

The Morris Family – Cotgrave Farmers

Eighteenth Century

The first reference that we have to the Morris family in Cotgrave occurs in the ‘Yellow Book’ (‘Cotgrave – Aspects of Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’), where we read that in 1731 the widow Morris was a tenant of the White family who were resident in the Manor House at the corner of Risegate and Scrimshire Lane. The Whites had been landholders in Cotgrave since the reign of Queen Mary – in 1556, she made them a present of land in recognition of their support at the time of the Lady Jane Grey plot. However, their base was the town of Tuxford and they obviously preferred to remain there, selling all their Cotgrave land (some 403 acres) to Evelyn Pierrepont, 1st Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull in 1741. Much of this was in Stragglethorpe and the Duke (then being the sole landowner) took the opportunity to effect an enclosure of the Stragglethorpe land, establishing four new farms in 1742. There is no evidence, though, that Morris’s ever farmed land in Stragglethorpe.

Also gleaned from the ‘Yellow Book’ is the statement that in 1740 William Morris was farming 91 acres in Cotgrave. He married Catherine Archer (also of Cotgrave) in 1751. Though we have found no record that they had any children, it seems likely that they did, there being three Morris brothers associated with the Enclosure of Cotgrave land in 1791.

Slightly later evidence concerning the Morris family occurs in a legal document dated 14th May 1774 (the fourteenth year of the reign of George III). In this Indenture William Morris of Cotgrave in the County of Nottinghamshire, Yeoman appears to pay the sum of £120 (roughly £25,000 in modern currency) to a Richard Barber of Kirby Frith in the County of Leicestershire and his wife Ann for a collection of Cotgrave fields and farm buildings which had recently been in the tenure, variously, of Mrs Scrimshire, William Sanday or John Morris (William’s brother). This latter reference suggests that John Morris was already established as a farmer in Cotgrave and, as we shall see, there is clear evidence of a John Morris renting land from both Earl Manvers and the Rector, Nathan Haines at the time of Enclosure in 1791.

In 1785, according to the ‘Yellow Book’, a certain Thomas Morris (1751-1809) (hereinafter referred to as Thomas (1)) became tenant of Whitelands Farm, along Mainstreet. In 1784 he had married Elizabeth Kendall, daughter of Thomas Kendall (1740-1777), and Elizabeth Sanday (1745-1777), sister of William Sanday, Agent to Earl Manvers. This tenancy of Whitelands Farm began a century-long association between the farm and the Morris family.

Enclosure - 1791

There is plenty of evidence that the Morris family was active in Cotgrave farming at the time of Enclosure but it is important that we distinguish between land ownership and tenancy. Ownership is indicated on a series of maps drawn up on behalf of Earl Manvers covering the period 1790 to about 1795. These specify plots owned by named independent landholders, together with a numerical system which identifies land let by the Earl to a wide range of tenants (though not specifying any names). However, the identity of these tenants is made clear in a pair of Surveys prepared by the Earl’s Agents, one in 1801 and the second in 1829. In addition, the Enclosure Act lists the names of all landowners as of 1791. Finally, we have come across an interesting document dated 1799 which lists all those Cotgrave residents paying a UK Land Tax and which distinguishes between landholders and tenants. It describes itself in the following terms: “An Assessment made in Pursuance of an Act of Parliament

passed in the 38th Year of His Majesty's (George III's) Reign, for granting an Aid to His Majesty by a Land Tax to be raised in Great Britain for the Service of the Year 1798." This document (which is attached as an Appendix) specifies the amount of tax paid by each owner or tenant but we can convert these monetary sums into a rough estimate of the acreage involved using the following procedure: the total tax paid on all the land owned by the Rector, Nathan Haines was close to £40, while we know that the Rector owned some 550 acres; this gives a conversion factor of £1 representing approximately 14 acres. Bearing in mind that the figures are only approximate, we can therefore tabulate the various amounts of land as follows:

Land Ownership:	1791	1799
Thomas Morris	30 acres	20 acres
William Morris	60 acres	50 acres
John Morris	-----	-----

Land Tenancy (let by - Earl Manvers):

	1791	1799	1801	1829
Thomas Morris	85 acres	110 acres	100 acres	100 acres
William Morris	160 acres	160 acres	190 acres	-----
John Morris	20 acres	100 acres	-----	15 acres (Widow)

Also in 1799 there were the following tenancies:

Let by - Rev Nathan Haines:

Thomas Morris 260 acres, William Morris 50 acres, John Morris 50 acres

Let by - William Morris:

John Morris 50 acres

It is worth emphasising that only the 1799 listing includes land owned by the Rev Nathan Haines and this is significant for the Morris clan, particularly for Thomas – when this contribution is taken into account we see that he is responsible for farming almost 400 acres, a major activity.

