Birth, parentage, marriage and death of

John Blockley the Elder

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

Those details are –

> John Blockley the Elder was baptised on 6th January 1737 in Claybrooke, Leicestershire, and his parents were John and Martha Blockley.
>
> He married Ann Groocock on 25th December 1770 in Claybrooke.
>
> He died on 21st September 1798, and was buried on 25th September 1798 at Claybrooke.

John Blockley the Elder was the third in a line of four successive John Blockleys. Accordingly, he has been designated John Blockley the Elder, a title given him in an historical record below, to distinguish him from the preceding and succeeding John Blockleys, being John Blockley Senior (born c.1663), John Blockley of Great Claybrooke (bap.1701), and John Blockley the Younger (bap.1776).

The research for this brief was principally conducted in about August 2026.

John's death

It is demonstrated in the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger that:

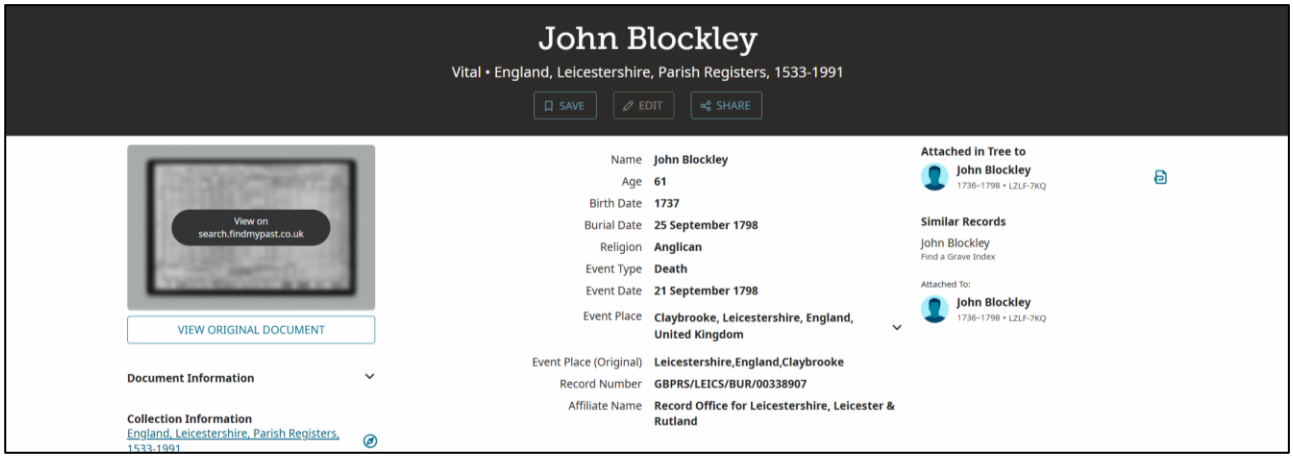
1. "John Blockley the Elder of Ullesthorpe" made a will dated 20th April 1795,[1] and under which he gave all his real estate "at Ullesthorpe aforesaid or elsewhere" to his wife Ann for her life, and then to his son John. He gave all his personal estate to Ann, and appointed her as his sole executrix.
2. John Blockley the Elder was verifiably the father of John Blockley the Younger baptised in 1776.
3. There were no other John Blockleys holding land in Ullesthorpe at the time.
4. Probate of the will was granted to Ann Blockley on 7th January 1799.[2]
5. The probate no doubt related to the John Blockley, late of Ullesthorpe, who died 3½ months earlier aged 61 on 21st September 1798, and was buried on 25th September 1798 at Claybrooke.

