

FAMILY HISTORY FUN

When I began my history back in nineteen eighty two
I asked myself where I should start and just what I should do
Books read from the library shelf informed my how to start
Family Bibles, photographs, relatives, were only just a part
Birth, marriage and death certificates from eighteen thirty seven
Enabled me to collect some ancestors from Devon
The books advised to join a group to talk and exchange ideas
And I found one in the area, established for some years
I went along to a meeting feeling shy and ill at ease
My husband came along as well just to support and please
Among the books that were displayed was the April magazine
An article that it contained was linked to me it seemed
A Will had been deposited for the Whitlock family
And mentioned as a legatee was Gt Grandma times three
I contacted the depositor to learn we were related
My three times great had stayed at home whilst her brother emigrated
Connections were made overseas through the Members Interests book
With Canadians and Americans who likewise took a look
One ancestor in the army fought in the Civil War
And kept a daily diary of everything he saw
In time I joined an evening class to gain more information
The teacher she was excellent and helped me find relations
By making use of the IGI and the census returns you see
Is the perfect way of assembling a substantial family tree
The registers of parishes for Marriage, Birth and Death
Were also well inspected to extract everything of worth
So too the parish papers Indentures, School and Poor,
Settlements, Tithe Maps, Land Tax and many many more
Like everyone I came unstuck a baptism I could not find
The entry was unreadable it just had to be mine
I feel like a detective as I assemble every clue
And when I have my tree complete whatever will I do
It took eight years to fill one gap by sheer coincidence
'Twas a visitor to the centre who had the evidence
I've used the indexes to the full Marriage, MI's and Strays
And using the 1881 on fiche definitely pays
This census enabled me to find a missing link once more
Instead of being in Sheepwash he was living on Dartmoor
Times are changing yet again a computer I must use
To store the names that I have found and assemble as I choose
But I prefer my indexes and my hand drawn trees are fine
Sometime in the future they'll be handed down the line.
Since joining the Society I've forgotten to be shy
I was group leader for three years and I'm responsible for strays
I oversee the centre when it's open for three days
I am your current Chairman which takes a lot of time
I help members with their research and have no time for mine

Since we have had the centre I have met very many more
Out of country members and those from distant shores
If you have only just begun to research your family tree
I hope you will have just as much fun as me. by SHEILA PIKE

The above poem was written by a distant cousin of mine and appeared in the February 1995 issue of the Devon Family Historian. The Whitlock Will Sheila refers to was part of a collection of Devon wills the Whitlock Family Association donated to the Devon Family History Society's collection. Most know the Devon wills were destroyed during the war but despite this I discovered in the early 1980's we had ten to fifteen in our collection and wondered if others also had Devon wills. I am not sure if the DHS has kept up the collection since the first donations as the last reference I have to the collection is 1982.

Sheila (Smale) Pike is a descendant of John & Catherine (Morcombe) Whitlock (M1723) of Langtree, Devon. She and her husband Maurice are both very active in the Devon Family History Society and as Sheila mentions she is the current Chairman of the Society.

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