



Family Roots

FamilyHistory Society for Eastbourne & District

www.eastbournefhs.org.uk

40th Anniversary Issue

40

1986 - 2026

Vol. 41.1 July 2026



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We have vacancies. Why not join us?

Copy deadlines for articles please.

February 15th, June 16th, October 16th.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES TO THE SECRETARY
(With s.a.e. Please)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (Due 1st May)

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Editorial

Some of you may not know Michael Gandy passed on 16th May 2026 aged 76. Michael was a long-standing member, Chairman and Fellow of the Society of Genealogists; he was editor of The Genealogists' Magazine from 2000.

Michael gave talks at two of our Family History days (2011 and 2013) and had been the speaker at several of our regular meetings before that, on all sorts of topics from Huguenots and Romany ancestors to short-cuts in family history. He was always an interesting and knowledgeable speaker. June Johnson would have had him every other month! He will be missed in the genealogical world.

Jenny Wootton.

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As you know this is my last edition of 'Family Roots', thank you to all who have sent me articles; I hope I have managed to give you an interesting magazine.

PLEASE send articles to editor@eastbournefhs.org.uk

with out them there will be no magazine.

John Titmuss

Programme for 2026

6th August Investigations at a WW1 camp at Cooden speaker Simon Stevens.
3rd September The Lost Farms of Eastbourne speaker Tony Pulford.
1st October Brick makers and Brick making speaker David Culfrey.
5th November The History of Chailey Herotage speaker Helen Lucas.
3rd December Christmas meeting details to be arranged

**Minutes of the 40th Annual General Meeting
of Family Roots FHS, (Eastbourne & District),
Ocklynge School, Victoria Drive, Eastbourne, 2nd April
2026 at 7.30pm.**

1. Welcome to the 40th Annual General Meeting of Family Roots.
2. Members attending;- 40 members attended.
3. Apologies were received from;- Lionel Jones, Robin & Lynn Bedford and Peggy Westwood.
4. Minutes of the last AGM were agreed as a true record;- (proposed by Emily Morton & seconded by Graham Upton).
5. Matters arising. There were no matters arising.
6. Chairman's report for **the 40th A.G.M. 2nd April 2026, (from Helen Warren).**
7. Treasurer's report, (from Helen Lucas).
8. Election of committee. Helen Warren was re-elected as Chairman and Helen Lucas re-elected as Treasurer. Their positions and those of the other committee members who are willing to remain, i.e. Shirley Moth, Graham Upton, John Titmuss, Tony Pulford, Marianne Gunther, Russell

Ridout and Amanda Sheehan, were proposed en bloc by Ailna Martin & seconded by Brenda Kenward.

9. Election of honorary auditor. Russell Ridout was re-elected as honorary auditor. This was proposed by John Tyhurst and seconded by Jenny Wootton.

10. Any other business. Janet Savage was thanked for her 16 years of work, selling CDs, working with online sales and on the book stall. She was presented with life membership, a certificate and an orchid. John Titmuss was also presented with a certificate for editing the magazine. (He is stepping down as editor and a new editor is being sought.)

David Chester from the floor reminded of the 1926 Census for Ireland, coming out with free access on 26th April.

We were also reminded of the Anniversary Tea taking place on 13th June at £20 a head, with the balance for a ticket to be brought to the next meeting. It should be a good tea and a welcome get-together.

The AGM closed at 7.52pm.

Chairman's Report -

the 40th A.G.M. 2nd April 2026

This year is Family Roots' Ruby Anniversary. Yes, it is 40 years since Phil Webb, Pat Turner, June Johnson and several others decided to start an Eastbourne family history group. Over the years the group flourished with membership numbers high. Before Covid in 2019 there were 140 members and it was not unusual to have 80 attend a meeting! However, we live in different times; it's no longer viable to have a coach trip to the London record offices as so much research can be done online. Who would have thought 40 years ago that with just the click of a mouse so many secrets can be revealed? But even so there's nothing like the thrill of seeing the original records!

I hope that we can all get together on Saturday 13 June at Willingdon Golf Club to celebrate the auspicious 40th Anniversary. We are planning to relive memories through pictures and stories, together with short talks and a super afternoon tea. The committee have agreed to subsidise the event making this a bargain at £20, friends and relations are invited too, plus please let any "old" member know.

Since the pandemic and easily available online information things are different now; our membership has dropped dramatically to 85 with 10

honorary members. However, although we are still an active group, we do need more members to take a positive role in the Society, e.g. we need a secretary, (we have a minute's secretary but need a correspondence secretary) and we desperately need a magazine editor. Just joining us as a committee member would be most welcome too! We are a friendly bunch who meet up monthly for an hour or two on Zoom. Our society will not flourish without your support

After almost ten years as editor of our now triannual magazine John Titmuss is stepping down. Thank you John for producing an excellent publication. I am pleased to say that John will continue as our webmaster! Also, a big thank you to Janet Savage who ran the bookstall for many years and has latterly continued to deal with selling the CD and PayPal sales. Thank you Jenny who relinquished being treasurer last year but has continued to write up the monthly Newsletter, reports on our speaker meetings and do all sorts of other jobs. Janet and Jenny are both not standing again at this AGM.

Thanks too to Helen Lucas for taking over as treasurer, and thanks to Russell for auditing the accounts and sending out our Newsletter and magazine. I feel our committee work well together, so thanks go to Marianne, Members' Secretary, Shirley for arranging our speakers, Graham for being our Vice Chair, Amanda our minute's secretary and

Tony for being a great support especially with all things technical! Jenny and Janet are standing down but I am delighted to say that the others are happy to stand again as committee members.

Not on the committee but always willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm are June Johnson and Chris Worsfold. This indomitable duo go regularly to the Gather in the Beacon Shopping Centre on the last Friday of the month to help anyone who wants help with their family history. They are great advocates for Family Roots, thank you June and Chris for all you do. Quietly working away in the background John Tyhurst, on behalf of Family Roots, continues to send records to Find My Past. Thank you John for this.

