

# **The Challis family in Sawston – Part 1.**

I must begin by pointing out that there are one or two assumptions made within this narrative that might not be totally accurate and where they occur I will try to point out the evidence that gives rise to them. The reason for this, as you will see is that the evidence available often lacks essential detail to make things certain, clearly other evidence may come to light so when and if that occurs these assumptions can be clarified.

The story of the Challis family in Sawston begins with the arrival of Thomas and Ann but exactly when this was who they were and from where they came provides us with the first set of problems. They clearly had a presence in Sawston in the summer of 1784 as their son John was baptised at St Marys Church on 10<sup>th</sup> June that year<sup>1</sup>, but where did they come from. In her research one family member, Sherrill Plumridge, has discovered a Thomas Challice born in Kirtling, Cambridgeshire on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1754, which is the birth year cited by the Reverend Canon Ronald Bircham<sup>2</sup> for Thomas. The Sawston Parish Records however do not contain a year of birth for Thomas which may mean this was a calculation made from age and year of death.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that another Thomas Challice was born on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1754 in Cheveley a village less than 3 miles from Kirtling. In both cases the father's name was Thomas while the mother at Kirtling was Martha and at Cheveley Mary. The spelling of Challice is probably not very significant as it does vary considerably through the records and even in these two is shown variously as Chalice, Challice and Challies. Details of both these births can be found on the Family Search website which had been obtained from the relevant Parish Records.

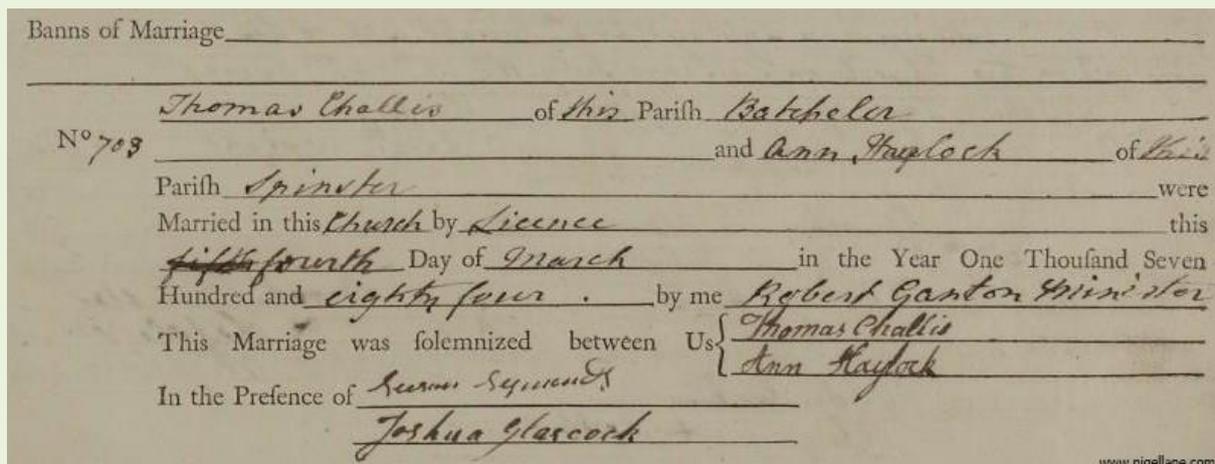
The next evidence we have is a marriage by licence on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1784 at St. Marys Church Saffron Walden between Thomas Challis and Ann Haylock both of that parish<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sawston Parish Records

<sup>2</sup> Sawston Surnames Volume 1 Page 96 Ronald Bircham 1977

<sup>3</sup> Saffron Walden Parish Records



The Saffron Walden Parish records have been searched but no other record of these two can be found amongst those of several members of a Challis family both in Saffron Walden and nearby Littlebury, but the term "Of this Parish" only means they were living in the parish at that time. This marriage was of course only three months earlier than the baptism of John Challis mentioned above which might explain the expense of a licence costing £1 1s 4d, approximately £142 in modern money, rather than waiting a few weeks for banns to be read.

