

An Early  
Cooper Family  
of Chesterfield



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## **Background**

I have been engaged in family history research since 2008 - as a hobby for my retirement. I started on an arm of the family that had emigrated to Australia in 1881 - my great grandfather, John Davies, his wife, Harriet Shorthose, and their children.

Initially I concentrated on John's side. He has both a common forename and surname so the research was difficult. I was, however, aided greatly as members of this family quite commonly were living under the same roof at times of the Census. This enabled me to build up a "total" picture of a wider family and hence have confidence that I was assembling a valid family tree.

I then turned to the family of Harriet Shorthose. It was relatively easy to identify her mother as Elizabeth Cooper and that Elizabeth had been born in Chesterfield. A preliminary search revealed that the "Cooper" name was very prevalent in Chesterfield at this time and that several Elizabeth Coopers had been born at the turn of the nineteenth century.

I therefore attempted to make progress in the same way as I had with the Davies side of the family - i.e. try to find, through Census records, others who may be related to Elizabeth Cooper. This search revealed nothing. Elizabeth had married John Shorthose in Barton Under Needwood and lived her life there with him. At no time in the Census records did she appear on a family visit, nor did any close relatives appear in the Census entries for her residence.

I had drawn a blank and needed some other way to approach this impasse. This document traces that process and its results.

## **Front page image**

The photograph on the front dates from 1909/10. On the left is Harriet Davies, nee Shorthose, daughter of Elizabeth Cooper. With her are her son, Sydney, his wife, Beatrice (nee Colwill) and their daughter, Edna, who is my mother. We see three descendent generations of Elizabeth Cooper in this one photograph.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to the Derbyshire Record Office for the key initial findings leading to Elizabeth's family tree and to a researcher in the USA, who prefers to remain anonymous, but who teased out valuable fine detail of the family movements.

# Elizabeth Cooper (1801 - 1878)

## Introduction

I made my first attempt to find details of Elizabeth Cooper some years ago. Census detail tells us that she was born in Chesterfield, and the ages she quoted in the Census, plus the age at death on her Death Certificate, were always consistent with a birth year of 1801, or perhaps 1802.

Unfortunately, there were several Elizabeth Coopers born in Chesterfield at the turn of the nineteenth century. Thus I put the search aside in the first instance. I returned to the problem in July 2013.

A trawl of all the Elizabeth Coopers born around this time yielded only two who were born in 1801 and who could potentially be my great great grandmother. There were no Elizabeth Coopers born in the area in 1802.

In all the information that I had gleaned regarding "my" Elizabeth Cooper there was nothing to connect her with her parents and siblings. I therefore decided that one way to get this information was to find the family of the "other" Elizabeth Cooper born in 1801, and therefore eliminate this family from my search.

In what follows I will attempt to err on the side of producing "too much" detail so that the trail to any findings will be as clear as possible. Some of the details may seem simple enough, but a great deal of time has been expended in the process. This includes assistance by others who have provided some information and critically reviewed the process and conclusions.

## Elizabeth Cooper - Primary information

The primary information regarding Elizabeth comes from her Marriage details, Census entries, and her Death Certificate. Here are the salient points:

**Marriage:** 16/04/1833, in Barton Under Needwood. The source of this is from Parish Records held at Lichfield. The marriage details do not yield any family information.

**Death:** Herewith her Death Certificate -

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
489	Twelfth March 1878 41 Union Street Barton	Elizabeth Shorthose	Female	76 years	Widow of John Shorthose rail Manufacturer	Old age Pneumonia 6 days Certified by Charles Perko M.R.C.S.	Charles Shorthose Saw Present at the death 41 Union Street Barton	Fourteenth March 1878	Geo. Richardson Registrar

This gives her age at death to be 76 years. This implies a year of birth as 1801 or 1802.

