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in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & the Isle of Ely

# THE JOURNAL



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VOLUME 30 : 4

WINTER 2024

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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

**HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS: NED WAYNE & CAROL NOBLE**

**A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION  
REGISTERED CHARITY No. : 278815**

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

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

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*For latest news, and updates*

**WATCH THE WEBSITE & NEWSLETTER & FACEBOOK**

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

**All general correspondence via the Secretary, please :**

**[secretary@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chfhs.org.uk) or by post to**

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

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**Additional guidance for contributors can be found on the CHFHS website**

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



# CAMBS & HUNTS FHS JOURNAL

VOL 30 : 4

WINTER 2024



Welcome to the Winter edition of the CHFHS Journal—this issue includes an eclectic mix of articles and reports. This year has seen the welcome return of live events continuing with CHFHS attending a number of fairs and open days as enclosed photos well illustrate. We hope to see you over the course of 2025.

Feature articles and resources in this issue include—Graham W continuing with the double life led by a relative, where petty crime gave way to ... *read on to find out what happened!!*; a little-known local charitable organisation has been researched by Laura H (might your poor relatives be listed among their records?); Michael S describes the complex tangle of relatives uncovered when trying to identify folk in a photo; local casualties from the Boer War feature on a memorial transcribed by Norman G; & Sue A describes how burial laws affected her non-conformist family.

All the regulars features are to be found dotted throughout—research surgeries and meetings' diary where, from the New Year, we will be consolidating the online evening talks into a single monthly event; reports of talks; book reviews—& much more (NB: the ReallyUsefulShowOnline in November has been postponed, & our online talks programme is to be consolidated and rescheduled as from Jan 2025).

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

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**cover photo** : Behind The Scenes At The Archives : members' visit Oct '24 (see p17)



## Keep an eye out for new content on the website

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

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

**all searches and results are FREE TO ALL MEMBERS**

## ZOOM TALKS PROGRAMME 2025

Please note that as from Jan 2025, we will be consolidating the zoom talks to a single session each month ...

... on 3<sup>rd</sup> WEDNESDAYs at 7.30

Please register via the website as before

Further details on p 33

Live talks at March are unaffected.

### The Society offers condolences to the family of :

Keith FRANCIS	3873
David MANNING	3406



## A WORD FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



### Talks

Our monthly talks provide the opportunity for our members throughout the world to share in zoom meetings, learn from our speakers, ask questions and watch the talk later if you were unable to attend the live session. Recent analysis by our committee member, John Bownass, shows that you have been catching up with the recorded talks on almost 2000 occasions, and that just over 260 members are using this service. Quite often I am unable to attend at the live time, so I watch the recording, or sometimes dip into a session I have attended, to check on something I saw. Fast forwarding to the part I want to check again is very quick by accessing the recordings from our website. However, 260 members is only a fraction of our total membership, and I hope that highlighting this resource in the talks and presentations session of the members' section will encourage more of you to catch up on what you have missed. The recorded talks include the 1921 census; DNA health, trees and adoptee miracles; which website and why; and Cambridgeshire calendar customs. Please have a look at the range available, and spend an enjoyable hour enhancing your knowledge and giving you new ideas.

Our monthly face to face talks provide the chance to meet other members and chat about family history. I will be using what I learnt about Apprenticeship records in my own research. This talk also included the chance to say thank you to Margery Young who has just celebrated a special birthday, something we are all interested in as family historians. One of my own distant cousins recently celebrated her 100th birthday, and I was able to read the newspaper report and see her photograph, cards, flowers. Sometimes these reports include the centenarian's memories of their own family and friends and are a valuable source. Older newspaper reports may well include unique memories from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### Heritage open days

The Society attended the Cottenham Dissenters cemetery open day at the recent annual heritage opening, both members and non-members attended, and I am grateful to those who staffed our stand and recruited new members. There are a huge range of events throughout the country, something of

interest to almost everyone. I visited the exhibition about Thomas Peacock and the Littleport shirt factory assembled by the Littleport Society and learnt a great deal about his influence on the whole of the local community. I also went to Kings Lynn where there were no less than 65 events on their chosen day. We went to just over ten of these as they are all close and within walking or heritage bus distance. Many of the places open are not normally accessible, and the heritage open days are always worth visiting. Why not pencil this in your 2025 diary or smartphone before it gets too full?

