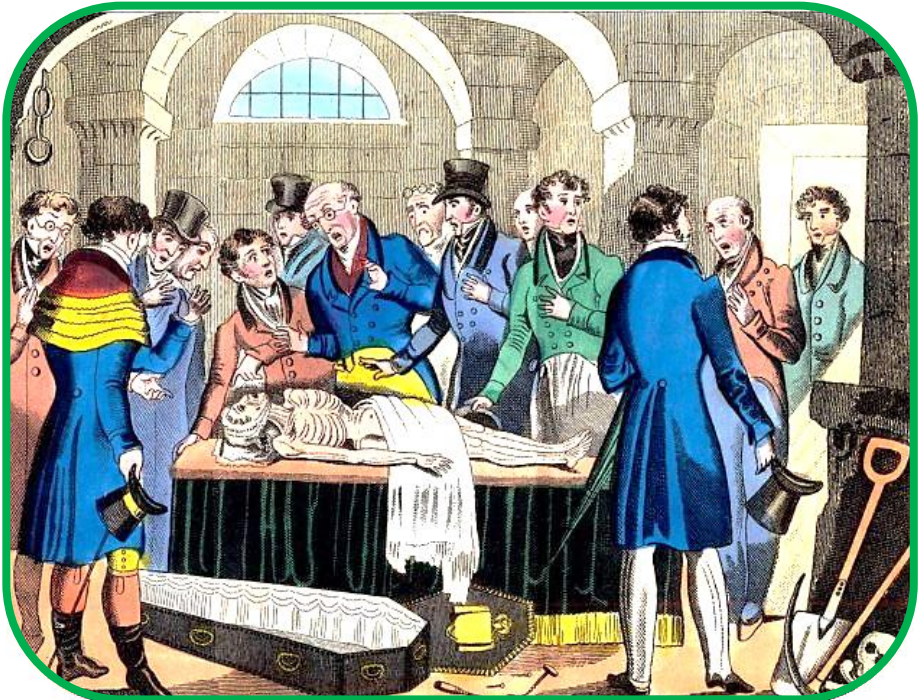




HILLINGDON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Member of the Family History Federation



Inquest jury examining the body. (see page 32)

2025 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

Unless stated meetings are at Hillingdon Baptist Church,
25 Hercies Road, Hillingdon, Middlesex. UB10 9EL
Doors open at 7.30 pm.

DATE	SPEAKER	SUBJECT
Thursday 15 th May 2.30pm ZOOM	Jean Renwick	'Researching and writing the Mourning brooch saga'
Thursday 12 th June 7.30pm	Rebecca Clarke	'H.M.S. India and her men'
Thursday 17 th July 7.30 pm ZOOM	Phil Isherwod	'Using a research methodology for family history'
<i>AUGUST NO MEETING</i>		
Thursday 18 th September 2.30 pm in the Hall	Jane King	'Coram's Children: History of the Foundling Hospital'
Thursday 16 th October 2.30 pm ZOOM	Janet Few	'Forgotten Women: researching the marginalised women in your tree'
Tuesday 11 th November 2.30 pm in the Hall	Ian Waller	'Nonconformist Records for Family history'
<i>DECEMBER NO MEETING</i>		

***NOTE: ZOOM MEETINGS. The link to join each meeting
will be included with the preceding NEWSLETTER.***

We always welcome visitors to our meetings at an entrance fee of £1

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JOHN'S JOTTINGS

By John Symons

I recently attended a virtual, online meeting by Nick Barratt who told us about life behind the scenes of the early British series of 'Who Do You Think You Are'. He is no longer associated with the programme but he still has connections with the Australian series. At the time of writing (late April) a new series is about to start on BBC.

I thought a couple of noteworthy points stood out. The first was that the current programme format was not originally intended, it largely evolved to its present form through delving into the life of one of the earliest subjects (Bill Oddie). He found that his mother, who he barely knew, had been committed to a mental institution in the 1950s. This, as you will understand, had a hugely significant impact on Bill and so the new programme title was born. The second, which is very clear to us as family historians, is that the primary focus of the programme is entertainment, not how to research your family. Nonetheless one of the episodes did lead me to a significant discovery.

One of the celebrities had an ancestor who was also committed to a mental institution, in this case the Devon County Lunatic Asylum in Exminster. I don't remember the celebrity involved but I do remember seeing a visit to what is now the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter where the archivist had ready and waiting detailed records about the ancestor. This immediately rung a bell with me as I knew from a death certificate that my 2nd great grandmother, Sarah Pedrick (nee Elliott) died in the same institution in 1887.

So, soon after whilst en route to one of my not infrequent excursions to Cornwall, a visit to the Heritage Centre was indicated. It is in fact handily placed just off the M5 motorway near the Exeter Services. A consultation with the catalogue showed that not only were admission records available but also a complete medical history of the inmates before and after admission.

(contd.)

These made rather sad reading because it was very clear that Sarah was suffering from a form of dementia and her family were unable to cope with her at home. On the other hand, she was encouraged to continue pastimes such as needlework which was good to know. She was a patient there from 1883 to 1887. These records were some of the most detailed I have ever found and they were not available online. I was able to take digital photos of the record books for a small fee as I recall. A good outcome then from this point of view, especially as a special journey was not required.

You may be lucky enough to find some hints yourself from the upcoming series. If you do, please share them with us.

FROM THE EDITOR

DATES FOR JOURNAL EDITIONS

JOURNAL	DEAD LINE
SEPTEMBER	9 th AUG
DECEMBER	10 th OCT

Ancestry, in an arrangement with West Dunbartonshire Arts & Heritage Service, have made available a very large number of Scottish records. As well as West Dunbartonshire these records cover baptisms and marriages from Argyll, Renfrewshire, Stirlingshire, and Lanarkshire (there are also burials from Lanarkshire). In addition to parish register entries these records have prison registers, muster rolls, valuation rolls, electoral registers, and more.

We have an arrangement with a number of other societies whereby we all exchange our journals and we recently had this email from Gillian Glover of the Chesterfield & District F.H.S.:

'Hello John - and thank you! Your journal looks great and I know the reading of it will be enjoyed. All the best, Gillian' (contd.)

Also, following one of John's newsletters, we received the following email:

'Thank you, John.

We hope you get well soon!

We really enjoyed the HFHS magazine. Very interesting.

Regards, Janet and Peter O'Brien'

Thanks for that feedback, Janet and Peter.

I must say thanks to all those who answered the call for more articles etc. for the journal. It makes life a little easier when there is an excess of material available and provides an interesting mix. Thank you again and keep them coming!

OUR NEW BANNER

As you probably know we attend the various fairs, fetes and shows that take place through the summer months.

As well as a gazebo to protect from the weather our 'for sale' books and other items that help to generate funds to keep us going, we also have a pull up banner to advertise the society.

As well as this original banner we have now received, as a donation, another 'pull up' banner.

It was unveiled during one of our Friday morning research sessions when Gill was snapped alongside, the resulting picture can be seen on the next page. We hope it will generate lots of interest and possibly encourage some new members.

(contd.)

HILLINGDON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Member of
The Family History Federation

1881 Census

Household	Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Occupation	Religion	Birthplace	County
1	Mr. J. H. Smith	45	M	Married	Engineer	Anglican	London	Middlesex
1	Mrs. J. H. Smith	42	F	Married	Housewife	Anglican	London	Middlesex
1	Mr. J. H. Smith	15	M	Single	Schoolboy	Anglican	London	Middlesex

Hillingdon is the most Westerly of the London Boroughs and was formed from nine ancient Middlesex parishes. We are the local Family History Society and offer help to all wishing to research their ancestors **WHEREVER** they are from. We have computers available on Friday mornings with volunteers to help you research and each month a guest speaker gives a talk on a variety of subjects including family history.

COME ALONG & LET US HELP YOU!

