

## **Intertwining Plants: A Story of Cooperation and Friendship**

**By Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (Member No. 179)**

By any standards, I am a novice in genealogy. I started to do family history only last summer, after reading an article on tracing your roots in a magazine. Now that the Internet has so vastly improved the ease of finding genealogical information, I had no trouble locating researchers on several of my family lines. But my experience with Plant researchers has been nothing short of phenomenal, in large part due to the generosity and encouragement of two sterling members of the Plant Family History Group, Shirley Hughes (member 29) and Kathy Compagno (member 121). I'd like to tell you the story of our co-operation, because it has led to discoveries that would have been much more difficult had we all been working alone.

In February of 2001 I found Shirley's name on a Genuki List for Staffordshire where, surprise! my Plants were located. Shirley put me in touch with Kathy – and this began a correspondence which has expanded to several emails a day among us – and a pooling of resources that has led not only to discoveries about our own Plant branches, but the creation of lengthy trees claimed by other Plant researchers we have been able to assist (four so far, and counting!). Our intention now is to identify all the Plants in the Black County (why not dream big?).

Early on in our correspondence Kathy told me about the Plant Family History Group – I immediately logged on to the website and was very excited – and my membership fee was put into the mail soon after. It was great to see other South Staffs/North Worcs researchers, and to know I was not alone in my search. Immediately useful was the Staffordshire Burial Index for Plants, which Kathy was kind enough to print out and send to me; it has been an invaluable resource (as the Marriage Index will be also – thank you Keith!).

Also early on, the name of Michael Plant (member 6) was mentioned by Kathy as the source of much of her early Plant research – a meticulous and precise researcher, as I was to find out. We all owe much to his discoveries (more about an interesting intersect with Michael later!).

With their enormous knowledge of Plants in the South Staffs/North Worcs area, both Kathy and Shirley were able to pinpoint my particular Plants, who descend from Benjamin Plant and Mary Bate who married in 1672 at Rowley Regis (dubbed the “Geographic Branch” by Kathy because of a recurring tendency to use the given names Richmond, Warwick and Dudley). Shirley even immediately found a Will reference for my 2x great grandfather, Reuben, who died in 1911 (she actually mentioned this in her very first email to me!). It didn't take long before I was immersed in my own research based on Kathy and Shirley's foundations – and learned an immense amount on how to do genealogical research (census and parish records are my best friends, to say nothing of wills and the GRO!).

It wasn't long before, armed with a newly created and documented tree of over 50 pages, that I felt the urge to turn to other Plant branches in South Staffs/North Worcs – of course, Shirley's and Kathy's branch was an ongoing interest (they descend from John Plant/Margaret Shaw of Old Swinford – not far away from mine). But Kathy, with her marvellous ability to inspire and encourage, was interested in what she called “Ancestral Mysteries,” Plants who couldn't be (so far) connected to our own lines. She created “starter” trees for Thomas/Anne of Alvechurch (married 1712?) and Richard/unknown wife of Bromsgrove (married 1595?); and she has recently become interested in Thomas/Eleanor Blakemore of Dunnington, Salop who married in 1727 in Kingswinford by licence and apparently went to Mucklestone to have their children.

She also produced a 6-page printout on the descendants of one James Plant/Esther Leah married at Kingswinford in 1743. In the meantime, I had gone to the Kingswinford marriage

records and transcribed all the Plant marriages between 1828-1853 – and this led to two Plants, brothers James and Daniel, whose father Thomas was the youngest boy of the mysterious James who married Esther Leah. Within a week of our documenting this line more or less through the 1881 census, I had a query from one of its descendants in Canada! The timing was almost eerie....

And, around that same time, at the beginning of May, I discovered another Plant with ancestors in Brierley Hill by an amazing coincidence. My great aunt Jessie Plant Brown, who was the family historian, lived in Westfield, New Jersey, USA. The minister at her church was also named Plant – and they discovered in a conversation one day that his Plants also came from Brierley Hill. I would never have known about this connection if my aunt (Jessie's niece), when going through some family papers, had not discovered the name of this Plant minister – and my cousin Joan (Jessie's daughter) was able to supply an address and phone number. I contacted him – and found out that he was descended from the very same James Plant/Esther Leah branch we had been working on! And the source of his information was a tree sent to him by an "8<sup>th</sup> cousin or so," Michael Plant (of our own Plant Family History Group)! We had come full circle, especially as Michael's research provided a missing William Plant (not in the IGI) who has turned out to be the missing link for a number of Plant descendants.

Does the story end here? Of course not – through Shirley's numerous contacts, we have now had queries from descendants of that William who now live in Australia and New Zealand (who had been searching for their distaff Plant for *years*); as well as an Australian descendant of one of the Plants in my "Geographic" branch. Kathy, Shirley and I continue to research the Black Country Plants – using records we share with one another – and hope someday to document them all!

If any of you have Plants in the Black Country and would like to join the fun – please contact us! We would love to hear from you, and add *your* branch to our ever-growing tree – and who knows, someday we may find the original Plant who connects them all.