

Sorting out the Pledgers

A family reconstitution of the descendants of George Pledger of Littlebury (1668 - 1739)

This account was written because I found some key differences between my research on this family and the version which appears in Megan Ridgewell's *The Pledger Family Archives*. While I have respect for the enormous amount of work which has gone into that book, the author had one of my direct ancestors linked to an entirely different spouse, and another descended from a different branch of the family. So I set out to try and confirm or disprove my version of events. I am making what I found available to other researchers not to belittle other versions, but to encourage those who may be connected to this family to look at the original records rather than accept verbatim what has previously been written.

The key players in this story seem to have spent much of their lives migrating between Great Chesterford and Littlebury, which, along with the limited choice of Christian names, makes it very difficult to disentangle the various branches. I have numbered all the various Georges, Williams etc, both in the account which follows and the appended tree, in an attempt to make it clear which one is under discussion. I am quite willing to believe that I may have made some wrong deductions, but I am sure that my direct ancestor, Sarah Pledger, born 1794, was the daughter of William⁵ Pledger and Sarah Mason, not of William Pledger and Elizabeth Bailey of Chippenham.

All key parish register details are taken from filmed versions of the original documents on microfiche at the Essex Record Office unless specified otherwise.

First Generation

George¹ Pledger and Elizabeth Stanley:

- George¹ baptised 3.4.1668 Littlebury; buried 20.2.1739 (aged c 70) with the note 'church clerk' next to his name, which would suggest he was both literate and a 'respected' member of the community. George and Elizabeth married by licence in Great Chesterford (not Little Chesterford) on 14.1.1688. The register notes:

'Both of Littlebury, single persons'.

He would have been about 20 and she about 22. Elizabeth was baptised on 9.12.1666 and buried (aged about 71) on 10.11.1738, both in Littlebury.

There is a curious, marginal note against the baptisms of his daughter Ann in 1703 and son Henry in 1706 saying pauper. This seems

unlikely given his apparent status as church clerk and the fact that he must have been a householder to be in a position to take on an apprentice. (See below.) However, there are numerous entries in this period marked pauper, and this may have been an attempt to avoid the tax on registration of baptisms and fee to the vicar which were mandatory between 1694 and 1706.

George¹ took an apprentice 'in husbandry' in 1717¹ jointly with his son George².

'Anyone taking an apprentice in husbandry had to be a householder and have, and use, half a ploughland in tillage².'

This kind of apprentice was effectively a servant, but the master often had little choice over taking him/her on, as this was a way of reducing the burden on the parish. There is some mystery, though, in the fact that while George Pledger² junior signs the indenture, George Pledger¹ makes his mark. If he was church clerk, he must have been able to write his name. Maybe this title was a misnomer, as his son Thomas¹ regularly appears in the churchwardens' accounts, being paid for the kind of things a verger might be responsible for, for example, cleaning snow off the leads, clearing the spouts, running repairs and so on. He was also paid annually for winding the clock, but after his death, this job is attributed to the church clerk³.

George¹ appears on the court roll as in occupation of a cottage called 'Hempsteds' held by Hannah Pitstow in 1717⁴. He also acts as bailiff at a manor court in 1725:

'And afterwards (viz) this day George Pledger officer of this court as bayliff now returneth that he by virtue of that precept to him directed did deliver to the said John Male the younger full seizin of the lands and tenements aforesaid with the appurtenances as by that precept he was commanded.'⁵

This lends credence to the idea that he was a respected man, even though this seems to be a one-off, as the bailiff was essentially estate manager to the manor lord. It seems unlikely that it is his son who is referred to, as George 'the younger' is so styled both in the apprentice indenture of 1717 and the court roll in 1727.

Either he or his son must have had property to let out, as 'G Pledger' is reimbursed 5/- by the overseers in 1726 for rent not received from Ann Duke⁶.

