

# DEVONIANS IN ONTARIO

a semiannual genealogical newsletter

number 3 : November 2004



Welcome to the third issue of this newsletter devoted to information about Devon (England), Ontario and the people who emigrated from one to the other. Contributions of any kind for the newsletter are welcome.

## **A Genealogical Research Trip to Devon**

Judy Gauthier (jgauthi@attglobal.net)

In June of 2004 my husband and I visited South Devon, England on an ancestor hunting trip looking for my **STURE** ancestors. I was lucky enough to have a first cousin once removed who had documented much of the family tree back to the 1700s. She is a member of the STEER-L ROOTSWEB list. The names STEER and STURE are of the same family line.

My great-grandmother, Florence Rosina STURE, was born 25 September 1876 in East Prawle, Chivelstone, Devon to Elizabeth Thirza STURE, single daughter of Henry Samuel STURE. Florence is listed on the 1881 census at 4 years born in Chivelstone, Devon, England as granddaughter to Henry Samuel Sture a farmer/yeoman at his farm Sture Court, Prawle, Chivelstone, coming under Malborough or Kingsbridge jurisdiction. She was listed again in the 1891 census at age 14 still living with her grandfather. Her mother died in 1887.

She married William Charles Ferridge in 1902. They emigrated to Hamilton, Ontario from London, England in 1906.

Prior to the visit, I analyzed the data I had from my cousin and developed a **list of places** where the STUREs were married, christened or buried with names of each person from each place. Most genealogy computer programs will provide such lists.

On previous visits to England, we had obtained a *Collins Road Map of Great Britain* – which is a very useful resource for planning a trip. We looked at south Devon and marked on it all the place names where my ancestors came from. While in Great Britain, we bought a 2004 *AA Big Road Atlas of Britain* once we realized that highway numbers had changed extensively since we had last been there.

I also made contact with a George STEER from England who was researching the same family line and made arrangements to meet with him just before we traveled into Devon. He gave me some valuable advice, some of which is passed on here.

\* **Kingsbridge** is the largest town in South Devon nearest to where I wanted to go. It has the wonderful **Cookworthy Museum of Rural Life in South Devon** plus a local **Heritage Resource Centre**. *Advice* – check out the opening times of the Heritage Centre beforehand as it is only open from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday to Thursday, and Wed. from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We arrived at 3:30 p.m. on a Thursday, but luckily

they were open until 5:00 p.m. The researcher opened up the Heritage Centre for me and I was able to do about ½ hour work. Plan to spend several hours or days here.

Address: The Old Grammar School, 108 Fore Street, Kingsbridge, Devon.

e-mail: [wcookworthy@talk21.com](mailto:wcookworthy@talk21.com)

“The Heritage Centre has computer access to three databases: Collections (including photographs and archives), Local History, and Heritage (including maps, books, directories etc.) Microfilms of local papers dating back to 1855 can be viewed. There is a Devon Record Office service point. Research support is available. Scanned prints of photographs can be ordered”. (Source: Cookworthy Museum brochure, June 2004)

I was able to quickly look through the hard copy collection of *Kingsbridge Gazette* articles that have been indexed. I found two articles referencing my STURE ancestors, one of which indicated a farm Henry Sture was living on in 1894. We were then able to see that farm called ‘Higher House Farm’ and took pictures. I wish I had had more time to spend in the Heritage Centre.

\* Buy an **ordnance survey map** of the area. These maps show in great detail the roads, houses, farms, and churches.

\* Buy some of the **local history books**. I bought such books as:

*Kingsbridge, Devon* by Anne Born and Kathy Tanner

*Smuggling and Other Transgressions in South Hams, Devon* by Brian Wigley

*Around and About Salcombe* by Chips Barber

*Old Kingsbridge* by Kathy Tanner and Len Fairweather

*A Pictorial History of Kingsbridge and the Surrounding Area* by Sue Linton

*The History of Kingsbridge and Salcombe* revised and enlarged edition by Anne Born

*The Red Stones* by Judy Harris

These types of books have old pictures and stories about locals that may include reference to your ancestors.

