

Chapter 4

Blacksmith Plants near Clowne

A FAMILY OF BLACKSMITHS AROUND CLOWNE¹

May 1992. One of a series of Chapters by Dr. John S. Plant, Keele University, England, ST5 5BG.

The previous chapter described the development of a large Plant family at Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton and at Clowne, between about 1730 and 1830. During this era, several roads around the area of Sheffield (which is 11 miles NW of Clowne) were ‘turnpiked’ and, by 1851, some of the Clowne Plants are found in Sheffield. By 1806 the blacksmith Benjamin Plant, who can be readily associated with the Clowne Plant family, had moved to the nearby parish of Harthill (3 miles N from Clowne).

4.1 Transport and Trade (circa 1780)

The ancient craft of blacksmith predates the development of ‘modern’ transport systems, before which the only usual form of ‘rapid’ transport was by horse. In the 18th century, the significant improvement in roads much stimulated the development of trade and this was especially true around Sheffield since appreciable commercial activity would not have been possible had the town still been cut off by lack of roads over the ring of hills around Sheffield.

Though late in embarking upon the turnpike venture², Sheffield made up in eagerness for lost time, and ten main roads were made in the area by 1821. In 1756 the road to **Chesterfield**, which went on to Duffield and Derby, was ‘turnpiked’; in 1758 two Acts inaugurated the road to Wakefield and a double road which, dividing at Ringinglow, went to Chapel-en-le-Frith by one way and to Buxton by another. The other new roads were Sheffield to Tinsley (1759), Attercliffe to **Worksop** (1764), Sheffield to Penistone (1777), Sheffield to Gander Lane near **Eckington** (1779), Sheffield to **Baslow** (1803), Wadsley to Langsett (1805), and Sheffield to Glossop (1821).

4.2 The Blacksmiths at Harthill and Staveley

Benjamin Plant and at least four of his sons were blacksmiths at Harthill, in Yorkshire, and at nearby Staveley, in Derbyshire. Harthill is 3 miles north of Clowne, which lies midway between Chesterfield in Derbyshire and Worksop in Nottinghamshire (at about 7 miles from each), and Staveley lies 5 miles SW of Harthill.

It seems most likely that the twice-married Benjamin of Harthill (Figures 4.1 and 4.2), who may even in fact have married thrice, is the same as the one baptised Benjamin in 1782 at Clowne, who is shown as a son of Thomas and Ann in Figure 3.5 of the previous chapter. An alternative

¹Developed mostly from data supplied by Gwyneth and Gordon Vick (Carlisle) of the Plant Family History Society. A version of this Chapter has appeared as J.S.Plant (July 1992) *Roots and Branches* 4, 5-7.

²The Roman Roads could originally be used by wheeled vehicles but they had mostly fallen into disrepair, as it was the responsibility of no-one to maintain them; and road transport was slow, unreliable, expensive and, in wet seasons, sometimes impossible. Technical advances in sealing the surfaces of roads in Great Britain were made by John Loudon McAdam and Thomas Telford in the 18th century and *turnpiking*, to pay for road maintenance, was also introduced.

contender, a related Benjamin baptised in 1790 at Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton as a son of James and Ellen (Figure 3.2), seems less likely to have been the Benjamin of Harthill because of his substantially younger age; also, other information (section 8.1) suggests that this younger Benjamin had moved to Dore by 1817 (and was perhaps at Norton, near Sheffield, by 1808).

Figure 4.1 shows that Benjamin of Harthill married first Elizabeth (née Bark) of the parish of Harthill in 1806 and all their children were baptised there. The baptism records show (this) Benjamin Plant as a blacksmith and husband of Elizabeth in 1814; and as a blacksmith but husband of Hannah in 1819. In the 1841 Census for Harthill, Benjamin (blacksmith, aged 55 approx) and Ester Plant (aged 60 approx) are recorded with William (22) and James (14), who are undoubtedly sons of Benjamin and Hannah (*cf* Figure 4.2).

4.2.1 Thomas of Staveley

According to the Census, Benjamin's eldest son Thomas Plant was still alive (aged 62) in 1871 in Staveley and was, like his father, a blacksmith; the Census shows that this Thomas of Staveley was (quite surely the one) born in Harthill and information from Chatsworth Estates records that he died at Staveley in 1887.

At the marriage of (this) Thomas to Elizabeth (née Webster) in 1833 at Old Brampton (Chesterfield), the witnesses were Thomas Elliot and Sarah Glossops; and the children of Thomas and Elizabeth, apart from the eldest one John (bap 1833), were baptised at Staveley (1834-45).

