

## RESEARCHING THE HAYES FAMILY

**Note from Keith Hayes**

**March 29, 2010**

Here are some recent discoveries I have made on the Hayes family tree.

I was searching for background on my ancestor Ellis Hayes, known to have been born about 1729. By sheer luck I was idly surfing the net following one link to another when I chanced upon the U.K.'s National Archives website. I thought the site would only contain information on famous, notable or wealthy figures from British history, not on ordinary people. I was wrong. Local authorities around the country are constantly sending indexes of material to the National Archives.

Anyway, I typed in 'Ellis Heyes,' as the surname used to be spelt, not expecting anything to come up. Intriguingly, a reference to an apprenticeship document held at our town hall here in Leigh flashed up, so I made an appointment to see it just before Christmas. It was A3 size and dated March 1st 1741 between 'Ellis Heyes, son of James Heyes, a poor child of Pennington of the one part and James Lowe of Lowton . . . chapman of the other part'. The apprenticeship was to last 7 1/2 years or until Ellis reached 21 years of age, whichever came first.

The furthest ancestor back I had traced was Ellis Heyes born about 1729, who married Martha Astley in 1750. Could this young apprentice be the same Ellis? The document certainly placed him in Lowton from age 13 to age 21. I looked in the Leigh Parish church registers and found the following baptism:

*Sep 2nd 1728 Ellis son of James Heys, shoemaker and Catherine his wife of Pennington.*

The apprenticeship document was dated one day short of 13 1/2 years after Ellis' baptism. Was it co-incidence his service was to last 7 1/2 years or until he was 21? Also, we know the Ellis who married Martha had a daughter Catherine who died young. I looked up a baptism for her in Leigh and found this:-

*Oct 2nd 1754 Catherine daughter of Ellis Heyes of Bedford (part of Leigh).*

The poor girl must have been 2 years old when she died. I also found another entry:-

*Feb 8th 1752 James son of Ellis Heyes of Bedford.*

It looks like he named his first 2 children after his parents.

This new information convinces me that it relates to our Ellis. The picture seems to be of a youth who moves to nearby Lowton to serve a 7 1/2 apprenticeship as a husbandman (farm worker who cares for animals), meets a girl from nearby Golborne, and gets married at St Luke's church in Lowton after he turns 21. He moves back to Leigh where he has 2 children, then moves back to Lowton where in quick succession his wife and daughter die in 1756, he remarries, has a son John in 1759, dies himself in 1760, and his son Ellis is born and dies in 1761.

What bothered me, though, was why did he enter an apprenticeship with a stranger when his own father James had a trade, i.e., shoemaker? Why was he described as a poor boy of Pennington?

Again I looked in the Leigh Parish registers and was stunned with what I came across. His mother Catherine was buried on, Nov 25th 1741, and within 6 weeks so was his father James, on Jan 2nd 1741. Hence 2 months later, on Mar 1<sup>st</sup>, Ellis is described as a poor boy. Little wonder. I must point out that the dates are correct. Until 1751 Britain used the old Julian calendar where the new year started on Mar 25th and finished on Mar 24th. So in the case of Ellis, his apprenticeship began at the latter end of 1741 just before 1742 began.

Another interesting point is that young Ellis actually signed his document himself. He didn't just put a cross or other mark. His son John 1759, grandson Ellis 1784, and great-grandsons Samuel 1821 and Peers 1828 all signed the wedding registers with a cross. It would be interesting to know who taught him to write because his signature looks quite smoothly written.

Once I had found James the father of Ellis Heyes 1728, I looked for any siblings to Ellis and found baptisms at Leigh: -

*May 8th 1732 Mary daughter of James Heyes of Pennington*

*Aug 17th 1735 James son of James Heyes of Pennington.*

There was also a funeral on June 18th 1726 for Alice daughter of James Heyes, a shoemaker of Pennington, but I couldn't find a baptism for her. Sometimes a baby might die before it could be baptized, I reasoned.

