

THE MANCHESTER AND LANCASHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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Most people have a desire to search for their roots. Changing social conditions and a high degree of mobility have meant that many families have, over the years, moved well away from their places of origin. Family members can also 'lose touch' with one another and knowledge and information about past generations is easily lost. However, the desire to know more about our origins, coupled with increased leisure time and greater accessibility of records has given rise to an interest in genealogy and family history. Genealogy helps us to discover who our ancestors were — their names, when and where they were born, married and died — and so provides the border or framework within which family histories develop. Family history in turn tells us how past relatives lived their lives, their experiences, the events they witnessed or were part of and how they responded. A Family History Society is concerned with the whole picture — genealogy and family history.

In September, several hundred people met at Owen's Park at the University of Manchester to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society — a society whose membership now stands at 3,500 and extends to fourteen countries. The guest speakers discussed 'The Future of Family History' — the theme of the conference. Book stalls and exhibitions added to the popularity of the event.

These 25th anniversary celebrations were a far cry from the day in February 1964, when a small number of enthusiasts, all from A.V. Roe's (Aviation) in Chadderton and all with an interest in local and family history, met to form a 'Trace Your Ancestors Group'. It was quickly appreciated that the group could not be limited to the factory workforce alone. Through press publicity and personal contacts, eighty members had been enrolled by the end of that year, many still active in the Society today, and the Manchester Genealogical Society — one of the oldest regional family history societies had been formed. In 1972, the Society extended its influence and became known as the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society. By 1983, we had become, in effect, three societies in one. Two more sections had been formed, that of the Bolton and District Family History Society, for members living or researching their ancestry in that area and the Anglo/Scottish Family History Society for those people who find they have Scottish links. Many of us find we have an interest in all sections and so attend the meetings and join in the activities of all three.

Although the Society is united by a common interest in family history there is a diversity of interests amongst the members. Some are keen local historians, others are interested in population studies and there is an increasing number who are looking at the applications of computers in genealogy.

It would be easy to believe that membership of the Society is largely confined to those living in the North West, but this is far from the truth. Certainly, there are those who were born, live and work in the area, some of us with strong local ancestral links, but equally there are others



Recording monumental inscriptions.

who, although resident here, have their roots in other counties or even other countries. Probably the majority of members live outside the region but their ancestors lived and worked here in earlier times. Our overseas membership is now worldwide and is one of the largest amongst family history societies. Whilst the prime aims are to assist in the preservation and indexing of local and genealogical records, we also try to help this diverse membership increase their use and knowledge of family history sources and where possible assist with research problems. Consequently, the activities of the Society centre around these objectives.

The opening of our headquarters and library rooms in Clayton House, Piccadilly, Manchester, seven years ago, was seen as a significant development. The rooms are fully equipped with microfiche and microfilm readers, study and seminar facilities and just as importantly house the accumulated effort of 25 years of transcribing, indexing and collecting genealogical and family history material. Members can drop in to do some of their own research, help with the Society's current project (at the present time we are indexing the 1881 Census for our area) or just browse around.

One of more recent acquisitions for the Library is the 1988 edition of the International Genealogical Index (I.G.I.). For the first time the Society has purchased the complete edition. This computerized index, produced on microfiche, consists of 120 million entries (mainly of pre-1880 baptisms and marriages) from ninety countries.

Lancashire alone accounts for nearly 5 million. This index greatly assists members to research their ancestry, not only in Britain and Europe, but worldwide.

Those researching their ancestry in the Lancashire area very quickly appreciate the value of this index and the other indexes compiled by past and present members of the Society. The region's parish registers have always been among the most extensive in the country, particularly for the nineteenth century. In the 1830s it was not unusual for 10,000 baptisms to be recorded in Manchester each year, 5000 at Manchester Collegiate Church (now Manchester Cathedral). Many of the baptisms were 'belated' or of children or adults over the age of 2 years and without the aid of an index these would be very difficult to find. Equally numerous were the marriages, which run into several volumes for each year. Just how numerous and often 'wholesale' can be understood by a description written by George Head in *A Home Tour through the Manufacturing Districts in the Summer of 1835*:

I attended the Old Church at Manchester one Monday morning in order to witness the solemnization of several marriages I had reason to suppose were then and there to take place. I had heard on the preceding Sunday the banns proclaimed as follows: 'For the first time of asking, sixty-five; for the second time, seventy-two; for the third time, sixty. Total, one hundred and ninety seven.'

It is a measure of the progress made in the last 25 years that in an article entitled 'Parish Registers' (*Manchester Genealogist*, July 1988) Julian Lloyd estimated that about 75 per cent of Greater Manchester's pre-1837 baptisms and marriages (all denominations) have now been indexed.

