

# The Yardys of The Fens

The full document of the above title is 'work in progress'. Rather than wait until it is complete, we shall publish it in draft in sections. This chapter is the first to reach a reasonable state. Others will follow as available.

## **Chapter 4 – The Yardys of Whittlesey**

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## Preface

For the last year I have been researching my family history. Having an unusual surname of Skyrme my first efforts were focused on the Skyrmes of Pembrokeshire. The first output of this research was the publication of *The Skyrmes of Manorbier and Penally*.<sup>1</sup> I commented in there that Having a fairly unusual name has its pros and cons. On the plus side, when finding a Skyrme, you are not faced with scrutinising scores of records to find the right one. On the other hand, being an unfamiliar surname it is frequently mis-read by transcribers, meaning that you struggle to find a record that you are sure should be there.

Having completed my research into my paternal line and their relatives, I switched my research focus to my maternal line. My mother's maiden name was Clarke, and the popularity of this name has made tracing this branch of the family difficult. However, her mother – my grandmother – had the surname Yardy. What surprised me, bearing in mind that it does not sound unusual, is that it is in fact three times rarer than Skyrme. In surname frequency statistics it is ranked lower than 16,000<sup>th</sup> with 308 occurrences compared to 954 Skyrmes.<sup>2</sup> However, like Skyrme it is often mis-transcribed by the main genealogy sites – Gardy being the most common rendition.

Although my grandmother's family lived in and around Norwich, earlier generations can be traced to Walpole St. Peter on the border of North West Norfolk. Intrigued by the name Yardy I searched for other instances in the 1841 census and found other clusters in Whittlesey and March, across the border in Cambridgeshire. However, all these localities share one thing in common. They are all in 'The Fens', areas of formerly marshy land at around sea level. Most fens were drained in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, creating wide tracts of agricultural land, which today cut across parts of four counties. The largest tracts are in Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk, with a small part in Suffolk.

This document gives the story of the Yardys who inhabited these parts. In early census records they were nearly all agricultural labourers, but over the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they branched out into other trades and dispersed across The Fens and beyond.

To develop this document I have used online sources, notably findmypast.co.uk which I found to have more accurate transcriptions than Ancestry for the Yardys, as well as having more useful resources earlier, e.g. the 1911 census and Cambridgeshire Parish records. Additionally I would like to acknowledge the work done by others who have researched the Yardys and provided me with useful information. The story is my interpretation of the records and may well have errors. It is undoubtedly incomplete, so I invite readers to fill gaps and provide updates. In the meantime, if you are a Yardy descendent, I hope you find it an interesting insight into your ancestry.

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February 2013

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.skyrme.info](http://www.skyrme.info). Research into other Skyrmes in Pembrokeshire, such as the Skyrmes of Llangwm, will take place in the future.

<sup>2</sup> [www.taliesin-arlein.net/names/](http://www.taliesin-arlein.net/names/) - which uses the Office of National Statistics database of 2002.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Yardy (very occasionally spelt Yarday) is a surname associated almost exclusively with the Fens. The 1881 distribution shows no other significant presence anywhere else in the country (see figure). That is not say that Yardys were only found in The Fens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, since we have found records citing Yardys in several other places including London, some dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Early census records show four main clusters of Yardy families. These are at Walpole St Peter, in Norfolk (about 6 miles north east of Wisbech), and in Cambridgeshire, Whittlesey (6 miles East of Peterborough), March and nearby Doddington. There are also earlier parish records of Yardys at Glatton in Huntingdonshire, Glatton is just 10 miles south west of Whittlesey, and later information indicates that some of them moved further north into the Cambridgeshire fens, It is therefore likely that this family of Yardys were the ancestors of several of the households around the four main clusters in the 1841 census. The majority were agricultural labourers, while several in the Whittlesey area were involved with brickmaking. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century three of the four clusters remained (the exception was that at Walpole St Peter) whilst their descendants have spread to nearby counties such as Lincolnshire and to places further afield, most notably Yorkshire and London. Although many remained labourers a significant proportion moved up the occupation hierarchy into skilled trades.

