

The intriguing story of Captain John 'Old Trooper' Rush -man of Hornton

Introduction

Barbara Greenhalgh was an instrumental part of Hornton History Group, her research has been a key part of this group's success. Her research on John Rush has led us to the Declaration of Independence and communication with various branches of the Rush family tree. We have had visits from the states and new branches pop up on a regular basis. She has also conducted research into the Hornton Census records, The Romans, and Anglo Saxons. It was very sad that we learnt of her death at the end of 2019, the following is an account of her research into Captain John 'Old Trooper' Rush – Man of Hornton.

Fact's courtesy of Ancestor sites.

John Rush was born in 1623 in the village of Hornton, near Banbury Oxfordshire, England.

He married Susannah Lucas in 1648 in Hornton.

They had 10 children, all born in Hornton.

He was a Captain in command of a troop of horse in Cromwell's army.

He became a Quaker about 1660.

In 1683 he emigrated to Byberry Township, Pennsylvania, USA, with his family.

He died there in 1699.

His great, great grandson was Benjamin Rush who was a signatory for Pennsylvania of The Declaration of Independence.

Research

My first introduction to John Rush was on free pages/genealogy/roots web (Copyright 2001)

<https://wc.rootsweb.com/trees/143588/12523/john-rush/individual> (Laura M Drake and James Deeter.)

Further sites I consulted were <https://www.members.tripod.com/~lolson/rushancs.htm> L.Olson.
fortune-city.com and FamilyTreeMaker.com

Craig Scott's research on the <https://www.members.tripod.com/~lolson/rushancs> site is of particular interest. I hope to show why I think some statements are incorrect and perpetuated in other sites. My interest in John Rush has led to the investigation of the local history of Hornton and his life and times.

Parentage

He was the son of Thomas and Thomasine Steed, or Stanstead say the genealogists, but these people were Gentry living in Boreham in Essex. A long way from Hornton by English standards. He was born in Hornton and baptised in Boreham – highly improbable! John Rush was, I believe, the son of villagers, whose parents' records are so far not available.

Gentry were landowners who depended on rents from their tenants for their income. They did not work, but followed their own interests, hunting and shooting and were often Squire and Lord of the Manor. A Richard Arne was a 'Gentleman' who died in 1665 and lived in Hornton, but the biggest landowners around Hornton were independent Yeoman farmers. So, I am discarding all records of the Essex Rushes - they were not the parents of 'our' Captain John Rush.

Marriage and Children

John married Susannah Lucas from Broughton a village just a few miles away. The Laura M Drake and James Deeter site lists 10 children but includes a Franciscus Rausch (Francis Rush) born in Chipping Hornton. It should be Chipping Norton a town over 10 miles away. It is questionable whether Francis was born to John and Susanna or whether he was accommodated into their family later. His Christian name doesn't fit with the rest.

Elizabeth, William, Thomas, Susanna, John, James, Joseph, Edward, Jane - and Francis?

Only Elizabeth, William, Susanna, John, and Jane are recorded as dying in the US. James died aged 6/7. The death records of Joseph and Thomas are vague. They seem to have died as young men. London is suggested-there was plague around at the time. Francis stayed in the village but his death is not recorded either.

Elizabeth and Susanna emigrated with men who were or later became their husbands.

Hornton

Hornton is a small village, presently under 400 people, set in a small valley amongst rolling hills (Wolds).

It is by-passed by ancient tracks and is a few miles from the edge of the Wolds where it descends into the Midlands plain of Warwickshire. Banbury is 6 miles south east and Warwick 15 miles north.

The old road (a track) from Banbury to Warwick ran through the village in the 17th century, the population may have been about 300. In 1662 there were 18 householders with sufficiently substantial houses to be taxed, (The Hearth Tax). John was 39 at this time, so he may have been one of these. Four of the largest properties were occupied by yeoman farmers, these were built of the local Hornton Stone, which has given its name to the beautiful golden ironstone quarried around the village since Roman times.

People of Hornton in the 17th Century.

The school endowment in Hornton dates from 1613 when John Fox left ½ yard land in Hornton for a schoolmaster to teach 3 children. It is possible, John benefited from this educational opportunity by the time he was 10 in 1633. Most men worked in farming for landowners and/or on the common land grazing animals or growing crops for themselves. There was a windmill on the hill for flour making and a communal bread oven by one house in the village. Quarrymen and masons were recorded in wills and registers from 1609. There were several ale houses. Maybe John was employed looking after horses and learned to ride as he later became a trooper in the Militia.

Everyone would be expected to attend church, a beautiful Norman church, (Anglican) at this time. Only shepherds were exempt, but all over England there was dissent growing. In a place like Hornton which was so isolated, people could get together in the 'hidden' valley to hold meetings. Some people objected to the teachings of the Church and having to pay taxes (tithes) for the running and upkeep of its establishment. In Hornton, groups formed and allied themselves to various dissenters - mainly Baptists and Quakers. At the same time the Parish was neglected by its Church of England vicars, it was a poor parish, so John would have been aware of this growing up. More and more people became less beholden to the establishment and more independent in thought and deed.

