



ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH

THE MOST
DISTINGUISHED
SURNAME
CHOWDHURY

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The surname is one of the many new names that came to England following the Norman Conquest of 1066. The Chowdhury family lived in Berkshire. The name, however, refers to the area of Cordray, in Eure, Normandy, where the family lived prior to the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. "Benedict de Coudray was witness to a charter of Roger de Menilwarin to Deulacresse Abbey (Mon. ii.) and Fulco de Coudray held one fee from Abingdon Abbey." ^[1]

ANCIENT HISTORY

The ancient chronicles of England and early records of the name Chowdhury, show it to be an old Norman surname. The history of the name is closely interwoven within the majestic tapestry as an intrinsic part of the history of Britain.

In-depth research by skilled analysts into ancient manuscripts such as the Domesday Book (compiled in 1086 by William the Conqueror), the Ragman Rolls, the Wace poem, the Honour Roll of the Battel Abbey, the Curia Regis, Pipe Rolls, the Falaise Roll, tax records, baptismals, family genealogies, local parish and church records, shows that the Chowdhury name was first found in the Hundredorum Rolls of 1273 where John de Coudray (no county) was listed. A few years later, the Writs of Parliament listed William de Coudraye, 1307. ^[2]

SPELLING VARIATIONS

Many alternate spellings were found in the archives researched, typically linked to a common root, usually one of the Norman nobles at the Battle of Hastings. Although your name, Chowdhury, appeared in many references, from time to time the surname included Cowdrey, Cowdray, Cowderey, Cowderoy, Corderoy, Cordroy, Cowdroy, Cowdry, Cowdery and Coudray, and these changes in spelling frequently occurred, even between father and son. Scribes recorded and spelled the name as it sounded. Typically a person would be born with one spelling, married with another, and buried with a headstone which showed another. All three spellings related to the same person. Sometimes preferences for different spelling variations either resulted from a branch preference, religious affiliation, or sometimes nationalistic statements.





The ancestors of the family name Chowdhury are believed to be descended originally from the Norman race, frequently but mistakenly assumed to be of French origin. They were more accurately of Viking origin. The Vikings landed in the Orkneys and Northern Scotland about the year 870 A.D., under their King, Stirgud the Stout. Thorfinn Rollo, his descendant, led his people into northern France early in the 10th century. In 911, King Charles III was forced to cede territory to Rollo, who became the first Duke of Normandy, the territory of the north men. Rollo married Charles' daughter and became a convert to Christianity. Duke William who invaded and defeated England in 1066, was descended from the first Duke Rollo of Normandy.

Duke William took a census of most of England in 1086, and recorded it in the Domesday Book. A family name capable of being traced back to this manuscript, or to Hastings, was a signal honour for most families during the Middle Ages, and even to this day.

The surname Chowdhury emerged as a notable family name in Berkshire where they were recorded as a family of great antiquity seated at Cowdrey with manor and estates in that shire. They were descended from Cordray in Normandy and Monsire Cowdrey was amongst the first of the settlers in England, he was an Abbott. From him was descended Sire Peres de Couderai, Sir Thomas Cowdray, and Sir John Coudray. They later branched to Herriard in the county of Berkshire.

Early London records revealed Francis, son of Andrewe Cowdrye buried at St. Thomas the Apostle in 1618 and at the same church, Andrewe Cowdrie was buried the following year in 1619. ^[2]

EARLY NOTABLES

Prominent amongst the family at this time was Abbott Monsire Cowdrey; and Daniel Cawdry (Cawdrey) (1588-1664), an English clergyman, member of the Westminster Assembly. He was the youngest son of Robert Cawdry. ^[3]

Zachary Cawdry (1616-1684), author of the 'Discourse of Patronage,' was born in 1616 at Melton Mowbray, of which town his father, also called Zachary, was vicar. ^[3]

Jeremy Corderory (fl. 1600), was an English divine, "the son of a Wiltshire gentleman. He

was sent about 1577 to St. Alban Hall, Oxford, and after taking his degree in arts in due course continued to reside there for the purpose of studying theology. He took holy orders, and in 1590 was appointed a chaplain of Merton College, a post which he occupied for at least thirteen years and possibly longer."^[3]

Julien Coudrey (or Couldray) (d. 1530), was a French watchmaker, Paris, royal watchmaker of Louis XI of France and Francis I of France.





