

Encouraging the study of family history since 1976



in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & the Isle of Ely

THE JOURNAL



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VOLUME 32 : 1

SPRING 2026

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION

REGISTERED CHARITY No. : 278815

The Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society exists to encourage the study of genealogy, heraldry and family history within the old counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, and Huntingdonshire. We reformed on 1 January 2020 when the separate family history societies representing Cambridgeshire (est.1976) and Huntingdonshire (est.1984) amalgamated into a single organization.

We actively support established guidelines for good practice and aim to promote considered, informed and quality research. Our projects teams continue to work to scan, transcribe and index name-rich resources of genealogical interest, to enable researchers to pursue their county ancestors wherever they happen to now live. Volunteer researchers will offer their collective opinion on almost any query.

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For latest news, and updates

WATCH THE WEBSITE & NEWSLETTER & FACEBOOK

CONTACT US (for additional contacts/services see p51-2

All general correspondence via the Secretary, please :

secretary@chfhs.org.uk or by post to

CHFHS Secretary, 15 Castle Hythe, Ely, Cambs., CB7 4BU

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Additional guidance for contributors can be found on the CHFHS website

We aim to publish The Journal quarterly : mid-late Jan / April / July / Oct
You can submit material for publication at any time. We will include it in the next available issue (please be patient, space is finite and we will keep you posted)



CAMBS & HUNTS FHS JOURNAL

VOL 32 : 1

SPRING 2026



Welcome to the Spring edition of the CHFHS Journal—with an eclectic mix of articles and reports. A couple of important dates for your diaries in April (EA Fair at St Ives) and May (AGM with our 50th Anniversary at Huntingdon Archives).

Feature articles in this issue include—an idea for photo sharing; thoughts on what to do with all the evidence we collect; a “local” from Hunts who ended up in Papua New Guinea; a report on cataloguing the Kimbolton Estate papers; researching the name on a “sampler”; a call for contributions and help with a one-name study; and, some reflections on the past fifty years of researching family history and our society.

Regular updates include—research surgeries, the latest dates for the programme of monthly area research Zooms, and meetings/talks diary; reports of past talks; book reviews—& much more. As part of our 50th Anniversary Year in 2026, we hope to set up more research days around the county—watch out for dates/venues to be announced via the website, newsletter and facebook.

Print too small?? Swap to the e-journal—it can be **enlarged** to suit all vision !!

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cover photo : The “Sarah Charles” Sampler (see p.22)



The FHF Really Useful Family History Show is coming to East Anglia!

AGRA, Alde Valley Suffolk FH Group, Bedfordshire FHS, Burwell Museum, Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire FHS, Cambridgeshire Archive Services, Cambridgeshire Collection, Cromwell Museum, FamilySearch, Family Tree Maker, East of London FHS, Essex Society for FH, Family History Federation, Fenland FHS, FIBIS, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertfordshire FHS, Lincolnshire FHS, London, Westminster & Middlesex FHS, Northamptonshire FHS, Nuneaton & Warwickshire FHS, Overdale Postcards, Orders & Medals Research Society, Peterborough & District FHS, Pharos Tutors, RA Longley Publications, Romany & Traveller FHS, Suffolk FHS, This Way Books & Cassini Maps, WeAre.xyz

10AM - 4.30PM

Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 6WU

What3words: ///rash.sharp.remaining

#RUFHSStIves2026

LIVE IN ST IVES APRIL 18TH 2026



& recently booked— CambridgeAncestry.com
Guild of One Name Studies

plus— live talk by 'Genetic Genealogist' Donna Rutherford
(ticketed event bookable on the day)

Save The Day
Sat 23 May



CHFHS
1976-2026

AGM 2026 Huntingdon Library

Exhibition of documents by Hunts Archives : from 10.30

AGM : 12.15-12.45

Buffet Lunch & Celebration Cake : 12.45-14.00

Talk by Mia Bennett : 14.00-15.30

Hidden in the Small Print by Mia Bennett

Discover how little details can reveal the answer to your problems.

*This talk looks at where additional information may be hidden
within documents that you have already viewed.*

*It takes you through different ways of
examining and viewing records to get more from them.*

Often it is these small clues that can help break through brickwalls.

Both the AGM and the talk will be broadcast on Zoom. We need to be quorate for any decisions to be ratified, so please do try to attend either at Huntingdon or on Zoom. However, we are limited to 50 guests at the Library so booking will be essential for those that wish to attend in person on a first come, first served basis.

Bookings for Zoom and separately for attendance at Huntingdon Library will open on the website from 1 April, or, you can email secretary@chfhs.org.uk by no later than 18 April 2026 if you wish to attend in person. Confirmation of attendance will be required in order that lunch and refreshments can be ordered.



A WORD FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



Where do you stop?

The article “How many do you have?” in the last journal set me thinking. Although computers can readily manage large data sets, the 17,300 typical family 5th cousins in the Ancestry DNA blog makes it difficult to spend much time researching all of these and finding meaningful content. If we go to the 174,000 typical 6th cousins, the task becomes unachievable.

I am very conscious of this in my own family history as I am sure others are too, so we can make choices where to draw the line and stop researching. Many of the public trees online with tens of thousands of named people have copied incorrect content and shared this, so it can be copied again by others. The choices we make are personal, and a robust family tree is only essential for inheritance, and highly desirable for health conditions. My own research focuses on my direct ancestors, their siblings and spouses, and their siblings’ children, and the sibling’s spouse’s parents. These close family members are likely to have been known by my direct ancestors, and the sources linked to these people may provide clues for my direct ancestors and their lives. I extend this where I have corresponded with others, where there are interesting (for me) distant cousins, such as those reported in newspapers, or centenarians. Even with these limiting choices, the numbers are large; 298 siblings for my 4th great grandparents; this increases slightly as more evidence is found. Ancestry provides a list of researchers with DNA common ancestors for all my 4th great grandparents, as it will do for you if you have tested with them, and there is a wealth of new information that can be found by exploring all these links. Each researcher starts from a different perspective, and will therefore know things that others do not, and are not available online. Sibling numbers increase more slowly than with direct ancestors for two reasons – lower life expectancy, and fewer evidenced ancestors going further back.

I’d be interested to learn how you limit your own research – cut off dates; some branches only of the family; following clues as they occur; something

else?

What do you keep for yourself and your family?

I am sometimes asked by our members about planning for the future and what to do with what can be a large quantity of documents, photographs and artefacts accumulated over time and perhaps from earlier generations. This is more difficult when there are no living children, grandchildren or other family members. I am sure most of you will have wished that more family items, photographs, letters, certificates had been kept thereby increasing your understanding, knowledge and help research. There is no one answer that fits all situations, but the Society has recently published general guidance on the website that I hope will be helpful. I have been talking about this and getting ideas from several people, including Sue Asbee, so I am very pleased that Sue has written an article for the journal bringing this important subject to life with a personal view.

Medieval Cambridge genealogies

I am not sure how widely known the book *Compassionate Capitalism: Business and Community in Medieval England* is. Catherine Casson and her co-authors have written a study of the medieval property market in Cambridge, 2020, Bristol University Press. There is a chapter on Family Dynasties: Success and Failure including characteristics of successful families; evidence patterns; family strategies for success; risks of failure; old wealth and new wealth. Another chapter on family profiles uses the Hundred Rolls in the Bodleian Library and the records of property transfer to compile basic genealogies with narrative comments and aims to reconstruct the leading families in Cambridge working backwards from 1279. Some of the genealogies cover six generations. Names included – Barton; Blancgernum; Dunning; St Edmunds; Gogging; Ivo; Laurence; Pilat; Rus/Ruffus; Seman; Toylet; Wombe; Wulward, all high-ranking families. Middle ranking names – Crocheman; Richard at the Gate; Hubert; Parleben; Pipestraw. Smaller families – John of Aylsham; William Braci; Matilda le Comber; Michael Malerbe; Morice. Do any of these link up with your family?

2026, our 50th anniversary

Writing this in mid-January, many of you will have just renewed your membership due at the end of last year. Please can I remind anyone who pays by Standing Order, that it is vital to pay the correct amount in order to continue to receive all your benefits. The Society cannot make changes to Standing Order amounts when subscriptions change, only you can do this. There are a small but significant number of people who still pay an outdated

subscription, and this causes a great deal of work. Please all make sure your payments and other details are correct and kept up to date.

Members will continue to receive details of Society events and this year is the 50th anniversary after the founding of Cambridgeshire FHS in 1976. We hope to see as many of you as possible at the St Ives regional fair on 18 April where there will be a wide range of exhibitors, and our AGM and 50th anniversary celebration at Huntingdon on 23 May, where there will be the opportunity to look back over 50 significant years.

David Copsey

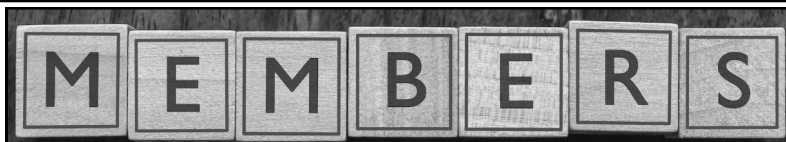
The Society offers condolences to the family of :

Frank Hart #5487

**and, we've just received news of the passing of
Peter Calver**

founder of the 'LostCousins' website and newsletter

**Peter was speaker at the CHFHS AGM last year, and will be
greatly missed by all in the family history community**



Keep an eye out for new content on the website

The database of 4m+ transcribed records in the Member's Area of the website is **FREE** to **ALL** members
(homepage; click top right; then select <search the database>)

- **Registering for zoom talks** : you will receive an acknowledgement by return whenever you register, but no zoom link. The link will **only** be issued 48hrs ahead of the event—so, please recheck your emails.
- **Cambs and Hunts Research** : the records database search / retrieval system is accessed **only** via the members area login.

all searches and results are FREE TO ALL MEMBERS

WHAT DO WE DO WITH ALL THE EVIDENCE ?

By Sue ASBEE

As family historians we have a personal investment in unearthing our past, and that personal element can be a problem when, faced with piles of paper and numerous miscellaneous artefacts, we need to decide what to store and what to discard among all the accumulated evidence. Family trees preserve our lineage, but it is the stories that we uncover that bring them to life. We have collected photographs of long-gone relatives and the places they lived in. From scouring birth, marriage and death certificates we know who their parents and siblings were, whether they married or not, who witnesses at their weddings were, and we may even know that they died of measles, bronchitis, childbirth, or simply old age. Census reports tell us where they lived, if they moved and where to, what their occupations were. And so the official documents - or often copies of them - pile up.

And then there are artefacts. A hypothetical grandmother's postcard collection for example, dating from early to late 1890s, documents her employment as a lady's maid travelling extensively in Italy, Germany and France, each time returning to the family's Park Lane home in London. What should be done with this rich primary historical source now that the cards have been catalogued and sorted? Half a dozen are declarations of love from an Italian man, as well as one much more formal one from the farmer she later married. If the postmarks are legible it's possible to date precisely when the cards were sent, and from where – such valuable evidence of a life! But what about the postcards with views of Le Boulevard de Madeleine in Paris or St Moritz in Winter which that grandmother bought as souvenirs of her travels, never intending to post? When storage is at a premium, do they deserve to be preserved too? They fill a couple of shoeboxes. A double bevelled looking glass and barometer present different but much bulkier storage problems.

There's a surprising amount of information to be found about this hypothetical grandmother's life and her family in the British Newspaper Archive: an inquest report of her father's death, thrown from a horse when she was only four years old; her sister's wedding listing guests and including all of the wedding presents; her husband as a young man up before the magistrates for poaching. Should these be printed and kept with the census reports, birth marriage and death certificates – and all the related evidence provided by local newspapers about other family members – or do we trust

the permanence of the on-line Newspaper Archive to save these stories in perpetuity? If we do, another pertinent question is raised: do local news articles like these only acquire meaning when they are gathered together from various sources and times to tell a family's story? If we discard these bits and pieces we have printed out, will anyone else have the time or the interest to ever put them together again?

