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Hertfordshire People

The Journal of Hertfordshire Family History Society

**No 176
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Sparkes House (Nan was born here) 1907
Brent Pelham or Furneux Pelham

The Sparkes family home where Florence Eleanor Sparkes was born. See article on page 24.

Is it in Brent Pelham or Furneux Pelham?

Is it still there?

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Your letters, comments and contributions for publication are welcome and should be sent to the Editor. Please quote your membership number, and enclose a SAE if postal acknowledgement is required. Articles should not have been published elsewhere, and where necessary copyright clearance must have been obtained for pictures, quotations from books etc. The Editor reserves the right to edit contributions.

The views expressed in these pages are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Society.

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Front Cover: Florence Eleanor Sparkes 1891-1988 see article on Page 24

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From the Editor

I do hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Hertfordshire People*.

As I write this editorial the sun is shining and the first few bulbs are appearing in the garden, a sure sign of Spring.



This issue has articles about families from around the county rather than a concentration on one place. Thank you to the members who contacted me regarding the December issue with its Hitchin flavour. Your journal content is dependent upon you, the members, sending in articles and snippets for inclusion and last time, but sheer happenchance, most of the items related to Hitchin. I am particularly keen on photographs of Hertfordshire People for the front cover. It is good if these tie up with an article in the journal but a brief biography of the person and a lovely photo is also great to include. A picture speaks a thousand words....

Please don't forget to pay your subscription which is due at the end of February. You can pay online via genfair [Hertfordshire Family History Society | Supplier | GenFair](#) or bank transfer, see page 4. If you don't, this will be the last issue of *Hertfordshire People* you receive and we would hate to lose you as a member.

I am always happy to receive your articles, snippets and research queries. It is your contributions that make *Hertfordshire People* the great journal that it is.

Jane

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

18 April 2026: The Really Useful Family History Show LIVE*. The East Anglian Group of Family History Societies will be holding another LIVE show in April 2026 in St Ives, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. In-person, St Ives, UK

24 April 2026: The Guild of One-Name Studies Conference, Portsmouth, Hampshire. Navigating the Future.

25 April 2026: The Register of Qualified Genealogists Conference In-person, Birmingham, UK

9 May 2026: Suffolk FHS Fair. Ipswich, Suffolk

3 Oct 2026: The Family History Show London, Kempton Park , Surrey.

***Hertfordshire FHS will be there!**

For details of in person and online events and lectures from The Society of Genealogists and Family History Societies and groups do check out the GENEVA website which is updated regularly.

Geneva.weald.org.uk/doku.php

Social Media



www.facebook.com/HertfordshireFamilyHistorySociety/



@Herts_FHS - Hertfordshire People



@Herts_FHS@genealysis.social

Do follow these accounts to keep in touch with the HFHS Talks programme, open to all, and posts relevant to local and family history with an emphasis on Hertfordshire. You can post queries on Facebook too.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Don't forget that Subscriptions are due at the beginning of March 2026.

To renew, please send your remittance to me, the Membership Secretary at:

50 Chelwood Avenue
Hatfield
Hertfordshire AL10 0RE

The instructions on how to pay online are below.

Sue Jackson
Membership Secretary

Renewing Membership by Internet Banking

If you have signed up with your bank for internet banking, please consider using it to renew your membership. To set up the Society as a payee three items are essential:

The Sort Code is 40-40-01

The Account Number is 72239752 (Business Account)

Name of Payee: Hertfordshire Family History Society

And you will need to quote a reference so that we know who has paid us. The reference should be in the form NNNN SURNAME, where NNNN is your membership number (to be found in the address label of your copy of Hertfordshire People) and SURNAME is as much of your surname as your bank's system will accept.

There is one trap for the unwary. Some banks allow you a one off payment without quoting a reference. Please do not let this happen to you.

And one reminder. If you have changed your postal address or your e-mail address, then let us know by e-mail to registrar@hertsfhs.org.uk

HFHS Online Query sessions

These hour long sessions are designed to help with brick walls, give you an opportunity to share your research stories and interesting sources you have found with other members and for members to get to know each other and the committee. Our helpful members will be on hand to help you with any family history queries. The sessions are inclusive and welcoming and are offered to members, and sometimes non-members.

Information about joining will be sent out by the Registrar and we will also publicise on social media. Meetings will start at 14.30pm (UK time) and last for about an hour, unless otherwise stated.

Dates for 2026

Saturday 11 April - Online 14:30

Saturday 11 July - Online at 9.00am for members in the Antipodes

Saturday 10 October - Online 14:30

New Publications

Do keep an eye on our website for the announcement of any new publications and refer to the pink publications list (in September issue of *HP*) for full list of publications available.

M.I. Vol 27 - Aston - St Mary - a new rewrite and reprint - price £6

M.I. Vol 114 - Woolmer Green - St Michael & All Angels - price £6

M.I. Vol No 115 - Hockerill - All Saints - price £6

Ruston, Alan *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* - revised edition - price £7

For online orders please visit our GenFair page

[Hertfordshire Family History Society | Supplier | GenFair](#)

To order these publications by post contact our Book Sales Officer

pub-orders@hertsfhs.org.uk

From the Chair

In my last From the Chair message, I mentioned that a recent Australian visitor had agreed to visit a local church when she returned home. I am delighted to report that the direct approach to a church in the suburbs of Brisbane has been very productive. A relative has been found who has provided lots of information, including pictures, of the brother (or stepbrother) of my 2x great grandmother and of his descendants in Australia. Sadly, they don't have any details about the earlier family in the UK. So, I have built a family tree of faces of the descendants of the 3 people that DNA matches suggest are related. Look at my article - do you think there are any facial similarities? I am now waiting for the DNA results of one of my cousins to see if that helps.



I gave a talk about my Granny and her ancestors to a local U3A group to demonstrate how to use both Hertfordshire and other sources. One member of the audience has submitted an article to



Finding My Granny's Family

Ancestors and their Descendants
mainly in Hertfordshire

our Journal about how our advice, provided several years ago, helped solve a brick wall. Do any other groups want this family history talk (in person or by Zoom)?

A steady trickle of people are seeking help either via sessions at Hertfordshire Archives or online. The latter makes it possible to help people with Hertfordshire ancestors who now live elsewhere in the UK or abroad.

As 2026 begins it is also time to plan for 2027 when we will be celebrating our **50th Anniversary**.

One way to mark the occasion is to collect memories, photographs etc of the society over the last 50 years. What made you join? Are you a founder member or a more recent member? Has the society helped or influenced your own research over the years? What are your recollections of personal experiences, events or other

anecdotes relating to the society? Start thinking about how you can contribute. Look out for more details in the next Journal about submitting items.

Meanwhile come and meet us at St Ives on **18th April**.

Hertfordshire Family History Society will be there as will Hertfordshire

Archives. We will have computers available to help with your queries, publications to purchase, and some free items.

Many other family history organisations will be attending. Entry is free but bring money and/or cards if you want to buy publications from us or others. A bag (or bags) may be needed to carry away purchased and free items!



Felicity Brimblecombe
chair@hertsfhs.org.uk

HFHS 50th Anniversary Celebrations

In 2027 the Society will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary.

To mark the occasion will be having an Open Day with guest speakers and local family and local history society stands, second hand books and a research hub where our knowledgeable members will be able to help with your family history queries. There will also be some online talks for those members who cannot come to Hertfordshire for the Open Day.

Throughout 2027 we would like to feature some of your memories of being a member of HFHS in *Hertfordshire People*.

- What made you join the Society?
- How has the Society helped or influenced your own research?
- Have you taken part in any events during your time as a member e.g. Open Days, Family History Fairs?
- When did you join - are you one of our oldest members?
- What are the changes you have seen in the world of family history and / or HFHS?
- Do you have any photographs or other memorabilia relating to HFHS that we could feature?

If you have any queries please contact our Chair - chair@hertsfhs.org.uk

Ada Rosina (Nan Stephens)

By Jean Gardner

'Who was Nan **Stephens**?' asked my granddaughter one day looking at the picture of a beautiful Edwardian lady in an enormous hat which hung in my bedroom.



'She was my cousins' grandmother who was like a granny to me,' I explained. I'd often wondered about her and decided to investigate.

She said that she was a posthumous child (one born after the father has died). We always celebrated her birthday on 15th December but I needed her maiden name to get her birth certificate. I knew her mother as Gran **Graham** (Harriet Maria) but an application for a birth certificate for Ada Graham in 1878 drew a blank. Ada's marriage certificate gave her name as Ada Louisa **Dobson**,

father Samuel Dobson. That name also drew a blank. Gran Graham had given her name as Dobson when she married a man called Samuel **Barber**. Ada Barber produced no birth certificate either.

I was stuck but with the help of a Herts FHS drop-in query session at Harpenden Museum I found Ada's birth certificate. Encouraged to widen my search I uncovered a census record showing an Ada R. Barber, 12, with Samuel Barber, Harriet Maria Barber, brother Frederick and sister Lottie. Her middle name was later transposed as Louisa. Much digging in the GRO certificates together with other Census returns have revealed quite a story. It's best written in chronological order to make it easier to follow.