Others I did not obtain:

*Domesday to D-day : a History of a Devon Parish* by D.A. McCoy

*Villages of South Hams* by John Legge (Ashprington, Tuckenhay, Cornworthy, Harbertonford, East Allington)

*The Story of Hallsands* by Chips Barber

*Beesands and Hallsands of Yesteryear* by Cyril Courtney (2000)

\* **Visit the churches and graveyards** applicable to your ancestors. Most churches have attached graveyards and all churches we visited were open to the public! They are wonderful old churches. We went to **Malborough**’s Cathedral of the South Hams All Saints Church, **Salcombe**’s Parish of the Holy Trinity Church (Salcombe has two graveyards), **East Prawle** which has no church but which had a STURE Court, a cottage owned by Henry Samuel STURE and mentioned in his will. It was being re-thatched and

we chatted with the thatchers while we took pictures of the cottage. We then drove on to Prawle Point (aka Signal House Point) over very narrow roads with hedges about 6 feet high. It is a most impressive coast line. We went to **Chivelstone** to St. Sylvester's Church where I found the tombstone of my great-great-great grandfather, Henry Samuel STURE and the tombstone of his second wife, Elisabeth (GILLARD) Sture, my gr-gr-gr grandmother. These tombstones provided actual death dates (one hopes) and named some children. This church has a Spanish chestnut wooden screen dated from the 1400s, a font from the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> Century and a pulpit carved from a single block of wood. We went to **East Allington** to St. Andrew's Church where it is indicated that church wardens have copies of gravestone plans and that deposited church records are now at the Devon Record Office.

Things I would do differently:

- 1) Plan time to go to Plymouth and Exeter to actual record offices.
- 2) Join more Devon Family History Sites.
- 3) Call ahead to determine opening times for museums and records offices, and schedule enough time to do more on-site research.
- 4) Try to contact churches to see what records are on hand and make arrangements to see those records.

But I have wonderful pictures and memories of the area. I am so excited to have walked in areas where my ancestors spent a large portion of their life and to have seen some of their homesteads and churches. I am now analyzing the data I recorded in the cemeteries, and seeing if and where they fit into my direct line. I have provided any concrete findings back to my cousin to help build up her records.

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Elizabeth Thirza Sture's name is interesting. Thirza is a most unusual name that had a fashion in the 1820s because it was the name of the heroine of a popular Methodist novel. For a few decades, there were many Thirzas and then the name died away. It is often misspelled in census and other records, as Thursa or Thurza.

Naming a child Thirza in the 1820s would be similar to the many girls who were named Crystal in the 1980s.

If your family has a Thirza, consider whether they might have Methodist leanings. They may not—but it might be a clue.

Judy's suggestion to contact churches in advance to arrange visits is a good idea. Many churches are now locked because of vandalism, even in the depths of rural Devon. By a law of 1975, the church is required to deposit its old records at the record office unless they can prove they have a fireproof place to keep them. Researchers will find that almost all resources—registers and other 'parish chest' materials—will be at the record office.

Calling ahead can have beneficent but unexpected side effects. I wrote to the rector of Buckland Brewer before my 2000 visit, to see if there would be a Sunday service while I was in the area. He confirmed that there would, and it being some special day, it would

be the 1666 prayer book service. I was delighted to think I would hear the beloved old service in the church where my ancestors had heard it through many decades.

When I arrived, I found them handing out the leaflets using the not-loved modern service. It was disappointing but I was still thrilled to be there. The rector came up to talk to me ahead of time and I mentioned the change. A few minutes later he went round gathering up the leaflets and handing out the prayer books. He announced that, for the sake of their faraway visitor, they were having the old service. I was very moved.

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From *The Observer*, a Bible Christian newspaper published in Bowmanville ON.  
For the first two obits there was significantly more info in the obit than shows in the synopsis below:

Feb 9, 1870. Died Barton Twp, 27 ult, Mary Jane LAWRY wife of H.J. LAWRY, age 54 and daughter of Thos. YEO of Hampton & formerly from Bradworthy, Devon, age 45

Aug 29, 1883. Funeral Putmanville, Aug 10, Rachel UGLOW, b Aug 12, 1803 do James & Mary PEARCE of Sheepwash, Devon. Rachel married 1832.

Oct 10, 1883. Died Fullerton, Elizabeth VANSTONE (nee ARTHUR) do William & Mary, born July 20, 1830 Highbrickington, Devon [High Bickington]

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Why did our family settle in Fullarton? (or Darlington? or Hay?) Here is one researcher's experience:

My interest in Devon stems from my grandmother Ada Glover, who arrived in Canada in March 1913. She settled in Alberta along with her brother, Joshua and his family, Archie and Sam. They went to live near a paternal aunt, Ellen Glover, who had come out in the late 1890's. The Glover family was from Frithelstock, Devon.

