

YE STYAN CHRONICLES - PART 19

FACT OR FICTION ?

In his youth Your Chronicler (YC) believed everything he read in the newspapers because if it was in the papers it must be true.

Many people still believe that when something appears in print it gains some sort of authenticity - especially if it is in an official document. Some readers of these 'Chronicles' even takes YC's word for it that he has got his facts right. That is very flattering.

In producing these little essays he has done his best to state the facts based on the best evidence available but he has stressed that some things he has written are only hypothetical, albeit very possible. That caveat sometimes gets overlooked by readers, so look out for '?' against a link in a Family Tree. It doesn't always stand out.

The fact that only one person is recorded in the expected place at the right time with the right name does not necessarily entitle him/her to a coveted place on our Family Tree. There may be others whose presence has gone unrecorded, but with equal claim to the privilege.

For example YC has recently organised his records of the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths of Styans in England and Wales for the period 1837-1992 so that they can be deposited in an accessible archive. These Registrations are about as official as records can be, but there are omissions as we shall now see.

Since 1866 the Index of Death Registrations gives the ages of the individuals listed. It should therefore be possible to find a corresponding Registration of Birth for the same man (assuming that he was born after 1837). (This doesn't apply to a woman unless we know that her maiden name was Styan).

Take James Styan for instance whose death was registered in Blackburn in 1891 aged 35. He should have been born in 1855/56 but there is no registration of his birth in or around that time. So where did he come from? It is highly unlikely that he was born in Scotland or Ireland (or that he immigrated from elsewhere) and he couldn't have died if he hadn't been born in the first place!

The same omissions apply in Parish Registers only more so - and they are often our only input for drawing a Family Tree. All YC is saying is 'TREAD WARILY when accepting everything he has written as Gospel'. We know that date of Baptism in Parish Registers is not evidence of age on its own. We have instances where economically-minded parents have waited until they have bred a fair-sized family and then had them baptised in batches. In at least one case they seem to have got confused and one of the offspring got baptised twice. So much for the Sermon.

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Your Chronicler originally started searching for his own roots out of curiosity because there was no Family Tree or written record and just a few hearsay legends to guide him. Anyway the activity presented a challenge.

Having discovered the officially recorded facts about his 19th Century family he started producing these essays in the hope that they would interest his immediate kin who he assumed were as ignorant of the facts as he had been.

Until that time it had been known that there were a number of Styan gravestones in the churchyard of a village called Whixley in Yorkshire, but there was no direct evidence that that is where his own particular line originated.

That was 19 years ago, and in the interim he has acquired a large amount of data on Styans - not only on his own ancestry - but on Styans generally.

He has also observed that many of the people who originally received copies of these 'Chronicles' are no longer with us. He will inevitably go the same way himself and then what will happen to all the information that he has collected?

Answer: It is going to be deposited at the Society of Genealogists in London so that future Styans can extract what they want for themselves without taking his 'Chronicles' as authoritative.

Preparing for this is a non-trivial task and until it is done YC will not be doing any further searching. Nor will he produce any more 'Styan Chronicles' after Part 20. He also has a life outside genealogy which he wants to enjoy, like just walking in the English countryside, and at 70 it seems a good time to do just that. (It is beginning to sound like an excuse for resigning - like a Government Minister who wants to spend more time with his family).

- but don't be alarmed (or elated as the case may be), he hasn't deserted entirely. He has now produced an index for the 'Chronicles'. Unfortunately this has proved to be a bit too bulky for general distribution so it will be available only on request.

THE INDEX

This is divided into 4 sections as follows: (1) People named Styan (2) People with names other than Styan (3) Places (4) Miscellaneous items.

It lists 449 Styans, refers to 21 Family Trees of varying detail and occupies 20 A4 pages. One thing it does not contain is references to sources from which most of the text was extracted. These 'Chronicles' were meant to be a chatty vehicle on topics which may be of interest to members of the Styan clan. They were never intended to be scholarly theses.

And just to show that Part 19 is not all gloom and doom here are
SOME THINGS THAT ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

Prior to sorting out his Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration records YC collated and deposited his census records. One item caught his eye. In 1881 a Mary Styan was a 13-year old servant in the household of a William Dawson in Whixley, Yorks whose occupation was described as Manure Agent General. Now that makes a change from the usual jobs like Ag. Lab. (for the uninitiated that means 'Agricultural Labourer').

MORE LISTS

Hands up those UK readers who received this year an advert through the post for 'Burke's Peerage World Book of Styans' for only £21.95.

Being of a suspicious nature YC did not believe that the document actually existed until the publishers had tested the market. On enquiring at the publishers YC was told that it consisted of lists of Styans (which YC thinks were probably extracted from computerised telephone directories) and generalised information on emigration and heraldry which are not related to Styans at all. They confirmed that they had only written to a sample of Styans.

