

THE DORSET ORIGINS OF ROBERT OKE (1794-1870) AND AMELIA OKE (BORN 1804) OF SHERBORNE

Robert OKE (1723-1788) and Elizabeth WHITEHEAD (1719-1754) married about 1745 probably in Sherborne where both families were well established for centuries. They had two sons, Robert (1747-1810) and John Whitehead (1751-1805) Oke, and two daughters, Ann (born 1748) and Mary (1753-1825) Oke.

The elder Robert Oke (1723-1788) had a sister, Ann Oke (1711-1755), who married Thomas DURNFORD in 1730. After his death she married John Whitehead (1711-1779). There was no issue from either marriage. However, John Whitehead was the brother of Elizabeth, and in consequence the family of Robert OKE and Elizabeth Whitehead were independently nephews and nieces of Ann and of John Whitehead. Ann had received a substantial inheritance of property from Thomas Durnford which, by her marriage agreement with John Whitehead in 1742, was to pass to the four Oke nephews and nieces, named above. This inheritance was to be of crucial importance in tracing the author's branch of the Oke family.

There is an extensive Oke family in Canada and the United States who are descendants of Robert Oke (1794-1870) who migrated to Newfoundland in 1811 to work with the Poole-Newfoundland fishery firm of Spurriers. One of the principals, William SPURRIER, was married to a cousin of Robert. Unbeknown to different family descendants, the Oke family was being traced in both Canada and Australia. In Canada, John Templeton, in uncovering the family connections of Robert Oke, discovered the following.

John Whitehead Oke had married Dinah BUDGETT in Bristol in 1770 at St. Mary Redcliffe and among their children two were named Edward Langdon Oke (1775-1840) and John Langdon Oke (1776-1812). Both were baptised at Sherborne. The Robert Oke in Newfoundland had also named a son Edward Langdon Oke (1825-1862) and a daughter, Matilda Langdon Oke (1831-1909). Clearly, there had to be a family connection. Furthermore, the Will of Robert Oke in Newfoundland had bequeathed All the Lands, Houses and Properties demised to my late father, John Oke, by his aunt Ann Whitehead that had first been recorded in the marriage settlement of Ann Durnford nee Oke on her marriage to John Whitehead in 1742. Consequently his father must have been John Whitehead Oke.

However, the baptism of Robert (baptised 5 Jan 1799) and his sister, Amelia (baptised 3 Mar 1804), the records of which were found in Sherborne Abbey, notes that their parents were John and Edith Oke. Two pieces of apparently relevant information were available. Firstly, there was the presence of a John and Edith Oke in Southampton, where several members of the Sherborne family had settled, and, secondly, the marriage of John Oke, widower, of St. James, Bath and Edith COGAN at St. Mary Magdalene in Taunton, Somerset, in 1787. From the available dates relating to the Southampton couple it appeared that they were probably not the parents of Robert and Amelia, however, this could not be completely ruled out and they were possibly the same couple who had married in Taunton. How could this information be resolved? We had speculated that John Whitehead Oke had married a second time to Edith Cogan, however, the death of Dinah Oke did not appear in the Sherborne parish register nor could it be found elsewhere. However, there was some support from an entry in the Sherborne register of the death of Ann Oke in 1786. As there was no known Ann Oke with whom she could be identified we concluded that Ann could have been Dinah, suggesting the change through Diane to Ann.

The marriage license of John to Edith and the attached marriage agreement illustrate the unreliability of written records. The Bishop's authority is given for the marriage at St Margaret's church Taunton. There is no St Margaret's Church and never has been, James PHILPOTT, surrogate of the Bishop of Bath and Wells,

obviously did not know this and did not check. However, on an attached document it appears that St Margaret's has been altered to St Mary Magdalen by another hand with a lighter pen. Only a copy has been seen not the original. Their marriage certainly took place in the latter church on 16 July 1787.