¹ D/P 9/14/1 Littlebury Overseers' Apprenticeship Records c 1717

² Terrick Fitzhugh *The Dictionary of Genealogy*

³ D/P 9/5/3 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1756-1871

⁴ D/DAd 53 Littlebury Court Roll 1711-18

⁵ D/DAd 54 Littlebury Court Roll 1718-28

⁶ D/P 9/12/1 Littlebury Overseers' Accounts 1741-7

Second Generation:

George¹ and Elizabeth's children:

- Elizabeth, baptised 27.9.1691, Littlebury. No further mention that I've found. Either died young, moved away, or married elsewhere.
- George² baptised 25.2.1694, Littlebury. Died after 1747, but burial not found. (Could this suggest that he was also church clerk, so that on his demise there was temporarily no one to write up his burial? However, the transcript records: 'A note by the vicar in 1770 lays the blame for lack of information on the curate-in-charge and the parish clerk...') Oldest son and 'heir-at-law' to George¹ and likely therefore to inherit the lion's share of any estate. Took apprentice 'in husbandry' with his father, so presumably also a 'householder'. He signed the apprentice indenture while his father made his mark. Admitted to land on Littlebury Common in 1725 and surrendered it in 1727¹, in which year he was also part of the court homage.

Married first aged c 26 on 15.7.1720 at Little Chesterford Elizabeth Mynott, one of 3 daughters of John Mynot, yeoman of Littlebury, who left his estate to his 3 surviving daughters in 1743². Two of these, Joyce Tipping and Mary Mynot, subsequently left bequests to their Pledger relatives, presumably thus improving the material standing of this branch of the family (see below). Elizabeth died between the end of 1732 and summer 1735. Burial not found.

Married second Mary Shed (transcript gives Thed) 15.7.1735 Littlebury. Either she or her sister-in-law (Henry's wife) was probably buried on 20.12.1769 at Littlebury.

- Thomas¹ baptised 7.11.1697, Littlebury. Appears to have married very late in life (c. 56) to a widow, Elizabeth Clarke (transcript gives Duke) at Littlebury on 19.11.1753. No issue. He was buried (aged c 68) on 25.12.1765 at Littlebury, and she, possibly, on 31.12.1761 at Littlebury.

There are references to Thomas scattered over a range of parish records, including bills signed by him³, so he at least was literate. His somewhat solid, square handwriting does look similar to some entries in the parish register. The last payment to him for work done for the parish was in 1764⁴. In 1765 he appears on the Overseers' Accounts in a brief series of entries in which he is described as 'very ill'. The final entry:

'Paid for sitting up with Pledger 1/-'

¹ D/DAd 54 Littlebury Court Roll 1718-28

² D/ACR 15/147 Will of John Mynot yeoman of Ly 1743

³ D/P 9/5/2 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1742-75; D/P 9/12/2 Overseers' Accounts 1741-64

⁴ D/P 9/5/3 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1756-1871

is dated the day before his burial¹.

- William¹ baptised 12.5.1700 at Littlebury. Married Hannah Banks at Arkesden on 21.5.1722 aged c 22. She was about 25. He was buried (aged c 70) on 1.4.1771 at Littlebury. Although his wife Hannah was bequeathed a share of part of brother-in-law Richard King's estate², he was probably poorer than his elder brothers. There seems to be no mention of him in parish records.

Hannah was baptised as Johannah daughter of John and Susanna Banks on 20.6.1697. The marriage entry begins with Johannah, but this is crossed out and replaced by the shorter form of Hannah. She was buried as Hannah Pledger at Littlebury on 30.7.1779.

- Ann baptised 2.5.1703, Littlebury The entry has 'pauper' under the date. Married William Livermore at Littlebury on 28.10.1725.
- Henry¹ baptised 14.4.1706 Littlebury. This entry also has 'pauper' written under the date. Henry married Mary Sermon, widow, at Littlebury on 21.1.1730 when he was about 24. He was buried (aged c 61) on 28.1.1768 Littlebury. Mary was possibly buried there on 20.12.1769 (see above). Their two children, Thomas and Elizabeth were baptised at Littlebury in 1730 and 31. At the very end of his life Henry and his wife received two handouts from the parish³, and a final entry on 27.1.1768 reads:

'For bearen of Henry Pledger £1 3/11'

The third generation

George²'s children by Elizabeth Mynot:

