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in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & the Isle of Ely

THE JOURNAL



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VOLUME 31 : 3

AUTUMN 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 :

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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 : 3

AUTUMN 2025



Welcome to the Autumn edition of the CHFHS Journal—with an eclectic mix of articles and reports. Breaking news just as we went to press is, of course, the release of the records collection for Cambs and Hunts by Ancestry (& also for Suffolk).

Feature articles in this issue—a sobering account of plague in Upwood from Mike S; Ray W from Australia lists local pioneer settlers in his town; Karen O takes a light-hearted look at folk a website cites as being her “relatives”; and Graham W describes fen skating in the local area and the effects of climate on the sport.

Regular updates include—research surgeries (we will attend at Cottenham Library, not Bar Hill, for the rest of 2025) and meetings’ diary; reports of talks; book reviews—& much more. Make a note of a couple of dates for extra research days this autumn—at Meldreth Local History Group in October and, to mark Heritage Open Days 2025, a “free access” day at The Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, in September (come along and also visit the historic local life collection); as well as St Neots Living History Festival in Sept. For 2026, advance notice of the East Anglia Regional Fair in April and the 50th Anniversary AGM in May.,

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

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cover photo : Breaking News — Ancestry Comes To Cambs & Hunts



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 :

***Dr Ian Baker
Mrs Jean Wheaton***



A WORD FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



Thinking out of the box

As a Society member, you will almost certainly fall into one of the following categories –

- Living in the county and with local ancestors
- Living at a distance or overseas with local ancestors
- Living in the county but with no local ancestors
- Living outside the county and with no local ancestors

The last category will include those such as libraries worldwide who provide an information service to their own members and community. Whichever category you belong to, it is highly likely that some of our ancestors will have lived elsewhere, moving for reasons including employment, marriage, change. I have no local ancestors, but the real benefit to me of our Society, and the key point from this long introduction, is taking what I learn and pick up and applying it to my own circumstances and research.

A good example of this is the local online research surgeries based around Poor Law Unions that are held twice each month. Because of other commitments, I attend only some of these, but I have recently seen the AI summary from two sessions that I missed. Where these are focused near to the county boundary, members of the neighbouring family history society join us. Participants will talk about their own experience and family, ask questions, gather information some of which is looked up during the session, and everyone contributes to a widely appreciated surgery. Much of the discussion and approach taken is transferable to other areas of the country and we are fortunate that Cambridgeshire has seven counties adjoining so the expertise that we pick up from other societies covers a very significant area.

I encourage you all to join these surgeries and to think out of the box about what you have learnt and apply this to your own research. A recent example from my own family that I wrote about earlier this year is the previously unknown connection my family has to Duxford.

Spinning House records online

The three volumes of the Spinning House committal books have now been scanned by the University Library and are freely available online through the Cambridge Digital Library, <https://viewer.cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/spinninghouse/1>. The Society paid for the scans, and each book includes a name index at the front so you can find individual entries quite quickly.

We are discussing with the University how to capture much of the other information in the books including places in and out of the county, other names mentioned including parents, the number of times an individual woman appears in the books. All this will help research and family history, and it is planned that Society volunteers will contribute to selective key word transcribing using Excel templates to undertake this work. If you want to find out more, please contact me, chairman@chfhs.org.uk.

Two dates for 2026

Two important bookings have now been made for next year.

Many of you will have attended the East Anglian region fair at the Burgess Hall in St Ives last year, and a similar event will be held there on Saturday 18 April 2026. Planning is at an early stage, but the wide range of exhibitors and resources on display should be similar to the previous fair.

We now also have a date and venue for our own 50th anniversary event, Saturday 23 May 2026 at Huntingdon Library; this will be combined with our Annual General Meeting. We are planning several activities for this important day, and further details will appear in due course.

Please save both these dates in your diaries.

Members' interests

We all benefit from sharing common interests with other people, and this is something that happens quite often by chance at our online events. We are currently trying to sort out some quite complex aspects of the membership database. If you want to hear from others who share your interests, you need to make sure that you agree to share your interests with others. Please update your own membership entry and check that everything is both correct and what you wish. For more long standing members, the default may have been not to share your interests, so it is advisable to check.

Keeping in touch and losing contact

Although there are ever increasing ways of keeping in touch with family, friends and others, it is also easy to lose contact and be unsure of what has happened to someone you were close to. It is important to make sure everyone has your own current contact information when you move, change

email or telephone numbers, social media and any other details. However, it is easy to forget to tell someone amongst the myriad of contacts we all have, and we don't always hear when people we know have died. I find all the following useful for events in the last five years – FindMyPast electoral registers for current addresses including 2025; the General Register Office for deaths up to 2023; National Probate Service for recent wills proved in the last few months; Ancestry deaths and newspaper reports; online searching by name and place. I was recently able to contact my mother's cousin after I discovered that her younger sister had recently died, and to pass on our thoughts.

Annual General Meeting 2025

My thanks to everyone who attended in person in Ely or online in May and heard Peter Calver's interesting talk. Those attending in person will have been able to see the display and list of all items that the Society has donated to the Archives over time. This was eye opening to me, and I am very grateful to the staff who gave up their time to prepare the display and the venue, and to attend. Draft minutes are now on our website and will be discussed in Huntingdon next May.

Stop press

Ancestry have just released over 4 million fully searchable baptisms, marriages and burials for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, matching Society transcripts to images from the original registers in the Ely and Huntingdon Archives offices.

David Copley

*Save The Day
Sat 23 May*

CHFHS
1976-2026

AGM 2026 : Huntingdon Library
Talk, Exhibition, AGM
Buffet Lunch, Birthday Cake
(more details nearer the time)



AGM 2025

Our thanks go to the Archives Team at Ely for again hosting the AGM, and for laying on an exhibition of documents for the delegates to view.

The talk at this year's AGM was given by Peter Calver, founder of the LostCousins website—pictured, with CHFHS Chair, David Copsey (LostCousins has just celebrated its 21st Anniversary).

Entitled “*It’s NOT About Finding Cousins*”, the presentation highlighted the importance of collaborating with experienced family historians who are researching the same ancestral lines. They may well be cousins, but that’s NOT why they are such valuable connections – hence the title.

There were other ‘nots’ to be wary of: NOT disappearing down ‘rabbit holes’, NOT duplicating the research that others have already done, and NOT going down dead-ends as a result of incomplete information.

DNA provided an illustration of how researchers could easily be side-tracked: for example, although family historians usually test in order to knock down ‘brick walls’, by the time they get their results they’ve forgotten what their objective was, and instead waste time trying to identify how their closest matches are connected. It’s NOT about finding cousins!

By focusing on what really matters, and collaborating with other researchers, family historians can free up time to research ancestral lines which have been put to one side. The speaker pointed out that female lines are frequently under-researched, even though our female ancestors contribute just as much to our heritage. As many as 70% of “unknown relatives in a typical tree are female.

At LostCousins there are tens of thousands of members, most of whom have been researching their tree for over 20 years – and some of them are *your* cousins. Free membership of LostCousins includes over 30 newsletters each year, and offers the opportunity to search for experienced family historians who not only share some of your ancestors but are researching them.

Thanks to Peter Calver for telling us what NOT to do!

**You can find out more at
www.LostCousins.com**



THE YEAR THE PLAGUE CAME TO OUR VILLAGE

By Michael Stephenson

Many of us retain a certain number of historical dates from our schooldays – 1066, 1215, 1348-9, 1588, 1805, 1815, 1914, 1939, 1666 and 1665, the latter being the year of the devastating plague in the city of London.

The pestilence of 1665 in London was bubonic plague, a horrible and painful disease, whose symptoms included a fever and painful swellings called buboes. Having contracted the disease the infected person would usually die within a few days. It is estimated that 100,000 Londoners died, about one-fifth of the population at that time. Plague was spread by the bite of fleas living on the black rats which flourished in the tight lanes and passages of the city. There was no medical remedy for the illness and it was only controlled by isolating the infected families within their homes. Those who could afford it and had families or houses in other counties, left the metropolis as soon as they could.

But 1665 was not the only plague year; in 1563 London had its worst episode during the sixteenth century, with at least 20,136 deaths. Closer to our county, it is recorded that the Midsummer Fair in Cambridge was cancelled on three occasions - 1630, 1636 and 1637 for fear of spreading plague infection from London. Goods from London were also forbidden to be sold in the county town in those years.

Nationally, the bubonic plague was particularly virulent during the years of 1609 and 1610, and villages around Durham, Chester, Ludlow and Evesham were heavily infected.

In 1610 the disease came to Huntingdonshire, but surprisingly only in a single village - Upwood, with its satellite hamlet of Great Raveley. A search for given deaths by plague in the parish registers of nearby parishes, including those north of the fenland towards Peterborough, proved fruitless.

But why Upwood? Even in 2025, many villagers are still aware of a plague pit in the churchyard, west of the chancel; today it remains a plain area, devoid of any later headstones. Many have also heard the story as to how the infection came to their village over four hundred years ago. This relates to the lord of the manor ordering a new coat from London in 1610, and on its arrival, discovering that it was harbouring many fleas. Somehow some must have escaped from the manor house, for the plague soon spread to the poorer inhabitants of the village. The owner of the new garment was Henry Williams alias Cromwell, who had acquired the manor five years previously.

Strangely, Henry was not the first to die of the plague, for he continued in good health until his burial in October 1630.

Burials given in the register for 1607 numbered only three; in 1608 four; in 1609 five; and in 1610 fifty-two.

On April 20th the first burial in 1610 was the minister of St Peter's church, Robert Leech. In the late sixteenth century the Leech family was very prominent in Upwood, with four principal families being noted in the parish registers. They were also active within the church itself, providing churchwardens many times between 1562 and 1596. It is therefore possible that the Robert, who had died in 1610, was the same child born to Richard Leech in 1586. A William Leech and two of his five children, which included twenty years old Ellen, were later to be buried within three days in May, possibly of the plague.

However, as there were no burials at all during June, it is uncertain as to which of these earlier deaths were due to the plague and not from natural causes.

But as the country heated up so the disease took hold, with the majority of the burials at Upwood taking place in July. Initially, the corpses might have had the conventional shroud burials, coffins being reserved or affordable for the worthies of the village. But with thirty-seven deaths in the village in July 1610, the digging of individual plots would have to be abandoned; hence the decision to open a large burial pit.

