

CHESHIRE ANCESTOR



The Journal of the
Family History Society of Cheshire



In this edition:

From Overton Hall to the Great Canal Engineers
Surname Interests ❖ A Wedding Photograph and a Letter
From Writing for Family to Publishing Worldwide
Winsford News and more...

Website: fhsc.uk

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CHESHIRE ANCESTOR

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Contents

Editor's Page	2	From Overton Hall to the	
View from the Chair	3	Great Canal Engineers	29
Society News and Notices	6	Winsford News (5)	32
Group News and Information	6	Three Seminars that	
Winsford News (1)	9	Left us Thinking...	33
Society Diary Dates	10	A Wedding Photograph and	
Notice of the 57th AGM		a Letter	39
of the FHSC	12	Winsford News (6)	42
Obituary: Alan Jones	15	My Grandpa,	
Volunteers Wanted	16	George Williamson	43
A Voice for Those not Residing		Winsford News (7)	47
in Cheshire	17	The First Name in the Register	48
Winsford News (2)	18	Winsford News (8)	52
Members' FREE Lookup Service	19	BMD: Registration from	
Winsford News (3)	19	1837 Onwards	53
Crewe Research Centre News	20	Winsford News (9)	56
Surname Interests	21	From Writing for Family	
Family History Events	22	to Publishing Worldwide	57
Family History News	25	Cryptic Quiz Answers	64
Cryptic Cheshire	28	Winsford News (10)	64
Winsford News (4)	28	Back Cover: Winsford	

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Our society was founded in 1969—one of the first family history societies

Editor's Page

by Rosie Rowley



I am sorry to report that I have not received a single submission for the Net That Serf (Computer Section) of this issue, so there is no NTS section this time. Indeed, I received only one new article for the main section of the journal, so I have really had to pull out all the stops to find enough material to fill all the pages. If you don't feel able to write a full article, please write a letter. Have you recently read a good family history book? Tell me about it so others can read it. Have you been watching *Who Do You Think You Are?* this year? Which was your favourite episode?

This issue includes an article about the first woman named in the register at Cheshire County Training College, Crewe, when teacher training formally began in Cheshire in 1908. It's interesting to note that until as recently as the 1970s many people - especially men! - felt it was not worth educating women because they were expected give up their employment on marriage; hence registrars and vicars not bothering to state a woman's occupation on a marriage certificate on the assumption she would no longer be working. I was, therefore, delighted to read in the *Northwich Guardian* in 1876 (page 9) that, after the **Rev. T. France-Hayhurst** gave each school in Winsford three tickets to the lectures of the Winsford Social and Intellectual Improvement Company for the three most deserving **boys** in the school, **Mr G F Wilbraham** gave three tickets to each school for the three most deserving **girls**. What an enlightened man!

ITEMS FOR THE CHESHIRE ANCESTOR

Articles and letters about family history or Cheshire local history are very welcome. Deadline dates are the 10th of January, April, July or October, but please send items as early as possible. Publication is at the discretion of the editor and is subject to space being available. Articles should preferably be sent by email in Microsoft Word, Open Office Writer, or plain text, to avoid having to retype them; or by post as a clearly-written manuscript. Suggested length of articles is 300-2000 words. Please write all surnames in CAPITALS. Illustrations must be your own images, not copied from another publication or website. If using images of official records and documents, please check that you have publication permission. Please email images separately in a high quality (low compression) JPG format, minimum 300 dpi, and include the name of the copyright owner and source of the image. Please include your membership no. and say whether you want your email address to be published.

View from the Chair

by Margaret Roberts



As I write this, it hardly seems possible how much has happened across the Society over the past three months. Looking back through my notes, I'm reminded once again just how fortunate we are to have such an active programme of events, delivered by enthusiastic volunteers and supported by members who continue to turn up, join in and make every meeting worthwhile.

April began with another excellent programme across our local groups. Members in Runcorn explored how maps can transform family history research, while Sale traced an extraordinary family journey from Lancashire mining communities to the worlds of music and television. Northwich took us from Cheshire to the Caribbean and back again, Alsager explored the rich history of theatre and entertainment, Crewe & Nantwich celebrated the sporting heritage of Britain's great country houses, while Chester and Macclesfield examined hospital life and the history of Victorian asylums. The diversity of topics on offer across the Society never ceases to amaze me.

One of the real highlights of April was our first *Brick Walls without Borders* collaboration with Shropshire Family History Society. The sessions were exceptionally well supported and demonstrated just how valuable it can be when researchers from different societies come together to share ideas and help solve one another's family history puzzles. The enthusiasm generated means we are already planning more joint events in the future. May maintained that momentum. Alongside lively research evenings and open forums, members enjoyed talks ranging from the sporting history of Tabley House and Cheshire women photographers to local eccentric characters and practical discussions on preserving family history for future generations.

June has perhaps been our busiest month yet. Our local groups covered an equally fascinating range of subjects, including the early Stanley family in Cheshire, the fascinating world of seventeenth-century apothecaries, the history of the early Chester press, and an excellent update from Cheshire's County Archivist, Paul Newman, on progress towards the opening of the new Cheshire Archives building

in Crewe. Many members are following developments with great interest and it was encouraging to hear how plans continue to move forward.

There is, however, one piece of news that has been tinged with sadness. After many years of serving family historians in the area, the difficult decision has been taken to close our Macclesfield Group. With Dennis Whyte stepping down and, despite our best efforts, no one coming forward to take on the role, the decision unfortunately became unavoidable. On behalf of the Society, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Dennis and to all the committee members, past and present, who have worked so hard over the years to make the Macclesfield Group such a success. Local groups do not simply happen, they thrive because of the dedication, enthusiasm and countless hours freely given by volunteers, often behind the scenes. Their contribution has been greatly appreciated by the Society and by the many members who have enjoyed meetings there over the years.

While we are naturally disappointed to lose one of our long-established groups, I very much hope that members who regularly attended Macclesfield will continue to remain part of the Society by making use of our extensive online programme. With monthly seminars, discussion groups, Research Buddies, Zooming in on Family History and many other virtual events, there are more opportunities than ever to stay connected, continue learning and enjoy the friendship that has always been at the heart of our Society.

Our online programme has continued to flourish. We were treated to three outstanding seminars. Firstly, we explored the experiences of the Royal Air Force during World War Two, with Clare Wilson. Claire brought together personal stories, historical context and practical research advice. It proved hugely popular with members and generated some fascinating discussion afterwards.

This was followed by Sarah Wise who presented *Inconvenient People, and How to Find Them: Tales from the Victorian 'Lunacy Panics'*. Sarah's engaging and thought-provoking presentation explored the realities behind Victorian mental health records, the social attitudes of the time, and, importantly for family historians, how researchers can uncover the stories of ancestors whose lives became hidden within the asylum system. Judging by the feedback received, it was one of those talks that I will certainly remember for a long time.

Our June seminar, presented by Linda Hammond, tackled one of the most important aspects of genealogy: analysing evidence. Linda shared a wealth of practical advice on weighing conflicting information, distinguishing between information, evidence and proof, and organising research more effectively. Even experienced researchers came away with new ideas to try.

Our second joint event with Shropshire Family History Society was another great success. Dr Sophie Kay demonstrated how maps can reveal entirely new ways of understanding our ancestors and the landscapes in which they lived, reminding us that geography often explains family history just as much as dates and documents.

One of my personal highlights this quarter was our June *Zooming in on Family History* evening, when members shared the three objects they would preserve for future generations. From lace bobbins and family recipe books to military memorabilia, jewellery and treasured household objects, every item came with its own story. It was a wonderful reminder that family history isn't simply about names and dates, it lives within the objects our families treasured and the memories attached to them.

Our Research Buddies sessions have continued to be popular, with members generously sharing both local knowledge and research expertise as we explored different parts of Cheshire together. Those collaborative afternoons perfectly capture the supportive spirit that makes this Society so special.

Before I finish, I would also like to draw your attention to this year's Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Saturday 7th November. The AGM is an important opportunity to look back on everything the Society has achieved over the past year, hear about our plans for the future and play your part in shaping the next chapter of the Society. Whether you have been a member for many years or have joined us more recently, I do hope you will consider coming along if you are able. Full details, including the details of the speaker for the day, can be found on page 12 of this issue.

Looking back over the last three months, what strikes me most is not simply the number of events we have held, but their consistently high quality. Whether attending a local meeting, joining an online seminar, tackling a brick wall or simply sharing treasured family stories, our members continue to demonstrate that family history is at its very best when knowledge, enthusiasm and friendship come together.

As always, my sincere thanks go to every speaker, organiser, volunteer and member who has helped make the past few months such a success. Together you continue to make the Family History Society of Cheshire a thriving, welcoming and inspiring community.

Society News and Notices

For the Society's Latest News

Keep up-to-date between journals by visiting the FHSC website (fhsc.uk), reading the Society's email newsletters, or follow the FHSC on:

Facebook	www.facebook.com/CheshireFamilyHistory
Blue Sky	https://bsky.app/profile/fhsofcheshire.bsky.social

Provided that you have given us your correct email address and permission to contact you, you should receive society news by email. Log in to the FHSC website to choose which emails you wish to receive.

Group News and Information



For the latest news from the Society's groups, please see the FHSC website or contact the Group.

You can receive emails from any group; log in to the FHSC website to choose which emails you wish to receive.

Contact details for all groups are inside the back cover.

FHSC Seminars

By Margaret Spate, Jean Laidlaw and Margaret Roberts

These Zoom talks take place at 7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. An email is sent out on the first day of each month with details of the talk and how to register.

PLEASE NOTE - we are trialling audio recordings of our monthly seminars. The recordings will be available on the FHSC website for one month.

Cheshire Research Buddies

By Margaret Roberts

Our online helpdesk takes place via Zoom at 2pm on the last Saturday of the month (except October). This is the ideal opportunity for members with research queries, photograph requests or 'brick wall' questions to talk to other members with local knowledge. Please check the topics and join us if you have local knowledge or a query.

Register for Seminars and Buddies meetings on the FHSC website. Log in, click on *Events* on the left-hand menu, find the event you want, then click the *Register [Individual]* button just below the event headings. You will receive a confirmation email; Zoom access links will be sent shortly before the meeting.

Discussion Groups

By Margaret Roberts

The Discussion Groups are open to all members to 'dip in and out'. The title of each group is self-explanatory, while *Zooming in on Family History* is a wide-ranging chat session which

members can attend for help with research, share success stories or just generally chat about family history. To join the mailing list for any Discussion Group, simply log in to the FHSC website and click on *My Newsletters/Email Subscriptions* in the left-hand menu. In the window that opens click on *Yes* alongside the group you are interested in; you will then receive the Zoom links for each meeting and any news from that group.

2pm, 1st Friday: *Historical Online Newspapers*, led by Margaret Roberts

7.30pm, 2nd Wednesday: *Windows PC*, leaders vary

7.30pm, 2nd Wednesday: *Mac computers*, led by John Reed (a change to time and day starting from September)

7.30pm, 3rd Thursday: *Family Historian*, to be confirmed

2pm, 4th Monday: *Publishing & Disseminating our Family History*, led by Victoria Doran

7.30pm, 4th Monday: *DNA*, led by Diane Kuster

7.30pm, 4th Wednesday: *Zooming in on Family History*, led by Sheila Jones and Margaret Roberts

7.30pm, 4th Thursday of alternate months: *Family Tree Maker*, led by Tony Cox

Alsager Group

By Hazel Rugman

All meetings, unless otherwise indicated, take place at 7.30pm in Alsager Library (postcode ST7 2AF)

and admission is £2 for FHSC members and £3 for visitors. Car parking behind the library is currently free of charge.

Chester Group

By Helen Elliott

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of the month in the Pavilion, Wealstone Lane, Upton by Chester, Chester CH2 1HD. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for visitors, including refreshments. On site car parking is available.

Chester Helpdesk

A helpdesk is available in Storyhouse, Hunter St, Chester CH1 2AR on Tuesday mornings 10am - 12noon.

Computer Club

Computer Club meetings have been replaced by the *Windows PC Discussion Group*. As before, meetings are held online via Zoom at 7.30pm on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, and are open to all members. Join the *Windows PC Discussion Group* newsletter for details, as described on the previous page.

Congleton Group

By David Smetham

Meetings are usually held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at Congleton Library. Doors open at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start. Entry is through the lower door facing the bus station. Updates about meetings are emailed to subscribers on our newsletter list. Please sign up to the Congleton group

newsletters on the FHSC website, or check the Congleton group pages.

Crewe & Nantwich Group

By Margaret Spate

Crewe & Nantwich F2F meetings are usually held starting at 7.30pm on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Jubilee House, St Paul's St, Crewe CW1 2QA. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for visitors, including refreshments. Nearby parking at the adjacent Victoria Centre Car Park, Crewe CW1 2PT (**NB charges apply after 6pm**).

Crewe Research Centre

Please see the FHSC website or elsewhere in this issue for information about the Society's research facilities.

Nantwich Helpdesk

By Sheila Mitchell

A helpdesk is available at Nantwich Library 2pm-4pm on the fourth Monday of the month. Future dates: 28 Sept, 26 Oct, 23 Nov, 25 Jan

Macclesfield Group

We regret to announce that the Macclesfield Group has now closed. We thank the organisers and members for their support over the years. Members are welcome to attend the meetings of any other FHSC Group; the nearest in person group is in Congleton.

Macclesfield Helpdesk

A helpdesk is available at Macclesfield Library (Jordangate) between 2pm and 4pm on the second Wednesday of each month to help anyone on a one-to-one basis either to start your family

history or to solve queries. Please ring the library on 01625 374000 to make a one hour appointment.

Northwich Group

By Dave Thomas

Meetings are usually held on the 2nd Monday of the month at Hartford Methodist Church Hall, Beach Road, Hartford, Northwich CW8 3AB. Doors open at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start. Admission is £2, and visitors are most welcome. Car park available.

Runcorn Group

By Sue Bowden

Meetings are usually held on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except January), from 7pm until 9pm, at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Clifton Road West, Runcorn WA7 4TE. Visitors are most welcome.

Our Research nights are fast becoming group discussion nights with advice from our advanced members. We are also engaging in one-to-one help between new and more advanced researchers.

