

*A Preference for 'P's*

*Porters, Pickerings and Other Families  
in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Liverpool  
and Kansas*

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## **Acknowledgments and Disclaimers**

As usual, I would like to thank the staff in the Record Offices I have visited for their unfailing patience and support. Although she is no longer alive, I would like to recognise the contribution of my father's cousin, Helena Patton, who helped me to identify the only picture of Harriet Porter to have come down through my line of the family and gave me information not known to my side of the family. I would also like to thank Kent Sperry, a distant Porter connection in America, whose photograph of Harriet as a young mother gave me a different dimension on my great-grandmother. Finally, as the internet becomes an ever-greater resource, I would like to thank all those who put their own enthusiasms and research into the public domain for people like me to find, especially John Palmer, for his excellent website on the parish of Wirksworth. Apart from in this instance, all parish register entries are taken from the original documents.

I am not infallible by any means, so please check original sources before taking what I have written as gospel. I have no doubt made mistakes on dates, drawn wrong conclusions from time to time, and not always used the 'correct' spelling of surnames. In this last case, though, the owners of these names were often equally inconsistent.

## **Abbreviations**

LRO	Lichfield Record Office
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives
TNA	The National Archives

## Harriet Porter - an introduction

My paternal grandmother, Gertrude Evelyn Park, lost her mother at an early age. Harriet Porter, my great-grandmother, died in 1887 when Gertrude, her youngest child, was only seven years old. Consequently my grandmother was brought up by an aunt in Gospel Oak in London, far away from her Porter roots in Staffordshire and Liverpool. Because of this dislocation from her own family in childhood, and because my father, the youngest of his own family, was told (or listened to) few family stories, I had very little to go on when I began to look for Harriet. My aunt did give me one gem, though, the fact that Harriet Porter and Richard Park - my great-grandfather - had eloped together because he was Catholic and she Protestant, and the families disapproved.



**Stoke upon Trent - Hanley Town Hall (Register Office)**

This much seemed to be borne out by the fact that, despite the fact that both parties were living in Liverpool before and after their marriage, the wedding took place in Stoke upon Trent and (unusually for the time) in a register office. Civil marriage, as opposed to a religious ceremony, had only been available since 1837 and Richard and Harriet wed on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1865. In fact, the whole thing seemed slightly suspect. The certificate shows the following details:

Richard Park, 25, Bachelor, 145, Brunswick Rd, Liverpool,  
John Park, butcher  
Harriet Porter, 16, Spinster, Etruria, James Porter, draper;  
before Wm T. Palmer, Registrar.  
Witnessed: Eliza Higgins, Joseph Higgins

Richard's address in central Liverpool fitted what was known about both families' whereabouts in the city at various nearby locations over the years. Finch Street, where Harriet's family were for the 1861 census<sup>1</sup>, was less than half a mile

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<sup>1</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9/2391, 1861 census, Liverpool

away – and that is where she would have been expected to be rather than at Etruria, in Stoke. Add this to the fact that Harriet was clearly a minor, and the plot thickens.

My aunt believed that when the couple returned to face the music, Harriet's mother-in-law insisted on a subsequent church wedding, but no such ceremony has come to light. Maybe they refused to be coerced. Legally, there must be some doubt over the legitimacy of the marriage of a minor without parental consent, but it seems to have held and been recognised. Richard and Harriet baptised their first two children at St. Francis Xavier in Liverpool as Catholics in 1867 and 8, the year Richard's mother died. The next child (Percival Douglas) was also baptised a Catholic, at St. Augustine's in 1871, but the fact that the mother is recorded first as Harriet Douglas formerly Park, with Park squeezed in after Douglas as an afterthought, suggests that the couple weren't regular members of the congregation. The next four children, including my grandmother, were all baptised in Anglican churches. In fact, the Porters, and most of the families they married into, seem to have been Church of England as far back as I have been able to trace the line.

### **The earliest Porters: Marchington**

The parish website<sup>2</sup> describes Marchington as a small and attractive Staffordshire village:

It lies between the towns of Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter, not far from the banks of the River Dove. In many ways it is an idyllic English village.

The other half of the parish, Marchington Woodlands, is more spread out – and includes Scounslow Green and Gorsty Hill. The terrain is described as undulating, and, as would be expected, wooded. Other than that, there is little information to be gleaned on the internet. I suspect this has always been a small and rather shy and retiring parish; the population of Marchington and Marchington Woodlands combined was only 470 in 1801<sup>3</sup>. In fact it started out as a chapelry of nearby Hanbury, and some documents treat it as part of its mother parish. Hanbury itself was described as follows in 1851<sup>4</sup>:

Hanbury is a small but pleasant village, upon a lofty eminence, overlooking the vale of the Dove, seven miles NW by W of Burton-upon-Trent, and the same distance SE by E of Uttoxeter, to the north of which are seen the moorlands and picturesque hills of Derbyshire. The parish of Hanbury is a very extensive district, being upwards of five miles square, and including the north end of Needwood Forest, and ten villages and hamlets, divided into five townships, viz, Hanbury, Newborough, Marchington, Marchington-Woodlands, and Draycott-in-the-Clay.

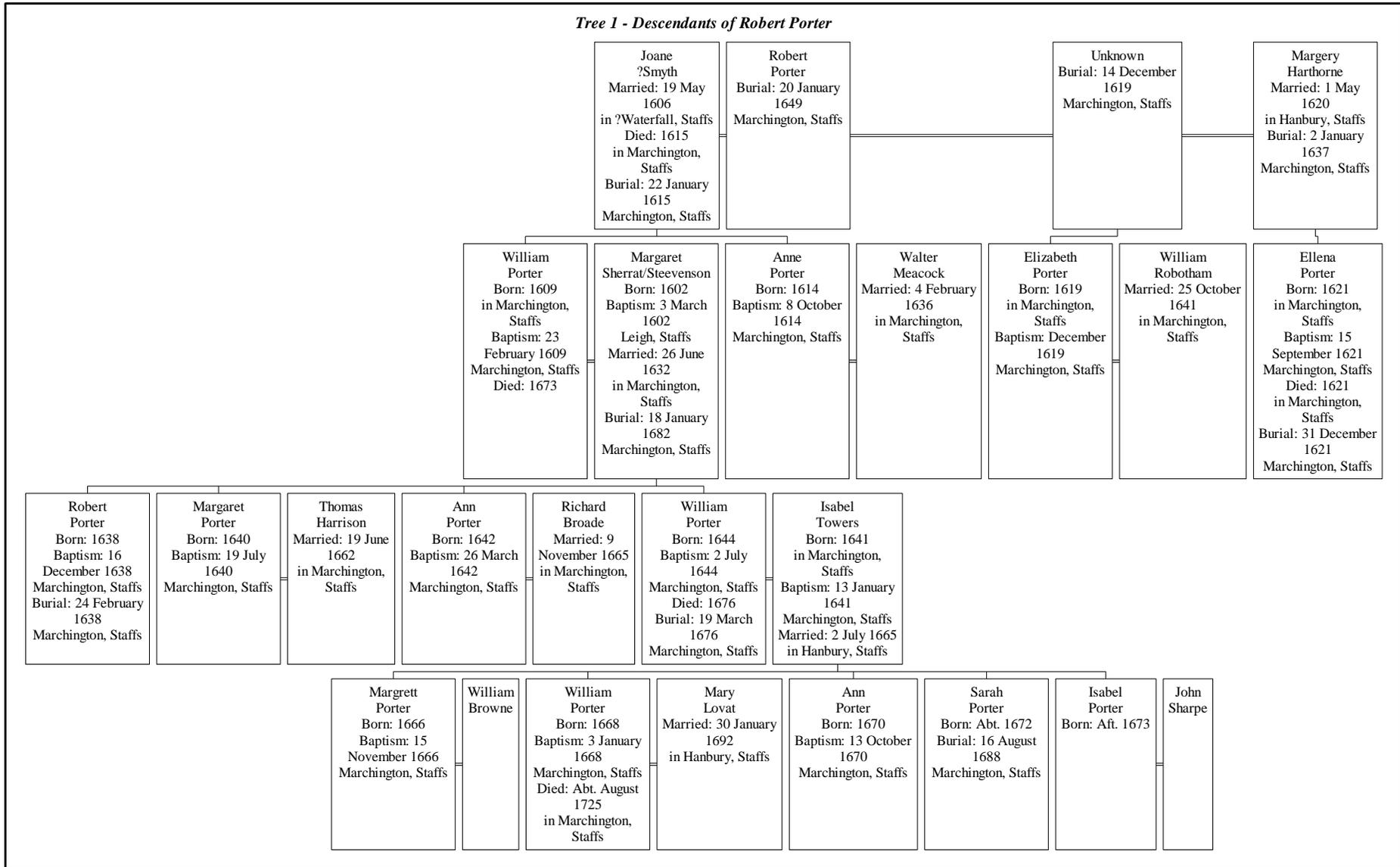
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marchington.info/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/STS/Marchington/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire*, William White, Sheffield, 1851

**Tree 1 - Descendants of Robert Porter**



The early pages of the Marchington register are very torn and faded. However, the first entry in the book (possibly February 23<sup>rd</sup>), on a page headed 1609, is the baptism of a boy named William<sup>1</sup> Porter (see tree 1 - p. 6). Not all of it is legible, but the Latin case endings show that this must have been William (Willielmus) son of Robert (Roberti) Porter. By the time Anna daughter of Robert Porter was baptised in October 1614 the page is more legible, though still with gaps. I suspect their mother was named Joan, as the register shows a partial entry in 1615:

Johanna Porter uxor Rob... sepulta fuit vicessimo secundo

i.e. buried 22<sup>nd</sup> – although is no longer possible to tell which month this was.

A marriage which took place at Waterfall on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1606 may be that of Robert and Joan. Although this parish was around 20 miles away, the tantalising ‘M’ followed by a long squiggle, which is all that can be read of the groom’s place of abode, makes it tempting to believe it is Robert of Marchington:

Robart Porter of [?]M... [?]husbandman and Joane Smyth the daughter of Raphe Smyth husbandman maryed the xix<sup>th</sup> of Maie.

It would seem that Robert Porter married again after Joan’s death, but only briefly as although he baptised a daughter Elizabeth in December 1619, the following entry records the death of this second wife, presumably in childbirth. Again, the entry is incomplete, but appears to say:

..... Porter uxor Roberti Porter .... fuit xiiii .... Decembris

Undaunted, Robert married again. This bride was Margery Harthorne, whom he wed at the main parish church at Hanbury on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1620. There was one short-lived daughter from the union, Ellena – baptised on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1621 and buried on 31<sup>st</sup> December the same year. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1637 the register recorded:

Margery wife of Rob Porter bur<sup>d</sup>

Robert outlived all three spouses, and was buried in his turn on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1649:

Robertus Porter sepultus erat

His two surviving daughters both seem to have married in Marchington, Anna or Anne to Walter Meacock in 1636 and Elizabeth to William Robotham in 1641.

A little more is known about the life of William<sup>1</sup>, born 1609. According to the Marchington register, he married a woman named Marg(a)ret Steevenson on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1632. However, their son William<sup>2</sup>’s will<sup>5</sup>, and the will of Margaret’s father<sup>6</sup> show her maiden name to have been Sherrat(t) (see tree 2 - p. 10). Either she was a

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<sup>5</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of William Porter of Marchington, 1677

<sup>6</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Edward Sherrat of Leigh, 1641

widow when she married William<sup>1</sup> (the most likely scenario) or she was a second wife he married elsewhere or there is a mistake in the register. There was a long gap before the birth of their first child Robert who was baptised on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1638 but buried two months later on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1638. The next two children were girls – Margaret, baptised 19<sup>th</sup> July 1640, married Thomas Harrison on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1662 and Ann, baptised 26<sup>th</sup> March 1642 married Richard Broade on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1665. Like their younger brother William<sup>2</sup>'s baptism on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1644, all these events took place at Marchington.



**St. Peter Marchington**

In 1642, all males over the age of 18 were obliged to sign the Protestation Oath to:

Live and die for the true Protestant religion, the liberties and rights of subjects and the privilege of Parliaments

The reason behind this was the growing rift between Charles I and his parliament and parliament's fear that Charles might raise a Catholic army to take control of it. Three Porter signatories appear in the Marchington section of the Hanbury return<sup>7</sup>: William<sup>1</sup>, his father Robert, and Henry Porter - possibly a brother or uncle.

Presumably, William<sup>1</sup> held much of his land as copyhold, and as he approached the end of his life was keen to ensure this was passed on to his heirs. At a court held at the house of Robert Towers in Marchington on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1673 William<sup>1</sup> Porter came:<sup>8</sup>

in his own person and surrendered into the hands of the Lord of the Manor through his steward aforesaid two acres of land or pasture in a certain field

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<sup>7</sup> SRO, MF 42, Protestation Oath Returns

<sup>8</sup> SRO, D 4038/A/6/6/iv, Surrender and Admission – William Porter

(close) called the Eyes recently part of a field called the Milne Fields four acres of arable land whether more or less by estimation spread out in fields in Marchington called Benjamin field Stafoles field Mill field and Brook field 12 acres whether more or less in a certain field called Swannes field lying and existing in Marchington Woodland with all land tenements hereditaments according to the customs within the said manor. To the use and behoof of William Porter son and heir and assign of the aforesaid William Porter for and during the course of his natural life and after to the use of Margaret and Sarah Porter daughters of the aforesaid William.

William<sup>2</sup>'s daughters were to hold the land in perpetuity unless their father paid them £140 between them when they reached 21, a tidy sum. As well as giving information about Porter land-holdings, it can be assumed that William<sup>2</sup>'s daughter Sarah, whose baptism is missing, must have been born before December 1673 but that her sister Isabel was born after this date as she is not mentioned. Maybe we can also deduce that William<sup>1</sup> thought himself close to death when he made this arrangement. (Burial records are missing for this period.) Shortly before his own death, William<sup>2</sup> seemingly returned to the manor court to confirm his admission:

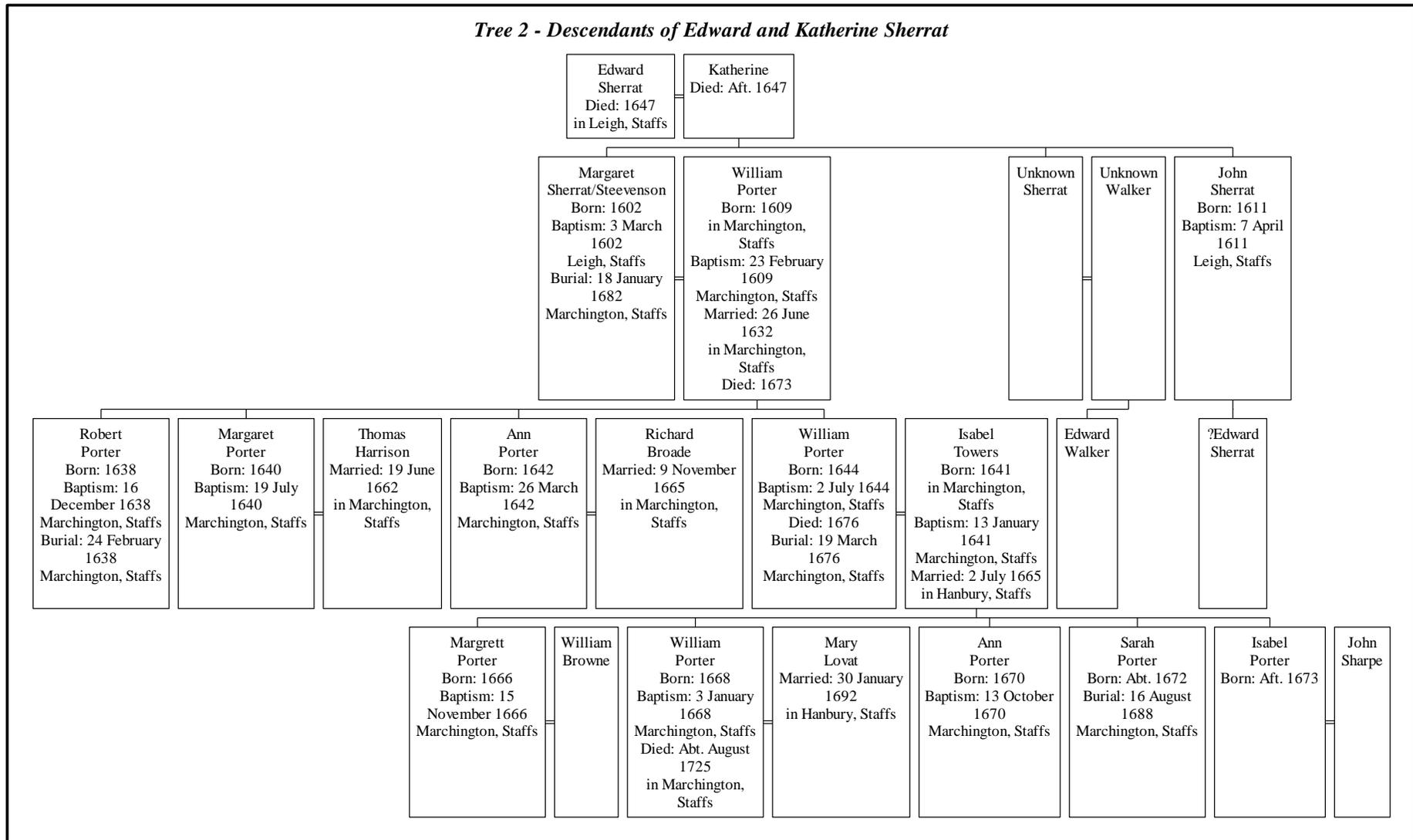
And afterwards, at a court with view of frankpledge and court baron held by the manor aforesaid 27<sup>th</sup> March in the 28<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Charles II [1676] William Porter in his own person sought to be admitted in the form aforesaid which the lord allowed [without fear of wrongful removal] to have and to hold from the Lord in form aforesaid by the rod at the will of the Lord by rendering service... He paid a fine of £9 to the Lord for entry, promised fidelity and was admitted tenant.