### **Surgeries**

Apart from giving you the opportunity to seek help from committee members with your brick walls, the surgeries include a range of handouts and freebies for you to take away. Have you seen our range of bookmarks, handouts about getting started, DNA, non conformists, and a very detailed list of contiguous parishes for the whole county that includes poor law unions and registration districts? Why not make time to visit the surgery near you, get guidance and help with checking records and learn from our new handouts. The list of surgeries, venues and dates is in this journal and online.

### **Museums**

Local museums are an important resource for finding out about the community and the people who lived there including our own ancestors. As I mentioned last time, the Society has recently donated money to fourteen local museums in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. We have now received the emails thanking us which show how much this is appreciated, and other local organisations have also shared these thankyou's with their members, all great publicity for us.

### **Mentoring**

We have recently started to offer mentoring to new members who have joined the Society. Each new member who chooses to take part will be paired with one of our mentors so they can discuss what is important to them and help them to get started in their own research. During my own career, I found working with a mentor and also mentoring others really helped me with new avenues of thought. If you want to take advantage of this, please contact our Publicity Officer, Karen Orrell, [publicity@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:publicity@chfhs.org.uk).

### **Suffolk Family History Fair and Guilden Morden research day**

The Society will have a stand on both these days, as will other organisations. The Suffolk fair in Ipswich is on Saturday 19 October, Guilden Morden on Saturday 2 November. We hope some of you will be able to attend both these events.

### **Website**

Since it was launched in June 2023, our new website has made a huge

difference to Society work. Many of the recurring and routine communications such as meetings, new and renewed memberships, accessing parish data and searching content from past journals has become much easier and saved committee members a large amount of time. We are grateful to Beachshore for all the work they have done to make this possible. However, there have been some issues that have taken longer than we hoped to resolve, and a small number of committee members discussed this with Beachshore in September. After this meeting, Beachshore will prioritise our data migration work with Name and Place, arrange regular future meetings, and I hope we all see the benefits and results in the near future.

*David Capsey*

### **A NOTE FROM LES, CHFHS TREASURER :**

To everyone who pays their subs by “**Standing Order**” : Les asks that you please check that your SO is set up for pay the **correct current subscription** rate for your membership and journal preferences.

Last January, many members did send the additional £2 following on from the increase, and we hope their bank instructions have now been amended. However, a few SO payers have not responded to email reminders and paid only the old fee.

*Thank you.*

### **RECEIVED FROM MIKE PETTY :**

Seventy Years of Collecting Cambridgeshire.

I append a copy of the talk on *Seventy Years of Collecting Cambridgeshire* that I gave to Cambridge Antiquarian Society and Cambridgeshire Association for Local History, Magdalene College, Cambridge, 2024.

I hope you may find it of interest, do share it if you wish.

Many thanks for all your support over the years

<https://archive.org/details/seventy-years-of-collecting-cambridgeshire-2024>

If you are 'researching' anything Cambridgeshire you should take a look at **Cambridgeshire History on Your Computer**: *hundreds of files, thousands of illustrations and newspaper articles shared on Internet*

Archive <https://bit.ly/3vHS23Y>

**Fenland History on Facebook**: my group for folk seeking and sharing Cambridgeshire history

# Opening up the files of: The Cambridge Charity Organisation Society

by Laura Catherine Housden  
*of Cambridgeshire Archives*

**2,896.**

That's how many individuals applied for relief from the Cambridge Charity Organisation Society (CCOS) between 1879 and 1927, representing 33 categories of employment ranging from agriculture to those working with precious metals. Most of these individuals resided within Cambridge city though there are also applications from major cities such as London and Liverpool and local villages such as Great Shelford and Fulbourn.

