

The 'Gentleman' Scrimshires of Cotgrave

Introduction.

Most inhabitants of Cotgrave will be familiar with Scrimshire Lane which joins Plumtree Road to Owthorpe Road but relatively few may appreciate the reason for its appellation. In common with many such ancient pathways it takes its name from an important family which inhabited the village over the two centuries from roughly 1550 to 1750. They were known to own significant amounts of land (some 250 acres) and property within the village, including Cotgrave Place and various small plots around the village centre. In particular, we have evidence that they occupied a grand house situated just off Plumtree Road where Green Platt exists today. Indeed, the short length of ancient stone wall which adorns the western side of Scrimshire Lane adjoining the present Church graveyard was almost certainly part of the wall surrounding their mansion.

To appreciate the importance of the family we may note that they were second only to the Cotgrave Rectors regarding their wealth – and Church dignitaries, in those days, were known to live rather well on the proceeds of tythes! But perhaps the best way to quantify the comparison is illustrated by the observation that, at the time of Cotgrave Enclosure in 1790, when the Rector's tythe income was replaced by an award of land, this amounted to some 550 acres (out of a total of roughly 3,000 acres representing Cotgrave and Stragglethorpe together). What this meant in terms of living standards is made clear when we learn from the 1881 Census that the then Rector, Alfred Hensley lived in a huge Rectory and employed no less than eight servants. The Scrimshire family may not have lived at quite this level of opulence but were surely of considerable importance, emphasised (as we shall see) by the frequently occurring appendage 'Gentleman' (or 'Gent') and their external association with a variety of titled individuals.

Given all this, it seems appropriate that our website should include a detailed account of the persons involved and their inter-relationships – and this (with the help of genealogy experts such as Ancestry) may sound straightforward enough. However, the practicality has proved somewhat less so! Two problems arise; firstly that it all happened a long time ago, before regular census returns and secondly that the name 'Scrimshire' (in its many variants) was a surprisingly common one in those days. Not only were there Scrimshire Gents in Cotgrave, there were several lesser families sharing the surname, while the algorithms used by Ancestry, for example, take no account of this distinction. What is more, the range of first names involved was somewhat limited, making it all too easy for Ancestry (and, indeed, myself) to muddle different families. Yet another difficulty lay with the fact that those same algorithms seemed to be unaware of a number of human characteristics such as the range of a woman's reproductive capacity – the suggestion that one particular Scrimshire offspring should have been born to a mother aged 69 illustrates the point! Finally (and I shall criticise Ancestry no further than this!) Ancestry describes one William Scrimshire as dying in Sydney, New South Wales in 1622 – while every schoolgirl knows very well that New South Wales only came into existence in 1788! Of course, it would be unfair to imply that Ancestry was useless – it certainly offered a great deal of help, suggesting lines of approach, for example – only that its detailed suggestions had to be regarded with an element of scepticism!

Indeed, it was via Ancestry that I made the discovery that the All Saints Cotgrave Parish records are available on the internet and this proved extremely useful. It was possible to check the accuracy of a great many statistics involving Baptisms, Marriages and Burials to a welcome degree of certainty. Ancestry also provided entry to several wills which also offered reliable details of one or two Scrimshire family members – and it is significant that it was only the more gentrified Scrimshires who felt the need to write such documents. However, even here, there are difficulties. For example, a male Scrimshire Gent was quite likely to marry outside Cotgrave so there is no record of such unions in the Cotgrave Records. On the other hand, the baptisms and burials of his family and the marriages of his daughters are usually available, which is extremely helpful. In one or two instances Ancestry also provided access to Parish Records of other localities so, once again, we can feel confident of their veracity. In the account that follows, therefore, I have adopted a formula whereby each name or date which can be confirmed by the use of such Records is indicated by a * - for example, “John Scrimshire (1609* - 1669*)”. It is also worth emphasising that Parish Records usually provide a precise date (year, month, day) which can sometimes be of considerable value. For example, John Scrimshire 1609* and his son John Scrimshire 1641* both died in the same year 1669* which is confusing until one can identify the father as being buried on 4th December* and the son on 25th June*(but what a year for the family!). The availability of precise dates can also be of help in recognising whether two children could be born to the same mother – four months apart, for example, suggests two different families!

