

Notes on the History of the Webb family
of Long Load and Hinton St. George,
with reference to events at
both these villages
prior to the
1700s

Adrian James Webb F.B.Cart.S., F.R.G.S.

Privately
produced for the
family gathering of the
descendants of the Webb family
of Hinton St. George held on 18th May
2002 at the Poulett Arms, Hinton St. George

Taunton : 2002
Updated Taunton : 2009

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Origins of the Webb family of Hinton St. George ..	3
Long Load and the Webb family during the 15th and 16th centuries	10
An account of the Webb Family of Hinton during the 17th century	20
Conclusion	31

INTRODUCTION

This research was put together to commemorate a historic moment in the history of the Webb family of Hinton St. George - that is, a gathering of the descendants of John and Mary Webb, who lived at Hinton in the late 17th and early 18th century. One can only wonder if the couple ever imagined what would happen to their descendants, indeed some of them have come from places that were not even on the map in the 17th century! Although Hinton has not been affected by any major physical development and on the whole the layout of the village remains basically unchanged since John and Mary's time, the world outside has changed dramatically. It was for this reason, and the resulting numerous social and economic changes, that the family became separated, and ultimately so widespread. Although there are many branches of the family tree that remain untraced, mostly because the Webb surname is so common (being based on the Old English word of weaver), those that have been, all have a story to tell.

The research on the manorial records of Long Load came from one source, that of the magnificent archives of Winchester College, via Miss Suzanne Foster, without whose help the information would never have seen the light of day in time to be included in this publication. Also to be noted are the people who all generously put their hand in their pocket to help fund this research, they are Barb Dembinski, William F. Fox, Julie Pearse, Jean Richards, Fred Snelgrove, Dorothy Snowden, Mrs S.C. Webb, and Mr and Mrs F.J.H. Webb.

All the mistakes contained within this work are my own.

THE ORIGINS OF THE WEBB FAMILY OF HINTON ST. GEORGE

The origins of the Webb family of Hinton St. George are a little misty, although what we know for certain is John and Mary Webb who died in the 1730s were the common ancestors of all the Webb descendants who travelled to Hinton for the family gathering in May 2002. The earliest reference to a Webb in the village is when Henry appears in the records of the manor in 1630, when he served as a juror, and his non-appearance in a tax roll for 1628 may suggest that he arrived in the village shortly after that date. In fact, he does not appear as a juror in the record of the first court of that year, which might suggest his arrival in early 1630. But what were his origins, who were his parents and where did he come from?

The parish registers for Hinton start in the 1632 so the answer could not be found there - so where to look? The best evidence is in the disputed case of Henry's will, which was brought by his brother, John Webb of Drayton in 1645, indicating that Henry might have come from Drayton, only six miles away from Hinton. This reference was very kindly given to me by my friend Marek Lewcun, who I owe a huge debt of thanks, as in the abstract of this document made by Phipps in the 1930s, he did not mention John's place of residence - thus rendering the origins of Henry virtually untraceable. What I went on to find is that a John Webb was married in 1609 at Drayton to a lady called Alice, but John is a very common forename, but Drayton is only four miles from Martock (which is also four miles from Hinton) where there were an abundance of Webbs in the latter part of the 16th century. It was in Martock between 1573 and 1583 that Henry and Joan Webbe (née Chubbe) had six children baptised, they were Alice in 1573, Martin in 1575, Joan in 1576, William in 1578, John on 1 March 1580 and Henry on 31 August 1583. Was this the John and Henry who were mentioned in the court case concerning the latter's will some sixty years later? I think that it was and there is plenty of evidence to show that the Webb family had been in Drayton since at least 1598 when Alice married Thomas Dawe, followed by Martin marrying Mate (*sic*) Humphrey in 1603, and of course John's marriage in 1609. Martin started a great 'dynasty' of Webb's whose number was ever swelled as the years progressed, and by 1628 he was wealthy enough to be assessed for £3 worth of goods in the subsidy returns. Martin's

wealth was probably due to him being the eldest surviving son, who may have inherited the lion's share of the wealth, thus leaving his two brothers slightly impoverished - as they did not own enough in goods or land to be taxed in 1628 for subsidy purposes. Martin's brother John signed the parish terrier of 1635 suggesting that he was held in some regard within the local community. By 1641 there were the following Webb men at Drayton, Henry, John senior, John junior, Martin senior, Martin junior and Robert who all appear in the Protestation returns, although only Martin appears in the tax roll of the same year as being assessed for £3 worth of goods. Whether this Robert is the one that married at Hinton is doubtful, as a Robert son of Martin was baptised at Drayton in 1619/20. However, the story continues.

Martin did very well for himself and the documentation (mainly deeds) relating to a leasehold estate in Drayton, originally sold in 1650 by Henry, Earl of Monmouth to the trustees (Thomas Made and John Humfrey the younger) of Martin Webb the elder of Drayton, yeoman, survive at the Somerset Record Office. Martin's lands comprised of 9 acres of land or meadow situated in or at Breach, a field called Sheeping Furlong and Marsh Mead; 6 acres in two closes called Burdland and Oxenlease; a further 4 acres in Sheeping furlong, 5 acres in Law Close, and 6 acres in a close called Drayton Wood. The estate was inherited by Mary Trevilian of Weston Zoyland, widow of John (son of Martin) Webb and her son Samuel Webb, and part of it was mortgaged in 1707 to William Bridge of Weston Zoyland, yeoman. In 1755 lands comprising 2 acres near Windick in Sheeping Furlong, 5 acres in Law Close, 1 acre in the field near Breach next unto the greenway there, 1½ acres in Marsh Mead and 6 acres in Drayton Wood Close were assigned to William Trevilian of Middelney, esquire by William Bridge of Cossington, esquire, a mortgage debt of £100 being discharged by the aforementioned William Trevilian.

Others of his descendants married into the local land owning family of the Trevilian's, a family who had been in the village since the Reformation. The nucleus of the estate acquired by the Trevilians, comprising the two manors of Middelney and Drayton Westover, belonged in the Middle Ages to Muchelney Abbey and it is likely that in the 16th century the Trevilians were tenant farmers of some of these lands. On the dissolution of the monasteries the manor of Middelney was granted (in 1538) to Edward, Earl of Hertford, who subsequently became Lord Protector and was executed in 1552. On his succession to the throne, James I restored to the Protector's grandson, Edward, third Earl of

Hertford, the lands forfeited by his grandfather; in 1606 the earl sold to Edward Daniell of Burbage, co. Wilts. the manor of Midelney comprising 12 messuages or tenements, 12 gardens and orchards including 320 acres of arable, meadow, pasture and woodland in the tithing of Midelney and parishes of Drayton and Muchelney, with common of pasture in the local moors in Curry Rivel and Kingsbury Episcopi. In 1610 Edward Daniell sold the manor of Midelney for £656 6s. 8d. to Ralph Trevilian the elder of Midelney, yeoman: three messuages and lands, parcel of the manor, were sold at the same time to Ralph Trevilian the younger, son of Thomas Trevilian.