The past year has been a good mixture of speaker meetings. Our programme started after the last AGM with Warwick Davies' talk entitled A Spoonful of Victorian Medicine. Then on 1st May Kevin Gordon used some of the information gleaned from Ocklynge Cemetery and St Mary's burials to tell us all about Eastbourne Ancestors. In June Alan Wenham spoke about 'Women who made a difference including Winifred Barnes - too racy for Meads!' His talk also included several other Eastbourne women including Mary Ann Gilbert, my favourite bygone Eastbourne woman.

On a glorious warm evening in July Colin Torode from English Heritage

gave an excellent guided walk starting at Pevensey Castle and walking on to Westham churchyard and cemetery where several members had family connections.

In August Steve Sims told us about his research into the Blogg family, while in September we learnt about Eastbourne at Leisure from Phil Gardener. In October Matthew Homewood talked about A Sporting History of Sussex - from the Amazing to the Bizarre. Then in November Jenny Flood gave us a detailed account of Conscientious Objectors in WW1.

On 18th November we held our second Family History Workshop. Whereas the first was extremely busy this was disappointing with very few attendees, in fact we had more helpers than people wanting help! We have no idea why this was the case, but it did give us a good chance to have a natter!

I really enjoyed our Christmas get-together when once again we asked you the members to bring in and talk about your treasured possessions. It was a great social evening with festive mince pies too we even had to put out more tables to display all the family treasures.

We had Zoom meetings in January and February. The first was Dr Sophia Kay is part of the TV Time Team programmes. She talked about

her work on the programme researching the family stories connected to the archaeological finds. Sarah Williams from Who Do You Think You Are magazine was our speaker at the February meeting. Both were excellent meetings.

In March we were delighted to welcome past member Helen Rimmer who gave a talk on Making Sense of DNA and What to do with your Matches. Helen first became a member when she was only 13, so all these years later it is great to have her as a speaker!

Thanks Shirley, for arranging a good programme of speakers. Please let us know if you have any ideas for speakers or activities for the future.

Lastly, please consider taking on the position of editor, we really do need someone to put together the July issue. John Titmuss is very willing to help you get started. Also consider the role of secretary or just try joining as a committee member, we would really appreciate new ideas. (If you cannot join a Zoom meeting then you could always come to our house and join me at my PC).

Lastly, thank you all for coming to our meetings and supporting Family Roots. We look forward to a great year ahead celebrating 40 years of Family Roots.

Treasurer's Report

Firstly, I need to apologise as the gremlins got into in copying last years accounts for this year and several of the figures are wrong so please ignore them. Unfortunately the accounts were sent out before I noticed. I am fairly certain that the figures for this year's accounts are correct.

As you are aware I only took over as treasurer last year so I am still finding my feet. The committee have taken various steps to improve our financial position and whilst our payments still exceed our income it is by a smaller amount this year.

The total receipts on the general account for 2025/26 was £1,908 but our payments amounted to £2,096 The difference this year is -£188. There was an overspend of £525 last year.

Our main income comes from membership subscriptions, which totalled £965 last year, a drop of £223 on the previous year. Income from meeting and visitors fees were also down by £58. £375 as opposed to £433 last year. FindMyPast royalties at £266 were similar to the previous year.

Our main outgoings were for the hire of the school hall, Speakers fees and the magazine.

Ocklynge School have kept the same hire charge at £70 per meeting

which has been the same as the previous years and it will remain the same for this year thus totalling £630. We have spent less on speakers fees (£513 compared to £893 last year), a drop of £380. I would like to give special thanks to those who gave their time and knowledge freely and to Shirley for sourcing and booking the speakers .

The cost of printing the magazine was £362 as opposed to (£609).

We reduced the magazine to 3 times a year and we also managed to negotiate a better price for the printing with Planahead. In addition we are having fewer magazines printed as sadly we have fewer members but also many new members are opting to receive the magazine digitally. This also reduces the cost of postage.

The cost of renewing the Zoom licence was £156, which is the same as last year.

The bookstall account was closed and Janet only has CDs and a few other records. John has made the CDs all available as downloads from the website

It had taken most of last year to finally dispose of all the books remaining on the bookstall and we owe Janet a debt of gratitude for persevering to reduce the stock and still bringing boxes to meetings for many months to sell off books at very reduced prices. The only stock she

now carries is the society's CDs which she will continue to sell through the website, accepting payments via PayPal which will be linked to the general account. Thanks also to John for all the work involved in sorting out the downloads and all the other behind the scenes work on the website.

The bookstall bank account at HSBC Was closed and the balance of transferred to the general account. We moved our main account to the Metro Bank in March last year, and finally closed the HSBC account in July. This was closed primarily because of HSBCs high charges. Unfortunately, the Metro bank have now introduced charges which seems to be in common with charitable accounts with all banks. At £3 a month, It is less than we were being charged at HSBC. In addition we have opened a savings account with Saffron Building Society which will provide us with some interest.

There have been no new items added to fixed assets.

The laptop bought 2 years ago has depreciated further and all other assets had already been written off.

Current assets totalled £5,821, and the net worth of the Society is shown as £5970 for the year. This is a reduction of £108 over last year.

Finally my thanks go to Russell for auditing the accounts.

FAMILY ROOTS FHS (EASTBOURNE AND DISTRICT)

General Society Account Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31 January 2026

			(24/25)
	£	£	£
Receipts			
Subscriptions	965		1,188
Meeting Fees	284		326
Visitors	91		107
Donations	102		113
Share of Raffle income	64		29
Books sold	103		74
Sale of second hand magazines	10		14
**Workshops income NET	Income 108		
	Expenses <u>85</u>		
Findmypast Royalties	<u>266</u>		<u>267</u>
		1,908	2,118
Payments			
Rent	630		630
FFHS subscriptions and insurance			43
Postages and telephone	107		90
Printing and photocopying	362		609
Speaker's fees	513		893
Website expenses	78		74
Projects expenses (Bookstall)			13
Zoom licence	156		156
Bank Charges	34		78
Donation to St Mary's Church (July 2024 meeting)			20
Pevensey Castle visit	83		
Miscellaneous	8		
Deposit for 40th Anniversary Tea	100		
Raffle prizes Dec 2025 meeting	25		
	<u>2,096</u>		<u>2,606</u>
Excess of payments over receipts	-	188	- 488

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS ACCOUNT
Trading Account for the year ended 31 January 2026

