

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2015 No 3 Issue 23

September 2015.

WATERLOO

The Battle of Waterloo. The GSSA J'burg branch's Newsletter suggests some websites for tracing Napoleonic Wars ancestors

1. Waterloo 200 - nam.ac.uk/waterloo200

This is the National Army Museum's official hub for the bicentenary celebrations. It's the ideal place to find out more about the 'battle that changed the world'. You can also read about all kinds of events and exhibitions taking place, such as Nelson, Navy, Nation: The Story of the Royal Navy and the British People, 1688-1815 at Royal Museums Greenwich.

2. Trafalgar Ancestors apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/trafalgarancestors

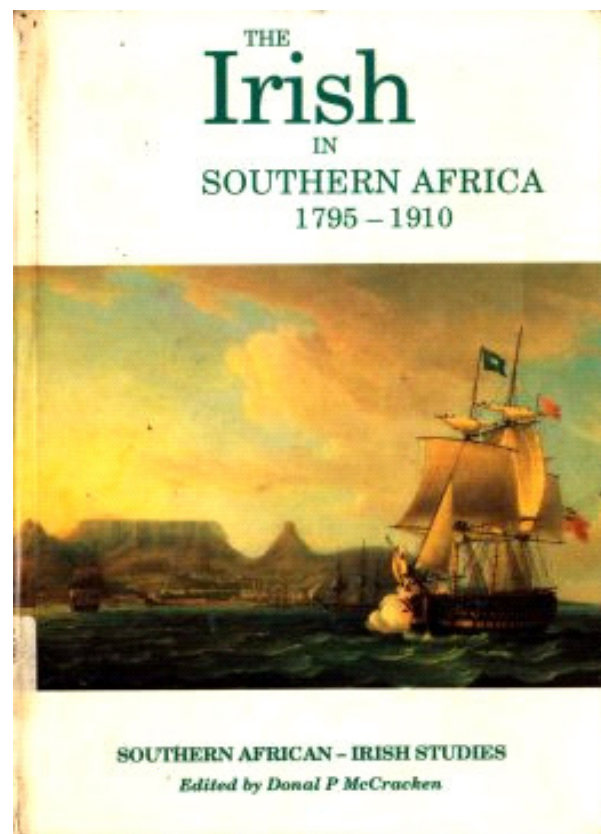
This free National Archives database records more than 18,000 individuals who fought in the Battle of Trafalgar, drawn mainly from ships' musters. Results include service histories and biographical details, where known. Also try the Genuki-hosted Trafalgar Roll compiled from awards made to the seamen who fought with Nelson, which lists commanding officers, crew and casualties.

3. Waterloo Roll Call archive.org/details/waterloorollcall00daltuoft

There are lots of digitised history books available through archive.org, covering all kinds of Napoleonic subjects. You can read and download accounts of Nelson's death, battles on sea and land, or this edition of the Waterloo Roll Call from 1904. It's a Who's Who of the battle, with all kinds of 'biographical notes and anecdotes', but not just relating to the great and good. For example, there's Colour Sergeant Jonathan Thomas of the 23rd Regiment of Foot, whose brief entry records simply that he died at the Union Workhouse, Swansea, in December 1867.

THE IRISH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Being on sabbatical means I have more time to meander in Libraries. Trying to find some Rondebosch history I was trawling through the 968 Dewey Decimal section when I came across *The Irish in Southern Africa 1795-1910* which is Volume 2 of the Southern Africa- Irish Studies edited by Donal P. McCracken. It is a series of occasional papers dealing with the Diaspora of the Irish throughout the world but in this series, in Southern Africa generally.



think all genealogists know Graeme Dickson's *Irish Settlers to the Cape: A history of the Clanwilliam 1820 settler from Cork harbour* published in 1973 but I wondered if this book would be more 'the study of Irish in south African history' and therefore less

(Continued from page 1)

useful to family historians.

