BMSGH BROMSGROVE BRANCH BRIEFING

Editor: Mike Fisher **May 2010**

Tuesday 11th May at 7.45 p.m.

"The 1851 Religious Census of Worcestershire and Birmingham"

by **John Aitken**

former lecturer at the School of Continuing Studies,
University of Birmingham

The 1851 Religious census of Worcestershire and Birmingham was the first (and last) attempt by Government to count the worshippers in England and Wales on a single Sunday.
John's talk will explore why and how it was done, what it tells us about religion and society of the time and why it was never repeated.
Emphasis will be on the Worcestershire results with some references to Birmingham.
John edited the Worcestershire Returns for this census and they were published by the Worcestershire Historical Society in 2000.

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The 1939 Identity Card

As war approached, preparations were made to enable a national register to be rapidly compiled and identity cards issued. A National Registration Bill was quickly introduced and royal assent given on the 5th September 1939, just two days after the declaration of war and a few days later it was announced that National Registration Day would be Friday September 29th 1939.

Information gathered for each person was their name, sex, date of birth, marital condition, occupation and whether a member of the armed forces or reserves. Approximately 46 million cards were issued.

The 1939 Identity Card Information is now in the care of the NHS Information Centre since it was used to form the basis of the NHS Central Register, a list of everyone who is, or ever has been, registered with a General Practitioner in England and Wales since the foundation of the National Health Service in July 1948. Until 1991 a manual (paper-based) system was in operation, since then a computer system known as CHRIS (Central Health Register Enquiry System) has been used.

Guy Etchells who was responsible for the challenge to the Information Commissioner that resulted in the 1911 census for England and Wales being released "early" (well early as far as the government was concerned) has also challenged the refusal of the NHS Information Centre to release information taken during the 1939 Identity Card Registration and in late 2009 received a

ruling by the Information Commissioner partially in his favour where that information relates to deceased persons.

In response to this and a large number of people following Guy's lead and also making requests, the National Health Service Information Centre announced at the end of January 2010 a formal service for people to request data held on the 1939 Register for England and Wales. There is a charge for this - £42 - and data will only be released for individuals who have died and are now recorded as deceased. The fee is for a search with no refund if nothing is found.

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GENTLEMAN signified a man with an income derived from property, a legacy or some other source, and was thus independently wealthy and did not need to work.

YEOMAN usually refers to a farmer who cultivates his own land, historically a lesser freeholder of England, below the landed gentry but with political rights.

HUSBANDMAN is a term used in the medieval and early modern period for a free tenant farmer. The social status of a husbandman was below that of a yeoman.

MISTRESS is an old form of address for a woman. It implies "lady of the house", especially a woman who is head of a household.

GOODWIFE was a polite form of address for women, formerly used where "Mrs.", "Miss" and "Ms." would be used today. However, a woman addressed by this title was of a lesser social rank than a woman addressed as Mistress

GOODMAN was once a polite term of address, used where *Mister* (Mr.) would be used today. A man addressed by this title was, however, of a lesser social rank than a man addressed as Mister.

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Next Meeting

Tuesday 8th June 2010 at 7.45 p.m.

Redditch History - A Sideways Look

by **Anne Bradford**, Local historian and author

Few towns have such an eventful history as Redditch
even though the general public may not be aware of it.
This talk is not for those who regard the town with affection.
In parts - light-hearted; In total - informative and entertaining.

Good luck in your researches

Mike Fisher

P.S. Phil Lamb is now Chairman of the BMSGH