



# Anglo-Celtic Roots

Quarterly Chronicle • Volume 29, Number 4 • Winter 2023

## In This Issue

***Stories from the War: Part I***

***Research Getaway: New England Historic Genealogical Society (American Ancestors)***

***We Shall Remember Them:  
Sapper Thomas Arnold Clayburn***



## *Anglo-Celtic Roots*

This journal is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa and sent free to members.

Unless otherwise stated, permission to reprint for non-profit use is granted to organizations and individuals provided the source is credited.

Articles accompanied by the copyright symbol (©) may not be reprinted or copied without the written permission of the author.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of BIFHSGO or its officers, nor are commercial interests endorsed.

BIFHSGO members are invited to submit family history stories, illustrations, letters, queries and similar items of interest in electronic format using MSWord-compatible software, to [acreditor@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:acreditor@bifhsgo.ca). Please include a brief biographical sketch and a passport-type photograph.

Authors are asked to certify that permission to reproduce any previously copyrighted material has been acquired and are encouraged to provide permission for non-profit reproduction of their articles. The Editor reserves the right to select material that meets the interest of readers and to edit for length and content.

Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 40015222  
Indexed in the Periodical Source Index (PERSI)

Managing Editor: Barbara Tose

Assistant Editor: Christine Jackson

Editors Emeritus: Jean Kitchen, Chris MacPhail

Layout Designer: Barbara Tose

Proofreaders: Sheila Dohoo Faure, Jean Kitchen, Marnie McCall, Christine Jackson

## ***British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa***

Founded and incorporated in 1994

Charitable Registration No. 89227 4044RR0001

Contact BIFHSGO at

PO Box 38026

Ottawa ON K2C 3Y7

[queries@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:queries@bifhsgo.ca)

[www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca)

# Contents

## COLUMN

*From the President/2*

## FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

*Stories From the War: Part I*

*Carol Annett/3*

*Research Getaway: New England  
Historic Genealogical Society  
(American Ancestors)*

*Anne Renwick/17*

*We Shall Remember Them:  
Sapper Thomas Arnold Clayburn*

*Nigel Lloyd/25*

## TECHNIQUES AND RESOURCES

*The Cream of the Crop*

*John D. Reid/29*

## BIFHSGO NEWS/32

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Back cover*

**Cover Illustration:**  
**Commonwealth War Grave  
headstones of the four fallen  
members of Phillis Crew in Bassu  
Cemetery, Marne, France: Sgt.  
James Norman, P/O Jack Spevak,  
P/O John Patrick Shortt and P/O  
John Ellard Searson**

Source: the author

## ***From the Editor:***

In this issue we begin with the first of a two-part story by Carol Annett about her father's service as an air bomber in World War II. Part I covers the outcomes for her father's comrades—and some of the resistance fighters who helped them—after being forced down behind enemy lines in 1944. Look for Part II— her father's story—in the Spring 2024 issue of ACR.

Anne Renwick recounts her *Research Getaway* at the American Ancestors Research Center in Boston. This program is provided by experts who are specialists in the collection of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (known as American Ancestors.) Anne provides a tour of the building, the process of the *Getaway* and describes some of her research results. It will make you want to go on a *Getaway* yourself!

And finally our soldier's biography from No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station recounts the short life of a young carpenter-joiner from Yorkshire who served with the Royal Engineers.



Barbara Tose

## From the President



This past week, John Reid began a *Canada's Anglo-Celtic Connections* blog post with these words: "We love volunteers." He's right. We at BIFHSGO love our

volunteers, too. And the holiday season and end of year reflections serve to remind us of their gifts of time, expertise and hard work.

- We are grateful to John Sayers, who recently passed away, for his years of research on British home children coming to Canada, and his leadership of a team of volunteers to index the RG76 records at Library and Archives Canada.
- We are grateful to the team of volunteers who are working on a variety of other indexes and resources which continue to expand BIFHSGO's Name Index.
- We are grateful to the team—contributors and editors—who produce our quarterly journal *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR).
- We are grateful to the team who organized and delivered BIFHSGO's annual conference in October. Feedback from participants is best summed up by one registrant: "Your calibre of speakers, level of program organization, communications about the conference, and the door prizes were all awesome!"
- We are grateful to the members—many of them also Board members—who work all year to

deliver BIFHSGO's program of events and resources, by undertaking the various back-of-house duties that ensure our members receive the high-quality benefits they have come to expect.

- We are grateful to all the volunteers who keep BIFHSGO members informed through newsletters, social media and the website. There are a myriad of contributors to the website—writers, text and video editors—and our hard-working and eagle-eyed web manager, Sheila Dohoo Faure, is essential to it all.

Would you consider putting BIFHSGO on your Christmas list, and offering time and expertise over the coming year? Check out the variety of opportunities listed in the *About Us* section of BIFHSGO's website. In particular, over the next 6 months we must find a Program Director; a Managing Editor for ACR; and people to serve on the 2024 Conference Committee. If you would like to chat about any of the available opportunities, feel free to contact me at any time at [president@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:president@bifhsgo.ca).

On behalf of that hard-working volunteer Board of Directors, I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season.

Dianne Brydon

## Family History Research

# Stories From The War: Part I<sup>©</sup>

BY CAROL ANNETT



*Carol credits her father, who was a master storyteller, with getting her started in family history. He left her not only his genealogy research files, but also a treasure trove of oral anecdotes about the family. Since his death in 2002, Carol has been honouring his memory by continuing to research and write down the ancestral narratives, including the one that follows, the first part of her dad's own story of serving with the RCAF during World War II.*

### Introduction

My father, Richard Glanville MacKinnon, known as Dick, served with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) during the Second World War. Twenty-year-old Dick was one of three airmen who survived when their bomber crashed in occupied France. He returned from the war with stories to tell—tales of camaraderie and courage, of danger, and of loss. Like many veterans, he rarely spoke of the war. But he carefully stored his memorabilia and saved RCAF notices and newspaper clippings long after the war.

Stories in this article are drawn from my father's collection and from the personal files of his crewmate, Wilfred Devine, complemented by my own research findings. My father's voice is heard throughout the article in excerpts from an interview I recorded with

him in 1995. This article is based on my feature presentation to BIFHSGO given and recorded in November 2022. A link to the video of my talk may be found in the members' area of the society's website. Eight months after giving that talk, I belatedly received my father's RCAF service record from Library and Archives Canada, so I have added a few more details to this two-part article.

This work honours those who served in the RCAF during WW II—those who survived and those who never came home. The account is set in the larger context of a massive war effort that involved air training schools all across Canada, ships carrying thousands of young Canadians overseas, and airfields in the UK that sent squadrons of armed aircraft against the most formidable enemy the world had ever faced. However, the stories

presented here focus on individuals: Dick MacKinnon, his air force friends—particularly Wilfred Devine and Hume Ritchie—and the brave members of the French Resistance who sheltered airmen who survived being shot down. For my Dad and others, the emotional impact of the experience lasted long after the war was over. Consequently this account spans six decades, beginning before Dick and Wilfred enlisted in 1942 and ending with a surprising discovery made several years after they died.

After their bomber crashed on 25 July 1944, Dick evaded being captured by the enemy, but Wilfred did not. As Part 1 of *Stories from the War*, this account covers Dick's RCAF enlistment, training and bombing operations. But first, we begin with an event that Dick did not experience—Wilfred's capture—to give the present-day reader a sense of how dangerous occupied France was.

### **“Aviateurs alliés capturés à Mathons”<sup>1</sup>**

Imagine it is August 1944. The Allies had landed at Normandy in June, but WW II is far from over. Allied forces are advancing to rid France of the German troops still occupying their country. Guerilla members of the French Resistance (the Maquis), called *maquisards*, buoyed by the Allied invasion, intensify activity

against the enemy. Forty men are forming a Maquis cell in the Forêt de Mathons in northern France, east of Paris. In their camp, they are hiding six RAF airmen and one RCAF airman—Wilfred Devine.

On August 7, the maquisards learn that the enemy has discovered their location and plans to ambush their camp. They double the guard at the edge of the forest. The next two days are deceptively calm. Early in the morning of 10 August 1944, two massive convoys of German soldiers surround the forest.

Years later, Wilfred Devine described what happened next, “Not knowing our way around the forest, the RAF men and myself were eventually captured after several hours of futile evasion.”<sup>2</sup> Along with the seven Allied airmen, the enemy capture only four young maquisards. At a nearby farmhouse, the Germans interrogate these Resistance fighters, then march them back into the forest. Their comrades discover their bullet-riddled bodies three days later. Soldiers arrest the farmer and his wife for helping the Resistance and set fire to their farm. The next day, when the couple's 11-year-old son comes looking for his parents, the Germans shoot and kill him. Brutality is swift and final for the four members of the Maquis and the child<sup>3</sup> (Figure 1). What would happen to the seven Allied airmen?

**Bernard Douillot, age 11**  
**René Jakubas, age 17**  
**Serge Kervaire, age 17**  
**Maurice Launois, age 26**  
**Gabriel Sanrey, age 23**

**Figure 1: Names of the four Maquis members and one child killed at the Forêt de Mathons inscribed on a stone monument in France**

All of the airmen captured at the Forêt de Mathons, except for Wilfred, took part in RAF bombing raids over a French town called Revigny-sur-Ornain. Their target was the railway, which the Germans needed to transport supplies to their troops in France. RAF bombers attacked the Revigny railyards three times in mid-July 1944. The Germans retaliated and Allied losses mounted.

