

The Parentage of William Roberts of Deerhurst, died 1705

William Roberts and his wife Elizabeth lived in the Parish of Deerhurst where they raised a family, born between 1649 and 1675. The names of William Roberts' parents are not recorded but sufficient evidence survives to indicate who they were.

Estimating William's Date of Birth

The births of the children of William and Elizabeth are recorded in volume 2 of the Parish Registers of Deerhurst following the baptisms of 1670.

1649	Elizabeth Roberts, born 4th feb 1649
1653	John Roberts, born 20th November 1653
1654	Joan Roberts, born 10th October 1654
1655	Robertas Roberts, born 1st 20th June 1655
1657	William Roberts, born 1st March 1657
1659	Mary Roberts, born 1st March 1659
1664	Thomas Roberts, born 1st December 1664
1668	Richard Roberts, born 1st November 1668
1670	Eliza and John, names of the children of William & Elizabeth Roberts his wife
1671	William Roberts, the son of William & Elizabeth Roberts

The first child, Elizabeth, was born on 4 February 1649/50. Assuming that there were no earlier children who had died prior to the writing of the list and whose burial is not recorded in the Deerhurst Registers, then it is probable that William and Elizabeth were married about nine months prior to the birth, in about April 1649. Unfortunately no marriages are recorded in either the Deerhurst Registers or in the Bishops Transcripts between 1635 and 1653.

As the average age at marriage in the 17th century was 25¹ it is likely that William was born in about 1624. William died in 1705 at the probable age of 80 so it is unlikely he was born much earlier.

William's Place of Birth

William Roberts lived all his adult life at Deerhurst, but there is no record of his baptism there.

The births of several boys named William Roberts can be found in neighbouring parishes:

- Chaceley, Worcestershire, 1.5 miles north east of Deerhurst
9 Sep 1621 William, son of Richard Roberts, was baptised,
- The Leigh, Gloucestershire, 2 miles south east
27 Nov 1618 William son of William Roberts, was baptised,

¹ "Marriage in Seventeenth-Century England: The Woman's Story" by Alice Brabcová, *Theory and Practice in English Studies*, Volume 2, Bron 2004, page 21

- Bredon, Worcestershire, 5.3 miles north east
30 Nov 1615 William, son of Will. Robertes, was baptised
5 Sep 1619 William, son of Will. & Elisabeth Roberts, was baptised
23 Jul 1624 Will., son of William Roberts, was baptised
11 Oct 1629 William, son of William Roberts, was baptised, and
- Woolstone, 5.6 miles west
4 May 1629 William, son of Richard Roberts

Some researchers have identified this last William as William Roberts of Deerhurst. However, as the Original Registers of Woolstone were destroyed in a Rectory fire in 1889 and the Bishops Transcripts that survive are incomplete,² it is impossible to know the fate of William Roberts of Woolstone.

Examination of Roberts wills from Woolstone, those of Richard Roberts, dated 18 May 1667³ and of John, dated 28 September 1650⁴, show that both men had sons named William living when their wills were written, both in the same generation as William of Deerhurst. The first of these is probably the William baptised at Woolstone in 1629. The other William is another possible birth to take into account:

- Woolstone, 5.6 miles west
1620s William, son of John Roberts

There is no evidence to show that any of these Williams were connected with Deerhurst.

However, before looking beyond Deerhurst for William's birth, the records of Deerhurst itself need to be thoroughly checked. There were few Baptisms recorded at Deerhurst for the years 1624, 1625, 1626 and 1627 and no Bishops Transcripts survive for those years. What entries do exist in the Register for these years are entered in a jumbled order.

**Number of Baptisms at Deerhurst
1620-1629**

Year	Register	Bishops Transcript
1620	13	15
1621	19	Lost
1622	16	18
1623	21	Lost
1624	1	Lost
1625	4	Lost
1626	4	Lost
1627	3	Lost
1628	0	Lost
1629	13	16

Given the small number of baptisms recorded for the period 1624 to 1628 it must be assumed that there were children born and baptised in these years but not entered in the register. It is reasonable to suggest that the baptism of William Roberts occurred in one of the missing years and that therefore William was born at Deerhurst.

² Surviving Bishops Transcripts for Woolstone in the 17th century are 1601, 1612, 1618, 1620, 1621, 1623, 1624, 1627, 1629, 1637, 1638, 1660, 1662, 1664, 1665, 1667, 1670, 1672, 1675-1683, 1685-1700.

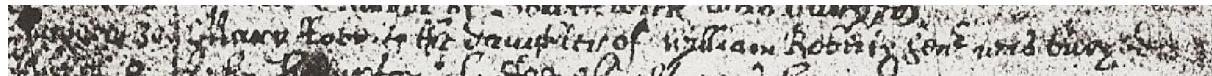
³ Gloucestershire Archives, Will Reference 1667/113

⁴ Probate granted at London, Will reference PROB 11/216/649

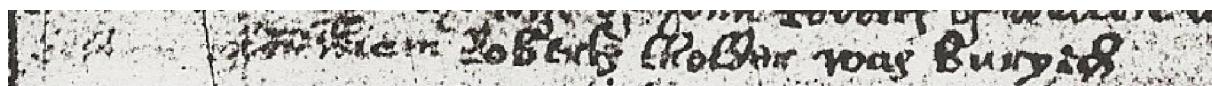
Identifying William's Father

As it was a custom in England to name the eldest son after the father's father, and as William's eldest son was named William, it is likely, but not certain, that his father was also named William.

For part of the period in which William and Elizabeth were having children there was another William Roberts living at Deerhurst. On 30 January 1659/60 Mary Roberts the daughter of William Roberts Sen^r was buried



and on 29 September 1661 William Roberts the elder was buried.



In nearly 90% of cases in the period 1653 to 1675 a man called "senior" or "the elder" in the Deerhurst Registers had a son of the same name.⁵ Therefore it is highly probable that William Roberts Senior had a son named William who was living in 1660 and 1661. William Roberts who died in 1705 is the only other contemporary William in these years.

In 1618 William Roberts married Margery Abbots at Deerhurst. They had children baptised in July 1619, January 1620/21, October 1622 and August 1631. As these dates span the missing period 1624 to 1628 it is highly likely that they had children born in this period. The name of one of these children is known from her later burial, Mary, the other is probably William.

Conclusion

It can be deduced from the Deerhurst records that William Roberts and Margery Abbots were the parents of William Roberts who was born at Deerhurst in about 1624 or died there in June 1705.

William Good
March 2022

⁵ Of ten men named Senior or the elder in the Registers of Deerhurst in the period 1653 to 1675 seven had sons of the same name, two may have had, but due to the missing baptisms in the 1620s it is impossible to be sure, and one appears not to have had.