

The Parentage of Thomas Wratten of Wards River

Thomas Wratten, farmer, died at Wards River 22 October 1890. According to the informant, his son, Charles Wratten, Thomas was aged 65, had been born in Kent and had been in New South Wales for 49 years.

Family tradition, passed to me by my grandmother, recalls that he was brought to Australia by the Australian Agricultural Company. My grandmother heard this story from her husband, Raymond Wratten, who in turn was told it by his mother, Emma, who had known Thomas as both uncle and father-in-law, and was 27 when he died. I have no reason to doubt its accuracy.

Information in Australia

“Pure Merinos and Others: The “Shipping Lists” of the Australian Agricultural Company” by P.A. Pemberton, published in 1986, records the arrival at Port Jackson, on 23 December 1841, of the “Emerald Isle” carrying, among others, Thomas Wratten, shepherd, aged 25. It also states that he was recommended by Mr Mount of Saltwood, near Folkestone, Kent. This suggests a date of birth of about 1816.

The birth certificates of his children Ellen Jane (1858), William Thomas (1859) and John Edward (1861) give his place of birth as “near Hythe” and suggest a date of birth between August 1825 and March 1826. Those of his children Frederick James (1879) and Alice Mary Glenthorne (1882) give his place of birth as Kent and suggest a date of birth between November 1824 and June 1825.

It is clear that Thomas Wratten was born near Hythe, and lived near Saltwood, a parish adjoining Hythe. His year of birth is unclear, although the date was probably in the period November to March.

Information in England

A survey of the parishes “near Hythe”, to wit: Hythe, West Hythe, Aldington, Burmarsh, Cheriton, Dymchurch, Lympne, Newington, Postling, and Stanford, reveals only two Thomas Wratten baptisms, both at Lympne:

17 Dec 1820 Thomas, son of John Wratten, labourer of West Hythe and Jane his wife; and
12 Mar 1826 Thomas, son of William Wratten, labourer of West Hythe and Elizabeth his wife.

Neither of these children were buried as infants at Lympne or any surrounding parish.

As the “Emerald Isle” sailed from Plymouth on 3 September, 1841, it is probable that Thomas Wratten was living near Saltwood at the time of the 1841 Census, taken on 6 June 1841. The only Thomas Wrattens in Kent of a suitable age are:

<i>Brookland</i>	Thomas Wratten, aged 25, shoe maker
<i>Burmarsh</i>	Thomas Wratten, aged 11, living with John Wratten, agricultural labourer.
<i>Lympne</i>	Thomas Wratten, aged 15, agricultural labourer, living with George Ward at Court Lodge.
<i>West Hythe</i>	Thomas Wratten, aged 20, Agricultural labourer, living with his father, John Wratten, victualler

Of these four all, bar the last, are recorded as living in England in the 1851 and later censuses. The Thomas Wratten who was baptised at Lympne in 1826 died at Brenzett, Kent, in 1909.

Conclusion

Thomas Wratten was baptised in Lympne 17 December 1820.

This raises two questions:

Why was Thomas Wratten given the age of 25 in the Shipping Lists?

In the lists for the "Emerald Isle" only two of the seventeen passengers are given ages, one of these is Thomas Wratten, 25, the other is a blacksmith, James Charlton, aged 45. Both these ages may be more indicative of an age group rather than of a specific age.

Why did Thomas give himself ages suggesting a birth year of 1825 or 1826?

It is important to remember that Thomas's wife, Mary Ann Glenthorne Moore, was born in 1839 and was, therefore, nineteen years younger than her husband. It is very tempting to speculate that Thomas appropriated the baptismal date of his cousin and namesake as his own, reducing the age gap to a mere thirteen years.

Afterward: DNA Evidence

This theory indicates that Thomas was the son of John and Jane Wratten of West Hythe. John Wratten and Jane Newman were married at Lympne, Kent, 31 October, 1818. John Wratten was baptized at Lympne, 3 May, 1795, son of George Wratten and his wife, Sarah Wright. Jane Newman was baptized at Aldington, Kent, 14 April, 1799, daughter of Thomas Newman and his wife, Mary Johncock.

DNA Matches found between descendants of Thomas Wratten and descendants of George Wratten and Mary Wratten/Keeler, brother and sister of John Wratten, and descendants of Matthew Newman and Mary Newman/Gower, brother and sister of Jane Newman/Wratten, all suggest a connection in the range of 5th to 8th cousins.

These DNA Matches strongly suggest that the theory regarding Thomas Wratten's parents is correct.

William Good

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