

HEFFERS OF FARNHAM A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF A FAMILY FIRM CIRCA 1827-1964

By Roger Horton, (nephew)

Henry Heffer 1807 – 1889
Henry Heffer 1844 – 1923
Henry Herbert Heffer 1884 – 1967

Extracted from Historic property records and memories of the last Henry Herbert Heffer (always known as Herbert)

I was fortunate to have the opportunity of reading and cataloguing about 160 property deeds and other papers inherited by Janice Cobb, (niece), prior to these being deposited at The Suffolk Record office in Ipswich. These generally relate to property in Farnham as, at one time, the Heffers seemed to own most of the village and parts of Stratford St Andrew as well as other property in East Suffolk. The documents date from 1726 to 1964 and are listed separately.

Most documents relate to The Manors of Benhale or Stratford, the Hollonds and Cobbolds respectively being the Lords of the Manor, and are ratified at Courts Baron held in the above Manors. Many deeds are on large parchment with lovely consistent handwriting, although some are difficult to read.

History

The first mention of a Heffer is John Heffer, Farmer, of Stratford St Andrew who was a joint executor of the will of Simon Hurren, shopkeeper, of Farnham dated October 24th 1793. *John Heffer's dates of birth and death are unknown but a John Heffer was married at Farnham in 1805.*

We then have a mention of Alfred Heffer, wheelwright, occupying a wheelwrights shop in Farnham in the ownership of a James Hurren and Isaac Bartrum. This is in an insurance policy from The General Equitable Fire Office Norwich dated February 26th 1827.

Alfred Heffer's dates of birth and death are not known. Could be related to John.

August 21st 1829 a lease from James Hurren to Henry Heffer, drillmaker of the blacksmith and wheelwright's shops and, on August 10th 1830 an insurance policy from The Suffolk and General Country Amicable Fire Office in the name of John Wilson (who held a mortgage on the property). Noting the house was in the occupation of Alfred and Henry Heffer and the wheelwright's shop occupied by Henry Heffer.

I do not know whether John Heffer was a relative, it seems Alfred was the father of the entrepreneurial first Henry Heffer. (I have since found that Henry's father was George Heffer, a farmer from Badingham so Alfred is possibly an uncle). Henry's gravestone is in Farnham churchyard so we know he was born in 1807 and died in 1889. By 1829 he is noted as a drillmaker. Smyth's at Peasenhall had commenced

manufacturing seed drills in 1800 and it is noted there were other smaller firms later also making drills. It seems the young Henry had decided to expand upon his father's skills and commence manufacturing on his own account probably around 1827 which would have made him about 20 years of age.

The firm obviously prospered because many properties were purchased in Farnham, Stratford and other villages over the rest of the 19th century. There is an advertising leaflet that must be dated around 1850 with an engraved print of a seed drill and stating Henry Heffer has been making drills for over twenty years and listing clients in Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Essex, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Kent, Shropshire and Worcestershire. (I still have the copper engraved printing plate). He certainly wasn't parochial and it is surprising there is so little information on this part of the business that seemed to be the foundation of the family wealth.

From the gravestones, it seems Henry Heffer married Ann Blumfield in Framlingham on July the 18th 1833, their daughter Jane was born in August 1834. Ann died in the second quarter of 1838 aged 35. In the 1841 census, a Mary Ann Woods* is living with Henry, listed as a female servant. He then married Mary Ann on the 8th **April** 1844 **IN STEPNEY?** They had a son Henry Heffer, born early **August** 1844 and Alfred Heffer, born 1846, died 1852 aged 6. Mary Ann died in 1877. Henry junior married Sarah Pearse in late 1878 who died in 1881 aged 31. He then married Annie Selinah Gardener in 1883, who died in 1923.

In 1878 Henry Heffer the elder is still noted as drillmaker so the business had existed for over 50 years. In 1881 a document notes that a granary is in the occupation of Henry Heffer junior, it would seem that the junior Henry might have been engaged in other business as well as the drillmaking. Indeed, further diversification is evident as in 1884 Henry Heffer the younger is described as innkeeper, this was The George & Dragon in Farnham that was run by father and then son until 1947. Also in 1884 the 3rd Henry Herbert Heffer, known as Herbert, was born. *It is likely the pub was actually taken over in the 1870s*. Herbert was educated at Framlingham College.

