

# William Littler's & Jane Booth's Marriage.

## A discussion document hosted by the NCS

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William Littler, son of William Littler senior and Sarah Shawe<sup>1</sup> (married 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1719 (**fig 1**), was baptised<sup>2</sup> on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1724 at Burslem St. John Staffordshire (**fig 2**). We still have much to learn about this important early British porcelain maker, and Miranda Goodby noted that details of his marriage still eludes us (Goodby 2001, 372). Consequently, we thought it useful to highlight the interesting discovery by Tony Gaskell of the somewhat tattered document in the Cheshire Marriage Licence Bonds and Allegations 1606-1905 which permitted the marriage of William Littler of Wolstanton and Jane Booth of Astbury on 31st August 1741, at the parish church of Astbury, Cheshire. (**fig 3**).

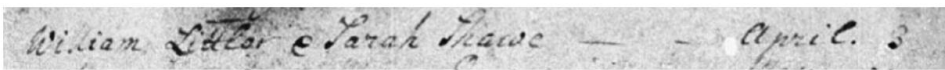


Figure 1 Burslem Parish Register Marriages 1719

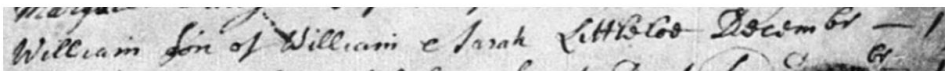


Figure 2 Burslem Parish Registers Christenings 1724

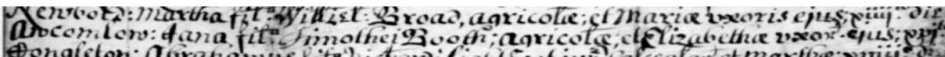
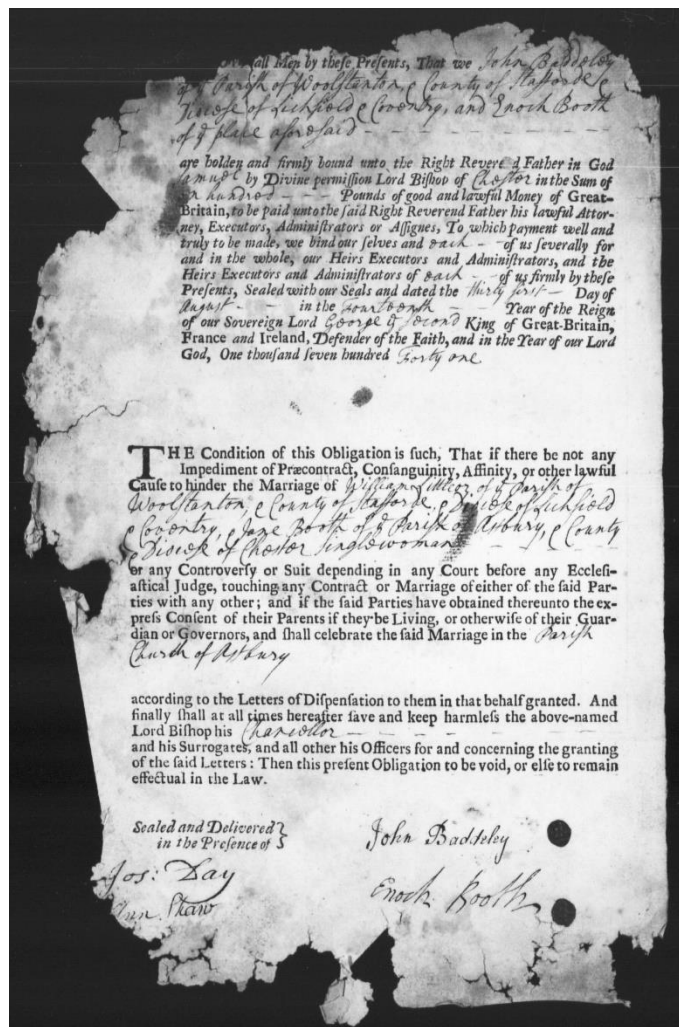


Figure 4 Astbury Parish Registers Christenings 1710.

