

Stephen Barker of Burston, Norfolk, England, Father of William Barker
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SUMMARY

The popular connection supposing that Stephen Barker of Burston (~1736-1787) was the father of William Barker of Shelfanger (~1762-1829) is almost certainly erroneous. It was apparently made in the 1950s and 1960s, and has been handed down for decades. It has been presumed by many to be fact, and appears to have been made on the basis of:

1. Shelfanger & Burston are only about 3 miles apart.
2. Stephen and his wife Judith Wragg did have a son named William who was Christened in Burston 18 Jan 1761.¹ This date is within about 8 months of the estimated birth of my ancestor William Barker of Shelfanger—derived from his burial record dated 15 Dec 1829 at age 67² (1829 – 67 = 1762 or 1761 if his birthday was later in the year than Dec 15).
3. This connection seemed to be the best fit—based on the parish records searches which had been made in the 1950s and 1960s.

“William” was one of the most popular names in Norfolk in the 1700s. And, there were a large number of William Barkers born in southern Norfolk near this time. Thus, there are quite a number of William Barkers whose records seem to be possible matches with William of Shelfanger.

What first led me to question the link between William Barker of Shelfanger and Stephen Barker of Burston is a probate record (called an Administration, or Admon) for Stephen Barker dated 13 Aug 1787.³ It had apparently not been found by the previous generation of researchers, and thus not considered when that connection was settled on. It lists Mary Barker as his wife and relict—certainly Stephen’s third wife whom he married 19 Nov 1782.⁴ The fatal flaw in the connection with our William seems to be: Stephen’s admon mentions a William Barker and described him as being “of Burston” and a “farmer” (this is almost certainly a reference to the William who was Stephen’s son by Judith Wragg (his first wife). At the time of this admon, our William and Jane had started their family in Shelfanger (Rhoda, daughter of our William & Jane Barker was Christened 31 Jul 1785, and her brother Leonard was Christened 6 years and 2 months later on 25 Sep 1791, both in Shelfanger).⁵ So in is highly unlikely the our William (of Shelfanger) would be described as “William Barker of Burston.” I subsequently learned that this information from the admon also caused Price and Associates (a professional genealogical firm located in Salt Lake City who had been commissioned by a cousin,

¹ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[64] FS image 74. (FamilySearch.org, UK, England, Norfolk, Parish Registers, Burston, Baptisms Marriages & Burials (BMB) 1656-1754[64] FS image 74.)

² Shelfanger PRT (*The Parish Registers of Norfolk: Shelfanger 1686-1837*. Transcribed by Jonathan Down. 1988.) p. 41.

³ FHL (Family History Library) Film # 167209.

⁴ Burston PR Marr 1755-1814, FS image 17.

⁵ Shelfanger ArchD BMB 1725-1812 FS images # 45, 54.

Elaine Barker Dismuke) to conclude that our William Barker of Shelfanger is not the same person as the William, son of Stephen Barker and Judith Wragg of Burston.

DETAILS

Stephen Barker and Judith Wragg of Burston were married 8 Nov 1758.⁶ Stephen and Judith's son, William, was Christened in Burston 18 Jan 1761⁷ and he was apparently the only child born to this couple.⁸ One and one half years after William's Christening, Judith, wife of Stephen Barker was buried (26 July 1762).⁹

Four years later Stephen married his 2nd wife, Judith Hall, a widow (on 23 July 1766 by license).¹⁰ The marriage bond indicates that Stephen Barker was a "husbandman."¹¹ I could find no evidence of children born to Stephen Barker & Judith Hall, and she was buried fifteen years after their marriage on 13 Mar 1781.¹²

One and one half years later, the Parish Register of Burston indicates that Stephen Barker, a widower, married Mary Saunders a single woman on 19 Nov 1782 by banns.¹³ Mary Saunders appears to be the daughter of Robert & Mary Sanders, and was Christened 25 Dec 1742.¹⁴ Thus, her age was almost 40 at the time of their marriage (1782 – 1742 = 40) and Stephen Barker was about 46 (based on his burial information, see below). James, son of Stephen & Mary Barker was born 4 years after his parents were married (on 10 Nov 1786) "and was baptized in the spring following."¹⁵ He appears to be the only child born to Stephen and Mary. James would have been about 7 months old

⁶ Burston PR Marriages 1755-1814 FS image 5.