The drillmaking business may have ceased in the 1880's, as in 1890 Henry Heffer is noted as a machinist and innkeeper on a document transferring his father's property to him, Henry senior having died in 1889. By 1899 further diversification had taken place as Henry Heffer is described as an innkeeper and threshing machine proprietor. I believe they were also undertakers at one time. From entries in the rent book it seems they also ran a Taxi service as journeys around the area are noted by various horse drawn traps, gigs and landaus and charged with the rents, for example, on October 11th 1890 Mrs Blagrove of Farnham was charged 3/- for a Landau to Saxmundham.

In 1919 Lime Tree Farm, Farnham was purchased, although the Heffers did not move there to live until the late 1950s. They left The George & Dragon in 1947 and moved to The White House in Stratford St Andrew.

Herbert continued in business as a farmer, threshing contractor, agricultural engineer, wheelwright and blacksmith, as well as dealer in scrap iron until closure in 1964. He also owned an extensive portfolio of houses and cottages around the surrounding area. At one time I believe they were also undertakers. The firm were agents for Garretts

of Leiston and serviced their traction engines and threshing tackle, as well as being agents for other many other well known agricultural machinery manufacturers for many years.

The Premises

The family ran The George and Dragon Inn for many years and, from 1919 also had Lime Tree Farm, which was where David Hope Caravans are now situated, (that whole area used to be full of scrap iron). The actual farm was to the south of what was the car park for The George and Dragon. There was a range of farm buildings with a large shed abutting the car park, where the entrance to David Hope Caravans is, with a pond behind.

The main works were behind the former shop in Farnham, now the Farnham Industrial Estate. Directly abutting the lane to the church was the entrance as now, to the south of that was the wheelwright and carpenter's shop with the blacksmith's shop joined directly to the south. This gave on to a covered Travis where I can remember the horses being shod. The smell of the red-hot shoe being applied to the horse's hoof is memorable. Originally, part of these premises were cottages and the old Poor House on the southern corner was purchased from the parish in 1875 and used as a store. The eastern part of the site comprised stores and large engineering sheds. Again, a large part of the site contained piles of scrap iron.

At Stratford, behind the row of cottages on the main road adjacent to the churchyard (where a new house has recently been constructed), was a sawpit, saw bench and storage sheds. Bill Paternoster senior used to store a traction engine and, later, tractors, with threshing tackle there. Yet again, between the cottages and the present filling station were more piles of scrap iron.

The water meadows just over the bridge in Stratford were used for a few cattle, Jimmy Cooper drove the cows along the A12 to the farm for milking, (less traffic then!) A Jersey cow was kept in the field adjacent to The Limes to provide milk and butter for the house.

Machinery

I remember Herbert ran two or three traction engines, both Burrell and Garretts, as I earlier mentioned I recall Bill Paternoster at Stratford having to light the boiler and raise steam very early in the mornings before the engine could be used. This engine was a Garrett called "Bunty" and now resides at the Bressingham Steam Museum, where she still works on occasions. Corgi have produced a die cast scale model of "Bunty" (which I have) and the accompanying text in the box mentions Heffers of Farnham owned her.

As far as I can remember there were two sets of threshing tackle comprising threshing drum, possibly also Garrett, elevator and baler. These were towed until the early 1950s by the steam traction engines and later replaced with Fordson E27N Major tractors.

There were also binders that cut and tied the corn ready to be put in stacks to await threshing. The binders were towed by tractors, but before my time, were pulled by horses. I recall there were many horse collars and traces still hanging in the former stables on the farm. The stack yard was to the south of the farmyard and us

youngsters used to go there when the threshing was taking place to hunt down the rats from the bottom of the stacks.

