



9TH SEPTEMBER 2023

ISSUE NUMBER 97

# Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY, SEVENOAKS, KENT  
[www.nwkfhs.org.uk](http://www.nwkfhs.org.uk)



## Welcome to NWKFHS Sevenoaks Branch

Our meetings are held at Otford Memorial Hall, 28A High Street, Otford, TN14 5PQ

Doors open at 10:45 am, meeting starts at 11am - Nominal parking fee.

We welcome visitors and new members, and we aspire to offer all the helpful advice that you might need.

Guests we appreciate a £1.00 - £2.00 donation to the society's funds.

We hope you enjoy your visit.

**Sanitiser and masks available and chairs placed at a friendly distance for those concerned about Covid.**

### Today's talk

### A Heroine of Dunkirk, the Paddle Steamer 'Medway Queen'

The Medway Queen was ordered in 1923 and entered service on the Strood-Chatham-Southend-Herne Bay route the following year. With occasional excursions elsewhere she served on the same route until the beginning of the II World War. Chatham Navy week was an annual highlight and in 1937 the ship ran an excursion at the Coronation Naval Review at Spithead.

Medway Queen was requisitioned for the Royal Navy in 1939 and converted for minesweeping. In 1940 HMS Medway Queen joined the 10th Mine-sweeping Flotilla based in Dover and remained an active minesweeper until late 1943 when she became an accommodation ship for a few months.

The 10th Flotilla played a key part in 'Operation Dynamo' in May-June 1940. Medway Queen and her crew made 7 return trips across the channel to bring the men home. The ship's crew estimated they evacuated 7,000 men while shooting down 3 Axis aircraft. In 1946/7 she was refitted and returned to civilian use. The famous Invicta motif was placed on the ship's funnel and in 1954 there was the addition of a bracket on the funnel for navigation lights. In the early 1960s paddle steamers were struggling to compete with newer-type vessels and the Medway Queen made her last voyage to Southend on 9th September 1963. In 1953 she was included in the Coronation Naval Review at Spithead. She carried many pre-booked passengers and was part of the formal fleet review.

After several attempts at preservation had failed, the ship was purchased by three businessmen, Alan Ridett, Colin Ridett and Robert Trapp in August 1965. She was towed by the tug Dhulia to the Isle of Wight and became a restaurant & nightclub. The Medway Queen Club was popular for wedding receptions and the on-board restaurant was a favourite with locals and holiday makers alike. In the evenings it became a night club with disco and live music. Following the closure of the Medway Queen Club, the ship suffered hull damage and became semi-submerged in the river Medina. In 1984 she was moved back to the River Medway. The current Medway Queen Preservation Society was formed in 1985 to support this endeavour and later became owners of this historic vessel.

After many years of frustration and hard work the society secured the backing of the Heritage Lottery Fund and, later, the European Regional Development Fund to rebuild the ship's hull and establish a base and workshop at Gillingham Pier. The hull rebuild was completed in Bristol in late 2013, and she is now moored at Gillingham Pier where she can be visited.

**Speakers PAM AND MARK BATHURST**

### NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING

#### **14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – The 1951 Festival of Britain preceded by the Branch Annual Meeting**

The Festival of Britain was a national exhibition and fair that reached millions of visitors throughout the United Kingdom in the summer of 1951. The festival was a triumphant success during which people flocked to the South Bank site, to wander around the Dome of Discovery, gaze at the Skylon, and generally enjoy a festival of national celebration.

The British public showed that it had not lost the capacity for enjoying itself.... Above all, the festival made a spectacular setting as a showpiece for the inventiveness and genius of British scientists and technologists.

**Speaker ALAN WILLIAMS**

### DARTFORD BRANCH MEETING

#### **7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 - The Rise and Fall of Lullingstone Roman Villa**

Rod Shelton describes himself as an author, artist and model-maker. He has lived in Otford for 25 years and is active in village matters. He is the local historian and chairs the Otford Society.