- John¹ baptised 16.4.1721 Littlebury. Died young.
- John² baptised 11.10.1724 at Littlebury. Buried 28.11.1777 at Littlebury aged c 53. Married Sarah Freeman at Elmdon in 1750. She was buried 28.12.1777 at Littlebury. John² was admitted to a cottage on the Common at Littlebury in 1757⁴. He was a beneficiary of his aunt Joyce Tipping's will in 1765⁵ and described therein as John 'of Littlebury'. He also inherited from his aunt Mary Mynott in 1768⁶. John and Sarah's children John³ and Mynot³ were baptised at Littlebury on 18.3.1750 and 11.1.1756 respectively and also inherited under Joyce Tipping's will. John³ was buried on 6.4.1781 at Littlebury. Mynot moved to Strethall where he married Sarah Law on 7.7.1789 and served for over 50 years as parish

¹ D/P 9/12/3 Littlebury Overseers' Accounts 1765-82

² D/ACR 16/325 Will of Richard King, victualler of Arkesden 1761

³ D/P 9/12/3 Littlebury Overseers' Accounts 1765-82

⁴ D/DAd 58 Littlebury Court Book (from *The Pledger Family Archives*)

⁵ D/ACR 17/9 Will of Joyce Tipping widow of Ly 1765

⁶ D/ACR 26/57 Will of Mary Mynott spinster of Ly 1768

clerk before being buried there on 8.1.1836¹. One of the marriages he witnessed was that of his illiterate second cousin John Pledger to Ann Abraham in 1795 (see below).

- Henry² baptised 10.2.1725 Littlebury. Died young. No burial found.
- Henry³ baptised 16.10.1726 Littlebury; buried 12.8.1733 Littlebury.
- Mynot¹ baptised 9.3.1729 Littlebury; buried 23.8.1729 Littlebury
- Mynot² baptised 31.5.1730 Littlebury; buried 13.5.1749 Littlebury.
- George³ baptised 11.10.1732 Littlebury; buried Great Chesterford on 22.8.1805, aged c 72. He was a carpenter by trade.

His first marriage was to Bennet or Benedict and must have taken place before or during 1753. However, there is no sign of this marriage at Great Chesterford in the original register, or in the transcript, although more than one piece of modern research makes this assumption. There is a Bennet Peters daughter of William and Mary Peters baptised 28.11.1732 in Great Chesterford, but this is not proof that she married George Pledger. Bennet or Benedict is not an unusual name in this area at this time. There were three sons from this union: George⁴, baptised at Great Chesterford, which would suggest this was his mother's home parish, while William⁴ and John⁴ were baptised at Littlebury, where Bennet was buried on 10.7.1759.

George³ married Elizabeth Peters at Duxford on 29.1.1760² but there was no issue from this marriage. Banns were recorded at Littlebury between:

‘George Pledger widow of this parish and Ann Peters widow of Duxford’

on 3rd 10th and 17th February 1760. I haven't discovered Elizabeth Peters' maiden name. The banns place George³ still in Littlebury at this point and parish records would seem to corroborate this. He is recorded in 1758 being paid along with his uncle Thomas for 2 days' work on the bells³, although this could perhaps be his father. However, he is also paid for paling the churchyard in 1768 and 'for carpenter's work repairing the roof and timber' in 1770⁴, which is after he moved to Great Chesterford. Maybe he travelled the short mile back to Littlebury out of loyalty to his home village. This Elizabeth Pledger could be the one buried at Littlebury on 3.12.1761, as she needs to have died before 1768,

¹ T/P 568/1 *Strethall Transcribed* Jean L Dobson

² Boyd's Marriage Index

³ D/P 9/5/3 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1756-1871

⁴ D/P 9/5/4 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1765-1859

but there are other candidates, and she may have been buried at Duxford.

Like his brother John, George³ is named as a beneficiary in Joyce Tipping's will, but not placed in Littlebury by it. This fits with the evidence of a move to Great Chesterford in the manor records, which cite him having acquired a house in Church Street, Great Chesterford in 1764¹. He received a later bequest from Aunt Mary Mynot.

