

Family of Benjamin Curry Walls, 1877-1947

Benjamin Walls, father of Benjamin Curry Walls, was baptised in Felixkirk, near Thirsk, in 1823, son of John Walls, an agricultural labourer, and Ann Scurr. He appears in the 1841 census as an agricultural labourer in Topcliffe, on the River Swale a few miles south of Thirsk.

In 1849 he married his first wife Eleanor Tinkler, of Sutton-under-Whitstonecliffe, just east of Thirsk, but they were not together in the 1851 census. Benjamin was lodging in Sutton (given as his birthplace) as a farm labourer while his wife and first child were visiting her father in Darlington. They had three more children before she died in 1858.

Eleanor died in 1860, and in the 1861 census Benjamin was recorded as a widowed agricultural labourer at Skipton-on-Swale, near Thirsk. He was 40 when he married Mary Curry there in 1863. By 1871 he was a canal lock-keeper on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Shevington, near Wigan, with his birthplace given as Felixkirk. He must have only just moved to Lancashire as his sons John, 2, and Joseph, 1, were born in Topcliffe.

His youngest son, **Benjamin Curry Walls**, was born on October 15th 1877 in Gargrave, where his father was lock-keeper in the 1881 and 1891 censuses, with young Benjamin taking over the job in the 1901 and 1911 records. He married Elizabeth Ann Swales, a farmer's daughter from Flasby, on August 30th 1899 at the Wesleyan Chapel, Gargrave, where he was a preacher and choirmaster. They had eight children including Benjamin Earle Walls in 1901, (Thomas) Norman Wells in 1904 and Richard Maurice Walls in 1906.

In the 1939 census Benjamin Earle and Richard Maurice are living near the canal in Skipton as (respectively) Inland Waterways District Manager and Canal Carrier's Agent; Norman, who provided the L&L Canal Society with the Walls Collection papers, is oddly not found in this wartime census but was also a Canal Company Director. Their father, Benjamin Curry Walls, is listed as Inland Water Transport Superintendent and Director, living with Elizabeth Ann in Kent's Bank, Grange-over-Sands. She died in Skipton in 1941 and her husband in Staincliffe, west Yorkshire, on August 27th 1947.

The "Uncle Richard" mentioned in the Walls Collection was Elizabeth Ann's brother Richard Swales, a farmer from Flasby. Living with him in the 1911 census was a 16-year-old domestic servant Bella Stirzaker of Galgate, near Lancaster, whose father and brother (both called Robert) were canal bank rangers on the Lancaster Canal.

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