	£	£	(24/25) £
Receipts			
Book sales	33		495
Share of Raffle Income			
Closing book stock	<u>463</u>		<u>475</u>
		496	970
Payments			
Opening stock	475		2,462
Bank charges	30		63
Postages, stationery etc.	<u>4</u>	<u>509</u>	<u>26</u>
			2,551
Excess of Payments over Receipts	-	<u>13</u>	- <u>1,581</u>
Cash in Hand			
Petty Cash	£73		46
Float	£20		£20
PayPal			<u>£2</u>
Total	£93		£68
Bank Account as at 31st January 2026	Nil (Transferred to No 1 account 27 June 2025)		

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31st January 2026**

Fixed Assets			(31.1.25)
		£	£
			£
	Cost Depreciation		
Microfiche reader	458 458		
2 extendable display panels	132 132		
Laptop purchased July 2023	429 259	170	257
Data projector	259 259		
Laptop/projector adapter	10 10		
Radio Microphone (2017)	30 30		
Radio Microphone (2018)	32 32		
SubZero Microphone system	56 56		
Microfiche	2200 2200		
120 white cups and saucers	150 150		
New banner (2023)	56 56	<u>170</u>	
Current Assets			
Stock of books and publications		463	475
Cash at bank: General Club Accounts			
Current Account No. 1		897	336
Books and Publications Account			
Current Account No. 2		Closed	4,942
Saffron Building Society		4,260	
Cash in hand: Petty Cash & PayPal		93	<u>68</u>
		<u>5,713</u>	5,821
Liabilities			
Net worth			
		<u>5,883</u>	<u>6,078</u>

J. Wootton, Treasurer (Outgoing - part year)
H. Lucas, Treasurer (Incoming - part year)
J. Savage, Bookstall Organiser

I have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of my knowledge and belief were necessary for the purpose of my examination of the accounts, and certify that they give a true and fair view of the affairs of Family Roots (Eastbourne & District) F.H.S. as at 31st January 2026.

**Invoice for October 2025 Workshop (£80) not received at year end. To be accounted for subsequently.
Loss over the two dates at that time will be £57.43, to be rounded to £57.

R. S. Ridout

Celebrating 40 Years of Family Roots

By: Helen Warren with the help of June Johnson

Sometime during the 1980s Judith Kinnison-Bourke ran a night school



Phyl Webb, Barbara Budd & Norma Weir

course about researching your family history at what was then Eastbourne College of Art and Technology, it was at the top of St Anns Road in Eastbourne. In 1986 when the course finished the attendees decided to form their own family history research group and Family Roots was born!

The first committee was chaired by Ken Alderton; Barbara Budd was treasurer and Phyl Webb secretary and for a long-time chair. June Johnson was responsible for refreshments, Norma Weir was librarian and Melanie Holland was project organiser. Others involved were Linda Caroe – the very first Family Roots' meeting took place at her house, Loretta Anniss, Kay Booker, Martyna Piper-Smith, Jeremy Daniel, Eric Rivett and Judith Kinnison-Bourke the tutor who encouraged forming Family Roots in the first place.

Others involved in those early days were Ernie Pitcher (a stickler for rules), Len Medhurst (local born and bred), Lez Smith (medal specialist

and later chairman then president) and Jack Stratfeild (army research).

Then there was John Rochester, June Barnes (editor and producer of the



1851 Census for Sussex in

book form) and David

Markwick, an active

member who was chauffeur

to those attending Book

and Family History Fairs.

When Family Roots'

meetings first started at the

Friends Meeting House in Wish Road, Eastbourne, everybody welcomed the new members and enquired what they were researching or why they were researching. As a society FR helped the LDS in transcribing the 1881 Census which later went on to be available as part of their on worldwide database. Members went on to purchase the fiche of counties they were interested in from the LDS. These were later given to Family Roots and added to the collection of fiche. Family Roots also purchased the fiche of the BMD index, before this the only way to investigate was a trip to St Catherine's House in London. They also purchased micro fiche reading machines which along with the fiche could be borrowed by members in their own homes. Many an exciting discovery was made while searching through the Family Roots' fiche collection!

Then there were organised coach trips to London repositories like the Census Returns Library in Liverpool Street, the Metropolitan Archives in Northampton Road and the National Archives at Kew. These trips were usually arranged by June Johnson who also gave detailed instructions about how to manage the visit and especially to take time out to eat your packed lunch!

Later there was a group led by John Tyhurst and assisted by Theresa Hancock, John Crane, Frances Muncey and others who transcribed many of the monumental inscriptions in local graveyards and cemeteries in and around Eastbourne. These transcriptions are published as CDs or digital downloads on our website now, and most can also be read through a Find My Past subscription. They continue to be a great asset to family historians worldwide.

After 40 years our society continues to flourish with memorable events like the 25th Anniversary dinner, the Victorian evening, plus quizzes and social ‘get-togethers’ at Christmas. Of course, there are the monthly speaker meetings too and the occasional outing, not forgetting our member’s magazine edited by John Titmuss for several years now. Although so much information is available online it is still good and necessary to visit actual places, to talk to folks who share our interest in family history and to belong to a group who are always happy to help

solve a brick wall or just make us look afresh at a particular problem.

Happy 40th birthday to Family Roots. With thanks to all the past and present members for making our society what it is today and may we continue for many years to come!

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Alexandrina – What’s in a Name?

Contributed By: Donald Selmes

As active members of Friends of Ocklynge Cemetery, Alison and I spend some of our time clearing foliage from gravestones and paths at the cemetery. In February of this year we cut down a clump of Holm Oaks that was totally obscuring several graves in the cemetery, most notably one for a lady called Alexandrina, widow of Charles Keats. I thought this was such an unusual name that I would find a little bit more about her,



and surely with that name it would be fairly straightforward. The gravestone also gave a few extra clues.

It reads “*In ever loving memory of ALEXANDRINA widow of Charles Keats of Pentruse St. Ervan, Cornwall daughter of Capt. and Mrs. Evans. Beacon House, St*

Agnes, Cornwall who died at Eastbourne Feb 13th 1929 “He Knows”

On the Kerb Stone at the foot of the grave it also reads “A loving loyal and faithful friend never forgotten”.

