

SUFFOLK ROOTS

Vol. 52 : No. 2 : September 2026



THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF
SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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Theme of this Issue

Choose a Tomb

Your favourite, most interesting or intriguing gravestone

Cover Picture

*Tomb of the **Reverend Anthony Wingfield**, Stonham Aspal
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Suffolk Roots

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Journal of Suffolk Family History Society

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TRUSTEES' MESSAGE

Thank you to everyone who has completed the membership survey. As with last time (three years ago!) we have had a great response rate and also some great comments, which we will follow up.

By the time you read this we will have been at a couple of Suffolk events and hopefully some of you will have seen us there. Most recently we have will have been at the Framlingham show in mid-August. **Howard King** of the Ipswich Group also had a stall at the **Lilian Redstone** Celebration Day on 22 July 2026 at The Hold in Ipswich. In addition, we will have a stall at Alde Valley's Open Day on 12 September at the Fromus Centre in Saxmundham.

Sadly, **Garry Pyett**, the most recent recruit to the Trustees, has died. I received a call from his niece in mid-July saying he had passed away that afternoon. We knew Garry was very ill, but the end came faster than expected. Garry was also a relative of mine (a Kerridge=Pyett marriage back in the mid-19th century) who I had been in touch with for quite some time, and I only recently managed to persuade him to become a Trustee. Garry had a very busy life, with interests in caravanning and also making walking sticks (I saw quite a few of them when I called in to see him earlier this year), so adding Suffolk FHS Trustee to the list was not easy. Sadly, he had only just got his teeth into things.



Garry Pyett (1949-2026)



Diane Kirby receiving her Honorary Life Membership



Doug presenting Christine Palmer with her Honorary Life Membership

On a happier note, I was over in Suffolk in June and took the opportunity to meet our Patron, **Doug Howlett**; and then went on to Woodbridge to present **Diane Kirby** with her Honorary Life Membership. Doug had presented **Christine Palmer** with hers a little earlier.

Following the article in June's edition about glass negatives, we had

follow-up from Benhall & Sternfield History Group, who had seen the article and were interested in having an opportunity to scan the negatives relevant to their area. We were very happy to agree to this and then contacted another couple of local history groups likely to be interested in these negatives. They were, and we will be sorting this out in September. If there are any other local history or similar

groups who would like the opportunity to scan these negatives, please get in touch. We will eventually deposit them with Suffolk Archives, but that can wait, and we would much rather have them seen by as many as possible. Sutton Hoo were unfortunately not interested in them, but we did have a useful conversation which helped identify several of the photographs.

Noting that some members are not receiving the monthly (or thereabouts) e-newsletter, we now have a section on the website where you can see the last few newsletters. Go to the **Resources** tab, then down to **Journals and publications**, and at the bottom of the list you'll see 'Recent Society Newsletters'. You need to be logged in to see them.

You will see some changes in format and typeface with this edition of *Suffolk Roots* as we try to combat rising printing and postal costs. We are also foregoing publishing new members' interests here and will instead send them out with the newsletter. The relevance of the listings is less than it was, as members can now modify and add to their interests themselves and we do not capture these updates in what we publish. We recommend you regularly check under 'Members' Interests' on the website, under the **Resources** tab, to see if there have been any new entries that correspond to yours.

Finally, I was pleased that we had a Zoom presentation in mid-July from **Janet Few** on writing your family history – the timing was perfect (if unplanned) as we are putting submitted family histories on our website. There is more on this elsewhere in the journal, but the message is loud and clear: write it down. This can be done in instalments to cover different parts of the family or time periods: the ones we have range from 10 pages to over 200 pages. Family history will never be finished, but that shouldn't deter you from starting to tell the story. We are happy to provide a platform for sharing, which also means that we can update the biographies if necessary. Please get in touch if interested.

Andy Kerridge, Chair
chair@suffolkfhs.co.uk

TONY HARBORD (1944-2026)

We are sorry to report that **Tony Harbord** passed away in June. Tony joined the Baptism Index project in 2015 in response to a request in *Suffolk Roots* for helpers at the Lowestoft Record Office, and he became a much-valued member of the team.

Over the years he helped transcribe and check parishes in all four phases of Lothingland Deanery and also several phases of the neighbouring Dunwich and South Elmham Deaneries.

Tony was our last helper working from the Record Office when it closed but was able to continue working from home, which was particularly useful during Covid times.

He was resourceful, too, learning to read entries in Latin along the way and also accessing registers not held by Suffolk Archives. Tony's contribution to the project is much appreciated.

Alan Bumpstead, *Baptism Index Co-ordinator*
baptisms@suffolkfhs.org.uk

PLANS TO TRANSFER THE SOCIETY TO CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (CIO) STATUS

Many of you will know that Suffolk Family History Society is an incorporated charity. This means the Society is registered with the Charity Commission and with Companies House. We also have a trading sub-company, SFHS Publications Limited, which has its own Companies House account. This arrangement has involved generating three sets of accounts each year (Society, Publications and Consolidated), submitting the Consolidated and Publications accounts to Companies House (now involving each Trustee providing an Authentication Code for online filing), also submitting the Consolidated accounts to the Charity Commission under a different process, and submitting two tax returns to HMRC each year. This is a very time-consuming process for us and one which we have come to realise is not actually required.

We have been using the Publications sub-company account to keep track of income we receive from royalties (Findmypast, via the Federation of Family History Societies), and from sales of our volunteer-transcribed indexes of parish registers (CDs and downloads). Our accountant confirmed recently that this income is classed as 'charitable primary purpose income', being money a charity generates by providing goods or services that directly achieve the specific objectives outlined in its governing document. Because these activities actively fulfil the charity's core mission, the net profits are generally exempt from corporation and income taxes, and we can report the income in the charity's Society account. The Trustees therefore approved the proposal to close the SFHS Publications Limited account.

We further found that it would be possible to convert the Society from an incorporated company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO),⁽¹⁾ registered only with the Charity Commission. There are several pros to making the change:

- Reduced personal liability for Trustees
- A single regulator (Charity Commission)
- Allowed to own property (*not relevant to us*)
- Simplified accounting – just one set of annual accounts submitted to the Charity Commission
- Cuts administrative burdens and operational costs
- Saves time and effort

- Avoids the complicated overlap of duties and conflicts that can occur relating to company law and charity law.

Since 2018, charitable companies can convert to a CIO using a fairly simple process, which means the charity continues to exist under a different legal form. We should be able to keep our name, charity number, objectives and our existing banks. Members should not notice any change. There will be no impact on membership fees or insurance or how we interact with members.

As Trustees, we have agreed that it is in all our interests to convert to a CIO and adopt the proposed CIO constitution. The CIO model constitution is very similar to our current Articles of Association. The main difference relates to the quorum required at general meetings. We propose keeping the clause from our current Articles which requires 30 people or more, rather than 5% of our membership.

The process to convert to a CIO involves us passing two resolutions at our AGM according to Article 23 of our Articles of Association:

'23. (1) A resolution in writing agreed by a simple majority (or in the case of a special resolution by a majority of not less than 75%) of the members who would have been entitled to vote upon it had it been proposed at a general meeting shall be effective provided that:

(a) A copy of the proposed resolution has been sent to every eligible member.

(b) A simple majority (or in the case of a special resolution a majority of not less than 75%) of members has signified its agreement to the resolution; and

(c) It is contained in an authenticated document which has been received at the registered office within the period of 28 days beginning with the circulation date

(2) A resolution in writing may comprise several copies to which one or more members have signified their agreement.

(3) In the case of a member that is an organisation, its authorised representative may signify its agreement.'

The Conversion Resolution: Members agree to apply to the Charity Commission to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The Constitution Resolution: Members approve and adopt the draft Constitution (the rulebook) for the new CIO.

Our AGM will be held on Tuesday 13 October at 19:30 (UK) when we will ask members to vote on the two resolutions. Following the AGM, and on the basis that the resolutions are passed, we would then submit our application to the Charity Commission to convert to a CIO.

A copy of the proposed CIO Constitution has been made available with the AGM Agenda on our website. Look under **Events** on the Society's website for the AGM entry: <https://www.suffolkfhs.co.uk/events>.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please get in touch with the Treasurer at treasurer@suffolkfhs.org.uk.

References and Sources

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c644f59c5b7f0012951c47/Association_CIO_model_090224.pdf

MEMBERSHIP STANDING ORDERS

We are aiming to reduce administration for our Trustees and volunteers engaged in membership renewal management. Currently we receive membership payments via the following methods:

- Bank transfer payments made annually in the online shop on the Society's website. These are automatically transferred into our membership database by our website provider.
- Bank transfer payments made on the Parish Chest website. These too are automatically transferred into our membership database by our website provider.
- Direct Debits set up to pay on 1 April each year. Once set up there is no need to renew each year as it is an automatic process. We download a spreadsheet of all the orders from our BACS agent once a year during April. Our website provider uploads these into our membership database.
- Standing Orders. Payments are generally made in March each year, but can also be made at other times. All these have to be checked by the Membership Secretary, and our membership database updated manually. Some members are still making an incorrect subscription payment.
- Cheques. The Membership Secretary pays these into the bank and updates the membership database manually.

For those paying by Standing Order or cheque each year (**Note: this only applies to members in the UK or with a UK bank account**), we encourage you to change to pay by Direct Debit. The benefits of doing this are that:

- The correct payment goes out on 1 April each year at the start of the membership year.
- If you wish to cancel your Direct Debit you can do so at any time and you are protected in law.
- The subscription data can be easily uploaded into our membership database, saving time and effort for volunteers.

The form to sign up for Direct Debit payments is at the link here:

<https://secure.edirectdebit.co.uk/Suffolk-Family-History-Society/payments>

You need to:

- Select the payment amount – either £10 for Electronic membership or £14 for Postal.
- Specify the **Collection Day** as **1 April 2027**. If this field shows a different date, please change it.

- Enter your personal and bank details.
- Choose how you want to hear from us – via e-mail or post.

Once you have received confirmation of your Direct Debit, you should cancel your Standing Order.

If you have any questions or need help, please email: treasurer@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Andy Kerridge, Chair
chair@suffolkfhs.co.uk

FAMILY HISTORIES ON OUR WEBSITE

In sorting out the Society library at Suffolk Archives, several family histories were found which had been deposited as CDs. These will not be accessible to the public, as the computers in the John Blatchly Local Studies Library do not have CD drives; researchers would have to bring their own.

So, I brought the CDs back home and, with a new CD reader, found 90% of them were still readable (lesson for those using CDs as storage media). I then had some of them printed out (one or two were too large) and have deposited them as paper files back in the Library so they are now easily accessible to those visiting – although we do now need to re-do the Library index and sort the files and books into a logical order.

However, those that were printed are also now in PDF and searchable, so we have created a section on the website to make them available to all members:

- Log into the Society website
- Select the **Resources** tab
- Scroll down to near the end of the main section and select **Family History Anthologies**.

There are a growing number as we have a backlog to process, and we also anticipate that members will submit new ones in the future, so keep checking back. Currently, they include my own (of course), one from our longstanding friend and *Suffolk Roots* contributor **John Lines (Allshorn)** and another from **Brian Lott** on the **Lott** families of Flatford. These are searchable PDFs so you can run a quick check to see if any surnames you are interested in are present.

Some of the loose-bound paper histories deposited will also be scanned, put into searchable PDF and dealt with similarly.

If you have deposited a family history with the Society and do not want it to be shared in this way, please let me know ASAP.

Andy Kerridge, Chair
chair@suffolkfhs.co.uk

BAPTISM INDEX NEWS

What a summer it's been, with heatwave after heatwave to cope with, something our ancestors may not have encountered, but our helpers have been working on to bring you yet more of the earliest Suffolk baptisms.

Bury Team Leader

Our Bury Team Leader, Christine Palmer, who has been closely involved with the project since its very beginning in 2003, has decided to hand over the reins to fellow member **Angela Cowling**, but will continue to work with the team.

During all that time, Christine has dedicated herself to bringing us many of the west Suffolk deanery collections we've already published, with two more close to being completed. My thanks to Christine for all her meticulous work helping us to trace our Suffolk roots, and to Angela for stepping forward to fill those 'big boots'.



Angela and Christine

Progress

We've several phase 4 (1538-1649) deanery areas now nearing completion, and my thanks to Ipswich Team Leader Diane Kirby and the members of each team for their dedicated work on these, which include:

- Fordham (Bury team) – two parishes to complete
- Thingoe (Bury team) – ditto
- Ipswich (Ipswich team) – ditto
- Sudbury West (Home team) – five parishes to complete

Work is also underway on other deanery areas, and there follows a list of many phase 4 Anglican parishes completed but not yet published. If you're itching to see if you have ancestors in any of these parishes, please contact **Arthur Bird**, our Search Service provider (details available at the back of this journal).

Phase 4 Anglican Parishes completed but unpublished

Bosmere & Claydon Deaneries		
Akenham (1539-1649)	Ashbocking (1555-1649)	Badley (1591-1649)
Barham (1563-1649)	Great Blakenham (1547-1649)	Great Bricett (1563-1649)
Helmingham (1559-1649)	Nettlestead (1649-1649)	Offton (1558-1649)
Fornham Deanery		
Cavenham (1539-1650)	Exning (1558-1649)	Freckenham (1550-1649)
Mildenhall (1559-1649)	Newmarket AS (1622-1649)	Santon Downham (1580-1649)
Tuddenham (1558-1650)		

Ipswich Deanery		
St Clement (1563-1649)	St Lawrence (1539-1649)	St Mary Elms (1557-1650)
St Mary Stoke (1565-1649)	St Mary le Tower (1538-1649)	St Nicholas (1539-1649)
St Stephen (1585-1650)		
Stow & Thedwastre Deanery		
Creething SP (1558-1649)	Little Finborough (1561-1649)	
Sudbury West Deanery		
Alpheton (1571-1649)	Boxted (1539-1649)	Cavendish (1594-1649)
Chilton (1623-1649)	Cockfield (1561-1649)	Great Cornard (1540-1649)
Little Cornard (1565-1649)	Glemsford (1550-1649)	Hartest (1556-1649)
Monks Leigh (1628-49)	Shimpling (1539-1649)	Stanstead (1570-1649)
Thingoe Deanery		
Barrow (1543-1649)	Brockley (1560-1649)	Chevington (1559-1649)
Flempton+ (1561-1649)	Fornham All Saints (1559-1649)	Hawstead (1558-1649)
Horringer (1559-1649)	lockworth (1566-1649)	Lackford (1587-1649)
Nowton (1562-1649)	Rede (1538-1650)	Little Saxham (1559-1649)
Westley (1565-1649)		

Gleanings

If you've been unsuccessful, so far, in searching for some of your earliest roots, you may well have thought it was due to the loss of registers through neglect over the years. But here's another possible cause, carefully set out in an early Euston (Suffolk) parish register and brought to our attention by Angela.

In the register there's a nine-year gap between a burial in April 1648 and a baptism in June 1657, with the explanation concealed in this 10-line poem between them:

*'When Traytors domineerd in Saints disguise
And Hell-gott Presbytereans made their Prize
Of Charles the first then Church & State were torne
And in black stormes of Warre laye both forlorne
Then Loyall Preists in their iust rights were crost
And then this book nine yeares & more was lost
If thou art greived cause here thou hast noe place
And canst not find thy yeare & daye of Grace
To King & Keyser render still whats due
And curse that Hell-gott Presbyterian Crue.'*

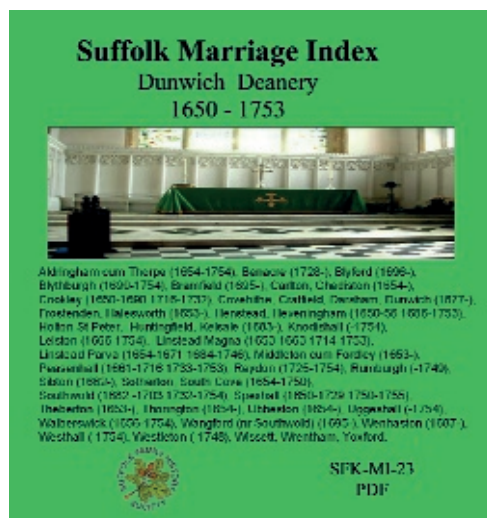
The June 1657 and subsequent entries are written in the same hand as the verse, and at the bottom of the page, in the same hand again, is the name '**Robert Mathew Rector**' who, according to the Suffolk Burial Index, held that position for 28 years until his death and burial there in 1683.

Keep a watch on our website for the release of any of those upcoming deanery collections, and good luck with your research.

Alan Bumpstead, Baptism Index Co-ordinator
baptisms@suffolkfhs.org.uk

MARRIAGE INDEX NEWS

Work on the Dunwich Deanery, comprising 45 parishes and spanning the years 1536 to 1753 at its widest margins, began in late 2025 and was split into two phases. In the March 2026 edition of *Roots* we reported reaching the halfway mark, and in the June issue there were just six parishes left to complete. As you can see from the CD cover here, 1650-1753 is now completed and work is progressing on the final production stages of the oldest phase, 1539-1649. We anticipate that phase will be available for purchase by the time you read this: please check the website.



It has proved a fascinating deanery, covering an extensive slice of East Suffolk and with a wide variety of parishes, both rural and coastal.

Some clergymen added information such as weather phenomena, personal comments on parishioners' lives or morals, or accounts of disasters such as that of the Southwold ferry coming back from Dunwich Fair on St James' Day 1616, a sad tale which involved the vicar's daughter too.

On a lighter note, there were a few 'strange' name choices:

- Southwold produced **Sylence Bradlie** who married in 1619, and **John Fox** marrying **Jone Hunter** on 4 February 1631.
- Halesworth saw the marriage of **John Irish** to **Sarah Wales** on 11 December 1695.
- Carlton recorded the marriage of **Humiliation Brown** to **William Cooper**, both from Saxmundham on 30 May 1715.

Currently, **Catherine Kendal** and I are working on checking Sudbury East Deanery and this should be finished very shortly.

Yvonne Hesketh, Marriage Index Coordinator
marriages@suffolkfhs.co.uk

EDITORS' WELCOME

By the time you read this, summer will be drawing to a close and, with it, the prime season for scouring churchyards and cemeteries for family graves. This year has perhaps been a bit hot for extended outings of this sort, which may mean that many of you decided to *write* about grave-hunting instead! As we hoped, the theme '*Choose a Tomb*' has inspired a good number of contributions – so many, that we have decided to continue the theme into December's issue. Accordingly, '*Music and Musicians*' will now feature in March 2027 instead. This means it's not too late to submit a tomb-related piece if you have one bubbling up...

The propensity of graves (or more precisely, headstones) to answer questions, such as exactly when ancestor X died or what their middle name was, is well known. What is shown by the pieces we've received is that, far from just answering questions, graves often prompt them. Sometimes the questions will be hard to answer definitively, as in the article '*John Who? A Sudbourne Mystery*'; but on occasion they may cast important light on a family's history, as demonstrated, for example, by '*Bridget: Mother of All*' and '*Mystery in the Fens*'. At yet other times, research prompted by a grave or a grave cluster can provide a gateway into aspects of social or cultural history, as in '*A Time Line...*' and '*What's in a Tombstone?*'. Of course, visiting a grave may simply be an end in itself, a way to honour a forebear, whether we knew them personally or simply feel close to them as a result of our research: the article '*Hunting for Great-Grandfathers*' falls into this category. We are grateful for all the varied and fascinating submissions we've received and are confident they will reignite in many readers an interest in hunting down their ancestors' last resting places. If you are one of them, let us know how you get on.

The 'tomb-related' articles all follow immediately after this Welcome, but as ever we have made space after the themed articles for other items that you may find of interest or assistance. Although we have somewhat fewer pages to play with than under the old format (a maximum of 80 rather than 96), a combination of changes to font and layout, the use of previously unused space, and the publication of New Members' Interests only on the website, means we are able to bring you much the same amount of content as we did before. We hope you find the new format accessible and continue to enjoy reading the journal. Needless to say, if you are motivated to write anything for publication, we will be delighted to hear from you. Don't feel you need to write at length; shorter pieces are always very welcome.

Lesley Hall and Rob Ward

editor@suffolkfhs.org.uk

WHAT'S IN A TOMBSTONE?