Herbert had one of the first combine harvesters in the area, this was a silver Claas that was not self propelled and had to be towed by one of the Fordsons. This combine was stored in the large shed that was near the entrance to David Hope Caravans. Also stored in that shed was Herbert's lorry, a 1933 Leyland, painted green and red with "H H Heffer" displayed on a board above the cab. Herbert was approached by Leyland who offered to give him a new lorry if they could have his for their museum. Herbert declined saying, "the modern lorries were not built to last and he preferred the reliability of his existing one". The lorry was driven by Alf Borrett who was quite a small man, bearing in mind such things as power steering and synchromesh gears were not fitted then, so it must have been quite difficult to drive.

As there was a lack of any large machinery on farms, the lorry generally had to be loaded by hand. During the sugar beet season high sides were attached to the lorry buck and the driver and mate, usually Alf Borrett and Percy Paternoster would collect loads from various farms and transport the beet to Ipswich Sugar factory. The lorry held about ten tons, all of which had to be loaded by hand held forks and thrown over the high sides. I think they relished the subsequent drive to Ipswich for a rest. The lorry did have a tipping buck so unloading was much easier!

As well as the larger Fordson tractors there was also a small orange Allis Chalmers for general farm work. All tractors were open sit on with iron seats and no luxury of an enclosed air-conditioned cab as now. I recall one winter, Jimmy Cooper sitting on the Allis Chalmers pulling a one-furrow plough. He was wearing two army greatcoats, a balaclava and cap and still had a 'dewdrop' on the end of his nose!

Stories

There are many tales about the Heffers, in particular the last, always known as Herbert. A few I recall are:

It seems around the end of the first world war representatives from the Ford Motor Company of America invited Heffer senior and junior to a demonstration of their tractors. As old established agricultural engineers the Heffers were apparently offered the Fordson dealership for East Suffolk. The story goes that father and son decided these tractors "would not replace the hoss" and declined the offer. Mr Potter of Framlingham was not so short sighted!

As previously mentioned Herbert was a dealer in scrap metal, I can remember large piles of rusting scrap at Farnham and Stratford. When this was to be cleared, Herbert engaged a self-employed carter and negotiated a price per load. Knowing of the man's doubtful probity, Herbert stationed one of his men with a notebook and pencil to count the number of loads. The final invoice tallied correctly with the number of loads observed and the man was duly paid, unknown to either man, the carter always returned with his lorry half full thereby doubling the number of loads.

Herbert carried out annual threshing in the autumn for many local farmers and his men and threshing tackle would start early in the morning to various locations. At some stage Cobbold brewery purchased The Green Man at Tunstall and had an

opening morning with free beer. Upon opening his East Anglian Daily Times the next day Herbert saw a photograph of the event, at the forefront were his threshing crew who should have been working at a farm a few miles away. Not realising this, Herbert bought the men a copy of the paper for posterity.

Herbert had very thick toenails that defied any scissors or nail cutters. Rather than see a chiropodist Herbert used to go to the blacksmiths shop, remove his boots and socks, place his foot on the anvil and have his toenails rasped down by the blacksmith.

Herbert was very pleased and surprised when one day his men “shared” some chocolate with him. Unfortunately it was actually Ex Lax and he ate a whole bar!!

The Men

Employees I recall were:

Alf Borrett

Percy Paternoster

Bill Paternoster

Charlie Godfrey

Charlie Cuthbert (wheel wright)

Jack Death (blacksmith)

Arthur Berry

Roly Berry

Jimmy Cooper

Joe Friend

Endnote

This was a long established country business handed down from Father to Son over three generations and spanning a period of nearly one hundred and forty years. Herbert and his wife Dolly had no children and the firm ceased trading in 1964, three years before Herbert died. The Heffers were undoubtedly well known and respected in the local agricultural community in an age where the pace of life was much slower than now. They generally seemed to move with the times, (apart from the Fordson dealership), but lacked another generation to carry the firm forward.

