

An English Civil War Family History Essay **John Bull of North Cadbury**

By Mark Wareham, updated April 2020

My great x 9 grandfather through my maternal grandmother was, I believe, John Bull. This is as traditionally 'English' a name as you could wish to be associated with. He was born at North Cadbury in Somerset in 1622 and was the son of Richard and Margery Bull. Richard Bull was a shepherd who had five sons and two daughters, all of who appear to have survived to adulthood. Not a lot of detail is known about the Bull family in this period although their family line can be traced back in the village to a John Bull who was born in the early 16th century and possibly even further back to a 'Henry Bole' who left a will in North Cadbury in 1494.

Somerset was mainly parliamentary in sympathy at the start of the English Civil War. Areas of north Somerset had been heavily influenced by the so-called 'puriton revolution'. This evangelical protestant affiliation tended to oppose the King when it came to the outbreak of conflict although not always as can be seen with Sir Ralph Hopton of Witham Friary in Somerset, himself a 'puriton' but who fought on the side of the King. Hopton was forced to abandon Somerset to the 'roundheads' when in 1642 he attempted to recruit troops on the Mendips and seize the county for the King. Instead he was faced with strong resistance as the people of that area flocked to support parliament. However such strong allegiance to the roundhead cause tended to be concentrated in the north and east of Somerset, whilst the east and south of the county tended toward neutrality or moderate support for the King. North Cadbury, in the south, appears to have favoured the King and two members of the Bull family (including John), a member of the Durnford and Pitman families and a Dr Duck of the village, all actively served the King's cause.

The evidence we have about my ancestor's civil war is not extensive but we do know from a later fine for 'delinquency' ('delinquents' was what parliament later called people who opposed them in the struggle) that he served –

"... as lieutenant of foot under Lord Hopton ..."

It is not clear exactly when young John joined the Royalist forces, but he was part of Sir John Stawell's Somerset Trained Band of Infantry which was active from 1642 when he was about twenty years old. John may have been in the regiment when in June 1643 it took part in the Siege of Taunton where the Parliamentary garrison was defeated and Taunton Castle was held by the Royalists until the following year.



Between April 1644 and June 1644 John's regiment was then under forces led by Prince Maurice, the King's nephew, in besieging Lyme Regis in Dorset. The siege

involved between 2,500 and 6,000 Royalists against about 2,000 Parliamentarians and over the three months the Royalists suffered 2,000 casualties compared to only about 120 in the garrison. Eventually Prince Maurice was forced to abandon the siege when the Earl of Essex entered the south west and recaptured Weymouth. John's regiment then returned to Taunton but Stawell quickly abandoned the town to the Parliamentarians, leaving only 80 men as a token force. However after Essex was routed in Cornwall the Royalists subsequently returned to Somerset to retake the county and besiege Taunton again.

John Bull must have gained temporary leave from serving in the besieging royalist army because on 25th May 1645, at his home parish church at North Cadbury, he married young Ann Pitman of the same village. Maybe John was granted such leave to marry



his sweetheart because of the uncertainties of the vicious war? A serving soldier did not know if they would be alive or dead by the end of the day and he must have wanted to wed Ann before it was too late. However John cannot have stayed long with his new wife before once more having to be back with his brothers in arms outside of Taunton.

The siege of Taunton was witness to some awful horrors of war as shown in this testament from a royalist army surgeon in May 1645 (from *An Unhappy Civil War*, by John Wroughton page 264) –

“... one of Colonel Arundell's men, in storming the works, was shot in the face by case-shot. He fell down and, in the retreat, was carried off amongst the dead; and laid in an empty house by the way until the next day: when, in the morning early, the colonel marching by that house heard a knocking within against the door. Some of the officers, desiring to know what it was,

looked in and saw this man standing by the door without eye, face, nose or mouth ...His face, with his eyes, nose, mouth and foremost part of the jaws, with the chin, was shot away and the remaining parts of them driven in. One part of the jaw hung down by his throat and the other part pushed into it. I saw the brain working out underneath the lacerated scalp on both sides between his ears and brows... I helped him to clear his throat, where was remaining the root of his tongue. He seemed to approve of my endeavours and implored my help with signs he made with his hands... I bound his wounds up. The dead were removed from thence to their graves, and fresh straw was fetched for him to lie upon, with an old blanket to cover him... There we left that deplorable creature to lodge: and while we continued there, which was about six or seven days, he was dressed by some surgeons with a fomentation made of plants...”

