

STOCKDENS IN PRE-PRO RECORDS

So, we know that the records can be full of errors - often due to the different accents in the different areas of the country. How do we get around the problem?. Well, in 1837 the government of the day introduced the then new idea of registering all births, marriages and deaths, rather than leave it to the local priest of the multitude of churches of differing religions. This change of policy would cover those that were not religious and had therefore no records made of their life or death. As I understand it the government made two mistakes. Firstly, that the person making the record would have to pay for the event to be recorded and secondly, the act of registering the event was not made a legal necessity until about 1876. By then of course many people were quite used to not having registered their marriage or child's birth or even a death and continued not to bother.

Records have been lost or destroyed and for the common person it is therefore difficult to trace a family beyond the early 1700's. Some events, such as a birth, or baptism, were recorded by people who were travelling, perhaps to a new country, but the baptism record would only show the parents and the named new child. No background, no future, only a very brief present. For example on 26 October 1843, the baptism of William, son of William and Ann STOCKDEN took place in St Peter's, Liverpool. Were they going abroad? There the evidence ends as no other Stockden could be found in Lancashire at that time. There was one in Birkenhead, across the water from Liverpool. In 1859, Bathsbeba Stockden, daughter of John Stockden, a farmer, married William Taylor, a gentleman, son of William Taylor, solicitor. Her address was given as Liverpool and 'residence at time of marriage'. I have been to the Liverpool records office but found nothing of these people as they were named. There was a number of Stocktons in Liverpool up to about 1850 but I could not relate them to earlier Stockden in nearby Cheshire or the possible ones in Lancashire.

We can get some interesting details about a few Stockden. In London in 1698, a John Stockden, victualler, was robbed and murdered in Grub Street. An account of this event was written by William Smythies, and of the discovery of the murderers, by the several dreams of Elizabeth, wife of T Greenwood. The original book in the British Library is too fragile to be allowed out. So it appears impossible to find out what family that John Stockden might have had!!

Again in London, in 1641, another John Stockden, (yeoman), wrote of the 'Seven women confessors, or a discovery of the seven white divils which lived at Queen Street in Coven-Garden.....Katherine Wels, Susan Baker, Anne Parker, Katherine Smith, Elinor Hall, Mary Jones and Dorathy (l.n.u.) The spelling of 'divils' and 'Coven-Garden' is as given to me by a very reliable genealogist. Perhaps 'Coven' as in witches is the Covent Garden of today's London. (1)

I, and friends on my behalf, have searched widely for Stockden in such places as the Record Series publications, Pipe Rolls and Patent Rolls. This one was extremely interesting:

1 March 1582. Grant for life to Richard Stockden, an ordinary gunner, now serving at Portsmouth, of wages of 6d per day.(2). This is payable quarterly by the exchequer, as from Michaelmas, 15 Eliz. The wage was granted to R Stockden (among others) by warrant (among others) by warrant of 24 Jan., 33 Henry VIII, but owing to

non-renewal of the warrant has not been paid since 3 Eliz. At his suit and for his good services in France, Scotland and Ireland.

Footnote:

(1) Printed for John Smith (1642) Series title: Early English books, 1641-1700: E.134, No:15.UCSD Central Micro F 524 Current Periodical Microform. (My thanks to Brian Randell for this)

(2) Two and a half pence of today's (1990's) money.

Occasionally, I came across the odd record which was not included in the IGI. Sadly no further details can be found, although I wondered how the original contributor had access to the information. For instance:

Marriage of Stockden & Lankton in 1550, 78 Greenford, Middlesex. To be found in the Middlesex Parish Reg Vol 1909. No hope of adding to the family tree there!

J H Stockden - found in Hill's History of Market Harborough (page 520) referring to Nicol's History of the County of Leicester. No date, so a hopeless case to research. I wrote to the Leicester Records Office and they could not find it.

In Essex, from 1630's to 1650's, the Reverend Ralph Josselin of Earls Colne, maintained a diary in which was mentioned one Mr Stockden. I went to school in this village from 1944 to 1948 and there was a Stockden family near there at that time. Richard (1894) Stockden had moved there from South Wales. In older times a family of Stockden lived at Kelvedon, some three to four miles from Earls Colne.

Very few records are available in which 'common' folk can be found further back than the mid-1500's, certainly not as sufficiently detailed as would be needed for the purposes of family history. A number of old wills survive because they were taken to the Consistory Courts for probate. These would probably list some relations of the deceased person who made the will

The only known example of an old Stockden will is on the opposite page. In June 1585 Thomas Stockden left this will. Old English writing is in itself difficult enough to read, but the use of quill pens demanded a style of writing that makes the deciphering of the message even more difficult. The following is as much as I could understand:

" The Will of THOMAS STOCKDEN of THEM St., LONDON Dated 1585 AD"

"In the name of God Amen, the 8th June 1585, I, Thomas Stockden, this my last will and testament in manner and torment fall on my trust. I bequeath my soul unto the hands of the Almighty who hath made me and all the whole world. I trust to be saved by the saviour of my saviour who hath redeemed me and all mankind and hath set me at liberty by God only our suffering on the cross and as for my body that I commit to the earth from whence it came. " Then it becomes too difficult with a few exceptions. He had a wife Katherine, a brother Germane (?), sisters, Ann Beaumont (?), Dorothe, Betty and Olive (?). His sister's daughter, Elizabeth Ann Beaumont (?). With the exception of 'ten pounds' to various people he appears to leave "all things whatsoever, such as money and household stuff (1), and anything else" to his wife.(2).

He also mentions an Edward, who may have been a member of a company whose

name was unreadable. Abbreviations and symbols were much in evidence too.

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