Did anybody out there actually buy a copy? YC would be interested in hearing if there are any Styans in it that he does not know about but he doesn't want to fork out £21.95 for what may be a waste of money. Anyway, as he said above, he doesn't want to do yet more research at the present time.

In 1987 one of our readers then resident in USA received a similar communication about 'New World Styans' and he procured the document out of curiosity and with his tongue in cheek. The list was useful to YC in his pursuit of Styans in Australia. It did not list Styans in UK.

If you want a mammoth list of Styans, YC received a draft of a "Styan Descendants Chart" from one of the clan in Canada this year containing 457 names including spouses. YC was invited to comment and hopefully he will do that in a constructive way in time.

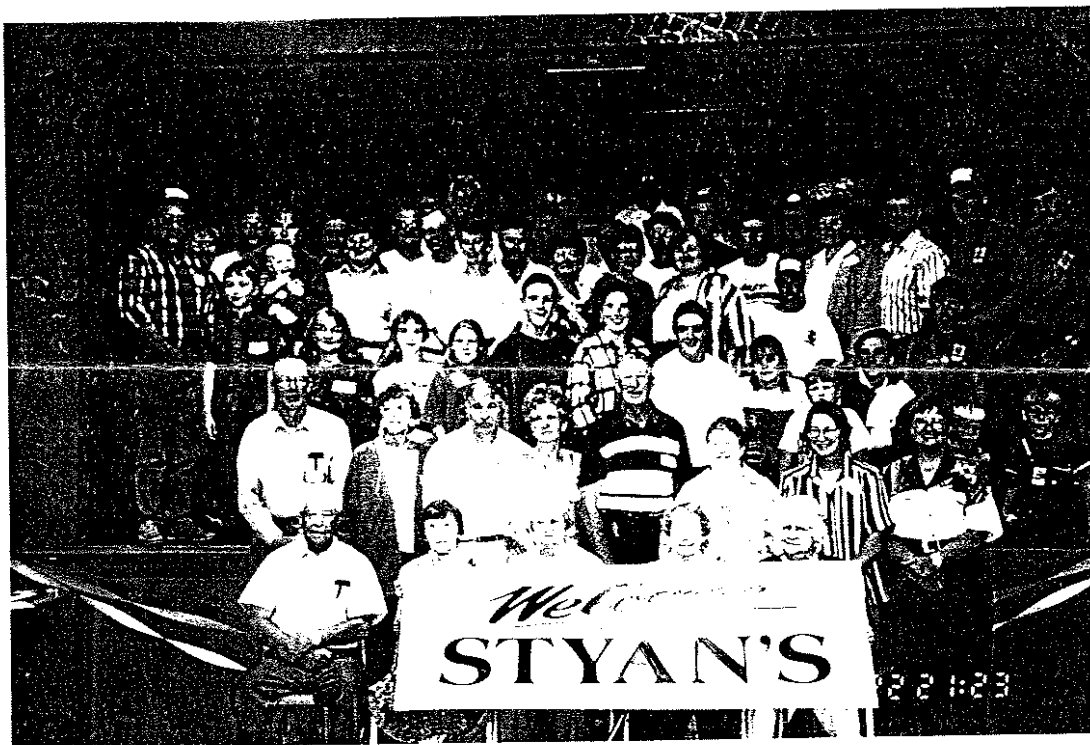
Somebody has done a lot of work inputting all those names into a computer program and it should be straightforward to edit. When that is done YC hopes it will be archived and not disappear into somebody's attic.

These Canadians do things in a big way and

THE 1995 STYAN GATHERING

in Saskatchewan was no exception. YC recently received a report on the event (and commemorative T-shirt) and from Friday July 21 to Monday July 24 there appear to have been activities and comings and goings by hosts of Styans and Styan-related people, all bent on and

having a good time. YC is not sure of the grand total who showed up at one time or another but 54 people attended the banquet on the Saturday night. The picture below was taken on that occasion.



On a smaller scale is the lone Styan who entered the Everest Marathon this year. YC does not usually name names but in this case it was his 47 year old nephew Andrew - who invited publicity for sponsorship purposes. The reason is that

the EVEREST MARATHON is no ordinary Marathon.

It is open to a select few of the world's mountain runners and starts at 5184m (17000ft) just below Everest Base Camp in the Himalayas. It finishes at 2446m (11305ft) after 26 miles of some of the world's most dangerous terrain. The runners face altitude sickness, dehydration, hypothermia and extreme exhaustion. Although Andrew has been a competitive fell-runner for 23 years and has held the British Fell-Running Championship (and later the Over-40's Championship) the Everest is his ultimate challenge.

The race took place 4 days before this was written but communications are such that it is not yet known how it went, and YC has to meet a deadline or these 'Chronicles' won't get to Australia before Christmas.

KGS Nov 1995