Ada's mother was born Harriet Maria **Pickwick** in the parish of St. Aldate, Oxford in 1855. She was the daughter of Charles Pickwick and his wife Emma formerly **Pettyfer**. By 1861 the census shows the family living in Lambeth at 197 Belvedere Crescent. Charles is now 25 and a warehouseman. Harriet Maria is 5 and a son Charles J.A., aged 1, all born in Oxford. In 1871 they are still in Belvedere Crescent but now at number 5. Harriet Maria is 15. The Census also revealed that at number 9 Belvedere Crescent was a lodger named Ainsley Dobson, 24, an engine fitter born in Leeds. Six years later Harriet Maria and Ainsley married on 24th December 1877. Two weeks later Ainsley died of tuberculosis, 9th January 1878 with Harriet Maria registering his death herself.

On 15th December 1878 Ada Rosina Dobson was born. She was registered on 24th January 1879 as the daughter of Arthur Ainsley Dobson jeweller, by her mother Harriet Maria Dobson formerly Pickwick. Baptism records of St. John the Evangelist, Smith Square show Ada Rosina Dobson baptised on 10th March 1879, born 15th December 1878. Her parents are given as George and Harriet Maria. A year later at the same address, 48 Marsham Street, Westminster, George Frederick Dobson is born 21st February 1880. Again Harriet Maria has registered Ainsley Dobson, jeweller, as his father.

On 22nd January 1881 Harriet Maria, 26, a widow married Samuel Thomas Thompson **Barber**, 47, a tinplate worker both were living at 36 Frederick Street, Camden. Three months later the 1881 Census lists Samuel, 49, a lampmaker, Maria Barber, 26, and Ada Barber, 2. George Frederick is not there. He appears with the family of William **Pearce**, a mason of Battersea and is listed as age 1 adopted. It's not clear whether this was an official adoption but by the 1891 Census he is back with his family. I remember Ada saying that her stepfather Samuel Barber took them all down to Stroud for work which the Census confirms. The family are all at Windsoredge. Avening near Gloucester. Samuel is now 56 and Harriet Maria 35 the children are Ada R., 12, Frederick George, 11, and Lottie L., 9. Ada certainly had a brother but lost touch with him in his thirties when he married and moved away. Her sister Lottie I remember well. She looked like Ada and was just as beautiful. She married a fairly well off Jewish man Lionel (Uncle Lal) who was an excellent pianist and entertained us children by playing the grand piano in the lounge of their home in Mill Hill. He kept a furniture shop in Golders Green.

Between the 1891 and 1901 Census the family moved back to London. Harriet Maria's second husband Samuel Barber died in 1901 and was buried in Hendon Cemetery. She was then forty six and widowed for the second time.

Ada now age 22 was working as a housemaid for the **Treadaway** family in Tufnell Park. She was very happy there for about fourteen years when she married Edward **Stephens** in 1908. The Treadaways gave her a complete bedroom suite which she cherished all her life. When she died in 1977, a very thrilled newly wed couple gave it pride of place in their first home. Ada and Edward lived in Hornsey for over sixty years. They had three children, sons Eric and Leslie and a daughter Joyce who sadly died when she was twenty five. Harriet Maria came to live with them when she was in her nineties. The 1939 register shows her as a widow in 88 Tachbrook Street, Westminster just two streets away from Marsham Street where Ada Rosina and George Frederick had been born so long ago. Charles E. **Graham**, a builder, and his wife Rebecca had lived in the house since the nineteen twenties. Google Earth street view shows it as a rather grand five storey terraced building. In 1939 it was occupied by several households among them Harriet Maria who is now known as Harriet Maria Graham. The column for marital status reads M but I've yet to find a marriage between her and a member of the Graham family.

She came to live with Ada in Hornsey about 1950 where all the neighbours called her Gran Graham. I knew her quite well and remember how tiny she was and how she always wore long dark clothes and button boots. When she was nearly a hundred she moved into a home in Highgate where she died just before Christmas 1956 taking the secrets of her early life with her. I doubt that I will ever find Ada Rosina's true father. I am only glad that she was unaware of the circumstances of her birth and was content just to be 'posthumous'.

Is there a strong Nonconformist / Roman Catholic tradition in Hertfordshire?

By Alan Ruston

Hertfordshire cannot be said to be a major centre for Nonconformity although it was relatively strong there in the 17th century. Early in that century the focal point was what is now the small village of Kensworth. From there English Prebyterianism, Independency and the Baptists spread over the county, and clandestine churches existed in all the major towns by the 1670s. Some of these chapels have remained, and for example, Beechen Grove Baptist Chapel, Watford can trace its origin back to 1652, one of the oldest continuing congregations in the country. The same applies to the Quakers and the Friends Meeting House in Hertford built in 1670, it is amongst the two or three oldest in the country.

Nonconformity as elsewhere declined in Hertfordshire in the 18th century, but was encouraged by the Methodist revival. Causes arose in the late 18th century, sometimes in villages, but the oldest and most well attended chapels were in the towns.

Growth continued at a much faster rate in the early 19th century and in 1810 a Union of Independent and Baptist churches in Herts was formed. This was an almost unique example of ecumenical understanding at the time, and was successful for about 40 years. It disappeared in 1878, but it spread Nonconformity to rural areas with missionaries at work forming congregations in places like Kings Langley, Flaunden and Bedmond. The later impact of the railways and urbanisation meant that chapels started to appear in new places like Waltham Cross and Letchworth while many rural causes barely maintained their existence.

World War 1 was a watershed and in the 1920s and 1930s most of the rural congregations disappeared. The churches have thrived in Herts most in pleasant urban situations on commuter suburbs or historic market towns. Elsewhere it has not been a success in recent times. Methodism was in the major towns in the late 18th century, but did not spread in any numbers further afield until the late 19th century. Herts is not a Methodist heartland.

There were few Roman Catholic churches in Herts before the 20th century. In the 18th century Standon was a centre for Catholicism in its dark times and after 1793 when the Catholic college at Douay, France was closed, the teaching of priests for British service was centered at St Edmund's College,

Ware. This became a major centre for Catholicism and remains so today. However it was not until the late 19th century that Roman Catholics could be said to have a proper presence in the county, and it is only in the 20th century that their churches have been built in any numbers.

18th April 2026 St Ives Cambridgeshire



At the BURGESS HALL, Westwood Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE27 6WU

**A big event, all day, speakers, stalls, and friendly
Family History Societies.**

Hertfordshire Family History Society and
Hertfordshire Archives will be there.

**Come and discuss you family history.
Bring someone with you.
Spread the word so that others know about the event.
Let see if we can gain more members.
£9 a year is a bargain!**

How a recent visitor from Australia has helped make a small dent in a longstanding brick wall in our theatrical family history.



Elizabeth Brown an actress, my 2x great grandmother, was baptised in Canterbury in 1825 to William Brown, painter, and his wife Elizabeth. Our family history has been stuck there since the 1970s. Employing a professional genealogist confirmed the baptism but found no evidence of the family elsewhere in Kent. Recently DNA matches have added a few more details.

Who were Elizabeth's descendants?

Elizabeth Brown 1825-1915 married in 1844 in Birmingham becoming Elizabeth **Dugmore**. As an actress, using the name Mrs Henry **Leigh**, she was on the stage in London for many decades.

There is considerable information about both her and her theatrical children often with different stage surnames:

- William Henry **Leigh Dugmore** 1853-1915, used the stage name of **Denny** and was often starred with his mother in Gilbert & Sullivan productions [W. H. Denny - Wikipedia](#)
- His son [Reginald Denny \(actor\) - Wikipedia](#) was a Hollywood actor and an aviator.
- Arthur George **Leigh Dugmore** 1857-1924 was also an actor.
- Georgiana 1855-84 was gaining good reviews as an actress before her early death.
- Kate 1847-1931 was on the stage briefly before marrying a musician.
- Her son, Joseph Bevir **Williams** 1871-1929, founded a union for musicians that become the Amalgamated Musician's Union, which led to his Chairmanship of the TUC; Kate ran the AMU for many years.

- Charles Leigh Dugmore 1851-1916 was a successful scenic artist and later an opera house manager .



My father, the grandson of Charles Leigh Dugmore, spent many years trying to solve this brick wall without any success. Approaching 100 he donated a DNA sample that, with the DNA of other family members, has resulted in finding two of Elizabeth Brown's siblings.

Who were Elizabeth's siblings?

Emma Brown 1826-85, actress:

Numerous shared matches have been found with someone on Ancestry searching for her ancestor, Emma Brown, an actress born about 1826. Emma's baptism has not been found and the evidence of a connection is the name of her father, William Brown on her marriage entry. Emma married James **Appleby** a comedian and they also had theatrical offspring.

Henry William Harris Brown 1836-65, schoolteacher:

Other DNA matches have been found in Australia.



Elizabeth and Emma seem to have had a brother, or stepbrother, a schoolteacher Henry William Harris **Brown** 1836-65.

His son William Brown 1863-1931 emigrated and became a minister at the Wesleyan Church, now the Uniting Church, in Sherwood on the outskirts of Brisbane.

Many of his descendants are mentioned in a publication about the history of the church. Understandably a stranger from the UK contacting the church about one of their early ministers gained no information.

But a recent visitor to the UK tracing her Hertfordshire ancestors returned home to the outskirts of Brisbane and very kindly agreed to visit the church. That has gained an avalanche of information, including photographs, about both the minister's father, uncle and descendants, but still no details about

earlier generations.

