

EARLY ORIGINS OF THE FIDDIAN FAMILY - A VIEW

The difficulties of tracing families before parish records were kept (from about 1540) can be hard to overcome, but I have attempted to uncover our earlier ancestry nevertheless. The most widely held belief is that Fiddian (along with Vivian, Vyvyan and several related surnames) derives from the pre-medieval given name Vivianus ('living'). Though of Roman (Latin) origins, it appears to have been introduced by the Normans after the Conquest in 1066 and recorded versions are first found in England in the 11th and 12th centuries. It should not be confused with Fidian (and related versions) which more likely derives from the Norman FitzJohn ('son of John'), though scribes in the 16th and 17th centuries were very capable of misspelling both. Vyvyan and Vivian were particularly popular in Cornwall and families with those names were mainly found in the West Country from 1540 to 1640. It remains uncertain whether these families are directly related to the Fiddians first found in the Midlands in the first 100 years of parish records.

The first Fiddian we can be confident is an ancestor of the present day Fiddians was William Fyddian, who was born about 1530. When first identified he was living in Coleshill, Warwickshire but if he was a priest he might have come from further afield. His father would have been born in about 1500 and might have come from Warwickshire or one of the surrounding counties. During the period between 1540 and 1640, there were very few Vivians/Vyvyans in the same counties (only 6 in Shropshire and none before 1595). Also there were very few Vivians in the counties between the Midlands and the West Country (4 in Gloucestershire and one in Wiltshire, with the earliest in 1593). It therefore seems less likely that a Vivian migration from Cornwall to the Midlands accounted for the families origins in Warwickshire than that they were already there in the 15th century. Between 1540 and 1640 there were only 15 'Fiddians' in the Midlands and all but two of these are related to us (one Fiddian, 5 Fyddians, 7 Fydians and 2 unrelated Fidyans).

I have searched the Midlands for any evidence of Fiddian/Vivian names before 1500. Bearing in mind that until 1377 surnames were very uncommon, I was also looking for given names as well as any other means of identification. There were several Fydians in Worcestershire and the nearby counties of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset cited between 1408 and 1474. All but one of these

was named William Fydian and all were priests, but they were not the same person:

- William Fydian 1408-11 Flaxley Abbey (Glouc) Priest
- William Fydian 1425-7 Christ Church, Bristol Rector
- William Fydian 1427-37 Upton-upon-Severn (Worc) Rector
- Wilbur Fydian 1438-48 Upton-upon-Severn (Worc) Rector
- William Fydian 1448 Warminster (Wiltshire) Vicar*
- William Fydian 1456-9 Lyme/Halstock (Dorset) Prebend^
- William Fydian 1459-74 Chute (Wiltshire) Prebend^

* Vicar of Minster Church, he was executed in 1448 but we do not know why.

^ They are probably the same person.

Although priests would have moved around the country to take up new positions, the above is consistent with the existence of at least two Fydian families living in or adjacent to the Midlands in the 15th century.

Remarkably, there were also several Vivians in Staffordshire in the 12th to 14th centuries and all of these were related. Even more remarkably this family also had estates in Warwickshire until 1460, and two of these were only 15 and 30 miles from Coleshill where we find the first Fiddian. So we have two families separated by only 40 years and 15 miles, sharing a very uncommon name we believe was derived from the other. Of course it may prove impossible to prove the link, and whilst I find it very compelling you will have to make your own conclusions. To be more confident I undertook an extensive search of the given name in Britain in the Middle Ages and found only 48 well documented individuals plus another 9 priests (see the Addendum on Vivian Research for details). As expected these all post-date the Norman invasion. Over 37% are to be found in the Midlands and remarkably most of these are related in some way, by descent, by marriage, by patronage, by friendship or by contact. Apart from the cluster in Staffordshire discussed above I have found another family in Shropshire who had Vivians in four successive generations from 1150 to 1255. They all come from a manor called Rossall (or Rosshall) near Shrewsbury and

initially I believed that they might be an alternate origin for the Fiddians but it turns out that the two families are connected by marriage.

Let us assume for the moment that we are descended from the Vivians of Staffordshire and go back to their early ancestry. The story begins with Norse mythology in about 500 AD with an ancient giant, Fornjot who was King of Finland, Kvenland and Gotland. His son Kari (meaning 'wind') had a son Frosti ('frost') who had a son Snaerr ('snow the old') who had a son Thorri, all Kings of Scandinavia. Snaerr was reputedly a vicious, oppressive and dishonest king, but we are still in the realms of mythology. Thorri ('frozen snow') had two sons called Gor and Nor. The latter was said to have founded Norway and given it his name, whilst Gor had a son Heytir Gorsson whose grandson Halfdan Sveidisson (nicknamed 'the old') was born around 750 AD. We may by now be dealing with fact rather than fiction as his son Ivar Halfdansson was Jarl (Earl) of Oppland in Norway, as was his son Eystein Glumra ('the noisy'). His son Rognvald was Earl of More in Norway and in 865 AD founded the Earldom of Orkney. His son Hrolfr Ganger ('walker') was born in about 860 and aged 25 was a lesser leader of a Viking fleet which besieged Paris.

