

Willett Families in Mobberley

John Willett (1793-1876) and his wife and their younger children moved from Madeley to Mobberley in late 1841 or early 1842. Only their middle son Thomas and his family remained in Staffordshire. He leased Owen House Farm, of about 53 acres, for several years but by 1861 was at Breach House Lane. By 1871 John and Susannah were retired and living with their youngest son Edward's family on a 100 acre farm in Small Lane.

John and Susannah's last few years were spent at Ashley with their daughter Ann and her family (Burgess) at their farm. John Willett died of "old age and senile decay" on 13 February 1876 at Thorne's Green, Ashley, and was buried in St Wilfrid's, Mobberley. Susannah also died of old age on 3 February 1878. Their grave is easy to find near the main entrance of the churchyard.

Of their children who survived childhood and lived in the Mobberley area, their oldest son, John (1819-1857), was a cooper in King Street, Knutsford, and his younger brother George (1835-1888) was his apprentice cooper in 1851. The family is buried at St John's Church, Knutsford. Their head stone is still clear to read and easy to find as a paving stone in the main path from the street to the front door of the church. Another younger brother, Joseph (1825-1900) was also a cooper but as a journeyman moved around the district. Son Richard (1827-1884) married into the large Bracegirdle family of Mobberley.

The youngest daughter Elizabeth (1835-1911) married William Drinkwater, a grocer, and remained in the area. William was the son of James who ran a school in Mobberley, and his skilful copperplate

writing is preserved in the 1861 census records for the village as he was the enumerator who collected the census information.

The youngest child of John and Susannah, Edward (1837-1874), graduated from being a wheelwright to becoming a tenant farmer. He sold all his farm livestock and agricultural equipment and some of his household goods at Baguley Green, Mobberley, by auction on 27th February, 1871. He moved from Mobberley to Toft in late 1871 or early 1872. The list of stock to be auctioned showed he was a dairy farmer and offers a snapshot of farming at that time. The advert said he was leaving his farm.

It seems strange that he sold all his farm stock and equipment as he resumed farming after he moved to Middlewich Lane, Toft. You would think that he would have kept some of his dairy cows and farming equipment for the new farm. Perhaps he moved in response to illness as he was diagnosed with tuberculosis about the time he moved farms. His widow, Sarah Ann (Green, daughter of the publican at the Bull's Head Inn), was to continue farming, although the farm at Toft was only 25 acres in comparison with the 100 acres at Mobberley.

In his will Edward specifically bequeathed a silver cup he had won. This could be the silver cup won by Edward Willett of the Toft Troop, Cheshire Cavalry, for sword exercise, as reported in the Cheshire Observer on 8th August 1868. It must have been valuable as the second prize was 5 pounds. The Cheshire Cavalry (Yeomanry) was centred around Knutsford, but there is no evidence of military service by Edward so we cannot be certain about this.

**Advert in the Nantwich Guardian,
Saturday 25 February 1871**

On Monday, February Twenty-seventh Mr JOSEPH WALTON has been favoured with instructions by Mr Edward Willett, of Baguley Green, Mobberley, who is leaving his farm, to SELL BY AUCTION on Monday, February 27th, 1871, the whole of his valuable DAIRY STOCK, HORSES, Carts, Implements, Dairy vessels, Produce, and part of the Household Furniture, &c., amongst which may be enumerated 13 in-calf cows, and heifers (mostly just at hand), newly calved cow, first-class bull, 20 months old; six heifer calves, and one bull calf, powerful hay mare, in-foal to Nonpareil, 16½ hands, five years old, suitable for town work; very active chestnut mare, 15½ hands, four years old (a nice brougham mare); black cart colt, two years old; six store pigs, three new carts with 6in and 4½in wheels respectively, with harvest and top gearing complete; two complete sets of shaft gears, two hackney saddles, hay chopper, splendid land roller, summerwork and seed harrows, wheelbarrows, turnip cutter, fodder barrow, timbering chains, blocks and ropes, ladders, new cart sheet, milk tankards, cheese presses, large wood shed, joiner's work bench, valuable Russian retriever dog, and kennel, part of the Household furniture, and a great variety of farm yard etceteras, also about 100 measures of oats, 16 loads of horse beans, and eight loads of wheat in sacks.

Sale to commence at Eleven o'clock.
The farm is situate within three minutes' walk of Mobberley Railway Station.
For further particulars apply to the AUCTIONEER, Wilmslow



Owen House Farm now



Baguley Green, long since demolished. From a 1951 WI history of Mobberley. Kindly provided by A. MacLeod.



Edward and Sarah Ann had six children and three of them returned to Mobberley. Ann (1862-1913) married Peter Ford, who worked the Smithy in Mill Lane, which featured on postcards she wrote around 1907 (above).

Their daughter Eliza (1868-1886) was to die young of heart problems, at the Bull's Head Inn. She was probably staying and working with her mother's family at the Inn. Her death was reported by George Blackshaw, the husband of her aunt Maria Eden postmistress at the nearby Post Office (right hand side of the lower photo,).

Two of Edward's sons married two Cawley sisters: John William Willett married Emmy Cawley at Toft in 1896 and George Edward married Alice at Toft in 1898. The Cawley family were also from Mobberley. John William inherited the tenancy for Yew Tree Farm at Toft, and they lived there all their lives. Their son Edward John (Teddy

Willett, 1908-1973) farmed Dam Head farm, maintaining the link to Mobberley.

Alice (Cawley) Willett died just after the birth of my grandfather Richard Willett (Dick, 1899-1980) and George Edward, then a brick layer supervisor, remained living with the Cawley family at the Dairy Farm, Toft. He later moved to Mobberley and was to marry Catherine May Ford in 1910. They started a new family there and he went on to run a building contracting business from the site of the old mill (opposite the Smithy and next to the post office shown in the postcard photos). They were to live at Mill Dene, Spout Lane, just across the bowling green of the Bull's Head Inn. George Edward and Catherine May were to have three daughters. Rita Willett (1915-1981) married Lesley Tench Brighthouse and farmed Clay House Farm. Their descendants still live in the area.

Ian Willett, Canberra, 19 Nov. 2017