Another attractive feature of the Library is the sale of books, most of which are produced by the main sections of the Society. Foremost amongst these publications are the many volumes relating to our most ambitious and successful project to date, the indexing of the 1851 Census Returns for the Greater Manchester/Lancashire area. This project has taken 10 years, over a quarter of a million people have been indexed and over 25 volumes have gone on sale as a result. Census returns provide a rich source of information for the family historian and the 1851 edition is of particular significance as it was the first Census to list the parish of origin against individual names. When the project was well under way the research co-ordinator published a progress report:

A whole reel of microfilm has been indexed. This amounted to nearly 16,000 people covering just one square mile. It is not surprising the numbers are high when in one small terraced house there was husband, wife, 3 children, brother in law, sister in law and 24 lodgers. Looking through the pages there are things to make you smile and to puzzle over, entries such as 'born under a tent on the common' and the wife who didn't know where she was born and yet her mother was living with them and I wonder if the man named Barney Notnow, when asked his surname, gave an impatient answer and was called just that.

Other library facilities include a photocopier and a microfiche copier with which we can provide members with print-outs of individual surnames from the I.G.I. As you would expect with such a large 'out of town' membership, the Library offers a postal service which is extensively used for buying books, photocopies and print-outs. Overall, the Library has proved to be a great



The Society's Library.

success. It is widely used and its popularity is increased by being located in the centre of Manchester, close to the Central Library and the other Record Offices which are so important to us.

Whilst the Library has proved an invaluable asset it is the Society's journal which provides the main link with the majority of the membership. The *Manchester Genealogist* began publication in Spring 1964, though at first it came out only intermittently. From 1974, it was decided to publish four editions a year, often running to 40 pages for each issue. By 1986, with a print run approaching 2000 it was decided, for reasons of clarity, to have the journal typeset. This was seen as a milestone at the time and the new clearer print was very much appreciated. However, 1987 was to see even greater changes as the journal began to be produced as an 80-page publication which was able to offer all sections and interests of the Society the opportunity to include far more information. An article on the Lancashire Record Office, by Alan Crosby, opened the 1987 'new look' journal. The Bolton section contributed a feature on Bolton Central Library, and the Anglo/Scots, amongst other items, listed some Scottish surnames found in Weaste Cemetery, which was at that time being transcribed by members of the Society.



Microfiche and Film Viewing Room.

Probably one of the most popular and important features in the journal is the Members Interests Section, in which new and existing members alike submit updates of family surnames and details of the research in which they have a special personal interest. In many issues this section can run to 16 pages, with up to 150 members contributing. Despite the statistical odds, many members, myself included, have found people with mutual family links. Finding new, living members of your family means shared research and experience and acts as a very strong stimulus. Also very popular is the Enquiries Section where members seek or offer assistance in research — no

matter how difficult the problem may be, there is usually someone prepared to assist or advise. The journal also advises on new publications, the whereabouts of records and on the latest developments in the world of family history.

While the Society brings together people with a common interest in family history, each person is researching their own unique family. As a result, individual members become experts in specialist records and research, whether they be concerned with the transportation of convicts, with details of past trade union membership and activity or with the origins of soldiers in the Napoleonic Wars. Contributions in the form of articles, lists, notes and 'fillers' reflect these interests and encourage others to pursue their own particular research. Articles on mediaeval genealogy by Julian Lloyd and Ian McAlpine have helped the increasing number of people who have begun to bridge the gap between post and pre-industrial societies. A recent article on the poll tax by Angela Barlow may have given food for thought to the present government and her witty feature on Somerset House and the Public Record Office, entitled 'London Letter, Wills & Ways' was very well received. Many other members have over the past few years contributed articles on genealogy and family history which collectively are now providing us with an impressive list of journal publications.

Remarkable coincidences can and do arise. In July 1987, two local historians wrote an article 'Letters to Stretford: A Detective Story'. This was based on their researches into a bundle of letters written to their parents, during the Napoleonic Wars, by Joseph Hulme and Samuel Hampson, two young Stretford men who had been press-ganged into the navy. In the following journal, a member from Gwent wrote:

Joseph Hulme was my great great great uncle. I am descended from his younger brother James . . . Oddly enough I heard only the other day of a tradition in one branch of our family that an ancestor was in the navy. Now we know that this tradition — like so many others — had a basis in fact. Until I read the article Joseph was no more than a name on the family tree. Now he is a real person, making me feel by turn happy that he was so fond of his family, friends and home village and sad that he did not survive to see them again.