CCOS was a successor of the Cambridge Mendicity Society founded in 1818/1819 to deal with the post-Napoleonic War problems of beggars and disease. In 1871, Mr Henry Sidgwick joined the Society and in 1879, the Society was dissolved to reform as CCOS.

The collection, here at Cambridgeshire Archives, is made up of individual applications which contain an application form and occasionally also includes correspondence and other supporting paperwork. These were catalogued and re-packaged by volunteers from the Cambridge branch of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS). These additional pieces of paperwork can often provide more personal details about those applying for relief; though it is not always positive! As with most administrative records, unfortunately, there is no parity in the completion of these applications forms. As a result, some are incredibly detailed whilst others only contain the bare minimum.

Each application form submitted to the Society represents an individual in need of help whether that was to see them through for a couple of days or to assist with 'big life changes'. Consequently, there are many personal stories within this collection to discover.

In 1887, Cupid Hayhoe applied to CCOS for assistance in purchasing a new wooden leg as his was nearly worn out.<sup>1</sup> At 70, Cupid lists his occupation as a brick burner though has been out of employment for 6 weeks due to not being able to wheel the barrows required for his job.



A search of newspapers revealed an article, dated 6 years prior, which details that Cupid had his leg amputated as a result of an unfortunate accident in which his left foot was crushed under some carriages.<sup>2</sup> Though, at the time of the article, he was in Addenbrookes refusing to have his leg amputated.

Unfortunately, Hayhoe's case was dismissed as one for 'woodchopping at the Union' and a further application form completed later in 1887 shows that Cupid appears not to have gone to woodchopping and instead tried stone-breaking which led to the breaking of his wooden leg.

Sadly, a search of burial records shows that Cupid was buried in Cambridge St Andrew the Less a year later on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1888.<sup>3</sup>

From a small sample, it would appear that the CCOS had a rather strict criteria when approving applications and providing relief. Requests for aid appear to be often denied due to 'character flaws' or as being another organisation's responsibility, usually the Board of Guardians.

This proved to be the case for the next two applications. John Day requested help in affording the burial fees for his child. The Relieving Officer, Mr Worthy, comments that 'the Guardians have lent applicant the amount of burial fees which is to be paid back by weekly instalments.'<sup>4</sup> Indeed the child does appear in the Burial Register for Cambridge St Andrew the Less as being buried one day after the application:

*14 April 1888      Day      Mary Ann of New Street, 8 months<sup>5</sup>*

Similarly, Emma Adcock had her request for boots and stockings for her daughter dismissed as various character references suggested that she was 'a person of immoral habits' and someone who drinks a lot.<sup>6</sup> There is also a comment regarding her sister who 'walks the streets' showing that it was not necessarily decided just on the character of the applicant.

Her employer, Mrs Smith, for whom Emma works as a laundress, comments that 'she is sometimes late and loses a quarter of the day'.<sup>7</sup> A widow, Emma Adcock appears to have returned to Cambridge after the death of her husband Francis John Adcock. The family had previously lived in London and it seems to be there that Francis died. Following this, the family had received £12 from an unknown benefit society but by the time of Emma's application, the family had outstanding rent at their previous address of £1-2-0 and the current rent due was 4/6.

Relief was not only required by the elderly or the infirm. There are nearly 650

applications by those under 30.

One of those is Annie Murkin who applied to the Society in 1889, at the age of 18 requesting help to find an apprenticeship. Annie had previously worked as a servant for both Miss Kennett and Miss Penfound though had to leave employment due to a weakness of her wrist.

As a result of these circumstances, Annie asked CCOS to assist in placing her as an apprentice with Miss Bilton of 21 Norfolk Terrace to learn dressmaking.<sup>8</sup> Initially, Annie Murkin's request to apprentice with Miss Bilton was declined due to Miss Bilton having heard that Annie 'had been guilty of pilfering'.