Forty-one Lancaster bombers from these three raids crashed into the countryside around Revigny; over 230 RAF airmen died. Historian Oliver Clutton-Brock later called it a *Massacre over the Marne*.<sup>4</sup> The French Resistance successfully sheltered most of the 59 survivors. Unfortunately, they transferred six of them to the Forêt de Mathons along with the seventh evader—Wilfred Devine—whose aircraft was shot down in the same vicinity on a different bombing mission. German soldiers captured Wilfred along with the six RAF airmen on 10 August 1944.

While Wilfred and the other captives were being carted off to Germany, members of the French Resistance were risking their lives to shelter his surviving crew-mates—the pilot, Jack Phillis, and the air bomber, Dick MacKinnon. How did Dick MacKinnon, a small-town boy from Western Canada, end up missing in action in occupied France? Let's go back to the beginning.

### **“I joined the Air Force shortly after finishing junior matric in 1942”<sup>5</sup>**

Dick MacKinnon came from Trail, a mining town of 8,000 people on the Columbia River, nestled between the mountains in southeastern British Columbia. Trail was known for the smokestacks of its smelter and its world champion hockey team, the Trail Smoke Eaters. In his neighbourhood, called the Gulch, Dick had a reputation for standing up to local bullies. He was an all-round athlete and a good student.

In 1940, the principal's message in the Trail High School Annual warned students that events beyond their control would change their life plans.<sup>6</sup> In 1942, when Dick graduated from grade 11 (junior matriculation), his plan was very clear: like many of his schoolmates, he was keen to enlist to serve his country.<sup>7</sup>

Leaving behind his parents and brothers in Trail, and his girlfriend, Marjorie, in Nelson, Dick MacKinnon travelled to Calgary, Alberta, and enlisted in the RCAF.

Inter-viewers at the recruiting centre noted that 18-year-old Dick was immature but his motivation was very good. One officer predicted accurately that he “has guts and will try hard.”<sup>8</sup>

### “I went through a 14-month training period”

Dick continued his education in Canada with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). In 1939, Canada agreed to supply facilities and training for flight crew from every part of the Commonwealth for service overseas. Between 1939 and 1945, 151 schools across the country trained more than 130,000 aircrew for the air forces of Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Praising this contribution to the war effort, U.S. President Roosevelt referred to Canada as the “aerodrome of democracy.”<sup>9</sup>

When Dick enlisted, he was issued a five-by-three-inch red notebook, which he used as a diary (Figure 2). His first entries were the dates of

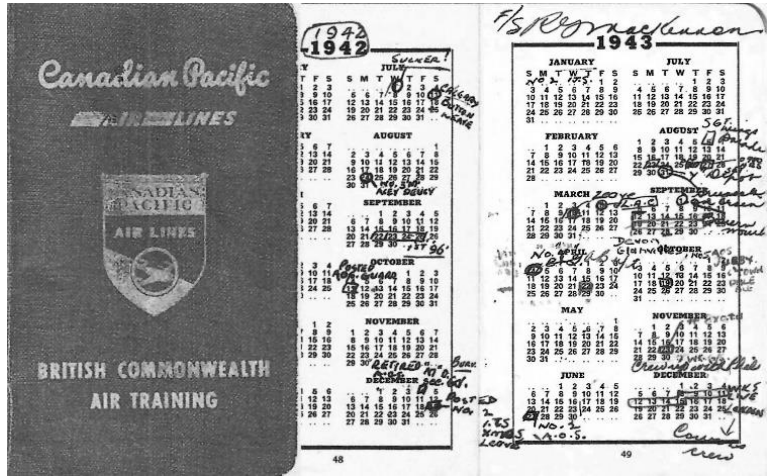


Figure 2: Red BCATP notebook  
Source: Collection of Dick MacKinnon

the courses he attended in Edmonton, Lethbridge and Regina. Dick had wanted to be a pilot, but failed to realize the importance of the flight simulator test at initial training school and did not qualify. For the next 14 months, he learned the skills of an air bomber, his second choice of position in the aircrew.<sup>10</sup>

In August 1943, a newspaper report noted that Dick MacKinnon earned his wings (Figure 3) at the same time as Hume Ritchie, who also came from the Trail, B.C. region. After they returned from the war, the Trail newspaper would print a feature article about Ritchie and



MacKinnon, which Dick would add to his scrapbook.



**Figure 3: Air bomber badge**

Source: Collection of Dick MacKinnon

### **“We went over with the *Queen Mary*”**

Three weeks after graduating as an air bomber, Sergeant Richard Glanville MacKinnon sailed from New York, U.S.A., to Gourock, Scotland, aboard the most famous ocean liner converted to carry troops. Between March 1940 and September 1946, the RMS *Queen Mary* was one of a number of steamships adapted for war service. The armed forces camouflaged her cruise line colours with drab-coloured paint and nicknamed her the “Grey Ghost.”<sup>11</sup> They refitted the vessel to carry 15,000 or more passengers, who had to eat and sleep in shifts, crowding every cabin, hallway and deck. On the crossing of 25–30 July 1943, she transported the largest number of people ever carried by a steam-

ship—15,740 troops and 943 crew.<sup>12</sup> While 630 fewer people sailed with Dick MacKinnon on the 27–31 August 1943 passage, one very important passenger was on board—Winston Churchill.<sup>13</sup>

Dick was likely less interested in the VIP on the ship and more concerned about finding his friends. He did spot three airmen from Trail among the 2,300 air force personnel on board, but he didn’t know at the time that his air bomber training mate, Hume Ritchie, and his future crewmates, Wilfred Devine and John Searson, sailed on the same crossing.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the war, Dick jotted down the names of friends from Trail and other air force buddies in his red notebook.

### **“Another training period of some eight months began in England”**

After the ship docked in Scotland, Dick travelled to the south of England. All arriving RCAF personnel had to pass through the Personnel Training and Reception Centre in Bournemouth, Hampshire, where they were issued uniforms, flying kit and identification cards.<sup>15</sup> Dick noted that he visited his mother’s Glanville relatives in neighbouring Devon before continuing to his first assignment, advanced flying training on the Isle of Man.

Next, Dick went to the Operational Training Unit in Ossington, Nottinghamshire, where he noted that the crew was “up with Phil,” meaning that he had joined Phillis Crew—the aircrew of Pilot Jack Phillis. Over the following weeks, the crew developed the skills and teamwork needed to fly bombing missions against the enemy. While at Ossington, MacKinnon was reprimanded. His negligent actions, the report said, caused the engines to stall and the plane to crash land. It sounds serious, but in his red notebook he referred to the incident as “Our Prang.” Damage to the Wellington bomber must have been minor as he was fined only £5, but a record of this single offence stayed in his file.<sup>16</sup>

Ossington was followed by ‘6 Group Battle School’ at Dalton, Yorkshire. Next, at Wombledon Conversion Unit in Yorkshire, the crew made the transition from the two-engine planes they had so far trained on to heavy four-engine aircraft, like the Halifax bomber pictured on a postcard he kept for his scrapbook. Finally, he joined a squadron that flew from an airfield at Middleton St. George, Durham, which would be his home base for the next two months. Dick MacKinnon was now one of the boys of Bomber Command.

**“We were in 6 Group, a Canadian group of squadrons”**  
Led by the British Royal Air Force, the bombing forces of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth countries united to form Bomber Command. Most of the aircrew were civilian volunteers in their late teens and early twenties like Dick MacKinnon.<sup>17</sup> The Canadian government wanted the RCAF heavy bomber squadrons to be in a distinctly Canadian group, so No. 6 Group was formed in October 1942<sup>18</sup> and was later expanded from eight bomber squadrons to fifteen.<sup>19</sup> Despite this growth, the majority of RCAF bomber aircrew still served with RAF squadrons. Dick MacKinnon was honoured to join one of the Canadian squadrons—419 Moose.<sup>20</sup>

**“Our squadron was 419 Moose—the Mighty Moose”**  
The first wing commander of 419 Squadron was John Fulton from Kamloops, BC. After the enemy shot down Fulton’s plane in July 1942, his squadron adopted the name Moose, the nickname of their fallen leader.<sup>21</sup> The 419 Squadron became one of the most decorated Canadian squadrons during the war and the one with the most losses.<sup>22</sup> In 1944, the RCAF awarded Andrew Mynarski of Moose Squadron the highest honour for valour, the Victoria Cross.<sup>23</sup> Thirty-seven years later, Dick would add Mynarski’s

story to his war collection. Dick MacKinnon began his service with 419 Moose Squadron on 24 May 1944.

### **“Our crew was seven in number”<sup>24, 25</sup>**

Like all members of 419 Moose Squadron, the seven men in Phillis Crew were called Moosemen. Phillis, the pilot, came from Florenceville, New Brunswick. Norman, the flight engineer from England, was the only non-Canadian on the crew. The navigator, Devine from Waterdown, Ontario, was the old man of the group. MacKinnon, the air bomber, was one of two crew members from B.C. Searson, the mid-upper gunner, hailed from Douglas, in Ontario’s Ottawa Valley, and wireless operator Spevak was from the city of Ottawa. Shortt, the rear gunner, from Cumberland, B.C., was Dick’s closest pal on the crew.<sup>26-31</sup> These young men would rely on one another in the tight quarters of their Lancaster bomber.