Hrolfr stayed behind, invading and later settling in an area of Northern France that became Normandy. After pledging allegiance to King Charles III, he was granted lands near Epte, converted to Christianity and took the baptismal name Rollo (Robert in English). As titular ruler in Normandy he was effectively the first Duke of Normandy and passed the title to his son William in 927. This William was the great, great grandfather of William the Conqueror, but his story will be told elsewhere. Hrolfr meanwhile had been accompanied on his voyage from Norway to France by his uncle Hulc, younger son of Eystein Glumra, who also stayed behind and settled in Normandy. Hulc's son Hugues (Hugh) de Calvocamp became one of the first Normans when his cousin Hrolfr became Duke of Normandy. Hugues had two sons of note, the eldest was also called Hugues de Calvocamp and became Archbishop of Rouen in 942, whilst a younger son became Raoul (Ralph) I de Tosny (land taken from the Church by his elder brother Hugues and given to the family). This Raoul had two sons, Roger de Tosny, Lord de Conches, born 990 and Robert de Tosny, Lord de Belvoir, born 1009. Both of these men had sons who were involved with the Conquest in 1066 and then settled in England, but it was probably Robert who had a son Brien (Brian) de Standon, born 1040 in Tosny, whom I believe to be our ancestor.

Brian and his younger brother Edelo (Alan) were the Lords of several manors in Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Lincolnshire, rewards for their support during the Conquest. In the Domesday Book they are called Brian and Edelo of Rauceby (in Lincolnshire) but elsewhere they are Brian de Standon and Alan de Swynnerton (both in Staffordshire). Brian's great, great grandson was Roger de Standon, born 1172, and he married Philippa de Fenton who was a daughter of Vivian de Stoke. So finally we have our first Vivian, though it isn't as simple as that. Some reports also call him Henry Vivian, who was Chaplain to King John of England and was appointed Rector of Stoke by him. This Vivian was dead by 1222 and there are no records of any other children besides Philippa. I must confess that I haven't been too bothered with his ancestry to date and will take another look in due course. Meanwhile, Roger and Philippa had a son who became Sir Vivian de Standon and it is this male line that I have generally followed back in time.

Going forward, Sir Vivian had sons Sir Robert, Warine and Thomas but no Vivian (although it is possible there was a Vivian who died young and so is not recorded). Sir Robert had a son Vivian, a grandson Vivian and a great grandson Vivian, all knights except for the middle one who was outlawed after robbing the King's clerk of a large sum of money and lost his inheritance. Harlech (Hardelagh) Castle was completed in 1290 and Sir Robert was made Constable in 1293, successfully holding out with only 30 men when they were besieged for the next two years by Madog ap Llewelyn (a descendant of my wife's ancestors). Three other family members were also appointed Constable of Harlech Castle over the next 40 years, including Robert's son Sir Vivian. The last of these Vivians died in 1375 at a time when most families had taken surnames so they could be identified for taxation. Little is known of his son Philip who died in 1424 but he may well have been known as Philip FitzVivian or else just Philip Vivian. He was the last of the 'de Standons' in any case as the estate passed out of the family because there was no direct male line, but Ditchford Frary in Warwickshire was still in the hands of Vivian heirs until as late as 1460. Ditchford is only about 30 miles from Coleshill, and they also held Wolverton (Wolverdington) in Warwickshire, 15 miles from Coleshill where we find the first Fyddian in about 1500. It may never be possible to prove this link, but for the time being we have an interesting tale to tell.

Our Fiddian ancestors remained in Coleshill until about 1590 (3 generations) and then moved to nearby Sheldon and then to Northfield, before settling in

Halesowen, Worcestershire in 1740. The first of our definite Fiddian family, William Fyddian may have been the William Fydian who was ordained in 1554 at the Bishop's Palace in London but we cannot be sure. In any case his son John Fiddian born in 1572 was a Yeoman Farmer as was his son John Fiddian and the next two generations to Thomas Fiddian born in 1677. Although predominantly farmers it was increasingly common for men to do other work during the winter months and at some point the family became involved with nail making. Certainly Thomas' son Thomas Fiddian, born in 1711 was most likely a Nail Master and so too were his two sons William and Richard, who also owned Public Houses (a common practice amongst Nail Masters). Both Thomas junior and Richard were also Churchwardens and Richard later became a Saddler.

The family must have been doing very well by now as two of the next generation of sons were Gentlemen and the third was an Esquire. One of the former was William Fiddian born in 1772 who was an established Brass Founder and manufacturer of brass products in Birmingham. It was his son the Reverend Samuel Fiddian, a Wesleyan minister and travelling preacher, who broke the mould so to speak. He had 13 children, including a schoolteacher (headmaster), a physician/surgeon, a member of the Indian Civil Service and a District Judge and they were scattered around the globe. Judge James Paull Fiddian had 7 children, six of whom were born in India, and one of whom was my grandfather Dr James Victor Fiddian (who strangely had an affinity for Harlech without knowing the history). The latter had five children, three of whom became doctors, including my father Dr James Anthony Fiddian born in 1922.

Returning briefly to the other cluster of Vivians found in Shropshire in the 12th and 13th century reveals another fascinating family. The last of the de Rossall descendants that I can trace died without issue in about 1345, making them less likely to be the direct source of the Fiddian lineage, but their ancestry is worthy of more detailed study. To avoid confusing the reader here I have provided the details in an addendum, but to entice further reading let me mention that it includes Knights, High Sheriffs, Barons (of Manchester) and Lords (of Ashton-under-Lyne).

In trying to trace our ancestry we have travelled from Finland to Norway to France to England to India, via Australia, and back to England. I quite like the idea of having a Viking ancestor called 'frost' born about 1500 years ago, a

number of Norman ancestors who were involved in the Conquest of England in 1066, Knighted ancestors in middle-England, industrialists and more recently an eclectic band of relatives travelling the world. You can choose to share my vision or settle for the conservative view, the choice is yours.