Inhabitants who contracted and died of the plague included the following: - Cromwell Onyett, who had married Anna Wilson in 1586, was buried on July 12th. Robert (12) and Thomas (6) followed their parents following day. Bartholomew Berridge (3) and sister Ann, children of William, were interred on the 14th. William followed his children on the 23rd.

William Warden's wife Frances and young daughters Ann and Elizabeth were buried on consecutive days in mid-July. But with six remaining children to bring up on his own he needed to re-marry quickly. This he did when he married Agnes Baker in April the following year. The couple were also able to add three more children to their family between 1611 and 1615. (See the Baker family below).

The Baker family was virtually extinguished when William, his wife Lettice, and daughter Sarah (21) were buried on consecutive days. However, somehow their two older daughters avoided the infection. For Agnes (27) took on the remaining members of William Warden's family in 1611. (See William Warden's family above). Her sister Alice (24) married Bartholomew

Ibbott at St Peter's church five years later.

The two children of Thomas Smith were buried together on July 22nd (son John had died two years earlier). A week later, Simon Smith and wife Elizabeth were placed in the pit on the same day. All three children of Leonard Inkerson died within ten days of each other in mid-July.

The list of deaths in 1610 had commenced with the Leech family, and the names of three of the Leech family were almost the final plague burials to be entered in the parish register. Christopher, his wife Catherine, and daughter Elizabeth were all buried together on August 25th. (One wonders what happened to their three surviving children).

Minister, Robert Leech had been the first to be buried at the start of the year and his position was soon filled by the wonderfully named Fortunatus Sanders, who was to serve as rector for the next seven years.

After 1610 the numbers of annual deaths quickly returned to the single figures of earlier years. The bubonic plague must have been a horrendous experience for the inhabitants of Upwood, and one wonders what measures were taken to confine the pestilence within their parish boundary. The larger town of Ramsey is only three miles away and is easily walkable. If one infected Upwood inhabitant had gone to Ramsey on market day it could easily have become a major hot-spot for the disease within the whole of England. However, Upwood soon recovered and in 1695 the rector, Nathaniel Coddington, took a personal census of his congregation. Walking round the lanes he counted 240 persons living in Upwood and 94 in Great Raveley. By 1841 the number had only risen to 378 (in 87 houses) and 311 (in 58 houses) at Great Raveley.

Some families must have stayed safe during the plague months, for their surnames were still evident in the registers many years afterwards.



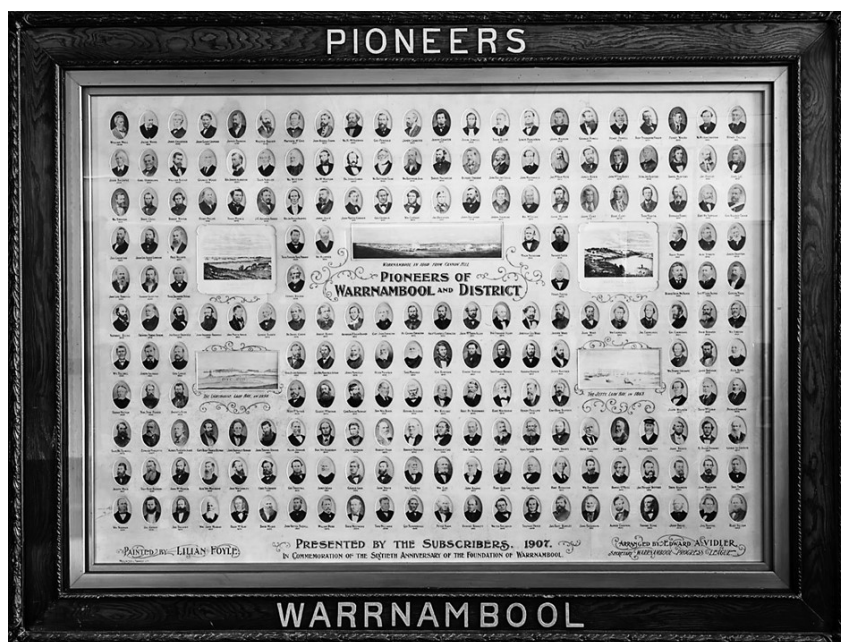
“CAMBRIDGESHIRE ON THE BOARD”

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE TO WARRNAMBOOL AUSTRALIA

By Ray Welsford #5904

Warrnambool is a city of some 36,000 people located on the south-west coast of Victoria, Australia. The first Europeans to sight the area were explorers Baudin (French) and Flinders (English) in 1802. The first European settlers were itinerant whalers and sealers who came ashore to mend gear and boats, and process their catch, eventually setting up primitive shelters.

One of Warrnambool's most important historic artefacts is the board pictured here. It measures 10 feet 2 inches in width and 7 feet 8 inches in height and contains 204 images of pioneering men together with three watercolours and two engravings of historic Warrnambool. A recently published book, *The Story of the Board* [ISBN 978-0-9871202-7-4], tells the story of the board's conception and creation along with details of people of significance in making it happen. Four of those pictured claim connections to Cambridgeshire and one to Huntingdonshire.



Brief biographical details of these men are as follows:

MARGETTS, Edmund – his story appears to have links to several localities in the Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire area. He was born c. 1814 in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, parents George MARGETTS and Mary CLARKE. On 19 December 1843 he married Sarah Ellen MABERLY at Stowmarket, Suffolk. Sarah was the daughter of Rev Frederick Herbert MABERLY, Vicar of Great Finborough, and Ann KIMPTON (the Vicar officiated at his daughter's wedding). At another stage his father was living at Hemingford Grey. In 1849 prior to his move to Islington and his emigration to Australia his property was sold at Holme. Arrived Melbourne 30 December 1853 and became Postmaster at Warrnambool. Also worked as an Actuary.

PARKINSON, Lewis – born c.1825 in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, parents Allen PARKINSON and Mary TURNER. Married 4 March 1844 Susan DRIVER at St Andrew, Cambridge. At time of marriage his occupation was hawker of Falcon Yard. Children, both named William Lewis, baptised 7 September 1847 and 16 Feb 1852, and both died as infants. Emigrated via *Ellen* arriving Portland, Victoria, 14 November 1852.

ROWLEY, John Searle – was born in Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, on 31 October 1836, his parents being David ROWLEY and Ann SEARLE. He did not marry and came to Victoria with his sister Elizabeth on the *Thames* arriving in Melbourne on 22 May 1857. He was a successful cordial manufacturer such that in the 1880s he was employing 13 men to make around 700 dozen bottles all sorts of cordials, aerated waters and light beverages each day. An enthusiastic supporter of the sport of rowing, Rowley died by his own hand on 20 September 1893 and is buried in the Church of England section of the Warrnambool Cemetery.

SHELDRIK, Walter – baptized 8 July 1832 at Triplow, Cambridgeshire, his parents being Richard SHELDRIK (SHELDRAKE) and Mary Ann TRIGG. C.1854 married Jane TRIGG and sailed from Plymouth on the *Shand* for Australia arriving in Portland, Victoria, on 20 January 1855. Initially set up as a butcher in Warrnambool before owning several different hotels and later becoming a noted brewer. Died 21 January 1876 at 43 years and buried in the Church of England section of the Warrnambool Cemetery.

I would be happy to correspond with anyone who has a particular interest in the general story of the board, or any one of the four men.

Additional details can be found at:

<https://www.warrnamboolheritageworks.org.au/pioneers>

Look Who You're Related To!

Not!

By Karen Orrell

It comes every year, this email from FamilySearch, excitedly telling me all the famous and noteworthy people I am related to. And every year it's, well, a bit of a damp squib...

Not because the people I am related to are not particularly well-known or noteworthy, but because... I'm not related to any of them!

This year I was informed I am related to Charles Dickens (8C6R), George Washington (also 8C6R), Queen Elizabeth II (10C3R – hey, a connection to royalty is a connection to royalty no matter how far removed!), Emily Dickinson (12C2R), Adam West (13C1R), John Wayne (also 13C1R) and last but not least, Princess Diana (14C) which I guess makes me doubly related to our future king, Prince William.

How very exciting!

But all those generations between me and the ancestor I share with these people just adds up to more and more places where mistakes could have been made in the trees of other people. For, of course, FamilySearch is basing my connection to these famous people on the information that has been entered by many, many faceless researchers.

And, oooooof, have some mistakes been made ...

Take Charles Dickens. Let's just say I had Bleak Expectations, if I may be allowed to mangle some of Dickens' best works, when it came to this relationship. On my side we need go back a mere 15 generations to Richard Wilmer born in 1480 and his wife Lady Joan Goodyear, also born in 1480. Charles has to count back only 9 generations to this couple. I look at the line from myself back to Richard and Lady Joan. It starts off well. That is indeed my mother listed and her father and his father – we are going great guns until we get to William Murfitt, my 5th Great Grandfather, married in Wilburton 1771 to Esther Whitehead, when it all starts to fall apart. He is listed as the son of Abraham Murfitt so I click on the link for more information. He was born in Stretham and married to Susannah Ivett at St Andrew the Great Cambridge. This sounds plausible – I may have just furthered my research as my tree ends with William because I have been unable to find a definite baptism for him. Abraham's son, William, was born in 1753 and married Ann

Pope in 1774 in Little Thetford and... Hang on. My William was married to Esther Whitehead and now I come to look more closely, William Murfitt and Elizabeth Murfitt in this tree showing me how I am Charles Dickens' 8C6R are all wrong as well. Well, what an Oliver Twist in the tale.

Strike one...

Maybe I will have better luck with George Washington, as I quite fancy being related to America's Founding Father. It doesn't take me long to work out George and I are not related either as, guess what? Our common ancestors are also Richard Wilmer and his good wife Lady Joan Goodyear!

Surely I am going to have better luck with the Queen? I really feel like I have blue blood coursing through my veins even though after 25 years of genealogical research I have yet to find any evidence of this. Apparently, my common ancestors with the Queen are Richard Toker and Margerie Priest. Once again, the path goes via my maternal grandfather, who I am sure would have totally backed up this Royal connection with lots of "facts" he "remembered" being told.

This time we are going via his grandmother Fanny Ansley and we carry on tracing the line back to Mary Cleave, my 6th Great Grandmother. This is where my tree currently stops on this line, but the FamilySearch tool is showing me that Mary's parents were John Cleave and Martha. I'm about to rush off to Ancestry to check the Devon parish registers when I notice that the line carries on through Martha. Just Martha. No surname, just "Martha". I look to see what marriage record has been put in. There is no marriage. I don't know about you, but my confidence is wavering. The line continues back to Richard and Margerie via Martha's mother Elizabeth. Again, no surname. I look at Elizabeth's page. Elizabeth's husband, father of Martha, is John Cleave. Martha's husband is John Cleave. Martha's father-in-law is John Cleave. Seems things have got a bit muddled somewhere around here and I am just a pleb after all.

