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in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & the Isle of Ely

THE JOURNAL

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VOLUME 31 : 4

WINTER 2025

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS: NED WAYNE & CAROL NOBLE

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 :

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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 31 : 4

WINTER 2025



Welcome to the Winter edition of the CHFHS Journal—with an eclectic mix of articles and reports. A couple of important date for your diaries in April and May—namely the East Anglia Family History Fair at St Ives in April, and the AGM with our 50th Anniversary at Huntingdon Archives/Library in May

Feature articles in this issue—the concluding part of his account of Fen Skating at Swavesey from Graham W looks at the evolution of the sport through the 20C; Robin P recounts the story of a Little Downham man's military service in the Boer War; the very convoluted trail behind an enquirer's DNA story is revealed by Karen O (and one which well demonstrates the power of DNA in helping unravel apparently insurmountable mysteries); and, Mike Petty has sent a link to a recent update of his Collecting Cambridgeshire website (an absolute “must” for everyone researching anything anywhere in the county).

Regular updates include—research surgeries (incl our attending at Cottenham Library until at least year end in lieu of Bar Hill), 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 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 !!

CONTENTS—Vol 31 : 4 (Winter 2025)

Diary Date : EA Fair 2026	2	Mind Mapping for family history (book)	27
Chairman “First Words”	3	How Many Cousins	28
Diary Date : AGM / 50th Anniv 2026	5	Curious Cures Exhibition visit	30
Speed Skating At Swavesey—part 2		Area Research Surgeries Programme	32
<i>By Graham Webster</i>	6	F2F Research Surgeries Diary	33
Herbert Frost—soldier of the Boer War		Meetings & Talks Diary	34
<i>By Robin Pearl</i>	16	Talks Reports	36
“Maggie’s” Story—a DNA journey		Out & About	46
<i>By Karen Orrell</i>	19	Document Display AGM 2025	48
Collecting Cambridgeshire—an update		Recent Research Enquiries	50
<i>By Mike Petty</i>	24	CHFHS Services & Contacts	51-2

cover photo : East Anglia Family History Fair, St Ives ... 18 April 2026

BOOK THE DATE!

Really Useful Show *Live*



Saturday 18 April 2026

10am—4.30pm

Burgess Hall, St Ives PE27 6WU

There will be talks by leading experts

A hall packed with family history and local societies

plus commercial exhibitors and

Family History Federation with the bookstall!

Please put the date in your diary today!

ReallyUsefulShowLIVE East Anglia ... 50+ tables booked to date ...

- Majority of FHSs in the EA Region & some from further afield
- Family History Federation
- Cambridgeshire Archives
- Cambridgeshire Collection (Cambridgeshire Local Studies Library)
- Pharos Tutors (online family & local history courses)
- This Way Books (local history publications & historical maps)
- R A Longley (books & data CDs; maps; storage and supplies)
- WeAre.xyz (online archive for family history &/or one place study)
- Quality Maps And More (historic & reproduction maps)

PLUS : Guest speakers to include Genetic Genealogist, Donna Rutherford
& advice/demonstration of Family Tree Maker software
& problem solving Q&A panel

Follow the latest news via CHFHS facebook/newsletter



A WORD FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



A wider context for your family

We are all used to finding key dates for our ancestors - birth, baptism, marriage, death, burial, and use these to populate and develop our family trees. Burial will normally take place soon after death for health reasons, but this is not necessarily the case for the gap between birth and baptism. I am sure many of you will have had the experience of recorded age at death and then trying to find a baptism record that looks to fit the age. Birth dates before 1837 can sometimes be found in the parish registers; the Dade registers for the north of England, and some non-conformist registers are much more detailed than most others. Family bibles give birth dates, although the one I have has some retrospective entries, the birthday is correct, but the year is wrong; the 1939 register has the same issue. Early family records may survive, especially for more wealthy people. Some baptisms took place much later for religious reasons, Baptists were usually young adults at baptism. Others were baptised very soon after birth because infant mortality rates were high.

We all tend to copy people we know for some aspects of what we do, and the application of this approach to family history can shed more light on our own ancestors. What were the trends at any one time? What did neighbours do? Were there local factors that influenced the choice of both baptism and marriage dates? I have recently been re-reading something I last looked at long before I moved to Ely – the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure¹, and the Local Population Studies Society². Both organisations collate a series of raw data, so that a wider context can be demonstrated over time and place. Some of the studies cover Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire – baptism customs at Melbourn³. The study shows how the percentage of baptisms in July varied significantly, almost half of the 170 baptisms in the 1790's took place in July⁴, other decades had a far lower percentage; the most popular month for marriages was October (nine months before July !!) in every decade over 60 years⁵, but the study shows how the timelapse is more complex. Michael Drake's book

has studies for baptism, marriage, burial and migration, and is well worth reading. My own knowledge of our local area is limited, and, although it is easy to search for place publications, this may not work where the place is not included in the title. Two examples of local authors whose work gives a wide context to our family history are Rowland Parker and his work on Foxton⁶, and Jack Ravensdale who lived in Landbeach⁷.

Plague in Cambridge in the 17th century

As I write this, I have just received a copy of an article by Professor Samantha Williams about two outbreaks of plague in Cambridge in 1625 and 1630. Samantha has used and acknowledged burial transcript records from the Society as part of her comparison of the different approaches to the two outbreaks by both the town and the University. The full article is well worth reading,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2024.2431387#abstract>

If you have any problems finding it, please contact me.

Your family photographs

Thank you to everyone who attended my recent talk about finding old family photographs, I had several emails about it and was able to confirm a provisional identification of one of my ancestors, as I received a later photograph of the same person from a direct descendant. My talk argued the importance of identifying and sharing photographs; the ones in your collection may be the only likeness of some of our ancestors. I am often asked about what to do with family artifacts, and the Society will be publishing guidance in the coming months; please contact me if you have anything to contribute.

Volunteer expenses and subsistence payments

We have recently agreed that anyone volunteering for Society work and activities is entitled not just to claim expenses but subsistence when they are away from home. It is important that our accounts reflect the costs of running the Society, and everyone should claim fairly promptly so they are not out of pocket when working for the Society. If you are not sure how to do this, please contact me.

Diary dates to save

Work is well in hand on two important dates for 2026, our own 50th anniversary and AGM in Huntingdon on Saturday 23 May, and the Really Useful Show in St Ives on Saturday 18th April. Please save both dates and come to both events if you are able to do so.

¹ <https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/>

² <http://www.localpopulationstudies.org.uk/>

³ Drake, M (ed) Population studies from parish registers, Local Population Studies 1982, pp36-47

⁴ Ibid. p. 38

⁵ Ibid. p. 40

⁶ See for example Cottage on the Green, the author 1973; The Common Stream, Collins 1975

⁷ History on your doorstep, BBC, 1982

David Capsey

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.

(more details nearer the time & * numbers will be needed for catering *)

SPEED SKATING AT SWAVESEY

Part Two

By Graham WEBSTER (2978)

Part One traced the earliest recorded ice skating in Swavesey, particularly Mere/Mare Fen. Severe weather was relatively infrequent but Swavesey became a popular location for skating when conditions were suitable, organised and sponsored by the National Skating Association (NSA).

On 5 December 1925, a race for the Chicago Cup took place. The prize of the Chicago Cup had been presented by C[harles] A[lfred] KING. King was a native of Over, born in June 1863, had moved to Chicago in ca 1885 and became a naturalised American in 1922¹; by 1920 he was a butcher, having moved on from running a grocery store². He built a house overlooking Mere Fen in ca 1923 – ‘The Blot’, 77 Station Road, Over³ - built for his sister and himself when they visited the UK from Chicago⁴. There is an intriguing coincidence here. George Granville DUDDLESTON (July 1851-13 November 1914⁵), a native of Wisbech, presented a silver cup (‘...a perpetual trophy...’) in January 1894 for an amateur one-mile ice skate race⁶. George had moved to Chicago in 1872⁷ and became a well-known figure there initially working in the Smithfield meat market there as a butcher into the early years of the 20th century (and later described as a meat merchant⁸) ‘...serving the choicest cuts of beef for steak⁹’. See the similarity; did they perhaps know each other through their occupation?

There was a history of ice skating in Chicago:

Competitive speed skating began to thrive in the 1890s, particularly among Norwegians in Humboldt Park, who formed the Northwest Skating Club in 1890. The city pioneered women's competition in 1904 with a state meet at Humboldt Park that attracted 50,000 spectators. Speed skating subsequently spread into grade schools...

By 1923 metropolitan Chicago's winter landscape was dotted with more than six hundred outdoor rinks (more than in any other city)...¹⁰

The Duddlestone Cup – often raced for since its inception - was the prize at the race held at Swavesey on 21 December 1927 under the auspices of the Fen Department NSA, when there were just six competitors – but plenty of spectators¹¹. The Amateur Skating Championship was again held on Lingay Fen on 31 December 1927¹². There followed few frosts, and a widely (but dated back to 1879) circulated joke was ‘that a thaw always set in on the day

that a [NSA] programme was arranged'¹³. The Chicago Cup was again fought for on 26 January 1929 on Mere Fen¹⁴. A newspaper reported that the 'holder of the Chicago Cup [Percy Burton]...was defeated'; he had won it twice before 'and had he been successful on this occasion would have won the cup outright'¹⁵; he was beaten by L[eonard] B[enjamin] (known as Len) from Over¹⁶. The NSA's Amateur Quarter-Mile race was competed at Swavesey on 16 February¹⁷. There was more racing on Mere Fen on 17th February, where £18 was collected for the Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Swavesey, Over and Fen Drayton Nursing Association¹⁸. The Over and Swavesey Amateur Challenge Cup was raced for on the 19th for the first time¹⁹, where four laps of the one-mile course had to be completed; L[eonard] B[enjamin] (known as Len) Carter was the winner. It was said that over the course of the week, the condition of the ice varied 'soft on top, and large pools of water appeared when the crowd gathered together'²⁰. The frost lasted until March 1929 in the Fens and in places ice was 10 inches thick²¹. It was also this month, for 'the first time for 50 years', a cricket match took place between Over, and a Swavesey and Fen Drayton team on Mere Fen on 2 March 1929; the former 211 all out, the latter 179 for all wickets. The match was made more interesting as there was no boundary with several eights and nines scored. The ice also made for some interesting plays:

Many were the falls and during one attempted run F Johnson's [opener for the Swavesey and Fen Drayton team] skate came off and he only just reached his ground by crawling in leaving bat and skate some distance up the pitch²²

Brief spells of frost and rough ice contributed to a barren spell of racing in the early- mid-1930s. It was, however, reported that December 1933 was the first time the Fen Department of the NSA was able to run three major events before Christmas – the Amateur Championship of Great Britain (the King Edward Cup), the Cameron Cup and the Duddleston Cup were all held at Lingay Fen. Notable was that A[ndrew] J[oseph] CARTER of Over won a heat in the former against a 10 year old and were 'youngest competitors of all time'²³. Andrew was the younger brother to Leonard Benjamin CARTER (*above*)²⁴, and also a cyclist.

