



St Helens Townships Family History Society



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Founder And President-Richard Waring

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

Public Notice



The opening hours of Local History and Archives Library will change week commencing **Monday 3rd June 2013.**

The new hours will be

Monday	10.00am	7.00pm
Tuesday	CLOSED	
Wednesday	10.00am	7.00pm
Thursday	CLOSED	
Friday	CLOSED	
Saturday	10.00am	4.00pm

No doubt our members will now be well aware of the current opening hours as shown in this leaflet. Our "petition" and letter to St Helens Council Libraries department, asking for the "Local History and Archives Library" to continue to remain open till 8:00 pm as before, was ignored and no discussion took place. We have therefore had to come to terms with the situation, However I have to report that access to the actual archives, is not always as free as it used to be. We feel that if St Helens Council sense that the archives are not being used, then the service might be removed altogether. There is a wealth of precious information and artefacts containing the records of the social and industrial history of this community, It is carefully cared for in a pristine climate controlled environment in the basement of the Gamble Institute So the message to our members is **USE OR LOSE THE ARCHIVES.** we need to preserve our heritage

Saturday 25th May



Three Ps

Peter Crosbie Pauline Hurst Peter Harvey

The St Helens Townships Family History Society in collaboration with The Friends of St Helens Cemetery

Held an open day at the cemetery for visitors to have the chance to have a family history taster.

Our Secretary Pauline and Chairperson Margaret had their computers "on the go" also in action with the PALS first world war project was our President Richard. Although business was not as brisk as we would have liked.

We succeeded in introducing a number people to their forebears.

Following a Family History Trail in South Africa by Helen Johnson

My Grandfather's eldest sister, Sarah Emma Turton, was born in St Helens in 1869. She had a boyfriend who left England to become a missionary in South Africa at a parish in Basutoland, now called Lesotho. She sailed there during the Boer War, they married in Durban South Africa in 1900.

My nephew lives in Johannesburg with his family, so when I visited them in April this year, we had a holiday at a seaside resort just north of Durban. What an opportunity for some Family History research! In advance I had asked my nephew to try to get the marriage certificate from the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa.

His response was downbeat "it won't be possible, this isn't the U K, it takes 18 months if we want a copy of our own certificates. We pay people to stand all day in queues for documents here". More positively he said we might find the certificate by asking the churches. On the internet we did find a phone number for a archive repository in Pietermaritzburg, 1 hour's drive from Durban. We rang and were told that permission would have to be granted to search the registers and that it could take as long as 3 months.

A journal written by a third party was kept of my great Aunt's passage to marriage and early married life in South Africa. It records the wedding date, vicar who performed the ceremony, plus the witnesses. It does not however record the church where it was held.

I hired a Taxi for a morning (not expensive) and went round all the churches in Durban that existed in 1900. Every church had an office open the morning and they were very helpful, but told me all church records were in Pietermaritzburg.

One secretary offered to ring them, and before I could say I had already tried, she was dialling the number. When she spoke to the Records Officer she explained that she was ringing from a church office. They promised to try and find the marriage record and suggested that I rang back in the afternoon. When I did, I was told that the record had been found easily, and I could have a copy from them for 100 Rand, about £8. The church involved was St Cyprian's named after the first African Bishop Martyr. So next day I hired the taxi again to be driven to the church Archives Office in Pietermaritzburg, where I saw the original entry in a large old register, and I bought a copy.

Unfortunately the 1900 St Cyprian's Church on Smith Street Durban no longer exists. There is a shopping mall on the site of the old church, and Smith St is now Anton Lembede Street. Many city streets in South Africa have been renamed in honour of their heroes who fought against apartheid. The present St Cyprian's church was built in 1939, away from the town centre.



I visited the new church where the Rector showed me a framed photo of the altar and pulpit area of the old church. I was looking at where Great Aunt Sarah Emma had stood when she married Edgar Lancaster. **He then gave me a booklet issued in 1970** when the church celebrated its centenary. It contained a photo of the original church, and of some of the clergy, including Rev. Herbert L Johnson who married Sarah and Edgar also Rev Herbert Jones who is mentioned in the journal **In the course of 5 days**, I had gone from being empty handed to having more information than I thought possible.

Helen Johnson

Monday 12 Feb 00. Rose at 8. Down at 9.30. Carriage with Dr Birtwell, at 5 to 10. Mrs Fyfe & her girl, Canon Johnson, Rev Jones (curate), Rev Fryer, Mr Fyfe, Mr Tacker from Kokstad & Mr Graenaer. Dr Birtwell gave her away. Dr Birtwell & Mr Tacker signed as witnesses.

