

# From schoolmaster to London brewer

By using several different types of resource, **Michelle Dennis** was able to reconstruct her ancestor's movements – and his change in career

By Michelle Dennis



Michelle Dennis is a web designer and family historian living in Melbourne, Australia. She has been researching her own family history for the past 30 years.

**H**ave you ever come across an ancestor who seemed to have an unlikely occupational change? My ancestor, Thomas Rawbone (1781–1856), was a provincial schoolmaster in 1816, like his father Thomas. He worked in the Buckinghamshire market town of Winslow, but later left behind small town life to become a publican and brewer in London.

Using parish and occupational records, wills, census and local history websites, I began to build up a picture of Thomas Rawbone and his family. He was born in Winslow in 1781, the son of Thomas Rawbone (1752–1836) and Hannah Taylor. He married Mary Reeves in the village of Dorton in 1814. Studying their eight children's baptism locations narrowed down the time of their migration to London. In 1816, Thomas was teaching in Chalgrove, before moving



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to Upper Winchendon by 1818. By 1827 he was back in Winslow, but within a year had relocated to London, living in Clerkenwell. After the death of his wife Mary in 1849, he married Ann Griffin in 1854 at Brill, back in Buckinghamshire.

In 1828, he appeared in the Register of Victuallers Recognizances, Finsbury Division, running the Red Lion public house in Cowcross Street, Clerkenwell. This was confirmed by the baptism record of his daughter in 1828, which listed his residence.

Newspapers were invaluable in tracking movements. An 1822 advert in the Oxford University and City Herald regarding his stolen horse confirmed he was living at Upper Winchendon. In 1847, The Era reported that the licence for the Castle pub on the Holloway Road had been transferred from John Tapps to Thomas Rawbone, and in 1846, the Law Times noted that his partnership with Hawks – brewers on the Fulham Road – had been dissolved.

Directories, including the London Post Office, Robson's and Pigot's, also mention him. In 1833, he was the publican at the Adam and Eve, which was at 20 Bath Place, New Road, in Paddington. By 1839, he was at the Northumberland Arms at 119 Tottenham Court Road, and this was confirmed by the 1841 census. In 1846, he was listed as a Scotch Ale



Garry Walton

brewer for Rawbone & Hawks, at Holywell Brewery, Little Chelsea, but by 1850 he had reverted to being a publican at the Castle, at 1 Albion Place, Holloway Road, Islington. The 1851 census confirmed he was a widower with two unmarried daughters – Mary and Elizabeth, who were both servants – here.

## WILLS AND WEBSITES

The archivist of the Worshipful Company of Brewers advised that as Thomas's pubs were outside the square mile of the City of London, it was unnecessary for him to become a member of the Guild. Despite the

archivist searching, no membership records relating to him could be found. However, he did appear in the 1851 Finsbury Petty Sessions, being recorded as the licensee of the Castle on Holloway Road.

Local and occupational history websites, such as <http://pubhistory.com>, are invaluable in tracing publicans. They provide details of the Licensed Victuallers Association (set up to protect and aid families in times of hardship) and membership rolls from 1824–1862 are also listed. Searching for 'Rawbone' provided photos of two of Thomas's public houses, and entries in poll books, petty sessions,



Anne Reeves Rawbone – or Rathbone – Davis

directories, as well as the London 1841 Public House and Publican directory.

Wills are also very useful. By 1856, Thomas – now aged 75 – had left London, and moved back to his cottage in Brill, Buckinghamshire. He died in December, and his will was proven in April 1857; it provided me with valuable genealogical information. It mentioned the testator's occupation (gentleman), and both his son, Reverend Hardwicke Rawbone, and son-in-law Sampson Davis, a surgeon. The will stated that his residence was in Brill, and it also provided details of personal possessions – a silver snuff box, a gold watch and chain, a diamond ring and wearing apparel, declaring

