

# Bolton's Genies



The Monthly Newsletter of the Bolton Family History Society:

<http://www.bolton.mlfhs.org.uk/>

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Newsletter Comments, Queries, and Mail Orders to : [boltongenies@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:boltongenies@mlfhs.org.uk)

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## February 2017

Bolton Family History Society is a branch of The Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society.

Contents of the Member Area. Note various Bolton databases <https://goo.gl/QW1jWb>

Other benefits and how to join <https://goo.gl/tjStxw>

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Greetings everybody after another busy month, culminating in the Feb 1<sup>st</sup> meeting when we “cracked” the 100 attendances. We think we had about 105 but we know some still might have “sneaked” in because we were so busy. (Please do all sign in otherwise we don’t know you are in the building if there is a fire). More later, and news of a lot more to come. You may have gathered that the launch of the Transcription/Indexing project is being well received, triggering various new comments and memories. Please keep them coming.

The recent talk on Bolton Workhouse (see below) has also initiated quite a bit of discussion and memories for which we are very grateful.

Now this next month, we are very much involved in the “relaunch” of the Bolton History Centre to the ground floor of the Central Library and the various events taking place to expand on the theme. It is an exciting time and I invite you to now just look at the diary. On with the show, (and apologies for the length of this epistle, but just so much to put in.)

## OUR LAST and NEXT MONTHLY MEETINGS

**Wednesday January 11<sup>th</sup> Bolton Workhouse Records 1900-1930** Well what an interesting talk this was.



The planned speaker was Dave Burnham who has spent many years researching around this subject, (see “The Great War: Suffrage, Surveillance and the First Crisis in Social Work” pp16-27

<https://goo.gl/2GWdT2> but due to a family crisis Dave was needed elsewhere and his co researcher

Michael Murphy, (a Salford University lecturer) was good enough to step in using the prepared presentation. This meant we got double value as Dave still managed to arrive in time for

question time. The talk ranged from the stereotypical workhouse conditions described by



Dickens where Oliver Twist asked for “more please sir”, and the

misery of oakum <https://goo.gl/dexyCz> picking and other degrading

pointless tasks assigned to inmates circa mid 19thC, to a slow

but steady awareness that one of the main contributors of these desperate conditions was alcohol, to numb their misery. Temperance and more charitable support was the apparent solution. Each town worked out its own approach.

In Bolton, various children’s homes were established, including that funded by the C/E Waifs and Strays Society at 112&114 Radcliffe Road

<https://goo.gl/gxXbCr> and <https://goo.gl/P45cal> , and the National Children’s Home at Crowthorn. <https://goo.gl/Bew9cB> .



We were then told how the physical care of these children was good but how much emotional support was lacking. Most of the children had arrived at this situation, maybe as genuine orphans with no family at all, maybe “surplus” step children after remarriages, maybe forcibly separated from their unmarried mothers “for their own good” and so on.

There were other unofficial options for child care such as “baby farming”, (this story of Amelia Dyer being one of the most notorious examples <https://goo.gl/MyWRCM>, who was eventually hung by Boltonian James Billington at Newgate Prison), or relocation to other members of the family often mainly to assist the workload. Many, however, were accommodated in the “cottage” system, and soon introduced to various basic menial trades whilst still infants, and apprenticed out to anywhere in the country that would have them. <https://goo.gl/mGO4VD>.

In the later 19th C some, including many from Bolton, were allocated to the yet more radical solution of a new life in one of the overseas “colonies”.

Houses at Crowthorn were even named after Australia and Canada. Some survived this, receiving good care, but there is many a tale of sadistic abuse from their new “masters” and “mistresses”, and even deaths

<https://goo.gl/0gxNuv>. Shirley Ann Field was mentioned as a local “success” story

<https://goo.gl/HJE2zU>.



Eventually with the turn of the century more enlightened Poor Law Guardians were appointed in Bolton. These included paid employees, and predominantly quite progressive women such as Alice Barlow, who chaired the first Poor Law Guardians Board, and Alice Kearsley who was the “prototype” full time Bolton social worker (Poor Law Lady Visitor), appointed in 1912 with a case load of 350+ children. Elected guardians included the likes of Sarah Reddish and Mary Haslam, and in 1910 there were eleven other women

In 1930 the local authority took over the responsibility from the charities, and the Guardians were abolished in 1933. These inter war years saw many children still with haphazard outcomes, many quite unsatisfactory, and an awareness developed of the need for more specialist management. Post war in 1948 The Childrens Act abolished the ad hoc arrangements for looked after children that had existed since the Poor Law was introduced in 1601. (This site by the Safeguarding Children e-Academy seems to summarize much of the legislative detail <https://goo.gl/VdyFvc> for your convenience). Local authorities were required to establish a Children's Committee and appoint a Children's Officer.

Michael finished his story at this point and David conveniently arrived to take some questions.

