

THE OWSLEY ANCESTRY OF WILLIAM HOUSLEY OF CROSCOMBE

born 1766

A Documentary Study: Evidence, Confidence, Sources, and Descendants

covering the direct line only, generation by generation, with the primary evidence behind each link

Compiled by Denzel Housley

Contents

Contents	2
Preface: What This Document Is	4
The Direct Line at a Glance	5
Generation One: John Owsley (d. 1663)	6
Generation Two: James Owsley (d. 1681)	7
Generation Three: Richard Owsley — the Central Question	9
What the record shows directly	9
An earlier hypothesis, and why it was retired	9
The identification this study now holds	9
Why this reading is preferred, set out plainly	10
What remains genuinely unresolved	10
Generation Four: Richard Ously of Thorncombe (bap. 1678)	11
Generation Five: William Ously (bap. 1704)	12
Generation Six: Richard Ousley (bap. 1732)	13
Generation Seven: William Housley (bap. 1766)	14
A Change in Spelling: Owsley to Housley	14
Y-DNA Testing and the Wider Owsley Family	14
Confidence Summary	16
Will of John Owsley, Yeoman, of Wootton Fitzpaine (1663)	20
Will of James Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine (1681)	24
What These Two Wills Establish, Together	27
Other Key Records	28
James Owsley's marriage to Ann Bazley, 1657	28
Richard Owsly and Rebeckah Lock, marriage register, 1679	28
How to Read This Report	30
Generation One	31
Generation Two	32
Generation Three	34
Generation Four	35
Generation Five	36
Generation Six	37
Generation Seven	38

Index of Spouses and In-Laws Named in This Report.....	39
Appendix: Terms and Places.....	40
The Burying in Woollen Acts	40
Croscombe, Somerset.....	40
Lyme Regis, Dorset.....	40
Old Style / New Style Dating.....	40
Proved (of a Will)	40
SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphism)	41
Thorncombe, Dorset	41
Wells, Somerset.....	41
Whitchurch Canoniconum, Dorset	41
Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset.....	41
Yeoman.....	41
Appendix: Confidence Key	43
Appendix: Sources for This Document.....	44

Preface: What This Document Is

William Housley was born in 1766 in Croscombe, a small village near Wells in Somerset, England, and baptized there under that name. His own descendants in the United States are well documented, generation by generation, down to the present day. What was not known, until the research behind this document was undertaken, was where William came from — who his English ancestors were, and how far back that ancestry could be traced with real confidence.

This document is the result of that research: a systematic review of English parish registers, wills, and probate records across Somerset and Dorset, undertaken to determine William's own paternal ancestry as far back as the surviving evidence allows. It traces seven generations, from William back to John Owsley, a yeoman of the Dorset parish of Wootton Fitzpaine who died in 1663 — the earliest ancestor in this line for whom a document has been found. Above John, no record has yet come to light naming a father in turn, and this document says so plainly rather than guess.

What follows sets out, generation by generation, exactly what evidence supports each link in that chain and how confident this study is in each one; a full table of the direct line and everyone documented as connected to it by birth or marriage; the two wills that anchor the line's middle generations, transcribed in full and reproduced here as images; the descendant report already prepared for this line; and a set of appendices explaining terms, places, and the Y-DNA testing that has since confirmed this branch's relationship to other Owsley-descended families.

This is a document about evidence and its limits. Where a relationship is stated directly on a record — a baptism naming a father, a will naming a son — that is said plainly. Where it rests on inference rather than direct statement, that is said plainly too, along with the reasoning behind it and what would be needed to settle it beyond doubt.

PART ONE

Determining the Direct Line: Evidence and Reasoning, Generation by Generation

Seven generations connect John Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine to William Housley of Croscombe. Six of those seven links rest on records that name the relationship directly — a baptism naming a father, a will naming a son. One does not, and this part gives that one link the most detailed treatment, because a family history is only as strong as its weakest joint, and this study has tried throughout to be exactly as confident as the evidence allows and no more.

The Direct Line at a Glance

The chart below summarizes the seven generations discussed in full in the rest of this part. Confidence levels follow the key given in the appendix.

John Owsley (d.1663, Wootton Fitzpaine, yeoman) -- [High, will TNA PROB 11/312/297]
|__ James Owsley (d.1681, Wootton Fitzpaine) -- [High, will + burial]
|
|__ Richard Owsley -- [Medium-High -- see Generation Three, below]
|__ m. Rebeckah Lock, 1679, Wootton Fitzpaine
Richard Ously (bap.1678, Thorncombe) -- [High]
|__ m. Joan Fowler, 1701, Thorncombe
|__ William Ously (bap.1704) -- [High, direct record]
|__ m. Elizabeth Bonner, 1726, Thorncombe
|__ Richard Ousley (bap.1732) -- [Medium-High]
|__ m. Deborah Bull, 1763, Wells St Cuthbert
|__ -- William (bap.1766, Croscombe -- recorded as HOUSLEY)
|__ Elizabeth

Note the one inferential link on this chart: John and James Owsley are documented by will at every generation, and Richard, baptized at Thorncombe in 1678, is documented directly; what remains an inference rather than a directly-stated record is that James's son Richard is the same man who married Rebeckah Lock in 1679 and fathered the 1678 child -- see Generation Three, below, for the full reasoning. Note also the spelling change at the very last step: William, alone among the seven generations, was recorded as 'Housley' rather than 'Owsley' or 'Ously' at his own baptism -- see the discussion following Generation Seven for what is known about that change.

Generation One: John Owsley (d. 1663)

John Owsley, a yeoman of Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset, is the earliest generation of this direct line documented by a primary record. His will, dated 2 March 1662/3 and proved at London that November (The National Archives, PROB 11/312/297), names his wife Elizabeth, his son James, and seven of James's own children as grandchildren, each left a specific cash portion: Mary (already married to James Comming, twenty pounds), Elizabeth (thirty-five pounds and a brass pan), Hester (twenty pounds), Margaret (thirty-five pounds and a brass pan), Richard (thirty pounds), John (thirty-five pounds), and Benjamin (thirty pounds). A grandson, also James, takes the residue of the estate rather than a fixed portion — the pattern used for an already-adult, already-provided-for heir.

No document has been found establishing John's own parentage, birth, or marriage; he appears in the record only as a mature, established yeoman making his will. This is not unusual for the period — wills almost never name a testator's own parents — and it means this direct line's documented ancestry begins here, with John, rather than further back. A manor court roll, a Hearth Tax return, or an as-yet-unfound Devon record (Wootton Fitzpaine sits close to the old Devon border, and its neighbor Thorncombe was itself part of Devon until 1844) remain the most promising routes to extending the line above John, should such records surface.

Confidence: High that John Owsley existed, held land in Wootton Fitzpaine, and died in 1663, exactly as his will states. Not applicable to any generation above him, since none is yet documented.

Generation Two: James Owsley (d. 1681)

James Owsley, John's son, is named directly in his father's 1663 will — the single clearest link in this entire line. James made his own will on 7 November 1681, and was buried at Wootton Fitzpaine six weeks later, on 20 December 1681; the will was proved at Bridport, in the Archdeaconry of Dorset, on 14 December 1682. His own will confirms every child named as a minor in his father's will eighteen years earlier as still living in 1681: sons James, Richard, John, and Benjamin, and daughters Mary (Comming), Hester (Smith), and Margret — each receiving a small token bequest rather than a full portion, consistent with all of them having already come of age and received their inheritance under John's 1663 will. A second, younger family, by James's wife Anne, is also named: daughters Elizabeth, Martha, Anne, and Mary, who receive the household goods and residue jointly, the pattern used for children still requiring real, ongoing provision.

James's own marriage is independently documented: he married Ann Bazley at Lyme Regis on 2 February 1656/7, described in the register as 'of Wootton Fitzpaine.' Whether this Ann Bazley is the same woman named as 'wife Anne' in his 1681 will has generally been treated in this study as an open question — but the arithmetic of his children argues against a single, twenty-four-year marriage accounting for all of them.

By his father John's 1663 will, James already has eight children on record: seven grandchildren given fixed cash portions (Mary, Elizabeth, Hester, Margaret, Richard, John, and Benjamin), plus a grandson also named James who takes the residue of the estate outright, the treatment reserved for an already-adult, already-provided-for heir. Two of these eight are notably advanced for a marriage only six years old in 1663: Mary is already married to James Comming, and young James is treated as a settled heir rather than a minor awaiting a portion. Eight children in six years is not a realistic reading for one mother; a bride old enough to be married herself by 1663 could not also be a child of a marriage contracted in 1656/7.

