

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HENRY BEECHING OF PEMBURY

Written By: Edward James Gilbert-Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

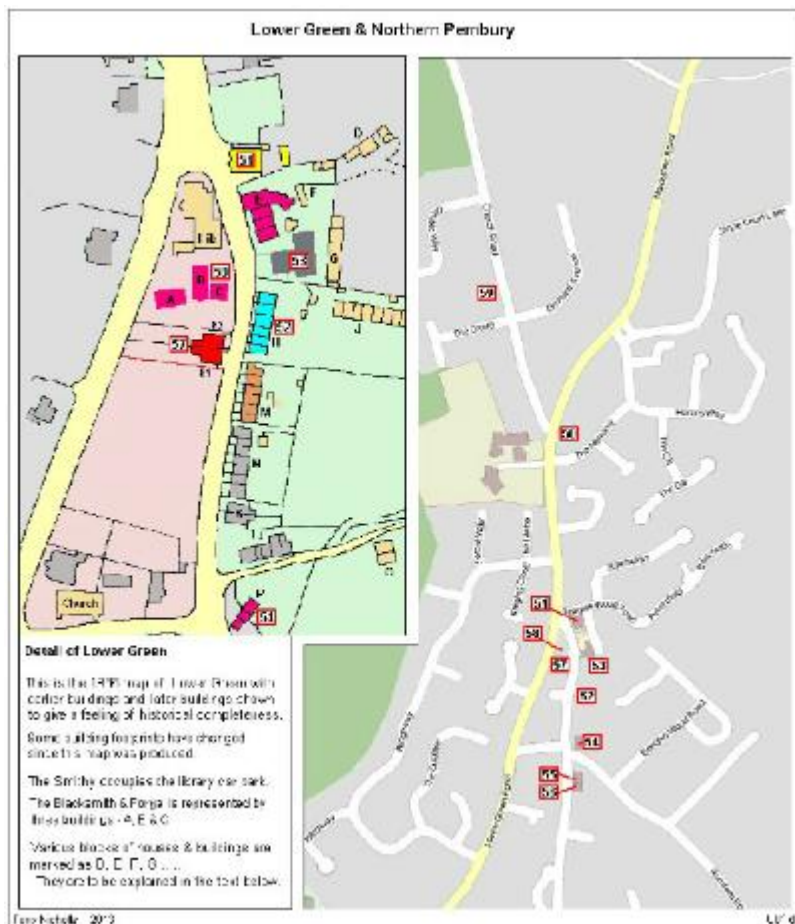
Date: March 16, 2016

OVERVIEW

The name of Beeching is well-remembered in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in connection with Beeching Bank, but the branch of the Beeching clan that is the subject of this article is not directory related to them. Instead, this branch of the Beeching family originated in Bexhill, Sussex and settled in Pembury, where Henry Beeching (1847-1932) ran the post office on Lower Green Road and from the same premises had a drapers and grocers shop.

From the time of his birth Henry lived in Bexhill, Sussex, the son of William Beeching, a coal merchant. William Beeching had married Caroline and with her had six children between 1838 and 1847, but he died in 1865. By 1871 Henry and his widowed mother were living at Primrose Hill in Tonbridge where Henry was a grocer and provisioners merchant. His wife Harriet Jane Cramp, who he married in 1873 died in 1880, six years after the birth of their only child Margaret.

At the time of the 1881 census Henry was living with his six year old daughter Margaret at 72 Lower Green Road, Pembury where he was a master grocer employing one assistant. His sister in law Caroline E. Cramp was living with him as his housekeeper.



In 1884 Henry married Mary Elizabeth Wanstall (1856-1927) and with her had 8 children between 1885 and 1897 who were all born in Pembury.

By the time of the 1911 census Henry's business was doing well and at his post office his daughter Amy Katherine Beeching worked for her father as a telephonist and his son Arthur Holtum Beeching worked for his father as a grocer's assistant.



Henry Beeching died in 1932 at "The Stores Lower Green Pembury". His wife Mary had passed away in 1927.

The Beeching store was still listed in directories after his death (1934) suggesting that perhaps his son Arthur continued the business after his father's death but by 1959 the grocers shop and post office were operated by C.H. Read. From about 1965 to 1974 the business was operated by A.C. King. The history of the business was not researched after 1974.

This article reports on the life and business of Henry Beeching with a particular emphasis of the years he lived and worked in Pembury.

Shown above is a map of Lower Green Road. Henry's shop is identified as No. 50 on this map, at 72 Lower Green Road. Also shown is an old postcard view of Pembury.