Walk into any Suffolk churchyard ('God's Acre') and you are entering a past community. Yes, you are treading on the graves of generations of the poor, those agricultural labourers who tilled the land, harvested the crops and produced the next workers of the parish. They were the backbone of society but are not honoured with any marker beyond the DNA present in their descendants.

Look around now at the scattering of headstones, commemorating those who were considered significant enough to have a lasting memorial. These were typically the farmers and wealthier artisans, the 'middling' folk who ran the day-to-day affairs of the parish as churchwardens, sextons, constables, overseers of the poor, etc. Note not just their names, dates and epitaphs, but also the shapes and designs of the stones. There were fashions in headstones, which can leave vital clues to the person's background. Typically, most stones will date from the 18th and 19th centuries, with some from the 20th century if there was sufficient room left in the churchyard.

Now observe the few large box tombs. These are likely to be the graves of the Lords of the Manor, the local upper class who owned the land, and leased it to the farmers who hired the labourers. These people mattered. Together with the vicar or rector, the Lord of the Manor controlled everything in the parish. Like the aristocracy, lords demanded the deference of bows and curtsies. Note the names, dates, and also the name of the manor of these grandees. The manor house might still exist, proudly standing in its well-tended grounds, or you might have to search for it on an old map.

Here, in this mansion, was the powerhouse of the whole community. You can still feel the family watching everyone in the churchyard. Be careful now...

I'm going to look in detail at one particular headstone, that of **John Swan** of Lidgate. Let us see what we can discover about this man. He was the brother of my ancestor, **Amy Swan**, who tragically died at the age of 24, probably in childbirth. Nothing is known about her beyond her baptism in Lidgate and her wedding and burial in Great Thurlow. Her brother John might hold some clues to her background.

John Swan's headstone is typical of the 18th century. It is rectangular with a popular cherub motif in a circle above the lettering, which is also enclosed in a circle. It states:

*'In
MEMORY OF
M^r JOHN SWAN
Who died Aug 13 1815
AGED 67 YEARS'*



*The headstone of John Swan
(c. 1749-1815) in Lidgate churchyard.
Photo: Author's own*

The honorary title 'Mr' (for 'Master') tells us that John Swan was a highly regarded member of the community. This term carried the implication that he was an employer, a 'master' of men.

Now let us look at the cherub above the lettering. A common 18th century motif, it represents the soul flying up to heaven – where John presumably hoped to be. Sometimes the cherub gives a clue to the deceased's occupation, by holding a tool of the trade, but not in this case. Cherubs were becoming old-fashioned by the time John died. Are we looking here at an out-of-date man, or perhaps an elderly stonemason?

Next let me introduce you to John Swan's brother-in-law, his sister Amy's husband. He was **William Barrott** (1753-1836) of Great Thurlow, a stonemason. Did he carve this headstone? Village masons usually created the local tombstones. There are plenty of stones almost identical to John Swan's, not just in Lidgate but all over the nearby parishes, with a notably large number in Great Thurlow. Are they all the handiwork of my busy ancestor and his son (by his third wife!), **John Barrett** (the surname spelling varied over the generations), who followed his father into stonemasonry? Significantly, very near John Swan's headstone is an almost identical one dedicated to **Mary Isaacson**, the wife of the long-standing rector of Lidgate, the **Rev. John Isaacson**. She died on 17 August 1785. Her husband swore in the executors of John Swan's will in 1803, and also buried him in 1815. If you look around a graveyard, you will find interesting connections like this.

It is always worth looking at the surrounding headstones, because families were buried together, side by side, so they were as close in death as in life. Just to the left of John Swan's headstone is a row of three stones, sinking into the ground, mostly illegible, that carry the name Swan. One is of a **William Swan**. We don't know the exact relationships between



*Three Swan headstones in Lidgate churchyard.
Photo: Author's own*

these Swans, but because one is obviously in a different and older style, we can conclude that John Swan's family were here generations before him. This suggests a land connection, a farming family, which proves to be the case, as John described himself as a farmer in his will.

We might expect to find a sizeable farm for such an impressive stone, but this seems not to be the case. It is another clue that someone – brother-in-law William Barrott? – has stepped in to honour him for posterity, for John Swan leaves a mere one acre and 35 perches to his son, the pastureland split into three tiny parcels. He does also own five cottages in Lidgate and Dalham, so perhaps this was his main source of income. John's signature on his will is firm and confident, suggesting he was fit and healthy. He had in fact another 12 years of life. Why did he write the will, then?

Let us now look at John Swan's background. The Lidgate parish register records his baptism, and also his sister Amy's:

'1749 October 8th John, Son of James & Mary Swan'

'1752 March 8th Amy, Daughter of James & Mary Swan'

The register also records the burial of their father **James Swan** on 2 February 1753, when (assuming they were baptised shortly after their births) John was 3 years and 4 months old, and Amy was not even one year old. James Swan left no will, perhaps because a sudden death robbed him of the opportunity to make one. Yet his father, John Swan's grandfather, left a meticulously thought-out will. Does this explain why John wrote a will before he felt his health was failing?

Interestingly, John Swan's grandfather describes himself in his will as a 'labourer', not a farmer, of Lidgate. His signature is made with the tell-tale effort of a person not used to writing. The will focuses solely on his children. With mathematical precision, all four are to inherit their share at the same time, when aged 24, 23, 21 and 19 respectively. As his father died when he was 19, this meant a five-year wait for John and Amy Swan's father (the eldest child), which possibly delayed his marriage to **Mary Gilby**.

A final piece of the jigsaw comes from **Hodskinson's** map of Suffolk, dated 1783. Here we find a **Nath. Barret Esq.** of Badmondisfield Hall, which still exists, in Lidgate's hamlet of Genesis Green. Surely this is not a coincidence? Was the marriage of Amy Swan to William Barrott on 15 December 1774 at Great Thurlow an arranged marriage between the two families?



*An aerial view of Badmondisfield Hall, Suffolk
(John Fielding of Norwich, CC BY 2.0)*

If so, it was tragically short. A year later, on 10 December 1775, the couple had a daughter, **Elizabeth Barrott**, who was baptised at Great Thurlow. The following year, on 31 December 1776, Amy Barrott was buried at Great Thurlow. There she could have remained a footnote on the family tree.

Instead, the tombstone of Amy's brother, John Swan, has brought her out of the shadows. We now know that Amy came from a well-respected farming (yeoman) family that resided for generations in Lidgate. We also know that there appears to be some prior (and prestigious) connection to her husband's family, through a local squire, Nath. Barret. We also have evidence, through his fine tombstone, that John Swan must have maintained contact with his brother-in-law, stonemason William Barrott, some 40 years after Amy's death. We also know that, by some miracle, in those two brief years of marriage Amy managed to produce a 'gateway ancestor', baby Elizabeth Barrott, from whom an incredible number of people descend today, including myself.

Susan Pearl Mb 12046

BRIDGET: MOTHER OF ALL

When I was a student of Archaeology, I think my lecturers were rather bemused when I decided I wanted to focus on gravestone iconography. After all, I was studying at Orkney College UHI, next door to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. But no: what fascinated me, and still does, was the way people were represented on their memorials. Naturally, one of the main types of memorial which was prominent in the study was *memento mori* – the symbols related to the transience of life. I became an expert at spotting these symbols in various graveyards: the hourglass, the crossed spades, the skull...

Fast forward a few years and 2021 found my sister and me walking through the graveyard in Aldeburgh. Generations of our family are buried there – we knew this – but we couldn't find any stones. It was a beautiful summer evening, in the hopeful context of a world just awakening from Covid, and we refused to admit defeat until we had checked every single stone. Our tenacity paid off: eventually, we found the **Richardson** family plot and, right next to that, another branch of our family, which married into the Richardsons in the early 19th century.

And there, in the middle of the Richardson plot, was a beautiful *memento mori* stone, with a carved skull staring away towards the sea. As I have such affection for *memento mori* iconography, I photographed it, and mused to my sister about how interesting it would be to have an ancestor whose grave featured this type of symbolism. It could not be the case in this instance: the name on the grave was **Bridget Newel** and so, despite being surrounded by Richardsons, she was not one herself.

We moved on, finishing our tour in the dimming sunlight and taking our photographs back home to northern Scotland to share with the rest of the family. It was only coincidence which led us to know a little bit more about Bridget some months later.

In order to identify all the relatives we had around Aldeburgh, I did a quick *Ctrl+F* on the *Suffolk Marriage Index* looking for 'Richardson' and I discovered that, before marrying **John Newel**, Bridget had been married to **Philip Richardson**. We tried to discover more, and have found that Bridget seems to have led quite an interesting life.

There is no record of Bridget and Philip marrying but, according to the dates given on her gravestone, she was 22 when her eldest child was born. She went on to have nine children with Philip, at least four of whom survived to adulthood. Her third son was named **Watts**, which became a family Christian name, so we have theorised that this may have been her maiden name, but there are no records to corroborate this.

When she was 39, Bridget became a widow. Her youngest child was born the same year, and she had four others under the age of 10. We cannot find out whether Bridget would have had a family support network around her, but the records show that it was another 10 years before she decided that the time – and presumably the person! – was right for remarrying.

John Newel was six years younger than Bridget and had young children of his own. He had only been a widower for a few months before marrying her. Rather than feeling relief that her years of childrearing were approaching their natural conclusion, Bridget instead opted to assume the role of mother for her stepchildren. But this was not to be the ‘happily ever after’ that Bridget may have hoped for.

Aldeburgh, with its vulnerable position on the East Coast, often found itself at the mercy of various rogues, such as smugglers and Dunkirkers, the Spanish and French privateers whose piratic approach to warfare attempted to evade the clutches of the British Navy.

On 17 July 1744, Bridget saw her second husband buried in the graveyard at Aldeburgh, with a note made in the record that he had been ‘*shot by a French privateer*’. His children were still young and Bridget must have been shaken to the core to find herself once again a widow with little children to care for.

She died at the good age (for the time!) of 62, having outlived not only two husbands but most of her children, too. The gravestone which was made for her, in the married name which caused us so much confusion initially, records her only as the ‘*widow of John Newel*’, but I imagine her more as a matriarch than a wife. In the family Bible, Bridget’s name comes at the top: we have no parents for her, no marriage certificate to give a clue as to her beginnings. We have affectionately titled her Bridget: Mother of All.



The gravestone of Bridget Newel, formerly Richardson, formerly Watts (possibly), Aldeburgh

Bridget Newel, formerly Richardson, formerly Watts (possibly), knew what it was to grieve, but to keep going and survive in order to support her family. I am pleased to be able to perpetuate her memory now, 700 miles and 282 years away from a day when Bridget would have been facing the adversity and devastation of becoming a widow for the second time, in the most violent of circumstances.

The skull on her gravestone invites us to *memento mori* (remember death), but it is also an opportunity to *memento Bridget*.

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MYSTERY IN THE FENS

When I spotted this headstone in the churchyard at Walpole St Peter's, in Norfolk, it created an itch I just had to scratch. The inscription reads:

*'John Frank Rowlett
The Beloved Grandson of
Edward & Sophia Rowlett
who died May 23rd 1914
Aged 24 years'*

I was searching for burial plots of my mother-in-law's maternal **Rowlett** ancestors and had already been unsuccessful in several other graveyards. The family originated in Upwell in Norfolk, and there is compelling evidence that the grandfather migrated to London in the 1870s, and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington. But what of family members who had remained in Norfolk?



*John Frank Rowlett's headstone,
St Peter's, Walpole St Peter.
Photo: Author's own*

St Peter's, Walpole St Peter, is a beautiful 14th-century church approximately two miles from Wisbech and 10 miles from the village of Upwell. Known as 'the Cathedral of the Fens', the church will have been familiar to the family both as a landmark in the unforgiving landscape and as the baptismal home of many generations. It seemed a sensible place to begin the search.



St Peter's church, Walpole St Peter, Norfolk (John Salmon, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Wandering up and down the paths between the gravestones, I suddenly came upon **John Frank Rowlett**'s intriguing memorial, far more imposing than many of the surrounding stones, and bearing the family name. At first, I thought John Frank had died during the Great War, but then realised the date was too early. War began for Britain in August 1914, three months after the date carved on the tombstone.

What had caused his death in his early 20s, and why had his grandparents arranged the memorial rather than his parents? These questions and more raced around in my head as I made a note of the details and took the photograph. Neither John Frank Rowlett nor his grandparents' names were on my list of past relatives, and there was no mention of his parentage on the headstone. Was it possible he was a distant relation? The Rowletts' many offspring were spread widely across that part of Norfolk.

No more revelations were forthcoming that day, so the graveyard search was abandoned in favour of other methods.

Eventually I discovered that John Frank Rowlett was indeed my husband's distant cousin. They were both 2x great-grandsons of **Fisher Rowlett** (1803-1887) and his wife **Alice (née Humphrey)** (1799-1895). Fisher and Alice married in 1823 and went on to have a large family. My husband's ancestral line came through their son **Fisher** (1832-1907) and his wife **Mary Ann (née English)** (1838-1892). John Frank was from the line of Fisher and Alice's eldest boy, **Thomas** (1824-1854), who in 1844 had married **Frances Neal** (1825-1859). My husband and John Frank are third cousins a generation apart.

Research revealed that John Frank's grandfather was Thomas and Frances' eldest son **Edward**, born two months after their wedding. His parents both died in their 30s, and when Frances passed away in 1859, Edward (15) and his three younger siblings **Sophia** (13), **Frances (Fanny)** (11) and **John** (8), were left orphans.

The 1861 census, taken two years after their mother's death, suggested the children had been separated. The two eldest were in service in two different households, Edward as a groom and Sophia as a nursemaid. There was no trace of Fanny that year, but she reappeared in 1871 working as a general servant. The youngest child, John, was living with his grandparents, Fisher and Alice Rowlett.

I discovered that in 1864 Edward had married **Sophia Wheeler**, and that this couple were the likely grandparents named on John Frank's gravestone.

It is very easy to make assumptions and mis-assign relationships. Edward and Sophia had three children, two boys, **Edward** and **John William**, and one girl, **Fanny**, the eldest, perhaps named for her grandmother Frances. With the surname Rowlett, I assumed John Frank belonged to one of the boys, but I met dead ends at every turn.

He had first appeared as a grandchild in the 1891 census aged 11 months, living at 7 West Drove, Walpole St Peter, with grandparents Edward and Sophia Rowlett, and their single daughter Fanny, aged 24. Fanny's brothers were found elsewhere on that year's count, Edward, with his wife of one year, living next-door to his

parents and John William lodging in Terrington St John, about three and a half miles away.

My attention turned to Fanny, the daughter, and I found that Fanny Rowlett had borne a son on 30 April 1890, with no father's name given. This was not unusual, as at that time an unmarried father was required by law to be present at registration for his name to appear on the paperwork. Fanny remained unmarried a year after the child's birth, and it appeared the father was not in the picture at all.

Illegitimacy in the 19th century was universally condemned, the mother often incarcerated in an asylum and the child removed for adoption. Although grandparents often took on responsibility for their orphaned grandchildren, it was a brave gesture on Edward and Sophia's part to allow their daughter to stay in the family home with her newborn child. This was a close-knit rural community and the family's reputation would be tainted by the daughter's perceived misdemeanour.

By 1901 John Frank was 10 and still living with his grandparents, but Fanny was no longer around. She had married **Joseph James Phillips**, a coachman, on 18 July 1894 in Wisbech, in the presence of one of her Rowlett cousins. She was then 28. After the wedding there is no evidence that Fanny had any further contact with her parents, or with her first-born son. The first census recorded after her marriage was three years later, in 1901. She was living in Great Crosby, Liverpool, with her husband and their two-year-old daughter **Hilda**. In 1911 this family, which now included two daughters and a six-year-old son named **John Edward**, lived in Hastings in Sussex. The move may have been due to Joseph Phillips' work as a coachman. The naming of the son John Edward, the names of her eldest child and her father, suggests Fanny may have regretted leaving him with her parents. She outlived her first-born, dying in 1929.

John Frank lived with his grandparents until his untimely death from tuberculosis at the age of 24. As a farm worker he would have worked long hours, labouring in the fields and driving a traction engine. Even for a young man this heavy work might create similar symptoms to those of TB, such as tiredness, and general malaise. It may have been some time before his condition was recognized. At that time there was no available treatment beyond fresh air and rest, and TB sufferers literally wasted away. John Frank died the year after the government began collecting annual data on the prevalence of this disease, and the breakthrough leading to a cure was nearly 40 years away.

This tombstone is an impressive memorial from grandparents to the child they had raised almost from a baby. It rises defiantly above its neighbours, encouraging reflections on lost opportunities, estrangements and hidden secrets, as well as the progress of medical research.

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JOHN WHO? A SUDBOURNE MYSTERY

Several of my ancestors lie in the graveyard of Sudbourne All Saints, and a research trip there took me back to a familiar group of family graves belonging to my **Keer**, **Meadows** and **Raymer** forebears. I took some photographs, and was pleased to see that the stones looked much as they always had – they have worn well over the years.

But it was something *next* to the family graves that really caught my attention: a wooden grave marker, standing close by the group. The cluster contains six graves in total, five of which I know for certain belong to my family. Given the close proximity of the wooden marker to the rest, it seems very likely that this, too, is the grave of a relative. Frustratingly, if the marker ever carried a name, it vanished long ago, worn away by a century or more of Suffolk weather.

A few days after the visit, while searching my emails for something entirely unrelated, I came across a photograph my cousin **Anita** had sent me some time ago. It showed the same group of graves and, at the very edge of the frame, a glimpse of the wooden gravestone bearing part of a name! I could make out ‘*John*’, and beneath it, what looked like the letters ‘*Br...*’



The group of family graves at Sudbourne All Saints, with the wooden grave marker on the right. Photo reproduced with permission



The wooden grave marker. Photo: Author's own

The photo was surrounded by a white border, except on the right side – the side where the name ‘*John*’ appeared – which looked as if it had been cut off. I wondered whether the original, uncropped photograph might show more of the inscription – perhaps a surname, or other identifying details. I asked Anita whether she still had the original; she did, and while this was itself cropped, and so didn’t reveal any more information, the quality of the scan was better. The letters beneath the name ‘*John*’ did indeed look like ‘*Br...*’.

The photograph gave us another clue: a rough date to work with. Next to the wooden grave marker, there are fresh flowers by the grave of my grandmother **Iris Keer**’s brother, **Harold Arthur Keer**, who died on 3 March 1928. The grave which now stands to the left of Harold’s is that of his brother **Donald Keer**, who died on 29 January 1930. But Donald’s grave is absent in this photo, meaning it was taken between the deaths of the Keer brothers. This means that the occupant of the grave marked by the wooden memorial was buried pre-1930, and possibly pre-1928.

Two possibilities suggested themselves for who ‘*John*’ might be. My grandmother Iris had an infant brother named **John**, who had died at only 31 hours old in 1910, and may have been buried alongside his siblings – this would fit both the location and the possible age of the marker. Perhaps the lettering underneath the name ‘*John*’ wasn’t a surname at all, but some other word? When I mentioned the discovery to my uncle **Brian**, he suggested a different candidate: a man named John Brinkley, who had married into our Meadows family, and whose name would neatly account for the ‘*Br...*’ that I was sure I could see on the marker.

Keen to settle the matter, I searched for contact details for the Sudbourne churchwardens, and traced an email address for one via an online copy of the parish magazine, *The Link*, from 2020. I wrote to ask whether the church held a map of burial plots for the All Saints churchyard, which might allow us to identify the occupant of the grave with certainty.

The churchwarden replied promptly and helpfully, explaining that the churchyard plan had recently been updated and might be of some use, and copied in a member of the Parochial Church Council who held the master copy. The Council member explained that the plan was not, as I had hoped, based on historical burial records, but had been produced a couple of years earlier by physically mapping the graves and annotating them with names taken from those stones that were still legible. An invaluable record for the future, but sadly, as our wooden marker is now entirely illegible, it carried no name on the plan, and there was no surviving record of who lay beneath it.

The Sudbourne burial register doesn’t record a burial for the infant John Keer, who was born and sadly died 1910. Perhaps that’s another story: when and where was he buried?

So, for now, the identity of ‘*John*’ at Sudbourne All Saints remains unconfirmed – though the circumstantial evidence points strongly towards John Brinkley. The Sudbourne burials on Ancestry only go as far as 1899; I would like to look for him in the burial register, to add another piece to the jigsaw puzzle.

