

**Notes on**  
**Descendants of**  
**Thomas and Sarah Smith,**  
**“Vagrants” of North Marston**  
**Buckinghamshire 1759.**

**By a Sixth Great Grandson:**

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**Figure 1: Prudence Smith 1844-1913 in 1911**

Prudence Smith was my Great Great Grandmother. Her life and this photograph of her at the 1911 <sup>1</sup> provided the initial interest for these notes. I had been told by my Mother and grandmother that when I was born my legs were very dark in colour – it was the “Gypsy” in me. Knowing that the family name was Smith, I did not attempt to follow anything up, thinking such researches impossible!

I came across this photograph of Prudence and her husband in Ilmington taken in May 1911. I was immediately struck by her high-cheek bones and resemblance to my grandmother – and so I began to research her in the Ilmington sources and came up with a string of children, some of them very oddly named – such as a boy “Florance” and a daughter Silenia (or Aunty Soil).

Before long, I had moved on to Tysoe, her birthplace, and was soon connecting into the many Smiths linked to that village. To my surprise, despite the family wandering widely, and their itinerant trades, it was quite easy to make basic connections between them – not in the least helped by their own unique forenames (Jasper, Geppy, Comfort, Fido, Treezy, Honour, Wisdom, Hercules, Anslow, Jerusalem, Garnaty, Genty, Cornelius, Sulavina, Lucretia, Moses &c.) and so a broad structure developed.

As time has gone on more information has been added by various distant cousins in the UK and USA until you see the notes before you. I can’t finish here without specially mentioning Nettie Edwards (who extracted a great deal of material from the Journals of the Gypsy Lore Society in Oxford) and John and Rita Lumsden, all descendants of Prudence. More recently, E-Mail contact has been made with relatives in the US who have also generously shared their information, particularly Mr George Jeffs who has happily shared material unearthed by his paid researcher. Recently, further information from the many Smith court cases (oh dear!) in Oxfordshire has been provided in great detail by Keith Chandler. Terence Lee’s book on the Smiths of the Midland counties <sup>2</sup> has been very useful for tracking down some of the more distant, and perhaps more fictional baptisms.

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<sup>1</sup> Copied from a Village May Day Picture published in ? (standard village history of Ilmington, written by Miss Ibbotson of Ilmington) Copy of picture obtained in 1980’s from publisher in Oxford via correspondence with Miss Ibbotson who did not have access to the original. *Note to KJN: sort this reference out properly.*

<sup>2</sup> Privately printed and a copy owned John and Rita Lumsden.



## Thomas and Sarah Smith, “vagrants” of North Marston.

The family examined here springs from the following couple, Thomas and Sarah Smith.

The location of this family is evident from the Baptism of their granddaughter, Lucretia, who was baptised in 1778. Her entry specified that her Father, Jasper, was a Traveller from North Marston. Other information fits this Jasper to a baptism in 1759 – and so we have a link to Thomas and Sarah Smith raising a family at North Marston.

They appear in the Parish Registers of North Marston in Buckinghamshire, north-west of Aylesbury, as follows:

