
Robert Lighttallars



by Ian Shalapata – November 2020

Every person living or dead, or yet to be born, with the name of Lytollis can trace their lineage back to one man; Robert Lighttallars, who was born around 1780 probably in Lancashire, England. Whether living in England or Scotland, Canada or the US, New Zealand, France, or Spain, the Lytollis family line originated in Car lisle, Cumberland, in the northwest of England, and with a single man. Shortly after the dawn of the 19th century, it's believed that Robert Lighttallars travelled to Carlisle from Lancashire in search of work. As a weaver, he would have been seeking employment in the handloom industry which was experiencing a boom in the Carlisle area at the time. Wages were said to be in the area of £1 a week but, with the influx of skilled weavers, wages plummeted to just 4 or 5 shillings weekly; a quick decline of 75%.

Robert was first recorded into history at his marriage to Jane Mayson in February of 1803. In the church register he was referred to as "of this parish" inferring that he had already been living in the Carlisle area for an extended period of time, at least August of 1802, considering he and Jane celebrated the arrival of their first son just three months after their marriage. The two were wed by banns on 21 February 1803 at St Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle. Jane was born in 1782 in the city's environ of Stanwix to the north across the river Eden. She was the sixth child, and third of four daughters, for Joseph and Mary Mason.

Not originally from the Carlisle area, and with no parents or siblings close by, Robert's surname was likely spelt phonetically by the officiant in the church register of marriages. It is considered that Robert migrated to Carlisle from Lancashire or West Yorkshire, though there are some strong clues that it was the former. Lighttallars is likely derived from Lighttoller, itself originating from the Lightowlers of Littleborough, Lancashire in 1296. Lighttallars progressed through many iterations until somehow the whole of Robert's descendants have adopted the Lytollis spelling today.

When Robert and Jane's son, John, was born, he was soon christened on 21 May at St Cuthbert's. For both the marriage and the christening, Robert gave his occupation as weaver. With a new son Robert and Jane required a better income in order to support the growing family in the face of diminishing pay. Just three days before John's christening, England and France renewed hostilities and entered into the era of the Napoleonic Wars. Fresh from the aftermath of the French Revolution, England responded to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte by raising county militias to augment the standing army. These militias included four battalions from Lancashire where men between the ages of 18 and 50 were required to register for service and who were then selected by ballot to serve for a five-year term.

Some men, like John Sutcliffe of Lancaster in Lancashire, preferred not to join and were allowed to provide a substitute in their place or to pay a hefty fine. In 1803, Robert gave up cotton weaving in favour of serving as Sutcliffe's substitute in the 1st Regiment, Royal Lancashire Militia. The regiment had been embodied in April under a Royal Warrant from King George III after a diplomatic spat between Napoleon and Lord Whitworth, the English ambassador in Paris.

As a substitute, Robert agreed to enlist as a private soldier with the Lancashire Militia and though now enjoying a higher wage there were many additional expenses for Robert to meet. A soldier needed to pay for food and forage beyond any rations supplied by the army as well as any extras. A loaf of bread alone, for example, cost around 5 pence out of a foot soldier's daily wage of 8 pence.

With her husband away and receiving little to no money, Jane needed to feed and clothe herself and John. The only avenue open to her would be to petition the overseers of the poor for a weekly stipend for the necessities. In September of 1803, Brown Gridale, a Justice of the Peace in Cumberland, ordered that Jane would receive a weekly allowance of 3 pence to augment any income she currently enjoyed as a cotton weaver until January of the new year. Gridale then sought to recover the funds from Lancashire for whom Robert was serving.

The like order on the overseers of Lancaster of £2-8-0 in pursuance of an order by Brown Gridale Clerk for the County of Cumberland for the maintenance of the wife and child of Robert Lighthallows from 23d September 1803 to 6th January 1804 at 3d per week.

At the end of each time period Jane had to return to the overseers to get an extension to the payments, though she never saw an increase to the amount. Though with parents and a large extended family upon whom she could depend upon for help, Jane and her son John were probably in a large part dependent on the maintenance from Lancashire.

For over a year Jane and Robert were apart; she in Carlisle with John and he serving with the militia. Robert, along with the 1,200 other men of the regiment had marched in late July from Lancaster to an encampment near Danbury in Essex where they remained until the beginning of August in 1804. From the Danbury Camp the regiment moved to Brabourne Lees in Kent and then took 8 days to march to Portsmouth, Devonshire, with all the men arriving by the middle of June 1805.

Meanwhile in Carlisle, the overseers again sought to recover funds from Lancashire which were paid to Jane. This time JP William Wilson, Esquire, had provided support of £5-8-0 for the period of 19 April 1805 to 11 April 1806 for the maintenance of Jane and John. Within a month of receiving the decision by Wilson, Jane probably enjoyed a visit by Robert who likely secured a reprieve from

military life in May 1805. He probably returned to Brabourne Lees in time to join the regiment on the march to Portsmouth.