Website: www.hfhs.org.uk
Email: enquiries@hfhs.org.uk

Baptism

Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Occupation	Religion	Birthplace	County
Mr. J. H. Smith	45	M	Married	Engineer	Anglican	London	Middlesex

Family Tree

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graph TD
    A[John Henry Smith 1835-1905] --- B[Elizabeth Ann Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- C[John Henry Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- D[Elizabeth Ann Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- E[John Henry Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- F[Elizabeth Ann Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- G[John Henry Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- H[Elizabeth Ann Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- I[John Henry Smith 1835-1905]
    A --- J[Elizabeth Ann Smith 1835-1905]
    
```

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024

Unfortunately, due to recent knee surgery I won't be able to be with you today but would like to thank Charles for looking after the business side in my absence.

We made some important changes during 2023 and during 2024 continued with those that seem to be working well.

One of the key developments was to vary the meetings between afternoons during the winter months and switching to evenings when the longer days are with us. In addition, the mixture of Zoom and in person meetings continued. Many people prefer one format or another but at least this way there is something for everyone and now that West Middlesex FHS have extended a welcome for Hillingdon members to attend their Zoom meetings, there is an even bigger range of topics to choose from.

The journal has also now settled into its new format. We try to produce a 44-page version each quarter and Mr. Editor, Alan Rowland, usually succeeds in that objective, but despite his best endeavours occasionally falls short. Please remember we rely on your contributions to keep this full of interest.

The research room continues to be well used. It is mostly now self-funded although we have had to increase the charges to reflect the rental cost.

Membership has been fairly stable but we do need to attract new members both from the web site and local publicity.

You will see from the Treasurer's report that finances are tight and we rely on donations to keep just out of deficit. Thank you everyone, it is much appreciated.

Thanks as always to the committee: Gill May, Valerie Fitch, Alan Rowland and Charles Hampshire as Treasurer.

(contd.)

There are also the Friday regulars, Jenny Munday and Jean Gorman. Not forgetting Frankie Pugh who manages the web site. These with you our members make this Society what it is.

Thank you.

TREASURER'S REPORT YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2024

In 2024, the accounts show a small surplus of £13 as opposed to deficits in previous years. Income was £3,991: Expenditure £3,978.

However, without generous donations of £849, including £200 from Gill's bookstall, the society would be in deficit. So, a huge thank you to all the members who have given money beyond their subs. It is much appreciated.

Donations in fact were 21% of Income this year. Membership subscriptions 38%, and Research room fees 26%. These three items together represented 85% of Income.

Rent, despite fewer in person meetings, remains our main expenditure at 46%, Printing 19%, Speakers 14%, Computer licences £19% and Postage 7%. The overall pattern of Income and Expenditure is broadly similar to the previous year.

Our Balance Sheet shows accumulated funds of £1,582. A working balance to cover some future deficits and computer renewals. We are solvent but not cash rich. Your Committee continues to review all Income and Expenditure to ensure the sustainability of the Society.

I'd like to thank Gill May and Val Fitch for their help in regularly collecting and banking monies.

I open the floor for any questions on the accounts. (there were none).
Charles Hampshire BA, MBA, IPFA. Hon Treasurer.

(contd.)

**HILLINGDON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
BOOKSTALL ACCOUNT**
Account for the Twelve Months ended 31st December 2024

INCOME

2023		2024
£143.69	Sale of publications/CD's	£239.86
£ 33.84	Data sold through Find My Past	£ 26.13
<u>£278.00</u>	Membership through Parish Chest	£236.00
	Refund from Ickenham Festival	<u>£ 15.00</u>
<u>£455.53</u>		<u>£516.99</u>

EXPENSES

£ 25.00	Fairs	£ 40.00
<u>£278.00</u>	Membership to No 1 A/C	£236.00
£ 0.00	Purchase of books	£ 0.00
£ 33.84	Find My Past to No 1 A/C	£ 26.13
<u>£ 0.00</u>	HSBC bank charges	<u>£ 0.00</u>
<u>£336.84</u>		<u>£302.13</u>

£118.69	Balance being excess of income over expenditure	£214.86
£146.32	Balance in hand at 31.12.2023	£115.01
<u>£ 60.00</u>	Cash in hand at 31.12.2023	<u>£ 60.00</u>
£325.01		£389.87
<u>£150.00</u>	Donation to No 1 A/C	<u>£200.00</u>
<u>£175.01</u>	Surplus	<u>£189.87</u>

Represented by:

£ 60.00	Cash	£ 59.91
<u>£115.01</u>	Bookstall Account at NatWest	<u>£129.96</u>
<u>£175.01</u>		<u>£189.87</u>

Signed G. May
(Bookstall Manager)

Signed [Signature]
(Treasurer)

I certify that the foregoing Account has been correctly drawn up and is in accordance with records produced to me.

Signed [Signature]
(Account Examiner)

(contd.)

HFHS Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2024				
		2024		2023
		£		£
<u>Current Assets</u>				
Cash at Bank		1,779		1,714
Debtor - Rent overpaid		0		45
less Current Liabilities		197		100
		1,582		1,659
Accumulated Funds		1,582		1,659
<u>Current Liabilities</u>				
Subs in Advance		197		100

[1] less Subs in advance 2025 plus subs in advance 2024

[2] less £45 overcharged

(contd.)

HFHS Accounts as at 31 December 2024					
Income			2024		2023
Subs			1,513 [1]		1,374
Donations			849		390
Research Room			1,051		1,007
Printouts			53		54
Draw			58		47
Other			467		258
			3,991		3,130
Expenditure					
Memberships			54		55
Insurance			107		107
Rent			1,840 [2]		1,821
Printing			758		808
Computer Licences			386		369
Postage			282		257
Speakers			551		358
Computer Equip			0		0
Other			0		0
			3,978		3,775
Excess of Expenditure over Income					645
Excess of Income over Expenditure			13		

AN INTRIGUING FIND!

By John Bridger

John has followed up his piece about the gold half sovereigns in the March journal with another story, this time concerning Maundy Money.

Many moons ago an aunt of mine, who lived in Hammersmith, was assisting at a large pre-jumble sale sort out when she came across a gentleman's suit. Kindly she thought that, if altered to fit, I would be able to make use of the garment. She was overoptimistic because in the event, it was totally UNSUITABLE! (Sorry about that!)

Before discarding it, I searched the pockets and to my surprise found two small paper wraps deep down in the top pocket of the jacket. There was no means of identifying the owner of the suit or the wraps and to my knowledge no one has come forward to claim either the suit or the wraps. I found each of the wraps contained a set of 1879 Maundy Money coins both in reasonable condition. I put the wraps away and forgot all about them.

With the approach of Easter, I became aware of the Maundy Money ceremony and realised I knew very little of what it entailed. I decided to let Artificial Intelligence carry out my Google search to save me a lot of time and from its findings I constructed the following.

Queen Victoria attended the 1879 Maundy ceremony which was held in Westminster Abbey, London and as it was the year she turned 60, the number of recipients was 60 men and 60 women.

The ceremony has its origins in the 13th century. It is said to be based on words spoken at The Last Supper. It involves the distribution of alms for life's essentials and silver coins. These are presented in two leather bags one red the other white. In the red are ordinary coin of the realm for clothes and food (in place of the actual goods given at the original ceremony) and in the white four specially minted silver Maundy coins of one, two, three and four pence denominations.

(contd.)



Sets of Maundy coins are very collectable and can be quite valuable depending on condition and rarity.

Artificial Intelligence or traditional research? For myself I will still use our usual sources and methods, but for background and general information A.I. can be very useful.

JOHN BRIDGER

It is with great sadness I have to report the recent death of John Bridger.

John was an active member of the Society for many years. He was a regular volunteer on our Friday sessions helping others to uncover their family secrets. Failing health meant that he could not continue with this, but he continued to contribute regularly and enthusiastically to our journal.

