

Family Studies, 4.

The Family Tree of Richard Sidney
Clarke. 1948 - .



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Almost all the information following is a product of the researches of Carol Kerry-Green CKG Genealogy, Hull. I thank her for bringing the story to light and would recommend her to anyone wanting to know more of their family history. The following is my presentation of her researches.

I have no pictures of the people recorded except those of my mother (see Appendix) discovered after the death of my sister Doris.

My mother was Annie Clarke, nee Rix, born 17/12/1901 (registered January 1902, a situation which led to some confusion as to her age) was 47 when I was born. She had married Sidney Walter Clarke in September 1924, three years after his demobilisation from the Occupation of the Rhineland (see Family History 3, whether he had returned straight to Boughton remains unclear). Their daughter Doris (see Family History 1) was born in October 1924, she then becoming half sister to Greta to whom Annie had been a single parent since Greta's birth in 1919.

Annie's mother was Florence Rix (1886-1934) who was 15/16 when Annie was born and who was recorded on Annie's birth certificate as a house-servant of Boughton¹ – no father was recorded and so Annie's paternal grandfather's line cannot be traced. Annie was most likely brought-up by her grandparents William and Mary Rix (see later) who were 52 and 47 respectively when Annie was born. Florence married Earle Horton of West Dereham (4 miles from Boughton) in 1906, their son Cecil Earle (1906-1975) was born in the same year, their daughter Phyllis Alma 11 years later² (1917-1997) and their second son Clifford William 4 years later (1921-1975). These were half brothers and sisters

¹ As she was working for a grocer and draper in Northwold (1901 CER), some 10-12 miles from Boughton she may have been a live-in servant.

² When I was growing-up Phyllis and her husband Don visited us occasionally. They then lived in Stoke Ferry at a time when Don was manager of a grass-drying works near the bridge over the River Wissey. Their family connection was never explained to me. Don was a well-known figure in the region having been a farmer in the Fens and estate manager at Cockley Cley (on the way to Swaffham). His memoirs were printed but unfortunately my copy was destroyed in the 2013 floods. Their only child 'Cliff' was, presumably, named after his uncle.

to Annie and, even though it does not appear that she lived with them, she certainly knew them and visited them. However, for some reason, the births of Phyllis and Clifford were recorded 'in Boughton' (?)³

Sidney Walter Clarke, my father (see Family History 3), was born in January 1899 at Boughton. He was the eighth of 10 surviving children to Benjamin Walter Clarke, 1859-1936, and Mary Ann Clarke nee Pettit, 1865-1942. Benjamin had had various 'careers' being described in the 1891 census enumerator returns as 'hawker' (a travelling seller of goods), in 1901 as 'groom and gardener' and in 1911 as 'fish hawker and dealer'.⁴ It is presumably from this pre-War time the story arose in the family that he rode (daily?) in a horse and trap to collect shellfish and samphire from the shore of the Wash (16 miles away!) to sell around the villages.⁵ Prior to the birth of their third child Benjamin and Mary had lived in Barton Bendish (a neighbouring village), they must have moved to Boughton c. 1889. Benjamin was illegitimate his mother, Eliza (1839-1916) being a 20 year old servant to an inn-keeper in Castle Acre in 1859. The 1861 Census showed the young Benjamin living with Eliza's

³ Earle Horton died in 1943, then living at Modney Bridge, Hilgay which, until by-passed, straddled the A 10 Kings Lynn to Cambridge main road. As a child I have a memory of certainly once visiting a family in this Fenland area. As we had no car on such occasions (rare) we were taken by Roger Robinson, the farmer who father and mother worked for, in his Humber car. The man was a farm worker (possibly foreman) and he and his wife had 5, maybe 6, children, all daughters. With relationships never having been explained I now wonder if this was Clifford William Horton and his family – if I was say 12 at the time he would have been 39. His daughters ranged in age from a bit older than me to much younger. C.W. Horton died in 1975. His father Earle was always recorded as a farm worker. His widow was Gertrude J. Horton, nee Taylor (see later) and they had married in 1945.

