

Birth, parentage, marriage and death of John Wilkins

This brief evidences the details of the birth, parentage, marriage and death of John Wilkins.

Those details are –

Birth and baptism dates, and parentage, are undetermined.

Married to Sarah Smith on 14th December 1735 at Dunchurch, Warwickshire.

Buried in Dunchurch on 12th September 1786.

(The research for this brief was conducted in early 2023).

John's marriage

Given that Edward Wilkins was baptised on 13th May 1739 at Dunchurch to parents John and Sarah Wilkins (see the brief relating to Edward Wilkins), a search of Family Search's "England Marriages 1538-1973" database was conducted for the marriage of a John Wilkins to a Sarah in Warwickshire between 1710 and 1745. It returned no candidates.¹

However, the like search of Family Search's Warwickshire parish registers database, but nominating the location as Dunchurch, returned one Dunchurch marriage record only, that of a John Wilkins marrying a Sarah Smith on 14th December 1735, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VHXC-DM4>.²

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch record for John Wilkins. The record is titled "John Wilkins" and is categorized as "Vital • England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963". It includes a thumbnail image of a handwritten marriage record. The details listed are:

Name	John Wilkins
Sex	Male
Residence Place	Dunchurch
Spouse's Name	Sarah Smith
Spouse's Sex	Female
Spouse's Residence Place	Dunchurch
Marriage Date	14 Dec 1735
Marriage Place	Dunchurch, Warwickshire, England
Marriage Place (Original)	Dunchurch, Warwickshire, England
Event Type	Marriage

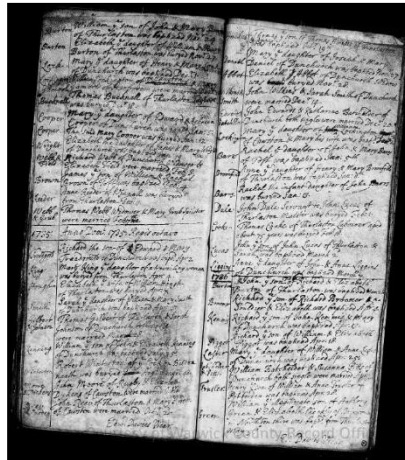
Below the details, there is a section for "John Wilkins's Spouses and Children" which lists Sarah Smith as the wife. To the right, there is a "Possible Family Tree Match" section showing a match with John Wilkins (Deceased • MGV-GQW) and an option to "ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE".

¹ See

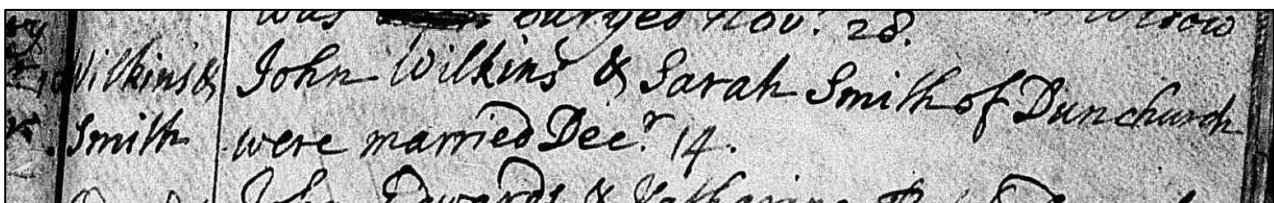
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1710&q.anyDate.to=1745&q.anyPlace=Warwickshire&q.givenName=John&q.givenName.exact=on&q.spouseGivenName=Sarah&q.spouseGivenName.exact=on&q.surname=Wilkins&q.surname.exact=on&q.collectionId=1473015>.

² URLs of Family Search records linked herein include "61903", presumably a specific member number, and likely need adapting to function.

This is the image of the Dunchurch parish register hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZK3-1BF?i=31&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVHXC-DM4>, image 32 of 44.



This is a close-up of the relevant entry.



In addition to Edward baptised on 13th May 1739, the database search also revealed that John and Sarah also had a Sarah baptised on 20th September 1741, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VHXC-8ND>, and a John baptised on 23rd November 1743, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VHXC-8VW>.

