



Senior

Moments

*The Newsletter of the Bookham & District
University of the Third Age*

Issue 66

May 2020



Photos by David Middleton at the casino evening



Bookham and District U3A

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Well we are in very strange times at present and it's not easy to see the light at the end of this tunnel.

This edition has much more reading matter than in recent issues which hopefully will be very welcome while we are on lockdown and welcoming any reading matter that is away from the c-virus. Judith Witter has contributed one of her history stories and there is a write up explanation on a new group—Qigong that I am sure we should be considering as one of our exercise programmes during this isolation period. Anita Laycock has contributed her regular gardening piece and the cover photo this time is an egg box in my very small, but heated greenhouse where amongst other things I am growing Cosmos daisies from seed. They are growing in pellets that I bought from Sarah Raven. These are not much bigger than two £ coins joined together but leave them in water overnight and they swell to a good size for planting seeds that can be planted straight into their final position without disturbing their roots. I also bought plug plants this year that arrive through the post in very lightweight plastic containers and must be watered on arrival and can be planted straight out. All of this helps to occupy my time while we are all “confined to barracks” so to speak.

Lets all hope by the time the next issue of Senior Moments is published in July the lockdown will be a thing of the past.

Maurice Baker

Chairman's Report

Greetings from isolation,

It is only five weeks since we last met in the Old Barn Hall but it feels very much longer. The pace of change as the coronavirus situation has developed has been rapid and, quite frankly alarming. Hopefully we are reaching the peak and the numbers will start to decline. The government advice for us all has been clear; to stay at home, preserve the NHS and save lives. For our U3A it has meant a suspension of our activities and for the majority of us, a move into isolation.

This has not been easy and I am aware that it poses challenges, particularly for members who live on their own. It is, however, very important and from a personal perspective I have seen the impact of coronavirus. In addition to friends who have been affected, our daughter who is a doctor, contracted the virus. Thankfully she has recovered and has returned to work doing the vital work of looking after her patients in Chichester.

I think we are lucky in Bookham in that many of us have a good circle of friends and people who can assist us during these challenging times. We are also blessed with the shops and services that are available to us in the village. The butcher, the baker (but no candlestick maker), greengrocer, co-op and the petrol station as well as others continue to provide us with a really good standard of service and many of them provide home deliveries as well.

I must commend our website and the work that Harold is doing as our Webmaster. He is updating it on a daily basis and it should be your first point of contact for any information you need about our U3A as well as information about local shops and services.

I know that social isolation can be difficult but remember that through the U3A you have a very wide circle of friends and contacts who you can speak to you. Sometimes just having a voice at the other end of the telephone can make all the difference. Please never feel lonely, the telephone is always there and should be used.

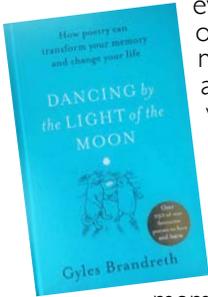
We are keeping our plans for the future under review and, realistically, we will not meet again until at least September. We will return to the Old Barn Hall as soon as it is safe for us to do so.

I wish you well, keep safe and keep in contact with your family and friends. Looking forward to seeing you all again as soon as we can.
Best wishes,



Memory Improvement?

Gyles Brandreth has recently written a book—Dancing by the Light of the MOON - in which he explains how poetry can transform your memory and change your life! He claims that if you try to memorise poetry it can delay or even avoid the onset of dementia! Well that must be worth a try and even if it doesn't work reading good poetry is always a joy in itself.



I have never been able to write poetry myself but we do have a number of U3A

members who have graced the pages of this magazine over the years I have been editor.

Brandreth states early in the book that "Learning poetry by heart as an adult gives you a happier and more successful life, improves your ability to communicate (and consequently the quality of your relationships); improves your memory; increases your brain capacity; and—glory be - keep dementia at bay".

I find I can only remember bits of poems, mainly the opening lines, even from my childhood, but I remember my mother even in her 100th year could remember the whole of many of the poems she learnt as a child. But she said in those days at school one of the common tasks was to learn by rote. Hopefully, Brandreth's book will inspire me to remember many poems and at the same time keep dementia away for many years to come. That is a very encouraging prospect if it can be achieved—we shall see.