I think all at the meeting would agree that it is all such a big subject that it was very difficult to reduce to one talk, but we had all begun to realise what great leaps have been made in child care over the last 200 years, and that there is still much work to be done. At least we now do have an awareness.

We were assured that many records are available for local research in the Bolton Archives, ( see our Research Officer Graham Holts report below), and I have been told on enquiry to Archivist Caroline Furey that *“there doesn’t seem to be the detail in the link to National Archives Discovery catalogue for our workhouse archive collection so I have attached a work document of the catalogue. The reference for the records relating specifically to children is GBO/9/133a-136a. Children may also be mentioned in the Workhouse Masters report books GBO/6. Some of these records are covered by data protection so anything less than 100 years old will be closed. However, regarding these closed volumes, as always if someone was looking for information about themselves and they can show ID we can extract the information, or if they are looking for information on a deceased person if we can be shown the death certificate we may be able to give access or extract the information.”*

NB David has added that the arts organisation ‘Live from Worktown’ is hoping to have a festival weekend in October marking the 25th anniversary of playwright Bill Naughton’s death. “As Bolton’s most famous playwright and author we think this needs noting. “Dave also mentions that he is in the process of writing a

short biography of Bill Naughtons life, filling in gaps left by others. He wonders if anyone might have any knowledge of what happened to Bills first wife Annie Wilcock after their divorce in 1950, or perhaps any anecdotes about his life in Bolton. Please reply by the Genies address and we can pass it on.



**NB Terry Walsh also attended with his collection of books from the Family History Partnership.** <https://goo.gl/2W9Fbq> . I am told business was brisk and we will not take so long for further visits now, with May 3<sup>rd</sup> and Nov 1<sup>st</sup> booked, now we know he can get it all up the stairs! We have also managed to acquire a stock of the popular ten generation book “My Family History” for our own sales, retailing at £9.95p so grab them whilst you can, either from us , or email Terry on <https://goo.gl/Gam2da> for favourable postage rates and quoting “Bolton FHS” for a mail order which will give our funds commission



### **Wednesday February 1<sup>st</sup> “Sex and Sin in 17<sup>th</sup> C Lancashire” by Dr Alan Crosby**

Well, as usual, Alan did us proud, and I think we have now become his “groupies”, much to his embarrassment. I suppose we were not really sure what to expect here, but it was explained that as so many encounters of a sexual nature and at this time had generated reams of legal paperwork, there is a vast resource to explore, particularly in Lancashire. There are two main sources of records, those from the Quarter Sessions that dealt with criminal and social offences (including Bastardy Orders), causing much concern over which Parish was financially responsible for any support, and the Ecclesiastical courts, who from the 1540s up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> C took on the “role” of guardians of moral behaviour. The latter relied heavily on the hearsay of servants and other third parties, often unofficially appointed to find suitable evidence, and the origins of the literal “eaves dropping” was mentioned. The judges’ lifestyles were often as dubious as the accused, but this was irrelevant. The decisions were usually male biased, women had few rights, and were considered the property of their fathers or husbands. He then went on to give various examples of local cases with most in the audience holding their breath, in case an ancestors name was mentioned. We were also delighted to welcome, Julie Lamara from the Bolton Archives, and Anita Forth one of our planned speakers for the future, on Crowthorn School, as well as representatives from other local history societies. It is good to enjoy this mix of like interests. Our book and stationery stalls were also busy, and I think we all went home tired but happy to have had a very successful evening.



### **Wednesday March 1<sup>st</sup> “A Return Visit to the History of Photography and Photograph Restoration” by Steve Gill** <https://goo.gl/IRszGM>

This will be Steve’s third visit to us but his first at our new venue. If you would like to bring any old photos in for opinions, he was very obliging last time, and the history was fascinating. See my own restored before right, and after left.



- **Where are we?**

**Bolton Old Links Golf Club, Montserrat Brow, Chorley Old Road BL1 5SU. Buses 5SU** <http://goo.gl/3llsRd> . All MLFHS members free. £2.00 to non-members unless joining on the night.

- **When?**

**7pm beverages available for 7.30pm start, on the first Wednesday of each month. Extras include a Help Desk for personal research, Stationery Table for discounted equipment, and recycle service for your used Family History Magazines**





## RECENT TRIPS AND COMING EVENTS

**Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup> War Memorials Condition Survey Workshop** <https://goo.gl/YPDu9t> Civic Voice. Well



what an interesting day this was. Lead by Sarah James and assisted by David Hearn, there were about 22 of us from various local groups attended this free course to learn how to identify, assess, and record any war memorials that we knew of locally, or came across on our travels. The goal is to make a national list available for free public research, of all those killed during any conflict involving British troops and preserve the existing but ageing items. We discussed the many forms and conditions of those that might be found, and how to identify imminent loss and report all to the website “**War Memorials Online**” <https://goo.gl/wPiMHm>, plus the appropriate local collator.

