

Roots in the Forest



WFFHS summer lunch

WALTHAM FOREST FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

September 2025

ISSN 0143-215X

WALTHAM FOREST FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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Roots in the Forest

The Journal of the Waltham Forest Family History Society

September 2025

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NORTH CHINGFORD HERITAGE FESTIVAL – Mark Carroll

The North Chingford Heritage Festival was a borough-sponsored series of community-based events lasting for 16 days (Saturday 21st June–6th July 2025) – see street publicity (Fig 1). Jo Parker, the Archivist at Waltham Forest Archives, had invited WFFHS to participate at one of the events on the opening day of the festival at Chingford Assembly Hall (CAH): a helpdesk for family history research. Chingford Historical Society was also invited to the same event. Committee members Kathy, Gill and Mark set out the WFFHS material across two tables: one with the publications for sale, the other with a laptop computer having access to all the key genealogical websites (Fig 2).

The Mayor of Waltham Forest, Tony Bell, attended the event to formally open it, and at one point in the afternoon he came over to the WFFHS stall to chat with us. We had a steady stream of about a dozen visitors over the course of the four hours. Most of them had pre-registered to attend one of the guided tours of the archives and local studies library – now housed at CAH after their recent relocation from Vestry House Museum in Walthamstow – organised by Jo and her staff. Thus, all the visitors whom we spoke with and helped already had a keen interest in history, whether it be family, local or social. We handed out free copies of information on family history research, together with WFFHS membership flyers. Hopefully some of these visitors will join us as members one day!

Another such event was held on Saturday 5th July, with Tim, Barrie and Kathy representing WFFHS. Again, there were tours of the archives, which included displays of various documents such as maps of Chingford going back to when it was mostly farmland. There was also a talk entitled “The Home Front in World War 2” given by Gary Heales. The talk was well attended, and Gary held a book signing afterwards.

WFFHS is a small society with limited resources and personnel. Its committee is of the opinion that one way to maximise the society’s impact with a view to recruiting new members is to collaborate with like-minded organisations, and the North Chingford Heritage Festival

was an ideal opportunity to do this. Interestingly we have had quite a few new members join recently.



Figure 1. Street advert for festival



Figure 2. WFFHS stall in Chingford Assembly Hall, Kathy standing on extreme left, Gill seated on extreme right

Continuing the diary of Thomas Alban Coward

When the Board of Guardians met I was sent for by a Miss Baker, she was chief guardian for Clerkenwell and knew the family well, being one of the benefactors of St Alban's Church. She asked me if I would like to live in the country and knowing that it would be better than this I, of course, said yes. Now I knew that unless one had no parents they were never sent to the country, so I guessed that mother was dead. Eventually on March 3rd 1906, Albert and I were sent to live with a Mr & Mrs Robinson at Watlington, Norfolk. Dicky, who was still in hospital, did not accompany us. Later I learned that they had adopted us and the guardians were paying them 5/- for each of us weekly. I soon got tired of this and wanted to go back to London.

On March 31st 1906 I was eleven years of age and decided that I would get a book and write out my remembrances, so that I could tell you and the boys about it when you grew up. This is how I have come to remember all this. I went to an ordinary school and was considered a very backward child. I was known as 'Cockney' and fought nearly everyone in the school. Apparently I was a bigger handful than Mrs Robinson had bargained for and she wrote the Guardians to that effect. No doubt I was a very wayward child, but a good tanning occasionally would have cured me. Instead I gave Mrs Robinson a good hiding and this led to us being transferred to a Mr and Mrs Pratt, Wallington, temporarily while the guardians found us another home. I went to them on July 7th 1906 and stayed until August 18th. I became a terror to the village and I killed nearly all their chickens and a dog. I used to throw all their fruit from the trees into the road. Here we were not considered adopted children and only had whatever food they thought fit to give us.

On August 18th, 1906, Albert and I went to live with Mr and Mrs Randall, West Winch, Norfolk. They had a very pretty house down a beautiful lane with a great orchard attached. They were old people and seemed very nice folk, and I resolved to try and please. Alas for my resolutions, the next day at Sunday School I fought two boys. But my foster parents were very patient and except for an occasional outbreak I was broke in. I speak like this because with kindness and a

little stick they did what I thought was impossible and I soon began to have a love for them which gets greater as time goes on. Again, at school I was considered very backward and was eleven years of age and could barely do standard 2 work. The headmistress Mrs Borking helped me a great deal and I have tried hard to learn. I began to like going to church and became what I considered to be a good boy, which was very marvellous. In September 1906 Dicky came to live with us. I can remember him now in petticoats. He remarked that the person that tied taters to a tree must be daft. He was alluding to russet apples. Soon he started school and we lived happily together. I was in the Ex. VII Standard when I was thirteen and I began to like teaching the infants. I studied hard for an examination which entitled the candidates that passed to three years in the King Edward VII Grammar School at Lynn. A month before the examination the age of entering candidates was altered from 13 to 12 and I was too old of course. I was greatly upset, and I really think I should have passed, but the learning gained by my studying was very useful to me.