The man in seat 61

This is a curious title for a website but it is the entry to the best up to date rail travel information, not just for the UK but for the whole of Europe and beyond. Its also easier to remember than many website names and it comes from the author, Mark Smith, who worked for British Rail and has an encyclopaedic knowledge of train travel and all its wrinkles. He is not a travel agent and he doesn't sell anything, but if you want to know the details of train journeys including times, prices and special tips this is the site to go to. He has also published two books. One of the books is for trains from the UK to the whole of Europe and the other is world wide rail travel. They make fascinating reading even if you are not planning to go on a continental rail journey and I particularly recommend the European Rail Book.

If you are planning a rail journey to Spain, for example, he recommends not only the trains but also the hotels to consider for overnight stops.

The "seat 61" in the title derives from the first class seat on the London to Paris Eurostar that Mark Smith prefers to use at the start of his journeys. I might well give this a try once we are out of lockdown.



Travelling by Eurostar from St Pancras?

Take the Horsham-Victoria train

Get off at Sutton

wait on the same platform for the Thames Link train

There are two an hour

They all stop at St Pancras



Maurice Baker

Southern Railway

Book Reading Group 2

USA Book Group 2 Average Voting scores for 2019

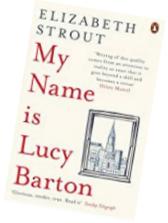
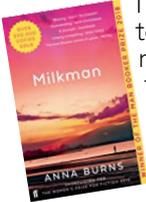
Book Title	Author	Style	Content	Good	Read	Range
Milkman	Anna Burns	2018	3.5	6.6	2.6	0-7
The Silence of the Girls	Pat Barker	2018	7.2	6.9	7.1	6-8
Peaches for Monsieur le Curé	Joanne Harris	2012	6.9	6.2	6.7	5-8
Three Things About Elsie	Joanna Cannon	2018	7.4	6.1	6.1	3-9
Found	Harlan Coben	2014	3.8	3.1	2.7	0-6
My Name is Lucy Barton	Elizabeth Strout	2016	6.9	7.2	6.7	4-9
Unsheltered	Barbara Kingsolver	2018	5	5.1	4.4	1-7
We Need to Talk About Kevin	Lionel Shriver	2003	7.7	8.4	8	6-10
Ruling Passion	Reginald Hill	1973	4.8	4.4	4.5	3-6
Under a Pole Star	Stef Penney	2016	6.4	6.7	6.4	3-8
The Keeper of Lost Things	Ruth Hogan	2017	6.6	6.3	6.5	3-9

All except one of the books we read this year were written in this century, most in this decade. The most popular was *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, which raised many issues of family relationships for discussion. There were so many factors that could have contributed to Kevin committing mass murder just before his 16th birthday. His mother Eva agonised with her husband Franklin over whether they should have a child. Her motivation for having one was partly to give herself a challenge. She

didn't feel anything for Kevin when he was born and interpreted his feeding difficulties as rejection of her. Toilet training became such a battleground that when he was still in nappies nearly age 6 she threw him across the room, breaking his arm. Kevin didn't tell anyone that she did that which meant she felt she had given him power over her. Franklin only saw the best in Kevin so the 2 parents pushed each other to opposite extremes and Kevin had little discipline

from his father. When Celia was born, through Eva deceiving her husband about using contraception, she was her mother's clear favourite. As a teenager Kevin reacted against his mother being so critical of American society but also against his father wanting to play happy families and see him as something he wasn't. Kevin planned his attack meticulously, including doing it before he could be tried as an adult and asking for Prozac so he could use reaction to that as a defence. He took pride in his action and was dismissive of other young murderers.

The book was easy to read if a bit long. It was written in the form of letters from Eva to Franklin which meant that it was a long while before it occurred to me that he was one of the murder victims. There were times when I questioned whether the plot was psychologically credible but then I realised that we only saw it through the unreliable eyes of Eva, who was torn between blaming herself for being a bad mother and blaming Kevin for being inherently evil. Sometimes I could see similarities between Eva and Kevin who both had very negative



feelings about people in general, found it hard to express their feelings for those they did love, were confrontational and cold, wanted to stand out from other people and deliberately said things to hurt each other. Kevin claimed he didn't kill his mother because he wanted her as his audience. As he had kept a photo of her he presumably had more feeling for her than he wanted to show. The book ended with some glimmers of a relationship between them 2 years after his crime when he was about to be moved to an adult prison and admitted he wanted her to visit.