**Figure 2 – Register details of Thomas & Sarah Smith’s Family in North Marston, Bucks.**

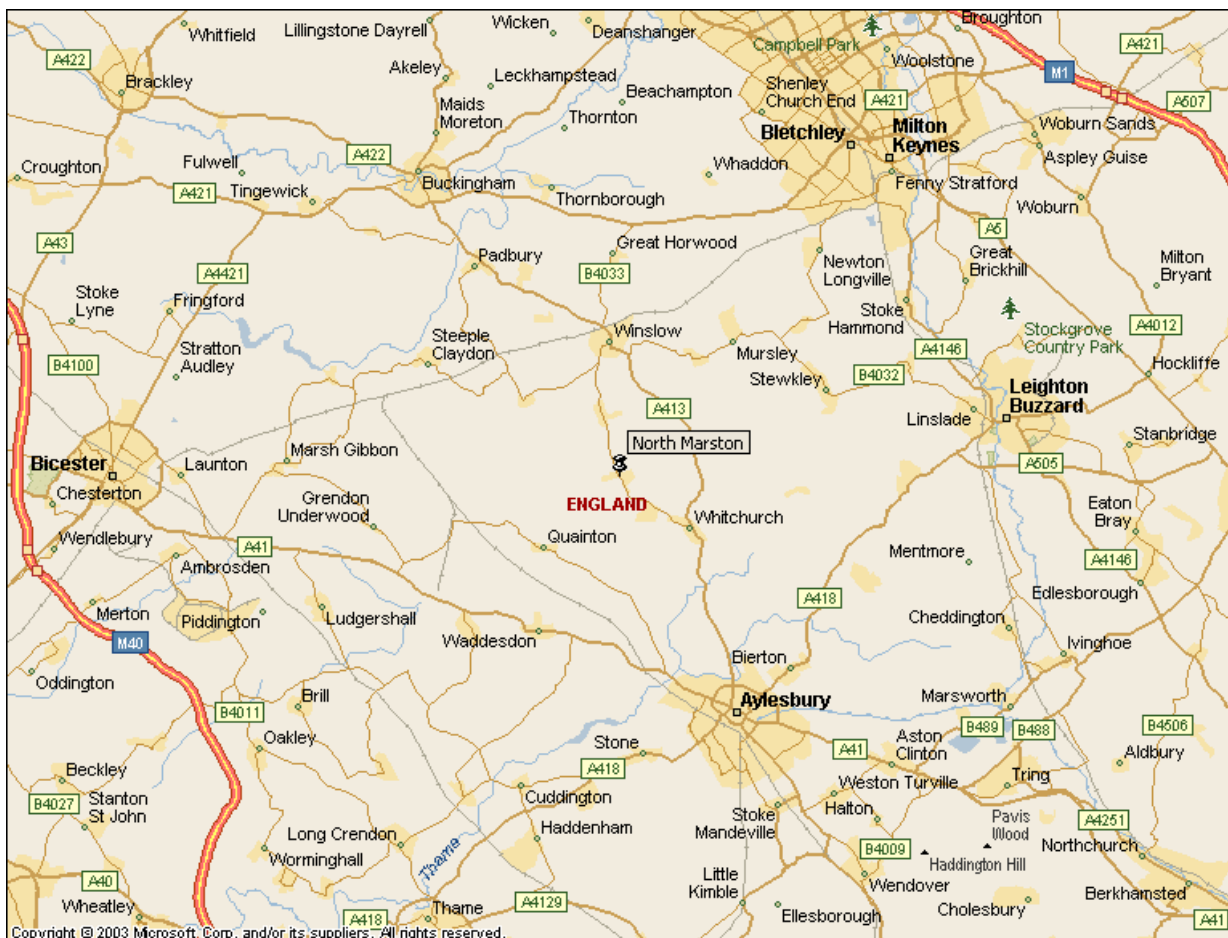
<i>30 Nov 1759 Jasper Smith</i>	<i>bpt North Marston of Thomas and Sarah, Vagrants</i>
<i>28 Feb. 1768 Absalom Smith</i>	<i>bpt North Marston of Thomas and Hannah, Vagrants</i>
<i>10 Ap 1768 Fido Smith</i>	<i>bpt North Marston of Thomas and Sarah, Vagrants</i>

Another descendant, Mr George Jeffs, paid for research to be done on this family, which he has kindly shared. The researcher found a “birth” of Jasper, a peddler, at Horley on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1749 – who may have been our Jasper. The Horley register needs examination.

### MENTION THE CHILDRENS BAPTISMS THAT REFER TO NORTH MARSTON....

George Jeff’s researcher also believes that Jasper may have been the child of Thomas and Sarah Smith (nee Taylor) who had a child, Thomas, christened at Bilton, Warwickshire, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1727. This is some 40 miles away from North Marston, where I have the first record in my researches.

North Marston may be a link into a widespread Smith family inhabiting Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire. Thomas and Sarah here baptised three children, there must have been more scattered about as they were “vagrant”. For example, where did Fido and Absalom Smith end up?



## Family of Jasper (1759-1838) and Catherine Beetles

*30 Nov 1759 Jasper Smith bpt North Marston of Thomas and Sarah, Vagrants*

Jasper Smith and Catherine Beetels were “travellers from North Marston in Buckinghamshire”<sup>3</sup> According to George Jeffs’ researcher; Catherine Beetles was born on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1751 in Horley, Oxfordshire.

Later sources in the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society about some of their children refer to several being half brothers of others, and some baptismal sources talk about a Jasper and SARAH, so Jasper was apparently married or partnered twice:

*“... Wisdom, ... a son of a Jasper Smith, had two brothers (or two half brothers as his father had two wives and I do not know which was his mother ).”<sup>4</sup>*

**Figure 3 : Summary table of Jasper Smith's movements and his children**

		Children of Jasper and CATHERINE	Children of Jasper and SARAH
	49		
	50		
	51	Catherine Beetles bpt at Horley, 25 <sup>th</sup> July. Not found	
	52		
	53		
	54		
	55		
	56		
	57		
	58		
Birth	1759	Baptism 30 Nov North Marston, child of Thomas and Sarah, of Nth Marston VAGRANTS	
	1760		
	1761		
	1762		
	1763		
	1764		
	1765		
	1766		
	1767		
	1768	Birth year according to death certificate and brothers Absalom and Fido baptised at North Marston.	
Aged 10	1769		
	1770		
	1771		
	1772		
	1773		
	1774		
aged 16	1775	Comfort Bp 16-3-1775 “bn in a field” Byfield Nthhants	
	1776		
	1777		
	1778	Lucretia Bp 21-8-1778 Shennington – “travellers from N. Marston “	
aged 20	1779		Hercules Bn Bletchington Bp 26 Dec 1779 Bletchington
	1780		
	1781	Jasper/Geppy” – Bp 16 Dec 1781 Long Buckby Nthhants	
	1782		
	1783		
	1784	Honour Bp 1 Jan 1784 Adderbury Oxf.	
	1785		
	1786	Wisdom Bp 6 Feb 1786 Wappenham Wappenham Nthhants	
	1787		
	1788	Japeth Bn 1788 ? Horely	

<sup>3</sup> according to the later baptism of their daughter Lucretia in Shennington, Gloucestershire, in 1778.