My Latin may not have translated this exactly, but is fairly close. However, this hypothesis is not entirely supported by the dates. The year changed on 25<sup>th</sup> March at this time, so 27<sup>th</sup> March 1676 would be almost a whole year before 19<sup>th</sup> March 1676. If the date of the admission is right, then it is William<sup>2</sup> being admitted to land he already holds. The dates on William<sup>2</sup>'s inventory and will support the idea that he was the man who was buried on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1676. The only possible other interpretation is that it is the 8 year old William<sup>3</sup> Porter being admitted to the land, maybe in the person of his father's overseers, The whole surrender and admission is confusing - especially as three generations of Porters involved with the land shared the same first name.

The document above has catapulted us into the life of William<sup>2</sup> Porter, born 1644, son of William<sup>1</sup> and Margaret. He left a clearer paper trail than his father or grandfather. In 1665 at Marchington he married a lady recorded variously as Elizabeth or Isabel Towers (these two names were often used interchangeably):

William Porter and Elizabeth Towers married the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November

*Tree 2 - Descendants of Edward and Katherine Sherrat*



Their first child, Margaret, baptised 15<sup>th</sup> November 1666, eventually married one William Browne. William<sup>3</sup> Porter, the next in our line, was baptised on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1668 and Ann followed, recorded on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1670. Her baptism is right at the end of the volume, and the following one for Marchington is missing. The next daughter, Sarah, born before 1673, was buried<sup>9</sup> on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1688. A younger daughter, Isabel, grew up to marry John Sharp. No marriage has been found for a John Sharp and Isabel Porter, but a John Sharp of Lichfield married an Elizabeth Proctor of Hanbury at Lichfield by licence on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1696. Given that there is not a single entry in the Hanbury and Marchington records for anyone named Proctor in the whole of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while it was a common surname in Lichfield, I wonder if they got the name wrong and this is Isabel Porter.

Through his marriage to Isabel Towers, William<sup>2</sup> Porter found himself signatory to documents dealing with his father-in-law's - and sometimes his own - affairs, the first on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1671<sup>10</sup>. This is a complex indenture, which seems to convey William Tower's house in two moieties, one to Isabel's brother Robert<sup>2</sup> - his heir - and the other to William Porter and two members of the Allen family, also related. The second<sup>11</sup>, dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1673, also dealt with Towers possessions, this time a property called Gorstie Hill House; William was merely a signatory to this document.

In addition, as outlined above, he went to the manor court to be admitted to his father's land in 1673. He couldn't have known how short a time he would have to enjoy it, but three years later, with maybe five young children, he was writing his will<sup>12</sup> which begins with the line:

My trust is in thy mercyes O Lord

and then names his executors:

my Brother in Law Francis Towers of Uttoxeter in the said County of Stafford skynner my brother in law Robert Towers of Marchington Woodlands yeoman And my cozen Edward Sherrat of Leigh in the said County of Staffs yeoman

The list of lands which he wants his executors to sell shows that the parcels mentioned in the manor records were not his entire holding:

my closes or parcells of land called the great Maudleys and the little Maudleys lyeing in Marchington aforesaid and all my meadowe grounds lying in Marchington Common Meadow and all my land arable meadow and pasture lyeing in Marchington Brookefield

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<sup>9</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/> , National Burial Index

<sup>10</sup> SRO, D786/22/1, Settlement of property in Marchington Woodland

<sup>11</sup> SRO, D786/22/3, Indenture between William, Lucy and Robert Towers

<sup>12</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/> , Will of William Porter of Marchington, 1677

Once the land is sold, the money raised is to be used to pay off any debts or mortgages on his freehold land. Anything left over, along with his goods, chattels and stock are to be earmarked:

for the raising a portion for my daughter Isabell

the only one of his children not catered for by his father.

His executors are enjoined to use the profits from Little Eyes and Benjamino Close to maintain his mother Margaret Porter for the rest of her life, and if she were to die before William<sup>3</sup> comes of age, the rents and profits were to go to Isabell until he reaches his majority. The rents and profits from his other land are to be spent on the maintenance of all his children until William<sup>3</sup> is 21. Finally, he bequeaths the residue of his household goods and husbandry ware to his son.

The will is dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1676, but following this is a final clause:

My will is that my executors shall stand full guardians unto my son William Porter until he comes to the full age of one and twenty. And this was set down before the sealing hereof.

Robert Towers was then named executor in place of Thomas Harrison and the document was witnessed by Robt Woodroffe, John H[a]rt, Edward Fenton and William Towers. It was examined and agreed as an original testament by notaries on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1677.

An inventory, dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 1677, was taken:

of the goods and chattels of William Porter of Marchington in the co. of Stafford, yeoman, deceased, taken and appraised the 20<sup>th</sup> day of March

This, like his will, gives his status as yeoman. It values his purse and apparel at £2 16/-, his livestock at £23 5/- and his total moveable estate at a comfortable £73 6/10. Items listed include a number of beds, some feather and some chaff; curtains and valances, rugs, blankets, coverlets and bolsters; sheets, table cloths and napkins; a variety of chairs, tables, stools and cupboards; cushions, candlesticks, salts, pots, kettles and a warming pan; and

Two gowns two petticoats one hat one green apron...

which presumably belonged to his wife. Added to this was the usual livestock - horses, cows and pigs. The house is described as having a parlour, a chamber above the house [or hall], a little chamber, a chamber above the kitchen, a buttery, kitchen, milkhouse, stable a [?] house, and a barn. According to a very confused set of Bishop's Transcripts, William<sup>2</sup> was buried at Marchington on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1676, meaning the appraisal took place the following day and the inventory was submitted just over a month later, the New Year starting at that time on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

Some years later, on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1690, his daughter Margaret, still unmarried at this point, came to court<sup>13</sup> and, if I have translated the Latin correctly:

surrendered..... 2 acres ... the Eyes lately part of the Milne Field, 4 acres in Benjamas Field, Statfold Field, Mill Field and Crook Field, 12 acres in Swan Field in Marchington Woodland to the use and behoof of William Porter brother of the aforesaid Margaret, his heirs and assigns. To this court came William Porter .... and requested to be admitted tenant

And so the land passed back to her brother, William<sup>3</sup> Porter. Much of this land was still in the family – though not our line – 150 years later, when the Tithe Award<sup>14</sup> shows a William Porter owning parcels of land called: Big Benjamin, Little Benjamin, Mill Hill Field Intake and Eyes.

### Sherrat/Sherrade - Church Leigh



### All Saints Leigh

The first foray onto a distaff line briefly explores Margaret Sherrat's family. I spent fruitless hours searching for the baptism of a Margaret Stevenson before the evidence from the wills cited above showed me I was looking for the wrong name. In fact, she was baptised at Leigh as the daughter of Edward and Katherine Sherrade on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1602 (see tree 2 - p.10). This would have made her seven years older than her husband William Porter and thirty when she married him, which maybe strengthens the suggestion that she had already been married and was the widow of a Mr Stevenson. Her brother John was baptised at the same parish nine years later on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1611. A will<sup>15</sup> written by Edward Sherrat, yeoman of Leigh, linked to

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<sup>13</sup> SRO, D4038/A/6/6/ii, Records of the Bagot family of Blithfield

<sup>14</sup> SRO, D1528/2/23/3, Tithe Award for Marchington 1847

<sup>15</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Edward Sherrat of Leigh, 1647

the reference to a cousin of the same name in William<sup>2</sup>'s will, shows that the older Edward was her father:

I give and bequeath unto my daughter Margaret Porter five pounds if my grandchild live until he come to 18 years of age then I request my daughter Margaret Porter to give it unto him and if he die before he come to 18 years of age then to take it so her own use

The grandchild in question would have been William<sup>3</sup> Porter.

A son John is also named, but receives only 1/- for his child (unnamed, but perhaps the cousin Edward) probably because he is in debt to his father:

my son John oweth me fourteen pounds of old reckonings five pounds ten shillings for weekly pay and the rest for other work, and if he pleases his mother well at latter end she shall forgive it him all I have laid down ten pounds five shillings for a yoke of oxen he shall pay it unto his mother before Michaelmas next

Another daughter, married to a man named Walker, receives a small bequest, as does her son Edward. His executor is his 'now wife' Catterin and his will was proved on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1647. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this will though is the preamble, for, along with the usual references to God, is the comment:

... believing by the merits and blood...of Jesus Christ to be one of the number of those which shall be saved

Edward Sharrat presumably had Puritan tendencies, as this group believed that salvation – being one of the 'saved' – was predestined, rather than a matter of faith or good works. Non-conformity was strong in this area<sup>16</sup>. His daughter Margaret, widow of William<sup>1</sup> Porter, was buried at Marchington<sup>17</sup> on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1682.

## **Towers - Yoxall, Marchington and Hanbury**

When William<sup>2</sup> Porter and his Towers wife baptised their first child, the register recorded her name as Isobel, but the next baptism noted it as Elizabeth while the third seemed to spell her name Issabel, though it could be read as Essabet! Unfortunately, not even the BT's marked her burial, so there is no way of telling whether she was more probably known as Elizabeth or Isabel, or indeed when she died. She was baptised in Marchington on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1641 as:

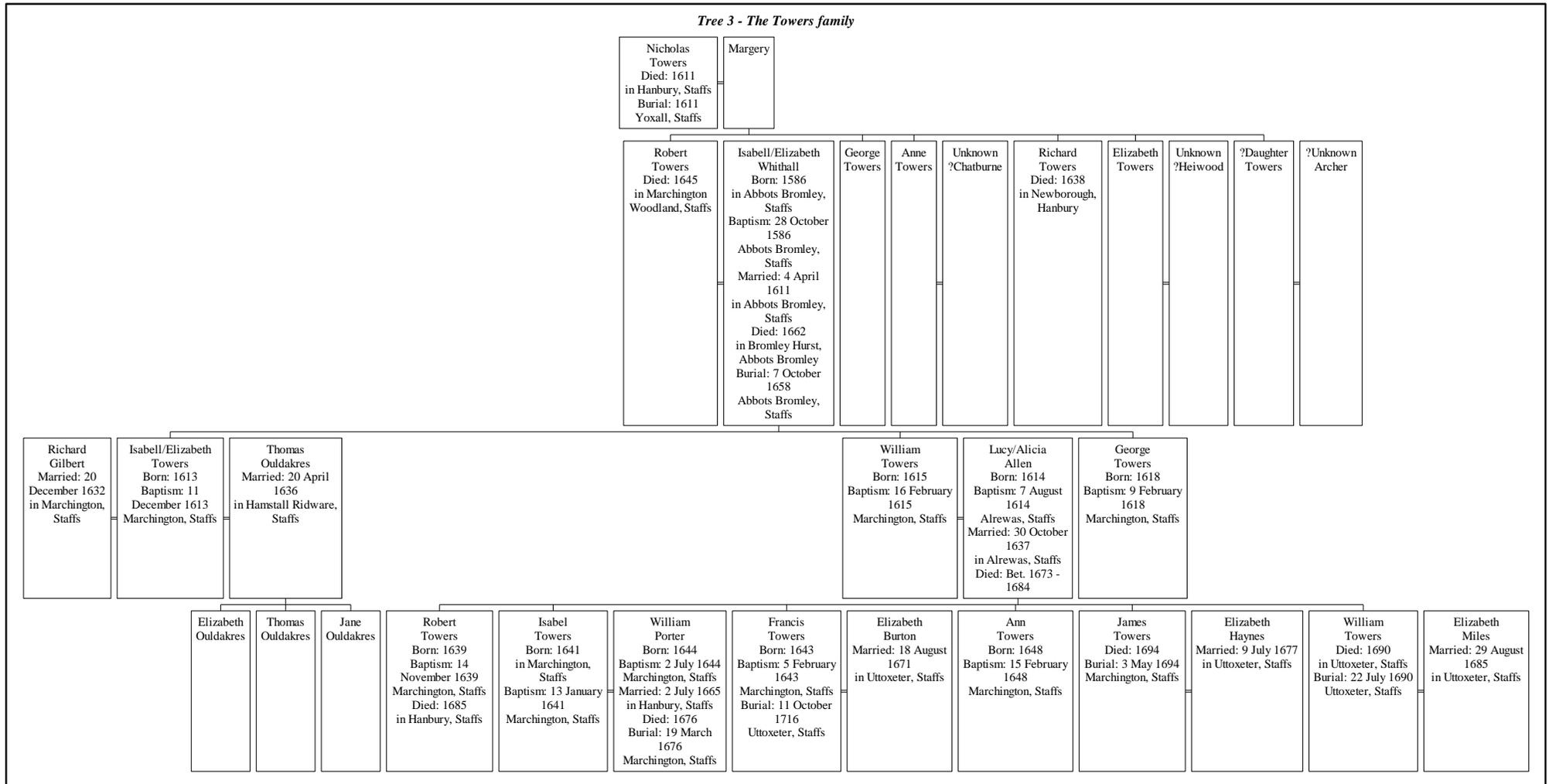
Isabel, daughter of William Towers and Lucy his wife

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/distinctivestaffs/faith.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, National Burial Index

Tree 3 - The Towers family



though by the time she married she had partly morphed into Elizabeth Towers. Several in this line seem to have used the two names interchangeably.

This family can be traced back through Isabel's father William and grandfather Robert<sup>1</sup> to her great-grandparents Nicholas and Margery Towers (see [tree 3 - p. 15](#)). There is no extant baptism for Robert<sup>1</sup> Towers; however we know from his will that he had a brother George, and also that his grandson William<sup>2</sup> described himself as of Knypersley in a quitclaim<sup>18</sup> referred to below dated 1702. The Knypersley in question must be Knypersley Hall in Marchington Woodland, in turn in Hanbury parish. According to the Staffordshire Record Office on-line catalogue<sup>19</sup>, this was formerly the property of the Towers and Mynors families. The last Towers heiress - Ann - married Rowland Mynors in 1734.

In 1611, one Nicholas Towers of Knypersley in Hanbury made his will. He describes himself as in good health, but wishing to see to the disposing:

of that worldly estate whereof the Lord has made me steward

He names several family members, including his wife Margery, married daughters Ann (?Chatburne) and Elizabeth (?Heiwood), and sons George, Richard and Robert. A number of grandchildren are also mentioned - Ann Archer, Thomas Heiwood, Nicholas Towers, and five unnamed children of George, so his family is obviously mature and this is a will written in old age. Ann, Richard, Elizabeth and George receive various specified household goods:

I give to Ann Chatburne als Towers my daughter one cupboard one table one loom, item I give unto Anne Archer my grandchild six pounds, item I give to Richard Towers my son and to Elizabeth Hewood [?Horwood?] als Towers my daughter one featherbed and my greatest brass pot, item to the said Elizabeth I give one churn and a loom, item I give to George Towers my son my greatest brass pan

and the rest is to be divided between his wife and all the children but Robert. The grandchildren receive yearling calves, and there are various monetary bequests to the children. William Jackson and Robert Heiwood - maybe his son-in-law - are named as overseers.

Robert<sup>1</sup> Towers must have been the oldest son and therefore heir-at-law, as, although the:

farm and messuage with all the grounds and appurtenances thereto belonging lying in Marchington Woodland within the parish of Hanbury

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<sup>18</sup> SRO, D786/22/5, Quitclaim by William Browne of Marchington Woodland, 1702

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk/>, D4743/1/1-49, Deeds relating to Knypersley Hall

are willed to Margery for the rest of her life, the property was clearly destined for Robert<sup>1</sup> eventually as he is enjoined to pay each of his siblings £20 out of the profits within a year of her death.

The will was proved by Margery on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1611. One other detail that the will suggests is Nicholas Towers' place of origin. He asks to be buried in the parish church at Yoxhall, a few miles to the south. That register only begins in the mid-seventeenth century, but two probate entries<sup>20</sup>, admons for men from Yoxall both named John Towers, one dated July 1597 and the other in 1572, seem strong contenders to be Nicholas' father and grandfather although this cannot be proven.

The birth of Robert<sup>1</sup> Towers would have predated the Marchington register, but on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1611 he married Isabella Whithall at Abbots Bromley, the parish west of Hanbury. As far as I can tell, there were only three children, Elizabeth, baptised on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1613, William - 16<sup>th</sup> February 1615 - and George - 9<sup>th</sup> February 1618. George died relatively young and was buried at Marchington on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1633. Elizabeth married twice, first to Richard Gilbert at Marchington in 1632 and then to Thomas Ouldakres on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1636 at Hamstall Ridware.

Robert<sup>1</sup> wrote his will on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1640 but it was not proved until 1645<sup>21</sup>, so his death probably occurred at the latter end of this period. His first bequest is to:

Elzabele my wife

It's easy, seeing this spelling, to see how Elizabeth and Isabel become interchangeable. She is bequeathed £20 to be paid within a year and a day provided she does not remarry, and provided she allows:

my son William Towers peaceably and quietly to enjoy all my lands and tenements during all the time of her life

If not, she will only get £10! Presumably the property in question was Knypersley Hall and the farmland around it.

His son-in-law Thomas Ouldakers is named next, though he only gets 10/- rather than the 40/- his wife Elizabeth receives. Their two children - Thomas and Elizabeth - receive 20/- each, and Robert's brother George has the option of his best suit of clothes and either £3 or a heifer. James and Dorothy Whithall, children of Robert (presumably his brother-in-law) get 5/- apiece. There are a couple of other small bequests. Before giving all the rest of his estate to his son William, and naming him his executor, he makes the following bequest to his grandson Robert:

all my wooden goods both within the house and that be forth of the house for to be heirlooms unto him and his heirs lawfully to be begotten after my

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Dioceses of Lichfield and Coventry wills and probate 1521-1860

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Robert Towers of Marchington, 1645

son William Towers decease.

I would love to know what these wooden goods constituted.

5/- went to Sarie Allen and her sisters and there was a bequest to the poor of Marchington and Marchington Woodland of the use of £10 or land to the value of £10. Robert<sup>1</sup> appointed Francis Allen and his son John and Robert Whithall his overseers, and then made his mark at the foot of the document. Francis Allen signed that he had witnessed the will, while Henry and Marie Asson made their marks.

