

The Willoughbys of Illogan and Redruth.

The Willoughby family in Cornwall lived in and around Redruth over more than three hundred years and through many generations. At the present time there are still a number of Willoughbys living in the same area. It seems likely that there have been members of the same family - distant cousins of one another, all descended in some way from the same ancestors, who reached Cornwall in the mid seventeenth century. Thus the Willoughby family have had a foothold in and near Redruth for more than 350 years.

The first of the family to settle in Cornwall may have been Thomas Willoughby, who was born in Colchester in about 1621. His father was supposedly one John Wilbie (b about 1591) and his mother is said to have been Katherine Collins (b about 1596). They are believed to have married in 1620. There were several variations in the spelling of the name over the generations. Wilby, Wilbie, Willaby, etc. were all used by different ancestors.

There were other Willoughbys in Cornwall earlier than this date, but that family appear to have died out prior to Thomas Willoughby's move to Cornwall, which seems to have been the result of his having to leave Essex in a hurry (having been ordered by the Colchester Court to pay maintenance of 1/6d per week for the "base child" of one Susan Parker)!

Thomas married Margaret Nicholas, daughter of James Nicholas and Elizabeth, on 21 Jul 1647 in Wendron Cornwall. (Margaret Nicholas was born circa 1627 in St.Breage Cornwall and died circa 1679 in St.Martin Meneage Cornwall.)

This couple had at least three children, John, Thomas and Peter. Thomas (baptised July 21 1649) had three children by his first wife, though no details of his wife survive. His sons are given as Thomas (1674), George (1678) and Nowell (1679). Presumably his first wife died sometime after the arrival of Nowell, because Thomas re-married in 1700. His second wife is recorded as being Mary Willoughby, but whether she was a cousin or this was her married name is uncertain. Over the next eight years they managed to produce eight further children, including twins.

The first mention of Illogan as a place of residence is associated with this generation. Thomas died in Illogan and both his two wives seem to have come from the same locality.

Thomas's son by his first marriage, Thomas (b 1674), married Jane Richards and had at least six children. Their son Thomas, born 1700, married Elizabeth Pascoe and was the father of at least 11 known children, who included the first Oliver Willoughby (b 1739). Oliver married Margaret Webster and they had nine children who included two of our direct ancestors - Thomas (b1761) - the eldest and Peter (b 1779) - the youngest of this family. Thomas married Ann Chapel (whose family were ancestors of Greg and Ian Chapel - cricketers). They had six children before Thomas died around 1800. Oliver Willoughby (b 1794) was the second son in this family. He married Phillipa Grose in 1815 and, after her death, married Sarah Andrew (Andrewartha), the widow of Charles Andrewartha, whose maiden name was Sarah Locket (b 1796).

The sister of Phillipa Grose, Elizabeth Grose, married Oliver's uncle, Robert Grose. These two Grose sisters are ancestors to several of the Willoughby researchers of recent times. Elwyn Rigby, in Mildura, Australia is a descendant of Robert Willoughby

and Elizabeth Grose, while Bill Phillips, in Melbourne is a descendant of Oliver and Phillipa.

Peter (born 1779), the youngest of Oliver and Margaret's family, married Julia Uren in February 1808. Her name is represented differently in different sources - Julian, Julien and Julina having all been suggested. The family bible of her youngest son, Richard Willoughby, shows her name as "Juluia". It seems likely that she was Julia and that the bible representation was a phonetic spelling - allowing for the Cornish dialectical version of the name "Joule-yerr". She and Peter appear in the Redruth census of 1841, when he is documented as a "Mine Agent". Her name is given in this source as "Julia". Peter's name is given in the family bible as "Petter" - which may again be a phonetic spelling of the dialectical name "Pay-terr"? Peter and Julia had ten children between 1809 and 1835. Richard, the last of the family, arrived when his mother was 46 years old.

Fred Morley in the USA, who did a huge amount of research on this family, is also descended from Peter and Julia Willoughby (his grandmother was Helena Willoughby).

In the latter part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century many of the Willoughbys were involved with the Copper and Tin mining, that was the major local industry.

Most people, when talking about mining in Cornwall, think of Tin as having been the major metal that was to be found there. However for long periods of time Copper was the metal that the miners were seeking.

