

Organ of the Copleston
Family History Society

Vol. 1 No. 1
January, 1979

Organiser: Mrs. M. Reson
73 Fleeming Road
London E17 5ET

The purpose of this Society is to gather and exchange all possible information on Copleston, Coplestone, Coppleston, Copplestone and even Coppelston(e)! Thence to sorting out the branches of this very old Devon family. The Newsletter will be a vehicle for seekers after information, for those wishing to be put in touch with family members and for all the interesting items you have come across whilst engaged in searches. It will be sent out quarterly in January, April, July and October. There will be no charge, but those who would like to receive copies will not be discouraged from sending postage!

Sources for Search

Those of you who wish to trace your own branch of the family and are beginners, ask the older members for all the memories they have of their parents and grandparents and when you have the area from whence they came, look in the Kelly's and other directories for that area at the appropriate time. Most central libraries carry these for their own districts. If you have been given a trade or profession for them, so much the better, for it often makes tracing easier.

Visit if you can your County Record Office or the General Register Office at St. Catherine's House for the births, deaths and marriages which will help to lead you on - or, rather, back! Write to the Organiser to see if she has note of any of the family in your area, past or present. If you are lucky and get back to Devon, study the Visitations - if these are not at your reference library, ask them to get them for you. Don't, however, guess into which line you go - it is a long haul and you must work backwards and not dare to miss a single generation!

Write to me at any time if you need advice or help or even a piece of inspired guesswork - things do come to you when you have been tracing for a while. If you do write for information, stamped addressed envelopes would be appreciated, thank you!

Copleston is my maternal family and a very interesting one it has turned out to be. With the help of good people in public service, Coplestons to whom I have written, some intuition and a great deal of searching, I have my pedigree back to the Visitations of Devon, Copleston of Copleston.

My Mother's family goes to Copleston of Kingdon via Launcelot, baptised 28th April 1597 at Bideford who, by his second marriage to Wilmot had a 3rd son (5th of his two marriages), Coriolanus, who was born in Alverdiscott and became a mercer of some repute in Bideford, dying there in 1722. He had two brothers named Caesar and Abdolominus - Launcelot must have been keen on Roman history! Coriolanus' grandfather was George Copleston of Ley in Morwenstow, first on the Kingdon Visitation. He appears in Copleston of Copleston as 2nd son "of Ley" of John Copleston of Copleston who was buried at Colebrook in 1550. John's father was Raphe, called "The Great Copleston" (I have yet to find out why) and his father was Phillip, Sheriff of Devon in the 12th year of Edward IV's reign.

To return to Coriolanus the mercer, we find that in 1703 his house was registered for dissenting worship and that he married Mary Bartlett, daughter of a well known Independent Minister who, with his father Walter, started the Independent Church in Bideford. Coriolanus and Mary had a son, John, who became Independent Pastor at Lavington Church, Bideford from 1718 to 1729. He is one of the two Coplestons most interesting to me - the other is my great-grandfather, Josiah, of whom I will write in the April Newsletter. John's son, another Coriolanus, was born in 1718. In Westminster Reference Library I looked in the National Union Catalog, Pre 1956 imprints, which indexes books and documents held in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and found reference to a sermon preached

by John in Bideford "1719/20" which was printed in 1720 and titled "God's works and wonders in the deep and the sea-faring man's duty" (30 pages). Having tried every way I know to locate a copy of this so that I might obtain a photocopy, and failed, I appeal for suggestions!

Both Rev. John and his son Coriolanus attended Doddridge's Northampton Academy. Coriolanus married in Princes Risborough 24.12.1747 to Hannah Bowler and some time after conformed and became eventually Curate at the Parish Church of St. Mary, Luton. It is his signature which appears on the Certificate of Burial in Woollen, Luton 1795, which is shown in Tate's "Parish Chest". He died in Luton in 1800, aged 83. The Rev. John's marriage and whereabouts at death I have not yet found.

I have been fortunate in finding Coplestons and Copplestones in Flint, Leeds, Shrewsbury, Birmingham, Swansea, Barking and now in Toronto. The latter is Australian born and his Grandfather and Father emigrated there from Birkenhead in 1922. Peter has been in Canada since 1970. He has kindly circulated the four other Coplestons in Toronto whom we hope descend from Nottingham Coplestons who went to Canada c. 1900.

Christine Mulvaney, nee Copleston, in Leeds looks for the Nottingham descendants. My gt.gt.-Grandfather, William, died in Leeds, so there is possibly a connection there. Francis Copleston of St. Albans and Leonard ('Bill') Copleston of Barking descend from my gt.gt.-Grandfather William's brothers Thomas and Coriolanus (there's that name again!) respectively. This Corio was a general dealer and HMSO bookseller in City Road, London and died Nottingham 1900 aged 93 - related to Christine's emigrees??

Rev. Copleston of Swansea was born in Wrexham, where lived a couple of generations of Francis' family - we must see how these families 'tie up'.

Bill's wife, Rose, in Barking is a very enthusiastic searcher and this branch has the distinction of being the largest family of Coplestons yet found. Bill has 11 brothers and sisters all living and they have about 33 nephews and nieces and 45 gt.-nephews and nieces. Their son, David, recently married, so we trust this branch is ongoing!

My one cousin Ronald and his wife, Anne, have no children, so our branch ends here. The Leeds family are also at the end of their line. Peter in Toronto has a son and daughter, as does Francis in St. Albans.

Change of type forces me to admit that the above was typed in the office in the slack day or two after Christmas, but I have to finish on my portable.

At this point I would like to make my thanks to the people and public services which have been of so much help. I will name no names, since some may wish to remain anonymous, but the people are in Shrewsbury, Birmingham, Barking, Leeds, Malvern and Flint and the public services and other organisations are Leeds Central Library, Nottingham City Library, Exeter Cathedral Library, Dr. Williams's Library, Levington Church, Bideford; Bucks C.C. Archives, Beds C.R.O., County Library, Luton; Maidstone Archives, Devon & Cornwall Congregational Union, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Exeter; Central Library, Plymouth; Westminster Reference Library, Guildhall Library (City of London); Devon Family History Society and The Society of Genealogists.

I have met with such kindness, interest and help in pursuit of my family - there is something about the study of family history which brings out the best in people!

This would seem to be all of the first issue. Please write - ideas, criticism, information, questions - whatever. I shall look forward to hearing.

Your sincere cousin,

Muriel