In 1935 it was recorded that Charles King (donor of the Chicago Cup, *above*) was a vice-president of the Over and Swavesey Skating Association²⁵. It was also this year that Len CARTER represented Great Britain on the international skating scene²⁶.

In December 1935 it is reported that Len Carter won the Chicago Cup raced on Mere Fen on the 21st; brother Andrew was third²⁷. The following year,



Len and brother,
Andrew, CARTER in 1935

*Private communication,
Carolyn REDMAYNE, April 2024*

1936, Charles King again presented the Association a 50-guinea solid silver cup 'to be known The Chicago Cup for the English Grand Prix²⁸'. It was remarked at the presentation that Charles was shortly to return to the USA – an American newspaper cutting of 1938 remarking on a visit to Lockport, New York State that he had made 45 trips from England arriving at New York from his latest journey on 9 June 1938 from Southampton on SS *Manhattan*²⁹.



Charlie King (on left),
presenting the
Chicago Cup
to P.J. Watts
in September 1936³⁰

It was noted that this was the third trophy [sic] he had presented and would be competed for:

...by amateur skaters for all England and will be a perpetual trophy. The race will be run over a course of 1½ miles with three turns whenever practicable with a Sash commemorating his winning of the English Grand Prix³¹.

The Over and Swavesey Skating Association held a meeting on Mere Fen on 13 February 1936 when Len Carter won the Williamson Cup for the second time; his brother Andrew, came second³². The trophy was presented by Charles King. There was a good Fen frost in 1938 but a heavy fall of snow at Christmas caused the Over and Swavesey Skating Association to cancel their racing programme 'for the first time in many years'³³. The frost in the winter of 1940 is said to have eclipsed that of 1929 but due to the Second War World there was no widespread Fen competitive racing, although Len CARTER retained the Morley Cup (a four-lap race over one mile straight course) on Lingay Fen on 3 January although only coming fourth in the Cameron Cup race on 5 January 1940³⁴.

In October 1941 was the sad news of the death of Andrew Carter. He was a sergeant, wireless operator/air gunner in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserves, service number 1161981, having enlisted at Cardington, Bedfordshire. His Manchester I, tail number L7312, aircraft from 207 Squadron based at Waddington, Lincolnshire, was shot down on 13th by a Bf110 Messerschmitt night fighter over Horendonk, near Antwerp, Holland, returning from a failed raid on the Huls synthetic rubber factory, crashing into a field in Belgium³⁵.

The dearth of racing extended into the winter of 1942 and the Fen ice of Christmas 1944 was in 'perfect condition' but was missed by skaters³⁶. During the rest of the 1940s and into the early 1950s some Fen racing was taking place, but not on the scale of the past and arranged around variable ice conditions. Len Carter failed to win the trophy outright in February 1947 by losing the Morley Cup at Bury Fen, after officials had to clear the snow off the course³⁷. The month had seen the longest continuous spell of frost since 1941, but ironically the following month fens were disastrously flooded³⁸.

In January 1952, Fen venues were being sought that had sufficient ice despite severe frost but the low rainfall prevented flooding, and it was noted that Swavesey was closed as a consequence³⁹. From 1954 to 1955 Fen frosts failed to produce ice suitable for skating and although February 1956 was the coldest since 1947 it produced poor skating conditions. To put the conditions into context, despite the conditions the NSA arranged six Amateur

Championships between 1950 and 1956, the first time since the period 1887 to 1893 during which 12 major events were held, compared to 20 between that 1950 to 1956 period⁴⁰. In 1959 it is noted that the Chicago Cup (and sash) had been donated by Charles King in 1940 for the English Grand Prix⁴¹. Charles had been living in Chicago in 1940, but died in Los Angeles in January 1942⁴². Spectator observation of the three-day meeting from 12-14 January in 1959, including the British Championship⁴³, was affected by foggy conditions but the newspaper reported the Chicago Cup had been won 'for the first time' [*sic*]⁴⁴!

Mere Fen, Swavesey,
January 1959
*Our Time, 1959*⁴⁵



Skating on Mere Fen,
Swavesey, 1959
*Fen Centre for all fen ice
skating, 13 August 2019,*
[https://tinyurl.com/
bde95v8n](https://tinyurl.com/bde95v8n)

In 1961, the use of the fields between Swavesey and Over for ice skating is noted⁴⁶, although in December of that year it was stated that 1959 was the last time a skating competition had been at Swavesey⁴⁷.

Despite the memory of the cold 1963 and 1964 there is no records of skating at Swavesey. In 1969, the Over and Swavesey Skating Association was hoping to run the English Grand Prix for the Chicago Cup again, weather permitting, and it is noted that they were trying to avoid a clash with the Fen Department of the NSA meets⁴⁸; it was held on Mere Fen on 17 February 1969⁴⁹. The history of the Chicago Cup is very confused but available records are unable to untangle the chronology

Records on ice skating on Mere Fen into the 1970s and beyond are thin on the ground. This may be accounted for by Anglian Water attempting to reduce its flooding. From 1975 Len Carter (see above, 1935 *et seq*) was secretary of Over and Swavesey Skating Association (or was it National Skating Association Fen Centre?); Gary Warrington took over in 1984 until 2004. It is probable that it was during this period it became the Over, Swavesey and Earith Skating Association which (as a speculation) morphed into the Fen Centre for Ice Skating in the early 1990s⁵⁰. As an official, Gary was the 'gatekeeper' to skating conditions, having to tell callers asking when fen skating would take place '...the only person to answer that would be "Jack Frost"'⁵¹. He was also responsible for setting out courses and relates a story of kneeling on a measuring tape (that over time had replaced metal chains) to prevent it blowing away when '...a very nice young lady' on her white posh skating boots doing some skating figures skated over the tape cutting it clean in half!⁵².

In February 1985 the Over, Swavesey and Earith Skating Association organised a 1½ mile race at Bury Fen for anyone living in a 20-mile radius of Mere Fen⁵³. During the 10 days of competitive racing – '...the best I can ever remember...', Gary Warrington – the organisers ran out of trophies to award and had to buy more⁵⁴. In June of that year it was announced that Cambridgeshire County Council was to purchase Mare [*sic*] Fen to prevent a scheme raised five years previously to plough the fen for cereal growing⁵⁵. It was then acknowledged that the fen's purchase could revive skating 'marking the rebirth of a well-established tradition'⁵⁶. With changing climate this tradition is obviously under threat. The history and folklore of skating on the Fens is well-described in the YouTube video *Chasing Ice: The Story of Fen Skating*⁵⁷, highlighting racing on the Fens not only during the first three months of the cold winter 1963 but also during the three years, 1985, 1986, and 1987 when during the latter the ice was 2 feet thick. It is reported on 15 December 1991, Over, Swavesey and Earith Skating Association organised the First Fen Championship in four years at Whittlesey Fen over a quarter-mile course, racing for the Over and Swavesey Cup⁵⁸. Due to weather conditions the meet lasted only that day!⁵⁹

As the YouTube *Skating on the Fens in Cambridgeshire*⁶⁰ demonstrated, the skating in 2010 on good ice was the first time in 11 years that it occurred. The twist to the changing climate (global warming!) is that a recent run of cold winters, for example 2017/2018 (the year of the Beast from the East⁶¹), 2019/2020, 2020/2021⁶², 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, shows that ice skating is still popular as seen by images available of the *Fen Centre for Ice Skating* Facebook page⁶³. Will this further enforce the revival of ice skating? Perhaps, though, not on Mere/Mare Fen, now a Local Nature Reserve, managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough⁶⁴.



Mare Fen,
The Cambridge Guided Busway—before the floods, 11 December 2012⁶⁵

¹ Although *US Census 1920: Illinois*, records naturalisation in 1893, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GR68-CRF> ; other records give 1922 - it is recorded that a Charles Augustus [*sic*] KING - date of birth and address matches - arrived in US in June 1883 and naturalised in July 1922, *Soundex index to naturalization petitions for U.S. District & Circuit Courts, Northern District of Illinois and Immigration and Naturalization Service District 9, 1840-1950*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PQQ-3Y85> and on a 1926 Passenger list as July 1922.

² *US Census 1910, Illinois*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRVP-935R> ; there is Charles KING, of Willingham, who is registered on the Over Electoral Register from the early 1920s to 1931 owning land in Over (FindMyPast), and Charles Alfred KING does not appear on the US Census in 1930

³ 77 Station Road, Over, Cambridge, CB24 5NL, https://www.hockey.co.uk/resources/100717017689_brochure.pdf

⁴ Private communication Carolyn REDMANE, March 2024; this is also the address of Maud, who had been his 'housekeeper' in Chicago after his wife died in before 1920, in her grant of probate in 1956, *England & Wales, National Probate Calendar*

(Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995

⁵ Died at 115 South Throop Street, Chicago, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2M7-9265> ; Mayor's 'pal' dead: revolver nearby; facts are hidden, *Chicago Tribune*, 14 November 1914, p1 <https://chicagotribune.newspapers.com/article/chicago-tribune/60620758/> ; Duddleston, George (1852-1914), <https://digital.janeaddams.ramapo.edu/items/show/848>

⁶ Skating: the Duddleston Cup, *Cambridge Independent Press*, 16 March 1894, p3

⁷ *United States Census, 1900*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS38-3TX>

⁸ *Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998* <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2M7-9265>

⁹ *Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998*, *ibid*; Mayor's 'pal' dead, *ibid*

¹⁰ *Skating, Ice* <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1146.html>

¹¹ BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*

¹² The Amateur Skating Championship at Lingay Fen, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 7 January 1928, p33; Skating Championships Aka Amateur Skating Championship (1928 [*sic*]), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNrIj9xFFg0>, 13 April 2014

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Skating for the Chicago Cup, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 1 February 1929

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Born 17 January 1910 to Stephen Benjamin and Kate Ada (née CHAPMAN) and died 8 June 2006 in Cambridge having lived in the village of Over for many years.