While the name Challis was new to Sawston the Haylock family had been resident for over a century with an Ann Haylock, daughter of John and Elizabeth baptised in Sawston on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1756<sup>4</sup>. This birth date would fit with Ann Challis who was buried in Sawston on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1837 aged 80 years<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps at this stage it is worth a short look at the Haylock family as it might suggest how Thomas Challis was able to establish himself so quickly in the village. Ann's father John, who was buried in Sawston on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1803<sup>6</sup>, is described as a Gentleman as is his father Edward Haylock who was buried in Sawston on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1782<sup>7</sup>. The word Gentleman had no specific meaning but referred initially to the lowest rank of gentry below esquire but came to include any well-educated man of good family and distinction, a man with an income derived from property, a legacy or some other source, and was thus independently wealthy and did not need to work. It was no doubt because

<sup>4</sup> Sawston Parish Records

<sup>5</sup> Sawston Parish Records

<sup>6</sup> Sawston Parish Records

<sup>7</sup> Sawston Parish Records

of this standing that Edward Haylock became Chief Officer and directed the administration of a trust based upon the will and charity of John Huntingdon, 1554. Very briefly this involved the renting and use of land known as the "Sawston Towne lands" which were left for the benefit of the poor. A detailed account of these matters can be found in "History of Sawston Part 2" Chapt. 8 by T. F. Teversham but the matters affecting directly here are that Edward Haylock was widely criticised for his management and accused amongst other things of:

- 1. That he had let charity lands to his relations and friends at cheap rents, and for which higher rents had been offered.*
- 2. That he owned several cottages which he had let to poor people who could not pay the rent asked for, and that he obtained these rents from charity funds<sup>8</sup>.*

These accusations resulted in Ferdinand Huddleston with others taking a protracted court case against the trustees, The High Court Action of 1765, which appears to have absolved Edward Haylock and his fellow trustees of all blame. Teversham states *"In 1774, the two surviving defendants, Haylock and Howell (a third having died) were both elected to serve on the new board of trustees, with the approval of the Master in Chancery, which clearly shows the court regarded them as men of integrity."* Teversham further states *"It is quite clear from the evidence that this long, acrimonious and costly action might have been avoided. Huddleston was a young man, under thirty, with a considerable knowledge of the law. Haylock was middle aged, and had been for several years the most influential man in the parish. He had married a lady of social standing, Sarah Dunch, and was probably not prepared to play second fiddle to a young squire, who had listened, perhaps too readily, to Haylock's detractors."* Sarah Dunch was Edward Haylock's second wife, they married on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1748 at Thriplow, Cambridgeshire<sup>9</sup>, his first wife Anne and mother of his children having died on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1743 aged 43 years.

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<sup>8</sup> History of Sawston Pt 2, p170, T.F.Teversham

<sup>9</sup> Family Search web site

It would also appear that Ferdinand Huddleston accepted the High Court finding as in the Sawston Court Orders of 1781<sup>10</sup> John Haylock, son of Edward and father of Ann, is listed as a member of The Leet. The Courts Leet spread throughout England in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and came to mean a court in which a private lord, in this instance Ferdinand Huddleston Esquire, assumed jurisdiction generally for his own profit or benefit over a territory, denoted by the use of the word leet, in this instance The Manor of Pyratts in Sawston. The orders made on this day set out what people could and could not do with the land and stock kept on the land.

An article appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle July 1815 by Sylvanus Urban, Gent, entitled Topographical Description of Sawston. Within this description the writer details the inscriptions on many of the gravestones but commences this section with the following paragraph:

*"I have transcribed the whole of the tombs in the church-yard, as many of them are so much " with nettles skirted and with moss o'er grown" that the will in a few years be totally illegible."*

I think anybody visiting the grave yard recently will realize that little has changed in 200 years except of course that the stones from which he made those transcriptions will almost certainly be illegible today. Fortunately, we have his record and the few shown below have relevance here.

*8. 'John Haylock, April 18, 1803,  
aged 77.*

*9. Elizabeth, wife of John Haylock,  
March 1, 1780, aged 56. Also three of  
Their children, viz. Edward, Sarah, and  
Mary. \* .*

*10. Edward Haylock, gent. Nov. 17,  
1782, aged 81. \_  
Anne his wife, May 1, 1743, aged 43.*

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<sup>10</sup> History of Sawston Pt 2, p152, T.F. Teversham

*And also two sons and a daughter,  
Thomas and Mary, who died infants:  
Edward died July 15, 1753, aged 20 years  
and 8 months.\**

*11. "Sarah Haylock, the last surviving  
daughter of W. Dunch, Esq. and the  
second wife of Edward Haylock gent.  
departed this life Feb. the 14th, 1773, in  
the 77th year of her age.*

*Upright stones.*

*12. Joshua Glascoek, April 28, 1814, aged 28.\**

The transcription of Sarah Haylock does include a long testament to her Christian faith and he also explains that the \* signs indicate verses that have been left out as he found them unsuitable for publication in the Gentleman's Magazine.

