



St Helens Townships Family History Society

Founder And President-Richard Waring

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Newsletter

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COMMITTEE Chair:Margaret Crosbie, Vice Chair:Tom McKenna, Secretary:Pauline Hurst, Treasurer:Peter Harvey

Programme Secretary: Geoff Hall



Colin and his wife Brenda

Question? Which well known local character has married the greatest number of times. No not Elizabeth Taylor or Rod Stewart. The answer is **Colin Smith** of course. After 36 years of employment by St Helens Council, Colin retired at the end of July. In his speech at his retirement presentation, Colin told of how his first appointment was at the old Register Office in Hardshaw Street, transferring to the present register Office in Central Street, when it opened in 1976. In 1992 Colin was appointed as Superintendent Registrar for St Helens.



Pictured with Colin and his wife Brenda are, L. to R. Ted Forsyth, Tom McKenna, Pauline Hurst, Margaret Crosbie

Many St Helens people had their Birth, Marriage and sometimes Death recorded by Colin. He thanked our Society for their help in transcribing the registration indexes. This work has helped the register office staff locate individual records on the computer, instead of the laborious manual search of the actual record books. The transcribing task is ongoing and will continue for

some years to come, our members are quietly and diligently beavering away at this mammoth task. Colin will be greatly missed for his efficiency and good humour, when conducting marriage ceremonies, in spite of the fact that his jokes were "sometimes" repeated.

Town Hall Meeting 26 August Member's Evening

Four of our talented members gave a short family history related presentation :-

Ted Forsyth ran through a PowerPoint presentation he had put together as a wet weather alternative to his walks which he was to lead at the St Helens Cemetery as part of the St Helens Heritage Weekend. This was appreciated by those members who were to be "on duty" in the Town Hall on the days Ted conducted the walks, and were therefore unable to enjoy Ted's rambles (see page 3)



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Geoff Hall gave us an insight into his own family history research. He had come across an aristocratic sounding name, "Mortimer" in his family tree. After a great amount of diligent investigation the mystery was resolved, the name eventually turned out to be an amalgamation of two names **Mort** and **Moore**.

Our next speaker was **Richard Waring** Our President, who had been asked to give a presentation to an audience in the Town Hall, during the Heritage week end.

Richard chose as his subject "The St Helens Pals" which he has been following for some time, and is to be one of the Regiments he is studying as a Heritage Lottery Project.

He told us what the intention was for this project and how it was hoped that we might all benefit. We have already benefitted from being able to use the MX files which the librarians have produced as part of their large Heritage Lottery Project. Richard used his own family history to illustrate how the people of St Helens will be asked to assist in our project. A number of our members were reminded of their own family members who had served in The Great War and promised to help in our forthcoming project. It is a pity that the preparation for that project has been so long, but it has been necessary to produce a strong case because of the type of Project envisaged. We all look forward to being able to join in the research to be able to tell the true story of the St Helens Pals.

Peter Harvey told a little tale of how a barrier was demolished to reveal how his great aunt came to have an influence on the rest of the family. Now that we have access to the 1911 Census it is possible to find where our grand parents lived, and in this case Peter's grand mother was found to be living with her sister in a house in Pitt Street. The barrier was that up to now, he had not been able to find this person (Rose McCabe) on the 1901 Census. Knowing that she had indeed been alive in 1901 a wide ranging search of the 1901 Census was undertaken, until Rose McCabe was found in Salford, listed as a domestic servant aged 10. The name was correct but there had been a transcription error as she was in fact 18. In a further transcription error the person to whom she was a domestic servant was said to be a *Passinette Maker*. Further research allowed Peter to find that he, Thomas Ogden Collinson, was in fact a *Bassinette (Perambulator) Maker*.

Having notified Find My Past of the two transcription errors Peter went on to find out about Thomas Ogden Collinson by the simple process of Googling that name. The article on him, told of his success in business, and that their family had gone on to become the makers of The Silver Cross brand of prams. Peter finished by revealing that though the Harvey family from Pitt Street were of humble background, they were all pushed round in Silver Cross prams, the like of which were normally reserved for Nannies of the middle classes

If anyone has a family history related story to tell which they think would be of interest to the other society members and they feel capable of giving a short talk. Just tell any committee member who will make a note to invite them to speak at the next member's evening.

