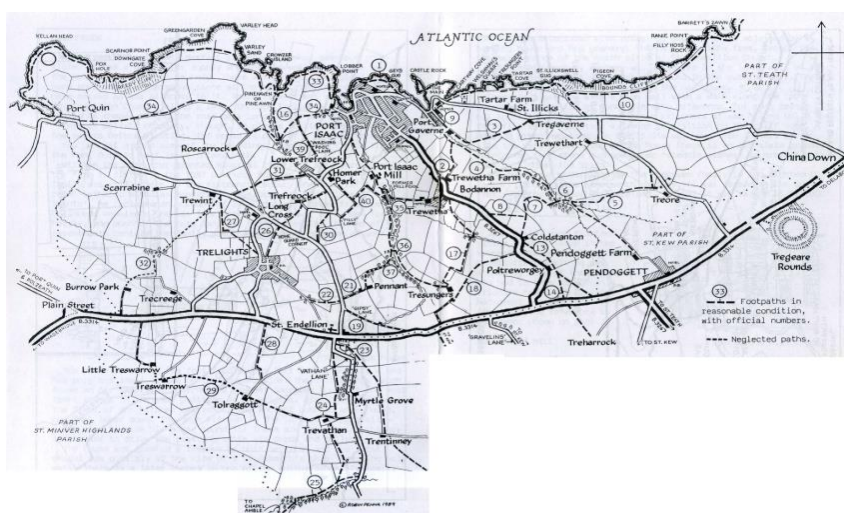


High Wych History – 26 – The Kempthornes

The name Kempthorne is quite common in these parts. That wasn't always so. I was told that the family hails from Cornwall. So I set out on a journey of discovery about which I can now report.



The church of St. Endellion and a map of the North Cornwall countryside.



The first Kempthorne to arrive in High Wych was William, born 1858 in St. Endellion. The 1871 census, and those of 1881 and 1891 finds him registered there as a farm boy lodging with the George Family. The 1901 census, see below, lists William living at Friars Cottage High Wych with wife Ann or Julia Ann and their children Olive Martyn and Russell. Oldest son Arthur, aka William Arthur is a live in servant with the Georges who live at the big house, in other words Friars Farm. What had happened?

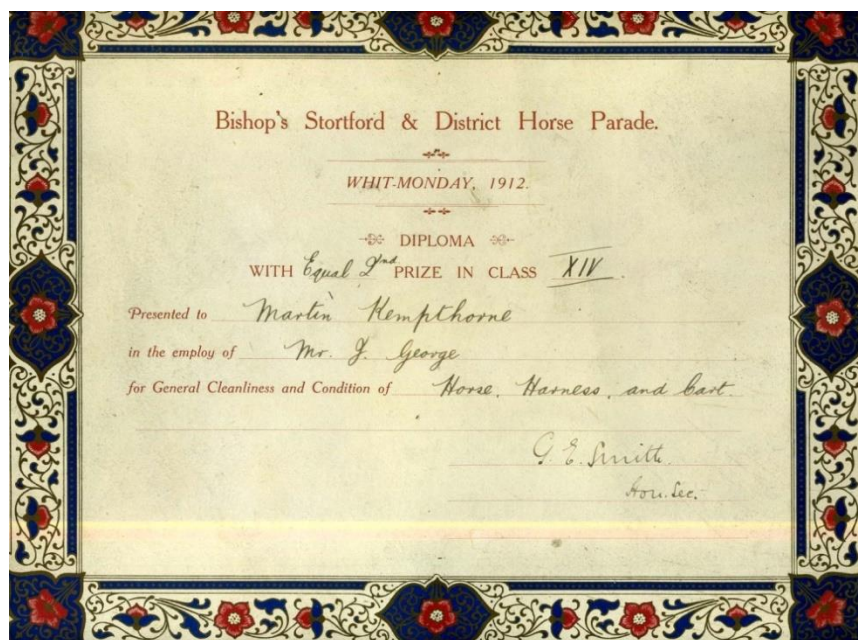
H.W.	111	Friars Farm	1		John George	Head	S	32	Employer	Cornwall Endellion
					Elizabeth Williams	Wife	S	58	Housekeeper (domestic)	Do. St Austell
					Catherine W. George	Sister	S	26		Do. Endellion
					Arthur Kempthorne	Serv.	S	15	General Farm Worker	Do. Do.
					Stuart W. Eldridge	Visitor	M	34	Self-employed accountant	London Marylebone
					Louise M.	Do.	M	35		Cornwall Roche
					Leslie S.	Do.	S	7		Middlesex Hornsey
H.W.	112	Friars Cottages	1	4	William Kempthorne	Head	M	42	Sheepkeeper on farm	Cornwall St Teath
					Ann	Wife	M	35		Cornwall St Endellion
					Martyn	Son	S	13		Do. Do.
					Olive	Daughter	S	10		Do. Do.
					Russell	Son	S	8		Do. Do.

