

Encouraging the study of family history since 1976



in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & the Isle of Ely

THE JOURNAL



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VOLUME 31 : 2

SUMMER 2025

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: ELIZABETH STAZICKER MA (OXON), DIPL ARCHIVE ADMIN, FRSA

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS: NED WAYNE & CAROL NOBLE

A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION

REGISTERED CHARITY No. : 278815

The Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society exists to encourage the study of genealogy, heraldry and family history within the old counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, and Huntingdonshire. We reformed on 1 January 2020 when the separate family history societies representing Cambridgeshire (est.1976) and Huntingdonshire (est.1984) amalgamated into a single organization.

We actively support established guidelines for good practice and aim to promote considered, informed and quality research. Our projects teams continue to work to scan, transcribe and index name-rich resources of genealogical interest, to enable researchers to pursue their county ancestors wherever they happen to now live. Volunteer researchers will offer their collective opinion on almost any query.

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For latest news, and updates

WATCH THE WEBSITE & NEWSLETTER & FACEBOOK

CONTACT US (for additional contacts/services see p51-2

All general correspondence via the Secretary, please :

secretary@chfhs.org.uk or by post to

CHFHS Secretary, 15 Castle Hythe, Ely, Cambs., CB7 4BU

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS BY EMAIL TO THE EDITOR, OR THE SECRETARY BY POST. PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE OBTAINED CORRECT PERMISSIONS FOR PUBLICATION OF IMAGES SO AS NOT TO INFRINGE COPYRIGHT (private photos; book/web sourced) Additional guidance for contributors can be found on the CHFHS website

We aim to publish The Journal quarterly : mid-late Jan / April / July / Oct
You can submit material for publication at any time. We will include it in the next available issue (please be patient, space is finite and we will keep you posted)



CAMBS & HUNTS FHS JOURNAL

VOL 31 : 2

SUMMER 2025



Welcome to the Summer edition of the CHFHS Journal—with an eclectic mix of articles and reports. This year sees our programme of online talks, live talks at March, and library research surgeries being complimented by a series of online parish—based research sessions—which have already attracted good interest. May sees the AGM at Ely Archives with a live talk (both also online), and a document exhibition. The relevant AGM papers are reproduced to ensure they reach all members.

Articles this time include the concluding part of his look at a distant connection with the Golden Age of Hollywood by Graham W., and from Robin P., the lot of a mistress in the welfare system of the 1830s. Plus, Mike P's bridging of the gap in the "Annals of Cambridge", and the FS Affiliate Library via Cambridgeshire Libraries.

All the regulars features are to be found dotted throughout—research surgeries and meetings' diary; reports of talks; book reviews—& much more including a couple of dates to note for extra research days: with Houghton & Wyton Local History Group in June, and to mark Heritage Open Day 2025, a "free access" day at The Farmland Museum in September (come along and also see the historic local life collection).

Print too small ?? Swop to the e-journal—it can be **enlarged** to suit all vision !!

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cover photo : Burrows Newsagents, High St., Ely; c.1935

A familiar fixture in Ely for some 125years, Burrows is to finally close its doors this month

See the story at : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjew0wlexqzo>

(with thanks to Ely CCAN for this photo, www.ely.ccan.co.uk)



MEMBERS HAVE FULL ACCESS TO THE ONLINE RECORD SEARCH

Keep an eye out for new content on the website

All members have FREE access to the transcription database,
which is accessed via the 'Members Area'
(click top right; then select <search the database>)

- **Registering for zoom talks** : you will receive an acknowledgement by return whenever you register, but no zoom link. The link will **only** be issued 48hrs ahead of the event—so, please recheck your emails.
- **Cambs and Hunts Research** : a new records database search / retrieval system that is accessed **only** via the members area login. The [big difference now](#), is that :

all searches and results are FREE TO ALL MEMBERS

THIS MIGHT INTEREST YOU ...

**Kelly's Directories for Cambridgeshire
1883 - 1892 - 1896 - 1916**

available as **FREE** downloads (pdf) on CHFHS website
listed under "Shop>Library"

The Society offers condolences to the families of :

Maureen NICHOLLS

long-time supporter of CHFHS

(Hon Life Member, former Research Officer & March Branch Chair : see p50)

Lucy Smith



A WORD FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



Research charges, County Archives

My piece in this journal has an unusual start, a report of an interaction between a Society member and the County Archives service. I am sharing this in order to clarify things and to prevent future similar misunderstanding or incidents. It appears that one of our members asked the Archives service to undertake research and copy documents for them. When the work was completed, Archives asked for payment in accordance with the charges they make and publicise for their research time and also charges for providing copies of documents. This then produced the comment that because the work was being done for a Society member, there should be special rates. There were also comments that some of the printed documents requested were less useful than others and therefore should not be paid for.

There was then a discussion between the member concerned and the Archives service and the decision was made to waive some of the charges in order to placate the situation. The member of the Archives staff was very aware of the reasons for making charges for professional time for their research, and the importance of generating income for the service, and was extremely upset by the whole incident and the attitude of the Society member. The incident was reported to a more senior member of staff and then passed on to committee members of the Society.

Please can all Society members note all the following points:

- The County Archives service has a vital role in family history and for the Society including the custodian of unique documents and the professional expertise of all their staff
- The service makes decisions about when it will make a charge as part of its budget management responsibilities, and these are clearly publicised. Society members must pay these charges when they ask for research to be undertaken and documents copied
- Society members must always treat Archives staff with respect

Members' forum

Our forum is a great place to post enquiries and information, and to get responses from other members. The collective knowledge of all of our members is one of the Society's most valuable resources, and I am sure most of you will have found how much information from others contributes to your own research.

However, our own forum does not get the volume of responses it deserves, and this makes it less likely that people will post if they do not think it will be worthwhile. This contrasts with many other forums where the ongoing dialogue and conversation from members is a powerful source for sharing collective knowledge. After members start to engage, the forum traffic becomes self-perpetuating. At present, our members have to visit the forum page to see what has recently been added and can then contribute. It is easy to miss new posts if you do not log in regularly.

We have therefore decided that all members will start to receive notifications of forum posts from the beginning of May. I hope this results in more members contributing their knowledge and posting their own enquiries, and the forum can become one of the major benefits of Society membership.

Annual General Meeting

Our next AGM will take place on Saturday 17 May at Ely Archives Office next to the Railway Station starting at 11.15. The full programme and agenda are in this journal, and papers on our website. Peter Calver, the founder of Lost Cousins, will give a talk before the AGM which will start at 13.15. The talk and the AGM will also be accessible on zoom for those unable to attend in person. The Society must have a quorum for the AGM business to be valid, so please all try to attend in person or online.

Family Search Affiliate Libraries

The millions of records on the Family Search website are one of the key sites for family historians, and are freely accessible, although a log in is required. Original images allow us all to decide for ourselves what the original says, whereas transcripts can be incorrect. However, many of the transcripts we find refer to images that are only accessible at Family Search Affiliate Libraries (FSAL) which can be open only limited hours as they are staffed by volunteers.

I am delighted to confirm that all the Cambridgeshire County Libraries are now FSAL centres and all the Family Search images can be seen at any library. The images include collections such as the Bishop's Transcripts held

in the University library. The decision to set this up followed from an approach by the Society.

In order to access the FSAL content, you must be a member of the County library; this is free of course. You also need a Family Search free log in and password that you can set up at home. I recently use the service at Ely library. You book a library computer, log in with your library membership number and PIN, then log in to the Family Search website. You can then search as you would at home but are able to click on the image links and see the millions of images on Family Search.

More details at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/affiliates/about>.

50th anniversary

The Society was founded in 1976, so next year will be our 50th anniversary. A subgroup of our committee has started planning how we will celebrate this important milestone. If you have anything you wish to contribute at this stage, please contact our Secretary, Muriel Halliday, secretary@chfhs.org.uk

David Copley

AGM 2025

SAT 17 MAY

@

CAMBS

ARCHIVES

ELY

11.00 ... doors open for document exhibition

11.45 ... live talk by Peter Calver

(founder of www.LostCousins.com)

"It's NOT About Finding Cousins"

13.15 ... CHFHS AGM

Getting there ...

Car (satnav CB7 4GS) free parking available on site

Railway station (5min walk)

Bus #9 from Cambridge to Ely Tesco (2min walk)

Bus #112 from Newmarket to Ely Tesco (2min walk)

See map extract overleaf

RECEIVED FROM Mike Petty

Annals of Cambridge 1857-1887, by Mike Petty, 2023.

<https://archive.org/details/annals-of-cambridge-1857-1887-by-mike-petty-2023>

Charles Henry Cooper, Town Clerk of Cambridge, published a series of '*Annals of Cambridge*' recording events in Cambridge from the earliest times to 1857.

These volumes have been published online with the final version including an index to contents:

<https://archive.org/details/annalsofcambridg01coopuoft>
<https://archive.org/details/annalsofcambridg02coop>
<https://archive.org/details/annalsofcambridg03coopuoft>
<https://archive.org/details/annalsofcambridg04coop>
<https://archive.org/details/annalsofcambridg05coopuoft>

In 2018 I published a 'Cambridge 1888 to 1988: a Chronicle of an English University City' which summarised events in Cambridge, divided into chapters. This is online in both complete and in chapter form:

https://archive.org/details/Cambridge18881988AChronicle.28June2018_201806/mode/2up

<https://archive.org/details/cambridge-1888-1988-by-mike-petty-2023./mode/2up>

There remains a gap between the two volumes.

Annals of Cambridge 1857 to 1887 is an attempt to bring the two together. To compile it I have worked through the files in the Cambridgeshire Collection of the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press. For some I have copied the actual articles. For others I have transcribed the stories in the British Newspaper Index.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Inevitably there are errors but you can track down the stories to correct it.

Annals of Cambridge 1857-1887

is uploaded to Internet Archive; Log in and search:

<https://archive.org/details/annals-of-cambridge-1857-1887-by-mike-petty-2023>

You can also search it on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=annals%20of%20cambridge>

Cambridgeshire History on Your Computer: hundreds of files, thousands of illustrations and newspaper articles shared on Internet Archive <https://bit.ly/3vHS23Y>

Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society AGM 2024

Saturday 17 May 2024 at 1.15pm

@ Cambridgeshire Archives, The Dock, Ely, & By Zoom

AGENDA

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) Acknowledgement of member organisation representatives
- 3) Minutes of the Virtual AGM held on 11 May 2024
- 4) The Chairman's Report
- 5) Financial Report for 2024
- 6) Election of the President
- 7) Election of the Officers and other members of the Executive Committee (Trustees)
- 8) The appointment of an Independent Examiner of the Charity's Accounts for the forthcoming year in accordance with clause M3
- 9) Annual Subscription
- 10) Discussion and decisions on any submitted motions (Motions for submission to the AGM shall be in the hands of the Secretary at least fourteen clear days before the Meeting, not counting the day of the Meeting)
- 11) Any other business, at the discretion of the Chairman



CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (hybrid meeting)

Saturday 11 May 2024 at 1.15pm at Cambridgeshire Archives, Ely

David Copsey introduced our President, Elizabeth Stazicker who took the Chair and welcomed all to the meeting. 29 joined by Zoom and 24 in person

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Chris Billett; Dave Edwards; Susan Tune and Margery Young

2 Acknowledgements of member organisation representatives.

John Bownass, Huntingdon Branch

3 Minutes of the AGM held on 14 May 2023 via Zoom

The Minutes of the 2023 AGM had been placed on the members only section of the website and advertised in the last Journal. Their acceptance as a true record was proposed by David Copsey, seconded by Lisa Constanti and agreed. There were no matters arising.

