

CUMBERLAND MIGRATION TO HAMPSHIRE

Owing to the very depressed state of farming in Hampshire after the repeal of the Corn Act in about 1879, a large number of tenant farmers had to give up and the Estates farmed the land themselves (in most cases) and were losing a lot of money and were offering the farms to local farmers rent free, but in most cases found no takers.

About 1890, Hud Smith came from Cumberland to manage Basing Park Estate for W Nicholson Esq (of Nicholsons Gin) who had spent a lot of money building cottages and cattle yards etc (mainly from flints picked up on the estate). This created a lot of work for local labour during a period of serious local unemployment.

I think Hud Smith was instrumental in getting Matthew Williamson to come to manage Woodlands (on the Basing Park Estate) in about 1891, and Hud Smith certainly told a number of Cumberland farmers that they should come to Hampshire and take these big farms at a very low rental and run them mainly as grass and stock farms - the scope was so much greater. As a result of this visit, Robert Hind of Millbeck Hall came to look at Woodlands Farm in 1892, but would not take it up as Matthew Williamson who was running it would have lost his job.

In 1893, Robert Hind and Isaac Wren of Lowgrove Farm (they were adjoining farms) came to look at Riplington and Westbury Manor Farms respectively, but each liked the other's farm better, so Robert Hind took Westbury Manor Farm and Isaac Wren took Riplington from Michaelmas 1893 at approximately 5 shillings per acre. As they could not move down till March 1894 the Estate farmed for them. The owner of the Westbury Estate was Colonel Le Roy Lewis.

These two men must have had pluck to come from small farms of about 60-80 acres nestling under Skiddaw, to take a big (500-600 acres) corn sick Hampshire farm which was said to be incapable of growing grass, and the only water supply being the River Meon and dew ponds on the hills. Undeterred, they sowed many acres of grass seed in the spring of 1894, no doubt wisely as 73 acres of Riplington sown to wheat after summer fallow in the autumn of 1893 was threshed out of the field in 1894 and yielded 5 sacks per acre and was sold for £1 per quarter (1 quarter = 2 sacks = 4.5 cwt = £4 8s 10d (£4.44) per ton).

The actual moving down must have been quite a pantomime. Robert and Isaac booked a special train from Keswick to Petersfield, on which they loaded livestock, a few implements, furniture etc having a passenger coach for the families. The train was timed to arrive at Petersfield station at 10am and the carters with waggons from both farms were sent in to meet them. Owing to delays en route, the train did not arrive until late afternoon, and the carters had spent the waiting time in the pub and were quite merry when the train did arrive. What a mixture, happy Hampshire carters and travel weary Cumberland farmers, neither of whom properly understood each other's accent. Eventually they arrived at their destination and it is perhaps worth mentioning that Walter Tulley, baker and grocer of West Meon, was waiting on Riplington doorstep ready to do business.

I have often wondered how these two farmers financed the move and the valuation and stocking of these larger farms. I can only assume it was done through private loans from relations and friends.

As a matter of interest, Isaac Wren had an elder brother, John Wren (10 years older) who farmed at Little Crosthwaite and nothing would induce him to visit Hampshire and have a look at his brother's farm. Needless to say, Isaac often returned to buy horses, sheep and cattle.

The next farmer to come to the locality was John Fawcett, who moved from about Torpenhow to Manor Farm, West Tisted (on Tichborn Estate) in about 1895 or 6 at a rent of 4s 6d per acre, the Tithe being 5s.

Fred Rook was the next to arrive, coming to John Fawcett as a pupil about 1896 or 7, and taking Church Farm, Priorsdean about 1898 or 9, and after four years he moved to Manor Farm Colemore. His sister Jean kept house for him until he married Mary Edgar and Jean became Mrs Edwin Williamson (Edwin the son of Matthew Williamson of Woodlands). Edwin chose the Navy and retired Engineer Rear Admiral.

