



No. 209 – November 2024

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Devonshire Bunker Research – Part 2

Editor's Note:

BFA Genealogist Bette Richards recently commissioned some research on the origins of the Devonshire Bunkers, particularly James Bunker. Following the receipt of two reports, Bette concluded: "I believe we are stuck with not really knowing more about our James Bunker. I think she [researcher Lucy Browne] is done with any records being found in Devon and do not believe there will be much, if anything in London. All we have is sources checked without success. The guess that James was the one baptized in Slapton has never sat right with me. Just like the Jane Godfrey Bunker of Nantucket. Both of these are assumptions with no basis in records and cannot even be helped with elimination of all other possibilities."

The following contains the second of the two reports (combined 10 pages in length). If any member would like further information on this research, please contact Bette.

Further searches for the origins of James Bunker/Buncker in Devon

Introduction

The conclusion of the first report recommended that there are enough 16th and 17th century references to BUNKER to justify further searches and attempt to draw together some of the groups. It suggested that all probate material should be seen, and any early parish registers not yet seen by the client. The third stage should include an examination of the Chancery records indexed on the Discovery website linking members of the Bunker family to property in Cornworthy, Rattery and Ashprington, but the index entries to these have been revisited to search for a genealogical context.

A further purpose of this second research project is to search for Bunker family groups in the parishes of interest (Slapton, Rattery and Blackawton) or nearby, noting any gaps in the registers into which records of vital events might have fallen. For this, the search engine of the Find My Past (FMP) family history website was used (www.findmypast.co.uk). This is because FMP has collections of scanned Devon parish register images for accurate genealogical analysis, and the best coverage for the county of all the genealogical subscription sites. Its chart detailing the coverage can be seen at <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/articles/devon-parish-records-coverage>.

FMP does not, however, identify any gaps in the registers, or whether there are copies or originals surviving they haven't scanned. Thus, it was also important to carry out a detailed check of original register survival in the Devon Archives of the Southwest Heritage Trust (SWHT). A knowledge of the various indexes and transcriptions in the Archive search room is also useful, in particular the Devon & Cornwall Record Society (D&CRS) which transcribed the registers of a large number of Devon and Cornwall parishes before World War II, including the Bishop's Transcripts, which although fragmentary in the 17th century, can be very useful when the survival of the registers is poor.

James Bunker

So far, no baptism has been found for James Bunker which matches the information recorded in Massachusetts after he emigrated. From DNA results, he is believed to have originated in South Devon where there is evidence of family groups found in previous research in Blackawton, Rattery and Slapton.

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STATEMENT

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February, and May, by the **Bunker Family Association**,
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Officer Profiles

**From time to time, we include a profile of one of
the officers of the Association. Treasurer Dan
Greenland included this note in a recent email:**

I have been doing genealogy for over forty-five
years now. It all started when the Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints asked all members to do
a four-generation pedigree chart. I did that and got
the bug. I didn't really do a lot until when I was
asked to be part of the reunion committee for the
Bunker Family Reunion that was held in Salt Lake
City. I served on that committee and helped plan the
reunion. I haven't looked back since.

Since that time, I worked for Ancestry.com for a
number of years. I then got the interest to help other
people with their genealogy by going to school and
getting my certificates in New England research and
International research. I have been helping others
for the last 4 years now. Once you catch the bug it
keeps on going.

- Dan Greenland

Missing Members

Recent editions of the *Bunker Banner* have
been returned via the Post Office. It is not
known whether the recipients have moved
and left no forwarding address, or no longer
among us. If anyone knows the whereabouts
of any of them, we'd appreciate an email
advising us. Send to
doug.detling@gmail.com.

The missing:

Thomas R. Bunker of Phoenix, Arizona
Jack D. Cook of South Haven, Michigan
Eldon B. Bunker of Rackerby, California

Thomas Bunker and Jack Cook are life
members of the BFA.

Book Sale

Devonshire Bunkers – 2000

-Bette Bunker Richards

Descendants of James (D-1) on a USB flash-drive.
Approximately 1,333 pages in length, it updates
the 1982 Bunker Genealogy – parts of the
1965 Bunker Genealogy and more.

