# THE IDENTITY OF MARGARET, WIFE OF JOHN PARLES: A CORRECTION AND SOME NOTES ON HER ANCESTRY

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## ABSTRACT

In my recent article on the Parles family (Foundations **2**(5): p.349) I identified Margaret (died 1459), the wife successively of John Parles and Robert Catesby, as the daughter of William Weldon, of Weldon, Northants. New evidence indicates that she was Weldon's step-daughter, and shows that her father was William Walwyn, of Herefordshire.


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A series of contemporary records link Margaret, the wife of John Parles and Robert Catesby of Northamptonshire, with William Weldon, of Weldon, and his wife, Joan.[2]

Firstly, William is known to have settled "*a messuage and 40 acres of land at Weldon*" on John and Margaret Parles, and the heirs of their bodies in fee tail, some time prior to 1453, presumably as a marriage settlement.[3]

Secondly, Margaret is known to have been the daughter of Joan Weldon: after the death of John Parles, she married again (*VCH Northants* 5, sub Stoke Bruerne), this time to Robert Catesby of Weldon,[4] and in about 1453 an action took place in relation to "*a box of evidences of lands*" in Northamptonshire, between "*Janet (sic), late the wife of William Weldon*", and Thomas Elyngham, on the one part, and Thomas Knyveton and Robert Catesby, "*husbands of the said Janet's daughters*", on the other.[5]

However, in this case it is not possible to conclude that, because she was the daughter of William Weldon's wife, Margaret Parles/Catesby must herself have been born a Weldon, since it now transpires that Joan Weldon had an earlier husband.

The contemporary evidence for this is found in a settlement of the manor of Longford, in Herefordshire, dated 6 June 1445: "*John Heton and John Andrews v William Weldon and Joan his wife: re the manor of Langeford, 12 messuages, 600 acres of land, 120 acres of meadow, 100 acres of pasture, 40 acres of wood, £10 rent in Langeford, Lugwardine, Lorteporte, Hampton Episcopi, Boterley and Auynbury: grant by feoffees to William and Joan and the heirs begotten of Walter Walweyn by the body of Joan, then to the right heirs of William Walweyn*"[6]

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2 As we shall see, she was variously called Joan, Jane and Janet in original sources. For consistency, I have decided to refer to her as 'Joan' throughout, unless quoting from a text.

3 *CCR*, 1447-1454, 376-377. In fact, the settlement probably took place much earlier, since Weldon died in 1447 (Roskell, IV, 797).

4 *CPR*, 1452-1461, 675 states he was "*of Great Weldon*" in 1459, when he was appointed a JP for Rutland.

5 PRO C 1/22/131. Elyngham possibly may have been Joan/Janet's third husband; he was not one of Weldon's executors, listed in *CPR*, 1446-1452, p.394 (which list includes "*Joan, late the wife of William Weldon late of Weldon*"). He was a party to a property transaction involving Thomas Knyveton and Christian his wife – the other daughter of Joan Weldon – in 1452 (CP 25/1/179/95 #130), and was described as "*of Weldon, esquire*" in 1454 (Birch, 1892).

6 PRO CP 25/1/83/56 #66.
http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/fines/abstracts/CP_25_1_83_56.shtml#66

Additionally, chronological deductions allow us to determine which of Joan's marriages produced her daughter Margaret. We know that Joan's first husband, William Walwyn, was still living as late as 1434, when he is listed amongst those scheduled to take an oath before commissioners, being then described as "*William Walweyn of Longeford, esquire*".[7] We also know that when John Parles died in 1452, he was succeeded by Joan[8], his daughter by Margaret, who was then aged five – indicating a birth-date of about 1447 (*VCH Northants*, 5, sub Stoke Bruerne, particularly notes 28-31).

It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that as Margaret Parles was old enough to be a mother in 1447, she must herself have been born before 1435, and thus we may place her as a daughter of Joan and William Walwyn.

Although it is unreferenced, some further support for this identification may be found in the pedigrees of the Walwyn family of Longford published by Burke (1836). One of these (p.680) contains an oblique reference to events that are likely to have been connected to the settlement of 1445 detailed above: *"John [son of William Walwyn, succeeded to Longford] to which, and other estates, a person by the name of Weldon having disputed the validity of his title, the affair was referred to the arbitration of four gentlemen of the county… and decided in [his] favour."* Burke adds that William Walwyn, the father, had married "*Jane or Joan, daughter of Sir Robert Whytteney, knt, as appears by a power of attorney in their joint names to John Bayley and Philip Longeford, to take possession for them of the manors and estates of Longeford, Avenbury, and Butterley*".[9]

## William Walwyn and his wife Joan

Was Joan Walwyn/Weldon the daughter of Sir Robert Whitney? In their biography of Sir John Greyndore, Roskell *et al.* (1992, III:245) state that his daughter, Joan Greyndore, married William Walwyn of Longford. This, it seems, is incorrect.

Identifying details of the life and career of William Walwyn is problematic, since there were a number of contemporary members of the Walwyn family who bore the same Christian name.[10] While it is the case that Joan, the daughter of Sir John Greyndore, married a William Walwyn, it is clear from the subsequent descent of the Greyndore estates that her descendants were not the same line as the Walwyns of Longford: her granddaughter Alice Baynham née Walwyn was returned as heir to Robert Greyndore in 1485, whereas Longford remained in different hands.[11]

In addition to the unreferenced statement by Burke, two other records support the identification of Joan Walwyn/Welford as a member of the Whitney family. The first of these is the *Book of Baglan*, a collection of pedigrees by John Williams, compiled in about 1600 – that is, some 150 years after Joan Walwyn/Weldon's lifetime. These pedigrees (p.34) state that "*Jaen (sic) Whitney ma[rried] Walwyn of Longford*".

