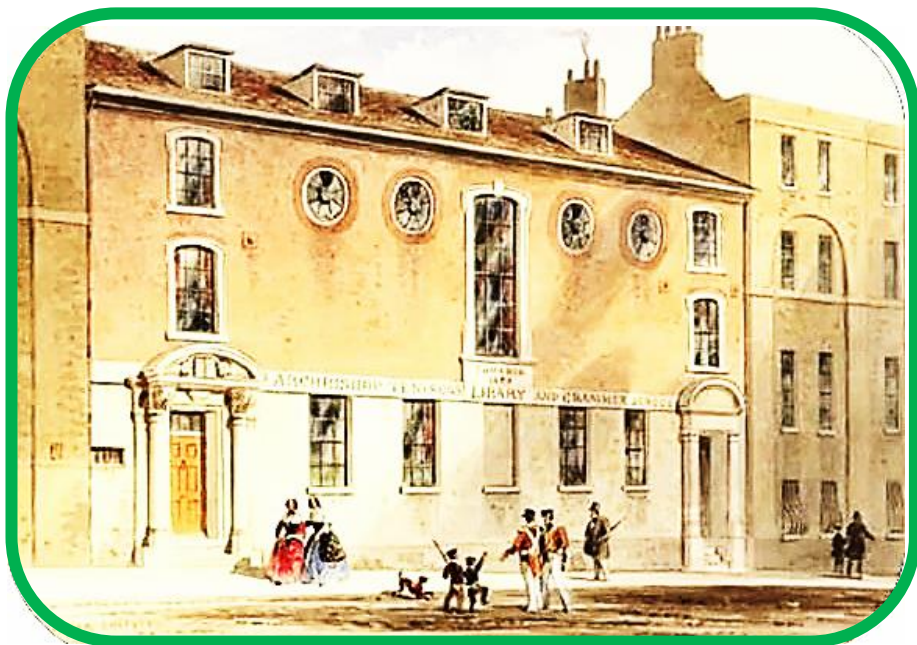




HILLINGDON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Member of the Family History Federation



The Castle Street elevation of St. Martin's Workhouse (page 18)

JOURNAL No. 154

JUNE 2026

2026 PROGRAMME of MEETINGS

Unless stated otherwise meetings take place at:
Hillingdon Park Baptist Church, 25 Hercies Road, Hillingdon,
Middlesex. UB10 9LS.

DATE	SPEAKER	SUBJECT
Thursday 9 th April 2.30 pm ZOOM	Linda Hammond	'A.I. for Family History'
Thursday 21 st May 2.30pm ZOOM	Dr. Sophie Kay	'Mapping Alchemy'
Thursday 11 th June 2.30 pm	Alison Wall	'Kensington Palace'
Thursday 30 th July 7.30 pm	Claire O'Grady	'Victorian Hiring Fairs' * * Change of subject
<i>AUGUST - NO MEETING</i>		
Thursday 17 th Sept. 2.30 pm in the Hall	T.B.A.	
Thursday 15 th Oct. 2.30 pm ZOOM	Gill Blanchard	'Tracing a House History'
Tuesday 10 th Nov. 2.30 pm joint with U3A	Karen De Bruyne	'Beyond the basics in Family Research'
<i>DECEMBER - NO MEETING</i>		

Doors open 30 mins before start time.

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

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

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A LARGE PRINT COPY OF THIS
JOURNAL CAN BE REQUESTED FROM
THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY



JOHN'S JOTTINGS

By John Symons

“Have you finished your family history yet?” Once, decades ago, I thought that it could be but now it appears just a totally unrealistic prospect. At the time I had done most of the work in putting together a printed story of my branch of the Symons family which I was in truth quite pleased with, so what went wrong?

First I could not resist looking at my other lines, particularly my mother's family. Unlike my father's line, this was and is far from straightforward. Illegitimacy was all the rage in those circles which has caused endless confusion with missing fathers and a range of other issues that can trap the unwary, such as myself.

How could my great grandfather not have been born? You will probably have guessed the answer – his surname ‘Aldridge’ was taken from his stepfather and his birth was registered as ‘Martin’ which was his mother's name. That took me a long time to uncover.

Then there are all the new sources that came to light. When I set out the 1881 census was the big thing but then came 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921 not to mention the 1939 Register.

Many parish registers became available at local record offices and then online along with a wealth of other records which were just not practical in the 20th century. All of these of course had then to be retrospectively applied to family you had already found, hopefully mostly confirmed and the results added to what you knew or thought you knew!

Some bright sparks in the scientific community then worked out that DNA would be a good thing to apply to family history and the whole concept of genetic genealogy kicked off.

If your family did things ‘by the book’ all well and good but if they, like some of mine on the maternal side, they took a less orthodox approach you could well end up with a researched tree and a genetic tree which did not entirely match.

(contd.)

More puzzles to contend with then!

So what to do about all those documents, photographs and other ephemera accumulated over the years?

If their relevance was not immediately apparent I would happily file these away in the 'too difficult' folder. Now we have artificial intelligence to provide possible insights into these sources. That's fine then, just add it to the list.

It seems that not a day goes by without Ancestry or one of the other big boys writing to suggest that there is information I may have missed that is now available. If you look at these hints just occasionally you discover they have actually found something significant which is also good, another topic to follow up.

It helps if you have a good sense of organisation. That might not be my strongest suit but I am learning all the time. The family history will never be finished but I have found out so much and it's always been interesting. What more could you ask for?

WE NEED A VOLUNTEER!

Hopefully you will have noticed our 'not to be missed' feature that appears near the end of each journal. This lists other family history societies electronic journals our that members can view on our web site.

We reciprocate by sending ours to them, however as the number of societies that produce electronic journals grows, we need to find someone who is willing to volunteer to record incoming electronic journals, check for any omissions and upload them to our web site. Similarly the volunteer would be required to send our quarterly electronic journals to the same list of recipient societies

This does not involve spending a lot of time, it is not a difficult procedure and we can give training. We will of course provide detailed instructions. Anyone interested in helping the society please contact us. Many thanks.

OBITUARY MICHAEL GANDY



Very sadly we have to report the recent death of our President of many years standing, Michael Gandy.

Michael was not only our President but a firm supporter of our Society. He was a most respected genealogist with a depth of knowledge that few could match. The many talks he gave to the Society were always informative, entertaining and well appreciated by our members. One of our number described him as a lovely man and I think that sums it up.

We would like to offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

FROM THE EDITOR

By Alan Rowland

2026 JOURNAL DEAD LINE DATES	
SEPTEMBER Edition	22 nd August
DECEMBER Edition	24 th October

For members with ancestors likely to be baptised, married or buried in the Westminster area of London an interesting situation has presented itself.

We had an enquiry from a member who needed help tracing one of his forebears and the woman that he married. He had come to a full stop and asked if we could find some answers to his questions. We spent some time researching and found the marriage on Freebmd. The marriage took place in 1864 at St. George, Hanover Square, Westminster but a search on Ancestry (London Metropolitan Archives L.M.A. data base) revealed nothing.

