

# Newsletter

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## Editorial

### POOR LAW UNIONS & WORKHOUSES

Early in February many of your committee helped lots of people at BBC Local Radio's "Who Do You Think You Are" Day at Trentham Gardens. There were many other Family History tables and the whole day was very enjoyable. The interest that the television series has developed can only benefit us all as the demand for information on our ancestors becomes more open to the public. Do you feel that the television programme gives the amateur family historian a false sense of how to research your ancestors? Information seems to come to the famous subject of the show quite easily and pieces fall into his jigsaw effortlessly. We all know how difficult it can be finding that elusive ancestor but that is what makes the hobby fascinating and so enjoyable. I always say that if you like Inspector Morse on the television or love reading an Agatha Christie novel then you'll love tracing your family history because the unfolding mystery is about your own family.

John S Booth

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Many of our antecedents fell on hard times, and without Social Security the only safety net was the Poor Law system. The Poor Law Act of 1601, which remained in force until 1834, provided for overseers to levy a poor rate on the householders in a parish in order to support the poor of that parish.

Because the rates were levied by the parish there was an inevitable reluctance to pay for the poor of other parishes, so it was not unusual for them to be returned to the parish from whence they came. From 1697 paupers were supposed to wear a large badge with the letter P and the first letter of their parish, and although often not enforced, this provision remained on the statute books until later in the year of 1810.

In 1834 the system was comprehensively overhauled, with the establishment of 600 Poor Law Unions, and a switch from 'outdoor relief', where the poor continued to live in their own homes, to workhouses. Anyone who has read Dickens will know what dismal places they were - but you may be surprised to learn that workhouses were not abolished until 1930.

Information can be found on the following database containing some Poor Law records:

<http://www.fourbears.worldonline.co.uk/Database.html>

This allows you to find out the Union in which each parish was situated, and also the records office that holds the surviving records. Some record offices have indexes of the names that appear in documents - this may be no more than a card index.

There's a site that is unequalled in the information it provides about workhouses:

<http://www.workhouses.org.uk>

On a page entitled 'Workhouse Memories' you can learn something of what it was like to live in the workhouse from those who survived the experience.

The above article was published in the LostCousins 2006 Spring Newsletter.

If you want to know what it was like living in a local workhouse then read Charles Shaw's book "When I Was a Child". This very graphic account of growing up in the 1830's Potteries and his harrowing experiences in Chell Workhouse.

## Additions to your Library List

<b>Book</b>	<b>Number</b>
Staffordshire Directory Kelly's 1936	37
Trysull PR 1558-1772	54
Sin, Sex and Probate	101
Maer St Peter PR 1558-1746	146
Audley St James M I's	176
Golden Hill St John M I's	187
Over Tean Checkley Independent Chapel Baptisms 1803-1837	241
Countrywise One	255 a
Countrywise Two	255 b
Countrywise Three	255 c
Brierley Hill Bap & Bur. 1800-1812	262
Stoke-on-Trent Farmers & Potters. A History of Pre-Industrial S-o-T	264
Audley Historian, The - No 10	621 j
Clent St Leonard 1561-1837 Banns 1754-1813 BTs 1621-1636 1758-1782	629
Alsagers Bank High St. War Memorial	640
Park Hall Colliery War Memorial Whitehurst Lane Godleybrook Nr. Dilhorne	640
Silverdale Victoria St. United Reformed Church	640

## What's on in our Local Museums

**The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery;** 11th Feb.—7th May

You Are Here

Discover the streets of your neighbourhood. The ever changing nature of Stoke on Trent's urban landscape using historical maps, paintings and photographs.

**Ford Green Hall;** Until 31st April

A retrospective display of events and exhibitions at the Hall over the past year.

**Gladstone Pottery Museum** is the only complete Victorian pottery factory from the days when coal burning ovens made the world's finest bone china and has the usual hands on attractions.

**Etruria Industrial Museum** is the last steam-powered potter's mill in Britain and includes Jesse Shirley's Bone and Flint Mill. The museum includes a family interactive exhibition, and as all the museums has a tearoom and shop.

### A Curious Epitaph in Hanley St Johns Church Yard

In Memory of WILLIAM ADAMS who Departed this Life 27th December 1786 age 69

My Sledge and Hammer Lies Declined  
My Bellows too Have Lost Their Wind  
My Song Extinct, My Forge Decay'd  
And in the Dust My Voice is Laid.  
My Life is Spent, My Irons Gone  
My Nails are Drawn, My Work is Done.

I have found out that William Adams was a Blacksmith of Hanley

## Who are the Huguenots

I AM A FITZGERALD on my mother's side and on my fathers side a DESMOULINS - a direct descendant from a Huguenot family that fled to London between 1620 and 1675. The first recorded entry that I can confirm is in the French Church of Threadneedle Street between Isaac Desmoulins and Jendique in 1620.

