

## *Contamination of Beriebroke Stream 1620*

Sedgehill covers a little more than 1000 acres divided into 8 or 10 farms; the population has varied between 100 and 230 as far as records go back. It once boasted a school and a post office but today the only focal point is the lovely little church of St. Catherine.

The principal industry here has always been farming, but gloving was once more than just a sideline. An article from 1620 describes what appears to be a family feud involving this trade.

If there is one surname associated with the village over the last 400 years more than any other it has to be King(e). Of the 97 historical wills held by Wiltshire Archives between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, 22 of them belong to the King family of Sedgehill. This indicates that at least some members of the family apparently owned something worth leaving in a will. The Rector between 1619 and 1622 was the Revd William King, but whether he was related to the feudalists is unknown.

In July 1620 a Grand Jury, sitting 30 miles away in Devizes, was examining the charge that John King of Sedgehill had been complicit in Peter King's defiling of a local water supply. Another King, Richard, who lived in a neighbouring house called Kippens, brought the charge. He claimed his cattle and household, along with other villagers, were dependent on the water from Beriebroke stream (known as Berrybrook today) that ran past his property.

It seems Peter King was curing animal hides for the leather trade on John King's land. To remove the fat, flesh and hair from the skins (fell-mongering), they were first soaked in a solution of water, lime and oak bark (and other unmentionable ingredients!) in a pit in the ground, then scraped and stretched out to dry. This process produced very unattractive waste resulting in the contamination of Beriebroke stream.

Sadly the report of the Grand Jury does not include the final outcome of the case - the Great Roll and Order book for the Quarter Sessions have been checked, but no record of what happened next is recorded. Wiltshire Archives say that such matters rarely went to trial; having been brought to the attention of the Grand Jury, an order would be made for the nuisance to be corrected.

There is no known connection between the above and the fact that Richard King and his wife Anna were buried at St. Catherine's church in Sedgehill on the same day as each other a little over two years after this complaint was heard in Devizes.

" ..... presented John Kinge yeoman of Sedghill for suffering Peter Kinge of the same place glovier for using of a gloviers pitt in a close or grounde of John Kinge called water pocke nere a little or running water called Beriebroke for the layeing dressing and useing of many sortes of lymye skinnes for leather to the spoile and harme of the cattle of Richard Kinge of Kippens in Sedghill and doe spoile the water there wch Richard Kinge manye times hath occasion to use in his owne grounde nere the same pitt for the use and howsehold of reliefe of himselfe and his familye and others of Sedghill this drye sommer and the sommer last past."

Maybe someone tracing their King ancestry in Sedgehill can add to this story?