

Notes on Bancroft Warburton

A recent DNA match to myself comes from a descendant of a William Warburton of Widnes who was born around the same time that William, son of Bancroft Warburton was born in nearby Great Sankey. Whilst this is not the only possible identification of William of Widnes it does offer some interesting possibilities. These notes record the known facts concerning William and Bancroft, and explore the implications should William indeed be the son of Bancroft.

The DNA match comes from a descendant of a George Warburton who was born in Widnes in 1822. George was baptised at St. Wilfred, Farnworth, Widnes, son of William (a labourer) and Elizabeth of Widnes. In all William and Elizabeth had 11 children baptised there, and William is variously called a husbandman or labourer. There is nothing to suggest there were two families based on the records in Lancashire Parishes Online but a check of the actual parish register should be carried out.

A marriage at St Mary the Virgin, Prescott on January 1st 1810 between William Warburton, a labourer and widower of Widnes, and Elizabeth Traverse a widow of Widnes is probably this William and Elizabeth, especially as their first child was baptized on February 17th 1811. St Mary the Virgin is the parish church of Prescott, St Wilfred (later St Luke) of Farnworth being a chapel of ease within the parish.

William and Elizabeth are present in the 1841 census living at Barrow Green, Widnes with son Matthew. William is 60 and Elizabeth 55, ages in 1841 being rounded down to the nearest 5 years. This gives William a birth date of 1777-1781. Neither William nor Elizabeth can be found in the 1851 census. The deaths of 2 Williams are recorded at Warrington in 1841. Both Williams were also buried at Warrington and Lancashire Parishes Online gives their age at death. One can be discounted as he is at the same address in the 1841 census and the burial record, though his age is correct for the son of Bancroft Warburton. The other is one year older, but his address on the burial record is also in Warrington. However he is not in the 1841 census unless he is William of Widnes.

In fact deaths at Widnes would have been registered at Prescott. Bancroft's son Joseph was farming very close to William in Widnes, in Crow Wood Lane, and his death in 1845 was registered at Prescott. However the first William whose death is registered at Prescott after 1841 is in 1857. I'm not sure if the proximity between William and Joseph implied kinship or is simply coincidence. Bancroft's sons William and Joseph were the youngest, and the two who didn't inherit one of Bancroft's estates in his will of 1804.

William's son Matthew is also an enigma. He doesn't appear in any census after 1841. The death of a Matthew was recorded at Warrington in 1854. Unfortunately age at death is not given on the index to the registers until 1865, and no burial is recorded on Lancashire Parishes online, there being no burials recorded for Great Sankey, Farnworth or Prescott for the relevant period. However given the rarity of the name this is quite possibly him, though it doesn't explain why he was missing from the 1851 census. There are several families at Barrows Green in the 1851 census so if William was alive and missed the census like Matthew it would seem he was living elsewhere.

All that is known of Bancroft's son William is that he is mentioned in Bancroft's will of 1804, which was proved in 1805, and so is known to have survived past that date. The key to determining if William of Widnes could be the same person is to identify

his death registration or burial record and check if his age at death matches a 1779 baptism. Even so with 14 baptisms of Williams between 1777 and 1781, seven in 1779 alone, it will need a DNA comparison with a known descendant of Bancroft to determine if they are the same. Two of the seven baptisms in 1779 were in Bowdon where my own ancestors lived, and only one in Warrington, in 1781.

Bancroft Warburton was baptised at Bowdon St. Mary on November 12th 1738, the child of John Bancroft and Elizabeth Warburton of Sinderland. On April 20th 1767 Bancroft Warburton married Elizabeth Norman at St. Luke, Farnworth, Widnes. Bancroft was described as of the parish of Prescott. He subsequently died in 1805 and was buried at Great Sankey, St. Mary, a chapelry in Prescott parish.

There is nothing to prove that the Bancroft baptised at Bowdon is the same as the one who married in Widnes and lived at Great Sankey except the coincidence of the unusual name, the correlation between the dates, and the lack of any other evidence of a second Bancroft. However, if Bancroft's age at death in 1805 ties in with the Bowdon baptism, i.e. it is 66 years, this would be pretty good proof. The record is included in Lancashire Parishes Online but no age at death is given. The parish records need to be checked to see if his age is given. It is also possible a monumental inscription might exist.