As noted above, the Clergy were, themselves, of ‘Gentleman’ status and it is clear from any detailed perusal of an appropriate Parish Record that they were concerned to emphasise the social status of their ‘clients’. Not only were certain individuals referred to as ‘Mr’, ‘Gent’ or ‘Esq’ but the entry was marked out with a cross or other similar indicator (some of these important! entries, for example, being in Latin!) and this could obviously be of considerable help in deciding whether an entry referred to the Scrimshire family we are concerned with or to another family with the same surname – there were definitely several John Scrimshires, for instance, flourishing during the seventeenth century. However, having said this, it would appear that (at least in the case of Cotgrave All Saints) this ‘gentrification’ practice may have existed for a limited time span only (perhaps from 1600 to about 1750) so one needs to be careful in applying it too rigidly to *exclude* an individual *not* favoured with such a soubriquet! Interestingly, there are one or two references to widows of Gents being referred to as ‘Gent’ on their burial entries. Others are classified as ‘Mistress’ or ‘Mrs’ (Note that ‘Mrs’, which we now use to mean ‘Missis’, contains a letter ‘r’ for this reason!)

Further confirmation of specific Scrimshire data is provided by four gravestones which were originally to be found in the nave of All Saints Church but which were removed in the restoration following the fire of 1996 and now lie gathering moss (and becoming less and less decipherable!) in the churchyard, adjacent to the base of the tower. (We have photographs but they are a poor substitute for the originals.)

The Early Years

The surname ‘Scrimshire’ originated in Scotland and derives from ‘Scrimgeour’ the hereditary title of the banner-bearers to the early Scottish Kings. Over the years the spelling has varied widely, such versions as Skrymsher, Scrimshaw, Scrimshawe, Skrimshyre, Skrymshyre, Scrymeshire, and several others having made their appearance during our period of interest. However, I shall confine my usage to the version ‘Scrimshire’ which is in general usage today. There is, by the way, a Scrimshire Coat of Arms, which appears occasionally in Ancestry’s accounts of individual Scrimshire males.

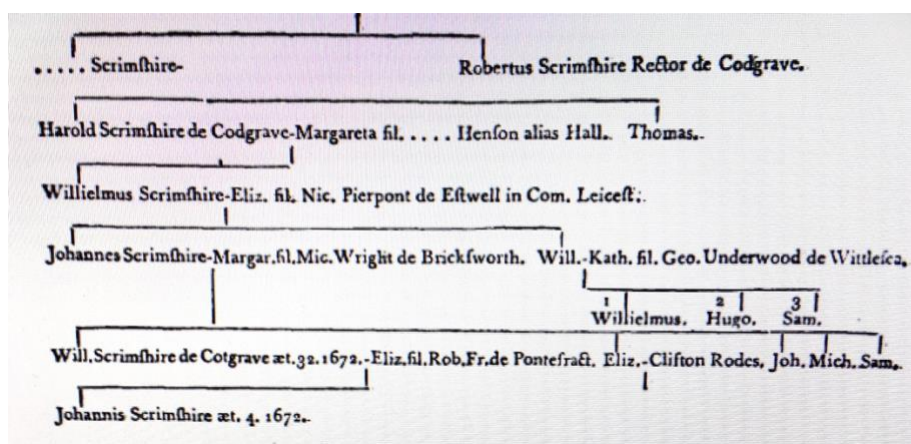


The first intimation of the existence of a gentrified Scrimshire family in Cotgrave is found in Robert Thoroton’s “The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire”, first published in 1677 and republished with considerable extension by John Thoresby in 1797. Herein we discover that “Harold Scrimshire purchased a Farm called Rempston Hall in Codgrave, of Brian Stapleton, of Carlton-by-Snayth, in Yorkshire; --- and another of ----- Rosell, wherein his Brother Thomas lived, which was purchased together with Walter Whalley’s and Richard Champion’s” (members of the Whalley



Dr Robert Thoroton

family co-existed with the Scrimshires in Cotgrave for some hundred years or so from about 1550 to 1650). It would seem likely that the two farms in question were situated at Cotgrave Place and what is now Green Platt, respectively, there being conclusive evidence from the time of Enclosure (1790) that the Scrimshires had once owned houses in these localities. Of even greater significance is the family tree included in Thoroton’s history which covers the four generations from about 1550 to 1670 (reproduced here). It provides important detail, though lacking many dates. However, as will become clear, with the help of the All Saints Parish records, we have been able to fill in many of these.