So, who was John Brinkley? Whatever the final verdict on the wooden marker, the research has brought to light the story of a man deeply rooted in this small corner of Suffolk. **John William Brinkley** was born in Sudbourne on 24 April 1849 and died there on 11 March 1925, having spent almost the whole of his 75 years in the parish: the census returns trace him there as a boy living with his grandparents, then as a young man, husband, father, and widower, scarcely ever moving more than a mile or two from where he was born. He worked with wood throughout his life, being recorded variously as a woodman, and, for most of his working life, a carpenter and woodcutter.

John married his first wife, **Mary Meadows**, in 1881, but the marriage was cut tragically short: Mary died in 1890 at the age of just 36, following childbirth. Of the six children John and Mary had together, four did not live to see their father’s own death – a heavy toll even by the standards of the period. Only two of the six, a son who moved away to Essex and another who remained in Suffolk, outlived

him. John later remarried, to **Elizabeth Spurling**, and continued to live and work in Sudbourne until his death in 1925. Having spent pretty much all his life in the village, it seems unlikely that John Brinkley would have been buried anywhere else.

What began as a chance glance at a weathered, bare wooden marker has turned into a piece of detective work involving family reconstruction, current family members, old photographs, and modern parish records – and a reminder that sometimes the most stubborn brick walls in family history are made not of stone, but of weathered wood.

I am doing a one-place study of Sudbourne. If any reader has any recollections of the village, and/or the Keer, Meadows or Raymer families in the surrounding area, I would be delighted to hear from you.

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A TIME LINE...

Standing at the north-east corner of the churchyard of St Mary Magdalen, Little Whelnetham, you can see a line of seven graves set close to each other, almost with mathematical precision when compared to other family groups. I think this is not by accident.

Nearest to the church is a white gravestone dedicated to **Ann Airy**. It tells us she was born in Rougham, a couple of miles away, in 1767 and ‘*died at the Royal Observatory Greenwich*’ in 1841. Ann is buried next to her husband, **William Airy**. Next to him is their daughter **Elizabeth** who, we are told, was ‘*For forty years resident of the Royal Observatory Greenwich*’.

How, I ask myself, did these two ladies have such a connection to the Greenwich Observatory? And why are they buried here in the Suffolk countryside?



This photograph shows six of the headstones in St Mary Magdalen churchyard. The missing one was apparently broken when tree surgeons allowed a heavy yew branch to fall on it. It now rests, in two parts, against the east wall of the church. Photo: Author's own.

The next two graves belong to Ann's sister **Elizabeth** and her husband **John Blencowe** (Elizabeth's headstone is the missing one). The last two in the family group are Elizabeth and John's daughters, **Jane** and **Lucy**, who both died unmarried aged 66 and 64 respectively.

Ann Airy was born Ann Biddell. Her father **George Biddell** was a tenant farmer who worked for a number of years in Rougham before moving to Little Whelnetham

Hall sometime around 1780. We know this because Ann's youngest brother **Arthur Biddell** was baptised in the adjacent church in 1783. More of him later. Ann would have been about 13 when the family moved to the Hall, and she spent most of her life here until she eventually married at the age of 33.

William Airy was also born into a farming family, in Luddington, north Lincolnshire, close to the Humber estuary. In his early 20s he decided to break away from farming and entered the Civil Service, becoming an excise officer (that's a tax collector to you and me!). It was the practice then for excise officers to apply for posts around the country. I envisage William coming to Bury St Edmunds to assess properties here for tax due on their land and buildings. Perhaps he visited Rushbrooke Hall, just a couple of miles south of the town. I see him discussing with **Sir Charles Davers** the value of his land and the window tax due on a house boasting over 50 windows.

It would be sensible to take a ride another mile to the south and visit George Biddell at Little Whelnetham Hall to assess his liabilities. Might William have known that Biddell had three unmarried daughters? All very Jane Austen!

Whatever the circumstances, William Airy married Ann Biddell in Little Whelnetham church on 30 September 1800. He was 50 years old, she 33. The occasion would have been tinged with sadness as her father had died the previous December.

William had accepted a post in Alnwick, Northumberland, in August, and so the couple moved north immediately after the wedding. In July the following year their first son was born. He was baptised **George Biddell Airy**, named quite obviously after Ann's father.

Very soon William was on the move again, accepting a post in Hereford. Here three further children were born: Elizabeth (1803), **William** (1807) and **Arthur** (1810). Arthur would die aged just 3 years, by which time the family had moved to Colchester.

This narrative now turns its attention to George Biddell Airy, the oldest son, hereafter referred to as GBA. He excelled at school and was good enough to be accepted into the Royal Grammar School in Colchester in 1814.

He was introduced to Ann's youngest brother Arthur (aforementioned) who had a farm in Playford just to the north of Ipswich. Arthur was a bit of a polymath, interested in the sciences and the arts. GBA and Arthur liked each other and GBA would visit his uncle whenever he could, especially during the school holidays.

One of Arthur's neighbours was **Thomas Clarkson**, well known for his efforts to end the slave trade. He was a graduate mathematician and recognised GBA's



Little Whelnetham Hall, viewed from the north, c. 1900 (much as it appears today). Taken from Whelnetham Parish Registers, Suffolk Green Books (No. XV) (1910)

great talent and potential. It was thanks to the efforts of Biddell and Clarkson that GBA was accepted into Trinity College, Cambridge to study Mathematics in 1819.

Wikipedia has a good account of GBA and his achievements. He excelled at Cambridge and graduated as Senior Wrangler, the mathematics student with the highest marks in finals. He was elected a Fellow of Trinity and two years later appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, a post previously held by **Isaac Newton**, and subsequently by **Charles Babbage** and **Stephen Hawking**. GBA turned his attention to astronomy and in 1828 was appointed Professor of Astronomy and made director of the new Cambridge Observatory.

In the same year that GBA entered Trinity College, his father left the Excise Service under mysterious circumstances and moved his family to Bury St Edmunds. I consulted GBA's autobiography for more detail, but found none. I did find, however, that his younger brother William attended the King Edward VI grammar school in Bury and the headmaster there, **Dr. B H Malkin**, another Trinity graduate, was able to get William accepted into the same Cambridge college. He would study Divinity and become a clergyman.

The autobiography also tells us GBA visited his family in Bury three or four times a year, travelling by coach, but sometimes walking the whole distance (c. 25 miles). GBA and his brother William came from Cambridge to attend the funeral of his father on 31 March 1827. His autobiography makes no comment about his father, in contrast to the death in 1860 of his uncle Arthur Biddell, of whom he said: *'He had been in many respects more than a father to me; I cannot express how much I owed to him, especially in my youth.'*

In 1824 GBA and William took a walking holiday in the Peak District. GBA carried with him a letter of introduction to the **Rev. Richard Smith** (yet another Trinity graduate and a former Fellow) who, as well as being parish priest in Edensor, was also chaplain to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth House. GBA was immediately smitten with one of the Rev. Smith's six daughters, **Richarda**. Within two days, it is said, he proposed marriage, but her father was having none of it. Here was a university student with not a penny to his name, and not in employment: *'Come back when you have prospects'* was the message.

It was six years later, when GBA had been appointed director of the Cambridge Observatory, that Richarda was finally allowed to accept his proposal. They were married in Edensor church on 24 March 1830. Her father officiated at the wedding, of course.

In 1828, after the death of her husband, Ann Airy moved from Bury to live with GBA at the Cambridge Observatory. GBA's



*A painting, possibly by **J & H S Storer**, of the new Cambridge Observatory, completed in 1825 (public domain via CC BY 4.0). The building is much as GBA would have known it. Is that Richarda on the extreme right?*

sister Elizabeth came too. In 1830, in order to make way for GBA's new wife **Richarda**, Ann and Elizabeth removed themselves to Luck's Farm in Playford, owned by Ann's brother Arthur. In due course GBA would buy a cottage there in Church Lane.

GBA was appointed Astronomer Royal at the end of 1835 and took up his post at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich along with Richarda and their children, **George**, **Elizabeth** and **Arthur** (family names with which we are already familiar).

Ann died there in 1841. She is buried next to her husband in Little Whelnetham. I think it likely that her body was transported there, a distance of approximately 80 miles, by horse-drawn hearse.



*Pencil drawing of GBA crossing the Front Court of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. It is dated 1839 and was drawn by **Elizabeth Smith**, one of his sisters-in-law (public domain via University of Cambridge Digital Library)*

His sister Elizabeth returned to the family, which now had four children in the house. There should have been six, but sadly the first two boys to be born, George and Arthur, both died of scarlet fever within a week of each other in 1839. They are buried at Playford.

Elizabeth died in 1875, and followed her mother back to Little Whelnetham to be buried after being '*forty years resident of the Royal Observatory Greenwich*'.

George Biddell Airy was Astronomer Royal for 45 years. Readers can research Wikipedia for a potted history of his life or refer to his autobiography as edited by his son **Wilfrid**.

He was an extremely clever man, well versed in mathematics and the sciences, astronomy, the classics, history. His output was prodigious. For me, three or four examples typify his breadth of knowledge and influence:

- He devised a method of correcting the deviation of a magnetic compass produced by the iron in ships.
- He determined the mean density of the earth using pendulum experiments (his result was an underestimate, in error by about 20%).
- He was part of the Royal Commission established to decide which gauge our railways should use.
- He suggested to **William Gladstone**, then Prime Minister, that the country should adopt decimal currency (didn't happen!).

Most importantly to my mind, the Greenwich Meridian was set in 1851 following the installation of Airy's Transit Circle telescope. In 1884, at a conference in Washington DC attended by delegates from 26 countries, it was agreed the Greenwich meridian would be observed world-wide as the prime meridian for time and longitude.⁽¹⁾

GBA was also interested in promoting science beyond the walls of academia and I will mention just two of his public events here.

First, on five consecutive evenings in March 1848, GBA came to the Temperance Hall in Ipswich to give a series of lectures on Astronomy, which was becoming a popular pursuit among the Victorian middle and upper classes. A full account of these lectures can be found on the website of the Orwell Astronomical Society. Between 1870 and 1874, the Orwell Observatory was built as an extension to Orwell Park Mansion, paid for by the owner and philanthropist **George Tomline**. Wilfrid Airy was engaged to advise on all the technical aspects of the build.



*Watercolour painting by **Christabel Airy**, GBA's daughter, dated 1863 and showing the newly built South East Dome at Greenwich, designed by GBA (public domain via University of Cambridge Digital Library). In 1893 the Dome was replaced with an onion dome to facilitate the installation of the Great Equatorial Telescope, supervised by **George Arthur Bidell**, a cousin of GBA who worked for Ransomes of Ipswich*

Secondly, in October 1858 GBA gave a single evening lecture at the Athenaeum in Bury St Edmunds. Some members of the audience were so inspired by the talk that they resolved to build an observatory in Bury. Within a year they had secured enough funds to build one on the Athenaeum roof. The original structure and telescope are still in place, but unfortunately not currently open to the public.

Playford became a retreat for GBA and his family and he would visit three or four times a year and always around Christmas and the New Year.

At St Mary's church, Playford, immediately opposite their cottage, is the family burial plot. As mentioned previously, GBA's first two boys, George and Arthur, tragically died young and are buried here.

Next to them lies Elizabeth, the oldest daughter, who died in 1852 shortly after returning from a visit to Madeira, aged just 19: '*my most dear, amiable, clever daughter*', as he recorded.

These three children pre-deceased their parents. The headstones have weathered a great deal and my photographs are not good enough to present here.



A sketch by Richarda of the Airys' cottage in Church Lane, Playford (courtesy of Suffolk Artists website). The cottage is still recognisable today

Next in line is a double grave containing the two unmarried daughters, Christabel (1842-1917) and **Annot** (1843-1924). The headstone says they both died at the White House, Greenwich, which was their father's home after he retired from his post as Astronomer Royal. They continued to live there after his death in 1892.

His other children, Wilfrid, **Hubert**, **Hilda (Routh)** and **Osmund**, are buried elsewhere.

Completing the family group at Playford is a headstone for Richarda Airy, who died before her husband and so his name appears beneath hers. It is a very humble commemoration for such a prominent man who gave a life of service to his country. Inside the church, however, is a marble bust of Sir George Biddell Airy (he was knighted in 1872), mounted on the north wall, facing you as you enter.

The graves here, as at Little Whelnetham, are close together and in a perfect line; all very mathematical. aligned north-south, parallel to the zero meridian, that enduring time line...



Sir George Biddell Airy painted in 1883, after retiring as Astronomer Royal (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Airy Collection)



Richarda and George's grave at Playford. The dates are engraved in 'astronomical style', i.e. year/month/day. Photo: Author's own

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References and Sources

Wikipedia

Findmypast.co.uk

Bury Free Press

Orwell Astronomical Society

Cambridge University Library

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Autobiography of Sir George Biddell Airy, edited by his son Wilfrid Airy (Cambridge University Press, 1896)

Whelnetham Parish Registers, Suffolk Green Books (No. XV) (1910)

1. Satellite technology has given us a more exact position for the Greenwich Meridian so that it now lies about 100 metres east of Airy's line.

HUNTING FOR GREAT-GRANDFATHERS

This is the first time of writing to *Roots*, and I hope my little story will be of some interest to other readers.

I have been tracing my ancestors for a few years, and one day last year I thought my wife and I would go to Ipswich New Cemetery to try and find the graves of my two great-grandfathers on my Mum's side. I found the grave locations on a map on an Ipswich Borough Council website, and it looked as though they were fairly close to one another. We parked up and walked to where we thought the graves would be, but the heavens opened and so we came home.

I went again the next day on my own, trying first to find **Arthur Prentice** (1870-1955), but there seemed to be so many broken and collapsed graves that I moved on to look for **Thomas Simon Green** (1878-1961). After a while without any luck I was about to go back to the car, but as I turned around I saw under a tree Thomas with his wife and son, all together. I can just remember Thomas, who lived in Cemetery Road in Ipswich. He used now and then to give me a small silver 3d, and I still had 10 of them. What I did was take six of the 3ds and thought I would give them back to him. For some reason the grave had been covered with what seemed like a concrete mix, but there was a tiny slit in the concrete down which I could drop the coins, which made me feel very good and pleased.



The headstone is in really good condition, but a piece of the surround has slipped and fallen away, so I thought I would get some 'No More Nails' and fix it myself. I checked with the Council before I did any work and they said I needed to employ a stonemason. No way am I paying out for that, when only a piece of surround needs putting into place! I must say I'm a bit disappointed with the Council, but then rules are rules.

My next task is to find Arthur, now I know the area.



*Arthur Prentice (1870-1955).
Photo: Author's own.*



*Thomas Simon Green (1878-1961) at the
wedding of the author's parents, at St Margaret's
Church, Ipswich, in 1957. Photo: Author's own.*

Steve Cullum Mb 12093
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THE AKENHAM BURIAL CASE: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE RAMSEY FAMILY?

During a recent visit to Flatford Mill I bought a second-hand copy of the **Ronald Fletcher** book *The Akenham Burial Case*,⁽¹⁾ published in 1974. Apparently, he had discovered a notebook of newspaper cuttings of this case of 1878. I have to admit that I hadn't heard about the case, but I was able to do what Ronald Fletcher was not, 'Google' it. There is a multitude of information online surrounding the main protagonists, the **Rev. George Drury**, parish priest, the **Rev. Wickham Tozer**, Congregationalist minister, and **Frederick Wilson**, owner and editor of *The East Anglian Daily Times* newspaper. At the centre of the storm were a poor farm worker, his wife and their 2-year-old deceased son. Infant **Joseph Ramsey** was named in the newspaper reports before, during and after the libel trial, but his father was referred to mostly as Mr Ramsey a farm labourer and Mrs Ramsey as the wife or mother. You have to search deeper to find their Christian names. Coming from a long line of Suffolk ag labs I felt that **Edward** and **Sarah Ramsey** deserved their lives recorded in this short article. It was not often that a humble couple from a small Suffolk hamlet made national news, and they were unwittingly part of the movement that changed the law to allow Nonconformist burial services within churchyards. Ronald Fletcher's book lays out the whole sequence of events in detail, from Joseph Ramsey's burial, through the libel trial to the change in the law. I recommend reading it for a full understanding of the matter. I will now turn to Edward and Sarah Ramsey. This is their story.

Sarah Ramsey, who was four years older than Edward, was born in Framsdon to **John Rose**, an ag lab, and **Emma (née Richers)**, and was baptised at St Mary's, Framsdon on 19 August 1846. She was one of six siblings. When her father died in 1858 the family were left destitute and 12-year-old Sarah needed to play her part in keeping them from the workhouse. Her mother was recorded as a '*Pauper*' in the 1861 census, receiving outdoor parish relief, and her elder brothers were still at home working as ag labs. Sarah, aged 15, had left home and was a live-in servant at Red House Farm, Framsdon Road, Pettaugh, three miles away.

Unlike Sarah, Edward was not baptised. His birth was registered in the fourth quarter of 1850 in the Bosmere & Claydon district, his place of birth being listed as Swilland on censuses. His parents were **Samuel Ramsey**, an ag lab, and **Esther (née Richerson)**. Edward was one of nine children, and at the time of the 1851 census was 6 months old. Edward's father, like Sarah's, died young, aged 41, in 1857 when Edward was just 7. By the time of the 1861 census his mother Esther was recorded as a '*Pauper*' receiving outdoor parish relief with seven children still at home, her eldest two sons working as ag labs.

By 1871, Sarah had moved into Ipswich and was a live-in general cook for **Sarah Cottingham**, a widow aged 62, a '*Fundholder Mortgag[ee]*', and her daughter. They lived in Berners Street in the parish of St Matthew's. Edward at this time was an ag lab in Swilland and was head of the Ramsey household, aged 20. Sarah and Edward married on 31 August 1874 at St Matthew's, Ipswich: she was 28 and Edward 24. The couple moved into Milton Street, Ipswich, where their first son **Samuel Edward**

Ramsey was born on 24 July 1875. The birth was registered by Sarah, and Edward's occupation was recorded as '*Brickyard Labourer*'. Edward's occupation at other times was given as bricklayer's labourer or general labourer. Sarah signed the register. She was soon pregnant again and their second son, Joseph, was born on 19 August 1876 in Milton Street. Again, Sarah registered the birth. Unfortunately, tragedy struck the family when Samuel Edward died at home on 4 December 1876. He was just 16 months old and the cause of his death was bronchitis of over 14 days' duration. Joseph was then four months old. Esther Ramsey, Edward's mother, had travelled from Swilland to help out and it was she who registered the death on 6 December, stating she was in attendance at the time of death, and made her mark in the register. Samuel Edward was buried in the Old Cemetery, Ipswich on 9 December 1876.

Both Edward and Sarah were country people and after the tragic death of their elder son they moved back to country life, hard though it was, when Edward took a job at the Akenham Hall farm, which came with a cottage for his family. The exact date they arrived in Akenham is not recorded but it was most likely during 1877. Edward's employer was **Ebenezer Edward Gooding**, a Nonconformist who encouraged his workers to attend worship in chapels in Ipswich, providing transport for the 6-mile round trip on Sundays. Edward and Sarah by this time were practising Baptists and part of the Zoar Baptist Chapel congregation, then in David Street, Ipswich. The parish of Akenham had been part of a national religious census, taken at the same time as the 10-year census on 30 March 1851, to record church and chapel-going numbers of different denominations.

The collected data for Suffolk has been published by the Suffolk Record Society.⁽²⁾ Although it relates to a time 27 years before the 'showdown' at Akenham, it does give a sense of how widespread Nonconformism was throughout Suffolk. Each parish is listed along with the information the vicar or minister provided. The Rev. George Drury had been rector of the parishes of Akenham and Claydon since 1845 and his return gave their populations as 131 and 540 respectively. He described Akenham as a village of five scattered houses and a few cottages plus surrounding farms. He noted, '*there are no dissenters.*' How things were to change! By 1871 the population of Akenham had fallen to 84 (taken from *Glyde's Suffolk Almanac for 1881*, p. 53). St Mary's Church was little used, as the Rev. George had changed services to more of a 'high church' style, turning his congregation against him and towards Nonconformism. The two largest local farmers in Akenham were Ebenezer Edward Gooding of Akenham Hall (335 acres, employing in 1881 10 labourers and 5 boys), and **Joseph A Smith** of Rise Hall (250 acres, employing 10 labourers and 2 boys). The parish totalled 998 acres. Edward and Sarah would have been well aware of the hostility towards the rector from his parishioners and churchwarden (who happened to be Joseph A Smith of Rise Hall), and the neglected and locked Akenham parish church. Although they kept their views



Church of St Mary, Akenham – [geograph.org.uk/_/548965](https://www.geograph.org.uk/_/548965); Photo: Andrew Hill, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

to themselves, they would no doubt have concurred with those of their employer and neighbours.

