

Windsor Jan'y 29th 1841

My dear Nephew

I have really not been inattentive[sic] to the information you wished to receive[sic] from me respecting my Fathers family the Luthers. And my Mothers, the Desboroughs but during the severe cold weather I could scarcely move from the fireside; as it is now much Milder, I will begin with the Luthers having collected two extracts from the life of our great Reformer of the Protestant Religion in Germany, Martin L ----- . You think more Generations must have passed away than I first stated, namely that my grandfather Luther was Great Grandson to the Said Martin¹ -- My father had nearly compleated his 64th Year when he Died (I was then not 22)² and now being near 82 Years old so that Our joint Ages make up 124 Years but I will not be certain and only state from recollection what I heard my father say, his could not be a Young Man as he left 6 Children, Sons grown up to Mans estate altho' my faher only two Years old when he died, he fully Believed himself to be lineally descended from M L, his crest & coat of Arms the same, the crest a Swan. I have frequently seen on a silver Seal, if this is not correct I know not where to obtain it as my dear Father was a Religious[sic] Man. I cannot have a doubt on the subject.

I well remember to have heard Your Grandfather Desborough of Huntingdon and my Mother were first cousins³, Brothers Children, what her fathers christian Name was (as I have before stated) do not recollect --- her Mother was of a good family and related to Sir Mathew Featherstonehaugh Bart⁴: and no doubt possessed some Property of her own or could not have brought up her Family as she did, what her Maiden Name was I don't know; I have heard My Mother say she often went with hers to Sir Sir[sic] Mathew F-----'s to dinner at his Residence in Featherstone Buildings Holborn; I also think Her remains were deposited with her Husbands in St Ann's Parish Soho⁵ ----- My Mother has often shown me one of the largest houses in Dean Street, (occupied not very many Years since by Sir Thomas Wilson) as one of her own father's Building, & property, I also remember to have heard

Your Dear Mother mention having had some gentlemen to Dinner when living in Fenchurch Street, one of whom said there are two houses in Soho Square (pointing out which) are Your Property but are now in Chancery , there I suppose they will remain.

I did not know Old Mr. Romilly was a Watchmaker but thought he was a Jeweller or Diamond Merchant, a fine tall old Man wearing a large Bushy Wig, curls hanging on his shoulders like a Judge, his Son Sir Samuel R I do not remember – the Protestant french Chapel they attended was in our Neighbour and the Minister Rev'd Mr. Ronstan lived within a few doors of our house in Frith St.

Miss Carmaults Mother (Mrs. Hiscox) had three houses on the opposite side of the Way, the centre one which they lived in, was exactly facing ours & excellent Neighbours; the Numbers on the Doors have twice altered, ours from 20 to 41, what they are now, don't know as several has[sic] been destroyed by Fire ----- Miss C now Mrs Tanner must be 80 Years of Age as I am her Sen'r only by one Year and ten months. ----- The House in upper Charlotte Street Rathbone Place where you was[sic] born⁶, was No. 53 directly facing a cross Street, to where that led to do not know but my Mothers was a very good one.

I think you will laugh heartily at this Letter, I shall feel great Pleasure if any of the statements prove satisfactory to you, Trouble there is none on my side and Old Age will plead for my Blunders.

I sincerely hope this will find Yourself dear Wife and Children in good health – I have indeed much to be thankful to Almighty God for, our being all in better health than might be expected from such intense cold Weather for four or five weeks – I sincerely wish your Sister will be supported under the separation Shortly to take Place between her & Son now about to sail ~~from~~ *for Bengal*⁷ and that good accounts from your dear Son⁸ & hers may reach both at no great distance of time—as conveyance now for Post is so much quicker – Mrs Geo. Kellner hears frequently from her Henry⁹.

*Now my dear Nephew accept our good Wishes and kind regards,
Present the same to Mrs H D and Believe me your Affect: Aunt.*

S. Kellner

*I hope your Brother Lawrence & his
family are well. I beg to be
kindly remembered when you
see him.*

Prepaid

H Desborough Esq'r
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Private

¹ Apparently Henry Desborough, Jnr. had questioned her about the number of generations separating her grandfather from Martin Luther. We had also suspected that there had to be another generation

² This is the first clue as to when Heinrich (Henry) died. We know Sophia was born on 19 July 1759, so that her father probably died early in 1781. She states he was almost 65 when he died which would give his birth year as about 1716. There is some discrepancy here with his stated age of 39 which he gave for his marriage allegation on 18 September 1758 which would imply his birth year to be about 1719.

³ This confirms what we have suspected for some time. Since we now know that the Desborough at Blenheim was a John, this leads us to the conclusion that Lawrence's older brother, John, born on 27 December 1688, is the father of Frances.

⁴ It turns out that Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh was one of the richest men in England at the time.

⁵ This gives us a clue as to where to look for the burial records of Henry and Frances Luther.

⁶ Impressive that this lady in her 80s remembers these details. Knowing where Henry was born should also help in locating where he was baptized.

⁷ This would be Webber Desborough Harris, son of Louisa Ayton (Desborough) Harris. Webber was born in 1822, became a Major General, and died in 1903.

⁸ This would be John Desborough, born in 1824, also rose to the rank of Major General and died in 1918.

⁹ Mrs. George Kellner was Sophia's daughter-in-law. The George Kellners also lived in Windsor. They had two sons and two daughters. The elder son, George Desborough, was employed by the Royal Post Office and died at St. Thomas on the way home from New Granada. The younger son was Henry William George and nothing more was known about him, but apparently he also was in the military.