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## **Hannah More's Parents**

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## Hannah More's Parents

By WILLIAM EVANS

Several authors have remarked on the dearth of information about Hannah More's parents. What there is derives mostly from the second earliest printed source, William Roberts's *Memoirs of the life and correspondence of Mrs Hannah More*, published in 1834, a year after her death.<sup>1</sup> Roberts's sister was Hannah More's companion and literary executrix and fed information to Roberts.<sup>2</sup> That should make Roberts a reliable source, but he has been criticised for inaccuracy and incorrect chronology by both contemporary<sup>3</sup> and later authors.<sup>4</sup> He admitted editing and re-wording some letters and suppressing others altogether, particularly those to and from members of Hannah More's family. In his preface to the 3rd (1835) edition of his book, responding to criticism in the *Quarterly Review*, Roberts said he had deliberately refrained from publishing intimate family letters.

Hence Roberts narrated only that Hannah More was a daughter of Jacob More; that Jacob More was 'descended from a respectable family at Harleston in Norfolk'; that he had attended Norwich grammar school, where 'under the brother of the celebrated Dr Samuel Clarke' he 'appeared to have made a great proficiency in classical learning'; that he had been 'designed for the church'; that 'his early expectations were defeated by failure of a lawsuit in the family'; that he left Norfolk and 'obtained, through the patronage of lord Botetourt' (then Norborne Berkeley, owner of Stoke Park), 'a foundation-school near Stapleton in Gloucestershire'; that 'soon after he came into this part of the world, he married a young woman of plain education, the daughter of a creditable farmer'; that Jacob More was a staunch Tory and a high churchman; that earlier members of his family had been Presbyterian; and that a relation of Hannah More called Elizabeth Newson had written (presumably to Roberts's sister) saying that the estate the subject of the legal dispute was 'near the coast of Wenhaston in Suffolk, and was worth more than eight thousand per annum at the close of the law-suit'.<sup>5</sup>

Roberts reports that when Hannah More was about eight years old, her father began to teach her Latin and mathematics, but 'was soon frightened at his own success'; that he ceased to teach her maths; and that 'his consent to her entering upon any new studies was only wrung from him by their joint importunity', that is, of Hannah and her mother.

Roberts recounts that Hannah's mother taught her to read,<sup>6</sup> but he did not name her. He mentioned her otherwise only once in his text, quoting a letter which included:

1. Published by Harper Bros. in New York. The earliest printed source is an appreciation of Hannah More's life and work in *The Methodist Pocket Book* (London, 1825), 1–12.
2. A. Stott, *Hannah More: the First Victorian* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 8.
3. For example, *Quarterly Review* 52, CIV art. vi, 416.
4. G.C. Boon and M.J. Crossley Evans, 'The Question of Hannah More's Membership of the French Academy Resolved', *Trans. B.G.A.S.* 119 (2001), 182–3; Stott, *Hannah More*, viii.
5. W. Roberts, *Memoirs of the life and correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (1834), I, 6–10.
6. *Ibid.* I, 11.

Is it not very melancholy when you go to see our solitary mother? I endeavour to think of it as little as I can, but in spite of my endeavours it mixes with all my thoughts. Saturday we had dinner at home, Mrs Carter, Miss Hamilton, the Kennicotts and Dr Johnson.<sup>7</sup>

The first to name Hannah More's mother as Mary was the anonymous author of an account of Hannah More's life and work in the 1825 edition of *The Methodist Pocket Book*, but the author did not give her surname. The first to do so was Henry Thompson, who knew Hannah More in her last years.<sup>8</sup> That should make Thompson also a reliable source, but as her health declined Hannah More became confused, confined to her bedroom and exploited by her servants, until in 1827 friends intervened and installed her in a house in Clifton. Recent authors warn against accepting uncritically what Thompson wrote if his only source was Hannah More in her last few years.<sup>9</sup> Apparently drawing on what Hannah More told him, Thompson depicted her father:

He set out in life as supervisor of excise in Bristol, but being, as his distinguished daughter simply but expressively describes him, 'a man of piety and learning', he soon interested Lord Bottetourt in his favour, and was, by that nobleman's influence, established in the mastership of the Free School at Fishponds. Shortly after his settlement in Gloucestershire Mr More married Mary, daughter of Mr John Grace, an humble but most respectable religious farmer; by whom he had five daughters...<sup>10</sup>

Subsequent biographers of Hannah More have repeated Thompson's identification of Hannah More's mother with Mary Grace.<sup>11</sup> The most recent biographer says Hannah More 'identified with her mother's relatives, the West Country Graces', noting that in her will Hannah More left £400 to a Martha Grace and did not mention any East Anglian relations.<sup>12</sup> The same author adds that 'very little is known of Mary Grace': only that she had a brother William who with his wife Susannah had many children;<sup>13</sup> and that Jacob More met Mary Grace through his connection with Botetourt. By 1985 Roberts's 'young woman of plain education, the daughter of a creditable farmer' had become 'intellectual, though farm-bred'.<sup>14</sup>

When Jacob More died in his 80s in 1783, Hannah More was in London. In a letter shortly after, she described him as 'the dearest and best of fathers',<sup>15</sup> but she did not return to Bristol for some months. In early November 1785 she wrote:

Early in December I trust I shall have the happiness to embrace you. I did not intend to have named a date now, but my mother has been ill, and human wants are all so uncertain that I am afraid positively to fix anything two or three weeks beforehand.<sup>16</sup>

7. Hannah More (hereafter H.M.) to sister 5 May 1783: Roberts, *Memoirs of Hannah More*, I, 225.

8. H. Thompson, *The Life of Hannah More: with Notices of her Sisters* (London, 1838).

9. M.J. Crossley Evans, *Hannah More* (Bristol Branch of The Hist. Assoc., 1999), 20–23; idem, 'The Curtain Parted, or Four Conversations with Hannah More, 1817–1818', *Trans. B.G.A.S.* 110 (1992) 181, 200; and personal communication.

10. Thompson, *Life of Hannah More*, 5.

11. For example, M.G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), 3; E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 24; Stott, *Hannah More*, 4.

12. Stott, *Hannah More*, 2, citing The National Archives (PRO: formerly Public Record Office), PROB 11/1822, f. 366. H.M. had left money also to a William Grace and a Susannah Grace in an earlier will.

13. Stott, *Hannah More*, 4, citing 'the parish records for Stoke', sed quaere.

14. R.B. Johnson, *The Letters of Hannah More* (London, 1985), 2–4.

15. Stott, *Hannah More*, 59, citing H.M. to Mary Hamilton 12 January 1783, Anson MSS. doc. folder 8.

16. H.M. to Mrs Garrick 8 November 1785, in a copy of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in British Library RP995.

