

FAIRALL or FEARALL

By Brenda Paternoster

My Grandma was Fanny Ethel MUNN, born 1887 and her eldest sister, born 1875, was Helen Elizabeth Fearall MUNN. That's something I've known for years and always assumed that Fearall would turn out to be their mother or grandmother's maiden name. However, when I turned my attention to researching that line and bought my Grandma's birth certificate she was Helen MUNN formerly LOVEL and her mother was Fanny Fearall LOVEL formerly SAUNDERS. So the name came from further back.

From censuses I discovered that Fanny Fearall SAUNDERS' birthplace was either Swanscombe or Greenhithe so that meant spending time in Strood archives looking at films of parish registers (this was before City Ark had the images on-line). Greenhithe parish was only created in 1875 from the northern part of Swanscombe parish, and sure enough I found Fanny's baptism in Swanscombe;

October 17th 1815, Fanny Fearall, daughter of Benjamin and Lydia SAUNDERS, a fisherman of Greenhithe.

I also found baptisms of two brothers to Fanny; Benjamin Fearall Sage SAUNDERS bapt July 1812 and Adam Thomas SAUNDERS baptized December 1815. So, the name Fearall was surely important to the family.

More research of the Swanscombe parish registers revealed two elder children born to Benjamin and **Ann** SAUNDERS;

James born 31 March, 1799, bapt 31 June 1799

Mary Ann born 11 October 1801, bapt May 1802.

I went on to find that Benjamin had married Ann DURLING at Swanscombe on 11 October 1798 and that Ann SAUNDERS was buried there in December 1802. The next ten years of Benjamin's life remained a mystery for some time. I knew that he had remarried to a Lydia but the marriage wasn't in Swanscombe or the immediate surrounding parishes.

The breakthrough came via Genes Reunited when I made contact with a distant cousin Jackie. She descends from Benjamin and Lydia via Elizabeth Eve SAUNDERS who was baptized in Gravesend on 18 January 1818. Jackie knew that Benjamin had married Lydia COUCHMAN at Milton-next-Gravesend on 12 October 1811, and that they had two children both baptized at Gravesend on 25 January 1821,

William Couchman SAUNDERS and Alice SAUNDERS. Jackie also realised that the gap of six years between the marriage of Benjamin and Lydia and the birth of Elizabeth Eve probably indicated further siblings. Several emails and telephone conversations established that we each had half of the jigsaw puzzle and the pieces fitted together perfectly.

Ann DURLING m Benjamin SAUNDERS m Lydia COUCHMAN							
James	MaryAnn	Benjamin	Adam	Fanny	Elizabeth	William	Alice
		Fearall	Thomas	Fearall	Eve	Couchman	
		Sage					
1799	1801	1812	1813	1815	1818	1821	1821

Benjamin and Lydia had given **two** of their children the second name of Fearall, but why was the name so important to them?

Lydia was buried in Gravesend on 20 October 1833 aged 55, so she would have been born c1778. Further contacts via Genes Reunited established that there were COUCHMANs in the Kemsing/Otford area, and we subsequently found the baptism in Kemsing of Lydia daughter of William and Fanny COUCHMAN on 20 September 1778.

Study of the Kemsing parish registers reveals that William COUCHMAN was married twice, first to Mary LOVER on 25 April 1762 with whom he had two children and then to Francis FAIRALL on 02 September 1770 and a further seven children;

Mary LOVER m William COUCHMAN m Francis FAIRALL								
Adam	Eve	Hannah	Elizabeth	James	Lydia	William	Alice	Fanny
1761	1764	1771	1774	1776	1778	1781	1786	1784

At last we had found the source of FEARALL, albeit with a different spelling, though in the light of subsequent research I think that maybe *Fear-none* would have been more appropriate than *Fear-all*.

William COUCHMAN lived all his life in Kemsing and was twice married there. I have been unable to find the burial of his first wife but he married Frances as a widower. Just to muddy the waters a bit, the LDS Family Search website shows another marriage just over the county border at Bodiam, Sussex between William COUCHMAN and Frances FAIRALL in October 1788. This marriage has been confirmed with Sussex FHS's marriage index. Was this just co-incidence of a couple

with exactly the same names, or were William and Francis putting right a previously bigamous marriage? Frances, wife of William COUCHMAN, aged 58, was buried in Kemsing on 29 November 1805, and William too was buried there just three and a half months later.

