

THE FAMILY OF NICHOLAS HOLT THAT ISN'T

(OR)

**Why, In Using False And Misleading Information, Trying To Trace The Pedigree Of
The Family of Nicholas Holt That Is, Can Lead One Into
A Very Merry Dance!!**



By Arthur Thomas.

Please Pass On To Other Relations

Hello, everyone!

Yes, it's me again! As you can see by the thickness of this thesis you have a fair bit of reading to do. If you have received this in the mail on a Friday, it might conveniently replace the Weekend Magazine liftout from your newspaper as required – if not preferred – reading.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention that **YOU MIGHT LIKE TO GET SOME LIQUID REFRESHMENTS**, be it tea, coffee, a “tinnie” – whatever. Having said that quite loudly, who was the wag who, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, said “Arthur’s shouting!!” AARRGGHH!!

You will recall that a little over twelve months ago you received newsletters (a large number even received a CD) denouncing, decrying and debunking the nonsense and myth concerning coats of arms that did not apply to descendants of Nicholas Holt who, it is **emphasised**, can not be proved and therefore ought not be claimed to be a descendant of any of the “northern England” Holts, to wit, the Holt families of Lancashire, Warwickshire or Cheshire. That coat of arms was proved to be extinct – not dormant!!

None of the illustrious Holts of the areas just mentioned (or in any other shire of England) were elevated to the Peerage; that is, there were no marquesses, earls, viscounts or barons who were previously Holts. Lord Nicholas Holt indeed!! Lord Love-a-Duck!!

Further to that, Nicholas Holt has not been shown by way of a verified pedigree to be a descendant of any Holt family from anywhere in England!

Over these past twelve months I have been somewhat busy looking into and researching other aspects of the 2-page screed ‘Family of Nicholas Holt’, especially the Romsey references - tanning and “history”- but, more particularly, the part in the main opening paragraph where it is purported that John del Holt was the ancestor of all the Holts in England!

Wow!! Amazing!! Balderdash!! Ludicrous! The stuff that would make roses grow!! And I suppose the ubiquitous Mr. Ripley will be asked to Believe it or Not!!

Having said that – and increased your curiosity and interest - let me elucidate and make it quite clear as well as throw some bright light into and onto this ‘dim-shadowy-clouded-in-mystery’ subject that is being passed off – which you can see by the cross-head on the next page – as The Family of Nicholas Holt issued in 2005. It is no such thing at all!

Over the past twelve months the research I have undertaken has included the following:

- (1) Contact with the Lower Test Valley Archaeological Study group (LTVAS) of Romsey, Hampshire, who are quite famous and noted for “digging up” information in their records, manuscripts, wills, documents etc that applies to all things Romsonian
- (2) A visit to England to research shipping records for the ‘James’ (and research data for other genealogy that I do) at Kew.
- (3) On the same trip, establish personal contact with over 70 persons of various and very different-to-others Holts’ bloodlines of Lancashire, Warwickshire, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, having previously made acquaintance with them (and many others) through the Internet, newspaper and magazine articles and, of course, “word of mouth.”
- (4) Have discussions and correspondence with a head of the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester. (The Holt hierarchy really has friends in high places!!)
- (5) Correspondence and discussions with six experts in genealogy – one each for Wiltshire, Hampshire Cheshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire and Middlesex (London) – all of whom are very familiar and knowledgeable with the history and the “English as she is spoke” of the 13th to 18th Centuries.
- (6) Correspondence with a historian at Edinburgh University and others with “know-how” – well, some of these ancient documents are hard to come by and, when they can be, are found in quite some unexpected places!!
- (7) Many emails with a former president of the Holt Association of America.

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- (8) Sundry emails from those of Holt blood (not necessarily of Nicholas Holt) in America.
- (9) A letter published in 'Practical Family History' (England) for November 2007, under the heading, "Bogus Pedigree".

Yep, I have been busy. I shall now deal with the aspects of that research as it applies to the two-page screed Family of Nicholas Holt distributed in Australia in 2005 to the Australian descendants of William Greeley Holt, himself a descendant of Nicholas Holt, and the connections with the above resources.

Family of Nicholas Holt First Generation

1. **Nicholas Holt** was born on 19 Oct 1602 in Of Romsey, Hampshire, England.

That is very much doubted. Correspondence with the LTVAS group (Phoebe Merrick, Chairman) shows that there is no trace in Romsey, Hampshire, England, of Nicholas's birth (and therefore no mention of his parents), none for his marriage to Elizabeth Short (OK, the tract does not state that he was married there, but the LTVAS looked for it, didn't they?). There is also no record in Romsey of his daughter (Hannah's) birth. Same "OK" as above.

This news was somewhat disappointing for I had more than half expected that, as it is stated that Nicholas was a younger sibling in a family of 12, the records at Romsey would have been full of Holt names and that all of these "siblings" would, hopefully, have birth and marriage records also. More of Romsey later.

Also - from an extract of "The First Three Generations of Holts in America, Newburgh, N.Y; Holt Assoc of America 1930, 395pp, ".....there is no mention of Nicolas (sic) Holt in the carefully preserved records of the Old Abbey Church of Romsey. It is believed his real place of nativity and occupation were concealed....."

Nicholas Holt's birth date and year have been arrived at by knowing his age at the time of his death and deducting that from the year of his death and arriving at 1602/03. The mention of Romsey (in? of?) comes from the **James** shipping list.

He died on 30 Jan 1685 in Andover, Massachusetts, USA.

HOLTS IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY.

I should like you to know that I have a copy of "The Holt Family in Europe and America" by Mr. V. Holt Tatum from notes provided by Maudie Holt Black and Others".

You should also be made aware that this booklet is primarily of the ancestors of Mr. V. Holt Tatum (died 1973-ish, not long after he printed this booklet) and Maudie Leo Holt Rickbourg Black, born 1901, deceased date unknown.

The ancestry of these two (more than likely they were second cousins twice or three-times removed) is described in this booklet as originating from a Randall Holt, born in 1607 at Prestbury, Cheshire.

The wording below is from this booklet. Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black made no mention whatsoever of a connection through a verified pedigree with Nicholas. I emphasise – this booklet is NOT about the Family of Nicholas Holt whatsoever.

