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## The Helwys Family.

This article will be better understood if read with the genealogical table open on one side, and a county map of Notts. on the other.

**I**N any account of the religious history of England in the early years of the seventeenth century the name of Thomas Helwys ought to find a place. He was actively associated with those who led the Separatist movement in the counties of Nottingham and Lincoln. He was a chief promoter of the migration to Amsterdam of those who were denied religious liberty at home. He became a Baptist under the influence of John Smith, but took a line of his own and led a little company of intrepid fellow-believers back to the home-land in the winter of 1612-13. Here in the metropolis he planted his church, one of the earliest (if not the very first) of English Baptist Churches. There were English Anabaptists at Norwich at an earlier date but we do not yet know whether they were duly constituted in church order. Thomas Helwys not only preached the doctrines he professed but also wrote and published books in their defence and thus has a special claim upon the interest of English Baptists.

### The Family Name.

The name "Helwys" is in itself distinctive and peculiar. It is rare as a surname and very local in its distribution. I have only noted it as occurring in the counties of York, Nottingham, and Lincoln before the sixteenth century, and from thence it spread to London. Whence was the name derived? It is not a place-name. It is not a trade-name such as Smith or Miller. A writer in the *Baptist Times* suggested that it might be connected with the Middle English term "Halwes," used by Chaucer in the sense of "saints" or "holy ones" and preserved in the phrase "All Hallows," but the early forms of the name are against it. At the time I was rather inclined to connect it with the surname Ellis or Ellys, but I have since been able to trace it to its undoubted source. It is a surname derived not from the father but from the mother. The Christian

name Louis, Lewis, or Aloys at an early date threw out a feminine form in France, "Heloise," and this was brought into England with the Normans. Thus William Mallet the Norman is referred to by Dugdale<sup>1</sup> as having a wife "Hesilia" or "Helewise." Here we see the first stage in the modification which led to the form which we know. Is there any evidence, however, that this form was ever taken up by a man as a designation? Yes, it was used as a descriptive title as early as 1243 when "Richard son of Helewysa"<sup>2</sup> witnessed a charter granting lands to William the Abbot and the convent of Welbeck in Nottinghamshire. Then some years later we find "Willielmus filius Helewysiae filiae Gilberti de Shupton"<sup>3</sup> and others producing an "extent" of certain land which they claimed against John Sampson and Mary his wife in Yorkshire. This was in the 27th year of Edward I. We may take it that the father of William was dead or that he was overshadowed by the more prominent personality of Helewysa his wife. In the course of the next generation the name was frankly adopted as a surname. At Michaelmas in the year 1333 "Oliver son of Ralph Helewys of Brunham"<sup>4</sup> in Lincolnshire makes a grant of land there abutting on land called "Twentiacres." This Oliver Helewys had living in 1348 a son Thomas and daughters Alice and Agnes<sup>5</sup> and probably had another son, Oliver, who was living in 13 Hen. IV., i.e. 1412. In this latter year there was executed a "release<sup>6</sup> by John son and heir of Oliver Helewys of Over Brunham, to John son of Henry de Hesyll of his right, on the death of his father, to a toft abutting on the road from Over Brunham to Kynyardfery." By this time then the name had become well established, and we are not surprised when we find a member of the Helwys family in the person of John Helwys instituted as *Vicar* of Headon<sup>7</sup> on October 27, 1487. Headon is the next parish to Askham, where we shall soon find the Helwys family firmly seated. Ten years later (15 August, 1497) John Helwys secured the vicarage of East Retford on the presentation of the Archbishop of York. He was a pluralist. On 7 December, 1503, he became *rector* of Headon, a distinct post from that of

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1 Quoted by Charlotte M. Yonge in her book on *Christian Names*, 1884, p. 406.

2 Wolley Charter, I. 53, Brit. Mus.

3 *Calendarium Genealogicum*, 1865, II., p. 579.

4 *Calendar of Ancient Deeds in the Record Office*, II., 417.

5 *Ibid.*, B761.

6 *Ibid.*, B752.

7 List of Rectors and Vicars in St. Peter's Church, Headon, Notts.

vicar, and in the year 1506 obtained the rectories of Hayton and Ordsall, both close to Retford. He was evidently a man of standing. Let us hope that he saw his numerous charges faithfully served by competent curates.

