



## Peterborough and District Family History Society Newsletter February 2025

### From the chair...

This is the time of the year when I wonder if there is anything in particular that I should pursue in my family research. I could, of course, revisit the benefits that DNA has brought me via Ancestry: it's some time since I explored that and I think there has been much movement since then. I do need to bring my KENNELLY family forwards to show some knowledge of the modern generation. I did see on 'Facebook' a lovely photo of my second cousin and her eldest son taken shortly before she suddenly died. There are various loose ends to tie up there. It might be nice to ensure I have photos of the churches where many of 'my' weddings took place. I could try to explore the far corners of the galaxy – i.e. the further corners of my family tree that beckon to me when I unroll the scroll. Perhaps that can be my motto: 'unroll the scroll'. I wonder if that will provoke me to action. We shall see. I will tell you in March how I have progressed with these ideas. Good hunting. **Michael Kennelly**

### From the editor...

January can be a dismal month.

The lights and decorations that greeted visitors to our homes in December have been packed away. It's cold and wet outside and no sooner is it daylight but it is dark again. There are very few hours available for outside activity. But at least we can put on the t.v, switch on the electric lights, and turn up the thermostat and spend our time doing our hobby, family history.

But what was it like for our ancestors?

Any activity inside in the evening would involve the use of a candle, and later gas light. But light for some families was an expensive luxury. Conversation, story telling, and singing were common activities. Families and communities coming together to relax and to share a fire, perhaps a glass or two of something warming.

So next time you reach for the light switch think how lucky we are.

What did your family do to pass the winter nights? please share your memories, or your parent's and grandparent's memories, with other members by sending an article in for the journal.

**Sadie McMullon**

## Zoom Talks

Please find below the programme of meetings for the next few months.

All meetings are currently being held by Zoom. Joining instructions will be sent in the week prior to the meeting.

Wednesday 5th February

Mind Mapping

Linda Hammond

Wednesday 5th March

Women of Peterborough

Stuart Orme

Wednesday 2nd April

Members' Evening

### Our Female Ancestors

Stuart Orme's talk in March will focus on the 'Women of Peterborough'. To coincide with this the March journal will be dedicated to our female ancestors.

Thank you to members who have already contacted me with their articles. It would be lovely to have a few more articles about your female ancestors to make the journal a success. They don't need to be long: snippets, short memories, or discoveries, will be welcome along with longer articles.

So please put pen to paper, or more likely finger to keyboard.

Make this your New Year resolution, to send in an article to the journal.

### 'Where was...'

Browsing a local newspaper I came across mention of the Douglas Theatre. The report stated that it was a wooden structure covered with canvas, and was located in the wood near Fair Meadow, close to the G. E. Railway.

Does anyone have anymore information about this building? When it was in existence? Its exact location?

I would love to hear from you.

### Ancestry 1921

You can now bring your family history research that little bit closer. The 1921 Census is now available on Ancestry. Please share with other members what your ancestors were doing in 1921. What surprises did you find? Were they where you expected them to be?

Happy searching.

## Archives

Hopefully everyone has received the new log in details for the members section of the website. If you haven't then please let me know and I will send them out to you.

If you have had chance to look at the new archives please share with members what you have discovered.

**HOW TO IMPROVE STANGROUND**

**Young Girl's Bright Ideas**

**"SEND AWAY THE CARAVANS"**

The Rev. Morley H. Wells, writing in the Stanground Parish Magazine, says he has not noticed a lot of people tumbling over each other to help the housing conditions and caravans in Stanground.

He will have the satisfaction of knowing that the village children have offered a few suggestions. Recently an essay competition, entitled "How to improve Stanground" was organised for the children. The winner was Betty Hall (13), of 48, Chapel-street. She wrote:

"My first suggestion is to have all the small houses pulled down because round about Stanground there are some very small and dirty houses, which are certainly not healthy for the people who live in them. New houses would have to replace these.

"Another thing necessary is to have all the caravans sent away; if this is done the recreation ground could be made bigger and better for us children.

**WASTE BASKETS.**

"Thirdly, I think it would be a good idea to have waste or litter baskets fixed on the Stanground lamp-posts, as they have in Old Pletton. I wonder why we have not. This would make a good deal of difference as the grown-ups could put their waste into one of these waste baskets, and so encourage the smaller folk.

"I also suggest having seats put along the side of the river. A little harbour could be built and boats moored inside so that people could hire them for pleasure rides, the cost, say, about threepence a ride for half-an-hour. This money could go to pay for some other little improvement in Stanground.

"Gardens ought to be kept tidy and prizes given for the best. We ought to have more flower shows round here, too.

"If more money were allowed for school equipment, school would be more interesting. How we should enjoy having everything up-to-date! We could even learn typewriting and play hockey and tennis like the luckier folk of Secondary schools do. But somehow we are not so lucky as the higher schools.

"These are a few things which I think would improve Stanground. Let us hope Stanground will be as it used to be before long."

## 'Somethings Never change'

By Sadie McMullon

It occurred to me, when I read this article in the *Peterborough Standard*, 6th May 1938, that somethings never change. The times may change but our concerns remain the same.

The Rev Morley H. Wells was concerned about the housing conditions in Stanground, so the school children were set an essay in which they had to propose their solutions.

