
Whatecroft & Watecroft Surname

The 14C records also mention the 'Whatecroft' surname. I decided to explore this information as they refer to an Adam de Whatecroft and his family. The first reference I found to Adam de Whatecroft, a merchant, is mentioned in the Calendar of Patent Rolls on the 3 March 1310 when he was given safe conduct for one year to travel within England with Thomas de Whatecroft.

It is possibly that Thomas and Adam are the same Adam and Thomas mentioned in other records between 1311 and 1340 in Staffordshire area. Adam de Whatecroft lived in Northfelt (Northfield) which is now a suburb of Birmingham. In a document held at the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive in Stratford upon Avon Adam de Whatecroft of Northfelt was one of the witnesses to a gift with warranty from John, son of Philip de Teshale, to Thomas Miller of Northfeld on the 21 April 1311. Adam had a close connection with the Lyttleton family and he is mentioned several times in the book the 'Charters & Muniments at Hagley' (Lyttleton Family) by Isaac Herbert Jeayes between 1311 and 1322. The surname being spelt both 'de Wetecroft' and 'de Whatecroft'. On the 27 December 1327 Adam (de Watecroft) with others is mentioned in the Patent Rolls when they were granted a pardon for a fine for malicious trespass in Worcester at the request of Roger de Mortno. Adam appears to have had some standing in his community. He is mentioned on the Subsidy Rolls for Harborne and Smethwick, Staffordshire in 1327 and again in 1332., The subsidy was a form of taxation based on a fraction of the value of moveable goods that became the main stay of Medieval taxation.

The documents also identify other member of Adam's family. Adam de Whatecroft did have a son Thomas who is mentioned in Patent Rolls in 1323 and the Lyttleton papers in 1340. Adam's daughter Joan and her husband Henry Sweter are referred to in the Patent Rolls dated 2 June 1363. Joan is described as the daughter of "Adam de Whatecroft of Northfield". Adam also had a son Nicholas who is identified in the Lyttleton Papers in 1339.

Adam's son Thomas had a son also called Thomas and is referred to as Thomas junior when he and others sued John Mai, for breaking into their close at West Bromwych in 1390. It is possible that this is the Thomas referred to on the 10 May 1382 the Abbot and Convent of Halesoweyn leased Thomas Whatecroft of Horbourne, 'of a moiety of lands in Hyebastern in Rugacre, with eight butts of land, the moiety of a plot of meadow land and the moiety of a field called Le Beorenastern'. There are other references to the Whatecroft surname during the 14C & 15C. The Plea Rolls also mention a John Whatecroft in 1360 and William de Whatecroft of Yerdeleye (Yardley, Birmingham) in 1378. A William Whatecroft lived at Lea Hall which is near to Yardley in 1379. In 1398 Roger Whatecroft of Birmingham is mentioned three times in the Patent Rolls. Initially I had thought Roger was not connected with Staffordshire. However, a Roger Whatecroft and his son John are mentioned in the Plea Rolls of 1431 in connection the Darlaston family of Darlaston, Staffordshire. The case heard at the court of Chancery refers to land in Benteley, and the manor of Darlaston and the advowson of the church of Darlaston, Staffordshire. There are other reference to a John Watecroft in the Staffordshire records between 1416 and 1448. In 1421 he entered a plea for Nicholas Thycknes and his wife Elizabeth to return land in Darlaston, Wednesbury and Benteleye 'which they had unjustly desiesed John'. John and his wife Joan appeared to have lived in West Bromwich but he also owned land in Harborne and Wednesbury. John Whatecroft (Watecroft) was the Kings Escheator in 1422. This may account for the number of references to him amongst the documents at this time.

The Patent Rolls in the time of Henry VI (1429-36) list the Gentry of each county that have been selected by the knights as being the most responsible guardians of the peace. They were to be summoned to take the oath against maintaining peace-breakers. In the portion referring to Staffordshire John Whatecroft of Harborne, esquire, is mentioned.

The English muster rolls 1369-1453 (Hundred Year War) held at the National Archives at Kew have been transcribed as part of the AHRC research project into the soldier in later medieval England. From the database online there are no references to Williscroft or one of its variants. However, there are three references to the surname Whatecroft. In 1360 a John Whatecroft was an archer employed in 'keeping of the seas' under John, Lord Neville. In 1404 Henry Whatecroft is mentioned twice as an archer in the Welsh Garrison under the command of Sir Rustin de Villa Nova.