Sale Group

By Marion Hall

Our open forums allow members and visitors to share their research with the whole group, and they have proved extremely informative for everyone.

Meetings are usually held at 7.30pm, for the talk at 7.45pm, on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at Sale Moor Community Centre, Norris Road, Sale M33 2TN. Visitors are always welcome. Admission is £2 for members and £2.50 for visitors.

Tameside Helpdesk

A helpdesk is available at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre 2pm-4pm on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. Please ring the Centre on 01613 424242 or check the FHSC website for details and to book.

Wallasey Helpdesk

A helpdesk is available 10am-1pm every Friday at the Wallasey Central Reference Library, Earlston Road, Wallasey CH45 5DX. Step-free access to the library is available via a ramp and internal lift. All welcome.

Winsford News (1)

from the Northwich Guardian, 4 Nov 1876

ENCOURAGEMENT TO WINSFORD SCHOOL CHILDREN – A fortnight ago we announced that the Rev. T. France-Hayhurst, Rector of Davenham, had handed to the managers of each of the five public schools in Winsford three season tickets of admission to the Lectures of the Winsford Social and Intellectual Improvement Company to be given to the three most deserving boys in the school. We have now much pleasure in stating that the Rector's excellent example has been followed by Mr G F Wilbraham, of Delamere House, who has given a similar number of tickets to be awarded to the most deserving girls in the schools.

Society Diary Dates

Below is a list of events and meetings planned at the time of going to press; for full details, or for changes to seminars and group meetings, please see the FHSC website or contact your local group (contact details inside back cover). To join a Zoom meeting, please see the instructions in the Group News and Information pages which follow this Diary Dates section. **Please note, these dates do not include the dates of all the “Discussion Groups” – see page 7 or the FHSC website for details of these.**

Note: meetings are in one of three formats – online using Zoom (Z), face-to-face at a local venue (F), or hybrid, using both face-to-face and Zoom (H). If no format is stated please check on the Group News and Information pages, or see the FHSC website fhsc.uk

Date	Group	Subject
2-Sep	Runcorn	Family Reconstruction by Peter Rowley
8-Sep	Crewe & Nantwich	F2F: The History of the Polish Hospital in Penley by Rebecca Griffiths
9-Sep	Sale	Cheshire's Historic Houses by Tony Bostock
14-Sep	Northwich	F2F: The Buildings of Richard Harding Watt by Stephen Smith
15-Sep	Congleton	AGM
16-Sep	Society Seminar	Z: A Strange Thing Happened on the way to the Police Station: an A-Z of Anecdotes by Martin Gaffney
21-Sep	Alsager	Review of the Year
24-Sep	Chester	Cheshire Maps and Map Makers by Jonathan Pepler
26-Sep	Research Buddies	Z: Middlewich/Winsford
7-Oct	Runcorn	Research Evening
7-Oct	Sale	The Workhouse by George Cogswell
12-Oct	Northwich	F2F: TBA
13-Oct	Crewe & Nantwich	F2F: AGM and Quiz

19-Oct	Alsager	TBA
20-Oct	Congleton	TBA
21-Oct	Society Seminar	Z: The 6th Annual Dorothy Flude Memorial Lecture - Hunger, Health and Hope: A History of School Meals in Britain by Dr Heather Ellis
29-Oct	Chester	Researching Merchant Navy Officers and Seamen by Victoria Doran
31-Oct	Research Buddies	Z: Northwich and area
4-Nov	Runcorn	Saving Private Smith by Brian Smith
7-Nov	FHSC AGM	Z: Titanic Myths: What the Records Really Reveal by Nichola Johnson (2pm) followed by AGM (3pm)
9-Nov	Northwich	F2F: TBA
10-Nov	Crewe & Nantwich	F2F: Teachers - Finding Records beyond the Census by Victoria Fenton
11-Nov	Sale	The English Civil War and its Effect on Cheshire by Tony Bryan
16-Nov	Alsager	TBA
17-Nov	Congleton	TBA
18-Nov	Society Seminar	Z: Fact from Fiction by Dave Annal
26-Nov	Chester	A Seasonal Miscellany
28-Nov	Research Buddies	Z: Knutsford and area
2-Dec	Runcorn	Christmas Social and Research Evening
8-Dec	Crewe & Nantwich	F2F: Christmas Social (6pm) followed by F2F/Zoom Quiz (7.30pm)
9-Dec	Sale	Christmas Quiz with Seasonal Refreshments
14-Dec	Northwich	F2F: Hotpot Supper and Quiz
16-Dec	Society Seminar	Z: FHSC Christmas Quiz
December	Alsager	TBA - Members' Christmas Meal
December	Congleton	NO MEETING
December	Research Buddies	NO MEETING

Notice of the 57th Annual General Meeting of the Family History Society of Cheshire

The 57th AGM of the FHSC will take place electronically using Zoom on **Saturday 7th November at 3.00pm**. The business meeting will be preceded by a talk by **Nichola Johnson** entitled *Titanic Myths: What the Records Really Reveal*. The talk will begin at **2.00pm with login from 1.45pm**. Members with a valid email address will be sent an AGM Newsletter to coincide with the publication of this Notice in the **CHESHIRE ANCESTOR** and on the website, containing registration details for both the talk and the AGM. Members only intending to attend the Annual General Meeting should not start the login process until **2.55pm**.

Talk

Few events have generated as many family legends as the sinking of the *Titanic*. But how many of these stories stand up to scrutiny? In her talk Nicola uncovers why myths emerge, why they persist, and how careful investigation can separate fact from fiction. Drawing on new findings and real case studies, Nicola highlights the challenges and opportunities in working with passenger and crew lists, newspapers, and the *Titanic* Relief Fund charity records. She also reveals how modern tools – from DNA to the 1921 Census – are transforming what we thought we knew about the disaster and the people behind the stories.

Nicola Johnson is a professional genealogist, writer, and DNA specialist with a Master's Degree in Genealogical, Palaeographic and Heraldic Studies from the University of Strathclyde. She runs All About Ancestors, where she specialises in English family history, maritime research – including extensive work on the *Titanic* crew and passengers – and DNA analysis. Before training to be a genealogist, Nicola spent two decades as a broadcast journalist with BBC Television News and Associated Press. She now combines her client work with her journalist background, writing regularly for *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Family Tree* and *Discover Your Ancestors* magazines.

In advance of the AGM

To ensure that the meeting runs smoothly:

- The Hon. Secretary's Report, the annual accounts and Hon. Treasurer's Report will be available on the website **two weeks prior to the meeting**. Details of those persons standing for election will be available on the website from **8th October**.

- Voting for Officers and Trustees and any notified Resolutions will be conducted in **advance of the AGM**, with the results announced at the AGM. **Voting can be done online via the Society's website AGM Menu item between 8th October and 6th November** or by post (see below).
- The Reports will be also published in the **CHESHIRE ANCESTOR** after the AGM.
- It would be helpful if members who have questions about the Reports submit them to the secretary at secretary@fhsc.uk prior to the AGM so that they can be passed to the relevant officers for a response.
- Any member's resolution should be submitted to the Hon. Secretary by no later than **26th September**.
- The agenda appears in this edition of the **CHESHIRE ANCESTOR**.
- The agenda and the minutes of the 2025 AGM will also be posted on the website.
- Any member unable to attend the AGM or who does not have access to the website may request a voting form and/or a copy of the agenda, minutes and details of those standing for election from the Hon. Secretary via email at secretary@fhsc.org.uk or by post to Mrs S A Jones, Hon. Secretary FHSC, 11 Brancote Gardens, Bromborough, Wirral CH62 6AH. A Stamped Addressed Envelope would be appreciated with the request. **Hard copy voting forms will not be sent out after 24th October**. Voting forms returned by post must be received by **6th November** and sufficient postage time should therefore be allowed if they are to count.

Election of Officers and Trustees

The following posts are open to election this year, all for a period of three years:

- Chair (3 years), vice Margaret Roberts
- Communications Officer (3 years), vice Margaret Spate
- Three other elected Trustees, vice David Guyton (3 years), Geoff Johnson (2 years) and Alan Turley (1 year)

Details of what is required for these roles and a nomination form are available on the website at www.fhsc.uk/fhsc-library/governance-documents/476-roles-and-election-procedures (you will need to be logged in to the website to access this section). You are also welcome to contact the Chair or Honorary Secretary (details inside the front cover) if you would like to discuss possible nomination

without any commitment. Nominations (which can be self-nominations) should be completed and returned **by no later than 30th September** to the Hon. Secretary via email at secretary@fhsc.uk or by post to Mrs S A Jones, Hon. Secretary FHSC, 11 Brancote Gardens, Bromborough, Wirral CH62 6AH.

AGM AGENDA

1.45pm: Login opens for the AGM

2.00pm: Talk by Nichola Johnson – *Titanic Myths: What the Records Really Reveal*

2.55pm: Login opens for members only intending to attend the business meeting

3.00pm: Annual General Meeting

Agenda for the 57th FHSC AGM commencing at 3.00pm

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2025 AGM**
- 3. Chair's Remarks**
- 4. Hon. Treasurer's Annual Report**
- 5. Hon. Secretary's Annual Report**
- 6. Election Results**

The following posts are open to election this year, all for a period of three years:

- (a) **Chair (3 years)**
- (b) **Communications Officer (3 years)**
- (c) **Three other elected Trustees (1 for 3 years, 1 for 2 years, 1 for 1 year)**

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Trustees recommend the appointment of Dan Bishop Finance as the Society's Independent Examiner for the Financial Year 2026-27 (see www.danbishopfinance.co.uk)

8. Proposals from the Membership

Under its Constitution, the Family History Society of Cheshire invites proposals from its members. The Constitution states that the membership present at the AGM has the opportunity:

“To decide by simple majority upon any resolution which may be duly submitted to the meeting for consideration. No resolution, other than those relating to the adoption

of reports and accounts, shall be moved at the Annual General Meeting unless a notice in writing, signed by the member who proposes to move it and stating its terms has been received by the Hon Secretary at least forty-two days before the date appointed for the holding of such Annual General Meeting.

The Chair of the meeting shall, at his or her discretion, and with the consent of the majority of the members present and voting, have the power to admit resolutions of which notice has not been given, if such resolution shall not involve any alterations of the Constitution. Such resolution shall be decided upon by a simple majority of members present and voting.”

9. Any other business relevant to the AGM.

Obituary: Alan Jones

**By Rosie Rowley
Hon. Editor**



It is with regret that we announce the death of Alan Jones, formerly of Alderley Edge, at the age of 91, in a Sandbach care home surrounded by his family.

Alan was a longstanding member of the Society, having joined in 1996, and an active member of the Macclesfield Group, acting as Treasurer for fifteen years. He was also Treasurer of the Society's Research Centre at Alderley Edge and continued in this role when the Research Centre moved to Mobberley. He was a quiet, pleasant man who was always willing to help with the running of the Group and the Research Centre.

After the death of his wife in 2017 Alan moved to Cornwall, relinquishing his roles in the Society. Some time later he returned to Cheshire.

Alan's obituary notice, along with a photo of a younger and very adventurous-looking Alan, can be found on the Funeral Notices website at <https://funeral-notices.co.uk/notice/jones/5308131>

Volunteers Wanted

The Society is run entirely by volunteers, without which it could not function. Please consider whether you might be able to offer your help in some way.

Could you be our next Treasurer?

FHSC needs a volunteer to join our Board of Trustees as Honorary Treasurer. If you enjoy working with figures, are organised and would like to play a key role in helping FHSC to continue to flourish, we'd love to hear from you.

The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the Society's finances, preparing financial reports for Trustee meetings, helping with the annual accounts and ensuring that our financial records are maintained accurately. While some bookkeeping or financial experience would be an advantage, you do not need to be a qualified accountant.

The Society uses *ExpensePlus*, a modern, cloud-based accounting package designed specifically for charities. It automates many routine tasks, including bank reconciliation and financial reporting, making day-to-day financial management straightforward and reducing much of the manual administration. Full support and a comprehensive handover will be provided by our outgoing Treasurer, Rob Brown.

Time commitment is approximately two hours per week, with a little extra time when preparing the annual accounts. The work can be carried out from home, at times to suit you. Trustee meetings are held online so there is no requirement to live in Cheshire. You'll be joining a friendly, supportive team of volunteers who are passionate about family history and preserving Cheshire's heritage.

Many of our current Trustees had not previously held the roles they now undertake. What they all have in common is a willingness to contribute their skills, learn where needed and work as part of a supportive team. If you are wondering whether you have enough experience, don't let that put you off, we are looking for someone with enthusiasm, reliability and a desire to help the Society continue to thrive.

If you would like an informal chat about the role or would like further information, please contact **Rob Brown** (treasurer@fhsc.uk) or **Sheila Jones** (secretary@fhsc.uk)

Could you help us safeguard the Society's future while helping others discover their past? We'd be delighted to hear from you.

Crewe Research Centre

More volunteers would be very welcome, to work either in the Research Centre at Crewe or at home working on projects. **For more information, please contact Margaret Spate, Crewe Group Leader (crewe@fhsc.uk)**

FHSC Governance Team Members

There are still vacancies on all of the Teams, except the Local Groups Operational Team, and details and an application form are available on the Society's website at <https://fhsc.uk/library-heading/governance-documents/486-operational-teams>

A Voice for Those not Residing in Cheshire

Ian A Worthington
FHSC Trustee

When I was elected as a trustee of the Society in 2024, I had in mind that being resident both outside Cheshire and outside the UK, I might act as a conduit for those in a similar position. I intended to be there for those who wanted to feed in ideas, observations, complaints or niggles to the Management Committee and the Trustees. Well, nearly halfway through my three-year term, and better late than never, we are finally in a position be able to create that conduit for you.

We have asked our webmaster to set up a discussion group *Out of Cheshire*, similar to the other discussion groups which came from the old Computer Club. I will be able to use this conduit to send out the occasional newsletter to those of us residing outside Cheshire. In addition, we will have a forum on the FHSC website. However, once the group is established (which should have happened by the time this edition of the CHESHIRE ANCESTOR is published), you will have to register to be part of the group and forum.