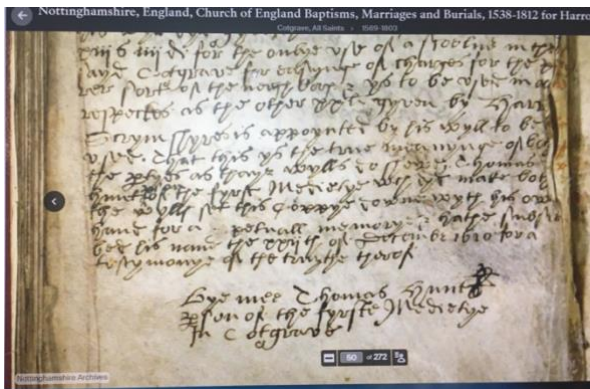


Though we shall begin our study of the gentrified Scrimshires with Harold, it is important to recognise that the Scrimshire name in Cotgrave goes back several generations earlier. As an example, recorded in the ‘Yellow Book’ (Cotgrave Aspects of Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, edited by Jocelyn Wood), we note that an earlier Rector, Robert Kynder (1617). took a Scrimshire lady as his second wife. Furthermore, as illustration of the

continuing presence of Scrimshires *after* the departure of Harold's successors, a later Rector, Nathan Haines (1797), similarly married a Scrimshire. There are also Scrimshire gravestones in the All Saints churchyard with dates into the nineteenth century.

Harold Scrimshire (? – 1610*)

While it seems clear that Harold Scrimshire 'founded' the gentrified Cotgrave family, we know relatively little about him, where he came from, whence came his obvious wealth (as suggested by his ability to purchase land and two grand houses). The fact that he came to Cotgrave in middle life means that his birth, marriage and children had already happened, so the only entry to be found in the Parish Records is concerned with his death! He was buried on the tenth of February 1610*.



The then Rector, Thomas Hunt (1595 – 1617) wrote a brief summary of Harold's will in which he left £10 (roughly £1,500 in today's currency) to the poor and £20 towards the maintenance of a village schoolmaster (he clearly appreciated the importance of education in the village), the legacies to be administered by the Churchwardens.

According to the usually reliable Thoroton, Harold's wife's maiden-name was Henson and Ancestry suggests her first name may have been Margaret but we know nothing more about her origins. Thoroton indicates that they had a son William who we shall take the liberty of designating 'William I', to distinguish him from several other Williams lower down the family Tree. He also tells us that Harold had a brother Thomas though, again, we know nothing about him.

William Scrimshire I (1575 – 1656*)

William was probably born before his father arrived in Cotgrave so we have little certainty over his date of birth. Ancestry refers us to a 'William Scrimshire' born in 1575 but we have no certainty that this is the 'right' one! Thoroton makes clear that William married Elizabeth Pierpont of Eastwell, though providing no date for the marriage. Eastwell is a small village in Leicestershire, about ten miles south-east of Cotgrave and the Pierponts – or Pierpoints or Pierpoyntes! – were well established there. Elizabeth's father, Nicholas Pierpont refers, in his will of 1606*, to a son-in-law William Scrimshire which is encouraging! But what of the date for the nuptials? There is a somewhat blurred entry in the Cotgrave Parish Register for 1599* to the effect that:

"Wmy Scrymshire Elizabeth Pierpoynt were maryed (date unreadable!)"

but there is no sign of the important word 'Gent'. It is also unusual in the sense that marriages usually took place in the church where the bride lived.

