

Fact Sheet: Robert Spencer Smyth

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> Robert Spencer Smyth
<i>Person ID:</i> IR1012
<i>Your name:</i> Bernie Tierney
<i>U3A group:</i> Northern Ireland
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
<p>Robert Spencer Smyth was born on the 11th February 1836 and was baptised by the Revd John W Dowling, then Presbyterian minister of Portadown on the 6th April 1836</p> <p>He died on the 15th of June 1916 aged 80</p>
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
<p>Robert Spencer Smith's parents were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father: Robert Smyth; occupation distiller; died on the 24th March 1863 aged 62 years • His mother was Eliza-Jane whose surname is unknown. However, her surname may have been Spencer or Hunter based on the inclusion of these names in his own name and that of his children (this was a widely practised convention within some religious traditions) <p>It would appear that Robert Senior's business experienced financial difficulties</p> <p>Robert-Spencer was baptised a Presbyterian so we can assume at least one of his parents was affiliated to that religion. We can also assume, given their financial position, that they could read and write. In fact, his mother Eliza-Jane's signature is on the above document.</p>
3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)
<p>He had at least two sisters one of whom was named Martha. She died in the original family home in Sussex Place in Belfast in July 1866. She was described as the second daughter of the late Robert Smyth. The <u>probable</u> civil registration of her death reveals that she was aged 25 (See Belfast Deaths/Quarter 3/Volume 11/Page 227).</p>
Part Two: Marriage and children/boarders

1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation). **Note:** *You can also use this space to record any details about people your pensioner boarded with.*

Robert Spencer Smyth married Sarah Anne Stelfox on the 3rd of April 1867 in Belfast

Sarah-Anne was the daughter of James Stelfox who at that time worked for the Gas Light Company in Belfast.

Her father's name appears in various records from the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, namely

- Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory (1856)
- The Griffith Valuation (1860)
- Slater's Directory (1870)

It would appear her father was actually the manager of the Gas Light Company and had come from Manchester to take up the position. Sarah-Anne's brother James also worked for the company and he was recorded in the 1901 census living in Belfast with his family. He recorded his place of birth as Salford, England (probably referring to Salford in Manchester).

We can assume that Sarah-Anne had been born in Salford. We know her father was James and her mother appears to have been Sarah-Anne Fridean. This couple married in Manchester in July 1832. They do not subsequently appear in English censuses suggesting that they had relocated to Belfast before 1841.

Sarah Anne Died in January 1901 aged 61; she was recorded as a Postmaster's wife; the cause of death was "Obstruction of the Bowel 14 days; Peritonitis 2 days". It was certified by a doctor.

2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)

Robert Spencer Smith and Sarah Anne Stelfox had four known children:

- Robert-Spencer; March 1868; at 9 Castle Street
- Florence-Elizabeth; April 1870; Old Hall, Waterside
- James-Hunter; September 1874; Clarendon Street
- Mary-Wilson; February 1878; Clarendon Street

The son Robert-Spencer received part of his education in a boarding school in Bedfordshire in England. He qualified as an engineer; he married Mary-Gertrude Mussen, originally from Co Down, in Shankhill Parish in 1892. Their only child Gertrude-Mary-Spencer was born in Belfast in 1895. The family were recorded in the 1911 census in Gartage Hall, Hucclecote in Gloucester, His wife died in February 1913 (London Gazette entry). It would appear he remarried as he shows up in the 1939 Register as a married man. His death was registered in Pancras, London in 1946. The beneficiary of his will was Elizabeth-Evelyn-Jannette Smyth.

The daughter Florence-Elizabeth appears not to have married and continued to live in Derry City. She died in July 1946 and is interred in the family plot.

The son James Hunter qualified with an M.A. from Trinity College Dublin (TCD). He began working for the Chinese Maritime Customs Service as a "Fourth Assistant (B)" in 1898 but died in 1906 on his way home. He was interred in Kobe, Japan.

The daughter Mary-Wilson married Robert Young, a merchant from Ballymoney, in June 1908. Their first child Robert-Spencer Young was born in May 1909 when the father was described as a Timber Merchant. Mary and her son were recorded with her own father in 1911 Census, possibly when visiting.

Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census and/or other years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

In the 1901 census Robert Spencer Smyth was recorded as being a Postmaster and a Retired Postmaster in 1911.

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census and/or other years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

In the 1901 census it was recorded that Hannah Ward aged 22 a Domestic Servant was living in the household

In the 1911 Census Robert Spencer Smyth had a cook and a nurse recorded as in the household in they both had the surname Hyndman, the cook Domestic Margaret Jane aged 24 and the nurse Lilly aged 19. Perhaps they were sisters?

Florence was unmarried at 38, perhaps the nurse was for her? Was she ill or had disabilities or other nursing requirements? However, Florence lived until 76.

Also recorded as living in the home in the 1911 Census was Mary Wilson Young (nee Spencer, daughter of Robert Spencer), aged 29 and her son Robert Spencer Young, aged 1. She was recorded in the 1911 census but maybe she was just visiting at the time of the census (was the nurse Lilly Hyndman for the baby?)

Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner. For example, what do we know about their life after they retired?

I have noted that Robert Spencer Smyth and his family moved house quite a few times; he employed live in domestic help, which we can assume meant he lived quite comfortably. He joined the civil service in aged 21 and continued his employment until aged 65 in 1901.