By the time of his third marriage, he was clearly settled at Great Chesterford, as the banns register there records the following:

'George Pledger **widow**² of this parish and Ann Pilgrim spinster of the parish of Langley. Banns called 24th and 31st July and 7th Aug 1768'.

Confusingly, the Langley register, while confirming that the wedding took place on 15.8.1768, gives George's marital status as bachelor. However, George⁴ would have only been 15, and even if such an early marriage is feasible, being mistaken for a widow by his own vicar or church clerk is unlikely. Maybe the Langley incumbant jumped to conclusions and George let it pass. George's signature in the Langley register is clearly the one which appears as witness to a series of marriages in Great Chesterford. These run from 1773, shortly after the first child from this marriage was baptised in Great Chesterford through 1777, 1778, 1780, 1783 and 1787.

From 1784 he apparently reappears in the Churchwardens' accounts³ at Littlebury, receiving payments on a regular basis up until 1803, a couple of years before his death. However, George⁴ seems to have migrated back to Littlebury at some time, as his daughter Elizabeth was baptised and he was buried there. It's possible that he was also a carpenter, and was the one being paid by the Littlebury churchwardens.

The birth of George³ and Ann's first child took place in 1771. All five children - Elizabeth, Henry, Mary, Ann and Sarah were baptised at Great Chesterford and their mother's name Ann appears in the entries. I have not traced Ann's burial at either Great Chesterford or Langley.

There are a number of entries in the Great Chesterford Churchwardens' Accounts⁴ which could refer to George³ or his son, but are probably the father as they seem to fit the pattern of his movements. 'George Pledger's bill' was paid by them in 1771, 1773 and 1774. A warrant was taken out against him and another man in 1776. It doesn't

¹ T/A 337/2 Great Chesterford Court Roll 1768-1830

² My emphasis

³ D/P 9/5/4 Littlebury Churchwardens' Accounts 1765-1859

⁴ D/P 10/5 Great Chesterford Churchwardens' Accounts 1740-1862

say what for, though the comment 'cast up short' in the 1774 entry may provide a clue. The references are brief, and it may be that George is the person being paid to fetch the warrant, especially as there is a later reference to 'Pledger' in 1797 for 'work on the bells'.

George³ is compensated by the 1804 Enclosure Award¹ at Great Chesterford:

'George Pledger copyhold: 2 roods 24 perches, value 18 shillings 2 pence lying in Little Field held by copy of court roll of manor of Great Chesterford'

He is also recorded as holding a cottage worth 2 shillings and 5 pence in the centre of the village, the house in Church Street, I imagine, (no. 96 on the enclosure map²). He leaves a will dated 28.3.1805³ which mentions none of his beneficiaries by name. However, he makes reference to land already surrendered at the manor court for sale and orders his executor to complete that transaction and then to sell up or surrender to the manor court, as appropriate, all his other possessions and split the proceeds between his wife and children. The main purpose is clearly to facilitate the wind-up of his affairs in the manor court after his death. The signature on this will, although extremely shaky, is clearly recognisable. The will was proved on 12.10.1805, which fits with a burial in Great Chesterford on 22.8.1805.

The manor court⁴ records the surrender of his land to Thomas Bullen in 1805, and then on 21.4.1806, the homage presents the death of George Pledger, along with the surrender of his property in Church Street. It is the link between references to the property acquired in 1764 in the manor records, when George⁴ would have been too young to be admitted to it, and the reference to the winding up of his affairs in his will which clinch the argument that it is the older George, i.e. George³ who was buried in Great Chesterford, and the younger, George⁴ who moved back to Littlebury.

George²'s children by Mary Shed

- Amy baptised 8.4.1739 Littlebury. No further trace has been found.
- Mary baptised 25.4.1741, married Edward Wilson on 17.10.1763, at Littlebury.
- William² baptised 11.4.1744 Littlebury. If, as asserted in *The Pledger Family Archives*, one of the Essex Pledgers married at Chippenham, it

¹ Q/RDc 8A Great Chesterford Enclosure Award 1804

² Q RDc 8B Enclosure Map Great Chesterford (See Seax)

³ D/ACR 19/415 Will of George Pledger carpenter of Great Chesterford 1805

⁴ T/A 337/2 Great Chesterford Court Roll 1768-1830

must have been this one. A William Pledger married Sarah Abray at Chippenham¹ in 1764, was widowed by her death there in 1783:

‘Sarah wife of William Pledger buried 21.3.1787’²

and then married widow Elizabeth Bailey there 8 months later:

‘William Pledger w³ married Eliz Bailey w 25.11.1787’⁴

As a younger son by a second wife, William would have been more likely to have to leave home in search of work than his older siblings.

