

# PULVERTAFT PAPERS

A Newsletter on the Pulvertofts & Pulvertafts

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## EDITORIAL

As we enter the new millennium, it is only natural for a newsletter that reports on the Pulvertoft and Pulvertaft families to consider the prospect of the name's survival today compared with past performance.

Pulvertoft survival was certainly not one of the great success stories of the last millennium! There were over 270 individuals whose lives spanned the 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries but their numbers declined from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the surname completely disappeared long before the millennium came to an end.

The Pulvertaft records start in Ireland in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and there are about 180 individuals who have borne the name or still do so today. While it would be wrong to draw too many comparisons with the Pulvertofts, the size of the Pulvertaft family peaked in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and subsequent generations have been getting progressively smaller. A gloomy forecast perhaps but all the more reason to find those missing branches! Happy Christmas. D.M.P.

## AMOS WILLIAM PULVERTAFT

Amos William Pulvertaft (Willie) [M18Q] was the youngest son and seventh of nine children of Robert Pulvertaft [M04P] and Elizabeth Anne (née Bogan) [M03P]. Born in Cork on 5 May 1882, he was baptised on 2 June in the Wesleyan-Methodist Chapel, Patrick Street, Cork. When Robert registered his son's birth, he gave his address as 119 Georges Street – an address that remained the business premises of the Pulvertaft brass-founding and engineering works for many years after that date.

Willie was educated at the Methodist College, Belfast and returned to Cork to work in the family business where his father was the owner and his uncles – John [M07P] and James [M08P] – and his cousin – Thomas [M23Q] – also worked.

He married Clara Savage [M19Q] at the Parish Church of Leamington Priors, Warwickshire on 4 August 1904. She was the youngest of seven children of Charles Savage - a timber merchant of Leamington – and had been an art teacher at Leamington Technical College before her marriage. Willie's brother - Rev. Thomas Pulvertaft [M14Q] - officiated at the wedding; identifying himself as the *Clerical Secretary, Spanish and Portuguese Church Aid Society* so, presumably, he was invited to officiate by the Savage's parish priest.

Willie and Clara returned to Cork, set up house at 3 Fernhurst Terrace, College Road and their first son - Godfrey [M36R] – was born there on 29 June 1905. In 1906 Willie's father – Robert – converted the family business into a Limited Company: "R Pulvertaft & Sons"; the sons being Robert George (Bobbie) [M16Q] and Amos William (Willie). Quite what happened next is not clear, but Robert fell out with his son Bobbie who was banished to South America and forfeited his interest in the family business.



AMOS WILLIAM PULVERTAFT

Two more sons were born to Willie and Clara; Guy [M38R] on 31 May 1907 and Norman [M40R] on 24 June 1911 and it was about this time that they moved to "Belmont", also in Victoria Road; a larger house for their growing family.

The business was doing well; providing parts for the first Cork-built Ford motorcars, making 18-pounder shells and shell adaptors for the British Government during World War I and exhibiting brass work and engineering products in England, on the Continent and in the United States. There was some diversification as they were also agents for White steam cars and Angus coach built cars. Willie himself underwent further training and, in later life, was to describe himself as a retired Electrical Engineer.

Willie's mother had died in 1910 and his father - by then 70 years old - married again in 1911. The Company's lawyers drew up a Settlement that year and again in 1919 that allowed Robert and his new wife to draw pensions from the firm which, by the time of the second Settlement, was being run by Willie.

It is not known whether these Settlements were simply a prudent businessman making provision for his retirement or are an indication of friction between Willie and his father. The latter might be implied from the will that Robert made in 1911. He left interest in various properties to his wife, his son, Thomas, and his three married daughters. The "black sheep of the family", Robert, had died earlier that year and so was not named but, surprisingly, nor was his youngest son, Willie. Perhaps it was simply that Willie had already inherited the family business that suggested to his father that he needed nothing else; or was there something more behind the omission? Willie's father died in 1922.

Between the two World Wars Willie and Clara moved to Douglas, a little to the south of Cork, where they bought a large house - Ballybrack - and he enjoyed a lifestyle appropriate to a successful businessman. Their sons, having been educated at Cork Grammar School, all then moved to England; Godfrey to join the Royal Navy and Guy and Norman to read medicine at Cambridge University.

World War II proved difficult for Willie. He was unhappy with the stance that the Irish Government was taking with the war and was concerned how the company's products might be used. Perhaps, also, he began to realise that, with each of his sons in an established career in England, there was no member of the family who was destined to succeed him. In 1942 he made the irrevocable decision to sell the business that had been in the family for over 100 years and he moved to England.



