The Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy:
some comments on pages 1-5.

What follows is a commentary on the claims as to Tomkins/Tompkins ancestry made on pages 1-5 of Robert A. Tompkins' first work, *The Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* (self-published, Los Angeles, 1942). In places it also comments on similar claims made in his later, unpublished typescript *The Clan of Tomkyns*, a much lengthier work now in the Los Angeles Public Library.

1. Thom the Saxon

On page 3 and elsewhere in *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy*, Robert A. Tompkins asserted that all Tompkinses are descended from one Thom the Saxon, said to have been born about 1030 and to have come to England with William the Conqueror and fought at the Battle of Hastings - on the Norman side!

There is no record of any such person having fought at Hastings - apart from William the Conqueror himself, only nineteen other men who fought in the battle on the Norman side can be identified with certainty (and three on the Saxon side - Harold and his two brothers). In fact I have been unable to find any historical record at all of a person called Thom the Saxon.

In *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins gave no source or evidence for Thom the Saxon, but in his later work *Clan of Tomkyns* he did give his source, and attempted to provide some historical evidence.

(a) Judge Tompkins. On pages 1 and 9 of *Clan of Tomkyns* Robert A. Tompkins mentioned that his source for Thom was the statement of a Judge John R. Tompkins from Mobile, who visited some Tompkinses in Surrey shortly after the American Civil War and was told by them that they were descended from Thom the Saxon. I have seen a copy of that statement (Jean Guillen-Atilano was kind enough to send me a copy) and actually it does not quite say that.

What it says is that logically the first holder of the Tompkins name must have been someone who was the kin of a man called Tom, who, it seems to have been assumed, was a Saxon (i.e. an Anglo-Saxon, one of the pre-Conquest inhabitants of England). Of course we now know that this is not how the surname came into being (see section 8 below), but when the Judge was writing the study of surname origins had barely begun.

However the point is that the existence of this Tom was only a logical inference from the perceived meaning of the name, and no-one was suggesting that he was an identifiable historical person, let alone one who fought at Hastings on the Norman side.

Quite how Thom developed from a logical inference to an identified historical individual I am unable to say. Perhaps Robert A. Tompkins misunderstood what he was reading, or perhaps he just followed the work of someone else who had embroidered the theory Judge Tompkins reported. Such embroidery was commonplace until relatively recently. At the time when the Judge visited England the studies of history and genealogy were in their infancy, and the fanciful

claims which many families made about their origins were accepted at face value, and even printed in publications such as Debrett's and Burke's.

Subsequent generations adopted more stringent evidentiary requirements, however, and most of the romantic pedigrees claimed by Victorian families were debunked around the turn of the century and then dropped from later editions of these works.

As Geoffrey White F.R.Hist.S. joked, when speaking to the Society of Genealogists in 1932 on the question of who were the Conqueror's companions at Hastings:

> No one could examine old pedigrees and peerage books without being convinced that an ancestor who came over with the Conqueror was formerly regarded as an appendage which no gentleman should be without, and that when a man rose in the world, one of his first cares was to adopt an eligible ancestor. And the adoption of an ancestor was in many ways a much easier operation than the adoption of a child. For instance, it would be difficult to adopt a child who did not actually exist, but there was no difficulty in adopting an imaginary ancestor. Again, a child usually had relatives already - even Bunthorne in "Patience", who never had a mother, confessed to an aunt - and their consent to the adoption had to be obtained; but a man who wished to adopt somebody else's ancestor never troubled about such formalities. Thus a really popular ancestor might accumulate quite a number of unconnected families as his descendants, much as a comet might develop a number of tails, or a Hollywood star a number of husbands; although he believed that the stars usually shed one husband before adopting the next. *Sic itur ad astra*!

The sources for the above are A.J. Camp, *My Ancestors came with the Conqueror* (London, 1990) - the quote above appears on page 9 - and a transcript of *Family Notes by the Honorable Jno. R. Tompkins (deceased 1907)* (archive reference unknown) supplied to me by Jean Guillen-Atilano of Waxham, North Carolina.