This is a relatively simple procedure:

Log into the website

Click My Newsletters/Email Subscriptions in left hand menu

Select Yes next to "Out of Cheshire" or any of the other groups or newsletters you'd like to subscribe to

For the forum click FHSC Forum (further down the same list on the home menu)/ Discussion Groups/Outside Cheshire and leave your message.....

Done!

By leaving messages or comments on the forum you will be able to make me aware of issues affecting you. I can then take these to the Committee and the Trustees and report back to you again via the forum.

The Society is undergoing some huge changes as it adapts to different challenges posed by the closure of some of the traditional geographical groups. The increase in the use of the internet and online features to present seminars, discuss topics of family or social history and keep the membership informed of these changes, is bringing about a step change in how we disseminate and receive our information. I know it doesn't suit or is convenient to all, especially those who do not have or use computers, but alas it is the way things are moving and the way the Society has to go if we are to remain a viable institution, and, importantly, maintain contact with our potential, younger, future members.

For those who are reading this and who do not have access to a computer, you could feed in your thoughts and observations to me, should you wish, orally via your geographical group leader. If you do not belong to a group you can always write to me via the Crewe Research Centre whose address is: Units 3 & 4, Brierley Business Centre, Mirion Street, Crewe, CW1 2AP.

I cannot promise to resolve all your issues, but I will listen and try my best to find some resolution. But, just as importantly, it would be good to hear your thoughts and feelings so I can feed these back to the Trustees.

Best wishes and I hope to hear from some of you from time to time.

Winsford News (2)

from the Northwich Guardian, 2 Sept 1876

THE SALT TRADE – ...this important Cheshire industry... has accomplished another of its yearly cycles since we last reviewed its condition. And we are sorry that the year just closed has not been a very prosperous one for the trade... solely owing to the want of united action in the trade itself... we understand that remedy has now been applied, so that with an improving demand, better prices will be obtained...

The power of production in the Cheshire district has considerably grown. Winsford takes the lead in this advance, having added 79 new pans to the 595 it possessed in July, 1875. Northwich follows close, with an increase of 72, Middlewich with an advance of one only, whilst Sandbach and Droitchwich districts have been quite stationary. There is an apparent increase in the quantities shipped during the last half year to British North America, the West Indies, South America, the Baltic and North Europe, France and the Mediterranean, and Coastways. The principal falling off has been in the amounts sent to the United States and the East Indies...

Members' FREE Research Lookup Service

Note that this is a free service for members only, and is subject to the time available to volunteers.

We will search our research resources held at the Crewe Research Centre for specific information about one named person. For example: a search for a marriage, baptism or burial record or a search for a memorial inscription. We will also check other indexes that we hold. We will respond as quickly as possible but please remember that the Research Centre is staffed by volunteers who also have other duties.

Lists of the resources held at Crewe can be found on the FHSC website at <https://fhsc.uk/library-heading/library-public/32-crewe-library-holdings>

Please note we cannot undertake in-depth family history research. Members wanting that sort of service should engage a professional genealogist.

Requests can be submitted:

- **Online on the FHSC website**
You must be logged in to the website to access this page.
<https://fhsc.uk/fhsc-help/members-lookup-service>
- **By post**
Please include your name, membership number, contact details and a correctly stamped, addressed envelope (at least C5 size – 162mm x 229mm).
Send to: *FHSC Research Centre, Units 3 & 4, Brierley Business Centre, Mirion Street, Crewe, CW1 2AP*
- **Email Contact**
Please send enquiries by email to librarian@fhsc.uk and they will be passed on to the appropriate person.

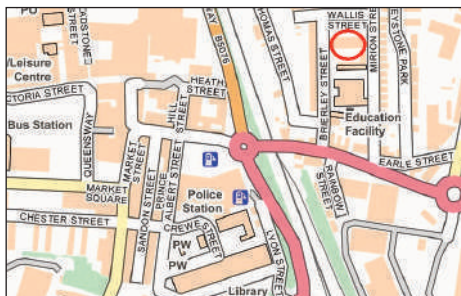
Winsford News (3)

from the Northwich Guardian, 4 Nov 1876

WINSFORD LOCAL BOARD – REJECTED PLANS – At a meeting of the Roads and Buildings Committee, a report from the Surveyor as to Mr P Carey's plans for two houses on Over-lane was read, and it was resolved, "That this Committee recommend that the plans be not passed, on the ground that the premises proposed to be built are not more than 12 feet from the back premises of the houses called Albert-place, but if an approved plan is submitted to the board showing the premises further back, so as to form a street down to Moss-street, the Committee recommend the board to take the matter into consideration."

Crewe Research Centre News

Units 3 & 4, Brierley Business Centre, Mirion Street, Crewe, CW1 2AP
Tel 07352 454501



Manned by experienced volunteers, visitors can obtain help and advice on family and local history research. Please see the FHSC website for holdings and up-to-date news about changes to opening hours, etc. If in doubt, or if travelling from a distance, please phone before visiting to ensure the centre is open and a computer/film reader is available.

The Business Centre is situated on Mirion Street, about six hundred yards from our previous location in Crewe Municipal Buildings. There is free parking with disabled parking spaces.

We occupy units 3 and 4 on the ground floor. Press the doorbell button for FHSC and one of our volunteers will come to the door and let you in.

*FREE access to Ancestry, FindMyPast, British Newspaper Archive
and The Genealogist*

*Local parish registers on film - extensive library of books
Crewe Collection (formerly Crewe and District Local History Archives)*

*For full details of our holdings, please see
the Crewe Research Centre Library Holdings lists on the FHSC website*

***Usual opening hours: 10am-4pm Monday and Tuesday
plus one Saturday morning each month (see website for date)***

We recommend arriving no later than 3pm. For Saturday dates and changes to usual opening hours, please see the FHSC website.

N.B. Anyone wishing to visit on a Saturday morning (between 10 am and 12 noon) **must email crewe@fhsc.uk at least 2 days in advance** to confirm their attendance. If no notification is received, the Research Centre will not open on that Saturday.

Non-members visiting for the first time will be offered (for a small donation) time with a volunteer to explain the facilities available and advice on family history research. Membership of the Society is encouraged for further visits.

Latest News

by Margaret Spate
crewe@fhsc.uk

Thanks for the continuing support of volunteers, members and visitors as we progress with preparations for change of venue.

Monday and Tuesday openings are as usual with one Saturday morning opening per month – please check the ‘Events’ list on the website for details of these. Additional open days or evenings will be arranged for sale of any surplus stock.

Can I ask that you notify me in advance if you are travelling any distance wishing to view specific records. The volunteers are happy to help you to access the records which we hold.

Surname Interests

Are you researching any of these names? If so, log in to the FHSC website and click on *Research Tools*, then *Members Surname Interests*, to find the person or people who registered the name as one of their surname interests.

If you haven’t already registered your surname interests on the FHSC website, why not do it today? You may make contact with someone who holds the key to your brick wall!

These names were added between 1 May and 30 July 2026:

Adams, Bird, Clubb/Clubbe/Club, Comberbach

Edwards, Hooley, Hopkinson, Hughes

Lowcock, Merry, Pemberton, Perryn/Perrin

Simpson, Woodcock, Woodward

Family History Events

For news of family history events, see these online calendars

<http://geneva.weald.org.uk/doku.php>

www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/news-and-events

<https://conferencekeeper.org/>

Wirral Archives History Workshops 2026

On the following dates at 2pm in the Wirral Archives Search Room:

Fri 4 Sept – The Foundling Hospital, Chester by Anthony Annakin-Smith

Fri 30 Oct – Churchyard and Cemeteries by William Meredith

Wed 11 Nov – The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

by Alistair Baker and David Grisenthwaite

To book, please contact the Archivist, William Meredith, on 0151 606 2922

or email: archives@wirral.gov.uk

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/wirral-archives-service/wirral-archives-upcoming-workshops-2026>

Davenport Gathering, 2026

from 3pm on Sunday 6th September 2026

at The Tytherington Hotel & Spa, Dorchester Way, Macclesfield, SK10 2JP

Talks 3pm – 5pm * Optional Visits to Davenport Sights

Optional Dinner at 7pm

Afternoon Talks plus hot drink £10 * Dinner at 7pm £44 extra

Hotel rooms available for booking if required

For further information and to book, please contact:

June Bird june.bird@hotmail.com

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Tour

2pm – 3pm on Sunday 20th September 2026

at Macclesfield Cemetery, Prestbury Road, Macclesfield, SK10 3BU

Tours available on various dates and at various locations around the country

Booking essential; tickets free or make a donation

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/events-tours-and-talks/#uktours2026>

The Family History Show: London

10am - 4pm on Saturday 3rd October 2026

at Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Rd E, Sunbury-on-Thames TW16 5AQ

*Free Talks * Ask The Experts * Exhibitors, Societies, etc*

Tickets £8.50 each or £12 for two (advance purchase)

£12 per person on the day. Under sixteens free of charge.

Tickets include a free goody bag on arrival.

Free parking - Kempton Park railway station 200 yards from entrance.

<https://thefamilyhistoryshow.com/london/>

Cheshire Local History Association: History Day

9am - 4pm on Saturday 10th October 2026

at Tarporley Community Centre, High Street, Tarporley CW6 0AY

Cheshire Towns and the March of Time

Five talks: Revealing Medieval Nantwich

*Munificence in Macclesfield * Birkenhead - 19thC New Town*

*Runcorn New Town, 1960s-1990s * Chester Steps into Modern Times*

Tickets £16 including tea/coffee on arrival and during the lunch break.

Lunch not included; delegates may purchase refreshments nearby.

Step-free access - Free parking

Bus stop outside venue served by the 84 Crewe-Chester service.

Information and booking via the website (click on **History Day** on the left):

www.cheshirehistory.org.uk

The Guild of One-Name Studies Seminar: Mapping your One-Name Study

9.30am - 4.45pm on Saturday 17th October 2026

at Cuddington and Sandiway Village Hall, Norley Road, Northwich CW8 2LB

Where did they come from? Where did they go? How did they get there?

The talks should be of interest to any family historian
wishing to locate their ancestors on maps.

The seminar is open to both members and non-members.

Free parking * quarter mile from Cuddington Station

Booking essential. Price: £27.50, including a buffet lunch and hot drinks.

<https://one-name.org/mc-events/mapping-your-one-name-study/>

Huddersfield & District FHS Family History Fair

10am – 4pm on Saturday 24 October 2026
at The Masonic Hall, Greenhead Road, Huddersfield, HD1 4EN.

*Talks * Advice * Exhibitors, etc*

Admission £5.00. Accompanied children under 16 are free.

Free car park with step-free access at the rear of the building.

When full, further parking is on the street or nearby pay and display.

Refreshments available throughout the day in a comfortable bar area.

<https://hdfhs.org.uk/the-family-history-fair/>

ADVANCE NOTICE: The Family History Show Midlands

10am – 4pm on Saturday 13th March 2027
at the Severn Hall, Three Counties Showground
Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6NW

*Free Talks * Ask The Experts * Exhibitors, Societies, etc*

The FHSC is planning to attend this event – do come along and say hello!

Tickets £8 each or £7 each for two or more (advance purchase)

£12 per person on the day. Under sixteens free of charge.

Tickets include a free goody bag on arrival.

Free parking – Use Main Entrance on Blackmore Park Road, B4208

Closest train station is Great Malvern. This is a short taxi ride away from
showground (approx 7–10 minutes / 2.6 miles).

<https://thefamilyhistoryshow.com/midlands/>

ADVANCE NOTICE: Family Tree Live

Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd May 2027
at Statfold Country Park, Ashby Road, Tamworth B79 0BU
Sponsored by Ancestry

*Talks * Advice * Exhibitors, Societies, etc*

The FHSC is planning to attend this event – do come along and say hello!

Statfold Country Park is the home of Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum
and the National Fairground Museum

<https://statfold.com/>

Sign up on the Family Tree Magazine website for show updates.

<https://www.family-tree.co.uk/family-tree-live>

Family History News

A selection of recent updates to websites, and other family history news. Remember, if you don't have a subscription to *Ancestry*, *Find My Past* or *The Genealogist*, our Crewe Research Centre has free access to these sites. You may also be able to access *Ancestry* or *Find My Past* through your public library – and look out for offers of free access on special occasions such as Remembrance Day. **Bear in mind that record collections on the Internet may be incomplete.**

Ancestry

Go to <http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/cardcatalog.aspx> for a list of all record sets, and click on Sort by > Date Updated to find the latest additions.

Go to www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/recent-collections for Ancestry news.

Although Ancestry say they have made datasets such as parish registers available online, not all have been indexed! To be sure you have checked, find the dataset in the card catalogue and search or browse from there.

England and Wales, Tithe Maps and Apportionments, 1775-1936

www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62611/

Images of tithe apportionment records and tithe maps for England and Wales dated between 1775 and 1936. The original documents are held by the National Archives at Kew, London.

Cheshire, England, Wills and Probate, 1530-1858

www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62255/

Images of wills and probate records from Cheshire between 1530 and 1858. The original documents are held by Cheshire Archives and Local Studies in Chester.

England and Wales, Death Index, 1989-2025

www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60630/

An index of deaths recorded in England and Wales 1989 – 2025. The collection contains over 80 per cent of recent deaths, but earlier coverage is lighter.

Scotland and Northern Ireland, Death Index, 1989-2025

www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60631/

An index of deaths recorded in either Scotland or Northern Ireland between 1989 and 2025. A small number of records from Jersey and the Isle of Man are also included. This collection covers approximately 45 per cent of the deaths which occurred during this time period.

Find My Past (FMP)

Go to <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records> to see a list of all record sets. Go to www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/new for FindMyPast news.

England & Wales, Divorce Court Index

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/england-and-wales-divorce-court-index>

The collection of English and Welsh divorce records has increased by 296,824 additional records covering 1858-1937.

Britain, Retired Railway Officers' Society 1902-1963

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/britain-retired-railway-officers-society-1902-1963>

Formed for senior management and officials from British and British Empire railway companies, this collection is a fantastic resource for biographical research. The records feature Member Portrait Albums that provide photographs alongside detailed career histories, service dates, and company positions. The records are from the RAIL 1156 series at the National Archives.

