

THE DONCASTER ANCESTOR



St Michael & All Angels Church Brodsworth

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Family History Society 1980 - 2025
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DONCASTER AND DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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continued on the back cover

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Doncaster Ancestor— Winter 2025

THE DONCASTER ANCESTOR

Journal of the Doncaster and District Family History Society

Free to Members

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Chair's Report



First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members and hope that we will be able to help you in tracing some of your ancestors.

The nights are drawing in now, and one's mind is turning towards more inside activities. Family History is one such pursuit that gets more attention as we begin to hunker down for the winter months.

Whether you do your research on paper, or electronically on your PC / tablet / phone, I am sure that you are constantly having to update your findings.

I keep my research on my PC using a family history program which is linked to some of the online companies records which are always suggesting a hint or update that requires investigation.

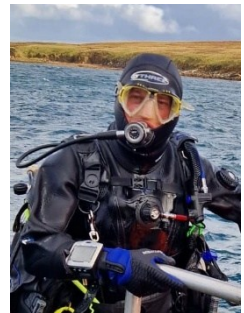
A major upheaval for many of us this month is the ending of support for Windows 10 and the realisation that some of our devices cannot update to Windows 11. This has been the topic of many a conversation on our Thursday morning help sessions with no easy answer on what best to do. I am only familiar with windows-based family history programs, so changing to another operating system does not appear to be practical for me.

How have you coped? Write in and let us know.

Hopefully, Ancestry, Find my Past, and My Heritage will make some offers again this winter like the generous half price deals last year.

We are striving incredibly hard to improve the quality of the monthly meetings at the Earl of Doncaster. I was holidaying, then Scuba Diving in Orkney last month, so unable to attend in person. I therefore attended the last two talks via Zoom and experienced the event from "the other side."

The technology is always a challenge, however, I feel that Andy has made more improvements and although not as good as being in the room, it still gives an enjoyable experience.



I look forward to the Doncaster Heritage fair at the DGLAM again this year – Sat 15th November. Committee members and I will be there again to help with any issues and receive any feedback you may wish

to give.

Our volunteers have agreed to continue the monthly community library help desks next year.

I would like to thank all the other volunteers for their support, without which the Society could not function. If you need any help, or wish to get involved more, please ask! This can be in person at our weekly Library help days or via email to the committee.

Best wishes with your research.

Clive Damms

Chair

DDFHS

From the Editor

Welcome to the winter edition of the Doncaster Ancestor.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in articles this time. You can send your articles in at anytime, although they might not always get put in the next Ancestor.

It seems ages now since we held our Family History Fair in the newly refurbished Corn Exchange and you can see Marian's write up and photos on page 22. We had a good day with a lot of interest and some people had quite a lot of cake! My lips are sealed!

You can come along and support the Society at the Local History Fair which is organised by Doncaster & District Heritage Association and is held in Doncaster Gallery, Library and Museum (DGLAM) on 15th November 2025.

In November we have Remembrance Day when we will be remembering all the people that sacrificed their lives in conflict for their countries.

In December we will be having a get together for all the volunteers who help to keep the Society viable.

All the major websites keep adding to their databases on a regular basis, so if you have previously looked for that elusive ancestor, then it is always worth having another look. You may find them this time.

Don't forget that you can always come along to the local libraries, where the Society volunteers are on hand to help you. See page 34/35 for further details.

Of course you can always contact Trevor, who is Research co-ordinator for the Society, and his details are on the back cover. Trevor likes to be kept busy!

Jenny Ellis, Editor

ddfhseeditor1@outlook.com

The Society is run by a small group of volunteers and you know the "ageing population" that people talk about, well that is us.

If you think that you have something that you can volunteer to do, then please contact one of the committee. It doesn't matter where you live in the world and any offer will be appreciated. Without volunteers, there is no Society.

You may get cake occasionally!

Doncaster & District Family History Society would like to wish all our members a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year and happy researching your family history

Deadline for the next edition is 1st Jan 2026 at the latest.

**Please send in any articles, preferably as a Word Document.
You can send articles in at anytime.**

The Doncaster Ancestor is published in February, May, August and November each year

Vol 36 No 1 Edition will be published in Feb 2026

Monthly Meetings via Zoom / Hybrid

Hybrid Members Meetings 2025/2026 Roomers & Zoomers Unite

You are invited to join us at the **Earl of Doncaster, Bennetthorpe, Doncaster DN2 6AD** 7pm for 7.30pm start. **ZOOM** link open from 7.15pm via email.

These will be Hybrid meeting where members can also join on Zoom, so why not join us at this excellent venue. There is plenty of well-lit parking and the venue has a lift. Refreshments are available from the bar.

November 26th 2025 Doncaster City by Jim Carley

Jim will describe the story of how Doncaster went from the town status we had to a new City, with all the twists and turns to get there.

December 2025 No Talk

January 28th 2026 The Bloodline, The Seed Kings by Mike Ogden

Follow the bloodline of the British Monarchy from King Alfred the Great to Queen Elizabeth II. Learn how King Alfred 's seed has passed through 39 generations in 12 centuries to the modern royal family.

Follow its sometimes-tortuous route as it passes beyond England into Scotland, Flanders, Normandy and Germany.

You will encounter many kings and queens in this talk, but you will not always follow the crown as it passes peacefully, or violently, from one head to another.

To know how the present royal family are linked to their ancient ancestors you must follow the bloodline. Come along and hear Mike's fascinating talk.

Hybrid Members Meetings 2026 continued

February 25th 2026

Trade, Hiring and Entertainment: a Brief History of Fairs by John Lee

How did fairs develop and operate? This talk looks at the buyers and sellers in fairs, the type of goods exchanged including luxury and everyday items, the locations where trading took place and how they were regulated. It will also explore the role of fairs in the hiring of labourers and servants, and for entertainment.