I must admit that I have no Irish blood (as far as I have discerned so far) and I am not a fan of the Irish. I tend to join the bigots who view all the Irish as labouring navvies who are always drunk and looking for a fight. Therefore I am always 'surprised' when I discover some historical figure I admire is born in Ireland and is Irish for example Oscar Wilde, Charles Villiers Stanford (composer) etc.



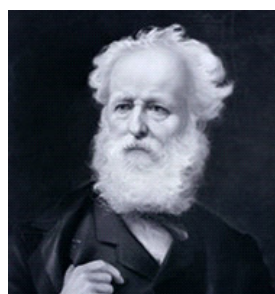
Thomas MacLear, astronomer

This book covers in about 20 essays a broad spectrum of South African life in the 19th and 20th Century ranging from Irish men in government, the troublemakers, British military, Orangemen in SA, the churches (Catholic and Protestant), journalism, retailers, and (most important for us) settlers and settlement schemes.

The last few essays cover themes such as the Irish 1820 Settlers, the Lady Kennaway Girls, Aided Irish Immigration at the Cape 1823-1910 by the well known expert on Aided Immigration, Esme Bull.

In this article I want to give an overview of the Irish in South Africa and the role they played. It is a summary of the introduction from the book written by Donal P. McCracken.

Compared to the number of Irish who headed to the USA in the 19th Century, the number who came to SA was very small. In fact the total immigrant population (from all countries – not just Ireland) remained small. In 1870 in the Transvaal only 6000 whites were not Boers, and at the Cape only 6% of the population were immigrants. Before the discovery of gold and diamonds the country was seen as being unsettled and teeming with hostile Africans. This reputation was aggravated by the treatment of 700 settlers from Ireland who came to the Cape between 1820 and 1823. They had been sent to the arid Northern Cape where there was very little rainfall for agriculture.



William Porter

So by the time of the discovery of gold and diamonds (one historians refers to these events as the "Industrial Revolution of Southern Africa") the immigration patterns of the Irish mainly to North America had been established.

There was still hostility to Irish settlers at Cape even though William Porter (another man I greatly admire—if you don't know him, Google him) was from Ireland. In the colony of Natal the famous Byrne Settlers, mainly urban Irish families, came between 1849 and 1851. By 1891 85% of Irish settlers lived in the towns and by 1911 had risen to 88% with 90% in the Transvaal.

The discovery of diamonds (1870s) and gold (1880s) attracted Irish labourers to work on the mines and help build the railways from the Cape, Natal and Mozambique. These attracted single men and so the number of Irish women in South Africa was never more than 34%. But all this work was transitory – once the railways were built their labour was no longer required – so most Irish movement to South Africa was seen as temporary. As one historian (Arthur Griffith) said: "Going to South Africa was not like emigrating, it was more like going on a long sojourn."



Frederick
Yorke St Leger

Esme Bull in her essay points out that 14 000 Irish immigrants were aided in their movement to South Africa between 1823 and 1910. The ones who took advantage of this aided immigration filled many different (but generally urban-related) positions. These included shopkeepers (e.g. Mr William Cuthbert of the renown Cuthbert Shoes Shops), Hamilton Ross, the wealthy merchant, Frederick York St Leger, the founder of the *Cape Times*, ministers of religion (Laurence Halloran – the fraudulent Anglican priest), astronomers (MacLear), lawyers (William Porter, Upington) etc.

Now, we all know that the Irish are in the

(Continued on page 3)



Laurence Halloran

majority, Catholic and certainly the first few years of settlers only 4% of the Irish who came were Protestant. Later those who went to the Transvaal found the Calvinism of the Afrikaner Boers just like the Calvinism found in Northern Ireland. Politically speaking the Irish tended to be liberal towards race with some cross-race

marriages. It was two Irishmen who encouraged the Slave Uprising in 1808 and William Porter's liberalism is well portrayed in J L McCracken's book *New light at the Cape of Good Hope*.

