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1. The Griffith and Gilbert family

Stephen Thomas Griffiths was born on 17th September 1842^{1:2} to Thomas Griffiths^{1:3} and Elizabeth¹. Within the family, there is memory of an Elizabeth Gilbert,⁴ but her relationship is unclear. Some thought she was Stephen's wife⁵, though certificates indicate that was Elizabeth Higgins.^{3:6} When a certificate was found for a Thomas Griffiths marrying an Elizabeth Gilbert in Cheshire, the thought occurred that this may be Stephen's parents. After all, it would perhaps also explain why Stephen's children were baptised in Castle Northwich, Cheshire.¹

There was some concern regarding inconsistencies.⁷ For example, Stephen's father was a coachman³, while the Thomas who married Elizabeth Gilbert was a Tailor.⁸ Having found Thomas and Elizabeth Gilbert within the census records, it appears that Thomas remained a Tailor and did not have a son Stephen. Therefore, these do not appear to be relations to Stephen Thomas Griffiths, or our family.

It seemed a shame to waste the research into Thomas and Elizabeth Gilbert, so it is included here.

1.1 Phillip Griffiths, father of Thomas Griffiths

The fathers of Thomas Griffiths and Elizabeth Gilbert are recorded in the marriage certificate shown in Figure 1.5. Thomas's father is recorded as Phillip Griffiths. Initially, I thought Phillip's occupation was recorded as Hatman. However, a more accurate transcription clarifies his job as being a flatman.⁹

A flat was a type of barge, with a wide beam and a shallow draft, used for carrying commercial goods inland.^{10:11} In particular, there were Mersey flats and River Weaver flats, the latter being considered a distinctive type¹². The Weaver flats were massively built of great oak timbers, the lowest planks of the hull four-inch thick rock elm.¹³ Along the river Weaver, the men who worked these boats were called "flatmen".^{14:15}

At the time of his marriage Thomas Griffiths lived in Wharton⁸, a village and a chapelry in Davenham parish, Cheshire that neighboured the river Weaver¹⁶ (Figure 1.2), so we may suppose that his father worked on River Weaver flats and hence was a flatman.

Philip would have worked on the river before steam powered vessels were introduced in the 1860's.¹⁴ By 1792 a towpath along the river allowed horses, rather than men,



Figure 1.1: Mersey Flat

to haul the flats along the river between Winsford and Frodsham bridge. From there the flats sailed on the tide down the Mersey to Liverpool.¹⁵ While ideal on the Weaver, not being as stoutly built as ships, the flats had a rough time in the more treacherous waters of the Mersey estuary or in the Irish Sea.¹⁷

It is possible that Thomas helped his father on the boats. In the earlier part of the Nineteenth century, working the flats was a family occupation. Numbers of women and children lived and worked on the vessels - the wives and children assisting with the steering and setting through the locks and “trimming” i.e. loading the boats.¹⁷

The hamlets of Wharton to the east of the river Weaver and Over to the west have been recorded as far back as the Domesday Book of 1086. They met the River Weaver at Winsford, documented from the 13th century.¹⁸ In 1815 Thomas Horne, on account of the 14 or 15 Salt Works in the area, describes Winsford as so populous that it had a weekly Saturday Market, and twice a year fairs for horses, cattle, sheep, cloth and other merchandise.¹⁰ As Winsford grew, by the mid-19th century, ‘Wharton’ and ‘Winsford’ both described the town on the east bank of the river.¹⁹

By the middle of the 19th century the Weaver valley was lined with salt works using open pans to extract salt from brine.²⁰ The main commodities transported by flats were coal to the salt works, and then salt from the works to Liverpool for export.²¹ In addition to coal and salt, timber and cotton were transported, and since around 1830, flint and clay were taken to the Staffordshire Potteries.²² Samuel Lewis, in 1833, suggested that “the tonnage of the Weaver was greater than perhaps that of any river of its size in the kingdom.”²¹ By 1840 Winsford had eclipsed Northwich in the production of white salt, although Northwich continued to dominate the rock-salt trade²³.

