

The Paternal Ancestors of Thomas Merton: 1652-1968

By William Meegan

Whether or not Thomas Merton was aware of his seventeenth-century relatives,¹ it is clear that he had met and knew the more recent family members. He learned to pray the Our Father from Gertrude Grierson Merton, his New Zealand grandmother, during her visit to his Queens, New York home in 1919.² He spent much time with his father's aunt Maud Grierson Pearce at her home in the West London borough of Ealing while he was at school in England (see *SSM* 61-63, 123). Also, in November 1961, when she was 72 years old, his aunt Agnes Gertrude Merton, known as Kit, visited him at his monastery on her way home to New Zealand from a visit to her sister Gwynedd Fanny Trier in Horsley, England.³ Kit shared stories of the family history, and Tom enjoyed hearing of his paternal grandmother, a Grierson, whose mother was from Wales and a member of the Welsh Bird family. Later he would make a tentative plan to visit Wales on his return from Asia in 1968.⁴ Of his grandmother, Gertrude Merton, he wrote:

But the best that is in us seems to come from her Welsh mother, whose family name was Bird. This is where our faces come from, the face Father had, that I have, that Aunt Kit has: the look, the grin, the brow. It is the Welsh in me that counts: that is what does the strange things, and writes the books, and drives me into the woods. Thank God for the Welsh in me, and for all those Birds, those Celts.⁵

While the Griersons immigrated to New Zealand from Wales, they were originally Scottish;⁶ the Birds were Welsh; and the Mertons were English and New Zealanders, and all were British. (As a brief aside, it can be asked if Tom was aware of his Welsh roots on his mother's side of the family. The ancestors of his mother, Ruth Jenkins, have family roots which can be traced to Arthur Jenkins, maternal third great-grandfather, who had emigrated from Wales and settled in Morgan County, Ohio, in 1804.)

To trace the early Merton family it is necessary to begin in the mid-seventeenth century. Could the Anthony Murton with whom the story of this family begins in 1652 ever have imagined that some of his descendants would leave England? It would never have occurred to him that a descendant might change the spelling of his surname. Could he ever envision that one of his descendants would have a child out of wedlock? Certainly he would not allow himself to imagine that one of his descendants would rise to the status of being a tradesman or even get an education. Would he have even been able to envision a descendant who would become a music instructor, a teacher, a nurse or another an internationally renowned spiritual writer and Trappist monk? Anthony was poor and an education was not in the cards for him or his family. Any of these events or accomplishments of his descendants were beyond his ken.

The story of these descendants is the story of the Murton family from

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1652 to Thomas Merton's death in 1968. Anthony Murton (1652-1717) was a simple farm laborer during his lifetime. He did not have well-placed family or own any land. Rather, he worked for those who owned the land. He married Anne Hawes (1650-1727) in the parish of Redgrave and together they raised five children in a small cottage.⁷ Their life was not one of anything more than being poor and living close to the land. Anthony died in 1717 in the same parish in which he lived and had been married.

Each of the next few generations lived in the parish of Redgrave in Suffolk, a quiet county in the southeast corner of England; with its flat farmland and few hills it is a place of natural beauty. Much of the England's need for food has been satisfied by the East Anglia counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Wheat, barley, beans, corn and linseed have been the main crops grown on this arable land. Suffolk's eastern border is the North Sea. This proximity to the rest of Europe accounted for the people of the county being aware of the news from the continent, and consequently being an informed populace.

Anthony's son, Samuel Murton (1681-?) married Elizabeth Keyl (?-1776) in 1707.⁸ Like his father, he was a simple farm laborer and lived the life of the poorest in the county. Their son, William Murton (1720-?) married Sarah Wickes (1718-1784) in about 1740 and they had five children. These generations lived without the benefits of education, or the ability to read, to write or to travel. The furthest travel for them would have been to the county seat to register births, marriages or deaths. St Mary's Church, in the parish of Redgrave, built in the fourteenth century, would have been a focal point of religious worship, in an area where the people were known to be very strong believers.

How or why William and Sarah moved 14 miles to the nearby parish of Haughley is not known. William may have been seeking work. It was there that his daughter Martha Murton was born in 1748.⁹ When Martha was 23 years old, in 1771, she had a child without the benefit of marriage.¹⁰ The law of the time provided that if the father's paternity could be known he was required to financially support the child.¹¹ William Allin's name was on the birth certificate, along with the name of Martha. For some time Allin supported Martha and the child. As a result Martha was able to escape living in the poorhouse of the county. Martha continued to live in Haughley and the child, named William, was known in the village by his father's surname – Allin.¹² The senior William eventually left the parish and the younger William adopted his mother's surname – Murton. From then on he was known as William Murton (1771-1839).