It includes descendants of:

- James (D-1) Bunker of Dover, New Hampshire
- Benjamin Bunker & Betsey Daniels, New London, NH
- Thomas Bunker & Alice Pertie, Rattery, Devon, UK
- William Bunker & Ann Forrester, New Castle, DE
 - Devonshire Parish Records
- Military service info for Bunkers from all branches
- Nearly 100 pictures • Maps • Indexes

Bedfordshire Bunkers – 2008

-Bette Bunker Richards

Descendants of Roger Bunker, Tingrith, Bedfordshire,
England available on a USB flash-drive, including:

- George (C-1) Bunker of Charlestown,
 - George (N-1) Bunker of Nantucket
- and the following connected by DNA tests:
- Joseph Bunker (b ca.1797 St. Albans, UK) and Mary
 - Henry Bunker (c1814-1866) m. Mary Ann Cassidy
 - Thomas Bunker and Clarissa Chamberlin
- Plus:
- Parish records (except Devon) that are copied to date
 - Military service info for Bunkers from all branches
updated through 2024
 - Ships named *Bunker Hill* (with histories & photos)
 - Numerous images and photographs

One book \$25; both books on one USB \$35

- Indicate which drive you want •

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**Volunteers are still needed to assist the
BFA.**

**We're looking for a newsletter editor and
Graveyard Committee chair, specifically.
If interested, contact BFA President LiAnn
Pennington.**

Devonshire Bunker Research

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Previous researchers including Charles Edward Banks (Topographical dictionary of 2885 English Emigrants Philadelphia 1937) have identified Slapton as his parish of origin, but unless others have quoted a source for this information, it might be hypothetical rather than a proven identification in the face of a lack of other contenders for the emigrant.

It was important to begin with the baptism record which gave rise to this hypothesis. FMP includes coverage for Slapton from 1635 for baptisms and 1634 for marriages and burials, and the SWHT catalogue confirms that these are the years from which the registers survive, so the baptism was assumed to have been originally found in the Bishop's Transcripts which include some earlier years, and these were checked. A "copy of the transcript from the Cathedral Archive [i.e. the bishop's transcripts], a manuscript transcription by the Devon & Cornwall Record Society, confirmed the baptism of James BUNCKER, son of James and Elizabeth on 10th February 1633/4. The transcription of composite registers of baptism, marriages and burials was then examined from the beginning starting in 1606 to see if there was other family to place this James in context. The years available prior to 1633 are 1606, 1608, 1610, 1612-1615, 1617, 1620, 1623 and 1632. The Bunker name was not seen at all; however, there were plenty of gaps into which baptisms of siblings might have fallen into, together with the marriage of James the elder and Elizabeth possibly occurring sometime between 1623 and 1632 or earlier. Additionally, James baptised in 1633/4 might not have been the only James Bunker in the parish. With the baptism records of 1628 missing, it cannot be known whether there was a second Bunker family who also named their son James.

For previous research to have settled on the 1633/4 baptism for James of Massachusetts, it presumably assumes that James was not an infant when he was baptised, with a year of birth nearer to 1628, calculated from the age of 50 he apparently professed to be in 1678. If he was an infant in 1633/4, he would not have been serving on a jury 14 years later. However, one should be cautious making any assumptions, particularly when record survival was patchy. While bishop's transcripts can leave out

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assumptions, particularly when record survival was patchy. While bishop's transcripts can leave out details, it is common for a note to be made if a child was no longer a baby. It was also unusual (not impossible but unusual) for a child to be baptised after infancy unless two or more siblings were being baptised together.

While parish registers have formed an extensive part of previous research by the client [Bette Richards] and others, with the search for a 1628 baptism presumably high on the list, none has apparently been found, and before settling on one which is a poor fit, it is important to identify other likely parishes around Slapton where a baptism might have taken place, the record of which does not survive. This would include following up other James Bunkers who apparently did not emigrate (are they contenders for James baptised in 1633?) as well as identifying family groups which might appear incomplete from available records.