(Ullesthorpe in Leicestershire adjoins the twin villages of Claybrooke Magna and Claybrooke Parva,[3] and falls into the parish of those twin villages, Claybrooke parish, see the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger. All three villages are less than a mile apart).[4]

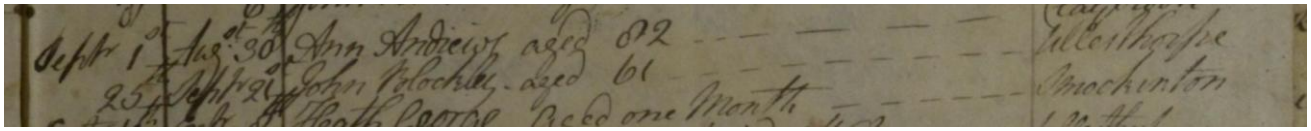
---

[1] See https://search.findmypast.com/record/browse?id=S2/GBPRS/LEICS/102909691/00048.
[2] See https://search.findmypast.com/record/browse?id=s2%2fgbprs%2fleics%2f102909691%2f00049.
[3] Parva is Latin for "little". Claybrooke Magna (Latin for "greater"), or Great Claybrooke, adjoins Claybrooke Parva. They run into each other.
[4] See also https://claybrookeparvaparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-history/, which confirms that the parish covers Claybrooke Magna, Claybrooke Parva and Ullesthorpe.

The Family Search record of the 1798 death is at https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP4Q-7TJD?lang=en:[5]



The original Claybrooke parish record of the death and burial is in the FindMyPast collections at https://search.findmypast.com/record?id=S2%2FGBPRS%2FLEICS%2F102197542%2F00018&parentid=GBPRS%2FLEICS%2FBUR%2F00338907:



Note that the record gives the burial date, the death date, the name of the deceased, the age at death (61), and, on the right hand side, the abode of the deceased[6] (Ullesthorpe).

There is no doubt this is the death and burial record of the father of John Blockley the Younger (that is, John Blockley the Elder) given his death would have been after he made a will on 20th April 1795, and likely shortly before the grant of probate for that will on 7th January 1799. As noted above, and as one would expect, there was 3½ months between this death and the probate.

Notwithstanding, a Family Search search was conducted for the death of a John Blockley in Leicestershire between 1775 and 1830.[7] The search returned several events in Claybrooke, namely the above 1798 record, one for a John Blockley buried there on 18th February 1775, one for a John Blockley who died there on 18th February 1784, and one for a John Blockley buried there on 28th February 1784.[8] Those last three events all pre-dated John Blockley the Elder's 1795 will.

[5] URLs of Family Search records linked herein include "61903", presumably a specific member number, and likely need adapting to function.
[6] The column is headed "late of".
[7] See https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.deathLikeDate.from=1775&q.deathLikeDate.to=1830&q.deathLikePlace=Leicestershire%2C%20England&q.deathLikePlace.exact=on&q.givenName=John&q.givenName.exact=on&q.surname=Blockley&q.surname.exact=on.
[8] The 1775 and 1784 burial records in Family Search are at https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP4Q-4H16?lang=en and https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP43-1BWT?lang=en, and the 1784 death record in Family Search is at https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6Y4P-PYH7?lang=en. Obviously, the John Blockley who died at Claybrooke on 18th February 1784 is the John Blockley who was buried there 10 days later. Equally obviously, he was also the John Blockley whose 1782 will was granted probate on 18th March 1784, see the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger. That Appendix also concludes that this John Blockley buried in 1784 was the father of John Blockley the Elder.

A Find a Grave search for John Blockley graves in Claybrooke Parva[9] located an additional record for a John Blockley death in Claybrooke to those listed above, that is, one which occurred on 27th July 1754. That event also pre-dated John Blockley the Elder's 1795 will.

A FindMyPast search was also made for a John Blockley death in Claybrooke (or within 5 miles of it) between 1775 and 1815, and it returned no additional events potentially relating to John Blockley the Elder.[10]

Accordingly, none of the searches made called into question the conclusion in the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger that his father was the John Blockley the Elder of Ullesthorpe who made a 1795 will which was granted a probate on 7th January 1799, or the further conclusion in that Appendix that that probate related to the John Blockley, late of Ullesthorpe, who died 3½ months earlier aged 61 on 21st September 1798, and was buried at Claybrooke.

