

# ***Just which Richard Parratt married Elizabeth Godfrey?***

*by Margaret Lewis (1177) in association with Wayne Parrott (775) and Harald Reksten (522)*

In researching my family tree I came across a Richard Parratt or Perret who married Elizabeth Godfrey in Potton, Bedfordshire, on 13 July 1619. Next, came the task of sorting out just who were Richard's parents? Looking through previous work done on the subject, including the March 2010 P\*rr\*tt Society magazine, two possibilities seemed to present themselves – firstly that he was the son of John Perret, a maltster of Potton, who died in 1602, or, the less popular view, that he was the son of Mr. Thomas Parratt of Shillington, who died in 1613. So, with the help of Harald Reksten and Wayne Parrott, I decided to go back to first principals and see what I could find out about both possibilities.

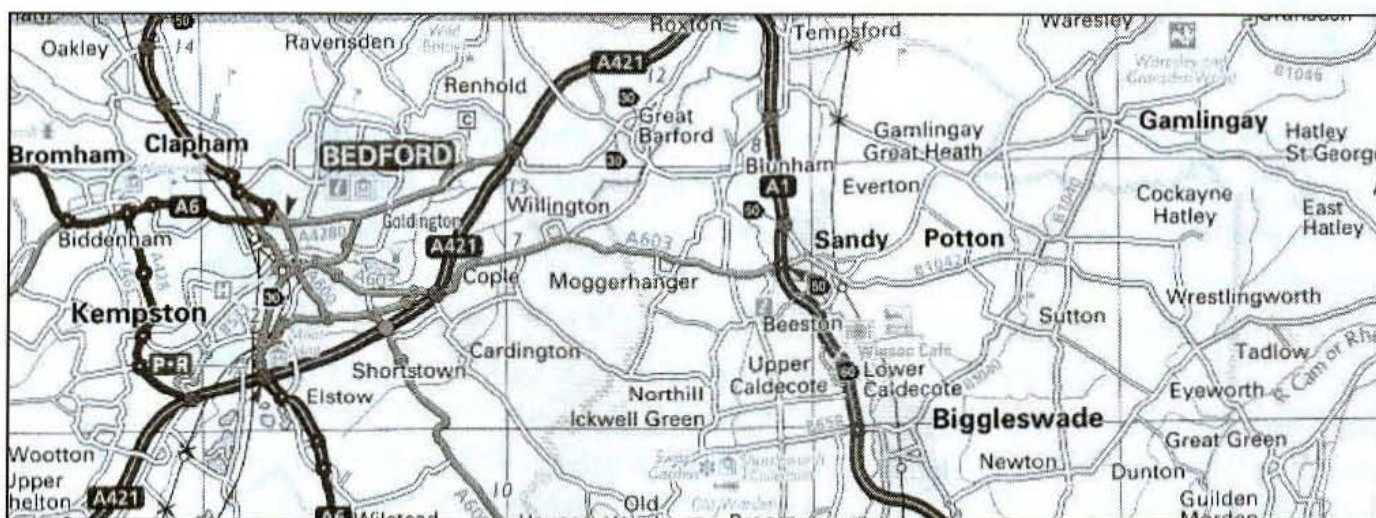
The Potton parish registers start in 1602 and so the first P\*rr\*tt entry is for the burial of John Perret in 1602. John left a will in which he mentions his wife Margaret, his son Richard, younger son Thomas and daughter Katherine Perrett, all the children being aged less than 16 years. The parish register next shows that later that same year Margaret Perret (presumably John's widow) married Thomas Britton. This is followed by a Richard Parret who christened three children in Potton between 1606 and 1610. He is followed by a Thomas Perrett / Perratt who commenced christening children in 1613. These two men would appear to be the sons of the original John Perrett.

The next event in the registers is the marriage of Richard Parratt and Elizabeth Godfrey in 1619. Children they christened in Potton were Mary (1620), Ann (1622/3), Thomas (1623/4), Richard 1624/5, John (1626), Abraham (1627), John (1630) and Elizabeth (1631/2). For most of the christenings Richard was listed as Mr Richard Parratt. Mr. Richard's wife Elizabeth was buried in Potton on 17 July 1632. It appears that the Richard who married Elizabeth died around 1656 as the will of Richard Parrat the elder, Gentlemen of Potton, was proved on 2 May 1656 at the PCC (Prerogative Court of Canterbury).

