

BRITISH FAMILIES IN DENMARK - ROBERT & NATHANIEL LAYBOURN

Robert and Nathaniel Laybourn were two of the seven children of Robert and Sarah Laybourn. Born in Bridlington in respectively 1767 and 1773, they came with their parents to Helsingør in 1775. Robert Laybourn senior became a tenant at Kronborg Ladegaard, and is recorded to have won a silver medal for sheep-breeding (an Anglo-Danish race).

Robert Laybourn junior was granted a licence for trading in wine and East Indian produce at Helsingør in 1787, but by 1803 he was a clerk in Copenhagen, married to Newlove Haram, and with three children (Charles, Newlove and Agathe). Robert and Newlove were living in Skindergade in 1807, when on the night of September 4th-5th the tower of Vor Frue Kirke collapsed onto their lodgings laming Newlove. (This was the third day of the 1807 bombardment by the British army, not the 1801 attack by the British Navy). It is recorded that Robert devoted all his spare time during the next 22 years to the care of his permanently handicapped wife and the upbringing of their family. It is relevant here to mention the friendship to the family of a surgeon, Dr. Ludvig Thune, who later married Newlove Laybourn (the daughter of Robert and Newlove) with whom he had twin daughters. After the early death of his first wife, Ludvig Thune then married Agathe (the second daughter of Robert & Newlove). To confound and confuse future genealogists, Ludvig Thune some years later, after the death of Agathe, married again to another Laybourn, this time Pauline (a daughter of Charles, the son of Robert and Newlove). These complex relationships were once recorded on the family gravestones in Assistents kirkegaard (I do not know if they still exist).

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Nathaniel Laybourn was a clerk in Helsingør in 1799, but in 1801 he settled down in a small village west of Copenhagen, known as Rødovre (population in 1801, 338), where he bought a farm known as Henriksholm. He rapidly developed a reputation as the most capable farmer in the district, yet remained unpretentious and modest. His modern methods of farming became known far and wide - he appears to have been the first farmer in Denmark to cultivate red clover, as well as potatoes (then little used), and is noted as the first 'Dane' ploughing with two horses. Although they sometimes laughed at his curious ways, his neighbours would secretly visit him in the evenings with their sacks to buy some of his 'funny, silly earth-rolls' (potatoes).

Nathaniel had eight children with Susanne Sørensen (two died young), who were mainly given English names, and lived a happy, sunny life on the red 'English' farm on the highway to Roskilde. One of his sons, Charles Robert had 11 children, and another, Frederick August, had eight children. Several of them continued the farming tradition in Rødovre, and Rødovre churchyard formerly had numerous Laybourn gravestones (I could not find any on a recent visit). William Laybourn, a son of Charles Robert, became a successful (yet modest) businessman, and acquired considerable property in the developing suburbs of Copenhagen, notably in Vanløse where there was formerly a Laybournsvej (this has also disappeared). However, while some of the old gravestones and street names may have gone, the family name is still very much alive in Denmark - there are 24 Laybourns in the current Copenhagen telephone directory, and another 115 in the rest of Denmark.

Editor.