4 Chair's report

The Chair's report as published on the members only section of the website was read out by the Chair. A brief summary of the main points follows:

- An overview of the Society's activities including monitoring changing national and sector developments; and a thank you to all, particularly project volunteers and committee members.
- Our new website was launched in June 2023 address <https://www.chfhs.org.uk>. Most significant change is the previous payment by using tokens to see full record has been stopped.
- I should like to thank both Beachshore and our team for the huge amount of work involved in preparing and launching the new website.
- Membership has increased by 15%, a major reason is our increased social media presence.
- We took part in the online Really Useful Show hosted by the Family History Federation in November 2023. We had a stall at the Suffolk Family History Society fair in Ipswich. We will be taking part in the Really Useful Show Live in St Ives on 20 April 2024
- Two member visits and tours of the Cambridge University Library and Archives took place in September and January.
- The County Archives and Ancestry project to digitise all the parish registers in both Ely and Huntingdon and match these to Society transcripts is continuing. We have received our first annual payment from Ancestry for using our transcripts.
- The Society made donations to the Archives Services to fund new laptops and we have been asked to purchase a display cabinet for entrance foyer area at Ely.

- Continuing links with the County Library Service include using venues for surgeries and talks and the purchase of archival quality storage boxes for the Cambridge Collection.
- The libraries have agreed to become a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. This will mean that the full range of FamilySearch resources will be accessible to everyone visiting the library.
- We have started to look at how Fenland cemetery registers can be more accessible and will be discussing this with all parties over the next few months.
- Talks have now become Zoom only. Most of the speakers give permission for their talks to be recorded and these are then available in the members' section of our website.
- Surgeries continue to be held at Bar Hill, Cambridge, Ely, Huntingdon, March and St Ives.

The report acceptance was proposed by John Bownass and seconded by Muriel Halliday and agreed.

5 Financial Report

The 2023 accounts are available on the members only section of the website and have been examined and checked by Peter Rasberry of Clenshaw Minns. Their acceptance was proposed by Muriel Halliday and seconded by Lisa Constanti and agreed.

6 Election of President

Elizabeth Stazicker agreed to continue as our President; proposed by David Copsey, seconded by Carol Noble and agreed.

7 Election of Officers

The list of officers of the Society is on the members only section of the website and all officers have agreed to stand for a further year in their respective roles including those of Branch representatives. There had been no other nominations. Acceptance proposed by Gill Forsythe seconded by John Nicholas and agreed.

8 Appointment of Independent Examiner of the Charity's accounts of the forthcoming year in accordance with clause M3.

It was proposed by Les Potts, seconded by Joan Bennett and agreed that Peter Rasberry of Clenshaw Minns should continue in the role of Independent Examiner.

9 Annual Subscriptions

No change.

10 Constitution

No change.

11 Submitted Motions.

None received.

12 Any other business.

No items were raised and the meeting was closed at 1.45pm.

Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society
Charity Number 278815

Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024

Income statement

	2024	2023
	£	£
<u>Income</u>		
Membership sales	11,707.00	11,710.00
Sales, downloads and tokens	8,247.24	9,634.87
Donations	189.50	115.00
FFHS royalty income	16,329.57	19,306.49
Miscellaneous income	12.24	-
	<u>36,485.55</u>	<u>40,766.36</u>
<u>Cost of sales</u>		
Opening stock	819.50	729.30
Bookstall purchases and expenses	-	-
Closing stock	(744.70)	(819.50)
	<u>74.80</u>	<u>(90.20)</u>
Gross profit	<u>36,410.75</u>	<u>40,856.56</u>
<u>Expenses</u>		
Journal printing and expenses	6,178.13	7,385.62
Printing and stationery	801.12	199.11
Advertising and publicity	-	-
Postage and telephone	110.71	361.02
Website	6,529.56	13,654.96
Fairs and conferences	35.00	30.00
Hall, speakers and branch costs	2,080.58	1,948.38
C.R.O. and other donations	22,696.00	12,058.09
Accountancy	810.00	810.00
Paypal and gocardless commission	464.05	515.86
General expenses and travel	1,336.45	1,246.40
Subscriptions, donations and expenses	899.52	974.99
	<u>41,941.12</u>	<u>39,184.43</u>
<u>OTHER INCOME</u>		
Interest received	5,391.04	3,996.45
Investment gains/(loss)		
	<u>5,391.04</u>	<u>3,996.45</u>
<u>Net (loss)/profit</u>	<u>(139.33)</u>	<u>5,668.58</u>

Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024

Statement of financial position

	2024 £	2023 £
<u>Current assets</u>		
Stocks	744.70	819.50
Cash at bank and in hand	121,111.80	121,666.33
	<u>121,856.50</u>	<u>122,485.83</u>
<u>Current liabilities</u>		
Trade creditors	-	490.00
Net current assets	<u>121,856.50</u>	<u>121,995.83</u>
<u>Capital and reserves</u>		
Brought forward at 1 January 2023	121,995.83	116,327.25
(Loss)/Profit for the year	(139.33)	5,668.58
	<u>121,856.50</u>	<u>121,995.83</u>

PETER'S AGM TALK: "Funnily enough, it's NOT about finding cousins!"

Two of the weakest reasons for not taking part in the LostCousins project are also two of the most common excuses that I hear:

- *I already know all my cousins*
- *None of my cousins are interested*

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out that nobody knows all their cousins. Some years ago Ancestry analysed millions of family trees and concluded that the average person of British descent has over 1,500 4th cousins, more than 17,000 5th cousins—and an amazing 174,000 6th cousins. In round numbers we have nearly 200,000 living relatives who are closer than a 7th cousin. (Anyone who doubts these numbers need only take the AncestryDNA test and see how many matches they get!)

But, funnily enough, the reason we search for our 'lost cousins' isn't because they are cousins—it's because they are experienced family historians who are researching some of OUR ancestors. The fact that they are also our cousins is a bonus, since it provides another branch for our family tree. But most family historians I know are more interested in their direct ancestors—the people they are descended from—than the cousins on the branches.

Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society

AGM : Chairman's Report 2024/2025

1 Overview

The Society has continued to provide the full spectrum of its activities to its members. We regularly monitor changing national and sector developments in the light of our overall aims, as set out in our constitution, linked from the front page of our website. Again, I must thank you all, and particularly our project volunteers and our committee members, all of whom have a key role in ensuring that the Society continues to be seen as a leading organisation in family history. The Society does not employ any staff, so the huge amount of time, energy, expertise and hard work that our volunteers all give deserves public recognition. I have used the same headings for my report as in previous years although the order has been changed.

2 Exhibitions and shows

My report written in March last year mentioned the forthcoming St Ives show, the first Federation face to face event since 2020. The show was held in April just before last year's AGM, it was a great success and it was clear how those attending appreciated the chance to speak with exhibitors, and to examine products at first hand before purchase. It also provided the Society with the chance to speak to other Societies and exhibitors.

We have had a stand at several other events during the year – local events at Steeple Morden, Huntingdon and Cottenham; the regional fair at Ipswich; and heritage open days.

Each of these events provides an opportunity to showcase the Society and attract new members but involves a significant amount of preparation as well as work on the day itself. These include liaison with the organisers; booking and paying for space; electrical cabling and wi-fi arrangements; transport of stock; parking; organising a staffing rota; responding to enquiries; after event follow up

3 Meetings and Surgeries

We have reduced the number of speaker talks held each month. The face-to-face talk in March library continues with the chance to chat to those attending, but we now only have one monthly online zoom talk so that our overseas and distant members can take part. The booking process through our website is easy, and results in an automatic zoom link, but we have recently arranged an email reminder a couple of days before each talk; this has increased the numbers attending. We have started to use AI to make the talk summaries that

appear in the journal easier to compile, and the recordings of past talks continue to be available for members on our website. We also create a regular statistical analysis of numbers taking part so that we can monitor trends. All our events are mentioned in the monthly newsletters; members need to opt in to be notified of each new newsletter and can do this by editing their membership record on the website.

Our monthly or bi-monthly surgeries at Bar Hill, Cambridge, Ely, March and St Ives all continue to provide an opportunity to seek help and guidance. The Huntingdon surgery has been replaced from the start of 2025 by one in St Neots library, the first session was very well attended and kept us busy throughout. We have also started a series of locally themed online surgeries using the Poor Law Union boundaries to provide a focus. Research questions are submitted in advance and those taking part can also contribute their own knowledge.

We are sometimes asked by local groups to give a family history related talk and a committee member normally does this; an opportunity to make new contacts and recruit members.

4 Website

Our website continues to be the initial point of contact for much of the Society activity. We have regular meetings with Beachshore as part of our support contract to discuss issues and update as necessary. Day to day issues are quickly resolved through the support ticket process. The website administration manages a wide range of our work including membership reminders and changes; event details and registration; database searching; shop sales both physical and downloads. File management of our bi-monthly committee meeting papers and reports makes my task to write this annual report much easier. A new map now shows contiguous parishes and links to our data; adjoining parishes over the county boundary are shown. Journal indexing has been improved, historical directories added, surname interest searching made easier.

We have continued to work with Beachshore so that the full functionality of Name and Place can be accessible both to the committee and to members, and new resources added. Much of the work our project volunteers do cannot be made available until everything is working correctly; this is a major task because of the millions of data records we have. The work has taken longer than we anticipated, and we have therefore made an additional payment to Beachshore so they can allocate more resources to this vital work. We have been told that the work should be completed by the end of March.

5 Membership

Membership numbers remain healthy, new members join each month, many people first come into contact with us through social media channels including Facebook which we monitor and make regular posts. There are a small but significant number of members who have not updated their Standing Order payments to the correct amount despite several chasers. When we have an email address, these members will now receive the journal electronically instead of print; where there are no email addresses, the membership will be suspended. It is hoped these changes will encourage those affected to make the correct payments. Chasing on an individual basis involves a huge of time and effort. All members should please make sure contact details, address, email, phone, are up to date as this makes it easier to ensure you receive everything correctly. There are no changes to our membership rates for 2025.

New members are now offered the chance to be mentored by an experienced committee member; the arrangements are part of the joining process.

Joan Bennett, our Membership Secretary for the past seven years, and the first point of contact with many members, is standing down at this AGM. I should like to thank her for all her work in this key role. Sue Asbee will be the new Membership Secretary, the two are in regular liaison to ensure a smooth transition.

6 Partnership work

We continue to work with local and national partners so we can both contribute and learn.

The work on the County Archives cataloguing of the important Duke of Manchester papers paid for by the Society is continuing, one day each week ensures regular additions; the new display cabinet in the entrance foyer at Ely has a plaque acknowledging that it was funded by the Society. A behind the scenes tour for Society members included a look at conservation work. The Ancestry / Archives /Society project to publish Society parish register transcripts alongside archives images of the original pages is now scheduled for a 2025 launch. We receive an annual payment in recognition of the work we have done. We continue to monitor Ebay for potential items to add to the archives collections.

Following a Society approach to the Cambridgeshire public libraries, the libraries are now part of the Family Search Affiliate Libraries. This means that public library members can see huge numbers of original images taken by Family Search but only in the library with their personal Family Search log in

details. We remain very grateful for the use of many libraries for meetings and surgeries.

Another show and tell tour of the University library was fully booked; the tour included a history of the building; displays of maps and archival documents of interest to family historians. The free issue of a library ticket for Society members continues, details of the process are in the journal. The Society has also paid the University to digitise the three volumes of the Spinning House records. Interest in these records of around 6000 women was apparent when we had a zoom talk from the author and Society member of a new book on the Spinning House. The content should be accessible on the Cambridge Digital library site before our AGM. We are continuing to type up University held records from the Consistory Court in preparation for a significant project that will involve several partners.