However family trees have been constructed using portraits of the three siblings and their descendants, do they have any facial similarities.

The descendants of the Elizabeth, Henry William Harris and Emma:



Trying to find more details about the ancestors of my actress Elizabeth Brown and her siblings:

The baptism in 1825 of my actress Elizabeth Brown to William, a painter, and Elizabeth Brown has not been helpful. Perhaps the unusual name of my actress' sibling Henry William Harris Brown might be easier to trace? Why was he Harris Brown? In 1859, his marriage to Ann **Anelay** stated he was a schoolteacher and his father was William George Brown occupation Captain (was he sure who his father was?).

The 1851 census for Lower Olland Street, Bungay, Suffolk lists Henry Brown (presumably Henry William Harris Brown) as a teacher in a family headed by George Harris a Greenwich Out Pensioner (i.e. originally employed by the navy, possibly as a Captain, who is not living with other pensioners at Greenwich).

George Harris	Head	Male	60	Greenwich / Out Pensioner	America New Orleans
Elizabeth Do	Wife	Female	57		British Spirehead
Ellen Do	Daughter	Female	19	Silk Weaver	Somersetshire Bath
Lucy Do	Do	Female	12	Do	Do Wells
Henry Brown	Stepson	Male	16	Teacher, National School Bungay	Devonshire Holsworthy

Details of two of the above children have been found using their ages and the birth locations provided in the last column:

- 1836 Henry William Harris was baptised to George 'traveller' and Elizabeth Harris in Southampton.
- 1839 Lucy Harris baptised to George 'stage player' and Elizabeth Harris 'passing through Holsworthy'.

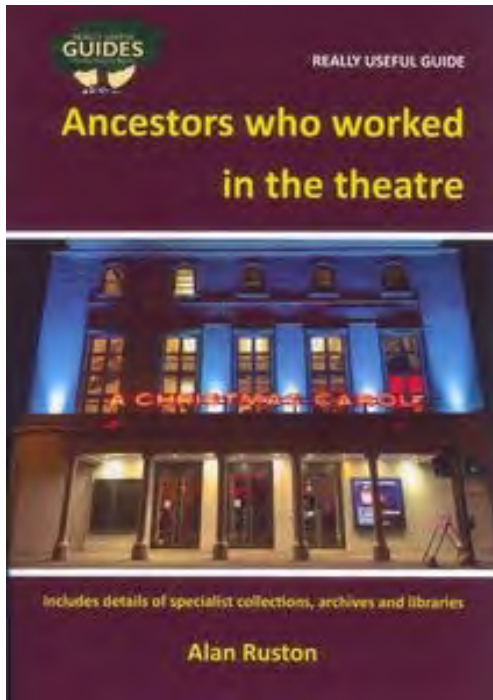
The 1841 census for exactly the same location lists William Brown, a painter, children Henry, Lucy and perhaps my actress age 15. Names, ages, occupations and whether born in the county were recorded but no details of how they are related!

William Brown	52	Painter	✓
Elizabeth Do	40		✓
Elizabeth Do	15	Winder	✓
Charles Do	12	Do	✓
Ellen Do	10	Do	✓
Henry Do	5		✓
Lucy Do	2		✓

Work continues to unscramble this complicated group of people called Brown or Harris in recorded in these two census returns and why one is a stepson. With more research and more DNA matches perhaps my Brown family will eventually be solved!

Felicity Brimblecombe

[I didn't inherit any acting or singing skills, but my dad, brother and a cousin did and enjoyed amateur dramatics.]



Ruston, Alan *Ancestors who worked in the theatre*, a Really Useful Guide, £6.95. Family History Books, 2025. ISBN 9781916599116. £6.95 - [Ancestors who worked in the theatre by Alan Ruston](#)

Our President, Alan Ruston, has completely revised his earlier work, *My Ancestor worked in the Theatre*, to provide this Really Useful Guide.

For those of us with relatives who trod the boards or worked behind the scenes trying to find their origins can be daunting but this book will be invaluable in your quest.

Theatre collections are spread around the country and further afield. By their nature these collections are specialist and in some cases unique in their content. Apart from the legitimate theatre there are the allied music halls, fairs and circuses that entertained the population. This book has a listing of these collections and also specialist societies.

Sometimes whilst researching family history you come across a strange occupation which may indicate that the person was working in the world of the theatre, not necessarily 'actor', but 'musician', 'painter' could also be relevant. You may need to link a stage name and a birth name - not always straightforward, as stage names could change.

Delve deeper into the available records and an interesting story can emerge, you may even unravel the mystery and discover an amazing story.

I shall be following Alan's recommendations and see if I can find out more about my own ancestors in the legitimate music and music hall world of nineteenth century London.

Jane Tunesi

Inbox

Your Editor is delighted to receive correspondence, letters or e-mails, from readers in response to any articles, reviews or enquiries that appear within these pages. Don't forget to write in!

editor@hertsfhs.org.uk

Dear Editor,

I was interested in the article about the **Gatwards** of Hitchin in the December issue of *Hertfordshire People* just received in that I descend from the marriage of Mary **Gazewood** to William **Camp** at Throcking in 1774 and noticed over years that in Hertfordshire her surname was sometimes rendered as **Gaywood** or **Gawood**, which may indicate how it was perhaps pronounced.

However, there was some argument about her place of settlement and her baptism has not been found with certainty. She was buried at Ardeley on 3 April 1825 aged 73.

Anthony Camp.



Really Useful Bulletin - The Federation's Newsletter

<https://www.familyhistoryfederation.com>

Visit the website for articles on a wide range of research topics - click on **Explore Your Genealogy**. Whether you are a beginner, or more experienced researcher you will find articles of interest and links to societies and organisations that are Federation members and also access to back numbers of the Bulletin. To receive the next edition of the FHF Really Useful Bulletin subscribe at <https://familyhistoryfederation.com/#contactlink>



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Research Hints

Are you using this FREE search for Mother's Maiden Name and Age at Death?

Well done if you are already using the updated information in the General Record Office but our help sessions are showing that many researchers are not aware of the details.

If you used to go to London and drag those big index files on and off the shelves you will have seen that from 1912 onwards the mother's maiden name was recorded. Wouldn't it be useful to have the mother's maiden name available from 1837 onwards?

They are now!

The GRO has produced a searchable database for births.

Who are you searching for?

Surname at Birth: ? Include: ?
Search for records with a matching surname

First Forename: ? Include: ?
Search for records with a matching first forename

Second Forename: ?

Sex: ?

Mother's Maiden Surname: ? Include: ?
Search for records with a matching Mother's Maiden Surname

Very useful to check you have allocated children to the correct parents and finding the right marriage of those parents. Perhaps you have already have that information, but have you found all the children? Try searching just using surname and mother's maiden name. That filled in 2 missing children in my tree mentioned in **Jackson** family oral history who had been difficult to find in Birmingham without purchasing loads of birth certificates.

Knowledge of the age at death helps verify your research. This free search can sift the babies from the teenagers or the adults from the OAPs. That makes it easier to purchase the most likely death certificate and find the burial.

Who are you searching for?

Surname at Death:		?	Include:	Exact Matches Only	?
<i>Search for records with a matching surname</i>					
First Forename at Death:		?	Include:	Exact Matches Only	?
<i>Search for records with a matching first forename</i>					
Second Forename at Death:		?			
Sex:	Please Select	?	Age at Death in years:	+/- 10 year(s)	?
			<i>(Enter 0 if less than 1 year old)</i>		

The search engine is a bit clunky. Separate searches are needed for male and female entries and search dates are only +/- 2 years. But it is quite easy to insert a name and a date e.g. 1850 +/- 2 search for male, then female, and repeat for 1854 +/- 2 etc.

I use it regularly for new research or to check existing information. We have a very detailed list of one grandmother's siblings but it does not include one born in 1873 who left home, went to Canada and competed in international running races. Discovering that person explained quite a few DNA matches!

'Search the GRO Indexes' is in the same place as ordering certificates: [General Register Office - Online Ordering Service - Login](#)

Best wishes for your research in 2026

Felicity

chair@hertsfhs.org.uk

Written In Stone: A Pillar of The Community (Literally)

By Simon Goodwin

Originally published in the Flamstead Parish Magazine

In a recent Flamstead Parish Magazine the Vicar spoke of a short dedication carved onto one of the pillars inside the church which reads ...

In this middle space / & at this seats end / there lieth buried / our neighbore frind / old John Grigge / of Cheverills end / anno 1598 Aprill 15

She went on to say that research in the Parish Registers had revealed that John **Grigge** and his wife, Elizabeth, had had at least five children while living in the parish. Given the fact that this carving is now over four centuries old it would be easy to assume that numerous members of the Grigg(e) family have been being christened, married and buried in Flamstead over the generations but, strangely, that doesn't seem to be the case when we look at headstones in the churchyard. Indeed, only a single headstone appears bearing the name Grigg and that is now lost.

To explain further, in the north-eastern corner of the Churchyard lay, at rest, the bodies of husband and wife Edwin and Sarah Grigg. There is nothing unusual in that, however, theirs is a story we wouldn't be able to tell without the work of volunteers from the Hertfordshire Family History Society as far back as 1988. In that year the Society visited the Flamstead Churchyard and recorded all the headstones still decipherable. And the reason that is important is that, since 1988, Edwin and Sarah's headstone has broken and disappeared. Go into the Churchyard today and there is no record of them. So, the moral of this story is always be grateful to the historical conservators because, when a record is lost, it is lost forever.