After the devastating royalist defeat at Naseby on 16th June 1645, Fairfax returned to the west to ‘mop up’ the last of the cavalier armies and reduce the threat of them mustering a new one. John's new lead commander, Goring, had to raise the siege of Taunton on 4th July and moved towards Langport in Somerset, where on July 9th Goring drew up his army in a strong position to await attack. Fairfax had 14,000 men, including Oliver Cromwell as a commander of horse, compared to just 7,000 under Goring but the royalists thought that their position was unassailable. But the parliamentarians proved irresistible after a strong frontal assault and the royal army

was routed. The cavalier troops, in desperation, set fire to Langport and Goring later escaped into Ireland. But Cromwell led his Ironsides through the blazing village to ride down the fleeing royalist soldiers. We know that from the evidence that John was then

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“... taken at the fight at Lamport [i.e. Langport, as it was otherwise called] ...”

John was probably fortunate to be captured by the New Model Army because other royalists were apparently hunted down and killed by Somerset Clubmen (local farmers who were mainly parliamentary in sympathy) in revenge for the depredations inflicted upon them during the royalist occupation. John became one of about 2,000 royalists to be taken prisoner after this short lived and decisive battle that destroyed that last royal land army in the west country.

John was then –

“... sent prisoner to London ...”

where he was kept until 11th November 1645, when he was released on bail. It must then have been a long and difficult journey back to his home in Somerset along old country roads and probably without means of transport. But he was alive and John must have been welcomed warmly by his wife, family and friends when he returned to North Cadbury.

Even before the war was over the new Parliamentary Committee for Somerset, like other county committees, started meeting to administer new government and raise money in the areas that they controlled. They sought to raise money largely from supporters of the King and gather much needed funds for the government struggling with debts incurred in fighting the first civil war. John Bull of North Cadbury was clearly known as a ‘delinquent’, having been held prisoner for six months for being in the royal army, and he paid further for his loyalty to King Charles I. In April 1646 John petitioned to ‘compound’ for his delinquency, this petition being a plea for a reasonable settlement against his limited property and means, to be able to maintain himself and his family with what to be left to him. On 9th May 1646 John was ordered paid ten shillings as a fine in settlement (10/), which I assume he did as there is no further record of him being a target of the Committee.

On 24th November 1646 John was then required to make the following oath of allegiance -

The humble petition of John Bull (of North Cadbury, Somerset). Sheweth, That your petitioner was a Lieutenant of a Foote Companie under the Command of Lord Hopton in which service he acted untill the fight at Langport where he was taken prisoner and sent upp to London where hee since hath remayned in prison untill the 11th day of November last past. Your petitioner was discharged by the Committee of Prisoners uppon sufficient Bayle given for his conformity to ye Parliament. That hee is hartily sorrowfull for his error and humbly submitts to ye mercy of Parlyment and prayeth that hee may bee admitted to a favorable Composition with consideration to his Estate which is truely presented to you in a particular annexed. And hee shall pry &e.

John evidently settled back in Cadbury with his family and in about 1650 he and his wife Ann had a son called John. This was followed in 1654 by a daughter Elizabeth.

