

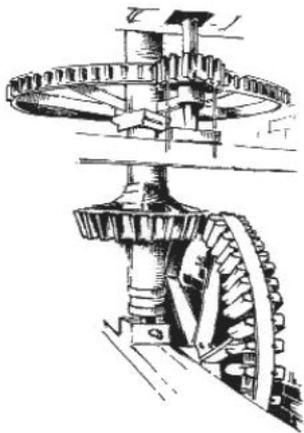
# The Miller's Tale

We do not know where Richard began his working life. He was not at home with his mother Jane in 1841, but given how hard the conditions were for the stocking makers, that is not surprising. He chose the craft and trade of a miller. Whether that was simply because of an employment opportunity or a career choice is unknown. It probably started as one and became the other. He always proclaimed his trade with some pride as a journeyman miller. A journeyman is defined as a skilled worker who has 'served his time' as an apprentice. He has a recognised qualification and is worthy of employment by any employer.

Richard probably left home as a young teenager to live with a miller who needed a bright lad to help him. In return Richard was rewarded with his keep and his training.

There would be different threads to his training which would have lasted for several years. At first he was just 'the boy', just a 'dogs body'. he would fetch and carry, ever at the beck and call of the miller, the miller's wife, and the miller's customers. The important thing was to show willing, and to be grateful that he was not still in the stocking trade.

He would be learning through observation and hearsay about the business; about grain and the quality of grain, about flour, about bran and waste. he would soon distinguish between good stuff for the 'big house', less good for the cottagers, and feed stuff for the animals in stock. He would be learning about commerce; how much to charge for the work, for the time, for the product.



*The vertical wheel is the pit wheel on the inside of the waterwheel. the vertical axil is the wallower*

It would not take the miller long to identify a bright boy of wit and intelligence, and he would want to teach such an individual about the mill itself. On first inspection it is a relatively simple construction and mechanism. That is, until you stand inside the mill when it is working. Then the whole building rattles and vibrates like the inside of a living creature, and you realise that without maintenance, the mill will grind to a halt.. Richard knew about water mills. A water wheel is powered by the mill race - a flow and head of water diverted along a leat from the main flow of the river or stream. The wheel is on a horizontal axil, and it turns relatively slowly with the flow of the water. On the other end of that axil, inside the building is the pit-wheel turning at the same speed as the water wheel.

The task of the miller and his millwright is to use this power to turn a vertical axil and turn the top millstones more quickly. So the large pit wheel connects to a smaller gear on the vertical axis - the wallower. Each turn on the water wheel now generates probably four turns on the wallower, and the top grindstones in the mill, weighing about a ton each,

are turning fast enough to grind the corn. The power in one wheel can usually drive two stones, and the same gearing mechanism is used to drive hoists for hauling sacks of grain to the top of the mill. All of this mechanism is housed on a timber frame made of immensely strong timbers that can withstand the stresses made by the movement of the wheels and gearing.

The miller had to learn how to maintain his mill to keep it going, and to know that maintenance after it has broken down is a wasted earning opportunity. His skills were in identifying what was wearing out and replacing it in time. Such skills and reputation made the journeyman so much more employable.

When Richard had finished his training, he is a skilled engineer, doing most of his work in wood - a joiner. Most of the big gears are made in wood. The cogs are made individually in fruit wood, and these need constant replacement. The water wheel is entirely wood, reinforced with iron work from the blacksmith. The hoppers, shutes and all the hoist axils are made in wood. It is interesting to reflect how in the future so many of these skills will be passed on to his sons, and grandsons, for three generations.

We don't know where Richard was apprenticed, and it is very likely that he worked for several enterprises, big and small, in the first part of his career. We don't know for certain that he was working in Leicestershire, although that is very likely. We can be certain that for sometime in 1848 he was in Desford, a village ten miles west of Birstall. Desford was like very many villages in Leicestershire at the time. It was a community where most work centred on agriculture or the stocking making trade. There is a large old manor house in the High Street, and just a mile from the village there is a hamlet called Newtown Uthank. And here there is a mill!



*This is Desford Mill,  
and almost certainly  
where Richard was  
working in 1848.*

By the mid 1840s Richard was a grown man and master of his trade. He was tall and strong, and judging by his photographs in later years, a handsome man. Also in the same village is an agricultural worker, William Newbery and his wife Elizabeth and their six children, four sons and two daughters. In the 1841 Census, William and Elizabeth only have their youngest son living at home. Their younger daughter Ann is thirteen and probably working in service somewhere close to home. She may even have been working at the mill. In any event Richard and Ann met at some time in 1848.

