

A Small Matter of our Paternal Ancestry

by Mark Wareham, updated 15th May 2012

I have been doing research on our family history for about twenty years and one of the many puzzles that I have come across has been that of my direct paternal line and in particular the background of my great x 3 grandfather James Small. I discovered that great x 2 grandfather George Wareham was born illegitimately to Susanna Wareham in Shroton (Iwerne Courtney) in Dorset in 1825 and I know that James was George's father because on George's marriage record in Shroton in 1847 he declares that his father was 'James Small, yeoman'. In my experience it is quite unusual for an illegitimate child to know and to name their father on such marriage records in a parish church, particularly when there is no evidence of a long term relationship between their father and mother after the child's birth. For George to have named his father and have known his occupation suggests that he was quite confident that James was his father. He may have been told about this by his mother or grandparents or he may have known his father personally.

The big challenge with this discovery was then finding out about James and his background and whilst there is plenty of Wareham family history in Shroton going back to about 1700, there is no such obvious ancestral trail for the Smalls in that parish or indeed in any neighbouring parish. There are hardly any references to the Smalls in the area in the 18th or 19th century and the only previous reference to James Small in the parish is a baptism of a child James Crib Small to James and Charlotte Small in Shroton in 1817. My natural assumption has always been that the father of this James Crib Small must be the James who was my George's father. For there to be a different James Small in the parish at the time, unrecorded in any other manner, would be too much of a coincidence. But there was a problem with this because the child James Crib Small is clearly recorded by the parish clerk in the baptisms register as being a 'gipsy' (sic) and so his parents, or at least one of them, must have been a gypsy. But how can a James Small who in 1817 had gypsy links be described as a 'yeoman' by 1847? A 'yeoman' farmer was a small tenant farmer, someone higher in social status in rural life than the labouring class and considerably higher social status to the poorest, most stigmatised and discriminated group, or race, of people as the travelling gypsy. James Small was a puzzle to me for many years and from time to time I would delve back into it and try and find our Wareham family grandfather's ancestor. But for many years there was no luck until in early 2011 I stumbled across someone who matched the profile and the more I looked into his background and family the more it all fell into place. I believe that I have found our man and it now all adds up and in fact I now think that George was right in his marriage declaration about his father and that remarkably James had a child in 1817 who could be described as a 'gypsy' and that he was a yeoman farmer by 1847.

The clue that I first stumbled upon is in the census records of the mid-19th century and I found a James Small who was a yeoman farmer who was not a very long way from Shroton. He was of the right age and what was most remarkable was that his wife was called Charlotte. This matched perfectly with James and Charlotte Small in Shroton in 1817 and with George's marriage testimony in 1847. I then investigated this James Small and found a number of interesting things, some of which present a far from simple story.

James Small's story

This is the timeline to James' life that I have discovered –

1794 father William was left £100 in his father Thomas Small's (a baker of Wylve in Wiltshire) will
1796 James was born in Warminster in Wiltshire to William and Elizabeth Small (*&***). He was baptised in the neighbouring parish of Bishopstrow.

1805 William's mother Lydia Small dies and leaves her will (see page 9)
 about 1810 William Small and his family (children William, John and James) move to Poulner near Ringwood in Hampshire (*) (mother Elizabeth appears to have died between 1798 and 1810)
 about 1813 William Small senior is in the Ringwood poorhouse with his children (*)
 1817 James has a child James Crib Small, a gypsy, with Charlotte and baptised at Shroton (**)
 1820 James Small marries Lydia Rolls at Ringwood (**)
 1821 James' wife Lydia is buried at Ringwood (**)
 1822 a daughter Winifred Ann Etheridge Wareham is baptised illegitimately to Charlotte Wareham at Ringwood (**)
 1824 James marries second wife Charlotte Wareham at Ringwood (**)
 1825 a son, George Wareham, is baptised illegitimately to Susanna Wareham at Shroton, father is James Small (**)
 1830 Susanna had a second illegitimate son called James (more than likely another child of James Smalls')
 1841 James Small is a 'labourer', aged 40, at Hangersley near Ringwood (***)
 1841 George and James Wareham living with grandparents Robert and Mary Wareham in Shroton
 1844 spinster Susanna Wareham (George's mother, aged 40) marries Thomas Parsons at Blandford
 1847 James' son George Wareham marries Jane Russell at Shroton (**)
 1847 James Small is a small farmer holding about three acres of land at North Poulner near Ringwood (****)
 1851 James Small is a 'yeoman farmer', aged 53, at Poulner, near Ringwood (***)
 1861 James Small is a 'yeoman farmer', aged 65, of 20 acres' at Poulner, near Ringwood (***)
 1871 James Small is a 'yeoman farmer', aged 75, of 60 acres at North Poulner Hill near Ringwood (***)
 1878 James Small is buried in Ringwood aged 81 (**)
 * from William Small junior's settlement certificate in Ringwood in 1820
 ** from parish registers
 *** from census records
 **** from tithe records

