

A Preference for 'P's

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

Part 3

The Pickering Line – all round the Wrekin

Ann Porter née Pickering, late Boote, has always seemed to me to be a formidable character. Born in Rodington in Shropshire in October 1816, a year after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and at the height of the Regency era, she survived

two marriages and two continents to die aged nearly 90 4,500 miles away in Topeka in a very different century. She was baptised on 20th October 1816 in Rodington as:

Ann, daughter of Joseph and Ann Pickering, Rodington, butcher

Rodington - on the River Roden - was, and is, a small village, owned mainly at that time by the Corbett family of Sundorne (lords of the manor) and some commoners. In 1801 the population was only 372 and by 1811 this had dropped to 361. By 1841 it had risen again, to 466 people and 88 houses. The coming of the canal at the end of the 18th century must have opened up what was probably an isolated rural backwater. It was not far from either Wellington or Withington, both of which places were given on census returns as Ann's birthplace. Although she was born in Rodington, I suspect she grew up in Wellington.



All Saints Wellington

At the age of 22 she married for the first time, by licence taken out on 7th November 1838 (see tree 23 – p. 113). The marriage took place at Wellington a week later, on 14th:

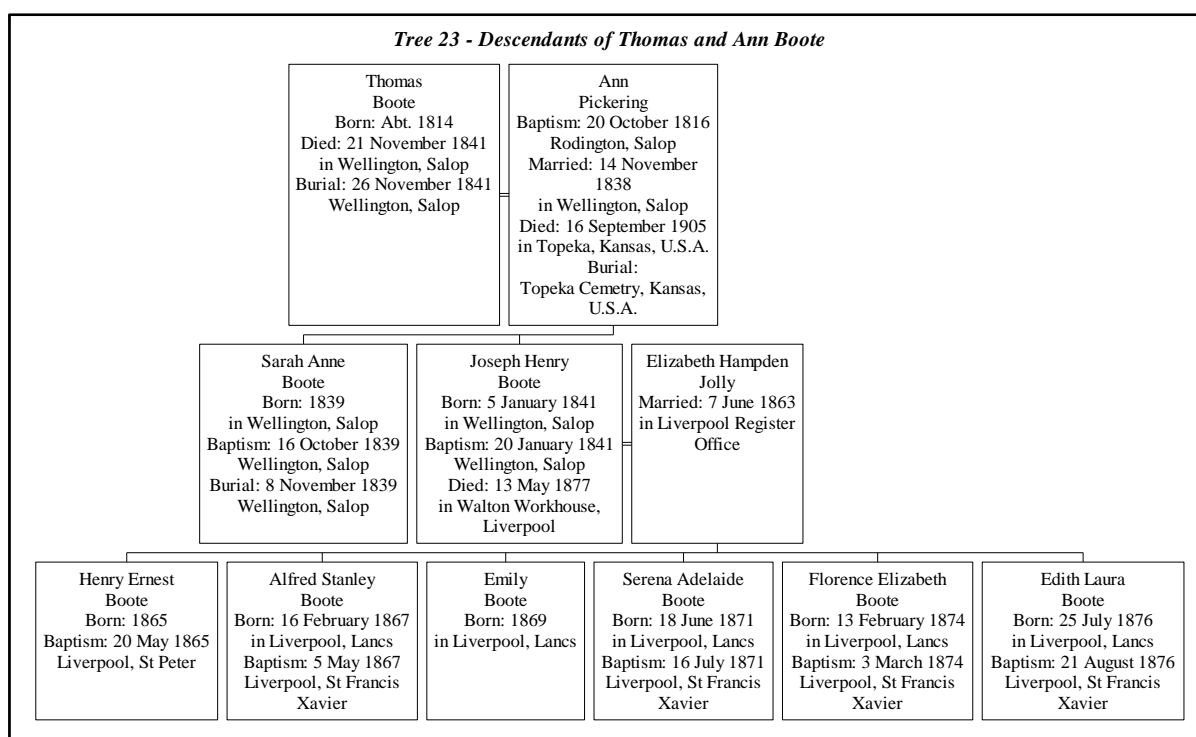
Thomas Boote	Full	bach	Grocer, Wellington,	Joseph Boote	farmer
Ann Pickering,	Full	spins	Dressmaker Wellington	Joseph Pickering	butcher

Both parties signed, and her sister Sarah Pickering and John Dax were witnesses. A short-lived daughter named Sarah Ann was born – and died – the following year. The address given on both baptism and burial was Church Street. On 20th January 1841, Thomas and Ann baptised a son at Wellington, naming him Joseph Henry. Thomas gave his occupation as grocer and their address as New Street. A few months later, the census¹ found them at the same address:

New St. Wellington, Salop

¹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/907/2, 1841 census, Wellington

Thomas Boote	25	Grocer	Y
Anne Boote	20		Y
Joseph Boote	5m		Y



Also part of the household was a 15 year-old servant, Mary Helks. Soon after this the little family must have moved to Market Place in Wellington, for this was given as Thomas Boote's abode in the burial register on 26th November 1841. He was only 27 years old when he died of consumption.

It is not known at what point in her widowhood Ann took up with James² Porter. Maybe she knew him already, but this is unlikely as in 1841 he was in Lichfield. Maybe her dressmaking skills provided a link. However, by early 1846 at the latest she had formed a relationship with him which resulted in Julia's birth in December that year. It is impossible to know why, in a strictly moralistic Victorian society, they did not marry straight away. Maybe James², seven years her junior, was not ready to settle down. Maybe it was Ann who didn't want to give up her independence. There may have been the intention to marry, or at least to convince the locals that they had done so, as a newspaper announcement² on 11th March 1846 suggested a fait accompli, although no ceremony seems to have taken place:

On the 5th inst. at Liverpool, James, second son of Mr. Porter of Heywood, Staffordshire, to Mrs Ann Boote, second daughter of Mr. Joseph Pickering, Butcher, of Wellington,

² <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>, *Eddowes's Journal, and General Advertiser for Shropshire, and the Principality of Wales*, 11.3.1846

Perhaps they felt a need for outward conformity at least. However, although informal, the relationship persisted and produced five more children, three before their marriage in 1855.



Joseph Henry Boote

It is unclear how far Joseph Henry was part of the new household. In 1851³ he was enumerated with his maternal grandparents, but this may have been because Ann was so close to giving birth to James, and had two other small children to care for. By 1861⁴ he had joined the 10th Brigade of the Royal Artillery and was stationed at Portsea. So although the photo printed above is labelled as James Porter in the Royal Artillery, it is almost certainly a picture of his step-son. Two years later, Joseph was back in Liverpool, living with his mother and step-father at 84 Finch Street when he married – on 7th June 1863 – Elizabeth Hampden Jolly at Liverpool Register Office. In 1871⁵, he was probably working for his stepfather, as he gave his occupation as draper's assistant. As well as Elizabeth, there were three young children: Henry, Alfred and Emily. An article on his son Ernest⁶ explains that Joseph was supported in his career by his step-father James Porter:

Boote was born into a reasonably well-to-do family of Elizabeth and Joseph Henry Boote in Liverpool, England, on 20 May 1865. His father, on leaving the Army, entered the business world as a clothier thanks to the financial backing of a generous stepfather who bankrolled his stepson's ventures on

³ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/2185, 1851 census, Liverpool

⁴ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9/639, 1861 census, Portsea

⁵ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG10/3811, 1871 census, Everton

⁶ <http://asslh.org.au/hummer/vol-3-no-5/henry-boote/>

two occasions (one thousand pounds each time). According to Henry, the business failed due to his father's 'convivial habits'.

This last sentence may partly explain why Joseph Henry was destined for a short life. According to an Ancestry tree⁷, he died of bronchitis in Walton Workhouse on 13th May 1877.



Henry Ernest Boote

I suspect the register office wedding denotes a mixed marriage, with Joseph an Anglican and Elizabeth Catholic. Henry, the first child, was christened at St. Peter's as C of E. Emily's baptism has not been found, but Alfred and three younger children – Serena, Florence and Edith were all baptised as Catholics at St. Francis Xavier. Several of the family emigrated to Australia; Henry first, probably in 1889. According to Wikipedia⁸, as well as being a journalist and editor he was also a prominent trade unionist, and rubbed shoulders with several Australian prime ministers. His mother, with his sisters Florence and Edith, followed him to Australia in 1894⁹. Consequently Ann Pickering has descendants in three continents: Europe, America and Australasia, and in two of them at least, her descendants were involved in political decision-making. Not bad for a girl from an insignificant Shropshire village.

Although short on direct documentary evidence, it is possible to trace Ann's development from butcher's daughter to dressmaker, to grocer's wife, to mother, to

⁷ <http://person.ancestry.co.uk/tree/53042226/person/13446322496/facts>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ernest_Boote

⁹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960

partner and eventually wife of a respectable outfitter, to pioneer emigrant, to farmer's wife, to matriarch, to American widow: a long life and an eventful one.

Ann's father was Joseph Pickering. He was the son of John and Sarah Pickering and was baptised at Withington on 12th June 1791. By 1812, when he married, he was living in nearby Rodington, where the register records:

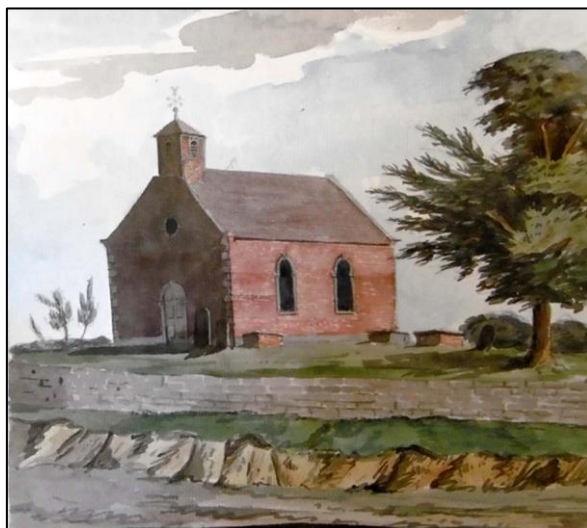
Joseph Pickering of this parish and Ann Passand of this parish married in this church by banns this 11th day of May in the year 1812

Both signed the register and the ceremony was witnessed by William Robinson and Mary Pickering, Joseph's sister. The first witness could have been his uncle, William Robinson of Ercall Mill, but it is more likely his son William, whose marriage to Elizabeth Turner at High Ercall two years earlier had been witnessed in turn by Joseph. Joseph and Ann had three children, all baptised in Rodington. Sarah was baptised on 1st November 1812 as the daughter of:

Joseph Pickering butcher of Rodington

Unusually for this period, the mother's name was not entered in the register. Ann was born four years later, but there was a seven year gap before the final child, Jane Mary, who was baptised on 1st November 1823. Sarah never married, and was buried at Wellington aged 27, from the Market Place, on 10th April 1840. Her death was reported in the newspaper¹⁰ as follows:

Friday after a lingering illness borne with Christian resignation to the Divine Will, aged 27, Sarah, the eldest daughter of Mr. Joseph Pickering, of Wellington



St George Rodington - 1790¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>, *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 17.4.1840

¹¹ SA, 6001/372/2/78, Watercolour of Rodington church. Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

It seems likely that Jane Mary died young as well, as there is no further trace of her.

Joseph Pickering seems to have had a foot in both Withington and Rodington in early adult life, and the two small parishes lie side by side. Joseph took part in parish life in Rodington, and his signature appears first in the Overseers' Accounts¹² on 14th February 1819. Between 27th August 1819 and 16th February 1821 he was Overseer for the Poor. His signature appeared as one of the Vestry at three meetings in 1823. He also signed as one of the 'parishioners' under an entry in the Rodington Rate Book¹³ in 1814:

It was agreed at the vestry meeting this 1st day of April 1814 that a lewn shall be collected for the use of the poor after the rate of one shilling in the pound throughout the parish of Rodington by us who have hereunto signed our hand.

Lewn is a Shropshire dialect word for a tax, especially a church rate. The next page lists the assessment, and shows that Joseph held land in Rodington:

An assessment of the lands hereditaments in the parish of Rodington in the county of Salop as hereunder mentioned viz:

	of rent	of lewn	total
Joseph Pickering	4 8 8	0 4 7	0 4 7

Similar entries are to be found for 1815 and 1816, some with the date of payment, showing him to be prompt in paying his dues. On the 16th June 1817 the following entry appears:

Joseph Pickering's	6 3 0
" Comming	2 7 0
	total levy 18/- whole sum received 14 th June

Comming seems to be a dialect version of common, so presumably he had acquired another piece of land.

There is a gap in the record then until 1831, when another run of entries¹⁴ reveal him branching out from his work as a butcher:

Rodington township							
Names	LSD arrears	Quarterly	ARP	Annual Value	LSD Rate at 1/- in £	when rec'd	amount rec'd
[9.4.1831]							
Pickering Joseph	3 0 17	20	5	0	1 0 3	Aug ^t 9 th	1 0 3
[5.9.1831]							
Pickering Joseph	3 0 17	20	5	0	1 0 3	Nov 21 st	1 0 3
[19.12.1831]							
Pickering Joseph (mill)	3 0 17	20	5	0	10 1½	Jan 14 th	10 0

¹² SA, XP230/L/4/1, Rodington Poor Law Minute Books, 1819-54

¹³ SA, XP230/L/1/2, Rodington Rate Book 1812-17

¹⁴ SA, XP 230/L/1/3, Rodington Rate Book, 1831-6

[16.1.1832]

Pickering Joseph mill 3 0 17 20 5 0 10 1½

10 0

This mill is described¹⁵ as having a base 21' in diameter and 9' high, with two opposed doorways 3' wide, and two 3' square windows. It was apparently used as a paper-making mill and first mentioned in 1829, so would have been quite new when Joseph became involved with it. However, as it is supposed to have fallen into disuse by 1842, presumably it was not a going concern. The demand for paper rose rapidly in the first half of the 19th century, with output in the UK rising from 20,000 tons in 1820 to 43,000 tons in 1841, so it is perhaps not surprising that Joseph thought this might be a lucrative sideline. In the 1820s, the number of paper mills in England and Wales peaked at around 560, but by 1840 this had fallen to around 360, with small mills, such as I suspect the one at Rodington was, being the most vulnerable.

Despite his high profile in Rodington, he was also paying taxes in Withington. In 1825 he paid 4^d on property with a rateable value of £1 6/8; in 1833 the rate had doubled, so he paid 8^d. Further entries appeared in 1838, 1839, 1840 and 1842, with a final appearance on 21st July 1847. Other members of the Pickering family seem to be assessed fairly erratically, whether this was bureaucratic inefficiency or something else is hard to tell.



