

# KIDNER

The origins and history of a name



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Part 2 – Spaxton and beyond

## Foreword

One of the problems with writing a history of a family is that the story increasingly comes to focus on one's own close family, to the detriment of other no less worthy branches bearing the Kidner name. I hope readers will not only forgive this bias, but be encouraged to talk to their older relatives and record and contribute what they know about the characters and events in the timeline of their own branch.

## Acknowledgements

With thanks to the many people who have contributed over the years to my research, and to earlier drafts of this work. I have so enjoyed the contact made with countless members of the family, who have trusted me with countless facts and stories. This is *our* story, and I hope that an understanding of our simple background in the farms of Somerset encourages future generations of Kidners all over the world to aim high, to respect their fellows and to honour the name.

Peter Kidner

South Petherton, March 2009



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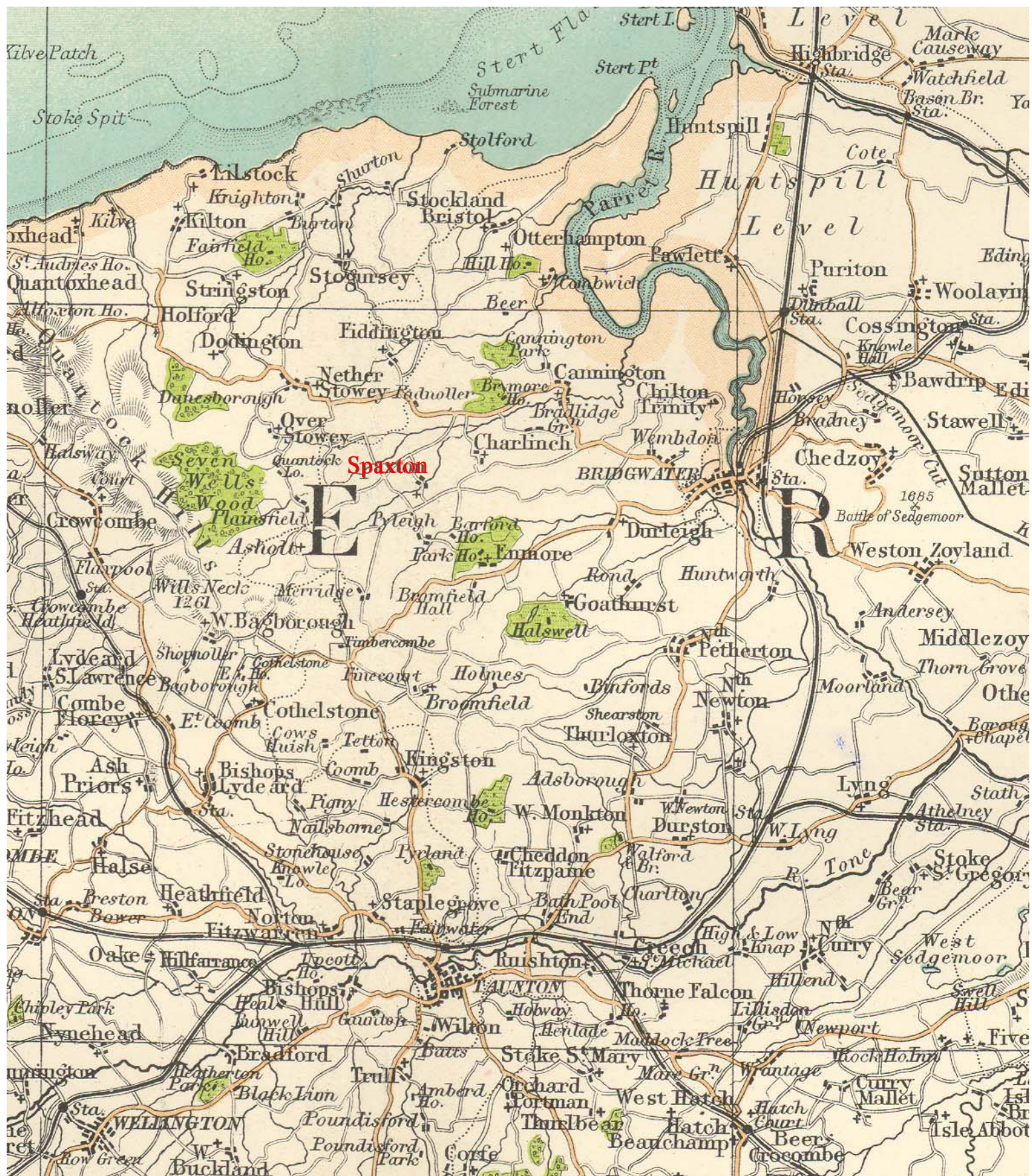
Cover photograph: St Margaret's, Spaxton

**KIDNER**

**The origins and history of a name**

**Part 2**





An extract from Bartholomew's Royal Atlas of England and Wales published c.1890.



## Spaxton 1550-1750

Our ancestor John Kidner was born at or near Stogursey in about the year 1490, the son of Walter Kidner of Stogursey and his wife Joan. Exactly where they lived has not been established. John had a brother, William, who was a churchwarden of Stogursey in 1546, and possibly a second brother Thomas Kyne of Cannington who refers to 'my brother William Kydnor' in his will of 1559. Whether 'Kyne' is a corruption of 'Kydnor', an occupational name meaning 'cattleman', or if 'brother' means 'brother in law' we cannot tell. All three are possible.

John Kidner was mentioned in the will of Henry Audley, vicar of Stogursey, on 12th December 1539 and it therefore seems probable that he was still living in, or close to, Stogursey at that time. The next firm date we have is the marriage of John's son, Henry, to Alice Scely (or Sealey) in Spaxton in 1558. So it seems likely that John moved to Spaxton between those two years - perhaps after his mother died in Stogursey in 1543 or 1544. John's father Walter had also died in Stogursey, some 14 years earlier in 1530.

John died two years after Henry's wedding, and was buried in Spaxton on 27th April 1560. His brother William was certainly alive in 1559; either he or his son, another William born around 1540, was buried at North Petherton on 9th January 1579 - although it seems likely that this was the burial of the younger William, of whom there is no later record. The parish Register of Burials at North Petherton starts in 1576. We may therefore assume that William moved from Stogursey to North Petherton between 1546 and 1563. It was in the latter year that William's eldest grandson Richard was baptised in North Petherton.

In this chapter we will examine the story of John of Spaxton and his descendants from his arrival in Spaxton in about 1550 until the second half of the eighteenth century when his 5xG-grandchildren were still living there, and probably still occupying at least part of the same land that had been held by their forebears in the 16th century.

The first reliable documents available to us are the Spaxton Parish Registers which start in 1558; the Somerset Muster Rolls of 1569; and a few early wills. It is very unfortunate that most of the Somerset wills which had been preserved for so long were lost when the Exeter Record Office was destroyed by bombing in 1942. A few had been copied before the Second World War but otherwise all we have are the Indexes giving the names of the testators, the place where they lived at the time of their death and the date when the wills were proved.<sup>1</sup>

The Muster Rolls of 1569 at once give us an insight into the ages and status of those listed. John Kidner the second, or John Kidner 2 as I shall call him (born c.1520) is listed amongst others as 'finding arms' 'two bows, two sheafs of arrows, two bills<sup>2</sup> and two sculls<sup>3</sup>. The fact that John was not

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<sup>1</sup> see Appendix 100 at <http://www.simonkidner.co.uk/chetenore/app/100.html>

<sup>2</sup> a 'bill' was a bill-hook on a short staff. The main function of a 'billman' was to strike at and unhorse cavalry.

himself mustered as an Ableman, that is an active soldier, implies that he was too old. The accepted ages for a man to be enrolled as an Ableman were 18 to 46. Richard Kidner, John's son (born c.1550) was enrolled as an 'Ableman - Archer'.