Our Yardys' story starts with the Yardys of Glatton in Huntingdonshire. This is followed by the Cambridgeshire clusters, concluding with those of Walpole St Peter which includes the family of my ancestors. Finally we provide a summary of migration patterns and give some insights into the main occupations.

## Chapter 4 - The Yardys of Whittlesey

The 1841 census records 3 Yardy family households in Whittlesey. There were Yardys living at two other households in Whittlesey as well as a William Yardy living with six other agricultural labourers a few miles north at Thorney.

### Descendants of Thomas and Mary

Of the Whittlesey families the largest was that of Thomas and Mary (nee Bonus). They had three boys and seven girls born between 1826 and 1847. In the 1850s they moved to Lincolnshire, first to Pinchbeck (1861 census) and then to Spalding (1871). It has proved difficult to trace the descendants of this family. Several of the girls were spinsters into their 30s. Only two children, teenagers Ann and Jane, were living with their parents at the 1861 census though elder daughter Sarah appears in the 1881 census as a single 38-year servant to the household of Revd. Richard Simpson "Clergyman Of Church Of Eng Without Cure Of Souls".

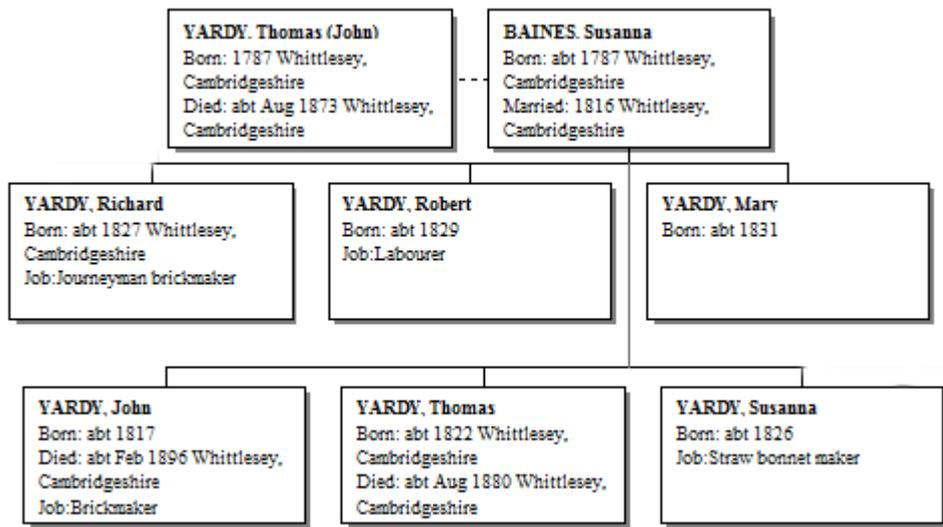
William the eldest son like his father Thomas was a brickmaker, the most common trade we find among the male Yardys of Whittlesey. The 1851 census shows him married to a Jane, though no trace of this marriage can be found. The 1871 census lists a daughter Emily born around 1866 who later became a seamstress and in 1888 married Charles Wesley Pickett,

There are several intriguing loose ends around William's ancestry. Living with him and Mary in 1871 was niece Emma Livermore and in 1881 his 17-year old cousin Elizabeth Laxton – at the time he was 55. However, we have been unable to find records showing the connection between them. Interestingly one record gives daughter Emily middle name as Livermore, and since no index to her birth can be found, one explanation is that she was born Emily and later became part of William and Mary's family through adoption of guardianship. This seems quite likely since they had no other children. Emily married a Charles Wesley Pickett in 1888 but --- \*\* find 1901 census record later appears as Emily Pickett. By 1891 William was described as a brick 'master'. He remained living in Whittlesey and he was still living in 1901 aged 75.

### Thomas Yarday (1787-1873) and Susanna Baines (1787)

The second large Yardy family in Whittlesey was that of Thomas and Susanna. The 1841 census finds them living at Brown's Brick Kiln in Stonadfield with their five youngest children, aged 10 to 19. Nearby at 'The New Gravel House' lives their eldest child John (age 21) with wife Rebecca nee Rowell and their two infant children. Both Thomas and John were brickmakers.

