

Please cite the Published Version

Edwards, S (2019) Warton, George Washington and the Lancashire Roots of the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship', c. 1880–1976. *Northern History*, 55 (2). pp. 206-234. ISSN 0078-172X

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2018.1552445>

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

Version: Accepted Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/623089/>

Usage rights: © In Copyright

Additional Information: This is an Author Accepted Manuscript of an article in *Northern History* published by Taylor & Francis.

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

Warton, George Washington, and the Lancashire Roots of the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship', c.1880-1976¹

Sam Edwards, Manchester Metropolitan University

Abstract:

This article takes as its starting point the ancestral connection linking George Washington, first President of the United States, to the Parish of Warton in north Lancashire. But rather than simply repeating the various details of this ancestry, this article considers instead the ways in which the Warton-Washington connection has been *used* within acts of 'commemorative diplomacy' – informal and often unofficial activities which deploy cultural memory in the interests of international relations. From the antiquarian endeavours of the 1880s, to the Washington-focused commemorations organised during the world wars, to the bicentenary events of July 1976, places like Warton have long played a vital role in Anglo-American relations. Indeed, what Winston Churchill famously called the 'special relationship' has always been a carefully cultivated 'myth' as much as a political reality, and thus rooting it in specific places has been essential, ensuring it seems 'organic' rather than constructed, real rather than artificial, old and robust rather than new and superficial. Commemorative activities at Warton therefore offer an important perspective on twentieth century Anglo-American relations, showing how a north Lancashire connection to the first President has provided an invaluable vector for defining, imagining and celebrating the transatlantic ties of the past and present.

Keywords: Warton; George Washington; Independence Day; special relationship; commemoration; Anglo-American relations.

Essay:

During the record-breaking heatwave of 1976, as temperatures soared and Britons burned, residents of Warton in north Lancashire spent ten days under the midday sun, celebrating American Independence. Planning for the proceedings had first begun back in March 1975, and local businesses were prevailed upon to provide funding and sponsorship. Among the various well-attended events was an historical exhibition in the Church Hall, an open air production of 'The Taming of the Shrew', various sporting contests, and, by way of a finale, a church service on July 4th itself, led by the Bishop of Blackburn.² A few days after the events had concluded, the press happily reported that it had all been a great success. Hundreds of Americans had attended the events, and parish community leaders seemed content that Warton was now 'on the map'. And in the village itself, shops reported a steady turnover, with at least one pub doing a roaring trade with parched party-goers desperate to quench their thirst.³

Whilst unusual in scale and ambition, this was by no means the first occasion during which Britons had celebrated national defeat in the American Revolution. Already by 1783, a certain Sir Thomas Gascoigne had erected a monument on his Yorkshire estate celebrating the

¹ The author would like to thank Sheila Jones of the Mourholme Local History Society for all her assistance, especially with regard to accessing the Society's archive. Similar thanks are also due to Helen Clark, archivist at Sulgrave Manor. And thanks as well to Colin Peacock of Warton Parish Council for his input and information about the 1976 Bicentennial.

² Warton Village Societies, 'American Independence Bi-Centenary Celebrations, Saturday 26th June to Sunday 4th July 1976', commemorative booklet, author's collection. Hereafter 'Warton Bi-Centenary Booklet'.

³ See 'Warton's Week of Glory', *Lancaster Guardian*, 7 July 1976.

victory recently won by colonial arms (Sir Thomas detested the government's North American policy); it carries the legend 'Liberty in North America Triumphant'. For many nineteenth century British radicals, the American Revolution was similarly inspiring, at least until the 1850s (by when the continued presence of the institution of slavery seriously undermined the idea of Columbia as a land of liberty). But it was during the twentieth century that interest seems to have peaked. By 4th July 1918, after a year spent fighting as allies on the Western Front, a very different British government from that which 'lost' the colonies in the 1780s went so far as to encourage the flying of the Stars and Stripes on buildings across the capital.⁴ Two decades later, with the British establishment keen to cultivate close connections with a still neutral United States, Britons again marked July 4th, this time with a BBC-CBS collaborative radio broadcast celebrating the Anglo-American ideals which Thomas Jefferson had committed to paper in the summer of 1776.⁵

By July 1976, therefore – the Bicentennial of American Independence – the occasion certainly had a presence in British culture, and indeed as early as 1972 a British 'liaison committee' had been established by the Foreign Office in order to coordinate a programme of government-sponsored activities.⁶ Nonetheless, if there were precedents to that summer's events in north Lancashire, there was also something distinct about the details of place and moment. For Warton was one of four English communities which had long-claimed an ancestral connection with the leader of the American rebels and, later, the first President of the United States, George Washington (the others were – and still are – Sulgrave in Northamptonshire, Washington in County Durham, and Purleigh in Essex). As the Chairman of the 'Warton Bi-Centenary Commemoration Committee' put it: 'The earlier ties of the Washington family with the village...have engendered a feeling of association with the United States of America'.⁷

This article explores this 'association', paying particular attention to the various twentieth-century uses made of the claimed ancestral connection. In doing so, the article contends that places like Warton have long been crucial to both the substance and symbolism of Anglo-American relations. Indeed, by bounding these relations in time and space, commemorations like those at Warton in 1976 were much more than mere window dressing to the 'real' business of transatlantic diplomacy. Rather, given that the 'special relationship' is as much carefully cultivated 'myth' as historical (or political) reality, rooting it in real places, and tying it to real people, has always been essential to its successful construction, enabling otherwise amorphous ideas of feeling and sentiment to be expressed *within* historically hospitable sites, thereby garnering added political legitimacy and rhetorical power. Seen in these terms, the various activities undertaken at Warton from the 1880s through to 1976 powerfully affirm the significance of so-called 'commemorative diplomacy' – that is, acts and activities which invoke the past in the service of international relations – whilst also deepening our understanding of the global reach of the 1976 Bicentennial of American Independence.⁸

⁴ D. Woodward, *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), p. 182.

⁵ See various correspondence between BBC Midland Film Unit and Sulgrave Manor Board, especially May-July 1938, Sulgrave Manor Archives (hereafter 'SMA'). See also FO371/26257, National Archives, Kew.

⁶ M. Todd Bennett, 'The Spirits of '76: Diplomacy Commemorating the US Bicentennial in 1976', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2016), p. 717.

⁷ Warton Bi-Centenary Booklet.

⁸ For 'commemorative diplomacy', see Bennett, 'The Spirits of '76: Diplomacy Commemorating the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976', pp. 698-699. The American-based events of the 1976 Bicentennial have been well-studied. See, for example, J. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in*

Discovering the Ancestry: Warton and the Washingtons, c.1880-1900

For much of his life, George Washington remained uninterested in the details of his lineage. He was vaguely aware of his English roots, and indeed understood himself – at least until the late 1770s – as an ‘Englishman’ in mind and manners.⁹ But like others of his generation in colonial America, he did not probe much beyond family lore of ancestors in Albion.¹⁰ Indeed, when once questioned on his ancestry, Washington explained that he thought his family ‘came from some one of the northern counties of England; but whether from Lancashire, Yorkshire, or one still more northerly, I do not precisely remember’.¹¹ After his death in 1799, however, many of his contemporaries and countrymen were understandably keen to tie down the fine details. Thus, following early work in the 1790s by Sir Isaac Heard, an ‘officer of arms’ keen to discern the first President’s pedigree, together with subsequent research by Washington Irving for his 1829 biography (*The Life of George Washington*), the key breakthroughs were duly made in the mid to late nineteenth century, first by Colonel Joseph Lemuel Chester, and then by Henry F. Waters.¹²

Chester, born in Connecticut in 1821, was among the most eminent genealogists and antiquarians of his day. After an early career as a teacher, journalist and then aid-de-camp to James Pollock, Governor of Pennsylvania, he moved to Britain in 1858, soon settling in London. It was there, in the early 1860s, that he began his work into the ancestry of American families, quickly developing a reputation for exhaustive research and an energetic commitment to the importance of both collecting and copying relevant materials from parish, regional and national archival collections. Central to these endeavours was a persistent interest in the lineage of the first president, although ‘he did not live long enough to publish a pedigree of George Washington, a favourite subject of his for many years’.¹³ Nonetheless, his diligent research still informed late nineteenth century understandings of Washington’s ancestry, and became the *di rigour* starting point for all those keen to complete the lineage. Foremost of these later figures was Henry F. Waters, who published among the very first sustained attempts to trace the definitive English bloodline of the soldier, statesman, and gentleman farmer from Virginia: *An Examination of the English Ancestry of George Washington* (1889).¹⁴ In contrast to Chester, Waters’ researches were by no means ‘exhaustive’. At one point, Waters explained that his method was similar ‘to that of the prospector who finds the hidden lode of rich ore and makes it known to the miners who may wish to follow up and develop the vein more thoroughly’.¹⁵

the Twentieth Century (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); T.S. Gordon, *The Spirit of 1776: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); M. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); K. Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁹ For some details of British views of Washington and the Revolution, see T. Bickham, ‘Sympathizing with Sedition? George Washington, the British Press, and British Attitudes during the American War of Independence’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 59, 1, (2002), p. 101. See also H. Peckham, ‘Independence: The View from Britain’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 85, 2 (1976) pp. 387-403.

¹⁰ R. Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 3.

¹¹ George Washington to Sir Isaac Heard, 2 May 1792. Quoted in A. B. Hart, ‘The English Ancestry of George Washington’, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 63 (Oct 1929 – Jan 1930), p. 3.

¹² For the role of Washington Irving, see Hart, ‘The English Ancestry of George Washington’, pp. 4-6.