Most of us have visited Lullingstone; and Josephine Birchenough's husband was involved in the excavation of the villa.

Rod has researched the story of the villa and will reveal how its fate lay in the violent machinations of the Roman Emperors and the lust to gain Imperial power. Lullingstone, he suggests, was to become a pawn in this game of political ambitions.

**Speaker ROD SHELTON**

## UP AND COMING LIBRARY WORKSHOPS

New to Writing Up your Family History? With Pauline Heathcote  
Family History Writing Group with Pauline Heathcote

25 October 10:30  
29 November 10:30

The beginner's workshop will cover Birth, Marriages and Death Certificates, Census Records, Parish Registers, Wills and Directories as well as Family Charts and Trees.

## UP AND COMING ZOOM WORKSHOPS

The Rat Catchers with David Cufley  
Breaking Down Family History Brick Walls with David Cufley  
My Ancestor was a Liar with Dave Annal

11 October 19:30  
8 November 19:30  
17 November 19:30

## DISCUSSION GROUPS AT THE LIBRARY

DNA Discussion Group for those who are either new to DNA or want to discuss particular aspects of DNA Sep 13th.

## MONTHLY ZOOM DISCUSSION GROUPS

Zoom DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln

The topic for each meeting is agreed by the members by notifying the leader through [workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk](mailto:workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk).

## ZOOM FAMILY HISTORY DISCUSSION GROUP

*Come and enjoy lively discussions on different aspects of Family History*

Each meeting the topic is agreed by the members at the previous group meeting. It can range from 'how do I do...?' to: 'sources for finding family information.' Because this is an open discussion the subjects can lead to topics that the participants want to discuss or expand upon points raised during the session. The structure is very flexible.

Please visit our website for further details, dates and times [www.nwkfhs.org.uk](http://www.nwkfhs.org.uk)

Changes and up-to-date details will be on the website and in the e-mail information service newsletter.

*Since re-opening the library post Covid the number of attendees is noticeably down. There are many reasons for this but if it is safety fears, we would like to reassure you that we will do all we can to make you feel and be safe. The tables can be spaced further apart to usual, furthermore, we can seat you on your own table and nobody will object to you wearing a face covering.*

We would be pleased to hear from any volunteers who would like to be involved with any workshops, along with any new topics that interest you. Contact us through bookings and enquiries by e-mail [worshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk](mailto:worshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk)

## 11TH OCTOBER – ZOOM DISCUSSION GROUP – THE RAT CATCHERS WITH DAVID CUFLEY

No booking necessary and this talk is open to Society members and non-members alike.

A talk on the 19th century profession of Ratcatchers using Enfield and Middlesex Rat catching sources. David describes how his ancestors played a part in the trade and the sporting rat matches held in the pubs around London.

Information also taken from Henry Mayhew's book 'London Labour, London Poor', but also other trade research sources that add to the understanding of the business and the Rat Matches.

Some references are to Ratcatchers in Manchester and Essex among the sources included in the Bibliography available.

As its on zoom you will need to bring your own coffee and biscuits!   

Please log in from 7.15pm and enjoy chat amongst participants before the workshop starts.

Join Zoom Meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87130743218?pwd=ViRJQ0VJWndQcHRaa1BselVmNUJzUT09>

Meeting ID: 871 3074 3218 Passcode: 144824

Workshop leaders freely give their time, but a donation via the web shop is appreciated:

<https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/shop/nwkfhs-shop/services/society-donation>

*Please visit our website for details of further workshops and updates and sign up for our free twice monthly Society eNewsletter.*

**NWKHS members** who missed a ZOOM talk: some speakers have allowed their talks to be recorded and recorded talks are saved here - <https://nwkfhs.org.uk/resources/all-other/zoom-talk-videos> note this link only works for paid up members logged into the website. Sometimes speakers have given permission for their talks only to be recorded for a specified amount of time, so members please do check the link.