### **“We were flying Canadian-built Lancasters”**

Phillis Crew flew only in Canadian-built Lancaster Mark X bombers (Figure 4). From 1941, the AV Roe Company produced Lancasters in England, but between 1943 and 1945, Victory Aircraft manufactured

430 Lancasters in Malton, Ontario.<sup>32</sup> The first Canadian Lancaster, nicknamed the *Ruhr Express*, would fly 46 sorties with Moose Squadron before it crashed in January 1945.<sup>33-35</sup>

In October 1943, the CBC launched a radio drama entitled “L for Lanky,” to promote the role of the Lancaster in the Allied invasion of Europe. Sponsored by the Marconi Company of Canada and produced in cooperation with the RCAF, “L for Lanky” became a radio highlight of the week.<sup>36</sup> One fan of the program



**Figure 4: Lancaster bomber**

Source: Dick MacKinnon’s red notebook

recalled, “This radio show gave us the hope that we would succeed and go on to victory, which we did with a lot of help from brave men and the great Lancaster Bomber.”<sup>37</sup>

Though the episodes were based on actual flights made by the RCAF,

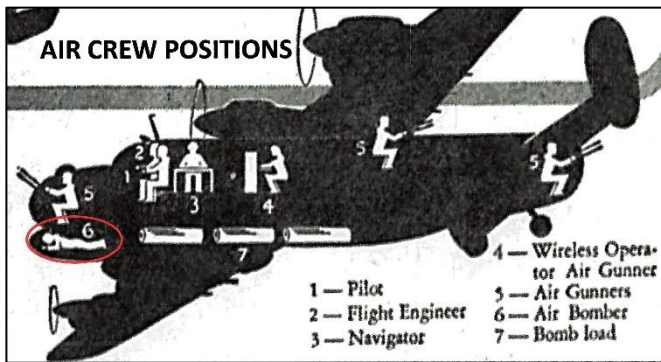
“L for Lanky” could not convey the human cost of the war. Historians would later question the effectiveness of the bomber war. But there would be no debate about the shocking number of fatalities. Of the 120,000 flight crew who served in Bomber Command, the enemy killed 58,000, including over 10,400 Canadians.<sup>38</sup>

The Lancaster bomber had exceptional flying characteristics, operational performance and bomb-carrying capacity. However, the designers had not built the interior for the comfort of the crew, particularly the air bomber. On bombing operations, Dick MacKinnon’s domain would be the nose of the bomber, just as pictured in a newspaper advertisement for “L for Lanky” (Figure 5).

If he spotted enemy fighters, the air bomber could fire the machine gun in the front turret. But his primary

position was lying on his stomach behind the Perspex blister in the nose of the plane. Before the flight, he and the navigator located the target on navigational maps. Prior to takeoff he would check that the bomb armourer had loaded the correct bombs. After takeoff, he scanned the darkness for flares left by pathfinder planes, so he could guide his pilot to the target. He programmed the bombing mechanical computer according to the bomb load and the weather conditions, and, after releasing the bombs, he announced to the crew, “Bombs gone!”<sup>39</sup>

Dick would endure bone-chilling cold, deafening noise, earaches and constant vibration while performing these duties at 20,000 feet wearing a flight suit and oxygen mask. Despite the risks, he was ready to play his part in the fight against the enemy.



**Figure 5: Air crew positions in the Lancaster bomber**

Source: Advertisement for “L for Lanky” radio program in the *Times Colonist* (Victoria, BC), 16 Sep. 1944 (Newspapers.com)

**“We made our first operation as a crew on D-Day”**

A tour of duty comprised 30 bombing operations but fewer than 25 per cent of crews reached that number. Phillis Crew completed ten.<sup>40, 41</sup> They flew at night, departing Middleton St. George

before midnight, dropping bombs on the target, and returning early the next morning. Their operations were designed to cripple the enemy's transportation routes and to demolish installations housing the deadly V-1 rockets.

On their first sortie, on 6 June 1944, the evening of D-Day, Phillis crew joined 43 Lancasters and 204 Halifax bombers to attack rail sites at Coutances, France, providing support to the Allied invasion forces. On their second operation to Achères, they encountered a Junkers 88 night fighter. Thanks to the actions of Shortt and Searson they returned to base undamaged. They completed operations to Le Mans, Saint-Pol and the Forêt d'Eawy without incident.

However, on their sixth outing, to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, enemy fighters attacked the Phillis plane on the way to and from the target, damaging an engine, a fuel tank and the undercarriage. During touchdown, two tires exploded

causing the plane to flip over. Miraculously, no one was injured. Phillis and Norman were awarded Distinguished Flying Medals.<sup>42</sup> This hair-raising sortie would have made a thrilling episode of "L for Lanky." Nine crews were not so lucky and failed to return to base.<sup>43</sup>

The next two sorties, to Bois-des-Jardins and L'Hey, were uneventful. Their ninth outing took them over enemy territory for the first time to Kiel, in the north of Germany. Two days later they flew over Germany again (Figure 6).

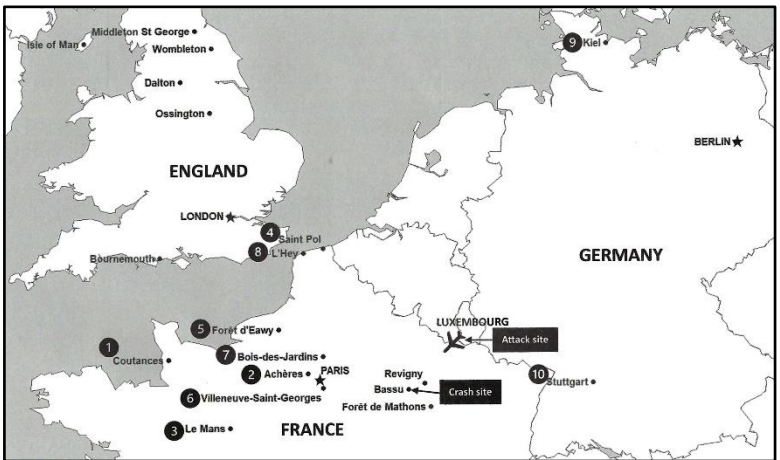


Figure 6: Map of Dick MacKinnon's training locations in England and bombing operations in France and Germany

Source: the author

### "We were attacked by a German fighter"

The night of their tenth operation, it was Phillis Crew's turn to be unlucky. On July 24, 40 Lancasters from three Canadian squadrons

were ordered to target the German city of Stuttgart. Theirs would be the only aircraft that failed to return to base.

An hour into the return flight, over Luxembourg, hostile fire breached the midsection of the bomber which burst into flames. At 1:30 in the morning of July 25, Phillis gave the first order, "Abandon aircraft!" The crew buckled their parachutes and awaited the second order, "Jump!"

According to protocol, the first to bail out would be the air bomber followed by the flight engineer, the navigator, the wireless operator, the mid-upper gunner, the rear gunner, and finally the pilot.<sup>44</sup> But that is not what happened. MacKinnon exited first, as expected, from the forward escape hatch. Then Phillis lost control of the damaged bomber, which had gone into a violent spin. Only two more made the jump.

Phillis bailed out successfully. Devine dragged himself out with one arm. No more than a thousand feet from the ground when he jumped, he landed hard, injuring both feet. Still, he was lucky to be one of the three survivors (Figure 7). The other four crewmen went down with the burning

aircraft, which ripped apart as it spiralled to the ground.<sup>45</sup>

The bomber crashed at 2:00 a.m. in sparsely populated farmland in the Marne region of northeastern France. The nearest village was Bassu, which had a population of 100 people. Noise and flames alerted local citizens, who conducted a recovery operation before German soldiers could interfere.

They found two severely burned bodies in the fuselage section, and another under the starboard wing, the aircraft having flipped over. The tail of the plane fell a kilometre away. Beside it lay a single body, identified as John Patrick Shortt.<sup>46</sup> Three members of the crew were missing from the wreckage—Phillis, Devine and MacKinnon. As soon as their plane failed to return, the base commander reported the entire crew as missing.



**Figure 7: The three survivors of Phillis Crew: (L-R) P/O Jack Phillis, P/O Wilfred Devine and F/S Dick MacKinnon**

Source: Collection of Dick MacKinnon

## **“I was reported missing for six weeks”**

The same day as his plane failed to return to base, MacKinnon’s parents received the dreaded telegram informing them that he was missing, followed by letters of condolence from the squadron’s chaplain and commander, and the Minister of National Defence for Air. “The Government and people of Canada join me,” wrote Charles Power, “in expressing the hope that more favourable news will be forthcoming in the near future.”<sup>47-49</sup> Six agonizing weeks would go by before his family received “more favourable news.”

## **“They’re buried in the county of Marne”**

Back in Bassu in the Marne region of France, the villagers treated the bodies of the fallen airmen with the utmost respect. They knew that these four young men—Searson, Spevak, Shortt and Norman—died trying to defeat the monstrous enemy occupying their country. After a church service, the people of Bassu walked to the cemetery, and placed flowers on the grave. The inscription on a wooden cross placed at the gravesite by the villagers translated as, “Here lie four Canadian aviators fallen 25 July 1944—Glory to these heroes.”

