

CLIFTON

Conversion to MSWORD – Feb. 2016 A.F.Sweatman

This is a letter I had from a son of an old lady of 97 years who remembered great-grandfather William Clifton, the carrier.

Dear Mrs Price,

Thank you for the letter to my mother Francis Hilda Davies of Berkswell. I read it to her and talked to her about the questions, at the end: I think you will be quite interested in the answers.

As you will know from the History Group booklet on Berkswell, my mother lived at Little Beanit Farm, on the road from Balsall Common to the hill, just at the point where the road crosses the Berkswell/Kenilworth railway. She lived there from 1891, when she was born, to the 1900.

William Clifton came to this farm every week, by arrangement to take the eggs from the farm and the butter made by her mother, to a grocer's shop in Coventry, called Allwoods. He came on market day, which she thinks was Wednesday in Coventry.

He would also take her mother's groceries order to the same shop for her Bacon, Sausage etc., - so on his return in the evening there would be a big settling up of how much he received for Mrs Jackson's produce, and how much was paid for the groceries, my Mother remembers Mr Clifton and her mother sitting at the table in the kitchen, doing the reckoning up. She also remembers that he used to do the same service for many others in the district in his Pony and Trap, also proceeding to Birmingham Market on Friday.

She remembers him as a very cheerful person who would always shout a greeting to anyone he met on the road as went about his deliveries. She recognized the picture you sent with no hesitation at all.

She only remembers him as living at Hob Lane, and doesn't remember anything about people at Holly Farm in Holly Lane. Neither can she recall Elizabeth Ann Clifton.

But she can remember your Uncle Sam Clifton: like you she was a bit frightened by his appearance; she confirms that he did not look after himself or his clothes, I asked if she knew he was a painter thinking you must have meant in your letter a house painter or contractor, but she remembered him as painting pictures, but she can't recall seeing anything he had actually painted. She described him as a bit of an oddity and gives the impression that she kept out of his way as far as possible.

Back to William Clifton for a last point; she remembers him as being absolutely reliable, even in the worst weather, she remembers some appalling winters of snow and ice sleet etc. But your grandfather always used to make the journey somehow. That seems a "rather nice memory to finish with".

Thank you very much for the enquiry; she has enjoyed puzzling over it, and I have enjoyed writing this out, hope it puts a few extra leaves on your family tree.

Yours sincerely

J. Davies.

CLIFTON continued

CLIFTON (Continued)

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What about the people who lived in Windmill Lane? The enclosure map award gives a number of landowners and tenants, but the enclosure map shows only two Houses and the Windmill; by the time of the 1841 tithe map the number had risen to seven dwellings and the Windmill.

Research has produced some interesting personalities, and one who it has been possible to oersue in some depth is Sammy Clifton. A name that will be familiar to some people. He was an artist, and having heard his name during my research, it was exciting to find an entry in the 1881 census giving him the age of 26yrs and a title of artist/painter, the son of Samuel Clifton. The earliest record we have of a Clifton is from the parish register which gives us a Mary Clifton married John Hamlin on 3rd Oct. 1726, and another entry when a Joseph Clifton married Elizabeth Arch on the 23rd Nov. 1756, they had a son Joseph, who was baptised on the 23rd June 1759. He could have been the Joseph Clifton who owned land near Catchems Corner on the enclosure award of 1802.

There is also a marriage between Thomas Swift and Rebeca Clifton by licence, on 11th Nov. 1758. Through the census it has been possible to trace Samuel Clifton back to his grandfather another Samuel Clifton, who was born in 1756 and was described in the 1841 census as a weaver; he also appears on the 1835, 1836 and 1837 reg. of electors as having "freehold land & houses on Berksweel common" - that is the area around Windmill Lane, Hob Lane, etc;

Grandad Clifton died on 14th Sept. 1853 and his funeral cost £1.6s.0d - 15s.6d, for the coffin and dress; 5s.0d. For funeral fees and 5s.6d. for refreshments. He had four children, so far as can be ascertained; three sons including another Samuel, who on the 1841 census was described as an agricultural labourer; John born in 1814, to whom we will return; and William born in 1818, ?? who is described as a carrier in 1851 census (a trade directory of 1874 for Balsall Common tells us that he went to B,ham from Holly Lane on Thursdays and to Coventry on Fridays).

