

## ❧ Blind Jack and Gee Cross ❧

### Family History (Original research circa 2000)

As can be seen from the first article, it is already known that Jack's connection with Gee Cross was his part in building the turnpike road between Stockport and Mottram. However, through researching our family history I have been able to prove that his links were much more tangible, in fact, he had family in Gee Cross and lived there for a while.

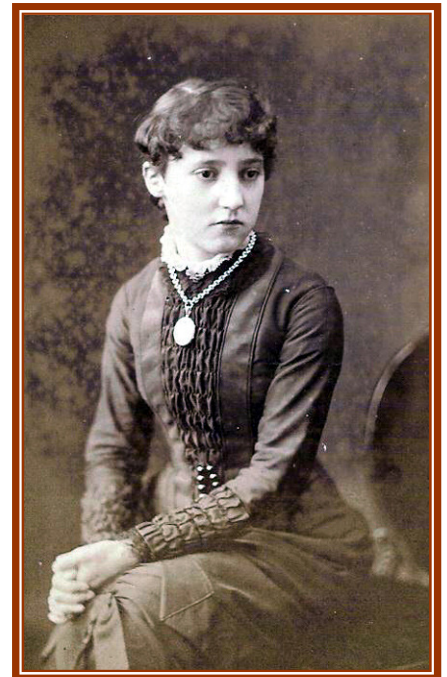
Family legend had it that great grandmother Selina Newton was a descendant of Blind Jack, so I started to search for proof of this. One of Selina's lines was proving particularly interesting, but only by virtue of the fact that it was leading me the furthest back in time, and towards Gee Cross.



Probably Joseph Cartwright born 1795



Martha Cartwright born 1829



Selina Newton born 1857

Great Grandmother, Selina Newton, was the fourth of eleven children of Fairbrother Franklyn Newton and Martha Cartwright. Martha Cartwright was baptised on the 20 February 1829 at Hyde Gee Cross Unitarian Chapel the sixth of eleven children of Joseph Cartwright and Hannah Stafford. The burial records for the chapel show that when Joseph and Ann buried an infant child there in 1838, they were living at Arnold Hill

Joseph Cartwright was the son of Richard and Ann Cartwright, baptised at Stockport St Mary's church on the 18 October 1795. Richard and Ann had five children:

- Joseph baptised 18/10/1795 at Stockport St Mary's
- Bristowe baptised 23/3/1798 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel
- John baptised 16/01/1801 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel
- David Jackson baptised 22/02/1803 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel
- Ann baptised 1/03/1807 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel

Unfortunately I couldn't find a marriage for Richard and Ann so couldn't find her maiden name. So here I remained, Stuck!! I hadn't managed to get back to a Metcalf line and still had a possible two more generations to go, to get back to Jack. (I have since found this marriage at Stockport St Mary's Church, 9 February 1795, Richard Cartwright to Ann/Nancy Jackson)

Then I read Alyson Jackson's adaptation of Blind Jack's story on the Knaresborough History on-line web page. Rather tantalisingly it said that one of Jack's daughters had married a cotton manufacturer from Cheshire and that he went to live with his other daughter at Spofforth on his

retirement. After reading this I decided to break all family history research conventions and try to work forward from Jack and meet in the middle.

There is no record of Jack's marriage to Dorothy Benson, probably due to their elopement, but I did find a record of their children's baptisms at Knaresborough:

- Christopher on the 7 February 1739
- Tabitha on the 23 April 1742
- Ellen on the 18 July 1744
- John on the 20 March 1746

Ellen Married Thomas Ingleson at Knaresborough 24 November 1763 and their children were baptised locally, so Ellen must be the daughter Jack went to live with at Spofforth in his retirement.

His daughter Tabitha married David Jackson at Knaresborough 7 October 1767. When I checked for any children of the marriage I was quite excited to find that three of them had been baptised at Hyde Chapel.

- Joseph baptised 22 October 1768 at Mottram Church
- Ann baptised 1 August 1773 at Mottram church
- Tabitha baptised 5 October 1777 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel
- Dolly baptised 28 November 1779 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel
- John baptised 8 February 1785 at Hyde Gee Cross Chapel

So now I knew that it was Jack's daughter Tabitha who married a Cheshire man. The Hyde Gee Cross Chapel's parish registers confirmed their address:

5 October 1777 baptism of Tabitha daughter of David Jackson of **SPOUT HOUSE**, Werneth.

And, the next entry proves the link between David and Tabitha Jackson and Ann and Richard Cartwright.

1 March 1807 baptism of Ann the daughter of Richard Cartwright of Werneth and Ann his wife the daughter of David and Tabitha Jackson born 1 February 1807.

