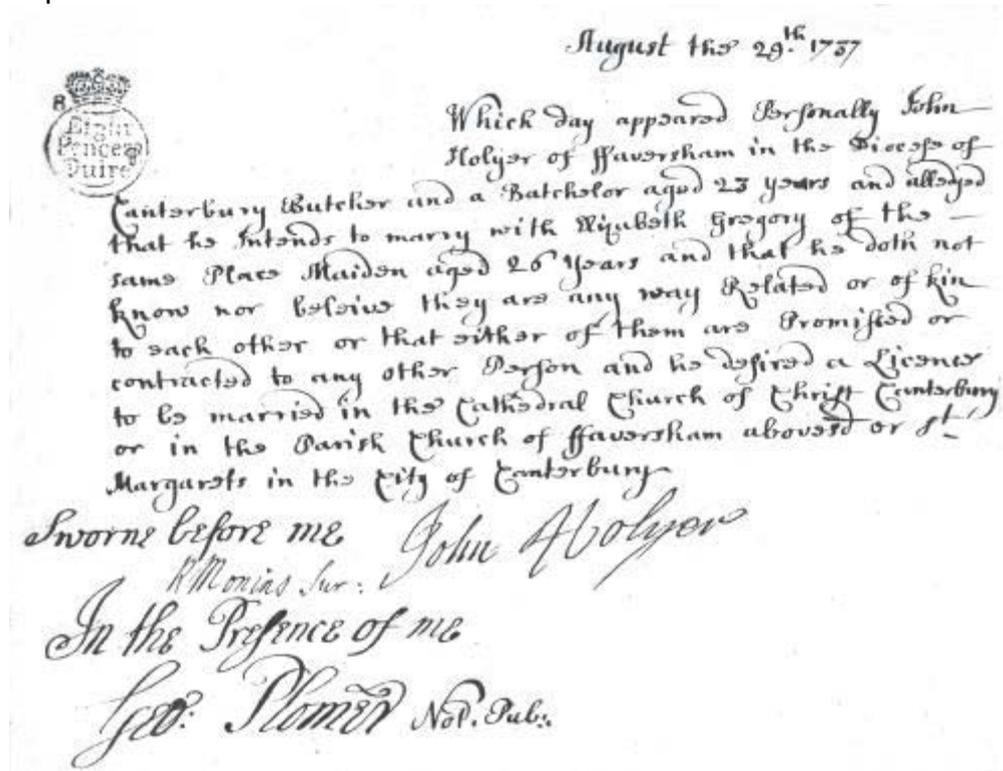


The Holyer family of Woodchurch

There are some early records of the Holyer family in Kent in a number of places, including some 17th century records at Woodchurch itself. The Canterbury Cathedral Communicants list of 1569 includes a John Holyer from Appledore, which lies a few miles south from Woodchurch across Shirley Moor. But the present day Holyer family all descend from John Holyer (c1714-1772) who married Elizabeth Gregory of Faversham in Canterbury Cathedral on 29 Aug 1737.

He may have been the John Hollier who was baptised aged 8 at Egerton in 1822, which suggests he may have been an orphan, as no parents are mentioned in the baptism record.



August the 29th 1737

Which day appeared Personally John Holyer of Faversham in the Diocese of Canterbury Butcher and a Bachelor aged 23 years and alleged that he intends to marry with Elizabeth Gregory of the same Place Maiden aged 20 years and that he doth not know nor believe they are any way Related or of kin to each other or that either of them are Promised or contracted to any other Person and he desired a Licence to be married in the Cathedral Church of Christ Canterbury or in the Parish Church of Faversham above or St. Margarets in the City of Canterbury

Sworne before me John Holyer
R. Monies Sur.

In the Presence of me
Geo. Plomer Not. Pub.

In his marriage allegation of 1737, he states his age as 23, which points to a birth date of 1714. Once married, John became a butcher at Woodchurch, establishing a link with the village that went on for many generations. He had his own land, suggesting that the Gregory family may have "set him up". It seems that John's land lay to the east of the village close to where Highlands Farm is today. John and Elizabeth had 7 children. Interestingly, the Woodchurch baptism registers describe John and Elizabeth as being 'of Faversham' on Susannah's baptism of 1738 and 'of Frittenden' on John's baptism of 1739. But by 1741 and the baptism of their 3rd child William, it appears they were living in the parish. They had another four children: Thomas (1742-1744), Abraham (1745-1815), George (1746-1748) and Elizabeth (1748).

In 1755, John is shown as paying Poor Relief tax of 3 shillings on his land and property assessed as worth £4 rent, but in 1758 he paid 4s and 2s each for his tenants Peter Illenden, Stephen Jewhurst and James Venner.

In 1772, just a few days before he died, John made his will. He asks his Executors to sell off the majority of his land of 41 acres, comprising Highlands and a wood adjacent to Wightwick Wood, to repay the mortgage on these lands and distribute the money remaining to his children: John (of Egerton), William and Elizabeth. His remaining land of around 8 acres passed to his son Abraham. His house was divided between Abraham and Elizabeth, the former part being that rented by Peter Illenden and his mother. Elizabeth also got 2 acres of woodland adjacent to Highlands.

