

THE BLAKER FAMILY OF SUSSEX, ENGLAND AND IRELAND

Volume 1.
Overview of Blaker research

by Chris Phillips
cgp@medievalgenealogy.org.uk

to Rod Blaker
rod.blaker@gmail.com

and Group Gen

OVERVIEW OF BLAKER RESEARCH

The following is an attempt to give a brief overview of research into the Blaker surname and the Blaker families of Sussex.

The notes refer to the following works:

Walter Charles Renshaw, ["Searches into the history of the family of Blaker of Sussex"](#) (2nd edition, 1904)

David Bethell, ["The Blaker Family of Sussex, England and Ireland. Volume 2. Research reports"](#)

Chris Phillips, ["The Blaker Family of Sussex, England and Ireland. Volume 3. Miscellaneous genealogical searches in 2008-2009"](#)

Chris Phillips, ["The Blaker Family of Sussex, England and Ireland. Volume 4. Monthly genealogical research reports starting in August 2024"](#)

The Blaker surname

The earliest men in England called Blaker, or something similar, occur in the 11th and 12th centuries. But in every case this was the personal name of an individual, not the hereditary surname of a family. From the 11th century there are a moneyer called Blacere (or Blacera, Blacra or Blacre) in Thetford, Norfolk, a man called Blakere who was a Benedictine monk at Bury St Edmunds and later the founding head of the Priory of Rumburgh in Suffolk, and a pre-Conquest tenant in Yorkshire named in several entries in the Domesday book as Blacre.¹ Similar given names occur later - in the 12th century there are a Blakerus at Thorney Abbey, in Cambridgeshire, two sons of Blacher in Yorkshire, and in the 13th century a grandson of Blaker in Whitby, also in Yorkshire.²

Two possible derivations of these personal names have been suggested. One is the Scandinavian name Blakkr, meaning dark or black - the most prominent holder of which was Blacair(e), the Viking who was briefly king of Dublin in the 10th century.³ The second is an apparently hypothetical Old English name Blæchere, supposed to mean "black army". The scholarly verdict has been divided between these, with Blakkr tending to have been favoured as the origin of the Domesday name, but with opinions differing about the other forms ending in -er(e).⁴

However, a survey of the occurrences of surnames similar to Blaker in England up to the year 1300 indicated that they normally derived either from an occupation or from a place-name, and not from a personal name.⁵

Of the 18 Blaker references in English from the 13th century, 12 were preceded by

1 Volume 4, pages 72-74.

2 Volume 4, pages 74-75.

3 Volume 4, pages 67-72.

4 Volume 4, page 68.

5 Volume 4, pages 45-59.

the prefix 'le', indicating an occupation, 4 were preceded by 'de' or 'del', indicating a place-name, and 2 had no prefix.

The four "de(l) Blacker" examples all come from Yorkshire, and can be linked to two Yorkshire places named Blacker, in the parishes of Crigglestone and Worsbrough. One of those without a prefix, also a "Blacker" and from Lancashire, occurs in a list of names immediately preceding an entry for John de Crikeleston [Crigglestone], in which the 'de' was originally omitted and then interlined. So it seems likely that this too relates to Blacker in Crigglestone, and that all five of the 'de' or 'del' records are for surnames derived from Yorkshire place-names.⁶

The other example without a prefix is a Walter 'Blakers' from Bristol in 1287. The origin of this form is not clear. It might conceivably have derived from the personal name Blaker, but a similar name Blackers has been interpreted as a nickname meaning "black arse".⁷

The remaining 12 examples of forms of Blaker preceded by 'le', and therefore indicating an occupation were from southern England - Buckinghamshire (1), Essex (4), Gloucestershire (2), Hampshire (2), Kent (1), Sussex (1) and Wiltshire (1) - and show a variety of spellings - Blaker (1), Blakier (3), Blakiere (4), Blakyer (1), Blakyere (2) and Blackere (1). All except two of these are of a similar form, with an 'i' or 'y' preceding the 'er'. The language of all these records is Latin, and the use of an English rather than a Latin form presumably indicates that the word was already being used as a surname rather than just specifying an occupation.

As for the meaning of this occupational surname, two diametrically opposite interpretations have been proposed - "bleacher" or "blacker" - together with two possible interpretations of the latter - either a dyer of black cloth or a maker of black ink.

