



in this issue >>>

- Why a family newsletter
- The parish of Highlight
- Submitting Articles for future publications
- Ask the experts
- And more...



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An Insight into the St. John Family of Highlight



current topics >>>

Why a family newsletter

By Suzanne St. John

The St. Johns of Highlight, Glamorgan, Wales are *lost* in Modern History. The individuals of this family, their ancestors and descendants have been merged, confounded, and obliterated into non-existence by well-meaning researchers, heralds, and family before us. It is our responsibility and right to honor our ancestors based on the primary records that have been left for us. We owe it to them as genealogical preservationists to correct the historical record and the public's understanding.

For more information go to
www.stjohngenealogy.com
 or email stjohngenealogy@gmail.com



The parish of Highlight

Key words missing 'parochial monastery'!

by Suzanne St. John

When you think 'parish', like me, I bet you may think 'just another church'. What is missing in modern text and understanding is what it meant to live in a parish and specifically the Parish of Highlight in the medieval period. And did people really live in 'just another church'?

To understand why these terms, mean more to me than probably anyone else, you must understand me. I was raised in a home without religion. I had a grandmother that told me Jesus loved me because He loved all little girls and boys and she had hundreds of people regularly praying for me and my health. I occasionally went to a Sunday school or summer bible school with friends and was expected to memorize a few sentences and repeat them in front of strangers (much to my horror). In High School I went to church services with friends from time to time and I always felt awkward and out of place. I didn't understand customs, traditions, behaviors, expectations, etc. And as a very young child, maybe aged 7, I had a neighbor ask me if I wanted to ask Jesus into my heart. When asked if I 'felt' him come into my heart, and feeling really creeped out by these questions, I lied and said yes to both and made some woman I don't even remember very happy. Guilt from lying, because I knew that was wrong, stuck with me as what I felt the most after that day. Religion was over my head in History classes. I didn't even know religion

was a topic in Government class debates. I remember sitting in class uncomfortably wondering 'what is this silent topic everyone knows about but me that has my teachers treading lightly?' By the time I reached my twenties, I began researching religions. I felt I had no other choice.

When I began to encounter 'parishes' in my St. John research efforts, an old familiar anxiety came over me. I was left with questions instead of answers. I was convinced this research was not for me to complete. But, I kept at it. I kept researching, reading, and most importantly absorbing information until one day my brain chimed as if it was a microwave and 'knowledge' was well-done. One day, it all just came together. That isn't true. It was in the middle of the night, while I was sleeping that I woke myself up. My brain had, like a computer, finished computing and it wanted me conscious to celebrate. I didn't celebrate but I was certainly less anxious and confused. It made my research finally make sense. It made unexplainable genealogically modern situations seem less antediluvian.

And to help others avoid such 'over-thinking' dilemmas I will explain what took me years to grasp.

Parish is defined: *(in the Christian Church) a small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest or pastor.* It was years before I looked up that definition because I just assumed a parish was a church - just a building. I had no reason to question my own ignorance. Today, Highlight, is considered an abandoned medieval village, however. Village is defined: *a group of houses and associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area.*

Reconciliation between the terms *village* and *parish* took much too long for me to resolve. While that may be crystal clear for many of you, I think it is worth stating just to avoid further confusion. The term village seems to exclude the church aspect (because I wouldn't assume a church would be a necessary associated building to a group of houses) while the term parish seems to, at least to me, exclude the houses and community population regarding a single entity - a church building.

Now, enters the term parochial as it appears in the documentation about Highlight by archaeologist Howard Thomas and his associates. Parochial is simply defined: *having a limited or narrow outlook or scope.* In the religious perspective, some might argue all religion has a limited or narrow outlook or scope. So, for me, parochial parish became redundant confusion. I couldn't grasp the implication of this term as it related to a church or village.

It wasn't until I finally made the connection between when Highlight was 'shut down', by whom it was 'shut down', and why it was 'shut down' that I finally understood what it meant to be the parochial parish of Highlight.

In the period between 1530 to about 1550, King Henry VIII ordered what we call today, the Dissolution of Monasteries. Highlight was one such institution that was 'shut down' or legally speaking dissolved. And, monastery has its own definition: *a building or buildings occupied by a community of monks living under religious vows.* At this point, I was very close to banging my head against my desk.

Once again, I was left with serious confusion and even more questions. Was Highlight accidentally included? Was Monasteries incorrectly defined or was the historical term 'dissolution of monasteries' a misnomer? I felt defeated. I was ready to give up and leave it as undetermined. But in October 2016, Orson St. John visited Glamorgan, Wales and he and his daughter sent me pictures.