England, Great Central Railway Company

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/england-great-central-railway-company>

The company began as the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway and was renamed the Great Central Railway in 1897. A London extension was completed in 1899 with Marylebone Station as its terminus, which is still in use today. The records are from the RAIL 226 series at the National Archives.

England, Peak Forest Canal Company

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/england-peak-forest-canal-company>

The Peak Forest Canal Company was first established in 1794 to construct a waterway from Derbyshire to Manchester, primarily to transport limestone. The records are from the RAIL 856 series at the National Archives.

England, Cromford Canal Company

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/england-cromford-canal-company>

This 14.5-mile waterway connected local coal mines and limestone quarries to Richard Arkwright's pioneering cotton mills. The records offer a window into the golden age of East Midlands water transport from 1789 until the canal was overtaken by railway competition and purchased by the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midlands Junction Railway company in 1852.

The Genealogist

Go to www.thegenealogist.co.uk/news/ for The Genealogist news.

New British Railways Regional Magazines

The Genealogist has added a fascinating new set of British Railways regional magazines to their growing newspaper and periodical collection, giving family historians a rich new source for tracing railway ancestors and exploring everyday working life on Britain's railways.

The latest release includes more than sixty issues from British Railways regional magazines, covering the Eastern, North Eastern, Scottish, Southern, Western and London Midland regions. The titles span the late 1940s through to the early 1960s.

The Women's Land Army

<https://www.womenslandarmy.co.uk/>

Those whose female ancestors served in the Women's Land Army (WLA) during WW2 are probably aware that service index cards exist and can be viewed on both Ancestry and FindMyPast one hundred years after the year in which their ancestor was born. However, the information supplied on the card is often very limited and full service records were not retained. These cards are from the National Archives series MAF 421.

The above website contains information about the Women's Land Army and its sister organisation, the Women's Timber Corps. Of particular interest are downloadable, searchable pdf copies of the *Land Girl* magazine which was published between 1940 and 1947 with the aim of fostering a sense of fellowship among the women, many of whom lived on isolated farms. The magazines include snippets of information and news of Land Girls around the country, so your Land Girl ancestor may be mentioned in one of the magazines.

Microsoft Windows 10 Support Extended

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/extended-security-updates?r=1>

Microsoft has extended security updates for Windows 10 for a further year, until 12 October, 2027. If you have already enrolled in the Extended Security Updates (ESU) programme, your support will automatically continue. The above web page explains how to enrol if you have not already done so.

Cryptic Cheshire

by Sheila Jones
Hon. Secretary

Who are these people who share their surnames with places in Cheshire? Seventeen are/were real people and three are fictitious. To help you, their initials and dates of birth and death (for the real ones!) are given. Answers on page 64.

- 1 Actor with a taste of honey (R.T. 1942-)
- 2 The man from Auntie, progenitor of a bean, time & time again (B.E. 1959-)
- 3 Painter, sculptor and a one-day peer (F.L. 1830-1896)
- 4 Writer in a brave new world (A.H. 1894-1963)
- 5 The People's Champion (R.H. 1978-2025)
- 6 Heroine of both north and south (M.H.)
- 7 She got herself out of here, probably by swimming very fast (R.A. 1989-)
- 8 Did this man of the cloth do as he would be done by? (C.K. 1819-1875)
- 9 Not an archer but liked Afghans (M.A.)
- 10 Not a drum was heard at his funeral (J.M. 1761-1809)
- 11 Sir Galahad survivor with Spirit (S.W. 1961-)
- 12 Joined castaways on a desert island? (R.P. 1914-1985)
- 13 Gold-covered bombshell under the name of Jill (S.E. 1937-)
- 14 If Catherine Connolly is number ten, he was number one (D.H. 1860-1949)
- 15 Modern cookery guru with a penchant for Brussel sprouts (E.A. 1799-1859)
- 16 Queen Mother twice over (A.H. 1637-1671)
- 17 A bassist or a pretender? (P.F. 1952-1983)
- 18 Known for his fighting talk (N.D. 1979-)
- 19 Very fictitious friend of Algernon Moncrieff (B.)
- 20 Give him a hand and flowers and several stars (T.K. 1973-)

Winsford News (4)

from the Northwich Guardian, 25 Nov 1876

MORE LIGHT – One of the most melancholy places in England on a dark night was Winsford, before it could boast of street lamps. Hundreds of men come home or turn out to work during the dark hours, but the lamps are extinguished at half-past eleven, so the poor men must still plod their way through darkness. Is it fair that those men who form so large a part of the ratepayers, should be denied the advantage of the gas for which they will be required to contribute their due quota?

From Overton Hall to the Great Canal Engineers

by Peter Havercan (11014)
and Jane Fraser (10213)

Our article in the September 2025 edition of CHESHIRE ANCESTOR told how John FURNIVALL from Sandiway came to inhabit Overton Hall in Smallwood and contribute to an important Professorship at Cambridge University. John's youngest son William FURNIVALL was probably born at Overton Hall and took over the tenancy after his father died. But it is William's third wife Mary, and people indirectly connected to her, who are the subjects of this article.

Wesleyanism in Smallwood

For four years, we were unable to find the birth of Mary, but we did know that she was the widow Mary SALMON when she married William on 29 December 1795. Mary was very active in the Wesleyan movement, and we read in John Dyson's *History of Wesleyan Methodism in the Congleton Circuit* for about 1799:

Overton Hall, the first preaching place in Smallwood, was opened about this time. The estate belongs to the University of Cambridge. It was then occupied by a family of the name of Furnivil. Mrs. Furnivil was the widow of Captain Salmon, who was brother to the late vicar of Sandbach.

According to an entry in the official guide to Congleton Rural District, recorded by William LOWNDES in 1972, *services were held in the large kitchen at Overton Hall, hence the bell on the house.*

Remarkably, in March 2026, we jointly discovered that the bondsman for Mary's marriage to William FURNIVALL was named Daniel GOODALL, who turned out to be Mary's older brother. This led us to discover that Mary's birth name was Mary GOODALL, which gave us a baptism date of 1767 in Astbury.

Although we have not found a positive identification, it seems likely that Mary's former husband was Edward SALMON, who was a younger brother of Rev Richard Lowndes SALMON, the vicar of Sandbach from 1787. According to a report in the Chester Courant, there was a Captain Edward SALMON aboard HMS Cleveland off Finisterre in 1776, but the vicar's brother would only have been fifteen at that time. Edward died aged 33 in February 1794, and his widow Mary married William FURNIVALL in December 1795.

On 27 September 1808, the Rev Richard Lowndes SALMON became chaplain to the First Corps of Volunteers at Sandbach, who were established as a method of home defence during the Napoleonic Wars. He was apparently well-loved by his parishioners, who erected a memorial to him in St Mary's Churchyard, Sandbach.

The Salt Magnate

The father of Edward SALMON, and so also that of the vicar Richard Lowndes SALMON, was Edward SALMON (1725-1786) of Hassall Hall. This elder Edward was of comparatively humble origins: his father was a cheesemonger in Hough, near Nantwich. But he was active in the British Army against the Jacobite Rising in Scotland in 1745. At Bernera, he saved the life of Lt-Gen RUFANE by disarming one of the highlanders, for which RUFANE later left him a bequest of £500 in his will. In 1751, Edward married Anne LOWNDES, who had recently inherited Hassall Hall from her father Richard LOWNDES (1703-1751). By marrying into the LOWNDES family, Edward became a wealthy salt magnate, owning wych houses, salt works, and brine pits throughout Cheshire and Staffordshire. Edward passed the LOWNDES name to his oldest son (the vicar) as a middle name.

The LOWNDES family of Hassall is a different branch from the LOWNDES of Lea Hall and Overton Hall, although they are distantly related.

Edward SALMON's friend, and a trustee of his estate, was Hugh HENSHALL. HENSHALL was a lesser-known canal engineer, who was a student of the more famous James BRINDLEY. Edward SALMON must have known BRINDLEY as well, as he left bequests of £25 each to Ann BRINDLEY and Susannah BRINDLEY, who were James BRINDLEY's daughters.

Hugh HENSHALL, born in 1734 in Wolstanton, Staffordshire, was also the brother-in-law of James BRINDLEY, as James had married Hugh's sister Anne HENSHALL. Hugh's other sister Jane married William CLOWES, brother of yet another prominent canal engineer, Josiah CLOWES, to be described later.

Anne HENSHALL was a remarkable woman. After her husband James BRINDLEY died, she married Robert WILLIAMSON, who was a partner (with William CLOWES and Hugh HENSHALL) of the pottery company Henshall & Co. After Robert also died, in 1799, Anne continued to run the company.

Canal Mania

The frantic phase of canal building near the end of the eighteenth century was known as Canal Mania. It began when the third Duke of Bridgewater, Francis EGERTON, commissioned James BRINDLEY to build the Bridgewater Canal to

transport coal from his mines in Worsley to Manchester. Then, in the Staffordshire Potteries, Josiah WEDGWOOD commissioned BRINDLEY to build the Grand Trunk Canal to carry pottery from his factory in Etruria to the River Mersey. This canal was also promoted by Lord GOWER (the Duke of Bridgewater's brother-in-law, Granville LEVESON-GOWER).

On 26 July 1766, Josiah WEDGWOOD, James BRINDLEY, Hugh HENSHALL, Josiah CLOWES, and others took part in a ceremony near Brownhills cutting the first sod of the new Grand Trunk Canal, later known as the Trent and Mersey Canal.

On 27 October 1768, Edward SALMON (of Hassall) attended a meeting in Newcastle-under-Lyme with Lord GOWER, Josiah WEDGWOOD, John GILBERT (the Duke of Bridgewater's agent) and other proprietors of the Trent and Mersey Navigation *to consider Proposals for making a Navigable Cut from the City of Chester to join this Navigation*. Hassall Green Bottom Locks on the Trent and Mersey, which can be glimpsed from the M6 southbound carriageway near Sandbach, are only half a mile from Hassall Hall.

Hugh HENSHALL completed some of the works started by James BRINDLEY, including the connection of the Bridgewater Canal to the Trent and Mersey Canal. The Bridgewater Canal was completed by HENSHALL in 1776, four years after BRINDLEY had died. Perhaps the Brindley Centre in Runcorn should have been dedicated to Hugh HENSHALL.

Josiah CLOWES was another lesser-known canal engineer, from Norton-le-Moors, Staffordshire. When he married Elizabeth BAGNALL in 1762, Hugh HENSHALL was one of the witnesses (Hugh's sister Jane was married to Josiah's brother William.) Sadly, Elizabeth died within eight weeks of the marriage. Josiah threw himself into his work; he was a prolific tunnel engineer, and worked on the Harecastle, Sapperton, and Dudley canal tunnels. He invented the *driving frame*, a wooden framework which supported the tunnel as the excavation progressed. The same technique is still used in modern tunnels, from the Channel Tunnel to Crossrail.

Josiah moved to Middlewich, and married his second wife, Margaret LOWNDES, on 19 May 1777 at Astbury. Their marriage bond was signed and sealed by none other than Edward SALMON of Hassall, the husband of Anne LOWNDES, so presumably Margaret was related to Anne in some way, and Edward was acting as Margaret's guardian.

In his will, Josiah CLOWES left legacies for his sister Sarah, who had married Joseph LOWNDES in Wolstanton, Staffordshire; and to several nieces and

nephews, including Sarah's son Sampson LOWNDES. However, there appear to be no close connections between the LOWNDES families of Staffordshire and those of Cheshire.

In 1793, Josiah CLOWES had been appointed chief engineer of the Shrewsbury Canal, and Thomas TELFORD became his assistant. When CLOWES died in 1794, TELFORD took over from him. So Josiah CLOWES became the link between the two giants of canal engineering, James BRINDLEY and Thomas TELFORD.

TELFORD is probably most famous for constructing the Pontcysyllte aqueduct over the River Dee, and the Menai Suspension Bridge at Anglesey. He also designed a chain-link suspension bridge to cross the Mersey at Runcorn, although it was never built.

The canal era brought together an amazingly diverse group of people, from the aristocracy (BRIDGEWATER and GOWER) to industrialists (WEDGWOOD and SALMON) to the engineers (BRINDLEY and TELFORD) to the humble navvies who performed the manual work of building.

References

There are citations and references for all the people in this article on wikitree.com. You can read about the connections between BRINDLEY, HENSHALL, and CLOWES in the book *The Canal Pioneers: James Brindley's School of Engineers*, by Christopher Lewis.

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Winsford News (5)

from the Northwich Guardian, 14 October 1876

TEA MEETING AND LECTURE AT WINSFORD – When the Wesleyans in Winsford put their shoulders to the wheel they do it in real good earnest. They are having new vestries to their church in Winsford, and of course they want money to build them with. What better than special sermons, a tea meeting, and a first-rate lecture? They have had all, and the result is a large addition to their funds.... On Wednesday afternoon there was a grand tea meeting, in the New Town Hall, and an excellent one it was, too. Everybody was friendly and sociable, and appeared to enjoy themselves.... The following gave tables, most of the parties named presiding: – Mrs Cooke, Mrs Twiss, Mrs Hoole, Mrs Peter Burrows, Mrs Wm Burrows, Mrs William Latham, Mrs Massey, Mrs Richard Brooks, Mrs Wolf, Mrs R Chesters, Mrs Jno Royle, Mrs J Newall, Mrs Jas Hatton, Mrs Whittick, and Mrs Caldwell.

Three Seminars that Left us Thinking...

by *The Seminar Team*

One of the great benefits of Family History Society of Cheshire membership is the fantastic programme of online seminars. Covering everything from methodology and social history to practical research techniques, they offer members the opportunity to learn from some of the country's leading genealogists and historians, all from the comfort of home.

Looking back over the last few months, choosing just three favourites has been almost impossible. Each has offered something different, challenging the way we think about our own research and, perhaps most importantly, sending us back to our family tree – hopefully inspired to try something new. Here are three seminars that particularly stood out.

Walking with your Ancestors with Dr Sophie Kay

In June we welcomed Dr Sophie Kay for a thought-provoking workshop, *Walking with your Ancestors: Mapping Strategies for Genealogists*. Jointly hosted with Shropshire Family History Society, the session attracted members keen to discover how maps can be much more than just illustrations in our research.