**Census:** She has been found in 1841, 1851, 1861, and 1871. She gives an age of 30 in the 1841 Census. We can discount this as people were told to give their ages in

multiples of 5, rounded down. (But even given this rule she should have been 35). In 1851 she is aged 49, 1861 aged 59 and in 1871 aged 68. The age in the 1871 census is inconsistent by one year from all the other indications. In all the census entries her place of birth is given as Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

## **The three families**

A trawl of the IGI yielded not just two families that Elizabeth Cooper could belong to, but three.

The parents of one of the Elizabeth Coopers were Paul and Sarah Cooper, and the parents of the other Elizabeth Cooper were George and Mary Cooper. But unfortunately, at the turn of the nineteenth century there were two George and Mary Coopers having family in Chesterfield.

I found 9 children born to Paul and Sarah in the IGI, and a total of 16 children born to the two George and Marys. In each list there was an Elizabeth Cooper born in 1801.

In what I produce below those 16 children have been separated into two families. This was done by the Derbyshire Record Office, using Parish Register data, subsequent to which I have found corroborative evidence - embodied in this document - that the lists of the Derbyshire Record Office are almost certainly correct.

## **Paul and Sarah Cooper and family**

Careful research indicates that I am not descended from Paul and Sarah Cooper. But I will here present what was found out about this family.

Paul Cooper was born (baptised) in Chesterfield on 31/07/1774. His father was John Cooper. Mother not given in the IGI. He married Sarah Cooke on 06/05/1800 at Ollerton, Notts. He died on 27/11/1853 in Chesterfield. By occupation he was a Dyer. In Census entries he states his birth place to be Hasland. A possible baptism for Sarah Cooke is 01/02/1780 in Scrooby, Notts. She was buried 06/05/1824 in Chesterfield.

Their children are as follows -

1797 - Charles (to a mother who probably died before Paul married Sarah; Paul Cooper married an Elizabeth Chapman 26/10/1795)

02/09/1801 - Elizabeth (tracked carefully to eliminate as my forebear)

24/04/1803 - George - possible burial 26/04/1809

01/01/1805 - John - possible burial 04/12/1806

01/02/1807 - John

30/08/1809 - Mary

01/01/1812 - Martha - gives us a link with sister Elizabeth

20/03/1814 - Anne - possible burial 12/11/1815

06/04/1817 - Sarah - possible burial 09/09/1819

25/12/1819 - Joseph

Elizabeth and Martha were important to establishing that I do not belong to this family. Elizabeth married a John Smith on 11/07/1821. Further investigation showed that her date of birth was in 1801. Martha married a John Whyatt (or Wyatt) on 23/12/1838.

As there is a Martha of similar age belonging to the family of George and Mary Cooper I obtained the Marriage Certificate of "this" Martha. It shows her father as Paul Cooper -

1838. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Chesterfield in the County of Derby								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
1281	December 23, 1838.	John Whyatt Martha Cooper	27 27	Bachelor Spinster	Butcher	Bestwell Street Iron Gate	William Whyatt Paul Cooper	Labourer Dyer
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Licence by me, <i>L. Hill Vicar</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>John Whyatt</i> <i>Martha Cooper</i>		in the Presence of us,		<i>John Cooper</i> <i>Elizabeth Cooper</i>		

Note that yet another Elizabeth Cooper is a witness to this marriage. She is probably the wife of Charles Cooper, eldest child of Paul Cooper. John is no doubt, a sibling of Martha.

Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, Maria, on 02/03/1823 and Maria is living with Martha and John Whyatt in the 1841 Census. This gives us a link from Elizabeth, via Martha, to Paul and Sarah Cooper.

Other information - Paul Cooper is living with Charles Cooper and his family in 1841. He is living in Irongate, Chesterfield, with a granddaughter, Ann Cooper, in 1851. John and Martha Wyatt and their family are next door.