In 1794 William Murton married Anne Whiting (1773-1851) and they raised eleven children in a small cottage which they rented from R. Ray, Esq.¹³ William and Anne's second son, James (1796-1878) was born in 1796 and worked as an agricultural laborer for some time.

It was in the year of James' birth that the Napoleonic Wars began, lasting until the defeat of the French at Waterloo in 1815. The political issues that started the conflict would be a distraction from this story. What is relevant, however, is the effect on the people of Suffolk. Waging these wars took a great toll on England in both men and money. The size of the army rose from 16,000 to 140,000 men. A homeland security force was also formed. These increases required vast budgetary increases in salaries and costs of food production. The total monetary cost was estimated to be £831 million. The first tax on the people to pay for the wars was imposed in 1798. William Murton paid a tax of 4 shillings. At the conclusion of the wars the ordinary workers had

paid for more than half the cost. Although this tax was a shock and a burden, the people had some benefits from the need for greater food production. Feeding the large armies pressed the country's resources to its limit. The East Anglia agricultural workers met this demand. Many agricultural workers were hired and the local economy flourished. William and Anne lived through the Napoleonic Wars and benefited from the positive effect on the economy.¹⁴ With the end of the wars in 1815, there was no longer this high demand for food. Many farm laborers were no longer needed, incomes were lost, prices rose and a period of depression began. Making matters worse, the population grew, adding more people who needed work, with less work available. In 1830, living conditions in rural parishes could be as unhealthy and harsh as in many towns. This economic depression was compounded by the Industrial Revolution and its labor-saving inventions such as the threshing machine, which also meant fewer laborers were needed.

James Murton must have been greatly smitten with Susan Denny (1799-1886), for during this time of great economic depression he proposed marriage and on June 3, 1821 they were married at St. Peter's Church, Ipswich, Suffolk.¹⁵ Their first child, Charles, was born on November 4, 1821.¹⁶ In 1840, in their mid-40s, James and Susan were still trying to eke out a living from farm labor.¹⁷ But they became victims of the economic depression described above and they left farm work. At 48 years of age they were house servants to the Rev. Charles Holland, Rector of St. Stephen Church, Ipswich, Suffolk.¹⁸

By the time Charles Murton – Thomas Merton's great-grandfather – was nineteen years old, he was an established bootmaker living in Haughley, Suffolk. The story of how Charles developed from bootmaker to teacher is one of great significance. It is in this narrative that the family is transformed from tradesman to professional. The tale begins about 25 miles south of Haughley in the village of Stoke-by-Nyland, and with the vicar of St Mary's Church, Rev. Charles M. Torlese. The two men may have met when Charles Murton made boots for Rev. Torlese. The vicar took a liking to the young Charles Murton. Charles spent much time with Rev. Torlese's family during the early 1840s and even joined them on family holidays to Long Melford.¹⁹ Rev. Torlese helped Charles in his education which allowed Charles to move beyond boot-making.

Charles Murton met his wife in the home of the Torlese family. Charlotte Street was a family servant in the Torlese home and nurse to the children. Sometime before his marriage to Charlotte, Charles changed the spelling of his surname from Murton to Merton. Charles and Charlotte married in August 2, 1847.²⁰ That same year a parish school was established in Stoke-by-Nyland and the Rev. Torlese appointed Charles to be master of the boys' school and Charlotte to be head of the girls' school.²¹

When one asks, "How did the Mertons get to New Zealand?" it is to the colonization policy of Britain and to the families of James and Charles that one must look. In the first half of the nineteenth century, England was establishing colonies and settlements world-wide. Four colonies had already been established in New Zealand by the New Zealand Company and the mood was right for further expansion. The Church of England wanted to sponsor a settlement and formed the Canterbury Association in 1848 with the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Sumner, as its leader.²² The new settlement was to be on the south island in New Zealand and its provincial name was decided to be Canterbury, in honor of the archbishop. The settlement name was to be Christchurch, after the college at Oxford of the same name. The Archbishop elevated John Harper

to be a bishop and set him on the task of establishing the Church of England-sponsored settlement in the new colony.

