

Meeting Report 15th April 2025

Terry G featured detailed research of five times grandfather, seeking out Bishops' Transcripts and the original PRs along the way. The latter had additional valuable information: the name of grandfather, Occupation (school master), and the name of the school. We were told about '**Durham Records Online**' which covers Northumberland and the North Riding of Yorkshire, reflecting the reach of the Bishopric of Durham. In addition, Terry recommended 'Lost Cousins' – research by subscription – by webmaster Peter Calver.

Roger B recounted '**The Life and Times of Granny Brown**', whom he never met, but three of his siblings had. Born in 1866 in Wetherby, six months after her father, a mariner, had died at sea in a storm off Cornwall, her life soon took a turn for the worse. Polly, as she was known, lived with her mother and grandfather. Grandfather died a month after she was born. Unable to cope, her mother Sarah went off to stay with relatives in Hull. Polly was taken in by her mother's sister, Sarah, always known as Aunt Woolford, who was already caring for three children, cousins of Polly's. There Polly remained until marriage in 1890 to Jack. There the couple remained until their first three children were born! Finally, Polly and Jack and the children moved out, had four more children, settling down to life in Starbeck, Jack having set up his own retail butcher business. When the Great War started, Polly's mother Sarah moved in with them. Two of Polly's lads joined up, Tom and Norman. Norman was engaged to Irene Robinson. Norman was killed in 1916. Tom came back. Sarah, the old girl, died in the summer of 1918. After the war, Tom married Irene. In 1920, Polly went to France at the government's expense, with Mrs Annie Reynard from across the road, to visit the graves of Norman, at Agny near Arras, and Ernest, Annie's husband, at Dantzig Alley, near Albert, 30 miles away. The lads had died two weeks apart. Polly had been given a camera to show folks at home the photos of the visit. The photo album is still a family treasure. In 1937, Jack had a catastrophic stroke, and the butcher's shop was handed to Roger's father. Polly moved out, to just a few streets away, to live with a daughter, Gertrude. Polly died in 1944, and Gertrude took on the role of 'laying out' her body. Gertie was well known locally for her skills, and was usually sent for when there was a death in Starbeck. Gertie never mentioned this sideline on any official document. Nor did Aunt Woolford ever mention her role in the Wetherby community as 'midwife', but that's what she was, *de facto*. The role of women, eh? They were there, and always had been for millennia, at the alpha and omega of people's lives, undeclared, unsung, practically invisible, performing tasks at the bookends of life.