

The Search for Samuel Braund

It was the summer of 1977 when I started to seriously research my family history and made my first visit to Cornwall Record Office. I fairly quickly discovered that my six times great grandfather was Samuel Braund, schoolmaster and stonemason of Menheniot, Cornwall. Although I have since found out more about Samuel and his descendants, there he sat, firmly at the top of my Braund tree, for thirty-seven years.



Menheniot



Samuel's Sundial

In 2000, I wrote up the history of my Braund ancestors for a competition organised by the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. The story was entitled 'So Soon Passeth It Away', after the inscription on a sundial carved by Samuel that is now sited over the porch of

Liskeard Parish Church. Later, the Braund Society published my story in four parts and all I then knew about Samuel appeared in part one, *Cornish Origins*. In this book I speculated on Samuel's ancestry as follows. *'It is almost certain that he, or his family, came from North Devon. One possibility is that his origins lie in Northlew, where Braunds of a*

similar social status can be found at the right time. It may also be of significance that the parish records for Northlew are incomplete. A hundred years before the birth of Samuel, this branch of the Braund family was involved in the cloth



Northlew

trade. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Liskeard was a renowned yarn market, frequented by the serge makers of Devon; thus providing a possible link between the two areas. Alternatively Samuel may be descended from John and Rebecca Braund née Hopkins,¹ whose probable, although not proven, descent from the fifteenth century Braunds of Black Torrington² can be traced. This suggestion is based on the apparent significance of the christian name Rebecca in Samuel's branch of the family.³ This is a very rare christian name amongst other Braunds of this time. Apart from two Rebeccas⁴ belonging to the Northlew branch of the Braunds, the only other Rebeccas to pre-date Samuel, relate to John and Rebecca Braund née Hopkins'.

Samuel turns up, as if from nowhere, on 1 November 1741, when he marries Jane Lucas in Stoke Climsland, Cornwall; a parish on the

¹ Probably a grandson.

² It is also possible that John, husband of Rebecca Hopkins, is connected to the Braunds from Northlew.

³ A daughter, niece and almost certainly, a sister were all called Rebecca.

⁴ Rebecca, daughter of William and Mary Braund of Northlew, born around 1645. Rebecca, daughter of Benjamin and Anne Braund née Warner, baptised 28 June 1699, St. Pancras, Soper Lane, London; her father was baptised in Northlew.

Devon-Cornwall border. At this time, he was described as a 'sojourner'; in other words, he was not settled in the parish, although he may have lived there for some time without gaining settlement. Samuel died on 29 August 1785; no age was given in the burial register and no headstone has survived. This suggests that he was born between 1680 and 1725, most likely some time in the 1710s.



Stoke Climsland

Apart from the use of the christian name Rebecca, the records provided a couple more clues. Samuel's will refers to his niece Rebecca Hunt. Rebecca Braund married Henry Hunt in Liskeard in May 1784.⁵ Although 'niece' may not have been used in the modern sense, it seemed likely that Samuel had a brother, or possibly a sister,⁶ to give birth to Rebecca. Her burial on 14 August 1815 gives her age as fifty-five, suggesting a birth between August 1759 and August 1760. All attempts to trace Rebecca's baptism⁷ had failed.

There was also a burial in Menheniot, for a Rebecca Braund, who surely must have been a relative. The gravestone states that she died on 4 October 1782, aged fifty-seven; her birth was therefore between October 1724 and October 1725. No baptism for this Rebecca Braund had been found in Devon or Cornwall either. It

⁵ The witnesses were Elizabeth Harvey and Whindon Pethick, Rebecca did not sign her name.

⁶ In which case Rebecca was presumably illegitimate.

⁷ Common variations of the surname, such as Braun, Brawn, Brawne, Browne and Broad were also considered.

seemed likely that she was Samuel's sister or sister-in-law and a candidate for the mother of his 'niece' Rebecca. In addition, a Mary Braund was buried in neighbouring Quethiock in 1794, no age is given but equally, she could have been a sister or sister-in-law of Samuel.