The 1901 census with the Georges and the Kempthornes.

Well, agriculture in Hertfordshire in the last quarter of the 19th century was in crisis. Farmers had great difficulty paying the high rents; many went bankrupt and a number of farms came to stand empty as a result. Scottish and Cornish farmers “came to the rescue”. This provided quite a sea change. In 1881 there were no Cornish farmers in Hertfordshire; in 1911 there were 50, nine of those had settled in High Wych. I can name families such as Moffatt, Lukies, Prout, Cleave and of course George, for whom the Kempthornes worked. Henry Rider Haggard, in between writing about King Solomon’s Mines also wrote about Agriculture in East Herts and noted in 1902 “how the native farmer had been replaced by incomers from Scotland and the West Country”. The newly installed High Wych Parish Council in 1901 counted 2 Cornish members, Messrs Prout and Lukies.

The Kempthornes first came over in 1899. Initially William and Ann with William Arthur journeyed to Hertfordshire together with John George, his sister Catherine and a housekeeper. Two years later John Martyn, Olive and Thomas Russell followed doing the journey all the way by horse and cart. It took them three weeks. In High Wych they settled at Friars. Later on they moved to Stonards.

The family integrated well into their new environment as is shown by the two pictures below. On the left you see a diploma won by Martyn Kempthorne on Whit Monday 1912 for his skill with horses. On the right you see William Arthur Kempthorne and a prize winning bull. By December 1915, young Russell, a police constable in Ware at the time, joined the Royal Artillery to fight in the Great War. That same month his brother William also joins the Artillery. Whilst in the army, on 23rd September 1916 he married Florence Ada Downham. Luckily both William and Russell survived World War one.



Whit Monday 1912: Martyn Kempthorne wins a prize for his horsemanship. On the right: cowman Arthur

Olive meanwhile had married Ernest Frank Ingram on 16th November 1912. Ernest went on to serve in the Coldstream Guards during WW1 and died on 17th September 1914 “of wounds” in “France and Flanders” one of the first High Wych casualties. In 1920 Olive went on to marry George Lawrence who had served in Egypt during WW1. She died in 1931.

Martyn did not serve in the army. His job as a horseman was most probably considered too important to send him out, even later on when conscription was introduced. On 23rd December 1916 he married Lilian Anna Downham (cousin of the aforementioned Florence Ada) who hailed from Leytonstone. They went and lived in Windmill Cottage which must have stood empty at the time, the mill having been taken away in 1870. John Sapsford often visited Windmill Cottage in 1927 when the Clements family lived there. He described it as “a thatched, tarred board single story home unusual in that all the rooms were in line. To

get to the farthest bedroom It was necessary to go through all the others.” Windmill Cottage was demolished at some point in the mid thirties. Life there must have been hard for the young couple. Martyn and Lillian’s first three children were born at that cottage: Frederick Martyn in 1918, Stanley Clifford in 1919 and Leonard George in 1921. Martyn and Lillian’s other children were born at Noonses (Noons) on High Wych Lane: David William(Billy) in 23, Kenneth John and Gerald Arthur in 25, Joyce Lillian May in 27, Ronald Desmond in 1930 and finally Raymond Alan in 1933.

Brother William meanwhile working as a cowman, settled in High Wych and had four children: Arthur, better known as Jim, Leslie and twin girls Jean Olive and Joan Augusta (the latter sadly died young). William unexpectedly died of pneumonia in 1929, only months after the birth of his twin daughters. Mother Florence then had to bring up the remaining three children on her own. Jean later married Sid Pedder and is now well known in the Parish.



Three generations K. on a day out – Itr grandmother Julia Ann, mother Lilian Anna and young Raymond
picture taken around 1936.

A future article will deal with the various Kempthorne boys that served in the second World War.

Thanks this time go to Mark Kempthorne, Raymond Kempthorne, Jean Pedder, Patricia Smith (nee Kempthorne), the John Sapsford memoirs, Wikipedia and of course material from HALS. I have also used information from “The impact of agricultural depression and land ownership change on the county of Hertfordshire, a Phd thesis by Julie Patricia Moore. The High Wych History Project needs your contributions, memories, stories and photographs as well as your criticism be it positive or negative. Get in touch!! Contact me at: theo@vandebilt.co.uk or phone me at 01279 725468