Bearing in mind these uncertainties, we are still obliged to go along with an Ancestry account that describes William and Elizabeth in the following terms: William (1575 – 1656*),

Elizabeth (1577 – 1646*), ten children, all born in Cotgrave, many of the births being confirmed by the Parish Records:

1601* – Ursula(?)

1602* - Anne

1603 – Frances

1605* – Margaret

1607 – Elizabeth

1609* – John

1611 – Samuel

1613 – William

1615* – Anne

1619* – Harold

They must have despaired of producing their first male heir, after five daughters! It is interesting to note that Nicholas Pierpont's 1606* Will refers to his grandchildren (plural) – (there were four at that point!), leaving them six pounds “to be divided between them in equal porcons.” Thoroton credits William with only John and William – mere daughters clearly didn't count in matters of serious family history! William (1613) married Kathleen (Katharyne?), daughter of George Underwood of Wittlesea and produced three sons (William, Hugo and Samuell) but we shall say no more of this branch of the family in favour of the direct line of descent.

As a final complication to this complex story, we cannot overlook the existence of a significant Will dated 14th January 1621, written by a William Scrimshire, naming himself as ‘Wilimi’ and referring to himself as a ‘Yeoman’. Probate was dated 31st October 1622, though there is no (readable) corresponding ‘burial’ entry in the Cotgrave Parish Record. The Will refers to “houses, lands, buildings and tenements” also to “parkland” which suggests a moderately wealthy author (in spite of his ‘yeoman’ description) but, more importantly, it references a “much loved wife, Elizabeth” and four sons (in order of procreation) “John, Samuell, William and Harold” – note the order in the above list of William and Elizabeth's children! It would be asking a lot of coincidence – surely this is the self-same William and Elizabeth Scrimshire pairing! Accepting this obvious conclusion, of course, demands a change in the year of William's death from 1656 to 1622. Bear in mind, however, that there is an appropriate burial entry for the year 1656* but none for 1622! Can there be a rationale?



William's signature 1718

The answer is “Perhaps”! Two further ‘facts’ point us in the right(?) direction. Firstly, Ancestry records a William Scrimshire who died in 1622 in Sydney! Whilst this is clearly impossible (Sydney didn't exist in 1622), we note that Thoroton tells us that William (1613), second son of our William, married Kathleen

(Katharene?), daughter of George Underwood of Wittlesea (a town near Petersfield, now known as Wittlesey) whilst there is a city in New South Wales called Whittlesey. Could this explain Ancestry's confusion? Perhaps William actually died whilst visiting relatives in Wittlesea and was buried there? This would explain the lack of any entry in the Cotgrave Parish Record for 1622 and, to speculate even further, we might suppose that the burial entry for 1656* actually refers to William's son (William – 1613). "Wild speculation" you may say? And I am inclined to agree but, sadly, we seem to be reduced to just that!

It is worth adding that the William Scrimshire Will makes mention of several daughters, viz: Ursula, Sara, Margaret, Elizabeth, Ann which, (recognising that Sara is an alternative form of Frances), corresponds exactly to the list of daughters collated above. It also makes clear that the eldest daughter, Ursula (then 20 years old) was married to Robert Kinder, then Cotgrave Rector (of the First Mediety). In fact, Robert Kinder was one of those who witnessed the signing of the will. Another one was John Whalley (Gent), a member of the Whalley family based in Screveton, (though there was a minor branch based in Cotgrave). As an aside, we may note that Richard Whalley (1498* – 1583*) of Screveton covered himself in glory during the Civil War and was a member of the Commission which condemned the King to death. He is also noteworthy for siring no less than twenty-five children - with the help of his three wives!. There is a monument to him in Screveton Church.

John Scrimshire I (1609* – 1669*)

As we have seen, John was born in 1609* to William and Margaret and, being the eldest of William's three sons, he therefore succeeded his father as family head. It is significant that most of the references to him in the various records use the appendage 'Gentleman' or 'Gent' (or sometimes merely 'Mr'). This is an important distinction because there were several John Scrimshires flourishing in Cotgrave at this time (one of whom was born in 1606, almost contemporaneous with John Scrimshire I).

