

Birth, parentage, marriage and death of William Neal

This brief evidences the details of the birth, parentage, marriage and death of William Neal (also called Neale).

Those details are –

Baptised in Napton on the Hill, Warwickshire on 9th September 1740.

Baptised to Henry and Pensissily Neal.

Married Elizabeth Wright at Birdingbury, Warwickshire on 27th July 1766.

Date and place of death and/or burial unknown.

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

William's marriage

William married Elizabeth Wright at Birdingbury, Warwickshire on 27th July 1766.

See the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright for verification of those details.

William's birth

As is noted in the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright, research into her burial resulted in the Family Search images of the Birdingbury, Warwickshire parish register being manually examined from 1808 to 1812, and then working backwards from 1808. Birdingbury is 1½ miles east of Marton, and was at the time a smaller village than Marton, judging by the number of entries per year in each village's parish register.

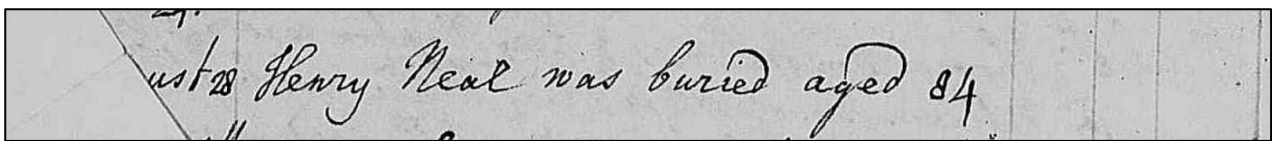
Upon that manual image examination, another Neal record was located in the Birdingbury parish register, namely the record of the burial of a Henry Neal on 28th August 1777 at age 84, see

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VFN?i=9&cc=1462403>, image 10 of 16.¹

¹ URLs of Family Search records linked herein include "61903", presumably a specific member number, and likely need adapting to function.



This is a close-up of the relevant entry.



This is the Family Search record linked to the image's electronic index, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-C66>.

Henry Neal
Vital • England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963

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Name Henry Neal
Age 84
Death or Burial Date 28 Aug 1777
Death or Burial Place Birdingbury, Warwickshire, England
Death or Burial Place (Original) Birdingbury, Warwickshire, England
Event Type Burial

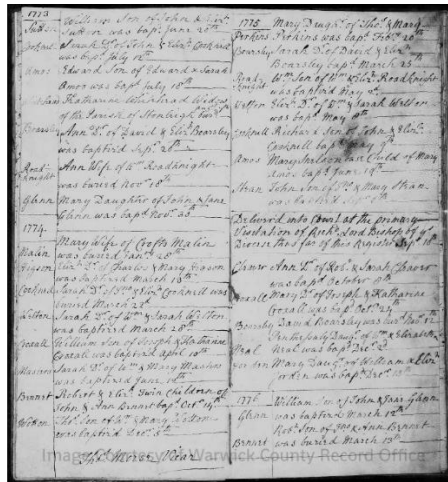
Family Tree
ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE

Similar Records
Henry Neal
England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963

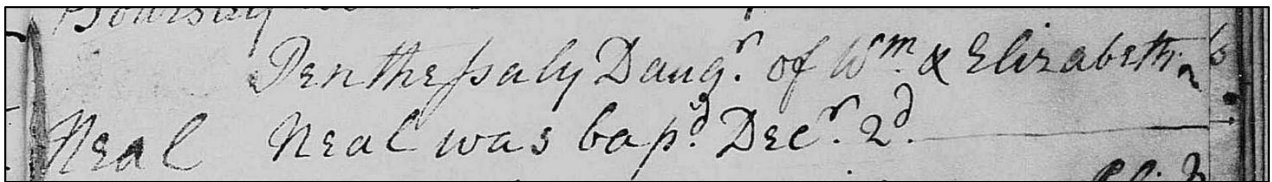
Although William and Elizabeth were baptising children in Marton up to 1779,² indicating that they were living there at the time of, and subsequent to, Henry's 1777 burial, the proximity of Birdingbury to Marton, the fact that William married there, see the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright, and the paucity of Neal (or Neale) records in Birdingbury (a fact noted on the above-referred to manual image examination), all suggest Henry is related to William, and could well be his father.

William had a further connection with Birdingbury in that he buried a child there in 1781. His daughter Penthessaly was baptised in Marton on 2nd December 1775, see the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright, and see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-QDN>. This is the image hyperlinked in that record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VXS?i=33&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVH6B-QDN>.

² See the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright.



This is a close-up of the relevant entry.



