

Wakefield families

History

Several sources say that Wakefield is a derivation of a locational name given to a person from an area of the same name. Possibly from the city of Wakefield in West Yorkshire, and perhaps also from a place of the same name in Northamptonshire. The location in Yorkshire is recorded as “Wachefeld” in the Domesday Book of 1086 while the Northamptonshire location appears as “Wacafeld” in the Domesday Book.

Read more: <http://www.surnamedb.com/Surname/Wakefield#ixzz2W1bLCwos>

Wakefield surnames in the census records

On the right is a chart of the various occurrences of the name in the UK census records from www.your-family-history.com

In 1841 the number recorded was only 154. The most popular names were Mary (16), George (12), Thomas (11), William (10) and John (9).

By 1851 the number of Wakefield's recorded jumped by almost seven times to 1000 though the following census years showed a much lower rate of increase per decade.

Census	Frequency of the Surname Wakefield
1841 Census	154
1851 Census	1000
1861 Census	1844
1871 Census	2931
1881 Census	4127
1891 Census	5004
1901 Census	6434
1911 Census	7739

By 1911 the most popular names were William (402), John (328), George (280), Mary (271) & Thomas (221).

Two examples of our Wakefield ancestors

The oldest Wakefield we have is Thomas Wakefield, born about 1733 possibly in the in Norfolk / Cambridgeshire area. He married Susannah Gaylor or Galer and their family is shown below left.



(LEFT) Thomas Wakefield (c.1733-1818) & Susannah Gaylor/Galer (c.1737-1810) (RIGHT) Austin William Wakefield (1859-1905) & Lucy Ellen Gray (1863-1912)

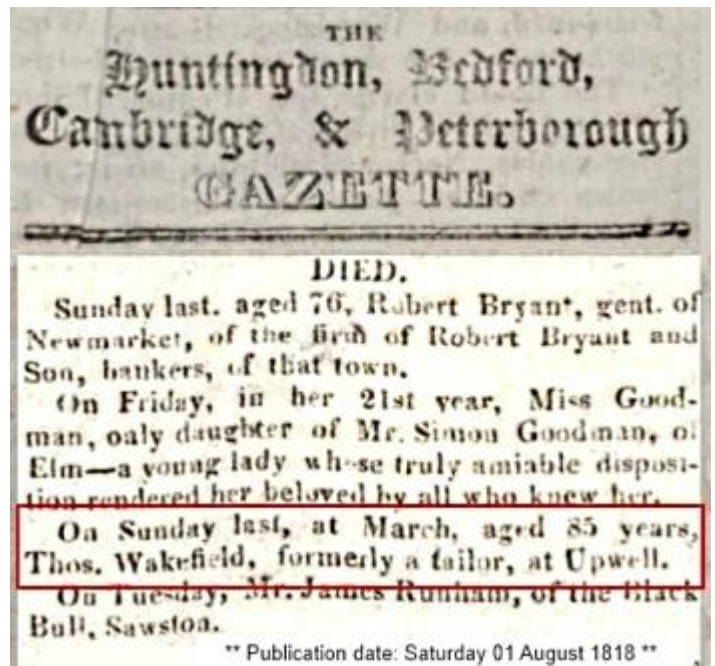
More recently (above right) was Austin William Wakefield born 1859 in London who later married Lucy Ellen Gray. This family extended the range of our ancestors to Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. (**Many other family members existed between these two examples of our Wakefield line.**)

More on the 'Oldest' Wakefield

As you can see from the family tree above our oldest member of the Wakefield family is Thomas Wakefield. He born about 1733, place unknown but we assume in the Norfolk-Cambridgeshire area.

We can deduce his birth year from two sources...

- Cambridgeshire Burial Index, 1801-1837 – records details of his burial in 1818 as widower aged 84 years in the parish of March, Cambridgeshire.
- Huntingdon, Bedford, Cambridge & Peterborough Gazette newspaper notice published Saturday, 1st August 1818 – see picture – records that he died 26th July 1818 aged 85 years and was resident of Upwell.



