

## *The Smuggler's Widow*

In 2015 I submitted an entry for the Alan Neame Award and was honoured to be awarded the second prize for my essay "*The "Wickedest Smuggler Living" or a Victim of 18th Century Circumstances?*" which was published in the June 2016 KFHS Journal.

It tells how I traced my direct ancestors back to a Frances FAIRALL who married William COUCHMAN in Kemsing in 1770, and why I believed she was the Frances FAIRALL baptised 1747 in Horsmonden, daughter of the notorious smuggler William FAIRALL and his wife Mary and not the Mary FAIRHALL baptised at East Malling, Sussex in 1745. I ended the essay by saying that I did not know what happened to Frances' mother Mary FAIRALL née SMITH after William was hanged.

A while later I was chatting about this to another KFHS member, also named Brenda, during a slack period on the Medway Archives Help desk. She asked me how old Mary was when William was hanged and my answer was that I didn't know as I had been unable to find her baptism, but William was only 26 so presumably she was still in her twenties. Brenda said that she was very sure that Mary would have remarried. That evening I sat at my computer and searched for a Mary FAIR(H)ALL marriage in the ten years following William's demise in 1749.

There was nothing obvious on Family Search or Ancestry. Find My Past had a couple of possibilities in Sussex and then one which jumped out at me. A clandestine marriage at St George's chapel, Mayfair, between John EVENS of Kemsing and Mary FAIRHALL of Ightham, Kent on 21st July 1750. Kemsing is the old spelling of Kemsing, the parish in which Mary and William's daughter Frances had married, raised a family and spent her last years. Ightham is the adjacent parish. These records had only been added to the Find My Past database<sup>1</sup> a couple of weeks prior to that search, they are now also on Ancestry<sup>2</sup>.

Brenda was right; Mary did remarry. She had moved about seventeen miles from Horsmonden to Ightham where she had presumably been able to support herself and two young children for a while whilst making a new life for herself. The marriage at St George's chapel in Mayfair was clandestine in that it was not in the home parish of either bride or groom and was without any formal preliminaries, but it was a legal and valid marriage. Clandestine marriages were popular with couples who didn't want a lot of fuss, and as Mary was rebuilding her life it's maybe not surprising that they chose to go to London for the ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

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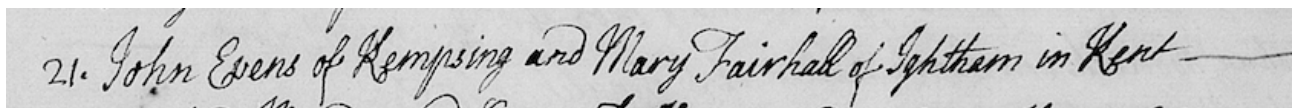
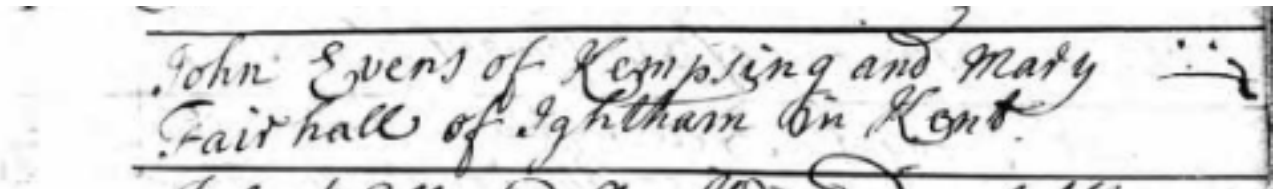
<sup>1</sup> Westminster Marriages Transcripts. <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbprs%2fm%2f492253557%2f2>

<sup>2</sup> London, England, Clandestine Marriage and Baptism Registers, 1667-1754. <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=5344>

<sup>3</sup> <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C13332>

The marriages at Mayfair were originally performed at St George's chapel, but from 1744 the 'Little Chapel', which was actually a private house just a few yards along the road, was used. It was in an affluent area and attracted professional classes and the aristocracy, whereas the other clandestine marriage venues were around the Fleet prison, Kings Bench prison and the Mint and tended to attract less wealthy people.

Both the chapel register and the Bishop's Transcript for the latter years of clandestine marriages at Mayfair chapel survive.



Lord Harwicke's Marriage Act just three years later required all marriages to be in a Church of England church following either the reading of banns or the acquisition of a licence issued by the bishop and for the ceremony to be witnessed by at least two people.

Now that I knew Mary's new married name I returned to my fiche (published by NWKFHS) of Kemsing parish register transcriptions and sure enough on 13th January 1750/51 Robert son of John and Mary Evans was baptised. There were no further baptisms of children to John and Mary in Kemsing, but on 25 April 1779 Mary EVANS aged 63 was buried. If that age was correct she was born c1716 and would have been seven years older than William who was born in 1723.

I had previously spent a lot of time in Maidstone archives searching, in vain, in and around Horsmonden but I been looking from 1720 -1728. I didn't start early enough! With a birth year of c1716 I very soon found her baptism with Family Search<sup>4</sup> in Horsmonden on 10 February 1716/17, daughter of Thomas and Frances SMITH.

Thomas SMITH and Frances FOREMAN were married at Horsmonden on 17th June 1714<sup>5</sup> and had five (known) children baptised there:

Thomas - 8th May 1715	Richard - 3rd July 1720
Mary - 10th February 1716/17	Anne - 17th January 1721/22
John - 5th October 1718	

<sup>4</sup> Family Search database: England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975.

<sup>5</sup> Family Search database: England Marriages, 1538-1973

I have been unable to trace the SMITH line back any further but Mary's mother Frances FOREMAN was baptised at Horsmonden in 1867, the eldest daughter of John FOREMAN and Mary HOLLANDS who were married at Bodiam, Sussex on 9th April 1685<sup>6</sup>.

John and Mary had six daughters, all baptised in Horsmonden<sup>7</sup>:

Frances - 5th May 1687	Ann - 25th February 1691/92
Mary - 11th October 1688	Judeth - 30th November 1693
Elizabeth - 14th October 1690	Martha - 11th December 1696

Their mother Mary HOLLANDS was baptised at Bodiam, Sussex on 15th July 1652<sup>8</sup>, the daughter of Thomas HOLLANDS and Elizabeth MANNINGTON who were married at Sandhurst, Kent on 29th February 1648. They had a total of five known children Christened at Bodiam between 1649-1662.

Before finding the marriage in Mayfair the last known reference to Mary FAIRALL was on 7th September 1750 when the Horsmonden overseers '*pd Mary Fairall for hoping £0-00-08*'. But by that date she had been married to John EVANS for about six weeks and was several months pregnant. Did she go back to visit her family and earn some pocket money picking hops before the new baby arrived? or was the second marriage not a happy one from the beginning?

After the baptism of baby Robert in the following January there are no further EVANS entries in the Kemsing registers until Mary's burial in 1779 and there is no record of John EVANS being buried there. Did John and Mary stay in Kemsing? or was it only Mary? Certainly her daughter Frances, who was barely three when Mary and John married, was still in Kemsing twenty years later when she herself was married and she remained there throughout her life.

Family history is like this. Finding the answer to one question very often raises further queries.

Post Script: My prize money from the Alan Neame award was put towards an Ancestry DNA test. More about that at a later date.

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<sup>6</sup> Family Search database: England Marriages, 1538–1973

<sup>7</sup> Family Search database: England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975.

<sup>8</sup> Family Search database: England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975.