This is a fascinating lifeline and if it is indeed all connected to the same James Small then it paints a picture of someone who did remarkably well for themselves in life after a very poor start but who, it has to be said, did rather fail to abide by the expected moral standards of Victorian England. That makes his later financial successes even more remarkable. But how did his father William come to use up all the £100 (£5600 in today's money) inheritance in 1805 and by 1813 was in the poorhouse? Why did he move to Ringwood in 1810? Why did William's mother leave nothing more to her sons than was left by Thomas Small, but left everything to her three daughters and someone called John Perrior? I doubt I will ever find all the answers.

One notices in the above lifeline that James appears to have had a child with Charlotte seven years before they were married and that between marrying her and having the child, he married another woman called Lydia Rolls. So without other evidence how can I be sure that this is the same James and Charlotte as were in Shroton in 1817? The frank answer is that I cannot be one hundred percent sure that it is. But the probability is that this is indeed the right James and Charlotte as it would be remarkable coincidence for another James Small and Charlotte to exist at this same time period and with so many other apparent similarities. James Small of Ringwood certainly had the same pattern of behaviour as James Small of Shroton and I think this suggests that they were one and the same person. Both had children out of wedlock and possibly engaged in extra marital affairs. I think that it is more than coincidence that two James Smalls exhibited a lack of compliance with established Christian morals of the age. This trait seems to have continued later in his family line because shortly before her marriage to John Henstridge, James and Charlotte's daughter Winifred Ann had an illegitimate child called Lewis Wareham (who later became a blacksmith) and he was baptised in 1841.

But where is the gypsy link? The Small surname suggests at a possible gypsy background for James as there was a Small family tribe that travelled southern England. However I found that

James' grandfather Thomas Small was in fact a baker in Wiltshire and at one time he even described himself as a clothier and a butcher. The fact that he changed his trade so often may suggest a changeable lifestyle similar to that of a gypsy? But looking at his and his wife's later wills (see page 8) there is no suggestion of gypsy roots and they clearly had possessions, a trade and households. Thomas was also well settled in Wylve for his whole life from his baptism to his burial. Thomas' grandfather was a Richard Small who was buried in Tisbury in 1716. Given that the Small family line hints at, but does not prove, gypsy lineage it is probably the case that James' second wife Charlotte Wareham was of gypsy heritage and that James had linked into the gypsy families when his family moved to Ringwood. Ringwood and the New Forest have been well known as a home to many travelling Romany families for generations. They refer to the area as 'Neve-Wesh'. I am not sure what drew William Small and his family to the Ringwood area but afterwards James later met Charlotte Wareham and according to the book '*Gypsies of the New Forest by HEJG, 1909*' – one of "the ordinary surnames amongst the Gypsy tribes in the Forest are ... Wareham...". It may therefore also be the case that my other ancestor Susanna Wareham had gypsy roots but her Wareham family had been well established and settled in Shroton since about 1715 and so if they were originally gypsies then that heritage was much further back in time.