So, he was reported as being 84 & 85 years old in 1818 which puts his birth about 1733-1734 – providing the informant knew the correct age of Thomas!

We also know that Thomas Wakefield married Susanna Galer (or possibly Gater) in the parish of Manea, Cambridgeshire on 3rd May 1757. The marriage record indicates that both Thomas and Susanna were 'Of This Parish' (OTP) – meaning they were residents of Manea. However, it doesn't prove that Thomas was born in Manea, merely that he resided there at the time of his marriage.

Several 'Public Members' trees on Ancestry suggest that Thomas was christened at Arnold, Nottinghamshire in 1735, and his parents were George & Mary Wakefield. Unfortunately, these same family trees show no connection between that event and the Thomas Wakefield who married Susanna Galer in 1757. Thomas & Susanna brought up their family in the Manea and Upwell parishes of Cambridgeshire/Norfolk.

So, the hunt to find confirmation of his origin continues...

If you have any info that can shed light on where Thomas was born, please [contact us](#).

A famous Wakefield Jockey

One of the more famous of his era was Christopher Wakefield – later called 'the Old Vicar'. He was born about 1801 in Upwell, Cambridgeshire to William Wakefield and Peggy Gill. Christopher was the ninth of twelve children and went on to become a well-known Jockey.

He married Sophia Kessy (or possibly Kerry) in 1829 and after a brief residence in Westminster they settled in Newmarket until around 1845 and then moved to Chelsea. They had a total of 12 children.

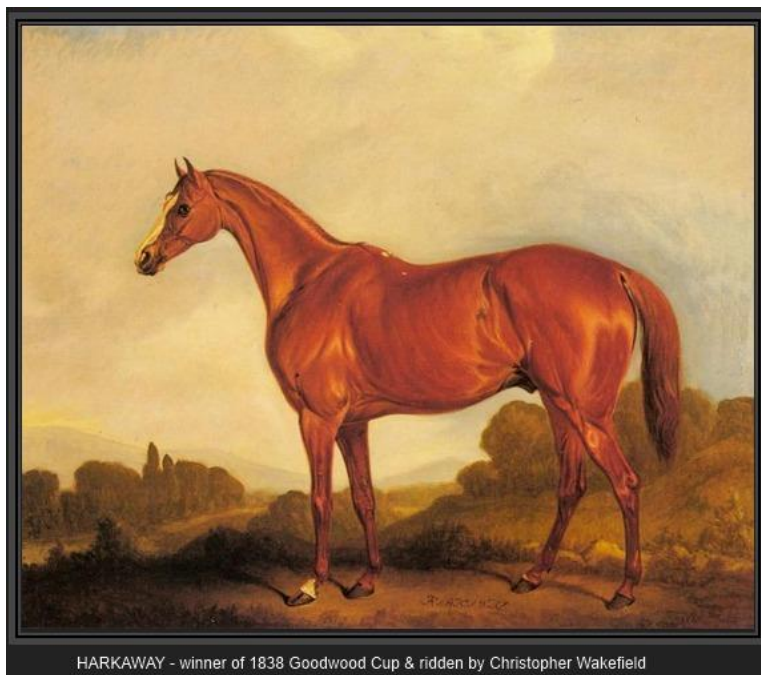
Christopher won the 1838 Goodwood Cup riding a horse called 'Harkaway' – see right. He also competed in many other races including the Grand National at Aintree.

He was connected to the turf for more than 30 years and met his end at the ripe old age of 57 while racing. After riding in two races at the Weston Zoyland meeting in 1857, he mounted 'Sweet Briar' to compete in the last race.

When rounding a turn he came in contact with a post and both horse and rider were hurled to the ground. He was taken to the Railway Inn, Bridgwater where he later died. He was buried at Bridgwater.

At the time, one newspaper article stated “...*he left a sick wife and ten children, seven of whom are totally unprovided for...*”.

Sophia Wakefield survived this tragedy and according to the 1861 census lived at Edwards Terrace, Chelsea with her son Edwin. She died in 1871.



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