

WIGAN FAMILIES in the 16th CENTURY

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September 20, 2013

If you are having trouble tracing back your family one hundred years and you want to dig deeper, take a deep breath – it gets nigh impossible!

It was in 1538 that Thomas Cromwell, Vicar General of King Henry VIII, ordered Parish Registers to be kept, but many parishes did not start keeping records of baptisms, marriages and burials until much later. The Registers of the Parish Church of Wigan date back to 1580, when Edward Fleetwood was Rector and Lord of the Manor. The baptism and burial records start at that time, but marriage records start only in 1594 and are incomplete thereafter.

From the Parish Registers I have extracted information about Wigan families in the 16th Century – from November 1580 to December 1599.

The Ecclesiastical Parish of Wigan included the townships of Abram, Aspull, Billinge, Dalton, Haigh, Hindley, Ince, Orrell, Pemberton, Upholland and Wigan. Baptisms, burials and some marriages in these townships were recorded in Wigan. The population of Wigan Parish was perhaps 4-7,000.

For baptisms, the date is given together with the baby's name and, in most cases, the father's name. The father's address is not given, but in many cases a township is recorded; and in a few cases a street in Wigan is named (e.g., Wallgate, Standishgate, Millgate, Hallgate), or a district identified (e.g., Highfield, Windy Harbour, Scholes). Only in a very few cases is the father's occupation identified. The mother's name is provided only when the child is born out of wedlock. Birth dates of the father and mother are not recorded.

For burials, the date and usually the name of the deceased person are given, sometimes with the husband's, wife's or father's name. A township often is identified. The age of the deceased person is not recorded. The cause of death is reported only on a few occasions such as drowned, killed with a cart, poisoned herself, or slain. Occasionally, both for baptisms and burials, information is provided such as poor begger, poor woman, poor child, bastard, illegitimate, vagrant, widow or spinster.

Some members of the Bradshaw, Gerrard, Langton and Orrell families are credited with the title of Esquire. Some members of the Ashton, Bankes, Bradshaw, Brown, Ince, Hindley, Maudsley, Occleshaw, Shakerly, Sherrington, Winstanley and Worsley families are credited with the title of Gentleman. The titles of Esquire and Gentleman generally indicate higher social status.

Most people in the 16th century were illiterate and family names generally were spelled phonetically and have variants. Below is a list of 404 family names in the Registers for the period November 1580 to December 1599. The most common names, judged by the number of burials, were (in alphabetical order) Green, Leigh, Lowe, Markland, Marsh, Mollineux, Pinnington, Winstanley and Wood.

Not surprisingly, many Wiganers have family backgrounds that go back more than 400 years. But when you have lots of Winstanleys living in Winstanley, Pemberton and Orrell, Pembertons living in Pemberton, Winstanley and Orrell, and Orrells living in Orrell, Winstanley and Pemberton with no specific addresses and ages, it is a real challenge to extend family lineages back that far – **with accuracy!**

FAMILY NAMES in the REGISTERS of the PARISH CHURCH of WIGAN 1580-1599

Abram

Adlington
Ainscow
Almond
Anderton
Arrowsmith
Ascroft
Ashall
Ashton
Asmall
Aspinall
Aspull
Astley
Atherton
Babington
Baldwin
Baliffe
Ballard
Baly
Bancrofte
Bankes
Barawe
Bardon
Barker
Barnes
Baron
Barres
Barrow
Barton
Bate
Bath
Battersby
Battowe
Beesley
Bibby
Bimson
Birch
Birchall
Blake
Bolton
Borne
Bould
Bowden
Boyes
Bradley
Bradshaw
Braythwaite
Bretherton
Briers
Brighthouse
Brike
Broocsmouth
Broscopp
Brown
Brownlow

Bullock
Burgesse
Bury
Byrom
Calderbank
Carseby
Carter
Cartwright
Case
Caterall
Chaddock
Challiner
Charnock
Cheetam
Chiton
Christopherson
Clarke
Clarkeson
Clayton
Codgrave
Cole
Collier
Coniway
Cooke
Cookson
Cooper
Cotterell
Coutsnappe
Cower
Cowl
Cowler
Cowley
Cowper
Crancke
Crompton
Crook
Crossbeye
Crosse
Crouchley
Crowforde
Crowshow
Cudd
Culshaw
Dalight
Dalton
Dan
Darbyshire
Darwell
Deane
Denison
Dennis
Dicconson
Dike
Dormer
Downall