In this same year of 1506 also "John Helwys, clerk, and John Hanley" made a claim for certain lands in "Scaftworth" and "two fishings in Idell."<sup>8</sup> In Catholic times inland fishings were valuable. This John Helwys died on 28th December, 1511, and was buried in the church of East Retford where an incised slab formerly marked his grave. The name was now well known in the Bassetlaw hundred of Nottinghamshire, and it is to this locality we must look for the family from which Thomas Helwys sprang. The name is variously spelled. The forms Helwis, Hellwis, and Helwisse seem to preserve the sharp sound of the *i* in Heloise from which it was derived. As members of the family moved southward, the southerners, always more shakly with their aspirates than men of the north, softened the name to Elwis and Elwes, in which form it is still borne by several families of distinction.

### Thomas Helwys the Baptist.

The fact that more than one branch of this family has won a place for itself among the landed aristocracy will account for the attention that has been bestowed upon its pedigree. In the Heralds "Visitations" of the County of Notts<sup>9</sup> a pedigree is given but with many mistakes and omissions. More elaborate genealogical tables are to be found in the local histories of Hertfordshire following out some branches of the family in great detail, and in Maddison's *Lincolnshire Pedigrees* (p. 329) the descent of the Lincolnshire branch of the family is fully set out. But none of these go further back than William Helwys of Askham, variously given as "Helwish al's Elwis," "Helwis vel Helwich," and "Elwes." As all researchers know, the early "visitations" need constant checking. We are able to carry the family story one stage further back and to add a few fresh details which may serve as starting points for other investigators. The task of tracing a land-holding family with such a distinctive name is far easier than determining the family connections of a Smith or a Robinson. As a result of my researches I soon found that the Thomas Helwys who accompanied John Smith to Holland was the grandson, and not the son, of William Helwys

<sup>8</sup> Thoroton's Notts., p. 425.

<sup>9</sup> Edited for the Harleian Society by G. W. Marshall, 1871, p. 29.

of Askham, as had been previously conjectured,<sup>10</sup> and from a personal examination of the Bilborough parish register I satisfied myself that he was the Thomas Helwys of Broxtowe who married Joan Ashmore on December 3, 1595, at Bilborough, in which parish Broxtowe is included. These results were made public in a lecture at Ilkeston on the "Pilgrim Fathers" on 21 December, 1908, the anniversary of their landing on "Plymouth Rock," and were briefly reported in the local press and the *Christian Life*.

It is true that William Helwys of Askham had a son Thomas who settled at Hebblethorpe close to John Robinson's old home, but he was dead by the spring of 1607. It is also the case that this Thomas had a son of the same name, so there was plenty of room for confusion. We shall refer to these two Thomas Helwyses again.

In my little work on John Smith and Thomas Helwys it was pointed out that the family comes into clear view with "Robert Elwes" of Askham who made his will on March 11th, 1525-6. It was proved on April 26th, 1526. The bequest in this will of "iijs iiijd" "to the churche warke of Ordesaull" is of interest in view of the fact that John Helwys had been rector of that parish. Helwys mentions his wife "Isabell" and his son William, but no other children. He makes them executors, and is concerned for their future as this bequest indicates:

"Itm. I gif to the receyvar of Scroby my best ox for his good counsell and lawfull love to be don to my wif and to William my son at all tymes comyng."

The "Receiver of Scrooby" acted as steward of the estates in this district belonging to the Archbishop of York. This office was held later in the century by William Brewster, father of the elder of the Pilgrim Church at Leyden. "Robert Elwes" made his main bequest as follows:

"Itm. I gif my take and firme the which I have in Askhm . . . to my wif and to William my son and if my wife lif sole and unmarried." If Isabel married again William was to have "all the said take and firme during my termes to hym and his assignes." There was no question in his mind about the customary form of baptism. He had stood as godfather to several children to everyone of whom he left "a mette barlie," i.e. a measure of barley. I take it that Robert was in the prime of life when he died and that his wife was with child at the time, for "William Ellwes" in *his* will mentions a brother

<sup>10</sup> In the article by A. C. Bickley in the "Dictionary of National Biography" on Thomas Helwys.