March 25th 2026

AGM followed by The Curious World of Olde Time Punishment by Ian Morgan

From birching to branding and beheading to burning, the strange and curious world of olde time punishments is something to behold. Listen to stories of ducking stools and witches, the pillory and perjurers and many more. We all know of corporal and capital punishment, but how do you punish the dead, a horse and cart or a train?

Just what is a deodand or a Newcastle cloak, and what about the Branks or the Hand of Glory? The answers are all here in this talk.

April 29th 2026 Charles Dickens and His Doncaster Connections by Mike O'Brien

May 27th 2026 The Mallard and a Drivers Story by Ian Carpenter

June 24th 2026

Lockerbie- Family Tragedies by Andy Harbon

If you are interested in attending the venue in person (Roomer), then you can do this via the email link that you will receive, or contact

June Staniforth either by telephone: 07901 523529 or email:

events@doncasterfhs.co.uk

Publications by D&DFHS

**Society publications can be purchased by post (see inside back cover or our website for full details) or through GenFair at www.genfair.com
Please allow 21 days for delivery.**

Goods can be returned within 14 days of receipt of order only if found to be faulty, or if you have been sent a different item from that requested.

Projects Report

New Project for 2025 – Edlington Cemetery

The transcribing of New Edlington Cemetery is going well and we are currently up to the 1980s. It should take about a couple more months to finish the transcribing.

Trevor and Philip are currently updating a Cemetery Plan to add to the file.

Margaret Jackson, Project - Coordinator

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Disclaimer

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From the Postbag

Dear Jenny,

I read about the VJ Day and WWII experiences of John George Laycock and Walter Hudson in the Autumn Journal, 2025. It was striking and sobering how much these two accounts differed. They were a reminder of the random nature of war, when the destiny of those called up to fight depends not just on place but also on time.

For me, the two accounts were particularly poignant because I am John George Laycock's daughter. He was certainly the lucky one and at ninety-nine years old, he has had a long, healthy and happy life and still talks fondly of his time in the RAF. In contrast your father was very unlucky and my heart goes out to you and your family.

Undoubtedly, the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945 saved the lives of both our fathers. And despite the horror, devastation and death caused by the bombs, I am grateful that those terrible weapons were used because like you, I owe my existence to them.

With best wishes,

Chris Severn, Member 4257

See further contact from Chris below

Dear Jenny,

After reading the articles about our fathers' war experiences, I thought it might be a good idea to have more articles in the Journal that record the WWII memories of surviving local ex-servicemen and women (only publishing memories that have hitherto remained unrecorded). It would make sure that their experiences are kept for posterity instead of disappearing for ever in a few years' time.

I have had experience of writing life stories for other people myself, and would be happy to write such articles, but I don't know of any veterans who might want their wartime stories to be in the Journal. Or

even how they could be contacted. If you like this idea, perhaps other Members could be called on and maybe able to help in making sure that these valuable first-hand experiences of local people aren't lost for good.

Best wishes,

Chris Severn, Member 4257

If anyone is interested in Chris's suggestion, they please do contact me.

I know that my Dad will never be forgotten as he is remembered at the Far East Prisoner of War building at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas. Picture below at the National Memorial Arboretum for VJ Day.

Jenny, Editor
ddfhseeditor1@outlook.com



Doncaster High School for Girls

(By a former pupil)

From its official opening on October, 3rd, 1911 to its partial demolition in 2014, the distinctive, landmark Doncaster High School for Girls building was a splendid sight to see on the edge of the town centre. Its copper domes, red bricks and white stripes graced the corner of Waterdale and Chequer Road.

Generations of Doncaster's girls were educated within its wall and between 1965 and 1972, I was one of those girls. At the time, I didn't appreciate the quality of education that I ungratefully received, but later on I realised how lucky I was to have been a High School girl.

The Waterdale building wasn't the first girls' High School in Doncaster. At the other end of town, in the Old Vicarage behind St George's Church, a school had opened in 1905 with Miss F. M. **Nodes** as its headmistress. Doncaster Municipal High School for Girls took seventy-six pupils, who in 1908 paid a fee of £2.18.4d a term.

These premises very soon became too small for the town's needs and as a result, Doncaster Corporation along with the West Riding County Council, splashed out and funded a new school in Waterdale. It was built to a very high specification and could house up to three hundred girls. Miss Nodes moved in with her staff and girls and more teachers were hired. The girls had lessons in English, History, Geography, French, Latin, Mathematics, Science, Religious Teaching, Drawing, Music, Domestic Economy, Needlework and Physical Exercise.

Just three years after the new school opened, the First World War began. School lessons continued as before but other activities were added. The girls knitted items to send overseas to our soldiers and they collected food for local hospitals and provided suitable entertainment for the injured soldiers recovering in local hospitals.

An interesting new girl joined the school in 1917 – a copy of the famous statue of Venus. She remained opposite the main entrance, under the spiral, centre staircase for the whole future life of the school, quietly watching the girls in their bottle-green uniforms moving around the building. Perhaps she remembers seeing me trip on that staircase and roll down it in spectacular but painful somersaults. Today she still looks out over those same stairs but from a different position.

After WW1 ended in 1918, the number of girls at the school continued



to grow. Old army huts were brought in and used for extra classrooms – but they were so cold that in winter, the ink froze in the inkwells.

In 1925, Miss **Nodes** retired and Miss H.G. **Brown** took over as the High School's second headmistress. A larger school building was needed and in 1935, half of the girls moved into the Old Infirmary in Wood Street, whilst more storeys were built onto each side of the High School building to make new classrooms, science labs, a domestic science room and a new Hall and gym.