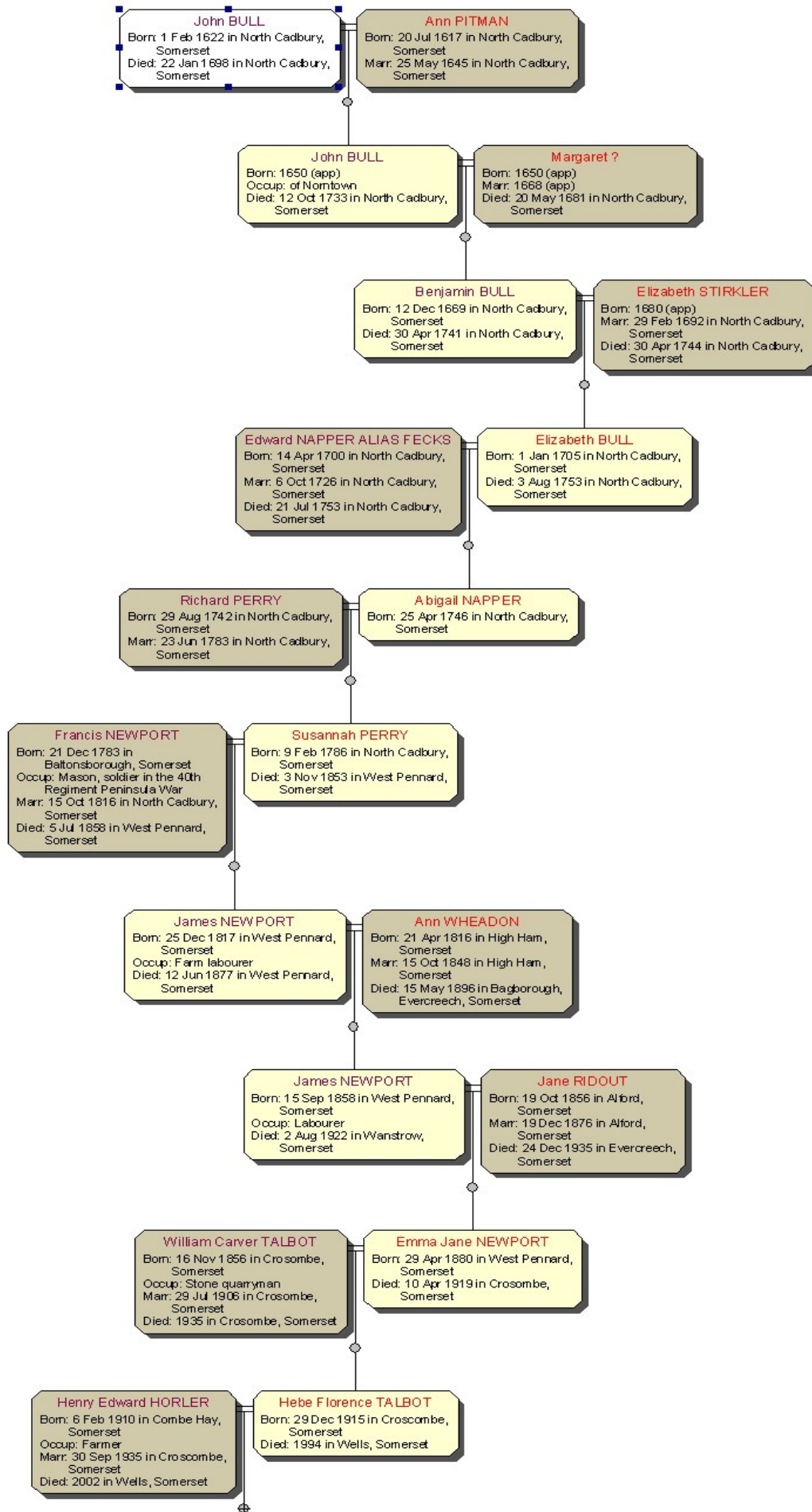
In 1653 John's father Richard died and he was named in the will being left with 'one sheep', as was the case with most of his siblings. John possibly got some more inheritance when his mother Margery, who was his father's main beneficiary, died in 1661. However as a second eldest son he probably wouldn't have been the main beneficiary of his mother.

In 1661 the monarchy was restored under King Charles II and no doubt John Bull of North Cadbury was one of those who greeted this news with great joy and celebration. There is no evidence that John was severely injured and so he probably did not benefited from new pensions set up to provide for maimed ex-royal soldiers, or for widows of previous soldiers. But he may have been one of 7,000 ex-soldiers to make a claim against a fund of £60,000 set up to help impoverished loyal cavalier officers.

John's wife Ann died in about 1680 and John himself died in 1698, aged about 76. He was buried at North Cadbury (church pictured below, from Wikipedia). There is no evidence that John left a will and the next two generations of this ancestral line appear to have been labourers, rather than farmers. Maybe the family had been financially disadvantaged by the civil war and its aftermath and this affected their wellbeing and social status?



The line from my grandmother, Hebe Talbot, to John Bull is shown on the next page.



The other North Cadbury combatants

Rob. Bull, North Cadbury, Somerset.

“May 1646. Compounds for delinquency in bearing arms six days against Parliament under Lord Hopton. Surrendered in March 1645, and has since lived peaceably with his friends at North Cadbury.”

From: 'Cases before the Committee: May 1646', Calendar, Committee for Compounding: Part 2 (1890), pp. 1270-1303. URL: [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=59705&strquery=bull cadbury](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=59705&strquery=bull%20cadbury) Date accessed: 01 July 2013.

Dr Duck – no current information.

Wm. Durnford, North Cadbury, Somerset.

“March 1647. Compounds for delinquency in setting forth a musketeer against Parliament. Is a man of weak estate, is greatly indebted, and has many children. 25 March. Fine at 1/6, 58l. 10s. 6d.452

From: 'Cases before the Committee: March 1647', Calendar, Committee for Compounding: Part 3 (1891), pp. 1676-1716. URL: [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=59716&strquery=durnford cadbury](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=59716&strquery=durnford%20cadbury) Date accessed: 01 July 2013.

Pitman – no current information.