Many of us use maps to locate an ancestral village or identify a parish boundary, but Sophie demonstrated that they can also become powerful analytical tools, helping us to ask better questions and uncover new avenues of research. Rather than treating maps as a final step to illustrate our findings, she encouraged us to make them part of the research process itself.

The workshop introduced three practical techniques that can be applied to almost any family history project.

The first, *Ancestral Walks*, invited us to experience the landscape as our ancestors might have done. By following the routes between home, workplace, church, school or market, researchers gain a better appreciation of the distances travelled, the physical challenges faced and the communities in which their ancestors lived. Walking the route, either in person or virtually using modern mapping tools alongside historic maps, often reveals details that are easily overlooked in written records.

The second technique, the *Concentric Survey*, encouraged researchers to widen their field of view. Rather than concentrating solely on one address or parish, Sophie demonstrated how examining the surrounding area in ever-increasing circles can reveal schools, employers, chapels, workhouses, transport links, industries and neighbouring families. This broader geographical context frequently explains decisions made by our ancestors and helps place them firmly within their local community.

Perhaps the most intriguing method was the *Outlier Method*. Instead of concentrating on where an ancestor spent most of their life, Sophie encouraged us to investigate those seemingly unusual locations that appear unexpectedly within a timeline. An isolated census entry, an unexpected birthplace, an unfamiliar workplace or a distant marriage might initially appear to be an anomaly, but these 'outliers' can often prove to be the key that unlocks an entire family story. By asking why someone appeared in a particular place at a particular time, researchers can uncover migration patterns, employment opportunities, family connections or significant life events that might otherwise remain hidden.

Throughout the presentation Sophie shared numerous examples illustrating how these approaches had transformed seemingly ordinary research into rich family narratives. Her enthusiasm for historic mapping was infectious, and she introduced a wide variety of online and printed map resources that members can explore in their own research. As always, she emphasised that no single record should ever stand alone; maps are another valuable source that help us test ideas, challenge assumptions and build stronger evidence.

The presentation was informative throughout, combining practical advice with fascinating case studies and plenty of opportunities for members to reflect on their own research challenges. A lively question-and-answer session followed, demonstrating just how many ideas had been sparked during the morning.

Whether researching a rural labourer, an urban artisan or a travelling family, the techniques demonstrated offered fresh ways of looking at familiar records. Many attendees will undoubtedly find themselves opening a historic map before their next census return, viewing it not simply as a way of locating an ancestor, but as a tool for understanding the world in which they lived. Those who attended will almost certainly never look at a map in quite the same way again.

Bringing it up to date: Research in the 20th Century with Dave Annal

Researching our more recent ancestors might sound as though it should be easier than tracing those who lived centuries ago, but as Dave Annal demonstrated in

his fascinating talk, the twentieth century presents family historians with its own unique set of challenges and opportunities.

Dave began by reminding us that while many nineteenth-century records are now readily available online, the twentieth century often requires a different research strategy. Privacy legislation, the closure periods applied to many records and the sheer volume of surviving documentation mean that researchers need to think more creatively when investigating the lives of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

The seminar explored the wide range of sources available for twentieth-century research and, more importantly, how they can be combined to build a fuller picture of an ancestor's life. Civil registration indexes, the 1921 Census, the 1939 Register, electoral registers, probate records, newspapers, military records and local archives all featured as valuable resources, each adding another piece to the puzzle. Dave encouraged us to think beyond simply recording births, marriages and deaths, and instead to reconstruct the lives between those milestones.

One recurring theme throughout the presentation was the importance of understanding why records were created in the first place. Rather than accepting every document at face value, Dave encouraged researchers to consider who supplied the information, what purpose the record served and how reliable the details might be. This critical approach to evidence is something that experienced family historians will recognise as being just as important in twentieth-century research as it is in earlier periods.

Particular emphasis was placed on using multiple sources to corroborate evidence. Electoral registers can help bridge the gaps between censuses, newspapers often provide colour and context that official records cannot, while probate calendars and local directories can reveal changing occupations, addresses and family relationships. Individually these records may provide only small snippets of information, but together they can create a far richer understanding of an ancestor's story.

Dave also highlighted the increasing importance of local resources. County archives, local studies libraries, family history societies and specialist collections continue to hold material that has never been digitised. While online research has transformed genealogy over recent decades, the seminar served as a timely reminder that not everything can be found from behind a computer screen.

As always with Dave's presentations, practical advice was accompanied by real-life examples drawn from his extensive experience as a professional genealogist.

These illustrated not only how individual records could solve specific problems but also how persistence, careful analysis and an understanding of the available sources often lead to breakthroughs where researchers had previously reached a dead end.

The session concluded with an enthusiastic question-and-answer session, during which members discussed some of their own twentieth-century research challenges. From interpreting the 1939 Register to locating elusive electoral records and making the best use of newspaper collections, there was plenty of practical advice for everyone, whatever stage they had reached in their family history journey.

This was an excellent seminar that challenged the assumption that recent family history is necessarily straightforward. Instead, it demonstrated that twentieth-century research requires careful planning, critical thinking and a willingness to explore a wide variety of sources. For anyone looking to move beyond names and dates and tell the stories of the generations who lived within living memory, the techniques and ideas shared during the seminar provided an invaluable toolkit. Members left with plenty of new ideas to apply to their own research and the reassuring reminder that, even in the twentieth century, there are always more stories waiting to be discovered.

British First World War Widows: The Forgotten Legion with Andrea Hetherington

Earlier in the year historian and author Andrea Hetherington gave a compelling presentation exploring the experiences of Britain's First World War widows. While much has been written about the soldiers who served during the Great War, Andrea reminded us that behind every casualty was a family whose lives were changed forever. Her talk shone a light on the women who were left to rebuild their lives after losing husbands in the conflict, revealing a story that has too often remained in the shadows.

Andrea began by placing the scale of the tragedy into context. More than 750,000 British servicemen died during the war, and by 1921 there were an estimated 230,000 war widows across Britain. These women represented what Andrea described as a *forgotten legion*, a generation whose grief was shared by many, but whose experiences have often received far less attention than those of the men they lost.

Andrea explored not only the emotional impact of bereavement but also the practical realities that widows faced. Losing a husband frequently meant losing

the family's principal wage earner, leaving women to navigate an unfamiliar system of pensions, official paperwork and financial uncertainty whilst raising children and trying to establish a new future. Andrea demonstrated how the bureaucracy surrounding pensions could be confusing, slow and, in many cases, deeply frustrating. Eligibility depended upon a number of factors, including the circumstances of a husband's death, and widows were expected to prove their entitlement and, remarkably, their respectability before assistance was granted.

One of the most striking aspects of the presentation was the comparison between the treatment of British widows and those in other parts of the Empire. Pension rates varied considerably, with British widows often receiving significantly less financial support than their counterparts overseas. Charitable organisations therefore played an essential role in helping many families survive during the difficult years that followed the war.

Throughout the talk, Andrea used individual case studies to illustrate the wider story. These personal examples transformed statistics into real lives, allowing us to appreciate the challenges faced by women suddenly responsible for supporting families alone. Their stories revealed remarkable resilience but also highlighted the social attitudes of the period, when widows were frequently judged according to moral expectations that would seem extraordinary today. Remarriage, employment and even personal relationships could affect financial security in ways that modern audiences often find surprising.

For family historians, the seminar offered valuable research guidance alongside its social history. Andrea highlighted the wide range of records that can help reconstruct the lives of war widows, including pension records, local newspapers, probate records, military documentation and charitable organisation archives. By following the widow's story after her husband's death, researchers often uncover an entirely new chapter in a family's history, one that is easily overlooked if research ends with a military casualty.

The presentation also prompted us to think differently about remembrance. While memorials and rolls of honour commemorate those who served and died, Andrea encouraged us to remember the families who carried the consequences of war for decades afterwards. The experiences of widows forms an important part of Britain's post-war story and deserves a place within our own family histories.

The talk concluded with a wide-ranging discussion, as members explored both the historical context and the practical challenges of tracing widows through surviving records. Andrea's combination of meticulous research, powerful

storytelling and practical advice made for a memorable presentation, reminding us that family history is not simply about those who fought, but also about those who were left behind to carry on.

Why the Seminars matter

Although these three seminars covered very different subjects, they shared a common message. Good family history is about understanding lives, not simply collecting records. Whether we're following an ancestor's footsteps across a map, piecing together the story of a twentieth-century family or uncovering the life of a First World War widow, the aim is always to add context, ask better questions and tell richer stories.

The hallmark of a really good seminar is that it sends attendees away with something new to think about. Sometimes that may be a previously unknown record set, sometimes a fresh way of interpreting familiar sources, and sometimes simply a different question to ask. The best presentations don't just provide answers, they inspire new avenues of research.

FHSC's seminar programme continues to do exactly that. Whether you're taking your first steps in family history or have spent decades researching your ancestors, there is always something new to learn from speakers who are experts in their field and generous in sharing their knowledge.

If you have yet to join one of our online seminars, why not give one a try? You don't need to travel, you can join from the comfort of your favourite chair with a mug of tea or even your dinner! You can enjoy engaging presentations, discover new research techniques and perhaps find the clue that helps solve your next family history puzzle. These three seminars demonstrate just how inspiring, and rewarding, an afternoon with FHSC can be.

Booking a place couldn't be easier. Registration for each seminar opens once the monthly seminar invitation email, sent on the first of every month, has landed in members' inboxes, containing full details and the booking link. Members can then register free of charge while non-members are also very welcome to join us for a small fee. Zoom joining links are emailed on the day before the seminar to everyone who has registered, so you'll have everything you need in good time. Full details of forthcoming seminars, together with speaker information, are always available on the website, so why not take a look and see what catches your interest? One final tip: do take a moment to read the monthly invitation email right through; it contains everything you need to know, from booking details to when your Zoom link will arrive.

A Wedding Photograph and a Letter

by Karen Thompson
Membership no. 11056

I love old photographs. My aunt has my Nana and Grandad's family album, and in it I found a beautiful wedding photograph in which my Grandad is the best man. As it is glued in, there is no way to see if anything is written on the back and, apart from Grandad (centre back), I don't recognise anyone in it. I asked all my older relatives about it, but nobody could shed any light on the bride and groom.

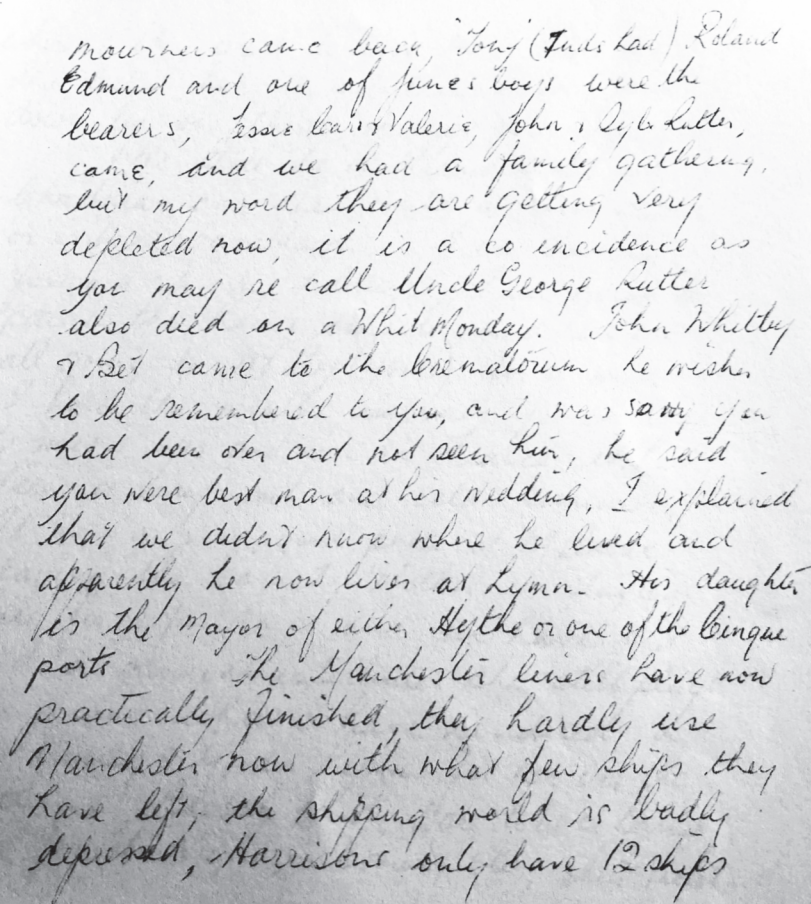


My maternal grandfather, James Frederick EDWARDS, was born in Runcorn, Cheshire, England, in 1907 and moved to Western Australia in 1966, arriving on Christmas Day with his wife, Cissie, and their two youngest daughters. I had arrived in Australia a few months earlier, as a toddler, with my parents and brother. There were seven children in the EDWARDS family, and most of them migrated with their families for a new life here in the sunshine.

Grandad died in 1987 and Nana died a couple of years later. I thought it was unlikely that I would ever discover the names and the story of those in the photograph.

Fast forward a few years, and I was visiting my uncle, who now lives in South Australia. As the eldest child, he had inherited all of Grandad's paperwork when he passed away and had boxed everything up and taken it interstate with him; and when I say everything, I mean everything! It seems that Grandad hadn't thrown anything away, and neither had my uncle.

With an avid interest in family history, I was delighted to look through the documents my uncle kept bringing out to show me—photographs, certificates, newspaper cuttings, title deeds, invoices, budgets, letters and more.



mourners came back, Tony (Tudor) Roland
Edmund and one of James boys were the
bearers, Isaac and Valerie, John, & George Rutter,
came, and we had a family gathering,
but my word they are getting very
depleted now, it is a coincidence as
you may recall Uncle George Rutter
also died on a Whit Monday. John Whitley
& Bet came to the crematorium he wishes
to be remembered to you, and was sorry you
had been over and not seen him, he said
you were best man at his wedding, I explained
that we didn't know where he lived and
apparently, he now lives at Lyman. His daughter
is the Mayor of either Hefthor or one of the Cinque
ports. The Manchester liners have now
practically finished, they hardly use
Manchester now with what few ships they
have left, the shipping world is badly
depressed, Harrisons only have 12 ships

As I was reading through one letter sent to Grandad by his cousin, Gordon BURROWS (1924–2012), around 1980, I couldn't believe my eyes. Gordon had written about attending the funeral of a friend or relative and said:

John Whitby and Bet came to the crematorium. He wishes to be remembered to you, and was sorry you had been over and not seen him. He said you were best man at their wedding. I explained that we didn't know where he lived and apparently he now lives in Lymm. His daughter is the Mayor of either Hythe or one of the Cinque Ports.