It was John who had the key to finding the certificate image, he knew that the L.M.A. records on Ancestry did not include those for Westminster. He also knew that the Westminster records were viewable on Ancestry – they can be found along with other Westminster parishes in the card catalogue.

From the opening Ancestry page, right hand side, scroll down and click on 'Card Catalogue'.

New window; go to the topmost search box on the left and type Westminster, scroll down and click on Birth, Marriage and Death including Parish. Scroll up and click on blue search button. From the results displayed select the data base you require – good hunting!

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

By Val Fitch

Having given a 'gentle reminder' to those who had forgotten to pay their annual subscription for 2026 I heard from a number of you together with the appropriate payment.

Thank you for joining us for another year of talks, research help and our quarterly journal. Don't forget if you have discovered in your researching something that is unusual or might be of interest to the members please contact us and send it along for inclusion in the journal

RESIGNATIONS

People who reigned were:

B107 Douglas Brown

H96 Sandra Hooker

S93 John Stone

I rang or sent emails to the following people, but got no reply. So I can only assume they no longer wish to be members and will remove them from the database.

N27/28 Rose and Eddie Nicholson

S88 Pam Sweales

H67 Phil Haskings

W88 Brian Wastell

G1 Winnie Gomm

Our membership data base is now up to date, and we currently have 120 members.

I hope you all have a lovely summer, and hope to see you at our zoom meetings or in person at the church meetings.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER..... (Part 1)

By Alan Rowland

The Family History Federation, February Really Useful Bulletin, No. 66, carried an article by Ian Waller one of our regular speakers. We present here part one of a truncated version of his article, the full piece can be viewed on: <https://www.familyhistoryfederation.com/>

Over the age of sixteen years anyone can call themselves by any name they wish. This simple act can cause research challenges for family historians. Over the past two hundred years or so, formal procedures have become common and are used for changes to be recognised by government, commerce and other organisations but less than 15% of those who changed names used official documentation. Most likely you will find a trail of records in one name, and then suddenly another trail of records in another name. The challenge is to prove that the two names relate to the same person. It is unlikely to be a single document that links the two names, which is where the challenge becomes a reality for researchers. If you are lucky you may find a press announcement of the change, but there are other ways of finding information.

Why change your name? Most people do not desire to draw attention to a name change so it just happened and it was the easiest way to escape officialdom, fade into oblivion or formalise a relationship.

There are many reasons why a name change may be desirable, illiteracy, simplification, necessity, mispronunciation or a dislike of their given name. Or it could be a fear of discrimination or persecution, to integrate as an immigrant, to cover up illegitimacy, to conceal marriage breakdown, hiding because of desertion from military service or bigamy.

Illegitimate children often carried the surname of their mother's subsequent husband even though he might only be the stepfather. This would in effect formalise the family relationship and is fairly easy to deduce from your research.

(contd.)

Name change in WWI was common if under age when enlisting in the military, or without parental consent. It was not unusual in the early twentieth century for a person to enlist under the name of a brother or friend. Military records are also sometimes annotated with the alias name, particularly any pension records.

The Western Front Association has the project 'Project Alias' which contains the names of thousands of men who enlisted under an alias name. Their database provides both original and alias names.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also established that around 3,500 soldiers have gravestones using an alias as well as a proper name. The key wording on their headstones being 'served as'. Similarly, many civilian gravestones in churchyards and cemeteries also indicate alias names.

Some name changes are as a result of an inheritance of property under the terms in a will or a marriage settlement. The only way of finding this out is to trace all the wills proved for all members of the family when you know a name change has occurred but do not know why.

Begin with the obvious. Before the advent of standardised spelling, names were written phonetically. Never undertake research believing that there is only one way to spell your surname.

Indexes can also have nicknames or pet names, e.g. Robert Baker could be Bob or Robbie..

Second forenames converted to a nickname is also common as was the use of alias names for no other reason than choice. Then, of course, there is also the complete misinterpretation of a name.

Very often family members took over the care of abandoned children without a formal recognition of the change of care or responsibility.

(contd.)

Guardianship was also bequeathed under terms of wills and often the children took on the surname of the guardian nominated by the testator.

Usually guardianship only applied until a child was twenty-one years of age so thereafter a name change could occur or they might revert back to their original surname.

The names of foundlings were changed upon entry to the Foundling Hospital. After admission they were immediately renamed and baptised. Their original name would only be identified by reference to an admission number and the mother's token.

Newspapers are a rich source of information in locating either a registered or unregistered name change. Also seek out any obituary notices or post-funeral announcements by family which confirm the deceased's alias(es).

It is possible, under certain circumstances, to record a different or new name on a birth certificate. This might happen where a factual mistake was corrected, the father's name was added to the birth certificate, the parents got married or a new name was recorded on the birth certificate. The Christian name of any child can be changed within one year of the original registration.

Some people are known throughout their life by a completely different Christian name to that given them by their parents. They live, marry and die with that name and appear in all manner of officialdom. So how do you link it back to the original birth certificate name? Simply obtain all documentation and fully examine the facts found in census returns, baptism records and occupational sources to clarify a connection.

Under English and Welsh law (the law is slightly different for Scotland), you may call yourself what you like unless it is used for criminal or fraudulent purposes. Many criminals use an alias name in an attempt to avoid detection. No legal documentation or public notice is needed to do so irrespective of motive.

NB Part 2, the concluding part of this article, will be in the September edition.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

By Fiona Oakley

Fiona is one of our Friday morning helpers and in the course of her researches came across the two following newspaper reports, for which we thank her.

The first is taken from the Newcastle Chronicle 8th June 1865:

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING.—About noon yesterday, a lad named M'Crea, fell into the Tyne, from the Newcastle Quay, and was in imminent peril of drowning, when a dog belonging to Mr. John Turner, of Low Friar Street, jumped into the water and held up the youth until he was rescued by one or two men on the quay-side. This is not the first life the same dog has saved in a similar manner.

The second from the Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury 25th November 1865:

FIRE IN LOW FRIAR-STREET.—About half-past nine o'clock on Tuesday evening, a fire broke out in an upstairs room, in Monk-square, Low Friar-street, occupied by a man named Hall. The fire was first observed by Michael Turner, living close by, who saw the window in flames, and who immediately commenced to apply water to the fire, which was speedily extinguished. The cause of the fire is attributed to a lighted candle left upon the table, which had been blown by the wind, and ignited the curtains. The damage done is happily trifling.

N.B. Low Friar Street certainly seems to have had its fair share of 'goings on'. Of course should you also find any interesting 'snippets' send them in for our journal.

AND ANOTHER THING...

By Alan Rowland

Referring back to my bell ringers of Great Baddow (March journal 'It rang a bell!') where I mentioned A.I., I was dubious as to its accuracy and decided to run a test.

I asked A.I. the question: 'Where was James ROWLAND, Great Baddow bell ringer, born?'

After a period of thought I was presented with this definitive answer no perhaps or maybe it could be, this was the definitive answer - this was where he was born!

James ROWLAND was born in Boreham, Essex, approximately four miles from Great Baddow.