In 1817 Charlotte, James' future wife, would have been just 16. She was baptised to Benjamin and Charlotte Wareham in Ringwood in 1801. Interestingly the name Benjamin Wareham also suggests a connection between the Warehams of the New Forest and those of Shroton because Susannah Wareham's grandfather was also called Benjamin. Benjamin of Ringwood also had a son called Jonathan Wareham in 1799 and Susannah Wareham of Shroton had a great grandfather called Jonathan who was born in about 1700. This is all rather too much of a coincidence and I would not be at all surprised if Jonathan Wareham of Shroton, Susannah's great grandfather, came from the New Forest area as I can't find his baptism in Dorset. However neither can I find it currently in Ringwood or Fordingbridge or in surrounding parishes. Jonathan may not have been baptised or may have taken the Wareham name later in life.

When Charlotte Wareham and James Small were in Shroton in 1817 they would probably not have been a married and established 'couple' and the birth of their child may well have been an 'accident'. If they were gypsies, or even if they were travelling as gypsies, and were not from that parish, then the parish clerk and vicar may not have sought or been able to obtain evidence of Charlotte's actual age or whether they were married prior to the baptism of their child. There is no evidence that this young James Crib Small survived after 1817 as he is not mentioned in the census of 1841 or afterwards, but he was not buried in Shroton or Ringwood or even Warminster. So it may be the case that if this young child died and that on their return to Ringwood James and Charlotte did not marry. Then a couple of years later James married Lydia Rolls who also sadly died very shortly afterwards. Eventually James did marry Charlotte, but apparently only after having another illegitimate child with her in 1822.

What took James and Charlotte to Shroton in 1817? It isn't clear but maybe it was en-route to a trip back to Wiltshire to visit James' family relatives in the Warminster area? Or maybe it was the draw of Shroton fayre which took place each year until the early 20th century and which was well known across the south. Gypsies have always frequented this and other fayres to gather together, to trade and sell their wares to local people. My great grandfather Walter George Wareham used to return to the village each fayre time to stay with relatives who were still living there.

Further evidence of possible gypsy connections are that James' brother John Small had a child called 'Levi'. Levi is a name commonly used by gypsies as evidenced by '*Wanderers of the New Forest by Juliet da Bairach 1958*'. James also had a grandson called 'Pharoah' and it was known for gypsies to use such unusual names and that they sometimes referred to themselves as 'children of Pharaoh' because they claim, amongst other stories, that they are a lost wandering tribe of Egypt. This is where the word 'gypsy' name comes from. Interestingly James' great x 2 grandmother's maiden name was 'Israel' Rose, maybe another suggestion of eastern gypsy connections and roots of the Small family? Gypsies probably entered Europe in the 11th or 12th century from India, rather than Egypt.

This is a fascinating life-story and one that does stand up to serious scrutiny even if there may not be absolute proof of all of the connections that I have made. It is much more probable than improbable and I am willing to place a bet that this James Small of Ringwood was in fact the father of my ancestor George Wareham of Shroton.

