



People News

Worton & Marston

Henry Galpin 1872 - 1955

Henry Galpin was my great-grandfather. From sometime between 1911 and 1920 until about 1936 he was miller at Worton Mill. He lived opposite the mill at Mill Leaze, 4 Mill Road, Worton until his death, at the age of 83, in 1955, owning not only this house but also the connected property, Mill Cottage, No. 2 (which I believe he rented to the Sumner family) and the adjacent paddock on the western side, plus what was known as the 'Five-Acre Field' behind.

I was born in 1950 and was only four and a half when he died, so my account of Henry is largely from tales my father told about him, yet I remember visiting him and my great-grandmother, Mary (known as Polly, she died in 1954). The house did not have the rear extension it has today, although I believe there was a small outshot with lean-to roof, nor did it have electricity or mains water. They lit the house at night with paraffin lamps and had the rights to draw domestic water from the stream (they must have been of strong constitution); cooking was done on a range in the kitchen. To the rear of the house, at a discreet distance was an earth closet, behind which, with the benefit of the composted results, grew the most marvelous tomatoes! There was a sizeable garden and a bit of an orchard with quite a few fruit trees. The paddock had a small stable in which he kept a grey pony. Indoors, I can only remember the living room, quite dark, in which the most impressive piece of furniture was his harmonium, standing proudly to the side of a heavily draped table upon which was a rather elaborate oil lamp. He would sit on a chair between table and harmonium whilst Polly would sit at the other side of the table, sewing or knitting. They had quite a few cats, one of which scratched me - and by so doing may have aided my retention of this memory.

4 Mill Road, Worton c.1940 with my father, Don Raddon and his grandmother Mary (Polly) Galpin



Henry was a staunch Wesleyan, and so seriously did he take his religion that he did not approve of alcohol, dancing or the cinema, neither would he allow Polly even to knit or sew on a Sunday. Sundays were reserved for his faith and, as Superintendent of Marston Chapel, he attended both that and the Worton chapel, playing the harmonium at each, Marston in the morning, Worton in the evening. He also, on occasion, played the organ at Christ Church.

Henry and Polly had an only daughter, Lilian, who in 1920 married my grandfather, Edward Raddon (in 1926 he established E. Raddon Undertakers in Sidmouth Street, Devizes). Their first son, my father, born 1921, was christened Donald Galpin Raddon, Galpin here being used as a second christian-name. Dad had 2 younger brothers, Hugo, b.1922 and Rae, b. 1935.

It seems they spent most weekends in Worton and my father had many fond memories of the village and its surroundings. Now, my grandmother wanted my father to learn the piano, sending him for lessons to a tutor in New Park Street, Devizes. He was never too keen on this but Henry taught him to play the harmonium, in which he was far more interested. One Sunday, the old man, satisfied that his grandson had the ability, and not feeling up to it himself, declared that my father would be playing the harmonium in chapel that day. Terrified, dad was duly marched to Marston chapel, placed at the harmonium and made to play. Later that day, with a little less trepidation, he was marched round to Worton chapel to do the honours there as well. I believe my father was about 12 at the time!

A few years before he died, Henry offered to bequeath the two houses and the land to my father if he would change his surname to the double-barrelled form "Galpin-Raddon". Dad, being as stubborn as his grandfather, refused, saying that he was proud to have been born 'Raddon'... and 'Raddon' he would stay. As a result everything was left to my grandmother, Lilian, who was by then separated from my grandfather, Edward, and living in London. As far as I can remember, she had sold it all by 1960. I remember seeing Henry's old harmonium at my grandmother's house in Woolwich. She kept it until she died in 1979, after which it was sold.

Returning to Wiltshire 4 years ago and finding myself living in Worton, I was pleasantly surprised to find that there are still a few amongst the older members of the community who remember him, and with some fondness. Since he died some 54 years ago, they must have been quite young when they knew him. He is remembered for his upright attitude to life, great generosity of spirit and his readiness to lend support to others in need.



Henry & Mary (Polly) Galpin with daughter Lilian c.1905, North Cadbury, Somerset



Henry & Mary Galpin with Edward & Lilian Raddon 1941

detail from picture below, the wedding of Don Raddon and Linnie Tarrant, my parents





Henry & Mary at Mill Leaze, Worton c. 1940

(cannot identify others standing behind)

Something of Henry's life can be gauged from the Census records 1871 - 1911 and the few anecdotes that have come to me from my father (quoted above) and his youngest surviving brother, my uncle, Rae.

Henry's parents were from Dorset, William Galpin born c.1845 in Sutton Poyntz, near Weymouth and Sarah Ann (nee Lush) born in Fontmell Magna, just to the north of Blandford Forum. By the age of 16 William was a miller, although his father had been a stonemason. He and Sarah Ann married in 1867 in Shaftesbury. Yet 1871, the year before Henry was born, finds William and Sarah, with daughter, Sarah Ann (Annie), born in 1868 in

Fontmell Magna, living in Mayfield Road, Claines, Worcester (!), William here described as a 'journeyman miller'. This is where Henry was born in 1872.

By 1881 they had moved to Lemsford Mill, near Hatfield in Hertfordshire (!!) where Sarah and William are described respectively as 'servants' with the professions of 'Housekeeper' and 'Miller (Journeyman)' in the employ and residence of Albert Hill, Mill-owner. Henry is 9 years old, his sister, here noted as Annie, 13. [Lemsford is now a part of Welwyn Garden City ; the mill can be found at AL8 7TW]

10 years later, in 1891, we find them all still together, but now in Galhampton, in the parish of North Cadbury, Somerset. William is a self-employed miller, with Sarah Ann in her proper station as miller's wife and Henry, 19, as 'miller's son'. Sarah Annie, now 23, is a dressmaker. Also present was Virtue Lush, aged 74, William's mother-in-law. The following ten years appear to have granted them a period of more stability and prosperity, as in 1901, with William and Sarah Ann, in their mid-fifties, together with Virtue Lush, now at the ripe old age of 84, remaining at The Mill, Galhampton, Henry is now set up on his own account as a baker at Three Ashes, North Cadbury, married in 1896 to Mary Marshall (born in Galhampton, 1871) and with a daughter, Lilian, my grandmother, born 1898. Three Ashes lies about halfway between North Cadbury and Galhampton at BA22 7BU.