Not long afterwards, the Second World War started and the newly extended building was taken over by the Yorkshire Dragoons for a short time. But the girls soon returned. Their timetable

was disrupted as they knitted for the Comforts Fund and helped with salvage and 'make do and mend'. Gas masks had to be taken to school to wear for practices and when the air raid siren sounded, the girls used the shelters in nearby Glasgow Paddocks.

The wartime school day finished early in winter when nights grew dark, so that girls could get home before the blackout. But not everyone was allowed to go home; all the staff and some of the older girls had to take their turn at fire-watching duty; checking the school classrooms and corridors with torches throughout the night and sleeping in the school on camp beds.

After the war years, Miss **Brown** retired and in 1949, Miss H.V. **Mellor** took over as the school's third and last headmistress, presiding strictly over her realm.

High School girls continued to help out in the community. There was a longstanding, annual Christmas party in the school Hall, for local disabled children. It was known as 'The Cripples' Party' and the girls

provided the food and entertainment. When I was a pupil, it was deemed a great honour to be chosen as a party helper.

Honour always ran deeply through the school's ethos. As well as striving for educational honours, personal moral honour was expected from the girls. The school motto was, 'Honour before Honours'. I remember Miss Mellor, speaking proudly but solemnly in Assembly one morning about a previous student, **Barbara Jane Harrison**, who had been a BOAC air hostess. In 1968 she heroically saved many passengers' lives, before losing her own in an aeroplane fire. She was posthumously awarded the George Cross.

To keep us in line, when I attended the High School, bad behaviour was punished with Bad Conduct Marks, Disorder Marks and the ultimate shame, a Bad Signature, which was so rare, that I don't remember anyone ever getting one. Punishments were sometimes humiliating – a friend had to spend the day with a sign hung around her neck, telling everyone about her wrongdoing. Most of us were scared of Miss Mellor, so we toed the line. Cheek of any kind wasn't tolerated but we still managed to tease the odd member of staff who couldn't control discipline.



A lot of the teachers in the second half of the 1960s were women; some of them elderly and unmarried. These ladies were of the generation that had lost many of its young men in the Great War. And they had probably also lost their chance of marriage and of having children. Hymn singing was always well rehearsed in music lessons and every year in our Remembrance Day Assembly, we sang the poignant hymn, 'O, Valiant hearts, who to your glory came'. Looking back, the atmosphere of the Hall on those days must have been heavy with sadness, loss and grief.

During its century of existence, Doncaster Girls High School saw many changes. Its name changed to Doncaster Grammar School for Girls in 1966 and in major changes in the early 1970s, the school merged with the Thorne Road Boys' Grammar School and became co-

educational and comprehensive.

Members of my family represented the different eras of the school; in 1972, my younger sister joined it in one of the navy-blue uniformed, mixed boy and girl classes, which used both the Waterdale and Thorne Road sites for lessons.

At the same time, I continued in a 'girls only' class, still wearing the bottle-green uniform and only using the High School building. Miss Mellor stayed as our headmistress until all the classes of girls had passed through the school, before she retired in 1973.

Later on in the 1990s, my daughter, Laura, was one of the last to use the Waterdale school building (for occasional lessons) when she attended Hall Cross School's sixth form.

The High School's doors finally closed for good in 2011. After this, the once grand building gradually became dilapidated, with small trees and plants sprouting from its neglected brickwork; a sorry sight. There was talk of it becoming a hotel but that never happened and in 2014, most of the school building was demolished. However, the corner façade with its domes was retained and it was decided to build Doncaster's new combined library, art gallery and museum on the old Doncaster High School for Girls site.

My son Peter's company, Bond Bryan Architects based in Sheffield, were chosen to design the multi-million-pound new building (though he wasn't involved in the project). Bond Bryan came up with an innovative plan to save the old building's façade by encasing it in glass. The building work was done by Willmott Dixon and was completed in 2020 with an official opening in May, 2021. The Doncaster High School for Girls building had once more become a distinctive Doncaster landmark.

A few parts of the old school's interior still remain on view – its concrete spiral centre staircase, its statue of Venus and some of its original, Edwardian style, dark-green glazed wall tiles - reminiscent of public lavatories. Its covered playground 'cloisters' have been incorporated into the railway museum.

Did any of the green-uniformed generations of Doncaster High School for Girls pupils ever imagine that part of their school would live on, preserved in glass? I certainly didn't.



Chris Severn, Member 4257

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© 2 x modern architectural photographs – Bond Bryan Architects.

Mother Shipton

On the back of one of the post cards given to me addressed to my mother-in-law were the prophecies of Mother Shipton. Mother Shipton's Cave and Dropping Well can be found in Knaresborough. She is said to have been born in 1488 and died in 1561. She prophesied that a nobleman would find a new country (Sir Walter Raleigh) from where he would bring a herb and a root (tobacco and potato). Carriages without horse would go and accidents fill the world with woe.

Some of her other prophecies were that: -

Around the world thoughts would fly in the twinkling of an eye
Through hills men shall ride and no horse or ass be by their side
Under water men shall walk, shall ride, sleep and talk.

In the air men will be seen....

Iron in water shall float....

A house of glass shall come to pass in England but alas war will follow.

...covered by hail and snow the world then to an end shall
come in nineteen hundred and ninety one.

Well, the world didn't end in 1991 but the prophecies I have quoted and others have come true!

Jean Rounthwaite, Member 3664

What's in a Name

We have often heard the question, 'what's in a name'?

It's amazing how an apparently simple fact, even with eyewitnesses can give rise to differing versions of that original event or fact.