The Pledger Family Archives misses the fact that this marriage took place between widows, and followed the death of an earlier spouse after 23 years of marriage, so therefore assumes that it was William⁵ Pledger who married Elizabeth Bailey, and that the family raised in Great Chesterford in the 1780s and 90s belonged to them. In fact, only the first child, Martha, is attributed to a mother Elizabeth in the original register; the rest have Sarah as the mother’s name. (See below for details of the marriage between William⁵ and Sarah Mason.) Unfortunately, the transcript omits this information, which makes it easy to draw the wrong conclusion.

- Thomas² baptised 15.2.1747 Littlebury. No further trace.

William¹ and Hannah’s children

- Hannah baptised 23.6.1723 Littlebury. Married John Reynolds 8.9.1747 Arkesden. I have not followed this line further.
- William³ baptised 24.4.1726 at Littlebury. Buried 12.10.1801 at Littlebury aged c 75. He married Rose Bray on 29.12.1751 at Strethall. She was baptised on 26.8.1733 and buried on 4.9.1811, both at Littlebury. They baptised nine children there: Hannah, Elizabeth, Elizabeth, William, Elizabeth, Mary, Matthew, John and Martha. *Strethall Transcribed*: p.71 refers to the:

‘Crown Gift Charity – a charity which distributed crown coins at Christmas to 20 poor householders in Littlebury town and 12 poor householders in Littlebury Green’

which includes an entry in 1794 for William Pledger of Littlebury Green⁵. My guess is that he was on the receiving end, especially as there is also a run of entries in the Littlebury overseers’ records in 1773 and 1774⁶ which refer to ‘Pledger’ or ‘Pledger’s family’ receiving amounts varying

¹ SoG Ca/R159 CMB 1567-1812 Chippenham. Transcript & Boyd’s Marriage Index

² SoG Ca/R159 CMB 1567-1812 Chippenham. Transcript

³ My emphasis

⁴ SoG Ca/R159 CMB 1567-1812 Chippenham. Transcript & Boyd’s Marriage Index

⁵ T/P 568/1 *Strethall Transcribed* Jean L Dobson

⁶ D/P 9/12/3 Littlebury Overseers’ Accounts 1765-82

from 1/- to 13/4. Although only one of these entries specifies 'Wm' I suspect they all refer to him.

The Livermores

- Ann and William baptised 4 children at Little Chesterford: Ann in 1726; William in 1729; Elizabeth in 1731; Robert in 1735 and Benedict in 1739. Ann and William's great-grandson William (son of Daniel, grandson of William) married Amey Pledger in 1819 at Great Chesterford.

Henry¹ and Mary's children:

- Thomas³ baptised 26.4.1730 Littlebury married Ann Morris 1752 at Littlebury, and Elizabeth baptised 24.10.1731 Littlebury was probably buried there 20.12.1788. Thomas³ baptised at least three children in Arkesden: William⁶, baptised 1753, Thomas⁴, 1755, married Hannah Sorrell 1781 Arkesden; and Ann, 1766, married James Harvey 1790 Arkesden. I have not followed this line any further.

The fourth generation

George³'s children by Bennet:

- ♦ George⁴ baptised 2.9.1753 at Great Chesterford. Received a bequest under Joyce Tipping's will in 1765. Marriage to Mary not found, and there were no banns called at Great Chesterford, although the baptism of 'Bennet the daughter of George and Mary Pledger' was recorded there on 14.1.1776. I can find no further trace of Bennet in either the Great Chesterford or Littlebury registers. A second daughter, Elizabeth, was baptised at Littlebury on 19.5.1782, in what was clearly a joint baptism with her cousin Pleasant. She evidently died young, as the burial of 'Elizabeth Pledger infant' is recorded at Littlebury on 31.10.1785.

