

Introduction

Let me introduce myself. I am Steve Lee youngest son of Elsie Muriel Lee (nee High) who in turn is the youngest daughter of James Henry High born in Salthouse and for 50 years blacksmith at Sheringham.

My own interest in researching our family began around three years ago and soon after I came across the Salthouse History website after my elder brother and sister had both told me how brilliant it was. It was here I found and was inspired by Fred High's incredible work on the High family tree.

Fred really did leave us with a cliff hanger! So much so I was determined to continue his great work. Who was the father of William High born about 1705 that married Hester! It became the question above all others that has dominated my family history research.

Finally, just over a year ago I made a small breakthrough and was convinced I'd discovered something Fred hadn't so very tentatively I emailed Fred to tell him what I've found.

Fred replied immediately, excited that someone else had taken on the mantle of continuing his work after his "retirement" in 2004. Since then Fred and I have been in regular contact and Fred kindly shared his thoughts on William's origins with me and likewise I have been sending Fred all my new finds over the past year for his expert opinion. Together we have found a great deal and think that now is the time to share it with everyone else.

I have found Fred to be a complete inspiration and would like to take time to thank him for all his kind words especially on the dark days whenever we disproved each of the countless William theories we researched!

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Ipswich, Suffolk, England, 9th July 2010

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The family of William and Hester High

Let's begin where Fred left us back in 2004, a position of believing that William and Hester had three children, Sarah 1734, Edmund 1735 and Benjamin abt 1741/2 and that William died and was buried at St Margaret's Cley in late 1742. We now know much more in fact we have traced five more children with the very strong likelihood of two more!

I use the terms "born in Salthouse" and "born in Kelling" throughout the text that follows. I've done this only to make it easier for my own research purposes. Commander Frank Stagg in his research on Salthouse in the 1930's commented on how intertwined the two parishes were so it may well be the case that William and Hester had one place of abode at Salthouse and the fact that some records are in Salthouse and others in Kelling could well be down to the whim of the rector who recorded the families birth marriages and deaths.

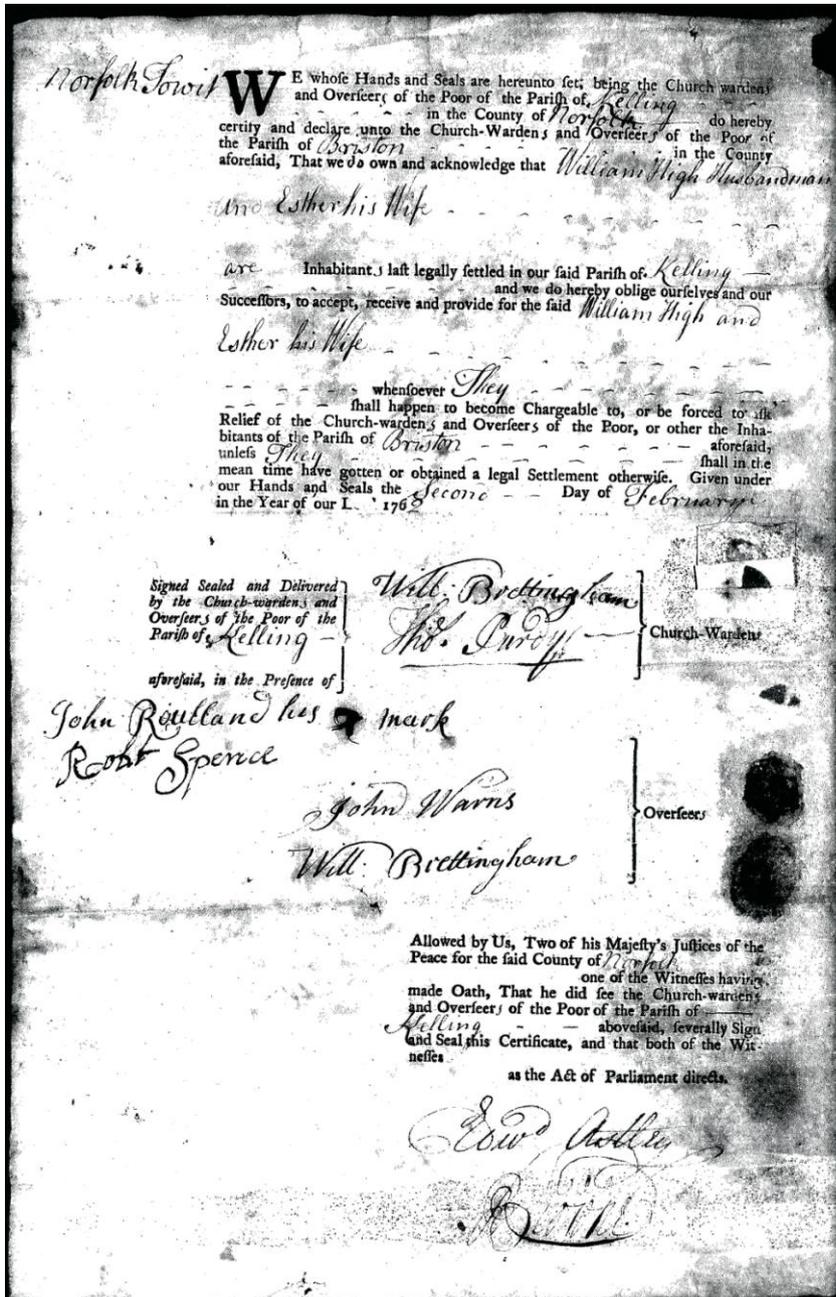
So without further delay here is the revised family for William and Hester. All the children listed have parish register baptism entries except Benjamin. There is little doubt that Benjamin is a son of William and Hester as they are the only High's in Salthouse, Kelling or other local parishes at the time. Despite having found no baptism record for Benjamin his marriage to Amy and Amy's family have now been traced. Extra marriage details have also been found for Sarah and Edmund as well.