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7 *CPR*, 1429-1436, 376. This cannot be a reference to a son or remoter descendant of William, since (as we shall see) his marriage with Joan did not take place until 1422 at the earliest, so that none of their issue would have been of age by 1434.

8 She was presumably named for her maternal grandmother

9 It will be noted that the properties referred to by Burke are probably those referred to in the 1445 settlement. I have been unable to trace this document.

10 For instance, William "*of Alkerugge*", 1416 (CPR, 1416-1422, 34; William, brother of Thomas of Much Marcle (Roskell *et al.*, IV, 766); William "*of Bykerton*", 1431 (CP 25/1/83/55 #40)

11 *CIPM* Henry VII, 1, 47 #116; 3, 135-136 #210. There is no indication that Longford was held in tail male, and it eventually passed out of the Walwyn family via an heiress (Burke).

Taken on its own, this late source would not be of great value. However, it is supported by a second, contemporary piece of evidence. This consists of a set of stained glass images across the county border in Worcestershire, in Great Malvern church (Chambers, 1817, p.40) which, though damaged, remain partially extant. Installed during the early part of the 15th century (Rushworth, 1936), they originally depicted "*Willielmus Walwein et Jana uxor eius*" [William Walwyn and Jane his wife]. Above these were placed two heraldic shields, the first displaying the arms of Whitney (*azure, a cross chequy or and sable*), and the second showing Walwyn of Longford (*gules, on a bend argent a mullet sable*) impaling Whitney – ie, indicating that 'Jane Walweyn' was a Whitney by birth. Fragments of the images have been replaced in one of the clerestory lights in the north of the chancel – including the lady's face – while the two sets of arms are still (December 2008) *in situ* in the south chancel-transept (Fig.1).[12]

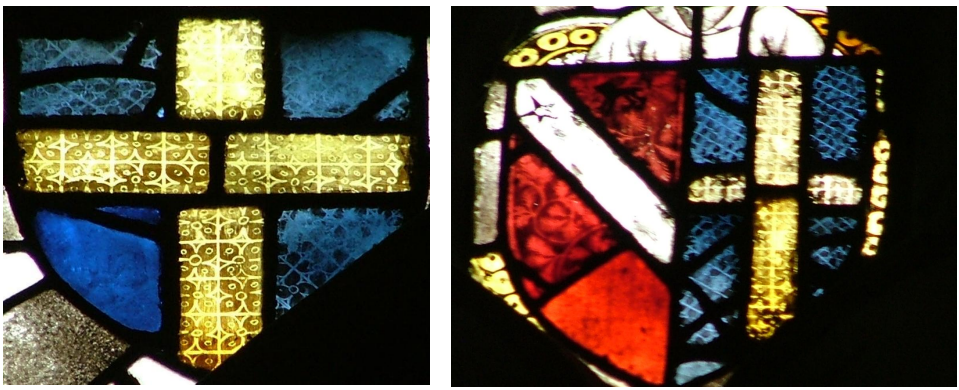


**Fig 1.** ***Stained glass in Great Malvern church depicting the arms of William Walwyn and Jane his wife***

Together, these items of evidence are persuasive in identifying Joan Walwyn/Weldon as a member of the Whitney family, and there is no reason to doubt the statements that her father was Sir Robert Whitney. Indeed, we know from yet another contemporary source that Sir Robert in fact did have a daughter named Jane. This is the will of his sister Perryn, Lady Clanvowe, dated 3 April 1422 (Furnivall, 1882). Amongst her bequests she names both her brother, Sir Robert Whitney, and her niece, "*Jane*", to whom she leaves £20 "*to her mariage or when sche is of age*".[13]

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[12] Viewing them has enabled me to determine that the cadency mark is indeed a mullet [star], a point on which there are discrepancies in the published sources. This indicates that the line of the Walwyns of Longford represented a third son.

[13] Lady Clanvowe also names her niece and god-daughter, Perryn. Although she does not state they were the daughters of her brother Robert, the *Book of Baglan* shows that '*Jaen Whitney*' had a sister '*Peryn*', whose married name was 'Abrall'.

# Conclusion

Sufficient contemporary evidence remains to show that Margaret, the wife of John Parles and Robert Catesby, of Northamptonshire, was the daughter of William Walwyn, of Longford, Herefordshire, by his wife Joan Whitney, herself the daughter of Sir Robert Whitney (Fig.2).

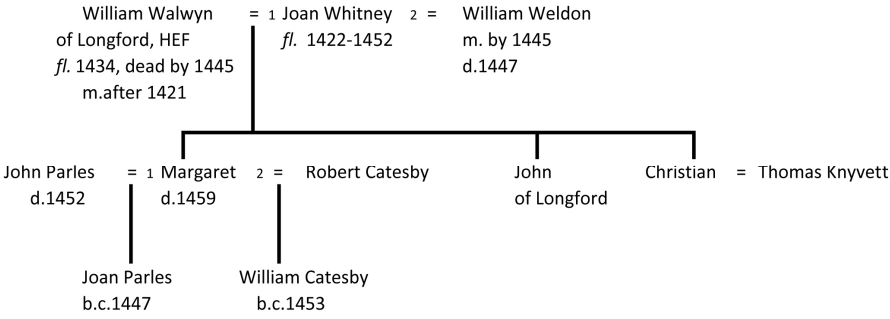



**Fig 2.** ***Pedigree table showing descendants of William Walwyn and Joan Whitney***

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Chris Phillips, whose transcription and online publication of the hitherto unpublished Herefordshire feet of fines enabled me to confirm the prior marriage of Joan Weldon to William Walwyn, thus proving the crucial element in this reconstruction.

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