



# No Longer Overwhelmed by a Frequent Name

## Whitehouse Study Thrives 10 years On

by **Keith Percy 1032**

**T**en years ago, I stopped responding to new enquirers and my one-name study continued to serve existing correspondents for only another three months. Of course, the study had to be removed from the Guild Register and the article "Overwhelming Whitehouses force my sad decision to de-register" was published in the Journal for January-March 2002 at pages 10 & 11. It told how during the year 2000 the number of enquiries rose to 70, as a result of my website, about five times the previous level and were running at about the same level in the first nine months of 2001. This article is about the revival of the "Whitehouse Family History Centre" and offers some ideas for others who have registered a frequent surname.

### Everything Had to Go Digital

The root of the problem was that all my records were on paper and at that time there were no online indexes such as now available from "Ancestry" and "Findmypast". Consequently, it took me a very long time to search a new enquiry in my paper collection. This was extensive and included slips of over 3,000 census households from 1841 to 71, as well as 7,000 marriage entries copied from the GRO indexes. The records had to be put on computer and loaded to my website. I thought of the transformation as a traditional corner shop switching to self-service.

Most Guild members study rare names, work out relationships, construct trees and fit people to them. I worked the other way around, by registering enquirers as "correspondents", improving their trees and linking them to others. I had accumulated files on 414 correspondents, contained in three and a half drawers of a filing cabinet and two giant detergent boxes. To continue with this would soon exhaust available space. So, the trees also had to be digitised. The card index to the trees, which filled seven shoe boxes, was another candidate.

It seemed a huge task - and it was, especially because my census records were far from complete. However, I set to and in 2006 re-opened for one month, admitting 28 new correspondents. That was a year of huge progress, at the end of which I had all Whitehouse households in the 1841-71 censuses, among many other records, on "MS Excel" spreadsheets. Finally, in February 2007, I re-opened fully and re-registered the name with the Guild.

### Managing my Big One-Name Study

By that time, I had evolved a settled way of working, which I still use today. A key decision was not to try to put the miniature family group sheets, on cards in the seven shoe boxes, onto computer. I had realised that for most of the time I was dealing with enquiries by using an index of those who had married a Whitehouse. I had transcribed all 8,800

Whitehouse marriages in the GRO (England & Wales) indexes from July 1837 to 1911, thus covering the years for which there is no cross-reference to the spouse. The reference numbers of my correspondents were added to that index and also to my census and probate indexes. To deal with marriages before civil registration or abroad, I continued to use my card index, gradually establishing spreadsheets as correspondents' files were digitised.

Another very important decision was to throw out any files in which the correspondent had no firm marriage or census entry before 1882. I hasten to say that this was not done in a high-handed way, as whenever possible I remedied the deficiency and/or contacted the person to establish whether he had made further progress backwards.

By the end of 2006, I had digitised the files of 60 correspondents. Many contained little more than letters and e-mails. I needed a quick way of drawing trees. That led to two more vital decisions. No. 3 was to limit the trees by not including any generation beginning after 1901. Fourthly, I did not take the tree down female lines in the direction ancient to modern. In other words, if Mary Whitehouse married Joe Bloggs, I would not include their children except to say "issue". I allowed myself the flexibility of making exceptions from time to time, especially if the issue included a forename which ran through many generations, as that helped to confirm that the relationships were correct.

### Drawing Trees in Microsoft "Excel"

The quickest way to draw trees, I reckoned, was in "Excel". Using a spreadsheet for this purpose must seem crazy to those who have never tried it. My method uses a tall tree format and a portrait mode. The oldest generation of ancestor goes in the extreme left-hand column and the tree moves through successive columns to the youngest generation. By judicious use of the hyphen and drawing lines, plus good mouse control, I created customised trees with all manner of "doglegs" not easily done in family tree programs. Three other factors were at play here.

The first factor was the "universality" of MS "Excel". It did away with the need for the reader to have a family tree program. The few people who did not have access to MS "Excel" could download the free reader from the Microsoft website or, better, install a substitute program such as "Open Office", also free.

