WIDER RECONSTITUTION

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The idea of family reconstitution based on the parish register came out of consideration of the material available for a parish history of Aldenham in Hertfordshire; the place chosen for no better reason - and no worse - than that we had moved there in 1957. It was undertaken without the excellent guidance and methodology set out by Dr. Wrigley in his chapter on the subject in An Introduction to English Historical Demography, but the need for similar conventions was clear, and their use alone made the undertaking possible. It must be confessed that the burden of working alone on such a project bore heavily on both mental and physical energy, as the work was undertaken 'blind', without any clear idea of what might come out of it. However, in some respects, interest was maintained and heightened by excursions into other documentary sources which, by the way in which they could be associated with the parish register material, began to present a structure which, whilst in many ways yet incomplete, presents fascinating evidence to explore.

What follows is an endeavour to 'prove' the conventions and the methodology as being sound bases, taking into account the many other sources of information which can be tapped for confirmation of some of the better documented subjects. The 'proof' of the methods in these cases may support the methods in less well documented cases and widen considerably the number of subjects for consideration in a particular field of study.

The sources available were: The parish registers from 1560 to 1812, which had been transcribed and printed at the beginning of the century and included copies of the
Bishops Transcripts and the Overseers copies of parts of the register of burials which are missing. These printed volumes also contain the record of monumental inscriptions from the Church and graveyard, which are obviously useful to amplify the register entries and link up otherwise unconnected data.

A map of the Inclosure Award of 1803. This covered all the parish in the Cashio Hundred, with the owners and occupiers of premises and land. Accompanying this was a schedule of claims by landowners, setting out their lands and occupants before the award — a useful difference. In addition there was another schedule giving full details of copyhold properties enfranchised — occupants, number of rooms on each floor, construction and state of repair. There was also a map of the Hamlet of Theobald Street which, while within the parish, was in Dacorum Hundred. This map had no schedule, but comparison between it and those of the Tithe Award showed that there was little difference, and some estate maps of 1765 for part of the Hamlet, with schedules of crops and trees for that year, and for 1657, confirmed the view that this part of the parish had altered little for two hundred years.

The parish chest had yielded the Assessments made by the Overseers from 1638 to 1843, except for 1685-1697 and 1720-1733, and their Accounts of expenditure from 1628 to 1842, with the same gaps. There were 95 assessments between February 1638 and October 1684; there are none for 1642 and 1654, but otherwise every year is represented, usually with two assessments, sometimes with four. Each assessment consisted of a list of those assessed with the amount of the assessment. The list was always in two parts, with significant names — Fieldside and Woodside — with two overseers to each part. They covered the whole of the parish, in both Hundreds, but two volumes are missing. These gaps are covered in part by the assessments of the Constable, which were in similar form but for the part of the parish in Cashio Hundred only; these assessments cover the years 1655-1738 completely.

The Allen Index (named after its maker) at Herts. C.R.O. is a monumental piece of research work in which there is a record of every Hertfordshire marriage in alphabetical order, with cross indexing.

Another source was found in the Militia Rolls of the parish which are available from 1758-1786. As usual, some are better than others, and these are usually the earlier ones. These again give a guide to residence as, for example, in 1762, when the list is headed with the name of the settlement where each resided. The ages, too, are helpful in confirming reconstitution, and show that in Aldenham there
were very few examples where fathers and sons of the same Christian name lived in the parish as adults together. Occupations are given in the rolls, and sometimes the reason why men were considered unfit for service — "broken-bellied" and "lame".

Estate Records such as those of the Hillfield Estate in Aldenham also provided further information, and at this point family reconstitution can be seen as a platform for the restructuring of the whole life of the community. This would be possible with a parish with good registers, accounts, assessments and with a good set of court rolls and freehold estate records. Only fragments of the Aldenham rolls are available in the form of estate papers.

The task is, starting with the parish registers as a basis, to use all the available sources to reconstitute families with as much detail as possible.