On Dec 23rd 1906 I went into Lynn Hospital and had my tonsils taken out. On Good Friday 1908 I had news that I was to proceed to London of Easter Monday and would be met at Kings X by an official. This was my second time in London as I spent a few days holiday there at Xmas 1907. Of course I understood that I had left school and that I was about to start work at something. When making my choice, previous to this I had expressed a little liking for teaching and checking, but I much preferred to be a silversmith. This preference was naturally prompted because it was father's trade. I left by the 5.45 pm train from Lynn and childlike I felt very pleased to think that I was going out to work, so much so, that I remember I was not at all upset when saying goodbye to them all at the station. I was met at Kings X and taken to Mitcham again, much to my surprise and the following day, I started the old Workhouse School routine. I did not get on very well and was very pleased to see George and Uncle Dick who came to visit me once. After seeing the Board again a month after my reinternment I went again to London and lived with some strange people and was allowed to go about a little so that I might get used to London. I was there a week, during which time in company with Mrs Baker I visit Dad's old workshop. Again I was sent back to Mitcham but on May 24th 1908 I was sent back to London and started

work at C.S. Harris & Sons the same morning. But much to my surprise I was not to be a silversmith but a polisher and it was very dirty work too. I remembered one workman who was a friend of Father's and he took me home to dinner. Let me explain the work. I started at 8 am, & used to rub pumice stone on plates of silver until 10.15 am. I then went round to the thirteen men in the compartment & took orders for lunch. These consisted of 2ds cheese, 2ds ham, ¼ds milk, ½ds bread, 1ds tomatoes, 1ds beer, etc. These eatables I had to fetch to the men by 10.30 am & they had to be eaten by 10.45 am. Work then went on until 12.30 pm then I took in similar orders & went out to buy the men's dinner. I had from 1 pm till 2 pm to get my own dinner, then went on work until 6 pm. The factory was fairly large & there were about 250 workmen. My pay was 6/- per week, & on the whole I was nothing but an errand boy. Before leaving Mitcham I was given an address, to which I was to apply for lodgings. This, I found to be a house belonging to the Homes for Working Boys in London Society, & for my board & lodging I was to pay 5/6½ leaving me with 5½d with which to buy my clothes, & for my pocket money. There were about 40 boys in the same position as myself & our meals were 2 slices & tea breakfast, an ordinary dinner, & 2 slices & tea for tea, not a very fattening living you will agree. All this went on for about 3½ years, during which time my pay rose to 12/6 & out of which I paid 9/8 into the home. My work was always the same. In my evenings I used to attend night school voluntarily, & I learned Gymnastics, French, Shorthand, Typewriting & Swimming. Occasionally I met George on some of the committees, but I never mixed with them much, & usually about twice a year I went to Norfolk to see Albert & Dick. I had two other holidays during my London sojourn to Yarmouth, & Clacton on Sea. In September 1912 I left the shop & intended to try my luck elsewhere. I had learned nothing & was still an errand boy, & of course, it went against the grain to run errands. I told no-one I had left, & after three weeks I enlisted as a Royal Marine for 12 years.

I am now fairly well off at any rate better off than I have been before. I have been at sea since April 21st 1914.

In World War 1 Tom served on the cruiser *The Black Prince* and sadly died on 1st June 1916 at the Battle of Jutland when his ship was

sunk. His name appears on two WW2 memorials: at West Winch where his adoptive parents lived and on the memorial at Portsmouth.



Tomas Alban Coward in his uniform



War memorial at Portsmouth



War memorial at West Winch

Introduction

Have you ever watched that ITV series on television called *Long Lost Family* with Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell? In it, people who have lost touch with their close family members, for whatever reason, try to find them. Many subjects of the programmes were adopted as babies and are seeking their birth parents – most commonly, their father. The team at ITV uses a blend of traditional genealogy research and DNA testing, assisted by specialist intermediaries who have access to otherwise restricted personal information relating to that person. Well, in spring 2025 the two authors of this article became linked in a very similar scenario that mimicked many of the features of a programme in the ITV series. However, our enterprise was hampered by the fact that the likely father in this case was a Smith man from London – a genealogist's worst nightmare!

Janet's story

Born in 1950 in Norwich, Norfolk, Janet YOUNGMAN never knew her parents as she grew up. She had been placed at 6 weeks of age in a Dr Barnardo's Home for Children in Kelvedon, Essex. She stayed there until the age of about 3, when she went to live with foster parents, Mr and Mrs MARTIN. They were Londoners who had moved out to Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire. She lived with them up to the age of 11, when she was moved to a children's home in Stanway, near Colchester, Essex. At the age of 15 she left school and went back to live with her foster parents. Three years later she got married and went on to have her own family. However, for 50 or so years she knew nothing about her family origins – just her name and date of birth and place of birth.

Then at the age of 52 she asked to have access to her Dr Barnardo's records. There, under the supervision of a social worker, she found out her birth mother's maiden name (Joyce L BALES) and the reason behind her having been admitted to the children's home. She also learnt that her birth father was likely called Benjamin SMITH, apparently a 35-year-old electrical welder and widower from London, who had been seeing her mother for about five months in 1949 in Norwich, Norfolk. Moreover, she discovered that she had half-siblings whom she had never known about. Not all the information in her case-file was available to her, as some had been redacted (blacked

out) – presumably details of a personal nature about other individuals. So it was that at the age of 52, Janet met her birth mother for the first time, and the two women kept up the connection between them before the latter's death. She has also been able to maintain contact with some of her half-siblings on her maternal Bales side; they, however, could not tell her much about that branch of her family tree.

