

Meeting Notes BMS ZOOM 1st July,2021: 19.30 – 20.49hrs.

Welcome to all guests and members by Dave Seeney.

1. Apologies: P. and S. Handford.
2. Stats: In attendance, 13 members and one guest.
3. Committee Information: **Our next meeting will be face to face! [Secretarial note added after the July meeting date.** The BMS will ***temporarily*** be at the venue of the ***Holiday Inn, Chapel Lane, Great Barr B43 7BG from August- October 2021 inclusive.***
4. Next meeting 5.8.2021 'The GSM 1918-62. The Interwar Years' by John Scott.

Roger Bragger welcomed speaker Martin Harrison to give his presentation. For information to BMS members and guests, all our 'ZOOM' meetings are recorded.

'Friends of the Family' by Martin Harrison.

Introduction:

Martin started his talk by stating the importance of researching smaller groups and single Victory Medals.

He had made a recent acquisition of a single Victory Medal [VM] and a Special Constabulary Long Service Medal [SCLSM] awarded to Frederick Herbert Tank Corps and Walter Herbert Sisson.

He nearly split the medals but made an offer on both to acquire the Tank Corps medal cheaply.

From the Ancestry website, Martin had quickly established that Fred Herbert had lived locally and found his joint grave (with Walter Sisson) in Bedworth.

Further information from the vendor [the grandson] revealed that Frederick Herbert had been a Coventry City football player. Whilst there was much associated paperwork on his footballing career, it was not for sale.

A quick 'Google' search confirmed that Fred 'Cute' Herbert is Coventry City's third ever highest goal scorer! Pictures were also available, thus beyond doubt proving the importance of researching the odd medal single too! **[see below for photos].**



Friends of the family:

This is actually quite a straightforward story made complex by knowing the person who the medals came from and a casual comment made by her at the time.

In 1978, as a young medal collector, Martin had been given a 1914-18 British War Medal [BWM] and VM pair to Cpl H. Maxwell and a VM to Pte D. H. Maxwell, by a lady called 'Toots' Allen who was living in Leamington Spa. Toots was in her seventies at the time and married to Fritz Allen a stalwart of the local Royal Air Forces Association and himself a serving airman from the mid-1920s.

Martin remembers clearly Toots saying [when she parted with the medals] that they had belonged to '*Friends of the Family*'. Martin reasonably assumed then that the Maxwells were probably brothers. The medals sat in an ever increasing collection for the next 32 years (frighteningly over half of the time from 1918 to 1978!). They remained uncleaned on their original ribbons. One VM was sticky with verdigris! They were never disposed of because they had been given as a gift; although there was occasionally temptation to do so to acquire more seemingly glamorous groups!



Pictured above left: Full entitlement medal group to Cpl H. Maxwell. Left to right 1914-15 Star, BWM and VM [erased 1914-15 Star added – see text].

Pictured above right: Full entitlement pair to Pte D.H. Maxwell. Left to right BWM and VM [erased BWM added – see text].

Initial research through the internet:

In 2010 and when Ancestry.com had become available, a search quickly revealed the first names of both men – Henry and David Henry and the fact that David was Henry's son together with much other detail from the census, marriage and death sections. Several pages of Henry Maxwell's service records were available. The medal index cards revealed that Henry's group was missing a 1914-15 Star and David's a 1914-18 British War Medal. Erased copies were acquired and added to each set to restore them to their full entitlement. A copy of Henry and David's death certificates were also obtained which confirmed the exact dates of death and the fact Henry had died in Warwick Hospital and David in Warneford hospital in Leamington Spa.