Accordingly, John died on 21st September 1798, and was buried on 25th September 1798 at Claybrooke.

(Subsequently, in researching John Blockley Senior, the following transcript of a headstone inscription in St Peter's Churchyard, Claybrooke, was located: "John Blockley, of Ullesthorpe, died Sept. 21, 1798, aged 61." The transcript was in Volume 4, Part 1, page 116 of John Nichols' *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (1795–1815), see https://leicester.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15407coll6/id/3048/rec/1.

As noted in the brief relating to John Blockley Senior: "As a transcription of headstones in St Peter's Churchyard at Little Claybrooke made only [a few years] after John Blockley [the Elder's] death, the existence at that time of the headstone, and the veracity of its transcription, is beyond question. The age at death is probably correct as well. The Blockleys were literate, and they would have had access to the relevant parish register to check baptism dates if there was any doubt about a person's age. And they would have been able to do that at a time when the relevant parish records were no doubt mostly fully extant, and in much better condition and legibility than some were when microfilmed and/or scanned.")

John's birth

John Blockley the Elder was recorded as aged 61 when he died on 21st September 1798, see above. If that age on that date was correct, it implies that he was born between 22nd September 1736 and 21st September 1737.

The following facts are verified in the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger:

1. A John Blockley of Great Claybrooke, "Yeoman",[11] executed a will on 3rd June 1782,[12] and under which he gave "unto my son John Blockley" a tenement at Ullesthorpe "with the Orchard Homestead", as well as leased lands at Walton and Kimcote.[13] Whilst his stated abode was Great Claybrooke, the "homestead" was at Ullesthorpe, so he probably lived there. As noted above, Ullesthorpe was in the Claybrooke parish and less than a mile away from both Claybrooke Magna and Claybrooke Parva.

2. As already noted, "John Blockley the Elder of Ullesthorpe" made a will on 20th April 1795[14] in which he gave (inter alia) all his real estate "at Ullesthorpe" to his wife Ann for her life, and then to his son John.

3. John Blockley the Elder was the son of John Blockley of Great Claybrooke, Yeoman.

---

[9] See https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/search?fulltext=&firstname=John&middlename=&lastname=Blockley&birthyear=&birthyearfilter=&deathyear=&deathyearfilter=&location=Claybrooke+Parva%2C+Harborough+District%2C+Leicestershire%2C+England&locationId=city_416767&bio=&linkedToName=&plot=&memorialid=&mcid=&datefilter=&orderby=r&page=1#sr-269462954. A separate search for Claybrooke Magna returned no results. The Claybrooke parish covers Claybrooke Magna, Claybrooke Parva and Ullesthorpe, and the parish church is St Peter's Church, which is situated in Claybrooke Parva, see https://claybrookeparvaparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-history/.

[10] See https://www.findmypast.com/search/results?sid=100&firstname=john&lastname=blockley&yearofdeath=1795&yearofdeath_offset=20&keywordsplace=claybrooke+parva%2c+leicestershire%2c+england&keywordsplace_proximity=5&sourcecountry=england.

[11] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeoman.

[12] See https://search.findmypast.com/record/browse?id=S2/GBPRS/LEICS/102890533/00093 (the preceding image being the case file jacket).

[13] Walton and Kimcote are adjoining villages 6 miles east of Claybrooke.

[14] See https://search.findmypast.com/record/browse?id=S2/GBPRS/LEICS/102909691/00048.

4. In turn (and again as already noted), John Blockley the Younger was the son of John Blockley the Elder.

Accordingly, John Blockley the Elder was almost certainly born in Ullesthorpe or Claybrooke, and then baptised in Claybrooke. There was strong place attachment in the early to mid-1700s in rural England,[15] and, additionally, the ownership of land (which traditionally passed down to the eldest son under the system of male-preference primogeniture which predominated in rural England at the time),[16] would also have tied the Blockley family to the locality.

