

M&LFHS Newsletter

The monthly newsletter of the
Manchester & Lancashire Family
History Society



January 2024 Issue 45

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Hello and welcome 2024 and the 60th anniversary of our Society. Before I say any more about our plans I would like to thank all our volunteers for their time and hard work during 2023 in ensuring the continued success of our Society. In recent years some societies have been struggling to stay afloat due largely to falling membership, higher costs and increased demand on people's time. Volunteers are the key to a society's success; you could say the backbone of a society.

To celebrate our 60th birthday we will be organising a number of special events throughout the year. I will give more details in the next newsletter.

You may remember that during a week in November we organised 5 ZOOM meetings on consecutive days. Your attendance and subsequent comments mean that we will be organising further ZOOM meetings during 2024. If you have any thoughts about what topics you would like to hear about then please let me know at my usual address.

We will also be holding our annual Family History Fair with a 1960's theme which again will be held at Manchester Central Library.

This month sees the first of our Quarterly Meetings when Michael Billington will be returning to explain about the golden age of postcards with emphasis on Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme. For the afternoon session Keith Warrender will be giving a talk about Deansgate.

The Bolton branch have a talk called 'They went to work in a Russian cotton mill and stayed 40 years' while the Oldham branch continue the cotton theme with an illustrated talk on 'Life and work in Cotton Lancashire ca 1830-1914'. There will be no Anglo-Scots meeting this month.

The newsletter contains all the usual features together with the answer to the word puzzle, the newsletter of the Salford Cemeteries Trust and the Family History Federation news for December,

Best wishes and all the best for 2024.

Barry Henshall

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hello again and a happy new year to you all. With Christmas behind us, I trust you are looking forward, as I am, to 2024 with anticipation.

The end of a year is traditionally a time for assessing performance during the previous 12 months. There'll be time for that between now and the AGM in May.

I prefer to focus on the year – even years – ahead and the challenges that your Society faces. These are many and include a steady decline in membership, diminishing social contact, reduced volunteer commitment and rising administration costs. So, very much a changing environment for the member and family historian. Significant factors driving a lot of this change are the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts across the world and the attraction of the increasing number of online genealogical services.

On the plus side, the advances in digitisation, often led by those online genealogical services, though also adopted by your Society, are very much a bonus. Gone are the days

when the researcher spent the day scrutinising dusty archival records often without helpful indexing. The emergence of technology-led research techniques, such as DNA profiling and the coming use of AI, also make the task easier. I view the growing platforms of social media as a tool we can use to reach the younger generations, as well as maintaining touch with the many members who are remote from our Manchester home.

The trustees and activity managers of your Society are well aware of these challenges and continually anticipate their impact on our members, taking steps to lessen the impact those changes are having on both on our operations, but also on our members.

You may ask, what can the ordinary member do to counteract the changing environment? I would encourage taking advantage of all the benefits available from your membership subscription. This has been held steady at £15 per annum for a considerable time now, though we have needed to trim some of the benefits because of rising costs.

Even so, our Great Database continues to provide unrivalled access to archived records covering many aspects of Greater Manchester's past; the vast experience of many of our members is always available when you log on to the Member Forum; the Helpdesk service at Central Library and our outlying branches can often supply the answers to those vexing questions you meet in your research; our database of past copies of The Manchester Genealogist holds a massive treasury of research material and sources, none of which tend to change very much with the passage of time and you will always be welcome when you join our meetings, whether online or in person. These are just some of the ways the work of our volunteers provides guidance and assistance to you. There will be other ways which will become apparent with close examination of our website, <https://www.mlfhs.uk>. I contend that this list of benefits represents great value for the price of your annual subscription, so would urge you to make the most of it.

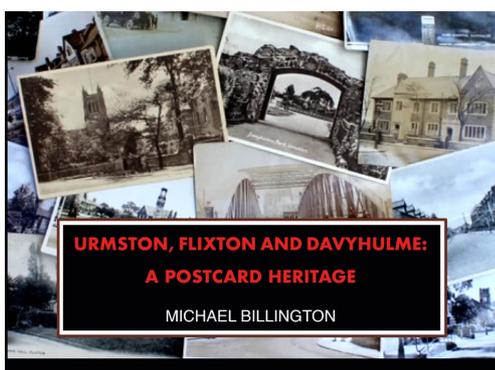
The year ahead will be the 60th since our founder Robert Chorlton enthused eight of his fellow workers at the Avro Works, Chadderton with the delights of the family history bug. We shall be celebrating the results of that intuitive action throughout 2024, so look out for opportunities to contribute to our activities throughout the year. Why not take a leaf out of Robert Chorlton's book and enthuse a friend into the joys of family history research? You know it's an absorbing and worthwhile pastime with an interesting outcome. Why not pass it on?

Best wishes for your research in 2024.

David

EVENTS/TALKS

Manchester Branch



Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme: A Postcard Heritage - Michael Billington

17 January 2024
Wednesday, 10.30am
Manchester Central Library

Booking: will be on Eventbrite
Cost: members - free of charge

Cost: non-members - £3

Join us on Wednesday, 17th January at 10.30am for this, our first quarterly talk of the day. Michael explains that The Golden Age of postcard collecting, known as deltiology, was between the years 1902 to 1914, an era when collecting became popular.

With regular and efficient collections and deliveries it was not uncommon to find such messages as "See you at 2pm this afternoon"; the text message of yesteryear?

This book looks at the development of the publication and collecting of postcards in the Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme area, and the postcards also chronicle the 'then and now' views of streets, pubs, churches, grand houses, parks, hospitals, railways, cenotaphs, canals and bridges.



The Deansgate Story - Keith Warrender

17 January 2024
Wednesday, 1.00pm
Manchester Central Library

Booking: will be on Eventbrite
Cost: members - free of charge
Cost: non-members - £3

In 2023, Keith talked to us about The Lost Districts of Manchester - a talk full of history, anecdotes and images that we had never seen before. This time we have asked Keith to talk to us about Deansgate, that ancient thoroughfare, well known to many of us whether because of the great stores of their day, such as Kendal Milne, or because of our searches for Ancestors who lived and worked in the smaller streets and courts. This is what Keith says about his talk:

"Discover the stories behind the buildings and businesses on this famous thoroughfare, with revelations about the people behind them. Deansgate boasts three tunnels, and this presentation which ranges from bombs to Usane Bolt, will make you look at this historic street in a different light." Join us on Wednesday, 17th January at 1.00pm for this, our second quarterly talk of the day.

Full details of Manchester meetings <https://mlfhs.uk/manchester/events>

Explore talks for 2024:

17th February - Missing in the GRO

25th May - Validating your research

28th September - 1939 Register or 'Deep Dive'

23rd November - 1921 Census.

Note that the last two topics may swap dates.

Bolton Branch



They went to work in a Russian cotton mill and stayed 40 years

Wednesday, 10th January 2024 at 7.30pm,

- This is the second Wednesday in the month
 - Room meeting at Bolton Golf Club, no ticket required
- Online via Zoom [Eventbrite](#) ticket required
MLFHS member - free Non-members MLFHS - £3

The story of how my Grandma's Uncle Thomas Fords, an Operative Cotton Spinner and his wife Fanny (nee Hall) a Cotton Winder were recruited to work in Russia in 1861 and stayed for forty years.

The speaker got interested in the subject only to find that there were thousands of other British in Russia up until 1917 and some actually never came back. They made quite a community for themselves, including their own churches, schools, and their own doctors. Some of the North West names identified include Yates, Knight, Shawcross, Boardman, Crawshaw, Ashworth, and there were many more. This fascinating research is still a work in progress. The pictures from Russia were kindly supplied to him from a local Russian museum in Narva after an enquiry some years ago. The head stone is of Tom and Fanny who had returned to Bolton by 1901.

Please note this is the second and not the first Wednesday of the month, which is our norm due to seasonal adjustments.

Full details of Bolton Branch meetings <https://mlfhs.uk/bolton/events>

Oldham Branch



'Life and Work in Cotton Lancashire, c1830-1914' an illustrated presentation given by Dr. Michael Winstanley

Date and time:

Sat, 13 Jan 2024 14:00 - 15:30 GMT

A free, zoom only meeting... all are very welcome
Booking, for zoom link, essential on [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)

What were the major changes in the Lancashire cotton towns during the 19th century and did they affect the roles of men, women and children? Is it possible to generalise about life and work in them or were they all distinctive?