I will always remember his sense of humour and good nature. It was always a pleasure to have his company. On behalf of the society, I would like to offer our condolences to his family. J.S.

NB So this article is the last that we shall see from John Bridger. For many years John provided articles for the journal and without his literary endeavours we would have been sorely tested to maintain our full size journal. A.R.

MY FOOTBALLING ANCESTOR FROM HAYES

By Sue Mahoney-Hampshire

With the help of our treasurer, Charles Hampshire, Sue sent us this story of her grandfather.

My grandfather Thomas George Holding was born on 18th January 1902 at Austins Row, Botwell, Hayes, to George Holding (a labourer) and Alice Holding (formerly Pope).

Thomas also became a labourer but later he had a car spraying business in Uxbridge which apparently sprayed Stirling Moss's car British Racing Green. He is however best known for his amateur football achievements.

Tom was a product of Clayton Road school (which closed in 1931 when Pinkwell opened) and made his football debut for Botwell Mission as goalkeeper in 1919. He played there for one season before joining the more famous Southall football club where he stayed for ten seasons appearing for them in the 1925 F.A. Amateur cup final against Clapton. Unfortunately, they lost 2-1. Clapton had previously won the cup four times in 1907, 1909, 1915 and 1924.

After a short spell at Egham, in 1930 he joined Hayes football club and played for them in the 1931 F.A. amateur cup final against Wycombe Wanderers, again losing but this time 0-1, in front of a 32,000 crowd at Highbury the home ground of Arsenal F.C. An account of the match says 'the only goal in the final came after a penalty when Bill Ceasar accidentally handled, Goalkeeper Tom Holding saved the shot from the spot but while the cheers of the Hayes crowd were still ringing, Britnell cut in from the wing to crash the ball in and give Wycombe victory.'

In 1934 Tom played for Leyton in his third F.A. amateur cup final, this time against Dulwich Hamlet (winners in 1920 and 1932) but it was not to be, Leyton lost 1-2. Grandfather lost a final perhaps for a record third time.

(contd.)

Tom returned to Hayes football club in 1935 and was appointed team manager and coach 1937-38, team manager 1939 and coach 1945-46.

During his playing career he played 173 times for Hayes between 1919 and 1939.

Incidentally Tom was the uncle of George Wilkins, who also played for Hayes as well as Brentford. George's son, Ray, captained England in 1982 having played for Chelsea, Manchester United, AC Milan, Paris St Germain and Glasgow Rangers. So, my grandad isn't the only distinguished footballer I am related to!

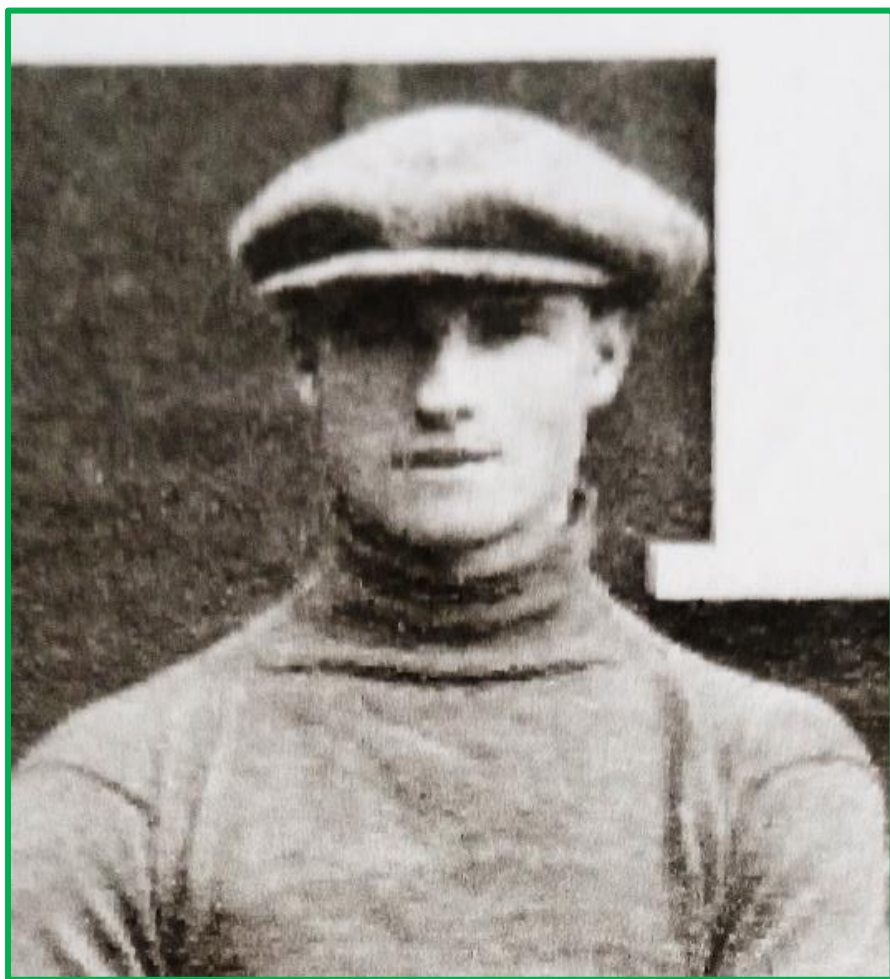
Sadly, Tom suffered ill health in later life and in 1954 had to give up the paint spraying business following heart trouble. He died on 11th July 1962 at the relatively young age of 60.

His contribution to Hayes F.C. was recognised when collections were held for him in February 1958 and Christmas 1959.

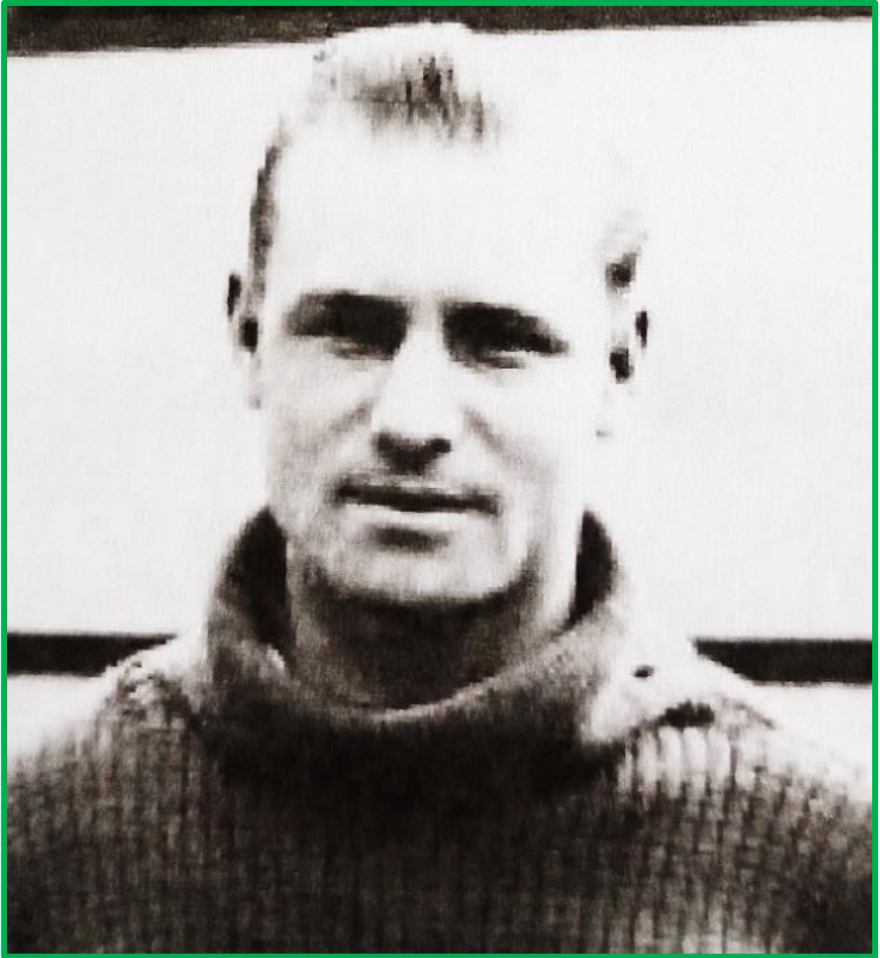
By the 1880s very few amateur teams reached the latter stages of the F.A. cup (proper) which eventually led to the creation of the F.A. amateur cup which ran from 1893 to 1974 when it was discontinued and the distinction between professional and amateur was abolished. The heartlands of amateur football were: in the North east (Northern League) and the South East (the Isthmian and Athenian leagues). With the end of the amateur cup most clubs played in the F.A. trophy which had been established in 1969 for leading semi-professional clubs whilst lower ranking clubs took part in the F.A. Vase competition. Bishop Auckland won the amateur cup a record ten times in 1896, 1900, 1914, 1921, 1922, 1935, 1939, 1955, 1956 and 1957.

Another coincidence occurred on a recent tour of Wembley Stadium, I met someone whose uncle played for Leyton in the 1920s and 1930s and it is likely that our two relatives played against each other and possibly together in 1933. Below are two photos of Tom but I am looking for photos of him playing in goal for any of his teams.

NB If anyone has pictures of Tom playing in goal or programmes etc., please let us know and we will forward copies to Sue. (contd.)



(contd.)



THE PINNER SHOW

We believe the Pinner Show will be held on 6th September and we anticipate attending with our usual volunteers, our book stall and the hope of recruiting some new members.

Why not go along and look us up on our stall, we will be pleased to see you.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DID?

Here is the next selection of oddly named occupations:

TROLLOPER
VERGE MAKER
HANDYWOMAN
FERRETER
DUFFER

You will find the answers on page 40.

Please send in any strange occupational names that you have come across together with their explanations, for other members to enjoy.

BOATMEN ANCESTORS

By Alan Rowland

For members without access to a computer, here is an abridged version of the Really Useful Bulletin No. 54 (February 2025) from the Family History Federation.

If you have found boatmen in your family history research, the chances are that they came to light through an entry in the census of England and Wales. The census is a good starting place for tracking down ancestors, but for boatmen it does have drawbacks and there are other sources of information.



Family and dog aboard boat and butty – believed to be 1929

(contd.)

Types of boatmen and boats

As an occupation 'boatman' can mean a number of things. It might be a man (but there were also women) working a horse-drawn canal boat, delivering coal or other heavy bulk cargoes. He might deliver goods the length and breadth of the country or just locally. It can also mean a man working a boat on a large river or estuary, these were sometimes referred to as flatmen, watermen, keelmen or lightermen.

The Royal Commission on Labour of 1892 showed what a variety of boats could be found on canals and especially on larger rivers and estuaries. They ranged from large steam-powered and sailing vessels through various types of barge and lighter to the smaller narrow boats used for the upper reaches of a river. Old photographs also show that three-masted schooners were towed by steam tug to upriver locations. Unlike canals, towpaths on rivers did not allow horses at first and it was common for vessels to be 'bow-hauled' by men and sometimes women.

Lightermen

Lightermen operated open flat-bottomed boats to load and unload ships anchored in harbours. Their boats had no cabins or proper shelter so they did not live on board. Their work had to fit the times of the tides and conditions were harsh, they often worked very long hours and even slept on the dockside.

Many lightermen were employed on a casual basis which meant they were not guaranteed work and before 1890 could be laid off at a moment's notice. They often had to wait long hours, unpaid, to catch the tide or wait for ships. Normal hours of work were twelve but after their shift they were often kept waiting for several, unpaid, hours before learning if there would be work for them the next day.

River boatmen

On large rivers such as the Thames, Trent, Humber, Mersey and Severn, larger boats of various types could be found. These were crewed mainly by men but it became more common for a captain to take his wife and children on board as crew.

(contd.)

The larger boats could offer better accommodation for the boatman, and if present, his family. Trent barges had a cabin at the stern for the captain and a smaller one in the bow for the mate. The Newark Heritage Barge, a floating museum moored at Newark, shows exactly what life was like on these vessels.

Canal boatmen

The terrain through which the canal ran determined its dimensions – if the supply of water was plentiful the canal could be up to fourteen feet wide but in hilly districts, they were usually seven feet wide in order to conserve water (not to save the planet it was the only way to have enough water in the canal for it to operate).

Narrowboats were most commonly found on the canal system. In the nineteenth century they were towed by horses, but by the early twentieth century steam and diesel driven motor boats began to appear.

Flyboats were the ‘express service’ of the canals they carried perishable and valuable goods, which needed to be delivered quickly. The key to the faster flyboats was that they were horse drawn with frequent changes of horse and 24 hour operation by an all man crew working shifts. They were mostly better paid than men on the slow boats and so could afford a slightly better standard of living.