After the war, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission replaced the wooden cross with individual

headstones for each of the four airmen.<sup>50</sup> When I visited the cemetery in 2010, a vase of flowers was placed in front of the stones bearing the crest of 419 Moose Squadron. Lest we forget these four were Moosemen (Cover and Figure 8).



**Figure 8:**  
The insignia of RCAF 419 Squadron on the vase at the gravesite  
Source: the author

## **“Only three of us escaped”**

Between 1939 and 1945, over 9,000 Allied aircraft hurtled into the French countryside, killing more than 15,000 airmen.<sup>51</sup> The enemy captured many survivors. The success of those who evaded capture depended on the help they received from members of the French Resistance.

Wilfred Devine, one of the three survivors from Phillis crew, walked along the River Marne for several days. Resistance members, including 20-year-old Georges Vaucouleur, hid him in their lodgings for a week. But on 6 August, because enemy soldiers were actively looking for evaders in the area, the Resistance network moved

Wilfred to the ill-fated camp in the Forêt de Mathons. As mentioned in the opening story, the Germans found this camp and captured him.<sup>52</sup>

Jack Phillis landed safely near Bassu, where a Resistance member took him into his home. Later, other members transferred Phillis to a Maquis camp 300 km south of Bassu, where he remained until the end of August.<sup>53</sup> The third survivor, my father, Dick MacKinnon, never encountered Devine or Phillis in France following the crash. What happened to him? Read his evasion story in Part 2, coming in the Spring ACR issue.

© Carol Annett 2023

## Acknowledgement

The author thanks Glenn Wright for finding the RMS *Queen Mary* troop passenger lists online at [heritage.canadiana.ca](http://heritage.canadiana.ca).

## Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Mémoires 52* (Blog du club Mémoires 52), “Aviateurs alliés capturés à Mathons” posted on 23 July 2014 ([memoires52.blog.spot.com/2014/07/aviateurs-captures-mathons.html?m=1](http://memoires52.blog.spot.com/2014/07/aviateurs-captures-mathons.html?m=1)), accessed 08 July 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> Wilfred Devine, Burlington, Ontario. Letter to Vince Elmer, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, unofficial 419 Squadron historian, 03 August 1984. Re 419 Squadron history book. Copy of letter sent to Carol Annett by Patricia Devine.
- <sup>3</sup> Oliver Clutton-Brock, *Massacre over the Marne: The RAF Bombing Raids*

*on Revigny*, July 1944 (Sparkford, Somerset: Haynes Publishing, 1994), pages 206–216.

- <sup>4</sup> Clutton-Brock, *Massacre over the Marne*, pages 23–78.
- <sup>5</sup> Annett, Carol. Interview with Richard Glanville MacKinnon (RGM), Burlington, Ontario, 15 April 1995. Topic: WW II service. Audiocassette tape and transcript privately held by interviewer, Ottawa, Ontario.
- <sup>6</sup> Allison, A. E. “Principal’s Message,” Trail High School Annual, 1940, Trail, BC, page 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Digital copy of compiled service record, Richard Glanville MacKinnon, R178188, Flight Sergeant RCAF, World War II, Library and Archives Canada, Attestation Paper, page 208.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, page 120.
- <sup>9</sup> Government of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada. “The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan,” pdf (<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/classroom/fact-sheets/britcom>), accessed 10 July 2023.
- <sup>10</sup> Digital copy of compiled service record, Richard Glanville MacKinnon, Library and Archives Canada, Report on Pupil Air Bomber, page 59.
- <sup>11</sup> Wikipedia. “*Queen Mary*” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS\\_S\\_Queen\\_Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_S_Queen_Mary)).
- <sup>12</sup> *Warfare History Network*. “RMS Queen Mary’s War Service: Voyages to Victory” ([warfarehistorynet.work.com](http://warfarehistorynet.work.com)).
- <sup>13</sup> *World War II Troop Ships*. World War II Troop Ship Crossings/ Ship



- Names—“*Queen Mary*.” (ww2troopships.com/index.html, accessed 08 July 2023). Details about wartime crossings of RMS *Queen Mary*.
- 14 *Canadiana Héritage*. Directorate of Movements: C-5622—Image 3872 (héritage.canadiana.ca). *Queen Mary* troop ship passenger lists of interest on images 3867 and 3869 and 3872.
- 15 Birrell, Dave, Bomber Command Museum of Canada, *The Canadian Bomber Command Squadrons – Their Story in Their Words* (Nanton, Alberta: The Nanton Lancaster Society, 2021). ([https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/book\\_bombercommandsquadrons.pdf](https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/book_bombercommandsquadrons.pdf)).
- 16 Digital copy of compiled service record, Richard Glanville MacKinnon, RCAF R178188, page 46.
- 17 Imperial War Museum. “RAF Bomber Command During the Second World War” (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/raf-bomber-command-during-the-second-world-war>).
- 18 *Wikipedia*. “No. 6 Group RCAF” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No.\\_6\\_Group\\_RCAF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._6_Group_RCAF)), accessed 10 July 2023).
- 19 Bomber Command Museum of Canada. “No. 6 Group and the Canadian Squadrons.” (<https://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/bomber-command/bomber-command-no-6-group-and-the-canadian-squadrons/>).
- 20 *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron* (Canadian Forces Training Material Production Centre, Winnipeg: 1977).
- 21 “Wing Commander John “Moose” Fulton, DSO, DFC, AFC.” *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron* (CFTMPC, Winnipeg: 1977), page 299.
- 22 Birrell, Dave. *The Canadian Bomber Command Squadrons – Their Story in Their Words*, page 158.
- 23 “Andrew Charles Mynarski,” *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron*, page 300.
- 24 MacKinnon, Dick. Letter to his grandson, Cameron, February 1998, answering questions for a school project. Copy sent to Carol Annett by Cameron’s mother, Margaret MacKinnon.
- 25 *The Lancaster & Manchester Bomber Archive*. “Lancaster and Manchester: Crew Positions” ([https://lancaster-archive.com/lanc\\_crew\\_positions.htm](https://lancaster-archive.com/lanc_crew_positions.htm)).
- 26 6 Bomber Group. “Daily operations for July 24/25, 1944” (<http://www.6bombergroup.ca/July44/July24~2544.html>). Lists all members of Phillis Crew.
- 27 RCAF Association, Heritage Awards, “Phillis, Jack Albert.” (<https://www.rcafassociation.ca/heritage/search-awards/>).
- 28 Commonwealth War Graves Commission. John Patrick Shortt (<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2346056/john-patrick-shortt/>).
- 29 Commonwealth War Graves Commission. John Ellard Searson (<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty->

- details/2346055/john-ellard-searson/).
- 30 Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Jack Spevak (<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2346057/jack-spevak/>).
- 31 Commonwealth War Graves Commission. James Norman (<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2346054/james-norman/>).
- 32 *419 Squadron RCAF 1941 to 1945*, “Moosemen aircrew Lists” (<http://www.419squadron.com>). Aircrew lists for the 10 operations flown by Phillis Crew show they always flew in Lancaster X bombers, which was the type made in Canada.
- 33 Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, “Avro Lancaster Mk. X” (<https://www.warplane.com/aircraft/collection/details.aspx?aircraftid=4>).
- 34 Dave Birrell. “Ruhr Express.” *The Canadian Bomber Command Squadrons*, page 81.
- 35 *419 Squadron RCAF 1941 to 1945*, “Aircraft Nicknames—Lancaster. KB 700 ‘Ruhr Express’” (<http://www.419squadron.com/KB700.html>).
- 36 *World Radio History*. “Calling ‘L for Lanky’” in *Manitoba Calling*, June 1944, pages 10, 11 ([worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Station-Albums/CKY/CKY-1944-06.pdf](http://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Station-Albums/CKY/CKY-1944-06.pdf)), accessed 10 July 2023.
- 37 Ron Lehman. Forum post “L for Lanky” on *Antique Radios, The Collectors Resource* (<https://www.antiqueradios.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=159286>).
- 38 Bomber Command Museum of Canada, “Bomber Command’s Losses” (<https://bombercommandmuseum.ca>).
- 39 RAF Museum, “Lancaster Crew Positions,” *Lancaster-Crew-Positions.pdf* ([rafmuseum.org.uk](http://rafmuseum.org.uk)).
- 40 Bomber Command Museum of Canada, “Bomber Command’s Losses” (<https://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/bomber-command/bomber-commands-losses/>).
- 41 *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron*. MacKinnon highlighted 10 operations flown by Phillis Crew, described on pages 199–220.
- 42 *The London Gazette*. Distinguished Flying Medal. “1868905 Sergeant James Norman, R.A.F.V.R., 419 (RCAF) Sqn” and “Can/R 161467 Flight Sergeant Jack Albert Phillis, RCAF 419 Sqn” (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/36718/data.pdf>). *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 26 September 1944, pages 4444, 4445.
- 43 *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron* (Canadian Forces Training Material Production Centre, Winnipeg: 1977), page 210.
- 44 *The Lancaster & Manchester Bomber Archive*, “Lancaster – Parachute Drill” ([https://www.lancaster-archive.com/lanc\\_parachute.htm](https://www.lancaster-archive.com/lanc_parachute.htm)).
- 45 *The Moose Squadron 1941–45: The War Years of 419 Squadron*, pages 219, 220. Crash of Phillis Crew.
- 46 *Ancestry*. Search Military Records. Entry for Jack Spevak in “Canada, World War II Records and Service

