

Meeting Report – Friday 10th June 2022

Ten of us got together for a 'Show and Tell', and a marvellous collection of stories were told.

Terry Griffiths came up with an unbeatable 52 aunts and uncles, great aunts and great uncles, knocking my paltry 37 into a cocked hat.

Mary Gracie brought along a daguerreotype (or was it an ambrotype?) photograph of Mary Ann Chennel, and explained the technique of dating the picture to around 1851, mainly by costume and the pose. Very illuminating.

Jane McHarry told the tale of two aunts, sisters who became jointly housekeepers to a Methodist minister, and a great mystery that, we hope, may still have some leads to follow up, after helpful suggestions from the floor.

David Jones brought along a photograph and a medal (India medal with Punjab clasp) of his uncle Albert Henry Dobbs who joined the army aged 14, saw active service from 16 and died of dysentery aged 19 in the Middle East. A sadly brief and extraordinary life, by our standards.

Karen Oakes has French Huguenot ancestry via (what is now the Republic of) Ireland. She was recommended to follow up by consulting the irishgenealogy.ie website.

Mark Barley brought along a postcard sent by his grandfather to his grandmother, before they were married, from Saskatchewan, Canada. He was in the North West Mounted Police for ten years. The postcard wasn't from where he was living though, on the endless prairie, but from a much more interesting mountainous place in the Rockies. Looks like he was trying to impress his future wife!

Jim Bottomley showed us a photo of his Uncle Billy, pictured on a motorbike in army uniform. Born 1915, died 1944. Billy first joined the Royal Artillery, then the Paratroopers. Trained at Ringway, he became very familiar with Tatton Park by frequently jumping into it. He was with the 2nd wave of gliders over the Normandy beaches, and six days after the initial D-Day landings, he was killed in action at Pegasus Bridge, a very brief but heroic life.

Margaret Gott told us about her great grandfather Edward William Marsh, who served with the Royal Navy 1850-1871, based in Portsmouth, then an Excise Officer in Liverpool. After his naval career he wrote to the Admiralty to ask for a medal to add to the six he had already earned. His letter, which Margaret read to us, was about his involvement in the Crimean War – Odessa, Sebastopol, Balaclava, Inkerman, Constantinople, then to China – Shanghai, Tientsin, then Japan, Suez, Trincomalee, Hong Kong. The request was turned down but the letter was returned, and thus survived, along with the story of his R.N. life. Remarkable and fortuitous.

John Wynne presented Annie Jane Wynne, born in Brymbo and emigrated to South Africa against her father's wishes, a man of stern Calvinist beliefs. Her subsequent marriage to a cad, as he turned out to be, and abandonment led to her pleas to the Imperial authorities for support, recorded in many letters, seeking a share of her estranged husband's war disability pension. Falling destitute in Blomfontaine, she languished in a mental hospital 27 years to her death in 1955. This truly harrowing tale had one positive outcome, the discovery of Annie's granddaughters in South Africa and New Zealand.