When twenty-six years old he married Margaret Wright of Brixworth in Northamptonshire on September 22nd, 1635*. The entry in the Parish Records of All Saints Church Brixworth refers to "Mr" John Scrimshire and plain Margaret Wright, while her parents were Michael and Samantha Wright. (It may be totally irrelevant to his choice of bride but Brixworth Church is perhaps the outstanding example of Anglo-Saxon architecture remaining in the British Isles!)

They lost no time in starting their family – Elizabeth was born in December of 1636*, followed by four sons, their baptismal dates being shown below:

1636*, 22nd December – Elizabeth

1639* 2nd April – William

1641* 20th May – John

1646* 26th December – Michael

1654* 20th November – Samuel

We know something of each of the children. Elizabeth married well – in 1661* she was espoused to Clifton Rodes of Sturton, Notts (6 miles east of Retford).



His father was Baron Francis Rodes, his mother, Lady Elizabeth Rodes, daughter of Sir George Lascelles. Another member of the family, Sir John Rodes was High Sheriff of Derbyshire.

William, the eldest son, became 'William Scrimshire II' so we shall say no more about him for the moment.

John, second son, took the path so often favoured by second sons, that of entering the Church. In 1661*, at the age of twenty, he began his studies at Emanuel College, Cambridge, received his BA degree in 1663*, his MA in 1667* and became Rector of All Saints Church, Cotgrave in the same year. (We may reasonably assume that the Scrimshires and the Pierrepoints, who held the advowson of All Saints, were on fairly close terms.) In those days of plural appointments, he was also appointed Vicar of Sneinton. Sadly, however, he died two years later, on the 24th June 1669*. The precise date is significant because his father (also John) died on 4th December of the same year (yet another possible source of confusion for the less fastidious researcher!). Life was obviously rather less secure in those days than we are accustomed to today but this double departure must have been difficult for the family to accept. In accord with the then requirements of Oxbridge colleges, John had not married so he made no contribution to the continuation of the Scrimshire line.

Michael followed a trend, which was to become gradually more frequent, by moving to London, where he took up the trade of Goldsmith. In 1678* he married Elizabeth Barton at St Hellens Church, Bishopsgate but, though he clearly lived permanently in London, he obviously maintained his family contacts in Cotgrave, as shown by the fact that he served as Executor for his mother Margaret's Will in 1671*.

Samuell, the youngest of the youngsters, chose to stay at home and live a (presumably) quiet life. It was only in 1693* when he was 38 years old that he married a Cotgrave girl, Mary Wats, some twelve years his junior. They had two sons, Samuell and Theophilus. Samuell only lived to fourteen years of age, while the name Theophilus broke with all Scrimshire tradition! Did it, perhaps, suggest a particular religious bent? Samuell, the father, also broke with tradition in living to be 83, a very good age, indeed, for the period.

We are fortunate to have the Wills of both John Scrimshire I and his wife, Margaret – she outlived him by three years and was briefly responsible for a part of the Scrimshire property so felt it necessary to write her own will in 1671*. Without going into detail of any specific bequest, it is worth emphasising that these wills provide firm support for the names and birth order of all their children, together with several mentions of various grandchildren.

We are also fortunate in having a record of John's burial in the shape of one of the gravestones mentioned in our introduction. The inscription is not quite complete but can fairly readily be interpreted as:

JOHANNIS SCRIMSHIRE GEN.

Senior 1669

HERE ALSO LYE TH(E)

BODYES OF MARGARET

AND BRIAN SCRIMSHIRE

???????? WHO D??

THE THIRD AND FIFTH

DAYES OF JULY ANNO

DOMINI 1705



Margaret and Brian were two of John's grandchildren who died in childhood, Margaret aged three and Brian aged two. According to the Church Records, they were buried on the fourth (Brian) and on the sixth (Margaret) of July. Note the inclusion of the word 'Senior' to avoid confusion with John's son John, who died earlier in the same year.

William Scrimshire II (1639* – 1688*)

William was thirty years old when his father died in 1669* so was well able to take up the Scrimshire reins. John had left a third of their property to his wife and the remainder to William but when she died in 1672* Margaret left her share to William so he became responsible for the whole estate, while his siblings were given specific sums of money and goodies.