THE GREAT MIGRATION

The democratic attitudes of the New World spread like wildfire. Many migrated aboard the fleet of sailing ships known as the "White Sails." The stormy Atlantic, small pox, dysentery, cholera and typhoid took its toll on the settlers and many of these tiny, overcrowded ships arrived with only 60 or 70 percent of their passenger list. The migration or banishment to the New World continued, some voluntarily from Ireland, but mostly directly from England or Scotland, their home territories. Some clans and families even moved to the European continent.

SETTLERS

There are 94 settlers with similar origins in the Appendix.





CURRENT NOTABLES

From the port of arrival many settlers joined the wagon trains westward. During the American War of Independence some declared their loyalty to the Crown and moved northward into Canada and became known as the United Empire Loyalists. Distinguished bearers of the family name Chowdhury in more recent times include: Christopher Stuart "Chris" Cowdrey (b.1957), former English cricketer; Matthew John Cowdrey (b.1988), Australian swimmer; Baron Cowdray; Michael Cowdrey, Company Director; and Rt. Rev. Roy Cowdry.

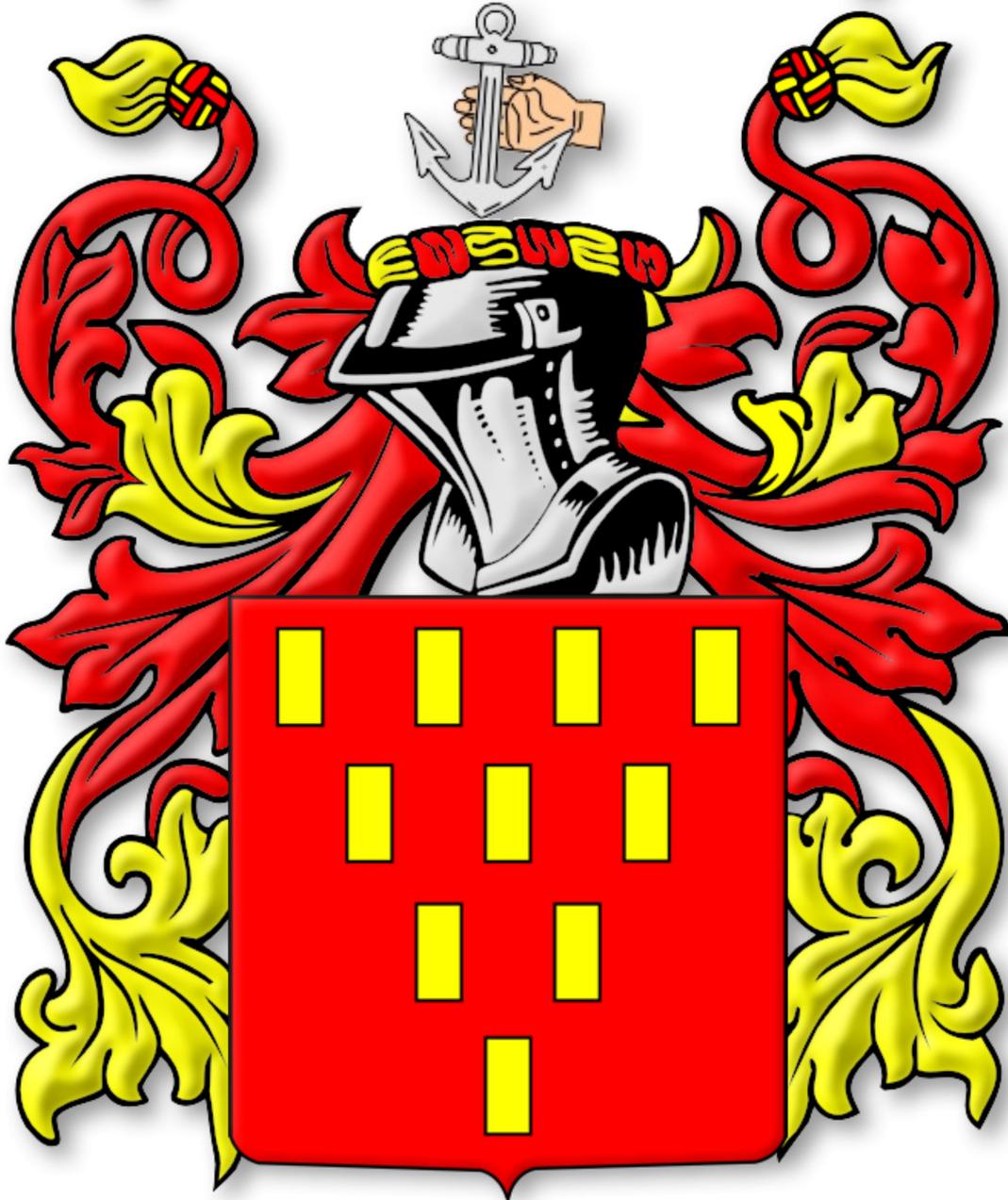




There are 3 historic event entries in the Appendix.



The Ancient Arms of



Chowdhury



The practice of representing people with symbols is ancient, and in England this habit evolved with feudal society into a system of distinctive devices on shields. The heralds developed an extensive armory that had the important function of distinguishing members of the upper class from each other, whether at court or on the battlefield. Since then, heraldry has grown into a complex field with many rules and a terminology that requires some knowledge to interpret.