Back to the name FEARALL or FAIRALL. There were quite a few FAIRHALL families in the Burwash and Lewis areas of Sussex, including a Francis and Sarah FAIRHALL who had a daughter Frances baptized at South Malling on 25 October 1745. The family moved to Chatham for several years and then back to South Malling. There are descendants of this family who are convinced that this was the Frances who married William COUCHMAN, but I don't think so. I think that William COUCHMAN's bride was the Frances who was baptized at Horsmonden on 25 October 1747, daughter of William and Mary FAIRALL. This Frances would have been 58 in 1805, fitting exactly with the Kemsing burial age, whereas the South Malling Frances would have been 60, but more significantly Frances' family very much wanted to continue the name FAIRALL/FEARALL – and the Horsmonden Frances certainly had a colourful background. I feel that her family probably thought that her father had been harshly treated and maybe even a miscarriage of justice, and that they wanted to keep his name alive.

My 4 x gt grandmother was Francis FAIRALL and I am 99% sure that her parents were William FAIRALL and Mary SMITH who were married at Horsmonden on 07 January 1743/44 by banns. They had a son John baptized there on 26 January 1745/46, followed by Frances in 1747.

Frances's father William was baptized at Goudhurst on 03 March 1722/23, son of Roger and Mary FAYERALL, and his brother John was baptized there on 17 October 1725, son of Roger and Mary FAIRALL. The family were the 18th century version of the 19th century census enumerators' "Ag Lab". There is a reference in the Goudhurst overseers' accounts on Monday 02 May 1726 when Rogger FAIRALL was paid 6s 0d for dressing hemp. This would have been hemp grown for coarse textile production, and not narcotic drugs. Hemp is grown and processed in a similar way to flax; the harvested stems are retted in water for several weeks to break down the tougher parts leaving the bast fibres which can be spun together to make thread for weaving etc.

Tragedy hit the FAIRALL family in 1729 when Mary died. Her burial was recorded at Goudhurst on 29 October. There is no record as to the cause of her death but with her younger child four years old it's quite possible that her death was related to pregnancy/childbirth, or she could have been a victim of the influenza epidemic that

swept the country in 1729-1730. Sadly, Roger too became ill and on 19 January 1729/30 the overseers recorded that they paid him in sickness 2s 6d. On 02 May 1730 Roger too was buried at Goudhurst. Again there is no record as to the cause of death, but maybe working in the damp conditions of hemp growing contributed to his ill health.

On 30 March 1730 the overseers at Goudhurst started to make regular four weekly payments to Widow CACKETT for keeping Fairall's children. I have not been able to identify exactly who Widow CACKETT was; there were several male CACKETTs buried in the parish in the preceding few years although William CACKETT who was buried on 01 October 1729 seems to be a likely candidate to have been her late husband and if she had been very recently widowed she would quite probably have welcomed extra cash, even though it was to be used for the upkeep of the FAIRALL boys.

Widow CACKETT continued to receive 12s 0d every four weeks until 26 March 1733 when the rate dropped to 6s 0d. This coincided with an agreement between the Goudhurst churchwardens and overseers and John LARKING, a husbandman of Cranbrook “ *to have a boy, one of Fairall's...*” The boy, who had to be ten years old William and not John who was still only seven, was to be in Larking's employ for two years until Lady Day 1735. At the end of the two years he was to receive 20 shillings as wages, but more importantly, to the Goudhurst overseers, this employment would have given him settled status in Cranbrook.

The next reference to William is his marriage to Mary SMITH of Horsmonden in January 1743/44. In September 1745 William was required to attend an Examination in Horsmonden. There seems to be no record of what the examination was about, nor of its result, but it would seem likely that William was required to prove to the Horsmonden overseers his ability to support himself and his wife and child. From the employment with John Larking we know that he would have learned some husbandry and from subsequent events we know too that he probably earned the biggest part of his income from smuggling, but until his arrest and trial on 05 April 1749 for breaking into the Customs House in Poole, (then in Dorset) there is no written record of these activities.