Paul Fiddian – August 2014 (Updated December 2014 & May 2016)

ADDENDUM - VIVIAN RESEARCH

The search for the given name Vivian in the medieval era has uncovered only 48 clearly documented individuals:

1. Vivian de Standon Staffordshire b.1190 Grandfather of 2.
2. Vivian de Standon Staffordshire b.1262 Father of 3.
3. Vivian de Standon Staffordshire b.1287 Father of 4.
4. Vivian de Standon Staffordshire b.1312 2x great-grandson of 1.
5. Vivian de Rossall Shropshire b.1150 Father of 6.
6. Vivian de Rossall Shropshire b.1185 Uncle of 7.
7. Vivian de Rossall Shropshire b.1215 Father of 8.
8. Vivian de Rossall Shropshire b.1255 Great-grandson of 5.
9. Vivian de Chetwynd Shropshire b.1260 Connected family.
10. Vivian de Verdon Staffordshire b.1289 Connected family.
11. Vivian de Stoke Staffordshire b.1154 Father in law of 1.
12. Vivian de Fenton Staffordshire b.1190 Another name for 1.
13. Vivian de Biddulph Staffordshire b.1289 Another name for 10.
14. Vivian de Biddulph Staffordshire b.1350 Grandson of 13.
15. Vivian de Tunstall Staffordshire b.1300 Relative of 1.
16. Vivian de Aston Staffordshire b.1260 Stafford Gaoler
17. Vivian de Besford Worcestershire b.1135 Notable family
18. Vivian de Besford Worcestershire b.1185 Grandson of 17.
19. Vivian de Heysham Lancashire b.1080 Another name for 21.
20. Vivian de Heysham Lancashire b.1200 2x great-grandson of 19.

21. Vivian de Gernet	Lancashire	b.1080	Another name for 19.
22. Vivian de Halton	Lancashire	b.1080	Another name for 19.
23. Vivian de Bolron	Lancashire	b.1150	Connected family
24. Vivian de Caton	Lancashire	b.1200	Another name for 20.
25. Vivian de Molyneux	Lancashire	b.1080	Notable family
26. Vivian de Molyneux	Lancashire	b.1190	2x great-grandson 25.
27. Vivian de Wolvemoore	Lancashire	b.1200	Unknown
28. Vivian de Orshaw	Lancashire	b.1220	Unknown
29. Vivian de Ribbleton	Lancashire	b.1250	Unknown
30. Vivian de Holm	Lancashire	b.	Unknown
31. Vivian de Luc	Hertfordshire	b.	Unknown
32. Vivian de Terynham	Hertfordshire	b.1300	Unknown
33. Vivian de Rokesley	London	b.1250	Father of 34.
34. John Vivian	London	b.1280	Also called de Roskeley
35. Vivian de Luca	London	b.1300	Shoreditch Apothecary
36. Vivian de Davenport	Cheshire	b.1185	Notable family
37. Vivian de Thelwall	Cheshire	b.1300	Unknown
38. Vivian de Foxwist	Cheshire	b.1346	Unknown
39. Vivian le Gatiler	Cheshire	b.1400	Catchpole/Sheriff's dep
40. Vivian de Churchfield	Northants	b.1080	Angevin family
41. Vivian de Fleyneburg	Yorkshire	b.1240	Debtor
42. Vivian de Penrose	Cornwall	b.1300	Another name for 43.
43. Vivian de Eskels	Cornwall	b.1300	Another name for 42.
44. Vivian de Bodelen	Cornwall	b.1300	Contemporary of 42.

45. Vivian de Wakelin	Suffolk	b.1250	Bailiff of Ipswich
46. Vivian Brusyng	Sussex	b.1250	Unknown
47. Vivian de Stuche	Wales	b.1310	Unknown
48. Vivian de Palgous	Wales	b.1420	Burgess of Bala

The Staffordshire/Shropshire Vivians

Eighteen of the above Vivians were living in the Midlands, of which 16 were based in the neighbouring counties of Staffordshire and Shropshire. Most of these were related (11) or were otherwise connected (6), with the two largest clusters becoming related when the daughter of the first Vivian de Rossall married the first Vivian de Standon. Another large group of Vivians (12) were living in Lancashire with at least 8 of these being related to each other and interestingly they can be linked to the Midland's Vivians via a common contact, Roger de Montgomery ('The Poitevin'), whose two daughters also married into both our and my wife Tricia's family trees. One daughter married an ancestor of the Chetwynd family and the other married an ancestor of the Peverel/Peperell family. The next largest cluster of 4 Vivians came from Cheshire, which separates Staffordshire and Lancashire.

The interconnections between leading families of the day were quite common and I have found several already (the more you look the more you seem to find). So, I have uncovered some commonality for at least 30 of the above Vivians and the remaining 18 can generally be dismissed as single or duplicate instances of the name scattered around different regions, though it is interesting to see the use of Vivian as a surname in London (at the time of the first Poll Tax – see 34. above). In this discussion I have of course omitted the family in Cornwall who were already using Vivian as a surname as early as 1174. It remains a mystery as to whether we Fiddians are directly connected to them, but by 1298 a Vivian in Cornwall had married a Peverel ancestor of my wife Tricia.

There are another 9 Vivians who will be discussed later, all of whom were priests, but their precise birthplaces are unknown and they cannot be traced to any particular family. So after very extensive research we can find only 57 individuals using Vivian as a Christian name in Britain between 1080 and about 1480. This is a remarkably small number and would appear to be

consistent with conventional wisdom about the name. It was undoubtedly introduced by the Normans after the Conquest (much like Warine) but was never widely adopted. More than half of the families who took to the name used it at least twice and most of these families can be traced back to French ancestry. They were generally families of some standing and would undoubtedly have mingled in the same social circles. As a result there are numerous examples of marriage directly between the families or via another connected family. Perhaps most striking though is the apparent patronage of many of the early families by Roger the Poitevin, a powerful Norman aristocrat.