The manor of Drayton Westover (of which Martin leased a part of) passed at the dissolution to the Ramsey family of Norfolk and London, and in 1625 to Robert, Lord Carey, later Earl of Monmouth. In 1657 it was sold by Henry, Earl of Monmouth to William Strode of Barrington, esquire, and in 1727 it was purchased by Jeffery Pottenger of Curry Rivel, gent., who, in 1762, sold the remains of the manor for £1,500 to William Trevilian of Midelney, esquire. At that time the manor of Drayton Westover comprised of 14 messuages or tenements, four cottages, six barns, orchards and stables, eight gardens, 550 acres of arable, meadow, pasture and woodland, and common of pasture for 200 beasts in Southmoor and Perrymoor in the parishes of Drayton and Curry Rivel, and in the forest of Neroche.

However, before getting too excited with thoughts of descent from a wealthy land-owning family, it was only by marriage that the Hinton Webbs are related. It also appears from a recently published edition of letters relating to the Trevelian family, that there is no connection between the Drayton family and the famous Trevelyans (note the spelling) of West Somerset and of national fame.

Returning to Martock, the father of John, Henry and Martin was another Henry who married Joane Chubbe on 11 January 1573/4 at Martock. Henry senior and his brother John were involved in a Chancery court case between 1558 and 1579, which shows all too clearly how the two brothers fell out, but how much of the accusations were true we shall never know.¹ One thing that is certain is the case enables the family line to be taken back another generation to Thomas Webbe, husbandman and his brother John. Although the case is undated (falling between the dates 1558 and 1579) it does mention the death of a John Webbe some five or six years previously, and another John Webb with ‘a great

1 ¹ Public Record Office C3/197/79.

charge of children'. It is certainly before 1577 and if John Webb who had died some five or six years previous was buried in Martock (whose burial registers start in 1558) then it could not be before 1564. The other John Webb had children baptised in the parish between 1567 and 1573, and describes himself as having a great charge of children which suggests a later date for the case. However, an entry relating to John Webb appears in the manorial court books for 19 October 1569 which states that he had died since the last court held on 26 April 1569, suggesting the Chancery case was in 1575. But in April 1575 it was recorded that Thomas Webb had died so it is possible that the case was more likely to have been in 1574.

John Webb's complaint appears first, and to avoid confusion I am calling this John Webb 'the complainant', the John Webb deceased 'John Webb senior' and the his son John 'John Webb junior'. He states that one John Webb, deceased, was seised for the term of his life, by a copy of the manorial court roll, according to the custom of the manor of Long Lode 'of and in one messuage or tenement, and certaine landes medowe and pasture with the appurtenances thereto belongynge, conteynge by estymation 20 acres or thereaboutes lyinge at Longe Lode'. This land belonged to the 'Colledge of Wynchester' but after the death of John senior that land was to pass to his brother Thomas Webb, father of the complainant. It appears that the complainant had been involved in more than one legal suit on behalf of his father which had meant the complainant laying out a good deal of his own money to cover the costs. In return for this Thomas and John had agreed that John should 'have hold possesse and enjoye the said messuage or tenement and other the premisses' during the life time of Thomas. When it came to the crunch when John senior died (about five or six years previously), the complainant should have taken possession, but this did not happen as someone had beaten him to it. One Henry Webb, brother of the complainant, possibly the ancestor of all of us gathered here at Hinton, had taken possession, according to his brother John 'mynedinge and practysynge very unhoneestly and unnaturally to defraurde' him 'with feyned tales and untrue reportes'. It seems that Henry had managed to persuade his father, who was a very weak old man, to fall out with the complainant but more importantly Henry had somehow acquired the copy of the court roll by which the lands were held of Winchester College. Legally, Henry had every right to take possession as he had the documentation, but it is clear from John's complaint that this was not the agreed course of action.

About six months previously under the instruction of Thomas, John had entered into an obligation bond with him as surety to one Nicholas Longe, for the sum of £100, concerning John's brother Matthew and Nicholas's daughter in law Alice Crocker. Some underhand dealings between Thomas and Henry would appear to have gone on and the bond was withheld, thus causing John 'his utter spoyle and undoinge'. Sadly John had no witnesses to any of this, making it almost impossible to prove in common law which resulted in this case being brought before Chancery. In his pleadings to Sir Nicholas Bacon knight, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England, John also mentioned that all of Thomas's other children had been 'prefferred and advanced' except for him, despite the fact he had 'taken most travell and paines for the said Thomas'.

Henry's reply, or answer, started with a retort that the complaint was 'sette forthe onlye of mallyce and evill' towards him, 'onlye to cause hym waste and confinne his goodes and to bringe hym into povertye'. He accused his brother John of being greedy and envious, and naturally refuted all the claims to be untrue. Henry agreed that his father held the land by copy of court roll, but it was his father's wish that it should go to him, as 'he was a pore man and alwaies brought upp in householde and service of husbandrye with his said father'. The complainant was referred to as being a merchant and 'a man of grate welthe and substannce' who as such did not need the lands in question, so they were let to Henry on a yearly basis. The agreement was also mentioned Matthew Webb (his brother) who had entered into a bond to marry Alice Crocker, the daughter in law of Nicholas Long, which Henry claimed he tried to persuade his father not to enter in to. Henry finished his answer by stating again how selfish and envious John was, and reading between the lines John appeared to be selfish, willing to put all his brothers and sisters in poverty to further his own gains. The verdict of the court is not known (at this time) as a lengthy search of the records is needed to answer this question.

Fortunately the manor of Long Load, from whom the family leased 20 acres of land, was owned by the ancient and mighty Winchester College (owners since 1551) whose diligent record keepers have preserved many documents relating to the manor. Court rolls and court books survive for the years 1379, 1384-8, for many years in the 15th and 16th centuries, and continuously from 1551 to 1923. It is from these very records (through the efforts of Miss Suzanne Foster), that we can trace our earliest ancestor, one Walter Webbe who appears in a court roll for the year 1494. This event almost 500 years ago, was two years

after Christopher Columbus discovered the Bahamas, over 40 years before the Reformation and the introduction of parochial registers. Although the court rolls begin in the year 1379 there are gaps, and our Walter appears in a roll from 1494 but where he came from is a mystery (at present), and how long the family had been at Long Load is unclear. If he was a tenant in 1494 then he would have been leasing land from the Lord of the manor before that date, although the records do not show when. What is certain is there is no mention of a Webb in the rent roll for the manor dating from 1440, or in any of the other records prior to 1494.

Although the origins of Walter are not clear, and he could have come from anywhere, the christian name is not that common. When I first started research into the Webb family in the 1980s I came across a plethora of 'Walters' in the records of the antiquarian F.A. Wood, whose papers are in Weston Central Library. On checking my notes I came across a will for a Walter Webbe of Stoke in the parish of Chew dated 27 April 1524, in which he mentions his wife Joane and his two sons John and Thomas! What a coincidence - but if there is any connection the Webbe family it would be difficult to prove, especially as this Walter is clearly described as being of Chew, and he wished to be buried there. As an aside, in the will of Thomas Webbe of Chew (in 1498) he mentions his sons, John and Martin - yet another interesting coincidence. But Chew Magna is in the north of the county and Martock in the south.