Some years previously, at the age of twenty-six, William had married Elizabeth Frank of Pontefract in Yorkshire. The Frank family was well-established there – Elizabeth's father, Robert was an Alderman, while a later Robert was MP for Pontefract.

The marriage took place in St Giles Church on the second of April 1665* and the couple settled in Pontefract for the early years of their marriage (prior to William's mother's death). It is thus that their first two children, Margaret, born in 1666* and John, 1668* were baptised in Pontefract, not Cotgrave. However, the family had apparently moved back to Cotgrave in time for their second son William's baptism to be recorded in the 1671* Cotgrave All Saints Record:

'William son of William Scrimshire Gent baptised 9 November'

There are no further such entries until 1681*, when the following double entry appears:

'Margaret daughter of William Scrimshire Gent baptised 17 April'

'Elizabeth daughter of William Scrimshire Gent baptised 17 April'

Twins! But can we be sure they were the offspring of William Scrimshire II? By 1681 Margaret was forty-two years old, still capable of childbirth and she lived on for a further two years but they already had a daughter called Margaret! (Born 1666). Could she have died in infancy? Indeed, it seems very probable (possibly even before the family moved to Cotgrave, there being no record of her burial in the Cotgrave Records), the second 'Margaret' being a late replacement (if I can be forgiven for such a crude interpretation). We have a very clear indication that this second Margaret died in 1748* (aged 67). Firstly, her demise is included as follows in the 1748 Cotgrave Records:

'Margaret Scrimshire from Pontefract Gent buried 19 May'

Note the use of the 'Gent' appellation even when applied to a female. Secondly, and even more conclusively, we have a gravestone:

(H)ERE

Lies interr'd the body of

MARGARET SCRIMSHIRE

Spinster who died y e 15 (th May)

1748 aged 67 (Therefore born 1681!)

Margaret also left a detailed Will, dated 31 January 1745*, the beneficiaries being the children of her brothers John and William (both of whom were already dead in 1745). This is helpful in confirming the names of John's many children – see the following section on John Scrimshire II. Her father William Scrimshire II died in 1688* at the age of 48 and her mother Elizabeth in 1683* aged 45. Their burials were both recorded in the All Saints Records and Margaret's death is confirmed by another gravestone:

HER LYETH THE BODY

OF MISTRESS SCRIMSHIRE

THE WIFE OF WILLIAM

SCRIMSHIRE GENT WHO

DIED THE 17 OF MARCH

ANO DNI

1682

Note the discrepancy of one year between the two accounts =- there is frequently some confusion over the year to which the All Saints Records refer, so we should probably believe the gravestone date of 1682. The two are consistent in so far as the gravestone records the date of death as 17th March, while the recorded date of burial is 20th March. William's relatively early demise meant that his son and heir, John Scrimshire II was only twenty years old at his

father's passing and this must have demanded some temporary legislation to bridge the gap until he reached the age of twenty-one.

Finally, we should not ignore the fact that Elizabeth Scrimshire was born as twin to Margaret in 1681*. However, the only further information available is an entry in the All Saints Records to the effect that on 29th March 1684* Elizabeth Scrimshire was buried. There is no evidence to prove that she was the daughter of William Scrimshire II but the fact that she does not appear in Margaret's Will suggests that she was already dead by 1745. We must leave it at that.

John Scrimshire II (1668* – 1713*)

John became head of the Scrimshire family at a time things were apparently flourishing. It was about 1690 that the house in which I live was built, presumably to house Scrimshire servants (its being situated a mere two hundred yards from the Scrimshire residence). There is also a record in the University Archives to the effect that John bought other property in the village.

It is interesting, then, that he should marry an ordinary country girl in 1692. Mary Melton came from a small village called Burton, near Lincoln, rather little being known of her background. According to Ancestry, she had given birth to a son John Scrimshire in 1688 (died 1690) at the age of fourteen (or thereabouts). Supposing that John Scrimshire II was the father (then aged twenty) may explain their eventual marriage, also the fact that it took place in Clifton rather than Burton or Cotgrave. This much is obviously somewhat speculative but the following features of their union are beyond doubt, all being recorded in The Cotgrave All Saints Records.