I remember Herbert looking latterly, as he is shown in the photograph on this website. That must have been taken before 1947 as that was when his wife suffered a stroke and they had to vacate the George and Dragon Inn. He always wore his leather buskins and I have an idea he wore the suit in the photograph until shortly before he died. He was a character and always had a tale to tell, as long as it made people laugh, whoever knew whether it was true or not.

This is a very brief look at the firm, sadly many of the records were destroyed when he ceased trading but they would have made fascinating reading of business over the 19th and 20th centuries. An 1888 rent book (listed on the documents page) shows rent payments made by tenants in cash, labour, carrots, beet, mole catching and gold.

If any readers have any more information, memories, photographs or stories of either the firm, Herbert or the employees I would be pleased and grateful to receive them. In particular I have never seen or heard of one of the Heffer seed drills. I have asked

collectors of old farm machinery without any success, indeed they have never heard of them before. In contrast there are many Smyth drills around.

When time permits I shall probably carry out more research into the family and update the website with any further information discovered.

The Heffer graves are situated in Farnham churchyard on the right hand side of the main path to the right of the Garrett tombs. Interestingly, the grave of Sarah, the first wife of the second Henry is under the Yew tree on the right of the cemetery gate, perhaps others of her family are buried there?

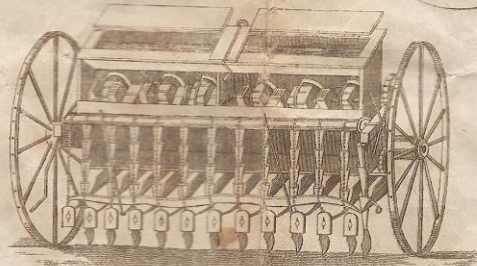
Please contact me at twohortons@tiscali.co.uk with any further information.



Herbert with Dolly (nee Horton) his wife on the right and Mrs Cracknell who lived in
The Limes

This must be pre 1947 as Dolly had a severe stroke then and was confined to a
wheelchair

HENRY HEFFER,
Corn, Seed, and Manure Drill Maker,
FARNHAM NEAR SAXMINDHAM, SUFFOLK.



RESPECTFULLY tenders his grateful thanks to his friends and the Agricultural Public for their continued and extended patronage for upwards of twenty years, and ventures to hope that the experience he has had will still enable him to meet the increased demand with efficiency and promptness.

These Drills have met the approbation of all the most distinguished Agriculturalists in the kingdom, and are so constructed that any careful person may use them.

Orders will be executed to any part of the kingdom for Ready Money.

Advertising leaflet circa 1850 (I still have the copper engraved printing plate)



Copper printing plate

H. H. has been kindly permitted to refer to the following gentlemen amongst many others who have favoured him with their patronage.

SUFFOLK,

J. Barthorp, esq., Hollesley. J. Bryant, esq., Bawdsey. R. Bond, esq., Hacheston. T. Barber, esq., Farnham Hall. Mr. G. Blumfield, Framlingham. Mr. S. Blumfield, Framlingham. Mr. Benham, Great Glemham. Mr. Barker, Cransford. T. Catlin, esq., Butley Abbey. Mrs. Catlin, Chilsford Lodge. Mr. Clark, Worlingworth. Mr. Durham, Stratford St. Andrew's. Mrs. Durham, little Glemham. Mr. J. Daves, Finboro. Mr. H. Daves, Finboro. Mr. Drew, Middleton. Mr. Dennington, Bromswell. Mr. Dove, Helmingham. Mr. Easter, Benhall. J. Flatt, esq., Tunstall. Mr. Garrod, Stratford St. Andrews. R. Gross, esq., Alderton. Mr. Heffer, Parham House. Mr. Heffer, Bruisyard. Mr. Hillen, Alderton. R. Kersey, esq., Framlingham Lodge. Mr. Largent, senr. Marlesford. Mr. H. Largent, Marlesford. Mr. Ludbrook, Wenhaston. Mr. Mills, Benhall Lodge. Mr. Orford, Sternfield. Mr. Lewin, Hollesley. Messrs. Page, Melton. Mr. Plant, Theberton. Mr. Plant, Farnham. Mr. Pope, Orford. Mr. Packard, Farnham. Mr. Plant, Benhall. Mr. Pratt, Campsey Ash. Mr. Pratt, Little Glemham. Mr. Pratt, Farnham. R. Rowlands, esq., Akenham Hall. G. Roberts, esq., Alderton. Messrs. Ransome's, Ipswich. Mr. Rands, Parham. Mr. Saunders, Farnham. Mr. Smith, Hollesley. W. Tacon, esq., Wingfield Castle. Mr. Tacon, Great Glemham. Mr. Toller, Benhall. Mr. Toller, Blaxhall. T. Waller, esq., Eyke Rookery.

