

The Chatwoods, Chetwoods and Chetwodes – an outline or - What's in a name?

As we know, in 1849 one of our ancestors, William Thomas Chatwood (or Chetwood) migrated to Wisconsin with his wife Frances Eaton and their first six children, leaving their Shropshire home to sail from Liverpool. Of course, other Chatwoods and Chetwoods went west too, mostly transported as free labour for capitalist developers, for crimes committed in England. You might like to google *Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674–1913* to look at the crimes and punishments. Wonderfully, our man's brave new start was successful, and wonderfully too, after over a century, the Minnesota Chatwoods and Shropshire Chetwood cousins renewed contact. Maybe this is a good time to fill in a little more about the family origins.

First, spelling - Chetwode is just an older spelling of Chetwood, pronounced the same, just as readers of PG Wodehouse say his name as 'Woodhouse'. See the map produced to accompany his books, showing English counties as they were for William Thomas and Frances. Chetwode is also the name of an English village in Buckinghamshire, where the family first lived and held lands, soon after the Norman Conquest - apparently granted by a Walter of Flanders. It was a very heavily wooded area – appropriate as the Celtic and English halves of our name both mean 'wood'.



Chatwood is a variant pronunciation of Chetwood – like Derby and clerk, pronounced *Derby* and *clark* in England. The farther back the records go, the less the Chatwood spelling is found, with Chitwood even rarer. As people tend to write what they think they hear, different regional accents can produce different spellings – often in the same document. For example, in the 1720 Will of Dr Thomas Chetwood of Chester, he and his brother, John Chetwode (the first baronet) sign their names as 'Chetwode' but throughout the document the solicitor's clerk has written 'Chetwood'. If you go back far enough, though, we're probably all of the same blood.

EARLY DAYS

Almost 300 years after the Battle of Hastings, one John left Chetwode and its manor to marry money in Oakley, Staffordshire. Surnames not yet being in use, he was known there as John de Chetwode. The Chetwodes remained in the Mucklestone area, living at Oakley Hall, belw, just over the border into Shropshire, until the hall was sold in the 1920s. They were related to and neighbours of the much-wealthier Crewe family, on whose land the Cheshire railway town of that name was built. They became local landlords and magistrates - and sheriffs, soldiers, sailors, MPs, clergymen, doctors and other professionals. After all, they could afford the best education available: many are listed as Oxbridge alumni. From that day to this more Chetwoods have lived in the triangle where Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire meet than anywhere else on the planet. Chatwoods, though, are mostly in Lancashire – but more of them later.



Oakley Hall, photographed in the 1960s. In 1710 it was much extended from the original.

Staying with this branch of the family – because it is the earliest one for which records exist - in 1522 Roger Chetwode, who held lands at Rees Heath (now known as Reaseheath), married Ellen Masterson, an heiress from nearby Nantwich, about three miles from Crewe. In Elizabeth I's time Nantwich was a military staging post en route to Chester, for embarkation of troops and supplies to Ireland, and in fact some of the Mastersons settled over there. Roger and Ellen are known to have had six children, some at least with descendants alive today. Their great-grandson Richard married Anne Knightley in 1601. Her father, Sir Valentine Knightley, was one of the 'adventurers' granted lands in Virginia by England's 'Virgin Queen' and it seems they have descendants there today. Land in the Americas was also being commandeered by France and Spain: the last thing Elizabeth I wanted was for her old Catholic rivals to outdo England.

Philip Chetwode, 1641-1678, a descendant of Roger and Ellen, also married an heiress, Hester Touchet. Sadly his early death meant they had only six children. However, in the troubled times following the attempted 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, with the Protestant monarchy needing all the loyal support it could find, their first child, John, along with many more, was made a baronet. In 1702, five years after the first service in St Paul's Cathedral, English Parliamentarians combined with the Dutch armies of William of Orange to oust Catholic James II of Scotland, son-in-law of Charles II, and prevent the Catholic grandson of Charles II from

becoming king. However William died in 1702, and the brief reign of Queen Anne, first of the Hanoverians, followed. People with much to lose had to be careful to be on the right side, like the Vicar of Bray, if you remember the old song.

