

# Newsletter June 2018



Part of Manchester & Lancashire  
Family History Society

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## **Branch News Our Last Meeting Saturday 12th May Courage or Cowardice? John Fidler**

John opened the talk by explaining that he used to be a history teacher and that he has an interest in the Oldham Pals who fought during WW1. He regularly goes to France and Belgium to find and record any Oldham Pals who were lost during the conflict. There are 150 cemeteries and memorials in the two countries.

John asked a number of questions: what do the words courage and cowardice mean? Have the words been cheapened over time? What do the words brave and courageous mean? Were the men brave who enlisted in the first week of the war? Is heroism a specific deed?..... what is heroism?

What about cowardice? How do you define cowardice? Is it a reluctance to fight that could have been due to shell shock or a gas attack? Who judges? And where does morality come in?

John gave an example of a soldier called Noel Chavas who was awarded the Victoria Cross twice yet he never fired a shot. Noel was in the Royal Army Medical Corp and won the medals for valour whilst recovering injured soldiers on the battlefield. There were three soldiers from Oldham who received the Victoria Cross and other soldiers from Oldham who were Mentioned in Despatches. There were many Oldhamers who did their bit, one might wonder how many did deeds of courage but were never mentioned. John showed us a slide of a photograph of the Manchester Regiment and asked how many of the soldiers in the photograph died and did they do deeds of courage? - we don't know and never will.

It wasn't just soldiers who showed courage, the relatives of those fighting had to have the courage and fortitude to carry on when a relative died.

As the war progressed The Derby Scheme was introduced in an attempt to boost recruitment and avoid conscription. Eventually those men who hadn't volunteered were called up.

Those men who didn't want to go, such as those in essential services, apprentices and conscientious objectors, had to go before a panel where a tribunal decided whether they could stay in post or had to go to war. The results from the tribunal were published in local newspapers. Also published were soldiers who were reported AWOL by their regiment. John read several newspaper reports on soldiers who had gone AWOL, several of whom were living in hiding with no money, food or supplies. It would appear they preferred living in poverty to going back to the front.

There were two Oldhamers who deserted from their regiments and who were shot at dawn. In total 300 soldiers were shot at dawn. 3000 soldiers were sentenced to be shot but the sentence was commuted to hard labour.

John gave an account of a riot in Oldham in 1917. A meeting had been called on Henshaw Street by a Peace Mission which called for peace and free speech. A group of New Zealand soldiers in the crowd were so incensed by the subject and the speakers that they whipped up the crowd. A Mr Winterbottom from the Peace Mission was beaten up and when the peacemakers tried to move away they were followed by the soldiers and the crowd. The police moved them to the safety of the police station (which was then behind the Town Hall) until the crowds were dispersed.

Where are the courageous people? Were they the soldiers who fought at the front or the families left behind who had to carry on? Or were they the conscientious objectors who stood up for what they believed in. Or were they in actual fact the cowards?

We should not look at it from today's point of view but try to understand the feelings and beliefs of the time. It is not clear cut what courage and cowardice mean as the words are subjective. With hindsight we know that many men suffered from shell shock and were deeply traumatised by what they witnessed and felt during the war however at the time they were stigmatised by their thoughts and actions.

John concluded by stating that it is significant that today there are red and white poppies side by side at war memorials.

By Joan Harrison

## **Our Next Meeting**

**Saturday 9th June**

### **Evolution of Asylum Patient Photography**

An illustrated presentation to be given by David Scrimgeour using the archives of the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum in Wakefield.

This meeting will start at 2.00 pm in The Lees Suite, Civic Centre, Oldham.

Free to members

Non-members £2.50

Free car parking on Oldham Civic car park for 3 hours but please get a ticket.

For more information see our website.

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

### **Tracing Your Female Ancestors Blog**

Carol Wells has published a blog on the Manchester Archives + site about tracing your female ancestors who were nurses during the First World War.

<https://manchesterarchiveplus.wordpress.com/2018/05/20/tracing-your-female-ancestors-in-the-military-2/>

## **Society News**

**Archives + Award Nomination for record-keeping service of the year in the Archive and Records Association's Excellence Awards. Please vote.**

Our partners at Manchester Library, Archives+, have been nominated for Record-keeping Service of the Year in the Archive and Records Association's Excellence Awards. This is the third year of these awards, which are nominated by peers and colleagues, and previous winners include the South West Heritage Centre and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

The Archives+ partners - Manchester City Council (Manchester Archives and Local Studies and the Greater Manchester County Record Office), North West Film Archive, the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, and the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society have transformed the way people engage with archives. Sharing and learning from one another, we have enriched our collections by telling the stories of communities from across our city and finding new ways to welcome as many people to our wonderful building.

