



WEST MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

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WEST MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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Meetings and Advice Sessions - Coronavirus Update

After an emergency meeting in mid-March , the Trustees of the St John's Centre where we hold our meetings, decided to close the hall because of the Covid-19 virus. As a result we have deferred our AGM and our talks for April and May have been cancelled.

At the time of going to press, we don't know when we will be able to start our usual activities again. If you have access to the internet, please check our website and look out for announcements. If you know of a member living near you who does not have the internet and cannot leave their home, the occasional phone call would keep them up to date and would help to combat the isolation.

Our meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of each month at St John's Centre, St John's Road, Isleworth, TW7 6RU, while our advice sessions are usually held in the Local Studies area of Feltham Library on the third Saturday in the month.

While we are all socially-isolating, it's a great opportunity to tackle some of your more difficult family history areas. Some libraries are allowing their customers access to Ancestry or Findmypast in their own homes. Surrey, Richmond and Hounslow offer home access to their readers. Check the website for your library service. And don't forget that FamilySearch is totally free! Our own website is regularly updated by Roland, so you can still search our databases.

With so many of our activities cancelled, this issue is rather thinner than usual, and even the easing of lockdown will probably not allow our usual meetings over the summer. To refresh a very old phrase - Now is the time for all good family historians to come the aid of the society . Bring out your hoarded articles so that the September issue is back to its normal size!

Want a Lift?



Do you find getting to meetings a bit of a challenge?

We may be able to help!

Below are details of those who have volunteered to offer lifts to other members. Please ring or email them if you would like a lift.

If you are able to offer a lift to someone living in your area, contact our Webmaster, Roland BOSTOCK (contact details below) giving your name, contact details and areas you could pick up from.

This list is also on our website under "Meetings" and hopefully more names will be added as time goes on.

Roland Bostock, who lives in **Teddington**, can do pickups from places such as:
*Hampton Wick, Teddington, Strawberry Hill, Hampton Hill
and Twickenham.*

Email: Roland@Bostock.net

Telephone: 020 8287 2754

Mike Pipe, who lives in **Hanworth Park**, can do pickups from places such as:
Hanworth and Hanworth Park

Email: mikejpipe@aol.com

Telephone: 020 8893 1705

Hilary Strudwick, who lives in **Isleworth**, can do pickups from places such as:
Isleworth and Hounslow

Email: hilary.strudwick@springgrove.org.uk

Telephone: 020 8560 7492

Contributions and Advertisements

The WMFHS Journal is your magazine so contributions of all kinds are welcome, not to say necessary! Your contributions can be articles, cries for help, snippets of information, whatever you like.

Articles should be between 800 and 1200 words in length. Longer articles can be submitted but may have to be published in two parts depending on space.

Formatting: please set the document out as an **A5 page** with **narrow margins** and **single line spacing**.

They can be submitted by email (editor@west-middlesex-fhs.org.uk) or sent by post. The editor's postal address is to be found on the inside of the front cover.

- If emailing an article, please submit any illustrations in a separate folder from the actual article.
- If a quote or image is used that is not the author's own, the attribution must be given. If the attribution is not known, please state this.

Copy submission dates:

15th January, 15th April, 15th July and 15th October.

Advertisements

NB: We only accept advertisements relating to family history.

Rates:

Full page: £25 (members) £30 (non-members)

Half-page £10 (members) £15 (non-members)

Quarter-page £10 for both members and non-members.

I wish I'd asked more questions

John Collis

February

It's a sad fact that, as most people don't take up serious family history until they reach middle age, most of the "horse's mouth" sources will no longer be around to question; so John's title rang bells with more than a few of the audience.

He freely confessed that in coming to talk to us about his family, he was also hoping to get a bit of free advice on where to look next and maybe get a fresh perspective. His family history research began about 20 years ago, when his father had suggested they try to find out more about the family. Being from a **Chiswick** family, his first steps took him to **St Nicholas Church**. As expected, he found his father and aunts in the registers, decided to go a little further back to the 1900s and eventually found himself going back to 1807, to his great great grandfather's birth! Being **Chiswick** residents, many of the family are buried in **Chiswick Old Cemetery** and John said that, if you go into the cemetery and turn right at the War Memorial, that is **Collis Avenue** because there are a dozen or so of his ancestors buried in that stretch!

His family tree began with **John Collis** (the First) a gardener, allegedly born in **Bedfordshire**, who migrated to **Hammersmith**. His descendants were many, but sadly no concrete evidence has yet been found for him in **Bedfordshire**. John then did what we are always urging people to do – join a family history society that covers the geographical area you are interested in! The family came to Chiswick in 1806 and stayed there. **John George Collis**, John's great great grandfather, was born in 1807 and baptised at **St Nicholas**. He had ten children and the **Collis** family spread from there to **Hammersmith**, then across to **Acton**, **Brentford** and **Putney**. **John George's** father died in **Putney** in 1861. In the same year **John George Collis** was living just off **Bollo Lane**, in a cottage owned by the **Rothschild** family. He was a market gardener, employing nine men, three children and one woman.