Their second child Mary appears to be the one who was named as the mother of three children when they were baptised at Staveley. Thus, in the 1861 Census for 109 Chesterfield Road, Staveley, widower Thomas is recorded as a Master Blacksmith employing 1 apprentice with unmarried daughter Mary (aged 26) and grandsons Jonathon (aged 8) and 'Benja' (aged 3). In the 1871 Census, for 139 Chesterfield Road, daughter Mary is still unmarried and acting as the housekeeper; there are grandchildren John T (assistant Smith, aged 18) and scholars Benjamin (13) and Emma E (8); all were born at Staveley (*cf* Figure 4.1).

It appears that Mary's sister, Barbara, was unmarried (aged 18) in 1861, and a servant (and barmaid) to a family at 108 Chesterfield Road, Staveley.

4.2.2 John of Harthill

In the Harthill Directories of 1849 and 1852, there is a John Plant who is described as a blacksmith and it seems that this *very likely* would be the second son, John Bark Plant, of Benjamin and Elizabeth (Figure 4.1). In the 1851 Census for '30 Harthill' this blacksmith John (aged 39 and born in Harthill) is shown with his wife and family, and *nephew* Thomas Plant (aged 17) apprentice from Newbold Derbyshire, which is about a mile to the north of Chesterfield; this Thomas is *tentatively* included in Figure 4.1 as a possible son of Benjamin's third son, Joseph. Indeed, this could be the Thomas baptised (19.2.1834) to the Joseph and Lucy that are recorded at Chesterfield, as shown in Figure 5.3. In the 1871 Census returns for Wickersley, Thomas (36) from Newbould had progressed to becoming a blacksmith and he is shown with his wife and children from Wickersley, Esther (29), Edith A (9), Lewiso? B (dau 4) and Thomas N (1); also with Thomas from Newbould is his blacksmith uncle William (52) from Harthill.

In the 1871 Census for '34 Harthill' blacksmith John is shown as a widower with blacksmith son George and daughter Sarah (Figure 4.1); also, another son of John, another blacksmith called James is to be found nearby at '70 Wales' as will be described later in Chapter 8.

4.2.3 Children of Benjamin and Hannah

There is a blacksmith William Plant from Harthill (stated age 45) in the 1861 Census, at '19 Springwell Coll' Staveley and his wife, Elizabeth, from County Roscommon (Ireland); this William *could be* the first child of Benjamin and Hannah (Figure 4.2).

