

The Cholwich Family of Cornwood, Chudleigh, Blackawton and Farringdon

The name Cholwich was an ancient one in Devon and connected with Chudleigh for just over 200 years, from about 1630 to 1835. Originally, the family can be traced to a single farm – that of Cholwich Town, a farmstead in the parish of Cornwood, about nine miles north-east of Plymouth and on the southwestern edge of Dartmoor. The word 'town' in this context derives from the OE *tun* meaning farm. The first reference to the name appeared in a Cornwood charter dating between 1200 and 1230 in which Guy de Brittevilla, lord of Cornwood grants to Benedict, son of Siward '*all my land of Cholleswyht...*'. and it was Benedict who took the place name as his surname. The spelling of the name passed through a number of variations through the descent of the family until settling as Cholwich in the later 1500s.

The historian Polwhele, writing in the 1790s, tells us that a marriage of a Cholwich to the heiress of Rich brought valuable property into their possession in the South Hams, particularly a mansion house in the parish of Blackawton near Dartmouth. This property, Oldstone, remained in Cholwich family ownership through a number of generations, finally being disposed of in 1835 following the death of the last of the Cholwich line. Purchased afterward by a family named Dimes it remained in their possession until a major fire in 1893, It was never rebuilt and remains of it can still be seen on what is now within the boundaries of Oldstone Farm.

Andrew Cholwich of Cholwich Town had become a man of means by the close of the 16th century; his annual rents from all property in an assessment of 1605 being given as £27 6s 8d – a considerable sum in those days. He was then stated as holding property in Plymouth, Newton Ferrers, Dittisham, North Huish, South Brent, Harberton, Revelstoke and Down Thomas. He married into the family of Rich and in so doing increasing his wealth and standing substantially; the marriage brought with it property at Blackawton, particularly the large estate named Oldstone. Andrew lived until 1611, Grace a further four years until her death in 1615.

After his father's death, William continued at Cholwich Town with his wife Frances whom he had married about 1608. Frances was of a long-established Exeter family, her grandfather, Thomas Isaacke and subsequent generations living in what was formerly Polsloe Priory in Heavitree.

William Cholwich had at least two sons, the first of which and of whom we are concerned, was Andrew. Baptised at Blackawton Church on 10 March 1610 it was this Andrew that brought about the Chudleigh connection with the Cholwich family.

From the 1500s Chudleigh was governed by a small group, referred to as 'The Four Men', one of these in our records of the 1580s, of whom we yet know nothing was a James Cholwich and it may have been this person that encouraged Andrew Cholwich to settle in Chudleigh.

Andrew Cholwich had come to Chudleigh by the 1620s and it is suspected that the woollen trade had brought him here from Blackawton. Not long after arrival he married at the parish church. His spouse, Joan Coysh, was Chudleigh-born having been baptised in the church on 29 September 1616. A marriage settlement of 1633 suggests Andrew acquired Biddlecombe at marriage. Other Chudleigh property connected with the family through the next 200 years was Great Hill and adjacent fields in the old way (Oldway), Heathfield, Henridge Orchard (part of which

is the small housing development in New Exeter Street mis-named as Herridge Orchard), Little Churchills on the Exeter Road and Lower Ranscombe in the north of the parish adjacent to the Whiteway estate. They may also have had an interest in the Oxencombe estate. A surviving deed of 1650 also reveals that Andrew Cholwich purchased three fields close to what is now Parkway Mill from Chudleigh tanner John Soper.

The marriage of Andrew and Joan produced four sons, all baptised at Chudleigh: Andrew (5 December 1634), John (20 June 1638), William (2 June 1642) and Thomas (11 March 1644). Andrew attended Exeter College, Oxford and after marriage in 1665 lived in Heavitree, Exeter. John took up as a merchant, also moving to Exeter. William died in infancy and Thomas, remaining unmarried also moved to Exeter, for a while at a villa called Coaver in the Topsham Road. He was buried in the churchyard on 16 September 1727. It was this Thomas whose mansion house in Chudleigh – the so-called *House of Cholwich*, said to have been on, or close to, the site where the town hall now stands – was purported to have played host to William, Prince of Orange when he stayed overnight in Chudleigh on 7 November 1688 en-route to Exeter, having come ashore at Brixham from France with his army two days earlier.