Blackawton

Family groups have been identified in Blackawton, and another suggested identity for James in previous research is as the son of Nicholas, brother of William (both born in Rattery), and Elizabeth Bunker of Blackawton who moved between Rattery, Blackawton and Slapton. These might be close contenders for James's family, but the source of information would need to be identified and revisited. Baptism registers for Blackawton included Nicholas, Elizabeth, a second Nicholas, Avis and Mary between 1631 and 1639, and with no gap in the register, an unrecorded child does not seem likely. However, a marriage for Nicholas and Elizabeth has not been found, and the family might have begun earlier in another parish with incomplete records, including a James being baptised in the appropriate year of 1628.

James Bunker: burials

From a FMP database search of baptisms, marriages and burials for the first report, it is evident that, while the surname is still unusual, from the later 16th century to the mid-17th century at least one couple per parish named Bunker was recorded having children baptised near Slapton. These parishes include Ashburton, Ashprington, Harberton, Plymstock (a bit further, but a large family headed by Thomas Bunker) and Totnes. The

name James was looked out for to give even a tenuous link, but while a range of Christian names were used in the families, no James was seen. As, apart from the emigrant, a number of James Bunkers are recorded locally in burial registers, this suggests that their baptisms took place in parishes the registers of which do not survive, so it is important to remember that there are missing Bunker family groups.

The burials for James Bunker, also seen in previous research, but revisited for this discussion, were found using FMP in the registers of Asprington (February 1653, James son of James Bunker) and 1680, Ashburton (1663) and Stoke Fleming (1670). No additional information appeared in these scans of original records, so apart from 1653, all were assumed to be adults.

Previous research identified James who died in 1670 as James Bunker born in East Allington in 1610, son of Philip and Agnes, and father of James baptised in Slapton. He apparently had connections with Blackawton, and has been suggested as brother to Gregory, William and Nicholas Bunker, also of Blackawton. This information, together with a family group headed by Philip and Agnes might appear in published genealogical histories of the family based on surviving sources at the time of writing, but for this report, no evidence has been seen to support these relationships, and again, this evidence, or evidence for there being several James Bunkers here, might not survive.

A similar search using FMP found no marriages of James Bunker, again suggesting that the registers either didn't survive or had not been scanned on Find My Past. The register survival of Ashburton, Ashprington and Stoke Fleming was researched to gauge whether it might be the record which was missing rather than the person.

Ashburton registers available on Find My Past apparently run from 1603, and the SWHT catalogue entry for the original (ref 2141A/PR/1/1) also suggests a good survival during this turbulent time with the composite register running from 1603 to 1687.

FMP includes baptisms from 1610 and marriages and burials from 1607 for Ashprington, and the SWHT catalogue entry for the original (ref 2027A/PR/1/1) denotes the coverage as 1607 to 1649. There is then a gap as the next volume (ref 2027A/PR/1/2) begins in

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1653 for baptisms and burials and 1658 for marriages. The father of James who died in 1653 might have married during that gap.

The parish registers for Stoke Fleming are apparently available on FMP from 1539 for marriages and 1538 for baptisms and burials. The first original volume (ref. 1342A/PR/1/1) runs from 1538 to 1602 (1603 for marriages). However, the second volume (ref. 1342A/PR/1/2) is an example of how the [British] Civil War disrupted record keeping which is probably the reason for the difficulty in finding James. Baptisms survive between 1639-1642, and 1670-1713; marriages from 1671-1713, and burials from 1605-1627 then 1670-1713. So the records of many events do not survive, or might not have been recorded in the first place.

The Bishop's Transcripts, transcribed by the Devon & Cornwall Record Office, were seen in the search room. Marriages for Stoke Fleming include 1611, 1614, 1616, 1620, 1626, 1627, 1635, 1666, 1668 and 1669. These were checked in case a Bunker might show a family presence in the parish, but none was seen.