(b) Domesday Book. Robert A. Tompkins also attempted to supply some documentary evidence for Thom's existence. In *Clan of Tomkyns* he dropped Thom as the progenitor of all Tompkinses, but continued to assert that he existed and speculated that he might have been the ancestor of a separate line of Tompkinses in Surrey. On page 1 he claimed that Thom and his son Toen were mentioned in Domesday Book, as Tham and Toeni. A couple of pages later (on an unnumbered page, apparently inserted later) he elaborated on this, mentioning a number of names which he had found in Domesday, and which he seemed to think were somehow connected to Thom and Toen (his remarks are so confused that it is not entirely clear just what he thought was the significance of the names, most of which are etymologically quite dissimilar). On page 9 he triumphantly revealed a reference to one *Toeni homo Tham*, perhaps thinking it meant 'Toen son of Thom' (though on the earlier page he admitted not knowing what such entries meant).

As he himself had admitted on the unnumbered page, in trying to use Domesday he was completely out of his depth. In fact there is no mention in it of Thom the Saxon, or his son Toen, and the references to Tham and Toeni are to other persons entirely.

To check his work I consulted the multi-volume Phillimore edition, which has both the original text (in the original abbreviated Latin) and a modern translation side by side and is particularly useful because of its magnificent index (in three separate volumes, of which *Domesday Book, Index Part Two : Persons* is the most useful). This would not have been available when Robert

A. Tompkins was carrying out his researches, and the edition he used probably did not have the benefit of a translation or commentary.

The Tham he refers to on page 1 is doubtless the Robertus de Tham he mentions on the later unnumbered page (certainly I can find no other Tham in Domesday). This is actually Robert de Thaon, a Norman from Thaon in Normandy (in the Department of Calvados), who was given land in Buckinghamshire after the conquest.

As to Toeni, on page 1 he must have been referring to one of three men called Ralf, Robert and Berengar de Tosny, who held much land in several counties. Their name is sometimes spelled Tony, Tosni or Toeni, and in the original Latin text of Domesday it usually appears as de Toeni or de Todeni. The de Tosnys were also Norman, from Tosny in the Department of the Eure, and none of them was the son of a Saxon called Thom. Ralf de Tosny was in fact the lord of Conches in Normandy, one of the nineteen men known to have fought at Hastings, who became a powerful baron in England after the Conquest.

I cannot find the *Toeni homo Tham* referred to by Robert A. Tompkins on page 9 - there appears to be no such person in Domesday (was he using a corrupt text?). However, even if such an entry could be found, it would actually disprove Robert A. Tompkins' thesis. He seems to have thought *Toeni homo Tham* meant 'Toeni son of Tham', but in fact it meant 'Toeni the man of Tham' (i.e. the retainer or feudal tenant of Tham - a feudal relationship, not a blood one). It is true that occasionally junior family members would hold part of the family estates from the head of the family by feudal tenure, but they would not be described as his 'man', particularly not in the case of a son.

Robert A. Tompkins seems also to have been impressed by references he found in Domesday to one Tonne. This was in fact a man (or possibly more than one man), usually referred to as Tonni, whose name appeared in the original text variously as Tonne, Tonna, Tona or Tunna and who held sizeable estates in England before the Conquest - but he was an Anglo-Saxon, one of the losers at Hastings, and in 1086 (when the Domesday Book was created) most of his land was in Norman ownership.

It may also be that Robert A. Tompkins misunderstood various references to Thomas, Archbishop of York, since his name was sometimes abbreviated to Thom' in the original Latin text.

Robert A. Tompkins seemed to suggest that after Thom's participation in the Conquest on the winning side he ended up in Cornwall, but it should be noted that none of these names which he thought might have been references to Thom appears in the Cornish Domesday - they were all in other parts of the country, many of them in the far east and northeast.

The source for the above is the Phillimore multi-volume edition of the Domesday Book mentioned above, especially J. M. Dodgson and J. J. W. Palmer (eds.), *Domesday Book, Index Part Two : Persons* (Chichester, 1992).

2. Toen the Crusader

On page 3 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins stated that Thom had a son called Toen, who died on crusade in Palestine. His evidence for the existence of this man is vague and confused.

He later suggested, in *Clan of Tomkyns*, that Toen is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but we have disposed of that error above. In fact when he wrote *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins had no evidence that Thom the Saxon had a son called Toen - all he had was a reference to a man called Toenchen (apparently in 'early Cornish records' - I have not been able to find it) and a belief that Toenchen meant 'little Toen', from which he drew the inference that Toenchen must have been the son of a man called Toen (see page 3 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy*). What justification he had for deciding that this inferred Toen was the son of Thom the Saxon is unclear.