LONG LOAD AND THE WEBB FAMILY DURING THE 15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES

But what do we know of Long Load during the 15th and 16th centuries when the Webb family were resident?¹ The manor was owned (prior to 1551) by the Hospitallers who were a charitable (though originally) military religious order, established at Jerusalem in the 12th century. This small village developed along the main road from Crewkerne to Somerton, with the majority of properties lying to the south of Load bridge. It relied heavily on agriculture to support the economy, and a map from 1815 clearly shows the ancient field systems and strips of land which our ancestors rented from the lord of the manor. The arable fields remained relatively unchanged during the 16th century, and they operated a rotation system based on wheat, beans, and fallow. The manor had an ancient right of common over the pastures known as Prestmoor and Wetmoor which divided Martock from Muchelney. There were three pastures within the tithing called Foremoor, Outmoor, and Rottenham, with two meadows called Barland and Gosham, the former was being inclosed as early as 1507. In 1552 Outmoor was being pastured by 37 tenants and in 1563 there were only 26 households at Long Load.

In 1552 tenants were required to keep their animals in the withy beds until the breach of Outmoor, and in 1553 to keep only three sheep for each acre held within the manor between St. Luke's day (18 October) and the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September). In 1556 the driving of cattle over Barland and Rottenham was forbidden, and three years later tenants were allowed winter pasture in both areas according to their holdings; paupers with no land having grazing for a horse or mare. In 1564 Foremoor was temporarily divided into 2-furlong closes to prevent the straying of sheep, and in 1567 tenants were allowed to keep only one gander and not more than four geese. In 1591 pigs were allowed to wander without a keeper only in the 'open season' from the breach of the fields until St. Luke's day.

¹ The general notes are taken from the chapter by R.J.E. Bush covering Martock printed in *A History of the County of Somerset* edited by R.W. Dunning, Volume IV, 1978, pp.76-110.

(Over) Long Load, 1815, from a copy in the Somerset Record Office.

The manor court operated as a means to regulate all sorts of misdemeanours, both civil and criminal, such as the repair of property, petty crimes, the use of common grazing land, maintenance of foot-bridges and the repair of droves, drains, houses and ditches. At Long Load the court was held twice a year (until the 17th century) being described as courts, or courts leet, for Hockday and Michaelmas terms, sometimes with view of frankpledge. The court was probably held in the priest's house during the 16th century, for it was described as the former court-house in 1607. Manorial officers included a hayward (from 1379), a tithingman (from 1413) and a reeve who was elected during the years 1442-1507 and two constables who were regularly appointed from 1553. There is also a reference in the manorial records to a teacher of infants at Long Load in 1567.

From the surviving manorial records we can see into the lives, and actions, of the Webb family from 1494 until almost one hundred years later when they gave up their interests in the manor.¹ I have arranged the following notes as a series of biographies in order to make the text readable; in some cases I have included references to other Webb people who appear in their own individual biographies.

Joanna Webb

In a rental dated 28 November 1505, Joanna the relict of John Webbe, is recorded as holding a cottage and six acres of customary land with pasture for two years in Rotynham (Rottenham), with appurtenances, for a rent of 9s. 8d. per annum; three pasture in Rotynham called Bordlese for a rent of 2s. 6d. per annum; three rods of pasture land in Le Mere, recently in the tenancy of Nicholas Bradford for a rent of 18d. per annum, and six acres of 'land of the lord called Bordland lying along the road the dreyve', at a rent of 7s. Whether John and Joanna were the parents of Walter is not known, and none of the entries in the court records show any mention of a connection to their land holdings.

¹ The following notes are based on the details supplied by Miss Foster of Winchester College Archives.

Presumably, as she was still alive at the time of Walter, and they both held different distinct areas of lands, and none of them came by descent to the sons of Walter, then any relationship looks doubtful. Unfortunately, a small gap in the court records leaves us without the full picture, as we do not know when Joanna surrendered her land, or when she died.

Walter Webb

He is first mentioned in a record of a court held on 28 October 1494, when he was a tenant of the lord of the manor, and presumably a copyholder. In a rental dated 28 November 1505 Walter is recorded as one of 48 customary tenants, who held one acre of bordeland recently in the tenure of Thomas Hawkins for a rent of 12*d.* per annum; one tenement and two acres of land with appurtenances, recently in the tenure of Robert Courtney and John Boucher for a rent of 7*s.* 4*d.*; one close of land called Northlane about one and a half acre of land, recently in the tenure of Walter Bigge and John Boucher, for a rent of 8*d.* per annum, and three acres of 'bondeland' recently in the tenure of Walter Bradford, and lying in the lord's field, for a rent of 3*s.* per annum.

In a court held three days later he was made a member of the jury when it was recorded he had delivered to the lord a stray animal found in the manor. He continued to serve on the jury in 1506 when he was presented for having a number of stray animals in his care, but he had allowed his sheep and pigs to roam in 'le out more' to the injury of his neighbours. These actions could not have gone against him as he was still serving on the jury in 1507 and on 2 November he was elected tithingman. As part of his duties as tithingman he would have been required to attend the Sheriff's turn (or court) for the hundreds of Martock, Crewkerne, South Petherton (and others) which was held on Hambleton Hill (*sic*) within the months of Michaelmas and Easter, according to an ancient custom. He would have taken with him an unspecified number of 'able and fitt persons', out of his tithing, to serve on the jury.¹

A terrier, rental and list of tenants of 1551 records the lands held by his two sons, John and Thomas. They claimed by copy of court roll dated 21 September 1511, one tenement and a cottage with appurtenances with a piece of

¹ P.R.O. E317/SOM/11, Survey of 18 May 1652.

arable land located at Yealway containing half an acre of land, to hold for the tenure of their successive lives at an annual rent of 7*s.* 10*d.* and a fine of 4*li.* The

(Over) A rental of 1505 (from the original at Winchester College re:12864) brothers also claimed a tenement by copy of court roll dated 15 April 1515 for two acres of bordland lying in 'pytfurlonge' for the term of their lives at an annual rent of 2*s.*, with a fine of one capon. In addition to the properties they held by copy of court roll date 16 April 1516 three acres of arable land or 'bordland' being two acres in the South Field and the other acre in the East Field, at a rent of 3*s.* per annum.

It was also in 1516 that Walter is recorded as having a stray pig in his custody and the following year he was in trouble for allowing his pigs to wander at large against the customs of the manor. A confusing entry relating to stray animals on the manor seems to suggest he was responsible for looking after them, and even possibly for the sale of them.

At a court on 4 December 1551 it is recorded that the land previously belonging to Walter consisting of one and a half acres of land in Barlonde called Gosnan, and one and a half acres in Loddmere called Southlongmere, were now given to John Dyer. Why these lands did not pass to his sons is unclear and his exact date of death is not recorded, so we only know that he died between 1516 and 1551.

John Webb

There were at least three people called John Webb living at Long Load during the 16th century, they were John brother of Thomas, John son of John (brother of Thomas), and John son of Thomas; see the earlier chapter on the Chancery case. The following notes have all been collated because it is almost impossible to distinguish between them (except in a few cases); some references can be found concerning them under Walter and Margaret.

