



# St Helens Townships Family History Society

[www.sthelenstownshipsfhs.org.uk](http://www.sthelenstownshipsfhs.org.uk)

Founder And President-Richard Waring

September  
2012  
Newsletter  
No.16

**COMMITTEE** Chair: Margaret Crosbie, Vice Chair: Tom McKenna, Secretary/Treasurer: Pauline Hurst,  
Programme Secretary: Geoff Hall

## Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter

### TOWNSHIPS FHS—CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE ARCHIVES

**Members** may remember our Society's concerns over the proposed changes to the Local History and Archives section of the Central Library. They may also remember the actions we took, drawing the attention of the relevant council officials who had the responsibility of care for many historic artefacts and documents. Our concerns were listened to, and through a newly set up consultation process, we have been able to have input into securing the future of the archives. We have to report that the process of relocating the archive room into the newly vacated Godfrey Pilkington Art Gallery (which has been re-



Pauline and Margaret check out the facilities prior to the opening of the new department

located to the World of Glass premises), is now complete. After months of waiting in eager anticipation, the transition is now complete. The research and archives department is now fully open and refurbished with new furniture and computers. We have resumed our Monday evening meetings, and apart from a few teething problems, we have settled in comfortably. We had fears of our membership reducing considerably. However the reopening of the department coincided with "Heritage Weekend" This brought a number of new people eager to find their ancestors, so we are in a better position than was feared.

**Vivienne Hainsworth**, has retired from her position as Senior Archivist at the Central Library.



For many years Vivienne has run the department and has been instrumental in the preservation of many important artefacts and documents, crucial to family history research. She has been of great help to our Society and will be sorely missed. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

Our Picture shows Vivienne receiving flowers and a gift from Our President Richard and our secretary Pauline.

**Karen Rylance has left her position at St Helens Council** Karen was a good friend to our society, and helped us in many ways. The most important assistance she gave was to facilitate funding processes, the society benefited from several cash awards enabling us to continue to provide an efficient service to the public and our members. We understand that Karen has joined the BBC and will work with Children in Need, our loss is their gain, we wish her well.

The most important benefit to our Society was Karen's assistance to secure substantial national lottery funding for the

**St Helens Pals Project.** This project is continuing to progress under the leadership of Project Manager Peter Harvey and supported by Richard Waring and David Risley, all members of our Society.

The latest event involving the Pals Project was at Langtree Park, the home of St Helens Rugby League Club on Sunday 9th September as part of the Heritage Festival Weekend. This event was a huge success with a great number of St Helens folk bringing their stories, documents and memorabilia to add substance and humanity to help record the effort and sacrifice ordinary people made in our country's hour of need.



Some of the medals and artefacts on display at the event



Peter receiving input from a relative of a soldier



Richard and David interviewed many relatives of war veterans and victims, recording their stories

### Visit to Prescott Parish Church on 24<sup>th</sup> May – by Steve Spencer

This year's church visit was to Prescott Parish Church, a church with a long and proud history, it is the only Grade 1 listed building in the borough of Knowsley. A group of 15 members attended and we were given a very interesting talk by Betty Brown on the history of the church, which include some amusing anecdotes. After the talk we split into 2 groups guided by Betty and Barbara to be taken round the church and shown some of its interesting features and have these explained to us in more detail.

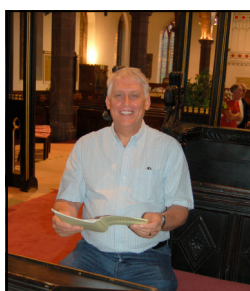


Prescott can trace its history as a religious sanctuary back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century long before Christianity came to these parts. The reason for this early religious settlement was the fact that 1) There was an ancient well in what is now the churchyard 2) Prescott is the highest point 150 feet above sea level as you come in land from the River Mersey, the next high point being Billinge Hill.