The class of Middle English surnames ending in -ier was discussed from a linguistic viewpoint in G. Fransson's book, "Middle English surnames of occupation, 1100-1350", published in 1935. He concluded that these were regularly formed from either Old English verbs ending in -ian or Old English nouns, the first syllable in both cases having a short vowel. One of his examples was Blakiere, which he argued must therefore derive from the Old English 'blæc', which meant black (or ink), and so must have the sense of 'blacker' rather than 'bleacher'.⁸

Confirmation of Fransson's opinion comes from a late-13th-century Cirencester charter of Walter le Blakier, which bears a seal with an inscription identifying it as the seal of Walter le 'Nerour'. This is apparently an occupational description formed from the Anglo-Norman French word 'neir' for black, of which a recognised variant was

⁶ Volume 4, pages 49-52.

⁷ Volume 4, pages 48, 52.

⁸ Volume 4, pages 52-53.

'ner', together with the Middle English suffix -our. The meaning would therefore be 'blacker'. Also, although the Old English 'blæc' could mean ink as well as black, the same is not true of the French 'neir'. So unlike the English form 'Blakier', 'Nerour' would not admit the alternative interpretation of ink-maker.⁹

Sussex Blakers before 1500

The earliest known Blaker reference in Sussex, dated to about 1285,¹⁰ records that Alice, widow of "le Blakyere" held a croft with a building on it, as a tenant of the manor of South Malling, near Lewes.¹¹ Nothing more is known of Blakers in the Lewes area at this early period.

The next Blaker reference is about 40 years later, and comes from the 1327 lay subsidy assessment for Cuckfield, in which a William Blaker appears.¹² As David Bethell points out, nearly all the surnames that occur here are preceded by 'le', 'de' or 'at(t)e' and Blaker is one of only four out of 29 that are not. This may indicate that in William's case he was no longer following the occupation from which his surname derived.

The William Blaker of 1327 is the first of many Blakers to be found in Cuckfield and its immediate vicinity, over a period of several hundred years. In the 14th century two local charters naming Blakers are known. In the first, from 1374, John Blakere is one of four men who are granted lands in Cuckfield, Shelley and Ifield, while in the second, from 1395, John Blakere of Shelley grants to William Haselyng of Cuckfield a croft containing 3 acres in Cuckfield. From its description, it appears that this land was in the same part of the parish as the farm which was held Richard Blaker in the early 17th century.¹³

The poll tax assessment of 1379 for Cuckfield lists a John Blakere and a Walter Blakere, both apparently married men. These are the only clear examples of the surname in the surviving Sussex poll tax returns, though an Alice 'Blokere' is also listed in Southwick (between Shoreham and Portslade on the coast).¹⁴

For most of the 15th century our main source of information on Sussex Blakers is the plea rolls of the Court of Common Pleas in Westminster, a number of which have now been indexed.¹⁵ Blakers appear in three cases. In one, from 1413, a Thomas Blaker was one of three men whose grazing animals had been seized at Lancing (west

⁹ Volume 4, pages 53, 56.

¹⁰ At one time it had been thought that there was an earlier record, from 1279, of a John le Blakere in New Shoreham. But the name had been misread, and was really John le Blak[e] (see volume 2, page 203, and volume 4, pages 15-20). In another New Shoreham record 50 years later - a charter dated 1329 - another reference to a John le Blak[e] has been similarly misread as Blaker (see volume 2, pages 204-209, and volume 4, pages 22-24).

¹¹ Volume 4, pages 35-37.

¹² Volume 2, pages 228-229; volume 3, page 7.

¹³ Renshaw, pages 12, 77-78; volume 4, pages 121-125.

¹⁴ Volume 2, pages 8-9, 235-238; volume 3, pages 42-43.