At the end of 1877 Sarah found herself pregnant again, and her third son, **Allen Ramsey**, was born at Akenham on 5 July 1878. Edward registered the birth in Ipswich and signed his name, giving his occupation as '*Farm Labourer*'. The register entry was made on 17 August 1878, and just two days later his son Joseph died. Edward returned to the Ipswich Register Office on 19 August and registered the death, on what would have been Joseph's second birthday. The cause of death was entered as '*Dentition Convulsions*'. There was now set in motion the Akenham burial scandal, which on 23 August saw Edward and Sarah and fellow villagers stopped from entering the churchyard with Joseph's coffin, as the gates had been locked after a confrontation between the Rev. Drury and the Rev. Tozer, and instead having to enter through a hedge to reach the newly dug grave. The dispute between the ministers turned on a clash between the Church of England's burial rites and the Baptist custom of not baptising infants. At that time, parishioners of any persuasion were entitled to a burial in the parish churchyard, but only those baptised could have a burial service there. The Ramsey family were Baptists who only believed in adult baptism. It is impossible to understand their feelings at the funeral and not to sympathise with them and the position they found themselves in. Perhaps some sentiments were engineered by others with their own agendas. Eight days later the couple celebrated their fourth wedding anniversary and must have reflected on their personal losses. Married four years, three sons born and two of them dead. Even when the average mortality rate at this time in England for under-fives was 40%, this was heartbreaking.

The Akenham burial case rumbled on in the press throughout Britain and dragged Sarah and Edward Ramsey along with it. The Rev. Tozer wrote a scathing article about the incident which was published anonymously in the *East Anglian Daily Times*. Outraged by the article, Rev. Drury sued the newspaper's owner and editor, Frederick Wilson, for libel, seeking £2,000 damages plus costs. The trial took place at the Court of Common Pleas in Westminster on Friday 7 March 1879 before a judge and jury, and Sarah and Edward were called to give evidence as, in the language of Mr Fletcher's book, '*minor witnesses*'. No doubt Edward's employer Mr Gooding would have provided transport to London and back for Sarah and Edward, as he was also a witness. A strong defence case was put forward, and after a four-day trial the jury found for the Rev. Drury but awarded him only a meagre 40 shillings (£2) plus costs. A fund was set up to pay the court costs of Frederick Wilson and £900 was raised across the country, which more than covered them. A celebratory dinner and presentation were held at the *Golden Lion Hotel*, Ipswich on 6 June 1879. The *East Anglian Daily Times* published a full report of the event and named those who attended. There is no mention of Mr and Mrs Ramsey. A presentation was made to Frederick Wilson of a cheque for £220, plus two '*magnificent*' large bronze armed crusaders and an inscribed marble dining room clock. The Rev. Tozer was presented with a cheque for £50. The only mention of the Ramseys was when Frederick Wilson announced at the presentation that on the previous day he had gone to Akenham

and been involved in the erection of a gravestone over Joseph Ramsey's grave. The inscription read: *'In memory of Joseph, son of Edward and Sarah Ramsey, who died at Akenham on his second birthday August 19, 1878. Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'* There was no mention of any financial help being given to the Ramseys, who would have been present at the graveside. The Akenham case hastened the passage of the Burial Laws Amendment Act, which allowed ministers of any denomination to take burial services in churchyards. The Act was much debated in Parliament and the press and finally became law on 7 September 1880.

Sarah and Edward remained in Akenham and Edward continued his daily toil at Akenham Hall farm. There do not seem to have been any further flash points between the Rev. Drury and the Akenham parishioners – if there had been, they would surely have been widely reported in the press. Another child, a daughter, was born to the couple on 16 March 1880: **Edith Rebecca Ramsey** was registered by Edward at Ipswich Registry Office on 22 March. However, shortly after this date the family returned to live in Ipswich. There was no obvious reason, but there might be a clue in a statement made by none other than the Rev. Wickham Tozer, speaking many years later and quoted by Roland Fletcher on p. 74 of his book:

'In 1882-5, Ipswich, like many other places, was suffering from depression of trade. Hundreds of men, through want of employment, were destitute, and for two years I had the painful pleasure of saving them and their families from starvation, by giving provisions twice a week, for four months in each year. Often as many as 500 were relieved in one week. Sick and weary of the work, and seeing no finality to it, I determined to devise some means of helping the men to help themselves, and render charity unnecessary. At that period Labour Bureaux were unknown. I had no example to follow and was, therefore, obliged to plan and start one without assistance from anyone except friends who supplied the money. Our aim from the beginning has been to prevent a congestion of labour by removing it from where it is not to where it is in demand; in this we have been entirely successful.'

Sadly, there is no record of when Rev. Tozer made this statement, but perhaps by 1880 there was already an agricultural depression in the countryside with a loss of work and wages. The 1881 census found the family living at 2 Albion Cottages, Woodbridge Road, Ipswich. Edward was recorded as a general labourer. Another son, **Arthur**, was born on 15 July 1883 at 2 Albion Cottages, and Sarah registered the birth on 4 August. Their final child, **Ethel Mary Ramsey**, was born on 29 April 1887 at 246 Woodbridge Road, Ipswich, and the birth was again registered by Sarah. Sarah was nearly 41 years old when she gave birth, which was a risk to her health, but she and baby Ethel survived. The family of six was complete, and the 1891 census found them living at 152 Cauldwell Hall Road, Ipswich. By 1901 the family had moved to 1 Rendlesham Road, Ipswich. Edward was recorded as a general labourer, but son Allen, now 22, was shown as a bricklayer. Sadly, Arthur had died on 2 September 1897, aged 14. Edward registered the death, and the cause was general tuberculosis. Arthur is buried in the Old Cemetery, Ipswich. There was to be another death in the family when Ethel died on 11 November 1910, aged 23, at home at 7 Holland Road,

Ipswich. The cause of death was phthisis or tuberculosis, and she was described as the spinster daughter of Edward Ramsey, a bricklayer's labourer.

The family were still at 7 Holland Road in 1911. The census form that year asked for particulars of marriage length and 'fertility' for each married woman entered on the schedule. Edward, who completed the form, recorded that he and Sarah had been married 36 years, with a total of six children born alive but only two still living, which makes for sad reading, but was far from unique for Victorian and Edwardian families. Of the two surviving children, Allen had married **Sarah Caroline Johnson** in the fourth quarter of 1903 in Ipswich, and was a trained bricklayer working on his own account. They were to have seven children, all born before 1921, and no doubt they were each celebrated by grandparents Edward and Sarah, who lived nearby. Edith had married **Robert Gray**, a coal carman, in the fourth quarter of 1902 in Ipswich. It does not appear that they had any children, but the families remained close and when Edward died at 9 Holland Road on 6 February 1928, aged 77, it was son-in-law Robert Gray who registered the death the following day. Edward's former occupation was noted as a '*Well sinker, journeyman*'. He was buried in the Old Cemetery, Ipswich. At his death Edward and Sarah had been married for 53 years. Sarah lived on until 1932 when she died on 9 December. Her address at the time of death was 9 Holland Road, and it was son Allen who registered it. She was aged 87 and was buried in the same plot as Edward. All her children are buried nearby in the Old Cemetery, Ipswich, except Joseph, of course, who was buried in the churchyard at Akenham.

As a postscript, Ronald Fletcher was involved in the production of a series of dramatised television documentaries, broadcast between 1975 and 1979 by BBC East, in Norwich, called *In a Country Churchyard*. There were five episodes, and for one he revisited and narrated the 'Akenham Burial Case'. At the end of the series in 1978 he published a book based on the TV series, also called *In a Country Churchyard*. In the book, after his reappraisal of the Akenham burial case, he gave an update of what happened to the main characters and quoted from their descendants. Regarding Edward and Sarah Ramsey, he wrote:

'One thing that has pleased me greatly was to have a characterization of the Ramseys, who seemed to figure only as characters of small significance in the national scandal as it developed, and who were dropped into the background as "mere labourers". Mr Edward Ramsey [a well sinker] was a quiet, gracious gentleman with deep Christian principles. His wife was a devout woman of very strong character, and proud to fight for her religious convictions. (A truly grand old lady in her poke-bonnet.)'

Bill Sutton Mb 12703

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References and Sources

Findmypast, Find a Grave, GRO Digital Images of the Birth and Death Register Indexes.

1. Ronald Fletcher, *The Akenham Burial Case* (Wildwood House, 1974).
2. T C B Timmins (ed.), *Suffolk Returns from the Census of Religious Worship 1851* (Suffolk Record Society, 1997).
3. Ronald Fletcher, *In a Country Churchyard* (B T Batsford Ltd, 1978).

SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity 1087748: Company No. 4191740, limited by guarantee.

**Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Society
to be held at 19:30 UK time on Tuesday 13 October 2026**

This will be conducted as an online meeting on the Zoom platform

AGENDA

Welcome by Andy Kerridge, Chair of the Society

Invitation to Doug Howlett, Patron of the Society, to chair the AGM

1. APOLOGIES

for absence: Proxy Forms received.

2. MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28 October 2025, with matters arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

3. TRUSTEES' REPORT – Presented by the Chair.

4. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS – To receive the Financial Accounts for year ended 31 March 2026, presented by the Treasurer.

5. INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

To approve the appointment, as the Independent Examiner, of: Peter Watters FCA BFP, Accountant, Counterculture Partnership LLP.
Registered Office: Unit 115 Ducie House, Ducie Street, Manchester, M1 2JW

6. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

7. OFFICERS

8. SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

Introduced by the Society's Secretary. Members will be invited to vote on two Resolutions.

(1) The Conversion Resolution: Members agree to apply to the Charity Commission to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

(2) The Constitution Resolution: Members to approve and adopt the draft Constitution (the rulebook) for the new CIO.

A copy of the draft Constitution can be found on our website under the AGM Event.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – Such matters as have been properly notified to the Company Secretary two weeks or more in advance of the Meeting.

10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF THE 2027 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

An announcement will be made at least 1 month before the planned date of 2027 AGM.

Carolyn Alderson, Company Secretary

SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

(Registered Charity No. 1087748)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Zoom on 28 October 2025

The Meeting started at 19:30

Andy Kerridge, Chair of the Society, introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Doug Howlett, the Society's Patron, was not able to chair the meeting this time. Andy thanked everyone for their attendance.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Seventy-one (71) members were present on the Zoom and there had been two (2) proxy votes received. The meeting was quorate (quorum being 30). Eight (8) apologies had been received by e-mail. Normally, the Chair would hand over to the Patron, Doug Howlett, to chair the meeting, but unfortunately Doug was not available and sent his apologies.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 1 October 2024, as published in the September 2025 issue of Suffolk Roots

No questions or comments were raised, and the minutes were accepted and approved.

3. Trustees' Report for the 2025 AGM presented by the Society's Chair, Andy Kerridge

The Chair reported on activities since the last AGM rather than the financial year. Trustees continue to meet via Zoom every six weeks, with occasional in-person meetings. Gary Pyett was co-opted as a Trustee during the year.

A successful fair was held at *The Hold* in April, combined with the Society's 50th anniversary celebrations. The Chair thanked Suffolk County Council for supporting the event and Councillor Liz Harsent for attending. The Society also attended the Family History Show in Kempton (Surrey) in October and will be at the West Surrey FHS Woking fair on 8 November. Several groups marked the 50th Anniversary, notably Lowestoft (where the Society began) and Ipswich.

The Bury Group continues to experience low attendance. A plan has been agreed to address this.

Monthly Zoom presentations remain well attended, with talks scheduled through to the end of 2026. Thanks were extended to Susan Schibli and John Wickenden for co-hosting, and to Susan for producing the posters. Measures have been taken to prevent unauthorised copies of presentations appearing on commercial websites.

Membership has fallen from around 1,600 to just under 1,500, partly due to membership fee changes and standing order updates. The Chair noted the need to enhance the Society's offering to attract and retain members.

The release of Suffolk parish registers on Ancestry was described as a mixed blessing: while offering high-quality scans, it may reduce transcription sales. The impact is not yet fully understood, though the Chair noted that Ancestry's indexing quality ensures continued demand for the Society's products.

New projects include the restart of the *Wills Beneficiaries Index* (led by Kevin Pulford) and the *Ipswich Vaccination Birth and Death Registers Project* in partnership with Cambridge and Suffolk Universities and Suffolk Archives, extending coverage to around 1940. A £4,000 grant shortfall was partly covered by Suffolk County Council Locality Funds.

To offset income reductions, the Society has expanded its collections on Findmypast, adding the *Coroner's Inquest Records Index (1767–1921)* and continuing work to extend it to 1936. The *Hearth Tax Index*, originally compiled by Donald and Shelagh Herring and Brian Southgate, will be added next.

The website migration to Beachshore has taken longer than expected but should be completed soon.

The Chair noted with sadness the passing of founder members Katherine Bardwell and Paul Scriven, and former Vice Chair and *Suffolk Roots* editor, Trish Turner.

The Chair concluded by thanking members for their continued support and for attending the AGM.

4. Financial Accounts (as posted on the website prior to the meeting)

The Treasurer presented the Society's accounts for the financial year 2024-2025. She explained the Society's structure as a charity with a trading sub-company, SFHS Publications Limited, and detailed their financial activities, including charitable and publications income, direct expenditure and management costs, investment accounts and overall membership funds. Carolyn also mentioned the Society's focus on the new website, new projects, and investment to ensure the Society's future.

Questions were asked by attendees as follows:

- a) *Is the £1,784 identified as website costs, the cost of the new website?* The Treasurer explained that there was very little spent as nothing much was delivered in the last financial year.
- b) *When is the website going to go live?* The Chair explained that Acceptance Testing had revealed two major problems – the Haverhill Project pages did not work, and the indexing and searching of past copies of *Suffolk Roots*. On our side, the existing website also has a number of issues with broken links and out of date pages.
- c) *What is the reserves policy?* The Treasurer explained that this was £40,000 and was our 'emergency fund' in case of significant fall in income and represents two years turnover. This was reviewed two years ago in light of the Ancestry project. The Chair pointed out that membership subs only cover the costs of *Suffolk Roots*, and we rely on publications sales to cover all other costs.
- d) *How often do volunteers' expense receipts have to be submitted & what happens if there are problems with paying at car parks, so receipt isn't available for some time.* The member had concerns about car parks with apps and difficulties paying and getting receipts. The Treasurer advised that

she received quarterly expense claims including any associated parking receipts from the Volunteer Group rep and so was unaware of the issue.

- e) *Is all the money in bank accounts protected under the FSCS i.e. Financial Services Compensation Scheme? And is there less than £85K in any bank account?* The Treasurer advised there is less than £85K in each bank account, and she would check about the FSCS, but we are banking with major institutions such as Lloyds and CAF.

5. Independent Examiner

The Independent examiner, Counterculture Partnership, was reappointed by an online poll.

6. Appointment of Trustees

Brian Thompson and Joan Horton were due to retire by rotation; both indicated they were willing to continue.

Garry Pyett had been co-opted during the year.

Ken Finch stepped down as Secretary but wished to stay as a Trustee.

Carolyn Alderson had volunteered to take on the role of Secretary and Treasurer.

Andy Kerridge was willing to continue as Chair.

All the above were voted on and approved by online polls.

The Chair thanked Ken for his service over many years as Treasurer and Secretary.

7. AOB

One item of other business, Awards.

Helen Richardson of the Sudbury Group was made a Life Member. Helen has been on Sudbury's committee since the beginning of the group. She had also written the Group's newsletter since 1998, organised the MI transcriptions from the start and, if that was not enough, was also the editor of *Suffolk Roots* for a while.

From the transcription team, Christine Palmer and Diane Kirby also received Life Memberships. Christine and Diane were in at the start of the Baptism Index in 2003, and we believe their involvement pre-dated this. As we progressed with the baptisms, they took on the role of team leaders at their respective Record Offices which continues to this day with Christine's team now doing a mix of working from home and visiting the Hold. This has spanned ever-more-difficult-to-read register entries, which they continue to do with the same dedication and enthusiasm.

Liz Cole, who has been on the Sudbury committee since the beginning of that group and has organised the refreshments for 20+ years, received the Derek Palgrave Award in recognition of her services to the Group and the Society.

Trustees will arrange formal presentations at a future date.

8. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF THE 2025-2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Chair advised that the date had not been agreed but would be announced by 1 March 2026. It would be by Zoom.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and involvement and the Trustees for their support. The meeting finished at 20:20.

SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

2026 AGM

The 2026 AGM will be held on Tuesday 13 October 2026 at 19:30.

The 2026 AGM will be held via the Zoom platform. To participate using Zoom you need to be online and have Zoom installed on your computer/tablet, smartphone etc. The AGM will be recorded.

If you wish to participate by Zoom:

1. Before 1 September 2026: Please notify our Membership Secretary, David Horton at membership@suffolkfhs.org.uk if you have changed your e-mail address recently.
2. A notice about the AGM will be sent out with the September e-Newsletter, asking people to register their intention to attend.
3. For those joining the society after 1 September, please contact the Chair at chair@suffolkfhs.org.uk directly for information on how to register.
4. Two days before the meeting: Those who have expressed an intention to attend by Zoom will receive, by e-mail, the meeting details and the Zoom 'key'.
5. **The 2026 AGM Agenda, a Proxy Vote form and the Minutes of the 2025 AGM published in this issue of *Suffolk Roots*** will be repeated (under AGM) on the Society's website at www.suffolkfhs.org.uk, together with a copy of the Society accounts.
6. **Only Society members will be able to participate and/or vote.** Where members hold joint membership, both members are allowed to vote.
7. **On the day:** Please log in to Zoom at or soon after 19:15 to allow for any connection issues.
8. **If you have technical issues** (can't hear audio etc.), there will be no time to deal with these once the meeting starts, so we suggest those not already familiar with Zoom try a practice session with friends or family.
9. **To ask questions or vote:** Questions may be asked via the chat function in Zoom. To vote we will try to use the Poll function. Explanations of how to use these will be given at the beginning of the meeting.

A quorum requires 30 members.

Please use the proxy form if you cannot attend - your vote is important.

SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity 1087748: Company No. 4191740, limited by guarantee



PROXY VOTE FOR 2026 AGM

I/We

Of (address)

Being Member Number

Hereby appoint*

Or failing him/her appoint*

As my/our proxy to vote in my/our name(s) on my/our behalf at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 13 October 2026 and at any adjournment thereof.

Unless otherwise instructed, the proxy may vote as he/she thinks fit or abstain from voting.

Signed Date

Completed proxy forms should be sent to the Society Secretary:

Carolyn Alderson
2 Stone Street, Crowfield
Ipswich IP6 9TA
e-mail: secretary@suffolkfhs.org.uk

* Any Officer (e.g. the Secretary) or a named person who will attend the AGM.

PROXY VOTES BY E-MAIL

These will be accepted provided members' full details are given, including membership number, and instructions are clear and unambiguous.

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TRUSTEES

Nominations or applications to join the Trustees may be made to the Secretary or any current Trustee at any time of the year.

ACCOUNTS

The accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 will be posted on the Society's website by 13 September 2026. Copies by post may be had from the Secretary on receipt of a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope.

NAPTHEN TRAGEDIES

My 3x great-grandfather, **William Napthen**, was born in Elveden, west Suffolk, on 30 May 1803 to **William** (1772-1828) and **Sarah Napthen (née Race)** (1762-1847) and was baptised on 12 June of that year at Fakenham Magna, Suffolk.

William lived his whole life in Elveden and on 10 October 1831 married **Maria Goddard** (1809-1897), a spinster from the village. Their son William was born on 2 June 1832 also in Elveden, but more of him later.