HOLT is an ancient and respected patronym found in many shires in England, namely Warwick, Suffolk, Cambridge, Lancaster, Oxford and Chester: it is also found in Westphalia in Germany as von HOLT.

In the beginning the name was not HOLT but de CERSUN, d'nus de NEUTON, prior to 1248

Let's look at the above sentence "....the name was not Holt, but de Cersun..." The sentence is as misleading as it is ambiguous to all but the relations of Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black; anyone else would take the implication that Nicholas Holt's ancestors were also of Cersun (Curzon) blood. We are thus being led to believe by the Australian Holt genealogists and the author/editor of the 2 page tract "The Family of Nicholas Holt" that all Australian Holts, whose Holt ancestors were born in England after 1248 are related to Nicholas Holt and Randall Holt and through to Sir Richard Del Holt. Yet the Australian Holt reunions as I know them, (1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005) were just for descendants of William Greeley Holt...not for every Holt in Australia who would care to attend!!

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It would have been very considerate - as well as appropriate - if the author(s) had prefaced these opening lines with the qualifying statement that the above applies only to the ancestors and descendants of Randall Holt, and from these notes it is only Randall Holt who has a specific place of origin mentioned in this booklet.

The positioning of Mr. V. Holt Tatum's extract on his and Maudie Holt Black (and others') pedigree from Randall Holt's line with the heading on the 2-page screed "The Family of Nicholas Holt" is therefore an incongruity.

What's the valid point of the inclusion? Where is the bloodline (pedigree) that shows incontrovertibly, conclusively and unquestionably Randall Holt's (and beyond) connection to "our" (Nicholas's) ancestry; i.e., **'The Family of Nicholas Holt?'**

The fact of the matter is there is no authoritative verification of that bloodline connecting John del Holt and his descendant, Randall Holt of Prestbury, Cheshire, to Nicholas Holt of address unknown.

There is no authoritative verification of a bloodline connecting Nicholas Holt to John atte Holt of Lancashire.

There has been no authoritative verification produced by anyone of an ancestry anywhere in England of Nicholas Holt.

It is therefore very strange and quite bewildering trying to work out why excerpts of Mr. V. Holt Tatum's booklet on his (and Maudie Holt Black's) ancestor, Randall Holt, were deemed to be of significance and of such historic value and importance to the Australian descendants of William Greeley Holt to make it necessary to include "notes" about Randall Holt's history in the 2-page screed the "Family of Nicholas Holt" when there "ain't no such family connection" through a proved bloodline.

Many of you will be intrigued as well as interested to know that the 16-page booklet (really the booklet is of 8 pages) "The Holt Family in Europe etc" was a home or office production. The equipment used was a typewriter with a very long carriage, duplicating stencils and one of those old-fashioned ink-roller duplicators that pre-dated photocopiers. Ah!! The memories of ink-filled fingernails and ink-clotted clothing that come flooding back to you!!

So two small pages were fitted onto one stencil. When done (1971), the booklet sold for US\$2.20; the proceeds of the sales were promptly donated to the Holt Association of America scholarship fund. The booklet had a very limited run and inquiries have since revealed that there may not have been any reprints.

This is somewhat of a pity. We may never know if the families of Mr. V. Holt Tatum, Maudie Holt Black and Others ever detected and corrected the errors stating the identity of John del Holt and John atte Holte were one and the same person and the statement "...the ancestor of all the Holts in England..." accompanied by a justification for that profound remark.

Just by-the-by: "...de Cersun, d'nus de Neuton ..." translates quite simply as de Curzon, lord of the manor of Newton.

About this date Sir Richard de Newton, Knt. moved his residence to a place called HOLT, and was thereafter called Richard Del Holt. His brothers and a sister were not so designated.

The next portion of this paragraph "...to a place called Holt..." is an enigma and led me and a number of Holts in the "north" quite a merry chase. My colleagues have questioned whether the word Holt should have been spelt with a capital 'H' or a lower case 'h'.

There are hamlets, towns and villages throughout England by the name of Holt, such as in Wiltshire, Dorset, Worcestershire, Norfolk and Leicestershire, but so far none of the Holts that I had contacted and met can link Sir Richard de Newton to these places and only one family that I had communications with could connect their family (in name only) to Sir Richard de Newton. More of that later. .

There is, however, a village called Holt not more than 12 miles west from Newton (Cheshire) and about 25 miles west as the crow flies from Wimbaldsley (Middlewich). (As Golden Square is to Bendigo, so is Wimbaldsley to Middlewich). Problem is this village of Holt has always had its feet firmly planted in Wales, not Cheshire. That is, Holt was once part of the Welsh shire of Flint, later became part of Denbighshire – and is now of the Welsh authority of Wrexham.

And another thing – Holt in Wales (Wrexham) has had its name only from the 15th Century – just about 200 years after Sir Richard.

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In mediaeval times – the mid 1200s – Holt’s original name was Villa Leonis – the Town of Lyons. OK, so it wasn’t claimed in the 2-page screed that Sir Richard de Cersun d’nus de Neuton aka Holt went into Wales, but I mention it here in the anticipation of the likelihood that someone has an England Road Atlas and has noticed the (not)-quite-bleeding-obvious!

So it should not come too much of a surprise to anyone that the Holt (Wrexham) Local Family History Society can not find any reference to Cersun-Curzon-Newton-Holt in their records.

There is, however, one thing more on the ‘holt’ word, as I was reminded by some of the Holts I had met. There is a Newton (as mentioned above) that nestles in the slopes and folds of the Peckforton Hills which, in the 1300s, would have been well and truly thickly wooded...and I couldn’t think of a better place than the “woods” in which there would be a ‘holt’.

Similarly, Middlewich (Wimbaldsley) up to Northwich (6 miles or so) is on the outer edge of what was once the great Delamere Forest...excellent spots for ‘holts’ (with a lower case ‘h’, of course!) There is another Newton just north of this forest.

As we had our “get together” at the Vale Royal, (just south of Northwich) I could see what they were getting at.

A pedigree exists giving eight descents from the original Sir Richard to William de Holt who was living in 1485 and was in possession of the manors of Wimbaldsley and Newton.