John spent most of his working life in Brentford and Chiswick, but despite this and the size of the family, he has never yet met another **Collis**! While giving a

talk on crime prevention in **Chiswick**, he did encounter a man who had married a lady named Collis. She had done considerable family research and emailed John a list of all the family names she had come across – 31 pages! Searching through all her work for his family, John found some of his aunts were missing. It is so easy to miss entries for family members when doing a large tree - John himself has found that going back to previous searches, he has missed people. And he is now planning to go back and check yet again! The audience's nods and rueful expressions showed that he was not alone!

He took a DNA test sometime later and was classified as 98% European. Of that 98%, 63% is Great Britain, 14% is Scandinavian plus some West European whatever that means. And some Neanderthal.

John now has an archive of certificates and other family history documentation. He showed us the newspaper report of his grandfather's death in 1933 which gave the cause of death as cirrhosis of the liver; like his father **John George**, he had been a heavy drinker. Never dismiss newspapers - they can often give us an insight into people's lives.

He also has a lot of family photographs, but, like all of us, had failed to ask questions about them while elderly relatives were still around. Fortunately, his mother, despite suffering from Alzheimers before her death, retained her memory of family members and was able on her better days to identify people for John. In one photograph, she identified no fewer than twelve people, including his great grandfather and his aunt Eliza. John has shared this information with the son of a cousin who emigrated to Canada, so the information has survived for another generation. Something we all intend to do but don't always get round to!

Another question John asked his mother was what his grandfather did in WW1. She could only remember that it was something do with the "Shiny Seventh". John set out to investigate and found the answer on Google. It was the Seventh City of London Battalion, later part of the Machine Gun Corps. John's grandfather served with them at **Arras** and **the Somme**, but survived as did his brother. The battalion got the nickname "Shiny Seventh" because the uniform had brass buttons in a brigade where all the others wore black buttons.

Researching his mother's family, John found that one of her forebears, **George Newell**, an apprentice lighterman had won the **Doggetts Coat and**

Badge in 1807. His descendants moved from **Bermondsey** across to **Chiswick** where most of them were recorded as lightermen or coopers. The **Courage** brewery, who were based in **Bermondsey**, went through hard times in the nineteenth century while **Fuller, Smith and Turner** in **Chiswick** were flourishing, which explains the migration.

John's wife's family, many of whom worked in the Royal Dockyards are a little more spread out, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Poland. They plan to visit Galicia in Poland to see if they can track down exactly where the Polish branch of the family came from. His wife's grandfather was a police officer who at one stage was close protection officer to the future Edward VIII who led him a merry dance! At the end of the night, the Prince of Wales would drive home to Buckingham Palace while his protection team walked home. His wife's great grandfather on the other side was chief cashier for **Coalport** china. Born in 1820 in a **Stockport** workhouse, he had gone to work in the **Coalport** factory and worked his way up to Chief Cashier.

John thinks he didn't ask enough questions and although he's filled in some of the gaps with his research there is still an awful lot to be done! And some information is lost forever.

PLEA FOR HELP

Jeff Allen, a new member, is trying to find photographs of the house where his family lived for the last 40 or so years of the 19th century. An 18-room residence, it was called **Bellevue House** and was in the **Staines Road, Twickenham**, situated between **Manor Road** and **Belmont Road**. In the 1920's it was renamed **Melbury House**. Jeff says that a block of flats now occupies the site, but he would like to find some photos of it. Please contact Jeff via the Journal if you can help.

Reckingen's Englishman or the minister's son: the story of a forgotten romantic novelist from Chiswick

James Marshall

The **Valley of the Goms** is in the **Valais** canton of south central **Switzerland**. A scatter of villages, including the village of **Reckingen** and some small towns, line its lower slopes and valley floor with the large town of **Brig** at its western end. Picturesque side valleys lead northwards into the mountains of the **Berner Oberland** and the **Aletsch**, and into the Alps that line the Italian border to the south. Surrounded by mountains in excess of 3000 metres in height, attracting skiers in winter and mountain walkers and climbers in the summer months, the district has been a magnet for tourists from all over Europe ever since the building of railways opened **Switzerland** up to the rest of the world.

To the **Valley of the Goms**, in 1929, came a solitary Englishman in his late-forties. His name was **Percy Azleby Vincenti de Pereda Donovan**, but he had long since shortened this to the more manageable **Vincent Donovan**. **Ilse Carlen** in her 2017 biographical sketch of him writes:

*“**Vincent** travelled from New York to the **Valley of the Goms** where he had spent summer holidays with his late father, the Vicar. The hotel that they had stayed in then was just a summer residence ... So the Englishman went a little bit further on to the mountain village of **Reckingen** where he stayed for 10 years. The first year he stayed in a hotel and undertook hiking tours into the **Valaisian** and **Bernese Alps**. In the summer, while rambling in the wonderful mountain region, he came across a cavern (once used for shelter by cattle-herders when the cows were on their high summer pastures)... He hired the cave and spent the summer months there. He collected herbs, berries and mushrooms (which he hoped to sell to passing tourists)... On Sundays all the villagers set out to the Englishman's cavern where they were handed tea and slices of fresh bread – a luxury for some of the village's poor farmers who only baked their rye bread once a month.”*

*“For the winter, the Englishman had a little hut built at the edge of the village, on the other side of the **River Rhone**. There he lived like a hermit, coming only to the centre of the village for doing his shopping. When he did*

his shopping he always dealt out sweets to the children and even, surreptitiously, put bags of food into the houses of poor farmers, who, sometimes, were really starving."