Weekend of 11th & 12th September at the Town Hall

As part of the St Helens Heritage Weekend our Society set up a family history "help centre" in room 9 in the Town Hall building. Our Secretary Pauline and Chairperson Margaret with laptops with internet access and 1911 census available, dealt with a steady stream of customers. The demand was so great the we devised a reception system and as a result the room resembled a doctor's waiting room, but the system worked well



Peter, Pauline and a member of the Unnamed Players, pictured by your editor believed to be the "Mayor" watching Margaret help two visitors find their relatives



Richard in action

Our President Richard who also had his laptop in action; dealt with numerous enquiries for military research. Richard received a copious amount of information from visitors for inclusion in the forthcoming publication he and David Risley are researching. This is the subject of our next meeting on 25th November. The weekend was great success, with over 200 visitors to our room, and a number of people registering as new recruits to our Society.

As part of this event one of our members—Ted Forsyth, in conjunction with cemetery staff conducted "Cemetery Strolls" - Short walks lasting about an hour describing the history of the cemetery and highlighting graves and memorials of the famous, the infamous, the comical and the tragic. Ted "entertained" around 200 people over the weekend



Town Hall Meeting 23rd September

Mr Geoff Sandford gave a talk about the history of the trolley bus in St Helens. The talk was illustrated with a slide show which evoked nostalgic memories from the audience

28th October a visit to Queen's Lancashire Regiment Museum Preston

Before Christmas in 2009 it was decided that we should take a group of members to QLR Museum in October 2010. This was in anticipation of getting the go ahead for our Heritage Lottery Bid for Heroes All: The St Helens Pals and The Medics. We proceeded with the visit as there was plenty of interest outside of the Bid and we had it as a stand alone venture.

When we arrived at Fulwood Barracks, we were greeted with a rather stern soldier on guard duty. Having checked the car number plate and ticked off the names on her list, we were allowed to enter through the gate and park on the Parade Square round the back.

Our entrance through the double doors at the front of the building was quietly achieved and we began immediately to examine the vast array of medals on display.



"Come in," called an authoritative voice from a nearby office, "Can I help you?"
 "Yes Sir, we are from St Helens Townships Family History Society and are to meet the Curator Jane Davies, sorry we are a bit early." In fact the redoubtable Jane was there a moment later and we were greeted and allowed to peruse the medals until our friends arrived.

Within ten minutes the party of twenty was complete and we gathered by the cases dedicated to the Boer War. Jane wished us well and launched into a forty five minute tour of the displays explaining the exhibits and pointing out items of special interest. Though her talk was detailed and precise, her tone was that of a conversation rather than a lecture, and our members listened with real interest.

I recall one story of how a company stretcher bearer, during one particular battle in the Great War, was so incensed at the intensity of machine gun fire mowing down his comrades that he threw down his stretcher and managed to take the machine gun post on his own, and then use the weapon to overpower another machine gun post nearby. Having captured both weapons and brought them back to his former position he picked up his stretcher and carried on with his job. Amazed I looked across at Dave Risley who nodded and mouthed, "Not in the RAMC, a Company bearer could take up arms"

The tour was full of incident and interest, and the cases full of exhibits, were all well presented and fascinating. Gathering close to the Regimental Silver and sat by the magnificent Dining Suite we completed the tour and asked our individual questions.

Jane was a model Curator and answered every one before letting us loose on what to some of us were the Crown Jewels.

We were led into the Archive Room and allowed access to the records and registers stored there. Some people were taken by Jane into her private office and assisted with their own research, to much acclaim when a gem of an unknown fact became known.

Everyone there did seem to get a great deal out of the visit, and we had fun as well as the serious part of our own research activity. For me, seeing several Waterloo Medals in the well stocked cases was a highlight, and sitting at the vast table imagining how all of that paraphernalia had been lugged around the battlefields of Europe, Africa and India and still looking in pristine condition, was a great credit to the Curator and those who had been in that office before her.

We said our goodbyes and some ladies were so engrossed in their private research that they had to be dragged back to the cars to make our way home

With thanks to Peter Harvey for this article



If these three "pals" had fought in the Great War one wonders what the outcome would have been

Forthcoming Events

Town Hall Meeting 25th November

Richard Waring and David Risley will give a talk about their progress to date on their proposed publication about the South Lancashire Regiment

Thursday 16th December 2010 Annual General Meeting and Christmas Party

We are always on the look out for interesting articles for this newsletter. If you think you can contribute, contact the editor Peter Crosbie either by email townshipsfhs@googlemail.com or telephone 0781 503 30785