⁷ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[64] FS image 74.

⁸ Some have supposed that another son, named John, was born to Stephen Barker and Judith Wragg. The PR of Burston, does show a John, Son of Stephen and Judith Wragg Christened 27 May 1759 (FS image 72). It appears that the clerk made a mistake in entering the names associates with the Christening date in the PR. Since there is no other reference to a Stephen Wragg in the Burston PR around this time, at first look, it seems like the reference might have referred to Stephen and Judith (Wragg) Barker—with the "Barker" omitted. On the other hand it could also have been a reference to William and Judith (Gooch) Wragg, with the name "Stephen" mixed up with "William". William and Judith (Gooch) Wragg had 10 children Christened in Burston including the Judith Wragg who married Stephen Barker. They are Mary (1729), Mary (1732), Judith (1735), John (1738), William (1745), Elizabeth (1745), Edmund (1745), Sarah (1747), Susan (1753), and Daniel (1753), (see images 56-69). Thus, either the mother Judith (Gooch) Wragg, or the daughter, Judith (Wragg) Barker would likely have been the mother of the child named John. Judith (Gooch) Wragg appears to have been born ~1710 and would have thus been about 49 years old when John was Christened—old in terms of child bearing, but not out of the question. On the other hand, Judith (Wragg) Barker had only been married to Stephen for 5 ½ months when the child John was born, and William, son "of Stephen & Judith Wrag" was Christened only 8 months later. Thus, in my estimation, we can eliminate the possibility that John was a child of Stephen & Judith (Wragg) Barker. It is possible that there was a Stephen and Judith Wragg as the PR entry states, but this seems less likely.

⁹ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[64] FS image 81.

¹⁰ Burston PR Marriages 1755-1814 FS image 9.

¹¹ Husbandman, a farmer or raiser of animals.

¹² Burston PR Buials 1764-1812 FS image 5.

¹³ Burston PR Marriages 1755-1814 FS image 16.

¹⁴ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[sb 64] image 66

¹⁵ Burston PR Baptisms 1764-1812 FS image 3.

when his father, Stephen, was buried. Later, Mary married Daniel Wragg of Sedgeford, Norfolk (~23 mi NW of Shelfanger) 10 Feb 1790 in Burston by License.¹⁶