I came across this story of an interesting historical event, in the Brede and Udimore Church Magazine many years ago, whilst researching my Smith relatives.

Monuments to the memory of **Maria Ann Smith** grow in almost every corner of the world, for she was the legendary Grannie Smith who made history by discovering the delicious, green skinned apple that bears her name.

She was born in 1800, the daughter of John and Hannah **Sherwood**. She lived in the Sussex village of Peasemars, until she married **Tom Smith** from the neighbouring village of Bickley, and some years later sailed to Australia on "The Lady Nugent".

For the first few years in New South Wales, **Tom Smith** was a soldier. But seemingly his army career was cut short by a medical discharge, and he accepted a small Government land grant, in lieu of a return passage to England.

Settling with their young family in a district that is today the Sydney suburb of Eastwood, the Smiths cleared five acres of virgin bush near Shripton's Creek. Then between raising her own six children and being midwife to many a neighbour, Mrs Smith grew vegetables, kept cows, and chickens and planted a small orchard. Tom meanwhile worked as an overseer for a major **Bailey Darvall**, who had property at nearby Ryedale.

The Smiths were well liked and well known among the local fruit growers of the 1800s and **Maria Smith** was a familiar sight driving her laden cart along the dusty road towards Sydney.

In the town's Market Street, the weather wizened woman, in her white, lace edged bonnet and black alpaca gown, became one of the regular stall holders known affectionately as Grannie Smith.

While there is no doubt that an apple pip planted on the Smith's land at Eastwood grew into the first 'Grannie Smith' seedling tree, there are

conflicting stories about the way **Maria Smith** acquired the original seed, and what she did with it.

Her grandson **Benjamin Spurway** wrote in 1956 that his mother – Grannie Smith’s youngest daughter – maintained that her mother had been given some Tasmanian French crab apples by a Sydney fruit agent named **Thomas Lawless** to test their cooking quality and flavour.

The plantings and cores from these Grannies threw out onto some freshly turned soil below the kitchen window, where a seedling soon sprouted. This was said to be the famous new variety.

However, another of Grannies many descendants, told a different story when writing in a Sydney newspaper in 1970. His great – grandma, wife of one of the four sons of Tom and Maria Ann, always insisted that the parent apple was given to Grannie Smith by a sea captain who was scouring Sydney market for similar apples to replenish his ship’s stores.

He praised the ‘keeping quality’ of the apple so highly that Grannie planted the seeds from it in a box by the kitchen door, from which grew five seedlings. When they came to bearing, one tree had fruit of a different flavour. The writer claimed that the first person to realise the commercial value of this apple was not Mrs Smith, but a man named **Pye** who had an orchard on Hunts Creek, North Paramatta. He propagated it commercially and named it “Grannie Smith”.

Evidence collected in the early 1920s from retired fruit growers who knew the original Grannie Smith was later published in the Australian Agricultural Press, and the following is the version that has gone into the Australian History Books

One morning in the year 1866, Mrs **Smith** asked a Mr E H **Small** to look at a seedling that was growing down by the creek and to say what he thought about it. Mr T **Small**, then a 12-year-old boy went with them to where the tree was growing among ferns and grass, with a few fine specimens of apple on its strong branches.

Mr Small senior tested it critically, and remarked it was a good cooking apple and might be worth working from though “Mobbs Royal” and several other good cookers seemed to fill the demand at that time. The boy, however, sampled it and remarked that it was also a good eating

apple.

Mrs **Smith** worked a few of the trees, and not long afterwards Mr **Edward Gallard**, another member of the family, planted out a fairly large bed and marketed a crop from them annually up to the time of his death.

Mr **Small** senior asked Mrs **Smith** how the tree managed to be there, and she replied that she had brought some gin cases back from Sydney market which had contained the remains of some Tasmanian apples. These had been rotting so she had tipped them out into the creek.

It is thought that Mrs **Smith** mentioned that the remains in the case were of French Crab apples. The greasy skin and keeping qualities of 'Grannie Smith' point to this being correct.

There is no evidence as to the length of life of the original tree. In fact, Mrs **Smith** thought that the whole creek was cleaned up not long after the first orchard came into bearing.

The "Grannie Smith" proved a saleable cooking apple, but its value for dessert was not known until some fruit agents began storing a few cases and found that they kept better than any other variety.

Grannie Smith died on 9th March 1870 aged 69, having enjoyed her fortuitous success for barely two years. During this time, she herself made little profit from the tree, preferring to give cuttings to friends and neighbours in the true pioneering spirit of sharing the earth's bounty.

On her grave is a tombstone which bears no mention of the apple she gave to posterity, though in recent years a public park, close to the site of the original Smith Homestead, was named in her memory.

It has also been mooted that this woman, who has a unique niche in Australia's history, should be more fittingly honoured with a giant bronze apple mounted on a pedestal in a Sydney square. No doubt that would be a spectacle for the snap happy tourists, yet not nearly so impressive as the dockside mountains of apples one sees being shipped around the world. Every box bearing the stencilled legend – Grannie Smith apples.

What may be less well known is the presence of Grannie Smith's descendants still living in the area - one of whom is **Maud Boreham** living in Rye who passed this story on.

The story of the **Smith** family and the origin of the apple of the same name, shows just how differently one factual truth can appear to several witnesses.

Barbara Wood, Member 5498

Family Trees

After taking some time off from working on my husband's family tree to pursue other interests, I decided to attempt to produce my mother-in-law's ancestral tree.