The idea that Toenchen means 'son of Toen', is onomastically unfounded. It is doubtful whether the name has any connection to the surname Tonkin/Tomkin at all - in which case there is no reason whatever to think the person of this name was related to either Thom or the first Tompkins - but if it is connected then it looks like an variant spelling of Tonkin, in which case it is just a diminutive or pet form of the forename Thomas (see sections 7 and 8 below). So there is no evidence that anyone called Toen ever existed.

Even if Toen had existed, it is unlikely that he would have gone to Palestine on crusade. If, as Robert A. Tompkins asserted, Toen was born in 1070, the son of a man who fought at the Battle of Hastings, he could only have participated in the First Crusade, which began in 1096 (the Second Crusade did not begin until 1147, when he would have been 77, and the Third not until 1189). However few men from England, if any, took part in the First Crusade. It is true that Robert Curthose's contingent from Normandy included a few magnates who had estates in England as well as Normandy, and there are obscure references in some contemporary documents to English ships and sailors supporting the crusade, but any participants from England must have been few in number.

On page 2 Robert A. Tompkins asserted that Toen's death on crusade gave rise to the coat of arms and crests which he described on that page. It was not stated clearly, but he seemed to imply that the arms were first used by Toen or perhaps, since they were supposed to have been earned by his death in Palestine, by his son. This must be unlikely since even if Toen had existed and had participated in the First Crusade a coat of arms could not have been thereby acquired, because at the time of the First Crusade heraldry did not exist. Indeed historians have long debated whether any Englishman had a coat of arms before the time of Richard the Lionheart (one of the leaders of the *Third* Crusade). Heraldry only came into wide use in the mid-to-late 12th century.

Unfortunately the coat of arms is Robert A. Tompkins' only evidence for Toen having been a crusader, and in fact it is no evidence at all, as will be seen in section 4 below.

Sources: Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades 1095-1588* (Chicago and London, 1998) discusses English involvement in the First Crusade. Most books on heraldry begin with a discussion of when hereditary coats of arms first began to be used widely.

3. Gerald of Wales

On page 3 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins suggested that Toen's participation in the Crusade may have been the result of the famous recruiting campaign carried out by Bishop Baldwin and Gerald of Wales.

This is chronologically impossible, since Baldwin and Gerald were preaching in 1188, to drum up support for the *Third* Crusade. Even if Toen had existed he would have been dead for many years.

4. Arms indicating descent from a Crusader

On page 3 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins said 'all authorities on English heraldry concede that we are descended from a Crusader'. I am mystified by this - I can find no authority which asserts anything of the sort.

Perhaps he did not mean that these authorities stated explicitly that Tompkinses are descended from a crusader, but that some items appearing in the Tompkins arms were universally conceded to be proof of descent from one, and indeed he seems to say as much on both pages 2 and 3. He did not say which charges on the coat of arms he was referring to, but it seems likely that he meant the three crosses on the chevron in the arms he describes on page 2.

The idea that a cross on a coat of arms is an indication of service in a crusade, or death on one, is an old but mistaken belief for which there is no evidence. It is true that one or two coats do have charges which may connect in some way to a crusade - the Douglas heart is a famous example - but there is no general principle that certain charges always indicate a crusading forebear. In the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries writers on heraldry developed an obsession with symbolism, allocating to every aspect of heraldry some personal characteristic or achievement which was supposedly attributable to the first bearer of each coat, but these flights of fancy have been acknowledged as such since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and I cannot find any later heraldic authority which repeats them. Perhaps Robert A. Tompkins was misled by a very old book of heraldry.

A much more likely reason for the crosses on the arms is that they were added 'for difference'. Differencing is a heraldic term meaning to change a coat slightly, usually by adding some charges (and crosses were often used), though there were other methods. It was done because any given coat of arms could only ever be used by one man, and after his death only by his heir. Everyone else (including his brothers and children and other relatives, and even the heir while his father was alive) had to use differenced arms. So the senior branch of a family used the undifferenced arms, and cadet branches, descended from the younger sons in each generation, used differenced arms.