¹³ G.C. Boase, revised by M. Erben, ‘Chester, Joseph Lemuel’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5236> (accessed: 30/4/18).

¹⁴ H. Waters, *An Examination of the English Ancestry of George Washington* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1889).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 5.

Even so, Waters' had a knack for finding the seams that others might then excavate further. He thus set to work on the still uncertain details of Washington's English ancestry, revisiting some of the facts originally unearthed by Sir Issac Heard back in the 1790s.

Working with sources in the College of Arms, Heard had established an ancestral link between the first President and the Parish of Warton in Lancashire, and thus already by the mid-nineteenth century the fact that George Washington's ancestors were 'Lancashire men' was known.¹⁶ With this point of origin confirmed, Heard also managed to establish a subsequent connection to the Manor of Sulgrave in Northamptonshire. But after this, the sources dried up and the evidence became more fragmentary. Heard believed – tentatively – that the beginnings of the Washington presence in Virginia started with two sons of a certain Lawrence Washington (of Sulgrave), named John and Lawrence.¹⁷ But Chester had comprehensively dismantled this theory in the 1860s, revealing the mistakes Heard had made regarding the ages of these supposed 'sons', both of whom 'were too old to have been the emigrants to Virginia'.¹⁸ Yet Chester had not pursued the matter further; the old theory was 'demolished', but 'without setting a new one in its place'.¹⁹ Establishing a new theory was thus the task Waters set himself as he 'gleaned' through parish records in England during the spring of 1883. And to his delight he was, eventually, successful. Via church registers, wills and various other archives interrogated with all the vigour one might expect from an enthusiastic antiquarian, Waters solved the problem, discovering that the John and Lawrence who landed in Virginia in 1657 were in fact the grandsons, not sons, of Lawrence of Sulgrave, and their father – yet another Lawrence – had been rector of Purleigh in Essex. The Washington line had now found its firm origins in England; the emigrants had been identified, and the line moved from Warton, to Sulgrave, to Purleigh, to Virginia. A subject much discussed in the letters pages of numerous contemporary periodicals – especially the *London Times* – had now been 'resolved', even if the fine details continued to be the focus of engaged debate for quite some time to come.²⁰

Significantly, aspects of Waters' genealogical endeavours were instantly corroborated by some timely archaeological evidence. For in 1885-6, just as Waters' was mining his genealogical seams, workmen restoring the tower at the church of St. Oswald in Warton made 'an interesting discovery' which, in the words of the *Manchester Courier*, 'throws considerable light on the doubtful and vexed question of the ancestry of George Washington'. As the *Courier* continued: 'While a quantity of plaster was being removed from one of the pillars there was disclosed the coat of arms and name of the Washington family, together with some papers.'²¹ Here was clear evidence of the prominence and power of the Washington family in Warton,

¹⁶ *The Morning Advertiser*, 6 October 1851, p. 6. Washington's connection to the north of England was also more 'immediate': his mother was from Whitehaven, and at one point he had even been destined for the Grammar School in Appleby, his older brother's alma mater.

¹⁷ For an interesting overview of the contributions made by both Heard and Chester, see Waters, *An Examination of the English Ancestry of George Washington*, pp. 6-8. See also J.S.C., 'The English Ancestry of George Washington', *The Academy*, No. 212, 26 October 1889, p. 269.

¹⁸ Waters *An Examination of the English Ancestry of George Washington*, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ The issue of Washington's English ancestry was frequently the subject of reader's correspondence in the pages of the regional and national press in Britain. See, for example, *The Standard*, 30 July 1888, p. 2. See also the intense debate which occasionally surfaced in *The Times*. For a sense of this debate, see in particular: 29 August 1894, 31 August 1894, 8 September 1894; 13 September 1894, 22 September 1894, 4 October 1894, 15 October 1894, 24 October 1894, 29 October 1894, 30 August 1901, 1 November 1904, 29 October 1913, 31 October 1913, 4 November 1913.

²¹ *Supplement to the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 11 September 1886, p. 7.

for the carefully carved crest clearly suggested that they had funded construction of the tower. In turn, this discovery also reminded some scholars that the presence of the Washington crest – or ‘Arms’ – had in fact long been ‘known’: John Lucas, the parish’s eighteenth century chronicler, had written of it in his history compiled between 1710 and 1740.²² Lucas noted that the presence on the church tower of the Washington ‘Arms’ clearly indicated that they were an ‘ancient yet credible’ family in the parish.²³ When combined, the diligent mining of Waters and the accidental discovery in Warton provided solid evidence for the Washington ancestral tie to Albion, and in particular to Lancashire.

Of course, when Lucas first chronicled the presence of the Washington Arms at Warton the family name had not yet achieved its American fame, and had not yet become synonymous with the almost god-like first president. By 1886, however, all that had changed, and the moment was particularly receptive to the (re)discovery of the specific Washington-Warton connection, and also to the sheer depth and breadth of the Washington family’s ties to England more broadly. This was the age of Anglo-American ‘rapprochement’, an era in which political elites on both sides of the Atlantic delighted in celebrating various transatlantic connections, many of which were as much imagined as ‘real’.²⁴ For those invested in this rapprochement – ambassadors, diplomats, presidents and prime ministers – the idea of an essential unity of interest between the United States and United Kingdom was the product of ever closer economic links which were themselves shaped and sustained by the hard-realities of global power politics *and* by contemporary racial obsessions regarding the supposed superiority of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ peoples, ideas and institutions.²⁵ Thus, in the United States, where a form of cultural Anglo-Saxonism had been written into the nation’s institutional origins, a late twentieth-century age of mass immigration (from southern and eastern Europe) together with industrial expansion and imperial conquest (out ‘West’) encouraged many among the patrician elite to shed any lingering, post-Revolution, Anglophobia and instead both see and celebrate a sense of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ common-purpose with the ‘motherland’.²⁶

In the United Kingdom, meanwhile, long-established anti-Irish sentiment (amongst the powerful and wealthy), exploration and Empire building, the growing threat posed by the ‘new’

²² W.O. Roper, ‘The Missing History of Warton, by John Lucas’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 38 (1886), pp. 159-169, esp. 167.

²³ J. Lucas, *A History of Warton Parish*. Compiled 1710-1740. First edited by J. Rawlinson Ford and J.A. Fuller-Maitland, 1931. New edition published by Andy Denwood, 2017. p. 38 for the quote.

²⁴ For some details about this rapprochement, see Bradford Perkins: *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Antheneum, 1968). See also: H.A. Tulloch, ‘Changing British Attitudes Towards the United States in the 1880s’, *The Historical Journal*, 20, 4 (1977), pp. 825-840. E.P. Crapol, ‘From Anglophobia to fragile Rapprochement: Anglo-American Relations in the early Twentieth Century’, in *Confrontation and Cooperation: Germany and the United States in the Era of World War I, 1900-1924*, Hans-Jurgen Schroder (ed.) (Providence: Berg, 1993), pp. 13-32.

²⁵ For details about the role played by racial Anglo-Saxonism in the rapprochement, see S. Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981); A. Martellone, ‘In the Name of Anglo-Saxondom, For Empire and For Democracy: The Anglo-American Discourse, 1880-1920’, in *Reflections on American Exceptionalism*, (eds) D. K. Adams and C. A. Van Minnen (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994); P. A. Kramer, ‘Empires, Exceptions and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910’, *Journal of American History* 88, 4 (2002), pp. 1315-1353. For a recent re-examination of the continued role of ‘race’ in Anglo-American relations, see S. Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

²⁶ For specific details about Anglo-Saxonism in late nineteenth century America, see R. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Exceptionalism* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981). See also J. Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

Germany, and an increasing awareness of the power and potential of the United States, all combined to encourage a similarly Anglo-Saxonist outlook on contemporary international politics.²⁷ In quick order, metropolitan political elites thus happily described the still expanding Empire as a great ‘Anglo-Saxon’ family, whilst some amongst them even sought to reconnect the transatlantic branch of this ‘family’ severed by the American Revolution. Indeed, more than one British aristocrat crossed the ocean in search of an American wife possessing the money and new world vigour necessary to revitalise often crumbling estates, and a moribund pedigree.²⁸ Still others went so far as to call for formal Anglo-American political ‘federation’ in the interests of global peace and security. In short, by the 1890s, with former diplomatic disagreements now resolved (especially the Venezuela Boundary dispute, finally settled in 1896), Americans and Britons – at least among the political and cultural elite – were ready to see in each other a ‘brother’, ‘cousin’, an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ ally. The confirmation of the English ancestry of George Washington thus took place just as the idea of Anglo-Saxon racial unity drew increasing attention in both Britain and the United States. Indeed, for the likes of Henry Waters, it seems clear that his antiquarian energies were in part driven by a contemporary commitment to the ‘rapprochement’. As he explains towards the start of his Washington genealogy:

On the American side of the water we had a complete chain running back from the President to the first settler of the name. There the chain, like the vast majority of American pedigrees, was broken short off, at the water’s edge.²⁹

Frustrated by this severance, Waters thus set himself the task of dragging ‘the depths in all directions, with the hope of picking up, somewhere, the lost end of the English line *to which the American line belonged*’.³⁰

A Place for Pilgrims: Warton as Anglo-American ‘shrine’, c.1900-1932

By the late 1880s therefore, and due to the efforts of those such as Henry Waters, the parish of Warton was firmly connected to the Washington Arms and ancestry, a development which in turn encouraged further interest among local scholars in Lancashire. Indeed, just as Waters’ was producing his own genealogy, a correspondent to *The Standard* announced that he too had been compiling ‘during the last twelve months a history of the “Washingtons of Warton”’, explaining that he was ‘much impressed with the idea that General George Washington was descended from that branch of the family’.³¹ That very same year yet another local – Henry Whitman – even managed to beat Waters to the press, publishing in Lancaster a small run of a

²⁷ For British investment in ‘Anglo-saxonism’, see R. Horsman, ‘Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37, 3 (1976), pp. 388-390; B. Melman, ‘Claiming the Nation’s Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. 3-4, (1991), pp. 575-595. See also L. P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (New York: University of Bridgeport, 1968), pp. 1-16. For the role of race in imagining the Empire, see, for example, Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries* (London: Macmillan, 1868). See also G.W. Morris and L.S. Wood, *The English-Speaking Nations: A Study in the Development of the Commonwealth Ideal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

²⁸ For an insightful take on the role played by such marriages in further consolidating contemporary Anglo-American relations, see D. Cooper, *Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press).

