

ODFHS Boatfamilies - 2026 Updates

(Canal Family 1 except where indicated)

Update V211 - 21.6.2026

New Total: 70,104

New Names: Hoggett 27; Brasnen (various spellings) 18

Main Increases: Hallwood +75; Potter +28; Ireland +23; Evans +20; Ainsworth +13; Jenkinson +10; Price +9; Hignett +6; Bowyer +5, Moore +4

All the new names and increases are connected to a large branch of the Hallwood family (headed by Francis Hallwood b1823 Runcorn) previously unknown to us, so a big thankyou goes to his descendant Debbie Muscatelli for the alert. Many of the boatmen involved worked on Mersey tug boats and on ferries between Liverpool and Wallasey or Birkenhead, while others were seagoing.

Update V210 - 2.6.2026

New Total: 69,761

No New Names

Main Increases: Owen +32; Smetham/Smitham/Snailham +10; Ireland +8; Wright +6; Butterworth, Cook, Harrison, Woods +5

Most increases are linked to the family of Jane Owen of Wolverhampton who married Burscough boatman Peter Harrison in 1872 after he moved to Runcorn. Her uncles Henry, Samuel and James of Aylesbury were boatmen, as were her brothers Henry, David and John around Widnes.

The Smetham/Smitham family of Runcorn also has Lancashire links, descending from John Snailham of Tarleton, with their surname changing spelling over the generations.

Update V209 - 11.5.2026

New Total: 69,624

New Names: Slade 8; Thrasher 7

Main Increases: Skinner +17; Smith +14; Mason, Ruscoe +7

We are grateful to Vicki Slade for alerting us to the complicated details of her ancestor Julia Smith, b1847, mother of a Midlands boatman Charles Edwin Slade, and of her second marriage to Edward Jewell who was already on our site. Later marriages in the extended family involved Skinner, Thrasher and Mason watermen on the Coventry and Grand Union Canals as far south as Uxbridge.

We have also expanded the Sandbach family of Ralph Ruscoe b1792, whose widow's drowning in the Trent and Mersey Canal brought strong criticism from the Coroner of her neighbour Edwin Estcourt (qv) for not doing more to save her.

Update V208 - 28.4.2026

New Total: 69, 529

No New Names

Main Increases: Mayor, Cookson, Wilson +6; Lund +4

We have revised the Mayor, Lund and Tyrer families of West Lancashire boatbuilders, plus related Cooksons (ropemakers) and Wilsons, adding details from the 1921 census.

This was prompted by a tribute to Harry Counce Mayor (1930-2025), chairman of James Mayor Boatbuilders of Tarleton, by Mike Clarke, Chairman - leedsandliverpoolcanalsociety.co.uk - who attended his funeral in Southport. (Report in the Society's Newsletter 'Clogs and Gansey', Issue No 64, Spring 2026.)

Update V207 - 13 4 2026

New Total: 69,484

New Names: Burnitt 37; Clayburn 27; Dennison 9; Death 7

Main Increases: Sefton +26; Clayton +24; Richardson +14; Gandy +8; Rhodes +7

Our new names and most increases are among inter-related canal families and mariners based in Knottingley and include John Rhodes, a ropemaker's son b1845, who worked on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Shipley as a ship's carpenter. His sister Mary Ann Rhodes married Robert Clayburn from a family of boat-haulers, 'horse marines' and watermen on the Aire and Calder Navigation.

Update V206 - 22.3.2026

New Total: 69,252 people

New Names: Ruscoe 23; Bosson 22

Main Increases: Palin +35; Jones +12; Bunn +11; Littler +9

Our new names and most increases link to the Palins of Sandbach already on our site. George Palin, b1832 Wheelock, married Jane Bosson of Betchton and in 1883 their daughter Elizabeth Ellen married John Ruscoe of Elton. Her brother Samuel Richard Palin married Rachel nee Follows, widow of Moses Bunn b1867 Middlewich. Elizabeth Ellen's sister Agnes Jane married Staffordshire boatman Edward Jones, and her nephew Willie Palin b1902 married Fanny Littler, daughter of Cheshire waterman Samuel Littler.

Update V205 - 5.3.2026

New Total: 69,101 people

No New Names

Main Increases: Stanley +26; Green +14; Yates +12; Hesford +9

Our main increases involve the Warrington families of John Stanley and Mary Green, a boatman's daughter, who married in 1858. Their sons Edward, James, John and William followed their father on to the local canals, and daughter Margaret married Widnes waterman Joseph Molyneux. The Yates and Hesford boatmen worked around Salford, either on the Bridgewater or Manchester Ship Canal.

Update V204 - 20.2.2026

New Total: 69,019 people

New Name: Jewell 18

Main Increases: Kirkham, +29; Pearson +17; Boden, Holloway +8; Pemberton +5

Our new family is descended from Alfred Jewell of Cirencester whose sons Edward and Charles worked on the south Midlands canals, and whose daughter Ellen married Edward Boden of Brierley Hill whose family was already on our site. Ellen's sister Mahena Jewell married Samuel Pearson of Stratford-on-Avon whose father Joseph was a boatman from Dudley. The Kirkham increases are among Cheshire watermen based around Runcorn and Warrington.

Update V203 - 5.2.2026

New Total: 68,904 people

New Name: Lyth 39

Main Increases: Brookes, Palin +24; Walker +12, Boden, Smith +8

Another inter-county link comes with our new family descended from William Lyth of Wem whose sons worked on the Llangollen and Shropshire canals, and whose grandson David, b1899 Nantwich, married Henrietta Dutton of Astley Green, near Leigh. Her father was already on our site, son of John Dutton of Wigan and Mary Sharrock of Burscough.

The Brookes, Palin and Walker increases are all among previously developed Cheshire families who turn out to be linked to the Lyths, as are the Bodens and Smiths of Staffordshire.

Update V202 - 21.1.2026

New Total: 68,756 people

No New Names

Main Increases: Turton +9; Jacks +8; Boden, Holland +6

We have expanded the families connected to Samuel Turton and Maude Jacks who married in Northwich in 1881. He was born in Daventry in 1878, one of three boatmen sons of Thomas Edward Turton of Rugby; she was born in Runcorn in 1881, daughter of Charles Jacks of Ellesmere Port most of whose seven sons were watermen on the Cheshire and Staffordshire canals.