One set of pictures were grave markers from the Parish of Penmark. There Oliver St. John

and his wife Frances Kemeys St. John of Penmark AND Highlight were buried. Their markers revealed evidence of Knights Hospitaller or Templar influence. In fact, Oliver was listed as a Temple Commander.

While some today don't believe Templars were monks or warrior monks, Knights Hospitaller are recognized as so.

The members of the Knights of the Order of Saint John the Hospitaller were both monks and knights. These men of the new order took the monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and they added a fourth vow, which bound them to protect pilgrims and fight the infidels.

The St. Johns of Highlight were part of the Knights Hospitaller order. And to their de Port-St. John distant cousins, they were labeled 'poor kinsman'. These vows were dissolved and that turned them into Adventurers, Privateers, borderline Pirates, Proprietors, Investors, and Colonists, determined to reestablish life separate from a church-state. Unfortunately, this conclusion is not without controversy. There are many misleading claims about St. Johns in general that must be overcome for some to even look at this new understanding. Couple that with a desperate desire for some to have a fiction-filled family history causes many to reject the idea they are not de Port-St. John or that this line DNA speaking conflicts with the de Port-St. John lineage. And even more curious is evidence for either a humble goal of leaving no historical traces behind or what appears to be to me an intentional act of attempting to erase history after the fact.

Graves that make up floors of churches are covered to this day. Markers are destroyed at key words and symbols. Terminology is changed and misleading. Genealogies re-written mid-1550s to about 1680s.

Highlight was without a doubt a monastery. And monasteries (whether an Abbey or a Priory) were separate 'religious structures' from the Church of England and had a 'narrow' scope not necessarily recognized in other parishes under the Church of England's purview. When the Monarch changed and that of his/her religion of choice followed, these monasteries remained for centuries until they were dissolved entirely. They remained because they had a religious covenant to keep and regardless of the popular or declared religion of the day, breaking such a covenant was not a popular idea one wanted to be responsible for as a 'God-fearing' Monarch.

Differences between Abbey and Priory can be read up following this weblink:

<http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/religion-miscellaneous/difference-between-abbey-and-priory/>

Howard Thomas and his associates documented the grave of a priest buried with a chalice at Highlight. Unfortunately, no DNA testing was to my knowledge done on any of the several remains found there. Headstones were illegible. The grave markers at the Parish of Penmark for Oliver St. John and his wife Frances Kemeys reveal Templar Commander.

When the dissolution of the monasteries occurred, the 'parish' of Highlight was closed. The last recorded event was found in the wall beams of the parish was the 1563 Last Will and Testament for William St. John, father to Christopher St. John 1547-1616. He was probably the last person buried at the Parish of Highlight. Christopher and his descendants were buried at the Parish of Penmark and elsewhere. Highlight was closed following the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

The last Knight found in this family line was Sir William St. John, Knight 1561-1638 the eldest son and primary heir of Christopher St. John 1547-1616.

So, when you think of the Parish of Highlight, remember it was more than just a church that fell to ruin. It was more than just a family tree that led to you.

This is a historical tradition that began in the 10th century and only ended in the 16th century by order of the English King. And then, it barely got noticed in any modern day historical work.

Write for us >>>

Submitting articles for future publications

The articles will be sent in Word Format to: stjohngenealogy@gmail.com

Focus

We seek articles on the St. John families that are direct ancestors or descendants of the St. Johns of Highlight, Glamorgan, Wales. This forum encourages descendants and avid researchers with any level of writing skill to participate. We can always find persons to help edit and improve submissions. The family tree at www.stjohngenealogy.com is the primary tree we use, update, and correct.

Writing Guidelines

- Microsoft Word, 12-point type
- Citations for each statement of fact that is not common knowledge. Each should be cited to one or more reliable sources; primary sources preferred.