The research therefore seemed very simple – an usual name and the gravestone tells us both her married and maiden name, as well as the part of the country that she probably came from. For reasons that will become clear I will call this lady Alex from now on.

The first task was to look for her death in Eastbourne so that I could possibly find out her age, but the only trouble was that there was no Alexandrina Keats dying in Eastbourne in the civil registers in 1929. In fact there were no deaths of anyone called Keats in Sussex for five years either side of 1929.

I decided to use the clues on the gravestone and look for an Alexandrina Evans being born in Cornwall and quickly found I was having a lot more luck. In the Civil Registration Birth Index we can see Alexandrina Evans being born in Truro in Q4 1861, and then we see the first variation in her name, as in the Baptismal Register she is down as Alexandria daughter of James and Ann Evans when she is baptised in St Agnes on 1st December 1862.

By the time she is on the censuses her Christian name has dropped not just the “n” but also the “i”. In 1871, named Alexandra she is with her family in Fiddlers Green, Newlyn where her father is a lead mine agent

and in 1881 she has the same name with her father being a mining engineer.

In 1885 the Marriage Index has her marrying as Alexandra in St Columb Major to a man named Charles Keat (note he is without the final letter of his surname as it is spelled on Alexandrina's gravestone), I have also found that the banns for this marriage were read in Blisland on 14/21/28 December 1884 and she is there named as Alexandria.

In 1891 the couple are living at Cassacarron Mill in Blisland, where Charles was a miller like his father, and now our lady is simply named Allie.

In 1901 they had moved to Pentruse, St Ervan, St Columb as Charles and Alexandria and Charles is now listed as a farmer. The address here matches that on Alexandrina's tombstone.

The marriage lasted for almost 20 years with no sign of any children being produced and then on 30th June 1904 Charles died and he was buried at Blisland Parish Church. The inscription on his grave reads "In loving memory of Charles the beloved husband of Alexandria Keat who died at Pencarrow Mills, Wadebridge, June 30th 1904 aged 42 years". His Probate record also show that the administration of his estate worth £1829 went to Alexandria Keat, widow. It was quite a funeral with, according to the Cornishman newspaper, a glass hearse followed by three mourning carriages and about twenty other carriages of friends and family.

Alex had only recently lost her mother Ann (nee Gilzean) who had died on 2nd March 1904 and as Alexandria Keat, widow, she had been granted probate along with her sister Eliza on 2nd August 1904.

A year later, Alex is back to being Alexandra Keat when she marries William Tremewan on 1st August 1905 in Truro, and the name is repeated in the announcements of the marriage in two Cornish newspapers.

William was a widower and farmer, fifteen years older than Alex and she acquired seven step-children through this marriage.

Her second marriage did not last very long and on 17th January 1911 William Tremewan died. The announcement in the West Briton and Cornwall advertiser described him as the beloved husband of A Tremewan.

It seems likely that Alex did not get on as well as she might with her step-children. Probate for William's £1595 estate was granted to his daughter, Winnifred Walters, and by the time of the next census on 2nd April 1911 she is living as a widow boarding in St Agnes with Elizabeth Gripe using the name A Tremewan. This may have been an ex-neighbour as William Tremewan died at Glanville Terrace at St Agnes which is where Elizabeth Gripe was living in 1901.

She had obviously held on to the property she inherited from her first husband throughout her second marriage. In June 1912 the Royal Cornwall Gazette reported on a case brought by her tenant farmer at

Pentruise, St Ervan suing his landlady Mrs Alexandra Tremewan, also of Pentruise.

Sometime between then and 1921 Alex decided to move on from Cornwall. It may have been as late as 1920 or 1921 as there is an advert in the West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser of 16th December that reads “John Tredinnick has been favoured with instructions from Mrs. A. Tremewan, The Russettings. St. Agnes, to remove to the above Hall, and SELL by AUCTION, on SATURDAY NEXT, at 1 p.m. sharp, HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE & EFFECTS, including satin walnut and other bedroom suites, French and Italian bedsteads, dining and drawing room furnishings, PIANO, etc”

By the time of the 1921 Census, on 19th June, she is living with Jessie Biggs, a Companion Help at 31 Bedford Grove, Eastbourne as Alexandra Tremewan and she would have filled the census out herself, using that name. In the 1922 Electoral Register she was now at 31 The Avenue and in 1923 at 31 Hyde Gardens where she was living when she died. Also living with her at that address was Mary Ann London, born in Kensington in about 1873. In 1921 she had been at 31 The Avenue to where Alex moved in 1922 and they both moved to Hyde Gardens together.

It would seem extremely likely that it was Mary Ann London who had the gravestone put in place with the message about her “loving loyal and faithful friend never forgotten”. Probate for Alexandrina Tremewan had

been granted to Mary Ann London to administer the estate worth £315 on 25th March 1929.

The Civil Registration Death Register lists Alexandrina Tremewan and the burial register for plot Y1173 also has her down as Alexandrina Tremewan when she was buried in plot Y1173 at Ocklynge. It seems she died using the name Alexandrina as she had been christened with it but had rarely used that name during her life.

The last Clue on the gravestone is that she was the daughter of Captain and Mrs Evans of Beacon House, St Agnes, Cornwall. We know from her christening that she was the daughter of James and Ann Evans and this family can easily be found in the censuses. One question to be answered is whether James was a military gentleman, or perhaps Naval or maybe in the militia.

In 1851 James was living with his father, a Tin Mine Agent and he was a Tin Miner, in 1861 James was a tin mine agent, 1871 he was down as a Lead Mine Agent, in 1881 he is a Mining Engineer, and in 1891 he was a retired Mine Agent born in St Agnes. His wife Ann was from Drainie in Scotland, as was his eldest daughter, Elizabeth Hellen. Apart from a short spell in Scotland, he seemed to have spent his entire life in Cornwall.

James died on 11th February 1898 and the Cornishman of February 28th reports that Mr James Evans, 68, M.E. died at Beacon House St Agnes so we know we have the right man and the address on the gravestone was

correct. The Cornubian and Redruth Times of 18th February had paid the following tribute “Capt. James Evans of St Agnes, but a few years ago a prominent mining agent, being connected with Budnick, East Wheal Rose, and other mines, recently passed away....”. Here again we have reference to him being a Captain but no trace of any military or seagoing history can be found.