Handwritten letters and card present a special case. They may reveal fascinating hitherto unknown relationships and events, or they may be prosaic – announcing arrival on Tuesday on the 4.15. But there is something beyond the information conveyed, something hauntingly personal about handwriting itself, whether the writer was known to us, or belongs to a relative from the remote past. Transcribing handwriting in the interests of a space-saving digital record rather than a bulky original curtails that emotional haunting sense of connection to the writer.

Our families' stories are based on collecting evidence, but the problem remains: what do we do with the primary sources once we have told the stories? Should we trusting that evolving technology won't render the copies redundant? And can digital images convey as much information as the real thing? What is lost when card or paper disappear? Did we scan both sides of a photograph, capturing the date, location and names of those who appear in it scribbled on the back, or the name of the photographer and address of his studio if this formal portrait dates from the 1850s? Do we need to keep that yellowing disintegrating newspaper cutting now it's been scanned? Now that cassette players have been superseded, I really hope we made a transcript of that audio interview with the great aunts back in the 1980s. Their voices accents and intonation will be lost though their words remain.

The doubled-bevelled looking glass and the barometer are antiques in good condition; we might sell them. But do we want to? A BBC Local internet item recently told the story of a metal detectorist who found a small piece of crumpled metal at the site of a plane crash dating from mid-twentieth century. It proved to be the badge from the pilot's cap. It had no intrinsic value whatsoever, but it meant an awful lot when given to his now-elderly daughter. That is probably the crucial decision-making point: an insignificant artefact can signify significant emotional worth - if its historical context links it to us as individuals. Educating the next generation to value our findings might provide a rationale and a duty to keep everything!

But if the younger generation remain resistant, perhaps we can educate and inform the future about past socio-economic conditions by donating our

accumulated research to a library or a museum? Then again, perhaps not. Norfolk museums' website is clear: 'If we already have an example of an object we will not duplicate it and we can only collect things with a good Norfolk connection'. This is disappointing but also suggests we reconsider the nature of the documents and artefacts we have inherited, are any of them specific to a sense of place and local history, or might any belong in a specific niche collection, such as textiles or costume? Was your great-grandfather a surgeon or a miller? Would the London Transport Museum welcome your great-uncle's long service medal, or his Union card – or do they already have more than enough of those? The Cambridge Museum of Technology is hopeful, admitting that 'there are gaps in our collection', but as with Norfolk's museums, they won't accept duplicate material and conclude 'sadly we cannot accept everything that has been offered to us'.

Museums and libraries face much the same difficult questions as we do: what to take, what to store, what to display. Like us, they too are invested in education and preservation, but an internet search of 'Museums donations' indicates that on the whole they would like our financial support rather than our artefacts. However, if you do have something unique the general advice is to email the curator first with a descriptions of the letters and documents, with photos, dimensions and the provenance of that double-bevelled mirror and that Victorian barometer. Include as much information as possible, then wait and hope and see whether you really want to part with them.

PERILS OF PREDICTIVE TEXT & AI

Beware of the effect of predictive text when filling in the name boxes to make a search of newspapers—

Susan = "suspect"

Hilary = "hilarious"

Norah = "north"

AI translations of speech make for interesting versions of place names

"Sof and bulbek"

Swaffham Bulbeck

"Whitney"

Whittlesey

"Street Nias"

St Neots



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MY FLACK ONE NAME STUDY

by Denise Carr

There have been a number of articles in The Journal on One Name Studies recently, so I thought readers might be interested in my Flack One Name Study as there may well be a Flack or two in their family trees.

My maiden surname is Flack, and I started researching my family tree over 20 years ago. My Great Grandfather, Francis Walter Flack, was born in Cambridge in 1859, and went out to South Africa as a Church of England minister shortly after he was ordained, settling in the Uitenhage / Port Elizabeth area of the Cape Province. So joining the Cambridgeshire FHS was an obvious point to start researching this side of my family tree and I have remained a member ever since.

When I hit the usual blank wall with a William Flack, born about 1710 in the Cambridgeshire area, I started gathering information on other Flacks in the surrounding area to try to find where he was born. I very quickly amassed a huge amount of genealogy information on Flacks, not only from Cambridgeshire, but also from neighbouring Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Huntingdonshire. I teamed up with another CFHS member, Jim Flack, now sadly no longer with us, to build the Flack Genealogy website. A Guild of One Name Studies member came across this website and convinced me to take my research one step further by taking on a Flack One Name Study. There are thousands of Flack families just in the UK alone, and few One Name Studies are that big, so it was with much misgiving that I signed up as a member of the Guild of One Name Studies and registered my Flack / Flacke / Flach study. But I here I am, many years later and still spending far too much of my "free" time researching Flacks and refining my Flack ONS as new sources become available.

My master database currently holds over 108,000 individuals, all of which are connected to the surname Flack (or its variants Flacke and Flach) either by birth/adoption, or marriage. My One Name Study covers all of the UK, as well as USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Most of individuals are gathered into family trees, the largest of which contains some 75,000 individuals and includes most of Cambridgeshire Flacks, including my direct line.

The Flack Genealogy website includes a fully searchable copy of my ONS database, and is now kindly hosted by the Guild of One Name Studies where it will remain freely available to everyone to view for as long as the Guild

exists. The link to my website can be found via the Guild of One Name Studies site under the surname Flack, or the database itself can be accessed directly at <https://flack.one-name-mwp1.net>. There is no need to log on - all the information there is available, read only, to everyone. If there are Flacks in your family tree, chances are they are on that database!

THIS MIGHT INTEREST YOU ~~~

A recent enquiry concerned a person apparently appearing in the burial registers of two adjacent parishes on consecutive days—was this true?

The research team looked at this puzzle, and concluded that, “yes”, on this occasion it was true and that it was one and the same person—the first entry appears to be a mis-recorded funeral service at place “A”, and the second entry the actual burial at place “B”. Looking at the back-story here, it’s evident that the person and wife had once lived at “B”, she died and was buried there; the widowed husband then moved to “A” where he had relatives, and lived for the next twenty years. When he died at “A”, a funeral held there for him, and then he was taken to “B” for burial with his wife (and recorded as being of place “A”); the couple have a joint grave stone at “B”.

Having first ruled out the possibility of there actually being death/burials of two people of the same name and age in the same area, this exercise highlighted something which we possibly are accustomed to over-looking—the distinction between “funeral” and “burial”. Mostly, the two events follow on, one from the other at the same place, and the parish register entry we usually see is the record of only the burial, any funeral service would normally be recorded separately in the “register of services” (a set of records not readily accessible to online research). It’s also not unusual to see a different place of residence recorded in the burial register when the deceased has been brought from somewhere else for burial (eg. “John Smith of Girton”, being buried at Cottenham). Cemeteries keep their own records.

When one of the key facts many researchers seek is the final resting place of a person, this distinction has perhaps taken on a greater significance over the past century. With the rise in popularity of cremation, we need to consider what records are actually created and what might actually happen to the ashes—burial registers increasingly record “interment of ashes”, but all the crematorium records might say is “returned to undertaker” or “returned to family” if taken away for private scattering who-knows-where. Thus, if a parish burial can’t be found, and newspaper provide no clues, consider the nearest civil cemeteries or crematorium at the time the death occurred.

SHARING PHOTOS—a standardised names format

by Julian Turner

Some of the most precious resources we have are photographs of our ancestors.

However it only takes one uninterested generation to lose the lot.

Hopefully this will be just the first of many pictures that survive with names.

This is the wedding of James Smith Peachey and Lydia Mary Bradford in Bottisham, between Cambridge and Newmarket, 21.06.1904. Nobody has yet told me what the building was, but it has been suggested a plate camera photograph was employed by the Navy as a recruitment consideration. My late mother made it her business to identify as far as possible all the adults at her parents' wedding. They are listed in the chart on the following page (if anyone would like a copy, please get in touch.)



**Julian proposes a standardised format for listing names/
information about individuals in group photos—we would
welcome others to share similar contributions for future issues**

row	no. l to r	forename(s)	surname	lifespan	relationship
Back	1	Sidney	Bradford	1887-1974	Younger brother to 3,5
Back	2	Edward John	Peachey	1847-1914	Father of 3,4
Back	3	Dinah	White	1847-	Cousin to 2,3
Back	4	Herbert	Peachey	1888-1970	Younger brother to 3,4
2	1	John Edward	Bradford	1839-1911	Father to 3,5
2	2	Jane	Bradford	1848-1918	Mother to 3,5. Née Bowyer
2	3	Mercy	Peachey	1850-1922	Mother to 3,4. Née White
2	4	Alice	Duffield		Girlfriend of 2,5
2	5	Ernest	Peachey	1884-1965	Younger brother to 3,4
2	6	Becky	Peachey	1862-1935	Wife of 3,2. Née Bradford
2	7	Unknown			
2	8	Mary	Peachey		Née Hyner
2	9	Frank	Bradford	1894-	Youngest brother of 3,5
3	1	Emily	Marsh	1894-1983	Daughter of 3,6
3	2	Edwin	Peachey	1873-1957	Older brother to 3,4
3	3	Eliza	Lavender		Unknown
3	4	James Smith	Peachey	1876-1939	
3	5	Lydia Mary	Bradford	1876-1954	
3	6	Walter	Marsh	1873-1961	Husband of 3,5's older sister
3	7	Gertrude Dorothy	Peachey	1892-1970	Youngest sister of 3,4
Front	1	Joe	Pettit	1901-1973	Nephew of 3,5 by her younger sister
Front	2	Bobby	Fuller		Nephew of 3,4 by older sister
Front	3	Jack	Fuller		Nephew of 3,4 by older sister
front	4	Nell	Marsh	1896-1970	Daughter of 3,6
Front	5	Grace	Marsh	1898-1970	Daughter of 3,6
Front	6	William	Marsh	1899-	Son of 3,6

STRAYS & DNAs

by David Cotton

Research Officer

Bendigo Family History Connections

Some 40 years ago I became involved in the family history quest hobby. I discovered it was important to find “Strays”. That is someone who is no longer living where they were born.

Family history publications of the 1980’s used to print lists of strays hoping that someone from “Home” might recognise a surname from a home county or state or country, make contact and find they had a connection with someone back “Home”. It was the 1980’s version of the modern day DNA explosion.

Being a Ten Pound Pom I am a “Stray” and when you think about it everyone with a non- indigenous heritage is a stray so Australia is full of them. In fact, if you study population movements in the last 300 years the whole world is full of strays.

The study of history and geography are important adjuncts to making family history connections.

I have only been here since 1961 and know I was born in St Ives Huntingdonshire but many Australians have linkages back to pre 1800 and finding where their original roots are is a challenging quest. Bendigo is a very good example as a “home of strays” seeking their Eldorado.

It is full of Cornish, Chinese. German (before Germany existed) Irish, Italian (Before Italy existed) Scandinavian, a mix of English counties, Scots, Welsh, Americans plus “Double strays” from Tasmania and NSW. Double strays is my term for someone who “strayed” to become a convict and then became a family history stray because they had involuntarily left home.

As I mentioned I am from Huntingdonshire often shortened to “Hunts”. In early Victorian immigration shipping records one will see “Hunts” but also one sees “Hants”. One of those quirks of the English language means that sometimes Hampshire is shortened to Hants, This is because in Old English Hampshire was named Hantumscir a district around the port of Southampton and nowhere near Huntingdonshire. It was very easy for people with no knowledge of the geography of either place to intermix Hunts and Hants.

Earlier this year we were looking for a family who strayed from Cornwall to South Australia then to Bendigo then to Charters Towers and then to Croydon Queensland.....this is what strays do when they have GOLD in their blood. By accident and with no connection to our research I saw on Trove The Northern Miner Charters Towers 18 Jan 1922 page 3 “Unclaimed Money” looking for WILLIAM MARTIN WILKIN who had left BUCKDIN HANTS for Australia.

My geographic knowledge suggests he may be a stray from BUCKDEN HUNTS ?

