*March 2016 Email from John Marsden re Harmsworth antecedents*

Hello Michael & Patricia,

Just wanted to update you on my recent trip to Barkway, where Tom Harmsworth & Alice Mansfield were married.I was staying at the Woodman hotel at Nuthampstead which is a couple of miles from Barkway.

I asked the landlord of the pub for the name of a local historian. He gave me a name & phone number. When I rang, Tom Doig he just asked what family I was tracing. As soon as I mentioned Mansfield he said he would be with me immediately and he arrived about 10 mins later with a binder about 3” thick. I remarked on the size and was informed this was only the “Ma” file. He has a file on every family in the area going back before John Mansfield's time. Everyone I met always referred me to Tom when I asked a question re local history.

Tom is an archaeologist by profession and works freelance. Seems that in the UK, whenever any building is proposed whether on Greenfield site or current, an archaeology survey MUST be done. I get the impression that Tom is like yourself-very interested in his local history and doing everything to record it.

Tom & Alice’s (T&A) marriage cert-Rapier Guiver was the Church Clerk and Ruth Pitty was a friend of Alice. Many Mansfields are from Great Chishill and Tom believes that Alice’s father John would have been from there also.

The area around the present school was where the Mansfield family would have lived as it was the poor side of town. The whole area was destroyed by a fire in approx 1722.

John Mansfield may have been a horse keeper.

Barkway in the mid 1700s was-what we would call a hub- on the main carriage route from London to Cambridge. A huge part of the business in town was devoted to servicing this industry. There was stabling for 96 horses. Blacksmiths, farriers, saddlers, wheelwrights, carpenters etc were needed constantly. It could be assumed that no official qualifications were needed as there was so much work.

At the time the population was just under 1000 so it was a big village for that period.

The soil in the area is clay and 2 brickworks developed at the same time.

There was an Annual Market but the townspeople-without permission-changed it to a weekly market and it was huge because of the location. Apart from the London-Cambridge carriage trade, sheep and wool were brought from Wales through Barkway to the ports on the east coast for shipment to Europe.

Average wage in Barkway at the time was 10/- and Tom was most probably earning 7/6 per week.

The Mansfields may have been bakers or worked in bakeries as well as with the horses. They were not middle class or above.

As a guide, most marriages in this period took place in the home village of the woman. If the groom wasn’t from the town he would reside in the same town for a specific period-possibly a month- and this would mean the Banns would only need to be published in one area saving money.

..There were approx 15 pubs in Barkway at the time and may all have been brothels also.

Maybe Tom had heard on the grapevine about the amount of work here.

GENERAL INFO

One important point-as most people couldn’t read or write-they could be given a piece of paper with their name written on it as per their banns. Interesting!

Being Baptised, Married or buried from a CofE church didn’t necessarily mean the person was CofE as no other churches were allowed. However the Baptists would allow a non baptised person eg died in childbirth or before they were 14 to be buried in their cemeteries. In other words searches of Baptist and Non-conformist records can help.

I've now got a picture of what Barkway was like in 1780. It does give a reasonable idea of why Tom may have been here but not a definitive one.

So Michael & Patricia, we are possibly a little closer to finding out how Tom from Bramdean in Hampshire came to marry Alice Mansfield from Barkway in northern Hertfordshire.

Best regards

John

[www.john-marsden.com](http://www.john-marsden.com/)

The website above-headed Sam's Clan- explains where we are at with searching for Samuel Marsden-a Private in the New South Wales Corp- who sailed on the "Surprize" with the 2nd Fleet from England in 1789 and arrived in Port Jackson (Sydney) in 1790. Anyone connected to the following Ancestor Families & Families of descendants of Sam’s children is welcome to join us.

Marsden, Harmsworth, Early, Mansfield, Allender, Stanfield, Beadle, Davis, Hoare, Jones, Woodley, Hush, Evans, Murray, Whiteford