The present church is the fourth to be built on this site since Saxon times. The oldest part of the present church is the North Vestry which dates from 1410, this was originally a Chantry Chapel founded by the Bold family.



The choir stalls in the chancel date from 1636 and feature misericords (tip up seats) these would normally only be found in cathedrals or churches with monastic foundations and shows the high regard Prescott church was held in in the past.



On a personal note the visit allowed me to return to a seat I used to occupy every Sunday when I was a chorister here in the 1960's. Sadly the magnificent stained glass of the East window over the Sanctuary which depicted the Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and dated from 1841 had to be removed in 1985 due to its deterioration and vandalism.







**At our Town Hall Meeting on 26th July** We were addressed by The impeccably dressed Mr Peter Herrim who's subject was The Leyland Family & Speke Hall. There is evidence that Speke Hall was originally constructed in about 1300, Much of the building dates from the 1500s and was occupied by the Norris family The talk however was largely based on the activities last tenant Frederick Leyland the manager of the Bibby Shipping Company. Frederick ploughed a large amount of money into the redecoration of the old house which can still be appreciated today. The hall is now a National Trust property [www..nationaltrust.org.uk/spekehall](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/spekehall)

**On 23rd August We held A Members Evening** This is an event at the Town Hall when our members recount some of the interesting family anecdotes which have come to light during their research. Pauline told us about an incorrect birth registration date. Eileen Hill also recounted a registration of a child who was actually two and a half years old at registration In Richard's family one of his relatives was conceived while the father was in France in the first world war. Margaret recounted a bigamy case in my (your editor's) family. Sue Davies had a very interesting story about her ancestor becoming very wealthy in the USA. Peter Harvey updated us with the progress of the "Pals" group (Dave Risley is giving us a talk on the subject on 24th November) The evening was a change from the usual "lecture" it gave us all a chance to air our views. All in all an enjoyable evening with lots of good natured banter.

Most of our members will know that our society is closely associated with

### **"The Friends of St Helens Cemetery"**

What you may not be aware of is what they get up to. As part of a project to improve and preserve the Windelshaw Chantry and its burial ground, "three characters" calling themselves "The Last of the Summer Wine" can often be seen wielding what appear to be instruments of torture and destruction. Seriously they are doing a great job of cleaning up what used to look like a derelict site. Our photo shows the culprits, each accusing the others of being responsible. Left to Right Jack Gaskell John Brennan and Ted Forsyth



Since the resumption of our Monday working evenings, we have seen an increase in the number of new members. They come seeking help to start growing a family tree. We have all been in this position and many of our society members have succeeded and have now acquired considerable skill and knowledge about our hobby. We are asking if some of you could help new members to get started. So if you would like to help, have a word with either Pauline or Margaret, or any committee member, who will show you how, if need be. Thank you Friends.

Just a reminder for our readers, the Society web site contains links to other useful family history related web sites here are examples of North West Links

<http://www.forl.co.uk/>

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk>

<http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk/>

<http://www.northwestfamilybusiness.arts.manchester.ac.uk>

I am always on the lookout for items for your newsletter. In order to keep it interesting and lively, I need some input from YOU.

If you have a story to tell, I would be very grateful to receive it, if you feel that you can't put it into words, just give me the gyst and I will do the rest. Pictures, if you have them help enormously to bring a story to life.

I have to thank Steve Spencer for his write-up on the Prescott Parish Church visit.

Email me at [townshipsfhs@gmail.com](mailto:townshipsfhs@gmail.com) Thank you Peter Crosbie-Editor.

## 2012 Programme

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 27 Sep: | <b>A Guinea A Box the Beecham Story, with Pauline Hurst</b>       |
| 25 Oct: | <b>Music Halls &amp; Theatres in St. Helens, with Tom Preston</b> |
| 24 Nov: | <b>St. Helens Pals, with Dave Risley</b>                          |
| 13 Dec: | <b>AGM (members only)</b>   |

**2013 Programme is almost complete and will announced soon**

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