Wellington – Market Street and pedestrian precinct

At some point before 1841, the family moved to Wellington, a few miles to the south-east, and a much bigger place than Rodington. Wellington, named after Watling Street which runs through it, is the market town for the area, and was presumably a step up for Joseph's butcher's business owing to its larger population. It lies close to the Wrekin, a prominent hill which is a significant landmark rising out of the Shropshire plain and offers superb views from its summit. I grew up with the expression 'all round the Wrekin', which means to go the long way round or out of

¹⁵ SA, LR 64 vf, *Historical Notes on the Parish of Rodington*

your way, without knowing that it referred to a real place. Presumably it was an expression passed down from the generations which lived in its shadow.

In 1841¹⁶, with Ann married to Thomas Boote, only her parents Joseph and Ann were enumerated at Crown Street in Wellington, both aged 50, born in county and with Joseph a butcher. (Crown Street is now part of the pedestrian precinct south of the market square.) There was a 15 year old live-in servant called Elizabeth Fitch. A year later, Joseph advertised himself in *Pigot's*¹⁷:

Wellington, Butchers: Pickering, Joseph, Market Place

Interestingly, the 1838 map of the town¹⁸ calls the road off the Market Place, now Market Street, Butchers Lane. Two years later he had moved to the township of Admaston, as recorded in *Slater's Directory*¹⁹. The move probably took place in the summer of 1843 as an advertisement placed in the local paper²⁰ suggests:

MARKET-PLACE, WELLINGTON

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION

BY MESSRS

DOWNES AND POOLE

On the premises lately occupied by Mr. Pickering, in

The Market-Place, Wellington, on Monday, June

5, 1843, without any reserve;

GENTEEL and useful Household Furniture,

Feather Beds, Piano-forte, handsome Sofas,

Two capital Carts, and various other Effects.

Particulars in Catalogues. – Sale at 12 o'clock.

By 1851²¹ he and Ann had moved again; this time they settled in Liverpool, in Richmond Row, just off St. Anne Street. Joseph was enumerated as head of household, a 59 year old butcher, born in Withington. His wife Ann is curiously unnamed, as in the register nearly 30 years earlier. She appears as a dot followed by a ditto under the name Pickering in the line above, with her age given as 61 and place of birth Withington. 22 year old Londoner Betsy Fitch is still in service with them, and a lodger, John Gill, 25 and from Withington is also part of the household. The final name on the enumeration sheet is that of Joseph Boote, Ann Pickering's son from her first marriage, aged 10, a scholar and born in Withington. Clearly, Joseph was a little impatient with bureaucracy, leaving his wife nameless and lumping

¹⁶ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO107/907 p.35, 1841 census, Wellington

¹⁷ *Pigot's Directory of Shropshire*, 1842

¹⁸ <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/salop/vol11/pp204-211>

¹⁹ *Slater's Directory*, 1844

²⁰ <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>, *Eddowes's Journal, and General Advertiser for Shropshire, and the Principality of Wales*, 31.5. 1843

²¹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO107/2185, 1851 census, Liverpool

baptisms at Rodington and Wellington together under the heading Withington, his own place of birth.

Joseph died on 21st January 1858, at Warren Street, just over half a mile from Richmond Row, which maybe suggests he had retired by this time. The certificate shows that his daughter Ann was present when he died:

23rd January 1858, 50 Warren St, Joseph Pickering, Male, 66 years, Butcher (Master), Softening of the brain, about 4 months certified, Ann Porter present at the death 50 Warren St Liverpool, 23rd January 1858, Joseph Horn registrar.

Cause of death was notoriously inexact on early certificates. Softening of the brain could be caused by syphilis, but was a term which also denoted a stroke or cerebral haemorrhage, both of which would not be unusual in a man of his age, especially one who had probably eaten a fair amount of red meat during his career as a butcher.



Toxteth Park Cemetery Chapel

He was laid to rest on 26th January 1868 in Toxteth Park Cemetery²², in the consecrated part of the grounds, section S, Grave 112. Interestingly, the index, while agreeing with name, age and occupation on the death certificate, gives his address as 50 Mason Street. I suspect, given that the number is right, that this is a mis-transcription somewhere along the line.

Joseph's widow, née Ann Passand, survived her husband by 11 years, some of which she spent living with her daughter Ann Porter, as witness the 1861 census²³. However, when she died on 31st January 1869 she was living at St. Albans, Everton:

Thirty-first January 1869, 20 St. Albans, Everton, Ann Pickering female,

²² <http://www.toxtethparkcemetery.co.uk/>

²³ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> RG9/2391, 1861 census, Liverpool

78 years, Widow of Joseph Pickering a butcher, Atrophy certified, James Porter Present at death, 20 St. Albans, Everton, 1st February 1869, Samuel Potts Registrar.

Atrophy is another indefinite term. It simply means wasting away, without defining a reason. Perhaps, here, given that she was 78, it was simply a symptom of old age. Like Joseph, Ann was buried in consecrated ground in Toxteth Park Cemetery²⁴, on 4th February 1869. However, they were not placed together and she lies in Section B, grave 51. Her probable parentage will be dealt with later.

The Pickering line (**see tree 24 – p. 122**) can only be traced with certainty for one more generation. Joseph's father didn't leave much of a paper trail and there are several possible baptisms for someone with his name, none of which can be proved definitively. Calculating back from the age given on his headstone, John Pickering should have been born around 1746. Only three baptisms for this name and year have been found; the nearest is at Wellington, where John, son of Robert and Mary Pickering was baptised – but this baby is recorded in the burial register a few weeks later. John son of Thomas Pickering was baptised at Market Drayton, about 15 miles away, and John son of John and Catherine Pickering appears as a text-only reference on *Ancestry* at Hodnet, around 10 miles away. There is nothing conclusive to link either of these to our man. However, there is a fourth possibility, for reasons which will be explained later, namely that John had links to two Pickering families in Ellesmere and Bridgnorth, 20 and 22 miles from High Ercall respectively.

The first concrete documentary evidence of John's existence was the obligation and allegation drawn up on 21st May 1774 in order for him to be granted a licence to marry Sarah Robinson. This states him to be:

John Pickering of High Ercall, cooper

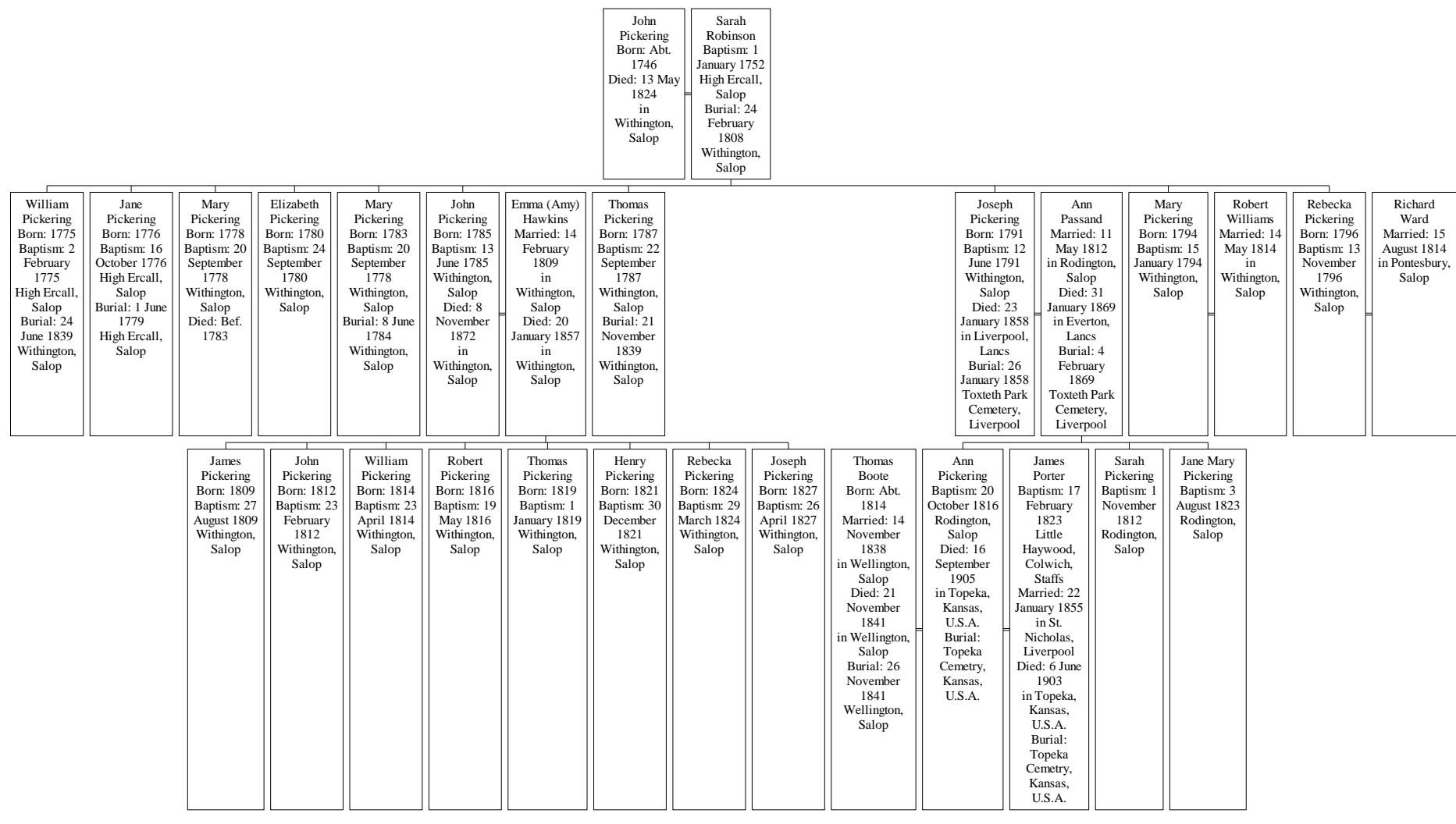
To compound the mystery of his origins, he was supported in the bond by 'John Doe' which is a sham name, so his supporter, if he had one at all, was concealing his identity. According to the bond, John and Sarah were both unmarried, over 21 and living in High Ercall. The marriage duly took place on 21st May 1774, at St. Michael and All Angels High Ercall. Both signed the register, and the witnesses were Sarah's brother William Robinson and Francis Smith – who witnessed most Ercall weddings at this time.

John and his brother-in-law appear together in the same document again, in a series of advertisements in the local newspaper²⁵ between 1776 and 1778:

²⁴ <http://www.toxtethparkcemetery.co.uk/>

²⁵ <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>, *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 21.12.1776, 4.1.1777, 20.6.1778, 17.1.1778, 11.7.1778 and 19.12.1778,

Tree 24 - Descendants of John and Sarah Pickering



We whose names are hereunto subscribed, inhabitants of the several villages within the parish of High-Ercall, herein after-mentioned, have bound ourselves in articles, to prosecute at our joint expense, all housebreakers, horse-stealers and persons guilty of any manner of felony, committed against our persons or properties. And by the said articles, any person who hath thereunto subscribed, having any of their property stolen from them, shall give the earliest notice thereof to the several members of this society, who shall immediately on such notice given, go or send one sufficient man and horse to the place or places, in the said articles assigned them, as they are determined to spare no cost to bring the offender or offenders to public justice. If any offender be apprehended and convicted by information given by any gate-keeper, or other person, he shall be handsomely rewarded by the said society. Hedge-tearers, cutters of springles, pea-raises, etc. will be prosecuted with the utmost severity.

This statement was followed by several names, including John Pickering and William Robinson. A hedge-tearer was a poacher and a springle a snare, but the meaning of pea-raise eludes me.

John and Sarah had a large family, though not all survived infancy. The first two were baptised at High Ercall, William on 2nd February 1775 and Jane on 16th October 1776. William doesn't appear to have married and was buried in Withington on 24th June 1839. Jane's life was considerably shorter; she was buried at High Ercall on 1st June 1779. The rest of the children were baptised at Withington, another small, probably sleepy, backwater until the coming of the canal. Even today, according to Wikipedia, the population is only just over 200. The current church buildings post-date the Pickerings' time here, but they would have recognised the old farmhouse, now divided into cottages, which stands beside the churchyard.



Church Farm Withington

Mary came first, on 26th January 1778, but must have died as an infant, as the name was re-used five years later. Elizabeth, baptised on 24th September 1780, may

also have died young as there is no further trace of her. Another Mary was baptised on 26th January 1783, but was buried (with a fee of 3d recorded) on 8th June 1784. The next child, John, was more successful. Baptised on 13th June 1785, he married Emma Hawkins in his home parish on 14th February 1809 and raised a family of eight: James, John, William, Robert, Thomas, Henry, Rebecca and Joseph. He followed his father's craft and was listed as a master cooper on the 1851 census²⁶. John died in 1872, but the 1841 census²⁷ shows that two of his children, John and Henry, also became coopers. William became a butcher like his uncle Joseph, James a farmer.



Withington St John the Baptist - 1790²⁸

Thomas came next, baptised on 22nd September 1787. He too reached adulthood but doesn't seem to have married. He was buried at Withington on 21st November 1839. After Joseph, born 1791, came another Mary, baptised on 15th January 1794. On 14th May 1814 she married Robert Williams at Withington, and the couple later baptised two daughters there, named Sarah and Rebecca. The witnesses to the marriage were either her father or more likely her brother – John Pickering – and Maria Passand, who was almost certainly the sister of Ann Passand who married Joseph Pickering. After the children's baptisms, no further trace of Mary Williams has been found. The last of John and Sarah's children was named Rebecca, baptised 13th November 1796. She married farmer Richard Ward on 15th August 1814 at Pontesbury, about 15 miles away on the other side of Shrewsbury. Here they raised a large family: Richard, Rebecca, William, Emma, John, Charles and Timothy, but Richard slipped in status to become an agricultural labourer. After 1871²⁹, when the couple are enumerated at Pontesbury, there is no further sign of Rebecca.