A manual image examination (referred to next) also located a Robert baptised to them on 27th March 1737, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZK3-1V6?i=32&cc=1462403>.

Although the Warwickshire parish registers database search returned only one marriage record for the period from 1710 and 1745, the images of Dunchurch's parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1730 to 1740 (images 28 to 36) were manually examined, and that review confirmed that there was no other record of a John Wilkins marrying a Sarah.³

Accordingly, John Wilkins married Sarah Smith in Dunchurch on the 14th December 1735.

(Notably, images 36 to 44 from 1740 until mid-1748 also had no other Wilkins records except the baptisms referred to above. That suggests that John and Sarah's family was the only Wilkins family in Dunchurch at that time. See the brief relating to Edward Wilkins for further evidence as to why that dearth of Wilkinses in Dunchurch continued into the second half of the 18th century).

³ There are discernability issues with the Dunchurch parish register records around about 1739-1740. See the brief relating to Edward Wilkins for a full explanation of the issues, the main one being that the surname column on the left hand side of the page was repeatedly cropped, and the surname is not repeated in the right hand column or is illegible. (The curate with poor handwriting mentioned in the explanation is the same as for the above marriage record, as the handwriting is the same). However, marriage records have two names in the left hand column, and they are mostly repeated in the right hand column (as, for example, in the marriage entries in the image above). For those that were not repeated, the left hand column plainly did not include a "Wilkins". Partially illegible entries, of which there was, for example, a number at the top of both pages in image 31, were also not "Wilkins" entries. The transcribed electronic index also assisted in deciphering more difficult entries. Accordingly, the comprehensiveness of the above-referred to manual search was not compromised.

John's burial

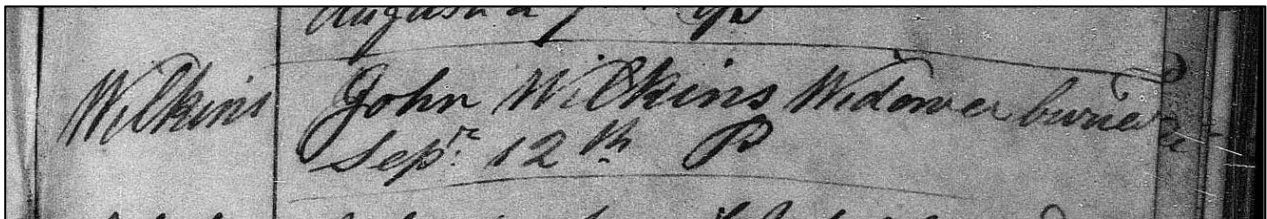
As noted in the brief relating to Edward Wilkins, the images of the Dunchurch register for "Baptisms, marriages, burials 1748-1812" are not electronically indexed, so the information in those images would not be captured in relevant Family Search databases.

Also, as noted in that brief, those images were manually examined from 1761 to 1812 for the burial of Edward Wilkins. During the course of that manual examination, two records of the burial of a John Wilkins were encountered, one for a burial on 12th September 1786, and another for a burial on 4th April 1799.

This is the image of the page listing the 1786 burial, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-64VQ-FW3?i=54&wc=X6W2-YWL%3A42645501%2C1583867309%2C1583869512&cc=1462403>, image 55 of 93.

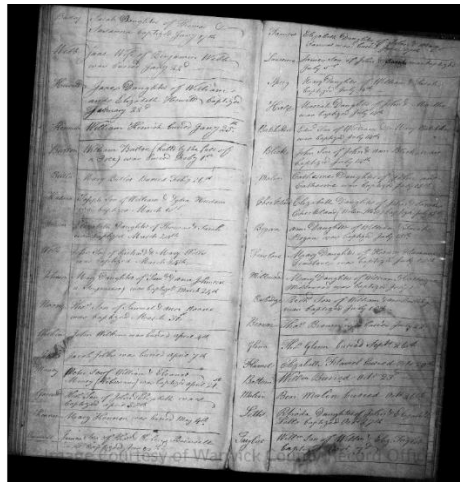


This is a close-up of the relevant record.