So, were we to have a time machine and travel back to 1988, we could read the headstone as follows ...

"In Loving Memory of Edwin Grigg who died September 10th 1898 aged 50 years. Also Sarah Grigg who died April 19th 1927 aged 83 years"

Edwin Grigg, one of at least three sons of Joseph and Mary Grigg, was born in Flamstead in 1845 and was christened in the village church on the 26th October that



same year. After leaving school he worked alongside his father as an Agricultural Labourer. Edwin married Sarah **Rooms**, four years his senior and daughter of William and Abigail Rooms of Flamstead, in St Leonard's Church on the 21st October 1869.

According to the 1871 census, taken two years later, Edwin and Sarah were living in a cottage close to the *Spotted Dog* Public House. Edwin was employed as an Under Gardener while Sarah worked as a Straw Hat Sewer.

Ten years later Edwin and Sarah were living, along with Sarah's younger sister, at 15 Spencer Street, Saint Albans. Edward was now working as a Groom. Later still the couple moved to live in Spencer Street, Sandridge and Edwin reverted back to his previous employment as a Gardener.

Edwin died, aged 50, on the 10th September 1898 and, only two years later, we find Sarah living on her own, a widow aged 58. By 1911, Sarah has been admitted to live in the "Widows Cottages" otherwise known as the "New Saunders Almshouses" on the Flamstead High Street.

As an aside, the Census of 1911 tells us who Sarah lived alongside, in the "Widows Cottages"

Mrs **Neal**, aged 78, Widow
Mrs Elizabeth **Abbot**, aged 69, Widow
Mrs **Hill**, aged 73, Widow
Mrs Anne **Coot**, aged 76, Widow
Mrs Louise **Newsome**, aged 76, Widow and described as being "totally deaf"
Mrs Eliza **Arnold**, aged 73, Widow and living with her granddaughter Winifred Arnold, aged just 9.
Mrs Margaret **Chalkley**, aged 81, Widow and described as coming from Cork, Ireland.
Mrs Mary Ann **Woodward**, aged 63, Widow
Mrs Susan **Hawes**, aged 78, Widow
Mrs Jane **Flitton**, aged 61, Widow
Mrs Anne **Morrice**, aged 71, Widow

To complete our story, Sarah Grigg died on the 19th April 1927, aged 83, and was buried as stated above, in Flamstead Churchyard alongside her husband Edwin.

So, the next time you can spare a moment you might like to thank those in the past, be they the sixteenth century Parish Clerk or an unnamed member of the Hertfordshire Family History Society who took the time and effort to record what they saw in our church and churchyard on that day, in one case with a chisel! Without them we couldn't tell this story of the Grigg(e) family today.

A Village Life: Florence Eleanor Sparkes 1891-1988

This is the history of Florence Eleanor (Nell) **Sparkes** (my Grandmother who I called Nan). She was born on 5th November 1891 and died on 22nd July 1988 aged 96.

Nell was the youngest of 11 children born to John and Emma (nee **Lawrence**) **Sparkes** who lived in a small village called Brent Pelham in the east of Hertfordshire. John Sparkes (1843-1915) was born in Anstey, a neighbouring village, and Emma Lawrence (1848-1935) was born in Brent Pelham. Both the Sparkes and the Lawrence families lived in these two neighbouring villages since at least the late 18th century.



Brent Pelham is a small village on the eastern edge of Hertfordshire in the Edwinstree Hundreds; formerly called Burnt Pelham because both village and church were destroyed by fire during the reign of Henry I. It has some very old stocks that can hold three people situated near the church in the village. In "The Gazetteer" of 1895 the population was stated as 215.

Nell's Childhood

Nell's parents, John and Emma Sparkes, married at the church of St Mary in Brent Pelham on 21st December 1874. John's occupation was a Carpenter and their married home was in Black Horse Lane, Brent Pelham.

Their first child Harry Alfred Sparkes was born before they were married but he was steadily followed by 10 further children Nell being the final child born on 5th November 1891.

The village was small, but it did have a school. From the Brent Pelham School Logs there appeared to be only one teacher. In October 1887 the teacher noted that she had to punish Jane and John Sparkes *"for coming, as usual, late; the only children with whom we have any difficulty on that point."*

From May through to July 1888 the teacher notes:

"The Sparkes family still unable to attend through illness of their grandmother." (Jane Sparkes 1818-1888)

"Jane Sparkes still unable to attend school as her grandmother is in a weak condition."

"The Sparkes grandmother still lies in an almost dying condition. There is an exceeding large family and Mrs Sparkes being obliged to wait upon her mother and leave her own house under the charge of a tiny child having some of the little ones with her, Jane is unavoidably absent."

On 2nd July 1888 she noted: *"Jane Sparkes returned to school, her grandmother being deceased."*

In 1891 it was noted in the teacher logs: *"John, William, Ronald, Frederick and Frances Sparkes have not attended school during the three weeks which I have been here. John is working for a farmer. The four younger children have been at home with whooping cough and have not yet sufficiently recovered to attend school."*

Nell was born in November 1891 when her parents were living in Hornead Road in Brent Pelham with 7 of her 10 siblings - Harry (the eldest), and May, John, William, Ronald, Frances and Frederick. Her elder sisters Dorothy, Lilly and Jennie were all working in service elsewhere. In the 1891 Census, taken earlier that year, her father John was aged 47 and working as a carpenter.

Ten years later in 1901 siblings Harry, Dorothy, and Jennie were all married and living elsewhere. Lilly (23) and Frances (14) were in service together with the family of a Barrister at Essendon Place in St Albans, while Nell, aged 10, was visiting another married sister (May) who lived in Hornchurch, Essex. Her brothers were all working - John and William as carpenters like their father, Ron was a bricklayer and Fred aged 15 was a carter. In those days the minimum school leaving age was 12 so children were out at work at what we now consider a very young age. The leaving age was raised to 14 in 1918 and to 15 in 1944. In 1972 it was raised to 16.

The family were Church of England and went to church regularly. In her



possessions Nell kept many religious tracts and leaflets and she regularly attended Sunday school. On Friday 16th March 1906 Nell was confirmed at Gt Hormead Church and on the 18th March 1906 she attended her first communion at St Mary's Church in Brent Pelham.

Nell's teenage years

Nell must have started work, as did her sisters and brothers, around the age of 14. She went into service and worked in several large houses. In 1907 she was 16 and working as a kitchen maid at Leahoe House in Hertford and in September 1908 she had moved to a new place – The Grange in Bishops Stortford. However, in the April 1911 Census Nell, aged 19, was back living with her parents John and Emma in Brent Pelham. Later that year in July she took a place at The Manor in Sutton Scotney, Hampshire. Nell was not really very happy there and her mother wrote to her to say that if she really didn't like it, then she would try to find her another place back nearer home.

In 1911, living with Nell and her parents were her elder brother William, his wife Edith and their two children Kathleen and Jack. For some reason William was unsettled and decided to emigrate to Australia and he left for Freemantle on 4th December 1912 on the ship *Australind*. The family story has it that Edith and the two children were supposed to follow him to Australia once he had settled, but Edith was frightened and would not go. William did keep in touch and sent photographs, however at some point he realised that Edith would never travel and he married another lady called Mary they had two daughters Vera and Betty and remained in Australia living in Campbell Street, Corrigin, Western Australia where he died in 1951 aged 65. Edith remained in the UK but moved, with her two children back to live with her parents in Oxfordshire.

Nell's next situation was as a maidservant in Hunsdonbury House, Hunsdon.

We are not sure how she met her future husband Harry **Burr**, but the Burr family were living at Downe House in Hunsdon at that time. In 1911 census Harry Burr was a gardener and worked at Spellers Farm in Hunsdon.

Nell and Harry married on 9th Aug 1913 in Church of St Mary, Brent Pelham. (Harry was 22, Nell was 21). The witnesses were Thomas James **Wells** and Dorothy **Kent** (Nell's married sister). Their marriage certificate states Harry was a Gardener, residing in Hunsdon - father John Burr – Merchant.



Married Life

When they were first married Nell and Harry lived in one of two little cottages on Spellers Farm where Harry worked as a gardener. They later moved into Harry's Great Grandma Burr's House in High Street, Hunsdon.

Their first child, Ruby Florence, was born on 2nd January 1914 at Hunsdon and then tragically, in July 1914, the First World War started. Things did not improve, as in May the following year Nell's father John Sparkes died. He was buried in the churchyard in Brent Pelham.

Nell's husband Harry enlisted on 7th April 1916 into the Royal Field Artillery, Service No.1882, just prior to the birth of their second child, Hazel Marjorie Eleanor (my mother) on 28th April 1916. Harry was later transferred into the 6th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment, Service No 26766. He spent most of 1916 training at Aldershot, but was eventually shipped over to France on 2nd January 1917 (his daughter Ruby's 3rd birthday).



His active service was brief as tragically on 9th April 1917, Harry was seriously wounded by gunshot and was classed as dangerously ill and shipped home to De Walden Court Hospital in Eastbourne. Visiting Eastbourne was not easy for Nell and efforts were made to get Harry transferred to a hospital nearer home. This was eventually achieved and on 20th September 1917 he was moved to Emmanuel College Hospital in Cambridge. Harry's medical discharge notes from Eastbourne Hospital stated: "Fragments extracted 10th rib broken. Had haemoptysis (coughing of blood) which has not re-occurred, now doing well. Digestive disorders. Further operation necessary on August 29th for subcutaneous abscess spreading 10" upwards."