By 1851 the only child of Thomas and Susanna living with them was Richard now aged 24. Also living with them as lodgers were the Brown family whose head William, like Thomas was a journeyman brickmaker. After Susanna's death in 1859, Thomas moved in with his son John who lived nearby in 8<sup>th</sup> private road at Peterborough End. In the 1871 census at aged 84 his occupation is given as agricultural labourer, no doubt helping his son John who was now a farmer. We'll now trace the children of Thomas and Susanna and their mail descendants. We are unable to trace what happened to Mary and Susanna.



### John Yarday (1817-1896) and Rebecca Rowell (1815-1891)

John married Rebecca when he was 20. Between 1838 and 1856 they had nine children, three of whom died in infancy. Living with them in 1841 was John Rowell aged 18, probably Rebecca's brother, who by 1861 was innkeeper of The Bell, the adjacent property to John and Rebecca's. Also by 1861 John's occupation had changed from brickmaker to a farmer of 30 acres. He obviously prospered since the 1871 census shows that his holding had increased to 70 acres and he employed three men and two boys.

Their eldest child Ann (b 1838) married Thomas Goodwin (b1836) in early 1861. They lived at West Delph and had four children – Elizabeth, Thomas, James and Harriett.

Their second child John (b1840) lived with his parents on the family farm until he married Elizabeth Stallebrass in the summer of 1868. By 1871 they ran a separate farm themselves at nearby West Delph. No indication of its size is given in this or subsequent censuses, though by 1891 their two eldest boys are listed as agricultural labourers. In 1901 they had moved on to be replaced by two younger brothers who are listed as "farmer's sons working at home". Altogether they had 11 children born between 1870 and 1884, The 1881 and 1891 censuses respectively show 8 and 7 of them living at home, so it was a busy household. In summary their children were:

- **Gertrude Fanny Yardy (1870-1947).** We have not found her in the 1891 and 1901 censuses but by 1911 she was a domestic cook one of six servants in the household of Samuel Storey. Samuel, then 81 was a newspaper proprietor, having been the main founder of the *Sunderland Echo*.<sup>3</sup> Gertrude later returned to nearby March, dying a spinster in early 1945.
- **Sidney John Yardy (1872-1930).** By the time he was 20 Sidney was a "carman" (carrier / delivery driver) living in Meadow Road in Kennington (London SW9). He

*There is a  
Worshipful  
Company of  
Carmen, founded  
1557. "carmen did  
not invent the  
wheel – they put it  
to work; they still  
do"*

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Storey (1841-1925) was a successful business man and also active in local and national politics, being an MP from 1881-1895 and also in 1910. For a short profile see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Storey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Storey). He is cited many times in [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). See also 'Sunderland's Newspapers', Patricia J. Story, Victoria County History.

married Rhoda Piddington at Hendon in 1895. They moved around London – Deptford, Lewisham – and in 1911 his occupation is “mechanical engine stoker”. They seem to have had no children of their own but adopted Alice, born 1895. Stanley died at Greenwich in 1930.