- Hester High baptised 1st January 1731 at St Mary's Kelling.
Nothing has been found about Hester so she may well have died as a child.
- Sarah High born 24th January 1734 baptised 18th June 1736 at Salthouse.
Sarah marries Thomas Latten on 30th November 1762 at All Saints Sharrington. The witnesses at the wedding were a W Fisher and James Turner. The register shows that neither Sarah nor Thomas was literate as both made their marks. On 13th August 1771 at All Saints Sharrington, Sarah Latten a widow marries John Reynolds from Briston and later in the St Pauls Norwich parish there is burial record for Sarah Reynolds (nee High), aged 65 years, dated 19th October 1803
- Edmund High born 16th January 1735 baptised 6th February 1735 at Salthouse.
This Edmund is now believed to have died very soon after his birth.
- John High born 15th February 1738 baptised 28th November 1739 at St Mary's Kelling
Nothing has been found about John so he may well have died as a child.
- Benjamin High abt August 1739
Benjamin is now believed to have been baptised at Kelling rather than Salthouse although there is still no baptism entry for him to be found. The August 1739 birth has been chosen to fit in with the births of the other children who do have register entries at either Salthouse or Kelling. The 1739 birth makes him 89 at his death one year older than age 88 as declared on his burial register entry of 24th April 1829 at Salthouse.
Benjamin married the widow Amy Warnes at St Mary's Kelling 5th July 1770. Amy's first marriage was to a Mark Warnes on 26th October 1766 where she is named as Amy Dennis. Amy was born 5th July 1747 baptised 19th July 1747 at Holy Trinity Runton the daughter of James Dennis and wife Barbara. Amy died 6th October 1818 at Salthouse
- Edmund High born 24th February 1741 baptised 14th February 1742 at St Mary's Kelling.
Edmund marries a Margaret Barrett at East Walton Parish Church 23rd November 1761

- Thomas High born 19th September 1742 baptised 16th January 1743 at St Mary's Kelling
Nothing has been found about Thomas so he may well have died as a child.
- Elizabeth High born 24th September 1745 baptised St Mary's Kelling 28th September 1745.
Nothing has been found about Elizabeth so she may well have died as a child.

William the Husbandman

Before discussing William and Hester's other possible children another revelation; William did not die in 1742 at Cley! A settlement certificate dated 2nd February 1762 shows that William and Hester left Kelling parish and moved a few miles south to Briston. The Briston burial register records Hester's burial on 19th April 1774 but unfortunately does not give her age. Again the settlement certificate does not reveal William or Hester's ages but it does state he was a Husbandman or in modern day language a tenant farmer. I've included an image of the certificate below. It shows Hester as Esther but Hester, Esther and Easter were all spelling variations of the same name in those times.



Titles such as Husbandman were very important in William's time and it's worth taking a detour to explain why. As a Husbandman William's social status can be gauged quite accurately. For a start it shows he was not a poor "ag lab" peasant in fact his Husbandman status places his rank in society just below that of a Yeoman a small landowner in his own right. Husbandmen got their title in a number of ways, for example he could rent his farm or smallholding from a local landowner or maybe work on a farm or small holding that was owned by his father or perhaps an elder brother. Many Husbandmen were rich enough to leave a will or at least an administration document that listed their goods and chattels after their death.

In William's time a person's religious beliefs were closely linked to their social status. Plain "ag labs" along with the aristocracy and landed gentry were almost entirely Church of England attendees. It simply suited the land owners to keep an eye on their peasant workforce even when they attended church!

In the middle is what we would nowadays call a small middle class and while many of these did attend the local CoE church many others were dissenting non conformists. At the poorer end of the non conformist spectrum were Baptists and Congregationalists and at the richer end were Presbyterians, Quakers and other Independents. The Baptists and Congregationalists' drew their ranks from tenant farmers, small landowners, shopkeepers, that kind of person while the Presbyterians, Independents' and Quakers appealed to richer people like large business owners and even some politicians.

Starting from the mid to late 18th century onwards these old non conformist churches were joined by the Methodists. The Methodists were originally formed as an evangelistic wing of the CoE by John Wesley and aimed their preaching directly at the common working man. Methodism split from the CoE soon after John Wesley's death and came to dominate non conformity in the 19th century where it increasingly replaced the older non conformist churches. The original Methodist church in turn split forming the Wesleyan Methodist and the more radical Primitive Methodist churches in the early part of the 19th century.

We know the Highs were attending the Primitive Methodist chapel throughout in the 19th century; in fact my Great Grandfather Henry High of Salthouse was a preacher on the Sheringham and Holt Methodist circuit. So is there any evidence that William and Hester could have been non conformist before Methodism arrived? The answer is very likely yes for the following reasons:

- William's title as a Husbandman places him in the bracket where being a non conformist is a distinct possibility.
- William's grandson Thomas Dennis High (my Great, Great, Great Grandfather) and also William's Great Grandson Benjamin Youngs High are named using the non conformist convention of having the mothers surname as a second Christian name. Only non conformists did this. Having children named in this way is a very strong indicator that the family is non conformist.
- The 19th century High's at Salthouse converted to Primitive Methodism in pretty quick time. They may well have been inspired by Wesley's visits to the region, for example at Walsingham in 1788. Walsingham has the oldest Methodist chapel in East Anglia with a Wesleyan society formed in 1779 and a chapel built in 1791.
- The dates of baptism for William and Hester's children that are known to have survived show the non conformist tendency to baptise children at a later age than CoE couples. Many of William and Hester's children were baptised at around 12 to 18 months. CoE couples were more likely to baptise their children within a few days of birth rather than wait. For the children that are suspected of not surviving their baptism generally occurs within their first year so it may be the case these children were baptised once it became apparent that they weren't going to live.

If William and Hester were non conformists how do we account for the fact that their children have CoE baptism entries in both the Salthouse and Kelling registers?

The simplest answer is that it comes down to the wealth of the individual family. William may have been a Husbandman but he was by no means a wealthy man. During the late 17th, 18th, 19th and into the early 20th century each parish was responsible for looking after its own poor. Any person wishing to claim poor relief could only do so in the parish they were legally settled in.