## Did you know?

Even Queen Victoria herself had to deal with rat problems in Buckingham Palace. Palaces are surprisingly susceptible to rodents. A combination of open entry points, well stocked kitchens, and a generally low concentration of humans makes for an endearing combination for rats and mice.

## NWKFHS 45TH AGM 2023

The NWKFHS 45th Annual General Meeting will be held at the commencement of the Dartford Branch Meeting on Saturday 4 November 2023 at 10.30 hours. Please arrive from 10am for the AGM and from 11.30/45am for the speaker (if not attending the AGM).

Our speaker after the AGM is to be Michael Gandy, a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and the Editor of their prestigious journal, the Genealogists' Magazine. Michael will be familiar to many of you as he has visited our Society several times in the past. He has been tracing his ancestry for 60 years, some of it in North West Kent. He was brought up in Sydenham, his mother was born in Eltham, his grandmother in Bexleyheath and his family were at Upton in the 18th century.

Michael will be talking on a topic which is new to us but comes highly recommended, "Name Lists 1500-1800", a non-parochial subject which will include some familiar sources but will also introduce you to others which you may have overlooked as they have not yet been indexed. (Wish they were, says Michael.)

The AGM will start at 10.30am and be followed by a short break and then the speaker at midday.

**Venue:** The Dartford Science & Technology College, Heath Lane, Dartford, DA1 2LY

The venue has a large, free car park but it is shared with other users and can become busy. It is suggested you come early if possible.

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**ON THIS DAY:** September 9<sup>th</sup> is the 252<sup>nd</sup> day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 113 days remain to the end of the year.

**September is the ninth month of the year and the seventh month of the Roman calendar, and its name is derived from the Latin *septem*, seven.**

**337** Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans succeed their father Constantine I as co-emperors. The Roman Empire is divided between the three Augusti.

**1000** Battle of Svolder, Viking Age.

**1488** Anne becomes sovereign Duchess of Brittany, becoming a central figure in the struggle for influence that leads to the union of Brittany and France. She was the only woman to have been queen consort of France twice.

**1493** Christopher Columbus, with 17 ships and 1,200 men, sails on second voyage from Cadiz.

**1513** James IV of Scotland is defeated and dies in the Battle of Flodden.

**1543** Mary Stuart, at nine months old, is crowned "Queen of Scots" in the central Scottish town of Stirling.

**1776** The Continental Congress officially names its union of states the United States.

**1791** Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, is named after President George Washington.

**1828** Leo Tolstoy is born, Russian author and playwright (d. 1910)

**1839** John Herschel takes the first glass plate photograph.

**1940** George Stibitz pioneers the first remote operation of a computer.

**1994** Space Shuttle program: Space Shuttle Discovery is launched on STS-64.

**2014** Graham Joyce dies, English author and educator (b. 1954)

**2015** Elizabeth II becomes the longest reigning monarch of the United Kingdom.

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## New Records:

### Findmypast:

- Devon baptisms 1923, marriages 1923, burials 1923
- Leicestershire baptisms 1923, marriages 1939, burials 1998
- Norfolk baptisms 1923, marriages 1939, burials 1998
- Welsh baptism 1923, marriages 1938

### RootsIreland

- County Armagh: Seagoe - Col baptism, marriage, and deaths 1672-1821; Col Hearth Rolls 1662; Seagoe Col Landholders 1709; Montiaghhs Col baptism records Register 1851-1867
- County Clare: Bodyke RC marriages 1832-1900; Bridgetown civil births 1881-1941; Carriagholt RC marriage 1832-1900; New Quay RC baptisms 1846-1900
- County Kerry: Ballyheigue RC Marriages: 1858-1900; Dingle RC Baptisms: 1823-1899; Killorglin RC Marriages 1798-1851 & 1884-1911

- County Mayo: Ballyovey Col Baptisms 1829-1918, Marriages 1854-1954 and Deaths 1880-1966; Kilvine Baptisms RC 1908-1923

## Women and Marriage

'Woman's mission on Earth is, of course to inspire love, with the ultimate object of getting married' declared Augustus Mayhew, slightly tongue in cheek, in *Faces for Fortunes*, (1867). Nineteenth-century writers (and some later ones too) tended to see marriage as the end of a woman's story, mission achieved. Family Historians on the other hand, might like to look on marriage as the start of another story, a change in a woman's life, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worst.