The Lancashire Vivians

a) Gernet of Halton

Our earliest Vivian is Vivian Gernet of Halton and Heysham born in about 1080 at Halton, Lancashire (near Lancaster). His father Ralph Gernet was born in around 1050 in Normandy and came to England in the retinue of Roger the Poitevin. Ralph has been described as a learned gentleman and so may have been a Clerk (priest) which would fit with him leaving his family who remained in Essex. Vivian was Serjeant (hereditary Forester) of the King's Forest in Lancashire and married Emma de Villiers. His sons Roger and Brian took Halton and Heysham respectively. Roger, producing no male heirs, was succeeded by his younger brother Adam and his daughter married Richard de Molyneux. Adam's son Benedict was High Sheriff of Lancaster and father to Annora who married Sir Adam de Molyneux. Benedict also had a son Vivian born in 1175 but it was a middle son Sir Roger Gernet who inherited Halton and the Serjeanty. He was followed by Sir Benedict, who's only son Roger had no heirs and so the manor passed out of the family via his daughter Joan's marriage to William de Dacre in 1290.

b) Gernet of Heysham

Vivian's son Brian born in 1112 held Heysham from 1140 and it passed to his son Adam when he died. In 1200 Adam was killed by Adam de Kellet, son of

Orme who was Bailiff of Lonsdale, and was succeeded by Thomas his son. Thomas' son Vivian born in 1200 was next in line but he was also Lord of Caton and Skelmersdale, acquired from his second marriage to Godith, daughter and heir of William de Kellet. Vivian's son Ralph sold Heysham to Randle de Dacre ending the line.

c) The Molyneux Family

Robert de Molineux was born in about 1000 at Moulins in France, the son of a Spanish priest and a French nun. His son William born in 1030 was a Captain and Companion to William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings. William's son William took Sefton (near Liverpool) as his seat but was succeeded by his brother Vivian de Molyneux born in 1080. Vivian was given custody of Liverpool Castle and Cuerden manor (Chorley) plus part of Windle by Roger the Poitevin. Vivian's grandson Robert married Beatrice de Villiers, whose son Richard married Edith de Boteller. They had sons Sir Adam de Molyneux who married Annora de Gernet and continued the line, and Vivian de Molyneux born in 1190. Two further Vivian de Molyneuxs were born in the 17th century. A descendent of the family also married a descendent of the Rokesley family from London and Kent (see below).

d) The Bolron Family

Vivian de Bolron born in about 1150 is the first recorded tenant of Bolron which was held by masonry meaning the holder had to provide a mason to work on the Castle of Lancaster when required. Vivian's father Gervase (another name introduced by the Normans) was the son of Warine the Little who was in some way connected to Roger the Poitevin and from whom the family probably acquired the right to Bolron. The Bolron family name persisted despite the line passing from Vivian's son Ralph de Bolron to Ralph's daughter Maude and then to Maude's son Ralph. A couple of generations later Robert de Bolron was Mayor of Lancaster from 1338 to 1349. There appears to be some connection between the Gernet and Bolron families in the 12/13th centuries but exactly what is unclear.

e) Miscellaneous Vivians

The remaining four Vivians found in Lancashire remain pretty much a mystery and will not be researched further.

The Cheshire Vivians

a) The Davenport Family

This family is most unusual amongst the Vivian families in having no direct ancestry from France. The first taking the name from their manor was Orme de Davenport born in 1086 whose father was also an Orme, and possibly so was his grandfather, descended from Leofwine, Ealdorman of the Hwicce (a Kingdom in the western midlands of Mercia) and an ancestor of my wife. Orme's son Richard was granted by charter the Chief Forestership (Serjeanty) of Leek and Macclesfield Forests from Hugh de Kevelioc, 5th Earl of Chester. Richard's great-grandson Vivian de Davenport was born in about 1185 and was granted the hereditary Master Serjeanty of the Peace in Macclesfield by Ranulf de Blondeville, 6th Earl of Chester. He married Beatrix de Hulme and was succeeded by their son Roger. The next three generations of Davenports were all knighted and in the 17th century two more Vivians appeared.

b) Other Vivians

The remaining three Vivians from Cheshire do not appear until the 14th or 15th centuries and do not appear to be connected. Little is known about them except that one, Vivian de Gatiler was a Sheriff's deputy.

The Besford Family from Worcestershire

The first member of this family is Vivian de Besford, tenant of the Beauchamps of Elmley Castle, who was born in 1135. He married Elizabeth de Nafford and they had a son Osbert de Besford who in turn had a son Vivian de Besford born in 1185. This Vivian was succeeded by his son Sir Walter de Besford and the line continued with two MPs, a JP and another knight before a lack of male

heirs saw Margery, Joan and Agnes de Besford marry, taking the manors between them and the line died out. It seems most likely that this family had Norman heritage but we cannot be sure.

The Rokesleys of Kent and London

A quite remarkable family whose flame burnt most brightly though briefly in late 13th and early 14th centuries before disappearing into obscurity. They can be traced back to the Norman Mauger who acquired Roskeley (and other manors) and hence the name under the tenancy-in-chief of Bishop Odo of Bayeux before the latter's disgrace. Mauger de Rokesley must have been born about 1050 in Normandy but it would be 100 years before we find a descendant Sir John de Rokesley born in 1150. Sir John accompanied King Richard I on the 3rd Crusade and was present at the siege of Acre. As well as Rokesley (Ruxley) Sir John held Orpington and several other manors in Kent. His son Richard was grandfather to Gregory de Rokesley born in about 1235 who went to London in around 1256. Though styled as a Goldsmith (probably having served his apprenticeship in this guild) he was a very successful merchant. In particular he was a Wool Exporter, selling high priced wool from the Cotswolds and Flaxley Abbey, and a wine Merchant, shipping St Emilion and other clarets from Gascony to London and even Boston plus selling them to the Royal Household, but also dealt in Corn, Fish and Cloth.

