

## The Challis family in Sawston – Part 2.

As we have seen the Challis family were established in Sawston by 1791 but what is not quite so clear is where they were established. The will of John Haylock, Ann's father who died in 1803, indicates that Thomas and Ann may already have had ownership over some land because of the use of the term Yeoman but if not then they certainly did as a result of his will as she was left substantial properties, although not as far as can be seen the freehold title. What is not at all clear is what properties they were.



**The heart of the village as shown in the Map that displayed the  
Enclosure of Land that took place in1802.**

Maps of this time lack sufficient detail to enable easy identification of properties but some assistance might be gained by jumping forward to the published memories of George Challis, I will come to exactly who he was later, when he recalls a walk down the high street *"Finally old Farmer Challis is to be seen through the window of the farmhouse which stood on the site of the cottages next to the present Smithy, sitting in the chimney corner warming his 90 year old hands at a fire necessary only to himself."*<sup>1</sup>



**The Smithy or Old Forge**

The reason for this leap is that old Farmer Challis, William Challis the second son of Thomas and Ann, following the normal rule of succession would most probably have inherited the house and estate on the death of his father in 1816 as his older brother John had died just a few months earlier, aged 31 years. It is highly likely therefore that the "farmhouse" was the house where Thomas and Ann brought up their family after 1803 if not before.

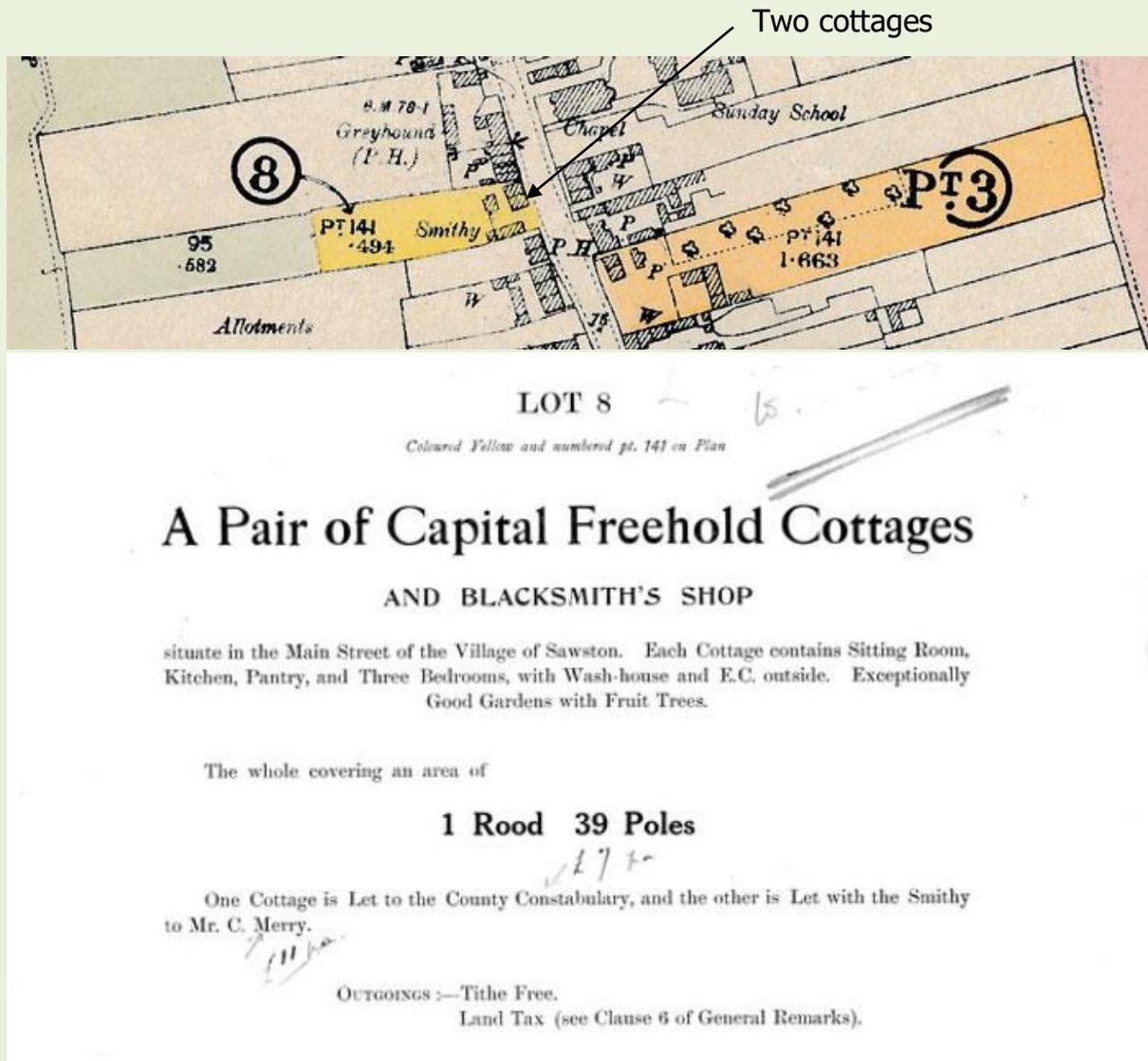
William Challis died on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1877 in his 92<sup>nd</sup> year so George Challis, born in 1860, would be describing events from his teenage years *"peopled by those long gone"* and recalled many years later. Other sources can assist a little starting with the census in 1841 which was then

