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Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY, SEVENOAKS, KENT
www.nwkhfs.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.

TODAYS TALK: From Castle to Cardboard, Discovering the History of Eynsford Castle

In this talk, Rod demonstrates and tells of the origins of the castle and how it then evolved over the period to reach its heyday in the 1100s. It tells the story of the influential de Eynsford family and their involvement in the Barons' revolt which led to the fall of Rochester Castle and the loss of Eynsford Castle to King John.

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. He was a London advertising copy writer; then ran his own commercial film company.

Rod specialises in reproducing homes of historical interest back to the period in which they were first built. This takes much research and reference as well as a fair amount of calculation. His particular interest is in the life of the people who lived there at that time. A large selection of his models of featured places and homes in the Darent Valley are on permanent display at Lullingstone Castle.

Speaker ROD SHELTON

NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING

16TH March - The Medieval Housewife

(Note that this month the meeting is one week later than its usual date of 2nd Saturday of the month)

Have you ever wondered what life was like for the ordinary housewife in the Middle Ages? Or how much power a medieval lady really had? Find out all about medieval housewives, peasant women, grand ladies, women in trade and women in the church. More has been written about medieval women in the last twenty years than in the two whole centuries before that. Female authors of the medieval period have been rediscovered and translated; queens are no longer thought of as merely decorative brood mares for their royal husbands and have merited their own biographies.

In the past, historians have tended to look at what women could not do. We will look at the lives of medieval women in a more positive light, finding out what rights and opportunities they enjoyed and attempting to uncover the real women beneath the layers of dust accumulated over the centuries.

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 are based on her research into the lives of ordinary and sometimes extra-ordinary people through history. Toni has spoken to us many times before and it will be a pleasure to hear her again.

Speaker TONI MOUNT

DARTFORD BRANCH MEETING

2ND March - Spitalfields Through the Ages with John Halligan

John Halligan is a Freeman of the City of London and a Qualified City Guide. He will describe the history and development of this historic area known for its Huguenot connections. With the aid of a colourful presentation, he will explore the fascinating story of the various migrant groups who have settled in Spitalfields including the legacy left by the Huguenot silk weavers. From 1960s onwards there has been a campaign to save many of the original properties, including the Old Spitalfields Market, which John will show us.

Speaker JOHN HALLIGAN

UP AND COMING LIBRARY WORKSHOPS

DNA and General Family History with Jack Ellis and Pam Goddard 14 February 10:30

Scottish Interests Discussion Group with Pam Goddard: 13 March 10.30

The group will look at the National Library of Scotland. What resources it holds and what is online?

DNA and General Family History with Jack Ellis 13 March 10.30

Booking essential - please email workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk to reserve your place.

MONTHLY ZOOM DISCUSSION GROUPS

ZOOM DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln 21 February 10:30

ZOOM Discussion Group with Ann Clarke 6 March 10.30

Are census records accurate and how can you tell?

ZOOM TALKS

Sevenoaks to Swanley Railway and the Eynsford Viaduct. Includes navvies and railway worker families with David Cufley 14 February at 7:30 pm

The Royal Dockyards, Deptford and Woolwich and their workers with David Cufley 27 March at 7:30 pm

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

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

How to get the Zoom Link

Booking is no longer required for individual Zoom Workshops and Discussion Groups.

For 2024 a Zoom Register has been created to cover all attendance to any of the zoom groups. Any society member who would like to be added to the register needs to submit their name, email address and membership number to workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk. You only need to register once.

Once a month the zoom links for the discussion groups and workshops will be sent by email to those members on the register. Members who have registered can then attend as many of the Zoom groups as they wish with no need to make a specific booking for each one.

All Zoom Workshops and Discussion Groups are members only-events.

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 more workshops and updates and don't forget to sign up for our free twice monthly Society eNewsletter.

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 look forward to you joining us.

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 workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk

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@nwkfhs.org.uk – word files or simply text in the body of an email is fine. We look forward to hearing from you.

Health more than 100 years ago

At the end of the last century, the standard of health in this country was far below that of today. In the 1880s of the population as a whole:

- ❖ 3 out of 4 people died under the age of 40.
- ❖ 1 out of 2 people died under the age of 20.
- ❖ 1 in every 4 babies died in its first year.

In the 1980s, the average life expectancy was 73 years. One in every sixty babies died in its first year. There were huge differences between the health of working-class people and the better off. The high death rate of the 1880s was due partly to the unhealthy conditions in which working people lived as this extract illustrates:

'House flies and bluebottles swarmed every kitchen alive: sticky foul smelling paper traps dangled about, dark with their withering bodies. And the bedbugs! With the warm days they appeared in battalions, first in the hovels, then in the better class houses, where people waged campaigns against their sickening sweet-odoured presence. Through summer days one saw the "fever van" carrying off some child who only too often would be seen no more.'

Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum

Much of the medical knowledge we have today did not exist. The discovery that germs cause certain diseases had not been made, there was no cure for tuberculosis, no penicillin or other antibiotics, no X-rays. There was no health service and people had to pay to see a doctor. Most health care among working people was done by women, who dosed children, nursed husbands, cared for the elderly, and passed on to each other tried and tested cures and remedies.

'We never had a doctor. If you were ill mother rubbed your chest or put something in your ear. I can never remember doctor coming into our home.'