Mark and Benjamin's story

Mark has been researching his maternal SMITH family for over 20 years and has encountered all the usual problems of working with such a common surname in London. Despite the obstacles, he had a fairly complete family tree – Figure 1 shows a small portion of it – with one notable exception: one descending branch had reached a 'brick wall'. His great-grandfather's nephew, Benjamin William SMITH, had been born in 1911 in Stratford, East London; he had married Agnes Florence LECOMBER in 1940 in Canning Town, East London, and the couple had had one child, June Florence, born there in 1942. At that point the trail ran cold – you try researching a June F Smith! A nephew of Benjamin's had provided Mark with a photograph of him in uniform, possibly taken around 1940 (Fig 2). The nephew had also said that his uncle was the 'black sheep' of the family, though the truth and the meaning of that statement were unclear at the time.

In 1921, according to the census of England and Wales that year, this Smith family was living at 26 Beddingfield Street, Stratford, East London, not far from the Great Eastern Railway marshalling yards; Benjamin was a school pupil there. Several of his older siblings moved in and out of the family home during the 1920s and 1930s, as evidenced by the electoral registers for Stratford (available at Newham Archives). In 1939, according to the National Register of England and Wales taken just before the outbreak of World War 2, Benjamin was single and still living at home with his parents. He was working as a blacksmith and was thus classified as a 'heavy worker', allowed extra rations and possibly excused military service. The following year he married Agnes, who was ten years younger than him, at St Luke's Church, Victoria Docks, East London. The couple had a daughter in 1942, June Florence. Much of this information has been captured by Mark in the form of a biographical profile of Benjamin on the Wikitree website (ref 1).

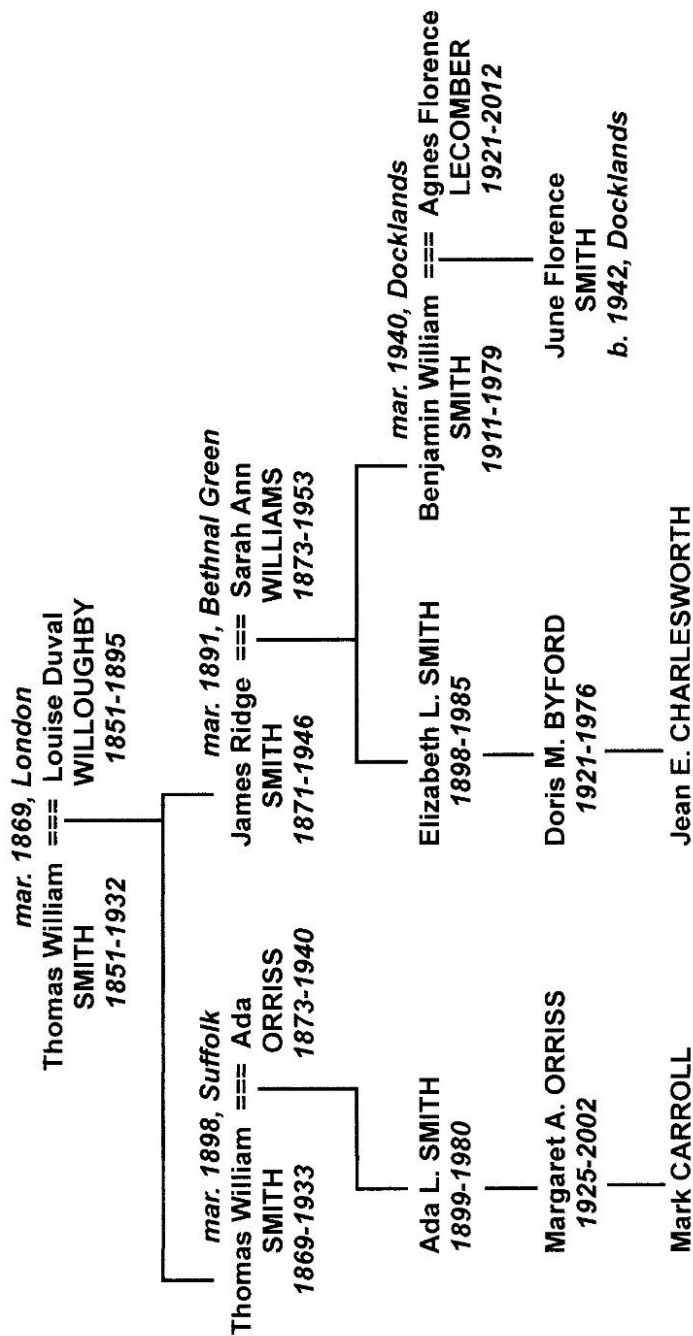


Figure 2. Benjamin William Smith, ca1940

One aspect of this story puzzled both of us after we were in contact (see below). Janet's biological mother had never left the Norwich area as far as she was aware, and Mark knew from his research that Benjamin lived much of his early adult life in East London. How had he come to be in Norwich in 1949? Mark subsequently found a newspaper report in the British Newspaper Archive, available online on FindMyPast. It stated: "£2400 robbery – Benjamin William Smith, 35, welder, said to be an Army deserter, of Sutherland Street [Pimlico], was charged with breaking into a flat at Lowndes Square, Westminster, and stealing [clothes] worth £2400 belonging to Mrs Helen Davies." (£2,400 is equivalent to about £87,000 in 2025.) Presumably found guilty, Benjamin could have been incarcerated in Norwich Prison for a term of three years, to be released there in 1949. Is that how he met Janet's biological mother? Is that why he acquired the label of 'black sheep of the family'? A later search of the British Newspaper Archive revealed Benjamin William SMITH to have been a somewhat incompetent burglar, as judged by the number of times he was caught:

- February 1935 – sent to prison for 10 months on the charge of breaking and entering
- July 1949 – convicted of factory breaking and larceny
- June 1951 – pleaded 'Guilty' to breaking and entering and theft.

Benjamin's family drop out of the records until 1955, when Agnes's brother, Albert James LECOMBER, died and left a will; in it he named his sister Agnes FARRELL as his executor, referring to her as a 'married woman' and wife of Joseph Francis FARRELL. Why the change of her surname? Well, the couple was not legally married at that time, for they did not have their wedding until 1977; by then her first marriage had been dissolved, thereby allowing her to remarry. Benjamin himself died on 17th October 1979 in Whipps Cross Hospital, Leytonstone, E11; his address at the time was 18 Church Hill Road, Walthamstow, E17. It seems that he died alone, for there is no relative named on the death certificate; the informant was a member of the hospital staff. He was buried in Manor Park Cemetery in East London in a communal grave with five other persons (square H, grave number 15). Unfortunately, Benjamin did not leave a will; it might have provided details of his daughter June. Joseph FARRELL died in 1998, and Agnes lived on as a widow until her own death in 2012 in Newham, East London.

Janet and Mark's story

In 2025 Janet decided to find out more about her biological father, so she undertook a DNA test with MyHeritage. Mark himself had tested with Ancestry DNA and with Living DNA, but had also uploaded his raw DNA data to the MyHeritage website. In early April 2025 an email alert from that company came through to his inbox, informing him that he had a new DNA match – Janet Youngman. The name did not mean anything to him, and the 44.6cM of shared DNA was on the low side, making it unlikely that he would be able to find the genealogical connection to her. He sent her his standard email letter without any great hope of expecting to get a response – the usual outcome in this situation. Somewhat to his surprise he *did* get a reply, in which she mentioned that her biological father might be a Benjamin SMITH from London. Now Mark was intrigued, for in his family tree there was indeed a Benjamin William Smith from East London – could they be one and the same man?

In an exchange of emails between Mark near Epping and Janet in Lincolnshire, she outlined to him her background, together with the main points in her Barnardo's casefile. In it her mother described having been seeing Benjamin SMITH for five months in 1949 in Norwich, despite the fact that she was married. It was not clear where her husband, Harry YOUNGMAN, was during that time. When Janet was born in early 1950 her mother apparently felt unable under the circumstances to keep the baby, whose maternal grandmother handed it over to be brought up in the children's home. Some of the facts in the casefile seemed to fit with what we already knew, but others did not: for example, Benjamin William Smith was definitely not a widower in 1950, and he was 38 and not 35 then. However, one has to pose the question: what was the source of the Barnardo's information? If Benjamin had told Joyce who had told Barnardo's, then an error – either deliberate or accidental – could have crept in at any stage. But if Benjamin William SMITH was indeed Janet's biological father, then there should be some physical resemblance between the two of them. If you compare the facial features of Benjamin as a young man with those of Janet as a young woman (Fig 3), would you say they were alike? Mark thought so, as did her daughter. Unfortunately, Janet's mother was no longer alive to identify Benjamin positively.



***Figure 3. Comparison of Benjamin William Smith and Janet Youngman
There seem to be similarities around the eyes, the mouth and the chin***

In terms of genetic genealogy, if you have a DNA match with someone, there are two possible explanations: identical-by-descent (IBD) or identical-by-chance (IBC). With IBD the two people match because they have each inherited the same segment of DNA from the one common ancestor – this is the situation that one hopes to confirm. With IBC the match might arise owing to a ‘false positive’ as a result of ancient DNA that we all have that is of no genealogical significance; or some shuffling of the DNA during reproduction has given rise to a spurious match. One way of discriminating between these two possibilities is to look to see if the matching DNA cousins also both match a third person – or triangulation, as would be the case with IBD. Mark knew that on his list of DNA matches from MyHeritage, there was a Jean CHARLESWORTH, a descendant of Elizabeth, an older sister of Benjamin William SMITH (see Fig 1). If Janet also matched Jean, IBD would likely be confirmed. When Janet looked again at her list of DNA matches, the name of Jean did indeed appear there. So far, so good!

Further confirmation that Mark and Janet were both genetically and genealogically related would come from the use of a chromosome browser, which would establish if the two of them shared any DNA segments at the same position on a given chromosome. Without Mark having a subscription to MyHeritage, that was not immediately

possible. However, one can download one's raw DNA data from the source company and upload it to another provider (but not Ancestry) or to a third-party website, such as GEDmatch (ref 2). Mark had an account with the British company, Living DNA. He gave Janet instructions for downloading her raw DNA data from MyHeritage, and he himself uploaded it to GEDmatch and to Living DNA. They then sat back and waited for the results. Each of those websites would provide details of many more DNA matches for Janet, and they both had a free chromosome browser; in addition, for a one-off payment of \$10, GEDmatch would provide some more powerful tools – their so-called Tier 1.