William was employed as Head Gamekeeper on the estate of **William Newton Esq.** of Elveden Hall, and lived in the gamekeeper's house there with his wife and family. On the night of 20 December 1850, being suspicious that there was to be a visit from poachers, William led a party of estate workers/keepers including brothers **Thomas** and **Isaac Allen**, **Jonathan Jessupp** and several others, to watch for them. William left the other men by an estate cottage whilst he searched the wooded area. At about 10:30pm a gunshot was heard and the keepers made their way in the direction of the sound, where they came upon a group of six or seven men who, on realising they were being followed, threatened to shoot the keepers saying they '*would not be taken*'. The group of keepers continued to follow the poachers to the edge of Mr Newton's estate, where the poachers again threatened to shoot the following group. It was at this point that William rejoined the other keepers and, together with the Allen brothers and Jessupp, confronted the poachers. A further pursuit followed during which one of the poachers turned and fired three shots, the first hitting William, the second missing and the third hitting Isaac Allen. The shot that hit William was fatal, passing through his heart and lung, and he died shortly afterwards where he had fallen. Isaac Allen was hit in the arm and unable to continue the pursuit, but his brother Thomas continued until once again he was threatened by the poachers who were able to make their getaway. The next morning, following an overnight frost, six sets of footprints were followed to Isleham where they were lost, but evidence of feathers suggested that the poachers had split their bounty and gone their separate ways.

Six men from Isleham were subsequently arrested, and on Monday 6 January 1851 **John Starling**, **Frederick Fletcher**, **William Brown**, **Richard Starling**, **Joseph Norman** and **James Cadman** were brought to the station house at Mildenhall charged with the murder of William Napthen and of having shot at Isaac Allen with intent to murder him, and seriously wounding him. Whilst the case was being considered, the prisoners were removed from the room and could be heard singing very loudly and being very merry. On being returned to the room they were advised it had been decided to commit James Cadman, William Brown and John Starling for trial at the Suffolk Assizes, the other three were released.⁽¹⁾

The three accused were tried for William's murder at the court-house in Ipswich on 4 April 1851. The judge took his seat at 9:05am before a packed and rowdy public gallery. The prosecution called evidence from a number of people, including gamekeepers involved in the incident, the local policeman and the postman. After the prosecution closed its case, counsel addressed the jury on behalf of

the prisoners (this was before defendants were able to give evidence in their own defence). The judge then summed up, advising the jury that they must decide whether the three prisoners were present on the night in question; if so, who fired the fatal shot; and whether the other two men were jointly concerned in the offence. After retiring for less than an hour, the jury returned verdicts of not guilty. Applause broke out in the public gallery (but was quickly suppressed) and all three prisoners were released.⁽²⁾

William was buried on 26 December 1850 in Elveden churchyard where a headstone marks his grave.

Before the Elveden bypass was built, my husband and I were driving to the village on family history research when we passed a small direction sign on the grass verge with the inscription '*Napthen's House*'. We made some enquiries at the estate office and were told that after William's death the gamekeeper's house had been renamed Napthen's House, and although a modern house had been built on the footprint of the original, it had retained the name.

Although the following is not about an incident in Elveden, it is about an Elveden man, William's son **William**, my 2x great-grandfather. He was born in Elveden in 1832 and married **Eliza Dennis** (1832-1887) from Mildenhall in 1853.

William jnr. had a number of employments, in 1851 being a miller in Mildenhall, in 1861 the innkeeper of the *Greyhound*, Cockfield, and in 1871 a gun cotton labourer at Stowupland. In 1871 William and his family moved to Waltham Abbey in Essex (my home town). By this time Eliza had given birth to eight children, all girls. William continued working with explosives as a labourer at the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills ('WARGM'). By 1882 Eliza had given birth to five more children, again all girls. In June 1887 she died and the following year William remarried, probably needing someone to help him raise 13 daughters.

Sadly, William did not live to see his large brood grow; he worked in the Breaking Down House at WARGM where slabs of explosives known as mill cake were crushed or broken down into smaller fragments before being moved on for further refinement. On 22 August 1890, whilst he was working with a colleague, a massive explosion ripped through the building killing them both and injuring many more in adjoining buildings. Newspaper reports from the time state that the explosion was heard up to 10 miles away and windows and shutters were shattered on properties in the town.⁽³⁾ Building debris and body parts were spread over a wide area. William's body was found on the Lea Valley marshes some 400 yards from the factory boundary, having been blown over a canal and a belt of trees. The other man was not found intact, although body parts were identified as being his.



*William Napthen's headstone
in Elveden churchyard.
Photo: Author's own*



The Breaking Down House before (left) and after the explosion. Photos courtesy of WARGM

An inquest into the two deaths was held the following Monday, 25 August, at which **Major General Noble R.A.**, Factory Superintendent, said he could give no explanation of the origin of the accident. The jury asked if it was usual to keep such a large quantity of explosive in one building at a time. It was stated that the whole 1,440 lbs. would be broken down by the mill in 40 minutes.

The funerals of the two victims took place on the following Tuesday. It was reported that WARGM closed at lunchtime when 400 men from the factory assembled at the gates and then, led by Major General Noble and **Dr Anderson**, Director General of Ordnance, followed the hearses to Waltham Abbey Cemetery where more than 1,500 residents from the town had gathered to honour the deceased.

It was later reported in the *Chelmsford Journal* that the War Office had granted the widows a life pension of four shillings each per week with no allowance for children despite one of them having six dependants.⁽⁴⁾

So, father and son both lost their lives in separate but violent and tragic circumstances.

Ann James Mb 12721

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References and Sources

1. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 12 January 1851.
2. *Ipswich Journal*, 5 April 1851.
3. See e.g. *Essex County Chronicle*, 29 August 1890.
4. *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 28 November 1890.

QUAKERS IN THE EXCHEQUER AND ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS IN SUFFOLK

Extracts from **Joseph Besse's** '*Brief Account of many of the prosecutions of the people called Quakers in the Exchequer, Ecclesiastical and other courts...*' re-printed from *Quaker Connections*, No. 28, journal of the Quaker Family History Society, with their permission.

'1696 **John Lawrence** of Bouch was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of **Thomas Echard**, parson of Bradford.

1696 **Thomas Humphreys** of Sudbury was prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court for a church-rate (so called) at the suit of **Buckstone Underwood** and **Thomas Dansdye**, wardens.

1697 **Jonathan Seaman** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of **Edward Broome**, parson of Woodbridge.

1697 **John Coe** was prosecuted in the Exchequer at the suit of the said Edward Broome.

1698 **John Parker** of Trimly was prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court for tithes, at the suit of **Richard Howard**, priest.

1699 **Richard White** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for small tithes, at the suit of **Charles Gibson**, parson of Mendlesham.

1699 **Samuel Kemble** of Woodbridge Haskiton was prosecuted in the Exchequer for a demand of about 35s per annum for three years tithes, at the suit of **John Punchard**, priest.

1699 **Isaac Lawrence** of Sudbury was prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court.

1701 **Samuel Parmitor** and **Robert Salmon** were prosecuted in the Exchequer, at the suit of **John Raymond**, an infant of the parish of Belchamp-Water in Essex.

1701 **Thomas Belsted** of Trimly was prosecuted in the Exchequer, at the suit of Richard Howard, parson of Trimly.

1701 John Parker was prosecuted in the Exchequer, at the suit of **Edward Rust**, parson of Walton.

1702 **John Piggott** of Playford was prosecuted in the Exchequer for four pounds demanded for tithes of herbage, at the suit of **George Clark**, parson of Tudenham.

1704 The widow **Kenifield** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of **John Jeffery**, clerk.

1705 **Elizabeth Chapman**, widow, and **Robert Brightwell**, miller, were prosecuted in the Exchequer for small tithes, at the suit of Edward Broome, parson of Woodbridge.

1708 **Sarah Smith**, **Dionysius Smith** her son, and **John Hawes** of Wiverston were prosecuted in the Exchequer, for about four pounds demanded for tithes, at the suit of **Francis Cooksedge**, priest of Backton.

1709 Jonathan Seaman of Woodbridge was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of Edward Rust, parson of Walton.

1712 **Hannah Pearson** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of **Parson Hood** of Haveringham.

1712 **John Clark** of Mildenhall was prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court for a demand of five shillings for marriage fees, at the suit of **John Brinkley**, reader of Bury, and excommunicated.

1714 **Thomas Free** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes at the suit of John Punchard, parson of Haskiton near Wood-end.

1715 Jonathan Seaman and his son, and Isaac Lawrence were prosecuted in the Exchequer for a mortuary and small tithes, at the suit of Edward Broome, parson of Woodbridge.

1724 **Nathaniel French** of Milford was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes at the suit of **James Johnson**, priest.

1724 Jonathan Seaman was prosecuted for tithes, on the statute for treble damages.

1724 **Thomas Galloway** of Hadley was prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court for a church-rate (so called) at the suit of the wardens of Hadley.

1726 **William Groom** was prosecuted in the Exchequer for tithes, at the suit of **William Hunt**, parson of Alderton.

1731 **John Scales** and **Caleb Clark** of Kirkley were prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court for small tithes and Easter-offerings.'

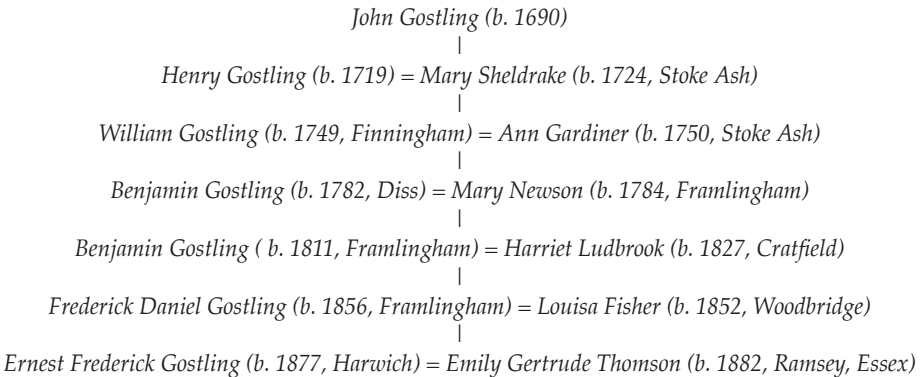
Andy Kerridge, Chair
chair@suffolkfhs.co.uk

A GOSTLING FAMILY STORY – PART 3

Benjamin Gostling (b. 1782) and family

We return to the Gostlings from Part 1, which started in the 17th century with **John Gostling**, and recounted the lives of the next two generations, ending with the introduction of **Benjamin**, my 4x great-grandfather, son of **William Gostling** (clockmaker of Diss) and **Ann (née Gardiner)**.

The chart below outlines the Gostling direct descendancy from John Gostling in the 17th century.



Benjamin married **Mary Newson Wright**, the daughter of **Sarah Wright** and **Jasper Newson**, on 10 October 1808 in Framlingham. Her Newson family ascend in Framlingham to **Thomas** and **Marie** and their children (c. 1665), and beyond to Great Glemham and Benhall. Related to this line, also in Framlingham, the **Goodwin** family ascend to **Jasper** and **Judith** (c. 1613), and the Wright family back to **Robert Write** and wife **Elizabeth** (c. 1650).

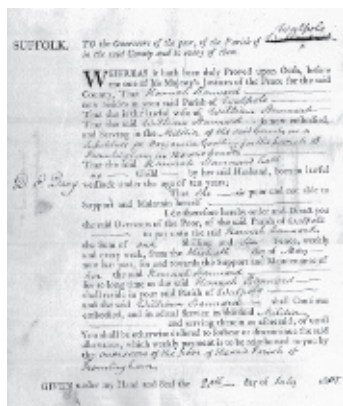
Benjamin was a carpenter and joiner (at one time said to be builder) of Framlingham. On 6 November 1797, three months after his father's decease, he was apprenticed to **Francis Newson**, carpenter of Framlingham, for a term of six years. Francis was his later wife's uncle. Mary was the illegitimate daughter of Jasper Newson and Sarah Wright, who very unusually was baptised the same day her parents were married, on 25 July 1784. Some six months prior to his marriage, Benjamin was found to have been enlisted in the Suffolk Militia.⁽¹⁾ A **William Stannard** had substituted for him, and on 20 July 1808 the Overseers of Framlingham Parish had undertaken to provide weekly relief of one shilling and sixpence to William's wife **Hannah**, of Walpole, for the duration of her husband's substitution for Benjamin.

Benjamin and Mary set up home in Framlingham and had seven children, some of whom were baptised at private houses, and others at the Meeting House in Framlingham, by **Samuel Say Toms**:

- **Mary Ann** (b. 12 June 1809, bp. 16 July 1809)
- **Benjamin** (b. 17 September 1811, bp. 8 March 1812)
- **William** (b. 15 August 1813, bp. 21 November 1813)
- **James**, twin (b. 2 August 1815, bp. 17 September 1815)
- **Jasper**, twin (b. 5 August 1815, bp. 17 September 1815)
- **George** (b. 28 April 1818, bp. 18 October 1818)
- **Charles** (b. 3 June 1823, bp. 18 June 1826)

There was an article in the *Framlingham Weekly News* of 18 January 1902, headed 'History of the Old Meeting House', which listed Benjamin's family:

'GOSTLING. Benjamin Gostling was a carpenter. He resided in one of the Castle Street houses belonging to the Old Meeting House, and worked in Double Street. Four of the family were teachers in the Sunday school. His son Benjamin was a watchmaker. Jasper was a tailor.



*Overseers' grant of relief to Hannah Stannard.
Photo: Author's own.*



*The Meeting House in Bridge Street, Framlingham (2008).
Photo: Author's own*

Benjamin Gostling, sen., died in 1840, aged 58. His wife died in 1848. Jasper Gostling died in 1835, and Charles (another son) in 1846. They were all interred in the Old Meeting House burial ground.'

I recently found a Suffolk Archdeaconry will of a **John Meadows** of Framlingham, carpenter, dated 7 March 1839, proved 11 September 1839,⁽²⁾ wherein he bequeathed to Benjamin Gostling of Framlingham, carpenter, his:

'tool chest with the planes and other tools therein and the bench planes saws and chisels which I had before the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty two. And I do give Benjamin Gostling the right to purchase all or any part of my timber and wood and other stock in trade at the cost price thereof if he shall declare his mind or desire to do so within one calendar month from the time of my death and shall pay for such ... within six months from my death but ... he shall not have a right to the possession of any such timber and wood ... till he shall have paid for the same.'

John died on 10 March 1839 and it is unknown whether Benjamin purchased the stock in trade by September; if he did, it would have been just over a year before he himself died in December 1840.

Following Benjamin's death (of consumption) on 18 December 1840, an advertisement appeared in the *Suffolk Chronicle* of 24 April 1841 detailing the auction of his stock, including 'Oak, Elm, and Mahogany Planks, Fir Timber, about 700ft of Elm Coffin Board, 4 to 500 ft Deal Board, Oak Gate stuff, ditto Posts, 5 work Benches, 3 Ladders, Tool Chest, Tools, and Effects, &c.'

The 1841 census did indeed show the bereaved family living in Castle Street, with Mary recorded as a schoolmistress, son Benjamin a journeyman watchmaker, George a shoemaker, and Charles a carpenter. Jasper had tragically died, by drowning, and was buried on 9 January 1835, aged 19. Jasper's twin brother James was absent.

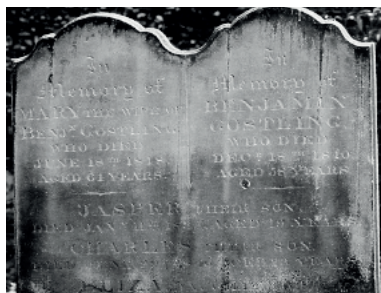
The headstone for members of the family in the Framlingham Meeting House burial ground reads:

'In memory of Mary the wife of Benjn. Gostling who died June 18th 1848 aged 64 years.

In memory of Benjamin Gostling who died Decr. 18th 1840 aged 58 years.

Jasper their son died Jany. 11th 1835 aged 19 years.

Charles their son died 29th June 1846 aged 23 years'.



Gostling headstone, in the Framlingham Meeting House burial ground. Photo: Author's own

Before leaving Benjamin, there is one more remarkable find to mention, unexpectedly come across.

The will of **Henry Banks**, gentleman farmer of Stoke Ash, dated 5 October 1834 referred to **Mary Barkham**, wife of **Thomas Barkham**, cabinet maker of Diss,

as '*my relation*' and also bequeathed £200 to Benjamin Gostling, carpenter and joiner of Framlingham. Mary and Benjamin were brother and sister, two of the children of William Gostling, clockmaker, and Ann (née Gardiner), born in Diss, Norfolk. What was, or could be, the specific familial relationship to Henry Banks?

After much research, I discovered that Henry Banks was the son of **Henry Banks** and **Mary (née Coleman)**, baptised in Stoke Ash on 23 August 1750. His parents, both single and of Stoke Ash, married in Little Thornham on 14 September 1739. Father Henry was shown as paying poor relief rates in the Churchwardens' account book.

Ann Gardiner, who married William Gostling, clockmaker, in Stoke Ash on 11 March 1774, was baptised in Stoke Ash on 12 September 1750. Her parents **Edmund Gardiner** and **Ann (née Coleman)** married in Thornham Parva (Little Thornham) on 16 November 1748.

William Gostling, son of **Henry** and **Mary (née Sheldrake)**, was baptised in Finningham on 7 December 1749.

A Stoke Ash Terrier⁽³⁾ dated 15 June 1723, presented/exhibited on 19 June 1723 at the visitation of **Thomas, Lord Bishop of Norwich** in Bury St Edmunds, contains the signatures of Henry Banks jnr.'s grandfather **James Coleman**, Anne Gardiner's grandfather **Edmund Gardiner**, and Mary Sheldrake's father **Thomas Sheldrake**, which confirms their presence together in Stoke Ash in 1723.

Henry Banks jnr., Ann Gardiner and William Gostling would have been born within 12 months of one another and known each other throughout childhood into adulthood, Henry and Ann living in the same parish, and William in the nearby parish of Finningham until the age of nine, when in 1758 his mother and father took on the Stoke *White Horse* inn. William lived there before and during the time of his apprenticeship as a clockmaker, until the age of 25 when he married Ann Gardiner and opened a shop in Diss in 1774. Both Henry Banks and Ann Gardiner were also in Stoke Ash until the age of 24. William's mother Mary continued to live, or hold land, in Stoke Ash or Great Thornham for several more years before moving to Diss.

Henry Banks' mother Mary Coleman, baptised 11 July 1718, and Ann Gardiner's mother Ann Coleman, baptised 20 August 1721, both in Stoke Ash, were sisters, the daughters of James Coleman and **Elizabeth (née Goddard)**. Thus, Ann Gardiner's mother Ann was Henry's aunt, Ann Gardiner herself being Henry's first cousin. By extension Mary (Ann) Barkham (née Gostling) and Benjamin Gostling were Henry's first cousins once removed.

That there was no mention of a wife or children in his will, suggests that Henry was a bachelor. His estate was considerable, including 104 acres of land. His bequest to Mary and her husband Thomas Barkham is referred to in a document held at Suffolk Archives.⁽⁴⁾ Thomas Barkham died on 27 December 1862 and was buried in Diss on 31 December 1862. The probate registry described him as '*Gentleman, late of Diss*', and his will was '*proved... by the oath*' of his son '*Grocer*' **Thomas Hall Barkham** of East Dereham, Norfolk on 15 Aug 1863.

James Gostling (b. 1815)

Returning to Benjamin's children, James (b. 1815, Framlingham), the surviving twin, by 1841 was 25 years old, a carpenter (like his brother Charles) and had moved to London, probably to find work. He was lodging at 3 Fairey Street, West Hackney, Tower Hamlets, with **George Todman**, carpenter, and wife **Amelia, Eliza Porter** (George's granddaughter), aged 1, and also a **Damaris Tappenden**, aged 17.

The situation then becomes somewhat difficult to unravel, yet interesting. Also in the 1841 census, where no familial relationships are given (and ages are rounded down to the nearest 5 years), a **William Porter** (20), **Eliza Porter** (15) and **James Porter** (15) were living together in St Giles-in-the-Fields. William Porter, a gilder of Farey Street, had married **Eliza Todman** (also of Farey Street) on 25 November 1838 at St Leonard's, Shoreditch, with **Susannah Todman** as a witness.

In 1851, James Gostling's address was 11 Fairey Street, where two families resided: Eliza Porter (29) was shown as '*wife*', a tailoress, born in Kent, with two children: **Mary Ann** (4) and **William** (1); the other household comprised the **Broadbent** family, with whom James Gostling (35) was a lodger. That Eliza was Porter, '*wife*' and '*married*', not widow, suggests her husband, William, although absent, was still alive. In 1851, a William Porter was residing in Endell Street, Finsbury St Giles, recorded with wife Eliza. However, if this was 'our' couple, it's possible that Eliza was not actually present there on the day of the census, but instead was with the two children at 11 Fairey Street, as described above. Had William and Eliza separated a short time before the census was taken?