In 1917, my grandmother came to Ontario to be with her maternal aunt Sarah Ann Blight who had arrived around 1910. This aunt first lived in Toronto, but holidayed near Mitchell Ontario, staying with a Mrs. Sanders. Then in 1913 Sarah Ann Blight came up to the Mitchell area keeping house for people in the area. Although we knew why Ada Glover ended up in Mitchell no one seemed to know why Aunt Sarah Blight came to Fullarton Township, Perth County.

Then 2 years ago, I received a family tree from a cousin in Barnstaple, Devon and all was clear. Sarah Ann Blight's grandmother was Ann Pridham. Ann's brother was Jasper Pridham who was one of the first pioneers in Fullarton Township in 1848. previously Jasper had lived in Durham County, Ontario. Ann's other sister Mary Pridham had married Robert Heal, and four sons and a daughter also came to Fullarton Twp. in the 1850's. The daughter was Dorothy who was married to John Sanders in Exeter, Ontario, and the lady that my gr gr aunt had come to visit in Mitchell. The Blight family was from Langtree parish, Devon.

The Munro community in Fullarton Township, had many families from Devon, Yeo, Harris, Greenwood, Balkwill, Johns, Moore, Curtis, Beer, Nethercott, Fanson, Heal

and Pridham.

My father was born in this community, but never knew until I saw the family tree that his best school chum, was distantly related to him. When my grandmother came to live in the Mitchell area, her aunt Sarah found her work at Henry Heal's farm, and later at the Mulholland farm, who I now know were all distant relatives. My grandmother died in 1946, leaving a young family behind and so none of this history was passed on to her children.

The Munro Church was also a Bible Christian church, with a large congregation in the 1800's and supported other churches in the Fullarton Township and the town of Mitchell.

Heather Burrow mail\_for\_heather@yahoo.ca

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As part of the GENUKI Devon site, an index of *West Country Preachers: A History of the Bible Christians 1805-1907*, by Michael J.L. Wickes can be found at <http://www.cs.ncl.ac.uk/genuki/DEV/DevonIndexes/Preachers.html>.  
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A Bible Christian family:

The following note is from Melva Robbins (mrobbins@telusplanet.net)  
48 Wren Crescent, Sherwood Park AB T8A 0G5:

Thomas Robbins married Maria Niccolls in Milton Damerel in 1822. They had 6 children, immigrated to Canada about 1835, settled at Hampton and had 6 more children.

The first batch of children had typical English names (Thomas, Maria, William, Susanna, Esdras, Richard, John) and the second batch had Biblical names (Hezekiah, Aaron, Moses, Samuel, Silas). They were Bible Christian; I suspect they joined the BC movement part way through their childbearing years and just prior to their immigration.

Maria (Niccolls) Robbins<sup>1</sup> mother was Agnes Rattenbury, sister of Hatton Rattenbury. When I visited the Milton Damerel Methodist Church in September 2001 I discovered (and photographed) a plaque on the foundation of the building which reads:

This stone was laid by Mrs. F. W. Bourne  
in memory of Susan Rattenbury  
W. O'Bryan's first convert and helper  
in North Devon and of her husband  
Hatton Rattenbury  
one of the first circuit stewards.

Thomas Robbins farmed Lot 16, Conc 6, Darlington Twp, just north of Hampton. Son Thomas had a business as a cabinetmaker in Hampton. William was farming in Darlington until his wife and son died in 1861. He eventually moved to Kansas and then Oklahoma. Esdras, known as Ezra, was a cabinetmaker at Leskard. He immigrated to North Dakota where there are descendants today. John was a farmer also, preferring to use the spelling of Robins. Hezekiah had a Stave Mill at Leskard which he sold in about 1872 and moved to Orillia to operate a bigger one there. Aaron and Moses

jointly owned and farmed Lot 33, Conc 8, Leskard. Aaron moved to Calgary. Moses took over the property and continued to farm. Samuel farmed Lot 20, Conc 10, Darlington until sometime in the 1920s when he followed his son to Ohio.

The family was all recorded as BC on the 1851 Census, but had all become Methodist by 1861.