Bertha Milton, in Bristol as We Remember It (writing of the 1900s)

Home Cures

Every mother had her 'home cures', often handed down through generations, and in many streets there was a local woman, to whom everyone went for medical advice. A well known cure for whooping cough was to go down to the gas works and inhale the fumes. Coughs and colds were a constant problem in winter for those in damp, unheated houses, and cough mixtures were homemade, mostly based on onions and vinegar. One way believed to prevent colds was to sew children into brown paper vests smeared with thick lard. They then kept them on all the winter. An investigation among London School children in the 1870s found that by the end of winter, one in three hadn't taken off their clothes for six months.

Many medicines were made from herbs, either grown in the garden or bought from the local herbalist. There were other cheap and easily obtainable ingredients. Here are some common homemade recipes:

- ❖ Saffron for measles
- ❖ Elderflower and homemade lard for sores
- ❖ Grated acorns for diarrhoea
- ❖ Heated onion for earache
- ❖ Cobwebs to stop bleeding

Some were a little outlandish, like the East Anglian cure for whooping cough - eating a fried field mouse!

There was a strong belief that 'prevention was better than cure', and every week children were dosed with Castor oil, Epsom salts or even soap and water to keep them regular. Another belief was that rhubarb taken regularly would clear the blood.

By the end of the century there were a number of pills and tonics available from chemists for example, 'Holloway's Pills' which claimed to cure all kinds of ailments. In fact a legal case brought against doctor Holloway revealed that the pills contained 'butter, lard, terps, wax and nothing else'.

Source Book 'Ordinary Lives – A hundred Years Ago' by Carol Adams and Published by Virago Press Limited 1982. Pages 170, 171, 178 and 179

Life expectancy at birth of the four UK nations in 2020 to 2022 was estimated to be:

- ❖ in England, 78.8 years for males and 82.8 years for females
- ❖ in Scotland, 76.5 years for males and 80.7 years for females
- ❖ in Wales, 77.9 years for males and 81.8 years for females
- ❖ in Northern Ireland, 78.4 years for males and 82.3 years for females

Source Office of National Statistics - [National life tables – life expectancy in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/national-life-tables)

Briefs, Pew Lists, Legacies and the Weather

As well as details of baptism, marriages and burials parish registers may contain all sorts of miscellaneous information. Some parish clerks and churchwardens used the register as a 'parish notebook' and entered notes on terriers, briefs, pew rents, legacies left to the parish, taxes paid and even the state of the weather and the harvest. There is always the possibility that you may pick up an interesting snippet of information relating occasionally to your ancestor or, more often, to the place where they lived.

Briefs were the equivalent of a modern 'Flag Day'. A letter was distributed to churches throughout England licensing a collection to be taken for a specific object of charity.

Pew Lists, fixed pews were uncommon before the 16th century but became increasingly common as the century advanced. There were rules relating to the positioning of pews, and who should sit in them, but as so many other cases what happened was very much down to the individual churchwardens and their interpretation of the regulations.

Legacies left to the parish, many parishioners in their wills left sums of money to the parish to be invested, the interest to be paid out annually, usually for the relief of the poor of the parish or Township or to enable children to be put out as apprentices. Many churches contain 'charity boards' detailing such donations and it is worth trying to locate such a board for the parish where your ancestors lived; they may be named as having given money or you may be able to visualise them receiving a handout, either of money or of loaves of bread, particularly at Christmas and Easter.

Weather, as well as meteorological events (hail, rain, snow and wind) mentioned in Briefs some incumbents and parish Clerks also made notes of outstanding events, such as the Aurora Borealis.

Terrier, a terrier was a written survey or inventory of land and other property held by the incumbent for the support of himself and his church. It was often very detailed and, as well as naming the fields, many include information about the rectory/Vicarage, the church and church plate. The terrier often includes names of tenants of church land and also names of the holders of adjoining lands.

Source: Book 'Pitfalls and Possibilities in Family History Research' by Pauline M. Litton - Published by Swansong Publications 2010. Pages 103, 104, 105 & 192

ON THIS DAY

February 10th is the 41ST day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 325 days remain to the end of the year.

February is named after an ancient Roman festival of purification called Februa, during which people were ritually washed. In this case, the god was named after the festival, not the other way around.

1306 In front of the high altar of Greyfriars Church in Dumfries, Robert the Bruce murders John Comyn, sparking the revolution in the Wars of Scottish Independence.

1567 Lord Darnley, second husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, is found strangled following an explosion at the Kirk o' Field house in Edinburgh, Scotland, a suspected assassination.

1763 French and Indian War: The Treaty of Paris ends the war and France cedes Quebec to Great Britain.

1814 Napoleonic Wars: The Battle of Champaubert ends in French victory over the Russians and the Prussians

1840 Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

1906 HMS Dreadnought, the first of a revolutionary new breed of battleships, is christened.

1939 Spanish Civil War: The Nationalists conclude their conquest of Catalonia and seal the border with France.

1981 Holly Willoughby, English model and television host is born.

2014 Shirley Temple, American actress and diplomat died (b. 1928)

2021 The traditional Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is cancelled for the first time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Did you know?

- A BAGNIOKEEPER oversaw a bath house or brothel.
- A BAIRMAN or BAREMAN was a pauper or beggar.
- A BANG BEGGAR was an officer of the parish who controlled the length of stay of any stranger to the parish.
- A BOARDWRIGHT was a carpenter.
- A BONE PICKER collected rags and bones also known as a Rag and Bone Man. They also collected 'pure' (dog dung) for use in the tanning industry.

The Sevenoaks Committee: Branch Chair – Vacant
Committee Members: Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins, Sandra Marchant,
Barbara Attwaters, Maureen Berry, Bill Chopping