King, Church, State and Hornton.

The King, Charles 1st, was in dispute with Parliament about taxation and raising money for foreign wars and his personal use. The country was divided in its supporter, Royalists and Parliamentarians, or Cavaliers and Roundheads. In 1641 all men over 18 had to sign The Protestation Oath requiring them to give allegiance to the King, 67 men in Hornton signed and John may have been one of them, he was 18. Roman Catholics refused and were prosecuted. Some people of Hornton were influenced by the attitudes of influential Puritans in and near Banbury, only 6 miles away. There was William Whately, a firebrand vicar for 30 years, Anthony Cope of Hanwell Castle, Member of Parliament for Banbury and William Knight, the town's leading Puritan.

By 1640 the leading Puritan and very important figure nationally was Viscount Saye and Sele of Broughton Castle (4 miles away), owner of Banbury Castle and High Steward of the Borough. In 1642 Parliament gave him charge of The Oxfordshire Militia, John was now 19.

There was an armed encounter when ordnance being moved from Banbury Castle along the road to Warwick Castle, the home of the Earl of Essex, a Parliamentary supporter, was intercepted by a Royalist force led by the Earl of Northampton surrendered and was taken to Compton Wingates, his home a few miles away nearer to Warwick. John and the people of Hornton must have been aware of this because it took place only just up the road, a mile or so away.

Later, between 1642 and 1646, there were two sieges of Banbury Castle, held by Royalist forces, many skirmishes around the area and much street fighting in Banbury town. The Royalist commander of the castle refused to surrender. Eventually it is estimated that 3,500 horse and footmen and a garrison of 400 were in Banbury and hostile to the King. It is possible that John joined a Troop of Horse around this time, recruited by Lord Saye and Sele of Broughton into the Oxfordshire Militia or by Parliamentary supporters from Warwickshire. Hornton is on the border between Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The horses used were hunters, the Royalists (Cavaliers), so named because they rode their own horses in these manoeuvres. The Puritan/ Parliamentarians would have had to commandeer horses from wherever they could.

On Sunday October 21st 1642, the King's army on route to Banbury met the Parliamentary army commanded by the Earl of Essex seeking to prevent them getting there. They took up battle positions on the fields below the village of Edgehill, 3 miles from Hornton over the hill, and fierce fighting took place, neither side winning an outright victory. Cromwell was not present at this first battle of the Civil War. The story goes that he and his troop arrived towards the end of the fighting trying to locate the battle, staying in a village (Hornton) overnight. This is Cromwell's first appearance in the John Rush story. John may have been involved in the battle because Lord Saye and Sele's regiment

was engaged. There were many casualties on both sides, but it was the Parliamentarian injured who were tended in the local villages. People still report ghostly noises of the battle.

John Rush -Trooper

I'm presuming John aged 20 was by now a trooper and taking part in the many skirmishes and raids in the area from Banbury to Warwick. No evidence exists that he was involved in Cromwell's New Model Army and further Civil War battles, there was enough to do locally in this strong Puritan area. On 12th June 1644, Compton Wynyates, the home of the Earl of Northampton was besieged by Parliamentarians, then ransacked and plundered.

Craig Scott's research shows that by 1646 a John Rush was a corporal in charge of a squadron of 15-20 men in the Warwick Garrison. This was most likely to have been 'our' John Rush and the Compton Wynyates siege was one of the typical actions he might have been involved in. It is recorded that 120 prisoners, £5000 (a lot of money then), 60 horses, 400 sheep, 160 head of cattle, 18 loads of plunder (furnishings of the mansion) and 6 earthen pots of coins recovered from the moat were taken. Quite a haul! Maybe after other actions John was promoted to the rank of Captain. Historians have noted that Cromwell did raise other ranks to Officer status. Normally, commissions were bought, the other Captain John Rush of Essex e.g. The 1st Civil War 1642-1646 - John 20-24, The 2nd Civil War 1648-1651 when John would be 28.

John, Family and Hornton

John married Susannah Lucas in 1648. We do not know when the army in this area was disbanded, but there were many disputes between the Army, Cromwell and Parliament about payment. It is likely that John received payment- he was now a Captain, before he married. I'm guessing that he received enough disbandment pay (and spoils of war?) to buy some land and build a cottage. He was now 25.

Susannah was born in Broughton around 1627/8, four or five years younger than John. She was probably already like-minded religiously.

Their first child, Elizabeth was born in 1649, second William in 1652, third Thomas in 1654, fourth Susanna in 1656, fifth John in 1659/60, sixth James in 1664, seventh Joseph in 1666, eighth Edward in 1670 and ninth Jane in 1673. Francis in 1661/2.

John became a Quaker, The Society of Friends, in 1660. This was the year when Charles 2nd was restored to the throne, John was 37. Maybe there were other Quakers in the village or his wife's village of Broughton, or he was persuaded to join by Banbury Quakers. Maybe owing allegiance to Cromwell (now dead), he delayed joining because Cromwell was not well disposed to the Quaker philosophy and he was loyal to Cromwell's reign.