At birth you normally gained settlement in the parish you were born so a CoE baptism certificate was one of the simplest ways to prove you were a resident of the parish and thus gain settlement and have a right to poor relief if you ever needed it.

If you later moved to another parish then before you could claim poor relief there you would need to gain settlement in that parish. Settlement could be obtained if you could prove:

- You had an income in excess of £10 a year around £15000 a year in today's terms.
- Your existing parish of settlement agreed to pay any costs incurred by the parish you were moving to.
- You could gain permanent settlement at the new parish if you were successful at a settlement hearing.

If you could not obtain settlement in the new parish you could be forcibly removed back to your original parish by the local constables. Originally the law stated you could be removed at anytime however it was later changed to when it became apparent you were a drain on the resources of the parish you had arrived in.

William and Hester's settlement certificate shows Kelling parish accepting that they would pay any costs associated with William and Hester during their stay at Briston.

The result of the settlement laws meant it was immensely important that everyone had a legal parish of settlement that they could turn to and claim poor relief if they ever needed to. Many poorer non conformist families hedged their bets and although they didn't attend the CoE church they had their children baptised by the local CoE rector thereby obtaining legal settlement in the parish for their children.

A good example of this occurs in the family of my grandmother Laura Johnson the wife of Jimmy High from Salthouse. The Johnson's were a Sheringham fishermen family and throughout the 19th century many have double baptisms, initially when they are a few days old at the Sheringham parish CoE church and again many months later by the Primitive Methodist minister responsible for the Sheringham and Holt circuit.

The Briston Connection

The settlement certificate for William and Hester shows Kelling parish accepting they will pay if William and Hester ever need to claim poor relief at Briston. In fact it appears William and probably Hester do return to Kelling as William's burial appears in the Kelling register dated 13th May 1770.

William's return to Kelling leaves two interesting questions. Why did he go to Briston in the first place and why did his widow Hester return to Briston after his death? The likely answer to this appears to be that two more of William and Hester's children lived there!

The list of William and Hester's children shows that daughter Sarah marries her second husband John Reynolds in August 1771. Briston is John's home parish so it would be easy to conclude that William and Hester move to Briston to live with or close by their daughter and her new husband. However there is compelling evidence that one more previously unknown child of William and Hester is already a resident at Briston.

Like Benjamin there are no baptism register entries for this mystery child at Salthouse or Kelling however the Kelling baptism register reveals the following:

- Mary High born 16th May 1748 baptised St Mary's Kelling 31st May 1748 the daughter of William High and **Elizabeth**

Mary is known to die in the same year but wife Elizabeth cannot be a second wife of William after a death of Hester as the settlement certificate shows Hester alive and well in 1762 and surviving until 1774. So this is a brand new William High and as William and Hester appear to be the only High family in Salthouse and Kelling at the likely time of his birth then in all probability he is their son. In this regard William has as much claim to be a child of William and Hester as son Benjamin who also has no baptism record.

Unfortunately no marriage entry has been traced for William and Elizabeth but if we assume that William and Elizabeth married in say 1747 when say William was around 22 years old then it places his birth around 1725 which as well as making him William and Hester's eldest known child (quite likely with the name William) also gives us a rough date as to when William and Hester were probably married.

Moving forward eight years from Mary High's birth in 1748 to Briston we find the earliest recorded reference to a High at Briston when a William High marries Susan Garitt on 1st October 1756. The Briston registers show a child Elizabeth born 13th January 1760 baptised 22nd January 1760 to the couple. Tragedy seems to strike the extended family as Elizabeth aged 14 dies and is buried on the same day as her grandmother Hester on 19th April 1774. So by far the simplest explanation to all of these facts given William and Hester's arrival at Briston in 1762 is that an ageing William and Hester move there to live with or nearby their eldest son William and daughter Sarah. Susan Garrit would have to be son William's second wife as the Kelling register shows he originally married an Elizabeth.

There is further intrigue at Briston in that a second settlement record dated 7th August 1764 shows a Henry High arriving at Briston from Saxthorpe. He and his wife Elizabeth have several children at Briston and Henry's grandchildren can be seen in the Briston Primitive Methodist chapel registers in the early 19th century. So was Henry another child of William and Hester?

One other fact that links Briston to the Salthouse Highs' and adds credibility to William and Hester as non conformists is that the Guestwick and Briston Congregationalist Chapel was founded there in about 1694.

A journey between Salthouse to Briston and back again seems quite a distance to undertake each Sunday but many early non conformist chapels were simply converted houses and could not hold a full congregation. The preacher or preachers may well have operated a circuit and travelled around the local villages in much the same way as my Great Grandfather Henry High did as a preacher for the Primitive Methodists in the late 19th century. Again using my Grandmother Laura Johnson's ancestors as an example a number of her ancestors along with many other Sheringham fishermen families have baptism records for their children at the Primitive Methodist chapel at Aylsham in the 19th century.

If we assume William and Henry are children of William and Hester the full family now appears as follows:

William and Hester are married in about 1725

- William High born abt 1726 at Kelling married first Elizabeth at Kelling and had a daughter Mary born 16th May 1748 baptised St Mary's Kelling 31st May 1748. Mary died 29th August 1748. Next he married Susan Garitt on 1st October 1756 and had a child Elizabeth born 13th January 1760 baptised 22nd January 1760, buried 19th April 1774 the same day as her grandmother Hester.
- Henry High born abt 1728 at Kelling. Nothing is known of Henry until he arrives at Briston in 1764 marries an Elizabeth and has several children.
- Hester High baptised 1st January 1731 at St Mary's Kelling
- Sarah High born 24th January 1734 baptised 18th June 1736 at Salthouse
- Edmund High born 16th January 1735 baptised 6th February 1735 at Salthouse.
- John High born 15th February 1738 baptised 28th November 1739 at St Mary's Kelling
- Benjamin High abt August 1739
- Edmund High born 24th February 1741 baptised 14th February 1742 at St Mary's Kelling.
- Thomas High born 19th September 1742 baptised 16th January 1743 at St Mary's Kelling
- Elizabeth High born 24th September 1745 baptised St Mary's Kelling 28th September 1745

In all the research so far we still need to explain why Benjamin, William and Henry's baptisms are missing from both the Salthouse and Kelling registers. We know both sets of registers were buried and subsequently damaged in WW2 and although the Salthouse registers have managed to be partially salvaged the Kelling registers are still beyond repair.