## The two potential families - George and Mary

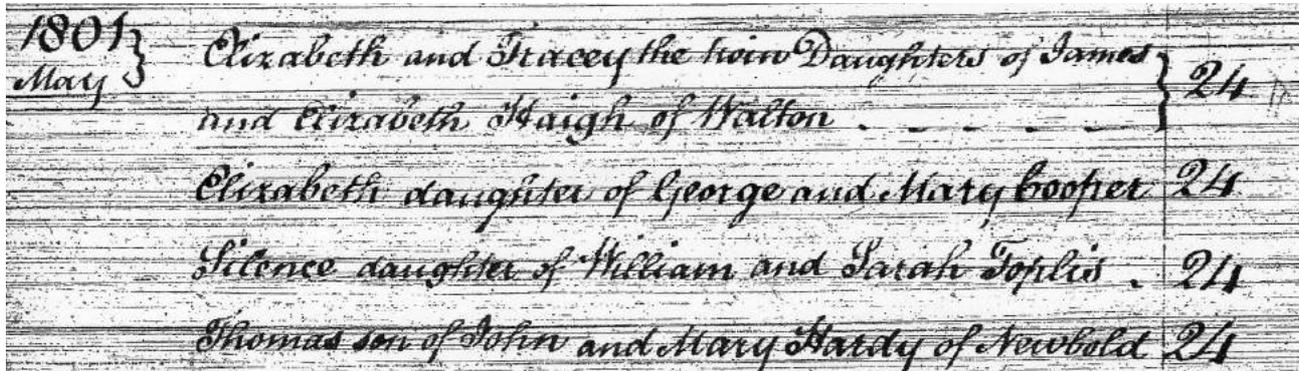
I now turned to the Derbyshire Record Office and funded them to research these two families to separate the children into two lists. I also asked if they could identify the occupation of the father.

Derbyshire Record Office was able to split the 16 children into two lists, one of which contained 13 children, and the other 3. This is because the archived records showed that 3 children were born in Newbold as distinct from Chesterfield itself. Dates of birth, etc, were all consistent with the separate lists. Elizabeth is in the list of 13 siblings. The IGI does not hold the subtle, but crucial, Parish Register data that allows the lists to be differentiated. I later found some siblings who had not been identified in the Parish Registers.

In the case of the last two of the children born to the same family as Elizabeth the occupation of the father is recorded - in one he is a Shoemaker, and in the other he

is a Cordwainer (a maker of leather shoes).

I have inspected the scanned images of the Parish Records that the Derbyshire Record Office sent to me with the family lists. In all cases the entries seem to have no "extra" wording for births in Chesterfield itself, but the name of the area of the birth when it was not Chesterfield. Here is a sample for the birth of Elizabeth -



Note that 2 lines below the entry for Elizabeth is a birth that is specifically noted as Newbold. The date - 24<sup>th</sup> - is the same for both entries. I conclude that Elizabeth was not born in Newbold.

I will now present these two families and further information gleaned.

## Firstly - The Parents

BOTH were married in the Chesterfield St Mary and All Saints Parish Church.

The known details are as follows -

25/10/1789 - George Cooper married Mary Tomlinson

13/02/1790 - George Cooper married Mary Roberts.

I am currently of the belief that I am descended from Mary Roberts but the link which I will show in the families, is subject to further confirmation.

## George and Mary Cooper family - I

The following were all born in Newbold - as distinct from Chesterfield for the other 13 - with parents George and Mary Cooper

28/08/1793 - Richard

29/08/1804 - Henry

21/10/1807 - John (baptised 13/12/1807)

I have located Mary Cooper living with Isaac Doe and Ann Doe in the 1841 and 1851 census entries for Newbold. Ann is said to be a daughter so Mary must have given birth to more than 3 children. Ann would have been born c1794.

Mary died in 1852 and I have her Death Certificate -

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
293	Twentythird December 1852 Common Newbold	Mary Cooper	Female	83 years	Widow of George Cooper Labourer	Gradual decay Dropsy Not certified	X The Mark of Ann Doe present at the death Common Newbold	Twentyfourth December 1852	Robert Pharo Registrar

We can see that her husband was a Labourer - this is important as the other George Cooper was a Cordwainer, and more than one son has also been found to be a Cordwainer, thereby strengthening the family lists as found by the Derbyshire Record Office.