In Bolton, of course this is the **Bolton War Memorials Project**

<https://goo.gl/4NoGDG> . We were treated to generous refreshments, introduced

to the recently refurbished Corridor of Remembrance in the Town Hall, and encouraged to practice assessments on the war memorials on display there, then asked to spread the word in order to save these precious records before they disappear due to age. Those who couldn't make it will be glad to know we are booking Dave Hearn to come and speak to us ASAP.

Next a reminder of

**Saturday 11th February, 10am to 4pm Bolton Family History Day Central Library's History Centre**



Event programme:

10am to 11.20am - Talks for beginners and advanced family historians.

11.30am to 2pm - Explore the Strong Room with our Archivist. Book your free place on the tour (9.30am 11.30am, 12pm, 1.30pm and 2pm) by calling 01204 332185. (NB, most places are now booked up with a waiting list).

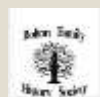
10am to approx. 4pm – Members of Bolton Family History Society will be in the library foyer to help with genealogy supplies, stationery and maps for sale and to help solve family tree queries in the History Centre.”

**The Bolton Library and Museum Services** Would also like help for another project. **A History of Lancashire in 70 Objects.** <https://goo.gl/L4Z7vk> blog As part of a project to celebrate Lancashire Life's 70th Birthday, Bolton Museum also needs your help in picking your favourite object from a shortlist to tell the story of the Lancashire region.

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March Visit to Deane Church. 2.00pm** The trip includes light refreshments and a £2 charge. The speaker taking the trip is Revd. Dr Terry Clark the vicar at St Marys. <https://goo.gl/MogOWR>



## WORKSHOPS, COURSES and CLASSES



**Saturdays March 11th, to 8th April 10-12pm Bolton Central Library and Bolton**

**Family History Society**

**A course of five Beginners Workshops £25 run by our very own Rita Greenhalgh and Barbara Owen.**

For those who want to know how to get started and for those who might have dabbled on the internet and now want to do more. All sources to be covered in line with student's requirement. For further information or to sign up please email [bolton@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:bolton@mlfhs.org.uk). Or ring Barbara Owen as above.



## **GENIE'S TIPS for February 2017**

**Pass on your passwords, or your family's digital memories will die with you** <https://goo.gl/5Lprco> The Telegraph Patrick Sawyer, Senior Reporter 18 December 2016 – “funeral directors are warning that the death of someone in the digital age can lead to the loss of irreplaceable memories”.

### **THIS MONTHS LOCAL NEWS and SOME ORGANISATION UPDATES**

#### **Bolton Projects**

Most of you by now should know that Graham Holt is our in-house Project Officer and he has a habit of disappearing into the “bowels” of various archives such as those of Bolton History Centre, Mere Hall, and Manchester Central Library, and then resurfacing after a while proudly announcing another Eureka moment. This is his latest progress report.

>**The Workhouse Servants Register** has been completed and added to the Bolton Documents Collection in the Members Only Area of the MLFHS website. <https://goo.gl/zvgFtt>  
NB, have you visited lately? The main site is now much easier to access than it used to be.

>Work on the **Workhouse Creed Register** continues.

>In the Members Only Area <https://goo.gl/Wu3RO3> list of records there is a list of Miscellaneous Records and within that there is a **facility to automatically search for a name across a series of databases**. A search for Holt, John got 285 hits across 7 databases and a click on the match number took me to the database. It was obviously very much quicker than searching the individual databases. It is hoped to convert all Bolton Databases to be compatible with this search facility. John Marsden is to be thanked for creating this facility.

>**Work has begun to transfer the Bolton Millworkers, 1802, data** [about 500 names] from a word document to a spreadsheet so that it can be added to the new search facility described above.

If you would like to assist with this, please email as above.

> Did you know that there is a vast number of documents, records, photos etc sitting there in the vaults of the History Centre, still waiting to be processed and catalogued? Some of our members have volunteered to help and are currently involved with a collection of maps and plans from the archive, but there is loads more material still to be recorded and assessed. More details next month.



**Sir Ian McKellen's episode of Who Do You Think You Are?** broadcast on Wednesday 25 January 2017 <https://goo.gl/bpqfqq>. Photo courtesy of the BBC Well what a superb episode this was. I might be biased as an honorary Boltonian, but even “foreigners” from the rest of the UK are making the same comments. Sir Ian did Bolton and the north west proud. As well as showing the town at its best, the BBC showed him as a very genuine person, appreciative of his roots. The fascinating stories of his musical hall maternal ancestor Frank Lowe, then radical campaigner ancestor Robert Lowe initiating the 5 ½ day working week was a revelation, topped up by the story of James Lowe, the Cumbrian engraver. What a family tale.