At this time, to hold any official post, a man had to prove he took communion in an Anglican church, as Catholics were debarred from office and greatly feared – and still cannot rule England or marry a monarch, not even an heir to the throne. We have Henry VIII to thank for this – and for the parish registers of England, originally instituted in 1538 as a form of social control to ensure observance of the established church. Now we just notice its helpfulness.

The Chetwodes though, went one better than a mere entry in a church record, with stained glass Chetwode windows, marble plaques and stone tombs in and around Mucklestone church (*see below*), about a mile from Oakley Hall. They also improved on the baronetcy (lowest rank of the English aristocracy) when Sir Philip Walhouse Chetwode was created a baron in 1945. His grandson, another Philip, is the present Lord Chetwood.



The senior branch, back in Buckinghamshire, left Chetwode Manor much earlier, though still retained the association with the area and the manorial title. At various times Chetwodes also lived in London and the Home Counties, often with or near in-laws. If a man married an heiress, he could adopt her inherited wealth as his own – all this long before the days of the Married Women's Property Act. For example, the fifth baronet, another John, married Elizabeth Juliana Newdigate-Ludford in 1821, added her surnames to his own to enable him to inherit her considerable wealth and moved to her father's Leicestershire mansion. As one of 18 children, he felt he had to fend for himself any way he could. Juliana was 9 years older than John and 42 when they married. After her death Sir John returned to Oakley Hall. They had no children to follow them, but Juliana's names were given to streets in Crewe's west end when Chetwode land was sold in the railway boom: John, Newdigate, Ludford, Chetwode and Oakley Streets are still there. By an odd coincidence I used to teach at Ludford Street School, Crewe, when living in my home town of Nantwich. Odder still, the 20th century business of my grandfather, William Chetwood, in Hospital Street, Nantwich was within a few doors of a house and gardens previously owned by one of the Chetwode baronets. I never thought then I'd visit Minnesota or Oakley Hall.

Please e-mail any comments or queries to lynda@chetwood.org

More later on:

Shropshire

High Ercall, Hodnet and other homes
How Chetwoods moved to Cheshire and London
Other Chetwoods who moved elsewhere in the UK
Abigail and Valentine

Oakley Chetwodes

Galloping baronets
Contested baronies
The Anglo-Irish Chetwoods
Valentines and Knightleys

The Vicar of Bray
(a Berkshire village)

In good King Charles's golden days
When loyalty no harm meant
A zealous high churchman was I
And so I gained preferment
To teach my flock I never missed
Kings are by God appointed
And damned are they who dare resist
Or touch the Lord's anointed.

*And this the law I will maintain
Until my dying day, Sir.
That whatsoever king may reign
I'll still be the Vicar of Bray, Sir!*

When Royal James possessed the crown
And popery came in fashion
The Penal Laws I hooted down
And read the Declaration
The Church of Rome I found did fit
Full well my constitution
And I had been a Jesuit
But for the Revolution.

Chorus

When William was our King declared
To ease the nation's grievance
With this new wind about I steered
And swore to him allegiance
Old principles I did revoke
Set conscience at a distance
Passive obedience was a joke
A jest was non-resistance.

Chorus

When Royal Anne became our Queen,
Then Church of England's Glory
Another face of things was seen
And I became a Tory.
Occasional conformists base
I blamed their moderation
And thought the Church in danger was
By such prevarication.

Chorus

When George in pudding time came o'er
And moderate men looked big, Sir.
My principles I changed once more
And so became a Whig, Sir.
And thus preferment I procured
From our new faith's defender.
And almost every day abjured
The Pope and the Pretender.

Chorus

The illustrious house of Hanover
And Protestant succession
To these I do allegiance swear
While they can keep possession
For in my faith and loyalty
I never more will falter
And George my lawful king shall be -
Until the times do alter.