John to whom no reference is made in the will of "Robert Elwes" the father. "William Elwes" prospered at Askham, and when he drew up his will October 5, 1557, he had a good estate to dispose of. The printed pedigrees represent him as having married a daughter of one Levesey or Leuesley, and it has been assumed that she was of the Lancashire "Liveseys," and was the "Rosimond Elwes" buried at Askham December 30, 1556. I think Canon Maddison is more likely to be right in connecting her with West Markham in Notts, close to Askham. William must have consoled himself almost at once by taking to wife a widow, Margaret Gabitus, who already had a family of her own. He probably felt the need in his declining health of some capable woman to preside over his household.

### William Helwys of Askham.

Let us look at the will of "William Ellwes." He describes himself as "farmer" and desires "to be buried within the parish church of St. Nycholas of Askam." He made the following bequests:

"To Margaret my wife the p'sonaige of Askam duryng the terme of my lease." "Unto my sonne John Ellwes my capital messuage of Houghton lounde" and the lease of the Manor of Askam withall the lande &c" . . . "my leases and all my farmes at Everton and Scrobye." "To Isabell my daughter a hundrethe pounds in money or goods to be paid at the day of her marriage at the hande of my son John Elwes."

To his sons "Jeffray Ellwes" and "Thomas Ellwes" a hundred pounds apiece. "Also my sonne Edmonde who had of me a hundred mark I wyll that he shall have xxxiiijl xiijs. iiijd. more which maketh up an hundredth pounds."

"My brother John Ellwes of Carberton shall have my foure oxen whiche he hath in his draught and one of the two kye whiche he hathe ther of mynde." . . . "I will that he have that farm which I bought of Mr. Castledyne the balye of Work-sopp during his lyfe naturall." John Ellwes was appointed executor as Edmund had gone off to London to make his way in the world. Among the witnesses to this will were Thomas Bellamy, Lawrence Smythe, and "Sir" John Blythe, curate of Grove. The parish register of Askham records the burial of "William Elwes" on October 17, 1557. The daughter Isabel mentioned above I take to have married William Bett or Bate of North Leverton, who, in his will proved October 7, 1586, speaks of her as "Isabell my well beloved wyffe," and appoints Edmund, John, and Thomas Elwes as supervisors of his will.

The next will to engage our attention is that of "Margaret Helyis" of Tuxford in the county of Notts., widow, drawn up on March 22, 1558-9, and proved April 20, 1559. I hesitatingly assume she was the widow of "William Ellwes," and that her brief married connection with the Helwys family had not been favourably regarded and led to her retirement to Tuxford a few miles to the south. Beyond the name which she legally bore she makes no mention of the Helwys family in her will. It is her sons "frauncis Gabytas" and "Robert Gabytas" for whom she is concerned and beyond bequests of her "blacke frok" and "read kirtill" there is little of interest to detain us.

All the sons of William Helwys did well in the world. Edmund, after a time in London, retired to the country and obtained a lease of Broxtowe Hall. John stayed on for a while at Askham, where his eldest son was christened in 1561, as follows: "Jervies Helwes filius Joh[ann]is Helwes baptizatus fuit primo die Septembris."

This Gervase Helwys came to a tragic end, as readers of his life by Sidney Lee in the Dictionary of National Biography well know. He was sent to Cambridge in 1573, studied law at Lincoln's Inn, was installed as Lieutenant of the Tower May 6, 1613, and executed November 25, 1615. He had acquired land in Notts., and Lincoln, and was mentioned (Jervas Elwaies, Knight) as a principal owner of Saundby in the year 1612. In Saundby Church he put up a beautiful alabaster altar tomb to the memory of his father. On the occasion of my visit to Saundby I copied the inscription:

"Here lieth buried the bodye of John helwys esq<sup>r</sup> sometye lord of this mannor and mary his wife, the daughter of Robert Blagden of Thames ditton in the cou[n]tye of Surrey esq: who left behind the[m] two childe[n], Gervase and margrett  
7<sup>mo</sup> Decembris Anno dni: 1599.

pietas hoc fecit, non fastus; vt qui non vulgari amoris affectu, me vivi educarunt iisdem honore[m] quem debui supremum mortuis praestare[m].

sic mihi contigat vivere sicq<sup>e</sup> mori. G.H."

Gervase Helwys evidently treasured the memory of his parents and of all that they had done for him in his boyhood.