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<sup>1</sup> Sawston – George Challis Page 47

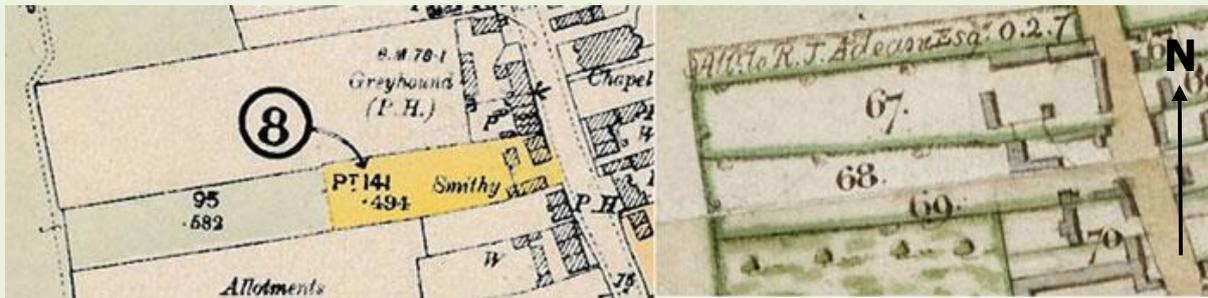
repeated each decade providing increasingly valuable detail. Maps lacked sufficient or reliable detail until 1885 and street or house numbering did not commence until long after this. However, using these sources we can perhaps pin things down a little further.

Looking at the following section of a map produced for the 1922 sale of the Sawston and Hildersham Estates, we can see clearly marked in yellow the area of Lot 8, the Smithy, with the sale description beneath.



George Challis describes the farmhouse as "*stood on the site of the cottages next to the present Smithy*" and the map, the detail of which in this area does not vary from that of 1885 shows two cottages on the Smithy plot itself as described in the sale lot. Looking below at the area of the Smithy Plot on both the 1922 map to the left and the 1802 map to

the right we can make some comparison. In 1802 the Greyhound, (Plot 67) was the northern most building on the western side of the High Street.



The colour change between 68 and 69 above results from scanning not the map colouring itself.

At that time, 1802 the Greyhound which had not yet been so named was a coaching station with a large yard, stables for horses and sheds for carriages while the main building itself, fronting onto the High Street appears to stretch all the way south along to the border with The Smithy Plot, 68/69. On the Smithy plot we can see that the first building after the Greyhound stretches across from east to west away from the High Street, where the two cottages in the 1922 map stand, surely the farmhouse. Details from the Census tend to show this to be the case. The 1841 record below shows William Dover and his family, who we know from other records was the Licensee of the Greyhound premises at this time with "Farmer" William Challis and his family next door.

