

## William and Mary Mason of Fulbourn -x2?

In the late 1790s there are, in Fulbourn Cambridgeshire, two marriages for William Mason to women named Mary. A number of Ancestry trees have this as the same William Mason marrying in 1792 and again in 1796. This is based mainly on the fact that the 1796 marriage is of a William Mason - widower. It has also been noted that the same person<sup>1</sup> appears as one of the witnesses to both marriages and that only one William and Mary Mason of Fulbourn shows up in the 1841 census.

There is however contradictory evidence to suggest that the Mary Rutt who married in 1792 was still alive at the time William 'remarried' in 1796. On 20 June 1797 the then 24-year-old Mrs Mary Mason nee Rutt received an adult baptism along with her two younger sisters. Significantly, there is as yet no record identified of a Mrs Mary Mason dying at Fulbourn in the mid 1790s.

Other evidence to suggest that there were two William Masons in Fulbourn at the time is that in 1805 there are two baptisms of Mason children 5 weeks apart. One of Joseph on 10 May in the parish of St Vigor, and another the following month on 18 June; Sarah of the parish of All Saints. I consider this to be strong evidence for the theory that there were 2 families in Fulbourn headed up by a William and Mary Mason.

I'm not suggesting that this proves that the two children were born within nine months of each other. Baptism dates are never a good indicator of birth dates (other than that they always take place after birth – and before death!). And in particular it seems that the Mason children were more likely to be baptized as infants than as babies.

However, it does seem odd for a couple who were planning to baptize their 2 children to do so within a few weeks of each other and having moved house in between!<sup>2</sup> It would make more sense, were Sarah and Joseph children of the same parents, to have been baptized together at the same time. That they were not, I would suggest, shows that Sarah and Joseph were not siblings but merely had parents both named William and Mary Mason.

There is more compelling evidence that there were two couples William and Mary Mason. Between 1793 and 1815 there were 10 children baptized by a William and Mary Mason of Fulbourn. The Cambridgeshire Family History Society (CFHS) registers qualify each William as either 'sen' for senior or 'jun' for junior.

William the younger had baptized the following; Mary (13 Oct 1793), Ann (14 Dec 1796). Thomas born 1799 (28 Sept 1800), Sarah (18 Jun 1805), Elizabeth (7 Feb 1808), Mary (2 Feb 1812) and Catherine (15 Feb 1815).

William the elder had baptized Elizabeth (16 Oct 1797), William<sup>3</sup> (31 Mar 1802) and Joseph (10 May 1805). Clearly then it is the younger William that marries in 1792.

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<sup>1</sup> The person in question is Cha[rle]s Dawson – he is most likely a Church warden. He was also a witness to sisters Elizabeth and Ann Rutts' marriages, Oct and Nov 1789 respectively. Tellingly, Chas Dawson was also the witness to the marriage immediately before theirs in the register while the next marriage in the register was witnessed by a John Dawson.

<sup>2</sup> Since 1766 only one church building stood in Fulbourn however the two parishes remained distinct well into the 19th century. See <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=18826> . If this was the same couple then they have to have moved from within the parish boundaries of St Vigor and relocated to the parish of All Saints late May/early June.

<sup>3</sup> This child is possibly the infant buried 4 June 1802 the week after his baptism but many trees have him surviving into adulthood and marrying Sarah Rolfe in 1825 where Joseph was one of the witnesses.

## So, which is which?

My interest is in the widow Mrs Mary Mason, who at the age of 78 married William Hoy(e) in 1850.

Through the censuses I have identified two children of this Mary. In 1841 William and Mary's granddaughter Mary Ann Rope (Roope) is with them on census night. Mary Ann is the daughter of Samuel James Roope and Catherine Roope nee Mason. In 1861, after the death of her most recent husband William Hoy, Mary is living with Sarah Harris nee Mason.

Additionally, Thomas Mason, born 1789, married Marianne Hoy in 1823. Thomas' father-in-law, William Hoy, was the same William who married Mary in 1850. This can't be pure coincidence. Catherine, Sarah and Thomas are all children of William 'jun' – the William that married in 1792 to Mary Rutt. Therefore it is Mary Rutt who marries William Hoy in 1850 and it is the younger William Mason that dies in 1846.

It is not clear who Mrs Mary Collins was, the widow who married widower William Mason in 1796. It is possible she was Mary Gnat who married William Collins at Little Wilbraham in 1789. There is a death record for a 25 year old William Colling at Little Wilbraham in 1792. Little Wilbraham is a bit over 3 miles from Fulbourn. This makes her a very possible candidate for the woman who married in 1796. There is also a Miss Mary Collins who marries in Fulbourn in 1811. If this is the same Mary Collins born in 1791 in Wilbraham then this adds weight to the Mary Collins nee Gnat claim. A Susan Mason was witness to Miss Collins 1811 marriage providing another connection to the Mason family supporting the notion she was a step-daughter of William senior.

Mrs Mary Mason, formerly Collins was buried 10 March 1815 at St Vigor. She was 45 years old. Her husband William 'senior' died in 1825 but not before marrying again in 1819 to a widow, Mary Allen. He was buried on 23 May 1825. He was 77 years old.

The younger William died in 1846 aged 78. He was therefore 20 years the junior of William senior. What was their relationship? The use of sen/jun suggests they were father/son. Unfortunately there is no evidence to support this. There is a 1771 Fulbourn baptism for a William born to a Benjamin Mason which could be William junior born circa 1768 but it is equally possible he was born out of parish. The first record of William senior in Fulbourn is his marriage to Mary Foyson in 1775. If he was the father of William junior then he was likely married before this<sup>4</sup>.

Thanks as ever to my 'partner in crime' *mmparkes*. Her wizardry with the IGI knows no bounds. And I must give credit to the CFHS's transcriptions and *david watkins* whose facsimiles of various records were invaluable in this analysis.

More details on these two couples can be found at [www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk) on my *Edward Boulton of Sydney Family Tree*

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P.S. – I had hoped that Eliz'th Woodhouse, informant for William Mason's death in 1846 would also prove to be a daughter of William and Mary. However I now believe her to be Elizabeth Woodhouse nee Smith of Huntingdonshire and the wife of William Woodhouse of Fulbourn. According to the Census they were neighbours of Mary, Mrs Hoy in 1851.

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<sup>4</sup> This would mean he was married a total of 5 times. Firstly around 1767 aged 19 to the mother of William, then in 1775 to Mary Foyson (1756-1781), in 1784 to Rachell Whybrough (1758-1796), in 1796 to Mrs Mary Collins (1770-1815) and finally in 1819 to Mrs Mary Allen.