One of the wealthiest men in London he found favour with first King Henry III and then particularly King Edward I. In 1265 he became an Alderman at Dowgate a position he held until his death in 1291. He was appointed King's Butler in 1266 and was High Sheriff of London three times in 1263, 1265 and 1270. Gregory was made Lord Mayor of London in 1274, a position he held eight times in all, and in 1275 King's Chamberlain. In 1279 he was made Keeper of the King's Exchange and Chief Assay Master of all of the King's Mints. His London estate extended over 12 parishes and centred on a great mansion at Cornhill but he also held 8 manors outside London. Several brothers and nephews in London were also Wine and Wool Merchants, some serving as Aldermen and two as High Sheriff of London. The next generation were enticed by the new fashion for Baltic trade and all became Cordors but served only as Councillors or Assembly-men. When this business dwindled the family retreated into relative obscurity again after only two generations.

A younger brother of Gregory's was Vivian de Rokesley who had died before the family really reached their zenith, though not before producing at least three sons. The youngest of these was John de Rokesley born in about 1280 and perhaps because he shared the name with an uncle used the name John Vivian instead. He was a Corder like others of his generation and briefly an Alderman in 1320 at Dowgate, dying in 1321. In the late 14th and 15th centuries there were an Adam Vyvian, John Vyvian and William Vyvian in London who could have been descended from John Vivian de Rokesley although the Adam at least could have come from the Cornish Vivians, as an Adam Vivian, gentleman from that family was an MP in the 1420s. The William Vyvian found in 1470 does not fit with the Cornish family so perhaps he could be our missing link to the first William Fyddian.

Gregory de Rokesley had sons Sir Reginald and Sir Richard de Rokesley who were more noted for their exploits outside the capital. The latter was even Seneschal (Governor) of Ponthieu and Montreuil in Picardy for a time. He married Joan de Criol extending the family estates but they had only female heirs and so the manors passed to another family when Agnes de Rokesley married Sir Thomas Poynings. Their son Lord Michael de Poynings, 1st Baron Poynings married Joan de Rokesley who had previously married Sir John Molyneux of the Lancashire family. One of the last of the de Rokesleys was apparently John, a grandson of Gregory, who was Rector of Chelsfield in 1345 and sold off some of the remaining families' properties. Finally in 1347 North Cray came again into the hands of Roger de Rokesley from a junior branch but when he died without an heir that was the end of the line.

The Cornish Vivians

The only remaining cluster of Vivians arose in Cornwall, but here they were already using Vivian as a surname from the end of the 12th century. Ralph Vyvian was born around 1174 but we know nothing of his ancestry though it is reasonable to assume that the family came from France at some point during or after the Conquest. The estates of these early Vivians had belonged to Robert, Count of Mortain at the time of Domesday. Robert, a half-brother of King William I had been a Companion at the Battle of Hastings and was richly rewarded holding 797 manors in 1086. Most of these were in Cornwall and so he was regarded as the Earl of Cornwall and indeed he was based there. Perhaps

he rewarded a member of his retinue who had accompanied him to England with an estate near the tip of Cornwall. Robert's other brother was Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent who had given the manors of North Cray and Rokesley to Mauger at around the same time. It seems hard to believe that this could be nothing but a bizarre coincidence and so perhaps the families are connected in some way.

Ralph Vyvian's son was Sir Vyell Vyvian and he married the daughter of Count Christopher of Kildare so the family were already quite exalted. Sir Vyell's son Sir Ralph Vyvian married into the de Ferrers family, originally from Normandy with a fine pedigree. Remarkably, besides two occasions when a Vyvian married a de Ferrers both these families have also married a Peverell ancestor of my wife and the de Ferrers family have married into four families connected to the Vivians discussed above (de Chetwynd, de Verdon, Poynings and de Stafford, the latter related to the de Standons). Whilst this does not prove a direct link between the Vivians it does indicate that they moved in the same social circles and had notable standing in society. The Vivians have remained in Cornwall and can be traced to the current day, some 25 generations, with several Knights, High Sheriffs (since the late 15th century), JPs, MPs and so far 13 Baronets. From around the mid-19th century the family have been found further afield, largely in Wales and Southern England.

Priests with the given name Vivian

During the search for early Vivians it became apparent that several of these were Priests and because we cannot be certain where they came from they have largely been excluded from the previous table (one, Vivian de Stoke is duplicated since we do know his connection to other Vivians).

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|---------------------|------------|--------|--|
| 1. Vivian de Tracy | France | b.1120 | Archdeacon of Orvieto,
Cardinal of St Stephen |
| 2. Vivian Tomasi | Scotland | b.1125 | Cardinal (papal legate) |
| 3. Vivian de Stagno | Derbyshire | b.1150 | Archdeacon of Derby,
Bishop of Coutances |

4. Vivian	France	b.1150	Abbot of Aunay
5. Vivian de Stoke	Staffordshire	b.1154	Rector of Stoke, Chaplain to King John
6. Vivian	London	b.1200	Prior at St Bartholomew the Great
7. Vivian de Luke	Berkshire	b.1260	Abbot at Abingdon
8. Vivian de Blancafort	Kent	b.1289	Rector at Eynsford
9. Vivian de Chelewalle	Staffordshire	b.1300	Priest at Lichfield
10. Vivian de Offley	Hertfordshire	b.1300	Chaplain of Kemyton

It is worthwhile to consider this seemingly miscellaneous group as it confirms much of what is said about the name Vivian. Firstly it's origin in France, secondly it's connection with the church (the earliest being the 5th century St Vivian, Bishop of Saintes) and thirdly that the name was generally reserved for those of fairly high status. The latter applying even to Parish Priests of the time as they usually came from the family of the Lord on the Manor. The three Vivians that have been included above who do not appear to come from England were all found in documents or publications relating to English affairs. So the name 'de Tracy' refers to a location in Normandy but was used by a family who came to England at the time of the Conquest (in fact Sir William de Tracy was one of the murderers of Thomas a Becket in 1170). 'Tomasi' is the Italian version of Thomas, and this Vivian was sent to Scotland, Ireland and England as a legate for the Pope. The final Vivian had no other name and was referred to as Abbot of Aunay, in Normandy.

