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## The Value of Manor Court Rolls in Family Research

IHGS Diploma 2021



Manor Court Rolls

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## **The Value of Manor Court Rolls in Family Research**

### **Introduction**

Many family historians believe they will never trace their ancestors back far enough to use manorial records, however this is a misconception as many manorial records date well into the nineteenth century. The manor was for centuries the main unit of local government and virtually the only source of written local records. Once the family historian has taken his research back beyond the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century manorial records must be the greatest hope for information while as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century they can continue to provide a major source of evidence for those able to transcribe and if necessary translate them. These records are often under-utilised, yet they can contain an enormous amount of information not just about those who owned a substantial amount of property, but also about tenant farmers and even the agricultural labourers who worked the land.

### **Purpose of this research**

The purpose of this research is to determine the value of manorial records to the family historian and using this as a starting point to extend the research undertaken for the Higher Certificate by tracing one particular family back to the sixteenth century.

This portfolio piece will demonstrate some of the uses of manorial documents for family history research and how such records can then be used in conjunction with other records to build a pedigree that extends back over a century.

### **Part One - Manorial Records Background Details**

#### **Background to the Manorial system**

Following the Norman Conquest in 1066 King William took advantage to impose a new social order upon the country; a system of landholding that historians call feudalism. The king immediately claimed all lands as his own, with the exception of property in the possession of the Church. However, he also wanted to reward his loyal followers, the major barons, and did so by granting them some of his property; these families subsequently became the tenants-in-chief of the Crown and therefore the aristocracy. The tenants-in-chief had knights who they rewarded with land, and they were known as mesne lords, who in turn could create new tenures by granting to others below them, (a process known as subinfeudation) thereby creating a hierarchical pyramid where everyone held land from an overlord (except of course the monarch). These lands were not free gifts – the barons owed the king military service in time of war or civil need, in numbers commensurate with their estates. The knights owed the barons, which meant they would provide an agreed number of soldiers when required. The basic socio-economic land unit was known as a 'knight's fee' – the amount of land required to generate sufficient income to support one knight and his family for a year. Today we call this unit a 'manor'.

The way land was held in a manor was very important, and would vary from place to place depending on the 'customs' of the manor. Each manor had a lord, or lady, who would grant strips of land within the manor in return for service, which usually comprised any combination of rent, military obligation or work on the lord's land according to custom. Anything not granted to manorial tenants but held by the lord was known as his 'demesne' which could be farmed by him, or leased out to individuals on negotiable terms. The way in which land was granted by the lord and held in the manor was known as 'tenure' and it would determine whether a tenant was 'free' or 'unfree'. Aside from a few obligations, such as performing a fixed amount of service on behalf of the lord each year, the free tenants were allowed to sell their property without asking permission from the lord, and from 1540 could leave their land to a named heir in their will. Unfree or customary tenants, often referred to as 'villeins' had an amount of work set, and would be told the nature of the work at the time it was due. They were also closely bound by the customs of the manor, in particular restrictions that were imposed on property transfer through a family. By the end of the fourteenth century the old servile villein class was in decline, and there were none by 1600. It became usual for the lord to grant a new type of tenure, known as customary tenure, whereby in place of services of an agricultural nature a fixed rent would be charged.

There were between 25,000 and 65,000 manors in England (compared to about 12,000 parishes). Manors varied greatly in size. A parish might include one or more manors, but some manors extended over more than one parish. An average manor consisted of a village and the surrounding farmland and woods.

## **Manor Courts**

In medieval times the manorial lords were not only landlords, but also local judicial and administrative authorities, acting through their manorial courts. There were two main types of court that would be held during a year. Twice a year, a 'court leet' and 'view of frankpledge' were held to try minor offences that had occurred within the manor, as well as to inspect 'tithings', groups of about ten households who were mutually responsible for each other's behaviour, a sort of neighbourhood watch system. If a man committed an offence, he and his tithing could be brought before the court. The court leet declined in importance when most of its functions were undertaken by the Justices of the Peace and is rarely mentioned after the seventeenth century.

The main type of manorial court was the 'court baron'. This was held on a regular basis and had jurisdiction over disputes between tenants or between a lord and his tenants. The court conducted the routine business of the manor, which would include financial penalties for offences against the customs and rules of the manor; general manor administration; announcements of deaths of any customary tenants since the last court; and the admission of new customary tenants into copyhold land – so called because they were given a copy of the record of the court to prove they had been admitted. All free tenants were expected to attend the court baron and acted as jurors; customary tenants were also required to attend, and unless they provided an 'essoin' or excuse they were given a financial penalty. The court baron also gradually declined in importance. By the late eighteenth century it was rarely concerned with matters other than dealings in copyhold land. This sort of land was eventually converted to leasehold by Act of Parliament in 1922.

Most records of manor courts were, before 1733 written in Latin, except for a brief period during the Commonwealth, from 1653 to 1660, when they were all written in English. Court rolls were compiled by the steward, who presided over the court, or his clerk, and were produced according to standard formularies reflecting the order of business of the court.

The steward, or his clerk, would keep detailed records of all these courts, and other manor business, and where they still survive these records are a boon to the genealogist. However, it is important to remember that manorial records were private documents, created for the use of the lord of the manor. Many manors formed part of much larger estates, belonging to gentry or aristocratic families. As such, the records are scattered around the country or may even still be in private hands.

### **The Manorial Documents Register**

Following the abolition of copyhold tenure in 1922 the only proof of title to copyhold property might only be found in manorial documents. To ensure that manorial documents were properly preserved, the Law of Property Amendment Act 1924 placed manorial documents under the charge and superintendence of the Master of the Rolls. The Master of the Rolls issued the first Manorial Documents Rules in 1926 listing the records that were to be protected. At the same time a register was to be compiled recording the individual nature and location of the documents concerned. The Manorial Documents Register (MDR) can help researchers locate the whereabouts of relevant material. The register is housed at The National Archives (TNA) but digitised entries for most counties can be searched either by name of manor or by parish at [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search)