Note: the Cinque Ports are a historic confederation of coastal towns in Kent and Sussex.

Could this be the clue I had been looking for? I now had a name to investigate—well, two names: John and Bet WHITBY.

I opened my Ancestry account and began searching for a John WHITBY who most likely lived in Runcorn and was a similar age to my Grandad – and I found him!

John Forbes WHITBY was born in Runcorn in 1906, and he married Elizabeth CLARE on 8 June 1932 in Runcorn. He appeared on a family tree created by his daughter. In the gallery on his profile, I was staring at the same wedding photograph that I had wondered about years earlier. The comments stated that the best man and one of the witnesses was James Frederick EDWARDS. Bingo!

I messaged the owner of the tree, explaining how excited I was to find her tree and solve a long-standing mystery. As many amateur genealogists know, messages often disappear into black holes, and you wait for replies that never arrive. Thankfully, in this case, I did receive a reply. Jo, the daughter, was in her eighties. She wrote:

My Dad, John Whitby, was at sea with Manchester Liners at the time of the wedding. In 1937 he came ashore and worked for them as a superintendent at Salford Docks. My grandfather, Joseph Whitby, lived at 43 Irwell Lane and was a tugboat captain. My Mum is Bet, and her Mum (my grandmother) had the corner shop at 5 Ellesmere Street. My Mum and Dad moved to Stretford when Dad came ashore, and that is where I was born. I remember Jim and his wife very well. Sadly, I can't remember your aunties and uncle (although I know of them), but I know my Dad and Jim went to the football together, and I remember them playing cards during the blackout in the war. Thank you for bringing back such wonderful memories. Jo.

It was so exciting not only to solve this mystery, but also to correspond with someone who knew my grandparents and could provide fascinating snippets to help paint a picture of my Grandad's early life.

Sadly, Jo passed away in October last year. Josephine Clare KIRKHAM MBE was the Mayor of Rye from 1979 to 1982 (when my Grandad received the letter from his cousin).

I found a newspaper article with a detailed obituary in which Jo was described as *the first lady of Rye* (Rye News, 23 October 2025). She was still a serving councillor at the time of her death at the age of 86. The article notes that she had served on Rye Town Council for 54 years.

Reading about all that Jo accomplished in her life, I really wished that I had had the opportunity to meet her. As well as being such a dedicated member of the local council, she was a JP, a teacher, an academic, an avid historian, a volunteer for numerous causes, a singer, a wife, a mother and a grandmother. She certainly sounds like an incredible woman.

I am very grateful that Jo had a public tree on Ancestry and was willing to share information about her family and its links to mine.

Now... on to the next mystery that needs solving.

Happy researching, everyone!

Winsford News (6)

from the Northwich Guardian, 16 September 1876

REJOICINGS AT HIGHFIELD, WINSFORD – On Saturday last the return of **Mr and Mrs W H Verdin** from their wedding tour was celebrated by a grand treat given to the numerous body of work-people employed by the firm of Verdin and Sons, at their various salt works and other enterprises carried on by the firm at Northwich, Marston, Newbridge, Winsford, &c. The scene of this gathering was Highfield, near Winsford, the pleasant residence of **Mr W H Verdin**, on the ground of which a number of spacious tents, most of which belonged to **Mr J G Barton**, Winsford, were erected... and arrangements were made for the carrying out of an extensive programme of athletic sports. About noon two steamers sailed from the Town-bridge, Northwich, crowded with the workmen and female friends from Northwich and Marston, accompanied by the Marston and Wincham bands. On arriving at Winsford a monster procession was formed, headed by the Weaver brass band... The procession extended a mile in length.... The visitors had ample opportunity of enjoying themselves... Punch and Judy exerted themselves for general amusement, Aunt Sally was well patronised; for others a shooting gallery was in readiness, and there was also a photographic tent, showing some excellent specimens of that popular art....

My Grandpa, George Williamson

*by the late Chester Guttridge
Former membership no. 9193*

In the evening of Wednesday 14 December 1853, a baby boy was born to Rebecca WILLIAMSON, née DAVIES, in an upstairs bedroom at the *White Swan* in Milton Street, Chester. He was her fifth child in a family that, two years later, would be six. His older brother Charles, Rebecca's first born, was eighteen years old and his three sisters, Elizabeth, Ann and Martha, fifteen, ten and six. Elizabeth was probably downstairs helping her father serve ale and perhaps bread and cheese or pies to customers in the bar. The baby's father, George WILLIAMSON, brewer, licensed tenant publican and carter, wrote in his diary *George was born at 10 oclock [sic] at night* - George didn't do apostrophes, commas or full stops. I wonder if there was a fire in the bedroom grate and whether an oil lamp, or perhaps only candles - or even rush wicks soaked in mutton fat - lit the room.

Seventy years and six months later, my arrival was to make that baby a grandfather and me his first grandchild. Three years later I saw him on his death bed. He raised his head, propped it on his right arm and spoke to me through his grey bearded face. I can 'see' him now as I type this. It's my only memory of him. My mother was with me.

All George's family surely mucked in at the *White Swan* - later renamed the *White Lion* - helping with brewing, cooking, running the bar, carting, milking the cow, feeding and mucking out the animals: horses, cows, pigs and poultry. Young Charles probably did most of the carting, fetching hay and turnips for the animals and carting for others for cash. George gave him two shillings a week on Saturdays and bought clothes and footwear for him from time to time.

But something happened in the weeks following baby George's birth. Whatever it was, it resulted in the family leaving Milton Street and moving to Sandy Lane, Bickerton/Bulkeley, some ten miles south of Chester on the Nantwich to Wrexham Road (now the A534) where George senior had spent his young manhood. What it was, I don't know but could it have been in connection with loss of teeth?

My Aunt Gerty told me that one of our ancestors lost some teeth when a wheel ran over his mouth in a Chester street, he having fallen from his trap. She didn't

know which ancestor, but only George and his father, Charles, lived in Chester, although other ancestors may have visited the city from time to time. I have those teeth: six incisors, two premolars and two molars, all complete with roots. The damage to his face and mouth must have been appalling, the pain excruciating – but was it enough to cause the move? Perhaps the wound became infected, adding to his disability and precipitating the move.

In the months following, son Charles was busy carting in the Bickerton area, principally manure for others, an occupation that hardly suggests roaring prosperity or a purposeful move. George, however, had money enough in his pocket for a little dealing in horses, although not always profitably. A good horse could be worth £30 – a year's wages for a steady labourer. Elizabeth stayed in Chester, perhaps to look after Charles senior, her widowed grandfather. George's connection with the *White Swan/Lion* was to be renewed when, some ten years later, he bought it and ran it with a succession of tenants – some good, some bad – but that is another story.

Baby George was christened at St John the Baptist Church in Chester on 12 February 1854, an unusually long time after his birth, the occasion probably having awaited an opportunity for the family to return to Chester, even if only for the day.

By a stroke of good fortune, the tenancy of the *Red Lion*, a coaching inn on the Nantwich to Wrexham road at Bickerton, became vacant and George, with his experience of brewing and managing a public house, was just the man to take it on. An agreement dated 1 January 1855 between John JOHNSON of Malpas, gentleman, and George WILLIAMSON, publican, of Bickerton, granted George the tenancy of the *Red Lion*, Bickerton, together with a malt house and about eleven acres of land for sixty two pounds of British money per annum. There were restrictions about the use of the land (to conserve its fertility) and an obligation placed on George to keep the said messuage open as an inn for the sale of spirituous liquors and conduct the same in a lawful manner. It was there that my grandfather spent six years of his early childhood.

George paid his rent half yearly in arrears, JOHNSON signing the receipt in the rent book across a penny stamp depicting young Queen Victoria. George seemingly paid the property taxes, which varied from year to year; but he reclaimed their cost from JOHNSON by deduction from the rent.

George and the family left the *Red Lion* on or soon after 1 January 1861; I don't know why. Perhaps he had been asked to leave, or he may have had other plans that fell through. He surely didn't plan for the fifteen-month hiatus that

followed. Son Charles, now married to Catherine, née LOWNDS, had been living at Worthenbury, but returned to occupy the *Red Lion* with his wife and maid, Ann BURKIL. The continuing family involvement with the Bickerton inn hardly suggests an acrimonious parting. In the 1861 census, Charles is described as publican and farmer, and Catherine as landlady at the *Red Lion* while George VERNON was licensee. Later VERNON bought ale for the *Red Lion* from George for several years until 1877. George had known members of the VERNON family in Milton Street.

In 2017, my son John and I spent a night in the *Red Lion* (now called the *Bickerton Poacher*), treading the old boards and seeing the well that my grandfather knew nearly one hundred and sixty years ago.

The 1861 census finds George, Rebecca and the remnants of their family back in Milton Street, although not at the *White Lion*. It was to be a sixteen-month interregnum in George's career as a publican and brewer, again surely unplanned, although he still brewed small quantities of ale for sale at the door of his private dwelling. In April or May 1862 the family moved to the *Nag's Head*, Bridge Trafford, paying John PEARCE, the previous licensee, £100 for goodwill. George was fifty-one years old, Rebecca forty-eight, Martha was fifteen and a useful pair of hands, George junior eight and attending Plemstall Church School and John six. Elizabeth and Ann were married.

Meanwhile Charles senior retired from his city farming occupation in 1864. He sold his furniture, brewing equipment, farm implements, carts, cows and horses, etc. at auction and went to live with George and Rebecca at the *Nag's Head* until he died three years later.

George senior, now brewing at the *Nag's Head*, supplied the inn itself, other public houses, farmers and private individuals. Two surviving sales ledgers record ale sales of father and son from 1870 to 1911, when George junior, my grandfather, retired*.

During the early years of the 1870s George senior, as he aged, gradually transferred his brewing operation to his son and the bar business at the *Nag's Head* to his daughter, Martha, who was seemingly a very capable young woman. The old man died in February 1876, leaving a number of properties to his children and life provision for Rebecca.

George junior, then 23 years old, took over the *Nag's Head* tenancy and licences to brew and sell ale and spirits, while Martha ran the bar as a separate business, buying her ale from George. Cash actually changed hands for a time. During the

following five years the brewing business sold ale to the average annual value of £565, of which nearly 20% was bought by Martha. George married Eliza Jane, youngest daughter of nearby farmer Thomas WRIGHT on 11 April 1882 in Plemstall Church. Shortly after, the newlyweds moved to The Brewery, Overwood Lane, Mollington, where George continued brewing, supplying most of his previous customers. Martha's husband, William DARLINGTON, took over the *Nag's Head* licenses but lasted only three years in spite of having an experienced wife with him. I fear he drank the profits.

Eliza Jane gave birth to a baby girl, Emeline Gertrude, my aunt Gerty, on 29 December in the year of her wedding, a feat which had me counting the months. Four more girls, Ada, Lucy, Elsie and my mother, Hilda, followed at varying intervals. Sadly Lucy died when she was only three years old and Ada developed benign mental problems that enabled her to do only simple jobs in the home. She died of TB in July 1940, having spent a winter in bed by a window from which the glass had been removed to provide "fresh air" – allowing snow to settle on her bed on one bitter day. Medical madness!

George rented the brewery at Mollington and an adjoining eleven acre field in Overwood Lane from the FIENDEN family for £50 per year, later reduced. He was taking a risk, as the previous tenant, Edwin PARKES, was made bankrupt and industrial scale brewers were well-established. In the event, George's business had its good and not so good years, although turnover never reached the levels of the last five years at the *Nag's Head*. The nadir came in 1895 when turnover reached only £176 in that and the following year. Without a private rental income, I doubt if the business would have survived. George and his father had saved during prosperous years, allowing them to buy properties, which together with some inherited properties helped the family through lean years. As with modern brewery companies, most of George's ale sales went to tied houses, including the *White Swan/Lion* in Milton Street. His principal inn customer was the *Queen's Head* at Sarn, which may have come into family ownership through his mother, Rebecca, who was born in Sarn. Over the thirty-five year period, sales to pubs accounted for nearly 68% of turnover. I have no idea how much profit he derived from brewing, but there is little doubt that investment income was of major importance to the family in some years.

When the FIEDENS sold their Mollington estates at auction in 1907, George bought the brewery and adjoining field, presumably to avoid risking the loss of his annual tenancy. He paid £1210 plus £23 8s expenses overall. He retired four years later. Foremost among his reasons for quitting may have been Edwin BEBBINGTON, who took up the tenancy of the *Queen's Head* at Sarn late in 1908.

Besides soon being in trouble with the police for out-of-hours drinking, he was a reluctant payer. By 1911 he was gone, leaving a debt of £11. 7s. for rent and £50. 8s. for ale which George did not pursue at law, having previously found that debts for ale were difficult to recover. George had had difficult tenants before, particularly at the Milton Street pub, but never a debt so large. The *Queen's Head* was sold at auction in Malpas for £675 to Messrs SOAMES, Wrexham, brewers, who subsequently extended it, more than doubling its size. Nearby fields totalling three acres sold for £280, grazing for horses being highly valued.

Mollington brewery, house and field fetched £1250 at auction on 11 May 1912, which left George with a small loss after expenses. Another property he owned, Pool House at Rhydygoleu, raised £450. Altogether he was able to amass sufficient capital to keep the family in reasonable comfort on the income. They moved in 1912 to a pleasant semi-detached house** on Dee Banks, with a distant view of the city and cathedral from an upstairs window. I treasure memories of many stays at Dee Banks as a child, taking a candle up to bed in what had once been a maid's bedroom, later my mother's room. I saw the embers of late Victorian England in that gas-lit house.

*See *Brewery History*, 170, 55-66, 2017.

