ODFHS Boatfamilies - 2026 Updates

(Canal Family 1 except where indicated)

Update V216 - 2.11.2026
New Total: 70,879 people
No New Names
Main Increases: Abram +7, Hartley +4

A major revision the Dobson, Hartley and Abram/Abraham families of Lydiate and Burscough follows an observation by Gillian Smith that we had confused two William Hartleys (b1881 and 1883). Thanks go to her for also providing an inquest report on her ancestor William Dobson (1871-1905) who was killed by a train at Aintree.

Update V215 - 25.10.2026
New Total: 70,866 people
New Names: Osbourn 18; Frank 13; Masterman 11; Laythorpe 6
Main Increases: Midgley +22; Tomlinson +20; Colverson +17; Rhodes +12; Hodgson +10; Mason +9; Bolton +6

New names and and increases are among inter-related families of Yorkshire watermen and mariners from Knottingley and Goole, and we are grateful to David Holbrook for sharing his research. Several were involved in the coastal trade with some moving away, others bringing back wives from Tyneside, London and Cornwall.

Update V214 - 28.9.2026
New Total: 70,643 people
New Names: Pilsbury/Spilsbury 60; Millard 16; Poultney/Pountney 11
Main Increases: Cresswell +27; Cox +17; Lloyd +12

The new names and main increases are all linked to Staffordshire boatfamilies already on our site.

Spelling variations appear in records of two of the new families: Ralph and Harriet Pilsbury appear as Spilsbury in the 1841/51 censuses (also a few descendants subsequently); and some of Elijah Poultney's relatives are listed as Pountney. We use the GRO birth record spellings and indicate the alternatives in notes.

Update V213 - 28.8.2026
New Total: 70,440 people
New Names: Glanfield 25; Cuckow 22; Evison 7
Main Increases: Brooks +33; Wood +10; Barnett +7; Bailey +4

An unexpected link to mariners from Suffolk has emerged with the 1844 marriage in Liverpool of Sarah Ann Hallwood, a waterman's daughter from Runcorn, to Charles Cuckow of Ipswich whose brother Edward married Susannah Glanfield, daughter of another Ipswich sailor. Thanks go to Debbie Muscatelli for further work on her Hallwood ancestors.
Our other new name and increases involve mainly Cheshire canal families, some with links to the Potteries.

Update V212 - 24.7.2026
New Total: 70,293 people
No New Names
Main Increases: Wray +25; Shaw +23; Hutt +17; Cross, Jones, Platt +13; Rhodes +10

The Shaw, Cross, Jones and Platt increases are among Cheshire watermen, and are linked to the Hutts of Tipton, Staffordshire, by the marriage of Herbert Shaw to a boatman's daughter, Maria Hutt, in Dudley, 1877.

We have also expanded two Knottingley families, one of watermen descended from John Wray b1789 and his bother Robert b1794, the other of boatbuilders linked to John Rhodes b1843.

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 Caunce 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 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.