

2nd. June, 1977.

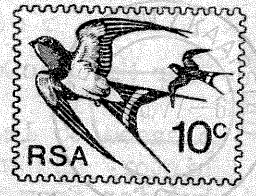
Dear Mr. MacDonald,

thank you for your letter dated the 4th. May from which I am pleased to learn of yet another branch of the Woolley family in search of family history and with a keen interest in genealogy. It is indeed a fascinating subject but far from supplying answers to our inquisitive minds and, on the contrary, leads us deeper into the mists of antiquity. Ancestry, as far as most people are concerned, is limited to the two or three preceding generations which still lie within living memory of those of the present generation. It is not too difficult to trace ones ancestors back to the early part of last century. In 1837 began the general register of births, marriages and deaths at Somerset House, London. Prior to that date the search becomes more difficult. In 1538, Thomas Cromwell instituted registers of baptism, marriages and burials but these all too often were not preserved so far back by the incumbents of the parishes where such records were to have been kept and the records of non-conformists at Somerset House were far from complete. Both the general registers at Somerset House and the parish registers have the added drawback that particulars given are all too insufficient to identify beyond doubt the subject with entries made more than one in the same name and seldom gives any clue of the place of origin of a man who has moved from one parish to another.

For medieval pedigrees we depend mainly on records associated with land tenure and to that extent are limited to the pedigrees of land-holding families. Here we have to seek information from the inquisitions into lands held by kings tenants upon their death; to Patent Rolls, Close Rolls, Pipe Rolls, Chancery and Exchequer records and legal proceedings of the many Assize Courts throughout the counties. Our earliest source of course is from the Great Inquisition of Lands of England made to the order of William the Conqueror in 1085 - known as the Domesday Book. To a certain degree, surnames had been used by the Normans since the Conquest in 1066 although limited to the patronymics or territorial names and not strictly hereditary but tending to become so as long as a family remained in possession of the land in question. Such would be the names recorded in Domesday Book and it is from this source many English names can still be traced back to the estate they held at that period in time. Prior to that, records were few and far from reliable. It was not until the late 12th. and early 13th. centuries that we find surnames becoming more common to all classes of English society although there was nothing static or official about them. It did however assist in establishing a more standard pattern of spelling whereas earlier recorded entries of family names based on patronymics and territorial claims were subjected to phonetics and resulted in a variety of spellings. A good example of this can be taken from the origin of our own family surname as traced by P.M. Reaney in his 'Dictionary of Birth Names' from Anglo-Saxon times and early Norman records. Mark Anthony Lower in his 'Patronymics Britannica' also takes us back to Anglo-Saxon origins suggesting it could have evolved from the Saxon Wulf Es-Leag a district abounding in wolves, common in those times. He records the origin of our surname at that stage as - WOLFLEGE and WOLVELEY. Note how these compare with P.M. Reaney's list and how little the pronunciation changed over the centuries:- HUGO DE WOLUELE (1219 - Assize Rolls - York.)
RALPH DE WULLUELEYE -(1230 - PIPE ROLLS BERKS) ROGER DE WOLVELE - (1279 - Rotuli
NICHOLAS DE WOLVELEYE - (1280- Assize Rolls - Staff.) Hundredorum -London)
BATE DE WOLFLAY - (1308 -Court Rolls - Manor of Wakefield-Yorks.)
ROBERT DE WOLUELE - (1327 -Subsidy Rolls Sussex) and please take note of the following one - JOHN DE WOLLEY (1332 - Subsidy Rolls - Staff.) From this point in time, the general usage of surnames for record purposes would tend to produce closer conformity in the spellings recorded officially particularly in regard to land tenure, tax etc. Reaney concludes his record with the following information:- (a) From WOOLLEY of Berks, Devon, Wilts. or (b) WOOLLEY of Somerset. Wilege in Domesday (Saxon - means clearing by the stream). The Saxon Manor of Wilege is today the Manor of Woolley and WOOLLEY near Bath would seem to have been the home of our ancestors. I ^{have} more information on this early Hamlet (Wilege now Woolley). I give all the foregoing details in the hope it may inspire you to make a deeper search into the early records given and perhaps be kind enough to pass any information on the Wooleys back to me.

At this stage I have not contacted your Aunt Spink although it may interest you to know she lives quite close to me. Actually, although my house is No.22 it is only the 4th. house along Sandown Road from the Camp Ground Road. Your Aunt is living at the 6th house along Camp Ground Road from the intersection of Sandown Road with Camp Ground Road

PER LUGPOS
BY AIRMAIL
PAR AVION



**AËROGRAM
AEROGRAM**

**AAN
TO.**

Mr. M. MacDonald.

38 Mayfield Road,

Sanderstead,

SURREY CR2 0BT

ENGLAND.

TWEEDE VOU—SECOND FOLD

NAAM EN ADRES VAN AFSENDER

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

J.L. Woolley.

22 Sandown Road,

RONDEBOSCH, (Cape)

7700 South Africa.

INSLUITINGS WORD NIE TOEGELAAT NIE

ENCLOSURES ARE NOT PERMITTED

VERSEËL EERS DIE TWEE SYKLAPPE, DAN HIERDIE EEN—SEAL THE TWO SIDE FLAPS FIRST, THEN THIS ONE

SNY HIERDIE KLAP EERSTE OOP

TO OPEN, CUT THIS FLAP FIRST

I hope I haven't bored you with our family origins. As far as I know there is no known tie between the S. African born Woolleys and my own branch although I am sure we all hail from the same ancestry. My wife and I came to S.A. in 1937. I will try, and get to know more of the local folk as it may throw a line back across my own ancestors somewhere along the years. I can cover eight generations in my family taking us back to late 1700's but unfortunately have no knowledge of the brothers of any of the direct line beyond that of my grandfather's. Any connect between you family and my own in recent history would no doubt be linked in some way with earlier branches by way of brothers of my earlier ancestors. Perhaps you will still be interested to combine our knowledge and thus give us a wider spectrum of our (worthy ancestry) family pedigree. If indeed it was your great-
 aunt Doris (Woolley) Hughes to whom I chatted one day I must admit the talk was far to brief. I did however mention my research into the family genealogy whilst in England. In 1976. On all previous visits time was against such pursuits. I hope therefore to have the pleasure of again meeting her and discussing more deeply the subject of our names. Do you happen to know if your family were connected in any way with either - Dr. Woolley, Sir Richard Woolley (late Astronomer Royal - now back in S.A.) or the late Admiral Woolley. By the time you have waded through this letter you may decide to let matters rest at this point; should you however wish to continue corresponding I would be most happy to exchange information. Meanwhile I wish you and your family every good wish for future health and happiness. God Bless you all.

Yours sincerely
J.L. Woolley