Shortly after John and Sarah settled in Withington, John took on an apprentice³⁰:

16th Sept 1780 John Pickering Wythington Salop Cooper Ben Cooper

²⁶ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO107/1991, 1851 census, Withington

²⁷ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO107/907/9, 1841 census, Withington

²⁸ SA, 6001/372/2/79, Watercolour of Withington church. Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

²⁹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9/1863, 1861 census, Pontesbury

³⁰ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures

John is almost completely absent from parish records apart from the registers. The only reference I have found is in the Withington Churchwardens' Accounts³¹. Some time in 1778 comes the entry:

Pd Mr Pickerings man 1/6

About the only thing that can be gleaned from that is that his standing was sufficient for him to be called 'Mr'. Several of his sons pay church rate at Withington from 1825, the year after his death: John and Joseph fairly regularly, and later, Robert and William. By the late 1850s, only his grandson Henry is still represented in the accounts. Little else is known about John, not even the date of his burial as the register is missing for the time of his death. Fortunately, his headstone in Withington churchyard survives and reads as follows:

Sacred
To the memory of
John Pickering
Late of Withington
Departed this life
May 13th 1824
Aged seventy-eight years



John Pickering's headstone - Withington

It is the inscription on John's gravestone which suggests a date of birth in 1746. As has already been said, there is nothing concrete to connect our John to

³¹ SA, XP309/B/1/1, Withington Churchwardens' Accounts 1776-1872

either of the Johns baptised in Shropshire in that year. Of course, the record of his baptism may not have survived – there do seem to be lots of gaps in many of the Shropshire registers – but I do wonder whether he had any connection to two other families which included coopers amongst their number. Coopering was very much the kind of trade which was handed down through families, as John's own family shows, with his son and two grandsons continuing the craft. It would be highly likely that he had relatives in the same line of business. A cooper makes and repairs all manner of wooden vessels. In a town, these might be mainly for storing goods in transit, wet or dry. In the countryside, as John was, more of his work would be making pails, churns for butter, and tubs for laundry as well as the more traditional barrels for storing food and drink. It took an apprenticeship of four or five years, often with a father or other relative, before the cooper was sufficiently skilled to first become a journeyman, then take on an apprentice of his own and eventually be considered a master cooper.

A few years after our John took an apprentice at Withington, in 1786, another cooper named John Pickering took on an apprentice³² in Bridgnorth. He took a second on in 1791, perhaps confirming that an apprenticeship lasted around four to five years. This man married twice in Bridgnorth, in 1782 and 1790, so obviously isn't John of Withington. There is no likely baptism for him, but I suspect him to be the son of William and Margaret Pickering, who baptised three other sons at Bridgnorth in the mid-1750s – William, Thomas and George. William must have been a cooper, as, after his death (in 1776), his wife Margaret, as a cooper, took on her own apprentice in 1778. Her son Thomas presumably carried on the business, and he and his wife Elizabeth baptised three children at Bridgnorth between 1782 and 1788 and buried a fourth in 1778. Thomas' marriage is recorded in the Bridgnorth register as having taken place at Ellesmere. The Ellesmere register confirms that this took place in 1776 and that while the bride was 'of this parish', the groom was from Bridgnorth. The couple must have spent their early married life there, as in 1773:

Thomas Pickering of Ellesmere, cooper

took Andrew Trantham as an apprentice. The narrative outlined above shows that the two parishes of Bridgnorth and Ellesmere were not too far apart to have links in the 18th century. The question that remains is whether there were links between the Pickerings settled in Ellesmere and Thomas the cooper.

On 12th May 1737, one Joseph Pickering married Eleanor Jones at Ellesmere. The eldest child, Mary, was buried at the chapel at Cockshutt (in Ellesmere parish, about 15 miles from High Ercall, on 25th March 1740. Three further children were baptised there: Jane, on 10th March 1744, John on 20th January 1750 and Thomas, confusingly on 4th August 1754 – the same year as Thomas the cooper was born. His abode was given as Crowsmere, or as it is now spelled, Crosemere, almost part of

³² <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, UK Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures

Cockshutt. I suspect both child and mother died, as nine years later, on 7th November 1765, Joseph remarried at Ellesmere, and his new wife, Margaret Morris, gave him another son Thomas, baptised on 3rd February 1765, also at Cockshutt, which is where Joseph was buried on 14th April 1768.

Although there is no direct proof, and although John son of Joseph Pickering of Ellesmere is technically too young to be John Pickering of Withington, it is tempting to wonder whether he perhaps served an apprenticeship with Thomas Pickering, cooper of Ellesmere and Bridgnorth, and whether his father Joseph - after whom, perhaps, John's son Joseph was named - was also a cooper. Certainly, there is no further sighting of him at Ellesmere, but several others seem to have slipped through the net as well.

There are three other Pickering graves in the churchyard at Withington, including that of his son John and his wife Emma who appears as Amy on the stone.



John and Emma Pickering's headstone - Withington

Robinson et al - mainly High Ercall

Although nothing certain is known about John Pickering's antecedents, the family of his wife Sarah Robinson is more easily traceable (see tree 25 - p.132). She was baptised at High Ercall on 1st January 1752, the oldest child and only daughter of William² and Elizabeth Robinson, and the family had lived in the parish since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

I suspect this parish had much more bustle than Rodington or Withington. High Ercall (pronounced Arkell) was a market town, and for some time had a Jacobean manor house at its heart and a mill which may well have its roots before Domesday. The Robinsons were millers here for several generations. Sarah had three brothers: William³, baptised 14th October 1753, Thomas, baptised 14th March 1756 and John, baptised 27th August 1758 – all at High Ercall. In 1774, aged 22, Sarah married John Pickering, and over 20 years gave birth to nine children. Her youngest child, Rebecka, would have been 11 when she died. Sarah was buried at Withington on 24th February 1808. Apart from these bare facts, nothing is known.

Sarah's eldest brother, William³, was a miller, like his father and grandfather. He married Elizabeth Gregory of Upton Magna by licence³³ with her grandfather's consent, her parents being dead. The wedding took place on 30th June 1774, and William's brother Thomas was a witness. William and Elizabeth had several children, one of whom, inevitably called William⁴, became miller in his turn. William senior was buried from Ercall Mill on 22nd August 1813. His brother Thomas, who doesn't seem to have married, was also buried from Ercall Mill, on 23rd February 1817, so it seems likely that he too was a miller. There is no further sign of the youngest brother, John. William⁴ also had a son named William, but he didn't follow the family tradition of at least four generations to become a miller.



Ercall Mill³⁴

William² Robinson married Elizabeth Morgan on 10th February 1750 at High Ercall. The bride was 30 years old, having been baptised in the same parish on 18th January 1720 as:

A base daughter of Richard Perry and Sarah Morgan

³³ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Staffordshire, Dioceses of Lichfield & Coventry marriage allegations and bonds, 1636-1893

³⁴ SA, PH/H/14/85, Ercall Mill. Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

No further definitive sign of either of her parents has been found. Elizabeth was buried on 14th March 1764 at High Ercall as:

Elizabeth, wife of William Robinson of the Mill

She was 44 years old.

Her husband William² only survived her by four years and was buried in his turn on 11th March 1768 at High Ercall, also identified in the register as belonging to Ercall Mill. He had been baptised on 20th April 1715, the son of William¹ Robinson, miller at Ercall Mill, and his wife Ann. The mill was mentioned in the Domesday Book, although the current building, now a B & B, dates from the late 18th century. The building which Sarah and her antecedents knew presumably pre-dated it.

William¹ Robinson is the earliest certain ancestor in this line. It seems likely that he was born after 1688 as, when he married Mary Russell of Ercall at St. Alkmund, Shrewsbury on 1st May 1709, it was by licence and the bond and allegation suggest that both parties were minors:

...Richard Wall of the parish of Alkmund in the town of Salopia, guest [hospitem] and John Doe.... Dated 1st May 1709...

...that William Robinson of the parish of Shawbury and Mary Russell of the parish of Ercall Magna... may [marry] ...and that the consent of their parents or other governors be thereunto first had and obtained....



St Alkmund from Butchers Row

However, his wife Mary was actually 21, just, so either he was under age or it was a formulaic and meaningless statement on the document. Given that the first

child was born 6 months later, the young William may have found himself pressured to marry his pregnant girlfriend despite his youth. He gave his abode as Shawbury, the next-door parish to High Ercall. A little further to the north-west is the parish of Clive, where a William Robison (no 'n') was baptised as the son of Thomas and Mary Robison on 10th July 1692. It is perhaps conceivable that this is our William, but there is also a baptism at Wem some years earlier of William son of George and Alles on 20th February 1674. As Wem, along with Prees and St Alkmund's, were mentioned as possible sites for the wedding, and William's supporter was a supposed John Doe of Wem, this is also a likely contender, and only just over 6 miles from Shawbury. However, Robinson is an extremely common surname.

The couple settled to child-rearing, with the first two infants baptised at Shawbury, Mary – 13th November 1709 – and Anne – 3rd April 1711 (buried on 12th February the following year). By the time Jane was baptised, on 29th May 1713, William was already established, as the High Ercall register puts it as:

William Robinson of Ercall milner

However, this was a change of venue not occupation as Mary's baptism reads:

Mary ye daughter of William Robinson and Mary his wife of Shawbury Mill
was baptised

William² came next, baptised on 20th April 1715, followed by John – 23rd November 1717, Thomas – 14th November 1719, Joseph – 23rd March 1722 and finally Ann – 22nd May 1726. Mary may have been the:

servant at Ercall Hall

buried on 12th July 1731. The evidence is inconclusive, but her father's will shows she died before 1741. Joseph also died young, and was buried on 9th February 1723.



High Ercall Hall

William¹ wrote his will on 15th December 1740. He described himself as of Ercall Mill, and a yeoman of Ercall Magna. He gave his wife Mary the 'peculiar prerogative' of being sole executor, and then willed her for life:

full and entire possession of all the cattle and chattels now in my possession

and then that:

my eldest son William Robinson be next to his mother in possession of my substance

Interleaved between this and the next bequest is the statement:

that my second son John Robinson of legacie receive five shillings

He then divides his estate between his remaining, surviving children:

that my son Thomas Robinson my youngest son if they agree to live together and help one another my desire is that during the life of their mother that what they shall be possest of at her decease shall be equally divided between them sharer Anne Robinson my only surviving daughter

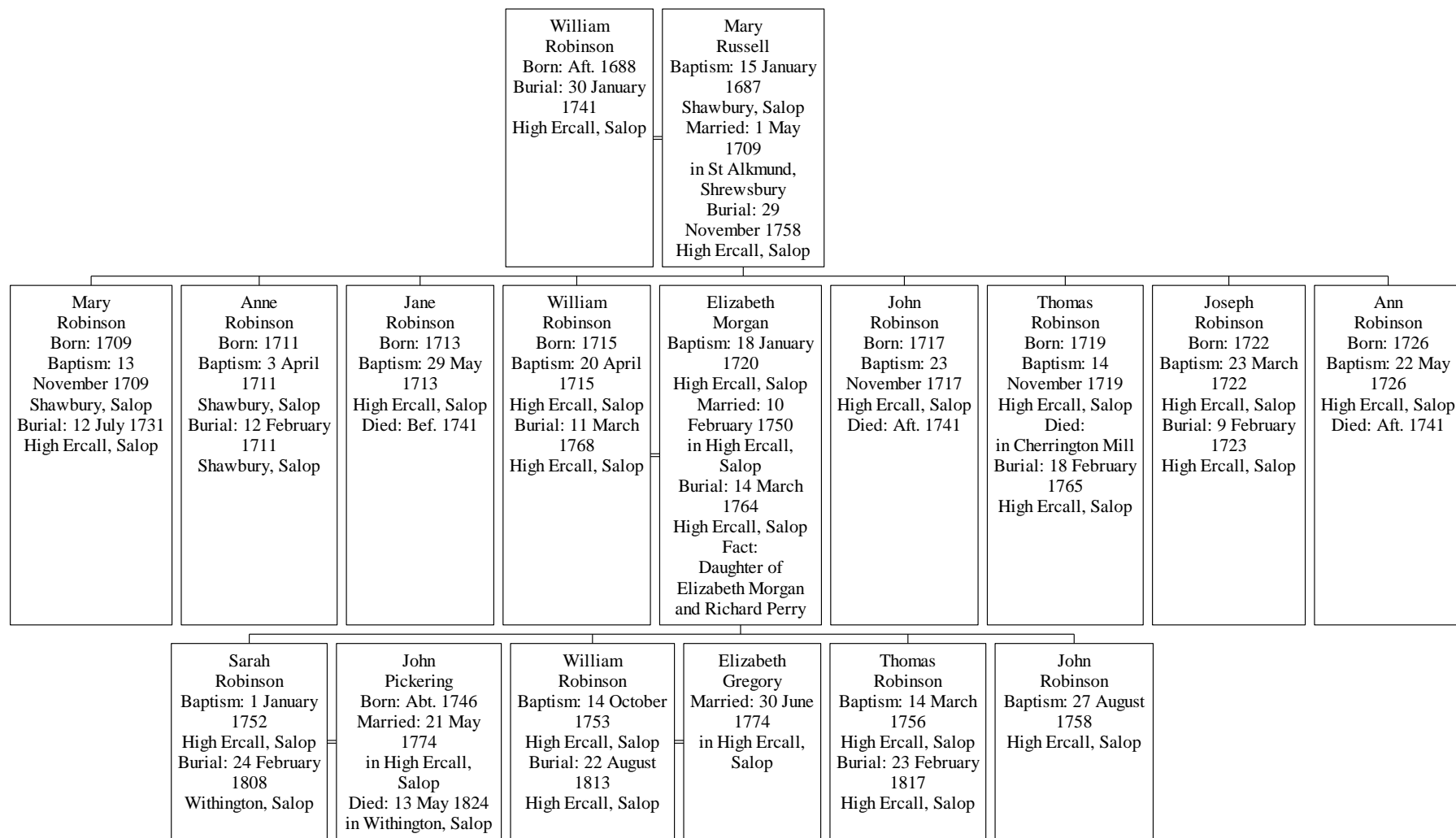
Clumsily enough put to upset a modern lawyer maybe, but clear enough in meaning. William¹ made his mark, and the will was witnessed by William Onions and Thomas Lindop. William¹ was buried at High Ercall on 30th January 1740, just two weeks later, and probate was granted to his widow Mary on 23rd October 1741.



St Michael and all Angels High Ercall

I have found no further trace of John or Anne, but I suspect Thomas took his share when their mother died but continued as a miller, as High Ercall records the burial on 18th February 1765 of Thomas Robinson from Cherrington Mill.

Tree 25 - Descendants of William and Mary Robinson



Both the mills at Shawbury (now known as Moreton Mill) and Ercall were on the River Roden, i.e. water mills, not windmills, and may date from the early 18th century, although British Listed Buildings³⁵ places them then towards the end of the century. However, both would have replaced earlier mills on the same site.

