

# FOUR CENTURIES OF HAILEYS

## A Family Saga

By Kathleen Casey, Ph.D.

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Foreword by Arthur Hailey

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To the younger

**Haileys**

of this generation and other generations yet to come  
this volume is dedicated, with hope for their future and with love

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and with the help of Barry and Margaret Renfrew.  
Barry's mother Daphne, born Hailey, is a first cousin of the author.*

## CONTENTS

Foreword	page 3
Chapter 1   Origins	page 4
Chapter 2   The Elizabethans	page 9
Chapter 3   Mark Time.....Forward March	page 14
Chapter 4   Revolution	page 22
Chapter 5   Progress or Perish - The Victorians	page 27
Chapter 6   The Edwardians - A Crisis of Identity	page 35
Chapter 7   Diaspora	page 43
A Note on Sources and Bibliography	page 56

## FOREWORD

By Arthur Hailey

In December 1977, my wife, Sheila, suggested that the Hailey family investigate its origins. Somewhat doubtfully I agreed. Sheila then contacted the Society of Genealogists in London, England, who – for what seemed a modest fee – agreed to dig into our past.

By April of the following year the Society had delivered a bulky packet of documents, followed by even more material a few months later. All of it was fascinating. My earlier indifference changed swiftly to enthusiasm. I wanted to put the pieces together in some kind of a report, which would be for the benefit of my own children, grandchildren, and descendants yet to come.

I soon realized, however, that I was totally out of my depth and, as a contemporary novelist, was in no way equipped to deal with history. Fortunately, I knew someone who was – the outstanding scholar of the Hailey family, my dear cousin, Dr. Kathleen Casey (née Craft, and whose late mother Minnie Hailey, was my father's sister).

Katie, whose doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley, is in Medieval History, was immediately interested and took over the investigational side of the project in November, 1978. Between then and now (1982) Katie has made several trips to England to obtain more information and has continued to fit pieces of the family jigsaw together. Having accomplished that, she wrote a summation of it all, along with perceptive comments, and this privately printed book is the result. It is all Katie's work, and is delivered by us both – to the Hailey family, with our love.

Arthur Hailey  
Lyford Cay, Bahamas  
September 7, 1982

## CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS

Each one of us is linked, child to parent, with an indefinitely receding past. Because of this, the farthest distances of human time are not a separate place beyond imagining. Think of it. Fourteen average lifetimes separate the author of this story from the earliest trace of the Amersham Haileys. From there, no less than forty-five more measure the path back to the first year of the Christian era. Beyond, and end to end, stretch lives we cannot even count, though they belonged to people bonded to ourselves by blood and bone.

Even so, a biological chain is not a family. A family must, above all, think of itself as one. A family is both a response to circumstance and an act of will.

Along the chain of ancestors, many a distinct family has crystallized, each in its own special moment of time – maybe a few years, maybe a few centuries long. The Haileys portrayed in these pages were created in and by one such unique segment of English history, one whose beginnings can be clearly seen and whose end, today, spins new beginnings even as we watch.

Opening a fresh era in world history as well as English society, the 1500s were the crucible in which the bonds of this distinct Hailey family from the Chiltern Hills were forged. Those bonds held together just long enough to turn an Elizabethan “household” into a Victorian “dynasty”, and now they are all but entirely dissolved. No one now can, or even should, try to replicate them just as they once were. Yet the story of their making and unmaking is worth telling, if only because it explains so much that may puzzle descendants about themselves as they piece together a fresh scenario for their own new age.

*In the Western tradition, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth bisects the timeline along which history is measured, like the zero point that marks off negative from positive numbers. At that point, the north-westernmost corner of Asia, later called Europe, was a wilderness, full of swamps and heavily forested. Right up until the 1500s the work of colonization still went on. After that, Europe's situation radically changed. The two great land masses of each hemisphere discovered each other, to form one world, exchanging crops, blood types and diseases.*

*Before the 1500s, the Old World had been dominated first by the reality and then by the memory of Rome, culmination of all ancient Mediterranean empires. At its frontiers, the wild and the urbane met and marvelled at each other. Rome did not fall. By 800, the blend of invaders and immigrants from Asia with Roman cities and estates and the Christianizing of both, had translated Rome into Europe, preparing to face the new challenge of Islam.*

*In England, meanwhile, Anglo-Saxons had spread across Romanized Britain, but as late as the 7<sup>th</sup> century no one yet lived in the Chilterns. Dense oak woods and thorny underbrush made the land impossible to cultivate. People came for hunting. So did outlaws and fugitives. Permanent settlement was first attracted in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a response to the first surge of growth in centuries in the west. Danes who conquered the eastern counties in the 900s brought in a distinctive style of law and land tenure and prepared the way for the annexation of all England by William of Normandy in 1066. From then until the 1500s, against the backdrop of the Crusades, and of unprecedented economic growth, English rulers and their subjects were locked in a system by which lands were held as as “fiefs”, by obligation, and in a struggle over rights and revenues. By the 1500s, as Europe slowly recovered from an agrarian crisis and the horrors of the Plague, these “feudal” relations were disintegrating. New fortunes, new land laws and an erosion of Roman control over the Church, encouraged by Tudor monarchs from Henry VII to Elizabeth I, laid the foundations for an entirely new and almost modern England.*

## **How the Hailey Name Arose**

The Haileys, who emerge from the written records in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a self-contained and self-conscious family, were a mere handful of those who have passed the name along, whether related by blood or by marriage, since the time that name first began to describe people instead of places.

Until the 1500s, no antecedent of those now called Hailey consistently used that last name, if they used any at all. For centuries, a baptismal name alone sufficed most people. Only those highly placed needed another one. Then, by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a more crowded and ever more regulated society found it had to identify individual more precisely, using an occupation, a nickname, a parent or a place. But even close relatives used different names at different times. Surnames became fixed and hereditary only after parish registers were started, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> or the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The modern English “Hailey”, along with its many variants (such as Healy, Haley, Hely, Haillie, Hayley, Heiley, Helly, Halle, Hale and, occasionally, Hall – even Ayley, Aly or Aylot) is a place name, with several likely Old English derivations. The word hagen (or hegen) means an enclosure. Halh (dat. sing. hale, nom. pl. halas and dat. pl. healum) means of land, and it has been used for a variety of landscape features, from a secluded hollow in a hillside to a piece of land enclosed by the bend in a river. West Saxon versions were healh, heale, healas, healum. And leah, meaning a wood or a natural clearing in it, has often been found in districts once heavily forested, like the hills in which Amersham is enfolded.

Yet there is little chance that all Haileys are sprung from a common ancestor. The erratic spelling of early modern parish clerks often does obscure real relationships, but for the most part the many variants probably never were, and certainly no longer are, interchangeable. Families that are quite distinct in origin took the name by pure coincidence.

It happened in this way. English surnames derived from place fall into four main groups: those restricted to a single locality; those common to a whole county; those occurring throughout a group of counties and, finally, those which elude all such boundaries. The name “Hailey” seem to be of the third sort, but oddly bunched in two quite distinct regions. One large cluster I found in Yorkshire and another, just as large, in a group of south-eastern counties, notably Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire. Like the outermost ripples of a wave, a further scattering of the name in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire; in Huntingdon, Norfolk and Cambridge; in Middlesex and other areas close to London measures the strength and defines the southern epicentre of a commotion once made by Haileys in the population pond.

Such a distribution of the Hailey surname suggests that those who took it were for the most part people with none better to use: foundlings, or people on the move.

## **How some Haileys Came to Be in Amersham**

Hamlets or physical features whose names perpetuate the old English origins of “Hailey” can be found all across England today, and very likely there were at one time many more. Such names are especially common in areas once settled by West Saxons. But it was not an Anglo-Saxon habit to create personal names from place words. It would only have been after the Norman Conquest, when English peasants began to follow the custom of their French overlords, that numbers of quite unconnected people born in, or even just passing through, one of the places called Hailey took the name.

Specific families, or lines, may have evolved from isolated individuals, but for some of them, the place where this happened may have been their last stop, not their first. This is probably why Haileys are rarely found in any place called Hailey.

For example, none show up in the registers of Haillie Weston, on the Bedfordshire border, nor in those of Hailey, a hamlet in the Oxfordshire parish of Witney, even though Hailey families were numerous in other, quite distant, Oxford settlements, especially by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. None are recorded at Haileybridge, in Huntingdonshire, nor at Haighley, a parish in the diocese of Norwich. For Heyleyness in Hertfordshire, no Haileys are encountered in the Poll Tax lists of 1399.

On the other hand, as early as 1248 at Evendon, in Berkshire, a certain Robert of Heyleslod entered a plea in a trespass suit before the Justices in Eyre. In 1273 the Hundred Rolls list the holdings of Galfridus, son of Wilhelmus de Haillie, near “Florendone” in Norfolk, and mention a Thomas Halay farming a croft in villeinage at Hyston in Cambridgeshire, as well as a Petrus Hayle in Oxfordshire. At Deyngton in 1376, tax officials cornered a William Hayle.

In the north of England, Poll Tax lists for 1379 for the West Riding of Yorkshire mention a Wilhelmus Haylay and a Johannes de Hayley. Johannes, son of Jacob Hayley, was christened in Halifax in 1557. William, son of William Hallay, was baptised in the city of York in 1603 and Thomas, son of Mathewe Haillay in 1607. Over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the tendency for northern and southern Haileys to use similar baptismal names seem to have peaked. After that, the range of Christian names preferred in each region widened, altered and in the end completely diverged.

It is useless to wonder about the relationship between Haileys of the north and the south, or whether and in what direction there may have been a drift from one region or the other. We are unlikely ever to know, for sure. All that does seem clear is this: whatever the remote origin of the Buckinghamshire Haileys, they must have arrived there from somewhere else.

Some version of the name shows up in many places before the 16<sup>th</sup> century but never, so far as we can tell, in that particular county. And in the only spot there where place name and family name have actually coincided, no baptism, marriage or burial of a Hailey goes on record until 1590. By that time, various forms of the name had already surfaced in several more Buckinghamshire parishes.

At Monks Risborough, about seven miles northwest of Amersham, a fir-crowned height rising to 813 feet is called Green Hailey to this day. There, a certain George christened nine children between 1590 and 1614, and the recording vicar was unsure how to spell their surname. Twice he wrote “Haly”, interspersed with “Hailey”, “Halye” and “Halie”, before settling finally on “Hayley”. Neither George nor his children reappear in the records of Monks Risborough and no Haileys, however the name is written, are found in neighbouring Princes Risborough. Yet near and far across the county, namesakes signalled their presence, not only in the 1590s but a generation or more earlier.

Robert Haylay, a tailor who celebrated his marriage in Chesham in 1595, hailed from a place called Great Wickham (which may or may not be a Buckinghamshire settlement – so far it has not been found anywhere within the county). Back in 1563, in Amersham, a certain Richard Haleye baptized a son called John, and another eight children before the end of 1587. As far off as Stowe, the county Muster Roll of 1522 had listed a Richard Halley, as well as another Richard Hallye in Aylesbury where more Hailey registration can later on be found. Census takers for Henry VIII's lay subsidy of 1524 ran down people called “Hailey” in several other places, including Woburn and West Wycombe. None of these towns are far from Aylesbury, Amersham and Chesham in either direction.



Then, in Amersham, we meet the daughter of a certain Peter Hally. Her brass image lies embedded alongside that of her husband in the stone floor of St. Mary's parish church, above an inscription committing their souls to the prayers of posterity and the care of the Lord. Elizabeth died on November 21, 1521. Her father, the Latin words intone, was a man entitled to bear arms: a knight. Her husband was John de la Penne, precursor of the man who founded Pennsylvania.

Who, then, could this father-in-law of John de la Penne have been? Did Peter Hally make his home in Amersham, or elsewhere? Was this Peter Hally a descendant of Petrus Hayle of Oxfordshire, listed in the Hundred Rolls of 1273? Oxfordshire is a scant 30 miles away from Amersham, as the crow flies. Were any of the other Haileys in the vicinity the cousins or descendants of Peter Hally? We shall probably never know.

### **What Kind of People the Earliest Chiltern Haileys May Have Been**

The way surnames evolved among people at Hailey's End in Bedfordshire dramatizes the very dissimilar fates that could befall families who once upon a time tagged themselves with a similar place-name.

Ninety percent of England's population were still rural cultivators even as late as 1750, so the chances are slight indeed that the first Haileys in Amersham or thereabouts, much less their remoter forebears, were anything but peasant farmers. At the same time, a medieval peasant could be born serf or free and, either way, die poor or prosperous. Independence, for better or worse, could be the lot not only of the powerful but also of the landless, the lawless and the illegitimate. So it is not surprising that at Hailey's End, the settled peasants known by the place in which they lived seem to have had little in common with the freewheeling and more substantial migrants in Amersham who must have come by the Hailey name in some other way.

The hamlet of Hailey was part of the parish of Great Amwell in Bedfordshire, separated from it by a wood and other parish. The earliest registers refer to some of the tenants at Hailey's End as "Haillie", then alternate that spelling with "Halle", until quite soon, and consistently, it becomes "Hall". Their manorial lords, too, had once added the words "of Hailey" to their names, like Isabella and Hubert between 1201 and 1206, or that Richard who gave five acres to a convent of friars in 1301. The manor seat, on the main road from Hoddesdon to Ware, was called Hailey Hall, and Haileybury College was the manor's charitable foundation. But over time, the family holding those lands acquired a different surname. So with the contrast in condition and destiny between lord and tenant as sharp as it was at Great Amwell, it would certainly have been odd to hear of Haileys down at Hailey's End when there were none up at the Hall. Even before the Norman Conquest, Great Amwell had been a berewick in the estate of Earl Harold with a servile tenantry, but it was the Norman habit of subletting fiefs that badly fragmented the manor and steadily impoverished as well as immobilized its tenants. It was all too literally Hailey's End for those whose point of origin the place had been.

The Chilterns, instead, seem to have been enclaves of that peculiar, non-servile form of tenure enjoyed under the traditional Danelaw of eastern and north-eastern England. Haileys in that region were most likely free in fact or in law, with far better prospects than the people at Hailey's End. More than that cannot be said, though, and it is both fruitless and quite pointless to probe for their remoter origins.

The very first attempts to mandate registration of all parishioners were not made until the 1540s (in the reign of Henry VIII) and without such records, fragmentary and episodic though they are, nothing can be firmly established. Of still greater significance is the fact that most people saw Fortune's wheel take a decisive turn, one way or another, during that very period. Tudor society very likely jolted the lives of any Haileys then in Amersham quite out of alignment with the experience of their forebears, whoever they were. Those must be thought of a people who belong to other families, with other stories. This one begins in the twilight of Elizabethan England.



## **CHAPTER 2: THE ELIZABETHANS**

Our great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas was married to Ellen (or Helen) Todd on August 19, 1635 in St. Mary's parish church at Amersham. Where and when he was born, just as where and when he died, remain unsolved mysteries.

He may have been the Thomas who was baptised at West Wycombe on August 26, 1604, or another Thomas registered by the same father, Richard, on September 29, 1605. Though no trace of a burial has been found, the first child probably died and was simply “replaced” - a typically matter-of-fact response, in those times, to high infant mortality. In High Wycombe and Chesham the registers are either incomplete for those likely years, or altogether bare of Haileys. There are a few other alternatives that we know of, so far. Perhaps our Thomas was the boy born to George at Monks Risborough in 1608? Or could he have been the Thomas christened by William Hely in Amersham in 1612/13?

Unfortunately, William Hely of Amersham, like the elusive Thomas himself, slips out from and back into the shadows just for that one event. Could he have been related to that Richard of Amersham whose last child was born in or no later than 1587? There is no obvious connection. Aside from the baptism in 1610 of two daughters of another Thomas – called both “Healy” and “Hailie” - the original registers are silent about Haileys for the entire generation spanning Richard and William. No further trace of Richard's children has been found, but in any case there was neither a William nor a Thomas among them. “While it is highly likely,” wrote A. Colin Cole, Windsor Herald of Arms in 1976, “that your ancestor Thomas Hailey descended from the earlier Haileys *tempore* Elizabeth I of whom we know from contemporary entries in the parish registers of Amersham, the dearth of intervening record..... is such to prevent it being proven that this descent exists. It might well be the case that Thomas Hailey was the son of another Thomas Hailey buried at Amersham in November 1630 who in turn was fathered by one of the sons of Richard Hailey ....but it is proof of this affiliation which is lacking.”

### **How Certain Pieces of the Puzzle Might Fall in Place and Who the Elizabethan Ancestors of Thomas Hailey May Have Been**

Baptisms and marriages from the 1560s to the early 1600s hint at the outlines of a broad kin network in the vicinity of Amersham. Great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas may have sprung from any part of that network, for in those days, beliefs and lifestyle, like the search for work and brides, followed an unmapped maze of ancient drover routes and footpaths. By one such path – unused now and overgrown – Amersham and Coleshill are really closer than they seem on the map or by the main road. Many such places once were drawn together that modern communication systems stretch apart. The College of Arms concedes that Thomas may have been a grandson of Richard. This cannot be proved. What if, instead, the descent was collateral? That cannot be proved either, but in all the known circumstances it is what makes the best sense.

This is the reason why. An earlier Elizabethan couple, John and Anne Halle, made a will, dated 1545/46, that mentions their sons Richard and John, Robert and Thomas. The oldest could well have been that Richard Haleye of Amersham whose firstborn, baptised in 1563, was called John and whose next boy, in 1577, was named Richard. It was the custom in naming sons, to honour a grandfather or an uncle before the father himself. Both John Halle and Richard Haleye apparently did just that.

What, then happened to John's third and fourth sons?

In 1595 a certain Robert Hayley found a bride in Bellingdon, outside Chesham, about a mile north of Ashridge, where Elizabeth Tudor once lived. Elizabethan bridegrooms were usually between 20 and 25 years old, younger than those of the next two centuries and Robert must have been born in or around 1570, so that he cannot possibly have been John Halle's third son. He was certainly not a son of Richard of Amersham, who had none called Robert. But he might have been one of Robert Halle's children – a younger son if he stuck to the conventional naming pattern – or perhaps a son of Thomas, the last and no doubt least well- endowed of the four brothers sired by John Halle. The Robert who married “Avelin daughter of Richard Bawldwin of Belend, deceased & sister (sic?) to Thomas Ashfeild” was a tailor from Great Wickham. Younger sons and the sons of younger sons could not hope to inherit land, but in the Tudor period they could do very well in a trade.

Unhappily, no offspring of the marriage between Robert and Avelin can be traced. The next Hailey entry in the Chesham parish register is no earlier than 1614, when a William Haylie married the widow Alice Lawrence (followed in 1618 by a note about the wedding of a Richard Healle). It is no more than conjecture, but still an intriguing possibility, that William was both a son of Robert and also William Hely of Amersham. Perhaps, after fathering a boy called Thomas, William Hely went on to a second marriage made in Chesham. And if so could this have been the reason why great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas called his first two children Alice and William?

A direct link between Thomas and the Elizabethan Richard of Amersham is hard to envisage, if only because there was no Thomas in his visible family. There was no William, either. But assuming an indirect connection instead the status change that this could imply does suggest a reason for the missing names. In junior branches of a family, sons owed less to their fathers than to their trade connections or their in-laws. If William and Thomas were indeed linked, somehow, with descendants of John and Anne Halle (perhaps through the Thomas born at West Wycombe) the intrusion of a “William” into the family naming pattern would simply mark an important change of direction for some of the Elizabethan Haileys.

Even in the event that our first Thomas was born near Monks Risborough, within sight of a landmark plainly called Hailey, the appearance of a William, this time in the generation following, would still need explaining, as well as the switch from farming to a trade. But in Monks Risborough, there are no clues at all. It seems more reasonable to work with those that do exist, especially when they happen to be found closer to Amersham itself.