### Thomas Helwys, senior, of Hablesthorpe.

The third son of William Helwys of Askham was Thomas, who settled at a little place which can boast of a charming variety of spelling from Habelsrop to Applesthorpe. It is now known

as Hablesthorpe and is joined with the parish of North Leverton. It supplied a prebend in York Minster<sup>11</sup> the incumbent having to preach there in his due course. Its church of St. Peter has long since disappeared. It was probably a small building similar to those at Littleborough and Cottam; which adjoin this township. I have visited the old site and the graveyard. Here Thomas Helwys would certainly come into close touch with the family of Robinsons to which John Robinson, the pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, belonged, and he would enjoy the society of his brother-in-law and sister, Thomas and Isabel Bate, in the next parish.

There was some difficulty in tracing the will of this Thomas Elwes. Hablesthorpe being a prebend in the Minster, the wills were proved and registered in the Dean and Chapter's Peculiar Court at York. In fact here you have three adjoining parishes: Sturton, North Leverton, and Hablesthorpe, and each had to prove their wills in different courts. The will of "Thomas Elwaies of Habelsthorp in the Countie of Nott<sup>m</sup> gent." was dated November 8, 1591. We may take it that his wife's surname was Slater.

"Itm. I give that my sonne Thomas Elwes or Thomas Slater or by what other name the law will call him for that he was born out of wedlocke (although I married his mother afterwards) shall have all my landes to him and his heirs lawfullie of his bodie bygotten." He bequeathed him one hundred pounds and made the following provision:

"The supervisors of this my will shall have the profit and receive the rentes of all my Landes and Tenements for five yeares after my death and to bring up my sonne in reasonable sort at the Inns of Court and to be accountable to him at the five yeares end at their discretions."

There are bequests to his daughters: "Bridgett Elwes ['Bridgett Slater' (interlined)]" and "Barbarey Elwes" the latter of whom he made executrix. She was the favourite. "Unto my daughter Barbarey Elwes CC<sup>l</sup> more than her sister." He made his "brother John Elwes and nephew Jarvis Elwes his son" guardians of his daughters. Happily this Thomas Elwes lived to see his daughters grown up and married, for his will was not proved till March 27, 1607. Bridget married Edward Ashton and Barbara

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<sup>11</sup> The incumbent of "Apesthorpe" in the order arranged by Archbp. Grindal had to preach at the Minster on the 4th Sunday after Epiphany and on the 23rd Sunday after Trinity. There was a fine of 13s. 4d. if he failed, unless fourteen days' notice were given, and then 10s. was exacted for a supply, or, if there was no preaching, for the poor. Vid. "The Statutes of the Catholic Church of York," 1900, pp. 87-9.

married Robert Throckmorton or Throgmorton. The Christian name has not been supplied hitherto in the printed pedigrees. This linked the Helwys family to other puritan households.

The fourth son of William Elwes of Askham was Geoffrey, baptized at Askham in 1541. He went to London, became a merchant tailor, and amassed a large fortune, and became sheriff of London in 1607. He married, February 19, 1570-71, Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Robert Gabot of Shrewsbury and London, and had a large family. He made his will on April 8, 1616, added codicils on April 10 and 12, concerning benefactions to the preachers at "Paules Crosse" and to St. John's College and the University of Oxford. His will was proved on April 17.

### **The Hamerton Family.**

The question arises whether William Helwys of Askham had a second daughter besides the Isabel mentioned in his will. The "Visitations" indicate that a daughter unnamed married a Hamerton of Lincolnshire. Now the will of Thomas Bate or Bett, 1585, has this bequest: "Itm. I give to my sister Margret Elwes one old angell" and the will of Geoffrey Helwys, 1616, has the following: "I bequeath to my brother Mr. Nicholas Hamerton . . . a mourneinge Cloke." Then in the will of "Edmund Helwis als Elwis of Broxtoe," 1590, there is the clause, "I give unto my good sister Hammerton an angle" [i.e. a "gold angel"]. And in the will of Elizabeth, widow of Geoffrey Helwys, dated 1621, we have a bequest of five pounds to Nicholas Hamerton "to make him a ringe." The Hamertons were from the Horncastle district. There was some connection between Hugh Bromehead, who accompanied John Smith to Amsterdam and became a Baptist with him, and the Hamerton family. If William Helwys had a daughter Margaret this would show the link between the Helwys and Hamerton families. But the case would be more simply met if we suppose Isabel to have married Nicholas Hamerton after the early death of her husband Wm. Bate, and that the wife of either Edmund or his brother Thomas was called Margaret.

