



St Helens Townships Family History Society

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COMMITTEE Chair: Margaret Crosbie, Vice Chair: Tom McKenna, Secretary/Treasurer: Pauline Hurst,
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As This is the first newsletter of 2011 may I wish you all a belated happy new year. 2010 turned out to a very fruitful year for our Society and we have to report that we have continued to grow. We now number over 300 members which from our humble beginnings in 2005

So on to 2011, our first event on 27th January consisted of an invitation by the Mayor of St Helens Mr Neil Taylor to visit the Mayor's Parlour and to tour the Town Hall. Our members are pictured being entertained to tea and biscuits by the Mayor.



We were then escorted by the very knowledgeable Mr Jim Taylor through the magnificent and largely original rooms of the town hall, rarely visited by members of the public

The history of the Town Hall is very well described in a book published by the Council entitled " St Helens Town Hall" This covers the



history of the council from it's beginnings in the Raven Hotel, through the opening of the town hall in 1875 to the present day, A heritage in which we should all be very proud. Members who were unable to attend at this time will have an opportunity to take part in a future visit at a date to be arranged.

Further to the front page item on our Town Hall visit,

Member Helen Johnson has provided this interesting article

The Retirement of Thomas Alfred Turton, 1st September 1939

I felt so very lucky to join the Family History Society's tour of St Helens Town Hall at the end of January, as among my family heirlooms is a photograph of my grandfather's retirement presentation, conducted in the Town Hall in 1939, where he worked as a magistrates clerk. I was keen to find the room where it took place and if possible take a photograph. When I showed my photograph to our guide Mr Jim Taylor, he immediately knew the location—The Member's Room.

After refreshments in the Mayors Parlour we moved on accompanied by the Mayor Mr Neil Taylor, to the Member's Room. The far corner was easily recognisable as the setting in the photograph. The Mayor very kindly suggested that I be photographed shaking his hand,

standing in the same spot as Grandad had 71 years ago.

What a special moment. The Mayor was wearing the same chain of office as the Mayor in my grandfather's day. It is over one hundred and thirty years old, The Mayor told me that retirement presentations still take place in the Member's Room today.

Displayed in the corridor leading to the Mayors Parlour are photographs of the Mayors of St Helens. The mayor in my photograph is easily recognisable as Nathaniel Birch, in office from 1938–1940. The man with the glasses between him and Grandad looks very like Edward Burrows, Mayor in 1937. On the back of my photograph, a family member has noted that among the ladies standing are Miss Edith and Miss Evelyn Pilkington. The seated lady is Mrs Dodd JP, who lived near Grandad in Windle Street.



On the table is his gift of a pair of binoculars in a monogrammed leather case which I still have. Unfortunately his right arm obscures his retirement clock. The clock is in an oblong art deco style wooden surround, with barometer, hygrometer and thermometer. A small metal plaque is inscribed as follows

Presented to T A Turton by his friends the Magistrates of St Helens on his retirement as Justices Clerk September 1st 1939

The clock hangs in my brother's hallway and still works well with a new battery mechanism

Grandad was born Thomas Alfred Turton at St Ann's Stores, Eccleston, on April 9th 1878, He was the sixth of eight children born to John Turton a Bookkeeper, and Catherine formerly Lockhart. Grandad died aged 88 having outlived all his siblings and is buried in Hard Lane Cemetery

Helen Johnson

30th January 2011



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

A Visit to Lancashire Record Office, Preston Friday 18th February 2011



Pictured above our members prepare to enter the research room

We were introduced to the Lancashire Record Office by archivist Katherine Newman, who described the wealth of information contained on 8 miles of shelving in 8 climate controlled strong rooms. She informed us of the facilities available to us and of the way in which we could access them. We were then turned loose to pursue our individual projects. A number of our members were able to resolve long standing problems using the resources available. The tea room was an especially welcome facility (St Helens take note) all in all a very enjoyable and fruitful visit

A Visit to the Latter Day Saints Resource Centre, Chorley Saturday 19th February 2011



The day started as a dull and rainy morning but things soon brightened up with a trip to the Latter Day Saints resource centre at Chorley. All the planning had been done and we were eager to get to Chorley to breakdown those brick walls in our research. For most of the group this was the first time they had visited the centre. The unique resources available were fruitful to the group and the helpful staff made it a brilliant experience

Our thanks must go to the Riverside Group Limited and the grant awarded from the "A trip back in time" fund and also a grant from Merseytravel made the two trips viable for our members to experience the wonderful resources available in the two centres. There are now requests to plan more trips along the same theme.

Like most children growing up in the 1950's with few toys. I had a box of bits and pieces picked up or given to me by various relatives to play with. One such item is a swimming medal that belonged to my Great Uncle Thomas Hughes Spencer. I think it must have been given to me after Thomas died, somehow I have managed to hang on to it for over 50 years.

Thomas was awarded the medal for winning the Maiden Handicap at the Swimming Gala of 1890. I thought it would be interesting to see if I could find anything out about the medal so I contacted St Helens Swimming Club.



Ian Turner the secretary of swimming club came back to me with some back ground information about the swimming club which I have reproduced below.

"The earliest record that we have for an individual event is the 'Challenge Cup Handicap' winner in 1894 although the club was formed in 1885. The club was very successful in the early days when clubs competed in both water polo and individual/team races. We have no records of the numbers involved at that time however it can be assumed that the numbers were large as the club competed across the country with various teams. Your great uncle's medal



of 1890 is now the earliest known record to date for St Helens Swimming Club".

From what I can remember Thomas had the medal attached to his pocket watch chain which probably accounts for the amount of wear on the front. The watch was given to me when I was 21, I have no idea what happened to the chain.

So not only is this an interesting family heirloom it's also a piece of our towns heritage

Steve Spencer January 2011

Next Town Hall Meeting — 24th February 6:45 for a 7:00 pm Start

The subject will be " Irish Ancestry" by Sean McCann **not**

"Digital Maps" by Neil Spurr as advertised

Neil's talk will now take place on

23rd June in the Town Hall

I would like to thank those who contributed copy for this newsletter making it a lively edition. Keep it up. I would welcome any articles and/or pictures, one page of A4 is ideal but any story is welcome : Editor Peter