**Sharp Breaks in Lifestyle and Family Identity**  
**Mark This Period, When The Haileys Were Part of a**  
**Social Group That is Hard to Define**

Connections that fully span the reign of Elizabeth I may never come to light. The continuity of most local records between the 1540s and the 1690s, when this history reaches firmer ground, is irretrievably lost. Unlike the headstones in St. Mary's churchyard, their message effaced by time alone, parish records have been eroded by political circumstance as well. Succession problems between the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I delayed the start of serious registration of births, marriages and deaths, while tension between parishioners of the old religion and clergy of the new may have had a similar effect later on. Could this, for instance, explain the wholesale disappearance of Richard Haleye's family? The sudden reappearance of the name in 1610?

It was a time, too, of economic dislocation, of inflation and social upheaval. Efforts to keep track of individuals and their doings were diluted by the drift and flux of population, by the climate of slackened restraint wherein people of middling status were given their head by an otherwise firm Elizabethan government.

*The world grew bigger and busier in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In China under the Ming Dynasty, no less than in struggling little Europe, population growth pressed dangerously on resources. Yet despite famines, epidemics, the new gunpowder warfare and steeply rising prices, Europeans ate, dressed, built, thought and even sang in bold new ways, within the shell of ancient feudal custom. Humanist scholars devised Utopias and planned ideal cities. Rulers – of whom an unusual number happened to be women – reached for the powers of Machiavelli's ideal prince. But the poor massed the disintegrating force of their swelling numbers against all efforts to contain and control them. Literary warfare erupted over marriage and sex roles. The essence of these dynamic and disturbing times is caught in the ironies of Rabelais and Erasmus, in Cervantes' mad Don Quixote and, above all, in Shakespeare's sweeping panorama of the human condition.*

*Many people already conceded that the earth revolved around the sun, a proposition threatening to explode conventional frameworks of faith and knowledge. But the thrust to expand human capacities still mainly took the form of occult speculation. The legend of Faust's fatal temptation by demonic power obsessed popular imagination. Profound questioning about the will and the soul – like Hamlet's – reflected a close interpretation of politics and religion.*

*In 1517, Martin Luther summed up the long festering discontents with Catholic doctrine and practice, especially concerning marriage and priests. The generation of warfare he precipitated left Europe divided into hostile Protestant and Catholic states, nagged by far more radical evangelists challenging every social institution. Catholic self-reform included a stricter training for parish priests, who were enjoined to register all baptisms, marriages and burials. On all sides, church and state allied to coerce alleged heretics and witches, among whom women were often the principal targets.*

*Meanwhile, Henry VIII of England responded to the Pope's refusal to dissolve his 20-year marriage with a Spanish Catholic by announcing himself head of an English church and granting his own divorce. By mid-century, Calvin had built up a tightly disciplined version of Protestant belief, bent on independence from external authority. Enclaves of French Calvinists, called Huguenots, helped to unleash long years of continuous struggle with the Spanish empire, a conflict that dominated all European diplomacy.*

*In Italy, now a sad satellite of Hapsburg Spain, the vital centre of Renaissance culture had passed from Florence to Rome (just starting to build St. Peter's) and to Venice, last bulwark against a renewed assault by Islam under the dreaded Ottoman Turks now advancing into the Balkans. The superb art and architecture of Italians like Raphael, Michelangelo, Tintoretto and Palladio – to name only a few – was now matched in the north and the west by other Europeans as diverse as Dürer and El Greco.*

*As the centre of gravity of power and culture shifted imperceptibly from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, puny England played cat and mouse with the limping giants. Tudor monarchs from Henry VII in 1475 through Henry VIII, Edward VI and “Bloody” Mary, to Elizabeth I struggled to build prosperity and order, and when Elizabeth died in 1603, the treasury was still empty, but her people had been galvanized by a burst of creative energy in the Italian style. England waited confidently for her turn on the world stage.*

England's more fortunate people must have had the mixed feelings common to all developing countries: a surging energy and expectancy, laced with deep misgivings about new people coming to prominence; about the dissolution of old bonds; about the crowding and poverty (due less to a rising birth rate than to massive internal migration) and the threatening faces, everywhere, of vagrant paupers. Distance has softened our own perspective of their world, flattened its uneven and disruptive rates of change. Merrie England? Maybe so.

Nothing quite so visibly expressed these new times as the Tudor building revolution. In the space of a few decades, between 1550 and 1620, it had reversed two centuries of physical dilapidation and decay in the fields and villages. The tidy landscape we take for granted and the timber-framed houses we

view as quaint and antiquated were brand new and brashly modern in the late 1500s. And where only a generation or so back, a few niggardly, iron-barred wall openings had sufficed for interior lighting, the sturdy and often commodious houses of the recently rich boasted as many novel, mullioned glass windows as they could afford. Glaziers were very busy. But so were heralds. Newly-prosperous families, few of whom were sprung from those who had ruled medieval England, marked their accession to power and prestige by purchasing gentility as well as estates. Airy, well-lit rooms displayed fanciful heraldic insignia devised and painted by a class of artisans whose skill and imagination, like that of plumbers and glaziers, had just found a dynamic and lucrative market.

Great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas was described as a “labourer”, whatever that may have meant. His son was a glazier.

The earliest Tudor Haileys most likely belonged to the yeomanry, like that Lawrence Hayley found in the parish of St. Margaret at Durham in 1559, or the Hailey identified as a yeoman of Edgware in 1566. Such people – substantial farmers, growing ever richer than the majority of those making a living from the land – were the mainstay, it is said, of Elizabethan stability and growth. All the same, the yeomanry was a class in flux. So was the gentry.

Henry VIII's “census” of 1524 lists John Penne, gentleman, in Amersham. He was probably the son of that John whose brass-engraved figure lies in the church alongside the daughter of Peter Hally. But although Henry's net was cast so wide for this subsidy that its list of adult male inhabitants of Amersham must be nearly complete, no Haileys appear on it. This can only mean that none had yet arrived. Wherever they lived in those days, though, they would no doubt be as hard to place as John Penne himself.

The inventory of a certain “labourer” named Haley from Nuffield, made in 1587, described a home little different in its essential features from that of a “gentlewoman” called Margaret Hayley of Chepping Wycombe who made her will in 1606/7. Margaret simply had more of everything. She even had a “parlour” - that new-fangled upper addition to the main room just then beginning to appear in simple timber frame houses.

A glazier's payment for one job would have bought John Haley's entire wardrobe, or two of his six sheep! St. Mary's churchwardens noted in their account books in 1599 that “glazing the church windows” cost 6s. 8d. For “mendying the leades”, some unnamed glazier was paid 12d., which only two years later was the sum “Paid the carpenter for a daye's work”. It was even enough to buy four of the candlesticks or two of the pewter plates that enriched and dignified the lives of respectable people. Yet it was well into the next century before a Hailey is found in the building trades. Why did the Haileys wait some fifty years to make this shrewd and profitable break with the past? Perhaps because the Chilterns were an undeveloped, almost a “frontier” region.

Amersham was still a tiny, isolated place. Its Saxon name, meaning the homestead (“ham”) of someone called Ealgmund (hence, Agmondesham, Elmondisham, Hagmondesham, among several versions), belies a more ancient, Romano-British origin as a choice yet very secluded settlement. The land itself, once a royal manor, was distributed at the Conquest among a number of Norman families, including the Earls of Essex, but a few borough rights were granted to the town in 1200. Nonetheless its privileges were insecure. As a market, even as late as the reign of Elizabeth, it could not vie with Aylesbury, about 10 miles to the north-west, where the terrain opens out to a broad valley. The vestry books at St. Mary's imply that unlike many Elizabethan parishes, Amersham was not besieged as yet by the armies of itinerant poor then crowding the better-known routes. East Anglia was still, at that time, the most populous and densely settled region of the British Isles. Interior wooded uplands like the Chilterns, more suitable for raising livestock than grain, remained a pocket of relative emptiness. It drew new inhabitants like a magnet in Tudor times, only to keep them, for a while yet, out of the mainstream of growth.

The marked dependence on London of 20<sup>th</sup> century Amersham and Aylesbury, as dormitory towns, was no feature of their life in the 1500s. Unlike most places in nearby Bedfordshire or Hertfordshire, oriented to the great abbey of St. Albans (the Roman “Verulamium”) even more than to the royal seat at Westminster, Buckinghamshire towns and villages turned inward upon themselves. Amersham's universe revolved within a narrow orbit encompassing Chesham, its closest neighbour; Coleshill; Great and Little Missenden; Great and Little Hampden and the Chalfonts, with Wendover, Ivinghoe, Beaconsfield and Wycombe at its perimeter.

Yet this small world was no haven of unruffled calm. The beliefs of John Wycliff, a 14<sup>th</sup> century critic of the Church, and even those of his far more radical followers found ardent support in Amersham. At least one local heretic was burned at the stake. Many parishioners, on the other hand, kept faith with the old religion well into the reforming 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ancient but newly-disparaged customs were still observed: watching the Sepulchre at Easter; May Day; the Robin Hood pageant; the game of tripping people up to claim “Hoke money”, so the vestry books record. But they are silent for the last three years of Henry VIII's reign as well as for every troubled year under Edward VI and Mary Tudor and for the first six in which Elizabeth I fought to keep her throne. Some people in Amersham had supported the Catholic Mary Tudor. Others, in 1553, were flocking to hear the uncompromising Calvinist, John Knox. Vanished or never-written parish accounts imply dissension or disorder in the town during those very years in which the Haileys are most deeply in shadow.

One thing is clear enough: the Amersham Haileys became a family well-established in a dynamic trade. In this respect, at least, they were not troubled by political chaos. Ahead, though, lay a century of civil strife in which the shifting weight of countless everyday decisions by faceless households without number would decisively affect the outcome. What the Haileys were up to then would become a matter of more than personal concern.

## **CHAPTER 3: MARK TIME ----- FORWARD MARCH**

Neighbour Hampden jabs a stern bronze finger southward over Aylesbury's main square. Heedless shoppers need a constant reminder: in the Great Rebellion of 1642-49, the Chilterns were a regicide stronghold.

Disgruntled gentry had overrun the royal shire. Between 1603 and 1641, parliamentary representation rose to 14 seats as Amersham, Wendover and Marlowe gained six between them. The foppish courtier George Villiers, powerful and hated favourite of two monarchs, became Duke of Buckingham. He was assassinated. Then, in 1642, John Hampden's tax revolt escalated into civil war.

For their headquarters, the rebel Buckinghamshire Lieutenants picked Amersham, only a few miles from Great and Little Hampden and a key defence point on the road to London. Too bad, that Amersham was such a deeply divided community, with its new-minted elite and a tradition of religious dissent already old. Local Lollard heretics in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had been hounded as well as sheltered, and by 1553, John Knox was delivering one of his Calvinist diatribes to an unreceptive congregation in St. Mary's. At that time the town favoured the succession of Mary Tudor, Catholic daughter of Henry VIII. Her half-sister and rival, the Protestant princess Elizabeth, was arrested in 1554 a few miles away, at Ashridge. Another century, though, and in November 1642, Oliver Cromwell himself would be marching Roundhead troops through town after the victory at Aylesbury. And to the dismay of many local people, he built a new home in the nearby hamlet of Woodside.

In all this, where did the Haileys stand? In 1642, when politics ineluctably led people over the line from resistance to revolution, what did great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas do? He lay low.

### **How Some Families Make History: Surviving Civil War**

Thomas was 30 years old at the outbreak of hostilities and another son had just been born. When Hampden called for troopers, many Amersham men did respond. But the spacing of Thomas Hailey's family is not odd enough, for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to suggest that he was away from home at all either during the rebellion or the interregnum. His youngest child, Ann, was christened in 1657, only three years before the Stuart dynasty returned with Charles II. By 1688, during the second "Glorious" revolution that ousted James II, Thomas would have been too old to venture into that last, brief and mainly distant struggle. The local registers it is true, bear no trace of his burial but only, perhaps because this turbulent period played such havoc with England's records.

For most people, the daily reality of revolution is a precarious teetering between valour and discretion. Thomas and Helen Hailey gestured in support of the locally dominant Puritans in 1642, when they baptised their second son. Nothing so clearly evokes the spirit of the Reformation as the name of the apostle, Paul, whose teachings about faith and grace form the core of Protestant doctrine. Whether personal conviction or perhaps just deference to someone among Helen Hailey's kin prompted the choice of such a name at such a moment, it cannot have failed to be an issue. Yet, in 1647, at the height of political tension, a third son was christened Thomas, in keeping with a Hailey tradition that a few years before the war had named the older children Alice and William.

Prudently then, in 1651, a year or so into Cromwell's Puritan republic, another son became Samuel, in keeping with the revolutionary spirit of the times.

The Great Rebellion opened up great fissures in English society. Issues deeply felt drove families, neighbours and communities far apart. But posterity's haste to diagram lines of conflict blurs a pattern of accommodation equally crucial to the process of change. As firmly as any trooper's boot, the Haileys' cautious tread hardened the country's path toward a new age.

*By 1600 there were some 500 million people in the world, most of them in Asia. The feudal Tokagawa shogunate in crowded Japan was adjusting to a rising money economy as Western governments turned exploration into colonization, setting the basic pattern for Europe's future development. Rival nations staked out vast territorial claims with tiny settlements in the Americas, concentrating support on private trade in Africa and Asia. In Europe, the mood was dark, amid stark contrasts of misery and splendour.*

*Changes in property law favoured capital growth that found few constructive outlets. Wild and often ruinous speculation was curbed by new financing techniques such as the limited liability company, but domestic markets were stunted by irrational trade barriers and a low level of mass demand. The philosopher Descartes provided a framework for theoretical science, but major breakthroughs in mathematics and in physics, such as Newton's law of gravity, were not yet translatable into technological progress.*

*Only about 90 million people lived in Europe and population failed to grow. Purposely late marriage, but also recurrent plagues, followed by influenza, smallpox and typhus as well as chronic malnutrition and sudden famine kept families small. The "little ice age" brought winters of unprecedented severity and summer drought repeatedly ruined harvests. Food riots and tax "strikes" were common as almost continuous warfare overstrained state revenues.*

*The Thirty Years War (1618-48), bringing Sweden briefly to the fore as a military power, devastated German territory and choked off its potential for nationhood. From this first pan-European conflict came the first of Europe's many territorial treaty settlements and Prussia started its climb to power. A series of shifting coalitions resisted France's drive to make its political and geographic frontiers coincide, but under Louis XIV, The "Sun" King (1643-1715), France exemplified the period, dominating Europe's diplomacy, language and culture. Molière wrote his comedies as Louis' ministers laid an intolerable tax burden on those least able to pay.*

*From the rising Muscovite kingdom, newly opened to Western influence by Tsar Peter the Great, to Holland and England – the new leaders of world commerce – elaborate courts ignored an abject populace in shrinking isolated villages and filthy, crowded cities. Middle groups lacked political power. Educated women denounced the more private tyranny of marriage, even while both Protestant and Catholic moralists elevated its moral status. Political theorists debated alternate roads to rational government, whether by all-powerful monarchs or under some form of the "social contract" advocated by Locke. England weathered the wave of constitutional crises besetting most countries in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century more artfully than the rest. The Great Rebellion (1642-49), the beheading of Charles I, and Cromwell's Republican interlude were only the first stages in a protracted search for a limited constitutional monarchy, culminating in 1688 with the "Glorious" Revolution engineered by powerful elites but satisfactory to most, in what proved to be a relatively open society. The Hanoverian monarchs replaced the Stuarts in 1714.*

*As intolerable pressures mounted between 1600 and mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, a new generation of religious leaders, Protestant and Catholic alike, counselled a markedly inward, quiescent piety. Distracted by ornate art forms and a creatively evolving instrumental music, Europe marked time.*

## **A Gun-shy Generation: The Children of Thomas Hailey and Helen Todd Learn Some Important Political Lessons**

Less vulnerable than their parents to the disruption of small lives by great events, those born in the turmoil of civil strife grew up ready to trim sails with every fresh wind. Death itself to which most people in those days were inured by early and intimate acquaintance, can hardly have affected the young Haileys more deeply. They saw or heard Cromwell's army pass through town. They learned that a king had been executed by order of his subjects. As young adults, under the Protectorate, they may have watched Puritans tumble the statue of St. Catherine from her niche above the altar in St. Mary's, or the far more radical Quakers assemble in their new meeting house on Whielden Street, where William Hailey would later make his home. Their middle years were spent under the less than saintly aegis of King Charles II. His restoration in 1660 once more reversed the political climate in Amersham.

William of nearby Penn, destined to found Quaker Pennsylvania in 1681, was courting his future wife up at Bury Farm in 1672, but his contemporary, a William Haley who may be the son of Thomas and Helen – the citation is ambiguous – was summoned only six years later before the court of Quarter Sessions at Aylesbury, as a “popish recusant.” (He was excused on the recognisance of a friend from Farnham Royal.) At the Saracen's Head on Whielden Street, kept by William and Katherine Hayley at least as early as 1694, people talk of a secret hiding place in the walls, and of underground tunnels, recently blocked up, that are supposed to link the inn with the church. Did fugitive priests use them when William was in charge? Rumour has all Amersham riddled with such tunnels, but perhaps, after all, they were only storerooms.

### **Running on the Spot: William the Innkeeper and the Glorious Revolution; In Which William and his Friends Fight a Rearguard Action against a New Coalition of Forces**



Market Hall had risen in 1682 on graceful Restoration arches, over a widened section of the High Street, to accommodate Amersham's unprecedented bustle. William the innkeeper, along with it, had prospered modestly. Adjacent to the Saracen's Head an old Tudor structure with low beamed ceilings, crooked landings and pokey rooms, fronting a jumble of tumbledown outhouses, he and Katherine built a brand-new house. On its upper story, a large stone plaque still boldly displays the initial “H” over “W” and “K”, with the date: 1695.

William was now one of those local worthies on whom the parish depended to run as well as pay for England's system of poor relief. The Tyrwhitt-Drakes of Shardeloes, lords of the local manor only since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, gave Amersham its graceful Drake Almshouse in 1657. All the same, people like William Hailey suspected that the gentry were not bearing their full share of the burden.

On December 27, 1684, the churchwardens and overseers noted in their accounts the sum of 1s. 6d. “expended with the Chimneyman at William Haleys house with some of our neighbours and others of the officers meeting with him concerning the poore people.” The Chimneyman was the Crown's franchised collector of the hearth tax. Charles II first levied it in 1662 at the rate of 2s. for every



household, save those exempt. The concern for the poor shown by William and his friends evidently meant plying the Chimneyman with drinks as he determined exemptions, hoping he would lighten their own tax burden. These men, not “the poore”, were the “common people” to which the records always refer. They it was who turned out to meet the new king-elect, William of Orange, on his way to London, to urge him to abolish the hearth tax altogether. He obligingly did so in 1689.

In 1688, William Hailey had joined with two churchwardens, the overseer, and fourteen others to protest the level of the poor rates at Amersham. He and they must have been jubilant in 1690 when the county justices agreed that the rates “should have respect to the Quality as well as the Quantity of land in the said parish”. William no doubt also applauded Thomas Todd, an overseer at Great Missenden. He alleged, in 1693/94, that a certain Francis Clarke, on relief, “was able to keep a horse and that he refused to work unless he was offered more than the ordinary wage”. A court order suspended Clarke's allowance of 1s. 6d. a week. Hailey (whose mother, incidentally, had been a Todd) may have noticed with satisfaction that this sum was exactly what it had cost to “arrange” the hearth tax in 1684. After all, Thomas Todd had paid a whole four shillings in hearth tax back in 1662, and in 1696, according to the Shardeloes estate accounts, as little as 2s.6d. would buy a pair of leather breeches. In 1697, four turkeys cost 8s. 6d. - only a shilling less than the wage for reaping two acres and 60 pole of wheat. Men like William were still too close to the pit not to fear those whose own weakness or misfortune might drag him with them over the edge.

The Elizabethan upsurge of population was over by now, but though the high toll of infant mortality and a new habit of postponing marriage until the mid-to late-20s helped to reduce most families once more to manageable size, impoverishment was the unavoidable lot of all too many rural people. A centuries-long process of enclosing arable land for sheep-runs was accelerating in Buckinghamshire. William and his like stood to gain enough support from the new political regime to wage their own war on poverty, but even as the gulf widened between them and the hopelessly distressed, England's gentry and nobility closed ranks to shut out people at their lower limits. Distinctions that a hundred years back had been hazy and informal hardened, to forestall any further incursion from below into the county elites. Those, henceforth, would be the exclusive source of all justices, sheriffs and members of parliament. Gone, as a significant force, were the crude but dynamic “forty-shilling freeholders” of Elizabethan times.

