

## INTRODUCTION

My greetings to you by way of this fourth edition of The Folker Phyles.

I mentioned in the last edition how I had been spending much of my time following that branch of my family which relates to the Parker name. That has slowed down now as further research is likely to be laborious.

I have spent a little time adding more detail to my direct ancestors along the Smith line in order to be able to put together a biography of my paternal grandfather.

The history of my maternal grandfather has also received attention for the same reason and I have now compiled his biography which is attached to this newsletter.

## CURRENT WORK

I also made mention in the last newsletter of my 4 x great-grandfather, Samuel Folker. I have now turned my attentions to him and his father and the research is proving to be very interesting.

Samuel was a Midshipman then a Masters Mate in the Royal Navy from 1781 which was the Nelson era. It is beneficial that there has been much written about naval life in that period.

Luckily, I already had some information about several of the ships on which Samuel served. From this I have been able to go to the Public Record Office and study the original ship's muster books which mention his name. These and other books also give details of the activities of the ships such as where they were sailing.

Much peripheral detail can be found such as comrades who were posted from one ship to another at the same time. All people on board are regularly listed including prisoners from wartime activity and the names of their ships also given.

I shall need several more visits to the Public Record Office before this avenue of information is exhausted.

From library books concerning the Nelson era of naval history I have been reading about the life of a sailor in those times. It was horrendous.

I had always looked upon the maritime tradition of this country as something of which to be proud. I now find that British seamanship was inferior to that of both the French and Spaniards yet somehow we managed to defeat them both in battle. The ships, although maintained well, were often constructed of unfit timber and started to rot even before building was complete.

The sailor himself was so badly treated that he actually looked forward to battle by way of relief. It seems that virtually all the officers were on the make at the expense of the ordinary sailor. Furthermore, each rank bullied that below their own and punishment was meted out severely and harshly and it was not uncommon for punishment to be fatal.

Many sailors went to America to avoid the Press Gangs but ironically many eventually fought against the English during the war between the two countries over the English colonies there.

Another interesting fact is the number of words and phrases that have remain in the English language which have emanated from naval tradition.

Samuel's parents were John and Mary Folker. I found from the registration of Samuel's christening that John was an 'Excise man' and this has given me a lead for further information as there are relevant books available at the Public Record Office.

I have started searching the indexes of the Excise Board Minute Books and have found references to three members of the Folker family in the period around 1750. Besides John, the other names are Ambrose Folker and William Folker, both of whom I already had knowledge. However, I should now be able to link them into the family tree more accurately.

---

The attached biography of my grandfather has been made up from the information that I have immediately to hand. Luckily he was a great hoarder, having kept many items relating to his family and these items have passed to me.

There are many more details of information which I know I can obtain in due course, and I will look for these as time and opportunity permit.

The one true thing about a biography is that it is never complete !!

## TO MAKE CONTACT

Your letters would be most welcome. Please address any correspondence to :-

Malcolm Smith  
Shaftesbury House  
Eastworth Road  
VERWOOD  
Dorset  
BH31 7PJ