

The Fletcher Family Of Lancashire

The earliest records of this family are those of James Fletcher plasterer, who died in 1673 and was buried in the churchyard of St Peter's Church, Burnley. There were Fletchers in Burnley many years before that date but they cannot be definitely linked to James.

James had a son John who was christened at St Peter's Church on the 25th August 1661. The parish register describes him as "John, son of James Fletcher" but as was usual at that time no name of his mother is entered. John married Elizabeth Whittam about 1680 and surviving parish records show that they had at eleven children, including twins named Adam and Eve. Their youngest child was John, born in 1700 and who earned his living as a chapman (pedlar). His will of which a transcription will be published on this website revealed fascinating details of early 18th century life as well as giving details of his relatives.

John (the second) married Elizabeth Heyworth at St Mary's Church, Whalley on 3rd January 1735 and it is recorded that he had five children, including one baptised at St Peter's Church but entered in the parish record without a forename. John himself died aged 55 in 1755 but must have been in poor health for some time as his will, drawn up in 1753, stated that he was then "sound in mind but weak in body". His first child, also named John, was born in 1737, the year after their marriage and he is currently one of the most important Fletchers in this family history as it is his sons who are the ancestors of distant cousins alive today whose characteristics in common, include the fact that some of their joints are unusually hypermobile or "double jointed".

John the third was a farmer and he married Mary Whitaker, heiress of Robert Whitaker of Healey Hall in 1759. The record of their marriage in the parish registers of St Peter's Church, Burnley is shown on this website. The parish registers record fifteen children, only two of whom failed to survive to adulthood. For each baptism the parish register records "son (or daughter) of John Fletcher of Ightenhill Park so it seems that although Mary had inherited the Healey estate and a farm at Gatefield (or Yatefield) she and John continued to live at Ightenhill.

The Healey estate was in Habergham Eaves and ownership passed to John and Mary's first son, John the fourth (1760). Whether he ever lived there is unknown although Dr Thomas Dunham Whitaker, Vicar of Whalley and author of "The History of Whalley parish" records him as a worsted manufacturer of Habergham Eaves. He died aged 36 in 1796. Dr Whitaker states that John the fourth sold the Healey Estate in 1787 but this fact is challenged by the Chetham Society who state

that the estate passed to his daughter Ann who conveyed it to her husband James Roberts and that it was sold to P.E.Towneley in 1826.

John and Mary's second son was Nicholas, born in 1762. He inherited the farm of Gatefield/Yatefield, originally under the ownership of Mary's father Robert Whitaker. Yet their third son, Robert Fletcher, born two years was employed as a boatman on the coal barges of the canal and was still working into extreme old age.

Until a few years ago it was believed that the double-jointedness recognised in the Fletchers first occurred either in John Fletcher the third or his wife Mary Whitaker. More recently posts made to the Lancashire Fletchers mailing list and messages left at Fletcher websites have revealed hypermobility in Fletcher descendants tracing back to Lancashire but not always to the family at Ightenhill. It is now believed that the condition first occurred in the ancestors of the Ightenhill family and there were Fletchers in the Burnley area when parish registers were first commenced in 1538. To date a link has not been proved between them and James the plasterer but it is believed that he was the James born in 1608 to Roberte Fletcher. Roberte was born in 1573 and was a son of James Fletcher born about 1550.

Information on the lax joints of the Fletchers can be found by clicking on "Information for Fletcher Descendants" in the Albums which can be reached by clicking "Albums" in the left hand margin.

Related websites are

The Double Jointed Fletchers of Burnley

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/lancs/fletchers/index.phtml>

The Double Jointed Fletchers of Lancashire and London

<http://business.thisisbuckinghamshire.co.uk/london/fletchers/index.phtml?pollaction=results&qid=168>

The Lancashire Fletchers Mailing List

<http://www.yahoo.com/group/LancashireFletchers/>

To see descendants of James Fletcher the plasterer who died in 1673 enter his name in the search boxes in the left-hand margin and then click the "Descendants" tab.