"Everybody in the village saw that the Englishman was highly educated, he spoke several languages: English, German, French and Spanish, and he had very refined manners. Therefore he was highly respected by the people (of Reckingen) and was befriended by some of them – the village Schoolmaster, the Postmaster etc. "

Percy Azleby Vincenti de Pereda (Vincent) Donovan was born in 1882 to **Percy James Donovan** (1858-1906) and his wife **Maria**. **Percy** senior had worked as a schoolmaster before going up to **Oxford** and then graduated in Theology at **Exeter College, Oxford** and was ordained in 1885. He served as a Curate, between 1886 and 1893, in various places across the country before being appointed, in 1893, as Curate-in-Charge of **Christ Church, Turnham Green, in Chiswick**.



The Parish House, Chiswick.

Photograph included by kind permission of Hounslow Local Studies

His Vicar, **Samuel Arnott**, retained the living until he died in 1904. But when **Percy Donovan** took charge of the church and parish of **Turnham Green**, **Reverend Arnott** had already retired and was in poor health. **Reverend Donovan** was a respected and popular minister in **Chiswick**. Sadly, in 1905, at the age of only 47, his health broke down. The parish sent him to **Bournemouth**, for a rest-cure. But in January 1906, he suddenly died. The

parish placed a memorial plaque in the church and raised money for a carillon of bells in his memory.

Vincent inherited his full name from his mother. **Maria Vincenta de Pereda** was the illegitimate daughter of a Spanish nobleman, **Count Vincente Maria de Pereda** (1812-1878), who fled political unrest in **Saragossa, Spain**, in 1836. Bell's New Weekly Messenger (April 10th 1836) reports that as a young judge, he and another member of the bench, refused to sentence some prisoners to death and a riot ensued. By 1841, The Count was a Wine Merchant in **Clerkenwell**. He married an English gentleman's daughter, **Sarah Pirkin**, at **Isleworth** parish church in 1843. **Sarah** and **Count Vincente** adopted his illegitimate daughter, **Maria Vincenta Pitt** (1864-1934), who married the **Reverend Percy Donovan** in 1881.

At the start of the twentieth century **Vincent Donovan** was a member of a family blessed with a private income. **Vincent** was a pupil at **Haileybury School** between 1896 and 1900. Following in his father's footsteps, he went on to **Exeter College, Oxford** where he read Law and Theology. During his student years he wrote a successful romantic novel: *A HEROINE OF REALITY* [Greening & Co., London, 1903], set in the **Valley of the Goms** where, as a teenager he had holidayed with his parents.

After leaving university, in 1905, **Vincent** set out for **America**, hoping to earn a living as a writer and freelance journalist. He wrote book reviews for The New York Times and some poetry – including a short poem of hope for the recovery of the city of **San Francisco** from the devastating earthquake and fires of 18th April 1906, which was published by The American Magazine. Although his name appears in American literary yearbooks and directories during the first quarter of the 20th century, he does not seem to have made a successful living from his writing. The U.S. wartime Draft Registration of 1918 records him as an Alien, working as a cook in **Manhattan**, while the Census of 1920 shows him as a printer, still at the same address.

In 1929 he abandoned his life in **America** and returned to **Europe**, settling, perhaps for sentimental reasons, at **Recklingen** in the **Valley of the Goms**. One reason for his decision to live as a semi-recluse in a quiet corner of southern **Switzerland** is likely to have been his preference for dressing and living as a woman, in spite of the male body he had been born into. This photograph in his abandoned suitcase shows him standing outside his mountain cave wearing a cardigan over a short, tunic-like, dress.



Vincent Donovan in female clothing. Courtesy of Ilse Carlen

His hair is bobbed in a feminine manner, but his face retains a distinctive masculine look.

In spite of his preference for women's clothes and their own strict Catholicism, the inhabitants of **Reckingen** accepted him fully. He had many friends and admirers but still remained an enigma. He never spoke about his past and most people didn't know his name, simply calling him 'Mr. Englishman'.

In 1936-37 Vincent wrote a short autobiography as **Franca Kraig** – his female persona. It was composed in German, in classic verse form. Although the **Valley of the Goms** is a German-speaking region of

Switzerland, the work's archaic language was not readily understood. He sold copies to the villagers, many of whom must have bought it out of charity.

Vincent had received a regular income from his mother, now **Countess Rivas**. However, the world-wide financial crash in the 1930s, and Spain's increasing political polarisation between conservatives and radicals, leading to civil war in 1936, destroyed the value of the Countess' inherited Spanish investments. With no other source of income, Vincent ran up debts in the village shops and was unable to buy the necessities of life. His attempts to revive his journalistic career met with no success. He became so poor that he struggled to survive by eating grass, coming into the village in winter without shoes, his feet swathed in rags. The villagers too were struggling to feed their families and did not realise his plight.