Although this family was extreme, the novel portrayed well how infuriating the demands of young children can be and how you have to work at avoiding

Unusually we gave low scores to several books for various reasons. The most memorable of these was the Booker prize-winner Milkman, which had the widest range of scores. The style was daunting with long rambling sentences and few paragraph breaks in the stream of consciousness. It was so difficult to read that several people gave up early in the book but those who persevered gave it high marks for the content and the way it portrayed the atmosphere of life in Belfast in the 1970s. Sectarian issues permeated everyday living because every choice you made, whether naming your child, buying a car or using a shop, could be interpreted as support for terrorists who were either 'defenders-of-the-state' or 'renouncers-of-the-state'. You learnt not



developing battlegrounds. Apart from the many issues of family relationships there were opposing opinions about current American society. Most of the group were very interested in this book and wanted to find out what happened next. I wouldn't say much of it was enjoyable because of the subject matter but there was some satisfaction in trying to read between the lines of what Eva said and work out how much we believed her.

to reveal your feelings for fear of being questioned or misinterpreted.

Our group had been stable for several years and a waiting list meant that we hadn't had any vacancies since 2008, but in 2019 we had several changes. We still need to find one more member to keep the normal group size of 10, so if you are interested in discussing one book each month on the second Thursday afternoon, please contact me.

Anne Eagle

Qigong classes

In November 2019, U3A started 'Qigong' classes based in Little Bookham Village Hall, and our initial response was very encouraging with over 20 participants interested to learn new skills and exercises to enhance their health and well-being.

Qigong is an easy-to-learn system of gentle exercises which help to coordinate and balance the body using techniques such as breathing, stretching and mental focus. These gentle, flowing movements begin to unblock and release tension in the muscles, tendons and joints and help to relax the body, improve posture and mobility. Qigong exercises are designed for all ages and abilities and can also be undertaken seated.

Today, Qigong is widely practiced by millions of people throughout the Far East in spaces such as parks, work places and at home. More recently Qigong has become increasingly popular in the Western world as a daily exercise that provides many health benefits for well-being and preventative healthcare. Everyone wants to enjoy good health, physical relaxation and

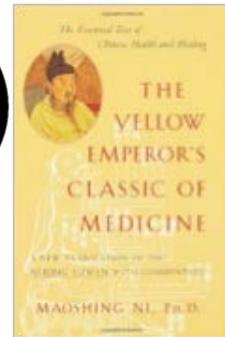
"Today, Qigong is widely practiced by millions of people throughout the Far East in any spaces such as parks, work places and at home."

internal peace and Qigong is an invaluable way of achieving these qualities of life.

The origins of Qigong were in China, from a culture that dates back more than 4000 years and that integrated into different segments of Chinese society including: Traditional Chinese Medicine for health and curative functions; Confucianism to promote longevity and improve moral character; Daoism and



Yin Yang symbol



The Yellow Emperor's classic of Medicine

Buddhism as part of meditative practice; Chinese Martial Arts to enhance gymnastic, defensive and fighting abilities. This also included practices such as painting and calligraphy that required control and mastery, and Qigong was the method for developing awareness and control of this internal power.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a system of holistic medicine that is based on more than 3,500 years of Chinese medical practice with

earliest known records contained in the and it gives us life and connects us to 'Huangdi Neijing' (The Yellow Emperor's the universe, it motivates and moves us Inner Classic) written in 3rd century through our daily lives. Gong means 'to



Bookham U3A Qigong class stance 'Painting a Rainbow'

BC. These records provided concepts and observations for treatment that remain the basis of its practice today. Its aim is to enhance our health and well-being by maintaining a dynamic balance between two complementary forces (known as Yin/Yang) within our Human body and our environment (universe). This balance helps to optimise the flow of energy or vitality (known as Qi energy) within our body through energy channels (known as meridians). According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, a person is healthy and in balance (harmony) when Qi energy flows unimpeded throughout the body and conversely physical illness or emotional disharmony occurs when the flow of Qi is blocked or impeded. Qi is the most vital and subtle energy

accomplish' or a skill that is cultivated through regular practice. Qigong therefore means method for cultivating Qi or energy exercise.