The conundrum? In the next census, of 1861, there was a single family, surnamed Gostling, living at 11 Fairey Street – James (45), Eliza (39), '*wife*', born Ashford, Kent, and children William (11), **John** [John Jasper] (8), **Alice** (6), **Charles** (4) and **Maria** (2), all born in Hackney and shown as sons and daughters of James. However, there are no birth registrations for any of the children under the surname Gostling, but there are, for all, under Porter. In fact, James Gostling and Eliza Porter (widow, father George Todman, carpenter) did not officially marry until 26 February 1868, at St Mary, Hornsey, Middlesex. A partial clue was found when son William (using the name William James Porter Gostling) married **Lucy Caroline Lowe** on 24 October 1868 at St Mary, Haggerston; he was a labourer at that time but later a successful bricklayer. Being born in 1850, it's likely he was the natural son of William Porter, and stepson of James Gostling.

I wondered when and why William and Eliza parted company, and why Eliza and James Gostling did not marry sooner. In 1861, William Porter was again found living in Endell Street, only now listed as unmarried (so he no longer regarded himself as married), with servant **Elizabeth Bartrum**. Seven years later she would be the executrix of his will. Their relationship must have grown close.

The year of marriage of 1868 explained the registration of the younger children as Porters. Officially they were illegitimate and registered in their mother's surname, derived from her marriage to William Porter. As already seen, that Eliza was Porter,

'wife' and 'married', not widow, in 1851 suggests her first husband was still alive. Also, the fact that she and James were living in separate households, albeit at the same address, suggests that they may not yet have been a couple. But they could reasonably be said to be by September 1851, when son John Jasper (whose middle name 'Jasper' was quite uncommon at that time, but corresponded with that of James' dead twin brother) was conceived, living for 16 years thereafter in a 'common law' marriage.

I found a will for a William Porter, '*Carver and Guilder*', proved on 24 December 1868, who died on 1 December 1867 at King's College Hospital. In his burial entry he was aged 45, thus born c. 1822. Eliza Todman, daughter of George and Amelia, was born and baptised in Ashurst (not Ashford), Kent in January 1822, the same year as William Porter. They both would have been barely 16 when they married in 1838, despite being said to be '*of full age*' in the marriage entry (the legal minimum age for grooms was 14 and brides 12, although the consent of parents was usually required if under 18). Was Eliza pregnant? Did their parents consent? Did things not work out? Or did they agree to separate without getting a divorce (which was expensive and available only on very limited grounds), with Eliza retaining her married title of 'wife' until William died, making a marriage to James legal?

A disconcerting twist in the story, revealed upon obtaining the birth certificates of William James Porter (b. 1850) and John Jasper Porter (b. 1853), was that the father of William James was shown as James Porter, not William Porter (Eliza Todman's husband of 1838). If correct, this James could be William's brother who was living with the couple in 1841, which might explain the apparent rift between Eliza and husband William. It does, nevertheless, seem implausible that this James Porter – if the entry is true – was William's brother. He appears to have married **Mary Lansdown** in 1844; was in Bradford as a visitor in 1851, with his children (born c. 1846 and 1848) being cared for by his wife in London; and was back in London in 1861. Would he really have had a liaison with Eliza around September 1849 when William James was conceived?

A grant of letters of administration dated 4 March 1868 regarding the estate of George Todman (widower, of Victoria Grove, Stoke Newington), Eliza's father, showed he died on 15 February, a few days before James and Eliza married on 26 February and less than two months after her first husband's death. Perhaps George gave them some money shortly before he died, which served as an incentive for them to get married?

In 1841, a Damaris Tappenden was living with George Todman at 3 Fairey Street, West Hackney, where James Gostling was lodging, and in 1868 a Susannah Tappenden was administratrix of George Todman's estate, and also, five days later, of that of George's brother, **James Todman**. They had died just two months apart (James first). The fact that their estates went into administration means that neither had made a will. Susanna Tappenden was described as George's daughter, and was Eliza's older sister, so also next of kin to her uncle after her father died. She had married **William Tappenden** on 25 December 1839, the year after Eliza married William Porter. Susanna and William had many (at least nine) children.

Eliza, through Susanna, likely had a good idea as to what her inheritance would be, shortly before she and James Gostling officially married. Sounds plausible? Or is it all coincidence?

A further twist was that Mary Ann Porter (who was living with mother Eliza and baby brother William in 1851) married a **John Tappenden** in Hackney on 31 August 1872. She did so as Mary Ann Gostling. Was she an illegitimate daughter of James Gostling and Eliza, or had she adopted or later been given the name Gostling, as the children registered as Porter were? John Tappenden was a son of William Tappenden and Susanna (née Todman), Eliza's sister. Mary Ann (14, b. West Hackney) was listed with surname Gostling and described as 'niece', living with William Tappenden and family in the 1861 census. Thus, Mary Ann Gostling (formerly Porter) and John Tappenden were first cousins, unless I'm mistaken!

The whole 'London clan' descended from James Gostling is considerable and will not be covered in this article.

William Gostling (b. 1813)

William (b. 1813, Framlingham), another son of Benjamin Gostling, married **Mary Ann Bond** (bp. 27 June 1813, Monk Soham), daughter of **John Bond** and **Sarah (née Elliot)**. They had one child, son **Walter** (b. 1841). In 1851 the family was living in Cock Street, Diss with William a '*carpenter journeyman*'. In 1861, still in Cock Street, William was absent from the household, although Mary Ann's status was still 'married'. I could not find any of them in 1871.

By 1881 Mary Ann was a widow, and she and Walter were living at 3 Sunnyside, Mount Street, Diss. Interestingly, living next door at No. 1 were Thomas Gostling (53), '*traveller for chemist*', his wife Mary Ann (52, b. Gipping), and three children born in Islington, Middlesex. This Thomas was a distant relation of William, the grandson of **John** and **Judith Gostling** through their miller son **William** and his wife, **Sarah (née Goldsbury)** with whom Thomas was living in 1851, when his occupation was journeyman miller. In 1861 Thomas was recorded as married, but staying with his widowed aunt, **Sarah Ann Gostling**, a linen draper in Margate, and in 1871 was a general draper in Islington with his wife and family.

I cannot find a death or burial for William. Mary Ann and Walter continued to live in Diss, Mary Ann on her '*own means*', and Walter receiving pension club pay (he was a retired brush finisher). Mary Ann died in 1897, and Walter, who never married, in 1922.

George Gostling (b. 1818)

For Benjamin Gostling's son George (b. 1818, Framlingham) there are very few records. It could be this George who appears to have 'lost his mind' in 1842, less than two years after his father's decease. I found a reference in Suffolk Archives entitled '*Letter from clerk to Plomesgate Union to overseers of Framlingham requesting them to arrange for the removal of George Gostling, a lunatic, to the County Asylum*'.⁽⁵⁾ I could not find a record of him being admitted, and if he was, he seems to have been discharged. There was a later record of him, if it is him,

being admitted to a lunatic asylum in Suffolk on 15 May 1846 and discharged on 14 December 1847. Further evidence of his being unbalanced in mind, again if it is him, is this report in the *Ipswich Journal* of 8 December 1849:

*'ALLEGED ROBBERIES – On the Friday morning, the 30th ult., about ten o'clock, a shooting coat was stolen from the coat room at the back of the premises of Mr. **Henry Clarke**, shoemaker, Princes Street. A man named George Gostling, a native of Framlingham, was afterwards apprehended and committed for trial.'*

At the Epiphany Sessions, Ipswich on 10 January 1850 this George Gostling was found guilty of larceny and sentenced to three weeks' hard labour. In the 1851 census, George (31) is found lodging, along with others including **Shadrack Pratt** (20), a fellow shoemaker, in Bishopsgate Street, Norwich, with Framlingham given as the place of birth for both. On 25 May 1861 Shadrack Pratt of Framlingham was committed to gaol, having previously served a sentence of 3 years and 3 months when in the Royal Artillery and the East Suffolk Militia.⁽⁶⁾ It seems likely that these 'pals' had both served in the Militia. In 1861, George Gosling (40), a soldier born Framlingham, was a patient in Melton Asylum, and appears to have died there in the December quarter of 1865.

Benjamin Gostling (b. 1811, 3x great-grandfather) and family

Benjamin Gostling (b. 1811, Framlingham, my 3x great-grandfather) was the eldest son of Benjamin (b. 1772) and Mary, and a journeyman watchmaker. He married **Harriet Ludbrook** at the Old Meeting House in Framlingham on 27 March 1850, according to the rites of the Baptist Church.

Harriet was baptised on 15 July 1827 in Metfield, the daughter of **Daniel Ludbrook**, a journeyman miller, and **Mary (née Mutimer)**, who were married in Brundish on 7 May 1822. Daniel's father, **John Ludbrook**, was an auctioneer of Monk Soham/Framlingham.

In 1841 the Ludbrook family, including Daniel's mother **Susanne (née Hart)**, but not Daniel or Harriet, were living at Mount Pleasant, Framlingham, and in 1851 they were at 52 Castle Street, Framlingham. This was the same street in which Daniel's father-in-law, Benjamin Gostling, and wife Mary (née Newson), had lived. Benjamin lost his father 10 years prior to getting married, and his mother Mary in 1848, which may explain why he didn't marry until 1850, aged 39, after his mother's decease. On the 1851 census, Benjamin, Harriet (25), son **Charles William** (10 months), and Harriet's sister **Louisa Ludbrook** (11) were living in Back Street, Framlingham. Ten years later, Louisa would marry in London.

Daniel Ludbrook was absent from the Ludbrook household in the 1841 census because he was in gaol in Ipswich, having been committed for trial on 7 April charged with two offences committed at Stradbroke. He received, and served, a custodial sentence of 6 months' hard labour (first and last month in solitary) ending on 7 October, for (as reported in the *Ipswich Journal* of 10 April 1841) *'having embezzled 1l. 2s. 9d., the property of Mr. **Jonathan Davy**, his master. He also pleaded guilty to a charge of having received the money for one stone*

of flour, and retained it for his own use.' The defence pleaded with the court for leniency because Daniel had a wife and large family – at that time, **Mary Ann, Ann, Sarah Ann, Sophia**, Louisa, **Susannah** and **Emma**. Daughters **Elizabeth** and **Harriet** were not at home in the 1841 census, and were old enough to work, but may have been included in the defence's argument. Had this not been the case he might have faced deportation. A bonus for us of Daniel's travail was that the admission paperwork described his physical characteristics, attire and educational attainment (i.e. he could read and write and had attended school – '*Earl Soham 7 years*'). He also had a distinguishing mark of a '*scar on the thick part of lefthand*'. His trade was cited as miller and '*where learned*' was '**Richard Titshall Hacheston**'.

Mary, his wife, was buried in Framlingham on 25 January 1849, age 46, with a quite concerning death notice in the *Bury and Norwich Post* of 24 January 1849 which read '*On the 17th inst., aged 46, Mary, wife of Mr. Daniel Ludbrook, miller, of Framlingham; she was the mother of 16 children, and leaves 8 surviving daughters.*' Sixteen children! And only daughters surviving – no son? There had been sons, but they died young, including **John** who, aged about 4, had drowned in a small pond near home in 1830.⁽⁷⁾

Later in 1849 Daniel married **Elizabeth Capon**, who died only a few years later and was buried in Framlingham on 9 June 1854, aged 59. Her death notice read: '*On the 4th, after a long and painful illness, aged 59, Elizabeth, the beloved wife of Mr. Daniel Ludbrook, miller, Framlingham.*'⁽⁸⁾ Daniel married his third wife, **Elizabeth Stevenson**, in 1856. He was buried on 3 October 1869 in Hackney, London. His death notice indicated he had also operated in London: '*LUDBROOK- 26th ult., aged 68 years, Mr. Daniel Ludbrook, Commercial Road, London, and late of Framlingham.*'⁽⁹⁾ The Ludbrook(e) family ascends to **John Ludbrooke** who married **Sarah Smyth** in Ubbeston on 11 August 1603. Daniel's daughters remained associated with the Gostling family, as we will see below.

Five children were born to Benjamin and Harriet: **Charles William** (b. 1850), **Francis Benjamin** (b. 1851), **Eliza Ann** (b. 1853), **Frederick Daniel** (b. 1856) and **Benjamin** (b. 1858). No infant baptisms can be found for them, but they all appeared with Harriet in the 1861 census, living in Badingham Road, Framlingham. Harriet (33) was a widowed laundress. Benjamin, surname spelt 'Gosling' on the death certificate, had died on 21 January 1858, aged just 46, from phthisis pulmonalis (pulmonary tuberculosis), leaving Harriet, aged 31 at that time, pregnant with their youngest son, Benjamin. As for the children:

- Charles William married three times, first to **Jane Elizabeth Bennett**, at St Nicholas, Harwich, Essex on 18 September 1874. Jane (b. 1848, Framsdén) was the daughter of **Thomas Bennett**, master blacksmith, and **Amelia (née Emeny)**, who married by licence on 16 October 1847 at Ashfield cum Thorpe. She grew up in Framsdén, appearing there in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses. After her father died in 1856, her mother took over the blacksmith business, and Amelia was thereafter listed as a '*blacksmith and dressmaker*'! Jane Elizabeth died in 1891 in Australia.

Charles married his second wife, **Annie Maria Moore**, on 15 January 1893 at St John, Lowestoft. Annie Maria was recorded in the 1861 census at Kelsale, aged 5, the daughter of journeyman tailor **Josiah Moore**, who appears to have married three times. Josiah's second wife (Annie Maria's mother), whom he married in 1853 in the Plomesgate district, was, would you believe, an Elizabeth Ludbrook, who could well have been Charles' aunt (his mother Harriet's sister), baptised in 1828 in Wortwell, on the Suffolk/Norfolk border, which is just a few miles north of Metfield where Harriet was baptised. Harriet and Elizabeth were included in a removal order of Daniel Ludbrook's family from Wortwell to Framlingham in 1829.⁽¹⁰⁾ It looks as though Elizabeth died in 1859, with Josiah marrying a third time in 1860. Charles and Annie Maria appeared in the 1901 census in Fakenham, where Charles was listed as a '*Tailor Cutter*'. It appears that Annie died in 1904 (Walsingham district).

Charles and his third wife, **Mary Ann (née Taylor)**, married on 20 October 1911 at Yarmouth Register Office. Her father, **William Taylor** (deceased), was a tailor. Charles died in 1919 at Gorleston-on-Sea, aged 69, leaving everything to his wife – there were no children.

- Francis Benjamin (b. 20 November 1851, Framlingham), was baptised as an adult at Christ Church St Pancras, Middlesex on 11 September 1869. In 1871 he was working in London as a clerk, living in Clerkenwell in the household of his aunt, Louisa Oldaker (née Ludbrook). About a year later, on 4 July 1872, he enlisted in London '*For Twelve Years Army Service*' with the Army Service Corps (ASC), as a clerk. He died in Cairo on 30 November 1882, just three months after being posted there. In 1881 a rebellion had broken out in Egypt, which threatened Britain's route to India through the Suez Canal. In response, a large expeditionary force under **General Wolseley** was despatched to quell the unrest, arriving in the area of the Suez Canal in mid-August 1882. After a decisive victory at Tel-el-Kebir on 13 September, the army marched into Cairo the following day, meeting little resistance. **Urabi**, the Egyptian general, surrendered, and the compliant viceroy, the Khedive, was reinstated, under British 'advisers', which marked the start of a long British occupation. The ASC would have played a vital logistical role in the campaign. Francis' service record listed him as '*Ex Force Egypt*' with a date of 11 August 1882 ('Ex' I believe to be short for 'Expeditionary'), suggesting he would have arrived a short time before Cairo was taken. Francis was awarded the Egyptian Medal and Egyptian Bronze Star. He had only just over one year of his army service remaining. It is quite remarkable that his service record has survived. The circumstances and cause of his death aren't given, nor is there any indication of whether, as a clerk, he was involved directly in the fighting.



Egyptian Medal and Egyptian Bronze Star

- Eliza Ann (b. 1853) married **Harry (Henry) Clements**, in 1877. The marriage was registered in the Tendring District, but I cannot find a record in any parish neighbouring Harwich.
- Frederick Daniel (b. 31 January 1856, Framlingham), of whom more in the next part of this article, was my 2x great-grandfather.
- Benjamin, born 1858, died in June quarter 1873, Tendring District, aged 14.

In 1871, Harriet and the children, apart from Francis Benjamin, were living in Bath Street, St Mary Quay, Ipswich. No occupation was given for Harriet, but Charles William (20) was recorded as a tailor, Eliza Ann (17) as a dressmaker, Frederick Daniel (15) as an errand boy, and Benjamin (13) as a scholar. Francis Benjamin was far away in Clerkenwell, London, a commercial clerk, living with his uncle, **George Frederick Oldaker**, an insurance agent who had married Harriet's sister Louisa Ludbrook (b. 1839, Stradbroke, bp. 28 April 1845, Framlingham Wesleyan Methodist church). She had moved to Islington by 1861. Earlier, in 1856, her sister Susanna Ludbrook (b. 16 June 1834, bp. 14 September 1834, Framlingham) had married George Frederick Oldaker but died only a couple of years later, in 1859. In the 1861 census, prior to marrying Louisa, George (24) was listed as a widower, and 'Assurance Clerk', living at 25 Englefield Road, Finsbury St Paul's, Islington.

My theory is that James Gostling (b. 1815) of Framlingham, Harriet (née Ludbrook) Gostling's brother-in-law, and Francis Benjamin's uncle, who had been in London since 1841, might have acted as an incentive for the Ludbrook sisters (who had close links with the Framlingham Gostlings growing up), and in turn Francis Benjamin Gostling, to move there.

In 1873, Harriet married for a second time, to **John Andrews**, widower. In the 1871 census he was living with first wife, **Sarah Ann (née Coppin)**, at 18 West Street, Harwich and shown as a beer house keeper. Sarah Ann died in 1872. John himself died in 1880, aged 67. In 1881 a **Samuel Carrington**, a beer house keeper, and wife Sophia (50, b. Framlingham) were living at that same address, now named the *Prince of Wales*. The Beerhouse Act of 1830⁽¹¹⁾ allowed any ratepayer to brew and sell beer from their home for a small fee (two guineas), often from just a room or two within a private dwelling. Primarily beer and cider were sold, but no wine or spirits. It came as a great surprise to find that Samuel Carrington's wife was Sophia Ludbrook (bp. 13 January 1831, Framlingham), Harriet's younger sister. Samuel and Sophia had married at St Nicholas, Harwich on 26 October 1852. Prior to taking on the beer house, Samuel had been recorded as a mariner on the 1861 and 1871 censuses. In the former, aged 33 and married, he was the mate of a crew of nine on board the fishing smack *Daisy*, which was positioned at the 'back of Yarmouth sands', her port or place, to which she belonged, being Woodbridge. The *Daisy* was built and first registered in 1860, of '61.47grt, dimensions 64.6'x17.6'x10.7',⁽¹²⁾ and delivered to **Henry Rougham Jones**, Aldeburgh, in August of that year. The census form heading margin has a handwritten note: 'Harwich No 89'. Boats would have sailed up and down coastal fishing waters.

Harriet might well have lived at 18 West Street before and after the decease of her second husband John Andrews in 1880, but by the time of the 1881 census, taken on 6 April 1881, widow Harriett Andrews, listed as a '*Retired Public House keeper*' was a visitor in Bedhampton, Hampshire, residing with son Charles William, a '*Tailors Cutter*', and wife Jane Elizabeth. Her married daughter Eliza Clements, a '*Mariner's wife*', was also there. By 1881 all of Harriet's surviving children had married or left home.

In the December quarter of 1886, in Tendring District, Harriet married for a third time, to widower **George Powell**, a bricklayer. She may have continued living with her sister and family in West Street until she married George, who had lost his wife in May 1886. Harriet died, as Harriet Powell, in 1903 aged 75.