But when her mother died in May 1786,<sup>17</sup> Hannah More was again in London: she had been away since the previous December, and she did not return to Bristol until much later.<sup>18</sup>

Some recent authors have interpreted the sparsity of the traces of Jacob More and his wife, coupled with Hannah More's absences before, at the time of and after the deaths of her parents, as indicative of her attitudes and emotions towards them,<sup>19</sup> and thus as helpful to an understanding of aspects of her life and works, literary, religious, educational and social. Thus one author contends that 'Roberts represses Hannah More's biological mother' and proposes that Hannah More, like Maria Edgeworth and others, was 'compliant' in 'promoting patriarchy'; Hannah More 'disencumbers herself of her real father', substituting 'the ultimate benevolent patriarch, the Evangelical Christ'.<sup>20</sup> Another has observed that several of Hannah More's early works focus on conflict between fathers and daughters; and that neither of her parents appears to have championed her during her unfulfilled engagement to marry: the initiative of involving James Stonhouse to negotiate a settlement with William Turner came from her sisters, apparently led by the youngest, Patty.<sup>21</sup>

Hannah More was vague about dates and names where her relations were concerned.<sup>22</sup> Roberts prints a letter in which Hannah More recounts a visit she paid in April 1777 to relations of her father's in Norfolk:

We arrived at Bungay a little before nine. In my way thither, Thorpe Hall, where my father was born, was pointed out to me. Our Cousin Cotton's house is about a quarter of a mile out of the town...On Tuesday, we went to dine at Mr John Cotton's, a romantic farm-house buried in the obscurity of a deep wood. A great number of Cottons were assembled, of all ages, sexes and characters. The old lady of the house...took a good deal of pains to explain to me genealogies, alliances, and intermarriages, not one word of which I can remember.<sup>23</sup>

That letter was written after a visit during which Hannah More attended performances at the theatre in Norwich.<sup>24</sup> While she was staying with her cousins near Bungay Hannah More also spent a few days with her cousins' parents at Brockdish, a village about 4 miles south-west of Harleston.<sup>25</sup>

What follows seeks to test with the help of documentary traces what Roberts, Thompson and others have written about Hannah More's parents. First, Jacob More: where and when he was born; what school he attended; what property could have been the subject of the lawsuit; whether he held an excise post; what connections may have brought him to Bristol; whom he married; and what happened during his schoolmastership. Second, Hannah More's mother: who she was; what family she came from; and what other relations she had. Third, Hannah More's aunt Susannah: her marriages, especially her second. The article concludes by speculating how or why the received narratives about Hannah More's parents might have arisen.

17. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* 14 May 1786.

18. Stott, *Hannah More*, 87, citing H.M. to Mary Hamilton 3 June 1786.

19. *Ibid.* 60.

20. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters*, 23–4.

21. Stott, *Hannah More*, 6, 18–21.

22. *Ibid.* 1.

23. Roberts, *Memoirs of Hannah More*, I, 99.

24. Stott, *Hannah More*, 37.

25. R. Bickersteth (ed.), *The Life of Hannah More with Selections from her Correspondence* (London, 1856), 41.

*Jacob More*

The year of Jacob More's birth is not known for certain. A Bristol newspaper reported only that More had died 'in an advanced age'.<sup>26</sup> In a letter dated 1781 Hannah More referred to verses written by her father, with the compliment, 'I do not think I shall write such verses at eighty-one.' That implies that Jacob More was born about 1700, as does another letter written shortly after Jacob More's death by Mary More, his eldest daughter, in which she referred to his life having been 'for a period of upwards of 83 years'.<sup>27</sup> In another document<sup>28</sup> Hannah More said her father died at the age of 88, which would make him born about 1694, but if Hannah More became more confused as she got older, the earlier reference, corroborated by her oldest sister's assertion, is more likely to be correct.

The place of Jacob More's birth is also difficult to identify. According to Hannah More's 1777 letter quoted above, it was Thorpe Hall. Two houses so named are close to the road that travellers would have used to approach Bungay from Bristol, or from London where Hannah More was staying with the Garricks in April 1777.<sup>29</sup> The first is in the Suffolk parish of Withersdale (now Mendham), several miles south-east of Harleston, the nearest town but over the border in Norfolk.<sup>30</sup> Marked on Hodkinson's 1783 map of Suffolk as Wethersdale Hall, it is a timber-framed farmhouse dating from the 16th and early 17th centuries, with two storeys and an attic, and 19th-century additions. The parish registers of neither Withersdale nor the neighbouring Metfield record Mores. Mendham's registers record the baptism of three Moores between 1698 and 1707, but none was christened Jacob. Registers for the Norfolk parishes of Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell, Starston and Brockdish do not record the baptism of a Jacob More.<sup>31</sup> The second Thorpe Hall is a red brick house in a style of about 1560, a mile or so north of the Suffolk village of Horham, about three miles south-east of Harleston.<sup>32</sup> No Jacob More is recorded as baptised there or in the neighbouring parish of Hoxne in the relevant period. In the parish of Scole a girl called Mary, daughter of Jacob and Alice More 'living at Thorpe Parva', was baptised 18 May 1697, but no son Jacob is recorded. There were Mores at Thorpe Parva, but no baptismal entry for a Jacob More in Billingford and Thorpe Parva, or in the adjoining parishes of Dickleburgh or Thelveton. More's father is said to have been a staunch Anglican, so can be expected to have had his son christened locally. The absence of an entry in the registers of the local parishes, whilst not conclusive, prompts doubts whether Hannah More's implied location of her father's birthplace was correct.

Roberts however did not say that Jacob More was born at or near Harleston: only that he was descended from a family there. That admits the possibility that he was born and spent his childhood somewhere else. During the relevant period three boys called Jacob More were christened in Norwich: Jacob, son of Thomas and Martha More, at St. Julian's on 3 January 1696; another, of the same parents at the same church, on 17 March 1699; and a third, to a different set of parents, at All Saints on 11 February 1704. The registers distinguish between Moore, Moor and More,

26. Bonner & Middleton's *Bristol Journal* 11 January 1783.

27. Miss Mary More to trustees of Mary Webb's charity 26 April 1783: Badminton Muniments (Bad. Mun.), Fm N 5/2/1, correspondence bundle.

28. Stott, *Hannah More*, 2, citing Clark Library, Los Angeles, H.M. MSS. Box 46, 'Reminiscences', f. 17.

29. Stott, *Hannah More*, 37; Bickersteth, *Life of Hannah More*, 37.

30. O.S. Nat. Grid TM 273 803; listing information from National Monuments Record, English Heritage, 2004.

31. Norfolk Record Office, PD 295.

32. O.S. Nat. Grid TM 211737.

and do so consistently. The practice of giving a child the same name as one deceased and an entry for burial of a Jacob More on 9 March 1699 suggest that the Jacob More born in 1696 did not survive. If Hannah More was accurate in saying in 1781 that her father was 81, then it seems possible that he and the Jacob More baptised on 17 March 1699 were the same person.

It is difficult to reconcile Roberts's statements that Jacob More attended Norwich grammar school, and with distinction, with the absence of his name from a list of admissions to the school between 1679 and 1723; and that he was taught by one Clarke, with no master or usher of that name being recorded there.<sup>33</sup> Roberts's report that More taught his daughter classics and some mathematics<sup>34</sup> does imply that he had had a grammar school education. Hannah More's English prose style suggests familiarity with Cicero and Tacitus and possibly with Quintilian. If, as seems probable, Jacob More was born in or close to Norwich, some other grammar school seems likely.

