

LUKER (Lockeyer, Lockier, Looker, Lucar, Lucker)

Although there are several references to Lukers on the Gloucester/Wiltshire and Gloucester/Oxfordshire borders in the late 17th century, the first from whom a line of descent can be traced is STEPHEN Looker. He was a day labourer (ie one without an annual hiring), and on 30 May 1715 he married Rebecca Packer at Barnsley, a village SE of Gloucester. No reference to Stephen's baptism some 20 - 30 years earlier has yet been found, although it is known that Rebecca was baptised on 20 Aug 1694 at Barnsley. Stephen and Rebecca Looker were buried at Barnsley on 11 Dec 1775 and 8 Jan 1768 respectively, having had at least nine children between 1715 and 1743. The sixth was WILLIAM Looker, baptised at Barnsley on 23 July 1732.

On 26 Sep 1763 William Lucar and Mary Bartlett were married in Barnsley. Three of their children were baptised in Barnsley between 1765 and 1768. One was THOMAS Looker, baptised on 2 Oct 1765. William Looker was buried on 8 May 1793 at Barnsley. Mary his widow, who survived until July 1811, was also buried there.

Thomas Looker, a labourer, moved to South Cerney but on 22 Sep 1793 returned to Barnsley to wed Martha Howes of that village. Their son JOHN Looker, born 3 Nov 1793, was baptised there on 10 Nov 1793 (a good many brides were pregnant on their wedding day - plus ca change). They had at least six other children, some of whom were born at Arlington (but baptised at Bibury) but at least one was born at Winson. Thomas Lucker was buried at Bibury on 27 Dec 1834. In 1851, Martha his widow was still living at Arlington as a pauper, with Ann and George her unmarried daughter and son and two grandsons. She was buried at Bibury on 24 Aug 1861, aged 90.

Thomas and Martha's first son John, named Lockeyer, and Esther Clift of Minchinhampton were married at Minchinhampton on 20 Mar 1814. It is known that Hester (recorded as the wife of John Luker in 1851) came from Minchinhampton. Although the spelling "Lockeyer" is a bit eccentric, the names in the title are all allowed to be viable alternatives in the Gloucestershire Record Office index to the 1851 Census. In view of that, the cross references and the absence of other Johns and Esthers/Hesters, the link seems probable. SAMUEL Luker, son of John and Esther Luker, was baptised at Rodborough on 12 Mar 1815, the year of Waterloo. John Luker had moved up in the world to the occupation of miller by the time of his son's baptism. He and Hester had at least four other children at Rodborough before moving in about 1848 to Marlings Mill at Painswick where they were living in 1851. This John's death has yet to be traced.

Samuel Luker and his wife Elizabeth (born Elizabeth Sparrow at Stroud) were married at Minchinhampton on 20 Aug 1836, both signing the register - the first sign of any education in the Lukers. In 1851 they also lived at Marlings Mill with Samuel's parents, John and Hester, their eldest surviving son JOHN Luker, born at Dudbridge, and six other children. John was then 13 (baptised at Woodchester on 25 June 1837) and was already at work for his father as a miller. Samuel Luker died on 11 Dec 1867 at Barnwood, Gloucester, of "softening of the base of the brain and abdominal abscess". There is a mystery about this Samuel's will, which was proven in 1868. He left his estate to Mary Anne his

wife, which implies that he remarried after his first wife, Elizabeth, died. But we do not know who this Mary Anne was.

Also at Painswick in 1851, at New Mills, were John Berryman and his wife Mary Anne (daughter of William Flight). John Berryman was a carpenter, then employing four men. He later became a builder. The Berrymans had eight children including Mary Anne (baptised 5 Nov 1836), Emma and Harriett. In 1851 they were 14, 12 and 6 respectively and were all born at Stroud. They were a non-conformist family, probably Methodist.

Another family of Lukers, also millers, appear to have been active in the area at this time. Slater's Directories say that the Grove Mill at Stroud was run by John and Daniel Luker in 1852 and by Samuel Luker in 1858. I have been unable to trace any firm connection, although it is not impossible that Samuel of Marlings Mill moved to Stroud. Further research is required, not least to establish that the Grove Mill was not a cloth mill. [Directories are not necessarily reliable sources.]

After the abolition of the Corn Laws and the consequent import of cheaper grain, from the USA, Canada and Russia, country mills found the going hard. The flour industry tended to gravitate to the ports and that meant Gloucester.