*Engraving by Hendrik de Cort (1742-1810); one of the 'Six Views of Chudleigh' (c.1795).
Mary Jones suggested this depicts the House of Cholwich*

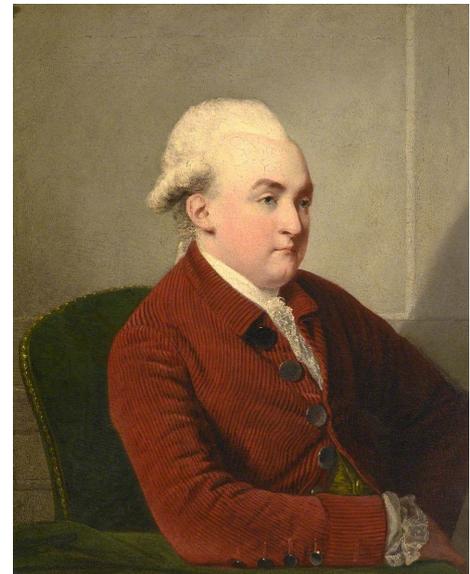
Of Andrew Snr. we know he remained in Chudleigh as he has a ledger stone within the parish church confirming his death on 22 September 1667 and describing him as '*Gentleman of Chudleigh*'. His wife has separate floor stone; she died on 11 August 1702. She, with her son Thomas, had been here at the time of the visit to their house by William, Prince of Orange.

Chudleigh-born Thomas Cholwich, his mother Joan and brother John are named as plaintiffs in a document of 1671 concerning property at Chudleigh. The document is entitled '*Cholwich v Wolcombe*' and the defendant named as John Wolcombe. Quite which property this concerned remains uncertain but we know that the Wolcombes also held substantial estates in the parish, including the meadow on which Culver House was later built.

Of Andrew Jnr (1634–1673) we know that it was he who succeeded at Oldstone in 1659 following the death of his grandfather William of Cholwich Town.

John Cholwich (1634–1714) moved to Exeter initially as a merchant. He went on to marry Ann Cooke, the daughter of another Exeter merchant, John Cooke of Kenbury, Exminster at St Mary Major Church on 17 November 1674. Through the family acquaintance of Thomas Hunt of Hams Barton, John acquired, in 1675, a substantial dwelling in the parish of Farringdon, a few miles east of Exeter. He later became an alderman of Exeter and in 1701 he was a deputy lietenant for Devon and became a Justice of the Peace. He continued to live at Farringdon until his death on 3 October 1714. The substantial Farringdon House remained in Cholwich ownership through two further generations. The last representative at Farringdon was John Burridge Cholwich (1752–1835) who had outlived his wife by almost 40 years and died without offspring to continue the Cholwich line.

John Burridge Cholwich was born on 19 September 1752 and baptised at Tiverton on the following 8 March. He was the only son of John Cholwich (1718–1753) and Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel Burridge, a wealthy woollen merchant of Tiverton. Not being the eldest son, John's father did not inherit Farringdon on the death of his father, John Cholwich (1683–1765). John Burridge Cholwich was educated at Tiverton and afterward Exeter College, Oxford. On his return to Tiverton he became involved in local politics. In 1775 his uncle, Rev Samuel Cholwich died and he, having married into the Oldstone Cholwich family in 1754, passed those South Hams estates to his nephew on his death. In the following year, John contested Exeter as a Whig at the by-election, but at 23 years of age he was no match for his formidable opponent, John Baring (1730–1816). At almost twice John's age, Baring won by 659 votes to 558. John remained in Tiverton, was sheriff of Devon for 1781 and mayor of Tiverton in 1800.



John Burridge Cholwich (1752-1835)
by Sir Joshua Reynolds
[Source: RAMM]

The year after his defeat by Baring he married at Exeter (8 February 1777) to Frances Duntze, daughter of Sir John Duntze of Rockbeare. Their marriage was short and produced no heir. She died whilst visiting Bath in January 1798, aged 39, and was interred at Farringdon a few months after John had inherited the mansion house there following the death of his uncle William Cholwich (1722–1800). As a widower John lived at Farringdon just short of 40 years, dying there on 14 May 1835. John Burridge Cholwich has a memorial tablet in Farringdon parish church and a separate one remembers his wife Frances and another that mentions several generations of Cholwiches of Farringdon.