Our U3A Qigong classes endeavour to incorporate many of these aspects of Traditional Chinese culture where we learn and practice Taiji Qigong Shibashi - a beautiful, gentle, and flowing set of 18 exercises that is suitable for all ages and abilities. It is a delight to practice, relaxing and extremely beneficial to our health, wellbeing and self-healing.

Initially, we learn the correct Qigong posture to maximise the flow of Qi energy through our body and 12 main meridian energy channels, and then coordinate our breathing with each movement or posture so as to relax the body and mind. Qigong also

focuses upon deep abdominal breathing to connect the body to the energies of earth and the universe and is sometimes termed 'mindfulness in motion'.

The daily practice of Qigong

“Our U3A Qigong classes endeavour to incorporate many of these aspects of Traditional Chinese culture”

exercises enables us to cultivate our Qi energy through breathing and good dietary practices, and to increase our vitality in our daily lives, as part of our constitutional strength or Essence (known as Jing), but also helps to provide clarity of thinking and consciousness (Shen).

There are many good reasons to routinely practice Qigong that may improve our overall well-being. Regular exercise: it is generally accepted exercise is beneficial to our health, Qigong gently increases our physical respiration, circulation as well as improve muscle tone, vitality and mobility.

Longevity: Qigong helps to make the body more supple and help prevent the aches and pains we tend to associate with the ageing process. Deeper breathing patterns will increase the supply of oxygen to the cells, aiding in recovery and assisting metabolism.

Spiritual awareness and clarity: Qigong opens up our awareness to a more subtle level as we learn to totally relax and begin to expand our spiritual

awareness and connection to our environment and the universe.

Self-Healing: Qigong enables us to relax our body, mind and inner being and creates a profound level of stillness within ourselves which enhances our ability for self-healing, which is one of the main reasons many people practice Qigong on a regular basis. Qigong also provides the basis for self-development practices especially complementary therapies such as Shiatsu and Reiki etc.

Freedom of Choice: Qigong assists us to take responsibility for our health and well-being, helping us to restore, realign and balance the energies with our body. This will enable us to recover easier from illness, and provides us the freedom to enjoy our lives

Our Qigong class instructor is Murray Nicholson, who lives locally, and is a Shiatsu Practitioner (similar to Acupuncture but without the needles), massage therapist, and has studied TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) and Qigong for the last 15 years.

If you are interested in Qigong or require further information please contact Murray via U3A or mobile: 07393 858317

Murray Nicholson

All Those “Healthy” Adverts.....?!!

*Do you, like me, think it must be our age
That makes us groan as turning page after page
We find magazines full of “kindly” advice
As how we can improve” our way of life!
I think I’m really not alone
In being fed up and having a moan
About all the ads I read and see
Aimed at the person I thought was me!
It’s good to be interested in fashion and health,
But not to the exclusion of everything else
When there’s a risk of becoming obsessed
With this constant striving to look one’s best.*

*With mask-like faces and pouting lips,
These willowy women keep handing out tips
On what to eat? On what to wear?
Change the make-up? Change the hair?
Try to follow this fitness regime,
And don’t forget the vitamin cream.
Do they really have our well-being at heart?
Or is it a way of getting us to part
With money some can ill afford to spend,
And is it really “worth it”, in the end*

*With the constant need to advertise
Health and Beauty form part of our lives,
There’s pressure to follow the latest trends
And be up-to-date for family and friends.
You are what you eat and your clothes define
The image you present, in person, – or on line
But losing sight of your original self
Could cause stress and be bad for your health.
TV and articles state all you need to know
About your body, from head to toe,
But how do you check on this and that,
As to what is false and what is fact?
And when there’s a true picture, as that’s what you’re after,
Along comes a survey - and changes the data!!*

*Glance in the mirror, pause and reflect,
Has all the effort had the desired effect??
If not, one piece of advice may hold the key,
“Why not go for a walk?” – and do it for free!*

Marion Kemp



2 East Gate Square, Chichester

My talk to the Social History Group meeting in January was about a family owned Poulterer's shop. George Barnes, my great uncle, first occupied the premises in the late 1870s. Then his

Through this entrance a horse and cart could be driven. In the late 19th century the area beneath the first floor and behind the double doors was converted into a store and working area for the shop. The doors could still be opened at any time and into the

1920s were opened up for Christmas time for the display of poultry and game.

