

Charles May



Charles, presumably named after his uncle who had emigrated to Australia in the early 1850s, was born in Burneston, and his birth was registered at Bedale in the Jan-Mar quarter of 1866. He has been traced through the 1871 and 1881 census when he was at home with his parents but by the time of the next census he had left home. In 1891 he was still involved in the horticultural industry, as a gardener at Old Sleningford Hall, North Stainley, near Ripon.



Old Sleningford Hall and Garden

As well as having moved away from his home turf, he is now also a married man, and he and his wife were living with two other servants of the Hall.^v

Robert Craike	48	Bailiff (Domestic)	Melton, Yorks
Charles May	25	Gardener (Domestic)	Burneston
Catherine May	42	Dressmaker	Long Sutton, Lincolnshire
Alice Boynton	16	Kitchenmaid (Domestic)	North Stainley

Charles seems to have landed on his feet. Today, while the early 19th century house is not open to the public, the garden with original layout is of interest to garden historians as well as artists, with its many acres with magnificent mature trees, woodland walk, wide lawns and terrace with Victorian fernery.^v Some further information about Castlestead has been provided by John Bird, a member of the Beverley Parish Council :

I am a member of Beverley Parish Council and the Clerk has asked me to reply to your email as my wife and I live in a bungalow in what was part of the grounds of Castlestead! This property is far from a humble abode but is a splendid castellated mansion built on an old Roman site! It was built in 1861 by George Metcalfe a local mill and quarry owner and highly respected resident in the dale. The gardens at the time Charles worked there as a gardener would have been magnificent and are recorded as having many choice trees and shrubs. After Metcalfe's death in 1898 Castlestead became a Hydro and then a country house hotel before reverting to private ownership and finally being converted into flats. It remains a beautiful and special place. Hope this info is of interest.^v

In fact, it was probably here that Charles met his future wife. Catherine was a member of the Staveley household, owners of the Hall, and at that time under the headship of widowed Anne Elizabeth Staveley, for the 1881 census.^v

Anne Elizth. Staveley (W)	64	Landed Proprietor	Calais (B S), France
Roseberry Staveley	24	Landed Proprietors Daur	Old Sleningford, York
Martha C. Staveley	21	Landed Proprietors Daur	Old Sleningford, York
Ellen Lee (Visitor)	40		Thame, Oxford
Hannah Paley	45	Housekeeper (Indoor)	Threshfield, York
Cathrine Fox	35	Ladies Maid	Long Sutton, Lincoln
Elizth. Avis	26	Nurse (Invalid)(Indoor)	Colchester, Essex
Elizth. Campbell	19	Kitchen Maid (Indoor)	Leghill, Northumberland
Annie Bonwell	15	Housemaid (Indoor)	North Stainley, York
Jane Petchy	41	Housemaid (Indoor)	Creake, Norfolk
James Crombie	37	Coachman (Indoor)	Fife, Scotland
Richd. Dean	20	Groom (Indoor)	Richmond, York

Joseph Denton	17	Footman (Indoor)	Bentham, York
William Bonwell	16	Gardener (Indoor)	North Stainley, York

No record has been found of the marriage between Charles May and Catherine Fox which would have occurred sometime between April 1881 and April 1891. Catherine was quite a bit older than her husband, but perhaps even older than the 1891 census record might suggest! Doing the maths, in the ten years between the 1881 and 1891 census returns, Catherine only aged by 7 years!

I think I have found Catherine in the 1841 and 1851 census returns (but nothing for her in the 1861 and 1871 census records) which suggest that she was in fact born earlier than she seems to have owned up to. In 1841 a Catherine Fox is listed in the Long Sutton sub registration district of Holbeach, with her parents, living at Roman Bank, Sutton St Mary.^v All the family is recorded as having been born in Yorkshire, but as we will see, Catherine's mother actually hailed from Cambridgeshire.

John Fox	40	Labourer
Elizabeth Fox	30	
John Fox	10	
Charles Fox	8	
William Fox	4	
Catherine Fox	3 mths	

An IGI record seems to confirm that Catherine was born about 1841 as she was christened on 9th May 1841 at Long Sutton.^{vi}

Ten years later, the Fox family is now registered for the 1851 census in the Gedney Hill sub district of Holbeach. With them, still at Roman Bank, are two visitors whose names give a pointer to Catherine's mother's maiden name, as their stated places of birth are within 1 mile of each other.^{vii}

John Fox	43	Ag Lab	Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire
Elizabeth Fox	38		Emneth, Cambridgeshire
Catherine Fox	10	Scholar	Sutton St Mary, Lincolnshire
Benjamin Fox	8	Scholar	Sutton St Mary, Lincolnshire
Joseph Fox	6		Sutton St Mary, Lincolnshire
George Fox	1		Sutton St Mary, Lincolnshire
Jane Muffin (S-i-L)	27	Visitor	Elm, Cambridgeshire
Elizabeth A Muffin (Niece)	3		Elm, Cambridgeshire

After his stint at Sleningford Hall, Charles and Catherine moved sometime before the 1901 census to Bewerley, near Pateley Bridge. With them at Castle Stead is Catherine's niece, daughter of her brother Benjamin and his wife Mary Jane Fox^x, who had probably been sent to the Mays so that Catherine could teach her niece dressmaking.^x

Charles May	35	Gardener (Worker)	Burneston
Catherine May	52	Dressmaker (Own Account)	Long Sutton, Lincolnshire
Jane Fox	15	Apprentice Dressmaker	Long Sutton, Lincolnshire

Catherine is still understating her age and apparently continued to do so to her death as a Pateley Bridge registration for the Apr-Jun quarter, 1902, for a Catherine May, aged 52 shows. And the same age is given on her death certificate. Catherine May died on 11th May 1902 at Castle Head, Bewerley, the wife of Charles May a Gardener (Domestic) who was with his wife when she died. The cause of death was Hypnototis (?) and Congestion of Lung.^{xi}

No further record has been located for Charles May after the 1901 census.



ⁱ RG10/4866/p11; RG11/4871/p10.

ⁱⁱ RG12/3511/p13.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://staveley-genealogy.com/index.htm>

^{iv} Email from John Bird, May 2007.

^v RG11/4318/p11.

^{vi} HO107/611/p35.

^{vii} IGI Individual Record Batch No.C030861

^{viii} HO107/2097/p10.

^{ix} For the 1891 census, Benjamin Fox is listed as a Blacksmith, still living at Sutton St Mary with his wife Mary Jane and 5 year old daughter Jane. RG/12/2567/p4.

^x RG13/4037/p12.

^{xi} Free BMD Index; certified copy of Death Certificate DYB472949.