John Webb served as juror for the manorial courts held in 1516, 1551-1554, 1556-1557, 1560-1563, 1565-1570 and 1572. In May 1552 he is listed as having nine cattle using the common and in 1553 he was presented for

unlawfully (and without licence) cutting down, and felling, an elm and two ash trees which were growing on his lands, for which he was in mercy for 3*s.* On 9 October 1557 he was appointed to the position of tithingman, a role which his father had played exactly fifty years previously; John also served in 1558. In the same year he appeared at the court as a member of the assize jury when he presented William Horewood, John Horewood, Thomas Dyer and others as jurors for the assize. At the October court of 1559 he was ordered to repair his cottage, but he failed to completely finish the job and in April 1560 he was in mercy of the court, who ordered him to finish the repairs by the feast of St. John the Baptist (24 June) or pay a fine of 5*s.*

On the 20 April 1561 he appeared at the court and took of the lord of the manor the reversion of two acres of 'bordelande' lying in a furlong called 'pyttfurlonge' for a rent of 2*s.* per year, a cottage and one acre of land for a rent of 18*d.* per year, and a tenement and cottage with appurtenances with a piece of arable land lying at Yealway containing half an acre of land for a rent of 7*s.* 10*d.* per year. All of these lands were for to be held for himself and his brother Thomas for which they had to pay a fine to the lord of 4*li.*, in two parts, being 66*s.* 8*d.* payable at the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (25 March) and 66*s.* 8*d.* at the feast of St. Michael (29 September).

He was presented in April 1562 for devising his land to an outsider against the customs of the manor, for which he was in mercy for 8*d.*, and the following year he was in court again for not repairing a wall. In September 1563 a licence was granted to John Webbe senior to permit him to devise to John Webbe junior during his life, half his tenement and all his land, at a fine of 10*s.* At the same court a John was elected as tithingman and a year later he was ordered to keep a record of all the stray animals in the manor, also to look after them until the next court. In September 1564 he reported to the court that the stray sheep (to the value of 16*d.*) would remain in the custody of John Dyer until 2 November.

In April 1569 he was presented for not having made any repairs to his house but at the next court, held on the 19 October 1569, it was recorded that he had died since the last court. At this court it was presented that he held of the lord a tenement and one cottage (with appurtenances) and a piece of arable land lying next to Yalways containing half an acre of land and also two acres of land of bondland lying in Pitfurlonge. Because he was a tenant and he had died a

heriot of one bull (to the value of 43s. 4d.) was due to the lord of the manor, and it was ordered to be deliver to the bailiff. This is certainly John senior because at the same time Thomas Webb came to the court, and claimed admission to the same tenement and cottage (and the other premises), as shown on a copy of a court roll dated 21 September 1511, and Thomas was admitted tenant to the lands. Thomas had to pay an entry fine of 2s. and pay the heriot by Christmas day.

On 11 April 1570 John Webb came to the manor court and was admitted as a tenant to a cottage, with one and a half acres of land, recently in the tenure of John Webb senior his uncle, by copy of court roll dated 20 April 1560. The said John swore fealty to the lord of the manor. Two years later on 21 April John Webb (junior) came to the court and surrendered into the hands of the lord all of his right, title, estate, claim, interest, which he had in the reversion of two acres of bordland lying in the furlong called Pit Furlong, at the annual rent of 2s., once in the tenure of Thomas Webb his uncle. John Dyer also went to court where he was admitted to the land, to hold it for the term of his life according to the customs of the manor.

Thomas Webb

There seems to have been two men called Thomas Webb during the 16th century and the following notes have all been collated because it is almost impossible to distinguish between them (except in a few cases); some references can be found to him under Walter.

Thomas served as a juror in 1516, 1517, June 1558, April 1559, April 1561, April 1562, twice in 1564, September 1567, April 1570 and April 1573. He was presented at the court held in January 1556/7 for having tried to demise (or sell) his land without licence, for which he paid a fine of 8d. In September 1561 he is shown as a tenant of the manor owing suit of court, which he duely made on the 16th.

At the court held on 19 October 1569, it was recorded that his brother John had died since the last court so Thomas Webb came to the court and claimed admission to the lands, as shown on a copy of a court roll dated 21 September 1511. He was admitted tenant to the lands, having to pay an entry

fine of 2*s.* and pay the heriot by Christmas day. At the same court he was presented for having demised his right to pasture in Load to John Mekar and against the customs of the manor sold the reversion of it to John Webb, for which he was in mercy, 12*d.*; a Thomas was also elected as tithingman.

After this date it appears that Thomas was in all sorts of problems and the following abstracts from the court books need little explanation, except for the entry relating to the dispute between Thomas and John Webb over a cottage with an acre and a half of land. This land belonged to Thomas' brother John and this was the case brought before the Court of Chancery, details of which can be found in an earlier chapter.

On 19 September 1570 it was presented that Thomas Webb, and others, had not been in continuous residence on their tenements, according to the custom of the manor. It was ordered that each of them should reside continually in the manor by Christmas, on pain of 20*s.* each. A fine of 20*s.* was a massive amount, approximately equivalent to the value of half a bull, which shows how seriously the lord of the manor thought of such action.

At the same time it was presented that there was a disagreement between Thomas Webb and John Webb about a cottage and an acre and a half of land recently in the tenure of John Webb deceased. They have agreed to abide by the adjudication of the court in this matter; that the said John had and held a cottage and curtilage, and that the said Thomas Webb held the residue of the said cottage, given to him by the lord at another time. Nevertheless, the said Thomas, his family and assigns unjustly accepted from the lord of the manor the said cottage. This grant was made against the regulations of the manor and in contempt of the lord, for which Thomas was in mercy 2*d.* He was finally presented for claiming to hold the right of pasture of one ploughland in Ratham, but his right to hold this is uncertain. He is therefore ordered to show proof of his holding at the next court, under pain of forfeiture of the said right of pasturage.

At the next court (1 May 1571) he was presented with others for not having taken a sufficient amount of wood from the area between Load Bridge and Boor Mead; each of them were in mercy 6*s.* 8*d.*, and ordered to take the wood under pain of 10*s.* each. Another presentment records how he was unjustly holding the right of pasture in Ratham, which pasture remained in the hands of

the lord and does so by ancient custom of the manor. However, the lord allowed Thomas to have or declare that the said right of pasture is part of his tenancy but he had to show this at the next court, under pain of forfeiture of the said right of pasture. His final presentment at this court was because he had not made continual residence in the manor, as was ordered at the last court, for which he was fined 20s. It was ordered that the said Thomas remain continually on his tenement until 25 July, on pain of 33s. 4d.

On 21 April 1572 it was recorded that an order made for Thomas to repair a road called le Lanchard, between land called le Hedrige and le More Furlonge, is confirmed and repairs are to be made, under pain of 6s. 8d. In October of the same year he demised his tenement to his son Henry, when he did not have the reversion of it, and therefore was in mercy, 2s.

An entry in April 1574 gives us a further insight into his social position, as he was ordered to make sufficient repairs to his barn, with timber and straw, thatching by 25 July, on pain of 5s. This reference to a barn, which in addition to his cottage and lands, suggest a modest holding on the manor, certainly much, much than his agricultural labouring descendents at Hinton some 200 years later.

The continual non-attendance at court between 1559 and 1574¹ and his non-residency remained a problem, which, I think was due to his age because in a court held on 22 April 1575 it was shown he had recently died. The full presentment records that Thomas Webb held of the lord, according to the customs of the manor, a tenement and one cottage with appurtenances and a piece of arable land lying at Yalwaye containing half an acre of land, but since his death there falls due to the lord a heriot of 43s. 4d. To the court came Isabella² Webb, recently the wife of the said Thomas, and claimed the tenure of the said land, to hold it during her widowhood. It was therefore granted to her and she swore fealty to the lord and was admitted tenant.