<sup>4</sup> Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, January April 1946 – Vol 25, nos 1-2 Page 56/57 “Some Gypsy Centenarians” E.O.Windstedt

Romany family of Prudence Smith

		Children of Jasper and CATHERINE	Children of Jasper and SARAH
	49		
	50		
aged 30	1789	Arnold Bp 18 Oct 1789 Horley Oxf "Gypsy Tribe"	
	1790		
	1791	Harriett Bn ? 1791 Mickleton Bp 19 Jun 1791 Hook Norton	
	1792	<b>Anseloe Bp 30 Dec 1792 Epwell "Poor Travellers"</b>	
	1793	Mary Ann Bn 1793 Hook Norton ?	
	1794		
	1795		
	1796	Keziah Bp 31 Jul 1796 Epwell	
	1797		
	1798		
aged 40	1799		
	1800		
	1801		
	1802	<i>Child ? Raili Smith born in indeterminate year <sup>5</sup></i>	
	1803		
	1804		
	1805		
	1806		
	1807		
	1808		
Aged 40	1809		
	1810		
	1811		
	1812		
	1813		
	1814		
	1815		
	1816		
	1817		
	1818		
Aged 50	1819		
	1820		
	1821		
	1831		
	1832		
	1833		
	1834	<i>Death of Wife in Horley, Oxfordshire. Near son Arnold.</i>	
	1835		
	1836	<i>Possible Pub Fracas and Court Case in Ilmington.</i>	
	1837		
	1838	<i>Death and Burial in Ratley allegedly aged 89 bn 1768</i>	
Aged 60 ?	1839		

The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society refers to Jasper as the "King of the Fiddlers"<sup>6</sup>

*"Here, as a Jasper Smith has been mentioned. I may perhaps be pardoned a digression to discuss the identity of the Jasper Smith, called the "King of Fiddlers" of whom Groome heard of in the "(18)70's from an aged villager in North Oxfordshire as travelling many years earlier with a band consisting of his sons "each of whom was a deadly fine fiddler"( JLGS (1) i 122."*

There is an off chance that Jasper's fiddling peregrinations may have been picked up in a Court Case in Ilmington, in 1836,<sup>7</sup> when he would have been about 71 years of age. Four travellers, Aaron, James, Jasper and a Hansolm Smith were involved in a fracas over fighting dogs in the "Wharf Inn" in Ilmington. The case was settled with a fine of £3.13.0 between them, but could not "Hansolm" be a misheard "Ansolm" – yet another version of our Jasper's frequently mis-spelled son "Onslow" – who was 44 at the time – or even of Onslow's own son, Absalom, a mere 20 at the time ? Unfortunately, the identities of Aaron and James cannot even be guessed at this time. (For fuller details see below section on Court Cases).

<sup>5</sup> Journal of Gypsy Lore Society – unreferenced, but near refs to Jasper as King of the Fiddlers above.

<sup>6</sup> Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, January April 1946 – Vol 25, nos 1-2 Page 56/57 "Some Gypsy Centenarians" E.O.Windstedt

In the 1880s Jasper's son, Hercules, was involved in a fracas in a pub in Banbury where his father's fiddle was stolen – so the musical theme is quite a strong one. Indeed, Jasper's other son Thomas, who settled at Headington Quarry has several sons and grandsons who are listed as fiddlers and Morris Men.

George Jeff's researcher states that Catherine Smith was buried in Horley on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1834 aged about 83 years of age. Perhaps after this date Jasper moved from Horley to Ratley to live with his Grand-daughter Sophia.

**Figure 4 -Death Certificate of Jasper Smith 1838**

Registration District: Banbury, district of Swalcliffe.									
No.	When & Where	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause	Informant	When Registered	Registrar
162	15 Sept 1838 Ratley	Jasper Smith	Male	89	Gipsy	Age and debility	The mark of Sophia England, in attendance, of Ratley <sup>8</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup> Sept 1838	Edward Charlton

He was buried on September 17<sup>th</sup> in Ratley<sup>9</sup> – having been born apparently in 1768 according to this age calculation.

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<sup>8</sup> Grand-daughter, Sophia, the daughter of Lucretia born in 1813. She would be 25 at the death of her Grandfather. A Sophia England of Ratley, the correct age, appears in the 1851 Census of Ratley.

<sup>9</sup> Jeff's researcher describing record from Sally Edgely.