The Bancroft of Great Sankey is also said to have 2 brothers. This is apparently a little guess work on the assumption Bancroft was born near where he lived and these "brothers" were from the same area. I think these brothers can be discounted.

The following facts can be determined about the background to the Bancroft baptised at Bowdon. On March 20th 1723/4 Mary Warburton of Dunham married John Bancroft of Carrington. By 1736 they had four children baptised at Bowdon (I do not yet have their names; they are currently missing from IGI though in the past the coverage of Bowdon by IGI has been good). Mary, wife of John Bancroft of Carrington, was buried at Bowdon on June 3rd 1737. Unfortunately there is no extant grave for Mary, or any other Bancroft buried at Bowdon in this period.

Mary Bancroft nee Warburton can be identified as the daughter of Thomas Warburton of Hale and Pheobe Dean of Knutsford who married at Bowdon on December 2nd 1701. This family subsequently farmed at Sinderland as tenants of the Crewe estates. Thomas died in 1727 and left a will which wasn't proved until 1734. It refers to his daughter Mary Bancroft. Phoebe died in 1761, by which time she was living in Marple, Stockport. Her son John continued the lease until his death in 1809. He does not appear to have married. His will exists but has yet to be examined.

The origins of Thomas of Hale are clouded as there are a number of Thomases attested in Hale at the end of the 17th century, and there is a known tendency for nonconformist baptisms to occur away from Bowdon, St Mary and so go unrecorded. However, if occupation is a clue, my own ancestors were the main Warburton farming family in Hale at that time and my ancestor Josiah was bailiff to the Crewe estates in Hale from 1686 to the early 1720's. He may therefore be the Thomas born in 1676 to Thomas (brother of Josiah) and Alice Worsely.

On a geographical note, on the baptisms of their children Thomas and Pheobe are sometimes described as of Sinderland, and sometimes of Dunham. Sinderland occupies the northern area of Dunham and these two names are frequently interchanged. Carrington lies to the north of Sinderland, still within the ancient parish of Bowdon.

Following Bancroft's baptism in 1738 there is a wedding between John Bancroft and Elizabeth Warburton on May 2nd 1749. Both are merely described as "of this parish". The question arises whether these are the parents of Bancroft Warburton, and whether it is the same John Bancroft who was married to Mary Warburton. Obviously the 10 year gap between Bancroft's birth and the marriage is strange, particularly as John Bancroft was not apparently attached himself.

Some clues come from the will of John Bancroft of Carrington who was buried at Bowdon on December 17th 1756. Firstly he is confirmed as the husband of Mary by reference to his brother-in-law John Warburton of Sinderland, who was one of his executors.

John left bequests to a son-in-law John Hallam (his main beneficiary), and two daughters Pheobe, and Ann (who got £100 each). There was no stipulation about waiting until they are 21, suggesting they were already adults. It is likely that the wife of John Hallam, and one other child were dead by then as they are not mentioned.

John also left "house room" to his wife Elizabeth, so he had clearly remarried to an Elizabeth. I don't know if a John Bancroft is recorded as marrying any other Elizabeth than Elizabeth Warburton in the area at that time. Certainly if she is the Elizabeth Warburton who married John Bancroft in 1749 the children are too old to be hers.

Finally, and most intriguing is the bequest of £20 to Bank Warburton. No relationship or reason is described, but it is likely that Bank might be a diminutive of Bancroft, in which case the Bancroft baptised at Bowdon would appear to be alive in 1756.

Elizabeth Bancroft's own burial might be expected to be at Bowdon. Three possibilities are:

Elizabeth Bancroft buried December 8th 1764 was from Sinderland, daughter of William and Margaret. When the parents are described it usually means the death of a child, so this one is unlikely. Also there is no known marriage of a William Warburton to a Margaret at this time.

Elizabeth Bancroft buried January 10th 1775 was from Prescott, Lancashire. This is intriguing because Prescott is where Bancroft lived so it would seem logical for her to go to her son in widowhood but return to her home parish for burial.

