

James Henry Howe or James Cowell Burrige or James Braund?

Janet Few and Judy Smith

Branch 2, 4, 15 and 18

Recently we had notification of a Y-DNA match between members of the Braund family and a gentleman in Australia whose sister had spent the last thirty years trying to solve the mystery of their great great grandfather, James Henry Howe. James claimed to have been born in Exeter on 3 September 1840, the son of William Howe. A newspaper article written on his 50th wedding anniversary stated that he had served in the Royal Navy for ten years, arriving in Australia on the *Galatea*. He married in South Australia in 1868. So why then does James Henry Howe appear to be a genetic Braund?

Firstly, a great deal of painstaking research, by James' descendant and a professional researcher, suggested that James Henry Howe was living under an assumed name. There was no birth registration, baptism or 1841 census record for him as James Henry Howe in the Exeter area and no naval record. Tracing backwards from the information given by James himself, the spotlight turned to *HMS Galatea*. It seems that the *Galatea* was no ordinary ship but was commanded by Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, fourth child of Queen Victoria. He was embarking on a world tour and was to be the first member of the royal family to visit Australia. Alfred had joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman in 1858 and was given command of the wooden steam frigate *Galatea* in 1866. They landed on Gibraltar and at the Cape of Good Hope en route, finally reaching Glenelg, South Australia on 31 October 1867. Later in the tour the Duke was to be shot by Irishman Henry James O'Farrell, who was acting for the Fenian cause.

When the ship arrived in Adelaide in November 1867 a dozen crew members deserted. By the time the ship reached Portland, only two deserters were still absent without leave. One of these was in jail at the time of James Howe's marriage and the other was James Burrige from Exeter. It started to seem as if James Henry

Howe and James Burrige were one and the same. The *Portland Guardian* described Burrige as an able bodied seaman aged 25, 5' 6" tall, with brown hair and hazel eyes.

In 1861 James Burrige was an able bodied seaman on board the *Liffey*. In 1841 and 1851 he was living in Red Cow Village, Exeter with his family. His father, William Burrige, son of James, a labourer, had married Mary Cowell at Holy Trinity Exeter in 1837. There is no record of any older siblings for James. Although there is no birth registration, there is a baptism for James Cowell Burrige at Exeter St David's on 20 September

1840. James Henry Howe's descendants have amassed a body of evidence suggesting that he was previously James Cowell Burrige who, understandably, changed his name following his desertion from the navy. James did keep parts of his story right, the man he believed to be his father was called William, he was in the navy for ten years and did serve on the *Galatea*.



James Howe aka James Cowell Burrige

The DNA test on James' descendant was done hoping to show a link to members of the Burrige family and provide the irrefutable proof that this theory was correct. Then came the match, not with Burridges, but with Braunds. There are of course Braunds in Exeter but which of these may be responsible for a Burrige having

Braund DNA? It didn't take long to discover a likely culprit. Next door to James Cowell Burr ridge's family in both 1841 and 1851 was Richard Braund (branch 4). Richard and his wife, Mary née Vine, were from Hartland and had married in Exeter in 1827. By 1840, when James Burr ridge was born to twenty five year old Mrs Mary Burr ridge next door, Richard and Mary Braund had six children of their own. At this time Richard was aged about thirty nine and a labourer. William Burr ridge died in 1847 and although his wife and 'children' were still next door to the Braunds in 1851, James' mother eventually remarried and took the family to Plymouth where James and two of his brothers joined the navy.

This all looks fine until the DNA matches are examined in more detail. Unfortunately there is an anomaly. The DNA profiles of Mr Howe and our branch 2 testee are similar, suggesting a common ancestor at some point; although this point might be further back than our paper trail can take their family trees and before surnames were established. The Richard Braund who lived next door to the Burr ridges was however from branch 4. We do have a Y-DNA profile for branch 4. Mr Howe and our branch 4 Braund testee are fifth cousins once removed. Although this doesn't sound like a very close relationship, in DNA terms, the profiles would be expected to be very close, if not identical. They aren't. In fact they are so different as to suggest that they do not share a common ancestor within an historical time frame.

This clearly needs further investigation and probably more DNA tests. If you are a descendant of Richard Braund and Mary Vine and would like to be tested to help unravel this mystery please do get in touch.

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Since this article appeared in the Braund Society journal, more DNA tests have been done, showing that James' closest relationship is to branches 15 and 18. The mystery remains.