



Adamthwaite ...

Adam's clearing in the Eden Valley

This is an abridged version of an essay written by Sue for The Guild Certificate of Attainment in Advanced One-Name Studies.

by **Sue Mastel (Member 4698)**

My Adamthwaite ONS began life (like many others) in an attempt to knock down a brick wall in my own family history. Along the way, I have tried to find out more about the early origins of the surname, which all point to a tiny farmstead hidden in the Howgill Fells - part of the Upper Eden Valley of the old County of Westmorland. This article aims to record what I have discovered on my journey so far about those early Adamthwaites, and also explores a sample of 30 of the earliest surnames found in Ravenstonedale and tracks their presence in the parish in a variety of records from 1379 to 1911.

Alfred Wainwright (1907-1991) fellwalker, guidebook author and illustrator, described Adamthwaite in 'Walks on the Howgill Fells' thus:

"There are many attractively situated farmhouses in the side valleys of the Howgills, none more so than Adamthwaite, deep set amongst lovely trees and in scenery reminiscent of a Scottish glen. It is remote, unsuspected and rarely seen"



Adamthwaite Farm, and the Howgill Fells (photo Paula Healey)

Today, Adamthwaite still nestles beside Wandale Beck with the Howgill Fells rising all around. It is located in the Fell End Angle of Ravenstonedale Parish in the old County of Westmorland, but the only access is via a two and a half mile track over the fells, which is frequently impassable in winter. The current Ordnance Survey map shows Adamthwaite farmhouse (which was rebuilt in 1684 by Thomas Adamthwaite) as the only building at the site, however a map of 1770 shows four separate buildings clustered together. This explains information found amongst Ravenstonedale Manorial documents from the 16th and 17th centuries, where indentures record the names of tenant farmers living in several different properties at Adamthwaite. The Wandale valley was also on an ancient route from Carlisle south to Sedbergh. So

perhaps 500 years ago, with a small community of families living there and many passers-by, Adamthwaite did not feel quite as remote as it does today.

From the early indentures, details in Ravenstonedale parish records and Wills, it is apparent that many of the inhabitants living at Adamthwaite between 1568 and 1771 actually carried the surname Adamthwaite. Two typical baptism entries read:

11 Octobar 1585 Was bap Edmond Sonn to Willm Adamthwat of Adamthwat

3 Octobar 1586 Was bap Janatt the dawghter to myles ffothrgill of Adamthat and she was gottne in adulterry

There were also a number of families with other surnames living at Adamthwaite during this period - notably Fothergill, Taylor, Morland, Clemmison, Perkin, Fawcett, Chamberlain, Metcalf - and interestingly, from an examination of the Parish Registers, it is evident that a number of these other tenants had married Adamthwaite daughters shortly before their appearance as tenants at Adamthwaite. Was tenancy of land at Adamthwaite passed on to favoured sons-in-law as a form of dowry?

Meaning of the Surname Adamthwaite

In 'Place Names of Westmorland' it is suggested that the prefix refers to a person 'Adam' and the suffix to 'þveit' (clearing). Writing in 1657, Camden stated that 'Thwait' was a word "*only used in the North, in addition of Towns: some take it for a pasture from the Dutch 'hwoit'*". Some two hundred years later, in 'Patronymica Britannica' MA Lower offered several meanings for the termination 'Thwaite' including '*land reclaimed from a wood or forest*', '*rough marshy ground*', '*a pasture*', going on to say that "*the prefix seems sometimes to refer to the name of the settler who effected the clearing, as in Adamthwaite, Simonthwaite, ...*".

Of the 50+ surname dictionaries held at the Society of Genealogists' library, only Bardsley specifically defines the source of the surname Adamthwaite. He states that the surname is "*Local 'of Adamthwaite' (i.e. the clearing of Adam, the first settler probably in the 12th century) a small hamlet in Ravenstonedale, Westmorland*". David Hey discusses the regional element of many of the surnames that appear in the Westmorland Protestation Returns of 1641 that are "*derived from minor place-names with the Old Norse elements -thwaite, -beck or -gill*". Although Redmonds does not provide a meaning for the suffix 'thwaite' he does give a very helpful explanation as to how this Scandinavian element in place-names and surnames evolved into such a great variety of endings (e.g. *-what, -fitt, -foot, -forth, or even -wood or -worth*) due to a combination of the local pronunciation and the parish clerk's problems with spelling the consequent sound. Even today in Ravenstonedale, Adamthwaite is pronounced "Adamth't".