John Edgar, after first looking at Tigwell Farm, East Meon, came to Old Place, East Tisted in March 1900, having taken it the previous Michaelmas (he was brother-in-law of Isaac Wren, Jane Wren being John Edgar's sister, as also was Mary Edgar who always lived with Isaac and Jane as she did not enjoy very good health. The Mary Edgar who married Fred Rook was of course eldest daughter of John Edgar). He was affectionately known as Uncle Johnny by all his nieces and nephews, and my father says he was the best judge of stock to come out of Cumberland at that time. He had wanted to move to Hampshire the previous year, but his landlord prevailed on him to stay, which was rather unfortunate as he had a bad outbreak of abortion on the farm and hardly had a live calf during his last year at Ormathwaite Hall, which must have been one of the best Under Skiddaw Farms.

Isaac went to Edgar's sale at Ormathwaite and bought among other things a court cupboard and blanket box probably under instructions from his wife, and had them sent down with the rest of Edgar's goods. This was never popular with the Edgars who have often regretted selling them.

The next family to make the move were the Mitchells, who came from Loweswater to Treyford Farm, Elsted, Sussex on the West Dean Estate in 1903. The story is that Billy Mitchell (then a young man) travelled overnight, arriving at Petersfield Station in the early morning. He was met by Isaac with pony and trap who then took him to look at Treyford, they liked it, went on to the Estate Office, fixed up the tenancy and came back to Petersfield station and Billy travelled back to Cumberland that night. The Mitchell family (Mrs Mitchell a widow, four sons and one daughter) started arriving in Sussex in September 1903 and the rest after giving up the Cumberland farm in February 1904 (Candlemas). It is interesting that they put up five oats ricks at Loweswater, one on each Saturday in November and one on the first Saturday of December, and in the sale they were all bought for seed.

The next family to make the move was George Atkinson who took South Farm, East Meon from September 1905 and moved down in March 1906. He looked at Peak Farm, which is now farmed by his grandson Wilson Atkinson, but turned it down, there being too much wood and too many rabbits and poor water supply - very true at that time. They travelled overnight and arriving at West Meon Station were met by Isaac and helpers. The story goes that some of the Atkinson horses jibbed pulling up Drayton Hill owing to not understanding Hampshire carters, but Isaac and George got out their traps and soon put that right.

I think the next to come was Alf Stanley to Lyss Place, Liss in 1911 or 1913. He came from Dancing Gate. He and George Atkinson showed their foresight by going in for British Fresians about this time. In fact I believe the Mitchell's were even earlier, and were entering a lot of cattle in the B F Herd Book just after World War 1.

Edwin Stanley came from Borrowdale to Liss about 1922 and stayed at Lyss Place with his brother Alf until he took Bydean Farm in September 1925. Their brother Tom Stanley had the Derwentwater Hotel, Keswick for many years.

Isaac Wren took Court Farm Farmhouse and 8 Cottages, West Meon approximately 400 acres (on the Brockwood Estate) in 1900 so he must have prospered at Riplington since 1894. As a matter of interest he bought Court Farm in 1919 for £11,500, sold off the timber to pay for a piped water supply (approximate cost £1,200) and when he died in January 1931 the farm was sold for £6,500, and wheat from that harvest was threshed and sold straight from the field at £1 per quarter, so his first and last harvest of wheat in Hampshire made £1 per quarter! In that period (1920) it went up to 90/- per quarter (quarter of wheat = $4\frac{1}{2}$ cwt) and dropped to 45/- per quarter in 14 days in the post war slump.

Written @ 1995 By Cyril Wren

Cumbrian Migration took Place
in this order.

- 1) Robert Hind took Woodlands Farm 1892
- 2) Robert Hind Westbury Manor } 1893.
2) Isaac Wren Riplinton Farm }
- 3) John Fawcett. Manor Farm, West. Tisted 1895/6
- 4) Fred Rook. Church Farm Prosslam. 1898/9.
- 5) John Edgar Old Place East Tisted March 1900.
- 6) Mitchell Family Trested, Elstead 1903.
- 7) Atkinson Family South Farm Sept 1905 / March 1906
- 8) Alf Stanley Lyes Place Liss. 1911 or 1913.
- 9) Edwin Stanley to Liss in 1922 to Bydean 1925.