

North West Kent FHS January 2026 enews

Welcome to the first enews in 2026. Thank you for reading, and if you are receiving this for the first time - welcome.

To all our readers - wishing you many new records uncovered, fresh discoveries made, and mysteries solved in the year ahead.

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Take a look at our website to see our extensive programme of events - dozens of in-person and Zoom talks, discussion groups, and workshops running through to the end of 2026. <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings>

The membership year runs to 31 December 2026 so now would be a great time for to join. It's only £10 - or £12 for joint members.

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/about/membership/our-membership>

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Zoom Talk: 8 January 7.30pm *He's not missing, he is here.* Tracing the Missing of the First World War with Mel Donnelly

The First World War presented an unprecedented challenge for the military forces – how to bury their dead, locate and register their graves and how to commemorate those who could not be found, all on a scale never previously experienced.

Family and military historians continue to be fascinated with that work, which continues today. The talk will include an explanation of how the burial, search and identification processes developed and how and where the Missing are commemorated, with guidance on how to interpret the records and tips on useful sources.

Mel Donnelly's fascination with family history, especially that of those who served in one of the armed forces, started over four decades ago. She has been very fortunate to be able to combine her military and family history research with her professional life, serving in the Royal Air Force, delivering international First and Second World War programmes at the Imperial War Museum and more recently leading the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Commemorations team.

Mel specialises in tracing the experiences of those who fought with the Commonwealth military forces, in particular those who paid the ultimate price. She now shares her expertise through talks, courses and workshops.

Mel's talk will be recorded and will be in the Members Only Area of our website for one month. No handout but a 'tips' slide lists useful website.

Please log in from 7.15pm and enjoy chat with the other participants before the talk starts.

Please ensure you use your real name when joining our Zoom events. Participants appearing as 'Zoom User' or similar will not be admitted, as this helps us prevent scammers from joining.

To Get the Zoom Link

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/workshops/upcoming-zoom-workshops/zoom-talk-hes-not-missing-he->

[is-here-with-mel-donnelly](#)

or <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings> for all January events

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Dartford Branch Talk 10 January *Thames Sailing Barges* with speaker John Rayment (Please note CHANGE OF DATE - our venue is unavailable on our usual date) Doors open 9.45am meeting starts at 10.30am

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.

John Rayment is 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.

The Talk venue has a large, free car park but it is shared with other users and can be busy at times.

No booking, just turn up.

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/dartford-branch-meetings/dartford-branch-talk-thames-sailing-barges-by-john-rayment-please-note-change-of-date>

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Sevenoaks Branch Talk 10 January with speaker Adam Taylor on *The Islands of the Medway Estuary* Doors open 10.45am meeting starts 11am

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.

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/sevenoaks-branch-meetings/sevenoaks-branch-talk-adam-taylor-on-islands-of-the-medway-estuary>

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Workshops, Special Interest and Discussion Groups - for Members Only

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings>

There are dozens of Workshops and Discussion Groups via Zoom to cater for members who cannot get to our Library - which is the venue, on Wednesdays, for our in person workshops.

The wealth of expertise amongst the Society members who volunteer to lead these groups is amazing. I wonder if other Societies put on this number of training sessions for their members.

Membership of our Society is only £10 a year and if joining now lasts until 31

December 2026. <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/about/membership/our-membership/#options>

If any Society members missed a workshop which they would have liked to attend, or it filled up, see here for videos of some past workshops: <https://nwkhfs.org.uk/events/workshops/past-zoom-workshop-videos>

Note the above link will only work for Society members logged into the website.

Attending Workshops and Discussion Groups

Groups meeting at the Library

These must be booked individually - the website link explains how to reserve your place. This is essential as numbers have to be kept to ten due to space restrictions.

Zoom talks, discussion group and workshops

These do not have to be booked individually, but you do need to register in order to be sent the Zoom links. The website link for each Zoom group explains how you register.

Many, many thanks to our volunteer workshop coordinators for arranging our exciting programme of workshops, and to the workshop leaders who all give their time freely.