Maybe I am related to Hollywood royalty? I eagerly turn to my Adam West connection. Oh. Our common ancestors are, once again, Richard Wilmer and Lady Joan Goodyear. Looks like Batman and I are NOT related – was this information entered by the Joker?

Let's try John Wayne. My dad is going to be seriously impressed with this, especially as he will also be related to John Wayne if the tree is correct. I will need True Grit to plough my way through this family tree but a girl's got to do whatta girl's gotta do. Once again we start off really well, following my direct paternal line, then we branch off to my great grandfather's mother's line. On

we go, via her mother, Elizabeth Cornwell and it is all looking very promising all the way back to William Cornwell, born in the 1730s in Fulbourn. Here, the FamilySearch tree and I have a slight disagreement. It's not a major falling out, but it is something that makes me stop and pause. The Fulbourn records are fairly patchy at this time and the fact is there is no definite baptism for William in them. However, it is very probable that he is descended from Robert Cornwell who married Agnes Driver in 1598 at Fulbourn St Vigor. Now, even my cousin, Peter (4C2R and that's a definite!) who has been conducting a one-name study on the Cornwells for decades says that he cannot move further back from Robert with any degree of confidence, so I am rather skeptical of the assertion that Robert Cornell of Saffron Walden is Robert of Fulbourn's father. And could Richard Cornwell, born in Oxfordshire, be Robert of Saffron Walden's father? Well, there are no sources at all given to link them and nor is there a shred of evidence offered that Richard of Oxfordshire is the son of "Sir Knight John Cornwallis Steward of household of future King Edward VI" and his wife Mary Sulyard.

Foiled again!

I move on to Emily Dickinson. My son is pretty good at writing poetry and maybe this is where he got the talent. Nope. Our common ancestors are Sir John Cornwallis and Mary Sulyard.

Next!

I'm left with Diana, Princess of Wales. Immediately my hopes are dashed by Sir John Cornwallis and Mary Sulyard again!

So, am I related to anyone "famous" at all?

In all my years of research I have only found one person of any note that I share ancestors with and it comes from my Cornwell line. John "Jack" Travers Cornwell, boy VC, is my 3C3R, our common ancestors being my 5th Great Grandparents, Holmes Cornwell and Elizabeth Day. Otherwise, I am related to ag labs, shepherds, miners, publicans, hawkers, chimney sweeps and carpenters.

I've uncovered some extraordinary stories about these "ordinary" people and I'm quite happy with that. Ruling the country would probably get in the way of my family history research, so all in all I feel it's worked out for the best that I don't descend from royalty!

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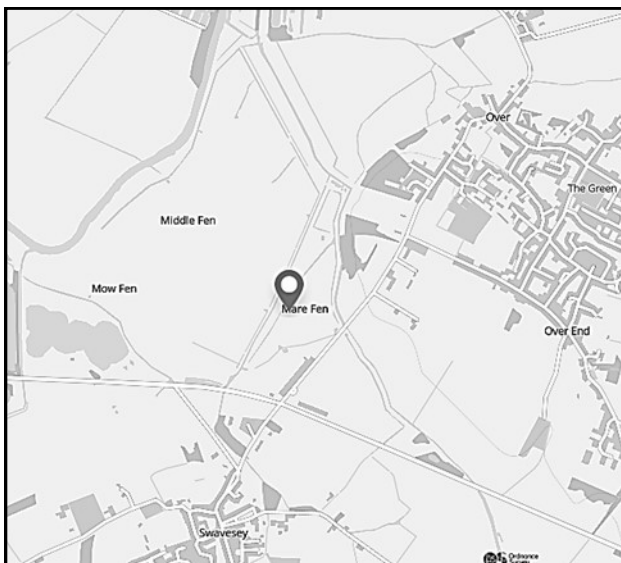
SPEED SKATING AT SWAVESEY

Part One

By Graham WEBSTER (2978)

Climate change is a commonly discussed topic today and but hardly a topic, one would have thought, for *The Journal*! However, in researching the life of Benjamin Carter (known as Ben) KIRBY from Over, Cambridgeshire ¹, it was drawn to my attention that he was in an ice-skating competition in 1925. It set me thinking about how times have changed with today's climate, although the history of skating at Swavesey (and the wider Fens) is littered with its dependency over the years on whether the weather was harsh, and more often, mild.

Ben was skating on, then described as, Mere Fen, near Swavesey. This fen, also titled Mare Fen, is to the north of Swavesey and to the south-west of Over ², adjacent to Mow Fen:



Location of Mere/Mare Fen ³

Ice skating was not unique to this area: although the East Anglian fens claim to be the birthplace of outdoor skating when, ca1660, Dutch engineers draining the Cambridgeshire fens claim to have brought their skates with them ⁴. It is said Whittlesey Mere, Lingey Fen near Haslingfield, and

Swavesey all in Cambridgeshire, and Bury Fen in Huntingdonshire and Cowbit Wash in Lincolnshire, are all listed as early places for ice skating ⁵. Speed skating was also imported from Holland, where it was practised on canals and rivers, and consisted of either a long straight course, or on a short course with several turns, usually round a barrel. The history of skating on the Fens is well-described in Alan BLOOM's 1958 book ⁶. By 1826 a course of two miles with three turns had become general in Cambridgeshire.

A course of a mile and a half with three turns was [then] established, though the turns were more numerous if ice was limited; that length remains the standard. After the First World War an oval course, as used on the continent, was introduced. There are two tracks, the competitors skating one lap on the inside and one on the outside, changing over at a given point. The system compensates for the disadvantage of losing the toss, and enables the public to see the whole of the race ⁷.

In the 1840s there were a series of mild winters and early record of skating specifically at Swavesey (and adjacent Over) was in February 1857, although it was reported in the Fens that 'on the night of 13th February [1855] the temperature fell to 14½ degrees [-9°C], the lowest...yet' ⁸. On 3 February 1857, Charles DODSON ⁹ from Swavesey beat all-comers at skating on Mere Fen and on the following day beat skaters from the villages of Swavesey and Over. He was racing the following day and won £4 ¹⁰. Also on the Thursday (5th) it was reported in the same sources that a bandy (an early form of ice hockey) match was staged between Swavesey and Over ¹¹. It is said that this report was the earliest contemporary record of the players in both teams – with many familiar names (from my family tree) from both villages such as DODSON, THORPE and RICHMAN of Swavesey, and SILK, BICHENO, MUSTILL, and INGLE from Over. It was said that after Bury Fen players those of Swavesey were the 'most deadly' ¹². Dodson was again racing at Swavesey on 8 January 1861 when a prize of 50s was on offer. He only managed second place in the racing two days later ¹³.

In January 1867, after a run of mild winters, the ice had 'never been in better condition' for the skating matches held, and on the 9th a cricket match was held between Mr Prior and Mr Masterson, each fielding seven players (although the scores were low – 37 and 28 respectively), and a dinner was held on the ice after ¹⁴. On 30 December 1869, Charles Dodson won the races held between teams from Over and Swavesey on Mere Fen ¹⁵. The cricket fixture was repeated in February 1870 when it was reported that:

Cricketing under peculiar circumstances took place on Monday, the 14th February last, on Mare Fen, at Swavesey, the wicket being

really as smooth as a billiard table, but instead of the scorching hot sun of July, there was a bitterly cold north-east wind blowing, and the players were all on skating pattens, and, of course, presented occasionally some ludicrous spectacles. Thousands of persons, according to the *Sporting Life*, journeyed by special and ordinary trains on purpose to witness the match¹⁶.

The match was between Richard CARPENTER's Eleven and Joseph MASTERSON's Sixteen (yes, sixteen!); only one from the two teams was local, a D LONG from Swavesey. Carpenter won the toss and put the Sixteen into bat first – they scored 125 all out. Stumps were drawn soon after 3.00 pm when the Eleven were 230 runs for 8 wickets.

THE ELEVEN.	
W. Newman (Cambridge), st Graham, b J. Masterson	0
J. Newman (Cambridge), b J. Masterson	8
F. Pryor (Cambridgeshire), b J. Masterson	37
J. Fordham (Cambridgeshire), b J. Masterson	11
R. Carpenter (Cambridgeshire), 1 b w, b J. Masterson	1
W. Saunders (Histon), c Masterson, b Graham	11
D. Hayward (Cambridgeshire), run out	10
G. Masterson (Cambridgeshire), 1 b w, b Graham	4
J. Smith (Cambridgeshire) retired	51
R. West (Magdalen College), not out	27
T. Hayward (Cambridgeshire), not out	52
N b 1, b 11, w 2, 1 b 4	18
Total	230
THE SIXTEEN.	
J. Nightingale (Cambridge), run out	1
Mr. J. Baker (Over), b Pryor	5
C. Baker (Stapleford), c Saunders, b G. Masterson	77
P. Coleman (Barrington), b Carpenter	0
D. Long (Swavesey), 1 b w b, Carpenter	0
E. Prime (Barrington), b G. Masterson	8
W. Tomkins (Cambridge), run out	1
H. Fisher (Sidney College), b Carpenter	3
H. B. Jones (Sidney College), st Carpenter, b G. Masterson	1
G. Graham (Trinity Hall), not out	24
C. S. Williams (Jesus College), run out	0
W. Cox (Cambridge), st Carpenter, b G. Masterson	3
E. Thompson (Cambridge), b G. Masterson	0
J. Masters (Cambridge), run out	0
W. Brown (Cambridge), b Carpenter	0
J. Masterson (Cambridge), run out	1
N b	1
Total	125

The Sporting Life, 16 February 1870, p4

BLOOM records how there was a series of mild winters in the 1870s¹⁷. Harsher weather in 1878 and 1879 is said to have contributed¹⁸, together with its effect on the rise in the popularity of the ice skating, to form on 1 February 1879 the National Skating Association (NSA) in Cambridge¹⁹ for

the control and encouragement of speed skating:

Apart from the promotion of amateur and professional speed skating championships, the aims of the association were to establish standards for figure skating, provide rules for 'the game of hockey on ice', and establish international contests ²⁰.