Robert<sup>1</sup>'s eldest son (Isabel/Elizabeth's father) was William Towers. He was baptised, I believe, at Marchington on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1615. Unfortunately, the original register has a torn page for 1615 and all that can be read is:

Willms filius Robti T  
decimo septo die Fe

The IGI has the surname for this entry as Towers, and in this instance I will have to accept it without further proof. William married Lucy Allen on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1638 at Alrewas, some 14 miles south of Marchington and close to Lichfield. However, their children were mainly baptised in Marchington, so this is presumably where the couple settled. Robert<sup>2</sup> came first, baptised on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1639. He married a lady possibly named Squires (Squires nephews and nieces are named in his will, but there were no surviving children) and was buried at Marchington on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1684. Isabel or Elizabeth came two years later and was followed by another brother, Francis, baptised on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1643. He migrated the short distance to Uttoxeter, where he took out a licence to marry Elizabeth Burton on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1671, describing himself as a fellmonger (a dealer in hides or skins). He was buried there on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1716 as Francis Towers, tanner. An entry in the Uttoxeter register for 12<sup>th</sup> September the following year is for the burial of:

Ann the wife of Francis Towers buried at Marchington

and although strictly speaking she would have been his widow, I'm sure this is a spouse – possibly the second – of Francis the fellmonger as she is also named in his brother Robert<sup>2</sup>'s will.

William and Lucy's next child was a daughter, Ann, possibly short-lived, baptised on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1648. The last two were boys, James and William. Their baptisms are missing; possibly they were born during the turmoil of the Civil War. The former married Elizabeth Haynes at Uttoxeter on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1677, although his will<sup>22</sup>, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1694 called him of Marchington. William, who also became a tanner, married Elizabeth Miles at Uttoxeter on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1685, but died relatively young five years later. His inventory<sup>23</sup> shows over £80 worth of hides as part of the

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of James Towers of Marchington, 1694

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will and inventory of William Towers, Uttoxeter, 1691

tally. Francis, James and William all baptised children at Uttoxeter. Whether James and William lived there or simple chose to go to the market town for important events can only be guessed at.



### St Werbergh Hanbury

The will of Robert<sup>2</sup> Towers of Hanbury<sup>24</sup>, proved in 1684, was long and detailed. He was his father's eldest son and chief heir and had presumably done well for himself financially as his monetary bequests ran to over £150. His Squire in-laws and Towers kin were generously provided for, but his sister's Porter children were not forgotten. First named was Isabel:

I give and bequeath to Isabel Porter one piece of land called the Long Holmes which I purchased of Robert Woodruff and John Morton the younger to her and her heirs for ever.

Interestingly, she and her husband later sold this land back to Robert's brother Francis<sup>25</sup>. Her sisters Margaret and Sarah and brother William<sup>3</sup> each received £20. In addition, William<sup>3</sup> was bequeathed:

all my wearing apparel and my chest and my gun

the latter item with a caveat:

I desire that my executors may keep my gun in their hands until he accomplish the age of one and twenty years

His brother Francis' son William was given the rest of his land, provided that he pay his three female Porter cousins another £20 each within two years.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Robert Towers, Hanbury, 1684

<sup>25</sup> SRO, D786/22/4, Mynors Papers, Bargain and sale

To return to the father of this brood, William Towers - born in 1615, married to Lucy Allen in 1638; apart from the baptisms of his children, the only other glimpse we get of him in the earlier years is his signature at Marchington on the 1642 Protestation Oath Roll. However, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1671 an indenture was drawn up to settle his property<sup>26</sup>. There are a number of parties to the deed. Initially, of course:

William Towers of Marchington Woodland in the county of Staffordshire  
yeoman

but then John Allen of Hanbury, gent – his cousin-in-law; Francis Allen of Fradley – brother-in-law; William Porter of Marchington - his son-in-law; and Arthur Alcock (married to his sister-in-law Elizabeth Allen) make up the second part, while his son and heir Robert<sup>2</sup> is the third part. The first part of the document suggests:

All that messuage house and tenement aforesaid which the said William Towers doth now inhabit

is being:

granted bargained enfeoffed and confirmed

to the two Allens, William<sup>2</sup> Porter and Arthur Alcock, but I assume they are being used as trustees, as later in the document, which has partly faded, it looks as if the property is being split into two moieties, one for William and Lucy Towers for the rest of their natural lives and the other to Robert<sup>2</sup>, who, after his parents' death will hold the whole property. A bargain and sale allowed the property to change hands, but the seller to retain the use of it. The document is witnessed by John Allen, William<sup>2</sup> Porter, Ann and John Towers and two members of the Lovatt family, of whom more later.

Two further documents<sup>27</sup> deal with William Towers' property. The first reiterates the deal already made, but clarifies that Robert<sup>2</sup> is paying annually £15 rent to William on the house where his parents live (and where he holds the moiety). There is also reference to another property:

But if the said William Towers or Lucy or the survivor of them do happen to inhabit at the house called Gorstie Hill House then yielding and paying £13 a year...

The next section of the document is not sufficiently clear to explain the nature of the said £13, but Robert<sup>2</sup> is also enjoined to provide both or either surviving parent annually:

two hundred of wooden faggots or ?kidds to be cut or made upon the

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<sup>26</sup> SRO, D786/22/1, Settlement of property in Marchington Woodland

<sup>27</sup> SRO, D786/22/2 & 3, Indentures between William, Lucy and Robert Towers, 5-1.1673

premises by the said Robert Towers his heirs etc. and shall also yearly make for the said William Towers and Lucy his wife or the survivor of them forty strike of barley into malt if required

William Towers signed this document; Lucy made her mark. John Allen, two of Robert<sup>2</sup>'s Squires in-laws and William<sup>2</sup> Porter were witnesses. The second document seems very similar in content.

It seems reasonable to assume that a similar settlement may have been made in favour of his next son Francis, as William's will<sup>28</sup>, dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 1684 which begins:

William Towers of Marchington Woodland in the parish of Hanbury in the county of Stafford yeoman

made no mention of either Robert<sup>2</sup> or Francis. He had presumably moved from the house he had passed to Robert<sup>2</sup>, as his first bequest was to his son James:

all that my messuage or tenement in which I do now inhabit

The proviso is that he pay his brother William £20 within the year. His next bequest is a charitable one, the sum of 12/- annually to be set aside for the poor out of the profits of a piece of land called Little Hawker Hill. William and James are given a red and flannel bed respectively and a silver spoon each. William, Margaret and Sarah Porter, his grandchildren, receive £3 apiece, while their younger sister Isabel gets £5. There are a couple of other small bequests, and then, after the usual proviso about debts being paid, he divides what remains between William and James, appoints William executor and his son Robert and John Allen overseers. Again, William<sup>3</sup> Porter was a witness. William Towers was buried at Marchington four days later, on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1684.

As was the norm, the neighbours or relatives made an inventory. Taken on 5<sup>th</sup> May, it values William's purse and apparel at £3 10/-. His livestock – cows, calves and a mare – and hay came to nearly £27. Other items include pewter dishes, porringers, candlesticks, a lantern, a brass mortar and pestle along with other brass goods. Then there is furniture – not a huge amount – barley and malt, brewing, kneading and milking implements, cooking utensils and other bits and pieces. Finally two bonds, (probably desperate debts as their value, £16, is subtracted from the total) leaving the sum at the bottom of the page at £47 13/4. Given the apparent status of William earlier in life, I suspect he had already passed on much of his estate to his family.

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<sup>28</sup> LRO, B/C/11, Will of William Towers of Marchington, 1684

## Whitall/Whithall - Abbots Bromley and Allen - Alrewas

It is possible to take the line of Isabel Whitall back one more generation. She was baptised at Abbots Bromley in October 1586:

28 die Issabella filia Jacobi Whithall bapt

Sometime after the death of her husband, Robert<sup>1</sup> Towers, she moved back to her home parish (possibly to live with her daughter) where she was buried on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1658:

Isabella Towers vidua de Bromley Hurst sepulta



**St Nicholas Abbots Bromley**

Being a widow, she was allowed to make a will<sup>29</sup>. All her bequests are to her daughter Elizabeth's Oldacres family; with granddaughter Jane benefiting from the bulk of her property:

threscore and eleven sheep young and old: one grey mare, one bay filly  
and one yearling colt: one black cow ... one black ... steer called Darling

although Jane's parents were to have use of these until she was 21. Her brother Thomas was willed a 3 year-old grey nag, and their mother Elizabeth her mother's clothes. Son-in-law Thomas was to execute the will, which Isabell signed in the presence of Thomas Norris, Henry Alport and Ellen Dickinson. By the time her daughter Elizabeth came to prove it, on 1<sup>th</sup> February 1661, she was herself a widow. The inventory is brief, and shows no household goods, reinforcing the idea that she was living with her daughter:

	Li	S	d
Imprimis one two year old colt	3	0	0

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<sup>29</sup> SRO, B/C/11 Will of Isabell Towers of Abbots Bromley, 1661-62

It one yearling colt	2	0	0
It three score and eleven sheep	13	10	0
It one ox	6	0	0
It one cow	4	4	0
It one mare	5	0	0
It one grey nag	3	0	0
It her wearing apparel	1	10	0
	<u>38</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>

The inventory was taken by Thomas Norris, William Alport and Anthony Forden. There was clearly still confusion over the correct version of her name as well, as the document is headed:

A true and perfect inventory of the goods cattles and chattels of ~~Eliza~~ Isabel Towers widow deceased taken the 17th March A.D.1661



### Abbots Bromley - The Buttercross

Abbots Bromley was a market town, now more of a village, lying to the south-west of Marchington. It still has much of the character our ancestors must have known, with an ancient buttercross and several beautiful timber-framed buildings. It is famed today for the annual September horn dance, and the antlers used by the dancers are displayed in the church.

Isabel's parents, James and Ellen Whithall, baptised a number of children in the parish, although the one I take to be the eldest from his position in the will - Richard - doesn't appear in the register (see tree 4 - p. 25). James was a short-lived child, baptised on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1585 and buried on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1600. Isabel came next and then Walter, who was baptised on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1588 and married Ann Keys in Uttoxeter on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1612. An un-named infant boy was buried on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1589, and then came Robert, baptised 24<sup>th</sup> February 1591. He and the next two children all

outlived their father. Ellen or Helen was baptized on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1593. Twins John and Martin followed, baptised together on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1595. Martin was buried four days later, but John survived his first five years, only to be buried on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1600 – a bad year for James and Ellen. The 1590s were a period of poor harvests and consequent food shortages. Having looked at James' will, I doubt that famine played a part in the loss of four of his 10 children; maybe infectious disease was implicated. The last-born child, Elizabeth, baptised on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1598, and perhaps surprisingly named as there was already an Isabel in the family, did apparently survive to adulthood, however, and married Thomas Loton in Marchington on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1619.

James Whythall wrote his will on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1613, describing himself as a yeoman of Bromley Woodland. His first bequest was to his son Richard Whythall of:

£20 in money and one brass pan and brass pot one candlestick ... and the one half of all my husbandry ware

His daughter Isabel Towers, already married and no doubt having received her portion, was given just 12<sup>d</sup> while his wife Elin received the other half of the husbandry ware and the widow's third of the rest of his estate. Son Walter was given £3 and his sister Elizabeth a cow. 10/- was donated to the poor of the parish and then the rest of his goods were bequeathed jointly to three of his children: Robert, Elin and Elizabeth. Richard and Robert and a Simon Whythall witnessed the document, along with John Watsonne, and James made his mark. His wife and son Richard, as executors, proved the will on 3<sup>rd</sup> September the same year.

I suspect it was John Watson who was part of the appraisal team who made the inventory, though the name looks like Watsonne. He was assisted by Simon Whythall and Thomas Barlow, and James' son-in-law Robert Towers. James had a considerable amount of livestock: dairy cows, a bull, several young cattle and calves, a team of oxen, three horses, a dozen sheep, hens and several bee hives. Together these were valued at over £80. There were also the tools and implements of husbandry dealt with in the will, as well as crops. Inside the house were brassware and napery, cloth and yarn, bedding, and also much food in store: beef and bacon, 52 cheeses, 6 pots of butter, malt and so on. All in all, the inventory, taken on 13<sup>th</sup> September, valued his moveable goods at £132 2/-, a considerable sum. This would seem to be the estate of a man in his prime rather than one enjoying quiet twilight years.

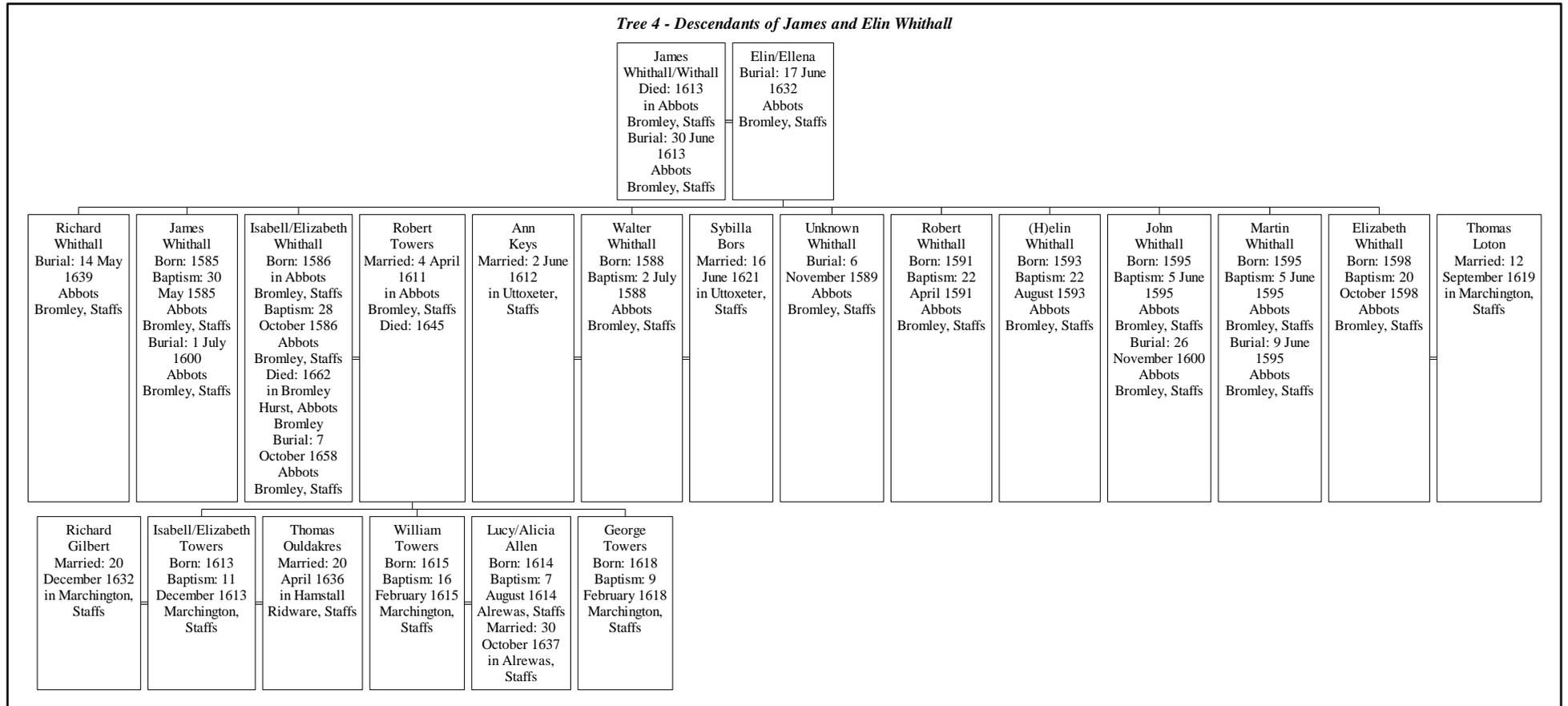
James was buried on 30<sup>th</sup> June as:

Jacobus Whitall paterfamilias [head of the family or household]

His wife, named as Elin in the will, survived him for nearly 20 years and was buried at Abbots Bromley on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1632 as:

Ellena Whitehall vidua [widow]

*Tree 4 - Descendants of James and Elin Whithall*



The last family in this detour is that of Lucy or, as the baptismal register puts it, Alicia Allen; the woman who married William Towers (see tree 5 – p. 29). She was baptised the daughter of Francis Allen on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1614. Her mother's name was not given, but she was Bennett Parker, who married Francis at Hanbury on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1613. Lucy must have died sometime between 1673 when she is named in a deed<sup>30</sup> and 1684 when her husband died. Francis and Bennett had seven other children, six of whom appear in the Alrewas register. These are Elizabeth, baptised 8<sup>th</sup> December 1616, married Arthur Alcocke on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1641; John – baptised 9<sup>th</sup> January 1618; Isabella – baptised 26<sup>th</sup> December 1623 (I suspect both of these died young); Sarah – baptised 6<sup>th</sup> January 1623, married Henry Hogge 1<sup>st</sup> February 1647; Francis – baptised 13<sup>th</sup> May 1629, who baptised his own son Francis in 1664; Richard – baptised 10<sup>th</sup> October 1632, probably married Joan Rogers on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1661 at Lichfield. There was another child, Elinor, who married Ralph Taylor at Alrewas on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1659, but her baptism has not been found.

Francis Allen appears in the Protestation Returns<sup>31</sup> as:

Mr Francis Allen

indicating some status in the community.



