

THE TWO WIVES OF ROBERT WHITNEY, ESQ., LORD OF WHITNEY: ADDITIONAL NOTES

by *Adrian Benjamin Burke*¹

ABSTRACT

This note supplements my article in the previous issue (pp.350-357), with additional evidence for a Robert Whitney, son of Robert, Lord of Whitney. See also corrections on p.450 of this issue.

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In my previous article (Burke, 2008, p.354) I presented my discovery of a previously unidentified son of Robert, Lord of Whitney, his namesake Robert Whitney, and cited Ward & Doyle (2006) for the identification of this younger son as founder of the Castleton branch of the family. Further research and analysis strengthens this identification.

The only known document that explicitly mentions Robert, son of Robert, Lord of Whitney, is a deed dating from 1512.² From this we know that the lord of Whitney's younger son held land in Clifford Parish with several local gentlemen, including Simon Milbourne, Esq., John Breynton (husband of Milbourne's daughter Sybil) and William Wallwyn (no doubt a scion of the ancient Hereford family).³ An exhaustive search of records in the National Library of Wales Aberystwyth, the Herefordshire Record Office and the UK National Archives has not yielded any further explicit reference to this younger Robert Whitney.

The earliest Whitney of Castleton was Robert (I) who had sons Robert (II) and most likely Thomas, d.s.p. Robert (I) was born in the mid to late 1460s and held lands of the lord of Whitney in Pencombe and Clifford.⁴ As his son and grandsons were described as gentlemen, Robert (I) most likely was of the same – if not conceivably a

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² Burke (2008) p.354, footnote 16.

³ Milbourne and Breynton, inter alios were made feoffees of the lordship of Whitney, 22 December 1505, according to the register of Richard Mayhew, Bishop of Hereford (1504-1516): <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/melocki/diocese/Bishops.html>

Elizabeth [v. Thomas ap Roger, second wife of Robert, Lord of Whitney] Whytteney widow, by her attorney, against Simon Milborn esquire, John Braynton gentilmou, Simon Hearynge & James Scudmore in a plea: that together with Robert Whitteneys son and heir of James Whitteneys, Thomas Morton clerk and Thomas ap Robert chaplain they present a suitable parson to the church of Pencombe which is vacant and is in their gift. And they did not attend and it was ordered to the sheriff to summon them and the sheriff now ordered that they be summoned etc; The judge attached them that they be here on St.Hillary's Day in fifteen days etc. TNA: Plea Rolls, De Banco; CP40/970 Michaelmas Term 1504 membrane 250 face. Available online at: <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/> CP40/970 (1504), image no. 515f. [This item was discovered and translated by Michael A Faraday - ABB]

⁴ Robert (I)'s estimated birth date is based on the fact his grandson Nicholas was of age when Robert (II) died in 1555 requiring Robert (II) to have been born by say 1500. Robert (I)'s birth could have been as late as 1475, but; after the lord of Whitney's eldest son James's birth in say 1462 implying a birth range of 1463-1474.

higher – social rank. In two pedigrees, Robert (I) is shown as the father of Robert (II) but Robert (I)'s parents and wife are never evidenced.⁵

Ward & Doyle (2006) described the most recent, albeit implied, mention of Robert (I) in John Whitney of Westminster's 1676 pedigree recorded by the College of Arms. This pedigree was based on an earlier 16th century pedigree incorrectly showing Robert Whitney [in actuality Robert (II) of Castleton] as the son of Sir Robert and Dame Sybil (Baskerville) Whitney.⁶ The next implied mention of Robert (I) comes from Robert Chaundler's 1634 pedigree in the Visitation of London.⁷ I do not believe Chaundler contrived his Whitney of Whitney descent for some minor benefit that might have accrued to him.⁸ Rather, I believe Chaundler correctly described his great great-grandfather as the second son of a lord of Whitney and was merely confused by the number of successive Robert Whitneys. This confusion is proven to have occurred before Chaundler was even born by the faulty 16th century Whitney pedigree, which essentially tried to connect Robert (II) to a Robert, Lord of Whitney, merging him with his father Robert (I) but failing to identify which lord of Whitney fathered Robert (I). As no pedigree explicitly identified Robert, Lord of Whitney's son Robert, genealogists and Whitney descendants alike were left to speculate how the Castleton branch connected to the senior line.