Under the heading 'Professional Achievements' a long list of Irishmen and the work they did is given. This list includes Irishmen in the medical field (dentist to President Steyn, first secretary of health in the Union); in the arts and architecture field (the Durban City Hall is modelled on the one at Belfast); in the theatrical field (an Irishman produced the first production of *The Mikado* in South Africa). And so the list continues.

If you have some Irish blood in you it is worthwhile getting this book and using the four pages of select bibliography to see where else you can explore the Irish resourcefulness in South Africa.

[The essay on the *Lady Kennaway* Girls looks fascinating and I'll try and include a summary in the next newsletter. Perhaps you have Irish **AND** German blood in you from this attempt to marry off the German Legionnaires to Irish girls by Sir George Grey]

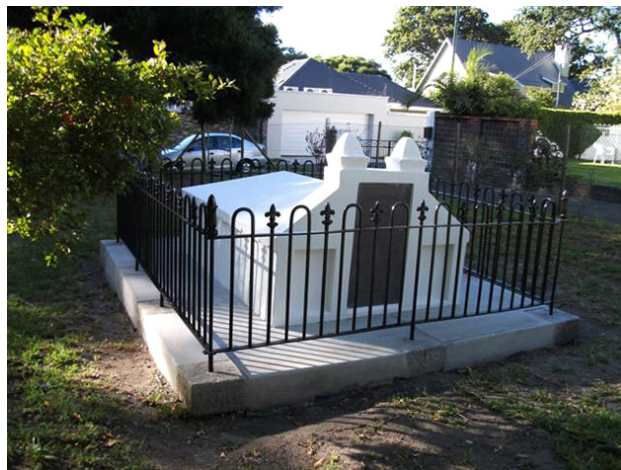


HELPERUS VAN LIER

by Geraldine Goncalves

As found at:

http://www.newlandsresidents.org.za/Heritage/Heritage_Hiddingh_Grave.html



This ancient grave, half hidden by trees and shrubs in a suburban Newlands road lined with plane trees, attracted little interest from passers-by over the years until the large old oaks on the plot were cut down in April 2008. There was concern at the time that the plot would be sold and developed. However, the grave is old enough to be protected under the South African Heritage Resources Act (SAHRA).

In fact, this is the tomb of a truly remarkable person of the VOC era. Helperus Ritzema van Lier was born in Holland in 1764. He was a brilliant scholar from Assen in the Netherlands who entered university at the age of 14. By 18 he was a Master of Free Sciences and Doctor of Philosophy, having majored in History, French, Latin and Greek. The subject of his thesis for the doctorate concerned "human liberty and responsibility in the light of man's lack of moral freedom and divine pre-science". Although he had originally registered for theological studies, he was conflicted between his interest in physical sciences and his spirituality. His scientific interests dominated in these early years and he was widely recognised for the scholarly papers he produced.

Following a series of personal misfortunes, Van Lier returned to his theological studies and qualified as a minister in 1785. In understanding this change of profession, it is helpful to recognize the influences in his life.

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JAMES BLOOR AND THE LION.

Original article by R Peter Bloor summarised and condensed by Derek Pratt.

James Bloor. Born in Bottomhouse near Leek in 1770 and presumed killed by a lion 1805.

Although this story sounds like Albert and his stick with a horses head handle being eaten by a lion, the difference is that this story is true!

James Bloor (born abt. 1710, died 1787) & Edith Brooks (born abt. 1712, married 1734 at Ipstones, died 1790) give their name to an extensive Bloor family which are very active in the Bloor Society. James Bloor (b.1770), whose life is described in this article was their grandson and several Bloor Society members are direct descendants of James Bloor.

