Part 3: Midlands

Haddon Hall

The Industrial Revolution

Chocolate!

War In The Air

St Bartholomew's Church

Ludlow Castle

Haddon Hall

Once again, our three night stay with Liz could easily have been three weeks, but we still had much ground to cover. Our next stop was the little midlands village of Bakewell, a two and a half hour drive to the southeast of Kendal.

Bakewell lies within the county of Derbyshire. it is also within the boundaries of the Peak District National Park. Both it and Lake District National Park, the first national parks in the UK, were created in 1951, late by Canadian standards. By comparison, our first national park, Banff National Park, was established in 1885.

Peak District National Park lies at the southern end of the Pennines, a range of high country running north-south that separates North West England from North East England. The first cotton mills of the Industrial Revolution were built on the streams rolling off these hills. Today, it is bikes that roll off the hills and hikers who walk them. Tourism is big here for a reason. The landscapes are stunning and access is easy. Walking holidays are popular in Britain and the Peak District is a popular place to do it. The epicentre for all this activity is the quaint little village of Bakewell.

On the edge of Bakewell lay our objective, Haddon Hall. We had come to visit the home of my great grandparents, the Vernons. Well, not just great grandparents — grandparents stretching back hundreds of years.

I am a fortunate man, for I am overflowing with grandparents. And so are you. I stopped to count once and quickly gave up. You see, all of us have two parents whether we like it or not. Each of our parents had two parents whether they liked it or not and so forth. Mathematically speaking, the number of grandparents we have increases by 2 to the power of n, where n = the number of generations we go back.

Haddon Hall first came into my family in 1170, when my 26th great grandfather, Sir Richard de Vernon, married Avice Avenell, the heiress of Haddon Hall. Back to the maths. When I apply the above formula to the 26 generations since Richard and Avice, I discover I have accumulated 2 to the power of 26 or 268,435,456 grandparents. They're not living downstairs, you understand. Come to think of it, they're not living. Nor did I actually count them.

Imagine the pain of doing so:

"Two hundred sixty-eight million, four hundred thirty-five thousand, four hundred fifty-five. Two hundred sixty-eight million four hundred thirty-five thousand four..." "Sweetie, I need a lemon. Would you mind running down to the ...." "NOT NOW...five hundred fort.... BLOODY HELL!"

No. The figure I gave is a statistical average. To give you an idea of just how many people that is, if you stuffed all of them (that's eight times the population of Canada) into a bowling alley, the bowling alley would be...nah, just kidding.

Some argue, my friends and family among them, that attempting to claim a relationship with someone who lived 900 years ago is a fatuous exercise, as staggering numbers of people may be related to any

given individual who lived hundreds of years ago. As if to drive home the point, my cousin Bill tells me that David, his tablemate at the retirement residence where he lives, is also related to the Vernons of Haddon Hall. Frequently, I find myself putzing about in what I think is an obscure corner of my family tree. Then when I stop to check the connection to me, I am flabbergasted to discover they are my umpteenth great grandparents!

And judging by the number of claimants to my DNA and by the following facts derived from genetics research, I am hard-pressed to argue the point. The facts are these: the amount of DNA we possess from our ancestors diminishes rapidly with each additional generation. By as little as five generations, we may have only 3% of each ancestor's genes and by the seventh generation, less than one percent.

Yet despite the science, I still feel that sense of connection to my ancestors of centuries past, for good reason. If any one of those 268,435,456 individuals had made a different choice of spouse, I would not be here. I may not have much of their DNA, but each and every one of them allowed me to be on this planet. How can I not feel connected?

The Vernon family called Haddon Hall home from the late 1100s to the mid 1500s. The family came from Vernon, France, in Normandy at the time of William the Conqueror. As fellow Normans, they were granted extensive lands in the lush rolling hills of Derbyshire and neighbouring Cheshire – the Midlands of England.

My entrée to the Vernon family came in 1510 with the marriage of William Fisher to Mary Vernon. We know little about William but his Fisher family is prominent in my family tree from the 1500s onward. Both the Fishers and the Vernons had the knack of doing well

from the people they called their friends and importantly, from the carefully chosen marriages of their children.

The Vernon family seemed never in a rush to part with their wealth or position. On multiple occasions through the centuries, cousins married each other in order to combine two estates into one grand estate, doubling the wealth of the family with a mere two words -- “I do”. Power, influence and more wealth came with their strategically arranged marriages and connections. Among them were three High Sheriffs, two Chief Justices, two Members of Parliament, a Speaker of the House, two Treasurers of Calais (a British possession for one hundred years up to 1558), and a governor and treasurer to Arthur, Prince of Wales. Some were earls, dukes, barons and knights. You might say they were ‘plugged in.’

Sir George Vernon was the last male of the Haddon Hall Vernons. He owned a vast acreage and was appropriately referred to as ‘King of the Peak,’ a reference to his domineering character, wealth and power, and the region in which Haddon Hall lay. King of the Poke, however, he was not, for he died without male heirs, a circumstance much dreaded in his day, for it meant that the family’s wealth and power would fall to the in-laws. When he died in 1565 Haddon Hall passed to his daughter Dorothy who married Sir John Manners. The couple’s descendants are the Dukes of Rutland, who own Haddon Hall today.

According to legend (never verified), Dorothy, a famously beautiful and kindly young woman, fell in love with John Manners. However, her father Sir George Vernon, forbade Dorothy to see Manners, perhaps because Manners was Protestant and the Vernons were Catholic or perhaps because John, as the second son, had uncertain financial prospects. The couple, however, had a plan. During a ball hosted by

Sir George, Mary slipped away through the garden. On the far side of a footbridge (still there today) Manners was waiting for her and away they rode to be married.

This is hardly the script for a modern-day gripper but there is no denying love. Novels, short stories, plays including a Broadway play, a light opera and a film starring Mary Pickford in1924 have all retold the legend of Dorothy and John.