I note from John del Holt’s pedigree that he is the great-great-great-great grandfather of William de Holt - a span of at least 190 years, from 1295 to 1485. I again state - this is the pedigree of Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black (and others!!), not the pedigree of Nicholas Holt. The heading Family of Nicholas Holt and the text that followed infers that it does.

Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black reproduced in their booklet a pedigree of sorts of Randall Holt’s line but it is very basic (I have detected an error in it, which is quite a blunder and will explain it later). I iterate, it does not show any connection with Nicholas Holt.

Of this line is John del Holt whom Burke refers to as John atte Holt

Burke does nothing of the sort! This is the great genealogical blunder made by Mr. V. Holt Tatum, Maudie Holt Black (and Others!). In his ‘General Armoury’, Burke makes no mention whatsoever of any Cheshire Holts. Burke refers to John atte Holt quite correctly as John atte Holt. For want of more accurate, thorough and proper research, Mr. V. Holt Tatum, Maudie Holt Black (and others!!) have incorrectly assumed and just as incorrectly have stated that John del Holt and John atte Holt were one and the same person.

Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! This will be clarified as you read on.

Neither I nor **some** of my England Holt contacts can reconcile Tatum’s remark with anything they have in their records – as well as their blood – especially as some bloodlines and records span some 600 years or more.

The Vale Royal, about halfway between Middlewich and Northwich in Cheshire is a very scenic area and because of its beauty (and golf club!!) is an ideal location for get togethers and, in particular, this Holt gathering in mid 2007. Nearby was a ‘holt’. How appropriate!

As mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter I had previously made contact with some people who have/had Holt as a surname. It was coincidental that this particular get together would be functioning in the same period I’d be in England so it was convenient for me to be there and discuss aspects of the Family of Nicholas Holt issued in 2005.

I had fervently hoped that among these families I would have met someone – anyone!! – who were the remnants of Nicholas’s family for, after all, was it not written in The Family of Nicholas Holt that he was a younger member in a family of 12 siblings? No such luck!

On this occasion there were some 70 persons in attendance and, from what I had been made aware, were from, approximately, a dozen different Holt families with origins in the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. There are many other known Holts – some not related – of other counties but were not present.

From Cheshire came several individual Holt families – one had a known bloodline (descendancy) from a William del Holt and his wife Joan which connects to John del Holt, landholder, of Wimbaldsley and Newton. This Cheshire family is thus “distantly related” to Randall Holt and his descendants, Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black (of booklet fame).

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This family showed me a very extensive family tree – I believe it was over 16 generations “wide” – and had references to Richard de Cersun lord of the manor of Newton; of Simon de Newton, lord of the manors of Newton, Wimbaldsley and Sutton, both being ancestors of John del Holt of Wimbaldsley.

This family also showed me reasons why John Del Holt, landholder of Wimbaldsley, could not possibly be John atte Holt, merchant of Manchester and were astonished and astounded by Mr. V. Holt Tatum’s blunder.

The reasons were obvious; the names of the two “Johns” respective parents were not the same; the years of their births were not the same; the names of their respective wives were not the same and their respective offspring did not have the same names.

John del Holt, landholder of Wimbaldsley, Cheshire, died about 1317, while John atte Holt, merchant of Manchester, was very much alive in 1360 when he inherited Aston manor. On John atte Holt’s death in 1377, Aston Manor passed on to an uncle.

Mr. V. Holt Tatum said whaaaat?

Clearly – but not to Mr. V. Holt Tatum – there were two (or even possibly more) John Holts; one “del”, the other “atte” living at the same time, albeit one considerably younger than the other and, coincidentally, abiding just 20 miles from each other.

It is very likely that the families of each “John” (and let’s include all other John Holts in the area!!) knew each other very well, just as they knew other, quite unrelated Holts, such as those whose descendants I met at Vale Royal.

Mr. V. Holt Tatum said whaaaaat in relation to “the ancestor of all the Holts in England?????”

Of the other Cheshire families there, well their bloodlines are quite different, too. One family’s Holt name did not emerge (come into being) until the late 1400s and traced to Glazebury, just 25 miles “up the road” to the north of the Vale Royal.

Mr. Holt Tatum said whaaaaaat!!!

Further; of several families with their own particular “vintage” Holt blood of another brand, one group with origins in Lancashire has traced their ancestry to the “famous” Holts of Aston which also includes the clans of Erdington and Nichells which, in turn, gives them a blood line to John atte Holt, merchant of Manchester – NOT to John del Holt, landholder of Wimbaldsley, Cheshire.

Testing by DNA samples show that this family is not connected to another Lancashire family there that day – their ancestry is traced also to the 1300s.

Need I say that these groups were admitted into my “Astonishment Club” after reading the 2-page screed “Family of Nicholas Holt” and their alleged ancestry, courtesy of Mr. V. Holt Tatum, Maudie Holt Black (and Others!!)

Pedigrees of the “different” Holt groups from Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire are similar examples of Mr. V. Holt Tatum’s blunder. One “Yorkie” family showed me a patrilineal descent of their Holt pedigree that had origins in the early 13th century at Wakefield, while the “Notty” group of Holt derivation went as far back as the 14th Century to Sherwood Forest. Made me wonder if there was an ancestor of theirs by the name of Robin Holt?

In looking at these pedigrees – there were more there than I have mentioned here – I went searching for the Nicholas name from earlier than 1602 and came across just two. One was ‘Nicolas’ (sic) Curzon who was, in fact, the brother to Sir Richard, aka Holt, of about 1260.

The other Nicholas was from the Holts of Aston side – traced to the reign of King Henry 8th – about 65 years before “our” Nicholas was born.

I also searched these pedigrees for names similar to “our” Nicholas’s children up to 1650 and although Samuel, Henry and James were popular in these pedigrees, I could not find the same names anywhere as brothers, cousins, uncles, etc in any particular family.

Mr. V. Holt Tatum refers to “Burke’s General Armoury” – those of you who received the CD last year about the misuse and usurpation of an extinct coat of arms would also have seen this “Holt” list – and it is this list that he and Maudie Holt Black say “Burke refers to as...” (John del Holt and John atte Holt being one and the same).

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Burke's General Armoury list shows the estates accumulated in other shires/counties by the wealthy, a title or two, and coats of arms Holts of the Lancashire/Warwickshire dynasty.