A search of the International Genealogical Index (IGI) and other databases available online has not revealed references to the above names. It is possible that Whatecroft and Watercroft may have devolved to Wheatcroft or Whitcroft.

First Name	Surname	Date	Place	County	Document	Source
Adam	de Whatecroft	1310	Westminster	LND	Patent Rolls	Calander of Patent Rolls: E II, Vol 1, p214
Thomas	de Whatecroft	1310	Westminster	LND	Patent Rolls	Calander of Patent Rolls: E II, Vol 1, p214
Adam	de Whatecroft	1311	Northfelt	WOR	Gift with warranty	Shakespeare Centre: ER139/31 21 Apr 1311
Adam	de Whatecroft	1311	Frankley	WOR	Release	Birmingham City Council:MS 3279/351117
Adam	de Watercroft	1311	Frankley	WOR	Grant	Lyttleton Papers
Adam	de Whatecroft	1315	Northfelt	WOR	Gift with warranty	Shakespeare Centre: ER139/32 21 Dec 1315
Thomas	de Whetecroft	1323	Northfelt	WOR	Grant	Birmingham City Archives: MS 3279/351143
Adam	de Watercrofte	1327	Harborne & Smethick	STS	Lay Subsidy	SRS, SRS VII 1886 pp234
Adam	de Watercrofte	1327	Worcester	WOR	Patent Rolls	Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1216-1452)
Adam	de Watercrofte	1333	Harborne	STS	Lay Subsidy	SRS Vol X 1889 p102
Nicholas	de Watercrofte	1339	Frankley	WOR	Grant 26/8/1339	Birmingham City Archives: MS 3279/351162
Adam	de Whetecroft	1340	Northfelt	STS	Plea Rolls 13 Ed III	SRS 1890 Vol XI p198
Thomas	de Whetecroft	1340	Harborne	STS	Plea Rolls	SRS 1890 Vol XI p198
John	Whatecroft	1360		STS	De Banco 33 E III Mich	SRS XII 1891 p172
Adam	de Whatecroft	1363	Northfelt	WOR	Patent Roll 237 E III	Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1216-1452)
Joan	de Whatecroft	1363	Worcester	WOR	Patent Roll 237 E III	Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1216-1452)
John	Whatecroft	1371	keeping of the seas		muster roll	TNAE101/31/17 m2
William	de Whatecroft	1378	Yardley	WOR	Grant 23 May 1378	Birmingham City Archives: MS 3375/427720
Thomas	Whatecroft	1382	Harborne	STS	Lease	Birmingham City Archives: MS 3279/351269
Thomas	Whatecroft	1390	West Bromwich	STS	De Banco Plea Rolls	SRS XV 1894 p19
Roger	Whatecroft	1398	Birmingham	WAR	Patent Roll 22 R II	Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1216-1452),
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Roger	Whatecroft	1398	Birmingham	WAR	Patent Roll 22 R II	Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1216-1452)
Henry	Whatecroft	1404	Garrisons	Wales	muster roll	TNA C47/2/49/19 m2
Henry	Whatecroft	1404	Carmarthen	Wales	muster roll	TNAE101/43/29 m3
John	Watercroft	1416	Harborne	STS	De Banco	SRS Vol 17, 1896
John	Whatecroft	1420	Harborne	STS	Escheator	SRS, Vol 12
John	Watercroft	1422	Harborne	STS	Plea Rolls	SRS 1896: Vol 17
John	Whatecroft	1422	Harborne	STS	De Banco	SRS 1896: Vol 17
John	Watercroft	1426-1456	Harborne	STS	Patent Rolls Henry VI	SRS 1908 Vol XI ns
John	Whatecroft	1422	Harborne	STS	Plea Rolls 9 H VI	SRS 1896: Vol 17
Roger	Whatecroft	1422	Harborne	STS	Plea Rolls 9 H VI	SRS 1896: Vol 17
John	Whatecroft	1440	Walsall	STS	Plea Rolls 18 H VI	SRS Vol III ns:1900
John	Whatecroft	1441	West Bromwich	STS	Plea Rolls 19 H VI	SRS Vol III ns:1900
John	Whatecroft	1448	West Bromwich	STS	Final Concords	SRS 1890 Vol XI p235
Joan	(Whatecroft)	1448	West Bromwich	STS	Final Concords	SRS, 1890 Vol XI
John	Whatecroft	1457	Tamworth	WAR	Case	Shakespeare Centre:DR 37/2/Box 83/12

References to the surname Whatecroft and Watercroft 1300-1500

SRS = "A Collection for the History of Staffordshire"