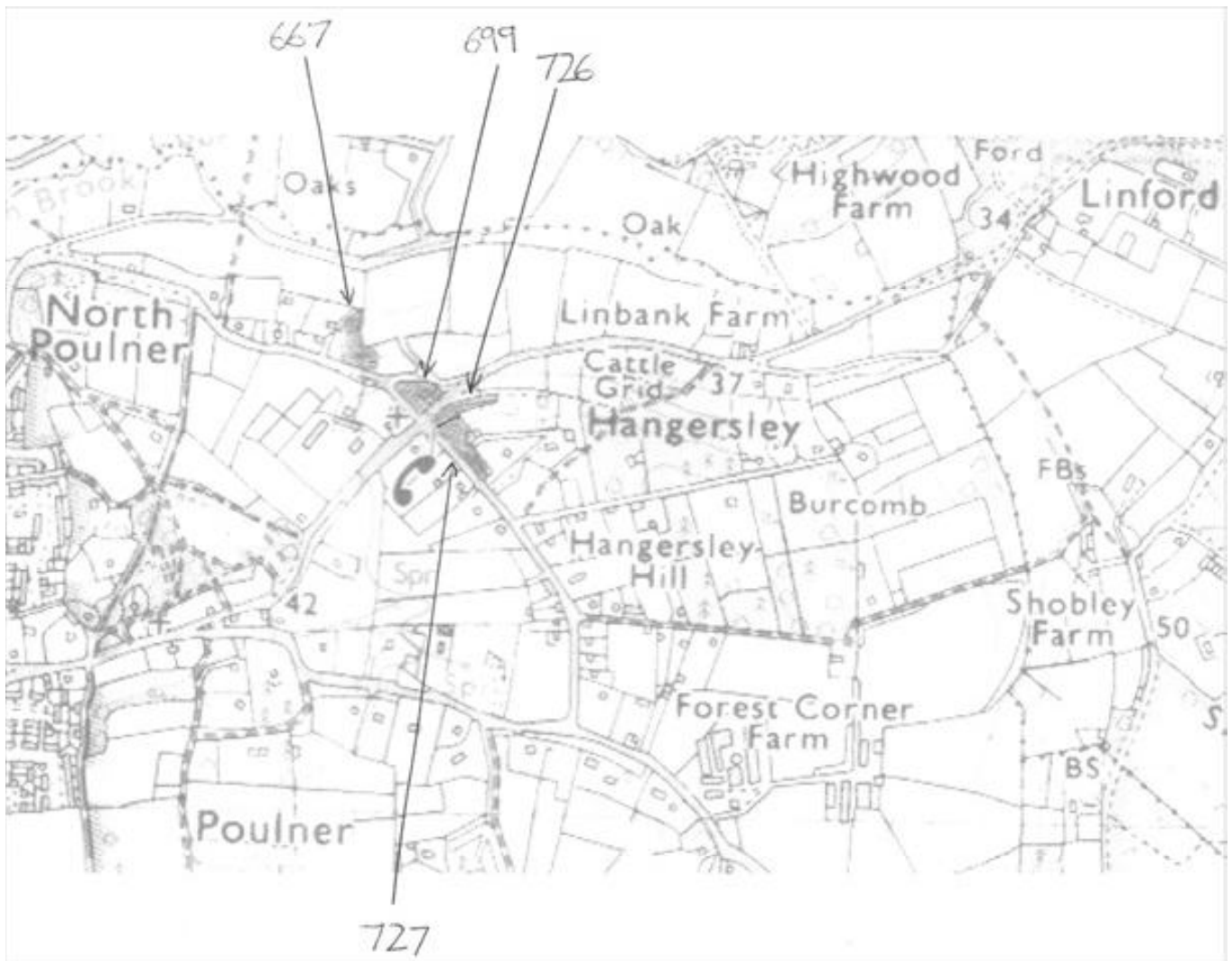
What is absolutely a fact is that James Small of Ringwood, the son of a pauper, came to establish himself in a farm tenancy. Then he managed to increase this holding twenty times over between 1847 and 1871 and died at a very decent age for the time, 81. In 1841 James was a labourer, but by 1847, when the tithes were recorded, he was holding this land from John Morant esq –

tithe plot number	name	area	tithe payment
667	Simmons garden	0a-2-20	£0-2s-11p
699	Garden	0a-2-16	£0-2s-9p
727	Fullhouse plot & arable	0a-3-14	£0-2s-6p

and from James Wareham (must be a connection to his wife Charlotte) –

726	Cottage outhouse & garden	0a-1-16	£0-1s-6p
-----	---------------------------	---------	----------

This is a map (Ringwood is to the left and western edge of the New Forest to the right) of where he held this land (shaded) –



James had a cottage (tithe 726) and land (tithes 667, 699 and 727) on the crossroads junction of Cowpitts Land and Linford Road. This would match with his record in 1841 as living at Hangersley. He did not have alot of land in 1847 and it was mostly garden with a little arable. However he did

have a cottage with an outhouse and another building and three plots. This was probably enough to keep some stock and maybe grow some vegetables.



Left - the crossroads at north Poulner looking towards old plot 726 where James Small had his cottage in 1847. The new cottage looks more modern.



Left above is plot 699, former garden but now with a residence and right above is Linford Road and on the left is the hedge of former plot 727.

Pictured to the right is former plot 667 which was called 'Simmonds garden'.