### **Yarcombe Manor**

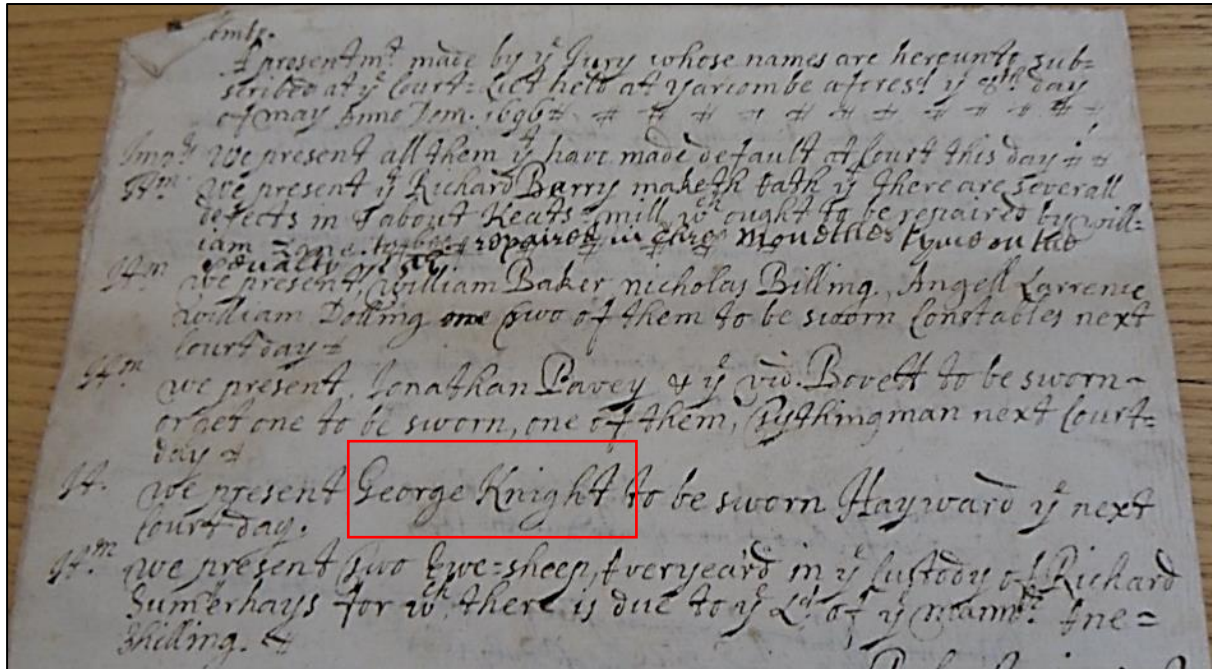
Originally Yarcombe Manor in Devon was an appendage of the Monastery of Syon in Middlesex. Upon the Dissolution of the Monasteries the manor reverted to the monarch. A moiety, or half, of the manor was granted by the Crown to Robert, Earl of Leicester who soon after sold his interest to Richard DRAKE. In 1582 Richard sold his moiety to Sir Francis DRAKE, the explorer, who in the meantime had been granted the other half of the manor. Upon Sir Francis' death the manor passed to his brother Thomas and remained in the hands of the DRAKE family for several hundred years. In 1601 Thomas brought a case to chancery against the then vicar of Yarcombe concerning tithes. The case listed all the householders of Yarcombe at the time, and some of the names of the farmers were MATTHEWS, SPILLER, PARRIS, PAVEY and KNIGHT<sup>1</sup>. Three hundred years later men of the same names farmed in Yarcombe.

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller-Elliott-Drake, Elizabeth Douglas, Lady. The Family and Heirs of Sir Francis Drake. London 1911. (e-book) [archive.org](https://archive.org) page 164 accessed 15 February 2021.

I had been researching for a friend the KNIGHT family of Yarcombe, Devon so decided to see what manorial records were available for this parish. A search of the MDR shows that for Yarcombe Manor, alternatively called Yarcombe and Knightshayne Manor, there are 77 collections of manorial documents held by three archives<sup>2</sup>. The records range in date from 1272 through to 1863 and are held at TNA, Devon Heritage Centre and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office.

A visit to Devon Heritage Centre allowed me to obtain a few of the original manorial records available.



Yarcombe Manor Court Roll 8 May 1696

#### "Yarcombe

A presentment made by the Jury whose names are hereunto subscribed at the Court Leet held at Yarcombe aforesaid the 8<sup>th</sup> day of May Anno Domini 1696<sup>3</sup>. There then follows a list of items presenting various people to be sworn as officers at the next court. This includes George KNIGHT to be sworn as Hayward (see Appendix 2 for full transcript).

<sup>2</sup> [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F277636](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F277636) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>3</sup> Yarcombe presentment 1696 original document Devon Heritage Centre ref. 346M/M/234

Assessment made by the Jury whose names are hereunto  
subscribed at the Court Leet & Court Barren holden at parent  
aforesaid the 8 Day of October Anno Domini 1697

And we present all them that hath made default at this  
Court this day

And we present the deaths of John <sup>and James</sup> ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
death & what happen for the death we know not

And we present the death of ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
we know not

And we present the death of Elizabeth ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
we know not

And we present Richard ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
for carrying of Males out of  
Sir ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
for which we Assess him 2<sup>d</sup> ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~

And we present William ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
for not repairing his hedges against the Common ft<sup>2</sup>  
And we present John ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
for not repairing his hedges which is  
ft<sup>2</sup> in ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~

And we present William ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
for not repairing his  
And we present in ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~

And we present Thomas ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
to survey  
the ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~

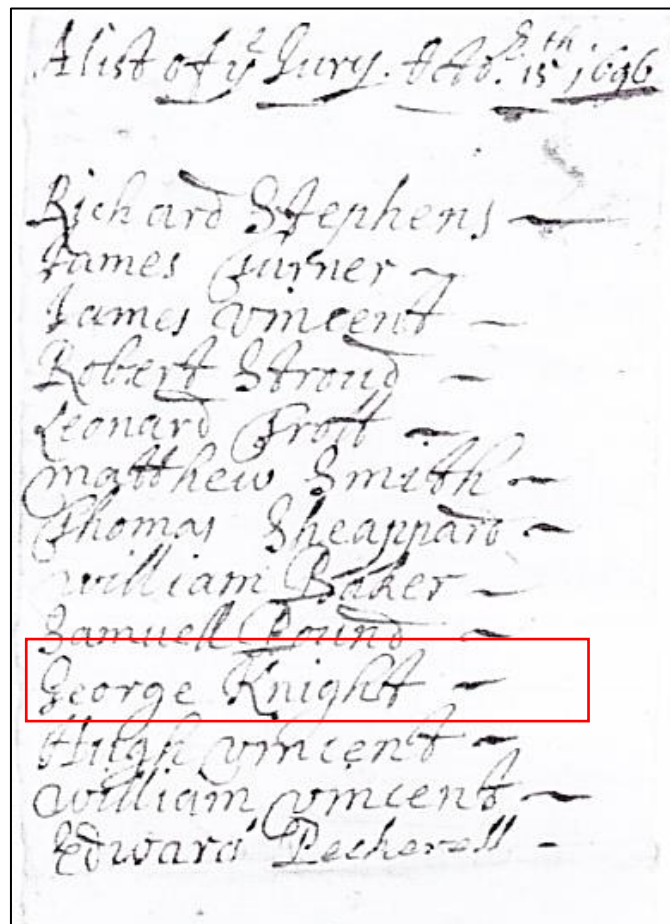
And we present Richard ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
to be sworn a thingman this  
Court And