From the Inclosure Maps and Schedule, the families in the register could be seen in their places in the parish, which is similar to many others in the country, consisting of a nuclear settlement in a spandril of ground lying between the common fields and adjacent to a water supply — a pond and a shallow well — with a number of settlements round it at fairly regular spacing — Batlers Green, Patchetts Green, Delrow, Hedgerow Green, High Cross, Kemprov. On the east there was Watling Street with the settlements of Radlett and Elstree-in-Aldenham, to distinguish it from Elstree proper which lay on the other side of the road and which is the extreme example for offering mobility between one parish and another. Theobald Street was of a totally different character, consisting of a dozen farms with no other settlement at all.

By making out a sheet for each assessment in turn, it was possible to follow through the occupation of land and premises, and here again the register entries were brought to life; the farmers, the small holders of land, the succession of father, son and grandson, often interspersed with the assessment of a widowed mother. Sometimes the change of surname confirmed the reconstitution as the widow married a new husband who then succeeded to the assessment; or the gap in the register of burials could be made good when the Constables' assessments which bridge this gap indicated the succession of a widow to her husband or of a son to his father. Here are two examples:
W. Spere was assessed in 1660 for 'Marshes Farm'. On 6.12.1666 he is succeeded in the list by Widow Spere and on 24.6.1667 she is succeeded by Henry Edwards junior. The register records that Wm. Spoare of Theobald Street was buried on 21.4.1666 and that Mary Spoare widow married Henry Edwards on 24.12.1666. In this case the burial entry confirms the constitution of the assessments and eventually this can be traced to Cressalls Farm. Henry Edwards Senior was assessed for Theobald Street Farm, almost opposite, from 1638–1672. Mary Edwards seems to have survived her second husband, as Widow Edwards succeeded to the assessment by 1698 and her will of 1701 describes her as widow and her name is given as Maria. Her assessment ceases after 7.5.1701 and her will is proved 12.7.1701.

Thomas Dell widower married Eliz. Redwood 12.7.1669. There is no burial record for either. However, he was assessed continuously from 1653 to 1.6.1694. On 13.3.1695 Widow Dell is assessed. This defines the period in which he must have died. However, he left a will naming his wife Elizabeth and three children of his first marriage. The will was proved on 1.1.1695. This narrows the period for his death to only 6 months.

The assessments rarely refer to the properties by name, but towards the end of the eighteenth century a few names appear. There are problems of reconstitution of assessments lists, but these do not concern the names occurring, and the lists are highly important evidence in respect of the presence in the parish of a large number of individuals.

On 15.8.1739, at the assessment following revaluation, there are 251 assessments. Of these, 26 are out-parishioners, and these cannot be included in a residential listing. Nine names are assessed for more than one item. This leaves 210 names who can be regarded as resident occupiers of some kind of dwelling. The 1801 census records 211 houses inhabited by 213 families, with 6 uninhabited houses and a total population of 1,103.

Although this full list is the only one of its kind, the list of assessments, added to the list of those receiving relief, can be regarded as offering the most consistent listing of families from year to year over a long period of time. Of course, reconstitution benefits from a listing check, as this is invaluable in confirming presence of reconstituted
families. A subsidy of 29 March 1642 contains 243 names. This of course contains names within one family. For example, in Tibert (Theobald) Street, Edward Brisco Esq., is listed together with Jaene Brisco widow, John Brisco gentleman and Ellen Brisco "filie"! The three latter are his mother, his brother and his sister, and these names may only represent one or two dwellings.

One part of the list appears to be the household of Henry Coghill and consists of 15 names in all, and at least half have names which do not occur in the parish register and may be suspected of being servants. On this basis similar relationships can be noted with other of the more substantial residents – the Briscoes are followed by three names which do not occur in the register and for similar small sums.

The names of wives and other relatives in the list number 17 and there are 36 names who are likely to be servants. On this basis the total number of dwellings can be reckoned as about 190. In 1644 the total of names on the assessment list is 92 and there are 45 names on the account as receiving relief or otherwise mentioned – total 137. As not everyone was in receipt of relief and as there is evidence that rates payments were not rigorously enforced on all, it appears likely that about 50% of resident occupiers supported 25% of the remainder, while 25% were held as unable to pay rates but not in need of relief.