The so-called slow boats were the main carrier force of the canals and carried heavy bulk goods. Some of the crew men on local services had homes ‘on the bank’ where some of their family members lived. On long-distance boats men slept on board in the tiny rear cabins. In some areas it was the practice for a man to work a boat with a mate, often his son, and leave the rest of the family at home. But in many cases men did live permanently on board with their families. The reason for this was that, even where a man was employed by a carrying company, he was required to find and pay a crew. He would be paid at a rate which took this into consideration, but if he took his wife and children aboard and used them as the crew, all the money stayed in the family. The captain, also known as the steerer, was usually a man but sometimes a woman, especially during the time of both World Wars. *(contd.)*

When engine driven narrow boats appeared they often towed a boat without an engine, known as a *butty*. It was common for the man of the family to operate the motor boat and his wife to steer the *butty*.

A narrowboat cabin was tiny – about 8ft long by 6ft wide. It would contain a small double bed for the man and wife, a single bed for a crew member or for children, a cupboard with a dropdown door which formed a folding table, and a stove for cooking and heating. There were no other facilities on board. For a toilet, they used a bucket or a canal side hedge. Water came from wells along the way, or the canal itself, but by the twentieth century standpipes began to appear.

No washing or laundry facilities were provided by the canal companies, even on the bank, until the 1960s.

Children of families who lived permanently on board, were usually born in the cabin. Keeping a toddler safe on a moving canal boat wasn't easy and small toddlers were usually tied to the roof where mother could keep a hand on them whilst steering. The cabin was not safe with a lit stove and a kettle of hot water usually present. This and other hazards of canal life led to plenty of accidents and a high death rate, especially among children.

The boats were constantly moving from place to place so one of the biggest problems was schooling the children. The children were supposed to attend the nearest elementary school whenever the boat tied up. From the 1820s canal missionaries began to appear. They provided mission rooms for the boating population who, because they worked on Sundays, were felt to be in need of spiritual help. Some of these missions also provided welfare facilities and even schools, but the children attended for short periods when the boats were tied up nearby.

Tracing boat families

Families who lived aboard can be particularly difficult to research. Census enumerators were not required to record people sleeping on inland boats, in sheds and hedges until 1861. Some enumerators did take note of people on boats at the end of their books even before 1861, but boat families could still be missed even after that date. (*contd.*)

Canal Boat Register of 1795

Two other main sources can assist with researching boatmen, but they are incomplete, can be hard to find and are incomplete.

The earliest is the 1795 Register of Boats. This required '*all Boats, Barges, and other Vessels, of certain Descriptions, used on Navigable Rivers, and on Inland Navigations, in Great Britain, to be registered*'.

It specified that all inland vessels capable of carrying more than thirteen tons, excluding pleasure craft, should be registered with the local authority in which the vessel usually worked or in which the master lived. A certificate was issued to the owner of the boat or his agent.

The registers contain the following information:

- type of vessel and its tonnage; name of the master(s) and their 'place or places of abode'
- number of men employed on the vessel and in what capacity (e.g. assistant to master, horse driver)
- waterway upon which the vessel normally operated
- the places navigated from and to, and the distance between them.

The certificate also contained a unique identifier for the vessel, i.e. a name or number, the county or place of registration and was signed and dated by the local issuing officer.

Surviving registers are now preserved in local record offices, usually in the Quarter Sessions section.

Canal Boat Acts 1877 and 1884

These aimed to cut down on overcrowding in cabins used as dwellings and to try to ensure a basic standard of cleanliness and repair. The first required all inland boats used as dwellings to be registered and laid down a minimum standard of accommodation by regulating the number, age and sex of persons permitted to inhabit the cabin. This would be recorded on the registration certificate which also gave the name and address of the owner and captain or steerer, details about the boat itself such as the intended cargo and route.

(contd.)

The second Act provided for inspection of canal boats by sanitary authorities under a centrally appointed Chief Canal Boat Inspector.

The Local Government Board accepted responsibility for the Canal Boat Acts only with extreme reluctance. However, they did draw up Regulations which governed, as well as other provisions, the minimum amount of free air space in the cabins per person.

Sixty cubic feet of air space was allowed for anyone over the age of twelve years and forty cubic feet for children of twelve years and younger.

The requirement for canal boats to be registered and inspected was ended by the Public Health Act of 1961.

Inspectors kept Registers of what they found and they can be useful sources of information for family historians. The details recorded could vary between authorities, but would always include the name of the boat, the name of the owner and the name of the master or steerer.

The number and ages of children were also recorded but not their names, nor the names of other members of the crew - most frustrating for family historians.

Surviving registers are normally kept in the relevant local record offices or county archives. There may also be other documents such as individual boat certificates, complaints books, inspectors' journals, annual reports and correspondence.

Canal Company Records sometimes include useful collections of records such as Toll Permits

The permits give the name of the boat owner and steerer, details of the cargo carried and the route taken. It covers the period from 1813 to 1878 but with many gaps.

(contd.)

About the author

Dr Wendy Freer has a PhD from the University of Nottingham on the subject of Canal Boat People. Two of her books, *Women and Children of the Cut* and *Canal Boatmen's Missions*, give much more detail about the everyday lives of families on narrow boats. Both books are widely available online. *Women and Children of the Cut* is out of print but there are plenty of second-hand copies.

THE ORPHANS OF HARMONDSWORTH

By Wendy Tibbitts (B101)

Judy Hill has given us two excellent talks on Workhouses and the Poor Law Acts. In the most recent, on 20th February 2025, she touched on the policy of child fostering by various institutions and the emigration of some children to Canada from Dr. Barnardo's homes.

I have researched local children who were in this situation and thought you might like to hear their stories.

In census data we sometimes find the term 'nurse-child' in the relationship column. This suggests it was a child being wet-nursed (definition: a woman employed to suckle another woman's child).

From mid-18th century, the Foundling Hospital in London often sent infants to be wet nursed by country women. These were usually the wives of agricultural workers or farm servants who were 'established at a particular farm or estate and were long-term members of the village community'.¹

(contd.)

Later as the 19th century progressed private wet nursing steadily decreased and by the 20th century ‘the employment of wet nurses was relatively rare in Britain’.²

The term nurse-child was later applied to orphans and pauper children from workhouses, that were fostered out by charities to mature couples. These families were ‘industrious poor of the working classes who are decent, respectable people all over the country districts’.³

They got paid five shillings a week for children over three and the advantage for the child was that he was brought up in a family unit and had a healthy country upbringing. The foster parents gained from the regular payment and the child was extra help for the family unit.