On May 23rd, they were married. For some reason the wedding did not take place in Desford, but at St Margaret's church in Leicester. Their wedding certificate states that they were married 'according to the rites and ceremonies of the established church after Banns', so perhaps this suggests that Ann was working in Leicester at this time. They both give home addresses in the middle of the city very close to the mainline railway station. Ann is living in Queen Street and Richard in Northampton Street.

  
**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE**      GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
 Application Number 2420903/1

1849. Marriage solemnized at <i>St Margaret's Church</i> in the Borough of <i>Leicester</i> in the County of <i>Leicestershire</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
406	May 23	<i>Richard Sanders</i>		<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Miller</i>	<i>Northampton St.</i>	<i>Richard Sanders</i>	<i>Miller</i>
		<i>Ann Newbery</i>	<i>Full</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Queen St.</i>	<i>William Newbery</i>	<i>Servant</i>
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, <i>after Banns</i> by me, <i>W. H. Hudson, Vicar</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <i>Richard Sanders</i>				in the Presence of us, <i>Hugh Elliot</i> <i>Elizabeth Elliot + her Maid</i>				

This is a copy of their wedding certificate - a tantalizing document! We know that Richard was illegitimate, and yet he describes his father as Richard Sanders; there is no evidence that any of the Newbery or Kilby family attended, perhaps because the 23rd May was a Wednesday; who are Hugh and Elizabeth Elliot? it suggests nothing of how they met or in what circumstances.

Richard is now 27 years old, six years older than Ann, and within a year their first child is born. She is Elizabeth, and she is born at Odstone. This small hamlet is only four miles from Desford. And not surprisingly it has a very fine water mill. This mill is still there and has been owned by the Timms family since 1734 and is on the River Sense. Now the mill is somewhat gentrified and part of it is now a tea room and cafe. But in 1850 it was a large enterprise, with several millers working there.

The following year in the 1851 census, the family are living at Clock Mill in the village of Swebstone, a further eight miles from Desford. All that remains of this now is the name Clock Farm. The census returns show Richard 29, and Ann 24, and Elizabeth, one year old. They are the only residents at Clock Mill, suggesting a much smaller business.

Before 1856, much of the miller's tale is based on surmise and supposition, and interpretation of records. But after 1858, we can be much more confident, for this is the year that Richard Sanders and Ann, and their five young children move to the water mill off Long Street in Repton, Derbyshire. This village is a place that many of us know personally, and some of us can remember the mill itself before it had to be pulled down. A 'chocolate box' picture of the same mill appeared in Repton on a picture post card early in the twentieth century, and this photograph featured two of Richard's children. together with his poultry and a pig! - and this was to be home for Richard and Ann for the rest of their lives.



From 1850, the lives and Richard and Ann were taken over by children. Between the ages of 23 and 40 Ann gave live birth to ten children. Four more children were born before the move to Repton.; Susannah in 1852, Emily in 1854, and Annie in 1856. We know from the 1861 Census return that the family had moved to Measham by

the time Annie was born. Mary was born in 1857 in Measham. But life for this family was by no means a perfect rural idyll. Soon after their arrival in Repton, Ann was expecting their sixth child, and he is born on 23rd March 1860, and given the name Edwin Thomas. No doubt it was a time of great happiness and optimism as they settle into a new village community, if only because at last they had a baby boy! But their happiness was to be short lived.

Five of the six older children were taken very seriously ill after the birth of Edwin. Oral tradition has it that it was a case of diphtheria, which may well be true. It is also the case that there was a very serious epidemic of influenza that swept through Victorian England in 1860. In any event the situation was soon dire at the mill, and the four elder children were soon critically ill. The symptoms for 'flu and diphtheria are similar. Diphtheria is an illness that attacks the upper respiratory tract; the patient has a very high temperature, and the throat is desperately painful; swallowing becomes almost impossible and breathing is very difficult. With young children the disease was almost invariably fatal in the nineteenth century, and Richard and Ann must have been desperate.

They would have known that the disease was highly contagious . It is contracted through physical contact and also through inhaling any part of the exhalations of infected patients. Children sharing a bedroom and perhaps sharing a bed, would be highly at risk. Parents must have been in agony watching their children suffer in such circumstances. They did suffer, and four of the children died in one week in December 1860

The burial register for Repton Church Yard has the following consecutive entries.