The village shop, a community enterprise, was in financial trouble because of its customers' debts. **Vincent Donovan** was the worst debtor and became the scapegoat when it was discovered that the council had misappropriated district road-making funds to support the village shop. The atmosphere amongst some of the villagers became hostile towards him. Some of the villagers had guaranteed his debts and now he could not repay them. When the community of **Reckingen** made an application to the government that

he be expelled from **Switzerland**, he retired into the woods above the village. Returning later, he found his hut had been demolished and its wood salvaged by some of the villagers. He went to **Binn**, another place where he had holidayed with his family, and lived in a hut, high up in the mountains. It was certain that he would never survive a hard and rough Swiss winter with masses of snow accumulating on the mountainsides. So, in 1939, **Vincent** was removed by the authorities and sent back to England. He left his suitcase with the Postmaster in **Reckingen**. From **London**, **Vincent** sent a few postcards to old friends in **Reckingen**, but he never returned to reclaim the suitcase.

Vincent de Pereda Donovan died on the 19th October 1940, aged 58 years, in **Charing Cross Hospital**. He was living in **St. Anne's Court, Soho**, a poor side street between **Wardour Street** and **Dean Street**. The 1939 Register shows its population as people who were mostly single and male, lodging in a handful of multi-occupied houses. Some were unemployed, most worked as hotel and kitchen porters, waiters and waitresses. His death certificate gives the cause of death as 'Due to War Operations'. He may have been mortally wounded in a bombing incident in the ten days preceding his death. During that time, Westminster experienced some 30 bombings causing 220 casualties. Ten of these incidents killed 47 Londoners outright. Others, including **Vincent Donovan**, died later of their injuries. One parachute mine, falling in Belgravia on the night of 16th October, killed 23 and wounded more than 80 people.

Vincent Donovan was buried in a common, unmarked grave in the **City of Westminster's** cemetery, **Hanwell**. He is recorded in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Roll of Civilian War Dead, 1939-1945.



Vincent's suitcase. Courtesy of Ilse Carlen

The Postmaster's son retrieved **Vincent's** suitcase from his late father's house following his death, but its contents remained unexamined for a further twenty years. Opened in the 1970's it was found to contain approximately 150 letters from family members and American friends, along with some of his writings and some of his books. A visit to London followed, but it produced little more than evidence of **Vincent Donovan's**

death during the London Blitz. **Ilse Carlen** of **Reckingen** is the current custodian of the suitcase.

In 2017, **Ilse** wrote to the Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society, sending an incomplete biographical sketch of the Englishman's life and hoping that a local researcher would help her find out more about his background and family history. Her appeal was passed to **Carolyn Hammond**, my predecessor as Chiswick's Local History Librarian, who was able to provide help. I then begged my late wife's kind assistance for **Ilse Carlen**. An enthusiastic family historian, **Mary** responded most generously. Said **Ilse**: "*She felt how much this project of Mr. Donovan was important to me and she just turned up out of the blue one day in my email inbox. I couldn't believe my luck. She will stay in my heart forever.*"

This article is based on **Ilse Carlen's** biographical sketch of *THE ENGLISHMAN FROM RECKINGEN*, as augmented by the late **Mary Marshall**. **Ilse** is also working with Rilke prize-winning author **Oskar Freysinger** on a fictionalised version of her book, *Der Engländer: Mosaiksteine einer Biographie*, illustrated by Bruno Demuth. The new book will tell **Vincent Donovan's** story in the form of an epistolary novel written from Vincent Donovan's perspective. **William Carlen**, a Paris-resident illustrator from an old **Reckingen** family, is working on a graphic-story of **Vincent Donovan's** life in **Switzerland**. **Vincent Donovan's** novel *A HEROINE OF REALITY* can be seen in Chiswick Library's Local Studies room, by appointment

Editor's note: When I received it, this was a much longer article. Owing to space constraints, I have, with James's permission, cut its length.

PLEA FOR HELP

Wendy Archer is asking for help for a gentleman in Fulham. Some precious family notes need to be entered into a family history program, one which supports GEDCOM migration, so that they are not lost. The notes are too precious to entrust to the post, so they would need to be collected - obviously once lockdown has ended - so the volunteer needs to be in the Fulham area. Please contact Roland at secretary@west-middlesex-fhs.org.uk if you can help.

Harry Augustus Caswill was born on 15 February 1891 in West London. He was the third and youngest son of **Walter** and **Caroline Caswill**. **Harry's** father **Walter** grew up in the Somerset village of **Stockland Bristol**, one of nine children (including five brothers) of **John Pinn Caswill** and **Sophia**. **John Pinn** was a cooper and three of his sons took up that trade. **John Pinn** died in 1881, and all the children eventually left the village.

Walter married **Caroline Williams** on 6 April 1885 in the recently rebuilt **St Mary Magdalene Church** in **Stockland**. He and **Caroline** moved up to **London** later that year. He was described as a resident of **Turnham Green** in his 1885 admission to the Society of Carpenters and Joiners.

Their first son, **Percy Walter** was born in 1887, when they were living at **2 Swanscombe Road, Chiswick**. By 1891 they had moved to No. 3 and in 1901 were at **16 Windmill Road**, a few streets away on the north side of **Chiswick High Road**. **Walter** and **Caroline** lived in **Windmill Road** for the rest of their lives. The even numbered side of **Windmill Road** has been demolished but No. 16 was probably similar to the terrace house on the other side of the road.