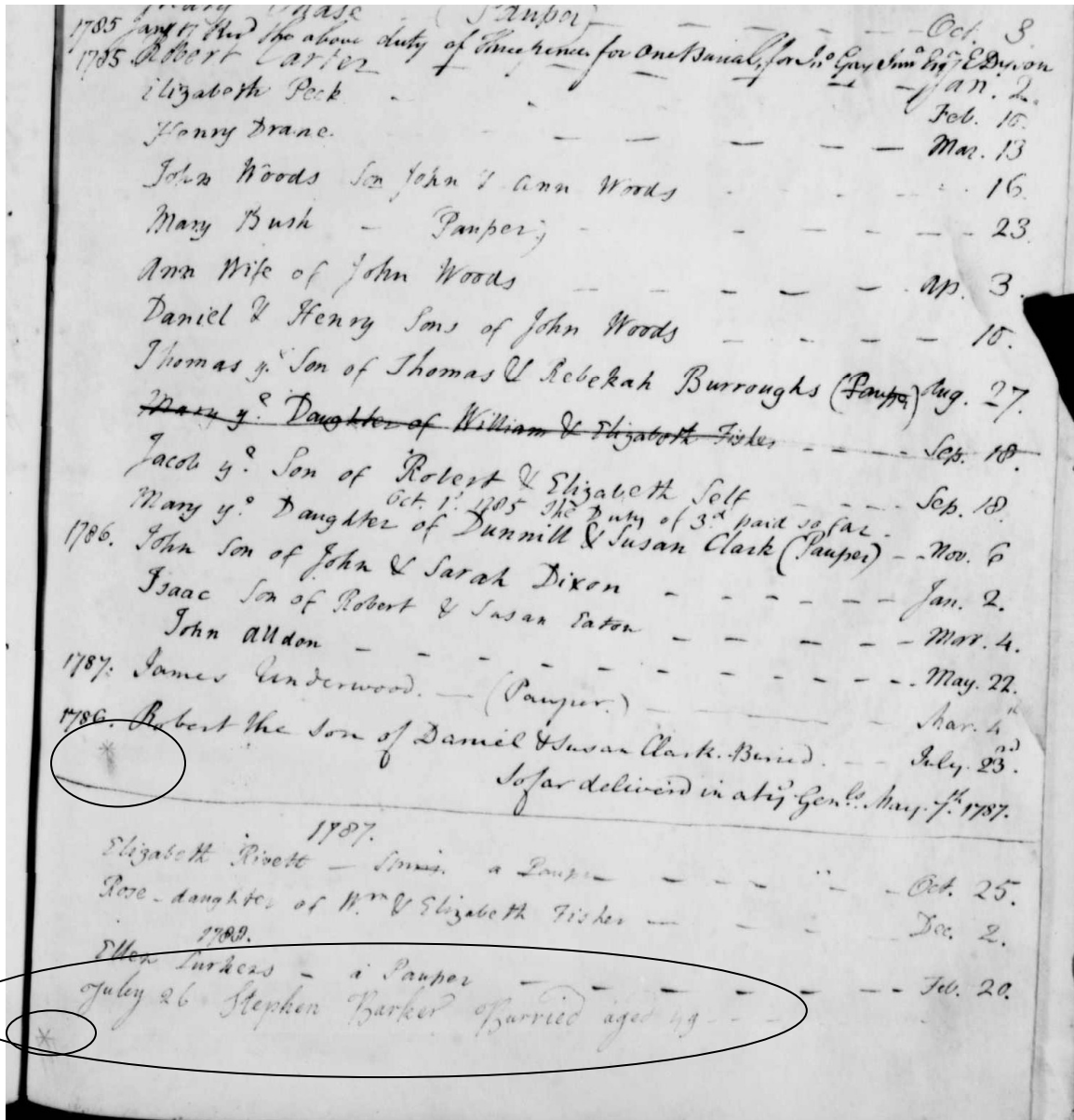


Figure 1. The PR page showing the burial entry of Stephen Barker 26 July¹⁷ (marked by the large oval). The asterisk (within the smallest oval) at the bottom left may have been intended to refer to the smudged asterisk just above the line drawn on the page (marked by a small oval).

¹⁶ Burston PR Marriages 1755-1814 FS image 20. Also pertinent: a note at the beginning of the 1764 Burston Parish Register states: "James Barker, Son of Stephen & Mary Barker was born Nov 10th 1786 and baptized in the spring following, but his Baptism is omitted in this Register. This information from his Mother, now Wife of Daniel Wragg" 30 Oct 1803. (Burston PR Bapt 1764-1812 FS image 3).

¹⁷ Burston PR Burials 1764-1812 FS image # 5.

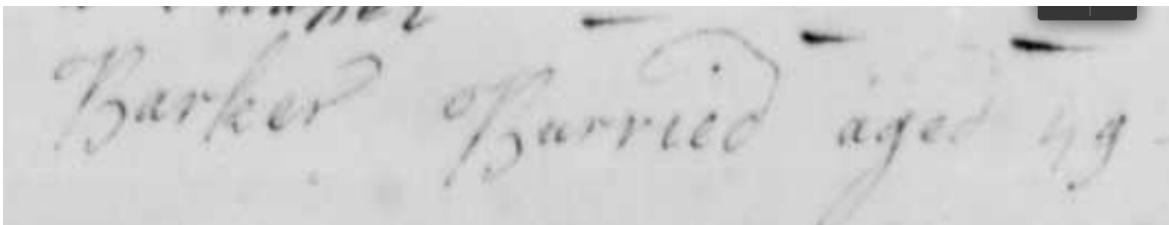


Figure 2. A closeup of the part of the entry showing Stephen Barker's age at the time of his burial as 49.¹⁸