We have made a further donation to 14 local museums to follow on from the donation we made in 2020 when they were unable to open.

The Family History Federation holds regular online meetings on themed topics and committee members normally attend the relevant events. They also provide insurance for any public events that we arrange or attend. The zoom meetings provide an opportunity to gather ideas from other members and to share what we are doing. The local East Anglia Group meets twice a year, with regular liaison between meetings when individual societies have issues they want to discuss with another member. We share online journals with other family history societies throughout the world.

The Society also contributes to national consultations about significant proposals. The government has abandoned the proposed destruction of original wills and is looking for alternative solutions. A burial and cremation Law Commission consultation is in progress; the Society response took account of the sensitivity of this challenging subject.

7 Projects

Progress on the Huntingdon parish registers has been delayed because of the ongoing work with Name and Place.

We have approached Fenland District Council to arrange a meeting to talk about making the Councils' cemetery burial records more accessible, but a Council software upgrade means we will have to defer an initial meeting.

New content is added to the shop and the website as it becomes available and can be accessed. Examples include vaccinations, new parishes.

8 Accounts and Independent Examiner for 2025

Our Treasurer has prepared the 2024 accounts, and these are independently examined by Peter Rasberry from Clenshaw Minns. We are proposing that Peter continues as our independent examiner for 2025.

9 Honorary Life Memberships

We have just over 20 HLM's in recognition of the significant and long last lasting work that they have done for the Society. We are proposing that Jane Gilmour is made an Honorary Life Member, she is a former secretary and assistant editor.

10 Committee nominations

Each of our committee members has a key role in Society work and has confirmed their willingness to be nominated and seconded. The split between nominated and co-opted members fits the structure of our constitution, but all committee members have full voting rights. There are no changes to our constitution.

11 Five-year plan

2026 will see the 50th anniversary of the Society, and we have started to plan for this. We hope as many members as possible will take part in the events to celebrate this significant achievement.

A revision of our Research Strategy is in hand, building on experience from issues that arise from the enquiries we receive and the input of the research team. We are also looking at closer liaison with schools and how the Duke of Edinburgh awards could link to family history.

David Copsey

Chairman,

March 2025

CHFHS 1976-2026

As David Copsey mentioned, above,
we are starting to look at what
we can do to mark fifty years of the society

We invite suggestions about what could be
put together to make a lasting legacy



Suggestions to the Secretary, please: secretary@chfhs.org.uk

WHEN THE STORY BECOMES MORE INTERESTING THAN THE FAMILY CONNECTION: OVER TO HOLLYWOOD Part Two

By Graham WEBSTER (2978)

Part One of this article traces the journey of Winifred BRISON's family from Over, Cambridgeshire to her film career in early Hollywood. As explained, there is only a tenuous family connection but it was the story rather than the person that attracted my research.



Winifred had retired from the movie business in 1928. This coincided with Warner BAXTER's (Winifred's husband) portrayal of the Cisco Kid ('...a charming, lackadaisical bandit on the run from the local sheriff...'¹) in the film *In Old Arizona*, release in 1928, for which he receives the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (ie Oscar) 1928/1929 Best Actor award². This film was the first major Western to use the new technology of sound and the first talkie to be filmed outdoors. It made extensive use of authentic locations, filming in Bryce Canyon National Park and Zion National Park in Utah, and the Mission San Juan Capistrano and the Mojave Desert in California³.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Old_Arizona

Before this film, Warner had appeared in 41 films⁴. After his Oscar he reprised the Cisco Kid role in *The Cisco Kid* in 1931. He

survived uninjured when, on 5 August 1931, the Southern Pacific Argonaut train derailed east of Yuma on route to Tucson where the film was being filmed. Warner's best role was arguably Julian Marsh in the 1932 film *42nd Street*⁵, although many consider his best role was Dr. Samuel Mudd, the doctor who treated John Wilkes Booth following the Lincoln assassination, in the film *The Prisoner of Shark Island* of 1936⁶.



In 1934 Warner starred in *Grand Canary*, an adaptation of A J CRONIN's book. It is also said that his niece, by marriage, Elizabeth MEIKLEJOHN (using the stage name Betty BRYSON), daughter of Winifred's sister, Vivian, also appeared in the film⁷. Betty was born on 5 October 1911, to father John Harry Meiklejohn (possibly married to Vivian in 1910 after April in that year⁸), and was a dancer with the San Carlo Opera Company⁹.

Her filmography contains 11 films from 1933 to 1944, largely uncredited as a dancer, but no mention of *Grand Canary*¹⁰. Betty eloped with LeRoy PRINZE and married him in Yuma, Arizona, on 22 June 1936 (both their second marriages¹¹). He was an American choreographer, director and producer, who was involved in the production of dozens of motion pictures, mainly for Paramount Pictures and Warner Brothers, from 1929 through 1958, and choreographed Broadway musicals. He was nominated three times for the Academy Award (Oscar) for Best Dance Direction in the 1930s, and won the Golden Globe in 1958. It was his early life that is so interesting; it is said that he joined the French Foreign Legion in Marseilles before the First World War, serving as a bugler in Algiers¹². After the outbreak of World War I, he returned to France, trained as

a pilot, and served in the French aviation corps and 94th Aero Squadron from November 1917 to June 1918; he switched to the 27th Aero Squadron until November 1918 where his duties included working at the Aircraft Acceptance Park test facility at Orly, France. Prinz subsequently told journalists that he crashed 14 to 18 airplanes, was nicknamed "America's German Ace" as a result (he was also called "Crash Ace Prinz")¹³. One of his wartime experiences was described in a 1918 newspaper article¹⁴.

By 1936, Baxter was the highest paid actor in Hollywood, earning a record \$284,000¹⁵ ((\$5,315,313.12 in 2019¹⁶), but over the next few years his films



Elizabeth Meiklejohn

BOARDMAN, Denise,
Tilley Family,

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/54633/person/-2109271537>

were all forgettable or simply mediocre (by 1947, he was reduced to earning \$30,000 (\$348,337.37 in 2019) per picture in a mere two-picture deal¹⁷). He scored a success in 1939 once again playing the role of The Cisco Kid in *The Return of the Cisco Kids* but quickly returned to mediocrity. By the mid-1940s he was working almost exclusively in the realm of B-films¹⁸. By 1943, his fall in popularity had slipped him into a string of B-movie roles. He had suffered a nervous breakdown that same year, and to ease his routine, he began a series of ten movie roles as Dr. Robert Ordway, in *The Crime Doctor* series of movies, starting with *The Crime Doctor* in 1943 and ending with *Crime Doctor's Diary* in 1949. His new contract required him to make only two movies a year, which proved a better schedule for him. His last film was *State Penitentiary* in 1950¹⁹. Warner made over 100 films between 1914 and 1950²⁰, and was given a motion picture star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6284 Hollywood Boulevard in February 1960²¹.

While Winifred said she gave up movies in preference to her husband's film career²², Warner gave much credit to his wife for his film career: 'I never take a role until we both talk it over. I have a high opinion of her judgment'²³. He said he no longer cared about high budget films or being a star: 'I don't need the money, and I work just to keep interested. I had a good part in a big picture about six years ago. There was tension in making it and I felt myself getting nervous again'²⁴. They moved to their beach house at 77 Malibu Beach, Malibu, California; he also had a cabin in the San Jacinto Mountains. For a number of years, he had an 80-acre working ranch about 12 miles north of Palm Springs at Desert Hot Springs, the Warner Baxter Ranch, later renamed the Circle B Ranch. It was used for years as a location for western films. It was listed for sale in mid 1945 for a price of \$40,000 and sold over a year later²⁵.

When not acting, Warner was an inventor and in 1935 co-created a revolver searchlight which would illuminate a target and allow a gunman to shoot at it in the dark. He later developed a radio device that would allow emergency crews to change traffic signals from two-blocks away and allow them to safely pass through intersections. He financed its installation at an intersection in Beverly Hills in 1940²⁶.

Warner suffered from arthritis for several years, as well as a chronic illness which caused eating difficulties and induced malnutrition. In 1951, he underwent a lobotomy as a last resort to ease the chronic pain. After he was lobotomized, he stopped complaining about the pain, but he also experienced severe memory loss and crippling seizures. Furthermore, he stopped recognizing people around him and turned apathetic²⁷. On May 7, 1951, he died of pneumonia at age 62 and was buried in Forest Lawn

Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, California in a private funeral service described as markedly reminiscent of the film capital's earlier days. Among his pallbearers were friends Ronald Colman and William Powell²⁸ (with whom he was a close friend of and with whom he starred in three films, and was at Powell's side when Jean Harlow died in 1937²⁹).

On 15 October 1953 Winifred married St. Louis architect Ferdinand Herman MANGER II at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas, Nevada³⁰. They would remain married until the end of her life when, on 20 August 1987 she died; she is also buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, California³¹. Winifred's sister, Vivian, had died in October 1959 having committed suicide by ingestion of overdose of pentobarbital; she was described as a freelance writer and poet³², although a canon of her work has not been found. Vivian was married at least three times: to James Albert COLE (b. ca 1887) in December 1908 in San Francisco, California; John Lowden HITTSON (1898-1945) in Santa Ana, California, in May 1927; David Nelson HAWTHORNE (1894-1966) in November 1929 in Los Angeles, California from whom she was divorced from after ca 1950³³.

This article was prompted by a photograph in a source I was using to fill out my family tree, albeit distant relations. Researching the story of the journey from the village of Over to the star-studded, twinkling light of Hollywood took over the interest in the people, not realizing how it would lead me to such fascinating stories!

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³³ Information sourced from FamilySearch

It's Highway Robbery!

John Mortlock (b.1755), was the only son of a prosperous woollen draper of Cambridge, who, in 1775 inherited this profitable business, a large sum in ready money and considerable property. The next year, he married the only daughter of a local prosperous grocer. With these combined fortunes John set up the first bank in Cambridge, in Bene't Street, in 1780. The bank acted as an agent for a variety of financial services, including the furnishing of letters of credit "*to such members of Cambridge town and university as were desirous of not running the risk of losing their guineas by an encounter with a highwaymen*" (!). Although a sound enterprise, the bank's paper notes had a limited circulation, especially in rural areas which much preferred gold and silver coins—even the Bank of England's (then new-fangled) notes were not universally trusted. John subsequently became a notable public figure: as an MP and thirteen- times Mayor of Cambridge. The bank he founded continued in Cambridge until absorbed into Barclay's in 1896.

More details at : <https://www.cambridgeppf.org/FAQs/john-mortlock>

THE FARMER AND HIS MISTRESS

by Robin Pearl

This story starts with Susan Hartley, who was living in Little Downham, with her two illegitimate daughters Elizabeth and Sarah. I don't know where Susan was from originally or why she was in Little Downham but I do know that she was in receipt of parish relief and the parish wasn't happy about it.

Before the welfare state the poor were looked after by the parish in which they lived and could be sent to the workhouse. The village hall in Little Downham was once a workhouse. Under the 1601 Poor Law Act the parish overseer of the poor could levy a tax on the wealthier inhabitants of the parish. Those who received parish relief were known as paupers.

This meant that parishes were not keen on poor people who turned up on their doorstep and had to be kept at the parishes expense. After 1662, if a person left their settled parish to move elsewhere, they had to take their settlement certificate, which guaranteed that their home parish would pay for their "removal" costs (from the host parish) back to their home if they needed poor relief. As parishes were often unwilling to issue such certificates, people often stayed where they were.