Sometimes the family would end up adopting the child, but usually, by the time they reached 13 the payments ceased and the child was expected to find employment.

Harmondsworth census data show several nurse-children in the nineteenth century.

In the 1911 census there were ten nurse-children living in Harmondsworth.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Little of Boltons Lane, Harmondsworth had three nurse-children ages 11, 8 and 4, and two adopted children aged 8 and 7. All the children were from different families so the adopted children might once have been nurse-children. Adoption was not legally recognised until 1926, but before that there had been a long history of informal adoption.

Mr. and Mrs. John Pope who lived at the Moor, Harmondsworth had two nurse-children, both aged 4. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Seymour of 4 Whites Cottages, Bath Road, had a one-year-old nurse-child as well as their own children. Mr. and Mrs. Walter Gray of Fernbank, Longford, Harmondsworth had a two-year-old nurse-child as well as three grown up children living with them. Mr and Mrs John Druce had a 2-year-old nurse-child.

(contd.)

At 12 Doghurst cottages (next to the Three Magpies on the Bath Road) were Charles Kislingbury and his wife, Jane, both in their fifties, living with their three children and two nurse-children. Charles was a labourer and they had been married for 26 years.

Two of their teenage children were employed and the two nurse-children were infants. George Kemp was a 3-year-old nurse-child from Streatham, whilst one year old Sydney Pitman was from Great Easton, mistakenly written on the census form as in Kent.

Sydney (or Sidney as he later signed himself) had actually been born in Great Easton, Dunmow, Essex to a Doris Pitman, née Dorster, which was his middle name. She died giving birth to him, was buried in the same location that Sydney was baptized and on the same day as the christening. Nothing is known about his father and as an orphan he was obviously placed with the Kislingburys.

Our Young Emigrants: Future Landowners



Picture ©Peter Higginbotham (www.workhouses.org.uk)

As can be seen from this Dr. Barnardo's promotional photograph it was hoped that they could be 'future land owners'. *(contd.)*

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1850 allowed Boards of Guardians to send children from workhouses abroad. Dr. Barnardo's children's homes had an emigration scheme, which ran from the 1870s to 1967, whereby large parties of children were sent to Canada to work on the land.⁴

Canada welcomed these children because there was a shortage of farm labourers, and Barnardo's felt it would give the children a better start in life and the chance to prosper in the future.

Eighty thousand children were sent to Canada before WWI. These voyages were suspended during the war, but the name of one of Harmondsworth's nurse children, Sydney Pitman, appears on a passenger list of Dr. Barnardo's children who went to Nova Scotia in 1924 when he was 14. (See below.)

DECLARATION OF PASSENGER TO CANADA.		948
1. NAME	PITMAN, SYDNEY	Age 14.
PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS. FAMILY NAME FIRST.		
2. Sex	Male	Are you married, single, widowed or divorced? Single
If married, are you accompanied by husband or wife? If so, give name of husband or wife		
3. Present occupation		Intended occupation Farming
4. Birthplace	Not known	Race or people British
5. Citizenship	British	Religion Protestant
(IF PROTESTANT, STATE DENOMINATION)		
6. Object in going to Canada	to do farm work	
7. Do you intend to remain permanently in Canada?	Yes	

The form is hard to read, but it gives his name and age. His birthplace is unknown, probably because he didn't remember, or hadn't been told. He is British and a Protestant. He says his object in going to Canada is 'to do farm work' and that he intends to remain in Canada. He probably did not have a choice. It must have been heartbreaking for him to leave the only home he had ever known to embark on one-way travel to an unknown future.

When Sydney arrived in St. John's, New Brunswick, he was in a party of 24 Dr. Barnardo's boys.

(contd.)

His destination was listed as John Hobday, 538 Jarvis Street, Toronto which was probably an interim address until he reached his final workplace. Farmers paid a fee to the charity when they took in a child. The children worked as indentured servants, until they came of age. Some were treated well, taken in as members of the family; many were seen as 'little workers'; others were abused. The children were supposed to go to school, but this often depended on the farmer's needs and harvest season.⁵

We don't know how Sydney was treated, but we do know that for all his working life he was in Leeds County, Ontario.

In 1931 he was a labourer working for William Little, a farmer, in Elizabethtown. In 1942 Sydney married Doris Watson in Addison, Leeds County. She was a cook and he was a foreman. They had a son, Joseph, in 1944, when they were living in Renfrew, Ontario, and later a daughter.

Sydney died in 1985 aged 76. His wife died in 2002 leaving two children and four grandchildren.

Other Harmondsworth nurse-children were also sent abroad when their period of being fostered came to an end. Some had spent their early childhood in a family home, but not all orphans were so lucky. One group of orphans was brought up in the workhouse.

At one time in Longford and Harmondsworth, the Weekly family were dominant farmers and employers. The first Thomas Weekly moved into the parish in the seventeenth century and built the Weekly House in Longford in 1676. Three generations later another Thomas Weekly was farming Manor Farm in Harmondsworth village. The whole family, for many generations, were ardent Baptists.

In 1808 the son and heir of Manor Farm, at the age of 19, abruptly went off to London to marry his sweetheart who was not of the Baptist faith. He came back to work in Harmondsworth, but he was shunned by his father and the rest of the family through subsequent generations. He had to bring up his children, and later his grandchildren, on a labourer's wage and without the support of the rest of the family in the village.

(contd.)

The grandson of the shunned Thomas had died in 1882, leaving four small children aged 5, 4, 2 and 1. Their mother struggled on but she died two years later. The four orphans were taken to the Staines Workhouse in Stanwell. There may have been some comfort for the siblings being kept together in the same place even though the conditions would have been harsh, but it could not last. They all knew that at the age of thirteen they would be found work and expected to leave. Ada, the only girl, was the eldest and she was found work as a domestic servant. In 1901 she was nurse/domestic to a family of a coal merchant in Kew, but she died six years later aged 30.

Her eldest brother, Thomas Walter Weekly, when he reached 13, took the initiative of asking the Board of Guardians if he could go to Canada. The Board of Guardians had never had such a request before, but they approached the Local Government Board, and by the Census of 1891 he was in an orphanage in Maida Vale preparing to emigrate. He was sent to Liverpool where he boarded the 'Circassian' to travel to Montreal. The whole ship was full of teenage boys, some as young as 10, who were all classed as labourers. Thomas must have inherited his great-great grandfather's enterprise and realised that there would be more opportunities for him in Canada than in England.

The journey, for Thomas, would have been a great adventure for someone who had spent most of his life in the workhouse, but he was going into an uncertain future.

Although it must have been difficult for Thomas to leave his two younger brothers in the workhouse, he had a plan. He wanted to work hard and do well so that eventually he could bring them over to him and they could all have a better life. He must have followed his plan because by 1905 he was working in St. Louis, Minnesota, in the US. By 1910 he was married, worked as a foreman in an iron mine in St. Louis and was a naturalized US citizen. By 1920, aged 42, he was Assistant Master Mechanic in the iron mine's workshop and had a son aged 10. He and his wife later moved to Wisconsin where they bought their own farm. In 1942 at the age of 64 he was on the draft register to fight in WW2. He had also been drafted during WW1, but his job in the iron works exempted him from service. He died in 1957 aged 78. (contd.)