Once Harry was in Cambridge it made life easier for Nell and Harry's sister Flo to visit him as they were able to cycle to the hospital to see him more frequently.

Most people living in villages were skilled in various crafts and Nell and Harry were no exception. Nell made all her children's clothes and often constructed elaborate fancy dress costumes. Harry, while in hospital, did a lot of beautiful embroidery. The family still have many examples of his work including two small dresses that he made and embroidered for his two daughters, Ruby and Hazel.



During the autumn and winter of 1917 Nell and Flo cycled to Cambridge hospital to visit Harry. At that time Nell lived with her two daughters, Ruby and Hazel in Gt. Grandma Burr's house in Hunsdon and Nell had inherited the furniture. Unfortunately, Harry did not recover and eventually died later that year on 30th December 1917. He was buried in the churchyard in Brent Pelham and his name is on the War Memorial in the village together with that of his brother Oliver Burr who also died on active service in the Navy.

Small villages, before the war, often had several large houses which gave employment for the villagers, as servants, gardeners, chauffeurs, etc. It was also quite normal to have a good sized garden to help out with extra food, and catching rabbits was another food source. Entertainment was usually local and the summer fetes, jumble sales, and vegetable shows were very much looked forward to. Dances, amateur plays and fancy dress shows were also part of the entertainment in a village. Ruby remembers a happy childhood in Hertfordshire with lots of family contact as many Aunts and Uncles lived close by. At times they lived at Buntingford, Hunsdon and Brent Pelham - all villages close to each other. Following Harry's death we believe that Nell moved to live with her mother (Emma Sparkes) in the High Street Buntingford next to the Police Station. Nell used to help out at her brother John's pub called *The Sailors* in Buntingford taking her daughter Hazel with her because she was "timid and frail" whereas Ruby, who was more robust would stay with Grannie Sparkes. Grannie Burr lived in Hunsdon and Ruby and Hazel would often visit her.

As time went by Nell restarted her life by going to dances with Aunt Flo (Harry's sister) and this may have been where she met her second husband – George **Butler**.

To be continued in the next issue of Hertfordshire People.....

My Family and the Gaza Cemetery

Several times during the dreadful Israeli-Gaza war I have wondered what was happening in the First World War Cemetery in Gaza, my interest being that my mother Hilda nee **Reynolds** had a cousin, Charles **Sells** from Hitchin who fought in the First World War and was killed and buried in Gaza in 1917.

I noted a news item in February 2026 that the Gaza War Cemetery had been damaged followed by an article in *The Guardian* stating that the cemetery had been bull-dozed by the Israeli's, the most affected part being where the First World War victims were buried. The cemetery caretaker was especially upset as he had cared for the cemetery, and its olive trees, for many years.

Charles **Sells** was the son of my mother's Aunt Susan nee **Catterill**, born in Preston, Hertfordshire, and familiarly called Aunt Suze. She married her cousin, James Catterill in 1878 and they settled in Hitchin. James died young, leaving Susan with several children, including Herbert, of whom later. By the 1891 Census Susan had remarried to Charles Sells, a widower and gardener. They lived at Kent Place, Hitchin with an amalgamated family of children from Susan and Charles's first marriages. By 1901 they have several children together including Charles, then aged 7.

By 1911 Charles Sells was a Grocers Assistant. During the First World War he joined up, presumably in the Bedfordshire Regiment and before long was fighting in the Middle East, a long way from home. His half brother Herbert Catterill was also in the Army fighting in Europe. It was Herbert who was killed first. He was a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery and fell on 29 June 1917¹. Charles was killed on 27 July 1917². We can only imagine how devastating it must have been for the family, now living in Maxwell's Path, Hitchin.

My mother spoke of these cousins often and pointed out their names on the War Memorial outside St Mary's Church in Hitchin. Their names are also on their parents' gravestones in Hitchin cemetery,

I think family members may have visited Herbert's grave in the Roclincourt Military Cemetery in France but I don't think that anyone got as far as Charles's grave. No chance now.

Eileen Martin

1. Gunner H. Catterill, 27096, 65th Howitzer Bty, Royal Field Artillery
2. Private C. Sells, 203465, 1st/5th Bedfordshire Regiment

Thank you Hertfordshire Family History Society

By Janet Walters

I have no ancestors in Hertfordshire but the Hertfordshire Family History Society helped me to complete my family story by finding my great grandfather, who disappeared for 15 years.

After I retired I spent six years researching my mother and father's families.

My father's ancestors were fairly easy to trace as the **Coles** have always lived in Leicestershire. They were farmers in the village of Langham - owned by Sir Andrew **Noel** who bought it from Thomas **Cromwell**'s family in 1600.

The local history society helped me to trace the records of George **Cole**, husbandman, who leased two messuages (cottages with outbuildings and garden) and 60 acres of land in 1606. The rent was £3 a year plus 4 hens a Christmas, 3 capons at Easter, a load of coal twice a year, four days carting wood and hay, and serving Sir Andrew with his sword and dagger when required. He was called up to fight on the Royalist side in the English Civil war and when they lost the village starved.

Several generations later Guy Cole became a baker in the village but his younger son Guy, my great-great grandfather, became a journeyman selling bread to neighbouring villages. His son Frederick became a draper, opened a tailor's shop in Leicester and then branched out into textile manufacturing, knitting socks and underwear. His grandson, my father Don, was another younger son so joined up in 1939 as a seaman in the Royal Navy Voluntary Reserve. After the war he had no job or home and a new wife so became a yarn agent. He later started a factory slitting ribbon for garment labels.

My mother's family, the **Herberts**, were much more difficult to trace with many ancestors having the same name, and many being younger sons. Their story starts in the eleventh century in south-east Wales - first in Crickhowell and then Wern Ddn, just outside Abergavenny. Her ancestor Thomas ap Gwilwyn could not fight in the Owain Glyndwr rebellion as his liege lord was Henry Bolingbroke, Lord of Brecon - later King Henry IV in 1399. Thomas's fifth son William was called up to fight in Agincourt in 1415. His eldest son William ap William was told by King Edward IV to Anglicise his name so chose the name **Herbert** (here means soldier and beorht bright and also means expert soldier).

My ancestor was William's younger brother Richard **Herbert**, who lived at Colebrook. After much searching I found that his great grandson Matthew, born in Crickhowell in 1625 had a son Thomas who later made his home in Kilkow, County Kerry in Ireland in 1655 as land agent to Edward Herbert, 3rd Baron Cherbury, a distant relative whose ancestors had gone on Ireland as a

settler in Kerry during Elizabeth I's reign. Edward was an absent landlord so Thomas managed the estate until his death. His heirs eventually inherited the lands in Kerry and through generations of several younger sons my great grandfather Thomas was born in 1821 near Killarney. But as the fifth son had to make his own way and in the 1840s he disappeared.



Kilcow House

I visited Kilcow and Killarney and the next year Cork. But it was only in a library on the way home that I found an article about Thomas going to Australia.

While he was studying at Trinity College, Dublin, Thomas heard that his brother Henry had set sail for America from Queenstown, Cork. He followed and they met in Boston, then sailed for Australia.

A shipping record noted a Henry Herbert disembarking at Melbourne but I could find no trace of either brother in the state of Victoria. They had disappeared, only to emerge back in Ireland fifteen years later with enough money to marry and buy some land.

Thomas and his family moved to Cork and emigrated to England in about 1878 before the Irish Land League forced through the Land Act of 1881. My grandfather Cecil, the youngest son, left Gloucestershire to train as a tea planter in Ceylon.

But I could not complete my family story until I found out what Thomas was doing for fifteen years in Australia. In 2019 I went into the Hertfordshire Family History Society's tent at the Hertfordshire County Show for some advice. They gave me the name of an obscure newspaper website and amazingly I found that Thomas and his brother had settled in Queensland in 1845.

They were among the first settlers to squat on land in the Burnett District, then in New South Wales. They raised sheep, named their homestead Ban Ban Station (meaning tall grass in the Wakka Language), panned for gold and helped to turn Norton's Camp nearby into a township (later called Gayndah).

But by 1860 the colonial government in Sydney were interfering too much, making Brisbane the regional capital against the northern settlers wishes and threatening to tax all sheep on unregistered land, making expansion impossible. The brothers sold their sheep, cattle, horses, wool for export, station house and outbuildings and went back to Kerry.

When my Australian son-in-law read about their exploits he asked his parents to visit Gayndah while they were on a caravan holiday in Queensland. They visited Gayndah museum and found the Herbert homestead outside – it had been moved and preserved there together with their meat store and tool shed. They also found some documents describing life at Ban Ban.



The Herbert Homestead outside Gayndah Museum

So thanks to the HFHS I was finally able to complete my story. I self-published my family history in a small book just for my relatives and family so that future generations could carry it on.



Settlers

What's new at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies?

By Sheila White

HALS on the move ... but not for a few years

Feasibility work is underway to relocate HALS to the Hertford Fire Station site, which is large enough to accommodate a purpose-built archive and local studies facility alongside the Fire Service. Although this move is still several years away, the size of the collections and scale of the project mean that preparation is starting now.