The more plausible reading is that James had an earlier marriage, currently undocumented, that produced at least Mary and young James, probably in the later 1640s or early 1650s; that this first wife died; and that his 1656/7 marriage to Ann Bazley then produced some or all of the remaining six portioned children — Elizabeth, Hester, Margaret, Richard, John, and Benjamin — between about 1657 and 1663, itself a fast pace of childbearing, though not an impossible one. A second, younger family appears only in James's own 1681 will: a younger Elizabeth (her elder half-sister's name reused after her presumed death), Martha, Anne, and a younger Mary (likewise reusing a name already used once), all still dependent, receiving household goods jointly rather than fixed portions or adult tokens. This points to a further death and remarriage: whichever wife bore the 1657–63 children very likely died sometime after 1663, and James married a woman named Anne, who bore this younger group and who survived him as his sole executrix in 1681.

On this reading, James was married three times rather than once or twice, and 'Anne' the 1681 executrix is probably not Ann Bazley of 1656/7 at all, but a third wife. No record has been found naming a first wife, documenting Ann Bazley's death, or confirming Anne as a distinct woman — this is offered as the reading the children's ages make most probable, not as a settled fact, and a document naming any of these three women directly, if one survives, would settle it outright. Confidence: High that James was John's son (stated directly in John's will) and that his own children, including Richard, are correctly identified (stated directly in James's will). The number and sequence of his marriages, discussed above, rests on inference from the children's ages rather than any

document naming a first or third wife, and carries markedly lower confidence than the parentage links themselves.

Generation Three: Richard Owsley — the Central Question

Every other link in this line rests on a document that states the relationship outright. This one does not, and it is worth walking through the reasoning in full, including the path this study did not end up taking, because the strength of a conclusion is best judged against the alternative it replaced.

What the record shows directly

On 1 January 1679, a Richard Owsly married Rebeckah Lock at Wootton Fitzpaine. Rebecca can be traced with confidence: she was baptized Rebecca Locke at Whitchurch Canonorum in 1655, daughter of Anthonie Locke — himself, per his own 1693 probate inventory, a resident of Wootton Fitzpaine, a poor cottager holding a thatched cottage and a small plot enclosed from the common, worth twelve pounds in all. A son, Richard, was baptized to this couple at Thorncombe on 12 April 1678 — nine months before the marriage, and clearly conceived before the wedding, an unremarkable pattern for the period — and a daughter, Rebekah, in 1679, named for her mother. Rebecca herself was very likely the ‘Rebecca Ously’ buried at Thorncombe in 1684, about twenty-nine years old.

Nothing in the marriage record itself, or in the two children's baptisms, names the groom's own father. The identity of ‘Richard Owsly’ the bridegroom — whose son continues this direct line — has to be established by other means.

An earlier hypothesis, and why it was retired

This study's original approach, before any Wootton Fitzpaine wills had been found, worked from a closed set of seventeen Somerset and Dorset parishes and looked for the only Richard Owsley whose age made the 1679 marriage chronologically possible. That search turned up a Richard, baptized at Winsham in 1632, son of Richard Owsely and Joane Bond — which would have made him forty-six or forty-seven at his wedding, a widower marrying a bride twenty-two years his junior. Nothing else recommended this candidate beyond his age fitting: no document connected him to Wootton Fitzpaine or to Rebecca Locke, and accepting him required assuming an entire unrecorded first marriage and death of a first wife to explain the twenty-two-year gap between his own 1632 baptism and a plausible age to father the 1678 child, plus a late-life return migration to Winsham for his own 1688 burial.

This candidate was retired once a document-backed alternative was found, and it is recorded here, rather than silently dropped, because a hypothesis built to fill a gap in the absence of anything better deserves to be named honestly even after something stronger replaces it.

The identification this study now holds

Two wills, both already discussed in Generations One and Two above, supply a considerably better-attested candidate. John Owsley's 1663 will names a grandson Richard, son of James, portioned thirty pounds, payable at twenty-one. James's own 1681 will confirms a son Richard still living, receiving his father's grey cloak and five shillings — a minor token bequest, consistent with an already-independent adult son. A Richard fitting this description would have been born in the late 1650s or early 1660s, making him somewhere in his mid-teens to early twenties at the 1679 marriage

— an entirely ordinary age for a first-time bridegroom, native to the very parish where the wedding took place, with no unrecorded first marriage or death required to make the timeline work.

This is the identification this study now holds: Richard, son of James Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine, is this direct line's own ancestor above 1678.

Why this reading is preferred, set out plainly

First, it rests on positive evidence — two wills naming a Richard in exactly the right family, at exactly the right place — rather than on elimination within a closed list of candidates. Second, the groom marries in his own home parish, which is the ordinary pattern, not an exception requiring explanation. Third, no unrecorded first marriage, first wife's death, or late-life migration is needed to make the ages work; a young bridegroom conceiving a child before his wedding is the single most common shape a life like this takes in this period. Fourth, this Richard is very plausibly the same man as a 'Richard Owsely' buried at Wootton Fitzpaine in 1707, which fits his likely age at death (roughly mid-forties to early fifties) far better than any alternative reading does.

What remains genuinely unresolved

One link in this identification is inference rather than direct statement: no surviving document says outright that James's son Richard is the same man who married Rebeckah Lock in 1679. The case rests on the rarity of the surname in this specific parish, the exact coincidence of timing, and the total absence of any competing candidate baptized locally — a strong circumstantial case, not a proven one. The original wording of the 1679 marriage entry (a fuller transcription might name the groom's own father, as period entries sometimes do), any surviving pre-1679 Wootton Fitzpaine baptism register or Bishop's Transcript, and Richard's own eventual probate record (if the 1707 burial is indeed his, an inventory or administration may survive) remain the most promising routes to closing this last gap outright.

Confidence: Medium-High. A strong, positively-evidenced case with no competing candidate, resting on one inferential link rather than a document naming the connection directly.

Generation Four: Richard Ously of Thorncombe (bap. 1678)

Richard, baptized at Thorncombe on 12 April 1678 (see Generation Three above for his own parentage), married Joan Fowler there on 16 July 1701, at the age of twenty-three. A son, William, was baptized to them on 7 January 1704, with Richard named directly as father on the record — one of only two places in this entire seven-generation line where a father-son link is stated outright on the child's own baptismal entry, the other being Generation Three's own record of Richard's baptism.

Thorncombe's registers hold a genuine complication here: no fewer than five separate burials of a woman named Joan Fowler survive across this period (1703, 1707, 1708, 1714, 1723), plus a sixth explicitly recorded as the wife of a different man, John Fowler (1730). A Burying in Woollen Act oath — a sworn affidavit required at burial under a 1666 law protecting the wool trade — sworn on 15 July 1703 by a 'Joan Owsley,' shows Richard's own wife was still living three months after the earliest of these burials, which rules that one out as hers. Her own eventual death has not been identified with confidence among the remaining candidates, and this study has left the question open rather than force a guess.

Confidence: High that Richard is William's father (stated directly on the baptismal record). Open, not resolved, which of Thorncombe's several Joan Fowler burials belongs to Richard's own wife.

Generation Five: William Ously (bap. 1704)

William, baptized at Thorncombe in January 1704, married Elizabeth Bonner there on 11 April 1726; Elizabeth had been baptized at Burstock, Dorset, in 1705 — the only Owsley-related entry Burstock's registers contain at all, almost certainly preserved because she was the woman who later married into this family. She was twenty-one at the wedding. A 'Richard Ously' was buried at Thorncombe six months later, on 9 October 1726 — very plausibly William's own father living to see the marriage, though no document states the relationship directly; if this is the same man, he would have been about forty-eight.

Seven children followed across the next two decades, baptized at Thorncombe: Elizabeth (1727), Martha (1730), Richard (1732, this line's own next generation), William junior (1735), Christian (1739), Thomas (1744), and Henery (1747). A woman named Elizabeth Ouseley married John Applen at Thorncombe on 24 June 1751, which would make her twenty-four — a plausible age, and the only Elizabeth of the right generation and place on record. This is offered as a candidate identification for William's own daughter, not a confirmed one, since no record states the connection directly.

Confidence: High. Both the marriage and the children's baptisms are direct parish records naming William as father.

