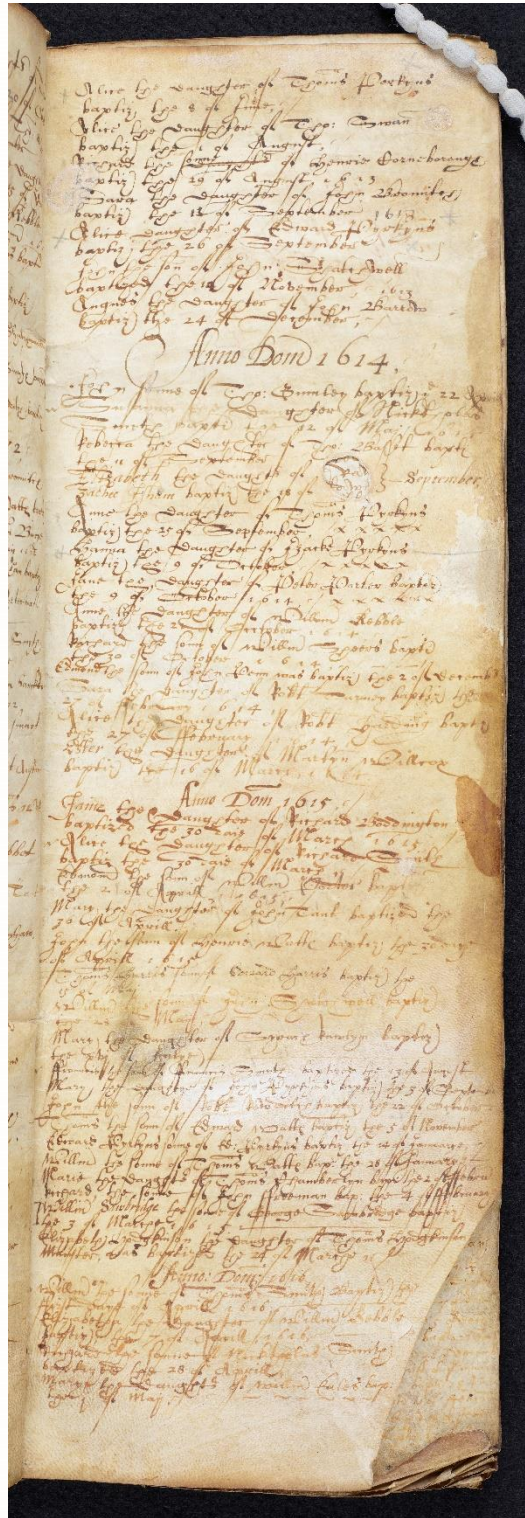


Mary Perkins entry in Hillmorton Parish Register

(DR 256/1)

March's Document of the Month is this parish register for the parish of St John the Baptist, Hillmorton, a suburb of Rugby. The volume is a composite register, meaning it contains the parish's baptisms, marriages and burials all in one volume. Earlier parish registers tended to be in this format.

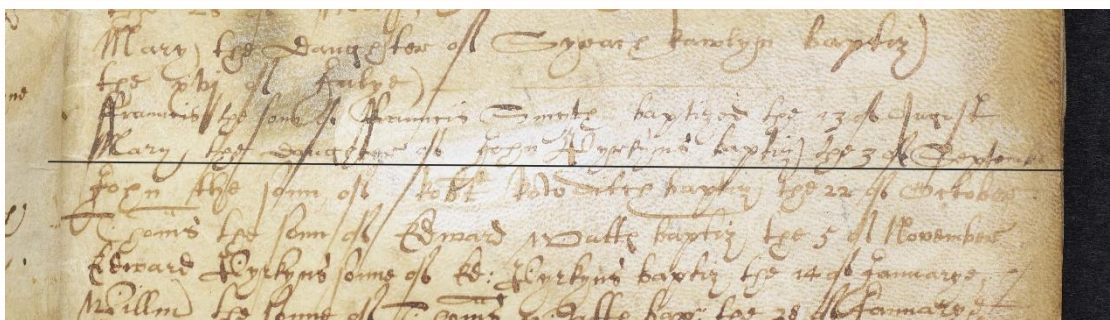


Page from Hillmorton Parish Register, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR 256/1

Whilst we have many of the parish registers for Hillmorton in our collections at the Record Office, this particular volume covers the years 1564-1653. The entry that we want to focus on is a baptism dated 3rd September 1615 for Mary Perkins.

The entry reads as follows:

*"Mary the Daughter of John Perkins baptised the 3 of September"*¹



Close up image of Mary Perkins' entry in the register (underlined), Warwickshire County Record Office, DR 256/1

At first glance it may seem an unassuming entry, but some years after this baptism entry, Mary emigrated to the American colonies and married Thomas Bradbury. Anyone familiar with the Salem Witch Trials will possibly be familiar with the name Mary Bradbury. Mary was among the people accused of witchcraft in the village of Salem and the surrounding area in 1692. She was found guilty and sentenced to hang, but the sentence was never carried out.

The Salem Witch Trials were a series of trials for people who had been accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between 1692 and 1693. Between 150 and 200 people were jailed and 19 were hanged. It was the largest series of witchcraft trials to ever take place in North America².

Mary Bradbury née Perkins

¹ Hillmorton Parish Register, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR256/1.

² Information gathered from <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/my-account/history-education/> (accessed 03/02/2024).

Mary Perkins was baptised in the parish of Hillmorton on the 3rd September 1615, the daughter of John and Judith Perkins. In 1630, the family of seven are listed as travelling on the ship Lyon, departing from the port of Bristol on 1st December and arriving in Boston, Massachusetts on 1st February the following year³. In 1636, Mary married Thomas Bradbury, one of the first colonial settlers of Salisbury and a much-respected member of society. They had eleven children.

In 1692, the first accusations of witchcraft in the town of Salem were made. Mary Bradbury was accused on 26th May 1692, despite not actually residing in Salem⁴. It is noted on the Salem Witchcraft Museum website that 115 friends and neighbours of Bradbury signed a petition in an attempt to save her, which gives some idea of the respect she and her family commanded in the area⁵.

Mary even wrote to the judges herself, stating her innocence. "I am wholly inocent of any such wickedness through the goodness of god that have kept mee hitherto"⁶.

Her husband Thomas also testified to her innocence. You can view documents from the trials, including transcripts, on the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project website⁷. Despite their best efforts, Mary Bradbury was convicted and sentenced to death on 10th September 1692. With the assistance of her friends and wealth, she was able to escape and live as a fugitive until she returned in 1693, living out her days until her death in Salisbury in 1700.

Ten years following her death, Mary's daughter Jane petitioned the court for a reversal of her conviction. In 1711 an 'Act to Reverse the Attainders of George Burroughs et al. for Witchcraft' was granted and among those pardoned was Mary Bradbury⁸.

³ Information gathered from Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestryinstitution.co.uk/search/collections/48127/>, (accessed 09/01/2024).

⁴ Information gathered from <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/mary-and-thomas-bradbury-home-site-of/> (accessed 01/02/2024)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Plea of Mary Bradbury, Witchcraft Papers, no. 12b, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA, Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, <https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n16.html> (accessed 01/02/2024).

⁷ <https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n16.html> (accessed 01/02/2024).

⁸ Information gathered from <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/mary-and-thomas-bradbury-home-site-of/> (accessed 01/02/2024).