Good idea, or was it? My parent-in-laws, Maud and Harold, both died some thirty odd years ago, my husband, his brother and sister have now also died. Relatives of my husband and I had kept in touch also. Well, I decided, I had my memory (not so good these days), the memories of my two sons and the internet. When my sister-in-law died, I obtained my mother-in-law's (Maud) birth certificate and two or three postcards.

Having read the above paragraph I realise I had quite a good start on Maud's family history so what had I to complain about!

First Maud's birth certificate confirmed where she had been born on the 7th June 1902 and baptised on the 31st August 1902 in the Wesleyan/Methodist Chapel, Barton-le-Willows, Yorkshire. (Signed off the A64 road)

In the 1911 census Maud was 8 years old living with her parents George & Sarah **Thorpe** in Barton-le-Willows where her father was a "House Joiner". I was told he had made the pews in the Wesleyan/Methodist chapel where she and her brothers and sisters were baptised but when I visited the village the chapel was locked and there was no indication outside who to contact for information and of course there was no one to be seen!

The family moved to Howsham, an estate village a mile or so from Barton-le-Willows sometime between 1913 and 1918 (according to where the last two of Maud's siblings were born) It must have been before Maud left home to become a kitchen maid because Howsham is where she met her husband Harold **Rounthwaite**. The family (my family) remember being told by Grandma that she lived only a few doors away

from Harold. There is only one single street in the village of Howsham and there are only houses on one side as in about 1770 the houses on the opposite side were removed as the owner of Howsham Hall, Nathaniel **Cholmley**, wished to improve the view from his windows. He had trees planted in their place.

In the 1921 census Maud aged 19 years old is working as a kitchen maid in Old Nunthorpe, York. I have two post cards addressed to her posted in April 1930 indicating that she was by then working for a Dr **Haswell**, a surgeon and living in Strensall, York. I believe she was Dr Haswell's cook. By the 1939 register she was married to Harold. Maud and Harold **Rounthwaite** were married in Pateley Bridge in the fourth quarter of 1930. I have a letter dated 5th September 1930 offering my father-in-law employment on the Owston estate. However, before his marriage he found lodgings in the village where I live (10 doors away to be exact). Harold and Maud had three children, the eldest being my husband.

The world is a very small place. When we bought our house, my grandfather told me that when he worked for the West Riding Council sometime in the 1930s he worked on the road running through the village. My father-in-law told one of my sons that when he lived here the road was cobbled!

Maud's parents were George and Sarah **Thorpe**. George was born in 1871 in Pateley Bridge. In the 1891 census he was an apprentice joiner to his father James Thorpe. By the 1901 census he was a joiner living in lodgings in Barton-le-Willows. He married his wife Sarah **Marshall** in the first quarter of 1902. They had eight children. In the 1921 census they were still living in Howsham but by the 1939 register George with his family had moved back to Pateley Bridge.

James Thorpe and Isabella **Ingleby** were George's parents. James was born in 1836 in Pateley Bridge. Various censuses show his occupation as a joiner, timber merchant/joiner (my sons have visited the wood yard he owned!) and builder/joiner. According to newspaper reports, he did a lot of joinery and building work for the Wesleyan/ Methodist Chapels in and around Pateley Bridge.

The saga goes on. I believe I have traced the **Thorp** family back to the late 1700s. My problem now is that the fathers of the direct line dependents all appear to be called Francis – births are now only giving the father's name and there are too many men called Francis of an

appropriate age in the Thorp or Thorpe families in Pateley Bridge!

Jean Rounthwaite, Member 3664

Memories!

Reading Linda Colman's article in the summer 2025 edition, it triggered a response to her question about the existence of a map of the graveyard at Christchurch, Doncaster. She needs an idiot "*like wot I am*" to put his head above the parapet!

Back in the mid 1980s my wife, being a member of the local Parish Church Council (PCC), volunteered my services to overcome a problem that the PCC had. There was no complete map of their graveyard, and one of my many disciplines as a college and university lecturer happened to be Land Surveying (with access to the necessary equipment)! Her ladyship paid her dues for not consulting me first by becoming (along with my son) my chainman (1) for the practical operation.

I must here interject and state that in the mid 1970's, after the deaths of both parents of my wife, I had made a start on our joint family tree; realised very quickly that the wallpaper was going to be too large to handle any depiction of said data and put the idea aside. Later, a friend gave me the link to 'Brothers Keeper' which set me off again doing research and joining the Bury branch of the Lancashire F.H.&H.S. I happened to say to my wife during our survey work that it was about at this location where my grandparents were buried. I had visited the grave with my mother, as a 9-year-old, just the once.

So, survey complete and plans drawn using computer aided drawing facility. Need to now check the accuracy of my work and get the correct grave numbering sorted out. In about 1980, members of the branch had transcribed the gravestones, and church has a copy of the work. The church is in an interregnum! (2) If I can acquire the burial registers, transcribe and index them and also do similar for the grave register, I will have a complete set of data for the graveyard (all 4000+ grave and 20,000+ burials).

Job done the only data missing is of early 1842 – c1890 burials where the grave book is not the original (it being "lost"). The current grave register shows existing occupied graves as having "X previous burials" - no names. My guesstimate of grandparents' grave location was 2

graves out! However, doing this exercise has revealed the burials of other ancestors of mine. Still in the interregnum, and with PCC approval I transcribe and index the Baptism registers – followed by the Marriage registers. In all cases using a spreadsheet format.! My fee for this? One print out copies of each to the church; one copy to the branch library; one copy to the Bury Public Library; the latter got them formally bound. The size of the graveyard plan was A0, and I used the good offices of another friend to obtain print outs of the plan (3).

So having completed this work “What next?” - Visit vicar of daughter’s Church and offer my services for the same fee. No graveyard here but offer gratefully accepted.