An Achievement of Arms such as the Chowdhury arms depicted on the left typically consists of these parts: the Escrolls, displaying the family motto and name, the family crest (if any) seen above the helmet, the actual Coat of arms (also known as 'arms,' or 'the shield'), the Helmet depicted below the crest, the Torse on top of the helmet, and the Mantle draped from the helmet. Each of these elements will be described below. Supporters were a later addition to the Achievement; they are somewhat rare, and are usually personal to the grantee.



MANTLE OF CHOWDHURY

The mantle was spread over and draped from the helmet and served as a protection, 'to repel the extremities of wet, cold, and heat, and to preserve the armour from rust.' The numerous cuts and slits suggest that it had been torn and hacked on the field of battle. The style or design of the mantling is up to the individual heraldic artist, and it is usually depicted in the main color and metal from the shield. The helmet (or Helm) varied in shape in different ages and countries, often depicting rank. The Esquire's Helm, as depicted here, is generally shown silver, with a closed visor and facing to the dexter (its right). On top of the helmet is a Torse or wreath which was formed by two pieces of silk twisted together. Its purpose was to hold the crest and mantle on the Helm.

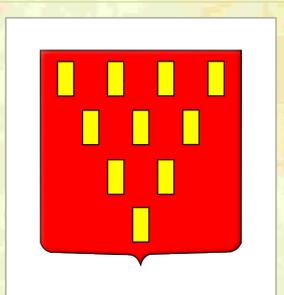
MOTTO

The motto was originally a war cry or slogan. Mottoes first began to be shown with arms in the 14th and 15th centuries, but were not in general use until the 17th century. Thus the oldest coats of arms generally do not include a motto. Mottoes seldom form part of the grant of arms: Under most heraldic authorities, a motto is an optional component of the coat of arms, and can be added to or changed at will; many families have chosen not to display a motto.

The coat of arms displayed here for the surname Chowdhury did not include a motto.