Further comments regarding the incident are detailed in the application form which discloses that the incident occurred when Annie was 13 and she took '3 little black feathers belonging to Mrs Gracock but gave them up when asked'. Rather kindly, consequently Miss Bilton reversed her decision about 10 days later and was quite 'willing to take Annie Murkin after hearing that the pilfering was so long ago'.

Another young applicant is John Wisbey, aged 21, who approached the Society for assistance in emigrating to Australia. Within John's application, there are several pieces of correspondence which aid in forming a more complete picture.

Initial letters show that John wished to leave for Mackay, Queensland on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1887 on S.S Dacca. A responding letter indicates that free passage can be arranged as long as John has 'done any farm work, understands milking, care of horses etc or has been accustomed to ploughing'<sup>9</sup> but the contract would require him to remain with the employer for a year. A final letter writes that the application is unable to proceed as John Wisbey had relations at Parramatta in New South Wales. It is assumed by the government of Queensland that the cheap passage to Queensland will be taken advantage of when there is no passage to New South Wales.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the seemingly rather strict criteria for relief, there are instances in which the Society assisted and was able to change someone's circumstances for the better.

Alfred Strangward was deserted as a 4-year-old by his father and ended up in the Cambridge Union Workhouse. At 18, he applied to the CCOS for assistance in finding a role as a light porter or errand boy to get out of the workhouse.

In his application, Alfred mentions that he has a 'slight spinal complaint' and as a result is unable to do any heavy work. He mentions that he has begun learning tailoring though he is unsuited to this due to health.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of his application, there was an appeal in local newspapers and Christian World made by the Cambridge Guardians on Alfred's behalf. The appeal from Alfred uses emotive language and tells that 'it is a hard thing for a young man like me to bury my days in a workhouse'.<sup>12</sup> Following the appeal, further newspaper articles showed that the Guardians had received financial support towards apprenticing Alfred; 'Joseph Gray, builder, gave £5 and Mr Burford added a guinea to this amount'.<sup>13</sup>

Alfred's file contains several letters from those who wished to offer work to him including management of a pony and trap and in a grocery workhouse. It does appear that despite Alfred's comments about tailoring in his initial application form in 1881, he ends up apprenticed to Mr Burrell as a tailor. Subsequent census records confirm this... The appeal also attracted several subscribers who assisted with the cost of his apprenticeship including Mr Gray and Mr Huddleston.

Receiving relief once did not necessarily mean that individuals would not need further help.

The family of William Harris completed several applications between 1885 and 1903. In 1885, the family contacted CCOS asking for help because of their daughter who was ill. Compounding the situation, their son was injured and unable to work for a short while. The Society granted 4/- if the boy was unable to take up employment.

Further applications were submitted a year later when Catherine Harris was due to be confined and her husband was unable to work as he was 'at times out of his mind and is subject to fits'.<sup>14</sup> These applications were dismissed as ineligible.

William did receive several grants and loans for the purchase of a new pony to assist with his work following the death of his previous pony as well as to purchase stock. These were later paid back by Harris.

As a family history resource, this collection is vastly underused but it provides a valuable insight into the social history of late nineteenth-century Cambridge. Moreover, as each application form contains genealogical information for the families of those applying, these records can be invaluable when tracing families who may otherwise prove to be elusive in

official records such as the census. Similarly, application forms can sometimes confirm or explain connections that may have been found in other records, allowing researchers to gain a much fuller picture of their ancestor.

If you would like to learn more about this fascinating collection or have any specific questions, please contact us here at [Cambridgeshire Archives cambs.archive@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:cambs.archive@cambridgeshire.gov.uk).