**All Saints Alrewas**

He also served as Churchwarden of Alrewas in the years 1636, 7 and 8, and his name is noted with his two co-'guardiani' in the parish register. Apart from that, he leaves little in the way of a paper trail until his will<sup>32</sup> which was written on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1664. In it, he describes himself as a yeoman before making a first bequest to his son Richard of parcels of land called Stockfords and Bailie Lane, with a proviso that the latter go to his son Francis after Richard's death. Rent for this land was 6/8 to the Lord of the Manor of Alrewas, probably a member of the Griffiths family, whose seat was at

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<sup>30</sup> SRO, D786/22/3, Indenture between William, Lucy and Robert Towers

<sup>31</sup> SRO, MF 78 1642 Protestation, Fradley, parish of Alrewas

<sup>32</sup> SRO, P/C/11, Will and inventory of Francis Allen of Fradley 1665

Wychnor. (A note in the Alrewas register commemorates James I's visit there in 1622. No doubt this caused much excitement locally.) Richard also receives £60 and:

all the seilinge that is in my dwelling house and all the seilinge that is in my parlour and buttery two long tables in my parlour and house and one bedstead in the great chamber and one cupboard in my chamber

Seilinge refers to panelling or wainscoting – a mark of comfort in a yeoman's house. Richard also received:

one little lea lying in Great Salterholme next to a lea that belongeth to my house at Fradley lying between Rushy Butts and the ?Tume

After the death of his wife Bennett, Francis and later his heirs were to hold:

all that my moiety or one half of one close of pasture ground lying in Alrewas aforesaid called by the name of ?Littles lately by me purchased

Daughter Sarah was given 5/- and her daughter the bed in the little chamber. His son-in-law:

William Towers and ... his wife and ... Francis Towers

each had 5/- while his other son-in-law and their offspring received similar amounts, though his nephew John, son of brother John Allen, and Henry Hogge received 10/- each. He then instructs his son:

Frances Allen to pay interest of 40 shillings to the poor of Fradley yearly from year to year to be paid out of Littles use 40 shillings that was left for that use by my father-in-law John Bird

This is an intriguing remark. Was John Bird Bennett Parker's father, in which case she must have been married before? Or was he a step-father – either to Bennett or Francis – both relationships for which this term was used. Either way, the remainder of his property went to Bennett for life, and she and son Francis became joint executors. Finally, he appointed:

my well beloved friend Daniel Watson of Grays Inn in the County of Middlesex Esquire and William Turton of Alrewas gent Thomas Bladen of Alrewas gent and Arthur Alcocke my son-in-law

to be overseers. Arthur Alcocke, Ralph Taylor and Richard Allen witnessed the will and on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1665 it:

was administered to Mrs Bennett Allen of Fradley in the parish of Alrewas at and in her own house the oath within written according to the... thereof by me. JS Simpson vicar of Alrewas

The usual inventory was taken, this time by Arthur Alcocke, Thomas Bevins, William Francis and Ralph Taylor, who appraised the estate at £199 9/2, a very good sum. Francis' purse and clothes added up to over £10, and several luxury items are listed: curtains, covers and valances, cushions, a carpet - which would have gone on the table not the floor - silver spoons and napery ware, a hanging press - presumably a wardrobe - and brass ware as well as livestock, instruments of husbandry, crops and:

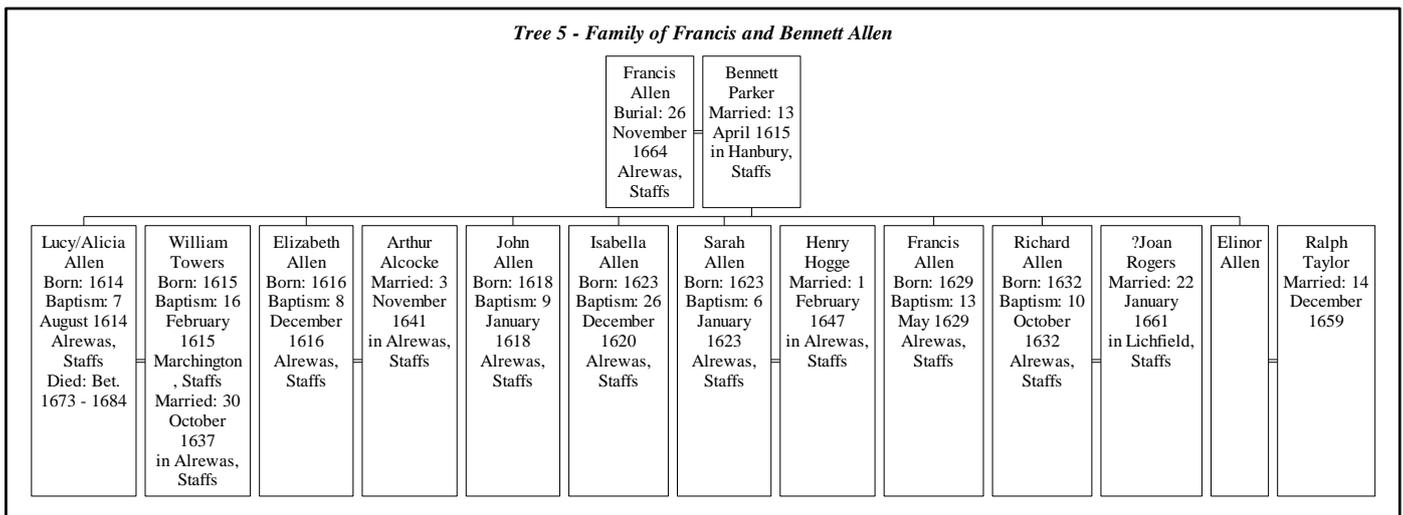
the reversion of a lease of Bradbury of land for one year

which was worth £12.

Francis was buried at Alrewas as a long-time resident of the parish on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1664 as:

Franciscus Allen longa jam aetate p [parish] Fradley

but there is no sign of a burial for Bennett.



### Porter: Marchington again

We return now to William<sup>3</sup> Porter born at Marchington in 1668. It is unusual that, in 1673, his grandfather William<sup>1</sup> should have chosen to pass land on to his granddaughters rather than a grandson<sup>33</sup>, although it seems to have been a ploy to ensure that William<sup>3</sup> pay his sisters their dues in order to inherit the land himself:

To the use and behoof of William Porter for and during the term of his natural life and after his decease to the use and behoof of Margaret Porter

<sup>33</sup> SRO, D 4038/A/6/6/iv 1673, Records of the Baggot family, Surrender and admission

and Sara Porter daughters of the said William Porter their heirs and assigns in perpetuity provided always that if William Porter son of the said William Porter his heirs or assigns pay or cause to be paid to the said Margaret and Sara or the survivor of them £140 of good and lawful money of England in the space of 3 months after they reach the age of 21 years the aforesaid William the son of the said William the father then this present surrender and admission...

the next section is unclear, but I think the gist is that this transmission of land to William<sup>3</sup> will be null and void if he doesn't pay his sisters the money.

The year following William<sup>2</sup>'s death – 1677 – at a court held at the house of Robert Towers, the girls' uncle, the little girls came to ask to be admitted to the land. The copy of the court record<sup>34</sup> rehearses the fact that the older William had put the land into the names of his granddaughters, and records that their father has now died, further confirming the rough date of William<sup>1</sup>'s death. Given that they were so young, I wonder if the venue of the court was significant. Their uncle Robert had been named as William<sup>3</sup>'s guardian in his father's will and was no doubt helping the young widow Isabel to bring up the children.

Presumably, by the time he was in his early 20s, William<sup>3</sup> was in a position to carry out his grandfather's wishes. His sister Sarah was now dead, but on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1690, Margaret Porter went to the manor court<sup>35</sup> and surrendered 2 acres in The Eyes, 4 acres in Benjamas, Statfoles, Mill and Crook Fields and 12 acres in Swan Field in Marchington Woodland to her brother William<sup>3</sup>, who was admitted to the land in her stead.

He must have had other holdings in the same area, as, at a court<sup>36</sup> held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1698, William<sup>3</sup> sold another piece of land:

To this court came William Porter in his proper person ... surrendered into the hands of the Lord ..... 12 acres by estimation called Swanfield in Marchington Woodland to use and behoof of Thomas Webb

Between these two transactions, though, he married. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1692, at Hanbury, William Porter of Marchington wed Mary Lovatt of Gortsie Hill, which is in the Marchington Woodland part of the parish. Mary was presumably born after 1670 and her baptism probably took place during the period of the missing volume of the register. As her last child was born in 1715 we can assume she was younger than her husband (**see Tree 6 – p.30**).

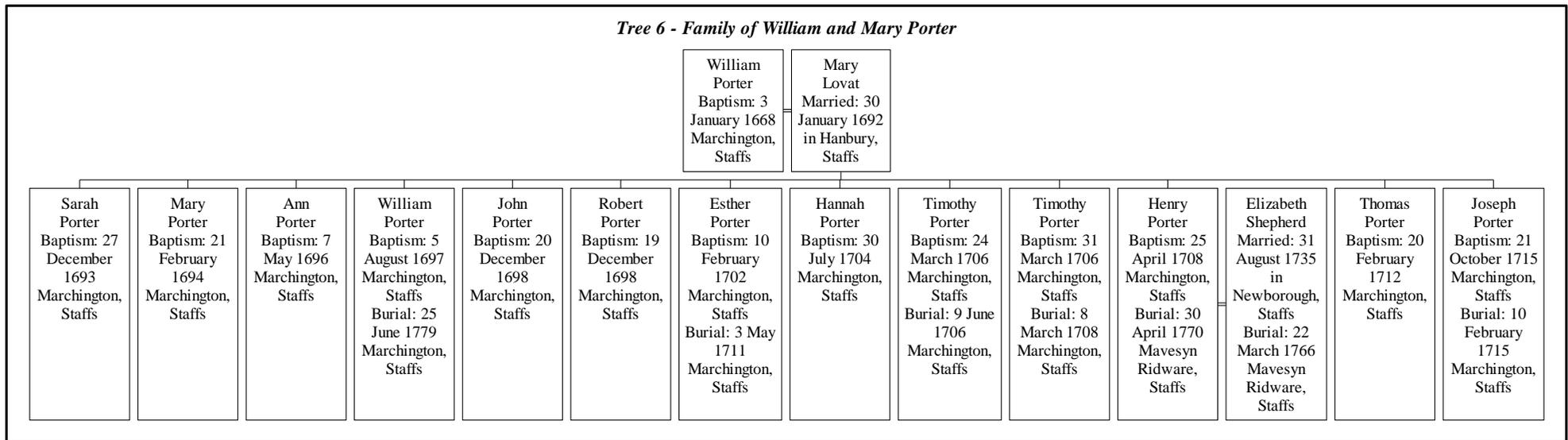
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<sup>34</sup> SRO, D4038/A/6/6/iii, 1677, Records of the Baggot family

<sup>35</sup> SRO, D4038/A/6/6/ii, 1690, Records of the Baggot family

<sup>36</sup> SRO, D4038/A/6/6/i, 1698, Records of the Bagot family

*Tree 6 - Family of William and Mary Porter*



The couple had 13 children at Marchington in all, but several probably died young as there seems to be no further record of them. The first three – Sarah, baptised 27<sup>th</sup> December 1693, Mary, baptised 21<sup>st</sup> February 1694 and Ann, baptised 7<sup>th</sup> May 1696 – may come into this category. The next child, William, baptised on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1697, probably grew to adulthood and died in 1779, but there are no possible sightings for John and Robert who, according to the BTs were baptised on 24<sup>th</sup> December and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1698 respectively. Esther, baptised on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1702, died aged nine and was buried on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1711, while Hannah, baptised on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1704 then disappears completely. Two Timothys appear to have been born and baptised almost exactly a year apart, on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1706 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 1706. I would consider this suspect were it not for the fact that there are also two burial dates: 9<sup>th</sup> June 1706 and 8<sup>th</sup> March 1708. Our ancestor Henry was next, baptised at Marchington on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1708, and fortunately he was a survivor. Thomas followed, baptised 20<sup>th</sup> February 1712 and finally came Joseph. Baptised on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1715, he was buried less than 4 months later, on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1715.

In the midst of trying to raise a family, William<sup>3</sup> was one of the witnesses to a bargain and sale<sup>37</sup> made on 13th April 1697 by his sister Isabel and her husband John Sharp in which they transferred a four acre piece of land called Longe Holmasse in Marchington Woodlands to Francis Towers for the sum of £42.

The next time the two families appear together in a document was in an award<sup>38</sup> dated 5th June 1702 concerning the wills of William Porter and Robert Towers, and there seems to have been something of a falling out. I have quoted at length from this, although the original is far longer, because of the genealogical detail and insights into family politics shown. Robert Towers was brother to Isabel Towers and therefore uncle to the three Porter sisters: Isabel, Margaret and Sarah and their brother William<sup>3</sup>:

In persuance of assessment ... made by Francis Towers surviving executor of William Porter deceased and other administrators with the will annexed of Robert Towers deceased and William Towers his son and devisee of certain lands and tenements which were the estate of the said Robert Towers and also by John Sharpe who married Isabell one of the daughters of the said William Porter and William Browne who married Margaret another of the daughters of the said William Porter and upon hearings of the said parties and their witnesses – I do award the following:

That is to say I do order and award that the said Francis Towers his executors and administrators shall at the request and cost of the said John Sharpe his executors administrators or assigns by writing under his hand and seal ..... on the attested sign over to him the said John Sharpe his executors etc. one .... obligation bearing date the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1690 wherein William Porter of the county of Staffordshire yeoman stands bound to the said Francis Towers in the personal sum of £80 conditional

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<sup>37</sup> SRO, D786/22/4, Mynors Papers, Bargain and sale

<sup>38</sup> SRO, D786/22/6, Mynors Papers, Award concerning wills of William Porter and Robert Towers,

.... the payment of £40 and interest upon the 26<sup>th</sup> day of March which was in the year of our Lord 1691 and all the money due thereon .... he neither hath released nor will release the said bond nor yet any money due thereon. It appearing to me that the money due thereon was an amount of the portion of the said Isabel the said wife of the said John Sharpe and sister to the said William Porter and the bond was taken in the name of the said Francis Towers in trust for her. I order and award that the said John Sharpe indemnify him the said Francis Towers from all ... that he shall bring in his name or any name or names on his executors or administrators upon the said bond and from all damage that shall or may happen to him the said Francis Towers his executors or administrators for or by his or their assigning over the said bond as aforesaid.

[From here, I have omitted the formulaic repetitions]:

And I do also award that ... Francis Towers ... shall pay ... John Sharpe ... £6 13/4 being the third part of the legacy of £20 devised ... by Robert Towers deceased to Sarah Porter now deceased who was sister to the said Isabell now wife to ... John Sharpe at or before the 29<sup>th</sup> September next ensuing the which £6 13/4 I take to belong to John Sharpe in right of his wife , the said Sarah dying under the age of 20 years and unmarried not having ..... the same. And I do award that ... Francis Towers ... pay ... William Browne .... £6 13/4 being the share of Margaret his wife another sister of the said Sarah ... which I take in like manner to belong to him.

And I do also order and award the said William Browne at or before ... 29<sup>th</sup> September next to deliver to the said Francis Towers or leave for him at his house all the goods which the said Margaret his wife borrowed of the said Francis Towers and his wife and upon the assignation of the said bond payment of the said money and delivery of the said goods, I do order and award the said Francis Towers to give the said John Sharpe a general release in writing [of all] amounts claimed and demands whatsoever from the beginning of the world to the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March last past ... being the day that the said parties submitted ... resolved to my award.

And I do also order Francis Towers at the same time to give the like release to the said William Browne. I do also order and award to the said William Browne and John Sharpe severally to give the like release at the same time to the said Francis Towers.

William Towers, Francis and Robert<sup>2</sup>'s brother, also seems to have been involved, and is told to pay to John Sharpe the legacy of £20 devised by Robert<sup>2</sup> Towers to his wife Isabel and charge on the real estate a further £6 13/4 being one third of the legacy devised to Isabel's sister Sarah. Clearly there has been a considerable amount of family bickering and recriminations on all sides. As far as I can make out, put as simply as possible, it would appear that William<sup>3</sup> Porter has failed to honour a bond taken out with Francis Towers in reference to his sisters' legacies. Francis, Robert<sup>2</sup>'s brother and executor, seems to have responded by withholding their bequests, but is now being told to honour them.

William Browne, Margaret's husband, had made a quitclaim<sup>39</sup> to William Towers already, on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1702

Know all men ... that I William Browne of Marchington Woodland in the parish of Hanbury quitclaim to William Towers of Nipesley in the parish of Hanbury, all legacies of my wife Margaret late Porter by the last will and testament of Robert Towers, and also that share given to Sarah Porter, my wife's sister...

It is to be hoped that, at the end of all this, everyone was happy!

William<sup>3</sup> Porter died in 1725. No burial has been found, but his wife Mary went to Uttoxeter to take out an administration of his estate on 28<sup>th</sup> October in that year, swearing that he had died intestate. She was bound to present an inventory and told to present the account of her administration by the end of October the following year. She appears to have been supported by Edward Madely of Dovebridge and Onely Heath of Uttoxeter, but they may just have been witnesses.



**Uttoxeter - Market Cross and Market Square**

William Tompson and Joseph Taylor took the inventory. As with most estates in this line, it suggests a mixed farm, with six milking cows valued at £20 the most valuable item, followed by 120 cheeses stored in the garret and worth £11. There were other cattle, a pig, a few sheep, and wheat, peas and hay. The property consisted of the house [or hall], a parlour, a pantry, rooms over the hall and parlour, a 'further chamber' and a garret. The beds, furnishing and kitchen implements are less grand than those of his Towers relatives, and his purse and apparel were valued at £3, making a grand total of £68 16/-.

It's hard to tell how long Mary survived him by, but the only burial of a Mary Porter at Marchington within the next 40 years was on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1743. As has already

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<sup>39</sup> SRO, D786/22/5, Quitclaim by William Browne of Marchington Woodland

been said, she was probably born after 1670 when there is a gap in the register, but her father's will, written in 1675, names her so she must have been born before this date. So a burial in 1743 is feasible.

### Lovatt - mainly Marchington



**St Mary Uttoxeter**

Mary was the youngest of four children belonging to John Lovatt and Mary Peeres or Peerce who had married on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1662 at Uttoxeter (see tree 6 - p. 30). The marriage bond<sup>40</sup> taken out refers to him as:

John Lovatt of Marchington Woodlands in Co. Staff husbandman

John and Mary's first child appears in the Marchington register on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1664 as:

Thomas the sonne of John Lovert and Mary his wife

but I suspect someone made a mistake, as John twice makes reference to his daughter Thomasin in his will. The next child, Timothy, baptised on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1665, is listed as a daughter, but as this child had died before the will was written it's not possible to be sure of the gender. Joseph was baptised on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1666, correctly identified as a boy!