And we present George ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
to be sworn a thingman this Court

Robert ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
George ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
Richard ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
Robert ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
Roger ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
William ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
William ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
Thomas ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~  
Thomas ~~Thorn~~ <sup>Thorn</sup> ~~the next~~

The Court Roll for 1697 also shows George KNIGHT to be sworn as Hayward, he is also named as a juror<sup>4</sup>. In addition this Court Roll gives the names of customary tenants that have died and who has been admitted in their place, for example “Wee present the death of Samuel Newberey and Thomas Newberey and John Newbery the next tenett and what happen for the heriot Wee know not.” Were Thomas and John the sons of Samuel NEWBEREY? Also “Wee present the death of Elizabeth Jeffery in the Lords hands”. Presumably Elizabeth was a spinster or widow without any heirs. Two people were mentioned for not repairing their housing, and one man was accused of carrying “marle” (a fertilizer) out of the manor to another Lord’s lands (see Appendix 3 for full transcript). All of these entries could warrant further investigation. Not only do they suggest possible relationships but they also show the collective responsibility of the local inhabitants to control and punish crimes and minor misdemeanours. Females are also often named, a rarity in other records of the time.

Lists of jurors were also available to me as in this example:



Jury list 15 October 1696<sup>5</sup>

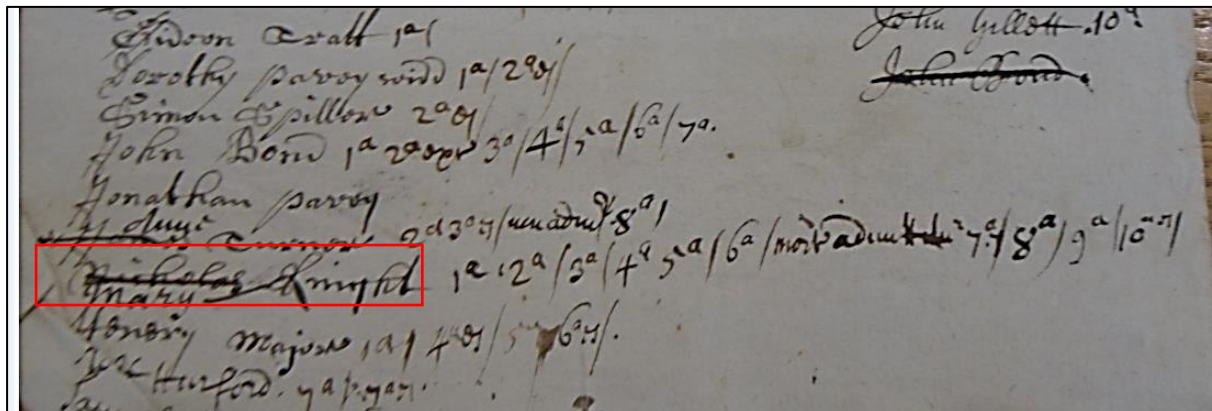
<sup>4</sup> Yarcombe presentment 1697 original document Devon Heritage Centre ref. 346M/M/244

<sup>5</sup> Yarcombe Jury List Original document Devon Heritage Centre ref. 346M/M228

An analysis of the jury lists from 1694 to 1703 show the number of times a particular person served as a juror.

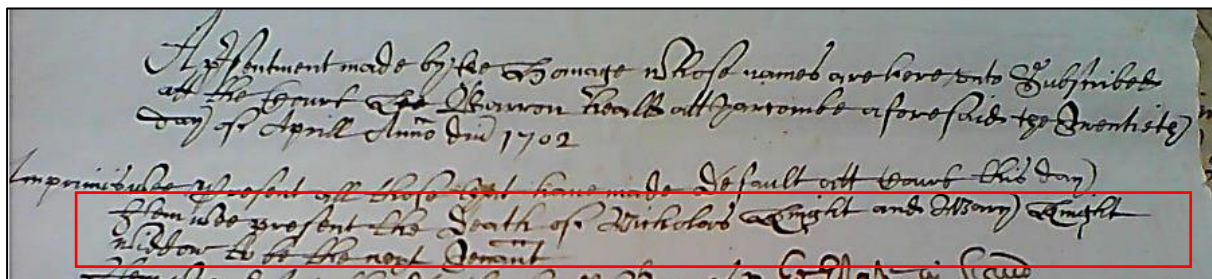
		Oct 1694	April 1695	Oct 1695	Oct 1696	Oct 1697	Oct 1703	Total
William	BAKER				Y	Y		2
Matthew	BILLING	Y						1
Joseph	BOLLETT		Y					1
John	BOND						Y	1
Henery	BOVETT					Y		1
Thomas	BOVETT	Y						1
Thomas	CLAPP		Y			Y		2
Thomas	COOMBE						Y	1
Samuell	COSENS	Y	Y					2
William	DABON						Y	1
William	DIMENT		Y					1
William	DOLLING		Y	Y		Y		3
Willm	HORNE		Y					1
Robert	HOUSE		Y					1
William	HOUSE	Y						1
William	HUTCHENS					Y		1
Nicholas	KNIGHT	Foreman						1
John	KNIGHT	Y						1
George	KNIGHT				Y	Y	Y	3
Simon	MANNING		Y	Y				2
Henry	MAY					Y		1
Abraham	MUTTER	Y						1
Robt	NEWBERY						Y	1
Edward	PECKERELL		Y	Y	Y			3
Samuel	POUND	Y			Y			2
Thomas	SHEPPARD	Y			Y		Y	3
Mathew	SMITH			Y	Y			2
Richard	STEEVENS			Y				1
Richard	STEVENS	Y	Y	Y	Foreman	Y	Y	6
Robert	STROUD				Y	Y		2
Richard	SUMMERHAYES			Y				1
Leonard	TROTT		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Roger	TURNER			Y		Y		2
James	TURNER		Y		Y			2
William	VINCENT	Y			Y	Y	Y	4
Hugh	VINCENT	Y	Y	Y	Y			4
Robert	VINCENT		Foreman	Foreman		Foreman	Foreman	4
James	VINCENT			Y	Y		Y	3
Jacob	VINCENT						Y	1
Robert	WALL						Y	1
Alexander	WARRING	Y		Y				2

Suit rolls contain the names of all tenants who were due to appear at court, and were often amended and dated when a tenant died, providing important genealogical information not only of a death but also when someone migrated in or out of the manor.



