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ISSUE NUMBER 124

Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY - www.nwkfhs.org.uk

Welcome to NWKFHS Sevenoaks Branch

Our meetings take place at Otford Memorial Hall, 28A High Street, Otford, TN14 5PQ

Doors open at 10.45 am, meeting starts at 11am - Parking: Up to 2 hours: £0.50 - Up to 3 hours: £1.00

We warmly welcome visitors and new members and aim to provide all the advice and support you may need in your family history journey.

Guests: We kindly ask for a £4 donation to support the Society's funds. Members: £2 contribution per meeting.

Hand sanitiser and masks are available at the venue. Chairs are arranged with considerate spacing for those who may still be cautious about COVID. We are also pleased to announce that we now have a hearing assistance system in place to improve the audio experience for attendees who may benefit from enhanced sound clarity.

TODAYS TALK: Christmas in the Middle Ages with Toni Mount

Christmas without turkey, roast potatoes, crackers, cards and Father Christmas!

But for those of you coming to listen to Toni, there will be sausage rolls, mince pies, tea and coffee.

Toni earned her Research Master's degree from the University of Kent in 2009 through study of a medieval medical manuscript held at the Wellcome Library in London. She is a well-known lecturer, historian, and author whose books draw on her research into the lives of ordinary—and sometimes extraordinary—people throughout history. A familiar and much-enjoyed speaker, Toni has visited us many times before, and it will be a real pleasure to welcome her back. She is based in Gravesend and always brings history to life with warmth, humour, and fascinating detail.

NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING 10TH January

Adam Taylor on Islands of the Medway Estuary

Using animation, sound and images, this PowerPoint presentation draws on many sources; census records, photos, Victorian technical plans, personal experience and several trips to the National Archives - to bring to life the people who lived on these islands, unlock the secret of how the twin forts of Hoo and Darnet were built, the story of the pub which stood on an island in the middle of the estuary, how a WW1 German submarine ended up where it is now and the story of the infamous Deadmans island.

The presentation also takes a close look at some of the flora and fauna of this huge, beautiful wilderness that is the Medway estuary. Adam is a keen canoeist with fifteen years' experience of paddling a fourteen-foot, Canadian (open) canoe. He has canoed in many places including the dramatic wilds of Ontario, pristine lakes of Finland, stunning rivers of Sweden and beautiful places here in the UK, but it is the islands and salt marshes of the Medway estuary where his heart is.

DARTFORD BRANCH MEETING 10TH January - (Please note CHANGE OF DATE)

Thames Sailing Barges by John Rayment

This is the history of the Thames Barges, whose red sails were once a common sight on the London River and Thames Estuary, and of the men who worked on them.

Our speaker is John Rayment a member of the Thames Sailing Barge Trust, a charity whose volunteers have undertaken to preserve these vessels for future generations. You may have seen the results of their endeavours at events on the river such as the Gravesend Festival.

Please visit our website for details of more workshops and updates and don't forget to sign up for our free twice monthly Society eNewsletter.

UP AND COMING LIBRARY WORKSHOPS

DNA and General Family History Discussion Group with Pam Goddard

14 January 10:30

Library Writing Group with Pauline Heathcote

25 February 10:30

ZOOM DISCUSSION GROUPS, TALKS AND WORKSHOP

ZOOM Do you feel a bond to any particular ancestors? Do you have favourites? with Ann Clarke

7 January 10:30

ZOOM WORKSHOP Beginning Family History with David Cufley

14 January 19:30

ZOOM DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln

21 January 10:30

ZOOM He's not missing, he is here. Tracing the missing of the First World War with Mel Donnelly

8 January 19:30

ZOOM Scottish Interest Discussion Group with Pam Goddard

28 January 10:30

(Please submit your Brick Wall by 12 November to David Cufley via <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/?location=1#Contact>)

Please log in 15 minutes before each online event and enjoy chatting amongst participants before it starts.

As this event is on Zoom, don't forget to bring your own coffee and biscuits! ☕ 🍪 😊

All events are for members only. For further details and fees please visit our website.

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

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



Participating in a North West Kent Family History workshop or discussion offers numerous benefits. It provides valuable skills for research, enhances your understanding of historical contexts, and fosters a sense of connection with your ancestry. We warmly welcome both familiar faces and new friends.

Calling all volunteers with fresh ideas! If you have a new topic of interest you'd like to see covered in our workshops, or you wish to be involved with our workshops, we want to hear from you. Contact us through bookings and enquiries by e-mail workshop.booking@nwkhfs.org.uk

Bring Your Own Mug (BYOM)



Let's make our meetings a little eco-friendly! Please where possible BYOM to help us to save a little cost, reduce waste and make a positive impact on the environment. If this is difficult or you forget don't worry, we do have a small supply of mugs to ensure you can enjoy a drink. We thank you for your cooperation.



28 January – Library Access Update

The library will be open for members to carry out their own research on this day. However, please note that access to the books and some maps and document collections will be restricted until the Society Committee meeting has concluded. We plan on finishing committee business by 1.00pm but sometimes overrun.

We apologise for any inconvenience and thank you for your understanding.



An Invitation from the Editor

As a member of our esteemed Family History Society, we invite you to contribute to our upcoming journals in the next few months. At NWKFHS, we value the rich tapestry of family narratives and historical insights that our members bring to the table. Your unique perspective and expertise would undoubtedly enrich our journal.

Whether you have a captivating family story, compelling research, or an enlightening exploration of historical records, we warmly welcome your submissions. This is a terrific opportunity to share your knowledge and passion with fellow members.