- Files of War Dead, 1939–1947” (Ancestry.ca). Jack Spevak’s RCAF service file includes a report of the investigation of the crash of his Lancaster aircraft near Bassu, France, 25 July 1944, which mentions the burial of the four airmen by the people of Bassu.
- 47 S/L W.J. Crees, Chaplain, 419 Squadron. Letter to R. J. MacKinnon, Trail, BC, 25 July 1944. Re R.G. MacKinnon missing in France. Collection of RGM.
- 48 W. P. Pleasance, Wing Commander, 419 Squadron. Letter to R. J. MacKinnon, Trail, BC, 27 July 1944. Re Sergeant Richard Glanville MacKinnon missing in France. Collection of RGM.
- 49 Charles Power, Minister of National Defence for Air. Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Richard John MacKinnon, card of condolence, postmarked August 1944, re Richard Glanville MacKinnon reported missing. Collection of RGM.
- 50 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Bassu Communal Cemetery, Marne, France (<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2033701/bassu-communal-cemetery/>).
- 51 *France Crashes 39–45*. Statistics ([https://francecrashes39-45.net/page\\_stat.php](https://francecrashes39-45.net/page_stat.php)).
- 52 Wilfred Devine. Letter to Vince Elmer, 03 August 1984.
- 53 *France Crashes 39–45*. Recherche par équipage, Phillis, Jack Albert (France crashes39-45.net). Transcription of Phillis’ evasion report.

---

## Research Getaway: New England Historic Genealogical Society (*American Ancestors*)<sup>©</sup>



BY ANNE L. RENWICK

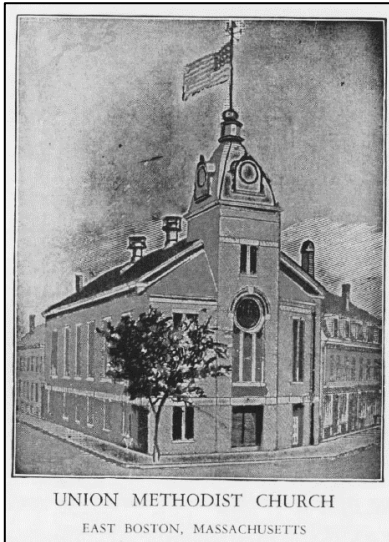
*Anne has been researching her own and other family histories from the British Isles for over 20 years. Participation in family history societies and continuous learning, through formal courses and informal webinars, fuels her enthusiasm for finding the stories behind the names. Here she shares her impressions and discoveries during a Research Getaway—three days of research, one-on-one consultations, orientations and social events—at the American Ancestors Research Center in Boston last fall.*

Narrow. That was my first impression of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) building in Boston (Figure 1). I was attending a “Fall Research Getaway” for the first time, having been a member of NEHGS for a few years, and in October 2022 I was excited to be visiting their headquarters in Boston.

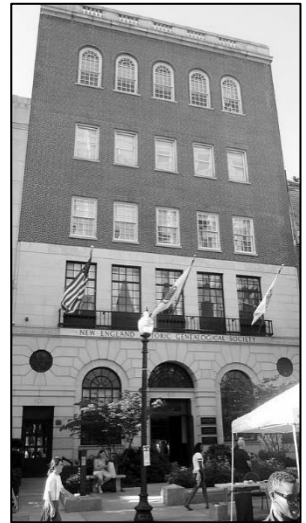
How could so much genealogical information be crammed into such a thin building?

For anyone not familiar with NEHGS, it is the oldest genealogical society in North America, having been founded in 1845. Their website is called *American Ancestors* ([americanancestors.org](http://americanancestors.org)) and they hold thousands of records: not only for New England, but Canada, the rest of the U.S.A., as well as international locations. If you have ever caught the PBS-TV show *Finding Your Roots* with Henry Louis Gates Jr., this is where it is partially filmed and researched. The NEHGS genealogists each have their own specialties, and there is bound to be one or more who can help you overcome your brick walls and steer you in directions not previously considered. This service is available both online and on site.

The in-person Research Getaways are held twice a year and are announced on the [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org) website. Upon signing up for the Getaway, one is asked to fill in a



**Figure 2: Union Methodist Church**  
Source: Boston University School of Theology Archives



**Figure 1: New England Historic Genealogical Society Building, File 2017**  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

questionnaire identifying two questions to be researched when at NEHGS. Depending on the subject of these questions, a half-hour one-on-one Zoom consultation is scheduled the week before the Boston event with a genealogist specializing in those areas.

I was thrilled to find that I'd been paired for my first consultation with David Allan Lambert, Chief Genealogist at NEHGS, whose areas of expertise include New England and Atlantic Canadian records. I was familiar with him from the weekly "Extreme Genes" podcast.<sup>1</sup> His own family tree includes New Brunswick roots (Moncton area) and we had a lovely time discussing the Maritimes. Our consultation resulted in my being able to identify the

church in Boston where my 2x great-grandparents from New Brunswick had been married in 1866. We discovered the church no longer exists, but Mr. Lambert gave me a lead to a Methodist archives in East Boston where a helpful archivist provided me with a drawing of the church (Figure 2).

My second consultation was with Melanie McComb, genealogist, whose areas of expertise include Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ireland. In my case, it was the latter that was called upon, as my research question had to do with the same 2x great-grandmother noted above, who emigrated from Ireland to Saint John, N.B., in 1861. Her name was Jane Dunlop. Just before my consultation I had discovered a passenger list recording Jane's arrival and home town. Melanie informed me that this was a lucky find, as travel within the British Empire was not usually documented in the 19th century. For Irish records to use to locate the family, she suggested searching for baptism and marriage records for Jane's children, records of the two siblings mentioned in family stories, and a death record for the father who wasn't on the passenger list.

For all participants, there was a pre-tour webinar via Zoom. This laid out the program in detail and gave us advice on how best to use our time. It was highly recommended we visit the online library catalogue and make a list of books, manuscripts and other materials to which we would like to refer once on site. This turned out to be excellent advice, as when one is actually there, the amount of available information can be overwhelming and pleasantly distracting.



Figure 3: Google Maps screenshot, 2 Nov 2022

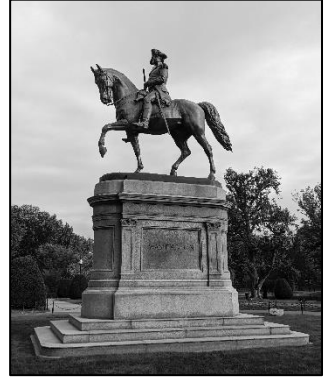
recommended for those driving) and walked the 10 minutes over to NEHGS on Newbury Street (Figure 3). The walk itself was a treat, as it took me across the wide expanse of the Common, past a magnificent statue of George

It was a crisp fall day when I arrived on the first morning of the Getaway. I found parking underneath the Boston Common (highly

Washington (Figure 4), past ponds and over bridges in the Public Garden, then along the very upscale Newbury Street (including Tiffany's—with valet parking!).

Arriving a bit early at my destination, I stopped by the café next door for a coffee. The café too displayed its upmarket vibe with chandeliers on the ceiling and macarons in the pastry case. I had my coffee outside at one of the bistro tables and spent a pleasant 15 minutes people-watching.

At 9:00 a.m. the doors to NEHGS were opened, and in I went. To one's left is the tiny reception desk, and beyond a wooden screen is a large oval paneled room lit by Waterford crystal chandeliers. The receptionist directed me with a smile straight to this area where I was greeted warmly by Ann Lawther, genealogist, who had provided all the preliminary scheduling information via email. I had attended a few of her online webinars and was happy to meet her in person. She gave me a welcome package and directed me to the floor where morning refreshments were provided and our orientation was to take place.



**Figure 4: Washington Monument, Boston Commons**  
Source: the author

The elevator up to the meeting room floor was, as the rest of the building appeared, very tiny. A few steps from the elevator door was the meeting room, where about 16 or 17 other people were already gathered around five tables, having coffee and chatting. At the head of the room were four of our hosts, two of whom I recognized as David Allan Lambert and Melanie McComb. I went over and introduced myself, then took a seat. Shortly thereafter, Ann Lawther arrived and the welcome orientation began. At one point we all had to introduce ourselves one by one and tell a bit about our genealogical ventures. It was then I discovered that one attendee was also a member of the New Brunswick Genealogical Society! She lives in Washington State and I had just seen her the week before at our Zoom meeting.

Our welcome package included the schedule of events, an overview of the collections, the handouts for each lecture, a list of the participants showing where they were from, a list of local eateries, a bookstore coupon, and copies of each person's pre-Getaway questionnaire. These questionnaires had been

hand-annotated with leads and recommendations by one of the other senior genealogists.<sup>2</sup>

The Research Getaway consists of three full days of genealogy. A lecture was scheduled for the start of each day and the afternoons were open for our own research endeavours. The first evening consisted of a wine and cheese event and the next evening a full dinner. The lecture topics at this Getaway were “Collections at American Ancestors Research Center: Digital and Non-Digital,” “Using Maps in Your Family History Research,” and “Follow the Money: Breaking Down Brick Walls Using Financial Records.”