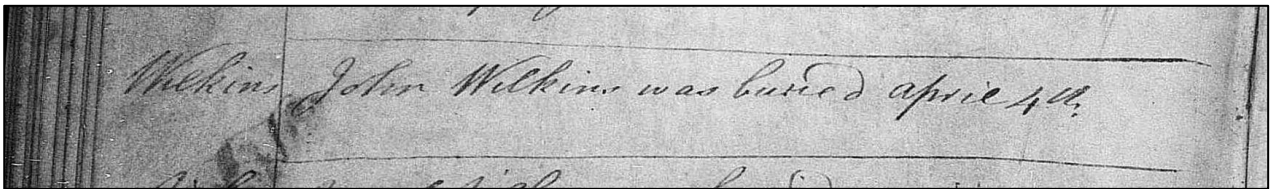


Notably, John is described as a widower.

This is the image of the page listing the 1799 burial, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-64VQ-NQW?i=80&wc=X6W2-YWL%3A42645501%2C1583867309%2C1583869512&cc=1462403>, image 75 of 93.



This is a close-up of the relevant record.

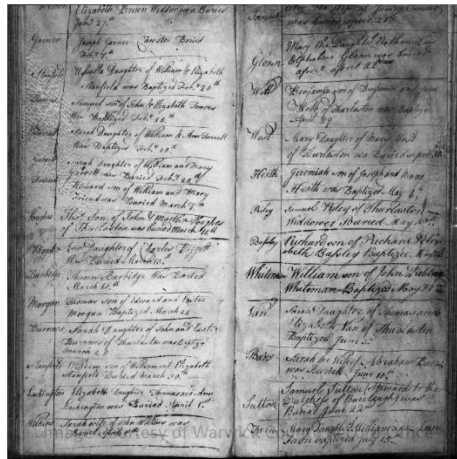


If John was at least about 20 when he married in 1735, as one would expect, he would have been born about 1715 or earlier. Accordingly, he would be at least about 71 in 1786, and at least about 84 in 1799. The former is more likely, given that life expectancy in England was about 35-40 in the 18th century.⁴

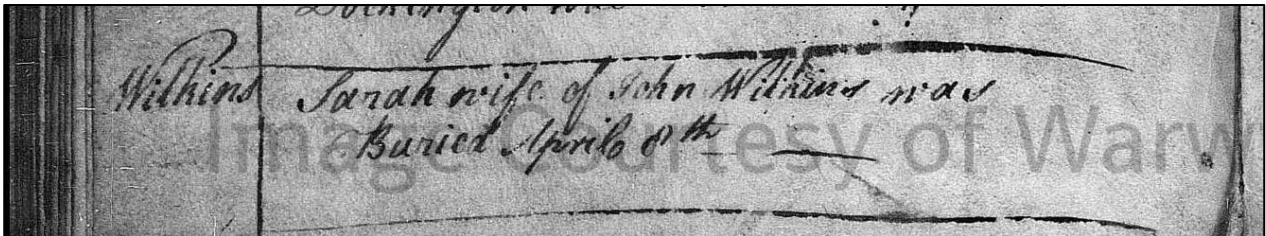
There was a dearth of Wilkinses in Dunchurch in the late 18th Century (see the brief relating to Edward Wilkins which reaches that conclusion), and also a probability that John and Sarah's family was the only Wilkins family in Dunchurch at the time (see above). That makes it likely that one of the 1786 and 1799 burials is John, and the other is John's son John baptised on 23rd November 1743, see above. It is more likely that John predeceased his son than not.

Also telling is that the 1786 entry describes John as a widower because, upon the above-referred to manual examination of the Dunchurch images from 1761 to 1812 for the burial of Edward Wilkins, it was noted that Sarah Wilkins, the "wife of John Wilkins", was buried in Dunchurch on 8th April 1781, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-64VQ-NRK?i=42&wc=X6W2-YWL%3A42645501%2C1583867309%2C1583869512&cc=1462403>, image 43 of 93.

⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_expectancy.



This is a close-up of the relevant entry.