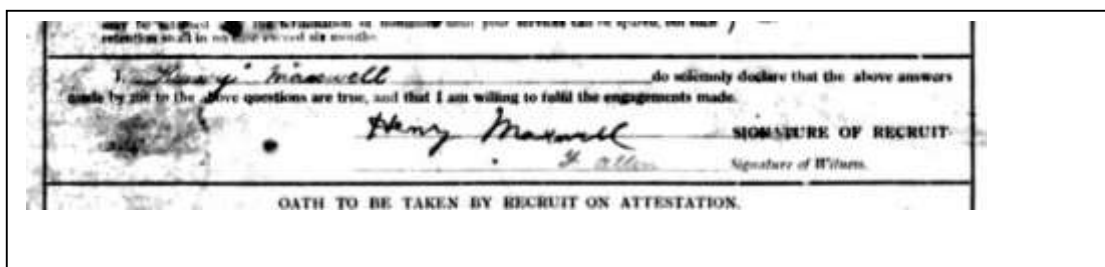
By telephoning Oakely Wood Crematorium in November 2010, Martin had quickly established that Henry and his wife Sarah Jane, were both buried in Leamington Cemetery, Brunswick Street in area 101, plot 101. No further information could be obtained about David's place of burial or cremation. Although the general area was located and photographs taken in 2010-11, no headstone could be found for Henry and Sarah Jane Maxwell.

This might have been the end of the research. However, it was noticed on Henry Maxwell's attestation papers from August 1915, that the witness' signature on the form was 'Y. Allen' – this being the same surname as 'Toots'.

This coincidence was too much to overlook, especially bearing in mind Toots' comments about '*Friends of the Family*'. So, what exactly what the link was between the Allens and Maxwells? There were some confusing but interesting twists and turns and many hours studying census records on ancestry.com and visits to the 'National Archives' [NA].

The detailed research that followed:

In the following section, Martin has demonstrated the complexity of his research and some of the analysis made during the various stages.



Pictured above: Signatures of Henry Maxwell and witness Y. Allen.

In trying to establish the link between Toots Allen, who was married to Fritz Allen, the following points were initially established starting with the one known fact Fritz Allen:

- Fritz Levett Allen married Florence Lillian Toone ('Toots') between July-September, 1939. They were both aged 34 and had no children.
- *An initial link had been established – that of Toone as this was Henry's wife's maiden name and it seemed likely that Henry had married one of Toot's relatives.*
- Toots was born on 19 Dec 1905 and died in April 1984 aged 78.
- Fritz was born on 10 Feb 1905 and died in April 1993 aged 88. At the time of this initial research neither of them were readily available on any later records as only the NA had access to the 1911 census.
- In 1886, Henry Maxwell married a Sarah Jane Toone in who was born in 1865 in Long Itchington (making her 40 years old when Toots was born). Toot's first name Florence was also the name of Henry & Sarah Jane's daughter.

The research emphasis now moved to Sarah Jane Toone's family to see where Florence (Toots) fitted in.

Sarah Jane's family on the 1871 census (she was now 6) shows her living in Long Itchington with

- John Toone (Father aged 37) Bn 1835 Long Itchington Sawyer
- Mary Toone (Mother aged 34) Bn 1838 Long Itchington
- William Toone (Brother aged 8) Bn 1863 Long Itchington
- Robert Toone (Brother aged 4) Bn 1868 Long Itchington
- Daniel T Toone (Brother aged 1) Bn 1870 Long Itchington

Sarah Jane's family on the 1881 census (she was now 16) shows her living at 11 Chesham Street, Leamington with:

- John Toone (Father aged 46) Bn 1835 Long Itchington Drayman
- Mary Toone (Mother aged 43) Bn 1838 Long Itchington
- Robert H Toone (Brother aged 13) Bn 1868 Errand Boy
- Daniel Toone (Brother aged 11) Bn 1870 Scholar
- Arthur Toone (Brother aged 3) Bn 1878 Leamington
- Oliver M Toone (Brother aged 11months) Bn 1880 Leamington
- Elizabeth Hincks (Visitor aged 21) Bn Bn 1860, Balsall, Warwick Servant
- Florence Hincks (Visitor aged 11months) Bn 1880 Berkswell, Warwick
- Emma Lenton (Lodger aged 47) born 1834 Long Itchington Charwoman

By the 1891 census Sarah Jane was married to Henry Maxwell and living with him and her brother Daniel in Birmingham.