Fortunately the will had already been transcribed by Harald Reksten with the assistance of Mary Wooldridge of the Bedfordshire Family History Society. In the will dated 10 March 1653 Richard requests that he be buried near the grave of the deceased wife in the little chanel of Potton church. His children listed are an eldest son Henry; other sons Richard, Abraham and Thomas; and married daughters

Anne West of Epping, Essex and Elizabeth, wife of William Waller. Comparing these children with the Potton parish register provides a good match, except that Mary is not mentioned in the will and Henry is not in the parish register.

The Shillington Parish register, provided a good match for the missing information as it shows that in July 1621 a Mary, daughter of Mr Richard Paratt was buried in Shillington and in the following February (1621/2) a Henry Paratt was baptised, the son of Mr Richard Paratt. There was no marriage for Richard in Shillington, nor any further christenings or burials. The two John's presumably died before Richard signed his will. The first died in infancy in 1626 and was buried in Potton, while the second is included in a list of Draper's Apprentices in an article in the P\*rr\*tt Society magazine of 1998 as follows – "15 Oct 1647. John Parrett, son of Richard, gentleman, of Potton, Bedfordshire." (continued overleaf)



### *WHERE IS POTTON?*

Potton lies a few miles east of Bedford, Bedfordshire, an area which was and is home to a number of P\*RR\*TT families.

In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* described Potton like this:

**POTTON**, a small town, a parish, and a sub-district, in Biggleswade district, Beds. The town stands in a picturesque tract, near the Bedford and Cambridge railway, 1 mile S of the boundary with Cambridgeshire, and 4 N E of Biggleswade; was extensively destroyed by fire in 1783; carries on straw-plaiting; and has a post-office under St. Neots, a railway station, several inns, a market house with clock turret, a church, three dissenting chapels, an endowed school with £30 a year, a national school, and charities £130.

Potton is on the eastern edge of Bedfordshire and a little over 13 miles from Shillington, so could they be the same person? The Richard of Shillington was christened on 15 March 1577/8, the son of Thomas. This Thomas Paratt, gentleman, of Shillington, signed his will on 30 May 1613, just about 4 months before his death. He had 8 children who reached adulthood and in his will he names all of his sons together with their children. Richard is the only son who does not have any children of his own listed, suggesting that he may not have been married in 1613.

Thomas Paratt held property in a numbers of areas – Shillington & Luton in Bedfordshire and Brington and Old Weston in Huntingdonshire. Richard inherited property in Old Weston, and Potton is not far from the most likely track that Richard would have travelled on between Shillington and Old Weston. In 1613 one of Richard's older brothers, Robert, was living in Old Weston, and he is mentioned in the Old Weston parish register until 1619.

So, at this point I was leaning towards the Shillington Richard, being the most likely man, but there was no definite proof. This proof was unexpectedly supplied by a reply from a query to the Potton Historical Society, regarding the location of properties in Potton held by Richard Parratt's father-in-law, Henry Godfrey. One of their members had summarised all of the wills relating to Potton around this time, and they kindly sent me a copy of this document. In it was the will of one Mary Smith, widow, who signed her will on 4 January 1630. In the will she mentions her brothers Robert, John and Richard Parat and Elizabeth, the wife of Richard. Referring back to Thomas Paratt's will showed that Thomas, did have sons with these names, and a son-in-law, Thomas Smith.

The Shillington parish register provided the marriage of Mary Parrat and Thomas Smith on 4 May 1590.

The final collaborating evidence that the Richard Parratt who married Elizabeth Godfrey, had come from outside Potton was provided by the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives on-line catalogue. Reference ABCP35-38 relates to a legal case of George Sheires or Sheeres, vicar, versus Wendy Oxenford, which took place in 1639. The defendant had not paid an Easter offering, tithe of eggs, or burial dues. Included amongst the witnesses in the case was Richard Purratt of Potton, gent., 60, who had lived there [in Potton] for 12 years and paid 6s.8d. when his wife was buried.

So, while this all seems to have solved the question of which Richard married Elizabeth Godfrey, I guess it raises the question of "What happened to the other Richard?" – the son of John. Does anyone know?