Extract of 1698 suit roll showing attendances at up to 10 court leets.

Nicholas KNIGHT died and Mary his widow was admitted at the 7<sup>th</sup> court leet, but it is unclear as to which year this was<sup>6</sup>. The manor court roll of 20 April 1702 says “wee present the death of Nicholas Knight and Mary Knight widdow to be the next tenant”<sup>7</sup>



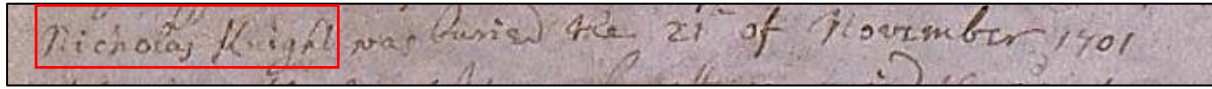
### Extract of 1702 Manor Court Roll

Nicholas must have died sometime between October 1701 (the previous Court Baron) and April 1702.

<sup>6</sup> Yarcombe 1698 Suit Roll Original document Devon Heritage Centre Ref.346M/M/202

<sup>7</sup> Yarcombe 1702 Manor Court Roll Original document Devon Heritage Centre Ref. 346M/M/206

A check of the burial registers for Yarcombe show Nicholas was buried on 21 November 1701<sup>8</sup>. If the parish register had not been available, or if Nicholas had been buried outside the parish, an approximate date of death could have been established from the court roll.

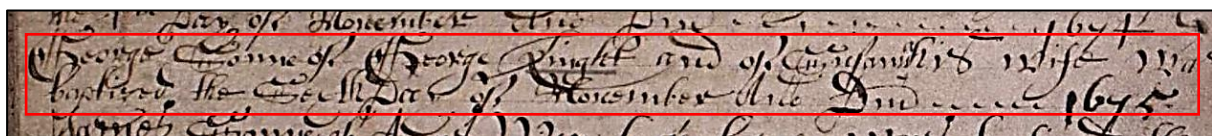


Nicholas KNIGHT's burial entry in Yarcombe parish register

## Part Two - Research into The KNIGHT family

In 1696 and in 1697 George KNIGHT was elected as Hayward for Yarcombe manor. As such he was basically in charge of all matters to do with the meadows and pastures. He impounded any animals that strayed into the meadows; he kept watch on the pastures; maintained the fences; charged those who infringed the customary rights thereof and oversaw the haymaking. At harvest time the Hayward assisted the reeve (the person responsible for the efficient running of the manor) and supervised the peasants in the fields. At the end of the year the Hayward produced a tally to the reeve of all those matters for which he had been made responsible.

Presumably George would have to have known what he was doing to take on this role, was he possibly a yeoman farmer? October 1696 was also the first year he became a juror, could this be because he had reached the age of 21 and this was one of the requirements of becoming a juror? A search of the Yarcombe parish registers show that George was baptised on 6 November 1675, the son of George KNIGHT and Susanna<sup>9</sup>, so he would have just been 21 when he was first sworn in.



George KNIGHT's baptism entry in Yarcombe parish register

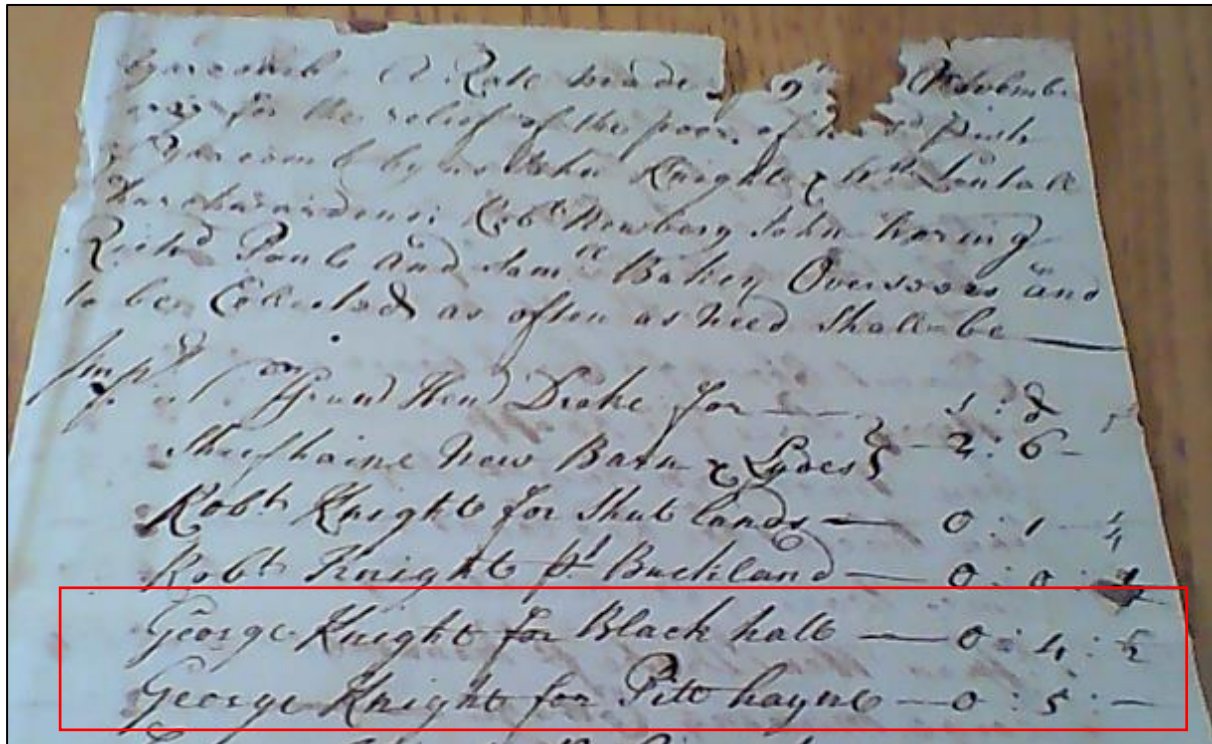
About 1692 George had married Thomasin, although I have been unable to trace this marriage, there appears to be a gap in the marriage register between 1693 and 1707, and no record can be found before or after these dates. They had three children Nicholas baptised 20 February 1692/93, Susanna baptised, 7 August 1695 and Jane baptised 18 March 1697/98<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>9</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