Roger Robinson would regularly top 100 mph in his Humber automatic, this while examining the fields around!

⁴ It seems that Walter (my grandfather) may have had his own 'War horse'. In a response to publicity about the film 'War Horse' Ralph Proctor (one of the farmers in the village of Boughton when I was growing up) has recorded that 'Bustler' Clarke (I had not heard this knick-name before) kept horses for his fish round that may have been sold for war service. Ralph records that 'Bustler' had two fields for grazing, one 'down Dublin' (an old name for Church Lane) and one 'down the Barton Road'. 'Bustler's wife attended to all those who died in the village while the Rev. Bellow tolled the church bell to tell the village population of a passing'. Where Ralph's recollections were recorded is uncertain at the moment. If still alive Ralph must be well into his 90s.

⁵ When available my mother would pickle samphire in vinegar ready for special occasions.

parents (Edward and Frances Clarke) in Gooderstone (a village five miles from Boughton).⁶

Eliza married William Hinsby in 1865 in 'Freebridge' Lynn. By 1871 Walter, then aged 12 and a 'scholar' was living with them and his half sister Sarah Ann, then aged five. William Hinsby was an agricultural labourer.

Benjamin and Mary's eldest surviving child was called Herbert Clarke (1886-?). In 1901 he was an 'agricultural labourer' still living with his parents and younger brother⁷s and sisters in Boughton. Company records show that by late 1904 he was employed by the Great Eastern Railway and by 1911 he was lodging in Essex. By the late 1950s he and his wife were living in Doncaster and he was working as a guard on the overnight London train.

Benjamin and Mary's second eldest surviving child was Albert Edward Clarke (1887-1963). In 1901 Albert (aged 13) was also an agricultural labourer, however in 1907 he joined the Norfolk Constabulary, his previous employment being recorded as 'groom'. In the national census of 1911 he was a single police officer boarding with a greengrocer's family in East Dereham. The archives of Norfolk Constabulary show that he was promoted to sergeant in 1924 and to inspector in 1928 before retiring on a full pension in 1933. He had been 'commended' by local magistrates on four occasions during his career. He died in 1963 at his home (council house) in Thetford.

The third of Benjamin and Mary's children and the first to be born (1890) in Boughton was Martha. As she does not figure on the 1901 census

⁶ Eliza and William had two other children, Gertrude born 1884 and William born 1887, when Eliza was 49! In 1881 Eliza and William (my grandfather's step-father) both Walter and Sarah had left home the only other person living in their cottage in Gooderstone being a boarding shoemaker with the uncommon name of Bogue Blance. By 1891 the couple were living at the Chequers Inn, Flegg Green, Wereham and Sarah (now 25 but still single) was living back with them along with Gertrude and William as well as a 74 year old boarder who was a widower still working as an agricultural labourer. In 1901 and 1911 the couple lived alone in Wereham, therefore William had left home by the age of 14. The evidence from the 'Where born' column of the Census Enumerator Returns shows that until old age the couple had moved home quite often.

⁷ I have a very hazy memory of father and I being taken one day by Roger Robinson to visit him, it was the furthest north I had ever been. I remember they lived in a council house near the Racecourse. The date of his death is as yet unknown but one day I plan to explore Doncaster's archives.

and as currently no other evidence of her life has been found it seems quite possible that she died in childhood.

The fourth child Adeline was also born in 1890 (approx.), by 1901 she was 'at school' in Boughton and by 1911 she was still single and employed as a 'house servant' in Barnes, Surrey. Currently have no further information except that as an elderly woman she was living in Fincham (a neighbouring village to Boughton).