By the 1901 census Daniel was married to Annie and living at 45 Court Street, Leamington as a Gas Works Labourer. They had one child, George. *It is possible that Daniel, Arthur or Oliver had a daughter, Florence (named after their niece Sarah Jane's daughter?) in 1905 which could have been Toots. If this is so then it makes Sarah Jane her aunt and Henry her uncle. David H Maxwell would therefore have been her 2nd cousin.*

This could explain the split medal groups as Henry who died after David may have given them to any surviving members of the family following WW1.

- Daniel T Toone died in 1950 between September and December in Warwick aged 80.

However, at the time of investigating in late 2010, it still did not explain the 'Y.Allen' on Henry's attestation papers! The only conclusion that can be drawn at present, until Fritz and Toot's 1911 census records are checked, is that Y Allen may have been one of Fritz's parents and that when Toots had told Martin they were '*Friends of the Family*', she may have meant the Allen's and Toone's, possibly living close to each other and therefore Fritz & Toots may well have known each other since childhood. Additionally, it was yet to be confirmed exactly where Toots fitted in with the Maxwell family as the above explanation was supposition.

In July 2011, a visit was made to the NA to view the 1911 census. Some hours concentrating specifically on Toots revealed the following:

- Toots, born in 1905 appeared on the 1911 census (aged 5) and living at 12 Duke Street, Leamington Spa.
- Living with Toots were Amelia Wilson, Grandmother aged 73. Edgar Horace Reeve Toone, Father aged 27. Amelia Jane Toone, Mother aged 30. Norah Winifred Toone, Sister aged 2.

Having established Edgar, Toot's father, the emphasis now switched to him to see where the Toone link lay as still there was no clue as to his background.

- Edgar Horace Reeve Toone was born between January and March 1884
- On the 1891 census, he is shown aged 7 and living at 11, Chesham Street with his family. However, his first name is shown as Edgar and *his parents* listed as John & Mary aged in their 50s.
- On the 1901 census, he is aged 17 at the same address, a Postman but is now listed as John & Mary's *Grandson*
- On the 1911 census, he is aged 27, living at 12 Duke Street, with Amelia Wilson, Amelia Jane his wife and two children including Florence (Toots) and Norah. He is shown as Town Postman.

Frustratingly there was still no definitive link between Maxwell and Toone, compounded by the fact that on the 1891 census he is listed by his second name and that (following cross referencing with Sarah Jane Toone's details) he is living with his Grandparents. A cursory search was made for Edgar Toone's Medal Index Card, as he would have only been 30 at the outbreak of World War 1 and as often happens with research, suddenly all fell into place. Edgar had sadly been killed in action in January 1917, and the casualty details stated **Son of Sarah Jane Maxwell**, husband of Amelia Jane Toone. The link was made, Edgar was seemingly the illegitimate son of Sarah Jane Toone, she was only 19 when she gave birth to him and this was two years before marrying Henry Maxwell in 1886. In 1884 this would have been a serious taboo and it seems that Edgar lived with Sarah Jane's parents and possibly to avoid embarrassment listed as their son and used his second name.

In Summary: The link between Toots Allen and Henry and David Maxwell is as follows:

- Sarah Jane Toone had an illegitimate child – Edgar Horace Reeve Toone
- Sarah Jane Toone subsequently married Henry Maxwell and had a child David Henry Maxwell
- Edgar Horace Reeve Toone subsequently married Amelia Jane Toone and had a child Florence Toone (Toots).

So, Henry Maxwell was Toot's Step Grandfather, and David Maxwell her Step Uncle.

Even in 1978, it would have been embarrassing for Toots to share her father's illegitimacy and so '*Friends of the Family*' would have seemed an appropriate comment. She could never have known of the later research that would establish the facts for posterity. How very kind of her to give a family heirloom to a 17year old medal collector! Toots' father's name, E.H.R. Toone appears on the Post Office Roll of Honour [pictured below].



It was subsequently established that Edgar's name appears on the Leamington Spa War Memorial and a visit was made in late 2011. It still of course leaves the question of who Y Allen was?