(That place attachment is further verified in the case of John in that he was married in Claybrooke in 1770, see below, his marriage record set out below notes Claybrooke as his place of residence, and it is also where he baptised his son John in 1776, see the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger).

Family Search searches were therefore conducted of its "England, Leicestershire, Parish Registers 1533-1991" and "England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975" collections for a John Blockley born in Claybrooke between 1720 to 1758. Both searches only returned a John Blockley baptised on 6th January 1736 in Claybrooke to John and Martha Blockley, see https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPWB-Y18S?from=lynx1UIV8&treeref=LZLF-7KQ:



If that John Blockley was born shortly prior to his baptism, he would have been aged 62 on 21st September 1798.

Family Search searches for a John Blockley born between 1720 to 1758 with "Claybrook" as a key word,[17] returned several baptised in Leicestershire, namely one in Earl Shilton in 1749, one in Thornton in 1750, one in Bagworth in 1750, and two in Heather, in 1735 and 1739. Earl Shilton is 6 miles north-north-west of Claybrooke, Thornton is 12½ miles north of Claybrooke, Bagworth is similarly distant (it is a mile west of Thornton), and Heather is 15½ miles north-north-west of Claybrooke. The search also returned two Johns with the surname

[15] Google AI Overview states: "In the late 1770s in rural England, place attachment was deeply rooted in traditional agrarian life, local community networks, and the land. People felt a strong sense of belonging to their native villages, parishes, and ancestral fields. This bond was shaped by shared communal labor, common land use, and generational ties, though it was soon disrupted by early industrialization and the enclosure acts." As to the *Inclosure Act 1773*, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclosure_Act_1773. Place attachment theory is explained in Section 2 (pages 1-2) of "Towards a Developmental Theory of Place Attachment", Paul Morgan, March 2010, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222246966_Towards_a_Developmental_Theory_of_Place_Attachment.

[16] See https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/learning/medievalwomen/theme2/inheritance.aspx and https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118430873.est0290. The system was designed to keep landed estates intact, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primogeniture: "The effect of English primogeniture was to keep estates undivided wherever possible". The system in operation is exemplified by the 1795 will itself, as well as the 1782 will of John's grandfather, see the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger.

[17] See https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.birthLikeDate.exact=on&q.birthLikeDate.from=1720&q.birthLikeDate.to=1758&q.givenName=John&q.miscKeyword=Claybrook&q.surname=Blockley. Changing the key word to "Claybrooke" returns the exact same search results.

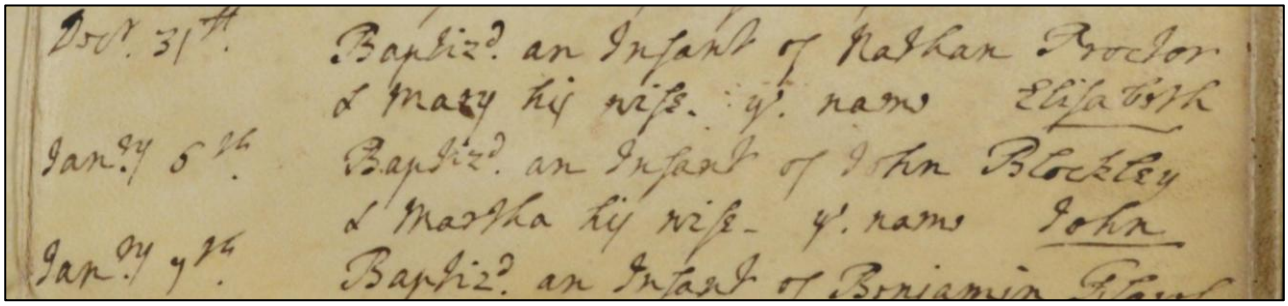
"Blockly", one born in 1738 in Packington, 18 miles north-north-west of Claybrooke, and the other in 1752 in Snarestone, 16 miles north-west of Claybrooke.