In the event of the parish authorities discovering that a person was likely to become a financial burden and become chargeable to the parish such as illegitimacy cases, those taken ill, suspected illegal immigrants or vagrants, the parish authorities undertook a **Settlement Examination**. The examination took place under the auspices of the Overseer of the Poor and a Justice of the Peace and was carried out to determine whether the person had a legitimate right to residency in the parish. Following the findings, a guilty person would be served a **Removal Order** and then, forcibly if necessary, removed from the parish.

Susan and her children fell foul of this law and on she was summoned by Robert Few, overseer of the poor for Little Downham.

Examination of Susan Hartley now residing in the parish of Downham in the said Isle singlewoman 7 Nov 1831 who on her oath saith that on the fifteenth day of September 1828 at Stratford in the parish of West Ham in the County of Essex she was delivered of a female bastard child which has since been named Sarah and is now residing with her in the said parish of Downham and is also chargeable thereto.

Bastardy examination 17 Nov 1831 Susan Hartley, now residing in Downham. Who on her said oath saith that on the third day of July 1822 in York Street in the parish of Saint Margaret in the City of Westminster she was delivered of a female bastard child which has since been named Elizabeth and is now residing with her in the said parish of Downham and is also chargeable thereto.

This established which parishes were responsible for Sarah and Elizabeth but there is no examination for the origins of Susan herself so she perhaps had a connection with Little Downham. Robert Few was himself summoned to explain what he done about the issue:

Who on his oath saith that he was overseer of the said parish of Downham in the year 1831 and that by virtue of an order of removal bearing date 17 Nov 1831 under the hands and seals of two of the justices of the said Isle of Ely, Elizabeth Hartley, the illegitimate child of Susan Hartley, singlewoman was removed from the said parish of Downham to the parish of Saint Margaret in the City of Westminster and that he did himself deliver the said Elizabeth Hartley with a copy of such order to one of the overseers of the poor of the said parish of Saint Margaret and this examinant further saith that the overseers of the poor of the said parish of Saint Margaret have not at any time appealed against the said order, and this examinant further saith that the said Elizabeth Hartley was shortly after such removal brought back again to the said parish of Downham by the mother the said Susan Hartley

Susan's status became irrelevant as she sadly died in 1832 at the age of 26 and is buried in St. Leonard's churchyard. The children presumably went to the workhouse and remained a burden to the parish coffers.

In 1834 Robert Few took Elizabeth back to Westminster and then Sarah to West Ham to establish who would be responsible for her, which he reported to the Justices in Ely:

... he then saw and conversed with Hannah the wife of James Beckwith of the parish of West Ham aforesaid housekeeper who appeared to be well acquainted with the said Susan Hartley and her said children and particularly with the said Sarah Hartley and who as this examinant was then informed had been in the constant habit of intimacy with the said Susan Hartley and her said child Sarah Hartley for upwards of three years after the birth of the said Sarah Hartley.

Robert must have taken Sarah back to Little Downham as, in 1836, he engaged an acquaintance, William Hammond of Grays Inn Lane, London, to perform some more investigation. William Hammond reported back.

According to your request I went see the parties relative to the birth of the child who is chargeable to your parish. I have seen most of them and I think that the only essential witness that will answer your purpose is Mrs Beckwith of Angel Lane, Stratford. She says that she can speak to its birth as she was in the room when Mr Elliot the surgeon was there, just after Susan Smith's delivery of the infant and was in the habit of seeing the child as well as its mother for several months afterwards, and can positively identify the child as the same, she having paid particular attention to it not only when it was born but afterwards. She perfectly recollects you being in town with it and says that it is the same child. I think this is all you want, the other evidence can prove no more and in my opinion not so much. She is perfectly willing to come down, provided her expenses are paid down and up, and whilst there, and something for her trouble she being a poor but, at the same time an honest and respectable woman as ascertained in the neighbourhood. After I hear from you and she can come down on Thursday – the best way will be to pay her coach fare from town, and if you will authorise me to do so I will do it and you can pay me afterwards. I suppose I must give her a few shillings beside fare and you must be ready to meet her in Ely and provide her accommodation until you get the business settled. I hope that you will be able to get rid of this and all other such like business. It appears that Vipers went by the name of Robert Smith and she Susan Smith and that the unfortunate woman had in all six children by him.

Mrs Beckwith did indeed have an all expenses paid trip to Ely to be examined, which included the following information:

... the said Susan Hartley was resident in the said parish of West Ham and cohabited with a man who called himself Robert Smith and that the said Susan Hartley at that time assumed the name of Susan Smith that the said Susan Hartley was delivered of a female bastard child at the house of the said Robert Smith

As a result of this, another removal order was made for Sarah and she can be found in 1841 living at Woodford Workhouse, in Essex.

1	
Name of the Institution	Woodford Workhouse
Sarah Yutkings	11
Sarah Hartley	11

Robert Vipian was a gentleman farmer of March and Mepal. In 1842 he married Julia Burt of Islington.

Robert didn't abandon his children and in 1840 Elizabeth Hartley was back in Little Downham to marry William Glover with Robert Vipian, gentleman, named as the bride's father. They had a number of children and Elizabeth died at Mepal in 1905 aged 82.

Sarah also escaped the workhouse and married Thomas Goodger, a widower at Wisbech in 1849. She was described as a servant of South Brink, Wisbech and, once again, Robert Vipian was the father of the bride, a farmer of March. Thomas and Sarah had a number of children and eventually moved to live on the Hundred Foot Bank at Coveney. Thomas died at Coveney in 1891 and Sarah must have moved away, perhaps to live with one of her children. She was buried at Lichfield, Staffordshire, in 1917 aged 90.

Robert Vipian died at March in 1851. It is probable that he found employment, and possibly husbands, for his daughters. There is no trace of the other four children that he reportedly had with Susan Hartley.

Exning Union Workhouse

When Poor Law Unions were set up in the early 19th century they sometimes crossed county boundaries. Several Cambridgeshire parishes in the east of the county thus found themselves part of the Newmarket Poor Law Union, in a workhouse erected in 1837 on the north side of Exning Road in Newmarket in Suffolk, designed by William P Roote who was also responsible for similar workhouses at Newport Pagnell and Leighton Buzzard.

The Newmarket Poor Law Union was formed on 30th December, 1835. Its operation was overseen by an elected Board of Guardians, 36 in number, representing its 29 constituent parishes listed below (figures in brackets indicate numbers of Guardians if more than one):

Cambridgeshire:

Ashley-cum-Silverley, Borough Green, Bottisham (2), Brinkley, Burwell (2), Cheveley, Chippenham, Dullingham, Fordham (2), Isleham (2), Kennet, Kirtling, Landwade, Newmarket All Saints, Snailwell, Soham (3), Stechworth, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior, Westley, Wicken, Wood Ditton.

Suffolk:

Dallham, Exning, Gazeley, Moulton, Ousden, Newmarket St Mary's (2), Lidgate.

zooming in on RootsTech 2025

a selection of what was on offer at this year's event

Thursday through Sunday, 6-9 March, saw the annual massive genealogical conference by the LDS/FamilySearch at Salt Lake City which, although a “live” event attended by many hundreds, also offered remote attendance to many of the presentations via zoom. Once “registered” in advance, zoom attendees could compile a personalised programme from the 200+ topics on offer to either view live or, perhaps more preferable for us in the UK, catch up on at leisure (many of the sessions were in the middle of the night GMT!!).

A wide range of themes and topics were available to choose from to suit one's areas of interest and expertise—and included technology, culture, resources, records, skills, region and country-based research, case studies, DNA, and AI, as well as key-note presentations from experts in their fields. As might be expected at a US-based event, many of the country-based research topics were from the US perspective, but once back in the particular “old country”, records and resources would be of use to any researcher. I found sessions on Germany and Sweden particular interesting, along with topics relating to Australia.

On the skills front, I tuned in to sessions on “cluster analysis” (describing the value of looking at the neighbours and community for additional insights into women's stories), on analysing evidence, and assessing sources.

Several sessions were devoted to DNA and, the “next big thing” (which has already arrived), AI. The AI presenter gave an overview of different AI systems which might be of use to family historians—some being better for particular types of tasks than others—and on the sorts of tasks AI could be used for. Guidance was offered on how to best frame “questions” to an AI system to get it to perform a given task was of particularly interesting. A live demonstration of three examples proved to be quite eye-opening: uploading of the digital image of an electoral roll to have people of a given surname extracted as a table; the 68-page transcript of a ship's log had key events in the voyage extracted and then turned into a narrative, with log entries relating to a specific person also extracted, and separately, a history of the ship itself compiled; an AI image was created to typically depict an event as described in a historical newspaper. A different presentation demonstrated the use of AI in the transcribing of handwritten documents. Impressive!

And—newly relevant to us here in Cambridgeshire—a session on making best use of a FamilySearch Affiliate Library to access restricted material!!

RootsTech has something for everyone—so do make a diary date for next year and set aside some time to zoom in. Many of the presentations are accessible via FamilySearch resources, at anytime.

FAMILYSEARCH AFFILIATE LIBRARY COMES TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES

Following a suggestion made by Cambs & Hunts FHS a year or so ago, we are pleased to be able to pass on this announcement recently received from Mary Burgess (Local Studies Librarian at The Cambridgeshire Collection)—

*Cambridgeshire Libraries are pleased to announce that all Cambridgeshire Libraries branches are now **FamilySearch Affiliate Libraries**, as well as Cambridgeshire Archives.*

This means that you can come into any of the libraries, log into your own FamilySearch account on library computers, and be able to access more records and digitised images than are available on the ordinary FS website—including digital images of the Cambridgeshire Bishops Transcripts as held at Cambridge University Library.

FamilySearch has a different collection of records to those on FindMyPast or Ancestry, and is particularly good for world-records such as the Caribbean, Europe and the USA. It is well worth a look to see what is available.

You can read more about affiliate libraries and what is available at:
<https://www.familysearch.org/en/affiliates/about>

NB: please note that this facility is only available through library computers and with a library card. However, Mary tells us that anyone can request a Cambs Library card (you don't have to be a county resident, or need to produce any ID or proof of address).

The access process has been “road tested” by CHFHS’s David Copsey :

- 1 Find an image on FamilySearch that you want to see, but cannot at home
- 2 Book a library computer terminal; you cannot use your own for access
- 3 Log in with your library ticket number and pin
- 4 Choose your browser - we picked chrome
- 5 Log in to family search with your personal username and password
- 6 Search for the name, date, place to match the image you want to see
- 7 Choose the image icon and click, the image will be displayed as part of the filmed page

Footnote to the George Brewster article

from Dave Edwards, March Branch

I was interested in the article in the Journal by CJ. I have mentioned this incident in my talk on Fulbourn for about 20 years, but had always given his age as 14, as per inquest, death certificate and burial register.

So when the blue plaque was mention and age 11, I revisited my notes. What I had missed was the report of the trial of the Master Sweep, where, the lads age was gone into in detail.

However, I think CJ may have missed this report in the *Cambridge Chronicle*, 27/3/1875, that explains that George was adopted by his brother William and wife Mary Ann, (nee King), soon after birth. In fact he was registered as their child. The birth is actually registered as George William Brewster, in the Stepney RD Sept Qtr 1875.

Without the court report, this would not be apparent from any other record.

