

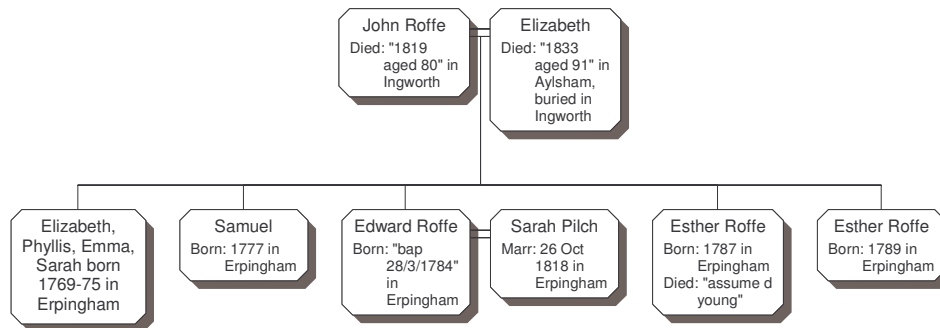
Roofe or Rolfe Family of Itteringham

This research was stimulated by an enquiry from a Warne relative of Leah Roofe (or Rolfe) who married Henry William Warne in 1879 in Thurgarton. In 1881 he was the miller in Mill House Thurgarton, where he was the employee of William Cooke miller of Aldborough watermill, and had come from a Tasburgh family with roots in the Tasburgh and Wymondham area.

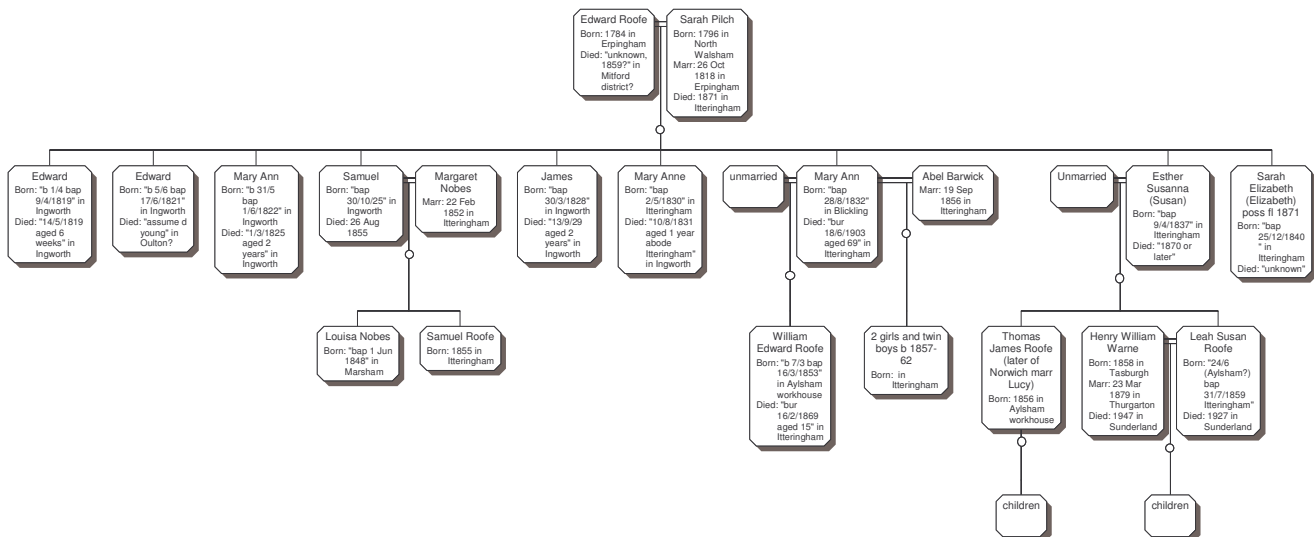
His family tree can be found on the website: The Descendants of Richard Warne. There seems to be no connection between this Warne family and the William Warnes who in the 1901 census was a shopkeeper on Itteringham Common. Leah was baptised in Itteringham, the daughter of Esther Susanna (later and more usually just Susan) an Itteringham-born girl whose mother Sarah lived in Itteringham off and on for 30 years or so – definitely an Itteringham family. The surname seems originally to have been Rolfe (Roffe or Roafe in the 1770s and 1780s), which changed into Roofe. Roofe and Rolfe and spelling variations on both can be found used more or less interchangeably in the official record of this family, which can make searching online sources tricky. The spellings shown here are generally as each source had it, but the final family tree is standardised on Roofe - by the 1850s the most used version.

Leah was the granddaughter of Edward Roofe of an Erpingham family and his wife Sarah Pilch of Erpingham, originally from a North Walsham family. Her family can be traced back to the 1740s via the North Walsham parish register.