Demand for Copper was substantial during the industrial revolution and prices were high. Moreover the reserves of copper were good and Cornwall was the main source in Britain. In the early years of the nineteenth century mining employed almost a third of the working men in the county.

Tin was to be found in the same areas as Copper, but usually at a deeper level. As the mines went further down, in an effort to find more Copper, tin was often to be found and, when the Copper was exhausted, the miners could continue to work - merely changing to the other metal. However the tin industry was on a smaller scale and employed fewer people and greater problems with drainage presented new problems for the mining companies, as well as increased costs.

At this time, early in the nineteenth century, steam engines were being built to provide the necessary power to maintain drainage as well as to carry the ore to the surface. Richard Trevithick, a Cornishman, developed high pressure engines (which antedated Stephenson by several years). Such engines were built locally in Cornwall and over the decades that followed were produced for export - to such an extent that Cornish technology in steam engines came to be found in mines in many parts of the world later in the century.

The life of mining families in Cornwall was however very tough. As with coal mining, in other parts of Britain, boys from mining families started working in the mine from soon after the age of ten. Many health problems were endemic amongst the mining community - including chronic cough, tuberculosis, etc. Life expectancy was short and few miners were able to continue to work beyond the age of about 40.

Accidents were common and injury or death an ever present threat, as is apparent to anyone who explores the numerous church burial grounds in the mining areas (such as that at Illogan Church where many of the Willoughby's were buried).

The gradual exhaustion of the copper and tin reserves, coupled with increased costs and the discovery of more easily accessible deposits elsewhere in the world, lead to progressive decline in Cornish mining industry, in the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. There was a substantial exodus of Cornishmen, many of whom with their family tradition being tied up with mining over many generations, emigrated to other countries where they could use their skills. Large Cornish communities grew up in such far flung places as the USA, South Africa, Australia and parts of South America. Others changed their trade, but all too often also left Cornwall and emigrated to other countries where the economic environment was better, such as Canada.

It has been said that, in the latter part of the nineteenth century at least (and probably well into the twentieth too), "down any mine, anywhere in the World, one would find a Cornishman".

Peter and Julia's youngest son Richard was himself a tin and copper miner during his early adult life. His wife Ann was the daughter of his first cousin Oliver Willoughby (a copper miner) by his second wife, Sarah. At the time of the 1841 Illogan census Oliver and Sarah were living with their two small daughters, Elizabeth (1837) and Ann (1838). Also in the house were Sarah's three sons by her first marriage (to Charles Andrewartha) - John, William and Charles Trewartha (all copper miners) and several of Oliver's first family (by his first wife, Phillipa Grose), including John, William, Oliver and Henry Willoughby - all described as copper miners too!



Richard Willoughby

Other Willoughbys, during the 18th and 19th centuries were farmers, labourers and "Yeomen". Many of them died relatively young - not lasting beyond middle adult life. However a number survived into their seventies or eighties.



Ann Willoughby

Richard and Ann Willoughby, were born in a period when mining in Cornwall was beginning its great decline. Richard certainly worked as a miner, but many of his family (cousins, sons, etc) had to look elsewhere for work and moved away or overseas. He himself worked in the tin and copper mines as a young man. Later he was described as a "Commission Agent as Traveller" (1881 census) and later still as a "Bookseller" (1891 and 1901 census).

They had a large family with 11 children, most of whom reached adult life - though information about them is sadly incomplete. One of the younger daughters, Edith Jane Willoughby, born in 1875, was alive and still living in Redruth in the 1950s.

One of the brothers - James Lander Willoughby emigrated to Australia with his wife, Mary Kinsman and two small children. They left Cornwall in 1898 and settled in Chiltern Valley, Victoria where they had three other Australian born children. Interestingly his wife's paternal grandmother was Mary Locket, sister of Sarah Locket

(James's maternal grandmother) so they were second cousins. Mary's aunt, named Sarah Kinsman, married Martin Prist Pascoe and they had emigrated to Victoria thirty years earlier and settled in the same area as that to which James and Mary later headed.



James and Mary Willoughby and family c 1904

The families of Martin and Sarah and that of James and Mary remained closely linked and their descendants are still in contact a century later. James Lander Willoughby died in Abermain, NSW in 1926. Judy Dixon, a descendant of Martin and Sarah Pascoe, who has a strong interest in local history, still lives in Chiltern and has provided much information about this family.