Part Five: Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

Robert Spencer Smyth

Evidence of Robert Spencer Smyth birth date and baptism date retrieved from British Civil Service Evidence of Age. This also provides evidence that his mother was Eliza-Jane:
<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=gbor%2fcseo%2f172%2f0210&parentid=gbor%2fcseo%2f00055476>

Marriage of Robert Smyth and Sarah-Anne Stelfox in 1867
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1867/11482/8220380.pdf

Civil Registration of Robert-Spencer's death in 1916:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1916/05244/4453209.pdf

1911 Census:
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002841345/>

Commemorative Tombstone for Robert and his children James-Hunter (died 1906) and Florence-Elizabeth (died 1946):
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/188723707/robert-spencer-smyth>

Ireland Calendars Of Wills & Administrations 1858-1920; Index
http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/reels/cwa/005014919/005014919_00743.pdf

English Wills Index:
<https://search.findmypast.ie/record/browse?id=gbor%2fgovprobate%2f1916%2fs002228-smits-1916&parentid=gbor%2fgovprobate%2f1916%2fs002228-smits-1916>

The Smyth family

Slater's Directory 1846 for Portadown; Robert Smyth [snr] listed under heading of "Wine & Spirit Merchants"

<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=IRE%2F1ET0010%2F767&parentid=IRE%2F1ET0010%2F767%2F067>

Death of his father in 1863; insert in Belfast Newsletter:

<https://search.findmypast.ie/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2F0000038%2F18630325%2F004&stringtohighlight=robert%20smyth%20malone>

Death of his sister Martha, insert in Belfast News Letter on 4th July 1866:

<https://search.findmypast.ie/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2F0000038%2F18660704%2F010&stringtohighlight=robert%20smyth%20malone>

Stelfox family (wife Sarah Anne's family)

Sarah Anne Stelfox; parents' marriage in 1832, Manchester:

https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=R_846330973

James Stelfox Sr's (postal pensioner's father-in-law) entry in The Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory 1856:

<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=IRE%2F1ET0011%2F312&parentid=IRE%2F1ET0011%2F312%2F037>

James Stelfox Sr recorded in Griffith Valuation in 1860

<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=IRE%2FGR1FF%2F010%2F056&parentid=IRE%2FGR1FF%2F010%2F010056%2F012%2F1>

James Stelfox sr and James Stelfox Jr (postal pensioner's brother-in-law) Slater's Directory from 1870; both working for Gas Light Company

<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=IRE%2F1ET0100%2F1004&parentid=IRE%2F1ET0100%2F1004%2F063>

James Stelfox Jr's marriage to Jane MacIlwaine:

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1869/11417/8193580.pdf

James Stelfox Jr's 1901 Census record:

http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Down/Ormeau/Ormeau_Park/1211992/

Wife and children of Robert Spencer Smyth

Birth of child Robert-Spencer

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1868/03454/2268175.pdf

Birth of daughter Florence-Elizabeth

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1870/03335/2222477.pdf

Birth of son James-Hunter

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1874/03137/2150461.pdf

Birth of daughter Mary-Wilson

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1878/02965/2086241.pdf

Death of wife Sarah

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1901/05737/4619379.pdf

Family in 1901 Census

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai000630498/>

Family in 1911 Census

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002841345/>

1) Robert-Spencer (son)

Admission to Bedford Modern School, Beds, in 1883:

https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=GBOR%2FSCHOOL%2FBED%2FBMS_B52_6%2F0044&parentid=GBOR%2FSCHOOL%2FAD%2F176074 AND

https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=GBOR%2FSCHOOL%2FBED%2FBMS_B53_3%2F0104&parentid=GBOR%2FSCHOOL%2FAD%2F181840

Marriage to Mary-Gertrude Mussen

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1892/10648/5879507.pdf

Birth of Robert and Mary's only child Gertrude-Mary-Spencer

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1895/02221/1837829.pdf

The family in 1911 Census in Gartage Hall, Hucclecote, Gloucestershire, England
<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F15274%2F0143&parentid=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F15274%2F0143%2F3>

Robert recorded in the 1939 Register
<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=TNA%2FR39%2F0332%2F0332A%2F015&parentid=TNA%2FR39%2F0332%2F0332A%2F015%2F41>

Robert-Spencer's death in 1947
<https://search.findmypast.ie/record?id=BMD%2FD%2F1946%2F4%2FAZ%2F000898&parentid=BMD%2FD%2F1946%2F4%2FAZ%2F000898%2F074>

2) Florence-Elizabeth (daughter)

Probate and Will: 24th October 1916, Londonderry (via [PRONI Will Calendars](#))

3) James Hunter (son)

James Hunter's appointment to the Chinses Maritime Customs Service:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/customs/resources/servicelists/databases.html>

James Hunter newspaper insert about his death, 1906:
https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=BL%2F0000250%2F19060411%2F345%2F0009&transcriptid=BL_0000250_19060411_345_757

James Hunter probate record, 1906:
http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/reels/cwa/005014914/005014914_00533.pdf

4) Mary-Wilson (daughter)

Marriage to James Young, 1908
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1908/10055/5656855.pdf

Birth of first child Robert-Spencer Young in May 1909
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1909/01616/1647752.pdf