The Cheshire Holts of Wimbaldsley, Newton, Sutton, Lee and elsewhere ARE NOT mentioned by Burke whatsoever. Why should they be? They are not of the family of the merchant of Manchester, John atte Holt.

And another thing; I have seen some pages extracted from "County Families of Lancashire and Cheshire" by John Croston, printed in 1887 – repeat, 1887. The Cheshire Holts did not rate a mention at all through the (at least) 369 pages.

The Lancashire Holts – James of Stubbley, Thomas Holt of Gristlehurst and a Hugh Holt are mentioned just once each and then by name only. Nothing is said of them in respect of their families, their worth, or accomplishments.

and who can be shown to be the ancestor of all the Holts in England

Would those of you who do not believe this nonsense, please raise your hands!! Oh!! **Nearly** all of you. Well, nearly all of you are quite correct. The statement is not historically factual, lacks credibility and begs to be refuted and rebutted.

It is reprehensible of Mr. V. Holt Tatum to claim that John del Holt "can be shown to be the ancestor of all the Holts in England" while he himself did not "show" by example and qualification, a justification for that statement.

To that I can add; **some** of the Holts I met in England have used DNA testing to back up their written pedigrees. Therefore it is noted that they are not related to Mr. V. Holt Tatum, his ancestor, Randall Holt and the ancestry right back to John del Holt and Sir Richard de Cersun aka Holt.

I repeat – Mr. V. Holt Tatum said whaaaat!

Notwithstanding all of this, I have the benefit of the "local knowledge" of Wiltshire from a genealogist specialising in Holt genealogy that unearthed some interesting history and passed the information on to me. So, for the record, I offer the following –

In the mid 1100s at the then church of Holt in Wiltshire, the Abbess of Shaftesbury had "on her books" no fewer than 27 persons as tenants. A number of these persons had single (Christian) names such as Thomas, Sefton, Godwin, Adelin and Roger. Of greater interest, especially to genealogists and historians (and me!!) was what was emerging as names additional to their Christian ones - the emergence of surnames; Agnes Passet, Nicholas of Haston, Walter of Lega, Richard Wite and William of Wila.

Two other names also appeared at the time - Roger of Holt and Godfrey of Holt - and there is that perfect example of two persons of the same location (Holt, Wiltshire) sharing the same "surname" and not related by blood. This, I would remind you, is approximately 100 years before Sir Richard Cersun was born and thus long, long before he changed his name to Holt; and what was that other nonsense about his grandson, John del Holt, being the ancestor of ALL the Holts in England?

What would the descendants of Roger of Holt and Godfrey of Holt (Wiltshire) think of Mr. V. Holt Tatum's remarks! Same thing can be said for descendants of other persons who took their names from a location called a "holt" or even from a hamlet or village by the name of "Holt" anywhere else in England at the same time; ie, the early 1100s.

Further to that, in the early 1200s the de Holt family held a manor within the manor of Bradford-On-Avon (Wiltshire),

I wonder how many of you are of the same thinking as me (based on what Mr. Holt Tatum in 1971 suggested about Holt ancestry); that all the Holts in America and elsewhere whose ancestors were born in England need not do any further research to discover how far back their pedigrees stretch, since Mr. V. Holt Tatum has seemingly done that research for them by doing the tracing himself - right back to John del Holt of Cheshire and, further back than that,, to a Sir Richard de Cersun d'nus de Neuton, later named Holt, prior to 1248.

I do not think I have to too loudly or too strongly appeal to your common sense to completely disregard and reject Mr. V. Holt Tatum and Maudie Holt Black's (and others') remarks about one person (John del Holt) being the ancestor of all the Holts in England.

I repeat – pshaw! And balderdash to Mr. V. Holt Tatum's "essay!"

(7) OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE

Nicholas Holt, with his wife, Elizabeth and their two-year-old daughter, Hannah, sailed from Southampton, England in the spring of 1635 on a ship named the "James".

In the passenger list preserved at Westminster, Nicholas is given as a Tanner from Romsey.

It is worth mentioning here that shipping records from England to America for the 1600s are very rare indeed. Those that survive are in very fragile condition and a number of lists are just not available to the public. The list I saw for the 'James' is being preserved as a National Treasure; I had to book well and truly ahead to get a look at it. The chances of seeing this passenger list (as well as others) "on line" are not remote.

I discovered, however, some matters which possibly, if not probably, have been the cause for some confusion concerning Nicholas' origins and occupation.

I noticed a book in Kew's public records repository ("preserved at Westminster" is about as vague as saying "preserved at North Melbourne") titled "Ship Passenger Lists, National and New England (1600-1825)" edited and indexed by Carl Boyer 3rd (1980).

This quoted the passenger list of the James from yet another book which went under the title of "The Greenes of Rhode Island with Historical Records of England Ancestry 1534-1902, Compiled from the Manuscripts of the Late Major General George Sears Greene USV" by Louise Brownell Clarke (1903) (Phew!!)

This included the entry, Nicholas Holte of Ramsey, Tanner. (Note – Ramsey)

This is, however, twice removed from the original source. "Ramsey" is often quoted on the Internet as being Nicholas' place of origin and it seems likely that some people are quoting this reference. "Ramsey" is in Huntingdonshire.

There was yet another book in the repository that I examined; "The complete Book of Emigrants 1607 – 1660" by Peter Wilson Coldham. Nicholas was mentioned in this book as a passenger on the ship, "James"; oddly, his occupation was given as a "tailor".

However, I can tell you with certainty that I sighted the entry in the original document and it is definite; "Nicholas Holte, Romsey, tanner." What you should know as well is the following which appears at the end of the list of names (all male): ***The total number of these men, youthes and boys are liii (53) persons. Besides the wives and children of dyvers of these***.

A date of sailing was given – ***"on and about 6th April 1635."***

So the list did not specify if Nicholas's family went with him. It is clear, though, that there were women and children on the James, but apparently as they were not of interest to the government, no information was recorded about them.

On making further inquiries I was told that it may be (I emphasise **"may be"**) that the government were – presumably – only concerned with adult males who would be economically productive.