After a little bit of research into Cornish mining I found the answer – Captain was an honorific used for mine agents in Cornwall. A Cornish Mining Captain was a highly skilled manager and agent, often overseeing all operations, safety, and personnel at, or below, ground level. Renowned for their expertise, they frequently exported Cornish mining technology worldwide, becoming global leaders in the 19th-century mining industry. At the final reckoning almost all of what was written on the gravestone turns out to be correct, even if it was slightly misleading, because of the several variations of her Christian name and the failure to mention the surname she died with and the mis-spelling of her first husband’s name. Why she ended up in Eastbourne we will probably never know – unless you, the reader, can shed any light. Some of her siblings had also spread their wings with her eldest sister, Elizabeth Helen marrying a watchmaker in Scotland and dying there in 1929, Annie Maria going to Calderdale in West Yorkshire and brother James Duncan ended up dying in New Zealand in 1904.

Digital Birth & Death Certificates

Contributed By: Rosalind Hodge.

Perhaps like many family history researchers I have a considerable collection of birth, marriage and death certificates that I have gathered over 40 years of research. They are mostly direct ancestors and not inclined to be siblings of, for example a great grandfather. However I have found the digital Birth and Death certificates introduced by the GRO to be so useful and at the bargain price of £3 an entry they are perfect for gleaning useful information about the wider family. For those not familiar with them, they are ordered online, you enter your card details in a secure site and immediately a screen comes up with the link to the image of the original entry in the register. You can download or screen save and an email gives you access to it for 3 months, so remember to save it within that time. I have ordered quite a number that I would not have ordered at the price of £12.50 a copy. Dates available are Deaths 1837-1957 and Births 1837 to 100 years ago- 1926 changing with the year. These digital copies are not accepted for legal purposes but are perfect for family history research as contain all the information in a digital image of the original entry in the register.

I'm not a names and dates person as I love to find extra information which can give so much more insight into our ancestors' lives. Recently

two birth and death certificates have been particularly useful. My great great grandparents Charles Wooller and Jane née Piper had 14 children two of whom died as babies. Before coming to Ratton, as Lord Willingdon's Bailiff, Charles and Jane lived at Arlington and Dicker. I have been able to trace and visit their houses as identified in the census but I have never found their entry for the 1861 census which was annoying. Over many years I've tried every wild card I could think of plus trawled through every census image entry for Arlington, Dicker, Wilmington and Hellingly with no luck. Charles and Jane were married at Arlington church 9 July 1853 both of the parish and their first two children were born there. In the 1871 census they were living at Copyhold Arlington but my gt grandfather David was born at Hatches Farm Upper Dicker, in Hellingly parish on 27 March 1865. One of the babies named George was born in 1860 and died in April 1861, the very month of the 1861 census. So, I decided to send for digital copies of his birth and death certificates hoping it might indicate the exact place of birth and death and not just put the parish as is often the case. It did give just Hellingly as place of birth but gave abode of his mother the informant as Starnash Farm Dicker. The actual address, just what I wanted to know. George was born 29 October and his mother registered his birth on 31 October in Hailsham. Did she really walk several miles from Upper Dicker to Hailsham register office within 48 hours of giving birth!

His death certificate gave Starnash as place of death and a strange cause, “Teething for 1 month, inflammatory fever 2 weeks”. I looked up death through teething and found it was quite a common recorded cause of death from the 18th century until the end of Victorian times. For some reason teething was considered dangerous and one reports it caused the death of one in ten babies. Of course we now know a child cannot die of teething and that the cause would have been some undiagnosed infection. I had no idea the family had lived at Starnash Farm before moving to Hatches Farm just down the road. I already knew Jane’s 93 year old mother Susannah Piper née Hoad died at Starnash in 1889 and had I visited a Mrs Piper at the farm in 1988 when researching the Piper family. She told me Woollers had lived there but knew no details. So George’s certificates proved when the family lived there.

Birth and death certificates that fall during the in between census years can be very informative as I was to find again when looking at the second baby, little Una Wooller. In 1871 Charles, Jane and family were living at Copyhold Arlington. I knew their youngest child Ada was born there 1879 the year they moved to Willingdon. So I assumed wrongly they lived at that address from 1871-1879. Curious about Una I ordered her digital birth and death certificates. To my surprise her place of birth and her mother’s abode in August 1875 was not Copyhold but Bates Green Arlington. Many of you who live locally will recognise that name as the

farm with the famous Bluebell Walk and open garden. Coincidentally it was somewhere I had visited twice in the previous week to enjoy the beautiful woodland walk and tea and cake in the Bluebell Barn having no idea it had once been my great great grandparent's home. On the Bates Green website there is a section on the history of the house with photographs showing when the now beautiful farmhouse was once just a simple cottage, the home of Charles and Jane. Una died aged 1 year 9 month in May 1877, of TB of the bowel and by then the family was back living at Copyhold. Again I looked up the cause of death to find it was recorded as a fairly common cause of death for babies apparently through drinking infected milk. However today this is considered medically to have been a rare and difficult condition to diagnose with symptoms that mimic other diseases such as Crohn's, gastro enteritis or even appendicitis. Today diagnoses would be through imaging and lab tests. So I wonder what was the real cause of the deaths of babies George and Una.

Information on the certificates of these two babies has given me two new home addresses for my great great grandparents which otherwise I would never have known. As George and Una were not direct ancestors I wouldn't have paid £12.50 for a standard certificate for each of these children. I consider these digital images are excellent value at less than a quarter of the price of a standard certificate.

To order go to www.gro.gov.uk then enter your email address and create a password. Once you have done this you can now search for an entry even without knowing the ref no. in the register. It's helpful if you have found this in an online registration search. Enter as much information as possible: the year of birth or death, surname, first name and register area/office. In the case of birth the mother's maiden name is key to identifying the correct entry. If you get a match click on the button and you get a choice of certificates, standard, PDF or digital. Click on digital and continue for an instant £3 original image.

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A Sad Way to Die

Contributed By Ailna Martin

My paternal great-great uncle, Ouseley Cooper, was born about 1837 in Aston, Warwickshire. His father was a master cabinet maker. His baptism, on the 13th of June 1837, is recorded in the Parish Register of the Chapel of St. James the Less in Aston, Warwickshire.