Susannah Sanders, December 14th, 8yrs

Emily Sanders, December 15th, 7 yrs

Elizabeth Sanders, December 17th, 10yrs

Mary Sanders, December 21st, 3 yrs

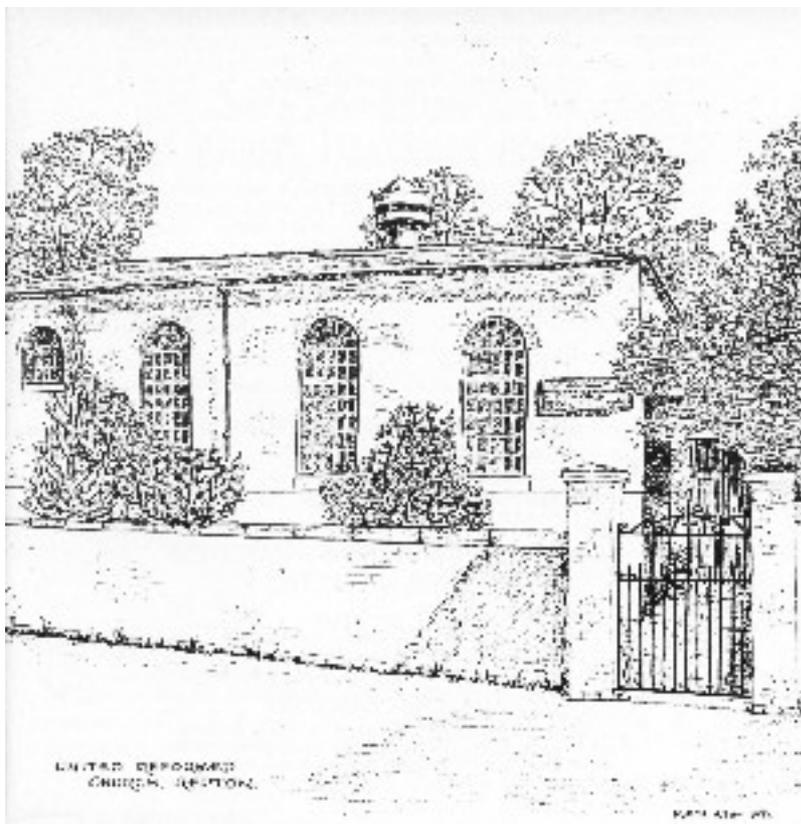
Signed by W Williams, Incumbent



*Susannah left this humble and very beautiful sampler, worked when she was only six, a treasured keepsake for Richard and Ann*

You wonder how the parent survive such a loss. In these circumstances you look to family for support. Thus it was that Ann returned to Desford for a while with her baby boy, and Annie a toddler of three, to escape infection, and recover her sanity. this much reduced little family doubtless took the Leicester train on the Midland railway from Burton on Trent which stops at the station in Desford. Ann's mother Elizabeth is now a widow, and in a position to care for her grieving daughter.

In the fullness of time, the family are reunited with Richard, and life resumes its natural course in Repton. Richard and Ann were to have four more children. Sarah was born in 1862, Alfred Henry in 1864, Mary Jane in 1865, and William Richard in 1869. And so six children, three boys and three girls grew up together in the mill. Families of this size are not unusual in nineteenth century England, but accommodation in the mill is not capacious. the cottage was basically two up and two down. The downstairs rooms had very low ceilings. they entered through the front door to a main living area that had the cooking range in the corner, and a door to a mall 'reception' room on the right. There was also a door to a 'cupboard' staircase that led to two bedrooms upstairs. There was a privy earth closet at the back of the house, and the water supply was a very attractive cast iron pump over a granite basin just by the front door. We can assume that the house had some gas lighting from the Repton Gas Works not far from the mill. We also have to assume that Richard was a tenant, perhaps renting from Repton School. The house has a large garden for the production of vehicles, and some accommodation for poultry, and at least one pig. There is some grazing land which becomes available for let early in the twentieth century.



There is also one more dimension to Richard and Ann that helps us to understand them and their children. This is their connection to the Independent Chapel in Pinfold lane.

There is a very full collection of documents from the Repton Independent Chapel preserved in the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock.

The chapel in Pinfold lane was first built long before Richard and Ann arrived in Repton. It is now a United Reform Church, but from the late eighteenth century it was an independent congregational chapel, with a tradition that goes back to the Roundheads and Puritans. Its governance was by the congregation for the congregation. The congregation chose its own pastor and funded his living from their humble subscription. The congregation has to agree who may be admitted into their circle as full members, often after a period of testing on both sides. Richard and Ann were admitted to the congregation almost immediately on arrival into the village, in August 1859, and it is obvious that they were both practiced Congregationalists.

Richard is made a church deacon along with Mr William Dakin with two years of their commencing membership. Both of these individuals would be persons looked up to by the congregation, men who knew their scriptures, and who could lead services and prayer meetings extemporaneously. Each year Richard and William travelled on the train to Chesterfield and are the delegates at the annual group meeting for all the independent shapes in the county..

The pew rents show that the chapel throughout the second half of the century was clearly dominated by a relatively few families; Sanders, Dakin, Dolman, Thorpe, Pearson, Collier. Richard paid three shillings a quarter for his pew throughout his life in Repton. Yet the chapel was very much a going concern. It ran a Sunday School of more than ninety children, and ran a day school until 1884. As one reads the minute books, there is a sense of a group of people striving to better themselves and their neighbours. The chapel has a Literary Institute that boasts 160 members and 300 volumes. The Institute takes the daily newspapers, runs a Horticultural Society, and runs a savings bank.