As Isabella had taken over the lands held by her husband she was now

1 ¹ In October 1559, at both courts in 1560, 1563 and 1565, once in 1566, 1567 and between 1569-1571, twice in 1572 and once in 1574, he sent his excuses for not attending the manorial court as he should have done because he was a tenant of the manor.

2 ² She is recorded as Elizabeth in some records but as Isabella in others. For clarity I have referred to her as Isabella.

responsible for their upkeep and any associated duties which needed to be performed. So immediately after she claimed the land the court ordered her (and others) to make repairs to a ditch between the land of John Grimster and a bridge called Load Bridge, under pain of 3s. 4d. At the same time the jury confirmed to all those present in the court room, that the tenement of Isabella was ruinous and in decay, and she was ordered to make the repairs by the next court, on pain of 6s. 8d. It was also agreed that John Webb would hold 'le was haie, alias le weste coate' during the widowhood of Isabella Webb, paying 3s. annually to her on 29 September and 25 March, provided that the said Isabella could continue to live in her cottage and the said John Webb did not do any damage.

In 1576 she agreed to act as tithingman in place of her son Henry, but the reason for this is not given. She sent in her excuses for non-attendance twice in 1577 and 1580, then once in 1585 when she was also presented for letting her tenement fall into decay, and it was ordered that sufficient repairs were to be made by Christmas under pain of 6s. 8d. On 10 April 1589 she was presented for letting her tenement fall into decay, when it was ordered that she make sufficient repairs by Easter, under pain of 5s.

The period of the Webb family holding land from Winchester College was soon to come to an end. On 4 September 1593 the court presented that Elizabeth (or Isabella) Webb held during her widowhood, one cottage and one and a half acres of land with appurtenances, at an annual rent of 18d., also one tenement and cottage with appurtenances and a piece of arable land of half an acre lying at Yelwaye, at an annual rent of 7s. 6d. She had died and a heriot of 43s. 4d. was due to the lord by 29 September. At the same court came Alice, wife of John Smith senior, recently Alice Webb, who surrendered to the lord a cottage with one and a half acres of land (with appurtenances), at an annual rent of 18d., and one tenement with a cottage (with appurtenances) and a piece of arable land of half an acre lying at Yalwaye, at an annual rent of 7s. 6d., also the right of pasturage in Rattenham at 10d. per annum. All these land which recently belonged to Elizabeth Webb, now deceased, mother of Alice, passed to John Smith senior, Robert Smith and John Smith junior, son of the said John Smith for the term of their three lives.

As Henry had passed away in 1592 the land went to the next surviving child, which was Alice Smith, which raises a few questions relating to the ages of these siblings and the descent of the property in question. Was John (their

brother) already dead, or because of the bad feeling did the family decide that the lands should go to Alice, or was it just the custom of the manor that the youngest child should inherit? Perhaps John was a younger brother, who knows?

Margaret Webb (formerly Cowper)

Thanks to an entry in 1562 relating to her son Richard Cowper, we know that she must have been married at least once before her betrothal to Walter Webb, unless of course Richard was illegitimate. She was described as a widow in 1560 when she sent in her excuses for both courts for not attending. At the first court in her absence she was presented for not repairing a property called 'le berehowse' (according to an order made in the last court), but as she had failed to make the repairs she was in mercy of the court and ordered to make the repairs by the feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist (24 June) or pay a fine of 6s. 8d. These repairs to her barn appear in a parallel set of court books as having incurred a 4d. fine and it is worth noting that licences to sell ale in the manor were granted in 1490, 1556 and 1557, although whether Margaret was making a living brewing ale in her beer house is unclear.

In October 1560 she was presented with Alice Meker for allowing their pigs to roam at large damaging their neighbours property, contrary to the customs of the manor, for which they were fined 12d. and 8d. respectively; another version of this records her as overstocking the common with her sheep.

She sent her excuses for non-attendance in April 1562 but in her absence she was presented for devising her land to an outsider against the customs of the manor, for which she was in mercy for 20d. To make amends she appeared at the next court (in September) and obtained a licence to permit her to demise her land to John Callowe, and to have him as her sub-tenant until the 25 December next, on payment of a fine of 4d.; presumably she got the 4d. back from Callowe in rent. However, she was presented again in April 1563 for allowing Callowe to lodge in her house without licence from the lord, but her son Richard Cowper came and represented her, asking for a further licence which was granted under a fine of 6d. At the same court she was presented for not sufficiently repairing her cottage, for which she was given two months to repair, unless she would be fined 5s. The sub-letting continued and a further licence was sought in September 1563, when it was stated that Callowe would perform all the

customary services owing to the lord.

She was presented in April 1564 for not making sufficient repairs to an embankment and was given until 24 June to make the repairs, under threat of a fine of 3s. 4d. In May 1565 she was in trouble again for letting the bank by her house next to 'le Waynesharde' fall into disrepair, which was causing a nuisance because it had fallen into the highway (presumably the main road through Long Load). The repairs had to be made to the bank and the road by 24 June under pain of 20s. and 10s. respectively. It would seem that her property was in need of some additional work, as in the same year, the lord of the manor ordered the bailiff to cut down and sell 21 beech trees growing on the banks belonging to Margaret; these trees were causing a nuisance because they were next to the highway.

Once a year at court from 1563 to 1567 she sent her excuses for not attending. She was presented in September 1567 for not having repaired the hedge and ditch between her garden and a close called Hawe, and a close of land belonging to John Webb; she was ordered to make the repairs by 18 October. In May 1576 it was ordered that she must maintain her ditch from 'le Wayne Yaet' to a bridge called Load Bridge, by 24 August, on pain of 10s.

Henry Webb

This is the Henry who was the father of the first recorded Webb who lived at Hinton St. George and although we do not know when he was born it might have been in the 1540s or earlier. He was a husbandman like his father, and it does not look as if there was much opportunity for anything else in this truly agricultural hamlet.

Presumably on the death of Thomas his father, Henry took a more active role within the manor as he served as a juror in 1572, 1578, 1580-1582, 1584, and 1587-1590. He died in 1592 which explains his absence from any court records after this date, and not once is it recorded that he sent in his excuses for non-attendance. In September 1576 his mother Isabella agreed to act as tithingman in place of Henry, and he was elected to serve the same office in the following year, and again in 1584 and 1585.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE WEBB FAMILY OF HINTON DURING THE 17TH CENTURY

Imagine yourself in a village in rural England over three hundred and fifty years ago when life's pleasures were few, if you were lucky you had enough money in hand not to be a burden to the parish overseer. Going to church on Sunday must have been a major event in the average man's week and hearing the vicar's sermon must have caused a stir now and again amongst the village community. Was life in Hinton St. George really so uneventful?

To those people who are unfamiliar with the village it has been dominated since shortly after 1429 by the Paulet, or Poulett family, up until the late 1960's. The Poulett family had a controlling interest in nearly every aspect of village life, not only as land owners but as charitable benefactors, the patrons to the living and the largest local employer. An example of their nature can be seen in April of 1653 when the poor appeared at the gates of the manor house and the Lord ordered his steward to give them 5 shillings, although other sources suggest that he treated the lesser people of the shire with contempt.