Harry's second name, **Augustus**, suggests that his parents had high hopes for him. It means 'magnificent', 'great', 'venerable', 'noble' etc.

(<https://www.britishbabynames.com/blog/2015/12/augustus.html>).

It was popular in early Victorian times, but was in some decline by 1891 and then its use later fell steeply. **Harry** lived at **16 Windmill Road** for much of his life. The house was close to the 8+ acres of **Chiswick's Back Common**. Known now as **Chiswick Common**, it was part of the site of the 1642 Battle of Turnham Green and no doubt **Harry** and his brothers walked and played (maybe cricket) on the Common.

Harry's relatives were also in the West London area. His uncle, **Henry Robert Caswill** was a carpenter like his brother **Walter** and was the first to come to London. All but the oldest of his children were born in the **Brentford** and **Acton** area. His wife **Hannah** died in 1893, and from about 1894 **Henry** and his children lived in **Beaumont Road**, just beside **Acton Lane** and in easy walking distance to and from **Back Common**. There is evidence that the

families were quite close, both geographically and emotionally. In 1899 **Harry's** cousin **Arthur Robert** joined the Dragoons and served in **South Africa** in the **Boer** wars. This must have made an impression on the local **Caswills**. The death of **Queen Victoria** in 1901 generated a huge public impact.



Caroline and Walter Caswill, in 1901, probably wearing mourning for Queen Victoria

The nearly-10 year-old **Harry** must have been much impressed by the public mourning and local ceremonies of the time and by the replacement of the old horse drawn trams with London's first electric trams on **Chiswick High Road** in the same year

Above is a photograph of Harry's grandparents, Caroline and Walter, in 1901. They seem to be wearing mourning for Queen Victoria.

In 1902 cousin **Arthur Robert** was back from the Boer war and joined the Metropolitan Police.

Around that time, **Harry's** uncle **Henry Robert** took on **The Bell** public house a few miles away in **Uxbridge**, and some of his children went there with him, including **Harry's** cousin **Ernest**. **Henry** died in February 1909, in **Uxbridge**. He had a grand funeral, reported in the Uxbridge, Harrow and Watford Journal, February 20 1909 "*enclosed in a polished elm coffin with brass fittings, conveyed from Uxbridge in a pair-horse Washington car, followed by three mourning coaches*". **Harry's** father and his brother **Percy Walter** were at the

funeral, but Harry and his mother were not. **Harry** and his two brothers he sent a floral tribute.

In 1911 **Harry** was working as a clerk in a coal merchants, along with his brother **Arthur Edward**, both still living at home in **16 Windmill Road**. No doubt they shopped in **Chiswick High Road** and maybe dropped into the **Windmill Inn** at the end of the road. **Percy Walter** had married and was living nearby in **Acton Lane**, as a grocer, with his wife **Mary** and son **Frederick Walter**.

Several of **Harry's** relatives emigrated, including his cousin **Ernest**, who had gone to **Winnipeg** in **Canada**. On 4 October 1913 age 22, **Harry** sailed 3rd class on the **Royal George**, an immigrant ship nicknamed the Rolling George from **Bristol** to **Quebec**. From **Quebec**, **Harry** went on to **Winnipeg**.

However when war broke out in Europe in 1914, **Harry** and **Ernest** signed up to go back and fight. They joined the 100th Winnipeg Grenadiers on January 28 1916. Harry's attestation papers tell us that he was 5' 5 ½" tall, with dark complexion, grey eyes and black hair. After a period of training, both **Harry** and **Ernest** left for Europe from **Halifax** on the **SS Olympic** on 18 September 1916 and arrived in **Liverpool** on the 25th. After that they went separate ways; **Harry**, having presumably learnt to ride either in **Canada** or perhaps in **Chiswick**, on **Back Common**, was assigned to the Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) while **Ernest** joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps. It is unlikely they met again during the war.

Harry's extensive Canadian military records show that he was transferred to **Seaford** on the **Sussex** coast on November 27. He must have passed through **London** at some point and had time and opportunity to visit his parents in **West London**. By that time, he was enlisted in the 1st CMR, and with them he was in France on 1st December, and on the 12th '*taken on strength in the field*'.

The story of Harry's time in WW1 and his post-war life back in Chiswick are the subject of a subsequent article which will appear in the September Journal.

St. John's, Hillingdon, a churchyard with surprises

Roland Bostock

The first surprise relating to **St. John's, Hillingdon** was in May last year when I received an email from Christine Bartlett of St. John's mentioning that West Middlesex had carried out a survey of their gravestones in 1980, which had been most useful to the church, and asking if we had any photographs of the memorials taken at the time.

Now I was very aware that the Society had visited **St. John's** back in 1980, and I was certainly considering asking the church if we could return there to do a follow-up survey. I knew quite a lot about the previous survey as I had come by **Vic Gale's** copy of it, when it was among papers handed over to the

Society by Vic's son, in July 2018, at our 40th anniversary celebrations.

Although the survey work was completed in 1980 it was not until 1984 that the typed copy of the survey was available.

In Vic's copy he includes an Introduction where he gives the names of 16 volunteers from the Society, one from the Society of Genealogists, a member of Hillingdon Local History Society, and two members of the church choir, who together with Vic made up the survey team.