¹⁵ These and other plea rolls can be searched [here](#)

of Shoreham on the coast) by John Gorynge, in consideration of customs and services due to him, as he said. He complained that the other two men had rescued the animals by force and arms.¹⁶ In the second case, from 1440, Thomas Blaker of Cuckfield, a husbandman, was one of the defendants in a plea of trespass.¹⁷ In the third, from 1473, Ralph Blaker, labourer, and Joan Blaker, widow, both of West Preston (between Rustington and East Preston on the coast), were alleged to be unjustly withholding three horses from one Alexander Stephens.¹⁸

In the late 15th century evidence emerges of the second prolific branch of the family in Sussex, at Preston (near Brighton, sometimes called Bishops Preston, or Preston Episcopi). This comes in the will of John Blaker of Preston, dated 1482, but apparently not proved until much later. Evidently he was not the first Blaker in Preston, as he mentions that his father's will had specified a gift to the church there. John's will mentions his wife Agnes, his son Richard (who was perhaps under age), and deceased parents, brothers and sisters. One of the deceased brothers was named Ralph, and had left two sons and a daughter, who were under age.¹⁹ Soon afterwards, in 1489, John Blaker the elder and John Blaker the younger, both of Preston and husbandmen, were defendants in a plea of trespass in the Court of King's Bench brought by the Earl of Derby.²⁰ And in 1493 a John Blaker was the plaintiff in another King's Bench plea of trespass, against Thomas Kempe of Preston, cooper.²¹

At the end of the 15th century Blakers also appear in connection with the neighbouring parish of Brighton. In most of the records no place of residence is given, and they may have lived in Preston.²² In 1492 a John Blaker brought a King's Bench plea of trespass against John Eston of Brighton, yeoman.²³ And a John Blaker or Blakar was involved in two undated chancery suits from around the same time, because he had been one of the feoffees of the Erly family for a messuage and land in Brighton.²⁴ But the final case definitely concerns a Brighton man - Simon Blaker, fisher, who in 1498 was one of several accused of breaking a close of Lord Abergavenny at 'Rattyngden' (probably Rottingdean) and taking £18 16s. in ready money.²⁵

16 Volume 2, pages 19-20.

17 Volume 2, pages 9-14.

18 Volume 2, pages 22-24. There are two entries concerning this case, and in one of them Ralph's surname is given as Blaber. This is presumably an error, as Joan's name is given as Blaker, and in the other entry both names are given as Blaker.

19 Renshaw, pages 12-13 and 264-265; volume 2, pages 26-29. Ralph Blaker is also mentioned in the will of Walter Knyght of Preston, also dated 1482, but also apparently proved much later.

20 Volume 4, pages 39-40.

21 Volume 4, pages 40-41.

22 The 1489 plea brought by the Earl of Derby, just discussed, may be an indication that the Preston Blakers were also active in Brighton. The earl appears to have had no interest in Preston, but was one of the coheirs to the Barony of Lewes, which included the main manor in Brighton, known as Brighton-Lewes (Victoria County History, Sussex, volume 7, pages 244-263), so the alleged trespass may have been committed there.

23 Volume 4, page 40.

24 See FONS files [BLAKER_29](#), page 4, and [BLAKER_30](#), pages 1 and 2, and also the catalogue entry for National Archives [C 1/133/33](#). These proceedings can be dated to either 1486-1493 or 1504-1509. The final date is that of the probate of the will of one of the parties, John Erly (or Ernley) of Lewes, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

25 Volume 4, page 41.

Sussex Blakers in the first half of the 16th century

In the 16th century records become more plentiful and it starts to become possible to construct continuous pedigrees. Most of the recorded individuals seem likely to be descendants of the Blakers who were already established in Cuckfield and the Preston area before 1500, and these will be dealt with separately. This section covers the other Blakers recorded in the first half of the 16th century.

The lay subsidy of 1524-1525 is the most comprehensive of the Tudor period. The Sussex assessments included Blakers in Cuckfield, and in three other hundreds - West Grinstead, Bexhill and Whalesborne. Unfortunately interpretation is not straightforward for any of these three:

(1) For the tithing of West Grinstead, a Richard appears, but his surname is spelled Blabyer in the 1524 return, and Blakyar in the 1525 return. So it is not clear whether he is a Blaber or a Blaker.²⁶

(2) For the hundred of Bexhill, which comprises only Bexhill parish, similarly a Richard appears, whose surname is spelled Blaker in 1524 and Blaber in 1525. So again it is not clear whether he is a Blaber or a Blaker.²⁷

(3) For the hundred of Whalesborne, four Blakers are listed in 1524 - Simon, John, Richard and Nicholas. The list for 1525 is mutilated, and includes only Richard and John, while this John is assessed at 20 shillings in goods, rather than 4 pounds as in 1524. Unfortunately, it is not clear exactly where any of these men would have been living. At this time, Whalesborne would have included three parishes where Blakers were to be found around this time - Preston, Brighton and Hove.²⁸