They had ten children, starting with the inevitable William in 1693* to maintain the William/John alternation which characterised the Scrimshire choice of first sons! The list is as follows:

1693* 3 December – William

1695* 8 April – Mary

1697* 3 January – John

1700* 31 March – Anna

1701* 12 September – Margaret

1703* 3 January – Brian

1705* 20 September – Sarah

1708* 27 May – Elizabeth

1710* 3 February – Mildred

1712* 2 April – Michael

John Scrimshire II died in 1713* at the relatively young age of forty-five, thus ending the sequence of offspring. Mary survived until 1745* (aged 70).

Margaret and Brian both died in July 1705, aged 3 and 2 respectively, as we have already seen, while the others survived into adult life.

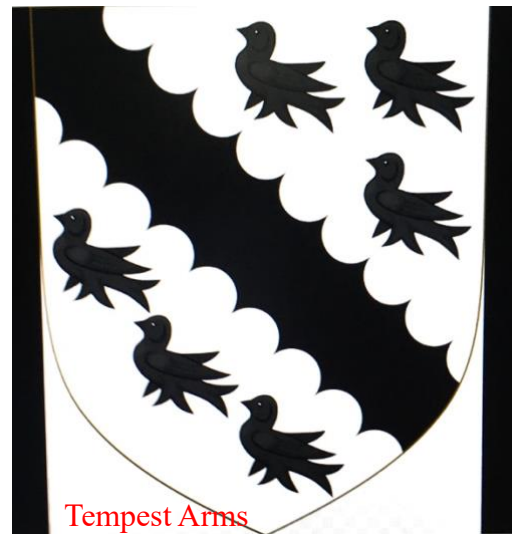
William, of course, became William Scrimshire III so we shall say no more of him for the moment. John appears to have married a Cotgrave girl, Elizabeth Shipman, in 1716* with whom he had at least two children, a daughter Catherine and a son Joseph. According to Ancestry, Michael married Jane Pellet at Ackworth, York in 1750 but we know little about his future career, other than that he acted as Executor for his Aunt Margaret's Will of 1745*.

Of the daughters, Mary, Anna and Mildred remained single, Anna being buried at Cotgrave in 1755* (aged fifty-five), Anna ditto 1758* (aged 63), while Mildred long outlived them, having moved into Nottingham, where she was buried in 1783* (aged 73). This latter date is confirmed by a splendid monument in All Saints erected by her two nieces



However, there is a mystery attached to this record in so far as it tells us that Mildred was the daughter of William Scrimshire. when there is no doubt that her father was John Scrimshire II. Witness the entry in the All Saints Record:for 1710*:

‘Mildred daughter of Mr John Scrimshire and Mary baptised 2nd April’



The other two daughters Sarah and Elizabeth married, Sarah to William Sharp of Scarrington (Aslockton) in 1724* and Elizabeth to Captain John Tempest of Nottingham in 1737*. This latter marriage was probably celebrated in Nottingham, rather than Cotgrave (there being no reference to it in the All Saints Records), presumably on the grounds of the senior status of the Tempest family. John's father was Sir George Tempest, Second Baronet Tempest and his mother was

Lady Anne Ashton Frank. The Tempest family lived at Tong Hall in the village of Tong, near Bradford – indeed, Sir George was responsible for the rebuilding of Tong Hall in 1702, following a devastating fire which destroyed an earlier building.



There is an interesting postscript to the evidence for this marriage. Ancestry is adamant that Captain John Tempest married a woman called Elizabeth Scrimshire, born in 1716 (whereas 'our' Elizabeth Scrimshire was certainly born in 1708*). Ancestry also affirms that the marriage took place in a village called Wroot in Lincolnshire, some few miles from Doncaster. This could well be true, though it seems slightly odd, when John Tempest lived in Nottingham and his birthplace was near Bradford! Ancestry also informs us that their first child was born in Nottingham, their second not specified, while the rest were born in Tong. They had six daughters, followed by a son, John in 1750. The father, John died in Nottingham in 1752*, while Elizabeth also died in Nottingham in 1784*. From our point of view, the crucial question is: is this Elizabeth 'our' Elizabeth? and the answer is provided by her Aunt Margaret's will which includes the sentence: 'I give and bequeath unto my niece Tempest, wife of Captain John Tempest, five pounds a year for and during the term of her natural life'. Clearly, she is, indeed, 'our' Elizabeth Scrimshire, born 1708* – where Ancestry got the 1716 date from is anyone's guess!