Despite these other candidates born in Leicestershire, the one baptised on 6th January 1736 in the location of Claybrooke is obviously by far the most likely to have been John Blockley the Elder. That date of baptism also closely matches John's expected date of birth given his age as recorded in his burial record. It also matches his expected date of birth more closely than any of the other Leicestershire records just mentioned.[18]

A FindMyPast search for the birth or baptism of a John Blockley in Claybrooke or within 10 miles and between 1720 and 1760 returned 64 records, but no additional birth or baptism records to those above which potentially might relate to John Blockley the Elder.[19]

The search returned two results for Warwickshire, both for the 1739 marriage of a John Blocksley. Whilst that event is not relevant to the present enquiry, that the search returned Warwickshire records is notable, as it provides assurance that no John Blockley was born near Claybrooke but over the Warwickshire county line. (Claybrooke is less than a mile east of it).

This is the record in FindMyPast of the 1736 baptism, see https://search.findmypast.com/record?id=S2%2FGBPRS%2FLEICS%2F15-0818-GB-LEC-CLAYBRO-DE732-5-BAPTISMS-MARRIAGES--BURIALS-1705-1736%2F00057:



Immediately noticeable is that the January date follows on from an October date in a list of 1736 events. As seems to have been very common in parish registers of the time, an event or events in the new year is added before the year is written. An examination of this page, as well as the previous page, makes clear that this happened in the instant case, and that the year of the baptism was actually 1737. Of course, that means that John was exactly 61 years of age at death, as recorded in his burial record.

Accordingly, John Blockley the Elder was baptised on 6th January 1737 in Claybrooke, Leicestershire, and his parents were John and Martha Blockley.

John's marriage

As noted at the outset of this brief, John Blockley the Elder's will named his wife as Ann.

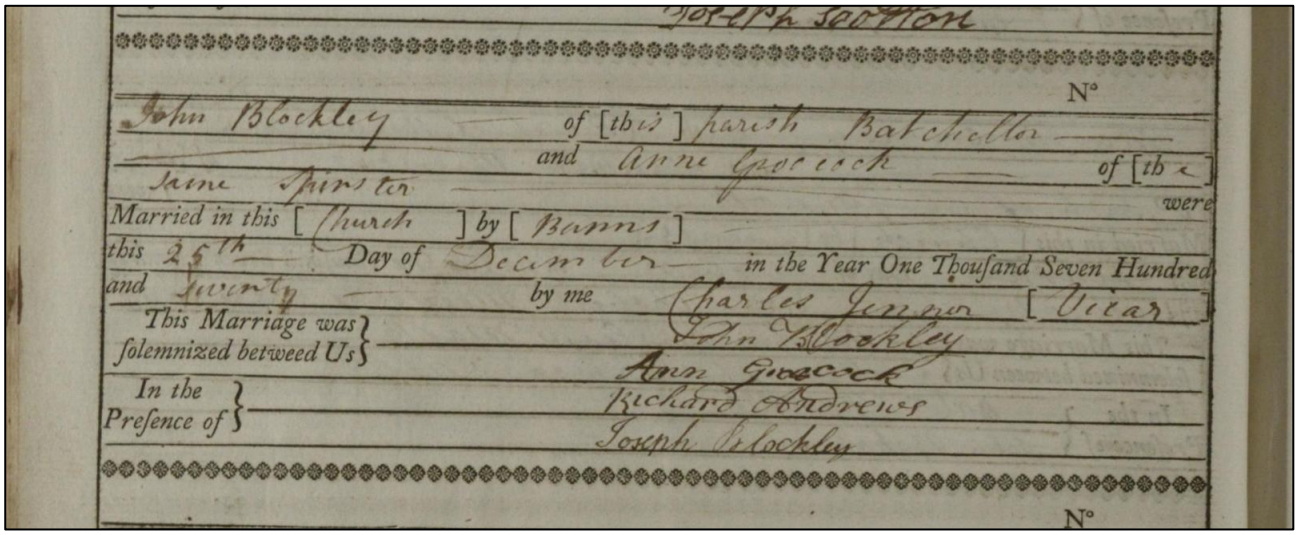
[18] The 1735 Heather baptism was on 20th July 1735, and the 1738 Packington baptism was on 4th December 1738. As noted above, if John was truly 61 at death on 21st September 1798, he was born between 22nd September 1736 and 21st September 1737. The 6th January 1736 baptism occurred on the date closest to that range.