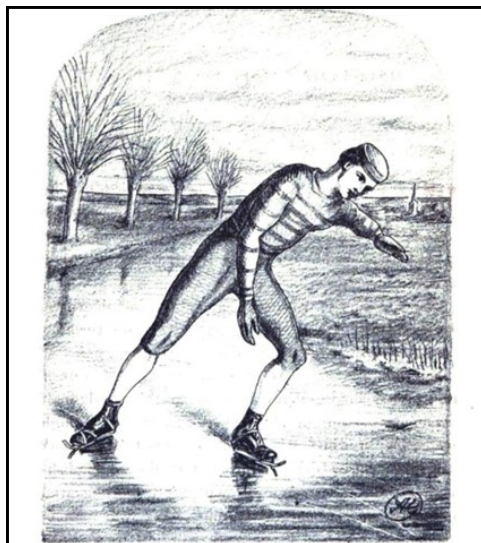
A race was held on 28 January 1879 at Swavesey and it has been written that this '...may be said to have originated...' the NSA ²¹. This race was won by George 'Fish' SMART (February 1857-14 October 1909 ²²) and although the time was fast there was '...good reason to doubt the accuracy of the distance in the race which took place...' ²³. It was also at this race that :

Lancashire sent three of their top skaters, G. Willcocks and the Boydells, to the ...match in January 1879. All three were defeated in the first two rounds, with veteran Turkey Smart beating G. Willcocks by 200 yards in the first round. Afterwards one of the Lancashire skaters said: 'We are the best men in our parts, but we run. These fenmen flee' ²⁴

'Fish' Smart was nephew to William 'Turkey' SMART (1830-1919). 'Turkey' was also from Welney, Norfolk, and first appeared in the record books in 1854, and later in 1855 when he won 10s in a skating race at Welney on 14 February ²⁵ and whilst winning races often thereafter was out-competed in January 1867 ²⁶. It is related that in 1881 (the winter of 1880/1881?) when the snow and deep cold eventually came, 'Turkey' volunteered to sweep a course if he could be provided with 'ten men to help and four gallons of beer to enjoy' ²⁷:

'Turkey', who is worth ten ordinary sweepers, acted as 'gaffer', and by the next morning an excellent had been prepared. Only one 'contretemps' occurred. After a hard spell of sweeping the men assembled to refresh at the four gallons. Alas! what a terrible moaning; the beer was frozen hard! But your fenman is not put down by trifles; while ten swept the odd man embraced the bottle and thawed it with the heat of his body. Thus they took it in turns, and kept the tap open till all was done beer and sweeping by about 4 a.m. ²⁸

Even at the age of 61 'Turkey' was entering contests, though hampered by a scythe injury to a leg. A clergyman once urged him to invest his winnings, saying it was unsafe to keep so much at home. 'Turkey' told him that it was already safe 'in the bank'. He later explained that he had actually buried it in the bank of the Old Bedford River where he lived! ²⁹



George 'Fish' SMART
GOODMAN and GOODMAN (1882) *Handbook of fen skating*

'Fish' was the best of his day; '...he was first, and the rest nowhere. A man of fine development, very muscular and athletic...' ³⁰. It was also said that when winning the professional skating championship, 'Fish' Smart prize was paid in instalments '...to keep himself temperate' ³¹.

An attempt to hold a skating meeting on Mere Fen under the newly-founded NSA auspices was foiled by thawing weather at the end of December 1881 ³². During the same time in 1882, the NSA had secured as its speed skating 'department' headquarters, Mere Fen ³³. One of the early presidents of the NSA, Lord DOWNING, persuaded the then Prince of Wales to presented a cup for the amateur championship, on condition that it should always be skated for in the Fens; the HRH was one of the patrons of the NSA ³⁴. The NSA also announced in December 1882 arrangements for a meeting on Mere Fen ('...if the frost should allow it...' ³⁵) that was open to all comers including skaters from Holland and Denmark. After a run of milder winters ³⁶, a NSA meeting was held at Swavesey in early January 1887. 'Fish' Smart won his third and final Professional Skating Championship at this meeting ³⁷. On 11 January 1887 a prize money of £1 was awarded for a race over about a mile with three turns despite the ice '...beginning to get very soft from the thaw and the rain which fell during the morning, and this, together with a strong wind at the time, made hard work of the business' ³⁸. After a further run of milder weather (although there was racing on 7 January 1889 at

Swavesey Eye for the villagers of Willingham where a George WEBSTER of that village was beaten into second place ³⁹), the Amateur Championship of Great Britain was raced on 26 December 1891 at Swavesey with 15 competitors over a 1½ mile course of three turns ⁴⁰. It was also on 26 December that Ben THORP (16 May 1871-22 June 1947), affiliated to Brampton ⁴¹, was beaten by 1 sec in a professional competition by the Peterborough Skating Association ⁴².

Much to the consternation of local Fen skaters, the headquarters of the NSA were moved from Cambridge to London in December 1894 ⁴³. In January 1895 the newspapers reported skating on Mere Fen when the 'ice [was] fairly good' ⁴⁴. The Amateur Championship of Great Britain was raced on 1 February at Swavesey with 22 competitors; the Professional Championship of Great Britain had preceded this on 29 January also at Swavesey ⁴⁵. The year 1895 was 'to prove the most satisfying winter skaters had ever known' for Fen skaters, and 12 weeks of frost set in ('an old-fashioned winter' ⁴⁶) in December, extending into the New Year when on 2 February 1896 the NSA's Amateur Championship of Great Britain was raced at Swavesey with 34 competitors ⁴⁷. Come the following year, 1897, Ben Thorp was again racing at Littleport on 28 January in the Fen Department of the NSA's Quarter-mile amateur championship, but fell in his heat. He was somewhat more successful in the One-mile Amateur race, the Duddleston Cup, when although fastest in the heats only came fifth in the placings of the final ⁴⁸. The competition was again planned for December 1897 on Mere Fen, when a straight half mile course was staked out. Unfortunately, the fen could not be flooded and the meet was moved to Littleport again ⁴⁹. Frozen fens were not always widely useable, though:

*There was skating on Mere Fen Swavesey. In the centre the ice was fairly good and safe but at the sides it was weak and many got their feet and legs wet. Three visitors from Cambridge afforded some amusement. Declining the services of the men with chairs they sat down on the bank after spreading out handkerchiefs to protect their clothing. They put on their skates and went boldly forward. But the thin ice near the bank gave way and one man dropped about two feet into the water. The chairmen laughed heartily and the visitors beat a hasty retreat...*⁵⁰

It was hoped to race again at Swavesey in December 1898 but again postponed until February 1899 to be held, again, at Littleport ⁵¹. There then followed a series of 'iffy' winters in the Fens – not really cold enough for competitive racing, although it was on 12 February 1900 that a '...successful amateur skating competition open to all within a radius of fives miles was

held on the championship skating course at Swavesey...'; Ben Thorp was one of the donors of the Prize Challenge Cup ⁵². There was some racing in Swavesey in February 1901. It was in a race on 23 February on Mere Fen that this happened to Ben [Thorp sic] met:

...with a serious accident during a spin with a Canadian gentleman. Whilst going at full speed he appears to have got upon some thin ice, where the previous day a hole had been made. The ice collapsed and Mr. Thorpe fell in, hitting his face violently against the edge of the firm ice... bleeding profusely from six or seven bad cuts on his face, besides wounds on his arm and leg... We are pleased to say that Mr. Thorpe is progressing favourably ⁵³

There must have been no lasting injuries as four months later, as Trooper Thorp of the Bucks Yeomanry, appeared in a Smoking Concert at the George and Dragon Inn in Swavesey '...as the warbler of love ditties...' ⁵⁴. Ben was racing mid-January 1903 for The Duddleston Cup ('...presented some eight or nine years ago...'), the prize for the one-mile amateur race. This was followed by a race at Swavesey on 17 January 1903 '...open to residents within a radius of three miles of Over and Swavesey'; Ben Thorp was one of the donors of the prize cup ⁵⁵. The winter of 1906-1907 'provided no more ice than would annoy a duck' ⁵⁶, although Ben Thorp was racing at Littleport in February 1907. Late December 1908 it was reported the snow was the worst since January 1881. There was up to 20° of frost (-11°C) '... not since the great skating year of 1895 has so many degrees of frost been registered' ⁵⁷. There was racing at Littleport and on Lingay Fen when snow cover permitted. Hopes were raised for racing on the fen between Over and Swavesey in December 1909 when despite the flooding frost were not severe enough for skating ⁵⁸. Whilst the condition of the ice varied, it was said that February 1912 provided miles of ice on the Fenland ⁵⁹. A course of 1¼ was laid out for a competition between Over, Swavesey, Long Stanton and Willingham when W KIRBY won the race; it was reported that Ben Thorp '...a veteran skater...' skated the course for a respectable time ⁶⁰. Disaster struck Ben Thorp (noted as a well-known skater and cyclist) in March 1913 when on the 3rd his cycle shop in Station Road, Church End, Swavesey was burnt out ⁶¹.

Ironically, the 1917 weather produced the longest and most severe spell of frost since 1895, as the First World War disrupted skating, whilst the matches on Mere Fen were not supported by many skaters 'and visitors were conspicuous by their absence' ⁶². After the War, skating resumed as illustrated by this photograph, despite few competitions ⁶³.



Skating on Mere Fen, Swavesey, ca 1918-1922;
one of the skaters is Ben Thorp

https://swavesey.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/skating-on-mere-fen-swavesey ⁶⁴

It was reported that 20 Acres, Swavesey hosted racing on 7 February 1919 followed, on 11 February, when the chief event for Over and Swavesey skaters on Mere Fen (across the road from 20 Acres) was the Chicago Cup, presented by Mr KING ⁶⁵. It was then reported in 1925 that:

Mere Fen, Swavesey, was patronised by crowds of skaters and onlookers on Saturday and Sunday [5 and 6 December], and the ice was in fair condition, though showing signs of wear on the latter afternoon. On Sunday, especially, the quiet village streets, usually only disturbed by the milk carts and an infrequent motor car, was kept alive from morning till night by motor cars and motor bicycles following close upon one another on their way to and from Mere Fen. ⁶⁶

On 5 December 1925, a race for the Chicago Cup took place; C[harles] A[lfred] King presented the trophy. Ben Kirby came third in the race, 32 seconds after the winner, missing out on 2nd place by one second ⁶⁷.

Part Two continues the story of ice skating at Swavesey, covering a number of years when the weather created near perfect conditions, and when the Chicago Cup was again the prize for a number of races.