Maria Niccolls died 1856 and is buried in the Hampton BC Cemetery, Darlington Twp. Thomas Robbins married Mary (Finlay) Holliday in 1859, Whitby Twp. Mary died sometime before the 1861 census was taken and Thomas married a third time in 1867 to Mary Johnston Carscadden. Thomas died Jun 1878. He is now buried in the Bowmanville Cemetery.

Messages from Readers:

My great grandfather immigrated to Canada from Devon (Honiton/Ottery St. Mary) in the late 1800's. He settled in King City area and his homestead was torn down to build Canada's Wonderland. His son (my grandfather) was one of the pioneers who homesteaded in Saskatchewan. I'm more than willing to share my research & stories with others!

Jane (Anning) Adams, Cambridge ON wadams@golden.net

Mary CHURCH bc 1831 in Devon. She married Solomon COWELL probably in Wentworth County ON. Their first child was born c1853 in Wentworth. They were in Wentworth in 1861, Halton in 1871 and Kent in 1880 when she died. I would appreciate any information in Mary - immigration? parents? siblings? where in Devon?

Diane French diane.french@sympatico.ca

Some of my DOWNING ancestors were born in Devon and migrated to Ontario ca.1870/1880. One of my grandfather's brothers PHILLIP DOWNING came over ca.1875 and settled first at Port Hope and in ca.1880 he moved to Apsley, Peterborough County. Another brother GEORGE DOWNING came over ca.1880 and settled in the Parry Sound area. My grandfather RICHARD DOWNING and his brother JOSEPH DOWNING and JOSEPH'S wife SUSAN ANN HANNAFORD came over in 1883. JOSEPH settled in Peterborough and lived out his life there. My grandfather apparently did not stay long in Canada, but I have no trace of him from 1883 until 1895 when he married in Sturgis, South Dakota. I have quite a lot of info on the DOWNING Family in Devon and also in Ontario.

Clyde Downing clyde1927@msn.com

I am a descendant of Hugh and Louisa (Littlejohns) Hillier, who left Devon about 1840. They lived in York County for some time and then moved to Goderich in Huron County. Most of their descendants remained in Ontario.

Charlotte Craven, Camarillo, CA, USA craven3@adelphia.net

Someone told me about this site: CDs, fiche and books for sale, mostly Westcountry and quite a lot for Devon. [www.thebookshop.org.uk](http://www.thebookshop.org.uk)

Robin Cox

My ancestors, the Kernicks, arrived in Canada circa 1843-45 from Devon/Cornwall. They were Bible Christians. They first settled in Darlington Twp. where my ancestor, Thomas Kernick, blacksmith, is buried in Bethesda Cemetery. His wife, Elizabeth/Betsy is most probably buried there, too. Most of their children moved from Darlington to Osborne Twp. in then-Huron County. Some Kernicks are still near Exeter but. Thomas' son, James, married in Huron and moved north to Muskoka District. His children remained staunch Methodists and passed that heritage down to my mother.  
Ann Harris, Toronto [annha@interlog.com](mailto:annha@interlog.com)

The name Treble is probably locative and derived from Treable, a farm just west of Exeter which is described in a Saxon charter of 739 A.D. and is also mentioned in Domesday. The farm has shrunk from about 10,000 acres to 186 acres today and still bears the name. I have visited the present owners, the Sellick family, on several occasions.

My GG grandfather, John Treble, from the Treble's Vognacott farm just north of Holsworthy, came to Canada in 1843 and settled in Huron County, Colborne Twp. He bought and sold a farm and the subsequent acquisition from 1853 is today operated by a descendant, John Treble. My family of Trebles in Devon were farmers from Holsworthy, Ashwater, and Clawton. Richard Treble was a warden of Clawton Parish in the 1590's.

John Treble's wife Elizabeth Stevens was from Bradworthy just 10 miles from the Vognacott farm. The Stevens were among the earliest settlers in Goderich/Colborne Twps., the first of whom preceded John's emigration by a decade. Bruce Elliot would define this as typical chain migration.

I have been visiting Devon annually for about 13 years doing family research. Unfortunately there are no Trebles living in the Holsworthy area so my endeavors have been limited to data from the Devon Record Offices and the West Country Studies Library; and of course the British Library, the Guildhall, the Family Record Centre, the PRO, and the SOG.

Don Treble, Ottawa [dwtreble@magma.ca](mailto:dwtreble@magma.ca)

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