Brewster. He subsequently met prisoner and arranged with him to appear before magistrates. The magistrate attended, but Wyer did not attend.—By Mr. NAYLOR: Did not know he was ill at the time. Barnard Brewster, brother of the deceased, said that so far as he knew, the deceased would have been 12 years of age next May. Their father lived in Twine court, Shadwell, when the deceased was born. His mother's christian name was Rebecca. He was born in the May after the Prince of Wales was married, in 1863. Witness saw the deceased in Cambridge a fortnight before his death. His brother William adopted the child. Their mother was ill at the time, and his brother William said he would bring up the child as one of his own. William and his wife (Mary Ann) had no children of their own. They lived in Emma-terrace, Radcliffe, at that time. His sister-in-law's maiden name was King.—[Mr. MEREWETHER here put in the copy of the certificate of birth mentioned by Mr. Stretten. The child had been registered by William and Mary Brewster, who were registered as the parents.]—Witness Brewster said he saw the body of the deceased after death. He spoke to Wyer about the state of the body, and asked how it was



**THIS
MIGHT
INTEREST
YOU ...**

visit the website and
zoom the map to
identify member
community groups
all over the country

<https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/>

CHFHS ONLINE AREA RESEARCH SURGERIES

by Karen Orrell

This year the society has decided to offer online research surgeries for those who cannot attend our in-person surgeries for any reason, whether that be work commitments, mobility issues or geographic impossibility! To ensure as many people as possible can attend we hold a morning session starting at 10.30am and an evening session the following day at 7.30pm.

Cambs and Hunts contain, between them, over 300 parishes, so we decided to group our parishes by area based on the old Poor Unions. You will find the upcoming surgeries listed below p.32, and on the talks page on the website.

Our first surgeries were held in February and covered the parishes within the Chesterton Poor Union and attendees came from as far afield as Canada. It was a lovely opportunity to speak to other family history enthusiasts and we answered specific questions as well as generally chatting about topics as diverse as DNA and the pros and cons of Ancestry and Family Search.

Specific enquiries were made regarding the extended family of a WW1 soldier commemorated on the Fen Ditton war memorial. A brick wall had been hit when it came to tracing the soldier's father's third wife, with contradictory census data making progression difficult. We were able to point the enquirer towards two earlier census returns that were very likely to be relevant and found several baptisms and burials worth following up. The search took us out of county to both Suffolk and Essex and provided numerous new avenues for the enquirer to explore.

We discussed how names change in the registers and why this is (usually a very strong accent and/or a hard of hearing clergyman!) with another enquirer who joined us from Canada. She is planning a trip to Cambridge this year, so we also discussed some places of interest for a family historian to visit in the area.

A third enquirer had picked up his father's research and had placed a significant amount of data on the FamilySearch website. He had noticed that a researcher from Canada had added sources to his family members, but had been unable to work out the connection. A search on Ancestry proved more fruitful. The researcher had used the same username across both websites, and her Ancestry home page provided a short bio. From this we could find the researcher's identity, how she was related to the enquirer and another avenue through which he could reach out to her as she had not responded to messages via FamilySearch.

We also touched upon Cambridge University Library, which all members can join free of charge when we helped an enquirer with his one name study. He had a brick wall with a man who was notorious for stealing from some of the Cambridge colleges. The library and the archives of the individual colleges hold documents relating to court cases and it was suggested that these could be a new avenue to explore.

Our second surgery covered parishes within the Huntingdon Union and the Oundle Union. During the morning session we had only two attendees, so they had plenty of time to ask all the questions they wanted. One was researching her husband's ancestors by the name of Ding who came from Swavesey and Woodhurst, with an early 1700s marriage in Stanground being her brickwall. I was thrilled to hear this as this couple are my 6th great grandparents (and also a brickwall for me) so we compared research and email addresses were swapped! Our other attendee had never attended a research surgery before and had come along to see what happens. We discussed what is available on our website, Ancestry, FMP and FamilySearch, the fluidity of names and dates on "official" documents, explained exactly what a Bishop's Transcript is and whether or not it is a good idea to CAPITALISE the surnames of your direct ancestors in your tree (I find this helpful!)

The evening session the following day was well attended with people coming from Cambridgeshire, further afield in the UK, and from Canada and America. We kicked off with an enquiry from a member who had 2 consecutive generations of illegitimacy in his family tree. The family could be found in the Ramsey and Woodwalton records but there were no clues as to the identity of the 2 unknown fathers. A DNA test had been taken and this had shown a link to people descended from Canada with a connection to the Hudson Bay settlement. Our Canadian attendee offered to help the enquirer with these records – a great example of how these informal get togethers can lead to collaboration with other members of the society! There was a question mark over whether these settlers had descended from a marriage between a Johnson and Beck. Many Ancestry trees were showing a marriage in Lincolnshire, but the enquirer had been unable to find any proof of this. We suggested posting on the RootsChat forum on the Lincolnshire Look Up Requests board. However, another attendee was a member of the Lincolnshire FHS and offered to perform the look up in their records.

Next up was an enquiry about common surnames and how to work out if you have the right person. The enquirer was researching a Samuel Day (and I can sympathise, having two unconnected Day branches in my tree – or maybe they are if I could get back far enough!) who was from the Wisbech

and Walsoken area. We advised that the records for these parishes are held in the Wisbech Museum Archive and that we have digitised them but the Walsoken images, being a Norfolk parish, were given to the Norfolk FHS. We suggested that the enquirer contact both the Norfolk FHS and the Wisbech Museum for further information about their holdings. The Day family had been publicans and so we discussed where records relating to publicans can be found. Petty Sessions can hold records for licences and there are victuallers records but their survival is patchy.

Publicans were a theme of the evening as our next enquirer also had a problem ancestor who was involved in the pub trade. He suspected that his ancestor had been born in Elton and sure enough we found a baptism in the parish at around the right time. From there we could find a marriage for the parents and several sibling baptisms, providing more avenues to research and hopefully knock down that brick wall. Our enquirer found this particularly useful as the Elton records have not yet been added to the online database. We ended up with one committee member and one surgery attendee racing through the Elton registers trying to find relevant entries while another attendee searched on Ancestry! It was a real team effort!

Our final enquirer lived elsewhere in the country but was about to visit the area for some research. He very kindly offered to take pictures of the Huntingdonshire churches he visited on his travels and send them to us. We have photos of the Cambridgeshire churches but not the Huntingdonshire ones so this was a very welcome offer! If you are in the Huntingdonshire area and can photograph any churches, we would love copies of your pictures please for our website! You can email your photos to publicity@chfhs.org.uk

During the course of our discussion, we had several attendees with overlapping families and so we urged everyone to add their surname interests to the database. For those of you who have not used this facility, you can access the surname interests already registered on the website by going to the resources tab and selecting surname interests from the drop-down menu. Here you can search for names that interest you and contact other members. If you have not registered your surname interests yet, you can do so by clicking the “click here” button above the surname lists on this page. If you have already registered some of your surnames of interest and want to add more, then head to the members area and select “manage your member interests” where you will be able to change any of your existing surname interests, delete them or add new ones. Keep checking the database as we are in the process of allowing non-members to add their surname interests as well – we will announce when this is ready in the newsletter and journal. Non-members will be able to see our member

interests but they will not be able to contact members unless they become a member themselves. Members will be able to contact non-members though. This will hopefully provide some more opportunities for collaboration and to further your research.

So, there we have an idea of what our online research surgeries entail. Our upcoming surgeries up to August will be covering parishes in the Ely, Royston, Whittlesey/Peterborough and St Neots areas—so please do join us if you have ancestors from these places for lively discussion, answers to your questions, local knowledge and get to know some of your fellow family historians at the society. They may be able to help you and you may be able to help them!

ONLINE WITH CHFHS—

Area Research Surgeries : programme 2025

We are continuing with the series of monthly online research surgeries, via Zoom, to look at groups Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire parishes as grouped by Poor Law Unions. Further locations/dates to follow

Each session will run twice to optimise attendance options, or to continue discussions—so, get your questions together. If possible, please submit in advance to enable the research team to look into the topic ahead of the session, and be able to put together some ideas/suggestions—

—or just join in, and see what comes up on the day.

Visit the “Events>Talks” page of the website to see which parishes fall under which union, and to book a place (zoom links will be sent nearer the date)

Royston Union Wed 14 May 10.30am & Thurs 15 May 7.30pm

**Peterborough, Stamford &
Whittlesey Unions** Wed 18 Jun 10.30am & Thurs 19 Jun 7.30pm

**St Neots & Thrapston
Unions** Wed 9 July 10.30am & Thurs 10 July 7.30pm

No sessions in August

**March, Downham
N Witchford Unions** Wed 10 Sept 10.30am & Thurs 11 Sept 7.30pm

Caxton Union Wed 15 Oct 10.30am & Thurs 16 Oct 7.30pm

Newmarket Union Wed 12 Nov 10.30am & Thurs 13 Nov 7.30pm

St Ives Union Wed 17 Dec 10.30am & Thurs 18 Dec 7.30pm

Any advance questions to secretary@chfhs.org.uk, please.

RESEARCH SURGERIES—scheduled locations/dates/times

CHFHS volunteers hold regular help & advice sessions at society meetings and at public libraries around the county
there are no charges for these services

enquiries : secretary@chfhs.org.uk

Ely Library	3 rd Wed alternate mths	Jan / Mar / May / July / Sept / Nov	drop in between 10.00-4.00
Norris Museum St Ives	2 nd Wed alternate mths	Feb / Apr / Jun / Aug / Oct / Dec	drop-in between 10.30 & 3.30
Bar Hill Library	3 rd Mon <u>every</u> mth	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 1.30-4.00
St Neots Library	4 th Thurs <u>every</u> mth	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 2.00-4.00
March Library	1 st & 3 rd Tues <u>every</u> mth	*** TWICE MONTHLY ***	drop-in between 10.00-4.00
Cambridge Central Library	2 nd Sat <u>every</u> month	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 11.00 & 2.00
	NB : we are now working from a table in the foyer outside the Cambridgeshire Collection (3rd floor)		

Project co-coordinator, Terry, updates on progress

With the end finally in sight, work on completing the WisMus project, unfortunately, remains temporarily suspended (this was to enable the switch over to the new data management system which is embedded in the new website). This transition has been much slower than was initially anticipated.

Hunts Parish transcriptions are also progressing in the background and a number of parishes are now awaiting upload to the Name & Place database at the earliest opportunity:- Alwalton, Bythorn, Diddington, Easton, Elton, Eynesbury, Warboys, Chesterton (Hunts), Covington.

Check out the c.40 Hunts locations MIs now available in the shop—along with Cambridge Vaccinations Certificates, Exning Workhouse Baptisms, and Upwood and Gt Raveley parish registers.

**If any of the old volunteers, or new ones (and particularly if you have skills with old handwriting and/or reading Latin) would like to help with the final push to completion of WisMus and progress Hunts Parishes—
—please get in touch with me via: projects@chfhs.org.uk**

MARCH BRANCH PROGRAMME Wednesday Face-2-Face Meetings		1st Wednesdays at 2.00pm March Library, March enquiries : march@chfhs.org.uk
Wed 7 May	Evans of Ely, Solicitors with Gill Shapland <i>A selection of snippets and interesting records researched whilst reviewing the cataloguing of this collection. The Evans papers span 1812-1943, and contain references to countless families and businesses from Ely and the surrounding area.</i>	
Wed 4 Jun	A Sign Of The Times with Sarah Doig <i>A history of village signs throughout East Anglia—looking at what they contain and how they relate to the villages they represent. The first signs were in Norfolk, and spread from there.</i>	
Wed 2 July	Summer outing ... watch out for further details nearer the day	
Aug	No meeting	

Houghton & Wyton Local History Group Family History Day

St Mary's Centre, Houghton : 21 June 10-4

*come along and say hello, bring your queries
visit the historic Houghton Mill*

*mark the date in your diary—additional information nearer the time
via website/newsletter/facebook*

CHFHS NEWSLETTER

—are YOU a subscriber?