Although Edward 'Roffe' was of an Erpingham family, where his father and mother John and Elizabeth came from is not known. His elder sisters do not appear again in our story, but his younger sister Esther lived unmarried in Aylsham in her later years until her death there in 1860. Edward was to name his son after his brother Samuel.



Edward and Sarah had a number of children over quite a span of years. Sadly several of their youngest died as infants, but 3 girls and 1 son survived infancy.



Even before he was married Edward moved around north-east Norfolk in search of work. By chance a settlement examination of 1821 by the poor law overseers of the parish of Oulton has survived in the Norfolk Record Office. Edward applied to be recognised as legally settled in Oulton and thus of that parish for poor relief purposes. This did not necessarily mean that he lived there for an extended period. He justified his attachment to Oulton by showing that he had lived there in the past and since then had no property ownership ties to any other parish. The examination gives valuable information on his early years.

On 9th January 1821 Edward Roofe labourer of the parish of Ingworth testified that he was about 36 and born of lawful parents in Erpingham, his father's place of legal settlement. He lived with his parents until aged about 11 and then went into service and lived in various places, hired by the year. When about 22 he was hired for a year by Mr Alexander Siely of Happisburgh and received his full wages, even though before the year was out he moved to work for Mr Robert Gay of Oulton. He lived in the parish, completed his year there and received his wages. Since then he had not been hired by the year (which would have given him a new parish of settlement). In November, he said, (actually October, but then men cannot remember anniversaries!) 1818 he married in Erpingham church Sarah Pilch spinster and they lived with his mother until September 1819. At the end of that month he rented a cottage in Ingworth from Mr W Cubitt at a rent of 4 guineas per year. He moved in and a month later rented 17 ½ acres of land from Cubitt at 50 shillings per acre per year. However, for reasons not explained, he gave up the lease of the land after just 5 months and his rental payments for the first 2 quarters were returned to him. But he stayed on in the cottage. Here the deposition ends and there is no annotation relating to the decision. He may well have succeeded in his application. However, from the pattern of his children's baptisms it seems that he did not return to live in Oulton.

Edward and Sarah lived for some years in Ingworth before moving to Itteringham. Here the family put down roots, albeit with a brief period in Blickling in the early 1830s. Later census information shows them living on Itteringham Common where they might have found employment on Hill Farm and perhaps the farm based at Blickling Mill. Unfortunately the houses on The Common were not numbered or described in the early census returns and it has not been possible to identify which cottage they were in.

The 1841 census for Itteringham shows Edward Roofe aged 55, an agricultural labourer born in Norfolk. His wife Sarah was given as aged 50 (at this stage the ages were usually rounded to the nearest 5 or 10 and cannot be taken as absolutely accurate), also Norfolk born. Their children were all born in Norfolk: Samuel 15, Mary 10, Susan 5, Sarah 8 months (the girls' names were then listed in these shortened forms). By 1851 it becomes clear that the family were never far from the breadline. Sarah Rolf, married aged 53, was living at Itteringham Common and working on a farm. With her was just Esther her daughter aged 14 born in Itteringham – ie, Leah's mother Susan. Here Sarah was given as born in Blickling. This is probably incorrect given her baptism in North Walsham, but a Pilch family was by then living in Blickling and they may have been close relations (she may even have been born in Blickling but baptised in her parents' home parish). In the same census Edward Rolfe aged 67, married labourer born in Erpingham, was in the Aylsham Workhouse. This was the grand new one built in 1848-49 on the Cawston Road - now St Michael's Hospital, with the frontage showing how impressive the workhouse must have been when opened. With him was daughter Elizabeth (ie Sarah Elizabeth) aged 11 born in Itteringham. The other daughter Mary Ann by 1851 was old enough to be in service somewhere away from home. Also in Aylsham in 1851, living in 68 Millgate a multi-occupant house, was Esther Roofe unmarried pauper aged 64 born in Erpingham. This was Edward's sister who was in and out of the Aylsham workhouse during the 1850s before her death and burial in the workhouse in August 1860.

