

## The Parents of Robert Blanch

On 4 March, 1753, Robert, son of Edward and Hannah Blanch, was baptised at Hollington, Sussex.<sup>1</sup> In 1776 Robert Blanch married Elizabeth Brann in the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin at Rolvenden in Kent.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth and he are the ancestors of many thousands of people scattered around the globe.

The baptism at Hollington is the only Blanch baptism recorded in the parish. There were no Blanch burials at Hollington and only one marriage, Richard Jennings and Martha Blanch, both of Mountfield, who were married at Hollington on 23 November, 1718 or 1719.<sup>3</sup>

Who were Edward and Hannah Blanch? Were they related to Martha Blanch Jennings?

The only marriage that has been found of parties with similar names to Edward and Hannah is that of Edward Blanch and Honoria Heather of Salehurst, which took place at Dallington in Sussex, 23 November 1731.<sup>4</sup>

### Richard Jennings & Martha Blanch

Richard and Martha Jennings had six children:

- Mary, baptised at Salehurst, Sussex, 14 February 1719/20;
- John, baptised at Mountfield, Sussex, 24 June 1722;
- Richard, baptised at Mountfield, Sussex, 10 January 1724/25;
- Timothy, baptised at Salehurst, Sussex, 18 Jun 1729;
- Daniel, baptised at Salehurst, Sussex, 31 October 1731 and buried there 19 December 1731; and
- Daniel, baptised at Salehurst, Sussex, 7 July 1733.

Whether Richard was the father of Martha's illegitimate daughter, Sarah, baptised at Brightling, Sussex, on 18 October, 1719, cannot be known.

By 1758 Richard and Martha had moved to Hollington as on 10 March, 1758, Martha, wife of Richard Jannings, was buried there. On 24 January, 1787, Richard Jannings, aged 93, was buried at Hollington.

Richard and Martha must have settled in Hollington earlier than 1758 as on 29 August, 1751, their son John married Frances Delves at Hollington, both were residents of the parish. Another son, Timothy, married Mary Cruttenden at Hollington on 8 February 1757.

So in 1753 Martha Blanch Jennings was living in Hollington and it is reasonable to assume she was a close relative of Edward and Hannah Blanch.

The registers of Mountfield, the parish in which Richard and Martha were living at the time of their marriage, record neither the baptism of Richard nor that of Martha. However, the neighbouring parish of Salehurst, where four of their six children were baptised, records the baptisms of both Richard, son of Daniel & Mary Jennings, on 10 January 1695/96, and that of Martha, daughter of John and Mary Blanche, on 9 April 1694.

Another child of John and Mary Blanche, baptised at Salehurst on 13 January 1695/96, was Edward Blanch.

### **Edward Blanch & Honour Heather**

Edward Blanch married Honoria Heather at Dallington in 1731. The fact that the wedding occurred in this Parish, one where neither of the parties were living, may be explained by the fact that Honoria was at least seven months pregnant on the day of her marriage.

Edward and Honour had six children baptised at Salehurst:

- John, baptised 21 January, 1731/32;
- Mary, baptised 4 November, 1733;
- Edward, baptised 23 February, 1734/35;
- George, baptised 13 February, 1736/37;
- Elizabeth, baptised 30 August and buried 1 October, 1741; and
- Martha, baptised 17 September, 1742.

The sons' names are all Blanch family names<sup>5</sup> so it is not possible to infer the name of Honour's father.

Edward Blanch was buried at Salehurst in 6 July, 1773, and his widow on 10 February 1784. Honor Blanch died after a decline at the age of 77.