The brother of the current Duke of Rutland lives somewhere in the back of Haddon Hall. I thought it only proper to introduce myself while we were on the premises – to let him and his folk know that they were not forgotten in the colonies and that if he ever felt the urge to visit, he must stay with us. The entire bedroom in the basement would be reserved for his exclusive use. Regrettably, I could not find the door to his apartment. It's likely a hidden panel in the armoury or a secret stairway from a bedroom to yesterday's maid's quarters. He will be so annoyed to learn he'd missed me.

For 200 years, starting in 1700, Haddon Hall lay vacant. The Manners still owned it; they just chose not to live there. They had other, more upscale castles at their disposal, with bigger fireplaces, fewer cracks and more doors. The hall must have fallen into dreadful disrepair but in the 1920s the challenge of bringing Haddon back to life was taken on by the 9th Duke and Duchess of Rutland. Today, Haddon Hall is touted to be "probably the finest example of a fortified medieval manor house in existence."

Haddon Hall is open to the public. We parked in the lot adjacent to the estate, walked through the arch of the designed-to-impress gatehouse and carried on up the road as it crossed an expanse of grass field, passed a pond large enough to float the British Navy and up a

rise to an extensive castle-like manor. To our left were the stables, converted now to a cafe. Ahead, was the manor's entry, its ancient wood doors with iron fastenings cast wide. Randi made small talk with the attendant, a rough-hewn man who was likely more at ease patching plumbing than punching tickets. "My husband is related to the family," she offered. "What?," said he, his interest instantly peaked. "Hey Arnold," he yelled across the inner courtyard to what appeared to be his superior. "Two more of 'em has just walked in. Bloody hell, when does it end?" groaned Arnold. Should I review the maths with them, I pondered? Probably not.

Haddon Hall is brilliant. Randi absorbed the place, methodically, room by room, then sat on a bench in the sun and chatted with strangers while she waited for me; I ran about with my camera, clicking here, clicking there in no particular order.

"Did you see the kitchen? she queried on the way out.

"Ah no, missed that I guess."

"The bathroom was grim."

"Bathroom...?"

Bakewell near Haddon Hall

Bakewell near Haddon Hall

Haddon Hall, Derbyshire

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, or First Industrial Revolution, occurred roughly between 1760 and 1840. It was the shift from hand production methods to machines, the use of chemicals in manufacturing, new iron smelting processes, and the application of steam and improved water power technology. This period also saw the advent of machine tools and mechanized factory systems.

Textile production was the dominant industry in terms of the number of people employed, the profits to be made and the amount of capital invested. The textile industry was also the first to use modern production methods. The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain and many of its advances were British in origin.

It was the Industrial Revolution which, in large part, powered the growth of the British Empire. In turn, it was the raw materials and cheap labour provided by the colonies along with Britain's restrictive, monopolistic trade agreements which fed the British engines of industry.

By the mid 18th century, Britain was a global trading empire and the world's largest economy, backed by the supremacy of the British Navy, the administrative and military might of the East India Company and Rule of Law.

Economic historians largely agree that the Industrial

Revolution was the most important event in the history of humanity since the domestication of animals. Its effect on virtually every aspect of daily life was profound. Whether or not it improved the quality of life is up for debate. On the one hand, wages rose significantly and some, for the first time, had access to a wide range of goods unimaginable in years prior. As well, people had steady work which was not subject to the unpredictability of harvests. On the other hand, factory work was often mind-numbing and dangerous, the working day and week were insufferably long, air quality in cities was deplorable, health care and leisure activities for workers were nonexistent and child labour was common. Numerous poor, displaced from farms by the Enclosures Act, were drawn to the cities where they were subject to the whims of self-interested employers and hard-nosed overseers. Generally, the owners got rich; the workers simply survived.

Although the First Industrial Revolution brought with it significant economic and social change during the 1840s and 1850s, the new technologies were not sufficient to drive high and sustained rates of growth. Rapid economic growth really began after 1870 as a second generation of innovations in steel making, mass production, assembly lines, machine tools and steam power were employed. This era became known as the Second Industrial Revolution.

Yet even by the 1830s, the impact of mechanization was massive. Cotton spinning machinery increased a worker's output by a factor of 500, the power loom by a factor of 40, the cotton gin, which removed seed from cotton, by a factor of 50. Efficiencies in steam engines reduced energy consumption by up to 90%, the use of coke instead of charcoal significantly reduced the fuel costs of iron-making and the introduction of machine tools led to more precise,

sophisticated production machines.
As the power of James Watt's steam engines improved, Manchester became the epicentre of cotton textile production, largely because of its existing, extensive canal system which could transport the finished product economically.

In 1772, 2000 tons of cotton were being imported per year. By 1816, that figure had risen to 45,000 tons. In 1816 there were 86 cotton mills in Manchester; by 1825 there were 110. Even in this early stage of the Industrial Revolution, the output capacity of these mills was staggering. Edward Baines wrote:

"We may see in a single building a 100 horse power steam engine [which] has the strength of 800 men, set in motion 50,000 spindles. The whole requires the service of but 750 workers [who]…produce as much yarn as former could have … spun [with] 200,000 men…."

Quakers, it seems, were quick to recognize the profit potential of mass production. And they had access to capital. When a good business idea materialized, Quakers could count on the financial backing of a Quaker bank, family or friends to turn idea into reality.

Once up and running, Quaker businesses held a significant advantage over their non-Quaker competition — they operated unfailingly from their religious principles. Customers and suppliers had complete confidence that doing business with a Quaker guaranteed one honesty, fairness and quality. Persons working for a Quaker could expect fairness in wages, respect, gender equality and good working conditions. In short, Quaker businesses of the 18th and 19th centuries were lightyears ahead of the times.

Thus, Quakers, some of my family included, thrived in industrialized Britain. Many became wealthy and in return (and contrary to many wealthy non-Quakers), to a person, they gave back to their communities — to their Quaker community as well as the greater community. They provided relief to the poor and lobbied decades on end for abolition, women's rights, prison reform, worker reform, and the cessation of trade in opium.

By the early 1900s, cities of the midlands region of England — Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham — had collectively become a global manufacturing powerhouse which both contributed to and benefited from the rise of the British Empire.