Despite the lack of guidance from modern experts, it seems safe to conclude that Adamthwaite is indeed a locational surname. Furthermore, my own distribution analysis of the surname since earliest records definitely points to the origin being Adamthwaite in Westmorland. The reference to woods in a location which is now largely bare fells might appear to be contradictory, but according to Burns and Nicholson, the fells in this part of Westmorland were forested until “*long after the Conquest*”, so it would be helpful to learn precisely when they were first cleared, as this might provide a clue as to when Adamthwaite (the place) took its name. Early maps show Mallerstang Forest very nearby, but the lack of accuracy means it is hard to tell how far the forest extended up the Wandale valley.

Earliest Mentions of the Surname

To date, the earliest definite use of Adamthwaite as a surname that I have discovered is the record of the ordination of **Roland Adamthwayte of Carlisle diocese** as a priest at New College Chapel, Oxford on 28 Feb 1461. However, there is also a series of intriguing entries in the ‘Pipe Roll of Cumberland and Westmorland’ from 1235 until 1247, which mention an **Adam Thwayt** paying fines to **Alessandri de Kirkeby Irloc** (in the earliest entries the name is written Adam Cayt or Kayet, evolving to Thwayt). Could this be the first use as a surname, or does the name merely describe some other Adam that lived in some other clearing? I have to accept that I shall probably never find the answer to that question.

The earliest parish records for Ravenstonedale date back to 1571, and it is clear that the Adamthwaites were well established in the parish by this time. Members of the family continued to appear amongst the ten most frequently recorded surnames in a variety of documents relating to Ravenstonedale for the next two centuries.

Amongst the holdings of the Cumbria Archives there is a document from 1568 detailing the tenants of Lord Wharton, written following the Dissolution when the manor, which had previously been held by Watton Priory, was transferred first to the local church, then to the Wharton estates. This document provides details of the names of tenants as well as the property they held, and confirms that Martin Futhergill, Leonard Futhergill, Robert Adamtwhat and Rolland Adamtwayt were all tenants holding properties at Adamthwaite; and Richard, Henry and William Adamtwhat were all tenants at Artlegarth - located along the track leading to Ravenstonedale Town. It seems that all holders of the surname were living at one or other of these two farms at this time. More research is needed to establish both the first mention of the hamlet Adamthwaite as well as the first use of the name as an inherited surname.

The 1379 Poll Tax

Writing about the 1379 Poll Tax Returns for the West Riding of Yorkshire, Rogers stated: “*There are strong indications from these individuals that, although the acquisition of inherited surnames was still incomplete, it was not a particularly recent innovation in Yorkshire at that time.*” My analysis of the Ravenstonedale Poll Tax Returns for 1379 seems to indicate that the situation just across the county border in Westmorland was at a similar stage.

I was disappointed to find that there did not appear to be any individuals appearing on the 1379 Poll Tax for Ravenstonedale or adjacent parishes (or across the county border in West

Yorkshire) whose names could be interpreted as Adamthwaite, however there are some surnames from 1379 that do appear in later documents about Ravenstonedale (see Table I). There were 86 persons listed (sharing 60 names), although some of the entries were too damaged to be transcribed. The list includes the following Locative names -

- de Morthwayt** - this farm is located close to Adamthwaite
- de Askfell -Ash Fell** - another farm in Ravenstonedale named after a nearby hill
- de Hogill** - presumably Howgill, the fell beyond the village
- de Dent** - a nearby village across the border in West Yorkshire
- de Raysbek** - a village near Ravenstonedale
- de Ravenstandale**