Rebecca's Gravestone

As far as identifying Samuel's parents, the research stalled there for thirty-seven years until a sunny day in May 2014 when the subscription website 'FindMyPast' www.findmypast.co.uk uploaded transcriptions and images of the majority of Devon's surviving parish registers. Obviously, a search for Samuel was first on the list. The only likely entry was for a Samuel Broad, son of Humphry and Florence, baptised on 24 May 1716 at Sampford Courtenay, on the northern edge of Dartmoor, Devon. A check of the original image showed that the surname was indeed written 'Brand' but this wouldn't be the first time Braund had been corrupted. Humphry is a name found in several branches of the Braund family, so this too was encouraging. I then searched for other children of this couple in Sampford Courtenay and came up with Elizabeth, baptised 5 November 1718 and John baptised 4 December 1720; in both these cases the parents were given as John and Florence Brand. Now I was under the impression that Florence only became popular as a christian name following the rise to fame of Florence Nightingale and indeed, searching the whole of Devon for seventeenth and eighteenth century Florences, of any surname, revealed very few.

Had she been Mary or Elizabeth, I would have been sceptical but this looked like the same family to me; was Humphrey a clerical error?

I now sought to prove three things:-

That these three Sampford Courtenay baptisms were the same family.

That the Brands were Braunds in disguise.

That this was the long sought baptism of my 6 times great grandfather, Samuel Braund.

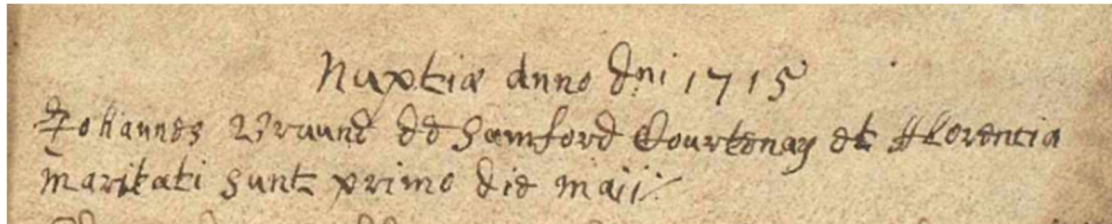


Sampford Courtenay

The obvious thing to do was to look for a marriage between Florence and a Humphry and/or John Brand, Braund, or similar variation. Initially nothing was found. I did find a burial for a Florence Brawn on 30 June 1757 at St. Eustachius, Tavistock. Tavistock is the 'big town', some twenty miles south-west of Sampford Courtenay but given the very unusual christian name, Florence, this looked like our lady and moved the Brand surname closer to Braund. I failed to find a burial for a Humphry or John but it looked as if Florence's daughter, Elizabeth was also in Tavistock. On 8 July 1744 Elizabeth Brond married Walter Bound in Tavistock. Sadly Elizabeth was buried just two years later, on 10 May 1746. One daughter, Mary, baptised in Tavistock on 5 October 1745, has been found.

I tried again for a marriage, this time searching for any marriages of ladies called Florence, to anyone, anywhere in Devon between 1680

and 1720. Working my way through these located Florencia Maritati and Johannes Braund marrying in Northlew on 1 May 1715. Northlew is ten miles from Sampford Courtenay and was not only home to a Braund family but the parish that I had identified as a possible place of origin for Samuel. A look at the image of the original marriage register was very exciting, the entry read



Extract from Northlew Parish Register

'Johannes Braund de Sampford Courtenay et Florencia maritati sunt primo die Maii'. I was disappointed to relinquish the exotic 'Maritati' surname; this was merely Latin for 'married' and no surname was recorded for Florence. I strongly suspect she was the Florence Arnoll, baptised in Bradford, Devon on 19 June 1683, daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth but I doubt that I shall ever be able to prove it.

I was however now convinced that the three Sampford Courtenay Brand baptisms were a single family and in addition, I was happy that they were indeed Braunds in disguise. It was looking more and more likely that I had the right Samuel but could I find any more substantiating evidence to prove it? I tried searching for Devon baptisms between 1710 and 1750 where the mother's name was Florence, again ignoring the surname. Sure enough, up came two children who were indexed as the offspring of John and Florence Browne but on checking the originals, were in fact Brawnes. They were both baptised at Sourton, between Sampford Courtenay and Tavistock and were Humphrey, baptised on 15 January 1723/4 and

Rebecca on 2 January 1725/6. This was only three months adrift from what I wanted for the Rebecca buried in Menheniot; I felt as though I was getting closer. The inclusion of a Humphry amongst the children was interesting, perhaps this name had some significance and might account for the confusion over the father's name in Samuel's baptism entry.