If you haven't yet signed up to the free CHFHS newsletter, why not do so—right now—by visiting the website home page www.chfhs.org

Sign up to receive the latest details on upcoming talks and research surgeries, local events with a genealogical slant, and on-going feature series “spotlighting” local surnames and villages histories.

CAMBRIDGE BRANCH PROGRAMME

3rd Wednesdays of the month at **7.30pm**
enquiries : programme@chfhs.org.uk

Cambridge Branch talks are Zoom only—**NB new day from 2025**

Wed 16 April	How Conflicts Around The World Shaped My Family with Claire Topping <i>This talk focuses on some of the historical forces that have influenced my family tree. My research journey has taken me to many places, both geographically and in terms of the sources used to piece together the story of my family.</i> <i>While some intriguing gaps remain, there is a discernible thread that runs through my discoveries so far. There is a clear role that conflicts around the world have played in bringing together a diverse group of people from different countries and continents.</i>
AGM SAT 17 MAY	AGM at Ely Archives with live/zoom talk by Peter Calver <i>It's NOT about finding cousins!</i> <i>Peter Calver of the Lost Cousins website, and the very informative LostCousins Newsletter, is the guest speaker prior to this year's AGM at the Cambridgeshire Archives in Ely. The talk will also be shown live via Zoom for those who cannot attend the Archives in person on the day. See p.11 for a synopsis</i> <i>(to attend on zoom, please register via the website—a separate registration will be needed to attend the AGM).</i>
Wed 21 May	Migration: when we get stuck! with Laurie Page <i>A look at migration theory and patterns—and how wealth, transport and choices affected families and where/why they moved. Clues can be spotted which can open up new avenues of research when we reach apparent “dead ends”.</i>
Wed 18 Jun	More Than Just A Name On A Page with Debbie Bradley <i>A talk to illustrate the rich variety of other resources which are out there to help find information to add background and context to your ancestors' lives—to bring them to life and to make them “more than just names on a page”.</i>
Wed 16 July	Manorial Records for the Family Historian with Philip Saunders <i>Manorial records can seem a little daunting to ask for, but this talk will seek to demonstrate that once you know what to expect, they can be simple to use and bring interesting rewards</i>
Aug	No session

MEETINGS REPORTS

*Don't forget that many of the talks
are recorded and available in the
members area of the website*

THE MOURNING BROOCH

WITH JEAN RENWICK

(CAMBRIDGE BRANCH : NOV 2024)

Jean Renwick spoke of her research and writing process when writing her trilogy, "The Mourning Brooch" based upon a real Yorkshire merchant dynasty. She described how she had inherited a mysterious brooch, a canteen of silver cutlery, and a box of photographs, which led her to discover the story of Elizabeth Addy, a woman who died in 1849. Jean explained her systematic filing method for organizing the vast amount of information she encountered during her research. She also shared a painting of Mary Ann Addy, which she received after completing the first book in the trilogy. Jean mentioned that she is still searching for the painting of Mary Ann's brother, John, and the whereabouts of the painting of Franny, the younger sister.

The various research methods and the challenges she faced while writing her books were explained, such as the use of Google Earth and old maps to identify significant buildings and locations. To fill the inevitable gaps dramatic weather events were blended into her stories to create fictional scenarios based on facts, such as the marriages of her characters. Newspaper reports detailing historical events were used to add authenticity to her stories, including the Dead Wife's Sister Act and the Housemaid Scandal. Jean also mentioned the use of press coverage to reveal personalities and add drama to her narratives.

Research into transatlantic travel during the 19th century led to a focus on the emigration of John Henry Willey's sister, Hannah Mary, to California in 1876. She also shared her research on the textile industry in Philadelphia, which involved the help of various historical societies and individuals, in particular the entrepreneurial attitude of the successful Philadelphia textile barons and the impact of powerful unions like the Knights of Labor. She also mentioned the rivalry between two brothers, John Henry and Francis Willey, sons of a well-respected wool merchant family in Bradford. Jean emphasized the importance of her research, which often doesn't appear in the book but helps her understand and develop the story.

The talk also covered the history and architecture of various buildings which featured in the books including the Bradford Wool Exchange, the Little

Germany district of Bradford, and the Palace of Monserrate in Sintra, Portugal. She also shared her research on the Willey brothers, particularly Frank, who was a successful wool merchant and businessman. Jean in passing mentioned her admiration for Waterstones for maintaining a striking Bradford building and her speculation about the connection between Lily Mellows, a character in her story, and the Cook family. She also shared her visit to the Palace of Monserrate and her meeting with the curator.

Further discussion followed about the research and writing process used for her books, focusing on the historical aspects and character development. As mentioned this ranged from the exploration of the transatlantic crossings in the 1880s, the textile industry in Philadelphia, and the wool trade in Constantinople. Jean also shared her experience of rewriting a significant part of her story due to a surprising discovery about one of her characters' marriages. She emphasized the importance of authenticity and the use of historical research to enrich her narratives.

Important national and local events were often included to aid portraying the lives of her characters, particularly in the absence of any written evidence. She highlighted the role of press reports and court reporters in revealing significant events such as the imprisonment of a housemaid and the bankruptcy of a snake oil salesman. Research covered the lives of the Earl and Countess of Derby, including their social and family life, and their hosting of royal guests at Knowsley Hall. She mentioned that her book, "The Morning Brooch," features nearly 200 characters, with only six being fictional. Jean also discussed her plans for the third and final book in the series, which will cover the years 1913 to 1943, including the two World Wars and life on the home front in Britain and the US.

One exciting discovery during the research was of a set of letters from a 19th-century accountant who was sent to Philadelphia to oversee the probate of a businessman's estate. The accountant, who had been working for a firm in Huddersfield, wrote back to his senior clerk in Huddersfield, providing instructions on managing other clients' affairs while he was away. The letters also revealed the accountant's desire to return to Yorkshire, where he could enjoy a cooler summer, and his humorous request to his senior clerk to refuse to open a brown paper parcel containing his soiled underclothes and collars for his wife to wash upon his return. Jean expressed her joy at finding these letters and her intention to include this story in her third book.

Currently the author is making slow but steady progress writing her third book, which is based on her family's history. She revealed a fascinating story about her ancestor, an artist who emigrated to the US in 1915 to avoid being conscripted to fight in World War I and returned to England two years later,

on a ship transporting horses. Jean also mentioned that she had received positive feedback from family members and a book club, and that her research had uncovered interesting details about her family's past. The conversation ended with Jean expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to share her work and engage with the audience.

Reported by Muriel Halliday

DID CROMWELL REALLY BAN CHRISTMAS

WITH STUART ORME

(CAMBRIDGE BRANCH : DEC 2024)

Stuart Orme, the curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, discussed the misconception that Oliver Cromwell banned Christmas. He explained that the ban on Christmas was a result of religious upheaval in the 17th century, with the majority of people being good sons and daughters of the new Protestant Church in England. The Puritans, a group within the Church of England who didn't think the Reformation had gone far enough, were opposed to the policies of Charles I, which included the introduction of a new Prayer Book and the reintroduction of certain rituals into English church services. The conflict between the King and Parliament eventually led to the English Civil War.

Origins and Evolution of Christmas

The talk continued with a detailed overview of the historical origins and traditions of Christmas, emphasizing its roots in pre-Christian pagan festivals and its evolution into a religious and community-focused celebration. Stuart highlighted the significance of Christmas in the 17th century, noting that it was a time for feasting, gift-giving, and community gatherings, with religious services playing a central role. He also discussed the Puritan opposition to Christmas, rooted in concerns about its pagan and Catholic associations, as well as its debauched and excessive nature. He concluded by noting that despite these criticisms, Christmas continued to be celebrated and evolved over time, with many of its traditions surviving to the present day.

History of Christmas Celebrations in Scotland and England

The history of Christmas celebrations in Scotland and England was discussed. He explained that the Scots were more fervent in banning Christmas than the English, with the Presbyterian Church in Scotland banning it in 1583 and making it a criminal offense in 1640. This ban lasted for 70 years. In Scotland, Christmas Day did not become a public holiday until 1958. Stuart also touched on the English Civil War and how it affected Christmas celebrations. In 1644, Parliament passed an ordinance reminding

people that the national day of prayer and fasting was to take place on Christmas Day, which was not widely effective. In 1647, a law was passed banning Christmas, Easter, and other religious festivals, with those who celebrated facing fines. However, this law was met with discontent and riots in various parts of the country.

Debunking Christmas Bans in England

A discussion on the history of Christmas bans in England followed, focusing on the period from 1644 to 1660. Stuart explained that the bans were not solely due to Oliver Cromwell's influence, but were a result of complex religious, cultural, and political factors. The bans were initially introduced in stages, with the first one in 1644, and were enforced in varying degrees across different regions. Stuart also debunked the myth that Cromwell banned mince pies, stating that there was no evidence to support this claim. He suggested that the bans were more like expressions of moral disapproval, rather than enforceable laws. The misconception about Cromwell's role in banning Christmas likely arose due to his omnipresence in historical narratives.

Evolution of English Identity and Religion

Stuart discussed the evolution of English identity and religion, highlighting the role of popular culture and the influence of Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries. He noted that the Protestant Reformation was not a sudden change, but rather a gradual shift in beliefs and practices. Stuart also touched on the growth of literacy in England, attributing it to technological advancements like the printing press and the expansion of grammar schools. He concluded by mentioning the current exhibit on Cromwell's head at the museum.

Reported by Muriel Halliday

GATWARD FAMILY STORIES FROM THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AND RESTORATION WITH TERRY GATWARD (CAMBRIDGE BRANCH : JAN 2025)

Terry Gatward was born in Luton, Bedfordshire but emigrated to Australia many years ago. From his early visits to St Catharine's House in London, back in the 1980s to the present internet sources, he has pursued a one name study of his Gatward surname together with its many spelling variants. Of particular interest to Terry is the period covered by the English Civil Wars, Interregnum and Restoration (i.e.1642–1660) and how the various Gatward

families coped with the strife of the times in their particular locations. From his research he has been able to create accounts for five Gatward Families.

Many of the families he researched seemed to originate with an Oliver Gatward, born 1550, in Wicken, Cambridgeshire. Oliver seems to have been of yeoman stock who became prosperous enough to have bought a coat of arms in 1591. Later related families can be found in various parts of East Anglia, around Cambridge, Steeple Morden, Royston, Newmarket, London and Essex.

Gatwards of London Michael Gatward, a merchant (1608–1649) was probably born in Wicken around 1608 son of a Henry and Mary Gatward. He was apprenticed to his uncle, Thomas Gatward in London in 1622, and became a member of the Worshipful Company of Mercers and a Freeman of London in 1635. In 1635 Michael and his brother Richard were in Venice working with the English ambassador, Basil Feilding (later the 2nd Earl of Denbigh and a Parliamentary commander). At the end of Feilding's time as ambassador in 1640, Michael returned to England. On 15 Feb 1641 Michael joined the prestigious Honourable Artillery Company militia unit. In 1641 Michael was the subject of a tax examination and was one of 31 Merchants who contributed to a (forced) £100,000 loan to King Charles in the Spring of 1641. His contribution was £100. As an officer in the H.A.C. he was likely present in Parliament's army at Turnham Green where the King's forces were prevented from entering London.

