

William Raynham (1809-1872) Chelsworth, Suffolk

Contributed by Bob Raynham
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"Keeping it in the Family"

{mos_fb_discuss:no_discuss} Following my contact with sisters Shirley Norman and Doreen Hambling in June 2002 I was able to connect their paternal Raynham family with that of the wider Raynham family. This short document charts the family links and provides the basis upon a family history for Shirley and Doreen.

Throughout this document the use of Raynham reference numbers are made, each Raynham who is linked to the family tree are given a unique "R" number to enable the person to be identified and to reduce the confusion that can occur. The sisters' story begins with William Raynham.

William [1] was baptised at Chelsworth at the Church of All Saints on Sunday 2 July 1809 [2], in the 39th year of George 111's reign, the parish register entry also confirmed that he was born on Wednesday 21 December 1808, see extract below. He was following in a long line of Raynhams who had been baptised in the parish church, going back to his great grandfather Thomas [3] in 1724/25. Growing up in the village William would have been surrounded by his immediate family and the many Raynhams from his extended family that resided within the parish. This would have included his relatives who had worked as thatchers and the other branch of farming Raynhams.

The Raynham family, from which I am descended, had worked and brought up their respective families in the parishes of Brettenham and Hitcham for over 150 years, no doubt judging from the Raynham wills [4] in close proximity with each other. At some time possibly prior to 1724 the family moved to Chelsworth, Suffolk to commence nearly 100 years of involvement with this parish, indeed Raynhams were still evident in the village up until 1924. Chelsworth is a village some 5 miles due south of Brettenham and in close proximity to Bildeston and Hitcham, see below for local map, some of the parishes mentioned in this document can be located.

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What is known is that Robert Raynham [6]; William's great great grandfather had six children, three of whom were baptised in Brettenham and the last three in Chelsworth. Much is known about the village of Chelsworth and its history, the church, its Lords and the people who occupied the village. Most of the material for the Raynhams of Chelsworth has been extracted from Geoffrey Pocklington book about Chelsworth, privately published in 1956, [7] Bernard Quinlan, a resident of Chelsworth was instrumental in providing significant data on the Raynhams of Chelsworth, including a Chelsworth Raynham Family Tree and extracts from the Chelsworth parish registers. Bernard Quinlan's updated book [8] on Chelsworth provided us with details of the Raynham families and we know that Robert and Sarah were one of two distinct Raynham family lines, the thatching branch and other farming.

Chelsworth can trace its history as far back as King Edgar, when in 962 it appears in a charter as "Ceorleswyrthe". [9] Chelsworth church has played a significant roll in the Raynham families lives; not only for their baptisms, marriages and burials but also later in the nineteenth century they became churchwardens to the church. In the Domesday Survey of the manor in 1086 it was described as "a church with 30 acres of ploughland and one meadow". The present Church of All Saints is of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries origins. There are no obvious traces of its Domesday predecessor, with the possible exception of re-use of the older building materials.

Many of our Raynham ancestors are buried at Chelsworth Church and today some of their gravestones can be still be seen and read albeit with difficulty. The church would have played a significant part of the Chelsworth Raynhams life and the photo below provides a view of the church looking towards the south porch entrance; part of the graveyard can also be seen in the foreground.

It would seem from Geoffrey Pocklington's research that Robert was a thatcher; and that he and his subsequent descendants were less prosperous than the farming side of the Raynham family. From parish and village records it would seem that Robert owned no land or occupied any known official position. Robert spent nearly 50 years raising a family and living in Chelsworth, he was buried on Tuesday 19 May 1772 in the parish church of Chelsworth.

Robert's great great grandson William was the second known child born to his parents Thomas and Susan Raynham nee Warren, he shared his birth year with Charles Darwin, Edgar Allan Poe, Lord Tennyson and Abraham Lincoln [10]. Later in life he became a thatcher and almost certainly would have learnt his trade from his father and older brother Thomas.

Weather they prospered is not known; certainly the farmers and landowners of Suffolk had experienced prosperity from the selling of their produce during the Napoleonic wartime years. By the end of the war in 1815 these "golden farming years" would have given way to the start of three decades of agricultural depression.

He married Mary Ann Raynham [11] on Tuesday 21 June 1836, who was his second half cousin and the daughter of unmarried Mary Raynham [12], and granddaughter of Robert [13], William's father's half-brother. The wedding took place at the parish church and no doubt the assembled and related Raynhams would have filled the church pews. Mary Ann was born on Wednesday 2 September 1812 and baptised at Chelsworth five weeks later on Sunday 11 October, see extract below. Mary Ann would have met and possibly played with her older cousin, her mother Mary married Carrington Sheldrake seven months later in 1813 at Chelsworth church.