William the innkeeper was evidently not a client of the squire. There are no Haileys listed among the tenants of Shardeloes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He was independent, still shifting uneasily below the gentry and between “citizens, burgesses and Yeomen” on the one hand, and a “fourth sort of men who do not rule” on the other, as Gregory King described the in 1696. But William and his status group had exchanged political pretensions for a chance just to maintain their hard won economic gains.

**Creating a Family Style:**  
**The Haileys Can Spell and Make a Will,**  
**But Their Survival Hangs by the Merest Thread**

In 1700 there were still no more than a million people in all of England and a family of that period is fairly easy to identify in the records. This is especially true in the case of the Haileys. During the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hailey entries multiplied in the Amersham parish registers, but at the same time the lines of kinship between distinct households perceptibly diverge. Many lost their slippery footing on the frontier between new gentry and new poor and, as a result, their ability to keep a family going. The only unmistakable descent line among Amersham Haileys is the one stemming from Thomas and his wife Jane, who were married in 1669.

Like most early 18<sup>th</sup> century registrations everywhere, many Hailey entries in the Amersham registers are perfunctory, as if the lives they witnessed were as worthless to those who endured them as they

were in the eyes of the recorder. The Rector troubled himself as little to insist on identifying details as the registrants were interested in supplying them. Several are described simply as “paupers”, without kin or future, sunk in the silence of despair.

In 1710, for example, the parish overseers thought it worth spending 15s.11d. “for carrying Faith Hayley before the Justices, for horse and cart and for the order to carry her off.” On April 20, 1707, she had baptised a fatherless child by the name of John. He died three weeks later. She may have had relatives in Amersham who would not claim her, but whether this was the reason for her unceremonious departure or whether she had forfeited her right to relief because she had not been born there, the parish got rid of her.

In sharp contrast stands the considered fullness and, above all, the accuracy of entries recording baptisms, weddings and burials in the direct line from Thomas and Ellen Hailey. To insist, quite early and consistently, on a distinctive spelling of a family surname implies not only the secure sense of identity of people in a good trade, but also a certain level of literacy.

Amersham had used Lord Cheyne's charity bequest of 1699 to supplement its public grammar school (endowed in 1621 by Canon Thomas Challoner of Windsor). Cheyne's Writing School taught writing and arithmetic, free of charge, to any resident. For a very small fee, reading and spelling could be learned as well, so perhaps it was at Cheyne's that at least one of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Haileys did so. The two brothers William and Thomas, who died within a year of one another in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, between them made reconstructing a pedigree much easier of us than it might otherwise have been, in that each left a will, but more important still is the fact that Thomas personally signed his document, while William, who apparently could not do so, quite literally made his mark in very respectable company. His witnesses penned their own names. They were James Child, owner of the Crown, and his brothers Timothy and Joseph, members of a family well established in Amersham since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, when several “Chyls” appear in the records along with John Penne, gentleman, and they it was who were responsible for “Childs' charity”, a bequest made in 1621. William's will, then, places him in a dignified social milieu.

Not everyone who made a will – or witnessed one – needed to write. An estimated 10-25% of all English people disposed of property in this way, whether or not it amounted to much. It was “a fashion in some families”, explains A.J. Camp of the society of Genealogists in Everyone Has Roots (London, 1978), and it certainly became a habit among the Haileys. This, their literacy, and their associates alone would be enough to set the family apart from many others of similar status. But the first two wills in their line are intriguing for yet another reason. They reflect a type of family strategy adopted by a vanguard in the middle ranks of western European society at that time. William, a mere innkeeper and Thomas, just a glazier, used their modest means to plan not so much for immediate survival – there was nothing very new about that – as for future growth.

It was on August 15, 1712 that William composed his last will and testament. Just four months earlier, his brother had done the same. Read together, the two documents look like the outcome of a family council, bent on consolidating its combined prospects. The fragmenting of property had for too long been the ruin of rich and poor alike. Assets painfully won over two lifetimes spent navigating unsafe currents of social disorder and political upheaval deserved more than mere protection, and people like the Haileys saw that their common resources were also to be exploited; used to carry the family one stage further toward its goals.

Strategies varied among families who took this course. Primogeniture – and potluck for younger sons – was not the inevitable course. A family had only to channel the most fruitful of its hard-won resources in a single direction to guarantee continued capital accumulation. So the senior Haileys arranged something like a fair apportionment between two principal male heirs – another William,

another Thomas – with a distinct bias toward the occupation they somehow, and rightly, sensed would carry their descendants farthest.

William the innkeeper had no heirs of his own body. Back in 1679 a recorded charge of bastardy brought against Alice Todd and a certain William Haley, both of Amersham, may betray a mid-life indiscretion on the part of our victualler, but even that, of course, could not provide him with the legitimate successor denied him in two marriages. His first wife, Mary Burrows, wed in 1657 and dead in 1689, was replaced three years later by the Katherine Edmunds who is named in William's will along with several of her relatives, to whom he was no doubt obligated. It was his nephew and namesake, then, the first son of great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas, whose future was secured by the inn-holder's major assets: the property on Whielden Street.

Brother Thomas, on the other hand, was by now established as a glazier in Wendover although his grown sons were still in Amersham. When his wife, Jane, passed away in 1709, Thomas must have contracted another marriage in the neighbouring town, and to judge by the amount of real estate that he willed back to Wendover in-laws, the new match must have made his small fortune. It was the glazing trade, however, that formed the centrepiece of the Hailey strategy.

Thomas' second son and namesake, described as a labourer, was to inherit the prospering business – on condition that it pass eventually to William the younger, heir-designate of William the innkeeper. Thomas the younger, then, was given a fair start, but it was his brother William whose future was doubly secured. The rest of the children, it seems, were simply left to take care of themselves.

The senior Haileys went further still in their efforts to recreate the direct, patrilineal descent through William the innkeeper that mere biology had denied. Shrewdly, in view of the high mortality of those times, the brothers tried to project their design on to a third generation.

The innkeeper's nephew's eldest son – yet another William and still a minor when the will was drawn up – was separately guaranteed both the Whielden St. property and the glazier's business. But what the family proposed, fate otherwise disposed. In an era when poor nutrition, contagions, convulsions and worms decimated the average family, planning for a third generation was a risky proposition. As it turned out, the two will-makers were lucky. Their careful calculations were not entirely upset, only readjusted by those uncontrollable forces capable of reshuffling an entire population, let alone the family of a country glazier. The Haileys' carefully packaged inheritance descended intact, as the two veterans had wished – but not to a single one of their carefully chosen heirs-presumptive.

Fourteen year-old William, oldest child of William the younger, died in October 1712, even before his great-uncle's will could be proved. No sooner was this done, than the substitute heir, another second son called Thomas, succumbed in his turn. So it was an infant, John, born just one year before the innkeeper made his intentions known, who by a less than even chance became the sole heir and last hope of the Amersham Haileys. As a rule, boys were less likely to survive their early years than girls, but in this case all save one of John's sisters were carried off in the decade between 1706 and 1716 (known to have been years of severe epidemic in England) while his lastborn brother, Christopher, died in 1733. John Hailey beat the odds, the lone male survivor of seven siblings.

Without such equivocal luck, this unintended beneficiary of William the innkeeper and Thomas the glazier would have gone the way of many another younger son in a patrifocal society; the family strategy would have been ruined – and none of us today who tell and read John's story would be here to do so.

**How the Haileys Left the Innkeeping Business  
and Became Coachbuilders as Well as Glaziers:  
the Mystery of the two Thomases  
and  
A Consolidation Comes About that the Two Willmakers  
Could Neither have Planned nor Foreseen**

The junior branch, left in jeopardy by the wills of William and Thomas, meanwhile managed to make its own adjustment. Parish register entries imply that Thomas, son of Thomas of Wendover, followed his father's example and remarried in 1706. Both wife and mother may have been struck down at the same time by the same disease. The new wife's name was Elizabeth Wright and Thomas, predictably, became a wheelwright in what must have been her father's community, the village of Coleshill, close by.

It was a sensible move. Coach-making had a sound, if limited future. Inn-keeping, on the other hand, was a rough and uncertain business, even before railroads replaced staging routes. Amersham in the 1750s had entered into its brief heyday as a coaching town, boasting at one time no less than fifteen inns. Yet by 1759, there were only twelve inns in town; by 1764 eleven, and between 1769 and 1771 the number fluctuated around ten or eleven. In any case, there had always been two classes of hostelry: one respectable and one disreputable, barely legal. Aside from the then almost unnoticed decline of coaching, it is not hard to imagine why a new generation of Haileys chose to exchange the rough and ready style of their 17<sup>th</sup> century forebears for a middle register of decorum and the steadier profits of the building trades. Even the Griffin was put up for sale in 1737. William Child advertised it in the London Evening Post on June 16 and June 18. It was, he averred, an inn "Fit to accommodate Gentlemen....", but he was letting it go, all the same.

The series of Victuallers' Recognizances beginning in 1753 shows no sign then or afterward of any Hailey in the business. The heirs of William, like those of his friend James Child, must have abandoned inn-keeping and sold the Saracen's Head. When it closed down in 1974, the place was just a rough squalid pub. Who knows? It may never have been much else, in the years of slow decline. (The summer of 1980 saw it refurbished for a new and more stylish way of life closer, perhaps, to the way it once had been when it was William's pride).

William's fine new house on Whielden Street, though, did remain in the family, according to the will of John Hailey, proved in 1755, and to those of both his son (1783) and his daughter-in-law (1804). Meanwhile, another Hailey household had appeared on Amersham High Street, not far from its intersection with Whielden Street. In the sixth house from that corner, in 1742, lived someone called Thomas Hailey. Next door was an "emporium" and on the ninth lot stood the house of "widow Hailey".

The street map locating them so precisely was compiled from records of the Shardeloes estate, listing the squire's lessees within the parliamentary borough, as of 1742: 95 out of 209 houses in town. The purpose? To show how the Tyrwhitt Drakes, aside from owning most of the surrounding land, assured their perpetual re-election to the House of Commons by using their influence as landlords and patrons of almost every voter in the community. Even those who voted independently "by scot and lot", as ancient custom put it, did not dream of opposing the squire. In any case, by 1760, he "owned" a clear majority of the votes: Amersham was one of England's notorious "pocket" boroughs, with the High Street Haileys safely in the Drakes' pocket. But who could those High Street Haileys have been? There was no Thomas in John Hailey's family in 1742.

The message on most gravestones in St. Mary's churchyard is by now quite obliterated, but out of those few that can still be deciphered one alone, by some chance, not only speaks of a Hailey but does

so in lettering particularly well preserved for its age. Beneath lies a certain Thomas, buried in 1809 when he was 71, who must therefore have been born in 1738. And of all the Thomas Haileys in the 18<sup>th</sup> century registers, the only one baptized locally in that year was the second son of a “wheeler” of Amersham, also called Thomas. Would this not have been the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Wright of Coleshill and, if so, likewise the grandson of Thomas the glazier of Wendover and great-nephew of William the innkeeper? The Coleshill Haileys, like their Amersham cousins, are clearly distinguished from others in the records by their occupation, and they repeatedly bestow the names William and Thomas on their offspring. There seems little doubt that the Thomas living on the High Street in 1742 must have been one of John's Coleshill cousins, back in town to benefit from its coaching trade, and no doubt operating out of the shop next door. It is conveniently adjacent to an alleyway that once must have led directly toward the clutter of sheds behind the old inn on Whielden Street.

The will of William the innkeeper was about to exceed its own expectations. Frustrated in its specific intent, it had already been fulfilled in its essential aim when John Hailey I and John Hailey II became William's ultimate heirs, and a single male descendant gained sole access to the family's major assets. What neither William nor his brother Thomas knew was that these would one day also include what the excluded heir of Thomas had managed to pull in on his own.

Thomas, the wheelwright's son, lost his wife Elizabeth thirty five years before he himself was laid to rest beside her under one of the quaint barrel vaults favoured at St. Mary's. Circumstances and the parish registers suggest that his children's ties with their mother's kin over-rode those in Amersham. Sons who seem to have been his, born in 1773 and 1775, were called James and Stephen, names common in Hailey families both of Coleshill and of Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, not far off. Although “Hannah Hailey, wife of James Hailey, who died Feb. 20, 1814 aged 43 years” lies in the family grave, the widower and his brother seem to have left town, at least before they grew old and died. The High Street properties passed, somehow, into the family of John the glazier.

By 1783 one of the High St. buildings appears in the Land Tax Assessment as the freehold property of John Hailey, while the other house was leased from the Squire, in the name of Thomas Hailey. Since John Hailey II died in June of that same year, those men were almost certainly his two heirs. Paying 4s. in the pound on a house valued for tax purposes at 9s. was not hard for great-great-uncle John, for the Churchwardens' account books record that in 1785 he exchanged the not inconsiderable sum of £3.10s.9d. for scrap materials belonging to the parish: a fire engine and some “old lead” that he probably put to good use in his trade.

Ten years later, the assessors raised the valuation on the freehold property to 10s. Both John III and his wife had been buried just a few months earlier, and the current owner was “Mrs. Hailey,” no doubt John's widowed mother Ann – still only fifty-six years old and destined to live until 1802. Her will, proved in 1804, confirms the identity of that Thomas Hailey who was leasing the second property from Squire Drake. Not to be confused with several other Thomas Haileys of his generation, this was none other than great-great-grandfather Thomas, whose life course would so dramatically alter the style of the Amersham family.

## **CHAPTER 4: REVOLUTION**

A single life may link past and present: the first of the modern John Haileys did so. A single generation may speed the pace of change: the Haileys of the 1780s and 1790s did that. Their lives entirely recast the family's painfully hesitant pattern of status ascent, decline and re-ascent; altered the terms on which it manoeuvred on the fringes of the middle class, and shook with the momentum of a revolution – sexual, social and political – overtaking virtually all of Western Europe and its transatlantic frontier in those decades. The force of that upheaval is still not yet quite spent.

### **Ambivalence toward Dissent Becomes a Thing of the Past, and As Radical Religion Becomes More Respectable and More Appealing, the Haileys Make Important Social Alliances**

In Amersham, the winds of change first blew from a familiar quarter, but this time the Haileys ran with them all the way. Amersham's independent sects were long established, solidly entrenched and widely supported. They had been a force to be reckoned with in 17<sup>th</sup> century politics and the Toleration Act of 1689 had built Dissent into the Whig system of government. But in the 1780s a rising tide of fresh religious sentiment swelled to an evangelical surge, sweeping the entire country and turning the anarchy of Old Dissent into organized Nonconformity. Sects became churches.

Most would be Congregational or Methodist, but Amersham's radical traditions included a strong dose of the doctrine that baptism should be performed on adults, not infants. It was the Baptist faith that became Amersham's alternative orthodoxy.

As early as 1703 a new Rector at St. Mary's had felt bound to preach “for some time”, as he complained in the second parish register, “upon the subject of Infant Baptism, the Anabaptists being then numerous”. By 1728, advocates of adult baptism had made such inroads that St. Mary's was celebrating communion only four times a year, for a paltry forty people. Entering the Baptist orbit was probably no sudden decision by the Haileys. The day did come, though, when it was suddenly catalytic.

Once Baptists, more so than other dissenters, realized that spreading the word was at least as important as preserving their purity, many more people than before were made both welcome and socially comfortable in the fold. The Church of England's Sunday School movement, first organized in Gloucester in 1781 to stem the rising tide of Dissent, arrived barely in time to do so in Amersham, five years later. By 1784 the new Baptist Church had arisen behind the 15<sup>th</sup> century King's Arms on the High Street, memorable for its unusual design and visible witness to the growing material power of the Baptist presence.



The second John Hailey, though baptised and buried in St. Mary's, named a dissenting “Minister of the Gospel” as his friend and the executor of his will, made in 1783. Ann Adams, who had married this great-nephew of William the innkeeper, lies buried in the old Baptist cemetery alongside an ill-fated grand-child, the 18 year-old Sophia Ann. Theirs is one of the few headstones remaining, let alone intact, in the abandoned church close. It is at this point that the Haileys disappear from the parish registers, only to reappear at once in the meticulous membership records of the Baptist Church.

This was much more than a change of faith. It was a bold change of direction for the Haileys, clearly signalled by a novel set of Christian names for the generation born in the 1780s and after. Local families with which the Haileys now link themselves seem already ensconced in a social niche slightly above them: the Mileses, the Sharps, the Mortons, all substantial tradespeople, and later on the Axtens and the Grimsdales. The traditional repertoire of names is enriched not only by some new favourites – Charles, Henry, Sophia – but also by a taste for double given names, just then coming into fashion. Surnames used as first names invoke both marital and baptismal connections.

Both the Grimsdale (Grimsdell) and the Morton (Moreton) families are found in the Amersham registers as early as 1618. A Grimsdale joined with the Childs in their charity bequest of 1621 and the name is perpetuated in Grimsdell's Corner and Grimsdell's Lane, north of the old town. A large stone slab laid in 1739 on a 15<sup>th</sup> century farm in nearby Little Chalfont names several family members buried there, including a Richard “who purchased This Estate and died in 1657” and his son, who must be the Richard named along with the William Haileys junior and senior in Amersham's Poll Book of 1705. Unlike the Haileys, both Grimsdales and Mortons qualified for the dubious honour of paying subsidies to Charles II in the late 1670s. In 1757 a marriage was celebrated between an Amersham Morton and a “John Grimsdale, gentleman” of Chalfont St. Giles, where another Morton-Grimsdale alliance was made in 1789, and where Mary Morton married Thomas Hailey in 1793.

Nonconformity, unlike Old Dissent, was not radical, but liberal and progressive. It expressed the aspirations of frustrated middle class people who at this very hour in France had taken a more dangerous path. The most significant revolution of modern times broke out in Paris in 1789. By the 1790s, France was engulfed in the Terror, a spectacle that sent shivers of dread through English people of every station. Yet the storm across the Channel had been raised by winds of social, economic and political change from which there was no refuge anywhere, neither in the American colonies nor in one European country after another where a new middle class in a burst of growth demanded its share of power. A maelstrom of new ideas set every group treading upon another's heels.

The speed with which the Western world moved toward modernity in the space of just a few decades can hardly be exaggerated. Not a village in Europe was unaffected. Small wonder that in Amersham, Thomas and Mary Hailey joined the revolution.