A subsidiary roll of 1545 lists 116 names which may similarly be reduced by 5. Bearing in mind the inadequacy of these listings it can be seen that there is a reasonable consistency between the different totals.

The accounts present an even more laborious task. Firstly, they are in the form of monthly or sometimes weekly lists of expenditure. First comes the regular payment of what was called the "monthly collection" to those parishioners in need and in receipt of regular support at the will of the Vestry. Then follows the lists of those in some cases equally regularly supported with usually smaller payments at the discretion of the overseers. There was quite clearly a dividing line between casual relief and regular "collection" and frequently the death of a recipient of the collection was followed by the elevation of one from the casual list to a regular payment – always, however, subject to the will of the Vestry.

The account follows with provision in kind – shoes, clothing, repairs, food. This gives valuable information on the occupations of the suppliers – John Downer paid for a coffin, Edward Nicholls paid for
writing, and so on. In reconstitution these accounts were reduced to an annual abstract month by month against each recipient, with cross-references for other names. Where children were kept or nursed the foster parents are sometimes identified, or the nurse, midwife, doctor, and so on. With the completion of the abstract the information was reduced to reference slips and then related to the reconstituted family. This was done for the period 1628–1770, and the following is one of the most interesting sequences.

John Hilyard and his wife Jane had three children baptised between 1658 and 1666, and then on 23.1671 John was buried and there is noted in the register that he was "a poore man hauling a sore legge, it being incurable ye surgine cutt it of in hope there by to save his life but God was not soe pleased." The overseers' account shows that he was given casual relief starting on 4.12.1670 and lists several disbursements for his care, maintenance, surgical treatment and burial. Following this, his widow was given regular but casual relief until the record ceased in March 1694. The accounts show that all three of John Hilyard's children received relief as adults.

The order of the assessments is also enlightening in respect of the geography of the parish. Periodically — especially on the commencement of a fresh account book — more care was given to entering the assessments. Marginal reference is made to the locality. After the Lord of the Manor and the names of two others in the locality of the Manor House and Parish Church, the overseers listed in succession (and nearly always in the same basic order whether marginally annotated or not) Patchett's Green, Delrow, Letchmore Heath, Batlers Green, High Cross, Hedgegrove, Kemp Row, Radlett, Cobden Hill, the Hamlet (of Theobald Street), outparishioners, Ashneysmead, then in the Woodside the group of dwellings around the junction of the lanes across the common to Elstree, with the lanes south west to Bushey Heath and eastward to Watling Street. This group included the most substantial residence in the area for many years, the home of the Coghill family, now known as Aldenham House. This group was followed by Bride Street, Curricot Hill, Idlestrey (Elstree), Medbourne and more outparishioners. The outparishioners were occupants of land within the parish but not resident within it, and their names indicate residences and farms — often quite large — which lay just beyond the parish boundary.

Although not marginally annotated the assessments of 1739 are particularly interesting as they give the result of a revaluation.
The first assessment in April was not acceptable and so in August another was made and a full list of ratepayers is given. In many cases names appear on the roll for the first time – notably small sums for cottagers. Some are never assessed again and some only for short periods, but where the continuity of occupation can be established beyond reasonable doubt in succession it leads to the identity of the occupancies of 1803. Going backwards many can be traced back to 1638.

The use of wills as an assistance to reconstitution is one of the more obvious sources and frequently clears up some of the more obscure family relationships, particularly in the matter of earlier marriages. The Aldenham register contains records of nine events regarding William EEles, Edward EEles and John EEles – their marriages, three baptisms, the burial of one child and those of William and his first wife, Isabel. Ffrisewide was a widow at her marriage to William, and John married a Joan Slow, and Ffrisewide's first husband was Slowe. Turning to the Allen Index, the following information is found. William EEles married Isabel Briscoe, widow of Thomas, by Bishop of London’s licence in 1591. She died in 1597 and William married Ffrisewide in 1597 – five months later – and William died in 1615 leaving a will. This described him as a yeoman and although he clearly had been living in Aldenham – for he refers to his house there – he had stronger affinities with Elstree and Harrow, the poor of the three parishes benefitting by 10s., 40s. and £5, in that order. He goes on to mention Thomas Briscoe, his son-in-law, his wife, Jone Ewer his daughter-in-law, Eliz. Fearne his daughter-in-law, son-in-law John Briscoe, the woollen draper of London, and Susan, Elizabeth and Mary, daughters of William Shrimpton. Thomas Briscoe who died in early 1591 had