The last Will and Testament of William Bloor, father of James (b.1770)

William Bloor (b.1740 and son of James and Edith), of Bottom Lane, Bottomhouse was married to Ellen Boam (born in Grindon) and who died in 1799. In the will William, outlined how his estate should be shared between his children, James, William, Ellen (married to David Keeling), John, and grandsons James & John (sons of James). The bulk of his estate appears to have been left to his second eldest son John. However an intriguing couple of clauses towards the end of the document set the enquiring mind in motion. These were:

My will & mind is, that my son John (who was also appointed a joint executor of his will) shall pay all my debts and funeral expenses, in proving this, my last will & testament. My will and mind is, that my son, John Bloor, shall pay to my son, James Bloor, the sum of five hundred pounds, if he ever returns to England again.

His father was obviously unaware at this time that his son had died in tragic circumstances on another continent some 12 years earlier.

So what happened to James? The first clues emerged in the book "Capital Crimes" written by Ros Prince in 1994.

On page 69, in a chapter entitled "A False Note, George Ferns of Bottomhouse."

Dealing in counterfeit bank notes was a very lucrative business, but to be caught passing a forged note was a capital offence. Many people chose to take the risk, however, and the whole business was a great problem to the law enforcement agencies.

The Bank of England had been tipped off that a certain George Fearn of the pub at Bottomhouse, about four or five miles from Leek, had been passing forged notes, and so they arranged for him to be investigated...

On July 1st 1801, arriving at 11pm, two undercover policemen who were disguised as hawking peddlers, proceeded to 'setup up' Fearn. In their conversations that night and the next morning, Fearn made the statement that it was bad times and a man had to work hard to live honestly. Sensing that Fearn was probably interested in other dishonest practices besides forging bank notes, the officers asked Fearn if he would like some cheap rum which they could supply at 6 to 6 and sixpence a gallon. Fearn took the bait!

The officer then put down a forged Halifax one guinea note and asked Fearn if it was well done. He was obviously experienced in this field and said that was a forged one, and thought it was a bad one at that. They then produced some Bank of England notes, the undercover officers saying that they had never seen better. "What do you give for a pound screeve?" (forged bank note) asked Fearn. "8/6d for the £1 note and 14 shillings for a £2 note."

Fearn then produced £5 and £10 screeves, saying proudly "Look at yours and look at mine." and saying that he had paid £1 and ten shillings for the £5 note. Having proved that Fearn was in possession of, and had passed forged notes, one of the officers slipped out of the pub and raced to Leek to get the local constabulary to come and arrest Fearn. They did so and the following morning was committed to Stafford Goal.

When his case came to court Fearn's defence counsel put forward all manner of technicalities to try and prove him not guilty

and Fearn's himself tried to deny everything, claiming he knew nothing of the notes in question, he did not sell them, and furthermore had witnesses that he did not.

It is here that James Bloor enters the proceedings. Bloor, a baker living near the Inn, said that he had been there the whole time, and no such conversations or transactions had taken place. However his story was not believed by the court. The jury found Fearn's guilty and Bloor was charged with perjury. The judge said he liked perjurers no more than he liked screevers (forgers) and the law must take its course.

George Fearn's was executed on August 8th 1801 for uttering three bills knowing them to be forgeries of the Bank of England. On April 3rd 1802, at Stafford Assizes James Bloor was sentenced to be transported for seven years for his perjury. He was transported in July 1802. As was common practice at this time, it was assumed that he was destined to serve his time in Australia. However more recent research has proved that this was not the case. James was destined to spend what was to be the last few years of his life in West Africa.

The Background.

Mungo Park (1771-1806), explorer.

Park was selected by the Association for the Promoting the Discovery of the Interior parts of Africa to explore and open up parts of West Africa in particular the Niger River. He was a 23-year-old Scottish surgeon who had just returned from a journey to Sumatra on a ship of the East India



Company. Parks had meticulously kept a journal of these travels and this fact led the Association to believe that Parks was their man. Parks accepted their offer at once and sailed from England in May 1795. Park's carried out two expeditions in Africa and kept a journal with engravings (published posthumously in 1815 but available on the internet - just Google Mungo Park) His journals do not make comfortable reading with descriptions of the slave trade and

the current prices for slaves (the going rate for a male slave was £18 and a female was £15).

