



Early Life

William Clamp was born in Moira in 1832, but baptised in Packington on the 18th March 1832, presumably because of family links. William was the son of George (born Linton) and Ann (born Snarestone) Clamp. His Moira born brothers were George 1821, Thomas 1829, James 1830 and Charles 1835.

The family was still in Moira in 1841, father George was a sawyer, oldest son George was a 20 year old banksman (at a colliery) and 12 year old Thomas was a labourer.

By 1851 older brother George, a coal hewer, was lodging with the family of Packington born Joseph Clamp in Spring Cottage, just to the North of Moira. Thomas had married Sarah Hart in 1848 and already had two daughters and was a coal miner living in Netherseal. James 21, William 19 and Charles 16 were coal miners and their father was still a sawyer.

Marriage To Maria Hart 1856

On the 18th August 1856 William married Maria Hart at Donsithorpe. At some stage they moved to Coleorton, perhaps that is when he started working at the Califat coal mine. Their daughter Ann was born in Coleorton in May 1860.

At the 1861 census William, Maria and Ann were living on Swannington Common, an imprecisely defined area between Limby Hall Lane and Anchor Lane. The Clamps were two properties from the Anchor Inn on the corner of Anchor Lane and Loughborough Road. William was a coal miner.

Their second daughter Naomi was born in 1862.

Califat Flooding 1863

On the morning of Thursday 8th October 1863 William Clamp would have got up at perhaps five o'clock before walking to the mine for his six o'clock shift. The Loughborough Monitor Thursday 22nd October 1863 reported on the flooding and inquest:

William Clamp, another miner, at the Califat pit, No. 17 stall, said : On the morning of the accident, I went down about six o'clock. When I got down I saw Hodges loading in our stall. He said they had tapped the Hollows, and if he had waited for the horse he should go to the bottom, as he considered it was not all right. We all waited for each other and the water had not broken in then. We stayed at the bottom about ten minutes (in all eighteen men besides boys).

Mr. Lewis and Pickering were also at the bottom, and came to us, when Mr. Lewis desired us to return to our work, and said that if there was any danger he would let us know. We went back to our work by his orders, and had filled about six tubs of coals in No 17 stall, when the alarm was given by Greasley that the water had broke in. We then got up as soon as possible. There was no water in the path but it had just got up to the shaft as we reach the bottom. We were all ordered to go out. and it was about nine o'clock when we ascended.



In half an hour I went down in company with three others to try and rescue the deceased and two others who were missing. When we reached the bottom the water was within nine inches of the roof. I swam off the cage into the stable (a distance of six yards), when I saw the horses up to the belly in water, but I did not see any of the men.

We then came up the shaft again, and descended a second time in company with Mr. Lewis. I went up the main road about fifty yards by myself; the water at this time being a foot deep. We went to the pit bottom and informed Mr. Lewis and others, when we all except Mr. Lewis went up the road, but as I had not much candle, I returned to fetch another one, and overtook them again up the road. I turned to the left hand, but was obliged to stop as the water was so deep. I saw Pickering who said I had better tell the three men to go back again. I met them at the turn said they had got the three men (Bird, Dolman, and Marsden) alive, and the deceased youth. We all ascended the pit.

Coal miners had to be tough to cope with the rugged and dangerous conditions. William's matter of fact account highlights his bravery and loyalty to his fellow coal miners, in that after ascending to safety he twice risked his life to descend into the pit and search for the missing miners.

Death of Maria Clamp (nee Hart) 1864

In May 1864 Maria died at Stanton, a hamlet to the west of Swadlincote and was buried at Donisthorpe on the 21st May.

It is possible that William had moved his family to Stanton because of being laid off from the Califat mine following the flooding. It is not known how long it would have taken to resume operations.

Marriage to Sarah Mason 1864

William married Sarah Mason at nearby Stapenhill on the 12th September 1864. This may seem incredibly quick, barely four months after Maria's death. However the harsh realities of 19th century life should be considered. William was a widower with two daughters aged four years and two years. The challenges of finding child care and the basics of living such as shopping, cooking, washing clothes, would have been immense for a miner working five and a half 12 hour shifts a week.

Sarah Mason was a widow with a one year old son Henry. Women's wages were notoriously low, especially for jobs that could be done while looking after her son.

The marriage provided child care for William's daughters and an income for Sarah and her son. William and Sarah had son, William, in 1865 and daughter Elizabeth in 1867, both born at Stanton.

Later Life

By 1871 the family had moved to Church Street, Church Gresley. They were still there in 1881, although the two older children had left home.

In 1891 and 1901 the three younger children had embarked on their own lives and William and Sarah were living in Linton Heath. By this time William had been working in the mines for at least 50 years. It appears that Sarah died in 1910 and William in 1915.