### **Edmund Helwys of Broxtowe.**

I have gone into the matter in sufficient detail to show the widespread family connections of Thomas Helwys, the anabaptist author. We must now look a little more closely at his immediate line of descent. We do not know the family name or even the Christian name of his mother. The name of his father is often wrongly given as Edward. For the remarkable religious preamble to his Will and for some account of the patriotic tract in

exposition of Revelation, Chapter xii., probably issued by him. I may refer the reader to my book on John Smith and Thomas Helwys.<sup>12</sup>

The printed pedigrees of this section of the Helwys family are meagre and uncertain. We must wait for further research among the wills, deeds, and parish registers of Notts., Lincoln, London, and Northampton before the gaps can be satisfactorily filled. Meanwhile the will of "Edmund Helwis" affords a good starting point for our investigation. This document is dated September 24, 1590. It was drawn up in the testator's own handwriting. We gather from it that the mother of Thomas Helwys was by this time dead, for Edmund Helwys bequeaths to his daughter "Annie Hellwis" such "apparel as was her mother's" as well as her mother's "wedding ringe." He also left her the "use sevrall to herselfe and her freinds and her servantes of the chamber over the dyninge parlour at Broxtoe Hall wth all the furniture therein and also a bedd rome in the chamber over the buttrie." She was to be allowed to walk or ride over "annie of the ground belonginge to Broxtoe at her pleasure," and she was to inherit her father's interest in a "close of pasture lyinge in Stanton in the countie of Darbie called portmore." The next to be mentioned by Edmund Helwys in his will was his son "Henrie Elwis," who is given in one of the pedigrees<sup>13</sup> as the eldest son and as dying without issue. I imagine he entered the church, but this is uncertain. He had received "ccl and odd" for which his father had taken his bond but this money was not to be called in. Then comes a reference to Thomas Bate:

"Itm. I give unto Thomas Bate my nephew x<sup>l</sup> to be paid when he shall accomplyshe the age of xx yeares and in the meantime to have xx<sup>s</sup> a yeare paid unto him by my executors towards the buyinge of Bokes for him if he be kept to the schole or els not, and the first paiment to beginne of the said xx<sup>s</sup> when he hath learned his grammar and is p'fect therein."

Here was an incentive to the young lad to press on in his studies. But who was this Thomas Bate? Surely none other than the son of William Bate of North Leverton, who married Isabel Helwys, and made his brother-in-law Edmund one of the supervisors of his will. The "visitations" give a daughter

12 John Smith the Sebaptist, Thomas Helwys, &c., chapter vii. James Clarke & Co., London.

13 Vincent's Collections for Notts., &c., in the College of Arms, quoted in "Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica, London, 1866," vol. i., p. 70. A "Henry Helwis" entered Gray's Inn in the year 1600. See Harl MS., 1912, fo. 39. Was not this the fifth son of Geoffrey Helwys, of London, who was named Henry?

"Margaret" to Edmund Helwys, and represent her as marrying a William "Batty" or "Batte," but I think they must be mistaken. They further assign to him a daughter Agnes, married to one Kniveton, of whom also this will makes no mention. The name is unusual. We at once think of the George Kniveton, apothecary of Newgate Market, who was chosen as lay-elder in the Separatist Church of Francis Johnson in 1592. Any connection? Edmund gives the residue of his estate to "Thomas Helwis," whom he makes sole executor "if he shall survive me if not then I give all the same unto my daughter Anne Helwis making her my sole executrix." Edmund Helwys nominated "Thomas Stanhope Knyghte," and "Mr Edward Stanhope of nottingham" as supervisors of his will together with "my brother John Helwis and my brother Jeffraie unto eyther of whom I give an old Angle hoping that the smallnes of my gifte shall not lessen their good wills."

In the next month, after preparing his will, Edmund Helwys died. He was buried on October 24, 1590. He had left precise instructions for his burial as follows:

"My bodie I wold have buried in the church of Bilburrowe eyther in the chancell or before the pue dore and a grave stone laid thereupon with my firste coate of armes sett theruppon in brasse."