Their marriage was very long lasting until William's death in 1872, during their 36 years of marriage Mary Ann gave birth to seven known children William, Walter Robert, Sarah, Ann Maria, John, Walter and Arthur [14] these childbearing years lasted from 1837 until 1855. During this time William's stated occupation at the baptisms changed from butcher to labourer and finally in 1846 he was listed as being a

thatcher, in addition he served as parish clerk. Sadly the family experienced the death of Walter who was buried on Saturday 14 November 1840 in the parish church, just 18 months after his baptism. Sarah died in 1853, when just 12 years of age, see family tree on the next page. During this period life for many Suffolk rural folk was hard, contemporary reports of the day spoke of up to a third of the Suffolk working population was unemployed, middle class gentlemen unable to pay their bills, of farmers accustomed to dining at inns, walking home to dinner and the state of the poor as being "lamentable indeed". Farmers unable to settle their accounts led to ruined tradesmen and farm workers found it impossible to manage on wages that had been reduced by a third. William progressed to become a master thatcher [15] by the time he reached middle age and continued to live in Chelsworth until his death, he lived at Meadow Cottage [16] in 1870 with his wife and sons John and Arthur, see photos on the next page of the cottage, one taken around the turn of the 20th century and the second taken in 1997. Note the replacement of the thatch roof with tile and the addition of roof window. Also living in the cottage with the family was Zachariah Scott, a second half cousin of William's. The cottage itself had been in the previous ownership of his father, Thomas. His father had been a tenant of the cottage but later purchased it from Ann Stannard a widow of Whatfield and on his death in 1853 the cottage became the property of his eldest son Thomas. [17] On Tuesday 25 July 1865, their daughter Ann Maria married [18] butcher William Cutter [19], who worked at Bryant's shop, later Drages in Monks Eleigh, the adjoining parish to Chelsworth. She had nine children from 1865 to 1881 with the first Walter William Cutter being born five months after the marriage. They resided in The Cottage in Parsonage Lane at the time of the 1870 survey. John, William and Mary Ann's fifth child married twice, his marriage [20] to Isabella Dorling took place at the parish church on Friday 28 April 1876 when he was 30 years of age. He also later in life married Ellen Francis at Chelsworth in 1906 at the age of 60 years and had followed his father into the thatching business. Walter, William and Mary Ann's sixth child married Ratchel prior to the 1881 [21] and was living at this time at Gazeley, a village on the Suffolk/Cambridgeshire border, where he was a butcher and died three years later, surviving him was his wife and 24 year daughter Emma. The youngest son Arthur married Annie and had seven known children during the 1879 to 1900 period. Arthur had been employed as labourer but had become a foreman at a corn merchant. By the time of the 1901 census where the family were living at Chapel Street, Bildeston a village that they had been residing in for at least 22 years. [22] All the children had been baptised and assume to have been born at Bildeston, see family tree below. On Monday 9 September 1872 William Raynham, the father was buried at Chelsworth church aged 63 years. His wife Mary Ann survived him for another 14 years and was buried at Chelsworth in 1887, see extracts from the parish registers below. During his adult life William served his community in the capacity of Parish Clerk, in the 1875 Post Office Directory for Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex he listed in the entry covering Chelsworth, Suffolk; see copy of extract from page 768 below. William became the parish clerk in 1870 and his son John [23] took over on his father's death, later Sherman Raynham [24] took over this role, he was a nephew of William. Sherman, whose full name was Thomas Sherman Raynham had been born in Kersey but was living at Hill House, Chelsworth. A notable builder and property developer and no doubt used his uncle and cousin John for thatching work. In the year of William's death in 1872 Suffolk had 400 schools open providing places for 37,000 children, this increase in provision reduced the level of literacy which in 1845 was just over 50% of Suffolk's population were literate; by 1900 this had risen to around 97%. The census in the previous year indicated that the population of Great Britain had increased to 29,700,000 with London at 3,300,000. Research to date has located the family in the 1841, 1851, 1861 census for Chelsworth. Mary Ann following the death of William may have been living with son John and his wife, as the 1881 census has her listed at Chelsworth. Of interest also enumerated with the family was Thomas Cutter, Mary Ann's grandson and nephew of John. The same census locates Walter Raynham with his wife Ratchel and 12-year-old daughter Emma at the Carpenters Arms, Gazeley, where he continued to a butcher. With the family were James Leyes, a 31-year-old border and butcher. The youngest son Arthur was living in Duke Street, Bildeston with his wife Annie and daughter Ethel Maud and newly born son Albert Walter, Arthur was working for a Corn Merchant as a labourer. Arthur later became a shopkeeper in Bildeston around 1935. Albert Walter, William's grandson was born on Tuesday 13 April 1880 at Duke Street, Bildeston, as a 20 year old he was living with his parents at Chapel Street, Bildeston [25] and married Alice Brett in 1906. Hopes for a better life at the beginning of the new century may have been high, the Victorian era ended with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and Britain entered the short Edwardian period with the coronation of King Edward VII. However for the farm worker life continued to be an impoverished one and remained so right through the reign of Edward. Average weekly earnings had risen to 17s 6d, well below the figure of 21s 8d considered to be the minimum sum a man would be require to support a wife and three children with the basic necessities of life. [26] This is the equivalent of ?54 [27] today. It was estimated that a third of all the families living in many villages existed below what had come to be known as the poverty line. They had five children between 1907 and 1918, Walter Lewis, Florence May, Frederick William, Violet Edna and Grace [28], the latter was adopted possibly after her birth in 1918, see family tree below. Their third child Frederick William Raynham [29] was born in Bildeston on Tuesday 18 July 1911 and married Florence Morphew in October 1934 at St Mary Church, Nedging [30]. Nedging is a village just south of Bildeston. St Mary is largely a 14th century village church with 18th century Gothic trimmings. Inside, the church is plain and simple presently a rural ambience that generations of villagers would recognize, even the medieval font is plain. Toward the west there are some medieval benches with carved ends, but the majority of the seating is simple Victorian benches. The marriage produced three daughters for Frederick and Florence, Jean Alice was born on Friday 14 June 1935, just four years before the outbreak of World War 2, Doreen Ann on Sunday 3 January 1943, two thirds the way through the war and Shirley Eileen [31] on Friday 26 July 1946, one year after the end of the war in Europe. All were born in Nedging village with Jean at Hampstead Cottage and Doreen and Shirley at Peartree Cottage. See family tree below which includes their grandchildren. Above is a photo of Hampstead Cottage taken around 1921. Doreen and Shirley