Samuel (born in Itteringham not Ingworth according to his census return) had moved to Marsham and set up his own home at 88 Fengate, working as an agricultural labourer. With him was the 23 year old Margaret Nobes, his lodger and housekeeper, and her 3 year old illegitimate daughter then given also as Margaret Nobes but in fact baptised on 1st June 1848 in Marsham as Louisa. Margaret had been baptised on 29th April 1827 in Briston to parents Mathew Nobes a chimney sweep and Hannah Earl his wife living on the Fakenham road in Briston with their many children. It seems that, although a 'bastard daughter' as the register bluntly put it, the child was Samuel's. On 22nd February 1852 in Itteringham, where they were then both living, Samuel Roofe labourer married Margaret Nobes. At 91 Fengate Marsham Charles Nobes, a pauper previously a chimney sweep, lived with his family – Margaret's uncle, like her father baptised in Stibbard. Later census returns show that Samuel and Margaret had a son Samuel born in about 1855, probably in Itteringham. From his absence from later census returns, it appears that Samuel senior died in the 1850s. In fact he was buried on 26th August 1855 aged 26 from his place of abode given as Aylsham – probably from the workhouse, with Oulton being the parish responsible for his burial. (Oulton's burial register was stolen from the church a few years ago and presumably lost forever, unless it is returned to the church or record office. Only a few Bishop's Transcripts survive and by luck 1855 is one of them.) Also that year on 15th April Sarah Elizabeth Roofe from Aylsham was buried in Oulton – most likely Samuel and Margaret's firstborn after their marriage in 1852. In 1861 Samuel's wife/widow Margaret (Nobes crossed out) Roof, aged 32 born in Stibbard, was housekeeper for Christmas Neal a farmer with modest acreage living in High Street Marsham, where also were her daughter Louisa Nobes aged 14 born

in Marsham and Samuel Roof her son aged 8 born in Itteringham. Margaret was established as a live-in housekeeper with her children living with her. In 1866 Louisa Nobes married Robert Moore in St George Colegate Norwich and gave her father's name as Samuel Roof. In the 1881 census Samuel (junior), born Itteringham aged 26, was unmarried and a general dealer living on Marsham Heath in Marsham, where he was head of his household. In the same year his mother Margaret Roofe widow, aged 50 born in Briston, was head of a household on the turnpike road Marsham, where she still was 10 years later (aged 62). But by 1891 there was no sign of Samuel junior in Marsham (and no further sign of him in the parish register) and it is not know if he married and had a family or had died during the 1880s.

There is little documentary evidence of the Roofe family's time in Itteringham, despite living there for many years. Edward was simply one of many agricultural labourers living in cramped cottages in the main village or out at The Common, always in fear of lack of work and thus a spell in the workhouse.

On 19th September 1856, again in Itteringham, Mary Ann Roofe married Abel Barwick of a long-standing Itteringham family and they went on to have several children. They seem to have lived in Itteringham until Mary Ann's burial in 1903. The 1861 census shows that Sarah Roofe was still on The Common, aged 60 and a char woman now widowed. We have not yet found where or when Edward died. There is no sign of his burial in Itteringham or the workhouse, so perhaps he was buried in Oulton (probably until his death the parish liable for him). However, his burial has not been spotted in the patchy Oulton BTs. A FreeBMD entry for an Edward Roofe dying further away in 1859 may contain the answer. In 1861 Sarah had none of her family with her. She was given as the head of the household in a cottage on The Common in which she lived with a lodger Robert Sparrow (an Itteringham-born 36 year old labourer – baptised in the village in 1827). Strangely her place of birth was listed as Colchester Essex. This is entirely at odds with the Norfolk declarations in the previous census returns and our identification of her as a North Walsham girl. Probably it was simply an error by the enumerator – we have found no connection to the Roofes of Colchester. Also surprising is that in December 1862 Sarah and Robert Sparrow had banns read in Itteringham church (the normal 3 times), announcing their intention to marry. For whatever reason they did not go through with it and Sarah remained an unmarried widow to her death.

A sale particular for 1864 (held in the NRO) shows the sale of 4 double cottages on Itteringham Common by the executors of John Randell who had built some of them in the 1830s and subsequently. Sarah Roofe was given as the tenant of one of the two on the west side of the road from Itteringham to Blickling woods – the right hand side of which is now number 90. This seems likely to have been the one occupied by Sarah with Elizabeth Daniels next door. This may not have been Sarah's long term home on The Common, but she was at least to some extent a protected tenant by virtue of a covenant on this cottage creating a special arrangement for the daughter of the owner before Randell to retain a life interest in the cottage. All the properties were bought by the Blickling estate and are now National Trust owned on a variety of lease arrangements.



No. 90 Itteringham Common

Edward and Sarah's daughters have all been spotted in the 1861 census – Mary Ann Barwick and Elizabeth in Itteringham and Susan in Aylsham. Elizabeth shows as 'Eliza Relf', unmarried servant born Itteringham aged 20, in the household of James Brown in tanyard or Bintry farm. 'Susan Rolfe', an unmarried servant aged 24 born in Itteringham, was in the Aylsham workhouse with her son Thomas Rolfe aged 4 (a scholar) and daughter Leah Rolfe aged 2 (both born in Aylsham according to this source). These were her illegitimate children - if she was widowed it would have said so.