I then had another stroke of luck. There is a website [WWW.LAN-OPC.ORG.UK](http://WWW.LAN-OPC.ORG.UK) that is currently entering parish records from Lancashire. I typed in 'James Heyes' and it came up with some unexpected results. I found the following baptisms at Prescott Parish Church, which is about 15 miles due west of Leigh: -

*June 3rd 1723 Alice daughter of James Heyes, shoemaker, & Catherine his wife of Prescott*

*June 27th 1725 Ellis son of James Heyes, shoemaker, & Catherine his wife of Prescott.*

This earlier Ellis died and was subsequently buried on Jul 4th 1726 at Prescott. I wondered if this James Heyes & family might be my James Heyes from Leigh. The evidence is circumstantial but I'm pretty convinced they are one and the same when you consider;-

*1) In both towns James Heyes is a shoemaker married to Catherine.*

*2) He has a daughter Alice linking them to both places through her baptism in Prescott and funeral in Leigh.*

*3) That classic Hayes hallmark - another couple of boys named Ellis, one in each place for good measure!*

Next, I found further children of James baptized at Prescott:-

*Mar 27th 1717 Margaret daughter of James Heyes of Prescott, who was buried 3 days later on Mar 30th. at Prescott*

*Nov 12th 1718 John son of James Heyes of Prescott*

*Feb 16th 1720 Margaret daughter of James Heyes of Prescott.*

I now needed to find where and when James was born. Looking back in the Leigh registers I found this-

*Jun 19th 1692 James son of Ellis Hey of Pennington (who else?!)*

However, what had led James to leave Leigh and end up in Prescott? Maybe his wife Catherine came from there? Unfortunately I don't know because I have been unable to find a marriage record for them so far. His trade as a shoemaker could provide a clue as Liverpool and the outlying areas were a centre for shoemaking in those days. Maybe that attracted him there. What does seem certain is that his father Ellis died when James was about 13 years old. At

Leigh Parish Church on Jun 10th 1705, Ellis Hey of Pennington was buried. It was prophetic of what was to come for James himself and his son Ellis.

Up till now I haven't found a marriage for James' parents. At this point I can only speculate that his mother was called Margaret, partly because he made a point of naming his firstborn daughter Margaret and then when she died in infancy naming the next one Margaret too. There is also a burial at Leigh on Jan 11th 1708 of Margaret Heys of Pennington, which would have happened when James was only 15. Maybe he too was then placed in an apprenticeship for the customary 7 year period. Who knows? I have managed to find siblings of James:-

*Jun 25th 1682 William son of Ellis Hey of Pennington, who was buried on Sep 2nd 1682 at Leigh*

*Nov 25th 1683 Thomas son of Ellis Hey of Pennington, who was buried Oct 15th 1686 at Leigh*

*Oct 26th 1686 William son of Ellis Hey of Pennington*

*Jan 18th 1689 Ellis son of Ellis Hey of Pennington, who was buried Oct 6th 1690 at Leigh*

*Sep 20th 1696 Ellen daughter of Ellis Hey of Pennington*

*Jan 14th 1699 Mary daughter of Ellis Hey of Pennington.*

The next logical step backwards was to find a baptism for this Ellis Hey but again I have had no luck. The problem is that during the Commonwealth period (1649-1660), a time of upheaval, there are significant gaps in the Leigh registers for some reason, with many baptisms, marriages and funerals going unrecorded. I think Ellis Hey was probably born towards the end of this period, roughly around 1658. Again, if we speculate that his father was named William because he named his firstborn son William and also named a further son William after the first one died, there is a baptism at Leigh on Aug 14th 1634 for a William Heye of Pennington but in those days the parents' names are sadly not recorded. So although it's possible he was the father of Ellis it can't be stated with certainty. If this William married in the 1650's at Leigh again there is no marriage recorded.

On the plus side I did find a baptism at Leigh on Feb 11th 1665 for Alice daughter of William Hey of Pennington. Interestingly, there is also a funeral on Jan 11th 1694 for Alice wife of William Hey of Pennington. I tend to think that these records do relate to the father, mother and sister of Ellis the father of James. From now on I'm afraid the trail runs a bit cold.

It's a fascinating journey looking into the past. Sometimes there is more out there to be discovered than you realise. You also realise that you are only here as the result of a long list of accidents, chance encounters and tragedies. Take just one away and you wouldn't be here.