Generation Six: Richard Ousley (bap. 1732)

Richard, baptized at Thorncombe on 16 March 1732, married Deborah Bull at Wells St Cuthbert, Somerset, on 26 September 1763, at the age of thirty-one. Deborah had been baptized at Wells on 16 June 1734, daughter of Thomas Bull, making her twenty-nine at the marriage.

The distance between these two events is the single largest geographic move documented anywhere in this family's history: Wells lies roughly forty-five miles north of Thorncombe, in the Mendip Hills, a considerably greater journey than any other move in the whole seven-generation line. No document explains why Richard traveled so far, though Wells, as a cathedral city, offered opportunities a small rural parish could not, and that alone would not have been an unusual pull for a young man of the period.

The case for identifying this Wells bridegroom as Thorncombe's own Richard rests on three things. First, no other Richard Ously or Owsley baptism anywhere among this study's seventeen core parishes is chronologically possible for a groom marrying in 1763 — there is simply no competing candidate. Second, and more persuasively, Richard and Deborah's own first son was named William — matching, precisely, the near-universal period convention of naming a first son for the paternal grandfather, which by this identification was indeed William Ously of Thorncombe. Third, Richard and Deborah also had a daughter, Elizabeth (called Betty), William's own sister — and Elizabeth was, by this same identification, the name of Richard's own mother, Elizabeth Bonner, William Ously's wife. A son named for the paternal grandfather and a daughter named for the paternal grandmother, in a family otherwise unconnected to Wells by any document, is not proof on its own, but it is the kind of double coincidence that tends to confirm a hypothesis rather than merely permit it.

Confidence: Medium-High. Timeline and naming convention both fit well; the distance is unusual but not disqualifying, and no document names Richard's parents directly at the Wells end.

Generation Seven: William Housley (bap. 1766)

William was baptized at Croscombe, near Wells, on 2 December 1766 — the last generation this study traces directly against the Somerset and Dorset parish registers. A sister, Elizabeth, is also recorded, with no further trace found for her. Deborah's own likely burial is one of three later Croscombe entries: Elizh Housley (1797), Elizabeth Housley (1801), or Deborah Housley (1809, about seventy-five years old).

Confidence: High. William's baptism is a direct parish record naming Richard as his father.

A Change in Spelling: Owsley to Housley

William's own baptismal entry is the first record in this entire seven-generation line to spell the family name 'Housley' rather than any variant of Owsley or Ously — and the change happens abruptly, within a single household, not gradually across a parish. His father Richard was baptized 'Owsley' at Thorncombe in 1732, and married Deborah Bull under that same spelling, 'Ousley,' at Wells in 1763 — three years before William's own baptism. William himself was recorded as 'Housley' in 1766, and the later Croscombe burials of Elizabeth and Deborah, noted above, already use that same new spelling within a few decades. From William onward, 'Housley' is the spelling that persists — through his own American descendants down to the present day.

No document found in the course of this research explains the change directly. A shift of this kind, within one family and one generation, most plausibly reflects nothing more than a parish clerk's own habit of spelling an unfamiliar surname as it sounded to him — Owsley and Housley are close enough in pronunciation, particularly in a West Country accent of the period, that a clerk unfamiliar with the family might easily render the same spoken name differently on different occasions. Spelling of surnames was not standardized in this period generally, and this family's own records show a wide range of variants already — Owsley, Ousley, Oushy, Owseley, Owesely — across earlier generations and other branches. What is unusual here is not that the spelling varied, but that this particular variant, once it appeared, stuck: every later record for William's own line, in England and then in America, uses 'Housley' consistently from this point forward.

Additionally, William's spouse, Anna Marie Sabitier, came from a more influential family than William. Her father owned several businesses during his life and was known as being very litigious. William's and Anna's sons were in apprenticeships in the United States once they reached age. This family would have been literate from the date of the marriage and it would be unlikely that the spelling of the surname would have changed after this time.

Y-DNA Testing and the Wider Owsley Family

Since William's own line continued in America under the Housley spelling, a separate line of evidence — genetic rather than documentary — has become available to test how this family relates to other Owsley-descended families still using variants of the original name. The Owsley Surname DNA Project, run by the Owsley Family Historical Society, has carried out Y-DNA testing on male-line descendants of several different Owsley branches, including this one.

This document does not rely on that testing to establish any of the ancestry set out in Parts One through Four — every generational link in this line rests on the documentary evidence described in

this document, independently of any DNA result. The Y-DNA testing serves a different purpose: it tests whether separately-documented Owsley lines, traced on paper without reference to one another, in fact share a common male-line ancestor, and roughly how long ago that ancestor lived.

The DNA testing showed that the separately documented Owsley lines most likely common paternal line ancestor lived in England in the 1400s or early 1500s.

Read alongside the documentary line traced in this study, this is a genuinely useful, independent piece of evidence: it confirms that this family's use of the Owsley surname is not a coincidence of naming, but reflects real shared descent from a common ancestor, likely several generations before John Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine — the earliest man this document can place with a document in hand. It does not, on its own, identify who that fifteenth- or sixteenth-century ancestor was, or connect him by name to any individual in this study; that remains, as it has throughout, a question for further documentary research rather than one DNA testing alone can answer.

Confidence Summary

Gen.	Person	Link to Prior Generation	Confidence
1	John Owsley (d.1663)	Earliest documented ancestor; no record found above him	—
2	James Owsley (d.1681)	Named directly as John's son in John's 1663 will	High
3	Richard Owsley	Named directly as James's son in both wills; identified as the 1679 bridegroom by strong inference, not direct statement	Medium-High
4	Richard Ously (bap.1678)	Baptism names Richard (Gen. 3) as father directly	High
5	William Ously (bap.1704)	Baptism names Richard (Gen. 4) as father directly	High
6	Richard Ousley (bap.1732)	Baptism names William (Gen. 5) as father directly; identified as the 1763 Wells bridegroom by timeline and naming-convention evidence	Medium-High
7	William Housley (bap.1766)	Baptism names Richard (Gen. 6) as father directly	High

Two links in seven — Generations Three and Six — rest on strong circumstantial inference rather than a document naming the relationship directly. Every other link is stated outright on a primary record.

PART TWO

The Direct Line and Its Known Branches: A Full Table

The table below lists every individual documented as part of the direct line, or tied to it by birth or marriage at each generation — siblings, spouses, and in-laws included. Direct-line individuals are marked in bold and shaded. This is the same underlying family already presented as a narrative in the descendant report (Part Four, below); this table exists to make the same information scannable at a glance.

Gen.	Name	Relationship	Event	Date	Parish	Married to / Notes
1	John Owsley	Direct line	Burial	1663	Wootton Fitzpaine	m. Elizabeth
1	Elizabeth	Wife of John	—	—	Wootton Fitzpaine	Surname unrecorded
2	James Owsley	Direct line	Burial	20 Dec 1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	m. Ann Bazley, 1657
2	Ann Bazley	Wife of James	Marriage	2 Feb 1657	Lyme Regis	May = 'Anne' of 1681 will; not resolved
3	Mary Owsley	Sister of Richard	—	by 1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	m. James Comming
3	Hester Owsley	Sister of Richard	—	by 1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	m. a Smith
3	James Owsley Jr.	Brother of Richard	—	1663/1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	Took 1663 residue
3	Richard Owsley	Direct line	Marriage	1 Jan 1679	Wootton Fitzpaine	m. Rebeckah Lock
3	John Owsley	Brother of Richard	—	1663/1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	—
3	Benjamin Owsley	Brother of Richard	—	1663/1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	—
3	Margarett Owsley	Sister of Richard	—	1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	Unmarried, 1681
3	Elizabeth Owsley (elder)	Sister of Richard	—	1663	Wootton Fitzpaine	Absent from 1681 will; likely died
3	Elizabeth Owsley (younger)	Half-sister of Richard	Burial	Dec 1693	Wootton Fitzpaine	Widow; probate inventory
3	Martha Owsley	Half-sister of Richard	Burial	1693	Wootton Fitzpaine	—

