



St Helens Townships Family History Society

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Autumn

Newsletter No19

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The seasons pass by so quickly, here now are in October already and there are changes happening, not only in the weather but in our Society activities.

We are changing our “workshop evening “ from Monday to Tuesday.

The reason for this is, that on Mondays we did not have exclusive access to the Local History and Archives Library, this meant that the facilities had to be available to the general public as well as our members. In addition the Library closure time had changed from 8:00 pm to 7:00 pm.,the effect was that our members were greatly restricted in time and access to the Library facilities.

Bearing these factors in mind we have requested and been given exclusive access to the Local History and Archives Library on **Tuesday evenings from 3:45 to 6:45**. We believe our members will benefit greatly, and we look forward to hearing your reaction to the changes.

Stop Press Wednesday 16th October 2013

We are very pleased to report that the first of our new workshop sessions, yesterday has been a roaring success. We had a full complement of members in the room. There were of course as with any new arrangements, some minor problems, but the overall consensus is positive, our thanks go out to all who helped to make the change a success. Current members and new members will be welcome each Tuesday.

Meetings in the Town Hall 6:45 pm for 7:00 pm

Thursday 21st November PALS Project Update with Dave Risley

Thursday 12 th December Annual General Meeting (Members Only)

The programme for 2014 is now complete and will be available at the AGM

VISIT TO THE REGISTER OFFICE

On September 19th we visited the Register Office in St Helens and were able to have a behind-the-scenes look around the building and an insight into the workings of the registrars.

Anne Atherton, Superintendent Registrar, greeted us and showed us the paperwork used for registering Births, Deaths and Marriages, most of which is now computerised.



She explained that although there is a thriving birth rate in St Helens most births happen at Whiston Hospital, which of course comes under Prescot Register Office, so be mindful when searching for records, that it is the place where the birth, death or marriage took place that will dictate at which registration office the records are held

Margaret Crosbie then showed us around the 'strong room' where all the records for St Helens District are kept, although because of Data Protection these weren't available to view. She explained the process the registrars go through to find records using index books to find the relevant certificate. If the records haven't been entered into the index books it can prove very difficult to find them, but staff will do their best, and search up to two years either side of any given date to try and find records.



Pauline Hurst showed us some very interesting records they had come across in their research; the death certificate of one gentleman showed he had been murdered and the names of his murderers had been entered on his certificate! This led to more research into the story and records were found showing the transportation of the culprits and their eventual return to England.

The visit was very informative and we came away with a better understanding of the process and sometimes difficulties of finding certificates. If any future visits can be arranged to the Register Office it is highly recommended and anyone researching family history would benefit from it.

Sue Davies



This strongbox was used to transport documents which were needed when marriages took place away from the register office. It is no longer in use.

The Circus came to Town----- and stayed!

Whilst helping a researcher to gather information about her great-grandfather we unearthed newspaper articles and adverts plus the original building plans for a circus that came to town and set up permanent premises on North Road

Circus premises at North Road taken from a map of 1895

Thomas Culeen was born in Burnley in C1845 and brought a wide variety of entertainment to St Helens.

It was certainly an interesting life but was not without its terrible accidents. In the 1860's and 1870's, before Thomas had his own circus, he was a trapeze artist and one of the members of the 'Culeen Troupe' fell from the trapeze and was killed - he was only 15 years old - so sad that the safety equipment did not amount to much in those days.



The circus family was based in Burnley in Lancashire from the 1870's until the 1900's.

Review articles and adverts in the "St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser" from early 1882 gave an insight to the entertainment provided to the local community. Shows appeared every night including the expected clowns, acrobats and jugglers but unexpectedly were the Saturday evening music concerts where opera stars and celebrities attended to entertain the crowds.

Many reviews of shows appear in the papers one such article read in September 1883; "Mr Culeen is happy to inform his patrons that he has secured the services, for one week only, of the great LING LOOK the Chinese Wonder, the acknowledged fire-eater and sword swallower; he dances bare footed on a plate of red hot iron, he bites off pieces off a red hot poker, he places boiling lead in his mouth and other incredible feats. Ling Look in his great cannon trick must be seen to be believed".

Fund raising events and competitions were held in the North Road premises several being for the St Helens Bicycle Club, the St Helens Cricket Club and the Haydock Brass Band.

The above illustrates how local newspapers can be used to expand your family history and give you an insight into your ancestor's lives.

Pauline Hurst

Two White Dogs by Margaret Crosbie

When a parent dies, we usually inherit a shoebox of "treasures" These items were certainly of value to our parent, but with the passage of time, they have become of only historical and certainly little monetary value. I have two such treasures, here is the first, the second will appear in a future newsletter.

My Grandma was brought up in Gregson's Yard off Crab Street, St Helens. She had 3 brothers and 1 sister, When I was a child I remember two white porcelain Staffordshire dogs sitting on my Grandparents mantelpiece over the black range, where Grandma did all her cooking

After she died the dogs passed to my uncle, then to my Dad and finally to me.

My Dad had told me not to get rid of them. **Now what do I do**, as my children don't want them. So I have asked the World of Glass, who have said that they will take them, with a letter of provenance from me.

The story is that Grandma rescued them from her auntie's ash-pit (the bin) in about 1900. The dogs then remained on her mantelpiece until she died in 1958.



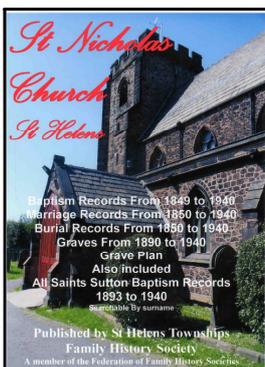
Grandma's brother, William went to live in America in about 1910 taking with him his wife and 2 daughters He settled in Ashville, North Carolina and became a successful building contractor. He never returned to Britain and Grandma never saw him again.

When one of William's daughters came over from USA to visit Grandma, she took a shine to the dogs On returning to America she wrote to Grandma in 1950 (I have this letter) saying that if no one in the family wanted the 2 white dogs could she have them. I don't know how she expected Grandma to send them to America. Needless to say they stayed put on the mantelpiece.

Eventually William and his wife passed away, and as neither of their daughters produced children: when they died, the connection was lost.

Had the White Dogs been sent to America they would now be history, they would have found themselves in the ash-pit again. They may be of little value but to me they mean a lot. All my life I have known these two dogs I am sure my Grandma would be pleased that they have stayed in St Helens and will once again

sit on a mantelpiece over a black range in the World of Glass museum.



The long awaited CD of the transcription of the registers for St Nicholas , Sutton and All Saints, Sutton will be available for members to buy on the 14th October. It will then be available to the general public on the 28th October.

If you would like a copy of the CD It will be available at our Tuesday Workshop Sessions at £10.00 Plus £1.25 p&p if posted.

Email. townshipsfhs@gmail.com for further details.

The Society Committee would like to extend their sincere thanks to all the many unsung heroes who contributed to the production of this and all the other available CDs and publications.