On several occasions – as people demonstrated dialect to me - I had it explained that it was possible that the men compiling the list misheard Nicholas's place of origin, but as Romsey was near Southampton, it seems reasonable to suppose that he did come from there.

If Nicholas had come from Ramsey (Huntingdonshire) there would have been nearer ports. However, this does not necessarily mean he was actually born in Romsey – just that he was settled there at the time of his departure.

We can still argue that there is a difference between the expressions "comes from Romsey" (i.e., born/lived there) and "came from Romsey" (recently arrived from). Clearly, we will never know the questions asked of Nicholas at the Southampton "travel centre" of 1635. Australians can fully understand the "dialect" and "accent" used in the 1600s when they pronounce "Romsey" (Hampshire) as rum-see and Ramsey (Hunts) as "rarm-see."

Couple this with pronunciations of "tanner" using "dialect" and you also end up making "turner" sound like "tanner" – and Vikki Verka.

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Nicholas was a younger son from a family of twelve children.

This is very questionable and another piece of misinformation for there is no verified documentation of Nicholas's siblings.

There were two other members of this family migrated to America, a brother William and another who settled in South Carolina in the early days.

This, too, is very questionable in respect of Nicholas's blood relationship to William and an unnamed "brother." William Holt's origins in England are as much unknown as Nicholas's.

In the 1 December 1928 issue of "Holt Happenings", Bertram Griggs Holt observes "...of William Holt, I can not locate, though he sailed about the same time (as Nicholas??), unless he was the William Holt who sailed for Barbados. This he might have done and later found his way to New England..."

In the issue of "Holt Families of America" (1984, the Holt Association of America) by F. Burton Holt, the author says, and I quote, "...As pointed out elsewhere, we have been unable to trace any of the early lines back to England. Family lore has it that Nicholas and William were cousins, or even brothers but no link has ever been proven..." but goes on to say that a William Holt sailed from England in 1635 aboard the "Truelove" to Bermuda and perhaps Barbados, going to New England some years later.

In the same publication is background information of the formation of the Holt Assn of America in 1921 – Hamilton Holt, Henry Holt and Frank L. Holt being the first office bearers. Who of these mentioned were descendants of Nicholas and William was not revealed, other than a few lines to suggest that this early Holt Association was formed to promote acquaintanceship among the descendants of Nicholas and William and other branches of the Holt family with the view to discuss the probable relationship.

It appears that in 1864 Daniel S. Durrie, while researching the Nicholas and William lines, could not research the line of the "other" Hols (perhaps this was the "Southern" group) because of "the war" that existed at the time, or prior to 1864. (The era of "Gone With The Wind".)

This conveys the implication that as no pedigree of the "other branches" was produced between 1864 and 1921 (the formation of the HAA) and 1921 to 1971 (publication of Mr. V. Holt Tatum's booklet) and 1971 to 1984 (publication of The Holt Families in America), the relationship by blood of Nicholas to William and the unnamed "brother" was not proved by verifiable means. Had that relationship been proved, these publications, I am sure, would have recorded it.

Looking at it another way. There is "knowledge" that Nicholas was said to be a younger son from a family of twelve children, one said to be William, but no knowledge or verification of how that "knowledge" was arrived at by producing a pedigree, the names of the siblings, and the parentage!

There is "knowledge" that an unknown person was a "brother" to Nicholas and William, but no knowledge of the documented evidence that verifies this and, if it could be produced, would name the "unnamed!"

Finally, there is "knowledge" that this unknown, unnamed "brother" has been pinpointed as having settled in South Carolina. How odd!!

From "Holt Happenings" of 1972 comes this paragraph, publicising Mr. V. Holt Tatum's booklet "The Holt Family in Europe and America etc etc. I quote, verbatim:-

"...In it he briefly but interestingly traces the families of Nicholas, William, Randall and Michael Holt down from their various arrivals in this country and back to Richard del Holt in England in 1248..."

Whaaaaatttt!! Mr. V. Holt Tatum's booklet does no such thing! Nicholas is of "address unknown" and gets a mention of barely 75 words. William Holt is mentioned in just over 100 words, his origins in England being unknown. No mention is made here of William going to Barbados or Bermuda. Michael Holt is recorded as sailing from Germany in 1717 for Virginia. He certainly is NOT traced to Cheshire and Richard del Holt!!

Randall Holt is the dominant figure here, for after all, the booklet is about this ancestor of Mr. V. Holt Tatum, Maudie Holt Black and Others!!

Since my CD and two previous newsletters were issued in 2007, I have come into possession through an American contact of some single pages of "essays" by various persons.

Among these were pages of 'Holt Happenings' issued by the 1928 Holt Association of America.

(9)

It is this edition that contains the over-indulgent hyperbole of Bertram Griggs Holt and reproduced (edited form) in the 2-page screed 'Family of Nicholas Holt' in 2005 for the descendants of Wm Greely Holt in Australia.

Yep, your arithmetic is spot on – the “essay” was 77 years out of date when you read it. Ye Gods!

Bertram Griggs Holt makes the profound statement in this “essay” (Holt Happenings, 1 Dec 1928) and I quote, verbatim: **“...the objection may be raised – how could Nicholas Holt, a tanner, be the bearer of arms? He may not have borne Arms, but from my rather extensive investigations, I am reasonably certain his father did. Tanning seems to have been the principal industry at Romsey...”** (end quote. You know the rest)

Oh yeah? And just how naïve and gullible did Bertram Griggs Holt consider his readers? “Extensive investigations”; “reasonably certain” - yet he did not unearth the name of Nicholas’s father who, Bertie “is reasonably certain,” through “extensive investigations,” and profoundly states, did have a Coat of Arms. However, despite this profundity, Bertie does not describe these alleged coat of arms awarded to Nick’s dad – nor tells us that his “extensive investigations” may/may not have been through the authoritative College of Arms in London – who would have issued the Coat of Arms in the first place!

In the event of the College of Arms issuing Mr. Holt Snr a Coat of Arms, that family’s pedigree would automatically have been recorded and that would include Nicholas and his siblings. A subsequent Visitation of the Heralds (The College of Arms) to the shire/county of the Holts’ domicile would reveal all. Consequently the mystery surrounding Nicholas, his siblings, parents and forebears would not exist.