Along with the above article, which was first published a couple of years ago, David supplied some details he had uncovered about this Mr Wilkin from Australian record sources and resources. We have been challenged to fill in the gaps from this end and pull the details together—

—well, here goes—and is he really “ours” ?!!??

WILLIAM MARTIN WILKIN of ‘BUCKDIN’ ‘HANTS’

by CHFHS Editorial Team

What have we been able to find out about William Martin Wilkin, and was he actually from Buckden in Hunts? The conclusion has to be a resounding “yes” and here's his story ...

The first task was to identify the newspaper ad which David had chanced upon. It was readily found online through the Australian Newspaper Archive “Trove” by searching on the name—two lines in a 1½ column piece entitled “Unclaimed Monies : Heirs Wanted” derived from Lloyd’s Next-Of-Kin Gazette (a listing published, presumably periodically, of dozens of names and brief details of emigrants no longer in touch with relatives). This listing appeared in several papers in New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia in weeks either side of New Year 1921, and are the only hits



Perth Daily News (WA) Sat 24 Dec 1921

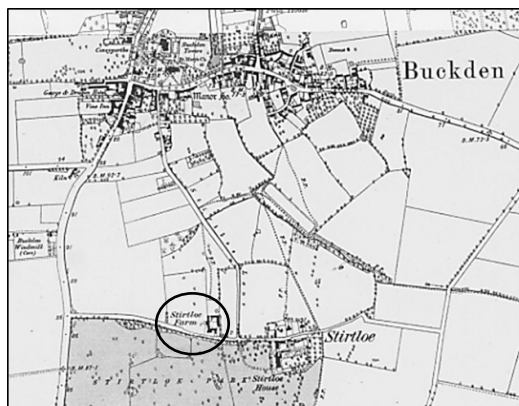
Richmond River Express & Casino Kyogle Advertiser (NSW) Fri 23 Dec 1921

(<https://trove.nla.gov.au/search>)

on his name in the whole database, apart from he apparently being the victim of a theft a few months earlier.

What can be found about William—when and where was he born, who were his family, when did he go to Australia, and what happened to him? All these questions can be answered, and more can be added through building on the details David supplied to take a look at the wider family—

1881 saw a Martin Wilkin, a small farmer, and his wife Sarah Jane (nee Langford) living in Witchford near Ely, with three small children (Emily, Thomas and Matilda) and Martin's widowed father, Thomas. A decade later, the family had recently removed to Papworth St Agnes, and now included the 5yr-old William Martin. By 1901, Martin, Sarah and the children were



now at Stirtloe Farm, just outside Buckden, where they were to remain for the next 20 years. Martin and Sarah died in 1919 and 1920, respectively, and their probate records both listed Stirtloe Farm as their address. Sarah left £4600 (over £170,000 at today's value) and it could be presumed that the will left bequests to all the children. Some 18-months later, William's name appeared in the

“heirs sought” listings, so it could also be presumed that the family had not been able to contact him in the intervening months via letter or telegram.

One other question might be that of when, and perhaps even why, did William go to Australia—a fairly conclusive answer came out of a look at the wider family. As part of closing the circle on the family, so to speak, we followed up on William's three siblings :

- Elder brother, Thomas Edward, remained at Stirtloe Farm until at least the 1950s, apparently unmarried, and died in 1958 at Great Staughton,
- Elder sister, Emily Jane, married a Frederick Dawson from Bourn, in 1899. They were life-long residents of Flitwick in Bedfordshire, where they ran a drapers shop. With the family in 1939, is a married Matilda Abraham described as “on holiday from Australia” ...
- Younger sister, Matilda, married a local farmer, Thomas Abraham and lived at Glebe farm, Hardwick with son Thomas Martin. Just a minute

here—who was the visitor with Emily in 1939—right name, right age??

Yes, younger sister and family had indeed gone to Australia themselves, and can be found on a passenger list bound for Sydney in December 1911, on the SS Geelong. They lived in Parramatta area near Sydney, and both died in 1959; son Thomas jnr married in 1937 and himself died in 1974.

What about “our” William? The very next entry in the 1911 passenger list, is for one “William N Wilkin”, which despite the second name initial, is very very probably he—travelling with sister and brother-in-law.

✓ 340	Thos Abraham.	do	1		
✓ 341	Mrs. Matilda do	wife.	1		
✓	Thomas M. do			1	
✓ 342	Wm. N. Wilkin.	Farmhand.	1		

I wonder if the message ever did reach William—I think it must have done when records relating to William in Australia are considered. The gist of the story was supplied by David through his research and outlines how William can be found in Australian WW1 records serving with the Camel Corps, and later became a planter in New Britain, Papua New Guinea, and involved in the local government there at Rabaul; he seems not to have married. This is where he would have been in 1921/22 when the family was seeking him.

The key document which ties it all together also reveals the sad end of the story—a “form of information of death” issued by the Territory of New Guinea in 1948 on the declaration made by one Thomas Edward Wilkin, retired farmer, of Stirtloe Farm, Buckden detailing that he was “*brother of William Martin Wilkin who was son of Martin and Sarah Wilkin and born Witchford, and a planter at the Lungaten Plantation, New Hanover*”—so the family did know where he was by then. But, what brought about this declaration being made—following the Japanese invasion of New Guinea, William Wilkin was among civilian POWs on board the ill-fated ‘Montevideo Maru’ which was



torpedoed 1 July 1942 with the loss of over 1,000 lives (mainly Australian POWs and civilians being transported from Rabaul) William is listed on the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, and by the CWGC.

One of my own distant relatives was also among those lost—Editor

REFLECTING ON 50-YEARS OF FAMILY HISTORY—1

By Cambs & Hunts FHS Editorial Team

In this, the 50th Anniversary year of the founding of the then Cambridgeshire Family History Society, it's worth taking a little time out to consciously reflect on just how far we have come in the those five decades and to appreciate the evolution of some of the resources which we perhaps now take for granted. Some of us will have been doing research for many of the intervening years, if not longer, others for a far shorter time, and all but the most recent converts will have seen great changes in the way we are able to research our family history. The longer we have been involved, the more changes we will have seen in the ways in which we are able to conduct our research—including: the ever-growing range of available records, better and easier access to them, resources to help find and use records and the adoption of technology to help widen access to, and search, records.

The first of this series is a very brief overview of the role of volunteers like you and me in “indexing” and “transcribing” to help widen access.

In describing the evolution of family history in his book “Family Matters” (see bottom of next page and definitely a recommended read for anyone with a wider interest in the subject for its own sake), Michael Sharpe details how early members of the Society of Genealogists set about creating indexes to assist the researchers of the day to find the record they wanted—such as “The Great Card Index”, Boyd’s “Marriage Indexes” and “London Burials”, also the work of the British Records Society in publishing transcripts of parish registers—but owing to the enormity of the tasks, it was largely a matter of luck as to which places got included. It’s easy to forget the difficulties researchers faced when trying to locate a person beyond the place in which they were thought to be in. Sharpe recounts how, for example, when the 1861 census was made available in 1962, researchers at the Public Records Office were presented with boxes of the original enumerators’ books to plough through; later, microfilming of census books would widen access. Those of us using parish registers in county archives in the early 1980s ordered up the original registers, book by book (perhaps allowed to have just two at a time) to go through, page by page, in the hope that “the” person would emerge—and repeat for every individual sought. BMD records, the one class of record which was already indexed, meant seachring each and every quarter-year volume for likely “candidates” among any same-namers, and purchasing certificates to confirm identity. But, if “the” person had moved out-of-area, or came from elsewhere, the process was further complicated,

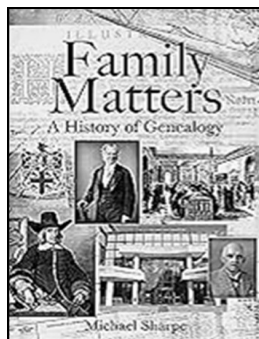
big time. Indexing/transcribing was to revolutionise the research process.

Sharpe goes on to recount that until around the later-1960s, genealogy was very much London-orientated in terms of resources and the organisation of support. Interest, on the other hand, was beginning to develop in the regions but found help and support lacking. The first regional society was founded in Birmingham in 1963, and others began to spring up in counties across the country. Fast forward a decade, and the Federation of Family History Societies was founded to support and facilitate co-ordination among and between societies which, within a few more years, were to be found in virtually every county—including Cambridgeshire from 1976.

Among the aims of societies was to undertake project work to index and transcribe records from their “patch”, and publish these as resources to help with searching for named people. Many such projects looked at parish registers and censuses—initially on an individual parish/village/town basis, work was later collated into deanery or registration district groupings and eventually even widened to whole-county. Using indexes, the researcher could focus effort and, hopefully, track down a sought person across a wider area. Indexes were relatively quick to produce compared to transcription (this was still the era of the manual type-writer and index card), but word processing was to revolutionise the work—and many a volunteer spent many, many hours on society projects at the local archives. Keeping up with evolving technology, indexes/transcripts were first produced as printed booklets, later as microfiche, more recently as CDs which have in turn given way to digital downloads or searchable databases online. This was, of course, a slow and piecemeal exercise and “luck” became a significant factor for the researcher: *has the place I’m interested in been worked on?*

However, all that effort of family history society volunteers has, in many cases, been sidelined as researchers now favour digitised images of records as offered by commercial providers in their massive collections online. But, searching for a digital image online still requires the use of a transcription

database—here the CHFHS transcripts live on as the database for accessing Cambs/Hunts records images from Ancestry—and the work goes on to fill the gaps with records which were unavailable to Ancestry.



**“Family Matters : a history of genealogy”
by Michael Sharpe (Pen & Sword, 2020)**

An insightful account and timeline of the evolution of genealogy/family history, and a fascinating read against which to set the story of Cambs & Hunts FHS.

CHFHS PROJECTS

The CHFHS Projects Team continues to work on parishes which are, for a variety of reasons, NOT part of the Ancestry Collection. A number of parishes from Hunts, in particular, are being transcribed and will in time be added to the CHFHS database.

Forthcoming Project – The Spinning House

The society are going to be working in conjunction with the Cambridge University Library to work together to transcribe the Spinning House records of Cambridge. The original records are held at the Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge.

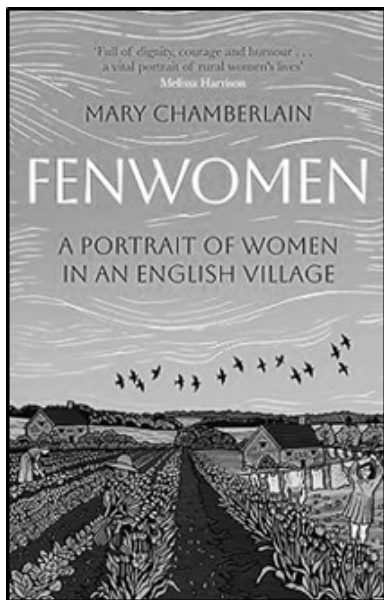
Therefore, the society will be looking for volunteers to transcribe these records, the volunteers will need to be able to transcribe 19th century handwriting, all work will be carried out on their own computers and in their own homes, without any travelling involved. If you feel you have the time and would like to help please contact the Societies Projects Officer, Terry Garner on projects@chfhs.org.uk.

Information about the Spinning house.