Apart from Vivian de Stoke whose daughter married into the de Standon family there do not seem to be any other direct connections between this group of priests and our ancestors. But given the rarity of the Vivian name, the percent who became men of the church seems remarkably high at around 18% and seems to fit with the finding of several early Fydian priests in the 15th century. So although it does not help with the identification of our specific ancestors it makes it extremely likely that they came from Normandy, probably arrived in

England during or fairly soon after the Conquest, were of pretty high social status, had good connections with the new nobility of England at that time and might be expected to have clergymen in the family.

Overall Conclusions

From all the above it remains highly likely that our Fiddian ancestors came from Normandy either in 1066 or within the next 100 years or so. On the basis that it is unlikely that a single occurrence of Vivian in a family would have been sufficient to persuade them to take the name as a surname we are really left with only about 8 possible candidates for our forebears. From the above it would seem unlikely that the Davenport family from Cheshire could be one of these as their origins are Anglo-Saxon and only one Vivian occurred before the Fiddian name arose. That would leave the following possibilities:

- a) **De Standon/de Rossall Family** – in all there were 9 individual Vivians in these two families with the male line coming from the de Standons. The de Standon line came to an end in the 15th century and the location was very close to the first Fiddians making this still the favoured source of our family name.

- b) **The Cornish Vivians** – although in some ways the most obvious source it seems unlikely that a family that chose Vivian or Vyvyan as their surname in the 12th century and have kept it for over 800 years would have opted for a Fiddian branch as well. There is also an issue with the location as these Vivians mainly remained in Cornwall until after the 15th century.

- c) **De Rokesley Family** – provides the only other documented example of the use of Vivian as a surname. However, there is really too little evidence to make a good case for this family and although the main line died out in the 14th century the Ruxley surname has persisted.

d) **Gernet Family** – with its various branches is an interesting group and provides several intriguing connections to our family and that of my wife but no clear evidence as a possible source of our ancestors. The surnames of Heysham, Halton and Caton have continued without the apparent need to switch to Vivian/Fiddian.

e) **Bolron Family** – also in Lancashire and possibly connected to the other families there but with only a single instance of an early Vivian.

f) **Molyneux Family** – had two early Vivians and some intriguing connections with other families but does not hold up as a likely source of Fiddian.

g) **Besford Family** – also has two early Vivians and a reasonable case for location but nothing else to support the argument.

h) **Biddulph/Verdon Family** – provides a similar case but does even better for location and yet is an unlikely source since both surnames have persisted.

So despite a more rigorous examination of all the families who had used Vivian as a given name in the relevant period it remains most likely that our ancestral line passes down through the de Standon line to Normandy and before that Scandinavia. This is entirely consistent with the results of my DNA testing but cannot be completely substantiated. What makes it most intriguing is that we can find several links, through marriage, patronage and in some cases location, which suggest that all the candidate families would have been associated with each other at some time. This should not be too surprising given the social standing of the families and the relatively small population at the time. For instance in 1086 the population of Lancashire (not yet formally a county) has been estimated at between 7000 and 11000. There were only 268 places (manors) identified in Lancashire at that time and there would have been fewer lords as many held more than one manor.

Small wonder then that many of us share ancestors from that time as the available pool for marriage with someone from a family of similar social standing would have been quite limited. Indeed on occasion the search for an appropriate partner would have had to extend beyond the hundred or county. So, even if migration between counties was still quite limited at this time there are several occasions when individuals from the landed gentry would move around the country. These would include marriage, postings within the church, service in the army, attendance at law courts (jurors and witnesses) and the royal court and finally from the early 13th century parliament. Since there are other families with names similar to Fiddian it is not unreasonable to assume that they too may have originated from the families with Vivian ancestors.

Taking the 12 commonest such names I have looked at their relative frequency as reported by a major genealogy site (this overestimates the number of individuals as it would include births, marriages and deaths) and reviewed where these events were located:

<u>Name</u>	<u>No. Reports</u>	<u>County</u>
Fiddian	2028	Worcs (30%)/Warws (25%)/Staffs (12%)
Phythian	14373	Lancs (64%)/Cheshire
Phethean	3508	Lancs (85%)
Phithian	550	Lancs (54%)/Cheshire (40%)
Phythean	182	Lancs (74%)
Phitheon	182	Cheshire (59%)
Phetheon	154	Lancs (50%)/Middlesex
Vidgen	3780	Kent (68%)/London/Middlesex
Videan	2286	Kent (75%)
Vidgeon	1692	Kent (77%)
Fidgeon	2260	Essex (23%)/Warws (18%)/Staffs/Durham
Fidian	349	Lancs (38%)/Cheshire (32%)/Warws (12%)

Apart from Fiddian which arose in the West Midlands, most related names beginning with an 'F' or a 'Ph' appear to come mainly from Lancashire or Cheshire. The only real exception to this is Fidgeon which seems to have a fairly diverse origin from Essex, the Midlands and Durham, but early records indicate Hertfordshire as the original source (see the main table of Vivians). This could mean that the name Phythian, and closely related names, derive from

the Vivian families in Lancashire or Cheshire. On the other hand the surnames that begin with a 'V' appear to derive entirely from Kent or London and its immediate environs. Though of course this does not apply to the surname Vivian itself which is more common than all the above names combined and arose in Cornwall. So, could the Vidgens etcetera be a branch of the Rokesley family? This would certainly paint a pretty complete picture of all the possible sources and the various outcomes but might be hard to prove. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that all this has helped to make the case for the derivation of the Fiddian name.

