

Pond Hall (Ipswich, Suffolk) - a house and its people

Emily Read was born in Farley, Wiltshire (about 5 miles east of Salisbury) in 1812 but by 1841 was working as a servant for Edward and Theodosia Vernon in Newchurch on the Isle of Wight. The Vernons were in their 50s and of independent means but so far no connection to Emily's home territory in Wiltshire has been found, although Ralph Whitlock, in one of his many interesting books about Pitton & Farley, mentioned a vicar, I think, who was particularly active in getting situations for the village youngsters.

Emily married William Wearn in 1843 and had 3 children: Emily 1844, William 1845 and Vashti 1848. They lived in Union Road in Ryde (less salubrious than the parallel Union Street) and she worked as a laundress while William 'laboured'. William died of heart disease in 1866 so Emily carried on taking in washing while her son worked as a carpenter. In the 1881 census she was living with son William and his wife and child in a house named 'Wiltshire' in School Street in Ryde.

Meanwhile, back in Wiltshire....Emily's father, Stephen Read, had married Harriet Whitlock in 1810 in Pitton, where both surnames go back many generations. The family lines are as tangled as a badly kept sewing basket. Emily was the eldest of 7 children, one of whom was named Vashti; the first mention of the name in the family tree, I think. The other offspring all seem to have stayed in the local area, marrying into local families and living the agricultural life.

Stephen was a labourer, born in Farley in 1784, one of nine children, to George Read and his wife Sabina Whitlock. Like many of the local men Stephen worked, at least some of the time, for the neighbouring Clarendon estate and between 1816 and 1825 lived there, too, with the 5 youngest children born there.

In 1825, the same year that his youngest child, Susan, was born, Stephen appeared at Devizes Quarter Sessions to give evidence as a witness of an 'armed attempt at poaching' on the Clarendon estate. The only other mentions of him unearthed so far are on Emily's marriage certificate in 1843 and her sister Lousia's marriage certificate in 1858, so although I cannot find him on any census returns, he was presumably still alive in 1858.

The photos were all taken in April 2009 when, as well as enjoying the beautiful countryside, I revelled in superb hospitality at the Silver Plough in Pitton. Joyce is a first class landlady.

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W50