At the top of the list of Janet's DNA matches from GEDmatch there appeared, as expected, the names of Mark and five of his Smith-related cousins whom he has had tested. At the very top was Sid SMITH, who had provided the photo of Benjamin and who shared an impressive 947cM of DNA with her. If one uses the Shared cM Tool at the DNA Painter website (ref 3), then one finds that this amount of shared DNA equates to a likely relationship of either first cousin or half first cousin. The latter would be the case, if Janet's biological father was indeed Benjamin William SMITH, as he was the youngest brother of Sid's father, Sidney. Mark also uses DNA Painter to map defined segments of DNA at specific sites on a given chromosome. When he compared Janet's DNA segments with this existing map, he saw two interesting features: he and she shared a segment on chromosome 4 (at position 106-113MB) with a known Smith cousin; and on chromosome 9 Janet shared a segment (at position 120-127MB) with two other known Smith cousins. These results provided further evidence that Janet was indeed a member of Mark's maternal London-based Smith family. Another free tool at GEDmatch is one called 'Match both kits': if Janet and a known Smith cousin both match a third person's DNA, then it is probably a case of IBD. However, the amounts of shared DNA in this situation were always rather small. One target person turned out to be an adoptee in America and hence unlikely to be connected to the Smith family – a probable 'false positive'.

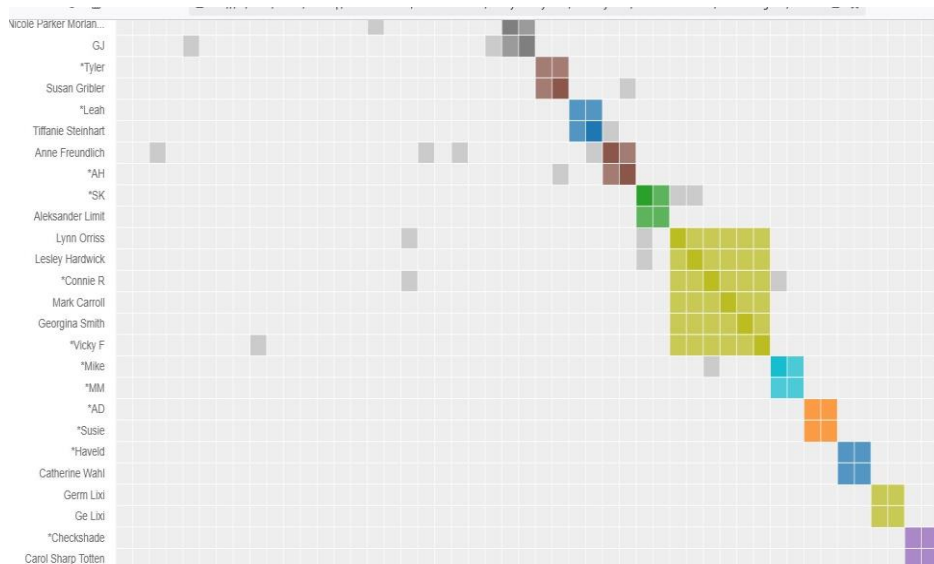


Figure 4. Cluster analysis of Janet's DNA
The large olive-coloured cluster represents the Smith-related cousins

Of the paid-for GEDmatch tools (Tier 1), several were informative. The Autocluster tool creates patterns where everyone in a given cluster matches everyone else, most likely as a result of IBD. With Janet's DNA there was one large cluster that included Mark and his five other Smith-related cousins (Fig 4), plus several small clusters. A related tool took that main cluster and just on the basis of the amounts of DNA shared between the individuals concerned, created a possible family tree. It was not 100% correct but it was a good attempt, and if Mark had not already integrated Janet into his well-researched Smith family tree, it would have provided him with some useful clues. A third tool was more helpful – Autosegment. This looks for DNA segments shared by Janet and her DNA matches, but Mark was particularly interested in those segments that were also shared with his known Smith-related cousins. One such individual was a Gerald TROTT, whose niece Clare is the genealogy expert in their family. Mark had earlier researched and constructed a basic family tree for Janet's maternal side going back to about 1850; one of the surnames in it was HOUGHTON. Clare said that Gerald's ancestor was a Maria TROTT, who had married a William HOUGHTON in Norwich in 1858. William was known to be the grandfather of Janet's

maternal grandmother, Lilian Eliza BALES née HOUGHTON (1896-1980). How often does one find the genealogical connection to a DNA cousin so quickly? Rarely, in most of our experience. At the same time this was an unexpected result, for Gerald should have been related to Janet on her paternal Smith side, not her maternal side. DNA works in mysterious ways sometimes!