At Christmas special arrangements had to be made because of the quantities of turkeys and geese sold along with the other poultry and game, and the need to have the birds trussed and delivered

on the last working day before the 25th. Whereas during the year only one man assisted with the poultry and game, two extra men were taken on about ten days before the 25th. One of these was Tom Quinnell, who appears in the photograph of the Christmas display.

Turkeys were only bred for Christmas and a whole flock of birds would be bought. It was then necessary for Ernest and two or three of the men to go out to the farm for one or two days before Christmas to kill and pluck the birds on the spot. As the poultry had to be prepared for delivery on Christmas Eve, the men worked through to the early hours of the 24th. At about 9 o'clock in the evening, there was the tradition of retiring to the



brother Charles James Barnes, my great grandfather, took over. After Charles died, his son Ernest James Barnes, my grandfather, took over.

The premises were built in the 17th century with living accommodation above and behind



the shop. There was a large double door entrance, alongside the shop beneath the first floor. This gave access to a cobbled and paved yard with a stable and door at the end.

'Market Inn' across the Square for stout and bitter.

George Barnes also had a stall at 1, Market House. The local newspaper dated 23rd December 1895 writes about their Christmas display. "The Finest Christmas show of poultry for many miles around is to be seen in the Market House

at night the illumination is brilliant as well as showy. Mr Cutler, the Engineer of Southgate, has fitted up incandescent lamps, and there are also rows of Chinese lanterns. There are other and tasteful decorations, and an imitation of a variously stocked aviary at the other end of the market."

"The latter had been arranged by Mr Barnes' brother, and is very pretty with its wild ducks, partridges, pheasants, lordly swans etc amid seasonal foliage."

Another newspaper article writes about the 1881 Snowstorm. In the early hours of Tuesday, 18th January a howling north-easterly gale heralded the most severe snowstorm to hit Southern England in the 19th century. For several days West Sussex was effectively cut off from the rest of the outside world. During the previous five days temperatures fell as low as -20C, causing ponds to freeze over. Residents woke up to find heaps of snow had been driven into their rooms through every exposed crack in the window frames and doorways. Drifts of up to 12ft were reported in exposed rural areas. The thaw eventually came by the end of January, causing yet more damage. Snow which had been blown into lofts melted, resulting in extensive flooding of homes.

Sadly, the shop and surrounding area were demolished in the late 1960s to make way for a link road. 2 Eastgate Square, Chichester is now the Italian Restaurant Carluccio's!

Anita Laycock



"Beast Market" from Eastgate Square to the Cross, Chichester, in 1870

in North Street. Mr G Barnes, the Poulterer there, being as usual at this period of the year far to the front in displays of this kind. An idea of the extent and attractiveness of the show may be given by mentioning that, in round figures, the fowls number 700, the turkeys 400, the geese 250, the ducks 250, and the pheasants, hares and rabbits etc hundreds."

"More than one side of the wall of the interior of the market is completely covered with them, and

Vegetable Gardening

In February we met at Penny and Gordon's to watch a DVD on fruit and vegetable gardening presented by Joe Maiden. Unfamiliar to most of us, Joe was born in Penrith, Cumbria, in 1941. He was a Radio Presenter on BBC Radio Leeds where he hosted



the Sunday morning Gardening Show for 22 years and was the station's on-air gardening expert for

over 40 years. He was awarded the Harlow Carr Medal by the RHS for his growing, lecturing and exhibitions of vegetables. He was a Fellow of the National Vegetable Society and served on the society's judging panel.

There were many tips, including taking a sideshoot from the bottom of a tomato stem and string to another cane to form another plant. This does work! Plant radish beside kale and don't leave netting on fruit cages in winter.

Gordon showed us round his lovingly tended garden giving us more ideas for our own plots. We enjoyed coffee and delicious biscuits and cookies.

A tour of Eastwick Allotments was our venue for the March meeting.

Many of the plots were ready for the coming planting season but some plottolders clearly don't start until after Easter when the weather becomes warmer! There were very healthy autumn planted onions, shallots and garlic which had survived the wind and rain. Heaps of good quality farmyard manure had been tipped at the edge of some of the plots ready to be either dug in or laid on top of the soil for the worms to do their work.