Birth Date: He was born on 22 May 1762.

Parents: Samuel ROWLAND and Sarah BRIGGS.

Having established these 'facts' A.I. went on to give details of his life:

Although born in Boreham, he spent much of his adult life in Great Baddow, where he became a legendary figure in the bell-ringing community. He died in Great Baddow on 17 July 1846 at the age of 84 and is buried there.

No mention was made for example, of the James that I found christened and presumably born in Llantillio Crossenny, Monmouthshire or any others with the same name in other places.

Taking the A.I. answer I checked the facts in the usual, old fashioned way by looking at the 1841 census with these results:

Both the A.I. James and mine appear – with the A.I. version residing in Waltham Abbey, Essex age 75 and mine living in Great Baddow age 70. Same name, but different ages and places on census night. As far as I know once in Essex my James was always in Great Baddow.

(contd.)

Their occupations were entered as; A.I. James 'ordnance P' (army pensioner) and my James 'Tailor'.

My James was in the army where he served as a tailor. Whether or not he was a tailor before enlisting is unknown but he was always recorded as a tailor and so were a number of his sons.

It seems that our friendly A.I. somehow managed to cross some of the infinite number of wires and computers it calls a brain, for it has managed to make a genealogical omelette of these two individuals.

In the case described above A.I. appears to have fallen into the trap that most of us at some time have experienced: if the name of the individual matches the search criteria it must be the correct one. This is reinforced if the location also matches, but as demonstrated above, on the 1841 census there are two individuals with the same name but only one is resident in the location specified in the search instruction i.e. Great Baddow.

Another bone of contention is how did A.I. determine that the Waltham Abbey James 'was a legendary figure in the bell-ringing community'? There is no proof that the erroneous James ever rang a bell and the proof offered by A.I. actually refers to my James! There is a framed record of a 'Bob Major' change being rung that hangs in Great Baddow church.

So as you can see if you are tempted to use A.I. do so with caution and the proverbial pinch of salt, it can produce some good results but always be aware it is not infallible.

As with public trees on Ancestry and Findmypast it is unwise to take everything for granted and when possible facts should always be checked against original records.

Does anyone have any success or otherwise using A.I., if you do please let us know so that we can share with the membership.

D.N.A. MIXED BLESSINGS

Anonymous

We recently received an email from a member with an article for the journal. The member wishes to remain anonymous so I will refer to him/her as *Anon*. *Anon* was moved to write after reading the D.N.A. article on 'Cousins' in the December 2025 journal which concluded 'we would be interested to know of your research experiences following a DNA test: did it help or provide something you did not previously know? Did it answer or create further family questions?'. The article follows:

MY DNA DISCOVERY.

I would say that there are 'pros and cons' to D.N.A. testing and research. You also have to be prepared for all eventualities and what you may possibly find out.

A Positive Start.

I started my family history research about 3 years ago. My mother was worried that she was the last of her generation in the family and she wondered what had happened to her childhood cousins. She also wanted to know who her maternal grandfather was and more about her paternal grandmother, whom she had never met, but was named after.

A family member gave her and a grandson the gift of a DNA test. The results found many matches however, as she did not recognise the names she dismissed the results and gave up, but she continued to ponder and fret over the same queries.

Which is where I enter the story.

I decided to help solve the questions because I was also interested in family history. I took a D.N.A. test and as I excitedly awaited the results, started a the family tree. I began with what I knew about both my maternal and paternal relatives.

(contd.)

My tree grew larger and once I had the test results, matches came thick and fast.

There were two matches near the top of the list of particular interest. They were quite close, extended maternal family matches (a half great aunt and a half cousin) on mum's side (her paternal grandfather). Although I didn't recognise the surname, the two Christian names seemed familiar from my childhood. To cut a long story short I made contact with the cousin and they were indeed family that we had lost contact with many years ago.

We exchanged contact details, information, family photos, burial locations. We also met with them and we still keep in touch. This was all very exciting and it occurred so early in my ancestry history journey, I could hardly believe it!

Mum was elated but then she started wondering about family on her paternal grandmother's side. I researched trees that shared the same names and sent messages to the tree owners. One in particular was very nice and explained that the names I was interested in belonged to her husband's family. After further messages I learnt some more including that her husband was the son of mum's cousin.

Again, we exchanged family stories, photos & information. He was overjoyed to know that mum had stories to tell of his father as a young man, wanted to meet us and travelled to the U.K. from America.

We had a marvellous afternoon and he introduced us to other cousins in the U.K. He also furnished us with a photograph of mum's paternal grandmother, which was absolutely fantastic. It was the first time we had seen a picture of her – now we had a face to go with the name and she became even more real to us.

Having been so successful with mum's paternal side it was time to move onto her maternal grandparents.

I followed the same method as before, using my own family knowledge, looking at hints, D.N.A. matches and other people's trees. I contacted people in Canada, U.S.A., Wales, Australia, and England.

(contd.)

Again, I was lucky enough to find and make contact with some more of Mum's cousins. It has made her so happy chatting to and meeting her cousins, including the more distant ones.

Talking about her childhood memories, shared relatives and experiences is like a history lesson. It feels like our family has grown, we keep in regular contact with our new found and old cousins.

There was just one strand left to complete—mum's maternal grandfather. This I expect to be rather tricky because we never knew who he was as my Nan was illegitimate.

There is a family tale that she was the daughter of a nobleman from the mansion house near to their home. However, I am a bit more cynical and think it was possibly someone who worked there. The D.N.A. cM match number together with census documents and employment records will all be very helpful in hopefully working out this conundrum. Other helpful tools are 'shared matches' in Pro. tools on Ancestry and the Leeds method. With these I should be able to form clusters of relatives who share a common ancestor. I still have lots of work to do but who knows, I might even track down the elusive name. I can but hope!

My Negative Experience of DNA Testing.

Mum struggled with the genealogy web sites and as Dad had recently passed away she had nobody to help her. I had some time on my hands as well as a keen interest in finding out about the family's history. I also had more knowledge of the internet technology so I created my own Ancestry account, had a D.N.A. test and began to work on our family tree.

My results came back! Mum was my mother, no doubt about that! But my nephew, who should have matched with me on one side as a maternal grandnephew or half nephew. That wasn't right was it?

From the results I could see various other relationships and percentages of probabilities so I didn't worry too much about it at first. After all I was new to the Ancestry site, perhaps I had not read / understood it properly, or there was a mistake.

(contd.)

As my Dad hadn't been D.N.A. tested my nephew couldn't be matched to him. It puzzled me the more I thought of it and I needed to find the answer. It became obsessive and was all I could think about day and night. After a year I asked my sibling (who was closely related to the nephew) to have a DNA test.

When the results arrived my world fell apart! We were only half siblings! Which of us had the unknown father? I kept the results to myself for a year before I told my sibling the result.

I had always wondered why I could never find a paternal match that fitted into my tree or I could identify with, so I suspected that it had to be me with the unknown father. However, I had to know for sure and I asked other siblings to D.N.A. test, which they did.