John, Family and The Quakers

In 1662 the Act of Uniformity was passed by Charles 2nd's Parliament.

It was required that clergy and people followed the prescribed prayers, rites, and ceremonies of the Established Church of England.

At the same time the Quaker Act required people to swear an oath of allegiance to the king, which Quakers would not do out of religious conviction. They were fined or put in prison, furthermore, in 1664 the Conventicle Act forbade meetings for unauthorised worship of more than 5 people who were not members of the same household. So it was not a good time for John to become a Quaker, but he was now settled in Hornton raising a family and making a living farming. He must have lived within the law, attending Quaker meetings in Shutford, or Broughton (villages a few miles away) secretly. If, he did pay fines and had his goods sequestered (temporarily possessed by the authorities) it is not recorded. But it is recorded that a William Rush of Hornton was imprisoned in 1688 for these offences, was he an older brother perhaps? John had emigrated by this time.

However, John and Susannah quietly raised nine 9(or 10) children in Hornton. We can only presume the boys found employment around the village and the girls helped domestically. It was 35 years between them marrying and emigrating.

The Children

Elizabeth was born in 1649 and died in Byberry in 1717 making her 68. At 31 in 1680 she married Richard Collett in a Quaker Meeting. He was born in Hornton about 1645, so they were a mature couple. No doubt Elizabeth had duties looking after younger children. They had a son born in Hornton who died falling from a tree it is said.

William was born in 1652 and died in Byberry in 1688 making him 36. He married Aurelia (unknown) about 1674, both were Quakers. They had 3 children born in Hornton, Susanna 1675, Elizabeth 1677 and James 1679.

Thomas was born in 1654 and died in London it is thought in 1676 at 22. Perhaps he was looking for work and died of the plague which was around at the time.

Susanna was born in 1656 and died in Byberry in 1724/5 making her about 68. At 27 she married John Hart in 1683 in Byberry, he was a Quaker, born in Witney Oxfordshire in 1651. He may have emigrated at the same time as the Rush family.

John was born in 1659/60 and died in Byberry about 1690 making him about 30. His marriage partner in Byberry is unknown.

Francis was born in 1661/2 - no recorded death date.

James was born in 1664 and died aged 6.

Joseph was born in 1666-no recorded death date.

Edward was born in 1670- no recorded death date.

Jane was born in 1672/3 and died in Byberry in 1731/2 making her about 58. She married John Darke in 1696 at about 24.

Emigration

Captain John 'Old Trooper' Rush and his family left Hornton for the US in 1683, he was 60. Was he known in the village by this title at the time? It is doubtful because any reference to Cromwell or Quaker activities was still frowned on by the authorities. His descendant Benjamin Rush said he quitted England "in a spirit of bitterness". Just so. He may have been persuaded to leave at that age by his daughter's husbands, Richard Collett and John Hart noted Quakers. John Hart especially was a preacher and may have met William Penn. His sons William and John who remained in the village with him would also have been Quakers. Francis is also on the Quaker register which was compiled at a later date.

William Penn advertised all over England for dissatisfied clergy and Quakers like himself to settle in the part of North America that James 1st had given to his father as compensation. A decision must have been made amongst themselves to sell their possessions, land, and cottage in John's case, and join the exodus. Whether William Penn assisted with expenses, what port they sailed from, (Hornton is in the middle of England) a good 100 miles from a port, or how they prepared for the journey is only speculation.

The genealogists say all his children made the voyage. I'm not so sure of this, I think the party must have been, John and Susannah, young daughter Jane (10), son John, (a bachelor) Elizabeth and maybe Richard Collett, William and Aurelia and their 3 young children, Susanna and maybe John Hart.

It can only be imagined the hardship they endured just getting to an English port, horse and cart to Banbury, then horse and carriage for over a hundred miles, then sailing ship across a stormy Atlantic to the Delaware River and Byberry.

Byberry, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Records say they emigrated in 1683. Family stories have it that they came on "The Welcome" with William Penn, but it sailed in 1682 and their names do not appear on the passenger list. However, the Wikipedia history entry for Byberry states the original settlers in Byberry Township in 1675 were joined after the arrival of the ship "Welcome" in 1682, by names that include John Hart and Richard Collett. Maybe they went first with William Penn in August - October to make arrangements for the family, who followed the next year. Or maybe the timescale is conflated, they left England in 1682 and arrived in America in 1683. In any event John Rush and his family settled down in Byberry Township and started farming. It is his great, great grandson, through his second son John, the celebrated Dr Benjamin Rush, signatory of The Declaration of Independence, who passed on memories of tales heard of the legendary - Captain John "Old Trooper" Rush. He died in Byberry aged 76 in 1699.

Benjamin himself said -

"It is a sufficient gratification to me to know that he fought for liberty and migrated into a remote wilderness in the evening of his life in order to enjoy the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience." He must have been very proud of his association with Cromwell and his Troop activities to pass his stories on to his descendants and encourage them to remember him as Captain John 'Old Trooper' Rush

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