In 1854 there were about 400 flats employed on the river Weaver²⁴ and they continued to increase in number until about 1900, in spite of railway competition.²⁵ About half were owned by the salt proprietors and the other half to individuals who generally owned and work the vessels themselves.²⁴ Each barge carried between 80 and 120 tonnes and on average made two voyages every three weeks to Liverpool and back.²⁴ Some of the individuals became quite prosperous and invested the money they had made in salt works of their own.²⁶

Opponents to the initial development of the river Weaver in the early 18th century, warned it would attract “thousands of watermen who were all beggars and vagabonds” and “who, generally were very lewd and ill-disposed people”.¹⁷ In 1840 the church of England considered the flatmen on the Weaver Navigation, a “long neglected class of



Figure 1.2: Maps showing the location of Winsford and Wharton in 1856

men” in need of “spiritual improvement.” The Rev. John Davies succeeded in getting the grant of the Sabbath made to the flatmen, where they were to “spend the Sabbath in a right way, keeping from public houses and regularly attending divine worship, training up our children in the way they should go, setting a good pattern before them, and striving in all things to do our duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call us.”²⁷

A sermon by John Davies, titled “The Due Observance of the Lord’s Day: an Address to the Flatmen of the Weaver navigation” was used by the editor of the Church of England magazine. He published a section that starts “Always bear in mind that God has appointed out station in life, therefore be satisfied to get an honest bread by the sweat of your face in that station.” A footnote makes it clear that the editor considered this a valuable tract for distribution among “the lower orders, especially at the present time.” The present time being one where “the enemies of sound religion and legitimate government are at work”, in particular the “torrent of atheism, under the designation of socialism, and of rebellion under that of Chartism.”²⁷

1.2 George Gilbert, father of Elizabeth Gilbert

Children: Elizabeth Gilbert (Section 1.3)

In the same marriage certificate that records Thomas Griffiths’ father, Elizabeth Gilberts farther is recorded as George Gilbert, a Size Maker.⁸

Size is a weak glue used by painters, decorators, and in the carpet, straw-hat box, wallpaper and other trades^{28:29}. The making of size has long been considered an offensive trade³⁰, along with businesses such as soap boiler, fat melter, bone boiler and blood drier.³¹ Charles Thackrah, writing about size making in Leeds in 1831, described how the ‘stench of the boiling and drying rooms is indeed well known to be highly offensive even to the neighbourhood.’ However, he went on to describe that despite the “putrid and ammoniacal exhalations from the decomposition of animal refuse,” the “men declare it agrees well with them, nay many assert that on entering this employ they experienced a great increase of appetite and health”³² (Figure 1.3).

We do not know much more about George’s family, except that he had a daughter Elizabeth, and a son George, born 1821³³. George witnessed his sisters marriage in 1840 to Thomas Griffiths in the parish church of Davenham.⁸ The other witness was a Elizabeth Hatton. A year later, on 24 May 1841, George Gilbert and Elizabeth Hatton were married in the same parish, with Thomas Griffiths as Witness.³³. While his father George was still working as a Size Maker, the younger George is recorded as a Cooper.³³.

A few months later on the 6 June 1841, the recently wed George Gilbert and his wife are recorded living just outside Winsford, overlooking the river Weaver on Winsford Hill (Figure 1.4). There are two children also staying with them, a Daniel Hatton and a Charles. Also living at the same address was a James Griffiths, a flatman and possibly a son of Philip Griffiths (Section 1.1). In 1841, the recently wed George Gilbert is recorded as a size maker³⁴, suggesting either a change in occupation, I have confused two families with the same name, or George worked as a cooper at the Size factory.