¹⁷ BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*

¹⁸ Great Skating Carnival... Races at Lingay and Swavesey, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 22 February 1929, p11

¹⁹ "...In 1929 it was reported that the Over and Swavesey Skating Association was 'newly-formed' ..., BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*, p95

²⁰ BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*; in February it was report there had been 19° of frost (-10°C)

²² Cricket on the ice: interesting inter-village match at Swavesey, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 8 March 1929, p3

²³ Championship at Lingay: C W Horn's fourth success, *Peterborough Standard*, 22 December 1933, p16

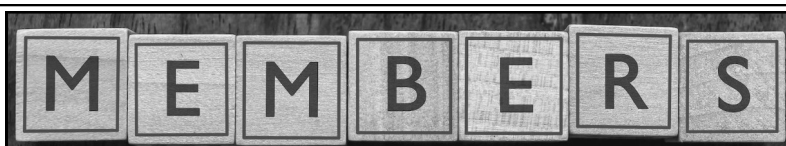
²⁴ Born 12 July 1915, Over

²⁵ Over: Skating Association, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 27 December 1935, p16

²⁶ Known also as a cyclist, he became quite famous internationally (Cambs Skater honoured: L B Carter to race in Switzerland, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 18 January 1935, p15) and at one time holder of the mile record for skating over a continental course [ie straight] (Speed skating: British team to go to Switzerland, *Daily News*, 15 January 1935, p15).

- ²⁷ New holder of skating cup...Swavesey events, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 27 December 1935, p3
- ²⁸ New cup for skaters: Gift to Over and Swavesey Association, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 21 August 1936, p13
- ²⁹ “King” of England visits Lockport, *Lockport Union-Sun and Journal*, 22 June 1935; there are probably too many records to cite here but as an example he departed on 2 November 1926 from Southampton on *SS Leviathan* arriving in New York on 8 November 1926; see also *New York City Passenger Lists, 1820-1957*, via FindMyPast
- ³⁰ New cup for skaters: Gift to Over and Swavesey Association, *ibid*, p10; thanks to Carolyn REDMAYNE, private communication, March 2024;
- ³¹ *Ibid*
- ³² Mere Fen skating: L B Carter wins trophy, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 14 February 1936, p17
- ³³ *Cambridge Chronicle*, 30 December 1938.
- ³⁴ Fenland skating, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 12 January 1940, p6: there is picture of Len skating in the Morley Cup
- ³⁵ *Sergeant Andrew Joseph Carter*, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2806969/andrew-joseph-carter/> ; the detailed account can be read at 12/13.10.1941 207 Squadron Manchester I L7312 EM: L Plt Off. Bowes-Cavanagh, <https://aircrewremembered.com/bowes-cavanagh-brian.html>
- ³⁶ BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*
- ³⁷ Len Carter loses Morley Cup: 20 competitors at Bury Fen, *Saffron and Walden Weekly News*, 21 February 1947, p7
- ³⁸ Farmers facing ruin in Fenland flood, *Leicester Evening Mail*, 19 March 1947, p1
- ³⁹ BLOOM, (1958), *ibid*
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*
- ⁴¹ Yesterday’s fen skating, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 16 January 1959, p24
- ⁴² *California Deaths and Burials, 1776-2000*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:HGW8-R3ZM>
- ⁴³ Fen Centre for all fen ice skating, 17 August 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/bde95v8n>
- ⁴⁴ Yesterday’s fen skating, *ibid*
- ⁴⁵ Carolyn REDMAYNE, private communication, 3 May 2024
- ⁴⁶ Village with great sporting traditions: Over’s character has little changed, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 14 July 1961, p8
- ⁴⁷ Ice skaters want it colder still!, *Birmingham Post*, 28 December 1961, p8; although photographs of racing on Mere Fen in January 1961 may have been published, *Our Times*, Carolyn REDMAYNE, private communication, 3 May 2024
- ⁴⁸ Skating: Chicago Cup and Sash, *Cambridge Daily News*, 12 February 1969, p28
- ⁴⁹ Olympic skater takes amateur title, *Saffron Walden Weekly News*, 21 February 1969, p20
- ⁵⁰ See for example, Have fun on the Fens – skating on meadows, *Cambridge Daily News*,

- ⁵¹ *Fen skating: why and how it all began*, notes of a talk given to Swavesey Historical Society by Gary WARRINGTON, ca 2014 – from Carolyn REDMAYNE, private communication, 3 May 2024
- ⁵² *Ibid*
- ⁵³ Skaters caught out by freeze, *Cambridge Daily News*, 15 February 1985, p40
- ⁵⁴ What a great year for the skaters at Bury Fen: The best I can recall – Warrington, *Cambridge Daily News*, 18 February 1985, p22
- ⁵⁵ PETTY (2016), *ibid*, 21 June 1985
- ⁵⁶ PETTY (2016), *ibid*, 18 December 1985
- ⁵⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le6M_ZO5AEc, 21 January 2016
- ⁵⁸ Good news for some – the skaters: Fen Championship on, *Cambridge Daily News*, 14 December 1991, p36
- ⁵⁹ French lesson for teenage hopeful, *Cambridge Daily News*, 16 December 1991, p29
- ⁶⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUnOitbEDpU>, 14 January 2010
- ⁶¹ *2018 British Isles cold wave*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_British_Isles_cold_wave
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- ⁶³ <https://tinyurl.com/bde95v8n>; ATTA, Fareid (2022) Fen Skating: The Cambridgeshire tradition that sparked an international movement, *Cambridgeshire Live*, 18 December 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/3xwzmjys>
- ⁶⁴ *Mare Fen*, <https://cityseeker.com/cambridge/892941-mare-fen>
- ⁶⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/4fz496n4>



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HERBERT FROST - Soldier of the Boer War

By Robin PEARL

On 11 October 1899, the second Boer War broke out after Britain rejected the Transvaal ultimatum. The ultimatum had demanded that all disputes between the two states be settled by arbitration; that British troops on the borders be withdrawn; and that troops bound for South Africa by ship should not disembark.

The Orange Free State joined the Transvaal in accordance with an alliance of 1897. In the course of the war, the British Army was reinforced by volunteer contingents from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape Colony and Natal.

The 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment sailed on the Scot in November 1899, and arrived at the Cape on the 28th of that month. They were sent to assist General French in the Colesberg district. After about a month in the colony they were sent into action. In the early morning of the 1st January the Berkshires had successfully assaulted a hill forming part of the Colesberg defences. On the 4th the Boers had been driven from other hills, but there was still another hill—Grassey or Suffolk Hill—on the north-west portion of the defences. Four companies of the 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment marched up the hill, as it was believed that the capture of the hill would be the key to taking Colesberg.



The Suffolks at Colesberg

The Boers were entrenched at the top, however, and waited until the British were within a few yards of their positions before opening fire. Colonel Watson, who led the raid, together with three officers & twenty five men were

killed, whilst one officer & twenty three men were injured. More than 100 officers & men were captured.

Among the captured men was sergeant Herbert John Frost, service number 3546 1st battalion Suffolk Regiment, son of George and Mary Frost, baptised in Little Downham in 1877. George was a brickmaker and the family lived at the Holts. Herbert enlisted in the Suffolk regiment in 1893, the records say he was about 18 but in reality he may have been younger and lied about his age. He was speedily promoted to sergeant. The Boer war is likely to be his first experience of battle.

After his capture sergeant Frost wrote home to his parents as follows:

"Colesberg 7-1-1900. My dear father and mother, just a line to tell you that I have had the misfortune to be made a prisoner and shall soon to be sent to Pretoria. I am also slightly wounded in my left hand, but it is not at all dangerous, and is getting on nicely. We got into a tight corner yesterday and could not get out, so we surrendered when we were obliged to do so.

Otherwise I am perfectly well. I shall be kept prisoner until the war is over. I cannot speak too highly of the treatment we are receiving in the hands of the Dutch, for we get every attention and have nothing to fear from them. I will tell you all about it after I am released, for I am not allowed to do so now."

However initial reports were that Herbert had been killed and this letter took six months to arrive as the following article reveals:

"The fate of sergeant Herbert Frost has now been cleared up. A short time ago his name appeared in the lists of killed in the Colesberg disaster, and, as if to confirm this, a friend of his wrote to Frost's mother telling her of her son's death."

Sergeant Frost also wrote to his wider family:

"My dear brother and sister, just a line or two to let you know I am still in good health, but not in a position to enjoy my free liberty, for perhaps you may have heard I am a prisoner of war from mother, for I wrote and told her some weeks ago. I was also slightly wounded in the left wrist and fingers, but nothing serious, for they are all healed now, and I shall soon be fit to go in into a boxing contest. I shall always have one of my fingers more or less straight, but it is the third finger, so it will not hinder me much. I cannot feel anything of the wound in my wrist now it has healed. I expect to soon be sent to Pretoria, for we are only staying at Bloemfontein until there are a few of us able to be sent on and there are several nearly well enough now, so I will send my address for letters to

go there. I have not yet received any from England, and I don't know if I shall get them or not until I am released after the war. I have been a prisoner since the 6th of January. The time seems long, with nothing to do but smoke and read and take exercise. We get treated very well indeed, for we live like we should if at home, and have nothing to complain about. No doubt you have heard of our affair or saw it in the papers, so it is no news for me tell you anything about it. We know nothing outside ourselves, for we are not allowed papers relating to the war, but we get plenty of books to read. Please give my love to all at Ely, and set them at rest about me. for I am sure they must wonder how I am getting on. From your brother Herbert."

The Boers had rejected an offer of peace from the British in March 1901, in part because it required that the Boers recognize the British annexation of their republics. Fighting continued until the Boers finally accepted the loss of their independence with the Peace of Vereeniging in May 1902.

Herbert Frost doesn't appear in the 1901 census so he must have still been a prisoner of war but shortly after his return to Little Downham, in 1903, he married Ada Stevens, a publican's daughter and settled down to the life of a farm labourer living at Head Fen.

In July 1916, Herbert made an application for exemption from military service. He was described as married with five children and was the Clerk to the Downham Feoffees charity, secretary to the Camp of Refuge Lodge of Oddfellows, and farm labourer. He had already been 12 years in the regular army, of which nearly three years were active service. As secretary to the Oddfellows a great deal of work was done by him in connection with State Insurance. Exemption was granted until November 30th. The following March he was granted conditional exemption on the grounds of being engaged in agricultural work. Herbert died in Addenbrooke's hospital in 1929 leaving a widow, four sons and a daughter.

FEELING PECKISH??

One of the things that Huntingdonshire gave to the world was the sandwich. It takes its name from the man who invented (or certainly popularised) it, the Fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718-1792) of Hinchinbrooke House, Huntingdon. The original sandwich was said to have been a slice of salt beef (a favourite of the Earl's) between two slices of bread. This food was said to have sustained him when indulging in marathon gambling sessions, but even if his gambling addiction was exaggerated the word for the consumable was already in wide use by the 1760s.