a daughter Elizabeth, baptised March 1564
a daughter Alice  "  Sept. 1565
a son Edward  "  August 1567
a son Thomas  "  April 1572
a son John  "  June 1577

besides other children who died in infancy. Marriages can be reconstituted for Alice to William Shrimpton in 1584, Elizabeth to William Ferne in 1584, Jone to William Ewer in 1588, Edward to Elizabeth Warner in 1590, Thomas to Agnes Warner in 1596. It is not difficult to insert in the reconstitution the names of their otherwise unknown mother Isabel who married again before the year was out as this reconstitution is confirmed by the licence of her marriage as widow of Thomas.

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William Eeles will goes on to mention his sons-in-law George Slowe, Hewe Slowe and daughter-in-law Agnes Weedon and her son William. These are the family of his wife Firisewide. An example of the way in which the estate papers can be combined with nearly all the main sources mentioned is provided by Patchetts. In 1638 Mr. John Cox was assessed and by 1639 this had settled to a steady figure representing an RV of £30 derived from the assessment and the rate. It may be mentioned in passing that the level of assessment, the number of rates collected and the totals disbursed are a study in themselves. There are no register entries for Cox. In 1648 he was succeeded by Edmund Royden, gentleman. During this period Patchetts was owned by Silvester Adams and his wife Rose, who in June 1640 made an agreement with John Edlin and he was admitted to the premises at this time. The Register shows Rose Edlin married Sylvester Adams in January 1630, her father being Roger and her elder brother John baptised in 1603, she in 1605. Her father was probably the Roger baptised in 1565, and his brother William baptised in 1568. These boys married Agnes Huddell and Jone Huddle in 1602 and 1600 respectively. Roger and his wife Agnes both died in 1625, probably of the plague of that year. Besides Patchetts a close called Huddells Field in Bushey was also surrendered by Sylvester Adams to John Edlin in 1640. Patchetts itself adjoined the Bushey parish boundary. Shortly after Edmund Royden is assessed the RV drops to £25 and this continues until 1656 when Mr. Warren and John Nicholls are assessed and in 1658 the latter alone. In 1660 John Edlin is assessed for two years and then William Roades until 1672, except for one assessment in 1665 when Edlin was assessed. This marks a marriage settlement of 1665 between John Edlin of Staple Inn, gentleman, and Thomas Gee of Isleworth, gent. in respect of the former's wedding the latter's daughter Mary. This document mentions Constance Nicholl, mother of John Edlin who is to quit claim her dower in the property. This confirms the reconstitution showing the burial of John, brother of Rose, in 1641, and must refer to John, son of John and Constance, baptised in 1637, another child John baptised in 1632 having died a month later.

The property was surrendered by John in September 1666, the quit claim by Constance is dated May 1667, and John and Mary are admitted in May 1668.

The Roades had lived in Patchetts Green for some time, possibly from the beginning of the Register entries. John and Judith Roades had a family of seven children 1596-1608. Judith, wife of John,
buried 1610. John of Patchett's Green buried 1630. Two sons, Edward and John, subsequently seem to have had families in the parish, both marrying in 1630, the year of their father's death - one earlier, one later.

John's family was practically wiped out in the plague of 1665 - he, his wife and two children, one already dead in 1658, the last dying in 1670.

