

William Baker's family

John Baker (the father) mentioned earlier on page 68 was the third child of a family of, I believe, eight children of William and Mary Baker.

Kent County Council, on August 27th 1992, researched the marriage of William and Mary Baker in the Halling register. Halling is a village on the Strood – Maidstone road (see map page ii arrow 4). William and Mary were married on June 12th 1831 and would both have been approximately 25 years old.



Halling Church, 2008

William Baker was a wheelwright and they lived at Frindsbury (see map page ii arrow 2). All except for the two eldest children, William & Jane, appear in the 1851 Census. John was then 15 years old and described as an agricultural labourer. Then there was Priscilla, George, Benjamin, Frances, and Matilda who was then 5 years old. William & Jane appeared in the 1841 Census as 9 and 7 years old respectively. In the Censuses, William the father was stated born at Frindsbury and Mary at Strood (see map page ii arrow 2). In the 1841 Census, William was aged 35 & Mary 36 years old.

We have a certified copy of George Baker's birth certificate stating he was born on August 25th 1839. As John was born before birth registration commenced in 1837, no birth certificate is available. His father, William's, occupation is given as a wheelwright. We know John Baker's mother, Mary, was a widow when she married William Baker and her maiden name was given as Gray and her widowed surname, Langradge.

In the 1851 Census, William and Mary's address was given as the village of Upper Upnor which is close to Frindsbury and which overlooks the River Medway across the river from the dockyard. In that Census both ages were given as 47.

In the 1861 Census, their address was Orchard Place, Strood. Only Matilda, then aged 15, was then living with the parents. From an 1897 map forwarded by Medway Council Archives in 2007, it would appear that the Roman Catholic School on Frindsbury Road now covers this site.



From Rochester Castle looking across River Medway to Frindsbury c 1900

In the interesting early photograph you can see Strood and Frindsbury across the River Medway. The two windmills together on the horizon are just behind where Orchard Place was. Also of interest are the sailing barges moored on the river to the right of the bridges. There were still a few of these barges working in my childhood in the 1950's working on the River Medway and River Thames. Further, the bridges (road on the left and railway on the right) are now much changed.

In 1871 the parents were recorded at 16, High Street West Cottages, Strood with both, William and Mary, aged 67.

Mary no longer appeared in the 1881 Census, William being listed as a widower. It is probably Mary who passed away in the June quarter of 1871 at the age of 67 – reference North Aylesford 2a 237. However another entry reference for North Aylesford 2a 255 for a 70 year old in the June quarter of 1876 could also be her.

William's 1881 Census address was Quarry Cottage at Cliffe where he was living with his son in law, John J Wright aged 41 who was a cement labourer, born at Chingford Essex. John's wife was Matilda (William's youngest daughter) and they had two children, Anne M aged 14 and William J, 13. It was Anne who was living with her Aunt, Mary Baker, in Chatham in the 1871 Census (see page 72). I remember a large cement works in the 1950's at Cliffe – a village north of Strood adjacent to the River Thames.

The book entitled *Isle of Grain Railways* by Adrian Gray, states: Francis & Co.'s 'Nine Elms' cement works at Cliffe, possibly the first such works in the county, commenced production about 1861. The works were built on the marshes to the west of the village where the chalk cliffs came almost within a mile of the River Thames. The marshes themselves proved a useful source of clay.....The Francis Company was taken over about 1900 by British Portland Cement Manufacturers..... The works were finally phased out in 1920/1.

William Baker passed away in the March quarter of 1891 at the age of 86 years – reference Strood 2a 383. In the 1891 Census, the Wrights were at 2, Mosman Cottage, Station Road, Strood with Annie and their grandchildren John, Annie & Arthur Medhurst aged 1 to 6 years. I can find no record of the Wright's in the 1901 Census.