“MAGGIE’S” STORY—A DNA JOURNEY

By Karen Orrell

Some of you may have watched the ITV programme “DNA Journey”, the latest series of which featured John Simm, whose DNA test revealed that his biological father was not the man he had always called Dad.

I recently participated in the DNA journey of Maggie* who had attended our research surgery in Ely to request help understanding her DNA results. Her test had revealed that her sister was, in fact, her half-sister. The realisation that the man who had raised her could not, therefore, have been her biological father was not as much of a shock to her as it had been to John Simm as Maggie had started to suspect several years ago that this may be the case. She knew he had been present at her birth in 1946, but, he was a soldier in WWII and she had discovered he had been in Italy May – June 1945 at the time of her conception, while her mother was in Flensburg, Germany.

Maggie’s DNA results were very clear ethnicity wise – her mother was of Scandinavian heritage and this accounted for 50% of Maggie’s DNA. The other 50% was Irish, so we knew her father must be of 100% Irish heritage. We also knew we were probably looking for a man who had fought in WWII. Flensburg, in May / June 1945 was the site of a Displaced Persons camp, and the place where the British Army captured Nazi officials and officers, and so there were a lot of British Army personnel in the town at this time.

Maggie had taken her DNA test with Ancestry, which was excellent news as Ancestry is by far the most popular testing site and has the largest database of potential matches. She had several sizeable matches there, but I still encouraged her to upload her raw DNA results to MyHeritage and GEDMatch, so that she could increase her pool of potential matches. Maggie then shared her DNA results with me on all three sites by inviting me to collaborate.

The first thing I did was the Leeds Method. This is a method invented by Dana Leeds to group your DNA matches, the idea being that you should end up with at least 4 groups who will theoretically descend from each of your four grandparents, or 8 groups who descend from your eight great grandparents. You can then look at the matches in each group and find common surnames in their ancestry.

The next step was to look at the trees of Maggie's matches and, where they did not have a tree, build one for them. This is usually a "Quick & Dirty" tree – there is no need to list sources, just the names, dates and places so you can find common surnames and places. It very quickly became apparent that something was amiss. Of Maggie's top 3 paternal matches, there were no common surnames. Her top Ancestry match, Sasha*, had a very small tree and both of her parents had the surname Smith. The match was 784cM (centimorgans – a unit to measure the total amount of DNA shared with matches in DNA testing) and so the only possibilities (given the ages of Maggie and Sasha) were full first cousins, or half niece and half aunt. Sasha's mother had no Irish ancestry so the match had to be paternal – and Sasha had no information in her tree for her paternal line other than her father's name and dates of birth and death. Her third largest match on Ancestry, Brendan*, had no tree at all and I was unable to find any record of his birth, although I could find a marriage and newspaper articles relating to him. He had helpfully listed the town where he lived in his bio which helped me to track these down. Using Ancestry Pro Tools I could see that Sasha and Brendan were fairly closely related to each other as well.

Maggie's second highest paternal match, Colleen*, yielded some pertinent information. She had a small tree of only three people, but both of her parents were deceased and so I could see their names. Her mother also had an unusual surname, so I was able to find the marriage of her parents very easily on FreeBMD plus Colleen's birth. From here I could build a tree for Colleen. Colleen's mother, I quickly discovered, had no Irish ancestry, so the relationship must be via Colleen's paternal ancestors. As the size of the match was 312cM, I knew from consulting the Shared cM tool on the DNA Painter website (<https://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4>), that it was highly likely the furthest back I would need to go to find common ancestors would be Colleen's 3rd great grandparents, but it was most likely that it would be her great grandparents who were the common ancestors. I aimed to go back to her paternal 3rd great grandparents, but we were looking at Irish ancestry here, and the Irish records are not as complete or as easily accessible as English records. Colleen had been born in England, as had her father and paternal grandfather, but her paternal great grandparents were born in Ireland. Here I met a dead end – there was no record of the births of either of her great grandparents, nor their marriage.

Sasha, Colleen and Brendan were all closely related, indeed Colleen and Brendan were full first cousins or half uncle and half niece – and yet I could find no record of Brendan's birth. I turned to some lower matches to see if I could find any clues.

The 4th paternal match, Stephen*, had no tree and no clues in his bio, but one of his shared matches, Katie*, had enough information in her tree to lead me to the surname Gallagher*. Again, this was not a surname that appeared in the trees of any of the previous matches – however, I did find that some of the matches on MyHeritage had trees containing this name as well. Stephen also matched Sasha, Colleen and Brendan.

As I worked my way down the list, I discovered that links were emerging. There was a very strong link to the surname O'Reilly* but I could not link Sasha, Colleen, Brendan or Stephen to this name. I knew that Colleen's paternal great grandparents in Ireland had the surnames Murphy* and Byrne*, but these names were not appearing in any other matches' trees.

By this time, I suspected we were dealing with adoptions and / or illegitimacy in the trees of ALL of Maggie's closest matches and so I contacted each of them. We were extremely lucky in that most people responded to my messages. Sasha confirmed her father was illegitimate and gave me his birth surname (Smith was the name of his stepfather!) which was his mother's maiden name; Brendan had been adopted but he knew what his father was called. This was a breakthrough, as his father's surname was Murphy and he was already in the tree I had built for Colleen. With this new information I could confirm that Colleen was indeed Brendan's first cousin.

But where did the surname Gallagher fit in? I contacted Katie for more information and she told me something very important. She descended from Mary Gallagher, nee Doyle* and she recalled that Mary's sister, Bridget, had married someone called Byrne. This was "a lightbulb moment". Colleen's great grandmother was Bridget Byrne*. In 1911, she was in Shropshire, listed as Bridget Murphy, with her husband Michael* and several children. Each child's birth had been registered with a mother's maiden name of Byrne but I had been unable to find the birth of their first child Winifred*. In 1901, Mary Gallagher was recorded in Ireland with her husband, children and her parents, Thomas and Mary Doyle. Also listed in the same house were a Bridget Byrne and her daughter, Winifred but no sign of a husband. I looked on irishgenealogy.ie for Winifred's birth and for a marriage for Bridget. I soon uncovered a marriage between Bridget Gallagher and Edward Byrne and, a year later, the birth of Winifred on 16th April 1900 in Waterford. I then looked for Winifred Murphy in the 1939 register in Shropshire – she was born 16th April 1900. I had already ascertained from the 1911 and 1921 census that she was born in Waterford. So, Bridget was using her married name when registering the births of her children and her eldest child was not Michael's daughter at all.

I was now able to build a pretty well-connected tree for a substantial number of Maggie's DNA matches – but I still could not work out where the O'Reilly surname fitted in. This surname appeared in the trees of so many of Maggie's matches it had to be the name of a direct ancestor. Several of Maggie's matches were direct descendants of a Mary Ann Murphy and Michael O'Reilly and so I surmised that Mary Ann may be a sibling or a cousin of Michael Murphy, Colleen's great grandfather. I trawled through the Irish records but could find no evidence that this was the case. I could also find no birth record for Michael Murphy, whereas I could find births for Mary Ann and several siblings and cousins. I went back 2 generations, just to be sure, but no link was to be found.

Bridget Doyle had gone to great lengths to hide her real identity and I started to wonder whether Michael Murphy had done the same thing. Bridget was highly likely still married to her first husband Edward Byrne (being Roman Catholics, divorce was out of the question) – was Michael also married to someone else?

In fact, were Michael Murphy and Michael O'Reilly one and the same person?

This conundrum was in the back of my mind as I continued working on identifying Maggie's father. We knew he was in Flensburg around May or June 1945, we knew he was therefore probably serving in the British Army and we knew from the tree we had built and looking at the probable relationships of her matches to each other and to Maggie herself, that it was highly likely that he was one of the sons of Michael Murphy and Bridget Byrne / Doyle.

We had 4 possibilities: Patrick*, Seamus*, Sean* or Joseph*. The obvious place to look first was the 1939 register and then cross reference with newspaper articles. Patrick was living with his parents in 1939 and was a miner – a reserved occupation. He was in trouble with the law several times during the course of the war and this was reported in the local newspapers. One such article placed him firmly in Shropshire in May 1945. Sean was with his wife and children in 1939 and was a builder's labourer. Joseph was also with his wife and children – but he was a direct ancestor of Colleen. The amount of shared DNA excluded him from being Maggie's father.

We were left with Seamus. His wife was living 2 doors down from his parents – but Seamus wasn't with her. Those serving in the army were often away from home at the time of the 1939 census, so it was a clue that he was possibly a soldier. But the 1939 register was taken 6 years before Maggie

was conceived, and besides, Seamus and his wife were having children all the way through the war. There was no other logical conclusion though – Seamus was our top suspect – but how to get more proof?

Seamus's daughter, Veronica* was born in 1944, so we bought her birth certificate. Sure enough, Seamus's occupation was given as CSM (Company Sergeant Major) 4th KSLI (Kings Shropshire Light Infantry) and gave his military number. Underneath in brackets it said corporation labourer, so it seemed he was possibly a Territorial Army man. Using his military number, I found his medal roll card on the National Archive website, which showed he had been awarded the 1939-45 Star for action in France & Germany – so he HAD been abroad during the war! It also confirmed that he was in the TA. A Google search revealed that the 4th KSLI had been in England throughout most of the war — but WERE in Germany in 1945 — in Flensburg. This explained how Seamus could be fathering children here and also be in Germany at the right time.

Further internet searches revealed that the Shropshire Archives had photos of the 4th KSLI – and they had photos of Seamus. We purchased a couple and sent them to Sasha – if my theory was correct, Seamus was not only the father of Maggie, but also the grandfather of Sasha. Sasha sent us a photo of her father and the resemblance was uncanny!

The only thing left to do was to look at Seamus's service record, which was held at the National Archive at Kew, to be absolutely sure that he was "in the right place at the right time". This necessitated a visit to the archive as the record had not been digitised, so Maggie paid for a search. Sure enough, the service record proved that Seamus was in Flensburg from June 1944 to September 1945.