Penthesaly died 5½ years later, and was buried in Birdingbury on 22nd June 1781, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-DLQ>.

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Penthisilea

Vital • England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963

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Name	Penthisilea
Sex	Female
Death or Burial Date	22 Jun 1781
Death or Burial Place	Birdingbury, Warwickshire, England
Death or Burial Place (Original)	Birdingbury, Warwickshire, England
Father's Name	Wm
Father's Sex	Male
Event Type	Burial

Penthisilea's Parents and Siblings OPEN ALL

Wm	Father	M
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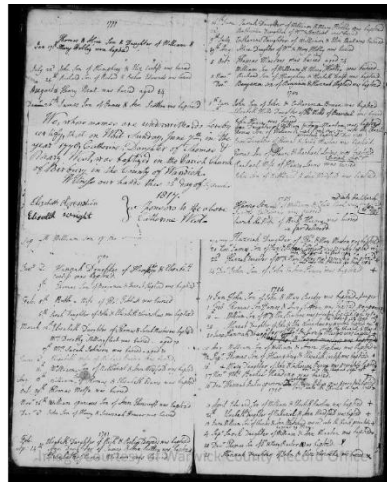
VIEW ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Family Tree ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE

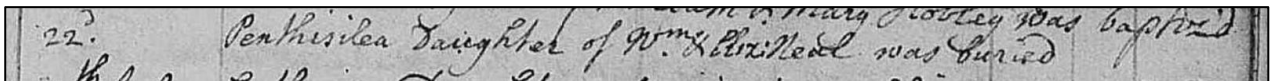
Similar Records

Penthisilea
England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963

This is the image of the relevant page in the Birdingbury parish register hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-V8Y?i=8&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVH6B-DLQ>.



This is a close-up of the entry.



Given the paucity of Neals/Neales in Birdingbury at the time, see above, as well as in the nearby towns of Marton and Napton, see below, and given William and Elizabeth are specifically named in the record (“Penthisilea Daughter of W^m. & Eliz. Neal”), this is obviously their daughter born 5½ years beforehand. (The discrepancy of the different spelling of the daughter’s name in the two records is addressed in a separate section below).

If Henry was 84 at death, he would have been born between about 27th August 1692 and 28th August 1693. If William was born about 20-25 years before his own first child William was baptised on 18th January 1767,³ he would have been born in the 1740s, which makes Henry, then in about his early 50s, a potential candidate as William’s father (albeit not exemplary given his age). Another indicator of his candidacy is that William and Elizabeth named a child Henry in 1782, and he was the first male child they had following Henry’s 1777 death.⁴

A Family Search search for Henry Neal returned a 1755 Warwickshire record of Birbury, Marton and Dunchurch “freeholders” in an “Account of all the Leys⁵ [and] who they belong to”, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VK4?i=332&cc=1462403>. Henry Neal was listed as the occupier of Lots 10, 13, 43 and 53 at Birbury (used at the time as shorthand for Birdingbury).⁶

Given the paucity of Neal (or Neale) records in Birdingbury, this is likely to be the Henry Neal who died in 1777 and, accordingly, given the ties of land ownership, he is likely to have lived there from at least 1755 until his death in 1777.

³ See the brief relating to Mary Wilkins nee Neal.

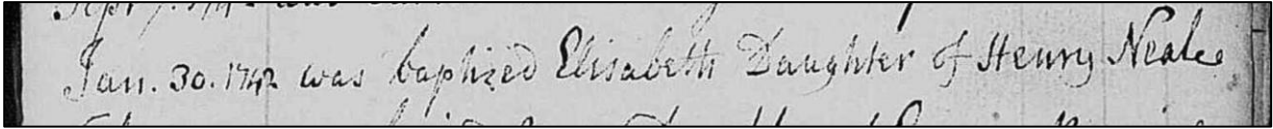
⁴ The intervening children were a Frances baptised on 27th September 1777, and a Katherine baptised on 5th July 1779, see the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright.

⁵ That is, pastures. See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ley>.