The second factor was that Whitehouse is a frequent name in the West Midlands, enjoyed largely by nailers, coal miners, iron workers, engineers etc. The vast majority were not well-off people who left wills. This meant that most genealogies

	William WHITEHOUSE			
	c. 10 Mar 1793			
	DY St Thos			
Edward WHITEHOUSE	d. presumed young [1]			
b.				
d.				
m. 17 May 1792	Mary WHITEHOUSE [2]			
	DY St Thos			
Mary NOCK	c. 12 May 1793			
b.	DY St Thos			
d.		Cornelius WHITEHOUSE		
		c. 26 May 1822		
KEY	(Edge Tool Maker, later	WY St Bt	John Edward Adcock	Henry James
Events	Whitesmith; inventor of	i. 04 Dec 1825 ae 3	(Gun Maker)	WHITEHOUSE
ae aged	continuously welded	WY St Bt	b. r. 1q. 1855	(Gunsmith &
b. born	tube; Tube Maker; later		Melton Mowbray RD	Tobacconist)
c. baptised	Engineer [4]		c. 28 May 1855	b. 1875-76 Oakham RUT
cs census	b. 22 Jul 1795 OY [4]		Melton Mowbray St Mary	(r. 2q. 1876 Oakham RD)
d. died	c. 04 Oct 1795		d. 07 Apr 1928	Albert WHITEHOUSE
h1, h2, h3 husband's	DY St Thos	Edward Searl	Oakham RUT	(Draper)
1st, 2nd, 3rd marriage	d. r. 3q. 1883 ae 88	WHITEHOUSE	m. 05 May 1875	b. 1877-78 Oakham RUT
i. buried	1st. 2nd. 3rd marriage	(Gun Maker)	LE St George	(r. 1q. 1878 Oakham RD)
m. married	m. 11 Jun 1821 h1	c. 10 Dec 1826 WY St Bt	Mary Ross ROBB	
r. registered	WS St Matthew ? [5]	d.	b. 1851-52 SCT	Florence Jessie
p. partnered	Mary PETERS	m. 12 Apr 1854	d. 01 Dec 1918 ae 54	WHITEHOUSE
q. quarter of year	b. 1796-97	Melton Mowbray St Mary	Oakham RUT	b. 1878-79 Oakham RUT
RD Registration District	i. 17 Dec 1822 ae 25	Susannah PICK	Cornelius James	(r. 1q. 1879 Oakham RD)
t. twin	WY St Bt	c. 30 Oct 1816	WHITEHOUSE	Miriam Christine
underlining denotes	oooooooooooooooooooo	Great Dalby LEI	b. r. 1q. 1857	WHITEHOUSE
name by which	B St Mtn [6]	d. r. 4q. 1897 ae 81	Melton Mowbray RD	b. about Dec 1880
usually known	Lucy ASTON	Melton Mowbray RD	c. 09 Mar 1857	Oakham RUT
w1, w2 wife's	(née BRIGHTON) [7]		Melton Mowbray St Mary	(r. 1q. 1881 Oakham RD)
1st, 2nd marriage	c. 01 May 1803 WY St Bt		d. r. 4q. 1857	
	i. 22 Jul 1828 ae 25	Elizabeth Power	Melton Mowbray St Mary	Douglas Edward
Places	WY St Bt	WHITEHOUSE	Susan Emma	WHITEHOUSE
AS Aston	oooooooooooooooooooo	c. 14 Oct 1832 WY St Bt	WHITEHOUSE	b. r. 1q. 1885 Oakham RD
B Birmingham	m. 03 Jan 1831 h3	i. 27 Apr 1835 WY St Bt	b. r. 4q. 1858	
DY Dudley	WY St Bt [8]		Melton Mowbray RD	
GLS Gloucestershire	Charlotte POWER		c. 18 Aug 1859	
HAM Hampshire	b. 1803-05 B		Melton Mowbray St Mary	
LE Leicester	d. r. 4q. 1873 ae 72		m/p. before 1881 cs	→225
LEI Leicestershire	WV RD		[14]	

**Partial Tree in Excel**

petered out in the mid- to late 1700s. With the above-mentioned cut-off at 1901 for the modern end, trees could usually be accommodated within a 5- or 6- column format in a comfortable font to read.

The tall tree layout enabled a great deal of information to be included in a relatively small space, which is critically important when the surname is frequent. To distinguish one Whitehouse from another, day, month and year dates are helpful, as are also places of events and occupations. With the heavy West Midlands bias in the surname distribution, I developed a two-letter town code for that region, which I use alongside postcodes for other towns and the Chapman county code. Keys to these and other symbols fit neatly into unused space below the oldest ancestor, in the extreme left-column, without looking too obtrusive. Footnotes to the tree also go here.

