

MEMBERS MEETING May 6 2008

"Family History Records at Chesterfield Library"

Talk by Lesley Phillips using a Power Point presentation.

Lesley began by telling members that the Local Studies at Chesterfield Library has many records relating to the Chesterfield area that are useful for family historians.

She recommends that before people get started with their family history research that they write down everything they know about their family; talk to other members of the family; gather photos and papers and organise their records. Also she recommends that when they visit the Library it helps if they have written down details of the people and places they are researching.

The Ancestry web-site (www.ancestry.co.uk) is available in all Derbyshire Libraries and is free. The site includes the censuses for England and Wales and the GRO Indexes. All the information is free, researchers only pay for a printout or alternatively they may put the information on a floppy disc or memory stick.

Lesley explained that the GRO Index began on 1 July 1837 when the government took over responsibility for registering births, marriages and deaths. Before this date the church had recorded the events. GRO stands for General Register Office and these records are sometimes referred to as the "St Catherine's Index" as this is where the records were originally held. Copies of Birth, Marriage and Death certificates are issued by the local Register Offices, The General Register Office at Southport or they can be obtained on line. These indexes can be a starting point in family history research and they also give useful clues, for example on death certificates the age or (from June 1969) the date of birth of the deceased is given. On birth certificates the maiden name of the mother is stated and on marriage certificates the name of the spouse can be found.

The web-site www.freebmd.org.uk is a site that gives an index to civil registrations. It is an index of all registrations compiled by volunteers and is free to use, however, it is not yet complete (i.e. only indexed to 1915).

Local Studies have the censuses for 1841-1901 on microfilm and on CDROM. In addition on Ancestry the census for England and Wales are

on line and indexed. Generally census records before 1841 only contained a head count but Chesterfield is fortunate in that it has the 1811 census for Hasland (in the Barnes collection) which gives the head of household, this is a rarity.

The latest census available for inspection is the one for 1901. This is because they are only released for public scrutiny after 100 years to protect people's privacy. The 1901 census contains more information than the previous ones as it gives the number of rooms in each house and states whether the individual was an employer or a worker.

The 1841 census can be difficult to read. It does not state relationships between individuals, doesn't give information as to where people were born and only gives approximate ages.

Monumental Inscriptions or MI's as they are sometimes called are details of gravestones drawn up by dedicated family historians. They are useful because they often give extra information about the deceased. For example the gravestone of Ernest Barnett at Christ Church states that he was age 14 when he died in a colliery accident. A search of local newspapers would give more information about him and the accident.

Local Studies have cemetery records on microfilm for the following:

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|------------|-----------|
| Spital | 1857-1997 |
| Brimington | 1878-1932 |
| Staveley | 1884-1997 |
| Hasland | 1883-1998 |
| Boythorpe | 1919-1997 |

These records can provide additional information. For example in the Spital records for 1864 there is a description of one person as a "wandering beggar". The records also show that there was an Irish presence in the town and there was a high incidence of infant mortality.

In 1937 many of the gravestones in Chesterfield Parish Church were taken up and stacked around the church. However, the Library does have a copy of a list of the monuments and a plan of the layout.

Military records for deaths in WWI are available on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission web site (www.cwgc.org). Chesterfield's Roll of Honour has been compiled by volunteers and contains details of the name, rank, service and regiment of the individuals who died in the conflict. The Sherwood Foresters have a War Office publication (disc

database) of 700,000 names by surname, where enlisted, where lived, rank and where killed. As this is special software it is necessary to book in advance to use it.

Records show that in 1803 French officers were imprisoned in Chesterfield as prisoners of war. They dined at Wingerworth Hall and they had a significant impact on the town.

Coal mining played a significant role in Chesterfield and the reports of the Inspector of Mines for the Midland District are available for the period 1850-1914. These contain a list of all those killed in each year and make sad reading. For example in 1876, 11 people were killed and the ages range from 14 to 70.