Other isolated stray references to Blakers occur in the 1540s. In 1545 there is a reference to a house and croft, apparently in the parish of Edburton (a neighbouring parish to Portslade), which had been occupied by an unnamed Blaker.²⁹ And in the lay

²⁶ Volume 2, page 200; volume 4, pages 78-79. Knowing only of the 1525 version, David Bethell noted that there were Blakers in the parish of Nuthurst in the 17th century, and suggested that Singlecross Hundred, for which there is no section in the lay subsidy returns, might have been included under the heading of West Grinstead. It might also pointed out that a Margery Blakeyar was assessed in Singlecross Hundred in 1543 (see below). On the other hand, in 1524 the tithing of Sedgwick, in Nuthurst parish, was included in Brightford Hundred, and other tithings in Singlecross were included in Steyning Hundred, of which Singlecross had earlier been a detached portion (see Victoria County History of Sussex, volume 6, page 128). Also, regarding the possibility that Richard was a Blaber, West Grinstead is quite close to Storrington and other places in the rape of Bramber where Blabers were recorded in the lay subsidies of the 1520s.

²⁷ Volume 2, pages 76-95; volume 4, page 84. No person of either surname has been found in other Bexhill records.

²⁸ Volume 2, pages 36-37; volume 4, pages 81-83. According to the Victoria County History, Preston and Hove were included in Whalesborne Hundred from the 13th century until 1540 (volume 7, page 264). It seems reasonable to assume that the Simon Blaker of 1524 was either the same as or a close relation of the Simon Blaker of Brighton, fisher, named in a plea roll of 1498 (see above).

²⁹ Renshaw, page 119.

subsidy assessment of 1543 there are two stray entries:

(1) Margery Blakeyar, in Singlecross Hundred, to the west of Cuckfield.³⁰

(2) William Blaker, in Tipnoak Hundred, between Cuckfield and the coast, to the south-west.³¹

In addition, there are several records relating a Blaker family in the neighbourhood of West Firle, to the south-east of Lewes. A William Blaker is listed at Preston Poynings (in West Firle) in both a muster roll of 1539³² and the lay subsidy assessment of 1543.³³ Between these two dates is a reference in 1541 to a Richard Blaker, occupying a messuage, lands and tenements which were part of the manor of Tilton (in the neighbouring parishes of Selmeston and Alciston).³⁴ Immediately after the date of the lay subsidy, William Blaker of the parish of Selmeston made a will in 1543/4 naming his sons John and William and mentioning his wife and three daughters, who are all unnamed³⁵. This and the will of his elder son John Blaker of West Firle, the administration of John's wife Agnes, and the wills of Agnes's mother Margaret Fawkenor and John's son Edward, provide more information about the family. Likely descendants can be traced in the area east of Lewes up to the 18th century.³⁶

The Cuckfield branch

The 16th century records of Blakers in Cuckfield give the impression of at least two separate families, one of which was significantly wealthier. Although no records of Cuckfield Blakers have been found from the second half of the 15th century, it seems likely that the Blakers had been in Cuckfield continuously since the early 1300s. If that is so, the different branches that are seen in the 16th century would not necessarily have been closely related.

Taking the wealthier family first, the records begin with a Richard Blaker witnessing a Homwod family feoffment in 1510. This concerned the manor of Slough, which is in the same part of the parish where Blakers seem to have held land in the 1390s, and where they held a farm in the early 17th century.³⁷

It seems likely that this is the same Richard Blaker who was assessed for £20 in goods in the lay subsidies of 1524-1525 and for £16 in those of 1543 and 1545,³⁸ and

³⁰ Volume 4, pages 88-89.

³¹ Volume 4, page 90.

³² Volume 4, page 63.

³³ Volume 4, pages 94-95.

³⁴ Volume 2, page 96, citing West Sussex Record Office [Clough/4/1/5/166](#). It is strange that Richard is not found in the other records at this time. This was a feoffment in which a number of pieces of property were listed. It is possible that this is an anachronistic reference to an earlier tenant, perhaps William's predecessor.

³⁵ Renshaw, page 78; volume 2, pages 97-98, 268.

³⁶ Renshaw, pages 79-81, 113-119; volume 2, pages 98-109.