And how different were these towns from elsewhere in Lancashire or the rest of the country?

This illustrated presentation, given by Dr. Michael Winstanley, seeks to provide answers to these questions.

Full details of Oldham Branch meetings <https://www.mlfhs.uk/oldham/events/meetings>

Anglo-Scots

No meeting in January

Full details for the Anglo-Scots Branch meetings <https://mlfhs.uk/anglo-scots/events>.

The National Archives

Our exciting programme of online talks is for everyone and delivered by experts, specialists and special guest speakers. When you book an event, you are invited to pay what you can – this is optional and entirely at the discretion of attendees. Some of our events remain completely free.

The National Archives also hosts a range of onsite events. To browse these, please see [Events at Kew](#) page.

Get priority booking to all events every month when you subscribe to the weekly newsletter. Get priority booking – sign up to the [mailing list](#) now.

Rootstech 2024

If you are thinking of being part of the Rootstock event 2024, whether in person or online, then pop over to <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/registration/> . The event is being held between the 29th February to the 2nd March.

BOOKSHOP

There have been no recent additions to the bookshop. We are currently carrying out a stocktake and it is more than likely we will be offering a range of items at greatly reduced prices. Please watch this space.

PROJECTS UPDATE

The following update has been posted to Newspaper Announcements
Added 4,830 BMD announcements from Manchester Courier for 1848 to the Great Database. Transcribed by Linda Bailey, Laura Lewis, Chris Norcross and Chris Hall

The following update has been posted to Horwich Locomotive Works Staff Record Cards
832 records added to the Great Database for surnames SUDDLELL-WARD together with 768 records for surnames PILKINGTON to TABERNER and 756 records added for surnames WALMSLEY to YOXALL. Scanning completed.

HELPDESK

MLFHS Helpdesk Update:

"The Society's Family History Help Desk continues to be a firm favourite with visitors to Manchester Central Library. We continue to offer FREE assistance to members and non members Monday - Friday 10:30-3:30. The queries are wide ranging and the visitor feedback is always great: "Informative, helpful, personable", "super helpful", "a great facility", "very helpful volunteers". We are located behind the café on the ground floor of Manchester Central Library. No booking is necessary - just drop in. We look forward to seeing you".

NOTE: The Helpdesk is closed until Monday 8th January 2024

WEBSITE NEWS



I'm Dean and I'm a journalist and urban historian writing about and exploring the backstreets of the Victorian city.

Over a decade ago, while researching my family history, I discovered that my nineteenth century forefather lived in one of the most notorious of Manchester's historic slums — the ironically named district of Angel Meadow.

In February 2012, archaeologists [made a surprising discovery](#) there — my ancestor's home.

It inspired me to write a book about the area (Angel Meadow: Victorian Britain's Most Savage Slum) which was published in 2016 and I've since gone on to do a PhD in urban history at Manchester Metropolitan University. Angel Meadow was the subject of [my thesis](#).

So that brings me to the here and now, and also to you. My idea for starting this newsletter is to continue keeping alive the stories of the Mancunians who lived in the city before us. In each newsletter, I'll tell you a story from the streets of the Victorian city. It will mainly focus on the areas I know best — Angel Meadow, Ancoats and the Northern Quarter — and in time I plan to explore further afield.

I'd really like to hear your own family stories too and if you have any old photos to share with other readers, then so much the better.

You can contact me in my chat group or feel free to send me an email at manchesterhistory@substack.com.

My big hope is that we can create a community where we can discuss the history of the city over a virtual coffee. I hope in time to run some history-related events too. Let's see what we can find out together.

Here's a few of my most popular posts to help you get started. You can read my full archive at www.manchesterhistory.uk and where you can subscribe to my newsletter.

A hot night in a Manchester rat pit

The gaslights in the backstreet beer house near Piccadilly were so dim that a policeman stepping inside would need to adjust his eyes to the darkness. It would give the house's patrons a few seconds to make a run for it before he had a chance to pick out their faces. [Read full story](#)

How Manchester came close to a massacre a decade before Peterloo

The crowd of handloom weavers watched in silence as the dragoons formed their horses into a long line on the far side of the field in the early evening light. They could hear the dragoon captain shouting orders before the line finally jolted forward.

[Read full story](#)

How archaeologists unearthed my ancestor's house

Whenever I would head into town before Angel Meadow was redeveloped, I'd park my car in the same spot. It wasn't that the car park was convenient for the Arndale Centre. For me that anonymous piece of flat concrete surrounded by a green, chain-link fence was sacred ground.

[Read full story](#)

Finding William: An Irish family history

I have my own way of finding him among the grey rows of Victorian paupers' graves. Passing in front of the Campo Santo, I line up the two statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and follow their gaze. They look towards a gap in the trees where a grass track opens up beneath the high canopy of branches and leaves.

[Read full story](#)

Who Do You Think You Are

There is an excellent article at <https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/feature/old-handwriting> which may help you in deciphering old styles of handwriting such as wills, Baptism records etc. It also lists a number of useful web sites. Sadly there are a number of adverts that you will need to navigate around.

A short but interesting article, especially for our newer members giving advice and ideas in starting your family tree.

<https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/getting-started/starting-your-family-tree>

The bar at the top of the page will lead you to:

[Latest](#), [TV Series](#), [Tutorials](#), [Magazine](#), [Q&A](#), and [Real stories](#)

There is also an option to subscribe to the magazine

MyHeritage: The MyHeritage Blog will keep you up-to-date. Why not drop by using this [link](#). There are 14 categories to search through and I am sure that you will find something of interest.

Family Tree: Keep up to date with the latest happenings in the world of family history with Family Tree News & Views by following this [link](#).

You can also get the latest advice, opinion and updates from the Family Tree team and a range of genealogy experts, from in-depth guides to research and archives to the latest goings on at the Family Tree magazine HQ by following this [link](#).

Find my Past: There is a wealth of information on the Find my Past website. Just follow the following links

[Getting Started](#)

[Build Your Family Tree](#)

[Family Records](#)

[What's New?](#)

[Help Hub](#)

[Discoveries](#)
[History Hub](#)
[The Findmypast Community](#)

1939 Register

If you've been unable to trace a relative in the 1939 Register, you may be in luck. We've opened 187,771 previously-redacted records in this landmark collection.

Ancestry: An Ancestry Blog can be found [here](#)

The Genealogist: The new Society of Genealogists library and archive, at 40 Wharf Road in north London, opens to members on 13 December, with access for members of the public from 3 January.

Further news and articles can be found [here](#)

FamilySearch:

Finally why not try the FamilySearch [blog page](#).

ORPHAN BMDs

If you have any BMDs you no longer want then why not consider dropping them off at our Helpdesk or you can send them to:

M&LFHS

61 Queens Road, Urmston, M41 9HF

If you wish to keep your certificates then you can send scans, preferably as a PDF to office@mlfhs.org.uk and they will be passed on to me. If you have problems sending scans to this address then please contact me at newsletter@mlfhs.org.uk and I will suggest an alternative means of forwarding the PDF files.

UKBMD UPDATES

Bath BMD has been updated to add:

Marriages:

317 for Combe Down, Holy Trinity, registers at Bath (1986-2021)

Many thanks to the register office and their volunteers for these.

Kingston upon Thames BMD website has been updated to add:

Births:

6,242 for Kingston, registers at Kingston (1892-1896)

Many thanks to the Register Office and their volunteers for these.