Elizabeth Newson's letter to Roberts's sister about Jacob More's Norfolk and Suffolk connections and the litigation about the estate near Wenhaston contains so much detail that it would be remarkable if it were to be wilfully incorrect in any material aspect. It would have been easy for contemporaries to catch her out on a point of detail. Wenhaston is a village in Suffolk, five miles inland from Southwold. Some two miles to the north of Wenhaston is Blyford Hall, a 16th-century timber-framed farmhouse.<sup>35</sup> Though one of its outbuildings is a large 10-bay timber-framed barn, dated to the 17th century,<sup>36</sup> and Hall Farm and Old Hall Farm are some miles south of Wenhaston, in the 1730s the Blyford Hall estate was no bigger than 250 acres. In the 1740s its owner died heirless, but that was years after Jacob More had come to Bristol, and it produced nowhere near £8,000 a year. In the 1730s the largest estate in the area, that of the Stradbrokes at Henham, north-east of Wenhaston, extended over 4,000 acres and produced only about £5,500 a year.<sup>37</sup> The second possibility for the estate is that of Wenhaston Grange, two miles west of Wenhaston and nearer to Mells and Halesworth. A 16th-century house with an early 18th-century front, Wenhaston Grange was part of an estate of about 400 acres.<sup>38</sup> Like Blyford Hall, it could never have produced anywhere near £8,000 a year. The conclusion is that the large estate near Wenhaston referred to by Elizabeth Newson (whose source was presumably Hannah More) did not exist.

It has not been possible to corroborate Thompson's statement that Jacob More was a supervisor of excise. Bristol excise records for the relevant period have not survived locally: the custom house on Queen Square was one of the buildings set on fire in the 1831 riots. Beavan's *Bristol Lists* (including Bristol Record Office's copy with pencilled additions) names some collectors of customs at Bristol and some types of surveyor, but no Jacob More. One biographer asserts, without referring to a source, that 'When Jacob More received the headmastership of the Fishponds school he moved his family from Gloucester to that village'.<sup>39</sup> Some Gloucester excise records have survived in the form of copies of Treasury instructions to surveyors, but they do not name individuals. Gloucestershire quarter sessions rolls (partly illegible and partly torn) contain subscriptions by several excise officers to the oath of allegiance and sacrament certificates under the Test Act 1672, but none relates or refers to a Jacob More.<sup>40</sup>

33. H.W. Saunders, *History of the Norwich Grammar School* (Norwich, 1932), 295–7, citing Bodleian Library, Oxford, Tanner MSS., but the source is MS. Gough Norfolk 33, f. 61.

34. Roberts, *Memoirs of Hannah More*, I, 11–12.

35. O.S. Nat. Grid TM 422767.

36. Listing information from National Monuments Record, English Heritage, 2004.

37. *Ibid.*

38. O.S. Nat. Grid TM 387758.

39. M.A. Hopkins, *Hannah More and her Circle* (New York, 1947), 9.

40. Gloucestershire Archives (GA: formerly Gloucestershire Record Office), Q/RO 1–3; Q/ROs 1–3; Q/SO 4.

That is not evidence that More was not a surveyor. Walpole's policy of keeping the land tax low was accompanied by an extension of excise duties, so that by the middle of the century there were nearly 200 excise officers in the Bristol Collection, whose area also covered north-east and east Somerset including Bath, Frome, Wells, Axbridge and Wincanton.<sup>41</sup> Because Bristol was the biggest customs and excise port in England outside London, it was used to train, on 6-month stints, officials from collections elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> More's name does not appear however in any of the Customs and Excise quarterly salary rolls that have survived,<sup>43</sup> nor in the salt duty accounts that have survived for 1732. More is not named in the surviving Bristol Collection lists of 1732 or 1740.<sup>44</sup>

He may have held a post of which there is no longer a documentary trace, or perhaps a lower post, which Thompson may have promoted to surveyor; perhaps More came to Bristol, not because of any connection with Norborne Berkeley, but because he was assigned to Bristol for training as a gauger. Any speculation of that sort needs to be tempered by the consideration that excise posts were in the gift of the Treasury; that the Whigs exercised tight control over places; and that Walpole and those who dispensed his patronage are not likely to have approved appointment of a staunch Tory. All government patronage in Bristol was usually channelled through one man: for 20 years prior to 1755, for example, it was Robert Nugent (later Viscount Clare).<sup>45</sup>

As to Jacob More's marriage, there is no trace in the Bristol, Stapleton, Stoke Gifford, Winterbourne or Almondsbury parish registers of a Jacob More marrying a Mary Grace, whether in 1737 as conjectured by Hannah More's latest biographer<sup>46</sup> or in any other year. St. Werburgh's parish church now stands in the north of Bristol, where it was relocated in the late 1870s, but in the early 1730s it stood in the city centre, close to the council house and the city's high cross, on one of the main commercial streets, opposite the famous brass nails where merchants conducted business and the site for John Wood's proposed corn exchange. In St. Werburgh's registers there is an entry for the marriage by licence on 2 July 1735 of Jacob More and Mary Linch.<sup>47</sup> There are no similar references to any other Jacob More in Bristol in that decade. As it is unlikely that more than one Jacob More married in the Bristol area about that time, it seems reasonable to infer that the St. Werburgh's groom was Hannah More's father. If that is so, then Hannah More's mother was not Mary Grace, but Mary Linch or Lynch (Fig. 1). Thus there is a good reason why 'very little is known of Mary Grace': in Hannah More's life there was no such person.

Contrary to the assertions of some later biographers, neither Roberts nor Thompson attributed Jacob More's coming to Bristol to Norborne Berkeley. Born in December 1717,<sup>48</sup> Berkeley was only 17 years old in 1735, so still a minor, and in France, in the early stages of a grand tour from which he did not return home until late 1738.<sup>49</sup> If Jacob More was in Bristol in 1735, Norborne Berkeley cannot have played any part in his coming to Bristol, cannot have met More shortly after the latter's arrival, and cannot have played any part in More meeting his wife. More was not appointed to the Fishponds school until Michaelmas 1743, by which time Norborne Berkeley was back from Italy, had inherited the Stoke Gifford estate (his father John Symes Berkeley had died

41. H.M. Customs & Excise, *Bristol: 700 Years of Customs & Excise History* (H.M.S.O., 1983), 11.

42. *Ibid.* 13.

43. PRO, CUST 44/17, covering 1721, 1740, 1741 and 1750.

44. *Ibid.* CUST 44/3.