The Manchester Genealogist has made an important contribution to the Society since its introduction and we

*Mary Taylor died at
Preston of a consumption
December 21. 1771.*

Requiescat in pace

*Catharine Taylor died
at Leigh of a consumption
February 13. 1775.*

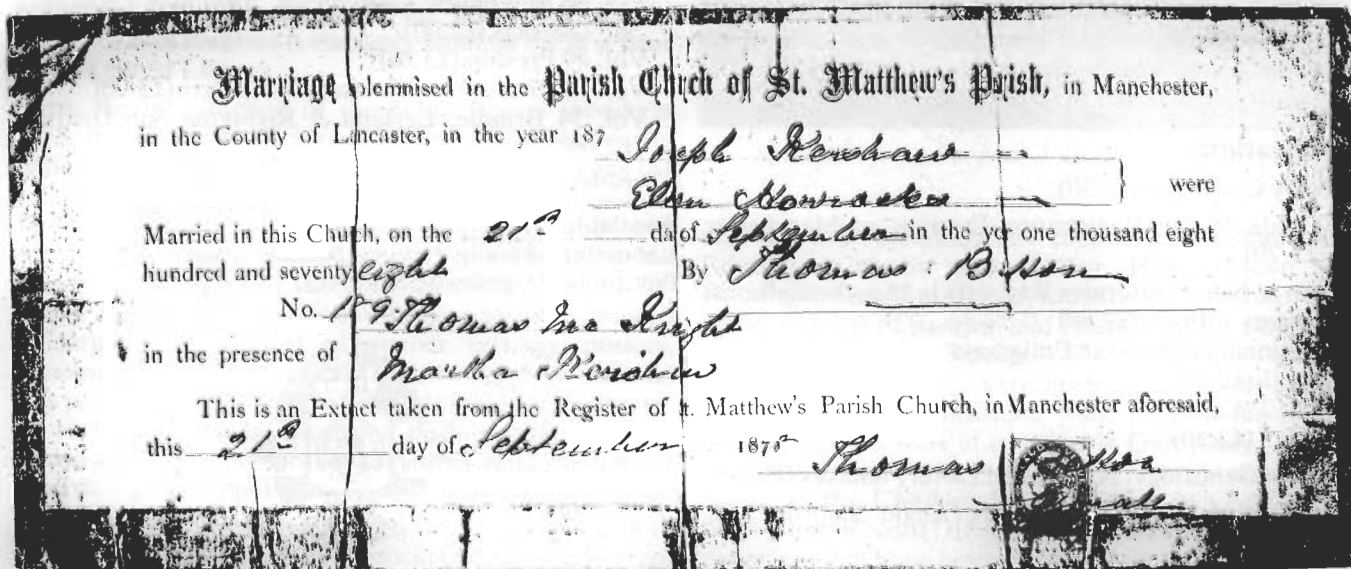
Requiescat in pace

*My dear Mother Eliz. Taylor
(The best of Parents) died at
The Monument-House in
Wigan-Lane July 15. 1778
about a quarter before Eleven
at night, in the 77th year of her
age — Requiescat in pace
Amen. Amen.*

A personal record of family deaths from the 1770s.

were all delighted when in 1988 it won the Elizabeth Simpson Award given by the Federation of Family History Societies. In the opinion of the panel of judges the Manchester Genealogist had "made the best contribution to Family History during the preceding twelve months".

From the beginning the Society has held monthly meetings at which we have a guest speaker or a talk by one of the members. The venue has changed several times over the years, from the Methodist Hall in Oldham Street to the Scout and Guide Hall in Faraday Street. We now meet in the Conference Hall of Manchester Town Hall



and frequently over 200 members attend. One of the continuing points of interest is the Society bookstall, which is always in evidence at meetings and conferences. This 'mobile' bookstall always offers us the greatest possible variety in books, maps and aids to research concerned with family history. Both the Bolton and Anglo/Scottish sections also have a full programme of activities which include monthly meetings, exhibitions and conferences.

Increasingly the Society has hosted conferences, not only on its own behalf, but jointly with other societies. Last year, for example, a conference was organized with the Society of Genealogists, on the theme of 'Computers and the Family Historian'. The use of computers in our research is becoming more important and necessary and many of us crowded into St. Thomas Centre in Ardwick to hear experts on the subject explain why and how computers could be used. In addition to these talks we were able to see demonstrations of personal computers and software suitable for use with family history sources.