After our welcome and introduction, I chose to take the library tour. Included in our handouts was a guide to the collections, explaining their locations as follows:

- 8th floor: rare book collection (books available upon request; no access)
- 7th floor: compiled genealogies, 17th century reference materials
- 5th floor: local histories and records, ethnic group specific holdings, Canadian references, manuscript requests, Jewish Heritage Center
- 4th floor: microfilm and microfiche, CDs (including a lot of Atlantic Canada coverage)
- 1st floor: international collection, how-to books, bookstore.



**Figure 5: Second Floor Stairwell, NEHGS**

Source: the author

in one of those paintings are purported to follow some people around the room! Here there are library stacks as well, and plenty of desk space and computers for doing research (Figure 7).

We started at the 7th floor, with the option of walking up the narrow switchback staircase (Figure 5) or taking the two-person elevator. I opted for the staircase, as it is lined with pictures of certain staff and board members within the organization, each matched with an image of one of their ancestors. One person I immediately recognized was Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Figure 6).

The 7th floor maintains the NEHGS historic look, with wooden shelving and furniture, and historic paintings. The eyes of a man



**Figure 6: Portrait of Henry Louis Gates Jr. and ancestor, NEHGS**

Source: the author

The 5th floor also contained stacks, among which were local histories and records, as well as the multiple shelves of Canadian reference material. Half as many research desks and computers as on the 7th floor still provided plenty of room to work there.

Both floors had three or four research assistants available. They were very accommodating in retrieving materials such as manuscripts that were available only by request, directing us to materials we could access, or pleasantly answering any and all questions we may have had.

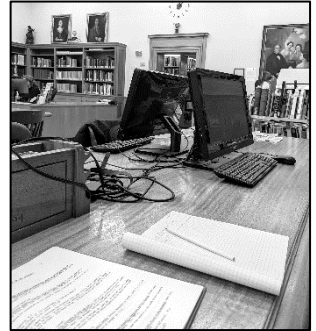
Our tour ended on the first floor in the oval meeting area, where the room was lit by two enormous Waterford crystal chandeliers (Figure 8). The building having originally been a bank, the tellers' windows now serve as niches for art, and the walls are decorated with paintings and large gilded mirrors.



**Figure 8: First Floor gilt mirror with reflected Waterford Crystal chandelier, NEHGS**

Source: the author

worthy of adding to one's library. Amongst other

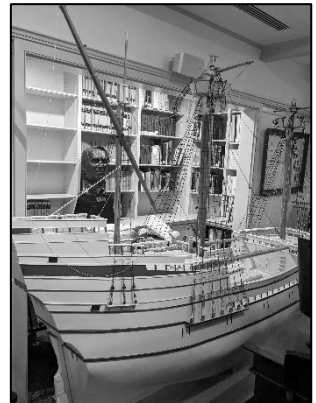


**Figure 7: Seventh Floor Reading Room, NEHGS**

Source: the author

Antique paintings and furniture are around every corner—and include some surprises too. One incongruous item was a scale model of the *Mayflower* (Figure 9) in an office off the main area. It had been purpose-built to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the landing of the *Mayflower* and had been on display outside the NEHGS building during 2020.

Tucked into a corner on the main floor of the NEHGS building is a little bookstore with a good variety of reference books and topic-specific cheat sheets

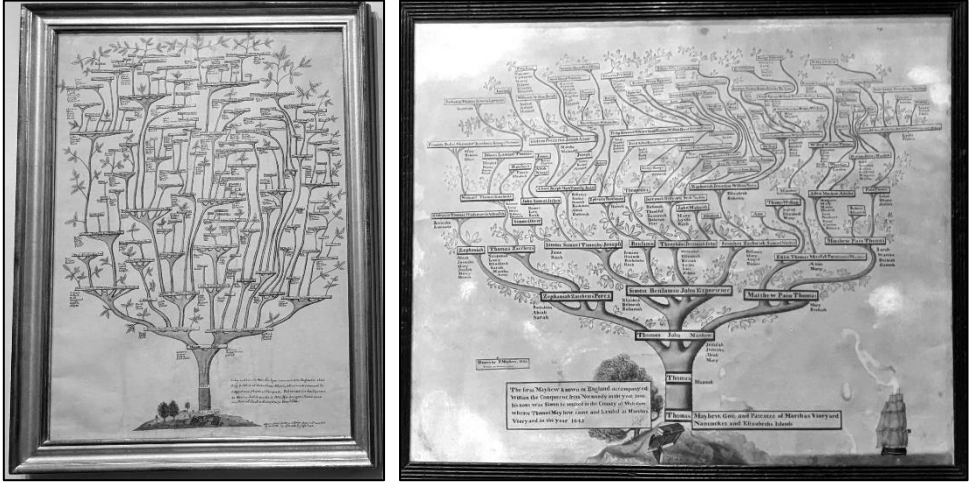


**Figure 9: *Mayflower* model, NEHGS**

Source: the author



purchases, I snagged a terrific little book entitled *The Genealogist's U.S. History Pocket Reference; Quick Facts & Timelines of American History to Help Understand Your Ancestors*, by Nancy Hendrickson. (The title takes up practically the entire cover!) Not a dry read at all, the book's timeline includes popular songs, recipes and medical treatments from various eras—



**Figure 10: Family trees, NEHGS**

Source: the author

great for ancestral background information. Colonial ancestors, for instance, may have heard the song *The Deceived Maid*, prepared Thomas Jefferson's catfish soup, and prevented hair loss with crushed bees in oil.

The afternoons of research felt luxurious, away from all usual distractions with the ability to focus strictly on “the hunt.” Everyone chose a desk at which to sit, either on the 7th or 5th floors, got out their laptops and binders and set to work. NEHGS genealogists came around to each of us to check on our progress and assist in any way needed. Online searches of some subscription databases like *Findmypast* could be performed at no charge using the provided computers. Accessing the NEHGS library catalogue was handy, resulting in many trips to the stacks as we progressed—a real treat to handle actual books instead of digital ones. Treasures from the manuscript (unpublished) collections were helpfully and promptly brought out on request.

As mentioned earlier, the advice to prepare a list of materials to which we would like to refer while on site was prudent, as the library and catalogue are full of “bright shiny objects.” It would be very easy to be distracted from

one's research plan. We were not restricted to our submitted research questions: my bright shiny object was the realization that I could research a Puritan ancestor who settled in Massachusetts in 1633. I veered off my New Brunswick research for a bit, and sure enough found a book of town records with multiple mentions of my ancestor and a clue in another book as to which plot of land he owned.

NEHGS/*American Ancestors* is a treasure trove of information and education for any family historian. Its workers mount numerous and varied events for all levels and genealogical interests, including seminars, webinars, heritage tours and conferences, and an online tree database called *Ancestrees*. Here is a sampling of the variety of webinars:

- GEDmatch: Features Every Genealogist Needs to Understand and Use
- Virtual Genealogical Skills Bootcamp
- Digitizing Your Family History Collections
- Winter and Spring Stay-At-Home (an online version of the Research Getaway)
- Scottish Research Tour
- New England Town Records.

Membership also includes two publications: *American Ancestors* magazine and the NEHGS *Register*. As stated earlier, I have been a member for a few years now and I renewed this year at a higher level. With ancestral lines from the British Isles to New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Massachusetts, my membership in the New England Historic Genealogical Society has been invaluable. The trip to Boston certainly was a highlight—I can't wait until next time!

© Anne Renwick 2023

## Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Extremegenes.com: Scott Fisher presents a weekly podcast, as well as offering a weekly newsletter, beginning genealogy courses, and other tips for family historians. A promo code for NEHGS membership is usually offered.
- <sup>2</sup> This was an interesting experience: the genealogist in question has been with NEHGS for 48 years and doesn't believe in computers or the internet! Paper only. His hen-scratch on our printed-out research questionnaires had to be interpreted for most participants by the other genealogists.

### *Back to Basics with Ken McKinlay*

Where are the records? What survives? Are there substitutes? What's online? What's free?  
Valuable lessons for beginners and experienced genealogists alike!