The 1569 muster was a national response to the growing threat of invasion from Spain which culminated in the Armada of 1588. Every town and village maintained a 'muster-roll' during those years of men liable for service in an emergency, and the arms and armour required for them were provided in part by the better-off individuals and in part by the parish. Those belonging to the parish were usually stored in the church. In Spaxton, they were kept in a small room over the porch, known as a 'parvise', and it was a responsibility of the churchwardens to see that they were maintained in good condition. There are no Kidners or Kitnors listed in the 1588 Muster Rolls of any Somerset settlement.

The first John 'of Spaxton' married before he left Stogursey and all his four sons were born there. Three (John, Henry and Thomas) settled in Spaxton with their father, but the fourth (Francis), third in age, probably moved to Huntspill in about 1570, for there is no later record of him or his family in Spaxton; in later years his grandson was known as 'Edward of Huntspill'. The descendants of John, Henry and Thomas lived in Spaxton in the 16th and 17th centuries and some were still living there well into the 18th century.

After the parish registers, which in the case of Spaxton are badly mutilated with many gaps, one of the most useful records available to us is the list of churchwardens prepared by Rev. Michael Odlum from various documentary sources including John Thomas's 'Book' which I will describe in more detail a little later in this chapter. John Thomas was churchwarden in 1720 and other, later, years, and it is due to him that we also have many valuable extracts from the church wardens' accounts for the period 1651-1698.<sup>4</sup>

The names of the churchwardens are known for all but 37 years out of the 157 years between 1597 and 1754. The gaps are scattered and they do not spoil the continuity of the record. Before examining the names, it is useful to consider the importance of the office of churchwarden in local affairs. The office dates from the 12th century or even earlier. Every year, two wardens were elected by the parishioners to represent the wishes of the people of the parish in the affairs of the church. Although the church retained the right to choose one of the two wardens if the Rector found himself unable to accept the elected pair, as far as is known this right was never exercised at Spaxton. The wardens' duties, under the general guidance of the Rector, included the control and administration of all the land and money held by the parish or due to it in the form of rates and taxes, including the levying of rates for specific purposes such as repairs to the church and the purchase of vestments for the Rector. The office was unpaid although there were some perks, and the duties were time-consuming and required the wardens to be educated people of reasonable

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<sup>3</sup> a 'scull' was a simple helmet

<sup>4</sup> John Thomas senior, John's father, was churchwarden in 1711 and undoubtedly contributed to the earlier entries in his son's book.

wealth and standing in the community.

Turning to the recorded names of the churchwardens, of which there are 234 in the lists covering 157 years from 1597, no fewer than 22 are Kidners, and each of the six generations living during the period are represented by one or more of the family and by seven individuals in all. The first recorded incumbent is John Kidner of Spaxton<sup>5</sup> for the year 1597, and one of those elected for the last of the 157 years – 1754 - is George Kidner of Spaxton (1700-1764). No other Spaxton family has a comparable record of service to the church during these years.

After 1754 there is a 40-year gap in the record. When proper records are resumed in 1794, most of the family names which featured in the earlier records have disappeared, and the list is dominated by a few newcomers from families which must have moved into the parish during the 'lost' years.

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<sup>5</sup> John Kidner of Spaxton '3' or the third in my shorthand

## **The Family at Spaxton from 16th century until the Restoration in 1660**

Information about the first John Kidner of Spaxton is meagre and it is impossible to be sure that the family tree I have prepared is correct for the years from John's marriage in Stogursey in about 1520 until after the birth of his grandchildren around 1560. We have two main documentary sources to guide us: the Spaxton parish registers which start in 1558, and the Somerset Militia Muster Rolls of 1569. We have already mentioned the latter, although the question arises why only Richard was mustered as an ableman when there were four other Kidners - cousins of Richard - living in Spaxton who were liable for service on the grounds of age. The answer probably lies in the quota of armed men which had to be found by the parish. John Kidner II was the head of the family at the time and the obvious choice to represent the family was John's eldest son. In all, only ten men were mustered as ablemen from Spaxton, although the arms found seem to have been sufficient for just four. Amongst the ten ablemen was one John Murley, who may have been the John Morly who married Catherine Kidner in 1575.

The Parish Registers are the foundation of any family tree. But for Spaxton their value is much reduced by the ravages of time - some parts have been lost, some destroyed by damp or vermin and some have become illegible after years of use. The register of baptisms is usually the most valuable to the genealogist since it records the names of both child and father and thus establishes the link between generations. Unfortunately at Spaxton it is the baptismal register that has suffered most, covering only 33 of the 73 years between 1558 and 1630. Of the family baptisms during this period, only 14 are recorded out of the 30 which probably took place. Some of the missing dates can be estimated from other sources, as can the names of the parents. But we are left with several names which can only be placed in the family tree by guesswork based on clues such as the Christian names common to particular branches of the family, the coincidence of dates and so on. Such cases are shown in the tables by dotted lines.

There are, of course, exceptions. Relationships can sometimes be established by the terms of a will, by land leases (which were often for the duration of the lives of named individuals), or through special circumstances such as the 1569 Muster of the Somerset Militia when John Kidner of Spaxton and his eldest son Richard are named in the same muster roll. But in some cases proof of descent may be impossible.

The early entries in the parish registers were kept on loose sheets of paper. Parliament, in about 1595, ordered that these sheets be incorporated into bound books which were then to be used for all subsequent entries. In Spaxton the two churchwardens for 1597, John Kidner and John Raffe, undertook the task of having the earlier entries transcribed into a book, although sadly many pages had already been lost. One of the transcribed pages from the baptismal register is reproduced at Annex D. Each page was signed by the churchwardens; Richard Kidner's signature has been partly obscured in the reproduction.

Turning again to the four sons of John Kidner of Spaxton (see table opposite), Thomas seems to have been the youngest; and it was Thomas's youngest son John who was churchwarden in 1597. We know little else



about this John except that he married Jane Gilberd in 1590 and they had two sons: John, born the same year, and William who was born in 1591. The young John married Anne Cavill at Spaxton in 1617 but had no male heir. Of William we know nothing other than the date of his baptism at Spaxton on 30th August 1591.

We have already noted that John's third son Francis (born c.1525) seems to have left Spaxton some time after his son Edward was baptised in 1564. He and his family seem to have settled at Huntspill near Burnham on Sea, for we find Francis's grandson Edward, son of Edward, named in a later document as 'Edward of Huntspill'. Nothing more is known of this family at the time of writing.<sup>6</sup>

Henry, John's second son (born c.1523), remained in Spaxton and married Alice Scely (or Seeley) at Spaxton on 3rd July 1558. This marriage is one of the very earliest entries in the parish register. They had one son, Henry, baptised on 21st August 1558, and probably two others, John and Ambrose born sometime between 1560 and 1570, and almost certainly after 1656 when an 18-year gap in the register starts. These three brothers all married. Henry had two sons Robert and Francis, baptised in 1593 and 1599 respectively, but there is no record of a son born to either John or Ambrose although both had daughters.

In the next generation, Henry's son Robert appears to have had only one child, Jane; while Francis, with five children born between 1627-1639, moved to Merriott in south Somerset. It was a grandson of Francis, also named Francis, who married Elizabeth Vildy in 1693 at Hinton St George, where I now live and where my own daughter was married.

Thus by the beginning of the 17th century only the descendants of John Kidner of Spaxton 2 (1522-1578) remained in Spaxton to carry on the family name. John had one son, Richard, born in about 1550, and two daughters of whom one Catherine - married John Morly at Spaxton in 1575. But Richard's son, also Richard, married Mary Morly of the same family in 1598 and had four sons and one daughter and thus secured the future of this branch of the family.

### **Status of the Family at Spaxton in 17th century**

It is clear that Richard inherited considerable property from his father, sufficient to affirm his status in the local community as a yeoman farmer. He was not 'gentry', but a free man farming his own land, in a position to pass on to his own sons sufficient land to ensure them a reasonable standard of living and with prospects of a favourable marriage. This wealth seems to have accumulated over several generations from the days when the family lived in the Stogursey and Petheram area. It is also apparent that they were literate and, by the standards of the time, had had a good basic education - at least from the time when William Kidner was churchwarden of St Andrew's Stogursey in the early 16th century. Earlier than that the records are few and inconclusive and it would be dangerous to speculate (more than we have done already!).