Census Returns – 1841-1881

Thomas and Elizabeth Morris had children – Thomas (2), William and Elizabeth. Thomas (2) (1785-1830) married Catherine (born Cotgrave 1793) in 1818 and they had seven children – Catherine, William, Mary, Elizabeth, Sophia, Thomas (3) and Lucy. Thomas (2) died in 1830, aged only 45. However, his widow Catherine continued to run their farm of 165-170 acres for many years after his death. She is recorded as being head of the family in Census Returns for 1841 to 1871, when she was 77 years old. She died in 1875, aged 82, when her son Thomas (3) apparently took over the land she had been responsible for. In the 1851 Census all seven children were living at home, together with four servants. Catherine was

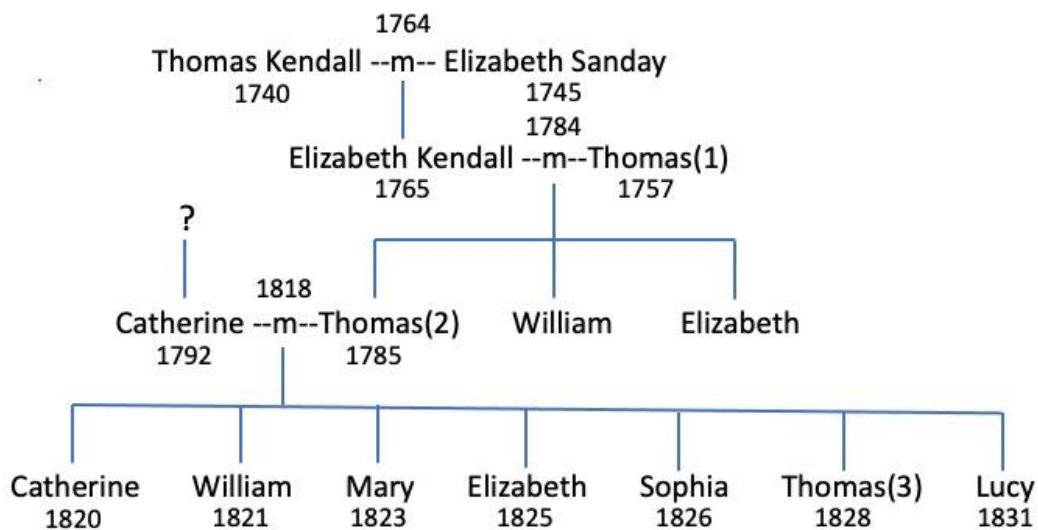
head of the household, farming 170 acres. In 1861 Thomas (3) had left home but in 1871 he was back again, being recorded as head of a separate Cotgrave household (probably Parr's Farm near the Rectory?), living with his sister Sophia and farming no less than 520 acres, then in 1881 living with three sisters and farming 165 acres (the same acreage as his mother Catherine had been farming in 1871). This sharp decrease in acreage may possibly be associated with the fact that in 1880 (or thereabouts) the then Rector, Rev. Alfred Hensley sold all his land (some 550 acres) to Lord Manvers. Perhaps Thomas had been farming the Rector's holding prior to 1880 (remember that his grandfather had farmed 260 acres of Rev Nathan Haines' land) but could come to no similar arrangement with Earl Manvers. No specific addresses are given but it is clear in the 1881 Census that Thomas was living in Main Road, so, presumably back in Whitelands Farm.

So much for that branch of the Morris family – but the 1841 Cotgrave Census return also refers to a Samuel Morris, a farmer (though no acreages were given in 1841). Born in 1806, he married Sarah Ann Roe of Radford (1816-1896) in 1833 and had two children, Louisa Ann in 1834 and John William in 1845. He died in 1845, aged only 39, and his widow left Cotgrave with the children to live in Nottingham with her mother, who ran a boarding house in the Nottingham St Nicholas locality. Sarah died in 1896, aged 80, in Nottingham St Marys.