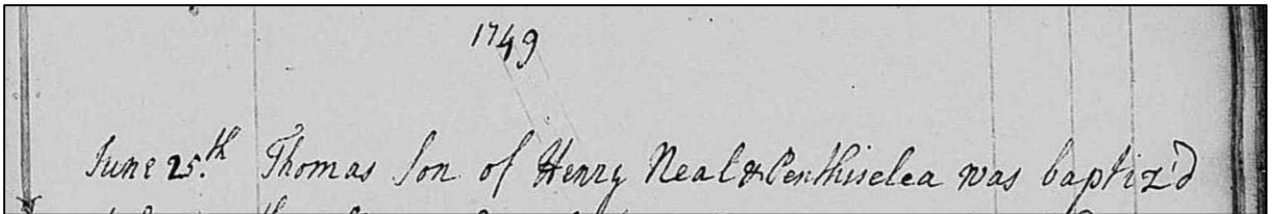
⁶ See, for example, the burial record of Thomas Neal on 6th August 1828 at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JZBS-62X>. Also shorthanded as “Burbury” in entries in the Marton parish registers, see, as examples, the images of the 1729 burial records of John Neal and his mother Goody in the brief relating to Henry Neal. Further detail of those two burial records is also given in a footnote below. (Marton parish was recording Birdingbury burials in 1729 for some reason). There are also four references to Burbury in entries in the 1720s in image 17 of the 1660-1812 Marton images set at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VHY?i=16&wc=X6Q7-6TL%3A42645501%2C1583867710%2C1583869325&cc=1462403> (including one written as “Burb.”), as well as a further such reference in a 1758 Marton record of a Tompson-Fairfax marriage at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-8DW> (for which the relevant image is at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VPD?i=2&cc=1462403&personUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVH6B-8DW>).

Armed with this information, a search was conducted of the Family Search database of Warwickshire parish registers for records involving Henry Neal and Birdingbury between 1690 and 1780, and the following records were located.⁷

An Elisabeth was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry Neale on 30th January 1742, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-CLB>. No mother is named. This is a close-up of the relevant entry in the parish register, an image of which is hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VJM?i=1&cc=1462403>.

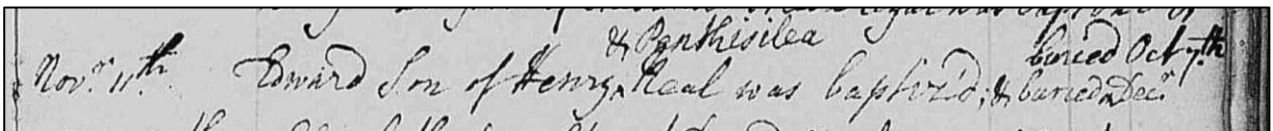


A Thomas was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry and Penthiselea Neal on 25th June 1749, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-FM2>. This is a close-up of the relevant entry in the parish register, an image of which is hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-V4D?i=3&cc=1462403>.



(Penthiselea or, as more correctly spelled, Penthesilea,⁸ is the name of an Amazonian Queen in Greek mythology.⁹ The name and its derivatives are now virtually extinct as a female name. It was also an extremely rare name in 18th century England – until Henry's wife was encountered, it was never seen before in the viewing of numerous person records of the time except for, tellingly, when William and Elizabeth Neal baptised a Penthessaly in Marton in 1775, see above. The rarity of the name is more fully illustrated in a separate section at the end of this brief).

An Edward was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry and Penthisilea Neal on 11th November 1753, then buried the next month, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6B-KMZ>. This is a close-up of the relevant entry in the parish register, an image of which is hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VLX?i=4&cc=1462403>.



There were no other baptisms in Birdingbury to Henry, or to Henry and Penthiselea/Penthisilea, but the search also returned two baptisms in Napton on the Hill, which is 5 miles south-south-east of Birdingbury, as follows.

A Henry was baptised in Napton on the Hill to Henry and Penthessela Neal in 1738, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QLQ2-SDSD>. This is a close-up of the relevant entry in the parish

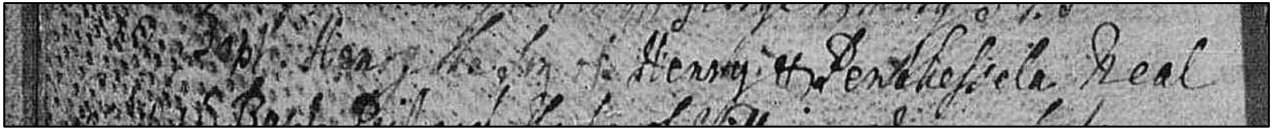
⁷ See

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&offset=140&q.anyDate.from=1690&q.anyDate.to=1780&q.anyPlace=Birdingbury&q.givenName=Henry&q.surname=Neal&f.collectionId=1462403>.

⁸ Penthesilea also appears to be the most conventional spelling, given that upon searching the name in its various spellings in Family Search's databases, in all of the nine non-Neal records located, the six persons concerned were all christened "Penthesilea". See the separate section at the end of this brief relating to the rarity of the name for more detail as to this search.

⁹ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penthesilea>.

register, an image of which is hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-W9R?i=5&cc=1462403>.



The date is obscured, but the month appears to be September.