In a planning note issued to the volunteers, Vic says they will make a start on 12th July 1980, and that two or three visits will probably be necessary. It turned out that the team made 6 visits during the months July to October, and they recorded a total of 524 inscriptions. They did miss quite a few memorials, but this was more to do with difficulties of access than simply missing them out. Vic refers to his team tackling "the tangled area at the back".

But from my point of view they had cut some corners to get the job done. The final report does not include any description of the memorials, nor any



layout map where they are to be found. The entries are also abbreviated, in the sense that they do not contain any verses or eulogies, nor even any “In loving memory of”; serviceable to use for family history, but not your actual historic record of the memorials. Hence it was that in June 2019 Yvonne Masson and I began our own survey, which was to be a complete reread of all the memorials in the churchyard, and inside the church this time also.

An early surprise

I have to say that I don't usually pay too much attention to the footstones, since the general rule is that a footstone will include on it just a list consisting of the initials of each deceased and their year of death; useful of course if the headstone is hard to read, but not conveying any additional information. But it was clear from a walk around the churchyard that there were quite a few footstones on their own, and thus it became policy in this case to read all the footstones that were legible. We had not done very many stones before we came across our first anomaly, two headstones side by side, each with their footstone where you expect it to be; but when we read the footstones they were simply the wrong way around – each inscription belonged on the adjacent grave. Had they always been like that? How does that sort of thing happen? I passed on the oddity to Christine of course. Then several weeks later we found exactly the same type of swap-over had happened for another pair of headstones with footstones. A curious affair!

A footstone with extra initials

I have mentioned that you do not expect to find extra information on a footstone, but then we came across a headstone naming three deceased people including a Mr. **Joseph Turner** who died in 1842, but when we looked at the footstone there were four sets of initials there, including T.T. 1853. It was not hard to discover from the parish register that a **Thomas Turner** was buried in 1853, who must be person referred to, but why was he only worth mentioning on the footstone?

A footstone with a real surprise in store

Sometimes a headstone or footstone is laid flat, and sometimes they are also facing downward. Now a large headstone is far too heavy to be turned over, but a footstone can be. We met this footstone laid flat and apparently upside down, so I didn't hesitate but put the spade under it and lifted it up. Well, did I get a surprise on this one, for the footstone covered a hole that went down eight feet – very spooky. It seems the water board were being creative

in the churchyard and used this stone, of the right size, instead of the usual manhole cover plate. We called over Robert, the gardener, to give us our special photograph.

An unexpected reference to “the above”

Another inscription that has to be put on the ‘odd list’ was a clearly inscribed headstone which started “Sacred / to the memory / of / Mrs. **Elizabeth Lucket** / who departed this life / March 23rd 1864 / aged 65 years / In fond remembrance of a beloved / mother / Also of the above / Mr. **James Lucket** ... “. Surely someone would



have noticed something odd there. Perhaps when the stone was new they had cemented over “the above”, but there is no sign of any such correction now.

Tomb in the wall



One tomb immediately catches the eye, as you seem to see a tomb built under the church wall, or rather that the church wall has been built to go over an existing tomb. The grave is handsomely done, and it is for Vice Admiral **James Nicoll Morris**, KCB, who died in 1830, and his wife **Margaretta Sarah Morris** who died in 1842. Although the church is very much older than 1830, it was extended in 1848, and it is the extension which is built over and around the Admiral’s tomb. The original inscription on the tomb is well hidden by the new church wall, but the inscription was rewritten on the panelling that is immediately over it.

There was a second surprise on this tomb, as when we checked the Admiral’s death as given on the panelling, compared to his burial in the parish registers, we found that the inscribers had swapped over the death details of the

Admiral and his wife. The inscription says that the Admiral died in 1842, but the parish register has to be believed when it says that it was his wife **Margaretta** who died in 1842, whereas the Admiral died in 1830.

A name with commas

Another most strange inscription comes from a headstone inscribed on both sides. The inscription on the west side starts "Sacred to the memory of **Mary, Ann, Emma, Hannah, Augusta Durrant** ... who died May 24th 1855 ...". Naturally I was very curious if 5 sisters had all died on the same day, and hence referred to the parish register again for clarification. This time I was really surprised to see the burial recorded in exactly the same way in the parish register, apparently a single individual with 5 forenames, and with a comma between each name. This required to be checked with death registrations, and at least there the commas are dropped, and the lady is given her 5 forenames in the usual way. Perhaps there was a family joke here concerning all those forenames, and to emphasize the excessive number thereof she was shown as having the names as a list.

One of several sunken graves

Do gravestones really sink? Or does the turf around a ledger stone increase in height? Sometimes it seems to happen, as the photo shows. This ledger was just one example of a stone that they did not record in 1980. In fact the churchyard volunteers had discovered these two stones just a month or so before we visited.



Yvonne is of course an archaeologist, but we both enjoy discovering what was previously buried. The clarity of the inscription testifies how the inscription itself is better preserved when underground compared to the weathering a stone gets when exposed to the elements.