Prior to the radical modification of the topography of the village, caused by the expansion of Hinton Park, the village was a simple linear settlement. To the south of the church, and on both sides of what is known today as West Street, was the nucleus of the Saxon and medieval settlements bounded by a stone cross. To the east of this area is a block of properties divided into a series of north south strips (running from High Street to Back Lane) which was probably developed in the late medieval period by the Poulett family.¹

The cross lies in the centre of the village and is a good example of late-medieval workmanship, based upon an octagonal calvary of three steps. On its east face is a figure of a man of tall stature, bare-headed, and unclothed with the exception of a garment loosely girt round the loins. The right hand is raised in a gesture of authority, while the left embraces and grasps a long staff, which is tipped with a cross. As St. John the Baptist is thus commonly represented, it is

¹ All the sources in this chapter can be found in my *A history of the Webb family and Hinton St. George, Somerset*, 1992, unless specified.

not improbable this figure may be intended for him, especially as he was a popular Saint in Somerset during the Middle Ages.

My story begins, in the year 1630, two years before Thomas Gerard of Trent described the village as Georgehenton, from the dedication of the church to St. George. 1630 was the year that Henry Webb appears in the court records for Hinton as a juror, a position which he held in almost every court until the book ends in 1639, during which period he is mentioned in detail on four occasions. In 1631 Hugh Limbery, the hayward, 'did not give notice for the getting the land of Henry Webb' and was fined 6*d.* and in 1633 Henry himself was in trouble. In that year he failed to do his 'suit of court' and thus by his non-appearance before the lord of the manor (or his steward) he was duly fined, which happened again in 1638; why he was absent it does not say. It was also in 1633, at the second court of the year, that Henry's neighbour Roger Saint was ordered by the court (of which Henry was sitting on as a juror) to cut down a tree on a bank that divided their lands, or else be fined one shilling.

In 1634 he served as 'Waywarden' for the parish of Hinton St. George with John Long, and he also served the same office in 1644 with Daniell Spurell. This bound him to oversee the repairs of the highways and byways which ran through the parochial boundaries; in the early nineteenth century the office of waywarden was filled by the then Lord of the Manor. It is worth noting here that in this same year Robert Webb married Anne Long at Hinton on 27 October.

Henry served as churchwarden of the parish in 1635 when he managed to put his mark. He had been educated enough to make a 'W' as his mark, but each time that he made it, he managed to do it upside down. As churchwarden he had a great many duties in his term of office, with John Longe, ensuring the church fabric was maintained, and accounting for any payments made to the church including,

the dept of the last wardens accompt
two Collections of a pennie the acre
a legacie given to the Church by Mary Alford wid: deceased
of Thomas Bayly for a seate in the Church upon exchange
of Edward Cheeke gent. for buryinge his wife in the Church
of Frances Vincent a fine for a seate for his sonne
the rent of Foxfurland

It was in this very same year that Ann (or Anna Webbe) appears in the manorial

court records described as a 'former prostitute' or 'mistress' living in the house of Thomas Nicholls. The entries read,

Likewise it is presented that Thomas Nicholls has received a former prostitute, namely Anna Webb, in his house contrary to the order of this court and has incurred the penalty of 10*li*. laid out in the same order. And therefore on this day it is further ordered that he remove the said prostitute or give sufficient security for exonerating the parish before the next festival of Saint John the Baptist under penalty of 20 shillings.

Likewise it is presented that Thomas Nicholls has not yet removed his mistress, namely Ann Webbe, as he was ordered at the last court. Therefore he has incurred the penalty of the 20s. Imposed upon him. And on this day it is further ordered that he remove the said prostitute before the next festival of the Birth of our Lord under penalty of 20 shillings.

Needless to say, Henry Webb served as a juror on both occasions whilst this was brought before the court to deal with, although it does not say if there was any connection between the two of them. Presumably the matter was resolved as Thomas and Ann did not appear at the next court, however, four years later the story continued. On 25 July 1640 Mary the base (or illegitimate) child of Anne Webbe was baptised at Hinton, but the records do not show the name of the father, neither do they record the death or marriage of either the mother, or child, under the Webb name.

Henry served as churchwarden under the watchful eye of Richard Gove, the parish parson who (at least) two years later was involved in an ecclesiastical court case against William Adams, who had served as churchwarden in the year following Henry Webb. The dispute was over the key to the great south door of the church which Adams had bought in 1636 and it gives us an insight into the duties, and the mechanisms, of the church officers at Hinton during the period. The key was kept by the parson who would give it 'without denial' to the churchwardens, in order for them to be able to make repairs to the church, and also give it to the parish clerk so that he could carry out his duties. Several witnesses were called during the dispute including William Bragge, a 54 year old farm worker who had lived at Hinton since he was 7 (being born at Chillington), who stated that the rector should have the keys for the other three doors and the church should be barred or bolted from sunset; this was possibly another duty of the churchwardens. It appeared that the former rector (Mr. Peacham) had made a second key which the clerk held and this seemed to always be the custom, which

Gove ignored and thus the matter was brought up in court. Another witness Roger Denham, a cordwiner, who had lived at Hinton for 22 years stated it was always the case, even in his father's time, that the wardens would borrow the key from the clerk.¹

It is interesting to note that in 1636 he was paid 3*s.* for 'his journey to Wells' and a year later he received 6*s.* 2*d.* 'for his charges at Wells Court at Candlemas and the hire of his horse', when the parish was charged 1*s.* 6*d.* 'for laying in o[u]r bill and dismissal of the court'. It is roughly 25 miles to Wells and the two journeys would have meant a round trip of some 50 miles. It is also in August 1636 that we find him being a bondsman with John Longe, dealing with the probates of Thomas Monie and Elizabeth Anthonie. Both Webb and Longe describe themselves as 'Husbandman', and for the probate of Elizabeth Anthonie they put up a bond of £7.

In 1641 Parliament organised a national protest against the possible imposition of 'an arbitrary and tyrannical government', aimed at Charles I. All males of 18 years of age or over were required to sign a declaration of belief in the Protestant religion, allegiance to the King and support for the rights and privileges of Parliament. The rolls that were signed have become known as the Protestation Returns and Henry, Joan and Anne Webb all signed the return for Hinton in 1642. It is interesting to note that Robert does not appear in the Protestation Returns, which suggests that he was away from the parish at the time, was dead or refused to sign it. Before the Civil War subsidies were the main means of raising money and in 1641 Henry Webb was assessed as having goods to the value of £3 for taxation purposes. It is interesting to note that in a subsidy of 1628 for Hinton he is not listed which would suggest that he came to the village shortly after this date.

It was on the last day of September 1644 that King Charles the First marched from Chard and quartered the night at Hinton House. Whilst at Hinton, Charles was joined by Prince Rupert who gave him an account of the unhappy affairs of the north, and that he had left about two thousand horse under the command of Sir Marmaduke Langdale, which he might have well brought with him, and the king would then have had a marvellous western expedition. Lord John Poulett was member of Parliament for the county in 1640, and distinguished himself for his loyalty during the civil wars and he was associated

¹ S.R.O. D/D/Cd 72.

with most of the military transactions in the West of England. Poulett accepted a commission to raise a regiment of 1500 foot and he was at Lyme in Dorset, and Exeter in 1644; perhaps Robert was a loyal tenant and served with his lord during the Civil War.

Perhaps if Rupert had brought the two thousand horse with him, the outcome of the war may have been different, but the effect on all those who lived in the village must have been great. Never before had such an entourage visited this small village, which had suddenly been brought into the focus of national events.