The 1861 Census records Ouseley living in Hackney with his young wife Elinor and their two-month-old infant, Clara Louise, when his occupation is given as "Clerk in the hop trade". This serves to corroborate his presence in a hop merchant's premises at the time of his death on the 6th of December 1868, at the all too early age of 32. The

death certificate states that Ouseley had died of a “violent haemorrhage caused by an accidental stab with a knife”. I imagine that he must have used a knife open the sack containing the hops and had foolishly used it incorrectly, slashing towards himself. The information was passed to the Registrar by the Coroner, following an inquest held on the 7th December 1868.

I had hoped to find a report of the inquest in the British newspaper archive but so far, I have been unsuccessful. I have also tried the London Metropolitan Archives. The search continues. Should any member have any helpful suggestions I would be delighted if they could get in touch with me via email – ailnabmartin@gmail.com

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At Last, I Know Who I Am

My DNA Journey to Discover My Biological Family

Contributed by: John Titmuss

In my editorial in Vol. 37.2 (November 2022), I outlined the beginning of my journey to discover the identity of my biological father.

At that stage, I had received my DNA test results from Ancestry and uploaded them to Ancestry, MyHeritage, and Living DNA. The matches I received suggested something I had never previously

considered: that my siblings appeared to be half-siblings, and that my nephews and nieces on my mother's side were also matching at levels that supported this theory.

Since then, that theory has been conclusively proven through DNA evidence.

My now half-nephew, Neil, had been conducting his own research in an attempt to identify the biological father of the man I had always believed to be my father. With the assistance of a very distant cousin, he made significant progress, as described in my article on the Schofield family in Vol. 40.1 (July 2025).

Not being particularly DNA-savvy myself, I revisited some of the information Neil had uncovered and, quite by chance, stumbled across a family tree belonging to Barbara, a cousin of Paul Scofield. We began exchanging messages through Ancestry in June 2025.

Barbara kindly offered to help with my search and suggested that I send her a link to my DNA results. Unfortunately, as she was visiting the UK at the time encountered difficulties accessing the information. After several unsuccessful attempts to view the data, we agreed that it would be easier to try again once she had returned home to Australia.

As often happens in family history research, life intervened and the

search temporarily went quiet.

Fast forward to 4th May 2026.

For reasons I cannot quite explain, I had left matters untouched for many months. Eventually, I contacted Barbara again, and she immediately resumed her offer of help. She asked me to identify my strongest DNA matches and to resend the link to my DNA results, which I duly did.

Around the same time, I contacted Vicky, my highest DNA match on Ancestry. What immediately caught my attention was that her family tree included the surname BROWN, which was my mother's maiden name. After exchanging information about our family trees, we both reached what turned out to be a completely incorrect conclusion—that our connection was through my mother's side of the family.

As it turned out, this was a BIG MISTAKE!

Vicky also mentioned that she was not intending to renew her Ancestry subscription because she felt unable to break through several long-standing genealogical brick walls.

When Barbara reviewed the DNA evidence, she quickly identified what Vicky and I had missed. Vicky was not a maternal cousin at all—she was a paternal cousin.

Needless to say, I sent Vicky a rather hurried message explaining this new discovery, although sadly I have not yet received a reply.

Determined to make contact, I followed up some of the hints attached to Vicky's family tree and located an electoral register entry with an address in Cambridge. Since her family originated largely from Suffolk and the Cambridge area, it seemed a reasonable lead to pursue. I wrote a letter, including my email address and asking for a reply either way. I also contacted the membership secretaries of both the Suffolk and Cambridge Family History Societies to ask whether they had any members by that name. Unfortunately, neither enquiry produced any results.

Meanwhile, Barbara's work continued at an impressive pace.

By 6th May she had constructed a private paternal family tree based on my DNA matches and invited me to view it. She also suggested that I upload my complete family tree, as only my maternal side was visible at that point. I followed her advice, made the tree public, and granted her Editor privileges so that she could continue her investigations.

The results were remarkable.

By 11th May I was looking at a family tree containing people who were, in Barbara's words, 99% likely to be my biological family: the Woolford family. Among them were newly discovered relatives Jayne and Heather,

together with Vicky, whose DNA matches were helping to identify my paternal line. At the age of 80, I felt I was finally beginning to discover who I really am.

The evidence pointed towards three brothers: Donald, Leonard, and Ernest Woolford. Donald was represented by Vicky's DNA match of 349 cM. Barbara explained that this level of matching suggests a biological relationship, but one that is probably more distant than a direct paternal line. Leonard presents a different challenge. There are currently no known descendants from his line who have taken DNA tests, making it impossible to either confirm or eliminate him through genetic evidence.

That leaves Ernest. As Barbara explained in one of her messages: "The strongest and most consistent DNA matches are through Ernest's line. Both Jayne (667.9 cM) and Heather (617.1 cM) fall into a range that is very consistent with a close biological relationship. Importantly, these are two independent matches from the same branch, and they both point in the same direction." Those words represented a major breakthrough in my search.

Family circumstances at the time may also fit the evidence. My mother had been told that my presumed father had died as a prisoner of war. At some point she appears to have met "A N Other"—possibly Ernest Woolford. Records show that Ernest was living in Thornton Heath at the

time and not with his wife. Whether they were separated is unknown, but he was employed as a motor driver, while my mother was living in South Croydon, only a short distance away. How or where they may have met will probably never be known, but the circumstances suggest that their paths could quite easily have crossed.

As if uncovering an entirely new branch of my family was not enough, Barbara also discovered a fascinating Australian connection. One of my relatives, though not a direct ancestor, was transported to Australia in 1843 after being convicted of highway robbery. Somewhere in New South Wales there may well be distant relatives who share that connection today.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this journey has been making contact with newly discovered family members. I have spoken with Jayne, who had no idea that I existed but was delighted to learn that she and Heather had another relative. Long before these discoveries, I already had two first cousins and one first cousin once removed living in Crawley. Now, with the possibility of additional newly identified relatives through the Woolford family, I am hoping to arrange a family get-together in the near future. It would be a wonderful opportunity to bring together both old and newly discovered branches of the family and share the stories that have connected us.