have managed to identify the following from left to right Florence May 12-year-old eldest daughter of Albert Walter and Alice, four-year-old Clarence Morphew and then Alice Raynham aged 36. Violet Edna, eight-year-old second daughter of Albert Walter and Alice, a 12-year-old stepdaughter and Mrs. Raynham as she was called, the second wife of Albert Walter. It is believed she had been his housekeeper and they married, it is assumed after Alice had died? Finally William Frederick, the ten-year-old third child born to Albert Walter and Alice, he is Doreen and Shirley's father.

The children suffered the trauma of the death of their mother, apparently she was one of the many thousands who died from the flu epidemic of 1918. The epidemic had taken its hold around the world and arrived in Britain in late September and had already caused the death of millions people. The populations having been weakened by wartime hardships were even more susceptible.

With the death of their mother her sister brought up the children. At the time of Alice's death Albert would have been about 38 years of age and with three children who ages ranged from 10 to 6 years and he may not have been able to cope with a new child Grace, thus an adoption was arranged. In 1923 a school photo was taken of Nedging School, which the Raynham siblings attended. Those present have been recalled Eddie Morphew [32], Doreen and Shirley's uncle on their mother's side. The Raynham siblings can be identified Florence May known as Florrie aged 14 years is the girl in the back row fifth from the right. 10-year-old Violet Edna is the second child from right in the third row and 12-year-old Frederick William can be seen in the second row, third child from the right, see below.

Doreen and Shirley's father Frederick William died on the 22 February 1979 and is buried at Nedging Church, his wife Florence nee Morphew was born on the 9 March 1914 and died on the 28 March 1997, at the age of 83 years.

- [1] Raynham reference R60.
- [2] Extracted from microfiche copy reference FL549/4/2 folio 2 and 3.
- [3] Raynham reference R44.
- [4] See John, R140, R100 and Thomas, R103 wills.
- [5] See John, R140, R100 and Thomas, R103 wills.
- [6] Raynham reference R40.
- [7] Chelsworth "The Story of a Little Suffolk Village".
- [8] New edition published in 1994, printed by Lavenham Press Ltd; ISBN 0 9523742 0 X.
- [9] "Chelsworth and its Church" by Canon J. A. Finch, M.A.
- [10] The Timetables of History by Bernard Grun.
- [11] Raynham reference R130.
- [12] Raynham reference R37.
- [13] Raynham reference R32, Bob Raynham's 4Xgrandfather.
- [14] Raynham references R72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77 & 78 respectively.
- [15] As noted in the 1861 census for Chelsworth.
- [16] As noted in an 1870 survey of census.
- [17] Raynham reference R51 (1773-1853) & R57 (1802-1887) respectively.
- [18] Witnesses were Charles Cutter, Elizabeth Cutter and Susannah Ling.
- [19] A direct ancestor of Steve Barber who is working on his grandmother's family, the Cutters of Lindsey and Kersey.
- [20] Witnesses were William Brook, W Cutter, Jeremiah Cooper?
- [21] Located in the 1881 census at Gazeley.
- [22] The 1881 census has them at Bildeston.
- [23] In his marriage to Isabella Dorling he gave his occupation as Parish Clerk.

[24] Raynham reference R192 (1839-1911).

[25] Source the 1901 census for Bildeston.

[26] "A Study of Town Life" by Seebohm Rowntree.

[27] John J. McCusker, "Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money in Great Britain from 1264 to Any Other Year Including the Present" Economic History Services, 2001, URL: <http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppowerbp/>

[28] Raynham references R437, 423, 420, 422 & 480 respectively.

[29] Raynham reference R420 (1911-1979).

[30] Photograph and commentary associated with the church copyright of Simon Knott, see his web site at www.suffolkchurches.com

[31] Raynham references R424, R418 & R419 respectively.

[32] He was aged 91 in 2002.