Edward's third son William was baptised in 1636 and he and his wife Margaret had a son in 1663. She died in the plague of 1665, with their son William, and this visitation is reflected in items in the overseers' accounts showing several payments to the family. William and another wife, Mary, commenced their family in 1667. Another child followed in 1669. In 1673 William, farmer, was buried on the same day as their third child, Elizabeth, was baptised. Widow Roades was assessed 1673-1675 and then Mr. Edlin (later identified as John Edlin, gentleman) in 1678 when the RV dropped to £22. This continued until 1693 when it dropped to £21, and then to 1699 when it reached £20. During the whole of this period there are no register entries to indicate his presence in the parish, and the possibility is that he was an absentee landlord but remained responsible for his rates. However, the form of the assessment list suggests he was resident and he may have figured in the missing register of burials although the transcripts and copies in the overseers accounts are fairly lengthy for these years but not complete as evidence the overseers accounts show 23 burials which are not included in the burial records. He may have been buried in the parish of his birth and baptism. The copy of the court roll shows that John Edlin was survived by his wife Mary and in May 1711 after her death the property passed to John Edlin, her son, and Sarah his wife.

From 1701 to 1712 the assessment was of John Winkfill or Winkfield, RV £20. It appears that this occupation led to marriage and the commencement of his family with the first recorded baptism in 1704 and seven children spaced over the years to 1721. The Wingfield family is remarkable in having a baptism of a child Morgan in 1599 and this child having a family 1624-29. The name Morgan also occurs in the Edlin family 1574-1618. In 1712 however after John Edlin was assessed for a year and was succeeded by Mr. Henry Dancer to 1725 and John Dancer to 1731. There are no Dancer register entries for this period.

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Wm. Finch succeeded John Dancer at RV £24 and in 1739 the revaluation was to £39 but dropped to £34 in 1740 when it is described as "for Esq. Tuach's." In 1729 Mary Edlin had been admitted to the property on the death of her father John and in 1751 John Edlin Tuach infant was admitted on the death of his father, Roger, who had been admitted with remainder to his first and other sons by Mary (formerly Edlin) his wife.

Wm. Finch was succeeded in occupation by Richard Nicholl who continued to 1760. In 1753 the Land Tax records him as in occupation of the farm late Mr. Tuach's for £2.6.9 tax. In 1755 John E. Tuach of Charlton, Kent, had been admitted but in 1762 had surrendered the property to Thomas Meadows. In 1761 Daniel Childs succeeded Robert Nicholl (for whom there are no register entries) and in 1764 the assessment is "for Mr. Meadows." Dan Childs had arrived in the parish (in which his surname appears in the records from 1665) in 1751 when he is first assessed at Piggots and in the same year his child Daniel was baptised. This again appears to be a coincidence of settlement at marriage - the opportunity for marriage at the lease of a farm.

Daniel had two other children Thomas and Ann. Thomas was buried in 1766 only 5 years old, but Ann baptised in 1756 married Robert Macksey in 1774. Her husband was witness at her brother Daniel's marriage 5 years later. Daniel senior figures in the militia roll in 1758 as the parish surveyor, but is given his occupation of farmer in later years and his residence as Letchmore Heath in 1762.

He didn't occupy Patchetts for long, being succeeded by Adam Redwood in 1767 until 1774. During this period the RV dropped to £31 and in 1768 the property passed to Thomas Clutterbuck the Younger of Stanmore under the will of Thomas Meadows dated 29 July 1767, the admission taking place on 26 May 1768. The Redwood family had been resident in Aldenham from the earliest register and several children called Adam are recorded. One of these boys was the last of his name to reside in the parish in the period under consideration and after marrying twice and having ten children, the last of whom was baptised in 1750, the records almost cease. The only entry after his disappearance from Patchetts is the burial of Elizabeth Redwood widow from Stanmore in July 1800. Elizabeth was the mother of his last six baptised children and almost certainly of two more buried without baptism but named in the burial register.
In 1775 Nathan Hadnutt Jun. was assessed for RV £35 until 1786 when it rose to £36 and this continued to the Inclosure award in 1803. At the award Robert Clutterbuck lodged a claim on account of one messuage and 49 acres 3r. 29p. situated at Patchetts Green occupied by Nathan Hadnutt. The award map shows the property as enclosures numbered 758-764 inclusive and 770-772 inclusive totalling 51 acres 1r. 20p.