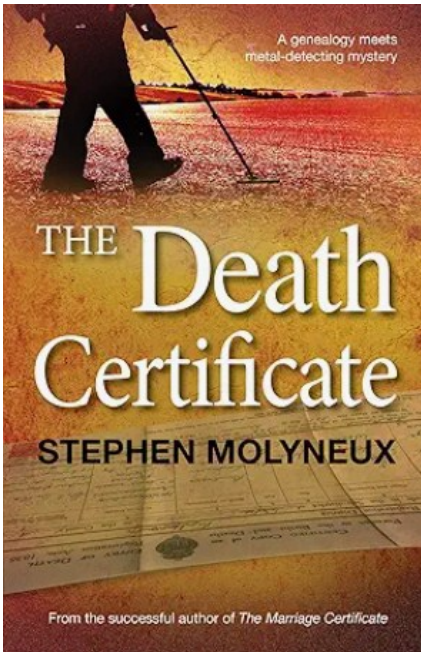
Betty Hall, of Chapel Street, was the winner.

She suggested:

1. To pull down the small and dirty houses, which were unhealthy, and to replace them with new houses.
2. To send the caravans away so that the recreation ground would be bigger for the children to play in.
3. To attach litter baskets to all the lamp posts.
4. To put benches along the banks of the river, and to even build a little harbour where pleasure boats could be hired from. The money could then improve Stanground further.
5. Gardens should be kept neat and tidy, with prizes for the best.
6. New equipment for school to make school more interesting. Suggested lessons included hockey, tennis and learning to type.

What wonderful ideas Betty had. I wonder what became of Betty and if she continued to pioneer ideas for change.

## Book Review



If you enjoyed Stephen's book *The Marriage Certificate* then you will be eager to read *The Death Certificate*.

*The Death Certificate* - A genealogy meets metal-detecting mystery.

When Peter Sefton gets the opportunity to metal-detect on a remote hidden farm, little does he know that one of his finds will lead him to search for the identity of its former owner. What he discovers is shocking and tragic. He starts to feel a connection for their paths had crossed - literally - albeit with a gap of about 150 years, but crossed they had. Combining his interest in genealogy and metal-detecting, Peter forms a theory about a link between a scandal in the antiques world of Victorian London and what may have occurred on the farm. Follow the story as modern-day events play their part.

**ASIN** : B082DHJDMZ

## 'Thanks'

By Ewan Cappitt

Now it is the season of Christmas and New Year and the time to give Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to all, I would like to take the opportunity to give grateful thanks to the small team who have been beavering away for much of this year transcribing the Nonconformist Baptism Records for the Methodist Church at Crowland.

This is one of the few Projects that we as a Society have undertaken this year and so to show my appreciation publicly I would like to thank Sue, Mandy, Graham and also to Mary who started with us but had to stop because of family commitments.

Alan has already published 3 of the books online in our archives, and by the time that you read this we will almost be publishing the 4th, and the final book will probably be completely transcribed and ready for checking.

If any other of our members feel that they could spare a bit of time in the evenings etc. to join our team and do some transcribing of records of other Nonconformist Churches in and around Peterborough that we have gained access to, please let me know either directly, see contact details in the Journal, or via our Secretary Sadie.

Many thanks.

# **‘Transcribing Crowland Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Baptism Registers’**

By Mandy Thompson

I have been part of Ewan Cappitt’s team transcribing the registers of the Crowland Wesleyan Methodist Chapels’ registers, and as I’m sure happens to many family history researchers, I have allowed myself to be distracted!

Branches of my family have been ministers in non-conformist churches – Baptist, Methodist and, most recently my maternal grandfather was a Congregational minister. One of my great great grandfathers was a Baptist minister then missionary who took his family to New York in the mid 1800’s, and then to Manitoba in Canada in the 1880’s. What about the lives of those officiating at the Wesleyan baptisms in Crowland?

I know that Methodist ministers do move around the country quite frequently, but surely the minister of a church in a small town like Crowland would not have travelled widely? Investigating the life of James Scholefield Morris, who appeared as officiant in the Crowland baptism register between 1932 and 1934, I realised how wrong I was!

James was born in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, in 1863, the son of a Wesleyan minister who had been a missionary in India where his first wife, James’ mother, had died. I am not sure where the name Scholefield came from as it does not appear to be a family name, but I did discover a reforming politician called William Scholefield who championed the expansion of the right to vote, free trade, and freedom of religion so perhaps his name had caught the eye of James’s father.

In his first few years James had already lived in Lincolnshire, Somerset, Cornwall and Yorkshire so was accustomed to frequent moves. James attended Kingswood School near Bath, a boarding school founded by John Wesley in 1748 for the sons of Wesleyan ministers (and colliers – an unexpected combination!) By 1881 James was an assistant master at what is now Launceston College in Cornwall, younger than some of the pupils. He trained for the ministry at Richmond Theological College in London, starting as a probationary minister in Tooting in 1889.

After 3 years in Tooting he went to South Africa as a missionary where he stayed for about 9 years until he was able to return to the UK at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War. There are reports in several newspapers of his lectures about his life in South Africa. It seems that he offered talks about many subjects, including ‘The life and customs of the native African described by the aid of capital limelight illustrations’, ‘Twelve months under Martial Law in Johannesburg’ and ‘Goldfields of South Africa’.

According to his obituary in 1948, he died after retiring from the ministry to Nantwich near Crewe in about 1934, ‘he had been a Superintendent minister for nearly 20 years, and had ministered in the circuits of Wolverhampton, Ampthill, Boston (Lincs), Barton-on-Humber, Todmorden, Biggleswade, Whaley Bridge, and Dunstable. He ended his ministry at Crowland and Peterborough.’

James Scholefield Morris certainly had a full life. He was married twice, had seven children and had dedicated well over 50 years to Wesleyan Methodism. One of the hymns at his funeral was, ‘Now the labourer’s task is o’er’. It seems appropriate.