

## Family of William Ray, nineteenth century farmer of Riplington

*email from Michael Saunders April 2016*



Riplington Farm today

I was born in 1946 and named Michael. My father was Douglas Herbert Saunders b.1915, son of Charles Saunders b.1870 and Florence Emily Ray b.1871. Grandmother Florence was the daughter of William John Ray b.1840 a wealthy, educated, and in Florence's opinion, an idle, womanizing drunkard! From the age of 32 he retired and lived on an inheritance from his father William Ray b.1811 who died in 1872, and was an industrious farmer at Riplington Farm in the beautiful Meon valley, Hampshire England. When Florence was just 12 years old her mother, Elfrida (nee) Lewis, died at age 45. In less than a year her father was remarried to Mary Ann Avery, who was once the children's live-in governess, and herself the niece of a wealthy farmer.

To her father William John's horror, Florence Emily, at age twenty four, married stableman Charles. Snobbery and class boundaries were rigidly adhered to in Victorian England and her entire family would have nothing more to do with her, or any Saunders, blood-related or not! Fortunately for Florence, her grandfather William (senior) of Riplington Farm, set up trust funds before his death in 1872, and some of that would flow to my Grandmother on her father's death in 1918, as he was powerless to stop it.

William (senior) had a very poor opinion of his only son William John. In his will, where he bequeathed him £5000 outright, he also bequeathed interest on another £7000 with the following conditions...*"I bequeath to my said trustees the sum of £7,000 new three% annuities upon trust to pay the annual produce thereof unto my said son William John Ray for his natural life or until he shall be outlawed or be found or declared a bankrupt"*. The total of his will, mostly to his children and his widow, but also to his widowed sister Ann, and his brother James, who was not as successful as his other brothers, John and Francis, was £45,000 which is many millions of pounds today. Full details are at Winchester record office on microfilm M255 (Alt Ref 5M62/12 page 467). It is six pages, nicely penned but with no punctuation whatsoever.

Inflation was negligible to non-existent throughout the nineteenth century, and there were even periods of deflation, so my great, great, grandfather William (senior) had no reason to suppose this would not continue, such that his descendants would continue to benefit from the trusts he established. However inflation following the Boer wars and the Great War of 1914 to 1918, poor investment choices, and possibly fraudulent activity by lawyers and trustees, all reduced the value of the trust to the point that it was not cost efficient to administer. The ever-shrinking pot was diluted by ever expanding numbers of heirs with each successive generation. Had William John been more ambitious, as were his cousins, I might be a very wealthy man today. My father, Douglas, was quite bitter about his grandfather's neglect.