³⁷ The feoffment is West Sussex Record Office, [Sergison/1/1/12/1/279](#). For the location of Blaker holdings in Cuckfield, see volume 4, pages 123-125, 171-175.

³⁸ Volume 4, pages 80-81, 90-92.

also the same Richard Blaker of Cuckfield who made his will in 1546, naming his wife Agnes and his children John, Joan and Amy.³⁹ His son John may have been assessed in his own right, during his father's lifetime, for goods worth £2 in the lay subsidies of 1543 and 1545. He was presumably the same John Blaker of the parish of Cuckfield whose will was dated 1567 and proved the following year, naming his wife Katherine, his son Richard and his unmarried daughter Elizabeth.⁴⁰

John's son Richard appears to be the same man who is recorded in Cuckfield from the 1570s until his burial as "an old man" in 1623 (unless these records represent two Richards in succession). The manorial documents of the early 17th century show that he held the present-day Moorfields Farm, to the west of the village of Cuckfield, together with about 40 acres of neighbouring land. One reference in 1586 identifies him as the brother-in-law of Robert Anstye alias Fielde, of the family who held the nearby Wyllies Farm, though the exact nature of his relationship is unknown.⁴¹ A number of Richard's descendants have been traced.⁴²

Returning to the early 16th century, the Cuckfield lay subsidies mention several other Blakers in addition to Richard. In 1524-1525 there is a Ralph Blaker, assessed for goods worth £1,⁴³ while in 1543 and 1545 there are John Blaker, with goods worth £2, and Edmund Blaker, with goods worth £4.⁴⁴ John may or may not be the son of Richard, assessed in his own right during his father's lifetime. In Edmund's case we have other references - in 1558 as the administrator of the estate of John Berd of Cuckfield, in the 1560 lay subsidy, assessed for £5 in goods, and in 1566 as a witness of the will of John Fouell of Cuckfield.⁴⁵ But his relationship to the other Blakers is not known.

The remaining records of 16th-century Blakers in Cuckfield can all be tentatively related to one another. In 1543, in the will of John Fawkenor of the parish of Cuckfield, the unnamed wife of William Blaker was left 3 shillings and 4 pence.⁴⁶ By her will dated 1587/8 and proved 1588, Alice Turpe of Cuckfield made Arthur Blaker her sole executor and residuary legatee, and gave legacies to several other Blakers.⁴⁷

39 Renshaw, pages 81-82; volume 4, pages 141-142.

40 Volume 4, page 141. For further information about John, see Renshaw, pages 82, 112; volume 2, page 148-149 (but note that David Bethell had access only to an inaccurate copy of his will which misnamed his son as John); volume 4, pages 144-145. The identification of this John as the son of the Richard who died in or soon after 1546 and as the father (or at least the predecessor) of the Richard who died in 1623 (see below) finds some support in John Rowe's early 17th-century survey of the manor of Cuckfield. In the entry for the land of the latter Richard, two dates are noted there: 12 October 1547 and 16 September 1568. These are close to the presumed dates of death of the earlier Richard and John, and it is plausible that they indicated the admission of their successors as tenants.

41 For further information about Richard, see Renshaw, page 91; volume 2, pages 150-157; volume 4, pages 109-110, 127-129, 145-146, 148-149, 161-165, 171-175.

42 Renshaw, pages 91-99; volume 2, pages 157-163, 177-179, 282. Renshaw says it can safely be assumed that George Blaker of Cowfold (d. 1617) was a son of Richard, and traces his descendants as far as the 19th century. But David Bethell suggests there was no close relationship (volume 2, page 178).

43 Volume 4, pages 80-81.

44 Volume 4, pages 90-92.

45 Renshaw, page 112; volume 4, pages 140-141, 143-144, 146-147.

46 Renshaw, page 79, note; volume 4, pages 142-143. Renshaw associates this reference with the known relationship between the Fawkenors and Blakers of West Firle, but the two relationships must be only a chance coincidence.