A final comment on the given name Vivian is also called for here. Despite an extremely intensive search it has proved difficult to find more than about 60 examples of this name over a 500 year period from around the Conquest. Given the status and positions of most of those with the name it would seem to have been generally reserved for the privileged few. In particular the number of clergymen with the name and their often elevated rank within the church suggests that the families using this name were both very religious and well positioned. All the clearly documented families were at one time closely associated with King William I, his family or his highest ranking Lords. Some, if not all, of the early family members had probably fought alongside the King at the Battle of Hastings and were blessed with an extraordinary level of patronage as a result. The uniqueness of the name and its rather special connotations might explain why it has been preserved phonetically from multiple sources and for so long as a surname.

Paul Fiddian – May 2016

ADDENDUM – POSSIBLE FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Returning to the Vivian de Rossalls in Shropshire we uncover a most interesting family. The first of these was originally known as Warin fitz Hugh, son of Hugh fitz Albert, but seems to have adopted the name Vivian de Rossall at a later date. This occurred before his daughter Roes married Vivian de Standon, indeed the first recorded usage is in the same year as the latter's birth (1190). He may well have had some connection with another of the early Vivians (possibly through the de Montgomery family) but as we shall see his family had also recently come from France. His grandfather was Albert Grelley ('Greslet' meaning pockmarked) and his great-grandfather was Warin de Metz ('The Bald'). Warin and his brother Rainald de Bailliol shared a father, a position (successive Sheriffs of Shrewsbury) and a wife (Ameria de Montgomery, Rainald married her after Warin died early).

Rainald held 129 manors at the time of Domesday (he is described as Reginald the Sheriff) and would have been a feudal Baron. He had a son Barnard who started the building of Barnard Castle in Durham in about 1100, which was completed by his son Barnard. Descendants of this family include John Balliol, 5th Baron Balliol who founded Balliol College, Oxford, and his son John and grandson Edward who were briefly Kings of Scotland in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Rainald's brother Warin de Metz had several children, including Albert Grelley, Fulk FitzWarin, Hugh FitzWarin (who was High Sheriff of Shropshire in 1102), a daughter who married a Peverel, and another daughter whose son married yet another Peverel (the latter being my wife's ancestors). Fulk FitzWarin had a son Warin FitzFulk, Knight who allegedly won the hand of a fair maiden at a jousting tournament, though the story may have been embellished to cover up the fact that she was his cousin; her name was Miletta Peverel. Their son Sir Fulk FitzWarin II was a powerful Marcher Lord seated at Whittington Castle in Shropshire, as was his son Sir Fulk FitzWarin III. However, the latter rebelled against King John and was forced to become an outlaw, leading to the legend of 'Fouke le Fitz Waryn' which is available online at: <https://archive.org/stream/historyoffulkfit00wriguoft#page/n23/mode/2up> . His life and relationship with Maud de Vavasour, his future wife, is also alleged to be the basis of the legend of Robin Hood and Maid Marion. Their grandson

Lord Fulk FitzWarin V was 1st Baron FitzWarin, and there were six more Lord Fulk FitzWarin Barons and a Baroness FitzWarin before the line became extant in the 15th century.

I have left the best to last however, as the final sibling of Warin de Metz's family is his eldest son Albert Grelley. Albert held only 31 manors at the time of Domesday, but then his father who had undoubtedly held many estates had only died in 1084. One of the manors was Rossall, which passed to his son Hugh fitz Albert and became the seat of the Vivian de Rossall family. The eldest son of each generation was knighted and each held one or more prominent positions in the county. One Sir Vivian de Rossall was Constable of Oswestry Castle, and twice the local Earl addressed him in writing as Sir Fynyan. The de Rossall family became extant in the middle of the 14th century. Albert Grelley was under the patronage of Roger de Montgomery, who was the cousin of Albert's mother Ameria, and whose lordship included much of what is now Lancashire. At some point he acquired Manchester (then in Salford, Cheshire) and Ashton-under-Lyne, being styled as feudal Lord of Manchester, and these were handed down to his remaining children Robert and Emma.

Robert Grelley like his father was feudal Lord of Manchester, but his son Albert de Grelley became Lord de Grelley 1st Baron of Manchester in 1158. The Barony was passed down six more generations (five more Barons as one generation was skipped) until the line became extant. Note that the family had added 'de' in front of Grelley to avoid the potential stigma attached to the name. Emma Grelley had meanwhile married Orm, son of Ailward, who acquired a knight's fee in Wrightington as well as Ashton-under-Lyne from her father. He is sometimes credited as the founder of the latter town as previously it had been only a church with a bit of land, and at some point the family built a large house and settled some serfs there. Their son Roger de Kirkby lived at Kirkby Ireleth (near Ulverston, Cumbria), Orm's family seat, rather than at Ashton. His son William continued to live at Kirkby and his descendants, many of whom were knighted, continued living there for over 600 years. Roger's younger son Orm inherited Ashton, and he or one of his descendants built the Manor House, Ashton Old Hall, which had three wings and in the 14th century was regarded as one of the finest houses in the North West. In 1414 the town was granted a Royal Charter allowing it to hold a fair twice a year and a market every Monday. In 1769 the introduction of the cotton trade led to Ashton thriving as a

mill town, with eventually 75 cotton mills being established, making it one of the most famous mill towns in the North West.

