

My ancestors were papermakers

Papermaking has been a tradition in **Linda Rollitt's** family tree. Here she traces the movement of her papermaking ancestors and the development of their industry.

Great-uncle Les (our fount of family lore until he died in 2002, aged 94) told us that his grandfather, Thomas Lang Caryl, was sent to Egypt to pick up the ancient mysteries of papermaking from the experts. He stayed in the King's palace in Egypt and while he was there met a young servant girl called Paulina. He liked the name so much that his daughter was named after her.

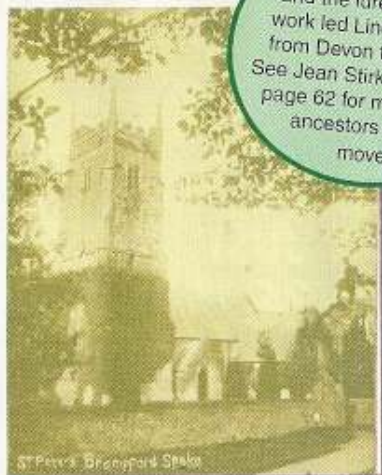
Thomas Lang Caryl was born in Brampford Speke, Devon, on 11 March 1838, and opposite the Agricultural Inn in this pretty village, you will find many Caryls buried in St Peter's churchyard. Inside the church, on a roll of honour of young men who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-1918, there is a William H Caryl. It seems likely that these people were members of our family and I look forward to finding a link with them. Thomas's father was William and father and son went on to be papermakers and the story continues in Hertfordshire.

According to *A History of Hertfordshire* by Tony Rook, 'In the 18th century, there were at least 18 paper mills in the county, mostly along the Chess, Colne and Bulbourne rivers in the western side of the county'.

It must have been a dusty and laborious job separating the rags into different cloths and colours,

ripping seams and taking off any buttons and buckles before chopping them up with scythe blades that were fixed upright to the work benches. It is no surprise that the women did most of these jobs, but their names were not listed in employee records of the time. The rags were then soaked and pounded with hammers driven by water wheels to make 'half-stuff'. Rather than using a mould contained in a frame called a 'deckle', John Dickinson's endless web was used to form the paper from the fibres in the mash stuff. This resulted in a much smoother and stronger paper quality. Placing the paper between sheets of felt was called 'couching' and several layers made a 'post', which was placed in an hydraulic press to remove the last drops of water. Once the paper was dried and smoothed, animal glue and alum were added so that it did not act like blotting paper when used in writing.

In 1828, a Dickinson paper mill was built in Croxley Green near Watford, with a five-mile canal link across to the Home Park mill in King's Langley. By this time, the mills were steam-driven and the papermaking process required that the sites be near water. The site between the River Gade and the canal seemed ideal, but the Croxley building was troubled by rather too much water and the foundations were



St Peter's, Brampford Speke. Many Caryls are buried in the churchyard.

Industrialisation and the lure of better work led Linda's family from Devon to London. See Jean Stirk's article on page 62 for more about ancestors on the move.

more expensive than expected. However, there was a grand opening in August 1829. This was closely followed by 'trouble at mill' with the Swing Riots of 1830. Machine breakers went on the march, but were scared off by the red coats of the Old Berkeley Hunt which they mistook for mounted soldiers.

Our Caryl family lived in housing provided by the company in The Mill Square and later Dickinson Square in Croxley. Uncle Les told us that Thomas would have lived in one of the better houses, as befitted a foreman papermaker.

Thomas's wife, Hannah Roney, affectionately known in the family as Gran Caryl, was a formidable woman who ran the Halfway House hostelry in Croxley whilst bringing up seven children. Uncle Les maintained that Thomas Lang Caryl died of a heart attack on his way back from work and his fellow workers carried him home on a gate borrowed from one of the fields surrounding the mill.

There is a hypothesis that the Sayers family (from which my daughter is descended via my first husband) was connected with the Dickinson paper people. Grace Annie Dickinson married Harold Frederick Sayers in 1915. Her grandfather Thomas Lewis Dickinson was a printer pressman in 1867. It is yet to be established if there was a connection and if so, the family of my first husband ran the company that employed the family of my second husband - small world?!

William H Caryl is commemorated on the war memorial in Brampford Speke. See www.devonheritage.org for a photo.

Devon Heritage

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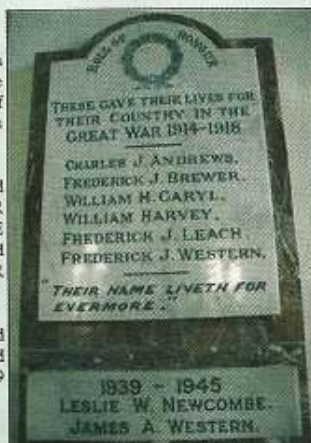
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BRAMPFORD SPEKE - THE WAR MEMORIAL

There are two parts to the War Memorial in Brampford Speke: the first part is mounted on the wall inside the church and consists of a sheet of white marble on which names are carved; this is mounted on a sheet of pink marble.

Below the heading 'Roll of Honour' and a carved wreath, are the words **THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918**. Six names follow and the Memorial is concluded with the words **'THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE.'**

A matching pair of marble sheets have been added below to accommodate the names of two dead from the Second World War, headed simply 1939 - 1945.



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