Russell and Jelly – High Ercall, Upton Magna and Shawbury

The Mary Russell who married William¹ Robinson was the daughter of William Russell and Ann Jelly (**see tree 26 – p.138**). The parentage of neither of these has been confirmed, though the baptism of a son William to William and Margrett Russell at St Chad's Shrewsbury on 10th October 1646 may possibly be our man. James and Margaret Jelly, who baptised several children at Upton Magna, are likely parents of Ann, who was probably born before 1653 and recorded in a faded section of the early register.

The couple married at Upton Magna on 14th November 1668:

William Russell and Ann Jelly after 3 tymes publication in the
churche weare married



Upton Magna

Their first child, Rebecca, was baptised at Upton Magna on 1st August 1669, but was buried exactly a fortnight later. Maybe this was why the second child, Edward, was baptised at nearby Stanton on Hine Heath rather than in the church at Upton, although the two churches may have been roughly equidistant from their home if, as some sources suggest, the Russells were at Moreton Forge at this time. His baptism took place on 3rd September 1671, but was also followed by a swift burial exactly 3 weeks later. They had better luck with their next child, Margaret, baptised at Upton

³⁵ <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk>

Magna on 15th September 1672; she grew up to marry John Harden on 24th June 1699 at Shawbury, by then the family's abode.

Sometime within the following four years, the family moved (in parochial allegiance at least) to Shawbury, possible via another parish as I think the birth of James, the next child, fell in this period. John came next, baptised (like most of the rest of his siblings, at Shawbury) on 26th September 1676. On 26th February 1703 he married Ann Hatherton at Stoke on Tern, but presumably settled in Shawbury which is where the calendar of wills³⁶ places him in 1729. Three more children followed about whom little is known: Ann, baptised on 20th March 1678, married a man named Harris; William, baptised on 19th March 1678, was buried on 22nd March 1684 and for the second Edward, only the date of his baptism – 10th March 1684 – and the fact that he outlived his father are known.

Next came Mary – later to become Mary Robinson – baptised at Shawbury on 15th January 1687. Into the four year gap between her baptism and that of William on 6th February 1691 may come Grace, who grew up to marry John Hazledine of Water Upton at High Ercall on 23rd September 1716. Her husband wasn't born until 1694, so it is also feasible that she was born after Joseph, who was baptised on 6th October 1694 at Shawbury. He married Rebecca Fox in his home parish on 29th September 1724. There was another son, James – no baptism found.

Although Grace's baptism hasn't been found, several on-line sources place her birth in around 1689, though without supporting evidence. She is cited because, as a consequence of her marriage to John Hazledine, she became the grandmother of pioneering ironmaster William Hazledine, who worked extensively with and formed a life-long friendship with the great engineer Thomas Telford. He eventually served as Mayor of Shrewsbury. According to *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*³⁷:

The Hazledine family lived at Moreton Forge, 2 km northeast of Shawbury, where relatives worked in the iron trade.

The relatives in question were the Russell family. Grace's other three grandsons through her son William – John, Robert and Thomas – set up Hazledine and Co. Iron Foundry in Bridgenorth with their more famous brother³⁸. Despite ongoing financial problems, the company cast engines and locomotives for Cornish engineer Richard Trevithick and was also instrumental in the casting of Chepstow Bridge. William's cv would have shown even more prestigious projects, as, working with Telford, he was responsible for the iron work of the Menai Bridge, the Conwy Bridge and the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct which carries the Llangollen Canal. Sarah Robinson, wife of John Pickering, cooper of Withington, would have been second cousin to these prestigious ironworkers.

³⁶ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Diocese of Lichfield Episcopal Consistory Court

³⁷ http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William_Hazledine

³⁸ <http://www.engineering-timelines.com/scripts/engineeringItem.asp?id=1193>

A fascinating ethesis³⁹ about William Hazledine gives possible insights into the origins of the Russells and the probably whereabouts of William and Ann Russell in their early married life. The author suggests that the name Russell is of French origin, and that the frequent occurrence of the surname amongst iron workers is indicative of their descent from French ironworkers who originally immigrated to the Weald in the Middle Ages. I'm not sure I fully accept that without documentary evidence, but his account of the links between Russell and Hazledine in Shropshire makes abundant sense:

Iron production was heavily reliant on skills and experience passed down by word of mouth, usually from father to son or other close relatives, so iron workers tended to form tight-knit communities bound together by kinship. They were also often surprisingly mobile, moving between forges when work became slack or the fancy took them. ... The Moreton Forge Russells, however, were more settled. A document of 1774 records three generations of Russells as having lived and worked at Moreton Forge, and it is likely that there was at least one further generation after these. In the 1720s it is likely that the head of the family was John, and the assumption is that he was Grace's father, so the Hazledines presumably moved in with the Russells. In 1728 John Russell died, and it appears that shortly after John Hazledine took over the tenancy of the cottage.

In point of fact, John Russell was Grace's brother, not father, but the inference to be drawn from this passage is that William Russell worked at Moreton Forge at some point in time.

Again, Pattison's research is enlightening:

Moreton Forge which is situated on the River Roden a short distance to the west of the Shawbury to Market Drayton road, 2km northeast of Shawbury and close to Sowbatch farm. The Forge was on the edge of the Parish of Shawbury, adjacent to the 'township' of Edgbolton (or Edgboulton), and also on the edge of the estate of the Corbet family who owned the forge. For these reasons the forge was variously called 'Moreton Forge' or 'Sowbatch Forge' [it was] ... just off the Shrewsbury to Market Drayton Road. The road past Great Withford (now Withyford) leads to High Ercall. (Staunton [just to the north of the forge] is now called Stanton-upon-Hine Heath).

This places William Russell close to Stanton on Hine Heath, and if he was working and living at Moreton Forge in 1671 might explain his son Edward's baptism and burial there. Pattison goes on to describe the work the forgerman or hammerman might do:

So what was the role of the Russells at the Forge? The document

³⁹ <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3358/1/Pattison12MPhil.pdf>, *William Hazledine, Shropshire Ironmaster and Millwright: a Reconstruction of his Life, and his Contribution to the Development of Engineering, 1780 – 1840*, Andrew Pattison

already referred to, describes them as 'hammermen.' The process of converting pig iron to bar iron required the removal of carbon from the iron (decarburisation) and took place in two stages. No doubt members of the Russell family worked together as a unit at one or both of the chaferies. The work was physically demanding, extremely noisy (due to the constant working of the mechanical hammers), and required a lot of skill to ensure that the iron was heated and worked to the correct degree. The quality of the finished product also varied depending on the amount of impurities in the original metal. The presence of sulphur made the metal brittle when hot (hot short), and so impossible to work, while an excess of phosphorus made the iron brittle when cold, or cold short. Considering that the knowledge of metallurgy at this time was rudimentary, it is easy to see why iron production tended to remain in families who knew the tricks of the trade, learned both from upbringing and experience.

All the parish register entries at Shawbury between 1676 and 1691, apart from Mary's, place William Russell at Wetheford Forge. The forge no longer exists, but the Shropshire Archives catalogue⁴⁰ shows it (now spelt Wytheford) to have been between the road running from Shawbury to High Ercall and the River Roden, almost equidistant between the two settlements. Very nearby is the settlement of Poynton Green, which would fit nicely with William's description of himself in his will⁴¹ as:

of the township of Painton in the parish of High Ercall

It is this document too which confirms his occupation as Forgerman.



St Mary the Virgin Shawbury

⁴⁰ http://search.shropshirehistory.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCS_MSA2700/

⁴¹ LRO, Will of William Russell of Painton (Poynton) 1717

Although the family chose to baptise most of their children at Shawbury from 1676 on, they must have been living – just – inside High Ercall parish as it was here that William paid church taxes. The Churchwardens' Accounts⁴², which record these, lists the entries in townships. William Russell was always in Poynton. His first appearance was in 1689 when he paid 10^d. Two years later, he paid 1/5, but this entry, and several others, seems to imply he was sharing some land and so equally taxed with his co-owner. Over the years, the amounts vary between 7^d and 1/8, and they continue regularly until 1717, the year of his death. In 1699 there are also a couple of entries which show him being paid by the parish for work undertaken:

Pd to William Russell for drawing the clapper of the great bell	4/6
Pd for carrying it backward and forward	1/-

Presumably his hard work at the Forge had brought reasonable remuneration for William as, when he wrote his will⁴³ on 18th April 1717, he had a fair amount to leave. At the time of his son John's marriage to Anne Hatherton in 1703 he had executed a lease and release on part of his estate called Little Leonards Brick:

together with the barns and house thereupon erected or built as a jointure on her the said Anne and to the heirs of my son John for ever

He then deals with another piece of land named Great Leonards Brick, which he leaves to his wife, Ann:

and whereas there was a piece or close formerly in the possession of Thomas Turner; and one other lease or enclosed land called by the name of Great Leonards Brick now in my possession whereon I have lately erected or built a new house and barn to and for the sole and proper use of me and my wife and to the use or uses of whom I shall leave the same

A complicated clause follows, which seems to separate income from the land from the house, which seems in turn to be being held to pay debts and raise portions for his younger children. A sum of £120 is mentioned.

Clearer, is the instruction that after his father's death, son John is to raise £200 on this property and:

pay the same to my children or their heirs

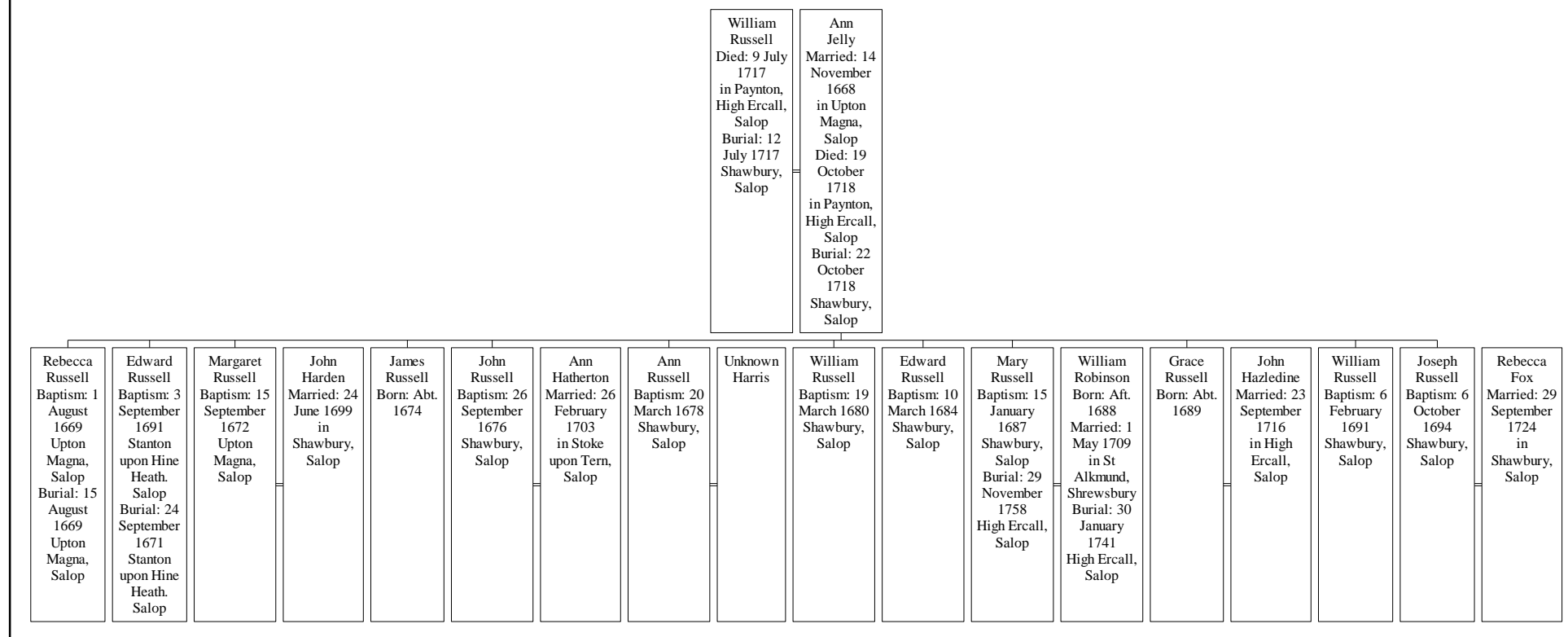
The money was to be apportioned as follows:

I leave to my son James the sum of £15; item I leave to my son Edward Russell £10; item I leave to my daughter Anne Harris the sum of £20: item I leave to Mary Robinson £20; item I leave to my daughter Margaret

⁴² SA, P129/B/1/1 High Ercall Churchwardens' Accounts, 1685-1770

⁴³ LRO, Will of William Russell of Poynton (Poynton) 1717

Tree 26 - Family of William and Ann Russell



Harden the sum of three pounds: item I leave to my daughter Grace £20: item I leave to my son William Russell £15; item I leave to my son Joseph Russell £40; item I leave to Margaret Harris my granddaughter: five pounds: item: my will is that as for the rest and residue of the aforesaid sum of £200 being the sum of £52: I give to my said wife: to be wholly at her disposing

The residue of the estate was distributed as follows:

and as for my personal estate without doors as corn cattle horses sheep or any other whatsoever I leave to my loving wife for life she making no wilful waste and after to my children equally to be divided: and as for all my goods within doors I mean in the dwellinghouse: I give after my wife's decease unto my two younger children to be equally divided between them; and I do make my loving wife my sole executrix; and my son James Russell Forgeman to be overseer

William Russell made his mark and the will was witnessed by John Marsh, Robert Brookes, Thomas Hudson and Robert ?Carden. Probate was granted to his wife Ann on 18th December 1717.

An inventory was taken which shows that, although his primary role was at the forge, William was also involved in husbandry:

A true and perfect inventory of the goods cattle and chattels of William Russell Forgeman late of Painton ... who deceased the 9th day of July in the year of our Lord 1717: appraised by: John Hampton and Jonathan Chidley: this 18th day of July: anno domini 1717.

	l	s	d
Corn and Lent tilling upon the ground	8	10	00
Flax and ?hep...	3	10	00
Three cows and one yearling calf: and one rearing calf	9	00	00
One horse and two mares	5	00	00
Seven sheep	1	08	00
A sow and four pigs	1	00	00
Implements of husbandry	2	00	00
Household goods below stairs	3	10	00
Goods above stairs	2	10	00
Wearing apparel and clothes	<u>2</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>00</u>
Tot.	39	08	00

He was buried at Shawbury:

William Russell of the parish of Ercall Magna was buried ye 12th day of July 1717

William's widow Ann did not outlive him long. On 10th October 1718 she made a simple will describing herself as a widow of the township of Paynton and leaving:

unto my granddaughter Mary Harding my black mantle and
petticoat and to my daughter Grace Hasseldine my silk apron.