Then a William was baptised in Napton on the Hill to Henry and Pencissela Neal on 9th September 1740, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QLQK-GPGZ>.

William Neal
Vital • England, Warwickshire, Parish Registers, 1535-1963

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Family Tree
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Similar Records
No similar records were found.

Document Information

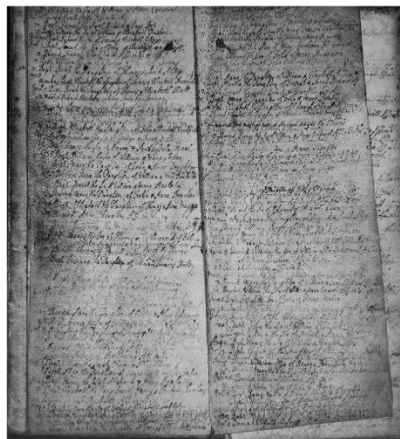
Image:

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William Neal's Parents and Siblings OPEN ALL

Name	Relationship	Sex	Age
Henry Neal	Father	M	
Pencissela Neal	Mother	F	

This is the image hyperlinked in the record, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-W9R?i=5&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AQLQK-GPGZ>, image 6 of 31.



This is a close-up of the relevant record.



Whilst the relevant letter does look more like a “c” than a “t”, it is also possible that the mother’s first name in the above entry is written by the vicar or parish record keeper as “Pentissela” rather than “Pencissela”, as transcribed by Family Search’s scanning software.

To summarise these five baptisms in date order –

1. a Henry was baptised in Napton on the Hill to Henry and Penthessela Neal in 1738
2. a William was baptised in Napton on the Hill to Henry and Pencissela (or Pentissela) Neal on 9th September 1740
3. an Elisabeth was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry Neale on 30th January 1742
4. a Thomas was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry and Penthiselea Neal on 25th June 1749 and
5. an Edward was baptised in Birdingbury to Henry and Penthisilea Neal on 11th November 1753.

The baptisms of Henry and William two years apart in the same location of Napton, and the mother’s extremely unusual first name (as to which, see the separate section at the end of this brief), propels one to the conclusion that the parents named, being Henry and Penthessela and then Henry and Pencissela (or Pentissela), are one and the same couple.

That conclusion is elevated to a near certainty by reason that, upon a manual examination of the images of Napton’s parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials, apart from the above entries relating to Henry and William, there were no other Neal or Neale entries from November 1731 (image 3) to June 1750 (image 9),¹⁰ indicating that Henry’s family was the only Neal family in Napton having children at the time. (That manual image examination also indicates that there were few other Neals/Neales in Napton at the time, and possibly none at all).

Next, the mother’s extremely unusual first name, the further narrowing down factor of its combination with Henry as the father, the proximity of Birdingbury to Napton on the Hill (about 5 miles away), all propel one to the further conclusion that the 1749 and 1753 baptisms of Thomas and Edward in Birdingbury to Henry and Penthiselea/Penthisilea Neal were to the same couple that baptised Henry and William in Napton on the Hill in 1738 and 1740.

(The most correct spelling of the mother’s name is Pensissily, being the spelling of her name in her baptism record,¹¹ see the brief relating to Pensissily Neal nee Hobley. Accordingly, that spelling is used for her in the balance of this brief, unless a specific record where the name is spelled otherwise is being referred to).

Birdingbury’s parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1729-1812 is available as a set of images,¹² as is the legally-required separate marriage register¹³ from 1754.¹⁴ Upon a manual examination of these Birdingbury images, apart from the above entries relating to Elisabeth, Thomas and Edward, there were no other Neal or Neale entries between November 1729 and December 1757.¹⁵ That indicates that there were few other Neals/Neales in Birdingbury in the 1730s, 1740s and 1750s, and possibly none at all until Henry’s family moved there.

¹⁰ The left hand side of images 4 and 6 is obscure, but the transcribed index assists in deciphering the entries. A number of entries in image 7 are indecipherable, raising a very small chance (perhaps a 1% chance overall) that there may have been a Neal/Neale entry between 1731 and 1750.

¹¹ This follows modern-day protocol that the name as recorded in a birth certificate is the correct name correctly spelled. For example, in England, and despite that it is lawful to informally change one’s name, the official legal name for the issue of passports, drivers’ licences and the like is that as recorded in a birth certificate (until changed using formal name changing protocols). See <https://www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll>.

¹² See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-V4B?wc=X6SB-7M9%3A42645501%2C1583871015%2C1583871809&cc=1462403>.

