

Report on 8th March 2024 Meeting

'When Henry Met Matilda'

Members were requested to bring along tales of how ancestors met. We like a good story, and we weren't disappointed. Comedy and pathos. Read on...

Mark P recounted (part of) (a small part of) the remarkable story of his father's life, as recorded by the old boy in over 30 articles, five of which he wrote after the age of 100.

When Sam Met Joan. Mark's parents met at Hollinwood Club, Oldham, in a 'Paul Jones' circular dance, he 18, she 16. This led to tandem rides across Lancashire and Cheshire, sometimes through Knutsford. This also led to Mark, who is keen to publish his father's extraordinary social histories. Members suggested contacting Lancashire F.H.S. and/or Oldham library for details of Local History publications, and following through to find publishers of such quality memoirs.

Mark B had reviewed records of his Lincolnshire great grandparents, and the very strong circumstantial evidence that placed them, in the North Thoresby area, through family friendships, together. **How Walter Met Alice.** Although living a few miles apart and going to different village schools, Alice's brother Harold befriended Walter. In the 1901 census, Walter's brother George lodged at the house of John Hewson, and John was the younger brother of Jane Hewson, Alice's mother. See? Then, as if that isn't enough, between 1891 and 1899 three Hewsons married three Bradleys, the latter living at Howerby Hall farm, which is where Walter was a groom. So, the probability of these two young lovers bumping into each other at various weddings and family do's means that they didn't stand a chance, it was meant to be. Well done, Mark, a great bit of detective work and conjectural in-filling.

Jenny C's maternal grandparents. A story that twists and turns: **When Harold Met Alice.** Harold and Doug were best friends. Elsie and Alice were best friends. Harold was dating Elsie. Alice didn't have a boyfriend. Doug didn't have a girlfriend. Elsie and Harold arranged an introduction for Alice and Doug.

The two couples met up and went out as a foursome. BUT – Harold now fancied Alice more than he fancied Elsie, and Doug fancied someone else altogether!

Harold knew that if he ended things with Elsie in order to date Alice, there was a strong possibility that Alice would refuse to date someone who had so cruelly ended things with her best friend. Harold was in a dilemma. What should he do???

He talked it over with his older brother Frank and the two lads concocted a story that Elsie and Harold were cousins and the relationship couldn't continue! Not true, but it helped to part the two of them and all remained amicable. A short while later Harold asked Alice out and she said yes.

All's well that ends well Elsie married Jack and had one son, Donald. Doug married Lucy – they had no children. Harold and Alice married in 1923 and had nine children and for the

next 49 years all nine children called Elsie and Jack Aunty and Uncle. Harold finally came clean to one of his sons as celebrations for their 50th Wedding anniversary loomed. Had Alice ever suspected? Certainly not at the beginning or for many years afterwards, but perhaps she had an inkling as time went on. Harold and Alice shared almost 60 years of married life before passing away within two weeks of each other in 1983.

Terry G told us about her mum and dad: **When Norman Met Veronica**. This was at a dance in 1949, in the Oxford Galleries, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Norman walked with a limp due to a TB hip in childhood. The limp wasn't obvious to Veronica during the dance, so she was surprised when this smart young man approached her later, limping. Clearly the hip was no obstacle! They married in 1951 and, after a lifetime of wearing built up shoes, Norman finally had a replacement hip in 1989.

Mary G: "My mother grew up in Watford and on leaving school she went to a teacher training college in Derby. During the war years this college was evacuated to Elvaston Castle, of which she always had happy memories and where she made friends that she kept in touch with for the rest of her and their lives. Her first teaching job was at a primary school in Bicester, Oxfordshire. On offering her the post, the headmistress realised she had no accommodation arranged and said she would ask whether her friend Mrs Smith in Banbury Road might have a room to let.

My mother moved in and was befriended by Mrs Smith's son, Antony, who was also recently returned from teacher training college, this time in Loughborough. And the rest, as they say, is history! They married and had a honeymoon in Pangbourne before both of them got teaching jobs in Henley on Thames, moving there in 1949."

By this stage we were running over time, so Allan Jones stepped forward to briefly announce that his parents met in wartime on a train from Paddington to Shrewsbury. At the end of the journey, dad announced to mum that he was going to marry her – and that's what happened! Allan will present his prepared story – about other pairings - at the next meeting.

Next time, we have a number of group members who wish to continue this theme and are keen to make their own presentations: Allan, Christine, Peter, Andy and me – but if anyone else would like to jump in, I shall take a step back, and bore the pants off you at another session. These stories may serve to remind us about how fragile some oral histories can be, and to record our own experiences, and those of earlier lives and times, for posterity.