

Newsletter

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Editorial

Now the holiday season is over it's time to pick up the family history research again. The Federation of Family History Societies keep me informed on what is new to the genealogist and I pass as much as I can onto you in our Newsletter. I also subscribe to another source of up to date information called The Parish Chest. There is a lot of information in this newsletter from the FFHS because I have been inundated with helpful information over these past few months.

In this edition of our Newsletter is a super article about how two hobby's can combine with a very satisfactory ending. I collect local postcards and spend hours at postcard fares looking at what is written on the back and hoping I will find it was from an ancestor.

As I saved this Newsletter to my hard drive I noticed that I have been editing our Newsletter for five years which equates to writing twenty Newsletters. I am always looking for articles or letters to put in our Newsletter.

There will be a new book published next year following the history of businesses along the Caldon Canal. It could be useful if your ancestor worked along side the canal.

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Poor Law records free online at the National Archives

Records relating to 23 Poor Law Unions in England & Wales have gone online thanks to a project between the TNA and volunteers across the country. Starting in 1834, when the Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced, and continuing in most cases into the 1840s and 1850s, the collection comprises correspondence between the union and the central authorities which helps to create a picture of what life was like in a 19th century workhouse. Individual paupers and staff are mentioned in the records, which can be searched and downloaded free through *DocumentsOnline*. Most surviving workhouse records are held in local records offices but these documents will reveal how workhouse's were run.

With permission of National Archive

Royal Marine medal roll now online

If any of your relatives served in the Royal Marines during the Great War you will be interested to know that the Royal Marine Medal Roll 1914-20, a record of all marines who received campaign medals in respect of their service in World War 1, can be found on the National Archives website or downloaded free with *findmypast.com*

England & Wales, National Probate Calendar, 1861-1941 (Index of Wills and Administrations).

The records were created by the Probate Registry, which took control of proving wills and administrations in 1858. Before this, four different types of ecclesiastical (church) courts dealt with these cases.

A Principal Probate Registry was established in London in January 1858, and several district probate registries were created around the country. From then on, the registries oversaw all grants of probate and letters of administration. This collection is the Calendar of these grants.

The Calendar is separated into a different volume for each year. The entries in each volume are then alphabetised by surname. Information varies across different entries, but each typically includes:

- Probate date
- Full name of the deceased
- Death date
- Death place
- * Registry where issued

Missing volumes:

Our collection covers 80 years from 1861 to 1941. We currently do not have the books for the years 1858-1860 and there are some gaps for the years 1863, 1868, 1873, 1876, 1877, 1883, 1888, 1899-1903 and 1910-1911. However, we hope to add records for these years as soon as possible.

These records are available on Ancestry.com.

By kind permission of National Archives

Parish registers - a treasure trove!

It's all too easy to rely on transcriptions of parish registers, rather than check the actual registers on microfiche - or, if you're lucky, online. But unless you look at the registers you'll never know what you're missing!

For example, after 1753 all marriage entries include the signatures of the witnesses, information that might seem incidental, but which in practice often helps to confirm that you're researching the correct parents. I can think of at least half a dozen instances in my tree where the names of marriage witnesses provided vital clues to the identity of my direct ancestors. Of course, it wasn't always obvious at the time - in one case it was several years later when the same name cropped up, and provided a completely unexpected solution to the mystery.

Similarly, baptism registers from 1813 onwards include the occupation of the father, absolutely vital information when there's someone else with the same name in a nearby parish - or even in the same parish.

The real bonus comes when you discover something written in the register that really shouldn't be there. Recently I've been scanning the burial registers of St Peter ad Vincula, Great Coggeshall in Essex, when I spotted something I've never seen before...

On 12th August 1755 a Mary Man, widow of John Man, was buried in the churchyard - but it was the words that followed that made me shiver "*a reputed witch*". I wonder what, if anything, she had done to deserve that reputation? She wasn't one of my ancestors, but perhaps she was one of yours?