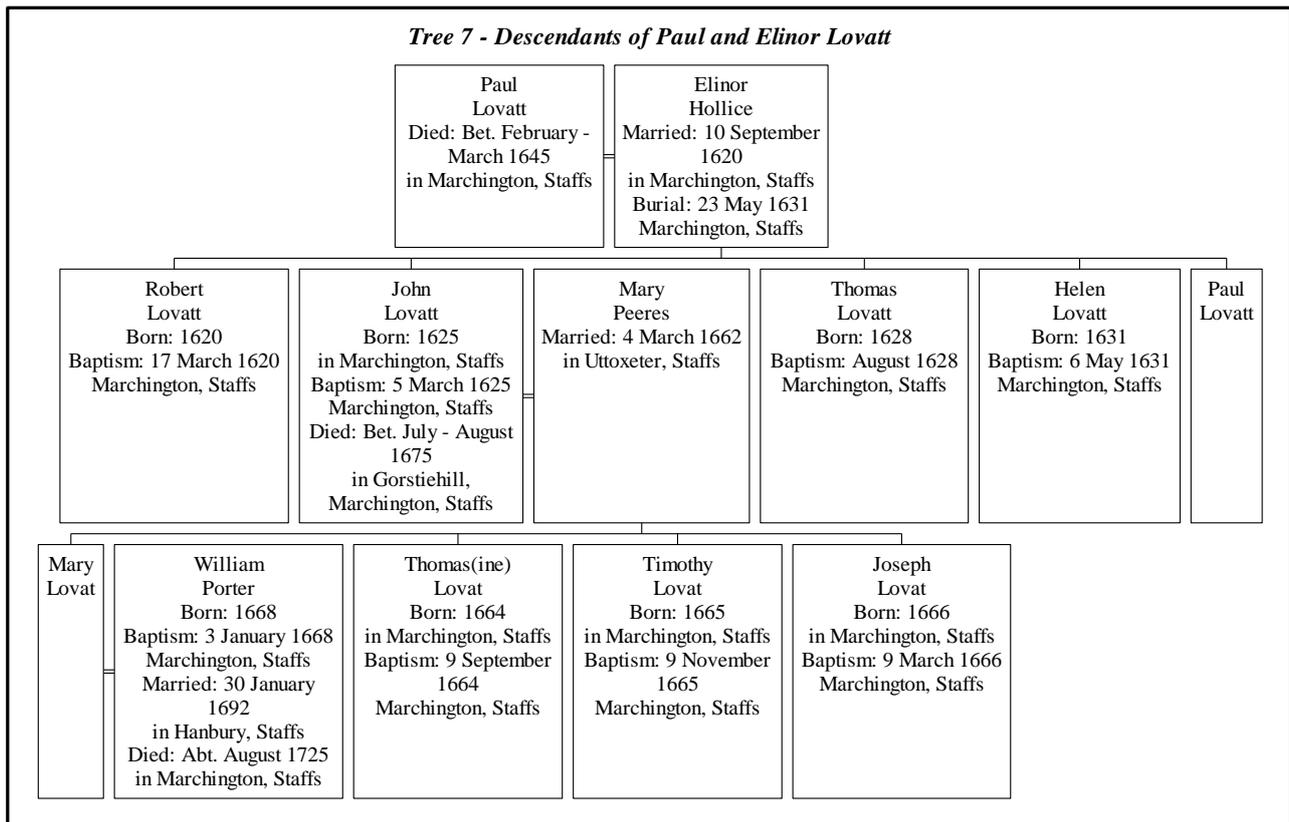
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<sup>40</sup> <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry Marriage allegations & bonds

John Lovatt had been baptised at Marchington on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1625, the son of Paul and Ellenor Lovatt. (No trace of Mary Peeres' origins have been found.) The entry in the register is a strange one:

Johes guatus Pauli Lovate et Ellena uxor euis baptus fuit quinto die

There are several other uses of this word in the surrounding pages. If I have transcribed it correctly, guatus means fertile; if the word is gratus, it means welcome. Either way it is an odd departure from the usual filius, meaning son.



Apart from the fact that he signed the Protestation Oath<sup>41</sup>, the only other information about his comes from his will, written on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1675. In it, he describes himself as a yeoman, so he had moved up a notch since his marriage, and gives his abode as Gorstie Hill. He is able to will his son Joseph three houses in Pinfold Lane in Uttoxeter. A lane of this name still exists, running north towards Uttoxeter from Abbots Bromley. Other parcels of land, namely Long Heath and land in Morry go to Joseph as well with the stipulation that he pay his two sisters, Thomasin and Mary, £20 from the rents. Another £40 apiece goes to the two daughters, and the rest of his estate goes to Mary his wife, provided she doesn't remarry. If she does:

Then my will is that she only have my best bed and furniture

<sup>41</sup> SRO, Protestation Oath 1642: MF 78

The rest would then go to the children. Mary is made executrix and Michael Edge, clerk of Uttoxeter, and elder brother Robert are made overseers.

His brother was also involved in taking the inventory, along with Nicholas Jackson, John Coye and John Tompson, who find six cows, six sheep, two pigs and a mare and two colts, and corn on the ground. This and the cows are the most valuable items. Otherwise it's the usual mix of utensils, furniture and furnishings, some silver, £20 of debts owed to him and £10 in purse and apparel. The total comes to £105 15/-

This line can be taken back just one generation further to John's parents, Paul Lovatt and Ellenor Hollice. Almost nothing is known about her other than the fact that she married at Marchington in 1620:

Paulus Lovat et Ellena Hollice coniugati fuer. X<sup>th</sup> die Septembr.

had five children and probably died as a result of the birth of the last. The baptism of a son Paul (possibly born around 1622-3) is missing, but the others were Robert - 17<sup>th</sup> March 1620, John, Thomas - August 1628 and Helen - 8<sup>th</sup> May 1631. Ellen was buried a fortnight later on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Her husband's will includes the name Humphrey Holley, who may be related as names in the register seem very fluid.

Not much more is known about her husband Paul. He did sign the Protestation Oath in 1642, but died three years later, sometime between 24<sup>th</sup> February when his will was made and 29<sup>th</sup> March 1645 when the inventory was taken. I suspect his death occurred shortly after the will was made as it was nuncupative, in other words, dictated in extremis. Pages are missing in the register at this time, so there is no record of the burial. The will shows that Paul was not financially secure at this time; he is the only one I have researched in this part of Staffordshire who was only a husbandman rather than a yeoman at time of death. However, it is clear that death caught him unawares:

A memorandum

Of the words that Paul Lovatt spoke being in good and perfect remembrance in the presence of John Lovatt Humphrey Holley Sebastian Parton. The words are these: at my decease I make my son Robert Lovatt and my son John Lovatt my executors. My will is that they should use my land living and goods together for three years to bring me home to pay my debts and to help their brethren if they can

Anything left over is to be shared equally between them. Robert is enjoined then to have possession of all the land and to pay his brother Paul £10:

if he can command it

and then pay his brother Thomas £3 a year. John was to receive his tenement adjoining Scounley Green - presumably what is now Scounslow Green:

for all my time of three lives

Provisos are made for how things are to be divided up should any of the sons die, and Robert's parcels of land are named as the Great Mede and the Little Rough. There is no mention of his daughter Helen; I imagine she died as an infant.

Amongst others, William Towers took the inventory, which shows a poverty-stricken household. Paul's clothes and purse were valued at a meagre 6/8, and all the bedding and brass came to less than 30/-. Reference is made to old implements within the house, and it's only what is outside that has any real worth: cows and calves are valued at £13 and hay and corn at £5. All this only adds up to £20 3/-, which is not enough, as below this is written:

Debts owing by the deceased as followeth:

To Jane Smith	12 <sup>l</sup>
To William Jackson	5 <sup>l</sup>
To William Towers	50 <sup>s</sup>
To one Browne a carpenter	40 <sup>s</sup>

S w o 21<sup>l</sup> 10<sup>s</sup>

It is somewhat ironical that his son John died being owed almost as much, and with a moveable estate worth five times as much.

### **Porter: From Marchington to Mavesyn Ridware**

Having been in a period fairly rich with information, the next generation is more shadowy. Henry Porter was William<sup>3</sup> and Mary's 11th child, and in the absence of a will it is impossible to know how many of his siblings survived to inherit whatever estate his father had beyond the £68 worth of movable goods cited in the inventory. His oldest brother William seems to have stayed in Marchington, but it may be that Henry had to move away in order to establish himself. Certainly the following chapter shows a less financially secure group of ancestors. Henry Porter was baptized at Marchington on 25th April 1708 and married at nearby Newborough on 31st August 1736:

Wedded Henry Porter and Elizabeth Shepherd both from Marchington  
by banns

No sign of Elizabeth Shepherd's origins have been found. The couple baptised their first two children in Mavesyn Ridware about 12 miles to the south-west of Marchington: Henry on 8th October 1736 and short-lived John, who was baptised on 13th February 1738 but buried a month later on 14th March. However, there is a gap before our direct ancestor Thomas<sup>1</sup> was baptised at adjacent Rugeley. Maybe the couple had other children elsewhere in the interim. Henry was buried at Mavesyn Ridware on 30th April 1770, four years after his wife Elizabeth who was

buried in the same parish on 22nd March 1766. (Their son Henry was buried there on 26th March 1782, unless I have mixed his death date with his father's. I have found no marriage for him.)

Lack of information about the people is partly compensated by information about the parish. The village website<sup>42</sup> describes it as

The heart of rural Staffordshire

It is one of four linked parishes, three of which have the suffix Ridware, supposedly a mixed Celtic and Anglo-Saxon name meaning ford-dwellers. The River Trent supposedly made the boundary between Celt and Anglo-Saxon at one time, as it now is said to divide the south and north of England. A number of bridges were later built in the area, making it an important crossing point. Mavesyn remembers the Malveisin or Malvoisin family, originally Norman French, and later Lords of the manor. The name suggests they made bad neighbours.



**The Old Hall Gatehouse Mavesyn Ridware**

In 1817, admittedly some years after the Porters there had died or moved on William Pitt<sup>43</sup> described the place as follows:

The village of Mavesyn Ridware is small, consisting of the manor-house, church, and parsonage, two farm-houses, and eight cottages. The manor-house is situated between the church and the Trent. A gatehouse of stone, 87 feet in length, is all that remains of the ancient mansion. The gateway faces the church: over it there is a large room, which, tradition says, has been an oratory. The walls above the gateway on the north side, and from the ground on every other side, are of brick. On the spot where once stood the antique and magnificent abode of the Mavesyns and the Cawardens, now

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www2.lichfielddc.gov.uk/mavesynridware/>

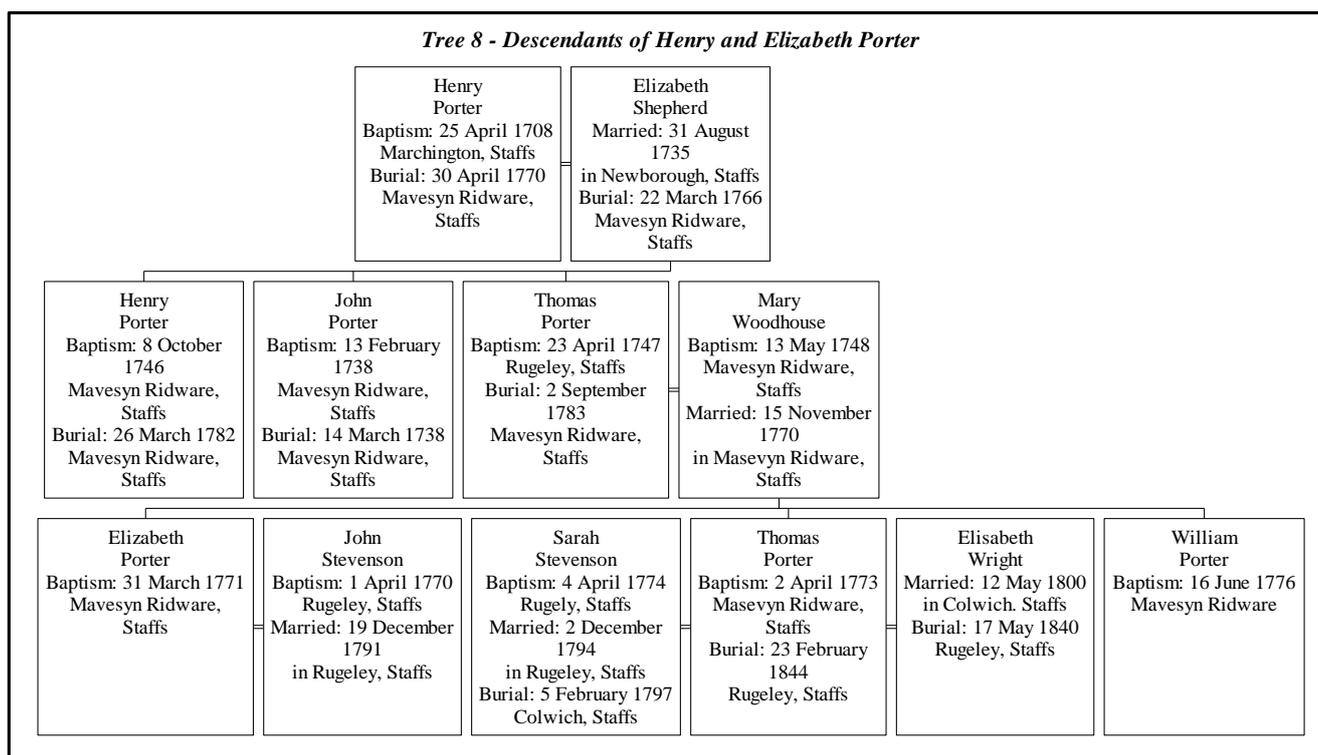
<sup>43</sup> <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/STS/MavesynRidware/Pitt1817.html>, *A Topographical History of Staffordshire*, William Pitt, 1817

stands a small house, built in 1718 by Charles Chadwicke, Esq. as a convenient box, pleasantly situated for a summer residence....

...This river [the Trent] abounds with pike, perch, greyling, eel, gudgeon, and craw-fish; trout and burbot are more rare: barbel, roach, dace, and chub, may be seen, in large shoals. A pike was caught in the Trent at Mavesyn Ridware, in 1785, which measured one yard six inches and a half, grad weighed twenty-four pounds and a half. An enormous pike was caught in 1772, above four feet long, weighing thirty-one pounds and three-quarters. The otter is the most formidable enemy of the pike in this river, and will attack, kill, and devour those of the largest size. Above fifty brace of pike have been killed here in a season, it being the rule, to take none but those that measure twenty inches in length; so that out of 179 caught, 113 have been thrown into the river, as being under size.

Our Porter ancestors would have been familiar with the imposing gatehouse which is now all that remains of the manor house, but the church was largely replaced in 1782, so would not really be known to the older generation, although Mary Porter née Woodhouse's second marriage may have taken place after the rebuild was completed. I do wonder, though, whether any of them witnessed the capture of any of the enormous pike.

*Tree 8 - Descendants of Henry and Elizabeth Porter*



Despite having been baptised at Rugeley, which was the nearest market town, I suspect that Thomas<sup>1</sup> Porter spent all his life in Mavesyn Ridware. Little more is known about him than about his parents, although we do have both banns and marriage records for him:

The said Thomas Porter and Mary Woodhouse were married by banns

the 15<sup>th</sup> day of November, by me Owen Lloyd.  
The mark + of Thomas Porter, The mark x of Mary Woodhouse.

The witnesses, Joseph and William Evans witnessed most of the entries, so were probably not family connections.

Thomas<sup>1</sup> and Mary had three children: Elizabeth was baptised on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1771, Thomas<sup>2</sup> – our line – on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1773, and William on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1776. Elizabeth and Thomas<sup>2</sup> eventually married a brother and sister – more of this later. Their father, Thomas<sup>1</sup>, died when they were still young, and was buried on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1783 at Mavesyn Ridware.

Left with three young children, Mary married again fairly quickly. This time her husband was Thomas Spear, whom she wed at Mavesyn Ridware on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1784. She had one more child, Anne, baptised on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1787 at Rugeley. She probably died there, in either 1796 or 1801.

### **Woodhouse, Pegg and Smith - into the Peak District**

The earliest Woodhouse ancestors I have found for Mary are her great-great-grandparents Henry Woodhouse or Wooddis and Elin Spensur who married at Wirksworth, a parish in the Derbyshire Peak District, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1635 (**see tree 9 - p. 43**). It may be this Henry who was buried at nearby Cromford as Henry Woodywiss on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1688, but there again, it may not. The couple baptised a clutch of children at Wirksworth: Edward – 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> February 1637, Thomas – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1640, Elizabeth – 11<sup>th</sup> December 1642, buried 11<sup>th</sup> August 1645, Grace – 1<sup>st</sup> April 1646 and finally Henry, whose baptism on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1647/8 also records him as Wooddis.



**St Mary Wirksworth**

A glance at the excellent *Welcome to Wirksworth*<sup>44</sup> website shows that the Woodhouses were a prolific clan in the area, and that the name was variously recorded as Woddis, Woddiwise, Woddiwiss, Woddiwise, Woddys, Wodhouse, Wodiwise, Wodiwyse, Wodwise, Woodas, Woodawis, Woodawiss, Wooddes, Wooddewis, Wooddis, Wooddiwise, Wooddiwisse, Woodwise, Wooddys, Woodewis, Woodewise, Woodewiss, Woodhouse, Woodhouses, Woodis, Woodiwis, Woodiwise, Woodiwiss, which must be the longest list of variants for one name I've come across. I am indebted to John Palmer, webmaster of this extensive site, for much that I know of this family.

Another page on the site lists all the occupations mentioned in the register between 1754 and 1837, a little after the period our Woodhouses lived there. However, while most occupations are listed in single figures, and the more common ones have only a few hundred mentions, there are 1721 mentions of the word miner, and that's not including references to colliers, so it is clear that this was predominantly a mining community. The principal mineral mined in the area was lead, especially in the period when Mary Woodhouse's ancestors lived in the area. Wikipedia<sup>45</sup> notes that:

By the 17th century lead was second in importance in the national economy only to wool. It was essential for the roofs of public buildings and the new houses being built in every part of the country by the nobility and gentry. All houses, including farmhouses and cottages by then, had glazed windows, with lead glazing bars. It was the only material for water storage and piping. Every army used it as ammunition. There was a thriving export trade as well as the home market and the Wirksworth area was the main source of the ore.

Apparently, Wirksworth was the administrative centre of one of the Derbyshire hundreds, or wapentakes. These hundreds were sub-divided into liberties, based on the parish system. Both Wirksworth and Middleton were liberties, though they shared the same parish register. Again, according to Wikipedia:

Lead ore was Crown property in most places and the mining area of Derbyshire under royal control was known as the King's Field, with two separately administered divisions, the High and Low Peaks.

The Wirksworth website also details how lead-mining operated in the area:

Few restrictions were put on the miner in his search for lead, apart from mining being prohibited in church yards, gardens, orchards and on the highway. This did not please farmers, who were considerably inconvenienced when miners staked claims on their land. It was not unknown for farmers to plant fruit trees and create an orchard to protect

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/>

<sup>45</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derbyshire\\_lead\\_mining\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derbyshire_lead_mining_history)

their holdings.