With the 500+ DNA matches for Janet at Living DNA, the top ones were, as expected, Mark and the Smith-related cousins, plus Gerald Trott. He sent his standard email letter to the next top half-dozen who lived in the UK, but by this time Janet was already satisfied with the outcome in having confirmed the identity of her biological father, as well as having found a half second cousin once removed in the form of Mark. Living DNA also provided a breakdown of Janet's recent ancestry – referred to by some DNA test providers as 'Ethnicity estimates'. The company's database is thought to be the best for British testees, as it is founded on a population genetics project at Oxford University, the 'People of the British Isles' (PoBI) (ref 4). It indicated that she was 98% British, compared with Mark's 71% – the difference being accounted for by his Indian biological grandfather. Beyond that, it was difficult to make comparisons. From the rudimentary family tree constructed for her, Janet's recent ancestry should have been 50% East Anglia and 50% London/Essex. She turned out to be only 23% East Anglia plus Lincolnshire, and 39% south-east plus south-central England, with smaller amounts from all over Britain. Anyway, these 'ethnicity' predictions are not definitive and should only be used as a guide for further research. Of the top DNA cousins of Janet's on Living DNA, none came back with a positive response that would enable Mark to establish their genealogical link to her.

Future research and a meeting

There was one last avenue of research that Mark wanted to pursue in a way that might help Janet further: to trace June, the daughter of Benjamin and his wife Agnes. She would now be in her early 80s, but if she was alive, she might know what happened to her parents' marriage in the 1940s and what became of her biological father in the 1950s. The only likely genealogical records for a June F Smith that Mark had been able to find previously were two marriages: both in Epping registration district in Essex, with one in 1964 and one in

1970. Without knowing June's married surname, however, it was not possible to know which certificate to order; and in any case neither might be relevant. There was a way forward in order to overcome this impasse though: order Agnes's 2012 death certificate in the hope of finding June named as the informant. Mark duly placed the order. The death certificate came back: Agnes had died in March 2012 in Newham Hospital, Plaistow, East London. The informant was indeed June Florence, with her surname now stated to be FRY; her home address was given as 45 Throckmorton Road, Custom House, E16. A Google search of that address revealed that the property had been sold in July 2022. Fearing the worst, Mark searched the English probate records to see if June had left a will in 2021/22 (ref 5). Sure enough, she had: she had died on 28th June 2021, with probate granted in December that year. The will had been written in 2008, and in it she referred to her husband at that time, George FRY, and their two children, Susan and Diane, who were appointed executors. However, neither of Benjamin's granddaughters, nor his son-in-law, responded to Mark's letter.



Figure 5. Janet Youngman and Mark Carroll, 2025, Lincolnshire

During our exchange of emails, we had expressed an interest in meeting up, for a personal encounter would enhance our previous

purely online relationship. As it happened, Mark's partner Jan had wanted for some time to visit a good friend of hers in Lincolnshire where Janet lived, hence it should be possible to kill two birds with one stone. So it was that all three of us met up on the afternoon of 29th June 2025 at Washingborough Hall Hotel near Lincoln (Fig 5). The atmosphere was relaxed, the conversation flowed, and Janet was comfortable with the idea that her biological father might be the 'black sheep' of her newly discovered Smith family – for we are not responsible for the sins of our fathers, are we?

Final thoughts

As a genetic genealogist, Mark was delighted to be able to help Janet in her quest for her biological father. In this kind of situation, the benefits can sometimes flow both ways, for a new distant cousin might be able to pass on to you copies of old family photographs or relevant information. The other benefit can stem from the results of the DNA test undertaken by that distant cousin. Mark always hopes to find a DNA cousin who is descended perhaps from a sibling or uncle/aunt of his maternal 'brick wall' ancestor, Thomas William Smith (1851-1932). Maybe Janet had inherited a segment of the latter's autosomal DNA, via Benjamin's father, that Mark had not inherited. And maybe one of Janet's DNA matches would be the person who inherited that same segment and who would know the origins of Thomas. Well, one lives in hope! In any case we have enjoyed our recent shared experience, even if there were no ITV cameras around to record an episode of *Long Lost Family*!

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1. Wikitree profile of Benjamin William Smith (1911-1979). Available: <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Smith-352480>
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4. People of the British Isles website. Available: <https://www.peopleofthebritishisles.org/>
5. Probate Search website: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/>

Feedback survey

To help improve the way our Society is run, it would assist the committee if members could give us some feedback. Please email your answers to the following questions and any other suggestions to: **dr.mcarroll@gmail.com**

- How did you find out about the Society?
- What can we do, that we don't already do, to help you with your research?
- What suggestions do you have for topics for workshops and talks, or for the way they are run?
- Would you be interested in visits to research centres? If so, what kind?
- Are you interested in getting involved in a project (eg transcriptions) or joining the committee? (*Further details on request.*)
- Any other thoughts? Would a Facebook page be a popular idea and does anyone feel that they could run it?

On 3rd August the Society had its annual lunch and walk. This year it took place in Leyton. Ten members plus my grandson came to the restaurant, although not everyone could take part in the walk. We had a very nice lunch at an Italian restaurant called Figo on Leyton High Road (see cover photo). The walk was led by member David Boote and was very interesting. Below are some of the accounts he gave on the way.

We started outside the restaurant and looking to our left were the old Leyton town hall buildings (Fig 1). The town hall building on the far left (on the corner of Ruckholt Road and High Road) was completed in 1882. By 1894 Leyton had become an urban district and the council decided that a bigger building was needed. The new building was completed in 1895, and the building on the left became the library.