SHIELD

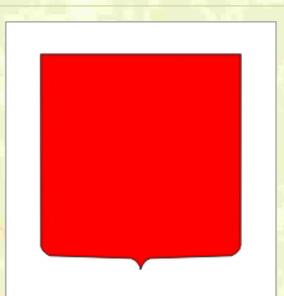
Shields (or Escutcheons) at first were painted simply with one or more bands of color or 'ordinaries'. Later, the ordinaries were used in conjunction with other figures or symbols. The Coat of Arms for the surname Chowdhury can be described as follows:



THE CHOWDHURY SHIELD

CHOWDHURY ARMS

A red shield with ten gold billets.



RED SHIELD

RED SHIELD

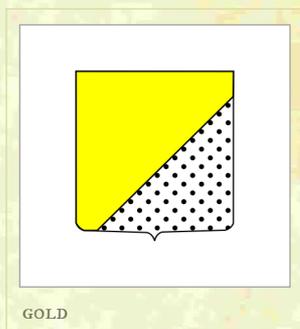
Gules, derived from an Old French word *goules* or *gueules* meaning "throats" translates into modern English as "red" and is the military color for excellence and fortitude. It is symbolic of nobility, boldness and ferocity, and can also represent fire and summer. Some ancient laws restricted its use to princes and their families. Red corresponds to the metal copper and is denoted in engravings by numerous perpendicular lines.

Symbolic Virtues: Red denotes the virtues of charity and courage, and indicates the qualities of valor, patriotism, and creative power. Those who bear a red insignia are obliged to right wrongs and win fame in arms.

Precious Stone: Carnelian, Ruby

Planet: Mars

Obligations: To right wrongs and win fame in arms



GOLD

GOLD

"Or" (from the French word for gold) is the tincture of Gold, or in heraldic terms "or," was considered the noblest color.

One of only two metals used in heraldry, it exceeds all others in value, purity and finesse. It represents the light of the sun, and was once borne only by princes. Gold is said to gladden the heart and destroy all works of magic. It is also associated with excellence and achievement, and the bearer surpasses all others in valor.

It is represented on coats of arms by the color yellow, and in engravings by a dotted pattern.

THE CREST

The Crest was worn on top of the helmet, and was usually made of wood, metal, or boiled leather. It provided the double advantage of easy identification and the addition of height to the wearer. If a family had no crest, and many chose not to, plumes (feathers) were often displayed instead.





APPENDIX - NOTABLE LIST

NOTABLES FOR THE SURNAME CHOWDHURY

- Abu Osman Chowdhury (1936-2020) Bangladeshi war hero and freedom fighter
- Jharna Dhara Chowdhury (1938-2019) Bangladeshi social activist
- Belal Chowdhury (1938-2018) Bangladeshi poet who was awarded the Bangla Academy Literary Award in 1984
- A. B. M. Mohiuddin Chowdhury (1944-2017) Bangladesh Awami League politician, Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (1996-2000)
- Amitabha Chowdhury (1927-2015) Indian Ramon Magsaysay Award winning investigative journalist

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- Richard S. Cordrey (1933-2022) American farmer, businessman, and politician from Millsboro, Delaware
- Michael Colin Cowdrey CBE (1932-2000) Baron Cowdrey of Tonbridge, Indian-born, English cricket player, Captain of Oxford University, Kent County Cricket Club and the England cricket team
- Mae Virginia Cowdery (1909-1953) American poet and participant in the Harlem Renaissance
- Graham Robert Cowdrey (1964-2020) English cricketer, the third son of the cricketer Colin Cowdrey
- Kenneth "Kenny" Cordray (1954-2017) American instrumental guitarist and songwriter; he was killed by his son in an apparent murder/suicide
- William Corder (1803-1828) nicknamed "Foxey", an English ladies' man who killed his girlfriend in 1827 in what would become known as The Red Barn Murder; he was tracked to London, tried and was hanged in Bury St Edmunds in 1828
- James Watson Corder (1867-1953) English historian who recorded family histories in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear; his 25 volumes of manuscript books took 40 years to compile lists of the births, deaths and marriages of Sunderland families
- Tim Corder (b.1949) American Republican member of the Idaho Senate
- Casey Cordray (b.1985) American soccer player
- Richard Cordray (b.1959) American lawyer and Democratic Party politician, 1st Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (2012-)
- Warren A. Cowdery (1788-1851) American editor of the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate
- Nicholas Richard Cowdery AM QC (b.1946) Director of Public Prosecutions for the Australian state of New South Wales
- John J. Cowdery (1930-2013) American politician, Republican member of the Alaska Senate (2001-2009)

