
FEATURE ARTICLE

Henry Talbot – tracking the career of a jobbing gardener:

As a member of the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS) I have recently been taking part in one of their mini-projects on gardeners. These were identified on the 1881 census and were allocated to members of FACHRS to discover more about their careers. My gardener was one Henry Talbot, who was living in East Ilsley with his family at the time of the 1881 census. This is what I was able to find out about this young man and his career, using readily available on-line resources and information from the local history society's own records.

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Henry was baptised in 1843 in Inkpen, Berks, the second son of George Talbot and his wife Mary (nee Eatell). Henry had an elder brother Joseph baptised in 1841 and five younger sisters – Eliza 1845, Charlotte 1848, Ann 1853 (these three were baptised in Inkpen) plus Sarah 1855 and Emily 1859 (baptised in Speen).

George married Mary Eatell on 7 Nov 1840. George is identified as a labourer in the parish registers but in a later census he identifies as a potter's labourer (1851) or brickmaker (1881). Inkpen during this period had several brickmakers, so he may have worked for either John Faithfull or George Thomas Killick.

In the 1851 census, George & Mary Talbot are living in Kintbury with their 4 eldest children, including Henry who was then aged 7, together with George's elder brother Henry who is 46, unmarried and an agricultural labourer. All of the household are listed as being born in Inkpen.

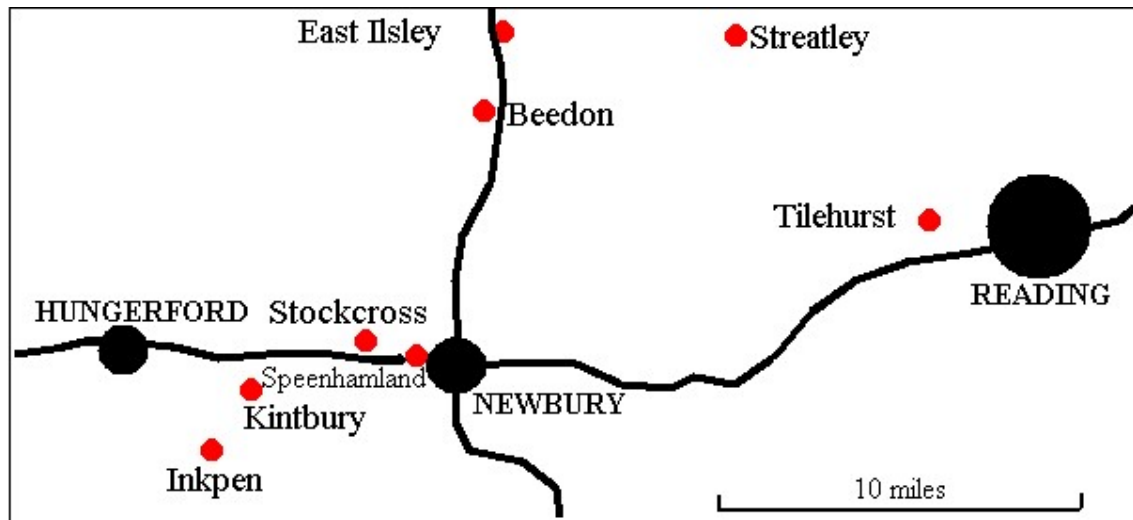
By 1861, George & Mary Talbot are in Stockcross with their five daughters but Henry has now left home and is living in Beedon. In the 1861 census Henry is listed as a carter, aged 18, living as a servant in the household of Henry Powell, agricultural labourer aged 26, with wife Jane aged 28 and son Jabus aged 4. Henry's future wife, Sarah Wakefield aged 21, is a boarder in the household of Elizabeth Butler aged 57, grocer. This is the village shop only a few houses along from where Henry was living. Sarah Wakefield was born in Beedon, her father Richard was an agricultural labourer.

Henry Talbot married Sarah Wakefield in Speenhamland on 6 May 1865. His occupation is then given as gardener and he is resident in Stockcross. He may have moved back in with his parents and sisters at this time. There were several market gardeners in the Speenhamland/Stockcross area, so Henry may have been working for one of them.