The Owsley Ancestry of William Housley of Croscombe

Gen.	Name	Relationship	Event	Date	Parish	Married to / Notes
3	Anne Owsley	Half-sister of Richard	—	1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	—
3	Mary Owsley (2nd)	Half-sister of Richard	—	1681	Wootton Fitzpaine	—
3	Rebeckah Lock	Wife of Richard	Baptism	4 Aug 1655	Whitchurch Canonicorum	dau. of Anthonie Locke
3	Anthonie Locke	Father-in-law of Richard	Burial	1693	Wootton Fitzpaine	Poor cottager
4	Richard Ously	Direct line	Baptism	12 Apr 1678	Thorncombe	m. Joan Fowler, 1701
4	Rebekah Ousley	Sister of Richard	Baptism	31 Mar 1679	Thorncombe	Named for her mother
5	Eliz Ousley	Sister of William	Baptism	1702	Thorncombe	—
5	William Ously	Direct line	Baptism	7 Jan 1704	Thorncombe	m. Elizabeth Bonner, 1726
5	Joan Fowler	Wife of Richard Ously	Marriage	16 Jul 1701	Thorncombe	Own burial unresolved (5 candidates)
6	Elizabeth Ously	Sister of Richard	Baptism	1727	Thorncombe	—
6	Martha Ously	Sister of Richard	Baptism	1730	Thorncombe	—
6	William Ousley Jr.	Brother of Richard	Baptism	1735	Thorncombe	—
6	Richard Ousley	Direct line	Baptism	16 Mar 1732	Thorncombe	m. Deborah Bull, 1763
6	Christian Ousley	Sister of Richard	Baptism	1739	Thorncombe	—
6	Thomas Owsley	Brother of Richard	Baptism	1744	Thorncombe	—
6	Henery Ousley	Brother of Richard	Baptism	1747	Thorncombe	—
6	Elizabeth Bonner	Wife of William Ously	Baptism	1705	Burstock	Only Owsley-related Burstock record
7	William Housley	Direct line	Baptism	2 Dec 1766	Croscombe	Recorded as Housley -- see spelling discussion
7	Elizabeth Housley	Sister of William	—	—	Croscombe	No further record traced
7	Deborah Bull	Wife of Richard Ousley	Baptism	16 Jun 1734	Wells St Cuthbert	dau. of Thomas Bull
7	Thomas Bull	Father-in-law of Richard	—	—	Wells St Cuthbert	—

Shaded rows in bold are the direct line itself; all other rows are siblings, spouses, or in-laws documented at that generation. See Part Four for the full narrative descendant report, and Part One for the confidence reasoning behind each direct-line link.

PART THREE

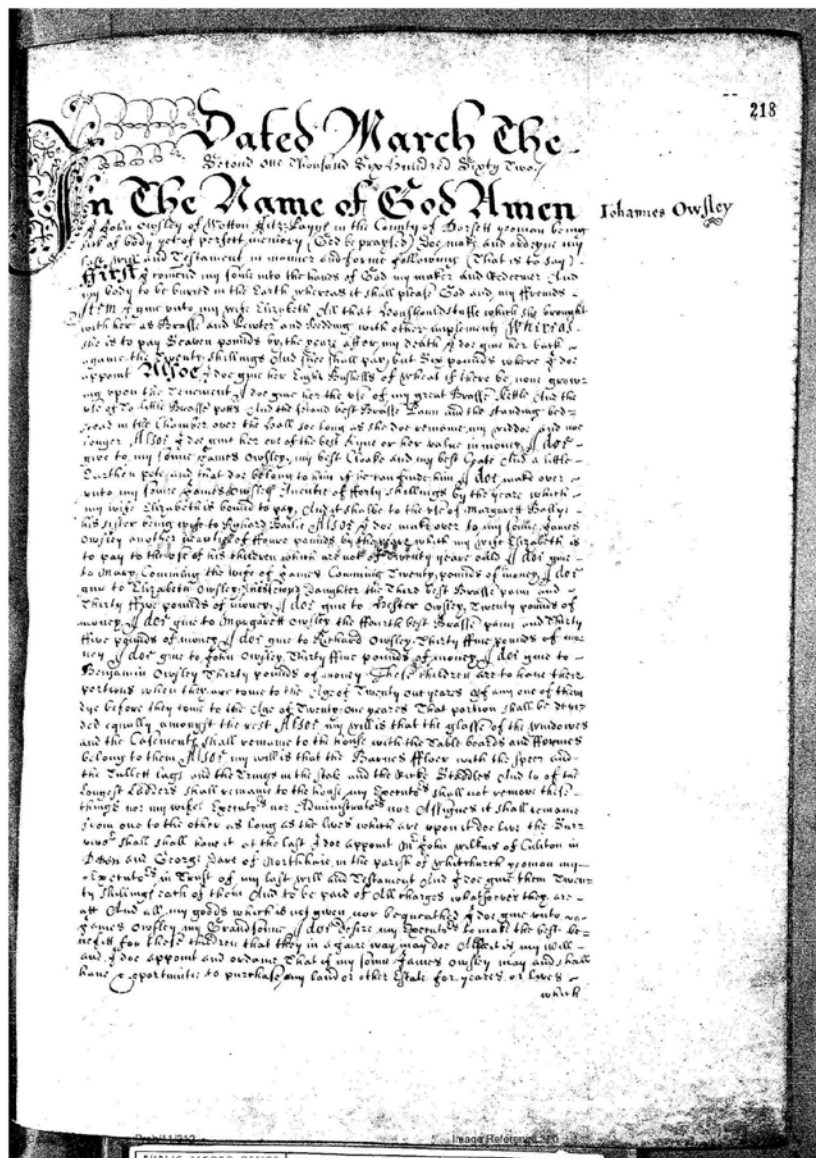
Primary Sources: The Wills That Anchor This Line

Two wills carry the weight of Generations One through Three, and are reproduced here in full transcription. Both are also presented, with document images, in Volume Two of the wider study (Owsley Family Source Documents); they are repeated here in text form so that this document is self-contained, without needing to duplicate the underlying photographs.

Will of John Owsley, Yeoman, of Wootton Fitzpaine (1663)

The National Archives, PROB 11/312/297. Dated 2 March 1662/3; proved at London, November 1663.

The National Archives' reference PROB 11/312/297 - Page 1



PROB 11/312/297, page 1 of 2. The will begins with the date and the testator's own style, 'John Owsley of Wootton fitz-Payne in the countie of Dorsett yeoman.'

Robatum fuit

[illegible][illegible]Walter.⁹ Price[illegible]

In the Name of God Amen I John Owsley of Wotton fitz payne in the County of Dorsett yeoman being [sick?] of body yet of perfect memory (God be praised) do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament, in manner and form following (That is to say) First I commend my soul into the hands of God my maker and Redeemer ... my body to be buried in the Earth where it shall please God and my friends ...

... unto Elizabeth my wife that household stuff which she brought with her as Kettle and Pewter and Bedding with other implements whereas ... is to pay Sixteen pounds [...] years after my death I do give her ... give her twenty shillings and she shall have ... appoint I do give her Eight Bushels of wheat if there be ... upon the Tenement ... the use of my great [and] little chest ... the iron pots ... second best barrel ... and the standing bedstead in the Chamber over the Hall so long as she ... she do remain a widow.

... do give to my son James Owsley, my best Cloak and my best coat and a little fustian doublet ... into my ... of forty shillings by the year which my wife Elizabeth is bound to pay ... of Margaret Baillie his sister ... I do make over to my son James another [sum] of four pounds ... which my wife Elizabeth is to pay to [...] of his children which [are] not of twenty years old.

I do give to Mary Comming the wife of James Comming Twenty pounds of money. I do give to Elizabeth [Owsley] daughter ... the Third best brass pan and Thirty five pounds of money. I do give to Hester Owsley Twenty pounds of money. I do give to Margaret [Owsley] the fourth best Brass pan and thirty five pounds of money. I do give to Richard Owsley Thirty pounds of money. I do give to John [Owsley] Thirty five pounds of money. I do give to Benjamin Owsley Thirty pounds of money. The children are to have their portions when they come to the age of Twenty one years. If any one of them [die] before they come to the age of Twenty one years, that portion shall be divided equally amongst the rest.

Also my will is that the glass of the windows and the wainscot shall remain to the house with the Table boards and forms belonging to ... and the malt mill ... and the ladder ... shall remain to the house. My Executors shall not remove these things nor my wife [or] Administrators nor Assigns.

... at the last I doe appoint Mr John Wilkins of Culiton in Devon and George Dart of Northhaie in the parish of Whitchurch yeoman my Executors in trust of my last will and Testament, and I doe give them twenty shillings each of them, to be paid of all charges whatsoever they are at.

And all my goods which is not given nor bequeathed I doe give unto James Owsley my Grandsonne. I doe desire my Executors to make the best benefit for these children that they in a faire way may doe.