Everything else was willed to her youngest son Joseph, her executor. The will was dictated in the presence of Andrew Downes, Francis Evans and John Hopton; Ann made her mark and died nine days later. She was buried at Shawbury on 22nd October but Joseph did not get probate until 15th April 1719.

John Chidley - this time aided by Thomas Hinshaw - took an inventory of her goods on 5th November 1718. The implements of husbandry were still valued at £2, but there was less livestock - two cows, a heifer and a bullock, worth £8; a horse and a mare, worth £4; a sow and two pigs, valued at more than William's sow and four pigs at £1 11/-; but no sheep. There were also corn, barley and oats in the barn, peas, straw and hay; all together her goods were valued at £22 3/-.

The Upton Magna register available on-line begins after the likely time of Ann Russell née Jelly's birth. However, just after its start date in 1653 are recorded the baptisms of Elizabeth, born 4th and baptised 13th May 1655; Richard, born 22nd August - baptised 13th September 1657; James, born 31st May - baptised 17th June 1660; all these are the children of James and Margaret Jelly. Elizabeth only lived for a year and was buried on 8th September 1656; Richard also died young and was buried on 2nd February 1658. A Margaret Jelly married Philip Onyons on 11th May 1672 at Upton Magna; her presumed father James was buried two years later on 26th April 1674 as James Jellee.



St Lucia Upton Magna

For various reasons, it is hard not to see this as Ann Jelly's family, despite the fact that the relevant page of the original register is very faded, and I could find no sign of a baptism for Ann. As Pattison says, iron work was very much a family

affair, with those families having the requisite skills forming strong ties. The inventory⁴⁴ of James Jelly's goods taken on 4th May 1674 calls him:

James Jelly of Upton Forge

which shows him to be in the same line of work as Ann's husband, William Russell. Upton Forge lies to the south of Upton Magna village, beyond the modern A5 road and on the banks of the River Tern. The inventory is hard to read, and begins with the usual array of household utensils, but in the middle of these is a surprising entry reading:

One map of the description of England 00 01 00

Was this because he was sending goods across the country? It's unlikely it was just an interest in geography. This must rank as one of the more curious items to find in an artisan's inventory in the 17th century. The total value of his goods came to £10 17/10 and his wife Margaret submitted the appraisal to the authorities – presumably to gain administration.

There is no burial for Margaret Jelly at Upton Magna, but an entry in the Shawbury register in 1706 reads:

B High Arcol parish Dec y^e 15 Widd Gelley of Withyford Forge Buried

This surely has to be Ann Russell taking responsibility for the burial of her aged mother.



The Wrekin from near Upton Forge

⁴⁴ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Inventory of James Jelly, of Upton Magna, 1674

Passand - Liverpool, Rodington, Wellington, Westbury and Wales

The trail into Ann Passand's antecedents is fainter than it is for the Pickerings. Using the ages given for her in the censuses and on her death certificate, a year of birth somewhere between 1788 and 1791 seems likely. However, there is no sign of her baptism in either of the parishes given on census returns as her place of birth – Wellington and Withington, or anywhere else in Shropshire. Given that Joseph Pickering gave Withington – his own place of birth – for several family members when filling out the census returns, Wellington seems a more likely choice, but nothing is recorded there for Ann.

There is, though, a baptism of a Maria Passand at Wellington on 17th April 1785, the daughter of John and Ann Passand (**see tree 27 – p. 145**). It seems highly likely that this Maria is the woman of the same name who married Thomas Higgins of Middleton near Manchester at Rodington on 7th November 1816. The marriage licence⁴⁵ shows that both parties were at least 27 years old or more, which puts another Maria Passant, baptised at Westbury in 1798, out of the frame. It also seems likely that it was the Maria Passand who married Thomas Higgins who witnessed Joseph Pickering's sister Mary's marriage to Robert Williams in 1814. The theory is compounded by the fact that a John Passand was buried in Rodington in 1837, about the right age to be Maria and Ann's father.

So, although Ann Passand's parentage cannot be proved conclusively, there are enough pointers to suggest that it is worth exploring John Passand. On 30th April 1783⁴⁶:

appeared personally John Passan of the parish of Baschurch in the County of Salop and diocese of Lichfield and Coventry and being sworn... made oath... that he is of the age of 21 years and upwards and bachelor and intends to marry Ann Corfield of the parish of Wellington in the County aforesaid... aged 21 years and upwards... wherefore he prayed a licence to be granted to him, to solemnise the said marriage in the parish church of Wellington aforesaid, in which said parish of Wellington the said John Passon also made oath that she the said Ann Corfield has had her lawful abode for the space of four weeks last past.

John was supported in his bond by Richard Garbett of Leighton. Baschurch was less than 20 miles from Wellington, about the same distance from Shrewsbury as Wellington, but on the north-west of the county town. Passand appears in the document without the final 'd' and spelled with both an 'a' and with an 'o' in the second syllable.

The marriage duly took place at Wellington on 12th May 1783:

⁴⁵ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Staffordshire, Dioceses of Lichfield & Coventry marriage allegations and bonds, 1636-1893

⁴⁶ LRO, Marriage Affidavit and Allegation, John Passan 1783

John Passan of the parish of Baschurch, bachelor and Anne Corfield of this parish spinster were married by licence.

Both parties signed – he spelling his surname Passon and she Ann without an e – and the ceremony was witnessed by Martha Garbett and Jonathan Taylor – a regular witness. A few months earlier, in January 1783, Ann Corfield had been witness to the marriage of Richard Garbet and Martha Ancret at Leighton. Martha was now clearly returning the compliment. The fact that Richard was John Passand's bondsman on his marriage licence suggests a close link between these two couples. Ann had witnessed another Leighton wedding on 28th May 1782, that of Thomas Smith, yeoman, and Eleanor Garland. The fact that Smith was a yeoman, support in his marriage bond by a farmer, and that both the weddings she witnessed were by licence⁴⁷, despite the grooms being bachelors, suggests Ann may have moved in more 'middle class' circles in Leighton, as marriage licences tended usually to be restricted to widowers or the better off.

Given that Ann seems to be a friend rather than close family at these events, and about to marry herself, it seems reasonable that she was a young woman at the time. The two weddings in Leighton make the baptism of Ann, daughter of George and Martha Corfield on 20th October 1765 a likely choice to be John Passand's bride, despite the fact that would make her 18 rather than the 21 claimed in the marriage allegation. Her speculative ancestry will be followed later.



Rodington Wharf⁴⁸

Sometime between Maria's birth and 1819, when John remarried, Ann must have died, but whether before or after the family's move from Wellington to Rodington, or whether they lived elsewhere in the interim is not known. No

⁴⁷ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, Staffordshire, Dioceses of Lichfield & Coventry marriage allegations and bonds, 1636-1893

⁴⁸ Courtesy of <http://www.geocities.ws/madeleyfamilytree/rodwharf.html>

possible burial for this Ann Passand has come to light. A clue to the move may be found in John's occupation, which, according to his death certificate, was, in later life at least, wharfinger. The Shrewsbury Canal, which was opened in 1796, ran from Wappensall Junction near Wellington to Shrewsbury, passing through Rodington Wharf, and making a move to Rodington a logical one for someone involved in the waterways. As wharfinger, or harbourmaster, John would have been keeper or owner of the wharf, with responsibility for day to day running, resolving disputes, ensuring boats were appropriately berthed and goods secured.

As an article posted by Rodington History Group⁴⁹ shows, the Shrewsbury Canal was built to transport coal either to Shrewsbury or to the River Severn, where it could continue its journey. The work was begun by Thomas Clowes but completed by Thomas Telford. Presumably this canal was narrower than the norm as:

The boats using the canal from Wappenshall on towards Rodington and Trench were 'tub' boats, specially constructed to allow passage through the smaller size locks and cargo transported to Wappenshall had to be transferred from standard size barges at that point.

Another obstacle to be negotiated was the river:

The canal was carried across the river Roden just south of Rodington village in a triple semi-circular arched brick aqueduct; this was sadly demolished some years ago after being deemed unsafe.

John Passand was definitely living in Rodington by 1811, when he was witness to a letter written by one Thomas Cooper⁵⁰ extolling the benefits of a medicine named *Ploughman's Drops*. Cooper recounts how, following an accident by which he was:

brought to the grave's mouth

despite the ministrations of a surgeon in Wellington, he was:

perfectly restored to my former health

following five large bottles of the aforesaid drops! Three witnesses to the letter - and presumably to the cure - were addended: Richard Whittall, Joseph Hulme and John Passand. Below these names is the address Long Waste in the parish of Rodington and the date, 6th December 1811.

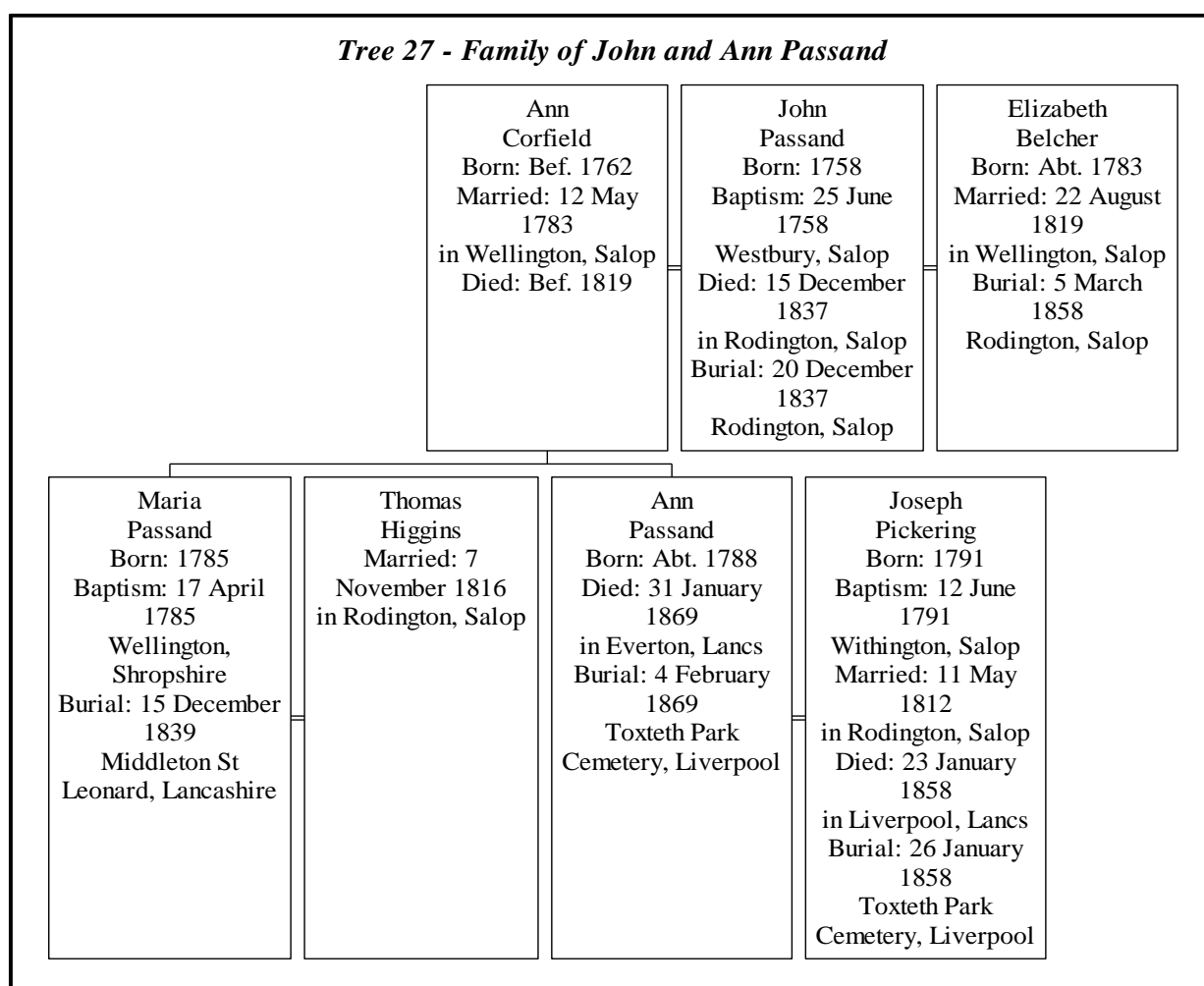
⁴⁹ http://rodingtonhistorygroup.org.uk/?page_id=17

⁵⁰ <http://www.lastchancetoread.com/docs/1812-01-22-the-salopian-journal.aspx?DocId=4533&Index=D%3a%5cdtSearch%5cw0066%5cLive%5cIndexes%5cPDFs&HitCount=2&hits=72aa+72ab+> , *Chester Chronicle*, 21.5.1813

On 22nd August 1819, John¹ married again. The marriage allegation affidavit⁵¹, made on the same day reads as follows:

...on which day appeared personally John Passand of the parish of Rodington....of the age of fifty years and upwards and a widower and intends to marry Elizabeth Belcher of the parish of Wellington widow aged 45 years and upwards....

His supporter was the fictitious John Doe. Despite the passage of 36 years, and the appearance of the 'd' at the end of John's surname, the signatures on all four surviving marriage licence documents are similar enough to make it clearly the same man. This second marriage also took place in Wellington, witnessed by Samuel and Eleanor Hodges. Eleanor, recently married in Rodington, had witnessed Maria Passand's wedding three years earlier, further strengthening the linkage chain between Rodington and Wellington records.