there are a few Toponymic names -

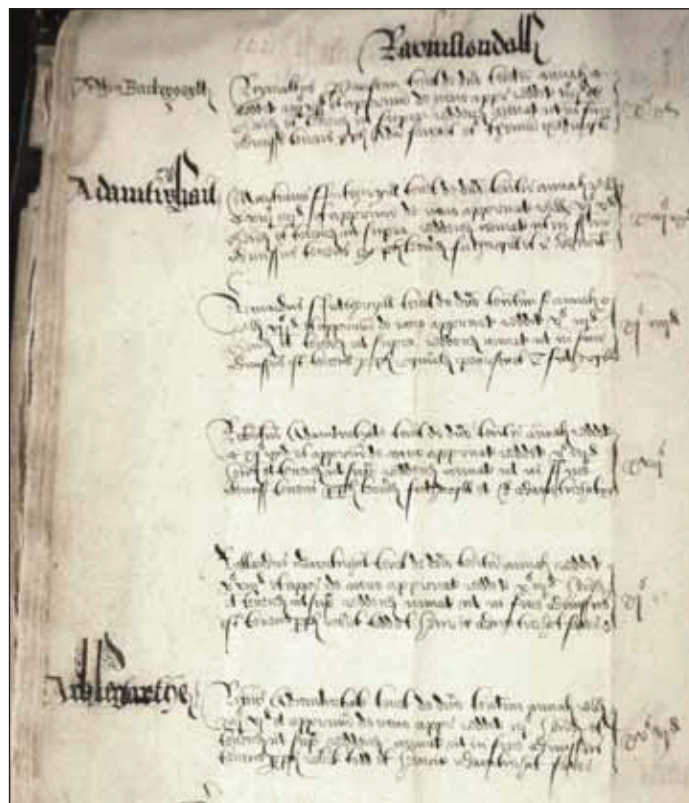
- del Grene** - though this could refer to an part of Ravenstonedale anciently called The Grene
 - del More
 - de Caldcotes
 - Cowhous
 - de Sandpool
- a number of Occupational names -
- Oxhird, Punder, Palfreyman, Clerk, Cook, Brewster, Tailleur, Walker**