The question that still remains, having seen something of the Haylock's in Sawston, was Ann who married in Saffron Walden related to them? As well as the marriage Saffron Walden Parish Records show two children born of Thomas and Ann Challis being baptised, firstly William in 1785 and secondly Ann in 1789. Both of these baptisms come after that of the previously mentioned John who was baptised in Sawston in 1784. I will return to these shortly but first the Sawston Parish Records also show baptism records for the following children of Thomas and Ann:

Edward Haylock 30 Oct 1791

Thomas 30 Mar 1794

Jonathan 8 May 1796

George 14 July 1799

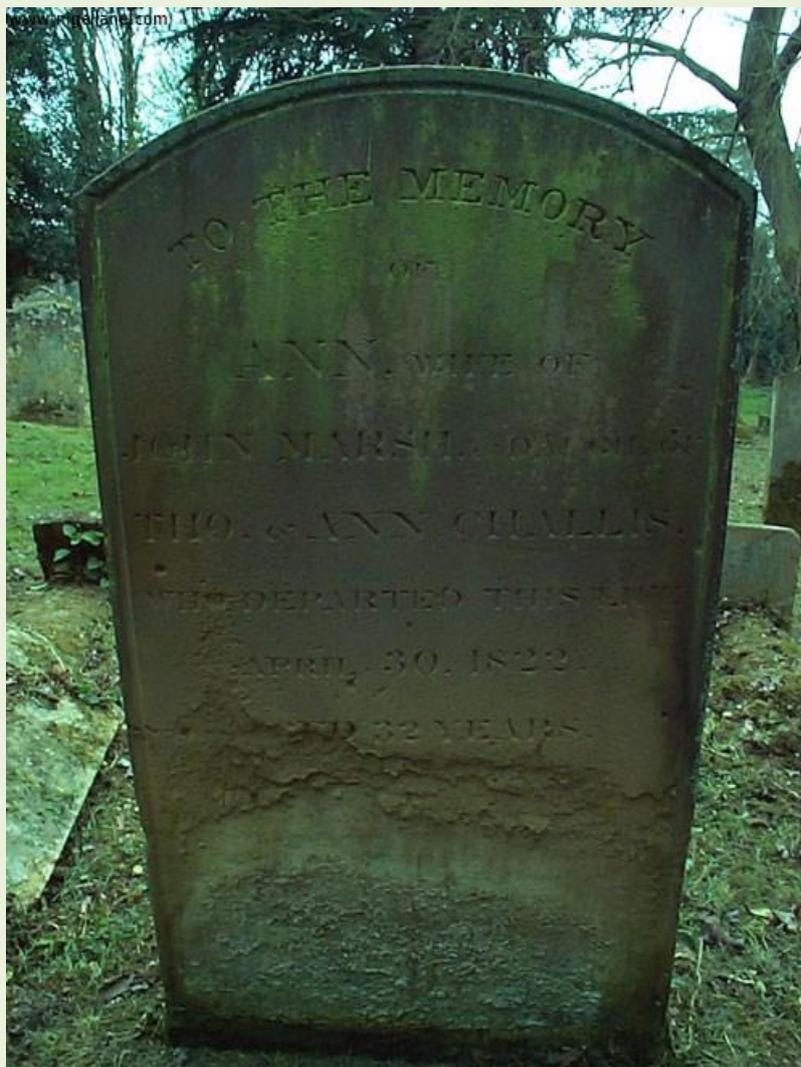
First looking back to William there is a record in the Sawston Parish Records for the marriage of William Challis to Eleanor Tarrant on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1815 and the witnesses to this marriage were Sarah Tarrant,

Edward Haylock Challis and Elizabeth Challis. Further there is a burial record for William Challis aged 92 on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1878 which would fit precisely with the baptism shown in Saffron Walden. Edward Haylock I would suggest is the younger brother of William but who is Elizabeth? I have been unable to find a birth or baptism record for an Elizabeth Challis with parents Thomas and Ann but there is a marriage record in the Sawston Parish Records for Elizabeth Challis and Thomas Mynott on 18 February 1822 with witnesses Mary Mynott, Edward Haylock Challis and William Mynott. There is also a burial record for Elizabeth Mynott aged 38 on 26 February 1826. There is also a gravestone in the churchyard at Sawston which bears an inscription to the memory of Elizabeth wife of Thomas Mynott daughter of Thomas and Ann Challis.