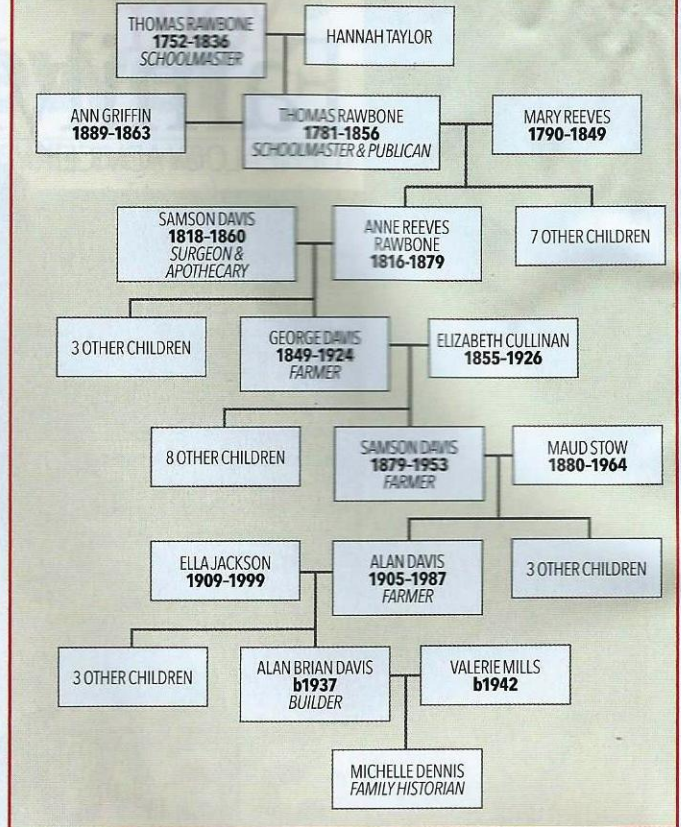
him a man of property, investments, and jewellery.

This will was created in 1856, before the Married Women's Property Act (1882). Therefore, women's possessions were treated as belonging to their husbands, so it was interesting that Thomas made special mention in his will that 'those goods that belonged to my wife at marriage to be sold, but remain in her possession and at her disposal' giving Anne the right to do with them as she liked. Perhaps this was a gesture of kindness on his behalf.

Thomas owned small fee farm rents at Bierton, near Aylesbury, which he left to his son Hardwicke, and he was in possession of £300 government consols (bonds) which he had invested, and was receiving annual interest for. At the time, these were paying three per cent interest.

He was most likely a gentleman of middle class standing, bequeathing his watch, diamond ring and clothes to his son. According to *The Gentlemen's Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness* – a complete guide for a Gentleman's conduct in all his relations towards society in 1860:

## THE RAWBONE FAMILY TREE



*'Diamonds and brilliants are quite unsuitable to men, whose jewellery should never be conspicuous. If you happen to possess a single diamond of great value you may wear it on great occasions as a ring, but no more than one ring should ever be worn by a gentleman.'*  
Thomas was observing

the social custom of the day, perhaps displaying his status by wearing a diamond ring, and then bequeathing it to his son.

There is an Amish proverb – 'a man who gives his children habits of industry provides for them better than by giving them a fortune'. Thomas's children were brought up working firstly in his hotels, before branching out into different careers of their own, so perhaps this is a proverb he lived and succeeded by.

His daughter, Anne or Annie Reeves Rawbone – sometimes known as Rathbone – married Dr Samson Davis, my 3x-great-grandfather, and emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in 1852. She died in Collingwood, Melbourne, in 1879. ■

## Local history websites

Learn about the community your ancestor lived in, by looking at these online resources

The importance of local history websites in family research cannot be underestimated, as they will often provide a rich background to your ancestor's lives. Using the excellent Winslow History website ([www.winslow-history.org.uk/](http://www.winslow-history.org.uk/)), I could see photographs of public buildings such as the railway and hotels, and streetscapes of the town. Details of recipients of poor relief from 1679 to 1897 are provided on the site, as is a comprehensive list of directories including householders from 1522, the 1723 Oath of Allegiance, electors, businesses and tenants. There is a list of families and people of the town, and even details of wills. Also included is an informative page about various schools of the area, and the schoolmasters and other staff are also detailed. This was enormously helpful in locating two of my Rawbone ancestors, as the website mentioned that Thomas was appointed after the death of his uncle, the Reverend John Rawbone. It also gave wonderful background history about the school children and their education. Other records about the area include maps, enclosure records, churches, census, fire insurance, railway, market, oral history, court rolls, tanneries, workhouse and hospitals. The site also lists books available for sale about the Winslow area.

