

The Paternity of Mary Ann Hefford's Children

Thomas Hefford and Mary Ann Edwards were married at St Clement, Worcester, 14 October 1811. On 10 May 1829 it was recorded in the baptismal register of the parish of Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, that Mary Ann Efford or Eford of Deerhurst was a "Married Woman, but for many years deserted by her husband Tho^s Efford." This raises two questions: how many of Mary Ann's children were the children of Thomas Hefford; and who was the father of her other children?

Mary Ann Hefford's children were:

- Mary Ann (1813-1815)
- Thomas (1815-1863)
- Harriett Ann (1818-1895)
- John (1820-1897)
- George (1822-1915)
- Anne (1825-1865)
- William (1829-1829)

Of these children

Mary Ann

"Mary Ann daughter of Thomas & Mary Ann Efford of Deerhurst, Labourer" was baptised 26 September 1813 at Deerhurst and buried there as "Mary Ann Efford of Deerhurst, aged 1 year 10 months" on 8 January 1815.

Thomas

"Thomas son of Thomas & Mary Ann Efford of Deerhurst, Labourer" was baptised 26 November 1815 at Deerhurst. He married first on 10 September 1840, at St Mary de Lode, Gloucester, Ann Robins, and second, 6 July 1846, at St Mary de Lode, Gloucester, Emma Cook. On both occasions he gave his father's name as Thomas Hefford.

Harriett

"Harriett Ann [daughter] of Thomas & Mary Ann Efford of Apperley, Labourer" was baptised 16 May 1819 at Deerhurst. This entry appears in the draft Register¹ as "Harrett Ann daughter of Maryann and Thomas Efford." She married Levi Roberts at Deerhurst on 18 August 1835. The marriage predates the registration of Marriages so her father's name was not given.

In surviving church documents from Utah, Harriett gave her father's names on four occasions. Once she gave his name as Thomas Hefford, and three times she gave his name as George Eagles. She also gave her date of birth as 20 June 1818. It must be stressed that the documents in question were of great religious significance and so must be assumed to be true, especially as, by giving the name George Eagles, she declared herself a bastard.

Interestingly the Curate of Deerhurst who baptised Harriett, George Foxton, appears to have been on leave from May 1816 to February 1818, so he would have had no cause to doubt her paternity, and, as 11 months had passed since her birth when she was baptised, any gossip would have died down.

¹ The Draft Register (Gloucester Archives Reference P112 IN 4/2) is the record of baptisms, marriages and burials maintained by the Parish Clerk. The Parish Register (Gloucester Archives Reference P112 IN 1/8) was written up from these notes. The Draft Register was the first written record of this baptism.

John

John Hefford was born in about 1820. No record of his baptism has yet been found. In the Censuses he gave his place of birth as (Hanley) Castle², Worcestershire (1851), Worcester, Worcestershire (1861), Gloucestershire (1871), Deerhurst (1881) and Tewkesbury (1891). He married twice, 5 August 1849 at Coseley, Staffordshire, to Mary Hill, and 25 May 1868, at Dudley, Worcestershire, to Elizabeth Deakin. On both occasions he gave his father's name as Thomas Hefford.

Hanley Castle is about 8 miles north of Deerhurst, Deerhurst is near the border of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and Tewkesbury is the biggest town near Deerhurst. The only known contemporary Thomas Hefford who could be John's father was Thomas Hefford of Deerhurst, formerly of Worcestershire, so the evidence strongly suggests that John was the son of Thomas and Mary Ann Hefford of Deerhurst. He died in 1897 at the age of 77 so he was born in about 1820.

While the evidence suggests that Thomas was his biological father, it is difficult to reconcile this with his elder sister Harriett's assertion that her father was George Eagles and with the probability that the same George Eagles was the father of the next two children, George and Ann.

George

"George of Marriann Efford of Deerhurst, Single Woman, Natural Child" was baptised 17 February 1822 at Deerhurst.

The person who baptised George was Richard Sandford, a new Curate, who had been given permission to live in Tewkesbury rather than in Deerhurst, so he would have been a bit vague on the exact details of his parishioners. This may explain why Mary Ann was described as a single woman. It may also denote Mary Ann's actual status as a deserted wife.

In his will dated 4 June 1853, George Eagles of Apperley, yeoman, bequeathed to George Hefford, a bedstead (after the death of George Eagles' wife), a substantial quantity of household goods, £45 in money, forgave him a debt of £15, and left him a cottage at Deerhurst. The size of these bequests indicates that George Hefford was the son of George Eagles.

Interestingly, when George Hefford married Maria Griffiths at Cheltenham, 13 December 1853, he gave his father's name as Thomas Hefford.

Anne

"Anne daughter of Thomas & Marianne Efford of Deerhurst, Labourer" was baptised 11 September 1825 at Deerhurst. However, in the Draft Register the entry appears only as "Ann daughter of Maryann Efford." Thomas's name was added when the Parish register was written up.

As 1825 was only four years before the date when Mary Ann Hefford was said to have been deserted for many years, and Thomas's name was missing from the original baptismal entry, the recording of Thomas Hefford as her father must be viewed with extreme caution. In 1825 the Curate of Deerhurst, Charles White, was relatively new in the position. From the baptismal register it seems he may not have been in the Parish at all between November 1824

² In 1851 both he and his wife gave their place of birth as Castle, Worcester. Mary Hill was baptised at Hanley Castle, 10 April, 1831, so it is a reasonable conclusion that Castle, Worcester, is Hanley Castle.

and February 1825, nine months before Anne was baptised (he certainly performed no baptisms, marriages or burials in this period) so he could not have known who Anne's father was and would, therefore, have accepted without question that Thomas Hefford was her real father.

On 23 January 1843 Anne married Thomas Booth at St Michael, Gloucester. She gave her father's name as Giles Efford. There is no Giles Efford or Hefford recorded anywhere in or near Deerhurst. It is probable that the name Giles Efford disguises that of George Eagles, the initial letters of both names are the same.

William

“William [son] of Mary Ann Effort or Efford of Deerhurst, Married Woman, but for many years deserted by her husband Tho^s Efford” was baptised 10 May 1829 and buried 16 August 1829 at Deerhurst.

There is no evidence as to the name of William's father. George Eagles, the likely father of his elder brother, George, had married a widow, Hannah Hitten, 14 December 1826. This does not, of course, prevent him from being William's father.

In summary the paternity of Mary Ann Hefford's children appears to be

- Mary Ann (1813-1815) Thomas Hefford
- Thomas (1815-1863) Thomas Hefford
- Harriett Ann (1818-1895) George Eagles
- John (1820-1897) George Eagles
- George (1822-1915) George Eagles
- Anne (1825-1865) George Eagles
- William (1829-1829) George Eagles

An explanation might be that Thomas Hefford left his wife in about 1816 and in 1817 Mary Ann Hefford formed a relationship with George Eagles. This relationship continued until George's marriage in 1826, and then resumed in 1828.

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