- Oliver H. P. Cowdery (1806-1850) American Latter Day Saint apostle, the Second Elder of the church
- Fabian Cowdrey, English cricketer, the third generation in his family to play cricket for Kent County Cricket Club
- Mark Cawthra (b.1961) English musician and music producer, born in Bishop Stortford, Hertfordshire
- Joseph Hermon Cawthra (1886-1957) English sculptor from Baildon, Yorkshire
- Joseph Cawthra (1759-1842) English-born, Canadian merchant and politician in York, Upper Canada, eponym of Cawthra Road, Mississauga
- Hugh Sherwood Cordery (1880-1973) English-born, New Zealand customs official
- Richard Cordery, British actor





HMS DORSETSHIRE

During World War II, HMS Dorsetshire was assigned to Force A of the Eastern Fleet. She was dispatched to escort a convoy of ships for repairs when she was spotted by a Japanese air craft from the Japanese Cruiser Tone. Once spotted, dive bombers attacked the HMS Dorsetshire from three different Aircraft Carriers finally sinking her on the 5th April 1942 along with her sister ship.



HMS DORSETSHIRE

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- Sam Cawthra, British aboard the HMS Dorsetshire when she was struck by air bombers and sunk; he survived the sinking^[4]

HMS PRINCE OF WALES

HMS Prince of Wales had an extensive battle history including the battle of the Denmark Strait. She was docked in Singapore when she became the flagship for Force Z, ordered to commence hostilities after Japanese aircraft raided Singapore she set sail with HMS Repulse and other destroyers. On the 10th of December 1941 she was sunk by Japanese Air Attack, 327 people lost their lives.



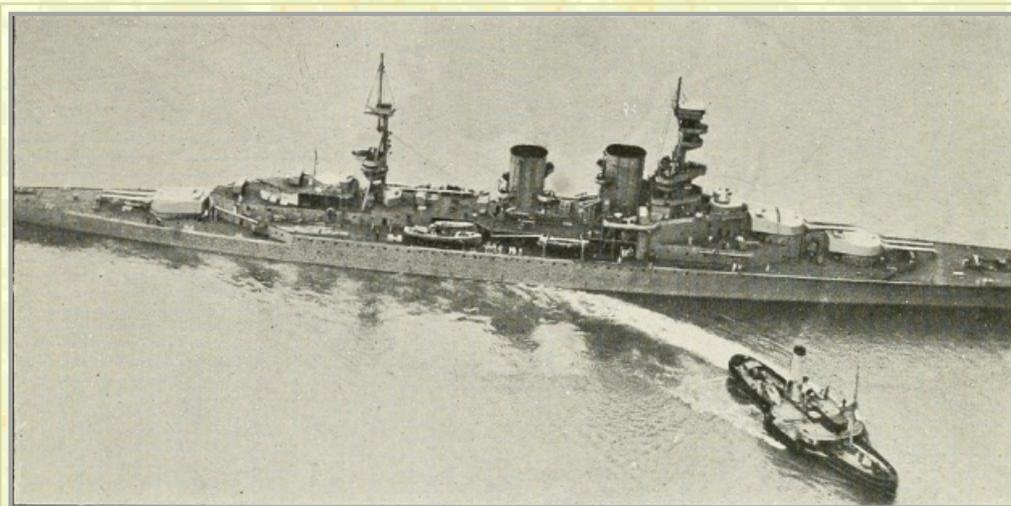
HMS PRINCE OF WALES

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- Mr. Arthur James Cawthra, British Lieutenant (E), who sailed into battle on the HMS Prince of Wales and survived the sinking^[5]

HMS REPULSE

HMS Repulse was one of the world's fastest battleships. She participated in many campaigns during her time, but eventually sunk on the 10th of December 1941 by a Japanese Aircraft. After witnessing the explosion of the HMS Hood she took torpedo fire and quickly capsized, 508 men lost their lives.