Local newspapers are useful sources of information as they contain announcements of births, marriages and deaths and war-time casualties. These are on microfilm and include the Derby Courier 1828-1927, the Derbyshire Times 1900-onwards (there is also an index for 1900-1919). Microfilm of the papers is readable but copies taken include scratches. It is hoped that in the future these may be digitally scanned.

T. P. Woods Almanac of Chesterfield and Derbyshire gives information of major events that occurred in the area. This is indexed from 1970.

Maps are useful in family history. Local Studies have complete coverage on microfilm of the Ordnance Survey maps 25" and 6". The Derbyshire County Council site Historic Mapping has a series of 6" maps but no tithe maps. There are also paper maps, these are easier to use than those on microfilm. The 6" map gives an overview of the area but only shows big buildings. The 1876 25" map for example is much more detailed. The 50" map of 1876 from the Town Hall shows the Theatre Hall that was knocked down to build the police station. It also shows the "Three Tuns" Inn.

There is a selection of tithe maps available on microfilm. For example there is a tithe map of Newbold and Dunstan dated 1847. Historically tithes were a levy where the church took a tenth of the produce of land and stock. In the early 19c plans were made to abolish tithes and townships were surveyed. Each survey produced a map and these are useful as the fields were numbered and valued and the names of owners and occupiers given. The maps are available on microfilm at the County Record Office or at Lichfield.

A variety of other maps are available. These are generally more artistic and lovely to look at. For example W. E. Godfrey's map of 1930, "Potters Plan" which was a survey done for the Duke of Devonshire. It is enormous and includes a book with named tenants. One particularly useful map is of the Shambles buildings in the 1930's and shows the occupants of individual shops.

There is a collection of property sales brochures relating to significant properties in the early 20c. For example in 1905 "Fern House" and "Fern Villas" at Stonegravel.

Local Studies have Trade Directories on microfiche. These include Kelly's 1790-1941 and telephone directories from 1949. There is also a run of Chesterfield year-books from 1913-1922 these list the heads of households.

There are sets of Electoral Registers and Burgess Rolls from 1830. These give a list of people registered to vote. After 1918 the records show how people qualified for the vote. Not many women occur on the lists. There is also a full set of poll books which show how people voted before the vote became secret.

Parish records are held at the County Office but transcripts may be available at Local Studies.

The IGI or International Genealogical Index is available on microfiche but it is the 1992 version. After finding an individual it is possible to do a batch search and locate all the other children of the family. Lesley did warn members the information on the IGI was not 100% reliable.

There is a parish register record on CDROM for Old Brampton burials from 1658- the end of 19c. However it is advisable to check the original entry. Bestall's Chesterfield Parish Register is a name index from 1558-1812.

Lesley paid tribute to Ray Batteson's parish transcripts. These are available in Local Studies and have been put on microfiche for the benefit of researchers. Praise was also given for the CADFHS Name Index. This was previously a name index on paper slips. It is now available on the DCC web site and is used all over the world.

Other useful records include Non-Conformists on microfilm up to 1837 with a name index. Quaker records are available on microfilm and

include burials. There is also a census of child population for 1892 with 8 books for Chesterfield. Chesterfield School log books are available on microfilm, names and dates of local historical events and Borough Council Minutes.

Photographs play an important part in family history. Picture the Past features photographs from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire archives. The project was set up to conserve the photographs and to make them available to researchers. It is possible to take a copy from the web-site or to buy one.

There are innumerable good sites on the Internet which are useful for family history research for example Portraits Photographs and Clergy Database. The Internet changes so quickly it is difficult to keep up to date but subjects entered in "Google" can usually help.

The Times Digital Archives 1785-1985 is available and is useful to find notable people.

It is now possible to use the Library Database from home using your Library card number.

Lesley concluded by showing examples of family history research featuring the Sanforth family:

Newbold Poor Rates 1829 show Widow Sanforth
Newbold Vestry minutes 1817-1870 feature the family
The daybooks show Samuel Sanforth maintaining the roads.

Keith Feltham gave the vote of thanks.

