

WERE THEY BROTHERS?

and where did Thomas come from?

In the late 1770s three men named WEEKS (Charles, John and James) suddenly appeared in the north-east Dorset area where there had been no other record of the surname in the previous 30 to 40 years, except one at Moor Crichel in 1751. Charles married Sarah Ann AVERY at Sixpenny Handley 26-1-1777. John married Elizabeth MANN née HUNT at Chalbury 11-7-1777. James and Marey (?) had a son christened at Sixpenny Handley 5-4-1779.

Thanks to the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society Marriage and Burial Indexes I have little doubt that the Charles Weeks, who married Sarah Ann Avery, was the son of Robert Weeks and Martha (née COLE) who had married at Moor Crichel in 1751. First of all Anne Preston the OPC (on-line parish clerk) for Handley, and all places round that area, found the christening record of Charles at Moor Crichel 10-12-1752, son of Robert and Martha. The SDFHS Marriage Index confirmed the marriage and the Burial Indexes found the proof.

The Records show that, after Charles and Sarah Ann married at Handley, they had four children christened at Gussage All Saints and the SDFHS Burial Records confirm that Charles died at Gussage All Saints 6-7-1832, giving his age at death as 79 years and birthplace as Moor Crichel. As Charles was christened in December 1752 and died in July 1832 he would have been 79 when he died. (It is hardly likely he was born before July 1752.) If only they were all as easy as that.

Sadly there are no such records for John and James. But OPC Anne Preston reports that there are some missing years in the Moor Crichel records. From christening records of the children of John and Elizabeth Mann née Hunt, they lived at Horton while James and Marey(?) lived at Sixpenny Handley. All three men of the same surname suddenly appear in the same area at the same time and living within a few miles of each other and not related. I'd hardly think so. But proof is the problem.

Until the marriage record of James and Marey(?), is found where James came from will probably remain a mystery. But, as far as John is concerned, there are several records for the christening of a John Weeks in the right time-frame in areas other than the north-east: Poole, Swanage, Wimborne and what about Broadchalke and Berwick in Wiltshire? Take your pick.

Then there is Thomas. He popped up a generation later than the above three when he married Mary DIBBEN at Handley 3-2-1798. No christening record for him either. So where did he come from? Mary died in 1805 and Thomas then married Elizabeth SYMONDS just a few months later, also at Handley 26-5-1805. Except for children in both his marriages (seven altogether), the only thing known about Thomas comes from OPC Anne Preston who found he joined the military in 1798 and disappeared after, or around, the birth of a son Richard in 1811. Maybe Thomas met his Waterloo a year or two early.

Surnames of those who married into these three Weeks families:

1. Into the family of Charles Weeks and Sarah Ann Avery: MASTERS Rachel married their son Robert 4-4-1812. They had three children but none married. Equals end of this family line.
2. Into the family of John Weeks and Elizabeth Mann (née Hunt): TUBBS Elizabeth married their son John 5-4-1802; MUSTON Elizabeth married their son Charles 18-5-1808; CHAPEL Catherine married their son David 12-8-1811; WHITLOCK Stephen married their daughter Rebekah 11-1810; KING Stephen married their daughter Mary Ann 11-2-1815; THORN Ann married their son William 24-10-1826.
3. Into the family of James Weeks and Marey (unknown): HAYTER Diana married their son John 23-2-1802; PENNY James married their daughter Mary Ann 15-8-1805;
(1) Unknown married their son William (in army – maybe a daughter Emma).
(2) WHIFFEN Ann " " " " " 17-11-1836; PENNY Thomas married their daughter Sarah 4-1-1822; MESSER (Meshuer) married their daughter Jane (Jenny) 13-5-1815; BENNETT Elizabeth married their son George 18-12-1825.

Note: Four grandchildren of James and Marey emigrated to Australia. John (jnr) married Hannah HAYTER (of Berwick), Jane married George VINCENT, Benjamin married Frances JEANS and Eliza married Henry GOULD. All four married at Handley. One grandson emigrated to Newfoundland.

4. Into the family of Thomas Weeks and Mary Dibben: THICK Sarah married their son George 20-6-1825.
5. Into the family of Thomas Weeks and Elizabeth Symonds: WEST Henry married daughter Sabrina 10-2-1824; Messer James married their daughter Mary 3-2-1831; Weeks Emma married their son Robert 2-10-1833; BRADLEY Mary Ann married their son Richard 31-7-1833.

Note: Richard and Mary Ann Bradley emigrated to Australia.

The forename Thomas does not reappear in any of the descendants of the Handley families but it is very prominent in the descendants of John and Elizabeth née Mann who lived in Horton.

There are gaps in the christening records of the Horton family – only one child (John jnr,) between the marriage in 1777 and 1886.

So the search goes on. Is it any wonder we all get hooked?

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