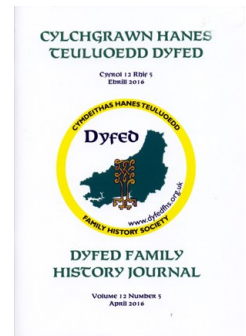


The Skyrmes of Llangwm

David Skyrme describes the story of this cluster of Pembrokeshire Skyrmes within the context of a One-Name Study



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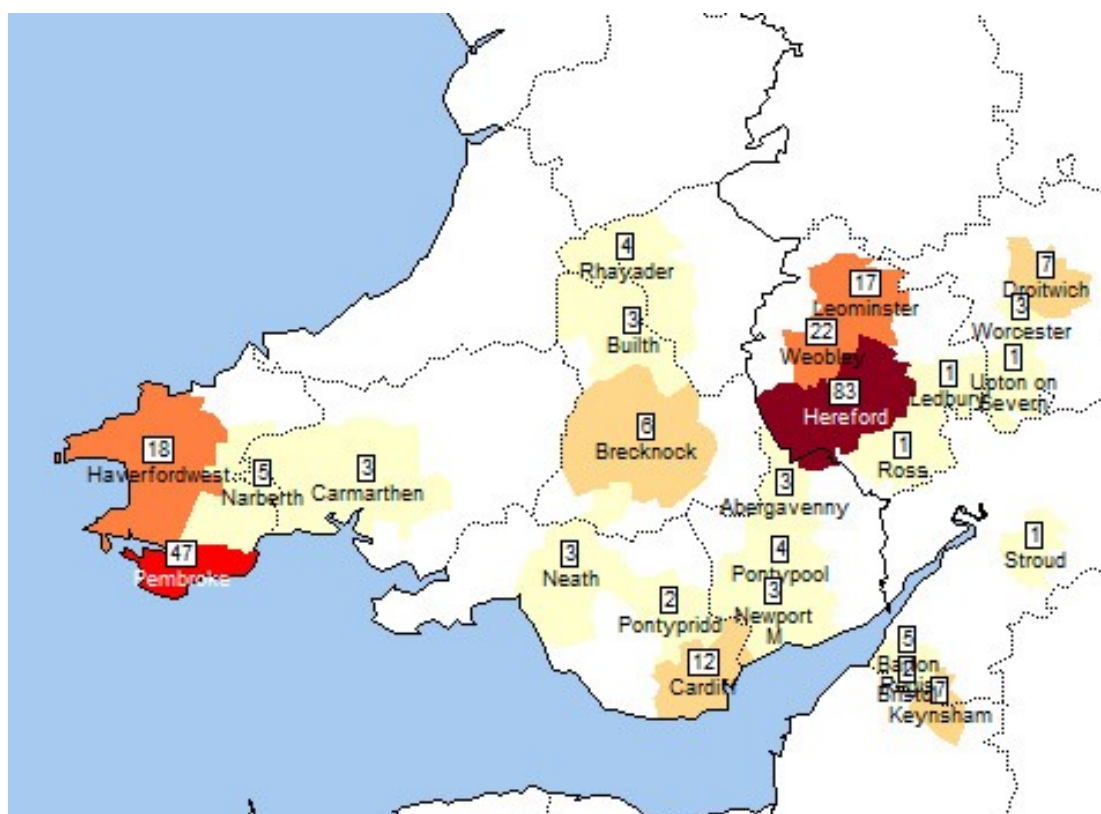
Following on from my research into my own ancestors from Penally and Manorbier (see April 2012 Journal) I have switched my research to a One-Name Study (ONS). This is a study that researches all instances of a family name and tries to develop trees and build up a picture of its origins and how the families spread around the world. This article gives an outline of the approach adopted and describes the findings about the Skyrme families who lived around Llangwm.

Origins and Dispersion

The earliest reference to Skyrme families (with variations Skyrm, Skirm and Skerm) are from Lugwardine in Herefordshire. From here are over 130 parish records dating from 1542 to 1750. The names of the first 100 or so individuals were spelt Skirme but from around 1660, Skyrme became the primary spelling. The following transcript from a Patent Roll dated 1310 shows that the surname was present in that village for some considerable time earlier:

Oct. 28.	Henry le Mouner of Brouham for the death of Simon le Cupere	By p.s.
Lialithgow.	of Penereth and for other offences.	
	Roger le Yinge of Lugwardyn for the death of Roger Skrym of the	By p.s.
	same place.	