James certainly did enough hard work with his first acre or two of land to expand to holding twenty acres by 1861 and then sixty acres by 1871. By 1871 he was also employing his son-in-law John

Henstridge as a 'farmer's man'. Henstridge and family lived in the same cottage as James and his second wife Charlotte. In 1871 James is listed as living at 'North Poulner Hill' which is the same area.

I doubt that there is much more information to discover about James and his life. But what I have discovered certainly paints an interesting picture. He was buried in Ringwood, although this may be in the small burial ground at Poulner rather than the main churchyard at Ringwood. The chapel is on the corner of the crossroads at North Poulner where he lived but there is no legible remaining memorial to him or his wife, if one ever existed. Pictured below is the chapel, which was built in 1841 when James first came to Poulner, which still contains gravestones from the 19th century. You can see the land at the top right of the picture where James had his cottage. James and his family may well have worshipped at this small and beautiful chapel.



James' former lover and my great x 3 grandmother Susanna Wareham appears to have married a man called Thomas Parsons in Blandford Forum when she was aged about 40. They had a daughter Mary (probably a name used after her mother Mary Wareham, nee Hayward) in the town in 1845. I don't think she and Thomas had any other children and I do not yet know when and where they died. My ancestor George and his brother James were with their maternal grandparents Robert and Mary Wareham in Shroton in 1841 and they were aged about 16 and 11. I don't know why they became separated from their mother. Robert was a very poor farm labourer and was frequently seeking poor relief from the parish including waiting over a year for money to pay for repairs to a leaking thatch roof on his 'hovvel', which it probably would have been. Robert worked for the Andrews family of Shroton for over 50 years and in 1847, when he was 70, he was awarded with a prize (of 20 shillings a waistcoat and coat) for long 'servitude' by the farmers in the Sturminster Newton Agricultural Society. George may have had some contact with his father because how else did he know that by 1847 that he was a yeoman farmer? His father was certainly not a farmer when he was born and when his mother knew him because if he had been then James would have been in trouble with the overseers of the poor in Shroton who had to provide for

young Susanna and her children. In February 1830 Susannah made her first application to the parish overseers and she received 5 shillings towards the upkeep of herself and her child, George. In July that same year she then received 2 shillings and 6 pence for herself and two children as James had been born in June. For some reason this was lower than the 3 shillings that she had applied for. Later in 1830 another claim was completely rejected as 'inadmissible' although it is not clear from the records why this was. Maybe it was because with two illegitimate children she had lost the support of the overseers? Maybe the milk of Christian kindness had run out and Thomas Hardy testifies in some of his books, like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* that the parish hierarchies, including some clergy, took a very hard line with what they viewed to be immoral young and single women. In September 1830 she is not listed with other parents as being in the village.

James Small became a yeoman farmer between 1841 and 1847 and so for George to have known that he had improved his lot in life must mean that there was some contact between them.

George Wareham became an agricultural labourer and he held this occupation most of his life. Later in life he did become a road labourer and he even acted as a foreman for some time. But most of his lifetime was spent poor and must have been a hard existence. He lost some children in infancy and childhood, one to typhus, and he was once living in the parish workhouse. He spent most of his life in Shroton but was in north Blandford in 1851 / 1861 (now the area of Queens Road) and he died in Shroton aged 67 in 1893 where he was buried with his wife. There is no memorial to George or Jane, as the family would certainly not have been able to afford a stone. But there is a memorial to George and Jane's three children (George (died 1864 aged 15), Emma (died 1880 aged 14) and Ellen Louisa (died 1876 aged 18)) pictured on the right. I expect that some beneficiary, touched by the story of family tragedy, or even the parish overseers, paid for this headstone rather than the parents who would almost certainly not have been able to afford a stone like this.