I have since completed work on the registers of 8 churches in the area including 7 graveyards.

As a result of this work; together with my wife and I checking M.I. recordings by other branch members prior to publication, and additional work by other branch members being gifted to me, I now have some 700,000 register/name entries in my “Hatched, Matched and Despatched “ database for the Bury, Lancashire area.

- 1 Chainman – the surveyors labourer used to drag the chain from one measuring position to another.
- 2 Interregnum. The time gap in an Anglican church between the cessation of one vicar's ministry and the commencement of the subsequent vicar's ministry. The PCC and the church wardens are in control of church activities.

Some lessons learnt.

Those remembered on the gravestone are not necessarily underneath it.

Has the gravestone been put back in the correct place?

Have old gravestones been moved to create a paved area?

Who knew the correct age of the deceased?

Who knew the correct names of the deceased and their forebears
Has the inscription on the gravestone been correctly transcribed and reproduced?

Was the named 'wife' the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or just a partner?

Don't forget familiar names Margaret – Polly; John - Jack etc.

How many bodies can you get in a single standard size grave? One of the graves in the first graveyard surveyed has 22 (not a misprint – twenty-two)!! Yes, it is an old grave; Yes it's a deep grave. Yes, I suspect there are children buried across the grave rather than length-ways.... but even so!

John Grundy, Member 4563

Family History Fair & 45th Anniversary 2025

The Corn Exchange was a brilliant venue to hold our Family History Fair and celebrate our 45th Anniversary. The cake was delicious which was shared by the exhibitors and also members of the public. It went down a treat.

This time we had more of the general public which was great as it show cased all the groups/societies we have in Doncaster. I have received so many great comments and the exhibitors had a fantastic day, and I received good feedback from them on the day.

Thank you to the Doncaster Waites who played for us for, they generated a lot of interest. They said that they enjoyed performing in the Corn Exchange, and were pleased the event was a success.

I do have a few people to thank. Firstly, to Daisy Astell who is the Events Manager at the Corn Exchange and her team for doing a fantastic job and also advertised our Fair as well. Everything was ready for us when we arrived. To Andy Harbon who did the poster for our Fair which went in to the libraries and shops. To those who donated raffle prizes June, and I would like to say thank you and we did have some lovely prizes. Thank you to the exhibitors who attended, and I do know they enjoyed the day and were very busy. Last but not least thank you to all the volunteers who helped out on the day.

Next year we will be doing it all again and the date will be Saturday 18th July 2026 at the Doncaster Corn Exchange. Hope to see you all

there.

Once again thank you everyone for making it a success.

I would just like to add a couple of comments that I received which were made about our History Fair and venue.

- Thank you very much for Saturday, I thought it was very well organised and a good venue. Jackie, Friends of Doncaster Mansion House
- Thank you Marion for organising the Fair. The comments have been favourable. Well done, Regards, Trevor.
- It looks to be a tremendous event. As I've recently made use of your services I speak very highly of this Society and the volunteers who responded so warmly and efficiently to my searches. Elona Rogers.

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We also received positive feedback from the public.

Marion Baxter, Secretary



The Doncaster Waites



Photos from the day



Families of Burma Comrades Reunited

Families of two men who fought together in Burma in WWII and connected by a photograph have been reunited after one family traced the other through a genealogy website

Jade Hizzett's WWII veteran great-grandfather **Leonard John 'Len' Leake** carried the photograph in remembrance of his fallen comrade, **Norman Harris**

After he was fatally wounded by the Japanese, Len had carried Norman's body for several miles to British lines, ensuring a dignified military burial and closure for his family

The photograph and a letter from the War Office were given to Len as a keepsake by Norman's parents when he visited them after the war

Thanks to genealogy websites like Findmypast, Jade managed to trace Norman's family – who were unaware of the story – and reunite them with the precious records after 80 years



As the UK prepares to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day, the great-granddaughter of one Far East veteran has restored a deeply personal link between two families separated by war for eight decades, thanks to family history websites.

Jade Hizzett from Doncaster was able to trace and reunite the relatives of Norman Harris, a young soldier killed in Burma during the Second World War, with precious keepsakes that had been treasured by her own family for generations.

Jade's great-grandfather, Len,

Leonard John "Len" Leake

who served alongside Norman in the Burma Campaign in the 17th Indian Infantry Division carried Norman's body for several miles to the nearest British Army encampment after he had been killed by Japanese forces. His act of bravery ensured Norman would be laid to rest with dignity and his family could be given closure and sent his personal effects.

Upon returning home after VJ Day, Jade's great-grandfather visited Norman's parents to share the story of their son's final moments. In gratitude, the Harris family gave him a photograph of Norman and the War Office letter announcing his death. These items were treasured by Len, who kept the photograph close until his death in 2010, when the items were passed to Jade's mum, Amanda Hizzett, who sparked and encouraged Jade's ambition to reunite them with the Harris family.



Norman Harris

Inspired by a visit to a VJ Day exhibition: "We Can't Celebrate: The War Isn't Over Yet!" at the Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery, curated by Ray Withnall, Jade began researching the Harris family using Findmypast's extensive historical records and archives. She eventually located Norman's great-niece, Caron Sheppard, who had never seen a photograph of him and was unaware of the story. Jade and Amanda were able to return the photograph and letter, along with wartime diaries collated by Amanda detailing the regiment's service in Burma and Norman's final resting place.