This is verifiably the Sarah who married John in 1735, given the inherent unlikelihood that there was a second couple with the exact same names in Dunchurch at the time, which unlikelihood is heightened by reason of the dearth of Wilkinses in Dunchurch in the late 18th Century (see the brief relating to Edward Wilkins), and the probability that John and Sarah's family was the only Wilkins family in Dunchurch at the time (see above).

It is more likely that Sarah predeceased her husband by 5 years rather than 18 years. Sarah's baptism date and hence her exact age could not be determined, see the brief relating to her, but it is more likely than not that, at and during her marriage, her age approximated her husband's age. Even if that were not true, and her husband was some years older than her, it would be even more likely that her husband would die a shorter time, rather than a longer time, after her. Based on the examination of numerous marriage and birth records of the time, most husbands were then, as now, either older than, or similarly-aged to, their wives.

It is only in the less likely scenario of Sarah's husband being some years younger than her that the chance that the John buried in 1786 is her husband reduces, and the chance that the John buried in 1799 is her husband correspondingly increases, but nevertheless the former is still significantly more likely to be the case given the life expectancy of the times noted above.

The 1786 burial record specifically noted that the deceased was a widower. That accords with two known facts about the John who married Sarah, namely that he married, and that, by 1786, he was a widower. The 1799 burial record gives no like indication. Whilst that observation is of limited probative value, because the John buried in 1799 might also have been a widower but the fact was not recorded in his burial record, it still adds some weight to the proposition that the John buried in 1786 is more likely to have been Sarah's husband, especially given that a person's status as a widow or a widower was often seen to be named in their burial record.

Each of the above likelihoods on its own favours the proposition that the John Wilkins who is the father of Edward is the John buried in 1786. Taking all of these likelihoods together, one is propelled to conclude that that proposition is correct.

Accordingly, John Wilkins was buried in Dunchurch on 12th September 1786.

John's birth

Given that John married in Dunchurch in 1735, a Family Search all records search was conducted for the baptism of a John Wilkins in Dunchurch about 20 years earlier, but without success.

Although they are electronically indexed, and thus presumably the information in those indices is in Family Search's databases, the images of Dunchurch's parish register from 1698 to August 1719⁵ (images 2 to 17) were manually examined,⁶ and it was confirmed that no John Wilkins was baptised in Dunchurch during that time. Indeed, there was not one single Wilkins entry during that period, which reinforces the conclusion that John's family was the only family of Wilkinses in Dunchurch in the first half of the 18th century.

That lack of any baptism record for a candidate, and also the absence from Dunchurch of candidates who might be his parents, suggests that the John Wilkins who married in 1735 was born elsewhere.

Database searches for the baptism of a John Wilkins in Marton and Frankton at the time (and also one naming the location as Cawston) also returned no records.

A search in the Warwickshire parish register database for a John Wilkins baptised between 1690 and 1718 returned two baptisms, one in 1717 at Stoneleigh, 9 miles west of Dunchurch, and one in 1702 at Newton Regis, 25 miles north-north-west of Dunchurch. Neither seems of a more likely age than the other – one could say that, at a marriage in 1735, the first was somewhat young, and the second was somewhat old. The first was baptised in a location closer to Dunchurch, and is therefore a somewhat more likely candidate than the second, but selecting him on that basis alone would amount to speculation, as that fact on its own, and in the absence of any known Wilkins connection to Stoneleigh, is insufficiently probative.

Further, the comprehensiveness of the Warwickshire parish register database search is slightly suspect. It missed a record, as a separate search with like parameters in the "England births and christenings 1538-1975" database returned an additional John Wilkins baptised in Warwickshire in 1690 at Lower Easington (also called Ettington), 19 miles south-west of Dunchurch.

Accordingly, John's likely baptism record could not be located, and hence his baptism or birth date could not be determined, nor could his parentage.

⁵ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZK3-1T9?wc=X6Q7-ZNL%3A42645501%2C1583867309%2C1583870007&cc=1462403>.

⁶ Image 1 covering 1696 and 1697 was not included as it contains extremely poor handwriting, and a good deal of it is illegible. As to the balance of the images, only a handful of entries were obscure.