These were turbulent times and they caused much suffering to all classes, rich and poor. One unfortunate incident happened in Hinton Park on 12 April 1656, concerning John Eyds of Crewkerne who found a deserted child in the park belonging to Joane Hisham, and it was alleged that she had left the child there. When Joane was examined she said that she was a native of St. Sidwell's parish in Exeter, the wife of a soldier in the regiment of Sir Thomas Pride. On returning from London she gave eight pence to a boy with horses to have a ride, but the boy having received the money rode away, and so she put the child on the ground and chased after him. When she returned about an hour later she could not find the child, 'and hath wandered about distracted to look for it' but it had been given to the constable of Crewkerne.

Two years later on 12 August, whilst reaping in the fields of Crewkerne for Giles Wills of Merriott, one Roger Hutchins of Merriott was stopped by John Lawrence of Hinton St. George who set his own men to reap. The wife and daughters of Wills came and tried to remove the sheaves which had already been cut, when Lawrence took them away, pushed down the mother and kicked one of the daughters 'so that she cried out very much'.

Henry Webb probably died at the end of November 1645 as he was buried on 3 December at Hinton. Fortunately he made a will, which although destroyed during enemy action at Exeter in World War II, has provided me with an interesting case. Sixteen days after Henry was buried, his brother John of Drayton, who was the executor of the will, disputed the proof of the document against Joan Webb, relict of Henry at the Archdeaconry court in Taunton. The dispute was over the validity of the signature of one of the witnesses Joane Smith, now deceased, but the outcome of the case is unclear although the will

was proved at Taunton in the next year. An act of administration was granted to Joan the wife of Henry, in 1647, by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and the original survives at The National Archives, which reads,

on the 16th day (October, 1647) a writ was issued by the Commissioners to Joan Webb widow of Henry Webb late of Hinton St. George in the County of Somerset deceased to administer the goods, dues and credits of the said deceased will etc. (by the fine of this commission) Bath and Wells

It would seem that the case brought by John Webb was unproven as Joan was granted the act of administration. Normally letters of administration are granted when there is no will and the applicant would have to pay all funeral expenses, debts, administer truly, and submit a true inventory and account of his or her stewardship. But this would seem not to be true in this case.

I have no record of whether Henry and Joan had any children and the last reference that I have come across for Joan is in 1647 when she paid 1*d.* to the churchwardens, but a Johane Webe married Robert Withye on 22 November 1654.

Adam Webb was baptised in 1634 the son of Robert and Anne (née Long) who had married on 27 October 1634. Little is known about his parents except that Anne Webb signed the Protestation return in 1642 and Robert did not. Also on 25 July 1640 Mary the base child of Anne Webbe was baptised at Hinton but whether this Anne was the widow of Robert is unclear as there is no burial for Robert at Hinton. In 1658 Adam was summoned for not appearing at the manor court which proves he was residing in the manor of Hinton. He was probably renting a property, rather than by lease, or mortgage, as there is no mention of him in a mid 17th century survey of the manor.

As we have seen the Poulett family had been staunchly loyal to Charles the first throughout his reign and the demise of Oliver Cromwell could not have come soon enough. The restoration of the monarchy, in the form of Charles the second, was celebrated at Hinton with great fervour, which is recorded in a letter sent from Hinton on 4 May 1660 to Hugh Smyth, then knight of the shire for the county of Somerset. The letter was addressed to be left at the Sign of the Gun in the Strand near Somerset House, and the author of it was probably one of the Poulett family who were closely related to the Smyth's of Ashton Court. The letter reads,

On Thursday being yesterday a good company of gentlemen were assembled here in expectation of news that might result from the meeting of the Lordes and Commons on Tuesday, about one of the clocke the letters came in, and were read with such transports, that if any weake brother had been present we should have given him the scandall of beinge popishly affected for seeinge us kisse soe orderly the Kinges armes he would certeynly have inferd that we would have worshipt his image if it had been there. The next resolution was into that cellar which has stone staires, where we only staid to drinke a very hartly draught of excellent clarett wine to his Majesties health, and soe proceeded to settle a methode for the eveninge worke.

My Lord imediatly dispatched away couriers to Petherton, Whitlakington and the other adjacent places with the printed papers which were every where read in great triumphe: then he sumond all the parish and the nearest neighbours to meete him upon the old warren; whither he caused to be sent to cartloades of fagotts a hogshhead of March ale, six dozen of bottles of clarett wine, meates toungs pies &c without number. About seaven of clocke my Lord my Lady Mrs Francis Mrs Amos &c were mett at the place appointed by all the neighbours whereof the better sort brought their offspringes not only of fagotts but alsoe of substantiall belly timber. Well the linnen was spread upon a faire greene carpet and upon that the dishes and upon them fell we first one round then another. I presume all that were there were cordially for the Kinge; the poorer sort I am confident of; for if any of them were not his for the miracle of his resturation, yett they were all because they ate of the loves and were filled.

Hitherto things were carried on calmly; but the people thought it was now a time they might storme in, and that they could not be merry enough for this newes without beinge mad therefore they throw fire into the fagotts, wine and ale into themselves, with such castinge upp of hatts and such a noise as I can compare it to nothinge but what you know we did a little before at Ilchester once, if the shouts were not able to rend the skies, yett I doubt they have almost broken the hearts of the poore male content fanatiques, who sate at home and listn'd.

This was our way, what others did I have not heard, but I am confident they all did to their proportion: for soe many bonfires appeared about us farr and neare that if we had not knowne the true cause of it, we should have appended a generall risinge of the finatiques to be executed by way of fire, and that the Anabaptists would have burnd all that would not be dipt. The truth is if I had been of their party I should have advised Monarch Lambert to deferre his appearance till this last night past; I am confident they might have catch'd their sturdiest opponents not napinge but soundly a sleepe you know

that is the period of Country triumphy.¹

Adam had four children baptised at Hinton, two by his first wife Rachael and two by his second wife Joanna (née Longford) who he had married on 5 October 1676. His first wife Rachael was a regular attendee at church from at least 1664 up until her death in 1676 and for the privilege of her own seat (which was previously occupied by the widow Joan Long) she paid an annual rent of 2*d*. Note again the connection with the Long family, as it was often the case that church seats, or pews, would often pass to members of the same family, or their relations. In this case the widow Joan Long could have been Adam's aunt or grandmother, either paternal, or maternal depending on re-marriage.

Adam was a stone mason, and the churchwardens accounts record the type of work he was capable of, by issuing the following payments,

- 1664 for laying of pavement in the church and churchyard and woork in the tower 7*s*. 4*d*.
- 1673 Adam Webb and his boy for work about ye church 3*s*.
- 1674 Adam Webb for stoppon ye hoale in ye Tower 6*s*. 6*d*.
Adam Webb and for his work a bout the Towar 1*s*. 4*d*.
- 1677 Adam Webb for masonry app the wall 6*s*.
Paid Rowden for attending Adam Webb 1*s*. 6*d*.
- 1682 Adam Webb for mending of ye Tower door.

Despite the fact that he worked possibly up until the end of 1682 he was paid 11*s*. 6*d*. during 1681 by the overseers of the poor for a reason which is not specified. In 1682/3 he was paid 'in his sickness' and he was buried on 20 March 1682/3. Without being able to work he must have fallen on hard times and the parish had to pay 5*s*. for his shroud and 1*s*. for his grave. With both of his wives already deceased the remaining children had become orphans and subsequently the parish would have been responsible for their upkeep.