In his early years in Rodington John left virtually no paper trail. The first mention of him I have found is in the Rodington Overseers' Accounts⁵² on 13th April 1815:

⁵¹ LRO, Marriage Affidavit and Allegation, John Passand, 1819

Pd Jn^o Passand for half a ton of coal for Martha Beest when she took Elizabeth Chapman on. 6/3

Nearly 10 years later, on 1st January 1823 he makes another appearance in the same document under the heading 'receipts':

Passand for coal delivered contrary to order to Sarah Wood 4/6

Given the formality of the era, it is perhaps significant that he is recorded as Passand, rather than Mr Passand. The Churchwardens' Accounts⁵³ in an entry dated 24th June 1825 note:

Paid John Passand for coal for the vestery 5 cwt at 9^d per cwt 3/9

He made three more appearances in the Overseers' Accounts⁵⁴, once receiving the honorific 'Mr'. In 1835, in a section saying 'underadded in August the last year' appears:

Mr Passand as per bill £4 12/7

This is listed as 'for firing. On 25th March 1836:

John Passand coal acc £4 7/7 ½

and on 24th June in the same year, under sundry payments:

John Passand as per bill 6/3

The early rate books⁵⁵ show no trace of him, which suggest he was tenant rather than owner of the wharf. There are entries for 'Williams and co, wharf' paying a rate of 8/-, so presumably this was the company he was working for. There are also entries for the canal company. These continue throughout, but Williams and co disappears at around the time John Passand's name appears. A series of entries shows John Passand paying his rates, maybe as employee of the company, and not always quite on time. Under Rodington township the following are listed:

Names	LSD arrears	Quarterly ARP	Annual Value	LSD Rate at 1/- in £	when rec'd	amount rec'd
[9.4.1831 Rate at 1/- in £]						
Passand John wharf		8	0	0	8/0	Dec 8 th 8/0
[5.9.1831]						
Passand John wharf		8	0	0	8/0	Dec 2 nd 8/0
[19.12.1831 Rate at 6 ^d in £]						
Passand John		8	0	0	4/-	Jan 21 st 4/-

⁵² SA, XP 230/L/2/1, Rodington Overseers' Accounts 1792-1824

⁵³ SA, XP230/B/1/1, Rodington Churchwardens' Accounts 1789-1965

⁵⁴ SA, XP230/L/2/2, Rodington Overseers' Accounts 1834-6

⁵⁵ SA, XP230/L/1, Rodington rate Books, 1797-1855

[April 1832 Rate at 1/- in £]						
Passand John wharf	8	0	0	8/-	Jan 27 th	8/-
[Aug 1832]						
Passand John 1 8/0	8	0	0	8/-	Jan 27 th	8/-

He seems to be in arrears at this point, but whether to the tune of 8/- or £1 8/- isn't clear. In January 1833, things return to normal:

Passand John	8	0	0	8/-	Jan 27 th	8/-
--------------	---	---	---	-----	----------------------	-----

The entry after this one, in an alphabetical list, is for Thomas Passand, but I suspect this is in reality his step-son Thomas Belcher, who is named as such in every other entry. (Thomas Belcher also appeared in the Withington Churchwardens' Accounts from time to time, further suggesting close links between the two parishes.) John continues to pay on the same rateable value until the book ends on 11th April 1836, although occasionally in arrears.

The following volume is in a slightly different format. The first entry on 11th April 1836 and next to John Passand's name, in a column headed 'name of owner' is for R. N. Pemberton esq. This would have been the Reverend Robert Norgrave Pemberton, son of a Shrewsbury legal family who eventually became Canon at Hereford Cathedral. The first entry shows the usual rateable value, but on 5th December 1836, the value suddenly shot up to £12 before returning to the usual £8. In what was presumably the first rate after his death, and on 18th February 1838, his step-son Thomas Belcher's name appeared amongst the 'P's' where Passand should have been. Thereafter, he was listed in the 'B's', with the property identified as 'Coalwharf House and garden'.

A Lease and Release⁵⁶ dated 1837 shows that John Passand was occupying property in Rodington Heath, a small hamlet to the west of Rodington and presumably away from the canal, suggesting maybe that he had turned to husbandry and retired from canal work. (The extract below is from the catalogue entry; the original document is no longer fit for production.):

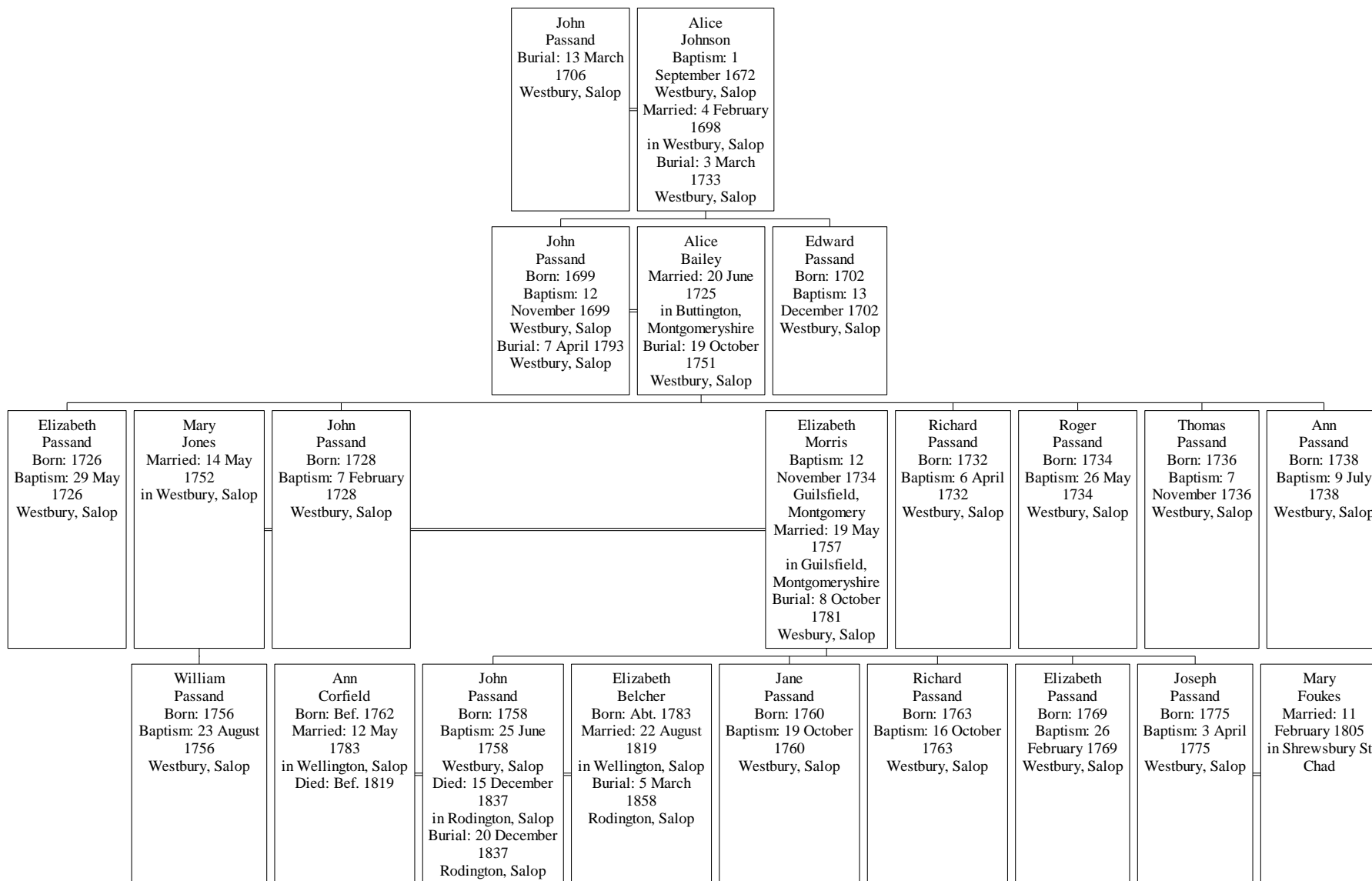
So for £210 to Nock from Richard Darby, sale of the house and barn, cowhouse and other buildings, yard, garden and 3 pieces of land (2a) at Rodington Heath (late Richard Pearce, now of --- and John Passant)

As he was clearly at the coal wharf at this time, maybe he was engaged in a dual occupation and just worked these two acres; certainly, he didn't pay rates in Rodington on this piece of land. His step-son Thomas Belcher called himself a farmer and wharfinger on the 1861 census⁵⁷ and such diversity of occupation was no less unusual then than it is now.

⁵⁶ SA, 4533/4, Lease and Release 6 & 7.6.1837

⁵⁷ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9/1896, 1861 census, Rodington

Tree 28 - Speculative ancestry for John Passand of Rodington



According to his death certificate, John Passand died at 5 p.m. on 15th December 1837; his age was given as 79, his occupation wharfinger and cause of death natural decay, i.e. old age. His wife Elizabeth registered the death on 29th December. He had already been buried on 20th at Rodington:

John Passand; Rodington; 20th December; 79

A brief coda about John's second wife, Elizabeth, and his daughter Maria is in order. After her husband's death Elizabeth continued to live in Rodington, enumerated in 1841⁵⁸ as a 70 year old of independent means with her son Thomas Belcher, also a wharfinger. The two were still living together in 1851⁵⁹; he was born in Gloucestershire, she in London. She was buried at Rodington on 5th March 1858 aged 85. Maria Passand, Ann's sister, moved to Middleton near Manchester with her cordwainer husband Thomas Higgins, and the couple had three children, Maria – baptised 17th October 1819, Sarah – 30th September 1821 and Thomas – 2nd April 1826. Maria's burial was recorded there on 15th December 1839; she was 54 years old.



St Mary Westbury

The age given both on John Passand's death certificate and in the register suggests a birth in around 1758, so speculatively, attention turns to Westbury. A quick glance at the IGI will show very few pockets of people named Passand, Passant, Passan or Passon in Shropshire in the 18th century, and those there are appear concentrated in four contiguous parishes, apart from a few events in Shrewsbury. The parishes in question are Worthen, Westbury and Alberbury, all running along the border with Wales, and Pontesbury which is on Westbury's eastern flank. The most promising of these, in fact the only one which has a John baptised in the right time-frame, is Westbury, now a quiet village, but in earlier years in an area of mining for coal and other minerals. Of course, our John may have

⁵⁸ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/906/11, 1841 census, Rodington

⁵⁹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO 107/1997, 1851 census, Rodington

been born elsewhere, and there is no documentary evidence which proves conclusively that he came from Westbury. Consequently, everything on the Passand family beyond this point must be treated with caution and there are three possible candidates, although this is the most likely one. The Westbury register shows:

John son of John and Eliz Passand bapt^d

on 25th June 1758. Westbury is just over 20 miles from Wellington, where our John married. (Shrewsbury, the county town, is midway between the two parishes, and directly en route.) A journey between the two, even via Baschurch, John's given abode when he married Anne Corfield, isn't inconceivable. The stumbling block is that there was a John Passant, also married to an Ann, who baptised children at Westbury at the turn of the century but I suspect this to be the family of the John who was buried at Westbury in 1829, with his age given as 63. There is no sign of a baptism of a John at Westbury in 1766 (or anywhere else) – the supposed year of this man's birth - though, so it is possible that this is John born 1758, which would, of course, make a nonsense of what follows (**see tree 28 – p. 148**).

If the surmise of birth at Westbury is correct, then Maria and Ann Passand had four paternal aunts and uncles for John born 1758 was the eldest of five children belonging to John² and Elizabeth Passand. The next to be born was Jane, baptised on 19th October 1760. There is no further trace of her at Westbury. Elizabeth, baptised 26th February 1769 is almost as shadowy, although the burial of an Elizabeth Passant there on 14th March 1827 aged 56 could conceivably be her. Richard was baptised on 16th October 1763, but also disappeared from the records. Maybe the whole family moved away, or maybe they simply slipped through the net of Anglican recording. There do seem to be a lot of gaps in the records of this family.

The final child was Joseph, baptised 3rd April 1775. I believe he married Mary Foulkes at St, Chad Shrewsbury on 11th February 1805 but returned to Westbury to raise a family. The first two children, John and Elizabeth, born 1805 and 1807, were named for his parents. The second two, born 1809 and 1812 were named Joseph and Mary after himself and his wife. A final child, Ann, was born in 1817. In 1841⁶⁰ Joseph was living with his wife Mary at Ford, working as an agricultural labourer. By 1851⁶¹, widowed, he was living as a lodger with his married daughter Elizabeth Dyus at Pontesbury. In 1861⁶², the Dyus family and Joseph were back in Westbury where Joseph was buried on 18th March 1864 aged 92.

The person I am now calling John¹ Passand, baptised in 1758, who I believe is probably the man who married Ann Corfield, belonged to a family which had been poor for generations. He clearly survived infancy, a dangerous period for any child

⁶⁰ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, HO 107/1911/4, 1841 census, Ford

⁶¹ <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, HO 107/1990, 1851 census, Pontesbury

⁶² <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/>, RG9/1864, 1861 census, Westbury

in that age, but particularly for the poor, as at the age of eleven he was put out to apprenticeship⁶³:

Master	Farm	Apprentice	Age	Date
Joseph Gittins	Vennington	John Passon	11	21.4.1769

Apprenticeships such as this, when a child was sent to live with a local farmer, were a common way of the parish relieving themselves of the responsibility of supporting poor children on their patch. It was not popular with the yeoman class, but in fact they had little choice in the matter. Consequently, in many cases, children were treated harshly and as unpaid labour. Parents had virtually no say in the matter. Apart from in London, where the law changed in 1769, these parish apprenticeships lasted until the placed child was 24 years of age. The rules changed in the rest of the country in 1778, by which time John¹ would have been 20. Given that Westbury was such a rural backwater, and that he had started his apprenticeship well before the system was updated, it is hard to know whether John¹ was released from his indenture in 1779, at 21, or 1783, when he was 24. If the latter, then a marriage the following year, after he had gained his freedom, seems not unlikely.

Another factor to consider is legal settlement. Parish apprenticeship conferred legal settlement on the apprentice, which is why the overseers often tried to arrange placements outside their own parish, so that if the apprentice then became a pauper, he or she would be chargeable to the new parish, not the one they were born in. Vennington was still within Westbury parish, so he would have kept the right of settlement there, but if John¹ moved away from Westbury when his apprenticeship was complete, he would not have been returned there unless unable to support himself. By 1795, it had become illegal to remove someone from a parish unless they had become chargeable.

At this point, it seems right to discuss the other candidates I've found who could be our John. A John was baptised at Pontesbury to Thomas Passand and his wife Ann on 16th August 1761. Technically, he is too young to be our ancestor John but ages on death certificates are notoriously slippery. There is no later reference to this small family at Pontesbury, but the marriage of a Thomas Passand of Westbury and Ann Trevor of this parish was recorded there on 6th November 1760. Ann was the daughter of Thomas and Margaret Trevor, and was baptised at Pontesbury on 22nd May 1734; although her father was buried there on 13th June 1756, Thomas and Ann don't appear in the register. There are, however, burials at Westbury which may fit this couple if they returned to the groom's parish to live. A Thomas Passand appears in the register on 5th September 1766, an Ann Passand on 16th January 1782, a Thomas Passand Pauper on 14th November 1785 and another Thomas Passand on 2nd February 1789. The fact that Thomas was from Westbury when he married and named his son John suggests he could have been the brother of John², and that they were both sons of John³ Passand. If Ann Passand née Trevor was John¹'s mother, it might have been her death in 1782 which triggered his move to Baschurch and his

⁶³ SA, XP279/L/9/1, Westbury Parish Apprentices, 1764-1833

marriage to Ann Corfield a year later. However, this is all speculative, dependent on a register which gives minimal detail and is probably a less likely scenario.