It was a cold and windy morning so we returned to Anita's for coffee and enjoy the delicious Stem Ginger and Lemon Drizzle cakes which had been purchased at the Bookham Friday morning Country Market.



Brian had a super birthday present from his wife Liz. A day with Nick Hamilton at Barnsdale! We all enjoyed hearing about his Vegetable Gardening Course.

Anita Laycock

what3words

Whilst walking in Norbury Park John and I came across a man needing medical attention. So what do you do? – phone 999, but how do you tell the emergency services where you are? In the middle of nowhere is pretty difficult to describe! However, whilst John was on the phone, two young ladies came along and we started talking about our whereabouts and we then remembered recently reading about the ‘what3words’ app. One lady then downloaded it onto her phone and lo and behold 3 words appeared. These were then given to the ambulance service on the phone and within a quarter of an hour help arrived. So if you walk out in the countryside, do download this app - you never know when you might need it!

Jan Dicker



Out & About with Bookham U3A

OUTINGS & THEATRE VISITS

The new arrangements for organising outings in Bookham U3A

Individual members are now expected to come forward to arrange “one off” trips and a number of members have arranged some very good outings.

U3A SURREY NETWORK STUDY DAYS

All study days have been suspended during the coronavirus lockdown

U3A Tuesday Monthly Meetings

There will be no Tuesday meetings while we are all in lockdown

The story of my great great grandfather Samuel Hodgkins

Before I began researching my family history I had never heard any mention of my great great grandfather Samuel Hodgkins.



He was not on the family tree I was given. His daughter Helena Hodgkins was on the family tree but with no parents recorded. When I researched his life I discovered a story I was not expecting. This article is based on a talk I gave to the Social History Group.

My paternal Grandmother Nora Roberts was born in 1881 in New Brighton, Wirral, Cheshire and died in Birkenhead in 1980. She was the oldest child of nine children of Bennion Roberts (1860-1926) and

Helena Hodgkins (1858-1923). When I was a child I was told that my paternal grandmother (Nora Roberts) that I



knew as Grandma Mac, was born into a well to do family and had married my grandfather (Grandpa Mac), a gardener against her parents' wishes. I knew Grandma Mac had very strong views



and as a small child I found him pretty scary. Politically he was a Labour Party supporter and so strong was his belief in blue collar workers sticking together he had not allowed any of his children to take the 11 plus exam. In his view if they took the exam and passed his child would probably have moved out of the working class which he could not tolerate. This action led to a great rift between my father and my grandfather. My father was very intelligent and as a parent my father's view was each child must take every educational opportunity and work hard to achieve their maximum potential. My father's views on education and advancement were thus diametrically opposed to those of his father.

I wondered if the story of my grandmother's background would turn out to be correct. Research showed me that her father Bennion Roberts

was born in Liscard, Wirral, Cheshire, and Bennion's father, Samuel Bennion Roberts, was a Car Proprietor (formally a livery stables keeper) who had married Priscilla Bromley in Liverpool in 1855. In 1871 the census recorded that Bennion lived with his parents in Egerton Street, Liscard. Also living in Egerton Street in 1871 was Helena Hodgkins. She was living with her father Samuel Hodgkins, a widower and a bootmaker. Bennion Roberts married Helena Hodgkins on 5th February 1881 in New Brighton, Wirral. Their eldest daughter, my grandmother, Nora, was born on 4 September 1881, seven months after their marriage. When Bennion Roberts (my great grandfather) died in 1926 he left an estate valued at £1,447. My grandmother Nora Roberts did have parents who were doing reasonably well.

I turned my attention to Helena Hodgkins, my great grandmother.



Her birth record showed she was born in 1858 in Wallasey, Cheshire. Her parents, Samuel Hodgkins and Ellen Black, married in Liverpool on 1 July 1853. On his marriage certificate Samuel was recorded as a bootmaker and both he and Ellen sign the marriage certificate with fluently written signatures. These signatures suggest both had an education as their signatures are not the cross seen where the person cannot write nor possibly also read nor a wobbly practiced signature just for the occasion. Samuel was born in LLanymynach, Oswestry, Shropshire in 1825 but by the 1851 census he had moved with his older sister Ann Hodgkins to Liscard, where they lived at the Bath House and both were lodging house keepers.