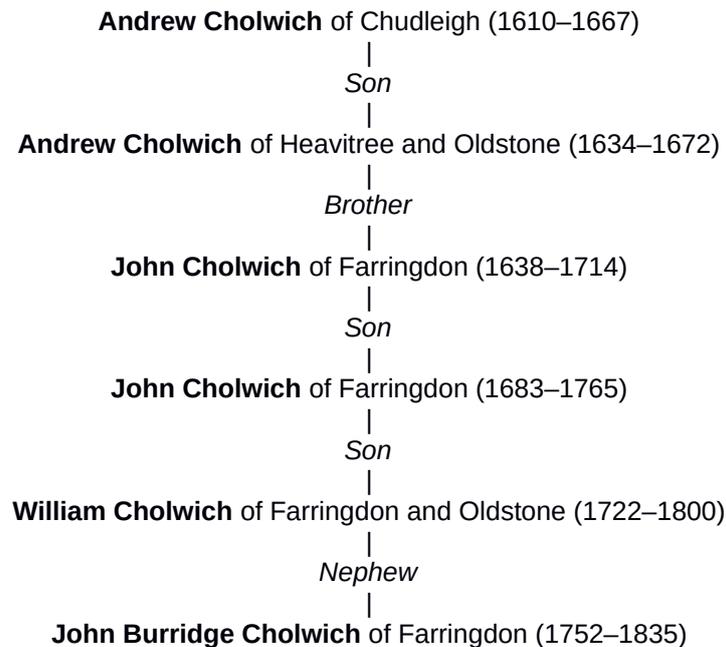


Memorial to John Burrige Cholwich in Farringdon Church

The death of Thomas Cholwich at Chudleigh in 1727 marked the end of Cholwich presence here, although their quite considerable estates remained in their ownership as absentee landlords until all was sold off following the death of John Burrige Cholwich in 1835.

There was one further attempt at continuing their family name after the death of John Burrige Cholwich in 1835 but that was literally a short-lived attempt. William Thomas Lear, only grandson of Mary Ann Cholwich was granted, through the will of his aunt, Grace Cholwich (1728–1794) the widow of the previously mentioned Rev Samuel Cholwich, use of the arms and surname of Cholwich. For a reason yet to be determined he passed away in a London prison in 1839 although his will styled him as William Thomas Lear Cholwich of Oldstone House, Blackawton. With his passing the Cholwich name became extinct as far as Chudleigh connections are concerned.

Chudleigh estates



The Cholwich family memorial in Chudleigh Church is located in the centre underneath the modern staging. The inscription reads:

MEMORIA SACRVM
ANDREAE CHOLWICH OLIM HVJVS PAROCHIA GENEROSI
QVI VITAE SCENA PIE SOBRIE IUSTE PERACTA
ET EX VNICO MATRIMONIO QVATVR ACCEPTIS FILIIS
ANDREA JOHANNE GVLIELMO ET THOMA
DECIMO SECVNDO DIE SEPTEMBRIS PLACIDE IN DOMINO OBDORMIVIT
AETATIS SVAE ANNO QVINQVAGESIMO SEPTIMO
AERAE AVTEM XTIANAE
MDCLXVII

DEFVNCTIS VIDEOR VIVO TAMEN AUSPICE CHRISTO
MORS EST IN MVNDO VIVERE VITA MORI
QUOD CORSPIRIVAVIT MORIENS ET IN ORE TENEBAM
IN COLOS INTEREST TERRA DEINDE VALE

Andrew Cholwich
Died 12th September 1667
Aged 57 Years

Mary Jones (*The History of Chudleigh*, 1875) records:

The Cholwich family had a considerable estate in the north side of the parish; they resided in a large house in the centre of the town, which was destroyed in the Great Fire. These estates were sold about a century since by John Burrige Cholwich, Esq., of Farrington House, to different proprietors. The last notice of the family in the Parish Register is the burial of Thomas Cholwich, Sept. 16, 1727.*

* Arms :—*Per pale, or, and A., three chevrons, sab.; over all, a file of as many lambeaux, G.; crest, a lions paw supporting a shield, per pale or, and arg., mantled G., doubled arg.*

Cholwich South Africa

Although the Cholwich name disappeared in England, it continues to flourish in South Africa. The name there does descend from the Cholwiches of Blackawton but as yet the actual link has yet to be established.

Whilst carrying out research for this report, a record was found of a William Cholwich Esq born about 1715 whose wife, by 1835 was Joanna. Their marriage location has yet to be found but it is known that there was at least one son of their marriage, John Cholwich born at Blackawton in 1738.

John Cholwich went on to marry Elizabeth Friend at neighbouring Halwell parish in 1768 and again there was at least one son of that marriage, another of the name John, baptised at Blackawton on 29 March 1773. In 1808 this John married, at Blackawton, Mary Luckraft, 31 years of age, also of Blackawton. The couple moved from Blackawton to Dartmouth and had four children. Mary (1808), John (1809), Thomas (1810) and William (1815). In the period 1815–20, John, Mary and their four children emigrated from Dartmouth to Eastern Cape, South Africa and settled at a place called Sidbury.

The youngest son, William is known to have married there to a Sarah Gertrude Maria Saayman, that marriage producing 5 sons and 7 daughters and it is descendants of those children that continue in South Africa today.



Resources

Hoskins, WG (1966) *Old Devon*

Jones, Mary (1852) *The History of Chudleigh* [reprint of the 1852 first edition]

Jones, Mary (1875) *The History of Chudleigh* [reprint of the 1875 second edition]

A free version is available online at

<http://ukga.org/england/Devon/towns/c/Chudleigh/History/Contents.html>

and hardcopy reprints are available from various online retailers.

Findmypast.co.uk

Our4bears.net/southhams

Familysearch.org

Discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Devonheritage.org

Genuki.org.uk/big/eng/dev

Memorial tablets in Farringdon and Blackawton churches