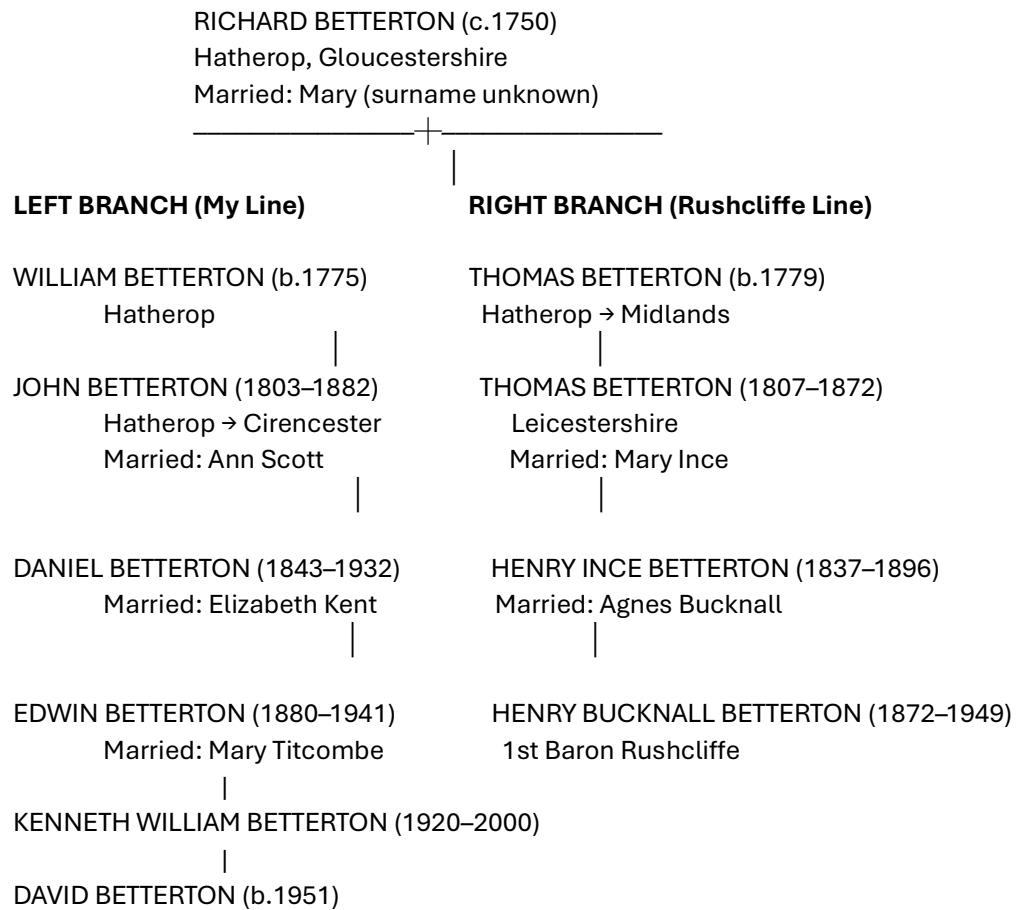


The Bettertons of Hatherop, Gloucestershire: A Family History Snapshot

Compiled by David Betterton



Kenneth Betterton
(My father)



Edwin Betterton
(My grandfather)



Daniel Betterton
(My great-grandfather)

Summary

In the late eighteenth century, the quiet Gloucestershire village of Hatherop was home to a small cluster of families whose names appear again and again in the parish registers. Among them, the Bettertons stood out—not because they were wealthy or titled, but because they were numerous, rooted, and unmistakably woven into the life of the Cotswold countryside.

At the centre of this family was Richard Betterton, born around the middle of the 1700s. He lived in a world of small farms, malt houses, and inns that served the coaching roads between Cirencester, Fairford, and Burford. Richard's sons—including William (born c.1775) and Thomas (born c.1779)—grew up in this landscape of agricultural labour, brewing, and village trade. Their lives would set the course for two very different branches of the family.

The Rural Branch: William's Line

Richard's elder son William stayed close to home. He raised his family in Hatherop, and in 1803 his son John Betterton was baptised in the parish church. John lived the life of a Gloucestershire working man, moving between Hatherop, Cirencester, and the surrounding villages. His children—including Daniel Betterton (1843–1932)—carried the family into the Victorian era as labourers, tradesmen, and smallholders.

This branch of the family remained firmly tied to the land. Daniel's son Edwin worked in the Cirencester area before settling in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Edwin's son Kenneth William Betterton was born in Clanfield in 1920 and continues this line today. I am reminded of my family's modest means, and deep roots in the rural counties of Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

The Ambitious Branch: Thomas's Line

William's younger brother Thomas, however, took a different path. While still connected to Hatherop, he moved into the world of publicans, maltsters, and small-scale brewers—trades that offered opportunity to those with energy and ambition. By the early 1800s, Thomas's family had left Gloucestershire for the Midlands, where brewing and malting were expanding industries.

Thomas's son, also named Thomas (born 1807), established the family in Leicestershire and Warwickshire. His own son, Henry Ince Betterton, continued the upward trajectory, entering business and public life. And it was Henry Ince's son—Henry Bucknall Betterton, born in 1872—who completed the family's remarkable rise.

A successful barrister, Member of Parliament, and later a key figure in government during the interwar years, Henry Bucknall Betterton was elevated to the peerage in 1935 as 1st Baron Rushcliffe. From a Hatherop maltster's son to the House of Lords in three generations—a striking ascent by any measure.

Two Branches, One Origin

Though their paths diverged, the two branches of the Betterton family share the same roots:

Richard Betterton of Hatherop, the eighteenth-century patriarch whose sons carried the family name in different directions.

- William's descendants remained close to the land, forming the line that leads to myself and siblings today.
- Thomas's descendants embraced trade, industry, and public life, culminating with the creation of Baron Rushcliffe.

The story of the Bettertons of Hatherop is, in many ways, the story of England itself: rural beginnings, the pull of opportunity, the rise of industry, and the persistence of family ties across centuries. Even as the branches grew apart, they never lost their shared origin in that small Gloucestershire village where the name Betterton first took root.