12A	High Street	William	CHALLIS	50	Farmer	Y
		Eleanor	CHALLIS	45		N
		William	CHALLIS	20	Tailor	Y
		Charles	CHALLIS	20	Ag Lab	Y
		Ann	CHALLIS	15		Y
		John	CHALLIS	15		Y
		Thomas	CHALLIS	14		Y
		Elizabeth	CHALLIS	12		Y
		Maria	CHALLIS	10		Y
12A	High Street	William	DOVER	35	Publican	Y
		Elizabeth	DOVER	40		Y
		Prior [m]	DOVER	15		Y
		/ Sabena	CLAXTON	3		Y
		/ Eliza	HANCOCK	15	F.S.	Y
		/ Rebecca	COBB	25	Innkeepers Wife	Y

It was only in 1847 that the Greyhound first took that name and the adoption of this name may reflect a greater change in the use of the premises. It had been a coaching inn for some time and while the licensee

in this period was William Dover the premises were owned by Mr Ekin of Cambridge who also ran a brewery, a coaching company and a farm. The following clip taken from the Cambridge Independent Press of 26<sup>th</sup> April 1845 gives some indication of the coaching trade.

**IMPORTANT TOLL CAUSE.**  
*COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH, Tuesday, April 22,*  
**EKIN AND ANOTHER v. FLAY.**

This was an action to recover from the defendant the sum of £6. 16s., which the plaintiffs alleged they had overpaid, under the circumstances hereinafter mentioned.—The plaintiffs, Messrs. Ekin and Chaplin, are the proprietors of the "Rocket" coach, which runs daily from Cambridge to London and from London to Cambridge. The defendant is the lessee of the tolls payable at the Stapleford turnpike-gate, and the several other gates on the Stump Cross Roads, in this county. The facts of the case although involving principles at once of general and individual importance, were very simple. The "Rocket" coach leaves Cambridge daily, in the afternoon, and on its journey to London, passes through the Stapleford gate, being drawn by 4 horses; its first stage being from Cambridge to Sawston. About the same time, each afternoon, the down "Rocket" Coach leaves London, and reaches Sawston about 7 o'clock, and there takes the 4 horses which the "up" coach had left, on its journey to London, and with which the "down" coach continues its journey to Cambridge; and between Sawston and Cambridge passes through the Stapleford gate. Under these circumstances the question betwixt the plaintiffs and the defendant was, whether a second toll of 4d., in respect of each of the 4 horses, was payable on their returning, as just mentioned, through the Stapleford gate. It will be perceived, that the same 4 horses which had drawn the "up" coach through the gate, also drew the "down" coach, on the journey from London, but that they drew a different coach, driven by a different coachman, and having upon it different passengers and goods.



[By Georges Jansoone](#)

But then the coaching trade declined.

*"However the development of the railways in the 1830s had a huge impact on the stagecoach. Stage and mail coaches could not compete with the speed of the new railways. Soon the post was travelling by rail and by the mid-19th century, most coaches travelling to and from London had been withdrawn from service."*<sup>2</sup>

And rather quickly.

*"In 1837 ten different coaches left Cambridge for London every week day, and two for Oxford. The last stage coach left Cambridge in 1849."*<sup>3</sup>

The 1851 census still shows William Dover and his family residing at the Greyhound Inn and William Challis, farmer of 85 acres with his family remain as next door neighbours. In 1861 however a complete change and below we see that there were four households between "Farmer" Challis and Joseph Doughton, the Licensee of the Greyhound Inn at the time. These are no doubt the occupants of the four cottages or houses shown in the 1922 map which appear to have replaced the southern half of the Greyhound building.