Throughout my years of family history research, I have often joked that

DNA stands for "Do Not Ask". Like many genealogists, I knew that unexpected discoveries could emerge from genetic testing. Nevertheless, curiosity eventually got the better of me, and I am very glad that it did. The journey has taken me down some surprising paths, introduced me to new relatives, and answered questions that have remained unresolved for most of my life.

Oh, and by the way — every member of my maternal family already knew that Frank H. Titmuss was not my biological father.

It seems I was the last person to find out.

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When Time Team Meets Family History

Family Roots Zoom Meeting January 2026

Speaker Dr. Sophie Kay.

Dr Sophie Kay is the genealogical expert who now works with the “Time Team” programme on television linking their archaeological finds to the history of a family. She started her talk by explaining the importance of the different historical disciplines, in this case archaeology, and how they can work well together.

“Time Team” started over 30 years ago in 1994 and was shown on Channel 4 over a three-day period. Now, in the 21st century, it is fully digitised and available on YouTube. Sophie started watching the

programme as a child, sitting on the sofa with her father, little realising that decades later the producers would approach her and ask her to become the resident genealogist on the show, marrying family history with the archaeological finds.

The programme is filmed over a three-day period, usually over a weekend, and nothing is known about the site until the first ground is broken. Over the course of the dig the team must research and respond to what they find. Sophie showed some behind the scenes slides of a dig and introduced us to some of the regular archaeological experts who all approach their research from different angles and ask slightly different questions but work together as a team to produce a balanced view of the project. To understand how family history fits into the programmes Sophie used a case study of the 2023 Modbury dig in Devon to describe her role. Modbury is a beautiful little town in Devon that is full of history and the programme involved a community project covering several areas of the town to uncover its history.

She showed the team photograph that is taken at the start of every dig and pointed out some of the experts and their roles. There is a wealth of expertise on the programme, from aerial surveyors, environmental archaeologists, landscape archaeologists, dendrochronologists, metal detectorists and researchers, as well as all the production team and

cameramen. Stewart Ainsworth is the landscape archaeologist who studies the local maps to locate potential sites before the dig; John Gater is one of the geophysists who scans the ground to work out what might be lying underneath; Helen Geake and Dani Wootton are two of the archaeologists and small finds specialists; and Carenza Lewis who is one of the main archaeologists, has been with the programme for a long time and is a mine of information.

Sophie doesn't appear in every episode but gets called in if the producers decide there is a particular family history element attached to a programme. Using regular family history methods and archival research she was able to find out a lot of the background history of Modbury and of the key families living there before the programme.

Modbury played a big part in the English Civil War era where the Second Battle of Modbury took place in 1643. The town was only a small settlement of about a thousand residents at that time, but during the battle they were descended on by 8,000 Parliamentary troops who faced an army of only 1,500 Royalists. Fighting started off to the east of the town but gradually spilled into the centre and still today residents are finding possible artifacts in their gardens such as lead bullets.

The Time Team were hoping to find evidence of the manor house owned by the Champernowne family, a wealthy family whose history went back

to the 1400s in Modbury, and the 12th century priory that used to be in the town close to St George's church. They would look for clues in the modern buildings, and for street names and physical remains around the town.

Sophie researched the ancestry of the Champernowne family, and also of Vincent Stitson, who was one of the fifteen Royalists known to have taken part in the battle. The Stitsons were crafts people and after the battle Vincent migrated to America with his cousin Robert Studson. Vincent was a cordwainer/shoemaker, working with cordwan leather, and Robert was a carpenter, and through the family line their descendants became famous for the invention of the Stetson hat. Jim Stetson had come over from America to join the Time Team as he had traced the Stetson family through twelve generations over in the States, where they had developed sawmills, and he was keen to find out more about their English history.

The team started by digging test pits all over the town, some in people's gardens and the school playing field and nearby fields. The town's community had been very enthusiastic and welcoming, many of them volunteering to help with the digs. All the finds had to be carefully logged and put into trays to be sent over to the small finds team for further investigation.

Sophie had started by finding out what was already documented about Modbury and the two families of interest, the Champerdownes and Stitsons, by searching archives of Modbury and parish chest records. She said it is important to visit where an ancestor lived to gain a more in-depth knowledge of what the records show and develop a feel for what their life would have been like in the 17th century.

Churchwarden's accounts from the Civil War period gave clues to what was being done in the town. The 1642 records showed accounts for making lead bullets for the Civil War. Bullet making was paid for out of church funds. Modbury church still has bullet damage from the war. Even old buildings like churches can be changed over the years. Two members of the Stitson family, Thomas and Hugh, were both carpenters and were very involved with work on the church between 1620 and 1650 as they were mentioned several times in church accounts as receiving payment. Sophie and Jim Stetson explored many parts of Modbury church to see if there was any remaining woodwork from the Civil War era that might have been made by his ancestors, but most of the church was from the late 18th/early 19th centuries.

In the years after the Civil War Vincent and his family disappear from the records in Modbury. They appear in Devon records for a few months in 1656 but then disappear from English records completely. A family

with the same names and ages pops up in the records of Connecticut, USA, from 1664. To prove that the Stitsons who emigrated to America were the same Stetsons who appear in American records Sophie used two methods - ‘hasping’ (to secure a family group in the right place at the right time) and ‘topping and tailing’ (where a person disappears from English records in one place and reappears in records abroad within a given timeframe that does not overlap), as described by Andrew Todd in his book “Family History Nuts and Bolts”.

Wills give excellent clues. Vincent’s 1690 will which was proved in Connecticut, names his children in the correct order of ages. She also looked at inventories and the inventory of Vincent’s possessions identified that he owned leather and shoe lasts, which proved he was a shoemaker. While there are excellent DNA records of the Stetson families tracing present day members by direct lines to Vincent and Robert in the States, no DNA link has yet been made back to a Stitson family still living in England, but Sophie was satisfied from the evidence found in Vincent’s will and inventory that she had connected the correct families.