Probate Records, and subsequent searches

A vast number of probate records were destroyed in the Exeter Sub-Registry in Bedford Circus during the bombing raids on the city in 1942. Survival ranges from a single reference in a list or calendar, to a full transcription made before the war, or an original which was elsewhere on that night. For the first report, the Devon Wills Index, the aim of which was to bring the details of all surviving material together, was searched for Bunker, Buncker, Boncker, Bouncker and Boncher.

Surviving material found included a reference to Olive Moger's transcription of John Bouncker's will, and the transcription was seen in the search room, which gave a few more details than the Burnett Morris card index entry. A nuncupative will (dictated or oral rather than written by the testator), it was dated 9th April 1613, and it was proved at Plympton Morrice in the Visitation dated 7th June 1613. "Churstow" or Churchstow is about 8 miles west of Slapton, and this family group are likely connected with the other South Devon Bunkers.

However, searches were made for the family without much success. Alice Bunker, widow, was buried at Churchstow on 21st December 1633, and might have been John's mother. Neither a marriage for her nor baptism records for John and his brothers Stephen and Thomas been found, so her husband's name remains unknown. No other indexed records linked the family and the parish, using the Discovery search engine for parish administration records and land records. Thomas Bouncker, witness, might have also been John's brother as no other identification was given for him.

A second will referenced in the Burnet Morris index, that of John Leigh in 1616, also mentioned members of this Bunker (spelt Buncker here) family. Robert is mentioned again, evidently close family, and might have been another brother of John. He was "deceased" by this time. Thomas Buncker and wife Honor were named, as well as Elizabeth Buncker, widow of John. The original will is not listed by the Devon Wills Project and it's possible that the only reference to it lies in the Burnett Morris Index. No further information was found in a search of parish registers.

Mary Putt who mentioned John Bunker in her will of 1621 has not been traced. It is possible that there is a family connection, but a marriage between a Putt and a Bunker was searched for with the FMP search engine and produced no results. No corresponding burial has been found for Mary Putt in the years before 1621. However, the Devon Wills Index lists a Mary Putt, widow, dated 1622 (which might be the year of proving) of West Alvington which is in the right geographical area for a connection with the Bunker family, and it still could be that Bunker was her maiden name, or that she was the daughter of a female Bunker (harder to find). Searching the West Alvington parishes registers between 1601 and 1621, several men named Putt were buried during this time (2 x Nicholas, 1 x William and 1 x John). In 1615, Deborah Putt the daughter of Nicholas and Mary was buried. Mr Nicholas Putt was buried on 5th May 1621, however, no burial of Mary Putt was found in a page-by-page search of the register. Finally, a John Bunker was listed in West Alvington in the 1581 subsidy, demonstrating an early Bunker presence in the parish.

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Ashprington

The parish of Ashprington near Totnes, about 10 miles north of Slapton, was evidently home to members of the Bunker family in the 16th and 17th centuries, and is of interest as the burial place of two James Bunkers (James son of James in 1653 and James presumably an adult in 1686, possibly young James's father). Property here was also the subject to a Chancery dispute between James Bunker, likely James the elder, and Alexander Baddaford and John Gill in 1657 (C 10/466/30 Date: 1657 as referenced in the previous report). Three 17th century estreat rolls for the Manor of Ashprington dated 1612, 1616-17 and 1629 survive in the Devon Archives, and it might be that after examining the Chancery records, they become relevant. A survey of 1754 (ref 90M/E/5) is included in the collection and might possibly contain some information and with more time might be checked. A 16th century rental together with an estreat roll and a court roll (CR/20125/20105 and 20102) for a second Ashprington manor, Tybbecome, also survive but are too early to be of use at this stage.

A second Chancery dispute, this time over property in Cornworthy (see previous report, ref C 10/53/15 Date 1658) almost certainly named the same James Bunker, this time against Richard and Mary Wise, Richard likely "gentleman" of Totnes who appears in various property records indexed on Discovery, around the same time.