Change to opening hours

To accommodate the work needed to prepare for the move, HALS is no longer open on Friday mornings and open only on the first Saturday of each month (by appointment) but no longer the third Saturday. All other HALS services continue as usual from the County Hall site.

Collections

The Stingemore collection of around 10,000 photographs of Hertfordshire and beyond is now live on the HALS online catalogue. Frederick Henry **Stingemore** (1890-1954) was an amateur but very accomplished photographer who lived in West Hertfordshire. He worked as an artist drawing maps and illustrations for the London Underground from 1919 until his death.

The collection contains countryside views, canals, trams and buses. Catalogue entries have images for reference and high resolution copies can be purchased through the HALS website. Search for DE/Sg in the online search bar and browse the lantern slide collection.

Events at HALS

Getting started at HALS - a guide to researching resources at HALS

Wednesday, 8 April, 11:00am – 12pm.

Thursday, 7 May, 2:00pm – 3.00pm.

Tuesday, 7 July, 11:00am – 12.00pm.

Wednesday, 9 September, 2:00pm – 3.00pm.

Thursday, 12 November, 11:00am – 12pm.

Free event; booking essential

Contact details for HALS

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies,
Register Office Block, CHR 002,
County Hall,
Pegs Lane,
Hertford, SG13 8EJ.

tel: 0300 123 4049 (ask for Local Studies)
email: hals.enquiries@hertfordshire.gov.uk
website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hals

You can follow HALS on Facebook.

HALS opening hours (recently revised)

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	9am – 5pm
First Tuesday	evening of the month only, 5pm - 7:30pm, and only by appointment
Wednesday	9am – 5pm
Thursday	9am – 5pm
Friday	Closed
Saturday	10am – 2pm first Saturdays of the month and only by appointment
Sunday	Closed

Please be aware that there are no longer any facilities for buying hot drinks or snacks at HALS. You are advised to take your own refreshments which can be consumed in the foyer. It is a ten minute walk into Hertford with quite a climb back up.

Useful links

www.findmypast.co.uk Hertfordshire parish registers, school logbooks, historic newspapers & the 1939 National Register searchable online (subscription site, free to use at HALS and Hertfordshire libraries)

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk> images of local newspapers from across the county including several Hertfordshire titles (subscription site, free to use at HALS and Hertfordshire libraries)

www.thegenealogist.co.uk Hertfordshire tithe maps and apportionments searchable online (subscription site)

www.workhouses.org.uk the story of the workhouse with information about workhouses in Hertfordshire and across the country

www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk Genealogy in Hertfordshire

www.hertsmemories.org.uk history, memories and photos of Hertfordshire

www.halh.org.uk Hertfordshire Association for Local History, with links to local history societies' websites. Details of free online local history talks can be found on the home page.

www.hertspastpolicing.org.uk Herts Past Policing: crime and policing in Hertfordshire through the ages

www.hertsatwar.co.uk Community led project to commemorate the diverse experiences of Hertfordshire during WW1

www.prisonhistory.org Database of prisons, prison records and lock-ups in England, searchable by county

maps.nls.uk/os Historic Ordnance Survey maps, including of Hertfordshire, at the National Library of Scotland

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk The National Archives (TNA)
Entrance to The National Archives at Kew is free and there is no need to book although visitors are encouraged to do so and to order documents in advance. A reader's card is required to view original documents and this can be ordered online. More on the website. At the time of writing, downloadable files were still available at no charge (usually £3.50). These include PCC wills, navy and marine records, New Poor Law correspondence (Bishops Stortford Poor Law Union only for Herts) and certain deeds.

Research Queries

Are you stuck with your research? Don't forget you can still call on the help of fellow HFHS members.

Send your research questions to:

The Editor, 53 Hitchin Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6AQ.
Or send an email to editor@hertsfhs.org.uk



We could do with some more Research Queries for *Hertfordshire People*. Don't forget to send them in!

Society Talks

November 2025

Walls come tumbling down presented by David Annal

Sprinkled with case studies David Annal gave a masterclass on the ways in which family history brick walls can be broken down with some valuable advice and five steps to successful problem solving.

1. *Evaluate* - when was a person born, where were they born and who were their parents.
2. *Investigate* - search for possible birth records and identify the possible candidates.
3. *Eliminate* - look for infant burials and trace the remaining candidates forward in time.
4. *Assimilate* - build up a picture of the family or families by reconstructing families based on records. Look for unusual forenames, addresses and occupations.

For Hertfordshire Dave highlighted the Herts Baptisms and Herts Burials databases on FindmyPast and online records such as Wills, Taxes and Apprenticeships. The PCC Wills Index can also be found via the National Archives website index with some digital images on Ancestry.

5. *Speculate* - Don't get fixated on finding a record of birth, look for evidence of a birth. Look for other references to the surname in records and don't forget to look for gaps in the records.

Wildcards are underused when using online indexes and datasets!

January 2026

The Youngest Magna Carta Baron presented by Jane Tunesi of Liongam

In a change to the scheduled talk our Editor gave a short talk on her research into the Montfichet family, their descendants and relations.

Family trees and heraldry and links to other people associated with the family, including royalty and other rebellious barons.

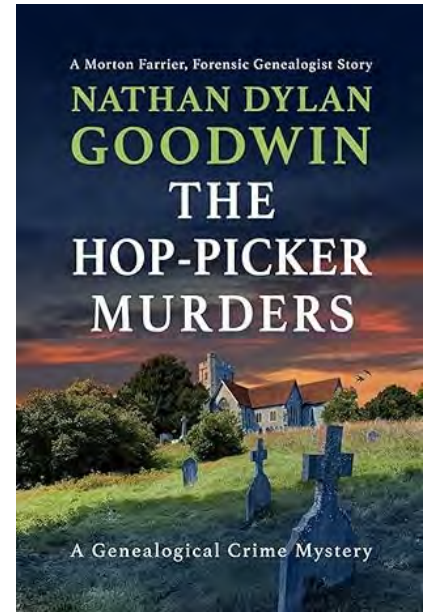
Well illustrated throughout, the family has links in Hertfordshire and especially Letchworth.

Book Reviews

Goodwin, Nathan Dylan *The Hop-picker Murders*. A Moreton Farrier, Forensic Genealogist Story #11. Nathan Dylan Goodwin, 2025. Available in hardback (£19.26), paperback (£13.33) and Kindle (£6.29 or £00.00 with Kindleunlimited) via Amazon.

I always wait with bated breath for the next book from Nathan Dylan Goodwin and this one does not disappoint.

Starting with an unwelcome visitor and threats that could damage his business Morton is approached by Molly Moon who is keen to know what happened to her uncle, Ernest Partridge, who was blamed for a serious theft which happened at the same time that he disappeared. Molly's father, Alfie, was a young boy at the time his brother disappeared and was one of a family from the East End of London who regularly went 'Hopping' i.e. hop-picking down to Kent each summer. Alfie and Ernest's sister, Nellie, did not believe that her brother had anything to do with the theft and was convinced that something bad had happened to him.



This mystery is mostly set in Kent, at one of the hop farms at Boughton-under-Blean and the surrounding area and is full of the detail of a hop-pickers life and the hop picking industry of the time. Although I had heard of hop picking by reading this book I learned much more about this manual industry and why it was so popular with people from London during the summer months.

The story alternates between the present day with Morton's research into the case and the time of the events in question which give clues to the reader and which make this book a real page-turner.

In 1920, the year after the theft, Nellie sets out to find out what happened the night her brother Ernest disappeared and records each piece of information she uncovers in her journal along with several of her poems which could also hold clues. Nellie is determined to find out what happened.

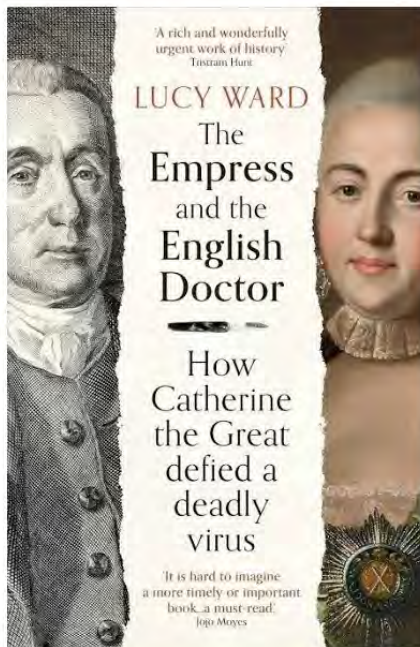
In 2023, Morton is handed Nellie's journal by her niece Molly Moon. The journal is now very worse for wear with some pages illegible, but can Morton piece together Nellie's clues and trace what happened to her brother? Amongst the cryptic entries is the claim that four missing hop-pickers, including Ernest, were murdered.

As is usual with Nathan's books, Morton demonstrates excellent genealogical research practice, using a broad range of historical sources found in archives and libraries as well as online. From birth and death registrations, census returns and newspapers to the more obscure such as early car registrations and licences and the Habitual Criminal and Police Gazettes and by visiting the hop farm and local towns. There is a useful Historical Information appendix in which the author summarises records used and identifies the real people who feature in this book and there is a very useful bibliography.

The story ends on a cliffhanger so I cannot wait for the next one!