- **Edward Ernest Yardy** (b1873). He started as an agricultural labourer in Whittlesey, probably for farmer George Hopper. By the age of 22 he was in Sheffield, where he married Annie Atkins. Their first child Ernest died within a few months of birth in 1898. As they moved around Yorkshire – Woodhouse Mill, Handsworth, Wales – they had four further children – John, Ettie, Ernest and Wilfred – between 1897 and 1908. In the Sheffield area Ernest was a colliery coal drawer (someone who pushes the wagons underground). Annie died, aged 34, in 1909, so at the 1911 census we find Ernest as a widower with his four children and a servant where he worked as a waggoner on Castle Farm, in the grounds of Worksop Manor.
- **Florence Elizabeth Yardy** (1875-1909). She married Charles Kisby, a timber yard labourer in Whittlesey in 1898. They had a girl Florence born in 1900 who died a few years later and then a son Charles, born 1905. After Charles was widowed he moved to Sheffield, remarried around 1910 and is listed as a “stonemason for a railway carriage works” and a chip shop worker.
- **Rowell Yardy** (1876-1927). Taking the surname of his grandmother Rowell started and ended his life in Whittlesey. In August 1900 he married Sarah Richardson in Northampton. She was a bead lace maker originally from Maulden near Bedford, the daughter of a carpenter and publican. So which of them moved to Northampton first is unclear. In the 1901 census the couple live at 3 Bruce Street in nearby Duston where he is a drayman for the canal company. By 1911, they had moved to Whittlesey where Rowell was a brick labourer. They had two children of their own – John (b1901) and Ada (b1906), and an adopted child Ernest, born 1896.
- **Ada Yardy** (1877-). Ada married Arthur Stevens in 1899. The 1901 census lists him as a dairyman and the 1911 census as a cattle dealer. It seems they had no children, but with them at the time of the 1911 census was their niece Florence Kisby, daughter of Florence above.
- **Alfred** (1879-1958). Alfred was the second of this family to move south to London. The 1901 census finds him as a builder’s labourer living at 42 Esher Street in Lambeth. He married Marion Joyce in 1906. Marion was a silk hatter’s assistant, the daughter of Frederick (silk hatter’s cutter) and Eliza. A couple of years Alfred and Marion were living in Mayfair and by 1911 had three children – Frederick (b1908), Dennis (b1909) and Marjorie (1911-1946). Alfred had then moved up in the world to be a chauffeur. The family must have moved to Chichester some time later since daughter Marjorie died a spinster in Chichester in 1946 (aged 35) and Marion in 1956. Alfred died two years later in Brighton.

*Wales is a village near Rotherham in Yorkshire. In the late 1800s it had a population of 350. Today it has over 6,500 and adjoins the M1 motorway*

*The Northampton arm of the Grand Union Canal passes less than a mile from Duston*

So, of the 11 children, most moved well away from their birthplace when young adults.

Of John and Rebecca’s other children, three of their daughters had moved to Louth in Lincolnshire by their 20s, probably all in domestic service. These were Susan (b1843), Rebecca (b. 1845) and Sarah (b. 1850). At the age of 16 Rebecca was a servant at her uncle Robert’s inn, The Ram in Delph. Sarah in 1871 was a domestic servant in the household of a

surgeon, Frederic Tate. They had two daughters named Elizabeth. The first was born in May 1852 and died shortly afterwards. So as was common at the time, the next girl born (in August 1853) was given the same name. She remained in Whittlesey and married poulterer Thomas Franklin in 1879. It seems they didn't have children. Their last of John and Rebecca was Richard. His was another infant death, though he lived for just over 5 years (1856-61).

### **Thomas Yardy (1822-1880) and Ellen Drewery (1823-1914)**

Thomas was a journeyman brickmaker. Around November 1843 he married Ellen Drewery. Her father was also a bricklayer, as was her brother Charles. The couple lived at Stonalfield until some time in the 1850s when they moved to nearby Church Field. In the 1861 census Thomas is listed as an agricultural labourer – was there a depression in the brickbuilding industry around that time? By 1871 he is again listed as a brickmaker. The couple never had children and Thomas died about November 1880. After being widowed Ellen took in her nephew John Drewery, a son of Charles. By 1901 she had moved with him to Peterborough, where he is now married and a railway engine cleaner. Also living with them is John's 61 year old mother-in-law Jane Dolman. Ellen is listed as blind. She died in February 1914 aged 91. We now skip Susanna of whom we can find no trace after the 1841 censuses.

### **Richard Yardy (1827-1904) and Ann Peake (1827-1907)**

Like his brother Thomas, Richard was also a journeyman brickmaker. Although he was living with his parents in 1851, by 1853 he had moved to Spalding in Lincolnshire, some xx miles away and married Ann Peake who was born in Winwick, Huntingdonshire. The 1841 census shows her living in Yelling, Hunts with her mother and four younger siblings. Soon after their marriage the couple must have moved back to Whittlesey where they had their first two children Lucy (b 1854) and Daniel (b1856) before returning to Spalding where two further children were born – Elizabeth Peake (1859) and Rebecca (1864). But by 1871 they were back in Whittlesey, this time at Latterley Field. Richard in 1871 and subsequently is described as a general labourer and later a jobbing gardener. They lived the last 10 years or so of their lives in Park Lane, Whittlesey.