There passed to his last rest in the next year one who probably influenced Thomas Helwys in his youth. I refer to John Hall, the incumbent of Bilborough. The entry of burial in the register describes him as "pastor hujus ecclesiae." A memorial was set up to Edmund Helwys; this was broken up in 1833, and the inscription from it was fixed on the chancel wall. The mason was given some commemorative Latin verses to inscribe. But not knowing the language he ran the lines together regardless of the metre, and filled up his space as best he could, the last four words being cramped in at the bottom in a smaller letter than the rest. The stone is cracked and difficult to decipher. The inscription has been read as follows, extending the contractions:

Edmunde exiguo residens helvise sepulchro  
 Extremum doceas corporis omnis iter,  
 Nata simul dilecta tibi vi mortis iniquae  
 Rapta sub hoc tumulo cum genitore jacet.  
 Scilicet hic morti[s] mos est mortisque triumphus  
 Grandævus teneris tollere saepe simul,  
 Aetas flos serus non rumpunt vincula mortis  
 Nata paterque cadunt, tempore nata prior.

A shield of arms<sup>14</sup> surmounts the inscription.

Thomas Helwys was now left in a responsible position. His uncles would see that his education was satisfactorily completed, and he was entered as a student at Gray's Inn on January 29, in 1592-3.<sup>15</sup> Returning to Broxtowe he soon found a wife in the person of Joan Ashmore, possibly of the Ashmore family, seated at Little Eaton, a few miles over the country boundary in Derbyshire. The rector of Bilborough cum Broxtowe was now Thomas Lowe, a man of puritan leanings. He probably conducted the ceremony which took place on December 3, 1595. At the end of the first register book of Bilborough is "a true terrier," setting out the bounds of the rectorial lands of Broxtowe in the year 1595, and signed by Thomas Helwys himself and the rector with a few other inhabitants.

Thomas Helwys and his wife now settled down to domestic duties at Broxtowe. Next autumn a son was born to them. The entry in the register runs:

Johannes filius Thomas Helwys }  
baptizatus fuit 5 die Septembris } 1596.<sup>16</sup>

Other children were born to them as the years passed on.

Then came the stirring period in the life of Helwys and his wife when they were drawn into the religious movement which issued in a Separation from the Church of England, and flight for refuge from persecution at home to the hospitable shores of Holland. I have given the details of this period with some fulness elsewhere, and these have been supplemented by Mr. Champlin Burrage in his recent work on the *Early English Dissenters*, so there is no need to go over the ground again. We should like to know more of the doings and sayings of Thomas Helwys after his return to London and settlement at Spitalfields. At present we have to part from him and his brave wife with a glimpse given in the will of his uncle Geoffrey, dated April 8, 1616.

"Itm. I give to Johane Elwes widdowe lat wīfe of Thomas Elwes deceased tenne poundes."<sup>17</sup>

The death of Thomas Helwys, then, was recent, and we shall

14 The arms of the Helwys family are described as follows: "Or; a Fess azure, debruised by a Bend gules." The motto is "A Deo non fortuna." The crest consists of "Five arrows, one in pale and four in saltire, points in base or, armed and flighted argent, entwined by a serpent proper." I think it was Edmund Helwys who secured the setting out of the "arms" for the family. It was a fashion of the time. The application of John Shakspeare, of Stratford, for a grant of arms in 1596, possibly at the suggestion of his famous son, is a case in point.

15 Foster's Gray's Inn Register, 1889, p. 81.

16 By an unfortunate misprint this date is given as 1595 in my book on Smith and Helwys, p. 115. I cited the case to show that Thomas Helwys had no objection at first to baptism or christening "in the ordinary way"; a keen-eyed reviewer pointed out that 1596 would be quite early enough for this event "in the ordinary way." Will friends please correct this in their copies?

17 "Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica."

not be far wrong in assigning it to the year 1615. Geoffrey Helwys made bequests of £15 for the good of the poor prisoners in each of "the two Compters" and £10 apiece for the like purpose to Bridewell and for relieving "the poore prisoners of Ludgate." I wonder whether he was moved to this generous and Christian action by any imprisonment of his nephew and John Murton. We must note one more item in this will:

"I bequeath a mourneinge Cloke to my nephew Thomas Elwes."