²⁹ Waters, *An Examination of the English Ancestry of George Washington*, p. 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *The Standard*, 30 July 1888, p. 2.

work titled *The Washingtons and their Connection with Warton* (1888).³² Whitman's stated purpose was clear: to secure for Warton the point at which the Washington line, broken at the Virginian shore, might be re-joined. For as Whitman explained, whilst several English towns and villages had staked a claim to the Washington ancestry, Warton was clearly pre-eminent. Whitman was confident he would 'be able to show that though nearly all [the other villages] have connection with the main stock, the one which is most interesting to us as having contained the very men who emigrated to America, and here founded the most illustrious branch of the family, is the village of Warton in North Lancashire, about eight miles north of Lancaster'.³³ Such endeavours were by no means isolated, and in the years to come several other local antiquarians – most notably Rev. J.K. Floyer and W.O. Roper – revisited the Warton-Washington link.³⁴ By 1903, the *St. James Gazette* thus felt sufficiently comfortable with the details to state that 'It is from the Lancashire family of Washingtons that the first President of the United States, George Washington...was descended'.³⁵

Nonetheless, it took the energies of still another Edwardian antiquarian – Thomas A. Pape – to firmly plant the Warton-Washington connection in the very landscape of the Parish itself. A schoolmaster by profession, Pape was one of those enthusiastic antiquarians so characteristic of the early twentieth century, a class of amateur scholar which famously included those such as Alfred Watkins, who spent the post-First World War era pursuing so-called ancient 'ley-lines' across the country.³⁶ Where Watkins was often to be found tramping the fields and lanes of the West Country, Pape's hunting ground was Newcastle-under-Lyme and the surrounding area of North Staffordshire.³⁷ On occasion though, Pape also ventured further north, and from the eve of the First World War through to the end of the 1940s a recurring subject of his research was the Washington connection to Warton and north Lancashire. His first efforts to excavate the connection took the form of a series of short articles written as part of the 'Round Old Poulton' series in *The Morecambe Visitor*. But in the belief that his 'gleanings in regard to the direct ancestors of the first President of the United States' might 'appeal to a wider circle than that encompassed by the readers of a local paper' Pape subsequently collected these articles together and republished them in 1913 as *Warton and George Washington's Ancestors*.³⁸

³² H. Whitman, *The Washingtons and their Connection with Warton* (Lancaster: E & J.L. Milner and R & G Brash, 1888). Also published in the US by Damrell and Upham of Boston. Archive of Mourholme Local History Society, hereafter 'MLHS').

³³ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁴ For Floyer's interest in the Warton-Washington connection see, for example, J.K. Floyer, 'The Old Rectory House and Rectory of Warton', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 57 (1905), pp. 28-47, esp. p. 40; J.K. Floyer, 'The Church of St. Oswald the King, Warton, Lancashire', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, Vol. 10 (1910), pp. 39-82, esp. 50-51. For Roper's interest, see W.O. Roper, 'The Missing History of Warton, by John Lucas', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 38 (1886), pp. 159-169, esp. 167. See also *Lancaster Gazette*, 18 January 1890.

³⁵ *St. James Gazette*, 3 July 1903, p. 5.

³⁶ For Watkins influential but later discredited tome, see A. Watkins, *The Old Straight Track: Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites and Markstones* (London: Head of Zeus, 2015). First published by Methuen & Co. in 1925. For the emergence and, later, marginalisation of the 'antiquarian' in England, see P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. pp. 40-69.

³⁷ Pape's notes and research papers are held in Keele University's Special Collections. See here for details: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/library/specarc/collections/pape/>

³⁸ T. Pape, *Warton and George Washington's Ancestors* (Morecambe: Visitor Printing Works, 1913), p. 5.

Pape begins by detailing the ancient history of the Parish: the caves and ‘pit-dwellings’ of Warton Crag, from where the viewer can look across to Morecambe Bay to where ‘the heights of the Lake Mountains rear their snow-clad peaks clear cut against the darker sky’.³⁹ From here, Pape explores various notable features of local geology and folklore, before shifting his attention to the many examples of medieval architecture thereabouts, especially the brooding towers that once guarded local farms and families from the armed raids of border reivers. Then, at last, Pape turns his attention to Warton church and the Washington family, noting – as we already know – that ‘in 1885 some of the rough cast outside the tower fell off, and the long-lost Washington shield was exposed to view’.⁴⁰ For Pape, the detailed description of the ‘shield’ which follows is essential. As he explains:

I have described this stone memorial of the fifteenth century at some length, because I believe it is the most ancient representation of President George Washington’s coat of arms; and the builder of Warton church tower, Robert Washington, who died in 1483, was a direct ancestor of the first president of the United States of America.⁴¹

Having claimed for Warton the ‘oldest Washington memorial in existence’,⁴² Pape then goes on to broaden and deepen the first President’s links to north Lancashire. Thus, he draws attention to the ‘Washington grave’ in the churchyard (to Elizabeth and Thomas Washington, the last of the family in Warton, the latter of whom died in 1823);⁴³ he notes the presence of a named ‘Washington House’ just a short distance from the church;⁴⁴ and he takes a turn past Greenlands Farm at nearby Tewitfield, ‘the residence of George Washington’s ancestors in early times’, before they moved two miles west, to Warton.⁴⁵

Pape’s digressions and details are not mere padding therefore, and in fact serve a clear purpose: carefully and diligently, he plants the Washington family tree in the Parish of Warton more firmly than anyone before or since. Where Sir Isaac Heard was content to identify the Warton connection, and where Henry Waters reiterated before quickly passing on, Pape lingers, looks, and wanders. And with the ancient roots of the Warton-Washington link consolidated, he is thus able to turn his attention to ‘the connection between the Warton and Tewitfield Washingtons and the *immediate ancestors* of George Washington’.⁴⁶ To be sure, Waters had already done much of the hard work. But Pape was nonetheless intent on highlighting the importance – and specifics – of the Warton link. For whilst other locations in England might claim a closer connection, Warton’s was older. As Pape explains: ‘though the emigrant ancestor of the President did not come direct from Warton, yet the direct ancestors of George Washington can be traced from Virginia in America to the Washingtons of Northampton, and still further back to the Washingtons of Warton’.⁴⁷ In the annals of pedigree-hunting, where

³⁹ Ibid, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 20-21.

⁴² Ibid, p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 21-22. Incidentally, the region’s connection with the Washington family finally seems to have been severed in October 1937, when a certain Penelope Washington of Kendal passed away. The local press reported her passing under the headline ‘Relative of George Washington Dies at Kendal’. See *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 23 October 1937, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 37.

precedence is of prime importance, this was a crucial fact. Such precedence was also significant because of the timing. For Pape, writing in 1912, was very much aware that interest in George Washington's English ancestors had only recently 'quickened', a development closely connected to an upcoming and much anticipated anniversary: the centenary of the Treaty of Ghent.⁴⁸

Signed in December 1814 by Baron Gambier and John Quincy Adams, the Treaty of Ghent officially drew to a close the War of 1812, the final occasion at which the United States and Great Britain had been at war. The centenary, coming as it did after two decades of Anglo-American 'rapprochement', was thus seen as an invaluable opportunity to celebrate the 'greatest example...of a peace preserved between two great nations'. According to a specially formed Anglo-American organisation (the Sulgrave Institution), at the root of this remarkable period of cooperation was the 'heritage, handed down father to son in both the elder and the younger branch of the English-speaking race', a heritage which had successfully 'maintained the peace between England and America intact in all the stress and strain of a hundred crowded years'.⁴⁹ Such sentiment predictably ensured that preparations for the centenary elicited the support of various influential 'Anglo-Americans'. For the United States, the key figures included Andrew Carnegie, Theodore Roosevelt and former Ambassador to Britain, Elihu Root, whilst in Britain those at the forefront of the plans included Earl Grey, the former Governor-General of Canada, as well as his namesake, Sir Edward Grey, then Foreign Secretary.⁵⁰ This support in turn ensured that the plans for the anniversary were ambitious in scope, and included various carefully choreographed ceremonies intended to encourage the mutual exchange of praise and platitudes. In time, however, two discreet yet connected projects became particularly prominent. The first involved a transatlantic exchange of monuments depicting famous figures in Anglo-American history: statues of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington for Britain, and two of Earl Chatham for the United States. The second project was the joint 'Anglo-American' purchase of Sulgrave Manor, the 'ancestral' home of the Washington family.⁵¹

This was a project of which Pape was clearly aware. Indeed, at one point in his 1913 volume he specifically notes that 'the purchase of Sulgrave Manor, in the county of Northampton, the former home of the Washingtons' was 'one of the schemes in celebration of the Peace Centenary in December, 1914', a subject to which he also returns towards the end of the volume.⁵² For Pape, the purchase of the Manor certainly made sense, for Sulgrave was 'the one place in England most closely associated with the name of Washington, because its manor house is the ancestral home of the emigrant John Washington, the great-grandfather of George Washington'.⁵³ At the same time, however, Pape was clearly concerned that all the attention

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

⁴⁹ British-American Peace Centenary: A Hundred Years of Peace, specially produced pamphlet, re-printed from *The Times*, 7 October 1913, SMA.