All was not lost at Kelling however as the Archbishop Transcripts (AT) survived. The Salthouse AT registers also survived but according to Fred they are very difficult to read and in any event are missing many years of entries. AT registers were supposed to be exact copies of the birth marriages and burials that happened in a parish and were sent to the bishop of the diocese. In reality most AT registers are of lesser quality than the originals usually because of the laziness of the local rector when making the copies!

So one obvious cause of some of the children not having baptism records is that they were not copied into the Kelling AT register i.e. if we could somehow look at the original full Kelling registers we would find William, Henry and Benjamin's baptisms along with the siblings who did make it through to the AT register.

An alternative view is that as non conformists these three children may never have been in the CoE Kelling or Salthouse registers at all. The situation is made worse in that some non conformist ministers purposefully didn't keep registers of their own; it was all part and parcel of dissenting! If this is the case then we will never be able to find baptism records as they would never have existed.

The discussion so far has revolved entirely around William, Hester and their family and has concentrated on getting a feel for the family as a whole. This is critical when starting to try and answer the question "Who were the parents of William High?" By setting the family into a background context it allows us to identify the most likely families that William is a child of. So for example if William was a non conformist it's very likely his parents were and similarly the knowledge that William was a tenant farmer also shows the social status of families to look at. The next section details all the research undertaken to try and find William's very elusive parents!

The parents of William High

If you have followed the story so far you may have spotted one very important fact that hasn't been elaborated. If William wasn't buried at Cley in 1742 then this burial record isn't accounted for and must be for an entirely different William High!

So which William High is he? The answer is he must be a third William High living in the locality in 1742 and in it may be William's father! Here's why:

- William is buried at St Margaret's Cley. The parish records at Cley are intact and go back to 1538. William's burial entry is the **only** High entry in the registers until nearly 80 years later when in 1823 the High family finally set down roots in Cley. So a very likely conclusion is that William is a Salthouse or Kelling High.
- It can't be William husband of Hester as he is alive and well in Briston in 1762.
- It can't be William's son William as he is alive and well having a daughter Mary with first wife Elizabeth in 1748. It can't be another son of William and Hester called William for the same reason.
- In 1742 apart from the one Cley entry no High families are living within around a 20 miles of Salthouse that we can find so it's unlikely to be a non local High. Likewise it's unlikely to be an uncle or cousin of William because there are no other High families mentioned in the Salthouse, Kelling or Cley registers.

So the conclusion is that we may have found the death of William's father. Progress at last!

The 1742 William High burial register entry at Cley actually gives us very little extra to work on as apart from maybe finding the name of William's father we still hit the brick wall of running out of High's in the registers at Salthouse and surrounding parishes. The Salthouse registers begin from 1538 and show no High's at all until Sarah High is baptised in 1734. The Kelling AT register begins in 1600 so even if incomplete you would expect to find at least the occasional High register entry within the proceeding 100 years and yet the earliest High reference at Kelling is for William's newly found eldest daughter Hester in 1731.

All of this leads to the conclusion that William arrived in Salthouse probably soon after he married Hester in around 1725. Even if we assume the Cley burial in 1742 is William's father we have no idea where he came from either!

When Fred retired from his quest to find William back in 2004 he was hopeful that as time went by more and more North Norfolk parish records would become available online via the LDS IGI site <http://www.familysearch.org> that would help locate William. This has certainly happened but a far more useful search site exists in 2010.

The site <http://www.freereg.org.uk/> has freely searchable parish register indexes for in excess of 1.5 million baptisms, just under 400,000 marriages and over a million burials in Norfolk covering a large percentage of Norfolk parishes.

In the last year an online database “NORS” has been opened by the Norfolk Family History Society <http://www.norfolkfhs.org.uk/> which increases the coverage of Norfolk parish registers still further. However you do have to be a member of the NFHS to use it.

The Norfolk Records Office (NRO) also operates an online catalogue <http://nrocat.norfolk.gov.uk/Dserve/public/searches/nroadvanced.htm> and while this doesn't list parish register records it does index other very useful documents that the NRO holds such as wills, administration documents, details of property transactions etc.

So what initial results do searches of all these resources reveal?

- There are very few William High's born in parishes in Norfolk for the period we are interested in namely around 1685 – 1710. In fact there are very few High (and variants of High) families who were having children at the time. Across all of Norfolk there appear to be only three William High's whose father was also called William in that period.
- The surname High is a relatively “late” spelling of the name. Prior to around 1650 the High name is almost entirely replaced with earlier spelling variations. In many cases these alternate spellings continued side by side with High once the name High begins to appear in the registers.
- The surname High (and its variations) is relatively rare and limited to tight groupings of families in various parishes in Norfolk.

With all this new information a battle plan was drawn up. A rough family tree for the entire High family of Norfolk could feasibly be created! Starting from the earliest roots in the registers in the mid 16th century each family line could be roughly worked out up to around the time of William's birth in around 1705. At each point along the way, whenever a possible candidate William appeared detailed research from the NRO could be obtained to confirm or rebut the theory.

So what are the variations of the High surname? There are obvious ones such as Highe, Hygh, Heigh, Hye and Hie, slightly less obvious are Hey, Heye and Hay and not obvious at all are Hoy, Hythe and even Heath. All of these names are seen to either to directly change to High in a single generation or in some cases it may take a couple of generations or more for High to emerge with the surname changing slightly at each generation.

The name Heath deserves a special mention. It is found in across a range of Norfolk parish registers over a 250 year period as entries which state “High alias Heath” and likewise there are similar entries which state “Heath alias High”. The mystery is solved in the parish of Stody where we find the Hieth family with variations Hyth and Hythe who lived in Stody and nearby surrounding parishes during the 1600's. In Stody the last generation of Hieths have their children baptised under the High surname in the 1680's and 90's. More on them later!