Spinning House Committals Books

By charter of 1603 James I granted the University of Cambridge the right to have its own gaol. In 1628 a House of Correction or Bridewell was built for the joint use of the University and town in St Andrew's parish, partly funded by local carrier Thomas Hobson (?1544-1630). After the building of a new town gaol in 1829, the Spinning House, as it had become known, maintained the Vice-Chancellor's prison. It was in practice used solely for one class of prisoner: women suspected of 'walking with undergraduates', that is, those accused of prostitution. The Proctors, in the exercise of their discipline over the manners and morals of members of the University, had anciently acquired the right of searching for and apprehending such women. The right was specifically confirmed to them in several royal grants but came under increasing criticism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. It was abolished in 1894 following the notorious case of Daisy Hopkins who sued the University authorities for wrongful imprisonment. The Spinning House was dismantled in 1901 and replaced by a Police Station, now used as Council Offices. [For further info : see the book by Caroline Biggs, or her recorded talk on The Spinning House on the members' area of the website]

We are always on the look out for new volunteers (and particularly if you have skills with old handwriting and/or reading Latin). If you would like to help—please get in touch with Terry via: projects@chfhs.org.uk



Fen Women

by Mary Chamberlain

50th anniversary edition of this modern classic, with a new introduction

"Full of dignity, courage and humour, and as fresh and insightful as the day it was written, FENWOMEN is a vital portrait of rural women's lives - not only as they were lived in the 1970s in one Cambridgeshire village, but in the generations before it, all over the country, and reaching forward into today's world, too" MELISSA HARRISON

REVIEW FROM WELL-KNOWN ONLINE BOOK SELLER :

Mary Coe recalls summers spent gleaning in the fields, laudanum-soothed babies strapped to their mothers' backs. Ann Sharman, married and pregnant at seventeen, imagines another life outside the village. Eighty-six-year-old Sybil Hayhoe looks back with pride at her years in service, while the village postwoman is sharply aware of her unequal wages. Girls aspire to be housewives, hairdressers or nurses - except Fiona, who dreams of training horses.

Told through the voices of ordinary women, Mary Chamberlain's portrait of an isolated village in the Cambridgeshire Fens remains as vital and thought-provoking as on its ground breaking publication in 1975. A feminist answer to Ronald Blythe's Akenfield, it vividly captures the rhythms, hopes and tensions of women's lives in a working-class rural community, and offers a unique snapshot of an almost-vanished England.

'Fenwomen is a fascinating insight into 20th-century rural life' *The Times*

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www.recycle4charity.co.uk/Send-your-cartridges.aspx

The ‘Sarah Charles’ Sampler

a research story by Caz

In a quiet moment at one of the research surgeries we hold at The Norris Museum, in St Ives, the Curators produced the catalogued details of a number of Victorian “samplers” in their collection. Unfortunately, not a lot is known about them other than they are believed to have come from a now-closed museum in Huntingdon long-ago**. Beyond that they are, in effect, not much more than examples of a style of needlecraft from the Victorian era known as the “sampler”. The task we were set was to see if genealogical methods could perhaps glean anything from the scant catalogued details to breathe some life into them. As we well know, in many instances all it takes is a name—and the one thing which many samplers do contain, is a name—

So, what IS a “sampler”? We’ve all probably seen samplers at some time, and may even be lucky enough to have one to have been passed down your family. Today, many are treated as pieces of decorative art, and framed for display. A good run-down on the evolution of this form of needlecraft can be found on the V&A Museum website :

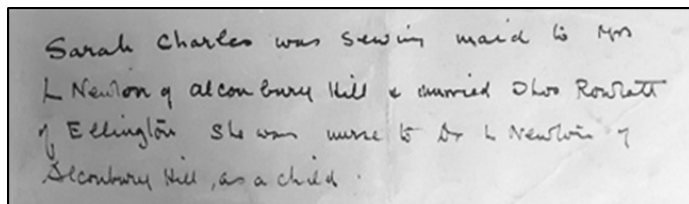
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/embroidery-a-history-of-needlework-samplers>

Essentially, this richly illustrated article describes the origins of samplers as “exampplers” to demonstrate skills and be a library of stitches/techniques. Some are disorganised collections of stitches and motifs of animals, people, nature, letters and geometric patterns or biblical texts, others have more design in the layout with, eg. borders surrounding mirrored motifs and blocks of stitched text. One feature quite commonly seen is a name and date worked into the piece by the stitcher, particularly if the piece was made to commemorate an event (say, a marriage or a christening); many look to have possibly be made for leisure.

One of the pieces at The Norris is a work comprising motifs and a text within a border, framed and backed with brown paper. Unlike many pieces, this one does hold clues—a stitched name/date within the piece, and a caption written on the backing paper which is thought to date from when the piece was (?) acquired/donated. So, who was Sarah Charles—what sort of story can be revealed from the clues :

*“Sarah Charles
25 May 1843”*





Sarah Charles was sewing maid to Mrs
L Newton of Alconbury Hill & married Thos Rowlatt
of Ellington. She was nurse to Dr L Newton of
Alconbury Hill, as a child.

*“Sarah Charles was sewing maid to Mrs
L Newton of Alconbury Hill & married Thos Rowlatt
of Ellington. She was nurse to Dr L Newton of
Alconbury Hill as a child.”*

Two separate stories came out of this exercise : that of Dr and Mrs Newton of Alconbury Hill, and of course, that of Sarah Charles herself.

First, a few words about the Newton family to set the scene (the name alone, on a sampler can be inconclusive—as found with some of the other samplers we looked at, it has not yet been possible to isolate the individuals named on those samplers among same-namers in the county). It can be presumed that Sarah worked the sampler whilst in the employ of Mrs Newton, perhaps in some scant spare moments between minding the children and doing household mending. Dr Lancelot Newton, a general practitioner, was the son of a wealthy family from Sawtry, who had married a Jane Fretwell of Gainsborough in 1842. By 1851, the household comprised an assistant to Dr Newton and five young children plus five servants kept to look after them—quite a sizable household in the small hamlet of Alconbury Hill (large scale maps show just a handful of houses). Lancelot died in 1867, and Jane in 1881; their son Lancelot jnr, was also a general practitioner who continued to live and practice at Alconbury Hill. 1921 saw him as the Medical Officer of Health for Huntingdon Rural District; he died in 1925. Sarah is not with the household in either 1841 or 1851, but would probably been with the family from the mid-later 1840s.

The Newtons were quite a prominent and well-connected family, and will be fairly well-documented in the locality, Sarah, on the other hand, seems to have been one of those people who went through life largely unnoticed, and whose story can only be teased out by how they feature in basic statutory records. The only concrete “fact” is that the caption states that she “*married Thos Rowlatt of Ellington*”. Well, yes and no, as there’s no marriage record of a Sarah Charles and Thomas Rowlatt!?!

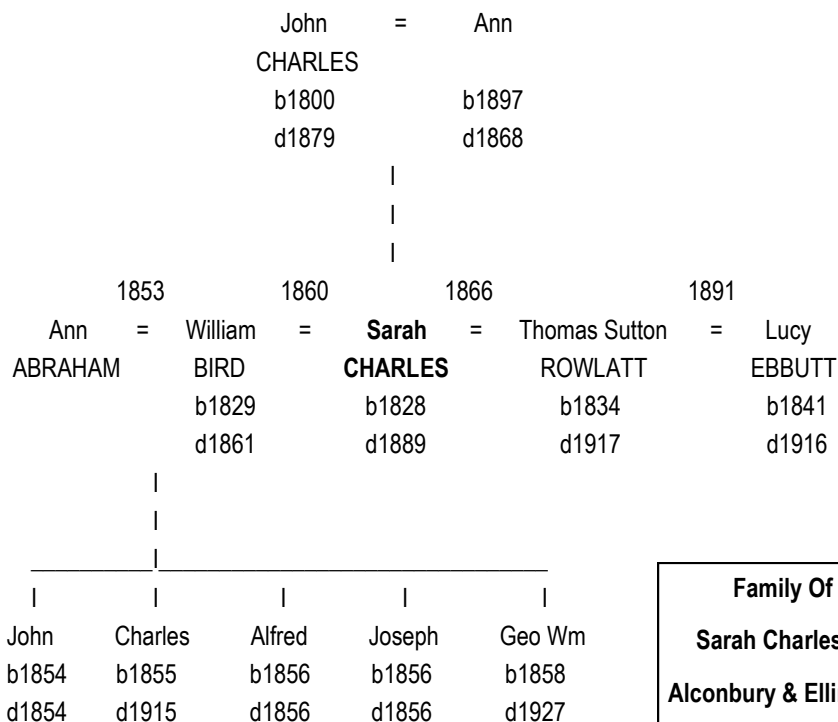
What does turn up through searching the records is a story of serial marriages across nearly forty years from which the full story can be pieced together [see

summary chart on next page]. Who in the area has the surname “Charles”. Searching census records reveals a John and Ann Charles in Alconbury in 1851 with a dressmaker daughter, Sarah aged 22y “born Leighton, Hunts”. Could this be the correct “Sarah”? Separately, the census searches also turned up, in 1871, in Ellington, a Thomas Rowlatt with wife Sarah aged 40y “born Leighton Hunts” with a John Charles described as “father-in-law” (John’s occupation, age and birth place also tallied with 1851)—looks like we are probably on the right track here. After systematically following up on links and leads to all censuses and PRs/BMDs in which these four people should feature, and similarly with other names encountered in their records, the life and times of Sarah slowly emerged.

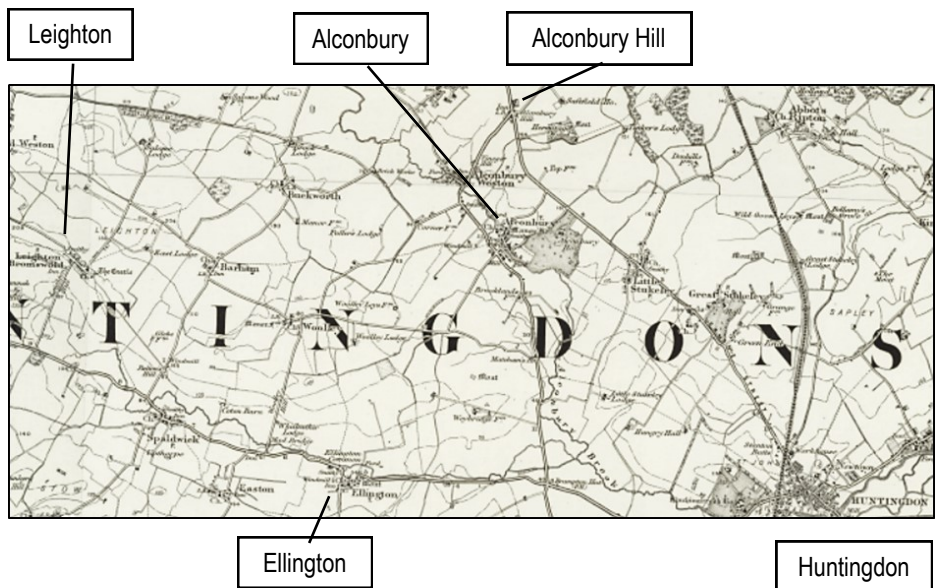
Born around 1828 to Bedfordshire-born gardener John Charles and his wife Ann, at Leighton [Bromswold], Hunts, Sarah set out on a life-course not untypical of many country-born girls of her time. 1841 saw her as a teenage servant in Huntingdon, she then became a dressmaker and returns to be living with the parents by 1851. It would be around this period that Sarah would have been with the Newtons and made the sampler to demonstrate her needle skills. Sarah would have worked the sampler when she was around 15yr of age, perhaps she brought it with her and the quality sampler was what secured her the position with Mrs Newton—who knows?!?

As noted already, 1871 saw Sarah living at Ellington and now married to Mr Rowlatt; her widowed father was with them and his presence helped confirm the assertion that this was, in fact, her. But why had no marriage been found? When this exercise was embarked upon, the Cambs & Hunts parish register records had not yet been released by Ancestry and it took a bit of deduction to work it out, but essentially, (as the Ellington marriages of 1866 were to reveal, Sarah was a widow and she married Mr Rowlatt as “Sarah Bird”. The 1861 census captured this short-lived phase of her life, and finds her already in Ellington having married William Bird, a grocer, the previous year in her home parish of Alconbury [not to be confused with another William and Sarah Bird at nearby Glatton]. With the couple are two young children, Charles and George William, but seeing as they married only the previous year, the children can’t be “theirs” as such, and their marriage record spells it out—William was a widower. In fact, William had had five children with his first wife, Ann Abraham, three of whom had died as infants; Ann herself, had died in 1858. Married to William in 1860, Sarah found herself also widowed the very following year when William died shortly after the census in 1861 leaving her with his two young boys [more of them later].