From Lugwardine one Skyrme family showed up around 1580 in Ludlow, just across the Herefordshire border in the Welsh Marches. In the 1640s Thomas Skirme, a lawyer, moved from Ludlow to Llawhaden, a few miles north of Narberth. This distinguished family was undoubtedly the first Skyrme family to settle in Pembrokeshire, but research to date has not found any definitive link between the three different Pembrokeshire clusters. The map below, generated by *Surname Atlas*, shows the dispersion of Skyrmes (all variants) in South Wales and Herefordshire at the time of the 1881 census:



Further afield, we do find early references to other Skyrmes around the country. For instance, in the early 17th century there were several Skirme families in Lincolnshire and this spelling of the name turns up in Henrico County, Virginia in 1655. An analysis of the 1940 USA census shows that the spellings Skirme and Skyrm (from Herefordshire) are both higher than that for Skyrme.

Research Methods

While the methods and sources used by researchers of ONSs and those of family historians are similar, the approach of an ONS means that whenever you see an instance of the name, you record it, even though initially it does not fit into any tree you have. I have found that piecing together multiple instances later helps to overcome 'brick walls'. Because of the large volume of data collection, it requires the discipline of creating lists or databases covering each type of document or source. Many ONSers find the programme Custodian4 useful in this respect, though since I have extensive GEDCOM records held in a genealogy programme since the 1990s, I use Excel for my lists. This avoids the tedious but necessary process of migrating the data into Custodian4 one record at a time. Overall my approach is as follows:

- A structured set of folders on my PC. These are in three categories: 1) original sources, e.g. jpeg images of censuses, parish records, wills, newspaper articles etc. 2) Lists and indexes, e.g. baptisms, burials, passenger, immigration, military service; and 3) Analysed information, e.g. trees, occupation analysis.

- Collect raw data and put it into a similarly structured set of "To Process" folders, e.g. Pembrokeshire - BMD, censuses, newspaper articles etc.
- As the data is processed, it is added to my master database in Family Historian (a genealogy programme with lots of flexibility), and relevant lists or indexes updated, along with unique identifiers for individuals generated by Family Historian.
- The source records are then moved to the relevant ONS folders. Many types of record, e.g. BMD records, censuses, are stored by traditional county.

Because new sources of data are coming online all the time, the "To Process" files now number over 1,500 for the Pembrokeshire Skyrmes. Particularly useful for the Llangwm study have been *Welsh Newspapers Online*, WW1 military records and *Trove* (Australian newspapers). Several trips to Pembrokeshire Archives at Haverfordwest have also resulted in photographs of leases, indentures and other material that is in process of being transcribed and analysed.

Fishermen and Ferryman

The 1841 census shows three sizeable Skyrme families living at Llangwm and nearby Black Tar. These were the first and second generation descendants of William and Mary (née Vaughan) Skyrme. William and Mary had four children, two named Daniel, the first of whom died in childhood. The second Daniel (b. 1786) became a shipwright, but remained single. The two families whose descendants have been traced through to the 20th century were those of John Skyrme (1778-1806) and Elizabeth Randell (the name Randell recurring through several generations), and that of James Skyrme (1780-1842) and Mary Lewis.

John and Elizabeth had only one child John (1805-1858), but he married Mary Brown and they had four boys including a Robert Randell Skyrme and a John Brown Skyrme. There were 19 children in the next generation. More prolific were James and Mary who had 11 children (six boys) and in the next generation were 21 Skyrmes.

Several of the Skyrmes worked on the river. For example, James is listed in records variously as mariner, fisherman and pilot. Two of his sons John (b1802) and James (b1810) were also fisherman, with James sometimes listed as a farmer as well. James's eldest son William (1801-1892) was a ferryman. The Llangwm Ferry, which crossed the



Site of the old ferry at Llangwm

River Cleddau to Coedcanlas, and took workmen to quarries at Landshipping, was run by him and his family for most of the 19th century. Another local landmark, The Three Horseshoes Inn on the Black Tar Road out of the main village was run by the elder John's widow Elizabeth for most of her life.

Fishing in Milford Haven was one of the mainstays of employment for the people of Llangwm. The most lucrative catch was oysters, though herrings and cockles were also fished. The fisherwomen of Llangwm were a formidable group. They would carry baskets full of oysters on their head and walked the 5 miles to Pembroke via Burton Ferry to sell them to dealers from Kent for the London trade. So important were oysters to the local economy that a petition to Parliament in 1806 sought to control outsiders coming into their area and bring regulation to the industry. Examination of the records of the Commissioners who oversaw the regulations records James Skyrme of Llangwm as the second person to register as conforming to the byelaws. Of the 15 initial signatories in January 1818, most were from Llangwm and Burton. Signing the regulations, however, did not absolve participants from prosecution. John Skyrme (b 1802) mentioned above was in April 1866 "charged with storing and collecting oysters of less dimensions than 2¼ inches in diameter, lately caught in the harbour of Milford". Actually it was his assistant Caroline Jenkins, employed to count oysters, who had bought some from three boats without authorisation while John was away. When he returned and saw what she had done "he took the oysters, and dashed them down, saying 'You have done me now'." The issue was whether "the master is liable for the acts of his servant". Since Caroline was doing things without authority the case was dismissed.