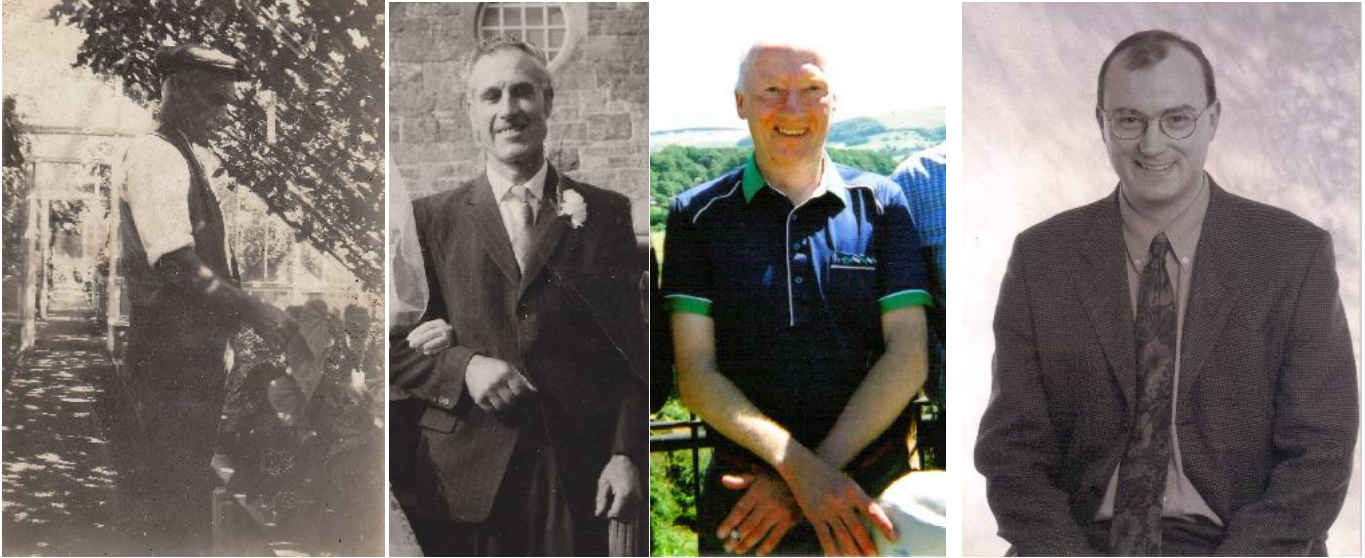


George's brother James (possibly also a son of James Small) appears in the 1851 census in Poole but then vanishes. I cannot find a marriage or death / burial record, but also no other references in censuses in the UK. I very much expect that James left these shores because Poole was a port and a main link between Nova Scotia in Canada. He may well have joined a voyage to start a life in the new world or maybe even became a sailor. Or, of course, he may have died at a young age and I just haven't found where yet.

Unfortunately, in my view, there appears to be no firm claim that we can make here to gypsy ancestry. From my perspective this would be an interesting ancestry to add to the more aristocratic and noble lines (mixed with plenty of labourers and farmers) that come through the same Wareham background. George's wife Jane Russell descends from a gentrified Blachford family of Fordingbridge and Dorchester who held a coat of arms. James Small does not appear to have been of immediate gypsy lineage although he probably later married a woman who was a gypsy. The Wareham name itself may suggest at a gypsy link and there is some suggestion at a connection between the Wareham families of Shroton and the New Forest but there is no firm evidence to prove it completely. However given the area connections and use of the description of

'gypsy' in 1817 for a child of James and Charlotte it seems that the family certainly mingled with gypsies of the New Forest and married into them.

Pictured below are four generations of James Small's descendents on the male line showing, from left to right) - his grandson (Walter George Wareham), great grandson (Sidney Wareham), great x 2 grandson (Rodney Wareham) and great x 3 grandson (a younger and thinner me), all of whom should probably, according the custom of taking the paternal surname and regardless whether I have in fact discovered the right James, have been called Small! Given the fact that I am over 6 feet tall and a bit larger these days, unlike my Wareham ancestors, to have been called Mark Small would have been quite an amusing name.



Back to the New Forest

From page 161 of 'Gypsies of the New Forest by HEJD 1909'.

Wild are the winds o'er the Forest sighing
Salt with the spray of the ocean so near
Bleak the plains where the plover is crying
And dense are the woods that shelter the deer
Far down the valley ponies are grazing
While cows on the lawns are feeding galore
The heather so bright in sunshine blazing
O take me back to the Forest once more
Deep in my heart its mem'ry still lingers
Sweetest of spots in this world so fair
O take me back soon and leave me there
Yes take me back to Ringwood* and bury me there.

