

Domus Historiae

JOURNAL OF BARNSELY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EDITORIAL

Domus Historiae

I received just one email from members about the title of the Journal and print below Judith Robinson's arguments in favour of simplification. At about the same time, Ron Spensley circulated to the committee (where the case for change had originally been voiced) a reminder of how the name *Domus Historiae* had come about. Given the current lack of feeling either way among most members I think it best to stay - at least for now - with the known and trusted. Ron's email is also printed below - details from which you will be able to slip into the conversation whenever you want to impress friends.

Lest we Forget

Have you noticed how often Society members refer to their interest in family history as an *obsession*? Tracking down a particularly complex line in one's family tree can certainly seem more than a pastime, and the thrills and spills and frustrations of the chase sometimes feel more like a sport than a scholarly pursuit! The articles in this edition of *Domus Historiae* highlight particularly well the difficulty in defining what it is that we are up to when poring over census returns or parish registers. 'Family history is a hobby', we say... but how is that different from an interest in *real* history?

What is fascinating about our research is often to do with discovering those details that bring the past to life. It is all too easy to think of one's ancestors simply as names on a family tree or to visualise them like the static figures on a formal studio portrait. In this edition, Elizabeth Till's letter about her great-great grandmother recalls a simple domestic event a century ago - and reminds us of a time when women wearing such elaborate clothes could have been seen in the streets of Barnsley! Similarly, Richard Ellis' fascinating discovery about a member of the Donkin family tells us as much about life in the eighteenth century Town as it does about his own forebear. The circumstances of George Brook's life in Great Houghton, so typical of his time and class, provide a glimpse of the settled patient lives of a very ordinary family in a nineteenth century township which had changed little since the middle ages.

But what of *real* history, you might ask? Not the past framed by family anecdote, local scandal or the conditions in a particular village or parish, but that wider history of the nation and its relationship with the world. How is our interest in the lives of Barnsley men and women related to that broader canvas? This edition of the Journal highlights the moment in their lives when members' ancestors were caught up in military struggle. When they left their homes to enlist, of course, these men had little say in the politics that had led nations into war. They were, though, players in a wider drama that took them from local fields, factories and mines into the conflicts that marked the rise and fall of Empire.

Some lived to tell a story of extraordinary military adventures and military honours. Rather more perished, their memorials now increasingly vulnerable in an age which does not value such things. The poignant stories of family loss in this edition are the fine detail hidden within the grand narratives by 'real historians' about the emergence of that world order which - for good or ill - we now inhabit.

Future Editions

As usual, I invite any contributions from members about people or events from their families' past which have been brought to life in the course of their researches. At some time in the future,

though, I would like to turn the spotlight on two particular areas about which you may have material that could be prepared for special editions of *Domus Historiae*.

The first of these is **schooling**. There have been a couple of pieces recently reminiscing about school days. More of these would be welcome. Barnsley Archives now have a number of school logs available for readers and these can provide a fascinating insight into the school days of family members. (The complete list of the records available appeared in our October 2009 edition.) I have looked into the Mapplewell Infants log book for the time my mother was a pupil there at the time of the First World War and reading accounts of the day-to-day running of the school at that time was like sitting in on the class where she would have been sitting...

The second theme I should like to explore concerns the lives of ancestors touched by local **'caring' institutions** – the hospitals, the workhouses, the prisons, the almshouses, the lunatic asylums. Your stories could provide important insights into this aspect of our past - and just as interesting for other members would be your own experience as researchers in locating and interpreting the evidence.

On these, and any other matters, I look forward to hearing from you at: editor@barnsleyfhs.co.uk

Jack Brook
Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

The journal title *Domus Historiae* was devised by a former committee member over a decade ago. He apparently took the Latin words 'domus', which can mean 'home' or 'family', and 'historiae', which can mean 'histories' or 'stories', and put them together, assuming that the phrase would mean 'family histories' or 'family stories'. In fact Latin doesn't work like that and the phrase actually means 'the home of history'. However, if you simply put a bar across the top of the letter 'u' in 'domus', the meaning becomes 'histories or stories of the family', which would make perfectly good sense for a family history society journal. I had a go at explaining things when I joined the committee but there was no appetite for change among the other committee members, so I gave it up as a lost cause. Personally, I now rather like the title whatever the slight problem with its meaning.