Research is underway to try and identify Jane Booth's family and background. So far only one Jane Booth has been discovered in the early 18th century parish register of St. Mary's Astbury, The Latinised register records the baptism of Jane daughter of Timothy & Elizabeth Booth of Alcumlow in the parish of Astbury on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1710. (**fig 4**.) At the time of the marriage in 1741 this Jane Booth would have been 31 and William Littler only 17 years old. The age disparity has cast some doubt on whether the right Jane Booth has been identified, and added to this we know that the Littler's only surviving child Mary nicknamed (Polly), died aged 8 in April 1774<sup>3</sup> (NAS B52/10/1), which would mean Jane giving birth at fifty-six, this seems unlikely, therefore the search goes on.

Figure 3 Littler Booth marriage licence 1741 from Cheshire Marriage Licence Bonds and Allegations 1606-1905



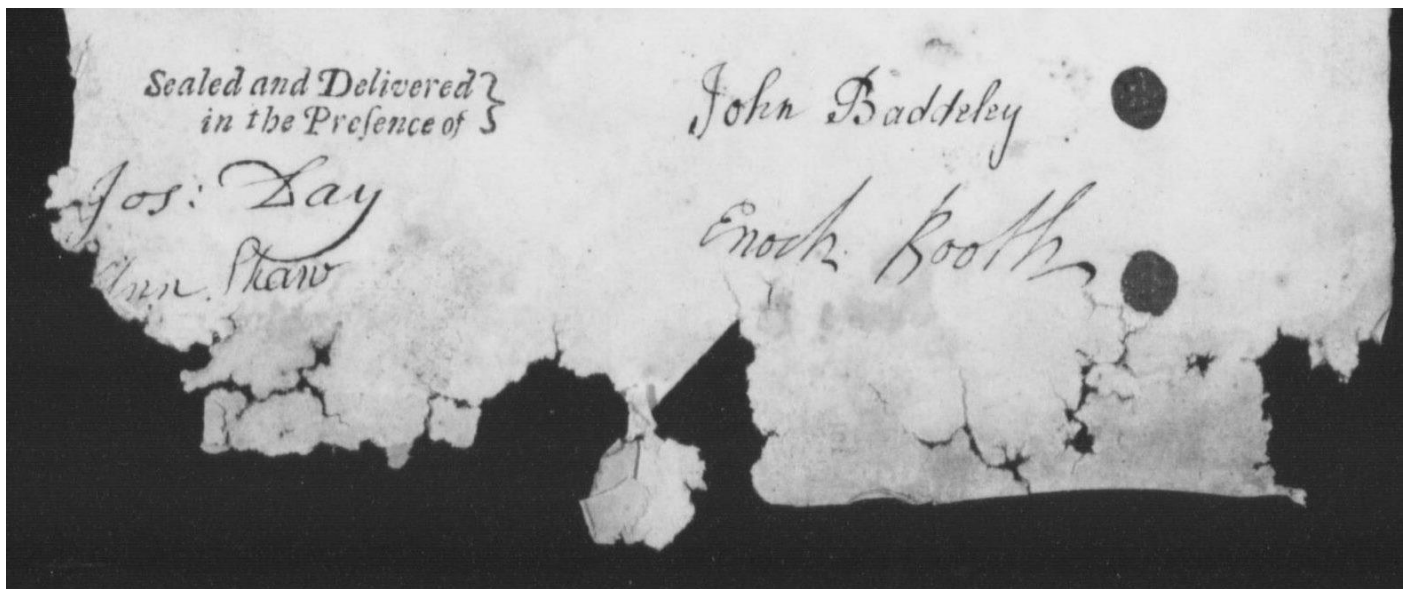


Figure 5 Detail of witness signatures, Littler Booth marriage licence 1741

One of the things the new discovery makes clear is the mistake, of naming William's wife 'Jane Shaw Littler', as published by Megan-Anne Malowney (1999, 12), and subsequently repeated by other writers. The four witnesses to the marriage, 'John Baddeley' and 'Enoch Booth' both of Wolstanton, 'Jos: Day', and 'Ann Shaw' (fig 5) are all interesting, especially Baddeley as Simon Shaw tells us that after leaving Longton Hall 'Mr. Littler, at a subsequent period was manager of a Porcelain manufactory in Shelton, for Messrs Baddeley and Fletchers.' (Shaw 1829, 199). Indisputably, there is still a gap of about four years between his time at Longton Hall which ended in 1760 and his first recorded presence at West Pans in Scotland on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1764<sup>4</sup> (Haggarty 2008, 5). This has led to much discussion on the subject including the possibility that he worked at Burslem for his brother-in-law, Aaron Wedgwood (Goodby 2001, 372). John Mallet has argued for various reasons, that it was unlikely that Litter worked at Shelton a thesis derived mainly from his research on Baddeley, using the Aqualate Papers,<sup>5</sup> in which he found no mention of Littler (Mallet 1966 & 1967). In spite of this, the fact that Baddeley was a witness to the marriage of Litter and Jane Booth, suggests familiarity, and it is not inconceivable that he did spend some time managing Baddeley and Fletchers pottery.

It's most likely that Jos:Day is Josiah Day, the parish clerk of Asbury, but it is also possible that he was Joseph Day as Godden notes a plaque in the Allman collection, which is incised Joseph Day, but comments that no potter of this name had been recorded (Godden 1988, 715). The Ernest Allman collection was sold by Sotheby's on the 12th Jan 1965 and it would be worth checking to see if there is an image in the catalogue or try and find its present owner and if possible, match the signatures.