Parish register records officially commenced in England from 1538 and from these they show the vast majority of variations of the High name seeming to converge in and around the parish of Beeston-next-Mileham situated a few miles west of East Dereham. There are also a number of Hey and Heye family members having burials at Scarning a few miles away. At this early time there is also

small outcrops occurring just south of Kings Lynn in the parish of North Runcton and in the above mentioned parish at Stody under the surname Hythe and its variations.

NRO records show a Heye family close to Norwich in the late 15th century. Thomas Heye was Clerk of the Norwich Cathedral Precinct in 1559 and an earlier Thomas Heye leaves a will dated 1462 at Blofield St Andrew. In 1500 William Heye was rector at Horsham St Faith and left a will in 1518 at Haringey. Also of interest is a William Heye rector of Barnby Suffolk in 1500. The original Heye family member who moved into the Beeston-next-Mileham area may well have been a John Heye of Wendling who left a will in around 1520. Although the records are scant there is evidence that the Heye family continued in and around Horsham St Faith's as well.

The Beeston-next-Mileham family remain there for several generations but over time some leave and begin a gradual expansion both back to and around Norwich, southwards into Watton and simultaneously a north westward drive into Castle Acre, East and West Lexham, Tittleshall, Whissonett and by the late 1600's a further drive north to Colkirk. By 1675 a Hygh family has reached the coast at Caistor baptises their children under the High surname and begins a High outcrop in and around Gt Yarmouth.

Where are you William High!

So finally we begin to turn to the big question and I'll present the top five High families Fred and I have researched in major detail. In addition to the five listed only four additional High families, two in Norwich, one in Hetherset and one at Castle Acre have a William born in the relevant period and in only one of these cases is the father also called William.

Three of the extra five families can be eliminated as their William's either died young or can be seen to marry locally in later life. Only the William High born in Hetherset in 1686 and the William born in 1703 to an Edward and Mary at Castle Acre remain unaccounted for and not investigated in any detail.

A basic investigation of the Hetherset High family seems to reveal their William to be a child of a Richard and Mary High who moved a few miles west out of Norwich to Hetherset shortly before his birth. They look to be plain CoE "ag labs" and do not look to be Salthouse William contenders.

The Castle Acre family have the opposite problem. They appear too wealthy, leaving many wills over a 100 year or so period. They were carpenters and builders, occupations that certainly do not match at all well with our William as a tenant farmer.

No. 5 - The High family at Whissonett and Tittleshall

This branch of the High family is seen moving between Tittleshall and Whissonett during the 1600's. They have some interesting notes attached to their register entries at Tittleshall that show the family to be mostly non conformist Yeoman (small landowners) They all appear to descend from a Nicholas, William and Henrye Hyge who were baptised at Whissonett in the 1590's. Their father was likely a Henry Heye originating from Scarning or Beeston-next-Mileham.

Of interest is a William High born in 1696 to John and Ann High. Unfortunately he can in all probability be ruled out as the likeliest outcome of this William is that he married at Whinnosett and had a child William who is listed as his son in the parish burial register in 1732.

On the whole the Whissonett and Tittleshall family look just a bit too wealthy to be ours and of course we have the issue that this possible father of William is called John and should be called William if the Cley 1742 burial is William's father.

No. 4 - The High family at Colkirk

The Colkirk Highs are a branch of the Whissonett and Tittleshall High family that reach Colkirk in around 1700. If we start from the final letter Fred on the Salthouse History website back in 2004 Fred mentioned he had found High baptisms in Colkirk from the 1730's onwards and that Benjamin High grandson of William and Hester was seen moving between the Whissonett, Colkirk and Oxwick area on at least two occasions. All very promising stuff especially when I later found that they were very likely non conformists.

My research during last year did find earlier High family members baptised at Colkirk with an Edmund 1703, John 1704 and Richard 1713 all baptised as children of a John and Mary High. Edmund died just after his birth and Richard went on to become the father of the Colkirk children born to Richard that Fred listed in his 2004 letter. John 1704 later moved and resided at Walsingham.

So the possibility is that John 1704 and Richard 1713 are William's brothers and consequently William is a son of John and Mary. Given the gap between John's baptism in 1704 and Richard's in 1713 it certainly looks like there are plenty of missing children to find.

John senior left a will dated 1759 but on obtaining a copy from the NRO it only names John junior at Walsingham and Richard at Colkirk along with a single other married daughter Elizabeth as John's beneficiaries. There is no mention of William or William's children.

At the time of getting the will the 1762 Settlement record still hadn't come to light so we were still assuming William died in 1742. Consequently John wouldn't have mentioned William so the mystery was why he didn't mention his grandchildren by William.

We now know this was no mystery at all as the Briston settlement record of 1762 shows William was alive after John of Colkirk's death so there is no reason for William not to be mentioned in Johns will if he was his son. Also if we are to believe the burial register entry for William High at Cley in 1742 is William's father then John of Colkirk's name should have been William of Colkirk.

No 3 - The Hieth family at Stody

Mentioned previously the Hieth and later High family at Stody deserved the full treatment in our research. Stody is a village just about 5 miles south of Kelling and Salthouse just the other side of Salthouse and Kelling heath and apart from our own High family at Salthouse this line is the only High family we have found within around 20 miles or so from Salthouse within the period 1500 – 1730.

The second interesting fact about this family is the prevalence of the Christian name Christopher. In the Salthouse millennium book "Salthouse the history of a Norfolk village" Florence Radley (nee High) mentions that her grandson Peter High had traced the family back to a Christopher and Amy High in 1600 at Salthouse.

We know by looking through both the Salthouse and Kelling registers this cannot be the case as the High name does not enter the registers until the 1730's. Regardless of the physical state of the registers today when Commander Frank Stagg did his research on Salthouse in the 1930's he did have access to both the undamaged Salthouse and Kelling registers and made the specific comment that Sarah High was the first High registered in Salthouse in 1734.