They hoped it would help me find a link to our unknown maternal great grandfather. I had the same hope but even more I hoped it would give the definitive parentage answer I was looking for. The results came back - they all matched as full siblings to each other but were only half siblings to me. I was crushed!

I have not told them this news because I am still trying to process it myself, but I have noticed that my relationship with each of them has deteriorated – this purely on my part. I hope that I can get it back on track with each of them as I navigate my way through this news.

My results had many unrecognised paternal matches; some are quite close in relationship. I contacted a couple of them in the beginning, but they did not recognise any of the relatives names or areas that I gave. Now I know why. I hope that the Leeds method will come into its own and give me some indication of biological truth.

As I said earlier, be prepared for all eventualities as your D.N.A. results may not be what you expect or want. It can have a very positive outcome showing the areas your ancestors came from and linking you with relatives. However the negative side can turn your world upside down.

NB. Anon suggested that a discussion in the journal of the Leeds Method, what it is, how to use it and interpret the results, could be helpful and interesting.

THE RESEARCH ROOM

As mentioned in the March journal we received a donation of a number of large screen monitors. These are now in use each Friday morning so that members can better see their research results.

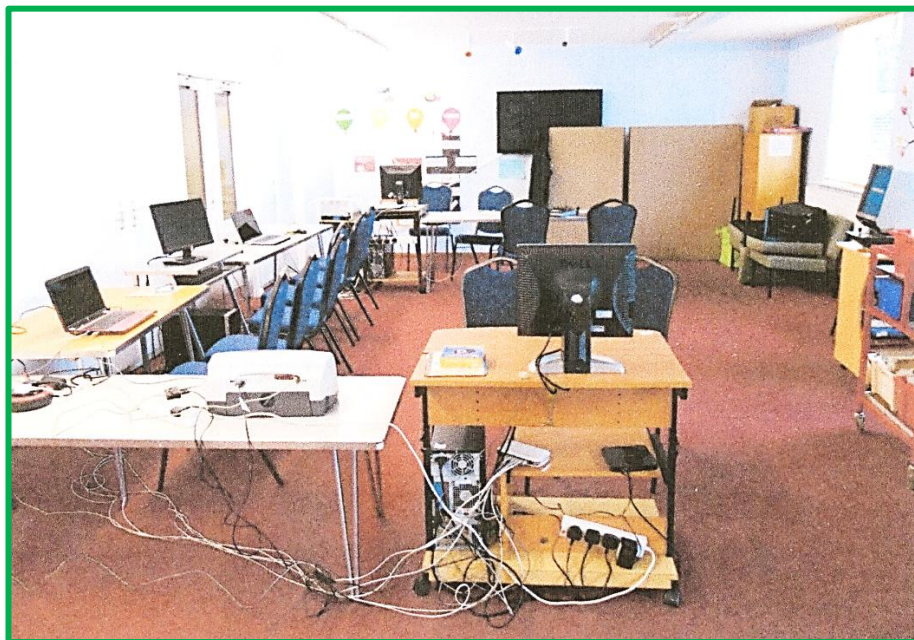
For general interest we thought it a good idea to show members the monitors in use and what they can expect when they visit the research room. The new monitors are that on the furthest left and the last two on the right.



In an earlier journal, June 2014, we had a similar photograph of the research room at that time and thought members might like to compare this picture with the latest (see next page).

At that time we had no separate monitors just two lap top computers and the rest were desk top computers. Also as you can see we had a regular 'wasp nest' of wires to connect us to the net – wi-fi was in its very early days for us.

(contd.)



Another sign of the times is the fiche reader just visible on the right.

WHERE WAS THOMAS WHEN I NEEDED HIM?

By Alan Rowland

Whilst writing my article, 'I Was Lucky to Find Aunt Edith' (March journal), I noticed another of the names on the burial record – Joseph MARDELL, my great grandfather. I remembered that he was also the subject of another confusing paper trail.

Joseph MARDELL, husband of Sophia and the father of Aunt Edith, was born in the workhouse at St. Martins-in-the-Fields, London 28th November 1845. His baptism record shows no father – just a mother, Amelia MARDELL, born 1824.

(contd.)

When I first started to research my maternal line, I found the marriage certificate of Joseph and Sophia FOWLER:

1867 Marriage solemnized in the Church of the Holy Trinity in the Parish of Tottenham in the County of Middlesex								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
134	August 13 1867	Joseph Mardeall	full	Bachelr	Blacksmith	Tottenham	Thomas Mardeall	Labourer
		Sophia Fowler	full	Spinster		Tottenham	Stephen Fowler	Lawyer
Married in the Church of the Holy Trinity according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England after reading me, <i>M. Mardeall</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <i>Joseph Mardeall</i>			in the Presence of us, <i>J. T. Turner</i>		by me, <i>J. T. Turner</i>			
					witnessed by <i>James Chapman</i>			

I already had all that I could find on Sophia, so this certificate led me into a search for Joseph's stated father, Thomas MARDELL.

I spent a considerable amount of time in fruitless searching and found innumerable Thomas MARDELLs but none of them were correct and finally I had to admit I had hit a brick wall! There just seemed to be no answer that was credible.

And then – I decided to see if Amelia had ever married and I found that she married in 1847 one Thomas READ, as this certificate shows.

1847. Marriage solemnized at <i>St. Peter's Church</i> in the Parish of <i>St. Peter's</i> in the County of <i>London</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
404	Dec 8 1847	Thomas Read	full	Bachelr	Labourer	James Street	William Read	Painter
		Amelia Mardeall	Spinster				James Mardeall	Book Binder
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, after reading me, <i>J. T. Read</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <i>Amelia Mardeall</i>			in the Presence of us, <i>J. T. Read</i>		by me, <i>J. T. Read</i>			
					witnessed by <i>James Mardeall</i>			

Was this the mysterious Thomas that appears on Joseph's marriage certificate as Thomas MARDELL?

Back to census searching and the 1851, being the first after Joseph's birth, to look for Amelia and Thomas READ and hopefully Joseph MARDELL. At last success!

(contd.)

This image shows exactly what went on – Amelia is the wife of Thomas READ and they have three children, Joseph (5), Thomas (2) and Henry (1). The marriage took place in 1847, two years after the birth of Joseph but he appears here as Joseph READ.

Parish or Township of <i>St Andrew, on the Walls</i>		Ecclesiastical District of		City or Borough of <i>Nottingham</i>		Ward of		Union of	
House No.	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of Males Females	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether blind, or deaf-mute, or idiotic	
106	<i>33 Ash Street</i>	<i>Thomas Read</i>	<i>Husb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Bookbinder, Labourer</i>	<i>Salisbury</i>		
		<i>Amelia 80</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Charwoman</i>	<i>Salisbury</i>		
		<i>Joseph 50</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>Son of 80</i>	<i>Widmore, Wiltshire</i>		
		<i>Thomas 20</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>do do</i>	<i>do do</i>		
		<i>Henry 10</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>do do</i>	<i>do do</i>		

This suggests that Thomas was the father of Amelia's illegitimate son, even if he isn't Thomas has still taken Joseph into his family with his family name.