The younger Richard's four sons were Thomas, George, Robert and

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<sup>6</sup> Huntspill is only 7 miles ENE of Spaxton, but it lies across the River Parrett and was therefore not easily accessible by road from Spaxton.

Richard, born between 1601 and 1610 and probably in that order. The parish register of baptisms for the period has been lost. Thomas was almost certainly the eldest but was not a beneficiary of his father's will (1639) probably because he had already been provided for; his son Richard received twenty shillings. He had married about 1628 and had moved to Broomfield before his father's death in 1639. He was to play an important part in the family's history which will be covered in a later chapter on Broomfield.

Richard's second son George married Mary Godd (or Good) in 1640; and he inherited from his father a tenement called Blacksole (the present day 'Blaxhold') between Enmore and Merridge and a house known as 'Somersland' there, in all about 55 acres of land. Mary Godd was a widow, born Mary Walten, who had married into the Good family which farmed near Merridge in the parish of Spaxton. Good's Farm still exists and lies between Merridge and Lower Aisholt.

In 1635 Robert, Richard's third son, married Alice Leave, daughter of John Leave yeoman. On his father's death he inherited all the Spaxton estates the family held amounting to some 94 acres of land and two dwelling houses - North House in Lower Pightley and South House in Higher Pightly. After their marriage, Robert and Alice sued her brother John and others over the lease of a tenement at Overpignole in Spaxton parish which they claimed had been left in trust for Alice by her father, John Leave senior, who had died in 1634 or 1635. The case was heard in May 1636<sup>7</sup> but the outcome is not recorded. Overpignole seems to have been part of the Leave family's property in Ebslye nearby. I have found no further reference to Overpignole and presume that Robert and Alice lost the case.

In an earlier action, in October 1621<sup>8</sup>, Richard senior had sued a John Cole about a dwelling house and some 10 acres of land at Huntspill, perhaps on behalf of his cousin Edward who was still a minor. That Richard had kept in touch with the Huntspill family is apparent from the clause in Richard's will leaving Edward twenty shillings. And in yet another case in 1626 Richard, with John Malet of Enmore and others, were themselves sued by one Richard Oliver about the lease of land in Currypool Park, Spaxton<sup>9</sup>. But in neither of these cases is the outcome recorded.

These three actions in the Courts show that the family had interests in land other than the holdings specifically identified below.

Finally, Richard, the youngest of the four brothers, married Dorothy Stanford of Overstowey in 1634 and settled in Aisholt. But he died only two years later and Dorothy remarried in 1649. I have failed to discover what land he held in Aisholt, but it seems likely that his father gave him some land there which Dorothy inherited on his death. Richard and Dorothy had one son, Richard, born in 1635, who paid hearth tax in Aisholt in 1665; he was churchwarden of Overstowey (and apparently Nether Stowey also) in 1670, and died in 1671 at the early age of 35. Nevertheless, he probably married and had at least one son, for there were Kidners in Overstowey in

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<sup>7</sup> Chancery Proceedings C2, Chas I, K18/51; 22 May 1636

<sup>8</sup> Chancery Proceedings, PRO C8/87/298

<sup>9</sup> 39<sup>th</sup> Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Records (1878), page 315.

the early 18th century whose lineage I have not yet studied.

Richard of Spaxton 2 also had a daughter, Mary, who was born in about 1610 and who married Hugh Knight of Spaxton. The Knight family held land at Ebslye and Splatt in the first half of the 17th century. Hugh was churchwarden in 1640 but by 1658 the only Knight recorded as living in Spaxton is 'the Widow Knight', that is Mary Kidner. But Hugh and Mary had a daughter, baptised Mary about 1630 who we will meet again in the chapter on Broomfield. The Knights had been close friends of the Kidners, probably since the late 16th century when Hugh's father Gregory lived in Spaxton, possibly at Radlet. Hugh was a witness to both Richard and Robert's wills, and was executor for Richard's wife Mary in 1649.

### **Plague and Civil War 1639-1660**

The years 1639 and 1640 were traumatic for the family in Spaxton. These were plague years in the West Country and many Somerset people died. It is likely that Richard and his son Robert were victims, and Richard's brother, whose name I have not found, also died in 1639. In Taunton, another George Kidner, his wife Margaret and their eldest daughter Frances all died of the plague within a few days of each other in September 1640.<sup>10</sup> The plague continued to take its toll until 1645 when the level of deaths returned to its normal level. It may have been the cause of death of Richard of Aisholt in 1636, in its very early days.

Also at this time the tensions that would lead to the Civil War were building. In Somerset there were two issues about which most people felt strongly - the Monarchy and the Church. Most of the West Country was for the King, and the parishes wanted neither Catholicism nor Puritanism. They much preferred the reformed Protestant Church established by Henry VIII and were not attracted by the extreme Presbyterian austerity sought by the Puritans. In Spaxton the parish was proud of its name - St Margaret's - and of its fiercely royalist rector, Richard Powell, and enjoyed the music and colour associated with the church services. In particular, Powell enjoyed the loyalty and support of his churchwardens, amongst whom we find Robert Kidner in 1637. The respect was mutual, for when Richard Kidner died in 1639, his executor was 'Ric. Powell'.

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<sup>10</sup> There were one or two Kidner families living around Taunton at this time. The burial register for Taunton St James describes George and Margaret as paupers.





The Civil War broke out in 1642, but the Parliamentarians never succeeded in subduing the West Country. In 1645 they occupied Bridgwater and laid siege to Bridgwater Castle. Writing later in the 17th century, John Walker says of Richard Powell<sup>11</sup>:

"When Bridgwater was besieged, he went into that Town and acted as a true subject ought to do, to vindicate his rightful and lawful King. At the same time the Parliamentary Army possessed Taunton; and when this clergyman repaired to his own house, he was forced to place people to watch whether any of the Parliamentary Army were coming; who often searched his house, and thrust their swords through his beds to find him. And when Bridgwater was delivered up to Parliament, all those clergymen who would not take the Covenant were driven away on foot to Portsmouth; amongst whom was Mr Powell; and there they were put on board a ship to be carried to London .... and there they were put into a Pest-house, and allowed no other lodging than the hard floor; and fearing that the plague would not kill them fast enough, they sent them a dish of capons with a delicate sauce, as they pretended. The poor, innocent, half-starved clergymen, thinking this dish to have come from a friend, and being very hungry, did eat freely of it; but one of them ... bid them have care fearing there might be poison among it; and upon that takes a spoonful of the sauce and gargling it in his mouth, presently spat out all his teeth. Immediately upon this all of them died except (him) ... he only escaped to tell me."

The Parliamentarians achieved military victory at Naseby in 1645 and Charles I was beheaded in 1649. Thereafter all ceremonial was forbidden in the churches, together with the use of vestments and the playing of music. But otherwise the Civil War seems to have had little impact on Spaxton. The only damage done to the church that is recorded is the defacement of the Royal Arms which hung in the chancel; the destruction of the statue of St Margaret which stood in a niche in the church porch; damage to a few of the gargoyles which appear to have been used for target practice by Roundhead soldiers; and the loss of the old, probably Norman, font which had to be replaced by a new one after 1660.

There are no reports of fighting or violence in the parish. No doubt the villages kept out of sight as far as possible and grumbled about the restrictions imposed on them!