In Australia, Ken Edmondson had been searching records concerning his great-grandmother Amelia Oke. She was known to have married a George ROGERS at St Paul's Church, Bristol on 9 November 1824. The census of 1851 shows that she was born in Sherborne about 1804 and he in Wiveliscombe, Somerset about 1801. He was a shoemaker and had a business on St Augustine's Parade while the family lived on St Michael's Hill. It is of note that a number of the Oke family of Dorset was involved in various aspects of the leather trade. Regrettably no earlier information on George can be found. The census record is faulty and omits the son of George and Amelia who was baptised Thomas Langbridge Rogers.

That Amelia and George Rogers named a child Thomas Langbridge Rogers, is strong evidence that the marriage of Edith Oke and Thomas Langbridge at St. Paul's Church, Bristol, on April 2nd, 1819, was that of her widowed mother, her father John Whitehead Oke having died in 1805. Thomas Langbridge Rogers carried on the family connection with the Oke family by naming his daughter Amelia Oke Rogers. She married Edward Charles EDMONDSON at St George Brandon Hill, Bristol on 2 Oct 1887. Their grandson migrated to Australia in 1956.

Combining the information obtained from both searches establishes that John Whitehead Oke was the father of Edward Langdon Oke and John Langdon Oke (the witnesses were Edward and Sarah LANGDON) by his marriage to Dinah Budgett and of Robert Oke and Amelia Oke by his marriage to Edith Cogan.

The presence of three other John Oke's before 1780 had complicated the matter. The Sherborne Poor Rate Book shows that John Whitehead Oke paid a tax of ten shillings on Durnford's Ground from 1778 when the record begins, until 1786 after which he is not mentioned. This is consistent with the death of his wife, Dinah, in 1786 and his leaving Sherborne to marry Edith in 1787. The Poor Rate book records taxes being paid taxes on stock by John Oke from 1799 to 1804. John Whitehead Oke died in 1805. At that time he was the only John Oke remaining in Sherborne and his middle name was not required for identification and was apparently omitted in the later Poor Tax record. In 1799 Robert Oke was baptised at the age of five in Sherborne, indicative that he had been born elsewhere and not baptised until the family returned to Sherborne.

The relationship of John Whitehead Oke to the family of John Langdon Oke, who became a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, was confirmed in a letter to the Admiralty written by him in 1805 in which he asked for leave to attend to his father's affairs.

John and Edith Oke of Southampton do not appear to be related to the Sherborne family despite the circumstantial evidence suggesting a connection. For example, John Oke (1821-1868) died at the George Inn in the High Street, Southampton; the Oke family had been innkeepers in Sherborne. Nevertheless, his birth in 1768 does not correspond to any of the Sherborne family.

Both authors are the 3rd great-grandsons of John Whitehead Oke and Edith Cogan who first met through our common interest in family history.

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Computer Corner ...

Have you tried FamilyHistoryOnline? It is the new per-view website by the Federation of Family History Societies which was launched on Christmas Eve 2002. It can be found at www.familyhistoryonline.net and contains indexes of Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, Monumental Inscriptions and Censuses produced by various Family History Societies. It enables you to access the indexes produced by various Societies and means that you will not have to pay out for a whole index just to get details of a few names you are interested in.

When you first enter the site you are asked to log in. This does not cost you anything, but will allow you to search the site for basic information.

Do you want to start searching for the first time? If so:
 You need to "sign on as a new user", choosing a User Name and Password. This enables us to keep your research details secure and confidential to you.
 Problems using a secure server? If so, sign on using the standard server.

You can then check which counties are included and what indexes are available. The illustration below was current at the end of May 2003, but may have changed by the time you read this article.

COUNTIES INCLUDED

- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cardiganshire
- Cheshire
- Cornwall
- Derbyshire
- Co. Durham
- Glamorgan
- Hampshire
- Herefordshire
- Hertfordshire
- Huntingdonshire



The indexes include census transcriptions, births, marriages, burials and MIs. They are in various states of completion. Below is the May 2003 state of the Cornwall indexes.

