

## Blacksmiths of Kilsby

### Parish registers show a succession of blacksmiths working in Kilsby:

- 1710s-1740s: William Hall (wife Sarah); they had four daughters during the 1720s, but no sons  
**1750s-1840s:** **Radford** family (Joseph in 1759, John 1814-1830s, John's son Edward in the 1840s)  
1760s-1770s: Joseph Middleton; was working here as a blacksmith when he married in 1769  
1830s-1840s: James Whitworth, John Coles (in the railway tunnel) and William Harland (travelling smith)  
**1850s-1880s:** William **Chambers** and Thomas Turner were both listed as blacksmiths in the 1850s (but the Chambers were blacksmiths right through to the 1880s, see census returns below)  
**1880s-1940s:** **Haddon** family (Edward 1880s-1910s, his son Albert Edward up to the 1940s)  
1890s-1900s: George Essen (at least 1892-1900 as a minimum; he lived in the cottage beside the Stocks)

This suggests 3 periods in which demand was especially heavy: 1760s/70s, 1830s/40s, and 1890s/1900s. And we know why, viz., they coincided with 3 key periods in Kilsby's wealth and/or dependence on horses.

### Census returns show slightly different detail for various blacksmiths:

- 1841: **John Radford** aged 60, his 3dtrs (25, 20 and 10) and son John Radford aged 14; no wife listed  
**Edward Radford** aged 35, wife Ann (30) and 1 dtr (1)  
These two families are living on either side of one of the village pubs (publican John King)
- 1861: **William Chambers** aged 46, wife Mary (42) and son William (10), next to the Independent Chapel  
Thomas Cooke aged 20 (of Wenlock Cheshire), living elsewhere in the village with his father and family
- 1881: **William Chambers** aged 66, wife Mary (62), and **William Chambers** (30) son, also a blacksmith  
Albert Lodder aged 31 (of Dorset) with no wife but 2 dtrs aged 6 and 4 and a son (3)

### Early wills include 2 wills of former Kilsby blacksmiths:

#### Henry Pinson\* of Kilsby, 1590 (NR1 Book V F370)

[He has a married elder daughter Elizabeth and also a younger daughter Elizabeth, so either he was twice married, or he married a widow; the elder daughter may be a child of his wife's first marriage, but he lavishes affection on her. He gives his present wife the option to depart and remarry, indicating that she is considerably younger than him; from which we may deduce that he probably remarried to provide care for his dead first wife's children.]

In the name of god amen. I Henry Pinson\* of Killesbie in the countie of Northampton, blacke smith, being sicke in bodie but wholle in mynd and of perfect remembrance, doe make this my last will and testament in manner and forme following, committing my soule into the hands of allmightie God, and my bodie to be buried in the churchyard of Killesbie aforesaid, the 18th day of July 1590.

First my will is that my wiffe Agnes Pinson shall have her fynding and keeping by my son Richard Pinson, his heires [execut? ....ad .... ..] uppon my ground wherein I now dwell, with meate, drinke and clothes and all other things needfull for her meeke estate, both in sickness and in health during her naturall lyfe, if she like well there to continewe her life; but if she like not there to abide, then uppon her dislyke she shall have ten pounds and departe whither she will.

Also the said Agnes my wyffe shall have her [waiting? wymens?] to bestowe at her and where she will.

Also I give unto my sonne John a paire of bellows, the [tewe?] iron, the [stydie....] hammers, three pair of tonges, a buttresse, a paire of pinsors, a vice, all the [se...ings] belonging to my [ha....] on the east side of my shopp, and 20s, all to be payed and delivered unto him in the fourth yeare after my deceasse.

Also I give unto my sonne Henry two quarters of wheat, to be payed unto him when he setteth upp his occupacion for himself.

Also I give to my sonne William £7, to be payed unto him at the age of 21 yeares.

Also my sonne Richard shall bringe upp the said William at schoole.