HMS REPULSE

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- Mr. Ronald Cawdrey, British Stoker 1st Class, who sailed into battle on the HMS Repulse and died in the sinking^[6]



APPENDIX - SETTLERS LIST

AMERICAN SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- John Corderoy, who landed in Virginia in 1622^[7]
- Thomas Corder, who landed in Virginia in 1623^[7]
- William Cowdrey who settled in Lynn Massachusetts in 1630
- William Cowdry, who landed in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1637^[7]
- Elinor Corderoy, who landed in Virginia in 1651^[7]
- Edward Cordery, who landed in Virginia in 1651^[7]
- William Cordery, who landed in Virginia in 1651^[7]
- Ellinor Corderay, who arrived in Virginia in 1652^[7]
- Edward Cordroy, who arrived in Virginia in 1652^[7]
- William Cordroy, who landed in Virginia in 1652^[7]
- William Cowdrey, who settled in Virginia in 1656
- William Cowdery, who landed in Virginia in 1656^[7]
- Edward Cowdrey, who landed in Maryland in 1662^[7]
- William Corderoy, who arrived in Virginia in 1663^[7]
- Edward Cowdrey, who arrived in Maryland or Virginia in 1665^[7]
- Elizabeth Cordery, who arrived in Maryland in 1668^[7]
- William Cowdrey, who arrived in Maryland in 1670^[7]
- William Corder, who arrived in Maryland in 1673^[7]
- Eliz Coudry, who landed in Maryland in 1676^[7]
- Elizabeth Coudry, who arrived in Maryland in 1676^[7]

CANADIAN SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- H. Victor Cawthra, aged 40, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1907
- Ada Cawthra, aged 40, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1909
- Grace Cawthra, aged 30, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1909
- Isabella Cawthra, aged 6, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1909
- Anna C. Cawthra, aged 76, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1913
- Florence Cawthra, aged 26, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1913
- Grace L. Cawthra, aged 32, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1913
- Alice M. Cawthra, aged 46, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1916

- Alice Maude Cawthra, aged 49, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1919
- Alice Cawthra, aged 52, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1920
- William Cawthra, aged 53, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1920
- Charles Martin Cawthra, aged 50, who immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1921

AUSTRALIAN SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

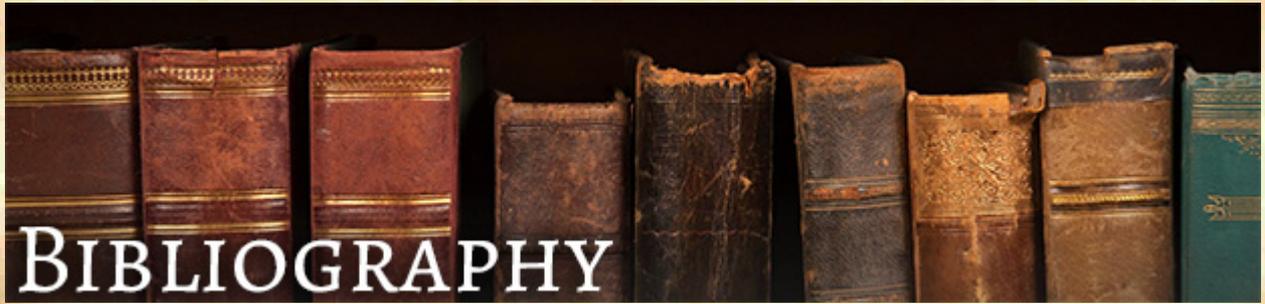
- Robert Corderoy, English convict from London, who was transported aboard the "Agamemnon" on April 22, 1820, settling in New South Wales, Australia ^[8]
- Mr. James Cordrey, English convict who was convicted in Essex, England for life, transported aboard the "Charles Kerr" on 6th June 1837, arriving in New South Wales, Australia ^[9]
- Thomas Corder, who arrived in Adelaide, Australia aboard the ship "Delhi" in 1839 ^[10]
- Thomas Corder, who arrived in Adelaide, Australia aboard the ship "William Barras" in 1839 ^[11]
- Mr. Henry Corderoy, (b. 1786), aged 54, English baker who was convicted in Berkshire, England for life, transported aboard the "Duncan" on 10th December 1840, arriving in Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land), he died in 1851 ^[12]

