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Early Documents Relating to
Hill Cliff, Warrington,
Chiefly Communicated by O. KNOTT, Manchester
[with notes by the Editor].

Minute at Hexham, 21 July, 1652, by Thomas Tillam.

“ **A** T my desire and testimonial of my wife, as a member of the church of Christ in Cheshire, they gave her the right hand of fellowship.”

Records of . . . Fenstanton, Warboys, Hexham, page 290.

I think that Hill Cliff may have been called the church in Cheshire, since it included the Baptists of Frodsham and Runcorn, at both of which places we hear of members. The Baptists were at that time found all along the Cheshire side of the Mersey. In those days Warrington was closely associated with Liverpool, not so much with Manchester, the road being bad.

Open Letters from Hexham, and reply.

[On 23 August 1653, Hugh Hesloppe, baptized 15 December 1652, was given an open commendation to all the churches of Christ. On 11 September 1654, Elizabeth received a similar letter. Ibid. pages 291, 292, 332, 365. These were evidently honoured by the church in Cheshire. On 26th day of the 4th month 1654, a letter was sent from Warrington by this church, signed by William Booth and eight other men who can be identified by their wills. Ibid. page 359.]

Register of Daniel Dunbavand's Marriage 1656, February 19.

Daniel Dunbaven of Warrington Draper son

of John Dunbaven of the same place deceased and Elizabeth Wigan of Manchester daughter of John Wigan of the same Clerke were married at Manchester. Witness. John Wigan, John Maddocks.

Several families of this name are found both in Warrington and Liverpool in the sixteenth century. Anthony Dunbabin, a woollen draper of the former town died in 1597. A hundred years later the name became Donbavand. The name does not appear in Mr. H. Harrison's excellent "Dictionary of Surnames," but on reference he replied, "I should say that it is almost certainly Gaelic in which case the first element would be the Gaelic "dun" a hill, and the second element might be Gaelic "babhunn" (plural sometimes babhainn) a rampant, bulwark.

On 12 April 1639 Thomas Dunbabin of Warrington married Ellen Leigh of Runcorn and on August 8 of the next year John Dunbabin married Jane Widdows also of Runcorn.

There were two Samuel Dunbabins (contemporary) who suffered fines under the Acts of Charles II., one a Baptist and the other a Friend.

The last of the family so far as Baptists were concerned was Thomas Donvaband a surgeon in Warrington who married Ellen Brooks daughter of Alderman John Brooks, Mayor of Liverpool (1747). They had no issue.

The Family of Morris.

Unfortunately, little information has been preserved respecting this family who took such a prominent part in establishing the Baptist cause at Hill Cliff. They had settled in this suburb of Warrington before the dawn of the seventeenth century when "William Morris of Grappenhall, gent," appears among local residents. At the Visitation of Cheshire held in 1613 the Herald of Richard St. George Norroy,

King of Arms by public proclamation at the Cross in Chester disclaimed Mr. Morris's right (among others) to be styled Esquire and included him among those who were not entitled to a coat of arms.

Mr. J. Paul Rylands, editor of the Harleian Society publications wrote in respect of this action: "Sometimes the heralds were very arbitrary and disclaimed worthy yeomen who never claimed such distinctions."

This William Morris died in 1634 leaving, it would appear, his youngest son of the same name a child of a few years of age. It was only likely that Emmanuel College, Cambridge, should be chosen for young William Morris, since a Lancashire man, Dr. Laurence Chaderton its first master, had there established a strong Puritan influence.

Register of William Morris's Marriage.

1658 June 10. William Morris of Manchester Clerke and Lydia Wigan daughter of John Wigan Clerke married at Manchester by John Harrison, Minister at Ashton-under-Lyne. Witness, John Wigan, Edward Gathorne, &c &c.

John Wigan, Clerk.

[He ought to figure as the hero of a romance. He was an episcopal clergyman, who became Baptist and founded the church at Manchester. He was also Colonel of the Guards to Cromwell, having cleared Lancashire of royalists before the Scottish invasion of 1652. Opposing Cromwell's desire to be king, he retired from the army & returned to watch over Baptist interests in south Lancashire; but was commissioned again after Cromwell's death in 1658.]