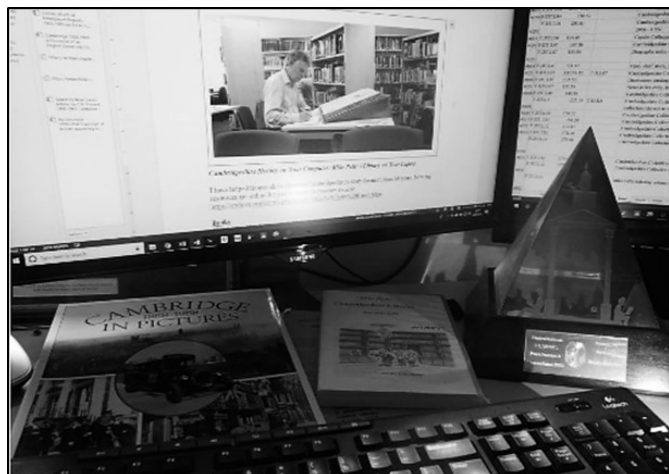
And were Michael O'Reilly and Michael Murphy one and the same person? I have no concrete evidence. Certainly, Michael O'Reilly's wife, Mary Ann, is on her own with their children in 1911 and I cannot find Michael anywhere in Ireland at that time. The mysterious Michael Murphy appears in an English census for the first time in 1911. For now, all I can say is the DNA strongly suggests Michael O'Reilly must have become Michael Murphy...

Maybe, one day, I will be able to prove it.

****All names have been changed to maintain the privacy of everyone concerned.***

<https://archive.org/details/collecting-cambridgeshire-by-mike-petty-august-2025>

This link opens the recently updated catalogue of
—Mike Petty’s “Collecting Cambridgeshire” resource
—an 853 page portal listing thousands of publications,
notes, photos and weblinks relating to county history
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***Collecting Cambridgeshire: Mike Petty’s Catalogue,
August 2025***

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***The Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library, Lion Yard,
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Cambridge and its region, including the Fens, all of which may be freely
consulted at the Central Library in Lion Yard, Cambridge***

***Former Librarian Mike Petty has compiled his own Collection of
Cambridgeshire Books, Illustrations, Maps, Newspapers and Recordings,
together with his own Writings.***

***Much of this material has been uploaded to Internet Archive and Google
Photos where it may be freely consulted, downloaded and used.***

This is a guide to some of that material

Revised 2024 07 24 2024 08 23 2024 12 31 2025 08 28

**<https://archive.org/details/petty-library-catalogue-update-2024-07-24th>
2025 08 25 Map update**

Seventy Years of Collecting Cambridgeshire

<https://archive.org/details/seventy-years-of-collecting-cambridgeshire-2024>

***There are other online resources for Cambridgeshire ‘history’. Of these the
most important is the Museum of Cambridge’s “Capturing Cambridge” project***

Contents

CHYC.01 Cambridgeshire Books and articles

- CHYC.01.01 Bibliographies
- CHYC.01.02 In Print books
- CHYC.01.03 Digitised books
- CHYC.01.04 CAS
- CHYC.01.04.01 CAS online
- CHYC.01.05 Cambs & Hunts Archaeological Society Transactions
- CHYC.01.06 Cambridgeshire Local History Society
- CHYC.01.07 Our Time
- CHYC.01.08 : VCH online
- CHYC.01.09 : Pamphlets
- CHYC.01.10 Pickwick Pamphlets
- CHYC.01.11 Fenland Notes & Queries
- CHYC.01.12 CD Roms
- CHYC.01.13 Website
- CHYC.01.14: Cambridgeshire Books and articles downloaded to my files
- CHYC.01.14a: Cambridge University Press books online
- CHYC.01.15 British History Online
- CHYC.01.16 Village history websites (bookmarked) & Facebook groups
- CHYC.01.17 Reeve notebooks, in suitcase
- CHYC.01.18 Reeve Albums
- CHYC.01.19 Handbills

CHYC.02 Mike Petty Writings

Many of my articles and other writings

CHYC.03 Cambridgeshire Newspapers

- CHYC.03.01
- Cambridge Newspapers 1905-1990 on Google Photos
- CHYC.03.02
- Down Your Street
- CHYC.03.03
- Cambridge Independent Press Village Articles
- CHYC.03.04
- Cambridge 1888-1988: a Chronicle of an English University City
- CHYC.03.05
- A Cambridgeshire Scrapbook 1897 to 1990, revised 2020
- CHYC.03.06
- Mini-Scrapbooks on places and topics
- CHYC.03.07
- Cambridgeshire Villages Newspaper reports
- CHYC.03.08
- Cambridge News Library cuttings files
- CHYC.03.09
- Ely Standard 1914-1919
- CHYC.03.10
- Other online Newspaper sources

CHYC.04 Cambridgeshire Illustrations

CHYC.04.01

Catalogues

CHYC.04.02

Scans of Albums of Pictures

CHYC.04.03

Albums on Flickr

CHYC.04.04

Other Cambridgeshire Illustrations online: links to CCAN and other sites

CHYC.05 Cambridge & Cambridgeshire Maps

Cambridge and Cambridgeshire

CHCY.06 Cambridgeshire Audio Recordings

CHYC.06.01

Farmland Museum

CHYC.06.02

BBC Sounds.

CHYC.06.03

BBC Radio Cambridgeshire Broadcasts etc

CHYC.06.0301

Cambridgeshire Echoes

CHYC.06.0302

Pickwick's Cambridge Scrapbook 1838

CHYC.06.0303

Time Was

CHYC.06.0304

The Cambridgeshire Collection and Mike Petty

CHYC.06.0305

Fen Floods of 1947

CHYC.06.0306

Off the Beaten Track

CHYC.06.0307

Other Recordings

CHYC.07 Cambridgeshire Video

CHYC.07.01 YouTube Videos and Online Film

CHYC.08 Cambridgeshire Presentations Online

CHYC.09 Stretham Material on Your Computer

CHYC.10 Internet Archive files, September 2024

CHYC.11 Books Classification Scheme

Each of these topics expand into hundreds of titles over the following 850 pages—Mike says *"Please make what use of this you may. Kindly remember where it came from [www. mikepetty13a@gmail.com](mailto:mikepetty13a@gmail.com)"*

Mind Mapping Made Easy for family historians

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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

"Birth Rate Falls To Record Low In England and Wales"

“Fertility Rates In England and Wales Plummet to Record Low—how do we compare to the rest of the world?”

“Why Cousins Matter”

"How closely is everyone related in UK" (portal to a number of articles)

"Cousin Statistics" (includes links to articles relating to genetic genealogy)

“More And More Cousins”

"The Great Cousin Decline"

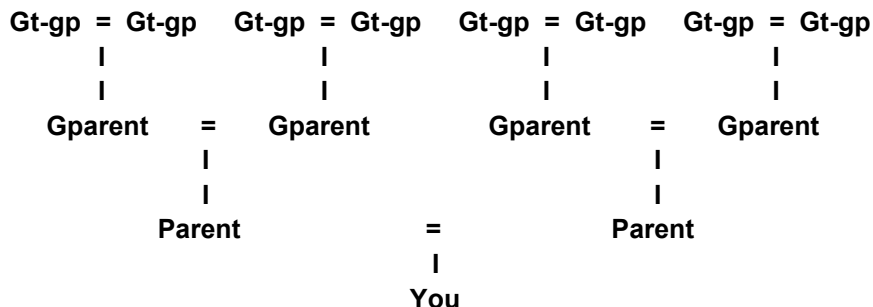
<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2023/12/cousin-relationships-fertility-rate/676892/>

“Cousins Are Disappearing” (article from Canada)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/cousins-decline-canada-1.7103338>

Numerous versions/styles of “cousin calculator” charts are available online.

How do your families compare across and between the generations? A comprehensive family tree should reveal some figures. We invite you to send in half-page for the next issue on **how many 1st cousins you and each of your parents, grandparent and great-grandparents have/had**



CHFHS Visit To

Cambridge University Library— “Curious Cures” Exhibition

Curious Cures: Medicine in the Medieval World

On 6 August, Dr James Freeman, the curator of the Curious Cures exhibition gave ten members of the Society an introduction and guided tour of the exhibition. He explained that a grant from the Wellcome Institute had enabled the digitisation of many of the books and other documents about medieval medicine in the University collection. The full texts are now freely available to scholars and researchers worldwide through the searchable Cambridge Digital Library, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/>.

James showed how the exhibition draws from the early influence of Galen and covers such topics as the humours; anatomy; astrological medicine; women and medicine; medical literature; treatment; herbs; blood letting; religion and friars. At least four of the exhibits originate from Cambridgeshire. The Milstein room includes books and manuscripts, each housed in a cradle to fit the individual volume; we saw the second version, as many sources can only be displayed for limited periods to avoid the risk of light damage. The first floor of the main library includes a framed series of drawings of aspects of the male and female body. There is also a test your knowledge quiz at the end of the exhibition, using true or false questions; our group scored five, slightly higher than the average score. Everyone thanked James for sharing his knowledge, expertise and answering our questions.

There is a 128-page large print edition of the exhibition guide, please contact me if you would like a copy. The exhibition runs until 6 December and gives a good insight into how our ancestors managed their bodies, regulated their health, cured disease, and the role of physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and practitioners. Highly recommended!!

Reported by David Copsey

Photos on next page by Lisa Constanti

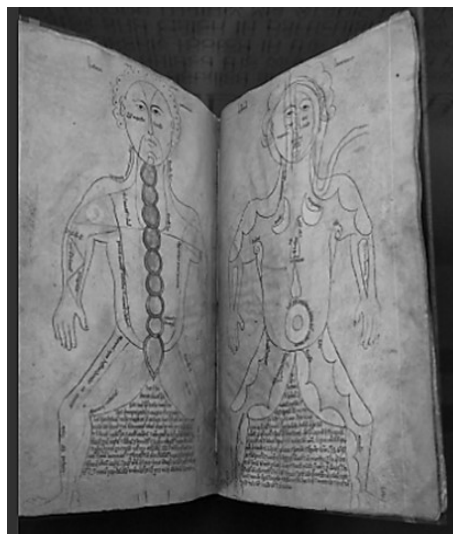
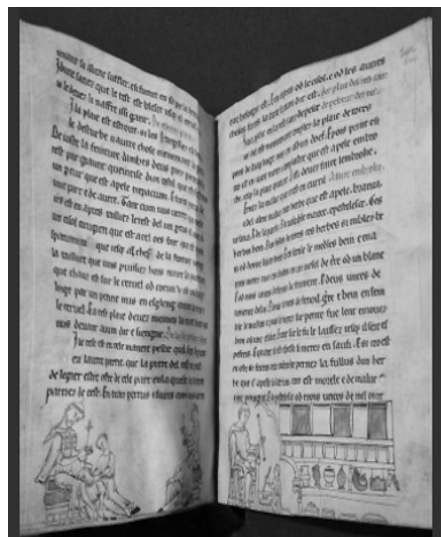
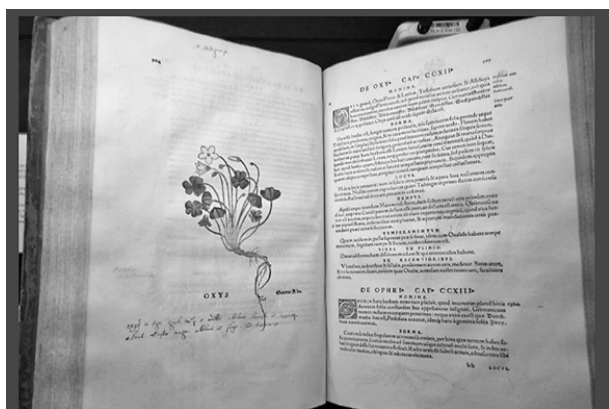
NB : Although a FREE exhibition, this is a ticketed event for visitors.