⁵⁰ For some details about those involved, see 1st Meeting of the Executive Committee (British), 21 February 1912, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 21/2/12 to 17/10/18, SMA.

⁵¹ For details about the efforts to commemorate Abraham Lincoln, see S. Edwards, 'From Here Lincoln Came': Anglo-saxonism, the special relationship, and the anglicization of Abraham Lincoln, c. 1860-1970', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11, 1 (2013), pp. 22-46. For information about similar activities focused on George Washington and, in particular, the dedication of a statue in London and the purchase of Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire, see S. Edwards, 'A Great Englishman': George Washington in Anglo-American Memory', in S. Marsh and R. Hendershot, *Anglo-American Cultural Connections* (forthcoming in 2019).

⁵² Pape, *Warton and George Washington's Ancestors*, p. 5, p. 40.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 40.

devoted to Sulgrave risked overshadowing Warton's, older, prior, claim, especially as the other location in England closely connected to the Washington line – Purleigh in Essex, home of Washington's great-great-grandfather – was similarly planning to establish a new memorial to mark the anniversary.⁵⁴ Yet at Warton, to Pape's apparent frustration, 'nothing so far has been proposed'.⁵⁵

Pape's determined efforts to signpost Warton's connection to the first President were thus driven by two inter-linked issues. First, he was understandably eager that Warton receive its share of the pride and prestige on offer during the centenary events. Equally important, Pape was also aware that any and all sites of American interest in Britain were just then drawing increasing numbers of visitors. Indeed, several early twentieth century writers had already catalogued and listed these sites. Some, keen to encourage closer Anglo-American affinities, had gone so far as to celebrate them as 'shrines' to which visiting Americans – pilgrims – should journey to pay due homage. Writing in 1907, for instance, Englishman Marcus Huish produced a lengthy tome outlining the 'American pilgrim's way in England'.⁵⁶ Detailing various locations of interest to Americans, Huish's book was part travelogue, part antiquarian report. Notably, the English roots of the Washington family drew particular attention, with Huish devoting a whole chapter and itinerary to the lineage of the first president. In doing so, and in line with the details already established by Henry Waters and Henry Whitman, Huish explained that when it came to this lineage 'we must look first to Warton in Lancashire, next to Brington and Sulgrave in Northamptonshire, and then to Purleigh in Essex, so I will take the Pilgrims to these in their order'.⁵⁷ What followed was an illustrated excursion through Washington shrines in England, starting with Warton, 'a very picturesque corner of Lancashire',⁵⁸ and ending above the 'Essex Flats', from where Rev. Laurence Washington's 'two sons emigrated to the United States'.⁵⁹

In concert with the politics of 'rapprochement', therefore, purposefully cultivated cultural affinities were the other key factor framing the purchase of Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire. And Sulgrave was thus intended to become the pre-eminent American 'shrine' in England.⁶⁰ The specially formed Anglo-American Sulgrave Institution duly completed the purchase of the Manor in 1914, and, after some understandable delays imposed by the war, it was officially dedicated as a memorial in the summer of 1921.⁶¹ This was around the very same time as all the other centenary commemorative projects were completed: statues to Abraham Lincoln were dedicated in 1919 (Manchester) and 1920 (London), and a statue of George Washington was unveiled at Trafalgar Square in 1921.⁶² At all the dedication

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ M.B. Huish, *The American Pilgrim's Way in England to Homes and Memorials of the Founders of Virginia, the New England States and Pennsylvania, The Universities of Harvard and Yale, the First President of the United States and Other Illustrious Americans* (London: The Fine Art Society, 1907). For other examples of this genre, see also J. Tozier, *Among English Inns: The Story of a Pilgrimage to Characteristic Spots of Rural England* (Boston: L.C. Page & Co., 1904); R.B. Mowat, *Americans in England* (London: George C. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1935).

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 300.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 309-310.

⁶⁰ 4th Meeting of the Executive Committee, 26 June 1912, SMA.

⁶¹ For details of the dedication ceremony, see *Banbury Guardian*, 23 June 1921; *Northampton Echo*, 22 June 1921; *Daily Sketch*, 23 June 1921.

⁶² For details of these statues, see Edwards, 'From Here Lincoln Came', pp. 22-46; Edwards, 'A Great Englishman': George Washington in Anglo-American Memory'.

ceremonies the rhetoric was remarkably consistent, with more than one speaker keen to play up the unique closeness of the Anglo-American connection. Dedicating the statue of Washington at Trafalgar Square, for example, Lord Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared to his audience of Anglo-American dignitaries that the ‘very fact of setting up this statue here was a sign that the two great branches of the English-speaking race were now indissolubly one’.⁶³ A year earlier, speaking at the dedication of the Lincoln Statue erected just outside Westminster, former Ambassador to the United States, Lord Bryce, had similarly remarked that the Great Emancipator belonged to ‘both branches of the race’.⁶⁴

Tellingly, all these newly dedicated sites also featured in yet another Anglo-American travelogue published in 1925, with Sulgrave Manor taking pride of place in a chapter devoted to ‘Washington Country’ (even featuring as the book’s frontispiece image). The volume in question also made very apparent its point and purpose: titled *American Shrines on English Soil*, it featured details of, amongst other things, the connections between Abraham Lincoln and East Anglia; the links between the Pilgrim Fathers and Lincolnshire; and the ties joining Hawthorne and Lancashire.⁶⁵ Notably absent from this travelogue, however, was any extended treatment of the Warton-Washington connection. It seems that despite all Pape’s efforts, the dedication of Sulgrave Manor had rather stolen all the attention, with the new volume’s author, J.F. Muirhead, declaring that the ‘popular vote has...quite rightly fixed on Northants as the true hearth and home of the Washington cult’.⁶⁶

Such relative neglect perhaps explains why Pape revisited the subject of the older Lancashire link in yet another rehearsal of the Washington pedigree, printed in a limited run in 1932. This new volume, a prestigious work published in the United States by Charles Arthur Hoppin (on behalf of his benefactor, Edward L. McClain) was titled *The Washington Ancestry* and even included – much like Muirhead’s *American Shrines on English Soil* – a frontispiece of Sulgrave Manor.⁶⁷ But whereas Muirhead had largely ignored the Warton connection, Hoppin, clearly impressed by the research of the ‘accomplished scholar’ Pape,⁶⁸ and also conscious that the ‘Washington ancestry in England had been entirely lost sight of in America’,⁶⁹ reasserted it, drawing special attention to the first President’s various links to the ‘north of England’, ‘Lancaster County’, and, especially, to ‘Whitfield in Warton, Lancashire’.⁷⁰ To reiterate the point, Hoppin’s volume even reproduced various images suggestive of these links, amongst which were pictures of a ‘Deed Dated 1401 Related to Land in North Lancashire and Sealed by Robert Washington with His Coat of Arms’, a photograph of ‘Tewitfield, Warton, the Lancashire home of the Washingtons’, and, most importantly, the ‘Washington Arms on Tower of Warton Church, Lancashire’. To consolidate the connection still further, Hoppin also rather laboured the details of the aristocratic ancestry it implied. For as Hoppin explained, both the bloodline and heraldry of Washington made clear that the first President was:

⁶³ *The Times*, 1 July 1921.

⁶⁴ *The Times*, 20 July 1920.

⁶⁵ J.F. Muirhead, *American Shrines on English Soil* (London: The Doorland Agency, 1925), pp. 83-92.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 85.

⁶⁷ C. A. Hoppin (on behalf of E.L. McClain), *The Washington Ancestry and Records of the McClain, Johnson and Forty Other Colonial Families*, Vol. 1 (Greenfield, Ohio: Privately Printed, 1932), frontispiece.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 4. Volume 1 of the ancestry commission by McClain and compiled by Hoppin sets aside a full 130 pages to working through the details of Washington’s English ancestry, the first half of which focused on Washington’s links to northern England, and especially to Lancashire and Durham.

a lineal descendent of the aristocracy, of the nobility, and even the royalty of England. He was a lineal descendent of six kings and six queens of England who reigned after The Norman conquest – of a long line of kings and queens of Scotland, of monarchs of Saxon England, extending back in long lines of both French and Saxon blood until the generations become dim in the vista of antiquity. He was a lineal descendent of Alfred the Great, of England, by two lines. He was lineally descended from Hugh Capet and forty other continental monarchs; likewise, from King John, the grantor of *Magna Charta*, and from eight baronial sureties for the famous document....He was a lineal descendent of the great Emperor Charlemagne.⁷¹

This was an impressive pedigree indeed; simultaneously rustic *and* aristocratic, Anglo-Saxon *and* Norman. And for Hoppin its implications were clear: ‘The upshot of Washington’s ancestry is that it was his ancestry, and that the majority of his fellow countrymen did not so descend’.⁷²

For Hoppin, this issue was formative in Washington’s greatness, and in no-way something to worry about unduly; in fact, it was to be celebrated. Given the extent to which Anglo-American relations had become strained during the inter-war period, something which had even seen the return in the United States of an often Anglophobic nationalism, this was a bold move.⁷³ After all, English aristocrats – seen by some Americans as authors of their country’s misplaced intervention in the First World War – were by no means popular figures in Depression-era America, and to imply that the first President was tied to such a class by blood and background thus risked inflaming increasingly powerful isolationist sentiment. Already by 1927, some ‘patriotic’ Americans were sufficiently concerned by what they perceived as the increasing Anglicization of American history that a school superintendent in Chicago – William McAndrew – found himself caught in a crossfire between Anglophobic populists and Anglophilic Atlanticists. At stake was the American history offered to the city’s children: was the United States distinct and exceptional (as the populists insisted); or was it but another part of an English-speaking and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world, as the patrician elite liked to maintain.⁷⁴ Celebrating Washington as a noble, Lancastrian, Englishman thus risked antagonising the very same urban, Anglophobic, sentiment. For other Americans however, and especially those still committed to a lingering progressive-era nativist sentiment, such a noble ancestry was a positive boon. For these Americans – such as those who joined the various patriotic societies first formed at the end of the nineteenth century – the lines and limits of the national community were bound by race and class, and, as such, ‘descent rather than consent’ was the crucial issue.⁷⁵ Seen from this perspective, discovering the extent to which George Washington was, at root, an ‘Anglo-Saxon aristocrat’, fit the mood perfectly, especially as he had long been depicted in sculpture and paint in aristocratic garb, guise and posture.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 1.