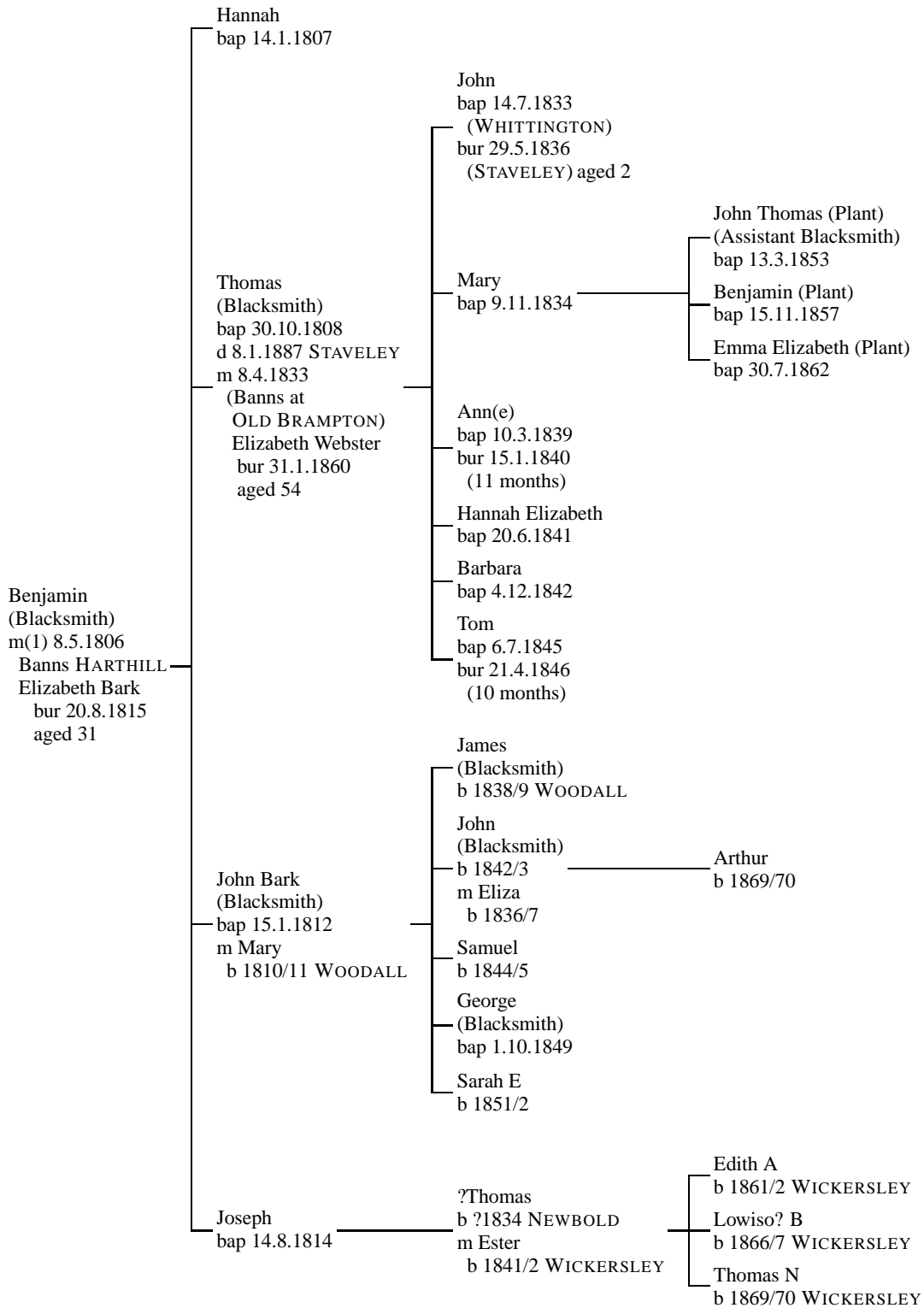


Figure 4.1: First marriage of Benjamin.

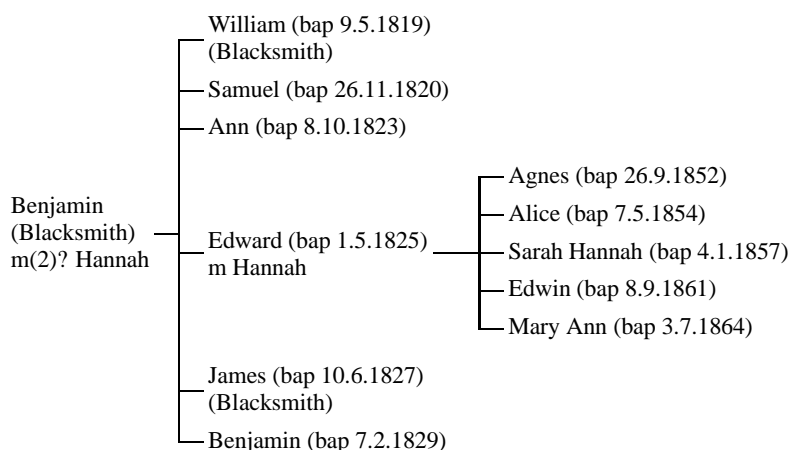


Figure 4.2: Second marriage of Benjamin.

It is possible that the second child of Benjamin and Hannah is the Samuel recorded in the 1841 Census (aged 20) as being in the household of William Leonard (physician) at Fence Cottage, Aston-Cum-Aughton (parish to the north of Harthill).

In the 1881 Mosbrough Census (near Sheffield) there is a **general labourer** at Hill Side called Edward Plant (stated age 54) from Harthill and wife Hannah from Eckington (two parishes west of Harthill and the one north of Staveley). This would presumably be the fourth child of Benjamin and Hannah (Figure 4.2); children are recorded in the IGI as baptised to Edward and Hannah at Eckington (1852-64) and these are included in Figure 4.2. There are records of a land conveyance at Birley (2 miles north of Eckington) in 1852 that involved **labourer** Edward Plant from Mosbrough (in the parish of Eckington) and his wife Hannah whereas, in 1851, Edward (25) from Harthill is recorded as an unmarried **house servant** in the household of farmer George Mullins at West Walk near Mosbrough.

From the 1851 Census, it would seem that the fifth child James (then aged 23) of Benjamin and Hannah was staying at '89 Staveley' as a **blacksmith** with his **blacksmith** step-brother Thomas (aged 42) and family (*cf* section 4.2.1).