

Mike's secret Indian family

By Gavin Sherriff

SCOTTISH journalist Mike Souter is heading for India to learn more about a branch of his family that has remained secret for decades.

Mike's late father Thomas Hoggan Souter, known as Ptosie, played for Rangers and Queen's Park in the 1930s.

But when Mike began researching an old family picture recently, he learned he may have Indian relatives.

"The picture shows my maternal grandfather Frederick Denison-Smith when he was in India with what looked like a family group. But nobody knew exactly who they were," he explained.

Mike had long wondered about his grandfather's time in India.

"Something never



■ Mike Souter

quite added up. It was odd that someone who'd lived an opulent lifestyle in India, was invited to all the best parties and taught the great aunt of the local maharaja should come back to Britain apparently penniless.

"I'd wondered about it for years but never had the time to look into it. Then I decided to spend the first part of this year getting to the bottom of it."

Mike got in touch with a local journalist who has since helped unearth details of his grandfather's life in India.

He has even appeared on the front page of the Bangalore Times!

After the story was printed he received confirmation that his grandfather had indeed fathered a secret Indian family.

"It's not a complete surprise," says Mike, "but I'm looking forward to seeing what I find when I get there."

"One thing's sure, if I do find any relatives they won't be called Souter!"

Love at faith site for Richard and Julie!

Religious dating over the web is all the rage

THE phrase "opposites attract" may well be true in some cases.

However, there's one aspect of life which is non-negotiable for many people when they're looking for someone to share their lives with — faith.

More than three million people in Scotland — around 65 per cent of the population — are deemed to be Christians.

There are also hundreds of thousands of Buddhists, Jews, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus as well as believers in a vast array of other religions.

Every day, thousands of these people, who haven't found love within their own social circles, are turning to internet dating.

However, many feel uncomfortable or unwilling to use websites that can't guarantee they'll meet people of a similar faith.

To solve this problem most religions now have their own dating websites which will only allow people of that faith to join.

“Being a single parent made it difficult to meet young Christians”

These sites are closely monitored and members usually spot any pious pretenders.

There are also strict rules on what photos members can use and scantily-clad pics are quickly removed or prevented from being loaded in the first place.

Julie and Richard Turner from Dunblane owe their happiness to one such dating website — christianconnection.co.uk.

Julie (43) had been divorced for 12 years and had two young daughters when she joined the website.

She became a Christian after her divorce and knew she'd only be happy with

By John Paul Breslin

someone who shared her faith.

Richard (46) had been a member of the website for some months before Julie sent him a tentative email in 2004 to introduce herself.

He was a member of the Church of England and Julie was an Episcopalian but the religious views they shared far outweighed any differences.

They soon started sending each other long emails describing themselves and what they wanted in life.

They also discussed their religious views in depth.

A couple of weeks later they had their first conversation on the phone.

Then, two months later, Julie took the bold decision to visit Richard at his house in Surrey after he invited her to stay for a weekend.

Julie discussed the visit with her clergy and her two daughters Natasha and Katrina who were aged 13 and 12 at the time.

All three decided she should go.

She and Richard both believe that sex should only ever be inside marriage so there was never any suggestion they would share a room during her stay.

They were little more than strangers when they finally came face to face at Heathrow Airport but Richard said there was a nervous energy about the meeting.

"We were both really excited," he said.

"There was no awkwardness. I think we were both just wondering whether or not something would develop between us."

The couple got on well and decided to make a go of things.

After that first



■ Julie and Richard have never looked back since meeting

on a Christian website.

weekend together they made an effort to meet up every three weeks.

Richard finally

proposed on May 12, 2007 at the top of the Wallace Monument in Stirling.

Surprisingly, the couple had been going through a rough patch at the time.

Julie was frustrated with having a long-distance relationship and had started to wonder where things were going.

One night, Richard was driving back to Surrey after the couple had parted on frosty terms.

He knew he would be passing the Wallace Monument on his way home and made a deal with himself.

If the monument was

lit up he'd propose to Julie. If he couldn't see it he'd call things off.

However, deep down he knew he wanted the monument's lights to be on and had a silent prayer to that effect.

Eventually he saw the tower shining out across the horizon and knew what he should do.

The next time they met in Stirling Richard suggested a trip to the monument.

Once they'd climbed to the top he fell to his knees and asked Julie to marry him.

She said yes and they've been happily married since their wedding at St Mary's Episcopal Church in Dunblane on October 6, 2007.

Julie, who now lives with Richard in



■ Wallace Monument, Stirling, where Richard proposed.

Dunblane, said faith-specific dating websites offer the chance of finding love with someone who

understands the importance of faith.

"Being a single parent made it difficult to meet young, single Christians," she said.

"Anyone I got involved with had to have the same understanding and life values."

"They also had to come from a similar faith background."

For a while Julie felt embarrassed about using a dating website and used to tell people she met Richard at Heathrow.

However, these days she's more comfortable about it given the happiness it's brought.

"I would definitely recommend other people to try it," she gushed. "I feel really blessed."

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