January Workshops and Discussion Groups

7 January 10.30am Zoom Discussion Group with Ann Clarke: *Do you feel a bond to any particular ancestors? Do you have favourites?*

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/zoom-discussion-group/zoom-discussion-group-with-ann-clarke-do-you-feel-a-bond-to-any-particular-ancestors-do-you-have-favourites>

14 January 10.30am Library DNA & General Family History Discussion Group with Pam Goddard

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/discussion-group/dna-and-general-family-history-discussion-group-with-pam-goddard>

14 January 7.30pm Zoom Workshop: Beginning Family History with David Cufley

How do you start? Are there new things to learn if you have been doing this for a while?

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/zoom-workshop/zoom-workshop-beginning-family-history-with-david-cufley-2>

21 January 10.30am Zoom DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/zoom-discussion-group/zoom-dna-and-general-family-history-discussion-group-with-laura-lincoln-2>

28 January 10.30am Zoom Scottish Interest Discussion Group with Pam Goddard

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/branch-meetings/branch-meetings/zoom-discussion-group/zoom-scottish-interest-discussion-group-with-pam-goddard>

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Society Library – Wednesday Open Days

The Society Library is usually open every Wednesday for members to carry out their own research, enjoy a cuppa, socialise, and take part in workshops and discussion groups held at the library. Our team of volunteers is also on hand to offer help and guidance.

Members are welcome to use the library's PCs and WiFi to access both *Ancestry* and *FindMyPast*, which now include the 1921 census. We recommend joining **Kent Libraries**, as this allows you to access these websites on your own device while at the library—helping to reduce demand for the library's PCs.

Not yet a member? You're welcome to join the Society in person at the library on any Wednesday.

📍 **Address:** 80 Summerhouse Drive, Joydens Wood, Bexley, Kent DA5 2EE

🚗 **Parking:** Free in nearby side roads

🕒 **Opening hours:** 10am to 4pm

To assist our volunteers, we kindly ask that visitors with research queries aim to arrive earlier in the day if possible. Please bring along any existing information you have about the ancestor you're researching, and consider bringing a **USB memory stick** to save any discoveries you make during your visit.

Important Note: on 28 January a Trustees Meeting is being held in the room where all our books and some maps are stored. So unfortunately, the room will not be accessible until the meeting ends, probably about 1pm/1.30pm.

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Our Journal Editor Pauline would love to hear your stories and receive your images for inclusion in the 2026 Journals.

Copy Date for the March 2026 Journal is 10 January. But please don't be deterred by this as there will be three more Journals to fill in 2026.

Perhaps write a little about your family history - maybe an ancestor with an interesting occupation, or a widely travelled individual.

Do you have a family heirloom? Something which has little monetary value but means a lot to you and your family. Could you share an image? A clock, a hat from an Easter parade or even a toy.

And if not, could you send the editor an email explaining why not? This might be humorous, or really help her to understand why contributions have dried up?

Also needed are images of your local war memorials, churches or schools that feature in your family history.

Pauline Heathcote, Journal editor

SEND a brief message to Pauline right now using <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/contact> Pauline will be delighted to hear from you and all such communications will receive a response.

You will then have her email address to submit your photo and/or research story.

The Journal is sent to all members, and is available online to logged-in Society members here <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/community/nwkhfs-quarterly-back-journals/past-quarterly-back-journals>

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Next Enews – Submissions Welcome

The next enews will be sent out on **1 February** If you have any items you'd like included, please send them to me **as soon as possible**, and no later than **28 January** Simply reply to this email to submit your content.

Going forward, the enews is circulated **monthly at the beginning of each month**. I may occasionally send a mid-month update as a reminder about an upcoming Zoom talk, as some other societies do.

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Click on our other links <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/community/news-journals/blog> [Facebook](#) [Flickr](#) <https://bsky.app/profile/nwkhfs.bsky.social>

I am a volunteer creating this e-news in my 'spare time' but, if you do notice any errors, please tell me, so that they are not carried forward to the next edition.

Please contact me if there's anything you want to say about enews. Just reply to this enews.

Please mention it to others and encourage them to sign up so that we can keep society members and anyone interested in family history informed of NWKFHS activities.

Stella Eames, Editor

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