The fifth child Mabel, born 1893, was 'at school' in Boughton in 1901 and by 1911 was still single and working as a kitchen maid at 87, Linden Gardens, Notting Hill West. It seems likely that it was with her that Sidney lived, perhaps as a sub-tenant, when he moved to London and worked at Whiteley's store (see Family History 3). At some point Mabel and her husband emigrated to Canada.⁸

The sixth child in the family was Eva (1896-1985). In 1901 she was 'at school' but in 1911 no occupation was recorded although she was still living with her parents. She later went 'into service' in London and then worked at 'White City' while living in Bloemfontein Road, Shepherds Bush. A son served in the Air Force during the Second World War. Eva married Robert Grove in 1922, registered at Downham Market, Norfolk, she died in 1985 in Blackpool, Lancashire. I have a vague memory of being taken by Doris as a child to visit the family in Bloemfontein Rd. for a few days. The home was a large Victorian terrace house with a two-storey rear extension and linear garden, just around the corner was Queens Park Rangers football ground.⁹

Benjamin and Mary's seventh child was Ada (1894-1970). In 1901 Ada was 'at school' in Boughton and by 1911 she was a single house servant in Stoke Ferry (a neighbouring village to Boughton). Later on she and her building labourer husband lived in Wereham (another neighbouring village) and brought-up six children in a two-up, two-down cottage (now demolished).

⁸ After Doris' death a few pictures were found that must have been of their life in Canada, although the pictures may be of Frederick's family (see later).

⁹ 'White City' was an early 20th century exhibition centre which later became a greyhound racing stadium (when Eva worked there). It was demolished in 1985 to be replaced by a BBC centre, (see Wikipedia). Queens Park Rangers still play at Loftus Rd. near Bloemfontein Rd.

Sidney Walter, Benjamin and Mary's seventh child, (1899-1978) was recorded as 'at school' in 1901 (!) along with his four elder sisters (see above), and still there in 1911, (see Family History 3).

Benjamin and Mary's eighth child was William, born 1902. In 1911 he was 'at school' with Sidney and as a young man went to live in London. Somewhat later he returned to live in Boughton and in later life lived in Wisbech and worked as a hospital porter.¹⁰

Finally, Frederick Percy Clarke, born 1904 by which time his father was 45 years old and his mother 39. In 1911 he was 'at school' in Boughton with his two elder brothers. In 1923 he emigrated to Canada, arriving in Nova Scotia aboard the 'Pittsburgh' on 19th August. The 'Declaration of Passenger to Canada' survives and shows that in England he had been a farm worker and was going to Canada to 'help with the harvest'. Further evidence from this form shows that he was not Physically or mentally 'defective', that he had paid for the passage himself, that he could read and was by religion a Methodist and that he had in his possession £1-10s. (the pounds figure is blurred but was not more than £9). The form was officially stamped at Winnipeg. Frederick later became a tobacco farmer at a point near Niagara Falls, he and his wife (presumably Canadian) brought-up four daughters.

Mary Ann Clarke nee Pettit, mother of the above and my paternal grandmother, was born in 1865 in the hamlet of Eastmoor three miles from Boughton and two from Barton Bendish to parents John and Ester Pettit nee Bird (see Family History ? for an inaccurate assessment of her time of death).

Eliza Clarke (mother of Walter and therefore my great-grandmother) was born in 1839 in the village of Gooderstone (six miles from Boughton). She was working as a servant when Benjamin Walter was born illegitimate in 1859. After his birth she worked as servant to an inn-keeper in the village of Castle Acre while Benjamin was looked after by his grand-parents Edward and Francis Clarke in Gooderstone. When Benjamin was six Eliza married William Hinsby of Swaffham. Evidence

¹⁰ There was a rumour that he (and Sidney) had to sell some land in Boughton after the Great War that Benjamin had owned, this is confirmed by the evidence of Ralph Proctor (see above).

from the census enumerator returns show that the couple moved around quite a lot. The couple had three children born between 1866 and 1887 – by 1871 Benjamin Walter was living with his mother and step-father and their first-born daughter then aged five. Clearly Benjamin Walter's name was not changed from Clarke. In 1911, when Benjamin Walter and his family were living in Boughton, William and Eliza were living in the neighbouring village of Wereham, she a 73 year old 'Old Age Pensioner' and he still a farm labourer, then aged 72. It is not known whether or not Sidney Walter (my father) had any dealings with his step-aunts and uncle (Hinsbys).