[19] See https://www.findmypast.com/search/results?sid=100&firstname=john&lastname=blockley&lastname_variants=true&yearofbirth=1740&yearofbirth_offset=20&keywordsplace=claybrooke+parva%2c+leicestershire%2c+england&keywordsplace_proximity=10&sourcecountry=england. It did return the burial in Claybrooke of "John Blockley senior" on 28th July 1755, likely a relative of John Blockley the Elder, see https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FLEICS%2FBUR%2F00755646&tab=this. Also the marriage of John Blockly to Marth Stafford in Claybrooke in 1736, see https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FM%2F7100791O9%2F1&tab=this.

One record returned on the FindMyPast search last mentioned was for the marriage of a John Blockley to an Ann Groocock in Claybrooke on 25th December 1770, see https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FLEICS%2FMAR%2F00188659%2F1&tab=this.[20]

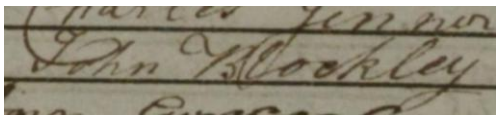
Also, as noted in the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger, both he and Ann Blockley (which that Appendix concludes were mother and son) countersigned a bond for a Thomas Groocock in 1802. Their provision of security for the bond suggests that they were somehow related to Thomas Groocock.

An image of the original parish record for the above referred to 1770 marriage is in FindMyPast at https://search.findmypast.com/record?id=S2%2FGBPRS%2FLEICS%2F102197543%2F00035&parentid=GBPRS%2FLEICS%2FMAR%2F00188659%2F1:

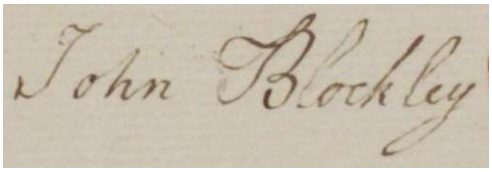


The signatures of the groom, and of John Blockley the Elder on his 1795 will, are a reasonable match:

1770 marriage record

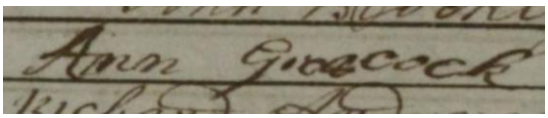


1795 will

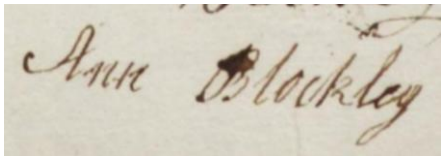


The signatures of the bride, and of Ann Blockley in the 1802 bond, do not appear to match, having regard to a comparison of the first names, and also a comparison of the letters "o", "c" and "k" in the surname:

1770 marriage record



1802 bond



[20] The marriage is also recorded in Family Search at https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP4W-5KZT?from=lynx1UIV8&treeref=LZLF-7KQ, and in the FindMyPast collection "Boyd's 1st miscellaneous marriage index, 1415-1808", seehttps://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FM%2F710302189%2F2&tab=this. As to that index, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boyd%27s_Marriage_Index. The "1st miscellaneous" index contained additional English marriage records that were not included in the main county-by-county sequences of Boyd's Marriage Index, see https://www.findmypast.com.au/articles/world-records/full-list-of-united-kingdom-records/life-events-bmds/boyds-1st-misc.

Another question mark arises in that John Blockley the Elder would have been about 35 as at the marriage date, which is an unusually late age to marry for the times. (He had not previously married – the marriage record notes that he was a bachelor, not a widower).