A tomb is rebuilt while we were there

Let me end with a heartening illustration of what this church is achieving from the dedication of half a dozen volunteers. On my last day there I met with the team who were busy preparing for their next rebuilding of a chest tomb. The churchyard has suffered neglect in the past, with ivy breaking up the walls of several tombs, but this group have found the answer. One man in particular, whom they call the glue-man, is an expert in using masonry glue to put back together what the ivy has broken apart.



The first photograph is what I took before we read the tomb's inscription. The second is what I took on our last day there. It's the same tomb of course. The band is only temporary while the glue hardens. Full marks to Christine and her volunteers for great work at St. John's

churchyard. I expect to visit again someday and see even more tombs magically put back together again. It's a very encouraging sight.

Members Discounts and Passwords

Find My Past

In May 2016 the Society signed a new contract with the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS) relating to the terms under which we supply data to Find My Past. As part of this contract Find My Past has made available a discount of 15% on all new subscriptions, or Pay as You Go payments, taken out by our members. All you have to do is to enter the appropriate discount code as given below:

For Subscriptions the discount code is *****

For Pay as You Go the discount code is *****

These codes are valid up to the end of this year.

Forces War Records

The Society has arranged a useful discount for our members of 40% when you take out a subscription with Forces War Records.

You must register your details with them in the normal way. Go to their website <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/register/> and register yourself as a user, then visit their [Subscribe Page](#) and enter our discount code ***** in the discount code box.

PASSWORDS

Apr – Jun 2020 *****

Jul – Sep 2020 *****

West Middlesex Family History Society Matters

It is with great sadness that we announce
the death of the following member

John Stone

We offer our condolences to his family

These are hard times for everyone and we are all urged to be creative and find things to be done, or learned, at home. One thing that family historians know all too well, is that searching our ancestral lines is engaging and interesting, but requires patience and a lot of time as well. We certainly have the time now!

Roland Bostock, our indefatigable Secretary, is hopeful that he can carry on with his photographing of graveyards while still adhering to the social distancing and lockdown regulations. St George's Hanworth is our current project.

Despite – or perhaps because of, the lockdown, we are still attracting new members. A very warm welcome to our newest members!

Name	Membership Number	Address/Location
Mr J Allen	A120	Waterlooville
Mr C Caswill	C282	Cherhill
Mr J Hitchman	H291	Southall
Ms E McCauley- Tinniswood	M245	Sunbury
Ms J Moon	M190	Feltham
Mr D Sherman	S299	Fulham
Mr G Tovey	T97	Hemel Hempstead

Indexes held by members

These indexes are intended as aids to research in the West Middlesex area. For Society members look-ups are free (please quote membership number), unless otherwise stated. For non-members there is a fee of £5. Please note that all enquirers must supply a SAE if a reply is required by post. If an email address is given, holders of the Index are happy to receive enquiries by email. Unless stated otherwise, cheques should be made payable to the holder of the index, not the WMFHS.

WEST MIDDLESEX FHS INDEXES

Roland Bostock, bostocr@blueyonder.co.uk

West Middlesex Monumental Inscriptions. Acton, Ashford, Cranford, Chiswick, Ealing, Feltham, Fulham (recorded 100 years ago), Hampton, Harlington, Hayes, Heston, Hillingdon, Hounslow (United Reformed), Norwood Green, Perivale, Staines, Teddington, Twickenham and Uxbridge.

West Middlesex Settlement Records. Chelsea, Ealing, Friern Barnet, Fulham, Hammersmith, New Brentford, Shepperton, Staines, Stanwell, Uxbridge.

Richard Chapman, Golden Manor, Darby Gardens, Sunbury-on-Thames, TW16 5JW

chapmanrq@btinternet.com. Cheques to West Middlesex FHS.

Marriage Index. Pre-1837 marriages in West Middlesex with partial coverage elsewhere in the county. Please supply places/dates/surname variants if known.

Mrs. Wendy Mott, 24 Addison Avenue, Hounslow, TW3 4AP. wendymott@btinternet.com

West Middlesex Strays. People from or born in our area, found in another area.

Mrs. Bridget Purr, 8 Sandleford Lane, Greenham, Thatcham, RG19 8XW

bridgetspurr@waitrose.com

West Middlesex War Memorials. Substantial name-list material, consisting of public, churches', schools' and companies' memorials, etc. for WWI, WWII and earlier wars where they exist; list not yet complete; information on any other memorials you know of would be welcome. When making an enquiry please include any information on village or town where you might expect a name to be mentioned.

PARISH RECORDS

Mrs. Margaret Cunnew, 25 Selkirk Road, Twickenham, TW2 6PS

Chiswick Parish Registers, St. Nicholas. Baptisms marriages burials 1813-1901.

Chiswick, 1801 Census

Ealing Parish Registers, St. Mary. Baptisms 1779-1868, marriages 1797-1857, burials 1813-1868.

Hanwell Parish Registers, St. Mary. Baptisms marriages burials, 1813-1855.

New Brentford Parish Registers, St. Lawrence. Baptisms marriages burials 1802-1837.

Old Brentford Parish Registers, St. George. Baptisms 1828-1881, marriages 1837-1881, burials 1828-1852.