And it is my will, that if my sonne James may and shall have opportunity to purchase any land or other estate for years or lives, which by the said James Owsley shall be conveyed and made over for or unto those children of him the said James Owsley which shalbe under the age of one and twenty years, and the Estate be proportionably to the fore mentioned Legacies and to be in such manner conveyed as may fully be security to each child under years in particular,

that then my Executors shall yield up and pay unto my sonne James Owsley all these Legacies bequeathed and given unto all the said Children which are under the aforesaid age, to be by him the said James Owsley disposed of as aforesaid. And the acquittance of my sonne James in that case shall be a full and sufficient discharge unto my Executors touching the forementioned Legacies.

And I doe appoint my sonne James Owsley to be overseer of all these premisses.

John Owsley [signed]

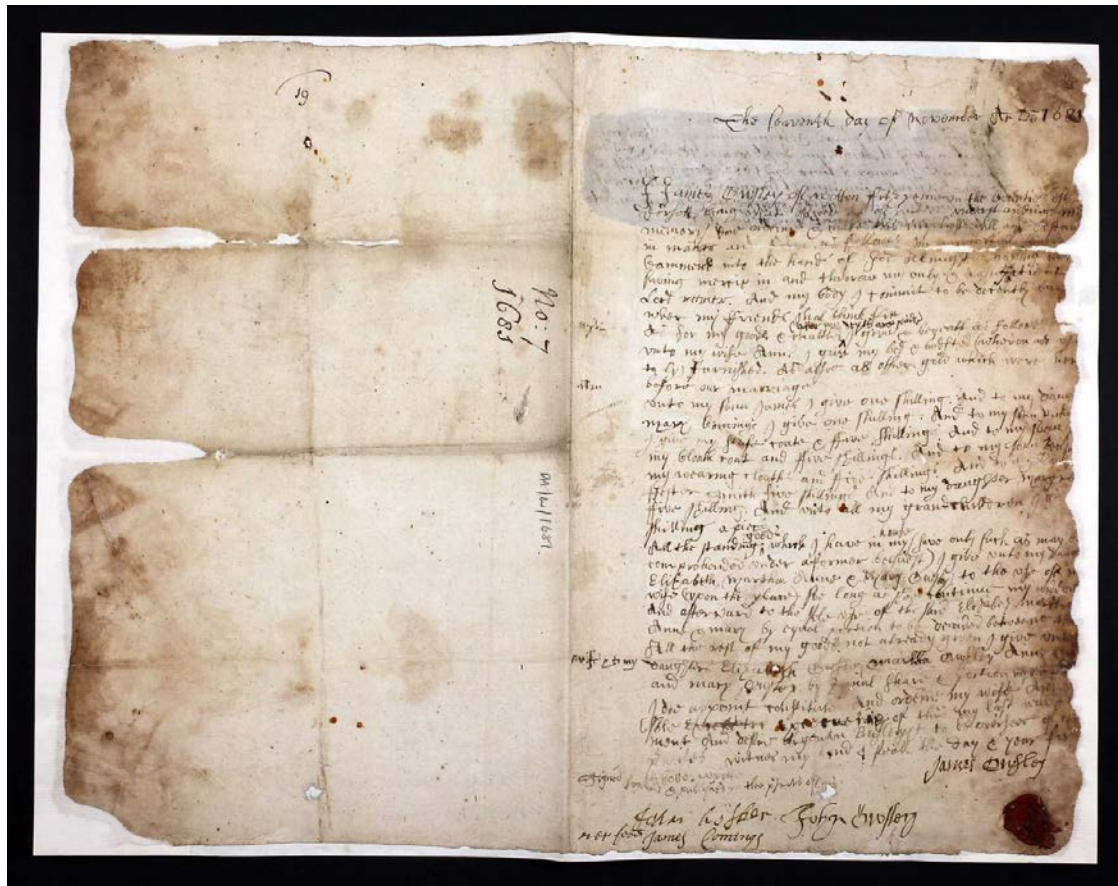
Sealed in the presence of us Richard Damer, Thomas Crosse.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro Domino Willielmo Meircke Milite, Legum Doctore, Curie Prerogative Cantuariensis Magistro Custode, sexto die Mensis Novembris, Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo Sexagesimo Tertio, juramento Johannis Wilkins de Culliton in Comitatu Devon et Georgii Dart de Northhaie parochie de Whitchurch, fiduciariis in dicto testamento nominatis, quibus commissa fuit administratio omnium et singulorum bonorum jurium et creditorum dicti defuncti, De bene et fideliter administrando eadem, Ad Sancta Dei Evangelia (vigore commissionis) jurat.

Editorial note: the testator's identity, the household provisions for Elizabeth, the seven cash portions and their exact amounts, the fixtures clause, the closing bequest to a grandson James, and the conditional land-purchase mechanism are all securely read. A closer pass against the original image also newly resolves the will's closing lines, previously left partly bracketed in this study: the two executors are Mr John Wilkins of Colyton, Devon, and George Dart of Northhay, in the parish of Whitchurch Canonorum -- not 'John Faulkner' and an illegible second name, nor the parish's 'Marshwood,' as earlier transcription attempts had it -- and the will separately names John's own son James as overseer of the estate, distinct from the two executors, a clause missed entirely in earlier passes. The probate clause is likewise now read with confidence: probate was granted 6 November 1663, at London, before Sir William Merrick, on the oath of the two executors named above. An earlier working note in this study had flagged a possible conflicting reading of 6 December 1662 for this clause; that reading is not supported by the image and is retired. One point carried forward from elsewhere in this project: the source this transcription was originally drawn from had titled the document 'the will of John Owsley of Whitchurch Canonorum' in what appears to be an error -- the will's own opening line plainly reads 'John Owsley of Wotton fitz payne,' matching every other record of this man in this collection. The confusion very likely arose from executor George Dart's own home, Northhay, lying within the parish of Whitchurch Canonorum -- which names an executor's parish, not the testator's.

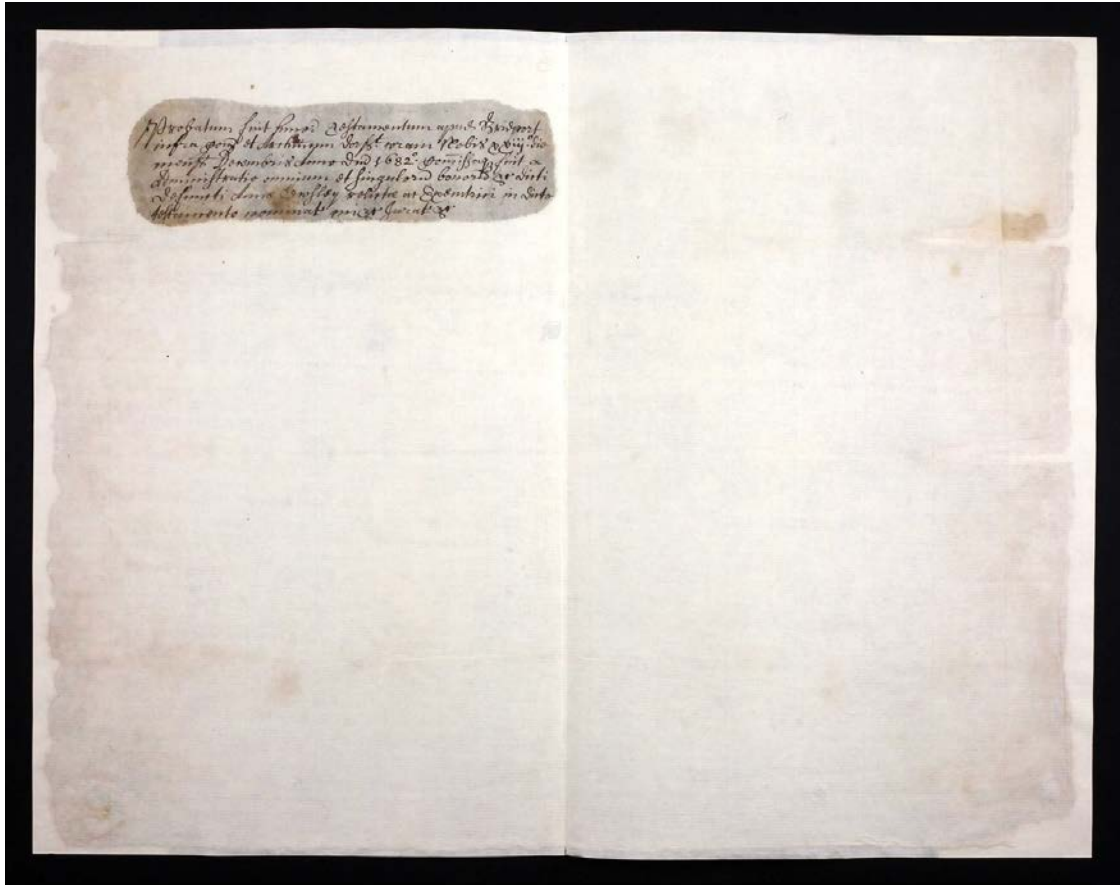
Will of James Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine (1681)

Original will, Dorset History Centre, Archdeaconry of Dorset collection. Dated 7 November 1681; proved at Bridport, 14 December 1682, by Anne, relict and executrix.



