

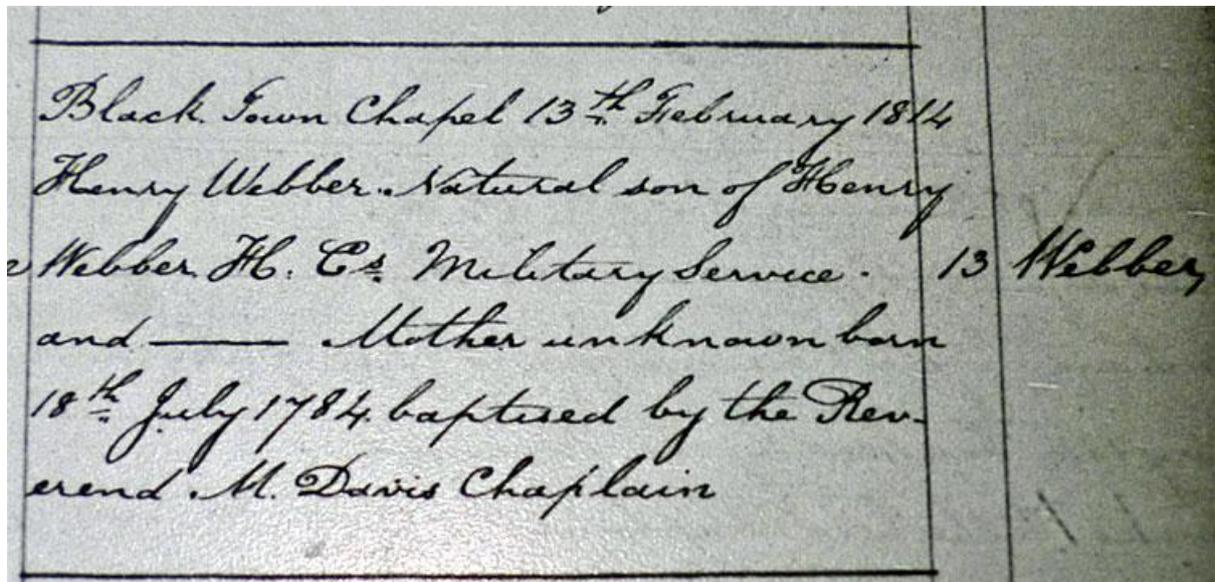
Henry Webber jnr

Baptised by the Reverend M Davis, Chaplain
Black Town Chapel (lds 506956)

13th February 1814

Henry is described as the
Natural son of Henry Webber H.C^s. Military Service
and
_____ (sic) Mother unknown

Born 18th July 1784



Black Town Chapel 13th February 1814
Henry Webber. Natural son of Henry
Webber H.C.^s Military Service. 13 Webber
and _____ Mother unknown born
18th July 1784. baptised by the Rev-
erend M. Davis Chaplain

The only candidate for Daddy at the moment is Ensign Henry Webber snr (from Branton in Devon and to retire as a Madras Army Major General in 1819). He arrived in India in 1780 according to *D&M "Officers of the Madras Army"*.

In baptism records (which in India could be up to a few years after birth, but not 30 – we thought this one was a mistranscription until we read the original!) mothers were usually named and either described as wives, or in the event of illegitimate births this fact was stated, with or without the name of the father.

The most likely explanation here seems to be a relationship between Henry snr and a local lady. Who she was and how long their togetherness lasted we don't know, but obviously she was not "unknown" – equally obviously she was not Henry snr's wife! Maybe Henry jnr did not want to use the description "Native".

One source estimates that there were up to four times as many Anglo-Indians as Anglos in India at this time. If Henry jnr was an Anglo-Indian he would have been subject to a large

number of restrictive laws invented to ring fence this group, including the inability to become an army officer. In turn of the century British East India, social attitudes towards mixed racers were also no longer as relaxed as they had been half a century earlier!

Why did Henry jnr choose to make this statement in February 1814 at the age of 29 ??

Henry Webber Snr, now a Lt Colonel, married Elizabeth Lucia L'Ecolier on 10th February 1810 in Trickingopoly. They had their first child, baptized Henry Charles Webber, in December 1810. Maybe Henry jnr belatedly wanted to formalize in public who his dad was, and in the process parade the fact that he was "the real eldest son".

Henry jnr's baptism took place after his marriage to Johana (later Joan) Dossey on 22 March 1812, and the birth of their first child Charles Henry Webber (why?!) in 1813, so Henry jnr (or his wife) could have been concerned about making his background more "legitimate" for whatever reasons.

We have no idea whether or for how long Henry snr took a caring or financial interest in his out-of-wedlock Anglo-Indian son Henry jnr. There were certainly English officers and civilians in similar situations who did, and it was not unknown for senior officers to have such children educated well, help them into good jobs with the Hon E I Co, and make provision for them in wills (sometimes disputed!) alongside legitimate offspring.

We rather think that Maj-Gen Henry Webber senior was not at the caring end of the scale as far as Henry jnr was concerned. The General returned to Devon with his "official" family in 1819 to take over the family estate "Buckland" in Braunton, as his older brother John, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, had died before the turn of the century. Elizabeth Lucia died in 1823 and Henry snr ten years later in 1833.

There is a memorial tablet commemorating Maj-Gen Henry snr and Elizabeth Lucia in the Braunton Parish Church of St Brannock (founder of Braunton they say). There is also a tablet commemorating his father and mother, and brothers John (Lieutenant RN) and Charles (Lt Col Bengal Cavalry). The UK National Archives have copies of the wills of Henry Snr and his dad Philip Rogers Webber, originally filed in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Henry jnr and Jane had half a dozen or so children including Priscilla (born in October 1826). Priscilla married Charles Benjamin Burton (himself an Anglo-Indian though in his case his mum and dad were married) in January 1853, and her father Henry jnr died a year later aged 69 – a clerk to the end. Henry's wife Jane died in July 1878 aged 78.

Most of the documents referenced here can be accessed from our [family website](#) .