#### **Lancashire Records**

**Returning WW2 photos to (Fleetwood) families - can you help?** <https://goo.gl/tK39op> **Recollections of WW2 Blog**

*“Last year I purchased a group of photos from an auction site. They were all photos of men who served in the Second World War, labelled with their names”.--- “It also became clear that these photos should have been returned to their owners once the exhibition was completed, and that didn't happen”.--- “I deduced that the photos all seemed to be from the same area - Fleetwood in Lancashire”,--- “I still have 15 photos*

which are waiting for family members to claim them, and I am running out of leads". If you have any, please contact [matthew.smaldon@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.smaldon@gmail.com) (and us).



<http://goo.gl/I29Jpl> Received from General Register Office to UKBMD 12.01.17



**"Future products and services from the General Register Office**

We previously updated you on plans for future products and services, in particular the release of the GRO online historic birth and death indexes, and regulations which had been passed which enable us to trial the provision of copies of registration records in PDF format.

Phase 1 of the PDF Pilot, copies of our digitised records, went live on 9 November and was completed with very high customer demand and, unexpectedly, no reduction in certificate orders. As a trial service, it provided valuable insight in to the operation of the service, which we need to take into consideration in the remaining 2 pilot phases (the premium PDF service and PDFs of our non-digitised records).

Consequently, pilot phase 2 (premium service within 3 hours) and pilot phase 3 (PDF copies of our non-digitised records) are now in progress."---"Phase 2 closes on 8 February or when 15,000 PDFs have been ordered, whichever is sooner".

**"PDF Pilot Phase 2"** <https://goo.gl/Bnohqs> **General Registry Office**

The response to this stage is going to be interesting. How desperate are you???

"Since the 19th January, we have been trialling a premium PDF service for registration records. Records will not be immediately viewable, but emailed as a PDF. Each premium PDF costs £45, and is available for the following England and Wales records held by GRO:

Births, Marriages and Deaths: 1837 on, Civil Partnerships: 2005 on



**Find a will,** <https://goo.gl/4VWS8R>

A new Beta site that they want tested and includes Wills and Probate 1996 to present, Wills and Probate 1858 – 1996, and Soldier's Wills

**What is Probate? | When is Probate Required? | Explained UK** <https://goo.gl/k6VGCg> Co-operative Legal Services Limited, accessed 22.01.17

## **SOME INTERESTING, USEFUL, AND MAINLY FREE WEBSITES**

**World War One and the Halliwell Brass Band** <https://goo.gl/5v2ICZ>

on January 19, 2017 By Dylan blawson In World War One



This article was written by Margaret Koppens, who many will know from Halliwell LHC-see below)

"The first mention of the Jubilee Band (later to become the Halliwell Band) is an article in the Bolton Chronicle dated 9<sup>th</sup> February

1828. Sometime before 1870 the band changed its name to Halliwell Band and practiced at St Paul's Church on Halliwell Road, Bolton.

When the First World War broke out 22 men from the band enlisted, two of them were killed and three were awarded the D.C.M. They are all remembered on a Roll of Honour to the Band which is held in the Bolton Museum Archives" --- and now also the Town Hall Remembrance Corridor. (close up version available on request).



**Edgworth researchers uncover lives of 300 Bolton soldiers** <https://goo.gl/6PvZhb> Bolton News 23 Jan 2017

More research re the local War Memorial at the Barlow, Edgworth, led by author Linda Spencer

**The story of the poppy | The Royal British Legion** <https://goo.gl/mLvX70>

"In the spring of 1915, shortly after losing a friend in Ypres, a Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was inspired by the sight of poppies growing in battle-scarred fields to write a now famous poem called 'In Flanders Fields'. After the First World War, the poppy was adopted as a symbol of Remembrance."



**Fallen Men of Salford** <https://goo.gl/YNmEMR> "Some men from other areas e.g. Harry Hodges born Little Lever enlisted Salford, Lancashire Fusiliers 16th Battalion, died 23/7/16 CWG Thiepval Memorial 1911 born 1889 Little Lever 28 Knowles Square Pendlebury, Labourer at paint works



**"Map Images" <https://goo.gl/gkIA6M> The National Library of Scotland**

Lots to play around with here, and they are now up to south Manchester for Geo-referencing (Side by Side Compare a selection of historic maps to modern map or satellite layers) , so it shouldn't be too long for the north side, and Lancashire



**"Search the PRONI Historical Maps viewer" <https://goo.gl/yCnBsu>**

Search and browse a range of historical Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) maps and find information on sites, buildings and landmarks of historical interest



**PRONI Guide to Church Records <https://goo.gl/JUoZu8> published: 12 January 2010 Public Record Office of**

Northern Ireland (PRONI) "This guide is an easy way to identify what churches are in a parish, what records exist for each church, the covering dates for each series of records (for example, baptisms, marriages, vestry minutes etc.) and their PRONI reference number. Denominations included are Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, Reformed Presbyterian, Methodist, Moravian, Congregational, Baptist and Religious Society of Friends' (Quakers').