This may only be answered once a copy of Fritz's birth certificate is acquired as he was in South Africa at the time of the 1911 census, returning to the UK in 1939. Edgar's brief biography appears below and his medals will be actively sought! Thus ends another example of how it is possible to build up a comprehensive life story of a family from events well over 100 years old and of how the initial medals and their recipient can often lead the researcher down many differing but interesting avenues.

POST SCRIPT: To quote medal expert the late John Tamplin "Research never ends" During May 2015, an e-mail was received from Henry Maxwell's Great Great Grandson, John Lee Maxwell, who lives in Australia. John provided much additional detail. His Father, John Snr and David Henry Maxwell's Grandson, is still alive at the time of writing and had an uncle, David Henry's second son, Horace Edgar Maxwell, named after Edgar Horace Toone, his maternal step uncle.

Enquiries revealed that Horace had served in the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers [REME] during World War II and had died whilst working on the Burma Railway in Thailand. Martin visited his grave at Kanchanaburi in January 2015 and acquired Horace's Service Papers. This will allow his biography to be pieced together in a later part of this story.

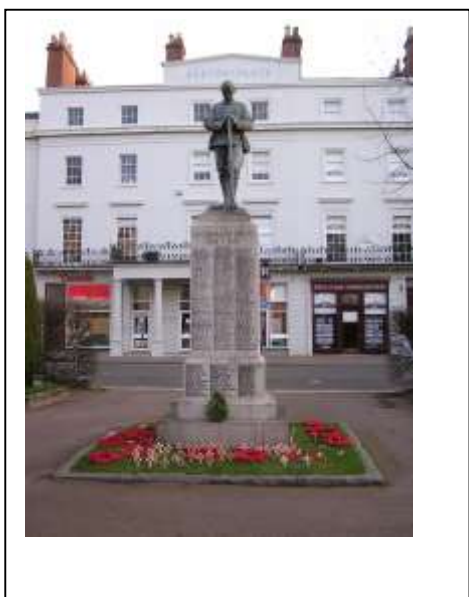
Having completed this additional detail further checks were made on ancestry.co.uk about Edgar Horace Reeve Toone, Toot's father and Horace's name-sake, to discover that further information had been released allowing his biography to be fleshed out yet further.



Photos above: Kanchanaburi Cemetery Thailand – Memorial to Horace Edgar Maxwell [REME].

Finally, it was revealed that both Edgar Horace Reeve Toone and Horace Edgar Maxwell appear on the Royal Leamington Spa War Memorial on the same side and a few names apart, but for different wars. One wonders if the connection had ever been made?

Pictured below: Leamington Spa War Memorial tributes to L/Cpl E.H.R. Toone and Cftsmn H.E. Maxwell.



TIMS PTE. F.
TIMS PTE. W.
TOONE L/CPL. E.H.R.
TOWNSEND PTE. G.E.
TOWNSEND PTE. W.
CLARK CAPT. H.A.

MARCHANT C.S.M. G.F.
MAXWELL GFTSMN. H.E.
MAYCOCK GDSMN. W.R.
METCALF CNR. P.A.
MILLER BOY 1ST CL. A.E.
MILLER F/SCT. J.F.

The last thirty minutes of the meeting was given over to a lively and often amusing discussion of attendees' questions and comments! This covered a broad range of matters from the risks/benefits of running of running your own website [generally felt that the benefits outweighed the hazards], family size, pregnancy and maternal age in late Victorian Britain, the changing number and names of Public Houses in Leamington Spa [and Bolton!] finally ending [somehow!!] with Martin Harrison's involvement with the media in 2010 as a medal expert in the exposée of 'fake medal wearing war hero' Roger Day.

Once again, we showed our appreciation for another high quality 'ZOOM' presentation.

My thanks to Martin Harrison for sending me his own presentation summary which I have edited modestly!

With my usual apologies for any errors, typos or omissions.

Typed 28-29.7.2021

Chris Davies
BMS Secretary.