Ron Spensley

Dear Editor,

You ask for comments on the use of the name *Domus Historiae*. When it was proposed to introduce this name, some years ago, comments were requested. Part of my response was quoted in the review of comments which was published: it included the words, 'but how pretentious!' - although I must have been in the minority. I have nothing against Latin - my grammar school learning of it has been extremely useful in many ways. Perhaps if the journal dealt mainly with medieval history, it would be reasonable. But for the Barnsley Family History Society newsletter I still think it is inappropriate. Your comment that it 'perhaps, flaunts an incongruous classicism' is spot on!

A good issue, by the way.

Judith Robinson

Dear Editor

You may remember we emailed the Barnsley Family History Society a few months ago asking for help with our new ITV1 series 'My Long Lost Family'. The series, made by the makers of the BBC family history series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, reunites long lost relatives, and with your help we were hoping to encourage people who have been searching for a missing family member for years to get in touch with us so we could help them find their relative. You very kindly forwarded information about the series to your colleagues.

I wanted to write and thank you so much for your help in publicising our search for people who are trying to find a relative – in the last 6 months we have been able to trace almost 100 people and have reunited many families over the last six months. However we still need to hear from more people who are looking for family members. We'd love your help again and would really appreciate it if you could pass on the series information below to as many colleagues and friends as possible.

Among many successful traces we have reunited two 65-year-old twin sisters who were tragically separated as children and adopted into different families. Amazingly they had both been living three miles from each other for the last 40 years but had no idea! They were both thrilled to finally meet each other for the first time.

We've also reunited a 45-year-old woman with the father she never knew but had spent her whole life searching for. We traced him in Canada – he had 5 sons of his own and had always wanted a daughter. He was overjoyed to meet her and they have been in very regular contact ever since.

It would be wonderful if you could help spread the word about the series within Barnsley Family History Society, so that anyone who is searching for a family member and who needs some help can approach us directly. All they need to do is go to our website and fill in the application form – we will get straight back to them. The application form can be found at:

www.walltowall.co.uk/findmyfamily.aspx

Thank you - we really appreciate your help – we'll let you know when the series is on ITV.

Annabel Borthwick

Dear Editor

Help Please! I am searching for pictures of the Pindar Oaks maternity home / Barnsley Municipal nursing home which opened in 1921. Having searched through many local history books, I enquired at Barnsley Archives but they were unable to help. Can anyone help with information as to where I might find a picture?

Thank You,

Amanda Charlesworth

Dear Editor,

My maternal family history research has taken me 'Up North'. In this respect, I qualify as one of the 'Out-of-Town' members of BFHS and I hope you find the following comments useful.

Perhaps you can imagine yourself in my place: I have lived all my life on the Dorset/Hampshire border. I have been most fortunate in researching my paternal ancestors, who were mainly *Ag Labs*, living within the same 15 miles radius ever since the 1700s, and I know this area well. But when I turn to my mother's family, I find it really difficult to get a clear picture of the lives, homes and working conditions of my maternal ancestors who lived as miners and mill workers. As I have no idea of the Yorkshire area (apart from a visit to York some 30 odd years ago!) I would find it helpful if there were some simple guides or maps about the Barnsley area that I could use.

At present all I have is a list of areas where my ancestors were recorded in the various census returns. Places such as *Town-End* and *Silkstone* crop up but I have not really much idea, apart from what I have found on modern maps, where and what these areas are or even in which parishes they are located. It would be so useful for members who live 'away' to have a simple guide to where the parishes are, the dates when the parishes came into being and the a brief description of the villages and hamlets that Barnsley residents take for granted in their research.

Janet Morton

Please see page six for the Committee's response to this suggestion. (Ed)

Dear Editor

There is a little story connected with this photograph of my great-great grandmother, Ellen Elizabeth Nunn, which the readers of *Domus Historiae* may find interesting.