William Scrimshire III (1693* – 1725*)

William was baptised in Cotgrave but seems to have spent most of his adult life in London. The first record we have (apart from his baptism) concerns his marriage to a London girl Susanna Scrimshire by special licence. On 13th October 1718* he presented an 'Allegation' to the effect that he intended to marry with Susanna Scrimshire of the parish of Stepney --- spinster aged twenty-four years. What is more, on the 14th October he did just that at St Bartholomew the Great. Not only did they share the same surname but they were both 24 years old. Sadly, Susanna was buried in Cotgrave on 26th April 1720*, a mere eighteen months later. There is no evidence that they had any children. The fact of her being buried in Cotgrave demonstrates the 'two-centred' nature of the Scrimshire lifestyle in the eighteenth century. While Cotgrave was their base, London was where the action was and that was where William spent his days.

Nevertheless, it was still important to maintain the family line and William married for a second time in 1722* but again to a London girl, Elizabeth Fish, aged twenty-two. Again the marriage service was held in St Barts. They had just time to produce two children before William himself met his end. The All Saints, Cotgrave records for 1725* contain the following entry:

'October 1st 1725 Mr William Scrimshire of London buried'

Whether the 'of London' insert was included euphemistically or not, it does suggest that Cotgrave had seen less of William than was felt to be desirable!

The two children, Catherine, baptised 18th May 1724* and John, baptised 11th April 1725* were born in London – baptised at the Church of St Andrew, Holborn. We should note that John, the eldest son knew his father for a mere five months and was presumably brought up by his mother in London. His attachment to Cotgrave was likely to be less than whole-hearted!

However, before we leave William Scrimshire III, we should comment on a rather strange double entry in the Cotgrave Church Records for 1728*:

Mr William Scrimshire of London buried 7 Jan.

Will S, his son (?????????) buried 7 Jan.

Remember that Mr William Scrimshire of London was first buried in 1725*. It is difficult to be sure what the (????) word (or words) are saying but the most likely interpretation is that William Scrimshire III had a son William who died in 1728* and his father's body was reinterred so that they could be buried together. We have no record of the son's birth or baptism but it could only have happened in London between 1722 and 1724. It only emphasises the Scrimshire tug of love between London and Cotgrave.

John Scrimshire III (1725* – 1768*)

On the death of her husband in 1725* at the sadly youthful age of 32 Elizabeth was left to oversee the Cotgrave estate. She was, indeed, referred to in a Manvers Estate Survey of 1740* as 'Mistress Scrimshire Senior'. We have no evidence to tell us whether she actually lived in Cotgrave or in London but we may reasonably assume that she spent a modest amount of time in the village. We do know, though, that when she died in 1756*, she chose to be buried in Cotgrave – presumably to lie next to her husband William.

John Scrimshire III came of age in 1746 and presumably took over responsibility then but we can only assume that, as he presumably grew up in London, he would already be looking to sell the estate and concentrate on his London activities (whatever they might have been!). It seems likely that his mother felt a certain love for the village which delayed his intent but once she died in 1756* he felt free to go ahead. The Scrimshire properties were sold to the Lamb family of Southwell in 1758*, thus ending the two-century association between the Scrimshire Gentry and the village of Cotgrave. It is significant, perhaps, that the sale document lists John as having a London address, rather than one in Cotgrave.

Post Script

John Scrimshire III lived on in London, being buried in 1768* (aged 43) at the Church of St Stephen Walbrook. It is of interest, though probably of no statistical significance(!) that the Scrimshire males developed a tendency to die young: William II 49, John II 45, William III 32, John III 43.

John Orton

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