

Written by Godfrey Hugh William BRAMHALL

John Henry BRAMHALL 1843-1910 and Ellen MARSDEN 1844-1919

The initial problem was to establish the name of George Henry's mother. Father was sure that her first name was 'Ellen' while his sister insisted that her surname was 'Ramsden'.

As everything seemed to indicate that George Henry had been born in Sheffield it seemed sensible to concentrate on the General Register for that city. We immediately found that the name 'Bramhall' with several variations was, and still is, pretty common in northern counties and particularly so in Sheffield.

But it did not take long to establish that John Henry's wife was Ellen Marsden, a perfect anagram of the name (Ramsden) suggested by my aunt!

They had been married at Christ Church, Pitsmoor in North Sheffield and had made their home at 40, Fawcett Street where their first three children were born, George Henry in 1866, Alice in 1872 and John Arthur in 1875.

Like his father John Henry was initially a saw maker but later decided on a change of scenery and occupation. By 1879 he had moved to Hull where his third son was born. On Sydney Gardener's birth certificate John is described as an 'insurance company superintendent'.

The family later moved to Stoke-on-Trent and kept a shop at 85, Birks Street but the precise nature of its trade is not known.

We have already drawn attention to George Henry's twin interests of accountancy and music, talents which he had clearly inherited from his father.

John Henry's abandonment of manual work in the steel trade for the world of insurance gives clear evidence of his facility with figures and clerical work.

We have also noted his modest ability as a composer and choir trainer. As such achievements are not plucked out of thin air but are the results of long familiarity with written music and shared musical activities it would be very interesting to know more about the background to his life than can possibly be gleaned from the lifeless statistics contained in census returns and other official records.

The only clue is that contained in his son's obituary which states that John Henry had been 'a member of the established church', which could be taken to suggest that he had been a member of his parish church choir and had learnt a lot from the experience.

John Henry died in June 1910.

Sources

General Register, St. Catherine's House.

Census Returns, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881 for Manchester, Sheffield and Hull.

'The War Cry'