45. Josiah Tucker, *A Review of Lord Viscount Clare's Conduct as Representative of Bristol* (Bristol, 1775), 16.

46. Stott, *Hannah More*, 4.

47. Bristol Record Office (BRO), FCP/StW/R/1(a)(3).

48. Westminster City Archives, St. Martin in the Fields baptism register.

49. Bad. Mun., Fm K 1/2/14.



in December 1736),<sup>50</sup> and had been elected an M.P. for Gloucestershire. Though Norborne Berkeley was not present at the meeting when the trustees appointed More to the school at Fishponds founded by Mary Webb,<sup>51</sup> and did not become treasurer of the school charity until 1754 (the treasurer in 1743 was George Packer), as principal local landowner and son of Mary Webb's first-named trustee, Norborne Berkeley is unlikely not to have had at least a say in More's appointment.<sup>52</sup>

If Jacob More was in the Bristol area in 1735, but was not appointed to the Fishponds school until 1743, he must have had some other means of support in the mean time. As a surveyor of excise received a salary of £90 a year,<sup>53</sup> More's acceptance of a schoolmaster's post at an initial salary of £16 a year would beg explanation, whether or not he also taught paying pupils (as is asserted in *The Methodist Pocket Book*) or held a surveyorship. Later documentary traces however suggest that More, like other schoolmasters who knew some geometry and trigonometry,<sup>54</sup> was recognised as having some ability at land surveying and valuing, tasks that would be consistent with More having been a gauger. In October 1751 Berkeley's land steward Silas Blandford paid Jacob More for drawing a map of Kingswood.<sup>55</sup> In November 1752 Blandford engaged More and another to appraise £31 worth of hay which Blandford was going to distrain for rent due from one of Berkeley's tenants.<sup>56</sup> In July 1759 Berkeley paid More £5 10s. 6d. towards the cost of prosecuting a man called Miles, which suggests More was regarded as competent to prosecute a legal case. In April 1762 Blandford paid More a guinea for 'measuring the new Inclosure for Stoke field & in the common meadow &c.'. The plan shows signs of trigonometry, but not of skilful draughtsmanship.<sup>57</sup> There are some entries in the same accounts for 'ink for Mr More, 3d.', but they do not identify whether the payment was for school or estate purposes.

There are earlier traces of Jacob More in the Stoke Gifford–Stapleton area. Until April 1730 account books for the Stoke Gifford estate imply that John Symes Berkeley employed as steward Robert Pinnell.<sup>58</sup> Then follows a period in which the accounts appear to be in John Symes Berkeley's own handwriting, and in which five entries refer to Jacob More. More brings up oxen, pays board wages to workmen, and signs a balance 'Jacob More' in a large, round, clear, even hand, in marked contrast to Berkeley's deteriorating scrawl. On 30 July 1735 Berkeley paid 18 guineas to More 'in full for wages and all accounts'.<sup>59</sup> No further entries refer to More, and from 13 December 1735 the accounts are in a different hand and headed by the name of a steward called Alexander.

As there is no other reference to Jacob More in the Stoke estate account books, it seems reasonable to conclude that he worked for John Symes Berkeley in the Stoke–Stapleton area only from 1733 to 1735, the year he married Mary Lynch. The accounts do not record the terms of his engagement, but the entries suggest that More's job included some aspects of estate management short of being a full land steward.

50. Stoke Gifford parish registers: BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(b)1; Bad. Mun., Fm S/G4.

51. Mary Webb charity trustees' minutes 6 October 1743: BRO, 42497/1, f. 9.

52. Mary Webb charity accounts: Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1.

53. Stott, *Hannah More*, 3.

54. Information from Dr. Crossley Evans 2004.

55. Stoke estate cash book: GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7.

56. GA, D 2700/QP 4/5/2.

57. *Ibid.* QP 8/7/1.

58. *Ibid.* QP 3/4/7(5).

59. *Ibid.* QP 3/3/2.

That prompts the question how John Symes Berkeley came to engage More. Documentary traces suggest two possibilities. In the Stoke estate accounts is an entry dated 29 October 1726, when John Symes Berkeley paid Benjamin More of East Cranmore in Somerset £18 15s. for 40 wethers. East Cranmore parish registers from before 1783 have not survived, and there are no bishop's transcripts after 1670 or before 1753.<sup>60</sup> However, the churchwardens' and overseers' accounts for the parish show that a Moore family was one of ten amongst which the offices of warden and overseer rotated between 1727 and 1770. For example, John Moore senior was overseer from 1725 to 1727, when he was replaced by John Moore junior. The latter and a James Moore either held office or formally proposed others for office until 1742, after which James Moore made the proposals in most years up to 1770.<sup>61</sup> The inference is that the Moore family, always so signing themselves but sometimes spelt 'More' by others, was dominant in East Cranmore from before 1720 until 1770. If Benjamin More was of that family, and if Jacob More was a relation of Benjamin, then perhaps it was Jacob More rather than his wife who was of a farming family, perhaps serving as a farm bailiff. Jacob More may have moved from Norfolk to the west of England because of a family connection with the Moores at East Cranmore. Or perhaps he held an excise post of some sort in the Bristol Collection, relinquishing the appointment when he was engaged to work for John Symes Berkeley.

Another possibility derives from John Symes Berkeley having owned lands in Norfolk and Suffolk. Those estates came to him through his marriage to his second wife, Lady Hereford (Elizabeth Norborne), who had inherited them after the death of her sister.<sup>62</sup> The lands were at Brancaster on the Norfolk coast; Horsham St. Faith, 4½ miles north of the centre of Norwich; and Brandeston Hall in Suffolk, east of Stowmarket. Accounts and rentals for these estates in the time of John Symes Berkeley survive, the accounts in his handwriting. None mentions a More in connection with those estates in any capacity.<sup>63</sup> But the closeness of Horsham St. Faith to Norwich tempts speculation that Jacob More may have come to John Symes Berkeley's attention in some capacity to do with the management of the latter's land in Norfolk. More's having worked for John Symes Berkeley might then explain why Norborne Berkeley was sympathetic towards Jacob More: not as talent he had spotted but as a man who had worked for his father. William Shaw's assertion<sup>64</sup> that More 'had previously been a domestic in the service of Norborne Berkeley' and the statement in the *Methodist Pocket Book* that both Jacob More and his wife 'had been domestics in the service of Norborne Berkeley' were not quite correct: one worked, and the other may have worked, for Norborne Berkeley's father. More's family either dined or was treated at Stoke at least once: in 1748 (the year after the general election) Berkeley paid 6s. 8d. for '4 bottles of wine when Miss Moore was there'.<sup>65</sup>

More's tenure of the schoolmaster post at Fishponds was fraught with lack of financial clarity and ended in recriminations. In her will dated 15 October 1729 Mary Webb had bequeathed her trustees £450 on trust to lend it out and from the interest to pay £15 a year to the master of the hospital or school she had had built at Fishponds for teaching twenty poor boys and ten poor girls of the parish of Stapleton, and the remaining £7 10s. to three poor old women of the parish at the

60. Information from Somerset County Record Office (SRO) 2004.

61. SRO, D/P/Cran.E 2/1/1; 4/1/1.

62. Margaret Richards, 'Catalogue' to Bad. Mun., xviii.

63. GA, D 2700/NR 13; QS 3/1; QS1/1/1; QT 1/1.

64. W. Shaw, *The Life of Hannah More, with a Critical Review of her Writings; by the Revd Sir Archibald Mac Sarcasm, Bart* (Bristol, 1802), 1.

65. GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/4(2). Assuming the entry is not an error for 'Mr.', the reference is more likely to be to Mary More, the eldest daughter: Hannah, however precocious, will have been only 3 years old.

rate of twelve pence a week each. The women were to be placed in the rooms adjoining the hospital or schoolhouse. The master of the school was to keep the schoolhouse and almshouse in repair out of his income.<sup>66</sup>

The charity's original trustees included John Symes Berkeley, Thomas Winstone, William Hart, George Packer, the vicar of Stapleton John Field, and John Becher. They assigned to three of themselves £600 of the trust capital: £300 to John Symes Berkeley, £200 to Winstone, and £100 to Becher, who each paid 4% interest to the charity treasurer. Winstone the first treasurer died at the end of July 1731 and was replaced by Field, who was followed in August 1732 by George Packer. In July 1732 John Symes Berkeley, Field's executor and Becher returned the £600 to the trustees, and they lent it to Bristol corporation at what they thought was going to be 4% but turned out to be 3½%. The interest was paid regularly to George Packer. He was still treasurer at Michaelmas 1743 when Jacob More was appointed to the school, at an initial salary of £16 a year, though by an oversight he was overpaid by £4. At the same time the trustees decided to adopt a suggestion by Norborne Berkeley that as the money with Bristol corporation was going to pay only 3½%, they should assign the £600 to him and he should allocate them some land yielding a rent of £24 a year. This was agreed, but never fully implemented: Berkeley simply arranged for his steward Silas Blandford to pay the trustees £24 a year.

In June 1747 Packer was succeeded as treasurer by Arthur Hart. By 1755 the trust capital had grown, mainly from donations by Thomas Webb, George Packer's wife, Elizabeth Baily and Norborne Berkeley, and by an anonymous gift of £100, which probably also came from Berkeley. Berkeley's donations, which included £85 15s. in May 1744, were made with the express intent of increasing the master's salary: by 1750 he was being paid £20 a year. By 1761 the capital was £735.

Whilst Silas Blandford kept careful and contemporary accounts of what Norborne Berkeley received and paid out on behalf of the trust, the trustees appear not to have managed their finances rigorously: for example, they continued to pay one of More's predecessors after he had been replaced, and they overpaid More £4 in his first year. They did not keep detailed running accounts: they received summary accounts at irregular intervals and entered them in their minute book only when the trusteeship changed hands. What purport to be full accounts from 1731 were in fact compiled in 1783 by Francis Sawyer, who must have drawn them up on the information he was given, years after the transactions in question, for reasons explained below. Though they are evidently based in part on the summary accounts in the trustees' minute book, they include a statement that Sawyer drew on information from the successive treasurers' executors, so they are clearly reconstructed as distinct from contemporary.

It was More's conduct that led to Sawyer being engaged to restate the accounts. In 1753 the trustees had 'allowed Jacob More to take over the account' and 'to act as paymaster'. At midsummer 1754 Norborne Berkeley was appointed treasurer, and the trustees reverted to the practice they had adopted in John Symes Berkeley's day: they put the capital in the hands of Berkeley, whose steward paid the income quarterly to More, for More to apply the money to the objects of the charity. From 1755 to September 1764 the accounts drawn up by Francis Sawyer show regular payments to More of £21 13s. 6d. a year. Norborne Berkeley's accounts however, kept by Silas Blandford in a day book, record from 1754 a series of quarterly payments to More, not always on time, totalling £25 15s. a year.<sup>67</sup> From 1758 Berkeley paid More a further £4 a year, being the interest on £100 left to the school under Mrs. Packer's will. He also paid More a further £4 16s.

66. Copy trust deed: Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1, deeds bundle; copy extract from will in trustees' memorandum book: BRO, 42497/1.

67. GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7(4).

a year in respect of another local charity the dispensing of which had been entrusted to More. At Michaelmas 1764 the trustees' accounts record More as not having accounted for £16 19s. 1d., but they do not appear to have taken any action. From 1766 to Michaelmas 1770 the same accounts say that the amount paid annually to More was £24 15s. 2d. At that point, in 1770, the trustees regarded More as having not accounted for £12 12s. 1d., but they still took no action. After Botetourt's death in 1770 the duke of Beaufort as Botetourt's executor took over the treasurership. More continued to receive payments of £24 15s. 2d. a year until Michaelmas 1782, at which time the trustees regarded him as having failed to account for £23 12s. 7½d., close to More's annual school salary.

In 1782 someone decided to call a halt. Though 82 years old, More was still the schoolmaster. The trustees had not appointed anyone else, and had no income to pay anyone else even if they had wanted to. More must long have ceased teaching,<sup>68</sup> but he was still receiving his salary and he and his wife continued to live in the schoolhouse until More was replaced.<sup>69</sup> There were two widows in the school almshouse, but More was paying a shilling a week to only one. The trustees evidently thought he was retaining money he should have paid to the second widow as Mary Webb's will required. More had not accounted for moneys entrusted to him. The vestry was getting restless, because any poor widow not relieved by charity would look to the parish for relief. Because the trustees' accounts were incomplete, the vicar Henry Shute paid Sawyer three guineas to state the charity's accounts properly. Whether it was Shute who took the initiative and got the duchess of Beaufort to allow her name to be used to bring pressure on More, or the duchess used Shute (who was her domestic chaplain<sup>70</sup>) as ambassador to the Mores is not clear, but on 26 April 1783 Miss Mary More protested to the trustees of the Fishponds school:

I should deem myself unworthy of the very important situation I hold in life, could I hear the dead calumniated without standing forth to defend a life, which for a period of upwards of 83 years the bitterest malice could not censure.

As well as I can recollect it was some time in the month of November 1782 that Mr Shute called on us to inform me the Duchess Dowager of Beaufort desired my father to quit all pretensions to the school, as she wanted to establish a servant of Mr Braggs in it, it was not a pleasant dismissal after a faithful discharge of his duty for a vast number of years: this request I most cheerfully complied with, provided it could be done without his knowledge, not willing to disturb the peace of his few remaining days. Mr Shute appeared kindly distressed at delivering such a commission.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of January I received another visit from Mr Shute, acquainting me my father had annually received money from the Beaufort Estate to which he was not entitled, but out of kindness it had been overlooked, producing a very old deed by which the Master of the school was entitled to no more than 15 or 16 pounds p. annm.<sup>71</sup>

Miss Mary More then said she had given an explanation to Shute, blaming an unnamed person for not paying the money on, presumably to the widows. As to the widows, however,

My mother has informed me she never learned but of one widow being supported out of the salary...the present widow has been paid up to Christmas. ...As I have been 30 years out of the

68. Stott, *Hannah More*, 5, consistent with Mrs. Mary More to trustees 26 April 1783, Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1, correspondence bundle.

69. Mrs. Mary More to duchess of Beaufort 25 April 1783: Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1, correspondence bundle.

70. R. Bigland, *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections Relative to the County of Gloucester* (Gloucestershire Record Series 5, B.G.A.S., 1992), 1156.

71. Miss Mary More to trustees 26 April 1783: Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1, correspondence bundle.

parish I know not any gentleman to whom I could apply for information on this subject...My father received 7 guineas and three half pence per qr for salary and widows.