When a vein of lead had been discovered, it had to be freed, by giving a dish of ore to the barmaster and applying for the title of the mine to be registered. Having been granted possession of his mine, the first requirement for the miner was to erect a stowe (or windlass) to signify ownership.

If the mine was not worked for three weeks, except for flooding and ventilation problems, the barmaster could cut a notch or "nick" in the stowe. This procedure would be repeated usually at three weekly intervals and if after the third "nicking" the mine was still unworked, ownership was forfeited and the stowe thrown down.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Edward MANLOVE, a steward at the Barmote Court in Wirksworth, wrote a poem to assist miners in remembering the laws. The theft of ore was considered a very serious offence and the law was recorded by MANLOVE as follows:

*For stealing ore twice from the minery  
The thief that's taken fined twice shall be,  
But the third time that he commits such theft,  
Shall have a knife stuck through his hand to th'haft,  
Into the stow, and there till death shall stand.  
Or loose himself by cutting loose his hand,  
And shall forswear the franchise of the mine,  
And always lose his freedom from that time.*



### **T'owd man: carving of a lead miner in Wirksworth church**

At the same time, though, Wirksworth was a market town, having received its charter to be so in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is described<sup>46</sup> as having:

many fine old buildings with picturesque alleys and craftsmen's yards.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.peakdistrictinformation.com/towns/wirksworth.php>



Nearby Middleton<sup>47</sup> is a picturesque, stone-built place:

a hilltop mining and quarrying village surrounded by the scars of industry yet steeped in history and bursting with community spirit. In fields around Middleton-by-Wirksworth you will find dips and hollows, being the spoil heaps and remains of lead mines. The majority of shafts have now been capped but it is always wise to be cautious when walking in the area...

To return to the Woodhouses, none of those in our direct line seem to have left a paper trail outside the parish registers, and even that is patchy. Henry Wooddis, born in 1648, must have married at some point, but there is no clue as to who or where. I assume it is he who is the father of William Woodhouse baptised on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1676/7. If so, then he was, according to the register:

of Middleton

at that time. No more baptisms have been found, so maybe William was his only child, and equally, he could be the Henry buried at Cromford in 1688.



**St John the Baptist Mayfield**

William Woodhouse is also fairly elusive. However, when he married the equally elusive Martha Harrison at Mayfield or Mathfield, just over the border back into Staffordshire, on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1700, he did so by licence. The gist of the obligation is as follows:

...William Woodhouse of the parish of Wirksworth, Co. Derby,  
miner and Thomas Harrison of the parish of Kingsley, Co. Stafford, farmer  
....dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1700  
...William Woodhouse and Martha Harrison the one of the parish of  
Wirksworth... and the other of the parish of Mathfield Co. Stafford may

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk/middleton-by-wirksworth-c10030.html>

lawfully marry together... [at] Mathford or Wirksworth...  
Signed William Woodhouse  
Thomas Harrison

On the back, in Latin, is the following:

Let a licence for marriage be permitted between William Woodhouse of the parish of Wirksworth county of Derby bachelor aged 24 and Martha Harrison of the parish of Mathfield county of Staffordshire spinster aged 23. To the obligation William Woodhouse Thomas Harrison of Matfield swore affidavit...

It seems likely that Thomas Harrison was either the bride's father or brother, and that therefore she came of farming stock, either in the Mayfield or Kingsley areas, but that is as far as the trail goes.

The couple settled in Wirksworth parish, baptising four children there. Anthony, the oldest, was christened on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1701; Henry followed on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1708 but was buried on 5<sup>th</sup> January in 1711. In the meantime, our direct ancestor, William, had been baptised on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1710/11. Hannah was baptised on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1713 but was buried two years later on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1715. The register records that, like his father, he lived in Middleton.

A miner's life would have been hard and uncertain, but there is no burial record to show whether William died relatively young or lived to a ripe old age. Martha's burial is also missing. Maybe they moved away.

William's son, also named William, was the last of this line to be born in Derbyshire, as when he married, it was in Tutbury in Staffordshire, a parish adjacent to Hanbury and on the county border. The register notes simply:

August ye 17<sup>th</sup> 1735 William Woodhouse and Elizabeth Hood were married

There are other entries for people named Hood, so maybe this was the bride's home parish. However, all four of the couple's children were baptised at Mavesyn Ridware: William on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1737; Ann - baptised 21<sup>st</sup> January 1738, buried 27<sup>th</sup> April 1743; Anthony on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1741 and John on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1742. A couple of months later, maybe as a result of this final birth, Elizabeth died and was buried, with affidavit, on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1743.

Almost inevitably, with young children to care for, William married again. His second wife was Hannah Pegg, whom he married on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1745 at Blore Ray, around 26 miles to the north but only 5 miles from Mayfield, the parish where his parents had married. The groom's home parish appears with its name in an alternative form in the register:

William Woodhouse of Maveston Ridware and Hannah Pegg of Swinscoe married by banns

Swinscoe, Hannah's home hamlet, a tiny settlement high in the Peak District, was even closer to Mayfield, only about two and a half miles away, so maybe William still had contact with relatives there. Or perhaps it's just a coincidence. Interestingly, between Blore and Swinscoe is a hamlet called Woodhouses, which may be where the family name originated.



### **Between Swinscoe and Blore Ray**

With his new wife, William settled back in Mavesyn Ridware. This is probably just as well, as within a few months the Jacobite army, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, marched through Mayfield on its way to Derby, which it reached on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1745. Apparently<sup>48</sup>:

Villagers took refuge in the church, locking themselves in behind the west door. The Jacobite soldiers contented themselves by firing shots through the door and their bullet holes can still be seen in the woodwork.

Just outside the village, at Hanging Bridge, a local innkeeper and a man who refused to give up his horse were shot. Surely this would have been too much excitement for a wife soon to give birth. William and Hannah's first daughter Sarah was initially baptised privately at Mavesyn Ridware (suggesting the child was not expected to live) on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1745 but survived to be received into the congregation on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mary, our direct ancestor, was also privately baptised initially:

Mary daughter of William Woodhouse and his wife Hannah his wife was privately baptised May the 13<sup>th</sup> 1748 received into the congregation July the 17<sup>th</sup> 1748

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<sup>48</sup> <http://1745association.org.uk/Derby%202012.pdf>

Two boys followed: Thomas was baptised on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1755 and Henry on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1758. Apart from Mary, I have not been able to follow the rest of the family, with the exception of the last-born, Henry, who was alive to be enumerated in the 1841 census<sup>49</sup>, aged 85, an agricultural labourer living with an 80 year old wife Mary. Next door was the family of Richard Woodhouse, his son.

Hannah Pegg was no teenage bride: she was 31 years old when she married William Woodhouse. Her baptism as:

Hannah daughter of Richard and Phoebe Pegg of Swinscoe

had taken place at Blore Ray on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1714. On 14<sup>th</sup> March 1741, and unmarried, she baptised a daughter named Martha. The transcript (the original register is now damaged and the entry missing) gives no clue as to the identity of the father. Still as a single parent, she buried her daughter two years later, on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1743. Her sister Ann, baptised in February 1706, also jumped the gun into parenthood, baptising a son Thomas a month before marrying Thomas Bentley in 1738.



**St Bartholomew Blore Ray**

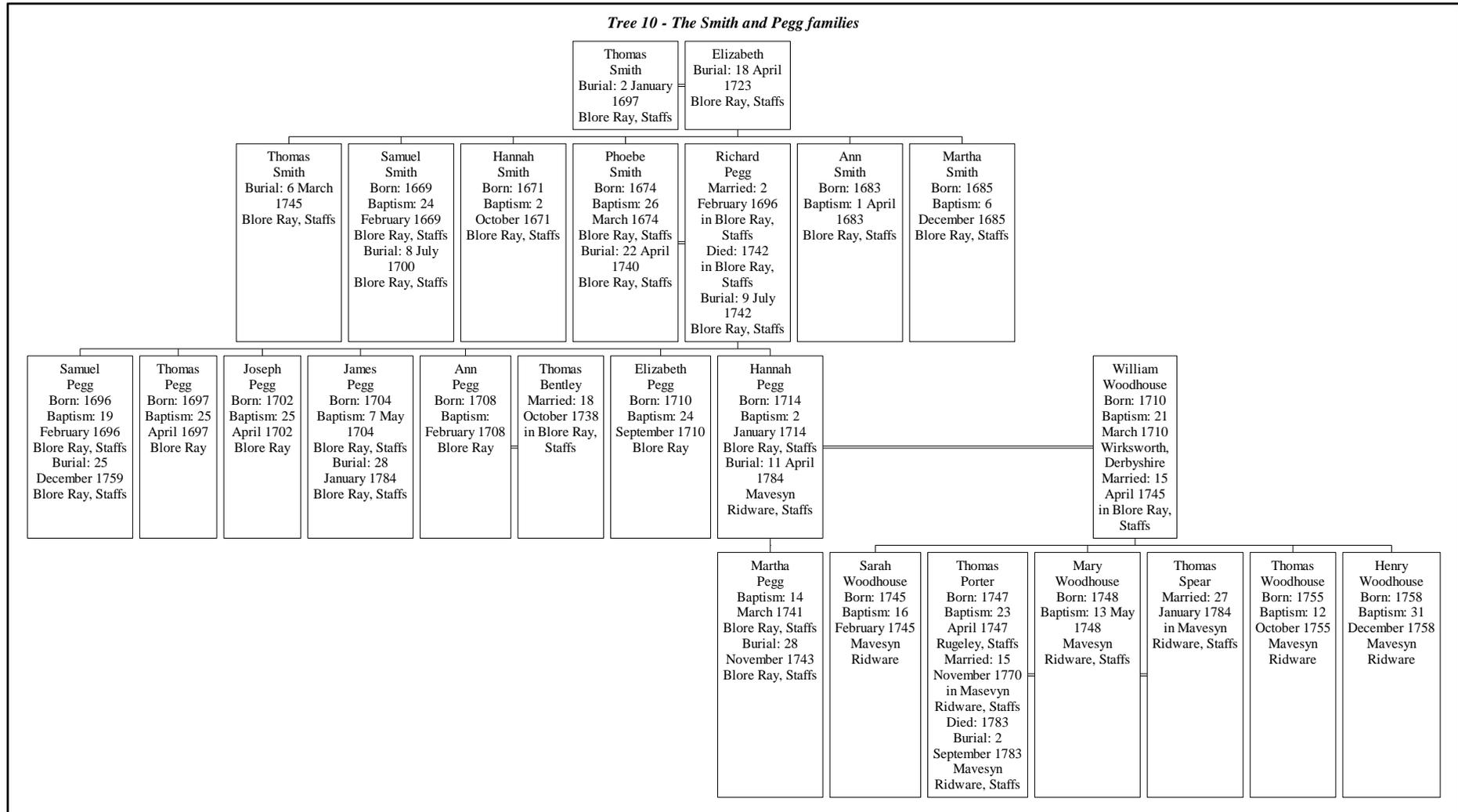
Richard and Phoebe Pegg had five other children, two of whom definitely reached adulthood, though the rest disappear from the records (**see Tree 10 - p. 48**). Samuel, the first born, was baptised on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1696 and buried on Christmas Day 1759. Thomas and Joseph were baptised at Blore Ray on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1697 and 7<sup>th</sup> May 1702 respectively. James lived to a ripe old age, baptised on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1704, he was 79 when he was buried on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1784. The penultimate child, Elizabeth, was baptised on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1710.

Hannah Pegg, having spent nearly 40 years of her life in Mavesyn Ridware, was buried there in 1784. The register is not clear, but the probable date is 11<sup>th</sup> April.

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<sup>49</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/976/14, 1841 census, Mavesyn Ridware

*Tree 10 - The Smith and Pegg families*



Her father Richard Pegg may well have been baptised at Cauldon, about 5 miles from Blore Ray, to Thomas and Alice Pegg on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1674. However, the relevant page is missing from the register, and so the only evidence is an *Ancestry* index card. He married Phoebe Smith on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1696 at Blore Ray:

Richard Pegg and Phoebe Smith of this parish (ye banns thrice published)  
were married

I suspect this was never a rich family. A note on Joseph's baptism in 1703 calls Richard a pauper, though perhaps this was a low point, as no other mention of this status is made. Although Blore and Swinscoe are situated in beautiful countryside in what is now the Peak District Country Park, they are high up – Swinscoe is nearly 300 metres above sea level - and fairly isolated, so I imagine life there in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century was hard. Richard was buried on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1742 as:

Richard Pegge of Swinscoe.

Richard's wife Phoebe predeceased him by two years; she was buried at Blore on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1740. Her family was possibly slightly better off than the Peggs, as she was baptised on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1674 as:

Phoebe daughter of Thomas Smith of Swinscoe husbandman and Elizabeth  
his wife

and on the baptism of Thomas and Elizabeth's eldest daughter, Hannah, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1671 he is referred to as a yeoman. The baptism record of the first child, Samuel, is damaged, so the date - 24<sup>th</sup> February 1669 - can be seen but not the father's status. Hannah and Phoebe were next, and then Ann and Martha on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1683 and 6<sup>th</sup> December 1685; both entries refer to Thomas Smith of Swinscoe, husbandman, and his wife Elizabeth. There must have been one more son, named Thomas, as the burial entry for Samuel on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1700 reads:

Samuel Smith of Swinscoe bachelor buried... Thomas Smith his brother  
administrator rec'd 12

Thomas Smith the father had died three years previously and was buried at Blore Ray, with affidavit, on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1697. His widow Elizabeth outlived him by many years and was buried at Blore on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1723 as:

Elizabeth Smith, widow, mother to Thomas Smith of Swinscoe

which unusual phrasing may suggest that Thomas junior had some standing in the community, or it may have been a way of distinguishing someone with a common surname. I suspect he was the Thomas Smith buried at Blore on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1745 as Thomas Smith of Swinscoe. There were several Smith families in the parish, so it has not been possible to follow this line further with any certainty.

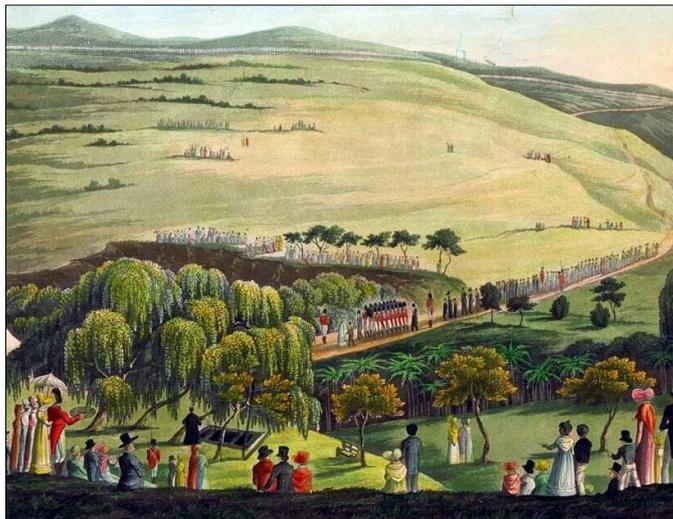
## Porter: From Mavesyn Ridware to Rugeley

Once again, we return to the main Porter line (see tree 11 - p.52), to pick up the story of Thomas<sup>2</sup> Porter and his siblings who between them have left a more extensive paper trail than their immediate ancestors. Rugeley, where Thomas<sup>2</sup> was baptised, is today dominated by two (now decommissioned) power stations, but at the time our ancestors lived there it was a market town, lying on the edge of Cannock Chase. To deal with the youngest of the family first, William, born in 1776, was apprenticed to a tailor in Rugeley on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1788<sup>50</sup>. His master was John Stevenson, who would eventually become father-in-law to both his siblings. Presumably he completed his apprenticeship, but whether out of patriotism or a desire for adventure, on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1799 he joined the army.

William Porter enlisted for an indefinite period with the 20<sup>th</sup> Foot Regiment at Gosforth in Hampshire, giving his age as a slightly inflated 24 years and his place of birth as Rugeley. His certificate of discharge<sup>51</sup> notes that he served for 21 years and 267 days before leaving the army:

in consequence of a wound in the side and long service

His general conduct was described as very good and after nearly six years as a private and four as a corporal he was promoted to sergeant, a rank he held for 11 years and 277 days.



### Napoleon's funeral St Helena<sup>52</sup>

This document notes his service in detail, first in Holland in 1799 where he was in action in 10<sup>th</sup> September and 6<sup>th</sup> October in a war fought by the English with their Russian allies against the French Revolutionary government. He then served in

<sup>50</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> , UK Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> , British Army Service Records

<sup>52</sup> <http://sainthelena.island.info/napoleonstomb.htm>

Egypt before taking part in the Battle of Maida in Southern Italy in the early days of the Napoleonic Wars. He fought at several other famous battles of the era: Walcherin back in Holland and then Vimeiro, Corunna, and Vitoria, all part of the Peninsular War against Napoleon. It was also during this campaign, at the Battle of the Pyrenees in 1813, that he received the wound in his side. He must have recovered initially as he was again in action at the Battles of Nivelle, Orthez and Toulouse in 1814. This latter battle was the final defeat for Napoleon, who abdicated and was exiled to Elba. After his return and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, he was sent to St. Helena in the South Atlantic, where he could no longer create trouble. In 1819, the 20<sup>th</sup> Foot, and therefore presumably William Porter, were sent to guard the erstwhile emperor, and after his death, 12 grenadiers from the regiment carried his coffin at the funeral.

It seems likely that his wound had never properly healed, as it is cited as the reason for his leaving the army. William was required to sign that he had received all the clothing and pay due to him, and in order to ensure that no-one would misuse the certificate, a brief description of him was given:

To prevent any improper use being made of this Discharge, by its falling into other Hands, the following is a Description of the said Sergeant William Porter. He is about forty-six Years of Age, is five Feet eleven ½ Inches in height, dk brown Hair, grey Eyes, fresh Complexion, and by Trade or Occupation a Tailor

The document was issued at Albany Barracks on the Isle of Wight on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1821. Unfortunately, William doesn't seem to have lived long enough to be recorded on the census, and, demobbed on the Isle of Wight, he could have gone anywhere, so there is no clue as to when and where he died.