The Staffs BMD was updated on the 7th December 2023 with the following

Deaths:

4,671 for Stoke, registers at Stoke-On-Trent (1980-1984)

Marriages:

44 for Chasetown, St John Community Church, registers at Lichfield (1998-2011)

44 for Alton, St John's Roman Catholic Chapel, registers at Newcastle-Under-Lyme (2009-2021)

6 for Uttoxeter, Midnight Cry Fellowship, registers at Newcastle-Under-Lyme (2001-2008)

Births:

749 for Stoke, registers at Stoke-On-Trent (1983-1992)

Replaced for corrections and to add mother's maiden names:

4,007 for Ipstones, registers at Newcastle-Under-Lyme (1884-1908)

www.staffordshirebmd.org.uk

and

www.westmidlandsbmd.org.uk

New data has been added at www.lancashirebmd.org.uk as follows:

Added 4,605 Births for Bury RD comprising:

Bury (1987-1989)

Added 2,450 Deaths for Bury RD comprising:

Bury (1976-1978)

Added 1,498 Marriages for Bury RD comprising:

Bury Register Office or Registrar Attended (1969-1971)

Prestwich, Prestwich Hebrew Congregation. (also known as Shrubbery) (1939-2020)

Thanks are due to Tony Foster and his team.

For access to all the UK's major BMD and Census sites visit <https://www.UKBMD.org.uk/>

For access to all the UK's major Family History sites visit <https://www.UKGD.org.uk/>

For access to all the UK's major Military Family History sites visit <https://www.UKMFH.org.uk/>

MANCHESTER ARCHIVES+

The main partners in Archives+ are:

Manchester City Council - Libraries & Archives

– Greater Manchester County Record Office (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities)

– Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives (Manchester City Council)

– North West Film Archive (Manchester Metropolitan University)

– Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre & Education Trust (University of Manchester)

– Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society

– Manchester Registration Service (Historic Registers)

Manchester Histories.

Why not visit the Manchester Archives+ [website](#) where you can sign up for their Blog via e-mail and also delve into a huge collection of subjects. There are 25 categories to choose from.

NORTH WEST SOUND HERITAGE

Unlocking our Sound Heritage

Thousands of cassettes, open reels, CDs and MiniDiscs are sitting in archives, museums, libraries and in people's homes all over the UK. All kinds of unique live music, radio and conversation are recorded on these tapes and discs. We've already lost many of the people captured on them. And the British Library estimates that we have fifteen years to preserve the sounds themselves.

That's why the British Library has received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to establish Unlocking Our Sound Heritage, an exciting new national project to save thousands sounds which are at risk of being lost forever.

Archives+ is the hub partner for the North West region, which covers Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. We'll be digitising around 15,000 recordings on 5,000 cassettes, reels and optical discs held all over the region here at Manchester Central Library.

This is a fascinating site providing a flavour of times gone by. If you are a sword swallower then discover what not to eat and drink before a performance!

Follow on Twitter - [@archivesplus](#).

Find more information [here](#). Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

NORTH WEST FILM ARCHIVE

Welcome to the [North West Film Archive](#), the professionally recognised public home for the moving image heritage of the North West of England.

WHO WE ARE

From historical footage and home movies to newsreels and adverts, we find, preserve and share over 50,000 items of film and video, for public, educational and professional use. We love film and how it can open a window into the past and the present in ways that can be powerful, moving and unexpected.

Part of Manchester Met, and based within Manchester Central Library's Archives+ partnership, we are a specialist resource dedicated to saving and growing our region's rich filmed history.

WHAT WE DO

Do you need some footage for teaching, broadcasting or an artistic or community project?

Do you have film of our region's people or places that needs looking after?

Whoever you are, if you need a professional and friendly service, we're here to help.

We offer:

- research support and loan or licence of footage (including for professional broadcast)
- bespoke learning and teaching support
- opportunities to hire or watch unusual and interesting films, with a local and historical theme
- opportunities for community engagement and collaboration

- a home for the region's film and video, where moving images are professionally preserved, stored and made available, for now and for the future

This is a site well worth visiting The NWFA was set up in 1977 and preserves moving images made in or about Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside and Cumbria and offers a variety of access services to users in the public, academic and commercial sectors.

SOCIETY CONTACTS

Website: - <https://www.mlfhs.uk>

Newsletter editor: - newseditor@mlfhs.org.uk

Bookshop: - bookshop@mlfhs.org.uk

MLFHS Office: - office@mlfhs.org.uk

The Manchester Genealogist: - office@mlfhs.org.uk or editor@mlfhs.org.uk

MLFHS mailing address: Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society,
3rd Floor, Manchester Central Library, St. Peters Square, Manchester, M2 5PD.

SOCIETY BRANCHES

Oldham Branch of MLFHS - <https://www.mlfhs.uk/oldham>

Bolton Branch of MLFHS - <http://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton>

Anglo-Scottish Branch of MLFHS – <http://www.mlfhs.uk/anglo-scots>

A MESSAGE FROM OUR GENERAL SECRETARY

The best and quickest way to contact the society is by emailing office@mlfhs.org.uk we will then direct you to the relevant person to help you. Our phone is very rarely used.

If possible please use the on-line option on our new website to join or renew your subscription. We use Stripe but you can pay as a guest with your card if you wish.

Have you considered taking out a Bank Standing Order? It means you don't have to think about renewing and you can stop it at any time. Always include your membership number. We can always find it for you should you forget.

There is so much you can learn from our website it seems a shame that members don't make the most of it. From the members area on the website you can make changes to your address and email just log in. It is so easy.

We recently held a talk on how to get the best from the website which was very well received. We are looking at ways to bring this to everyone. Most people were amazed at just what was available on the site and I'm sure went home to try it all out.

If you must pay by cheque please send to:
MLFHS, 17 Fortyacre Drive, Bredbury, SK6 2EZ
DO NOT send it to the office and we no longer take cash at the Helpdesk.
The Click and Collect is now available from our shop.

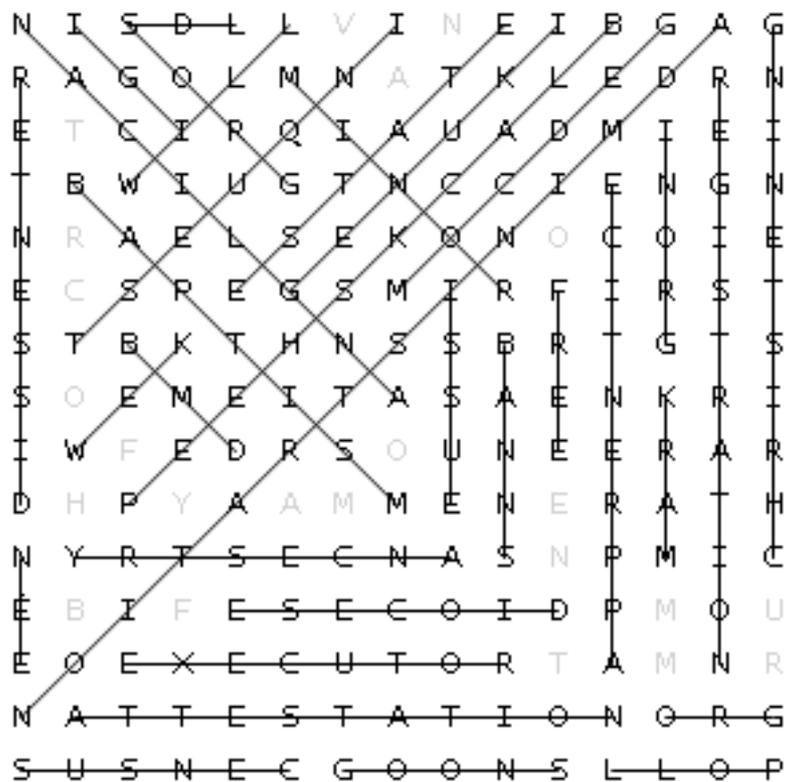
Best wishes
Elsie



Genealogy

Find the word in the puzzle.

The Answer



Newsletter

FRIENDS OF SALFORD CEMETERIES TRUST

WINTER 2023

A Note from the Chairman, Paul Sherlock.

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of our Newsletter. On reflection I can see parallels between my quarterly notes and Janus, *“the Roman god of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages, frames, and endings”*. He is always figured with two faces looking in opposite directions. It’s not that I’m suggesting that my attitudes to members are in any way “two-faced,” but basically what I do mostly is tell you what events we have had and then what events are ahead of us. As we have now completed three years of our Newsletters, I wonder if this might be getting a bit repetitive. I assume that it is useful to have updates about our activities, but if I were reading these rather than writing them, I suspect that I might feel that they are becoming a bit samey and would like to see something new and inspiring.