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If you have family from Ulster, this will interest you
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RECEIVED FROM PETER COCKER

I would be pleased to hear from anybody in your organisation that has an interest in the Cocker family or associated families as I am collating a family history and any information they can provide would be greatly appreciated.

I should therefore be most grateful if you would kindly mention this to all your members at any appropriate moment.

I am always happy to correspond with relatives however distant in a mutual understanding of the family history and how we have spread ourselves within Britain and across the globe.

With kind regards
Peter Cocker

Please reply to David Copsey in the first instance

chairman@chfhs.org.uk

CHFHS ONLINE AREA RESEARCH SURGERIES

summarised by Karen Orrell

Over the past few months we have continued to hold our monthly online research surgeries and since the last edition of the Journal we have covered the Ely, Royston, Whittlesey & Peterborough and St Neots areas.

In our April session on the Ely area, we talked about the allocation of land after the Fens were drained, particularly in Padnal Fen and looked for information on Pingle House. Our secretary, Muriel, was on hand to answer questions – her ancestors have never moved from the area so there is not much she does not know! March Branch representative, Dave, was also in attendance, looking through many of his offline resources such as a record of marriages that took place in Cambridge college chapels rather than in the home parish (not as rare as you may think – the incumbent often couldn't be bothered to trek out to the parish church!) and enclosure maps.

In May, we tackled the Royston area and were joined by former CFHS Chair, Andrew Pye, who has a special interest in the area, particularly the Mordens. The participants did not disappoint with their questions and Andrew was kept very busy, even answering questions via email after the end of each session. We were also joined by a representative from the Bedfordshire FHS as some of the parishes we were covering are contiguous to Bedfordshire parishes. We discussed whether the Bassingbourn and Royston workhouses were the same place (yes – the town of Royston lay within several parishes and the Union workhouse was situated in the parish of Bassingbourn) and where the records for the workhouse were held as well as what is actually available. We then moved on to land and estate records for the parish of Foxton and one participant mentioned the Hertfordshire Record Society would be publishing a 1610 manorial survey of Royston within the year. In the next session we looked into the parishes of Croydon and Gamlingay and discussed how common it was for our ancestors to move villages and settlement orders and where to find them.

In June, it was the turn of Whittlesey and Peterborough to be the focus of the surgery. We were joined by representatives from both the Peterborough & District FHS and the Northamptonshire FHS, both of whom provided valuable local and archive knowledge. We researched the surnames Thacker, Muncie, Verney and Aikens, delving into nonconformist records and battling with spelling variations. All participants left the sessions with plenty of new

avenues to explore.

Finally in July, we tackled the St Neots area, where we were once again joined by representatives of the Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire FHS. We looked at the surname Trustram, covering four counties in the process and accessing several different databases. In the second session, we were looking at families from Kimbolton, St Neots, Great Staughton and Eynesbury. Two of the participants discovered that they had common research interests and shared information!

We are taking a break in August, but we will be back in September, starting with the March and Chatteris areas, where a representative of the Chatteris Museum will hopefully be on hand to answer questions and, of course, our March Branch Rep, Dave. In October we will be looking at the Caxton area and in November Suffolk FHS will be joining us to tackle the Newmarket area – as most of this area is within the archdeaconry of Sudbury, the Suffolk Record Office holds many records relating to Cambridgeshire parishes so this is not an opportunity to be missed if your ancestors come from this part of the county. In December we will cover the St Ives area and in 2026, we will cover the remaining areas of Linton, Wisbech and finally, Cambridge.

You can sign up for any of the sessions for the rest of 2025 on the website, so please do join us and see what you can find out!

These sessions are your opportunity to share your research and ask questions – the more we share the more we learn!



**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/>

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY ...

HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2025

**Sat 20 Sept @ Farmland Museum, Chittering, Cambs
(off the A10 near Waterbeach)**

Free entry to museum & CHFHS RESEARCH SURGERY

visit their website further details of the day ...

<https://dennyfarmlandmuseum.org.uk/>

ONLINE WITH CHFHS—

Area Research Surgeries : Programme Sept-Dec 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)

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.

**these sessions have been very well received
and are proving to be popular events
for both specific and general interest**

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
Cottenham Library	3 rd Mon <u>every</u> mth	In place of Bar Hill to end of 2025	drop-in between 1.00-3.00
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)		

Dave Edwards in BBC Cambridgeshire News

CHFHS's Dave Edwards of March Branch has featured twice in the BBC Local News in recent months in his role as Archivist of March Museum—identifying the 1925 “lost” burial place of a WW1 serviceman, and explaining the re-discovery of a long-forgotten tunnel under March market place

Read the full stories at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy750zw38xo>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2v25jpezjo>

Libraries Connected Awards 2025

**Congratulations to Mary Burgess,
Librarian of The Cambridgeshire Collection.**

Mary has been awarded “First Runner Up” in the Information & Digital Category for her work on launching “Picture Cambridge” (digitising and uploading over 2,300 images of Cambridge) and delivering talks to over 500 people during 2024



MARCH BRANCH PROGRAMME Wednesday Face-2-Face Meetings		1st Wednesdays at 2.00pm March Library, March enquiries : march@chfhs.org.uk
Wed 3 Sept	Women In Medicine <i>A look at the struggle faced by women to become doctors.</i>	with Dr Martyn Thomas
Wed 1 Oct	Freedom Of Information for Genealogists <i>Under the FOI Act 2000, members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities—find out how this can help you.</i>	with Richard Holt
Wed 5 Nov	Home From The Western Front <i>A look at some experiences of those returning after their service</i>	with Helen Green
Wed 3 Dec	Station Road Cemetery, March <i>The history and development of March Cemetery, with a look at some of the prominent locals, and others, who are buried there</i> PLUS : Seasonal Social	with Peter Wright

Meldreth Local History Society

Family History Day

Sat 4 October 2.00-5.00

come along and say hello, bring your queries

*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 17 Sept	A Picture Is Worth—tracking down photos of your ancestors with David Copsey <i>A talk which offers some suggestions as to how you might find photographs of your ancestors, and the challenges this presents. It will be based around a case study of the speakers' great grandparents. The approach taken should be applicable to most families.</i>
Wed 15 Oct	The Pye Storey with Roger Crabtree <i>We tell the story of how, from humble beginnings in a garden shed in 1896, Pye grew to become Cambridge's biggest employer for much of the 20th century. At its peak, it employed over 7000 staff in the Cambridge area and over 30,000 worldwide. It created many companies designing and manufacturing a wide range of products, though it is probably best known for its TV and Radio products. Inspired by its long term leader, Charles Stanley, its innovators created many ground breaking products which were sold across the world.</i> <i>We follow its rise to pre-eminence and its takeover in 1967, its subsequent decline and finally its disappearance by 2000.</i>
Wed 19 Nov	An Introduction To Using Local History Resources At Cambridge University Library with Kevin Roberts, Curator of Religious & Estate Collections <i>What does the CUL Dept of Archives & Modern Manuscripts have to interest me? Very possibly, quite a lot—the collection includes records from many local estates and institutions relevant to local and family history research. NB: CHFHS members can apply for a free UL Readers Ticket (contact CHFHS Membership Secretary)</i>
Wed 17 Dec	The Victorians and Entertainment with Dr Judith Hill <i>From the music hall to the seaside and football and many other entertainments—a look at how the Victorians turned enjoyment into big business.</i>

Living History Festival
Market Square, St Neots .. Sat 6 Sept
look out for further details nearer the time

MEETINGS REPORTS

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

FOUL MURDERS OF EAST ANGLIA

WITH MIKE WABE

(MARCH BRANCH : APRIL 2025)

Mike Wabe was the April speaker, as a former policeman and a town crier for the last 10 years, nobody had difficulty hearing the talk on 'Foul Murders of East Anglia'. All the murders were historical and may have related to our past family members.

The first murder took place in Peasenhall, Suffolk in 1902. Rose Harsent was found dead at the bottom of the stairs one morning by her father when he turned up at the house. At first it was thought she had fallen down the stairs, but her throat had been cut. A fire had also been started by lighting newspapers. A broken medicine bottle that contained paraffin was found at the scene.

An anonymous letter to Rose was found. This was traced to William Gardener an elder and choirmaster at the Methodist church that Rose attended. Rose was found to be 6 months pregnant and considered not to be innocent with a string of suitors. It was concluded that William Gardener was the father. He was a married man with 6 children and considered to be beyond reproach. He claimed to have been at home with his wife and family at the time of the murder and all evidence was circumstantial. Although there was blood found on Gardeners clothing it could not be proved that it belonged to Rose. At the time there was no test to determine if the blood was human or animal.

However, Gardener stood trial for murder. At the first trial on 7th November 1902 he was found guilty by 11/1, not by all 12 jurors. The second trial on 21st January 1903 he was found not guilty by 10/2, again only a majority. A third trial was dismissed. After this William Gardner moved away to London. The next murder took place in 1876 in Cambridge. Annie Pepper and Emma Rolf were at the Garrick Inn, Cambridge on 24th August 1876 where unfortunately, Emma who was 16 years old, met Robert Browning a 25 years old tailor. Annie had walked away leaving Emma alone with Browning who had already been drinking in other pubs. Emma's father had left the family when she was eight years old leaving her to be brought up by two siblings. At

the time of the murder it was reported that Emma was living in a brothel.

They walked to Midsummer Common where a nearby police constable heard a scream. Browning left her and apparently had returned to the Garrick Inn for a glass of ale. Whilst walking home Browning met the police constable who had heard the scream, when questioned, Browning immediately took him to where Emma's body lay with her throat cut, so severe her head was almost severed. He handed the razor to the office with blood stained hands. A coroner's inquiry took place where it was found Emma's death was as a result of willful murder. Browning was brought before the Mayor and sent to trial.

The trial took place on 29th November 1876 at Norwich Assizes where it was established that Browning had previously been dishonorably discharged from the army where he had assisted a surgeon. The jury took 3 minutes to find him guilty. Browning pleaded clemency but was hanged on 15th December 1876.

Mike next turned to the Stansfield assassinations of 1848. The recorder of Norwich, Isaac Jermy and his son were shot dead at his home, Stansfield Hall on his large estate near Wymondham. His wife Elizabeth and a servant Eliza Chestney were badly wounded. The butler James Watson witnessed them being shot and hid in his pantry but was able to give an account of the shooting. He described a man, wearing a disguise of a wig and beard and having 2 large pistols.