The second brother, William James, joined the Navy and served from 1900 to 1910. He went to live in Australia in 1920, aged 40, and married, but still the sea was calling. He was an able seaman, based in Australia, which also allowed him to travel between Australia and the US. He died in 1951.

The youngest brother, Richard Harry, was apprenticed to a baker in Southall, and as soon as he had finished his 'time' he emigrated to Quebec Canada in 1901.

The three brothers kept in touch with each other and in 1903 Richard crossed into the USA to visit his brother, Thomas, in St. Louis. In 1909 he was in Vancouver to meet up with his brother William who was visiting Canada aboard 'HMS Severn'. In 1910 he was a boarder in a house in Oregon where he was working as a baker and in 1916, he was a chef on the California Railroad at the Kern Trading and Oil Company.

He, like William, was a great traveller and in 1921 he went from Hong Kong to California as a ship's cook. By 1940 he was in Montebello, Los Angeles where he had his own restaurant. He never married and died 1941 aged 67.

It is gratifying to know that from being raised in a workhouse, the three Weekly brothers eventually made a good life for themselves.

Although sometimes many miles apart they kept in touch with each other and met up whenever there was an opportunity. Their offspring probably have no idea of the unhappy start to their lives, and would not know that they were descended from the once powerful Weekly family in Harmondsworth.

From the experiences of nurse-children and orphans in Harmondsworth, it does seem that the Poor Act of 1850 gave children opportunities. The Act did not take account of the emotional harshness of removing children from the security of their home country at such a young age, but it seems that if the children had ambition they could make a good life for themselves, and I hope they all found happiness during their lifetime.

(contd.)

Sources:

- 1 Fildes, Valerie, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, (Oxford, 1988), p.174
- 2 Fildes, Valerie, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, (Oxford, 1988), p.204 & 242
- 3 Barnardo, Mrs and Marchant, James, *Memoirs of the late Dr. Barnado*, (London, 1907) p.193
<http://archive.org/stream/memoirslatedrba00marcgoog#page/n238/mode/2up/search/boarding> accessed 15/8/2013
- 4 Barnardos from "Who do you think you are?" BBCTV 14/8/2003
- 5 <https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2015/06/19/a-timeline-of-barnardos-and-other-child-emigration-programs.html#:~:text=Barnardo's%20sent%20tens%20of%20thousands,in%20the%20late%2019th%20c>entury.

A TALK - THE ROLE OF THE WORKHOUSE AFTER 1834

Report by John Symons

This on line talk on Thursday 20th February was given by Dr. Judy Hill to Hillingdon F.H.S. Last year Judy gave us a presentation on the early parish workhouses and the poor law of the time.

Around 1834 these were amalgamated into Union Workhouses covering groups of parishes and so it was fitting to welcome Judy back with a sequel talk on why this happened and the consequences these changes brought to society in general and the poor in particular.

The early system of parish based poor relief worked well enough when a reasonable level of prosperity existed. It provided a means of support against problems such as unemployment, old age and illness. Increasing demands on the parishes brought about by more recipients, less available work and the trauma of the Swing Riots in 1832/33 led to a review of the way that relief should be handled. The conclusions were that 'generous allowances encourage idleness and immorality undermining the desirable self-help ethic'.

The key belief underlying all this was that poverty was largely self-inflicted and that a distinction needed to be made between the deserving and undeserving poor. To ensure that workhouses would not be viewed as in any way a desirable option, they had to provide conditions that were inferior to the worst that paid employees faced outside the workhouse.

(contd.)

The new workhouses reflected this through their austere and forbidding appearance, often built to a similar design and naturally much larger than the parish workhouses they replaced.

In 1834 the Poor Law Act was passed which for the first time detailed exactly what help was to be given in what circumstances. These rules were to be applied nationally. Each Poor Law Union was responsible for administering and applying the rules in their jurisdiction. These rules even governed areas like diet according to the category of inmate.

It was intended that outdoor relief, that is support within the community rather than in the workhouse, would be phased out. This did not always happen however as it was found that it was sometimes more expedient to assist outside and therefore outdoor relief was never totally abolished.

From 1837 workhouses had to provide temporary shelter to any destitute person. Some workhouses went on to provide separate accommodation for these in what was known as casual wards. Inmates still had to work though so it was not an easy option. Another development was the introduction of workhouse infirmaries specifically for those in poor health. The number of infirmaries dramatically increased during the latter part of the 19th century. Often housed in separate buildings they were increasingly staffed by trained nurses. From 1883 sick people could be admitted to the infirmaries without going through the admittance requirements for regular paupers. They provided basic medical care for those in need. Many of these infirmaries went on to become hospitals in the 20th century as was the case here in Hillingdon where the infirmary was on the site of the current Hillingdon Hospital.

Education in one form or another was always part of the reforms. Under the 1834 Act Poor Law Unions were required to provide at least three hours of schooling each day for children in their care and to appoint a schoolmaster or mistress. Some became separate establishments known as District Schools. In addition, some became Industrial Schools to include training in various trades such as carpentry and tailoring.

(contd.)

The intention was to set a path forward to enable these children to make their own way in the world so that they would not be a charge on the Union in the future.

These laudable objectives did not always work for the individual or for the Union so in the 1870s a new concept of Cottage Homes was developed. These Homes would provide accommodation for some 15 to 20 boys or girls in a rural location and under the care of house parents. These Homes were to an extent self-sufficient teaching trade skills along with agriculture and horticulture.

One of my family members, a shoemaker, along with his wife, fulfilled these roles for a number of years in the late 19th century.

Moving into the 20th century, the workhouses gradually lost their overwhelmingly negative associations by introducing increased amount of social and medical care. In 1913 they became Poor Law Institutions and in 1930 they became Public Assistance Institutions under the responsibility of Borough or County Councils. When the National Health Service was formed in 1948 many of the buildings became hospitals. Many carried on like this until more recent times, but some have now been rebuilt as apartments often retaining the same exteriors.

You will probably find that some of your ancestors have been affected by the various Poor Laws and Judy's talks have provided a context which helps us to better understand how society treated poverty and the individuals caught in the system.

A TALK– CORONERS INQUESTS

Report by Jenny Mundy

After our A.G.M. on 20th March 2025, our speaker was Kathy Chater and she gave us an interesting talk on inquests.

Like many people Kathy did not bother to about follow up ancestors' deaths but just pushed back as far as possible. *(contd.)*

After attending a family history course during which inquests were introduced, she realised that they could be a source of information about a family that you would not find anywhere else.

In a small village an inquest might be the most interesting thing that happened in the whole year and people would crowd in to hear what was said and what the resulting verdict was.

Parson Woodford of Norfolk kept a diary in which he recorded village life in the 18th century including inquests held in Weston Longville, twelve miles northwest of Norwich.

On 28th September 1765 Mary, a cook to a Dr. Clarkson, was found concealing a dead child in her box of belongings. An inquest was held on the following Monday to discover whether the child, a boy, was born dead or killed and everyone in the vicinity was very interested.