Miss More enclosed a list of dates from 1765 to Michaelmas 1782, each with £7 7s. 1½*d.* against it. Her letter to the trustees was probably prompted by threats of an investigation. On 23 April 1783 Henry Shute had written to Mary More:

Yesterday at a vestry meeting Mr Bridge publicly declar'd, he would get a commission to enquire into the application of Mrs Webbs charity money at Stapleton. One widow only has been paid from 1764 to Michaelmas 1782. Another widow has been in one of the rooms ever since Xmas 1777. On several applications to your father for her money, it has constantly been refus'd, to be paid her.<sup>72</sup>

Miss Mary More replied, in a peculiarly worded letter that may have been written in a state of confusion or incorrectly copied, to the effect that she recalled her mother (father?: Mrs. Mary More did not die until 1786) saying before her (his?) death that widow Shute (Shute was the vicar: the widows were both called Tyler) had been paid her money. 'There seems to be a mystery in your letter, but I hope I am deceived, I think Sir I know you too well to join with any one to attack the reputation of a Man after his death, who you know the bitterest malice could not malign when living'.<sup>73</sup> On 25 April 1783 Mrs Mary More wrote to the duchess of Beaufort:

I would not have presumed thus to introduce myself into your Grace's presence but upon an occasion of the utmost importance, no less than an attack of the blackest die on the character of my late husband...Your late honoured Brother [Botetourt] was his kind patron, & protector and generously added from 80 to £100 to the original salary on my husband being appointed Master to the school...My husband never made any application to Mr Cater [who replaced More as schoolmaster] to take upon him the care of the School, his brother a man of good Estate in the Parish made the proposal, and with the consent of the Trustees he was admitted. Nay Mrs Cater gave us the offer of living in the house, but as our children had been long removed from us, we thought it more advisable to take a house near them.<sup>74</sup>

Mrs. More claimed that payments to widows fell when 'the principal was taken out of the hands of a common tradesman at Bristol at 5%' and put out to Bristol corporation at 3 or 3½ per cent. 'When my husband was talked of for the place, Lord Botetourt took the whole into his hands at 4pc. All the donations since the original were given to the Master, as his salary was very trifling, after having paid the expenses of the repairs'.

What Mrs. More said about how the trust money had been invested was not true in several respects. Nor did Norborne Berkeley take over the trust endowment at the time More's appointment to the school was being considered: Berkeley took over in June 1754, nearly 11 years after More's appointment. Miss Mary More's information about the amount of the quarterly payment to More was also incorrect: what she claimed were receipts of £7 7s. 1½*d.* a quarter appear in Silas Blandford's accounts as payments of £6 8s. 9*d.* a quarter,<sup>75</sup> and in the trustees' accounts as £24 5s. 6*d.* a year, of which £21 13s. 6*d.* was for More and £2 12s. for one widow. Miss Mary More's list of payments appears as reconstructed as the trustees' accounts. It was inconsistent of her to deny that money had not been passed on to the second widow and to claim that there was only one widow. Taking Silas Blandford's contemporary accounts as trustworthy, both Shute's and the

72. Henry Shute to Miss Mary More 23 April 1783, *ibid.*

73. Miss Mary More to Henry Shute 23 April 1783, *ibid.*; Mrs. Mary More did not die until 1786.

74. Mrs. Mary More to duchess of Beaufort, 25 April 1783: *ibid.*

75. Stoke day book: GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7(4-5).

Mores' claims were incorrect, but it was clearly improper for More to have refused to pay a widow the trustees had placed. Perhaps he objected to the cut in his net salary that the placement of the second widow entailed. The surviving documents do not tell how the dispute was resolved, except that the trustees started to keep running accounts; they extracted and kept receipts (the 5th duke of Beaufort's papers include several from the widows); and they appointed a new schoolmaster, William Cater. That he was paid, at £24 15s. 2d. a year, from Michaelmas 1782 suggests that the trustees had appointed Cater from that date, which is also consistent with Mrs. Mary More's letter of 25 April 1783 to the duchess of Beaufort. In a letter dated 2 October 1783 the duchess of Beaufort purported to appoint Cater as schoolmaster in place of More. Perhaps the trustees felt they needed evidence of her endorsement; perhaps the duchess wished to make it clear that whatever the legal position might be, it was she who made the decisions. The money More had not accounted for was eventually made up by the duke of Beaufort.<sup>76</sup>

Jacob More was buried 8 January 1783 at Stoke Gifford.<sup>77</sup> There is no memorial to him in the church or churchyard.

### *Mary Lynch*

Mary, third daughter of William and Martha Lynch, was baptised 29 January 1718 at Stoke Gifford.<sup>78</sup> That does not precisely match Hannah More's statement that her mother was 65 when she died in 1786,<sup>79</sup> but as no other Mary Lynch or Linch is registered as baptised at Stapleton, Stoke Gifford or Winterbourne about that time, it seems reasonable to infer that it was the Mary Lynch baptised in 1718 who married Jacob More in 1735. If she was baptised immediately after birth, she will have been 16 years 5 months old at the date of the marriage. Mary Lynch had a sister Susannah, six years her junior (Fig. 1).<sup>80</sup>

The Lynches were well known to John Symes Berkeley in more than one capacity. An established Stoke Gifford family, they lived at Harry Stoke.<sup>81</sup> In February 1708 Sarah Lynch, then the eldest daughter of the family, gave birth to a daughter, Patience. According to the Stoke parish register the putative father was Dennis MacCormack, a Scottish soldier. The Stoke overseers paid for Sarah to be looked after 'in her distress,' and for her to lay an information at quarter sessions.<sup>82</sup> Whether that was for affiliation or rape, nothing seems to have come of it, perhaps because Sarah died and was buried 2 January 1709 in the neighbouring parish of Winterbourne.<sup>83</sup> From 1708 the Stoke overseers made a succession of exceptional payments for shoes and clothes for Patience, or Patient as their clerk tended to call her. She was boarded out, initially with a family called Walker, until 19 April 1715, when her uncle William Lynch agreed to look after her for 1s. 6d. a week. Payments ceased in September 1717, by which time Patience was 9½ years old and either integrated back into the Lynch family or deemed old enough to earn her keep.

William Lynch, Sarah's brother, married Martha Parsons at Stoke Gifford in 1712.<sup>84</sup> His brother Thomas Lynch married Grace Salter of Winterbourne at Stoke in 1719.<sup>85</sup> They had a son called

76. BRO, 42497/1, f. 52.

77. Transcript in *ibid.* FCEP/V/4/134(a)1.

78. *Ibid.* FCP/SG/R/1(b)1.