The new Rector, appointed in 1645, was John Carlile who came of a more moderate family where the Presbyterian creed was readily accepted. Richard Powell's natural successor was his son, also Richard, who was studying for holy orders at Oxford when his father was murdered. The Church, however, refused to appoint him because of his father's views. John Carlile, however, confounded the authorities by marrying Richard Powell's eldest daughter Dorothy, befriending his son and having him elected churchwarden in 1656 after his graduation. After the Restoration in 1660, when Richard might have been appointed Rector of Spaxton, he refused to oust his brother-in-law and accepted the Parish of Cannington where he remained until his death in 1685. John Carlile became a popular and highly respected Rector, and encouraged the reintroduction of the practices, colour

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<sup>11</sup> *The suffering of the Clergy in the Time of the Grand Rebellion* by John Walker

and music of the Established Church of England. John Carlisle witnessed and executed the will of Mary Kidner née Morley, widow of Richard Kidner, when she died in 1649.

### **Landholding in Spaxton Parish, 16th and 17th centuries**

There is a considerable amount of documentation on landholdings in Spaxton in the 17th and early 18th centuries, and I include extracts which concern our own family and relatives at Appendices Band C to this chapter.

The land held by Richard Kidner 2 at the end of the 16th century comprised:

- Two tenements in Lower and Highly Pightley, with two dwelling houses known as North House and South House, totalling some 31 acres
- Three further tenements in Pightley known as Duckhams, Fishers and Days, totalling 43 acres
- A single tenement in Splatt known as Leggs, amounting to 22 acres. (See Annex for the 1827 will of Richard Kidner, which bequeathed this property and the Water Grist Mill thereon to his nephew William Squire.)

In all Richard held some 96 acres.

All the Pightley holdings were held leasehold of Sir John Malet of Enmore, and it is not clear when they were first acquired. The lease held by Richard was signed by Sir John Malet who died in 1615, but whether this was the original lease or a renewal is not known. It seems likely that the two dwellings and the two tenements at Pightley were held from an earlier date and possibly from the 1540s. It is known that Kidners held undefined interests in land in the Spaxton/Merridge area as early as the 14th century or even earlier. Maud de Kytenor had married William Malet I of Enmore in the early 1200s. Those are the facts, the rest is guesswork.

The picture we have is of a reasonably prosperous but hard-working yeoman family. Not gentry, but able to maintain a very acceptable standard of living, to ensure adequate provision for their sons and the prospects of a satisfactory marriage for their daughters. They had their own seats in church and attended Sunday services regularly. Together with the Knights, Collards, Leaves, Goods and Morleys, the Kidners were among the most respected dozen or so families in the parish.

Duckhams, Fishers and Days are so named after their earlier occupants and were acquired by the family sometime after 1618, as was Leggs. A further tenement known as Millses<sup>12</sup>, held by Robert Kidner in 1687, has not been identified though we know it was held by one John Mills in 1618. John Thomas's survey of 1720 gives the total area of cultivated land at Pightley as 352 acres. It is unlikely to have changed very much during the previous 200 years. Finally a survey carried out in 1791 says that Pightley then comprised nine houses with an undefined area of pasture

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<sup>12</sup> Referenced in the description of the Churchyard Bounds for 1687 in Michael Odum's *The History of the Church and Village of Spaxton* (1974)



and arable.<sup>13</sup>

One important question remains to be answered: What type of farming was carried on over these acres? There is little indication of the answer in any of the sources we have considered. The goods and chattels listed in the few wills which have survived are typical of the things one would expect to find in a rural home of the period: beds, bedding and linen; pewter platters and a few silver spoons; cauldrons, pots and a posnett; cupboards, chairs, a spruce chest and other coffer; a 'white brasse panne', a brewing furnace and a soap furnace; and milk kyne. All items are of strictly practical value and there is nothing to indicate any real wealth.

Leland, touring the West Country in about 1540<sup>14</sup>, wrote that he saw evidence of agricultural prosperity wherever he went, with much land enclosed for pasture. In the area of the Quantocks he reported plenty of beans, wheat and cattle. But, as Dunning points out<sup>15</sup>, Somerset in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was a rich county and the third or fourth most densely populated county in England. Its wealth was based in great measure on its wool and cloth industries. Sheep farming was probably widespread. Odum says that there was an active wool industry in Spaxton from before 1500. Weaving, tucking and fulling; tentering, dyeing and finishing – all processes in the manufacture of cloth – were carried on in Spaxton. One of the 16<sup>th</sup> century bench-ends in St Margaret's church shows a fuller at work using his specialised hand tools. The raw wool was no doubt produced locally.

### **The Restoration and later years**

The church records kept during the period of the Commonwealth are spare, although we do know that a Robert Kidner was churchwarden in 1654. The family at that time had been sorely affected by the plague, the only male member of Richard's family remaining in Spaxton being his grandson, Robert also, then aged 16 or 17. Richard also had a second cousin called Robert who had been born in 1593, the grandson of Henry Kidner of Spaxton and his wife Alice, who was thus aged 61 in 1654, when a Robert Kidner appears in the list of churchwardens. That year there is an entry in the churchwardens' accounts which reads:

5 November 1654 – To the Ringers, in ale, by Thomas  
Jenkins and Robert Kidner 1/-

The date, of course, is significant. The Gunpowder Plot had been foiled that day in 1605, but it was not until nearly fifty years later, in 1651, that the anniversary was first celebrated in Spaxton by ringing the bells of St Margaret's. The ringing of bells for religious purposes was forbidden by the Puritans. Perhaps Guy Fawkes Day provided a way around that imposition that had no religious and, by then, political implication. Thereafter the occasion was marked each year by a peal of bells, the ringers being provided with refreshment at the expense of the church funds.

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<sup>13</sup> Collinson, J. *'The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset'* (1791)

<sup>14</sup> *John Leland's Itinerary*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith (1964)

<sup>15</sup> R.W.Dunning *A History of Somerset* (1978)

1660 marked the end of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of the Monarchy. Charles II entered London and was proclaimed King on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1660, and the anniversary was known as 'Oak Apple Day'.

The churchwardens' accounts, which have survived for the period 1651-1698, provide the best available commentary on the life of the village and the varied duties of the churchwardens. Soon after the Restoration we find the traditional trappings of the Protestant Church being restored:

1662	-	For a new surplus and the making	£3-10-0
	-	For 6 yards of black serge for a hearse cloth, and making	£1- 5-0
	-	For a Common Prayer Book <sup>16</sup>	7-6
1665	-	The Ringers ye 29 <sup>th</sup> May	2/-
1669	-	Paid Mr Hayward for his journey from bath to Spaxton	£1 - 0-0
		and to him for repairing the organ	£5 - 0-0
1670	-	Paid Robert Holo for playing the organ and	£4 - 0-0
		Paid John Loggatt for blowing the billows <sup>17</sup>	£1 - 0-0
1681	-	John Loggatt for blowing the billows one year and ¼ year for cleaning the churchyard and	£1 - 2-0
		Paid William Apsey for casting the second bell	£14-12-0
	-	for drawing articles about the bell	1/-
	-	for taking down and hanging up the bell	3/-
	-	for carrying the same bell to Enmore	5/-

Perhaps Enmore, and other parishes, had also decided to have a bell recast by an itinerant bell-founder, who had carried out the actual work at Enmore.

1686	-	To John Loggatt – ¼ year's wages and blowing the billows	4/-
		To William Hasle – ½ year's wages and blowing the billows	6/-

So John Loggatt retired in 1686 and William Hasle took on the job at a reduced wage. None of which even hints at the turmoil of the previous year. For in 1685 The Duke of Monmouth had landed at Torquay hoping to raise an army from disaffected West Country elements, but was stopped at the Battle of Sedgemoor, fought just eight miles from Spaxton. I have,

<sup>16</sup> This would have been the new prayer book authorised under the Clarendon Code in 1662, its use enforced by the Act of Uniformity of 1662.