Figure 1 Leyton Town Hall

We walked down Leyton High Road and into Coronation Gardens, which was opened on 23rd May 1903 to mark the coronation of Edward VII in 1902. It was originally part of the Manor of Ruckholt and in the 19th century was mainly watercress beds (Fig 2).



Figure 2 Coronation Gardens

On the opposite side of the High Road is Sidmouth Road, originally named Faraday Road after the scientist (other roads in the area were also named after scientists). This land was also watercress beds as it was by the Fillebrook stream, but by 1882 had houses on it. Houses were prone to flooding in the road because of the stream and in 1904 the council surveyor recommended enlarging the brick culvert in the road. In 1940 a total of 5 people were killed at numbers 18, 22 and 26 in a bombing raid. The middle section of the road was demolished in 1973, and the area turned into a park. Houses to the north of the park were renumbered as part of Dawlish Road.

We then walked up the High Road and along Grange Park Road leading us back to the High Road. Along the way David talked about

the many famous people who lived in the area such as Rosa LEWIS (nee OVENDEN). She was the subject of a television drama in the 1960s called the Duchess of Duke Street. She was born on 26th September 1867 in Leyton and was christened in St Mary's church on 27th June 1869. In the 1871 census she was living with her parents in High Street Leyton. By the time of the 1881 census, she was working as a servant. By 1891 she was a kitchen maid at Ugbrooke House in Devon and later worked for the exiled French royal family where she learnt French cuisine. In the 1901 census she is a cook and this is how she met Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. She was cook at Sheen House in Mortlake, and he was a guest. They also met at other parties where she did the catering.

She married Excelsior Tyrel Chiney LEWIS on 13th June 1893, but it was not a happy marriage and in 1904 they were divorced. She bought the Cavendish Hotel in Jermyn Street in 1902 where she cooked regularly for King Edward VII. There were rumours that she had been his mistress or maybe he just liked her cooking. She died on 28th December 1952 aged 85.

The Duchess of Cambridge's great grandfather, Frederick George GLASSBOROW, was born at 7 Grange Park Road on 17th December 1889. In 1900 he and his family were living at 70 Vicarage Road and in 1903 moved to 57 Manor Road. In 1908 they moved to 13 Essex Road. In the 1911 census he was working as a bank clerk. He eventually became a bank manager, and his daughter Valerie was the mother of Kate's father.

We walked down Church Road towards St Mary's church passing the Coach & Horses. According to the Leyton Rate Book from 1836 it was a beer shop occupied by Margaret CARTER and she was listed as the licensee in the 1838/9 Robson Essex Directory. In the 1840/41 rate book she is listed as Margaret Carter nee ROBERTS and the owner is Mr WELLESLEY. In the 1851 census she is aged 60 and living there with her son Thomas. In the 1861 census Charlotte MARSH aged 42 is listed as a beer shop keeper living with her three children. In the 1860 Post Office Directory she is the licensee. In the 1861 Leyton Rate Book Earl Mornington is the owner. In the 1868 Leyton Rate Book Earl Cowley is named as the owner. In the 1871

census Charlotte is still living there with her three children and her granddaughter. Her youngest son Thomas is a barman.

In 1879 the Coach & Horses was rebuilt and moved 20 feet to the corner of the road (Fig 3). In the 1881 census James SIMPSON was living in the beer house with his wife, their five children, a barmaid and a servant. In 1882 the Coach and Horses was granted a licence.



Figure 3. The Coach & Horses

A review in 1986 described the pub as follows: large two bar pub with extensive games room. Lounge is comfortable but the public is bleak. Snacks, darts and pool. It looks a lot better now and is popular with fans of Leyton Orient football club after matches.

We carried on to St Mary's church (Fig 4); the rain did come down a little bit but soon stopped. After a tour of the graveyard and the outside of the church we finished the walk. Everyone agreed that it had been a very enjoyable day.



Figure 4. St Mary's, Leyton



N is for:**Naturalisation records**

Documents recording the process by which an immigrant becomes a citizen.

Before 1844 naturalisation was granted only by a private Act of Parliament. The procedure was expensive and only a few could afford it. After 1844, right up to the present day, naturalisation has usually been granted by the Home Office.

The process of naturalisation or registration produces paperwork. Most of the surviving paperwork, up to 1986, for successful naturalisations is held at The National Archives. There are two broad types: the document declaring someone's naturalisation and the background papers that were submitted to support their application. MyHeritage, Ancestry and FindMyPast also have online records.

Newspaper archives

A wealth of information can be found in newspapers. Births, marriages, deaths, inquests, businesses, etc.

<https://www.newspapers.com> (subscription required – now partnered with Ancestry)

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk> (subscription required – now partnered with FindMyPast)

Some libraries subscribe to newspaper archives such as The Times. Another resource is the Wikipedia: List of online newspapers in the Wikipedia Library.

Non-conformist register

This is a parish record from a non-conformist Protestant church or chapel. Examples of these include the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian denominations, and the Quakers (formerly the Friends Society).

Following the Marriage Act 1753, all English and Welsh marriages (except those of Quakers and Jews) had to take place in a Church of England parish church. However, any baptisms and burials (or equivalent ceremonies) from other denominations might take place within their own churches and chapels, and these were often recorded in their own non-conformist registers. Many of the early non-conformist chapels never maintained any such registers, or only sporadically, as there was no legal requirement to do this.