Five years later, Sarah married Thomas Rowlatt at Ellington, a bachelor farmer, as the sampler caption had stated. The marriage record describes



Family Of
Sarah Charles of
Alconbury & Ellington



her as a “shopkeeper” so she may have taken on and continued with William Bird’s business. Indeed, Thomas appears to have come into the business, as he is described as grocer/shopkeeper at Ellington for the next forty years—but alas, without Sarah for all of that time as she died, aged 61, in 1889.

Early in 1891, the now widowed Thomas Rowlatt himself married Lucy Ebbutt way down at Sutton in Surrey. Lucy was a “local”, and also from Alconbury, so he perhaps even knew of her through his late wife. However they might have met, they continued keeping the grocers shop in Ellington through to their deaths in 1917 and 1916, respectively. All are buried at Ellington.

However, from these four marriages, the only surviving descendants appear to be the two sons of William Bird and his first wife, Ann. Sarah did not have any children with either husband. One can only speculate what became of the sampler. Perhaps it remained in the home Sarah had set up with William Bird in Ellington and her continuing there with Thomas Rowlatt (he certainly seems to have come to live with her and not the other way round), and thence when he continued the business with Lucy after Sarah had died. When the household was broken up following their deaths and no immediate family to take things on, it’s quite imaginable that articles like the sampler would find their way into the open, say, through a house contents sale. The presentation of the sampler and the caption do suggest that something of its provenance and Sarah’s background was known to who ever had noted the information.

A few words to finish about Sarah’s step-sons, Charles and George William Bird. They would have been around 3yr and just a few months old, respectively, when their mother Ann died, and 6yr and 3 yr when William Bird died. How long they remained with Sarah, who can say, or perhaps they went to live with his relatives. However, what is evident is that they were both probably influenced by their stepmother, as, by 1871 the teenagers were both apprentice grocers (her profession) and living with their employers. George was in nearby Catworth with Charles at Old Weston a few miles the other direction. George married Kate Asbee from Swaffham Prior and spent his whole working life as a grocer in Welford, Northants, before retiring to Linton; the couple died in 1927 and 1942, respectively, and had no children. Although starting off as a grocer, Charles became a soldier in his 20s at the cavalry barracks, Windsor. He was to remain in and around London suburbs for the rest of his life in a number of jobs including the furniture trade and a park attendant., and died in 1915. He seems to have married twice, and had two sons (one of whom was to become an apprentice grocer back in Huntingdon, but died in 1883 at Welford, Northants, where his uncle was living at the time). Neither step-sons are likely to have inherited the sampler.

UPDATE FROM THE NORRIS : Currently kept in the back-store and not on public display, the 'Sarah Charles' sampler has recently had a conservation assessment, and, once remounted in an archive-quality display frame, might even find its way into the front-of-house area for all to see—perhaps with points from our research to give some historical context to what is otherwise just another nice piece of decorative embroidery

... and, a note to self for 2026 ... to see if there's a photo of Sarah's shop in Ellington in local history books or at the Archives??

Our thanks go to Rachel, the Curator at the Norris Museum for setting us this task, and for providing the opportunity to photograph the sampler at our last research session back in December.

*** And, for adding this about the probable source of the sampler —
"there was once a Huntingdon Museum (separate from the Cromwell Museum that is there today). It was part of the Huntingdon Literary and Scientific Institute which amassed a large collection of items from 1840 until 1959. They included local artefacts, but also some items collected from further afield. Most of it was transferred to The Norris Museum when it closed in 1959."*

CATALOGUING THE KIMBOLTON ESTATE PAPERS AT HUNTINGDONSHIRE ARCHIVES

By Esther Bellamy, Collections Archivist

Here at Huntingdonshire Archives, we are nearing the end of the third year of our project to catalogue the papers of the Kimbolton Estate.

This collection came to us in the late 1940s and it contains both the papers of the Montagu family of Kimbolton Castle and the records of their estates and tenants across the county. There are more than 300 books and boxes of papers in total so this is a complex task, made possible only through generous funding awarded by the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society, alongside the Huntingdonshire Local History Society and the Kimbolton Local History Society. This funding means that I can take time away from my regular job as Collections Archivist to spend one day a week working just on these papers, alongside our small team of dedicated volunteers.

You might wonder why this has been such an important collection for us to catalogue. The Montagu family and their relatives, the Bernard and Sparrow families, owned lands in 23 different Huntingdonshire parishes as well as some smaller estates in Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Essex and Northern Ireland. Most of our local ancestors would have heard of the family and many may have also rented their lands, been employed by them, received an education at one of the schools they supported or relief from one of their charities. For this reason, the collection is a really name-rich source of information for researchers with ancestors in these parishes.

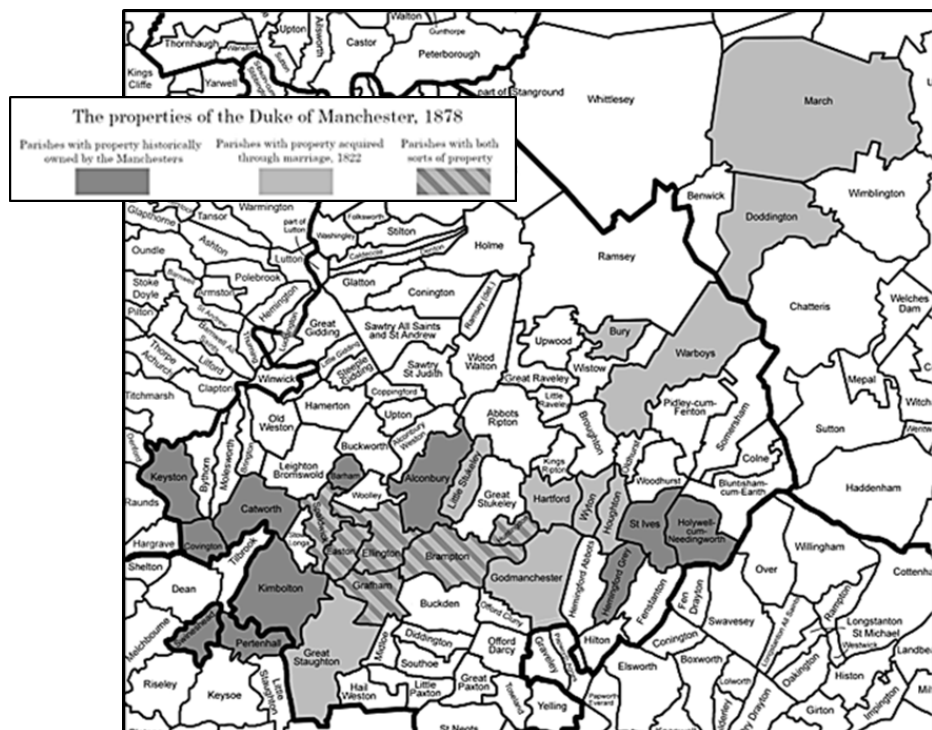
Within the collection we have found a complete run of rental books, naming tenants and the properties they leased, for the period 1847 to 1930, and even earlier for some parts of the county. There are also estate letter books, containing copies of all the letters sent out to tenants, neighbours, contractors and tradespeople by the estate stewards during the course of their work. These cover roughly 1852 to 1928 and have mostly been indexed by surname already. We have title deeds and manorial records going back to the 15th century as well as maps and plans, rent account books, lists of labourers who worked on the land and registers of servants employed at Kimbolton Castle.

It isn't just the estate records that can prove useful to family historians though. The Dukes of Manchester, and the wider Montagu, Bernard and Sparrow families, were prominent in local affairs and interacted with Huntingdonshire communities in many different ways. Several members of the family were MPs and Lord Lieutenants of Huntingdonshire, others were soldiers or patrons of agricultural associations and religious societies. Lady Olivia Bernard Sparrow, mother of Millicent Duchess of Manchester, was a very well known philanthropist who supported schools, churches and charities. Her papers contain many lists of men and women who received donations of coal, clothing, books or money. The 7th Duke of Manchester established a cavalry troop called the Duke of Manchester's Light Horse Volunteers in 1860 and his papers contain lists and correspondence with more than 600 local young men who enrolled.

Until three years ago there were no catalogue entries for this collection online at all. The records were poorly organised and the existing box lists, drafted in the 1950s, contained a number of incorrect or misleading details. For this reason our project had to begin almost from scratch. We have been working through each box, volume or bundle of papers, one at a time, creating new lists and uploading them to the catalogue as we go. It's a very time-

consuming process particularly because some of the records are in poor condition and require conservation or repackaging before they can be properly checked. In total we have now added more than 9,000 new entries to the online catalogue. These new entries include the indexes to the estate letter books mentioned above, as well as a newly drafted surname index of more than 600 men who served in the Light Horse Volunteers and Huntingdonshire Militia. New records are added to the online catalogue most weeks so it's worth checking fairly regularly if you think your ancestor may have lived or worked on land owned by the Montagu, Bernard or Sparrow families.

We've already noticed an increase in public enquiries about the collection and there has been a clear rise in the number of records from the collection that have been requested in our Huntingdon searchroom. There is still some way to go but we are looking forward to uncovering more interesting records and helping people with their research in the coming months. A link to the catalogue can be found on our website but if you have any questions about the collection please email Hunts.Archives@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk and we would be happy to help.



THIS MIGHT INTEREST YOU ...

A summary of the queries and topic discussed at the recent online St Ives Area Research Surgery (Dec 2025) :

- “J” asked about identifying the location of Wigan House in St Ives. Live research using maps, aerial photos, directories and discussion confirmed it to be No.5 The Quadrant (in the modern one-way system), and confirmed its connection to the enquirer’s gt-grandmother, Annie Maria Barton. Discussion went on to finding information about a property and former residents.
- The group investigated the fate of a commemorative plaque to a William Barton who died in 1840, but not found during a recent visit to the chapel in St Ives. “J” also mentioned that a number of relatives are buried in St Ives General Cemetery, and how he has had to visit the Cemetery Office to see records—only to be shown entries one at a time by the staff.
- “G” shared research on the Corbett and Bennett families from Houghton, and the group discussed the varying end-dates of different records from different parishes. The issue of common forenames was raised relating to the problem of identifying the correct person—“G” mentioned that 80% of English men shared just 10 first names in the early 1800s.
- The group considered the 1833 marriage at Wyton, of John Corbett and Jane Jacobs, and who Jane’s parents might be. Discussion revolved around Jane’s birth—whether it be 1812 or 1814, and concluded she was daughter of a Thomas and Jane Jacobs. A link with Chatham suggested that Thomas was likely a Royal Marine, and married the widowed Jane Burgess in 1797
- The group shared their experiences with using the new online images of Cambs & Hunts parish registers, and commented on there seeming to be errors in record linkage by the provider in certain parishes.
- “B” shared extensive experience in family history research, and the discussion highlighted how families moved around for work, with miners and stonemasons following their professions across different regions. “M” on the other hand, talked of her family’s stability in the Ely area from the 1640s.
- The session concluded with the group reminding themselves about the upcoming CHFHS events in 2026—future Area Research sessions, the East Anglia Fair in April, and the AGM in May

COUSINS

... how many do you have ?

... how many did they have ?

From time to time, newspaper articles appear about the falling birth rates around the world, and no less so than in the UK. Recent months have seen another flurry of journalistic interest in the subject

An aside to the broad subject of population and falling birth rates at national levels, is the effect of this at a more personal level—our cousins. The question has been posed as to how many we, today, have compared to our ancestors of generations past—our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents generations?

Just how many 1st, 2nd, 3rd cousins etc, do we and did they have?

Recently, it's been said that a teenager in the 1970s typically had seven 1st cousins, today that number is down to just five.