The third issue related to archiving. The whole point of digitising the files was to preserve them, since many had non-public information derived from handed-down stories, data from family bibles or just painstaking research. The concise tall trees in "Excel" occupy far fewer pages than conventional drop-down charts produced by family tree programs. This makes it practical to store them as paper printouts on archive-quality paper, as well as digitally. "Excel" might not survive, but paper will be around for a long time and has the advantage that it can be scanned to whatever digital format is current. Of course, at the moment it is simple to create a portable display format (pdf) file from "Excel", but even pdf might have a limited life. I store my paper versions as stapled A4 pages in heavy gauge polypropylene pockets ("Ryman" premium grade) in ring binders. They are much more expensive than the normal thin pockets, but have a lovely feel, which enhances the pleasure of completing a tree and inserting it.

**Collecting Records - How Worthwhile?**

When the surname is frequent, it becomes impossible to collect all references to it. Even core genealogical datasets need to be limited. I started with the GRO (England & Wales) births, deaths and marriages from July 1837 to 1911, copying

the 38,981 Whitehouse entries from the paper indexes at the Family Records Centre and its predecessors, but it is not a task that I would undertake today, even using online data such as from "FreeBMD". Rather, I would confine it to marriages. That would be a launch pad for a marriage mining exercise to obtain the full details from church registers, which, in my opinion, is the most important record for a big one-name study, but more of that below. The 8,800 marriages are referenced with the correspondents' numbers, taken initially from the card index and enhanced as digitisation has proceeded. 7,920 (90 per cent) have an identified spouse, useful in eliminating possibilities as well as finding them, and, of course, they have all been sent to the Guild Marriage Index.

Guild members have to face the fact that record collecting is increasingly being done for us by online data providers and far faster than we can achieve. What we can provide is greater accuracy and the correction of mis-transcriptions. I feel a glow of satisfaction at my hard work on collecting all Whitehouse households in the 1841-71 censuses, which involve 34,977 people, when I see such bizarre renderings of the name as Atutchcus, White Mouse, White Snape, McWhitehouse, Vohitehons, Silutense, Ukikhouse and Shitcharce! More importantly, the spreadsheet layout has enabled me to look at households that are geographically close and make deductions from that. However, in retrospect, this was not a good use of time. For the 1881 census, I have collected only those entries that feature in my trees, referenced with the correspondent's number. This "referencing file", as I call it, has been built up slowly alongside digitisation of trees, numbering 4,036 people, of whom 3,123 are Whitehouses, which represents 40 percent of the expected total of 7,772 Whitehouses and deviant versions thereof. This method is strongly recommended.

Thirty years ago I made a key decision, never regretted. It was to extract details from Whitehouse wills and administrations in which the grant was before 9th January 1858, when the Principal Probate Registry began. My index of 492 grants and the people mentioned in them, which is complete from 1731 to 1858 in all registries of interest for the Whitehouse name, seems unlikely to be obtainable online within my lifetime. It remains my second most important record and is referenced to correspondents' numbers.

Another worthwhile record for a frequent name is the Principal Probate Registry indexes for 1858 onwards, because, amazingly, there is still no index that is reliable and highly accessible. There is a partial index available on a computer at the PPR, but accompanied by a warning notice about reliability. Personally, I have found it awkward to use and the terminal is often occupied. While extracting the entries and building up a spreadsheet is laborious, it is useful having the results on one's own computer in a spreadsheet format and, again, I reference it to the correspondents. I have got as far forward as 1950, which covers 2,039 Whitehouse grants.

**To What Extent are Parish Registers Worth Extracting ?**

The more frequent the surname, the more important it becomes to use every scrap of available information. With baptisms, the father's occupation and address are very necessary and for marriages in the old style registers, before civil registration began, witnesses are crucial. Thus, I have started compiling spreadsheets for parishes where the name

is most common and in time this will probably become my third most important record. At the same time, in a separate “referencing file”, I am collecting the pre-July 1837 marriages from the digitised trees, here recording only the parties, date and place, but adding the correspondents’ numbers. With a mere 541 entries, this has been easily manageable. For US marriages, I adopt the same system, but cover all years to 1911 in this format. For Australian and New Zealand marriages, where the numbers are much smaller, I have full indexes, again referenced.