Another page, a quarter of a century earlier, also caught my eye - five people were buried between the 17th and 18th June 1730: Ann wife of William Nicolds, Robert Skakeshaft, Rebecca Wakeling, Thos son of Ambrose Smith, and Thomas Trew. Alongside were the words "*shot by the forces then quartered here in a Riot*".

A Google search revealed that there had been a riot in nearby Great Tey in 1727, but I haven't yet been able to find out what happened in 1730, although I did find an estimate that two-thirds of the riots in the 18th century were about food (or the lack thereof). This doesn't surprise me - having studied the burial registers for Coggeshall the number of infants and children who died during the period was quite horrifying, and some families lost a child almost every year.

Although most of the entries in the early baptism registers for Coggeshall didn't give the age or date of birth of the child, some not only gave the date, but also the time:

"January 28:1775 Jamima Daughter of Richard and M... born November 13:1774 half after 9 at night"

Modern birth certificates show the time of birth only in respect of twins (or other multiple births), but all the individuals I found with precisely timed births were baptised singly. I wonder whether giving the time was a form of one-upmanship, a way of making it clear that "we have a clock", or did it merely indicate that the family lived sufficiently close to the church that they could hear the clock striking?

Many parish registers are available through the pay to view websites such as *ancestry.co.uk* or *findmypast.co.uk* but be careful when searching marriage records using the birth year of the bride or groom, because if no age was given for a post-1837 marriage Ancestry assume that the individual was 0 years old.

There is so much information in original parish registers that does not get transcribed by parish register societies or passed on to websites and there are so many original parish registers available on microfiche that no true family historian should just look in books or on the internet. These two sources of information are only guides to the truth.

Reprinted by kind permission of Peter Calver. Lost Cousins

Robert Earlam

Two of my interests are family history and collecting Aynsley China. I have been able to combine both, when in 1997 I purchased an Aynsley moustache cup and saucer from a local antique fare. It is a very pretty design, with colourful floral sprays decorating it. It also has a personel inscription as follows: -

Presented to Robert Earlam on his 19th birthday Sept. 19th 1919.

This is completed in gold in very ornate lettering. It is clear from the condition of the cup and saucer that it was never used and kept as a treasured piece. I used my research skills and discovered that there was only one Robert Earlam recorded in the 1901 census. He was 7 months old and was born in the parish of Fenton. His parents, Thomas Earlam and Sarah Annie Lowndes at St Peter's in Stoke in 1892.

In the 1911 census his name is shown in full as Robert William Earlam, now aged 11 years and his address was given as 33, Newhall Road, Longton. He lived with his father, a miner's banks man, who was by this time a widower and Robert had four brothers and four sisters. Roberts mother died in 1906 age 32 years. His two older brothers also worked in the coal industry and an older sister was a domestic servant. There was a daughter name Ethel, age 14, who was recorded as a domestic at home. What a tough life they must have had, especially Ethel.