Will of William Morris, M.A., extract.

25th December 1662. Will of William Morris of Grappenhall in the County of Chester.

To my brother John Morris £100 in money to be paid within two years after my decease. And whereas there is a debt of £100 owing to me by John Herron of Gorton County Lancaster, I give the same to Edward Rowe, Mary Rowe and James Rowe sons and daughter of my brother-in-law Edward Rowe of Scotland House near Newton Heath, County Lancaster equally. Remainder of all kinds of property to my wife Lidia Morris. Executors. Robert Roscove of Bolton, co. Lancs. Chapman, and Richard Davies of Woolston. Witnesses: Daniell Donbavand, John Naylor, Jeremiah Legh, Henry Cockson.

Proved 4th Marth 1662-3 by Lydia Morris before William Seddon Rector of Grappenhall who, in company with Thomas Bradshawe of Lymm, Clerk, was deputed to receive the oaths.

Memorial Brass in the Parish Church.

HIC JACET CORPUS GULIELMI MORRIS DE GRAPENHALL
 IN AGRO CESTRIANSI GENEROSI NECNON ARTIUM
 MAGISTRI E COLLEGIO EMANUELIS CANTABRIGIÆ
 QUI EX HAC VITA DISCESSIT VICESSIMO SECUNDO
 DIE FEBRUARIJ ANNO ÆRÆ CHRISTIANÆ MDC
 LXII SUÆ ÆTATIS TRICESSIMO
 Coelum animam eripuit jacet hoc sub marmore corpus
 Perpetuum nomen circulus orbis habet.

Entries of Burials at Grappenhall.

1662-3 February 26 Mr William Morris of Grapnall gentleman

1663 April 27 Mr Morris his daughter unbaptized

1663 October 3 Mr John Morris of Grapnall gentleman

Lease of 1661 and sub-lease of 1663.

[On February 2 1660-1, William Morris of Grappenhall granted a lease of land at Stockton to Peter Daintith of Stockton for the lives of Peter Daintith (died 1663), William son of William Middleton

(died 1663), and Mary sister of Peter Daintith (died 1699). The consideration was 2/- a year and a man to work the harvest. On June 3 1663 Peter granted a sub-lease to Peter Clare of Hatton for 90 years if his term proved so long.] The Lease by William Morris is witnessed by Nicholas Hough, Thomas Dunbabin, Richard Middleton, John Leigh & John Marshall.

Deed of 1663 by John Morris.

[John having succeeded to William as freeholder, and two of the lives being extinct, John on 23 September granted the reversion to Thomas Millington of Appleton, gent., and Wm. Rowlinson of Burtonwood, yeoman, and their heirs. On the falling in of the third life, the ground] "shall be used and employed and shall continue remayne and bee for the use of a Buriall place for all such person and persons and those people which are comonly called Anabaptists with such other of the Congregratonall people way, or persons as shall desire to bury their dead there being in the said Counties of Cheshire and Lancashire or either of them for ever. And concerning the house, housing and building upon the land it was declared that the same was to be converted to such use and uses as by the said Thomas Millington and William Rowlinson and their heirs should be thought meet for time to time for ever." Witnesses to trust deed, Jo Wigan, Lydia Morris, John Heawood, Jo Wigan junr. Henry Cockson.

[Thomas Cockson and Richard Midleton were appointed attorneys to take seizin and hand over. On 23 September they did take seizin and give it. Richard Caldwell, personal tenant, then attorned and gave sixpence as token. Witnesses: John Wigan Junior, W. Booth, W. Cowper of Appleton, Richard Latchford (both signing by marks). Signed also by

Hy. Cockson and Richard Middleton, attorneys. Richard Caldwell made attornment as above.]

Mary Daintith and Peter Clare were evidently members of the Baptist community, and took the lease in order to be in possession prior to the execution of this trust deed; a purely legal compliance.

The beginning of burials; diary of Matthew Henry.