¹³ Under the *Clandestine Marriages Act 1753*. See https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/History_of_Parish_Registers_in_England. The Act came into force on 25th March 1754, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clandestine_Marriages_Act_1753.

¹⁴ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DZP7-VL2?i=2&wc=X6SB-929%3A42645501%2C1583871015%2C1583869329&cc=1462403>.

¹⁵ See images 1-6 of the 1729-1812 bundle, and also images 3-4 of the marriage register.

That fact pertaining to Birdingbury, and the like fact pertaining to Napton (see above), reinforces the above conclusion that, notwithstanding the variations in the spelling of Pensissily, the parents are the same in all four records above (that is, the records for the 1738 and 1740 baptisms in Napton on the Hill, and the 1749 and 1753 baptisms in Birdingbury).¹⁶

The likelihood that there was only one Neal family, or alternatively a paucity of Neals/Neales, in Napton and Birdingbury during the above periods also indicates that the Elisabeth baptised in Birdingbury to Henry Neale on 30th January 1742 was also a child of Henry and Pensissily. That suggests that the family moved from Napton to Birdingbury between September 1740 and January 1742. Even if there was another Henry Neale in Birdingbury in 1742, and Elisabeth was not Henry and Pensissily's daughter, the family had moved to Birdingbury by the time of Thomas' baptism on 25th June 1749.

Whether Henry and Elizabeth's family moved from Napton to Birdingbury before early 1742 (when William was an infant) or before mid-1749 (when William was a young boy), in either case he would have moved with them given his age. Hence Henry and Elizabeth Neal's son William most likely would have married in Birdingbury even though he was baptised in 1740 in Napton 5 miles away.

In terms of marriageable age, the William Neal baptised in Napton on 9th September 1740 well fits with the William Neal who married almost 26 years later in Birdingbury on 27th July 1766. The paucity of Neals in both Napton and Birdingbury at the time further supports that they are one and the same William Neal.

And there is one final clincher – the William and Elizabeth Neal who married in Birdingbury on 27th July 1766 gave the unusual name of Penthessaly to one of their own children, see her baptism and burial records set out above. William named a daughter after his own mother.

Accordingly, William was baptised in Napton on the Hill to Henry and Pensissily Neal on 9th September 1740.

(The discrepancies in the spelling of Pensissily in the various records is addressed in a separate section below).

William's death

William's wife Elizabeth was buried in Birdingbury in 1808, see the brief relating to her. Being named in her burial record likely means that William was then still alive and, to check for his burial, the images of the Birdingbury parish register available through Family Search were manually examined, but the burial records end at 1812. Working backwards from 1808, in case he was buried before Elizabeth, no burial of a William Neal was located.

Family Search all-records searches for a burial of a William Neal or Neale in Birdingbury, Marton or Napton on the Hill between 1782 (when William's last child Henry was baptised in Birdingbury)¹⁷ and 1840 returned no records. The same searches expanded to the whole of Warwickshire returned 17 results for Neal and 18 results for Neale.¹⁸ Only one had any discernible connection to William, a connection due to proximity of location, being a burial on 21st November 1817 in Southam, 4¼ miles south of Birdingbury, but he proved to be an infant.¹⁹

¹⁶ The images of Marton's parish register from 1722 to 1749 were also manually inspected in connection with research into Elizabeth Neal nee Wright (see the brief relating to her). There are some other Neal entries in them, although not many. A John Neal, bachelor, was buried on 14th July 1729, and a Goody Neal was buried on 23rd October 1729. Both events are recorded on image 19 of 51, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3SHT-DZP7-VTQ?i=18&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVH6B-W1G>. The wife of Thomas Neale was buried on 31st March 1740, image 22 of 51, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3SHT-DZP7-VC6?i=21&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AVH6B-8TY> (although query if March is the month written in the image).

¹⁷ William's son Henry was baptised on 20th December 1782, see the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright.

¹⁸ See

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.deathLikeDate.from=1782&q.deathLikeDate.to=1840&q.deathLikePlace=Warwickshire&q.givenName=William&q.givenName.exact=on&q.surname=Neal&q.surname.exact=on&c.deathLikePlace1=on&f.deathLikePlace0=9&c.deathLikePlace2=on&f.deathLikePlace1=9%2CEngland&f.deathLikePlace2=9%2CEngland%2CWarwickshire> and <https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.deathLikeDate.from=1782&q.deathLikeDate.to=1840&q.deathLikePlace=Warwickshire&q.givenName=William&q.givenName.exact=on&q.surname=Neale&q.surname.exact=on&c.deathLikePlace1=on&f.deathLikePlace0=9&c.deathLikePlace2=on&f.deathLikePlace1=9%2CEngland&f.deathLikePlace2=9%2CEngland%2CWarwickshire>.