Chocolate

Three families of Quakers, for reasons not known to me, began manufacturing chocolate — the Rowntrees of Yorkshire (1862), the Cadbury's of Birmingham (1824) and the Fry's of Bristol (1759). All did exceedingly well and all three families were heavily engaged in philanthropy and social action. As well, members of all three families intermarried with members of my family, the Spriggs and Haywards, who also lived in and operated businesses in Birmingham. I have chosen to tell the Cadbury's story here in order to relate an extraordinary act of philanthropy.

It was there in Birmingham, in 1824, that John Cadbury began selling tea, coffee and drinking chocolate. Early customers were limited to the wealthy because production costs were high.

In 1861 John's sons Richard and George assumed control of the business and by 1866 it had become evident to them that chocolate was the key to success. When they dropped tea and coffee to focus exclusively on chocolate, and upped the quality of the cocoa bean, the business took off. The rest of the Cadbury story, at least the business side of it, is largely about the ups and downs of the many products they brought to market and about the marketing efforts by which they did so.

However, there is another story here, the story of Bournville. Over time, the Cadbury business grew, requiring two moves to larger premises. By 1878, when a third move was required, George posed a question to brother Richard, which might have gone

something like this:

"Would you not agree Richard, that the success of Cadbury's, apart from our own brilliance…" George grins, "is due almost wholly to the loyalty and dedication of our workers? Now you and I know too well the conditions under which our workers live. We have volunteered in their neighbourhoods, talked with their families, witnessed the rampant ill health and frankly, squalid conditions which they have no option but to tolerate. You and I leave the factory each night, retiring to our large, comfortable homes on the edge of the city where we enjoy every possible luxury. We owe them more Richard. A great deal more.

"I've been thinking about this for a while and I've come up with with a rather grand idea — something which I don't believe has ever been done. Still with me Richard? Excellent.

We must move to larger quarters and we must do it soon. However, we are not obliged to remain within Birmingham. Agreed? What if we were to take this once in a lifetime opportunity to do something outstanding for our workers, that is, build not just a new factory, but an entire village in the country to house our workers, provide them with health care, nice shops, good schools, fresh air, clean streets and places to walk about and socialize. Would that not be the perfect way to say "thank you" Richard?

"It would indeed brother. And that is precisely what we shall do. It is brilliant. You are brilliant. Come, Priscilla just rang the bell. Teas on. Let us celebrate the new and improved Cadbury's and show the world how things ought to be done."

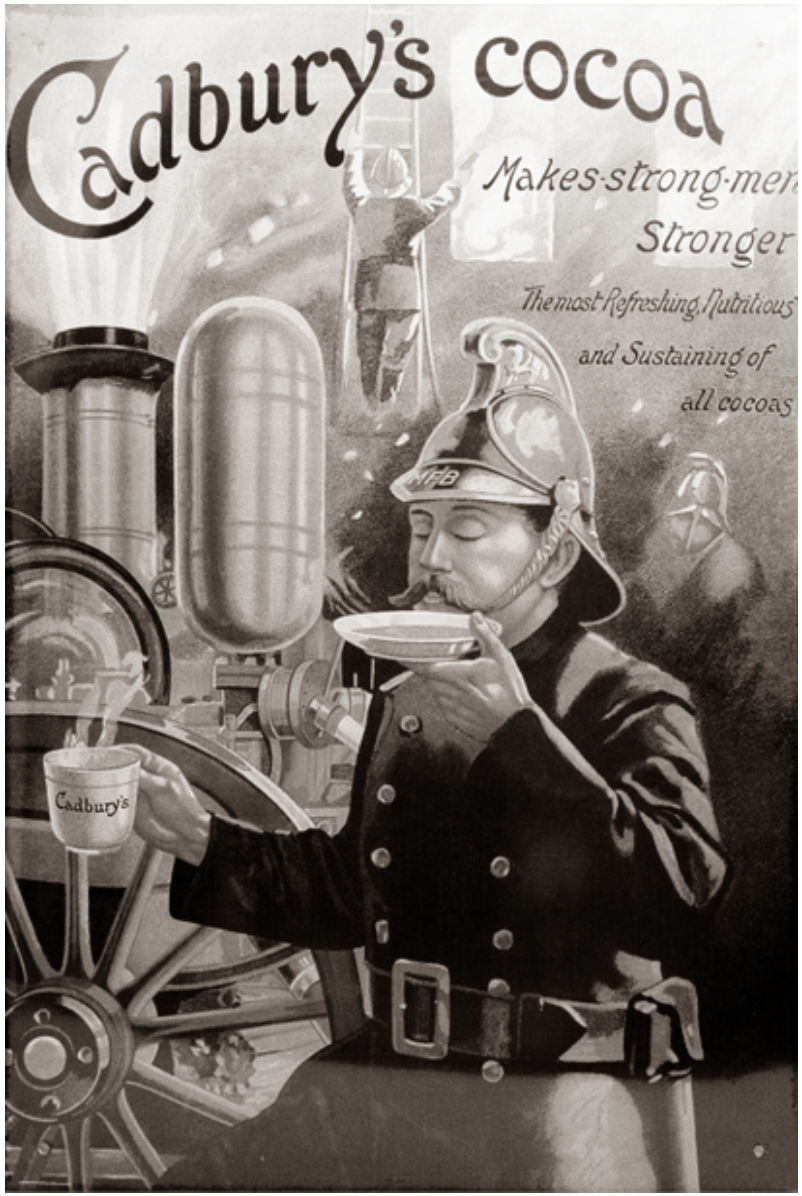
That is precisely what they did do. In the countryside

just beyond Birmingham's outer limits, the Cadbury's purchased land for the new factory and began construction. Later, in 1893, George Cadbury purchased 120 additional acres for workers' housing. On that land, he built 143 cottages. The cottages were clustered in pods of 3 or 4 and the pods were set back from tree-lined streets. Each cottage had a front and back garden, fruit trees and space to grow vegetables.

A cottage had three bedrooms, a parlour, living room, kitchen and good sanitation. The rooms were large and airy with plenty of light. One tenth of the estate was put aside for parks, recreation grounds and open space. They called the village Bournville.

Housing reform became a passion for George Cadbury. He joined the Garden City Movement begun by housing reformer Sir Ebenezer Howard, and was instrumental in the movement's success.