Who was this? This was the cousin of our Thomas Helwys. This was the son of Thomas Helwys of Leverton and Hables-thorpe, now grown to manhood. He too had entered Gray's Inn as a young man in accordance with the wish that his father had expressed for him in his will.<sup>18</sup> This identity of name and educational career should make the researcher doubly careful in tracing the family connection. Rare as the name Helwis was, I actually came across a contemporary Joan Helwis in one of the more obscure branches of the family in Nottinghamshire. On November 20, 1612, administration of the goods of "Richard Elwes als Elvis lately of Dunham was granted to Joanne Elwes als Elvis," widow, relict of the said Richard.<sup>19</sup> This shows how easily confusion might arise. But the main lines of the family are now clearly marked out. It now remains for some researcher, with more time and means at his disposal than an ordinary pastor can afford, to complete the picture by tracing the wills of Thomas and Joan Helwys, and thus giving us authentic news of their dwelling place and family and time of their decease.

We may conclude with an extract from the will of Elizabeth, widow of Geoffrey Helwys of London (which was drawn up in 1625 and proved November 26, 1625), showing that the memory of the old home in Nottinghamshire had been kept green in the household of the prosperous London merchant:

"Itm. I give and bequeath for and towards a perpetuall releife of some poore schollers or other poore inhabitants for the time beinge of the parrish of Astham [Askham] in the county of Nottingham where my late husband was borne the some of five hundred pounds of lawfull money of England."

This was to be laid out in lands or tenements "wth the advise and consent of some of the cheife of the inhabitants of the said parrish" and put in trust in "the names of some

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Elwes, of Leverton, Notts., late of Staple Inn, Gent., admitted to Gray's Inn, 23 Nov., 1597. Foster's Register, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> Act Book of Southwell Peculiar in Notts. Probate Registry *sub dato*.

feoffees" the profits to be "employed and bestowed for a perpetuall maintenance or releife of some poore schollers or other poore inhabitants of the said parrish." The rents now go to support the "Hospital"<sup>20</sup> or "Spital" of Askham which now shelters three poor widows of the parish; the former building, which stood at the side of the hilly village street, accommodated six. The religious movement into which Thomas Helwys threw himself so whole-heartedly and in which he was gallantly supported by his wife did not make a very great impression upon the life of the county of Notts.; but I think it left more traces behind than Joseph Hunter, who identified Scrooby as the cradle of the Pilgrim Fathers' Church, was inclined to allow. The General Baptist Churches at Gamston and Retford were founded early enough to enshrine some memories of the work of Helwys, Smith, and Robinson. Curiously enough the former of those two churches is linked on with the story of the New Connexion of General Baptists through the baptism there of Dan Taylor by its pastor. Both of them were within easy reach of the former seat of the Helwys family at Askham. It is likely that they embodied some part of the dissenting interest of the district which, as we know, had definite expression in 1669 in conventicles or private meetings for worship in the locality. The church at Gamston<sup>21</sup> may be the successor of the conventicle at Headoncum-Upton. The conventiclors of "Schrooby" [Scrooby], Ordsall, South Leverton, "Clareborowe" [Clarborough], and Everton would find Retford a convenient centre when toleration was secured in 1689. The movement started by Smith, Helwys, Robinson, and Richard Clifton in all likelihood left some lingering traces and probably influenced both the Independent and the Baptist churches of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire in the next generation.

Broxtowe passed out of the hands of Thomas Helwys before the summer of 1610. The lease either lapsed or was granted by Helwys for a money consideration to others to supply his needs in Holland and further the printing of his books. The Calendar of State Papers notes that a lease of the manors of Broxtowe in Notts. and Mapperley in Derbyshire was granted on June 11, 1610, to Andrew Wilson and Lancaster Gibbon. Broxtowe Hall has been altered in many points but some of the original work remains. It should ever be a place of interest to those who are stirred by the story of the struggle for religious liberty in England, and especially to those of the Baptist household of faith.

Plymouth, April 2, 1912.