Ellen Elizabeth nee Youngs was born in Somerleyton, Suffolk, married Robert Nunn in June 1873 in Stockton-on-Tees, and the couple eventually settled at 73 Commercial Street, Barnsley where Ellen Elizabeth lived until her death on 17 June 1925.

An amusing memory passed down through the generations relates to the splendid hat which she is wearing in the photograph reproduced here. Apparently, Ellen really liked the hat, she had saved up for a long time to buy it and eventually bought it for 7/11p in about 1912 - in those days quite a lot of money. She would wear it proudly around Town, and afterwards the precious hat was always put away in its hat box. One day, though, she didn't close the box lid properly and the family cat got into the box, recognised the hat as a comfortable bed and had her litter of kittens on it.

The fate of the cat and kittens is not recorded. My great-great grandmother, though, was so very upset by what had happened, the precious hat was thrown away!

Elizabeth Till

BFHS AREA GUIDE

Off to a Good Start

Janet Morton's Letter to the Editor printed above, prompted a quick response from the Committee. It was agreed that the Society should prepare an Area Guide as a companion volume to the Resources Guide published earlier this year. It is proposed that the new volume will be issued as a forty-page Journal Supplement some time in 2011 and will be distributed free to members.

The Lie of the Land

We hope that the Guide will be more than an account of places and resources useful only for those unfamiliar with the Barnsley area. It should be a valuable tool for all researchers wishing to investigate the history of their families in the context of the localities where their ancestors actually lived.

The first part will provide a general description of the local landscape, its natural features, its agriculture and the minerals that were found beneath its surface. The original parishes, their churches and the original settlements will be listed. There will be an overview of the main centres of employment and of the turnpike roads, the canals and the railways that linked them.

In the second part, the parishes themselves will be described in a little more detail – looking at surviving records of interest to family historians, the surviving evidence of employment, housing and the churches and chapels that were built in response to growing population. At the moment, we are thinking that this section will be best covered as three groups of parishes: the Upland Parishes, the Lower Dearne Valley Parishes and the Central Parishes which will include Barnsley Town itself. Throughout, we hope the Guide will give an accurate 'outline sketch' with pointers to where and how to get full information. In this respect it will be complementary to the Resources Guide issued previously.

Gathering Information

Currently, Jack Brook, Gill Brookes and Ron Spensley are taking the project forward and it is anticipated that a number of Committee members will contribute. We recognise, however, that although this project is in some respects modest in its scale, it will need to draw upon considerable familiarity with the area and will be strengthened if other members of the Society with specific areas of interest and expertise can be brought in to contribute.

If your researches have led you to a particular interest in part of the geographical area covered by the Society – a familiarity with its townships, villages and farms, its big houses and its mines and mills – we would very much like to hear from you.

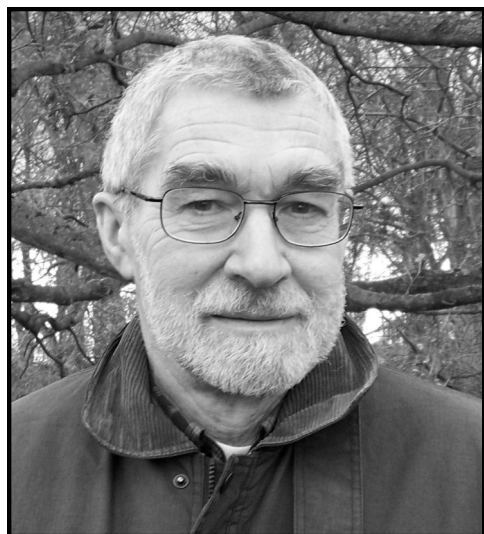
A Way of Working

Until we know how many might be interested in the project, it is difficult to envisage how the research group will operate. We have a draft outline plan for the Guide and a 'template' of notes for the gathering of information which all contributors will work from. We do not foresee any commitment on the part of contributors to attend meetings! We also want to keep organisation simple so that the project does not drag on for too long.

If you would like further information, or if you would like to express an interest in contributing, please write to: editor@barnsleyfhs.co.uk

MEET THE SECRETARY AND LIBRARIAN

Ron Spensley talks to *Domus Historiae* about his background in family history, his present position as Society Secretary and Librarian and his ideas for the future development of his work.