¹⁹ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XXPP-X31> and <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3SHT-DY39-91S?i=8&cc=1462403&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AXXPP-X31>.

Family Search's England deaths and burials database was also searched using the same parameters, but then limiting the search to Warwickshire burials. The searches returned 16 results for Neal and 17 results for Neale, mostly duplicates of those returned in the searches referred to immediately above but, again, none of interest.

The images of Marton's parish register²⁰ were manually examined for a William Neal or Neale burial between 1808 and 1840.²¹ Then the images²² were also checked for any such burial going backwards from 1808 to 1782. There was none, in fact, for both periods, that is 1782 to 1808 and 1808 to 1840, there was not one single Neal or Neale record, evidencing that there continued to be very few Neals/Neales in Marton during this later period.

The images of Napton's parish register²³ were likewise manually examined for a William Neal or Neale burial between 1782 and 1840.²⁴ There was no Napton burial record for William in that 1782 to 1840 period. Indeed, there were only three Neal/Neale records for the whole 58 year period, two of which were for persons evidently not from Napton.²⁵ That paucity of records evidences that there continued to be very few Neals/Neales in Napton during this later period.

It seems likely that William was buried in Birdingbury, given that his daughter Penthessaly was buried there in 1775 (see above), his last child Henry was baptised there in 1782, and his wife was buried there in 1808. It is also likely that he died after his wife Elizabeth was buried in 1808 since he was named in her burial record.

However, a Birdingbury burial could not be confirmed one way or the other because, as noted above, the images of its parish register of burials available through Family Search end at 1812.²⁶ (And, if relevant parish register pages are missing, such that there are no images, there would also be no electronic index to an image, and hence no record in Family Search's databases of any Birdingbury burial after 1812 either).

Thus, although it seems most likely that William was buried in Birdingbury²⁷ some time after 1812, despite comprehensive searches, that could not be confirmed, and William's burial record could not be found.

Accordingly, William's date and place of death are unknown.

The different spellings of Penthesilea

This section addresses whether the different spellings of Penthesilea referred to in this brief undermine conclusions in this brief, including the key conclusion that Pensissily was William's mother.

²⁰ See <https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=X6M6-ZNL%3A42645501%2C1583867710%3Fcc%3D1462403>.

²¹ Being images 49-51 of the 1660-1812 bundle, and images 4-17 of the 1813-1915 burials bundle.

²² Being images 37 to 48 of the 1660-1812 bundle.

²³ See <https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=XD5H-YWL%3A42645501%2C1583867702%3Fcc%3D1462403>.

²⁴ Being images 24-31 of the 1731-1797 bundle, all images in the 1798-1812 bundle, and all images in the 1813-1841 burials bundle. A number of entries for 1792 and early 1793 are indecipherable. It was noted that none of the images were electronically indexed, so presumably the information in the images would not be in Family Search's databases.

²⁵ The first record of the burial of a non-local appears to relate to an itinerant boatman working on the Oxford Canal, which circles Napton, or the Warwick & Napton Canal, which has a junction with the Oxford Canal on Napton's north side. The record reads "Robert Neal a Boatman who died of the Small Pox buried Sept' 5th [1794]", see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-WVB?i=26&wc=XDLB-4WL%3A42645501%2C1583867702%2C1583874819&cc=1462403>, image 27 of 31. The parish regularly buried boatmen and boat boys, for example, two in one year in 1801, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-WLP?i=4&wc=XDLB-GP8%3A42645501%2C1583867702%2C1583870019&cc=1462403>, image 5 of 15. The second record of the burial of a non-local was of a Thomas Neal of "Stony Stratford Bucks" on 23rd July 1814, aged 35, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-W3T?i=5&wc=XDRK-N38%3A42645501%2C1583867702%2C1583866404&cc=1462403>, image 6 of 36. Stony Stratford is a town in Buckinghamshire, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stony_Stratford. Being born about 1779, this is obviously not the Thomas Neal who was the son of Henry and Pensissily Neal, as he was baptised in 1749 (see above). The third record was of the burial of a Henry Neal widower on 5th November 1801, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCGS-WWG?i=5&wc=XDLB-GP8%3A42645501%2C1583867702%2C1583870019&cc=1462403>, image 6 of 15. This was not William's son Henry baptised on 20th December 1782, as he died a month after his baptism, see the brief relating to Elizabeth Neal nee Wright. Nor was it William's father, as he was most unlikely to be still alive in 1801, see the brief relating to Henry Neal. Given the paucity of Neals/Neales in the area at the time, it seems most likely that he was William's older brother Henry baptised in 1738, see above.