Tanning seems to have been the principal Industry of Romsey. This town furnished the Kings Army more saddles, harness, shoes and body protectors than any other town of its size in the Kingdom. In all probability Nicholas was the proprietor of his own tanning establishment, and that the King’s bounty baskets hung from the walls of his building.

I wish to respectfully beg your further indulgence, however, as I quote from a letter from the Lower Test Valley Archaeological Study group of Romsey – they who are quite famous for “digging up” information in their records that applies to all things Romsonian.

“...Romsey’s principle industries at the beginning of the 17th century were cloth production (You will recall the earlier reference in a book that records that Nicholas was a tailor) and tanning. The town is threaded with water courses and both industries relied heavily on water. Thus it is quite possible that Nicholas Holt was a tanner here, but I have not found a trace of him. What is the source of your family history’s detailed claims about the activities of Nicholas Holt? I have not encountered them...”

Bertram Griggs Holt writes of Romsey’s tanning industry....giving the impression that an ‘audit’ was taken over a number of years to perhaps show which town(s) of a similar size to Romsey and which tanners (Dad Holt and Son Nicholas?) got the best of the King’s contracts. The tanning industry existed from the 1300s to at least 1921- so for the residents, that was over 600 years of having the wind blowing in the wrong direction!

The thing is, both monarchs in Nicholas’s time (James 1st and Charles 1st) were so broke that they went around England raising unpopular taxes (well, they were certainly ‘popular’ to the monarchs!!). Yet according to Bertram Griggs Holt, Nicholas hung his bounty baskets from the walls of his (non-existent??) building in order to receive the monarch’s contracts and spare change!

So, according to Bertie, we have an allegedly affluent Nick being in the grace of a king, yet having to flee England in 1635 because of the monarch? Ludicrous!

Quoting further from the LTVAS letter-: “The raising of ship money was one of Charles 1st schemes for taxing the population without the need to recall Parliament. The tax had originally only been levied on coastal towns, but Charles 1st extended it to the whole country which was massively unpopular. No one by the name of Holt appears on the (Romsey) list of payers.”

Had Nicholas Holt or his father been in business in Romsey, they would most certainly have had to pay the ship money tax. Only 100 persons in Romsey were on that list.

(10)

In March 2007 Phoebe Merrick of the LTVAS was editing "Collections for a History of Romsey, Hampshire". Phoebe was sent a copy of the 2-page screed 'The Family of Nicholas Holt'. It must have been an astonished Phoebe who, on reading

of the supposed affluence of Nicholas and/or his father by Bertram Griggs Holt, rushed to Romsey's records for further enlightenment. Nicholas Holt and his unnamed father ought to have been mentioned in "Collections for a History of Romsey, Hampshire" but were not. Wonder why????????

Further, Phoebe Merrick writes "....I have looked through my notes for the name 'Holt' and been somewhat unsuccessful. There are one or two references to Holts in south-west Wiltshire (the neighbouring shire) in 1465..."

Who among you will now have "mental dialogue" that these south-west Wiltshire Holts may be descendants of Roger of Holt or Godfrey of Holt dating to the mid 1100s in Holt, Wiltshire?

I have no comment to make that some people may be having mental dialogue that Nicholas Holt could also have come from south-west Wiltshire and be descended from the Holts of Wiltshire!!

As for religion, Phoebe says: "...Romsey was the centre of Non-Conformation in the 17th century to the present day. A number of people left here for America because of religious persecution throughout that century..."

Phoebe Merrick concludes her letter by stating:- "...The conclusion that I have come to is that your ancestor (Nicholas Holt) probably lived elsewhere. It is possible that he lived in a nearby village.

It is more than likely that he lived in one of the places that are often confused with Romsey, Hampshire. These include Ramsey, Huntingdonshire; Romney, Kent; or the "other" Romsey in Cambridgeshire..."

The LTVAS was paid for their very thorough and knowledgeable research – and it is NOT out of date!!

In November 2007 a letter of mine was published in "Practical Family History", a respected English Genealogical magazine that has worldwide readership and to which I subscribe; letter as follows:

Bogus Pedigree?

A piece of potted history of a Holt ancestor of mine (Nicholas Holt, said to have been born in Romsey, Hampshire about 1602), tells me that he was a descendant of a Cheshire Holt family dating from as early as, approximately, 1248. I believe, though, that no pedigree has been produced to verify this.

It is being touted that a Sir Richard de Newton, by taking the name "Holt" was the ancestor of all the Holts in England and subsequently every Holt in America whose forebears were born in England; that is, other than European Holts (and various spellings of that name) and their descendants.

It is also being said that Nicholas Holt, a tanner in his own business in Romsey from about the 1620s – no verification of that, either – was likely to have been in the king's favour and that '...Romsey furnished the King's army more saddles, harness, shoes and body protectors than any other town of its size in the Kingdom...'

In respect of the armoury, is it reasonable to assume that some sort of audit was taken around the 1620s to show which towns got the best of the king's contract?

Could I be advised if the statements are historically correct or are they what is commonly called 'bucket shop' spiel'?

Arthur Thomas, Australia

(11)

You may be interested to learn that the "Nicholas History" was a mystery as far back as 1864 when a Daniel S. Durrie wrote a book called **"A Genealogical History of the Holt Family in the United States, more particularly the Descendants of Nicholas Holt of Newbury and Andover, Mass. 1634-1644 and of William Holt of New Haven, Conn."**

It would further interest you to realise that when Durrie was producing this book (1864), William and Amelia Holt had just become parents of their 5th child, Arthur W. Holt at Dunnolly.

I received only a couple of photocopy pages from Durrie's book for there was rather a strange reference to Nicholas Holt in it; some information I had previously come by via an authoritative source makes me reasonably certain that what is being "put over" by Durrie at that time was not quite true.

I will quote the relevant paragraphs and then point you in the right direction towards the Internet where you can read more in order to make your own minds up about the veracity of yet another article incorporating and involving the name "Nicholas Holt".