Bournville near Birmingham, built for Cadbury's workers



Cadbury's advertising, late 1800s

John Cadbury (1801-1889)

Founder, Cadbury's Chocolate
Relation: paternal grandfather of wife of brother-in-law of great-aunt

War In The Air

William Spriggs (1898-1986)

My thanks to the Spriggs family — Hilary Hellum, John Spriggs, David Spriggs and Tim Hellum for their generous contributions to and edits of this article.

A special thank you to you William Spriggs for your gallantry to advance a noble cause at any cost. We shall not forget. Nor must we forget the millions of people on both sides who died in this, yet another senseless war.

William (Will) Spriggs (1898-1986) is my uncle. He was the eldest of two girls and two boys born in Birmingham, England to Quakers William Spriggs and Alice Hayward. Like many of our extended Quaker family, they were well-to-do. His father, William Sr. co-owned a mattress manufacturing company and ultimately, both he and Alice inherited considerable wealth from their parents and relatives.

Early Life

Will, my mother Hester and siblings Bob and Alison had a privileged childhood. They lived in a large house in the pleasant village of Acock's Green on the outskirts of industrial Birmingham. They had servants — a cook, a nanny and a maid. A motorcar was kept in the carriage house. The children attended schools for the privileged and in the back yard was a miniature

ride-on steam train designed and built, probably, by Will's father and his factory workers.

During the summers, the family retired to Torquay on the South England coast, where days passed with fun outings to the beach, Quaker meetings and socials with Quaker friends and family. As well, there were trips to the Lake District in Northwest England with visits to their cousins, the Richardsons. It was a good life.

Will's grandfather, also William (1821-1899), was a successful clothier in Birmingham and Worcester. He manufactured and retailed wool clothing. He must have been a consummate businessman, for the family lived at Battenhall Mount, a sprawling Victorian mansion with extensive grounds, enormous rooms extravagantly furnished and maids to do everything.

When William (Will's father) was a young man he had what he thought was a 'watershed idea.' He approached his parents. It might have gone like this:

> Will found his mother, as was her custom at 10am on a Saturday morning, sewing in the parlour. "Mother, how is father's mood this morning? Does he strike you as approachable on an important matter?"
> "Well, yes, I suppose so dear. You have nothing to lose by trying. He's in the library." More like everything to lose, thought William. His father was a man who held very clear ideas about how life ought to unfold, for himself and for those in his realm. William knocked on the library door, the required protocol, then waited for the familiar "Enter." "Father, may I speak with you for a moment?"
> "Yes, of course, William. What's on your mind?"

“I’ve been thinking a lot about a choice of career lately and keep coming back to the idea of engineering. You know how I love to plan and build things. I think it’s a good fit for me and I’m asking for your permission to pursue that.”

There. It was out. William’s life hung in the balance. His father was silent, his brows knitted. William’s heart sank. He’d seen that look on many occasions. None of them turned out well. An eternity passed before his father spoke.

“William. I have done well in my business, as you know. We lead privileged lives here. We are respected members of both our Quaker community and of the community at large. Would you not agree?”

“Yes father.”

“We have earned a social standing, William. With that standing come opportunities. Doors open, not for me so much anymore, but for you and your siblings. What schools you and your future children attend, what you will make of yourself, whom you will marry, where and how you will live, depend in great measure on your social standing. Do you understand that?”

“Yes father.”

“Well, I must say you leave me to wonder on that point. You see, William, engineering is not becoming of a gentleman with our social standing and a gentleman you must be. You are my eldest son, William. As the eldest son, like it or not, you have responsibilities. I expect you to join the family business. I expect you to live as a gentleman.”

“But fa…”

“That’s all William.”

William did as directed, almost. He had no inclination to be under his father’s thumb in the clothing business,

so convinced his father to secure him his own business which had engineering elements to it — the Birmingham Woven Wire Mattress Company. Woven wire mattresses in the late 1800s had been around a long time and for no particularly good reason. They were the wire mesh equivalent of a hammock. By 1915, spring coil mattresses had been transforming the mattress industry for 40 years. Mattress technology was evolving rapidly and to make matters worse, a recession had set in. Birmingham Woven Wire Mattress Company had become an anachronism, the horse and buggy of mattress makers. Unless the company made some dramatic changes, it was doomed to fail.

Come the war, both of William's parents had died, leaving he (46) and Alice (47) free to make their own decisions, It was time for a change. For the 20 years William had been with Birmingham Woven Wire Mattress Company, he could not recall one day he had truly enjoyed. Business was not his cup of tea. He was a quiet, retiring man, not comfortable networking, deal-making and managing people and paperwork. And there was another matter. Son Bob had lost an eye in a school accident. He and Alice were concerned that Bob, with his disability, would have trouble finding a career niche in England. Perhaps farming was the answer, in a new land. William consulted with Alice, as is the Quaker way, then sold his share of the business. It was decided. The family would immigrate to Canada.

Canada

It was not an impromptu affair. Spriggs' decisions are carefully made, well-considered. Land was cheap in Canada. They would buy a farm, work hard and live a peaceful life in the country with fresh air, home-grown food and independence — free of expectations and

stress. First, an exploratory trip was made to confirm the plan was viable and locate a farm. An apple farm was found and purchased near Wolfville, Nova Scotia. They called it Edgemere, for it rested on the shore of the Bay of Fundy. It was removed from the nearest town. The farm had been unoccupied for some time. It was badly rundown, the house, outbuildings and equipment in disrepair. But the price was right and excellent schools were found for the offspring.

The new chapter began. The Spriggs departed Liverpool on the Corsican and on the 17th of April, 1915 they arrived in St John's, Newfoundland, Canada. Once on the farm and with the diligence of Quakers on a mission, William, Alice and two paid locals, a man and a woman, set to work. William and his help brought the farm back to life while Alice, with her help, renovated the house and planted a huge flower and vegetable garden.