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Second St. Cyprian's Church, Smith Street, 1900.



Canon Herbert L. Johnson, with six of the clergy who assisted him. 1900 or 1902.
Standing, left to right: ? ? Rev. Daniel Mzamo.
Seated: Rev. C. D. Robinson, Rev. Herbert Jones, Rev. Herbert L. Johnson (Vicar), Rev. E. W. Gibby.

Programme of Speakers 2013

19th September	Behind the scenes at the Register Office (members only please book with a committee member)
17th October	Pilgrimage to Medieval England with Thom Hughes
21st November	PALS Update with Dave Risley
12th December	Society Annual General Meeting (Members only)

May meeting – Visit to St Anne and the Blessed Dominic Church in Sutton

I have to admit that when we get the programme for our meetings the one I always look for is the church visit. We all have churches that have some significant meaning to us – the church we regularly attend or went to as a child or the church we married in etc. Each church we visit has its own history or story to tell.

This year's visit to St Anne's church was no exception to this and probably has more of a story to tell than many churches. Our President Richard Waring provided us with a history of the church and its association with the Passionists. We were also shown a very interesting video presentation showing some photographs of the old church,



the monastery, the Blessed Dominic, Father Ignatius Spencer and Elizabeth Prout.

The original church opened in 1853 adjacent to the Passionist monastery which opened in 1849. Sadly this church damaged heavily by mining subsidence and had to be demolished. The present church was built in 1973 and has a passing similarity to the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool. What sets this church apart from others in the area is the shrine attached to the church. Beneath the altar in the shrine lie the body of Dominic Barberi, on one side of him lie the remains of Father Ignatius Spencer and on the other side those of Mother Mary Joseph Prout. It is possible that some day in the future St Anne's could be the home of three saints as 'cause for each of them is with the Vatican.

A recent addition to the shrine is a collection of Father Ignatius Spencer's personal belongings.

In the church grounds is the Grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes which was built using stone from the original church tower and steeple.

This was a most enjoyable visit and we were made to feel very welcome, the evening finished with tea and biscuits, our thanks go to everyone involved in making this a memorable visit. I for one am looking forward to next year's church visit. *Steve Spencer*



Summer Reading

For those of you who enjoy a good read I can recommend these novels (all available for Kindle), the difference with these novels is that they are Genealogical crime mysteries all written by Steve Robinson. Their titles are in order of publication 'In the Blood', 'To the Grave' and 'The Last Queen of England'.

July Meeting – A walk round St Helens Cemetery

Our July meeting took us away from the Town Hall and out to St Helens Cemetery. On a perfect night a large group met with Ted Forsyth for a very informative and interesting guided walk around the final resting places of some of the great and good of St Helens. From Beecham, Gamble and Pilkington to Lily Parr, William Cotham and the Barton's we were taken on a journey back through some of St Helens history and the men and women who helped to put St Helens on the map.

One of the most interesting was Lily Parr, reputedly English footballs most prolific goal scorer, scoring more than 900 goals in a career spanning 1919 to 1950. Lily was 6ft tall and was supposed to have a harder shot than any man and in one game broke a goalkeeper's arm such was the power of her shot.

Lily was a heavy smoker and was said to have asked that the payment she received for playing (10 shillings or 50p in new money) was supplemented with packs of Woodbines, somehow I can't see our modern day players asking for something like this. Lily died in 1978 and was inducted into the Football Hall of Fame in 1992 the only woman so far given this honour.



The recorded first burial at the Cemetery was in 1858, although there is a head stone that records a burial in 1857.

The Cemetery site is huge, there are over 67000 pauper, public and common graves. At one time the Cemetery had 3 chapels – Church of England, Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist sadly only one remains today but the foundations of the other 2 are still there – and the remains of an Abbey which has its own burial ground, there can't be many Cemeteries that could match this.

Moving on from the well-known we moved to the pauper graves, there are large apparently clear areas in the Cemetery unknown to most these are the final resting place of thousands of paupers. Two of these areas hold the remains of over 25000 children aged between 0 and 16 years old. Over the last few years the Friends of St Helens Cemetery have erected memorial headstones on each of these areas the final one being unveiled on 26th March 2013 each a fitting memorial to those who lie in unmarked graves.

Our thanks go to Ted for such an interesting evening. *Steve Spencer*



My thanks go out to our contributors Helen Johnson and Steve Spencer Both of whom have previously submitted articles for our newsletter.

If you have a family story to tell, just give me the gist, and I will do the rest, even the briefest outline can make an interesting article

Just email me at the Society address townshipsfhs@gmail.com Thank you Peter Crosbie Editor.