

## CHAPTER 8

### SOME COLLATERAL BRANCHES

It would be tedious to describe the descent and history of every collateral branch of the family, and to do so would probably entail a lifetime's research. There are still Sodens in Coventry and some as far afield as Australia and the U.S.A. My researches have led to corresponding with and meeting some of them and if others should read this monograph it may prove to be a foundation on which to build their own genealogical research.

It may be remembered that Jonathan (1675-1720) and Ann at Combefields had several sons, the third of which was John, and that since Jonathan had so many children it was

obviously  
difficult for him to employ them all at home or to  
find work  
for them in the village. John, who was born in  
1705, therefore  
moved to Coventry where, after his  
apprenticeship, he became a  
barber and peruke-maker in the Bishop street  
ward, of the city.  
Barbers then were not only hairdressers as we  
know them today,  
but also carried out such minor surgery as tooth  
extraction and  
blood letting. Barbers' shops were also popular  
meeting places  
for news and discussion, where stringed musical  
instruments  
were sometimes kept for customers to amuse  
themselves and their  
friends. Probably under the influence of his  
apprenticeship  
master, John became a presbyterian, and he is  
mentioned in the  
Great Meeting pew rents books as having one  
seat from 1724.

In 1730 John married Esther West at Holy Trinity church,

Coventry, and subsequently they had five children: James born

c.1731, John 1732, Thomas c.1734, Francis 1737 and Jane 1744.

John the elder died in 1773 and was buried on March 17 at Holy

Trinity, leaving all his leasehold premises and personal estate

to his wife. His leasehold land he left to sons John and

James, and the remaining term of the lease of his home to John.

The residue was to be divided equally among all his children.

Only Francis was to take up his father's occupation, all the other boys becoming weavers.

The eldest son, James ( c. 1737-1794), was destined to be

Coventry's leading citizen. A 'silkman', or silk ribbon manufacturer, he married twice. First, on 11 June 1753 at Edgbaston, Birmingham, to Elizabeth Farmer who, before her early death in 1763, gave him one son, Edward (b. c.1754). Second, on 3 June 1772, at Holy Trinity church, Coventry, to a 24-year-old widow, Martha Minister. By his second marriage he had two more children, James born in 1773 and Lucinda born in 1774. Lucinda lived for only three years.

Like his father, James too was an alderman, he was a Presbyterian; the Great Meeting pew rents book mentions him as having a seat in the gallery pew number 25 from 1752 and on election as an alderman, he was promoted to pew 53 in the hall. As a member of the Weavers' Company from 1752 he became its Warden in 1755 and Master in 1763, 1764 and 1792,

and the Land Tax records show him as the owner of property in at Radford and Keresley.

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His list of Public Appointments is an impressive and lengthy one -

1753	City Warden
1760	Sheriff
1766/1773/ 1774/ 1791	Mayor Alderman for 25 years
1760	Bond's Hospital Trustee
1771 - 89*	Trustee of St. Thomas
White's Loan money 1776 - 80	Administrator of Jessop's Bread Dole
1791, 1794	Wheatley's Loan Truste

Now in a powerful position, he promoted an Act of Parliament

(30 Geo.III,c.77,) which created an organisation, which was completely independent of the Corporation, to take over all the duties which had been fitfully performed by the Leet and the Council, with himself as the head.

The new organisation consisted of ten street commissioners, with a treasurer, clerk, overseer, surveyor , scavengers and ten assessors who were to collect a rate of 1s.6d. in the pound. Neither was he free of nepotism, for in 1763 he irregularly admitted his son Edward to the City Council.

Edward became a member of the Weavers, Company in 1777, Warden in 1786 and clerk from 1812 onwards. His father promoted his interests whenever an opportunity occurred, and though his eligibility to serve on the City Council from 1792 - 95 was

challenged, he had' already become a city Chamberlain in 1774, and there is a record of him being a Corporation official of some kind in 1822. Little is known of his personal life except that he married a Mary Harper at St. Michael's church on 23 June 1784.

Sir Thomas White was an alderman and merchant tailor of London who founded St. John's College, Oxford in the reign of Mary.