"...According to Dugdale, Burke and other writers on English genealogy, there appears to have been two prominent families of this name: known as the Aston family of Holtes of Warwickshire, whose estates were situated near Birmingham, and the Grizzlehurst family, of Lancaster. Of this last family, the most notable person was Sir John Holt, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench. And of the former, Sir Charles Holte, a personal friend of King Charles 1, who built the elegant mansion known as Aston Hall, at which place he entertained the king after the disastrous battle of Edge Hill. Sir John Holt died at his seat at Redgrave (the former residence of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seals to Queen Elizabeth 1st), without issue, leaving a large estate to his heirs.

On 5th March, 1745 the wills and codicils left unadministered by her late majesty's solicitor, administration was granted to Thomas Thurston, Esq., the lawful attorney of Rowland Holt, great-grand-nephew and heir-at-law of Sir John Holt. Mr. Thurston died in 1762 and the administration ceased and expired.

This estate, which has been estimated by some parties at 13 million Pounds Sterling, is still unsettled, awaiting proofs of heirship.

The Andover family of Holt in the United States, of which Nicholas Holt was their head, have the impression very generally, that their ancestor was the legal heir to this estate, and as a consequence, efforts were made some years since, by Mr. Stephen Holt of New York (the proprietor of the large hotel known by his name on the corner of Pearl and Fulton streets) in the English courts, to procure a judgment in his favor for himself and other descendants of Nicholas Holt, in which endeavor he was unsuccessful. Mr. Holt died shortly after his return, being fully impressed that this estate would ultimately come into possession of his relatives. Another effort is soon to be made by Mr. S. Holt's family for the same object.

It would be a source of satisfaction, if the question could be definitely settled as to the ancestors of Nicholas Holt of Andover and of William Holt of New Haven, and particularly if it could be ascertained that this large estate would enure to their benefit. But this question is at present unsettled, and may always continue so. The compiler of this work, while engaged in collecting information of the descendants of these two persons – the heads of such a large posterity – was not indifferent to that part of the genealogy connecting them to the English families. And having the advantage of abstracts from the records in the British Museum, and other record depositories, collected by Columbus Smith, Esq., of Vermont, a gentleman who has made it his business to examine into and prosecute claims of American parties in England, in his humble opinion, it is almost an impossibility to connect the American and English families; the lapse of time proving an insuperable barrier.

In making this statement the writer is aware that he differs from the views entertained (as before stated) by a large number of the family; but nothing is to be gained by assuming for facts, what can not be well authenticated..."

(Durrie's essay of 1864 ends)

In mentioning the two prominent families, viz, the Aston Hall and Grizzlehurst Holts, Durrie makes no mention of the alleged prominent families of Cheshire.

Daniel S. Durrie identified himself in 1864 as a Librarian of State Historical Society of Wisconsin, USA, with connections to New England Historic Genealogical Society.

(12)

I would like to add here that I have made further inquiries into Durrie's essay as there seems to be some contradictions when one compares his writings with what appears on the Internet, specifically

<http://www.genforum.genealogy.com/holt>

There are some extraordinary entries there that relate – or in some cases, purports to relate, to Nicholas Holt.

On 26 January 2003, an entry (forum number 4908) reveals that brothers Charles and Henry Holt “claim” the 80 million pounds estate of Redgrave Park (Suffolk, England)

On 8 July 2003 an entry (forum number 5116) details a genealogy from Nicholas and Elizabeth (Short) Holt down to a Daniel and Keziah (Rust) Holt of the mid 1700s and their 2 sons, Charles and Henry.

Likewise, on 8 July 2003 (Forum number 5117) an entry tells us that Charles and Henry Holt of NY were awarded the \$80 million estate; the amount has been changed to US dollars, whereas the previous entry was in English pounds.

The anomaly here is that the “claims” and the alleged awarding to Charles and Henry Holt of this vast fortune evidently took place some time in the early to mid 1800s given the dates for Daniel and Keziah Holt's death years.

Very strange indeed. Did not Daniel Durrie write in his essay of 1864 “...it is almost an impossibility to connect the American and English families...?”

Surely, then, had there been such a claim made before 1864 with Charles and Henry the beneficiaries, Daniel Durrie as well as the rest of the Holts in America, would have heard about it? Not only that, but name the descendants (if any) of Charles and Henry?

Just a surely, too, would this have hit the headlines in the London and NY newspapers as well as the regional newspapers of Suffolk, England at the time, especially in view of the alleged amount – 80 million dollars!! Had that happened the information would have surely been known to those interested in the formation of the Holt Association of America in the 1920s?

Very odd!!

Keeping this in mind, I recently made inquiries with a Mr. Tim Holt-Wilson of the Redgrave Park family. He advises that Sir John Holt's estate passed to his (Sir John's) brother, Rowland (1) which then passed to his son, Rowland (2) and in 1739. to Rowland (3)

The Wilson Family took over the Park in 1799 and held it till 1971. Family papers held by Tim Holt-Wilson make no mention of the “court challenge” that was alluded to by Durrie, or of “beneficiaries” Charles and Henry, alluded to by the Holt forum contributors.

In addition to the correspondence with Tim Holt-Wilson, I also had correspondence from the Suffolk (England) County Council who have an extensive Holt-Wilson archive (Ipswich, Suffolk). There is no mention in those papers of the “court case” alluded to by Daniel Durrie or alluded to by the contributors to the Holt genealogy forum which also means no mention of Charles and Henry and the \$80 million.

Therefore I will now direct your attention (and in particular, the attention of the contributors to the Forum numbers 4908, 5116 and 5117) where the “true facts” can be read:

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/redgravehistory/wilson/wilsonpark.htm>

You may also **Google** ‘Redgrave Park’ and browse through a lot more information. While you are at it, you could also **Google** Sir John Holt. You will agree with me, will you not, that prior to any year mentioned before 1864, nothing remotely resembling Durrie's essays appears in the history of Redgrave Park – or years after!

From the Holt Association of America's newsletter of around 1989 comes this brief report of a book titled “Genealogy and Regional Family Histories”, presented by Elinor Abbott and reviewed by Bob Holt:

“...Nicholas Holt is listed as coming from Romsey, England, but no connection has been found of this. The conclusion has been that, being a tanner in Romsey, he was recruited to move to America.”

(13)

“Elinor’s research is convincing but not proof positive that Nicholas’s background was from the north of England. Other indirect evidence that Nicholas was from Northern England is his tendency to toss his lot in with the East Midlanders and Northerners...”