*January*—Scotland      *February*—British Census Records  
*March*—Civil Birth, Marriages, Deaths      *April*—Church Records  
*May*—Immigration & Emigration

# We Shall Remember Them

BY NIGEL LLOYD

*A BIFHSGO member for eight years, Nigel Lloyd has been writing soldier biographies for the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station project for five years. In this article he tells the story of a young joiner and carpenter who fought with the Royal Engineers.*

## **Sapper Thomas Arnold Clayburn©**

**Regimental number: 477045**

**9th Field Company, Royal Engineers**

**born: 1891–died: 1918**

Thomas Arnold Clayburn was born in Holymoorside, near Chesterfield in Derbyshire, in the summer of 1891.<sup>1</sup> He was the youngest of three children born to William and Anna Clayburn.<sup>2</sup> William, born in 1859 to John and Charlotte Clayburn,<sup>3</sup> was a clerk who worked in a number of different industries. At the time of Thomas' birth, he was working for a cotton manufacturer.<sup>4</sup> Anna was a farmer's daughter,<sup>5</sup> born in 1866 to Mary and Thomas Lowe Watkinson.<sup>6</sup>

William and Anna were married in Brampton in 1886,<sup>7</sup> and their son Sydney Drabble was born the next year,<sup>8</sup> followed by daughter Hilda Mary in 1889.<sup>9</sup> By 1911 the family had moved about 15 miles north to Ecclesall, near Sheffield, Yorkshire.<sup>10</sup> William was now working as a clerk for a gold and silver refinery, Sydney was a clerk at the University of Sheffield, and Thomas was a joiner and cabinet maker, following in the footsteps of his grandfather John Clayburn.<sup>11</sup>

In about July 1916,<sup>12</sup> a few months after the death of his father,<sup>13</sup> Thomas enlisted in the Royal Engineers at Sheffield<sup>14</sup> and was assigned to the 9th Field Company, which was part of the Corps' 4th Division. At the time it was stationed in Northern France just south of Arras,<sup>15</sup> but on 23 July it moved north by train to Poperinge in Belgium.<sup>16</sup> Most of the work involved building and repairing trenches. Thomas' training in carpentry would have been invaluable. In August they were subjected to a gas attack and artillery bombardment near Ypres but did not suffer serious casualties.<sup>17</sup> Then in September they moved south to Bertricourt, just north of Amiens.<sup>18</sup>

They stayed in this general area until March 1917, when they moved to Ourton, north of Arras.<sup>19</sup> Here they took part in the April offensive,<sup>20</sup> digging strong points, putting wells in working order, and clearing roads

and the river, which was full of debris. This month, one other rank (non-officer) was killed, and one officer and 14 other ranks wounded.<sup>21</sup>

In September 1917, the company moved to Proyen, Belgium,<sup>22</sup> but returned to the Arras sector in October.<sup>23</sup> Towards the end of April 1918, after an enemy attack was repulsed, they were subjected to a gas attack which left 24 other ranks injured (out of a total of about 200).<sup>24</sup>

In June 1918 near Riez-du-Vinage, the 9th Field Company suffered four fatalities: two were killed by shells and two died from wounds.<sup>25</sup> The following account of the action appears on the site of the Royal British Legion Scotland Kirkwall Branch—Orkney Isles:<sup>26</sup>

On the morning of 17th June, 1st King's Own made a successful daylight raid on the German trenches in the Vinage Sector of 4th Division's front. That probably triggered heavy German artillery fire later that day, when Sappers Simon Corrigall and Bertie Bloomfield of 9th Field Company RE were killed in action, while Sapper Thomas Clayburn died of his wounds next day. The three sappers were probably working together in the front or support line, when they fell victim to German artillery fire.

Sapper Thomas Clayburn was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with severe wounds to the chest.<sup>27</sup> He died and was buried on 18 June, age 26, in the Pernes

British Military Cemetery (Plot 5, Row B, Grave No. 14). The cemetery lies one kilometre west of Pernes-en-Artois, in the region of Pas-de-Calais, and contains the remains of 1,096 soldiers from the two world wars.

The inscription on his tombstone reads

GREATER LOVE  
HATH NO MAN THAN THIS . . .  
JOHN XV.13.<sup>28</sup>

Sapper Thomas Arnold Clayburn received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918).<sup>29</sup>

Thomas' mother Anna lived another two years, passing away in Ecclesall Bierlow in late 1920, aged 54.<sup>30</sup>

Thomas' brother Sydney Drabble Clayburn also served in the British Army. He enlisted in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps at Sheffield on 15 December 1915<sup>31</sup> but was not mobilized until 27 July 1917.<sup>32</sup> He served for one year and 202 days and was stationed in India and South Africa.<sup>33</sup> He was demobilized in February 1919.

In 1939 Sydney was living in Cornwall with his unmarried sister Hilda Mary and working as a solicitor's clerk.<sup>34</sup> Sydney died in 1953, aged 65,<sup>35</sup> and Hilda died in 1971, aged 82.<sup>36</sup>

© 2019 BIFHSGO

## Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Thomas Arnold Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 62.
- <sup>2</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Thomas A. Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 40, Piece: 3252, Folio: 25, Page: 19, Household schedule number: 121.
- <sup>3</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for William Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 10a, Page: 519; “1861 England Census,” www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 January 2019), entry for John Claybourne [*sic*].
- <sup>4</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for William Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 40, Piece: 3252, Folio: 25, Page: 19, Household schedule number: 121.
- <sup>5</sup> “1871 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 January 2019), entry for Thomas Watkinson, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 34, Household schedule number: 19, Piece: 3614, Folio: 82, Page: 4.
- <sup>6</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Anna Watkinson, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 520.
- <sup>7</sup> “England & Wales Marriages, 1538–1988,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 January 2019), entry for William Clayburn.
- <sup>8</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Sydney Drabble Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 691.
- <sup>9</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Hilda Mary Clayburn, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 702.
- <sup>10</sup> “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 January 2019), entry for William Clayburn, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Registration district number: 509, Sub-registration district: Ecclesall West Central, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 31, Piece: 27751.
- <sup>11</sup> “1861 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 January 2019), entry for John

- Claybourne [sic], Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 34, Piece: 2532, Folio: 32, Page: 4.
- 12 Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers’ Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 19 January 2019), entry for Thomas Arnold Clayburn.
- 13 “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 9 January 2019), entry for William Clayburn, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 448.
- 14 “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 8 January 2019), entry for Thomas Arnold Clayburn.
- 15 “UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 5 January 2019), entry for Royal Engineers Regiment, Sub-unit: 9 Field Company, Piece: 1469, Page 148.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 245.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 256.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 26 “The Corrigan Brothers,” Brian Budge, *The Royal British Legion Scotland Kirkwall Branch – Orkney Isles* (<http://www.rbls-kirkwall.org.uk/memorials/Swk/CorriganBrothers.pdf>: accessed 29 January 2019).
- 27 “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Playburn [sic], T. A.
- 28 *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 January 2019), entry for Clayburn, Thomas Arnold, Service No: 477045.
- 29 “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 5 January 2019), entry for Thomas A. Clayburn.
- 30 “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 9 January 2019), entry for Anna Clayburn, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 360.
- 31 “British Army WWI Pension Records, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 5 January 2019), entry for Sydney Drabble Clayburn, Page: 75914.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 75916.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 75921.

34 "1939 Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 16 January 2019), entry for Sydney D. Clayburn, Schedule number: 45, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: WAKD.

35 "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 January 2019), entry for Sydney D.

Clayburn, Registration district: Plymouth, Inferred county: Devon, Volume: 7a, Page: 658.

36 "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 January 2019), entry for Hilda Mary Clayburn, Registration district: Liskeard, Inferred county: Cornwall, Volume: 7a, Page: 148.

## Techniques and Resources

# The Cream of the Crop

*Top items from recent posts on the Canada's Anglo-Celtic-Connections blog at [www.anglocelticconnections.ca](http://www.anglocelticconnections.ca)*



BY JOHN D. REID

### Maps

The David Rumsey Map Collection's *Text-on-Maps* facility uses artificial intelligence to

facilitate searching for text on some of the maps in that vast collection. Type a word or phrase that interests you in the search field in the top left of your browser window at <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>, and click the search icon. I tried a search for "Sandringham" and got 150 hits. Many of those hits, not all, are for the location of the royal estate in Norfolk, England. Original place names are often reused elsewhere, sometimes in homage to a home in the old country. I was surprised at how much the new

facility found and how accurate it is, considering it is experimental! If you'd like to get into the weeds of it, there's an accompanying *YouTube* video at <https://youtu.be/yStLzf-mrtY>.

It can be hard to keep up with the pace at which the National Library of Scotland brings newly digitized maps online. As I write, the most recent to be added are the Ordnance Survey (OS) one-inch Ireland engraved maps (1850s–1910s). Previous additions were OS six-inch Ireland first, second and later edition maps from as early as 1820. Colour raster layers have been added to the UK Ordnance Survey's present-day 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scale maps to produce digital

versions of the OS Landranger and Explorer paper map series. In case you're unsure about the equivalence between the two ways of expressing scale, one-inch to the mile is equivalent to 1:63,360.

For Ireland, John Grenham has been working on improving the utility of the maps at his site at [https://www.johngrenham.com/places/civil\\_index.php/](https://www.johngrenham.com/places/civil_index.php/). You can zoom in and out, see where the parishes and constituent townlands are, and "best of all enjoy the whole thing in glorious Candy-Crush colour." Read details at <https://www.johngrenham.com/blog/> in Grenham's inimitable style.

## Military

The collection *UK, Wills of Royal Navy and Royal Marines Personnel, 1786-1882*, is now available at *Ancestry*, sourced from ADM 48 at TNA: Navy Board, Navy Pay Office, and Admiralty; and Seamen's Wills from the Accountant General's Department. It contains 32,361 records. Most are handwritten onto pre-printed forms. You will usually find name, rank, will date, ship, captain, executor and beneficiary on the first page. Be sure to look beyond the first page for other information.