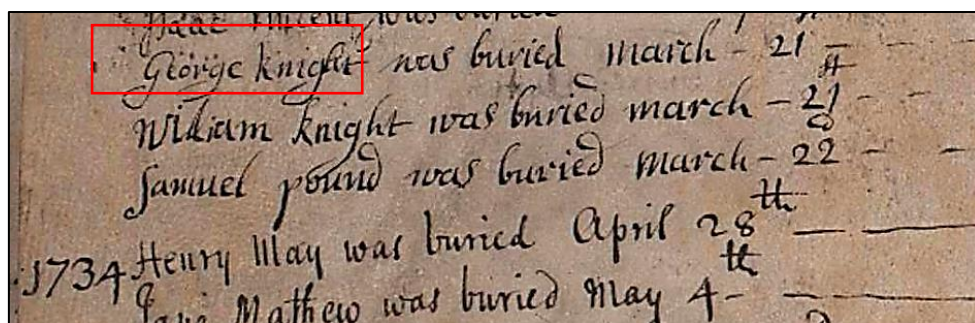
<sup>10</sup> *Ib id*

The 1727 land tax rates for Yarcombe show a George KNIGHT occupying the property called Blackhall. There is another George KNIGHT owner occupier of Pitthayne. Which one of these Georges is “my” George? I shall return to this later.



A rate made 9 November 1727 for the relief of the poor of Yarcombe<sup>11</sup>

George KNIGHT was buried on 21 March 1733/34<sup>12</sup>.



George KNIGHT's burial entry in Yarcombe parish register

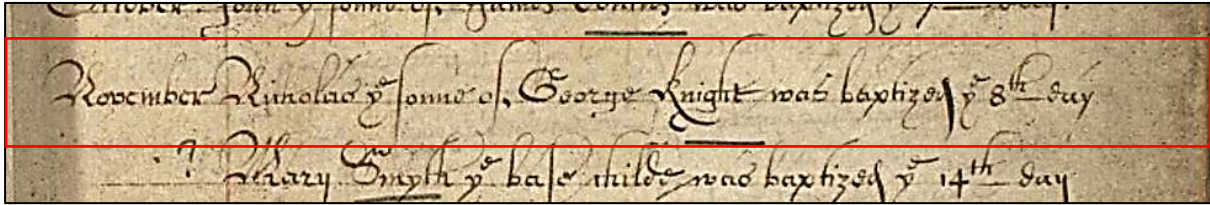
Returning to the jurors' lists which mention Nicholas KNIGHT, who as we've seen died in 1701, and John KNIGHT, could they be related to “my” George KNIGHT? A further search of the Yarcombe parish registers show that “John Knight sonne of George Knight and of Elizabeth his wife was Borne the first day of July 1659”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Yarcombe Land Tax Rates 1727 Original document Devon Heritage Centre ref.: 346M/E/647

<sup>12</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

There is no trace of a Nicholas being born in Yarcombe, however there is a Nicholas baptised 8 November 1649 in Stockland<sup>14</sup>, the parish next to Yarcombe. His father was George.



Nicholas KNIGHT's baptism entry in Stockland parish register

There is also a "*George the sonne of George Knight was baptised the 25 day March 1652*" in Stockland<sup>15</sup>.

Could Nicholas, George and John be brothers?

George KNIGHT senior died in 1678 and in his will dated 1673 (see Appendix 4), shortly after his marriage to Honer BOVETT, he mentions his three sons Nicholas, George and John. As he owned land in Yarcombe (Diocese of Exeter) and Stockland (Diocese of Bristol) his will had to be proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC). Probate was granted to John KNIGHT, son and executor, on 14 September 1678<sup>16</sup>. So Nicholas and John, who were jurors in 1694, were the uncles of "my" George.

<sup>14</sup> Stockland Parish Registers 1640-1761 Devon Heritage Centre 1215A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

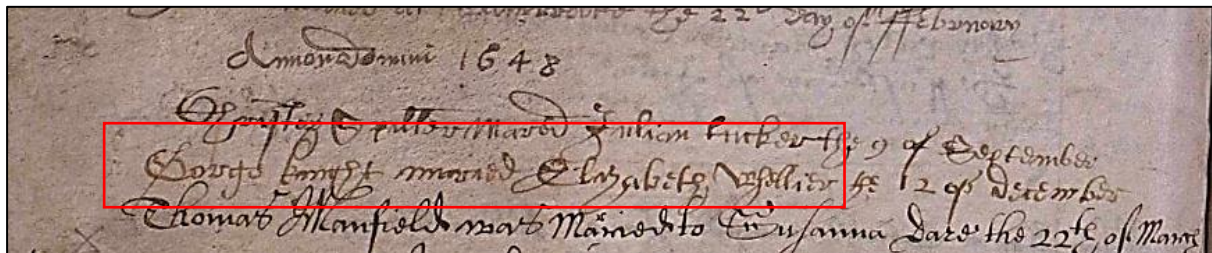
<sup>15</sup> *Ib id*

<sup>16</sup> England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858 digital images [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) accessed 09 Feb 2021 Original Data: The National Archives, Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Class: PROB 11; Piece:357

I was hoping to find evidence of members of the KNIGHT family in the Yarcombe Hearth Tax Return and/or the Protestation Return, however neither of these is extant. The 1660 Devon Tax Assessments do not name any KNIGHTs in Yarcombe, but there are gaps in this listing.

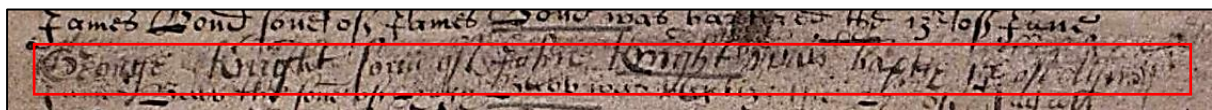
Could I trace the family back further?

George KNIGHT senior married Elizabeth WHELLIER in Yarcombe on 12 December 1648<sup>17</sup>.



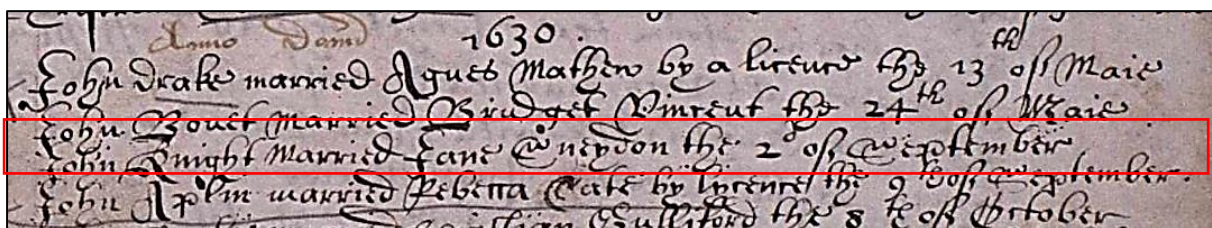
George KNIGHT's marriage to Elizabeth WHELLIER

The only baptism I could find in Yarcombe for George was dated 13 August 1630, "the sonn of John Knight", could this be him<sup>18</sup>?