My father's maternal grand-parents were John Pettit (1838-1926) and Esther Bird (1838-1908). John was recorded as an agricultural labourer by successive census enumerator returns except that by 1901, at the age of 65, he was 'engine driver of farm'. Ten years later he was living in Boughton with his son Walter (my grandfather) and their four children still living at home,¹¹ he was 75 and described as an 'Old Age Pensioner'. John lived to 1926 but whether or not he had stayed living in Boughton is not yet known.¹²

John and Esther had five children of which the third Mary (1865-1942) was my grandmother. The family were brought up in Eastmoor, a hamlet between Boughton and Barton Bendish. The three sons all became farm labourers while in 1881 Mary (see above), still living with her parents, was an unmarried 'dressmaker'. Until moving to Boughton as an old man (see above) John had lived all his life in Eastmoor whereas Esther had been brought up in Wretton (another nearby village).

The parents of Eliza Hinsby nee Clarke (1839-1916), my great grandmother (see before) were Edward Clarke (1791-1846) and Frances Clark (maiden name unknown and back then spelling of Clarke becomes variable) 1799-1881. Edward was an agricultural labourer and he and Frances, married in the early 1820s, had six children of which Eliza was

¹¹ Eva, Sidney Walter (my father), William and Frederick (see before). So that little cottage had seen successive generations and must always have been so crowded.

¹² If so he would have spent his last few years living with the young children Greta and Doris (see before plus Family Studies 1).

the fifth born.¹³ The family lived in Gooderstone, a village six miles from Boughton. The 1851 census enumerator returns show the widow Frances working as an agricultural labourer as were her two elder unmarried daughters (Celah? and Maria), the 13 year old Eliza was 'at home' while Margaret was still a 'scholar'. To supplement the household income Frances had taken-in a 16 year old unmarried lodger Charles King who also worked on the land – the only man in the house at a very impressionable age! By 1861 the family had dispersed and Francis was living with Matilda in Swaffham and working as a 'laundress'. Frances lived to 1881 (aged 82) and may have been in receipt of outdoor relief from the local poor-law union.

The parents of John Pettit (one of my paternal great grandfathers and see before) were Anthony Pettit (1811-1855) and Martha Mann (?-1841). Anthony and Martha were married 'by banns' registered at St. Mary's church Barton Bendish, 1836 and John (their second son) was born two years later. The marriage recorded in the church archives shows that Anthony 'made his mark' while Martha signed her name. Following Martha's death in 1841 Anthony married Mary Whitfield (1808-1892) in 1845 and they had three children, step-siblings to John.¹⁴ The 1851 census records the family living in Eastmoor (see before) and including Robert (John's elder brother from the first marriage) but not John? Robert, then aged 12, was already a farm hand. Although Anthony died in 1855, in the 1861 census Mary Pettit is still described as 'married' although the only other members of her household are son James, already a farm labourer aged 10, and the young married couple John and Esther boarding with his widowed mother. At this point the occupation of John, aged 24, is given as 'engineer'. Mary lived for a further 37 years after her husband's death. In 1871, aged 65, she was working as a charwoman in Barton Bendish while bringing-up a grandson then aged six. In 1881 she was living in the house of a farmer called Rose Flatt in Barton Bendish as a servant and nurse. Mary lived the last years of her life with John and Esther in Boughton (see before).

¹³ The children were; Matilda (1826-1866) who married a Thomas Turner(?) of Swaffham, Celia (1829-?), Maria (1832-?), Edward (1833-?), Eliza (1839-1916) and Margaret (1843-?).

¹⁴ The children were; Sarah (1844-?), Mary (1846-?) and James (1851-?).