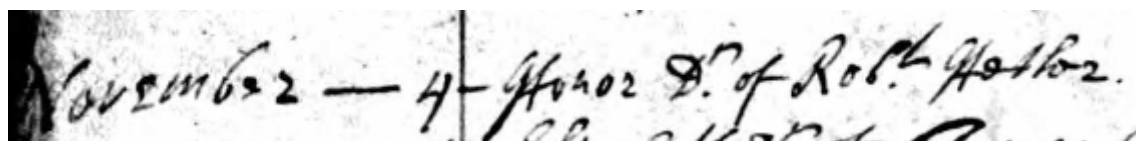
According to her marriage record Honour Heather was a resident of Salehurst at the time of her marriage. Her age at death suggests a birth in about 1707. This age must be accepted with caution as by the date Honour was buried her husband and anyone who knew her exact age were dead.

There are seven baptisms and one burial of members of the Heather family recorded at Salehurst:<sup>6</sup>

- Robert, son of Robert & Ann Hayler or Heyder, baptised 6 May 1683
- Thomas, son of Robert & Ann Heyder or Hyder, baptised 27 Dec 1685
- Samuel, son of Robert & Ann Heather, baptised 1 January 1687/88;
- Robert Heather buried 13 May 1689
- Richard, son of Robert & Ann Heather, baptised 11 May 1690;
- Mary, daughter of Robert & Ann Heather, baptised 18 February 1693/94;
- Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Hether, baptised 20 November 1697; and
- Thomas, son of Robert & Elizabeth Heather, baptised 4 January 1707/08.

It is likely that the last entry is that of Honour's brother and therefore that Honour's parents were Robert and Elizabeth Heather.

The only baptism anywhere in England of a child named Honour Heather occurred at St Mary's at Lambeth, Surrey, on 4 November 1709, when Honor, daughter of Robert Hether, was baptised.<sup>7</sup>

A close-up photograph of a handwritten church register entry. The text is written in cursive ink on aged paper. It reads "November 4 - Honor D. of Robt Hether." The entry is written in a single line, with a vertical line separating the date from the name and parentage.

Lambeth is nearly 45 miles from Salehurst, a great distance in the early eighteenth century. However, St Mary's at Lambeth was part of the palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury on the outskirts of London. The Hether baptism is a stray baptism, there being no other baptisms of children of Robert Hether in the parish register. Therefore Robert Hether was not a native of Lambeth and could have come to London from any part of the country.

The rarity of the child's given name, the name of the father, the date of the baptism and the fact that the father was not a resident of Lambeth all make it highly likely that this is the baptism of Honour Heather/Blanch.

### **Could Honour be Hannah?**

Robert Blanch was the son of Edward and Hannah Blanch. The presence in Hollington of Martha Blanch/Jennings makes it certain that Edward and Hannah were members of the Blanch family of Salehurst.

In 1753 Martha had two close relatives named Edward, her brother Edward, baptised in January 1695/96 and her nephew, Edward, baptised in February 1734/35. Edward Senior was aged 57 and Edward Junior, assuming he had survived infancy, would have just turned 18. If Edward Junior were Robert's father he would have been married at seventeen. While seventeen is quite young to be married it cannot be excluded.

In March 1753 Honour Heather was aged 43 and still capable of child bearing. Robert Blanch's daughter-in-law, Maria Ashdown Blanch had her last child at the age of 41 and her daughter Mary Blanch Warby had her last child at the age of 47.<sup>8</sup> What is surprising is not that Honour could have had a child at the age of 43 but she appears to have had her last child at the age of 32. So Honour Heather Blanch was not too old to be Robert Blanch's mother.

How then would Honour become Hannah in the Hollington register? Bearing in mind that the Blanches were not residents of the parish of Hollington and that Honour was an unusual name, the Parish Clerk when writing the entry in the Parish Register may have heard the name Honour but written down a name he knew, and which sounds quite similar, Hannah.