The majority of surviving documents before 1750 are in the National Archives which has a guide leaflet on how to track them.

Charles Nicholson's book 'The Pleasures of Murder' tells how in 1925, a Canadian scholar tracked down documents recording the inquest on Christopher Marlow the Elizabethan actor who died mysteriously in a brawl in a Deptford public house. The records appeared to reveal contacts with Elizabeth I's intelligence network.

After 1837 death certificates if signed by a coroner rather than the local Registrar, even if the cause of death is recorded as natural, would indicate that there had been an inquest.

If the cause of death is stated as insanity this suggests that an inquest had probably taken place. People do not die of insanity but they may have committed suicide as a result of being insane. The inquest verdict could affect whether the individual could be buried in a churchyard, possibly with or without a burial service, or at a local crossroads because suicide was illegal.

Between 1750 and the 1850s inquest records were held at the Coroner's Office in the county concerned, only after WW1 were records sent to be archived. Modern inquest records are kept for about fifteen years in the local Coroner's Office after which, unless there are special circumstances, they can be destroyed. *(contd.)*

Fortunately, inquests were often reported in the newspapers and frequently gave more information about the family than the inquest record.

Check for inquest reports in local newspapers for about two weeks after the death. They often give the number of people who were called to give evidence as well as the officials conducting the inquest. The parish Beadle would summon the jury of local people and make sure witnesses attended.

County newspapers are the best source of inquest reports from the mid-18th century and local newspapers from the late 19th century. The Gibson's Guide lists all county newspapers.

While Ancestry and Find my Past have some digital newspapers, but the British Newspaper Archives is the best digital source for copies of the papers.

Inquest records for London are kept in the London Metropolitan Archives (now the London Archives) and are closed for 75 years. A person wishing to see them must get permission from the relevant coroner's office.

Originally the Crouner (coroner) represented the Crown's interest in a death to see if the Crown could benefit, in the form of money or land, from the estate of the deceased.

Before 1888 city coroners were elected or appointed by privileged individuals but after that date they were appointed by the local authorities.

In Scotland anyone with suspicions about a death could ask the Sheriff's Officers to carry out an enquiry which would be investigated privately.

Coroners had jurisdiction over:

- preserver of the peace - magistrates could commit for trial
- inquest into deaths
- enquire into suicides, neglect or other possible causes

(contd.)

- enquire into 'Treasure Trove' discoveries. The coroner decides if the items discovered were accidentally lost or deliberately hidden. If the former there is no owner and the finder can keep the items. If found to be treasure trove, then the Crown has an interest in the value.
- from 1877 enquire into Royal Fishes that is large valuable fishes could be claimed for the Crown
- enquire into shipwrecks, appeals of felonies and confessions could be recorded.

Before 1859 failure to appear after being summoned to appear at a coroners court the person could be outlawed by the coroner. The coroner could execute the process if a sheriff's representative was unavailable.

Until 1997 the coroner's jury could decide if a person was murdered and who did it but today, they can only state that an individual was unlawfully killed and may not name a responsible person.

A city coroner was elected for life but if there was only one for the city, there was no substitute. Large counties had two or three coroners, small counties had only one. On one occasion the coroner for Monmouth was in jail for debt, consequently no inquest could be held until a new one had been elected. Before 1888 some privileged counties e.g. Westminster, appointed their own coroners and they could have substitutes.

Most records of Middlesex, in the liberty of Abbot of Westminster, are in the county record office. Other jurisdiction records are in the National Archives.

The High Court of Admiralty covered death on the high seas. In the case of a naval death, the body would be put in a barrel of spirits and an inquest would be held in the port where the ship docked.

The coroner of the Household and Verge was responsible for the monarch's household which was deemed to include an area of 7 miles surrounding the place where the monarch was at the time. The Monarch has their own coroner.

From 1750 burial records documented the ceremony which took place not the actual death. (contd.)

The death certificates signed by clerks and released by the coroner, gave the cause of death which may be a clue to further understanding of the events i.e. 'Accidental death' indicates that an inquest was held.

There may be additional information in the 'Day Books' these can sometimes be found with the registers. Some include details of suicide or other accidental situations. As an example, there was a record of two women buried together the coroner's verdict was accidental death. One woman had persuaded the other to drink the poison and she is recorded in the day book as accidental death. The persuader's name does not appear in the burial register!

Inquests were often held in the local public house because this was often the only place big enough to hold all the people required to attend together with all the other interested locals who would be crammed in any remaining space for their entertainment and gossip.

An Inquest was held in 1664 at the Hare and Hounds, Briarcliffe, Lancashire concerning five men killed in a civil war local skirmish.

Their bodies were put into the pub cellar to keep cool and await the coroner and the inquest. The publican of the Kings Arms in Hounslow refused to have an inquest in his pub without payment.

The coroner for the local area, Heston, was angry but the inquest had to take place in a small local shop.

A coroner's warrant would be issued for people to attend. Jurors were supposed to be householders, usually lower middle class tradesman.

Jury service was not popular because they had to accompany the coroner to view the body and physically examine it for any signs of murder. For this reason, but also possibly to avoid loss of earnings, some paid (two shillings and six pence (12.5 new pence), for a substitute to attend in their place.

Up to twenty four people could be summoned for a jury and they had to produce a majority verdict with at least twelve in agreement. They all had to sign otherwise it was not a legal inquest.

In the mid-19th century jurors played a much greater part in proceedings. (contd.)

They formed an opinion as to whether the witness was truthful or not and with their local knowledge, sometimes ask questions or even argue with the coroner. They rarely retired to consider their verdict.

G.P.s attending inquests as witnesses, or to offer opinions, would not have had any special training and generally witnesses could be from any walk of life. On one occasion one was even from Newgate jail – a prison officer David Ross. Few witness depositions survive.

Possible verdicts included:

- visitation of God – something sudden e.g. a stroke or heart attack
- natural causes/ natural death
- drowning (questions fall off bridge. pushed or suicide)
- accidental death
- murder: manslaughter: justified homicide and if attacked, self defence
- suicide – Insane, if the inquest decided they did not know what they were doing, the body could be buried in the Churchyard before 1833
- ‘Felo de Se’ if they decided the suicide was a deliberate choice - the body would be buried at a crossroads
- want of the necessities of life (starved to death)
- inclemency of weather (died of exposure)
- open or narrative verdict – e.g. found dead, found drowned they did not know how it happened. If a narrative verdict, then later evidence could reopen a case
- accidental death – domestic abuses – a case in Oldham where a man committed suicide, the verdict was possessed by an evil spirit.

In the 20th century an inquest requires a request for a warrant for witnesses, a doctor’s report, a coroner’s office report, a report from a Hospital and a Doctor’s Certificate given to the Registrar.