Fortunately earlier this year we had some rather different events in the form of our Walkabouts, but in the last quarter it has been back to our established events such as the Heritage Open Day Guided Tour of Weaste Cemetery in September and Salford Histories Festival in October, both of which were once again successful and enabled us to communicate with friends old and new and hopefully expand our community a little. At the Histories Festival, it was particularly helpful to be adjacent to the stand for the now reconstituted Agecroft Cemetery Chapel Restoration Group. I also managed to attend the November Armistice remembrance event at Agecroft Cemetery, which was organised by the Royal British Legion, and which we still like to support. The Mayor and others laid wreaths at Commonwealth War Graves, the Civilian Blitz Memorial and the Lancaster Bomber Memorial.

We are now approaching a quiet period in our calendar, but on Sunday 17th December at 11 am, a small, but loyal group of members will lay a wreath at the Agecroft Cemetery Civilian Blitz Memorial, in memory of Salford citizens who were killed by the German bombing blitz of Christmas 1940. We invite you to join us. Later, at 12 noon, a wreath will be laid on the Blitz memorial at Peel Green Cemetery. And at 12.30 pm we will be laying a wreath on the Common Grave memorial at Weaste Cemetery. By the time any further events (other than a committee meeting) will be due, I should have written my Spring Note. Whether that will contain anything refreshingly different, I cannot as yet say, but I guess it’s down to others to somehow let me know what they want, unless I have some personal inspiration with the New Year. Meanwhile, I would like to wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and successful 2024.

Cemetery News from Bereavement Services Officer, Luke Smith.

The Bus Shelter at Agecroft Cemetery has now been refurbished, and the security fencing around the former Burial Chapel has been improved to reduce the possibility of further damage to the building. New book of remembrance cabinets at Agecroft and Peel Green Crematoria have been installed, which are now wheelchair accessible. Also, the public toilets at both sites have been refurbished. Footpaths at the rear of Peel Green Cemetery

are being re-furbished to improve access and drainage. New litter bins have been installed at Weaste Cemetery to improve the collection process and to deter fly tipping.

As you may be aware, the cremation process leaves behind metal objects which can be recycled. Our recycling of metals scheme can make positive use of this. I'm pleased to report that a donation of £14,000 has recently been made to local charity Andy's Man Club. This charity is engaged in men's suicide prevention, by offering free-to-attend, peer-to-peer support groups across UK and online. Bereavement Services Manager Barry Ellis is completing a 51 mile sponsored walk, visiting ten cemeteries in Greater Manchester on 7th and 8th December during Grief Awareness Week, raising money for Andy's Man Club and Once upon a Smile. This latter charity provides emotional and practical support for children and families who have lost a loved one.

Unusual Gravestone Inscriptions at Weaste Cemetery, Graham Ramsden.

Captain John Furniss of the barque "Crusader" who was washed overboard during the storm at Buenos Ayres on 30th August 1860, aged 23. This vessel was a three-masted sailing ship, 86 feet in length and weighing 224 tons. It was reported that a terrible gale occurred on La Plata River during 29/30 August creating widespread destruction. The British barques Crusader a Reciprocity came into contact and sunk each other, and a number of lives were lost.

Thomas George Butler Digance, the beloved son of Thomas and Sarah Digance, who was killed on the Manchester Ship Canal at Hollins Green, 5th October 1888, aged 15 years. Erected by his fellow workmen and friends. This happened during construction of the canal and details are not known, but young boys were employed to support the Navvies as errand boys and tea boys.

Michael Kiveal, who was accidentally burned to death at 140 Tatton Street, Salford, on 14th May 1902, aged 52. The Salford Fire Brigade attended the fire at his Hardware and Toy Shop in which six members of his family barely escaped with their lives. Mrs Sarah Kiveal aroused the children, threw bedding out of the front upstairs window and they managed to jump out one by one. When Michael's body was found, he was burnt beyond recognition.

Some Interesting Cemetery Snippets from Jean Coward and Sue Tydd.

Agecroft Cemetery. On 26th January 1922, Daniel Allam, a 17-year-old Colliery Wagoner employed at Pendleton Colliery, on Whit Lane, was struck and killed by a runaway wagon. A steel rope securing a fully loaded coal wagon snapped and free-wheeled down an incline for 30 yards, smashing against an empty wagon that Daniel was pushing. He was killed instantly.

Peel Green Cemetery. Eric Howard Valentine aged 21 was killed in an accident in Worsley Road, Winton at midnight on 7th April 1934. He was returning from Bolton on his motorcycle when he swerved to miss a cyclist, struck a kerb and crashed. He was employed in Eccles Town Clerk's office.

Swinton Cemetery. On 28th April 1892, the remains of the late Rev James Lee of Haslingden was interred at Swinton Cemetery. The deceased was 52 years old and had been 31 years in the Primitive Methodist ministry. He was born in Wogden, near Swinton. The Mayor of Haslingden and many Non-Conformist ministers of the town attended the funeral.

Weaste Cemetery. After flooding of the River Irwell in August 1881, the body of an unknown man was pulled out of the river by Regent Bridge, in a badly decomposed state. The Salford Reporter printed a description of the man and his clothing, but no-one came forward. He was buried in a common grave. Two weeks later, two women came forward saying that the unknown man could be their husband. When the body was exhumed, one of the women, Mrs Horrocks, recognised her husband and the body was then re-interred.

Agecroft Cemetery. John Dudgeon Giles was Medical Superintendent for Salford Union Infirmary (Hope Hospital), Pendleton for 25 years. He received an OBE for outstanding services during the First World War. He was largely responsible for enlarging and modernising the X-ray and other departments. On the night of 23rd December 1940, German aircraft dropped a one thousand pound parachute bomb onto the hospital which killed John, his wife Annie and several other staff. He was buried at Agecroft Cemetery on 31st December, age 60, and his wife Annie was buried on 13th January 1941, aged 59.

Peel Green Cemetery. Alderman John Staton Speakman was an Insurance Superintendent and an Eccles Politician. He became Mayor of Eccles for 1835/36 and was awarded an MBE in 1937 for his role as Chairman of the Eccles Local Employment Committee. At an event to celebrate 21 years of his chairmanship of that Committee, on 8th January 1944, he rose to thank his staff, uttered a few words, sank back in his chair and died almost immediately.

He was buried at Peel Green Cemetery on 12th January 1944, aged 80.

Recent Research Biographies at Weaste Cemetery from Pete Kilvert.

Oliver Yates (1813 – 1897) was a Cotton Yarn Agent/Merchant in Manchester, who later returned to his roots as a Farmer in Woodhead, near Belthorn, Blackburn, Lancashire. He later retired to Southport Lancashire, where he died.

William Percival Pochin (1875 – 1881) was only in his sixth year when he died, but his uncle was Henry Davis Pochin who was a Manufacturing Chemist, Director of a colliery and Mayor of Salford from 1866 to 1868.

John Thomas Cheers (1862 – 1934) was a House Painter and employed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society in Pendleton. He became Superintendent of Painters and was also made a Justice of the Peace in 1924.

Susan Walmsley (1827 – 1901) was the subject of a 1904 postcard of the Weaste Cemetery Gates. It was addressed to Miss E Latham of Douglas, Isle of Man, and referred to her dear grandmother, being interred within.

William (Bill) Horrocks (1843 – 1918) was one of the early pioneers of Socialism in Salford and the organiser of the Salford Gasworkers Union. There is some mystery about his death, as he was found drowned in the Bridgewater Canal.

Private Henry Flynn (1852 – 1885) was a trumpeter in the band of the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards. In 1871 he was stationed at the Cavalry Barracks in Hulme, Manchester and in 1881 he was stationed in Aldershot.

John Joseph O'Sullivan (1835 – 1872) was a very popular actor and comedian in the Victorian theatres in England. He played Shakespearian characters and was later known for playing the role of Irish stereotype characters in Irish plays.

Richard Boyer (1832 – 1874) was a Newspaper Clerk in Manchester and in 1859 became a Volunteer in the 56th Lancashire Rifles, which was created as a reserve regiment in time of war. He was buried with military honours.