Please visit the UL website for further information, and free ticket booking :

<https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitioncuriouscures>

Dr Freeman provides a reading list on the subject, linked via the UL website :

<https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/stories/curious-cures-reading-list>



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 Nov '25-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)

Newmarket Union	Wed 12 Nov 10.30am	&	Thurs 13 Nov 7.30pm
St Ives Union	Wed 17 Dec 10.30am	&	Thurs 18 Dec 7.30pm
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**

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	In place of Bar Hill to end of 2025	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	2 nd Sat <u>every</u> month	Nov / Dec	drop-in between 11.00 & 2.00
	NB : we are now working from a table in the foyer outside the Cambridgeshire Collection (3rd floor)		

**** Cambridge Central Library **** ... from Jan 2026, we will no longer be providing a drop-in research surgery at this venue.

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

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 Wednesday Face-2-Face Meetings		1st Wednesdays at 2.00pm March Library, March enquiries : march@chfhs.org.uk
Wed 5 Nov	From Home To The Western Front <i>A look at what happened to the young men who enlisted, and their journey to the Western Front.</i>	
Wed 3 Dec	Station Road Cemetery, March with Peter Wright <i>The history and development of March Cemetery, with a look at some of the prominent locals, and others, who are buried there</i> PLUS : Seasonal Social	
Wed 7 Jan	Paper, People, Power with Sue Paul <i>Occupational Family Migration relates to the paper industry, how families followed where work was available.</i>	
Wed 4 Feb	Victorian Rural Women with Charlotte Paton <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>	
Wed 4 Mar	'That Rings a Bell' :The history of the Town Crier with Mike Wabe (Mike will be in full costume) <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>	

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 19 Nov	An Introduction To Using Local History Resources At Cambridge University Library with Kevin Roberts, Curator of Religious & Estate Collections <i>What does the CUL Dept of Archives & Modern Manuscripts have to interest me? Very possibly, quite a lot—the collection includes records from many local estates and institutions relevant to local and family history research. NB: CHFHS members can apply for a free UL Readers Ticket (contact CHFHS Membership Secretary)</i>
Wed 17 Dec	The Victorians and Entertainment with Dr Judith Hill <i>From the music hall to the seaside and football and many other entertainments—a look at how the Victorians turned enjoyment into big business.</i>
Wed 21 Jan	Unusual Forenames with Denise Bates <i>Most family history researchers will have encountered at least one non-standard forename in their family tree. After discovering her third, Denise began to investigate the sorts of unusual forenames that were used. Based on her research, this talk shows that unusual names have been used for many centuries, for a variety of reasons. The talk looks at how unusual forenames often relate to the time when they were chosen by parents, and what clues they might offer to a parent's character or values. The talk will end with an opportunity for discussion or questions, which usually proves very stimulating.</i> NB : this talk will NOT be recorded
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</i> <i>The new premises in Wharf Road is much smaller than the old library so I will also go over what is immediately available there and what is held offsite and how to order material in advance of your visit</i>

ANCESTRY comes to Cambs & Hunts

As you will probably be aware by now, mid-July 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)*

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.

Spinning House Project—work also continues on transcribing/indexing material from other sources of local and genealogical interest—including records from "The Spinning House" (effectively, a local prison operated by Cambridge University) which are held at Cambridge University Library. We are working with the UL to produce an index of names which will be linked to the full records on the UL website. The recording of a talk by Caroline Biggs on the history on this institution can be found in the members' area of the CHFHS website—do take a look.

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

MEETINGS REPORTS

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

EVANS & Co., SOLICITORS
WITH GILL SHAPLAND
(MARCH MEETING : MAY 2025)

At the June meeting Gill Shapland came along and gave a talk/presentation on 'Evans & Co. Solicitors, Ely'. This was based on finding a collection of documents in 150 boxes deposited at the Cambridgeshire Archives. The majority related to ordinary business matters, prosecutions and property. But, many contained interesting snippets.

Gill explained the work that had to be carried out to make the documents workable. Coal fires, heat residue and soot deposits all had to be painstakingly cleaned using smoke sponges. It took a morning to clean one box of documents before the contents could be catalogued. Volunteers were asked for.

The first box contained documents from the 17th century on the Hundred of Grimshaw, Kings Lynn, relating to the Civil War. These had not been transferred to Norfolk as documents are very rarely transferred to another archive. In 1643 guns, horses and men were all deployed. The name Fairfax was mentioned as was the name Thomas Carter. Their documents were stored in a strong box and deposited with their solicitor. A future project will relate to documents about the Carters (who were on the winning side). Gill recommended that when looking for records to try all archives, not just local offices. She had found two 'missing' local people in Devon applying for Poor Relief as they had been travelling there.

Evans & Co., wrote wills for many people in the Ely area. Lots of probate papers were amongst the documents. Many letters, sent from various parts of the world, contain interesting and useful facts on local people. Men in the army and navy travelled the world. Some men sent abroad could take their wives with them, who went often being decided by drawing lots. In the army, the women did the washing and cleaning for the whole battalion. Not glamorous at all!

The Dean and Chapter of Ely was one of the richest manors in England. Documents include apprenticeship papers signed by the Churchwarden.

Names of many local people are found in these records. The manor owned whole streets of properties in London, including Hatton Gardens. The Dean and Chapter at that time was one of the wealthiest offices in the land. Other documents relate to sales and transfers of property, auction² in particular. These relate to the area surrounding Ely as well as Meldreth, Foxton and Newton, with maps showing plots owned by the Dean and Chapter of Ely. Some property was leased and other property transferred stayed within families. All of these are interesting and useful when trying to discover more about the lives of ancestors.

Gill had found papers headed W.W. Fardell dating to the 1840's that relate to the Griffin Hotel in March.

Records from house sales, and inventories of house contents dated 1871 provided more interest. Museums have an interest in relevant records when trying to create displays. Gill also spoke about sale of land records for building of the schools, as at Haddenham and Sutton.

Reported by Linda Peckett

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

WITH SARAH DOIG
(MARCH MEETING : JUNE 2025)

Sarah Doig gave an interesting presentation at the June meeting entitled 'A Sign of the Times'. This talk focused on village signs and how scenes of local landmarks, people and trades are all depicted. These can tell us a lot about the villages and towns where our ancestors lived. There are about 3000 of these signs in Britain as a whole. Norfolk has the largest number with over 500 followed by Suffolk with over 350. East Anglia as a whole has more than other areas. Sarah had travelled extensively over East Anglia taking photographs of interesting village signs to illustrate her talk.

Village signs originated in Norfolk during the early 1900's. Edward the then Prince of Wales commissioned for a village sign near to the Sandringham Estate leading to 3 more in the local area.

Sarah showed many photographs of village signs although she explained several were difficult to photograph due to their surroundings, trees getting in the way and other factors. The original sign at Wolverton was put up in 1912 but then replaced in 2012 for the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee. A competition was run by the Daily Mail with the winner of the chosen design rewarded with £200. King George VI encouraged future village signs to

commemorate his coronation in 1937. Campsea Ashe is thought to be the oldest of these. Bredfield near Woodbridge, is thought to have the oldest wrought iron village sign in the shape of a canopy over the village pump.

Many more village signs across the region were put up to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and the Millennium. Walberswick was one of those commissioned in 1953. This is an ornate metal sign showing a frigate – similar to a wherry. The sign was stolen in 1984. A couple from Kent who had bought the sign in an antique shop were in the area and decided to find out more about the village. They learnt the sign had been stolen and decided to return it. It was then restored and replaced ready for the Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

The Women's Institute has been instrumental in organising fund raising for village signs over the country. One of these is at Ingoldisthorpe that depicts 2 local women. Mrs Agness Briggs, the daughter of the local rector who left £10 for the relief of the poor. The other, Mrs Eleanor Coates Tylden who died in 1928 at the age of 105 years. She was a benefactor to the village, funding, amongst other things, a village hall. This sign was replaced in 2012, still showing the 2 women.

Many village signs are the work of Harry Carter from Swaffham in Norfolk who carved over 200 wooden signs. 20 of these are in Suffolk, some in Essex and many in Norfolk. These are distinctive, brightly coloured signs.

A designer of metal signs was Hector Moore who, with his wife May ran the Braneston Forge in Suffolk. He made the impressive sign for Snape. This was designed by Jenny Toombs and dedicated in 1987. The sign is topped with a Consecration Cross, below which are 4 painted pictures all representing local aspects of the village. An Anglo Saxon ship, top left, A monk praying, top right, the bridge built in 1802 and demolished in 1960, bottom left and a curlew as a symbol of inspiration in the bottom right. Other signs by Hector Moore can be found at Stambourne in Essex, depicting the village church and a ploughman; and Conington in Cambridgeshire that depicts a silhouetted B17 Flying Fortress and the local All Saints Church.

Redgrave in Suffolk is one of the few double sided village signs. One side depicting Redgrave and Lopham fen that is managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This shows a lake, reed bunting, reed warbler, a grass snake and 2 raft spiders. Also a man cutting reeds for thatching and another digging peat. Below this in the spandrels are 2 men fishing from a boat, and 2 ducks. The other side shows more historic pictures of the village. At the top,

the now redundant St Mary's church, a church bell and organ (this may represent a local organ builder Joseph Hart) the windmill that was destroyed by fire in 1924 and a thatched barn. The spandrels show crests of the Holt family and the Butts family. On the top of the sign, seen from both sides, is a wild boar – the crest of the Bacon family.

The sign at Girton is another silhouetted metal sign. This shows 2 geese, representing those kept in a pit, and their feathers used as quills for the Cambridge Colleges, corn marigolds that prevailed locally, and a design from a wall built by the Romans.

Reported by Linda Peckett

WOMEN IN MEDICINE

WITH DR MARTYN THOMAS
(MARCH MEETING : SEPTEMBER 2025)

Unlike years ago, today 50.04% of doctors are women and 49.96% are men. In 1865 there was only one female doctor – Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, but by 2014 there were more women GPs and psychiatrists than men.