A stable hand heard the shots and rode to town on horseback and raised the alarm. The first to arrive on the scene was Mr Standley the local auctioneer followed by Mr W R Cann Esq., magistrate and several others. Local police and police from Norwich attended. A telegraph was sent to Mr Nicols, the family doctor to attend.

Public opinion quickly named one man – Rush (James Bloomfield Rush). There was ill will between Isaac Jermy and James Rush relating to money transactions and the right of Jermy to the Stansfield estate. Jermy and Rush had faced each other in court in 1847. Rush had lived at Stansfield Hall before mortgaging it to Jermy for £5,000.

Rush's trial before Mr Baron Rolfe commenced on 29th March for the murder of Isaac Jermy and his son lasting 6 days. The public seats were crammed with local ladies and gentlemen including noblemen. Rush pleaded 'Not Guilty'. James Watson and Eliza Chestney were among those giving evidence. The jury retired for only 6 minutes before returning a 'Guilty' verdict. James Bloomfield Rush was sentenced to death and hanged at

Norwich Castle on 26th November 1849 in front of a mass crowd. He did not confess to the murder.

Mike went on to describe several other East Anglian murders at Raleigh, Essex and Diss in Norfolk.

The Red Barn, Suffolk's notorious murder in 1827 is well known and much published. Maria Marten was a young woman looking for love and a better future lived at Polestead. She was the secret lover of Thomas Corder a local squire's second son with whom she had a child. The child died only weeks after it was born. Sadly Thomas accidentally drown in the pond at Polestead. Maria then formed a relationship with Peter Mayhew a local landowner. She again fell pregnant and had a son Thomas Henry Mayhew. Peter Mayhew paid a quarterly sum of £5 to Maria's family, as was the expectation at the time.

William Corder, brother of the late Thomas Corder, had inherited the family farm after the death of his father and three brothers. William and Maria formed a relationship resulting in a pregnancy. William Corder lured her to the barn by promising to elope to Ipswich with her and marry her. Maria was persuaded to dress as a boy. Rather than elope, he murdered her, buried her body in the barn and fled. William Corder who disappeared from the village, went on to send letters to Maria's parents telling them she was well and made excuses why he could not bring her back to Polestead.

Her stepmother Ann had dreamed Maria was buried under the Red Barn leading to her father Thomas Marten digging up the barn floor and finding her body with William Corder's silk scarf round her neck. She had been shot.

An investigation into the murder was led by James Lea a London Detective after the local constable had started the investigation. After the death, William Corder advertised for a wife and got married. An inquest was held at the public house in the village. Corder denied knowing Maria and represented himself in court. After two days he was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

It is reported that a local surgeon, George Creed bound a book of the trial with Corder's tanned skin. Other parts of his body, including his skull were used anatomically.

After talking about more foul murders Mike explained the process of hanging. He had studied this and had written an application to become a hangman that was never sent as hanging was not brought back. With him he had a hangman's rope, surprisingly soft to touch.

Reported by Linda Peckett

FOUR PEOPLES' STORIES THAT DESERVE TELLING

WITH CHARLOTTE PATTON
(MARCH BRANCH : MARCH 2025)

Charlotte Paton was the speaker at the March meeting. This time she spoke about 'Four People's Stories that Deserve Telling'.

The first person was Robert Bugg who was sure he could win the marathon at the 1908 Olympic Games. The 1908 Olympic Games were held in London. The marathon turned out to be an unusual and rather bizarre event. The official distance was 26 miles and 385 yards, and run between Windsor and the White City. Dorando Pietri of Italy was leading the race when he staggered, dazed into the arena. He headed in the wrong direction and collapsed. Officials helped him to the finish line in first place. This resulted in him being disqualified and Johnny Hayes of the USA awarded the title. Although he did not win officially, his courage gained him immortality.

A Norfolk man, Robert Bugg was sure he could have beaten the time of 3 hours 16 minutes and 8 seconds. Although Robert Bugg was not built to be a natural runner with short legs he had the lung capacity of two men. He was employed at the iron works in Norwich and trained by running from Marlingford about 6 miles from Norwich to Tottington Heath (now a deserted village). His diet consisted of raw eggs, port, stews, rice pudding, soda water and sherry. Bugg had been able to run 10 miles in 64 minutes, but had to stop due to getting stitch and a cut foot. He lost minutes whilst the foot was attended to. Although he had difficulty completing his time was 3 hours and 23 seconds, beating all the English teams. He had thousands of supporters and was awarded a marble clock and silver medal. His story was soon forgotten.

John Craske was the second person's story that deserves telling. John was born in Sheringham in 1881. He was the third of five sons and four daughters of Edward and Hannah Craske. The family moved to Grimsby where John went to school until the age of 14. He then joined his brothers working as a sea fisherman. The work was long, grueling and cold. With the demise of sailing smacks and the coming of steam trawlers the family moved back to Norfolk to run a fish shop in Dereham also supplying local villages on a pony.

John attended the Salvation Army and sang in the choir. He met Laura Eke who was a member of the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Dereham where they married in 1908. They worked together running a fish business, John collected fish from the docks and Laura did the curing and smoking never taking a day off. In the 1911 Census John (age 29) is recorded as a 'fish

merchant' living in North Elmham with Laura (age 28). They returned to Dereham in 1914. Physically John was not strong and was exempted from active service in WW1. However, some local people appealed against his exemption and he was called up. In 1917 John collapsed whilst training and sent to hospital in Croydon. He was diagnosed with an abscess on the brain and transferred to Thorpe Hospital, Norwich and later released to Laura's care. He was discharged from the army in 1918.

John had periods of being in a coma, sometimes for months. Dr Victor John Duigan suggested that sea air may help his cure. His father died in 1920 resulting in another relapse. Laura rented a house near Blakeney where John could sail and started to sew, make model boats and paint. He used calico to sew on using wools, string and anything available. The house proved unsuitable and they moved to Wiveton and later Hemsby. John painted seascapes on any flat surface he could find, plywood from chests, box lids and door panels using whitewash, house paint and any paint he could find.

In 1927 Valentine Ackland purchased a painting of the James Edward for thirty shillings. She wanted more of his work for an exhibition in a London gallery. The Daily Mail reported on his work, calling it 'crude, but works of art'. John Craske worked on many painting and stitched pictures. Charlotte showed pictures of several of stitched pictures. A third exhibition including his work was in New York. Some of his work was from memory and some from his imagination. One of his embroideries is of the the Norfolk coast and can be seen at the Red House, Aldeburgh. Valentine gave all the artwork she had purchased to Peter Pears and exhibited at Snape Maltings. He worked on a picture on the Evacuation of Dunkirk measuring 132 inches long and 22 inches wide until he died in 1943. This is held at Norwich University Museum. After his death, John Craske's work was exhibited at the Glandford Shell Museum and the Aldeburgh Festival in 1971. More than 50 of his works were exhibited in Dereham in 2004. Some of his works have been sold by Bonhams.

Dora Eileen Agnew Wallace was born 1897 in Cumberland and died in 1989 at Diss. She was a teacher, social campaigner and novelist, having more than 50 books published under the name of Doreen Wallace. Dora taught at Diss Grammar School before she married Rowland Rash in 1922 a farmer and landowner from Wortham in Suffolk.

For many years vicars of the Church of England were entitled to a tithe equal to one tenth of everything each farmer owned. For example the rector of Doddington received £10,000 a year from tithes. This was bitterly resented

by the farmers. Some farms had to be sold to pay the tithe. Cartoons appeared on pottery depicting the injustice. Dora's campaigning became most prevalent in the 1930's in the agricultural depression calling the tithe as 'the iniquitous tithe tax'. She became president of the National Tithe Payers Association. The injustice led to two farms being impounded in. In 1934 Dora and her husband refused to pay the tithe. Dora owed £565 (£51,000 today) pigs and cattle were seized leading to a siege at Wortham Manor. Dora was pictured in the local press being held aloft by local farmers who were protesting after a bankruptcy sale in 1939. A ditch was dug and trees cut down to keep the bailiffs out. A memorial stone outside the church reads '134 pigs and 15 cattle seized 22nd February 1934'.

After WW1 farmers refused to pay, many of the farmers sons had been killed in the war, tenants had taken on the farms; there was no money to pay the tithes. Dora campaigned becoming a spokesperson trying to explain the plight of farmers to the public. A farmer owing £100 was taken to court, where he was ordered to pay £300. Livestock was seized and sent to auction to pay the fine, nobody bid. Bailiffs took produce further north to be sold. The whole situation had got 'out of hand'. Eventually the law was changed.

Dora died in 1989 at the age of 92 at her home in Diss.

The fourth person Charlotte talked about was Leslie Harrison Lambert .

Born in Nottingham in 1883, he was a Foreign Office official, Royal Navy officer and cryptographer in the Enigma team at Bletchley Park, a musician who performed for the Royal Family and was also famous in the Magic Circle and known under the pseudonym of A J Allen when he made occasional broadcasts in the 1920's and 1930's. The broadcasts were tall tales written by himself and very popular with the audience. He would turn up at the BBC in white tie and tails carrying a candle and matches in case of an emergency. But, he disappeared – or did he?

Leslie Harrison became a radio ham at the start of WW1 working at the Lighthouse in Hunstanton. Here he intercepted messages from German radio transmissions. Queen Mary visited from Sandringham and recognized him. He did magic tricks for her and friends. In 1914 he was employed by the Admiralty at Intelligence Room 40 where he stayed until the outbreak of WW2, although official records state he was working at the Foreign Office since 1909.

In WW2 Harrison was sent to Bletchley Park Room 8 where he helped with intercepting messages from Russian transmissions. A colleague said his work at Bletchley Park was 'in contrast to his outrageously unconventional

stories' and that he led his life on a 'monotonously regular timetable'.

Whilst working for the BBC his broadcasts were an immediate success. Although the stories appeared to be 'off the cuff', he was meticulous in writing each story and only made about 5 broadcasts a year. Harrison (A J Allen) made the ending of his stories unexpected for the audience and whimsical. Whilst broadcasting he used cards with the written stories rather than using paper that would rustle. Three collections of his stories have been published. Harrison was married but had no children. He died at Norwich in 1941.

Reported by Linda Peckett

WAS THIS THE "WOMAN IN WHITE"?

WITH ALAN POWELL

(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : MARCH 2025)

The meeting focused on Alan's research into a historical incident from 1858 involving Mary Jane Turner's (nee Hepworth) confinement in an asylum and subsequent escapes, which may have influenced Wilkie Collins' novel "The Woman in White." Alan presented detailed family histories, including connections to various locations and notable figures, while discussing naming conventions and genealogical research methods. He used census returns, archives in York, Lincoln, and Wakefield, and newspaper reports from the time to piece together the story.