47 Volume 4, pages 129-130.

The information in these two wills, in combination with other evidence, suggests that a daughter of John Fawkenner named Iden married Robert Turpe and was the mother of Alice Turpe, while another of John's daughters was the wife of William Blaker and the mother of Arthur.⁴⁸

In Alice Turpe's will of 1588, as well as legacies to Arthur and those identifiable as his immediate family, there is a legacy of 5 shillings to a John Blaker. In 1587, the Cuckfield court roll recorded that a John Blaker had surrendered his right to the reversion of a cottage in Broad Street after the death of one Joan, the wife of Ralph Bottom, so that after Joan's death he should hold it only for his life, and it should then pass to Arthur's daughter Eleanor and her heirs.⁴⁹ Two years before that, a John Blaker had been a witness of the Robert Anstye alias Fielde of Cuckfield, and is also described as "wryter" (of the will).⁵⁰ His literacy suggests a possible identification with the John Blaker who had graduated from Cambridge University in 1590-1 and was granted a licence to teach boys in Slaugham, near Cuckfield, in 1595.⁵¹ A further entry in the court roll in 1600 implies that John was dead by that time. John and Arthur were evidently closely related, and the mention of John in Alice Turpe's will suggests that he was a descendant of Arthur's mother. Arthur would have been born around 1540,⁵² and the chronology suggests that John may have been a nephew, or perhaps a much younger brother, of Arthur.

Arthur Blaker himself is regularly recorded in the Cuckfield court rolls in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. These show that he held another cottage in Broad Street, which he exchanged in 1600 with his daughter Eleanor's reversion of the cottage then held by Joan Bottom. Arthur's will, dated 1618, names his wife Alice and numerous children and grandchildren. The parish register records his burial in 1618 and that of his widow in 1631/2.⁵³ Some lines of descent from Arthur Blaker have been outlined by David Bethell and Renshaw (who traces them as far as the 19th century), and he still has descendants living today.⁵⁴

The Preston branch and its offshoots

The Blaker family that had been established in Preston since at least the 1480s continued there and in nearby parishes in the 16th century.

At first we have only scattered references. A Preston manorial court roll records that John Blaker and his Agnes were holding a messuage and two and a half virgates of land in 1501-1504.⁵⁵ This may be the same John Blaker listed in the 1524-1525 lay

48 Volume 4, pages 150-151.

49 Volume 4, pages 165-166, 169.

50 Volume 4, pages 127-128.

51 Volume 4, page 149.

52 At his burial in 1618 he was described as "an olde man", and when his widow Alice was buried in 1631/2 she was said to be about 93 (Renshaw, pages 99-100; volume 2, page 185).

53 Renshaw, pages 99-100; volume 2, pages 184-190, 283-284; volume 4, pages 110-112, 147-151, 165-171, 175-179.

54 Renshaw, pages 100-104; volume 2, pages 194-199.

55 Volume 2, pages 33-34.

subsidy assessments for Whalesborne Hundred, which included Preston and other parishes (see above). And there is a reference in Star Chamber proceedings of 1533 to a John Blaker the younger, the son of a frustratingly unnamed Blaker of Preston who had sold land to Sir Edward Bray (apparently including a freehold messuage or tenement called Blakers in Preston).⁵⁶

As well as this John (or these Johns), there are references to a Richard Blaker in 1508 as a Preston coroner's juror,⁵⁷ a Richard Blaker of Preston, yeoman, as the defendant in a plea of debt brought by the Prior of Lewes in 1512 in the Court of Common Pleas⁵⁸ and as a juror at a view of frankpledge in the Preston court roll for 1537.⁵⁹ This Richard (or one of these Richards) may be the same who was listed in the 1524-1525 lay subsidy assessments for Whalesborne Hundred (see above).

At least the latest of these records of Richard seems like to refer to a man whose family can be reconstructed from later wills, manorial records and parish registers. This is a Richard Blaker who would have been born perhaps around 1500, was listed under Preston and Hove in the lay subsidy assessments of 1543 and 1545 (and described as Richard Blaker the elder in 1545), and was buried at Preston in 1571. Three sons of Richard the elder can be identified - Richard Blaker of Preston (d. 1558/9), John Blaker of Hove (d. 1567) and George Blaker of Brighton (d. c. 1588), all of whom left wills. The descendants of George have been traced as far as the mid-17th century.⁶⁰

The Blakers who were to become most prominent in Sussex were the descendants of Edward Blaker of Portslade (d. 1571). The first record of him there is an entry in the Portslade manorial court roll, which says that he had been admitted as the tenant of copyhold premises in Portslade and Aldrington on 25 September 1544.⁶¹ Portslade lay about 3 miles to the west of Preston, while Aldrington was Hove's westerly neighbour.