George’s father was still a Size Maker and lived a short distance down the hill into

GLUE AND SIZE BOILERS are exposed to strong putrid and ammoniacal exhalations from the decomposition of animal refuse. The stench of the boiling and drying rooms is indeed well known to be highly offensive, even to the neighbourhood. Yet the men declare it agrees well with them—nay, many assert that on entering this employ, they experienced a great increase of appetite and health. All the glue and size boilers we saw, were remarkably fresh-looking and robust. Though exposed to frequent and considerable changes of temperature, to sudden changes also from an atmosphere of hot vapour to the dry cold air, they are not subject to rheumatism, pulmonary inflammation or catarrh. The only complaints we could hear of, were occasional pains in the loins and limbs, attributable to posture and exertion.

BUCKRAM MANUFACTURERS are exposed to the odour of the glue. This is well known to be so great as to offend the neighbourhood of the manufacture. Yet the men make no complaint of ill-health, and reach considerable age. Of the seven men employed at the Buckram-house, in Water-lane, one is 51, another 58, a third 68, and the fourth 76; and these individuals have been at the employ from an early age.

Figure 1.3: The Health and Longevity of Size Makers in Leeds, Charles Thackray 1831

Winsford, staying with his daughter Elizabeth and her recent husband Thomas Griffiths.

1.3 Family of Thomas Griffiths and Elizabeth Gilbert

Parents: Phillip Griffiths, George Gilbert

Thomas Griffiths and Elizabeth Gilbert married in the parish of Davenham on 17th February 1840⁸ (Figure 1.5). I am not sure whether this would have been at the parish church in Davenham, or at the more local Christ's Church, built in the mid 1830s for the convenience of the local people, though the patronage remained with the rector of Davenham³⁴.

The marriage certificate shows both Thomas and Elizabeth living in Wharton. A year later on 6 June 1841, Thomas and Elizabeth are recorded as living in Winsford³⁴. As mentioned in Section 1.1, these may refer to the same place.

The population of Wharton/Winsford at the time of the census in 1841 was 1400, though a further 45 men and 29 women were away from home, detained in Liverpool or on the River Mersey due to the River Weaver being run off for repairs.³⁴ Nearly half of the population were under 15 years of age, and a further 350 did not have an occupation recorded. The majority of the remaining people worked in the salt works or as flatmen, but there was also a size manufacturer in town, perhaps associated with the bone button manufacturer, and a sizeable number of other trades including a baker, a blacksmith, two barbers, four butchers, four grocers, five tailors, nine shoemakers and fifteen people involved in making ships. As well as three inns, there were also perhaps a dozen beer houses.^{19;34}

Thomas and Elizabeth lived on Winsford Hill, which led east from the river Weaver towards Middlewich and is now known as Station Road³⁴. The house they lived in still stands³⁴ (Figure 1.4). Living with Thomas and Elizabeth was their daughter Jane, and also Elizabeth's father George Gilbert.³⁴

Thomas and Elizabeth stayed in the Winsford/Wharton area through to 1881.³⁵⁻³⁹ Thomas remained a Tailor, and became a Tailor and Draper, living above a Drapers Shop in Wharton.³⁹ After Jane, they had six further children: Sarah and Thomas (born 1846), Ambrose (b1851), Elizabeth Ann (b1852), Alice (b1855) and Ruth (b1860). The child Thomas does not appear in the census records after 1851, and there is no mention of a Stephen.

A row of semi-detached cottages owned by John Bewick. These still remain and stand opposite the car park by the river.

The first of these housed the family of William Such, a bricksetter.

Next door to them lived Charles Rawcliffe's family

According to the tithe map a John Muskett lived next door but he and his family must have been absent for the census.

George Gilbert, a size maker, Thomas Griffith, his wife Elizabeth and their daughter Jane lived in the next house.

Then came a cottage owned and occupied by the Robinson family:



End house is that of George Gilbert, Thomas Griffiths and Elizabeth in 1841 census

Rising up out of Winsford the road is known as Winsford Hill.

