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Sulgrave Manor

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Washingtons » Early years

From *Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons'* by H. Clifford Smith, London 1933 pp 46 -49

This village of Washington (anciently Wessington) lies not far from the River Wear, four miles distant from Chester-le-Street. The place-name (according to Harrison's *Surnames*) signifies the estate or farm of the family of Hwaes. Hwaes, an Anglo-Saxon personal name, meant sharp or keen. About the year 1180, so the 'Baldon Buke' (a contemporary manuscript preserved in Durham Cathedral library) tells us, the Manor of Washington was acquired by one William de Hertburne. Having given up his former possessions at Hartburn (presumably the Hartburn in Durham, though there is a namesake village in Northumberland) the owner acquired the right to call himself 'William de Wessington' instead of 'William de Hertburne.' Either he or his son did, in fact, adopt the place-name as a title, for 'William de Wassinton' is named as such on an Exchequer Roll of 1211 in the Public Record Office.

family, but at the time of the battle of Lewes in 1264 it is a Sir Walter de Wessington who holds the title.

On an undated thirteenth-century deed in Durham Cathedral library there is a seal containing a lion passant within a circular legend naming it as 'the seal of Walter, son of William de Wessington.' The document itself tells us that this Walter, presumably the same Walter who fought at Lewes, was married to Diana Dilston. He appears to have had by this marriage three sons, Walter, William, and John, all of whom are mentioned in documents which link up in the last two decades of the thirteenth century. The property at Washington descended through the family of Walter the second. The family of William became possessed of property at Helton Flechan in Westmorland. It is this branch upon whose seal the celebrated device of 'stars and stripes' (heraldically two bars and three mullets) is first seen to have been used by a Washington. This is in 1346: about sixty years later we find similar seals on documents in Lancashire signed by descendants of the third brother, John.

It was from John that the Sulgrave and Virginia family was apparently derived. By his marriage in 1260 with Elizabeth de Burnsheved he acquired land also in Westmorland, in several parishes near Kendal. His son Robert married into the Strickland family, and fought in 1297 at the battle of Stirling. Robert acquired half the manor of Carnforth in Lancashire, and his son, another Robert, who married Agnes le Gentyl, added to the property from other parishes. His grandson (or possibly great-grandson), John de Washington, was married some time after the middle of the fourteenth century to Joan Croft, and acquired through her Tewitfield in the Manor of Warton, and other lands.



Early Washington sit

The Washington shield with bars and mullets appears, as we have said, on several documents early in the fifteenth century relating to land in Lancashire. On the tower of Warton Church which was built at the end of the fifteenth century the

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Warton Church - West tower.

Warton and by a service of 7 s. yearly, and lands in Melling, Arkholme, Gressingham, Tatham, Hoghton, Hesham, Horton, Over Kellet, Dalton-in-Lonsdale, and Preston-in-Amounderness. The main properties descended to his eldest son, John, who was born in 1453, and died in 1499. Through him the line continued at Warton until as late as 1823, when the Rev. Thomas Washington, Vicar of Warton for twenty-four years, died without descendants.

We pass to another Robert Washington, the second son of the Robert who died in 1483 and the brother of the John just mentioned. This Robert, the grandfather of Lawrence Washington, the builder of Sulgrave, was married three times: to Elizabeth Westfield, to Jane Whittington, and to Agnes or Anne Bateman. His eldest son by his first marriage was another John Washington, who married Margaret Kytson, the daughter of a neighbour at Warton, and the sister of Sir Thomas Kytson, the merchant adventurer, of Hengrave Hall, Suffolk. Of the six children of John Washington and Margaret Kytson, the eldest, Lawrence Washington, was the builder of Sulgrave Manor House. He is presumed to have been born at Warton about 1500.



Hengrave Hall

The ancestry of Lawrence Washington has been traced here somewhat perfunctorily, for despite all the researches of recent years it frequently remains obscure whether the John or the Robert Washington mentioned in one document is the same as the John or the Robert of another, and not a son or a nephew of the same name. A Visitation of Northamptonshire for 1564 is, however, fairly detailed as to the immediate descent of Lawrence of Sulgrave. We know the names of his brothers, Nicholas, Leonard, Peter, and Thomas, and of his sister Jane, who married Humphrey Gardener of Cockerham. Nicholas, it appears, moved to the neighbourhood of Morecambe Bay in Lancashire. Leonard remained at Warton. Peter died young.

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