George⁴ must have lived in Great Chesterford with his father from 1764, but presumably moved back to Littlebury before 1782, and lived the rest of his life there, being buried in Littlebury on 9.3.1806. This would explain why he doesn't appear in the Great Chesterford Enclosure Award along with his father and youngest brother. The entries in the Littlebury accounts initially attributed to his father from 1780 are probably his. The fact that he and his father died within a year of each other just adds to the confusion. I have found neither burial nor marriage for Bennet, and Mary also effectively disappears.

- ♦ William⁴ Despite his baptism at Littlebury on 23.6.1755, he must also have spent his youth with his father in Great Chesterford. After his marriage, he settled in Littlebury but this didn't stop him witnessing a series of weddings in Great Chesterford - with brother John in 1788 and with another witness in 1782 and 88. He also is absent from the 1804 Enclosure Award in Great Chesterford.

The Pledger Family Archive marries Ann Harry to William⁵, which was the statement which made me decide to check this part of the tree in detail. I had come up against this particular multiple candidacy some time ago, but discarded William⁵ as a possible groom, as at 17 he would have been very young to support a wife, whereas William⁴ was about the right age to marry. The case for believing that William⁴ was the groom is set out in detail below.

Banns were called before William Pledger's marriage to Ann Harry, Herry or Hurry, at Great Chesterford:

'Banns of marriage between William Pledger **of this parish**¹ and Ann Herry of the parish of Saffron Walden: 1st, 8th, 14th December 1776',

and at Saffron Walden:

'Banns of Marriage - William Pledger of **Great Chesterford** and Ann Hurry of this parish were published on Sundays Nov 10th, 17th and 24th.'

According to the Saffron Walden transcript², Ann, daughter of James and Pleasant Hurry labourer, was baptised on 21.4.1757. So he would have been about 22 and she would have been about 19 or 20 when they married at Saffron Walden. The entry reads:

'William Pledger of the parish of **Chesterford Magna**³ bachelor and Ann Hurry of this parish spinster were married in this church by banns on the ninth day of January in the year of our Lord 1777'.

Ann signs 'Ann Hurry'. The signature of William Pledger is clearly the same as the one in the Great Chesterford register, as is the witness signature of his brother John. The other witness was Richard Bright.

William⁴ and Ann's first child, Ann, was baptised at Saffron Walden on 15.9.1777, but the other three were baptised at Littlebury so presumably they settled here after their wedding, and Ann followed the custom of returning to her mother for the birth of her first child. Pleasant, the next child, shared her christening with her first cousin Elizabeth, George⁴'s daughter. Andrew Todd, in *Nuts and Bolts*, a book on Family Reconstitution techniques, cites parishes where 7% of all baptisms were 'extended family' baptisms. This cut costs and allowed for family get-togethers. The last two children - Susan and Sarah - also shared a christening, on 21.1.1787 at Littlebury, but the 5 year gap from the previous ceremony maybe suggests a late baptism of one child rather than twins. The same pattern is evident with the joint baptism of Henry and Mary (William³'s half brother and sister) in 1776. It is presumably

¹ My emphasis

² SoG ES/R/57 C 1558-1793 Saffron Walden

³ My emphasis

Ann, born 1777, (or maybe her two years younger half-aunt) who married William Reed in Littlebury in 1797.

The most likely burial date for William⁴ is 12.10.1807 at Littlebury – all three brothers seem to have died within about 18 months of each other. There is another burial of a William at Great Chesterford on 29.8.1804, which could just be this one, but it seems unlikely. Like his brothers, at age 52, he seems to have died comparatively young¹. I have not followed this line any further.

- ◆ John⁴ baptised 5.3.1758 at Littlebury. Like his brothers, he signed the marriage register in Great Chesterford for a number of his peers, first in 1778, then 1781, 1786, 1787 and 1788. He appears in the Churchwardens' accounts² as being paid for going to Hertford. The Enclosure Award³ allotted him land on the Common in Great Chesterford, valued at 18 shillings and 1 penny. Like his father, he also held a cottage or tenement – no. 97 on the plan⁴, worth 3 shillings and 4 pence. In 1806 the manor roll⁵ records him as surrendering a property in Low Street, divided into 2 dwellings, and to which he was admitted in 1789. It was next to the tenement of George Pledger.