Thomas James Rolfe was born on the 13th and baptised 23rd April 1856 in the workhouse. A baptism certificate has survived in the NRO for Leah Susan Roofe. Leah was born (place unstated, but her civil registration in Aylsham would give it) on 24th June 1859 and baptised in Itteringham by William Kirby the minister of the Aylsham Primitive Methodists on 31st July 1859 (the certificate being signed the following day). Her mother was described as Susan Roofe a servant living in Itteringham. Leah later gave her birthplace as Itteringham – presumably at Sarah's cottage. The entry in the register clearly states that Leah was illegitimate and no father's name was given.

Although not a complete run of years, the Aylsham Union workhouse records in the Norfolk Record Office tell us more about the family. For example, in May 1847 Edward Roffe, born 1785 married labourer, was admitted as a result of 'infirmary of age'. With him were his daughters Susan, born 1837 able bodied but in want of employment, and Elizabeth born 1840 and also able bodied. All were then of the established church and came to the workhouse by order of Itteringham parish. They were discharged in June – typical of the frequent short stays in the workhouse that were to be repeated over the years.

The workhouse records show that Susan's sister Mary Ann also had an illegitimate child – a son William Edward born and baptised there during her admission in March 1853 by Oulton parish. She too was described as a servant. She and the child were discharged 2 months later. This was the William Roofe aged 15 who was buried in Itteringham on 16th February 1869.

In March 1864 Susan Rolfe and her children Thomas and Leah, all then from Oulton (or at least this was the responsible parish), had a short visit to the workhouse. The following January Susan's young nephew Samuel Roofe was admitted, but in February he ran away.

In 1866 Susan's children were in the workhouse on more than one occasion on their own. It seems likely that Susan found work as a servant, perhaps in Oulton, but could not have her children with her. In January that year 'the grandmother' Sarah took Thomas and Leah out of the workhouse. In June they were released at their mother's request, showing that she was then alive and perhaps living in Oulton. Another entry, without a parish reference, in May 1870 again shows Susan still alive. Did Susan die in Oulton about May-June 1870? (There are no BTs for Oulton that year.) In June 1870 Leah was again admitted and her clothing was tagged with the number 200, perhaps she was now an orphan in for a potential long stint. On 20th January 1871 her grandmother Sarah Roofe, aged 77, was buried in Itteringham – Leah no longer had a place to go in the village. The 1871 census for Aylsham shows Leah Rolfe aged 12 scholar (born in Aylsham again in this source) in the Aylsham workhouse. No other people with her surname or similar were in there at that census date and we have not found Susan elsewhere. In June 1871 Leah was discharged with the reason given as 'her Aunts gone to a service'. This seems unlikely to be her now married aunt Mary Ann Barwick and more likely to be scarce evidence that her aunt (Sarah) Elizabeth was still alive and in service. We have found nothing more about Elizabeth. Did she provide the reason why Leah ended up being of Thurgarton when she married there in 1879? Alternatively it might have been her aunt Margaret Roofe in Marsham getting another housekeeper's job that again permitted her to have children with her – in 1871 she was at The Street Marsham working as a char woman with her son Samuel, by then a general dealer, living with her.

Leah, a 20 year old servant, was married in Thurgarton on 23rd March 1879 to Henry William Warne miller, a 21 year old bachelor and son of George Warne of Tasburgh. Leah gave her father's name as Levi and it was written down as Levi Roofe. It seems likely that she was obscuring her illegitimacy; perhaps though her father was one of the several Levis living in the Aylsham district in the middle of the 19th century. At least four of them with local surnames have been identified from FreeBMD: Tubby, Page, Bird and Curson. Witnesses signing the marriage register were Thomas James Roofe and Mary Anne Warne – the bride's brother and groom's sister. In the 1881 census Thomas James Roofe (aged 24 born in Aylsham), his 23 year old Norwich-born wife Lucy and their 1 year old son also Thomas James lived in Bath House Yard St Martin at Oak in Norwich; where Thomas was an engine driver in a factory and Lucy was a horse hair weaver. It looks from FreeBMD as though Henry and Leah had a son Alfred William (Alfred was the first name of one of Henry's brothers, William was another) who was born and died in the December quarter of 1881 in Aylsham district. But there is no sign of further births in Norfolk. By 1888 Leah and Henry had moved to Sunderland where they were to have several children and where descendants of one of Henry's brothers still live.



Leah Warne photographed in Sunderland

We again have a Rolfe family living on The Common at Itteringham. Are they related, or is this just a coincidence of a relatively common Norfolk name? Can anyone add more to this story?

Sources: Census returns, parish and methodists' registers and Bishop's Transcripts in Norfolk Record Office; Aylsham Union and Oulton poor law records in NRO; IGI Familysearch, FreeBMD, FreeCEN, Norfolk Baptisms Project online. Unfortunately no wills were left.

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