G.R.O. Certificates. A number of original GRO birth, marriage and death certificates have been kindly donated to the Society by members and are available for purchase at a cost of £1 per certificate. Please check on Society website for current list. Cheques should be made payable to West Middlesex FHS and please include an sae.

Mrs. Wendy Mott, 24 Addison Avenue, Hounslow, TW3 4AP. wendymott@btinternet.com

Harmondsworth Parish Registers. Baptisms marriages burials 1670-1837.

Mr. P. Sherwood, 5 Victoria Lane, Harlington, Middlesex, UB3 5EW

psherwood@waitrose.com

Harlington Parish Registers. Baptisms, marriages, burials, 1540-1850.

Mrs. M. Sibley, 13 Blossom Way, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 9HF.

mavikensib@aol.com For more than 3 names, please write for an estimate of charge.

Hayes Parish Registers, St. Mary. Baptisms marriages burials 1557-1840

Hillingdon Parish Registers. Baptisms 1559-1909, marriages 1559-1910, burials 1559-1948 (churchyard) and 1867-1903 (cemetery).

Isleworth Parish Registers, All Saints. Baptisms 1566-1919, marriages 1566-1927, burials 1566-1942.

Isleworth Register of Baptisms: Brentford Union Workhouse, Mission Church, Wesleyan Methodist Church, extracts from Register of Baptisms.

Ms. Carol Sweetland, 36 Diamedes Avenue, Stanwell, Staines, TW19 7JB.

carol.sweetland@btinternet.com

Stanwell Parish Registers. Baptisms 1632-1906, marriages 1632-1926, burials 1632-1906. Also available on FreeREG. Name database 1632-1906.

MISCELLANEOUS INDEXES

Mr. A. Rice, 46 Park Way, Feltham, TW14 9DJ. secretary@feltham-history.org.uk

Feltham Index. An expanding collection of transcripts and indexes relating to the parish of Feltham. Donations welcome, payable to Feltham History Group.

Mr. Paul Barnfield, 258 Hanworth Road, Hounslow, TW3 3TY

paulbarnfield@hotmail.co.uk

Hampton Wick. Records of this village collected over 40 years of research.

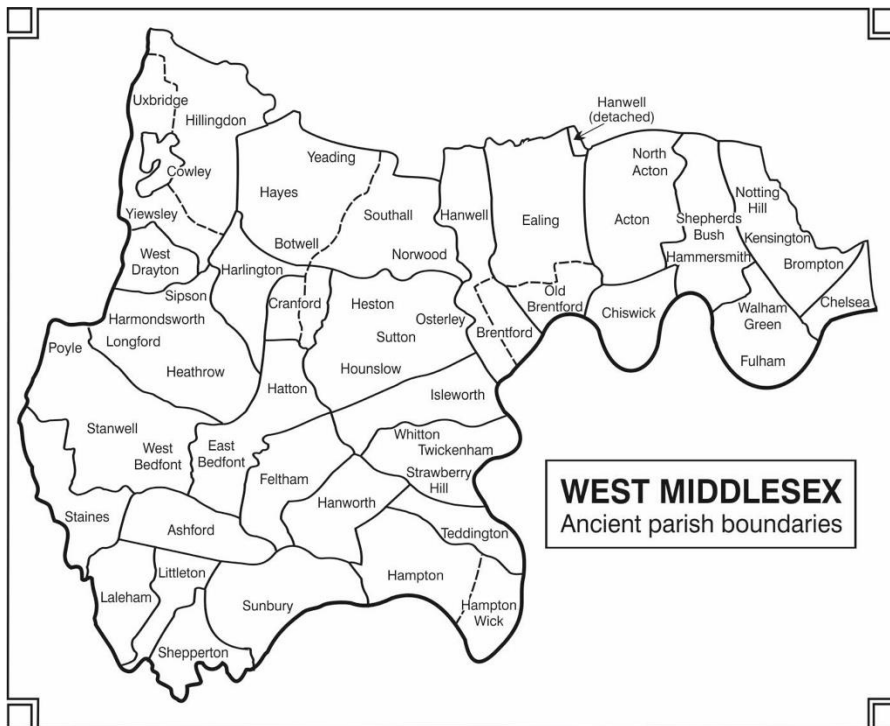
Mr. Brian Page, 121 Shenley Avenue, Ruislip, HA4 6BU. brian729@blueyonder.co.uk

1641-2 Protestation Returns of Middlesex. This has been indexed. You will secure a printout, which includes variants. Cheques made payable to West Middlesex FHS.

Front Cover

Image: This quarter's cover is unusual as it is not in the West Middlesex area – far away from it in fact. It is a postcard depicting the Hotel de la Post and the village church in Reckingen, Switzerland. Reading the article “Reckingen’s Englishman” will make all clear.

Source: Ilse Carlen



West Middlesex Family History Society

Area of Interest

Acton, Ashford, East Bedfont, Chelsea, Chiswick, Cowley, Cranford, West Drayton, Ealing with Old Brentford, Feltham, Fulham, Hammersmith, Hampton, Hanwell with New Brentford, Hanworth, Harlington, Harmondsworth, Hayes with Norwood, Heston, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Isleworth, Kensington, Laleham, Littleton, Shepperton, Staines, Stanwell, Sunbury, Teddington, Twickenham and Uxbridge

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