*The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time of hope and horror. There could be no return from the trend set by the American Revolution of 1776 or the cataclysmic French Revolution of 1789, from Stevenson's steam engine or from the dramatic surge of population growth that intensified every human activity and visibly altered the environment in Europe.*

*Few structures in the West pre-date these decades. Imaginative horticulture and field enclosure banished the traditional landscape. Elegant Georgian buildings sprang up on both sides of the Atlantic. London grew enormous. And in 1770, Australia was discovered.*

*From the 1750s, mortality had plummeted as science began to transform agriculture and medicine. Smallpox was doomed in 1796 by Jenner's vaccine. Favoured earlier than Europeans by abundant food, health and prosperity, Americans led the way to earlier marriage and larger families, and though widespread birth control soon became evident, illegitimacy everywhere took a sharp upward turn.*

*Economic activity in the 1770s and 1780s was volatile, spreading an uneven prosperity. Most women, married or single, had to work for pay and vast new prisons and asylums immobilized increasing numbers of both sexes deemed deviant or insane. But, for a majority, rising expectations and unprecedented mobility undermined inefficient, bankrupt old regimes on the Continent and shook conventional Whig and Tory politics in England.*

*Enlightenment philosophy and the Romantic mood alike found a deep and wide public response, captured in the plea for "life liberty and the pursuit of happiness" of the American Declaration of Independence. The natural rights of man were defined in a flurry of constitution writing; the rights of woman by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1789. In practice, inalienable human rights were restricted to the male citizen and focussed on property. Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, cornerstone of modern economic theory, had appeared in 1776.*

*In an age that cultivated both the natural and the supernatural in a spirit of free and rational, moral as well as sceptical inquiry, periodicals and academies proliferated, knowledge was crammed into encyclopaedias, travellers roamed the globe and the novel began its meteoric career. Vampires and gloomy ruins stirred the imagination of a generation memorable not only for Voltaire and Diderot, Rousseau and Goethe, Jane Austen and Beethoven, Mesmer and John Wesley and the Marquis de Sade, but equally for its host of obscure inventors and pharmacists, antiquarians and diarists; for its crowds – storming the Bastille, overflowing political clubs – and for the gruesome novelty of mass mechanical execution by guillotine in Robespierre's Reign of Terror.*

*France exported the principles of its revolution to every part of Europe and overseas by means of the first national standing army. By the end of the century, Napoleon held the entire Continent in an iron and seemingly invincible grip. But the French Empire was to be as ephemeral as the fluid and sensuous lines of its fashion and décor. Briefly and giddily, women flaunted the diaphanous fabrics and daring décolleté of the French court, but reaction was on its way. In the century ahead, it was the moral and reforming, not the anarchic and experimental tones of this irreversible revolution that would prevail.*

### **The Haileys Detonate a Population Bomb**

The marriage of Thomas and Mary Morton Hailey in 1793 – year II of the French Revolution – had a truly dramatic impact on their own obscure family, but the significance of that impact is far wider. This couple unwittingly helped to fuel not only the modern population explosion but also an acrid debate among 20<sup>th</sup> century historians, some of whom insist that the political and economic upheavals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century were accompanied by an equally dramatic revolution in sentiment and sexual expression. While others remain sceptical, the experience of Mary and Thomas Hailey tends to confound those doubters.



The couple's outsize family sets them apart even from their relatives and contemporaries John Hailey and Elizabeth Sofia Sharp, married a few years before in 1788. In startling contrast with John and Elizabeth's small family of three (only one of whom lived, to marry another Morton) looms the total of fourteen infants to whom Mary Hailey gave birth and raised to full maturity. The little completed families of the three John Haileys, like those of William the younger (b. 1670) and Thomas the glazier (b. 1647) typify the stagnant demographic patterns of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The big and healthy family of Thomas and Mary, on the other hand, heralds the onset of modern, exponential population growth.

Did the fact that Mary regularly produced a child, at an average interval of 16.88 months over fourteen years, really mean that this pair were much more sexually active than any of their known ancestors? Or does the long list of live births and survivals only reflect the improvements in natal care certainly taking place at that time? Mary's very large family could also simply reflect a younger age at marriage than that of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century foremothers. That would have increased the span of her fertile years and, automatically, the size of her family, just as a greater life expectancy extended the childbearing period at the other end of her life. The date of Mary's birth has not yet been found, but we do know that her sister-in-law and co-religionist, Elizabeth Sofia Sharp, was married at twenty-two, and that even her mother-in-law, Ann Adams Hailey, had already pioneered the trend in 1759 by marrying at the age of twenty-one.

One circumstance suggests that this was a marriage in which sentiment and sexual harmony were involved in a new way. Whereas middle-class women in Western Europe had for some time been having fewer babies, Mary Hailey's conceptions occurred with regular frequency. In fact, they happened with increasing frequency – and this was unusual in her social class. During her twenty years of child-bearing, birth control was far in the future, but if neither Mary nor Thomas were choosing sexual restraint – as seems evident – they were taking one small step toward our present-day sexual equality.

### **The Family Becomes Politically Active Again**

Even in rural Amersham, society braced itself for yet another revolution.

An imminent industrial age called for new motivations and adjustments, keyed to the primacy of self-help. Nonconformity fostered and rewarded it. So did the movement for political reform. By 1815, Thomas Hailey was a local official, groomed as well as burdened by the increasing demand for responsible government. Power that the oligarchic revolution of 1688 had eased away from men of the Haileys' standing came once more within their reach, if not yet quite within their grasp. According to the Buckinghamshire Poll Book of 1784, a Richard Hailey voted in Beaconsfield and a Thomas Haley in Monks Risborough, but never a Hailey in Amersham. Even by 1790, only about one hundred of its inhabitants qualified for the franchise, and in 1793 the assessed value on the family's freehold property must still have been too low. All the same Thomas Hailey would arrive close to the apex of the local power structure by 1798. Amersham's social pyramid is visible in the "Posse Comitatus" returns for that year, its list of householders registered for military service including 155 labourers as against one "gentleman", one attorney, three surgeons – and four plumbers and glaziers. One of those had to be great-great-grandfather Thomas.

Was he satisfied? It so happens that he is the first ancestor to speak directly to his descendants out of the past, but the faint echo of his voice sounds a wary and defensive note.

The first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which Thomas and Mary Hailey's family grew up, were swept by a tide of political and social reform. But major reform movements rarely, if ever, spring fully

mature out of a bad situation. The way is prepared by a period of awakening to new needs. The first response, though genuine enough, may simply prove inadequate, and great-great-grandfather Thomas seems to have been part of that general inadequacy.

He was one of an army of unpaid local officials elected by neighbours at a parish meeting and known for centuries as “petty constables.” Thomas represented Amersham in the division of Burnham – one of the three Chiltern “Hundreds” - a very ancient unit of local government that was being pressed into a new kind of service. As new forms of peace-keeping, of public health and welfare, and of representative government struggled to emerge, he and his colleagues shouldered a multitude of old-fashioned and onerous as well as unpopular duties: keeping the stocks and whipping post in order; arresting vagrants, drunkards, swearers, eavesdroppers, and those out late at night; reporting the building of new cottages without permission and the sale of unlicensed beer; watching out for false weights and measures; finding apprenticeships for poor children and keeping roads in repair. But the new prosperity was stimulating county government to reorganize and intensify its own control. The “presentments”, or reports, that constables had always been required to make to the Buckinghamshire Assizes began to be more fully and more regularly recorded and they tell us that county officials were giving special attention to behaviour in the ale-houses and to keeping the weights and measures honest.

It is hard not to hear a hint of querulous negativism in the echo of Thomas Hailey's brief words before the justices on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1815:

“There is none that I know of that buys or sells by false or illegal weights, but with regard to the Beer Measures in general I cannot venture to make the same answers”.

Whatever he meant to imply, it had not prevented his signature from appearing on the license issued to the Crown Inn on September 6. The framed document hangs in its lobby.

More typically, constables denounced tippling on the Sabbath, named names, and made positive statements, one way or the other, about cheating. Constable Hailey's non-committal response suggests the same evasive mood in which his successor in 1821 remarked that

“...several of the inhabitants of this town have been convicted in penalties on the complaints of the inspectors appointed by the Justices, but on my knowledge I have no complaint to make.”

A certain lack of enthusiasm for enforcing the rules might be expected from people like Thomas, whose right to vote was at issue in 1832. But he was also more subtly immobilized, caught as never before between the claims of family and community. Both were large and ambitious. Both were competing for his energy. He may have been relieved to see “Bobby” Peel's new national constabulary take over during the 1830s.

As for his children, it was only a question of time before they put Amersham behind them.

## **CHAPTER 5: PROGRESS OR PERISH - THE VICTORIANS**

By the 1850s, Amersham was no longer big or stirring enough for the oversize family of Thomas and Mary Morton Hailey. Seven surviving sons and at least two single daughters left home, never to return, and a single family rooted to the spot for over three centuries became several distinct families in less than one. Ironically, though record-keeping was centralized in England from 1837, it is far harder to visualize the Hailey family as a whole thenceforth than in earlier times, with only spotty parish records to rely on.

To understand how all this happened we have to see life as the Victorians did, and Amersham as it looked to them: a place rather different from the carefully renovated tourist attraction of more than one hundred and fifty years – and many changes – later.

Far from confessing doubt and failure, sentiment and nostalgia worked for the Victorians in harness with novelty and optimism, to promote an ideal of invincible progress. Amersham's mud-filled thoroughfare, churned by sheep and horses, was a daily reminder, to folk peering from two strings of unmodish dwellings, less of a picturesque and splendid past than of the way out. Picturesque and splendid in their eyes were the brand-new villas springing up row upon row, decade by decade, to transform sleepy hamlets and fill up empty land on the beckoning road to London, or along the coasts. It is enough, even now, to look down the empty High Street early on a rainy morning to imagine the mood of great-grandfather Charles and all those great-great-aunts and great-great-uncles. Unlike so many of their predecessors and less fortunate contemporaries, they were not forced to leave. Their gradual exodus appears as calculated as it was delayed. Faced with the classic dilemma of any large but close-knit Victorian family of modest prospects, both the sons and the daughters of Thomas and Mary Hailey steered cautiously between the security of well-trying habit and ascendant social ideals of initiative and risk. The enduring traditions of the old home were not rejected. They were simply transplanted to novel settings.

Nor did the generation raised by Mary and Thomas Hailey turn its back abruptly on the parent community. The young Haileys straggled across their immediate environs to outposts midway between their old home and the metropolis, guided by marriage ties that first their parents and later on they themselves established. Irreversible as the consequences were, they can hardly have seemed so at the time. The mutual isolation in which satellite Hailey clans were developing a hundred years later would have seemed unthinkable in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That isolation, all the same, was a logical outcome of the family's enduring sense that it owed something to itself. It is a paradox at the very core of its strength.

*In retrospect, the climactic event of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the American Civil War (1860-65). In the wake of a staggering toll of life taken by its modern style of combat, a fledgling federal republic in North America became an industrial nation. Swollen by immigration from every part of the globe, the new society ceased to be an appendage of Europe and, as counterparts in the southern hemisphere struggled toward the same goal, the United States embarked on a long ascent to world power. Meanwhile, in China, Westerners forced concessions and annexations in a pattern set by the Opium War of 1841. The Manchu dynasty steadily lost ground to revolutionary and anti-foreign movements. By the 1860s, the birth rate had turned downward in the West, and British hegemony began to wane. Britain had emerged as the first power in Europe with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. On the seas, world trade flourished under the Pax Britannica secured by her naval supremacy. Carefully balanced alliances and periodic conferences averted general war among Europe's five major powers, and although the Crimean War (1854-56) closed the phase of greatest security, that remote and localized conflict was the only international disturbance in a full century of peace guaranteed by the "Concert of Europe".*

*Gripped by a mood of grim reaction to the excesses of the French Revolution, the great powers raised*

*iron defences against the claims of its legates to political democracy, nationalism and socialism. The Concert's aspirations echoed in the rise of the symphony orchestra and the Viennese waltz, but the gaiety of glittering ballrooms served also to muffle discord. Independence movements threatening to dismember the "sick man of Europe" - the Ottoman Turkish Empire - and to endanger the balance between covetous powers were encouraged by leaders of literary romanticism like Byron and Shelley. Advancing industrial capitalism, along with uncontrolled urban growth, sharpened class conflict.*

*British legislative reform in the 1830s and 1840s removed the worst features of the early factory system and completed the transfer of power from a landed aristocracy to the urban middle classes, but ruthless repression of a revolutionary wave that swept the Continent in 1848 drove a flood of political refugees to England and the United States. Meanwhile, the standard of living for many people rose to unprecedented heights, despite chronic poverty at the margin, a rising tide of prostitution, and the advent of new diseases - cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis. Everywhere the working class - which still included most women - stayed highly stratified, its culture as deeply rooted in tradition and religion as in politics. Classics of suspense and social realism by novelists like Gaskell, Eliot, the Brontë sisters, Dickens, Zola and Balzac faithfully mirrored the tensions of class and sex in this half-century of free thought and behaviour by both sexes. Its exuberant, eclectic spirit, and its faith in scientific systems and utopias inspired both the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London's new Crystal Palace and the Communist Manifesto, published in Paris in 1848. On each side of the Atlantic, architecture and decoration went beyond the mere revival of past styles to try combining the best features of each. Conventional knowledge was challenged in every field, from language to natural science, but nowhere more dramatically and fatefully than by Darwin's Origin of Species, published in 1859. And an epochal trend toward the full emancipation of women approached its climax, helped and hindered by an exaggerated reverence for their alleged moral superiority.*

*Popular literature of the 1840s and the 1850s sentimentalized wife and mother as "Angel or the Home", and family life as a refuge from the working world, even for the poor. It was the Victorians who turned Christmas into a domestic festival, immortalized by Dickens' tale of Scrooge and Tiny Tim. Yet an unusually high proportion of women (10-15%) never married. And although the line between male and female activities became ever more rigidly drawn, creating separate public and private spheres of life, Florence Nightingale's Crimean war service made a new place in public life for women as professional, military nurses and feminism matured into a political movement as American women began to claim the right to vote. Early Victorian society was neither monolithic, bland, bigoted nor utterly repressive.*

### **Great Expectations**

Pre-industrial families had kept themselves intact either by tying all providers to the home and offering each a share of the resources, or by pushing fledglings out of the nest. As often as earlier Haileys had veered toward the second option, death any times saved them the trouble, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century their descendants found it much easier to become agents of change rather than victims of circumstance.

It does not look as though the resources of Thomas and Mary Hailey were overstrained after their eldest son and daughter had received their traditional portions. The glazier's business went to Thomas Morton, and the dowry that fell to Eliza must have been attractive enough, for she married quite well locally, as did her daughters later on, out of town. Even so, the High Street home continued for years to support four unmarried daughters, and until John (the second son) met an untimely end at the age of 36, three of their lifelong bachelor brothers as well. Ephraim had set himself up as a plumber in Great Missenden by 1851, with his sister Ann keeping house for him, but the census takers in Amersham found Maria and Sophia still in the old house along with their widowed mother and a servant. Although no trace of any of these people can be found in town a decade later, the two remaining single brothers and at least one of the spinsters, Maria, were back in 1871, but shortly afterwards they all turn up in Rickmansworth, maintaining a genteel style of life.

Fanny, who was visiting her niece there when the enumerators came around in 1871, could have moved away from Amersham as early as 1840s. At some point she acquired three freehold cottages in Chalfont St. Giles and leasehold premises in London: on the Vauxhall Bridge Road, as well as in Kensington at Hyde Park. Three of her nieces, all unmarried, lived there, renting rooms. Then, in 1875, her younger sister, Sophia, who may have left Amersham in the 1850s, willed to Fanny the contents of her house at No. 1 Portland Villas in Watford: "...books, plate pictures, china, horses, carts and carriages...sums of money...securities, stocks, etc.", all tangible evidence both of the family's substance and of its mutual supportiveness – not to mention the rugged independence of that often maligned or pitied character, the Victorian spinster.

No doubt the all too visibly low horizons of an ever widening circle of distant relatives – farm workers, lacemakers, servants, jobbers, almshouse denizens and elderly lodgers – reminded the High Street Haileys that there had never been room in town for more than one successful family of that name. But for those who already had a slight edge, the Napoleonic Wars created quite exceptional prospects. Between 1790 and the 1820s, England enjoyed its last great agricultural boom. Transcontinental warfare had generated high food prices and profits, new farms proliferated as old ones were reorganized, while rural people not directly engaged in farming could afford to consider new options.

Exactly how Amersham responded to expansion is not clear, for it was still in many ways a conservative place whose main concern was, as it had been for centuries, to keep the Poor Rate down. Yet even with railroads supplanting stage routes and the town's importance as a coaching station slowly fading, the shift was not yet obvious. As late as 1862 a through coach to London still called daily.

Stagnation cannot have been what drove the Haileys away. For them, there was something else to consider. Many people were bestirring themselves, as the Haileys did, not just because population doubled between 1801 and 1831 but because Nonconformist growth had a major impact on the generation that matured between 1790 and 1850 – one already marked and moulded by the French Revolution, and a crucial one in English history. Nonconformists, as a rule, were neither dour nor inhibited but on the contrary, rather lively and gregarious people. It was the Baptists, though, who went through the most profound transformation from an inward turning to an outward turning group; from "chapel" to "Church." As they turned from a closed and narrow sect into an open, influential and expansive social group with a membership of some 50,000 by the 1840s, their "born again" offspring were encouraged not just to multiply but to begin new and independent lives in fresh communities. This, then, was the old religion, in new-minted form, that the Haileys had embraced.

The third and fourth of old Thomas Hailey's sons were the first to take the two county highroads to its borders: Alfred heading northward for Stony Stratford; Henry Grimsdale eastward for Rickmansworth and the short hop through Uxbridge to north London. Two new branch families were founded in this way. The other modern lines – those in Essex, in Suffolk, and in Hampshire-Surrey-South London – all owe their existence to just one of the Hailey brothers: great-grandfather Charles. He was the one who headed for the coast.

### **The Wolverton-Stony Stratford Branch**

Several of Thomas junior's brothers, as well as some of his nephews, followed the family's traditional calling, but not all of them were content to do so in the traditional way. Alfred Hailey was one of those who took the old trade to new heights, in new directions.

He married Sarah Trail in a chapel ceremony at St. Pancras, Middlesex and they had six children in

Stony Stratford between 1835 and 1846. In 1849, when their second son was born Alfred was still calling himself a plumber but by 1851 he was a “builder”. He was also a widower. Ten years later with a second wife, Caroline (who hailed from Essex), he had moved his family from the old home on Church Street in Stony Stratford to Elm House on the Wolverton Road in Potterspurty. In 1872 the contents of his will left them all comfortably off.

### **Riverside Interlude: Rickmansworth**

By 1841, Henry Grimsdale Hailey, plumber and glazier, was enjoying the beauties of “the Island” in Rickmansworth, where his youngest girl was born in 1838. Why Henry took her back to Amersham for baptism in the parish church is not clear. Charles Axten, as well as three more brothers and a sister, Mary Miles, had been christened there too, but that was before their father had left town. In those days marriages still had to be performed in the established church in order to be legitimate, but since Henry Grimsdale's parents had raised him in a religion that formally rejected infant baptism, the christenings at St. Mary's could either mean that some or all of the Haileys were not “strict Baptists”, or else that Henry Grimsdale was one of the first of many modern Haileys to rejoin the established church.

Just as the double names that he and two of his children always used, spell out hopes of advancement, through the marriage alliances to which those names defer, the leafy waterways of Rickmansworth whisper of the younger Haileys' longings for a more urbane style of life. Little Rickmansworth, stagnant for centuries amidst undrained water meadows not many miles from Amersham, had suddenly begun to outpace and to outclass it. The quiet charms of a rural market town could not compete with the cachet of a peaceful and dignified riverside suburb. There, in due course, Henry Grimsdale's niece, Sophia Ann Scott, married an income tax collector. There, too, an eccentric coterie of aunts and uncles from Amersham assembled: Fanny, the woman of property; her sister Maria; Ephraim, the former plumber, glazier and painter, and George, a “retired herbist”, each dignified in his will by the honorific title “gentleman”.

If, as later family rumour has it, one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Haileys was a watercolour artist, a retired man of independent means talented enough to exhibit his work in public, such a man could well have been one of these brothers. For a painter – of the one sort or the other – Rickmansworth and the adjacent village of Mill End must have been an ideal environment, even if its lush and leafy waterways, its subtle twilights did also mean “...mud, both plentiful and sticky.” The local newspaper, filled with complaints about drainage, is nonetheless proof of the prestige and promise, despite such drawbacks, of a place big enough to start a weekly of its own in 1896, decades before many another town, including Amersham, could boast of much more than a broadsheet.

West End Villas, where Ephraim lived, at Number 3, can no longer be found. Nearly new then, they must have been swept away in the great wave of development engulfing his bucolic retreat around the turn of the century. George's Bill End residence that his widowed niece, Sophia Ann Scott Belch, also called home cannot be identified now, even if it still exists, because in so secluded a community no specific address was given or needed. Mill End's fishponds and paper mill survive, but its Baptist Church has been rebuilt and the shells of its Georgian and early Victorian homes have either been replaced by modern housing or abandoned, in their forlorn elegance, to decay.

### **The North London Branch: A Change of Direction**

Not a single one of Henry Grimsdale Hailey's children stayed in Rickmansworth. Charles Axten, who moved to Watford, did follow his father into the building trades, but his two brothers became grocers, like their uncle Harry Scott. It was from him that young Frederick, as a shop boy in Amersham, learned the business that sustained the Haileys of north London for the better part of a century.