<sup>17</sup> These were annual payments. John Loggatt worked the organ bellows for many years, but his payment was later reduced to 16/- a year. His fee for keeping the churchyard tidy amounted to 24/- a year.

however, discovered no reference to the Rebellion in any of the Spaxton records. In the list of rebels charged at the 'Bloody Assizes', there is only one Spaxton man, an Abraham Gulliver, charged with 'being absent (from Spaxton), believed aiding the rebels', but there is no record of his conviction and it seems probable that he was never brought to trial.<sup>18</sup>

In 1689 a Richard Kidner was elected churchwarden, and his name sets a problem of identification. There are four possibilities:

- Richard Kidner 4, born in about 674 and thus not more than 16 years old – so too young to be considered;
- Alice Kidner was expecting a child when her husband Robert died in 1639. But there is no record of the baptism (at least no Kidner entries are legible in the register), and there is no mention of a second child in the 1649 will of Alice's mother;
- Richard, son of George Kidner of Goathurst, would have been 48 years old, but he lived outside the parish. But Goathurst is only 3 miles from Spaxton, and it was customary for the leading families to nominate the churchwardens by rotation when the parishioners had shown to no clear preference. This Richard is the best candidate on what we know.
- He might, of course, be a Richard Kidner of whom we know nothing.

A Richard Kidner – perhaps the same one - was also churchwarden in 1694, 1695, 1697, 1699 and 1701, and possibly 1698 as well although Odlum gives the name as Robert Kidner. That seems unlikely as the only living Robert – as far as we know – was just 20 years old. After an interval of 14 years Richard Kidner 4, son of Robert, became churchwarden, and he held the post for five years between 1715 and 1724.

Returning to the churchwardens' accounts, there are important entries for 1694:

1694 -	Paid Thomas Knight for new casting the Great Bell and adding 440 pounds of metal, by Richard Kidner and Christopher Ruscombe, all at a cost of	£40-0-0
-	Paid for weighing the bell several times and for two journeys to Clossett <sup>19</sup>	£2- 1-0
-	Paid Jonathan Leave carrying the bell to Bridgwater and bring back	12/-
-	Paid Mr Parsons carrying the Great Bell from Bridgwater to Clossett and back again	£2- 0-0

The Great Bell was the Tenor, the largest of the five then installed, weighing some 19¾ cwt after the extra metal had been added. It was recast at Closworth and finished at Bridgwater. The job was well done and the bell has not been recast since. It still hangs in the tower, where the visitor can

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<sup>18</sup> *The Monmouth Rebels*, W. McDonald Wigfield, Somerset Record Society (1985)

<sup>19</sup> Closworth, near Yeovil



read the inscription it bears:

"Richard Kidner and Christopher Ruscombe 1694".

In the following year it was the turn of the roof to receive attention:

1695 -	Paid Peter Hurrow for 2 tun 6 cwt. new lead for the tower at 2d a pound	£43- 8-0
	His own labour and his man's, 14 days at 4/6d a day	£3- 3-0
	Sold him lead carried down from the Tower 1 tun 7 cwt. 3 qtrs 16 lbs	

The last surviving entry in the accounts, when Robert Kidner was churchwarden, reads:

1698 - Paid a Dogwiper his salary, 2/6d

The Dogwiper, or dog-whipper, was responsible for keeping under control the dogs brought to church when their masters attended Sunday service.

After 1698 and, with few exceptions over the following hundred or so years, the churchwardens' accounts have not survived, and the church records generally are very patchy.

### **The Waywardens or Highway Surveyors**

Maintenance of the roads had been the responsibility of parishes since the Highways Act of 1555. Under that Act every parishioner had to provide, at his own expense, carts horses, tools or just his own labour for up to six days a year. To supervise and organise the work and to arrange the supply of materials, parishes were required to appoint a Surveyor of Highways, or Waywarden as he came to be known in later years. The Vestry would submit names to the local magistrates for approval. The post was unpaid and often required the Surveyors to advance money from their own resources and was therefore restricted to those of some wealth.

In Spaxton the Parish was divided into four divisions and it became the practice to appoint a Surveyor for each division. Lists of their names for the years 1699-1754 have survived together with some extracts from their accounts. After 1754 there is a gap in the records until they are resumed in 1773. Among the names we find Robert Kidner for 1699, Richard Kidner for 1728 and 1729, and George Kidner for 1746.

George Kidner was the last of the family to play a significant role in Spaxton affairs, as far as I can ascertain. He was the son of Richard Kidner 4, and was born about 1700. He served as churchwarden in 1746, 1748, 1753 and 1754, but otherwise we know very little about him. He had one son, Richard, and three daughters, all baptised at Spaxton between 1741 and 1755.

### **John Thomas's Book, 1720-1750**

John Thomas kept a book in which, from about 1700 onwards, he recorded his views on any event which interested him, some of which he

wrote about retrospectively and with the help of his father. The book is not a complete record of parish affairs but, in the absence of official records, is an invaluable source. It includes notes of factual matters such as land holdings and church seating, extracts of which are included in Annexes B and C. One of the most valuable sections is his record of the two 'Agreements' he prepared for the Vestry's approval. The 'First Agreement', dated 1702, considers the work of the churchwardens and severely criticizes the Vestry for failing to pay proper attention to their duties. He most strongly denounces the wardens and the Overseers of the Poor for extravagance in their control of parish funds. His aim seems to be to reduce expenditure rather than to provide better care for the poor; and he does nothing to discourage the traditional rewards of office, approving the custom of allowing the Rector, churchwardens and other Parish officials 'one substantial dish of meat with drink and other necessities' after each of their monthly meetings, all at the cost of the parish.

This first Agreement covers, amongst other matters, the arrangements for the election of Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor. It includes two lists of those proposed for the Office of Overseer:

<b>The First Twelve:</b>		
Henry Carlile, Rector		
John Thomas, senior		for 1700
Robert Everard, Esq	}	
Richard Kidner		for 1701
John Jenkins	}	
Goyne Teall		for 1702
Robert Kidner	}	
Thomas Reason		for 1703
Henry Carlile	}	
Richard Porter		for 1704
John Barrell	}	
Luke Parsons		for 1705

**The Second Twelve:** This list covers the years 1706 to 1711 in a similar manner, including:

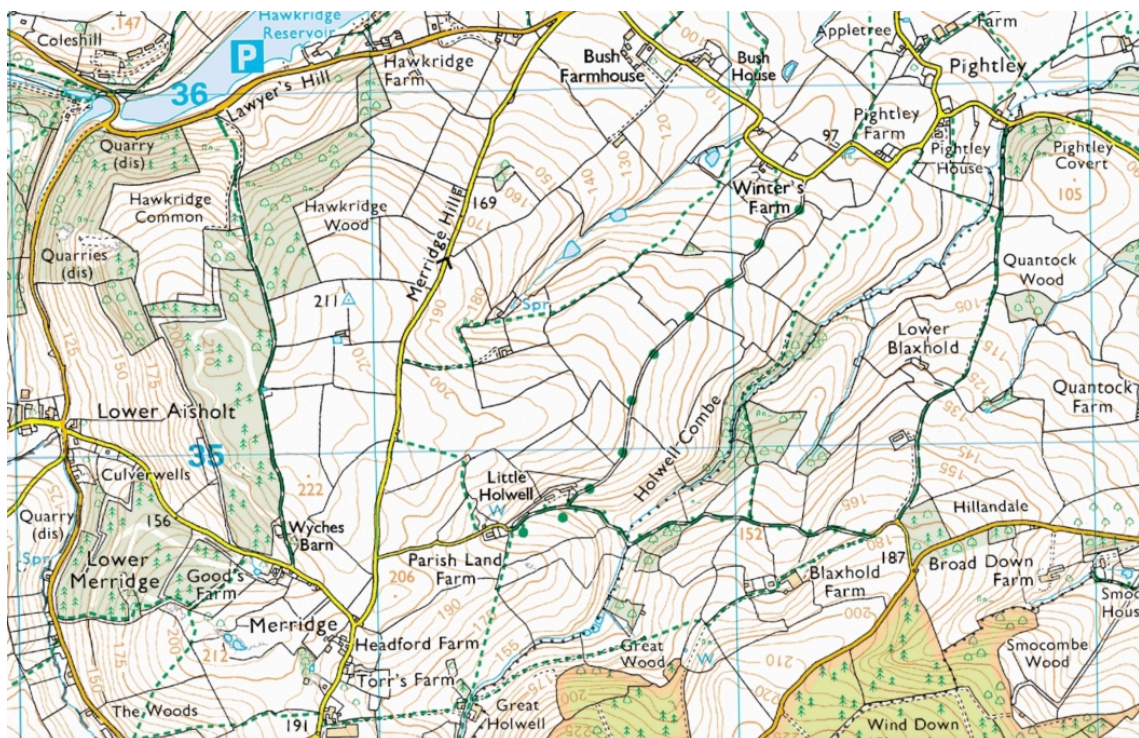
Thomas Reason	}	
Richard Kidner		for 1707
Richard Kidner	}	
John Farthing		for 1710