The eldest of their children, Lucy married James Basford, a carpenter, in 1874. Shortly afterwards they moved to Leicestershire where two children were born – Phoebe at Kegworth in 1875 and John at Loughborough in 1877. But something happened to the marriage since in the 1881 census she is listed as single and was working as a cook in the household of 45-year old widow Fanny Matthews at 9 St. Georges Villas, Thorne Road Doncaster. However, James at the same time is described as 'married', although he was a lone lodger in Loughborough in both the 1881 and 1891 censuses. At number 7 her youngest sister Rebecca was working as a nursemaid in the household of medical officer of health James Wilson. Phoebe's children at the time (1881) were living with grandparents Richard and Ann in Whittlesey, while John, then aged 13 is still with them at the 1891 census. In 1891 both Lucy and daughter Phoebe were servants in the household of retired infantry Colonel James Dalton, J. P. She gives her status as 'widow', even though husband James did not die until 1916 and at every census he remains a lone lodger (later a horsebreaker instead of a carpenter) with status 'married'. O

Richard and Ann's second child Daniel, became an oil cake carrier by the time he was 15 (1871 census). This was obviously a career that did not suit him since he later became a Royal Marine. The 1881 census finds him on HMS Alexandra stationed at Malta. He married

*Oil cake is the residue left after squeezing seeds for oil. It is used as an animal feedstock*

Ellen Harris in Portsmouth in 1884, and they lived there until sometime in the last few years of the century when they moved to Benwick in Cambridgeshire. The 1901 census describes him as a licenced victualler and butcher, while by 1911 he is a naval pensioner and living in Lattersley Field, where his parents lived in the 1870s. They had three children, all born in Eastney, Portsmouth – William (b1885), John (b1888) and Nellie (1890). In 1911 William was married with one child and was a carter in Whittlesey. John was single and a joiner in Corringham, Lincolnshire and Nellie a dressmaker living with her parents at Lattersley Field.

The third child Elizabeth died when she was only 7 years old in Spalding in 1867. It was shortly after that her parents moved back to Whittlesey.

The youngest Rebecca, we have already noted as being a servant – a cook – at Doncaster in 1881. In 1884 she married a horse groom James Eccles. In 1891 they were living in Nottingham with their 3 children – Agnes, Lucy and Annie.

### **Robert Yardy (1829-) and Ann Stallebrass (1834)**

Robert started life as a labourer. The 1951 finds him living as a lodger in the Stallebrass household. The head John Stallebrass was a waterman married to Sarah. They had at least five children – Thomas (b1826), William (b1828), Mary(b 1830), Ann (b1833) and Elizabeth (b1842). 24 year old Robert married 19 year old Ann in August 1853. Robert soon became an innkeeper but had other sidelines as well. The couple initially lived at The Ram Inn and later at The Nags Head on the Whittlesey High Causeway. Roberts sidelines included being a butcher (1871 census) and a farmer of 26 acres employing one man and one boy in 1881. He had retired sometime between 1891 and 1901 and had become a widower in February 1898. The couple had no children.

*As well as  
"innkeeper"  
censuses describe  
Robert as a "beer  
house keeper" and  
"licensed  
victualler"*

This concludes the Yardys of Whittlesea. Other Yardys occasionally occur in Whittlesea censuses, but they originated elsewhere, such as Alfred Yardy from March who lived in the area in the 1880s before returning to March. We'll cover these 'immigrants' in other chapters. All these Yardys are probably related through ancestors living in the mid 1700s where records are more difficult to find and analyse.

## About the Author

David Skyrme is a retired management consultant. He started researching his family tree in the early 1990s, but it took a back seat until his working career wound down. In 2010 he restarted in earnest and published online the first part of *The Skyrmes of Pembrokeshire*. He has worked more intensely on the various Yardy families of The Fens and their trees since late 2012.

He is a member of The Guild of One-Name Studies and registered the Yardy surname as the focus of his one-name study in February 2013. The initial scope of this study are the Yardys of England. It will be followed by research into Yardys world-wide (USA, Canada and Australia).

You can read more about the progress of this project and see more details of the trees described in this document at The Yardy Website

[www.yardy.org.uk](http://www.yardy.org.uk)

Contributions to this study and feedback on this document is welcomed. You can contact the author as follows:

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