Orm, son of Roger, became known as Orm (or Ord) de Assheton and had a son Thomas de Assheton, who along with the next couple of generations left no real evidence behind, until Sir John and Sir Robert de Assheton made their mark. Born at the very end of the 13th century they were the first of many generations of Knights, Baronets, MPs and County Officials who held seats at Ashton, Middleton, Great Lever and Downham, all in Lancashire. Sir Robert was a successful civil, military and naval officer under King Edward III, becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1375. His son Thomas has been described as a warrior, once capturing the Royal Standard of Scotland when the Scots invaded Northumberland, but he was never knighted. Sir Robert's grandson Sir John de Assheton was a military commander and Knight of the Shire for Lancashire (in the 14th century each county sent two knights to parliament to represent their interests), but we know nothing more about this line of the family.

Sir Robert's brother, Sir John de Assheton, was also a military commander and had a son who later became Sir John de Assheton, had a relatively short but successful career then drowned in a well (though we don't know how he got there). His son, also Sir John de Assheton, served as a soldier under both Kings Henry IV and V, fought at Agincourt in 1415 and became Chief Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster. He had at least three sons, all of whom were knighted, but with two different wives and was involved in a number of family feuds. The oldest son, Sir Thomas de Assheton, was an alchemist (although presumably not a very successful one) and had 11 children, but apart from a son, Sir John de Assheton, who was knighted before the Battle of Northampton in 1460 and became an MP we know no more of them. The youngest of the three sons mentioned above, from the second wife, became Sir Ralph de Assheton, Knight Banneret. He gained a reputation as a cruel and unpopular lord, known as the Black Knight, and in the end he was shot and killed at Ashton where his death was still celebrated at the annual fair in the 1950s when we were children. He was a page of honour to King Henry VI, an officer of state under King Edward IV and also Vice-Constable of England and Lieutenant of the Tower of London under King Richard III. In the latter role he expedited the many executions ordered by the new king and this led to him being remembered in the legendary rhyme:

*Sweet Jesu, for thy mercy's sake, and for thy bitter passion,
Save us from the axe of the Tower, and from Sir Ralph of Assheton.*

Sir Ralph de Assheton married his wife when she was only eight years old and they had at least two sons, who went on to produce two great lines of the Assheton family. The eldest, Sir Richard de Assheton, was the first of seven successive Richards who succeeded to the family seat of Middleton (acquired by Sir Ralph from his marriage to the heiress), four of whom were knighted. The last of these, Sir Richard de Assheton, served as a Colonel-General on the Parliamentary side in the first Civil War in 1642, was Commander-in-Chief of the Lancashire forces and served in the long parliament. He too had an eldest son Richard, but he died in infancy supposedly due to witchcraft, and so he was succeeded by his son Ralph who in 1660 was created 1st Baronet of Middleton. This Sir Ralph de Assheton was succeeded by his son, Sir Ralph de Assheton 2nd Baronet of Middleton, who enjoyed the title for over 50 years. He died in 1716 without male issue and so he was succeeded by his nephew Sir Ralph de Assheton 3rd Baronet of Middleton (son of his brother Richard). This last Sir Ralph also had no sons, so the baronetcy became extinct and the estates passed out of the family.

The second great line of the Assheton family was headed by Sir Ralph de Assheton of Great Lever (which he acquired by marrying Margaret Lever, heiress), who was twice appointed Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod. He like his brother was the first of seven successive generations with the same name, in this case Ralph, who went on to hold the family seat of Great Lever. He was the only Ralph to be knighted, though the fourth and fifth Ralphs were High Sheriffs of Lancashire and the sixth Ralph in 1620 was created Sir Ralph de Assheton 1st Baronet of Lever. He was succeeded by his son Sir Ralph de Assheton 2nd Baronet of Lever, who also gained Downham manor from his cousin Richard. When he died without issue the title passed first to his brother Edmund and then their brother John who were 3rd and 4th Baronets of Lever. But when Sir John de Assheton died in 1696 the title became extinct, and the estates that hadn't already been sold went to his nephew Sir Ralph de Assheton 2nd Baronet of Middleton (son of his sister Anne, who had married her 6th cousin once removed, the 1st Baronet of Middleton).

By way of a diversion I would return to the fifth of the successive Ralphs mentioned above. He had a son Richard who in turn had at least two sons Richard and Nicholas born in 1575 and 1590 respectively. The latter Richard died in 1596 as a young man and it was claimed that the cause of his death was bewitchment by Old Demdike. The claim and trial of Old Demdike and several other alleged witches is described in the book ‘The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster’ and can be found at:

<https://archive.org/stream/pottsdiscoveryof00pottrich#page/n325/mode/2up> .

The book was written by the clerk to the Lancaster Assizes (who happened to have grown up in the house of the man who in 1605 apprehended Guy Fawkes and prevented parliament and King James I from being blown up). Nicholas de Assheton also died quite young, aged 36, but briefly kept a journal of his life as a country gentleman, which can be found at:

<https://archive.org/stream/journalnicholas01raingoo#page/n7/mode/2up> .

Finally, Nicholas and several other members of the de Assheton family appear in a novel called ‘The Lancashire Witches – A Romance of Pendle Forest’ written by William Harrison Ainsworth in 1878, which can be found at:

<https://archive.org/stream/lancashirewitch00ainsgoog#page/n6/mode/2up> .

I hope that you will agree that it was worth spending some time with the relations of our likely ancestors in the Midlands. I am more than ever convinced that the cluster of Vivians in Staffordshire and Shropshire must have been the origin of the Fiddian family. However in researching this, the discovery of our distant links to the founder of the town we actually grew up in and the amazing Assheton family has rewarded the endeavour. I also find it quite extraordinary to discover that over the years our ancestors have sought to marry ancestors of my wife’s family on so many occasions (I trust you’ve been keeping count).

Paul Fiddian – September 2014 (Original version)/May 2016 (Revised version)