After marriage Samuel and Ellen settled in Liscard and their first child, James Henry Hodgkins, was born in 1854. They had seven children with their third child, my great grandmother Helena, born in 1858 and their last child, Edith Ann, born in 1868.

In the census of 1871 it was recorded that Samuel Hodgkins was a widower. When I found the death certificate for his wife Ellen I discovered that she died of smallpox aged 41 on 14th February 1871 in the workhouse Tranmere. The workhouse would at that time have been the only hospital available. Ellen's death left Samuel with seven children ranging from John Henry aged 17 to Edith Ann aged 2.

In 1871 census Samuel had five of his children living with him, but two children, John aged 10 and Agnes aged 8, lived with Samuel's sister Ann, now married and known as Ann Taylor. Samuel was clearly going to have a hard time earning his living as a bootmaker and looking after his children.

Between 1871 and 1881 Samuel and his children experienced a tough time. Edith Ann, Samuel's youngest child, died on 20th June 1871 of measles. Her death certificate was very revealing as the informant and person in attendance at the death was James Henry, her eldest brother, aged 17. There is no way to understand why Edith Ann's father, Samuel was not present nor the informant. Samuel could have been working to earn enough money for his family, but I do wonder how much care he was giving his family. Had he abandoned them leaving John Henry to cope? In the April 1871 census James Henry Hodgkins, aged 17, was recorded as a Lawyers Clerk but clearly James Henry was not at work on the day of Edith Ann's death.

Tragedy struck again on 26 November 1878 when one of the worst fogs in living memory covered the river Mersey. The ferry ship 'Gem' left Wallasey for Liverpool at 9.30 am with 250-300 passengers. On board was 19 years old John Hodgkins (Samuel's fourth child), a merchant's clerk. The 'Gem' hit the sailing ship 'Bowfell' anchored in the Mersey.

John Hodgkins was crushed to death by the ferry funnel falling on to the seat he was sitting on.

Another incident occurred on 30 June 1879 when Samuel Hodgkins aged 49 a shoemaker of New Brighton was found guilty at the Quarter Sessions at Chester Castle Court of stealing a turkey at Liscard on 15th June 1879. He was sentenced to two months' hard labour. This record made me wonder what was going on in the family and that maybe Samuel was not working in this period and resorted to stealing because he was so poor.

My research into the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census revealed another turn of events. In each census Samuel Hodgkins was recorded as an inmate of Birkenhead workhouse. In the 1881 census my newly married great grandmother Helena and her husband Bennion Roberts had two of Helena's siblings living with them. These were Margaret Bates Hodgkins, aged 17, scholar (later to become a headmistress) and William Wallace Hodgkins, aged 14, also a scholar at Wallasey Free Grammar School. By 1881 James Henry Hodgkins, aged 26, had moved to Leicester where he was a clerk to Leicester County Court (later to become High Bailiff of Leicester).

Further research into Samuel's time in the workhouse reveal Samuel had 32 admissions to the workhouse from 1881 to his death in 1911 aged 86. He was almost always in for the winter and the periods when he was

out were shorter over time until he was an inmate from 1906-1910. When he was out of the workhouse he was at times in the tramp sheds where he had to work in return for shelter at night. Other times he was of no address, presumably on the streets, homeless and otherwise in lodgings. He could only be an inmate in the workhouse due to poverty. Although both Helena and William Wallace lived in Liscard and not far from Samuel's lodgings, he was never recorded as admitted to the workhouse from their homes. Clearly there was a dissonance between what was going on for Samuel compared with his children. His children were being educated far beyond what might be expected for a poor family in this period, particularly Margaret Bates Hodgkins who was still at school aged 17. It is not possible to know how much Samuel was acknowledged by his family. My grandmother Nora Roberts was aged 30 when Samuel died in 1911 and as she lived close to Birkenhead workhouse I imagine she knew all about him. Presumably shame meant he was removed from the family story. I also now think my grandmother's marriage to my grandfather was disapproved of because she married a man who had a dim view of education when the generation before had made such effort to continue in education as long as possible.

Judith Witter



We're all in lockdown now, but see, there's a rainbow!

David Middleton photo

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