The records of who actually filled these posts show that the two lists were accepted without unavoidable change. Before 1700 there had been four Overseers appointed each year, including Robert Kidner in 1697 and Richard Kidner in 1698. The change from four to two greatly reduced

expenditure because - it has been suggested - the posts were restricted to those of greater wealth who were correspondingly less generous with the use of parish funds - the bulk of which they themselves provided.

The Second Agreement, which followed soon after the first, set out regulations concerning the use of parish funds, and is of little use as a source of family history.

The final entry in John Thomas' Book, however, dated 11th September 1750, is of interest. It concerns an attempt by one Thomas Carey Esquire to take possession of parish land at Holwell which, according to Thomas, had been owned by the parish of Spaxton since early in the 14th century. He lists nine Spaxton people, whom he describes as 'roagus', who supported Carey. The nine include John Kidner, John Cavill senior, and John Cavill junior who married Charity Kidner. John and Charity Kidner were the grandchildren of Robert of Spaxton 3 who had died in 1688. The Holwell land lies just within the Spaxton parish boundary on the southern boundary with Broomfield parish. It was known in the parish as 'Kytcot'. One reason why John Kidner may have been an interested party is that he may still have held Holwell farm, bequeathed by Thomas Kidner of Broomfield in his will of 1651: "unto the said Richard Kidner my sonne my tenement called Holwell ... by estimacon three score acres be they more or less in Broomfield aforesaid and all my estate and terme of yeares therein". Richard had married Mary Knight of Spaxton, and in due course the lease of the Holwell tenement would probably have been inherited by John Kidner. Little Holwell and Great Holwell are marked on the modern Ordnance Survey map, and 'Parish Land Farm' lies between the two.





After 1754 I have found few further references to the family in Spaxton. The first is an entry in the Highway Surveyor's accounts for 1791:

1791 -	Paid Mr Kidner for wrighting assignment	
	for a wheal barrow:	Assignment 1/-
		Borrow 6/-

The second item, in the churchwardens' accounts, refers to the granddaughter of John and Charity Cavill:

1816 -	John Cavill's daughter, a hedgehog	4d
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Hedgehogs were considered vermin and payment was made for any destroyed. Catching them and other pests was a job for the children. Sums paid included 4d per dozen for sparrows; 4d each for stoats, polecats and hedgehogs; and 6d each for hawks. In 1817 in Spaxton payment was recorded for 28 dozen sparrows, 4 hawks and 6 hedgehogs, but no stoats or polecats.

The third reference is the will of Richard Kidner, who died in 1828, and who left Legg's Mill to his nephew Nicholas Squire.



**The Churchwardens of Spaxton 1597-1754**

from a list prepared by Rev. Michael Odum in *The History of the Church and Village of Spaxton* (1974).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Churchwardens</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1597	John Keedner ♦ John Raffe	
1607	Symon Morly ♦ Thomas Hoskins	Morly was probably the brother of Mary Kidner
1610	Barnabas Leave ♦ William Thorne	Barnabas was John Leave's brother
1619	Barnabas Leave ♦ Henery Thorne	
1621	Richard Kidner ♦ John Crosse	
1622	Thomas Collard ♦ Andrew Crosse	Collard was trustee for land left to Alice Leave by her father
1629	Arthur Jenkins ♦ Simon Leave	
1630	John Leave ♦ John Ruscombe	
1636	Barnabas Leave ♦ William Thorne	Thorne held the lease on Parish Land Farm
1637	George Daves ♦ Robert Kidner	Robert b.c. 1606
1640	Hugh Knight ♦ Francis Osbourne	Knight married Mary Kidner
1654	Thomas Jenkins ♦ Robert Kidner	Jenkins was a dyer. Robert (1637-
1656	Richard Powell ♦ Thomas Gander	Powell was the son of the Rector murdered in 1645
1661	John Collard ♦ Thomas Fisher	Collard died in 1678, and made Robert Kidner an overseer of his will
1664	Robert Kidner ♦ Henry Cole	
1670	Robert Kidner ♦ William Hodges	
1678	Robert Hook ♦ Frances Leave	
1679	Robert Kidner ♦ Richard Biffen	
1681	Robert Kidner ♦ Robert Streat	
1686	Robert Kidner ♦	Robert died 1686

	William Thorne	
1689	Richard Kidner ♦ Thomas Trott	Richard was Robert's younger brother
1694-95	Richard Kidner ♦ Christopher Ruscombe	
1697	Richard Kidner ♦ William Blake	
1698	William Thorne ♦ Robert Kidner	Robert (1678-
1699-1701	Thomas Reason ♦ Richard Kidner	
1715	Richard Kidner ♦ Luke Parsons	
1716	Richard Kidner ♦ Arthur Blake	
1724	Richard Kidner ♦ Thomas Reason	
1744	John White ♦ George Kidner	White had bought the Pightley estate from George's father, Richard before 1720.
1748	George Kidner ♦ John White	
1753	George Kidner by himself	
1754	George Kidner ♦ Thomas Grant	

Note: No records in the years 1598-1606, 1608-09, 1611-18, 1624-25, 1631-35, 1641-50, 1652, 1659, 1755-72, 1774-84, 1786-94.



## Landholdings in Spaxton 1658-1720

There are four primary sources which tell us what land and property the family held in Spaxton over this period:

- The Church rate for 1658
- Hearth Tax paid in 1664 and 1670, and exemptions
- The list of Church Bounds for 1687
- John Thomas's survey of 1720

### The Church rate for 1658

A rate made on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1658 for the repair of Spaxton Church:

Pightley -- a total of £2, including

Robert Kidner	1/10d
Barnabas Leave	4/4d
Alice Kidner	1/10d
George Kidner	3d

Ebslye – a total of £1 – 0 – 4, including

John Leave	2/6d
The Widow Knight	2/- (ie Mary Knight née Kidner)

Splatt – a total of 19/-, including

The Widow Knight	2/4d
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### Hearth Tax for 1664/65 and Exemptions for 1670

The tax was payable at a rate of 2/- per hearth in all dwellings with an annual value of 20/- or more. Amounts paid in 1664/65 were:

Pightley

Robert Kidner	8/-
Barnabas Leave	6/-

Elsewhere (location not stated)

Robert Kidner was not required to pay tax on a second house because it was not 'rated for Church and Poor', i.e. it was not liable for Church rates, presumably because it was not worth 20/- per annum.

Exemptions for 1670

Amongst those exempt were Humfry and John Cavill, Thomas Hill, William Tucker (tailor), and 55 others. There were no Kidners or Leaves. Together with the 110 who did pay tax, the total number of dwellings in the parish must have been about 170. Odium describes the typical dwelling occupied by poor families as 'no more than four

mud walls, a turf roof and one room perhaps divided by a curtain of sacking'. Only the comparatively wealthy lived in stone cottages with thatched roofs.

The list is signed by Joseph Cooke, Rector; Robert Kidner, William Hodges (his mark) churchwardens; and by certain others.