Most lists of coats of arms mention both the undifferenced Tompkins coat (*azure, a chevron between three birds or*) and the differenced one (*azure, on a chevron between three birds or as many crosses crosslet sable*). Both coats were used by the Tompkins families who lived in Weobley, Monington and Buckenhill in Herefordshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and also by other families elsewhere,. Incidentally, the birds are most often said to be cock pheasants, not moorcocks.

Far from having been adopted at the time of the Crusades, the Tompkinses' arms were probably first assumed by them at a much later date. Only gentlemen could use coats of arms, yet surnames derived from pet forms of a forename, of which Tompkins is an example (see section 8 below), were adopted almost exclusively by the lowest levels of medieval society. These classes tended not to acquire hereditary surnames until the late thirteenth or fourteenth centuries or later, so it is unlikely that the forebears of the armigerous Tompkinses had managed to climb to a social rank high enough to call themselves gentlemen (and therefore display a coat of arms) before the

fifteenth century at the earliest. It is probably significant that I can find no record of their arms earlier than 1569 - several centuries after Toen the Crusader is supposed to have lived.

The alleged symbolism of the crests (high military rank, first over a rampart etc) which Robert A. Tompkins also gave on page 2 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* is equally fictitious.

Sources: any modern book of heraldry will have a conspicuous absence of references to a general principle that any charge (a cross or otherwise) on a coat of arms or in a crest always indicates a crusading forebear. References to the debunking last century of the symbolism theories can be found in A.C. Fox-Davies, *Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London, 1909; J.P. Brooke-Little's rev. ed., 1985), p. 5, and T. Woodcock and J. M. Robinson, *Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 53-4 and 63-5. Any book on heraldry will explain the personal nature of arms and the system of differencing.

The differenced and undifferenced versions of the Herefordshire Tompkinses' arms can be found in Sir Bernard Burke, *General Armoury of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales* (London, 1884) and George Strong, *Heraldry of Herefordshire* (London, 1848). The earliest record of the arms is in the 1569 Visitation of Herefordshire – F.W. Weaver (ed.), *Visitation of Herefordshire 1569* (Exeter, 1886), p. 66. A survey of the arms used by various Tompkins families can be found at http://www.tomkins.net/home/tomkins-heraldry-work-in-progress .

5. Surnames became compulsory in England c.1240

On pages 1 and 4 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins said that the use of surnames became compulsory under English law in about 1240.

There has never been any such law. Even now English law allows anyone to call himself anything he likes, with or without a surname, providing he does not do it for fraudulent purposes. I have no idea where Robert A. Tompkins got this idea, though it may be that he was thinking of the well known law passed in Ireland which required Gaelic Irishmen to adopt English surnames. However that only applied in the Pale (the English-settled part of Ireland), and the law was not passed until 1465 (and was not enforced for long).

Why and when hereditary surnames were adopted in England is a complex question, and is still the subject of much academic research. In particular the factors which triggered the process are still imperfectly understood, but what is certain is that they were spontaneous social factors, not legislation.

The timing of the process is also complicated. A very few individuals, both Saxons and Normans, had hereditary surnames at the time of the Conquest, but such surnames only began to be assumed by large sections of English society from the late thirteenth century onwards. The process was not completed in England until the mid-eighteenth century, and took even longer in some other parts of the United Kingdom. It was a gradual change, spreading slowly from the south to the north, from the rich to the poor, and from town to countryside. Thus the process was completed for all sections of society relatively quickly in the southeast, but took longest for the rural poor in the far north west.

Sources: Any modern book on the history or meaning of surnames will confirm this, but a useful summary of the current state of knowledge is R.A. McKinley, *History of British Surnames*

(London, 1990). Pages 32-38 cover the circumstances in which surnames were adopted and became hereditary.

6. All Tom- based surnames are related

On page 4 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins suggested that all families with surnames based on Tomlin- and Tomkin- are descended from two brothers called Tomlin and Tomkin (and that all Tonkins are descended from another member of the family called Tonkin). This is about as historically factual as the idea that the European, African and Asian races are descended from three sons of Noah. The truth is that not only is there no ancestral connection between families with these two categories of surnames, but in fact not even the families with Tomkin-based names are all connected: for example, Tomkins, Tomkinson and Tomkiss are almost certainly separate surnames. Indeed not even the families called Tomkins are all related - the surname arose separately in several different parts of England.