Elizabeth Bancroft buried April 21st 1793 aged 98 was the wife of Thomas from Sinderland. She would be 43 in 1738, a little old to be having illegitimate children, and probably long married.

Elizabeth's origins are difficult to determine. There is no age at death on the 1775 burial. They were introduced as the norm at Bowdon just a few years later. Since Bancroft was conceived a few months after John's first wife's death, Elizabeth might have gone as a servant to help him with his young family. This might imply she was related to Mary, though Mary had no sister of that name. A cousin, a daughter of one of Thomas of Sinderland's brothers would be most likely. Also the delay in them marrying might have had something to do with waiting until the family was more grown up. It might also mean Elizabeth herself was very young.

It should be noted that there were a number of Warburton families in Bowdon, some apparently unrelated to each other so having the name Warburton in common does not in itself imply a close relationship.

Elizabeths baptised at Bowdon in the relevant timeframe are:

- The daughter of James of Altrincham baptised on September 17th 1702, is possible, but a little old. However if Thomas of Sinderland is the son of Thomas of Hale, then James would be his brother.
- The daughter of John of Altrincham baptised on June 15th 1711, would be 27 when Bancroft was born. This John would not be a brother of Thomas, because although there is evidence of a brother John he probably died in 1695.
- The daughter of George of Dunham baptised on August 31st 1712, would be 26 when Bancroft was born. No likely wedding has been found for George. As with John, Thomas's brother of that name was dead by this time. He did also have an uncle George but if he had a family it was not in the Bowdon area.
- The daughter of William of Hale baptised on April 10th 1717, would be 21 when Bancroft was born. This William is probably the one who married Mary Dawson in 1707 when both were described as of Baguely. Their first child was baptised before the wedding, and in subsequent baptisms the children are described as the children of William of Hale. There is some evidence for Thomas having a brother William in that his brother Aaron acquired some land on behalf of a William in 1702. This William could not have been Aaron's son due to age; Aaron didn't marry until 1694.
- The daughter of Josiah of Timperley baptised on June 6th 1721, would be 17 when Bancroft was born. There is an argument for Josiah being brother to Thomas based on his name. It is known Josiah was born around 1691 from his age at death. His parents had been married over 20 years by this time so he would have to be one of the youngest. However, by this time Thomas's uncle Josiah had become a significant figure being a leader of the non-conformist movement, and bailiff on the Hale estates of Lady Lucy Crewe. The name becomes quite frequent in the family after this time. However it must be noted there is another Josiah of unknown origin in the parish at this time.

None of the above Elizabeths was buried as a child, and only two other marriages involving an Elizabeth occurred in the period up to the marriage of Elizabeth to John Bancroft in 1749, or for 15 years afterwards. One is the remarriage of the widow of Josiah of Timperley, and so can be discounted. The other was in 1738 to Robert Thorley. Also the IGI doesn't have any other likely Elizabeths baptised nearby.

John Bancroft's will provides circumstantial evidence that he was the father of Bancroft Warburton, and that he later married his mother. The Elizabeth who went to live in Prescot before being buried in Bowdon offers a suggestion of a link between the two Bancrofts.

If William of Widnes is Bancroft's son then unless John Bancroft himself, or one of his ancestors, was the illegitimate son of a Warburton, he cannot be Bancroft's father according to the DNA evidence. The closeness of the DNA match makes it unlikely that such an illegitimacy took place very much before. More likely Bancroft's father was a Warburton. This raises 2 questions, who was he, and did John Bancroft know.

As to the latter we can only guess, though if he did know then it implies he was prepared to claim paternity to hide a greater scandal, implying Elizabeth and the father were closely related.

For the former the only clue is geography. On Bancroft's baptism his parents are described as from Sinderland which is where Mary Bancroft's family farmed. By 1738

both Mary's father and eldest brother were dead. Her mother Pheobe was running the farm on behalf of her remaining son John. John was baptised on May 27th 1725, so would be not yet 13 when Bancroft was conceived. It is just possible, and certainly a scandal if true.

More probably the DNA match is proof that William of Widnes is not Bancroft's son, but until a descendant of Bancroft is tested the possibility of a deeper scandal remains.