John⁴'s wife was named Elizabeth, and she gave him three sons, also named John⁶, George⁶ and William⁶. They were all baptised at Great Chesterford, on 25.7.1790, 4.7.1795 and 18.9.1803 respectively. John⁴ only outlived his brothers by a couple of years. He was buried at Great Chesterford, aged about 49, on 21.3.1807, with the note 'visitation', i.e. stroke, next to the entry in the parish register. His wife may have died shortly afterwards, as there is an Elizabeth Pledger buried at Great Chesterford on 30.6.1807. I have not followed this line any further.

George³'s children by Ann Pilgrim

The Pledger Family Archives misses this third marriage of George³, and misled again by a transcript which doesn't consistently give the mother's name of children baptised, attributes these children to George⁴ and Mary. It was the lumping of three children together, one baptised in January 1776 and 2 more in July of the same year which made me return to the original register to look for an alternative interpretation.

¹ The suggested date of death in *The Pledger Family Archives* for William³ of 1842 is actually that of the two year old son of Joseph Pledger of Catmer End Littlebury, who died of scarlet fever on 4th December 1842. There are no other entries in the GRO for a William Pledger in that year, and although some deaths did get missed in the early years, there is no burial recorded for a William Pledger in 1842 in Great Chesterford or Littlebury.

² D/P 10/5 Great Chesterford Church wardens' Accounts 1740-1862

³ Q/RDc 8A Great Chesterford Enclosure Award

⁴ Q/RDc 8B Enclosure Map Great Chesterford (See Seax)

⁵ T/A 337/2 Great Chesterford Court Roll 1768-1830

- ◆ Elizabeth baptised 19.6.1771 at Great Chesterford. It may have been this Elizabeth who witnessed a marriage along with George⁴ in 1787 and by herself in 1788, but if John⁴ was married by this time, it could equally be his wife. This Elizabeth may be the one buried at Great Chesterford in 1791 (no date, but near the September entries.)
- ◆ Henry⁴ baptised 5.7.1776 Great Chesterford. He shared this christening with his sister Mary, so - as with their nieces Susan and Sarah - they were either twins or one was a late baptism. The transcriber of the Great Chesterford registers notes that late baptisms were a common practice in this parish. Banns were called at Great Chesterford for his marriage to Anne Andrews in September/October 1798. I have not followed Henry's life further.
- ◆ Mary baptised 5.7.1776 Great Chesterford. She married James Whitman at Great Chesterford in 1796. Banns were called in July/August.
- ◆ Ann baptised 2.8.1779 Great Chesterford.
- ◆ Sarah baptised 9.7.1780 Great Chesterford.

William³ and Rose's children

- ◆ Hannah baptised 20.11.1752 at Littlebury. Married William Perrin 20.11.1776 at Littlebury. I have not followed this line further.
- ◆ Elizabeth baptised 25.5.1755; buried 25.6.1755 Littlebury.
- ◆ Elizabeth baptised 7.8.1757; buried 10.7.1759 Littlebury.
- ◆ William⁵ baptised 24.2.1760 at Littlebury. Given that William⁴'s signature ties him to the marriage to Ann Harry, it must be William⁵ who married Sarah Mason at Great Chesterford on 19.4.1787:

‘William Pledger of this parish bachelor and Sarah Mason of the same parish spinster were married in church by banns on the 19th day of April in the year 1787 by me J Baker curate.
William Pledger X his mark; Sarah Mason X her mark.’

Witnesses were Joseph Pilgrim, Mary Pilgrim. William was 27 and Sarah was 23. The fact that this William was illiterate helps tie him to this branch of the family, rather than the better off and better educated descendants of George Pledger, especially as his younger brother John was also illiterate.