Thomas Vernon owned the first two cottages housing the families of Thomas Dutton, a joiner, and Jane Atherton

Next door lived James Griffiths, a waterman, George Gilbert, a twenty years old sizemaker and his wife and two children Daniel Hatton and Charles.

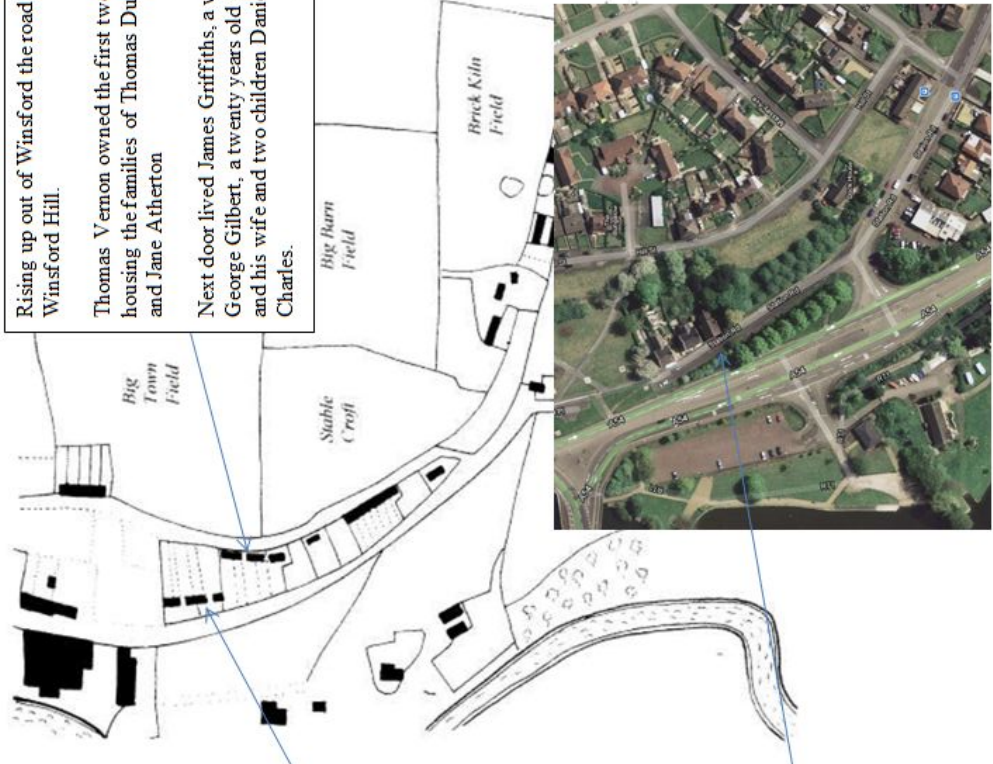


Figure 1.4: Maps showing Wharton side of the river Weaver at Winsford in 1841

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE



Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON

Application Number G40009

Registration District Norwich in the County of chester

1840. Marriage solemnized at the Parish church in the Parish of Davenhan

No.	(1) When married	(2) Name and Surname	(3) Age	(4) Condition	(5) Rank or Profession	(6) Residence at the time of marriage	(7) Father's name and surname	(8) Rank or Profession of father
48	February 17	Thomas Griffiths Elizabeth Gilbert	full	Bachelor Spinster	Taylor	Wharnton Wharnton	Phillip Griffiths George Gilbert	Hatman Size maker

Married in the Parish church according to the Rites and ceremonies of the Established church after banns
This marriage was solemnized between us, Thomas Griffiths his x mark in the presence of George Gilbert his x mark by me William D Seng
Elizabeth Gilbert her x mark or us, Elizabeth Hutton her x mark

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Marriages in the District above mentioned.
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 17th day of February 19 89

MB 384068

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 65 of the Marriage Act 1909. Subsection 1 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.
 CAUTION:—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.



