

PHILIP GRIGGS - APPRENTICE : 1764

Philip Griggs was born here in Birchington on October 24th 1757, the illegitimate son of Sarah Griggs (daughter of Edward and Ann). His father was a soldier called Thomas Harby, of the regiment belonging to Lord Albemarle, a regiment of Dragoons and in Captain Boyn's Company. While Sarah was carrying her son, she had to make two arduous journeys to Dover, the second one only days before his birth, to try and sort out the baby's parentage. She was ordered to do this in order for the authorities to try and shift the burden of paying for his upbringing onto someone other than the Parish. But in this case, they were not successful in getting the father's assistance.

In 1764, when Philip was 7 years old, he was apprenticed to Isaac Anchor, a silk weaver of Canterbury. He was of Huguenot descent and his family had come over to England in the previous century. Under the terms of Anna Gertruy Crispe's will (in which the Crispe Charity provided a School as well as grants to pay for apprenticing boys and girls to various trades) the Overseers of the Poor of Birchington and the Churchwardens, paid the sum of £10 to "put out, place and bind Philip Griggs, a poor boy of the said parish of Birchington, Apprentice to Isaac Anchor".

The boy was to "serve from the day and date of these Presents (the 22nd day of December 1764) until he shall accomplish the Age of twenty four years" - in other words, for 17 years! On the face of it this appears to be a horrendous situation for so small a boy. In reality, his mother Sarah had preceded him into the household of Isaac Anchor by just a few months. On June 24th 1764 she and Isaac Anchor had married. Philip probably stayed with his grandfather in Birchington until the Apprenticeship Deed was completed.

Isaac had been twice widowed and had been left with two small boys. Very shortly after he and Sarah married, she and Isaac had a baby baptised. Whether it was Isaac's or not we will never know, but they then had another baby just a year later. By then, one of Isaac's two little boys had died, so the new baby was named after him.

By this time Philip was well established in the family and was probably receiving a little schooling from Isaac, as well as learning the trade of silk weaving. He would almost certainly have been taught to measure and count, besides learning to read and write. Part of his trade would also have involved following the traditional patterns of the silk weaving trade. Whether he completed his 17 years apprenticeship or not, we are not sure. If his stepfather died before the end of Philip's time, he would presumably be released from the contract. The Apprentice could also buy his release if he could raise the money.