BMSGH BROMSGROVE BRANCH BRIEFING

Editor: Mike Fisher April 2010

Tuesday 13th April at 7.45 p.m. Annual General Meeting

followed by
"Travelling Magic Lantern Show –
Pictures of Worcestershire"

by our own member Mike Fisher

 A tour of the highways, byways, towns, villages and buildings ofWorcestershire as in times gone by.

FREE USA censuses

Did any of your relatives venture to the USA? For the rest of April Footnote on http://go.footnote.com/census/ have all their USA censuses for free . Only the 1860 is 100% complete closely followed by the 1930 at 98% . Their coverage of the 1900-6%, 1910-4%, 1920-3%.

The LDS Family Search Pilot on http://pilot.familysearch.org has 1860(Footnote images), 1870(LDS images), 1880(no images) & 1900(LDS images).

For other years you will have to go to a Worcestershire Library and use Ancestry.com.

Spelling

From Bill Brysons "Shakespeare"

Spelling was luxuriantly variable. You could write 'St Paul's' or 'St Powles', and no one seemed to notice or care. Gracechurch Street was sometimes 'Gracious Street', sometimes 'Grass Street'; Stratford-upon-Avon became at times 'Stratford upon *Haven'*. People could be extraordinarily casual even with their own names. Christopher Marlowe signed himself 'Cristofer Marley' in his one surviving autograph, and was registered at

Cambridge as 'Christopher Marlen'. Elsewhere he is recorded as 'Morley' and 'Merlin', among others. In like manner, Philip Henslowe, the impresario, indifferently wrote 'Henslowe'or'Hensley'when signing his own name, and others made it *Hinshley, Hinchlow, Hensclow, Hynchlowes, Inclow, Hinchloe* and half a dozen more. More than eighty spellings of Shakespeare's name have been recorded, from *Shappere* to *Shaxberd*. (It is perhaps worth noting that the spelling we all use is not the one endorsed by the *Oxford English Dictionary,* which prefers *Shakspere.*) Perhaps nothing speaks more eloquently of the variability of spelling in the age than the fact that a dictionary published in 1604, *A Table Alphabeticall of Hard Words,* spelled 'words' two ways on the title page.

Pronunciations, too, were often very different from today's. We know from Shakespeare that *knees, grease, grass* and *grace* all rhymed (at least more or less), and that he could pun *reason* with *raisin* and *Rome* with *room.* The first hundred or so lines of *Venus and Adonis* offer such striking rhyme pairs as *satiety* and *variety, fast* and *haste, bone* and *gone, entreats* and *frets, swears* and *tears, heat* and *get.* Elsewhere *plague is* rhymed with *wage, grapes* with *mishaps, Calais* with *challice* (the French town was often spelled 'Callis' or'Callice').

Whether or not it was necessary to pronounce all the letters in a word — such as the k's in knight and knee — was a hot issue. Shakespeare touches upon it comically in Love's Labour's Lost when he has the tedious Holofernes attack those 'rackers of orthography ... who would call calf "cauf", half "hauf", neighbour "nebour" and neigh "ne".

Our May meeting on **Tuesday 11th** will be **"The 1851 Religious Census of Worcestershire and Birmingham"** by **John Aitkin** – former lecturer at the School of Continuing Studies, University of Birmingham.

Regards Mike Fisher