Nevertheless, it is concluded that this was John Blockley the Elder's marriage for the following reasons:

1. The marriage record notes John's abode to be Claybrooke parish.

2. A Joseph Blockley was a witness to the marriage. John Blockley the Elder had a brother Joseph. They were both named in their father's will, see the Appendix to the brief relating to John Blockley the Younger.

3. A Family Search search of marriages of a John Blockley in Leicestershire between 1750 to 1780 returned the above marriage on 25th December 1770 as the only one to an Ann or an Anne, and as the only one in Claybrooke.[21]

4. The same search in Warwickshire returned no marriages during that period.[22]

5. A FindMyPast search for John Blockley events in Leicestershire between 1745 and 1785 did not return any other marriage in Claybrooke.[23] There were marraiges in Peckleton in 1772, and Ravenstone in 1773, but neither was to an Ann or Anne.

6. The same search in Warwickshire returned four marriages.[24] One was in 1802, and two more were not to an Ann. The fourth one, a marriage in 1749 of a "John B", did not have the bride's first name, and in any event was in Harbury which is 19 miles south-south-west of Claybrooke.

Accordingly, no other candidate marriages for John Blockley the Elder were located apart from the 1770 Claybrooke marriage.[25]

Regarding the question mark as to John's age at marriage, notably, it is concluded in the brief relating to Ann Blockley nee Groocock that she was baptised on 8th September 1738, so she was aged 32 on the date of marriage, that is, as with John, she too was older. Whilst marrying at 35 would be a late age to marry for the times, that does not seem so unusual if there is an age match for the couple.

As to Ann's signature mismatch, obviously, signatures can sometimes change reasonably significantly over 30 years, and this must be the case here, since all of the research indicates that there are no other potential candidate marriages for John and Ann.

Accordingly, John Blockley the Elder married Ann Groocock on 25th December 1770 in Claybrooke, Leicestershire.

---

[21] See https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1750&q.anyDate.to=1780&q.anyPlace=Leicestershire&q.givenName=John&q.surname=Blockley&c.marriageLikePlace1=on&f.marriageLikePlace0=9&c.marriageLikePlace2=on&f.marriageLikePlace1=9%2CEngland&f.marriageLikePlace2=9%2CEngland%2CLeicestershire.

[22] See https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1750&q.anyDate.to=1780&q.givenName=John&q.surname=Blockley&c.marriageLikePlace1=on&f.marriageLikePlace0=9&c.marriageLikePlace2=on&f.marriageLikePlace1=9%2CEngland&f.marriageLikePlace2=9%2CEngland%2CWarwickshire.

[23] See https://www.findmypast.com/search/results?sid=100&firstname=john&firstname_variants=true&lastname=blockley&lastname_variants=true&eventyear=1765&eventyear_offset=20&keywordsplace=leicestershire%2c+england&keywordsplace_proximity=5&sourcecountry=england.

[24] See https://www.findmypast.com/search/results?sid=100&firstname=john&firstname_variants=true&lastname=blockley&lastname_variants=true&eventyear=1765&eventyear_offset=20&keywordsplace=warwickshire%2c+england&keywordsplace_proximity=5&sourcecountry=england.

[25] It would have assisted if a sequence of children had been born to a John and Ann Blockley in Claybrooke after 1770, but the only one located was John Blockley the Younger baptised in 1776, despite Family Search and FindMyPast searches made for other children, see https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.birthLikeDate.exact=on&q.birthLikeDate.from=1770&q.birthLikeDate.to=1799&q.givenName=John&q.givenName.exact=on&q.miscKeyword=Claybrook&q.spouseGivenName=Ann&q.surname=Blockley&q.surname.exact=on and https://www.findmypast.com/search/results?sid=100&firstname=john&lastname=blockley&eventyear=1780&eventyear_offset=10&keywordsplace=claybrooke+parva%2c+leicestershire%2c+england&keywordsplace_proximity=5&sourcecountry=england.