Even more off-beam is the proposition (on page 4 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* and repeated on page 1 of *Clan of Tomkyns*) that all bearers of the wider group of Tom-based surnames, such as Thom, Tom, Tomes, Tombs, Thomas, Thomson, Thompson and Thomsett, are related. I suspect Robert A. Tompkins may have seen references in a book on surnames to these names being related, or being part of the same family, and mistook an etymological relationship for a biological one!

A moment's reflection will show how absurd these propositions are. Anyone familiar with medieval English history will know how common a forename Thomas was in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries (the period when most surnames were coming into existence). Inspection of any records of that period which list large numbers of names will confirm this. For example, the 1327 Lay Subsidy Roll for Worcestershire lists thirty two taxpayers in the village of Abberley - five of them were called Thomas.

At the time when surnames based on the Christian name Thomas were first appearing there must have been tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of Englishmen called Thomas. It is ridiculous to suppose that only one of them gave rise to all these names and families.

Sources: The research contained in my *Origins of the Surnames Tomkins and Tompkins* will, I hope, persuade any reader that Tompkins at least has multiple origins (it can be found on-line at http://www.tomkins.net/home/origins-of-the-surnames-tomkins-and-tompkins). Any modern book on surname history or meaning ought to make it clear that the same is true of the other Tom-based names mentioned above, but again McKinley's *History of British Surnames* is the most up to date (see in particular pages 101 and 115).

7. The first Tompkins came from Lostwithiel

On page 4 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins claimed that the common ancestor of all modern Tompkinses was a man called Tomkyn or Tomkyns, living in Lostwithiel in Cornwall at the beginning of the thirteenth century, whose sons were the first to use the surname Tomkyns.

The fact is that there were quite a few originators of the surname, all unrelated to one another and living in widely scattered locations across England (though most were in the Midlands). The vast majority of modern Tompkinses will be descended from a line which originated in some other part of England than Cornwall.

Further, while it is true that at least one of the first bearers of the surname would have lived in Cornwall, it is unlikely that more than just a few present day Tompkinses are descended from that first Cornish Tomkin - because his present-day descendants are mostly called Tonkin. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the surname changed in Cornwall from Tomkin to Tonkin, with the result that the 1881 census recorded not a single Tomkin or Tomkins born in the county. It did however record a great many Cornishmen called Tonkin - the descendants of that first Cornish Tomkin. Any modern-day Tompkins descended from him would have to trace his line back through someone who had migrated away from Cornwall before the surname evolved into Tonkin.

It is also true that men surnamed Tomkin can be found in early records of Lostwithiel, but not before the beginning of the sixteenth century (two centuries later than Robert A. Tompkins' ancestral Tomkyn) and Lostwithiel is anyway unlikely to be the ultimate point of origin of the Cornish line, as there were then many more Tomkins in other parts of the county. On the basis of the surname's sixteenth-century distribution the original home may have been much further west, at the very tip of the Cornish peninsula (possibly even in Madron - the village which Robert A. Tompkins identified in *Clan of Tomkyns* as perhaps the first home of all Tompkins lines). Though it is also quite likely that the surname arose independently in more than one part of Cornwall.

Source: *Origins of the Surnames Tomkins and Tompkins*, particularly the chapters entitled 'Connecting the 19th and 14th centuries' (see the subsection dealing with Cornwall) and 'Conclusions' (pp. 60-2 and 75-8 in the original hard copy).

8. What the surname Tompkins means

As mentioned previously, exactly why medieval Englishmen began to use hereditary surnames is uncertain, though it is clear that there must have been a number of factors operating together, perhaps different factors at different times. However one cause is believed to have been the decrease in the number of forenames in use during the two centuries after the Norman conquest. At the time of the conquest the Anglo-Saxon population had a naming system which gave most individuals nearly unique names. However by 1200 the thousands of names in use had been reduced to just a very few, with most of the population sharing some ten or twenty names.