Gatwards of Royston The Gatwards of Roystons were maltsters, deriving their income from farming and then processing their grain into malt ready for brewing. The Civil War caused much hardship in running the malting business. Disruption caused by less labour and issues with distribution due to a lack of carts and horses together with poor-quality roads. In winter, heavy malting wagons were forbidden between Royston, Buntingford and Ware. Goods were transferred to individual horses or carts with two wheels drawn by not more than five horses. Just after the restoration of the Monarchy, the family was persecuted for their non-conformist beliefs so it was likely they had contributed to the Parliamentary cause.

Gatwards of Steeple Morden John Gatward was a respected local landowner and the churchwarden of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. John and his wife, Mary, had 12 children baptised between 1602 and 1619. The civil war eventually reached the remote village on March 15 1644. William Dowsing, an infamous Parliamentary commissioner arrived, who sought to enforce an ordinance to remove "idolatrous" and "superstitious" images from churches. As the churchwarden, John was responsible for cooperating with

Dowsing during his visit. John had no choice but to accompany Dowsing to the church. Dowsing had a mandate to smash and destroy anything that he deemed contrary to Puritan beliefs and in Dowsing's journal recorded the damage done that day. Nine "superstitious" pictures were destroyed, and three inscriptions in brass were broken. As a churchwarden, John's role had formerly been to protect and preserve the sacred space, yet now he was forced to watch its desecration. At a time of religious turmoil John had to navigate the local religious divisions while trying to maintain harmony in the community. The Gatward family, lived on in the village, where his descendants continued to play important roles in local life for generations to come.

Gatwards of Cambridge and Great Shelford The Gatwards of Cambridge experienced the English Civil War period largely as witnesses to the various troop movements in the area. Early on, Cromwell had seized the University's silver plate which had been collected and destined for the King. There were economic pressures caused by the need to supply the local Parliamentary forces. In Great Shelford, where many of the Gatwards resided, life was centred around farming and the Civil War's impact was less pronounced here compared to Cambridge.

Gatwards of Suffolk – There is some evidence that the Gatwards were involved with the Suffolk Train Bands (militia), which played a role in Parliament's War effort. The Suffolk Militia supported critical events such as the Siege of Colchester in 1648 during the Second Civil War. Economically, the Gatwards in Suffolk were probably affected by the War through requisitions and the disruption of trade routes. The location, near the Royalist stronghold of Newmarket, meant demands came from both competing military interests.

Gatwards of Essex, In Fryerning, Essex, Edmund Gatward, an Innkeeper, was impacted by the highly unpopular Ship Money tax in 1637. This tax was traditionally levied on coastal areas but was extended inland to places like Fryerning. This assessment was part of a larger attempt to raise funds for Charles I without Parliament's approval. During the Second English Civil War (1648), Fryerning experienced military activities. As troops passed through the town, followed by a contingent heading to the Siege of Colchester. The Gatwards likely witnessed this turmoil, reflecting the local population's shifting loyalties—from early support for Parliament to dissatisfaction with the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell.

Reported by CJ

SUPERIOR SEATS
WITH JOHN VIGAR
(MARCH BRANCH : FEB 2025)

John Vigar gave an excellent talk entitled 'Superior Seats' at the February meeting. John is a member of the 'Friends of Friendless Churches' that seeks to rescue abandoned churches from falling into ruin. The seats in question are those in churches and looks at who could seat where as seating in the Anglican Church tells us a lot about social history. The usual format of choir stalls, seats for the clergy and rows of seats for the congregation was very different at the time the early churches were built.

John showed many pictures throughout the talk to show examples of seating in some of the many churches he has visited. The first was Yatton in Herefordshire. This is a rare example of a church that remains unchanged. The floor is untiled, the altar is stone, no statues, no seats – the congregation stood. Eventually churches added seats in the form of stone benches along the walls – where the expression 'the weak go to the wall', comes from. The strong stand and the weak sit. An example of an unchanged church shown was Ivychurch in Kent. Another example was the church at Tal y Llyn in Anglesey. St. Andrew's church Didling in West Sussex has not changed for 800 years, a small whitewashed building with a complete set of benches dating back to the late 13th or early 14th century. These have candle holders on the sides. Many of the church buildings became damp and deteriorated. Seating evolved from the stone benches against the walls with the addition of more stones each side of a centre aisle with a wooden plank placed between. Gooderstone in Norfolk has benches from the 15th century. Benches are seating without a door, pews have doors.

East Budleigh church has later examples of wooden benches with carved rectangular ends some showing items relating to the occupations, e.g. shears. The Armidoucish family shield, dating from 1534 was shown (they were related to Sir Walter Raleigh). Wealthy families paid for their seats. Many examples of elaborate seating with staircases both inside the building and out were shown: some leading to separated compartmentalized areas.

The church at Esher in Surrey has a separate outside entrance paid for by the Duke of Newcastle, Sir John Banborough, leading to seating for his family and a second compartment for his brother's family. The subdivided section has several doors, a fireplace, and curtains that could be drawn for privacy. They may not be able to see the main body of the church but could hear the service. The important thing was to be seen to be attending church, rather than taking part in the service. The private seating here was once used by Queen Victoria.

Shobdon Church in Herefordshire was rebuilt in the 18th century in the Gothic style. The interior is all beautifully painted in white, including the benches and pews. John Bramley had a gallery and five new pews added in 1829. At St Mary's Church, Whitby an outside staircase leading to private pews at an upper level can be seen. The whole church is filled with pews where people were charged to sit. This was to raise money. One pew was free for the poorest and one for 'strangers only' – people visiting the area. If a family rented a pew they could cover it with canvas when they went away. It was a status symbol to have your own pew. St Mary's Church in Warbleton, West Sussex has a fine example of a large manorial pew accessed by a substantial wooden staircase in the north aisle on raised pillars giving an excellent view over the whole of the church interior. This dates from 1722. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is buried at Minstead, Hampshire church yard. The church has two extensions. Private pews and a fireplace are on the raised gallery added in the 18th century opposite the pulpit and paid for by two prominent families of the village.

Brass plaques with house names on were drawn for by lottery at Halifax Minster in West Yorkshire. The whole of the minster is filled with pews. One such house was Shirden Hall—the home of Ann Lister, also known as 'Gentleman Jack'.

John explained that it is unusual to find any documentation of amounts paid for private seating. However, he showed a copy of a receipt for a pew at Lymington, Hampshire for £20 also one for two seats at Dunham Massey. He also found a notice for St John's Chapel, Chichester, for a 'seat to let' that has been stuck on the seat for over a hundred years. The chapel has a large mezzanine level on three sides of the building, full of pews, two deep. There are also more pews on the lower level as well as benches.

It became illegal to charge for pews in 1868. From then on collections to raise funds are taken at services.

Reported by Linda Peckett

CAMBRIDGESHIRE WAR MEMORIALS

WITH DAVID EDWARDS

(MARCH BRANCH : JAN 2025)

David Edwards (CHFHS member) gave a very interesting presentation on Cambridgeshire War Memorials that he has been researching over the last 26 years. In 1999, a group recorded all names listed on war memorials in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely for 119 parishes. Cambridgeshire is listed on page 270 of the Roll of Honour website. Not very much detail is recorded

on war memorials, often initials and surname rather than full names, although sometimes the rank of the person is included. More information on regiments, dates the person was killed, age and some addresses can be found on the Commonwealth Graves website.

Townpeople and villagers raised the money for the memorials themselves. Remarkably, many were dedicated as early as 1920, only 2 years after the end of WW1. The names for the memorials were collected from those living in the parish with some appearing on more than one memorial if their names had been given as being connected to that parish.

The earliest Cambridgeshire Regiment war memorial dates back to 1854-56, designed to go in a window of Ely Cathedral, but the cathedral refused to authorise it. It was placed in the regimental chapel but removed. A brass plaque was unveiled at Ely Cathedral in 1904 with the names of 25 men who lost their lives in the Boer War 1899 - 1902. Another stone plaque for choristers lost in the Boer War has 9 names. A further slate plaque on the wall in the King's School garden lists those lost in WW1, 24 names, WW2 43 names, with an additional name at a later date. A canon from Ely was awarded a Queen Victoria Cross in 1860.

Ely Cathedral is also the home to several war memorials for those who lost their lives from Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. A very large hinged oak memorial lists, in alphabetical order for each town and village, 5320 names of those lost in WW1. Another memorial is the chapel dedicated to the Cambridgeshire Regiment. The City of Ely war memorial is a recessed stone recessed semi-circular arched memorial built into the outer cathedral wall near the market square lists 224 names for those lost in WW1, plus names for WW2 and to the present day. The Charge of the Light Brigade has a large brass plaque on the south side of the cathedral includes Lt. Henry Sparke who lost his life at Balaclava. The RAF has a separate memorial dedicated in 1955 to Bomber Command and other RAF service men who lost their lives; the book lists some 20,000 names.

At Huntingdon a replica cannon can be found. The original cannon was captured at Sebastopol from the Russians during the Crimean War, and was used as scrap during WW2. The replica was cast from an identical captured cannon sited on The Green at Ely near the cathedral. The Huntingdon cannon has the names of major battles inscribed on the four sides of the base: Sebastopol, Inkerman, Alma and Balaclava.

Around the county, some who lost their lives are named on the grave stones of others. Harry Fuller, a Royal Marine who died aged 27, is commemorated on his sister's grave giving full information. Arthur Frost from Benwick was

originally commemorated on the Benwick memorial but later moved to Doddington.

March war memorial is a granite structure with an obelisk standing on a base of steps; a helmeted soldier is standing, his arms resting on arms, reversed. Unveiled on 19th June 1921, the memorial lists 210 names but a few months later the sculptor was asked to remove some of the names including A G Sharman and C W Sharman; no reason was given, so David could only speculate. People who had asked how to clean the memorial were told “with ‘Vim’ ”! Around March, there are several memorials for those who lost their lives in wars: St John’s church, a brass plate, Sept 1919; Baptist Chapel 1920 with 7 names (later destroyed by fire; St Wendredas, May 1920, 26 names; March Post Office 3 names; the Conservative Club 9 names; Provident Baptist Chapel 26 names; Wesleyan Methodist Chapel 12 names; March Grammar School 26 names (now at the Neale Wade School); St Peter’s Church 42, May 1921. At St Mary’s Church, Westry, only Claude Dorman (a POW) from 1918, is commemorated.

At Wimblington, 25 men are commemorated on the east window. The name of Percy Bush Cox turned up on the memorial at Wimblington in the 1930s. His story is strange: he was injured, treated in a military hospital, and then rather than return home he joined the Australian army under the name of Ernest Durham, along with 3 others; the family had no contact with him for 20 years. A question lies over whether he had deserted.

The village of Doddington has brass plaques, naming 36 men, in the chapel and parish church. Manea has a memorial with 38 names, and Benwick 44 names. Chatteris memorial lists 158 names, including George Clare VC, the only Victoria Cross to be awarded in the Isle of Ely. These show just how many lives were lost from the villages.

The War Memorial at Mepal contains the name of a woman – Nellie Walter who had served in the NAFFI, and died at the end of WW2. At Willingham, Dorothy Willis, an ammunitions factory worker who died through contact with the chemicals. Leverington has a tall cross with stone plaques around the base, dedicated in 1920, listing those from the parish who died in WW1.

In the Cambridge, 1354 WW1 names from the Borough of Cambridge, are listed on the Guildhall memorial. Cambridge Great St Andrew’s has 15/20 names, Cambridge St Phillip’s has 196 names. Cambridge Holy Trinity Memorial Shelter is situated in the churchyard, an octagonal structure to commemorate 45 members of the church from WW1.