There were probably five children from this marriage, although the first child, Martha, baptised 5 months after the wedding, on 23.9.1787, was recorded as the daughter of William and Elizabeth rather than Sarah. Unfortunately, whoever transcribed the original register has often only recorded the mother's name for the first birth, which has helped to perpetuate the misconception that her parents were the

William Pledger and Elizabeth Bailey who married at Chippenham. (See entry on William².) The original register for this period is written in a very clear hand, with the surname neatly underlined for each baptism. For the baptisms of the other four daughters: Mary – baptised 26.6.1791, Sarah – born 16.8, baptised 14.9.1794, Amey – born 5.7, baptised 5.8.1798 and another Mary – baptised 3.11.1805, the mother's name is always recorded as Sarah. Sarah's name also appears on the burial entry of the first Mary: 'Mary daughter of William and Sarah Pledger was buried aged 8 yrs 31.7.1799.'

It is just possible that there was another stray William, with wife Elizabeth and daughter Martha, but it seems unlikely, especially as there is no further trace of them unless the stray burial in 1806 is for him.

There is an entry in the Great Chesterford Churchwardens' Accounts¹ which records a charitable handout to the poor on the occasion of George III's jubilee in 1809. It seems that the size of the handout depended on the size of family, and William is recorded as having 5 children. By this time, the first Mary had been long dead, so it is possible that William⁵ inflated the number of offspring he was supporting, but, provided Martha was his child by Sarah, he could have been answering how many children he had fathered, so not strictly lying! The four surviving girls all married in Great Chesterford: Martha to John Cook on 10.6.1806, Sarah to William Bard on 16.12.1813 (and later to Joseph Hills on 2.2.1839) Amey to William Livermore on 21.1.1819 (Witness Lewis Bard) and Mary to James Bard on 27.1.1825.

William⁵ was buried on 21.3.1824 at Great Chesterford. The original register gives abode as Great Chesterford and his age as 65. More properly, he was in his 65th year, but it's close enough. Sarah, his wife, was buried on 22.11.1826 also at Great Chesterford. The original gives her abode as Great Chesterford and her age as 61. If she was baptised on the day of her birth, this would be right, but she was probably just 62. Both ages are close enough to lend confidence to the belief that the baptisms cited belong to the right candidates.

- ◆ Elizabeth baptised 8.11.1761 at Littlebury. It is possible that this Elizabeth was buried there on 3.12.1761. However, her two earlier namesakes were recorded as infants on burial, so it is strange that she was not, although this could be an oversight on the part of the clerk. I think it is more likely that she is the Elizabeth buried 26.12.1788 at Littlebury, with the note 'She died of ye great ... (the final word is illegible).
- ◆ Mary baptised 29.4.1764 Littlebury. Married John Burgess on 14.10.1790 at Littlebury.

¹ D/P 10/5 Great Chesterford Churchwardens' Accounts 1740-1862

- ◆ Matthew baptised at Littlebury on 26.10.1766 was buried there on 15.5.1768.
- ◆ John baptised on 28.10.1769 at Littlebury married Ann Abraham at Strethall on 7.12.1795. He is described as 'of this parish', so had obviously moved from Littlebury before this time. He was about 26, a similar age to his brother William on marriage. He made his mark on the marriage register; like his brother, he was unable to write. The witnesses were William Andrews¹, soon to be his brother-in-law, and Mynot Pledger, the church clerk and his second cousin. He baptised six children at Strethall: Sarah - 1796, William - 1797, John - 1802, George - 1804, Mynot - 1807 and Thomas - 1810. It struck me as odd that someone from this branch would choose to perpetuate the name Mynot, but maybe it was chosen out of deference to a cousin who was of higher status in the parish. I have not followed this line further.
- ◆ Martha baptised 9.12.1772 at Littlebury married William Andrews there on 17.10.1797.

Pam Griffiths July 2008

¹ It seems feasible that this William was the son of James Andrews and Mary Haseler, bap Ly 1768. If so, he was the brother of Martha Andrews who married Lewis Bard and was the mother of William, Lewis and James Bard, all of whom either married one of William⁵'s daughters or witnessed her marriage. William Andrews would have been their uncle by birth, and the Pledger girls' uncle by marriage.