The original will of James Owsley, signed and sealed. His own signature, and the red wax seal, are visible at the foot of the text; John Owsley (very likely his son) appears among the witnesses signing below.

The Owsley Ancestry of William Housley of Croscombe



The reverse of the will, bearing the archdeaconry's probate memorandum: proved at Bridport, 14 December 1682, by Anne Owsley, relict and executrix.

The seaventh day of November Ao Dm 1681

I James Owsley of Wootton fitzpayne in the countie of Dorsett being weake in body but of good understanding and memory doe ordeyne & make this my last will and Testament in manner and forme as followeth ffirst I comend into the handes of God allmighty hoping for a saving mercy in and thorow my only Redeemer & Lord Christ. And my body I comitt to be decently buried when my friends shall thinke fitt

And for my goods & chattells I give & bequeath as followeth Unto my wife Anne I give my bed & bedstead (whereon we of late lye) furnished. Also all other good which were her before our marriage

Unto my sonn James I give one shilling. And to my daughter Mary Cominge I give one shilling: And to my sonn Rich[ard] I give my stufe coate & five shillings. And to my sonn [John] my cloath coat and five shillings. And to my sonn [Benjamin] my warme cloathe and five shillings. And to my daughter Hester Smith five shillings. And to my daughter Margret five shillings. And unto all my grandchildren a shilling apiece.

All the standing goode which I have in my howse (only such as may be comprehended under aformer bequest) I give unto my daughters Elizabeth, Martha, Anne & Mary Owsley to the use of my wife (upon the yearlie) so long as she continue my widowe and afterwards to the sole use of the said Elizabeth, Martha, Anne & Mary by equal portion to be divided betweene them

All the rest of my goods not already given I give unto my wife & to my daughters Elizabeth Owsley, Martha Owsley, Anne & Mary Owsley by equal share & portion my wife

I doe appoint constitute and ordeine my wife Anne sole Executrix of this my last will and testament and desire the yeoman [name illegible] to be overseer, wittness my hand & seale the day & yeare aforesaid Signed sealed and published in the presence of us

John Hester John Owsley

not for James Comings

[James Owsley, signed]

Editorial note: bracketed names in the bequests to sons Richard, John, and Benjamin are supplied from context — the will lists three coat-bequests in sequence following the named bequest to Richard, most plausibly John and Benjamin based on his father's 1663 will naming these same sons — and should be read as a reasoned inference, not a directly legible reading, in every instance. This is a transcription of an original paper will, not a register copy, and the manuscript is damaged along its right edge in several places. The overseer's own name, left blank in the transcription above, could not be read with confidence against the image; earlier attempts have proposed several different readings, none of which is asserted here.

What These Two Wills Establish, Together

Read side by side, these two documents are the entire documentary foundation for Generations One through Three of this line. John's 1663 will establishes James as his son and names seven of James's own children, including Richard, each with a specific portion. James's own 1681 will, made eighteen years later, confirms every one of those same children as still living — Richard among them, receiving his father's grey cloak and five shillings, the token bequest of an already-independent adult son. Richard's documented survival to November 1681 places him precisely in the window during which this study's own direct-line ancestor was born at Thorncombe (1678) to parents married at Wootton Fitzpaine (1679) — see Part One, Generation Three, for the full case that this Richard, rather than an earlier candidate from Winsham, fathered that child.

Other Key Records

Three further primary records, none of them wills, carry real weight in this line and are worth noting here in brief.

James Owsley's marriage to Ann Bazley, 1657

Recorded in the Phillimore Marriage Registers for Dorset: James Owsley, 'of Wootton Fitzpaine,' married Ann Bazley at Lyme Regis on 2 February 1656/7 — likely her own home parish. This gives James's marriage an exact date and names his wife for the first time; see Part One, Generation Two, for the open question of whether this is the same Anne named in his 1681 will.

Richard Owsly and Rebeckah Lock, marriage register, 1679

The Wootton Fitzpaine parish register entry recording this marriage on 1 January 1679 is the anchor for Generation Three — the record this whole study's identification of Richard ultimately has to connect to. Its exact wording, if a fuller transcription is ever obtained, remains the single most valuable document this line could still find, since period marriage entries occasionally name the groom's own father directly.

PART FOUR

The Descendant Report

This is the same descendant report already prepared as a standalone reference, reproduced here in full so this document is self-contained. It presents the same seven generations as Part One, in the standard genealogical register format: each numbered individual's own entry, followed by their children, with a '+' marking whichever child carries the line forward to the next numbered generation.

How to Read This Report

This report follows standard genealogical descendant-report format. Each generation is numbered in sequence. A person who is followed forward into the next generation is given a bold reference number (e.g., “3.”) and a full entry of their own; a “+” before a child's entry in the list below their parents means that child has their own numbered entry later in the report. Children without a “+” are documented here but their own descendants, if any, are not traced further in this report.

Every generation from Richard Ously (bap. 1678, Generation Four) downward rests on direct baptismal or marriage records naming the parent. The link between James Owsley's son Richard (Generation Three) and the man who married Rebeckah Lock in 1679 is Medium-High confidence: a strong circumstantial case built on geography, timing, and the absence of any competing candidate, but not a document that names the connection outright. This is noted at the relevant point below; full reasoning for every link is given in the companion book, Part One.

Generation One

1. **JOHN OWSLEY** was a yeoman of Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset. He died in 1663; his will, naming his son James and six grandchildren, was proved at London in November 1663 (TNA PROB 11/312/297). He married ELIZABETH, whose maiden surname is not recorded.

Only James is named as a child in John's will; whether other children existed is not documented.

Child of John Owsley and Elizabeth:

- +i. **JAMES OWSLEY** (see Generation Two, below).

Generation Two

2. **JAMES OWSLEY** (John¹) was buried at Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset, 20 December 1681. He married ANN BAZLEY at Lyme Regis, Dorset, on 2 February 1656/7 — likely her own home parish. He made his will on 7 November 1681; it was proved at Bridport, in the Archdeaconry of Dorset, on 14 December 1682 — the original will, signed and sealed, survives at the Dorset History Centre. That will names his wife as ANNE, who survived him as his executrix.

Open question: whether this Anne is the same Ann Bazley he married in 1656/7, or a further wife, cannot be settled by any single record — but the children's own ages argue against one twenty-four-year marriage accounting for all of them. See the fuller discussion under Generation Two in Part One, above; this report follows that reasoning below in treating Mary and James Jr. (i and iii) as probably children of an earlier, undocumented first marriage, the six portioned minors of 1663 as probably Ann Bazley's own children, and the second family named only in 1681 as probably borne by a further wife named Anne.