Other interesting Northern Irish Records can be found here <https://goo.gl/vCQ1pu>

Genealogy, family history and probate research in Northern Ireland <https://goo.gl/SoGZS1> Ulster Ancestry is compiling a series of Free pages which you can use for your research purposes. These have been sorted by date and detail the document type for your convenience. Passenger Lists are located near the bottom of the page



**Genealogical Society of Ireland <http://familyhistory.ie/wp/>**

Ireland's most active genealogical organisation

**New Year honours list 2017 <https://goo.gl/DnILlo> The Gazette** "As the official public record, The Gazette publishes the Queen's New Year and Birthday honours each year." Plus, a lot more. Just to remind you.

**More on Childcare**

**Barnardo's homes - North West <https://goo.gl/DPx4OV>**



Barnardo's ran hundreds of children's homes across the UK from Thomas Barnardo's day until the 1970's. We don't run orphanages and children's homes anymore however, this is a complete directory of all the homes and what has happened to them in the Northwest area.



**Barnardo's Family History Service <https://goo.gl/L1KwV2> Barnardo's Family History Service can help you**

"Barnardo's has a vast archive of records about the children in its care. The oldest records available date from the 1870's. If you had a relative you believe was in the care of Barnardo's during their childhood, we may have records and images that will help you in researching your family history" --- We offer a range of services to assist you in your research.

**Tributes paid to Cwmbran Barnardo's stalwart <https://goo.gl/VwXBNA> South Wales Argus 13 Oct 2014 / Andy Rutherford** Well yes, I know this is a Welsh story rather than north west, but I think a wonderful story about a Barnardo's boy

**Adopted? Starting the Search for Your English Birth Ancestors <https://goo.gl/5FfhPX> Ancestry Cloud Blog by Nikki Paine accessed 19.01.17** "I was born in 1962 in London and placed with my adoption family six weeks later. I was told I was adopted when I was 5 and my adoptive mother was pregnant with her second natural child-"  
**Adoption, Search & Reunion <https://goo.gl/InmSE9>** suggesting "Adopted people's rights to access birth and adoption information >> Accessing information about your origins Your right to access" ... "Since 1975

*adopted people in England and Wales have had the right to apply for the information to enable them to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate---*

**The British Evacuees Association** <https://goo.gl/pnzdhx> *"is a non-profit making registered charity which was --- formed in 1996 to ensure that the true story of the great evacuation would become better known and preserved for further generations".*

### **Overseas News (not much room for more this month—Sorry)**



#### **Belgian State Archives digitises church registers**

some 26.000 registers counting over 5.3 million pages are available in digital format.



Consultation is free

**New Zealand Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes** <https://goo.gl/q8tfDP> Findmypast Aug 11, 2016

### **Clergy Duties and Burial Guidelines**



**Guidebook for The Clergy** <https://goo.gl/QoTxgz> General Register Office Issued: 2011 Last updated:

February 2015 *"This booklet has been designed to be read in conjunction with the Faculty Office booklet "Anglican Marriage in England and Wales. A guide to the law for Clergy", and aims to provide you with support and guidance in your role and responsibilities regarding burials, the issuing of a certificate of name given in baptism and of accurately recording and maintaining marriage registration records."*

A fascinating insight into the responsibilities of recording of BDMs by the Clergy.

**Burying in Woollen Acts** <https://goo.gl/bVAuoU> From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia accessed 13.01.17

*The Burial in Woollen Acts 1666-80 were Acts of the Parliament of England (citation 18 & 19 Cha. II c. 4 (1666), [1][2] 30 Cha. II c. 3 (1678) [3] and 32 Cha. II c. 1 (1680) [4]) which required the dead, except plague victims and the destitute, to be buried in pure English woollen shrouds to the exclusion of any foreign textiles*

**Were your ancestors "Buried in Woollen"?** <https://goo.gl/E39D2G> Oxfordshire FHS news 22nd July 2014

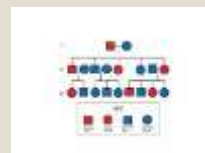
*From 1666 onwards parliament passed a succession of "Burying in Woollen" acts, with the aim of supporting the local woollen trade. You will often come across references to these in early burial registers*

**"Burial in Woollen"** <https://goo.gl/ENnf4Z> Devon Heritage accessed 13.01.16

*Many family historians searching parish registers have come across the phrase "buried in woollen" or a reference to "the affidavit". Sometimes another name appears in the register either alongside the actual entry or listed later. This is the name of some person who either laid out the body for burial or viewed the body before the funeral and has sworn that the regulations have been followed. In some registers, there are also entries detailing infringements and the subsequent payment of fines.*

### **More DNA Stuff**

**"Which Genealogy DNA Test is the Best? A Detailed Comparison Guide to Help You Decide"** <https://goo.gl/LKO1EU> Copyright © 2012-2017 Family History Daily. Once again this is from the American perspective, but I suppose this is where the drive is coming from, so maybe helpful for some.