Another piece of evidence derives from a list of contingent heirs to the 1587 will of Sir James Whitney of Whitney. Sick and without a wife and heir, Sir James designated his brother Eustace as his successor. In addition, Sir James included a list of contingent heirs in the event his brother's agnatic line failed (Table I). The first half of the list appears to be genealogically ordered from Sir James's closest male Whitney relatives (his brother and uncles) to his cousins, with their known or proposed relationships.⁹ James Whitney of Clifford and Frances Whitney of London, Gent. have not yet been identified. The last Whitney on the list was Eustace, the senior representative of the Clifford branch founded by John Whitney, Esq., of Gorsington (or Upper Court), Clifford whom I believe was the second son of Sir Eustace Whitney, MP for Herefordshire, and father of Robert, Lord of Whitney.¹⁰

Table I Contingent heirs in the will of Sir James Whitney of Whitney (1587)

- (1) brother Eustace Whitney
- (2) uncle George Whitney
- (3) uncle William Whitney
- (4) Thomas Whitney of Clyro

⁵ Ward & Doyle (2006) footnote 10.

⁶ Ward & Doyle (2006) footnotes 9 & 10.

⁷ Burke (2008) p.354

⁸ Sir Thomas Whitney of Whitney, the last of the senior line, d.s.p. in 1670, after which the Whitney estates were divided amongst his four sisters.

⁹ Sir James evidently skipped over Robert (II)'s eldest son Nicholas of Castleton who died soon after Sir James, as well as William, his second son according to the pedigrees, whom Ward & Doyle (2006) believe may have been William Whitney of Isleworth on Thames, Middlesex. Conclusive identification of Thomas of Castleton and the details of his relationship with Sir James will be presented in a forthcoming article authored with Tim Doyle and Paul C Reed.

¹⁰ Faraday & Cole (1989) record the administration of Ustans (sic) Whitney, of Clifforde's estate in 1525 by his son James who must have been born by say 1500. Eustace in turn must have been born no later than 1475, probably earlier, and his father, John of Gorsington, no later than 1450. Siddons (2002) shows John as the founder of the Clifford branch with the arms of Whitney of Whitney differenced by a crescent, signifying a second son.

- (5) Thomas Whitney of Castleton
- (6) Richard Whitney, brother of the last
- (7) James Whitney of Clifford
- (8) Francis Whitney of London, gent.
- (9) Eustace Whitney of Clifford
- (10) Queen Elizabeth (I) of England

The known or proposed relationships of these Whitneys to Robert Whitney, Lord of Whitney, are shown in the chart (Fig.1). From the inclusion of the Castleton Whitneys in Sir James’s will we can be certain that their branch was not only related to Sir James’s, but that it was more closely related than the prominent Clifford branch. Robert (I) was too old to have been a posthumous son of James Whitney, Esq. (d.1500) and since we have reason to believe Robert (I) was a second son, he most likely was not a son of Sir Eustace because John of Gorsington was most likely his second son. The only interpretation of the facts that accords with the ordering of Sir James’s entail and with all other information discovered is that Robert (I) of Castleton was identical to Robert, son of Robert, Lord of Whitney.

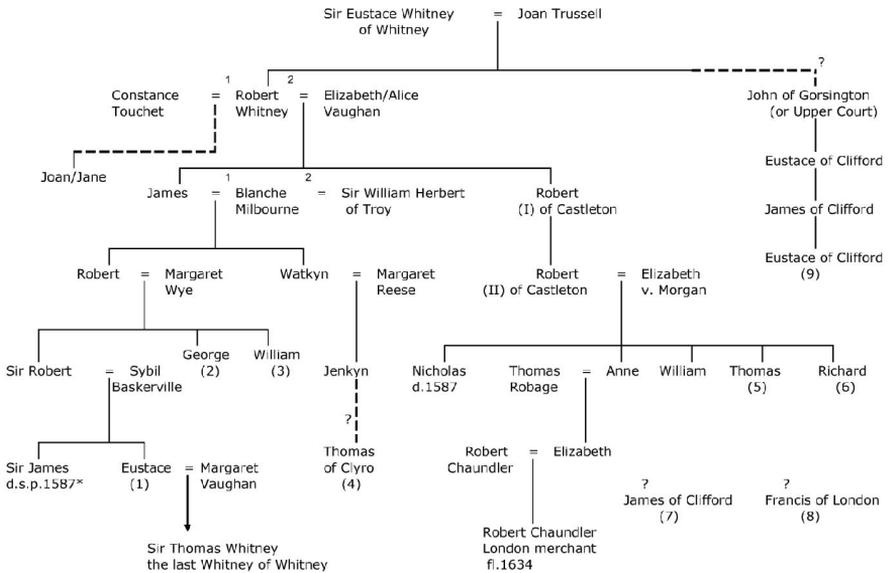


Figure 1 Outline pedigree showing the relationships of the different Whitney branches

Notes: Whitney surname is omitted from male-line descendants, for clarity; numbers in parenthesis refer to the entail of Sir James Whitney (Table I).

Finally I should mention that as well as John Bevan’s descent from Edward III through Constance Touchet, Richardson (2004) outlined a descent from Henry II through Joan Trussell, mother of Robert Whitney, Esq., Lord of Whitney.

Acknowledgements

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References

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