

Rob's Family History Journal

July 2007

Waterhouse Research

This is the first journal entry I have written so bear with me if it gets a bit long winded. The idea behind this journal is to try and put on paper how I am carrying out my research. Publishing it like this may show others what I am struggling with, a problem shared and all that. On with the business in hand.

The most current research I am working on is a link to the Waterhouse family on the Isle of Wight with my main stream of Waterhouse links in Sussex, Surrey and Kent. About a year ago I was in Totland, on the Isle of Wight, searching for some of my wife's family graves, namely Harvey, Sanders and Saunders. To my surprise I came across a group of graves with my surname on. I have been to most of the cemeteries on the Island and never came across my own surname. Obviously this interested me. I photographed the graves and put them on my website, for interest's sake rather than anything else. I did a little research into the family at the time, like you do! It was like most Victorian and Edwardian families around the turn of the

century. They stood out a little as they were more than your normal ag labs! Not that there is anything wrong with ag labs, like anyone else my family is full of them. They had more graves than most families in one area, as too many of the sons gave their lives in the First World War. I left the research at that, a sad story but not appearing to have a link to my family.

That was until recently. I was working more on the history of the villages on the Island, concentrating mainly on Whitwell. The research was looking at my wife's side of the family. Then a chance contact again with Darryl, a fellow Waterhouse researcher showed a distant link to the Waterhouse graves in Totland. I have been actively tracing my family history for the last four years. Initially this was looking into my mother and fathers families, namely Waterhouse and Tamplin as I said earlier, in the Sussex, Surrey and Kent counties. Once I got addicted to the search I needed a bigger fix, as it were. This meant I needed something a bit closer to my home, the Isle of

Wight. As luck would have it my wife was born and bred on the Island, which meant I could fulfil my urges into more local research. I had to restrict my own family research to summer holidays, occasional weekends away and the internet. My wife's family were mainly farmers on the Island and also had quite an interesting history...

I digress. The chance contact with Darryl. This spurred me on to look more closely into the graves in Totland. This opened up a new part of social history to me that I was not familiar with. In the 19th Century lunacy was literally classed as a crime, as it led to imprisonment without parole. This led to families being broken up by what could possibly only have been a case of anti natal depression (I have sent for the documents relating to Phoebe and will include them in the next journal). Thomas Waterhouse and his wife Phoebe were possibly one of those families. I am only very early in my research into this line of the Waterhouse family but it has already thrown up some very interesting things. When you get into this family tree bug, research can take you over a bit. At the earliest opportunity I drove back over to Totland to check the graves out again.

I like to start my research with some definite evidence. I have found gravestones are a good place to start, following them up

with census data and BMD data. You can get all these things on the internet without moving from your armchair, but seeing the graves is just more personal. I have found this a much more fulfilling way to research people. Most of the people in the graveyard have all but disappeared from history, some lucky soles have managed to make a mark in other ways during their lives but most don't. It appeared at first that this was a normal family, but their luck was far from normal, as will become apparent as this family unfolds.

The family in question begins with Thomas Waterhouse born in Tuxford, Nottingham in 1823. Thomas was not born in London like the rest of his siblings. I am yet to discover why Thomas and his parents had moved to Nottingham at this time. Thomas's father was a surveyor and may have had a job in or around Nottingham at this time? Thomas married Phoebe Woolfitt who was also from Tuxford, on 21/12/1851 in Holborn, London.

The original move to the Island meant that Thomas had already had to leave his wife behind. Phoebe was classed as a lunatic and was incarcerated in The District Lunatic Asylum for the County of Nottingham (Sneinton, below). The census for 1871 and 1881 listed Phoebe as a 'Lunatic Pauper'.



Sneinton Asylum

At the same time her family were thriving on the Isle of Wight. Somehow this does not seem fair but the act of parliament gave no choice to the families. This was the first disaster for the family. It is interesting to see that Thomas and Phoebe were living in London before the move to the Island for the main family, with Phoebe going back to Nottingham to the asylum there rather than one on the Island or in London.

The family initially thrived on the Island. Thomas was working as an estate agent in Alum Bay and living on Warren Farm. In 1870 Thomas formed the Totland Bay Estate Company. They appeared to be selling property to renovate in the Totland area. Setting up his own company must have meant that Thomas was doing very well for himself and his family. Thomas and Phoebe had three children. Namely Henry, Ellen Louise and William John.

Henry worked as a carpenter all his working life, dieing relatively young in 1895. He married Martha Kelleway in 1885. They lived in Seaview Cottage,

Yarmouth Road, Totland. Martha had lived there for her whole life and continued after Henry's death to use the property as a lodging house. Henry and Martha had three children, Nellie, Harold and Bernard. Harold died young at only 22 without marrying. Bernard lost his life while serving aboard HMS Victory II during the First World War. Nellie married Harry Kelleway.

Ellen Louise married Frederick Latham in 1884 but sadly died in 1887.

William John worked with his father as his assistant and later ran the business after his father retired as an estate agent. William married Louisa Mary Adams in 1888. They had three children, Ernest Thomas, Ethel Louisa and Arthur Henry. Sadly, both Ernest and Arthur gave their lives in the First World War in 1918 and 1916 respectively. Ethel married Frank Allen McClean in 1921. They had one son, John Allen. He very sadly died while serving in the Second World War. Finding a grave with a whole family on it is initially exciting as a family historian, until you suddenly realise that that could be the sum of that family's history. I do not want that to happen to anyone that is in my family tree and I think through these journals and my website I will eventually achieve that.

This is where too many stories have ended up while studying my family. All families lost members in the World Wars but few I have studied have lost so many. The whole male line was ended by tragic early deaths and WW1 & WW2.

There are still two leads I am trying to chase. The first is whether Ellen Louise and Frederick Latham had any children before she died. The second is what happened to Nellie and her husband Harry Kelleway. I know that they had a daughter, Barbara Joan but have not been able to find anything else.