George KNIGHT baptism entry in Yarcombe parish register

John KNIGHT married Jane SNEYDON 2 September 1630 in Yarcombe, although this is after George was born, could they still be his parents<sup>19</sup>?



John KNIGHT's marriage to Jane SNEYDON

<sup>17</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>18</sup> *Ib id*

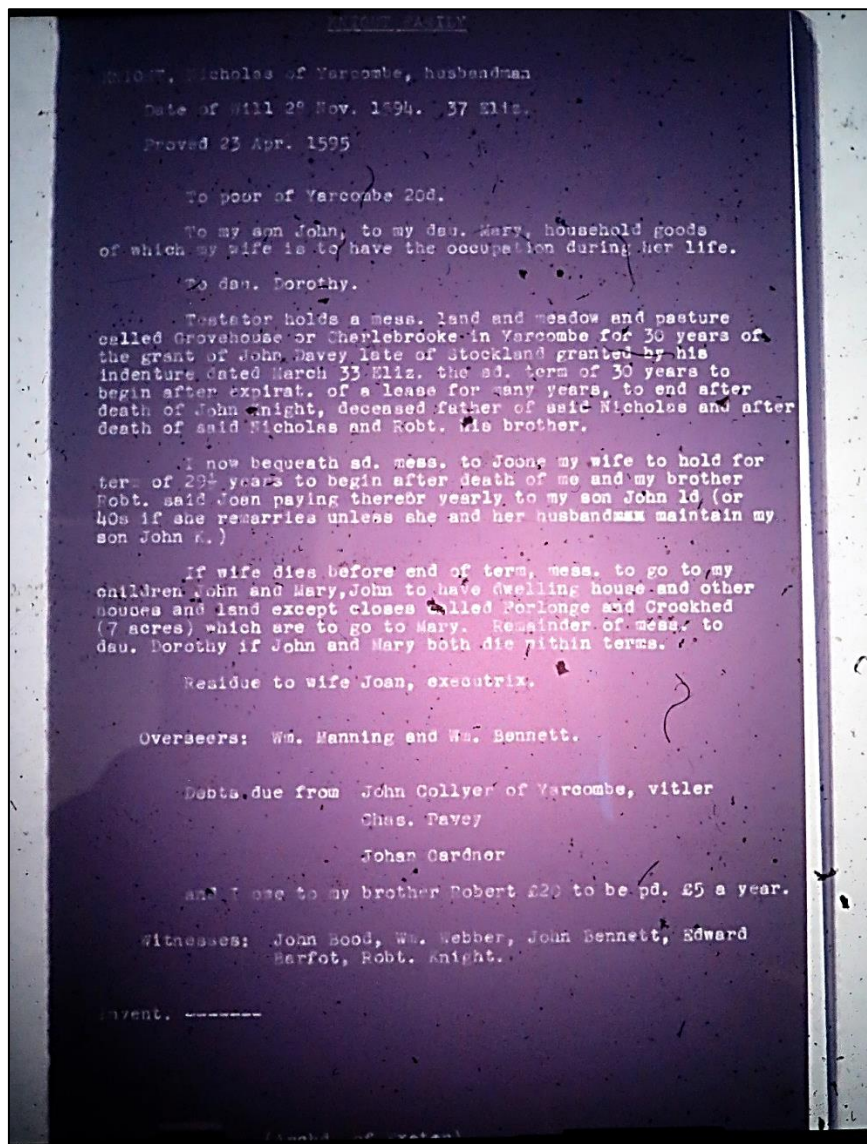
<sup>19</sup> *Ib id*



Probate for William KNIGHTE was granted in 1587 so he could not have been John's father. Probate for Nicholas KNIGHT was granted in 1595 in the Consistory Court of Exeter.

Prior to the establishment of the Principal Probate Registry in 1858 the ecclesiastical courts had responsibility for probating estates. Unfortunately, a great many wills and other probate records from the majority of the Devon church courts were destroyed during World War II. However, Miss Olive MOGER a professional genealogist, abstracted many probate records from most of the Devon courts prior to World War II. At some time after 1942 all her will abstracts were typed up and carbon copies were made and bound into twenty two volumes.

One such abstract is that for Nicholas KNIGHT<sup>24</sup>.



Abstract of Nicholas KNIGHT's will proved 23 April 1595

<sup>24</sup> Moger Olive. Copies of Transcripts and Extracts of Wills. 1921 Original document examined on microfiche.  
Devon FHS 12 February 2021

This clearly shows Nicholas had a son John, as well as daughters Mary and Dorothy. It also tells us that he had a long lease for a messuage, land meadow and pasture called Grovehouse or Charlebrook in Yarcombe and that a new 30 year lease would come into force after the deaths of John KNIGHT (his father deceased), himself and his brother Robert. He bequeathed this land to Joan his wife.

The brother Robert never married so I conclude that Nicholas KNIGHT was John KNIGHT's father.

John KNIGHT senior was buried at Yarcombe the 27 September 1572<sup>25</sup>.

In his will that was proved in the PCC on 24 June 1573<sup>26</sup> John mentions his wife Alice, his three sons Robert, William and Nicholas and a daughter Joan BARFOOTE. I am unable to find baptisms for any of the KNIGHTs, however Joan married Edward BARFOOTE on 26 September 1562<sup>27</sup>. She would certainly have had to be born before 1550, (females could marry at age 12), the earliest baptism recorded in the Yarcombe parish registers is in 1545 explaining why I cannot find any KNIGHT baptisms before this time.

The 1569 Muster Roll for Yarcombe listed all the men aged between 16 and 60 with their weapons or those assessed by the value of their goods to provide weapons. John KNIGHT was assessed as having goods worth £7<sup>28</sup> and so was obviously quite a wealthy man.