You may contrast this with the biography of Nicholas Holt on the

www.family2remember.com/bios/nholt/1602.htm

The Webmaster of the site is the author and a 9 times G-grandperson of Nicholas. The article, at 1½ A4 pages is too long to reproduce here, but you will be interested in this extract:-

“...Nicholas died at Andover, January 30, 1685. In his early life he carried on the business of manufacturer of woodenware. A few years before his death, in distributing his property among his children, he styles himself “dish turner”. The word “tanner on the roll of the ship “James” is probably an error of the recording official who mistook the word “turner” for “tanner”...”

The HOLT COAT of ARMS

It was not my intention to write further on Coats of Arms; however, I realise that a number of inquirers had been given information that others had not. It would be proper and appropriate if I gave the same information to you all. The cross-head above from The Family of Nicholas Holt is incorrect. There is NO “The” Holt Coat of Arms.

There are, of course, many Coats of Arms for many Holts. In any case they do not apply to the Family of Nicholas Holt.

You will get some very good advice on Coats of Arms from world experts. Stephen Plowman and Martin Goldstraw are two names that come to mind

<http://genforum.genealogy.com/coatofarms/messages>

Note that the address is coat (singular), **not** coats (plural). There are several “messages” here which will be of interest to you and shed a bit more light on the subject. When you get into the site, use the box on the right hand side to enter a forum number.

Put 3635 into the box and you will get a very interesting message. Likewise you can log in the number 3644 for another message. There are heaps of messages there, so you will have an enjoyable time exploring the contents.

While you are browsing the Holt genealogy Forum

www.genforum.genealogy.com/holt

you will find some wild and erratic fancies. In the numbers box on the right hand side, I suggest you log in the numbers 5120, 1027 and 556. There is a discussion there about Nicholas Holt being the axeman for the execution of King Charles 1st in 1649. – 14 years after Nick had nicked off to America!

Number 5117 will tell you that Nicholas Holt is a ***descendant of*** Sir John Holt. That would be one of these famous “unexplained mysteries”, for Sir John was born in 1642 and died in 1710!!! (Nicholas was born in 1602 and died 1685 yet someone says Nicholas is a descendant of Sir John!!!!

Try also: - www.faketitles.com

Not quite “Nicholas”, but I think you will appreciate the information. When you have read this article, go back and click on “Are You Being Conned”....this will take you into the site operated by Baronage Press. A brilliantly written essay on the subject awaits you. I’m sure you will get many guffaws and chuckles from it – and it’s so TRUE!! The final page about the Joneses is a gem.

The Society of Genealogists has two excellent scripts for Americans and I recommend them for downloading:

www.sog.org.uk/leaflets/americans.pdf

www.sog.org.uk/leaflets/arms.pdf

You may also try “Googling” the following phrase - Want to Buy Your Family’s Coat of Arms?

The full text, by Dick Eastman, was included in my CD “Newsletter” issued last year.

(14)

Finally – yes, cousins, the end is near!! Actually, I'm much in need of some liquid refreshments; you had yours at the beginning, so now it is my turn...but I can not hear anyone "shouting". ("Shout" is an Aussie colloquialism for "standing a round of drinks"; or a treat, such as "I'll shout you a new shirt dress, or whatever).

The following is a snippet from a contact in America – a genealogist/historian specialising in collecting Holt history as it applies in the USA. From a lengthy but very welcome email that arrived on 4 March 2008 comes this piece of information which will interest you.

There is a lot of Holt information out there that does not ring true. Where people get the idea all Holts are related is beyond me. Of course they are not! There are at least five lines of Holt that came to USA in early years and are not related to one another. I have viewed the book you mention many years ago at Sutro Library in San Francisco, California. It was strange that someone could draw the conclusions that you mention. People seem to have made up many stories to try and justify what they want to connect. I do not approve of that as it is not true. It has not even been proven completely that William and Nicholas are brothers. Unfortunately, back in the 1920s a John Holt left millions and it seems all Holts immediately became relatives wanting to share the wealth which no one was able to claim. DNA would help us today. One wonders where Nicholas really came from. Is there a port in Romsey? If so, perhaps he just travelled to Romsey and left from that port and never ever lived there. We simply do not know.

(snippet ends)

As you are now aware, the research I have undertaken over the past twelve months has not revealed any more about Nicholas Holt than what William Greeley Holt's descendants in Australia had learned in 1985 at the first (Fenton's Creek) reunion – nothing that would shed light on Nicholas's origins prior to his departure for America in 1635.

In conclusion (well, almost!) I have to say that nowhere in my readings have I seen any "official" statement from the Holt Association of America relating to Nicholas Holt's ancestry, parentage, occupation, siblings or birth location.

If there is a lesson to be learnt here, it is never to accept anything you read or hear until you have checked it out for yourself; otherwise you may well end up with a contrived biography and a questionable family tree (and an extinct coat of arms!!), with origins that are controvertible and questionable.

I would have more than likely have paid for production and postage of these newsletters and CDs if I had \$5 for every time I have read – or heard – of some ingenuous, wishful-thinking soul indulging in some fantastical, whimsical family myth.

There may occasionally be a grain of truth somewhere in the story that's based on something someone heard from someone else. Self-delusion, combined with an urgent desire to believe their ancestry is more illustrious and colorful than it really is, makes such naïve and gullible folk natural and enthusiastic recipients for a variety of bogus pedigrees that are knocking around in printed works and on the internet.

Over the many years one has had an interest in genealogy there has been no shortage of claimants and pretenders to a descent from some famous (or infamous) person in history.

Often, of course, the only crime involved is that of naivety and gullibility rather than any deliberate intent to deceive. Just because something is printed in an expensively produced and gorgeously covered book – or even one reproduced on stencils - it does not mean that it must be true

So many people fail to observe the simple principle and end up believing in – and reproducing in print – a family "pedigree" which, though impressive, is simply not theirs.

Never accept anything you find until you have checked it ("researched" is a better word) for yourself.

I hope that this newsletter (newspaper??) has been of interest to you and, coupled with the previous Coat of Arms newsletters, make you much better informed than you previously were.....Arthur Thomas

(Thanks to Practical Family History Feb 2007 and Roy Stockdill in particular for the inspiration and ideas expressed here.)