⁷² Ibid, p. 2.

⁷³ For some details about the Anglo-American tensions of the 1920s, see B.J.C. McKercher (ed.) *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

⁷⁴ For information about this trial, see D.M. MacRaid, S. Ellis, S. Bowman, ‘Interdependence day and Magna Charta: James Hamilton’s public diplomacy in the Anglo-world, 1907-1940s’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 12, 2, 150-153.

⁷⁵ F. Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 10. For nativism and American national identity, see Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*.

Of course, if Hoppin had stated the issue with particular force, the significance of Washington's illustrious pedigree had long been implied by those Britons who had drawn attention to a key issue briefly noted above: the *details* of the family Arms discovered on Warton church in 1885-86. As John Lucas had recorded back in the 1720s, the Washington Arms, 'well cut' into the very masonry of the St. Oswald tower, were distinctive, and featured '2 Bars Gul. In Chief 3 Mulletts of the 2nd'. Translated, the family heraldry consisted of two 'bars' (in red) and 3 'stars' (also in red). For more than one commentator, this was clear evidence that, just like the first president himself, the very flag of the United States was 'English' in origin. Already by 1887, for example, (soon after the rediscovery of the Washington Arms at Warton), a writer in the *Manchester Courier* asserted that 'Republican America is indebted to a Lancashire man of aristocratic lineage for the suggestion of a design which was adopted as the national coat of arms',⁷⁶ an idea which steadily took hold by the turn of the century. In 1903, whilst commenting on the origins of the 'star spangled banner', one periodical confidently noted that the connection between Warton, the Washington Arms, and the American flag 'has now become accepted on both sides of the Atlantic'.⁷⁷

Despite such oft-repeated claims, the precise origins of the American flag have never been fully confirmed, and the suggestion that it was inspired by the Washington Arms seems to have in fact started with a play written by Martin Farquhar Tupper for the centenary of American Independence, in 1876, just a decade prior to the re-discovery of these same Arms on Warton church tower. At one point, for instance, Tupper has Benjamin Franklin declare that whilst the idea for the flag was his, the inspiration was nonetheless 'Washington's coat, his own heraldic shield'. But the evidence for such a claim is lacking, and even a scholar sympathetic to the suggestion – Thomas Pape – remained sceptical, going so far as to note that Tupper's conceit – which saw Franklin announce his inspiration in Congress – was 'pure fiction on the poet's part'.⁷⁸ Fiction or not, both the image and idea were clearly appealing for those early twentieth century Britons keen to cultivate the 'Englishness' of the United States, and so Warton's claim to possess one of the oldest representations of the family Arms, and thereby have a stake in the very origins of the 'Stars and Stripes', remained, and has been reiterated and repeated whenever the Washington link is discussed. This was especially the case during 1932, the year in which McClain published his ancestry of Washington, but also the year in which Americans celebrated the Bicentennial of the first President's birth.

McClain's expensively produced ancestry was purposefully timed to coincide with the Bicentennial, an event commemorated on both sides of the Atlantic as well as at many other locations across the world. In the United States, for instance, the Bicentennial was organised by a specially created commission which oversaw an extensive programme of talks, lectures, pageants, celebrations and commemorations.⁷⁹ In Britain, meanwhile, the Bicentennial was 'celebrated on numerous occasions during the year 1932',⁸⁰ with the *Manchester Guardian* setting the tone in an editorial published in February, just as the events got underway. Clearly

⁷⁶ *Manchester Courier* 16 July 1887.

⁷⁷ *St. James Gazette*, 3 July 1903.

⁷⁸ For some details of the link between Tupper's play and ideas regarding the origin of the American flag, see Pape, *Warton and George Washington's Ancestors*, pp. 41-42.

⁷⁹ For full details about all the many events and activities connected to the 1932 Bicentennial of Washington's birth, see multi-volume work, The United States Bicentennial Commission, *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration* (Washington, D.C: The United States Bicentennial Commission, 1932)

⁸⁰ See: The United States Bicentennial Commission, *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration: Foreign Participation* (Washington, D.C: The United States Bicentennial Commission, 1932), p. 203.

well-versed in the genealogical discoveries of Henry Waters, the *Guardian's* editor explained that:

Two hundred years ago today (by the “new style” reckoning) was born a great Englishman who became the first American. We must claim this for George Washington in order that the land which reared his forefathers may share the proud title in him of the Republic he made. Apart from the accident of his birth, by his character and his outlook on life and politics Washington was “mere English,” if in the end he became something more. He was quite as English as George the Third, and possibly more English than Lord North.⁸¹

The essential ‘Englishness’ of Washington was a recurring theme in the various British-based Bicentennial events, which included a carefully choreographed ceremony in Washington, County Durham, a ‘happy pilgrimage’ to Sulgrave Manor involving the American Ambassador, Andrew Mellon,⁸² and, significantly, a ‘unique commemorative event held in Lancashire, England, on the Fourth of July 1932’.⁸³

This latter event involved numerous Americans living in the north of England, together with consular officials from Bradford, Manchester and Liverpool. Departing by bus from Liverpool, the main group journeyed north and ‘passed through the picturesque country surrounding the historic town of Lancaster’ before the ‘pilgrims were welcomed by Reverend E.W.A. Ogilvy, who conducted them through the church and churchyard, pointing out the various relics of the ancient Warton family of Washington’. But the real focus of this ‘pilgrimage to the parish church at Warton-in-Lonsdale’ was still to come, and involved selected American diplomats placing ‘American and British flags on the coat-of-arms of the Washington family’, as well as laying wreaths on the tomb of Warton’s last Washingtons, Elizabeth (died 1751) and Rev. Thomas (died 1823). According to Corabelle A. Holland, the wife of the American Consul General in England, the ‘pilgrimage was a great success’, and also included an excursion to the village’s ‘Washington House’, as well as a recounting of the Warton-Washington connection inspired by the dedicated researches of the now familiar Thomas Pape.⁸⁴ The official report produced on behalf of the US government was similarly effusive, noting that ‘The party of Americans who journeyed to the village of Warton on July 4th 1932 paid tribute to the memory of those Durham men whose ambition and energy carried them beyond their old boundaries in Westmoreland and Lancashire; and on through Northamptonshire and out across the seas to unknown lands where their compatriots had carried, and planted on new soil, the rich heritage of Anglo-Saxon civilisation’.⁸⁵

In many respects, this pilgrimage was among the last instance of a certain form and style of inter-war ‘commemorative diplomacy’. In subsequent years, as the global depression took hold, and as American politicians confronted domestic challenges whilst their British counterparts increasingly worried about events in Europe, the opportunities for repeating such performances were rather circumscribed. In the United States in particular, this was the age in

⁸¹ See The United States Bicentennial Commission, *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration: Foreign Participation*, p. 218-219.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁸⁴ For full details of the events at Warton, see *ibid.*, pp. 235-238.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

which many politicians declared for isolationism rather than calling for expressions of transatlantic inter-dependence. Even for those more internationally inclined, this was still the era in which the hard-realities of economics, trade and treaty often overrode the soft-power diplomatic performances characteristic of the immediate post-1918 period, and which had climaxed with the dedication of Sulgrave Manor in 1921, the erection of statues to Lincoln and Washington in London (1920, and 1921), and, lastly, the various Bicentennial activities of 1932.⁸⁶

Over Here: Warton and the Roots of the Special Relationship, c. 1941-1946

Yet the rhythms of international politics are notoriously fickle, and within a decade of the 1932 Bicentennial the climate was once again very conducive to transatlantic diplomacy of all sorts, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, economic and cultural. This was a shift occasioned by the outbreak of the Second World War, and especially by American entry into the conflict in late 1941. For in accordance with President Roosevelt’s ‘Germany First’ policy, huge American military bases were duly established in various locations in Britain, two of which are of special significance to the issues here discussed: Warton, near Preston (forty miles to the south of Washington’s Warton), and Burtonwood, near Warrington.