Amelia was baptised in the workhouse (probably also was born there) because she is recorded there with her mother Ann in 1824. She enters and leaves workhouses frequently over many years with her parents.

After their marriage, Amelia and Thomas were in the workhouse in 1848 and significantly, Joseph is also recorded with them as Joseph MARDELL, together with confirmation of his illegitimacy:

Thos x Amelia	Thomas 8 19 31	
Amelia x Thomas	Amelia 15 22 18	
Joseph x Amelia	Joseph 12 24 18	
1848 Bastard of Amelia Read late Marrell		Relieving Officer

The above reads: Read.....Thomas: Read.....Amelia: Marrell.....Joseph, Bastard of Amelia Read late Marrell.

I searched for both Joseph READ and Joseph MARDELL on the 1861 census but to no avail – he just doesn't seem to be there.

(contd.)

I next found Joseph MARDELL on the 1871 census with his wife Sophia MARDELL (né FOWLER).

So at some time between 1851 and 1871 he reverted to his baptismal family name of MARDELL.

1871 Census

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the										(Page 3)
Civil Parish (or Township) of		Urban or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Village or Hamlet of	Local Board, or Improvement Commissioners District of	Electoral District of		
Brentford		Brentford	Brentford	Brentford	Brentford			St Pauls		
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, Ave. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES (Total No. of Houses in the Parish)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION	AGE of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	1. Date of Birth 2. Sex 3. Marital Status 4. Locality	
70	2 Palace Road	1	Big W. Gomers	Son	Mar	1		Brentford		
71	3 Palace Road	1	Big W. Gomers	Head	Mar	15	Lab. Super. Sec.	Brentford		
			Big W. Gomers	Wife	Mar	15		Brentford		
			Big W. Gomers	Daughter	Mar	28	Carman	Brentford		
			Big W. Gomers	Son	Mar	6		Brentford		
			Big W. Gomers	Daughter	Mar	4		Brentford		
72	4 Palace Road	1	Big W. Gomers	Head	Mar	15	Hammerman B/Smith	Brentford		
			Big W. Gomers	Wife	Mar	15		Brentford		

This census shows he is married to Sophia FOWLER, born in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, they live in Brentford, Middlesex, both are 25 years old and he is a hammerman B/Smith.

Joseph carried his MARDELL name until 1902 when he died as his burial record shows:

No. ⁶ / ₁ ² / ₁₂	Class B Private	57	Joseph Mardell.	57	6-12-02.	3	-	3252	11.	
			Edith Sophia Mardell	⁷⁰ / ₁₀	11-4-02.	1	7	6	2111	20.
			Sophia Mardell	⁷⁹ / ₉	12-6-25	3	14	0	1538	24
			Frank Mardell	50	25-7-31	3	14	0	18679	49

I know that we always stress that original paper records are the be all and end all of researching but I think the foregoing demonstrates that an original record (Joseph's marriage certificate) can lead you astray down a lengthy path in the wrong direction. But with perseverance and not a little luck, it is possible to uncover the truth - it is still good advice however to get original records rather than transcriptions.

As a footnote, there was a strange coincidence, following my 'I was lucky to find Aunt Edith' article in the March 2026 journal. Having read the article our President, Michael Gandy, emailed me to say that his mother was a Mardell and therefore we were 8th / 10th cousins, how strange especially in the light of his passing in May.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – John Symons

We have had mixed fortunes during 2025. Some of our activities were really successful, others less so. I shall try and summarise these different areas and what our response should be.

Meetings, despite a range of good speakers, are often not well attended especially the in-person type. This dates back to the time of the pandemic and we have noted that numbers never really recovered following that event. At the time we quickly moved across to Zoom meetings and found that a greater range of the membership were able to participate particularly if they had physical difficulties or did not live locally. What was missing however was the social contact. Our current mix of in-person and Zoom meetings tries to address the attendance issues, but we do usually have better attendances for the online meetings. Consequently we need to consider the viability of the hall meetings on such a regular basis. We have two shared meetings a year with the Hillingdon U3A Family History Group and they do buck this trend with better attendances.

We hope you continue to enjoy our journal. 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 and we do attract new members both from the web site and local publicity.

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

(contd.)

Thanks as always to the committee, Gill May, Valerie Fitch, Alan Rowland Journal Editor, Paula Hill who arranges the talks programme and Charles Hampshire, Treasurer.

There are also the Friday regulars, Jenny Munday, Fiona Turner and Jean Gorman. Not forgetting Frankie Pugh who manages the web site and who came to give an interesting talk in February. These with you our members make this Society what it is. Thank you.

TREASURER'S REPORT for year ending 31 December 2025

The accounts for the year have been independently examined and show a true and fair view of the Society's activity for the year.

Expenditure exceeded Income by £346.

The pattern of Income and Expenditure is very similar to previous years with the bulk of our Income coming from Subscriptions, donations and research room fees.

The Society wishes to thank everyone who adds a small donation to their subscriptions and for all our generous donors. Gill's bookstall and work at fairs contributes greatly to funds and we are grateful to all who work in such ways to keep the Society solvent. I must also thank Val Fitch who collects money at meetings and banks it. With the continual closing of bank branches this can be very time consuming.

Expenditure follows previous years with Rent being our main cost followed by printing, computer licences and postage.

Our balance sheet shows accumulated funds of £1,297 sufficient to cover small shortfalls in Income for a number of years although from time to time the Society does need to upgrade computer equipment.

Your Committee continuously keeps finances under review and seeks to minimise expenditure as much as possible whilst seeking additional sources of funds.

Charles Hampshire BA, MBA, CPFA
Honorary Treasure

(contd.)

ACCOUNTS

HFHS Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
<u>Current Assets</u>	£	£
Cash at Bank	1,487	1,779
Debtor - U3A	38	0
less Current Liabilities	227	197
	1,298	1,582
Accumulated Funds	1,298	1,582
Note:		
<u>Current Liabilities</u>		
Subs in Advance	227	197

*(contd.)***HFHS Accounts as at 31 December 2025**

	2025	2024
Income		
Subs	1,727	1,513
Donations	735	849
Research Room	1,281	1,051
Printouts	56	53
Draw	51	58
Other	106	467
	3,919	3,991
Expenditure		
Memberships	50	54
Insurance	107	107
Rent	1,880	1,840
Printing	840	758
Computer Licences	386	386
Postage	321	282
Speakers	626	551
Computer Equip	0	0
Other	54	0
	4,264	3,978
Excess of Expenditure over Income	346	
Excess of Income over Expenditure		13

**HILLINGDON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
BOOKSTALL ACCOUNT
Account for the Twelve Months ended 31st December 2025**

INCOME

2024		2025
£239.86	Sale of publications/CD's	£117.80
£ 26.13	Data sold through Find My Past	£ 30.70
£236.00	Membership through Parish Chest	£331.00
£ 15.00	Refund from Ickenham Festival	<u>£ 0.00</u>
<u>£516.99</u>		<u>£479.50</u>

EXPENSES

£ 40.00	Fairs	£ 30.00
£236.00	Membership to No 1 A/C	£331.00
£ 0.00	Purchase of books	£ 0.00
£ 26.13	Find My Past to No 1 A/C	£ 30.70
<u>£ 0.00</u>	HSBC bank charges	<u>£ 0.00</u>
<u>£302.13</u>		<u>£391.70</u>

£214.86	Balance being excess of income over expenditure	£ 87.80
£115.01	Balance in hand at 31.12.2024	£129.96
<u>£ 60.00</u>	Cash in hand at 31.12.2024	<u>£ 59.91</u>
£389.87		£277.67
<u>£200.00</u>	Donation to No 1 A/C	<u>£100.00</u>
<u>£189.87</u>	Surplus	<u>£177.67</u>

Represented by:

£ 59.91	Cash	£ 59.91
<u>£129.96</u>	Bookstall Account at NatWest	<u>£117.76</u>
<u>£189.87</u>		<u>£177.67</u>

Signed G. May
(Bookstall Manager)

Signed C. H. G.
(Treasurer) BA, MDA, CPA.