DH In the last edition of DH, members read that you had recently relinquished the position of Chairman: does this mean you now have more time for your own research?

RS Not really; moving from being Chairman to being Secretary seems to have increased, not reduced, my Society work load. Nevertheless, I've always found time to keep adding to and making better sense of my own family history. Sometimes a distant relative whom I've never previously heard of gets in touch, and that often triggers off new and productive research.

DH When did your own interest in family history begin?

RS Having completed an MA course on Country House studies at the University of Leeds in 1999 I decided it was time to start looking at my own ancestors instead of those of the gentry and aristocracy. I made a few false starts, and one, in particular, was painful - I was attacked by what seemed at the time to be legions of insects in an overgrown grave yard at Kirby Hill, just off the A1, while fruitlessly trying to locate a Spensley grave stone which I'd been told about. All in a good cause, you might say, but the next day, covered with lumps, I discovered that I'd visited the wrong Kirby Hill; the one I needed was further north, near Richmond.

DH What then are your family links with the Barnsley area?

RS On my father's side, my great-great-great-grandfather and three of his sons migrated from Swaledale to Stainborough in about 1830. One son stayed and some of his descendants are still in the area. On my mother's side the Naylor's were already at Hoylandswaine two hundred years ago and several of their descendants still live to the west of Barnsley. My father was brought up in Dodworth and my mother in Higham.

DH Have you made any interesting discoveries in the course of your research?

RS Finding out about the sharply contrasting fortunes of some of my Spensley ancestors has been fascinating - and sobering to a certain extent. In the late 19th century my great-great aunt spent several years in Barnsley workhouse with her three illegitimate children, whereas some of her not-too-distant cousins, who had migrated to the American Mid-West, quickly became prosperous, buying land and owning farms and large industrial concerns, at the very time when she had nothing.

DH What does the position of Librarian actually entail?

RS The library is run as a free look-up service for all members and complements the search service run by Phil Edwards. I receive email enquiries and send the information which is

needed, together with scans of the various documents. The contents of the library are fully listed in the resources guide which all members received earlier this year and members can ask me to check whether a particular family, place name or event occurs in any document. In addition I can advise members where else to look if our own resources don't provide what they need.

DH How do you think the Society might exploit its collections more fully? As 'keeper of the archives' how do you see the future in terms of encouraging access and 'ownership'.

RS I think that we have to find a way of making available to all our members the material which at present is available only to those who attend our monthly meetings. The church records which we hold on microfiche are a case in point, as are the electoral rolls. This problem has been discussed many times at our committee meetings and we haven't yet found a solution.

DH How do the services offered by the Society complement those available through the local Archives and Local Studies department?

RS Of course the department holds far more material than we do, and I would advise all our members to obtain a copy of its Family History Handbook. Armed with that, our own resources guide and any decent introduction to tracing your ancestors, you have a fair chance of making progress.

DH Can members look forward to any projects of your own which are lined up for future editions of DH?

RS Earlier this year we purchased a copy of Phil Norman's recent transcription of Eli Hoyle's *History of Barnsley and the Surrounding District*. I've written an introduction to it elsewhere in the present Journal and intend to follow this up with a series of articles relating to its contents.

BFHS AT THE YORKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY FAIR 26TH JUNE 2010