Gone was their life of privilege. Gone was their treasured extended family. Gone was their Quaker community. Before them was a foreign land, a foreign people and a foreign occupation. They had much to learn and the lessons came quickly. As William made purchases for the farm, he had a rude awakening. Not all Canadians adhered to William's accustomed ways of doing business. Dishonest people took advantage of the newcomers obvious naiveté and sold William a lame horse and faulty farm equipment.

By the next spring, Edgemere had come to life again. A reasonable apple crop was had. Selling them, though, was another matter. It was 1916; the war was in full swing and the apple market had collapsed. Yet the Spriggs laboured on at Edgemere for the duration of the war.

In 1919, after years of back-breaking work with little to show for it, the Spriggs gave up, sold the farm,

undoubtedly for a loss, and at ages 51 and 52, retired to the quiet, pretty village of Baie d'Urfé near Montreal. The farming chapter had not left them destitute, for they bought a big house on the edge of the St Lawrence River and the youngsters continued to board at the same schools.

Joining Up

By 1915, both Bob and Will had chosen their career paths. Ironically, it was engineering. Will had enrolled in pre-engineering at Acadia University. By the spring of 1916, the war had entered its third year. Will (17) had not yet been in Canada a year when recruiters for the newly formed 219th Battalion Nova Scotia Highlander Regiment appeared at his school. His classmates were joining. Will could not refuse, nor did he wish to. His father was at his side at the recruiting office. "You realize he's underage," he said firmly to the recruiting officer. The latter nodded. Honesty was central to Quaker faith. And in this case, clarity was important. Should Will, as an underage recruit, survive the war (and there was a reasonable chance he would not), he was entitled to a free university education. That he later got.

Training

On the 22nd of February, 1916 Will signed up. He entered officer's Flight School and trained through that summer where, fatefully, he learned signalling and Morse code. In September, he sailed for England where he underwent lengthy additional training, first with the Imperial Army, then on April 1, 1918, with the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF). Flight training continued. He took courses in photography, gunnery, ground signals, cross country navigation, formation flying and bombing and strafing.

Finally, as a certified pilot, on the 10th of August, 1918, Will was transferred to France where he was assigned to Squadron 8 of the Fourth Army under General Henry Rawlinson. After two years of training, 2nd Lieutenant William Spriggs, untested in war, found himself on the front line of the most ferocious and deadly war the world had ever witnessed.

Reconnaissance

By 1917, the role of reconnaissance crews was to take photographs of enemy positions which would give allied command strategic intelligence about exactly where the enemy was, their strength and their hardware and importantly, tactical intelligence in the form of feedback to artillery and tanks on the accuracy of their fire. Observer aircraft were fitted with specialized cameras attached to the side of the fuselage which were operated by the pilots. The cameras were capable of taking multiple images shot on a grid, which, back at command, were pieced together to form a mosaic of the enemy position and nature.

Observer aircraft were two-seater open cockpit biplanes designed to be slow and steady to accommodate the photography. Those characteristics made them them highly vulnerable to enemy fire. Reconnaissance was a risky business. By definition, it meant that one was always operating on and behind the enemy's front line. Attrition rates were high. New pilots used to call themselves the 20 Minute Club because their life expectancy in combat in 1916-1917 was 20 minutes.

Acquiring intelligence was one thing; getting it into the hands of command was another. There were no airstrips on the front line. In the early years of the war, the solution was simple. Air crews called it 'message in a bottle.' Weighted bags or multi-coloured message

streamers were dropped near the command post. As radio technology improved, radios were installed in reconnaissance aircraft allowing intelligence to be conveyed instantaneously to ground forces by one-way Morse code.

The Aircraft

At the outbreak of war in 1914, only 11 years had passed since the Wright Brothers first lifted off the ground. Aircraft were little more than a contraption of wood, wire and canvas. They were not capable of mounted weaponry; pilots encountering the enemy would resort to throwing stones and insults in passing. However, in the four years to 1918, aircraft had developed considerably — by the Germans, renowned for their mastery of things mechanical, and by the Allies. Both fighters and reconnaissance aircraft were bi or triplanes with two open cockpits.

For almost the entirety of the his war service, Will flew an FK8 Armstrong Whitworth 160, an observer plane and light bomber. The AW160 had two cockpits for pilot and observer. It was purpose built for acquiring photographic intelligence. Thus, it was capable of high stability at very slow speeds. Strafing was carried out with a Vickers rigid mounted machine gun. The Vickers was a recent innovation. Its firing action was synchronized to the engine, allowing it to fire between the rotating propellor blades. Fire was directed by manoeuvring the aircraft. Bombs were loaded under the wings of the FK8 AW160. The observer operated Lewis machine guns mounted on each side of his cockpit.

Parachutes were only sporadically used in the RAF before 1920. The pragmatic argument against them was that the chute's bulk restricted the crew's movements and accordingly, their abilities in the

already cramped cockpit. The other, a most tragic argument, was that Allied Command viewed chutes as the coward's way out, that it was the crew's duty to find the moral fibre to press home the attack to the very end. Thus, for the duration of the war, the fate of the aircraft was necessarily the fate of its crew.

Duties

The observer's job was to shoot down or scare off enemy aircraft using his two mounted machine guns. The pilot's job was to fly the plane, carry out the photography, convey the intelligence to the ground forces and, if necessary, strafe and bomb enemy positions.

Taking photos of enemy trenches was risky business. It required the aircraft to fly in a straight, uninterrupted line while a string of photos were taken, photos which would later be pieced together to provide a mosaic of the enemy's position. This straight line fly path requirement was well-known to the Germans who could then accurately aim their anti-aircraft fire at the 'sitting duck.' If the pilot broke away to avoid the 'ack ack' he was obliged to go back and start over.

Pilot and observer could also be assigned offensive missions, sweeping low over enemy positions while strafing and bombing. On the bottom of the pilot's cockpit was a heavy glass floor embossed with cross hairs for sighting. More often than not, however, bad weather and dirt in the cockpit rendered the glass unusable, requiring the pilot to stick his head out the side and view the target directly. When on target, the pilot pulled a lever beside his seat to release the bombs.