**"23andMe, Ancestry and Selling Your DNA Information"** <https://goo.gl/vslPy7> accessed 26.01.17 DNAexplained – Genetic Genealogy. *"Are you aware that when you purchase a DNA kit for genealogy testing through either 23andMe or Ancestry that you are literally giving these companies carte blanche to your DNA, ---?"*

**"DNA testing for Family History an Intro"** <https://goo.gl/M1lvoy> Bunter Family Blog by Sharon Bunter Sunday, 22 January 2017. An informative Australian perspective *"DNA testing is now all the rage, and in case you were wondering if it was worth doing a test you might find my experience useful to help make your decision."*



## **“The 2017 Indexing and Transcribing Project” Article 2**

This next article is a contribution from Eric Kent who has kindly agreed to write an article for us about his “career” as a Free BMD <https://goo.gl/xLHGcv> transcriber.

*My interest in family history started in the days when searching the GRO Birth, Marriage and Death indexes usually involved a trip to St Catherine’s House in London. I remember the frenzied activity on a typical day as the search room was filled with people lifting heavy index volumes from the shelf, searching the index for the required name, replacing the volume on the shelf and lifting down the next one!*

***By the late 1990’s the arrival of the internet was beginning to transform family history research.***

*Towards the end of 1998 I heard about an ambitious new project, FreeBMD, whose aim was for volunteers to transcribe the GRO Birth, Marriage and Death indexes for England and Wales to create a searchable version of the indexes which anyone could use without charge.*

*When I first heard about this project, I had my doubts whether it would really be possible for volunteers alone to transcribe all the index entries from the beginning of civil registration in September 1837 through to the end of 1983 (GRO introduced a new computerised system). It would be a mammoth task! I remember my surprise when, in the early days of the project, I casually entered a search in FreeBMD for one of my Victorian ancestors, and there he was! As time passed and the database grew, I was increasingly successful in finding my ancestors on FreeBMD.*

*The project has come a long way since those early days. Now family history enthusiasts all over the world perform about 130,000 searches on FreeBMD each day. Over 11,000 volunteers have worked on the project, progressing through the 19th and 20th centuries as far as 1979, making FreeBMD an increasingly useful resource (and it’s still free of charge!). At the time of writing, the FreeBMD database contains over 256 million distinct entries.*

*FreeBMD has also spawned related projects for census entries (FreeCEN) and parish registers (FreeREG). The 3 projects are grouped together under the title ‘Free UK Genealogy’.*

***FreeBMD has excellent search facilities.*** *I’ve found it especially helpful for identifying possible spouses for a Marriage entry (even in the days before the marriage index recorded the spouse’s surname), or quickly locating all the children of a marriage when the mother’s maiden name is recorded in the Birth register. An added bonus is that FreeBMD provides images of the index pages for the matches you have found.*

*When I retired from work, I had plenty of ideas how I might spend my time, and one thing I really wanted to do was to give something back to the FreeBMD project which had helped me so much in my research. I wondered what it would be like to be involved in this project and what actually went on ‘behind the scenes’ to build this wonderful resource. To find out more, I clicked on the ‘Join FreeBMD’ button on the FreeBMD website.*

***The first thing I learned was that FreeBMD volunteers are grouped into syndicates,*** *so that although you are part of a huge project, you work as part of a syndicate group (groups have ranged in size from less than 50 members to over 2000 members). Each syndicate has a leader, who is wonderfully helpful in showing you how to get started and patiently answering all your questions. The syndicates are truly international – some members of my syndicate (including our leader) live in New Zealand, some of us live in the UK, and other members live in Australia, but we all work together on the worthwhile task of adding data to FreeBMD.*

*Before I joined FreeBMD, I assumed that I would be asked to use a spreadsheet product such as Excel, but the reality is better than that: I am provided with 2 specially-designed programs: one for transcription, which speeds up the process by predicting first names and district names; the other to check my transcription by comparing what I have typed with the original page to make sure I haven’t made any mistakes. My syndicate leader checked my first transcriptions to make sure I was doing it correctly. I soon discovered that the most important rule of transcription is to transcribe exactly what you see! In addition, a*



large number of records have been keyed twice by different transcribers (especially for the hand-written Victorian indexes), giving FreeBMD an excellent reputation for its high level of accuracy.

**Each syndicate is allocated a different index to transcribe.** Our syndicate has recently completed the birth indexes for September 1974 quarter. The way it works is that my syndicate leader allocates me a batch of pages (usually 10), I transcribe and check them (each page usually takes me 45-60 minutes) before loading the transcriptions up to FreeBMD, then I request my next allocation of pages.