### **Churchyard Bounds for 1687**

The boundaries of the Churchyard – fences, hedges, walls and gates – were the responsibility of the occupants of properties adjoining the churchyard, the liability being based on the value of the land and buildings. The list below is an extract from the 65 entries in all.

#### **An Account of the Bounds about ye Churchyard of Spaxton as followeth Anno : Dom 1687**

The wall against ye Church house belongs to Mr Arindell and Mr John Blake for Tuxwell;

The hach belonging to ye parish;

The gate next to that, to ye Rector;

Ye next to, John Barrell;

...

Next to that is a tree belonging to ye parish;

Next to that tree is a wall belonging to ye Widow Leave for Ebsley and Edward Leave for Aishtons and John Crocker... for ye Mill;

...

Next Mr Kidner for Higher Pightly;

...

Next Robert Kidner for Fishers;

...

Next Robert Kidner for his south House;

...

Next Robert Kidner for his north House;

...

Next Francis Leave two pairs of bounds together belonging to their Mills;

...

Next Robert Kidner for Duckhams;

...

Next Robert Kidner for Millses;

...

Next Robert Kidner for Leggs;

...

And all the wall of the North side of the Churchyard to Mr John Burlande for the Farme.

**SPAXTON in *A History of the County of Somerset***

The ancient parish of Spaxton comprises scattered hamlets and farmsteads on the eastern side of the Quantocks. The main part of the parish included settlements at Spaxton, Four Forks, Merridge, with Lower Merridge and Courtway, Pightley, Radlet, and Tuxwell, and entirely surrounded a detached part of Charlinch called Bush. A detached area to the north, the former manor of Stockland Lovel and later known as North Street, included Coultings and Farm. There was also a smaller area to the south-east, surrounded by Enmore parish, which was the 11th-century holding of Quantock, later Quantock Durborough. The highly irregular boundaries and their relationship with other parishes in the immediate vicinity suggest that Spaxton parish may be the residue of a larger unit, possibly with a minster at its centre, which included Charlinch and perhaps Postridge and part of Nether Stowey.

The main part of the parish measured up to 4 km. from west to east and nearly 6 km. from north to south. North Street was 3 km. from west to east and 1.5 km. from north to south, and Quantock Durborough 1 km. by 0.5 km. In 1839 the total area was reckoned as 3,387 acres.

West and south-west of Spaxton village and Pightley the land rises up a spur formed between two streams flowing from the Quantocks, one through Holwell Combe where it marks the boundary with Enmore, the other called Peartwater. Hawkridge Hill rises to more than 213 m. and then falls abruptly into a valley at Lower Merridge, where a stream divides the parish from Bishop's Lydeard and Aisholt. In the south, where the parish reaches the Quantock ridge, the land rises to over 244 m. near the Travellers Rest inn, further south-west to above 228 m. on Gib Hill, and then up the scarp to the boundary ridge which gave Merridge its name on the 305-m. contour just below the summit of Cothelstone Hill. North of Peartwater is a smaller spur shared with Over Stowey parish, a shallow valley occupied by Radlet common and wood, and then a small ridge of slates and grits. The north-western and eastern part of the parish, below the 91-m. contour, lies largely on marl and valley gravels with a band of sandstone running along the Peartwater through Spaxton village. Pockets of limestone were worked at Merridge in the 18th and 19th centuries, and licences to mine near Spaxton were granted in 1714.

By the later 11th century there were at least seven settlements, of which the most populous was Spaxton, followed by Pightley and Tuxwell. By the 13th century farmsteads or hamlets had been established, possibly by woodland clearance at Ebsley, and at Durland or Durnland and Pleabury, called Claybury Castle in 1838, the last on marginal land near the 122-m.

contour.

Until the 19th century there was no significant nucleated settlement. Spaxton village comprised the church, manor house, rectory, church house, two mills, and some cottages beside the Peartwater, all on a loop running from the Old Way, a road from Cannington which led directly to the Quantock ridgeway. The road from Bridgwater and Durleigh to the Quantocks ran slightly south of the village. There a roadside settlement grew up, known from the 15th century to the 18th as Fursegate. The scattered settlements produced the complex network of roads in the parish. Three parallel routes from Bridgwater and Cannington crossed the parish to the Quantock ridge. The most northerly was the only one to be turnpiked, in 1759.

There was woodland on all the 11th-century estates in the parish with the exception of Pightley. That name suggests pre-Conquest clearance, and field names indicate that clearance continued. In 1380 a tenant on Spaxton manor had to dig up tree roots. Felling was carried out in the later 15th century to the east of Spaxton park and at Stockland Lovel, where timber was sold with faggots and underwood. Coppices at Merridge were cut for charcoal burning in the 1650s and there were over 40 acres of wood there in 1709. In 1838 there were 90 acres of woodland, mainly plantations and coppices, the largest plantations being on Hawkridge Hill and encroaching on Merridge common.

Ten Spaxton people were implicated in the revolt of 1497, and one man in the Monmouth rebellion in 1685.

The **Duke of Monmouth** was the illegitimate son of Charles II and Lucy Walter. A Protestant, he assumed he would have popular support as king rather than Charles II's Catholic brother James. Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis with about 150 men and denounced James as a usurper. Supporters from Wiltshire, Devon, and Somerset joined him, but the king's army cornered him at Bridgewater and, attempting to break out across Sedgemoor, Monmouth's untrained troops were slaughtered. Survivors were savagely punished by Judge Jeffreys at the 'bloody assizes'. Monmouth was captured and executed on 15 July 1685.

#### **Perkin Warbeck and the English throne 1491 – 1499**

The son of a poor citizen of Tournai in Flanders, he pretended to be Richard, Duke of York, one of Edward IV's two sons whom Richard III had imprisoned in the Tower of London, and whose fate was unknown. He was supported by a number of enemies of Henry VII, including Charles VIII of France and James IV of Scotland. Eventually he landed in the west of England in 1497, but was soon captured by Henry's troops and hanged.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Until the 16th century or later part of the parish was in Merridge tithing in Andersfield hundred and part in Spaxton tithing in Cannington hundred. During the 17th and 18th centuries it was divided into 10 divisions or tithings for administrative purposes: Ebsley, Fursegate, Merridge, North Street, Padnoller, Pightley, Radlet, Spaxton, Splatt, and Tuxwell. For the land tax there were 7 tithings: Merridge, North Street, Pightley, Lower

Plainsfield, comprising Radlet and Padnoller, Spaxton, including Splatt and possibly Fursegate, Tuxwell, and the Spaxton division of Aisholt tithing which included Ebsley. The tithingman of Spaxton paid 'burghright' and other taxes for Pightley Malet at Cannington hundred court in 1521. In 1650 the Spaxton tithingman complained that his expenses in repairing stocks and conveying prisoners had not been paid.

Extracts from court rolls for Spaxton manor survive from between 1328 and 1403, and rolls for 1423–5, 1427, 1459, 1531, 1579, 1587–8, 1592, 1594, and 1599–1605. Courts were still held in the later 17th century when the tenant of the capital messuage had to entertain the lord and his officers twice a year. The 1425 court roll contained a separate entry for Fursegate. There was a hayward in 1425.

There was a parish beadle in 1607. Churchwardens were being appointed on a property rota by 1636, absentee owners having to pay a fine for not serving or to provide a deputy. Shortly before then collectors for the poor were recorded and by 1697 there were four overseers. Four highway surveyors divided the parish between them in 1699.

In 1700 the number of overseers was changed to two to reduce the cost, and in 1706 a new rota of 15 principal inhabitants was established to serve as wardens and overseers. In 1735 the number of eligible people was brought down to 12, and each year the two overseers were to receive £4 in expenses to work within the parish, and on retiring at the end of the year were to serve as churchwardens.

The 15 principal inhabitants of 1706 were also to act as a vestry concerned with poor relief and church repairs, and each in turn had to provide a meal for his fellows. Poor relief from 1706 was to be administered on the first Friday of every month at a certain tombstone in the churchyard. From 1735 relief was given monthly on Sundays.