This 'Institution - while it is calculated to benefit in a large degree an humbler class of the inhabitants, must tend also to promote kind and neighbourly feeling amongst the general inhabitants.'

The architects of these wonderfully noble sentiments were Richard Sanders, William Dakin and Joseph Dolman. Richard is the church deacon until the end of his life, and is still working as Sunday School Superintendent in 1890. The whole enterprise is done without any patronage from the Big House, the Big School in the village. It is done through the subscription of members, and a constant round of fund-raising activity. There are Flower Services, Harvest Festivals, Sunday School Anniversaries, Guest preachers, and at every function there is a tea, usually organised by Ann. There are services on Sunday morning and evening and Sunday School in the school room. There is an annual public tea each year just after Christmas, when there is entertainment and a 'ham' supper, which Ann - or as the minute books so correctly record, Mrs R Sanders - organises right until the end for her life.

Richard lived for a total of thirty three years in the mill, and died in the summer of 1891, aged 69 years. It is clear that he spent a significant proportion of his time in the chapel putting his faith into practice. Ann survived him another seven years. When Ann died there were still three children living at the mill, Alfred, Mary and William, all in their twenties. This photograph has Mary feeding the poultry, and Alfred leading the horse.



These photographs of Richard and Ann were taken by Winter's in Derby probably in about 1880. They would have both travelled, perhaps on the train, seeking to provide a record of themselves for their children and grandchildren. The gentry have an artist to paint a portrait of themselves to hang in the great hall. Richard and Ann can afford a photographer in Derby called Mr Winter.



They wish to be remembered well.

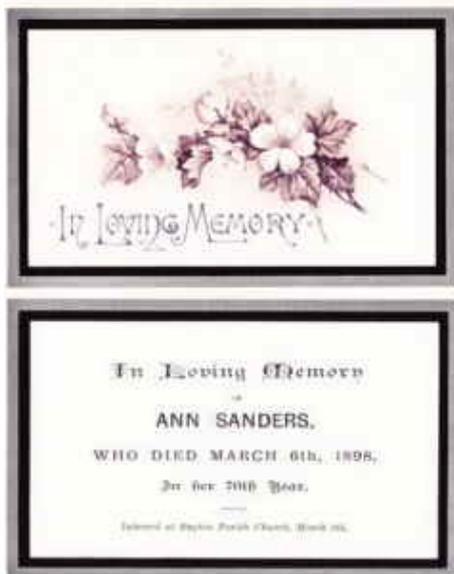
Richard has shaved carefully to show off his fringe, and groomed his Sanders' hair. He wears his bow tie (perhaps Ann has helped in the tying) and a new-fangled collar. He wears a very fine frock coat, double breasted with covered buttons, and he wishes to be remembered as a man of letters who reads. He has chosen a lovely carved chair upholstered in velvet from a selection available in the photographers studio.

This is a man who has come a long way from Birstall and that nasty irascible parson who condemned his entry into the world as illegitimate as he completed his entry in the parish register.

*Richard Sanders, Journeyman Miller, born 15th December 1821 in Birstall, Leicestershire.  
Died 21st July, 1891 in Repton, Derbyshire*



*Ann Sanders, nee Newbury,  
Wife of Miller, born 6th May  
1828, in Desford,  
Leicestershire  
Died 6th March 1898 in  
Repton Derbyshire.*



Ann is also in her Sunday best. She has chosen a different chair, and to sit by a velvet drape that will show off the sheen on her sateen frock. It was pressed only this morning before we came on the train, and I like these buttons that shine when you rub them up. And if Richard is to be seen with a book, then so shall I. I especially like this velvet bow choker, which I think goes so well with this frock. I'm not going to smile. I want to be taken seriously, and anyway I couldn't hold a smile for that long for Mr Winter.

Ann died in 1898, aged 70, leaving just over £235 to be administered by her executors, William Newbery and Joseph Dolman. Both were joiners and builders, and this act indicates a change in direction for some of the Sanders family. Newbery is of course Ann's maiden name. Dolman was the name of the original partner in the Sanders' building firm.

Throughout their lives in Repton, Richard and Ann were stalwart members of Victorian society. They are pillars of the Congregational Chapel in Pinfold Lane. They have also known immense sorrow and sadness. Their name would be known throughout the community of Repton and beyond.

When Ann dies in 1898, one of the children arranges for the In Memoriam card to be printed and posted to everyone who needs to know - posted in that special envelope with the black border. No doubt they were posted to family members in Desford. We will never know whether they were posted to relatives in Birstall or Belgrave.