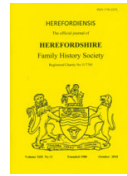


A Change of Name

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Why Change Your Surname?

This started as a postscript to the article "The Infamous Solicitor of Ross" in *Herefordiensis* Vol XV No. 1 (April 2002). After writing the article I found that the only child of John and Elizabeth, William Henry SKYRME (born 1872) had changed his name by 1891 to William Henry POWELL. This was the name of his uncle with whom he had lived since his parents died. The name change was formalised by deed poll in 1893. In 1890 he went up to Cambridge University and was later a librarian in Hampshire. Was the stigma of living with the name Skyrme too much?

I have another example of such a change in my Pembrokeshire ancestors. This was Ernest Scourfield Skyrme (1871-1943). Scourfield was his paternal grandmother's surname. He joined the Royal Marines in the mid-1890s and adopted his middle name as surname since it was said that his mother and siblings, all teachers, disapproved of his choice of career. So from then onwards he was Ernest SCOURFIELD.

Changing Relationships

However, more common reasons for changes of name are due to illegitimacy, adoption or when a mother marries and changes her name when a child is young. Even today this causes a dilemma on which surname a child should use. In an earlier article in *Herefordiensis*, Vol XIII, No. 7 (October 2017) "The Tailor Who Changed His Name", I described how Arthur Williams of Hereford kept flipping between this name and Arthur Skyrme at different censuses. Williams was the surname of his mother. His father may or may not have been a Skyrme, the result of a liaison between Mary and her sister Jane's husband.

Perhaps the most interesting case is that pertaining to the Skyrmes of Vowchurch in the Golden Valley. From 1775-1850 there were over 75 baptisms in Vowchurch, more than five times the number in any other parish, thus making it the largest cluster of Skyrme families in

Herefordshire. Tracing their ancestors backwards, the earliest baptism of a Skyrme in Vowchurch is that of Thomas Skyrme on 4th December 1699. In the baptism record he is a "base child" (i.e. illegitimate) whose father was Thomas Cook and mother Mary Skyrme. Both are listed as "of Allensmore". So had not Thomas kept his mother's name of Skyrme, we might have had a cluster of Cooks rather than Skyrmes in Vowchurch!

Conclusion

I've given a few examples from my own research of surname changes. Readers may have other examples they might wish to share.

There is a useful 'Changes of Name' guide at the National Archives website - (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/changes-of-name/>). This guide refers to Phillimore and Fry's 'Index to Changes of Name 1760-1901'. This is where I discovered William Henry Skyrme's change of name to Powell. The index is free to view online at the Deed Poll Office website - https://deedpolloffice.com/pdf/phillimore_and_fry_index.pdf.

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