Although Stephen's burial entry is beneath the one dated 1788, the year of his burial is unclear from the PR. From it, one could assume the year of his burial was 1786, 1787, 1788, or possibly 1785 at age 49.¹⁹ The page includes at least one other entry which is out of order: note the entry dated 1786 between two entries dated 1787, and the Stephen Barker entry appears to have been added at a later date.²⁰ Using information from admon (1787), the year 1788 can be eliminated from consideration since, unlike wills, admons were made after the person died, not before. The year 1785 can also be eliminated based on the birth of Stephen and Mary Barker's son James (10 Nov 1786).²¹ The year 1786 is very unlikely because James would have been born after Stephen's passing, and the record of his birth indicates he was the son of Stephen and Mary Barker (with no indication of any decease of his father). Had Stephen's passing been before James was born, the entry would likely have mentioned that fact or at least that Mary was a widow. Thus, the most likely date for Stephen's burial is 26 July 1787, which is consistent with the date of the admon (13 Aug 1787).²²

A Stephen Barker was Christened 16 May 1736 in Dickleburgh²³ (about 4 miles east of Burston). It is generally believed to be the Christening record of Stephen Barker later known as Stephen Barker "of Burston." If Stephen was buried in July of 1785 and born in May of 1736, his stated age of 49 at the time of burial would be a perfect match with the Christening date of the Stephen of Dickleburgh. If it was earlier in the year than his burial (1785 - 49 = 1736). Since it appears that Stephen's burial was in 1787, there may not be a match with the Stephen Christened in Dickleburgh. However, where and when Stephen of Burston was born does not negatively affect the main premise of this report, namely that William Barker of Shelfanger is not the William Barker, son of Stephen & Judith (Wragg) Barker.

Pertinent excerpts from the admon of Stephen Barker of Burston, dated 13 Aug 1787 follow:

¹⁸ Burston PR Burials 1764-1812 FS image # 5.


¹⁹ Stephen's burial entry appears to have been added at a later date as it is not shown in the Archdeacon's Transcripts of Burston during the years 1785-1789. Thus, the entry on the PR was likely added after the ArchD transcript was made—which was usually once a year.

²⁰ As evidenced by the altered format and the fact that it does not appear in the ArchD or the Bp's Transcript.

²¹ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[1764] FS image 74.

²² Family History Library Film #167209.

²³ Stephen son of Robert & Alice Barker of Dickleburgh (Dickleburgh PR BMB 1540-1738 FS image 100).

 KNOW all Men by these Presents That We *Mary Barker* of Burston
in the County of Norfolk widow and *William Barker*
of Burston aforesaid Farmer

THE Condition of this Obligation is such, That if the abovebound *Mary Barker*
Widow Relict and
and Administrat^r of all and singular the Goods, Rights, Credits and Chattels, of
Stephen Barker late of Burston aforesaid in the
said archdeaconry Deceased

the said Court, making request to have it allowed, and being thereunto required, do render
and deliver the said Letters of Administration (Approbation of such Testament being
first had and made) in the said Court: Then this Obligation to be void and of no
Effect, or else to remain in full Force and Virtue. *Mary Barker*

Sealed and Delivered
in the Presence of

Martha Scott
George

William Barker
his & Mark

and render a true and just account thereof, when she shall be thereunto law-
fully called.

— *Mary Barker*

Sworn at *Dife*
the *13th* Day of *August* 1787
before me *Nathl. Scott* Surrogate

Figure 3. Four images of key sections of Stephen Barker's Administration dated 13 August 1787.²⁴ The 3rd and 4th sections show what appears to be two signatures of Mary Barker²⁵ (no doubt Stephen's 3rd wife), and William Barker's mark (almost certainly Stephen's son by his 1st wife Judith Wragg), a farmer of Burston.²⁶

The Admon indicates Mary Barker of Burston was Stephen's widow and relict. Also mentioned on the Admon was **William Barker of Burston**, a farmer, almost certainly, this

²⁴ FHL film 167209.

²⁵ In the two places where Mary's signature is called for, the "m" in Mary is written in lower case and the letters "arker" in Barker are almost superscripted, like "B^{ar}k^{er}".