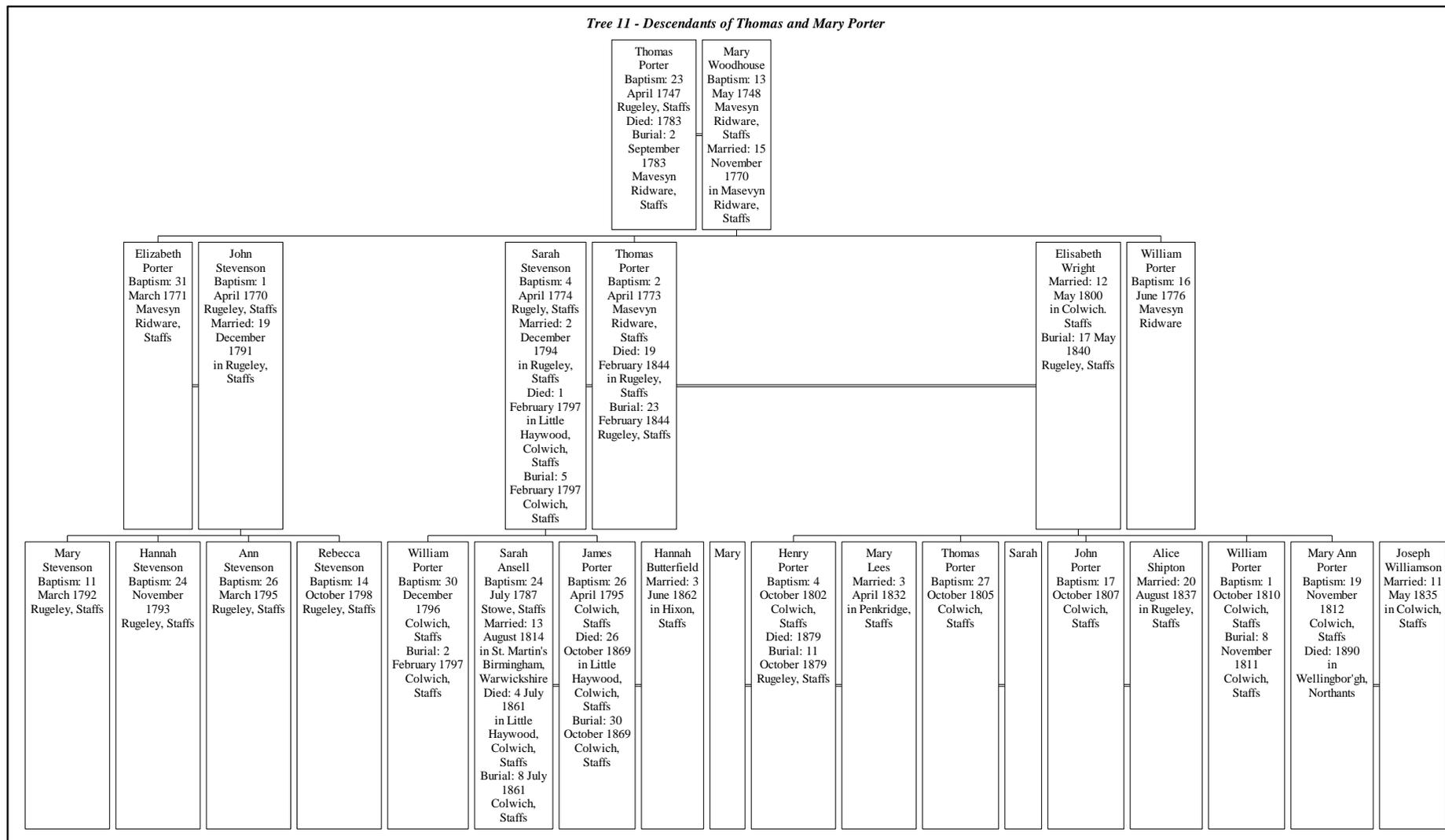
Maybe through her brother's apprenticeship to John Stevenson, Elizabeth Porter, the oldest child of Thomas Porter and Mary Woodhouse, came to know and then marry John Stevenson's son – also called John – on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1791 at Rugeley. She was 20 and he 21. Groom and bride both signed, as did the witnesses, John Jones and Sarah Stevenson – John's sister, soon to be Elizabeth's sister-in-law on two counts. John and Elizabeth had four daughters, all baptised at Rugeley: Mary in 1792, Hannah in 1793, Ann in 1795 and Rebecca in 1798. John was still alive when his father died in 1813 but after that there is no sign of him and his family.

The third child in this family, Thomas<sup>2</sup> was also apprenticed to a tailor<sup>53</sup>, in his case to John Avevill of Kings Bromley on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1783 (see tree 12 – p.55). Having completed his apprenticeship and presumably established himself as a tailor in Rugeley, he married Sarah Stevenson there on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1794 by banns. Both signed the register. In a mirror image of their siblings, he was 21 and she 20. One of the witnesses was Thomas Bott, and the other his sister Elizabeth, now Stevenson. The couple seems to have settled in nearby Colwich.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Register of duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures

Tree 11 - Descendants of Thomas and Mary Porter



Colwich parish, home to the Porters for the next few generations, lies directly north of Rugeley in the Trent valley and close to Cannock Chase. According to John Marius Wilson's *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales 1870-2*<sup>54</sup>, it:

contains also the townships or hamlets of Fradswell, Bishton, Moreton, Wolseley, Shugborough, Swanmoor, and Mount-Priory...and parts of the townships of Drointon, Great Haywood, Little Haywood, and Hixon

An archivist at the Staffordshire Record Office once explained that the area has a very complicated system of land organisation. Indeed, a glance at the 1845 Tithe Map of Colwich<sup>55</sup> shows numerous individual fields labelled as part of Stowe parish. William White's *Gazetteer and Directory of Stafford*<sup>56</sup> in 1851 described part of the parish thus:

Haywood, Great and Little, are two neat villages, near Colwich, the latter three and a half, and the former four miles NW of Rugeley. Great Haywood has 765 inhabitants, and Little Haywood 519 inhabitants, 252 of the former and 49 of the latter are in Stowe parish.



**Grave of Sarah Porter née Stevenson - Colwich**

Sadly, Thomas<sup>3</sup> and Sarah were not destined for a long marriage. She must have been 5 months pregnant at the time of her wedding as our direct ancestor James<sup>1</sup> Porter was baptised in their new home parish on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1795. Sarah quickly became pregnant again, and another son, William, was baptised on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1795. He only lived a few days, and was buried on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1797.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/8007>, Colwich

<sup>55</sup> SRO, D1274/2/1, Tithe map, Colwich, 1845

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/STS/Colwich/>

Sarah followed him to the grave a month later and was buried on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1797 having died three days earlier. Their memorial in Colwich churchyard reads:

To the memory of  
SARAH PORTER  
Wife of  
Thomas Porter.  
She died Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1797  
Aged 23 years.  
Also in memory of their son  
WILLIAM  
who died an infant

Between the births of these two children Thomas<sup>2</sup>, as a master tailor in his own right, had taken on his first apprentice<sup>57</sup>. The entry reads:

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1796  
Tho<sup>s</sup> Porter Colwich Co of Stafford Taylor Jn<sup>o</sup> Lawrence

Four years later he took on another:

11<sup>th</sup> February 1800  
Tho<sup>s</sup> Porter Little Haywood, Co of Stafford Taylor Leonard James

In the same year, Thomas<sup>2</sup> married again. His second wife was Elizabeth Wright of Shugborough, whom he married by licence at Colwich on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1800. Both signed the register and the ceremony was witnessed by Henry Nutterford and Mary Clark, neither of whom seems to have had family connections. Thomas had five more children by his second wife, all baptised at Colwich: Henry on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1802, Thomas on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1805, John on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1807, William on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1810 and Mary Ann on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1812. William died young, like his namesake, and was buried on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1811.

It is not clear whether Thomas<sup>3</sup> worked as a tailor in Colwich while he was raising his family and later moved his business back to Rugeley or whether he 'commuted' as it were into town to work. The first reference to him in a directory comes in 1818<sup>58</sup> when he appears as:

Thomas Porter, tailor and draper, Wellington St, Rugeley

In 1828 he appeared in *Pigot's Directory of Staffordshire* and in 1834 - operating in Albion Street, Rugeley - in *White's Directory of Staffordshire*. He must have moved into Albion Street when it was a pretty much a new build as *Pigot's Directory*<sup>59</sup> describes Rugeley in 1828 as follows:

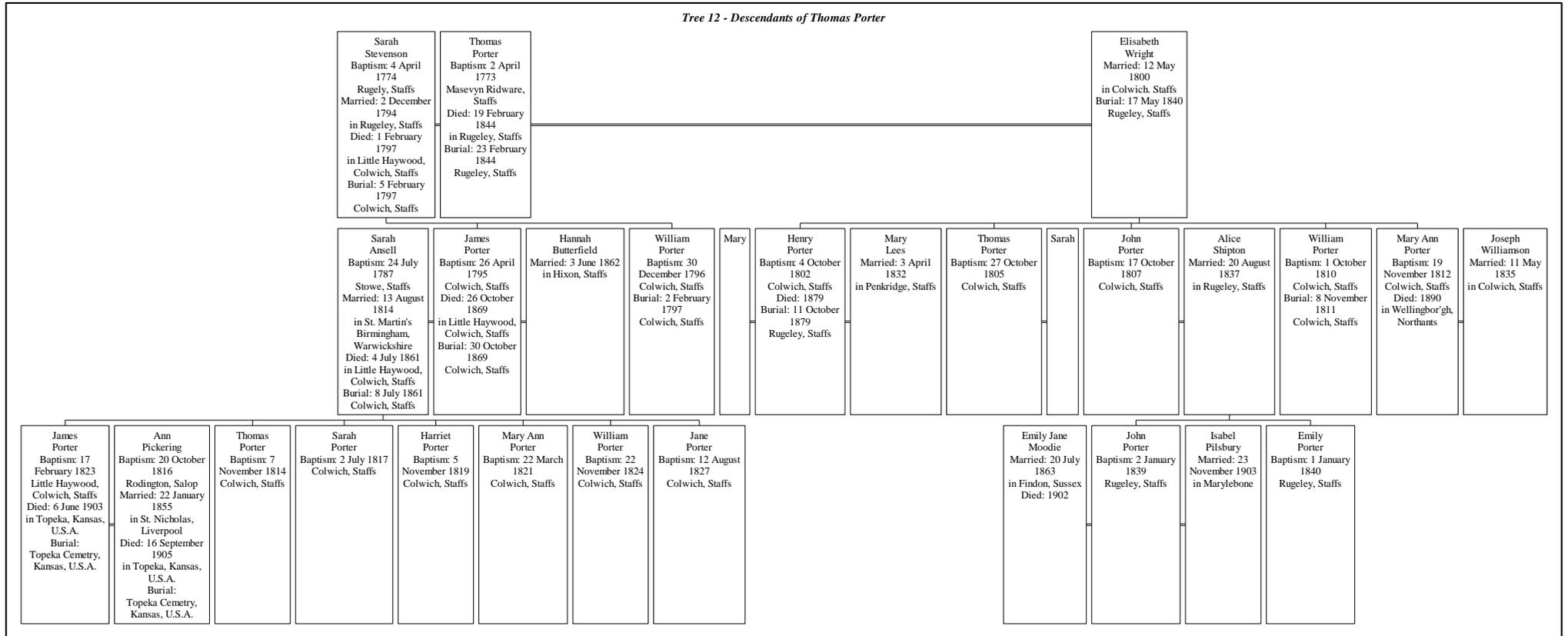
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<sup>57</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Register of duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures

<sup>58</sup> <https://books.google.co.uk/books>, *Staffordshire General & Commercial Directory*, W. Parson and T. Bradshaw, 1818

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.bfhg.org.uk/Z-Rugeley-Pigot's-Directory-1828-29.php>

Tree 12 - Descendants of Thomas Porter



RUDGLEY, is a small market-town and parish, in the hundred of Cutlestone East, 126 miles from London, 23 miles from Newcastle, 9 miles from Stafford and 7 miles from Abbot Bromley and Lichfield, situated in the northern extremity of Cannock Chase; Cannock Heath approaching within a mile of the town, on the south.... The town has a remarkable neat, cleanly appearance; the houses are well built; and it has lately received the accession of a new street, called Albion Street, near the Market-place; another new one, to be called Church-street, is building, and some of the houses are already completed in a very tasteful style. The chief article manufactured here is that of hats, which are principally made by commission for London houses. There is also a considerable manufactory for sheet iron, [and] of cut nails and brads.... This little town is fast advancing into notice, and its prosperity is considerably enhanced by its great thoroughfare situation, and the advantage of inland navigation, that it enjoys by the great trunk canal which runs past the north side of the town, betwixt it and the rent. The old church has long been dismantled, and the new one erected close to it... In 1821 the population of the parish of Rugeley consisted of 2,677 inhabitants, which number is said to have much increased since that census.

He appeared in *Pigot's* again in 1835 and 1842.



**Albion St Rugeley**

In 1827 his name appears on the list of those able to serve as constable of the township of Rugeley<sup>60</sup>. In 1840, on 17<sup>th</sup> May, he buried his second wife Elizabeth, so appears alone at Albion Street in the 1841<sup>61</sup> census:

Thomas Porter	Head	70	Tailor	Yes
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Thomas died three years later on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1844; the certificate records:

<sup>60</sup> SRO, D3243/N/25/15, A list of persons liable to serve as constable for the township of Rugeley

<sup>61</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/793, 1841 census, Rugeley

Thomas Porter, male, 70, Tailor, Paralysis general, John Porter present at the death

He was buried at St Augustine's Rugeley on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1844.

Of Thomas<sup>3</sup> and Elizabeth's children Mary Ann, the only girl in the family, married Joseph Williamson on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1835 at Colwich, witnessed by her half-brother James<sup>1</sup>. Her husband was an iron founder from Manchester and they settled in Heaton Norris in Stockport<sup>62</sup> where a daughter Mary Ann was born. By 1861<sup>63</sup> they were in Warwickshire with a seven year old son George. By 1881 Mary Ann was a widow, living now in Wellingborough<sup>64</sup> with son George and daughter Adelaide, but as she listed her occupation as:

Iron and Brass Founder employing 35 hands

she presumably continued in business after Joseph died. She died in Wellingborough in 1890.

Henry Porter, the eldest of Thomas' second family, followed in his father's footsteps both as a tailor and in being widowed young. In 1841 he was living with the family of William Whitehouse – another tailor – at Cheslyn Hay<sup>65</sup> in Staffordshire. He presumably married sometime after this, as in 1851 he was recorded as a journeyman tailor, widowed, living with the Jones family in Bow Street Rugeley<sup>66</sup>. By 1861 he had married again, to a wife named Mary, who gave her age as 35, so much younger than him. The couple were living in Sheepfair, Rugeley<sup>67</sup>, and Henry was still a tailor. I have not managed to trace either marriage; maybe there were no formal ceremonies. Henry was buried in Rugeley on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1879, although there is no sign of him or his wife in the 1871 census; his widow was recorded in the town in 1881<sup>68</sup>.

Thomas<sup>3</sup>, the next son, bucked the trend and became a carpenter. Somewhere, he married a girl from Devon named Sarah, and they settled in Lambeth<sup>69</sup> where they were enumerated with their children, Thomas, Emily, Charlotte, Sarah and Mary (Ann). With their youngest daughter, Mary Ann, they were still there in 1861<sup>70</sup> and in 1871<sup>71</sup> though at a different address and with a number of lodgers in the house. Mary Ann gave her occupation as milliner. I

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<sup>62</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/2155, 1851 census, Stockport

<sup>63</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9 2196, 1861 census, Chilvers Coton

<sup>64</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG11 1572, 1881 census, Wellingborough

<sup>65</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107, 973/13, 1841 census, Cheslyn Hay

<sup>66</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/2015, 1851 census, Rugeley

<sup>67</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9 1978, 1861 census, Rugeley

<sup>68</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG11 2779, 1881 census, Rugeley

<sup>69</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107 1571, 1851 census, Lambeth

<sup>70</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9 349, 1861 census, Lambeth

<sup>71</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG10 653, 1871 census, Lambeth

imagine Thomas died within the next decade, but have not found the record of his death.

John, the last surviving son of Thomas<sup>2</sup> Porter's family, also became a tailor. Both he and his sister specified Great Haywood, one of the Colwich townships, as their place of birth on the census returns. John married Alice Shipton on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1837 at Rugeley. In 1841 they were living at Bees Lane<sup>72</sup> there, with son John aged 3 and one year old Emily. In the late 1840s the family spent a couple of years in London and John junior, according to his autobiography<sup>73</sup>, went to school in Tavistock Street in Covent Garden. In 1851 the family was back in Rugeley in Albion Street<sup>74</sup> where John senior gave Stowe as his place of birth on the census return. In 1861<sup>75</sup> only Emily was still at home. By 1871 the couple had moved to Heron's Nest Street<sup>76</sup> where they were found in the following decade<sup>77</sup> when Alice described herself as a dressmaker and milliner. By 1891<sup>78</sup> John had retired, but Alice was still dressmaking. John's death was registered at Lichfield the following year.



**John Porter of Kingsclere**  
(from his autobiography)

A codicil perhaps needs to be added about John's son, who, also called John and born 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1838, grew up to become a trainer of horses. In his

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<sup>72</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/973/18, 1841 census, Rugeley

<sup>73</sup> *John Porter of Kingsclere, an autobiography*, John Porter and Edward Moorhouse, G Richards, 1919, London

<sup>74</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/2015, 1851 census, Rugeley

<sup>75</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9 1978, 1861 census, Rugeley

<sup>76</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG10/2919, 1871 census, Rugeley

<sup>77</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG11/2779, 1881 census, Rugeley

<sup>78</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG12/2215, 1891 census, Rugeley

autobiography, he says he was destined for a career in the law but after a holiday in which he became increasingly interested in horses, in 1853 he was apprenticed as a jockey to trainer John Day, and never looked back. Margaret Ingram<sup>79</sup> says:

Mr Porter was a noted trainer, with seven Derby winners trained at Kingsclere [in Hampshire] - Blue Gown 1868; St Blaise 1883; Ormonde 1886; Sainfoin 1890; Common 1891 and Flying Fox 1899. Horses, which he trained between 1863 and 1905, won £793,192 in prize money.