However Peter must have got 1600 Christopher from somewhere. I tried to contact Peter by writing to him around a year ago but to no avail so Peter if you are reading this please make contact with me! Fred and I are assuming at this stage that Peter also came across the Stody Heiths and this is where Florence got her Christopher High from.

In reality the Stody Heiths are split across several parishes during the 16th and 17th centuries mostly in Stody itself but also in Edgefield, Brinton (not Briston) and Hunworth. The family is first seen in Edgefield when William Heyth dies at sometime between 1519 and 1529. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries the family left several wills that show them owning property at Stody, however by the end of the 1600's the families male heirs had reduced to just two lines; that of Christopher Heith and his wife Deborah Pyle and Christopher's brother Roger Heith and his wife. Importantly by the time of Christopher's death in 1711 both Christopher and Rogers's family were calling themselves by the High surname.

Christopher and Deborah had several children during the period between 1682 and 1700 all girls except a single son Thomas in 1690. In the same period Roger has children that again are all girls and has no known male heir.

During the research I discovered the Stody registers on the freereg website were incomplete AT registers and had a gap in their records between 1697 and 1713. I also discovered that Christopher High who died in 1711 left a will.

With high hopes I ordered research from the NRO to examine the full Stody, Edgefield and Hunworth registers to see if William was listed as a child of Christopher and Deborah or again as a child of his brother Rogers family. At the same time I ordered a copy of Christopher's 1711 will. Fred and I waited...

The result - No William High's born to Christopher and Deborah or to Roger and his wife. Christopher's will confirmed our disappointment as the only beneficiary is his son Thomas, his wife Deborah and a number of his surviving daughters. So William had eluded us again!

In retrospect the disappointment of the Stody Heiths could have been anticipated. While William was a relatively popular Christian name in the Heith family other names of William and Hester's children and grandchildren names were not. The Stody Heiths preferred Christopher, Roger, William and had a fascination for the name Phillip which they gave to both boys and girls!

No 2- The Hey family at Little Plumstead

If family Christian names can be used to signal possible parents of William then the George Hey family of Little Plumstead is spot on!

If it wasn't Little Plumstead but just plain Plumstead (a village a few miles east of Edgefield and Stody) we would undoubtedly conclude we had found William. But this is Little Plumstead a village a few miles east of Norwich and quite a considerable distance from Salthouse.

As a Christian name George is incredibly rare in the early High family. George Hey's parents are still unproven but in all likelihood he is either the son of Robert Hey born abt 1625 in Watton and, if so the Watton registers show George was baptised there in 1648. This branch of the Watton Hey's look to have been predominately Ploughmen and Ploughwrights so one can easily imagine them selling their services across the county.

Alternatively George could be a descendent of one of the Hey and Heye family lines known to exist around the Horsham St Faiths area right back to the mid 1400's. The register records around this area of Norfolk are still quite patchy so finding a line back is still difficult.

What has become clear from research carried out by the NRO is that the Hey family entered Little Plumstead sometime between 1680 and 1687 and prior to that no earlier Hey's exist in the Little Plumstead registers.

Here are George and his wife Frances' children

- John Hey born 1687
- George Hey born 1688
- Sarah Hey born 1690
- William Hey born and died in 1693
- Henry Hey born 1694
- Benjamin Hey born 1697 died 1757
- Robert Hey born 1702
- WILLIAM Hey born 1704
- Mary Hey born 1708

In this family we have 5 family names that occur in William and Hester's family and a William born at exactly the right time. George and Frances both died in 1712. If we trace what happens to George and Frances grandchildren we find that they are baptised HIGH.

Benjamin marries Elizabeth Sutton and has the following children

- William High born 1723
- Benjamin High born 1724
- John High born 1725
- Elizabeth High born 1733

Robert marries an Amy Bell and has the following family

- Robert High 1726 – 1726
- Amy High 1729
- Thomas High 1730
- Robert High 1731
- Elizabeth High 1732
- Susan High 1735
- Henry High 1742

In very simple terms if these families were at Salthouse at the beginning of the 1700's they would not look out of place in any way. The match up on family names is quite dramatic.

It appears that most of the Hey family were farm labourers of some description as in the 1780's there are settlement certificate references to various members leaving the Little Plumstead area and going to nearby Blofield. The family may have owned land at Little Plumstead which was passed down through subsequent generations as in 1816 and 1828 family members left wills and in 1841 Thomas High farmer of Little Plumstead also leaves a will.

Frustratingly apart from parish register entries it's not been possible to trace references to the family earlier than 1780 however no evidence has been found that disproves that William Hey born 1704 could not become William High who at some later date moved to Salthouse. He does not seem to marry in the locality and he is never listed in the burial register. The only negatives about this family are that father George's name is not William and so cannot account for the 1742 Cley burial record and of course the distance away from Salthouse is a problem.

No. 1 – Who was the father of William High!

This is a case of straight in at No.1. The family concerned has only come to Fred and my attention in the last couple of months and we are still in the process of investigating them fully. The family is why Fred and I have written this document as the reason for choosing them is controversial. We would like opinions of other High family members and High family history researchers. Have we finally lost the plot after many years of research!

If we are correct this family can trace its ancestors from the present day generation by generation back to a Robert who was born around the year 1490 and died the year Elizabeth I became queen in 1558. Members of the family have lived in the same parish throughout that 520 year period. The parish register has a baptism entry for a William baptised 2nd May 1703 with a father called William baptised 19th September 1675. William's mother was Susan but I'm afraid that's all we know at present.

The family was relatively well off in the 16th century and most probably worked for the local Lord of the manor. In the early 17th century their relatives are seen associating with the major local landowners at the time. However during the 17th century and for whatever reason the family's fortunes declined both in terms of wealth and in terms of male heirs to carry the name on. By William's birth in 1703 only his father's line remained.

William had a brother Thomas born in 1705 and a sister Elizabeth born in 1710 both appear to have died young.

So where is this parish? I'll make you guess just one more time by saying that we believe the 1742 William who was buried at Cley is neatly accounted for by our proposed father born in 1675.