Margaret Ann Bulkley (1789 – 1865), Margaret was born in Cork at a time when only men were allowed to study medicine. In 1809 she took on the identity of her uncle and became known as “James Barry” to enable her to study medicine at Edinburgh University. “James” qualified in 1812 and worked at St Thomas’s Hospital in London. The following year he enlisted in the army becoming an army surgeon which involved him travelling widely all over the world including places like South Africa and the West Indies. It was only after James’ death that it was revealed that he had started life as Margaret Bulkley, and demonstrated the lengths she had gone to in becoming a doctor.

Elizabeth Garrett (1836 – 1917), fought tirelessly for women to practice medicine. Despite huge opposition she opened St Mary's Dispensary in 1866 to provide treatment for women. The year before she married James Anderson in 1871, at the age of 34 she obtained a medical degree from the University of Paris and became a visiting physician at the East London Hospital for Children. Lord Shaftesbury opened a 10 bedded ward at the Dispensary, staffed entirely by women. This was named the New Hospital for Women and renamed the Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital in 1918. She became a member of the BMA in 1873 and remained the sole female member for 19 years due to the BMA's vote against the admission of further

women. In 2000 the Hospital merged with the Obstetric Hospital at University College Hospital and was known as the Elizabeth Garret Anderson Obstetric Hospital.

Sophia Jex-Blake (1840 – 1912), was one of the 'Edinburgh Seven', the first group of women to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh in 1869. She recognised the need for women to exist in the medical profession and to represent the specific needs of women. Through the resistance of male peers they were not allowed to sit exams. Sophia eventually completed her medical degree in Switzerland in and returned to the UK. She was one of the first female doctors, and founded both the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women and the London School of Medicine for Women. She was the first practicing female doctor in Scotland. Sophia campaigned and fought for women's access to university education and to break down the barriers to women working in medicine often through lack of education for women.

Victorian women such as Dickens' fictional characters of Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prig (in the novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, serialised 1843-44), were used by the author to satirise the nursing profession at the time. Sairey Gamp was an alcoholic, disreputable midwife highlighting the untrained, low standard of care for women at the time.

Florence Nightingale born in Italy 1820 was known for her nursing work in the Crimean War. She studied statistics and administration and was the first woman to be inducted into the Royal Statistical Society. Florence was a social reformer and philosopher of modern medicine. She was put in charge of nursing the British and Allied soldiers in Turkey during the Crimean War and became known as the 'Lady with the Lamp' due to her image of night rounds and many hours on the wards.

Florence was a pioneer in formalising nursing education for women. She recognised the importance of hygiene and sanitation in healing of the wounded soldiers. She established the first scientifically based nursing school – the Nightingale School of Nursing at St Thomas' Hospital in London that opened in 1860. She also initiated training for midwives and nurses in workhouse infirmaries and was the first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit (1907).

Mary Jane Seacole (1805 – 1881), was born at Kingston in Jamaica. Her mother was black and her father was a white Scottish army officer – James Grant. Her mother ran a lodging house and was much respected locally. She was also a healer and taught Mary her skills using traditional Jamaican medicines leading to Mary having a wish for medical knowledge. At the age

of 15 Mary travelled to England with relations and stayed for about a year. This provided her the opportunity to gain knowledge about more modern European medicine. At the age of 18 Mary went to London by herself for 2 years. Here she experienced racist comments.

In 1826 Mary returned to Kingston to nurse her mother. Ten years later she married Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole. Mary nursed him when he became unwell. He died in 1844, closely followed by her mother, and Mary was devastated by these deaths.

Mary nursed victims of cholera and yellow fever through epidemics. She was invited to supervise nursing at the British Army headquarters in Kingston.

The Crimean War lasted from 1853 – 1856. Mary travelled there, funding her own trip. Here she provided respite for sick and recovering soldiers near Balaclava, much closer to the fighting than Florence Nightingale's hospital. Mary visited the battlefield, sometimes under fire, to nurse the wounded and was known as 'Mother Seacole'. After the war she returned to Britain where she died in London in 1881. Mary was awarded three medals for her nursing, one from England, one from France and one from Turkey. In 2016 a memorial was unveiled in her memory at St Thomas's Hospital.

Marie Stopes (1880 – 1958) was born in Edinburgh. From an early age she was exposed to science through the work of her father. She qualified at University College London with a double first class honours degree in botany and geology, but, after her father died in 1902, the family was left in financial difficulty. Marie went on to study Palaeobotany when Francis Oliver hired her as his research assistant working on carboniferous coal balls and coal bearing strata.

She was a pioneer, campaigning for women's rights and family planning. In about 1913 Marie began to write a book on how she thought marriage should work. This was declined by publishers being thought to be too controversial. Working with her second husband Humphrey Roe a philanthropist, the book was published and an instant success. In 1917 Marie and Humphrey offered to endow a birth control clinic attached to St Mary's Hospital in Manchester but it was proposed no abortions be done and only married women could be patients. The offer was declined. Marie opened the first birth control clinic at Holloway, London in 1921, this moved to Tottenham Court Road in 1925 where the building has a 'blue plaque'. Although controversial, Marie was a supporter of the eugenics movement and expressed strong opinions. More birth control clinics were opened and continued to operate after her death.

A PICTURE IS WORTH TRACKING DOWN

WITH DAVID COPSEY
(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : SEPT 2025)

David opened his talk, titled "*A Picture is Worth Tracking Down: Photographs of Your Ancestors*," by focusing on the challenge of finding and identifying photographs of ancestors. He began with a tribute to his great aunt Helen Dorothy Copsey, an artist and suffragette, sharing various photographs of her throughout her life, to demonstrate the value of visual records in understanding family history. He explained that while text-based searches are effective for finding records, photograph indexing presents unique challenges due to the difficulty of describing visual content in words.

David presented research on his family history by focusing on his great-grandparents' families; the Earls and the Woodgers, with 11 and 10 siblings respectively, totalling 21 people. He shared photographs of 18 individuals and discussed the birth and death patterns across a 25-year and 100-year period respectively. He showed the details about birth, marriage, and death certificates, including specific information about occupations and locations in the Medway Valley. He noted that while most family members remained in Kent, some died in other regions, which makes the challenge of finding photographs of certain relatives harder, particularly the last surviving sibling who died in 1980.

He discussed various sources for finding family photographs, including personal collections, migration records, institutional records from places like mental hospitals and prisons, and modern resources like ancestry websites and social media. He explained methods for identifying people in photographs, ranging from labelled photographs and newspaper reports to DNA matching, with DNA testing being particularly useful for identifying relationships in cases of illegitimacy. David emphasized the importance of a systematic research approach and warned about potential mislabelling issues in family photographs.

David presented a historical overview of photography, covering its development from 1835 to modern times, and discussed how photograph preservation and identification can be challenging, especially for those of earlier generations. He outlined plans to create guidance on document and artifact retention and shared insights about using various sources including local libraries, archives, and online collections to find historical photographs. David also highlighted the importance of proper copyright considerations for modern photographs and acknowledged several individuals who have

contributed significantly to family photo collections, particularly for the Earl family.

The talk raised many comments and questions from our members, including finding photographs on the Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network website; experience of processing family photographs for a book; finding historical family photographs which provided valuable historical context and evidence. There was also some discussion about how to correct errors found in other people's trees that included our own ancestors.

This was a very well researched and presented talk about the value of finding and using historical family photographs, and the information they contain, to enhance our understanding of our own family trees.

Reported by John Bownass

THE PYE STORY

WITH ROGER CRABTREE & MIKE WASSALL

(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : OCT 2025)

Roger Crabtree and Mike Wassall, colleagues in the Pye History Trust, presented a historical overview of the Pye Group, highlighting its significance as Cambridge's largest company in the 20th century. They spoke about the formation of the Pye History Trust, which aims to research, document, and commemorate the group's achievements through various initiatives including oral history interviews, a permanent exhibition at the Cambridge Museum of Technology, and ongoing website development.

William George Pye, the company's founder, began his career as an instrument technician at Cavendish Laboratories and later established the Pye Group, showcasing his entrepreneurial spirit and technical expertise.

Michael told the history of WG Pye's factory in Cambridge, focusing on its development from manufacturing scientific instruments to producing wireless technology during the early 20th century. He explained how WG Pye's son, Harold, suggested entering the wireless business, leading to the creation of their first wireless system in 1922, which was successful and contributed to the development of early radio technology. The factory later produced portable radios with distinctive fretwork designs, which became iconic until the Second World War.

Michael spoke about the history of Pye, a company that began as a publicity firm in London before expanding into radio manufacturing. He described how the company grew through various acquisitions and innovations, particularly

in television and radar technology during World War II. He highlighted Pye's development of key military technologies, including proximity fuses and sensitive valves for radar, which played a crucial role in the war effort. He discussed the history of Pye, a strategic company during World War II, which refused to move from Cambridge to Swansea but instead set up local assembly units employing 14,000 people. Post-war, Pye quickly diversified into various products, including television, and expanded its factories. By the 1940s, Pye was working on transformerless television sets, a breakthrough for service engineers, and was already exploring colour television in the early 1950s, though it wasn't widely available until 1967. Pye initially focused on record production – Lonnie Donegan, Petula Clark, The Searchers, The Kinks, Status Quo etc - before expanding into electronics, including the development of the first transistor radio. He highlighted Pye Unicam's growth as a major UK manufacturer of laboratory equipment, employing around 1,500 people in Cambridge.

Roger spoke about Pi Telecom, a company that began as a gas mask factory during World War II and later became a pioneer in radio telephones for private mobile systems. He shared a vintage advertisement for Telecom, showcasing the evolution of mobile communication devices over the decades. He told of the expansion of Pye, a major UK electronics company, highlighting its growth in mobile radio equipment, systems, and components in the 1950s and 1960s. He mentioned Pye's acquisition of EKCO in 1960 and Telephone Manufacturing in the same year, which expanded its product range and workforce. By the mid-1960s, Pye was the UK's largest electronics company, employing around 28,000 people in the UK and 4,000-5,000 overseas, with a diverse range of products including radio, TV, and telecommunications equipment.

Theo Stanley, one of the founders of Pye was a visionary but also ruthless in his business approach. His leadership and the company's growth were highlighted, including his ability to anticipate market trends. However, by the mid-1960s, Pye faced significant challenges, such as unsold TV stock and a reliance on black-and-white TVs as consumers awaited colour models. The board eventually removed Stanley as director in 1966, leading to a takeover battle between Phillips and Thorne Industries.