Neither trade slowed down the “gentrification” process, though. While working as a decorator in Piccadilly, Charles Axten married the daughter of a “Gentleman” from Kentish Town, and when Frederick remarried in 1880, the registrar described his father, Henry Grimsdale, in the same fashion.

By November 1868, at the latest, Henry Hailey was a grocer and cheesemonger living at No. 3, Newmarket Terrace, off the York Road in Kentish Town. His wife was the daughter of a watch-case maker from Rickmansworth. Both of his wife's parents were living with the growing family in 1871. But like the rest of the new Hailey homes, no trace of Newmarket Terrace now remains, for the face of London north of Regent's Park was ceaselessly transformed between the 1830s and the century's end, through speculation and revolving land use. Almost as fast as regional railways carried country people to work and affluence in the city, metropolitan lines emptied it of refugees from soot and crowding, seeking a new ideal, the “garden suburb.” Nearly new residential districts were obliterated by rampant railroad tracks or given over to commercial use and blight. The trail of the north London Haileys grows faint amid these leap-frogging populations.

Henry Grimsdale's youngest son, Thomas, a person “of weak intellect,” remained in the care of his unmarried sister, living in Wood Green with her parrot. Emily left income property in London's Portman Square and in Kingston, too, as well as her villa on Truro Road. Thomas survived her in the charge of an old servant, the bird on a legacy of twelve pounds a year.

### **The Carrot and the Stick: Great-grandfather Charles and the Victorian Ideal of Self-reliance**

By far and away the heaviest branch of the family tree was laden through the efforts of Thomas Hailey's sixth son, Charles, another plumber and glazier, and by Charles' many children and grandchildren. His wife was a sailor's daughter. Their children, born between 1838 and 1850 in places as far apart as Dover and Cranford, in Middlesex, as well as in Amersham, wandered in their turn even farther afield: to Berkshire, to Suffolk, and to Hampshire. Along with the family's traditional values and training they seem to have inherited itchy feet and an idiosyncratic turn of mind. It is impossible now to discover whether such traits descended through great-grandmother Emma Colyer, or whether her seafaring heritage merely strengthened attitudes nourished among the Haileys back in their native Amersham. Victorian society itself, in any event, encouraged that very combination of wilfulness, respect for the three R's of education, and aversion to public charity manifested by so many of Charles Hailey's progeny.

“Whatever it is, they're agin' it!” This is the way their current doyen, Albert Martin, sums up his kin, past and present: wary and defensive, like Thomas the constable. After all, the family had long occupied an equivocal slot in Amersham, especially during the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by that time the role of loyal opposition, played with dutiful reserve, no longer satisfied them. A crisis in the town's education system and a drastic reordering of its welfare structure must have induced the younger Haileys to value independence first and foremost.

The Victorian era's ever more private, hearth-centred family had begun to cede traditional community burdens to a centralizing national government, with particularly dire results for the very poor. Several centuries of field enclosure throughout England had left more and more farmers and labourers without land or work, and in the Vale of Aylesbury and its environs the situation was especially desperate. The region was, and still is, so much more obviously suitable for sheep than for the plough. It was at Speenhamland, near Amersham, in 1795 that the Elizabethan system of “outdoor relief” for the poor had first been adjusted by tying the disbursement of Poor Rate funds to the price of a loaf of bread. In 1834, however, a newly enfranchised and cost-conscious middle class, incensed by the Speenhamland system, restructured England's public health and welfare system entirely. “Outdoor relief” was abolished. Men, women and children seeking aid were compelled to enter separate workhouses, harsh

and repugnant enough to deter all but those with no possible alternative from resorting to public charity.

A century later, great-grandchildren of Thomas Hailey whose own experience of economic distress was limited to unemployment insurance – what they called “the dole” - continued to voice an irrational dread of “the workhouse”. My own mother, a granddaughter of Charles of Dover, had never to my knowledge been to Amersham, much less walked down Whielden Street, past the Saracen's Head, toward the austere, grey, neo-Gothic Poor Law Union Workhouse built in 1835 around the old Tudor House of Correction. Nor, so far as I know, had any of Minnie's siblings ever seen the exterior, so forbidding even in its graceful proportions, of an institution intolerant of riots like those that once ensued among the poor women and children housed at Chesham Bois and Chalfont St. Giles. None of the Haileys' direct forebears had been among the workhouse Guardians, nor do their “Proceedings” refer to the family in any way. Yet my mother's generation, doubtless absorbing an oral tradition, were indelibly imprinted with an existential terror of the place.

A person's best defence, they counselled, was a healthy respect for work and education. “Charity,” said Minnie Hailey firmly, “begins at home.” Her signature looks uncannily like that of Thomas Hailey.

### **Tom Hailey's Schooldays**

Frederick, youngest of Thomas and Mary Morton Hailey's sons, was discovered by the census enumerators of 1851 at Brent Lodge Ladies School in Hanwell, Middlesex. Twenty-six pupils there were learning English, French and music from Ann, Frederick's wife, and from three assistant teachers, with the help of a nurse, a Scottish cook and two housemaids. Frederick's eldest daughter was “quite laid aside by illness”, but her three sisters, ranging in age from ten to five were part of the student body. A decade later, when the school enrolled only ten scholars the roster included the Haileys' cousin Ada Belch of Mill End, but that link with Rickmansworth did not guarantee close contact with the rest of the family. Brent Lodge School fades from view. Later informants vaguely recall it only as being “somewhere on the South coast”. Nonetheless, our fleeting glimpse of Frederick's academy brings the Victorian Haileys momentarily into sharper focus.

Frederick, who throughout described himself as a house decorator and plumber, had contracted a second marriage in 1849, in a Nonconformist chapel, with the daughter of a Gloucestershire surgeon. The accomplished 35 year-old spinster, who happened to be living in Amersham at the time, joined Frederick in a productive life that combined the skills of hand and mind. In so doing, they pursued the educational goals both of Frederick's family and of his birthplace.

It was not just a matter of literacy, for men in the Hailey family had been placing their signature on documents since the time of great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Thomas. Much more unusual was their evident commitment to raising and marrying educated women. Sophia's books; her sister-in-law's school; Emma Colyer's signature on a birth certificate in 1846, at a time when many women still made an “x”, and Ann Hailey's name inscribed on her will in 1799, a full four generations before the National Education Act of 1870, all witness the family's enlightened standards. What is more, its long-standing habit of will-making implies a certain self-conscious setting and achieving of goals that also happens to be the hallmark of formal training. This should not be too surprising. For a small country town, Amersham offered unusual opportunities to learn.

The rudiments of an education for both girls and boys had been available to social classes other than the landed elite as early as 1699, when Lord Cheyne founded his Writing School. Challoner's was a Latin grammar school, as its trustees took pains to emphasize in the new regulations of 1826. The Church furnished its premises and personnel, with the charity itself paying their expenses, but in



adjacent rooms, under the Cheyne bequest, as the Charity Commissioners reported in 1832,

“All children of parents resident either in the parish of Amersham (including Coleshill) or that of Chesham Bois ..... are taught writing and arithmetic without any charge, except 1d. a week for pens and ink; but as they all, in fact, learn reading and spelling, they each pay 3d. a week besides for that instruction, the parents providing the books and paying sums .....for fuel.....”

so that the operation of the two schools seems to have been indistinguishable, in practice. Fuel charges for the Writing School were 2s.6d. a year, the same as those for attending Challoner's, whose master also required 1s.3d. a week from the parents, collectively for cleaning the rooms.

Not surprisingly, Amersham's Nonconformist presence put strong pressure on the local hierarchy to respond more effectively to middle class needs. So while Nonconformists later provided their own alternatives (Ebenezer West's school, founded in 1829, and the British School, dating from 1842) Challoner's between 1826 and 1830 taught “commercial” as well as classical subjects to 188 boys. Its new rules enjoined the education of “the children and youths of the parish, of whatever age under eighteen years, and whether poor or rich.” And Thomas Hailey's receipt, written in 1826 to acknowledge payment of his bill for framing these new school rules certainly implies a spirit of cooperation between Anglican and Baptist communities.

It did not last. By 1852 there were only sixteen pupils left and in 1862 a horrified board of trustees reported that only one pupil remained. They blamed this on “...the unfair prejudice against the Master and undue influence exercised over the parents in the town...” meaning, presumably, the influence wielded by the forces of Dissent. But their hostility to the Master, the Rev. E.J. Luce, was surely due less to his daily twenty five minutes of religious instruction, offered to Anglicans and Nonconformists alike, than to his snobbish neglect of subjects the town's commercial elite believed just as important as Greek and Latin. In 1862, a dignified threat was sent to the Trustees by twelve worthies who included a butcher, a grocer and an innkeeper (as well as Thomas H. Morton, unidentified by occupation but certainly one of the family with which Thomas Hailey had allied himself, two generations back).

“We the undersigned being inhabitants of Amersham,” they warned, “.....having sons for whom we wish to secure a sound commercial, and classical, education, hesitate to avail ourselves of the above charity, feeling that the system as now carried out, does not meet the requirements of the present time. We therefore most respectfully request you will take into your consideration the best means of securing these advantages for the benefit of those who may in future be placed in this School.”

The Master's excuse that “...there does not appear to be many boys in Amersham whose parents' circumstances permit their attendance...” looks rather lame in this light. In 1860 the £24.11s.2d. alone that he himself owed one of the Haileys for repairs would have paid several years' tuition! Luce was duly replaced.

Amersham, then, had been in the vanguard of a movement to modernize education long before most of mid-Victorian England felt the impact of that reform. Some of the Haileys may even have had their basic “commercial and classical” education at Challoner's itself. Charles' grandson, as his own son recalled, could recite Latin and Greek. But the last generation to be raised in Amersham may have been discouraged by the struggle of Amersham's middle class to assert control over its charity school. Although Charles' son William, born in 1840, was still a resident in 1851 the outlook for Challoner's by that time was bleak.

Be that as it may, the standards that Challoner's set may have helped Victorian Haileys indirectly, by

encouraging an interest in its standard curriculum: English, Latin, Greek, Geography, History, Writing, Arithmetic and Mathematics.

One way or another the family managed to attain a certain level of culture, but it no longer did so obliquely, through community involvement and membership in a local governing elite. By the 1860s, its whole attention had been engaged by a private and personal ascent, a self-creating process. The Haileys chose the quintessentially Victorian way of expressing their era's most powerful political ideals.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE EDWARDIANS - A CRISIS OF IDENTITY**

In the late 1900s, machine production turned England's working population from a complex hierarchy into a homogeneous pool of unskilled and semi-skilled labour that managed to absorb the more distressed ranks of Victorian society. Artisans, however, saw their individuality and pride in work devalued, their traditional pre-eminence eroded. Some prospered in business, or rose to join a vastly enlarged force of professionals and bureaucrats. Others, less fortunate, drifted downward into the new working class. Many a cousin became a stranger.

So it was with the Haileys, once of Amersham. My mother always spoke vaguely of an aloof, faceless group she called “father's people.” Their distant lustre cast a faint glow over the child who stood, mystified, in their long shadow. Years later, only the terse language of census and probate records – and a front page of an old New York Times – could tell her anything at all about the senior branches of Charles Hailey's family.

### **Pruning the Family Tree: The North London and Stoney Stratford Branches are Thinned Out**

In north London Frederick Charles, grandson of Henry Grimsdale Hailey, had qualified as a “licensed valuer and gauger” with an office in Gray's Inn and a home in Highbury. He was the only one of five brothers mentioned in their oldest sister's will. The rest either predeceased her at quite an early age, or broke contact in some other fashion. In Stony Stratford, meanwhile, Alfred's second son began life as an ironmonger in London's Notting Hill district but later became an accountant, living in Bedford Park. His younger brother took up bookselling and married a picture dealer's daughter from Bradford in Yorkshire, where he settled down as a manufacturing stationer.

Both of David's sons struck out for the Dominions. Arthur Percy settled in Gisborne, New Zealand and he was eventually joined there by both parents. Alfred James, a sea captain, master of Canadian Pacific's “Empress of India”, lived in Vancouver. At the end of May in 1914, his mother, Elizabeth, was a first class cabin passenger on board its sister ship, the “Empress of Ireland”, bound for Liverpool. Mrs. Hailey had come up from New Zealand to visit her son a month back, the New York Times reported, “and then booked passage for England, where she planned to visit relatives.” But after dinner on May 28, the “Empress” hove to in a dense fog on the St. Lawrence River. She was “dead stopped and blowing her whistle” when the “Storstad”, a small Danish collier, “rammed her amidships with terrific force, smashing bulkheads and tearing out a good part of the interior.” The big liner listed so suddenly that many of her lifeboats broke off and floated away, useless. An explosion followed and the “Empress” sank within fourteen minutes, in nineteen fathoms. Out of 1,387 souls aboard, only 433 were saved. David Trail Hailey's widow was not among them.

We do not know exactly how she died. According to the Times, “Most of the passengers were drowned in their cabins.” Many of the women perished, it grimly added, because they stopped to dress.

We can imagine the anguish of Captain Hailey as his company sought to exonerate itself amid a storm of recrimination and controversy. It was a scant two years since the “Titanic” had gone to the bottom, with a death toll not much higher. The “Empress of Ireland” disaster raised a public outcry on both sides of the Atlantic. While help had come quickly, thanks to the new wireless signalling, many people succumbed in ice-chilled water, just like the “Titanic” victims but unlike them, within sight of land. There were grim hints at looting, and xenophobic talk of frenzied behaviour among foreign steerage passengers. On May 30, the London Times pointed out a peculiar coincidence: the sister ship of the “Storstad” had some time earlier run into the “Empress of India”, twin ship of the “Empress of Ireland”, but on that occasion, happily, no lives were lost.

Captain Hailey's 88-year old aunt Sarah, yet another Hailey spinster of independent means, made generous bequests of property acquired from her oldest brother John and from her unmarried niece, Alice Edith. Two years earlier, in 1924, Alice had left "Auntie" one "thousand pounds worth of Funding Stock" as well as smaller sums to the emigrant nephews, for in 1914 she in her turn had received just over that sum from Elizabeth's estate – apparently the lion's share. In accordance with Alice's will the sum of four hundred pounds was set aside for Alfred James, her brother Percy "having received his share at the time of the division, being legally able to claim it, the will being lost." It had gone down with Elizabeth on the "Empress of Ireland".

Back in England, both senior branches of the main Amersham stem began to wither. Male representatives of the north London and the north Buckinghamshire Haileys on that side of the Atlantic did not reproduce with enough ardour to stay the relentless drift toward extinction that all families confront. Not so, however, the line descending through Charles of Dover.

Two of his sons – Frederick and Edmund – seem to have believed in siring as many children as possible, with wives as fertile and cooperative as their paternal grandmother Mary – this at a time when most people in western Europe were beginning to have doubts as to the wisdom of such a course. But size alone does not decide a family's fate. In the one case, a big brood proved no bar to material success. In the other, it most certainly did.

*In the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial revolution passed into its second, technological phase. Real wages rose by some 50% between 1870 and 1900 in the industrial countries and all peoples were drawn into a world economy. Western medicine unleashed a continuous expansion of global population, even as tuberculosis, cholera and deficiency diseases overtook older life-threatening scourges. Codification of laws in most countries followed the consolidation of large nation states, and popular democracy made further advances. Rampant agnosticism provoked both orthodox counterattack and unorthodox responses that included occultism, while esoteric and incommunicable works of high imagination signalled the final withdrawal of creative artists from the social mainstream.*

*Trusts and combines edged out laissez-faire capitalism and parliamentary liberalism retreated before militant tactics, including the hunger strike. Intermittent, severe economic depression stirred up bitter labour unrest on both sides of the Atlantic, and in the United States, a tidal wave of immigration forced major adjustments. By the 1880s, unskilled workers began to organize. Socialist parties sprang up in many countries. Intellectuals like G.B. Shaw and H.G.Wells sponsored the alliance of British Fabians with the trade union movement, to form the Parliamentary Labour Party. But the appeal of international socialism was disputed by that of nationalism. The revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871, in part a response to the unexpected victory of Bismarck's newly united Germany in the brief Franco-Prussian War of that year, failed to ignite the anticipated general upheaval of Europe's labouring classes.*

*In 1878, the Congress of Berlin transposed European power struggles to a new global arena and temporarily removed the threat of war, as industrial nations partitioned the African interior. Britain meanwhile acquired imperial power in India, bought out the Suez Canal in 1875 and repeatedly denied Home Rule to Ireland, but by the turn of the century her will to rule, epitomized in the career of General Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), had been impaired by the non-traditional fighting style and dubious validity of the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1901) and the intractable struggle in Ireland. Imperial Russia, expanding into its Far Eastern hinterland, met with a devastating defeat at the hands of Japan, although this rising power in its turn encountered a rival for Pacific hegemony in a United States fresh from successful intervention in Latin American wars of independence. It was Germany, embarking on a new and aggressive course after 1890, that did most to change the face of the Western World. International tension mounted, despite the phenomenal growth of a peace movement both in*

*Europe and the United States.*

*The world war ignited in August 1914 by long-smouldering rivalries in the Balkans merely hastened the passing of an era doomed already by the invention of the automobile; by Freud's epochal studies of hysteria (1896), uncovering the unconscious mind; by Planck's demonstration of the quantum in 1900 and by Einstein's theory of relativity, developed between 1905 and 1916, as well as by an alarming plunge in Western birth rates and women's stealthy withdrawal from their traditional role. Nietzsche's philosophy of a Superman and scorn of Christian values as weakness, no less than Wagner's powerful but nostalgic operatic recreations of Teutonic myth, new versions of old arguments for sex inequality, witnessed not only Western imperialism's confidence in its scientific evolutionary destiny but equally and ironically, a pervasive dread of decline.*

### **At Lowestoft, a new Beginning**

Just outside Stony Stratford in 1869, at Old Wolverton Church, Frederick Hailey, second son of Charles from Dover, exchanged vows with Anna Maria Hellen, whose Suffolk family pronounced its name “Hell-een.” Both were 26 years old. The bridegroom, born in Dover, was a plumber and glazier who must have been working either for his uncle Alfred or for one of the Haileys' trade associates, but it is still not clear how the bride came to be at Wolverton End. Her father, James (who was a carpenter), had died in 1850 at quite an early age. Anna Maria may have been staying with one of her sisters, married to a Stony Stratford man whose name appears as a witness to the Hailey wedding. Frederick's oldest child was born in Stony Stratford the following year, but by 1871 the young household had settled down in Kirkley, a small fishing village just outside Lowestoft.

Deeds show that Ann Maria's father had inherited from Henry Hellen, a “beerhouse-keeper”, and from Henry's father and namesake, a good deal of property in Kirkley, Kessingland, Pakefield and Gisleham, including the site of the future Wellington Esplanade. James' executors sold that in 1851 to Sir Morton Peto, principal developer of Edwardian Lowestoft, and until 1871 James' widow, Henrietta, lived in a “substantially built and pleasantly situated” house next to the Lord Raglan inn. That year, however, the rest of the Hellen estate was divided between the widow and her seven children, and Frederick used his wife's share to buy a plot of land worth 168 pounds, next to her mother's new home on the London Road. There, in 1872, he built a tiny, plate glass-fronted department store, topped by a gleaming gilt ball and crescent – a Lowestoft landmark dominating the southern access route to town. Frederick's brother-in-law, John Sayer of Stony Stratford, turned the property next door into a tobacconist's shop.

Five more Hailey children were born in Suffolk, their arrival as carefully recorded in the family Bible as their subsequent marriages and the twenty-one more children that resulted. But business claimed at least equal attention. Anna Maria's pregnancies were widely spaced. Between the oldest and the youngest the age difference was so great that Emily Louisa always thought of Emma Mary not as a sister but as a rather too forceful aunt!