Reflecting on the experience, **Jade Hizzett** said:

"I was incredibly lucky to grow up having my great-grandad around until my teenage years. Although he didn't speak much about his experience in the war, the story of Norman was always present. Although he wasn't a biological link to our family, his story was and will always be entwined with our stories. Following the exhibition, we wrote about Nor-

man in the guest book, as we wanted his name to be remembered. This sparked an interest in me and I felt that if we could reunite these incredibly precious items with Norman's family, it would be like doing one last thing for my great-grandad. We, as a family, had held onto them for 80 years, and we were in agreement that it was time they were returned to Norman's family, if he had any living relatives. Luckily, I found Caron who was overjoyed to receive them. It was rather poignant and very emotional, but I think my great-grandad would have been grateful and proud of the decision we made and the work we put in."

Jade Hizzett, Member 4585

Jade tells me that this is the original press release, which was mostly written by herself. The story is in the Doncaster Free Press and also on Findmypast. She was concerned that this Doncaster Ancestor would go out long after VJ day but I felt it was a lovely story of comradeship and agree that items should be reunited with the families.

Jenny, Editor

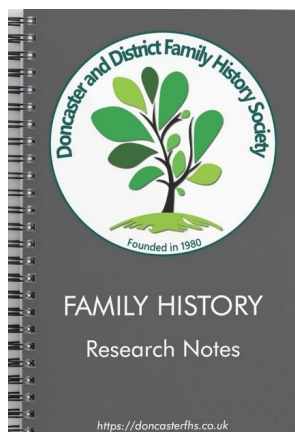
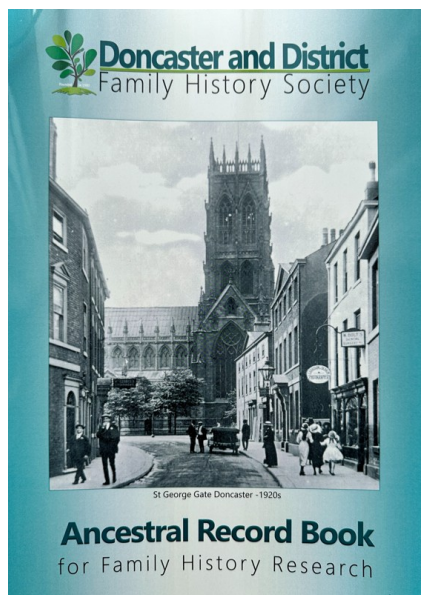
The Exhortation

***"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them."***

Response: *"We will remember them."*

The Exhortation is said at Remembrance events before the Last Post is played and the Two Minute Silence. The extract from a poem written by Robert Laurence Binyon called "For the Fallen", composed in September 1914, just a few weeks after the outbreak of the First World War.

Merchandise for Sale / Stocking Fillers



Ancestral Record Book £5.00 + p&p

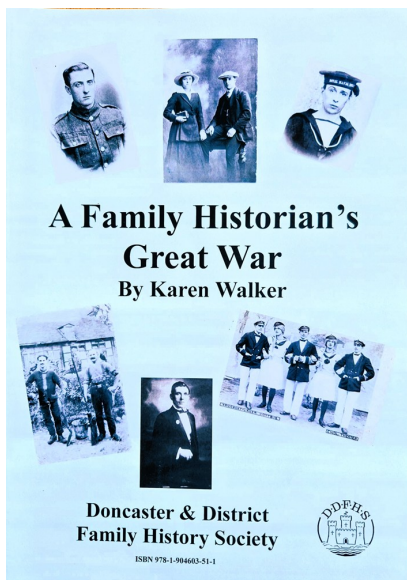
Family History Research Notes £3.00 + p&p

Pen £1.50 + p&p

Pencil £0. 50+ p&p

Special Price Bundles

**Ancestral Record Book, Research Notes Book, Pen & Pencil
for £8.00 + p&p**



A Family Historian's Great War by Karen Walker

This book tells the stories of people with a connection to Doncaster or to some of our members.

£4.00 + p&p

The above items are for sale via the website and also on monthly Library and Archives days and would be handy as stocking fillers. The new Ancestral Record Book now contains space for the 1921 census and the 1939 Register.

New Membership Offer

New members who join the Society between January - March will receive up to 3 months membership free, so 15 months for the price of 12 months. A bargain at £10.00, with our 1.7 million Database available for members only.

New Members

Listed below are the names, and membership numbers of members who have recently joined the Society. We extend a warm welcome to them and wish them good luck in their personal research.

Mem ID	Title	Initial	Last Name
4673	Mr	G	Huntriss
4674	Mrs	C	Richardson
4675	Mr	J	Wood
4676		R	Willmore
4677	Miss	K	Bailey
4678	Mrs	J	Bowerman
4679	Mrs	S	Senior
4680		R	Johnson
4681	Mr	D	Hobby
4682	Mr	P	Jacklin

Members' Surname Interests

Surname	Code	Place	Dates	Mem ID
Godfrey	WRY	Doncaster	1750-1940	4682
Turner	WRY	Doncaster	1750-1940	4682
Hodgkinson	WRY	Doncaster	1750-1940	4682

Doncaster Local History Fair 2025

Danum Gallery. Library & Museum

Doncaster DN1 3 BZ

16th November 2025

11.00 - 3.00pm

Doncaster & District Heritage Association have arranged their local history fair at the DGLAM building once again.

About seventeen local history and heritage groups from the Doncaster area will be in attendance and admission is FREE.

The exhibition is over all the floors, and you will find DDFHS on the top floor again. (Did someone think we are a fit bunch) There is a lift in the building.

So do come along and join us, as I am sure it will be an interesting day. The guides and brownies will be there to earn some of their badges, and they have been given questions by all the stallholders to achieve this.

This will be the final event of the Societies 45th Anniversary year.

The Water Sports at Stainforth

Stainforth sports had been an added attraction of the local feast since 1894.

Peter Dumville looks back at the event.