We can also see that her age at death gives a year of birth c1769. I believe that there is a [significantly] higher correlation with her being Mary Tomlinson at birth, than Mary Roberts.

I also did some research on Henry Cooper and have a Birth Certificate for one of his children -

When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
17th of February 1861 Newbold	William	Boy	Henry Cooper	Mary Cooper formerly Cullumbers	Labourer	Henry Cooper Father Newbold	Third of March 1861	Samuel Hollingworth Registrar	

Henry is living with Ann Doe in the 1871 Census and is entered as a brother.

## George and Mary Cooper family - II

The following is a list of the children born to "my" George and Mary Cooper.

04/04/1790 - William

09/04/1792 - John

01/01/1794 - Mary

28/06/1795 - Mary

16/04/1797 - George

1799 - Barbara - identified from IGI records.

24/05/1801 - Elizabeth (my great great grandmother)

25/05/1803 - Joseph

28/08/1805 - James

18/02/1807 - Thomas, bapt 18/03/1807

21/07/1809 - Charles, bapt 30/08/1809

31/05/1812 - Sarah

17/03/1814 - Martha

23/07/1816 - Paul, bapt 04/08/1816

Some of these children died at an early age. I have found several of the others in various census entries and secured some GRO Certificates. I will deal with each in turn. The list includes Barbara, who was not in the list gleaned from Parish Records by the Derbyshire Record Office.

### 1790 - William

I have possible sightings and have attached an 1871 one to his entry in my family tree. But I have not gleaned any significant family information from his sightings.

### 1792 - John

I have several potential sightings (IGI, Census) that I believe are this John and he gives his occupation as a Shoemaker. He married but I do not believe that there are any children from this marriage. His wife was a Lydia Webster who had already been married and had a daughter, Georgiana. Georgiana later married a George Billard and lived in Sheffield. I believe Lydia's maiden name to be Crookes. From census entries it looks like John Cooper and Lydia lived separately but were not either divorced or widowed for some considerable time.

### 1794 - Mary

I tracked down a potential marriage on 12/06/1838 to a William Taylor but the evidence then pointed to this person not being "our" Mary Cooper. Her father was a Collier and she was born in Arundel.

1838. Marriage solemnized *at the Parish Church* in the *Parish* of *Chesterfield* in the *County* of *Derby*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
64	June 12 1838	William Taylor Mary Cooper	both 24 21	Bachelor Spinster	Labourer	Dunant Green Holywell Street	Francis Taylor George Cooper	Butcher Collier

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church* by *law* by me, *John Hovater*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { *William Taylor*  
*Mary Cooper & her mark* } in the Presence of us, { *John Hovater*  
*Elizabeth Webster & her mark* }

### 1797 - George

I have several sightings that I believe are this person. Fortunately he married after 1837 and this helped greatly with GRO Certificates. He was a Tailor in Marylebone, London (Census, 1851). He had a daughter, Barbara, who was born in 1842. I obtained her Birth Certificate, thence the Marriage Certificate of her parents. I needed the Birth Certificate as there were several marriage choices for a George Cooper. I could reduce this to one choice with the mother's name. See -

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
26	Birth of July 1842 at 1 York Place	Barbara	Female	George Cooper	Charlotte Cooper formerly Mairgerson	Sawyer	Charlotte Cooper formerly Mairgerson 1 York Place	22 July 1842	Joseph Bachhoffner Registrar	

1830. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Riddington in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
384	July 22 1830	George Cooper.	Both full age.	Bachelor.	Sailor.	Star Street.	George Cooper.	Shoemaker.
		Charlotte Mairgerson.		Spinster.		Edgware Road.	Mrs. Mairgerson.	Wife.

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church of the Banns by me, *A. B. Ludlow-Curak*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *George Cooper* and *Charlotte Mairgerson* in the Presence of us, *Arthur Cooper* and *Caroline Heath*

By the time of the 1851 census her mother had already died and George had re-married. However, the Marriage Certificate indicates that George's father, also called George, was a Shoemaker. Additionally George puts Chesterfield as his place of birth in census entries, and his age matches with his date of birth being c1797.