The American presence at Warton (Preston) can be traced to August 1942, and in time developed into one of the most substantive concentrations of US military forces in Britain.⁸⁷ Together with a connected facility at Burtonwood,⁸⁸ the base at Warton operated as a vast supply and maintenance depot, with the American military population ultimately outnumbering that of the locals by ten to one. The prime focus of personnel based at Warton was two-fold: the preparation for combat of newly arrived aircraft, and the repair of those battle-damaged by the sky-fights that raged over Europe from 1943-45. But outside of these duties the base commander encouraged the provision of various activities and entertainments in order to keep service-personnel content and, ideally, to ensure good relations with the local population. As such, there were dances led by military swing-bands, Christmas parties for local school-children, visits by celebrities, and baseball matches hosted at nearby sports grounds.⁸⁹ But in the midst of all these activities there were also trips out to local sites of interest and, in particular, to the very Anglo-American ‘shrines’ so painstakingly catalogued in previous decades by the likes of Huish and Muirhead. In Norfolk, for instance, where there was also a massive US military presence by 1944, American troops made pilgrimages to the villages of Hingham (ancestral home of Abraham Lincoln), Thetford (birth-place of Thomas Paine), and Boston (connected to the Pilgrim Fathers).⁹⁰ For those based in Essex, Purleigh – one of the

⁸⁶ Another indicative act of commemorative diplomacy occurred at Maldon, Essex, the burial place of Rev. Lawrence Washington, one time Rector of Purleigh. On 5 July 1928 the Official Representative of the American Ambassador unveiled a new stained-glass window in the parish church celebrating the transatlantic links connecting the ‘two branches’ of the ‘Anglo-Saxon race’. Funded by American donors and with involvement from the Sulgrave Institution, the window features various depictions of Anglo-American common purpose, including a scene of George Washington signing the Declaration of Independence. See here for details: <http://www.itsaboutmaldon.co.uk/allsaints/>

⁸⁷ For details of the base, see A.P. Ferguson, *Lancashire Airfields in the Second World War* (Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2004), pp. 231-254. See also H. Holmes, *The World’s Greatest Air Depot: A Pictorial History of the U.S. 8th Air Force at Warton, 1942-45* (Motorbooks International, 1998).

⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Lancashire Airfields*, pp. 95-125.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-243.

⁹⁰ See *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly*, 3, No. 2 (1944), p. 98; R.S. Arbib, *Notebook of an American Soldier in Britain* (London: the Right Book Club, 1947), pp. 169-170. See also S. Edwards, ‘“He came from America didn’t he?”: The Thetford Statue Controversy and the Problem of Paine in Transatlantic Memory, c. 1909-

villages tied to the Washington family – was an understandable draw, and the same was true of Sulgrave (Northamptonshire) and Washington (County Durham), both of which attracted visits from American servicemen stationed nearby.⁹¹ In Lancashire, meanwhile, their counterparts stationed at Warton (Preston) made special journeys to the namesake in the north, from whence the Washington line originated.⁹²

Amongst the first American soldiers seem to have visited Warton in February 1944, a couple of weeks before the anniversary of Washington's birth, with the parish magazine recording that large parties had arrived in order 'see the Washington connection'.⁹³ More followed over the next few months, and by April large groups of Americans were arriving every Monday, sometimes unannounced, but most often by invitation, with local women turning out in force to help and host. As the vicar explained in the parish magazine: 'Some of our kind ladies are coming down each visit to set out their lunch for them in the Church Hall and make a hot drink'.⁹⁴ Such efforts were clearly welcomed, for the vicar also happily remarked that the 'Americans seem to appreciate Warton very much'.⁹⁵ At root, such 'appreciation' was the very point and purpose of it all. For these visits were not mere exchanges of pleasantries and platitudes, even if this did often come to the fore. Rather, the visits made by American soldiers to Warton were inextricably connected to the wider politics and propaganda of the contemporary war effort, and specifically to the concerted efforts on the part of both national governments to consolidate the Anglo-American alliance at the grass-roots. Thus, where the US government published in 1942 a guidebook to Britain for all servicemen posted to the country designed to enlighten and edify, the British government and assorted semi-official agencies reciprocated in kind. The British Council even produced a short guide to the English Lakeland for US soldiers, within which were details of various local links to George Washington, including that claimed by Warton.⁹⁶

It was the implicit politics of these pilgrimages which explains some of the notable features of a journey made to Warton by a party of 80 Americans, on 5 February 1944.⁹⁷ The visit began at Lancaster Castle, where town and county officials met the party and gave them a tour. Municipal officials, including the Keeper of the Keys, Mr G. Crook and his wife, Mrs Crook, were delighted to learn that several of the visiting yanks 'had associations with Lancastrians, some of whom had actually been employed at the Castle when it was one of H.M. Prisons'.⁹⁸ Once the tour of the Castle was complete, the group moved north to Warton, where they were welcomed by Rev. Coombs who 'conducted them through the church and other places of interest in the parish with which the Washington family was associated'.⁹⁹ As in Lancaster, local women were also again crucial to the success of this act of transatlantic diplomacy, with several 'lady members of the church' entertaining the visiting pilgrims to

1970', in S. Edwards and M. Morris (eds.) *The Legacy of Thomas Paine in the Transatlantic World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 214-215.

⁹¹ For details of some of these pilgrimages, see the *Newcastle Journal and North Mail*, 23 February 1944, p. 4; *The Birmingham Mail*, 22 February 1943, p. 2.

⁹² For a detailed history of the American 'occupation', see D. Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000).

⁹³ *Warton Parish Magazine*, March 1944, MLHS.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ For some details about this booklet, see the *Manchester Evening News*, 19 October 1943.

⁹⁷ *Warton Parish Magazine*, February 1944 and March 1944, MLHS.

⁹⁸ *Lancaster Guardian*, 11 February 1944, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

tea.¹⁰⁰ And among those issues discussed by Lancastrian ladies and Yankee GIs was surely the region's deep connections to the United States, connections with which the visiting soldier-pilgrims had been briefed whilst at Lancaster. For as they wandered around the interior of the thirteenth century fortification they were suitably enlightened by their guide, a certain Thomas Pape. As the *Lancaster Guardian* explained, the presence of Pape was 'singularly appropriate' for he possessed 'great knowledge of the history of the Washington family', and duly educated his charges accordingly.¹⁰¹ And rather than 'just' highlighting the by now familiar story of the Washington-Warton link, Pape also added a further dimension: he drew upon recent genealogical research to explain that via a Robert Kytson of Warton Hall, 'President George Washington and our great Prime Minister Winston Churchill have a common local ancestor'.¹⁰² For Pape, such connections ensured that as the anniversary of Washington's birth approached (22 February) there would rightly be 'many references to the ties, never so close as now, which bind the two great English-speaking nations'.¹⁰³

In celebrating this new, Churchillian, connection, Pape had both complicated and consolidated Warton's place in the contemporary Anglo-American relationship. For the very person then involved in shaping the reality of this relationship, and who was himself Anglo-American in parentage – Winston Churchill – had now been found to possess a yet deeper connection to the Great Republic, and to its pre-eminent statesman, George Washington. And this connection ran through not Sulgrave, nor Purleigh, but through Warton. Thus, as Churchill cultivated the ideas which ultimately led him to call for a 'special relationship' in his famous 1946 speech at Fulton, Pape's claim helped ensure that the old warlord's very own ancestry had become part of the narrative informing this relationship. At the same time, if the vast majority of people remained unaware of this connection (which was surely the case), the small village of Warton had nonetheless played a star turn in grounding the ideas which Churchill himself later deployed with such vigour. Indeed, for Churchill, the conviction with which he was able to deliver the lofty rhetoric of the 'special relationship' was partly a product of his *faith* in the history upon which he understood that relationship to be based.¹⁰⁴ Herein lay the significance of half a century of Anglo-American activities at Warton, and of the recent discovery of the Kytson-Washington-Churchill link. Beneath the quarried cliffs of Warton Crag, the very genealogy of the Anglo-American alliance had roots deep in the Lancashire loam; 'blood and soil', it seemed, made the relationship real.

To be sure, given the contemporary battle against Nazism, most advocates of the Anglo-American alliance carefully avoided any such explicitly racialized rhetoric. Yet the emphasis on ancestral ties, and the frequent turn to familial language when describing the Anglo-American connection, ensured that, as an idea, the 'special relationship' always included more

¹⁰⁰ American and British women have long been central to helping cultivate and consolidate Anglo-American relations. For a discussion of this, see Cooper, *Informal Ambassadors*.

¹⁰¹ *Lancaster Guardian*, 11 February 1944, p. 5.