Mrs Hannah Amery, my children's schoolmistress died on the 2d. December 1709. She was an Anabaptist, but in constant communion with us [at Chester]. She was a very truly good woman. She was ready in the scriptures, and delighted in good discourse. On the 6th I attended her funeral, out of town, towards Hill Cliff, the Anabaptist burying-place, near Warrington, where her father was the first who was buried, &c. Life, edition 1841, I.123.

Comments by the Editor.

[Beamont's History of Appleton, 1877, asserts that William Morris senior had leased the land; no proof is offered; it is improbable. It also wrongly dates these deeds as 1660 or earlier. The object of this study is to nail down modern inaccuracies & to present contemporary evidence. Beamont is very inaccurate, as the editor has verified in many details; moreover he calls Roger Holland the martyr of 1558 a Baptist, forgetting that "he caused master Rose to baptize his said child in his own house." Beamont is only named here to show that he has not been overlooked. There is another assertion that the church met sometimes] at premises of Richard Davies in Woolston just outside Warrington in Lancashire, and sometimes at the barn of William Morris senior at Hill Cliff on the Cheshire side of the Mersey. [This is quite probable in itself, for there are other instances of churches preferring the borders of two counties so as to evade the magistrates of either. And the next

pieces of evidence heighten the probability. The law as to conventicles in 1663 was that of Elizabeth, under which John Bunyan feared a sentence of death, which was actually passed on several Baptists at Aylesbury. This so revolted the popular feeling, that a new Conventicle Act was passed in 1664, toning down the penalties.]

Baptists still suspected in 1663.

In the letter book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall Wigan, a reference to the plot of the Independents includes the names of Mr. Ditchfield and Sergeant Will Booth, both living in Warrington.

Will of John Morris of Grappenhall, gentleman.

10 September 1663. After leaving various pecuniary legacies To the two children of my uncle Davies of Woolston by my aunt Elizabeth £10. To my sister-in-law Mrs. Lydia Morris £30 and all my apparel, linen, woollen to be at her disposal. To my friend Mr. John Wigan the younger [her brother] £10. To the children of Mr. Daniel Donbavand of Warrington [and Elizabeth, sister of John and Lydia] £10. Executors. My brother-in-law Mr Edward Rowe, my uncles Mr. Robert Roscove of Bolton and Mr. Richard Davies of Woolston. Witnesses: Jo. Wigan Junior. Richard Middleton. Henry Cockson. I expect £40 or £50 to be expended and laid out in and about my funeral in my decent homebringing. Witnesses to a codicil: Lydia Morris. Jo. Wigan jun.

[26 July 1664. Will proved at Chester. Inventory £387: 16: 8 appraised by John Heawood and Thomas Yates.]

Presentations of 27 August 1664.

Conventicle in the house of Richard Davies, Wooston or Poulton. Hugh Haslop, Warrington, apothecary. John Seddon, Burtonwood, husbandman.

Thomas Holland, Budworth, husbandman. Ralph Earlom, Poulton, webster. John Barrow, Poulton, webster.

The Earliest Tombstone found by the Editor.

Maria: Heslopp

Exit: Febr: 18

1664

The New Conventicle Act.

In August 1665 Peter Legh made a raid upon a conventicle in Woolston and hurried off the preacher "who denyed to give his name" to his uncle Sir Henry Sclater. This unlawful gathering was held in the house of Richard Davies. The following names were taken:—Hugh Haslope, Warrington (Apothecary) John Seaden of Burton Wood [Threatened to rescue if taken without warrant under hand and seale] John Barrow Ralph Earlom both linen websters. Thomas Holland Thomas Holland's wife John Sadon and wife Margaret Spruse Elis Spruse Jane Murey, of Warrington, widow. "Another woman who I know not" "A smale boy, whom I know not" The number being with the speaker, 13.

The Family of Seddon otherwise Sedan.

More than one family of this name were associated with Hill Cliff Church during the time of persecution. When the Baptist conventicle at the house of Richard Davies outside Warrington was raided John Seaden of Burton Wood and another entered in the charge as John Saden with his wife were of the assembly.

Their surname was derived from the ancestral home since their forebears had come from Sedan. That town on the Meuse had long been famous for its manufacture of woollen goods, and Flemish clothiers had two centuries before begun to settle in Bolton

and Rochdale where they introduced wooden clogs and jannock or oatmeal loaves.