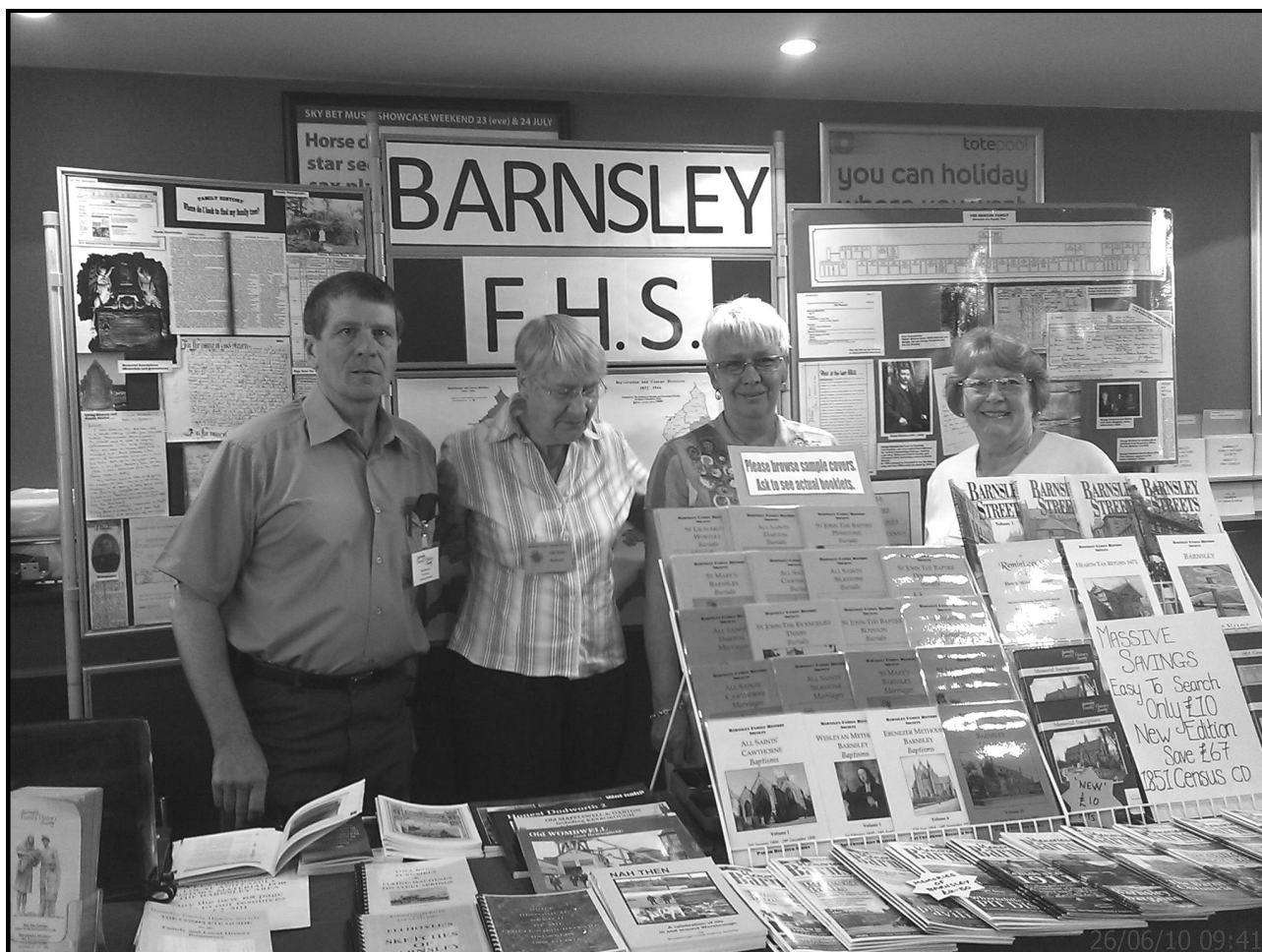
I am constantly impressed by the time and effort Committee members put in for the advancement of the Society. Here are some notes I received from Linda Hutton which give an impression of a busy BFHS table during the recent fair at the Knavesmire Exhibition Centre, York. Thanks, too, for taking the photograph, Linda.(Ed)

- The York Fair now seems such a long way back to me!
- There were some talks going on just below us on one of the mezzanine floors - I think Joan went to one?
- Displays from commercial outlets, Ancestry, Find My Past...Societies from Wales and Scotland plus the usual northern counties (Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Manchester and so on northwards). I can't say I saw anyone from any further south - I may be wrong though.
- Very busy in the morning, but tailing off towards the mid-afternoon.
- Most societies are selling CDs now. Where people still have paper booklets they are looking a bit dog-eared; our plastic sample covers are useful - but sometimes complicate matters if there are many volumes of the same church. I sold several sets (Dodworth and Silkstone burials, I think) but had to drop the prices to tempt the buyers as £15 or £20 in one go is an awful lot!

