

Hannah Fulford 1762-1838

Part of Modern Day Research

Like any other female family historian, discovering your direct maternal line is of great importance. The knowledge you learn of your female ancestors can help discover and define who we are. But how would you feel about the knowledge that your ancestor's remains are being used for scientific research?

This is exactly what I discovered whilst researching my maternal line.

Hannah Fulford was baptised 24 February 1762 in St. Edmund's, Salisbury, the daughter of Richard Fulford and Mary Randall, is my direct maternal ancestor, my 5th great grandmother.

On 9 April 1781 at St. Edmund's, Salisbury, Hannah married Richard Rapson, a printer from London. They went on to have the following children, all born in Salisbury and baptised at St. Edmund's.

David Rapson	born 7/12/1784	bapt. 31/8/1785
Charles Rapson	born 15/8/1786	bapt. 30/5/1787
Phebe Rapson	born 9/8/1788	bapt. 9/11/1788
Hannah Rapson	born 28/7/1790	bapt. 30/8/1790
Edmund Rapson	born 25/6/1792	bapt. 18/7/1792
James Rapson	born 6/8/1794	bapt. 1/9/1794

The family relocated to the Fleet Street area of London sometime around 1800 for Richard to continue his work as a printer in his home town. The Rapson place of worship for some years had been St. Bride's, Fleet Street, and this is where Hannah and family continued to worship.

Richard Rapson died in June 1825 and was buried on the 15th June 1825 at St. Bride's Lower Ground.

Hannah Rapson (nee Fulford) died in November 1838 and was buried on the 4th November 1838 at St. Bride's Lower Ground. Her cause of death was recorded as Decay.

Prior to a holiday in London in 2011, I contacted St. Bride's to find out if they could show me where Hannah was buried. They advised me that when St. Bride's burial ground became full, a second burial ground was opened on Farringdon Street nearby. This was known as St. Bride's Lower Ground. It was here that Hannah and her husband Richard were buried. The staff at St. Bride's also went on to tell me that the Lower Ground burials on Farringdon Street had been excavated and the remains I was looking for were in the custody of the Museum of London's Centre for Human Bio-Archaeology.

Shocked? Yes!

I immediately contacted the Centre and was provided with some fascinating information. Below is the content of the email they sent to me.

Here at the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology we are privileged to be able to curate many individuals enabling us and other researchers to learn more about the past and directly from the people themselves.

With our analysis of the skeletal remains that are revealed from excavations of developments in London and the Greater London area we macroscopically analyse and record everything that we can about each individual – estimation of biological age (sternal rib ends, pubic symphysis & auricular surface), estimation of sex (looking at criteria of the skull & pelvis), measurements (cranial and post cranial), pathology & trauma, surgical intervention, dental pathology, vertebral pathology, joint disease, non metrics, measurements etc. – a lot of the methods we employ have come from forensics e.g. the estimation of age and sex – what we have to bear in mind is that the populations that these were based upon are modern and we are extrapolating the information and associating it to individuals who lived in a very different environment and society – but they do provide us the means to get a demographic profile, and enables us then with the pathological analysis to start to see potential patterns particularly with respect to diseases –

e.g. we see an increase during this period that we identify as the Post Medieval in rickets, scurvy, specific infections such as syphilis and TB –

Our analysis of the skeletal remains is then able to link in to the archaeological and historical context which enables us to provide a bioarchaeological perspective of the individuals - hence put them back in to the time in which they lived and died – providing an insight in to their lives, the impacts of disease, trauma etc. upon their lives and how they adapted and the body can adapt and modify in response to such insults. We can also sometimes see if there may have been any medical attention/intervention and also the beginnings of the desire to know what had caused an individual to die and so we see post mortem investigations. Interestingly the individuals where do see bone changes in response to a disease or trauma are in effect the healthy individuals as they had an immune response which enabled the body to respond and the integrity of the bone/s to alter. What we see in the skeletal remains when we see disease are chronic – unfortunately the person had to have something for a longer period of time to affect the skeleton. If a disease is acute we will not be able to visibly see the disease in the skeleton – e.g. Black Death and for the most part TB

We have an electronic database WORD (Wellcome Osteological Research Database) that enables us to enter all of our analyses in a standardised way which enables for a much better comparative source for study by researchers both here and abroad. We can then enter large amounts of data that can also be extracted and queried. Because we have such large numbers that we curate this helps with respect to producing statistically significant data.

What must also be remembered is that we are always dealing with a sample number of individuals who were buried, the cemetery area may not have been fully excavated so we have biases and samples of samples as it were – this then has to be remembered when getting results that we may see patterns but that it is not necessarily representative of the whole population and this is why it is so good to have the complimentary archaeological and historical sources to enhance and compare the data

The excavation at the St Bride's Lower churchyard, Farringdon revealed only a part of the cemetery (the date range we are given in relation to the section excavated is (1770-1849) and not all of those people who had been interred in the cemetery over its period of usage were disturbed. Those that were revealed during the excavations were archaeologically excavated and retained for research as they are a very interesting and important assemblage from a key period in the development of London. All assemblages of skeletal remains have Burial Licences and incorporated within them will be details relating to the time for which they may be retained for research.

St Bride's Lower churchyard individuals are particularly interesting as well as they provide an excellent comparison to the individuals with biographical data who were buried in the church of St Bride's Fleet Street. Unfortunately, the church was bombed during WWII and as a consequence it provided the opportunity for the first time for a London church to be archaeologically excavated. During the excavations the crypts that had been sealed in the 1850's (utilised for burial over a period of just over 150 years) were rediscovered and it is some of these individuals who are retained in the church that were available for me and previous osteologists to analyse.

Our aim in the future is to be able to produce work relating to the comparison of these two assemblages as it is very unusual to have individuals living in the same parish at the same time period but from different socio economic backgrounds – it will enable us to look at the demographic profiles, disease patterns and the like. Thus providing a much richer insight in to their lives, the environment they lived in and the time in which they lived. A formidable time of change for London and Londoners alike

Unfortunately, when developments occur and human remains are revealed and disturbed they are not reburied back to where they are found but reburied in another cemetery that has available space. With regard to the individuals from St Bride's Lower churchyard they are currently curated and retained here at the museum with a burial licence to enable us and researchers to continue to have the privilege to learn from them

With respect to the individuals buried in the Lower churchyard there was no legible preservation of coffin plates which provide us with such a valuable source of biographical detail and so for this reason we do not know the names of the individuals. There are indeed the burials records and registers but it is not possible

to associate the burial number with specific individuals and so we would not be able to identify each of the individuals that we curate here at the museum.

What is fascinating for us is learning information from relatives, such as yourself which adds another interesting layer of knowledge.

(With thanks to Jelena from the Centre of Human Bioarcheology for providing this information.)

It is fantastic research that the Museum is undertaking and will no doubt provide useful information to scientist, anthropologists and archaeologists in the future.

So, now my dear ancestor Hannah is in a box in the Museum of London. This has been confirmed by St. Bride's. There is no funding available to do DNA testing of the remains to match with the living, so I will never know which box she is in or exactly where and when Hannah is re-interred.

I would ideally like Hannah to be returned to St. Edmunds, or somewhere else in Salisbury at least.

If there is anyone with an interest in this family, I can be contacted via the Administrator of Wiltshire OPC Project

**Jodi Fuller
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27 December 2012.**