To conclude her talk Sophie described how all the different areas of expertise on Time Team come together to build up a picture of what Champerdowne manor could have looked like. The Champerdownes were a wealthy family in the 1400s and had built a typical medieval

manor in Modbury which had been destroyed in the Civil War and nothing remained above ground. Evidence for the manor house was found in a private back garden. The Time Team housing expert was able to work with their 3D construction expert to develop an image of what the manor would have looked like as nearly all courthouses of that period had the same elements.

Sophie had looked at inventories to piece together what the contents of the house might have been and added that information to help with the 3D reconstruction, which in turn would help the archaeologists when searching for artifacts that might have come from the house.

To understand the places where our ancestors lived Time Team brings archival research into family history, reconstruction expertise, knowledge of building history, local history, DNA results together with the archaeology to make the programme. It is the huge amount of interdisciplinary collaboration and the opportunity to ask different questions of other areas of expertise that makes the programmes so interesting.

Archaeology looks at a material culture angle. What are the physical items found in the ground and where did they come from? How do they compare with similar items found elsewhere? Family history looks for records of named individuals and how they relate to other individuals to

form a family tree. They may appear very different disciplines, but at the heart they are both about people and how they lived in the past.

Sophie encouraged us as family historians to always use maps to find out where your ancestors lived, and don't overlook local history societies and archaeological societies for your ancestors' places of interest. They may be able to give excellent insights about the history, buildings and industries of a place to help build a broader picture of your ancestors' lives. And don't be afraid to ask questions.

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Behind the Scenes of WDYTYA Magazine.

Family Roots Zoom meeting – Thursday, 5th February 2026

Speaker: Sarah Williams

By: Jenny Wootton

Sarah Williams started her talk with a brief background of her own family history and how she became part of 'Who Do You Think You Are?' magazine. The first issue of the magazine, published in October 2007, was linked to the television programme of the same name and was part of BBC magazines. Sarah was deputy editor of BBC History Magazine. Natasha Kaplinsky was on the cover of the first magazine and the programme about her family background was a very emotional one.

Sarah introduced us to the team who produce the WDYTYA magazine – Rosemary Collins, features editor; Seth Burgess, production, and Robbie Bennie, art editor. They are all based in Bristol, where a range of BBC magazines are produced. Rosemary Collins is the person to contact if you have an interesting story for the magazine – wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk.

At the beginning the magazine cover featured a full colour photograph of the celebrity whose family was being researched, and it used to include maps and other research booklets. Now it is produced as a digital magazine which is searchable online and individuals can subscribe to receive it online.

Subscribers can submit their stories online and share them with others. They can apply for help and advice through a question-and-answer panel, and members' letters allow a sense of community sharing your story with other readers. Readers can also submit photographs and ask for help identifying them. One should allow 6-8 weeks before getting answers to an enquiry.

WDYTYA magazine is always pleased to hear from readers who have a story they want to share, especially if you have had a 'Eureka' moment with your research and have had a breakthrough in unravelling a family mystery. They are also interested to hear about a family hero, military or

otherwise, someone you are proud of in your family tree, male or female. The magazine will often send a freelance writer to your home if you cannot write the story yourself and will visit with a photographer to illustrate your story in the magazine.

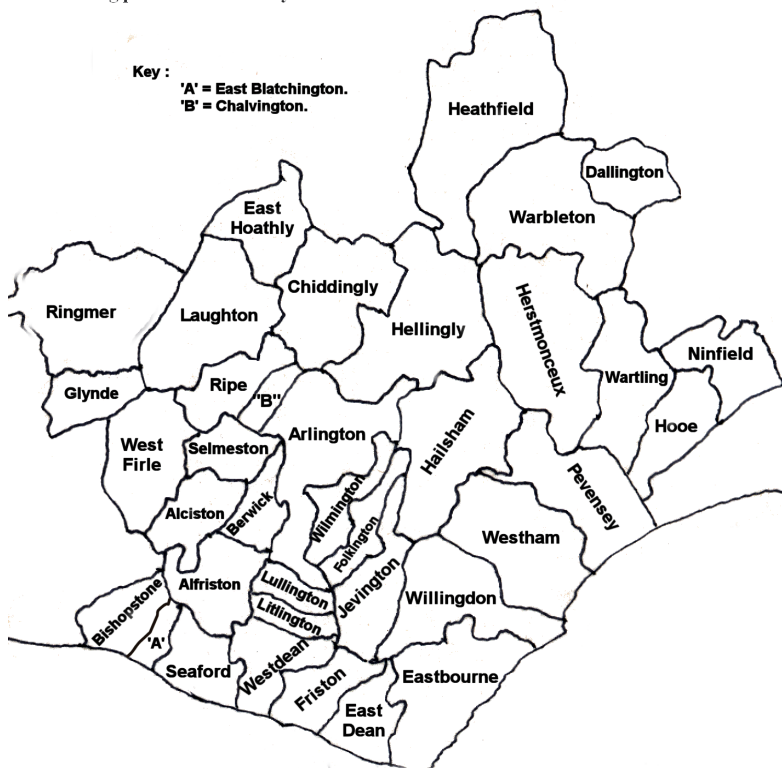
Family History Societies can send in news stories or events for their society, and also ask for help with projects and archives. There is a WDYTYA Facebook group where you can ask for help in their weekly newsletter.

Sarah Williams said it is getting harder to keep printed magazines afloat and independent journalism is important. The magazine is published every four weeks. It takes five weeks to put the articles together, and nine days at the printers before the magazine comes out, but it is getting harder to find printed copies in shops and supermarkets as many outlets will not order stock as fewer are sold in hard copy. If you wish to have a printed copy of the magazine you can order it from your newsagent.

WDYTYA magazine is now in digital format and you can download the app for free. This also allows you to search back issues for a name or a topic. There is a charge to subscribe for a digital copy as the magazine still has to cover copyright, photographs and salaries. Apple News at £12.99 per month gives access to all newspapers as well as WDYTYA magazine.

MAP OF "DISTRICT"

Showing parishes for "Family Roots" local research.



Map reproduced by kind permission of East Sussex County Record Office.

Alciston * Alfriston * Arlington * Berwick * Bishopstone
 *Chalvington * Chiddingly * Dallington * East Blatchington
 *East Dean * East Hoathly * Eastbourne * Folkington
 *Friston * Glynde * Hailsham * Heathfield * Hellingly*
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