High St						Sch 120	Folio 121B
William	CHALLIS	H	M	75	Farmer of 80 acres employing 2 men	ESS	S Walden
Elenor	CHALLIS	Wf	M	72	Farmer's Wife	CAM	Sawston
John	CHALLIS	S	U	38	Farmer's Son	CAM	Sawston
Elizabeth	CHALLIS	D	U	32	Farmer's Dau	CAM	Sawston
Sarah	RAWLINGS	V	U	66	Fundholder	CAM	Linton
High St						Sch 121	Folio 121B
Job	HAYLES	H	M	24	Employed at Paper Mill	CAM	Whittlesford
Annie	HAYLES	Wf	M	28		[CAM]	Cambridge
Frederic W	HAYLES	S		1		CAM	Sawston
High St						Sch 122	Folio 121B
Joseph	DOCKRILL	H	M	24	Employed at Paper Mills	CAM	Sawston
Naomi	DOCKRILL	Wf	M	22	Employed at Paper Mills	CAM	Sawston

<sup>2</sup> [Historic UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [British History Online](#)

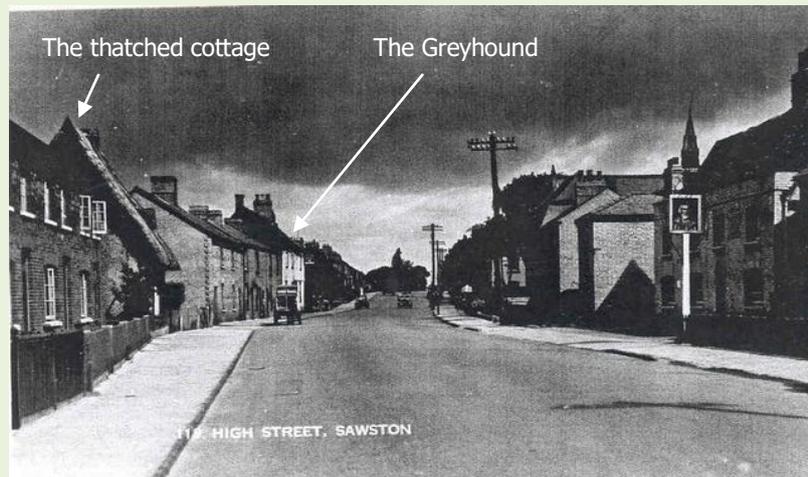
SAWSTON		1881 Census					
High St						Sch 123	Folio 121B
James	BARKER	H	M	27	Parchment Maker	CAM	Sawston
Elizabeth	BARKER	Wf	M	26	Parchment Maker's Wife	CAM	Over
Flo Elizabeth	BARKER	D		1		CAM	Sawston
High St						Sch 124	Folio 122A
John	BASS	H	M	30	Parchment Maker	BDF	Leighton Buzzard
Jane E	BASS	Wf	M	29		CAM	Sawston
Bertha	BASS	D		6		CAM	Sawston
Eleanor	BASS	D		2		CAM	Sawston
Eliza	BASS	D		1		CAM	Sawston
Charlotte	SCRUBY	Au	M	59	Independent	CAM	Sawston
High St						Sch 125	Folio 122A
Joseph G	DOUGHTON	H	M	29	Chelsea Pensioner & Victualler	HRT	Oslow
Caroline	DOUGHTON	Wf	M	28	Chelsea Pension & Victualler's Wife	HRT	Backlaw
Emily H	DOUGHTON	D		1		HRT	Backlaw

While the coaching trade declined in this period the manufacture of leather and paper in the village increased and with it the housing demand for the rising number employed in those industries. At some time during this decade, probably with a change of ownership the nature of the Greyhound and its grounds also changed with the building of four cottages. This fitted a pattern running through the village as even within the small sections of maps shown above we can see that considerable building took place during the period as Teversham states *"In the Sawston of 1820 and for some years afterwards, there was no continuous line of houses, flush with the street, as we see today. Many of the cottages were set back for some distance, with gardens in front, and trees to provide shade and shelter, and here and there were intervening open spaces."*<sup>4</sup>

Most of these newer buildings were of poor quality with some much worse than others and so few have remained while many of the older ones are inhabited to this day. Unfortunately, the farmhouse was not one of these as it was replaced, probably shortly after the death of William Challis by two cottages which looked similar too and met with the same fate as the four on the Greyhound land. The picture below shows these cottages

<sup>4</sup> History of Sawston Part 2 T.F. Teversham, Page259

which appear on the left of the photograph just after the thatched cottage that was to the left of The Smithy in the first photograph shown above.