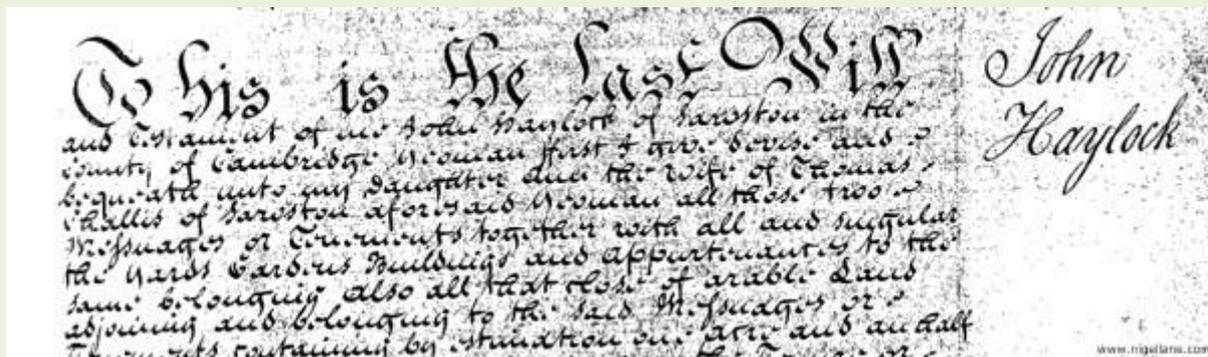
In the Saffron Walden Parish Records there is a record of a baptism on 29 July 1787 for Elizabeth daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Challis and as this would fit exactly with our Elizabeth I wonder if there was simply an error with the mother's name.

Then there is Ann and while I can find no positive record of her marriage there is a record at Christ Church Greyfriars Newgate London on 16 April 1817 of a marriage between John Marsh and Anne Challis. Certainly Ann did marry a John Marsh as is evidenced by her gravestone in the Sawston Church yard which has an inscription in memory of Ann wife of John Marsh daughter of Thomas and Ann Challis who departed this life April 30 1822 aged 32 years.



It seems that Thomas and Ann Challis married in Saffron Walden earlier perhaps than they might have wished because of circumstances. Then not being properly established in Saffron Walden Ann or both returned to Sawston for the birth of their first child John who was then baptised in

Sawston. But they returned to Saffron Walden and lived there for several years where William, Elizabeth and Ann were born before they finally moved and established themselves in Sawston during the period 1789 to 1791. They had lived in Sawston for over a decade when John Haylock died in 1803 and his will, the opening section of which you can see below, shows clearly the association with Thomas Challis and the start that the Challis family gained in Sawston.



## *This is the last will*

*and testament of .. John Haylock of Sawston in the county of Cambridge yeoman .... and I bequeath unto my daughter Ann the wife of Thomas Challis of Sawston aforesaid yeoman all those two Messuage or Tenements together with all and ..... the yards gardens buildings and ....*

The will which is several pages long is held in the Public Record Office, and as you can see quite a few words are very difficult to make out, as denoted by the ..... It is clear even in these few words that a substantial property was left to Ann which provided a foundation for their future. It might well be that by the time of this will Thomas already owned some land because of the use of the term Yeoman. While there is not a strict meaning to this word at this time and in these circumstances it normally meant a farmer who owned land by either freehold, leasehold or copyhold. Copyhold was in effect land leased from the Lord of the Manor in terms described in the roll or book kept by the steward and the tenant would be given a copy of this record thus making him a "copyholder". The

properties mentioned in the will above were not copyhold as this term is quite clearly used with reference to other land within the will.

So by this time the Challis family were well established in Sawston and while there is a lot of further detail attached to the story that I have not mentioned many will no doubt think I have gone on far too long as it is. One thing that has given me some satisfaction in going through this history is to discover something of the nature, scale and spirit of the charitable works going on in Sawston right up to the present time, and reflected in the character of many family members.