And as a matter of fact, though hardly found elsewhere, the names which finally became "Seddon" was common in South East Lancashire.

Proceedings in the Bishop's Court.

Records at Abbey Gate, Chester. Cited as *Anabaptists*, 1665:—James Winterbottom, John Ditchfield, John Morres, Ann Bent, William Booth, John Ditchfield Junr, Robert Massey, Samuel Dunbabin, (Anabaptists). John Barron, Samuel Dunbabin, John Crowchley, Susanna Crowchley, Brian Sixsmith (Quakers).

Cited in Bishops Court as *Anabaptists*, 1666:—James Winterbottom and his wife, John Ditchfield and his wife, Jane Murray, Anna Bent, Hugh Hisleop, William Booth, Samuel Dunbabin, William Savory, Thomas Whipham, John Nichols, John Ditchfield Junr, Robert Marsh.

Comments by A. Mounfield, "Warrington Nonconformity."

"The names of Ditchfield, Winterbottom, Savory, Pickering, Booth occur repeatedly as unyielding Anabaptists and those of Brian Sixsmith, Dunbabin, Cocken and Smith as Quakers, and they are fined year after year. In 1674 a mixed batch were brought before the Bishop for refusing to pay a Church 'ley,' imposed to raise money for the repair of the Church. The list reads, John Gibson (3^d) John Winterbottom 4^d, John Burrows 3^d Thom Whitehouse 1/- W^m Booth 1/-, Samuel Dunbabin (Quaker) 6^d Samuel Dunbabin, Anabaptist 4^d, Maria Cocker 4^d, John Sandiforth 4/- Rich Richardson 8^d.

From Winwick & Ashton, Edward Winstanley, Roger Lowe Junr, Peter Lealand, John Robinson, John Marsh of Ashton (in Makerfield) for not coming to Church.

From Croft & Risley, Richard Birchall of Croft, Jacob Pilling, Catherine Smith, Richard Lythgoe, Thomas Lythgoe, John Withington, George Boydell.

William Aspinwall of Crofts for preaching at Conventicles or unlawful meetings.

Five others from Riseley appear against a charge of not bringing their infants to be christened. They were

John Bate, W^m Middleton, Charles Higinson, George Boydell, Geo Monkes."

The next Stones dated.

Joshua Seddon 1672

Here lyeth the body of [Joseph?] Witter son of John Witter interred ye 10 Aug 1676.

[Copied by J. Owen thirty years ago. The Witter stone, in the judgment of Earwaker, was the earliest which had not been tampered with. The illegible Christian name is supplied by the editor from the will.]

Evidence from the Civil Courts.

Warrington men presented at Quarter Sessions 1675 for not coming to Divine Service being Paptists or Anabaptists:—John Burrows, Thomas Whitham, Marie his wife, Hugh Crosby, Hannah Crosby, John Pickering, William Booth, Thomas Turbitt, Alecia Southworth, Maria Southworth, John Pinnington, Joseph Smith, Tabitha Smith, John Oldham, Ann Holcroft, Jacob Wright, John Ditchfield, Thomas Pape, Catherine Halton, Jeremiah Tomkinson, Brian Sixsmith, Eliz his wife, William Sixsmith, Ana Holcroft, Nathan Smith, John Allen, Sam^l Dunbabin a Quaker, and wife, Sam^l Dunbabin, Anabaptist, John Wilson, John Dichfield Maria his wife, Eliz Barnes, Ric^d Richardson, Thomas Hall, Hannah his wife, Richard Barnes & wife, Nathan Abram, Richard Rachburne, John Leech of Church St, Richard

Nichols, Margaret Leigh, Sam^l Leech, Sam^l Lathom, Peter Peake. All fined 2/6.

Form of excommunication passed on some of them August 29, 1675 and March 3rd 1676.

Rich^d Richardson said to have been previously proceeded against in the High Court in 1674.

The visitation of 1677 gives the usual batch of Anabaptists:—W^m Booth, John Ditchfield sen, John Ditchfield Jun^r, John Pickering, Samuel Dunbabin.