See more at:

<http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/715-ara-excellence-awards-2018.html>

**Please vote for us at:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ARAawards2018>, voting closes on 1 July

Best wishes

Larysa

Larysa Bolton

Heritage Collections Officer

Libraries, Galleries and Culture

### **Wednesday 6 June 7.30pm: Bolton Branch Meeting**

Dr Michael Nevell, from the University of Salford, will give a talk on Worsley New Hall & Gardens, the families who lived and worked there and the renovation of the gardens to RHS status.

Meetings are held in the Montserrat Room, 1st Floor, Old Links Golf Club, Chorley Old Road, Bolton, BL1 5SU. (There is parking for 70 cars.)

Guests and potential members are sure of a warm welcome. From 7.00pm tea & coffee are available in the room, and drinks are available from the bar. Unwanted genealogy magazines and CDs can be swapped/collected at the meetings. At the end of every meeting there is a Help Desk, manned by experienced researchers, available to assist you with your genealogy problems.

The meeting are free for members of the MLFHS, £3 for non-members. There is no need to book.

### **Saturday 9 June 10.30am: It's in My DNA Family History, Science & Irishness**

**This is not a MLFHS event but may be of interest to members.**

Irish Diaspora Foundation in collaboration with Double Helix History (University of Manchester) and the Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society are delighted to welcome you to a morning of talks and activity exploring family history, Irishness and science, including the kinds of information that scientific developments around DNA can add to our understandings of ancestry.

Are you interested in investigating your family history? Have you had your DNA tested for this reason? Are you thinking about having it done?

Join us for a series of talks and workshops looking at the relationship between heritage and science including talks by Debbie Kennett and Dr Jerome de Groot on DNA and family history; workshops on health issues, family history investigation, and the best ways to think about your past using DNA testing.

This **FREE** event will be held at the Irish World Heritage Centre, 1 Irish Town Way, Manchester, M8 0AE

For more information and to book a place, [CLICK HERE](#)

### **Sunday 10th June 12.00 : Manchester Histories Festival**

The wonderful Manchester Histories Celebration Day will this year take place at Manchester's Central Library and coincides with the library's Family Fun Day. Featuring over 70 exhibition stands from histories and heritage organisations from across Greater Manchester and special activities for all ages that uncover and reveal the passionate histories of people and places from across Greater Manchester there will be something for all the family.

**The MLFHS Help Desk will be open to assist you in researching your family tree.**

### **Saturday 16 June 2.00pm: Anglo-Scottish Branch Meeting**

#### **Ancestry Workshop: Questions and Answers**

Attendees will have the opportunity to question those present to help solve their research problems.

This meeting will be held in Performance Space 1 at Manchester Central Library. The talk is open to both members and non-members. Booking is not required.

### **Saturday 23 June 10am - 4.30pm: The Family History Show, York**

MLFHS will have a stall at this event which will be held at York Racecourse.

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

### **Volunteers Required: Oldham Register Office**

If you live in or near Oldham and have a spare half day each week, we are looking for one or more volunteers to assist in the completion of the LancashireBMD indexes for Oldham. The work involves entering data to computers at the register office.

If you are interested, please [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Linda Richardson, who will provide more information.

## **Local News**

**Talks by Other Groups** (which are not part of our society)

### **Royton Local History Society**

#### **Down Forget-me-not Lane (Part Three 1960-1965)**

A talk by Brian Hallworth at Downey House, Church Street, Royton on **Monday 11th June** at 7.30pm.

### **Saddleworth Historical Society**

#### **The Medieval Settlement of the Castleshaw Valley**

An illustrated presentation given by Steve Moorhouse at Saddleworth Museum on **Wednesday 13th June** at 7.30pm.

All welcome but a charge of £3.00 on the night for non-members. Refreshments available.

Copies of the recent book "William Pownall's Uppermill" are still available from Charles Baumann at 19 Ravenstones Drive, Diggle, Saddleworth, OL3 5JU by letter request, enclosing payment of £9.95 and, if to be posted adding £1.75 per copy. Or the book can also be obtained direct from the Saddleworth Museum shop, High Street, Uppermill, with payment.

### **Oldham Historical Research Group**

#### **Subject TBA**

A talk by Roger Ivens at Oldham Local Studies and Archives on **Wednesday June** at 7.00pm.

Also the meeting on **25th July** will be a talk given by Dr. Gervase Phillips, Principal Lecturer in History, MMU, on **The American Civil War : Lancashire and the Cotton Famine.**

### **Moorside and District Historical Society**

#### **The Parish Boundary - Boundary Stones**

At St Thomas' Church Hall Lounge, Moorside, on **Monday 18th June** at 7.30pm.

**Written and edited by Sue Forshaw.** Assisted editing by Irene Whitby

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