NEW ZEALAND SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF CHOWDHURY

- Susan Cowdry, aged 27, a servant, who arrived in Wellington, New Zealand aboard the ship "Bolton" in 1840
- Mr. Benjamin Corderoy, (b. 1830), aged 28, British blacksmith travelling from Gravesend aboard the ship "Indiana" arriving in Lyttelton, Christchurch, South Island, New Zealand on 28th November 1858 ^[13]
- Mrs. Elizabeth Corderoy, (b. 1834), aged 24, British settler travelling from Gravesend aboard the ship "Indiana" arriving in Lyttelton, Christchurch, South Island, New Zealand on 28th November 1858 ^[13]
- George Cordrey, aged 23, who arrived in Lyttelton, New Zealand aboard the ship "Ballochmyle" in 1874





Here is a listing of some of the sources consulted when researching British surnames. The resources below directly or indirectly influenced the authors of our surname histories. We have most of these titles in our library, others we have borrowed or had access to. Source materials have been chosen for their reliability and authenticity. Our research into surnames is ongoing, and we are continually adding to our source library. For each surname history, we seek and refer to sources specific to the surname; these are generally not included in the list below.

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TRUSTED WEB-SITES

British History Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

United Kingdom National Archives:
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College of Arms (England): <http://college-of-arms.gov.uk/>

Library and Archives Canada:
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>

The National Archives (USA): <http://www.archives.gov/>

MEDIEVAL ROLLS

Where available we consult Medieval rolls or use their information as reprinted in secondary sources.

Assize Rolls: records from court sessions

Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem: Feudal inquiries, undertaken after the death of a feudal tenant in chief to establish what lands were held and who should succeed to them. Records exist from around 1240-1660.

Curia Regis Rolls (Rotuli Curiae Regis): Rolls and Records of the Court held before the king's Justices. Various translated and published, London 1835),

Register of the Freemen of York: list of freemen from 13th-18th century, published by the Surtees Society, Francis Collins (editor) in 1897.

Historia Regum Britanniae ("The History of the Kings of Britain"): a legendary account of British history, accredited to Geoffrey of Monmouth in around 1136.

Hundred Rolls (Rotuli Hundredorum): various royal inquests, documents were held in the tower of London. Much was published in 1818 Ragman Rolls: rolls of deeds on parchment in which the Scottish nobility and gentry subscribed allegiance to Edward I. of England, A. D. 1296.

Subsidy Rolls: taxation records from the 12th to the 17th centuries.

Pipe Rolls: rolls of the Exchequer of accounts of the royal income, arranged by county, for each financial year. Many 12th and 13th century documents have been published with indexes by the Pipe Roll Society.

Roll of Battle Abbey: a list of the principal Norman Knights said to have accompanied William across the English Channel. Original roll was lost.

Feet of Fines: Legal agreements, usually about property ownership

Charters: documents recording grants, usually of land recorded by the Chancery

Heralds' visitations: 16th-17th century, county by county visits to regulate the use of arms; many published by the Harleian Society.

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