Also I give to my daughter Elizabeth Theldon 46s-8d and a paire of sheets.

Also I give unto my daughter Joane 46s-8d and a paire of sheets.

Also I give Marie 46s-8d and a paire of sheets.

Also I give unto my daughter Alice 46s-8d and a paire of sheets.

To be payed unto every of them either at their age of 18 yeares or at the daie of their maryage, which shall first come.

And further I give unto my daughter Elizabeth Theldon my biggeste brasse pann and a [char stening sheete?] and a towell.

And to Joan my daughter I give my third brasse pann.

And to Elizabeth my daughter the younger I give my third brasse pott and a candlesticke.

And to Mary my daughter I give a pewter platter.

Also to Sannder [ie Alexander] Earle of Watford a bushell of masline [NB: maslin = mixed grain, esp. rye and wheat], and to his children William Earle 12d, John Earle 12d, Elizabeth Earle 12d and Joan Earle 12d.

And to Thomas Pycroft a strike of wheat.  
And to William Preiste my sonne in lawe a strike of masline.  
And to every of my god-children 4d a-peece.  
To Roger Preist my sonne in lawe 6s-8d.  
Also I will that if any of my five daughters, or John or William my sonnes, depart this lyfe before their porcions be payed unto them, then his or her porcion or porcions so deceassing shalbe equallie devided amongst the survivors of the said seven.  
Also I will that if anie of my children be sicke or diseased by God's visitacion and not through their owne wilfullness, then they shalbe succoured and releaved by mine heire upon any ground with all things necessarie for them, they being unmarried and their porcyons not payed unto them.  
Also if my daughter Elizabeth Theldon doe marrie with one that hathe no habitacion to bring her unto, then my will is that they shall have [Clew's?] house with the close belonging to it, for the rent of 10s by the yeare, to be payed to my sonne Richard.  
All the rest of my goods not given and unbequeathed, I give to my sonne Richard, whom I doe make my wholle executor of this my last will and testament, to paie all my debts, legacies and other dewes.  
In the presence of William Lee, Sannder Earle, Thomas Pycroft, John Read, with others.

[\*NB: **Pinson** – pincers. This man is named after his trade.]

Probatio fuit ... 23 Sept 1590 ... etc  
Invent. extendit ad summum £70-7s-8d.

A John Pynson was working (probably in Crick) as a blacksmith in 1621 – he is almost certainly the second son of Henry Pinson the prosperous blacksmith of Kilsby.

### **Thomas Clarke of Kilsby, 1656 (PROB 11/260)**

In the name of god amen. I Thomas Clarke of Killesby in the county of Northampton, Blacksmith, beinge weak in bodye but of sound and perfect memorie (praised be Almihtie God), doe make and ordaine this my last will and testament of that worldlie estate which God hath lent me, in manner and forme followinge.  
First, whereas I have surrendered my cottage house with th'appurtenances to the use of my beloved neighbour Thomas Hall as a friend in [trust for me?], my desire is that Mary Clarke my wellbeloved wife shall enjoy the same or so much thereof as may be convenient, for and dureinge her widdowhood, without molestacion; And further my desire and intent is, that Rebecca Clarke my daughter shall have and enjoye the said Cottage paying out of [.....] unto her three sisters the sum of Thirty pounds, to each of them Tenn pound a peece. And if any of them shall depart this life under the age of 21 yeares or unmmarried, the part of the deceased shalbe equally devided betweene them surviving.  
Also I give and bequeath unto my daughter Sarah the sum of Tenn pounds, to be paid by mine executrix.  
Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Mary Clarke the sum of Tenn pounds, to be paid her at the age of one and Twentie yeares by myne executrix hereafter named.  
Also I give and bequeath unto my daughter Anne Clarke the sum of Tenn pounds, To be paid her at the age of one and Twentie yeares by mine executrix hereafter named.  
And if any of my daughters shall depart this life under the age of one and twentie yeares, the portion of the deceased shalbe equally devided betweene them surviving.  
And all the rest of my goods catells and chattells of what kinde soever, I doe give and bequeath unto my wellbeloved wife Mary Clarke, whom I doe make the full and sole executrix of this my last will and testament.  
And I doe hereby utterlie reclayme and revoke all former wills at any time heretofore by me made.  
In wittnes whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale, the seaventeenth day of May in the yeare of our Lord One thousand sixe hundred fifty and six 1656.  
Thomas Clarke, In the presence of Abraham Lee, The marke of Henry Foster