** See *Cheshire Ancestor*, 47(2), 45-50, December 2016.

Ed.: Chester Guttridge was a great supporter of the CHESHIRE ANCESTOR, having at least one article published in almost every issue from March 2016 until June 2022, six months after his death at the age of 97. This last article was set aside because it was very similar to others that were printed during that period, but I feel that sufficient time has now elapsed so it will not provoke feelings of déjà vu when read. Chester was a real character with a quirky and mischievous sense of humour. I always looked forward to hearing from him and still miss his cheery emails.

Winsford News (7)

from the Northwich Guardian, 18 Nov 1876

OVERCROWDING – The Surveyor reported that he had served Christopher Foss with a notice requiring him to abate the overcrowding of the house he occupies at Grange Cottage, Waterside, belonging to Mr Otto Pohl. There were no less than 20 persons dwelling in the house, 16 of whom slept in one small room. There were only two bedrooms to the house, the state of which might be imagined.

The First Name in the Register

by Margaret Roberts
FHSC Chair

The history of the Cheshire County Training College, Crewe [CCTCC] and the achievements of its students and academics over the years is a story that weaves together those small, discrete, individual life threads as they are embroidered into the historical tapestry of teacher training in the UK, which in Cheshire formally began in 1908. This was a pivotal time for young people in this country, especially for women who were struggling for parity in terms of both suffrage and educational opportunities.

The women who enrolled in the first two cohorts of students at CCTCC in 1908 and 1909 could be viewed as the academic daughters of those who had previously fought for further education for girls. Women like Frances Mary Buss and Dorothea Beale who established the North London Collegiate School for Girls and Cheltenham Ladies College respectively, as well as those who advocated for women's access to higher education, such as Emily Davies who founded Girton College, Cambridge.¹

CCTCC was founded as a direct result of the 1902 Education Act, which basically created the county Local Education Authority [LEAs] system in the UK and put these LEAs in charge of providing and controlling all aspects of their own education delivery – everything from building and maintaining schools and colleges, to the training of teachers.²

It is against this backdrop of exciting change and new opportunities for women across the country that Helen BLANKLEY became the very first female recorded in the inaugural student register of 1908.³ Helen was born on 20th October 1890 in Baguley, now part of Manchester but historically in Cheshire. She was baptised at the local parish church on 18th November, when her father George was noted as being a salesman.⁴ George had married Annie Maria KILVERT in 1884⁵ and the couple had seven children altogether, of which Helen was the middle child.

In 1891, when Helen was just five months old, the couple are living with Annie's widowed father, George KILVERT, a retired pork butcher. The family lived in Grosvenor Square, Altrincham [Ashton upon Mersey]⁶, which is where Helen would spend all her unmarried life. Ten years later, still at the same address,

George BLANKLEY is now head of the house following the death of his father-in-law and recorded as an ironmonger and draper; Helen is noted as being ten years old.⁷

In 1904 Helen was among those girls who passed the Class 1a examination for those who wished to become what was known as pupil teachers,⁸ following a course at secondary school. Helen moved to Sale High School, from where she sat and passed the Preliminary Certificate in 1908 and was able therefore to enrol at the Training College in September 1908.⁹

The course at CCTCC was over two years, the stated aim being to prepare students for actual schoolwork. The curriculum covered the Theory of Teaching, which included Discipline and Organisation, Child Study, the History of Public Education, General Methods, and Methods of Teaching Individual Subjects. The myriad of other subjects the students were expected to master included Handiwork, Physical Exercise, Music, Hygiene, Drawing, English, History, Geography, Maths, Field Work, Rural Science, and Scripture. In their second year, students were sent out to local schools for teaching practice.¹⁰ The female students were expected to dress smartly, in long-sleeved, high-necked blouses and ankle length skirts, with their hair *upswept* and securely fastened.



Image reproduced courtesy of Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe Research Centre

During her time at CCTCC, there is evidence that Helen played for the college hockey team; she is named in this image of the team from 1908 – second from the left in the middle row. Helen passed what was referred to as the Final Exam for the Training College in 1910¹¹ and in the 1911 census she was living with her parents in the family residence, Russell House, Grosvenor Square, the return noting that she was a schoolteacher at Northenden Council Schools.¹²

Helen married fellow student Henry DICKENSON on 31st December 1912 in the Wesleyan Chapel, Sale. On the marriage certificate Helen has no occupation noted – in fact, that box is struck through with a line – while Henry is recorded as a School Master.¹³ The report in the local press states that the wedding had attracted some considerable interest, the bride being a member of the teaching staff of the Northenden Council Schools and she was also a teacher at Sale Wesley Sunday Schools,¹⁴ which begs the question why her occupation wasn't noted on the certificate!

At the time that Helen graduated from CCTCC, in line with the strict conventions of the day, when a woman married she had to give up her teaching career. Whether this situation influenced the couple's decision to move to South Africa is perhaps one that at this distance in history will never be known, but what is known is that Henry and Helen moved to Cape Colony sometime after their marriage and before the birth of their first son Kenneth on 5th August 1918.¹⁵ Keith, their other child, was born on 23rd August 1924 in Grahamstown, Aliwal North.¹⁶ Helen seemed to carry on in her chosen profession for some time, as it was reported in the CCTCC 21st anniversary booklet, published in 1929, that she was teaching at the High School in Aliwal North, South Africa.¹⁷

Sometime prior to 1944 Henry gained a position as the Headmaster of the College School in East London, Cape Province and the couple relocated there from Aliwal North. Their eldest son Kenneth, who was a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, was reported missing on 24th September 1942 during an air raid over Germany. His death certificate, dated 28th August 1944, gives his parents address as School House, College Street, East London; his father is recorded as a headmaster and there is no occupation listed for Helen.¹⁸

Unfortunately, Henry dies on 18th August 1949; this was reported in the local newspaper back in the UK.¹⁹ In the 1966 edition of *The Torch*, the magazine produced on an annual basis by the Old Students Association [OSA] there is a note that Helen BLANKLEY [Mrs DICKENSON] has left East London, South Africa, and is at present living with her married son at Port Elizabeth. She tells the editor that she missed the British theatre but makes up for it by playing bridge.²⁰

I cannot locate a death for Helen and there is no obituary in the OSA magazine as was often the case, but the run of the magazine finishes in 1973/4, so perhaps she died after that date.

In many ways Helen and her cohort all dreamed of having an education, a career, and some degree of financial independence. Helen was also a staunch defender of women's suffrage, but she left the UK shores before all women gained the vote under the Representation of the People Act 1928. Fortunately, her dreams would be fulfilled – she was enfranchised in her new homeland of South Africa after the passing of the Women's Enfranchisement Act 1920, which gave white women the vote on the same basis as white men. While some of her peers remained independent and single, others went on to marry and have children, therefore not being permitted to remain in the profession for which they had trained so hard.²¹

The duty of a married woman is primarily to look after her domestic concerns and it is impossible for her to do so and to effectively and satisfactorily act as a teacher at the same time, a statement by a senior British judge in 1925, reflected the harsh reality faced by thousands of women teachers in the 19th and early 20th centuries.²² It was not until 1944 and R A Butler's landmark act that this law was repealed; of course, far too late for those women who had been dissuaded from marrying and now faced poverty in old age with no family to support them.²³ In moving to South Africa, Helen was luckier than some and was able to combine marriage and teaching in a way that was not possible for those friends she left behind.

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⁴ Manchester, England, Church of England births and baptisms 1813–1915. Accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁵ GRO Marriage indexes: 1884, December Quarter, Northwich Dist, Vol 8a, Page 341

⁶ 1891 England Census, RG12, Altrincham, Cheshire, Folio 118

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For a good history of pupil teachers see https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/sites/history-in-education/files/attachments/teacher_training_-_up_to_the_1960s.doc

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Winsford News (8)

from the Northwich Guardian, 30 Dec 1876

WESLEYAN CHAPEL EXTENSION – *The Wesleyans of the Northwich circuit have undertaken a scheme of chapel extension... A committee... brought up their report, which was to the effect that it was desirable to build new chapels as follows:– Northwich (near the railway station), £3,000; Winsford, £2,500; Hartford, £1,500; Weaverham, £1,500; Sproston, £250; Middlewich (re-pewing the body of present chapel), £250; total, £9,000. The Rev. F. Standfast, one of the circuit ministers, stated that 34 persons had promised £3,400.*

BMD: Registration from 1837 Onwards

by Dave Williams

With the advent of Civil Registration in 1837, the use of Bishop's Transcripts declined into virtual obsolescence over the next twenty years or so.

The format of marriage registers also changed – essentially, the same form was used in CofE weddings as for weddings in a Register Office. In effect, from the point of view of the civil marriage, the priest conducting the church marriage was acting as the civil registrar. Individual churches of other denominations could apply to use the same system as the CofE and a number of churches did so, particularly some Methodist and United Reformed churches. But as far as I know, no Roman Catholic churches did. Roman Catholic priests owed allegiance to the Pope, not the English State!

In the CofE system, the couple would have been legally married at the point when the priest or minister pronounced the phrase about *those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder* (or similar wording). But then the marriage had to be registered using the registers held at the church.

If the church was not authorised to use the CofE system, a civil registrar had to be present to witness the church ceremony or the couple had to have a separate civil marriage. The couple would not be legally married until the civil registrar had either witnessed or performed the ceremony. The register used would usually be a book brought by the registrar unless some special arrangement had been made with the church.

The marriage register format had two forms per page, with a varying number of pages per book, quite commonly 250 pages (500 marriages) for “busy” churches. Each of the forms had a pre-printed number, starting at number 1 in each register. The normal (CofE) procedure was that the church would have two registers in use at any one time. There would also be a stock of blank marriage certificates. At the “signing of the registers”, the details of the married couple would be entered in each copy of the register and on the marriage certificate. The couple, the witnesses and the officiant would sign all three documents. The entry number from the register would be entered by hand on the marriage certificate. The certificate was retained by the newly married couple.

Just after the end of each quarter, one of the church registers was sent or taken to the local register office. Each of the forms for marriages in the quarter would be copied by hand (by register office staff) into a register held at the register office. The church register would then be returned to the church.

So now there would be four copies of each marriage form. In theory, all the details were identical, except that the copy held at the register office was completely in the handwriting of the clerk or registrar that had prepared the copy (including the various signatures).

Many of the registers were microfilmed at some stage. Some of the filming seems to have been done at the register office, the rest at churches.

If you apply for a copy of a marriage certificate from the GRO, the copy will be made from the register they hold. The form number will have been entered by hand, and everything on the form will be in the same handwriting. When you look at a scan of a marriage register entry, if the entry number is printed, the scan is of the church register (with original signatures). If the entry number is handwritten, the scan is of the register office copy and does not have original signatures.

In practice, there can be some problems with this system, although fortunately it usually worked okay.

It has happened (more than once), that when starting a new page in the registers, in one of the books two pages were accidentally turned over together. Although the procedure was followed as I have described, the two registers are no longer identical because the entry numbers are different. For example, one register shows the marriage form number #427, while the other shows the same details as entry #431. The certificate given to the couple could have either of the two numbers. The entry number shown on the register office copy will depend on which of the two registers was used to make the copy. It is possible that a copy subsequently obtained from the GRO will not have the same entry number as the original certificate. In one case I have seen, it was ten years before the page turn error was noticed. The church then deliberately left two pages blank in the other register to bring the entry numbers back in sync. Of course, this did not affect the legality of the marriages concerned. But it can cause confusion to family historians.

Another problem that can arise, is that sometimes the details were not fully completed in the second church register. Perhaps just the couples' names had been entered when the registers had been signed, and somebody forgot to fill in

the other details later. The register used to make the register office copy would have to have been complete; and maybe it was thought that it didn't matter as long as the "official" register was correct. It is unfortunately the case that some registers that were microfilmed contained a few incomplete entries.

The double page turn problem seems also have happened sometimes during microfilming, as some pages are missing from microfilms.

Since May 2021, the church register system was no longer used. After a church ceremony, instead of signing the register, a form is now filled in, signed, and sent to the register office, where the marriage is registered electronically. A certificate is then issued to the couple, based on the electronic record.

But in all cases, the date of registration is recorded as the date of the marriage. This means that the marriage will be registered in the quarter when the marriage took place.

In the case of registration of births and deaths, however, the date of registration is usually after the event, although it can be on the same day, especially in modern times.

A birth or death that occurred near the end of a quarter might not be registered until the following quarter; and if this happened at the end of a year, registration could be listed in the following year.

Death registration is usually effected fairly soon after the death becomes known, especially if the deceased left a will, as a death certificate is required in order to obtain probate. In recent decades, a death certificate was also required before burial could take place, but this was not a strict requirement in earlier times. Registration could be delayed in the event of a post-mortem or inquest.

These days there is normally an attempt to match a death record with the deceased's original birth record. But in earlier times the recorded "age at death" was the age that the informant thought the deceased was, the informant not necessarily being a close family member. Plus, of course, some people lied about their age while they were alive.

Birth registration can be more problematical. In the early years some parents "forgot" or "didn't bother" to get births registered. Although it was a legal requirement, registration of a child's birth did not bring any financial benefit to the parents in the days before child benefit or family allowance.

When the authorities realised that births were not being registered in a timely

manner (or at all), a system of fines was introduced if births were not registered within three months. However, if a parent was late recording a birth it was a simple matter to report a birth happening at a more recent date in order to avoid a fine.

In Victorian times, it was not unusual for a mother to have eight or more children, starting in her early twenties and continuing into her forties or fifties. It could (and did) happen that an older daughter would “fall pregnant” and when the child was born it was the grandmother, rather than her daughter that was registered as the baby’s mother. This would hide the fact of illegitimacy and also make it easier for the daughter to find a husband.

A birth certificate normally gives the mother’s married and maiden surname and the name of the father. It is often assumed that the absence of a father’s name means that the child was illegitimate. However, this is not always the case. I have seen examples where a couple were legally married, but the father had died before the child was born; his name was not entered on the birth certificate. I don’t know whether it was a policy that only the names of living fathers could be entered, or whether there was some misunderstanding by the registrar.

I have seen a case where a child was born illegitimately, and the birth registered with the mothers surname. The mother and father married soon afterwards, and the same child’s birth was then registered again to make the child legitimate. I have also seen a case where a widow loved her husband so much that she continued to have children registered with him as the father for some years after his death.