There is just one parish in Norfolk where the story of William High's parents almost fits precisely and that is

SALTHOUSE

Yes it's a shocking revelation and one that requires just a single but controversial leap of faith. You have to believe that William's father was not William High but William Howse.

The controversy isn't really that the High's of Salthouse should be named Howse as that's a nonsense argument. I hope Fred and I have shown that all descendants of any High regardless of which family branch they started out from could today be named Hye, Hey, Hay, Hoy, Heigh, Hieth, Hygh, Hyth, Hythe, Hie or even Heath!

The spelling was determined by how the probably semi literate rector in each parish at each baptism decided it should be spelt based on the simple question "What's your name?"

Many family lines stabilised to High but just as many are still called Hey or Hythe or whatever today and there are bound to be cases where the family name was at some point High but is different today.

The real controversy is when you look at the meaning of the two names. Howse is an:

“Occupational surname for someone employed at or with some connection with, the largest and most important building in the settlement. This may have been the local "great house" of a nobleman or the landowner, or a religious house, a monastery or convent. In some cases the name may have referred to a "householder", someone who owned his own dwelling as opposed to being a tenant. “

Early relatives of the Howse at Salthouse are the Howsegoe family which essentially has the same meaning. Both names apparently derive from

“an anglicized form of the pre 7th century Olde Frisian word "huisinga", a term which referred to a house owner as opposed to a tenant.”

I can find very little on the meaning of the High surname in any of its forms. The closest I can find is that in the form Heighoe it literally means the high house i.e. the family that lives in the house on the hill.

So the problem is that we can't use the same sleight of hand spelling tricks that take us from say Hythe to High when we try to move from Howse to High or even claim the two names have a similar occupational meaning.

Even with an 88 year old mother born a few miles away from Salthouse at Sheringham I can't see how Howse and High can sound similar even with a broad North Norfolk accent! What is lacking is the insight that even though spelt completely differently they could be the same name as was the case with High and Heath when you took into account how the names were pronounced.

Putting to one side the name issue there are obviously reasons why Fred and I have made William Howse our No. 1 candidate so here is the story of the Howse of Salthouse as we know it so far starting on the next page with a tree put together by Fred and myself that shows the direct line back to about 1490.

In the tree only the William Howses born abt 1570 does not have a legible baptism entry in the original Salthouse registers. The pages around this time are quite damaged but enough is readable to determine that only William Howsegoe and wife Margaret Atkins were having children at the time and so in all probability William was a son of theirs.

The only other possible problem is that instead of descending from William Howsegoe b 1552 we could just conceivably descend from an unknown son of the William Howse who died and left a will in 1570. This would still lead back to Robert in 1490 as William Howse was another of his sons. As yet I have not requested any of the Howse or Howsegoe wills from the NRO. It is interesting to note that the Robert Howsegoe 1520-1572 that we seem to descend from left his will in the name of Howse rather than Howsegoe so the two surnames seem to be interchangeable.

1 Robert Howse b: Abt. 1490 Salthouse d: 07 Nov 1558 Salthouse (left a will dated 1558)
..... 2 Robert Howsegoe b: Abt. 1520 Salthouse d: 1572 Salthouse (left a will dated 1572)
..... +Johanne m: 27 Nov 1542 Salthouse
..... 3 Andreas Howsegoe b: 01 Dec 1544 Salthouse
..... 3 Ane Howsegoe b: 15 Sep 1550 Salthouse
..... 3 William Howsegoe b: Feb 1552 Salthouse
..... +Margaret Atkins m: 05 Dec 1568 Salthouse d: 25 May 1589 Salthouse
..... 4 William Howse b: Abt. 1570 Salthouse
..... +Ellen Stampe m: 1593 Salthouse
..... 5 William Howse b: 15 Jun 1598 Salthouse d: 14 May 1670 Salthouse
..... +Marie (Marye) d: 09 Jun 1676 Salthouse
..... 6 Henry Howes b: 03 Sep 1630 Salthouse
..... 6 William Hawes (Hows) b: 1636 Salthouse d: 06 May 1702 Salthouse
..... +Elizabeth Fuller m: 14 Jun 1667 Salthouse
..... 7 Elizabeth Howse b: 20 Aug 1671 Salthouse
..... 7 William Howse b: 12 Sep 1675 Salthouse d: Abt. 14 Nov 1742 Cley next the Sea
..... +Susan
..... 8 William High (Hows) b: 02 May 1703 Salthouse d: Abt. 13 May 1770 Kelling
..... +Hester b: Abt. 1707 m: Abt. 1723 d: Abt. 17 Apr 1774 Briston
..... 9 William High b: 1725 Kelling
..... 9 Hester High b: Jan 1732 Kelling
..... 9 Sarah High b: 24 Jan 1735 Salthouse d: Abt. 19 Oct 1803 St Paul Norwich
..... +Thomas Latten b: 1734 Sharrington m: 30 Nov 1762 Sharrington
..... *2nd Husband of Sarah High:
..... +John Reynolds m: 13 Aug 1771 Sharrington
..... 9 Edmund High b: 16 Jan 1736 Salthouse d: 1736 Salthouse
..... 9 John High b: 15 Feb 1738 Kelling
..... 9 Benjamin High b: Abt. 1739 Salthouse d: 24 Apr 1829 Salthouse
..... +Amy Dennis b: 05 Jun 1747 Runtton m: 05 Jul 1770 Kelling/Salthouse d: 06 Oct 1818 Salthouse
..... 10 John High b: 15 Apr 1770 Salthouse
..... 10 Barbara High b: 12 May 1771 Salthouse
..... +Robert Garrett b: 1771 Holt, Norfolk m: 12 Aug 1798 Cley next the Sea
..... 10 Ann High b: 03 Apr 1774 Salthouse
..... +John Fowl m: 15 Oct 1804 Hindringham
..... 10 Benjamin High b: 1776 Salthouse d: 10 May 1862 Whissonsett
..... +Frances Youngs b: Abt. 1778 Salthouse m: 16 Dec 1801 Yaxham d: 18 Aug 1844 Whissonsett
..... 10 Henry High b: 1784 Salthouse d: 1856 Salthouse
..... +Lydia Dickens m: 13 Nov 1810 Fakenham
..... 10 Thomas Dennis High b: 15 Oct 1786 Salthouse d: 06 Jul 1875 Salthouse
..... +Ann Williamson b: Abt. 1788 Beeston Regis m: 13 Dec 1811 Salthouse d: 24 Jan 1861 Salthouse
..... 10 Mary High b: 24 Feb 1790 Salthouse d: 1871 Salthouse
..... +William Cubitt b: 1787 Blakeney m: 14 Jun 1810 Salthouse
..... 10 Robert High d: 04 Mar 1793 Salthouse
..... 9 Edmund High b: 24 Feb 1741 Kelling
..... +Margaret Barrett m: 23 Nov 1761 East Walton
..... 9 Thomas High b: 19 Sep 1742 Kelling
..... 8 Thomas Howes b: 11 Mar 1705 Salthouse
..... 8 Elizabeth Howse b: 26 Feb 1710 Salthouse
..... 7 Henry Howsse b: 20 May 1678 Salthouse
..... 7 Ellen Howse b: 04 Jan 1668 Salthouse
..... 6 Thomas Howse b: 08 Jul 1638 Salthouse
..... 6 John Howes b: 30 Apr 1643 Salthouse
..... 5 Johane Howse b: 25 Aug 1594 Salthouse
..... 5 Margaret Howse b: 20 Jun 1596 Salthouse
..... 5 Marie Howse b: 21 Aug 1597 Salthouse
..... 4 Johane Howse b: 10 Oct 1568 Salthouse d: 25 Apr 1594 Salthouse
..... 2 John Howsegoe b: Abt. 1520 Salthouse
..... +Alice m: 31 Dec 1552 Salthouse
..... 3 Elizabeth Howsegoe b: 20 Sep 1550 Salthouse
..... 2 William Howse b: Abt. 1520 Salthouse d: 1570 Salthouse (left a will dated 1570)

