



Friends Are Waiting

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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My paternal grandfather, Robert Hancock, was an orphan who was sent to Canada by the Dr. Barnardo organization when he had just turned eleven years of age. He was a wonderful man and I was named after him (my middle name is Roberta).

Three years ago I began doing research and traced the family tree back to 1642 Cornwall. So, on September 5th my daughter, Kristal, and I headed to England to view the area where our ancestors had lived.

Unfortunately, many of the addresses we had traced led to patches of grass where buildings had once stood. One street in Portsmouth is now a busy highway round-about. Other streets have been renamed and just left us empty-handed when it came to finding our history.

When we arrived in St. Austell, Cornwall, there was one place that I knew would still be there - the church where the family had been baptized and married and buried for decades. Holy Trinity Church was built in the 15th century but there is evidence of a church on that site as early as 1169. The internet had convinced me that it was still standing but it was locked on the Saturday that Kristal and I found it. We stopped at a book store in the area and were told that there are still three services each Sunday and so we decided that we would go to see it the following morning.

When we arrived at the church, everyone was so welcoming and grateful that we had come to visit. The vicar had a microphone and asked if anyone wanted to give thanks and so I told about my research and our purpose in joining them. I expressed thanks for Kristal being with me and the people who had made us feel like we were part of them.

After the service people began approaching us. One family invited us to their home for a chicken dinner and we had a wonderful day walking by the sea and talking with them. They invited me to return for another visit.

My great-grandmother had lived and died in Portsmouth. A woman named Marilyn and I had connected through a genealogy website three years ago. Even though there were only a few short emails exchanged between us, when she heard we were coming to England, she invited us to meet her. She had been born in Portsmouth and is the President of the Heritage Society so she gave us a lovely tour of the city. Marilyn had also gone to City Hall to do research about my great-grandmother and took us to see her grave. We had a wonderful visit over lunch that we shared on the wharf.

Kristal and I went to England without knowing any of these people. We returned with the warmth of knowing that we had made good friends! None of them had asked anything of us except to share a little of our time with them.

I am always sad when I hear that people tell me that they are lonely, especially when I know that there are now more than seven billion people in the world, many of whom are also lonely.

You don't have to go to England to make friends.

All you really need to do to begin a new friendship is to reach out to someone else and that begins with a simple "Hi".