²⁶ FHL film 167209.

was a reference to William the son of Stephen Barker and Judith Wragg, (Stephen's first wife). This William appears to have been ~26 years old at the time.²⁷

In contrast, at the date of this Admon (13 Aug 1787), **our William Barker & Jane seem to have been settled in Shelfanger and raising their family there:**

1. Rhoda, dau of William & Jane Barker, Christened in Shelfanger 31 Jul 1785.²⁸
2. Leonard, son of William & Jane Barker, Christened in Shelfanger 25 Sep 1791.²⁹
3. The Parish records show that most of the rest of William & Jane's 8 children were Christened there as well. (I've been unable to find any record of the Christening of either William, or Frederick).
4. I haven't found any parish records indicating our Wm was a farmer. He was called a work-gang leader in the notes of a missionary, Joseph Barker, who in 1896 interviewed Onan Brown of Shelfanger, who said he had known our William, and that he was a relative of the Barkers of Shelfanger, Diss, and Bressingham.³⁰ Onan's mother's maiden name was Barker³¹ (or Parker). According to our William's burial record, he was a "labourer" which fits with what Onan Brown told Joseph Barker in 1896. Further, if our William was really married to Jane Knowles, as is apparently the right connection, he was a weaver (at least at age 17).³²

Thus, the details found on the Admon—particularly the reference to this Wm being a farmer "of Burston" (at the time our William & Jane were residing in Shelfanger) provide powerful evidence that this William, son of Stephen & Judith (Wragg) Barker, is not our William. Our William apparently married Jane Knowles, in Winfarthing³³ (~2 miles north of Shelfanger) and raised their family in Shelfanger.³⁴

I found one other mention in the Burston Parish records of a William Barker, he was Christened 25 Dec 1753.³⁵ He appears to have been a second or third cousin of the William, son of Stephen & Judith who was Christened 18 Jan 1761, therefore the William Christened in 1753 is not likely the William of Burston mentioned in Stephen Barker's admon. I could find no other marriages, burials, or children attributed to a William

²⁷ This is likely the Wm who was Christened 18 Jan 1761 William, son of Stephen and Judith Barker. If so, since the Admon was dated 13 Aug 1787, he was 26 at the time of the Admon (1787 - 1761 = 26) assuming his Christening date was close to his birth—which was usually the case.

²⁸ Shelfanger ArchD BMB 1725-1812 FS image 45.

²⁹ Shelfanger ArchD BMB 1725-1812 FS image 54.

³⁰ Joseph Barker's letter dated 25 Oct 1895, Cheltenham, England.

³¹ Gary Barker Hansen and his wife Helen shared a digital copy of Joseph Barker's missionary Journals and letters (made by his sister—the originals are now in Special Collections at the Utah State University).

Joseph collected some nice information and Gary and Helen and their family have done well to preserve it.

³² FHL film 167209. See my research summary on William and Jane Barker of Shelfanger.

(www.davidmckaybarker.com, genealogy, William & Jane Barker).

³³ Norfolk Marriage Bonds, Norfolk Court FS image 254. I also obtained a copy of the PR page showing the marriage entry of William Parker and Jane Knowles on 17 Nov 1782 from the Norfolk Records Office (NRO) as recorded their marriage in the Winfarthing PR.

³⁴ See the Shelfanger PRT pp. 20, 22, 23, 25, & 26.

³⁵ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[sb64] image # 69.

Barker in Burston. So, although at the time of Stephen's admon, a William Barker was described as "a farmer" and "of Burston", and another Wm Barker was Christened in Burston,³⁶ if either of them married, or had children, they must have done so elsewhere.