CORNWALL

- Cornwall Baptism Transcriptions (1537-1897)* 50% of parishes added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Marriage Transcriptions (1813-37) virtually completed added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Burial Transcriptions (1813-37) complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall MI indexes (1258-1990)* many parishes completed added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1841) complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1851) 45% complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1861) 56% complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1871) 100% complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1881) 70% complete added 30SEP2002
- Cornwall Census Transcriptions (1891) started added 30SEP2002

It is easy to search for details. The form has a number of useful features. It will check for similar names. BROMFIELD as well as BROOMFIELD, CHAS as well as CHARLES. It will also calculate birth for a census record so if you ask for CHARLES BROMFIELD born 1858 it will find you the 1891 census record when he is 32.

Search form with fields for Surname, Forename, County or area, Year, and include both years. Includes instructions for wildcard characters and similar names.

Performing the search gives you a list of the possible entries and an indication of the price you have to pay to look at the entries.

Charles BROOMFIELD (with variants for forename and surname) anywhere at any time.

- 11 results found
1. Charles BROOMFIELD found in Devonian Marriage Index year 1897 (55A) year 1897 1 entry 42.00
 2. Charles BROOMFIELD found in Bedford Burial Index & Burial Index 1898 (L3) year 1898-1993 3 entries 48.00
 3. Charles BROOMFIELD found in Isle of Wight 1891 Census Index (200) year 1891 1 entry 42.00
 4. Charles BROOMFIELD found in Hampshire 1891 Census Index (204A) year 1891 1 entry 42.00
 5. Charles BROOMFIELD found in Bedford Burial Index (204A) year 1891 1 entry 42.00

If you want to look at an entry you will have to have a voucher. These can be purchased from Family History Societies or are available as "virtual" vouchers on the internet. You purchase them using your credit card, but unlike other websites, these vouchers last for 6 months. I was very impressed with the security, you even get an email back from the company who handles the banking to say that they have received the application and when they will take the money.

If you do not have a voucher then clicking on the index required will bring up the pages which take you through the steps for paying. Once you have paid then clicking will display the requested entry. When you display an entry, the site also tells how much you have paid for it.

Group number 39269 in Cornwall 1871 census.

Search results for Group number 39269 in Cornwall 1871 census.

Serial	First Name	Second Name	Age	Sex	Married	Occupation	Value	Charge	Notes	View
1	Charles	BROOMFIELD	32	M		Labourer	18p	9p	1871	View
2	Elizabeth	BROOMFIELD	28	F		Wife	18p	9p	1871	View
3	John	BROOMFIELD	14	M		Son	18p	9p	1871	View

In the example above I viewed Charles and then asked for details of the household. This is why the charge at the bottom is 18p and not 27p. I paid the 9p when I found Charles. I then printed the entry out to keep it. If you do this then I suggest that you use landscape format rather than portrait format which cuts off some of the information.

You can look at an entry again within a specified time period and will not be charged for it. It is also possible to examine your account to find out what you have spent.

Searches for user 12449 between 19 May 17:20:53 and 26 May 2003 17:20:53

- 3 results found
1. Date number 3090 in Cornwall 1871 census 21 May 03:20:51 Amount paid 42.00
 2. Charles BROOMFIELD anywhere during 1871 in Cornwall 1871 census 21 May 03:20:56 Amount paid 42.00

I found the website very useful. It could be easy to spend a lot of money on it so I suggest that you keep a record of the searches you have done or you could find yourself paying for the same entry more than once over a long period. I think it is very good for finding the odd entries, but if you need to look at a large number of entries in one area, then you may find it better to buy the paper or CD based index sold by the particular family history society.

With both the participations counties and the completion status of the indexes changing then if you do not find this website useful at the moment, then I suggest you check periodically as your interests may appear in the future.

Ann-Marie Wilkinson