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

Signed C. H. G.
(Account Examiner)

A TALK – THE WORKING-CLASS WOMEN OF HARMONDSWORTH

Report by John Symons

The talk on Thursday 19th February 2026 was given by Frankie Pugh to our society. Frankie is a history teacher at a secondary school and a member of our Society.

For his dissertation for his degree he looked at the experiences of late 19th and early 20th century working class women in Harmondsworth and Harlington as that is where many of his family originate (as indeed do mine). As the basis for his research, Frankie used the theory propounded by the historian Ellen Ross in 1983 ‘that women founded their own support network not dependent on familial ties’ and set out to determine if this was borne out by empirical data from that time?

In order to demonstrate this theory Frankie explored his own familial ties with Harmondsworth and Harlington using the commonly used record-based information from civil registration and the censuses. He noted the size of the families, which was quite normal given the level of infant mortality at the time. Was there conflict between the women and if there was what caused it. How was it resolved?

Whilst these records provide solid evidence of who these people were, they do not by themselves reveal much of the social structure of family life. For an insight into possible conflicts between individuals Frankie used newspaper reports to identify a total of 111 cases appearing before the Uxbridge magistrates between 1881 and 1921 where women neighbours were in conflict with each other. Some of those involved were Frankie’s own ancestors which he was able to report on in some detail. In most cases the cause of conflict were property, space (or lack of), husbands and children.

To illustrate this Frankie provided a number of photographs of the houses of the time in Harmondsworth.

(contd.)



The Harmondsworth area was mainly rural at that time, homes afforded only minimal conditions of comfort and were in close proximity to their neighbours. Conditions which could easily provide a breeding ground for disputes given the scarcity of resources (see next page)

(contd.)

UNNEIGHBOURLY NEIGHBOUR.

Mary B. Kew was summoned for assaulting Elizabeth Pratt.

The parties are married women living at Harmondsworth, and from the complainant's story it appeared that on the previous Tuesday evening there was a quarrel between their children, which ended in a quarrel between themselves. Defendant ultimately struck complainant in the face, pulled her off the step and kicked her, and also called her a foul name.

Women named Lewin, Wilmore and Reynolds (complainant's daughter) gave corroborative evidence.

Defendant said the complainant first struck her, and that she (defendant) only struck her once in self-defence; she did not pull her off the step and kick her, as had been alleged. She called

Phillip Tillier, a bricklayer, living near the parties, who gave evidence in support of her statement, adding that he believed Mrs. Pratt would have "limbed" Mrs. Kew had not the former been taken away by her son.

Replying to complainant, witness denied having said to defendant, "If you subpoena me I'll go up and 'do' for her";

In consequence of the conflict of testimony, the Bench dismissed the summons, but remitted the costs. The Chairman also advised the parties to try and live more like neighbours in future.

Analysing court cases that were covered in the local newspapers, most of the parties looked for and found support for their causes from within their own family. This runs counter to the proposition posed by Ellen Ross. It does however highlight the important role that women played both in their own families and the wider community to a much greater degree than the usual records suggest.

Better still they provide a wealth of stories which might otherwise have remained hidden but now thanks to Frankie have been brought to life.

A TALK– SUICIDE

Report by John Symons*

Kathy Chater, one of our most respected speakers, paid a return visit on 19th March 2026 to talk about a difficult subject, suicide. Sadly this affects many families but attitudes towards it have changed and will likely continue to do so.

** The summary that follows was prepared with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) using ChatGPT. I hope that does not detract from your understanding of the subject but let me assure you that time is a precious commodity and this has saved me hours of work. I will not be offended if you conclude that the bot has made a better job of it than I would have done.*

Kathy's talk offered a wide-ranging and thought-provoking exploration of suicide across history, with particular emphasis on how changing social attitudes have shaped both the treatment of individuals and the interpretation of their deaths. Rather than focusing solely on individual cases, she situates suicide within broader cultural, legal, and medical frameworks, highlighting how these influences affected everything from coroners' verdicts to family memory.

She began by challenging common stereotypes about suicide, noting that popular imagery, especially in the 18th and early 19th centuries, often portrayed victims as young, tragic figures, such as abandoned women driven to despair and moral ruin. Literary and artistic depictions reinforced this narrative, presenting suicide as the culmination of shame, sin, and social rejection.

However, historical evidence suggests a very different reality. For centuries, the most typical suicide victim was not a romanticized young woman, but rather a middle-aged, married man with children, often suffering from ill health or financial distress.

This contrast between perception and reality was a key theme throughout the talk. Attitudes toward suicide have shifted significantly over time. (contd.)

For much of history, it was regarded as both a crime and a grave sin, an offence against God as well as against society. This moral condemnation influenced not only how individuals were judged but also how their deaths were officially recorded. Families often concealed suicides due to shame, and even in more recent generations, such deaths could be quietly reinterpreted as accidents or natural causes. Kathy illustrated this with an anecdote about a widow who consistently described her husband's death in neutral terms, while others in the community knew it had been suicide.

For family historians, these attitudes have important implications. Documentary evidence may be incomplete or misleading, and researchers are encouraged to look beyond death certificates. After 1837, if a death was subject to an inquest, this would usually be noted on the certificate, offering a valuable avenue for further investigation. Although original inquest papers are often difficult to access local newspapers frequently reported inquests in detail. These reports can provide rich insights into the circumstances surrounding a death, including witness testimony and community perceptions. Indeed, newspapers from the 18th and 19th centuries are highlighted as one of the most important sources for uncovering such histories.

Kathy then turned to the legal framework surrounding suicide, particularly the role of the coroner. Coroners' inquests, which date back to the medieval period, were originally concerned as much with financial matters as with determining cause of death. If a person was found to have taken their own life deliberately—classified as 'felo de se,' or self-murder—their property could be forfeited to the Crown. This created a strong incentive for authorities to interpret deaths in ways that benefited the state.

Religion reinforced harsh attitudes toward suicide particularly in the post-Reformation period, suicide was widely regarded as the work of the devil and one of the gravest sins a person could commit. This perspective is vividly illustrated in formal inquest verdicts, which sometimes included language describing the deceased as being 'moved by the instigation of the devil.'