In the early 1800s, as soon as she said I do and signed the wedding register. Your ancestor lost, not only her surname, but also her identity, and in the eyes of the law she became almost a non-person. All her property automatically became the property of her husband.

An exception might be any land, property shares et cetera that was protected by a marriage settlement, perhaps drawn up by her protective father or personal items that were lumped together as her '*paraphernalia*'. Such settlements were often made as a matter of course, in middle-class marriages, ensuring some financial independence and protection for the woman against a spendthrift or even downright mercenary husband. In general, though, a married woman owned nothing, not the clothes she stood up in, not the cash in her purse, not a stick of furniture, not a piece of jewellery. Marriage was a very serious business for a woman.

In 1870, the Married Woman's Property Act allowed women to keep as their own any wages or earnings they might acquire after that date. It said nothing, however, about the property or money they had been in possession of before marrying. This was rectified by a follow-up act in 1882. From this point, a married woman could own her own separate property, and she could hold it or dispose of it as she wished, by will, or by any other means. She could also run a business or carry on a trade in her own right, and she would be liable for her own contracts and debts.

It follows that more married women left wills from the 1870s onwards. However, wills or letters of administration relating to the property of married women are by no means unknown before that date and are well worth checking the will register for. Working out how your married ancestor came to leave a will could be interesting, was her family better off than her husbands? Was there a marriage settlement? Was she perhaps legally separated from her husband and therefore after 1857, entitled to possession of Her own earnings?

Source: Book 'The Female Line' by Margaret Ward, pages 24 and 33

### Things to remember when researching your ancestors' marriages.

Before beginning to search for a marriage, you need to remember the pitfalls, regarding spelling, handwriting and missing entries. Bear in mind that common-law relationships occurred frequently, divorces, or annulments were virtually impossible, marriage to a wide range of Kith and Kin was forbidden, apprentices could not marry; many men went, voluntary or otherwise, into the army or navy, and could be away for years at a time. After seven years, with no news, their wives often felt free to remarry. Re-marrying was common; it is estimated that at least 25% of marriages involved a widow or widower although marital status is often not stated. While the majority of marriages particularly after 1754 took place in the brides parish a substantial minority took place in either the bridegrooms parish or in a parish convenient to both of them, with one of the couple establishing the necessary four weeks, residential requirement.

Always bear in mind that the bride might be a widow, therefore baptised under a different surname, and that the groom could be a widower with children born to an earlier wife.

Did you know until 1886 marriages could only take place between 8 am and 12 noon. The time was then extended to 3 pm and in 1936, to 6 pm. Marriage was also forbidden at certain times of the year principally during the 40 days of lent, Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday, and the 24 days of advent, preceding Christmas day.

Source: Book 'Pitfalls and Possibilities in Family History Research' by Pauline M. Litton. Pages 141 and 143

### 2023 Open House - From the 6th to the 17th of September

Don't forget this year's Open House Festival. This is a two-week celebration of London's homes, architecture and neighbourhoods. You can get inside some of London's best known buildings, as well as some of its best kept secrets. Open House Festival revels what happens inside the buildings that we walk past every day; a festival that works to give all Londoners the chance to learn from the city's best architecture and the people behind it. This includes London boroughs such as Bromley, Bexley, and Greenwich. Along with open buildings, the festival has a programme of urban walks and tours and is one of the best ways to learn about London's history, architecture and the social significance of the diverse neighbourhoods of London.

The 2023 Open House Festival programme is now live – visit their website <https://open-city.org.uk/open-house-festival-2023>

### The Sevenoaks Committee: Branch Chair - Bill Chopping

**Committee Members: Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins, Sandra Marchant,  
Barbara Attwaters, Maureen Berry.**