I'm omitting most of Park's descriptions of his first expedition - it does make exciting reading but I want to get to the 'Eaten by a Lion' story! On this first trip he finally got back to London and returned to Scotland and married but the call of Africa was very strong.

In 1804 the British Government, keen to establish a commercial foothold in Western Africa, invited Mungo Park to lead another expedition to explore the Niger and gave him the rank and pay of an army captain.

On his second expedition he had a party of 44 Europeans, included his brother-in-law, an army lieutenant, and 30 soldiers of the Royal African Corps. The Royal African Corps had been set up in West Africa by the British in 1800 under Colonel John Fraser, initially as the Goree Corps and then the African Corps. On 25th April 1805 it was approved for the African Corps to be styled "Royal". This group of military men were formed to defend the Island of Goree in West Africa which had recently been captured from the French. In January, 1804, Goree was recaptured by the French, but was again taken by the British in March of that year, a detachment of this African Corps being again left in possession of the island. This regiment was one of the several penal corps or "condemned battalions" raised about this time which were recruited from deserters and convicts from the hulks (prison ships). It was likely that these were the only members of society who would volunteer for service in such a hostile and arduous environment. To some it was the preferred choice instead of deportation for seven years to the other side of the world. To James Bloor it would prove to be the wrong choice, if in fact he had been given any choice at all. He was attached to Captain Short's Company and as a Private Foot Soldier he was paid 18 shillings a month. Park thought that the inclusion of these 30 armed militia-men in the party, (in spite of them being unsuitably clad in their bright red tunics), would protect him and his party from all the violence, robbery and captivity which he had experience on his first expedition in 1795.

Three weeks out from their stating point (Pisania), the rains began and the soldiers began to suffer from the inevitable dysentery and malaria. Still Parks pressed on into the interior. Those who became too ill to keep up with the rest of the party were left behind to die. It is in Chapter 3 of the Journal that James Bloor is specifically

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(Continued from page 6)

mentioned for the first – and last time, but alas for the wrong reasons!

On page 197, the events of June 28th 1805 are recorded by Park thus:

At eleven o'clock crossed a stream, like a mill stream, running north. We halted on the east side of it; found that one of the asses with a load of beads had not come up. The soldier who drove it (Bloore), without acquainting any person, returned to look for it. Shortly after the ass was found in the woods. Sent the serjeant after Bloore on one of the horses. He rode back as far as Sankaree without seeing him, and concluded that he had lost the path. He found one of the sick (Shaddy Walter) who had wandered from the track (for there was no road); and had laid himself down among the bushes till some of the natives discovered him. Paid the natives ten bars of amber and desired them to look for Bloore.

In the afternoon collected the asses for marching. Had great difficulty in finding the horses, one of which (the serjeant's), after all our search, could not be found. As it was in vain to wait for Bloore, put on the loads and departed. It is to be observed that there is no path-way in these woods, and we found much difficulty in keeping together: fired muskets frequently to give intimation of our line of march. After travelling about four miles,

Shaddy Walter, the sick man mentioned before, became so exhausted that he could not sit on the ass. He was fastened on it, and held upright; he became more and more faint, and shortly after died. He was brought forwards to a place where the front of the coffle had halted, to allow the rear to come up. Here when the coffle had set forwards, two of the soldiers with their bayonets, and myself with my sword, dug his grave in the wild desert; and a few branches were the only laurels which covered the tomb of the brave.