### 1799 - Barbara

Barbara moved to Manchester where she married a George Taylor on 25/12/1834. They had three children.

### 1801 - Elizabeth

This analysis seeks to prove she is my great-great grandmother

### 1803 - Joseph

I have one "sighting" of Joseph - his death in 1842. I could not locate him in the 1841 census.

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
30	Manchester 1842 at Devonshire Street Chesterfield	Joseph Cooper	Male	39 (years)	Cordwainer	Consumption	The X Mark of the Woodroff present at the death Devonshire Street Chesterfield	Twenty-fifth of October 1842	Samuel Hollingworth Registrar

This certificate indicates that he was a Cordwainer. His age at death indicates a date of birth of 1803.

Joseph married Lydia Wilbourne in 1832 but I have no record of any children.

### **1805 - James**

I have no sightings that give family relevant information. He may have been buried on 29/08/1814, aged 9.

### **1807 - Thomas**

I have possible sightings of him as an Ironstone Miner in 1851 and 1861 but have not gleaned any family relevant information. For these sightings I have a possible marriage to Sarah Watkinson in Old Brampton on 25/09/1833. IGI has a birth entry for Sarah Watkinson in Chesterfield on 15/07/1810.

### **1809 - Charles**

Charles moved to the Manchester area where he married Fanny Wainwright on 14/03/1850. Fanny was a widow with two children, and she gave birth to two further children of Charles.

### **1812 - Sarah**

I have no sightings.

### **1814 - Martha**

Martha moved to Manchester where she married a Thomas Vosper on 28/03/1846. They had five children.

### **1816 - Paul**

Possible burial on 10/10/1816.

I am indebted to a researcher in the USA who identified Barbara and found her, Charles and Martha in the Manchester/ Salford area.

## **The parents - George and Mary**

There is a "very fortunate" entry in the IGI for the death, in 1836, of a George Cooper as this entry gives his occupation as a Cordwainer. This is almost certainly "my" George Cooper. His age at death, 70, yields a date of birth as 1766 and, indeed, a George Cooper was born in this year. His father is John, but the entry does not give a mother's name. The salient dates are - baptism 29/09/1766, burial 09/09/1836.

As I also noted above, I believe that Mary Tomlinson is the wife of the "other" George Cooper and that I am descended from Mary Roberts. A salient birth (baptism) for Mary Roberts, in Chesterfield, is 08/10/1766, father George Roberts.

## **Was Elizabeth Cooper a widow**

I considered the possibility that Elizabeth Cooper may have been a widow when she married John Shorthose. In this case her surname, Cooper, may not have been her

surname at birth.

I investigated three Elizabeth Coopers who may have been widowed in the early 1830's and was able to rule them out.

However, subsequently I realised that on the Birth Certificates of children the box which carries the mother's surname before marriage specifically asks for her surname at birth. I had three Birth Certificates on file for Elizabeth's children all of which carry "Cooper" as her maiden surname.

There is no evidence to support the possibility that she was a widow.

## **Key decision points**

The decisions that are key to identifying "my" Elizabeth Cooper are, at this time -

- 1) That the Maria Smith living with Martha and John Whyatt in the 1841 Census is the daughter of Elizabeth Cooper and John Smith who were married in 1821. This eliminates Elizabeth as being "my" Elizabeth and it therefore eliminates Paul and Sarah Cooper as being "my" forebears.
- 2) That the segmented list of children born to the two George and Mary Coopers are correctly applied to the relevant parents - a process that requires subtle interpretation of the Parish Register data - though I now have considerable corroborative evidence that these lists are correct.

## **The next generation**

Having got to this point I noted a family tree on the Ancestry site that had the next generation back for this family. I funded the Derbyshire Record Office with looking into this generation and reporting back.

This research was performed in March-April 2014.

In the event they found that the tree on Ancestry is not factually correct and, additionally, were able to furnish me with [by far] the most likely next generation.

