



The Barfoot Family

and

The Old Hall, Langham

By Sue Swinchatt

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Sue Swinchatt recently retired, and living in Cornwall began delving into her family history three years ago. Researching initially on the internet Sue found two previously unknown distant cousins, Renn Wortley and June Seward, also descendants of the same Barfoot family. Sue is keen to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to both Ren and June for kindly sharing with her the results of their own researches. After learning that her ancestor Henry Barfoot, and his brother Thomas both married women with the surname Sharpe, Sue was keen to find out more. Discovering the Langham Village website earlier this year was like opening a box of delights. The information found there, together with several wills and other information obtained from the National Archives has helped piece together their story.

Ed [ Ren Wortley has been a contributor to the Langham Web site and our Village History Group for a number of years from his more distant location in Australia]

# The Barfoot Family

and

## The Old Hall, Langham

By Sue Swinchatt, 4<sup>th</sup> great granddaughter of Henry Barfoot and Mary Sharpe



Thomas Sharpe, Gentleman, of Langham died in 1783. Records suggest that he was the first son born to Luke Sharpe (bap 1678) and grandson of the Luke Sharpe responsible for the beginning of the construction of the Old Hall, Langham. Thomas's mother Elizabeth (Wild) died just after his birth and was buried on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1709, Thomas was baptised on the same day. In 1712, his father married Susannah Adcock of Barleythorpe and they had two sons and two daughters. The youngest son, Robert, died in his second year, Samuel (bap 1714) married Dorothy Adcock in 1749 and is known to have farmed at Cold Overton, a village two miles to the west of Langham.

There were Adcock's living in Cold Overton as early as 1570,<sup>1</sup> and branches of this family were to be found in Barleythorpe, Hambleton and Oakham during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that Susannah and Dorothy were directly related to Samuel Adcock, a tenant of Henry Turner of Cold Overton Hall,<sup>2</sup> early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There may have been family connections with Samuel Adcock, a Gentleman of Hambleton, who in 1775 left substantial estates of freehold property in Rutland, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, including land and property in Cold Overton acquired during the 1760's.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Sharpe and Ann Tampyon were married in Braunston during 1754 and by the time of his death were living in the Old Hall Langham. With no surviving children, Thomas left Ann two hundred pounds, his household goods, *'our Gelding or Mare and four Milked Cows to be freely chosen by her out of my stock'* the rest of his estate is left to various nieces and nephews, the five surviving children of his half brother Samuel in Cold Overton.<sup>4</sup>

Dorothy Adcock bore Samuel Sharpe eight children but only Elizabeth, born just after their marriage in 1749, Susannah (bap 1751), Samuel (bap 1753), Mary (bap 1756) and Thomas (bap 1759) survived into adulthood.

In his Will, Thomas Sharpe states that his nephew Samuel, was to inherit land and property in Langham, but it seems that after Samuel married Esther Brampton, he remained in Cold Overton, taking over the farm when his own father died. In the Cold Overton graveyard is their tomb, sited so closely to the outer wall of the church that it is not possible to read the inscription on the innermost face. The outer face records Esther's death on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1824. Samuel's brother Thomas was to inherit property in Ashwell in the tenancy of his cousin, William Robinson.

The Barfoot connection with the Sharpe family began with the marriage in 1777 of Thomas Barfoot to Susannah, the second daughter of Samuel Sharpe and Dorothy Adcock. Thomas's father, Henry Barfoot was born in Thurmaston near Leicester in 1719. Henry married Rebecca Pritty of Lyddington and they farmed in Wardley for some years before moving to nearby Ayston. They had five children, Thomas (1741-1813) being the eldest. He farmed at Braunston and after the death of his first wife in 1781 married Martha Flavel from Barkby.

Thomas later served as the High Sheriff of Rutland in 1793<sup>5</sup>. He and Martha are buried in All Saints' Church in Braunston, where there is a large memorial stone to them on an inside wall of the church. Two much smaller stones, presumably marking their actual resting place, are to be found right below the feet of the pulpit, alongside a larger stone dedicated to Thomas's only son Henry who had died in 1808 aged 29.