The other possible candidate is John son of Edward and Jane Passon baptised at Alberbury on 28th January 1763, so even younger to be our ancestor John who died in 1837 aged 79. He married Ann Pool there on 14th February 1792, and baptised two children, Thomas (1792) and Sarah (1793). An Ann Passon was buried in that parish on 19th November 1793, a fortnight after Sarah's baptism, suggesting a death after childbirth. Maybe this John, having lost a wife, moved to Westbury to start again and was the father of John, Ann, Edward, George and James (see below). There is no further sign of him in Alberbury and as 1763 is closer to the birth in 1766 assumed from the burial of John Passant at Westbury in 1829, he can probably be discounted.

For a 24-year-old man, having spent the last 13 years in servitude and the 11 prior to that in poverty, his home parish could not have held many attractions. It would not be surprising if John¹ wished to leave Westbury and seek his fortune elsewhere. And why not Baschurch, 15 miles away? And why not a quick marriage to a young girl in Wellington the year after he gained his independence? However, this all may be a flight of fancy, and it may be John¹ who, also with a wife named Ann, fathered John (1798), Edward (1805), George (1809), Ann (1811) and James (1814) baptised in Westbury. This couple can't be John Passand and Ann Corfield, as Ann would have been nearly 50 in 1814, and daughter Ann would have married out of the cradle. Even if this is John¹ it would presuppose him waiting until the age of 40 to father a first child, or even, should the John baptised in 1798 not belong to this family group, the age of 48.

All this makes decidedly confusing reading and there are no clear-cut answers. However, on balance, I believe that the John Passand who died in Rodington in 1837 was the child born at Westbury in 1758. So I will continue with this line with the usual caveats.



St Aelhiarn Guilsfield

The parents of John¹ Passand born 1758 were John² and Elizabeth Passand or Passant. The only Westbury marriage of a John Passand in the right period was to a Mary Jones on 14th May 1752. This may have been a short-lived first marriage for John² or a possible but less likely second marriage for his father, and resulted in a son William, born in 1756. A suitable Passand wedding did, however, take place over the Welsh border in Guilsfield, Montgomeryshire. The transcription on *Findmypast* shows that Elizabeth Morris, of this parish, married John Passand of Westbury on 19th May 1757. This is just over a year before the birth of John and is almost certainly the right couple. Details of their other children, Jane, Richard, Elizabeth and Joseph, are given above.

Very little is known of their life together, apart from the births of their children and maybe their burial dates. Elizabeth Passant probably died over 20 years before her husband. Again, the register is unhelpfully brief, giving simply a name, Elizabeth Passant, and the date of burial, 8th October 1781. It is a shame no age is given. The Guilsfield register shows the baptism of an:

Elizabeth, daughter of John Morris of Burgedin [a village in Guilsfield parish] and Margaret his wife ... baptised 12th November 1734

However, in the Welsh Marches, Morris is a very common surname, and although there are no other Elizabeths in the Guilsfield register at the right time, there is no certainty that this is the right person.

If Elizabeth died in 1782, it might explain the one entry in the Westbury Overseers' Account Books⁶⁴ which I think refers to her husband. In 1783, amongst a raft of entries for the John Passant I take to be this man's father, is the following:

Coals: to John Passon junior 1 stack 8/-

Presumably, after this date, he managed, as the only other mention of him I have found is in the burial register, where there is a brief entry in 1805, giving just his name and the date, 16th February. If I have got my Johns right, he would have been 77 years old, fitting well into a family group of long-lived males.

John³ Passand also chose a Welsh wife, Alice Bailey, whom he married at Buttington, close to Welshpool, on 20th June 1725. The Bishops' Transcript entry, transcribed onto *Findmypast*, records the groom as John Passon, and says the ceremony was by banns, but does not show the abodes of the two parties. However, it seems likely that this is the right marriage as this Welsh parish is only a few miles from Westbury. John³ and Alice had 6 children: Elizabeth, baptised 29th May 1726; followed by John, baptised on 7th February 1728. Richard was baptised on 6th April 1732, Roger on 26th May 1734, Thomas on 7th November 1736 and Ann on 9th July 1738.

⁶⁴ SA, XP297/L/4/2 Overseers' Account Books, Westbury, 1759-92



The Welsh Marches – Buttington

It seems feasible that the Alice Passand buried on 19th October 1751 was John³'s wife. John³ himself seems to have been buried on 7th April 1793, which would have made him 95, an amazing age at that time. However, his grandson Joseph lived to be 92, so perhaps it was in the genes. The word pauper appears beside the entry, and no doubt he would have been too old to support himself. The overseers' accounts⁶⁵ confirm his poverty, providing the entries do refer to him and not his son. The accounts run from year to year rather than giving specific dates, so the first payment he received from the parish was sometime between May 1781 and May 1782:

To John Passant coals	1 stack	8/-
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Fuel seems to have been the initial assistance given, but by the following year he was receiving money as well:

To John Passant	cash 4/-	1 stack of coals	8/-	total 12/-
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In the same year another entry reads:

Coals: to John Passon snr	1 stack	8/-
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In what appears to be the same year:

To Passons	2 ¾ yds ticking at 19d p y thr ^d	4/4
------------	---	-----

After that, he becomes a regular, salaried recipient of parish relief. He seems to have received £2 16/- in total in May 1784, and in the year from 1st May 1784 to 3rd April 1785, his payments were broken down as follows:

⁶⁵ SA, XP297/L/4/2, Overseers' Accounts Books, Westbury, 1759-92

John Passons	13 w at 1/-	13/-
"	44 w at 1/3	£2 15/-
Extra		3/6
Total		£3 11/6

In 1787-8, presumably as he became more infirm, his extra allowance increased, and he was paid:

John Passant	22 w at 1/3	£1 7/ 6
"	30 w at 1/6	£2 5/ 0
Extra allowance		£1 5/ 6

The following year he was paid at a rate of 1/6 a week for the whole year, making a total of £3 18/0, with another shilling extra for making his shirts. Payments continued; in 1789-90 he was granted another £3 18/0 and in 1790-91 he received £6 6/3, huge increase. A final entry under disbursements appears in the year between 15th May 1791 and 29th April 1792, when he received £5 9/-. By this time he would have been a frail 92 years old. He had been on parish support for eleven years.

However, he was not dead yet. The entry which I believe to refer to his burial at Westbury was dated a year later, on 7th April 1793, and read:

John Passond pauper

So where did he spend his final year? It seems to be no coincidence that just as he disappears from the overseers' accounts, Atcham was incorporated into a Poor Law Union under a local act of 1792, and powers were granted to build a workhouse⁶⁶ serving, among other places, Westbury. This was erected at Cross Houses in Atcham, and may be where John Passand spent his 94th year.

John³ was probably the son of John⁴ Passand and his wife Alice Johnson, who married at Westbury on 4th February 1698. John³ was baptised at Westbury on 12th November 1699. He had one brother, Edward, baptised on 13th December 1702. Four years later, John⁴ was dead, and was buried at Westbury on 13th March 1706. His wife Alice survived him by a quarter of a century and was buried on 3rd March 1733 as:

Alice Passand wid

Given that she seems to have been a Westbury girl, it is possible that she was the Alice Johnson baptised as the daughter of Edward Johnson and Alice at Westbury on 1st September 1672, but here the trail, faint and uncertain, finally peters out.

⁶⁶ <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Atcham/>

Corfield and Plimmer – Leighton and Little Wenlock

Ann Passand's mother was Anne Corfield (see tree 30 – p. 157), who married John Passand at Wellington in 1783. It has already been established that she probably came from Leighton, as she witnessed two weddings there, including that of the woman who witnessed her own, and whose husband supported John Passand's application for a marriage licence. Although the marriage bond would suggest a birth before 1762, it would not be unheard of for a bride to lie about her age, or for her intended spouse to inflate it, especially if she were still a minor. If, as I suspect, she was born at Leighton, she would have been 18 when she married, and was baptised there on 20th October 1765 as:

Anne daughter of George and Martha Corfield



Leighton St Mary – 1791⁶⁷

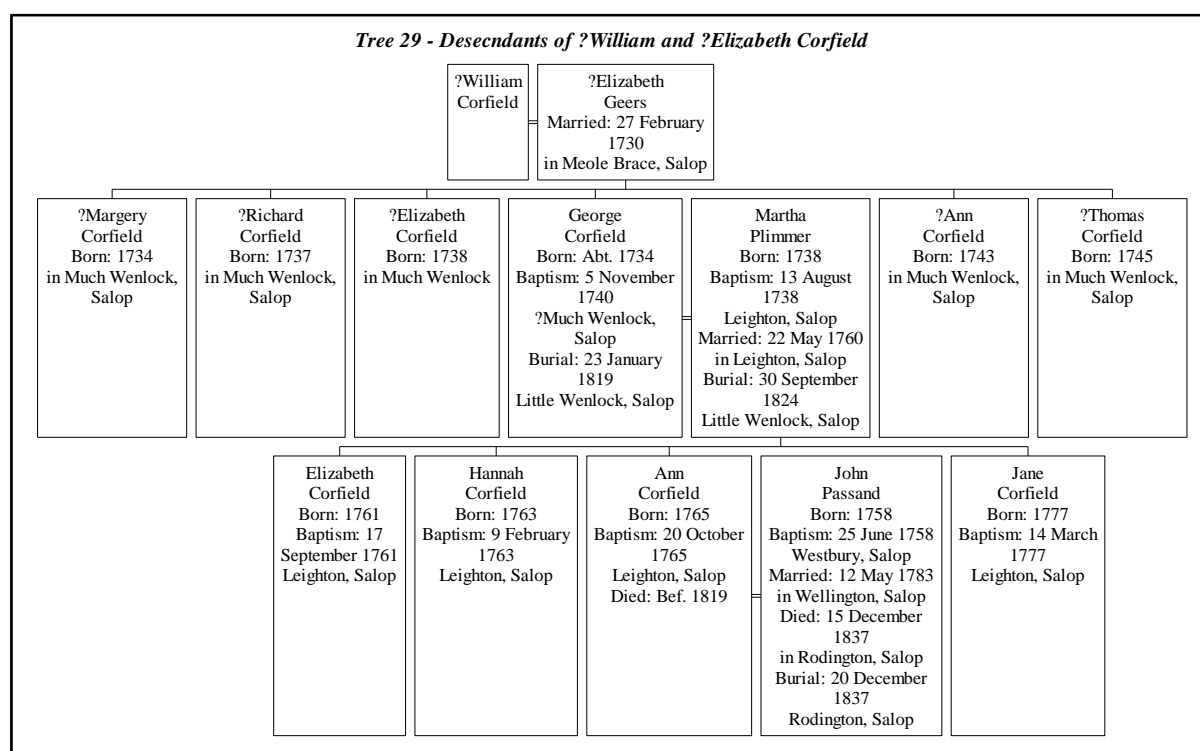
Leighton is another parish dominated by views of the Wrekin, which lies on its north-east border. It lies beside a series of meanders on the River Severn and is a small village with many black and white houses. Its main claim to fame seems to be that it is the birthplace of author Mary Webb. Little Wenlock was also a small, mainly agricultural village, but did have several small opencast coal-pits in its eastern part, as the place name Coalmoor suggests.

George Corfield of Little Wenlock married Martha Plimmer of Leighton at Leighton on 22nd May 1760. Banns had been called in both churches on 20th and 27th April and 4th May. Both parties made their mark, as did Thomas Corfield, whom I take to be George's brother, and who witnessed the ceremony. A daughter Elizabeth was baptised 16 months later on 17th September 1761. Another daughter Hannah was baptised on 9th February 1763, and Ann was born in 1765. It was another 12 years, though, before Jane, was baptised at Leighton on 14th March 1777, which

⁶⁷ SA, 6001/372/3/65, Leighton church, 1791. Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

maybe suggests removal to another parish in the interim. Apart from Ann, they all disappeared, although Jane may have married James Morris in Shrewsbury in 1796.

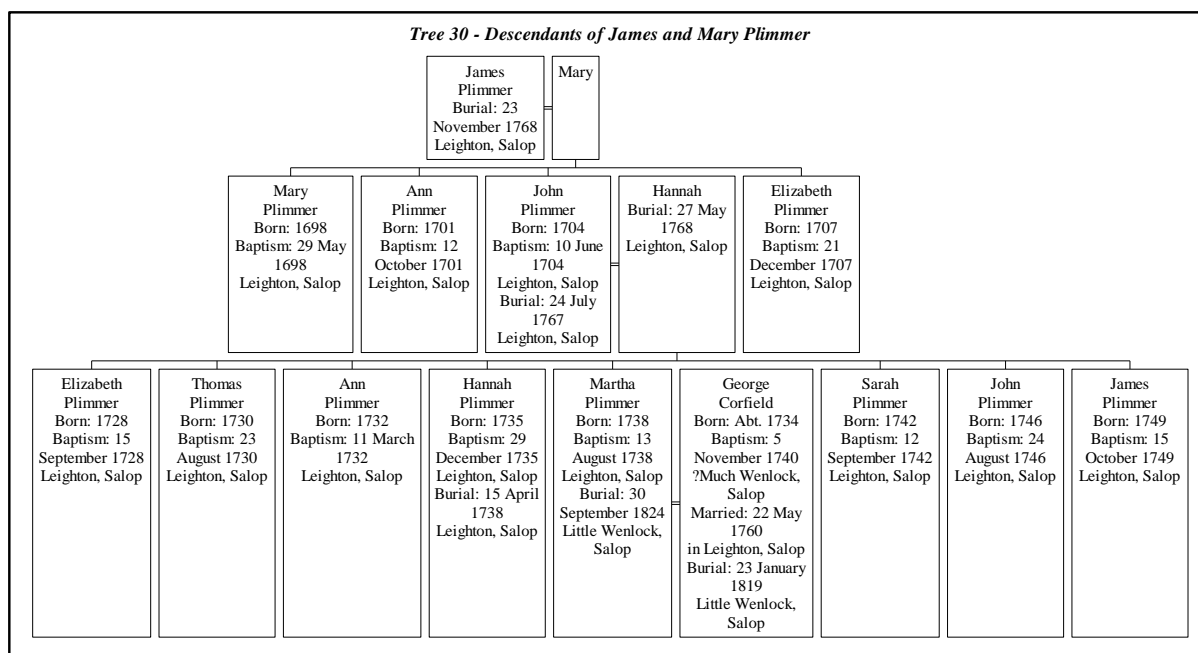
At some point after Jane's birth, George and Martha left Leighton, as their burials are recorded back in the neighbouring parish of Little Wenlock, where they had been living at Coalmoor, less than five miles from Leighton, but much closer to Wellington; maybe they wanted to be nearer to their married daughter. George was buried on 23rd January 1819, with his age recorded as a possibly inflated 85; Martha was buried on 30th September 1824, with her age given as 88, two years older than she actually was.