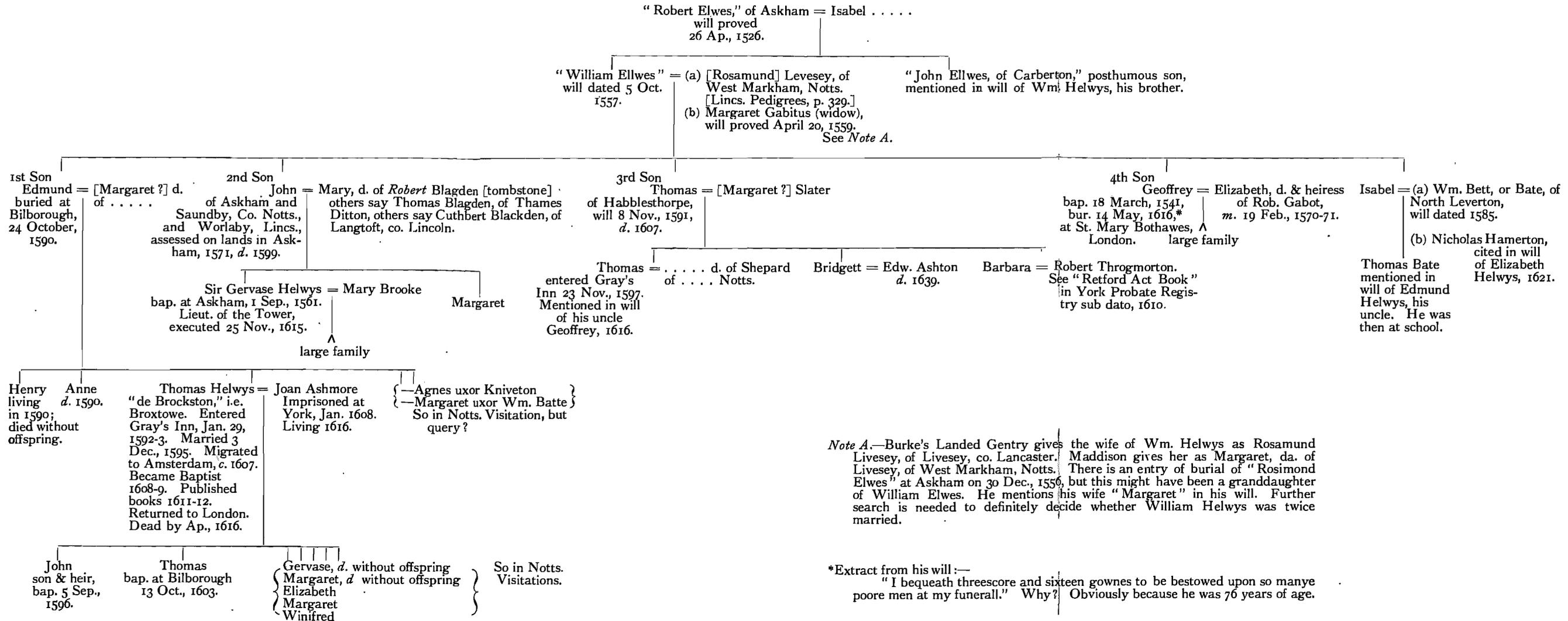
WALTER H. BURGESS.

<sup>20</sup> There was a bequest in the will of Robert Helwys, 1525, of a sum for "the beldyng of Askham Spital"; so I read it, but I should like my reading confirmed. It may refer to the Askham Steeple.

*CORRECTION.*

Mr. S. S. Pursglove, of Bilborough, points out that the date when the Helwys altar tomb in Bilborough Church was broken up was 1888. The date 1833 is an error derived from a mistake in a paper on Bilborough published by the Thoroton Society.  
—W.H.B.

# HELWYS, OF ASKHAM AND BROXTOWE.



Note A.—Burke's Landed Gentry gives the wife of Wm. Helwys as Rosamund Livesey, of Livesey, co. Lancaster. Maddison gives her as Margaret, da. of Livesey, of West Markham, Notts. There is an entry of burial of "Rosimond Elwes" at Askham on 30 Dec., 1556, but this might have been a granddaughter of William Elwes. He mentions his wife "Margaret" in his will. Further search is needed to definitely decide whether William Helwys was twice married.

\*Extract from his will:—  
"I bequeath threescore and sixteen gownes to be bestowed upon so manye poore men at my funerall." Why? Obviously because he was 76 years of age.