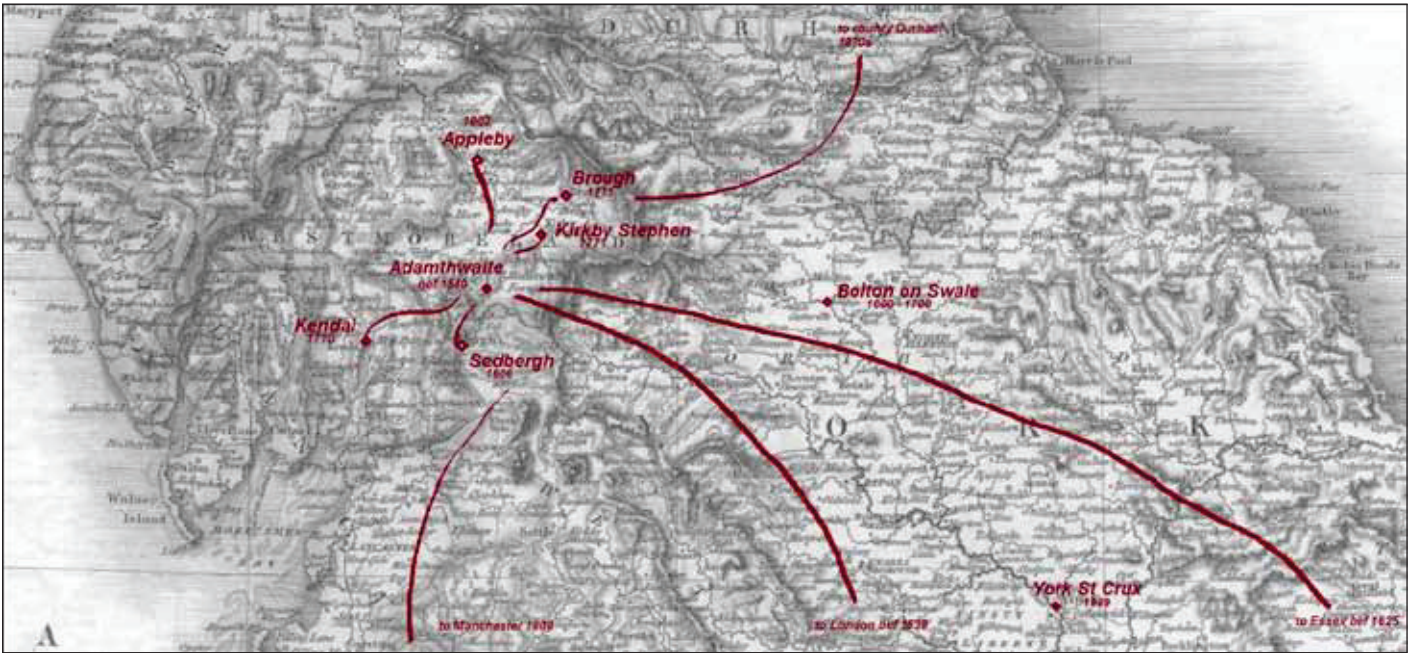
just a few Nicknames -

- Kyngeson, **Pacock, Todd**, Squyer
- and quite a lot derived from Personal names - including a number of women who had the suffix ‘mayden’-
- Ibbotson, Dimotson, Stevenson, Bryant, Walkerson, Macolmeson, Dobson, Sysson, Benson, Sanderson, Henryson, Atkynson, Jakmayden, Johnmayden, Henrymayden, Atkindoghter

The names in bold type were all continuously present in Ravenstonedale for the following four hundred years.

[A page from the 1568 document showing details for Adamthwaite and Artlegarth \(reproduced with permission of the Trustees of the Lowther Estate\)](#)





Approximate dates of early migrations of Adamthwaite families to local towns and further afield

Mapping the Adamthwaite Surname

From my research, it seems that in the mid 16th century the earliest ADAMTHWAITEs were to be found in just two locations within Ravenstonedale parish and the majority of records remain in Ravenstonedale for the next 200 years. However, wills and parish registers reveal the following incidence within the British Isles:

- In York St Crux there were two baptisms in 1589; between 1600-1700 there was at least one family group around Bolton upon Swale, Yorkshire; and a few families also started to appear in the Sedbergh parish records in 1686 (though I believe they came from Ravenstonedale)
- In 1625 a John Adamthwaite, woollen draper, died in Maldon, Essex (from the family members named in his will I believe he also came from Ravenstonedale)
- In 1638 the first Adamthwaite record was found in London - at least three families appear in records over the next 75 years; their origin is unknown and no descendants seem to have survived beyond the 18th century
- Not until the 1770s do we find any records of Adamthwaites in neighbouring Westmorland parishes (apart from occasional marriages), but around this time a number of families from various lines started to settle in Brough, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby, Kendal and in Bowes in Yorkshire
- In 1793 members of the Sedbergh line moved to London, followed ten years later by members of two Ravenstonedale lines arriving in London and Manchester
- In 1841, there were still about a third of all Adamthwaites living in Westmorland, but in Ravenstonedale there was just one servant girl left: even she had moved away by 1851). By 1911, there were just six Adamthwaite individuals living in the whole of Westmorland.

The map used to illustrate the early migration of families from Ravenstonedale is based on Pinkerton's map of 1811.

Frequency of the surname over time

Adamthwaite has always been a rare surname: I have found records of UK births/baptisms of only 1037 individuals between 1572 and 2004 and have been able to put 95% of individuals born between 1700 and 1925 into reconstructed family trees. There have never been as many as 200 individuals in any census:

England & Wales census:	Number of individuals located
1841	85
1851	96
1861	122
1871	139
1881	158
1891	181
1901	173
1911	183

For England and Wales, Public Profiler estimates there were 116 Adamthwaites alive in 1998, and according to the ONS database, there were 132 people holding the surname in 2002. The findings for worldwide distribution according to Public Profiler look far less reliable, in particular as the known population in Australia is missing altogether.

Migration to the New World

The 1850s saw the first Adamthwaites leaving England for good and setting off for the gold fields of Australia and the prairies of north America. Most of those early adventurers found success in the New World and they produced large families, with the result that there are now probably more Adamthwaites living in Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand than there are in England. We have fairly good coverage of these families until the early 20th century, but little modern data.

So this is my next target ... to discover more about the Adamthwaite descendants still living in the New World, and learn if they found their own Eden. ■

This is an abridged version of Sue's essay, for which she was awarded a Distinction. The full unabridged 8-page version, including additional tables, figures, and detailed source citations is available at http://www.one-name.org/journal/vol11-2_article1.html.