THE LIFE AND BUSINESS OF HENRY BEECHING

Henry Beeching was born in Bexhill, Sussex. His birth was registered in the 1st qtr of 1847 at Battle, Sussex. He was one of several children born to William Beeching (1790-1865) who had married twice, and Caroline Manser, born 1809 in Pevensey Sussex. William Beeching had been born in Bexhill, Sussex and by 1851 was working as a coal merchant in Bexhill.

The 1851 census, taken in Bexhill gave William Beeching as a coal merchant. With him was his wife Caroline and the following children (1) Thomas, age 13, an agricultural labourer (2) Benjamin, age 10, scholar (3) Joseph, age 8, scholar (4) Emily, age 6 (5) HENRY, age 4. All of the children had been born in Bexhill.

The 1861 census, taken at 1 Chapel Row, Bexhill gave William Beeching as living from "profits from houses" and the only person living with him was his son HENRY, who was working as a pupil teacher at the Bexhill National School.

When William Beeching died in 1865 his widow and his son HENRY moved to the town of Tonbridge. The 1871 census, taken at Primrose Hill, Tonbridge, gave Caroline Beeching as a widow, living on own means and the only person living with her was her son HENRY who was working as a grocer and provisioners merchant.

In the 2nd qtr of 1873 HENRY married Harriett Jane Cramp (1847-1880) at Battle, Sussex. Harriet had been born in the 4th qtr of 1847 at Bexhill, Sussex. With her he had only one child namely Margaret Louise Beeching (1874-1903). When his wife died in the 2nd qtr of 1880 HENRY and his daughter Margaret moved to Pembury where he opened a shop at 72 Lower Green Road.



The 1881 census, taken at 72 Lower Green Road, Pembury gave HENRY as a widower and working as a "master grocer employing one lad". With him was his daughter Margaret; one grocers assistant, and his sister in law, 30 year old Caroline E. Cramp, who had been born in Bexhill, Sussex and was working as his housekeeper. Shown above is a photo of Henry's shop dated 1922 . A similar view from a different angle taken at the same time is given below.



In 1884 HENRY married Mary Elizabeth Wanstall (Photo opposite)(1856-1927) and with her had the following children (1) Louisa Mary ,born 1885 (2) Amy Katherine, born 1887 (3) William Richard, born 1889 (4) Florence Eveline (1890-1990) (5) Arthur Holtum (1892-1984) (6) Francis Joseph (1893-1966) (7) Frederick Leslie (1895-1979) (8) Doris Harriet (1897-1994). All of the children were born in Pembury. Mary Elizabeth Wanstall had been born at Eythorne, Kent in the 3rd qtr of 1856 and died in Pembury June 20,1927. She was one of four children born to Thomas Andrew Wanstall (1816-1892) and Susannah Martha Wanstall, nee Hiltum (1823-1864). No photograph of Mary was found but shown opposite is a photograph of her sister Harriet Martha Wanstall (1856-1933). A photograph of one other of Mary's sisters (below) shows that they looked very much alike and no doubt Mary closely resembled her other two sisters.



The 1891 census, taken at 72 Lower Green Road gave Henry as a grocer, draper and sub-postmaster. With him was his wife Mary; five of his children, and Henry Bassett, age 25 who was working for Henry as a grocers assistant.

The 1901 census, taken at 72 Lower Green Road gave Henry as a grocer, draper and sub-postmaster. With him was his wife Mary and six of his children. His daughter Louisa was working at that time as a school teacher.

The 1911 census, taken at 72 Lower Green Road gave Henry as a grocer employing others at home. With him was his wife Mary; his daughter Amy Katherine, a telephonist at the post office; his son Arthur Holtum, who was working for his father as a grocers assistant; his son Frederick Leslie who was working as an auctioneers pupil and three other children. The census recorded that the couple had been married 29 years and that they were living in premises of 9 rooms.

Probate records gave Henry Beeching of The Stores Lower Green Road. Pembury, and that he died February 15, 1932. The executors of his 2,573 pound estate were Arthur Robert Scovell, estate agent, and Francis Albert Warwick, income tax collector.

A review of local directories listed Henry Beeching as a grocer and draper in 1882 and 1899. As Beeching General Store he was listed in directories from 1903 to 1927 and as Beeching Stores, grocer and post office in the 1934 directory. Since Henry passed away in 1932 it appears that his son Arthur Holtrum Beeching may have continued his father's business at least for a few years.



The 1959 directory gave C.H. Read as a grocer and postmaster at 72 Lower Green Road. The Pembury Guide of 1966 listed King's Post Office & Off-License and A.C. King is listed as grocer and post office in directories of 1965 up to an including 1974. Shown above is a 1966 photograph of the shop at the time it was run by Mr King.

The above article, originally on Edward Gilbert's web site, has been reformatted to suit the Pembury History web site.