Their eldest brother, Frederick James, met his future bride, Clara Whale, when both were just seven years old and her foot was stuck in the old swing bridge, but this nostalgic vignette of Edwardian childhood masks, in its serene predictability, a tough core of work and discipline. All of the children, including the girls, were expected to lend a hand in the store, and even Emily, “the baby”, acquired a keen business sense. Stern and strong-willed, both parents were as loved as they were feared. A strict Baptist with “quite Puritanical ideas”, as Emily's nephew Gordon recalled, Anna Maria was “greatly esteemed” nonetheless, “by all who knew her.” Emily married a man who deeply revered his mother-in-law as “one of the two best women in the world”, and drew his own household into the Hailey orbit, rejecting his own family.

Some fifty people worked for Frederick, starting at six in the morning and toiling for two hours before breakfast, alert to the angle of the trilby hat he invariably wore. "If it was on a certain way," one lifelong employee told Emily's daughter Ruth, "...look out!" Frederick was always on the job, always "the gov'nor." But there was nobody like the gov'nor, the former odd-job boy assured her.

He came from a poor family and he had holes in his boots. "Percy, haven't you got a better pair of boots than that to wear?" the gov'nor asked. Hearing that Percy's mother was saving up to buy him a pair, Frederick sent him across to the shoe store. "Put them down to me", he ordered.

In middle age, ill health obliged him to run the business from an imposing cane wheelchair, Anna Maria keeping him company on a stool she always brought along for the purpose, with their little black dog, Pogo. And sometimes he would play the flute. Frederick James was sent to London to gain experience and later on all three sons were taken into partnership.

Plumbing, painting and paperhanging, the "outside work" on which the business had been built, were not completely phased out until 1977, but in the early 1900s they had already begun to assume a secondary role. In 1910, the big, new store arose on the site of the old and an adjacent property, as the Haileys expanded into furniture and appliances. Like their Tudor forebears, they had spotted a rising trend.

By about 1900 the family was quite comfortably off, with the mortgages on various acquisitions all fully paid up. Emma's wedding in 1903 was a morning-dress affair. Meanwhile, the small fishing town had transformed itself into a fashionable resort, and the Hailey women joined Edwardian Lowestoft's parade of elegance thronging the resplendent sea front. Armed with season tickets to the new and equally modish pier, the young ladies were even allowed to attend its Saturday evening functions. But the moment the last strains of the band ceased to drift back to the Hailey residence, Frederick would appear at the front door, watch in hand, to count out the ten minutes allotted for his daughters' brisk homeward walk.

The place captivated him. Of course, he had been born near the sea, at Dover, but Lowestoft was the only place to live, he always said. If his second son, Charles William, could ever be induced to take a holiday away from home, he always hurried back. Such devotion to an adoptive home, more remote in character even than in miles from the old, must have deepened Frederick's isolation from the rest of his family, particularly from his two older siblings. His younger sister, Mary Newman - "Aunt Polly" to the Lowestoft kin who loved her - was a favourite with both Frederick and his younger brother Edmund, but she never fully bridged the widening gap between the Suffolk patriarch and his maverick brother.

### **Grandfather Edmund Retreats to Hampshire and a Bucolic Way of Life**

Edmund's young adulthood came to an abrupt close in a short street off the Vauxhall Bridge Road where, scarcely thirty years before, green fields still embraced a bend in the river Thames. In 1879, the former Ellen Arnold, daughter of a clerk, had already presented the journeyman painter with two sons when, at the age of twenty-five and a mere nine days after the birth of a third, she died of scarlet fever. Three years later, in Wimbledon, the widower married a country girl, and started a new family.

No memory of the household at 122 Lillington Street survives. Even the row in which it stood was to become rubble beneath fresh foundations.

Some say Ellen's oldest boy always spoke warmly of his step-mother's unselfish ways but Frederick,

his nephew, thinks that discord drove Mary Ann's stepsons out of the house in Wimbledon. For my part, I never saw my grandmother without a little smile on her round face nor heard her voice without a chuckle lifting the soft Hampshire vowels, but that was later on in Basingstoke and no-one will ever know, now, what really happened in those early years of her marriage. All that can be said, for sure, is that her background differed sharply from that of the Haileys.

Edmund's second wife was born and raised in an out-of-the-way corner of the flatlands bordering the Solent. ("Are you sure this is where you want to get out?" asked the bus driver as he let me off there.) Unlike Amersham, commanding a highway to the metropolis, Curbridge consists of little more, even today, than a wayside chapel, a few houses, and the "Horse and Jockey" that Mary Ann's father, a carpenter by trade, took over some time during the early 1850s. Born and married in Bishops Waltham, Charles Pink and Elizabeth Dowse had lived in its tithing of Ashton before moving south into the vast but rapidly filling parish of Titchfield. Relatives on both sides abounded in and around the ancient episcopal seat they left behind, tucked discreetly into the lush downs guarding a triangle of land between Portsmouth and Southampton.

A setting more peacefully remote from the earnest politics of Amersham can hardly be imagined. Along streets humped and bowed beneath a Saxon church, Georgian fronted cottages hiding half-timbered backs gaze down, at a respectful distance, on the crumbling remains of a 12<sup>th</sup> century Norman palace. Built for the bishops of Winchester by Henry of Blois, brother of King Stephen, it heard Henry II ask his barons to supply the second Crusade and welcomed Richard the Lionheart in 1194 as he prepared his last expedition to France. Then, in 1644, Cromwell's troops reduced the massive fort to an evocative ruin, its dry moat as thick with foliage as are the parish registers with a tangle of Pink and Dowse connections.

Mary Ann was understandably vague about them. She was the youngest child, only twelve when her mother died of pneumonia. Mistakenly, she passed on the belief that the Dowse name was French. In fact, both Dowse and Pink families were of old English stock, going back in Hampshire to very early times, and fertile as well as healthy enough to scatter their names liberally throughout the diocese of Winchester. In the Tudor period each managed to produce one short-lived knighthood, complete with crest and manor – in Romsey and Otterbourne, and in Winslade – but the earliest Pink and Dowse wills were made closer to Bishops Waltham, by one John Dowse of Vernham Dean, in 1546, and by a George Pink of East Meon, in 1550. Whether they could have been forebears of Mary Ann Pink or any of her relatives remains an open question.

Mary Anne's children referred dubiously to their Hampshire antecedents as "gypsies". More accurately, in their grandparents' time and perhaps for a hundred years or so, many had been little more than migrant workers. Neither of Elizabeth Pink's parents, nor Charles Pink's mother and grandmother – nor his own wife – could sign their name, and in this conservative environment no Pink or Dowse had ridden the Victorian tide quite so dramatically as the Haileys. Some had prospered, but the distance between more and less advantaged kin seems never to have been as marked or as obvious in Bishops Waltham as in Amersham.

It was a cousin several times removed who gave his consent in 1833 to the marriage of great-grandmother Elizabeth Dowse, a minor. Her older sister and brother had gone to Middlesex to be married in 1830 and 1833, and were joined at Isleworth by their parents. Perhaps the presence of some Pinks there helps to explain the migration. Elizabeth probably stayed behind in Bishops Waltham as the dependent of another equally prolific but propertied Dowse family of bricklayers and brewers. Her own father, Edwin, a labourer, and her guardian's great-uncle Edwin, "60 years Butcher in this parish" as his gravestone proclaims, must have shared a common ancestor, perhaps the butcher John Dowse – a contemporary, as it happens, of William Hailey, the innkeeper of Amersham. In much the same way, Elizabeth's bridegroom may have been linked with that farmer Pink of Dene (Dean),

born in 1659, whose remarkably legible headstone leans between three less outspoken companions close to the church door in Bishops Waltham, not far from Edwin Dowse and the small group of relatives surrounding him.

Charles Pink's sister Sarah showed some family graves to my youngest aunt during a childhood stay in Bishops Waltham. The gilt lettering on them that so impressed her at the time is nowhere in evidence now. Her visit to the church, though – indeed, her very presence in late Edwardian Bishops Waltham – spelled the survival of an old-fashioned sense of kin, still, in the somnolent community that her mother's people had abandoned. With just over 3,000 inhabitants in 1901, its population had not even doubled during a century of explosive change elsewhere.

Prospering at Curbridge, Charles and Elizabeth Pink had invested the usual small, weekly sum of money for their children's basic schooling but after Elizabeth died, Mary Ann could not be sent off to be “finished” at a “dame school”, as planned. When Edmund Hailey met her, she was a parlour maid in the big house on Ridgeway Road in Wimbledon, not far from Brentford, where her mother's people had settled. She was, as everyone agrees, a very good cook, and it was most probably her own idea to open a restaurant. This, unfortunately, was one Hailey enterprise that failed. Edmund did not have his older brother's head for business. What he did have was a personality full of contradictions.

Edmund was a skilled journeyman decorator, energetic enough to rise at four in the morning and walk many miles to a job, whenever he could find one, until he was well over seventy years old. At one time, he had worked with his brother Frederick in Lowestoft. They did not get along and “Uncle Ted” as he was known there, cut himself off. By 1882, during the early years of his second marriage he was describing himself as an “artistic” house painter. He was also a strong union man. Though he stopped short of joining one of the new political parties, he was attracted to socialism, talking incessantly about injustice; about the parlous state of a country deep in labour troubles, under the shadow of world war. But these were just “undisciplined” opinions, from the standpoint of his youngest daughter, who was later to espouse an uncompromising form of Marxism. At the same time, to her considerable chagrin, Edmund lost his shirt as a capitalist. Edmund went through two legacies, to no avail. A venture into Irish real estate was badly timed to encounter an agrarian depression and “the Troubles.” With the Wimbledon restaurant a failure too, a decent education for his children was out of the question.

Discouraged, he was inclined to lie late in bed, his youngest daughter told me. Or he would hang around the house, reluctant to let his wife manage their dining place in her own way. Mary Ann was easy-going, but she was also the more determined of the two. “It was your grandmother who supplied the barbs,” quipped one daughter-in-law, “even if grandpa shot them.” The Haileys had moved more than once during their Wimbledon years, but around 1890 they moved back to the country.

They stayed briefly at Sherbourne St. John in Dorset, just beyond the Hampshire border. Their sixth child, who was my mother, was born there, receiving as her second name that of the little cousin who had once lived with Mary Ann at the Curbridge inn. A year later, the family finally settled down.

Basingstoke, a venerable Hampshire community, had only recently begun its long career of explosive growth as a nerve centre of the Southern Railway system. Edmund and Mary Ann headed for Worting, a tiny hamlet two or three miles away. Population in 1901: 198. And there, for almost forty years, they stayed.

Eleven of my grandmother's twelve children survived, to grow up in a cramped cottage that was always cheerful and full of company. The budget would not stretch to outings or birthday treats, but there was always enough to eat. Mary Ann saw to that, even if she sometimes had to go without herself. Saturday nights, the children helped her mix and bake. Sunday mornings, everyone would



assemble to eat the fresh cake – before breakfast. And high above them, along a grassy embankment, the puffing trains taught the family its ritual chant:

Much-as-ever,  
Much-as-ever,  
I-shall-get-to  
Michendever.....”

All the children knew they must leave home.

Edmund resolved to place every single one of them – sons as well as daughters – in domestic service. He saw it as a form of advancement. In those days, certainly, it was not always a derogation of status, especially for women. On the contrary, the vast majority who worked at all preferred “service” to home life; to farm work; to laundering or sewing; to industrial or heavy, casual labour. Freedom was willingly exchanged for clean and comfortable quarters, better clothes and food, and the chance to pick up some social graces as well as good housekeeping habits – not to mention a personal nest egg. The upper ranks of the “downstairs” hierarchy – cooks and housekeepers (like my mother) or ladies' maids and parlour maids (like my grandmother and one or two of her daughters-in-law) - enjoyed a certain status with employers and fellow workers alike.

At school in Worting, nevertheless, my mother and her sisters had been in trouble because they would not curtsy to visiting members of the school board. Upbraided, spanked and asked the reason why, the tearful Hailey girls confessed that their father had ordered them never to bend the knee to anyone. But whether egalitarian principle or Edmund's own family tradition had prompted his patriarchal intransigence and their dutiful defiance, the Hailey girls who matured before the outbreak of war in 1916 saw no reason to thwart their father's plans for them. Not so the boys. In the heyday of Empire, another kind of service beckoned. One by one they ran away from home before “Father” could work his will, joining the navy, the marines, the merchant service or the army, and for the triumphal homecomings that invariably consumed their leaves, they booked a room at the village inn. All but one of them.

The war that overturned the Hampshire Haileys' world altered the perspective and the prospects of their remaining children. It also reversed expectations based on gender. Edmund's adolescent son willingly followed his father's dictates, entering a household of high rank. What man, after the “war to end all wars”, wanted to be a warrior? His two youngest sisters, on the other hand, spurned their father's old-fashioned strategies. What woman, in the brave new world, wanted to be a servant?

My mother knew Edmund Hailey only as a stern and disapproving disciplinarian. He was nothing of the sort, counters her youngest sister. Perhaps the twenty-three difficult years separating the two girls softened his outlook. But those years also decisively separated Edmund from the rest of the Haileys. The children of this aloof and elusive man grew up isolated from their broader kin network. They were from Hampshire, and that was all they knew.

### **Aunt Binnie and the Problem of “Surplus Women”**

The Hampshire Haileys knew something of their “Aunt Polly”, Edmund's favourite sister. No one, on the other hand, whether from Lowestoft or from Basingstoke, knows much about Albina.

Her given name, sometimes written as Albina (and sometimes, preposterously, as “Albania”) must be an adaptation of the classical “Albinia”, an expressive hint at the tastes of her father Charles, painter, builder and master plumber, and of his wife Emma, the sailor's daughter from Kent. Born in Amersham, “Binnie” lived both in Kent and in Middlesex as a child, but by the time she was twenty-

one the household at Harlington, near Staines, contained only her brothers and her sister Mary, still at school. She and Albina both received a legacy from their aunt Fanny in Rickmansworth, but while Mary married a London pawnbroker in 1871 – the son of a brewer, almost certainly connected by marriage with the Stony Stratford Haileys – Binnie by then had reappeared in her parents' home at Cranford, unmarried and with an eleven month old daughter, her namesake. The census taker misspelled both names, carelessly or in disbelief. The thirty-two year-old single mother formed part of what 19<sup>th</sup> century moralists unfeelingly referred to as “the problem of surplus women”.

The ratio of women to men was seriously out of balance again. Women who were “refined, intelligent, truthful and affectionate”, as one employer wrote, could easily find themselves pregnant and abandoned. Women in the upper ranks of domestic employment outnumbered, outranked and outclassed most males in the social categories where they could normally expect to find a husband. At the same time, savings that were often substantial, along with exceptional personal qualities, attracted men with whom marriage was not a possibility. If such women did marry, their mates were usually something less than their equal. Situations like that of Albina were common, and there is really nothing surprising about the fact that Charles and Emma Hailey's granddaughter was born in their home.

Albina died in 1906, in Fulham. Her unmarried niece Connie lived in the borough, but though Mary's daughter, a court dressmaker, did stay in touch with relatives, particularly with Frederick's family, she either knew or communicated little about the mysterious aunt who chose to say she was widowed. Her story ends abruptly in 1914. Binnie's daughter married a widower of Northampton, a shoe finisher ten years her senior, in whose house she was already living. For whatever reason Albina the younger, likewise, found it expedient to call herself a widow.

### **William the Whitesmith Leaves His Line in Limbo**

The life of William Hailey, born in Amersham in 1840, barely twelve months after his sister Albina, is no less obscure than hers. Four years later, when the loss of his wife left him with four young children under eight years old, he chose to remain a widower, unlike his brother Edmund, and passed the rest of his life alone, or so it seems, in Wokingham. That was where he died, in 1914. His mother, Emma, widowed in 1881, left Cranford to join him, but between her death five years later and that of William himself, there is not a hint of further contact with the other Haileys. For this, William himself may be less responsible than his oldest son.

The five year-old boy was sent to live with his mother's sister. So unhappy was his childhood, and so deep his sense of rejection, that for most of his adult life William junior could not even speak about his father. He would say only that he remembered picking primroses to place on his mother's grave. The eccentric tinkerer and inventor avoided paternal kin and said not a word about his siblings. If they, too, had been placed in foster homes, no one knew where. They were never heard from again.

My mother and the old engineer were first cousins, yet they neither knew it nor cared to find out. This was alienation of a new order. Edmund and Frederick, William and Albina kept their distance for reasons that were far from novel and peculiar to each. At the same time, as if in unison, they were leading the Haileys along a most unfamiliar course. If individuals rarely are aware how their own lives maintain the momentum of social change, they may, as family members, develop at least a sense of the road travelled together. In the late 1900s, however, multiple stresses converged to shrink the story of the Amersham Haileys to that of a single junior branch. By the outbreak of the “Great War”, even that narrow and foreshortened perspective had dissolved. The chance to look back and forth along a common path had slipped away, and in this important sense, the Hailey family was no more.

## CHAPTER 7: DIASPORA

As late as 1939, the family dispersal, though well advanced, stopped at the water's edge, but World War II and its convulsive aftermath drove the Hailey diaspora into its global phase. Caught up in a national phenomenon that doomsayers of the 1950s called "the brain drain", all but a few of Edmund's grandchildren scattered across four continents. They headed for southwest Asia and Australia; for Africa – Cape to Cairo – and westward from Canada to the Caribbean. Gazing only into the future, they became people without a past. It lay in pieces, undecipherable, among the tales told to children.

All the same, it was precisely this new style of life that eventually prompted those descendants of a forgotten English family to rediscover one another, looking and thinking remarkably alike in the respective four corners of the earth.

Some of the groundwork for this reunion had already been laid. Gordon Hailey of Lowestoft, perhaps the first to realize what had slowly been slipping away, had long kept notes on the confused oral tradition linking his own line with Amersham. Those notes were to become indispensable. Meanwhile, deep in rural Essex, Albert Martin was visiting Amersham and working alone, on his small Dunmow farm, at the earliest version of the family pedigree. Ironically, he managed to compose a picture that was much clearer for the distant than for the more recent past.

*The last three quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were spent reacting to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the world's first atomic bomb explosion at Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. The long-term effects of these two cataclysmic events were compounded by an exponential increase in global population. An estimated 304 million between 1960 and 1980, it promised to double by the end of the century.*

*Hostilities halted by the armistice of 1918 were resumed in September 1939, complicated this time by an ideological confrontation between collectivist societies and those in which the individual remained the centre of concern. During the 1930s the League of Nations, inspired in 1919 by U.S. President Wilson's dream of democratic cooperation, was eroded both by the world wide Great Depression unleashed in 1929 and by the spread of totalitarian rule. The United States, isolating itself to try to cure domestic ills with Roosevelt's New Deal, abandoned attempts to check German National Socialism's bid to create a European "New Order" under Hitler, abetted by Italy's Mussolini and by Generalissimo Franco, ultimate victor in the bitter Spanish Civil War (1936-39). In the Soviet Union, Stalin sacrificed revolutionary ideals to ambition. For ten years in Asia, China, alone, resisted Japan's thrust for military and economic hegemony. Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 forced U.S. entry into World War II (1939-45). The impact of wartime technological developments in pure science as well as social organization and weaponry would endure for the rest of the century.*

*Post-war Europe, devastated by indiscriminate bombing, mass murder and forced population dispersal, was rescued by the U.S. Marshall Plan in 1948 and raised to new heights of prosperity in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the United Nations, replacing the League, disguised traditional power politics under a constitutional façade. Armed with nuclear weapons, the United States and the Soviet Union faced off in a "Cold War", but by the 1960s, thermonuclear weapons and nations with the capacity to use them began to proliferate, disturbing the global balance of power and further distorting the U.N. constitution. A multitude of small "developing" nations had emerged out of Europe's former colonies. Labelled the "Third World" at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations at Bandung in 1955, Africans Asians and Latin Americans battled with crippling disadvantages, long-term climate change and mass starvation. In the 1970s, however, following the precedent set by Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal in 1956, oil producers acquired vast new revenues that jarred both their culture and the global economy.*

*Meanwhile, Stalin's death, the USSR's 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and a revolution in Hungary in 1956 produced a chain reaction de-stabilizing the collectivist powers, and in the 1980s, the People's Republic of China, the most populous society on earth, exchanged doctrine for a share in the*

*technological revolution. The inter-war years had briefly held in check a high tide of social changes released during the hectic 1920s. Art Deco styles expressed the cult of modernity. The 1960s everywhere finally and radically transformed production and consumption, from agriculture to knowledge. The cybernetic and transistor revolution, with Japan in the vanguard, displaced the written word in favour of the image and the byte, creating multinational corporate entities. A widening gap between elites and illiterates falsified egalitarian ideals. Existentialism, focussing on the human predicament, was largely superseded in the last quarter of the century by the human potential movement and by the appeal to popular imagination of interplanetary travel, brought within the realm of reality in 1969 by the landing of three humans on the moon.*

That is understandable. There were Haileys in Amersham, still, but not a single one of the descendants of Thomas the constable. Albert Martin thought he was alone. Then one day in 1979 he picked up the telephone and found, to his utter astonishment, that his paper family could speak.