SURREY,

Mr. Ashby, Beddington. Mr. Browne, Ewell. T. Baker, esq., Tilings, Guildford. Mr. Burt, Guildford. Mr. China, Ockley. W. Chapmane, esq., Esher Lodge. Mr. Dallen, Cobham. Mr. Daniels, Moulsey. Mr. Eagle, Esher. W. Fuller, esq., Tooting. Mr. Freeland, Stoke. Mr. Heffer, Cheam. Colonel Lester, Cheam. Mr. Lee, Goddleming. Mr. Langton, Wordsworth. Mr. Lawrence, Reigate. J. Mangles, esq. M. P., Guildford. Mr. Martin, Lingfield. Mr. Mason, Worplesdon. Mr. Mayor, Cheam. Mr. Marshall, Morden. T. Overton, esq., Sutton Lodge. Mr. Pennington, Cheam. H. Tubs, esq., Walton on Thames. Mr. Thompson, Reigate.

SUSSEX,

A. Davis, esq. W. Farncomb, Bishopstone. Mr. Martin, Hartfield. Mr. Westgote, Chiddingly. Mr. Salisbury, Eden Bridge. Mr. Bristow, Ifield Court, Crawley.

ESSEX,

Mr. Bedford, Ardley. H. Bright, esq., Orsett. Mr. Heffer, Bradley hall, Ardley. Mr. Green, Romford. R. Ingram, esq. Little Thurrick. Mr. Stephens, Bullfa.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE, Mr. Allen Barrow, Baddington.

HEREFORDSHIRE, Mr. Grimwood, Much Birch. Mr. Young, Marston, Pembridge. Mr. Green, Waterdale.

KENT, Mr. Calcutt, Horsemonden.

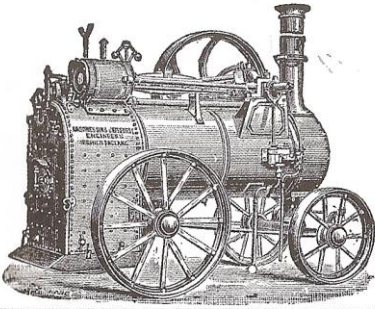
SHROPSHIRE, Mr. Gilbert, Alvely.

WORCESTERSHIRE, Mr. Broom, Kidderminster.

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FARNHAM, near SAXMUNDHAM, Suffolk.

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AGENT FOR ALL THE LEADING FIRMS.

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Machines by best Makers, to Let on most Reasonable Terms.

Cash at Six months. Five per cent. interest will be charged
on Overdue Accounts.

1897	Use of Engine & Machine 12 Mins			
July 19	$\frac{3}{4}$ day Cobbing Leads		18.9	
20	1 day Ditto & Drawing		1.5	
21	$\frac{3}{4}$ day Drawing		18.9	
22	$\frac{3}{4}$ day Ditto & Cutting Chaff		18.9	
23	$\frac{1}{2}$ day Cutting Chaff		12.6	
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Paid for 1898
Henry Heffer

WHEN HERBERT HEFFER of Farnham—Henry Herbert to quote his baptismal names—died last year a striking character disappeared from the Suffolk farming scene. Not that Harbut, as he was always known, farmed on his own account. He was, in fact, licensee of Farnham 'George' (or perhaps Mrs. Heffer was—I do not really remember) but his principal business was the selling and repairing of agricultural machinery, a trade he conducted from the works near the pub.