Charles Turner was born in Liverpool in 1807 and educated at Harrow School and became an Official Assignee in Bankruptcy (Official Receiver). Mary Jane Hepworth was born in 1817 (or 1819) in Manchester but she was not baptised until 11 days before she married Charles in Acomb Parish Church in 1845. However, the 1851 census shows them living on The Wirral with a daughter, Ellen Turner Hepworth aged 12 – said to be the natural daughter of Charles Turner. It is said he had hidden the birth from his family due to Mary Jane's lower social standing. According to newspaper reports, the marriage was stormy from the start and due to his work, Charles was often away from home. Mary Jane was extremely violent towards Charles, attacking him on various occasions with a stick and another time with a poker – which fractured his skull. She was taken into custody and he to hospital. Following his release from hospital Charles refused to press charges against Mary Jane but they did agree on a separation. Charles allowed her £200 per annum which in today's money is about £12,000!

In 1857, following bouts of paranoia, Mary Jane was committed to Acomb

House Asylum which appears to have been privately run, the proprietor being John William Metcalfe and holding a Diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons. Mary Jane was charged 3 guineas a week (approx £200 today) for her board and laundry – paid for by Charles Turner! Another of the inmates was Edward Tennyson, brother of Lord Alfred Tennyson who spent the rest of his life in the asylum.

On 24 February 1858, Mary Jane escaped from the asylum through a bedroom window by tying sheets together and going to York or possibly Leeds, where a sister was living. She was returned to Acomb House but escaped again and returned to York living in Little Blake Street. When John William Metcalfe traced her she was wearing a nightdress and the newspapers make a big thing about her state of undress and the language used in her apprehension. In July 1858 a tribunal was held in York Castle over a 2 day period. Following examination of a number of witnesses, Mr Metcalfe and Mary Jane the jury, after half an hour, found her to be of sound mind and Mr Metcalfe's behaviour to be disgraceful. His licence to run the asylum was revoked in September 1858.

John W Metcalfe was the son of the Rev John Metcalfe, a minor Canon, and was baptised in 1818 in Canterbury. John Metcalfe was born in Ely, probably the son of the Rev. William Metcalfe and Anna Maria Howard, both of whom are buried in Ely Cathedral. Alan noticed that one of the clergymen officiating at John W Metcalfe's wedding was a Rev. J P Metcalfe - his brother – John Powell Metcalfe. The Powell family came from Bramham and upon checking, Alan discovered that JPM's mother is a distant relative of his family!

The Case of Mrs Turner
The British Medical Journal Vol 2 83, 1858, pp 632-632. JSTOR
• PRIVATE LUNATIC ASYLUMS: THE CASE OF MRS. TURNER.

• The Commission of Lunacy held on Friday and Saturday last, in the Castle at York, for the purpose of inquiring into the alleged lunacy of Mrs. Mary Turner, has disclosed some very painful facts relative to that lady's treatment by Mr. John William Metcalfe, surgeon, of Acomb House, the proprietor of the asylum in which she had been placed. It appears in evidence that she was placed in this private asylum, under the usual certificates, in December last; and that on two occasions she escaped. On the second occasion, when he discovered her in a house in bed, his groom, at his request, lifted her by the feet, whilst he took her by the shoulders; and in this manner forced her to dress. In his book of entries, he had remarked, "I find Mrs. Turner to be specious, mendacious, ignorant, and beastly;" and on one occasion he said to her, "Come, you have stripped before many men, you shall strip before me;" and he admitted that he had used words to the effect that he could name half a dozen men who had had to do with her. These details, if true? and we see no reason to doubt them, as they are publicly reported in the Times Prove that private asylums sometimes fall into the hands of persons altogether unfit to deal with the insane; and the jury only did their duty in appending to their verdict a reflection on the disgraceful conduct of Mr Metcalfe, which they referred to the attention of the Commissioners of Lunacy.

Acomb House remained an asylum until 1904 but changed name to avoid association with the scandal. John William Metcalfe lived in exile in Jersey. He died in Switzerland in 1896 leaving £3,276 (approx. 250,000 today). Charles Turner moved from Devon to Liverpool and died in 1872. Mary Jane Turner possibly died in Isleworth 1875. There are a number of Mary Jane Turner's dying in the 1870s!

All the above happened in 1857 and resulted in change to the Lunacy Laws. So, was this the basis of the books called 'The Woman in White' by Wilkie Collins, the first being published in 1859, about a young woman who had an illegitimate child, and was confined to a lunatic asylum?

Reported by Muriel Halliday

HOW CONFLICTS AROUND THE WORLD SHAPED MY FAMILY

WITH CLAIRE TOPPING

(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : APRIL 2025)

At the beginning of her presentation Claire said that she would be using country names familiar to her in the presentation for fluency.

Claire started with the historical context of her family's background, starting with the Mughal Empire and the British East India Company who obtained large tracts of land which needed to be defended. She explained how the East India Company eventually governed a significant portion of India and as a result had it's own private army which by the late 1700s numbered around 200,000 soldiers. However, it started to fail financially and after several bail-outs the Company came under direct British rule in 1858, this being the start of what was known as The Raj. The Anglo-Burmese Wars resulted in Burma becoming a province of India in 1886.

Claire began with Henry Pendarves Tremeneheere part of a wealthy Cornish family who was a ship's captain with the East India Company. Her great-grandfather Henry George Henry Wynne Tremeneheere (b.1840) joined the army and served in various places in India, and married Elizabeth Minna Ewart daughter of Major General Ewart of the India Staff Corps in 1864. They had 13 children, one of whom was Seymour Wynn Tremeneheere. His son Hugh Seymour Tremeneheere was Claire's grandfather born in Bangalore in 1895. Hugh Seymour ended up in Rangoon, Burma in the 1920s working for the P&O Steamship Company.

On Claire's mother's side of the family, Thomas Everard Luxor who worked as a telegraph operator in Rangoon emphasizing the importance of the

telegraph office in maintaining the British Empire. He married Ethel Francis White, who was much younger in 1895. She was the youngest daughter of an Irish/Scottish Army Captain stationed in Rangoon. Their daughter married Hugh Seymour Tremeneere in 1924. They had 6 children, the youngest of whom is Claire's mother. During the Second World War the family eventually settled back in Bangalore but with Indian Independence on the horizon some of the family relocated to Australia and one sister went to the Isle of Man with her husband. Claire's mother joined that sister in 1952 and began training as a nurse.

On Claire's paternal side, Arthur Charles Marshall was born in Little Compton, Gloucestershire in 1866. He joined the army at the age of 21 and served in Africa, Singapore and Lucknow (India) and Britain. At the age of 34 he married Kate Lamdin aged 18 in the Isle of Wight. Immediately after the wedding they were posted to Ireland due to the Irish Home Rule issue, where their four children were born, thus entitling Claire to take dual Irish British citizenship. They eventually settled back on the Isle of Wight. Their daughter, Vera Madeleine Marshall, was Claire's grandmother.

Claire's other grandfather, William James Topping, was born in Manchester in 1899 into a multi-generational family of boiler makers, employing 25 workers prior to the start of WWI. He eventually joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve during the First World War at the age of 17 and served on minesweepers. He joined the newly formed Air Force in 1921 supporting the flying boats/sea planes. He married Vera Madeleine Marshall in the Isle of Wight in 1927.

The couple had three children, one of whom was Claire's father, William, who was born in Cupar Fife, Scotland in 1930. Through National Service he became a pilot in the RAF serving at RAF Butterworth, Malaya during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960). Claire's mother had not enjoyed civilian nursing and joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, eventually being posted to a hospital in Singapore.

Claire's father and mother met on a train returning from a period of rest and recuperation in Penang. They married at RAF Butterworth in 1955, had two children, and served in a number of places including Aden in the 1960s during the Aden Emergency. By the time she was 8 years old, Claire had moved seven times before settling in Saffron Walden.

During questions Claire explained all the types of records she had accessed to put her talk together.

Reported by Muriel Halliday

MIGRATION PATTERNS

WITH LAURIE PAGE
(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : MAY 2025)

Laurie Page has been engaged in family history research for over 40 years, with wide experience in adult education, committee member of the Essex Society for Family History, speaker for the Federation of Family History Societies, and Group leader of the Warsash Community U3A Family History Group.

This talk looked at the Theories of Migration - why it happened and how - illustrated with many case studies from his own family.

Laurie started with a detailed overview of historical migration patterns, starting with Ravenstein's 19th century research and the Residential Histories Project. He explained that most migrants moved short distances, with work being the primary reason for moving. He used case studies, including his own family's history and the Fullman family, to illustrate how migration patterns changed over time, particularly with the development of the railway network in the 19th century. He emphasized the importance of census records in tracking family migrations and highlighted the limited distance most people moved, even in later generations. Laurie explained that while most ancestors moved short distances within nearby parishes, exceptions existed due to historical events like the Huguenot migrations and the Irish famine.

Laurie presented several case studies of genealogical research, focusing on tracking family histories through various historical records. He detailed his investigation into the ancestry of Rebecca Annie Brown, who was conceived in 1871, leading to the discovery of a potential connection to a village policeman. Laurence also discussed his research on the Howard family, tracing their lineage back to Thomas Howard from Eaton Bray, and the Buckmaster family, which he linked to London during the plague and fire of 1665-1666. Additionally, he explored the mysteries surrounding Joseph Page's move from Kenilworth to Weston Underwood, and the adoption of Daniel Lee, who was a foundling. Laurence emphasized the importance of circumstantial evidence and coincidences in genealogical research, and highlighted the challenges of tracing family histories, such as naming conventions and missing records.

He discussed historical transportation methods, noting that people in the past primarily walked and used horse-drawn vehicles, with horses being a luxury only the wealthy could afford. It was the later advent of the railways that allowed people to migrate to other parts of the country.

Laurie also covered migration to other parts of the world, particularly focusing on Australia and the role of parishes in sending people abroad. He explained that many people who emigrated to Australia were stepchildren who no longer felt part of their families, and that parishes would sometimes send people abroad to reduce their burden on parish funds. Other motivations for long distance migration to Australia and the US in the 19th century was often driven by the desire for new opportunities and fortune, with Australia's ten-pound passage being a significant attraction.