Yet life is not without its trials and the brief account related to me by my uncle Rae gives some insight into Henry's tribulations and strength of character. Since Rae had it from his mother, Lilian, these events must have happened, presumably, in North Cadbury:

"I can remember Mum talking about her childhood - here are my thoughts, not necessarily in the right order. Grandfather Galpin was at one time into poultry farming and there was talk of a sizeable group of businessmen banding together, cutting prices with the syndicate financing the loss and forcing people out of business, similar to the supermarkets of nowadays, I suppose - anyway he was bankrupt or near-bankrupt.

"Another episode is that they had a steam boiler, either in [the] mill or bakery and Mum used to talk of a Chinese worker who used to play mahjong with her: she would have been 8 - 12 years old at the time. In about 1910, the boiler blew up, killing the Chinese man and destroying the building.



Three Ashes Mill before the Explosion



Three Ashes Mill after the Explosion

"Then there was the bakery and she used to go on his round with him in the Sherborne - Wincanton area. I think they used to live at a place called Cole Hill but I don't know what happened there. Then he ran a mill for someone in that area before moving to Worton to run the Mill there.

"Grandmother's [Mary's] relatives were from the Bournemouth - Charminster area and I think their father owned or had built the arcade in Bournemouth opposite the park : it is still there, I think. This was the Marshall family and there seemed to be a bit of money there.

"In Worton, Mum was very friendly with Edie Sumner, who came from Marston, just down the road from Mill Leaze, on the corner going towards that dreaded chapel. Edie married a Fred Blackwell who had been gassed in the First World War."

[Rae talks with some bitter humour of the rigours of Sundays, the strict devoutness of Henry and his terror of the harsh atmosphere of the chapel in those days. His mother left his father in 1943 and took Rae, then 8 years old, with her to London, this leaving him with a small boy's horror of the discipline of chapel life. My Dad and their other brother, Hugo, although by then 22 and 21, were also left with a strong distaste for chapel.]

In the 1911 Census Henry, Mary, and Lilian are found as visitors at the home of William & Sarah Ann in Sherborne. William is described as a self-employed miller. The postal address given is : Sandford Orcas Mill, Sherborne.

Henry's profession is not given but that section is marked in red, as a correction, "visitor", whilst Lilian's entry is corrected from "son's daughter" to "grandaughter". Possibly, this may mean that following the explosion at Henry's premises, the family was effectively homeless and Henry was living and working elsewhere whilst his wife and daughter were temporarily living with his parents, Henry visiting at the time of the census.

When they moved to Worton and Henry took the job as miller here is not known but it must have been long enough before 1920 at least for Lilian to be met, courted and married to my grandfather, Edward Raddon (who was living in Potterne). Certainly, Sarah Ann, Henry's mother, died here in 1919. I would surmise that the move might have been around 1913. At first, they appear to be have been living in Mill House: when Lilian & Edward married in 1920, their marriage certificate gives Lilian's address as "Mill House, Worton". Considering Henry's religiously strict nature, if her parents were situated directly across the road I doubt that she would have been living-in at Mill House, say, as a domestic servant.

Between 1855 and 1933 the ownership of the Mill is not known but a T. Kelson was tenant prior to 1926. My father told me that it was about this time that, owing to financial problems, Kelson wound up the business and Henry was made redundant but that when Mr Fry bought the Mill and the Mill House in 1933 he was re-employed as miller and carried on in this capacity well into the 1940's He probably retired about 1947, by which time he would have been 75! I do not know when Henry bought Mill Leaze, Mill Cottage and the adjacent land but he was certainly in ownership of them by that date.

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(Mr Fry's daughter, Edna, who still owns and lives in Mill House, knew Henry well and as a child she became a good friend of my father when he came to stay with his grandparents. They remained in contact until my father died in 2009).

Mary died in 1954, followed by Henry about a year later in 1955. Their grave can be found in the far south-east corner of the graveyard at Christchurch, Worton.



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Quite an eventful life, one might say, and it would seem that Henry was courted by disaster for most of his life. The one heirloom he did leave to my father was a very old oak longcase grandfather clock, an early example of an 8-day movement with elaborate face decorated with moon and sun and displaying the day of the month, likely pre-1800. It was the only possession to have been saved from a house fire by Henry's father, William, who grabbed it as he ran out of the front door, by which it stood. All else was lost to the fire. My father always maintained he would never part with it, and indeed, in the late 1960's was offered £1000 for it by an antiques dealer who said it was one of a pair and quite a rare example. Dad used to tell me that it would come to me when he was gone but, sadly, obstinate as he was, in 1996 felt he had to sell it rather than ask for help when he had a small financial shortfall, his bank making threats over the paltry sum owing that would have been addressed within a few weeks upon the interest of one of his annuities. He took it to auction and it went for only £300, from which Dad received £253.

Thus, each time I pass Mill Leaze, a number of reasons bring me to ponder ... "There but for the grace of..." and I am left to wonder if it were God or two stubborn old men.



Me and my sister, Valerie, by the paddock, Mill Leaze, Worton 1954

The above account was written by Antony Raddon in 2009 and is published here with his kind permission