“Stainforth has neither knowledge nor energy for sport” was the heart-breaking comment heard by Walter Worfolk, a Stainforth ship’s carpenter, in the summer of 1894 in a neighbouring village. Infuriated by this remark he immediately called a village meeting in the Stainforth schoolroom to rectify the matter, which eventually led to the start of Stainforth Athletic and Aquatic Sports.

The sports were added to the local feast in September 1894. The Athletic Sports were held on a field in front of the West Hall, now the site of the present Stainforth Working Men's Club. The Aquatic Sports were held the following day near the bridge, on the opposite side of the Hall.

One of the first events of the Aquatic Sports was the obstacle race, which attracted a dozen competitors. They started by running across a field, swam across the river against a strong current, climbed its muddy slopes and then washed off the mud, gathered in the river for a final swim across the canal. Every man came up smiling! There were many other races and competitions, for example, sculling races for girls and married women, rowing with handspikes, climbing the greasy pole (for which the first prize was a copper kettle), boat races to be propelled by hand only and boat races to be propelled by manure forks! At the end of a very successful day the prizes were distributed in Mr. Hodgson's butcher's shop.

The Aquatic Sports continued to be very popular and in 1911 £20 was expended in prizes. This year the sea horse race caused much amusement. In this race the contestants had to sit astride a barrel, to which had been affixed a wooden horse's head, and they had to paddle a certain distance. Even more amusing was the greasy pole contest. At first it appeared hardly anybody was going to enter, but then it became known that likely contenders were hanging back until somebody else had worn the grease off the pole. However, the committee became wise to this and announced competitors would draw lots for their turns. A new innovation this year was the keel man's cycle race to Doncaster Christ Church and back, however 3-speed gear machines were not allowed to compete!

In 1934 the Water Sports were held on the canal on Bank Holiday Monday, but the attendance was poor on account of the weather. Included in the usual range of events was the Sculling Championships of Yorkshire. At this time the sports were organised by the local hospital movement committee.

Stainforth Mariners' Society organised the Aquatic Sports from the late

1940s and gave profits to various organizations, for instance £90 to the old folk of Stainforth in 1954. Unfortunately, by 1955 the lack of entries was becoming a problem resulting in some items being withdrawn. There was also a lack of skilled oarsmen and, therefore only three events were held where the traditional skill of a waterman was required. However, the Aquatic Sports were still popular with the people of Stainforth, and in 1955 over 1,000 people paid to see the sports, which ensured the old aged pensioners of the village received a Christmas gift of 25p from the society.

In 1956 because of the inclement weather, very few entries and a shortage of committee helpers the future of the Aquatic Sports became very uncertain. The takings of £30 were not enough to cover the expenses, although over 600 spectators attended proving it was still a popular local event. Soon afterwards, understandably, a decision was taken to end the traditional event.

A revival of the Aquatic Sports in the form of an 'It's a Knockout' type contest was first organised in Stainforth Swimming Pool in 1978, but Stainforth Community Association restarted and organised water sports in the canal in 1986, which they named the Stainforth Water Festival. Money raised was given to the Special Care Baby Unit at Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Sadly, this festival ended in 1989 because of lack of support by local village teams and the danger caused by parents allowing children to swim in the canal during events.

Many people have gained much enjoyment over the years in the water sports at Stainforth, Will they ever return?

Peter Dumville, Member 4574

Do you have any memories of Stainforth that you would like to share?

Jenny, Editor

DDFHS Family History Research Help Days

Conisbrough Community Library Old Road, Conisbrough, Doncaster DN12 3ND

Please note these days are the **1st Monday of every month
throughout the year including December 2nd**

10.00 - 12.30

Entrance free, Tea & Coffee by donation

**Experienced volunteers will be on hand to help with your
research and it is free**

**Please note that if this is a Bank Holiday, it will be moved to
the 2nd Monday, if available**

Armthorpe Community Library Armthorpe DN3 3AL

Please note these days are the **2nd Monday of every month
throughout the year, except Bank Holidays**

10.00 - 13.45

Entrance free, Tea & Coffee 50p

**Experienced volunteers will be on hand to help with your
research and it is free**

**Doncaster Archives
Chequer Road
Doncaster
DN4 0NA**

**Please note these are on the 3rd Tuesday of every month
throughout the year, excluding December
10.00 - 2.00,
Entrance free, no refreshments available**

**Experienced volunteers will be on hand to help with your
research and it is free**

**Sprotbrough Library
Sprotbrough Rd
Doncaster DN5 8BA**

**Please note these days are the 4th Wednesday of every
month throughout the year, excluding December
10.00 - 2.00
Entrance free, Tea & Coffee free**

**Experienced volunteers will be on hand to help with your
research and it is free**

doncasterfhs.co.uk for further details

D&DFHS Subscription Rates 01 Apr 2025 - 31 Mar 2026

Paper Journal / Electronic Journal

Individuals	£10.00
Family in same house	£12.00
Institutions UK	£12.00
Overseas via Air Mail	£15.00

Please make cheques etc. payable to:

Doncaster & District Family History Society and send to the Membership Secretary.

see back page or **www.genfair.com**

**New Members who join the Society between
January - March will receive up to 3 months
membership free**

DDFHS Research Enquiry Service

The Research Service is primarily a “look-up” service and is limited to one surname search of the Society’s over 1.6 million transcriptions database.

Any additional research will be at the discretion of the Society’s Research Enquiries Coordinator, **Trevor Betterton**:

researchenquiries@doncasterfhs.co.uk

If you are not a member we will endeavour to assist, but ask you to consider joining the Society as an appreciation of the time spent by our volunteers.

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*Please only contact Committee
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office hours*

