

## Meeting Report – January 2025

### ‘Occupations’ and ‘The Role of the Census Enumerator’

We were pleased to welcome Judy Popley to the meeting, which managed to cover the Occupations theme so well that no time remained to discuss census enumerators. Bar one, whom Judy P brought to the table. Mr Henry Tunstall did sterling work over three decades of census returns for High Legh, a well-respected Post Office Master and Collector of Taxes whose life was tragically ruined by the death of his two sons in 1917, each of whom served in different theatres of The Great War:



#### William Henry's Story.

William was born in April 1880 in High Leigh, Cheshire, eldest son of 4 children born to Henry and Mary Tunstall, Post Office Master and Collector of Taxes, of High Legh. He was educated at High Legh School. In civilian life he was employed as a Solicitors Clerk. He married Dorothy Wallwork in 1912 and they started their married life residing at Glebe Farm in Statham, Lymm. William enlisted with the Queens Westminster Rifles in November 1916 and after completing his training, was posted to France in January 1917. He died from wounds in a hospital base in Arras, France on 8th April 1917 aged 37.

His younger Francis emigrated to Canada and when war broke out he enlisted and served at the western front with the Canadian Regiment, he was killed in action on 3rd May 1917.

It is understood that their father Henry Tunstall never got over the loss of his sons.

Terry G told a tale of mistaken identity. Nineteenth century handwriting isn't always as clear as it might be, and she had been content to learn that an ancestor's family were Lawyers, as described in the census. Not so pleasing to find that, due to a florid 'L', they were actually Sawyers!

Georgina B spoke about the role of the registrar, how spelling errors, mis-hearing and attempts to crudely correct dates could lead to more than just a confused genealogist in years to come, but to problems for the individual when subsequently presenting a BMD certificate as proof of identity.

Karen O was puzzled about her grandfather's occupation as shown in the 1939 Register: 'Bellman', working for MetroVicks in Trafford Park. After much discussion, Terry G came up with the answer: Bellman was a company that provided effective temporary shelter to enable heavy electrical engineering manufacture to continue when the factory was partly destroyed e.g. by bombing in wartime, or when a factory extension was needed at short notice. A Bellman was part of a construction team. That made sense. Karen's grandad was an engineer. MetroVicks made warplanes in WW2 and in 1939 was busy setting up more capacity to undertake this change of role. Trafford Park was hit by bombs, many times.

As a corollary to this story, Judy P recommended visiting St Anthonys Centre in Trafford Park. It's a visitor centre and explains what the area made and built since it was set up as an adjunct to Manchester Ship Canal and its docks. A must for family and social history seekers.

Roger B re-introduced the 1776 Account of the Population of Wetherby, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. This census was instigated by the Duke of Devonshire, who owned the town and was thinking of selling it. It was subsequently sold in small freehold lots, but that was much later, in 1824. Rev Richard Kay compiled the 'census', noting every household in every street, the occupation of the householder, name and age, detailing 'widow' status, and every apprentice, journeyman and domestic servant, also by address, name and age. In total, 912 people. Rev. Kay summarised by Occupation. Most numerous: Labourers, 58; then 'Widowers' (actually, all widows), 35; Inn Keepers, 15; 'Taylors', 11; Farmers, 10; Weavers, 8; Shoemakers, 8; No Occupation, 7. Amongst the quirky stuff was a 'Beasom Maker', a Stay Maker, 2 'Tole Bar Keepers' and a 'Mantey Maker'. This turned out to be a Mantua Maker, who made mantuas, and there wasn't just one, there were two, so to right that wrong here they are: Ann Rawlinson aged 30 and Ann Spink aged 26. Here is a picture of a mantua wearer in the 1770s:



This one is wearing a jacket over her pink mantua. The term started mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and ceased to exist circa late Victorian times. Rev Kay was recording occupations of economic value, as Terry G pointed out, so the 29 apprentices, 3 journeymen and 64 domestic servants didn't make it to his summary, but they were recorded. Rev. Kay's own job title is recorded by him: Perpetual Curate. We learned how to distinguish one of these from a vicar or a rector or an assistant curate. We found two others perpetual curates of note: Rev. Charles Dodgson of Daresbury, father of Lewis Carroll, and Rev. Patrick Bronte of Harthill and Haworth, father of Ann, Charlotte and Emily.

There was more, but that's enough for one month. Except to mention that the Rev Kay recorded a lad called Richard Hill aged 18, as apprentice to Mr Samuel Powell, butcher. Young Richard Hill is my great great great great grandfather, and went on to be a butcher in his own right. So excuse me when I say: God bless his Grace for assigning his perpetual curate to record this significant moment.