Although this is the eleventh Morton Farrier genealogical crime story it can also be enjoyed as a stand-alone story.

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Ward, Lucy *The Empress and the English Doctor: How Catherine the Great defied a deadly virus.* Oneworld Publications, 2022. ISBN 978-0861542451.

Lucy Ward has worked as a journalist on national newspapers. When Covid struck the world in 2019 she was inspired to write about an earlier epidemic which would have caused as much consternation. This was Smallpox, which had raged across Europe at intervals for many centuries. 300 years ago new ideas about eradicating it were beginning to emerge.

One of the first to look into this was Lady Mary Wortley **Montagu**. She had been left severely scarred after contracting smallpox. In 1717 her husband was appointed Ambassador to the Ottoman court in Constantinople. Here, while visiting local people Lady Mary observed their custom of gathering children together once a year, and by means of inserting a needle into the sore of a victim were able to extract enough matter to insert it in a small cut on the arm of their own child. That child would then develop a fever but not a severe illness.

When she returned to England she was eager to pass on this information. Physicians were listening, but the general public were not too enthusiastic. One of the physicians who took an interest was Thomas **Dimsdale**. Born in 1712, by 1734 he was trained as a surgeon and set up practice in Hertford. Although born into a Quaker family he 'married out'. He kept to their ideals, but did not worship with them.

A scientific revolution was going on. These were the days of Sir Isaac

Newton, people with enquiring minds. Various doctors around England were trying Lady Mary's ideas with some success. Thomas Dimsdale was one of these. Living in Hertford he had seen how an epidemic could bring a market town to a state where shopkeepers and market traders were unable to supply their customers or keep trade going.

Rich people were prepared to pay for inoculation. Mr. Dimsdale bought a house on Port Hill, Bengoe where he invited paying customers to stay, supervising their diet, inoculating them and then overseeing their fever and recovery.

He was also prepared to treat the poor for free. One cold January night in 1768 he was asked to go from Bengoe to Little Berkhamsted to attend a boy, George **Hodges**, who was suffering from smallpox. He was too late to save him but was able to inoculate the entire population of that village and nearby Bayford. If an entire village was treated at the same time, then isolated themselves in the village there would be no link to infect the outside area.

It was about this time that Thomas Dimsdale had a visitor from the Russian Embassy in London. Catherine the Great had heard of the work he was doing, he had been judged as the most suitable physician to inoculate her and her son Paul as the doctors in Russia were not so advanced as those in England. Catherine's husband Emperor Peter had contracted the disease, been left badly scarred and died a few years later leaving her a widow. She was the daughter of a minor Prussian prince and had found Russia very backward when she first married Emperor Peter. She then proclaimed herself Empress of Russia and set about trying to modernise her subjects.

Mr. Dimsdale accepted her invitation. It was in 1769 that he set off for St. Petersburg with his 20 year old son Nathaniel, who was training to be a doctor. The journey, by sea to Amsterdam and private carriage for much of the remainder took a month.

Catherine received them at the opulent court in the Winter Palace. She explained that she would be their first patient as she wanted to show her many subjects that she was 'Mother to the Nation'. When that had progressed well then she would have them inoculate her son Paul, who was in his early teens.

All this went according to plan. Paul lived a life away from court, he had his own palace with his tutors. The Empress wanted to keep him free from disease and the lifestyle of the court. When Thomas and Nathaniel moved in with him to start treatment he felt as if he had a family for the first time. Dr. Dimsdale was a father figure and Nathaniel an elder brother. This relationship lasted many years.

Both inoculations were successful which made other members of the court circle request the same treatment. Later, in the depths of winter they travelled to Moscow in horse-drawn sledges big enough to sleep in amongst

luxurious furs including bearskin.

When the first request came to Dr. Dimsdale he was asked to name his price. He preferred to say 'Let the Empress pay me what she thinks I am worth'. Catherine was very generous with money, enabling him to live without having to worry about providing for his family, A Royal Title for each of the men and items like diamond encrusted gold snuffboxes handed out randomly.

The whole venture took about a year. Both men were glad to be back in Hertford. Dr. Dimsdale kept up a correspondence with the Empress, even sending her a greyhound which she used when hunting. He later sent another so that she could breed from them.

Thomas Dimsdale married for the 3rd time in 1779. In 1781 with his wife Elizabeth he went back to Russia to inoculate the two young sons of Paul.

The Empress Catherine died in 1796 and Thomas Dimsdale in 1800.

By this time, inoculation had been accepted in Great Britain and much of Europe. By 1800 the population of Britain was nearing 9 million. Fifty years earlier it had been around 6 million. A large proportion of this increase was put down to smallpox inoculation.

Towards the end of the 18th century Dr. Edward **Jenner** was advocating vaccination. He had noticed that milkmaids did not suffer from smallpox. The matter from sores on cows udders kept them free of the disease. He promoted this theory and it was widely accepted. Smallpox has now been eradicated worldwide, but only about 40 years ago.

There is much more in this book, including mentions of other doctors in Britain who were working on this.

Lucy Ward has written a readable, interesting book. Anyone with Hertfordshire ancestors will find it useful.

Janet Pearson

Have you seen any new books with a Hertfordshire theme or content? Would you like to write a review for inclusion in a future edition of *Hertfordshire People*?

I am always happy to receive notices of forthcoming publications and information on new books or online sources on all aspects of Hertfordshire history and topography.

Editor.

A Hertfordshire Heraldic Miscellany

By John J. Tunesi of Liongam

73) The Funeral Hatchment of Edward George Earle Lytton-Bulwer, the 1st Baron Lytton

This funeral hatchment is displayed amongst several **Lytton** family hatchments upon the walls of the Parish Church of St. Mary and St. Thomas of Canterbury within Knebworth Park a stone's throw from the family's ancient family seat, Knebworth House.

The hatchment celebrates the life of Edward George Earle **Lytton-Bulwer**, the 1st Baron Lytton (born 25th May 1803 died 18th January 1873). He was the third and youngest son of General William Earle **Bulwer**, of Heydon Hall and Wood Dalling in the County of Norfolk and his, Elizabeth Barbara **Lytton**, the daughter of Richard Warburton Lytton of Knebworth House, Hertfordshire.

Edward was noted as being both a politician and as a writer of some worth. As a politician he sat in the House of Commons at Westminster as the Member of Parliament for St. Ives (1831 – 32); Lincoln (1832 – 41) and for his home county of Hertfordshire (1852 – 66). During that time, he served in the Earl of Derby's administration as the Secretary of State for the Colonies for a short period (1858 – 59). He had been created as a Baronet (styled 'of Knebworth in the County of Hertford') within the Baronetage of the United Kingdom on the 18th July 1838. Upon leaving the green benches of the House of Commons

in 1866, Edward found himself sitting upon the red benches of the House of Lords when he was elevated to the peerage as Baron Lytton, of Knebworth in the County of Hertford within the Peerage of the United Kingdom on the 14th July 1866. He had previously assumed by Royal Licence the surname and arms of Lytton on the 10th February 1844.

Edward was appointed as a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George (GCMG) on the 24th November 1869.



Edward George Earle Lytton-Bulwer, the 1st Baron Lytton (1803 – 73) by Henry William Pickersgill.

Upon the literary front, he was the author of prodigious number of novels and plays several of which were produced upon the operatic stage. He was the originator of several well-known quotations such as "The pen is mightier than the sword", "pursuit of the almighty dollar", "It was a dark and stormy night" and "the great unwashed".

Edward married Anna Rosina Doyle **Wheeler** (born 4th November 1802 died 12th March 1882) at the Parish Church of St. James, Piccadilly in the County of Middlesex on the 29th August 1827. She was the daughter of Francis Massey Wheeler, of Ballywhire in the County of Limerick and his wife, Anna **Doyle**. Anna (who is also found named as Rosina) was also a writer. During her lifetime she wrote some fourteen novels and several essays and letters.

Sadly, their marriage was not a happy one caused in the main by Edward's intense political and writing interests as well as his infidelities. They initially separated in 1833 and subsequently formally and legally some three years later in 1836.

Interesting Edward's hatchment shows only his Lytton quarterings with no reference to his marriage to Anna. Perhaps her family were not armigerous? Strangely the background of the hatchment has been painted entirely black that ordinarily denotes that the individual memorialised was unmarried as there are no corresponding arms a spouse and Edward predeceased Anna by some nine years this again shows perhaps the animosity between the couple.



© Andrew Gray

The armorial bearings depicted upon his hatchment may be blazoned as follows:

Arms:

Quarterly of six 1st and 6th Quarterly i and iv Ermine on a chief indented azure three ducal coronets or (for Lytton) **ii and iii Gules on a chevron between three eagles close regardant or¹ as many cinquefoils sable** (for Bulwer) **[at fess point the baronet's augmentation] 2nd Gules on a chevron between three eagles close regardant or as many cinquefoils sable** (for Bulwer) **3rd Azure a fess between two bars gemel or²** (for Earle) **4th Argent a chevron sable between three choughs proper** (for Warburton) and **5th Quarterly argent and gules in the second and third quarters a fret or over all a fess azure [differenced with a crescent argent]** (for Norreys)

The arms are ensigned with a baron's coronet and environed by the Collar of a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George

Crests:

(Dexter) **A bittern in flags proper charged with a rose³**

(Sinister) **An heraldic tyger's head erased ermine crined and armed or**

Supporters: **On either side an angel proper**

Motto: **Hoc Virtutis Opus** [This is virtue's work] (for Lytton)

Upon Edward's death in January 1873, he was succeeded in both his peerage and baronetcy as well as the Knebworth estate by his and Anna's eldest son, Edward Robert Lytton Bulwer-Lytton (born 8th November 1831 died 24th November 1891).