William Baylis (1828 – 1869) was a Carpenter and Joiner in Worcester and came north to Hulme, Manchester in the early 1850s to be a Draper/Hosier in partnership with his wife Jane, who was a Draper/Milliner.

John Clegg Boond (1809 – 1886) was a Warehouseman in Manchester who took out patents to improve Jacquard loom apparatus. His niece was Frances Hodgson Burnett who wrote the popular children's novel "The Secret Garden."

Please visit and join our Facebook site: Friends of Salford Cemeteries Trust.

Also visit our website: www.WeasteHeritageTrail.co.uk.

Deadline for Spring 2024 issue is 1st March 2024. petekilvert@virginmedia.com.



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

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REALLY USEFUL Bulletin

No 40

December 2023

Welcome to this bumper Christmas edition of the *Really Useful Bulletin!*

In this **SPECIAL 40th** issue you will find two lead articles

Christmas Past and Present and *Women at War*

There are **Christmas giveaways**, our **New Year book sale** plus a useful list of all Bulletin articles since 2020!



We send very best wishes to all Bulletin readers for Christmas and for successful ancestor hunting in 2024!





Really Useful Bulletin



Christmas Past and Present

by Charlotte Soares

*Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat,
please put a penny in the old man's hat.*

The days are getting shorter, there will be frosty or damp, foggy days as we head towards the darkest time of year in the northern hemisphere: midwinter. The midwinter solstice is when the sun doesn't rise far above the horizon and our forefathers prayed for the return of the sun, for spring to come, for food to grow and for healthy animals to have their young.

In pagan times a festival of light was held on the shortest day. Candles and lamps were burned as a prayer to the sun to bring back warmth and daylight. The further north you go, the less light there is in winter till you never see the sun above the horizon. How did our ancestors manage this time of depressing gloom? Fires were important, they must not be allowed to go out. A log was brought in to burn throughout the dark days, though there is no written mention of them being 'special' till the 1600s when they were referred to as the Christmas or Yule log. Nowadays, we remember them with chocolate log cakes dusted with icing sugar and perhaps a tiny model robin, the bird that kept a flame-coloured breast all year and stands out among bare winter branches like a ray of hope. In snowy winters people would encourage robins into their homes to stay alive through freezing weather.

Once the special winter log was alight, it was bad luck for the fire to go out. It was the only warm and light spot in old houses. People would sit in the inglenook and share stories, especially spooky ones, drink and play cards. On Christmas Eve, a Yorkshire tradition was for the youngest person to light candles from the Yule log and place them on the table. It was a solemn sacred moment and chatter stopped until the candles were on the table. My father was from Yorkshire and, whether a remnant of this or not, we had real candles on a real Christmas tree and there was a solemn moment on Christmas Day when the electric lights were turned off and the candles lit and then we'd sing carols. It seems very old fashioned now we have the television on, fairy lights adorning our trees for weeks and often the trees not even real.

Greenery was important in pagan days and that tradition continues. A cold walk to gather prickly branches of holly, ivy and fir, but the effort was rewarded by the difference it made to the living room. Once the greenery was in, it really was Christmas. Holly round the pictures made the dowdiest room look festive. The Christmas tree did not come in until Christmas Eve and it was the grown-ups

domain to create a surprise for the children on Christmas morning.

Now all the traditional events could take place. In the 1950s we put up streamers of cut and twisted crepe paper, some fringed, looping across the room, corner to corner, and round the edges. When one came unpinned and floated down over the furniture there was a dash to pin it back up, a fire risk with the open coal fire! We had paper lanterns made at school and fancy, bought folded-paper bells and globes. It was all very secular and removed from the Christian celebration of former years.

Margaret climbed on a stool and nailed on the wall the Christmas texts, 'God bless our Home', 'God is Love', 'Peace on this House', 'Happy Christmas and a Bright New Year'. Scarlet-breasted robins, holly, mistletoes, and gay flowers decorated them, and the letters were red and blue on a black background. Never had Susan seen such lovely pictures... (The Country Child by Alison Uttley).

Today, Advent calendars count down the days, a relatively modern tradition rather spoiled by the addition of chocolate which ruins the miniature pictures behind every door. Shopping for almonds and brazil nuts, figs and fruit, ordering a roasting bird or, in these modern days, a nut roast may take over. Preparation through December is, in many ways, the best part of Christmas. Making Christmas cake and Christmas pudding, stirring in wishes, cooking things overnight and waking up to delicious aromas that saturate the house. We try not to get stressed with the endless list of gifts (who realises they symbolise gold, frankincense and myrrh) and devise present hiding places away from children's prying eyes.



I love to see crib scenes as the birth of Jesus was superimposed onto the midwinter festival. Some are life-size, like the one every year outside Canterbury Cathedral. Some are so small they fit in a walnut shell as seen in

a shop window display. There are homemade reminders of schooldays - plaster casts and papier maché a bit worse for wear but loved for their memories - treasures that come out every year after their months in bubble wrap in a cupboard.



Really Useful Bulletin



As Christmas is the time for giving, in the old days we used to go carol singing to raise money for a charity. Traipsing door to door, being given mince pies here, hot drinks there, it was a bit of community spirit probably still alive and well in Britain's country villages. In the 80s, a large garishly-lit trailer sleigh with a live Father Christmas on it did the rounds of suburbia blaring out recorded Christmas music. Someone would knock on every door asking for money for a particular charity. It is not the same thing.

Books remind us of other traditions that have faded away. The mummers, sometimes called guisers, acted plays in disguise in people's houses, getting more and more intoxicated as the evening progressed. Alison Uttley gives a vivid description of them in her semi-autobiographical *The Country Child*. They appear in many classics like *Wuthering Heights*, and those by Hardy and Dickens. Dickens started many Christmas traditions with his novel *A Christmas Carol*, having a day off being one. Being generous and not a Scrooge has become an idiom, gathering the family together, reaching out to the elderly or poor, white Christmases, all inspired by Dickens's writing. He was not the only Victorian writer to add to our experience of Christmas, *The Tailor of Gloucester* by Beatrix Potter tells the legend of animals that can speak on Christmas Eve, and there is Thomas Hardy's poem *The Oxen* (1915):

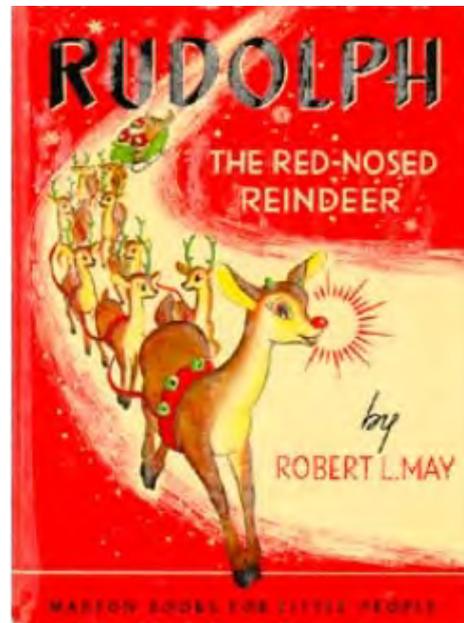
*Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock,
 'Now they are all on their knees',
 An elder said as we sat in a flock
 By the embers in hearthside ease.
 We pictured the meek mild creatures where
 They dwelt in their strawy pen;
 Nor did it occur to one of us there
 To doubt they were kneeling then.
 So fair a fancy few would weave
 In these years! Yet, I feel,
 If someone said on Christmas Eve
 'Come; see the oxen kneel
 In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
 Our childhood used to know',
 I should go with him in the gloom,
 Hoping it might be so.*

O. Henry wrote a marvellous short story about choosing the right present, *The Gift of the Magi*, and Christmas isn't Christmas without reciting *The Night before Christmas* by the American Clement Moore.

*When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
 But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
 With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
 I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick.
 More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
 And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name.*

*'Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and
 Vixen!
 On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
 To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
 Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!'*

Written in 1822, it puts St Nicholas forever in a flying sleigh with eight named reindeer. There is no Rudolph, he did not appear until 1939 in Robert L. May's book.



More recently, films have joined the Christmas must-do list; *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Miracle on 34th Street* and *A Muppet Family Christmas* (all American).