79. Stott, *Hannah More*, 4, citing H.M. to Mary Hamilton 3 July 1786.

80. BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(b)1.

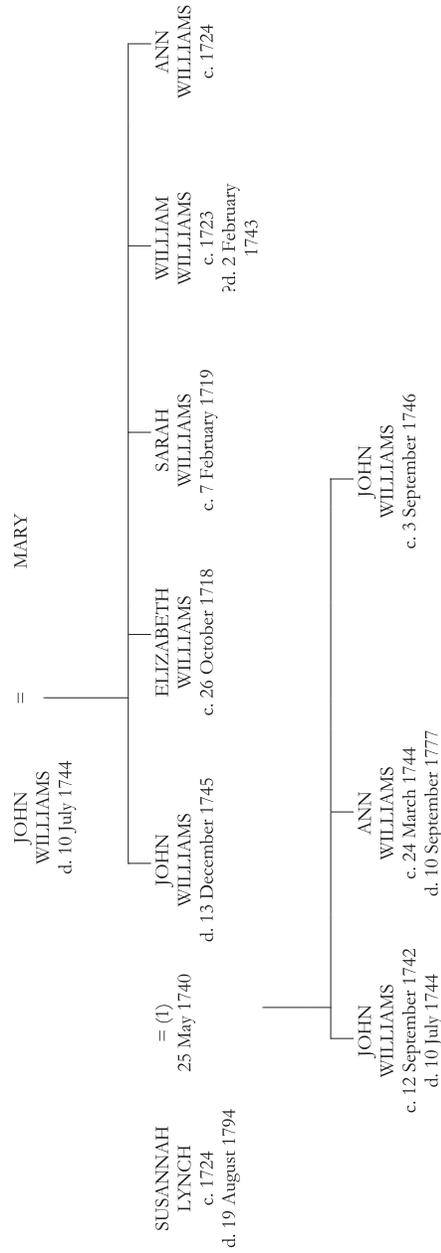
81. *Ibid.* FCP/Wi/R/1(c)1.

82. Overseers' accounts: GA, D 2700/SD 4/2.

83. BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(b)1; FCP/Wi/R/1(c)1.

84. *Ibid.* FCP/SG/R/1(b)1.

85. *Ibid.* FCP/Wi/R/1(c)1.



c. = christened  
d. = died

Fig. 2. Susannah Lynch and pedigree of Williams (drawn from parish registers of Stoke Gifford).

Thomas (Fig. 1). William and his nephew Thomas Lynch were both masons. From 1724 John Symes Berkeley and from 1738 Norborne Berkeley or his agent employed them, usually together, on work at Stoke.<sup>86</sup> They built walls, pitched the floors of barns and stables, fitted cisterns, ovens and chimneys, put up pillars, laid flagstones, pointed walls, repaired tenants' houses and so on. They were journeymen paid 1s. 6d. a day. In 1728 William's wife Martha<sup>87</sup> appears in the accounts, being paid the occasional 6d. a day for weeding. In 1730 Martha is paid the occasional 6d. a day for picking stones and for beating and dressing ground. From 1737 the overseers paid her 6d. a week for lodging Mary Beal, a pauper, until the latter died in 1753. William Lynch died in July 1742,<sup>88</sup> after which some of the payments were recorded as to Widow Lynch, and she was paid for occasional work in the gardens at Stoke.<sup>89</sup> So Hannah More's maternal grandfather was not a small farmer but a journeyman mason.

As John Symes Berkeley's accounts do not mention a Mary Lynch, it has not been possible to corroborate Shaw's assertion<sup>90</sup> that Hannah More's mother was a 'fellow-servant' of Jacob More in the domestic service of Norborne Berkeley. Mary More (née Lynch) was buried at Stoke Gifford 17 May 1786.<sup>91</sup> There is no memorial to her.

### *Susannah Lynch*

Susannah Lynch was born in 1724, the youngest of the 4 daughters of William Lynch the mason and Martha Parsons (Fig. 1).<sup>92</sup> Susannah Lynch, youngest sister of Hannah More's mother Mary, was thus Hannah More's maternal aunt. In 1740 at Stoke Gifford she married John Williams.<sup>93</sup> In April 1742 Silas Blandford paid money to Susannah Williams 'for carpentering'.<sup>94</sup> That may have been a matter of convenience or a recognition that by then Susannah was running a business: John Williams was buried at Stoke on 13 December 1745.<sup>95</sup> Of their children, two survived (Fig. 2).

In 1747 the widowed Susannah Williams married John Grace at Olveston, a parish five miles west-north-west of Stoke Gifford.<sup>96</sup> The marriage was by licence, neither bride nor groom coming from that parish. John Grace was a carpenter and, like William and Thomas Lynch, a journeyman paid 1s. 6d. a day. From 1744 Silas Blandford had engaged him on the Stoke estate both indoors and out.<sup>97</sup> The Stoke Gifford overseers also engaged him, for example in 1751 to repair a poor house and to mend a gate. John Grace came from Almondsbury, to the north-west of Stoke Gifford. He was born 2 January 1718 to Henry and Mary Grace of that parish (Fig. 3).<sup>98</sup>

Eight children followed Susannah's second marriage: William, baptised 3 January 1748 and buried 22 May 1748; Mary, baptised 12 November 1748; William, baptised 30 November 1749; Elizabeth,

86. GA, D 2700/QP 3/3/2.

87. Reading 'Matthew' as a transcription error, but other entries refer to 'Lynch's boy'.

88. BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(b)1.

89. GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7(2).

90. Shaw, *Life of Hannab More*, 1.

91. Transcript in BRO, FCEP/V/4/134(a)1.

92. *Ibid.* FCP/SG/R/1(b)1.

93. *Ibid.* FCP/SG/R/1(c)1.

94. GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7(2).

95. BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(c)1.

96. *Ibid.* FCP/Ov/R/1(f)1.

97. GA, D 2700/QP 3/4/7(1).

98. BRO, FCP/Alm/R/1(c)2.

baptised 10 February 1751; Thomas, baptised 13 December 1752 and buried 1 May 1753; Sarah, baptised 8 December 1754; Martha, baptised 26 August 1759; and Mary, baptised 1 February 1761.<sup>99</sup> All the baptisms and burials were at Stoke Gifford. The registers name John Grace as the father, but Hannah More's latest biographer attributes those children to a William Grace and his wife Susanna and identifies that William Grace as Mary Grace's brother.<sup>100</sup> As the registers do not name a William Grace or a Mary Grace, apart from John Grace's mother and except as children of John and Susannah Grace, it is difficult to see how that identification can be true.

Some time between Michaelmas 1759 and November 1760 John Grace and Jacob More jointly took a holding at Stoke Gifford and paid Norborne Berkeley a rent of 11s. a year.<sup>101</sup> Only from that date could John Grace be said to be a farmer, in the sense of one who occupies land, but he continued to work as a carpenter.

Hannah More recorded the death of her 'poor afflicted aunt Susannah' in 1794.<sup>102</sup> She was buried at Stoke Gifford.<sup>103</sup> John Grace died 23 January 1795<sup>104</sup> and shares a headstone with his wife. That it calls Susannah Susan, as does Hannah More's proved will, suggests that Hannah More may have commissioned the memorial stone, a gesture Hannah More did not accord her parents, buried in the same ground. In an earlier will she had left money to Susannah Grace and John Grace.