YARCOMBE PARISHE					
Presenters sworn : Robert Billinge Robert Dare John Hellier Thomas Cobborne					
Who do presente as biffore is said (or Libborne?)					
John Mathewe 1 almen corslet, 1 pike, 1 harquebut					
John Knighte	G 7	Robert Billinge	G 7	William Zane	G 7
William Griffithe	G 7	Robert Dare	G 7	John Hellier	G 7
Hugh Walrond	G 7	Thomas Collier	G 7		
The Inhabitants not particlarly chardged by the statute are acessed to fynde and maynteyne etc one corslet, one pike, two harquebuts.					
The Names of all the habell menne within the saide parishe mustered as biffore is saide etc					
<u>Archers</u>					
Robert Gullocke		Abraham Mitchell		John Snowe	
Robert Zane		Robert Lake		William Bragge	
Thomas Moore					
<u>Harquebusiers</u>					
Thomas Vyncent		William Mannynge		William Clappe	
John Mathewe		John Purchase		Henry Sawnder	
John Trencher		Paul Browninge		John Hodder	

Yarcombe Parish 1569 Muster Roll

<sup>25</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>26</sup> England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858 digital images [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) accessed 14 Feb 2021 Original data The National Archives Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Class: PROB 11; Piece: 55

<sup>27</sup> Yarcombe Parish Registers 1539-1812 Devon Heritage Centre 1150A/PR/1/1 Digital Images of register pages [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) accessed 02 February 2021

<sup>28</sup> Stoate, T. Laity., Howard, A. J. (Arthur John). The Devon muster roll for 1569. Bristol: T. L. Stoate. 1977

This is the earliest reference to a member of the KNIGHT family that I can find. The Devon Subsidy Rolls 1524-1527 do not mention any KNIGHTs. It would be interesting to view the extant Court Rolls for Yarcombe dating between 1527 and 1581 to see if any KNIGHT is mentioned in these, and this is a possible line of future research, assuming I am able to read them!

## **Conclusion**

From a starting point of a few manorial records I have been able to produce a pedigree of the KNIGHT family dating back to the sixteenth century. I have also shown how manorial records can often prove to be a useful source of names, dates and places, although there is often insufficient information to be able to build a family tree. What they do provide is a vivid picture of the day-to-day life of the ordinary people. Who was elected and sworn to be officers of the manor, who was given a license to sell ale and who broke the local 'trading standard rules' on weights and measures, who had trespassed against another, who assaulted who or who owed money to whom.

The early records are chief among the few records chronicling the lives of ordinary people and the communities in which they lived. They also reveal the organisation and preoccupations of the local community, particularly crime and punishment. Manorial documents are perhaps most useful when used in conjunction with other records, if they exist for a similar time frame, such as census substitutes, parish registers, parish chest records and quarter session records. They can be particularly beneficial, if numerous years' worth of records are available, for tracing families over several generations, and are among the most positive ways of ensuring that true and not speculative ancestry is traced.

Jane Chislett  
The Value of Manor Court Rolls in Family Research  
IHGS Diploma 2021

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Bibliography and websites used

Appendix 2. Transcription of Yarcombe Manor Court Roll 8 May 1696

Appendix 3. Transcription of Yarcombe Manor Court Roll 8 October 1697

Appendix 4. Will of George KNIGHT

Appendix 5. Will of John KNIGHT

Appendix 6. KNIGHT Family pedigree

## Appendix 1

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- Find My Past [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)
- The Internet Archive [archive.org](http://archive.org)
- The National Archives [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

## Appendix 2

### Yarcombe Manor Court Roll 8 May 1696 Devon Heritage Centre ref 346M/M/234

#### Yarcombe

A presentment made by the Jury whose names are herunto subscribed at the Court Leet held att Yarcombe aforesaid the 8<sup>th</sup> day Of May Anno Domini 1696

- Imprimis  
Item We present all them that have made default at Court this day  
We present that Richard Barry maketh Oath that there are severall defects in and about Keats Mill which ought to be repaired by William Zane to be repaired in Three monethes tyme on the penalty of 5s
- Item We present William Baker Nicholas Billing Angell Larrence William Dolling or two of them to be sworn Constables next Court day
- Item We present Jonathan Pavey and the viduus Bovett to be sworn or get one to be sworn, one of them, Tythingman next Court day
- Item We present George Knight to be sworn Hayward the next Court day
- Item We present two Ewe sheep Overyeard in the Custody of Richard Summerhays for which there is due to the Lord of the Manor One shilling

### Appendix 3

Yarcombe Manor Court Roll 8 October 1697  
Devon Heritage Centre ref 346M/M/244

#### Yarcombe

A presentment made by the Jury whose names are hereunto  
subscribed at the Court Leete and Court Baron held at Yarcombe  
aforesaid this 8 day of October Anno Domini 1697

- Imprimis wee present all them that hath made default at this  
Court this day
- Imprimis Wee present the deathe of John Care James Vincent and William  
Huckenes the next  
Tenett and what happen for A heriot<sup>29</sup> we know not
- Imprimis Wee present the death of Samuel Newberey and Thomas  
Newberey and John Newbery the next tenett and what happen for the  
heriott  
Wee know not
- Imprimis Wee present the death of Elizabeth Jeffery in the Lords hands
- Imprimis Wee present Richard Stevens for carying of Marle out of  
Sir Francis Drakes Land into another Lord Lands 800 and 20 seemes  
for which wee Amase him 2s 8d
- Imprimis we present Matthew Smith uppon the information of Thomas  
Sheppard for not repairing his hedges against the Common
- Item wee present John Fay for not repairing his howsing which is  
in decay
- Item we present William Zane for not repaireing his howsing  
which are in decay
- Imprimis we present Thomas Newberey and William Steckland to sworne  
Constables at this Court
- Item we present Richard Steevens to be sworne Tithingman this  
Court
- Item Wee present George Knight to be sworne Hayward this Court