Thomas Barfoot's younger brother Henry (1751-1796) married Susannah's sister, Mary Sharpe in 1783. It is from this couple that my branch of the Barfoot family descended to my maternal grandmother Maud Annie Barfoot who was born in 1891 in London.

Henry farmed at Witham-on-the-Hill in Lincolnshire, where he and Mary had ten children, with only seven reaching adulthood. Henry died aged forty-five in April 1796, the Stamford Mercury reported '*on Sunday last died at Witham o' th' Hill Mr Barfoot, an eminent farmer and grazier.*' His oldest child would have only been ten, and the youngest less than a year old.

In his Will<sup>6</sup> his brothers-in-law, Samuel Sharpe of Cold Overton and Thomas Sharpe of Langham, are appointed his Trustees, demonstrating a close relationship between the two families. Henry's beautifully decorated, and still legible slate gravestone, can be seen in the churchyard of St Andrew's at Witham-on-the-Hill. The memorial also gives the names of his first two children, Thomas and Susannah, who died in infancy. The third child, also a Thomas, only survived to the age of nine. However, the other children, namely Mary, Henry, Elizabeth, William, Samuel (my 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather), Ann and Sharpe all thrived, living long enough to benefit from legacies from their Sharpe relatives.

After the death of his uncle, Thomas Sharpe (bap 1760) moved from Cold Overton to reside in the Old Hall in Langham and at some point, his mother Dorothy also moved into the Old Hall and she was still living when Thomas died in 1814. Thomas's Will<sup>7</sup> shows he left two hundred pounds to each of his seven '*nephews and nieces, Mary Barfoot, Henry Barfoot, William Barfoot, Samuel Barfoot, Elizabeth the wife of Valentine Wortley, late Elizabeth Barfoot spinster, Ann Barfoot and Sharpe Barfoot, the children of my sister Mary*'. He also refers to '*my estate in Twyford, Leicestershire*' and to land in Ashwell, which he had inherited from his uncle Thomas, all of which was to be sold with the proceeds divided between the Barfoot children, with smaller bequests to three members of his mother's family, namely Robert Adcock of Barleythorpe, Thomas Adcock of Oakham and Francis Adcock of Eggleton.

Although Thomas does not refer to a wife, it seems he did have a child whom he acknowledges in his Will as '*my natural son James Sharpe otherwise James Stevenson*'. This may suggest his son was illegitimate and James's baptism in February 1795 at Oakham mentions only his mother's name. If his mother was Jane Stevenson who was baptised in 1780 in Pickwell, then she was only fifteen when he was born. However, Thomas does the decent thing, and ensures James receives an inheritance of three hundred pounds from his estate.

In the census of 1881, James Stevenson Sharpe is living in Barleythorpe with his occupation stated as carpenter and builder even though he is by then 86 years old! Some years earlier, he had farmed a smallholding of twenty six acres in Langham. He and his wife Mary had four children, two sons, who became carpenters, and two daughters. According to census records three of them had been born '*deaf and dumb*' and they remained living with their parents throughout their lives. In 1901 only Susannah, the one child who was not deaf, and her older brother Thomas were still alive living together in Barleythorpe.

It is also interesting to note that Thomas Sharpe left seven shares in the Oakham Canal, one to each of his Barfoot nephews and nieces. Construction of the canal, some fifteen miles in length connecting Oakham to Melton Mowbray, began in 1793 and was completed in 1802 at a huge cost of £70,000. The canal was purchased by the Midland Railway in 1846 and it employed Mr Cubitt, in his first major contract, to dismantle the canal so that it could no longer be used for transport. A reliable, year round source of water for the ten miles of navigation into Oakham proved a major problem disrupting traffic during dry spells. I have read that a preservation society has recently been formed to revive the canals fortunes.<sup>8</sup>

When Thomas's brother Samuel Sharpe dies in 1822,<sup>9</sup> he too leaves all his estate to '*the children of my sister Mary Barfoot*'. One of these children was the Reverend Henry Barfoot who had been educated at the expense of Colonel John Frewen Turner (1755-1829).