The Copyhold Valuation gives the details of the buildings. The house had 4 rooms on each of ground and first floors. There was a stable and lean-to adjoining and formerly used as a brewhouse. The construction was of brick with lath and plaster and the roofs were tiled. The condition was tenable and the value was £200. There were in addition a barn with 3 bays and a porch, a shed for potting and wood and a shed for cows. All were of boarded walls and tiled roof. There was a shed for sheep and another for hogs. These were boarded and thatched. All these were valued at £40. There were newly erected buildings consisting of a barn with five bays and a porch, all with oak floor, a stable adjoining, two sheds for cattle adjoining the barn, total value £170.

There was another barn with 4 bays and a porch with oak floor, a lean-to for sheep, sheds for waggon, for two carts, for another cart, all were boarded walls with either tiled or thatched roofs. These buildings were considered tenantable and the value was £73 making £513 in all and unfurnished at £85. 10/-.

The Hadnuttts first appear in the Aldenham registers in 1666 with the marriage of Nathan Hadnutt to Mary Amry. The Ameries figure in the register from 1580 and the Christian name Nathan occurs frequently but is only used once by a father of another Christian name. This is an interesting point for reconstitution as it appears that in some families at least the fathers name was regarded as his personal right to pass on to his sons and was not lightly used by other branches of the family.

The Nathan Hadnutts can be reconstituted as follows in the table below. The only other boy baptised Nathan was the son of Thomas in 1787 and it is considered that he is not likely to be the Nathan (6) married in 1503.

The Hadnutt assessed in 1775 described as Junior would be Nathan (4) so described because his father (by convention) was still alive and he continued at Patchetts Green until his father died in 1793. Then it appears he moved to the family property in Letchmore Heath and his
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baptised</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Buried</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nathan (2) 2.9.1677</td>
<td>10.1.1704</td>
<td>5.1.1716</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at Kings Langley</td>
<td>(Allen Index)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan (3) 21.3.1707</td>
<td>First 31.10.1730</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second before 17.6.1750</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; probably about 1736</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third 29.9.1785</td>
<td>7.8.1793 Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan (4)</td>
<td>20.4.1762</td>
<td>29.7.1813 aged 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b. about 1737)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan (5) 13.2.1763</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29.4.1763</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan (6) 27.3.1769</td>
<td>First 21.2.1803</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second 12.4.1809</td>
<td>15.1.1832</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>of Patchetts Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan (7) 16.1.1804</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.8.1829 aged 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b. 28.12.1803)</td>
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son Nathan (6) took over at Patchetts Green. In 1803 Nathan Hadnutt Senior is listed at Letchmore Heath and Nathan Hadnutt Junior at Patchetts Green. Nathan (4) is described as the Elder of Letchmore Heath - farmer - at his burial in 1813 but Nathan (6) stayed at Patchetts from whence he was buried in 1832.

Nathan (4) had 14 children of whom Nathan (5) was the first and Nathan (6) the fifth. The latter had one son Nathan (7) by his first wife and 10 children by his second. Nathan (7) did not survive to succeed his father and one of his half brothers, Martin or William, may have inherited. His aunt, his father's youngest sister Jemima, survived to be counted in the Census of 1841 when she is described as "Independent." Two of his sisters are to be found in Watford in 1851, unmarried and occupied as school teachers living in the High Street.

While this may be regarded as no more than a very abbreviated and sketchy history of certain individual families concerned with one minute piece of a vast rural community, new possibilities in the
recording, storage and retrieval of information presents us with the opportunity of considering questions about a world we may recover in part by the use of methodical reconstitution on sufficient scale of materials which for so long have lain unrelated to each other.

Sources used for Aldenham:

Inclosure Award 1803, Claims and Valuations associated Valuation 1806.
Tithe Award 1837
Census 1841, 1851
Militia Rolls, 1758-1617
Allen Index of Hertfordshire Marriages (Herts. CRO)
Overseers assessments 1638-1808
Overseers accounts 1628-1770
Constables assessments 1655-1738
Constables accounts 1703-1729
Wills – PCC
The Parish Register of Aldenham 1560-1812 (printed)
The Parish Register of Aldenham 1813-1851 – burials
The Parish Register of Aldenham 1813-1837 – marriages
The Parish Register of Aldenham 1813-1839 – baptisms
(by permission of the Vicar)
The Hilfield Estate papers, HCRO
Miscellaneous papers at HCRO relating to Aldenham

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