Submission Guidelines

- Submit a description of your article in advance.
- Limit to 6000 words or less
- Consider including digital copies or scans of original documents
- Do not submit articles that have been published before
- Do not submit articles you are submitting elsewhere
- Include author's direct lineage up to Christopher St. John 1547-1616 of Highlight, Glamorgan, Wales if known.
- A PDF digital copy of your article once published will be attached to your person record on our website

Types

- Immigrant origins with a genealogical summary.
- Problem solving articles with genealogical summary.
- Genealogical accounts of families, especially families for which no genealogy now exists.
- Source Material
- Current Events
- Common Bonds
- Brick walls
- Help requests
- DNA discoveries
- Phonetic variations
- Newly discovered branches
- Persons or Events of Interest
- Biographies

Primary records >>>

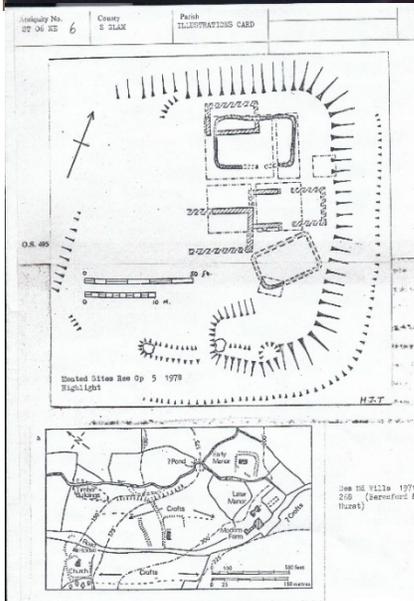
Primary Records and Documents for Genealogy

Primary source materials include such resources as vital records (birth, marriages, and death), abstracts of wills, court records, town records, city directories, church (parish) registers, census, newspapers, land deeds, military lists, passenger list, heraldry trees, Visitation reports, tax rolls, archeological reports, and family folklore.

Evaluate the Evidence

- How helpful is the evidence?
- How reliable is the evidence?
- Is it valid for meeting the research objective and does it produce some level of proof?
- Is it objective evidence
- Does it answer questions
- Does it stand on its own merit?
- Do others interpret it

Remember all records are not equal



St. John Genealogy & DNA

Social Media is a great way to connect with other St. Johns, share information, ask questions, and learn. In addition to this newsletter, we have a Facebook page and group!



www.facebook.com/groups/stjohngenealogy



Preserve your DNA for the future

We are looking for DNA test subjects with a documented and provable St. John lineage to participate in our ongoing Genealogical and DNA study. Collections kits obtain saliva for testing. They are non-invasive, painless and private.

Groups Insights

64 +3.1K% New Members Last 28 Days	590 +37% Posts, Comments and Reactions Last 28 Days	Julie Kaufman, Jeff St John and others are top contributors.
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Events | Calendar | Settings | + Create Event

September 2017

- St. John Family Reunion**
Sunday, September 24, 2017 at 11 PM CDT
Jason J St. John and 74 other guests | You hosted.
- International Talk Like a Pirate Day 2017**
Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 12 AM | You hosted.

Volunteer Job Role openings

- Writer:** A writer is someone who uses descriptive and engaging written language to create historical profiles and summaries of our St. John ancestors.
- Technical Author:** A writer that specializes in explaining genealogical and other technical processes in a simple, easy to understand, manner.
- Copy Editor:** makes sure that published or soon to be published works are free of spelling and grammar errors.
- Editorial Assistant:** helps with the general running of the newsletter, from administrative to editorial.
- Art Editor:** creates an overall look of the newsletter, making sure it's both attractive and easy to read.

ask the experts >>>

Q: What DNA test should I buy?

A: The St. John project uses FTDNA and AncestryDNA

For Y-DNA testing of St. John males, FTDNA offers several test kits to choose from. The St. John DNA project recommends the minimum of 37 Y-STR marker test but 37, 67, 111, and Big Y are also available at increased costs. For Autosomal DNA we recommend testing at AncestryDNA first, so you can upload to FTDNA for free. For mtDNA, we are currently not actively studying in the project, but you may certainly test mtDNA, if you so desire, and join the project.



If any of these VOLUNTEER job roles interest you, please submit a brief resume and portfolio sample to stjohngenealogy@gmail.com



printed copy...

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DNA isn't just for scientists

The St. John Genealogy & DNA project has been an ongoing DNA effort since 2002. Suzanne St. John became the volunteer administrator for the project in 2013.

In this role, she documented the lineages, where known, of each test subject. She has compared DNA results, compiled reports, and documented genetic family trees. Test subjects are identified by kit numbers not names.

FTDNA projects:

St. John Family DNA Project: 123 members.
<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/st-john/about/background>

Glamorgan Wales Cousin Project: 386 members.
<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/glamorgan-wales-cousins/about/background>

AncestryDNA share results with THEPOETZ

coming soon >>>

In the Next Issues

- *Highlight Manor and Farm*
- *Thomas St. John, Master*
- *Sir William St. John, Knight*
- *Mathias & Mathew St. John were not the same man*

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