If you are interested in contributing, please feel free to reach out to us with your proposed topic or submission. Our editor Pauline will be delighted to hear from you and will respond to every proposal. Please email theeditor@nwkhfs.org.uk - word files or simply text in the body of an email is fine. We await your proposals.

Help Needed



Many hands make light work. That is certainly true when it comes to sharing the tasks that keep our Society operating smoothly. Please see our website for monthly updates for these volunteer opportunities. Below are a few tasks where help is much needed at our Sevenoaks Branch.

Chair – Sevenoaks Branch Meetings

Barbara Phillips is currently acting Chair but would like to relinquish this post as she is also programme secretary for the branch and has other responsibilities within the Society. The chair does not have as many responsibilities as previously, as others have taken on some of the tasks. If the Branch Chair is away for a meeting, this can be managed. The job is not onerous but needs commitment.

Transporter - Sevenoaks & Dartford Branch Meetings

Sevenoaks & Dartford need someone to bring the Bought -in-Books to the meetings. When not required they can be housed in the Society's lock-up off of Thames Road, Dartford. One does not need a big car boot. Any monies involved are the responsibility of the individual branch and do not concern the person who brings them. The job is not onerous but does need commitment.

Raffle and Refreshment Volunteers

We're looking for volunteers to help with refreshments and the raffle at our meetings. The tasks are simple and straightforward, and full guidance will be given, so there's no need to worry if you haven't done it before. All we ask is a bit of commitment and reliability to help things run smoothly for everyone.

If you're able to help out, even occasionally, please speak to a committee member at the next meeting or get in touch via the website.

We would greatly appreciate any raffle prize donations as well. Thank you – your support makes a big difference!

ON THIS DAY

December 13th is the 347 day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 18 days remain to the end of the year.

December the twelfth month of the year, was the tenth month in the old calendar of Romulus c 750 BC.

December is derived from the Latin word decem meaning "ten".

1577 Sir Francis Drake sets sail from Plymouth, England, on his round-the-world voyage

1623 The Plymouth Colony establishes the system of trial by 12-men jury in the American colonies

1642 Abel Tasman is the first recorded European to sight New Zealand

1643 English Civil War: The Battle of Alton takes place in Hampshire.

1758 The English transport ship Duke William sinks in the North Atlantic, killing over 360 people

1769 Dartmouth College is founded by the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, with a royal charter from King George III, on land donated by Royal governor John Wentworth.

1937 Second Sino-Japanese War: Battle of Nanking: The city of Nanjing, defended by the National Revolutionary Army under the command of General Tang Shengzhi, falls to the Japanese. This is followed by the Nanking Massacre, in which Japanese troops rape and slaughter hundreds of thousands of civilians

1962 NASA launches Relay 1, the first active repeater communications satellite in orbit

1972 Apollo program: Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt begin the third and final extra-vehicular activity (EVA) or "Moonwalk" of Apollo 17. To date they are the last humans to set foot on the Moon

1974 Malta becomes a republic within the Commonwealth of Nations

2018 Noah Klieger, Holocaust survivor who became an award-winning Israeli journalist died (born 1926)

Old Occupations:

- ❖ **OAT HULLER** A person who removed the hull (the dry outer covering of a fruit, seed, or nut; a husk, a shell) from oats. This could be done by grinding the oats between two stones (older method- miller) or by heating the oats and then spinning them in a container to remove the hulls (newer method 1900s). Either could be on census. The latter method could be done at home. (Huller - a person who removes the hulls)
- ❖ **OILMAN** One who deals in oils; one who is engaged in the business of producing or of selling oil. One who sold oil specifically used for lamps. A retailer who sells vegetable oils, and food preserved in oil. A person who sold the oil for lamps
- ❖ **OSIER PEELER** or **WITHY PEELER** Person who removed bark from willow rods or osiers which were used in basket weaving, usually women and children

Edwardian Health Care (1901–1914)

Healthcare was becoming recognisably modern

- X-rays (post-1895)
- Vaccination more common
- Specialist hospitals (eyes, maternity, chest)
- District nurses visited homes in poorer areas
- Midwives Act 1902 introduced training and regulation

Where your ancestors got treatment

- Poorer families: still heavily relied on charity or workhouse infirmaries
- Working-class families: friendly society doctors (a precursor to the NHS GP)
- Middle/upper classes: private consulting rooms, private hospitals

Common illnesses

- Influenza
- TB (still widespread)
- Infections from childbirth (reduced but still a risk)
- Workplace accidents

Genealogy clues

- Sanatorium records (TB treatment)
- Early medical insurance / friendly society documents
- Coroner's reports for industrial accidents
- Newspapers increasingly reported illness, accidents, hospitalisation

How this helps you interpret your family history

Cause of death terminology – Many ancestors' death certificates list unfamiliar terms:

- Phthisis = tuberculosis
- Apoplexy = stroke
- Childbed fever = postpartum infection
- Ague = malaria-like fever
- Dropsy = heart or kidney failure

Understanding family movements

Illness often explains:

- Why families moved to cities (seeking work despite unhealthy living conditions)
- Why children were sent to relatives
- Why widows remarried quickly (economic necessity)

Why children died young

Child mortality was extremely high:

- Georgian: 30–40%
- Victorian: still 15–20% in working classes

Mental health & asylums

Victorian and Edwardian asylums kept exceptionally detailed records. Symptoms recorded for things like:

- postnatal depression
- dementia
- alcoholism
- epilepsy



The Sevenoaks Committee: Branch Chair – Vacant

Members: Barbara Phillips, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins, Sandra Marchant, Janet Rose, Barbara Attwaters, Maureen Berry, Jon Henderson, Christine Hills