He was the founder of Newbury racecourse, his plans for which were endorsed by no less a person than Edward VII after the Jockey Club initially turned him down. During his career he trained horses for the Duke of Westminster, the Duke of Portland, the Earls of Crewe and Portsmouth and King George V.

### **Stevenson and Wilday - Rugeley and Colton**

Before exploring the life of Thomas<sup>3</sup> Porter's eldest son James<sup>1</sup>, it is time to look at his mother Sarah's family, the Stevensons. Sarah's father John was baptised:

John son of John and Hannah Steventon

on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1737 at Rugeley. Presumably he served a tailor's apprenticeship somewhere as he was later able to take on apprentices of his own. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1767, at the age of 30, he married Ann Wilday at Colton, a small, rural village about a mile or so north of Rugeley (**see tree 13 - p.61**):



**St Mary Colton**

John Stevenson of the parish of Rugeley, Taylor, and Ann Wilday of this parish spinster were married in this church by banns the 16<sup>th</sup> day of

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<sup>79</sup> *Kingsclere Place and its People*, Margaret Ingram, 1987

February 1767.

John signed the register but Ann just made her mark. Her father Edward Wildey and William Winington witnessed the ceremony. John and his brother Thomas later acted as executors to Edward Wildey's will.



### **St Augustine Rugeley**

The couple baptised and raised their family in Rugeley with firstborn Hannah - who later married John Aldritt at St Mary Stafford on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1794 in a ceremony witnessed by Thomas Porter and Sarah Stevenson - baptised on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1768. The next child was John, who married Elizabeth Porter; he was baptised on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1770. Then came Ann, baptised on 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1772. She married Benjamin Chapman of Rugeley on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1801 at St Mary Lichfield, in which parish she was living at the time. Sarah was next, followed by William on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1776 and James on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1779. I haven't found any further record of these latter two. The final child was Charlotte, baptised on 16 March 1783. She eventually married Thomas Rowley on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1804 but not before she had produced a daughter of her own and baptised her at Rugeley on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1802 as:

Charlotte: Base dau<sup>g</sup> of Charlotte Stevenson

She was 21 years old.

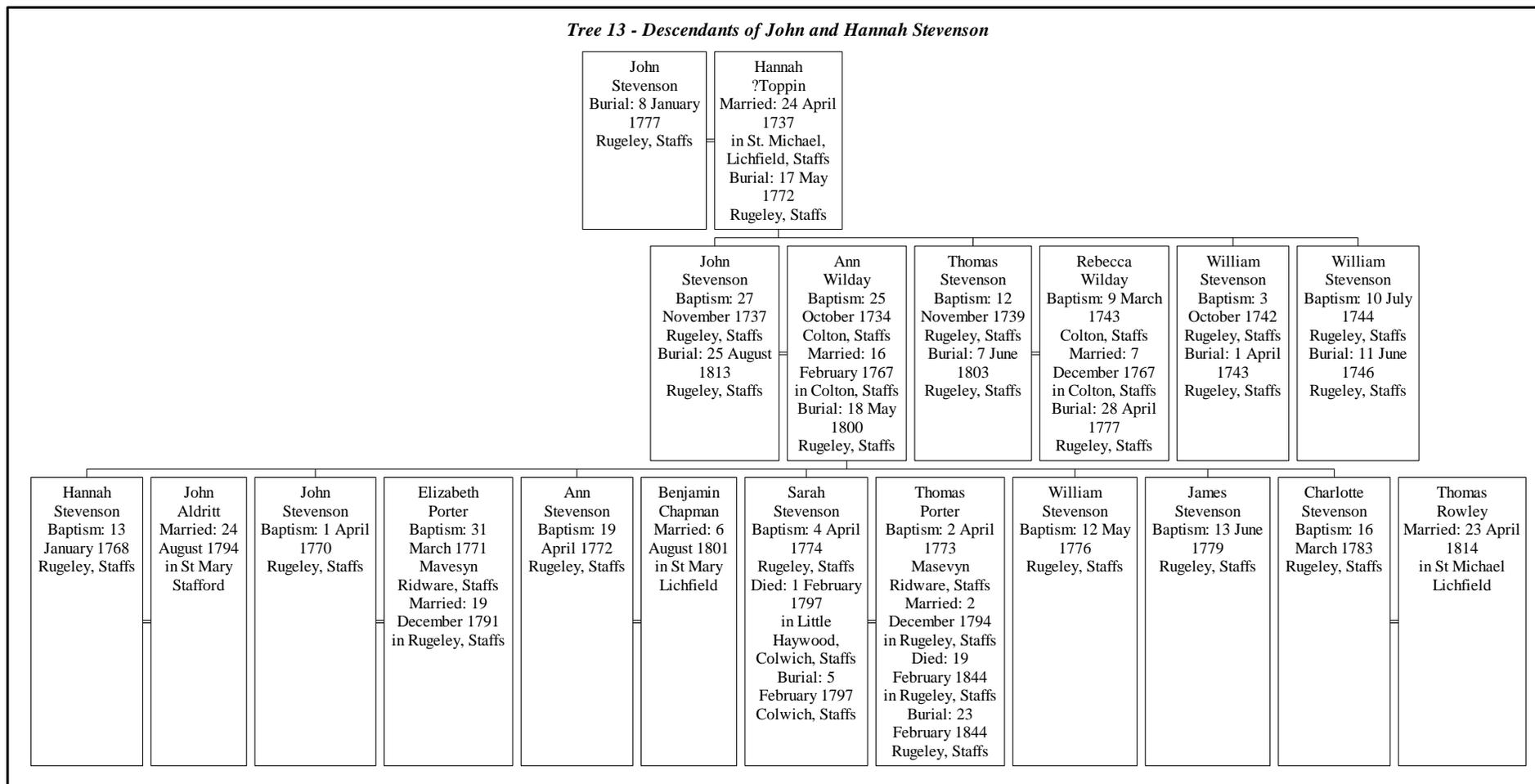
There is not a lot more information about John Stevenson's life, and even less about his wife Ann. Either he or his father is mentioned in the Colwich vestry minute book<sup>80</sup> on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1758 in the following note:

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1758: Also agreed that John Steventon of Rugeley shall have a lease of the land he now rents that belongs to the poor of this parish for 21 years upon the terms agreed in the old book dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 1754.

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<sup>80</sup> SRO, D24/A/PV/1, Colwich vestry Minute Book, 1758 - 85

*Tree 13 - Descendants of John and Hannah Stevenson*



The initial agreement in 1754 must have been with his father and it may well be that the note refers to John Stevenson senior at this point. However a further note, dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 1788 must relate to this John:

Received from John Stevenson £10 for half a year's rent, due Lady Day.

We also know he took William Porter as an apprentice in 1788, and that in 1798 he paid five lots of land tax<sup>81</sup> in Rugeley, so presumably he was farming land as well as tailoring:

Landlord	Tenant	
John Stevenson	John Stevenson	~ 1/8 )
John Stevenson	John Stevenson	~ 3/4 ) 5 March [1798]
Colwich Poor	John Stevenson	~ 17/6
Mr Pegg	John Stevenson	~ 5/-
Sir Thos Anson Esq	John Stevenson	~ 2/6

Apart from that, the only source of information on his life is his will<sup>82</sup> (written initially on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1808) which fortunately is detailed. His wife Ann was already dead, and had been buried at Rugeley on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1800.

In his will, he refers to himself as a yeoman rather than as a tailor and the first item gives his son John Stevenson:

the sum of one shilling he having already received a full share of my estate

He then puts all his real and personal estate, except a life policy with the Rugeley Senior Friendly Society, into a trust in the hands of his executors - William Banks, skinner and Thomas Hatfield, blacksmith, both of Rugeley - who are then instructed to dispose of the assets as follows:

three messuages or tenements shops and appurtenances to the same belonging

on Ellman Street in Rugeley are to be sold as soon as convenient after his death and the money arising disposed of as later in the will directed. His own home, described as:

all that messuage cottage or tenements with the outbuildings thereto adjoining and belonging and a garden lying near thereto called Rushton's Croft

along with his household goods, furniture, plate, linen and china and yet a further property - a cottage, barn and garden in the occupation of one George Goodwin - an acre and a half of land called the Mossly, occupied by his son-in-law Thomas Rowley, are all put into trust for his daughter Charlotte Rowley and her children. A

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<sup>81</sup> <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Land Tax Redemption 1798

<sup>82</sup> LRO, B/C/11, Will of John Stevenson of Rugeley, 1813

further cottage, in the occupation of John Salt, is to be sold and the money to benefit his daughter Charlotte's illegitimate daughter Charlotte Stevenson. A bequest is £10 is made to his niece Catherine Smith.

He then deals with the remainder of his real and personal estate, including the money raised from the properties on Elman Lane. One third of this and his wearing apparel go to his daughter Hannah the wife of John Alldritt, or to her children should she predecease him. The remaining two thirds goes to his daughter Ann, wife of Benjamin Chapman, again with the proviso that her share go to her children should she die first. There is no mention of his sons William and James, which maybe confirms the theory that they died young. However, there is also no reference to his grandson James<sup>1</sup> Porter, son of his daughter Sarah. We can only speculate whether he, like his uncle John, had already been provided for or whether perhaps John senior had severed links with the Porter family. This seems unlikely, given that his son John was married to Elizabeth Porter.

The will is signed in a firm hand and witnessed by Mary Armishaw, John Salt and Richard Parsons. However, on 28 June, 1813, when he must have been close to death, John added a codicil in which he revokes the bequest of a shilling to his son John, replacing it with one of the two thirds initially willed to his daughter Ann. There is still no reference to James Porter. John's signature on this part of the document is very shaky and the codicil is witnessed by Ralph Walker, Charles Salt and JW Smith.

His two executors were granted probate at Lichfield on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1813 with a note to the effect that the testator died in August last. Despite the number of properties mentioned in the will John Stevenson's personal estate was valued at under £600.

John Stevenson's father, also called John but with his surname usually recorded as Steventon, is a more shadowy figure. No baptism has been found for him although he was probably born roughly between 1710 and 1715. The name of his first wife was Hannah and, given John junior's baptism date of 27<sup>th</sup> November 1737, it seems feasible that a marriage celebrated at St Michael Lichfield on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1737 between John Stevenson and Hannah Toppin was that of John junior's parents. This seems especially likely as although Hannah Toppin's baptism hasn't been found, almost all the entries for this name or its more common variant Topping are to be found in Rugeley and the block of parishes to the north-east – Colton (Ann Wilday's home parish), Blithfield and Abbots Bromley.

After John, the couple went on to have three more children though the last two, both named William, died young. The first of these was baptised on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1742 and buried on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1743; the second was baptised on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1744 and buried on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1746. The only other child was Thomas, baptised on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1739, at Rugeley like all his siblings. In a pattern familiar from his niece and nephew, who both married Porters, Thomas married Rebecca Wilday, sister of

Ann Wilday at Colton 10 months after his brother's marriage, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1767. Unusually, the register gives his occupation – brick-maker. His brother John witnessed the ceremony. A son Thomas was born in 1770 but Rebecca died in 1777 and was buried at Rugeley on 8<sup>th</sup> April. This must have been a second marriage for Thomas, as an earlier wedding – to Lydia Timmins – was recorded at Rugeley on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1765. She was buried on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1767. A burial entry on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1803 in the Rugeley register probably records Thomas' death.

John senior's wife Hannah died in 1772, and was buried on 17<sup>th</sup> May, after a marriage lasting 35 years. Despite his children being grown up with families of their own – or maybe because of this, John married again. His bride this time was also widowed, one Mary Curradine, whom he married at Rugeley by licence on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1775. Both made their mark. John made his mark also on the bond and allegation for the marriage licence. He gave his occupation as malster, and was supported by the sham John Doe. The only other traces he leaves in the records are in the Colwich Vestry Minutes Book<sup>83</sup>:

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1758. Also agreed that John Steventon of Rugeley shall have a lease of the land he now rents that belongs to the poor of this parish for 21 years upon the terms agreed in the old book dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 1754

and in Rugeley's burial register in 1777, where he was noted as:

John Steventon                      Bur'<sup>d</sup> Jan y<sup>e</sup> 12

His second wife Mary died just over a month later and was buried on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1777.

Ann Wilday or Wildey was baptised at Colton on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1734 as:

Anna filia Edwardi Wildey

Her parents, Edward Wilday and Elizabeth Hall (**see tree 14 – p.65**) married at Colton on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1731. They had four daughters: Maria – baptised 27<sup>th</sup> October 1732; Ann – born 1734; Elizabeth baptised 29<sup>th</sup> September 1737 and finally Rebecca, who later married Thomas Stevenson – 9<sup>th</sup> March 1743. Not much else is known about Edward. He was baptised on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1705 at Colton, the son of Edward and Rebecca Wildey and was buried in the same parish on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1771.

Fortunately, he did leave a will<sup>84</sup>, in which he describes himself as a husbandman of Hambley Heath in the township of Colton. His daughter Elizabeth, now married to Thomas Greatrix is dealt with first and given:

all that cottage with all and every of the appurtenances wherein I now do dwell and also the sum of five pounds

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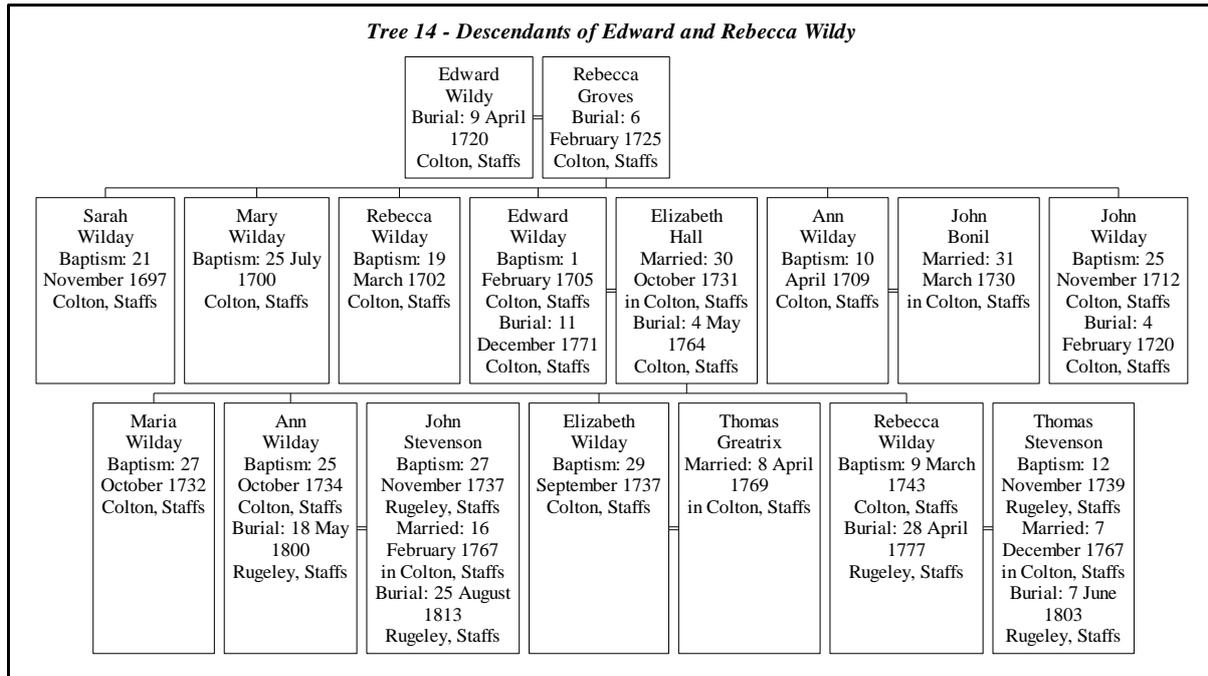
<sup>83</sup> SRO, D24/A/PV/1, Colwich Vestry Minutes Book 1758 – 85

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Edward Wildey of Colton, 1772

Her sister Mary, still unmarried, is bequeathed £20. The rest of his estate goes to:

my two daughters Ann (the wife of John Steventon of Rugeley in the said County of Stafford Taylor) and Rebecca (the wife of Thomas Steventon of Rugeley aforesaid Brickmaker) and their heirs share and share alike

The two Steventon brothers were also appointed executors and in fact John proved the will at Lichfield on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1772. William Johnson and F Dorrington witnessed the will.



Edward's father, also called Edward was buried at Colton nearly 50 years earlier on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1720. Somewhat faintly, the register shows six children baptised as Colton: Sarah on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1697 (married John Lander of Rugeley at Colton on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1725); Mary – 25<sup>th</sup> August 1700; Rebecca – 21<sup>st</sup> March 1702 (who may have had her own and illegitimate daughter named Rebecca who was buried in 1720, and died five years later); then Edward on ?1<sup>st</sup> February 1705; Ann – 10<sup>th</sup> April 1709 (possibly married Edward Bonil on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1730 at Colton); and John baptised 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1712 and probably buried on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1720.

Edward Wildy senior also wrote a will<sup>85</sup>, and also gave his residence as Hamley Heath, although he called himself a labourer. He was probably a relatively young man, with a young family as he gave:

to my dear and loving wife Rebeccah Wildy all my personal estate during the term of her natural life towards her own better support and maintenance and towards the support and maintenance of those younger children that are not yet able to get their livelihood, and from and after my wife's decease my will and meaning is that my personal estate shall be

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, Will of Edward Wildy of Colton, 1720

equally divided among all my children share and share alike

Unfortunately, he does not name these children or say how many were still alive. He also adds a caveat: his son Edward is not included in this bequest. Instead, after his mother's death, he is to take possession:

of the cottage and land adjoining lying and being in the parish of Brewood  
in the county of Stafford the reversion of which is to come to me for life and  
to my wife for life after the death of my mother-in-law Diana Groves

This is presumably a good deal for Edward junior, as once he has the property he is enjoined to pay £20 to his siblings. The will was witnessed by J Taylor and James Underwood, and Edward made his mark. It was proved by his wife and executrix on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1720.

It is unusual for a will to take us a generation further back, but in this instance, we can surmise that his wife was probably born Rebecca Groves, unless, that is, his mother-in-law Diana Groves had married twice. Brewood lies to the south-west of Colton, on the Shropshire border.

*See Part 2 for continuation*