In 1683 Katherine Harison was paid 5*s*. 'for keeping Adam Weebes child' but poor little Mary was buried on 9 August 1684 and the overseers paid the following bills,

- for making of Adam Weebes child grave 6*d*.
- John Wills for a shroud for Adam Webs child 8*s*. 2*d*.

1 ¹ Bristol Record Office AC/C64/81.

given to the woman for stretching out of Roger Dunham and Weebs child 4s.

The connection between these 17th century Webbs and the later ones may not be proved in law but the Christian names of the children of John and Ann Webb, baptised from 1698/9 to 1711, are worth noting. Names such as Robert, Ann and Adam, all appear as Christian names during the 17th century, but to use this as grounds for a pedigree is unacceptable, however tempting it may seem. However Rachael's first child Robert (baptised at Hinton in 1663) has proved to be something of a mystery as I cannot find a marriage for him or a burial at a time when the registers are almost complete. I have searched all of the Quarter Sessions order books in the hope of finding a removal order, or settlement case, without any success, or have I found any clues as to his whereabouts. One theory which is quite possible is that although he was christened as Robert, he was brought up under the name of John (who married Mary, had at least six children between 1698 and 1711, and died in 1735). The name Robert does not appear in the parish registers, overseers or churchwardens accounts during this period, only John's name who had the same occupation as Adam Webb (died 1682), as that of builder and mason. There is no recorded baptism for John (died 1735) at Hinton and as he was such a burden on the parish surely they would have made some efforts to get rid of him and his family, if they did not have the legal right of settlement? But there is no record of this which suggests that Hinton was his legal place of settlement, thus adding more weight to the argument for recognising Robert as John, or vice-versa. If Robert was in fact John then it would be common practise to name your first son after yourself, your first daughter after your favourite aunt, your second son after your father and your third son after your grandfather. Adam is a Christian name that I have not found anywhere else in this region of Somerset, at this time, and for John to pick this as a christian name for one of his children is surely more than just coincidence, so perhaps if John was not Robert then who was he? One possibility is that he was a child of Adam and Rachael but that his baptism was not recorded in the Hinton registers. One event which can be found during this period is puzzling, as in April 1690 the burial register records 'Eaustachia of John Webb', but was it his daughter or wife? I wonder if this could have been John Webb's first wife, or possibly a child; we may never find the answer.

There is one tantalising piece of information which could fit in to this story. On the 16 June 1698 a marriage took place at Charlton Horethorne, about 15 miles away from Hinton, between a Robert Webb and a lady called Mary. Her surname in the register has faded and the last three letters are illegible, but

what can be made out is the name Washingg..... I think this could be our man because of the date of the event, and the significance it has in relation to the date of the baptism of the first child of John and Mary at Hinton. Their first child John was baptised on 14 February 1699, which was less than seven months after the marriage at Charlton Horethorne, being a typical length of time between conception, discovery of the fact, a quick marriage, followed just over six months later with the birth and subsequent baptism. Robert, or John's absence from the records of both churchwarden and overseer from the latter 1690s might be interpreted as evidence for him working outside of the parish. Also the Charlton Horethorne registers do not record the baptism of any children from this union, or any other mention for that matter, suggesting that they were either childless or they moved away.¹

Another event of national importance affected Hinton, this time in 1685, when James, Duke of Monmouth visited Hinton House during his ill fated attempt to seize the throne, which ended at the Battle of Sedgemoor and was followed by the 'Bloody Assizes' held by Judge Jeffreys. When Monmouth was making his triumphal progress through the West of England, before his appearance in the character of a revolutionary, he was hospitably entertained at Hinton House, and a large party was feasted with junket in the park. It is carefully recorded that during the feast,

Elizabeth Percy, who had heard of the festive party, made a rush at the Duke of Monmouth, and touched his hand. She was a martyr to the king's evil, and had received no benefit from the advice of surgeons, nor even from a seventh son, to whom she had travelled ten miles. After touching the Duke all her wounds were healed in two days. A hand-bill was circulated, in folio, setting forth this marvellous cure ; and a document, signed by Henry Clark, minister of Crewkerne, two captains, a clergyman, and four others, lay at the Amsterdam Coffee-house, Bartholomew-lane, London.

The 'king's evil' was, from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century, a condition named after the healer. It was a form of scrofula and it was believed that those with royal blood could heal sufferers by touching them. The idea of the seventh son having similar healing powers as those of a monarch was a popular one. In April 1278 Edward I touched 530 people, all of whom received a penny dole, in Monmouth's case it may have been purely propaganda to try and generate support for his cause by making people believe that he was the

¹ S.R.O. D/P/cha.h 2/1/1. The register of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1698-1721 was checked and no Webb or Washingg... references could be found, except for the marriage.

rightful King of England.

Seven men from Hinton were listed as being in Monmouth's army, who were Ben and John Butcher, Amos, John junior and John Dunne senior, John Gough and Richard Hoare. Ben Butcher, the Dunnes and Gough were not captured, but John Butcher was tried at Wells and later hanged at Axbridge. Hoare, a husbandman, was tried at Wells and sentenced for transportation which was reprieved and Elias Holmes was sent in his place. Hoare's land was subsequently forfeit and offered up for sale.

CONCLUSION

I cannot help but think that the evidence for the parentage of Robert Webb (who married Anne Long in 1634) is pointing to Henry and Joan, who arrived at Hinton sometime before 1630. The connection to the Long family over the next 40 years is surely more than a coincidence, or just a case of neighbourly love, and the connection with Nicholas Longe in the Elizabethan Chancery case may be another indication of the close links with the family; although that was over 50 years previous to the marriage of Robert and Anne, the connection is not inconceivable. I think that Robert was the son of Henry, and it was a natural thing for his uncle to have been executor of his father's will, at a time when the son may not have been available to undertake the relevant duties. The abstract of the disputed case makes no mention of Robert, neither does the administration, which indicates to me that Robert could have been dead, because surely he would have had a greater involvement in matters?

Similarly the theory behind the parentage of John (or Robert) Webb who died in July 1735, is much more than coincidence, especially when you consider the documentary evidence relating to his life and family. If John had been working in the parish church as a ten year old with his father in 1673, and the churchwardens had recorded his name, the question would have been answered. With all things considered should we be thinking along the lines not of a family gathering of the descendants of John and Mary, who died in the 1730, but of the descendants of an earlier marriage? This marriage between Henry Webb and Joane Chubbe took place in the parish church of Martock, over 50 years before Henry Webb appears in the records of the manor of Hinton. Or should we go back to another common ancestor, that of Walter (the father of John and Thomas Webb mentioned in the Elizabethan Chancery case), who was probably born before 1480. Either way we all share a common ancestor, and a common interest, in finding out more about the past and present members of our family.

But is there one easy way to answer the questions which appear in our family history? I think there may will be a way of proving our link back to Walter Webb and quashing beyond doubt the tenuous connections from one generation to another. If, by finding a descendant of Martin Webb, who was living in Drayton in the early 17th century, and then taking a D.N.A. sample and

comparing it against a male Webb from the Hinton St. George line, a comparison could be made to try and get a match back in the 13th generation. If this match was made, then it would prove that all the Drayton and Hinton Webbs were descended from Henry Webb (died 1592), and of course Walter who was alive at the end of the 15th century!