Rev. Charles Torlese was a member of the Canterbury Association planning committee and encouraged members of his flock to be pilgrims to the new settlement. Settlers had to be people of strong faith and some had skills needed in the new settlement. He chose James and Susan Murton, as well as their son Charles, with his wife Charlotte and their four children, to join the early settlers of Christchurch. Their fare was waived because they had skills needed for the settlement and they travelled as assisted passengers on the sailing ship *Egmont*, which left London September 10, 1856 and arrived in Lyttleton, New Zealand on December 23, 1856.²³

This voyage to a place 11,000 miles away took more than three months. It was to be a challenge for this family as well as the other settlers. While cabin-class passengers had private rooms and meals served to them, sleeping quarters for those in steerage were bunks that were not private. Steerage passengers prepared their own meals and each person had shipboard chores. What leisure time they had was occupied with informal games, dances and church services. Three people died during the trip.

Once in New Zealand, Thomas Merton's great-great-grandfather, James Murton, and his great-grandfather, Charles Merton, were among those who established the town of Rangiora, a small village near Christchurch. The Rev. Charles Torlese's son, Charles Obins Torlese, was the surveyor for the Canterbury Association who surveyed the land which became Rangiora. He helped James and Charles Merton get settled on land owned by Torlese and they were given a leasehold.

Relatively little is known about James Merton in New Zealand. He eventually had a freehold for the land he first settled in Rangiora and was living there when he died in 1878. His wife Susan died in 1886. Both are buried in the Rangiora Anglican Cemetery. At first, Charles Merton worked as a bootmaker, and he tried to make farming a viable option, but his chief talent was his musical ability. He formed a brass band, organized concerts, gave private music instruction and was a teacher of music. He was appointed master of the Church of England School, whose curriculum was religious and scriptural. He eventually established his own day and boarding school for boys and continued to teach biblical and musical subjects. He founded the Rangiora Horticultural Society as well as the town literary institute, and was president of and player on the cricket team. In Christchurch Charles was a member of the cathedral choir and the first senior lay clerk. Charles died in 1885 and Charlotte in 1906. Both are buried in Woolston Cemetery in Christchurch. On the occasion of his death, the Cathedral Guild placed a memorial to Charles in the entrance to the church, in recognition of his many contributions to the Cathedral and its choir.²⁴

Thomas Merton's grandfather, Alfred James Merton (1857-1931), was born to Charles and Charlotte one year after their arrival in New Zealand. Alfred was a bright student and received a Provincial Government Scholarship. In June 1874 he passed the exams for his teacher certificate. He was musically talented and in 1878 he became assistant organist at St. Michael's Church. He was then appointed organist, choirmaster and music director at Christ's College²⁵ and wrote the music for the school song. He was musical director for the Savage Club, a social club for men, as well as grand organist of the District Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Bugle-Major of the

Canterbury Battalion and bandmaster of the Garrison Band. He conducted the school teachers' musical examinations and was examiner to the Wellington Education Board in music and singing.

In 1882 Alfred married Gertrude Heathcote Grierson (1855-1956).²⁶ Gertrude Grierson was born in Cardiff, Wales. It is in Wales that most biographers place the family roots of Gertrude Grierson but her son Thomas Merton was correct when he thought the family origin was Lowland Scotch (see *SSM* 4). In fact, Gertrude Grierson is descended from a long and noteworthy line of Scottish nobility. Lag Tower was the ancestral home of the Griersons in the Scottish Lowlands.²⁷ It is possible with a high degree of reliability to trace the ancestry of Gertrude as far back as her thirteenth great-grandfather, Gilbert Grierson, first Lord of Lag.²⁸

It was Gertrude's grandfather, William Grierson (1771-1854), who left Penpont, Dumfriesshire, Scotland some time before 1810. He took the family to Shropshire, England where Gertrude's father, John Grierson, was born on January 26, 1816. William was a cloth merchant and taught John the trade. It is John's occupation which is likely to have led him from Shropshire to Cardiff, Wales, since both cities were involved in the textile industry. It was there that John met and married a Cardiff girl, Elizabeth Bird. They married in 1842 in Cardiff, Glamorgan, Wales.

Why John and Gertrude Grierson decided to immigrate to New Zealand is not known, but they and their eleven children were First Class passengers on the sailing vessel *The British Empire* when they immigrated to New Zealand in 1864. At the time Gertrude was 9 years of age.