By 1866, Henry had moved to Streatley where his two eldest children were baptised – Henry John 1866 and Mary Catherine 1867. In the parish registers he is described as a gardener. There were no market garden businesses there at that time so he was probably a jobbing gardener as there are a number of substantial houses in Streatley and the neighbouring village of Goring, just across the Thames.

Henry had moved to East Ilsley by 1869, where five of his children were baptised. These were Sarah Anne 1869 (she died in 1878 aged 9 and is buried in East Ilsley), Frederick William 1870, Edward George 1872, Bertha Jane 1875 and Benjamin James 1879. Henry is listed as a gardener at each of these baptisms. In the 1871 census, Henry is living in Cow Lane with Sarah and his four eldest children, occupation gardener. There were two other gardeners in East Ilsley in the 1871 census, James Deacon aged 84 and James Deacon aged 70, so a younger man would have been quite welcome!

In the 1881 census Henry is still in East Ilsley with his wife Sarah and his six surviving children, listed as a gardener in Compton Road. (Note: Cow Lane and Compton Road are actually the same street so he probably has not moved house since the 1871 census). Also at the house on census night is his father, George Talbot aged 62 brick maker, who is listed as a visitor. By this time only one other gardener (domestic) is listed in East Ilsley – this is Albert Warr 35, who is a living-in servant at East Ilsley Hall. On census night there are only 2 servants at the Hall, Warr and a housekeeper.



By 1889, Henry had moved to Tilehurst in Reading. His wife Sarah died in 1889 aged 48, her address being given as St Georges Road, Tilehurst. In the 1891 census, Henry aged 49 is listed as a widower at 26 St Georges Road, with his son Benjamin aged 12. His occupation is still given as gardener. There were several nurserymen listed in Tilehurst in 1887, Henry may have worked for either Henry Aldridge or James Murray Reed.

Henry died aged 55 in 1898 in Brentford, London, probably while staying with one of his sons who had all moved to the London area by then. There are no probate records for Henry.

So, did any of his children follow the same occupation? Only his eldest son, Henry John Talbot, seems to have carried on the tradition as a domestic gardener. Of his other sons, Frederick William became a general labourer, Edward George went into catering and Benjamin James became a railway porter on the GWR. Both of his daughters, Mary Catherine and Bertha Jane went into service.

In the 1891 census, Henry's eldest son, Henry John Talbot, is a domestic gardener in Hambleton, Bucks, with his wife Charlotte and daughter Beatrice, 1, and is just two households from where his two sisters are working – Mary Catherine, 24, is a parlour maid and Bertha Jane, 16, is a housemaid, both in the household of Lionel Muirhead. It is quite possible that Henry John was also working for Lionel Muirhead. By 1901, John Henry has moved to Harrow on the Hill with his wife and daughter and is described as a domestic gardener and is still at the same address in 1911 (The Gardens, Elmfield Grove Hill) with his wife and daughter – Beatrice is now listed as a dressmaker.

Henry's three younger sons had all moved to the London area by 1911. Frederick William was living in Cambridge Road, Hanwell, Brentford with his wife Bertha and daughters Mabel 12, Winifred 6, Alice 5, and Bertha 10m, all born Hanwell. Also living there was Joseph Talbot, 69, pensioner from County Asylum, born Inkpen (this is his uncle, Henry Talbot's brother). At the same time Edward George was living at Station Road in Hanwell with his wife Lizzie and son Harry, 6, also born in Hanwell. In 1911 the youngest son Benjamin James was living in Kilravock Street, Paddington (handy for his job as a GWR porter), with his wife Adelaide and daughter Violet, 7, born London.

So overall, Henry Talbot seems to have spent nearly all of his adult life as a jobbing gardener, apart from a brief spell as a carter as a young man. Most of that time was spent in Berkshire, although he did move around quite a bit (see sketch map above). Only at the end of his life did he leave Berkshire for London. Even then, he may only have been visiting his sons when he died. So overall a fairly uneventful life but successful in its own way, raising six of his seven children to adulthood.