¹⁰² Ibid. The Warton based connection between the Kytsons and the Washington's had been known for some time, but it was only in the 1930s that the link to Churchill was identified and acknowledged. For an older discussion of the Kytson link to Warton, see *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 30 October 1891, p. 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of Churchill's personal investment in building the 'myth' of the special relationship, see S. Edwards, 'The Architecture of a Myth: Constructing and Commemorating Churchill's Special Relationship, 1919-1969', in A. Dobson and S. Marsh (eds.) *Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 202-222.

than a hint of the old Anglo-saxonism.¹⁰⁵ Exactly how such sentiment was duly received by visiting American troops remains unknown and unrecorded. One suspects that if any African-American troops were part of the pilgrimage parties they might have – very reasonably – bristled at this English-led celebration of a Virginian slave-holder. And there were indeed Black troops in Lancashire, many of whom were already angered by the indignity of performing patriotic service in a still segregated military.¹⁰⁶ But if the exact response of American troops (white and black) to these carefully organised acts of informal diplomacy remains frustratingly unknown, community leaders in Warton were understandably delighted with all the interest in their history and heritage. Thus, the vicar had the details of the ‘special relationship’ between Washington and Churchill framed and mounted inside St. Oswald’s church, not far from where visiting American soldiers could also see the eroded outlines of the Washington Coat-of-Arms, inspiration (so goes the myth) to their flag and, according to Thomas Pape, the ‘oldest Washington memorial in existence’.¹⁰⁷ And the good reverend was especially excited on learning that the BBC intended to descend on the village on 22 February 1944 to deliver a transatlantic broadcast to coincide with Washington’s birthday. As the vicar explained to his parishioners, such an event promised to put Warton ‘on the map’, for the broadcast was to include ‘[o]ur church and vicarage, school and Washington House’.¹⁰⁸

The Bicentenary and the Summer of ‘76

After 1945, Warton’s role as a shrine to the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ remained, a point affirmed by a parting gift of some of those GIs who had journeyed to the parish: an American flag, since flown every July 4th from atop St. Oswald’s. Meanwhile, the redoubtable Thomas Pape was sufficiently inspired by the recent interest to expand upon his 1913 guide to the Washington-Warton connection: in 1948, he published a fuller treatment of the subject, titled *The Washingtons and the Manor of Warton*.¹⁰⁹ As Pape acknowledged in the preface, he hoped that the new volume ‘should prove acceptable...to American visitors’,¹¹⁰ and to that end he identified yet another Lancastrian claim to precedence.¹¹¹ This new claim centred on Poulton Hall in Morecambe, a manor house mostly demolished in 1932 save for a ‘fine old medieval doorway’ which was preserved by the local council and re-erected adjacent to the Town Hall. There, a ‘suitable inscription’ had been added explaining that the now disappeared home was ‘owned in part during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by President George Washington’s direct paternal ancestors whose main resident was at Warton’.¹¹² For Pape, long concerned with securing for Lancashire the ‘oldest’ of Washington connections, this carefully preserved masonry was clearly important, for it ‘was the oldest part of a manor house formerly

¹⁰⁵ For the idea that the ‘special relationship’ remains a racialized concept, see S. Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ In June 1943, African-American servicemen of the 1511th Quartermaster Truck Regiment, based at Bamber Bridge near Preston, were even involved in a violent confrontation with white Military Policemen, several of whom had attempted to arrest some members of the Regiment. The subsequent fight, which involved firearms and which occurred just a few days after the bloody and brutal riots in Detroit, left one soldier dead and several others injured. For details regarding the presence in wartime Britain of Black US troops, see G.A. Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987).

¹⁰⁷ The November 1943 issue of the *Warton Parish Magazine* makes reference to the presence of a ‘genealogical table’ in the church.

¹⁰⁸ *Warton Parish Magazine*, February 1944, MLHS.

¹⁰⁹ T. Pape, *The Washingtons and the Manor of Warton* (Morecambe: The Visitor, 1948).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

owned by the President's ancestors nearly five hundred years ago'.¹¹³ And Pape's continued commitment to celebrating such claims was by no means isolated. By 1955, Warton's religious and civic leaders were themselves sufficiently concerned about preserving their transatlantic connection that the 'oldest Washington memorial' – the coat-of-arms at St. Oswald's – was similarly the subject of a preservationist impulse. Long exposed to the wind and rain which whips in from the Irish Sea, the carved stonework rediscovered by workman in 1885 was moved to the church interior so that it might be protected and better displayed.¹¹⁴

Yet despite all this activity, the Warton-Washington connection nonetheless became increasingly overshadowed in the post-war period by events elsewhere. For instance, in the very same year that the first President's family Arms were moved into St. Oswald's church, 'Washington Old Hall' in County Durham – another property which boasted a connection to the first President's family – was restored by public subscription, with the majority of the funds raised in the United States. The hall was officially opened with all due pomp and ceremony on 29 September 1955, with the United States Ambassador to Great Britain, Winthrop Aldrich, and a troop of American Cavalry in attendance.¹¹⁵ A few years later, in 1962, the recently opened American Museum in Bath purposefully replicated the gardens of Mount Vernon (Washington's Virginian home) as a memorial to Washington and as a celebration of his ties to Somerset.¹¹⁶ And throughout the post-war period, Sulgrave Manor continued to draw large numbers of American visitors, consolidating its status as the pre-eminent Washington shrine in England. As a result, by the 1960s Warton's prior claim on the Washington bloodline had increasingly faded from view, something which Thomas Pape had already anticipated twenty years earlier. Speaking to a gathering in the Church Hall in 1943, for instance, Pape had suggested to his audience that the village really 'ought to advertise the Washington connection more'.¹¹⁷ In 1976 the people of Warton finally did just that.

The occasion in question was yet another Bicentenary, this time of the Declaration of Independence. Much anticipated in the United States, preparations for the Bicentenary had been underway since 1966, when a special commission was established by President Johnson to co-ordinate activities.¹¹⁸ In due course, the plans became the subject of intense discussion, not least regarding the extent to which commercial activity should be encouraged or disallowed.¹¹⁹ Yet throughout these domestic debates all seemed agreed on at least one key issue: after the political controversies, social divisions, and military defeat of recent history, the 1976 bicentenary was an invaluable opportunity to win back popular support – at home and abroad – for 'the American way'. As historian M. Todd Bennett has skilfully shown, in terms of American diplomatic relations, the timing of the bicentennial was a godsend, offering as it did 'a "pivot" away from Vietnam, an opportunity to change the subject and go on the offensive'.¹²⁰ And if this was a useful moment for American diplomats to exploit, it was equally

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Lancaster Guardian*, 9 December 1955.

¹¹⁵ *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 28 September 1955, p. 5. For some details about the Washington ancestral connection to County Durham and the north-east, see George S.H.L. Washington, *The Earliest Washingtons and their Anglo-Scottish Connections* (Cambridge, 1964).

¹¹⁶ For details of the Mount Vernon Garden at Bath American Museum, see 'Somerset to Mount Vernon and Back: The Opening of the Mount Vernon Garden at the American Museum', *America in Britain* (Journal of the American Museum), 1, 1, (1963), pp. 5-8.

¹¹⁷ *Warton Parish Magazine*, November 1943, MLHS.

¹¹⁸ Bennett, 'The Spirits of '76: Diplomacy Commemorating the US Bicentennial in 1976', p. 703.

¹¹⁹ See Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976*.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 702.

opportune for their counterparts elsewhere, particularly among western European allies, many of whom were keen to reconnect with the recently humbled and humiliated super-power. Just like the Washington birthday Bicentenary of 1932, therefore, foreign ministries across Europe developed their own plans through which to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution. In France, for instance, the President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, took 'full advantage of...the bicentennial to manifest his desire for a major expression of French-US amity'.¹²¹

In Britain, marking the Bicentennial at first appeared more problematic. After all, the Revolution represented a break from British rule, and the Declaration of Independence itself effected a symbolic severance. As Bennett puts it: for many Britons, the 'Bicentennial not only served as an unwelcome reminder of British loss but also cast Britain as the villain in the United States national imagination'.¹²² This was a point not lost on contemporary scholars of Anglo-American relations, one of whom – Frank Thistlethwaite – admitted that for 'the erstwhile Mother Country of the "revolting" colonies officially to celebrate two hundred years later the anniversary of the American Revolution is an exercise fraught with ambiguities'.¹²³ For British diplomats, therefore, the challenge was to find a way to commemorate the past whilst also celebrating the contemporary 'special relationship'. Fortunately, the specially created British Bicentennial Liaison Committee ultimately developed a clever strategy: in early 1975, they decided that the centre-piece of British involvement would be to gift to the United States Congress an original copy of the Magna Carta. The symbolism was clear and deliberate: it would remind Americans that their 'legislative system derives from the Mother of Parliaments'.¹²⁴ Put differently, it would remind Americans that whilst the Declaration of Independence *appeared* to be an act of severance, in actual fact those evocative words authored by Thomas Jefferson might be reasonably placed into a secure and noble historical lineage, a lineage which bound Anglo-American ideals together: Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, the Glorious Revolution, all were expressions of the irrepressible pursuit of English liberties.

Such a claim had in fact been deployed in previous decades: in 1907, an Anglo-American 'International Magna Charta Day Association' had even been founded to celebrate the liberties enshrined in the document signed by King John on the meadows at Runnymede, liberties which had subsequently inspired (so went the theory) the lofty Independence ideals of Thomas Jefferson and, later, the very design of the American Constitution.¹²⁵ These activities ensured that by the time the United States entered the First World War, transatlantic political elites delighted in celebrating American Independence Day in Britain.¹²⁶ In July 1918, for example, Winston Churchill told an audience of Britons and Americans that he was 'glad to know that an English colony declared itself independent under a German King', an idea he

¹²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 715.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 716.

¹²³ Frank Thistlethwaite, 'Forward' in H.C. Allen and R. Thompson (eds.) *Contrast and Connection: Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1976), p. vii.

¹²⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 717.

¹²⁵ For some details of Thomas Jefferson's 'Anglo-Saxonism', see E. Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 76. See also Stanley R. Hauer, 'Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language', *PMLA*, 98, 5, (1983); P. O'Connor, 'The Anglo-American synecdoche? Thomas Jefferson's British Legacy 1800-1865', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 13:2, p. 155. For early twentieth century transatlantic interest in Magna Carta, see MacRaid *et al.*, 'Interdependence Day and Magna Charta'.