We did not come up to the coffle until they had halted for the night near a pool of water shaded with ground palm trees. Here I was informed that two of the soldiers were not come up; one (Baron) was seen about a mile



from the halting place; the other (Hill) was supposed to be three or four miles behind. Fired two muskets every quarter of an hour; one to call their attention, and the other about half a minute after to give the direction. At half past seven Hill came up, being directed entirely by the sound of the muskets. At eleven o'clock saw some lights in the woods, and heard people holla: in a little time five people came, bringing with them Bloore, the man who had gone in quest of the ass. He had gone back as far as the Black River, crossed it and made signs to the people about the ass and the load. As they did not rightly understand Him, they thought that some party had fallen on the coffle, and that this soldier had run away. They therefore came with him to see if they could in for their share, or at least receive some reward for coming along with the man. Paid them ten bars of amber, and desired them to look for Baron, and I would give them ten bars more if they found him.

June 29th 1805

At day-break fired muskets for Baron; and as it was evident he must have wandered from the track made by the asses, and it was in vain to look for him in so extensive a wilderness, at half past six o'clock loaded the asses and set out. Two more soldiers affected with fever. Route in the morning rocky. Travelled twelve miles without halting, in order to reach a watering place. About two miles before the watering place, Bloore, the soldier who had come up during the night, sat down under the shade of a tree; and when I desired him to procede, he

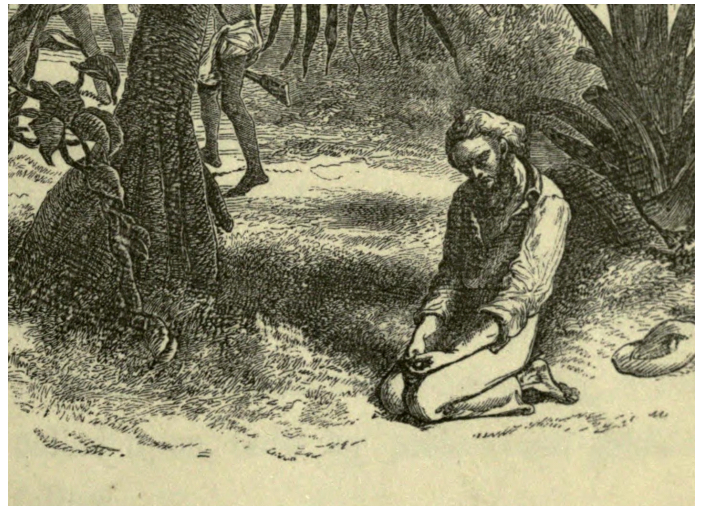
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said he was rather fatigued, and when he had cooled himself, he would follow. I assured him that the halting place was only a very little way off, and advised by all means not to fall asleep. We halted on an elevated table of land: the water was only rain collected in the hollow places of the rock. At half past four o'clock, as Bloore had not come up, I sent the sergeant on one of the horses to bring him forward; He returned at sun-set having seen nothing of him, and having rode several miles past the place. I suspected that the sergeant might have rode past him asleep under a tree; I therefore got three volunteers to go with me, and look for him. It was now quite dark. We collected a large bundle of dry grass, and taking a handful at a time, kept a constant light, in order to frighten the lions which are very numerous in these woods. When we reached the tree under which he lay down, we made a fire. Saw the place where he had pressed down the grass, and the marks of his feet: went to the west along the pathway, and examined for the marks of his feet, thinking he might have possibly mistaken the direction. Found none: fired several muskets. Hollowed, and set fire to the grass. Returned to the tree and examined all round; saw no blood nor the foot marks of any wild beasts. Fired six muskets more. As any further search was likely to be fruit-less, (for we did not dare to walk far from the track for fear of losing ourselves) we returned to the tents.