²⁶ See <https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=X6SB-MNL%3A4264%501%2C1583871015%3Fcc%3D1462403>. A search of the register for "Marriages 1813-1836" on the off chance that William's burial was recorded there was not done.

²⁷ In fact, it seems almost certain, as no burial record for him in the potentially competing locations was found upon the manual examinations of the Marton and Napton images between 1782 and 1840 referred to above.

As noted above, Penthesilea is the correct spelling of an Amazonian Queen in Greek mythology. One Greek mythology website notes that this spelling is the Latin version, whereas the transliteration from the Greek alphabet is Penthesileia.²⁸ Another Greek mythology website notes Penthesilia as an alternative spelling of the name.²⁹ Wiktionary spells the name's genitive case as Penthesileae.³⁰ The Anglicisation of names often results in spelling variations, and this may have caused the adoption of other spellings of the name in the past.

The name is also likely to be variously pronounced, for example, "Pen-tha-see-lee-ah" and "Pen-tha-sill-ee-ah".³¹ According to Wiktionary, there is also an "ecclesiastical" pronunciation which has a silent "h", that is "Pen-te-si'le-a"³² (or, more phonetically, "Pen-ta-see-lee-ah"). These varied pronunciations lend themselves to resultant spelling variations. For example, Pentissela is explicable as a spelling of the name given the ecclesiastical pronunciation "Pen-ta-see-lee-ah". The opening syllables of Pencissela and Pensissily are homonymous, making them likely interchangeable spellings.

And, whatever phonetic sound of Penthesilea is adopted, there will be likely alternative spellings, such as Penthiselea and Penthisilea given above.

Obviously, also, the more unusual and longer a name, the higher the likelihood of it being spelled in multiple different ways.

All of these factors explain why the name was spelled differently on each occasion.

The obvious comment might be that one would expect consistency of spelling if the parents were spelling the mother's name for the vicar³³ in the case of the baptisms of Henry, William, Thomas and Edward. And that, likewise, that one would expect consistency of spelling between the baptism and burial records of Penthessaly/Penthisilea if the parents were spelling the daughter's name for the vicar. The answer is almost certainly that the informants did not know the name's correct spelling due to the widespread illiteracy in rural England in the first half of the 18th century.³⁴ In other words, the vicar was transcribing the name from speech, and recording it phonetically as he heard it.

Indeed, in the case of Penthessaly/Penthisilea, her mother Elizabeth signed with a cross in her own marriage record, see the brief relating to her, so she was certainly illiterate, as were about three quarters of rural females of the time.³⁵ William signed his name in that marriage record, but may well have been unable to write much else, given almost half of rural males were illiterate.³⁶ (There is no signed marriage record for Henry and Pensissily).³⁷

There is also the fact that consistency of spelling would be difficult to achieve in any case for such a long and unusual name with such varied phonetic sounds and pronunciations. This is demonstrated by the records of the Napton baptisms of Henry and William. The Napton vicar was Rev. John Loder for both. The mother's name is

²⁸ See <https://www.theoi.com/Heroine/AmazonPenthesileia.html>.

²⁹ See <https://www.hellenicaworld.com/Greece/Mythology/en/Penthesilea.html>.

³⁰ See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Penthesilea>.

³¹ These are two of three pronunciations given at <https://www.howtopronounce.com/penthesilea>. As may be expected, that website returns no search results for Penthessela, Pencissela, Pentissela, Penthessaly or Pensissily. However, it did return results for Penthiselea and Penthisilea, supporting that they are obvious alternative spellings to Penthesilea as suggested above.

³² See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Penthesilea>.

³³ The expectation would be that the vicar kept the parish registers, but reference to a vicar in this section includes any other record keeper that the parish may have used. Manual examination of many parish register images invariably showed all entries for a parish in the same handwriting for large blocks of time, at the end of which sometimes the vicar's own death was noted. An example is given in a footnote below referring to the Napton vicar's death in 1744.

³⁴ Male agricultural workers had an estimated literacy rate of 46% in 1718-1728 and 57% in 1728-1738, see Table 4 on page 59 of *Literacy in England, 1718—1759*, Dorothy Hagberg Cappel, a 1980 thesis available at <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4171&context=etd>. The literacy rates of females were probably about half that of males, see Table 1 on page 56.

³⁵ See the preceding footnote.

³⁶ The handwriting in the burial record is different from that in the baptism record (see those records set out above), so the vicar changed in the meantime, which tends to explain why her name recorded at burial is spelled quite differently from her name recorded at baptism although, presumably, the parents pronounced it the same. That quite different spelling also supports that neither William nor Elizabeth was able to spell the name for the vicar.