HARBUT

By R. A. Whitehead

The business must, I think, have been started by his grandfather, for Harbut's notepaper carried the proclamation 'Established in 1827'. This was no idle boast either, for in the oldest extant ledger at Garrett's Leiston works the Heffers were already established customers for machine parts in 1848.

Like a true aristocrat Harbut was absolutely indifferent to what the world at large thought of his personal appearance. Certainly it was not lack of means that caused him to dress in old suits and greasy mackintoshes, though his wry sense of humour may have contributed.

Harbut was often seen at Leiston purchasing parts for threshing machines or engines which he had under repair. Early in 1932 Richard Garrett & Sons Ltd. went into liquidation and were succeeded in due course by the present owners, Richard Garrett Engineering Works Ltd., an offshoot of Beyer Peacock & Co. Ltd. of Manchester. The new owners sent down as general manager Arthur Bambergh, a Mancunian and, I believe, an accountant. Whilst he was acquainting himself with his new domain he spent some while following through the account books and discovered that Harbut owed some trifling sum, say 30s., and had done for some time. All those who knew Harbut had not the slightest doubt that in due time he would appear and discharge the debt but the new general manager, who was perhaps a little earnest, asked 'Is he a man of good principle?', a remark that produced about the same kind of reaction as Bateman's man who asked if Howard's aspirin was best.

As it turned out, only a few days went by before Harbut looked in at the works for a few bits and pieces he needed. After they had been looked out he stood in the yard, somewhere about where the door of the welfare office now is, talking to Cyril Thurston about the pricing of his purchases, when Bambergh was seen to approach down the slope, austere in black jacket and pinstripe trousers. Cyril, never averse to a little entertainment, thought it might be amusing to introduce him to Herbert Heffer. The



Drawing by Jennifer Kent

name Heffer jolted the new general manager's memory. 'Am I not correct in supposing, Mr. Heffer', he said severely, 'that for some long while you have owed the company thirty shillings?'

Harbut took it dead-pan. 'That's quite right, Sir,' he said with well simulated regret, 'and I'm wholly sorry that it is so. But as you know things have been pretty bad in the trade just lately and the money has been slow coming in. Still, Sir, I've just now sold a few pieces of machinery and when I get the cash in I hope to be able to pay you.'

He looked reflectively at his disgraceful old raincoat and the tear in the front of it and he went on. 'Now as you can see my mackintosh isn't very good and if there happen to be one at home you've done with wearing I'd be wholly thankful for it.'

He took the hem of the general manager's immaculate jacket between his discoloured finger and thumb. 'Now that's a very fine jacket you have on, Mr. Bambergh, and as you see mine's not up to much so if you do happen to have an old one that you've no use for, well that'd be a great help to me.'

With a very audible snort, the new general manager turned on his heel and stalked off into the offices. Harbut turned to Cyril Thurston and winked. 'Why, he don't seem to hev no sense o' hoomer,' he said.

'HARBUT'

THE ARTICLE ABOUT THE LATE Mr. Herbert Heffer in the January issue recalls a tale 'Harbut' told against himself. The description of his untidy old raincoat fits the one he was seen to wear for years on end. Apart from this coat, his footwear, clothes and unshaven face gave no hint to people who did not know him that he was a very wealthy man.

Forty to fifty years ago, tramps were seen every day on the roads, as they went from workhouse to workhouse, where they were given a bed and breakfast. One evening, about 5.0 p.m., 'Harbut' was walking very slowly up Farnham hill, in the Saxmundham direction, when he was tapped on the shoulder from behind and told: 'Git a move on, mate. They lock up in 'arf an ower.'

'Thankee, chum', said 'Harbut', still maintaining his slow gait. 'Oi int a-goin' thet far.'—*Oliver W. Lane, 33 Dovedale, Felixstowe.*

From the East Anglian Magazine (no date)



Bunty in steam at Bressingham 2008



Former Poor House with site of Travis at rear



Plaque on Poor House FPH 1792



Former wheelwrights with blacksmith shop behind