From Watermen to Shipwrights

From the mid-19th century many other Skyrmes became shipwrights. Robert Randell Skyrme and his brother Thomas appear in Bristol in the 1841 census as shipwright's apprentices to Pembrokeshire man Thomas Phillips from Oak Hill on the Cresswell River. Most Skyrme shipwrights, however, worked closer to home, at the Royal Naval Dockyard in Pembroke Dock. Each day they would walk the three miles to Burton Ferry (now replaced by the Cleddau Toll Bridge), take the ferry and walk the remaining mile to the dockyard, six days a week.

On one Saturday, 5th August 1899, John Skyrme (b1858) witnessed a terrible accident. He was walking with three fellow dockyard workers when a heavy thunderstorm struck. As they sheltered in a shed near Ashfield Farm, lightning struck and killed one of them - John Morris. John Skyrme was a witness at the inquest held that afternoon where he said that he "saw a ball of fire, heard a great explosion, and saw Morris fall. Morris was found to be dead. His hair and whiskers were singed off, and the side of his face was blackened".



Altogether over a dozen Skyrmes worked for some time at the dockyard in the late 1800s. Some, such as Peter Skyrme (1837-92), son of William the ferryman, moved with their family to Pembroke Dock. Peter married Frances Mason and five of their six sons became shipwrights, while the sixth, Robert, started a shipwright's apprenticeship but then joined the Metropolitan Police. Although he was posted in London and then to a War Office depot near Selby, it should be remembered that the duty of policing the Royal Dockyards and certain War Office property was actually that of the London Metropolitan Police and not the local constabulary.

Dispersion from Llangwm

The table below shows the number of Skyrme individuals descended from William and Mary Vaughan and their residence at each census.

There are some distinct contrasts with the migration of Skyrmes from the Manorbier / Penally cluster. Numbers of individuals were similar in 1841 but by 1861 there were twice as many Manorbier Skyrmes as there were Llangwm Skyrmes. Also migration from Llangwm was much slower than that of the Manorbier / Penally Skyrmes who in the 1860s were already at other dockyards (Portsmouth, Barrow, Sheerness) and in the South Wales coalfields. The Skyrmes maintain a presence in Llangwm to this day, while by 1901 there was not a single Skyrme still living in Penally.

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Llangwm	21	16	17	15	11	26	18	15
Coedcanlas	9	6	5	5	3	2		
Burton			4	1				
Pembroke Dock				8	13	9	12	11
Pembrokeshire (other)		1	2	5				
Bristol		2	3	7	4	4	6	1
Cardiff			1	2	5	9	11	17
Birkenhead/Wirral				1	7	3	9	13
London					2	8	7	3
Other							1	20
Total	30	25	32	44	46	61	64	80

Some Fascinating Stories.

Behind each of the figures of the table above are fascinating stories. One family in Cardiff owned and managed a marine store. The move to Birkenhead was that of Henry Walter Skyrme, a grocer previously trading in Haverfordwest. And there were strong links to the Wesleyan movement. John Brown Skyrme of Llangwm, both a shipwright and farmer, was also a minister at the Wesleyan Chapel in Llangwm. One of his sons, Anthony, spent time as a missionary in Jamaica, with his sister Norah as his housekeeper. John's eldest son Rowland emigrated to New Zealand, where his descendants live today. Here are some other findings unearthed during my research:

- Robert Randell Skyrme unwittingly married a bigamist. This only came to light after his death when his widow claimed compensation from her third husband who had deserted her, only to have her first husband appear in court.
- Thomas, the shipwright in Bristol, married into an inn-keeping family. He and his descendants ran the Shakespear Inn in Woolcot, Bristol, a pub that still exists today.
- "Warminster Down Mystery Partly Solved" - this line about "the girl in green" headlines the sad story of Muriel Joy Skyrme found dying in May 1938 on a golf course at Warminster.
- Frederick Skyrme, son of Metropolitan policeman Robert, spent most of his life as a colonial administrator in Malakal, now in South Sudan.
- James Henry Skyrme was one of several Pembrokeshire sailors who were among the first casualties of World War 1. Their ship, *HMS Amphion*, was sunk by a German torpedo on 5th August 1914.

The headstone in the picture is that of two elderly spinsters, who spent all their lives in Llangwm. Frances was for many years a local school teacher.

You can read more about these and other individuals in my free online publication *The Skyrmes of Llangwm and the Cleddau* at the Skyrme Family website www.skyrme.info which is also kept up to date with new findings.

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