It's also been calculated that we typically have some 193,000 living relatives of 6th cousin or closer (<https://www.ancestry.com/c/ancestry-blog/dna>)

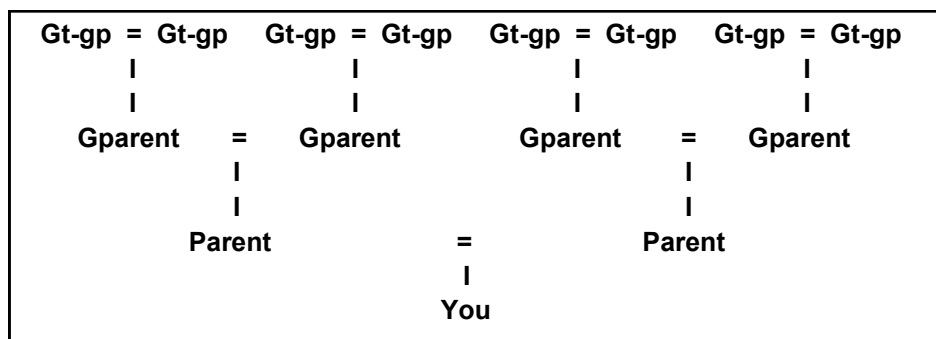
Wow!!

Ancestry's DNA Blog pages includes some interesting comparisons to help put the “big numbers” in perspective [published 2015].

Potential cousins are all around us :

- All one's cousins would fill Wembley stadium twice over
- 1:300 chance of being related to any stranger
- Equivalent to 12,000 among the daily tube commuters in London, in theory
- Or 1 in 4 of all London bus passengers
- And at least 20 passengers on a large cruise ship would be your “cousins”

typical numbers of cousins	
1st cousins	5
2nd cousins	28
3rd cousins	175
4th cousins	1,570
5th cousins	17,300
6th cousins	174,000
total	193,000



In response to this piece in the last issue, we've received a couple of contributions detailing cousins across the generations as illustrated above. While any one given example can, of course, vary wildly from the average or any other specific example, it is still interesting to see how the numbers stack up. The second contributor has kindly outlined some of the variables in play, and undoubtedly we can all see a selection of the possibilities in our own families—marriage ages, non-marriage, early marriage, longevity, small families, large families, early deaths, child deaths, the effect of the lost generation from WW1, etc—the knock-on effect of which determines the “cousins” across the next generation.

David Copsey cousins by generation

	Parent 1	Parent 2	Total	Generation total
David	0	0	0	0
Parent 1	0	3	3	
Parent 2	6	13	19	22
GP 1	0	6	6	
GP2	18	24	42	
GP3	7	20	27	
GP4	0	22	22	97
GGP1	41	0	41	
GGP2	0	15	15	
GGP3	63	18	81	
GGP4	60	13	73	
GGP5	49	12	61	
GGP6	11	5	16	
GGP7	N/K	15	15	
GGP8	33	54	87	377

Notes: 10 people appear twice in great grandparents lines, excluded from total

One great grandparent, father name known but birth not certain so no siblings known

FIRST COUSINS

received from Peter D Smith

The following table is a direct response to the article on pages 28–29 of the Winter 2025 edition of *The Journal*, concerning recent reports in the press about the diminishing number of first cousins. As requested, the top line shows the number of first cousins of each of my 8 great-grandparents, the next line of figures is for my grandparents, then below that for my parents, and finally for me. The only half first cousin has been omitted from the statistics.

24	=	23	11	=	27	19	=	17	3	=	52
17		=	26			30		=	23		
		26			=			9			
					26						

As you will see, there is no discernible trend in the figures for my family (although my only 3 nephews do not and will not have any first cousins at all). Perhaps by aggregating the comparable figures submitted by a large number of members of the Cambs & Hunts FHS, the claims of diminishing numbers of cousins may indeed be exemplified.

The same results for my family appear in the table below, with a further breakdown to show whether the cousins lay on the paternal or maternal side of the individual's family tree. And lest any reckon my arithmetic defective, Parent 1's first cousins include two double first cousins.

What strikes me most is the great variation between one individual's number and another, especially when considering on which side of the family the cousins lie. Size of family is clearly an important factor, which in turn depends on age at marriage (particularly for the mother) and whether parents died before reaching the end of child-bearing age.

There were instances when even a large number of siblings produced

	Cousins			Uncles & Aunts	
Relationship	Paternal	Maternal	TOTAL	Paternal	Maternal
Self	23	3	26	5 (5)	1 (1)
Parent 1	24	4	26	11 (9)	4 (2)
Parent 2	3	6	9	2 (2)	3 (3)
Grandparent 1	5	12	17	5 (1)	5 (4)
Grandparent 2	2	24	26	4 (1)	8 (6)
Grandparent 3	4	26	30	8 (1)	9 (4)
Grandparent 4	7	16	23	6 (4)	13 (6)
Gt Grandparent 1	23	1	24	10 (5)	2 (1)
Gt Grandparent 2	11	12	23	7 (3)	7 (2)
Gt Grandparent 3	9	2	11	7 (2)	9 (1)
Gt Grandparent 4	8	19	27	7 (2)	10 (4)
Gt Grandparent 5	0	19	19	2 (0)	13 (3)
Gt Grandparent 6	2	15	17	2 (1)	10 (3)
Gt Grandparent 7	3	0	3	3 (1)	0 (0)
Gt Grandparent 8	18	34	52	6 (4)	8 (7)

comparatively few children: some siblings of course died young, others never married, some married too late to have many or any children. In the hope of shedding further light, I have also included the number of uncles/aunts for each of the individuals; the numbers in brackets are the numbers of uncles and aunts who had children. A half uncle and a half aunt have been omitted from the table.

I await with interest the figures on first cousins from the families of other members before attempting to draw any conclusions on the matter.

COUSINS : Our thanks to David and Peter for their contributions—anyone else up for adding observations from their own families ?

You don't, of course, have to be able to fill in numbers for all of the fifteen "slots" on the chart ... just as many of the direct ancestors' family groups as you've managed to find thus far.

We all, undoubtedly, have examples of the extremes—where one particular family may have, say, ten children or more but go on to have very, very few descendants between them—while another family of just a few children who might each go on to have ten apiece ...

CHFHS NEWSLETTER

—are YOU a subscriber?



*If you haven't yet signed up to the **free** CHFHS newsletter, why not do so—right now—by visiting the website home page www.chfhs.org*

Sign up to receive the latest details on upcoming talks and research surgeries, local events with a genealogical slant, and on-going feature series “spotlighting” local surnames and villages histories.

ONLINE WITH CHFHS—

Area Research Surgeries : Programme Feb'26—Apr '26

We are continuing with the series of monthly online research surgeries, via Zoom, to look at Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire parishes as grouped by Poor Law Unions. Further locations/dates to follow

Each session will run twice to optimise attendance options, or to continue discussions—so, get your questions together. If possible, please submit in advance to enable the research team to look into the topic ahead of the session, and be able to put together some ideas/suggestions—

—or just join in, and see what topics come up on the day.

Visit the “Events>Talks” page of the website to see which parishes fall under which union, and to book a place (zoom links will be sent nearer the date)

Linton Union	Wed 18 Feb 10.30am	&	Thurs 19 Feb 7.30pm
Cambridge Union	Wed 11 Mar 10.30am	&	Thurs 12 Mar 7.30pm
Wisbech Union	Wed 15 Apr 10.30am	&	Thurs 16 Apr 7.30pm

Any advance questions to secretary@chfhs.org.uk, please.

**these sessions have been very well received
and are proving to be popular events
for both specific and general interest**

We are looking at continuing with similar monthly sessions, but with a more general enquiry theme, later in the year. Details and dates to follow in the next journal, newsletter and website.

RESEARCH SURGERIES—scheduled locations/dates/times

CHFHS volunteers hold regular help & advice sessions at society meetings and at public libraries around the county
there are no charges for these services
enquiries : secretary@chfhs.org.uk

Ely Library	3 rd Wed alternate mths	Jan / Mar / May / July / Sept / Nov	drop in between 10.00-4.00
Norris Museum St Ives	2 nd Wed alternate mths	Feb / Apr / Jun / Aug / Oct / Dec NB : Dec '25 to 12.30 only	drop-in between 10.30 & 3.30
Cottingham Library	3 rd Mon <u>every</u> mth	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 1.00-4.00
St Neots Library	4 th Thurs <u>every</u> mth	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 2.00-4.00
March Library	1 st & 3 rd Tues <u>every</u> mth	TWICE MONTHLY	drop-in between 10.00-4.00

**** Cambridge Central Library and Bar Hill Library **** ...
from Jan 2026, we are no longer providing a drop-in research surgery at these venues.

If you are unable to attend any of the locations, we can offer a zoom call or a pre-arranged meet-up to look at your queries.

Please contact the Secretary to arrange a date/time/place to suit :

email : secretary@chfhs.org.uk



**As part of our 50th Anniversary
Celebrations in 2026**



we hope to set up a number of additional special research days around the county—

**—look out for date/venue announcement via the
website/newsletter as events are finalised**

MARCH PROGRAMME <i>Wednesday Face-2-Face Meetings</i>		1st Wednesdays at 2.00pm March Library, March enquiries : march@chfhs.org.uk
Wed 4 Feb	Victorian Rural Women <i>Rural women living in East Anglia had tough lives working on the land, raising often large families, working in ‘service’ and living in difficult conditions in comparison to those who lived in the ‘big houses’.</i>	with Charlotte Paton
Wed 4 Mar	That Rings a Bell’ :The history of the Town Crier <i>Step back in time and discover the vibrant history of the town crier. Once the lifeblood of every bustling town square the town crier’s powerful voice echoed through the streets, delivering essential news and proclamations with a commanding Oyez, Oyez, Oyez! In this fascinating journey, you’ll learn how these charismatic figures, dressed in elaborate regalia and armed with brass bells, captivated communities. From announcing royal decrees to spreading news of local events, their role was crucial in an era before newspapers and digital media. The immersive narrative traces the evolution of the town crier from medieval times to their ceremonial presence today. Experience the excitement of a bygone era where the town crier was the trusted voice of authority and community spirit. This exploration into the world of the town crier brings the past to life.</i>	with Mike Wabe (Mike will be in full costume)
Wed 1 Apr	From Cheshire To The A14—the story of salt <i>Salt has been a valuable commodity over the centuries. This talk looks at salt’s very interesting history and it’s uses over the years, bringing the story to modern times.</i>	with Helen Green
Wed 6 May	Longthorpe Tower, Peterborough <i>One of the most important medieval buildings in England, not only for its unique wall paintings (giving an insight into the Medieval world), but as a rare example of a tower house in the south of England, and for the family story it encapsulates.</i>	with Don Chiswell
Wed 3 Jun	A—Z of Cambridge <i>A quirky alternative to Cambridge’s rich history, dipping into aspects such as books, to oysters sold at the largest fair in Medieval Europe. Famous residents are also covered</i>	with Sarah Doig

CAMBRIDGE PROGRAMME

3rd Wednesdays of the month at **7.30pm**
enquiries : programme@chfhs.org.uk

Cambridge Branch talks are Zoom only—book via the website

Wed 18 Feb	County & Local Sources at The Society of Genealogists with Sue Gibbons <i>The talk will cover what we have at the Society and how to find the following: County wide sources such as county histories etc., local material about a single place, registers (both C of E and nonconformist), Monumental or tombstone inscriptions, census transcripts and indexes including those before 1841, directories, poll books and voters registers and lastly periodicals such as county and local record society publications The new premises in Wharf Road is much smaller than the old library so I will also go over what is immediately available and what is offsite, and how to order material in advance of your visit</i>
Wed 18 Mar	AI For Family History : what it can (and can't do for you) with Linda Hammond <i>Curious about how Artificial Intelligence can support your family history research? This engaging talk introduces you to the exciting ways AI can act as your genealogy assistant - helping you save time, spark ideas, and even bring your ancestors' stories to life. From summarising tricky old records and translating faded letters, to suggesting alternative surname spellings and drafting family stories, AI tools can give your research a powerful boost. We'll look at practical examples of how to use tools like ChatGPT, while also exploring the limits of what AI can (and can't) do. You'll discover how AI can organise your findings, generate timelines, provide historical context, and even help with difficult handwriting - without replacing the detective work and personal satisfaction of genealogy itself.</i>
Wed 15 Apr	When The Saints Go Marching In with Eric Jackson <i>This talk is the story of all those saints we know so well, or think we do! St George, St. Patrick, St. Valentine, St. Christopher and many others, their stories and legends brought to life in this fascinating talk. The talk is presented in a non-religious manner so will suit all audiences. Why do we send Valentine's Day cards, what is the connection between St. Nicolas, aka Santa Claus, and why do we exchange gifts at Christmas? Why and how did a Greek soldier become the patron saint of England? All these stories and more in this illuminating talk.</i>

MEETINGS REPORTS

*Don't forget that many of the talks
are recorded and available in the
members area of the website*

AN INTRODUCTION TO USING LOCAL HISTORY RESOURCES AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

WITH KEVIN ROBERTS

(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM MEETING : NOV 2025)

Kevin Roberts is Curator of Religious and Estate Collections in the Department of Archives and Modern Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library. In this role he looks after the archives of the Diocese of Ely, Ely Cathedral, estate collections and many other collections with a Cambridgeshire focus.