The William Barker who was the son of Stephen and Judith (Wragg) Barker seems a better candidate for being the William Barker who, two months after the date of the Admon, was described in his marriage Banns as being "of Alburg."³⁷ This William of Alburg married Jane Peck of Redenhall on 11 Oct 1787.³⁸ They had five sons, who were Christened in Alburgh between 1788 and 1795 (Alburg is about 8 mi EEN of Burston):

1. William son of William Barker and Jane, late Peck, spinster.
b: 26 Sep 1788, Chr: 26 Oct 1788³⁹
banns: 18 Oct 1812 William Barker & Elizabeth Layan both single of Alburgh⁴⁰
2. **Stephen** son of William Barker and Jane, late Peck.
b: 13 Dec 1789, Chr: 10 Jan 1790⁴¹
3. John, s of William Barker and Jane, late Peck, spinster.
b: 25 July 1791, Chr: 21 Aug 1791⁴²
4. James, s of William Barker and Jane, late Peck, spinster.
b: 16 June 1793, Chr: 7 July 1793⁴³
5. Peter, s of William Barker and Jane, late Peck, spinster.
b: 21 Mar 1795, Chr: 22 March 1795⁴⁴

Note: The 1st two children of this William Barker of Alburgh and Jane Peck Barker were named William & Stephen suggesting "William of Alburgh" may be the son of Stephen Barker & Judith Wragg of Burston. The names fit with the fairly popular practice of naming the 1st son after his father and the 2nd after his grandfather.

This Jane Peck Barker was buried 9 Aug 1795 at Alburgh age 29⁴⁵ four and one half months after their last child was born. This William Barker "of Alburgh" was buried on 15 Jan 1797, at age 36⁴⁶ only 1 ½ years after his wife. He had apparently remarried after Jane's death because his burial record states he was "a married man" rather than a widower.⁴⁷

³⁶ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[sb64] image # 69.

³⁷ Alburgh PR Banns 1738-1809 FS image 13. It appears that residency may have been established in as little as 4 weeks (based on statements on others' marriage records).

³⁸ Redenhall ArchD 1725-1812 FS image 112.

³⁹ Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS image 55.

⁴⁰ Alburgh PR Banns 1810-1847 FS i#4.

⁴¹ Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS i# 55.

⁴² Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS i# 59.

⁴³ Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS i# 61

⁴⁴ Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS i# 63.

⁴⁵ Alburgh PR BMB 1738-1809 FS i# 81. FS Alburgh PR Burials 1783-1812 FS i# 3

⁴⁶ Alburgh PR Bur1793-1812 image #3.

⁴⁷ The burial record lists him as 36 years old, a labourer, and a married man. Alburgh PR Bur1793-1812 image #3.

Based on the burial record of this Wm of Alburgh, (15 Jan 1797 at the age of 36)⁴⁸ his birth date would have been about 1761 (1797-36=1761). Thus, William Barker “of Alburgh” seems a perfect match for William, son of Stephen Barker & Judith Wragg Barker who was Christened 18 Jan 1761.⁴⁹

If this William (husband of Jane Peck) really was the son of Stephen & Judith Barker of Burston, (which seems a better fit) he may have been a cousin, but not our direct ancestor, and thus neither Stephen nor Judith (Wragg) Barker would have been our ancestors. (In Elwood I. Barker’s research notes he mentioned his concern that none of the children or grandchildren of our William Barker were named Stephen, thus casting doubt on the connection between our William of Shelfanger and William of Burston, son of Stephen & Judith.)

William Barker & Jane Peck’s Banns were posted on 9, 16, and 20 of September, 1787, in Alburgh as well as Redenhall⁵⁰ where the Parish record states: William Barker of Alburgh singleman & Jane Peck of this parish married in this church by Banns. William & Jane, their marks, 11 Oct (1787).⁵¹

I searched the Parish register of Alburg, Baptisms Marriages & Burials from 1747 thru 1800 and found no Barkers, Parkers, Knowles, or Pecks other than the Banns of this William Barker “of Alburg” and Jane Peck, the Christenings of their 5 sons, Jane’s burial 9 Aug 1795, and William’s 17 Jan 1797. So, although they were in the Parish of Alburgh between 1787 and 1797, I could find no mention of William’s birth, Christening, parents, or other potential ancestors in Alburgh. Thus, he must have been a transplant from another Parish (and Burston seems a likely prospect).