The parents of Esther Pettit, nee Bird, (see before) were William (1810-1883) and Ann Bird (maiden name unknown and ?-1879). William and Ann must have married in the early 1830s and by 1851 were bringing-up their family in Stoke Ferry (a neighbouring village to Boughton), the village in which William had been born. At this point their seven children ranged in age from 14 to two and all had been born in Stoke Ferry.¹⁵ Interestingly Esther was still a scholar while her one year younger sibling was already an 'errand boy' by occupation. Until near the end of his working life William was employed as a farm worker, as was his son Augustus by 1861. By 1871 William had changed his occupation to that of 'malster labourer' while the only one of their children still living at home was James, a 15 year-old 'bricklayer's boy'. Eight years later Ann died and by 1881 William was a pauper, being cared for in Downham Market's workhouse.¹⁶

To return to the ancestors of my mother her maternal grandparents were William (1849-1923) and Mary Rix (nee Lavender, 1854-1921). They were married in 1874 and had eight surviving children between 1875 (approx.) and 1896 (approx.). William was born in Boughton and the family were brought-up there. Mary Ann Lavender was born in Wereham.¹⁷ William Rix worked as a farm labourer as were his two eldest sons by 1891. By 1901 William's occupation was recorded as 'horse linder'(?), William and Arthur were still living at home and working as farm labourers while the two youngest sons were at school – Harry, Kate, Alice and Florence had left home by 1901.

¹⁵ William aged 14, Esther (see before) aged 12, John aged 11, Ann aged 10, Elizabeth aged 6, Augustus aged 4 and Sarah aged 2.

¹⁶ Peter Higginbotham's website entitled The Workhouse – story of an institution is an invaluable source of evidence on individual workhouses in G.B. Downham Market's section includes photographs of the building's impressive west facing facade. The building was in an area of the town still called the 'Howdale'. The section on each workhouse usually gives the list of paupers as recorded in the 1881 Census, by far the biggest category of adult male's previous occupation was agricultural worker.

¹⁷ The children were; William, Harry (born 1878 approx.), Kate (born 1879 approx.), Alice (born 1881 approx.), Florence (1886-1934, see above), Arthur (1883-1956), Herbert (born 1892 approx.) and Edward (born 1896 approx.).

By 1911 the two youngest sons lived at home still, both now farm labourers, Harry, by then a 33 year old married railway porter, was also recorded at his parents address as was Alice, by then a 30 year old wife of Asa Vincent of Downham Market, and her daughter. Annie Rix (my mother and William and Mary's grand-daughter and see before) was then nine years old and attending the local village school whilst being brought-up by her grand-parents.¹⁸ Annie's grandmother died in 1921 by which time Annie was caring for her young daughter Greta as a single parent. Annie's grandfather died in 1923 by which time Annie was again pregnant and soon to marry Sidney, now home from the Great War (see Family Studies ?).¹⁹

William Rix's parents were Henry Rix (1821-1893) and Sarah Elizabeth Rix (nee English, 1827-1910). They were married in 1846, William having been brought-up in Wereham and Sarah in Boughton. They brought-up their six surviving children in Boughton.²⁰ William and all the sons once they had left school were all described as agricultural labourers in the census enumerator returns between 1851 and 1891 inclusive. In 1901 Sarah was recorded as living alone in Boughton as a widow without occupation.

The parents of Mary Rix, nee Lavender were Edward Lavender (1829-1865) and Ann Lavender, nee Kellengrey (1825-1892). Ann had been born in Stoke Ferry Edward in Wereham, and it was in this village that the family of five children were brought-up following the couple's marriage in 1851.²¹ In 1871 Ann was recorded as a widow and single

¹⁸ Whether Harry, Alice and little Ada Alice were visiting on the day of the Census or whether they were living there for a while and, if so, for whatever reason the enumerator was not required to record.

¹⁹ Elsewhere I have speculated that Sidney and Annie Clarke and their two daughters moved to the property later to be called the Old Post Office, Boughton (see Family Studies ?) in the early 1940s as Annie inherited it (I never knew of any rent or mortgage having to be paid), and that possibly William and Mary brought-up their family there, it being originally a neo-gothic estate cottage. However with both grandparents being dead by late 1923 this now seems unlikely. I do nevertheless have a sense that there was a connection of some sort to the Rix dynasty.