There is a case in my family tree, where a father registered the birth of a child, but the mother sent him back to register a different name instead. That child had two birth certificates, the second one with the note: *Name changed after registration.*

Winsford News (9)

from the Northwich Guardian, 18 Nov 1876

WINSFORD STATION – Some correspondence had taken place with reference to the placing of a lamp on the Clive side of the bridge at Winsford Station. The railway company agreed to light the station on condition that the Board provided the additional lamp, and the gas company had expressed their willingness to lay the extra mains. The Board decided to put up the additional lamp.

From Writing for Family to Publishing Worldwide

by Helen Parker-Drabble

Why is it Important to Share your Family History?

The story of your family has value.

Family stories can be a source of strength across generations. They show how the people before us met adversity and endured, and that knowledge is worth passing on.

Research shows children with a strong sense of their ancestors tend to be more self-confident.

Sharing stories promotes bonding and helps adolescents develop a sense of identity.

Family histories can illuminate patterns of inheritance in physical and mental health, and sometimes challenge them.



Parker family descendants gathered around a large printed family tree at the Bedford Hall, The Tank Yard, Thorney, 2014, reuniting different branches of the family 130 years after Walter Parker's birth.

Pitfalls and joys of saving family history for future generations: a personal legacy

My first attempt to share family history with my relatives was a family tree charting my ancestors up to the level of my eighth great-grandparents. Early in the process, I fell into the trap of trusting someone else's research. I discovered they had not proved the ancestral connections in their family tree. Even after I managed to print a reliable chart, I found that my family's response to my discoveries was, understandably, lukewarm.

I turned to growing our tree, found new living relatives, and arranged a meeting in the Tank Yard, Thorney, Cambridgeshire, once home to my maternal grandfather. It was great fun reuniting the different branches of the family 130 years after the birth of my granddad, Walter PARKER. But sharing the large tree I had printed was not the family's highlight.



Stephen Parker Drabble, a cabinet maker, examines the apprentice pieces crafted by his great-grandfather Stephen Parker, also a cabinet maker, connecting generations through shared craftsmanship.

Holding previously unseen heirlooms is what made the event. Touching items that had belonged to our ancestors reinforced the emotional connection with the past. More importantly, it created special memories with newfound family.

The experience made me realise how little we know about what we each have in our own collections. Now I collate a digital record of all the heirlooms, diaries, photographs, newspaper clippings, recipes, and personal documents that have survived in our respective collections. I had planned to save these to a USB memory stick. Then I remembered how the audio and film of me as a young child had been lost.

My challenge was to select a widely accessible format, while making sure its form would be robust enough to last. Each technology I considered ran the risk it would not be understood or valued. So, I planned another printed photo album. An advantage of this format is that it can easily include a description of each item, along with any associated stories. But it was the thought of a professionally produced photobook lasting for many more generations that spurred me on.

My next goal was to finish a legacy box for each young person in the immediate family, including:

- ancestor charts
- family trees
- family photo albums
- photo albums of heirlooms and birth, marriage, and death records.

Yet this did not feel enough. Although each of the above enterprises is valuable, they did not communicate all I wanted to future generations.

My leisure time soon revolved around treading in my ancestors' footsteps, particularly those of my grandfather Walter PARKER. I pored over archival records and binge read social history to understand the context of my forebears. My family was now keen to know what I had uncovered, but how much could I say and what would be remembered? So, how to share?

I realised that if family historians want what they have painstakingly discovered to survive, they have to weave the distinct threads into a narrative, and print the result.

Writing a book: who, me?

Writing your family history can be daunting and, at times, overwhelming. Questions raced through my mind:

- How would I find the time?
- Could I cut the project down to size so it would be possible to complete?
- What would keep me motivated?
- I had not written anything before. How could I make it good enough?
- I am not a qualified researcher or historian, so why would anyone want to read a book I had written?

The answer to my question *Where would I find the time?* came from tutor Gill Blanchard on her *Writing Your Family History* course at the Society of Genealogists in London. Gill told me, during a break, *It is not about finding the time; it's about*

deciding what to give up. I found it was easy to give up most of my television viewing for an activity that felt so rewarding.

Gill also showed me how I could cut my project down to size. She explained my progress would be quicker if I concentrated on one person. I chose my Victorian grandfather Walter PARKER and drafted a writing plan.

For motivation, I started telling people I was writing a book, if only to hold myself accountable. I pressed on, despite my misgivings and frequent crises of confidence. I decided to behave as if it were possible for me to bring a book into the world. When I was ill, exhausted, or despaired of finishing, I pictured someone reading my book two hundred years from now.

The challenge of making my writing polished enough to publish ran alongside the whole endeavour. Feeling confident my work stood up to historical scrutiny was the hardest hurdle to overcome. But the solution to both these problems turned out to be the same: to go from writing for family to worldwide publication, I needed a team behind me.

You are not alone: building a team

Looking back, I realise I was as methodical about putting my team together as I was in my research. I considered my doubts and questions and, over time, sought out people who could help me.

Long before I had a first draft, I started criticising everything I wrote. I stalled. Rather than give up, I found a writing coach and editor, Vrinda, whose encouragement helped me through the inevitable setbacks. When I could not see a way forward, Vrinda sensitively shone a light on my work and inspired me to take my writing to the next level. An epiphany led me to combine my counselling background and interest in mental health with my family history research. I considered what my grandfather could have inherited from his ancestors, and a psychological inheritance unravelled, revealing intergenerational anxiety, trauma, loss, alcoholism, and depression. And what family is without these? I had discovered my voice and the overarching theme of my work. This was the beginning of what I now call geneathrapy: an interpretive framework combining genealogy, social history, and psychological understanding to recover the emotional dimensions of ancestral lives.

Overcoming doubt

As I came to the end of my fifth draft, I felt the manuscript was still not finished. Doubt in my ability, never far away, returned. I questioned whether I had written

a book only I could enjoy. Unfairly, I shared it with trusted friends, but I failed to ask for feedback from people interested in family history. Finally, I bounced my ideas off fellow enthusiasts and was delighted at how responsive they were to my blend of family history and psychological research. Dare I believe my book could find a wider audience than family?

I asked myself what would give me the confidence to seek a publisher. At that stage I had no formal qualifications in history, so I looked for a professional to work alongside me. Dr George Regkoukos, a historical consultant, was enormously patient and encouraging. He also:

- gave me a historical perspective
- helped me focus my research
- pointed out gaps in my thinking
- referred me to research I had overlooked.

Armed with hard-earned confidence and a draft I could be proud of, I was ready to seek a publisher.

From writing for family to publishing worldwide

When seeking a publisher, my first considerations were: would my writing find an audience? Would a traditional publisher see the value in such a niche form of writing?

Publishers expect authors to identify and bring their own readership, and to undertake a great deal of marketing themselves. For a niche subject, their launch window can be short. The more research I did, the more I believed publishing independently would work best for me and for a family history book. It is the reader, in the end, who decides whether a book is worth their time.

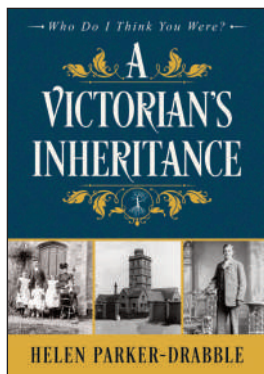
I wish I had come across the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) at the beginning of my journey. ALLi is an affordable professional business membership organisation for self-publishing authors, nothing to do with vanity publishing. One of the significant points ALLi makes is that as an author you do not need to become a specialist in every field. Instead of being uncertain, you can plug into essential, trusted advice, supportive guidance, and a range of resources that would be near impossible, and time-consuming, to create for oneself. I added more people to my team, a book cover designer, a proofreader, and an interior book designer.

As an independent author, you retain your intellectual property rights and can seek out worldwide opportunities in print, podcast, blog, radio, audio, and ebook

over your lifetime. A quick note: under UK copyright law, your heirs can benefit for seventy years after your death, another legacy. You also know the price each book sells at, where the sales come from, and in what format. As a bonus, when it comes to your next book, you can tailor your marketing to what you have learned from your previous publication.

Once I made my decision to stay independent, I looked at two different methods of publishing: print-on-demand, where a distributor prints a book when an order is received, and ebook publishing. Here I was fortunate. The consultant historian I was working with was won over by my book and started developing a software package that would make my digital family history shine. The print version was published in 2021.

It has been a long journey. But family history cannot survive unless it is shared. I hope this article will encourage you to bring your own painstaking research to life. Whatever form yours takes, I hope you will join me on the ride from writing family history to publication, leaving behind a legacy that could not be told any other way.



Since *A Victorian's Inheritance* appeared in 2021, my work has continued to develop under the interpretive framework I call geneatherapy, which combines genealogy, social history, and psychological understanding to recover ordinary lives from the traces they leave behind. Two further books have followed, both part of the Who Do I Think You Were?® series published by Animi Press: *A Facsimile Reproduction of a Victorian Recipe Book* (2024), and *'Yet': A Story of Triumph over Childhood Separation, Trauma, and Disability* (2025), which was Runner-up for the CILIP LSG Alan Ball Award 2025 (Best Hardcopy Publication) and Silver Winner in the NFAA Book Awards 2026 (Biography and Memoir). The next in the series, *Mary: A Victorian Life Recovered*, is in production for 2027.

About the author

Helen Parker-Drabble is an author, speaker, and independent scholar based in Bristol. Her work recovers ordinary lives from the traces they leave behind, combining genealogy, social history, and psychological understanding through the interpretive framework she developed and calls geneatherapy.

If you would like to read the first two chapters of *A Victorian's Inheritance*, visit helenparkerdrabble.com and go to the Books section. Helen's books can be

purchased in several formats from her Payhip shop at payhip.com/b/zQiMr, and from major retailers. You can also request them from your local library.

If you have any questions about Helen's journey from researching her family tree to publishing worldwide, she would be delighted if you got in touch at helen@helenparkerdrabble.com.

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The Parker family reunited outside Thorney Heritage Museum in The Tank Yard, Thorney, Cambridgeshire in 2015

Cryptic Quiz Answers

Answers to the Cryptic Quiz from page 28

- 1 Rita **TUSHINGHAM**, starred in the film *A Taste of Wild Honey*.
- 2 Ben **ELTON**, featured in *Ben Elton: The Man from Auntie*, wrote *Mr Bean* and the novel *Time and Time Again*.
- 3 Sir Frederick **LEIGHTON** – only lived for one day after gaining his peerage!
- 4 Aldous **HUXLEY**, author of *Brave New World*.
- 5 Nickname of boxer Ricky **HATTON**.
- 6 Margaret **HALE**, heroine of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South*.
- 7 Olympic gold medal-winning swimmer Rebecca **ADLINGTON**, 2013 participant in *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here*.
- 8 Rev Charles **KINGSLEY**, author of *The Water Babies*.
- 9 Marjorie **ANTROBUS**, former character in *The Archers*, dog breeder.
- 10 Sir John **MOORE**; the line comes from the popular Nineteenth Century poem *The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna* by Charles Wolfe.
- 11 Simon **WESTON**, Falklands War veteran, founder of charity Weston Spirit.
- 12 Roy **PLUMLEY**, presenter of *Desert Island Discs*.
- 13 Shirley **EATON**, played Jill Masterson in the Bond film *Goldfinger*.
- 14 Douglas **HYDE**, first President of Ireland.
- 15 Eliza **ACTON**, author of *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (first published 1845), which included the first recipe for Brussel sprouts in the UK.
- 16 Anne **HYDE**, first wife of James, Duke of York (later James II), mother of Queen Mary II and Queen Anne.
- 17 Pete **FARNDON**, bass player in The Pretenders.
- 18 Neil **DELAMERE**, Irish Comedian and BBC *Fighting Talk*'s Champion of Champions in 2022.
- 19 **BUNBURY**, a wholly fictitious invalid invented by Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* to give him an excuse to visit the country.
- 20 Tom **KERRIDGE**, chef patron of the *Hand and Flowers* gastropub and holder of several Michelin stars.

Winsford News (10)

from the Northwich Guardian, 4 Nov 1876

HOUSES TO BE NUMBERED – The Roads and Buildings Committee recommended the Board to proceed to have the houses in the district numbered at the cost of the Board, and paid out of the general district rate. This recommendation was adopted.

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Front cover photo: Entrance to the southern portal of the 1,239 yard Preston Brook Tunnel, on the Trent and Mersey Canal, which joins the Bridgewater Canal on exit. It opened in 1775, the first major canal tunnel completed in the British Isles. The tunnel is only wide enough for one boat, so boats heading north must enter on the hour until 10 minutes past, while boats heading south enter between 30 and 40 minutes past. Photo taken 24 March 2012 by Peter Scott, CC BY-SA 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/78624342@No2/8433393724/>.

See *From Overton Hall to the Great Canal Engineers* by Peter Havercan and Jane Fraser on page 29.

Back cover photo: St Chad's Church, Over, from the southeast on 2 April 2009. Image by Peter I Vardy, in the Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Winsford



St Chad's Church, by Peter I Vardy

Home to just over 33,500 people, Winsford is one of Cheshire's historic market towns, its fortunes shaped by the rich deposits of rock salt lying beneath its streets. The town's name is thought likely to derive from Wynne's Ford, the crossing place of a man named Wynne or Wain across the River Weaver, reflecting its origins as an important river crossing.

Archaeological evidence suggests that salt was being produced here during the Roman period, while medieval Winsford developed around the neighbouring borough of Over, which received its market charter from Edward I in 1280. The canalisation of the River Weaver in the eighteenth century and the expansion of rock salt mining in the nineteenth transformed Winsford into one of Britain's principal salt-producing centres, exporting Cheshire salt across the world.

Overlooking this long history is the ancient parish church of St Chad, whose origins lie in the medieval period. With parish registers beginning in 1558, a fine Tudor tomb and later additions by the celebrated Cheshire architect John Douglas, it remains one of the county's most important historic churches.

Winsford's history is not solely industrial. Its surrounding landscape preserves traces of prehistoric settlement, medieval farming and centuries of rural life, while churches, chapels, schools and mining records provide family historians with a rich seam of evidence. Today, Winsford remains proud of its heritage, where the story of Cheshire's famous salt industry continues to shape the town's identity.