So far as we can discover, neither Thomas (3) nor William ever married and there are no Morris's recorded as living in Cotgrave in the 1891, 1901 or 1911 Census returns

Gravestones

In All Saints graveyard are two Morris gravestones. The first one is to Thomas Morris (Buried 1809, aged 52, therefore born 1757) and his wife Elizabeth (buried 1823, aged 58, therefore born 1765). This couple correspond to Thomas (1) and Elizabeth Kendall – though note that his date of birth was given in the 'Yellow Book' as 1751! The second pair are children of Thomas (2) and Catherine Morris. They are Mary Morris (buried 1865, aged 42, therefore born 1823) and William Morris (buried 1867, aged 47, therefore born 1820).



Appendix – UK Land Tax 1798

Owner – Lord Newark	Occupier	Sum assessed
	William Sanday	£18 – 13s – 8d
	Thomas Kendall	£15 – 10s – 4d
	William Morris	£11 – 2s – 8d
	Joshua Mann	£8 – 17s – 0
	Henry Thornton	£7 – 15s – 8d
	John Morley	£5 – 10s – 8d
	John Morris	£6 – 19s – 4d
	William Gilbert	£6 – 17s – 4d
	Joshua Archer	£4 – 15s – 2d
	John Archer	£6 – 2s – 0
	Willian Upton	£6 – 12s – 4d
	John Giles	£8 – 7s – 8d
	Thomas Morris	£8 – 4s – 10d
	John Parr	£1 – 13s – 4d
	George Hickling	£2 – 6s – 6d
	John Howitt	£2 – 2s – 2d
	Samuel Voce	£1 – 10s – 0
	William Thornton	£1 – 19s – 6d
	Samuel Richards	£1 – 5s – 8d
	John Sanday	£1 – 5s – 0
	John Wayte	£1 – 0s – 6d
	William Towle	£1 – 0s – 0
	Thomas Parker	£1 – 1s – 10d
	William Simpson	£0 – 12s – 10d
	George Hickling	£0 – 10s – 2d
	George Henstock	£0 – 10s – 2d
	William Squire	£0 – 9s – 8d
	Samuel Voce	£1 – 3s – 8d

John Champion	£0 – 16s – 8d
John Shipman	£0 – 9s – 8d
John Simpson	£0 – 9s – 8d
Thomas Beeston	£0 – 5s – 0
Theophilus Richards	£0 – 10s – 2d
John Randall	£0 – 12s – 2d
James Dixon	£0 – 7s – 8d
Henry Smith	£0 – 14s – 0
William Holmes	£0 – 7s – 0
Thomas Hoe	£0 – 15s – 4d
John Howitt	£0 – 10s – 10d
Thomas Whitehead	£0 – 2s – 6d
William Hart	£0 – 2s – 0
Samuel White	£0 – 2s – 0
Edward Wylde	£0 – 0s – 8d

Lord Newark – Total Sum **£150 - 9s – 0**

Assuming 14 acres to the pound – total acreage **2100 acres**

Rev. Nathan Haines	Thomas Morris	£18 – 13s – 11d
	John Morris	£3 – 13s – 11d
	William Morris	£3 – 15s – 8d
	Rev. Henry Smith	£2 – 12s – 2d
	Joshua Mann	£2 – 8s – 8d
	Thomas Kendall	£2 – 8s – 0
	John Morley	£2 – 4s – 6d
	John Giles	£2 – 3s – 8d
	William Upton	£1 – 3s – 6d

Rev. Haines – Total Sum **£39 – 12s – 0**

Total Acreage **550 acres**

14 acres per £

William Janson Esq.	William Janson Esq.	£14 – 12s – 0
Thomas Kendall	Himself	£8 – 16s – 0
William Morris	John Morris	£3 – 12s – 0
Joshua Mann	Himself	£1 – 0s – 0
Mary Mann	Herself	£0 – 14s – 0
Thomas Morris	Himself	£1 – 8s – 0
John Collishaw	Himself	£1 – 6s – 0
Thomas Frost Esq.	Tenants	£0 – 8s – 0
Thomas Scothern	Himself	£0 – 8s – 0
William Sanday	Himself	£0 – 4s – 0
John Chapman	Himself	£0 – 4s – 0
William Hickling	Himself	£0 – 4s – 0
Richard Cole	Himself	£0 – 4s – 0
Samuel Parr	Samuel Baguley	£0 – 4s – 0
John Baguley	Himself	£0 – 4s – 0
Total Sum		£33 – 8s – 0
Total Acreage		460 acres
Grand Total Sum		£223 – 2s – 0
Assuming 14acres to the Pound – Total Acreage		3120 acres

NB These acreages are in very rough agreement with those quoted at the time of Enclosure.