Enoch Booth is perhaps the most interesting of the four signatories as he is now generally credited with the refining cream coloured earthenware later called creamware, by combining a double firing cycle with a fluid glaze sometime in the 1740s. The evidence for this has been well summarised (Halfpenny 1993). Enoch Booth's only daughter Ann, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1760, married Anthony Keeling (1738-1815), one of the five

original partners who purchased Champions patent for making hard past porcelain in 1781 and set up the Staffordshire 'New Hall' factory, and who eventually succeeded Enoch Booth in his business.

The fourth witness, Ann Shaw, was probably related to Littler through his mother Sarah Shaw the daughter of Ralph Shaw Senior. Sarah had died two years before Littler's marriage in 1739, so Ann was probably a cousin or aunt.

After his bankruptcy at West Pans Scotland in 1777 William Littler returned to Staffordshire and was buried in somewhat reduced circumstances at Burslem St. John's on the 28 Oct 1784. It is thought that a group of frit porcelain with the designation (Baddeley-Littler), and thought to date from c. 1777-90, may have been produced by Ralph Baddeley in association with Littler. If so, was this due to a long-time family friendship?

**The details of Littler's Marriage Licence Bond and Allegation adds to the many unanswered questions relating to the life of William and Jane Littler. Any help or thoughts would be appreciated.**

#### **Unanswered questions include**

1. Was Jane Booth, born at Awcomlow, William Littler's wife or was it a yet unknown Jane Booth?
2. Was William married twice to women named Jane? We have searched for the death of a Jane Littler but with no success.
3. Was his wife Jane Booth related to Enoch Booth, a marriage witness?
4. What was the witness Ann Shaw relationship to William?
5. Where did William gain his knowledge of porcelain production?
6. Where did William work after he left Longton Hall and prior to his appearance in Scotland 1760-4. (Baddeley & Fletcher)?
7. Was Littler's friendship with the Baddeley's significant especially with Ralph Baddeley after Littler left West Pans in 1777.

#### **References**

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<sup>1</sup> Her father Ralph Shaw was a successful Burslem salt glazed potter

<sup>2</sup> Burslem Parish Records Part 1 (1578-1761).

<sup>3</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1766 Jane Littler gave birth to a daughter, and on 31<sup>st</sup> May the infant was baptised in Inveresk Church. *Witnesses - Archibald Tod and William Dallaway.*

<sup>4</sup> At this date, his pottery was up and running which might suggest he had been in Scotland for at least a few months?

<sup>5</sup> From Aqualate Hall the seat of Thomas Fletcher's descendants and which were in Staffordshire County Council archives; William salt Library in Stafford.