He stipulated that thirteen of the scholarships he awarded were to be drawn from his kin and from the towns of Topnbridge, Reading, Coventry and Bristol.

James's second son, also named James (b. c.1773), was the child of his second marriage to Martha Minister. Having ambitions for this boy he apprenticed him at the age of 19 to Thomas Mason, attorney - at -law of the King's Bench at Westminster. In 1801 James junior married Mary Hill at Chilvers Coton, now part of Nuneaton. The novelist George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), born there, was baptised in the same church in 1819, and many of the places in her novels are based on the village. Nearby Arbury Hall, the home of the Newdigate family, is called Cheverel Hall in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story'. James practiced as an attorney in Hinckley and had two sons, William Hill Soden and Thomas Hill Soden. Both were baptised at Chilvers Coton, the former in 1803 and the latter as an adult in 1828.

Little is known of either, but Thomas was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and also practiced as an attorney at Hinckley with his father.

Now to follow the story of John the peruke-maker's second son, Thomas (b. c.1734). Thomas, it may be recalled, became a weaver, and on 3 May 1764 married Sarah Osborne at Holy Trinity church, Coventry.

All five of their firstborn children, Thomas, two Sarahs, another infant and the first-Joseph, died-in infancy but later-born sons, Joseph and John Smith Soden (1780-1863) survived. John Smith was first apprenticed to his father as a weaver, but later became a surgeon and a Fellow of the Royal college. As a young assistant surgeon he served in Egypt in 1801 with the 79th Highlanders in General Sir Ralph

Abercromby's expedition against the French. On his return from

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abroad he practiced in Coventry, but soon after marrying Elizabeth Burney, the daughter of a Coventry banker, in about 1812, he moved to Bath, where their surviving six children were born, John, Joseph, Robert, Elizabeth, Mary and Sarah. Robert, John and the three daughters were to survive him, but Joseph died in 1824 at the age of six. His wife Elizabeth's death followed in 1828, and she was buried on 8 November at St. Michael's church in her home town of Coventry, where her husband placed a memorial to her and their son,

Joseph, in the Mercers' Chapel. Sometime after Elizabeth's death he must have remarried, for in 1837 another son, Thomas Spooner Soden, who was to become a barrister was born. John Smith Soden himself died at Bath on 19 March 1863, aged 79. In his will he provided legacies of £900 each to his three unmarried daughters, all living at No.1 Duke street in Bath, £1,000 to son Robert, and £300 and his plate and pictures to Thomas, the youngest son. After these and other small legacies to his four servants and a Sarah Arnold, the rest of his estate, which amounted to rather less than £14,000, was equally divided between John and his three daughters.

John Smith Soden's elder brother Joseph (d.1848) was another silk ribbon manufacturer, and was a near

contemporary of Thomas Soden of the Quadrant. He was a member of the weaver's company in 1788, warden in 1791 and master in 1826. Originally the owner of property in the Broadgate ward of the city, at least up to 1799, he later developed his business by building weavers houses in Foleshill, then a village on the northern

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outskirts of Coventry, where he also farmed. Like one of his forebears he was a trustee of Sir Thomas White's Charity (from 1837 to 1848) and of the Coventry Union Banking Co. He died in 1848, having appointed his brother, John Smith Soden, Daniel Ledsam (his sister Sarah's husband who was a

Birmingham merchant) and Richard Rotherham, a Coventry watch manufacturer, as his executors. His final will has not been found, but in what was probably the last draft, prepared by his solicitors, Dewes & Sons of Coventry two years before his death, he expressed his wishes at that time. The lack of any mention of his wife Sarah or any children would indicate that by 1846 she had died without issue. In this draft document he left small bequests to his servants John Burbage, William Sidivale, Ann Parker, Esther Jephcoat and Thomas Turrell, an annuity of £10 a year to Charlotte Eburne (the daughter of his late uncle John), and legacies of £300 to Charlotte Rotherham and £1,200 to Samuel Vale, a Coventry solicitor. The bulk of his estate was left to his brother John Smith Soden and his

sister Sarah Elizabeth Ledsam, and afterwards to their children. There is no indication of how much money he left, but it must have been a very substantial amount.