Children of James Owsley named as grandchildren, and portioned, in John's 1663 will — probably by two different mothers (see the discussion of James's marriages under Generation Two, Part One):

- i. **MARY OWSLEY**; already married to JAMES COMMING by 1663 — which argues she was born before James's 1656/7 marriage to Ann Bazley, probably to an earlier, undocumented first wife; portioned twenty pounds; received a token bequest in 1681.
- ii. **HESTER OWSLEY**; married a man named SMITH by 1681; portioned twenty pounds; received a token bequest in 1681.
- iii. **JAMES OWSLEY, JR.**; treated as his grandfather John's heir, taking the residue of the estate in 1663 rather than a fixed portion — like Mary, probably born before the 1656/7 marriage, to the same presumed first wife; received a token bequest in 1681.
- +iv. **RICHARD OWSLEY** (see Generation Three, below); portioned thirty pounds; received a token bequest in 1681.
- v. **JOHN OWSLEY**; portioned thirty-five pounds; received a token bequest in 1681. Possibly (unconfirmed) the John Owsely who married Elizabeth Orchard at Wootton Fitzpaine on 16 June 1709 -- proposed as the unidentified husband named in Elizabeth Owsley's own 1744 will, an identification resting on the matching given name and a documented 'Cozen' Orchard-family connection in that will, not on any direct record naming him. If correct, several otherwise-unattached Wootton Fitzpaine individuals -- George, Anstice, Ann, and Richard Owsley -- may be their children. Not confirmed by any burial or probate record; see the OMPD Master Workbook (WOO-008, WOO-031) for full reasoning. A second, independent candidate marriage has also come to light: a 'John Oussely' married Deborah Dollen at Thorncombe on 18 September 1682, which would make this John about nineteen to twenty-five, depending on his exact birth year within the 1657–63 window — itself a plausible age for a first marriage. This is not the same proposed marriage as the 1709 Wootton Fitzpaine match above; if both identifications are correct, this John would have married twice, first at Thorncombe and, after Deborah's presumed death, again at Wootton Fitzpaine in 1709. Neither marriage is confirmed, the two candidates are not mutually exclusive, and no single record names this John in both places.
- vi. **BENJAMIN OWSLEY**; portioned thirty pounds; received a token bequest in 1681.

- vii. **MARGARETT OWSLEY**; portioned thirty-five pounds and a brass pan; unmarried but received a token bequest in 1681.
- viii. **ELIZABETH OWSLEY (elder)**; portioned thirty-five pounds and a brass pan in 1663. Absent from her father's 1681 will, in which all six of her surviving siblings above receive a token bequest -- very likely because she had died in the interim. No burial record for her has been identified. Not to be confused with a second, younger Elizabeth, below.

Children of James Owsley named only in his own 1681 will, receiving the household goods and residue jointly rather than a fixed portion or a token -- most plausibly a second, younger family, the elder Elizabeth's name reused after her death:

- ix. **ELIZABETH OWSLEY (younger)**; probate inventory as a widow taken 1 January 1694/5 describes a modest, entirely personal estate -- clothing, a bed, two coffers, a small desk, a chair -- consistent with a widow living among family. She died in December 1693; her first husband's name does not survive. One of her appraisers, Anthony Comming, was very likely kin to her half-sister Mary's husband, James Comming.
- x. **MARTHA OWSLEY**; died 1693.
- xi. **ANNE OWSLEY**; named in her father's 1681 will.
- xii. **MARY OWSLEY**; named in her father's 1681 will. Possibly the Mary Owsly buried 1690 or 1691 -- a second Mary buried in the other of those two years may be a different woman of the same name.

James's 1681 will also names an overseer — the yeoman's own name is illegible in the manuscript and is not asserted here. Whoever he was, he is not James's own son Benjamin, who is remembered separately in the same will as one of the seven token-bequest siblings above.

Generation Three

3. **RICHARD OWSLEY** (James², John¹) married **REBECKAH LOCK** at Wootton Fitzpaine on 1 January 1679. Rebeckah was baptized at Whitchurch Canoncorum, Dorset, on 4 August 1655, the daughter of **ANTHONIE LOCKE**. Anthonie himself died at Wootton Fitzpaine in 1693; his probate inventory describes him as a poor cottager, holding a thatched cottage and a small plot of ground enclosed from the common, worth twelve pounds in all. Rebeckah was very likely the “Rebecca Ously” buried at Thorncombe on 10 November 1684, about twenty-nine years old.

Confidence note: Richard's identity as the 1679 bridegroom is Medium-High. It rests on the rarity of the Owsley surname in this parish, the exact coincidence of timing, and the absence of any competing candidate baptized locally -- a strong circumstantial case, though no single surviving document names the connection between James's son Richard and this marriage directly.

Children of Richard Owsley and Rebeckah Lock, baptized at Thorncombe, Dorset:

- +i. **RICHARD OUSLY**, baptized 12 April 1678 -- nine months before his parents' marriage (see Generation Four, below).
- ii. **REBEKAH OUSLEY**, baptized 31 March 1679; named for her mother.

Generation Four

4. **RICHARD OUSLY** (Richard³, James², John¹) was baptized at Thorncombe on 12 April 1678. He married JOAN FOWLER at Thorncombe on 16 July 1701, when he was twenty-three.

Thorncombe's registers hold no fewer than five burials of a woman named Joan Fowler across this period (1703, 1707, 1708, 1714, 1723), plus a sixth explicitly recorded as the wife of a different man, John Fowler (1730). A Burying in Woollen oath sworn 15 July 1703 by a "Joan Owsley" shows Richard's wife was still living three months after the earliest of these burials, which rules that one out as hers -- but her own eventual death has not been identified with confidence among the remaining candidates.

Children of Richard Ously and Joan Fowler, baptized at Thorncombe:

- i. **ELIZ OUSLEY**, baptized 30 April 1702.
- +ii. **WILLIAM OUSLY**, baptized 7 January 1704; his father Richard is named directly on the record (see Generation Five, below).

Generation Five

5. WILLIAM OUSLY (Richard⁴, Richard³, James², John¹) was baptized at Thorncombe on 7 January 1704. He married ELIZABETH BONNER there on 11 April 1726; Elizabeth had been baptized at Burstock, Dorset, in 1705 (her parents are not identified in any record found for this study). She was twenty-one at the wedding. A 'Richard Ously' was buried at Thorncombe six months later, on 9 October 1726 — very plausibly William's own father, though this is not stated directly on any record; if so, he would have been about forty-eight.

Children of William Ously and Elizabeth Bonner, baptized at Thorncombe:

- i. ELIZABETH OUSLY, baptized 8 February 1727. Possibly (unconfirmed) the Elizabeth Ouseley who married JOHN APPLIN at Thorncombe on 24 June 1751, which would make her twenty-four at the wedding — a plausible age, and the only Elizabeth of the right generation and place on record, though no document states the connection directly.
- ii. **MARTHA OUSLY**, baptized 23 August 1730.
- iii. **WILLIAM OUSLEY, JR.**, baptized 30 October 1735.
- +iv. **RICHARD OUSLEY**, baptized 16 March 1732 (see Generation Six, below).
- v. **CHRISTIAN OUSLEY**, baptized 8 April 1739.
- vi. **THOMAS OWSLEY**, baptized 20 January 1744.
- vii. **HENERY OUSLEY**, baptized 17 January 1747.

Generation Six

6. **RICHARD OUSLEY** (William⁵, Richard⁴, Richard³, James², John¹) was baptized at Thorncombe on 16 March 1732. He married **DEBORAH BULL** at Wells St Cuthbert, Somerset, on 26 September 1763, when he was thirty-one. Deborah had been baptized at Wells on 16 June 1734, the daughter of **THOMAS BULL**, making her twenty-nine at the marriage.

This marriage represents the single largest geographic move documented anywhere in this family's history -- roughly forty-five miles from Thorncombe to Wells, in the Mendip Hills. No document explains why Richard traveled so far, though Wells, as a cathedral city, offered opportunities a small rural parish could not.

This connects to the well-documented American Housley family, whose own descent — traced independently through family and civil records, not through this study's own parish-register research — identifies Richard as the immigrant generation's own English-born ancestor. See the discussion following Generation Seven, above in Part One, for the spelling change this family's name underwent starting with Richard's own son William, and for what Y-DNA testing has separately shown about this branch's relationship to other Owsley-descended families.

Children of Richard Ousley and Deborah Bull, baptized at Croscombe, Somerset:

- +i. **WILLIAM HOUSLEY**, baptized 2 December 1766; named for his grandfather, William Ously, following the near-universal period convention of naming a first son for the paternal grandfather (see Generation Seven, below).
- ii. **ELIZABETH HOUSLEY** (called Betty); no further record has been traced for her, but her name is worth noting -- Elizabeth, by this line's own identification, was also the name of her father's own mother, Elizabeth Bonner (see Generation Six, above).

Deborah's own likely burial is one of three later Croscombe entries: Elizth Housley (1797), Eliz^{ab}eth Housley (1801), or Deborah Housley (1809, about seventy-five years old).

Generation Seven

7. **WILLIAM HOUSLEY** (Richard⁶, William⁵, Richard⁴, Richard³, James², John¹) was baptized at Croscombe, Somerset, on 2 December 1766, recorded there under the spelling Housley rather than Owsley or Ously — see the discussion in Part One, following Generation Seven, for what is known about this change.