That event was not triggered by pure chance. Its seeds lay within the family's own historical experience, awaiting cultivation by latter-day members endowed with its characteristically dogged perseverance. The chain of circumstance leading to that unlooked-for phone call was set in motion the day a 20<sup>th</sup> century descendant of the Tudor Haileys went back to Amersham to live, but that decision itself was linked to many another, in a chain stretching far back into the past.

During the 1960s, Edmund's youngest granddaughter happened to buy a house in Amersham-on-the-Hill. On the face of it that was not a particularly unusual choice, for London's Metropolitan line now snakes through the town, past Great Missenden and Wendover, on the way to Aylesbury. Amersham has become part of what Londoners now call "the stockbrokers' belt", a choice spot for young professionals, where the air is clean, schools are traditional and antiques expensive. The young London housewife was drawn to her new home solely by its charm and accessibility, she avers. A pragmatist, she discounts a parent's half-recalled allusions to the place. It was the unknown Edmund's voice that reached her, nonetheless, for he had mentioned Amersham from time to time in the Worting cottage, and not all of his children forgot the name.

### **The Road from Basingstoke**

Violet was the most disaffected of Edmund's children, though all of them betrayed to some degree signs of the anomie afflicting an entire generation caught between two worlds in the years between two wars. Among other tribulations, the death of Arthur from war wounds in 1917 had deeply affected the whole family, for of all the dashing brothers on whom the Hailey women doted he, the oldest, even as a fading sorrow, was their remembered favourite. It was a hurt that never healed.

Indelibly imprinted on the memory of Arthur's nephew and namesake are these lines from a memorial card:

"Gone from us, but not forgotten.  
Never will thy memory fade.  
Loving thoughts shall ever linger  
Round the spot where thou are laid."

"Marry George or Alec," the dying soldier had enjoined his fiancée, Elsie Wright. He had been in the process of getting a divorce and was planning to marry her. George came home; Elsie made her choice; they called their son Arthur. But the Haileys called him "young Arthur", and "young Arthur" he remained.

The six aunts juggled their cherished independence with a sentimental solidarity belying their sardonic refrain: "You can choose your friends; you can't choose your relatives!" They were willing to make

startling breaks with precedent. They married men Edmund scarcely approved of. They looked for new occupations. Minnie cut off her long hair without asking anybody first, and made her husband very angry. Ethel would never consult any but a female physician. And in naming the astonishingly few children born to this interwar generation, deference to family was boldly swept aside by the claims of friendship or by the Art Deco allure of names like “Iris”, “Daphne”, “Colin” or “Basil”. At the same time, there was self-conscious hesitancy. One of the two more self-assured sisters-in-law found it odd that neither Violet nor Ethel would ever use the front door of the Worting cottage. “When they wanted to go into Basingstoke,” she said, “they slipped out the back way and walked across the fields”. Even as the “war to end wars” threw open an escape route for the Hailey women once used only by their brothers, those cloche-hatted innovators could not resist recreating “home” in a place halfway up the tracks linking Basingstoke with London.

Woking, an army base in two world wars as well as an important rail junction, lured May and Ethel into uniform as clerical workers and then, with the return of peace, into the baking trade. The serviceman May married was a master baker. Mercurial and meticulous Ethel became the indispensable, when not thoroughly disgruntled, branch manager for May and George Foote, and Ethel it was who in due course provided the family pilgrimage centre.

The Worting children, even in dispersal, remained unswervingly devoted to the rotund and rheumatic old lady immobilized for good, by this time, in her big, plush chair. After Edmund's death in 1927 Mary Ann had spent a year or two with her youngest daughter in Luton: a small, unprepossessing industrial town to which Arthur's father had been lured by the presence of his wife's people. Happily, the countryside was within walking distance. “I suppose, really, it was a good a place as any, “Young” Arthur concedes. “In those days, people tended to – and still do, to a large extent – let life happen to them, rather than make it happen.” So George worked steadily, thenceforth, as a storekeeper and relief night-watchman for an engineering company. With no special skills, denied a pension through some technicality, despite years of service in the navy and the merchant fleet as well as the Royal Artillery, Lance-bombardier George Wellington Hailey (under-age recruit in the Boer War, escort at Queen Victoria's funeral, proud “Old Contemptible” and veteran of the grim battle of Mons, with star and clasp) sought only a quiet life. “It's no good aiming too high,” he told his son, provoking some of the only sharp words that ever passed between him and his wife, for she believed just the opposite.

Unaccountably, his sister Violet decided to recuperate in Luton from an attack of the shingles, renting a room two doors down from the typically tiny, brick row house George and Elsie occupied at 107 Albert Road. It was very similar, their son recalls, to the one depicted in the celebrated play, “Look Back in Anger”, John Osborne's bitter dissection of British working class life.

Bickering disturbed the two Hailey households in Luton, especially after Mary Ann arrived from Basingstoke. When Ethel took over one of the Woking bake shops, the old lady was transferred there, and in those final years of armed peace during the 1930s Woking became the place all Basingstoke Haileys called “home”, passing through in a steady stream to salute the jovial and placid matriarch.

Grandchildren were chased from the floured frenzy of a redolent bake-house while adults gossiped and wrangled. “Young” Arthur and his cousin Iris smooched in a back room. The young country woman grandfather had married must have looked a lot like Iris Foote: arch and wide-eyed with the peachiest of all those smooth, soft complexions passed down by Mary Ann to daughters and grand-daughters alike. Reading was a waste of time for girls, she had always said but Ethel, now in full charge, turned me loose on an arcane hoard of Victorian literary débris: outlandish moral tales, close-printed, and volumes of vintage Punch – the flotsam of a family's life piled helter-skelter in a hall cupboard. Mary Ann just beamed indulgently at my efforts to fathom the joke in verbosely captioned cartoons about ladies in “bloomers” toting cigars, or inebriated gentlemen in top hats given short shrift by crafty adolescents in poke bonnets. The aunts must have absorbed much more than their eagerly random

reading habits from this engrossing miscellany.

For the youngsters, their grandfather's prior family barely existed, if they knew of it at all. Yet one indelible recollection of early infancy is of visiting the grubby and expansive plumber in Kentish Town called "cousin Charlie". Contact ceased before I could learn that this was Edmund Charles, oldest son of the mysterious grandfather who died thirteen days after I was born. Arthur recalls "cousin Charlie" as a big, warm, and handsome man with a shock of white hair.

The slender, erect frame and aquiline good looks found in so many of the Hailey men passed little changed to Charlie's nephew Frederick, a cabinet maker rediscovered decades later in retirement near Hastings. His father, Albert, had married his own maternal cousin. Starting out as a baker, Frederick explained, he found that job "too hot" and followed family tradition instead: he joined the army.

Old Woking, the venerable Saxon settlement overshadowed by its brash new counterpart at the mainline junction, became the home of yet another of the Hailey sisters, the wife of a railwayman. Nellie (Ellen Mabel), like Minnie, developed symptoms of manic depression and the Mists' two shy children, never close to their cousins, disappeared from view after their mother's death in early middle age. Annie, the eldest, who lived with Ethel for a while, "was not basically a cheerful person," either, her nephew Arthur thought. Ethel herself was moody, plummeting from giggles to gloom, daily vowing to sail off to South Africa some day soon, though she never did.

Minnie, on the other hand, bounced back from a bout with depression in her early twenties, according to her youngest sister, and kept it at bay during middle life, but she always appeared too resourceful, too energetic, for the role in which family and society had cast her. "You don't look like a servant", one former employer had declared, and introduced the young housekeeper, when they travelled together, as "a friend". Marrying late, and battling the Great Depression on a soldier's pension and "the dole", Minnie actually managed to put a few pounds by. They were spent on a second hand piano and lessons, at sixpence a week for her only child.

It had been her idea, in the late summer of 1939, heavy with heat and fear, to sweep her small family out of London lock, stock and barrel, into a house not one hundred yards from the Woking "home", then not long bereft of Mary Ann. Since Munich, the grim table talk in Ethel's house had been of refugees and camps; of children and parents forced apart and hopelessly lost. Woking, to my loudly voiced disappointment and secret relief, offered an alternative to the official evacuation plan and a refuge from the recurring nightmares triggered by each evening's radio news about "displaced persons". For Minnie, Woking offered an unexpected opportunity to earn money for the first time since her marriage, but first she eased into the new role by helping out in her sister's shops. A bleak post-war widowhood brought her back once more from London to share living space first with Ethel and then, in a short-lived experiment, with "young Vi", until in 1966 the shock of rejection by U.S. immigration authorities demolished the last of her fragile defences against depression. Hers, even so, had been "a very good life", she reflected, a few months before turning 82.

Violet had broken so far with custom as to become a factory hand. Office and shop work in Basingstoke bored her, and she did not quite know what to do with an untrained ability to draw and paint, a trait shared with cousin Charlie's son Frederick. Many years later Frederick's widow told Arthur's daughter, Diane, that "Freddie was very, very clever with his hands. He had infinite patience..." and Diane, a photographer, knew exactly what she meant. So would any plumber! Had Vi known more about the Haileys she might have been more encouraged. After all, are not architecture and drawing but a logical step away from plumbing and building? She did hear – probably from her father, the "artistic" housepainter – about a Victorian watercolourist to whom she was related. (Perhaps he was that Hailey who, so Frederick used to say, helped decorate the ceiling of St. Paul's Cathedral, a project undertaken during the late 1800s). At any rate, while Frederick found an

outlet for his gifts, as an illustrator and screen-card writer, Violet did not. The hat factories of Luton absorbed her into a world of grinding piece work, left-wing political clubs and evening art classes. She grew bitter about the obstacles of sex and status that stood between her and even a modest level of achievement.

Vi arrived back in Woking just before the outbreak of World War II and lingered there for a while, packing parachutes, but her violin practice tried the family's patience and her Marxist ultra-orthodoxy turned visits into shouting matches. The war industries of Croydon soon allowed an alienated and irascible Vi to distance herself decisively from her siblings.

It was, in contrast, the extreme loyalty of Mary Ann's sons that perpetually astonished Hay's wife, Gladys – all the more because, as she put it, “they never had anything!” Henry Walter, the last child to be born in the Wimbledon home, fled at a tender age from the quaint but spotless two rooms up and two down of Edmund and Mary Ann's thatched cottage in Worting. He joined the Marines, lying to pass for 13, and on two occasions, by a quite remarkable chance, shipped out on the same vessel as his brother Alex, in whose pantheon the Royal Navy occupied a niche lower only than that occupied by his mother.

Even while an older man bearing the name Hailey, from a different Hailey family, gained national recognition by advancing enlightened policies for the wilting British empire, Chief Petty Officer Alex (“Tim” to his mates) had no thoughts of relinquishing imperial glory.

“I remember once,” he said on Hayling Island beach after World War II, “we went up the Euphrates on a punishment mission. We went up, two of us, in line ahead. And the backwash”, he told Harry's future son-in-law, with evident relish, “was washing these Arab villages right off the banks.” The young newsman from Australia was appalled. Later, sitting out the Suez crisis in Cairo, with Uncle Tim's navy steaming toward the Delta, I could almost feel the swell.

But on a bright day in 1937, some of us had watched the coronation procession leave and return to Buckingham Palace from the roof of one low wing, and in between we had enjoyed a champagne lunch. “Young Cyril,” at the other end of the political spectrum from “young Vi”, was rising in the royal household to become a Page of the chambers and Deputy Steward, with ceremonial duties involving investitures and the reception of foreign dignitaries. Occasionally he would lead hushed relatives through the maze of gilt and mirrored corridors for a brief encounter with tiny-boned royal persons. The irony amused me. We ourselves were all so tall. But Cyril's dignity, his measured loyalty, exquisite tact and complete discretion earned him the deep respect, confidence and affection of the diminutive royal patrons above whom he hovered. My mother and aunts revered him.

Bound to the ritual peregrination – Sandringham, Windsor, Balmoral, his palace flat – Cyril spent too little time in his own immaculate new Malden home. With an experience of precedence and organization few could match, he weathered those “many changes” that had come, he hinted in his careful, understated language, with the war and its aftermath. During the final illness that suddenly overwhelmed him during a retirement already plagued by arthritis, his wife turned for help to people she knew at Court. “I wrote to Lady Elizabeth Bassett, one of the Queen Mother's ladies-in-waiting,” she told me, “and there was another good friend of mine.....the Master of the Queen's Household.....and he spoke to the head of the Privy Purse....” Cyril died near Blackheath in a medical facility of which the Queen is patron. His wife of fifty years, a native of Wales and a former lady's maid, now lives “by grace and favour” in Windsor Castle. “These are such thick walls,” she muses. “They keep in the heat and keep out the cold..... That coffee service was what Lord Plunkett gave to Cyril when he retired.....The Queen Mother still sends me a Christmas card...” The sun glints on the Thames, gliding beyond a green meadow far below the recessed turret window of Mabel's tastefully furnished sitting room. Cyril and Mabel once made the ritual return to Worting. They even plucked

up enough courage to knock on the door of the remodelled cottage and were invited in to take tea with the new resident, vastly intrigued by their story. Some years afterwards I followed them – to my bitter regret. The fields and lanes are gone now, paved over by an arterial motorway. Acres of public housing dwarf the cottage, awkward under its modern façade. Worting has been engulfed by a rampant Basingstoke, regional centre of social services the like of which Amersham's workhouse never dreamed. Whatever would grandfather Edmund have made of it all?

**The Basingstoke – Lowestoft Links:**  
**George and Elsie; Harry and Gladys**

If a certain worldliness rubbed off on Cyril and Mabel in the course of their career, something of the sort touched both George's Luton household and that of Harry, freeman of the City of London – but for a different reason. Their wives were enterprising, loquacious and peripatetic. Elsie was vivacious and very attractive; Gladys was hearty and expansive. They were at ease anywhere. These two, at least as much as Edmund's sister Mary (“Auntie Polly”), forged what was for many years the only link between the Hampshire Haileys and their Suffolk cousins.

It was during the 1930s that the Luton Haileys began their long friendship with a group of relatives whom the Woking group hesitated to contact.

Elsie's upbringing had been subtly different from that of her husband. Her maternal grandmother, whose name was Savill, never worked before marriage. Her paternal grandparents were schoolmaster and schoolmistress at Leamington Spa, in Warwickshire. The formidable David Wright, pictured with a riding crop laid across his knee, can be seen dominating a group of family portraits in the California country house shared by three of his Hailey great-grandchildren.

The William Mail Wrights raised slightly fewer children than the Basingstoke or the Lowestoft Haileys – there were fourteen in all, four of whom died – but they migrated far more often. Elsie's father, a coachman and horse trainer, “would get started and do very well, then move on,” her sister “Bubbles” told a great-niece. “It was in his nature,” she thought. But the Wrights were, all the same, a closely knit family.

All the children were given names beginning with “E”. Their mother was extremely protective and the Wright home, regularly filled with guests, was where the young people spent most of their time. Someone was always having a birthday, Edna “Bubbles” Wright recalls, although the celebrations were very modest. In such ways, their contacts with other children were restricted, not prohibited. Disobedience was not even thought of, although neither parent, on any occasion, ever resorted to physical punishment. On walks, the youngsters would line up side by side, holding hands, and if they were forbidden to eat ice-cream on the street, they played darts and table tennis and were free to read anything they liked.

Adulthood took them along paths quite different from those followed by the Basingstoke Haileys. For a while “Uncle Ted” Wright lived in India, where he became a Freemason of a high order and then, on his return to England, sold vacuum cleaners. Elsie was working as a barmaid in North London, in Finchley, when she first met the Haileys during World War I.

Gladys Maud Willis – Harry's wife – though a lifelong teetotaler “pulled many a pint of beer” too, she admits, but that was in her sister's pub on Hayling Island. Their parents once occupied a dainty and still immaculate Georgian cottage next to an equally minuscule Baptist chapel, not far from the Yew Tree inn. Gladys was working as a kindergarten nurse, however, when Harry Hailey literally bumped into her. “He knocked me down as I got off the bus and we started talking,” is the way she describes the encounter. She was on her way to meet someone else but decided, then and there, that she



wouldn't go.

“Mum had gone out on a bet,” is her daughter's version. “She had a blind date.” “It was about three weeks before I even found out Harry was in the service,” Gladys continued. She never knew exactly when she would get off work, and sometimes it was raining when Harry came to meet her. “He'd have to stand outside in the wet street. We were planning to get married in about six months, but one night he'd just had enough, so he said, “It's now or never!”

Nine years older than his bride, Harry was a widower with a small legacy from his first wife, and after his discharge from the Marines he and Gladys prospered as joint caretakers for a City of London firm that would not tolerate children. Perhaps that is why their relatives with youngsters saw them so often. My portly uncle loved to enrage me by dropping his false teeth out onto the page while reading aloud from a Granny Goose book, and roared to her me recite:

'Arry went to Ampstead;  
'Arry lost 'is 'at.  
'Arry's mother said to 'Arry,  
'Arry, where's your 'at?....

Gladys' sister Margery recalls it as a poised and polished performance – for a four year-old.

Some years later, Harry's satisfied employers chose to ignore the baby that ensued when he “changed his brand”, as Gladys bluntly announced to the family at large. It must have been hard for the Walbrook firm to overlook a tap-dancing Daphne Ann, all ringlets and ruffles. She filled the penthouse flat to overflowing with her toys. Her electric train set circled the cavernous boardroom at the Christmas feasts our two families shared.

With the immaculate child in tow, Gladys made the rounds of family and friends, her Sunday jaunts as unforgettable as her lavish Sunday high teas. “I've always gone about,” she declared in her eightieth year, sprinting for a bus. “You may as well lie down and die if you don't. And I'm the only one in my family that's ever flown. They've had the chance, but they won't go. I started flying when Uncle (Harry) was alive; when we started going to the Channel Islands. I've flown in a 15-seater...” “She treats the Atlantic like a lake”, her daughter in New York observed.

A firebomb destroyed their inner City home and everything in it at the height of the Blitz, during World War II. “I didn't have a shirt to change into,” Gladys said. But they could not leave London. Harry had re-enlisted and was serving in the Marine unit guarding Winston Churchill's wartime cabinet. Instead, they moved all the way across town, setting up house afresh in Streatham, at the southern fringe of the metropolis. This time they were the target of a V-1 missile, one of those menacing robots that chugged slowly over the south coast in broad daylight to stop for a second or so in mid-air before plunging to earth in full view of their gaping victims.

Gladys, however, was not one to be caught standing still. Sensing trouble and unwilling to stay in the house overnight, she had just returned next morning to drop off the dog and go shopping when she and a neighbour saw one of those “doodlebugs” in the sky. “Run”, the other woman shouted. “It's got our number on it!” But even as they fled, Gladys remembered the dog and dashed back to get him. She was only just in the nick of time. The house was badly damaged.

Daphne spent most of the war years in a boarding school, isolated from the cousins who had so often been her playmates in the past. And when peace came, the new diaspora began in earnest.