John Smith Soden's son John James (1813-1871) lived all his life up to 1865 at Bath, where he too practiced as a surgeon. He married Henrietta Williams, of Berthddu, Llandinam, Montgomeryshire. She was the daughter of Charles Decimus Williams and Anne Maurice of Lloran, Llansilin, Denbighshire, who was descended on her mother's side from the Corbets of

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Ynysymaengvyn near Tywyn, Merionethshire.

After their marriage John and Henrietta lived at 24 The Circus in Bath, where they had three sons, Athelstan John (born in 1849) , Arthur Herbert Soden (b.1857) and Alfred Soden (b.1867). Athelstan as the eldest son, was to benefit later from his mother's ancestry.

The Ynysymaengwyn estate had descended for several generations through the Corbets of Moreton Corbet in Shropshire until the line ended in a sole heiress, Anne Corbet, who married Athelstan Owen, of Plas Rhiwsaeson, Llanbryirmair, Montgomeryshire.

She died in 1760, aged 76, having created an entail settling Ynysyrnaengwyn on the descendants of her youngest daughter Anne, wife of Pryse Maurice of Lloranr on condition of their assuming the name of Corbet. The estate was eventually vested in Athelstan Corbet (previously

Maurice), who died in 1835, and subsequently held in trust for the benefit of his neice, Henrietta Soden, the eldest child of his sister Anne by her marriage to Charles Decimus Williams. It was thus that Henrietta and her husband John Soden assumed the name Corbet to enable their son Athelstan to inherit.

The house a, Ynysymaengwyn was in reality three separate houses built on a square with one side open. They were all built between 1730 and 1758 by Anne, the wife of Athelstan Owen of Rhiwsaeson in the fashionable and distinguished English design of the mid-eighteenth century. Sad to relate, they were so badly damaged by naval occupation during the 1939-45 war that they had to be demollshed afterwards.

John Soden (He reverted to his own name) lived at Bath until he retired about 1865 and moved back to Denbighshire, probably following Henrietta's death in the same year. In 1869 he remarried, to Josephine Sidonie Tooth, and he himself died on 19 January 1871. He left the whole of his unentailed estate, amounting to just under £35,000, to be equally divided among his children on attaining the age of 21, out of which was to be paid an annuity of £300 to his second wife.

What his son Athelstan's fate was I have been unable to discover; there seems to be no evidence of him ever marrying, but the entail of Ynysymaengwyn ceasing with him, he is known

to have squandered his inheritance. His or his father's name is commemorated by the River Soden, which runs into Cardigan Bay between Newquay and Aberporth.

His brother Arthur died in 1935, also without having married.

Slightly more is known about the third son, Alfred. He was educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge, and died at The Hall, Datchet, Buckinghamshire on 20 March 1938, and was buried at Datchet, leaving a wife, Emily Clara and, it is thought, two children. As his estate was valued at his death at no more than £737 he had probably made earlier provision for his wife, and perhaps, his children.

Dr. John Soden's brother, Robert (1819 - 94), was destined for the army, but being short-sighted he was not accepted.

Apparently he was a great traveller, his first voyage being in a sailing ship to Singapore, a journey then taking six months.

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From there he went on to Borneo and visited Rajah Brook of Sarawak, another native of Bath. He seemed to have married a somewhat eccentric woman, Mary Graham of Claverhouse who, after Robert's death, went with her son Alex to live near Vienna, but left there in 1913 to live in France. She spent the war in Italy, returning to France in 1920 and living in Cannes.

Alex was educated at a Jesuit college near Vienna, and afterwards studied agriculture near Munich.

While he was there he met Baron Max von Soden and, sharing the same name, they became friends. On the outbreak of war in 1914, Alex, being an enemy alien, was interned at Ruhleben, but as Minister for the Interior for Bavaria, Max (now elevated to Count) von Soden continued his friendship and offered him many kindnesses. They kept in touch after the War, when Alex was entertained at the Count's Schloss. The von Sodens were a very old and distinguished family, having owned the salt mines at Bad Soden Allendorf for centuries, and expanding into different branches in Hanover, Wurtemberg and Bavaria. Over the years they played prominent roles in the national life of Germany.

Though members of the Bath connection continue in existence to the present day, their line has not been pursued

beyond Alex.

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