(contd.)

Such phrasing persisted well into the 19th century, demonstrating the enduring power of religious interpretations.

However, from the late 17th century onward, attitudes began to shift. The decline of institutions like the Star Chamber and changes in legal practices reduced the Crown's direct involvement in inquests. At the same time, 'Enlightenment' thinking encouraged more rational and compassionate approaches. By the 18th century, there was growing sympathy for those who took their own lives. Instead of being condemned outright, they were increasingly seen as 'poor unhappy creatures,' victims of circumstance rather than moral failings.

This shift was reflected in the types of verdicts returned by juries. Whereas earlier periods emphasized guilt and punishment, later juries were more likely to attribute suicide to insanity. By the early 19th century, it had become common to assume that anyone who took their own life must have been mentally unwell. This interpretation had practical consequences, as a verdict of insanity could spare families from financial penalties and social stigma. Nevertheless, the distinction between sanity and insanity remained difficult to define, and verdicts often reflected subjective judgments influenced by social attitudes and personal biases.

Also highlighted was the uneven nature of historical records. Newspapers tended to report sensational or morally charged cases—such as those involving scandal, prostitution, or dramatic circumstances—while more ordinary deaths went unrecorded. This creates a distorted picture, reinforcing stereotypes while obscuring the experiences of the majority. Family historians must therefore remain aware of these biases when interpreting available sources.

In exploring the causes of suicide, Kathy emphasised that there is rarely a single factor. Instead, suicides typically result from a combination of pressures. Poverty, particularly a sudden decline in financial status, is a major contributor. Those accustomed to relative comfort often found it especially difficult to cope with hardship. Ill health, grief, and social shame also played significant roles.

(contd.)

For men in particular, the loss of status or reputation could be devastating, especially if they felt they had failed their families.

Alcohol emerges as another key factor frequently noted in inquests. Excessive drinking was often linked to both mental instability and impulsive behaviour, and juries routinely questioned witnesses about a deceased person's drinking habits. In some cases, intoxication itself was treated as a form of temporary insanity.

The methods used in suicides also reveal important patterns. Individuals tended to use means that were familiar and accessible to them. Men often used tools associated with their work, such as razors or ropes, while women were more likely to use household substances like poison. This practical dimension can offer clues for researchers, and in some cases may raise questions about whether a death was truly self-inflicted or involved other circumstances.

In the latter part of her talk, Kathy introduced more modern perspectives, particularly the role of biology and environment. Advances in science have highlighted the importance of brain chemistry, including the influence of substances such as serotonin and dopamine on mood and behaviour. Nutritional factors may also have played a role in the past, as diets were often limited and seasonal. Deficiencies in vitamins and other nutrients, especially during winter months, could have contributed to depression. Additionally, widespread food adulteration in the 19th century meant that many people were unknowingly exposed to harmful substances, potentially affecting both physical and mental health.

Despite these insights, she cautioned against overly simplistic explanations. Suicide is a complex phenomenon shaped by a wide range of interacting factors, including personality. Even individuals facing similar circumstances may respond very differently, as illustrated by contrasting examples of men who experienced public humiliation but chose divergent paths - one continuing with resilience, the other ending his life.

(contd.)

In conclusion, the talk underscored the importance of understanding suicide within its historical context.

Attitudes toward the act have evolved significantly, influencing how deaths were recorded, interpreted, and remembered. For family historians, this complexity presents both challenges and opportunities. By examining a variety of sources and considering the broader social and cultural environment, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of ancestors' lives and deaths. Ultimately, Kathy encouraged a thoughtful and empathetic approach, recognizing that behind every record lies a human story shaped by circumstances that may be difficult to fully reconstruct but are nonetheless worth exploring.

NB It would be interesting to hear any reactions from members to the result of the AI experiment.

A TALK – USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (A.I.) IN FAMILY HISTORY

Report by John Symons

On 9th April 2026 we welcomed back Linda Hammond to give a talk to H.F.H.S. and in order to produce this report it was only natural and appropriate to take advantage of the Zoom A.I. tools that Linda described..

Linda delivered a comprehensive presentation on using A.I. to support family history research, covering the fundamentals, practical applications and best practices. She explained how A.I. works through pattern recognition and prediction rather than direct information retrieval, demonstrating both its strengths in language tasks, data analysis and translation, as well as its limitations in handling live research and certain image processing tasks.

(contd.)

Linda demonstrated various A.I. tools including ChatGPT, Copilot and Gemini to show how A.I. can summarise documents, extract data from records, analyse historical photos and help build family trees.

She emphasized the importance of writing clear, specific prompts and validating A.I. outputs, while cautioning about potential hallucinations and data privacy concerns.

The presentation concluded with guidance on getting started with A.I. for genealogy research, including tips on tool selection and ethical considerations. Artificial Intelligence is best thought of as a research assistant, not a researcher. It helps recognise patterns in large amounts of information and generates likely responses.

A.I. **WILL** help organise and explain information, suggest ideas, sources and approaches. It will summarise long documents, extract names, dates and relationships. It will also translate records, organise timelines, tables and explain unfamiliar terms.

A.I. **WILL NOT** replace original records, think critically on its own or guarantee accuracy. A.I. helps save time and support understanding without replacing research. It works best with 'better questions' and using 'good prompts'. In other words A.I. needs to know who it should act as, what you want done and how you want the answer presented.

Be aware of the following: Answers are not facts treat them as suggestions and verify important facts, ask why and how and separate unrelated topics into new chats.

On the next page we reproduce Linda's comparison table of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various A.I. bots that are available.

Use results as clues not conclusions. Protect privacy, be aware of bias and use A.I. as support, not authority. Remember, A.I. is a tool that works best alongside traditional genealogy research. Start small, experiment, and think critically.

(contd.)

AI Bot	Strengths	Weaknesses	Best Use Case
ChatGPT	Writing family stories and explaining things clearly	Doesn't search the web for records unless connected to plugins	Turning facts into readable family history
Claude	Reading long documents like wills and registers	Less strong at live web search.	Understanding old, wordy documents
Gemini (Google)	Good at scanned documents and structured data	Not great at storytelling	Handling scanned records and structured files
Perplexity	Finds records and websites fast with sources	Less creative in narrative writing	Finding archives, indexes, and genealogy websites
Copilot (Microsoft)	Combines search, planning, and writing help	Less specialized in ultra-long document analysis.	All-in-one research planning and guidance
📷 Photo & Document Analysis			
AI Bot	Strengths	Weaknesses	Best Use Case
ChatGPT	Can describe images and handwriting if OCR is used	Doesn't analyze raw photos deeply	Light image help and handwriting interpretation
Claude	Reads long documents like wills and contracts really well	Can't analyze photos directly	Best for long text documents
Gemini (Google)	Good at scanned documents and structured data (like forms or registers)	Struggles with very old handwriting styles.	Best for scanned records and structured files
Perplexity	Finds tools and websites for document/photo analysis	Doesn't analyze images itself	Best for locating digitisation projects and resources
Copilot (Microsoft)	Combines OCR tools with helpful guidance	Not as strong at raw photo analysis as Gemini	Balanced support for scanned documents and context help

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT WORK.