The next part will continue with my 2x great-grandfather, Frederick Daniel Gostling.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME? – URSULA WATLING

In the decade between February 1813 and February 1823, 323 infants were baptised at St Nicholas' church in Wrentham, a parish covering some 125 homes.⁽¹⁾ There were also 37 babies baptised at the Congregational Chapel, which was built in 1778 for a group established in 1649; by the 1810s it had up to 400 members from Wrentham and the surrounding area.⁽²⁾ These 360 baptisms comprised 188 boys and 172 girls who had parents living in Wrentham. Not all survived infancy:

in the same period, 31 infant boys and 18 infant girls were recorded in the burial register, which covered both denominations.

The boys were given one of 29 different names, but the 'top five' were shared by 65% of them: William, John, Robert, James and Charles. By contrast, 13 names appeared only once. The girls were slightly more diverse: 42 different names. Even so, a relatively small group covered 59% of the baptisms: Maria/Mary, Mary Anne/Marianne, Elizabeth, Eliza, Anne/Anna/Hannah, Sarah, Susan/Susanna. Again, 13 names appeared only once each. (This did not necessarily reflect the prevalence of the more common names in the community, since, when a baby died, its successor often received the same name.)

I have written previously about being unable to determine which of two cousins is my ancestor, as they were of similar age and had the same name.⁽³⁾ Is the search any easier when a first name is an unusual one?

Among the Wrentham baptisms with unique names are my 2x great-grandfather, **Ishmael Watling** (bp. 1814), and his sisters, **Heppy** (bp. 1820) and **Ursula** (bp. 1817). These were three of the 14 children of **Robert Watling** and his wife **Elizabeth (née Calver)**: the eldest two were baptised in Blythburgh, the middle six in Wrentham and the remaining six in Wangford. All those who survived and married made an 'X' in the register.

Ishmael is indeed a rare name – only six appear in the Suffolk registers indexed by Ancestry for the decade 1813–23. It is of biblical origin, and the story from Genesis would be familiar to anyone attending church regularly. Ishmael Watling was not too hard to track, except in the 1841 census where, after his move to the town of Woodbridge, his name was recorded as Samuel, as was that of his son, another **Ishmael**.

Heppy I did not trace beyond the 1841 census, when she appeared to be working as a servant on a farm in Wangford, recorded as Happy Watling. No other girl was baptised 'Heppy' in Suffolk in the decade, though four were given the name Happy (including twins Happy and Easy) and 24 were called Hephzibah (in various spellings, another biblical name - 2 Kings). However, other researchers have successfully identified Heppy as Abigail Watland who married a Suffolk man, **Francis Alders** (or **Aldis**) in Old Swinford, near Stourbridge, Worcestershire, in November 1844. Their son **Robert** was registered in 1851 as the son of Francis Alday and his wife Hepsey Alday née Watlin, according to a certificate helpfully posted online. Heppy/Abigail was later known as Sarah, and died in Worcester Asylum in 1907.

And so, to Ursula. Nineteen girls were given that name in Suffolk in the decade. Not a biblical name. **Saint Ursula**, a (possibly apocryphal) virgin martyr, is represented in a few Suffolk churches, though there are no churches actually dedicated to her. Ursula Watling did, however, have an aunt of the same name, her father's younger sister, who had died in 1813, aged 13, so 'my' Ursula was presumably named after her aunt. FreeBMD offers a marriage in the appropriate district for Ursula Watling, and initially I picked that up. For a relative that distant I would

not purchase a certificate. How likely is it that there were two? Quite likely: the Westleton parish register shows that, on 8 June 1840, **Ursula Watling** married **John Newson** stating clearly under father's name: '*Illegitimate – mother's name Mary Watling*' (almost certainly Robert Watling's sister, bp. 1792). This Ursula was married in her home village where she was too well known to invent a father – though the officiating curate did have the option of leaving the space blank. But she was not the Ursula I was looking for.

Searching through Watling marriages, I found Ursley Watling, daughter of Robert Watling, deceased (Robert Watling, aged 44, had been buried in Wangford in 1834). Ursley married a mariner, **Robert Crickmore**, in Southwold on 9 October 1838. Bride and groom both signed with an 'X'. By 1841, Southwold was roughly twice the size of Wrentham, with a population of about 1,800. The official BMD index has the bride as Ursuline (the adjective from Ursula, name of an order of nuns, but rarely a personal name). Their first child, **Robert William** (known as William), was baptised in November 1839, as the son of Robert and Ursuline Watling (*sic*), by **Rev. H W R Birch**, who had conducted their wedding just over a year earlier. Perhaps he did not remember them. He baptised their second son, **Robert**, in July 1844, this time with the correct surname, but with the mother's name recorded as Mary Ann. I cannot find a baptism for **Harry Crickmore**, who arrived in 1844, but **Emma** and **Anna** were baptised as the daughters of Robert and Usely, by the curate of Southwold, **Richard Bicknell**, on 16 June 1850, when Emma was already three years old. **Sophia** was born in 1852, but I found no baptism.

In 1854, Rev. Birch died, aged 59, and was replaced by **Rev. John Rustat Crowfoot**. Originally a Cambridge academic, specialising in Hebrew studies, John Crowfoot married and therefore was obliged to give up his college fellowship: after a curacy in Cambridge, he was awarded the living of Reydon with Southwold. It was he who, in July 1860, baptised Robert Crickmore's youngest child, **Caroline Elizabeth**, born 10 August 1855 (Rev. Bicknell, the curate, who might have known the family, had moved to the parish of Groton by then). The register shows Caroline as the daughter of Robert and Mary. The censuses of 1861 and 1871 show Robert's wife as Mary. What happened to Ursley/Usely?

The census enumerator for that part of Southwold in 1861 and 1871 was **Thomas Henry Jellicoe**. Born on the Devon/Cornwall border near Plymouth, he had moved with his family to Southwold with his father's job as a preventive officer with HM Customs. Thomas Henry married a local girl and became a grocer/draper, a shipping agent, secretary to the regatta, committee member of various charitable organisations, a town councillor and later alderman and mayor of Southwold. An active, literate citizen, but not a Suffolk man.

Caroline's birth certificate shows her mother as '*Ursley Crickmore, formerly Whatling*', informant, '*Ursley Watling, her mark*'. The 'Mary' Crickmore in the two censuses is the same age and has the same birthplace as Ursley. Ursley Crickmore died in Southwold on 25 March 1877 of a malignant disease of her abdominal organs that had lasted two years. The informant was **Mary Burcham**, who had been present, an elderly local widow living nearby.

In 1881 it was Sophia Crickmore who kept house for her father, Robert, and his granddaughter, **Lily**, her sister Anna's daughter; in 1891 Robert lived with Lily, then aged 20, and in 1901 with Lily and her husband.

So, it seems Robert had not been widowed from Ursula before 1860 and remarried someone called Mary. The evidence points to Ursley being informally renamed 'Mary' – or someone misreading her name as that when transcribing it into an official document. Or was there resistance among the literate to this unknown, perhaps local, name, Ursley?

A relatively uncommon first name is thus a mixed blessing for a researcher, especially when the subject cannot read, and has moved to a town where they are not known. And we must not forget the broad, and sometimes highly localised Suffolk dialect, about which a learned book was published in 1823.⁽⁴⁾ This exercise has reminded me that we must not assume perfection in records and that:

- the baptism register is a record of what the celebrant heard the parents say they wanted the name to be, and sometimes of what was transcribed into the register from a scrappy note;
- the marriage register contains what the celebrant understood and selected of the information provided by the couple and/or their representatives;
- the purpose of the census is to *count* people, altogether, and in their categories (age, gender, marital status, occupation etc.), not to record their names;
- the censuses before 1911 record what the enumerator wrote down from the household return, which may not have been completed by the head of household, supplemented by their own geographical knowledge (or lack of it);
- a death certificate records what the informant told the registrar, to the best of their knowledge and belief, supplemented by any medical input;
- it is not illegal in England & Wales to call yourself by any name you wish, provided that you have no intention to deceive.⁽⁵⁾

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Editors' note: Dawn has drawn our attention to an authoritative and helpful article on name changes by **Ian Waller**, in the Family History Federation Really Useful Bulletin, No. 66, February 2026, available at <https://www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/files/1086-1-1.pdf>

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DANIEL DICKERSON, SUFFOLK GEORGIAN CLOCKMAKER

Several years ago, while searching for my Suffolk Dickerson ancestors, I came across a marriage licence dated 11 June 1767 for the marriage of **Daniel Dickerson** and **Jane Doughty** in Framlingham, Suffolk. Daniel's occupation was given as watchmaker.

Early in 2018 I had the opportunity of buying a longcase clock made by Daniel Dickerson of Yarmouth, and took a chance that he was also the watchmaker of Framlingham. I have several people in my family tree by the name of Daniel Dickerson, one being my 3x great-grandfather who was born in Bucklesham, near Ipswich, in 1783. I know that I am not descended from the clockmaker, but decided to investigate if there might be a link further back between his family and mine, as they all emanated from the Diss area of south Norfolk. I also wanted to prove that Daniel of Yarmouth and Framlingham were one and the same person, but had no idea where the search would lead! Eight years of intermittent research has culminated in the publication and printing of my hardback book, titled *Who was Daniel Dickerson the Georgian Clockmaker? His True Identity, His Ancestors and His Life Story*. **[Editors' note: please see the following book review.]**

Daniel Dickerson is considered to be one of the more important Suffolk and Norfolk Georgian clockmakers; he is mentioned in horological works by **Brian Loomes**, **F J Britten** and others, with suggestions given as to who he might be, but no one had uncovered his true identity. The chance discovery of the marriage licence threw Daniel's original identification into complete disarray. The clockmaker had always been identified as the **Daniel Dickerson** who had married **Priscilla Drake** in Roydon, Norfolk on 7 January 1740/41, but this Daniel's occupation was given as a shoemaker. The couple were living in Diss, where they baptised eight children, until 1755 when they moved to Framlingham on a Settlement Order. No one was aware that less than three months after Daniel and Priscilla's marriage, their first son Daniel was baptised in Wortham, Suffolk on 15 March 1740/41.



*The dial of the Daniel Dickerson Yarmouth longcase clock acquired by the author in 2018.
Photo: Christine Brooks*

This Daniel is the clockmaker. His name does not appear on the Settlement Order as in 1753 he had begun his seven-year apprenticeship to the clockmaker **Thomas French** in Norwich.

By 1760 he must have completed his apprenticeship and returned to his family home in Framlingham. On 25 September 1760 in Earl Soham, Suffolk, he married by licence **Bridget Scotchmer** of Earl Soham. He was aged about 20 and she was

about 30, so 10 years his senior. Perhaps it was an arranged marriage, as Bridget was from a relatively wealthy family, being the daughter of **Francis Scotchmer** and **Priscilla (née Folkard)**. She had been baptised in Earl Soham on 13 August 1730 and her mother Priscilla came from a line of Folkard families who owned large areas of land in various parts of Suffolk.

Two children followed their marriage, both baptised in Framlingham: **Daniel** on 14 July 1762 and **Priscilla** on 29 December 1763. Although the parish register entry for Daniel clearly states that he was the son of Daniel and Bridget Dickerson, it had previously been interpreted as saying Daniel and Priscilla, which caused some of the confusion over the clockmaker's identity.

Daniel's mother Priscilla (née Drake) died in the summer of 1765, her burial being recorded on the same day (23 August) as the baptism of her 16th child, a daughter, **Frances**. Daniel's wife Bridget died only four months later, though her burial is recorded not in Framlingham but in Earl Soham where she is buried in the Scotchmer family plot: part of her gravestone survives. As a result of the two deaths occurring so close together, Daniel and his father Daniel were both widowers who in theory could have been the Daniel Dickerson who married **Jane Doughty** in 1767, but later documentary evidence proves that this was Daniel the son, not the father. When Daniel and Jane married in 1767, he was 27 and she was a spinster of 42. No children followed the marriage, suggesting that this was a platonic arrangement with Jane being a mother to Bridget's children.



*Bridget Dickerson's
gravestone, Earl
Soham churchyard.
Photo: Christine Brooks*

Daniel remained living in Framlingham until 1772, as confirmed by records of his apprentices, including **William Gostling**, records of mortgage and property deals, and several longcase clocks bearing his name and 'Framlingham'.



*The dial of a Daniel
Dickerson Framlingham
longcase clock
(owned by the author).
Photo: Christine Brooks*



*A Daniel Dickerson
Framlingham hooded
wall alarm clock
(owned by the author).
Photo: Christine Brooks*



*A Daniel Dickerson
Framlingham longcase
clock (owned by the author).
Photo: Christine Brooks*

On 11 April 1772, the first of several advertisements was placed by Daniel in the *Ipswich Journal* indicating that he had left Framlingham and was moving to the *Three Cranes Inn*, situated on the quay at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. It had recently been refurbished and he had laid in entirely fresh stock. He continued his clockmaking business, as a few clocks bearing his name and 'Yarmouth' still exist.

He stayed in Great Yarmouth for only about 18 months, as he placed another advertisement in the *Ipswich Journal* on 16 October 1773, announcing that he was moving from the *Three Cranes Inn* to the *White Lion Inn* at Eye, Suffolk. From research it appears that clockmakers often took on the role of publican while continuing their clockmaking business. Daniel placed other advertisements, including for cricket matches to be played in



*The White Lion Inn, Eye.
Photo: Christine Brooks*

Eye between the gentlemen of Eye and Woodbridge and for auctions at the *White Lion Inn*. He is also mentioned in the records of the General Court Baron held at the *White Lion Inn*, which was the principal manorial court. He was listed amongst the principal residents of Eye when it was announced in April 1778 that the town had been free of smallpox for one month.

A personal and touching advertisement appeared in the *Ipswich Journal* on 30 July 1774 relating to a white greyhound dog answering to the name of Snow. The dog had gone missing, stolen or strayed from the *White Lion Inn*, implying that the dog was Daniel's, and a reward was offered for his return.

From advertisements in the *Ipswich Journal*, Daniel appears to have remained at the *White Lion Inn* until the late 1770s. Other documentation states that there was a small farm of about 25 acres connected to the inn. In the *Ipswich Journal* of 20 September 1788, an auction was announced of all the household furniture, brewing and dairy utensils, livestock and implements in husbandry of Mr Daniel Dickerson of Eye. This suggests that Daniel was a tenant at the farm.

Framlingham is only about 13 miles from Eye and Daniel owned property there, so it can be speculated that he frequently visited or stayed there to be with his young children.

There is nothing to suggest when Daniel left Eye or whether he kept connections there and returned to Framlingham, but in the 1784 Suffolk Poll Book he is listed as being resident in Eye with a freehold property in Framlingham.

His son Daniel was also a clockmaker and, given the absence of an apprenticeship record, must have been trained by his father, completing his apprenticeship by about 1782.

Information from entries in the *Ipswich Journal* indicates that from about February 1789 Daniel took on the premises and business of the well-known **Moore** family of clockmakers, in Brook Street, Ipswich. He advertised himself as a silversmith, clock and watchmaker and was a skilled engraver, most of his clock dials

displaying intricate oriental designs. He probably left Ipswich in December 1790 because a watchmaker, goldsmith, jeweller, hardware and toyman by the name of **Norton** opened a business in Brook Street and there is no further mention of Daniel in the town. In the Suffolk Poll Book for 1790, Daniel is recorded on 29 and 30 June as resident in Ipswich with a freehold property in Framlingham.

On 11 December 1790, Daniel Dickerson, clock and watchmaker and silversmith, advertised in the *Ipswich Journal* that he had opened a shop in the market-place, Framlingham. My initial thought was that Daniel had opened these premises after leaving Ipswich. But it is more likely to be his son Daniel who, on 5 November 1791, as '*Daniel Dickerson, jun.*', placed an identical advertisement saying that he had taken the shop of the late **Mr Pach** of Harleston, Norfolk, who had been a clockmaker there.

There is nothing to suggest in all the mortgage and property documents that Daniel jnr. ever owned property or married.

Daniel's second wife Jane died in Framlingham in July 1800 and in February 1801 an auction of Daniel's dwelling house and premises '*near the Market-place*' together with all the household furniture and other effects was advertised. There is no further mention of Daniel in Framlingham.

It would appear that the whole family had moved to Norwich. In 1794 Daniel's daughter Priscilla had married **Charles Hubbard**, a haberdasher from Norwich, by licence in Framlingham, and she had then moved to that city. In the 1802 *Norwich Directory*, in the trade section, there is an entry for Daniel Dickerson, '*Watch-maker*', at 9, Saint Martin's by Palace (now St Martin-at-Palace Plain). By 1802 Daniel would have been 62 years of age, so this was probably Daniel jnr. In 1806 Daniel is listed in the Poll Book for Norwich as a clockmaker, owning property in Norwich but resident in London, suggesting that he had gone to London to enjoy the social life of that time. His third marriage, to a wealthy Essex widow, **Rachel Beckwith**, was by licence at the church of Saint Mary Newington, Southwark.



*9, St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich.
Photo: Christine Brooks*

The only other record is a short report on 21 January 1807 in the *Bury and Norwich Post* which must refer to Daniel jnr. He had been committed to the county gaol for swindling several persons out of their watches under the pretence of repairing them.

Saint Martin-at-Palace Plain is a short walk from the Church of St Simon and St Jude, where the parish registers record the burial of Daniel jnr. of that parish on 6 January 1818, aged 56, which is correct for his birth year. His father was also buried at St Simon and St Jude on 4 February 1827, aged 90, his abode given as

Tombland, an adjoining parish. The church is located at the bottom of Elm Hill, the oldest surviving street in Norwich. It became redundant in 1892 and unfortunately any monumental gravestones were removed many years ago.

If anyone is interested in learning much more about the incredible life of the Suffolk Georgian clockmaker Daniel Dickerson, please contact me at the following email address.

Liz Brooks Mb 9984

liz.crisaliz@btinternet.com

BOOK REVIEW

Who Was Daniel Dickerson the Georgian Clockmaker? His True Identity, his Ancestors and his Life Story by Liz Brooks



A book that's easy to read and pick up from time to time (which is my excuse for taking some time to review it). There is a liberal use of pictures, which is always very welcome to illustrate what is being discussed and also to break up the text and make it easy on the eyes.

Around one third of the book is comprised of appendices with family trees, transcripts of wills and other documents such as mortgages, which support the main text. There are still some wills and marriage licences in the main text where appropriate and immediately relevant. I particularly liked the parish maps highlighted in crayon to show which family was where.

A lot of work has gone into trying to discover as much as possible about Daniel Dickerson, and this book lays out clearly the process and the supporting documents, and also what is missing (but hopefully still to be discovered).

Copies are currently only available from the author, Liz Brooks. The book costs £25 plus £5 postage and packing (UK), but can also be collected direct from Liz in Suffolk – contact her to arrange: liz.crisaliz@btinternet.com

Andy Kerridge, Chair

FREDERICK CLARKE

Frederick Clarke was one of the deaf people identified in the *Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future* project mentioned in the June 2026 edition of this journal. Frederick appeared in the 1911 census, and **Hannah Salisbury** (formerly of Bury Record Office and now a freelance heritage consultant) did quite a lot of work trying to find Frederick's parentage and trace his life, but was unable to come to firm conclusions. So, I offered to take the story and run it in *Suffolk Roots* in case our members are able to offer any other perspectives.

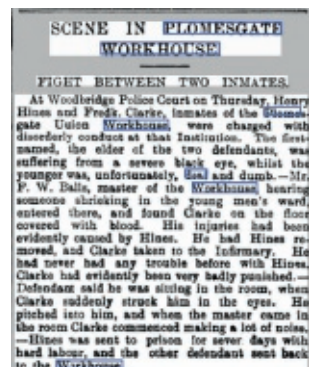
We first see Frederick in the 1891 census in Plomesgate Workhouse, Wickham Market, aged 5, born in Saxmundham. He was not recorded as deaf at that point (and there was a column to mark folk as such). This workhouse was to be his home for the next 30 years. In 1901 he was recorded as being deaf and dumb from childhood, so whether this was missed on the earlier census, or an early illness or accident caused the deafness, is not known.

In 1891 there were two other Clarke boys there, recorded adjacent to Frederick – are they all from the same family? **Charles Clarke** was aged 12, born in Carlton, and he was followed by **Arthur Clarke**, aged 6, born in Saxmundham. The inmates are not listed alphabetically, in fact before Charles Clarke is an **Albert Kerridge**. I have not found baptisms for either Frederick or Arthur, and no obvious birth registered for Frederick.