### **Hannah or Honour?**

If Robert's mother were Hannah then five questions have to be answered:

- Why did Edward and Hannah have their child baptised at Hollington?  
*It is common for the first child of a couple to be born and baptised in the mother's home parish. The Hollington connection is through a Blanch relative. However, in the absence of a marriage record of Edward & Hannah there is no way of being certain that Hollington was not Hannah's home parish.*<sup>9</sup>
- Where were Edward Blanch and Hannah married?  
*No record of this marriage has been found.*
- If there were any other children where were they baptised?  
*No records of any baptisms have been found.*
- Where was Edward Blanch buried?  
*No identifiable record of a burial has been found.*
- Where was Hannah Blanch buried?  
*No identifiable record of a burial has been found.*<sup>10</sup>

If Robert's mother were Honour then three questions need to be addressed:

- Why would Edward & Honour's son be baptised at Hollington?  
*Honour was 43 in March 1753 and, as there are no baptisms of any children at Salehurst after 1742, it is possible she had had a series of miscarriages or stillbirths. In these circumstances it would be understandable that she was living with her sister-in-law at Hollington during the final stages of her pregnancy.*

- Could Honour have been incorrectly written as Hannah?  
*The two names sound quite similar and as Honour is an unusual name this is quite possible.*
- Did Honour have any children between 1742 and 1753?  
*There is no record of any baptisms or burials of children of Edward and Honour Blanch between these years. Honour may have suffered a series of miscarriages or stillbirths, any children born in this period may not have been baptised at Salehurst or were baptised in a nonconformist church, or the baptisms, conformist or nonconformist, have yet to be located.<sup>11</sup>*

Based on the answers to these questions it seems likely that Robert's parents were Edward and Honour, not Edward and Hannah.

William Good

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<sup>1</sup> Sussex Family History Group Data Archive [www.sfhg.org.uk](http://www.sfhg.org.uk)

All references to baptisms and burials in Sussex are taken from this source unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> William Good "A Forest of Blanches" (Sydney 1988)

<sup>3</sup> The year of 1718 is given in the Sussex Marriage Index (Sussex Family History Group 2004-2008). However when I transcribed this entry I read it as 1719.

<sup>4</sup> Sussex Marriage Index (Sussex Family History Group 2004-2008).

All references to marriages in Sussex are taken from this source.

<sup>5</sup> John Blanch was Edward's father, Edward Blanch was his grandfather and George Blanch was his great-grandfather.

<sup>6</sup> The first two entries appear on familysearch <[www.familysearch.com](http://www.familysearch.com)> as Heyder. The entry for Elizabeth in 1697 is found only on familysearch.

<sup>7</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, St Mary at Lambeth, Lambeth, Composite register: baptisms Jan 1670 - Nov 1683, Dec 1684, Jan 1685 - Jun 1689, Jul - Dec 1689, Mar 1690 - May 1718, marriages Jan 1670 - Dec 1674, Jan 1679 - May 1718, burials Oct 1669 - Sep 1687, Dec 1692 - May 1718, P85/MRY1/343.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Ashdown was baptised at Westfield in Sussex in 25 January 1789. Her youngest daughter, Ann Blanch, was born 25 September 1830. Mary Blanch was born 18 October 1828 at Rolvenden and her youngest son, James Morgan Warby, was born 30 March 1876 at Beaver. Utah.

<sup>9</sup> The only child named Hannah baptised at Hollington between 1720 and 1740 was Hannah, daughter of Thomas and Hannah Mathews. Hannah Mathews married Thomas Holland on 4 March 1753 in the nearby parish of Fairlight

<sup>10</sup> Thirty years of research by the author has failed to find any trace of the marriage of Edward and Hannah, the baptism of any other children, or any burial that could be identified as being of either Edward or Hannah.

<sup>11</sup> One possible child is William Blanch of Udimore who married Ann Furminger at Brede, Sussex, in 1768. William and Ann had children baptised at Brede and at Udimore. In 1780 William was issued with a settlement certificate by the parish of Ewhurst. This means that Ewhurst was his home parish. However, there is no record of his baptism at Ewhurst. The parish of Ewhurst is the parish immediately east of Salehurst. William would have been born in the mid 1740s and so could be a child of Edward and Honour Blanch.