The sources used for the presentation were fully detailed, including settlement records, census data, parish records, and marriage indexes.

Laurie's talk was very well received and gave rise to a number of questions from the audience who also described migration within their own families' history. The ability for labourers to find work, which may have led to moving districts was discussed, and the social aspects of marketplaces and hiring fairs, where people met, found work, and socialized. One viewer's ancestor had moved from East Anglia to Yorkshire in the mid-1800s in response to a labour shortage, facilitated by advertisements. Some participants explored the historical patterns of surname distribution and migration, with Laurence noting that many surnames originated from place names and were often passed down through generations.

There was great interest in the tables and charts that Laurie had drawn from his investigations into the 1881 census and others, and it was confirmed that these would be included in the zoom recording (available on the CHFHS website).

This was an excellent presentation of the subject supported by more facts and figures than we normally see, and emphasis on the sources of this information that should open up other avenues of discovery for all of us.

Reported by John Bownass

*Save The Day
Sat 18 April*

**East Anglia Regional
Family History Fair
Burgess Hall
St Ives**

**watch out for more details and announcements
nearer the time via the CHFHS website/newsletter/journal**

MANORIAL RECORDS

WITH PHILIP SAUNDERS
(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : JULY 2025)

Philip Saunders, a former senior role holder at the County Council's Archive service, discussed the significance of manorial records for family historians. He explained what constitutes a manor, noting that it can refer to a house, estate, or administrative unit. He highlighted the importance of these records in tracing ancestral history and provided guidance on where to find them, using examples from Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and the National Archives at Kew. He also mentioned his involvement in the Manorial Documents Register project, which continues to evolve.

An overview of manorial records followed, highlighting their significance and the various sources for accessing them. He explained the role of the Victoria County History and the Manorial Documents Register in documenting and preserving these records and noted that more manorial records are being discovered over time.

Recommendations were given of the various resources available, including books with glossaries and online archives, for those interested in researching manorial documents. He also addressed questions about Latin transcripts and the transition of constable appointments from manors to local vestries, though he couldn't provide a definitive answer on the latter.

The history and functions of manorial courts was discussed, focusing on their role in managing land tenure and agricultural regulations. He explained the distinction between copyhold and freehold land, noting that copyhold could be enfranchised to become freehold under various acts. Philip also outlined the types of records produced by manorial courts, including court rolls, minute books, and rentals, highlighting their significance for historical research.

Following this was a detailed overview of historical court rolls and court books, showcasing their evolution from the 14th to the 19th centuries. An explanation about the format, content, and legal significance of these documents, highlighted key features such as Latin text, juror presentations, and tenant surrenders. The role of stewards and lords of the manor in managing these courts was detailed, and he provided examples of admissions and surrenders from various manors.

The various historical documents related to manorial courts, was discussed, these included election flyers, public health records, and tenant lists. An explanation for how these documents could provide insights into literacy rates and social dynamics in villages. The example of a 16th-century rental document and a detailed survey of the manor of Fenstanton with Hilton was

given, noting their value for family history and land management studies. He mentioned a recently published map of the Doddington manor, which includes March, Wimblington, and Benwick, and will be available for purchase soon. The presentation concluded with a brief mention of the survival and variability of manorial records across different locations

The talk sparked interest from attendees, with many saying they would follow up on suggested resources avenues. After a mention in the Lost Cousins newsletter, the Society welcomed around 130 attendees for this talk.

Reported by CJ

MORE THAN JUST A NAME ON A PAGE

WITH DEBBIE BRADLEY

(CAMBRIDGE ZOOM : JUNE 2025)

Debbie's talk outlined a strategy for pursuing family history as more than just a listing of names—by the putting an ancestor's life into a social context. People may start initially by using census and b/m/d records to locate where an ancestor was living and what their occupations were, and wills left by ancestors may also name relatives and children to enhance research. What other sources might be available to the researcher? Debbie used the example of her own Gilbert ancestors to demonstrate what else can be pieced together from various sources.

For her grandfather, Richard Albert Gilbert, Debbie found his civil registration record but no baptism so it could be that he wasn't ever baptised. His school record was located and he was found in the 1921 census as he was born in 1912. He is also on the 1939 Register. He turned up in electoral rolls but did not show up in WW2 records as Richard didn't serve in the forces. She has his death certificate and knows where he's buried and also found his will.

Debbie also looked at another ancestor, Frank Gilbert. She obtained copies of his birth, marriage and death certificates. From the censuses his job was as a carpenter with the Great Western Railway. On application to the preserved GWR archives, she found out he moved from Swindon, where he was based to Paddington to work on the carriages there and then he left and started his own company. Again, quite a lot of information about one person's life. She found Frank was from Devizes but his ancestors had long resided in a little village in Wiltshire. Debbie explained that large organisations often hold extensive personnel records, e.g. London Underground, Marks and Spencer's, Boots, Lloyds Bank or the various Livery companies based in London. If an ancestor had a trade with them you may find them in their apprentice records.

You can find all sorts of unexpected facts in old newspapers. You might even find a picture of an ancestor. Many papers are now included in the British newspaper Archive. Debbie explained from a newspaper report she found how in the 1880s, her great-great-grandmother had been sent to prison following a street incident. It was also found that Frank's father, Richard Gilbert, was summoned for neglecting to send Frank, age 11, to school in compliance with the Education Act and subsequently fined.

Records for Richard Gilbert, showed he was born illegitimately. His baptism record usefully included the name of the reputed father. His name was mentioned on a bond when his mother, Sarah had taken his father to court for non-payment and maintenance. His mother did marry Richard's father afterwards but didn't stay around for long which is why she went to court. So that was another insight into his life. In censuses his occupation was shop owner. Sarah owned the shop with Richard, and they could also be found in trade directories. Trade directories tell you about what the town was like at the time, such as who were the prominent people in the town, the tradesmen and shopkeepers. Richard appeared in a newspaper report when there was a problem with the quality of mustard he was selling. Was he adulterating the mustard to eke it out a bit longer? Anyway he was found not guilty. Over the years, they used both the mother's married name and her maiden name, therefore finding marriages was not always straightforward. Finding notices of the children's marriages in newspapers revealed who they had married, and when and where.

The National Archives are a brilliant resource. They hold government records but also have guides to businesses that were dissolved. The Gazette archives are really good, because they tell you, if your ancestor become bankrupt, or a partnership split, or a changed their name by deed poll. School records can be useful. From school logbooks and admission registers a lot may be found about an ancestor. FindMyPast, has a lot of admission registers on there. Admission registers tell you, when they came to school and may have dates of birth if not already known. Quarter sessions records deal with criminal trials, settlement records, crimes in the parish and apprenticeships if something went wrong with the masters.

Several Family History societies have transcribed historic tax records. A hearth tax was levied from 1662 to 1689, so there may be mention of an ancestor in a tax record. Similarly for Land Tax records, collected from 1693 to 1963, although not many early examples survive.

Settlement examinations can tell you about an ancestor if they had moved

parish. If people fell on hard times and were not settled in a parish, the parish authorities would ship you back to where you came from before to avoid having to financially support them. County archives hold many records which contain information which may assist in locating ancestor. Diaries, if they exist, can tell you an awful lot about the places where your ancestor lived.

Local family history societies have local knowledge. They know about places, and they may know about the people. With local help, Debbie was able to find a map showing where Richard's home and shop were located. You can also share surname interests as there might be someone else in that Family History Society researching the same family as you—they may know more than you—they *might be a relative!*

Compiled by CJ

ANCESTRY comes to Cambs & Hunts

As you will probably be aware by the time you read this, mid-July Ancestry released its collection of Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire Parish Registers.

We are please to be part of this exciting initiative by Cambridgeshire Archives to widen access to records. CHFHS's "life-long" work on transcribing parish registers lives on as these transcripts form the foundation of the search database for finding the images (the Society also has joint billing with the Archives as the records "source" on the Ancestry website)

As with the other counties in the Ancestry "stable", the new collection comprises four records databases which can be searched individually, collectively, or as part of an "all records search" over the whole of Ancestry

- Baptisms, Marriages & Burials 1538-1812
 - Births & Baptisms 1813-1924
 - Deaths & Burials 1813-1997
 - Marriages & Banns 1754-1950

NB: users should note that this is NOT the same as the CHFHS website database—Ancestry have reproduced scanned images only from material held by Cambs/Hunts Archives (which is **not** every parish in the counties)

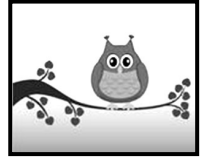
The CHFHS Projects Team continues to work on bringing online access to records from parishes which are NOT part of the Ancestry Collection, as well as to material from other local sources of local and genealogical interest.

We are always on the look out for new volunteers (and particularly if you have skills with old handwriting and/or reading Latin). If you would like to help—please get in touch with Terry via: projects@chfhs.org.uk



RECENT RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

we are not just all about Cambs/Hunts



The Research Team can be contacted in a number of ways—local library surgeries; events and fairs; facebook; email to the research team; by letter to the secretary; zoom sessions. Over recent months, we have received a wide variety of enquiries on a wide variety of topics ranging from simple “how to ...” queries from newer researchers, to complex “last resort” problems having long-flummoxed their owners—from the “local” to down under and beyond. Recent receipts include:

- Request about Pack family in Alconbury early 1800's – finding evidence of the family there but also a question about why the family in Alconbury would also migrate to Higham Ferrers in Northants
- Search for evidence of Richard Annis in Wistow and Elizabeth Thody, late 1700's from Wistow
- History of the Norman family from Isleham in 1700's
- A request relating to the Mary Hatch almshouses and related charities and benevolences related to Mary hatch in Witchford and Nornea Farm
- Request for baptism details of Susanah Briggs who m. Robert Salmon in 1796 in St Ives. Supposedly she was from St Ives – only baptism records came from Cheveley near Newmarket and Burrough Green.
- Service record requests for Jabez Nightingale based on a snippet from an (unknown) site for attestation record – 2 of same name living at same time, found in Ettisley and London – both shoemakers in some records – odd overlap – not the same person, but nothing traceable for the Jabez which is conclusive.
- identifying the public house in the St Neots area that was once owned by an ancestor, alluded to, but not named in the relevant censuses.
- the best way to record your tree and back-up stories on paper?
- looking for information on the Hunts Bicycle Battalion
- tracing ancestors who were transported to Van Diemen's Land

REMEMBER— we're here to help, so don't hesitate to ask

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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ALL OTHER, & POSTAL, CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SECRETARY, PLEASE

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