John Luker, son of Samuel and Elizabeth, married Mary Ann Berryman at Painswick on 26 Jun 1858 (one of the witnesses being Marianne Flight) and they must have moved to Gloucester soon afterwards as their eldest son Joseph John was born there in 1860. An indexed, but missing, cutting from the Gloucester Journal of 12 Mar 1859 refers to the establishment of a Luker mill. In 1871 at the Duke Inn, 16 Quay Street, lived John Luker, miller, his wife the innkeeper, five children and a servant. One of the children was SAMUEL BENJAMIN Luker, born 18 Dec 1867 at Gloucester.

Just along Quay Street at number 6 was John's brother James Luker, also a miller, his wife Ellen, three children and a servant. Quay Street, with Upper and Lower Quay Streets, was a place of refreshment for the seamen and stevedores of the port. In 1871 there were nine drinking places - Elephant and Castle, Anchor, Globe, Three Kings, Duke, Star, Mermaid, Ship and the Booth Hall Tap. The Star's landlady was Diana Washbourn. By 1881, these nine had been reduced to five, the Duke had closed and John Luker and family had moved.

There is mention of other Luker milling in Gloucester. Morris' Directory gives Samuel Luker of Quay Street in 1865 and 1868, so John's and James' father Samuel may have led the move to Gloucester and leased the Quay Street mill, with John and James as his employees. Morris' in 1876 and Kelly's in 1879 list a Henry Luker at Island Street and James at Victoria Mill, Quay Street. By 1894 no milling Lukers are listed.

To return to Quay Street in the '70's. "On 31 July 1873 at about 1/4 to 10 in the evening....." starts the report of a fire at Quay Street Mill in the Gloucester Journal of 2 Aug 1873. "The Liverpool, London and Globe; Norwich and Phoenix brigades [Fire brigades were then run by insurance companies] were soon in attendance but from first discovery a few minutes showed that the fire had a firm hold and there was no hope of saving the building. "Much time was lost as the river was low and

long lengths of hose were needed - the Norwich engine used a main in the street. There was a problem with a large mob, whose anxiety to "help" resulted in a broken stand tap. The fire was under control in an hour after spreading to the Star Inn and adjoining cottage rooves. A box over a bearing had caught fire from the bearing running hot. Damage to the mill, machinery and stock was estimated at £1500 and to adjacent buildings at £300. The property was all insured and belonged to Mr JT Agg-Gardner of Cheltenham whose tenant at the Star was Mr Washbourne.

The Editor comments "Yet another fire amid scenes of confusion and risk to life, with police unable to control the crowd"...."Will our civic authorities wait for wholesale conflagration and loss of human life before they are aroused to their obvious duty?" By 1888 when the latest in a series of serious flour mill fires occurred, the authorities had not been aroused and there was still no city fire brigade.

However, on 16 August 1873, seventeen days after the fire, John Luker advertised in the Journal "to thank his numerous friends for the assistance kindly rendered by them at the fire at his premises and informs customers that with the assistance of some friends during the re-building of the mill, his business carries on as usual, when he solicits a continuance of their favours".

It is clear from this that family stories of a classic flour explosion and of Samuel Benjamin, then aged five, having to be withdrawn from grammar or private school and sent to be an apprentice, because of the family being ruined by the fire, are unlikely to be true.

It is not known where Samuel Benjamin went to school, but he was not on the roll of the King's School between 1870 and 1880. The King's School, attached to the Cathedral, wore mortarboards (as did Samuel in a remembered photograph) but perhaps he borrowed a mortarboard for the photo? The Blue Coat school, Sir Thomas Rich's foundation, is another possibility. The sons of Charles Luker, a draper's assistant, Frederick and George, gained entry in 1856 and 1872. I have not found a connection to this family. Samuel, son of John Luker, miller of 5 Forest Road, sat the examination in 1877, got 35 marks out of 60 and was not admitted. Next year he got 30 and was again not admitted. He was too old to sit in 1879.

John Luker moved to Stroud Road where he was registered as a voter in 1884/5 and then to 16 Forest Terrace in 1886/7. He died there in 1902 of chronic nephritis - certified by W Washbourn MRCS. His occupation was then given as flour mill hand. A "miller" is not necessarily the owner or leasee of a mill - he may be just a skilled journeyman - but this description by his son Raymond may indicate that John had come down in the world. Or that people were becoming more precise in their categorisation?

John Luker's first wife Mary Ann died in 1874 and they had had at least six children. Some time before 1876 he re-married; his second wife was Harriett Berryman, one of his first wife's younger sisters. They had at least seven children, the youngest recorded, Edith Harriett, being born in 1887 and living only a year. Meanwhile, a third sister, Emma Berryman (1839 - 1898) had married Thomas Woodfield, a wheelwright of