²⁰ Mary Rix (died in infancy, 1848), William (1849 approx.-1923, see above), John (born 1850 approx.), Henry (born 1856 approx.), Ruth (born 1857 approx., as she is not mentioned on subsequent census enumerator returns she probably died before 1861), Robert (born 1859 approx.) and Stephen (born 1872 approx.).

²¹ John (born 1852), Mary Ann (1854-1921), Samuel (born 1858), Elizabeth (born 1861 approx.) and William (born 1864 approx.).

parent and working as a 'laundress'. By 1881 she was living with her brother-in-law Thomas Lavender, an unmarried agricultural labourer, as his house-keeper in Wereham.²² Ann's youngest son William was then still living at home but working as an agricultural labourer. By 1891, a year before Ann's death, Thomas had become a 'stone pit labourer'.

Some brief summarizing comments.

Perhaps the most obvious common factor shown here is the extent to which my predecessors on both the maternal and paternal sides depended on farm labouring as their means of employment, this mostly throughout their working lives. This was recognised as one of the lowest paid forms of employment and given the large size of many families it must have been that many people highlighted here lived in considerable poverty. Although throughout the 19th century farm labouring was Britain's most common single form of employment there was often a hierarchy within that form of employment, particularly on large farms. There is little evidence above that any progressed through that hierarchy, although the detail recorded in the 'occupation' column might vary from one enumerator to another. The numbers employed nationally as farm labourers declined rapidly during the Agricultural Depression of the late 19th century and as a result of increasing mechanisation between the World Wars. Perhaps this goes some way in explaining the greater diversity of employment pursued by my father's siblings into the police, railway company service, moves to London and emigration, although ironically, my father returned to the farming village of his birth after demobilisation and worked as an agricultural labourer for the rest of his life.

Later national censuses recorded the numbers of houses/cottages in each community with four or less rooms, this prompted by public health concerns leading to concerns over the quality and availability of working class housing. My only certain evidence on this issue is the Old Post Office, Boughton, a three-bedroom neo-gothic estate cottage built in the 1870s, however, given the low wage employment of many of my

²² Thomas was 12 years Ann's junior.

ancestors, it seems likely that many families lived in low-value rural housing with some, certainly from the early 19th century, maybe being mud-stud and thatch.

Nevertheless, given the above, there does seem very little evidence of high infant mortality, although much could happen between decadal censuses.

Another impression, perhaps illusory, is evidence which suggests a succession of 'strong women', in the broadest sense of the term. Although an occupation was rarely specified for the 'wife' nevertheless it may be assumed that whenever possible they would turn their hand to seasonal farm work at day rates.

Unsurprisingly resort to the local workhouse is part of the story, although by the turn of the century personal welfare for inmates was probably much better than for those living in poverty in the community. Of particular impact in this context was the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908 (first implemented early in 1909) which, although of low monetary value, gave an individual no longer able to work an income from the state – and the dignity that went with it.

The above history examples many families who understood the responsibility to the children, especially when family life didn't follow a conventional norm – whether this responsibility was undertaken willingly or not, like today, we cannot know.

Finally, the geographical location of those persons encountered. If the village of Boughton is taken as the centre of an imaginary circle the vast majority of my ancestors came from, and lived their lives within, the villages within an eight mile radius, villages which today can be reached one from another in a car in just a few minutes – but then they didn't have a car, nor many other possessions, but they did have the land, the landscape, the air and each other.

Appendix.



Fig.1 Photo discovered after Doris' death. Apparently a wartime wedding, uncertain location as I have not yet identified the church in the background (not Boughton). The only people shown that I have any knowledge of is Annie (my mother, but before I was born) far right, Greta stood to her right and Doris far left.



Fig. 2 Annie holding me, presumably late 1948. Photo taken to the rear of Post Office, Boughton, by the time of my earliest recollection the capped wall in front of the outbuilding had been demolished (see Family Studies ?).



Fig. 3 Photo taken on an occasion unknown to me, c. 1954. Annie is the second adult from the left, I am stood in front of her.

When I first saw the above three pictures I did not recognise my mother as I did not remember her other than as an older woman.



Fig. 4 Annie, Sidney and Greta on a trip to the seaside c. 1970.

