

## CORRESPONDENCE

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The Editor,

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I read with great interest the article about Hannah Lightfoot written by David Sox as I have been researching this lady's story for the last twenty-seven years.

If I may I would just like to bring the story of Hannah up to date. At the beginning of 2002 Tigress Productions, a television production company based in Bristol, were able to further their aim to make a programme about Hannah Lightfoot when they gained the support of the widow of the late Earl of Munster. She agreed to allow DNA testing to be carried out on DNA obtained from the late Earl. The late Earl of Munster was an acknowledged male descendant of George III through an entire male line of descent and once the geneticists had identified the unique male marker they were able to compare DNA from putative male descendants of George III through an entire male line to see whether any of the putative male descendants had this same unique marker and were thus descended from George III.

Many putative descendants have a cross gender line of descent and were therefore unsuitable for comparison. In the end three families were identified. These were descendants of George Rex of Knysna, George Rex of Hobart, Tasmania and General John Mackelcan. The results indicated that none of the putative male descendants shared the same male marker that was found in the DNA of the late Earl of Munster thus negating the possibility of descent from George III.

Further, the production company also tested the documents produced in the Ryves/Serres's court case of 1866. These documents had been authenticated by Sir Ernest Netherclift but were deemed to be forgeries by the court of law and were thus impounded for 100 years.

A handwriting expert looked at these documents again and determined that the signatures of the various personalities involved were within the limits of change expected by any one person during the course of their lives and dependent upon the nature of the document to

which the signature was appended. However, Peter Bower, a Paper Historian showed that watermarks within the paper proved that the paper had been made between 1790 and 1810. Thus, as the signatures on these documents were said to have been applied in 1759 and 1762 the documents cannot possibly be genuine.

Many might feel that this proof concludes the Hannah Lightfoot story however, the fact that the marriage certificates produced were not genuine simply proves that the documents were not documentary evidence of a marriage. In themselves they do not prove that a marriage or a relationship did not take place.

The hunt for the truth about Hannah Lightfoot and her time and place of death and her final resting place continues.

Yours faithfully,

Sheila Mitchell

The Editor,  
The Journal of the Friends Historical Society,