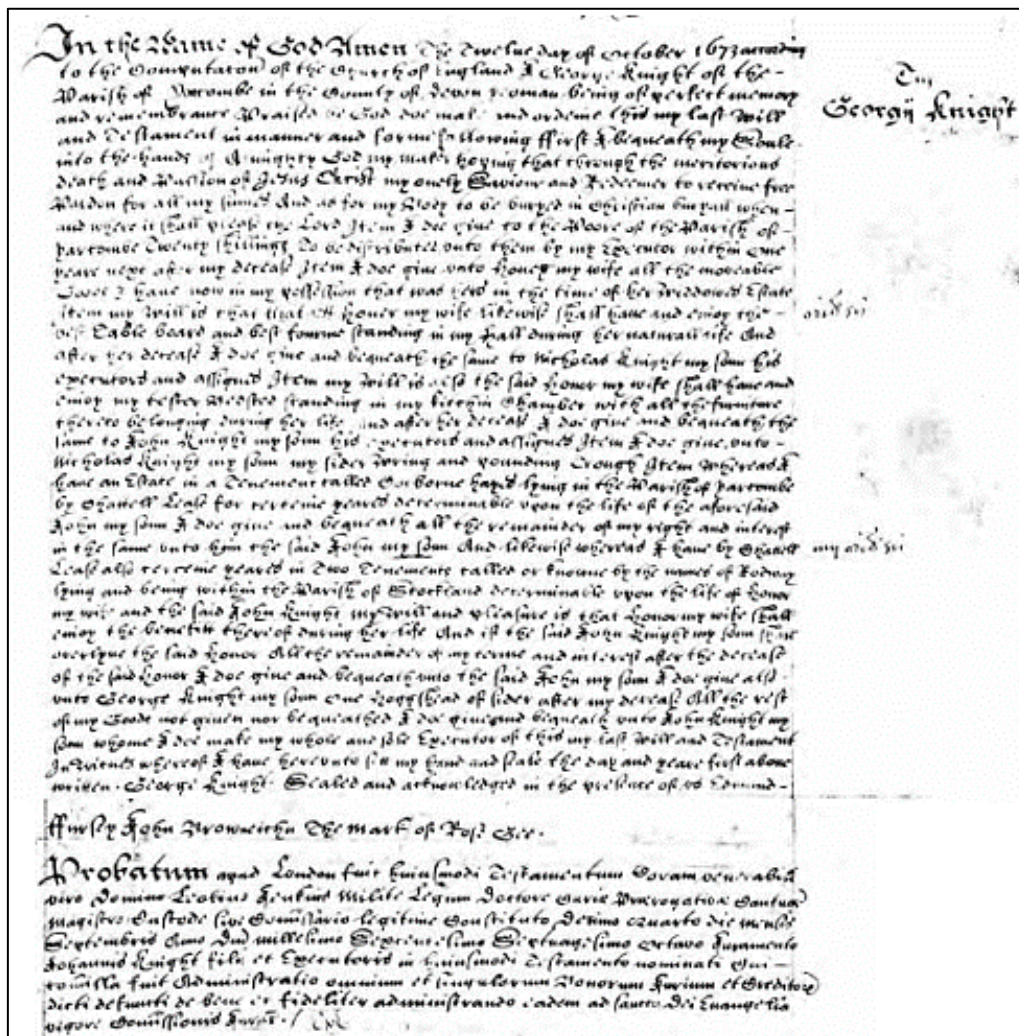
Robert Vincent  
George Knight  
William Vincent  
Leonard Tratt  
Robert Stroud  
Roger Turner  
William Huckens  
William Colling  
Henry Bovett  
Henry May  
William Bater  
Thomas Clapp

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<sup>29</sup> Heriot was the right of the lord to the best beast or sum of money payable when the tenant died.

## Appendix 4

Will of George KNIGHT proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury  
14 September 1678. The National Archives PROB 11/357



Transcription of the will of George KNIGHT  
(Transcribed following the text per line as set out in the original document)

In the name of God Amen The Twelve day of October 1673 according to the Computation of the Church of England I George Knight of the Parish of Yarcombe in the County of Devon Yeoman being of perfect memory and remembrance Praised be to God doe make and ordaine this my last Will and Testament in manner and forme following First I bequeath my Soule into the hands of Almighty God my maker hoping that through the meritorious death and passion of Jesus Christ my only Saviour and Redeemer to receive free Pardon for all my sinnes And as for my Body to be buried in Christian buryall when and where it shall please the Lord Item I doe give to the Poore of the Parish of Yarcombe Twenty Shillings to be distributed unto them by my Executor within one yeare next after my decease Item I doe give unto Honer my wife all the moveable

Goods I have now in my possession that was hers in the time of her Widdowed Estate Item my Will is that Honer my wife likewise shall have and enjoy the best Table Board and best fourme standing in my hall during her naturall life And after her decease I doe give and bequeath the same to Nicholas Knight my sonn his executors and assignes Item my will is also the said Honer my wife shall have and enjoy my tester Bedsted standing in my kitchen Chamber with all the furniture thereto belonging during her life and after her decease I doe give and bequeath the same to John Knight my sonn his executors and assignes Item I doe give unto Nicholas Knight my sonn my sider wring and pounding Trough Item whereas I have an Estate in a Tenement called Corborne Hayes lying in the Parish of Yarcombe by Chattel Lease for certeine yeares determinable upon the life of the aforesaid John my sonn I doe give and bequeath all the remainder of my right and interest in the same unto him the said John my sonn And likewise whereas I have by Chattell Lease also certeine yeares in Two Tenements called or known by the names of Rodway lying and being within the Parish of Stockland determinable upon the life of Honer my wife and the said John Knight my will and pleasure is that Honer my wife shall enjoy the benefitt thereof during her life And if the said John Knight my sonn shall overlyne the said Honer All the remainder of my terme and interest after the decease of the said Honer I doe give and bequeath unto the said John my sonn I doe give also unto George Knight my sonn one hoggshead of sider after my decease All the rest of my Goods not given nor bequeathed I doe give and bequeath unto John Knight my sonne whome I doe make my whole and sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament  
In witnes whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale the day and yeare first above  
written. George Knight. Sealed and acknowledged in the presence of us Edmund Fursey John Browdiche The mark of Rose Geo

Probatum apud London fuit huiusmodi Testamentum coram venerabili viro domino Leolino Jenkins Milite Legum doctore Curia Praerogativae Cantuar Magistro Custodi sive Commissario legitime Constituto decimo Quarto die mensis Septembris Anno domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo Septuagesimo Octavo Juramento Johannis Knight filis et Executoris in huiusmodi Testamento nominati Cui comissa fuit Administratio omnium et singulorum Bonorum Jurium et Creditore dicti defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando eadem ad sancta dei Evangelia vigore Comissionis Jurat

## Appendix 5

Will of John KNIGHT proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 24 June 1573  
PROB 11/55



### Abstract of the will of John KNIGHT

Testator John KNIGHT of Yertcombe, Devon

Will dated "the olden daye of Maye" 1573<sup>30</sup>

To wife Alice ij kyen and xx sheepe to be halfe weathers and half ewes.

To Joane Barfoote my daughter one cowe and Tenne sheepe halfe weathers and half ewes.

To Henrie Barfoote iij ewes

To Sonne Roberte Knighte one cowe fyve weathers and fyve ewes.

To evrye of my godchildren viij d a peece

To the church of Yercombe vi s. Viij d.

The residue of all his goodes as well moveable as unmovable to William Knyght and Nicholas Knight sonnes.

Executors William Knight and John Knight

<sup>30</sup> There appears to be an anomaly here. If John KNIGHT was buried on 27 September 1572 he could not have written his will some nine months later! I believe the clerk who copied the original will has made an error by writing 1573, instead of 1572.

Appendix 6

KNIGHT Family Pedigree