That was the last time that Bloore was mentioned in the journal. Although it was not proven that James Bloore was killed by a lion, it is the most probable theory of how he met his end. Three days later on July 2nd 1805 (and after three more men falling ill and another dying) Park records the following;

Page 202

Had a severe tornado at seven o'clock, which put out the watch-fire and made us all crowd into our tents. When the violence of the squall was over, we heard a particular sort of roaring or growling, not unlike the noise of wild boar; there seemed to be more than one of them, and they went



all round our cattle. Fired two muskets to make them keep their distance; but they still kept prowling round us, we collected a bunch of withered grass and went with Lieutenant Martyn in search of the animals, suspecting them to be wild boars. We got near one of them, and fired several shots into the bush and one at him as he went off among the long grass. When we returned to the tents, I learned by enquiring of the natives that the animals we had been in search of were not boars, but young lions; and they assured me that unless we keep a very good look out they would probably kill some of our cattle during the night. About midnight these young lions attempted to seize one of the asses, which so much alarmed the rest that they broke their ropes, and came full gallop in amongst the tent ropes. Two of the lions followed them, and came so close to us that the sentry cut at one of them with his sword, but did not dare to fire for fear of killing the asses."

From what Park writes here, the expedition were certainly in lion country and the beasts were not afraid of humans when hunting for their next meal – had James Bloore been on their menu three days earlier? We will never know for sure.

One Summer Evening in a Country Church Yard

While overseas in the UK in July this year my son's in-laws invited me to join them in attending a choral concert in a little village church in Weobley, Herefordshire.

Weobley is known as a "black and white" village as most of the buildings are Tudor style with black wood framework surrounding the white plasterwork. It is a real rural village with a church, a small village shop and a pub and not much else.



Weobley was about two hours drive from Clevedon, near Bristol. We got to Weobley early, having driven



around Chepstow and up passed Tintern Abbey and on up through Hereford. As the choir was still doing their final rehearsal in the church, Phil and I sat in the graveyard on that warm but cloudy summer afternoon.

As is a genealogist's want, my eyes soon strayed to the graves nearest to where we sat. Two graves, by their design and surnames were obviously linked. The one read:

Martin Cecil Birchby, priest, In loving memory of a dear husband, father and grandfather. Died 13th October 1997. Rector of Pembridge Group of Parishes 1975-1985.

Joan Lilian Birchby, re-united with her husband Martin. Dear mother and grandmother. Died 23rd June 2001. The Lord bless you and keep you

The second read:

In memory of Judy Norma Birchby, died 11th April 2002. Beloved daughter of Joan and Martin and much loved sister and aunt. May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.



I turned to Phil and said: "What a lot you learn from those two graves." He looked at them and said: "What else besides the names?" "Well," I said, "Yes the surname Birchby with

husband **Martin** and wife **Joan** but the fact that they give the name of the parish he served in implies that this was **the** major parish he served so most probably it was his last parish. If he served until retirement age of 68 (as it was in the 1980s) it means that he was born about 1917. He obviously married **Joan Lilian** and if we check the FreeBMD when we get home, we will find

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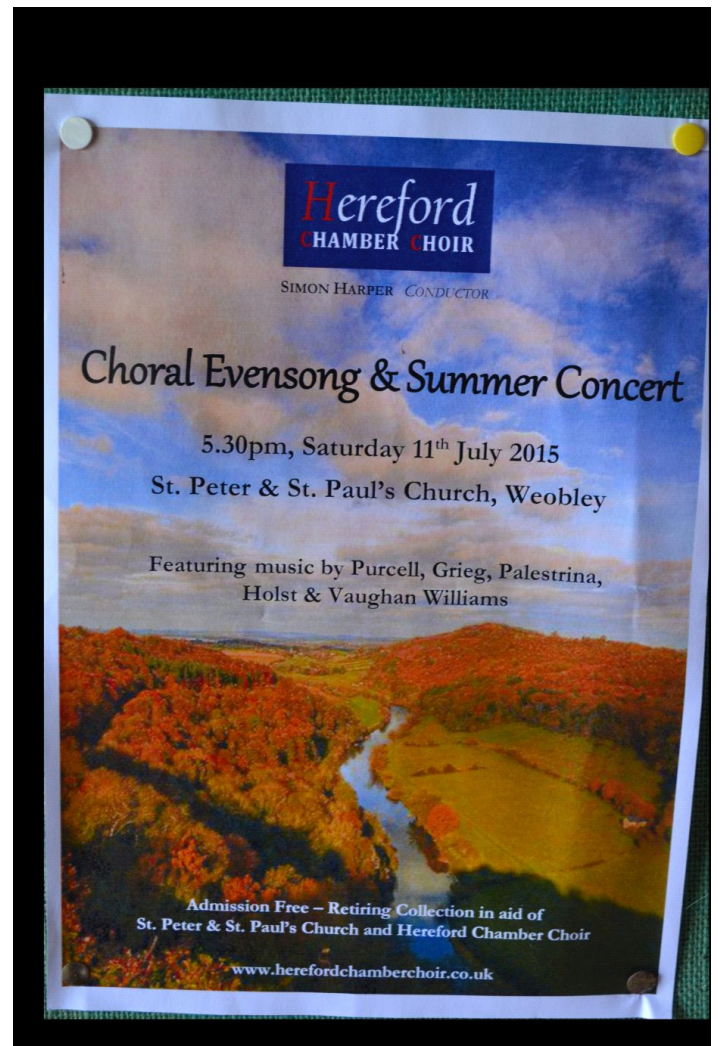
Joan's maiden name. [This we did do online when we got home and found it was **Miller**] We can then enter 'Birchby' and her maiden name and find how many children were born to the two of them."