The youngest child on record was Mary; she was a school mistress and married into the Duffy family (another family still remembered by some local residents). She married William Duffy in 1816 at Pershore. He was a railway labourer and could have lived in. One of the terrace of so- called railway Cottages, now known as Byfield Place. Which are reputed to have been built for the men building the B,ham to Coventry railway

William and Mary Duffy apparently had three children, so far as can be ascertained from documentary evidence. The youngest Teddy Duffy, is particularly remembered, and on the 1871 census he is listed as age 19yrs and a agricultural labourer.

However back to artist Sammy, whose father and grandfather lived at some stage in the cottage now known as Fox's Cross. It was owned by grandad when according to the tithe map, it was two cottages rented out to Joseph Tidmarsh and Benjamin Claydon; however, neither of these names appear on the census of that year, so is assumed that by then both Samuels lived there. Artist Sammy was born in 1855, the youngest of a family of four daughters and two sons by this time of the 1881 census, only his sister, Winifred J. then unmarried, remained in the area. It is thought that Sammy didn't paint all his life, and in later years lived in one of the pair of cottages set back from the road besides Byfield Cottages. Later still, he is said to have lived rough in the Catchems Corner area.

I have so far heard of two pictures painted by him and still in the possession of local people; one a picture of Berkswell Church and one of the Windmill. The latter is painted on wood a quarter-of-an-inch thick, showing the Windmill from the other side of the lane, with its reflection in the pools left from the old gravel pit workings. There are two tall trees between the Road and the Windmill. His love in later years was astronomy, and he is vividly remembered sitting under the window of what is now Mrs Mason's shop, telling a group of children about the stars in his cultured well educated voice, while he kept news-paper stuffed his clothes, insisting that it helped to keep him warm. According to some accounts he was always smoking clay pipes, which he would have cost him 1d. each and he liked a drink, the Bricklayers Arms being one of his haunts.

On the opposite side of Catchems Corner is the cottage which has the post-box in the wall, and it is arguably the oldest shop in Windmill Lane. From the position of its entry in the census of 1861 when John Clifton brother of William, is listed as having the trade of grocer and farmer, it has been deduced that it was from this cottage that his business was carried out, although there is no positive proof of this. John Clifton was married to Elizabeth who was born in Hampton in Arden, but by the age of 68yrs, John was a widower though still a grocer. The first definite proof we have of this cottage being a shop is its picture on a post-card of 1967, and from a trade directory is in 1908 when Kellys list's Miss Mary Varnon as a shopkeeper in Windmill Lane.

This this is a copy from Berkswell Miscellany, written by Mrs Dee Tracey. '

Letter written to me by Mrs Dee Tracey.

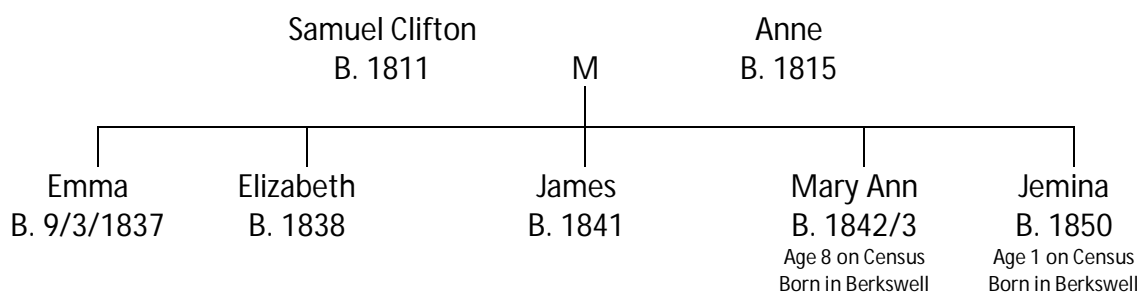
Dear Mrs Price,

The letter and notes sent by you to Alan Stainer were passed by him on to me - I live in a house built on the site of the farm house by the Painting family, and did an article about Windmill Lane in our first edition of Berkswell Miscellany.

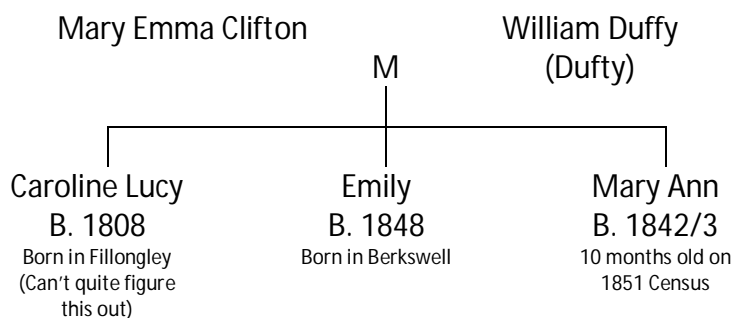
The following notes will, I hope, give you some additional information about the Clifton family, the main source is the census returns for Berkswell. So I have listed information taken from each return starting with 1851, sorry I have added 1841 census at the end.