In 1678 the leading Warrington Nonconformists are fined half a crown each for not coming to Sacrament. [Mr. Mounfield gives long list].

Early Tombstones corroborated by Wills.

John Witter / died the 10th / Avgvst / 1679 /

Elizabeth S / eddon the wife / of Joshua Seddo /
N[ovember] 1679 /

[These are only copied from Beaumont's Appleton, pages 49, 50, and were sought in vain by the editor on two visits. But the wills of both are extant; John was of Cheshire, Elizabeth of Withington, doubtless in Cheshire. So also with another, which has been strangely overlooked, but which the editor found:—]

Here lyeth the body / of Thomas Naylor / who
departed this / Life Avgvst the 18 / ano dni 1684 /
HN SN /

Five more Inscriptions at third-hand, per O.K.

Here lieth the / body / of Katherine / wife of
William / Hall of Newton / who was buried / the
of Febru / ry 16 3 /

Here lyeth the body, of / William Batho / of
Chester / who died Nov 17 168 /

Here lyeth / the body / of / John Witter / of Nether-
ton / who deceased / February, the / second 1688 /

Here lyeth the body / of Dorothy Jones / of
Frodsham / who was interred the 10 June / 1692 /

Here lyeth the body, / of Elizabeth the widow /

of John Witter of Netherton / who was interred Oct 21
1692 /

Two pillars of the church.

Ebenezer Fabivs 1691

[He was a Dutch immigrant, a token of the new dynasty which gave the Toleration Act. His family settled in Liverpool, retaining their membership here. The pastor of Hill Cliff was Thomas Lowe, a husbandman of Coppull, who often got into trouble with Bradshaigh at Haigh; he persistently declined to pay fines, & returned to his work directly he was out of prison. He often visited Wrexham, where there was a pedobaptist pastor, to baptize members of his mixed church; Wrexham notes his presence in 1665. He twice went to the Assembly in London, 1689 and 1692. He had the joy of seeing the old premises of Morris replaced by a regular meeting-house erected on the ground, and certified, not to the bishop but to the Quarter Sessions at Chester on 17 April 1694. Within two years he died near Burton, and his stone, now partly illegible, reads:—]

Here lyeth y^e body / of the faithfvll / and [emine]nt
ser / vant [of Christ] Thomas / Lowe Pastor of the /
Baptist Congrega / tion [at] Warrington / who di[ed] at
Dra]ke / ley y^e [21 Feby. 1695 &c]

[A few months later, Manchester as well as Liverpool claimed its right of burial, and we find:—]

[Here] lyeth the / [body, of] Sarah wife / of John
Pycroft / of Manchester / bvried the 7th / of Avgst
1696 / the 56 year / of her age /

A few interesting memorials.

[There is a stone to the memory of Hannah Amery 1709, whose funeral was attended by Matthew Henry. Also another to Hannah Fabius of Liverpool who died June the 7th 1709, after taking a great part in establishing the cause there. Daniel Slater of Ley-

land, who had been Elder of the Barnoldswick church, was buried February, 1725/6. Thomas Dunbabin in 1759 showed the persistence of the family religion. A London family, who had settled about 1683, kept up their ties even longer:—

Here lyeth the /body of mr Row /land Hall of Lach /ford who Departed /this Life on the 3rd /of ian^{ry} 1722 in ye /75th year of his /Age / William Hall his Son /was interred A D 1717 / Mary Higginson / Daughter of W^m Hall /and Widow of Rich^d / Higginson of Warrington /died 27th June 1811 /Aged 87 Years /

Pycroft of Manchester 1714.

Here Lys ye body /of Elizabeth pycroft /who dyd Decembr /22 1714 /

[The accuracy of that statement can be verified by seeing her will at Chester, which has been duly calendared by the Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society. But the last line was first improved into **1522** 1714. Then it was copied into printed books without the 1714. And within the last few years it has been very neatly made to read, 14th **1522** age 14. There are evidently some local people with a taste for antiquity; it is a pity they did not stop with adding a 5 instead of 15; that would have proved that the Britons were Baptist in 522 before the English came. It would not be very hard to show when the legend started of 1522; it had not arisen in 1819, when an article in the Baptist Magazine names 1663 as the earliest date then known for the church's existence.]