At the end of July 1805, the regiment were again ordered to pull up stakes, this time heading to Weymouth in Dorset, a distance of 104 miles, to be inspected by the King on 12 August. By 12 October, the men were returned to Devonshire, this time to Exeter where they were granted furloughs. By this time Jane would have known she was pregnant with their second child, but Robert may not have received word she was expecting. By February Jane saw through the arrival of a second son, Joseph, who was christened at St Cuthbert's on the 19th of the month. The joy was short lived, however, as John died at 3 years of age and was buried on 3 May. It's possible that Robert never met Joseph or knew of his existence nor knew of John's demise.

At the end of April 1806, the 1st Regiment of Lancashire Militia returned to Weymouth for another inspection by the King, arriving at the camp on 4 May. It was not, however, until 23 June that the parade took place, where the King and Queen Charlotte presented the regiment with new colours. In July and August authorities expected a French invasion and the regiment helped to bolster the defences along the south coast of England. During this state of readiness, Cumberland authorities again sought an order from the Lancashire Quarter Sessions in Lancaster for recovery of monies provided to Jane. T. Fletcher, Esq, requested that £5-17-0 be paid by the Lancashire Overseers of the Poor in Lancaster "for the maintenance of the family of Rt Lighthallows from 11 July 1806 to 10 April 1807."

In early November 1806 orders were received commanding the regiment to return to Exeter along with a contingent to be stationed at Stonehouse Barracks in Plymouth. Robert likely joined this latter group at some point. Plymouth was a large industrial and seafaring town with an 1801 population of over 43,000. For every person employed in agriculture in the vicinity there were 8 who held manufacturing jobs of some sort. By contrast, Devonshire as a whole was largely agrarian with agricultural labourers out numbering all other employment by over 2:1. (DFHS) Not far away from Stonehouse Barracks was Plymouth Dock, later known as Devonport, where countless ships crews arrived from near and far to engage in trade and commerce. The Admiralty controlled Plymouth Dock while the army garrisoned Plymouth and Stonehouse beyond the walled dockyard.

Stoke Damerel Parish served the religious needs of the area's populace with the 15th century Church of St Andrew with St Luke as the parish church. To the east of the church was a burying ground which had been expanded in 1789. It is now converted to a park upon the creation of two larger cemeteries in the city in 1849 and 1870.

It was into this seething mass of humanity that Robert was plunked when the Lancashire Militia was returned to Plymouth and Exeter in 1806. With almost three years in the militia, Robert had spent considerably more time away from Jane and their family than he had been with them. The life of a private soldier was dramatically different than that of a handloom weaver. The daily drudgery of military life coupled with the long marches and other deprivations must have taken a collective toll on Robert. We know that officers within the Lancashires often “retire” their commissions due to poor health, those within the ranks didn’t have the same luxury, however.

In Lancaster on 28 April 1807, William Willson was again seeking to recover £1-19-0 “ for the maintenance of the family of Robert Lighthallows for 13 weeks at 3d per week.” At the end of May, however, Robert was dead. There’s no way to distinguish if by a sudden occurrence, by injury, or disease, but there is a one-line entry in the Stoke-Damerel burial registry for 2 June recoding the interring of “Robert Lightollows age 27” the same day as 2 year-old John Day. There doesn’t seem to be much evidence to support a state of epidemic in Plymouth. There were 824 burials at Stoke-Damerel in 1807, averaging 69 per month. However, though May of that year saw 70 burials while June witnessed 75, neither in a material increase over average for the year as a whole. It’s quite possible that simple wear and tear was the sole factor which played the part in Robert’s demise.

SOURCES:

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Devon Family History Society, The Devon Historian, No. 157, February 2016, Exeter.

Stoke Damerel Church (Plymouth, Devonshire), register, Robert Lightollows buried 2 Jun 1807 at Stoke Damerel, Plymouth, Devon. Stoke Damerel parish burial archive: 166/82 page:97.

Lancashire, England, Quarter Sessions 54: 96, Order for maintenance of the wife and child of Robert Lighthallows, 10 April 1804.

Lancashire, England, Quarter Sessions Order Books: 212, Maintenance for the family of Rt Lighthallows, 11 Jul 1806.

Lancashire, England, Quarter Sessions 57: 5, Order for maintenance of the family of Robt Lighthallows, 13 January 1807.

Lancashire, England, Quarter Sessions 58: 12, Maintenance order for the family of Robert Lighthallows, 12 January 1808.

Church of England (Cumbria Record Offcie), Page 43 1803 No. 127. Robert Lighttallars of this Parish, Bachelor, and Jane Mayson of this Parish, Spinster. Married in this Church by Banns this Twenty First day of February in the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Three by me, J. Brown.

Genealogical Society of Utah, "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," database, FamilySearch (accessed 21 March 2020), John Lightollers christening, 21 May 1803, Saint Cuthbert, Carlisle; data collected by the Genealogical Society of Utah, Salt Lake City.

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Genealogical Society of Utah, "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," database, FamilySearch (accessed 21 March 2020), Joseph Lighttallars christening, 19 February 1806, Saint Cuthbert, Carlisle; data collected by the Genealogical Society of Utah, Salt Lake City.

See also on this site:

[Lytollis & Ward families](#)

[Robert Lighttallars' descendants](#)