1. Family Background.

(a). As indicated in paras. 1(g) and 1(h) on page 2 of the history of the Fairbrother family, the connection results from the marriages of two Harwood sisters, Mary Ann and Ruth, of Harby respectively with John Spencer and Thomas Fairbrother, both of Twyford. This note sets out something of the background of the Spencer family.

(b). Mary Ann and Ruth were daughters of William and Mary Harwood. William & Mary were included in the 1841 Census Return for Harby, but fuller details are given in that for 1851, as recorded below. The 1841 Return includes William (a brickmaker) aged 25, Mary aged 26, John aged 5, Mary aged 2, and George aged 15 (presumably a younger brother of William).

(c). In the 1851 Census Return William Harwood is listed as a Brickmaker Journeyman, then aged 37, born at Ratcliffe, Nottinghamshire. His wife, Mary, then aged 35, was born at Bingham. Their children, listed in the Return, were a son and four daughters, namely:-

- John (16) born at Bingham, a Brickmaker Journeyman;
- Mary Ann (13) born at Kinoulton, a Lace Runner;
- Ruth (9) born at Harby;
- Elizabeth (6) born at Harby;
- Ellen (4) born at Harby; and
- Martha (1) born at Harby.

(d). This Harwood family was then living at the Brickyard, Colston Lane, Harby. At the same address was listed a second Harwood family, namely:-

- George Harwood (28) born at Bingham, a Tilemaker Journeyman;
- Arabella (wife) (28) born at Hose;
- John (son) (5) born at Hose;
- Sarah (dtr) (3) born at Hose;
- George (son) (2) born at Harby; and
- William (son) (5mths) born at Harby.

(e). George Harwood’s family does not appear to feature further in our present story. However, the 1861 Census Return lists William Harwood as then being a Farmer of fifteen and a half acres and living at .......... with his wife Mary, his son-in-law John Spencer (aged 23), an Agricultural Labourer who was born at Twyford and his wife Mary Ann nee Harwood), daughters Elizabeth (17), Ellen (14) and Martha (12), together with his widowed Mother-in-law Mary Huskinson (aged 76, born at Denton, Lincolnshire, a former Stockingmaker’s wife). Ruth Harwood was not at home at the time of the Census Return. Elizabeth Harwood married (in 1868) James Whittle, son of John Whittle (publican at Harby) and Rebbecca (nee Penistone) of Plungar.

(f). In the 1871 Census Return William Harwood was listed as a farmer of fifteen and a half acres, living with his wife Mary at a farm on Waltham Road, Harby, adjacent to a brickyard occupied by George Mabbott, a Foreman Brickmaker (aged 70) born at Cropwell Bishop, and his wife Elizabeth (aged 50) born at Bingham. Peggy Shipman told us that this brickyard was adjacent to the farm now known as “Willow Farm” (see O. S. Map of Harby), so presumably William Harwood was at that farm. Perhaps it was William who, being a brickmaker himself, started up this brickyard. Living with William and Mary Harwood at the time were two children, namely their grand-daughter Mary A. Harwood (aged 14) born at Stathern, and Mary E. Huskinson (aged 8) born at Twyford, listed as a boarder.
John Spencer had married Mary Ann Harwood at Harby Parish Church on 26th November 1860; the marriage certificate mentions that John was a son of Stephen Spencer.

In the 1841 Census Return for Twyford the entry for Stephen Spencer indicates that he was a Grocer, then aged 35. His wife Frances was listed as being 42, and their children then comprised Watkin (aged 11), William (9), Elizabeth (7), Stephen (6), Frances (5), John (3), Mary (2) and Thomas (1 month). The 1851 Return lists the parents as being then aged 43 and 42 respectively, and the children then at home were Elizabeth (17), John (13), Mary (11), Thomas (10), Marjorie (7), and Sarah Ann (4). Of these children we know from the Parish Records that Elizabeth was buried at Twyford on 6th April 1862 (aged 28), and Sarah Ann was buried at Twyford on 7th March 1862 (aged 15). John is the son who married Mary Ann Harwood.

The Census Return for Twyford in 1871 lists John Spencer as a widower, a Grocer then aged 33. Presumably he had taken over his father’s shop. Living with him were his daughter Mary F. (? known as Fanny) aged 7, his son William aged 5 (both born at Twyford) and Sister-in-Law Ruth Harwood, aged 28, from Harby acting as Housekeeper.

John Spencer died before the Census Return for 1871 was made, and, by this time, the two Spencer children were living with Thomas and Ruth Fairbrother, as noted in the Fairbrother story.

By 1891 William Spencer had moved to Harby, for he is recorded in the Harby Census Return for that year as living with William Harwood at the farm on Waltham Road.


According to the Harby Banns Registers, William Spencer married, in April 1892, Sarah Anne Skinner (whose mother, according to Peggy Shipman, was ‘a Barnes’, the Barnes Lodge being on the LHS of Waltham Road, under the woods, the lodge on the other side of the road being “Freck’s Lodge”. Sarah’s father, William Skinner, lived near the Post Office, Harby, and was the Church Organist for many years.

William and Annie Spencer had several children, namely:-

May, born ....... who later married a Gill and lived at Holwell;

Violet, born ....... who later married a Blackmore;

Fanny, born ...... who married an Edlin, and lived opposite Long Clawson Chapel; her daughter plays the organ;

A boy, born ...... who died in infancy when 6 mths. old;

Eva, born ....... who married Horace Peck, who had a Garage business;

Margaret, born ....... who married Fillingham Brown; they had a family of ........... and lived at Rickmansworth, in a house with a beautiful garden and wooded background, which we visited circa .........

Margaret, now widowed, lives at ............. and supplied us with much of the information about the family;

Dorothy, born ........... married a Bamford who had a farm at the top of the first Long Clawson Hill but later went to Australia; Dorothy now lives with her daughter in Guernsey; and

Muriel, born ........... who married a Paget at Long Clawson; she now lives at Oast Cottage, Fig Street Farm, Seven Oaks, TN13 5HP (Tel. 01732-450877).

Annie Spencer died c. 1917, and
William married Kitty Brown c. 1921/2.

**3. Homes of William Spencer and family.**

(a) According to information given over the ‘phone (in Feb/Mar 1996) by Margaret Brown, the family lived at several locations at Harby, then at Holwell and later at Long Clawson.

(b). The first dwelling at Harby was a small farmstead on O.S.Plot 210 (Harby 2nd. edition map dd. 1904) approached from Watson’s Lane, opposite “Lilac Cottage”. These buildings have been demolished and the land developed to provide a number of bungalows (on Watson’s Lane) and houses (alongside Stathern Lane).

(c). The next home of the Spencers was the farmhouse, known as “The Chestnuts” on the corner of School Lane / Burden Lane (where the Steads once lived).

(d). The Spencers next moved to “The Poplars” (near to the Harby Methodist Chapel).

(e). The next move was to Howell.

(f). They later moved to “Bridge Farm” on the outskirts of Long Clawson, where they lived until William retired (? c. 1914).

(g). After retirement, William first lived at “The Chestnuts” towards the east end of Long Clawson, and finally moved across the road to “West Holme” and the Atterwells (Kitty Atterwell) occupied “The Chestnuts”.
