

ELEVEN

GENERATIONS

OF THE

CHEAL FAMILY

DGAC

December 2020

Eleven Generations of Cheals

1. First Generation

The story begins in April 1625 when John Cheal was born in the Sussex village of West Hoathly. We know he was baptised in the village church of St.Margaret's on 10th April, just two weeks after King Charles I became King on 27th March. John's parents were Thomas and Elizabeth, but we know nothing about their son except that he found his bride, Philippa, living in the neighbouring village of Horsted Keynes. It was there that John Cheal married Philippa Venall on 18th September 1655.

2. Second Generation

The fourth of John and Philippa's five children was Thomas, and he was baptised at West Hoathly on 17th September 1665, right at the peak of the outbreak of Bubonic Plague which was ravaging England that summer. By the time Thomas reached the age of 21 in 1686 King Charles II had been succeeded by his brother James II who was England's last Catholic monarch. Thomas married Elizabeth Peckham on 7th February 1687, and they had three children before Thomas died in January 1731 at the age of 66, and was buried at West Hoathly.

3. Third Generation

Henry Cheal was the eldest of the three (surviving) children born to Thomas and Elizabeth Cheal. He was born in August 1687 just six months after his parents got married, and baptised on 23rd August (a date which was 312 years to the day before his (4 times great) grandson, David, first entered this information on his computer) . When the baby was only a year old, Parliament invited the Dutch prince, William of Orange, to take over the vacant English throne. (His arrival was dubbed "The Glorious Revolution"). Henry was growing up in rural Sussex during the reign of Queen Anne and would have been married to his wife Mary by about 1714. Henry and Mary had ten children between January 1716 and October 1729. Henry died thirty years later in 1759, the year known as the Annus Mirabilis. He was buried on 2nd May at West Hoathly, and then four years later, on 20th November 1763, his widow Mary was also buried at St.Margaret's in the village. She would have been about 74.

4. Fourth Generation

The eldest son of Henry and Mary, another Henry, was baptised in West Hoathly on 20th November 1721. Sadly, we know nothing of young Henry's childhood or schooling, though any education he may have had is likely to have been rudimentary. He married Ann Voice, a local girl from Balcombe at the end of May 1759 (shortly after his father had died). The Parish Registers for West Hoathly do not record a date for the wedding, but they do state that the Banns were read in church on May 21st 1759. It seems reasonable to assume they married at Ann's home church in Balcombe a week or two later. The year 1759 was notable, too, in the world beyond Balcombe and West Hoathly. Both the poet Robbie Burns and future Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger were born in this year, and it marked the death of the composer Handel. There were British victories in India and Canada (the Annus Mirabilis) and Arthur Guinness founded his brewery in Dublin (all of which probably escaped the attention of young Henry Cheal). Between 1760 and 1770 Henry and Ann had five children.

5. Fifth Generation

The first of Henry and Ann's five children was born in West Hoathly in 1760 and baptised John. He is referred to as John senior to distinguish him from his only son, also called John who was born in 1800. At some point in the 1780s or 1790s John left West Hoathly and moved to Crawley where he became a shopkeeper in premises right opposite The George Hotel (still there today 240 years later). This John was the first in the family to become a Quaker and in 1814 he helped to found the Crawley branch of The British and Foreign Bible Society. On 29th June 1798 John Cheal married Lucy Sayers at the Friends Meeting House in Ifield close to Crawley. For the next 207 years the Cheal family of Crawley maintained their connection with FMH Ifield, a link that ended only when my grandmother Annie was buried there in February 1980, as were her daughters Chris and Rene a few years later. John and Lucy had two children: John (junior) born on 7th June 1800, and Martha born on December 27th 1801 (in the same year that Admiral Nelson's fleet defeated the Danish navy at Battle of Copenhagen). John died in 1837 and is buried at Ifield FMH.