By John Symons

Following the April 2026 talk in order to more clearly show what A.I. can do, I experimented using various A.I. tools to determine how it would deal with a couple of my historical family photographs.

You will need an account with the A.I. provider but it did not cost extra. You will be encouraged to pay for enhancements but I have not done so. This is in no way an exhaustive comparison.



This original print is almost certainly my maternal great grandmother, Eliza Agnes Aldridge (née Gynge) 1854-1898. I scanned the picture into both Microsoft Copilot and Google Gemini A.I.s with the request to improve and analyse the image. Results are on the following pages.

(contd.)

COPILOT & ANALYSIS



This restored photograph is a fascinating window into late Victorian fashion and studio portraiture. Here's what stands out:

Clothing and Style

Era: The outfit aligns with the 1890s to early 1900s, a transitional period between high Victorian and Edwardian styles.

Dress: The striped skirt with tiered ruffles and puffed sleeves were hallmarks of the 1890s. The fitted bodice and high collar suggest formality and modesty typical of the time.

Accessories: The hat with feathers and bow, gloves, and drawstring bag indicate middle-class respectability and attention to detail. Hats were essential for women outdoors or in public settings.

Photographic Technique

Setting: The plain backdrop and even lighting suggest a professional studio portrait, likely taken with a large-format camera using glass-plate negatives.

(contd.)

Pose: The upright stance and composed gaze were common in formal portraits, reflecting social decorum and the long exposure times required by early cameras.

Restoration: The improved version shows excellent tonal balance and clarity, revealing fine textures in fabric and facial features that were previously obscured by age marks.

Social Context

This kind of portrait was often commissioned to mark milestones—marriage, social status, or family heritage. The sitter's confident posture and refined attire imply she belonged to a family of some means, possibly urban or professional.

GEMINI & ANALYSIS



This black-and-white portrait captures a woman in highly structured, formal attire, characteristic of the late Victorian era (likely the 1890s). The photograph is a classic example of studio portraiture from that period, emphasizing poise, social status, and intricate fashion.

(contd.)

Fashion and Style

The subject's outfit is a masterclass in Victorian textile complexity:

The Dress: She wears a full-length gown featuring bold vertical stripes. The skirt is heavily detailed with multiple tiered ruffles and horizontal ribbon accents, creating a "bustle" silhouette that was popular in the late 19th century.

Sleeves: The "leg-of-mutton" sleeves (puffed at the shoulder and tapered toward the wrist) are a hallmark of mid-1890s fashion.

Accessories:

The Scarf: A long, dark, possibly fur or heavy silk tippet/scarf is draped over her shoulder.

The Hat: A small, decorative "perched" hat adorned with feathers or botanical elements.

The Parasol: She holds a dark, folded parasol (or umbrella), which served as both a practical tool for sun protection and a standard fashion accessory for a lady of her standing.

Gloves: Dark, tight-fitting gloves complete the ensemble, indicating formal outdoor or visiting wear.

Composition and Technical Details

Lighting: The lighting is soft and diffused, typical of a professional glass-ceiling studio of the era. It highlights the textures of the fabric—the sheen of the ribbons and the crispness of the stripes—while minimizing harsh shadows on her face.

Pose: Her posture is rigid and dignified. In this era, long exposure times often required subjects to remain perfectly still, leading to the serious, unblinking expression seen here.

Backdrop: A simple, neutral gradient backdrop is used to ensure the viewer's focus remains entirely on the subject and her elaborate clothing.

Historical Context

This image likely represents a woman of the middle or upper-middle class.

(contd.)

The sheer amount of fabric, the complexity of the tailoring, and the specific accessories (parasol and gloves) signal that this was a "best" outfit, worn specifically for the occasion of having a professional portrait taken.

The clarity of the image suggests it was captured using a large-format plate camera, which allowed for the incredible fine detail visible in the lace collar and dress patterns.

In my view the Gemini enhancement is the better in this instance but that might not be replicated across the board. The analysis is rather better with Gemini as well.

I then ran the same process with a photograph of my paternal grandfather Henry Symons and family during World War One.



I also asked Gemini to colourise the photo with this result. (contd.)

I don't think I will use this version in my family history, but would you? This is one of the dilemmas that A.I. can produce but I hope this demonstrates the advantages offered by A.I. as well as some of the issues it raises. More will probably appear in the future but if we are open and transparent about its use as another tool, then it should be a welcome development. We welcome comments and experiences from other users.

RESEARCH AND HELP BY H.F.H.S.

RESEARCH.

We can undertake, both for members and non-members, limited investigations at the London Metropolitan Archives, the National Archives and other London record offices.

Members are charged £5.00 per hour (non-members £10.00 per hour) plus any expenses incurred i.e. copying, postage etc. Should you choose to this service please be specific as to your requirements together with the upper limit of expenditure. You must appreciate that if the investigation produces no results the charges will still apply.

HELP.

We also offer help if you have become 'stuck' at some point in your researches. If you believe that there is a connection with our corner of Middlesex, we may have local knowledge that might help. However, in this modern age of the internet we are not restricted to Hillingdon or indeed Middlesex. This service is free to members and for non-members a charge of £2.00 is made for each family name forming the help request.

If you wish to use either of these services, please list out your requirements with as much detail as possible (names, dates, locations etc) and send to the society either by email on: enquiries@hfhs.org.uk or by mail addressed to:

Mrs. Valerie Fitch,
43 Doncaster Drive, Northolt, Middlesex. HA5 4AT

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	
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WHERE TO FIND US



Hillingdon Park Baptist Church, 25 Mercies Road, Hillingdon, Middlesex. UB10 9LS

By Car: The Church has a very small car park that can be reached via Aurioi Drive and there is a public car park on the eastern side of Long Lane: entry alongside the Co-op store or via the exit slip road off the A40 from London.

By Public Transport: The nearest T.F.L. station is Hillingdon which is within easy walking distance of the Church. There is also a frequent bus service, the U2, which stops outside the Church. Please note the main entrance to the Church is on the side of the Church and our Research Room is on the 1st floor.

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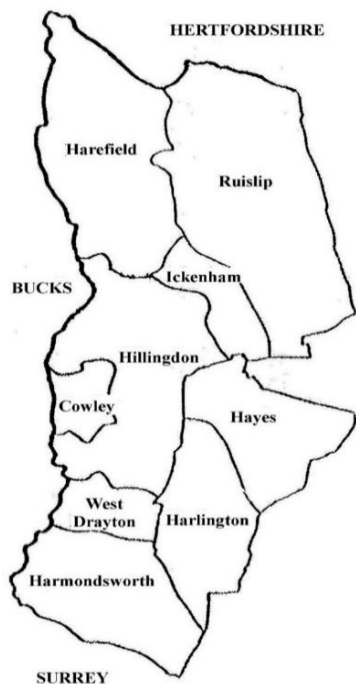
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THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON



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 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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