

Camdens – Sir John Pratt, Lord Camden’s father

John Pratt’s family became landed gentry at the dissolution of Carswell Priory, at Dulford on the Devon-Somerset border, in 1553. However, the family lost their land during the civil war, having sided with the King, and the first son Richard Pratt moved to the Royalist stronghold of Oxford where, in 1656, he married Elizabeth Skay. Their only son, John Pratt, graduated from Wadham College at Oxford University, came down to London in 1681 to study for the bar. However, he crossed with Chief Justice Jeffries, appointed by James II, and chose to leave London for practice in Exeter – where Jeffries was sent to control the Monmouth uprising and held the ‘Bloody Assizes’, executing almost 300 people and becoming the ‘hanging Judge Jeffries’ of public memory. But with the arrival of William to take the throne, the political balance in London swung. Jeffries died in the Tower and John Pratt returned to take up practice before the Court of Common Pleas and the House of Lords. From 1700 to 1715 he was Member of Parliament for Midhurst in Sussex. He became a judge at the King’s Bench in 1714, took part in trying the Jacobites at Carlisle in 1716 and was Chief Justice in 1718. His children were mainly baptised in Kensington, but he died at his house in Great Ormond Street in 1725.¹



Sir John Pratt after Michael Dahl (based on original c1718 at Bayham Abbey)
National Portrait Gallery NPG 480

In 1705 John Pratt bought an estate, known as Stidulphe’s Place and which he called Wildernesse Park, at Seal near Sevenoaks, Kent. His first wife, Elizabeth Gregory, with whom he had eight children, died that year 1705 and is buried at Wildernesse. He remarried, and with Elizabeth Wilson had a further eight children

Lord Camden’s siblings are shown here briefly, indicating some of their social connections. (I regret the male/female ordering, but Eeles doesn’t provide birth dates.)

¹ <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/pratt-john-1657-1725>;
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-environs/vol3/pp170-230>

Children of his father's first marriage:

John (1690-1770), oldest son of the family, inherited Wildernesse and Bayham. He married Elizabeth Jeffreys (b.1693) and their son, John Pratt (who became something of a recluse at Bayham Abbey), died without family in 1797)

Edward, bachelor, in the East India service

Grace (1675-1720) married John Fortescue, a justice of the Court of King's Bench (1718–1727) and the Court of Common Pleas (1728–1746) and was raised to Lord Fortescue of the Irish Peerage;

Jane married Major Taylor, 1st Horse Guards;

Anne married Edward Gee, Six Clerk's office

Children of the second marriage:

Thomas – bachelor, Keeper of the Treasury papers

William – South Sea Company – 'cast away at sea'

Charles (Lord Camden)

Robert – Captain of Horse, Lord Albemarle's regiment, died on service

Anna Maria married Thomas Barrett Leonard, 17th Baron Dacre

Caroline married Herbert Munster, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal American Regiment.

Jane married Nicholas Hardinge, MP for Eye, Clerk of the House of Commons and Secretary of the Treasury