Simson of Chester 1719.

[This cemetery was now famous for Baptists, though at Liverpool the Fabius family provided another, while Brassey Green, Mottram, Warford also had little God's acres. A merchant-pastor of Chester

was laid to rest here, and a learned inscription keeps his memory alive:—]

M.S. / Samuelis Simson. / Cestriensis Viri Oblin-
dolis / et Morvm Facilitatem / Omnibus Nec Immerito
/ Chari Civis Spectatæ Fidei / Mercatoris Seduli et
Probi / Mariti Olim Dilecti Admodum / At Nunc Heu
Desiderati / Christiani Denique Non Nisi / Subselli.
Qui in Christo Placide / Obdormivit Die VII mo.
Martii / A.D. 1719, ætat Svæ 59 / Posuit Mœrens
Uxor. Ejus / Ex. Parte Tantum Superstes /

Winterbottom of Coldhouse.

[The name Winterbottom has occurred in many documents. Lawsuits of 1876 and 1877 caused careful research to be made for many generations back, with the following result:—]

Elizabeth Winterbottom, married—Moult of Manchester, and had four children, Emmanuel, Susannah, William, John, all being taught in 1748. John was in Brazenose Street 1788, was trustee of Coldhouse Baptist chapel; his will was proved 17 September 1803.

James Winterbottom her brother married Sarah Bent. He was a smallware manufacturer and pin-maker in Cable street, Manchester. He was also pastor of Coldhouse [qualifying at Quarter Sessions 1724, died May, 1759]. Will dated 30 June 1755, proved 1764. Two children: Nathaniel, trustee of Coldhouse 1748, died without issue 20 March 1788, and:—

John Winterbottom, married Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Greaves. In 1748, with his brother, trustee of Coldhouse. Died 17 December 1764, will proved next year. Five children; Nathaniel, James, & another, died unmarried: Elizabeth (1756-1787) married Joseph Priestley who pre-deceased her, and left three children who all died unmarried; also:—

John Winterbottom M.D. (1758-1826). Married

(a) Ann Withers, who died December 1789 leaving a daughter who died unmarried, (b) Ann Townsend of Newbury on 21 September 1799. She died 26 September 1840. They had eight children who died unmarried, also:—

John Frederick Winterbottom, married Jane Charlotte, baroness Weld. He died 3 December 1868, intestate as to large estates in Manchester, Leeds, Huddersfield, Hants and Berks.

[There is at Hill Cliff a large tombstone with a short and very legible inscription:—]

Here Lies the Remains of / James Winterbottom of Manchester / [The editor formerly supposed this to commemorate the pastor of Coldhouse; but Mr. Knott shows good reason to believe that he was buried in that chapel, and suggests that this is for his grandson of Brazenose Street, who died in 1801 away from home.]

John Leeds of Manchester.

A note in last volume, page 256, is supplemented by Mr. Knott. At St. John's College, Cambridge, there is an entry that John Leeds junior was admitted sizar, not earlier than 1666. "John Leeds, born at Manchester, Lancashire, son of John Leeds, gent. School, Manchester (Mr. Wiggan). Admitted sizar for Mr. Ashton, tutor and surety Mr. Verdon. 2 July. act. 17." The school of John Wigan junior was probably at Gorton. It is rather puzzling how Leeds senior could send his lad to Cambridge, just then, with all the fierce legislation against dissent. It had been easy before 1660, and William Morris had graduated from Emmanuel; at this period he was conveying the land at Hill Cliff for Baptist burials. But John Leeds is not on record as a Baptist till 1672, when he took out a license for his house. From other sources we know that the preacher was Edward Gathorne, of a Kendal family, and Mr. Knott suggests that his adhesion was due to a debate of 1650 when Thomas Taylor upheld the Baptist cause in Kendal Parish church. John Leeds was buried 26 October 1691, and his son John, a doctor of physick, 19 November 1695; Mary Leeds, widow, 16 March 1703. Owen MSS., xxii, 70; xlv, 88.