Crews were expected to carry out two sorties per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each sortie was about two hours in length. Between sorties, the men hung out in the mess. The air was thick with unspoken tension which the young men managed with an ample dose of humour, tom-foolery and good-natured banter. Yet privately, each was harbouring the question which had no answer: who among us will not be here by sunset?

Sorties

Will and his observer Oscar flew an unknown number of sorties at the front line. During some of those, he was pursued by German fighters. Will's slow AW160 could not hope to outrun the fighters, but he could do something they could not. He could fly slowly. Although the AW160's cruising speed was 80mph, it could slow to 35mph without stalling, well below the stall speed of German fighters, who would regularly overshoot the airborne turtle or be obliged to pull up at the last minute and bear off to avoid a collision. When they pulled up they lost speed, exposing themselves to Oscar's deadly accurate aim. This slow-fly strategy proved to be crucial to their survival and unexpectedly treacherous to German flyers.

The Mission

Through the summer of 1918 the tide of the war began to turn in favour of the Allied Forces. On 8 August the Allies began the Hundred Days Offensive, a series of 10 back-to-back battles designed to overwhelm and crush German opposition, and bring an end to the war. The battles would occur sequentially along the length of the Hindenburg Line, Germany's defensive position across central France. Will's General Rawlinson led the 8th of the 10 battles, the Battle of the Selle. The Selle

was a river, not particularly wide or difficult to cross, were it not for the German's entrenched defensive position on the high bank opposite.

> "By 11 October, the Fourth Army had closed up on the retreating Germans near Le Cateau, with the Germans taking up a new position, immediately to the east of the Selle River. General Henry Rawlinson was faced with three problems: crossing the river, the railway embankment on the far side and the ridge above the embankment. The decision was made to commence the assault at night and as the river was not very wide at this point, planks would be used for the soldiers to cross in single file. Later, pontoons would be required for the artillery to cross the river."
>
> "After a six-day halt for preparations and artillery bombardments Fourth Army troops attacked at 5.20 a.m. on Thursday 17 October. Infantry and tanks, preceded by a creeping barrage, moved forward on a 10 miles (16 km) front south of Le Cateau. The centre and left of the Fourth Army forced crossings of the river, despite unexpectedly strong German resistance and much uncut barbed wire. Fighting was particularly fierce along the line of the Le Cateau–Wassigny railway."
>
> Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Selle

The success of the entire Hundred Days operation depended on each Allied sector meeting its target, as an unequal advance along the Hindenburg Line would open the Allies to attacks from the rear. Rawlinson needed a quick solution to knock out the enemy's resistance which had allowed only limited progress on the morning of October 17. In the early afternoon, an

order was dispatched to Squadron 8 to attack the enemy from the air. It seems only Will and Oscar were available to carry out the order. The mission: cripple enemy resistance adjacent the centre and left flank of the 4th army's position by strafing infantry and bombing artillery and tanks.

The weather that morning was horrendous and continued so into the afternoon, when Will and Oscar received their orders. Cold driving rain and wind thrashed them as they scrambled across the field and climbed into the cockpits of their AW160. The engine roared to life and almost immediately, the little aircraft was lifting off the grass field in a downpour. Low cloud and heavy rain persisted for the 45 minute run to the target. The cloud cover allowed only occasional glimpses of the ground, leaving Will to depend entirely on dead reckoning (estimation) to find the target. On this day, the very best of what Will was capable of was being called upon.

Then, in a brief opening in the the clouds Will spotted the target and took a bearing. Just before the target was reached, they dropped low below the clouds and swept along the line, strafing and bombing as they went. It was apparently the straw that broke the camel's back, for the Fourth Army was then able to advance, albeit in the face of continuing resistance all the way to the village of Le Cateau. By the close of day, the Fourth Army had taken Le Cateau. In the following weeks, the Allies added to their advance, retaking French villages one by one and driving the Germans back to the Northeast. On the 11th of November, Armistice was declared.

Getting Home

Confident and relieved that the mission had been accomplished, Will and Oscar headed for home. But the day's work was not over. Out of the clouds at perilously close range appeared a German observer aircraft, the crew of which was likely as surprised as Will and Oscar. Oscar Berridge:

> "While on Contact patrol on the 17-10-18 almost out of gas flying in between very low clouds when a Hun two seater was seen to come out of the clouds about 50 yards distance flying away from us at right and slightly below us. The observer immediately engaged with his rear guns, getting a successful burst of fire, the enemy machine replied, the observer continued firing. E.A [Enemy aircraft] was observed to burst into flames and spin to the ground.
>
> O. Berridge SubLt Observer"

In the fray, the propellor driven fuel pump mounted directly over Will's head had exploded from gunfire. There was a hand pump back up, but Will opted to break off and head for home. Just then, a grinning, sharp-shooting Oscar Berrige tapped Will on the back and pointed down to starboard. Smoke and flames were swirling from the enemy aircraft as it dropped from sight. Will and Oscar returned safely to Malincourt Field. It had been a very long day and two young German pilots would not appear for muster in the morning.

Distinguished Flying Cross

For their efforts on breaking enemy resistance, Will and Oscar received the Distinguished Flying Cross for "gallantry and devotion to duty." Will returned to civilian life, completed his engineering degree, then worked for Shawinigan Water and Power Company of Quebec for

his entire career. That and his family were all the excitement he needed. He died at 89 in 1986.

Note: Details of this event were drawn from deductive reasoning, historical records and first person and official accounts and may contain

Reconnaissance photos were pieced together to

A reconnaissance camera which was secured to the fuselage adjacent the open cockpit. Source: International War Museum

A message streamer dropped from the cockpit

Will with RAF wings, back home at Edgemere, the family farm, 1919 after

To Second Lieutenant W. Spriggs
Royal Air Force

Headquarters, Fourth Army.
10th Feb 1919.

I congratulate you on the gallantry and devotion to duty for which you have been awarded

the Distinguished Flying Cross.

D. Rawlinson Gen.

Commanding Fourth Army.