Another brother, Richard Willoughby who worked as a tailor, emigrated to British Columbia with his wife Annie Cheffers and several English born children in 1906. Descendants of this family are still living in and around Vancouver and have been in contact in recent years.

William Charles (Charlie) Willoughby, was the first child in the family. He was born in Redruth on March 15th 1857 and studied at Spring Hill Theological College in Birmingham being ordained as a Congregationalist minister in 1882. It has been suggested that he went into the ministry to get away from the mines?

He was appointed by the London Missionary Society (LMS) to central Africa, where he went in 1882. He returned home with malaria in 1883 and resumed study at Spring Hill. He married Charlotte Elizabeth (Bessie) Pountney (b 8/1/1862, d 1940) on October 27th 1885 at Moseley Road Congregationalist Church, Birmingham. He was a minister in Perth, Scotland between 1885-1887, where the first son of the marriage,



WC Willoughby and African chiefs 1895

Howard, was born in 1886, and thereafter was engaged in deputation work for the LMS between 1887-1889. He worked as a minister in Brighton from 1889-1892 and was then appointed an LMS missionary to the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) in 1892. He went to Palapye to work among the Bamangwato of the Christian chief Khama (Kgama) III in 1893. He accompanied Khama and other chiefs, Bathoen and Sebele, to England to help them oppose Cecil Rhodes's demands for administrative rights over the Protectorate in 1895.

The fact that Bechuanaland retained its independence from South Africa had a number of knock on effects in the years that followed. The Boer war has been said to have occurred as an indirect consequence - though this is probably a very tenuous connection, if linked at all?

More directly attributable is the fact that Bechuanaland (Botswana as it now is) retained a black African government and was never ruled over by white imperialists. The fact that Botswana is one of the very few stable and relatively peaceful and successful African countries, still ruled by black Africans, is a direct legacy of Willoughby's influence.

He was a member of the South African Native Races Committee, London, 1900-1908. He removed with the Bamangwato tribe to Serowe, 1903 and was appointed first principal of the proposed LMS Central School for Bechuanaland in 1903.

He established the school, named the Tiger Kloof Native Institution, on a farm near Vryburg in the Cape Colony in 1904 (it celebrated its centenary last year). He was the local correspondent of the Royal Anthropological Society from 1905. He gave evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Assembly of the Cape of Good Hope in 1908. He resigned as principal of Tiger Kloof owing to ill-health in 1915. He had responsibility for the Molepolole mission in the years from 1914-1917. In 1917 he visited Australia and New Zealand on an LMS deputation and he returned to England via America in 1918. Thereafter he was Professor of African Missions at the Kennedy School of Missions of Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, USA, 1919-1931



Painting of Tiger Kloof
c 1914 (by Dora Woods?)

He was elected Vice-President of the Fourth International Congregational Council, 1920. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of sacred theology, Hartford Seminary, on his retirement in 1931. He then settled in Birmingham, where he lived until his death in 1938, aged 82.



WCW with wife and
three surviving children
about 1910

He was a fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and of the Royal Geographical Society.

He and his wife had five children, of whom only three lived to adulthood. The eldest son, Howard, died from TB at the age of 15. The youngest, Grace, died in infancy. Two sons - Godfrey (b 1888) and Edgar (b 1894) lived to an advanced age, but neither had children of their own.

Doris, born in 1890, married John Crozier, a school teacher, 15 years her senior. He had worked at Tiger Kloof but was, at the time of their marriage, a school principal in Barkly West. He was the son of a Wesleyan Methodist minister. They were married in 1914 at a joint ceremony at which Godfrey Willoughby was married to Medora (Dora) Woods. The marriage took place in South Africa - with the photograph of the wedding group outside the Principal's house at Tiger Kloof. The date of the wedding was several weeks

after Rev Willoughby finished his appointment at the school and handed over as principal to his successor AJ Haile. Presumably the wedding and associated photograph were organised to take place at the school for sentimental reasons?

Doris and John had two daughters, both born in South Africa - Agnes (1915 - 2005) and Muriel (1918 - 1999). They left South Africa in 1920 and lived on the Isle of Wight for most of the next ten years, after which they moved to Birmingham to be near Doris's parents when they returned from Hartford in retirement.