Many nationalities have contributed to modern Christmases. The Germanic influence is perhaps the biggest with toy-making industries from wooden toys to Steiff teddies, Christmas markets, decorated Christmas trees inside the house courtesy of Prince Albert, and gingerbread houses and biscuits. Swedish snowy *tomte* stories, elves and the festival of Santa Lucia, red-and-white decorations and pepperkarka (ginger biscuits) have been adopted here. Blue-coated Saint Nicholas was the original Santa Claus and the putting of presents in shoes on his saint's day, 6 December, became hanging up stockings on 24 December. Coca Cola advertisements took Santa Claus to a whole new level in red suit with bushy white beard so he is forever now dressed in red. British Father Christmas tries valiantly to keep his name from disappearing under the bombardment of Santas. Thank you Raymond Briggs for writing about Father Christmas and not yet another Santa Claus. His cartoon is a must see as well as *The Snowman* which is now a staple of Christmas. Italy has *Babbo Natale* and a kindly witch, *La Befana*, who gives presents on 6 January, Epiphany, the day the three kings arrived at Bethlehem according to legend. France celebrates the three kings with a cake and crowns, and has a literal translation for Father Christmas as *Pere Noel*.



Really Useful Bulletin



DATE OF CHRISTMAS.

The 25th of December is recognised as Christmas Day by Christendom, yet the 25th is merely an accommodation date for the anniversary of Christ's birth. The Christmas pictures, the various carols and suggestions about snow, ice, frost, and the like, would be horribly out of place in Australia, where Christmas falls in summer weather. The year, too, is wrong; most people would say that Christ was born in the year A.D. 1. But our chronology is four years out; this should really be 1924, for Christmas Day, on the most indisputable authority, could not have been later than February B.C. 4.

All attempts to settle the actual day and month have failed, and it took centuries to decide that the 25th December be held as the anniversary. In the first centuries of Christianity several Eastern races observed 6th January as the day, and the Armenians still hold this day.

It was in the fifth century that some uniformity was attained, but many still held "old" Christmas Day. All will agree that if the 25th December is not actually the anniversary day, it is a very convenient one, the holidays breaking the long tedium of winter.

When the calendar changed in 1752, the days between new Christmas on 25 December and old Christmas, 6 January, became days of misrule, 'topsy-turveydom' where anything might happen. At grand houses there was a Lord of Misrule, who was someone lowly in the household selected to organise festivities and entertainment. Masques and plays were performed. Britain brought in the secular pantomime for those lucky enough to afford tickets and live near a theatre. Bawdy jokes for adults go over children's heads so a good time is had by all the family. Panto evolved from the sixteenth-century Italian *commedia dell'arte*, the comic antics of Harlequin and Columbine. Younger children will have had their nativity plays at school, which are often becoming multicultural given the nature of modern society. But who hasn't been a

shepherd, an angel with tinsel halo, half a camel or donkey, or, if honoured, have a speaking part as Gabriel, Mary, Joseph, or the innkeeper – 'No, there is no room at the Inn'.

Christmas today is about company and communication with far-flung friends. I love giving and receiving cards, which first started in Victorian times with the advent of a postal service. During the pandemic I, like so many others, had Christmas alone, talking via Facetime to nearest and dearest and trying to make the best of it. It made me appreciative of the next Christmas when we could gather and share the *Quality Street* tin, and even quarrelsome kids are better than no one to talk to with no charades and monopoly or watching the young ones with their computer games. Last Christmas the postmen went on strike and many cards did not arrive till the end of January often ruined, as in my area, by sacks left outside in all weathers. How often were gifts delayed in our ancestors' days when parcels were delivered by stagecoach and roads were impassable in wet weather which lasted most of the winter?

Other strange Christmases have been travelling ones to explore how other countries decorate: the *marlitrans* of Switzerland driven by St Nicholas; the life-size, red-silk-clad angels in Singapore, and artificial golden Christmas trees the height of houses. Not yet experienced is the Australian BBQ picnic festive season, or a visit to Lapland's many homes for Father Christmas under the Northern Lights complete with reindeer stables, although we did visit one in summer when the reindeer were out to graze and Father Christmas was away on his well-earned holiday!

Happy Christmas!

About the author:

Charlotte Soares is passionate about history and making patchwork quilts. She is a regular contributor to Family Tree magazine, has self-published family histories and aided people with their family history research.

Christmas Gingerbread Biscuits

Make these tasty biscuits and cut in rounds, Christmas shapes or gingerbread men! Great for gifts!

Rub together 350g plain flour, 1tsp bicarbonate of soda, ½tsp mixed spice, 2tsp ground ginger, 1tspn ground cinnamon, pinch of salt and 125g butter.

Add 175g of dark soft brown sugar and mix.

Stir in 4tbsp of golden syrup (warmed—makes it easier!) and one lightly beaten egg.

Work into a smooth dough. Wrap and chill well.

Roll out on floured surface to about 2-3mm thickness, and cut out shapes. Line baking trays with non-stick paper. Bake at fan 160°C / 180°C for 12-15 minutes. Allow to cool a little before transferring to wire rack to cool completely.

If wished, when cold decorate with icing for a festive flourish. *Ed.*

tbsp = tablespoon; tsp = teaspoon.





Really Useful Bulletin



Christmas Giveaways!

Our annual giveaways—send one email for each item you would like to win!

Winners will be picked on 5 January.

Overseas readers who win will receive a £20 voucher for Family History Books Online *in lieu*.

Giveaways only available to registered subscribers. All winners will be notified by email.

Entry email is: competitions@familyhistoryfederation.com



Win both volumes of *Dating by Design*.

Two chances to win!

Simply send an email to above address.

Put into the subject line: By Design

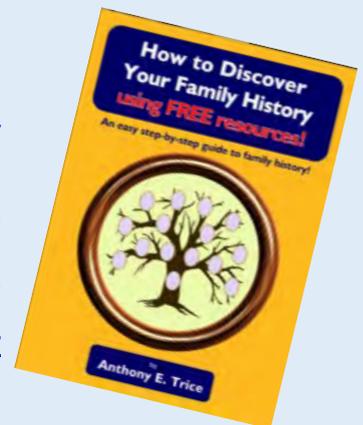


Win a copy of *How to Discover Your Family History using Free Resources*.

Two chances to win!

Simply send an email to above address.

Put into the subject line: Discover



A collection of research aids. These titles plus a little extra added by the elves helping in the stockroom!

Two collections to be won!

Simply send an email to above address.

Put into the subject line: Collection



Father Christmas himself will select books from the collection at Family History Books to make up your mystery parcel.

Two to be won!

Simply send an email to above address.

Put into the subject line: Mystery Parcel





Women at War

by Ian Waller

Warfare was the domain on men until the twentieth century. The transformation began in the First World War when women were included in warfare – and that still exists today. However, for a woman to serve as a sailor or soldier was easier than you might think, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are also earlier examples of women in the military back as far as Boadicea. Before the twentieth century, women who wanted to serve had to conceal their gender or be content to serve as nurse or as camp followers. There have always been females serving in disguise

in the British Army. Phoebe Hessel, (pictured) born 1713 in Stepney, was a private in the 5th Regiment of Foot. The medical treatment she received after sustaining a bayonet wound to her arm exposed her gender. Mary Anne Talbot, 1778-1808, also served. She was illegitimate and her guardian, Captain Bowen of the 82nd Foot, disguised her as a drummer boy when he took her with him on campaigns. In her career she served as a *powder-monkey* on HMS *Brunswick*, was a French prisoner and a junior officer on a merchant ship.



For many of us our nineteenth- and twentieth-century female ancestors could easily have served. The two world wars proved that, with opportunity and the right physical and mental qualities, women could serve both at home and in the theatres of war. So, what roles did they fulfil and how can we find valuable information concerning their service?

WOMEN'S SERVICES – FIRST WORLD WAR

Due to the shortage of menfolk, the government actively recruited women to fill vital roles. Several government departments had responsibility including the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Service and the War Office. However, it was not until midway through the war that the women's auxiliary services began, primarily to replace men in vital non-combatant roles. Some important background and statistical information about the Ministry of National Service which controlled recruitment of women can be found in class NATS1 at the National Archives. In November 1917, ten regional headquarters for recruitment were fully organised around the country. All three services supplemented by auxiliary and civilian

volunteers had women serving as cooks, clerks, wireless operators, code experts, instructors, drivers, storekeepers and fitters. Many members were also in the *thick of it* in the theatres of war.