The next move seemed to be to look for futures for the children of John and Florence, to see whether they fitted, or were incompatible with, the Menheniot Braunds. Nothing could be found for Rebecca, leaving her free to be the one buried in Menheniot. At first I believed that John Braund, baptised in 1720, was going to be the John Braund who married Grace Toll in 1753 in Broadwoodwidge. I knew from his age at burial that this John was born c.1720 however further investigation found a much more likely future for Samuel's brother. A John Braund married Mary Bartlett in Harford, Devon on 20 May 1750, both were described as being of Cornwood at the time. Harford and Cornwood are adjacent parishes on the southern edge of Dartmoor. John and Mary had five daughters and a son baptised in Cornwood, all with the surname spelt either Brand or Brond. These included both a Florence and a Rebecca. Significantly, the Rebecca was baptised in May 1761,⁸ not precisely the right date for the Rebecca who married Henry Hunt in Liskeard but very close. It is possible that the Quethiock burial, mentioned above, is Mary, daughter of John and Mary née Bartlett. If this is the case it seems a little strange that her sister Rebecca was mentioned in Samuel's will but not her. Also, a likely marriage has been found for this Mary in Modbury in 1781. So the identity of the Mary who was buried in Quethiock is still not satisfactorily resolved.

⁸ Her age at burial, suggests a birth between August 1759 and August 1760.

It is believed that Humphrey, son of John and Florence, married Ann Brock in Monk Okehampton on 29 March 1752. They had four children baptised with the surname Brawn in neighbouring Broadwoodkelly: John on 20 October 1752, Joan on 18 July 1755, James on 16 November 1760 and Samuel on 1 March 1763. Ann was buried at Monk Okehampton as Braund on 25 February 1767. Humphrey also had an illegitimate child, Edward, by Ann King, baptised in Monk Okehampton 7 February 1767, just weeks before his wife's death. Humphrey then married Mary Godfrey in Ugborough on 3 June 1769. Humphrey was a husbandman and both were 'sojourners'. A daughter, Hannah, was baptised in Ugborough on 8 April 1770, followed by a short-lived Susannah, baptized in Monkokehampton the following year. Mary was buried in Monkokehampton on 23 February 1776 and Humphrey on 11 February 1788; he was described as a 'pauper'.

Some of Humphrey's children have been traced further. Joan married Samuel Smale, a day labourer of Zeal Monochorum at Broadwoodkelly on 18 July 1755. Hannah married John Brayley in Zeal Monchorum on 26 May 1793. Samuel may have married Mary Western in Iddesleigh in 1790; this Samuel was known to have been born in 1762/3. Alternatively, he may have married Joanna Curtis in North Tawton on 18 April 1797. The clerk has written the surname as Brown but Samuel has signed Braun. James may have been buried in Stoke Damerel in 1836, aged seventy-five as Brawn. John is believed to be John Braund who married Elizabeth Wadman in Zeal Monochorum in 1782. He was buried in Zeal Monochorum in January 1825 aged seventy-three, described as being 'of North Tawton'.

With the identification of the two Rebeccas connected to the Samuel who was baptised in Sampford Courtenay, both of whom were very

close to the ages of those connected to Samuel Braund of Menheniot, it looked as though John and Florence were indeed my 7 x great grandparents. As to who John was, that is, as they say, another story.

Sources

The baptism registers of Bradford, Devon

The baptism registers of Broadwoodkelly, Devon

The baptism registers of Monkokehampton, Devon

The baptism registers of Northlew, Devon

The baptism registers of St. Eustachius, Tavistock, Devon

The baptism registers of St. Pancras, Soper Lane, London

The baptism registers of Sampford Courtenay, Devon

The baptism registers of Sourton, Devon

The marriage registers of Broadwoodkelly, Devon

The marriage registers of Iddesleigh, Devon

The marriage registers of Liskeard, Cornwall

The marriage registers of Modbury, Devon

The marriage registers of Monkokehampton, Devon

The marriage registers of Northlew, Devon

The marriage registers of North Tawton, Devon

The marriage registers of St. Eustachius, Tavistock, Devon

The marriage registers of Stoke Climsland, Cornwall

The marriage registers of Ugborough, Devon

The marriage registers of Zeal Monochorum, Devon

The burial registers of Menheniot, Cornwall

The burial registers of Monkokehampton, Devon

The burial registers of Quethiock, Cornwall

The burial registers of St. Germans, Cornwall

The burial registers of St. Eustachius, Tavistock, Devon

The burial registers of Stoke Damerel, Devon

The burial registers of Zeal Monochorum, Devon

Memorial inscriptions for Menheniot, Cornwall

Memorial inscriptions for Quethiock, Cornwall

The will of Samuel Braund, written 15 December 1784, held at
Cornwall County Record Office, reference B4611.

Churchwardens' Accounts for Liskeard, Cornwall