1840

Figure 1.5: Copy of the marriage certificate of Thomas Griffiths and Elizabeth Gilbert, 1840

2. Sources

Many of the sources used have been via the internet. While I have included links to the web pages referenced, given the transient nature of the internet, I'm afraid the pages may not exist in the future. Other records are cited using referencing systems described below.

Census Records

Census record references for England and Wales are referenced by Class, Piece, Folio, Page. The census *Class* usually identifies the the year of the census though, as shown in Table 2.1, it is not a unique reference for the 1841 and 1851 censuses. A census *Piece* is a collection of many individual enumerators' books for a district. A census *Folio* is a sheet within one of those books. The page number refers to the page in the enumerator's individual book. Since their book will have been combined into a larger volume along with lots of other books, it is less revelant now.

1841	HO107
1851	HO107
1861	RG9
1871	RG10
1881	RG11
1891	RG12
1901	RG13
1911	RG14

Table 2.1: Class to Census Year

Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths

Since 1837 all births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales have had to be registered at the register office in the district where the event took place. The original indexes to these registers are held by the local register offices. Quarterly, the original entries were retranscribed and then reindexed by the central government and these indexes have been made available by the General Register Office for England and Wales (GRO). Local register offices use their own reference systems, while the central GRO indexes are referenced by District, Quarter, Year, Volume and Page. The first quarter of the year may be referenced as Q1, or Jan-Feb-Mar, or simply JFM. More recent GRO indexes give the District, register number, district/sub-district number, entry number, month, year e.g. Torbay A63A-4221A-215 Apr 1996. Sometimes the district/sub-district number is missing.

While the indexes contain some information, more details can be gathered by

purchasing the certificate. In general, it is better to purchase from the local register office, as the later GRO copies may contain transcription errors.

International Genealogy Index (IGI)

The International Genealogical Index (IGI) is compiled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (also known as LDS or Mormons). It is a listing of christenings (baptisms) and marriages from various sources, including parish registers, bishops' transcripts, non-conformist registers, compiled marriage indexes, censuses, wills, and LDS members' research. Most entries, however, have come from extracting christening and marriage information from parish registers.

If the information from the IGI has a batch number, it will be a record extracted from an original register. A batch number merely means that it is the "batch" of records which have been extracted from that particular church or chapel. A small church may only have one batch, a huge Cathedral may have many.

You can search other entries within the Batch by using the Advanced Search from the LDS site <https://www.familysearch.org/>, or use the batch number to help identify the location of the register using Hugh Wallis' site <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hughwallis/>. Within these sites a batch number consists of letter prefix, followed by a six digit number. You may need to remove hyphens and prefix a zero to the given batch number, for example C-2282-5 becomes C022825. The letters used are usually C for Christening, P - indicating a primary source Baptism record, or M - indicating a primary source marriage record.

Glossary of other terms

AMJ	Second quarter of calendar year, April May June
BC	Birth Certificate
BMD Index [BMD]	Index to Birth, Marriage and Death Register as indicated
BT	British Telecom
DC	Death Certificate
GRO	General Register Office for England and Wales
GROS	General Register Office for Scotland
IGI	International Genealogical Index
JFM	First quarter of calendar year, April May June
JAS	Third quarter of calendar year, April May June
LDS	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
MC	Marriage Certificate
NRS	National Records of Scotland
OND	Fourth quarter of calendar year, April May June
OPR	Old Parish Register for Scotland
PR	Parish Register
SR	Scottish Statutory Registers
TNA	The National Archive, London
VR	Vital Records, as collected by the LDS

Table 2.2: Glossary

Sources

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- [4] Person: Audrey Mary Hayward Perry.
- [5] Family Tree by Arthur Hayward Perry.
- [6] BC 1874 Griffiths, Elizabeth; South Hamlet, Gloucester. South Hamlet, Gloucestershire District Register Office.
- [7] Jan Nodder letter 1989.
- [8] MC 1840 Griffiths, Thomas and Gilbert, Elizabeth; Davenhan, Nortwich, Chester. Copy obtained from the Nodder's.
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