One worry I had before I joined the project was that I would be under pressure to complete a set of transcriptions by a given date. However, I've found that there is no pressure at all. We are all volunteers, and whatever we can do is appreciated. I like being free to work at my own pace, which varies depending on other commitments.

I've found that transcribing for FreeBMD is surprisingly relaxing, it keeps the old brain cells ticking over, and there's great satisfaction in knowing that the work which I'm doing is helping other people in the exciting pursuit of discovering their family history. There are less volunteers working on FreeBMD than there used to be, and if you can spare a little time to help with this project your help will really be appreciated!

When asked to comment on his thoughts after reading John Marsdens article on LancsBMD last month Eric has added these additional thoughts.

As John explains very clearly, the big advantage of transcribing from the original registrar's records (as Lancs BMD does) rather than from the GRO indexes (as FreeBMD does) is that the production of the GRO indexes involved several acts of copying, each with the danger of miscopying or even omitting records. FreeBMD provides our volunteers with software which enables us to achieve a very high level of accuracy in our transcriptions, but of course we can't do anything to correct errors in the GRO indexes we are working from. So it's fair to say that for the registers which Lancs BMD have transcribed, their information will almost certainly be more accurate than the equivalent information in FreeBMD.

The additional information which Lancs BMD provides - the mother's maiden name for births, and age of the deceased for deaths - is very useful. The new GRO indexes also give this information, but FreeBMD doesn't as it is based on the old indexes. Lancs BMD also shows the name of the sub-district, which is a great help in finding the right entry. For marriages, Lancs BMD is good at pairing marriage entries, so if you searched on the name of the groom it will also tell you the name of the bride - FreeBMD can help with this, but not as well as Lancs BMD.

**So why bother with FreeBMD at all?** Well, as I said, the two sites aren't in competition, they offer different benefits. One great strength of FreeBMD is that it covers the whole country. So if your ancestors had an annoying habit of crossing county boundaries, or even moving half way across the country, you can still find them with one FreeBMD search.

Another benefit is that at the moment the FreeBMD database is almost certainly more complete than Lancs BMD. It now contains nearly everything from 1837 up to the late 1970's. It's true that FreeBMD search results may be incomplete because of the copying errors which John describes, but Lancs BMD results are also likely to be incomplete because not all registers for all areas of the county have been transcribed yet (and FreeBMD may also find some ancestors who, unknown to you, had moved across the border to another county). So, the obvious answer is to search both sites -you don't have to choose on or the other!

NB It is also cheaper to get certificates from the GRO than from a Registrar! Using information from FreeBMD, you order certificates from the GRO, which costs £9.25. Using information from Lancs BMD, you order certificates from a Registrar, which usually costs £10. And

#### **More News on Other Projects**



**Current MLFHS Projects can be found here** <https://goo.gl/HhhLJn> These are in progress now. Please click on the project title to view full details and progress reports and to access a link to the project manager

*"The original goal was 15 million indexed records which you handily achieved about half way through the month! But you kept up pace and as your responded to the stretch goal of 22 million indexed records. This was truly a success! Way to go above and beyond to end 2016".* Part of this process includes Record arbitration which this article explains <https://goo.gl/V1gtYI>



**A Bit of Light Relief The forgotten legend behind the world's most famous tongue twister** <https://goo.gl/KPqdpw> (Mary Anning Source: Wikipedia/Public domain)

*"To many, tongue twisters may seem like mere childish wordplay. However, the most famous tongue twister of all carries a far deeper significance than you might expect".*

**Have You Ever Heard the Term 'Piss Poor?' I Had No Idea It Comes From THIS!**

<https://goo.gl/OuXnr1>

*"They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot. Once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery. If you had to do this to survive, you were "piss poor." But worse than that were the really poor folks who couldn't even afford to buy a pot. They "didn't have a pot to piss in" and were considered the lowest of the low".*

There are a lot more explanations on this theme. Worth a read. Oh the delights of the English language, and finally

**English phrases: Test your knowledge** <https://goo.gl/YGytrn> 27 November 2016 *How much do you know about the English language and its sayings? A recent BBC News article unearthing the stories behind some phrases drew a huge response from readers, who sent in examples of their own".*

### **MEMBERS COMMENTS, QUERIES, and MEMORIES)**

We were pleased to receive this message from Lesley Cooke within 24 hours of the January 2017 posting, <https://goo.gl/bmyles> , and

**first response to John Marsdens article about Lancs BMD transcribing,**

*I read your Genie's newsletter and the part relating to transcribing.*

*I currently do some transcribing for Lan-opc, and also Lancsbmd. The transcribing for Lancsbmd I find relatively straight forward because I am transcribing from original registers, however it is a different matter when transcribing from a downloaded file for Lan-opc. The reason being is the change in handwriting of the person recording the event. I do try to be as accurate as possible and if I am in any doubt I check with other sites to confirm what I am seeing. If I cannot find what I am looking for, I send the appropriate entry to my co-ordinator for her opinion on the transcription and get confirmation from her. When I finish the register, I send it back to my co-ordinator and she then sends back to me any errors to be corrected before the register is processed to be submitted to the site.*