Kevin began by describing the library's long history of collecting materials, including estate and religious collections, and highlighted the significance of their holdings for local and family history research. He emphasized that while some collections might now be more relevant to local government archives, the library's extensive historical collections provide valuable resources for researchers. He also noted a shift from unwelcoming attitudes in the 1960s and 1970s to a more inclusive approach today. He further emphasized the importance of promoting collections and highlighted the challenges of digitization, which is often limited due to time and cost constraints.

Kevin provided an overview of the University Library's special collections and services relevant to family and local history research. He explained the layout of the library's departments, including Archives and Modern Manuscripts, Rare Books, and the Maps Department, and highlighted key collections such as the DOCS, the CAM Collection, and the Diocese of Ely Archive. Kevin also described the library's digital resources, reprographics services, and conservation team, emphasizing the availability of digitized materials and the expertise of the staff.

He discussed the extensive and varied collections of the Diocese of Ely Archives, highlighting the challenges in cataloguing and accessing records, particularly for modern materials. He mentioned ongoing projects to improve the archives' organization and accessibility, including an audit of bishop's transcripts and plans to explore consistory court records further. Kevin also described the types of records available, such as tithe maps, bishop's transcripts, marriage licenses, court records, and manorial records,

emphasizing their potential for genealogical and historical research. He noted that wills and probate records have been transferred to Cambridgeshire Archives.

Kevin discussed various historical records available at the cathedral and university archives, including memorial records, grammar school collections, financial records, and manorial documents. He highlighted the extensive collection of enclosure awards and the vast University Archives, which contain records of matriculation, student societies, and court series. Kevin also mentioned an ongoing project to return records from the Church Commissioners' Archive to their original collections.

He then discussed the history and administration of the Vice Chancellor's prison, known as the Spinning House, which was used to incarcerate women accused of prostitution. He highlighted the existence of records and rules governing the inmates, and mentioned a project to digitize and catalogue these records, with the help of volunteers from our society. Volunteers also helped catalogue various other collections, including manorial records, family papers, and estate documents.

He mentioned plans to merge the Rare Books and Archives reading rooms into a single service point. Kevin explained the use of the ArchivesSpace management system and Archive Search as a public interface for accessing archival collections. He concluded by mentioning tours of Cambridge University Library and the partnership between the library and the Family History Society.

The presentation gave rise to many questions from the audience, including;

- the challenges of tracking farm names that no longer exist - Kevin suggested exploring the Cambridgeshire Place Names book and local archives for more information;
- researching families back to 1600's - checking parish records and suggested exploring nearby villages and Suffolk for additional information;
- the location of various records, with Kevin noting that some diocesan materials moved to the library during the mid-2010s, though some may still be held by the diocese;
- accessibility of individual college libraries - Kevin explained that is depended on specific college arrangements but certainly recommended that CHFHS members take up the offer of free admission to the University Library (on production of a letter from our Secretary) and to make use of the library's website inquiry facility for further research assistance.

Kevin's presentation covered many aspects of the CUL's collections and the ongoing work to catalogue, digitise, and make them available to the broader public.

His style was both entertaining and energetic and clearly made an impact on the audience shown by the amount of discussion that followed it.

Reported by John Bownass

THE VICTORIANS AND ENTERTAINMENT *WITH DR JUDITH HILL* *(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM MEETING : DECEMBER 2025)*

Judy's talk began on the transformation of leisure and entertainment in Victorian Britain, highlighting the contrast between the limited recreational options available to the working classes in the 1830s and the broader access to mass entertainment by 1901. She explained how industrialization and urbanization led to a regulated working day, increased spending power, and the emergence of a distinct leisure time separate from work. Judy also mentioned the introduction of bank holidays in 1871 and the role of the railways in expanding recreational opportunities for the working classes.

Judy explained the history of public parks in Victorian England, how they were developed as a response to urbanization and the need for recreational spaces accessible to all classes. She highlighted the role of industrial benefactors and horticulturalists in funding and designing these parks, which featured formal gardens, lakes, and bandstands. Judy also touched on the establishment of botanic gardens and the provision of allotments for workers, emphasizing the Victorian belief in the educational and health benefits of these spaces. The Great Exhibition of 1851 attracted diverse visitors and aided in expanding leisure activities for the working class through affordable train tickets and organized group trips to the exhibition. The rise of music halls as affordable entertainment and the growing popularity of seaside resorts led to more enjoyment for the working class, together with the expansion of leisure activities like football, which did not require special attire or club membership, contrasting with more exclusive sports like cricket and golf.

Judy also covered Thomas Cook's role in popularizing tourism through organized excursions and guidebooks, noting how his temperance background influenced his initial focus on middle-class travellers before expanding into global tourism. By the end of the 19th century following the

introduction of unpaid public holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Whitsun & 4 August, many working-class families could afford to visit seaside resorts and also to music halls, theatres, fairs etc. Life certainly changed enormously for the working class during and after the Industrial Revolution.

Reported by Muriel Halliday

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW & REQUESTS FOR GENEALOGY

*WITH RICHARD HOLT
(MARCH MEETING : OCTOBER 2025)*

At the October meeting Richard Holt gave a talk/presentation entitled 'Freedom of Information Law and Requests for Genealogy'.

He started by giving an introduction into making Freedom of Information requests for family history purposes and challenging responses that may not give the result required. Richard explained that he is not a legal professional and that his talk is based on his personal experience. His objective was to inform us of the basic principles of FOI, to understand the types of information available and steps that the public can take. The first requirement is 'patience'!

The public have the right to access information that public bodies hold unless there is an exemption that overrides the right, for example national security. Schedule 1 gives a list of public authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Local Government bodies in England and Wales, District Councils, the NHS, Maintained Schools and Educational Institutions, the Police, public bodies and offices including museums, galleries and theatres.

The FOI law does not replace other laws governing the disclosure of information, for example, adoption of the Children Act where there are numerous exemptions.

Anyone can make a FOI request for any recorded information, printed, written, photographs, CCTV and records. Requests need to be in writing, letter or email. Information that needs to be included is name, contact details and email address and send to the special FOI department, found on line under the heading 'how to make a request'. Richard advised keeping a record of all correspondence and to be really clear on what you are searching for. Requests for recorded information can be asked for in large print, braille or Welsh. If you are asking for information on a deceased person they may ask for proof of death. The standard time for a reply is 20

working days, but can be longer. If the request is not granted a Decision Notice will be issued, if you don't agree with this decision Richard advised to write promptly to ask for an Internal Review clarifying the reasons. This can go to a First Tier Tribunal, then an Upper Tribunal currently administered by the Ministry of Justice.

Refusals may be on grounds of cost to them, which is on the time taken by the public authority to find the information, currently £600 for Central Government, Parliament and the Armed Forces and £450 for other public bodies. Their Code of Practice – Section 46, Management states ‘ if the quality and archive management is not good then public authorities have no chance of finding the requested information’. Retention schedules are 20 years after which much information is sent to The National Archives.

Richard gave a case study of his own experience of some burial records from Berkely Burial Committee, Gloucestershire. There were concerns over the management of records held with no clear fee structures for obtaining information from registers and maps. The search fees per hour were not proportionate to the time a search may take. They were going to charge £100 for the request information without doing anything, whereas they should have confirmed or denied that they actually hold the records requested.

Another request to Buckinghamshire Cemetery databases resulted in a reply that there are 800 entries under the name requested, they asked for additional information and a greater level of detail such as approximate time period and geographical area. This had already been given. Sometimes requests will lead to being referred to digital information already available, rather than them taking time to search for additional information. Public bodies may not want to disclose information and will seek a reason for exemptions.

The 1939 Register was used as a basic for the data required to issue Ration Books and in 1948 for the NHS. From 1898 – 1996 index cards were used for all passports issued, after that data was digitised.

Richard advised us not to trust transcriptions as they are often based on a best guess and are often incorrect.

Reported by Linda Peckett

SUFFOLK FHS FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

Sat 9 May at The Hold, Fore St., Ipswich — 10.00-4.00 — FREE ENTRY

talks; societies stalls; local history; advice ; CHFHS will be there

further information from : www.suffolkfhs.co.uk

HOME TO THE WESTERN FRONT

WITH HELEN GREEN

(MARCH BRANCH : NOV 2025)

Helen Green (member) was our speaker in November. Her talk – *'Home to the Western Front'* gave an alternative to what happened to the soldiers returning from fighting, this told us about the time before they were sent to fight. Helen's son was an infantry officer, other family members also have military backgrounds, hence her interest in the army. Helen researched names on a war memorial at Northwich, Cheshire and found interesting facts about them, one had been shot at dawn.

When war was declared in 1914 there was much enthusiasm amongst young men to enlist following widespread advertising encouraging them to do so. Conscription was not introduced until 1916. At the recruiting office, volunteers signed their attestation form and were sent for a very basic medical. The attestation form asked the recruits for personal information, name, parish, trade, where they lived, apprenticeships, any sentences and any territorial experience. It had to be signed under oath and signed by the attesting officer. A recruit had to be a minimum of 5ft 3ins tall and have a minimum chest measurement of 35 inches. These standards were reduced by 1917. Recruits often had a second medical when they joined a regiment. Helen showed a photograph of a very young looking recruit, she thought about 16/17 years old. Many of the recruits were underweight, unhealthy and in a poor physical state. At the beginning of the war there was not enough accommodation resulting in recruits sleeping in tents and without uniforms. Eventually uniforms were supplied, woollen serge tunic and trousers, braces, grey collarless shirts, ammunition belts, hob nail boots and puttees (strips of cloth worn wound round the leg from the ankle to the knee).

Training lasted between 6 and 9 months. The day started at 5.30am, reveille, make beds with sheets and blankets, 6.15am parades – there were 8 per day, followed by 1 hour drill (physical and musketry), football, fundamentals of rifle shooting and route marches. Many were discharged at regimental training camps due to health conditions including defective teeth, ear infections and other conditions. At the start of training they sent letters home to their mothers. Daily work included cleaning rifles, look out duty, checking grenades, front line standing in line ready for action, midday meal, evening meal and stand down.

Trains took the soldiers to the ports where ships took them across the Channel to France. They didn't spend all their time on the front line, sometimes they were at the rear with tasks such as filling sandbags and

making barbed wire barriers.

Photographs showed a Scottish regiment (identified by their hats and wearing a leather apron over kilts), in the trenches where the men start to look less smart due to the awful conditions. Ladders were ready to 'go over the top' and sandbags lined the trenches. However, standards had to be upheld the soldiers were always required to wash and shave each morning (in cold water). Dawn was thought to be the likely time for an attack, therefore all soldiers had to be ready with clean rifles checked by an NCO who also checked that grenades were ready. Evening meals came from the Quarter Master's Stores and were collected by each platoon. Hay boxes were used to carry food to the soldiers on the front line. Men ate with a spoon and fork.