This will was proved at London ... 4 November 1656 ... etc.

### **Hearth Tax returns**

Levied from 19 May 1662 until 1689. Provide indication of the size of each house assessed at the time. Exempt from payment were those in receipt of poor relief, those inhabiting houses worth less than 20s per annum and not paying parish rates, schools, almshouses etc., and industrial hearths except smiths' forges and bakers' ovens. Tax, paid by the occupier, was 2s on each hearth, collected in 2 instalments at Lady Day and Michaelmas.

The 1663 return lists **Lawrence Hall in a 1-hearth house with a 1-hearth forge next door**; and the return for 1674 states exactly the same. It is the only forge listed in Kilsby (Crick by comparison had 3 forges listed in 1674)

### **Militia Lists, 1771,1774,1777**

Shows Joseph Radford as the village blacksmith. William Harrison was also listed as blacksmith in 1777 only.

## **Summary**

We can now draw up a fairly complete and definitive table of Kilsby blacksmiths:

1570s-1580s:	Henry <b><u>Pinson</u></b> (wife Agnes) plus 4 sons and 4 dtrs
1590s-1600s:	Richard <b><u>Pinson</u></b> son and heir of Henry Pinson
1640s-1650s:	Thomas Clarke (wife Mary) plus several dtrs (leaving his house to Thomas Hall)
1660s-1670s:	Thomas Hall's son Lawrence <b><u>Hall</u></b> (in the cottage formerly occupied by Thomas Clarke)
1710s-1740s:	William <b><u>Hall</u></b> (married Sarah Sabin 1717); they had only 4 daughters, no sons
<b>1750s-1840s:</b>	<b><u>Radford</u></b> family (Joseph in 1759, John 1814-1830s, John's son Edward in the 1840s)
1760s-1770s:	Joseph Middleton; was working here as a blacksmith when he married in 1769
1777:	William Harrison also listed as a smith (perhaps an apprentice or assistant to Joseph Radford?)
1830s-1840s:	James Whitworth, John Coles (in the railway tunnel) and William Harland (travelling smith)
<b>1850s-1880s:</b>	William <b><u>Chambers</u></b> and Thomas Turner were both listed as blacksmiths in the 1850s (but the Chambers were blacksmiths right through to the 1880s, see the census returns)
<b>1880s-1940s:</b>	<b><u>Haddon</u></b> family (Edward 1880s-1910s, his son Albert Edward up to the 1940s)
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This covers just under 400 years of Kilsby's history with relatively few gaps or discontinuities – and it seems likely that the main forge has stood in its present location since at least the latter-1700s (ie Enclosure). The earlier pre-Enclosure forge(s) may have been more centrally located in the village, since they would probably have served a more village-centred clientele with farm-carts and ploughs to make and mend, rather than catering to “passing trade” – however, this is no more than a guess.

We can see 3 periods during which several smiths were needed in the village – namely:

- 1760s-1780s: period of the greatest prosperity of Kilsby's weaving trade
- 1830s-1840s: construction of the tunnel and railway through Kilsby (2 portable forges)
- 1890s-1900s: the period of Kilsby's remount depots

It is logical to find the forge not too far away from the wheelwright's cottage, since their work would regularly bring them together (eg shrinking steel bands on to finished wooden wheels, hooping barrels and casks, etc).