CLARA PULVERTAFT

Willie and Clara settled in Devon where they enjoyed their retirement in various houses in the Torbay area and certainly saw more of their family than would have been the case had they retired in Cork. They returned to Ireland occasionally; renting a holiday cottage in Waterville, Co Kerry where Willie taught his grandchildren to fish and, when unsuccessful, was supplied by the local gillies with freshly caught salmon!

Willie died at Bovey Tracey, Devon on 11 September 1958 and was buried there. Clara moved to Dorset to be closer to her eldest son, Godfrey, living for most of the next nine years in the same village, West Moors. She died on 8 March 1967 at the age of 90 and was buried at West Moors.

## ANOTHER EXPLANATION FOR THE PULVERTAFT SURNAME

My thanks to Pamela Pulvertaft [M109S] of Palenville, New York for forwarding a scroll produced by *The Historical Research Center Inc.* on the "Pulvertaft Family Name History" that her daughter, Diane Sogaro, got when she was researching the family name. After an introductory paragraph on surnames in general, it says:

*"The Irish surname Pulvertaft or Pulvertoft is ultimately of English origin, having been brought to Ireland during the Anglo Norman invasion of 1172, becoming more common in Ireland than in England. The name is of toponymic origin, denoting "one who came from Pulvertaft or Pulvertoft", the name of a place in Lancashire which is today extinct. The toponym Pulvertaft is derived from Pulver, the name of a stream, also preserved in the toponym Pulverbatch, Shropshire, derived from the Old Norse "puldra" meaning "to gush". The suffix of the name "taft or toft" is derived from the Old Norse "topt" meaning "homestead" and is a common element in Norse and northern English place names, where the Scandinavian influence is felt the most.*

*The earliest records of this surname mention Robert and John Pulvertaft who were married in Cork in 1753 and 1765 respectively. All modern bearers of this surname, which is also found in America, Australia, South Africa and Denmark, as well as Ireland and England, seem to be descended from one Thomas Pulvertaft, whose marriage was registered in apx. 1840."*

**BLAZON OF ARMS:** *Argent, a mullet between eight fleur-de-lis gules.*

**CREST:** *A fleur-de-lis of the arms.*

The document gives a "translation" of the Blazon of Arms and quotes the source of the heraldic information as *Burke's General Armory* p. 829.

With the explosion of interest in genealogy over the last ten years or so, there have been many commercial organisations providing information about family names which are bound to include some sweeping generalisations (vide Vol 3, No 10 of these papers for an assessment of *The Burke's Peerage World Book of Pulvertafts*).

My own assessment of the origins of the name are based on the views of the eminent Lincolnshire historian, Michael Tunnard, (vide Vol 2 No 1). I responded to a request from the authors' of *A Dictionary of Surnames* (Oxford University Press); the resulting entry being quoted in Vol 2 No 10 of these papers. It is clear that much of the information in the text opposite comes from this source, even though the proposition that the family arrived in Ireland in 1172 seems far less likely than a move from Lincolnshire in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

Reference to page 829 of Burke's General Armory is also interesting as this was a reference book that I consulted very early in my research. Three Pulvertoft arms are described; one of which is that quoted opposite. Burke makes no mention of a crest and none of the manuscripts of the Heralds' Visitations show one for the Pulvertofts. This entry is judged to be an extrapolation of the evidence.

With these minor reservations, Diane Sogaro seemed to have made a worthwhile purchase.

## NOTES & QIERIES

International Genealogical Index. This huge reference was described in these papers in 1984 (Vol 1, p46) with an update in 1993 (Vol 3, p34). Originally on microfiche, there is now a CD edition with an addendum that includes records taken as recently as 1997.

In addition to the IGI and the Ancestral File, the CD version also has a "*US Military Index*" - covering deaths during the Korean War (1950-57) and the War in Vietnam (1957-75) - and a "*US Social Security Death Index*" with records from 1937 to 1997. The former includes no Pulvertafts but the latter contains two different John Pulvertaft references, each having an "Issuance Place" of New York:

John Pulvertaft: born 1908, died 1974, residence New York.

John Pulvertaft: born 1920, died 1966, residence not stated.

One's initial impression might have been that the two John Pulvertafts from New York must be related but closer examination shows that the first was from the modern Cork family [M79R] and, indeed, it is the death of his widow that is recorded in the Obituary below. The second John was from the American family first recorded in Vol 3, No 10 of these papers; he being identified as John Edward [U02R], even though there is a one-year discrepancy in both the date of birth and death. While the family tradition of this group is that they come originally from Cork, more facts are needed before the connection can be made.

### Obituary

It is with deep regret that the death is recorded on 29 September 2000 of Gertrude Pulvertaft (née Croyat) of Palenville, New York at the great age of 97.