Note: Other than the two Stephen Barkers mentioned above (Stephen Barker of Burston who was apparently Christened in Dickleburgh and Stephen the son of William of Alburgh), I’ve only found four other Stephen Barkers in the area. One was Stephen Barker in Dickleburgh, who married Sarah Gower in 1700⁵² and had a child in 1701.⁵³ Stephen & Ann Barker of Little Dunham (about 25 miles NW of Burston) who had a son named William Christened 19 Mar 1758.⁵⁴ Stephen William Barker, son of John Barker and Mary (late Mary Why) was born 9 Jan 1790 and Christened 3 Feb 1790 in Diss.⁵⁵ Stephen Barker and Mary who had a daughter named Mary who was christened 18 Mar 1760 in Long Stratton (about 7 mi NNE of Burston). None of these Stephen Barkers seem to be closely connected to Stephen Barker of Burston.

⁴⁸ Alburgh PR Bur1793-1812 image #3.

⁴⁹ Burston PR BMB 1656-1754[1764] image 74.

⁵⁰ Alburgh PR Banns 1754-1809 FS image 13 and Redenhall ArchD BMB 1725-1812 FS image 112.

⁵¹ Redenhall ArchD BMB 1725-1812 FS image 112.

⁵² Dickleburgh PR BMB 1540-1738 FS image 84.

⁵³ Dickleburgh PR BMB 1540-1738 FS image 85.

⁵⁴ Little Dunham PR BMB 1757-1783 FS image 2.

⁵⁵ Diss PRT, p. 309. (*The Parish Registers of Diss 1551-1837*. Transcribed by Jackie Crosby et al. 1987, p. 309.)

Another detail noted by Price & Associates that appears to cast more doubt on the connection of our William Barker to Stephen and Judith (Wragg) Barker of Burston is that neither name “Stephen” nor “Judith” was passed down to anyone in our Barker family during at least the next two generations. They noted: “It is certainly possible that such a naming pattern neglect could have occurred, but not probable.” They also noted that the name Judith Barker does show up again in the Christening of Judith Barker, daughter of William and Elizabeth 17 Nov 1800⁵⁶ (although I haven’t confirmed a Christening or birth of this Judith from the parish records of Burston).

Furthermore, if our William Barker of Shelfanger was really married to Jane Knowles (which appears to be the correct connection),⁵⁷ then he was definitely not the son of Stephen Barker. The father of William Parker (Barker) who married Jane Knowls was named John Parker. This is made clear by the marriage bond of William Parker & Jane Knowles which was dated 17 Nov 1782.⁵⁸ It states that William Parker (17 years old) of Wymondham & Jane Knowls (21 years old “and upward”) of Winfarthing were to be married at Winfarthing. Wm signed with a scratchy mark like a large backward “c”. And, and accompanying affidavit from his “natural and lawful father” John Parker granted permission for Wm, a minor, to marry Jane Knowles in Winfarthing).⁵⁹

The names Barker and Parker are clearly not the same to those of us who know how to spell, and they likely have different derivations. However, most, if not all of us, who are surnamed Barker can attest to having been called Parker at one time or another. I remember my father, Clarence S. Barker, (a newspaper reporter) making special effort to enunciate the B in Barker to distinguish it from the P in Parker. No doubt some of our ancestors didn’t enunciate as well as my father, and since many of them signed their names with an “x” mark, it appears they didn’t know how to read or write, and thus didn’t know how to spell. For instance, my ancestor George Barker, son of William & Jane, signed his name on with an “x” mark on his Banns & Marriage records.

CONCLUSION

Although not unequivocal proof, it seems the data collected and referenced above is powerful evidence—sufficient to conclude that William Barker of Shelfanger, the husband of Jane, was not the son of Stephen Barker and Judith Wragg of Burston.

⁵⁶ P&A Dismuke (Barker) Research Report 11 Feb 2002, p. 1.

⁵⁷ If you’d like to see my research summary on William & Jane Barker of Shelfanger, you may do so on my website (www.davidmckaybarker.com) or email me for a copy at ddbarker@comcast.net.

⁵⁸ Norfolk Marriage Bonds, Norfolk Court FS image 254.

⁵⁹ Norfolk Marriage Bonds, Norfolk Court FS image 254. I obtained a copy of the page showing the entry recording their marriage in the Winfarthing PRs on 7 Nov 1782 from the Norfolk Records Office (NRO).