

FAMILY HISTORY FAQ

The Bewick Society often receives requests for information about the Bewick family, past and present. We have prepared this Frequently Asked Questions sheet to guide would-be researchers.

Am I descended from Thomas Bewick?

Sadly, no.

Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) the engraver and his wife Isabella Elliot (1752-1826) had four children but all four died unmarried and childless. **So Thomas Bewick has no direct descendants today.**

Am I descended from Thomas Bewick's father or grandfather?

Possibly.

Is there a Bewick family tree?

Yes, in part. http://www.bewicksociety.org/Research%20PDFs/bewick_family_tree.pdf

The late Dr David Gardner-Medwin wrote three papers for the Cherryburn Times outlining his research into Bewick's Ancestry. They are available on the Bewick Society website:

Part 1. His Father, John Bewick, and the Arthurs of Kirkheaton <https://bit.ly/35pmt0L>

Part 2 His Grandfather, Thomas Bewick <https://bit.ly/2YkKFQz>

Part 3 His Mother's Family <https://bit.ly/2SirO4E>

My family name is Bewick and I've been told I'm related to the Engraver, but I can't find my line of descent. Can you help?

Possibly. Keep reading.

Am I related to Thomas Bewick's mother, Jane Wilson?

Answered in section 4 below.

Am I related to Thomas Bewick's wife (Isabella Elliot) or her relatives the Ward family?

See section 5 below.

Do you have any further information about the Bewick family not mentioned below?

Sadly no.

A large box of un-catalogued research papers and correspondence by Nora Hancock (see section 1 below) is deposited at Cherryburn and could be made available to researchers on application to the National Trust, but neither the Trust nor the Bewick Society can undertake searches of this collection.



Sources of Information

1. Thomas Bewick had five sisters and three brothers. Only his sister **Agnes Harrison** (1756-1777) and his brother **William** (1762-1786) had surviving children. The Bewick Society has no information about Agnes Harrison's descendants. A pedigree of Thomas and his children, and of **William Bewick's** many descendants, created by Nora Hancock, is available from the National Trust, Cherryburn, and is published in *Cherryburn Times* Volume 5, number 2 (Easter 2007)pp.4-5. It can be viewed online at http://www.bewicksociety.org/Research%20PDFs/bewick_family_tree.pdf

Thomas Bewick also had four paternal aunts who reached adulthood and who are shown on the same pedigree. We have no additional information about their descendants.

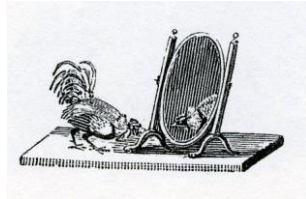
2. A second Bewick family, related to Thomas only by marriage, is the cause of much confusion. Persons with the surname Bewick who believe themselves to be related to the engraver, but who are unable to find their line of descent from **William Bewick** on the pedigree mentioned above should consider this family as the possible solution to their difficulty.

Thomas Bewick had a first cousin, **Sarah Dicker**, (the daughter of his mother's sister **Hannah Wilson** who married Abraham Dicker). Sarah married **Fenwick Bewick** at Gateshead on 13 April 1786. Fenwick was not otherwise related to Thomas Bewick. Fenwick and Sarah Bewick had six or seven children named **John William** (baptized 1796), **Ann** (1788), **Fenwick** (1790), **Abraham** (1792), **Elizabeth** (1797), **Thomas** (1795) and perhaps **Sarah** (1799). **John William** (1786-1855) became the gamekeeper and 'steward' of Ministeracres estate in Northumberland. **John William Bewick** had five children; one son **Thomas John** (1821-96) was a noted mining engineer and another, **John William** (1824-86), was a Roman Catholic priest who became the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.

See further <https://bit.ly/2YkKFQz> and <https://bit.ly/2SirO4E>



3. The family history of the engraver's paternal grandmother **Agnes Arthur** and her Atkinson ancestors; and the very limited known information about Thomas Bewick's grandfather, also **Thomas Bewick (1685-1742)**, and his forebears, are to be found in 'Thomas Bewick's Ancestry', Part 1. His Father, John Bewick, and the Arthurs of Kirkheaton <https://bit.ly/35pmt0L> and Part 2 His Grandfather, Thomas Bewick <https://bit.ly/2YkKFQz>



4. The available family history of Thomas Bewick's mother **Jane Wilson** (1727-1785) of Ainstable in Cumbria is to be found in 'Thomas Bewick's Ancestry', Part 3 His Mother's Family <https://bit.ly/2SirO4E>



5. For people who may be related to Thomas Bewick's wife Isabella Elliot, the following information may be helpful.

Isabella Elliot (1752-1826) was the daughter of **Robert Elliot senior**, a farmer at Woodgate, near Bill Quay in the parish of Heworth, County Durham, and his wife Jane née Forster, who were married at Heworth on 26 June 1742.

Isabella had three brothers, all baptised at Heworth: Edward (1743), Thomas (1745), and Robert (1757). Thomas in turn had five children in 1784-1791 (William, Alice, Jane, Barbara and Thomas) all baptised at Heworth.

Thomas Bewick (in his *Memoir*) relates that Robert Elliot senior and the family moved from Woodgate to Ovingham - where Robert died in 1777 - and Isabella spent part of her childhood in Ovingham where she was a near contemporary of her future husband. Her younger brother **Robert Elliot** also farmed at Ovingham. Robert junior married **Agnes Noble** at Heworth on 14 Dec 1782 and they had six children, all baptised at Heworth (presumably because of family tradition since the family by that time was living and farming at Ovingham): Thomas (1783), Dorothy (1785), Ann (1787), Henry (1789), Dorothy (1791) and Hannah (1795). Their third child, Ann Elliot (born 21

January 1787, bapt. 26 Feb.), married **Thomas Ward** of Ryton on 20 January 1816 at Ryton, County Durham.

Thomas Ward had been baptised, the son of Thomas Ward senior, at Ryton on 13 November 1774. Thomas senior and junior both farmed at Castle Hill – a farm on the south side of the Tyne, near Wylam but in the parish of Ryton. **Robert Ward**, the third of four children of Thomas and Ann (born in 1821 and baptised at Ryton on 2 August 1821; died 1883), was a printer who was in business in Newcastle 1845-1883, and founded the Ward firm (C. J. Hunt (1975). *The Book Trade in Northumberland and Durham to 1860*. Newcastle: Thorne's Bookshop).

Robert Ward was thus the great nephew of Thomas Bewick's wife. He collaborated with Bewick's daughter Jane in publishing Bewick's *Memoir* in 1862.

Isabella Bewick, the last surviving child of Thomas and Isabella Bewick, died unmarried in 1883. Robert Ward (who died in the same year) was the residual legatee of Isabella junior's will. The Ward family at that point acquired the wood blocks of the illustrations of all of Thomas Bewick's most important works. They remained in the family until 1942 when Dame Irene Ward M.P. sent them for auction and they were bought by a New York bookseller and later dispersed to innumerable buyers in the United States. Only a few have filtered back to this country since then – there are modest collections at Cherryburn, the Newcastle City Library and in the hands of various private collectors.

Further Reading

Bain, Iain, editor (1975). *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by himself*. London: Oxford University Press. (Also issued in paperback in 1979.)

Uglow, Jenny (2006). *Nature's Engraver: a Life of Thomas Bewick*. London: Faber and Faber. (Also issued in paperback in 2007.)

This sheet was prepared for the Bewick Society in Spring 2013 and updated with refreshed links April 2020. Correction made September 2021.

See <http://www.bewicksociety.org>