Marriages, census and probate (more accurately, grants of representation, the proper generic term to include administrations) are as far as I would recommend going in core records. Baptisms from 1813 to about 1845 in the areas of densest surname distribution are well worth considering. Many may react with horror to the limited nature of these suggestions, but it is very important with a frequent name to focus on the realistically achievable.

### Marriage Mining

I referred above to my most important record, the details of marriages in the civil registration period. By “details” I mean all the essential information in a marriage certificate or church register. Parish registers are fast becoming available online, but establishing a spreadsheet of details has been critical for my Whitehouse research, because it can be sorted by the name of the father. I have acquired the full details of 6,692 of the 8,800 Whitehouse marriages in the July 1837 to 1911 period, which is 76 percent. (These statistics count the 59 known Whitehouse-Whitehouse marriages twice). I am particularly delighted to have included all Anglican marriages in Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, except for 10 marriages at Darlaston All Saints (registers destroyed in WW2) and 1 at Amblecote Holy Trinity (register at church; access reportedly problematic). While most of this work has been through my own efforts, I cannot give enough thanks to the Guild Marriage Challengers.

### Fast Forward

150 new correspondents have been added to the 414 of ten years ago and, after 35 deletions as not complying with my basic requirements, the total has reached 529. 352 of them (67 percent) are linked together, i.e. (usually) they are cousins or cousins-in-law. 52 trees, belonging to 61 correspondents, remain to be digitised, which should be achievable by the end of 2013.

The bundles in the two detergent boxes have gone and the remaining paper files fit comfortably within a single drawer. By-passing referencing of the 1891 and 1901 censuses as not realistically achievable, I have extracted 40 percent of Whitehouses in the 1911 census onto a spreadsheet and want to complete this project. I place a lot of value on the 1911 census, because the number of years of the marriage is given, which enables me to confirm its correctness, when I work forwards on the collateral lines of a pedigree. Here, and also with the ongoing transcription of the 1880 US census, I have been fortunate to be helped by three of my correspondents. Non-core records include apprentices, fire policy, GWR shareholders, lunatic asylums, patents, and the Sedgley Manor Rolls. All told, the databases on my website contain 109,604 lines of typing and all are freely available to download.

Perhaps it is the wealth of material on my website, perhaps genealogies in “Genes Reunited” and similar, but the flood of enquiries of ten years ago has slowed to a trickle, with which I can deal fairly comfortably.

There is much more that I would like to put on computer, but priority has to be given to revising the trees in my collection and preparing everything for archiving. ■

---

## SILVERTHORN(E) FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Report of the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Gathering at Raglan, Gwent, on Saturday, 2nd July, 2011.

The Silverthorn(e) Family Association has 58 members, most of whom live in the south of England or south Wales, with a few from other parts of the UK. We also have members in Europe, New Zealand and the United States where Monty Reed, who lives in California, carried out most of the original research into the Silverthorne name.

The name was first recorded in 1450 in the Wiltshire village of Steeple Ashton and it is in this beautiful village that we usually hold our annual meeting. This year, however, we held the Gathering in Raglan, so that more of our Welsh members would be able to come. Thirty-three members and seven guests attended the meeting which was held in a function room of the Raglan Parc Golf Club. Following the AGM and a buffet lunch provided by the golf club, we had an interesting talk on Raglan Castle by a local resident, Anna Tribe. Mrs. Tribe told us about the often eccentric owners and residents of the castle over the centuries, principally the Beaufort family, whose main residence is now at Badminton in Gloucestershire. Her family had been estate managers

for the Beauforts. One Silverthorne couple had also been employed by the same powerful family as a housekeeper and coachman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The committee of the Association has been without a Treasurer or Recorder for the last two years, the former post being filled temporarily by Elizabeth Silverthorne who has now kindly agreed to become Recorder and to take over the extensive archive which has accumulated over the years. We also appointed a new Vice-chairman and Treasurer at the meeting in July so the committee is back to strength. We hope soon to have our own website and would welcome any Silverthorne related enquiries.

### Committee members:

Chairman:	Richard Moore
Vice-chairman:	Lloyd Silverthorne
Secretary:	Jane Hughes
Treasurer:	Christine Silverthorne
Recorder:	Elizabeth Silverthorne
Newsletter Editor:	Ruth Henderson

Enquiries to: [janehughes2003@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:janehughes2003@yahoo.co.uk) or 01189464899 ■