These two entries now gave me a complete family history from Blind Jack to the present day. As if further proof was needed Richard and Ann Cartwright even called one of their children David Jackson Cartwright.

### **Further Connections with Gee Cross**

Another chapter in Jack's book tells us that in 1778 whilst he was engaged in road making in Cheshire, his wife Dolly became ill, so he brought her to Cheshire to be looked after by his daughter, and that he also took her to see a doctor in Stockport (He could have meant Werneth, since this came under Stockport at this time). Unfortunately Dorothy did not survive her illness and she is buried in Stockport Churchyard. **Porritt** transcribes her epitaph:

In Memory of Dorothy, wife of John Metcalf,  
Who died April 12, 1778 aged 61 years.  
At Harrogate in Yorkshire I was born,  
But now my BODY lies under the stone.  
Your BODY when in dust will lie the same as me,  
Take care in time to obtain a happy fate,  
And don't neglect for fear it may be too late.  
All you that come these lines to see,  
Prepare in time to follow me.

I later found that the memorial inscriptions also included the words:

Here lyeth the body of John son of David and Tabitha Jackson, late of Werneth, who departed this life 4 February 1772 also Tabitha who departed this life October 19 1777, who died in infancy, also Dorothy wife of John Metcalfe who died 12 April 1778 aged 61 years.

It is certain that Jack will have stayed at **SPOUT HOUSE**, with his daughter and son-in-law, during this sad time and possibly throughout 1778 whilst he was in charge of building the turnpike road.

Thomas Middleton in his 'Annals of Hyde' states that that the road was started in 1765, but other chroniclers of Jack's history indicate a date between 1778 and 1792.

1. **John Metcalfe, Road Maker** in Smiles' **Lives of Engineers** Volume 1, Part III chapter V: 1861.
2. **John Metcalf, Blind Road Maker** by A. Porritt; Halifax Antiquarian Society, pamphlet, 6 February 1962.

Both describe him initially building his roads in Yorkshire, then routes across the Pennines, and later moving into Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, finally finishing as far south as Staffordshire. Since he only built his first three-mile stretch in 1765, I don't feel that he actually built the road at Gee Cross in 1765. The Act of Parliament to build the road was passed in 1765 and Jack would certainly have been visiting the area that early for his daughter to meet and then marry David Jackson in Knaresborough in 1767. Burdett's map of 1777 does show the turnpiked road. There is some mix up in chronology somewhere, but no definitive answer.

### Where was David Jackson's Cotton Business?

According to Jack's life story his daughter was married to someone in Cheshire engaged in the cotton business in Stockport, and, as trade was brisk at that time, he decided to try this himself. He started in a small way with six spinning jennies and a carding machine, to which he later added looms for weaving calicoes, jeans and velveteens. But, the cotton industry was fickle and Jack couldn't make it pay, so he gave his spinning jennies to his son-in-law and took up road making again. So it seems that Jack stayed for a while in Gee Cross to try and branch out into another trade, before he returned to building roads.

So far I had not been able to find any evidence of David Jackson's cotton business either in old Trade Directories or written histories of Hyde or Stockport, but I now find that the evidence may have been staring me in the face.



On a visit with Jack and Lynda Shufflebotham, the current occupants of Spout House Barn, they told me that the tall three-storey building abutting the right hand side of SPOUT HOUSE was originally built as weaver's cottages, and used to be an integral part of the property. As part of our *History on your Doorstep* class project about Gee Cross I have been gathering evidence about the history of Spout House and have not been able to find any evidence of anyone

engaged in the cotton industry since David Jackson left circa 1797. On the 1841 Tithe Map of



Werneth, one of the fields belonging to Spout House is called 'brick kiln field' and there is a large kidney shape in the middle of it. By 1843 in the Tithe Apportionments this field is described as 'pasture land'. I now feel pretty sure that this three storey annexe to Spout house Farm was the location of David Jackson's cotton business.

I have no idea where David Jackson went after 1797, but I do know that with the advent of steam power the cotton industry died out in Gee Cross. The cotton industry had originally thrived due to an abundance of water, but sadly it had no natural coal resources to drive the later steam powered engines. Consequently, the cotton trade moved further down into the valley to Flowery Fields, and hatting became the mainstay of Gee Cross.

In conclusion, through researching our family legend, I have managed to show that Blind Jack had much stronger links with Gee Cross than previously supposed.