During the eighteenth century excessively high rates of tax on brandy and rum, tea and coffee and luxury goods like lace meant that smuggling was rife all around the coast of England and many people were sympathetic to the smugglers, and welcomed the contraband goods. William appears to have been one of the leading members of the Hawkhurst Gang of smugglers who operated all along the Kent and Sussex coast,

although most of the stories are from secondary sources. There is a lot in print about William FAIRALL, both in books and on the web but apart from two excellent articles by Henry Jones in 'Bygone Kent' vol 23 (1999) they all seem to go back only to two contemporary documents; the account of the Ordinary of the Old Bailey and "*Sussex Smugglers*" written by "A Gentleman of Sussex" both of which contain errors and opinions presented as fact.

The Ordinary [chaplain] stated that William was "*aged 25, was born at Horsendown-Green [Horsmonden] in the County of Kent, bred to no Business, yet I could learn, inured to Smuggling from his Infancy*". He was 26 and baptized (born) at Goudhurst – see the parish registers! If he was inured to smuggling from infancy it would have been whilst in the care of Widow Cackett and the Goudhurst parish officials, or in the employment of John Larkin who went on to become an overseer at Cranbrook. No mention of the poor parents who were both dead before William's eighth birthday. The Ordinary's account also tells us that "*..he was once apprehended and about to be brought to the New Goal in Southwark, but somehow had the good Luck to escape from the Officers, that had the Care of him; upon his Return home, he immediately, sets to work, and meditates Revenge upon the Gentleman, who was thought to have granted the Warrant for his being taken. Accordingly the Gentleman going one Day abroad, Fairall, and Kingsmill with others, way-layed his Return in the Evening near his own Park Wall; and 'tis generally believed had it not been for an Incident that happened in his Return, which retarded his coming Home, and tired their Patience, he would inevitably have been murdered by them. Because they were overheard to say, D - n him, he won't come Home to Night, let's be gone about other Business; and accordingly they went away angry at their Disappointment.*" For an official court document this does somewhat lack in proper references, not even the name of the "Gentleman".

Graphic details of both how the Hawkhurst Gang together with smugglers from Sussex broke into the Poole Customs house and the subsequent horrific torture and murders of two men, Galley and Chater are recorded in '*Sussex Smugglers*' written by "A Gentleman of Chichester", credited by many sources (without stated evidence) to be the Duke of Richmond, the same 'Gentleman' who is thought to have signed William's earlier arrest warrant.. It is because the two episodes are together in one volume that William's name is associated with the murders. It was men from Sussex who were tried and convicted of the murders following the Poole Customs House raid. There is no mention of William FAIRALL in the Old Bailey proceedings of that trial and the murders of Galley and Chater were not mentioned in the proceedings of William's trial for Housebreaking.

Because of his known association with the Hawkhurst Gang it is generally assumed that William took an active part in the battle of Goudhurst in 1747, but again there is no written evidence to confirm this.

What we do know is that in September 1747 the cutter *Three Brothers* was intercepted by customs officials and her cargo of tea, which had been purchased in Guernsey by the Hawkhurst Gang, was impounded and taken to the Customs House in Poole. On the night of 6th/7th October 1747 smugglers from the Chichester area together with members of the Hawkhurst Gang, including William FAIRALL, thirty men in total, broke into the Customs House and took away the thirty seven hundredweight of tea, valued upwards of £500, which they considered to be their property. They made their escape to Fordingbridge where they divided the tea equally between themselves.