Edward's parentage is not known, despite the fact that his will mentions several cousins and an uncle. Renshaw wrote a lengthy appendix attempting to identify these relations, but was unable to offer more than speculative suggestions.⁶² There is, however, evidence of Edward's place of residence immediately before he became a tenant of Portslade manor. Unfortunately, in Renshaw's research this was obscured by his dating of lay subsidy records according to the dates of the parliamentary grants

⁵⁶ Volume 2, pages 37-39, 66-72 and 267.

⁵⁷ Volume 3, page 33.

⁵⁸ Volume 2, pages 34-35.

⁵⁹ Volume 2, page 40.

⁶⁰ Renshaw, pages 82-90, 104-106; volume 2, pages 40-64, 143-146, 164-172, 270-273, 277-281; volume 4, pages 92-94.

⁶¹ Renshaw, pages 14-15.

⁶² Renshaw, pages 15-18, 78-90. One of his suggestions was that the Richard, son of Edward's cousin John Blaker, deceased, could be the son of John Blaker of Hove (d. 1567). Although John's will mentions no children other than a daughter Agnes, the baptism of a son Richard had been recorded at Hove in 1558/9. Unfortunately for this suggestion, an entry in the Preston court rolls made after John's death identifies Agnes not only as his daughter, but also as his next heir, indicating that the son Richard had not survived (volume 2, page 144).

rather than the dates of the assessments (the 1543 and 1545 assessments relating to a single grant).⁶³ As a result, he seems to have believed that in a single assessment, which he dated 1543-5, there were two Edward Blakers, both assessed for £20 in goods, one in Preston and Hove and the other in Fishersgate Hundred (which included Portslade), and that in subsequent assessments the latter Edward continued to appear in Fishersgate, beginning in 1545 and 1549 (the heading in 1549 being Poynings and Fishersgate).

In fact there is no reason to believe that there is more than one Edward. The correct sequence of the assessments is:

23 November 1543.

Edward Blaker, for £20 in goods [E 179/190/193, rot. 3: Hove and Preston]

1 December 1545 (date assessment delivered).

Edward Blaker, for £20 in goods [E 179/190/192, rot. 3d: combined section for the four hundreds of Preston and Hove, Whalesborne, Fishersgate and Holmestrowe]

24 April 1547.

Edward Blaker, for £13 in goods [E 179/190/218: Fishersgate Hundred]

12 April 1551.

Edward Blaker, for £12 in goods [E 179/190/246: Poynings Hundred and Fishersgate Hundred]⁶⁴

Edward's admission as a tenant at Portslade fell between the first and second of these four assessments. The second, third and fourth records are consistent with his being resident in Portslade or Aldrington (both in Fishersgate Hundred) after that time, but the first shows that in the year before his admission at Portslade he had been living in Preston or Hove. The likely connection with the Preston Blakers discussed above is strengthened by the fact that George Blaker (d. c. 1588), the son of Richard Blaker of Preston (d. 1571), was himself living at Portslade in 1566 according to the will of his brother John, and was presumably the same George Blaker who was a witness of Edward's will.⁶⁵ It seems likely that the uncle Richard mentioned in Edward's will was identical with one of the Richard Blakers associated with Preston in the early 16th century, mentioned above.

Through his son of the same name, Edward had many Blaker descendants, many of whom have been traced.⁶⁶

⁶³ Renshaw, page 111.

⁶⁴ For the first two, see volume 4, pages 92-94. The dates of the assessments are taken from the [E 179 database](#). I have not seen the original documents for the third and fourth given by Renshaw. He includes the document reference for the third, but gives a sequence of four references for the fourth. However, he also gives the heading as "Poynings and Fishersgate", and according to the database this occurs only in E 179/190/246.

⁶⁵ George Blaker was also assessed in Fishersgate Hundred for the lay subsidies in 1560, 1572 and 1576 and was a juror at the view of frankpledge for Fishersgate in 1577 (Renshaw, pages 85-86, 112; again the dates of assessment for the lay subsidies have been obtained from the E 179 database).

⁶⁶ Renshaw, pages 19-75, 85, 88-89, 106-108, 109-110, 122-124-126; volume 2, pages 112-136, 274-276, 286.