

# THE BAILIWICK

by Dr Peter Burville

My earlier article (ref 1) in the Newsletter recorded a one-name study, registered (1537) with the Guild of One-Name Studies, into the surname Burville and its many variants. Following over twenty years of research into the subject the present article reports the findings of that study which are recorded in a book and its associated CD (ref 2).

The objectives of the research was to find out about the lives of people with the surname, where they lived, how the events of history may have affected them, and finally to offer a suggestion for the origin of the name.

The period covered is from the 12th century, i.e. as early as they have been found, up to the beginnings of the 20th century. Being a one-name study, when the distaff side of the family married and took their husband's surname their line was no longer followed.

It was possible to establish quickly that the surname distribution in England was concentrated in East Kent with the to-be-expected groups in London. Study of the name going back in time made it clear that many of the Bailiwick, the term used for those with the surname, were illiterate agricultural workers so that the surname spelling was at the whim of the recording authority who were frequently themselves semi-literate. This led to various spellings being offered. Even in a will the spelling of surnames was not constant - several examples of different spellings on the same line were encountered.

The Bailiwick also includes many examples of highly educated people. James, a Six Preacher of Canterbury Cathedral (ref 3), lived at the beginning of the 17th century when the family was thriving. Although he had the Commonwealth period to contend with and fled to Ireland for the latter part of it, the family appeared to be "going places". Like James, his son James was also a graduate of Queens' College Cambridge and went into the church. James junior's son Henry was also a Cambridge graduate and went into the church. Henry had a coat of arms which, combined with that of his wife, features on their impressive heraldic ledger slab in West Peckham church where he was the vicar. Henry's brother Peter was in the Royal Navy and ended his days as Captain of HMS Comet Bomb to be buried at sea in the Caribbean. Peter's grandson John joined the army and rose to the rank of Major. Having been active in the defence of Gibraltar against the siege by the Spanish he also went to the Caribbean. John, a contemporary of Nelson, died of the yellow fever in Hispaniola and was shipped back in a barrel of rum to be buried in Boxley church where his father George was vicar. When John died in 1796 Nelson, together with his rum-fuelled sailors, had yet to achieve their famous victories against the French.

Even James the Six Preacher was the subject of different surname spellings. Both James of Northbourne and his father carpenter William of East Studdal were recorded as "*Burvill alias Burfield*" in 17th

century property dealings. These alternative forms of the surname were used intermittently down the centuries. In the Eastry/Tilmanstone area the surnames Burfeld and Barfeld can be traced back to at least the 13th century. In the 20th century my son William had a letter addressed to Mr Burfield following a phone call to the letter writer.

Contrasts in educational level are reflected in the lives that people led. Rich members of the Bailiwick left wills listing the properties they held and the furniture in their dwellings which give a clear idea of the rooms in the house. For example, Rector George of Boxley, father of Major John, lived in the vicarage with a parlour, sitting room-cum-study, kitchen, a paved cool larder where food and beer could be stored, a buttery for dairy and other products, and a brew-house or washroom with a chimney and associated oven. Upstairs there was a room with closet and inner room, a *Great Room* with closet and a further room beyond a *Great Beam*. It seems the *Great Room* was partitioned, ie *new boarded*, to provide extra rooms. Only the room with the inner room had a chimney, suggesting that the chimney was added to an external wall rather than being enclosed by the house. Outside there was a stable and a *house of Eassmts*, i.e. toilet. Attached to the latter was a little house, with a chimney, where the servants may have been accommodated. George, who was seriously rich, owning considerable real estate, had no male heirs so the wealth went to the distaff-side, the Burvill-Rashleighs.

Whilst illiterate people could be rich and powerful - early kings of England for example - many were poor. Quite a few

families in Folkestone and Dover had to resort to the workhouse for sustenance. This was particularly so during the depressions of the 19th century, conditions that gave considerable motivation to migrate.

Members of the Bailiwick spread from East Kent to other parts of England and Wales, sometimes taking the surname Burwell and being lost to the Bailiwick. Others went further to North America and Australia where they prospered and left their mark with roads being named after them as well as the geographical feature Burvill Point in Northern Australia. Some claimed Huguenot origins but evidence to support that has not been found. Whilst Huguenots, such as the early 17th century merchant and draper David Berville of Dover, was doubtless the genuine article no connection with the Bailiwick has been established. Interestingly, a Church of England family from Folkestone worshiped at the Black Prince's Chantry in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral where their children were baptised as Huguenots. Later the family returned to the Church of England.

As recorded in my earlier article (ref 1) the de Aubervilles were a powerful Norman family with extensive holdings in Kent and other counties. Sir William de Auberville laid siege to Dover Priory in 1191 "with his soldiers of the province" as he was not satisfied with the behaviour of the Priory. The following year this baron, with his wife Maude, founded Langdon Abbey. This was considered as a source of the surname as English serfs in the service of the de Aubervilles could have adopted a shortened Berville/Burville

version of the master's name. However, after investigating possible locative and other sources for the surname my conclusion is that the Burvilles from Kent derived their name from a manor less than six miles from where I live at St Margaret's Bay. Barefeld (Berfeld) Manor was in Tilmanstone and was located at what is now Barville Farm. Of course, other groups of Burvilles, such as those from France, will derive their name from another source.

To facilitate access to the information in the book and CD a comprehensive set of indexes are provided. The book also features some basic maps and naïve

illustrations. The CD was necessary as the many references plus family tree information meant exceeding its 500 A4 size pages. In addition the use of a CD has enabled the author to include various images relating to the Bailiwick that have been collected over the years.

Those interested in this research can contact Dr Burville on 01304 853267.

#### References:

1. *The Dover Society Newsletter*, no. 12, January 1992, pages 50-52
2. *Burville, Peter, An East Kent Family: The Burvilles, 2011, plus associated CD*
3. *Hill, Derek Ingram, The Six Preachers of Canterbury Cathedral, K. H. McIntosh, 1982*

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