It was at Fordingbridge that one of the Chichester men, Jack DIMER, recognised an old acquaintance, Daniel CHATER a shoemaker of Fordingbridge, and threw a packet of tea to him. DIMER was subsequently arrested and in custody at Chichester, suspected of the Poole Customs House raid. On 14th February 1747/48 Daniel CHATER, together with William GALLEY, were sent to Chichester with a letter for the Sussex Justice of the Peace confirming DIMER's identity. They stopped at Rowlands Castle where the landlady became suspicious of their intent and sent for several of the Chichester men who got the pair drunk and gained sight of the letter. Subsequently these men carried out the horrific torture and murder of the two men; GALLY was buried, supposedly still just alive, in a shallow grave and CHATER was thrown down a well shaft and stoned until silent. On 16th January 1748/49 seven Sussex men were tried at the Old Bailey and found guilty of the murders and sentenced to death.

William FAIRALL and four other were arrested a few weeks later and were tried and convicted on 5th April 1749 for Housebreaking. Because they were armed the penalty was death. William, and the gang leader, Thomas KINGSMILL, were sentenced to be hung in chains afterwards.

According to "Sussex Smugglers" William behaved insolently during his trial and when the death penalty was announced, followed by "*and the Lord have mercy on your souls*" he shouted "*if the Lord has not more mercy on our souls than the jury had on our bodies, I do not know what will become of them*" and when one of the other co-defendants was committed to being hanged and then buried he is reported to have said "*We shall be hanging in the sweet air when you are rotting in your grave*"

William appears to have kept a brave face almost to the end. “Sussex Smugglers” states that he smoked and drank with his friends after attending chapel on the eve of his execution and when ordered to his cell for the night he asked “*Why in such a hurry, cannot you let me stay longer and drink with my friends? I shall not be able to drink with them tomorrow*”

The public hanging took place at Tyburn on Wednesday 26th April 1749. After that the bodies of William FAIRALL and Thomas KINGSMILL were taken and put into chains and then into specially made wooden cases and taken under guard to the New Cross Turnpike where they were handed over to officers of the Sheriff of Kent to be taken to Horsmonden and Goudhurst respectively.

On reaching Horsmonden William’s body was hung, by the ankles, in a “*strong and high Gibbett riveted with iron*” erected for the purpose on Horsmonden Green. It was left there as a deterrent to others and would have remained for as long as nature took to decompose it although foxes etc would have taken much of the flesh.

One can only imagine how his young widow coped with all this. I have found only one further reference to Mary FAIRALL. Eighteen months after the execution of William the accounts of the Horsmonden overseers record that on 7th September 1850 they paid Mary FAIRALL 8d “*for hoping*”[sic] ie picking hops, but I hope that she did in fact find happier times. I do not (yet!) know how or where she ended her days.

William FAIRALL has no grave nor memorial inscription and he is not recorded in any burial register but to this day the road alongside Horsmonden Green is known as Gibbets Lane; in memory of my great great great great grandfather.

Parish registers; Swanscombe, Milton-next-Gravesend, Gravesend, Kemsing, Horsmonden and Goudhurst.

Overseers’ accounts; Goudhurst and Horsmonden

Accounts of the Old Bailey’s Ordinary for 5th April 1749
http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/html_oams/oa17490426.html#t17490405-36

Old Bailey trial of Sussex men for the murders of William Gally and Daniel Chater
http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/html_units/1740s/t17480116-1.html

Old Bailey trial of William Fairall for Housebreaking http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/html_units/1740s/t17490405-36.html

Sussex Smugglers – A Gentleman of Chichester, published 1749
Re-published by Barclay Wills 2001

Image of breaking into Poole Customs House as published in 'Sussex Smugglers'
http://www.smuggling.co.uk/gazetteer_se_19.html#barbarous_usage

Brenda Paternoster (*00986)

Subsequent to publication of this article registers of Clandestine marriages in London have been put online by FindMyPast. The register books for St George's Chapel, Mayfair record the marriage of John EVINS of Kemping and Mary FAIRALL of Ightham on 21 July 1750. From that I have found the baptism of Robert to John and Mary EVANS in Kemping on 21 July 1751 and the burial of Mary EVANS there on 25 April 1779

This shows that Mary moved on quite quickly following William Fairall's demise, and, importantly, she moved to Kemping/Kemsing which is where her daughter Frances was married to William COUCHMAN in 1770. This takes away any possible doubt that my 4x great grandmother Frances FAIRALL was not the daughter of William FAIRALL the infamous smuggler.