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Canada
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- 4 July

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter and the interesting copies. I was particularly interested in the story about John Wesley. I sent a query to the Kent FHS mailing list and have got a few replies so far.

Apparently, John Wesley visited Sheerness in 1767 and Blue Town, Sheppey in 1769 and 1776. He also went to Tunbridge Wells (there's a memorial there) and stayed in a house on the edge of Southborough Common and left his portrait there.

Another story sent to me: In Staplehurst in 1763 a house owner and 14 others were sent to court and convicted under a 1664 Act following an appearance by John Wesley. They appealed and were retried at Maidstone Quarter Sessions. The sentence was upheld so they appealed to the King's Bench and the convictions were squashed. This seems somewhat more serious than the event you are looking for but it shows the sort of problems there were at that time. Later on Wesley seems to have been more accepted.

Even more interesting, it says in Arthur Mee's *The King's England - Kent* (publ.1936): 'Shoreham knew John Wesley and, though there were riots in the church when he first came to preach, its people must have learned to love the old evangelist, for he came once a year for 40 years to see his friend Vincent Perronet, who was preaching in this church for nearly two generations. ... Wesley... was at the death of his son and at the death of his wife, and he was there when the vicar himself died at 91. ... Every morning Wesley would preach at the vicarage, and every night in the church; he would start the day with a sermon at five o'clock with William Blake fast asleep in a cottage close by.'

This is interesting as I have for years been trying to prove a connection between John Clark of Shorne and the Clarks of Shoreham. Vincent Perronet was vicar for 57 years until 1785. This suggests John Wesley was visiting from about 1745. As he was preaching in the church it seems unlikely he would have needed a barn there but perhaps a Clark relative in another parish invited him.

I have done some research on the Clarks in Shoreham because of the name Avis. I see your John b.1809 had a daughter Avis as well as a sister. David had a daughter Avis in 1835 just before he moved to Essex. David also had at least 2 granddaughters named Avis making three generations of Avis Clarks.

Finding where John Sr. came from is a problem because there are so many Clark families. There are Clark families in Rochester and Gravesend. There was a John baptized to James and Catherine on 12 Apr 1761 in Cobham which is a possibility. This James and Catherine also had children William, Sarah, James, Mary, (John), Elizabeth and Richard. Another John was baptized on 16 May 1762 at Higham, son of James Clark and Ellen Faffin. This is on the IGI but I don't have any more details.

I wondered whether John may have had a sister or mother named Avis and checked the IGI for all Avis Clarks. There were 2 Avis Clark baptisms in Shoreham so I did some more work on this family: Richard Clark married Elizabeth Turly in 1757 and they had 7 children Anna Maria, Daniel, Mary, John bt.5 Feb 1764, Anne, Richard and Avis bt.1771. Daniel (the only son to have children in Shoreham) married Lydia Russell in 1787 in Farningham and had 9 or 10 children including Richard, Benjamin, Avis (1791), John and Daniel. I have seen the Land Tax records of Shoreham which list Richard from 1780-87, then Widow Clark in 1788, then Daniel from 1789-1832.

I feel there could be a connection here, our John may not be the one bt.1764, but could be a nephew of Richard, who appears to have come to Shoreham from somewhere else. I have been meaning to check out the Shoreham BTs for ages to see if that John survived infancy for example.

Then there is the wood dealing thing. Shorne was a heavily wooded area and as 3 of Johns' sons were wood cutters/dealers it is likely that John was also. Shoreham is not a wooded area so I doubt if the Clarks there were in that type of occupation. John may have come from a wooded area. The main problem is that IGI coverage is quite poor in Kent.

Long ago I recorded the Clarks in Shorne in the 1841 census:

Ridgeway The Seeks	Richard Clark	30	Ag Lab	Y
	Ann Clarke	30		Y
	Maria "	5		Y
	Mary "	1		Y
	//			
	Jane "	65		Y
	John "	30		Y
	Eliza "	20		N
	Eliza "	5 mths		Y
	//			
	Daniel "	35	Wood cutter	Y
	Ann "	25		Y
	Daniel "	4		Y
	Mary "	1		Y
Shorne and Ifield	David Clark	80	Ag Lab	Y
	Mary "	80		Y

I don't know if you're familiar with this census, the Y/N is whether born in Kent, the ages are rounded down from 15+ so Jane's age is 65-69. The // marks indicate a new household so there appears to be 3 Clark families all in the same place, possibly neighbouring cottages. David and Mary are interesting, as David could be a brother of John (David wasn't a very common name). David was buried at Shorne on 25 Jun 1841 age 82 and Mary (who could be his wife or his sister) was buried 14 Nov 1847 age 87. It would be nice to know if David's occupation was wood too. Ag Lab is very general and he probably couldn't do much at 82!

Shorne Ridgeway was just south of Shorne village on the east side of Shorne Wood on the road from Higham to Cobham. The Wesleyan Chapel was at Ridgeway by 1838 but has no known registers. There was one slightly earlier in Frindsbury and one in Rochester by 1796, these are both on the IGI.

One puzzle I had with John in Shorne was the Land Tax. He was renting a property and paying tax from 1797 to 1804 only. The filmed records go from 1780 until 1832. I did wonder if he was actually living in another parish although his children were baptized in Shorne and he was buried there. I haven't seen any of the nearby land tax records though.

Also I did try to find a will for him. There are 2 possible wills probated at the PCC, one in Aug 1824 and one in Feb 1825. They just say John Clark of Kent so it's a long shot. I haven't checked them. It may be worth checking death duty registers also, but these are difficult on film as there are so many films.

By the way there are indexed copies of the registers for Shorne up to 1812 at the SOG library. These are the ones I saw originally when I was living in Hampshire. I think these are the same transcripts available on fiche from the Kent FHS Fiche #139. I didn't buy them as I had already noted all the Clark entries. They cost 3.80.

I think we are a sort of half 4th cousin, once removed. My mother's father was Herbert Clark b. 1881 in Upminster, son of Edward Clark b. 1856 Upminster who was the first child of Richard and Jane. My mother and I were both born in Croydon. The Clark descendants from Edward have almost died out now, my aunt in her 80s is the last with the name. There should be some descended from Richard's other sons though, but I don't know of any.

Please let me know if you find any new information.

Yours sincerely,

Maurice Rawson