Gertrude had been a victim of polio from birth and her nature was such that she overcame any limitations due to this infirmity. As an adult she wore leg irons and rode a bike to Canterbury University College where she was a member of the first group of matriculated students that attended the college, one of the first women students and Senior University Scholar in French and German. With her training she taught at Bingsland School, West Christchurch, and Mrs. Bowen's school in Riccarton. She eventually opened her own school.

Owen Heathcote Grierson Merton was the fourth of six children of Alfred and Gertrude, born May 14, 1887 in Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand. He did not follow the path of his siblings toward formal academic education; rather his artistic talents were recognized in his early teens and he trained, first in Canterbury, and then in England and eventually in Paris. His career as a painter progressed to the point that he was recognized by several art societies; however, he was rarely able to be financially solvent or support his family, and his passion for painting took precedence over his duties as a parent.

Owen's life and career as a painter has been chronicled in an unpublished biography by Roger Collins.²⁹ Owen married Ruth Calvert Jenkins in London on April 4, 1914 and following their marriage the couple lived in Prades, France, where their first son Thomas was born in 1915.³⁰ Owen continued painting but was unable to support the family. In 1918 they left France to live with Ruth's parents in Douglaston, Queens, New York City. Their second son, John Paul, was born in Douglaston on November 2, 1918. Ruth died of cancer in New York in Bellevue Hospital on October 3, 1921, and Owen died of a brain tumor in Middlesex Hospital in London, England, on July 14, 1931. Tom was educated in France and England and then at Columbia University where he received bachelor's and master's degrees. He converted to Catholicism in 1938, and became a monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1941, belonging to the Order of Cistercians of the

Strict Observance (OCSO), known as Trappists. His writing made him one of the most influential spiritual writers of the twentieth century.

Following his mother's death, John Paul spent his childhood being raised by his mother's parents, Sam and Martha Jenkins. He spent five years at Cornell University without completing a degree. Months before America got into World War II, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and was trained as an Air Bomber and flew in the crew of a Wellington bomber.

Both Thomas (1915-1968) and John Paul (1918-1943) died in tragic circumstances. Thomas died while attending a conference on monasticism in Thailand.³¹ John Paul died a heroic death in the crash of his Wellington bomber over the English Channel in World War II.³² Neither brother left any heirs.

One can only wonder what the farmer with whom this story began would think if he knew of these descendants. If Anthony Murton could speak now, what might he say of the family described here; and about all of those ministers, teachers, attorneys, musicians, military officers, nurses, writers who are not included, as well as the Trappist monk who is the most famous of the lot? I would like to think that in true English style, Anthony would take his floppy cap off, scratch his head and exclaim, "Blimey!" – being left speechless and in awe. From the simple and humble life of this Suffolk farmer, rose six generations of Mertons. From farmer to tradesman to teacher to preacher to acclaimed artist to the spiritual and literary Trappist monk. Each generation grew in commitment to their faith and in contributions to their community. Thomas Merton's life personified this evolution, and his contributions remain permanently imprinted on our consciousness.

The Merton family line continues and prospers in New Zealand. Little is known of the family in Suffolk.³³

1. Some of Merton's ancestors of the seventeenth and eighteenth century were identified with the help of Rev. John James Merton, first cousin of Thomas, who resides in New Zealand. His information came from professional genealogy research into the family history. The full family tree identifies more than 400 people with more than 1500 records. The full tree can be made available by contacting the author at: billmegan139@gmail.com.
2. See Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) 9; subsequent references will be cited as "SSM" parenthetically in the text.
3. See Thomas Merton, *Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years. Journals, vol. 4: 1960-1963*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996) 176-78; for Merton's letters to Aunt Kit, see Thomas Merton, *The Road to Joy: Letters to New and Old Friends*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989) 59-60, 68-69, 69-70, 73-75, 79, 81-82, 84.
4. See A. M. Allchin, "Can We Do Wales Then?" *The Merton Journal* 13.2 (Eastertide, 2006) 2-10.
5. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 181; for a thorough review of Merton's interest in the Celts and Celtic monasticism, see Paul M. Pearson, "Sentinels upon the World's Frontier: Thomas Merton and Celtic Monasticism," *The Merton Journal* 21.1 (Eastertide, 2014) 11-25 and Monica Weis, SSJ, *Thomas Merton and the Celts: A New World Opening Up* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016).
6. Source information for second great grandfather William Grierson: Ancestry.com. Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: Scotland, Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
7. Source information for Anthony Murton (married Anne Hawes, 1674): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
8. Source information for Samuel Murton (married Elizabeth Key, 1707): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England,

- Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
9. Source information for the birth of Martha Murton (1748): Ancestry.com. England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
10. Source information for William Murton (born to Martha Murton and William Allin, 1771): Ancestry.com. England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
11. See <http://www.suffolk-family-history-research.co.uk/category/bastardy-bonds> (accessed 15 March 2020).
12. Personal communication from John James Merton.
13. Source information for William Murton (married Anne Whiting, 1794): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
14. See <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/The-Napoleonic-Wars> (accessed 14 March 2020).
15. Source information for James Murton (married Susan Denny, 1821): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
16. Source Information for Charles Murton (baptism): Ancestry.com. England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975; Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
17. Source citation for James Murton (1841 census: class: HO107; piece: 1035; book: 7; Civil Parish: Haughley; County: Suffolk; Enumeration District: 7 8; Folio: 18; Page: 8; Line: 6; GSU roll: 474643); source information: Ancestry.com. 1841 England Census [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2010.
18. Source citation for James Murton (1851 census: class: HO107; piece: 1800; folio: 354; page: 23; GSU roll: 207449); source information: Ancestry.com. 1851 England Census [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.
19. Malcolm Anderson, "Merton, Charles," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1993); *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*: available at: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m46/merton-charles> (accessed 18 June 2019).
20. Source information for Charles Merton (married Charlotte Street, 1847): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
21. Source citation for Charles Merton (1851 census: class: HO107; piece: 1788; folio: 355; page: 12; GSU roll: 207437); source information for Charles Merton (biographical information): Ancestry.com. 1851 England Census [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2005.
22. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canterbury_Association (accessed 14 June 2019).
23. See <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Digitised/Emigration/EmbarkationLists/Egmont-1856/> (accessed 14 June 2019).
24. See Malcolm Anderson, "Merton, Charles," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1993); *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, available at: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m46/merton-charles> (accessed 4 March 2021).
25. See <https://christscollge.com/about-college/history/> (accessed 17 June 2019).
26. Source information for Alfred Merton (married Gertrude Grierson, 1882): Ancestry.com. New Zealand, Marriage Index, 1840-1937 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: New Zealand Marriage Index, 1840-1950 (microfiche).
27. For a video of Lag Tower and its history see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8Qk3WZYHyk> (accessed 15 March 2020).
28. See the following for the Grierson history: Find A Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>: accessed 17 March 2020); memorial page for Sir Gilbert Grierson (1397-1444), Find A Grave Memorial no. 60665926, citing Old Dunscore Cemetery, Dunscore, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland; Maintained by Delbert Bauer (contributor 47095919); <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/en/zoeken/index.php?q=grierson&vn=&pn=scotland> (accessed 17 March 2020).
29. Roger Collins, *A Sense of Construction: The Life of Owen Merton* (unpublished manuscript archived at the Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY).

30. Source information for Owen Merton (married Ruth Jenkins, 1914): Ancestry.com. England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973 [database on-line]; Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; original data: England, Marriages, 1538-1973. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
31. Source citation: Thomas Merton death report: National Archives at College Park; College Park, Maryland, U.S.A.; NAI Number: 613857; Record Group Title: General Records of the Department of State; Record Group Number: Record Group 59; Series Number: Publication A1 5166; Box Number: 58; Box Description: 1968 MAR – MZ; source information: Ancestry.com. Reports of Deaths of American Citizens Abroad, 1835-1974 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.
32. Source citation: John Paul Merton death report: Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Canada; Service Files of the Second World War – War Dead, 1939-1947; Series: RG 24; Volume: 28233; source information: Ancestry.com. Canada, WWII Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947 [database on-line]; Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry Operations, Inc., 2015.
33. As with most genealogy research, accounts are never complete. There is always one more person, fact, or story to chase down. And so it is with Thomas Merton's family. There are baptism records for Thomas Murton in July 1573 and George Murton in September 1573 in the history of Buxhall parish, Suffolk (Source information: Ancestry.com. *History of the parish of Buxhall in the county of Suffolk* [database on-line]; Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005; original data: Walter Arthur Copinger, *History of the Parish of Buxhall in the County of Suffolk*. [London: H. Sotheran & Co., 1902]). The dates suggest there are two Murton families in the parish at the time. The names are ones that are found in subsequent records of the Murton family. Buxhall is 18 miles south of the parish of Redgrave, Suffolk. It is possible that these records are for ancestors of Thomas Merton prior to Anthony, with whom this story began. However, since I have not been able to locate records that link the Buxhall Murtons with the Redgrave Murtons, they have not been included in the family tree.