In the last ten years the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society has grown eight-fold, reflecting the growth in popularity of family history as a whole. Many were drawn into tracing their ancestry after seeing a television series on the subject presented by Gordon Honeycombe — a series which also promoted sales of a B.B.C. publication, *Discovering Your Family History* written by Don Steel. This series proved so popular that it has since been shown again several times and never fails to provide new converts. Most recently in June/July 1989, a Radio Four series based on the family histories of four Bolton families gave us a very local theme which has been of particular interest to Bolton members.

Recent years have seen the publication of several excellent books which have become standard introductory works. These have helped many people to understand the records and sources we use, and among the most popular are *Beginning Your Family History* by George Pelling, which first came out in 1980 and is now in its fourth edition, and Colin Rogers' *The Family Tree Detective*. These books offer the beginner and experienced researcher alike, information to help them trace their ancestry as far back as the sixteenth century.

The Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society has, over the past 25 years, provided a focal point for people researching their roots in this area. On a personal level, my own membership of the Society has been a most rewarding experience and has given me the opportunity of sharing my interests with many friends I would not otherwise have known. If you would like to know more about us, please write to the Society at Clayton House, 59 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2AQ (Tel: 061-236 9750).

Publications

Library Catalogue (£2.50)

A Guide to the Registration Districts of Manchester (£1.70)

Parish & Non-Conformist Registers in Manchester Local History Library (£2.50)

A Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants

Vol. 1 (£2.25)

Vol. 2 (£2.50)

Vol. 3 (£2.50)

Scottish Genealogy: A Digest of Library Sources (£0.50)

Directory of Members' Interests (Anglo Scottish FHS) (£1.70)

Prestwich Marriages 1754-1800 (18 microfiche) (£7.20)

Lancashire Graveyards & Burial Grounds (£2.00)

Stockport Marriages 1799-1837 (4 microfiche) (£4.20)

1851 Census Surname Index of Manchester and Lancashire

Vol. 1 Newton, Beswick and Bradford (£1.20)

Vol. 2 Market Street Sub District (£1.70)

Vol. 3 London Road Sub District (£1.70)

Vol. 4 St. Georges Sub District (£1.70)

Vol. 5 Ancoats (£2.50)

Vol. 6 Deansgate Sub District (£2.00)

Vol. 7 Cheetham and Failsforth (£1.70)

Vol. 8 Hulme Sub District HO 107/2221 (£2.00)

Vol. 9 Didsbury & Ardwick Sub District (£1.70)

Vol. 10 Chorlton-on-Medlock and Ardwick (£1.70)

Vol. 11 Salford (£2.50)

Vol. 12 Barton, Stretford and Worsley (£2.50)

Vol. 13 Droylsden, Audenshaw and Denton (£1.70)

Vol. 14 Standish & Aspull HO 107/2198 (£1.70)

Vol. 15 Wigan (£1.70)

Vol. 16 Hindley, Pemberton, Up-Holland & Ashton-in-Makerfield (£1.70)

Vol. 17 Leigh (£1.70)

Vol. 18 Ashton-under-Lyne (£1.20)

Vol. 19 Newton & Dukinfield Sub Districts (£2.50)

Vol. 20 Hartshead, Mottram and Staly Sub Districts (£2.50)

*Vol. 21 Rochdale (Butterworth & Castleton Sub-districts) (£1.50)

*Vol. 22 Spotland Nearer Side & Further Side (£1.50)

*Vol. 23 Wardleworth & Wuerdle and Wardle Sub Districts (£2.00)

*Vol. 24 Whitworth & Blatchinworth (£1.50)

*Vol. 25 Holcombe, Tottington Lower End & Walmersley Sub Districts (£1.50)

*Vol. 27 South Bury (£1.50)

*Vol. 28 North Bury & Elton (£1.50)

*Vol. 30 Haslingden (Newchurch Sub-district) (£1.50)

*Vol. 32 Haslingden (Haslingden & Accrington Sub-districts) (£2.00)

*Vol. 37 Blackburn (Western section) (£1.50)

*Vols. 41/42 (combined vol.) Clitheroe (Whalley, Chipping, Gisburn & Slaidburn Sub-districts) and Stonyhurst College (£2.00)

+Vol. 43 Fylde (Kirkham, Lytham & Poulton-le-Fylde) (£2.00)

*Vol. 44 Garstang (£1.50)

Vol. 47 Oldham (£2.50)

Vol. 48 Middleton, Chadderton, Royton & Crompton Sub Districts (£2.00)

Vol. 49 Preston (£3.00)

Vol. 51 Chorley & Croston Sub Districts (£2.00)

Vol. 54 Brindle, Leyland & Rivington Sub Districts (£2.00)

* Published by Lancashire FHHS + Joint Publication

Available (postage extra) from:— Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, Clayton House, 59 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2AQ.