This is the last generation traced directly against the parish registers of Somerset and Dorset for the purposes of this report. William's own descendants in America are documented separately, through family and civil records, down to the present day; that portion of the family's history lies outside the scope of this document, which is concerned with William's English ancestry rather than his descendants.

Index of Spouses and In-Laws Named in This Report

For quick reference -- everyone tied to the direct line by marriage, in the order they appear above:

Elizabeth, wife of John Owsley (Gen. 1) — Ann Bazley, probably James Owsley's second wife, m.1656/7 (Gen. 2) — James Comming, husband of Mary Owsley (Gen. 2) — (a) Smith, husband of Hester Owsley (Gen. 2) — Anne, named in James's 1681 will, probably a third wife (see Gen. 2 note) — Rebeckah Lock, wife of Richard Owsley, and her father Anthonie Locke (Gen. 3) — Joan Fowler, wife of Richard Ously (Gen. 4) — Elizabeth Bonner, wife of William Ously (Gen. 5) — Deborah Bull, wife of Richard Ousley, and her father Thomas Bull (Gen. 6).

Appendix: Terms and Places

A short glossary of terms and places that recur throughout this document, for readers unfamiliar with English social rank, probate practice, genetic genealogy, or the geography of Somerset and Dorset. Listed alphabetically.

The Burying in Woollen Acts

A pair of English laws (1666, tightened in 1678/1680) requiring the dead to be buried in a shroud of English wool rather than linen or other cloth — a piece of trade protectionism intended to support the domestic wool industry. Enforcement required a sworn affidavit, usually from a relative, within days of the burial, and some parish registers preserve these affidavits alongside the burial entries themselves. It is exactly such an affidavit, surviving at Thorncombe, that helped this study distinguish Richard Ously's own wife from several other women of the same name buried in that parish within a few years of each other.

Croscombe, Somerset

A small village in the Mendip Hills, about three miles from Wells. William Housley (Generation Seven), this line's final documented English generation and the ancestor of the American Housley family, was baptized here in 1766.

Lyme Regis, Dorset

A port town on the Dorset coast, three to four miles south of Wootton Fitzpaine. Known today chiefly for its harbor (the Cobb) and its fossil-rich cliffs, Lyme Regis was a working trading port in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Unusually, its probate matters fell under the Peculiar Court of the Dean of Salisbury rather than the Dorset Archdeaconry that handled the rest of this area — meaning wills proved at Lyme Regis are held today in Wiltshire, not Dorset. James Owsley (Generation Two) married Ann Bazley here in 1657.

Old Style / New Style Dating

Before 1752, England began its legal year on 25 March (Lady Day), not 1 January — so a date such as ‘2 February 1656’ in the reckoning used at the time falls, by modern reckoning, in what we would call 1657, since 2 February came before that year's new year had yet begun. Dates falling in this ambiguous window, 1 January to 24 March, are often written with both years, as ‘1656/7’ — a convention this document follows wherever it applies. England also kept the older Julian calendar until 1752, eleven days behind the Gregorian calendar already in use elsewhere in Europe.

Proved (of a Will)

A will was ‘proved’ when a church court formally validated it after the testator's death, confirming it as genuine and authorizing the named executor or executors to administer the estate. Before 1858, this was done by ecclesiastical courts rather than any civil authority — in this line's own case, variously the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (for larger estates or those spanning more than one diocese), the Archdeaconry of Dorset, and the Peculiar Court of the Dean of Salisbury (which,

unusually, handled Lyme Regis). The proving date can lag the date a will was written by months or years, and the two dates are given separately throughout this document for exactly that reason.

SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphism)

A single-letter variation in DNA that, on the Y chromosome, passes largely unchanged from father to son across many generations. Y-DNA testing looks for these variations to determine how closely related two male lines are, and roughly how long ago they shared a common ancestor — the basis for the Owsley Surname DNA Project's findings discussed following Generation Seven.

Thorncombe, Dorset

A parish a few miles from Wootton Fitzpaine, historically part of Devon until it was transferred into Dorset in 1844 — reflected in this document by referring to it under its modern county throughout. Thorncombe is where Richard Owsley's own son (Generation Four, also named Richard) was born and raised after his parents' 1679 marriage at Wootton Fitzpaine, and where three further generations of this family — his son William, grandson Richard, and their children — were baptized before the line's final move north to Wells and Croscombe.

Wells, Somerset

A cathedral city in Somerset — England's smallest city by population — built around Wells Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace. Wells lies roughly forty-five miles north of Thorncombe, by far the largest single geographic move documented anywhere in this family's history, made by Richard Owsley (Generation Six) when he married Deborah Bull here in 1763.

Whitchurch Canonorum, Dorset

A parish adjoining Wootton Fitzpaine, about two miles away, and historically the head of the 'hundred' that included it. Its parish church, St. Candida and Holy Cross, holds the shrine of St. Wite — one of only two shrines in England known to have survived the Reformation with their relics still in place, the other being St. Alban's. Rebeckah Lock, wife of this line's own Richard Owsley (Generation Three), was baptized here in 1655.

Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset

A small parish in the Marshwood Vale of west Dorset, about three miles inland from the English Channel coast at Lyme Regis and Charmouth. This is the home parish of the earliest three documented generations in this line — John, James, and Richard Owsley — and sits within the historic 'hundred' (an old administrative district) headed by the neighboring parish of Whitchurch Canonorum. The name 'Fitzpaine' comes from a medieval landholding family with no connection to this one.

Yeoman

A rank in the English social hierarchy, sitting just below the gentry: a working farmer who held enough land to be reasonably independent and comfortable, typically fifty to a few hundred acres, by

freehold or secure copyhold tenure — lasting rights to the land, not a precarious year-to-year lease. Unlike a gentleman, a yeoman worked his own land rather than living off rents, though he might employ laborers. Yeomen were the ‘middling sort’ of rural England, often serving as churchwardens, jurors, and constables. John Owsley, the earliest generation in this document, styled himself ‘yeoman’ in his 1663 will.

Appendix: Confidence Key

High — the relationship is stated directly on a surviving record (a baptism naming a father, a burial naming a spouse, a will naming a child, and so on).

Medium-High — the relationship is not stated directly, but rests on a strong, mutually reinforcing combination of age, geography, and naming pattern, with no plausible competing candidate found anywhere in the wider study.

Medium — a reasonable case can be made, but with a weaker fit on one dimension (a wider age gap, a greater distance, or the existence of an alternative, less likely candidate).

Low — the reasoning is suggestive rather than compelling, typically because it depends on more than one uncertain link joined together, or because a key supporting fact has not been found.

Appendix: Sources for This Document

This document draws entirely on material already gathered and verified for the wider study; it introduces no new research of its own. Full citations for every record, will, and cross-reference summarized here are maintained in the companion research workbook (OMPD Master Workbook) and presented at greater length in the two-volume study and its own source volume.

Principal sources for the direct line specifically:

The will of John Owsley, yeoman, of Wootton Fitzpaine, dated 2 March 1662/3, proved November 1663 — The National Archives, PROB 11/312/297.

The will of James Owsley of Wootton Fitzpaine, dated 7 November 1681, proved at Bridport 14 December 1682 — original will, Dorset History Centre, Archdeaconry of Dorset collection.

The marriage register entry for James Owsley and Ann Bazley, 2 February 1656/7, Lyme Regis — England, Phillimore Marriage Registers, 1531–1913.

The marriage register entry for Richard Owsly and Rebeckah Lock, 1 January 1679, Wootton Fitzpaine, and the baptismal entries for their children Richard (1678) and Rebekah (1679), Thorncombe — parish registers.

The marriage register entry for William Ously and Elizabeth Bonner, 11 April 1726, Thorncombe, and the baptismal entries for their seven children — parish registers.

The marriage register entry for Richard Ousley and Deborah Bull, 26 September 1763, Wells St Cuthbert, and the baptismal entry for William, 2 December 1766, Croscombe — parish registers.

The Owsley Surname DNA Project (Owsley Family Historical Society, established 2003), as reported in the OFHS Newsletter of December 2018 — Y-DNA testing establishing this branch's genetic relationship to other Owsley-descended lines, and an estimate of when their common ancestor lived; not used as a source for any ancestry link in this document, all of which rest on documentary evidence alone. See the discussion following Generation Seven.