¹²⁶ Woodward, *Trial by Friendship*, p. 182.

later revisited in a speech given during the 1932 Bicentennial.¹²⁷ By the end of the Second World War, the ‘Englishness’ of American Independence was thus sufficiently well-known for Prime Minister Clement Atlee to broadcast a July 4th speech from the hallowed grounds of Sulgrave Manor.¹²⁸ And by the time of the 1976 Bicentennial itself, the idea had become central to the very historiography of Anglo-American relations. Historians H.C. Allen, Roger Thompson and Frank Thistlethwaite, even compiled a special volume of essays as ‘an English gesture of homage to the Revolutionary Bicentennial’.¹²⁹

The celebration of American Independence Day at Warton in 1976 thus drew inspiration from an already well-established discursive framework. As one of those Americans involved put it, with democracy then being ‘challenged, questioned and defeated throughout the world’ it was crucial that Americans and Britons ‘commit...anew to the ideals and purposes for which our first soldiers fought; the soldiers who fought under George Washington, whose connection with the Warton village is the reason we are celebrating the Bi-centennial here’.¹³⁰ Such was the purpose and politics of Warton’s fortnight in the summer sun. In March 1975, just as the London-based British Liaison Committee was deliberating over whether to dispatch to Washington a copy of Magna Carta, a special Bicentennial commemoration committee was formed in Warton, securing the presidency of Mrs Helen Reynolds, lady of the local Manor (Leighton Hall), and the Vice-Presidency of the Earl Peel.¹³¹ And if the plans duly developed were not quite so high-profile as those of their counterparts in the capital, they were nonetheless appropriately ambitious. Looking forward to the events, for example, the local press explained that as well as the usual summer fair entertainments there would also be a full programme of historical talks, exhibitions, and several ‘performances by a number of American groups which are coming over for the week’.¹³² These groups included the ‘120 strong Bethsheda Missionary Choir from Detroit, the Montford Players (drama) from Ashland, North Carolina, the Coronna Festival Choir from Ontario, the State University of New York Theatre from Brockport, New York, and the Patriots of Music from East Detroit’. For the Chairman of the committee, Mr A. Earl, it was clearly both exciting and stressful, for he anticipated ‘thousands visiting the village – 8,000 Americans are expected to visit the North West from mid-June to the end of the season’.¹³³

By all accounts, the occasion seems to have been a success, and when the sun finally set on 4 July 1976 Mr Earl was surely content with all that he and his committee had achieved. Starting on 26 June with a children’s sports competition, and with various pageants, processions, and even a transatlantic radio broadcast over the subsequent nine days, the celebrations did indeed draw in large crowds of locals and visitors, with 2,000 being counted at one of the performances.¹³⁴ The grand finale, an Independence Day ceremony held in the church and led by the Bishop of Blackburn, was similarly well-attended, with the pews of St.

¹²⁷ See ‘Independence Day 1918’, Churchill Archives (Churchill College, Cambridge) CHAR 9/56. See also: The United States Bicentennial Commission, *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration: Foreign Participation*, pp. 208-210.

¹²⁸ *The Times*, 23 February 1946.

¹²⁹ Thistlethwaite, *Contrast and Connection*, p. viii

¹³⁰ Warton Bi-Centenary Booklet.

¹³¹ ‘Warton Prepares for America’s Bi-Centenary’, undated newspaper cutting, ‘Warton’ file, Lancaster Library Local Studies Collection.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ ‘Warton’s Week of Glory’, *Lancaster Guardian*, 7 July 1976; ‘Calling America, this is Warton!’, *Lancaster Guardian*, 25 June 1976.

Oswald's full of those keen to mark the moment and hear again the details of the Warton-Washington connection. Little wonder that the *Lancaster Guardian* reported the proceedings under the headline 'Warton's Week of Glory', going on to gush that 'the final verdict...is definitely an outstanding success'.¹³⁵ Such success was even noted at the American Embassy in London, with one report cabled back to Washington recording that the various Bicentennial events staged across Britain – including that at Warton – had 'exceeded all expectations'.¹³⁶ That said, 'there were some snags', including a problem unfurling the stars and stripes aloft St. Oswald's tower (and all before the television cameras), not to mention the intense heat: the master tape produced to accompany one of the school children's pageant actually melted.¹³⁷ But local people clearly rose to the occasion, with staff at the Black Bull Pub 'working an unprecedented 100 hour week' to parch the thirst of the gathering crowds.¹³⁸ A few days later, after a comprehensive stocktaking, the landlord found that the pub – which stands immediately adjacent to the church – had sold 'four times as much beer and lager as usual'.¹³⁹

Conclusions: Warton, Washington and the Special Relationship

The Bicentennial of 1976 provides a revealing marker for local, national and indeed international interest in the Warton-Washington connection. Since this high-point, there has been no large-scale celebration of the connection, although that is not to say that the parish has abandoned interest in its ties to the first President of the United States. Each July 4th, the stars and stripes can be seen flying from St. Oswald's; the Black Bull has been renamed the 'George Washington'; and both the Washington coat-of-arms and Washington grave in the churchyard continue to draw interest from travellers, and especially (until quite recently) from American veterans of the Second World War, many of whom returned to their old bases in the early 2000s for 'one last look'. Warton's role in helping to forge the 'special relationship' also receives periodic attention in the local press, a fact which ensures the long-celebrated connection between the Washington family heraldry and the flag of the United States is still occasionally repeated, and reasserted.¹⁴⁰

But if many of the ideas linger, they have less traction now, for times have changed. Back in the 1880s, when the Warton-Washington ancestral connection was first actively acknowledged, contemporary investment in the Anglo-American diplomatic rapprochement ensured that such details were welcomed, and quickly celebrated. For a generation of political elites in the United States, concerned about the loss of domestic power and prestige occasioned by industrialisation, urbanisation and especially mass immigration, cultivating a sense of 'Anglo-Saxon' identity was a means to reassert their status and standing. This was a class drawn to the details of ancestry and genealogy, and drawn to a racialized reading of the information such researches uncovered. At the same time, a very similar class in Britain, equally disorientated by domestic change and upheaval, committed to the Empire, and

¹³⁵ 'Warton's Week of Glory', *Lancaster Guardian*, 7 July 1976.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Bennett, 'The Spirits of '76: Diplomacy Commemorating the US Bicentennial in 1976', p. 719. And there were indeed activities elsewhere. In East Anglia, for instance, home to several thousand American service-personnel and with various historic connection to the United States, local authorities established a special Anglo-American 'Heritage trail'. See *Thetford and Watton Times*, 30 April 1976.

¹³⁷ 'Warton's Week of Glory', *Lancaster Guardian*, 7 July 1976.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ For some details about more recent interest in the Warton-Washington connection, see, for example, the *Lancaster Guardian*: 7 July 2000; 7 July 2002; 4 July 2003; *Lancashire Evening Post*, 22 January 1993; 5 May 1993; *The Morecambe Visitor*, 27 November 1991.

cognisant of rising American power, was also drawn to racial Anglo-Saxonism. And into this moment came the discovery that George Washington, the first President, was English in ancestry, and so ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in race; a man whose very roots could be traced to a picturesque spot in north-west England, the parish of Warton. This Lancastrian Washington was duly recounted and recorded in the learned tomes of Henry Waters (1889), of Henry Whitman (1888), and of Thomas Pape (1913).

After 1918, Washington’s various links to Albion continued to be the subject of enthusiastic interest. In 1921, a specially formed committee of transatlantic elites dedicated Sulgrave Manor as an Anglo-American memorial, and the same committee also unveiled a statue of Washington in London. Such activities ensured that Sulgrave in particular soon became ‘recognized...as a shrine for patriotic Americans and English friends of Americans to visit’.¹⁴¹ But Warton, too, received attention, especially during the 1932 Bicentennial of Washington’s birth, which saw diplomats and dignitaries make a pilgrimage to the parish which still claimed the origin of the Washington line in England. Then came another war. In the 1940s, with several hundred thousand Yanks based in Lancashire (ironically, many of them at a parish forty miles south, but with the same name: Warton) Washington’s ancestral home, long recorded in various travelogues targeting American tourists, finally became a destination for American soldier-pilgrims. They came in large groups, enjoyed a tour from the vicar, were hosted by local women, and, by the war’s end, had left an American flag as a parting gift. But these meetings of parishioners and pilgrims did not *simply* involve sharing tea and cake on the vicarage lawn. Rather, these were the moments in which Churchill’s ‘special relationship’ was made real; occasions in which Americans and Britons met one another and no doubt discovered their differences, but also their connections – values, language, history. These were invaluable means for representatives of the new behemoth to encounter a powerful idea, and one that Hawthorne had similarly acknowledged back in the 1860s; that in certain key respects – political, cultural, ideological, and, at least for some, ancestral – Blitzed and broken Britain was nonetheless their ‘old home’.

As such, these were important acts of ‘commemorative diplomacy’ which bolstered transatlantic relations in the present by finding deep connections in the past. And Warton’s role in such diplomacy was not just because the Washingtons had once walked its streets and sat in the church pews; the village also had ‘a share in the ancestry’ of Churchill himself, and indeed the wartime prime minister was linked by blood to the Virginian patriot.¹⁴² As a result, in the post-war period, as politicians on both sides of the Atlantic busily cultivated Churchill’s Anglo-American myth, the Warton-Washington connection retained significance, and occasionally drew the interest of press and public. But it was not until 1976, the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence, and a moment in which many transatlantic diplomats – post-Vietnam – were keen to rediscover the bonds of the ‘special relationship’, that Warton finally had its day in the sun. As temperatures rocketed in a now legendary heatwave, the people of the parish turned out *en masse*, invited into their midst several thousand Americans, and revelled in the fact that two centuries earlier a son of their soil, George Washington, had led the United States into a very English – if not Lancastrian – act of rebellion.

¹⁴¹ The United States Bicentennial Commission, *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration: Foreign Participation*, p. 240.

¹⁴² *Warton Parish Magazine*, February 1944, MLHS.