

## **Notes on Harriet Brooker**

(Great-grandmother of Daphne, Laurence, Glenys and Lynette Hay)

### **Birth, parentage and forebears**

Harriet, the sixth child of James Brooker, Knacker\*, and Lucy née Horsecraft, was born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England, on 18 February 1842. At the time of Harriet's birth James and Lucy already had three daughters (Louisa, Elizabeth and Mary) and two sons (James and Robert), and after Harriet two more daughters (Eliza and Ellen) were born to them – eight children in all.

\*A person who disposes of dead or unwanted animals, especially horses.

James and Lucy had married on 30 September 1832 in Frant, Sussex, not far south of Tunbridge Wells. Possibly Lucy was a widow, as Louisa her eldest daughter would appear (from her age as given on census records) to have been one or two years old at the time of the marriage.

Lucy, born on 6 December 1807 in Buxted, Sussex, was the daughter of William (II) and Jemima Horsecraft. After Lucy, at least two more children were born to the Horsecrafts: another daughter, Philadelphia, and a son William (III).

The father William (II) had married Jemima Langridge in Buxted on 25 April 1807 some seven months or so before the birth of their first child, Lucy.

William (II) himself had been born in Framfield, Sussex, on 25 November 1779 to William (I) and Philidelphia [sic] Horsecraft.

### **Deaths of parents**

The UK census taken on 30 March 1851 reveals that in a dwelling 'Back of North Street', Tunbridge Wells, seven of the eight children of James and Lucy Brooker were to be found; apart from the parents, only Elizabeth is missing, possibly at age 18 living-in as a domestic servant elsewhere in the town. Louisa, aged 19, is designated by the census enumerator as 'Head' of the household. Clearly, the children were by now orphans.

The GRO index lists five James Brookers with deaths registered between 1845 and 1851. Only one Lucy Brooker is listed as having died during that period, her death being registered in the last quarter of 1847.

### **Young Harriet and her siblings**

The 1851 census record further informs us that all the Brooker children were born in Frant, Sussex. This contradicts the probably more reliable information given in the 1841 census that the first three children were not born in the county. The 1851 record tells us also that Louisa was a 'Housekeeper' (whether of her own house or employed in someone else's is not stated), James, aged 13, a 'Helper in Stables' and Robert, 12, an 'Errand Boy to a Plumber', while Harriet, 10, Eliza, 7, and Ellen, 5, were each dignified with the title 'Scholar'.

A search of the next census, taken on 7 April 1861, reveals that Harriet Brooker, born in Frant, is now a servant (the only one) in the household of Thomas Elliott, 'Brewers Commercial Traveller', residing at 1 Greenland Tce, Hydraulic Rd,

Tunbridge Wells. As Thomas, his wife and their five children aged from 2 to 15 were all in the house, Harriet's life must have been busy and demanding.

Harriet's name is recorded in this census with a middle initial that appears, in the enumerator's idiosyncratic style, to be an 'S' -- 'Harriett S Brooker' -- but the indistinct initial could conceivably be an 'L'. In which case it might indicate that Harriet had begun to add the name of her recently deceased mother -- Lucy -- to her own; one wonders what other reason she could have for adding any second name. Also, she is stated in the census record to be only 16 years old, but had, in fact, turned 19 by the census date.

### **Marriage**

Possibly the strain of the work imposed upon her in the Elliott household was what motivated Harriet, later in 1861, to move to Maidstone, where she met Joseph Baker, under what circumstances we do not know. In St Philip's church, Maidstone (not the present building), on 1 January 1862, Joseph, aged 24, and Harriet, still 19, were married. Both are stated to be living in Tovil Road, Maidstone, at the time, and Joseph is described simply as 'Labourer'. Joseph was able to sign his own name in the marriage register; Harriet placed her mark.

*[For Harriet's married life see Notes on Joseph Baker and Harriet née Brooker.]*