The village of Harlton provided a wooden memorial listing 6 names in gold, dedicated on 29th December 1918. Whittlesey St George has 190 names

dedicated in 1923. Ramsey and Fordham both have memorials representing St George and the Dragon. The impressive Fordham war memorial was designed by notable sculptor Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled in 1921. The church at Swaffham Prior has three stained glass windows depicting different stages of war scenes. They were designed by the local lord of the manor Charles Allix, Cecily Allix and the artist Thomas Curtis. Charles Allix commissioned and paid for the windows that were unveiled and dedicated in December 1919; 23 names are on a separate tablet nearby.

Friday Bridge has a memorial clock tower with 24 names on a plaque listing names from 1914-1918. The clock tower is pebble dashed; painted white with a pyramid style roof, a weather vane and a coat of arms of the Isle of Ely Borough. Repairs to storm damage to the clock tower in 2000 were made by Elm Parish Council. Eltisley St Pandionia and St John's church has a memorial lych gate with 2 plaques: that from WW1 lists 14 names and was dedicated in 1920 following fund raising by the Women's Institute, that for WW2 lists 2 names. Upwell has a white tall pedestal square stone memorial with a carved angel on the top erected in 1922, and lists 57 WW1 and 10 WW2 names; other names from the parish appear in the Book of Remembrance at Ely Cathedral.

Prior to the Crimean War, memorials only record the names of officers.

There is continued and growing recognition that those killed fighting for their country should be remembered.

Reported by Linda Peckett

FOLLOWING IN FAMILY FOOTSTEPS

WITH ANDY BROWNING

(CAMBRIDGE BRANCH : FEB 2025)

Our speaker was Andy Browning who told the story of how an old sepia family photograph inspired a three-month adventure following 80-year-old footprints through the mountains and deserts of East Africa. Having stared at the same unremarkable photo on his grandparents' wall for years, Andy was surprised to discover that not only was this picture taken in Khartoum in Sudan, but also that the slightly dusty and angry looking man holding a bicycle was in fact his great grandfather, Reuben John Head.

Andy was surprised as he and his family never travelled far from south east England so to find he was related to someone pictured in the middle of Sudan stirred his imagination, especially when he found another picture – his great grandfather with a monkey on one shoulder. His grandmother told him

the story of how she had visited him as a very small girl, taking a boat from Liverpool to Egypt and then a combination of railway and boats up the river Nile, and on to Khartoum. This was the moment Andy made the decision that one day he was going to repeat this journey and follow in his footsteps and get to Sudan and Khartoum.

Many years passed and Andy found himself working as an expedition leader in Tanzania. He realized that when his work there ended he didn't have any reason to rush back to the UK. He formulated a plan to trace Rueben's journey backwards to Sudan but first, how to even get there?

Andy recounted the first visit to the embassy to get a visa, leaving Tanzania, heading into Kenya, and then Ethiopia and on to Sudan. Very quickly he learned that it was impossible to get into Ethiopia as the land border was closed. Not deterred he flew into Ethiopia, landed in Addis Ababa and went straight to the Embassy to secure a visa. There followed many administrative hurdles that Andy and his travelling companion Nick had to pass. Ten days later they secured their Sudanese visas which allowed them to travel through the country within two weeks. Andy showed a picture of the incorrectly dated visa, which meant that they had to wait a further month before they could travel on from Ethiopia and cross the border into Sudan.

Andy described the very clear differences between the two countries: western dress of Ethiopia became traditional Jalabiyas; orthodox Christianity had changed into the call to prayer; and the lush highlands of the Ethiopian mountains very quickly turned into that kind of traditional hot, dusty Saharan landscape.

Andy's excitement in reaching Sudan came through – what had only ever been a childhood dream had actually come into reality. They had arrived at a town called Matama, and the first task was to get their visas accredited by the police in Khartoum before doing anything else. They arrived at 2am and with no hotel booked and no idea of the layout of the city, they wandered around, eventually resting in the doorway of a chicken shop. In a short time, a man named Aziz, a journalist on his way home from the night shift, saw them and started a conversation which led to him offering them a place to stay. Once in his apartment he offered cake and homemade bread. Andy explained how Aziz's humanity on that evening and during the following days helped them have such a successful visit to the amazing city of Khartoum – its buildings and colonial history and the modern commercial side. The most memorable trip was to the point where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet.

Andy then returned to the reason for the trip - to try and understand a little bit more about the man in the photographs. He had also been given other

pictures taken in Khartoum that he assumed meant something to his great grandfather, including the railway, a ship and the Grand Hotel. The hotel is still there and he had an amazing conversation with the manager. Visits to other buildings which existed at the time of the Second World War, including the War Office and National Bank, were less successful.

Andy explained the interest in the boats on the river Nile that could have been used by his ancestor on his journey. Especially as the photograph had writing on it stating that the boat belonged to Sudan Railways Company. And so that combination of railway and boat is what matched up with his grandmother's memories of her visit.

Despite not finding the actual boat, Andy explained that he felt quite happy as they were connected in a way with some of the experiences that Reuben would have had. He then showed a picture of the Post Office, looking very much the same, which was the next port of call. Andy took some pictures but was questioned by a man in military uniform. It turned out that the building is now the Intelligence Ministry. Andy's explanation of retracing his ancestor's footsteps and reproducing pictures of the same buildings was accepted, and much to his surprise, he was allowed to go.

Andy then went back to the most important picture - Reuben on his bike near the train station. It was still a functioning train station, they went in and met Mohammed, a very proud worker of the Sudanese Railway Corporation. Once shown the photograph he took them outside to the trackside where they met the chief engineer of the sidings, who was very keen to help find the actual location of the photograph, which they did! The manager then produced a bicycle so that Andy could be photographed in the same pose as his great grandfather. Before leaving the railway they were told of the whereabouts of a small museum in one of the old churches in Khartoum.

Andy described it as a very small museum with very few artefacts and some photographs including one, dated 1944, of the Consultative Council for the North of Sudan - in the background was a man who Andy thought was Reuben John Head. He sent a photo of the picture to his father for confirmation that was quickly given – he had found his great grandfather!

With the help of this museum in the middle of a desert, Google, and later the archives at Durham University, Andy was able to piece together his great grandfather's work and life in the Sudan. He was an accountant, started work on the 18th of July 1926, and in 1939 was working for the Sudan Defence Force. By 1942 he was part of the Agriculture and Forest Department, and in 1944 he was photographed at a meeting of the Consultative Council.

In the picture Andy thought his great grandfather was seated at the back and looking bored whilst all around him were looking very serious and important. At the time Andy imagined he was working in some exciting role but actually he was an accountant looking after the books until his retirement in 1948 but working in the middle of the desert in Khartoum.

Andy said that his adventure spurred him on to further research, particularly at Durham Archives. This and other sources of information showed his ancestor travelled between the UK and Sudan three or four times. Travel from Khartoum to Egypt was often challenging.

Andy concluded his talk with his experiences travelling home to the UK, unfortunately not by train as Reuben would have done but rather in buses and 4x4s again with some memorable moments on the way, including in the Sahara Desert, visiting the pyramids of Sudan, and finally leaving Sudan via the Nile to Aswan and from there in a variety of feluccas to Cairo. Eventually he flew from Hurgada home, having been unable to retrace his ancestor's footsteps any further.

Andy's enthusiasm for the history and the people of Sudan and Egypt was infectious, but being somewhere where you know one of your ancestors has been, even if it was only 80 years ago, is clearly a really exciting feeling. His talk and presentation slides totally captured his incredible journey to Khartoum, and the discovery of what Reuben was doing really allowed Andy to flesh out his character. In fact it has kindled a new interest for Andy as the family research continues.

There followed many questions and observations from the audience who also had ancestors in that part of the world in the past. Information on other sites of relevant records were also exchanged. The Chairman closed the meeting after an extremely interesting and unusual presentation which had been very well received by the audience.

Reported by John Bownass

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY ...

HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2025

Sat 20 Sept @ Farmland Museum, Chittering, Cambs

Free entry to museum & CHFHS RESEARCH SURGERY

watch for further details nearer the day ...



Maureen Nicholls 1946-2025



Members of the March Branch were sad to hear at their last meeting of the death of Maureen Nicholls.

Maureen had been a member of the society for over 30 years. In 2003 she began assisting the late Bernard Amps with his weekly family history surgeries in March library, and in 2004 they set up the March Branch.

When the main Cambridge Branch meetings moved to Girton in 2005, at the request of Cambridge based members, Bernard and Maureen began organizing talks at St Lawrence church hall forming a "City Branch" of the society. Maureen and Bernard also went on to form a branch at Ely in 2009.



When Bernard retired from active involvement in the society in 2013 Maureen took over his roles as the society's Research Officer and Chairman of the March Branch, where she had been secretary since it was founded.

Maureen continued running the March Branch until 2014, organizing an interesting selection of talks and running surgeries. Occasionally she would give us one of her own talks. I remember one in particular on the SS Princess Alice Disaster in 1878. She also persuaded her son Michael, to give us a talk, in full costume, on the activities of the English Civil War Society.

Maureen gave up her role as Research Officer in 2016 and she was made an honorary member of the society in 2019.

*Our thanks to Dave Edwards of March Branch
for his recollections of our friend, Maureen.*

Our thanks continue go to everyone who has sent in contributions—whether as articles about your families and researches, or just shorts pieces, please keep it coming—getting something down on paper to share "the story" with others is the key. Family history is so much more than just genealogical facts, it's the stories which we either know or have deduced from the raw facts, and these need to be written down. Apologies if your piece hasn't appeared as yet, it's very much a jigsaw puzzle to fit the material into the available pages.

The Editorial Team

MEMBERSHIP

The Society offers a regular programme of meetings designed to appeal to the specialist and beginner alike; the quarterly members' journal is also available, if preferred, as a digital download. The UK subscription, due on joining and annually thereafter, is £12, and includes the member's partner. The overseas subscription is £17, which gives airmail postage of the Journal. If you chose to receive the e-Journal, the annual subscription for all locations is £9 (we also offer a life membership for x10 annual rate). Subscriptions/renewals may be made online through the CHFHS website via debit/credit card or PayPal, or by DirectDebit; alternatively, sterling cheque/etc payable to *Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Family History Society*, should be sent to the Secretary. Changes of address/email and members' interests to the Membership Secretary, please. See p52 for contacts.

SEARCHABLE RECORDS & SHOP

“Cambs & Hunts Database” When fully operational, the new CHFHS website will feature a brand new records search and retrieval system (replacing both “AncestorFinder” and “SuperSearch”). On offer will be a basic search facility freely available to all comers, and the records database with searchable access to over 5m of CHFHS's online transcribed records from across Cambs & The Isle of Ely and Hunts. The database is **available to all members** and accessible via the website members area. Additional records not suitable for the format can be found as browsable pdf files.

CHFHS SHOP Search the publications listings on the website to see what's available for particular parishes and locations (CDs and/or downloads). Additional material not suitable for the database is also available as CDs and/or downloads. Also shop via: www.ParishChurch.com (incl books).

RESEARCH SERVICES

The Society will undertake a limited amount of help for members who have reached a sticking point in the work. This can be done in two ways :

- # general enquiries can be addressed to the Secretary by email secretary@chfhs.org.uk (or by post, with an SAE please)
- # more detailed requests should be sent to our Research Team, preferably by email, via the request form on the website research@chfhs.org.uk

We will attend to requests as our time allows. We ask that you remember we are all volunteers, so please be patient and reasonable in your requests.

Please supply as much information about the topic/person as possible (such as the sources of “facts” you already have, and which records/resources have already been consulted (eg. BMDs, census, wills, parish registers, a family tree, Ancestry, FindMyPast, FamilySearch, etc)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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