A long list of 139 locations connected with the First World War in Belgium and France were recently granted World Heritage status. They include the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in Pas-de-Calais, France,

the Canadian Brooding Soldier Memorial at St. Julien in Belgium, and Canadian Cemetery No. 2 and Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery, both cemeteries being located within Vimy Memorial Park; also included are the Newfoundland Regiment Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel, France and the Menin Gate at Ypres (now Ieper) in Belgium.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has introduced a new facility, *Evermore: Stories of the Fallen*, for use regarding someone who is commemorated at the CWGC site. Text, images and even video from *YouTube* or *Vimeo* may be added to information available from that person's official documents already on the site. You'll find an instructional video and step-by-step guide on how you can add someone's story at <https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-apps/stories-portal-help/>. It's a step up from the capability to add images found at the *Canadian Virtual War Memorial* registry ([veterans.gc.ca](http://veterans.gc.ca)).

## Living London

Do you know of the three-volume work *Living London; its work and its play, its humour and its pathos, its sights and its scenes*, by George Robert Sims (1847-1927)? Published in 1902-1903, it's a resource worth knowing if you'd like one man's view of the place and times.

Each volume has nearly 60 chapters with copious illustrations. Do you



want to know about football, rugby, cricket or athletics? There are chapters on those. Other chapters are headed London Awakes, Marrying London, Russia in East London, Sweated London, Trial at the Old Bailey, Artistic London, and Christmas London. There's much more, all available on the *Internet Archive* along with other books of his including, *How the Poor Live* and his best-known poem *Christmas Day at the Workhouse*.

### **Parish Records New and Updated**

Since September, *Ancestry* has made additions for Carmarthenshire, Hampshire, London and Worcestershire parish records; for Ireland, the *Select Catholic Marriage Registers, 1778–1942* collection was updated with a total of 401,663 records, including images. *Findmypast* made additions for Devon, Derbyshire, Dublin, Herefordshire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Westmorland.

### **Internet Genealogy Magazine**

It was disappointing to learn of the demise of Moorshead Magazines, and its flagship publication, the bimonthly *Internet Genealogy*. The only commercial Canadian-published genealogy magazine, it struggled through the pandemic that greatly affected the industry. Although editor-publisher Ed Zapletal and his partner Rick Cree made significant changes in an effort to adapt, including most

recently moving to online-only delivery, the economic challenges were just too great to overcome. Ed and Rick supported several BIFHSGO conferences by running BIFHSGO ads in their magazines and participating in the conference marketplaces. While regretting the decision, we can all understand the necessity and wish them well.

### **Conferences**

*RootsTech* continues with its annual in-person conference at Salt Lake City along with free online attendance from 29 February to 2 March (<https://www.familysearch.org/rootsTech/>). Not as hectic, although with a full program from morning to evening, the OGS/Ontario Ancestors Conference will be hosted from 14 to 16 June in Toronto at the Airport Delta Hotel. The first OGS in-person conference in five years, it will be particularly strong on genetic genealogy with marquee speakers Blaine Bettinger, Diahn Southard and Jonny Perl, along with favourites Chris Paton, Paul Milner and Ron Arons and a host of brilliant session speakers. I'm going. (<https://conference2024.ogs.on.ca/>)

### **Bits and Bobs**

In major additions, *Ancestry* has added or updated: *UK Postal Service Appointment Books, 1737–1969*, with nearly 1.5 million entries; *England, Criminal Lunatic Asylum Registers, 1820–1876*, with over 1.3 million records; and *UK RAF Officer*

*Service Records, 1918–1919* with over 190 thousand entries. Those are in addition to regular *Find a Grave, Obituary and Marriage Index* updates from newspapers.

Over 12 million records have been added to *Findmypast's UK Electoral Registers & Companies House Directors Collection*, some from as late as 2023. As with previous years, you'll find a person's name, address, and confirmation of whether they are the director of a company. The Collection now contains 125,717,058 records. Separate additions were *Manchester Electoral Registers*, with 25,066,154 records from 1820–1940, and 1,312,044 records in the *Lambeth Electoral Registers 1832–1886 Collection*.

*MyHeritage* has made available an index to *Mental Health Records, 1858–1921*, from the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh (MC7 series), via *Scottish Indexers*. Included are a total of 198,890 records that may contain the full name of a patient, their birth date, admission date, their location within Scotland, and date of death in cases where a patient died in an asylum. Each entry has a link to

purchase the full record on the *Scottish Indexes* website.

Roughly 6,500 names of UK men and women honoured with civilian gallantry awards have been added to The National Archives' *Discovery* online catalogue (UK). As well as names, it lists the associated towns, cities, and counties. This will help people researching bomb damage and explosions during the Second World War. Search the TNA catalogue at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C15354/>.

## **Celebrating 30 Years**

Another BIFHSGO anniversary is coming up in 2024. What celebrations, aside from a cake (!), are planned? We already know about one. Every five years, members are invited to write a story from their British Isles family history and enter it into a writing competition. As well as receiving cash prizes, winners' stories are published in *Anglo-Celtic Roots*, the Society's quarterly journal. Have your entries in by 31 May 2024. Find competition details at <https://www.bifhsgo.ca/30th-anniversary-writing-competition>.

## **BIFHSGO News**

*The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa acknowledges that its activities take place in the ancestral homeland of Indigenous people who have inhabited these lands for millennia. We acknowledge the enduring presence here of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. We recognize the importance of bringing awareness and understanding of our diverse nation's past to all, and we promote research and education programs that bring us together as Canadians.*

## **BIFHSGO Board of Directors 2023–2024**

President	Dianne Brydon	president@bifhsgo.ca
Recording Secretary	Laurie Dougherty	secretary@bifhsgo.ca
Treasurer	Jennifer Hill	treasurer@bifhsgo.ca
Program	Marianne Rasmus	programs@bifhsgo.ca
Membership	Anne Coulter	membership@bifhsgo.ca
Research & Projects	Sue Lambeth	research@bifhsgo.ca
Outreach	Patricia Grainger	outreach@bifhsgo.ca
Communications	Vacant	
Director-at-large	Susan Smart	first_directoratlarge@bifhsgo.ca
Director-at-large	Beth Adams	second_directoratlarge@bifhsgo.ca
Past President	Duncan Monkhouse	pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca

### **Communications:**

Anglo-Celtic Roots Editor	Barbara Tose	acreditor@bifhsgo.ca
Newsletter Editor	Susan Smart	first_directoratlarge@bifhsgo.ca
Web Manager	Sheila Dohoo Faure	webmanager@bifhsgo.ca
Queries	Sheila Dohoo Faure	queries@bifhsgo.ca
Social Media	Dianne Brydon	president@bifhsgo.ca
Photographer	Dena Palamedes	
<b>Conference 2023</b>	Dianne Brydon	Conference_program@bifhsgo.ca
<b>Public Accountant</b>	McCay Duff LLP	

## **The Society**

The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSGO) is an independent, federally incorporated society and a registered charity (Reg. No. 89227 4044 RR0001). Our purpose is to encourage, carry on and facilitate research into, and publication of, family histories by people who have ancestors in the British Isles.

We have two objectives: to research, preserve, and disseminate Canadian and British Isles family and social history, and to promote genealogical research through a program of public education, showing how to conduct this research and preserve the findings in a readily accessible form.

We publish genealogical research findings and information on research resources and techniques, hold public meetings on family history, and participate in the activities of related organizations.

Each year members enjoy four issues of *Anglo-Celtic Roots (ACR)* and ten family history meetings, plus members-only information on bifhsgo.ca, friendly advice from other members, and participation in special interest groups. Membership dues for 2024 (individuals or institutions) are \$50 (with electronic ACR) or \$60 (with printed ACR).

# BIFHSGO Calendar of Events

## Saturday Morning Meetings

**In-person**—Geneva Hall, Knox Presbyterian Church, 120 Lisgar St., Ottawa  
**Online**—on Zoom, **registration required**

**\*13 January 2024** **You've Got Mail: Rent and Associated  
10:00 a.m.–11:45 a.m.** **Agricultural Terminology in Scottish Records,  
circa 1500–1750**

Scottish research can present terms for agricultural weights and measures for produce and livestock that are unfamiliar today. **Robert Urquart** will provide an explanation of terms and the systems used to estimate the value of agricultural produce while illustrating what it can tell us about everyday life in Scotland.

**\*10 February 2024** **Researching Female Ancestors: What Could  
10:00 a.m.–11:45 a.m.** **They Tell Us?**

Researching female ancestors can be frustrating—even their obituaries sometimes provide next to nothing. **Diane Rogers** will provide strategies for searching genealogical sources for information about individual women and finding sources of women's history.

**†9 March 2024** **So, who was Jack Hibbard's wife?**  
**10:00 a.m.–11:45 a.m.** The impending visit of a cousin looking for family history information spurred **Ann Burns** to look more closely at collateral lines of her paternal grandmother. Conflicting information for her grandmother's brother, Jack, provided a challenge she couldn't resist: Who, *exactly*, did Jack Hibbard marry?

**\*Zoom only meetings.**    **†Hybrid meeting.**

**Check our website at [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca)** for up-to-date information on our monthly meetings, education talks, and details of special interest group meetings.

### Articles for *Anglo-Celtic Roots*

Articles and illustrations for publication are welcome. For advice on preparing manuscripts, please email the Editor, at [acreditor@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:acreditor@bifhsgo.ca). The deadline for submissions to the Spring issue is 14 January 2024.