After spending an allocated time on the front line, soldiers went to the rear for a 'rest', but there were still many tasks to be completed. On the front line the danger came from shells, snipers and tanks. After the war many soldiers did not speak about the horrors they had endured and witnessed.

More locally men named on the Cambridgeshire Roll of Honour show they were posted around the world. Numbers of brothers were killed including two Bond brothers from the March family of decorators and Ben and Charles Fountain local farmers. The name of H. Harold DCM, a railway worker is named on the memorial at Liverpool Street Station. Ely library contains local newspapers with letters sent home from the soldiers telling of the conditions. These include letters from Arthur Pike who looks forward to a letter from home, Claude Boyden gave a description of the awful scenes. Helen read out sections of the letters.

Reported by Linda Peckett

HELP WANTED

Received from Martin AVEY

"Many years ago during my days of long-distance walking, I came across a small group of cottages "Avey Cottages". I have lost my records as to where they were, but guess somewhere in Cambridgeshire.

My family of AVEY were resident in Cambs for centuries, centred eventually around Ashley-cum-Silverley.

If any fellow member has knowledge of these cottages (or indeed anything to do with the AVEY family) I would love to hear from them.

STATION ROAD CEMETERY, MARCH

WITH PETER WRIGHT

(MARCH BRANCH : DEC 2025)

Station Road Cemetery, March was Peter Wright's topic for the December meeting. Peter, who lives next door to the cemetery, began his interest in 1980, he researched everybody and anybody. There are several graves of people who, sadly experienced sudden or violent deaths.

The cemetery opened in 1865. In May of that year the clerk of the local Burial Board wrote to Mr Vawser, a local farmer asking to purchase the land. (Burial Board meeting minutes are held at March Museum). This was accepted at the agreed price of £830 and plans for the cemetery chapel with two wings and an arch was submitted on 4th September 1865. A farm dwelling and farm buildings were demolished. The north side of the chapel was for Non-Conformists and the south side for Church of England. On 2nd November 1865 Mr Stevenson's plans were approved and the chapel built at a cost of £3,000. According to local newspapers this was completed by 31st October 1866. Broadhurst and Dearing of March were the builders, and the foundation stone laid on 12th June 1866. A penalty clause was put in place. On 8th August 1866 Mr Broadhurst asked for an extension of time as his workers were needed to work on the harvest. The extension was granted for completion by March 1867. On 26th April 1867 a service, conducted by Rev. J Newby was held at St Wendreda Church to consecrate the new cemetery. The Bishop, clergy and other dignitaries marched through the town from the church to the cemetery where the Bishop consecrated the chapel. The next day the first burial took place for John Billet, aged 18.

On 7th April 1870 Elizabeth Taylor was the first of many to die due to epidemic disease. Her body and others were not taken into the chapel, but had to remain outside. Other names on gravestones that are shared with famous people are: George Best, John Ball, George Foreman, John Smith, May West, Mary Wilson and Henry Wood. Another of interest – Mary Christmas.

There are several deaths of children recorded on the gravestones. Robert Allpress in July 1880. His body was found in a pit near a public house. It was an area where children played. It was reported that Lizzie Allpress was doing the washing at the time, she ran over the road to the pit where Robert aged 7 had been sent to fetch water and fallen in. Her attempt to pull him out was unsuccessful. Dr Johnson was called.

Flora Rose of Floods Ferry was digging potatoes and sent home to get warm. She spoke to her father who told her to put on a jacket. He gave her

a pail, which Flora put on her head, meaning she could not see where she was going. Flora fell into a drain and could not be saved.

A father Alec Davis and his son were fishing in the Twenty Foot Drain in 1928. The son fell in and the father searched for him unsuccessfully. Mr Church who lived nearby found the boy in a hole in the bank. PCs Edgley and Cracknell attended the scene.

Walter Griffin of Binnemoor who did not like school and left school at the age of 8. On 11th May 1923 he left home, smoking a cigarette. He then rushed home with burning clothes and his skin peeling off. He died on 16th May in Addenbrookes Hospital.

Fred Stacey of Upwell Road, March aged 8 was given a gun and cartridges for Christmas 1927 and was shot dead accidentally by his friend.

John Palmer a toll collector at Mepal told John Walters that the flooded Wash was safe to cross. He told him that the gate was undone. Although it was late at night he passed through the gate and not seen after several days. On Tuesday 27th December his father sent a telegram. William Pearson searched as far as Welches Dam, Manea where he found the body of John Walters and managed to get him into a boat. An inquest was held, John Palmer thought that John Walters was sober when he went through the toll gate. The inquest found that Walters died from drowning. A military funeral was held on 3rd Jan 1922 at St John's Church, March. The hearse carried the coffin draped with a union Jack and coat of arms, wreaths and flowers. A band led the procession through the streets to the church with his father and brother behind the coffin carried by 8 volunteers. It was a solemn occasion.

Mr Henry Bond was the captain of the Fire Brigade, he joined in 1888 with his 2 sons. He introduced uniforms and metal helmets. They attended a fire at the home of Mr Morton a farmer in West Fen. Half the firemen rode on the engine and half walked from the Griffin Hotel. The thatched roof had fallen into the dwelling. Captain Bond explained this was the worst experience of his career involving people, buildings and animals. Captain Bond died on 29th December 1932. Members of the fire service from all over the county attended.

Stanley Nash born 1903, a keen sportsman, joined the Suffolk regiment in 1922. On 6th October 1928, whilst riding a motorcycle near Ascot he was hit by a car and sustained multiple injuries from which he died on 7th October 1928. He was given a full military funeral.

As March is a railway town, as expected there are several graves of

railwaymen at Station Road Cemetery. One of these was Robert Bannock who, in 1885 was washing down an engine. George Lloyd and a friend were repairing the engine. Robert Bannock was at the front of the engine when the equipment slipped causing him to fall. However, he resumed working for a further 25 minutes when he fell with blood coming from his mouth. The doctor was called at 3pm but he died at 4pm. An inquest found that he died of compression of the brain.

Isaac Benton, an engine cleaner with 18 years of service signed on for duty on 4th January 1929. The 2pm train from London reversed over the station which was an infringement of company rules. Benton was behind the train and suffered a fracture at the base of the skull from which he died. Over 100 railwaymen attended his funeral.

Several more instances were given. These demonstrated how, by finding details on gravestones and then researching in local newspapers, more interesting information on the death can be found.

Reported by Linda Peckett

ANCESTRY comes to Cambs & Hunts

As you will probably be aware by now, mid-July 2025 saw Ancestry releasing its collection of Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire Parish Registers.

We are pleased to be part of this exciting initiative by Cambridgeshire Archives to widen access to records. CHFHS's "life-long" work on transcribing parish registers lives on as these transcripts form the foundation of the search database for finding the images (the Society also has joint billing with the Archives as the records "source" on the Ancestry website)

As with the other counties in the Ancestry "stable", the new collection comprises four records databases which can be searched individually, collectively, or as part of an "all records search" over the whole of Ancestry

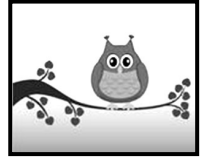
- Baptisms, Marriages & Burials 1538-1812
 - Births & Baptisms 1813-1924
 - Deaths & Burials 1813-1997
 - Marriages & Banns 1754-1950

NB: users should note that this is NOT the same as the CHFHS website database—Ancestry have reproduced scanned images only from material held by Cambs/Hunts Archives (which is not every parish in the counties)



RECENT RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

we are not just all about Cambs/Hunts !!



The Research Team can be contacted in a number of ways—local library surgeries; events and fairs; facebook; email to the research team; by letter to the secretary; zoom sessions. Over recent months, we have received a wide variety of enquiries on a wide variety of topics ranging from simple “how to ...” queries from newer researchers, to complex “last resort” problems having long-flummoxed their owners—from the local to down under and beyond. Recent receipts include:

- An elderly enquirer, whose parents had both died quite young didn't know her grandparents' real names, and was delighted when we were able to find them along with some familiar names (aunts, uncles and cousins) in East London, at addresses she recognised.
- We've continued to help a new-comer get to grips with “how to ...”, and make suggestions to overcome some sticking points by mixing and matching information from a variety of sources and resources
- An enquirer couple brought his and hers problems: 1) searching for siblings of an Irish immigrant grandmother in the 1920s; 2) a search reminiscent of the circumstances behind that in the DNA article featured in the last issue—the enquirer was advised to seek better qualified help
- The enquirer sought confirmation that a grandfather had joined his brother in Canada, and served with Canadian forces in WW1 before returning to England—attestation papers were found, as well as passenger lists showing he went back to visit for 18mths in the 1920s
- “what did you do in the war?” is a familiar question and one which often wasn't asked, or not answered if it was—an enquirer seeking to what lies behind the acronyms in his father's albeit scant service record—we were able to help decipher some references and offer a few ideas to follow up
- An overseas researcher sought property records and was directed towards the Manorial Records Register via The National Archives website

REMEMBER—we're here to help, so don't hesitate to ask

Our thanks continue go to everyone who has sent in contributions—whether as articles about your families and researches, or just short pieces, please keep it coming—getting something down on paper to share “the story” with others is the key. Family history is so much more than just genealogical facts, it's the stories which we either know or have deduced from the raw facts, and these need to be written down. Apologies if your piece hasn't appeared as yet, it's very much a jigsaw puzzle to fit the material into the available pages.

The Editorial Team

MEMBERSHIP

The Society offers a regular programme of meetings designed to appeal to the specialist and beginner alike; the quarterly members' journal is also available, if preferred, as a digital download. The UK subscription, due on joining and annually thereafter, is £12, and includes the member's partner. The overseas subscription is £17, which gives airmail postage of the Journal. If you chose to receive the e-Journal, the annual subscription for all locations is £9 (we also offer a life membership for x10 annual rate). Subscriptions/renewals may be made online through the CHFHS website via debit/credit card or PayPal, or by DirectDebit; alternatively, sterling cheque/etc payable to *Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society*, should be sent to the Secretary. Changes of address/email and members' interests to the Membership Secretary, please. See p52 for contacts.

SEARCHABLE RECORDS & SHOP

“Cambs & Hunts Database” When fully operational, the new CHFHS website will feature a brand new records search and retrieval system (replacing both “AncestorFinder” and “SuperSearch”). On offer will be a basic search facility freely available to all comers, and the records database with searchable access to over 5m of CHFHS's online transcribed records from across Cambs & The Isle of Ely and Hunts. The database is **available to all members** and accessible via the website members area. Additional records not suitable for the database format can be found as browsable pdf files.

CHFHS SHOP Search the publications listings on the website to see what's available for particular parishes and locations (CDs and/or downloads). Additional material not suitable for the database is also available as CDs and/or downloads. Also shop via: www.ParishChurch.com (incl books).

RESEARCH SERVICES

The Society will undertake a limited amount of help for members who have reached a sticking point in the work. This can be done in two ways :

- # general enquiries can be addressed to the Secretary by email secretary@chfhs.org.uk (or by post, with an SAE please)
- # more detailed requests should be sent to our Research Team, preferably by email, via the request form on the website research@chfhs.org.uk

We will attend to requests as our time allows. We ask that you remember we are all volunteers, so please be patient and reasonable in your requests.

Please supply as much information about the topic/person as possible (such as the sources of “facts” you already have, and which records/resources have already been consulted (eg. BMDs, census, wills, parish registers, a family tree, Ancestry, FindMyPast, FamilySearch, etc)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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ALL OTHER, & POSTAL, CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SECRETARY, PLEASE

SELECTED RESOURCES TO ASSIST RESEARCH IN CAMBS & THE ISLE OF ELY AND HUNTS

www.chfhs.org.uk

**visit the CHFHS website to find
listings, links and information**

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