From: British History Online

Source: Spaxton. A History of the County of Somerset: Volume VI, R.W. Dunning (Editor) (1992).

URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>

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**Will of Richard Kidner of Spaxton**

Made on the 18th February 1638/9 1631 and proved on the 16th April 1639.

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN, I Richard Kidner of Spaxton in the countie of Somerset being of perfect and good memory thanks be to Allmightie god, do constitute and ordaine this as my last will and testament.

**Inprimis** I commende my soule into the handes of Allmightie god my gracious creator hopinge by the meritte of Jesus Christ and a lively faith in his meritte to receive an everlasting inheritance amonge those that are sanctified and my bodie unto christian buriall in the p[ari]she Church of Spaxton.

**Item** I give unto the poore of the p[ari]sh of Spaxton twentie shillings to be distributed amongst them within one Moneth after my decease;

**Item** I give unto the five children of Francis Kidner my kinsman of Spaxton the summe of five pounds to be divided amonge them by equall portions and paid unto each of them as they shall successively accomplish the age of one and twentie years;

**Item** I give of my Chattell of Blacksole all that part of it which lies on the South west of the house conteyninge about thirtie four acres unto my sonne George, and the house and all the rest of the groundes lyinge North east of the house conteyninge about eighteen acres with the dwellinge house and all bartens and housinge thereunto belonging unto my sonne Robert to have and hould unto either of them their heires or a[ss]ignes either of these partes for all the tearme of time determynable upon lives which I have yet to come and unexpired in the said tenement. Butt my will is that whereas there is a match intended betweene my sonne George and Mary Good widdow the daughter of Matthew Walten if the match shall proceed and take effect, and my sonne George shall pay unto my sonne Robert in one moneth after the solemnizacon of such intended marriage the summe of one hundred poundes and the sum of one hundred poundes more within a year after the first payment then my sonne Robert shall not have or enjoy anie parte of my tenement of Blacksole but shall quietly suffer my sonne George unto whome upon these foresaid condicons I bequeath the whole foresaid tenement to enjoy it;

**Item** I give unto Richard Kidner sonne of my sonne Thomas the some of twentie poundes ;

**Item** I give unto Robert Kidner sonne of my sonne Robert the summe of twenty poundes;

**Item** I give unto Edward Kidner, my kinsman of Huntspill twentie shillings;

**Item** I give unto my sonne George the house and three acres called Somerstands of the tenant of Mr Luttrell of Dunster Castle so as he shall in liewe thereof discharge the some of one and twentie poundes which is due unto Joane Kidner my Sister in Lawe leaving the meadowe of the same terme unto my Executor;

**Item** I give unto my sonne Thomas whom I doe release of all former debts the some of fortie poundes to be paid twentie poundes within six moneths after my decease and twentie poundes more within six monethes after the firste payment is due;

**Item** I give unto Thomas, John, Robert and Mary the sonnes and daughter of my sonne Thomas unto each of them ten shillings, the whole fortie shillings to be paid unto them within one moneth after my decease;

**Item** I give unto Margery the daughter of my sister Lawe Joane Kidner Widdow twentie shillings;

**Item** I give unto all my godchildren unto each of them exceptinge Richard sonne of my late sonne Richard twelve pence, and unto him the said Richard tenn shillings;

**Item** I give unto Jane Kidner daughter of Robert Kidner my kinsman twentie shillings to be paid within one month after my decease;

**Item** I give unto Henry Stucky my servant twentie shillings;

**Item** I give unto Mary Knight my daughter my spruse chest;

All the rest of my goodes and Chattells not formerly disposed my debts and legacies discharged I doe give and bequeath unto Mary Kidner my wife whome I doe make my full and sole Executrix, but if that Mary my wife shall fortune to die before the probate of this my will and testam<sup>a</sup>ent, or within six weekes after my decease and not fully recovered of this sickness of which shee nowe languisheth then my will is that all the remaininge goods chattells and monyes which shalbe left unto my executrix above my debts and legacies shall then bee equally distributed between Thomas, George and Robert my sonnes by Richard Powell clerke Humfry Pime and William Champion gent or anie twoe of them whome I doe make in this behalfe my Executors in trust of this my will and testament in case that Mary my wife shall not live but dy within the tearme before prefixed.

In witness whereof I have putt my hand and seale unto this schedule dated the Eighteenth day of February one thousand six hundred thirtie eighte, the mark of Richard Kidner Testator, in the p[re]sence of Richard Powell, Hugh Knight his mark, George Kidner.

This will was proved at London on 16th April 1639 before Henry Wharten Doctor of Laws.

**Will of Mary Kidner of Spaxton**

Made on the 25th March 1649 and proved on the 6th December 1649.

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN, I Mary Kidner of Spaxton in the countie of Somerset widdowe being sick in body but of perfect mynde and memory thanks be to God doe make and ordayne this my last will and testament in manner and forme following (vizt).

Inprimis I give and bequeath my soule unto Allmighty God and my body to Christian buriall.

**Item** I give to the poore of the parish of Spaxton twenty shillings to be distributed amongst them within one moneth after my decease by the hand of the Executor;

**Item** I give unto Richard Kidner sonne of my sonne Thomas Kidner one shilling in money one brasse panne the greatest saveing one, one brasse pott the greatest saving one, the worst posnett, one flockbedd, one white Rugge, one feather boulster and one feather pillowe one payre of sheetes and two pewter platters to be paid within one whole yeare after my decease;

**Item** I give unto my Godsonne John Kydner one shilling in money;

**Item** I give to Thomas Kydner Robert Kydner and Mary Kidner three other children of my sayd sonne Thomas Kydner the summe of twenty shillings a peece to be paid unto their father within one year after my decease and upon the receipte whereof he the sayd Thomas the father shall give good and sufficient security unto my Executor for the payment of the sayd legacies as they come of yeares;

**Item** I give to Robert Kydner sonne of my sonne Robert Kydner deceased one feather bedd and bedsted with the furniture thereunto belonging, two milche kyne the little brasse pott the white white brasse panne the brewing furnes two platters one new chayre the two cupboards being in the new house and a brasse posnett and the brewing fate. And my will is that Alice his Mother shall have the moderate use of the goods given him (in case shee remayne still a widdowe) until hee shall attayne unto the age of one and twenty yeares or be married. But if the said Alice shall happen to dye before that her sonne attayne unto the sayd Age of one and twenty yeares that then the sayd goods shall remayne to the Executor to the use of the sayd Robert Kidner. But if the sayd Robert shall happen to dye before that he come unto the age of one and twenty yeares my will is that all the sayd goods given unto the sayd Robert shall remayne unto my Grandchildren to bee divided by even and equall portions.

**Item** I give unto Mary Knight the daughter of Hugh Knight the summe of ten pounds and one spruce chest;

**Item** I give unto Richard Kydner sonne of my sonne Richard Kidner five pounds;

**Item** I give unto Richard Kydner and Mary Kydner Children of my sonne George Kydner ten pounds a peece;

**Item** I give unto Thomas Kydner my sonne five shillings foure silver spoones the best Caldron save one;

**Item** I give unto my servant Anne ffisher daughter of Edward ffisher twenty shillings;

**Item** I give unto all my Godchildren twelve pence a peece.

All the rest of my goods and Chattels not given or bequeathed my debts paid and funerall discharged I give and bequeath unto my sonne George Kydner whom I make and ordayne sole Executor of this my last will and testament.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seale the day and yeare abovesayde in the presence of those whose names are under written Mary Kydner

Witnessed hereunto Roger Shattocke the marke of Alice Kydner:

Memorand that I do hereby appointe John Carleill of Spaxton aforesayd Clerke and Humfrey Podey of Bishop Lydeard in the said County of Somerset and Hugh Knight of Spaxton aforesaid yeoman, to be Overseers of this my last will and testament before mencioned to see the same duely executed and performed and I give to each of them Tenn Shillings for their paine John Carleil Humfrey Pody Hugh Knight