A James Bunker also had a daughter baptised in Dartmouth, about 7 miles from Ashprington, in 1647, and might be the same man, but no marriage has been found or other baptisms to fill in the family, although the significant gap in the Ashprington registers mentioned above, between 1649 and 1653 for baptisms and burials, and 1649 and 1658 for marriages. No James was listed in the Dartmouth Protestation Returns of 1641. James in Ashprington would be an appropriate age in 1653 to have been baptised in Slapton in 1634, and this should be borne in mind in the search for the migrant's identity. However, if Dartmouth James is the same man, he would be too old. The Protestation Returns for 1641 (see previous report) listed James Buncker for Ashprington, and also Richard, likely either the son or husband of Barbara.

Looking further for possible Ashprington origins for James, the parish registers transcribed by Granville and

Mugford (see Report 1) and indexed by Burnett Morris were examined. The transcription recorded Richard Bunker and Barbara Dunning marrying there on 19th October 1601 (registers for this period now only run from 1607) and subsequently their son Harrie, apparently baptised and buried a few weeks later. The baptism of Thomas, son of Richard and Barbara was found using FMP in Littlehempston, about 4 miles from Ashprington, dated 31st January but the year isn't entirely clear; a page-by-page search found the entries jumping from 1603 to 1616. No further records have been found for this family group, but there might have been baptisms in Littlehempston in the 1600s recorded in the apparently missing pages of the register.

Thomas Bunker, married to Winefred (with various spelling variants) had at least three children baptised in Ashprington: Jane (1610), Richard (1611) and William (1613). As Winefred lived to a good age in the parish, Thomas and Honor mentioned above are evidently a different couple.

In the previous report, a billman named John Bunker was listed in Ashprington Parish in the Devon Muster Roll for 1569, and further research might find him a close relative of Richard married to Barbara. John Bunker was also listed in the Ashprington Devon Subsidy Roll for 1581.

Rattery

Finally, parish-of-interest Rattery was revisited to pull together previous references and explore whether any clues emerged. A Chancery case, short title Hele v Phillips (see previous report, ref C 8/222/32 Date: 1667) included the surname Bunker for property in Rattery. There are several names in this document, and it might be that a Bunker was a trustee. Genealogical information might be included, all the same, and the dwelling place of the Bunker named. From the date, and the baptism registers, if it is a Rattery Bunker, it is likely to be Roger who was having children baptised possibly over two decades from the 01660s to the 1680s. Roger Bunker and Mary Williams "both of Rattery" married in Totnes and were recorded in the registers on 19th July 1656. This might be Roger Bunker of Rattery named in the Protestation Returns of 1641. A Mary Bunker was buried on 22nd October 1663, and on 26th April 1664, Roger Bunker, possibly her widower, was married to

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Mary Andrew in Rattery. It is quite possible that Roger was born in the parish and is related to Wyllyam Bunker and Dorythye Gordyn married 14th August 1609 and Wyllyam Bunker son of Gregory baptised 28th June 1609, records found for the previous report in the Bishop’s Transcripts. However, the incomplete registers for the first half of the 17th century, together with a lack of surviving manorial records, mean that any connections will be difficult to prove. Previous research has already identified links between the Rattery Bunkers and those in other parishes, and William, father of Gregory baptised in Blackawton in 1635 is quite likely Wyllyam son of Gregory baptised in 1609.

Lucy Browne’s Conclusion

The challenges facing all those attempting to research this period and location include the effect of the English Civil War on both the maintenance of records and their survival, and the dispersing of the population. There was inevitable disruption in communities, and the steady progress of family groups in a small area, never predictable at the best of times, lead to the moving around of those upset by battles, skirmishes and general unrest. In some cases, this led to migration as in the case of James Bunker, whose origins without doubt lie in South Devon, but whose precise lineage remains to be ascertained.

Sources

All parish register entries seen are from the collections in the Devon Heritage Centre, including original registers, original Bishop’s Transcripts, and the transcriptions of the Devon & Cornwall Record Society. For further references not included in the text, see the previous report dated 8th August 2024 [published in the August 2024 *Bunker Banner*].