³⁷ An image of Henry and Pensissily's marriage record was not located, see the brief relating to Pensissily Neal nee Hobley, and, in any event, the marriage was in 1733, before more formal marriage registers requiring the bride and groom to sign were adopted from 1754, see above.

written as Penthessela in Henry's baptism record, and then, two years later, and in the same handwriting,³⁸ as Pencissela (or Pentissela) in William's baptism record. The vicar would likely be familiar with all his parishioners in a small English village,³⁹ and one would expect consistency in how he wrote down their names, but this name is so difficult to spell that there was no consistency between these two records of events which were only two years apart.

For these reasons, the different spellings of Penthesilea referred to in this brief is entirely explicable, and those spelling discrepancies do not undermine the conclusions that –

- the mother in the above records of the 1738 and 1740 baptisms in Napton, and the 1749 and 1753 baptisms in Birdingbury, was the same person and
- the Penthessaly baptised in Marton in 1775 was the same person as the Penthesilea buried in Birdingbury in 1781 and
- Pensissily was William's mother, and Penthessaly was his daughter.

The rarity of Pensissily's name

Family Search all-records searches for any Warwickshire⁴⁰ record of any date for a Penthessela, Pencissela, Pentissela, Penthesilea, Penthesilea, Penthessaly, Penthesilea or Pensissily returned no records additional to the four records of baptisms to William and Pensissily Neal referred to above, the baptism and burial records of William Neal's daughter, and the baptism of his mother Pensissily in Napton on 26th September 1708 (as to which, see the brief relating to Pensissily Neal nee Hobley).

Expanding each of those searches to England returned 9 additional records for 6 additional persons, all for "Penthesilea", and with event dates ranging from 1595 to 1790, and none thereafter.⁴¹

Google searches for the name in the different spellings Penthessela, Pencissela, Pentissela, Penthesilea, Penthesilea, Penthessaly, Penthesilea and Pensissily all returned no female so named, except for hits relating to the Amazonian Queen in Greek mythology, and one for a South Warwickshire Family History Society website record for the Marton baptism of William Neal's daughter Penthessaly in 1775.⁴²

A Wikipedia list of Greek feminine given names does not include the name or any derivative.⁴³ Nor does a baby name website with a "comprehensive collection" of Greek first names including 6,280 female names. Another baby name website claims that only four females worldwide were named Penthesilea in the 34 years between 1984 and 2018 (three in Germany and one in Austria).⁴⁴

Obviously, the name is extremely unusual. Family Search claims to have 1.2 billion "ancestors" in its database, and thus probably hundreds of millions for England. Total records for England is about 860 million,⁴⁵ although,

³⁸ Both the 1738 and 1740 entries are in the same Family Search image of the parish register book, and the handwriting of the two entries is the same, indeed all the handwriting in that image is the same. It is also the same as the handwriting in the preceding image 5, and well as the succeeding images 7 and 8, until it changes between entries for 23rd September and 21st October 1744, which latter entry states "Buried John Loder Vicar of Napton †". See also the like note of his burial on image 3, left hand page. The changed handwriting upon the vicar's death would seem conclusive of the fact that he was making the entries, but even if they were made by a parish record keeper rather than the vicar, the point remains valid, that is, one would expect consistency in how that person wrote down particular names.

³⁹ Napton had "above one hundred houses" in 1730. See <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol6/pp181-187>.

⁴⁰ See, for example,

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyPlace=Warwickshire&q.anyPlace.exact=on&q.givenName=Penthesilea&q.givenName.exact=on>.

⁴¹ See, for example,

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyPlace=England&q.anyPlace.exact=on&q.givenName=Penthesilea&q.givenName.exact=on>.

⁴² See https://swfhs.org.uk/index.php/cofe-records/parish-baptism-records/baptisms-master-index3?option=com_grid&id=1_iz_0&p=5729.

⁴³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Greek_feminine_given_names.

⁴⁴ See <https://www.popular-babynames.com/name/penthesilea>.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyPlace=England&q.anyPlace.exact=on>.

obviously, many persons are likely to have multiple records, such as baptism, marriage and burial records (as is the case with persons referred to in this brief).

With only seven persons having the name (or any derivative or similar name) in something less than twenty of Family Search's 860 million English records, the incidence of the name in those records is about one in 50 million records. Whilst the incidence of the name in the records for 17th and 18th century England would be significantly lower, there is still no doubt that the name was rare in the extreme at that time.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Family Search does not provide the number of English records that relate to that period, so the exact incidence could not be calculated.