Arthur, who served in Canada, was still in the Royal Air Force when I went up to London University

on a State scholarship in 1945. We had lunch a couple of times while he was working as a technical writer in the air Ministry, opposite the London School of Economics, but post-war England soon drove him back to the greater freedoms and opportunities of Canada. I stuck it out a while longer across the road, lighting candles in lecture halls when frequent power failures stemmed the flow of Keynesian theory, but my trip to Prague for the founding World Festival of “Democratic” Youth in 1947 had the reverse effect intended by its organizers: I became a lifelong fan of Italian creative anarchy. My first job, on graduation, at the Royal Institute for International Affairs, was abandoned in unseemly haste for what I thought a more enterprising destiny as a globetrotter. In 1950, Uncle Tim's daughter, Joan, took herself off to Australia, followed not long after by her sister. Daphne left for Singapore after marrying the young man from Reuters.

Gladys had thrown a big 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party for her daughter at London's Cumberland Hotel. Working in Paris at the time, I could not attend, and though Cyril, Mabel and Minnie were there, the majority of guests were Haileys that grandfather Edmund's family barely knew, including the children of his sister, “Aunt Polly”. These were the family contacts Gladys and Harry, George and Elsie had made, while the rest of the Basingstoke brethren shyly held aloof.

Mary Hailey Newman of Stamford Hill was a great favourite with Daphne's father, Harry. She was also “held in great affection and respect” by Charles William Hailey of Lowestoft, (Harry's cousin) and by all the second cousins there, Gordon Hailey wrote in December 1979. It was either in 1922 or in 1924, he said, on one of Charles' visits to Connie Newman (Mary's second child) that the Haileys were taken by her brother Arthur to meet Harry and Gladys, though in Gladys' recollection it was Elsie who brought them all together. Gordon lodged with Connie on Lilleyville Road when he qualified as a chartered accountant and joined the firm of Price, Waterhouse in 1934. And Frederick Albert, a member of Edmund's first family who lived in Fulham then, knew Connie too. Elsie and George once took Minnie and me to see Gordon, it seems, and I know my mother was aware that Connie lived nearby, but that was the extent of our contact.

Aunt Polly's older daughter, Honor, and other Newmans were frequent guests in Lowestoft between the wars and they were at Gordon's wedding in 1936. Eighty-two years old in 1979, Honor's son Jack was still occasionally making a trip from his home in Heston, near Uxbridge, to visit Gladys on Hayling Island. His eldest son had gone to live in Scotland. Gladys by that time had long been a widow.

Harry's fatal heart attack in 1951 deeply shocked his brothers and sisters. Since their sister Annie's death of cancer in 1931 they had stayed remarkably united throughout twenty years of social change, economic depression and global war. Now peace and creeping prosperity, as well as advancing age, began to divide them. A decade later, Uncle Tim (Alex) would amaze Minnie's new American son-in-law by roaring in from Portsmouth on a motorcycle, but all the others, save for Vi, were in declining health and jaded by England's latest cultural revolution. They had seen too much already.

### **Hailey's Ltd., of Lowestoft**

In Lowestoft the best of the private schools failed to return after the 1914-18 war and East Anglia as a whole moved by degrees down the road to depression and decay, but the Haileys survived remarkably well. The store founded by Edmund's brother Frederick recovered from the bombardment of 1916, survived the death of its founders, and prospered, despite a loss of some of the resort's old lustre.

Frederick James returned from a spell in the London furniture trade to open another store at the north end of Lowestoft. He also built an impressive new house at 14 North Parade, overlooking the park and the sea. The other two Hailey brothers lived in terrace houses for a while, near the Kirkley shops, until they too started building larger homes during the 1930s. But in 1929 Frederick James' sudden

death at the age of 55 forced retrenchment in his household, and eventually the survivors moved to London.

A few years after Frederick James' impressive funeral, attended by a crowd of employees and community leaders, and after his share of the partnership had been paid out, two companies were formed: one to own the shops, a small hotel and various houses in Lowestoft, and another, C & J. Haileys Ltd., to run the business. In 1979, the board of directors comprised the descendants of the younger sons of the first Frederick: Gordon, along with his sister and brother, and the children of John Edward (Jack), under the chairmanship of his oldest son Richard Morton – called Morton – who by then was in his seventies. Few of the founder's great-grandchildren, though, were opting to make the family business their whole concern. Morton's son Richard did choose to make his living in the Lowestoft firm after gaining experience of the trade in London, but even as one of Hailey's directors, Stephen continued to practise as a chartered accountant, like his father.

Over two successive generations after World War I, individual plans diverged more and more from the family enterprise, eroding active involvement. The senior branch of the Lowestoft Haileys dropped out altogether. Frederick James' son Jack (known as “John” in his youth) worked his way up to a directorship in a London furniture store and his son Michael heads a Rudolph Steiner school for special education. For many year, it was Charles William who held the fort in Lowestoft. “My father had strong ideas about not working for other people,” Gordon explained.

Charles was “very attached to his brothers”, but apt to find their wives and sisters “rather trying”. Not everyone agreed with Charles that all the profits should be ploughed back into the business. Tall and proud of it, however, the Haileys “must have been rather overpowering”, Gordon thought, recalling that his own mother's people, Norfolk farmers, were “quite short”. Not surprisingly John Edward (Gordon's Uncle Jack), who attended a Lowestoft college, chose to supervise the Haileys “outside business” for the rest of his life and put his oldest son into the ironmongery trade. That son, nonetheless, as current chairman of C. & J. Haileys Ltd., will be the last to have contributed direct experience in the field to the firm's management. Neither his brother Geoffrey, an engineer in Peterborough, nor their younger brother, a printer, play any part in it.

Charles William had no better success with the rising generation. “I think he expected me to come into the business after a few years experience in London... but I never did”, Gordon admitted. “My brother Aleck rather felt he had been pushed into the business, but I think he could have gone elsewhere if he had wanted to.”

Their upbringing had been relatively liberal. Both Charles William and John Edward adhered to the family's Free Church tradition not as Baptists but as Congregationalists. Theirs was an open and progressive denomination, and as a great reader Gordon's father let his children pick up any book they liked. The cousins all went to private or “dame” schools, as they were called, until the young Haileys were about 10 years old, before transferring to a high school. Gordon's sister became a weekly boarder at Norwich. And in the generation following, still more emphasis was placed on education and an individual choice of career. Quaker boarding schools were chosen for all of Gordon's own family. He and his wife, Esme, joined the Society of Friends in the 1940s.

Back in the carefree 1920s, though, work was not something that teenage Haileys thought much about. Halcyon days filled with walks and gatherings, on the beach and in the country, or birthday celebrations and costume parties frequently brought the crowd of cousins together. The Hailey girls, all of them older than the boys, would not have much to do with them, but they all played a lot of tennis and hockey. Morton developed, and all his life sustained, a passion for sailing. His home is on the Norfolk Broads, at Dulton. But with the untimely death of Frederick James, the fun abruptly ended for his flighty and vivacious daughters. When the bereaved family moved to London in 1933,

Thora went to work as a demonstrator for a company that made cooking stoves, and then shocked relatives by continuing to work after her marriage in 1936 to a design engineer in the technical department to which she had been promoted. It was, she explained, the only way they could save enough money to buy their first house.

Back in Lowestoft, meanwhile, the youngest member of Frederick and Anna Maria's family was supporting her household virtually alone. Her husband, Thomas Havelock Coombs, had become a permanent invalid and Ruth, his only daughter, was so used to having him around the house that she thought a father who went out to work something of an oddity. The girl was a great help to her mother in the private hotel they ran, almost next door to the Hailey emporium on the London Road South.

Emily Coombs was as proud of a table in her house, made from an oak tree on the Hellen land, as she was relieved that she had not been given her grandmother's name as well. "Emily" was bad enough, but "Henrietta" would have been worse, she always said. Emily was a forceful and regal presence, refusing, like Queen Mary, to abandon the ramrod dignity of archaic clothing styles. And even as a staunch member of the Established Church, her early training as a Baptist gave her the edge in any text-swapping argument. Her charisma was legendary. Denied a widow's pension, she argued her case in person before the highest court of appeal in the land, the House of Lords, and triumphed.

The lack of intimacy, on the whole, between Basingstoke and Lowestoft Haileys was as much due to a marked generation gap as it was to a growing social distance between the two families, though the combined effect was greater in some cases than in others. Emily Coombs, herself separated by many years from the rest of her siblings, was closer to some of them than to others. My mother never met this first cousin of hers, ten years her senior, but Emily was only seven years older than Harry; a mere five years older than May, and only four years senior to George, Arthur's father. So Gladys and Daphne spent vacations in the Coombs' hotel and there were return visits to Hayling Island, where May and her Woking family, too, once joined them all. Daphne well remembers the teenage Ruth's thick, blonde braid of hair and the younger brother whom "Aunt Em" called "Coppertop" on account of his auburn locks and – according to his sister - "a temper that went with them". He grew up to be a successful lawyer. At the close of her career as a primary school teacher, Ruth stayed on alone, after her mother's death in 1960 in the house hard by the family store.

That store was not destined to remain in family hands much longer. In March 1980, a little less than a decade after Hailey's celebrated its centennial, the interior was partly destroyed by a serious fire. Arson was suspected. Seven fire engines arrived to fight the blaze that badly burned two firemen, and hundreds of gallons of paraffin oil kept in the rear of the premises threatened an even worse disaster. It was averted, but there are no plans to reopen the place as Hailey's. It will probably be sold to a supermarket chain. The shock may have hastened Gordon's death just a few weeks later, his cousin Thora believes.

Like the Basingstoke Haileys, the Lowestoft branch, too, has lost much of its cohesion. "We don't really seem to be a very close family, certainly not since the war," Gordon had observed. The Tofts – the aunt Annie Hellen's family – had been quite lost to view for some time, even though they are thought to be still in Hingham, a mere 30 miles from Lowestoft. Gordon's sister, Margaret June, lives in West Suffolk, like Morton's widowed sister. One of Gordon's sons manages a farm in Devon. And after several years in Harpenden, near George and Elsie, Thora and Tom Lattimer have retreated to a Cornish cliff house, full of fine antiques and rare Lowestoft china, with a magnificent view of Fowey harbour.

### **The Past is Finally Pieced Together**

When I visited the Lattimers in Cornwall, in 1980, a neighbour mistook me for Thora's niece. Thora

enjoyed the joke, for she herself, at her first sight of me, had been struck by the resemblance. A picture of Margaret Durant showed me why.

The year had already played plenty of similar tricks. In a day and age soured by depression and as scarred by peace as by war, three members of the Lowestoft clan had managed to hold on to a sense of the past that eluded most English people of their generation. Gordon Hailey, Thora Lattimer and Margaret (Peggy) Durant had for years been trying to assemble the known fragments of their history, but the scattered verbal clues did not always make much sense. In 1979, however, their notes began to shed light on the research begun two years earlier by Arthur Hailey with the help of the society of Genealogists in London. I was recruited to the project as a professional historian. My doctoral dissertation on "Papiano, 1300-1500: the Social Structure of an Italian Rural Community" happened to have steered me toward the study of families.

Over the years I had also managed, with luck and purpose, to stick to an itinerary plotted with the aid of two old National Geographic magazines found in the house at Woking. My odyssey swung in a wide arc between the pyramids of Giza and those of Tezoztlan. En route, in 1960, I bumped into cousin Arthur again, down from Toronto for a script conference in Hollywood, and by the mid-sixties, both of us made our way to northern California. During the seventies, shuttling between a home there and a job in New York, I found cousin Daphne on Long Island, matured into a wry and composed adult who deftly balanced Hailey tenacity with her mother's incomparable verve. Gladys herself was jetting over from England every winter to spend a few weeks in her daughter's rambling house at Sand's Point, on the Sound. In February 1981, Reuters wire service called her son-in-law to London to head the international agency and it was Daphne's turn to commute, but meanwhile, I had started both the family history and a new job, a short 700-mile flight from home each week.

It was cousin Fay in Amersham, however, who opened the door through which, like Alice, I tumbled into a labyrinth of surprises. From a friend there, the wife of a local Hailey, Fay heard about someone in Essex who had spent long years working on a Hailey family history. I trailed him to the remote hamlet where he unfolded a genealogy nearly identical to the one I had brought along in my briefcase. The only difference between them was that on Martin Hailey's chart the space where grandfather Edmund and the entire Basingstoke clan should have been, was entirely blank. Yet there I stood, the living contradiction; the missing link. After we had both survived the shock, we had a good laugh, Hailey style.

That was the circuitous path by which we stumbled across the grandson of the estranged William; lost brother of Binnie, Frederick, Edmund and Mary. Between 1963 and 1976 this new-found cousin, a humanistic engineer and railroad buff whose fascination with the romance of tools and words finds an echo in Arthur's novels, had enlisted the help of A. Colin Cole, then Portcullis Pursuivant of Arms at the College of Heraldry (now Windsor Herald of Arms) to solve the mystery of Martin's origin. With his older son Peter, head of the French department at Godalming School, Martin nosed around Amersham and found clues linking the Haileys with the Saracen's Head and hinting at antecedents of the innkeeper's father, that first Thomas whom we can all reliably claim as the head of the line.

Today, Martin Hailey is not his heir apparent in that direct line, as he once thought, but he is the senior male member to have come forward. One day, perhaps, descendants of the Stony Stratford branch may be traced in Canada and New Zealand. Probate records show that Frank Percival Hailey, Alfred's oldest grandson, who remained in England working for the Prima Co. of Birmingham, retired to Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex and in 1958 left his very considerable estate to an only son, Frank Newman Hailey, but his whereabouts are still unknown.

Survivors of the North London branch remain mute and invisible, too, save for a single, serendipitous exchange in 1980. On a hunch, I had written to a name in the London telephone book. Later research

confirmed that the eighty-year old spinster who answered by letter was, indeed, the person I guessed her to be: one of Henry Grimsdale Hailey's grandchildren. Her family had been in the wholesale food business, she said, but aside from that she knew nothing about her relatives. All contact had been lost. Alone in London, her eyesight almost gone, Marjorie Louise Hailey had not even seen her only brother these many years.

Nor has anyone, as yet, managed to place a certain Miss Elma Hailey of Fulham, who briefly corresponded with Gordon Hailey and Peggy Durant in the late 1940s. She was able to list some of the children of great-grandfather Thomas of Amersham and believed she was connected with the Lowestoft Haileys through Alfred of Stony Stratford. She complained how hard it was to get a domestic servant in this day and age. She was never heard from again.

Fulham .... Connie Newman the dressmaker...Frank Newman...it might all have been so easy to figure out long ago, while I still lived in Fulham, had I but realized where these clues could lead. Instead I merely wondered vaguely, from time to time, about my progenitors a century or two before, never thinking of Fulham – rather dowdy in those days – as part of their story. More than forty years later, walking past my old home toward Chelsea for the first time since 1939, I found the place infinitely more charming than I remembered.

### **A New Kind of Family**

The same wanderlust that drove the Haileys apart brought them back together, at least in spirit, during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New occupations, new lifestyles and fast travel shrank distance and fostered spontaneity. Cousins who lived continents apart began to meet as nonchalantly as ancestors riding between Colleshill and Amersham.

By 1974 the Woking nucleus was no more. I had not been the only particle to fly off. May's surviving son, Basil, had reluctantly assumed the burden of the family business in the late 1950s, though he would rather have flown airplanes. Instead he triumphantly repulsed the onslaught of balloon bread and packaged pastries, studied chocolate production at Cadbury's and was photographed for the local newspaper beside a mammoth Easter egg of his own concoction. With Cyril's help he developed a catering and banquet service distinguished by its impeccable style. But as the years passed, Basil found ever less time for diving and photography, and the underwater camera he himself designed and made fell to my husband on our grand tour of Europe in 1962. Just over a decade later he laid aside the cares of management in regulation-ridden England to discover unimagined freedom - Violet's theory of political economy notwithstanding – on the production line of a cake factory in Australia.

Daphne and Glen occasionally meet him there. Moreover, in 1979, he and Joan Hailey Rawlins realized that all this time they had been living only a few miles apart, near Melbourne. Joan's large family, as handsome as Arthur's and glowing with health from their gardening, fishing, parachuting, fashion modelling, fund-raising and “bushwalking”, had by this time produced four grandchildren.

Basil's sister Iris, for years a partner in the family firm, had long since exchanged Working for Hersham. Now, with characteristic equanimity, she watched her daughter leave for Kuwait and her son for Scotland. Ann Pauline and her Iraqi husband, an insurance broker in flight from his own homeland, both hope to migrate Stateside one day soon. Arthur Charles has chosen a career in cancer research. His doctoral thesis, accepted in December 1978, was on “Investigations into the Effects of Alkylation of Deoxybonuclein Acid in Baby Hamster Kidney Cells by N-Methyl-N'-Nitrosoquanadine”. Both he and his Scottish wife, Gillian, a chemist who received her PH.D. In 1979, hold appointments at the University of Aberdeen.

Women as well as men in the family are contriving to carry forward the family name as well as its

traditions. The first Jane Hailey in the line since 1705 decided to keep her own name when she married a maternal cousin from England. At Cambridge, building on a degree in psychology from Stanford and two years of teaching in San Francisco, Arthur's elder daughter is earning her doctorate in medicine. Judith Hailey Renfrew, on the other hand, will not fully understand why she carries such a name until she learns more of her family history.

Daphne, Judith's mother, called her first child Barry Glen instead of Henry Walter – after all, her father himself had ignored tradition. He was already on the way to the registrar's office when he impulsively stuck “Daphne” in front of the “Ann” meant to honour the child's grandmother. Daphne compromised with her mother's reiterated demands for a Hailey name – three daughters later.

It's a history that has been written for all those people, with or without the Hailey name, and however it may have been acquired, who in some way have been touched by its spirit, from Christopher in Amersham to Christopher in California; for those like Mark, raised in Los Angeles, who will find here yet another reason to build country houses; for those, like Aunt Bea in Enfield, who are not quite sure where they fit in; for those who are lost as well as those who have been found.

It is a small tribute to that community of the living and the dead that is a family; a community linking those still here with those both long and lately gone: Mary, a twin who lived but two weeks, back in Amersham in 1671; Susannah, a twin who lived for a full year in 1684; Ann, one of the Renfrew twins, whose promising career as a physicist, at Harvard, was ended at the age of 21 by a fatal fall in Scotland, on the descent from Ben Nevis.

It is for “a good family talk,” as cousin Thora put it; the kind that would drift back, through bursts of laughter, over a twilight room in Basingstoke or Woking, to reassure a sleepy child.

“The Haileys,” said Thora, “were ever good talkers.”

Berkeley, California  
1982.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

Historical research uses two kinds of source, primary and secondary. The first category is the raw material of history, produced in the very same past of which it speaks by people living at the time. Such records can be written documents, whether edited and printed or in their original form (lists, registers wills, laws, letters, court cases, financial accounts, and so forth) but they may also include maps and pictures, or artefacts like tombstones, houses or clothing as well as – more recently – tape recorded interviews. The second category covers every other source of information that reaches us at second hand. The Hailey history has been compiled from both categories of evidence.

As a special kind of history with special needs, genealogy cannot be done at all without as much reliable information as possible about individual births, marriages and deaths. In the Hailey case, most of these indispensable facts have been gathered by the Society of Genealogists in London. Their reports are available for consultation among the author's private papers, along with letters, news clippings, copies of original wills and will abstracts, recorded interviews and miscellaneous documents including a number of certified copies of entries of births, marriages and deaths filed since 1837 in the General Register Office

As complete as this inquiry has tried to be, more details may yet await discovery by anyone wishing to burrow further into the sources listed below, or to consult others that they, or ingenuity and imagination, may suggest. For convenience, primary sources are listed alphabetically by location.

**PRIMARY SOURCES** (other than artefacts, letters and oral interviews).

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Shardeloes Estate Records;  
Tithe Map, 1836.

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British Library. Newspaper Library: Chesham Examiner, Amersham & Rickmansworth Times;  
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Bedfordshire, Berkshire & Hertfordshire: Bedford & Hertford Parish Registers (original and in transcript).

Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury):

Challoner's School records;  
Land Tax Assessments;  
Marriage Licenses;  
Muster Roll, 1522 (index);  
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Poll Books, 1705, 1784;  
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