They were able to do this because the Parish Registers in their possession carry more detail than I was able to glean from the IGI. In particular they give the area of Chesterfield in which a birth was registered and, using this information, families with similar parents' names (in this case "John" was very common) could be identified by place of birth.

Here is the next generation as they researched it -

Parents John Cooper and Barbara Goddard who were married on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1759.

Children - all born in Hasland -

21/11/1762 - George; buried 05/02/1766

10/02/1765 - Mary

29/09/1766 - George - my great great great grandfather. A Cordwainer who had premises initially in South St but latterly in Packer's Row

20/11/1768 - William; buried 12/06/1782

30/09/1770 - James

08/03/1772 - Martha

31/07/1774 - Paul - father of the other Elizabeth Cooper born in 1801. A Dyer who had premises in the Shambles.

18/08/1766 - Barbara

05/04/1778 - Mary

14/05/1780 - Elizabeth

16/06/1782 - Joseph

We see that Paul Cooper is a brother of George Cooper and these are the two fathers of Elizabeth Cooper born in 1801. Hence these two Elizabeth Coopers were cousins and even if the incorrect one is chosen as my great great grandmother, the next generation back - presented in this section - is correct for both of them.

Having noted that, I am certain that "my" Elizabeth Cooper was the daughter of George and not Paul.

## **A mystery substantially unlocked**

I have always been puzzled as to how John Davies and Harriet Shorthose (Elizabeth Cooper's daughter) met. They were married in St Simon's Salford on 09/08/1877. Until I had researched Elizabeth Cooper there was no connection of either of these two individuals with Salford.

Harriet had lived all her life in Barton Under Needwood with, initially, her parents and some siblings, but latterly her mother had been widowed. The family was well off and there is no evidence that Harriet had ever been employed.

John Davies, on the other hand, was a Gas Works Manager and he was simultaneously manager at Kidsgrove in Staffordshire and Oswestry in Shropshire. He sometimes lived between these two places in Stoke On Trent. His first wife, Martha Astley, had died in October 1870.

However, the research on Elizabeth Cooper shows us that three of her siblings moved to the Manchester/ Salford area, were married there, and had family. I have established that three of their first generation children had jobs in the Gas Industry. They would have been first cousins of Harriet.

It is known that John Davies was involved in the design and construction of Gas Works and it is therefore very likely that he did some work in the Manchester area. If this occurred at a time Harriet was visiting her cousins, there is a great possibility of their meeting.

I have separately researched John Davies through historical documents regarding

the Gas Works at Kidsgrove and Oswestry but neither cover any information regarding such travel.

Family trees are very interesting not just as the trees themselves, but for the rich history that can be gleaned from them. In this case I'm certain that John and Harriet met in the Salford area through Harriet's relatives and their relationship with the Gas Industry. But it would be nice to obtain more detailed information about their movements.

Although much of this is circumstantial it fits into the greater picture of the family lending weight to the fact that it has been correctly researched, despite the initial difficulties.

## **A family spreads out**

Arising out of this research we see that not only did Elizabeth Cooper leave Chesterfield as a young woman starting out in life, but also so did many of her siblings. It's one of the reasons this family unit was so difficult to research as there is no initial indication of where to make appropriate searches.

More importantly, "Why did they all move away from Chesterfield?" I currently have no answer to this interesting question.

## **Cooper family trees**

I am using Ancestry.co.uk as my main research vehicle and I also have a copy of their Family Tree Maker software on my PC. I have more generations available that are not reported in this document which I have produced to demonstrate the manner in which the research proceeded. However, I am not finding it easy to produce succinct family trees to append to this document as appendices.

However, if there is an interest in them I am happy to publish them in a suitable form.

I can be reached by email at [blv@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:blv@blueyonder.co.uk)

My tree, which is "private" on the Ancestry site is called VTDC. I am more than happy to allow interested parties to view this tree. Just drop me an email at the above address and, using your email address, I am able to connect you with the tree, via the Ancestry site.

In the course of this research I have put together fragments of other Cooper family trees and can also make them available - they are included in my VTDC tree.