6. Sixth Generation

John (junior) was born above his father's shop in Crawley. We know little of his early life, but we know he was sent to the Friends' School at Ackworth in Yorkshire from 1812 to 1815 and from then on he was working in the shop. His diary for 1830 opens with the comment that "dr Mother departed this life 6th day of 12th month 1829" (this was Lucy who died on 6th December aged 67). The same diary records that his father travelled to both Brighton and London in April for Quaker meetings. At the relatively advanced age of 40, John married Mary Fox, a Yorkshire girl from Dewsbury. They married on 3rd February 1841 in Dewsbury and went on to have three children: Lucy born 29th August 1846, Joseph born 27th March 1848, and Alexander born 29th December 1849. All three were born at home, Oak Tree Farm, Lowfield Heath. Alison has written a full account of the life of John Cheal in her book "Two Great-Grandfathers" (published June 1981). John died in 1896.

7. Seventh Generation

The Cheal family line continues down through Joseph who was my great-grandfather. In 1848 when Joseph was born, revolution and political upheaval was rampant in continental Europe (though probably not in Lowfield Heath). Joseph was educated at The Friends School in Croydon, then in 1871 he helped his father to establish J.Cheal & Sons Ltd, which would grow to become the well-known nursery and landscaping business. In 1875 Joseph travelled to Yorkshire where he married the 20 year-old Mary Elizabeth Gill in the FMH Dewsbury. Back home at Lowfield, Joseph and Mary had seven surviving children born between 1876 and 1888. Their firstborn son was Ernest who arrived in January 1878, the same month his future wife Annie Swain was born in Ireland. Joseph travelled widely overseas and became an influential member of the Royal Horticultural Society, which awarded Joseph with their highest level of recognition the Victoria Medal of Honour. Joseph died in June 1935 aged 87, and was outlived by his wife who died in March 1945, just five months after I was born (in October 1944).

8. Eighth Generation

Ernest grew up on the nurseries with his six siblings and was trained by his father, Joseph, to take over the management of the family business. Ernest met Annie in Sussex, but he travelled over to Ireland in August 1903 to marry her in Moira, on a day when it never stopped raining. They had five children, all born at Brookfield between 1905 and 1915, though only four survived infancy. Their only son Wilfrid arrived on 12th May 1907. Ernest and Annie lived at Brookfield from 1903 to 1960 before moving to 35 Millbank in Ifield so that Wilfrid and his family could move into Brookfield. Ernest died on 12th September 1961 aged 83, and was buried at FMH Ifield alongside his forebears. His widow Annie lived on for 18 more years lovingly supported by her daughters.

9. Ninth Generation

Wilfrid's childhood was much influenced by the First World War, as the family watched the troops marching past Brookfield on their way to the battlefield in France and Belgium. On a still day from outside in the garden, my father told me later, they could hear the thunder of shellfire from the armies in Flanders.. Much of the detail of Wilfrid's life is included in an appreciation I wrote earlier in 2020 and distributed to his children and grandchildren. Wilfrid married Barbara Ledgard on 18th May 1940, and their four children were born between 1942 and 1950. Wilfrid and his sister May had the difficult task of finding a buyer for the family business in 1965/66, but once he was relieved of this worry, he was able to enjoy 20 years of well-earned retirement in the Sussex village of Amberley. He died on 1st June 1987 and we buried him at the church in Amberley. Barbara lived on, in her beloved Sussex until November 2010. We laid her to rest in the graveyard which looks up to the Sussex Downs which she loved so well.

10. Tenth Generation

I was born in October 1944, and went to school at Great Walstead, then from 1958 to 1962 I was educated at St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate. On my 19th birthday I started in London articled to Price Waterhouse & Co where I trained to become a Chartered Accountant. Having met Jan Moen in early 1969, we married on 18th July 1971 at Dedham in Essex. The next few years we led a peripatetic lifestyle working in Europe, USA and Brazil for Mobil Oil. In 1978 our son Alex was born in Sao Paulo, and by 1984 when our second son, Richard, was born, we were living in Nigeria. We settled in Kent from 1987 until 1994 when we moved to Northern Ireland where we still live in 2020.

11. Eleventh Generation

The eleventh generation is represented by Alex and Richard (but also of course by Garth and Kate, and by Claire and Nicholas, as well as Diana, Miney and Henry), This potted history is intended primarily for each of them and their children, so that they have at least a summarised outline of the generations of Cheals which preceded them. There is much more detail available for those who wish to see it, and of course there is the huge database of 404 names on the Hume / Logan / Swain side of the family. This mass of data is also relevant to the families of Anthony and Christopher Parker who are most welcome to share in it.