What do we know about the Howse and Howsegoe families at Salthouse? Not a lot at the moment but here are some things I've found so far.

- In 1690 a John Abraham sold to son Robert property that was originally mortgaged by the Robert Howsegoe / Howse born in 1520.
- In 1559 Robert Howsegoe / Howse became a tenant of the Lord of the manor as a copyhold property agreement exists in that year.
- In 1602 records at Stiffkey show four men including a James Howsegoe were impressed to serve in the Navy. The other three were Thomas Parr, John Standforth and George Clarke. The Parr's and Standforth's were the two major landowning families at Salthouse during this period.
- In 1668 William and Hester's grandfather, William born in 1636 sold half his house and lands described as "moiety of messuage" to Henry Fuller maybe as a dowry for William's grandmother Elizabeth Fuller who he had married in 1667.
- Also mentioned in the John Abraham property papers is a tenement and orchard originally owned first by William's grandfather William Howse born in 1636 and then by William's father William Howse born 1675. This tenement and orchard are part of what John Abraham sells his son so we can conclude they were no longer owned by the Howse in 1690.
- William father William Howse must have left Salthouse after 1710 and moved to Cley as he was buried there in 1742

So overall it seems to show a family in gradual decline having to sell their property and lands from the mid 16th century onwards.

Although we can trace the family accurately back to Robert born about 1490 can we go any earlier? There is one very interesting record:

In 1455 a William Howys alias Tonyngton left a will at Cley. Could this be Robert's grandfather? The Tonyngton family seems to be a rich London family of the 14th century. It is likely the alias was a "status symbol" surname; perhaps this William married the daughter of a wealthy Tonyngton. I'm pretty convinced that this William was a Howse not a Tonyngton as the Howse name is seen in a number of villages within about 10 miles of Salthouse far earlier than 1455.

So why did Howse change to High? I'm not sure we will ever find the actual reason but here are a couple of ideas. The first uses the work on the rectors of Salthouse carried out by Frank Stag in the 1930's.

During the late 17th century it appears the Salthouse rectory was probably in a dilapidated condition so the local rectors did not live there. Edward Dawney who died in 1677 was the last rector to run both Kelling and Salthouse parishes from Salthouse. His successor Charles Worsley's died in 1682 and has a burial entry in the Salthouse registers but, a mural tablet left to him in the Chancel of Letheringsett church is known to have existed, so it's more than likely he lived there rather than either Salthouse or Kelling. Worsley was succeeded by Thomas Bainbrigg who was also headmaster

at Gresham School at Holt. He decided it would be a good idea to write the registers in Latin! He lived and ran the two parishes from Kelling a situation that continues until the present day.

We suspect the High's at that time were non conformist and probably didn't even attend the Salthouse CoE church. This fact coupled with the confusion of what was going on at the Salthouse rectory could quite conceivably result with Thomas Turner the CoE rector at Kelling from 1714-1745 mishearing or incorrectly transcribing Howse as High. This argument is quite compelling as the name Howse completely vanishes after 1710 in the registers and is entirely replaced by High from the early 1730's onward in both the Kelling and Salthouse registers.

To emphasise this point at no time does a single rector transcribe both a Howse and a High! Thomas Bainbrigg recorded the name as Howse or Hows until his death in 1714 and then Thomas Turner recorded it as High from that time forward until his death in 1745.

A second argument goes like this: If William Howse, William's father, moved to Cley soon after his daughter Elizabeth's birth in 1710 then son William is likely to have returned to Salthouse / Kelling for his marriage to Hester in the around 1725. At this point he may have been carrying the "incorrect" High name as his father was buried at Cley as High in 1742.

To conclude this saga Fred and I are pretty much convinced that William Howse born 1675 was the father of William High who went on to marry Hester and start the High dynasty at Salthouse. Do we believe this "beyond reasonable doubt?" The honest answer is still no but based on the circumstantial evidence it is undoubtedly the strongest case and I think I would find William Howse "guilty as charged" if I had to make a single definitive choice.

So perhaps it's time to move onto the next question "Who was the father of Robert Howse born about 1490 and died 1558?"

Steve Lee 9th July 2010