More English Research

I just got the parish records for Tingrith and have copied all the Bunker entries, even those made after our Georges came to America. Neither of the Georges married in Tingrith. Nantucket George married Elizabeth Godfrey in Malden Parish and Charlestown George married in Odell Parish. Both, of course, were buried in America.

The name is variously spelled Buncker and Bunker. These records are source proof of the Tingrith Bunkers, ancestors of both the American George Bunkers. The actual handwritten records were transcribed by the Bedfordshire Historical Society.

- Bette

TINGRITH, BEDFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND PARISH RECORDS-1572-1812 -BEDFORDSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BAPTISMS 1572-1800

- 1572 Fe4 Thos s Oliver Buncker
- 1574 Mr6 Francis s Oliver Buncker
- 1576 My7 Edmd s Oliver Buncker
- 1604 JI16 Eliz d Jn Buncker
- 1609 De 3 Hen s Jn Buncker
- 1610 Ap24 Oliver s Francis Buncker
- 1611 Fe25 Jonathan s Francis Buncker
- 1613 Ja23 Frances d Francis Buncker (“daughter” written above “sonne” struck through B.T. gives “daughter”)
- 1617 Ap6 Geo s Francis Buncker
- 1619 No7 Jane d Francis Buncker
- 1621 Mr3 Joan d Francis Buncker
- 1624 No17 Wm s Francis Tabitha Buncker
- 1621 Ap25 Geo s Timothy Buncker
- 1623 Oc26 Wm s Timothy Eliz Buncker
- 1625 Au28 Joan d Timothy Eliz Buncker
- 1647 Oc30 Hannah d Jn Bunker
- 1648 Jn17 Wm s Geo Bunker
- 1650 Ap2 Eliz d Jn Bunker
- 1667 My12 Oliver s Timothy Bunker

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TINGRITH, BEDFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND
PARISH RECORDS-1572-1812 -BEDFORDSHIRE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BAPTISMS 1572-1800

1668 No29 Mary Bunker
1670 Ap24 Jn s Timothy Bunker
1700 Oc26 Sarah d Thos Buncker born Oc25
1702 De26 Ann d Thos Saarah Buncker
1706 Au20 Sarah d Thos Sarah Buncker
1708 Jn27 Thos s Thos Sarah Buncker
1710 My14 Ann d Thos Sarah Bunker
1712 Ja1 Jn s Thos Sarah Bunker

MARRIAGES

1586 Se28 Wm Vause Alice Bunker
1609 J110 Francis Buncker Tabitha Davey
1620 My3 Timothy Buncker Eliz Hawkins
1624 J11 Wm Page Eliz Bunker
1634 J118 Hen Deacon Alice Buncker1679 Ap15 Oliver
Bunker
1672 Jn18 Oliver Bunker Alice Page
1797 Edw Ashbey (Toddingtton) Eliz Bunker

BURIALS

1588 De30 Patrick Buncker
1615 Fe17 Jos s Francis Buncker
1616 Au25 Oliver Buncker
1617 Ap7 Joan w Timothy Buncker
1623 My18 Jn Buncker
1625 My26 Joan Buncker
1631 Fe12 Tabitha Buncker
1632 Au16 Francis Buncker
1636 De3 Wm Buncker
1652 Se29 The wife of Timothy Bunker
1657 Ap11 Timothy Buncker
1665 Fe15 The wife of Oliver Bunker
1679 Ap15 Oliver Bunker
1687 Mr10 Jn Bunker

1689 Ap1Alice Bunker
1696 My10 Ellen w Thos Buncker
1705 Oc5 Sarah d Thos Sarah Buncker
1705 Mr20 Ann d Thos Sarah Buncker
1707 Au2 Wm s Thos Sarah Bunker
1724 Mr30 Thos Bunker yeoman
1739 My15 Sarah Bunker, widow, of Marston Morteyne

Abbreviations:

Jn = John, Jos= Joseph, Wm=William, Thos = Thomas,
Eliz=Elizabeth, Edmd=Edmond Hen=Henry,
Geo=George, Edw=Edward
S=son, d=daughter