- We had several people join...did anyone take a note of how many?
- We launched our new CDs - *Memorial Inscriptions* and the *1851 Census* - I sold a couple of each and have sold more since.
- Phil used the new combined index for searches - it prints out nicely headed reports and you only have to enter the name (or part of a name) once to search lots of record sets. We had at least one person join so they could get searches cheaper!

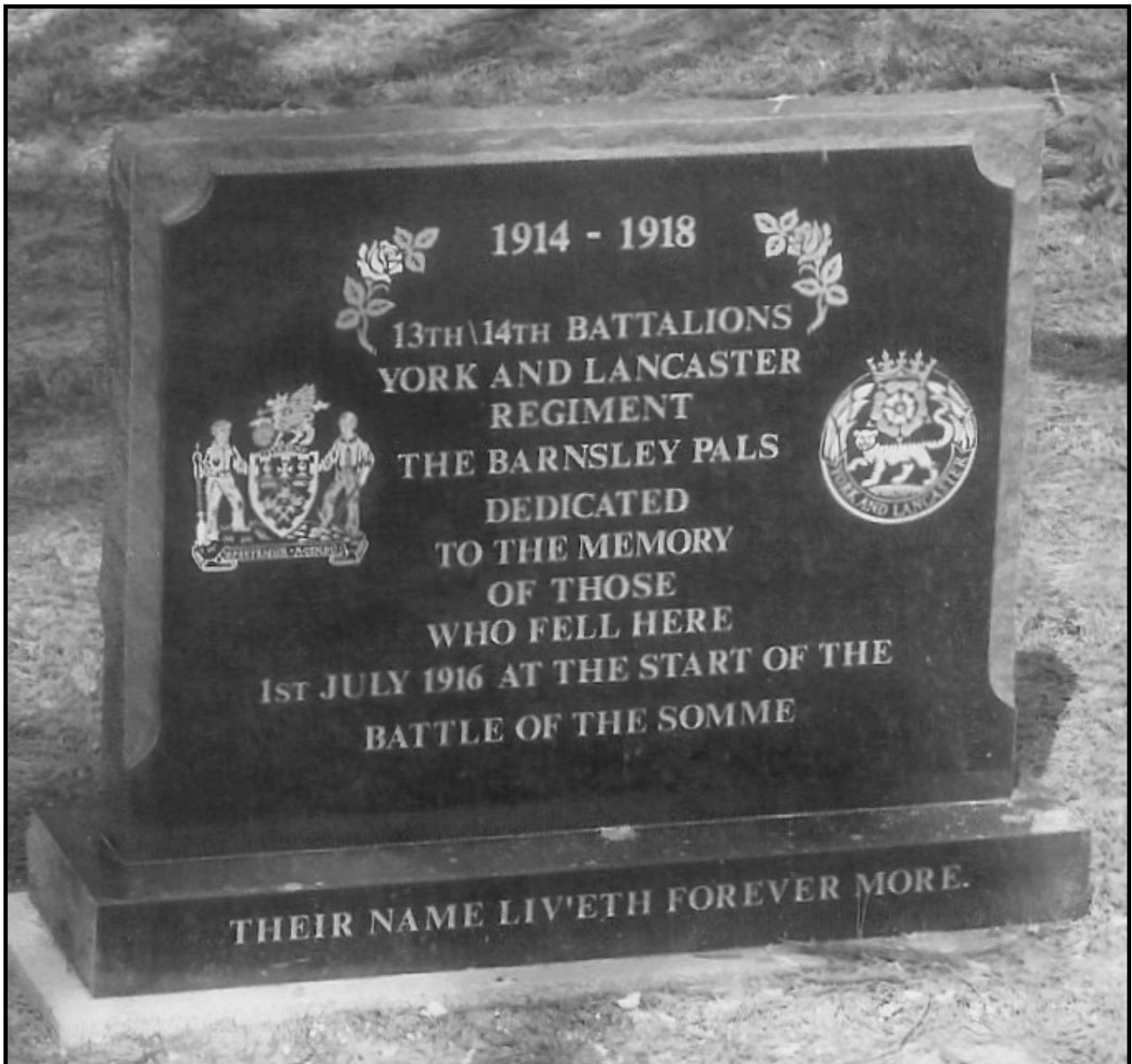
And finally...