Downam
Downes
Dunstall
Dutton
Eccleston
Edge
Edgekers
Edleston
Edon
Edward
Edwards
Ellison
Emer
Emorell
Entwisle
Fairbrother
Fairclough
Fairhurst
Farnworth
Farrimond
Fegage
Fell
Filford
Finch
Fleetwood
Fletcher
Flitcroft
Fogg
Ford
Forseheye
Foster
Forth
Fowler
France
Frith
Gardener
Garner
Gaskell
Gate
Gellibrand
Gerrard
Gibson
Gidlowe
Glasbrooke
Glover
Gorse
Gorton
Gower
Grange
Green
Greenhough
Gregson
Grimshaw
Grundy

Hacking
Haigh
Hall
Halton
Hammon
Hampson
Harrison
Harrocks
Hart
Harvey
Haslam
Hassocke
Hatton
Haughe
Hawen
Haycocke
Heaton
Hesketh
Hey
Higginson
Higham
Hill
Hilton
Hindley
Hitches
Hodgson
Hogley
Holcroft
Holland
Hollen
Hollice
Hollinhead
Holme
Hope
Hopwood
Horrocks
Houghton
Howard
Hulton
Hurleston
Hutton
Huyton
Hyde
Idson
Ince
Irish
Ireland
Jackson
Jake
Jameson
Johnson
Jolly
Kidd
Kilshaw

Kindsley
Kirby
Kitchen
Laithwaite
Lancaster
Langshaw
Langton
Latchford
Lathom
Lawson
Lea
Leadbeater
Lee
Leigh
Letherbarow
Ley
Leyland
Lightowler
Liptrot
Locker
Longshaw
Lowe
Lyon
Lythgoe
Maddocks
Magan
Mann
Mannering
Markland
Marsden
Marsh
Martir
Mason
Mather
Mathew
Maudsley
Medwall
Mittton
Mollineux
Morris
Morte
Moss
Moude
Moulding
Munday
Naylor
Never
Nightingale
Noel
Norrice
Occleshaw
Ormeshaw
Orrell
Ownesworth

P arpoint	Ratliffe	Seddon	Taylor	Warrender
Parre	Reade	Sergeante	Tetlaw	Watelesly
Patricke	Reeve	Shakerly	Thomasson	Waterworth
Pawson	Rene	Sharphouse	Thompson	Watmough
Peacocke	Rigby	Sharples	Threlfall	Watson
Pemberton	Risley	Shaw	Thurstan	Wetherby
Pendlebury	Rimmer	Shepherd	Tilman	Whalley
Penkethman	Rishton	Sherrington	Tomlinson	Whiteside
Penkett	Risley	Shuttleworth	Tompson	Whittle
Pennington	Rivington	Sixsmith	Topping	Wilde
Phillips	Robinson	Slينهead	Townley	Williamson
Pie	Roby	Smethurst	Travis	Wilson
Pigeman	Rogerson	Smith	Turner	Winckley
Pilkington	Roper	Snape	Tyldsley	Winnell
Pinnington	Rothwell	Snart	U nsworth	Winstanley
Platt	Rounsell	Southworth	Urmeston	Winward
Pollard	Rowson	Speakman	W adsworth	Withington
Pomfret	Rush	Spencer	Waite	Wood
Postolat	Rutter	Stananought	Wakefield	Woodward
Prescott	Rycroft	Staples	Walker	Worsley
Preston	Ryding	Starkey	Walmsley	Worthington
Price	Rylands	Stones	Walthew	Wrast
R adford	S ale	Sumner	Wanley	Wright
Rainford	Sanckey	Sutton	Wanthie	Wyrrall
Rancshawes	Scillicorne	Sweeting	Ward	Y ates
Ranneckers	Scott	T arlton	Wardley	
Raphson	Scoulcrofte	Taverner		

Reference

Josiah Arrowsmith (ed.), 1899. *The Registers of the Parish Church of Wigan in the County of Lancaster. Christenings, Burials and Weddings 1580 to 1625*, printed for the Lancashire Parish Registry Society (Vol. 4) by Strowger & Son, at the Clarence Press and reproduced by Google books.