The registers of baptisms, marriages and burials of many non-conformist churches were collected and validated by the British Government in 1837. These may be viewed at the Public Record Office in series RG4. Some local chapels promptly abandoned keeping their own registers, at least for a while, after this date (which coincided with the start of civil registration in England and Wales). However, a second tranche of non-conformist registers was transferred to London after 1857, following a further report by a government commission.

After the Marriage Act 1836 marriages could take place in many other licensed non-conformist chapels, provided that the local Superintendent Registrar was in attendance. Eventually the Marriage Act 1898 enabled some of these chapels to dispense with this requirement, if they had an Appointed Person (usually the minister or priest), who would be responsible for maintaining an official marriage register.

Many non-conformist registers have now been deposited in approved repositories, such as the local county offices. Many of these records are available online at FreeBMD, Ancestry, FindMyPast and The Genealogist.

Nuncupative will

An oral will declared or dictated by the testator in his last sickness before a sufficient number of witnesses and afterwards put in writing.



On Sunday 18th May we attended the Highams Park Spring Fayre. We were very busy all day and many people showed an interest in the Society. Barry, Gill and I manned the stall (Barry and I are in the photo).

Barry had a copy of his very extensive family tree on display on the side of the stall (you can just see the back of it on the left-hand side of the picture). He was kept very busy explaining it all to the people who showed an interest.

We hope to make this a regular event for the society as it always is very popular.

Waltham Forest Family History Society

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL for the year to 31st October 2026

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It was nice to see so many members for lunch and the walk in August, and we are already planning next year's.

Just a reminder that membership is due for renewal on 31st October and a form is included on the previous pages.

I am always in desperate need of material to put in the journal and would be pleased to receive anything from members to help with this. At the moment there are just a few of us contributing material and if I do not have enough to fill the journal, I will have to cut down the number of pages, which is something I have never had to do so far.

You may not feel able to write an article but any information you have that can be made into an article is welcome even if it is only a few lines. Have you made any new discoveries recently? Have you found some useful ways to carry out your research that you can share? Do you have any interesting stories in your family?

I would also like to hear any of your recommendations for websites etc that you have found useful. I myself am a member of the Anglo-Italian Society and we have recently had a new website built professionally at www.aifhs.org.uk. If you have any Italian ancestry there is quite a lot of useful information on the site, including record sets and historical accounts. What other societies do you belong to?

**Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month
(except August) at 8pm**

**Either at Spruce Hill Baptist Church Hall, Brookscroft Road,
Walthamstow E17 or on Zoom**

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DIARY

14th Oct Workshop (hall): Family history puzzle – Mark Carroll

11th Nov AGM (Zoom): President and Committee

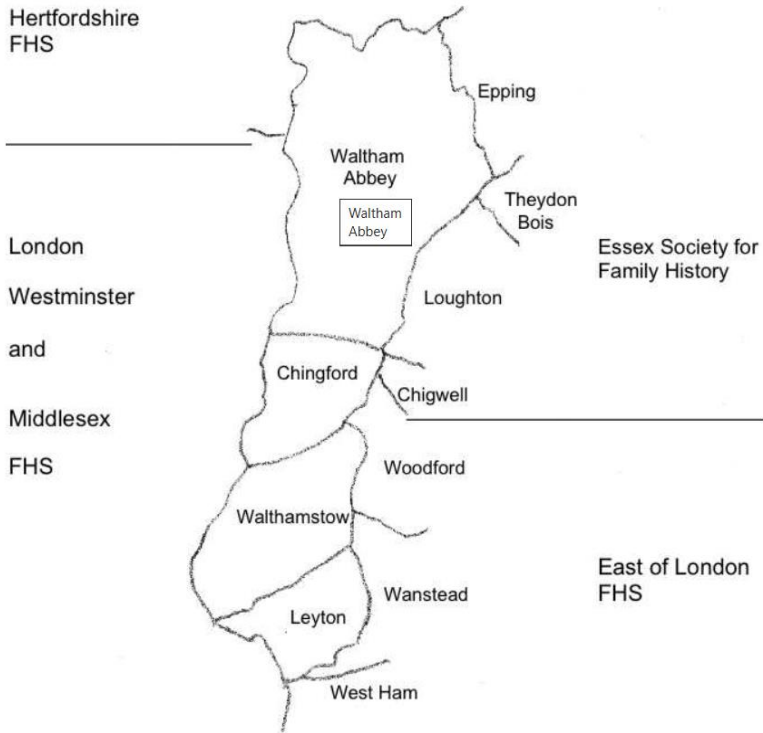
**Dec 9th Talk (Zoom): What Granny didn't want us to know –
Steve Manning**

13th Jan Quiz and Social (hall)

**10th Feb Talk (Zoom): AI for family historians – Linda
Hammond**

10th Mar Workshop (hall): TBC

Waltham Forest FHS



The Society covers an area largely defined by the River Lea, M25 and A11/A104 roads, this includes the London Borough of Waltham Forest, comprising the old Essex metropolitan boroughs of Chingford, Leyton and Walthamstow, and extends to Waltham Abbey in the north

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Family History Society

If undelivered, please return to:
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