Looking at the same scene today we can see that the first cottages to the left remain, now converted to shops and further along the Greyhound P.H. still stands looking smarter perhaps than before but all the buildings between including the thatched cottage have gone. They were replaced in the 1970's by a small modern estate with a roadway called Old Forge Way and just to add to the family history of this site Amanda lived at No 8 Old Forge Way, almost exactly on the site of the farmhouse, from 1975 until 1985 a full 100 years after William vacated the property.



[\(Click for larger view.\)](#)

If the assumption about the farmhouse is correct then it brings us close to an aspect of village life that the Challis family, or at least part of it, had an influence upon and while there are perhaps several of these I will deal with the most respectable one first, the establishment of the Independent Church. Teversham writes "*Previous to the institution of Edward Daniel in 1836, the parish had been, for over a century, without a resident vicar, and the last thirty years of this period were among the most distressful in all its long history, in so far as the welfare of the working classes was concerned.*"<sup>5</sup> Such a void left open by the established church could only encourage the growth of independent thought and while it is difficult to trace any real history of any such movement prior to this time it is known that a group of families held regular meetings from early in the 1700's. The arrival of Sarah Haylock née Dunch in about 1748 had a considerable influence on this group and no doubt also upon the family she married into. The following tribute published in The Gentleman's Magazine 1815 resulting from a visit to the village and her grave in the churchyard suggests she must have been quite a formidable lady with very strong beliefs.

*11. "Sarah Haylock, the last surviving daughter of W. Dunch, Esq. and the second wife of Edward Haylock, gent. departed this life Feb. the 14th, 1773, in the 77th year of her age. Of all her accomplishments, and they were many, Religion was the guide, its throne was her heart, its language her life, yet (for she was a CHRISTIAN) she looked for IMMORTAL LIFE from the mercy of God through the merits of Christ; to this grand object her parents taught her infant eye to turn. Her affections fired at its beauty; her faith fixed on its truth: and all her life was one stretch for the prize. No mean infatuations with the phrensies of life; no low suspicions in the anguish of death; for well she knew the HAPPY GOD, and all his mazy plans she thought was right. Reader, would 'st thou, like her, all placid and serene close as the evening of a Summer day softly meand'ring through the dusky vale; Be HOLY then, without this none shall see the Lord."*<sup>6</sup>

The numbers attending these meetings grew and the barn in Common Lane used for so long as their meeting house became too small to seat all those who wished to attend consequently a movement was made to build an Independent Church. A big obstacle to such a venture would be the lack of building land and considering the extensive enclosure procedures that had just been enforced the chances of finding anything suitable was slim, fortunately however there was a farmer, Mr Simon Brown, who

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<sup>5</sup> History of Sawston Vol 2 Page 271 – T.F. Teversham

<sup>6</sup> The Gentleman's Magazine, Vol LXXXV - September 1815

owned the freehold of a suitable piece of land which he donated to the cause. On the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1811 an Indenture granting the land for Sawston's first purpose built Congregational Church was signed between Simon Brown and some 15 village notables including Paper Maker Thomas Challis. This is the only occasion I have seen Thomas Challis referred to as a paper maker, in all others he is a farmer but perhaps he was both. The land concerned was, conveniently just across the High Street from the farmhouse and very quickly a red brick church was built and dedicated on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1812. This building, set back from the High Street served as the Church for a number of years until land closer to the High Street was acquired and in 1879 work began building the rather more imposing Congregational Church we know today. Both of these buildings can be seen on the 1922 map (Page 3) where the newer Church is shown as Chapel and the older building as Sunday School although it was more commonly known as the Lecture Hall.



**The Congregational Church of 1879 opposite the Greyhound P.H.**

Teversham says *"A century ago book-learning was frowned upon and was considered effeminate; for instance, an ancestor of Mr A. J. Challis had nine stalwart sons, each of whom was taught a trade, but none was allowed to learn reading or writing."*<sup>7</sup> In the next part of this story we will come to see what those sons of Thomas Challis made of themselves and just how well he prepared them for the life they were to lead.

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<sup>7</sup> History of Sawston Vol 1 Page 180 T.F, Teversham