*During my time looking through the sites I come across names which cannot be correct and in the case of FreeBMD I have noticed marriages with only 3 names listed where there should have been 4, obviously one of the spouse's names are missing, which can be very frustrating if one of these names happens to be what you are searching for.*

*I am currently transcribing registers for Liverpool for Lan-opc, the reason being some of my ancestors were living in this region for a time and sadly a lot of registers for Liverpool have not yet been done on Lancsbmd. To date I have not come across any of my ancestors but hopefully somewhere, sometime, someone will be transcribing my ancestor's records. Regards Lesley (Cooke)*

**And shortly after reports of David Burnham's talk went out on Facebook we received this 18<sup>th</sup> January**

*"Hi, I was in the Hollins cottage homes from 1944 until 1947 ish. (Photo courtesy of Peter Higginbotham from*

<https://goo.gl/DetPak> *grey houses built 1878 1881, red brick early 1900s) I do not remember a whole lot because I was only around five years old when we were able to go and join my dad. We lived in Brancker Street Westhoughton and my mother died in childbirth I was two. My older sister and brothers all were in the home as my dad could not cope with four children and work. My earliest memory of being in the Home was*



being in a kind of playroom with a Rocking horse and I sat on that and kept rocking and I would not stop !!another memory lining up naked for a bath and it was three to a tub. I do remember the caregivers were very kind and I had a memory of being in a crib without the side up. I remembered a beautiful stained glass window at the top of the stairs and a small toilet beside it. Years ago, I did revisit the place with my sister and sure enough the window was still there but the toilet was a storage area. We were bused to St Peter and Paul's and I was in the nursery my younger sister remained in the home longer than I. I do not know why. My father re-married and obtained a house in Bolton I remember leaving the home and walking from there all the way to Commission St Bolton.

Don't know if these recollections are useful but I thought I would share them".

Photo courtesy of Peter

Higginbotham →

Kathleen Hagan {nee Orrell}.

On my checking that Kathleen was happy to share this she added

"Yes, you may put it in the newsletter. I live in Ontario Canada and visit Bolton once a year. It is doubtful that I would be able to attend a meeting. My sister who was 12 when my mother died told me that for the three years she was in the home she helped out in the Nursery and had only good things to say about the Matron, in fact my sister became a J P in Australia and had a lifelong interest in child welfare, I trained as a nurse, obtained my S R N { also a BScN in Canada} . I consider myself fortunate that there was a Cottage homes to keep us safe. There must have been many families in those times that had need of assistance.

Thank you for your interest. Kathleen Hagan"



## **OTHER LOCAL SOCIETIES NEWS**

**\*Halliwell Local History Society** <http://goo.gl/8erYvr>



Email [margaretk@talktalk.net](mailto:margaretk@talktalk.net) .Meetings are usually held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm, at St Luke's Church, Chorley Old Road, BL1 3BE opposite Shepherd Cross St, Bolton,  
**28th February 'When the Queen came to Lancashire'** – An account of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's visit to Lancashire in 1851 and Prince Albert's visit to Barrow Bridge Mill **told by Judith**

**Atkinson**

**\*Turton Local History Society** <https://goo.gl/PHNXjA>



TLLH have launched a brand-new website to promote their meetings and sales of their books which they sell on Amazon. Most of their books are still in print and are very useful for genealogists searching for their families who lived in Bradshaw and Turton. The old Urban District of Turton, includes the ancient Townships of Bradshaw, Edgworth, Entwistle, Harwood, Longworth, Quarlton and Turton. Illustrated talks and meetings are held from August to April inclusive on the fourth Wednesday of the month, at Longsight Church Centre, Harwood BL2 3HX beginning at 7.30pm. This next month's event **22nd February - History of Edgworth Hostelries (John Barlow)**

**\*Westhoughton Local History Group** – <http://goo.gl/XNugl5>

Meetings take place on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, between 10am and 12md in the room above Westhoughton Library, Market St, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU.

**9 February Visit to Victoria Hall Bolton. Tickets £5 from Cindy**

**16 February The Liverpool Cow Keepers : David Joy**

**\*Horwich Heritage Centre-** <http://goo.gl/fSPsji>



Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm at the Horwich Resource Centre, Beaumont Road (off Longworth Road), Horwich BL6 7BG.

Open Days, are held most months on Saturdays between 10am --- 1pm . Next talk

**February 14th 2017 David Lloyd - "Bolton 66 Tram Restoration"**

**\*Blackrod Local History Society at Blackrod Council Chambers**

**Monday 13th February 7pm for 7.15pm "The Short Life and Murder of Minnie Stott", by David Hargreaves**