Top: Cert. of Congratulations, Gen Rawlinson

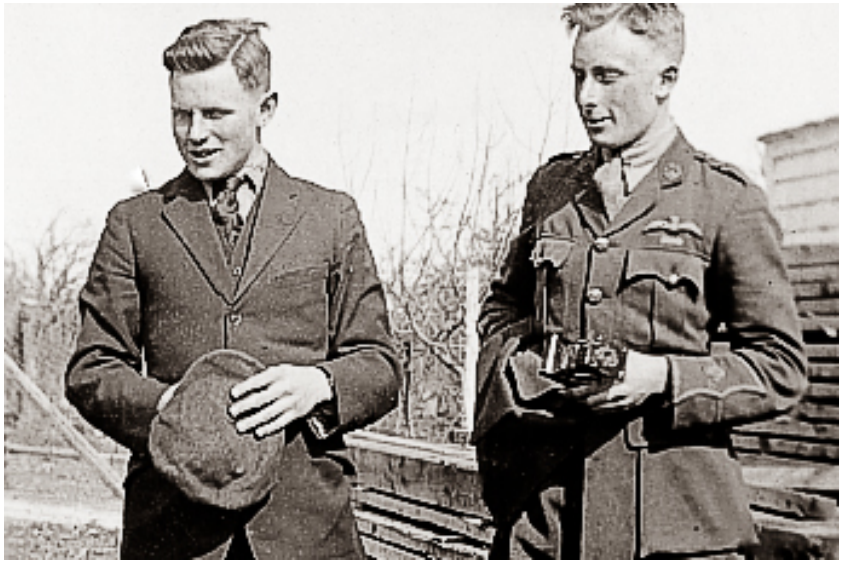
Bot: Distinguished Flying Cross

This page: Will's Marconi station at the farm, 1919

Overleaf: Top R and L Family portraits, 1919

Overleaf Bottom: Brother Bob (L) andWill (R) 1919

Overleaf R: Will in RCAF uniform with flyer's cap, 1919



Dogfight. Source: International War Museum

Freddy West

Heroes in Will's Squadron 8 were not in short supply. Below is the story of Freddy West, adapted with thanks from Wikipedia:

He was 22 years old. It was World War I and Freddy was already the captain of No. 8 Squadron, Royal Air Force. No. 8 was an observer squadron, dedicated to providing intelligence on enemy positions and fighting force to infantry and tank divisions on the front line of the Allied 4th Army. After four years of war, battle commanders had learned the indispensable value of aerial observation.

On 12 August 1918, the Allies were 4 days into the start of the largest offensive of the war, the Hundred Days Offensive. Squadron 8 was ordered to locate enemy positions. Setting off at dawn, West and his observer, Lt. William Haslam, flying an Armstrong Whitworth FK 8, spotted an enemy emplacement through a hole in the mist. At the same time, the enemy spotted them and commenced concentrated ground fire. Almost immediately, they came under attack from seven German fighters. West was hit in the leg, his radio transmitter was smashed.

Despite his injuries, West continued with his reconnaissance duties while under attack, then manoeuvred his machine so skilfully that observer Haslam was able to register several hits on the German fighters, sufficient to drive them off.

Only when he was sure of the enemy's ground position did West break off and head for home. To slow the profuse bleeding from his mangled leg, he twisted his trouser leg into a tourniquet to stem the flow of blood. West realized he would not reach the airfield in his injured state and landed the Armstrong Whitworth in a

field behind Allied lines. His left leg had five wounds, one of which had shattered his femur and cut the femoral artery. He was in an agony of pain, yet he insisted on reporting his findings forthwith. His leg was amputated.

West was returned to Britain for medical treatment and recovery and on 9 November, two days before Armistice, he received word that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross.
Freddy West carried on with his military career after the war, becoming Air Commodore Ferdinand Maurice Felix West, VC, the equivalent of Brigadier-General in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Armstrong Whitworth F.K.8 Aw160 flown by William Spriggs

Google search term: AW observer plane 1918

St Bartholomew's Church

It was well into the afternoon when we left Haddon Hall. It took us two hours to drive to the village of Tong near Saint Bartholomew's Church, leaving no time to explore the church that day. But at 10am the next morning, refreshed with a sound sleep at the Ramada Inn, we arrived at the church as planned. Our guide, David Lewis, showed us about.

David Lewis was a good-looking, affable man in his 70s. He was dressed in a less than crisp sports jacket and casual shirt and had a manner that suggested he was equally comfortable in an office or the garden or just about anywhere. For an hour, David walked us through this medieval church of modest proportion, describing the life and the times of its parishioners.

In the middle ages, it was largely the wealthy who could afford to build churches. So often it was the wealthy who owned them. When the title of the estate changed hands, the church went with it. Such was the case at Haddon Hall. During the period the Vernons owned Haddon Hall, St Bartholomew's Church was part of the package. Effectively, they owned its parishioners too, for they were largely tenant farmers, employees and others dependent on the good graces of the Vernons for survival. Attendance at church was mandatory, explained David. Any tenant who missed a service without good cause (e.g. death or the black plague) was removed permanently from the congregation and from the estate.

In the church were a number of sarcophagi in which I had a particular interest. They were my Haddon Hall relatives. The Vernon family frequented the nearby

church in Bakewell, but when they married into the Tong lordship, they chose to be buried at St Bartholomew's in the village of Tong. And there they were. Sir Richard Vernon (1394-1451) and his Benedicta de Ludlow (1392-1451), their son Sir William Vernon III (1421-1467) and his wife, Margaret Swynfen (1425-1471), and grandson Sir Henry Vernon (1441-1515) and his wife Anne Talbot (1445-1494). There lie my 16th, 15th and 14th great grandparents, who lived, loved and died near here over 500 years ago.

Their tombs are works of art, with elaborate stone carvings on the sides of each tomb depicting religious figures, events or family crests. On the top of each tomb lay effigies of the reclining couple, their hands placed as in prayer on their chests, the entirety magnificently carved in alabaster.
There is an unexpected resident in the churchyard – Little Nell, from Charles Dickens novel "The Old Curiosity Shop." In the novel Little Nell and her grandfather fall on hard times and move to a small village to become beggars. There, Little Nell dies and her grandfather sinks into mental decay.