- *the original author used Minstead in the Forest, but Ringwood is just as appropriate here.*
- *My Wareham family also claim ancestry from several families i.e. Barry / Pinhorne / Casbert, through the Russell and Hurdle families of Shroton, who lived in Fordingbridge / Ringwood / Gorley and so this poem about the New Forest is just as relevant.*

See page 11 for the Wareham family line from my grandfather, Sidney Wareham.

The wills of great x 5 grandparents Thomas and Lydia Small

Transcription of the 1794 will of Thomas Small of Wylve in Wiltshire
(buried 31/5/1794 aged 60 years and 10 months)

... of Wily in the County of Wilts Baker.
Made 18th April 1794.

... I also give and bequeath unto my three sons namely Henry Small, William Small and Edward Small the sum of £100 apiece ...after the death or decease of my wife Lydia Small.

I also give and bequeath unto my three daughters namely Sarah the wife of Philip Bennett, Elizabeth the wife of William Farley and Mary the wife of John Scammell the sum of one guinea apiece ... one month after my decease.

All the rest and residue of my monies and securities for money, stock and utensils in the baking business household goods and furniture and implements of household, book debts, goods, chattels and effects whatsoever and wheresoever of what nature sort of kind soever I give and bequeath unto my wife the said Lydia Small for her own sole use and benefit forever and I make constitute and appoint her my said wife Lydia Small sole and only executrix of this will ...

Signed by Thomas Small with seal

Witnessed by Wm Lawes and John Perrior

Effects under £600, proved Sarum 3rd June 1794 before Wm Whitworth.

The image shows a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas Small". To the right of the signature is a dark, circular impression, likely a seal or a stamp, which is somewhat indistinct but appears to contain some text or a design.

Transcription of the 1794 will of Lydia Small of Wylve in Wiltshire
(buried 13/3/1805 aged 83)

of 'Wily in the county of Wiltshire, widow'. Bequeaths –

To granddaughter Ann Small 'who now lives with me' £20.

'I give and bequeath all my cloaths and wearing apparell of every sort and kind under my daughters Sarah Bennett wife of Philip Bennett of Wily aforesaid labourer, Mary Scammell wife of John Scammell of Wily aforesaid shoemaker and Betty Farley wife of William Farley of Wily aforesaid carpenter and my said granddaughter Ann Small to be equally divided between then share and share alike.

'Also I give and bequeath all and every my household goods and furniture unto my said daughters Sarah Bennett, Mary Scammell and Betty Farley to be equally divided between them share and share alike.

Also I give and bequeath unto John Perrior of Wily aforesaid innholder his heirs and assigns all that my tenement and dwellinghouses garden and premises thereunto belonging situate lying and being at Stapleford in the said county of Wilts to hold to him the said John Perrior his heirs and assigns for ever upon the trusts hereinafter mentioned. Also I give and bequeath unto the said John Perrior his executors administrators or assigns all and every the rest and residue of my rights credits monies securities for money and personal estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever which I now am or at the time of my decease may be possessed of or entitled to upon the trusts following (that is to say) in trust nevertheless that he the said John Perrior his heirs executors administrators or assigns do and shall within six months next after my decease sell and dispose of the said tenement or dwellinghouse and all such part of the rest residue and remainder of my said personal estate and effects as shall not at my decease consist of ready money or be laid out and invested in the public stocks or funds or other security in such manner as he may think proper and for the most money and best price or prices that ... or may be gotten for the same and also collect receive and get in all such debts and sums of money and may be due and owing to me at my death and the

money arising therefrom after paying the said legacy of £20 unto my said granddaughter Ann Small. Also my just debts funeral expenses and the costs and charges of proving this my will I direct shall go and be paid and I give and bequeath the same unto my said three daughters Sarah Bennett, Mary Scammell and Betty Farley to be equally divided between them share and share alike to and for their own proper use and benefit and I make nominate and constitute and appoint him the said John Perrior executor in trust of this my will.....

Made August 1795

Signed my Lydia Small with her mark of a cross

Signed by witnesses - Isaac Fleming, William Mead and Ann Ramsey