He was later advanced within the Peerage of the United Kingdom as an earl taking the title of Earl of Lytton in the County of Derby, together with the subsidiary title as Viscount Knebworth, of Knebworth in the County of Hertford on the 28th April 1880.

Notes

1. The painter of this hatchment has mistakenly tintured the chevron as 'argent' (silver/white) and not as 'or' (gold/yellow).

2. Once again, the painter appears to have mis-tintured these arms in that both the bars gemel should be 'or' (gold/yellow) rather than 'argent' (silver/white).

3. Here the painter has omitted the 'rose'.

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Apart From our Monumental Inscriptions and Militia Lists books, did you know that Hertfordshire FHS has also produced several special publications? They have been produced over the years in a variety of formats, print, CD and flash drive.

- **Transported beyond the Seas** - criminals convicted in Hertfordshire who received transportation sentences to Australia 1784-1866.
- **Fleet Marriages of Hertfordshire People to 1754** - an alphabetical list of grooms and brides.
- **Hertfordshire Settlement Certificates**
- **Hertfordshire Removal Orders**
- **Hertfordshire Examinations**
- **Nonconformity in Hertfordshire**
- **Hertfordshire Places**
- **Hertfordshire Obituaries** - from *The Gentleman's Magazine*
- **Hertfordshire Burial Index** (CD)
- **1851 Hertfordshire Census** (CD)
- **Hertfordshire Militia Ballot Lists** (CD)
- **Hertfordshire Quarter Sessions 1585-1615** (CD)
- **Herts Marriage Links 1538-1837** (CD)
- **Hertfordshire Strays Index** (CD)
- **Herts Poor Law** - Settlements, Removals & Examinations books above (Flash Drive)

We welcome letters on any aspect of the history and genealogy of Hertfordshire places and families, or in response to articles and extracts which have appeared in *Hertfordshire People*. Contact the Editor at the address or e-mail at the top of page 1.

Members Interests

If interested in any of the names listed here, advise the Registrar who will liaise with the submitter so that contact may be made. Quote the full line of the submitted interest. The contact addresses are listed below. Apart from the new listings in *Hertfordshire People*, a free search facility is available to members only on family names that they may be researching using our members' interests database. This database is kept up to date at all times. Email correspondence is preferred but, if communicating by post, enclose a sae. For all enquiries, the Registrar will liaise with the submitter so that contact may be made. The contact points are:

By post: The Registrar, 134 Beechwood Avenue, St. Albans, AL1 4XY
 By email: registrar@hertsfhs.org.uk

Name	Period	Parish	County	M/No
Abbott	Any	Highgate, Islington	Mdx	4737
Carey	Any	Any	Hrt	4532
	Variants: Cary			
Carey	1554-1620	Hunsdon	Hrt	4532
	Variants: Cary			
Carey	c1620	Stogursey	Som	4532
	Variants: Carey			
Childs	Any	Barnet	Hrt	4737
Childs	1700-1900	North Mymms	Hrt	4737
Childs	1800-1950	Highgate	Mdx	4737
Cleeve	1546-1618	Any	Any	4532
	Variants: Cleeve, Cleve			
Goodchild	1600-1900	Ashwell	Hrt	4737
Jennings	Any	Barnet	Hrt	4737
Jennings	1800-1910	North Mymms	Hrt	4737
Jennings	1800-1950	Highgate	Mdx	4737
Lowen	17c-18c	Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon	Hrt	4742
	Variants: Lowten			
North	17c-18c	Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon	Hrt	4742
Oclee	-1850	Loudwater, Rickmansworth	Hrt	4516
Penn	17c-18c	Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon	Hrt	4742
Seabon	Any	Thorley, Thundridge	Hrt	4743
	Variants: Saban			
Shambrook	17c-18c	Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon	Hrt	4742
Underwood	19c	Hitchin	Hrt	4740
Underwood	18c	St Pauls Walden	Hrt	4740
Underwood	19c	South Australia	S. Aus	4740

New Members

Number	Name	County / Country
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4733	Ms Jayne S. Hill	NSW, Australia
4734	Mrs. Keeley Sparrow	Hertfordshire
4735	Ms Ruth Wilks	Surrey
4736	Mr. John Thorogood	Devon
4737	Mr. Stephen Abbott	Berkshire
4738	Mr Martin Ridgway	Shropshire
4739	Miss Victoria Wood	Scottish Borders



Family History Research
Hertfordshire, London & Middlesex
All enquiries welcome
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St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9JR
Tel: 01727 833664
carolynn.boucher@virginmedia.com

Hertfordshire Family History Society

(Established 1977)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES: *note two rates i.e. Printed / digital PDF*

UK individual - £13/£9; UK Family - £14/£10; Overseas (airmail) - £16/£10;
UK Families receive one journal per household. Subscriptions only accepted in **Sterling**. Overseas members may pay by credit card online using the website **www.genfair.co.uk**.

Subscriptions run from 1 March to 28 February each year. **Subscriptions by post are payable to 'Hertfordshire Family History Society' and sent to The Membership Secretary, 50 Chelwood Avenue, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10.** All correspondence by post regarding membership of the Society should be addressed to the **Membership Secretary**. Otherwise, email all queries and changes of personal details to the Registrar at **registrar@hertsfhs.org.uk**.

SOCIETY PROJECTS : Projects are ongoing and volunteers for transcribing, checking etc are always welcome. If you would like to know more, contact the **Projects Co-ordinator: Mr John Pearson - johnwelburn@talktalk.net**

PUBLICATIONS: A full list of Society publications is issued with the September journal each year, and is always available on our website: **www.hertsfhs.org.uk**. For a booklist, you can also contact the Secretary at any time. You can buy Society publications online using a secure credit card facility at **www.genfair.co.uk**

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MEMBERS' INTERESTS: Apart from the new listings in each issue of *Hertfordshire People*, a free search facility is available, to members only, on family names that they may be researching, from our database of Members Interests. The names searched for will be completely up to date with the membership details held. Email correspondence preferred, but if by post enclose a s.a.e. For all enquiries, the Registrar will liaise with the submitter so that contact may be made. The points of contact are as follows:

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EXCHANGE JOURNALS: The Society exchanges journals with other family history societies in the UK and overseas. Digital journals are uploaded to our Members Area, hard copies can be loaned to members at a main meeting by arrangement.

JOURNAL DISTRIBUTION: if there is any problem with the delivery of your copy of *Hertfordshire People*, please contact - **registrar@hertsfhs.org.uk**

UNWANTED GRO CERTIFICATES: Can be donated to the Society, making them available to other members. **MEMBERS' FAMILY TREES** or family histories are also welcome additions to the library. Please make clear what surname they relate to, what location in Hertfordshire the family comes from, and keep them compact! Contact the Secretary.

OTHER MEMBERS WITH SOCIETY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Reference Box: Would you like to take responsibility for bringing our reference books to meetings? If so, please contact the Secretary.

HOUSE GROUPS: At present, one House Group is active.

Hoddesdon Area Group - Organiser: Mrs Janet Pearson - johnandjanet@ntlworld.com Meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the Methodist Church Hall, Middlefield Road, Hoddesdon. 2 - 4pm. New members welcome.

The Society would be pleased to help set up further House Groups - contact the Secretary if you would like to help to start one near where you live.

HFHS SEARCH SERVICES

Our Society is always looking for ways to help members with their research. We use income from our search services to provide further research material and in this way we hope to expand our services in the future.

The Hertfordshire Burial Index 1800-1851

Please request searches through 'Genfair' at **www.genfair.co.uk**.

BOOK, CD & FLASH DRIVE SALES

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www.genfair.co.uk/supplier/hertfordshire-family-history-society-66/



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Information is also available on the Society's website:
www.hertsfhs.org.uk

Hertfordshire Family History Society

Meetings Programme 2026

All our talks are by Zoom
From 2.15pm - Speaker 2.30pm (UK time)

Please check our website News & Events page and our social media platforms for the latest changes to the programme.

- Mar 28** **William Schaw Lindsay: Victorian Entrepreneur** presented by Bill Lindsay. Born in Ayr in 1815, William Schaw Lindsay had an amazing life. Orphaned by 10, he ran away to sea as a teenager and was the Master of an oceangoing vessel within nine years. When he retired from the sea, after many adventures, he built up one of the largest shipping companies in Britain in the 1850s. His diaries are full of personal anecdotes of famous people he met and he also wrote the four volume *History of Merchant Shipping*.
- May 23** **AGM** followed by **Researching your Second World War Ancestors** presented by Simon Fowler. Join our speaker as he shows you how to find out about your parents and grandparents service in the forces and on the home front between 1939 and 1945.
- June 27** **Quick and Dirty Trees** presented by Karen Evans. Using trees is a vital component of working out how a DNA match is related to you but what happens if they have only limited information? Our speaker will explain what a quick and dirty tree is, how to create one and what they mean for your DNA match list.

Website: www.hertsfhs.org.uk