So, the moral from this interesting talk is – don’t give up, explore all avenues. You never know what can be discovered!

A TALK—THE ART OF CRIMINAL CONVERSATION: TALES OF DIVORCE AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Report by John Symons

This was an online talk by Claire Moores on Thursday 17th April 2025 to Hillingdon F.H.S.

Until fairly recently divorce and separation were relatively rare concepts in British society. Claire set out to explain why this was, the slowly changing circumstances that led it to becoming more commonplace and the records that we as family historians might hope to find to as evidence of marital breakdowns.

There are differences between the terms separation and divorce, the main one being that a divorce is a legal term that marks the end of a formal relationship between two people which started at the marriage ceremony.

In earlier years divorce was very unusual for a number of reasons. It was not considered as socially acceptable and was mostly forbidden under church rules which held considerable sway.

Moreover, the cost of the legal process needed to put into force was well beyond the means of all but the richest people.

Claire showed some examples from the 17th century where cases of couples living separately were brought before the poor law commissioners because they sought relief. Even if there was no suspicion of immoral behaviour, the resumption of cohabiting was encouraged.

At the turn of the 20th century there remained many obstacles to any change in the law allowing divorce. Much of this was derived from societal attitudes. Wealthier women might be fearful of their husbands divorcing them depriving them of their wealth and status whereas for men it was not unusual to have mistresses anyway. There was in addition strong opposition from the established church from whom lifelong marriage was one of the basic tenets of faith.

When the few cases were brought for judgement, they were heard at the ecclesiastical courts.

(contd.)

The strict rules for evidence were adhered to and given that married women had very limited legal rights and had little opportunity to put forward their own cases, few were successful. The system was set to force most defendants into arbitration rather than a successful litigation. If you are lucky enough to discover any of these records they will likely be at county record offices.

There are five main ways a marriage could be ended in England.

1. By suing in the church courts, usually on the grounds of desertion or adultery. This however, as already noted, was expensive and beyond the reach of most people.
2. Sometimes it depended on one of the parties not being able to marry by, for example, being under age or already married (bigamy).
3. By desertion or elopement but this was not subject to legal process so the couple were still legally married.
4. Wife sales, again not legally recognised but sometimes occurred (as in Thomas Hardy's novel "The Mayor of Casterbridge" where a wife was auctioned to the highest bidder).
5. By Act of Parliament from 1690 to 1857 but usually only with evidence of a woman's adultery. Only the wealthiest could afford this but it did have legal effect. Most cases will be found in the Parliamentary Archives.
6. By private separation.

Any legal proceedings were usually between a husband and his wife's lover who was said to have had "criminal conversations" with her. Claire gave a few examples of these where the witness statements were recorded in precise detail and in one case even published no doubt to satisfy public curiosity about the private affairs of the wealthier members of society.

Although some Acts of Parliament were put into force in the latter half of the 19th century it was not until 1912 when divorce courts were set up which put the possibility of those proceedings within the reach of many. From then on, not only were there more divorce proceedings, but there are more easily accessible records on Ancestry. (contd.)

In fact, from my own experience this is the only example of divorce I have come across when a wife petitioned for a divorce on the grounds of cruelty claiming that her husband assaulted her while under the influence of alcohol. Judgement was given in her favour and her husband had to pay maintenance. You might have thought that she would have wanted nothing more to do with him but a few years later they were living together again. Even though the evidence is very graphic, there is probably more to this story than we know.

A final source, not to be neglected, are newspaper reports. These are more likely to appear if either of the subjects are well known or if there are any particularly salacious features to the case that will appeal to their readers.

In summary in England, divorce for most until the 20th century was quite unusual but if and when you do find cases in your researches, the insight into the lives of the families can be quite remarkable.

QUIZ ANSWERS

TROLLOPER	A scrimp* fisherman in the Wash district
VERGE MAKER	Maker of spindles for watches and clocks
HANDYWOMAN	Local woman called in to help with births and deaths
FERRETER	Dealer in or manufacturer of ferret (silk tape)
DUFFER	Peddler of cheap goods (women's clothing)

* Could be shrimp

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

By Valerie Fitch

What a joy it is to know that Spring is with us at last. It's so nice to have sunshine and light evenings. Makes us all feel better.

After giving a 'gentle reminder' to those who had forgotten to pay their membership subscription this year, I had a very good response. Our membership database is now up to date and stands at a total of 121, however, we would like to greet some new members.

Several members attend our Research Room on Friday mornings (first floor of Hillingdon Baptist Church, 25 Hercies Road, Hillingdon, UB10 9LS). Sessions are hourly between 10-1pm. and our experienced volunteers will try to help you locate hard to find relatives, or try to demolish any 'brick walls' that you encounter. We recommend you book for a session on enquiries@hfhs.org.uk as we can get quite busy but casual visitors are welcome and we will try to accommodate you.

Sadly, we have been notified of the death of two of our members this year and our thoughts are with both families:

B22 David Butler – from Berkshire

B64 John Bridger – from Hillingdon

RESIGNATIONS	
Membership No.	Name
D39	Jenny Drake from Uxbridge
K27	John Kirkland from Harrow
M103	Dean Medland from Pinner
S91	Maggie Scott from Stoke Poges, Bucks
W85	Terry Whitley from Ruislip

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER	
Membership No	Name
H99	Sarah Hatcher from Uxbridge

DON'T FORGET THIS FACILITY

A gentle reminder, our website carries a number of other societies' journals which can be viewed in the Members' Area. Others will be added when received.

FROM SOCIETIES IN ENGLAND	
Airedale and Wharfedale F.H.S.	Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies
Barnsley F.H.S.	Felixstowe F.H.S.
Bedfordshire F.H.S.	Lancashire F.H.S.
Berkshire F.H.S.	Nottinghamshire F.H.S.
Calderdale F.H.S.	Waltham Forest F.H.S.
Cheshire F.H.S.	West Middlesex F.H.S.
Chesterfield and District F.H.S.	Weston-Super-Mare F.H.S.
Doncaster F.H.S.	
FROM SOCIETIES IN SCOTLAND	
Aberdeen F.H.S.	
FROM SOCIETIES IN WALES	
Glamorgan F.H.S.	
FROM SOCIETIES IN CANADA	
Alberta F.H.S.	
British Columbia Genealogical Society F.H.S.	
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THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON



The London Borough of Hillingdon is the most Westerly of the Greater London Boroughs. It is bounded by the counties of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Surrey and was formed from nine ancient these Middlesex parishes: Cowley, Harefield, Harlington, Harmondsworth, Ickenham, Ruislip and West Drayton.

Hillingdon embraces a mixture of Greater London suburbs: ancient, modern, large and small, each with its own distinctive identity. In the South of the borough lies Heathrow Airport.

Other localities within the borough are: Colham Green, Eastcote, Longford, Northwood, Ruislip Manor, Sipson, South Ruislip, Uxbridge, Yeading and Yiewsley.

Most of the parish registers for the original Anglican parishes and some more recently created, are deposited at the London Metropolitan Archives and can be viewed online at Ancestry. Many of the monumental inscriptions in the churchyards have been transcribed and may be searched on Findmypast under the 'Middlesex Monumental Inscriptions' dataset.

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