This must have caused difficulties in identifying individuals, and was probably a powerful factor in the adoption of surnames (though it does not explain why surnames became hereditary, of course). Surnames could be formed by a variety of methods, but a particularly common one, especially amongst the lower orders of medieval society, was to use the father's forename as a surname, sometimes with -s or -son added, sometimes without any addition. By this method patronymic surnames such as William/Williams/Williamson and Adam/Adams/ Adamson came into being.

The early medieval period was also a period when diminutive or pet forms of forenames were widely used. The diminutive forms could be simply a shortened version, for example Tom, Will,

or Dick, from which surnames such as Thom/Toombs/Thomson, Will/Wills/Wilson and Dick/Dix/Dixon derive.

Other diminutive forms were created by adding suffixes to the shortened version (in the same way that nowadays we might add –y to Tom or Bill to make Tommy or Billy). Common suffixes used were -lin, -kin, -cock, -el, -et, making names like Tomlin/Tomkin/Tomcock/Tomsell/Tomsett, or Wilkin/ Wilcock/Willet.

In the period before surnames were widely adopted these diminutive versions of names may have been used to distinguish individuals of the same name - in a village one Thomas might be called Tom, another Tomlin, a third Tomkin, and yet others Tomcock, Tomsell or Tomsett.

When these diminutive forms of forenames were used to create surnames, they also could be used either without any further suffix, or with the addition of -s or -son (making names such as Tomalin/ Tomlins/Tomlinson, Tomkin/Tomkins/Tomkinson etc).

It has been observed that by and large -s tended to used only in the south of England, and -son only in the north, while names without any suffix could be found in both areas. Sure enough Tomkins appears to have originated only in the south (principally in the Midlands) and Tomkinson only in the north (though only just - actually the name comes from Staffordshire, in the north west Midlands), while Tomkin originated both in north and south. Incidentally, as is known to have happened with other -kin names, several Tomkin lines changed to Tomkins in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

Sadly it is a fact that surnames formed from diminutives of forenames were adopted almost exclusively by the poorer sections of medieval society - the rural peasantry and urban poor and artisan classes.

The suffix -kin does indeed share an etymological origin with the modern German diminutive suffix -chen. However its use to make diminutive forms of forenames appears not to have had an Anglo-Saxon origin (contrary to expectation, Anglo-Saxon being a Germanic language). Rather the practice was introduced to England in the post-Conquest period by Flemish immigrants, and spread from them to the population as a whole just in time to be fossilised in surnames.

Thus the surname Tompkins means “son of Thomas”, as do all the other linked surnames mentioned by Robert A. Tompkins on page 4 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* (just to avoid any confusion I mean linked etymologically, not genealogically!).

Sources: As always, most modern books on surname history and meaning will confirm the general principles stated above, but I believe the best summary can be found in McKinley (pages 101-120 in particular). *Origins of the Surnames Tomkins and Tompkins* also contains information about the geographical origins of different forms of the Tompkins surname.

POST-SCRIPT (added April 2008)

9. Robert Tomkyns of Charlton and his sons

On pages 4 and 5 of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins gave 'Tomkyn or Tomkyns of Lostwithiel' a son, called Robert Tomkyns of Charlton. This Robert was given three sons; Alan of Apley, Thomas (bishop of Hereford) and John of Charlton, all said to have been surnamed Tomkyns.

There is in fact no historical evidence for any of these individuals, or at least not by those names. They are however well-known to history by their true names, as Robert de Charlton, of Charlton in Shropshire, and his three sons Alan de Charlton, of Apley in Shropshire, Thomas de Charlton, bishop of Hereford, and John de Charlton, lord of the barony of Powys and king's chamberlain. None of them was ever recorded using the surname Tomkyns – Alan and John founded dynasties surnamed Charlton, and Thomas, being an ordained priest and a bishop, was celibate and left no recorded offspring. Why Robert A. Tompkins decided they were really called Tomkyns is unknown.

Sources: More detail, with sources for the historical de Charlton family, can be found in a separate paper entitled 'Robert A. Tompkins and the Cantilupe connection.'

10. Subsequent generations

On subsequent pages of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* Robert A. Tompkins carried the line of descent down through further generations to the various Tomkinses who emigrated to America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

These genealogies should be treated with extreme caution. Many of the individuals named in them did exist (though not always under the name given them by Robert A. Tompkins) but few of them were related to each other in the way stated by Robert A. Tompkins, or indeed at all. His method was collect all the references he could find to individuals named Tomkins and then to join them together in family relationships for which there was not a shred of evidence, and which are frequently extremely improbable. In most cases the emigrants' true parentage is completely unknown, and no family tree can go back beyond them.

