

This is the twenty-eighth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

HOW DNA TESTS REVEALED THE MYSTERY OF THOMAS LINCOLN THE MILLER

When I was preparing material for the Lincoln Exhibition, I was faced with a problem that I was unable to resolve at the time. This problem has now turned into a mystery!

The sons of Edward Lincoln who helped to found New Hingham

I had concentrated on the story of Richard Lincoln of Swanton Morley and the controversy that was caused by his will in which he effectively left all his estate to the children of his fourth marriage. This controversy was a contributory factor in the decision by three of the sons (Thomas, Daniel and Samuel) of Richard's eldest son Edward, who were living in Hingham, to go to America and to help to found "New Hingham".

Now there were quite a few Lincolns in New Hingham, several of whom shared the same Christian name, and in order to distinguish between them, they were referred to by their occupations. Thus the above three sons were called Thomas *the Weaver*, Daniel *the Sergeant* and Samuel *the Weaver*. The problem that I faced was to identify the other three Thomases. I found out that Thomas *the Husbandman* (and his brother Stephen) came from Wymondham, and that Thomas *the Cooper* came from the west country. This left Thomas *the Miller*. Now there are no Parish Records of Hingham before 1600, although those of Swanton Morley go back somewhat further. The only Thomas Lincoln of about the right age that I was able to find was the grandson of John Lincoln, Richard's brother. Now John's eldest son, Thomas, was baptised in Swanton Morley in June 1576, and this Thomas's third son, another Thomas, was baptised in Swanton Morley on 28 December 1600. This makes him much the same age as Thomas *the Weaver* from Hingham. So, in the lack of any other candidates, I tentatively identified him as Thomas *the Miller*. Indeed, there are some websites which state this as a fact.

The American DNA testing programme

Then, half-way through the exhibition, the inevitable happened: an energetic American lady, called Bonny Cook, who was steeped in Lincoln genealogy, happened upon the exhibition by accident. She left me a polite little note saying how much she had enjoyed the exhibition, but adding that she had DNA evidence that Thomas *the Miller* could not be John Lincoln's grandson. It turned out that she was taking part in quite an ambitious exercise in which the DNA of various modern descendants of the Hingham Lincolns was being measured and compared. What was being measured was the Y-DNA, which is only passed down the male line.

The test used was the SNP Test, which tests for certain Y-DNA locations which have very low mutation rates. The various Lincolns were identified as belonging to a limited number of different "haplogroups", i.e. groups of people who share a common ancestor, with what is termed a single nucleotide polymorphism, or SNP (pronounced "Snip"). The SNP test is used to confirm that a certain individual is a member of a particular haplogroup.

To identify them, haplogroups are assigned letters of the alphabet, for example 'R', and subdivisions of these groups are given additional number and letter combinations, for example R1b1.

The results obtained were as follows:

The haplogroups to which the various Lincolns in New Hingham belonged

Member of the Lincoln Family	Haplogroup
Thomas <i>the Weaver</i> (and hence his brothers Daniel <i>the Husbandman</i> , and Samuel <i>the Weaver</i>)	R1b1b2
Thomas <i>the Cooper</i>	T.....
Thomas <i>the Miller</i>	G2a3b
Thomas <i>the Husbandman</i> (and hence his brother Stephen)	R1b1b2
Daniel <i>the Sergeant</i>	R1b1b2

Don't worry about the complicated numbers, just think of them as different groups of people.

You can see that Edward's son, Thomas *the Weaver*, and hence his brothers, were members of the haplogroup R1b1b2. Now, Thomas *the Husbandman*, and his brother Stephen, who came from Wymondham, were also members of the same haplogroup. There is some uncertainty as to the background of Daniel the Sergeant, but again he is shown to be a member of the same haplogroup. Thomas *the Cooper* came from the west country, so it is not surprising that he is from a different haplogroup.

The odd thing is the fact that Thomas *the Miller*, who I thought came from Swanton Morley, belongs to haplogroup G2a3b, so his ancestors were totally distinct from those of the R1b1b2 group. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that he did not come from Swanton Morley, but, if he did, then it was from a totally different line.

The significance of haplogroup G2a3b

Bonnie Cook got quite excited about this, because apparently very few men of this group are found in Britain. Now, haplogroup G is present among many ethnic groups in Eurasia, usually in comparatively low numbers; it is most common in the Caucasus, the Iranian Plateau and Anatolia; in Europe it is mainly found in Greece, Italy, Iberia, the Tyrol and Bohemia. *But it is extremely rare in Northern Europe.* All recent studies place the origins of haplogroup G in the Middle East and date it some 10-20,000 years BC. We can, of course be rather more specific about the particular subgroup that interests us, haplogroup G2a3b. However, this haplogroup was only identified in mid-2009, and evidence is still very limited.

Bonnie stated that today members of haplogroup G2a3b form some 30% of the population in South Ossetia (which you may recall declared independence from Georgia in 1990). However, it is still uncertain where this group came from originally. She claimed that this haplogroup can still be found in a number of places on the frontiers of the old Roman Empire, and suggested that the line might perhaps have come through a Roman auxiliary. A lot of work is still being done on this topic.

Conclusions

All that really matters to us is that we now know that John Lincoln's grandson, Thomas, who lived in Swanton Morley cannot be Thomas *the Miller*. It is possible that evidence may eventually emerge showing us where Thomas *the Miller* did come from, but in the meantime I shall have to see if I can find any evidence that our Thomas stayed on in Swanton Morley.