Little Nell's burial plot is, of course, as fictitious as Little Nell. George Bowden, Vicar of the church in 1910, created the burial plot and entered Nell's name in the church register as a ploy to bring more tourism to the village. People came. However, the village economy seems to have dropped off again, as Little Nell's plot was recently moved to a more conspicuous location, right outside the church door.
St Bartholomew's was looking her age. She was yellowed and gray. On her north wall was a cannonball hole and impressions from lead shot, left over from the English Civil War of 1642-1651. The maintenance fund, it seems, has not been particularly robust. In the same

war, her lead roof was stripped for cannon balls and ammunition and in recent years, stripped six more times by salvage thieves. A door on that same north wall was bricked up. It was once used as the final exit for the excommunicated. The tombstones in the churchyard, tilted at odd angles, have been defaced by time. She is what she is, St Bartholomew's -- an old lady from another time, a last vestige of a way of life owned and controlled by the very rich on the backs of the very poor. Yet even in her decrepitude, this old lady, still loved, still valued, continues to serve the people of Tong.

My 16th great grandparents Sir Richard Vernon VII & Lady Benedicta de Ludlow, St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

My relatives from the 15th century, with David Lewis, our guide. St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

Top Left:

Son of Isabel de Lingen. His mother (L), my 17th great grandmother, died 1446; her third husband (R), Fulke de Pembrugge, died 1409

Top Right:

Sir Thomas Stanley, husband of my second cousin 13X removed , St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

Bottom Left:

My 16th great grandparents Sir Richard Vernon VII & Lady Benedicta de Ludlow, St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

Bottom Right:

David Lewis, our guide at St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

Ludlow Castle

An hour's drive to the southwest of St Bartholomew's Church near the border with Wales is Ludlow Castle. It peaked my interest because Benedicta de Ludlow (1392-1451) is my 16th great grandmother and I assumed there was a connection between her family and the Castle. I know the Ludlows didn't build it, the Norman castle builder Walter de Lacey did around 1075.

Google tells me that the name Ludlow was attached to the castle before 1138. It derives from Old English and means 'a place on a hill (low) by loud (lud) waters.' Thus, it seems, 'de Ludlow' is a reference to the place where Benedicta's family lived, which may or may not have been the castle.

It was still called Ludlow Castle in 1501 when Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales, Earl of Chester and Duke of Cornwall (just so you know, all three of those guys are Arthur), eldest son of King Henry VII and heir apparent, moved in with his new bride Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish princess. It was a marriage arranged by King Henry and the King of Spain to cement the alliance between their nations.

Those were tumultuous years. England had been devastated financially and socially by the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). Two years later civil war broke out in England between rival factions of the long-ruling House of Plantagenet — the House of Lancaster and the House of York. That messy business known as the Wars of the Roses carried on for 32 years, ending in 1487.

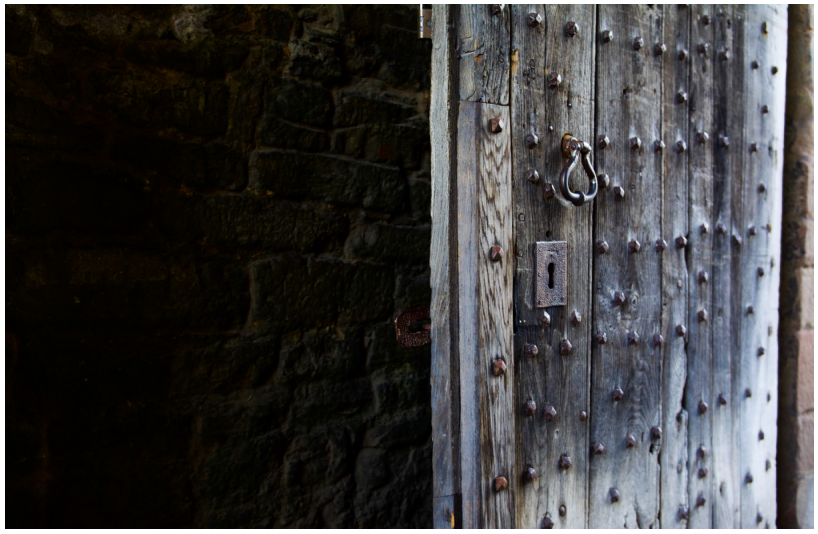
Enter King Henry VII, a Lancastrian (they got the last whack) who came up with the brilliant idea to marry Elizabeth of York, effectively joining the two houses and securing peace. Later, Henry upped the ante and arranged for his eldest son Arthur to marry Catherine of Aragon and secure an Anglo-Spanish alliance against France. Things were looking up. With Spain and Britain on the same side, the risk of French aggression would be considerably reduced. Peace meant Henry might even be able to stash a few gold ducets for a rainy day.

Hopefully he did, for it wasn't long before it rained. Arthur and Catherine set up housekeeping in Ludlow Castle but six months later Arthur died. The cause of death was either not known or not revealed. Either way, Arthur, a healthy, strapping young man was suddenly dead.

That put Henry in a bit of a pickle with the King of Spain who was counting on the alliance. Understandably, Britain and the rest of Europe were, by that time, sick to death (pardon the phrase) of blood, guts and rolling heads. Peace was in the air but marriages were needed to to serve as glue. Henry, resourceful soul that he was, quickly realized he had a groom in reserve — his other son Henry.

King Henry made the necessary arrangements for Catherine to switch horses. Her marriage to Arthur was annulled on the basis of failure to consummate. Catherine swore up and down (pardon the phrase) that in the six months she lived with handsome, tall, affable, well-built Arthur, they never had sex. It seemed reasonable. Every one of Henry's courtiers nodded and agreed, as did the King of Spain.

And Catherine lived to see another day, which, as it would later turn out, was more than two other wives of Henry VIII got to do. What she couldn't have known is that in front of her lay a lifetime of uphill sledding.



Ludlow Castle, Ludlow, Shropshire

Ludlow Castle, Shropshire

Ludlow Castle, Shropshire

Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales (1486-1502)

Relation to Arthur: 2nd cousin 15x removed

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536)

Relation: wife of 2nd cousin 15x removed

King Henry VIII (1486-1502)

Relation: stepson of 1st cousin 16x removed