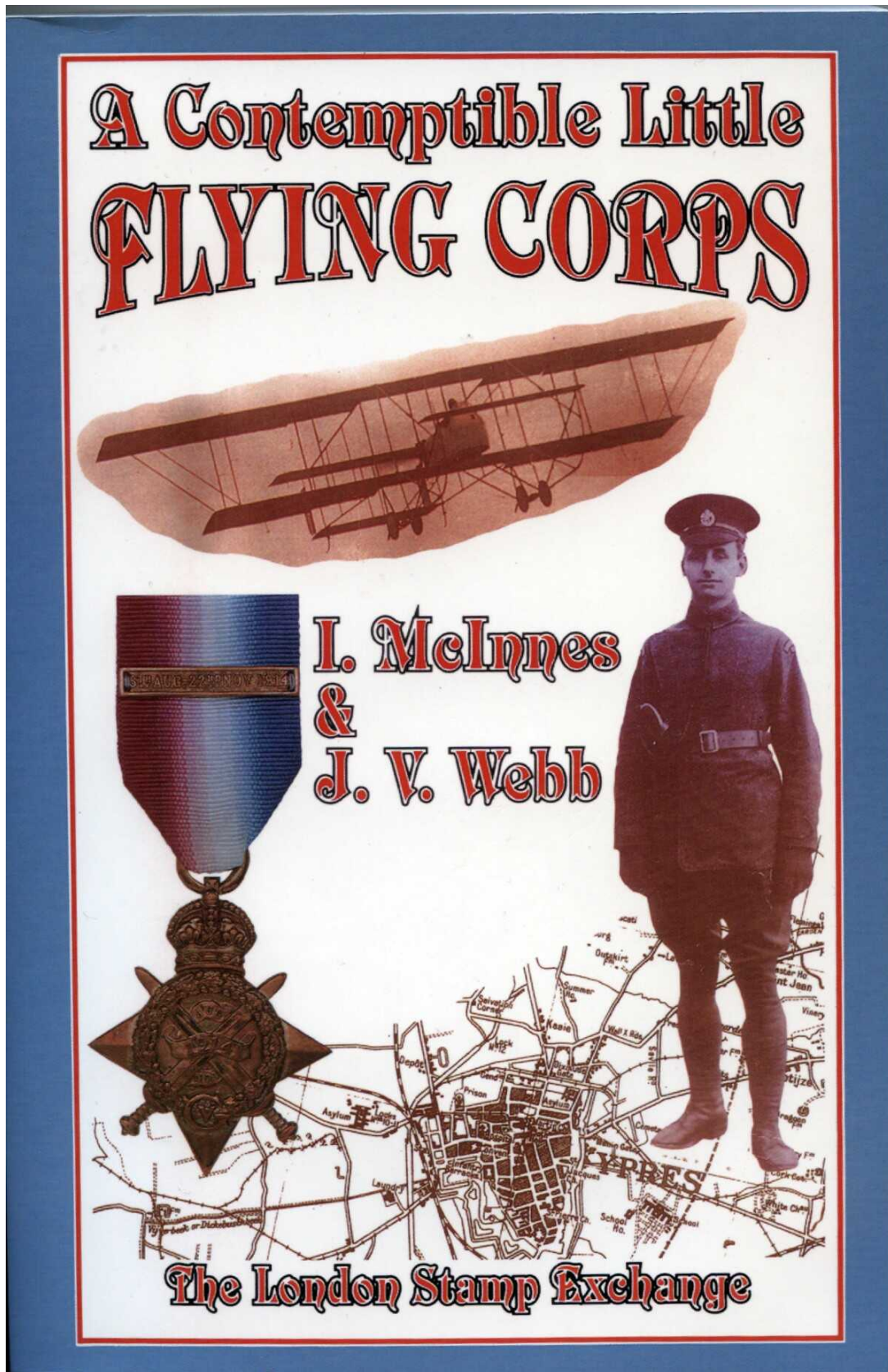
Robert married Ethel M. Birks at the Church of the Holy Evangelist, Normacot in 1924. I imagine that a friend or member of his family, or maybe even a sweetheart, may have worked at Aynsley at the time of his 19th birthday and had a cup and saucer made as a one off gift.

I have worked at Aynsley China in the Payroll Department for the last 25 years and although our personnel records go back quite a way, sadly not back to 1919. This is a shame as I understand that my own great grandfather also worked there as a kiln man.

I will be happy to pass on a photograph of the cup and saucer to anyone interested in Robert Earlam.



Submitted by member
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Was your ancestor in the Royal Flying Corps?

The above book gives information on the first 1400 members of the Royal Flying Corps plus information on Special Reservists, uniforms, theatres of war and medals awarded. The book also list where to look for further information so is invaluable if your ancestor was in the RFC before it became the RAF in April 1918.