- Thanks to Phil for taking me there, I had a great day out!



- And I just remembered... I took some details from a lady from Salisbury because she had an ancestor buried in Barnsley cemetery according to our search results. The next afternoon, my husband walked me down to the cemetery and we found the gravestone of the lady's ancestor. I remember walking back - there was an England match just starting and we were the only people on the streets of Barnsley. I sent her the photo that afternoon - how's that for service!

Linda Hutton



Most of the articles in this edition of *Domus Historiae* are concerned with the lives of ancestors who served in the forces. These accounts of service to the Crown span almost two hundred years and reference is made at a number of points to the various resources available for family historians to research the military careers of their relatives.

MORE THAN JUST NAMES

Every Remembrance Sunday since I was a child, I have stood in silence as we have remembered the local casualties of war. Usually it has been at a cenotaph or memorial, and the names of those commemorated have been read out. For the last nine years I have lived in Penistone, where the roll-call has numbered 56 names from WW1 and 25 from WW2. Having an interest in genealogy – or perhaps that should read ‘having an addiction to genealogy’ – I wanted to know more about those we were remembering than just their names. Whose sons were they? Were they husbands and fathers? What had their jobs been in ‘civvy street?’ What units were they serving in, and when, where and how did they die?

I resolved that before Remembrance Day 2010 I would try to find the answers to these questions for the First World War casualties from the Penistone team parish. There are a further 12 names on the memorial in St Saviour’s Church, Thurlstone, but so far as I am aware there are no memorials in the surrounding villages in the parish, such as Carlecotes, Crow Edge, Dunford Bridge, Ingbirchworth, Langsett, Midhope and Oxspring.

Surely, now that the Commonwealth War Graves website lists all the casualties, and the 1901 and 1911 censuses are searchable online, it would be a straightforward process, albeit one requiring a good deal of time and patience. ‘Straightforward’ is no longer a word that I would apply to the research. It has been challenging in the extreme, and continues so to be.

My first line of approach was to advertise in the Penistone edition of ‘The Barnsley Chronicle’ and the church magazine, which brought detailed information about three of the men from their relatives. Next, I looked at the copies of the *Penistone Almanack* for 1915-1919 in the archives of Penistone library. There were helpful lists of ‘those who have joined the Colours from Penistone, Thurlstone and district,’ giving their regiment or corps. Many were in what became ‘The Sheffield Pals’ and ‘The Barnsley Pals’ battalions of the York & Lancaster Regiment but others were in a surprising diversity of regiments and a few were in the Royal Navy and one in the Royal Flying Corps.

The First Problem

As I trawled through the months in the *Penistone Almanacks*, the first war casualty I found was Private George Johnson of Oxspring, 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, killed in action on the 10th January, 1915. This presented a problem, because he was not one of those named on the memorials. (However, I subsequently noticed that he was included on another memorial sited in the Lady Chapel of Penistone Parish Church.) I wondered whether there might be others who had been killed but whose names had not been remembered year after year as had those on the memorials.

I had already learnt that there were no known surviving records about the gathering of the names to be inscribed on the memorials. It occurred to me that the memorials would have been erected a year or two after the end of the war, and sure enough, I discovered from the Almanacks that it was not until September 1921 that a meeting was held to plan for the Penistone memorial and to appeal for subscriptions to pay for it. Negotiations were protracted, and it was not until August 1924 that the memorial was finally unveiled.

One would expect that when the memorial was planned, there would have been an appeal for people to submit the names of casualties to be inscribed. However, in some cases the next-of-kin might have left the area and not have been aware of the appeal, while others could have died. Subsequent research on the CWGC site showed this to have been so in the case of George Johnson. His widow Rebecca had remarried and was living in Sheffield.

**This is a sample to view more
please become a member.**

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please become a member.**