It may be of interest to say something about how this very important group of people came to be, and their interaction with the Catholics. The name came from the Protestants of Tours, followers of the reform doctrines of John Calvin (1509-1564), who used to meet at night near the gate of King Hugo. Their emblem is the Cross and the Dove, created about 1578 by Maystre, a jeweller of Nimes

The Reformation was founded by Martin Luther (1483-1546) a professor at Wittenburg who was appalled by conditions when on a mission to Rome and, among other things, the shameless sale of indulgences. He could never have foreseen the chain of events he started, when in 1519 he denied the primacy of the Pope and completed the break with Rome by a series of publications. Lutheranism rapidly became widespread in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Calvinism followed, to become the foundation of many non-Lutheran Protestant Churches, including the Huguenots. Calvin was a French theologian and reformer, who was born in Picardy, studied Latin in Paris and Law at Orleans. He was forced to flee to Switzerland in 1535, went to Strasbourg for a time, then returned to Geneva where he founded a University as a theological academy. His influence was felt in the great struggle in France between the Guises and the Protestants. Claude of Lorraine, created The Duke of Guise for suppressing a peasant revolt, was the father of Mary, wife of James V of Scotland and mother of Mary, Queen of Scots. His family saw themselves as the upholders of religious orthodoxy in France, and they were to take the lead in the suppression of Protestantism, Henri the third Duke being one of the instigators of the massacre on St Bartholomew's day

1572.

From 1562 to 1598 there was almost continuous civil war, the Wars of Religion, between the Huguenots and the Catholic majority. Full freedom of worship was granted by the Edict of Nantes (1598) issued by Henry IV. Henry had been brought up by his mother as a Calvinist, but had accepted the Catholic faith as a way to achieve unification - "Paris is worth a Mass". However, there continued to be friction. The Edict confirmed toleration for the Huguenots by allowing them possession of 200 fortified centers and their own political and legal institutions. This to the Catholics was a very dangerously privileged position, and remained a source of strife until 1610 when the Jesuits assassinated Henry IV. Louis XIV (1638-1715), the "Sun King", came to the throne at the age of five. From 1643-1651 his mother and her lover Cardinal Mazarin carried on government until Mazarin's death in 1661 when Louis took charge. His reign was one of the longest and most brilliant in European history, but for the Huguenots disastrous. At the beginning of his reign he had sworn to maintain the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenots being among the most industrious, loyal and enterprising of his subjects. Unfortunately he listened to his Mistress Madame de Maintenon and his Jesuit Confessor Pere la Chaises, who in the end overcame his scruples, and on the 18th October 1685 he signed the notorious Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Although it was his own act, it was a popular measure, approved by the Catholic Church and the main body of the French people. There followed a bloody persecution of French Protestants, and mass emigration to Holland and England of French Huguenots. The numbers that fled are subject to conjecture; there were three waves, before, during and after the Revocation, and a figure of 230,000 would not be an over estimate.

The Huguenot immigration to Britain began early in the 16th century, but was small until the Massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572. It did not take on a large scale until the Revocation - in fact some traveled to and from France during this period. It has been calculated that after the Revocation in 1685 some 70-80,000 refugees were in England, almost one fiftieth of the population. In

the centres where they were concentrated it must have been much higher. The word "Refugee" came to the English language with the Huguenots. They were of all ages and classes, nobles, gentry, intellectuals, bankers, goldsmiths, weavers and etc. My ancestor was a Marquis, and the name Moulins goes back to the third crusade. The Huguenots and descendants obtained an important position in English commerce; 99 out of the 542 London merchants who presented an address to the King in 1754 were of Huguenot stock, and they played a notable part in preparing England for the industrial revolution. They took weaving to Ireland, wine trade to South Africa. It is statistically probable that over three quarters of all Englishmen alive today have some Huguenot blood in their veins. A younger brother of an ancestor left for Virginia in 1700 on the ship "Mary and Ann" and I have a copy of the receipt given to his friend the Marquis de la Muce. *"Received of ye hon 'ble Marquis de la Muce and Chas de la Saily, ye summe of nine hundred, forty five pounds in full for ye passage of two hundred and five people aboard ye ship Mary Ann, bound for Virginia, I say receiv 'd this j9" 1 April, 1700. £945. Virginia: James City, July 31 1700. This is a tru copy.*

The reason for their success was that when they arrived they had to work to survive. Their houses and looms were burnt, and they were given a bad time, so they earned their place instead of demanding it. They changed their names. Renard became Fox, Blanc became White and so on. It was a tragedy that to reform, the practice of Christian faith was so fractured, that so much mayhem, death and destruction had to be endured before stability came to the French Nation. Fanatics tried to disrupt religious stability, regardless of whether it was corrupt or not. Do we see the same problems today?

Based on extracts from an article by David Desmoulins (member 1953) in the *Devizes Catholic Church Magazine*.

Wilts FHS Oct 2000 30