Thus it is Hannah More's aunt Susannah, and not her mother who supplies the link between Hannah More and the Graces. John Grace the Almondsbury carpenter was not Hannah More's maternal grandfather, but the second husband of Hannah More's youngest maternal aunt.

### *Conclusions*

Hannah More was vague about her father's Norfolk relations. Her statements of a 'romantic farmhouse buried in the obscurity of a deep wood' and of 'genealogies, alliances and intermarriages, not one word of which I can remember' are consistent with a genuine lack of interest, with innocent confusion, or with intentional obfuscation. On a strong balance of probabilities Jacob More was from a family in a Norwich parish, had no connection with either of the Thorpe Halls near Bungay, and did not attend Norwich grammar school. There never was an estate near Wenhaston worth £8,000 a year that could have been the subject of litigation whose outcome disappointed him. Whether or not Jacob More ever held a post as a surveyor of excise, he had been employed for two years by John Symes Berkeley as some sort of bailiff or agent when he married, and was discharged from that employment the same month.

Hannah More's biographers, and by implication their sources and possibly Hannah herself, appear also to have misrepresented who her mother was. Why they should have done so remains obscure. Hannah More's rise in London society is not likely of itself to have been a motive, because it would not explain why she should substitute a family not much higher in the social-economic scale: both William Lynch and John Grace had a maximum earning capacity of nine shillings a week, at least until John Grace and Jacob More became tenants of some of Norborne Berkeley's land. As late as 1785 the duchess of Beaufort, who inherited Stoke on her brother's death, was

99. Ibid. FCP/SG/R/1(c)1. Other versions of Fig. 3 are possible, but none would differ significantly in respects material to this note.

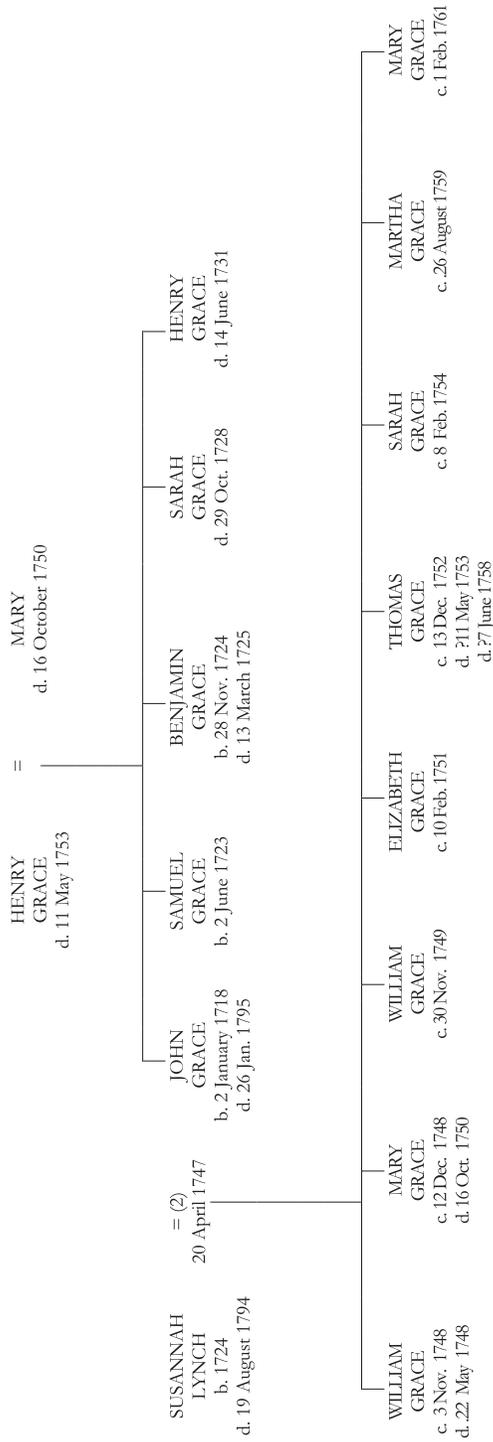
100. Stott, *Hannah More*, 4.

101. Stoke Gifford rentals: GA, D 2700/MJ 11/1/18.

102. Stott, *Hannah More*, 153, citing H.M. diary 31 August 1794, Clark Library, Los Angeles.

103. BRO, FCP/SG/R/1(c)1.

104. Bigland, *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections*, 1172.



b. = born  
 c. = christened  
 d. = died

Fig. 3. Susannah Williams (née Lynch) and pedigree of Grace (drawn from parish registers of Almondsbury, Olveston and Stoke Gifford).

engaging John Grace to perform low-skill carpentry at Stoke and Stapleton.<sup>105</sup> His son William Grace, also a carpenter, fitted a boiler in the schoolroom in 1799 and he did sundry repairs to the schoolhouse in 1805 and 1816.<sup>106</sup> If John Grace gave Hannah More the idea for her pseudonym ‘Will Chip’ for her *Village Politics* (1793), then perhaps it was his character that attracted Hannah More rather than his social standing, but that alone would not explain why he should be misrepresented as Hannah More’s grandfather.

From the 1783 correspondence it is clear that the information Mrs. and Miss Mary More were publishing was not accurate. They may have been genuinely confused. They may have refigured the narrative for themselves and their husband and father. Or perhaps Jacob or Mrs. More or both may have misinformed their daughters, for reasons now unknown. The 1783 protests perhaps betray social awkwardness at a time Hannah More had not disengaged herself from high society. Perhaps the transformation had two stages: first, a distancing of the Mores from the Lynches in order to save Hannah More social embarrassment; later, when Hannah More wished to distance herself from the world of fashion, an introduction of a man of whose character Hannah More approved.

From Hannah More’s will and the letter she wrote after her aunt Susannah’s death in 1794, it is clear that Hannah More knew that Susannah was her aunt, so she must have known that John Grace was her uncle, not her grandfather. John Grace’s son William and daughter Martha were still alive when Hannah More died in 1833, so she is not likely to have claimed a relationship to John Grace that they could have contradicted. There must have been some basis for Hannah More’s biographers attributing consanguinity, as distinct from affinity, with the Graces. One explanation, not convincing, might be that Mary Lynch, Hannah’s mother, had an uncle Thomas who married a Grace Salter in 1719, thus giving Hannah More’s mother an aunt called Grace,<sup>107</sup> which might have been misunderstood as meaning that Grace was Hannah More’s mother’s surname. Or, when Jacob More and John Grace jointly took a lease of some land in Stoke in 1759, Hannah More, then 14 years old and a pupil at her sisters’ school in Trinity Street, Bristol, may have interpreted or imagined that as implying not just a business relationship but something closer. Later, such a relationship would help distance Hannah More from the Lynches. Whether or not by the 1820s Hannah More, having distanced herself from the Lynches, not least the local memory of poor Patience, felt no need to correct any misunderstanding, her biographers adopted or invented a narrative that was false.

#### *Acknowledgements*

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105. Stoke building accounts: Bad. Mun., Fm L 6/3/18, entries for e.g. 17 September 1774, 3 April 1785.

106. Mary Webb charity accounts: Bad. Mun., Fm N 5/2/1.

107. Fig. 1.