THE ARMY

The Women's Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC) founded in March 1917 became the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corp. There are three main sets of records - administrative, service and war diaries. Administrative records cover accommodation, uniform and importantly transfers between the WAAC and the WRNS and WRAF. War diaries in class WO95/84 & 85 give day-by-day accounts of movements, discipline etc. Although not on combat duties, some members of the WAAC endured shelling and bombing raids by German aircraft. During one attack in April 1918, nine were killed at the Etaples Army Camp and between March 1917 and February 1918, twenty-one of the 6,000 WAACs in France became pregnant!

The service records in class WO398 are available on *Documents Online* at The National Archives, but like other service records many were destroyed by enemy bombing in World War Two and only about 7,000 records survive. The records comprise enrolment forms, which provide basic genealogical information including marital status and next of kin, statements of service, promotions, health and casualty details and if you are lucky much more.

THE ROYAL NAVY

Although the Royal Navy was the senior service, the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) was not established until November 1917. The organisation and administration is very well documented in various classes of ADM116. The location of service records depends upon whether your ancestor was an officer or rating. Both sets of records are available in classes ADM318 and 336 but for anyone continuing service after 1919 the records are still retained by the Navy.

The officers were not commissioned and were regarded as *Civilians in Uniform*. Officers' records contain a wealth of personal information and some anecdotal detail including attestation forms and correspondence. There are also two original registers in class ADM321 that include details of appointments, promotions and resignations. Ratings' service records are less detailed but still give information about service, age on enrolment, next of kin and particulars of character and ability.



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THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

As the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) was not formed until 1 April 1918 only a few records of serving personnel are available for World War One. Officers' records do not appear to exist but the records for airwomen do in AIR80. The records are similar to the other women's service records and include details such as religion, dependants, marital status, physical description and statements of service.



First Chief Controller, Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) in France, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, GBE.

© Art.IWMART3048

The indexes to service records in AIR79 may give name and service number of those who served after 1919 and for whom records are retained by the RAF.

The Official History of the WRAF in class AIR1 is an invaluable resource for information for such matters as daily routine, types of jobs, demobilisation etc.

MEDALS AWARDED TO WOMEN

Campaign medal rolls for Women's army service in World War One and those who received a gallantry medal or were mentioned in dispatches are available. WRNS medal records are in ADM171 and include the British and Victory medals and the Silver War Badge. Women whose service resulted in an honour such as the MBE are recorded in class WO162/65 and may appear in the *London Gazette*. All such WRNS honours appear in the issue of 9 May 1919.

The women's sections of the three services continued beyond the end of the First World War and like all military records those for later years are still retained by the Army, Royal Navy or RAF.

MILITARY NURSES AND NURSING SERVICES

The Army Nursing Service originated in the post-Crimean War period of the 1850s, although it took many years to convince the army medical department of its worth and consequently for it to develop. The first nurses were employed at Woolwich in 1861 and were joined two years later by nurses at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley (pictured below). This establishment of about a dozen women remained unchanged until 1882 when the military Campaign in Egypt resulted in more nurses being sent to care for the wounded.

After 1883, there was a steady increase in numbers and around the turn of the century, the establishment was augmented by members of the National Aid Society, later the British Red Cross, and also by the Princess Christian Army Nursing Service Reserve. The difficulties of maintaining a nursing service during the Boer War [1899-1902] resulted in a major reorganisation providing professionally trained nurses to care for military personnel into the twentieth century. Their records of service are unfortunately incomplete, but those that do survive, and are mainly territorial, can be found at St Bartholomew's Hospital Archive and in class WO339 at the National Archives. They provide an excellent source of information on their movements but include varying amounts of personal detail. Some nurses continued to work during the Great War, and others returned from retirement to do so - for these there is a good chance of records surviving.

In March 1902, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service [QAIMNS] enveloped the Army Nursing Service. Some members of the ANS chose not to transfer to the new service or retire. Most of those who did transfer held senior positions as matrons and sisters in military hospitals.



Picture © www.netley-military-cemetery.co.uk/



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The service expanded in the pre-war period, relying on members of the Army Nursing Service Reserve to fill shortfalls. Members of QAIMNS had to be over the age of twenty-five, single or widowed, and completed a three-year training course in a War Office approved hospital. At the outbreak of the Great War, trained nurses were serving in military hospitals throughout the world. Enrolment in wartime provided nearly 11,000 nurses mainly in the Reserve.

Their service records are part of class WO399 but few records survive for those who resigned before 1914. However, some details can often be traced through nursing journals of the time, and, if they continued to work as nurses after 1921, through the registers of the General Nursing Council found in classes DT10 - 14. Service records for those who served after 1939 and during the Second World War are retained by the Ministry of Defence.

Although women had been employed in naval hospitals from 1744, the Naval Nursing Service was not established until 1884. In 1902 organisational changes resulted in Queen Alexandra also giving her name to a new nursing service for the Navy.

The nurses were initially employed at Plymouth and Chatham and by 1919 the regulars were assisted by 200 Reserves at fifteen naval hospitals and on nine hospital ships. It was not until WWII that the regular establishment increased substantially.

Early service records pre-1865 in class ADM73 give only scant information. Service records of all branches of Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service up to c1927 are on microfilm in class ADM104 at the National Archives giving details of seniority (in line with Royal Navy procedure), age, hospitals where they served, comments on character and work, training and qualifications and date and reason for discharge.

CIVILIANS IN UNIFORM

The Territorial Force Nursing Service was formed in 1908 providing a nursing service for the Territorial Force primarily in military hospitals in the United Kingdom. The women were all civilian nurses who had undertaken to be mobilised in the event of war. In the First World War they also served overseas alongside their colleagues in the military nursing services.

After the war, most of the women continued to serve by going back to civilian life and committing to be mobilized if

the need arose. Many such nurses formed the core of the service in the Second World War. Their records are again in WO339 although because they were often recruited locally some records *may* exist in county record offices.

In 1909 the War Office granted to the British Red Cross the authority to organise on a county basis Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) to provide supplementary aid and medical assistance in time of war. By the summer of 1914 there were over 2,500 stations where over 74,000 girls and women volunteered. During the next four years they worked as assistant nurses, ambulance drivers and cooks in Britain and on the front line.

Initially, the military authorities were unwilling to allow VADs on the front line but relented in 1915 when those over the age of twenty-three and with more than three months experience, were allowed to go to the Western Front, Mesopotamia and Gallipoli. Many went as letter-writers for soldiers who were wounded, ill or illiterate. Wives of prominent service personnel served including May Bradford, whose husband was John Rose Bradford, senior physician to the British Expeditionary Force. She did much to educate soldiers in the etiquette of letter writing.

The British Red Cross Museum and Archives hold extensive but incomplete indexes for VADs in both World Wars. There is no guarantee that the person you are looking for will be found. For conservation reasons the records cannot be searched personally so written applications with a donation are required.



The record cards include the dates of service, duties performed, name of the detachment, places of service and any honours. There are also records for those who served in military hospitals, for trained nurses and medal rolls. Records do not survive for pre-First World War or the inter-war periods but some do survive for the post-World War II period.

THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

Most of us associate the Women's Land Army with World War Two but its origins are back in 1917. The government decided that women would have to become involved in producing food and goods to support their war effort. Some farmers resisted and in 1916 the Board of Trade sent organizing officers around the country

to persuade farmers to accept women workers. This strategy worked and by 1917 there were over 260,000 women working as farm labourers. Disbanded in 1919, it was reinstated in 1939 disbanding again in 1950.

Above is a popular poster from WWII [image © IWM]



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DON'T FORGET

Women served in uniform during the wars in other capacities such as the police, fire service and civil defence so even if you don't find your ancestor in the military services, they would still have done their bit.

SPITFIRE PILOTS

During World War II women of the Air Transport Auxiliary delivered spitfires, hurricanes and Lancasters to all RAF stations in England and on one occasion to Belgium. Many had never flown planes before. They were civilians in uniforms who were of supreme importance to the RAF throughout the war.