For example, this is certainly the case with the famous Ralph Tomkyns, emigrant on the ship Truelove in 1635; nothing is known about his parentage, save that he was not a member of the Tomkyns family of Monnington-on-Wye and Weobley in Herefordshire, as Robert A. Tompkins stated. It is also true of Giles and Humphrey Tomkins, who appeared separately in Virginia and Maryland in the late seventeenth century; nothing is known of their English origins, except that they were not the sons of Giles Tompkins, organist at King's College, Cambridge (as claimed by Robert A. Tompkins), and there is no reason to think they were brothers.

Sources: Over the years I have posted a number of analyses of the historic evidence for Robert A. Tompkins's claims about these individuals and other aspects of the pre-emigration portions of *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* and *Clan of Tomkyns* to the TOMPKINS-L@rootsweb.com list and the Tompkins Family Genealogy Forum (http://genforum.genealogy.com/tompkins/) – one day I will get around to combining them into a single coherent analysis of all the errors in *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* and *Clan of Tomkyns*, but in the meantime anyone interested in

investigating Robert A. Tompkins's genealogies can find more information by searching in the Rootsweb archives and on the Genforum site.

11. Robert A. Tompkins later recanted the genealogies in *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy*.

Robert A. Tompkins himself later acknowledged that the genealogies in *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* were wrong. This is implicit in the fact that in *Clan of Tomkyns* he produced quite different ones. For example, while he continued to assert that Thom the Saxon, Toen, Toenchen and the rest had existed and might have been the ancestors of a second Tompkins family, he created an entirely new ancestry for 'Robert Tomkyns of Charlton' and all the subsequent generations (running back through the de Cantilupe family to Charlemagne).

He also re-jigged the generations between 'Robert Tomkyns of Charlton' and the emigrants, re-combining the various historical Tompkinses he had found in new relationships. Thus Ralph Tomkyns was removed from the Monnington family and given new (but equally unjustified) origins in London and Lostwithiel, while Giles' and Humphrey's supposed father Giles was similarly plucked from the Monnington line and, *mirabilu dictu*, placed in his correct historic parentage (unfortunately not a frequent occurrence) though he was still wrongly stated to have been their father.

It must have been while he was preparing the new pedigrees in *Clan of Tomkyns* that Robert A. Tompkins arranged for a disclaimer, signed by him, to be pasted into the copy of the *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* which he had donated to the library of the Society of Genealogists in London. Under a stamp reading 'Robert A Tompkins, 1228 Neal St., N. E., Washington 2, D.C.' it reads:

> In printing this work, a page was erroneously omitted. This page was to explain that the early English data was only tentative. It gives the names of persons of such a time and/or place. which names we had encountered in English records we had seen, but with no proof as to their relationship. It was intended as a place where future research might look, and find corroboration or correction as to the facts.
>
> ONLY insofar as it agrees with the visitations or other English records, is this tentative pedigree to be considered as factual.
>
> Regarding the Thomas Tomkyns we have as number 12 on page 5, this was NOT the Thomas Tomkyns we have as Bishop of Hereford. The Thomas who was Bishop of Hereford, born in 1218, one generation earlier than our Thomas number 12 on page 5. Thomas, Bishop of Hereford was known in Catholic records as Thomas de Cantilupe, now known as St. Thomas of Hereford.
>
> We would be glad to hear from anyone interested in our family name, giving any correction or addition to our data, as we expect to publish other and better books on the Tomkyns families. Thank you. [signed] Robert Angus Tompkins

Unfortunately many of the errors in *Tomkins-Tompkins Genealogy* which have been analysed above were subsequently repeated in *Clan of Tomkyns*, and the same methodological failings have ensured that its pre-emigration portions, though different, are hardly more reliable. (And

incidentally, although the Thomas numbered 12 on page 5 was indeed not Thomas de Cantilupe, bishop of Hereford from 1275 until 1282, he *was* nevertheless a bishop of Hereford – he was Thomas de Charlton, bishop from 1327 to 1344.)

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