The Colonel was born into a puritan family,<sup>10</sup> the son of the Rev. Thomas Frewen who had inherited large estates including Cold Overton Hall. Colonel Frewen Turner's patronage ensured young Henry Barfoot's education got him into Cambridge University after attending Uppingham Public School. During his time at Uppingham School, Henry wrote regularly<sup>11</sup> to the Colonel about his progress in his studies, which included Greek, Latin and Mathematics.

Henry went up to Trinity College in 1807, but in December 1808 wrote to his benefactor saying he felt academically unworthy of his patronage. Another letter quickly followed apologizing for seeming ungrateful. In October 1809, he wrote again to the Colonel and to George Kellam Mason, who was Steward<sup>12</sup> of the Great Hall in Cold Overton and married to Elizabeth Sharpe, Henry's aunt. In the letters he asks if he may move to the smaller Clare College, Cambridge, which he eventually did, and he graduated BA in 1812 and MA in 1815.

At the time of her death in 1833, Mary Barfoot (née Sharpe) was residing with daughter her Mary and son-on-law (and nephew) Robert Barfoot who was now farming near Wincanton in Somerset. Her will<sup>13</sup> refers to her as being '*of Lyddington*' and it is known that she lived with her son Henry whilst he was curate there for a number of years before becoming Vicar of Old Leake in 1831.<sup>14</sup> Henry is her sole executor and receives a bequest of one hundred pounds, which Robert Barfoot apparently owes to her. She leaves property in Waltham Abbey, Essex to her son Samuel, but I have so far not been able to establish how she came to have this property or of what it comprised. No mention is made of her other two sons William and Sharpe. They had been left property in Lyddington by their father, so perhaps Mary felt they were adequately 'set up'.

Her will also gives some interesting details regarding her personal effects. For example, she leaves her linen and clothes to be shared between her three daughters Mary, Elizabeth and Ann and her workbox to her granddaughter Elizabeth Wortley. A Morocco letter case is left to another granddaughter, Elizabeth Barfoot,

and her writing desk goes to Mary Barfoot of Langham, who was one of the daughters of Sharpe Barfoot. Reverend Henry Barfoot is known to have arranged the sale of the freehold of the Old Hall and four acres of ground in Langham to Richard Westbrook Baker in 1836 for £4,500.

The only member of the Barfoot family to reside in Langham was Sharpe Barfoot born in 1795. He became a grazier and maltster, and in 1824 married Mary Fisher who was the daughter of Thomas Fisher, a farmer and the training groom at Exton,<sup>15</sup> the home of the Noel family. In 1841 Sharpe is a tenant of William Snodin farming an area known as "Bell Piece" in Langham.<sup>16</sup>

Sadly, Sharpe's wife died on 3rd February 1847, followed a few days later by his daughter Mary aged twenty-two and then fifteen year old Eliza; all from Typhus. It seems Sharpe did not fare well after this because in 1850 on or near his fifty-fifth birthday, he killed himself. The report in the 12<sup>th</sup> July 1850 edition of the Stamford Mercury says '*In Langham on the 5<sup>th</sup> inst, Mr S Barfoot, grazier aged upwards of 60. He committed suicide by hanging after taking laudanum which his stomach rejected.*' With regards his age, it seems even then newspapers did not always get details correct. Thus came to a sad end the connection of the Barfoot family with Langham.

## *References:*

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- 2 East Sussex Record Office FRE/9641
- 3 East Sussex Record Office FRE/8198 – FRE/9713
- 4 TNA PROB 11/1111
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- 6 TNA PROB 11/1278
- 7 TNA PROB 11/1760
- 8 Melton & Oakham Waterways Society
- 9 TNA PROB 11/1661
- 10 East Sussex Record Office FRE 592/596
- 11 East Sussex Record Office FRE/1875
- 12 East Sussex Record Office FRE/9644 - FRE/9663
- 13 TNA PROB 11/1817
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