*WWII crew at Hatfield,
from Ruth Ballard collection © ATA Museum*

FIRST AID LINK

The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry was created in 1907 as a vital first aid link between the front line and the field hospitals. During the First World War, FANYs ran field hospitals, drove ambulances and set up soup kitchens, often under highly dangerous conditions. Their gallantry awards included seventeen military medals.

NO LONGER NEEDED?

In 1943, the government ended women joining the armed forces because of a severe labour shortage in factories and on the land. Although conscripted, they were then given a choice of working either on the land or in factories. Both did an invaluable job for Britain survival and ultimate victory.

STAFF NURSE ON A BARGE -

A UNIQUE INNOVATIVE EVACUATION

Staff Nurse Mildred Rees, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (*service record WO399/6913*) was leader of a group of nurses who suggested to the authorities that canal barges could be used as hospital

units to evacuate casualties from France and Belgium. Although a much slower and smoother form of transport, in her opinion they could allow nursing staff to successfully facilitate soldier's repatriation and provide proper nursing care.

During the Battle of the Somme Mildred Rees spent her time at No. 4 Ambulance Flotilla Barge 192 nursing some thirty casualties during each trip; it would take the barges a couple of days to evacuate patients to the hospital trains further down the line and this undoubtedly saved endless lives that otherwise may have been lost. Mildred devoted her war service to the medical and nutritional welfare of hundreds of soldiers and because of her meticulous care, none died on the barges.

THE RECORDS

THE ARMY

Service records for women follow a similar style to that of men. The form of enrolment shows age, address, marital status etc and is supported by other documents such as identification certificates and records of service.

THE ROYAL NAVY

In true Navy fashion, the service records for WRNS are a single sheet giving details of person and service. Many omit place of birth although they give an age. They incorporate the next of kin which is genealogically useful.

THE RAF

Records for WRAFs up to the end of the First World War are not that revealing and consist mainly of discharge certificates. These provide basic information about the person including a physical description, enrolment and trade but are significantly lacking in service details.

IN CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the few females who served with the military in previous centuries, at the outbreak of WWI, it quickly became clear and it was a case of *all hands to the pump*. Trained soldiers, sailors and airmen were needed for their specific military fighting roles in action against the enemy – the government and the military soon realised that they didn't have time or the manpower for all the additional peripheral support which was sorely needed in times of war. So this is where and why women became increasingly important to the war effort in both World Wars. The country couldn't do without them!



About the author:

Ian Waller is vice-chairman and education officer of the Family History Federation and a retired professional genealogist. He is a Fellow of AGRA and also a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists.



Really Useful Bulletin



**FHF REALLY USEFUL
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in 2024**

Saturday 20 April

10am-4pm

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Free parking Refreshments available Entrance : FREE (Show programme £1)

www.fhf-reallyuseful.com

East Midlands **LIVE** Really Useful Show will be held on Saturday 15 June 2024

Full details next month!



Really Useful Bulletin



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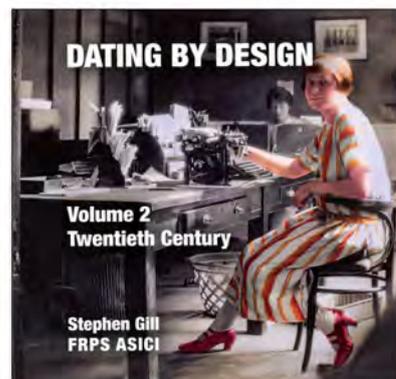
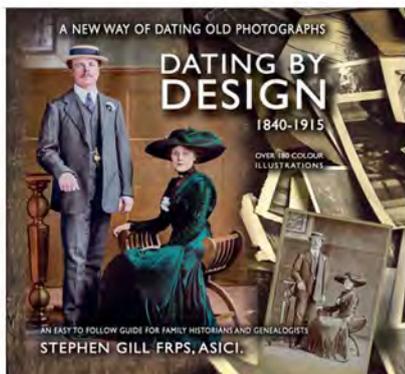
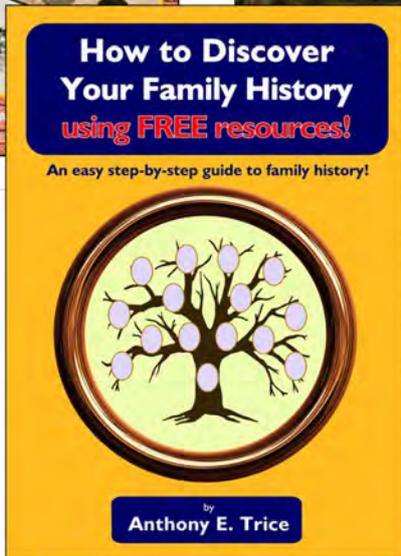
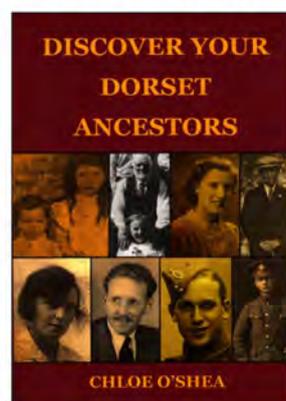
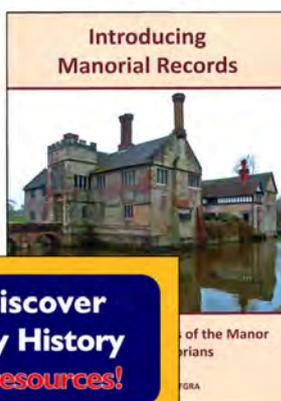
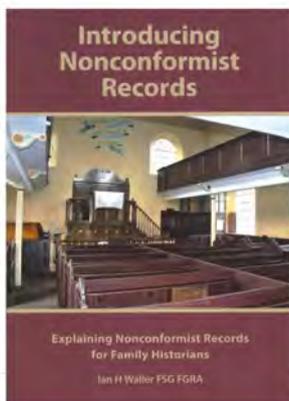
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The list above will help you to locate the appropriate edition using the issue number from the left-hand column.

The direct link for past *Bulletins* is: www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/bulletins

There is much more to be found—to explore—on the new website which is constantly expanding with articles submitted by family historians around the globe.

There is plenty to occupy you for hours and hours. The basic link to explore all the topics is www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/

Scroll down to the “boxes” for each topic and enjoy!



Really Useful Bulletin



NEWS FROM FIND MY PAST

New and improved Findmypast family tree features just in time for Christmas

Just like your Christmas tree, your family tree is incomplete without the memories, traditions and stories that make it truly special. So, as you decorate your tree and gather with relatives this festive season, why not use Findmypast's latest features to add some sparkle to your family tree too?

1. View and build on the rich detail in your Findmypast family tree with the new and improved timeline. It helps you visualise and understand your ancestors' incredible life stories at a glance
2. As your family tree grows using Findmypast hints, it's now easier than ever to see the new facts the hints reveal and compare them with your tree, so you can seamlessly add fresh information and make quick changes without losing any of your research
3. You can scour Findmypast's entire collection of records for any mention of a relative in your family tree, straight from their newly simplified profile. To help you pinpoint their records even faster, their details are automatically added to your search
4. And don't keep your family tree discoveries to yourself. Share your hard work with family, friends and colleagues so they can view your Findmypast tree this festive season. It's a great way to get some research advice, dig up more details and spark conversations – family history is a shared activity, after all.



Explore, preserve and share more of your family history with Findmypast this Christmas to create new memories that will last for generations to come. www.findmypast.co.uk/tree/all-trees

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Have you looked at the "downloads" section on Parish Chest? Have you realised there are some FREE items there of general interest?

Try the British Association for Local History's [Guide to Records Created under the New Poor Law](#), or [Living the Poor Life](#). They also have a free guide to publishing research on the web.

FHF member Nuneaton and North Warwickshire FHS has [Questions to Ask Granny and Grandpa](#)—useful for Christmas gatherings. Also a [Christmas recipe collection](#) with real recipes, and some hilarious ones, too. Check out the Elephant Stew...!!





Really Useful Back Page



Family History Research Aids from the Experts



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- Parish register transcriptions and more from local FHS
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