Pye was acquired by Philips in 1967. Roger outlined three phases of the company's integration into Philips, including standalone operations, gradual integration, and eventual restructuring. He also touched on the company's culture, noting its family-like atmosphere and strong emphasis on employee

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LOCAL STUDIES COLLECTIONS AT :

CAMBRIDGE

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WISBECH

& : ELY, MARCH, ST IVES, ST NEOTS

MUSEUM OF CAMBRIDGE

WISBECH MUSEUM

FARMLAND MUSEUM

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MIKE PETTY'S '*FENLAND HISTORY*
ON YOUR COMPUTER'

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COMMUNITY

ARCHIVE NETWORK

CAMBRIDGESHIRE HISTORY

ROLL-OF-HONOUR

training. He concluded by sharing anecdotes about the company's Christmas parties and its commitment to education through apprenticeships and degree programs.

In 1970 Pye Telecom's opened its new factory in Cambridge which was threatened by flooding but went ahead with makeshift arrangements. Roger described the company's extensive employee transportation system, which brought 1,400 workers daily from across the Fens region, and detailed various social activities including annual sports days, company outings, and seaside trips.

A lively question and answer session followed as a number of attendees had personal memories of the Pye company.

Reported by Muriel Halliday

Out & About with the CHFHS Events Team ...

The Events Team has been out and about in recent weeks :

- St Neots History Festival, September
- Heritage Open Day at The Farmland Museum, September
- Family History Day at Meldreth Local History Society, October
- Get Online Day at Huntingdon Library, October

Our thanks go to the host organisations for inviting CHFHS to take part in their events—and for the generous supply of cakes and coffee!

A sunny but blustery day in St Neots Market Place saw our gazebo visited by Queen Victoria, various lords ladies and soldiers, the town crier, the real vicar of St Neots, and a few passers-by. Unfortunately, the outdoor location wasn't really a suitable venue for detailed discussion and problem solving.

The indoor events did attract a steady stream of enquirers with specific family history problems. Some came looking for advice on starting their searches from scratch, while others wanted to progress their family story from a few sketchy recollections gleaned from relatives. In most cases, we were able to help by providing significant information on the day, although one person was advised they would have to get a couple of certificates to identify a grandparent's marriage and birth among several same-namers. Another query was less successful over the family story of "the ancestor who drove cattle from Wales"—unfortunately, however, and despite the Welsh surname, that family could be found firmly rooted locally to at least 1800 (far beyond the date the family was thought to have "come to this area from Wales").

Out & About with the CHFHS Events Team ...

Top to bottom :

St Neots History Festival

Heritage Open Day—

Farmland Museum

Meldreth

Local History Society—

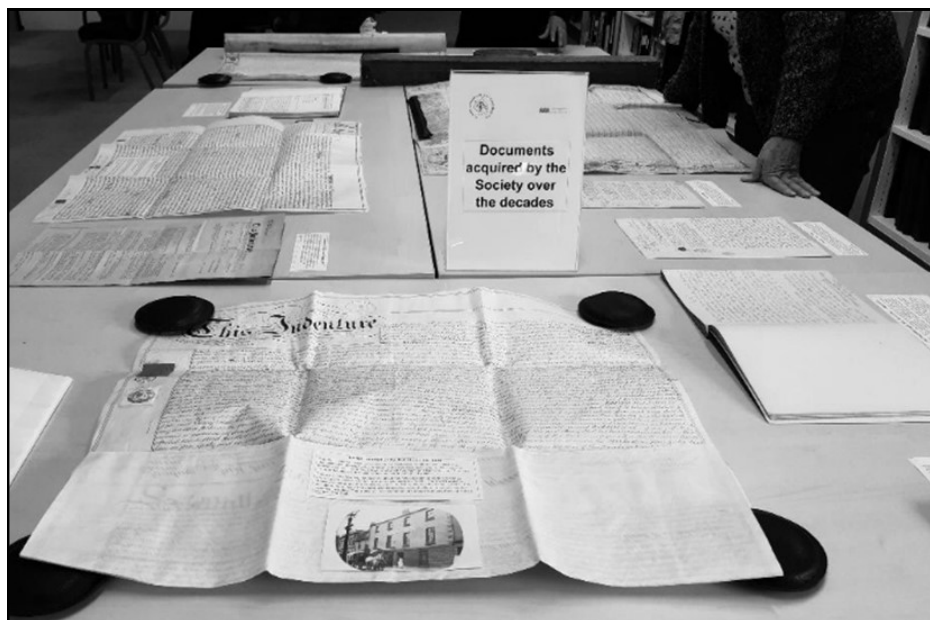
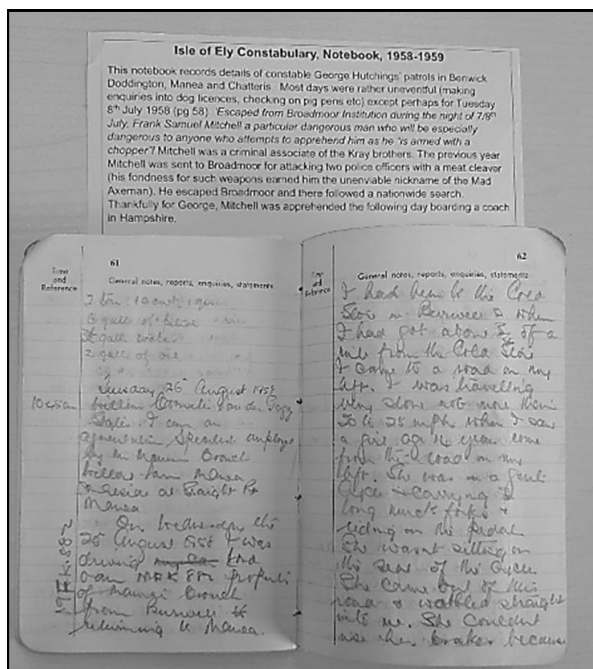
Family History Day



Documents Exhibition at AGM 2025 ...

The AGM Meeting was accompanied by a display of some of the documents which CHFHS has acquired for the Archives through various auctions ...

Our thanks to the team at Cambridgeshire Archives for setting out the display





Removal Order } To the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Parishes
of *Sawston* in the said County of *Cambridge* and Overseers
of the Poor of the said *Little Shelford* in the said County of *Cambridge*
and to each and every of them.

J. Newling
Mayor

UPON the Complaint of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the
Poor of the Parishes of *Sawston* and *Little Shelford* unto us
whose Names are hereunto set and Seals affixed, being two of His Majesty's
Justices of the Peace in and for the said County of *Cambridge*
and one of us of the Quorum, that *Simon*
Smith and Elizabeth his Wife have

come to inhabit in the said Parishes of *Sawston*
and *Little Shelford* nor having gained a legal Settlement there, nor produced
any Certificate owing *Simon Smith and Elizabeth his Wife* to be
settled elsewhere, and that the said *Simon Smith and Elizabeth his Wife* are

likely to be chargeable to the said Parishes of *Sawston*
and *Little Shelford*. We the said Justices upon due Proof made
thereof, as well upon the Examination of the said *Simon*
Smith upon Oath, as otherwise, and likewise upon
due Consideration had of the Petition, do adjudge the same to be true,
and we do likewise adjudge, that the lawful Settlement of *Simon Smith and Elizabeth his Wife*

is in the said Parishes of *Little Shelford* in
the said County of *Cambridge*.
We do therefore require you the said Churchwardens and Overseers of the
Poor of the said Parishes of *Sawston*
or some, or one of you, to convey the said *Simon Smith and Elizabeth his Wife*

from out of your said Parishes of *Sawston*
to the said Parishes of *Little Shelford* and *Thorne* to deliver to the Churchwardens and
Overseers of the Poor there, or to some, or one of them, together with
this our Order, or a true Copy thereof; And we do also hereby require
you the said Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the said Parishes
of *Little Shelford* and *Thorne* to receive and provide for
the Inhabitant, of your said Parishes. Given under our Hands
and Seals the 29. Day of *February*
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Seventy*
Seven

Printed and sold by FLETCHER and HODSON, in Cambridge.

Removal Order, 1777

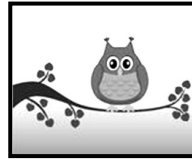
This removal order was purchased by the Society on eBay in 2023. An order was made on February 22, 1777 to remove Simon and Elizabeth Smith from Sawston to Little Shelford their place of legal settlement. The Settlement and Removal Act, 1662 empowered parish overseers to remove an inhabitant who did not have a legal settlement and who were likely to become chargeable to the parish. The act was repealed in 1834 when the New Poor Law was introduced.

Doc ref. 2557/2/2/4



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:

- Wondering whether a divorced and remarried grandfather might have gone on to have other children with his new wife
- Seeking advice on how to “write it up” to produce a family story booklet
- Seeking some ideas on tracing an old friend in Canada, and how to find whether they might have died as there has been no response to letters
- Looking for information on a possible divorce in the late-1940s
- A couple of enquiries sought information on ancestors/relatives who been in the army in India and South Africa c1890-1920
- Several enquirers came armed only with some bits of information derived from their own memory, and wanted advice on what to do next to start their family research in an organised way—
- Others brought along a variety of names and dates, derived from hearsay and the recollection of relatives, sketched out in a basic tree—and wished to set it on a more formal footing to expand on what they had been told.
- One specific enquiry came from an older person who, as an only child of only-child parents, now realised that she didn’t know the “real” names of her now long-gone grandparents—they had only ever been Gran and Grandad. We were quite easily able to find them, and her great-grandparents. Names of some of the grandparents’ siblings sparked recollections of aunts, uncles and cousins. A very satisfying conclusion.

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 shorts 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

COMMITTEE 2025–26 (T : TRUSTEE)

CHAIRMAN : (T) David Copsey [postal correspondence via the Secretary, please]
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VICE-CHAIRMAN : vacant

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TECHNICAL ADVISOR & HUNTINGDON BRANCH REP : John Bownass

email : hunts@chfhs.org.uk

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

PUT SOMETHING BACK INTO FAMILY HISTORY



**CAMBS & HUNTS FHS WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE
COUNTY ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES TO PHOTOGRAPH,
SCAN, TRANSCRIBE AND INDEX KEY COUNTY RECORDS
ESPECIALLY NAME-RICH ONES OF GENEALOGICAL INTEREST**

**we are looking for additional volunteers
to help expand access to name-rich
county genealogical material**

*'TRANSCRIBING' FROM DIGITAL IMAGES OF THE DOCUMENTS
'CHECKING' BY COMPARING DIGITISED DOCUMENT IMAGES
AGAINST WORD / EXCEL FILES OF TRANSCRIPTIONS*

**FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT
projects@chfhs.org.uk or write to The Secretary**

*OUR EFFORTS ARE HELPING TO PRESERVE CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S
LOCAL RECORDS AND TO MAKE THEIR CONTENTS AVAILABLE
FOR COUNTY RESEARCHERS TO USE AT ANYTIME ANYWHERE*

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