

Sister is surprise beneficiary after fiercely private man is featured in BBC programme

£200,000 TV riddle

by Bev Peck

A DECEASED Dunstable man was the subject of a intriguing TV investigation to hunt down relatives who should inherit his £200,000 fortune.

Thousands of viewers tuned into Heir Hunters, a popular BBC1 programme, which focused on the late Tony Williams. A fiercely private man, Mr Williams lived in Blows Road until he died aged 82.

As he did not leave a will, Mr Williams was put on the Treasury's list of declared intestate estates.

This is a record published weekly including the names of deceased people who leave no will and who have no obvious next of kin to leave their life savings to.

Fraser & Fraser, a London-based firm of international genealogists and probate researchers, undertook the search to find an heir to his estate - and the results were televised on Monday.

The investigation saw the team travel to Dunstable in March, where they soon discovered Mr Williams had a sister, Margaret Rush, who was living in Oxfordshire.

His sister was telephoned during the show and she was then told of her brother's death and of her unexpected windfall. Investigators discovered that Mr Williams had been dead for seven

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A PRIVATE MAN: Tony Williams pictured with his mother, Mabel, before his death

Ex-accountant lost his wife in '50s and became reclusive

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months before his sister was told he had passed away.

She said she had once been close to her brother, but as he had grown older she had found it more difficult to keep in touch with him as he had become more solitary and removed his telephone.

She was shocked after learning of his death but added that she would buy a decent bottle of something to toast him with. A Fraser & Fraser spokesperson

said: "The findings in this investigation were quite tragic. They were close enough for him to send her a birthday card just two months before he died, but she did not realise he had passed away."

Neighbour Colin Misters, 70, spoke to researchers when they visited the area. He said: "Mr Williams told me he had a sister in Oxshot many years ago and I told the programme researchers."

Mr Misters and his wife knew Mr Williams, a former accountant, for

around 30 years. He said: "He was a very industrious man who travelled with his job, but as he grew older he turned more reclusive."

During the later years of his life he was sometimes not seen for many days and if he did venture out it was to the Star And Garter pub in High Street South, where he was a regular.

Mr Williams, a former RAF serviceman, had no children, and lost his wife Ruby in the 1950s. Heir Hunters is currently

showing the third series of the programme following the success of the second series, aired in summer 2008.

Viewer numbers have overtaken ITV rival The Jeremy Kyle Show and have exceeded the 1.2 million mark.

During filming the cameras shadow investigators in-house at the Fraser & Fraser London offices and external researchers on typical days as they attempt to crack the Treasury's list of declared intestate estates.