Of his children, John went to Charing and later Egerton where he was a butcher. Some of his descendants became butchers in Maidstone. Elizabeth married John Comber in 1775. William and Abraham carried on as butchers in Woodchurch and many Holyers descend from them both. Elsewhere in Kent and Sussex, there were Holyer butchers for over 200 years: the last known Holyer butcher was Gerald Fleming Holyer (1911-1976) of Patcham, Sussex. The Holyer butchery business at Woodchurch is said to have passed to the Fullagar family who kept it going until the 1980s, but evidence to support this link is still being sought.

The main Holyer lines in Woodchurch descend from John's sons William and Abraham.

In 1776/7 William was a Churchwarden, while in 1779, he is shown as one of the landowners at Woodchurch nominating the Overseers for the Poor.

William married Sarah Batchelor in 1763 and they had 9 children, although only 4 lived to adulthood. His son William Gregory Holyer carried on as butcher after William (though he was made bankrupt in 1826), while his other surviving son John became the butcher at High Halden.

William made a will in 1810, leaving some of his immediate land and property to William Gregory Holyer, while the balance of 14 acres was sold and divided in 5, one fifth going to John. Another fifth went to James Holyer, the illegitimate son of William's daughter Sarah. This James went on to marry Hannah Morris in 1819 and thereby started a long line of Holyers who used the name Morris or Maurice.

Abraham married Susannah Crittenden in 1768 and had 8 children, but only his eldest child, Walter, married and passed on the Holyer name. Walter's 5th child William, who married Mary Highsted in 1820 was the ancestor of many of the Woodchurch Holyers.

Holyers can be found at Woodchurch at each of the censuses 1841-1901 and a Gedcom file of all Holyers who lived at Woodchurch has been deposited with the Woodchurch Museum.

There are 4 Holyer gravestones at the back of the Parish Church at Woodchurch, though many more Holyers are certainly buried there.



Sacred to the memory of WILLIAM GREGORY HOLYER who died February 14th 1845 aged 71 years. Also MARY HOLYER his wife who died January 26th 1841 aged 71 years. They had issue ten children Mary, Grace, William, John, Kitty, Jane, Richard, Susan, George and Ann.

William Gregory Holyer was the grandson of the first John Holyer and like him a butcher at Woodchurch.

Being a butcher wasn't apparently an easy business, as William Gregory Holyer went bankrupt in 1826.



To the memory of RICHARD HOLYER late of Brenzett in this County who departed this life May 13th 1842 aged 37 leaving issue by Elizabeth, his wife two sons Richard Henry and John Parton.

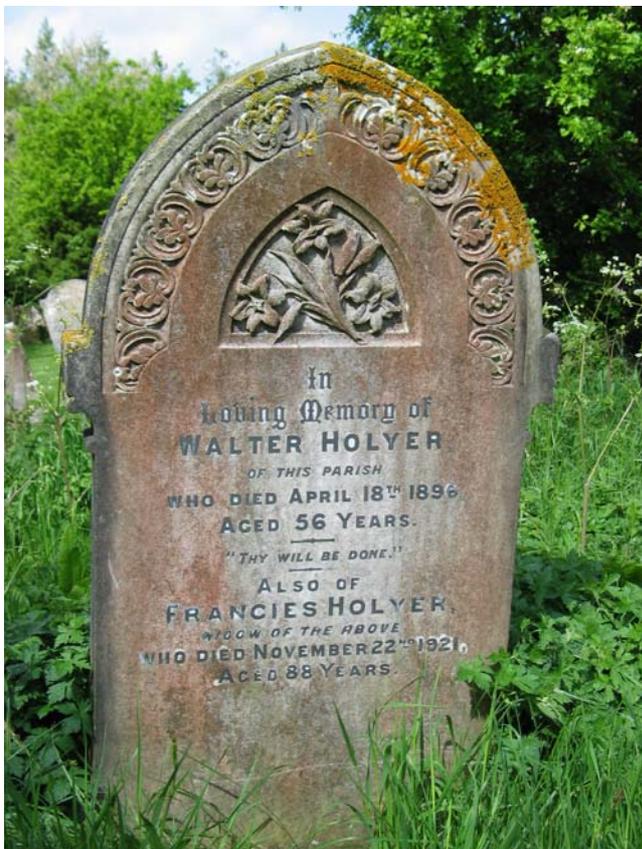
JOHN PARTON HOLYER who died Nov 1st 1849 aged 10 years and HENRY HOLYER 12th Nov 1892.

Richard was the son of William Gregory Holyer, above, and the Miller at Brenzett. He was probably a close friend of John Parton, the miller at Woodchurch. Elizabeth continued as a dairy farmer at Old Romney until her death in 1906.



WILLIAM HOLYER who died 3rd May 1874 aged 74. ALSO his wife MARY who died Oct 29th 1853, aged 51, leaving 4 sons and 5 daughters.

William was a grandson of Abraham Holyer and was a farm labourer and local preacher. Many Holyers descend from this family.



In loving memory of WALTER HOLYER of this parish, who died April 18th 1896 aged 56 years. Also of his wife FRANCIES HOLYER, widow of the above, who died November 22nd 1921 aged 88 years.

Walter was the son of William & Mary, see above.

Francies may have been the last Holyer to live in Woodchurch.

The Holyer family is being extensively researched by Peter Walker, a descendant of the Woodchurch Holyers, as part of a wider One Name Study of the names Hollyer, Holyer and Hollier. He can be contacted at:-

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