Once again, I did this when we got home. The technique I used was to enter no forenames but only **Birchby** under the surname. Then I took the marriage date [1939] and add ten years to it and set the range of possible birth years to 10. That means I entered 'born' as 1949 with a range of ± 10 years – so the range of 1939 till 1959. I presumed that that covered the reproductive years of Mrs Birchby. I also set the "Mother's maiden name" entry to **Miller**.

This gave me two results: **Judy N Birchby** born 1943 and **Celia M. Birchby** born 1951. Of course, even while sitting in the Weobley graveyard, I could see the grave for **Judy Norma Birchby**. And this grave too told me lots. Firstly, it told me that Judy Norma never married (as it gave her name still as **Birchby**) and stated she was a loving daughter and aunt implying no children of her own but more importantly showed that there were other siblings. This we proved once we got home and on line by finding **Celia M Birchby**. Now, I could also logically prove that Celia must have married and had children because it says that Judy was a loving **aunt** to Celia's children.

So I then looked for Celia M. Birchby marriage and found she had married **Andrew Pickard** in Bromyard, Hereford in 1973. Bromyard Registration District seems to be in wild rural areas of Herefordshire – just like Weobley! I applied the same technique as above to Celia and Andrew Pickard and found two children who were obviously the nieces who Judy Norma Birchby loved. Rebecca Jane Pickard (b. 1976) and Gabrielle Marie Pickard (b. 1978). Both born in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

With Martin birth registration post-1911 I found his mother's maiden name [Ursell] and that he was born in Croydon – short step from their to Birchby-Ursell marriage, then 1911 Census and so on backwards. **Isn't family history fun!**



Can I re-assure any of Martin Birchby's descendants who might read this article – I'm not stalking you or your ancestors! Merely proving how easy it can be to trace your family – that is until you get to inevitable 'brick wall'.

Obviously to do a lot of this one has to subscribe to site such as www.findingmypast.co.uk or www.ancestry.co.uk

HERITAGE DAY 2015—IN PICTURES



CAPE TOWN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

WEBSITE:

<http://www.family-history.co.za/>

Contains lots of interesting and useful information

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Third Saturday of each month at St John's Church Hall, Wynberg

COMMITTEE 2015-16

CHAIRPERSON:

David Slingsby

SECRETARY:

Ann Smythe

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Cheri Wright

Kevin Turner

WEBMASTER

Eric Settle

BACK PAGE HUMOUR

GENE TOONS

by Wendell Washer



Good news, Mr. Smith!...

Never mind the children.

Do you know where your 2nd Great Grandparents are tonight?

someecards



Isn't genealogy fun?
One problem leads to two more!

someecards
user card