In 1901 Frederick was recorded as being 15, and there were no other Clarks present. In 1911, aged 20, he was listed as a general labourer, born at Wickham Market. In 1921 he was aged 35 and 8 months, but now his birthplace was Ipswich. He was still resident in the workhouse, again a general labourer, but this census clarified that his employer was the Plomesgate Board of Guardians.

So that's the overview. As stated, 30 years in the workhouse, possibly a couple of brothers but no recorded parents.

There are other sources. The *Ipswich Journal* of 20 July 1895 reported that the **Rev. Sinclair** raised the matter of educating a deaf and dumb child in the workhouse (which could have been Frederick, then aged 9), and investigations were made as to where he could be educated and also learn a trade. It was, however, 2½ years (December 1898) before a resolution was passed to send Frederick to a Deaf and Dumb Institution (at a cost of £25 p.a.). The chosen institution was reported in the *Framlingham Weekly News* (7 January 1899) as one in Edgbaston. Sadly, nearly two years later in November 1900, it was reported that with Frederick's time at the Edgbaston institution coming to an end, he



Framlingham Weekly News,
23 February 1907. Content provided
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Newspaper Archive

had received no industrial training – the managers considering that he had ‘*not much ability*’. The Plomesgate Guardians reflected that the large expenditure had been a waste.

The next time we hear of Frederick is in 1907 as reported by the *Framlingham Weekly News* of 23 February, when he was involved in a fight.

Who were Frederick's parents?

It has been difficult to find traces of Frederick or his possible siblings, but it seems likely that he was at least partially orphaned and the son of **Lydia Clarke**. Lydia was found in the 1881 census living in Saxmundham. She was head of the household, a 36-year-old widow. With her were 7 children:

- **William George Clarke**, son, 15, no occupation, Peasenhall, lame
- **Minnie Maria**, 14, Peasenhall
- **James Frederick**, 12, errand boy, Framlingham
- **Eliza**, 10, Framlingham
- **Jane**, 8, Dennington
- **Rosa**, 5, Carlton
- **Charles**, 1, Carlton

Charles Clarke, aged 1, was probably the Charles Clarke, aged 12, born Carlton, present in the Plomesgate Workhouse with Frederick in 1891. Going back to the 1871 census (RG10/1762; f.60; p.17), Lydia's husband was **William Clarke**, then aged 27, born Stallbrook (?Stradbroke), Suffolk. It seems likely that he is the William Clarke who was buried in Kelsale on 17 November 1875, aged 31. There appear to be some discrepancies in the Kelsale register, as it seems to indicate that the burial was in 1877 rather than 1875. The GRO registers show the death was registered in 1875, which sort of decides it! The family was definitely living in Kelsale at the time, as in 1875 one of the children was baptised in the same church.

So, Charles was born about four years after the death of Lydia's husband, William. This arguably makes it more likely that Arthur and Frederick were also her illegitimate children. Lydia herself died, aged 40, in Saxmundham in 1886, and in 1891 the three Clarke boys were recorded in the workhouse. They were probably there earlier, but it's just then that we find them in the census. Charles and Arthur both leave, but Frederick doesn't.

Hannah has traced Lydia's other children forwards as follows:

- William George appeared again in 1921, aged 36, in Bristol.
- Minnie Maria married **Edward Mann** in 1888. She lived Kelsale from 1891 to 1911, and then in 1921 appears as a widow working as a housemaid in Bournemouth.
- James Frederick married **Alice Elizabeth Mann** in Yoxford in 1900. In 1911 he was a gardener in Sternfield, and in 1921 he resided in Ufford.

- Eliza may be the person of the same name recorded as a servant in Edgbaston in 1891 (or is this a coincidence?), and possibly died in 1919 in Blything Registration District.
- Jane was possibly an 18-year-old servant in Tunstall in 1891, then in 1901 a servant in London. She may have married **George Richards** in 1903 and been a lodging house landlady in 1911.
- Rosa was a scholar aged 16 at Orphan House, Bristol in 1891. She was not found in 1901 and 1911, but was in Bristol in 1921 with brother William George.
- No further trace of Charles has been found after the 1891 census.
- Arthur joined the Lincolnshire Regiment in 1902. He was a railway porter in Kirkdale, Lancashire in 1911 and 1921.

This leaves Frederick. The last census sighting was in 1921. The Plomesgate Workhouse closed in 1936, and the workhouse records show he was discharged that year, but give no clues as to where he went. The *Felixstowe Times* of 13 June 1936 reported that the inmates were transferred to 'other Public Assistance establishments' on 11 May – the same date as Frederick's discharge record. There's a chance he went to St Audry's, but those records are still closed. There is a possible clue in an earlier report in the *Felixstowe Times* of 6 January 1934 which said that Red House, Bulcamp was the likely destination for the inmates. Hannah has looked at the Red House entries in the 1939 Register and Frederick isn't there (unless he's one of the closed entries, which seems unlikely). It is possible that he died between 1936 and the compiling of the 1939 Register.

For completeness, back to Lydia. She was born Lydia Ann Mayhew and in 1865 married William Clarke in Peasenhall. Both were aged 20 and signed with a cross. William was a labourer.

Hannah has made some suggestions for records that might be helpful in identifying what happened to Frederick after the closure of Plomesgate:

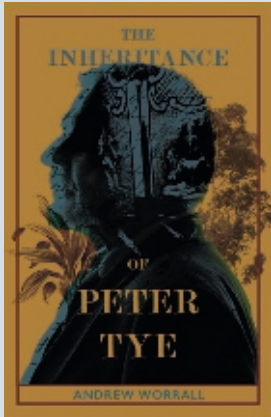
- Poor Law Records: Blything Union ADA1/AE1/1: Clerk to the Guardians: Statistics: Returns – Returns of persons sleeping in the workhouse 1937-1941.
- Poor Law Records: Blything Union ADA1/CB1/1-3: Workhouse Masters: Inmates Admission and Discharge Books 1937-1940
- Poor Law Records: Blything Union ADA1/CB5/1: Workhouse Masters: Inmates Registers: 1 – Register of Inmates 1930-1938

Does anyone have any further details about Frederick? Is there anyone related to this Clarke family who can provide other insights? Or are there any other suggestions of where to look?

Andy Kerridge, Chair
chair@suffolkfhs.co.uk

BOOK REVIEW

The Inheritance of Peter Tye by Andrew Worrall



This book has been written by long-standing Society member **Andrew Worrall**, who has also completed a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Suffolk.

You could say the book is about an Indian glass bowl, but there is more to it than that – it's about discovering how the (fictional) narrator, Peter Tye, is related to the lady who owned the bowl, and exploring the stories of the families involved.

The story takes us from England to Ireland, then to India, almost, but not quite, to Canada, and finally to Australia. Whilst clearly based on the usual family history evidence such as births, marriages and deaths, this is supplemented

with information from court records, house records, Army records, etc., to build engaging stories around the individuals. No knowledge of genealogy is needed, and in fact when I finished it my wife, who is absolutely not interested in family history, asked if she could read it as she thought she might like it, having read the blurb on the back page. She did, and like me found all the individual stories different, interesting and well written.

The Inheritance of Peter Tye is available from all major book retailers, both in-store and online, ISBN 978-1919234908.

Andy Kerridge, Chair

Editors' note: Anthony Worrall will be speaking about his book at the Ipswich Group meeting on Wednesday, 2 December 2026.

HELP WANTED – BUFFAT / BUFFETT / BOUVET / BOWETT FAMILY

I am trying to find out who **William Buffat** was, and whether he is part of my family tree. William was buried in Withersfield in west Suffolk on 18 December 1812, the parish register recording that he was an '*Old soldier*'. I have tried to find his Army record but have not been lucky so far. The spelling of his surname could be Buffett, Bouvet or Bowett. Other members of this family lived in Withersfield and in nearby Great Wratting. I would be grateful for any information.

Eileen Blythe Mb 8140
eileenb891@gmail.com

FORTHCOMING FAMILY HISTORY FAIRS AND EVENTS

As *Suffolk Roots* goes to press (August 2026) there are both physical and online events being organised. These are often advertised on the Family History Federation's website at <https://www.familyhistoryfederation.com/events>

We also aim to bring Suffolk a little closer to those members living outside the county by attending a variety of events across the country, but as yet, unfortunately, not overseas! Below are details of out-of-county Family History Fairs at which Suffolk FHS will be present, with all available publications and up-to-date, searchable information on our database. Do come and make yourself known to us when we visit your area.

West Surrey Family History Fair

7 November 2026

Woking Leisure Centre, Kingfield Road, Woking

Details: <https://www.wsfhs.co.uk/pages/openday.php>

In addition, there are the following Family History Events:

The Family History Show London

3 October 2026

Kempton Park Racecourse, Sunbury-on-Thames

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

All About That Place

7–16 October 2026

Free, Online (10 days of 10-minute talks with 10 themes)

Details: <https://sog.org.uk/welcome-to-all-about-that-place/>

Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair

24 October 2026

Cherwell School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford

Details: <https://www.ofhs.uk/events/event/ofhs-family-history-fair-24th-october-2026>

GROUP PROGRAMMES

All Society members are entitled to attend any or all Group meetings.

**GROUP MEETING START-TIMES VARY – PLEASE CHECK
THE GROUP CONTACTS PAGE. ALSO CHECK THE SOCIETY
WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION**

TBA = To be arranged : TBC = To be confirmed

AS WE GO TO PRESS, GROUPS HAVE CREATED PROGRAMMES OF
INDOOR PHYSICAL MEETINGS, AS LISTED BELOW. IN ADDITION,
A NUMBER OF ZOOM PRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN ARRANGED

LOCATION	DATE	EVENT	SPEAKER
SEPTEMBER			
Haverhill	10	Paranormal East Anglia	Mike Wabe
	19	OPEN DAY at Haverhill Library 10am–3pm (TBC)	Group
Ipswich	02	The Trials of Mrs Everson	Janis Kirby
Lowestoft	01	Silver Harvest	Daryl Fraser
Sudbury	29	Winifred Challis – Morals, Marriage and Mass Observation in WWII	Terry O'Donoghue
OCTOBER			
Haverhill	08	A Glimpse into the Life of a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages	Kim Case
Ipswich	07	Elizabeth Garrett Anderson – A Lady of 'Firsts' from Suffolk	Andy Relf
Lowestoft	06	A Mariner's Story	Ivan Bunn
Sudbury	29	Suffolk Villages	Peter Tatam
NOVEMBER			
Haverhill	12	Restoring a Lancaster	Kelly Bennett +1
Ipswich	04	All about 'Coroners' Inquests'	Vicky Holmes
Lowestoft	03	Halesworth Witches	Davide Woolwebber
Sudbury	24	The Most Secret Place on Earth	Roger Pugh
DECEMBER			
Haverhill	12	Christmas Quiz (with refreshments)	Group
Ipswich	04	The Inheritance of Peter Tye	Andrew Worrall
Lowestoft	03	Colmans of Corton – The Mustard Family	David Butcher
Sudbury	24	No Meeting	

**For Bury programme and the most up-to-date information
about other groups' activities, please check on the
Suffolk FHS website, under the Groups tab**

**Organisers: Please inform Suffolk Roots of
your upcoming Group Programmes**

Who Are YOU?

A Family History Course for Beginners...

Three sessions – Starting on Saturday 14 November at 10:30 am
At the Salvation Army Citadel, 558 Woodbridge Road, Ipswich IP4 4NT.

Society members: £5 per session – £10 for all 3

Non-members: £6 each session – £18 for all 3

This course is not limited to people from the immediate Ipswich area!

To book: contact Howard King at ipswich@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Tel: 01473 274300

ZOOM TALKS

Zoom talks for members from September 2026 onwards are listed below. Please put the dates in your diaries and/or your computer-based calendars.

Further talks, prior to the next edition of *Suffolk Roots*, will be publicised via the e-newsletter, Facebook (and other social media), and in the News area of the website. Please check regularly for updates on these and future talks.

Members wishing to join the Zoom presentations will find a link to register for the next talk on the News tab, once they have logged in as a member. If you have any difficulties registering, contact Andy Kerridge at chair@suffolkfhs.org.uk.

Prior to watching your first Zoom presentation you will need to have downloaded and installed the Zoom software, which may be found at <https://zoom.us/download>, onto your PC, phone or other device.

Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 7:30pm

Illegitimate Ancestors

Liz Yule

Monday 26 October 2026 at 7:30pm

Witches and Witch Hunting in East Anglia

Mike Wabe

Monday 23 November 2026 at 7:30pm

Mayflower

Cathy Shelbourne

December 2026

Quiz

We will make recordings available (when permitted) on the Members' pages of the website as soon as possible after the talk. Typically, they are then available for two weeks.

FUTURE THEMES FOR *SUFFOLK ROOTS*

The theme of December's edition will again be '*Choose a Tomb*'. Although we have interesting articles on this theme that we did not have space for in this issue, we would welcome more. So if you know of a grave that has intrigued you, please consider making a submission.

Do you love wandering through graveyards, finding them peaceful or maybe interesting? Or do you find them a bit spooky? It's likely that while walking through or searching for an ancestor you have spotted an unusual tomb – maybe a striking headstone or memorial, or perhaps an inscription that is memorable in some way.

Below are the provisional themes for other upcoming editions, to seed ideas for future contributions (although we do welcome articles of Suffolk interest on any subject).

STATUS	ISSUE	THEME TITLE	DATE TO THE EDITORS
Final	Dec 2026	Choose a Tomb <i>Your favourite, most interesting or intriguing gravestone</i> A favourite occupation for family historians, particularly in the summer months, is to visit a graveyard in search of an ancestor's memorial. For this issue, we invite you to write about the life of one of the people so interred. Or maybe you've walked through your local cemetery and an old stone has intrigued you, or you have discovered some interesting tales from researching a village war memorial. Please tell us about them: Who were they, and what was their cause of death? Who were their family and what became of them? Was it an untimely death caused by social conditions or conflict? Was their burial a small affair, or did the whole community turn out? Are relatives buried nearby? Contributions welcome relating to anyone (or anything) with a Suffolk connection, wherever they may be, and any other notable cemetery 'finds'.	Deadline 16 Oct
Provis'nl	Mar 2027	Music and Musicians <i>Our musical (or otherwise) ancestors</i> With Christmas approaching, one of our historic traditions is carol singing. This issue will focus on ancestors who were somehow involved with music. Did your ancestor play an instrument? If so, which one? Were they a bell ringer, or did they sing in a church choir? Did they play in or conduct a band or orchestra? Were they involved in music in the military or a uniformed profession?	Deadline 16 Jan

Perhaps they worked in instrument manufacture or repair?
 Or maybe they composed music or taught it in school?
 As always, contributions welcome relating to anyone (or anything)
 with a Suffolk connection, wherever they may be.

**Provis'nl June
2027**

Key Workers

Deadline 16 Apr

Ancestors who did those overlooked, unpleasant and unpopular jobs

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/2021 highlighted how dependent we are on those known as 'key workers'. They are described as 'essential personnel who provide critical services in society', yet they are often low-paid, low-profile, or less popular employments. In recent times, key workers have included nurses, teachers, shop workers, refuse collectors, cleaners, transport staff, and so on.

Did your ancestor work in such a role?

Were they a railway navvy, a night-soil collector, an Inspector of Nuisances, a laundress (of either variety!), a straw-hat maker?

Did they work at a tannery, or in a factory, or at a knacker's yard?

What were the conditions like? Were they able to make ends meet?

Were they discriminated against?

Or maybe they were recruited from elsewhere to fill a local shortage in that area of employment?

As always, contributions welcome relating to anyone (or anything) with a Suffolk connection, wherever they may be.

**Provis'nl Sept
2027**

Sports, Games & Other Pastimes

Deadline 16 Jul

What our ancestors did in their spare time

'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', so the saying goes. We enjoy researching our family history, and probably many other hobbies, including sport. But did our ancestors have time to enjoy such frivolities?

Did your ancestor play a sport in a team? Were they successful?

Was it a village, workplace or school team?

What did they play or do? Did they compete for county or country?

Did they take part in local competitions, such as village flower or produce shows?

Perhaps their forte was a work-related activity, such as ploughing matches? Or church-related – bell ringing?

Maybe they preferred a more sedate pastime, like painting?

What pastimes did women pursue?

As always, contributions welcome relating to anyone (or anything) with a Suffolk connection, wherever they may be.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Please note the changes for UK membership. If you pay by standing order *and your subscription rate has changed*, then you need to cancel and pay by other means as we no longer offer new standing orders as a payment option. Please contact the Membership Secretary for help on the alternatives.

Subscriptions for the membership year beginning 1 April 2026:

A – UK postal membership/joint ⁽¹⁾	£14
B – Overseas postal membership	£40
C – Electronic membership	£10
D – Life membership (not available for overseas postal)	£150

¹ If joint membership is applied for, all members must reside at the same address

Anyone joining during the membership year will receive or be granted access to copies of *Suffolk Roots* for that membership year. To enquire about membership, please contact the Membership Secretary whose details are in the list of Officers, below.

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Vice Chair:	Post currently vacant
Membership Secretary:	David Horton, 26 The Crescent, Slough, SL1 2LQ Tel: 01753 537673 e-mail: membership@suffolkfhs.org.uk
Publicity Officer:	TBA e-mail: publicity@suffolkfhs.org.uk
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Suffolk Roots: Tel: 01276 679747

e-mail: editor@suffolkfhs.org.uk

If you are interested in taking up a vacant post or becoming a member of the team, please contact any Trustee.

Please address your queries, letters and e-mails to the appropriate officer at the corresponding address.

GROUP CONTACTS FOR 2026

HAVERHILL

Meet 2nd Thursday of the month, at 7:30pm unless otherwise stated, at:

Old Independent Church Hall, Hamlet Road, Haverhill, CB9 9EF

Contact – Secretary: Charmian Thompson, 5 Hadrian Close, Haverhill, CB9 0NH

Tel: 01440 712652

e-mail: haverhill@suffolkfhs.org.uk

IPSWICH

Meet 1st Wednesday of the month, at 7:30pm unless otherwise stated, at:

The Salvation Army Citadel, 558 Woodbridge Road, Ipswich, IP4 4PH

Contact – Chair: Howard King, 11 Bodiam Road, Ipswich, IP3 8QP

Tel: 01473 274300

e-mail: ipswich@suffolkfhs.org.uk

The post of Ipswich Group Secretary is currently vacant. If you would like to apply or find out more about the role, then please e-mail Howard King.

LOWESTOFT

Meet 1st Tuesday of the month, at 7:30pm (doors open 7:00pm), unless otherwise stated, at:

St Margaret's Church Hall, Hollingsworth Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4BW

Contact – Chair: Janis Kirby

e-mail: lowestoft@suffolkfhs.org.uk

SUDBURY & DISTRICT

Meet last Tuesday of the month, at 2:30pm unless otherwise stated, at:

Long Melford Village Hall, Long Melford, CO1 9LQ (opposite Bull Hotel)

Contact – Chair: Sheila Piper

e-mail: sudbury@suffolkfhs.org.uk

BURY ST EDMUNDS

This group meets at: The Church of Latter Day Saints, Symonds Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7DZ. For dates and times, please check the Society's website (under the Groups tab) and Facebook pages when available.

Contact – Chair

e-mail: chair@suffolkfhs.org.uk

WEST OF LONDON

This group no longer meets. If you would like to help with restarting this group please e-mail: westlondon@suffolkfhs.org.uk.

SFHS DATA CO-ORDINATORS AND SEARCH SERVICES

BAPTISMS

Index Co-ordinator

baptisms@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Search Service

baptismsearch@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Alan Bumpstead

71 Downs Crescent, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 9LJ

Phone: 01440 704157

Arthur Bird

Phone: 01904 793884

Search = 1 surname up to 30 entries

Please send your request by e-mail

BURIALS

Index Co-ordinator

burials@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Search Service

burialsearch@suffolkfhs.co.uk

Arthur Bird

Phone: 01904 793884

Arthur Bird

Phone: 01904 793884

Search = 1 surname up to 12 pages

Please send your request by e-mail

MARRIAGES

Index Co-ordinator

marriages@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Search Service

marriagesearch@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Yvonne Hesketh

Arthur Bird

Phone: 01904 793884

Search = 1 surname up to 30 entries

Please state surname, forename, geographical area and dates.

Please send your request by e-mail

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

Search Service

burialsearch@suffolkfhs.co.uk

Arthur Bird

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