1851 census.

(1)



(2)



Also

Living with them was.

- (a) Samuel Clifton father-in-law, a widower, formerly a linen weaver, born in Berkswell.
- (b) John Clifton, brother -in-law, unmarried, age 37yrs in 1851, a farm labourer, born in Berkswell.
- (c) William Clifton, brother -in-law, unmarried, age 33yrs in 1851, a carrier, born in Berkswell.

1861 census-

- 1) John Clifton had married Elizabeth, then aged 49, born in Hampton in Arden. John is described as a farmer and grocer. The census puts him in Wasts Lane.
- 2) in the same census William Duffy (spelling is always a bit different on each census and this must be the Duffy family living in Waste Lane, that you have describe as a platelayer their youngest son Edward is called Edwin.

1871 census-

1) John and Elizabeth Clifton are described as living in Windmill Lane, John's occ., being a grocer. (they could have been at the shop on the corner with Waste Lane- the one with the post box in the wall -see the article in the 1st miscellany and also the 1881 census information).

1881 census -

1) Elizabeth Clifton has died leaving John as a 68yrs old widower still a grocer but this time back in Waste Lane. (this movement from Waste Lane on the census returns must mean that he lived in the shop on the corner).

2) The Dufty family were only represented by Emily - unmarried age 29, and Edwin unmarried, aged 27yrs and described as an imbecile.

3) Samuel Clifton is recorded in Windmill Lane, a 70yrs old widower, occ. bricklayer with him was a daughter, Winifred age 28, unmarried, born in Berkswell, i.e. in 1853 and a son Samuel E. unmarried aged 26 i.e. born in 1855, in Berkswell occ. artist, painter.

Therefore, Samuel Clifton was the son of Samuel Clifton, born in 1811 and most likely Ann, born in 1816, however, Sam Clifton and Ann disappear from Berkswell census returns for the 1861 and 1871 and return in 1881 when Samuel is a widower of 70, in which return we have the first mention of Sam the artist, born in 1855, and his sister Winifred, born in 1853.

1841 census-

This census has very little detail than the later ones, and only list Berkswell Common for the Windmill Lane area.

On the census is listed.

Sam Clifton age 30, occ. agricultural labourer.

Sam Clifton age 65, occ. linen weaver.

Under a list of paupers taken from Berkswell Reg. Parish, in the later part of the eighteenth century is mention of-

1791 Joseph, son of Sarah and Joseph Clifton who was bapt. on the 12th June.

(he must be the Joseph Clifton age 50, born in Barston on the 1841 that you have on your records).

Notes on Teddy Dufty.

1) He also remembered by Len Skidmore. Apparently when Teddy started work he insisted on having a pair of hob nailed boots like his fathers. He used to follow the threshing machines around the country - many hundred of mile on foot.

2) Mrs Lawrence remembers that he used to wear an old fashioned hat made of felt. He had a white beard and used to help with the threshing machines.

Notes on Samuel Clifton the painter.

1) He was in love with "old" Mrs. Hitchcock, who was apparently headmistress at Burton Green village school.

2) He painted a picture of Burton Green school. (I have no idea unfortunately, where this and the previous paragraphs info came from, therefore i can't either statement- nor do i know Mrs Hitchcock's maiden name. If we' ever do find out, we'll let you know.)

3) We plan to include this story in the 2nd volume of the Berkswell Miscellany. 70yrs ago Sammy repainted a 200yr old doll called Dimsey, which belongs to Mrs Lawrence who now lives in Kenilworth, but who used to live in hob lane, not far away from Burton Green school. The doll is made from a newel post and Sammy painted on the hair and a dress with a pattern round the neck. I have seen the doll, it is not very large, but most interesting.

4) Sammy used to help chop wood and help with the haymaking where Mrs Lawrence lived as a child. He used to take bacon and lard to her mother, Mrs Lawrence's mother kept a special pan for' cooking his food.'

5) Sammy used to smoke clay pipes, he always had one in his mouth- they cost him a penny each, (this info, came from a man called Mr Skidmore, who lives in Berkswell village, and says he can remember Sammy quite well).