A George Corfield was baptised at Much Wenlock (rather than Little) on 5th November 1740, the son of William and Elizabeth Corfield. This couple baptised the following children there: Margery – 18th August 1734, Richard – 5th June 1737, Elizabeth – 3rd January 1738, George in 1740, Ann – 8th April 1743 and Thomas – 26th June 1745. Technically, George who died in 1819 is too old to belong to this family, but given the proximity of Much and Little Wenlock, it seems a possible origin for Anne's father, although the name Corfield, which comes from the name of a local river, the Corve, is common in this area. William Corfield and Elizabeth Geers were both described as of Much Wenlock when they married at Meole Brace, near Shrewsbury on 27th February 1730.

George's wife, Martha Plimmer, was baptised at Leighton on 13th August 1738, (see tree 30 – p. 158):

Martha the daughter of John Plimmer and Hannah his wife



She was a middle child in the family, preceded by Elizabeth, baptised on 15th September 1728, Thomas (who later married local girl Mary Matthews in 1752 at Shrewsbury) - 23rd August 1730, Ann - 11th March 1732 and short-lived Hannah, baptised 29th December 1735, buried 15th April 1738. Three more children followed: Sarah - 12th September 1742; John - 24th August 1746 and James - 15th October 1749.

The marriage of John and Hannah Plimmer has not come to light, but she was buried at Leighton as:

Hannah wife of John Plimmer

on 27th May 1768. This suggests that her husband was still alive. However, the only burial for a John is of:

John Plimmer the younger

buried on 24th July 1767.

There is another entry on the same page for James Plimmer, buried 23rd November 1768, so maybe the clerk made a mistake in writing up the register. Given that John was probably the child baptised to James and Mary Plimmer at Leighton on 10th June 1704, it would be a reasonable error to make. Strangely, in John's baptism entry, someone has later inserted the word pauper after his father's name in a different ink and hand. James is also designated pauper on the entry for his daughter Mary, baptised 29th May 1698, but not on Ann's - 12th October 1701, and by the time his daughter Elizabeth was christened on 21st December 1707 he had either dragged himself out of poverty or the incumbent was less judgmental.



Little Wenlock St Lawrence⁶⁸

Harriet Porter again – Mainly Liverpool

To go back to the beginning of this story: my great-grandmother, Harriet Porter was born on 11th February 1849 at a property somewhere on the long High Street in Burton on Trent, a town just on the Staffordshire side of the county border with Derbyshire. The certificate states her to be the daughter of James Porter and Ann Porter, late Boote, formerly Pickering, and her father's occupation is given as draper, as it is at her baptism at Holy Trinity, Burton on 25th March. She was the couple's second child, Julia Ann having been born just over two years previously in Wellington. Two years after Harriet's birth, directories record her uncle and aunt - John and Sarah Robinson - running a linen and wool drapers at Burton. Maybe James was working with them when Harriet was born.

By the time Harriet was two years old, the family had moved to Liverpool, where four more siblings were born: James, Sarah Jane, William and Alfred Sutton. Harriet appeared on the 1851 census⁶⁹ with her family at 16, Great Homer Street, West Derby, Everton, Kirkdale, but by 1861⁷⁰ the family was at a more central location at 84, Finch Street, Liverpool, where Harriet was recorded as a 12 year old scholar. Four years later, she eloped with Richard Park. When they returned to Liverpool they set up home at 3, Deacon Street, off Brunswick Road - the road in which Richard's parents lived. He worked at this time as an ironmaster's assistant, one of several occupations he followed during his life.

⁶⁸ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Lawrence,_Little_Wenlock_-_geograph.org.uk_-_119014.jpg, Courtesy of Geoff Pick

⁶⁹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, HO107/2189/2 folio 0291, 1851 census, Everton

⁷⁰ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG9/2691, 1861 census, Liverpool

Most of the rest of Harriet's fairly short life was spent in child-bearing and child-rearing (**see tree 31 – p.161**). The first of her seven children, Bertha, was born at Everton on 15th May 1867 and baptised into the Catholic Church at St Francis Xavier Liverpool on 26th May with her grandmother Elizabeth Park and uncle John Park as sponsors. Richard Stanley, born on 18th December 1868 was also baptised there a few days later, on 27th December. Percival Douglas was born on 6th December 1870 and baptised at St Augustine's Catholic Church Liverpool on 1st January 1871. He died as an infant sometime in the autumn of 1872.



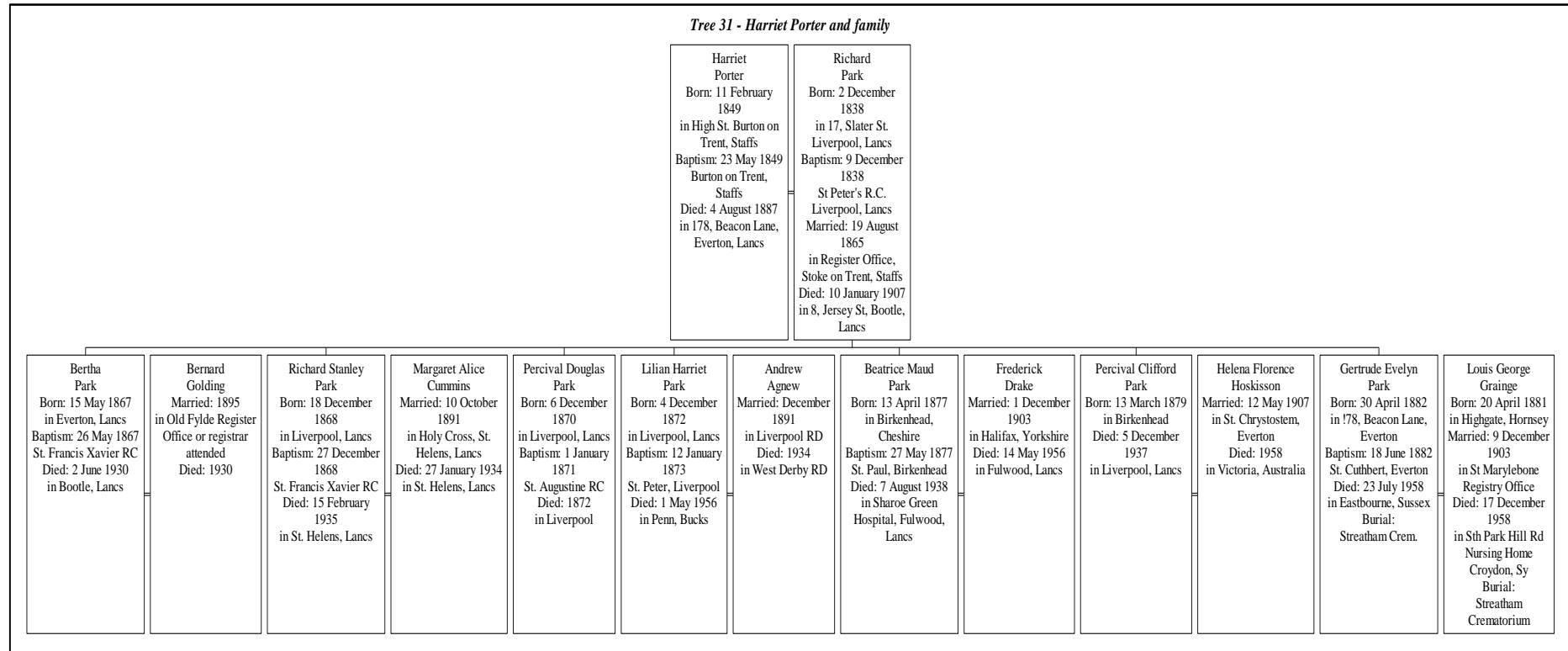
19th century Liverpool

Whether Percival Douglas' death influenced his parents' thinking, or whether Harriet rebelled against bringing her children up as Catholics, the rest of the children were christened as Anglicans. It may be that a rift developed between Richard and his family at this time, as his brother's descendants knew nothing of his family. Lillian Harriet, born on 4th December 1872, was baptised at St Peter's Liverpool on 8th January 1873. Beatrice Maud, born 13th April 1877 in Birkenhead was baptised at St Paul's church there on 27th May 1877. Her brother Percival Clifford was also a Birkenhead baby, born on 13th March 1879 and baptised at St Paul's on 6th April. By the time my grandmother, Gertrude Evelyn was born on 30th April 1882, the family was back in Everton, where she was baptised at St Cuthbert's church on 18th June 1882.

Harriet's husband Richard was a licensed victualler for most of his life, moving from pub to pub, either through failure or a desire to improve the family circumstances. The 1871 census⁷¹ shows the family at 60A in Waterloo Road, which ran along parallel to the river and directly behind the docks in Liverpool, with the note 'public house' beside the address. The census shows almost every other property to have been a pub. I suspect it was not the most salubrious area, and life was probably hard for the young Harriet. At least she had a 16 year old general

⁷¹ <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG10/3763, 1871 census, Liverpool

Tree 31 - Harriet Porter and family





Harriet Porter

Clockwise from left: Harriet with Bertha, Richard and Percival, c 1871; photo identified as like oil painting in Percival Clifford Park's house; detail of photo above; photo labelled Harriet Porter on reverse



servant, Elizabeth Blundell, to help out. The census⁷² also shows Bertha staying with her maternal grandparents in Marsden Street, so she also evidently had support from her family despite her rash marriage. A photograph taken at around this time, grainy and faded, shows Harriet as a young mother with three children, a girl and two boys. These must be Bertha, Richard and Percival, and must have been taken before Percival's death in 1872. Judging by the baby, I would guess it to have been taken some time in the second half of 1871.

Within a year they had moved to run the Spirit Vault in Soho Street, Islington, Liverpool⁷³, a much nicer area, away from the docks. According to John Park, a descendant of Richard's brother John, when their mother's estate was proved in 1870, Richard used his share of capital from it to set himself up in Soho Street. However, it was probably while they were there that most of the Porter family emigrated to Kansas in 1874. This must have been a blow to Harriet, and she must have felt bereft.

Richard and Harriet did not stay in Islington long; by 1877 they had moved again, across the water onto the Wirral where Richard ran the Borough Hotel at 1, Borough Road, Birkenhead until 1881. Again, according to John Park, this was a step up. By 1882, though, they were back in Everton, this time at the Brighton Hotel at 178 Beacon Lane, where my grandmother was born.

Five years later, Harriet died. The death certificate gave General Paralysis as the cause of death. This was a term frequently used to suggest tertiary syphilis, the disease, if untreated, eventually attacking the brain. If this is what killed Harriet it would have been an extremely unpleasant end, with symptoms including⁷⁴:

grandiose delusions, a staggering gait, disturbed reflexes, asymmetrical pupils, tremulous voice, and muscular weakness

which attacked when the victims were apparently in the prime of life. It was most common in men in their 30s and 40s, but:

On those occasions when the disease appeared in women, they were said to be prostitutes or innocent victims infected by their philandering husbands. R.S. Stewart, a Scottish alienist (as psychiatrists were then known), commented on the apparent increase of GPI during the 1880s and pointed to its prevalence in port and mining towns.

Harriet, living in Liverpool in the latter part of the 19th century, was in the wrong place at the wrong time. She died on 4th August 1887 at 187 Beacon Lane aged just 38. I have not been able to discover where she was buried. Administration of her personal estate of £100 was granted to her husband Richard. It all seemed a rather

⁷² <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>, RG10/3840, 1871 census, Liverpool

⁷³ *Gore's Directory of Liverpool*, 1872

⁷⁴ <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-25/edition-10/looking-back-fascinating-and-fatal-disease>

sad end to the big adventure of her runaway marriage. However, the genes live on. Her children produced 19 grandchildren between them, and I am one of at least 38 of Harriet's great-grandchildren. Her descendants today must number well over a hundred. Not a bad legacy.

Some years ago, I was given a photo by one of Harriet's grandchildren, Bobby Agnew. It is labelled, I think in his handwriting, as Harriet Porter. At first glance, it looks like a totally different person from the image I had both inherited and verified, and for some time I wondered if it was actually Harriet's mother, Ann Pickering. However, when compared with the photo of Harriet with her children, there are distinct similarities, as there are between the picture of Harriet as a young mother and my grandmother in a similar role. This photo, if it is indeed Harriet, was taken somewhere between the mid to late 1870s, when Daniel Jones photographer was practicing in Liverpool. In the fashion of the day, the subject looks as if she is dressed in furnishing fabric. The rounded corners on the carte de visite place the photo between 1870 and 1879, but it is full length, rather than a three-quarter length photo which would suggest the first half of the 1870s. I suspect then, that it was taken around 1875, when Harriet would have been about 26, although she looks older – something else which gave me pause for thought.

I only inherited one photo of Harriet Porter. It is also a carte de visite, unnamed, although the information about the photographers – Brown, Barnes and Bell on the back is specific enough to tie it to the year 1883, when she would have been around 34 years old. Years ago I photocopied the image, and in this now outmoded technology, the similarity to my aunt, another of Harriet's grandchildren, was striking. Correspondence with yet another granddaughter, Helena Patton in Australia, revealed a description of portraits of Richard and Harriet which had hung on the living room wall of her childhood home. Having already described Richard Park as quite a short man, she went on to say:

Harriet was even shorter, I believe, and wore her dark hair pulled back severely off her face into a 'bun' at the back of her neck and held in place at the sides with pearl-edged combs. (All this of course from memory of the portraits [of both Richard and Harriet] which were destroyed in the blitz).

When I read this, I immediately saw the description as matching the photo I had, and sent Helena a copy for confirmation. Her reply was as follows:

The photocopy of Harriet Porter was immediately recognisable, you will be pleased to know; I was immediately taken back to my early schooldays when her portrait in oils hung on our wall. In that case she was in profile but there is no doubt that it is the same person, even to the pearl-bordered combs in her hair. Poor little thing, I feel that she must have had a fairly rough time, having such a large family and dying at such an early age. Looking at the picture it seems incredible that she was only in her mid-thirties when it was taken, when you compare a woman of the same

age in these days. Of course the style of dressing didn't do anything for her except make her look twice her age, but from what I can gather, the aim was to look responsible and dignified at all costs. But who on earth would want to look upholstered!

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Yenowine	Walter	72,
	Seth	110,