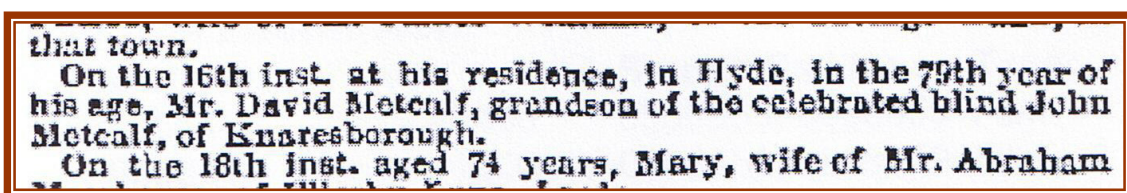
The newspaper article mentioned at the very beginning of Jack's story has only recently come to light. Mrs Walker, the lady mentioned in the article was Selina Newton's granddaughter.

### **More local links to Blind Jack's descendants:**

Blind Jack's eldest son Christopher was born February 7, 1738/9 in Knaresborough. He married Jane Leach, 21 September 1769 at Saddleworth St Chad Church. The marriage entry states that Christopher was a 'sojourner', interpreted in the transcription as a 'visiting craftsman'. He is later variously described as a stone getter and labourer. The baptisms of their children say they were living at High Moor which lies alongside various stone quarries. One of the major roads his father built was from Huddersfield through High Moor and Thurston Clough to Doctor Lane Head. It does seem that Christopher must have come over with his father when he built the road through Saddleworth and then stayed after marrying a local girl. The naming pattern of their children illustrates the link perfectly:

David, Dolly, Christopher, Joseph, Mally Benson, James, Tabby, Jonathan Leach.

As further proof, I have found their eldest son David living at Hoviley Bridge, Hyde in 1841, and the following cutting taken from the Manchester Guardian, 24 May 1848:



that town.  
On the 16th inst. at his residence, in Hyde, in the 79th year of his age, Mr. David Metcalf, grandson of the celebrated blind John Metcalf, of Knaresborough.  
On the 18th inst. aged 74 years, Mary, wife of Mr. Abraham

### **Ellen Metcalfe – Jack's third child baptised at Knaresborough 18 July 1744:**

Roundabout the late 1780s John and Christopher INGLESON turn up in Cheshire living a few hundred yards away from Blind Jack's other daughter Tabitha who has already been living there since 1767. John and Christopher follow the same family naming patterns for their children, eg, John, Christopher, Ellen and Dorothy. There don't appear to be any other INGLESON lines in Cheshire at the time.

There are apparently many gaps in the Knaresborough Parish Registers on the International Genealogical Index and sometime in the future I would need to check the original parish registers to see if John and Christopher are listed to confirm that they are Ellen and Thomas' children

According to Ian Haynes book *Hyde Cotton Mills*, Christopher Ingleson pays Land Tax for Peter Thorniley's land at Hunt's Croft Cotton Mill, near Gower Hey Wood on Stockport Road in Gee Cross for the years 1799-1801. This land virtually runs alongside that of his aunt Tabitha and David Jackson's farm at Spout House.

### **John Metcalf baptised at Knaresborough 20 March 1745/6:**

Another road and another child of Jack starts a new family line. By 1780 Jack had completed part of the road from Buxton to Whalley Bridge over Long Hill through Fernilee, then turned his attention to the road from Whalley Bridge to Macclesfield.

John Metcalf married Ann Ainsworth at Prestbury 8 October 1772, his first wife died 2 June 1793 and John remarried to Ann Brown 3 June 1794. He is listed as an Innkeeper from Macclesfield and so is his son Isaac after John's death. John and his children follow the same recurring naming patters.

### **Conclusion:**

His eldest son, Christopher, settled in Saddleworth as a stone getter living near to a set of quarries, and alongside one of the roads across the Pennines Jack built. His daughter, Tabitha, married David Jackson a farmer and cotton manufacturer from Gee Cross in Hyde. David Jackson's farm was also the coaching stop along the main Stockport to Mottram turnpike road that Jack built. His son John became a silk manufacturer and Inn keeper at Macclesfield and started a line there. The only child to stay in Knaresborough was his daughter Ellen who married Thomas Ingleson from Spofforth. It is with this daughter that Jack spent his last years after he finally retired from road building. I believe that John and Christopher INGLESON may have been born in the 1760s and that they might be the sons of Ellen METCALFE and Thomas INGLESON. The only child of Ellen and Thomas on the International Genealogical Index (IGI) is Thomas born in 1764 a year after their marriage. They also came to live in Gee Cross and became close neighbours of their aunt Tabitha.

From the dates of his children's marriages 1767, 1769 and 1772, the roads Jack built were probably built earlier than he remembered when recounting the story of his life. The only child to stay put in Yorkshire married a little before Jack began his road building career.

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