- <sup>1</sup> Cambridgeshire Archives, CCOS Case File no. 1375
- <sup>2</sup> Cambridge Independent Press, 17 September 1881, page 8, column 5 [accessed via British Newspaper Archive]
- <sup>3</sup> CA, P24/1/39, Register of Burials Cambridge St Andrew the Less, 4 January 1888 - 21 March 1899
- <sup>4</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1619
- <sup>5</sup> CA, P24/1/39, Register of Burials Cambridge St Andrew the Less, 4 January 1888 - 21 March 1899
- <sup>6</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1437
- <sup>7</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1437
- <sup>8</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1804
- <sup>9</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1427
- <sup>10</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 1427
- <sup>11</sup> CA, CCOS Case File no. 331
- <sup>12</sup> Cambridge Express, 10 February 1883 [enclosed in CCOS Case File no. 331]
- <sup>13</sup> Cambridge Independent Press, 24 February 1883 [enclosed in CCOS Case File no. 331]
- <sup>14</sup> CA. CCOS Case File no. 993

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## ***a few words from the Suffolk FHS Fair, Ipswich, Oct 2024***

It was a horrible wet morning at Ipswich for the Suffolk Family History Fair which, unfortunately, probably deterred people from attending. But, despite that, it was a good day for all those who were there.

A number of people perused the selection of books and other information available on our stall, and resulted in two people joining the Society on the day with two more looking to sign up on-line over the next few days. Lisa, our lead researcher was on hand to assist with queries and will be following up on three lines of enquiry.

It was also good to be able to catch up with volunteers from the other Societies who were there, and to discuss how we can help each other particularly with finding speakers for our on-line talks.

The three talks on the theme of 'Suffolk Farming' were well attended.

*by MH*

# **HAROLD FORDHAM:**

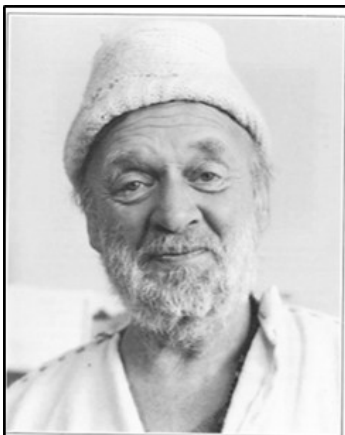
## **A LIFE IN TWO HALVES**

### **Part Two**

By Graham WEBSTER

**In Part One, the background of Harold FORDHAM (1919-1998) was described with the ‘first’ part of his story – his criminal side.**

**This second stage in Harold’s documented life, continues in 1988.**



**Harold Fordham**  
*(Stemp and Collins, 1989)<sup>1</sup>*

In February, the owner of the Gallery on the Cam, near Jesus Lock, Chesterton Road, Cambridge, Mr Phillip MARTIN, was told to move his barge 100 yards along the river as the stretch of river between Jesus Lock and the Mill Pond, where it was moored, had to be lowered by 4ft. One consequence was that a three-week exhibition by local “wanderer” Harold FORDHAM that had been planned starting on 6 March 1988 had to be cancelled<sup>2</sup>. It was reported that Harold was soon to be made homeless; he was described as the ‘bag man’ and had been living in the garage of the vicarage of St Andrew’s Church, Chesterton, Cambridge for the previous 12 years<sup>3</sup>. The impending eviction was arising as the then vicar, Canon John CARRE, was retiring to Ely<sup>4</sup>. The exhibition of Harold’s paintings - Watercolours of Cambridge with An Imaginative Touch - eventually went on show on Sunday, 18 June 1988 and lasted until 9 July<sup>5</sup>. The idea of the exhibition came from Harold’s long-time friend, John DAVISON<sup>6</sup>. The paintings, 25 or so of them, often battered having been carried around Cambridge, were donated by friends and well-wishers, given to them by a grateful Harold for hot drinks, coffee, hot meals and for washing his clothes. A newspaper report wrote that Harold has been:

*“...given a £1 for a cup of coffee this week, little knowing that he now possessed £1,000. Harold Fordham was sitting in Eaden Lilley’s coffee shop thinking he had no money, when [the reporter told] him that nearly all his paintings had been sold on the opening day of his Gallery on the Cam exhibition. ‘But they are not my pictures,’ said Harold. ‘I let people have them for £1 or so to get my washing done. I don’t draw social security.’<sup>7</sup>*

The cost of preparing the pictures, including the framing, for exhibition had been met by a generous grant from the regions only merchant bankers Singer and Friedlander of Milton Hall that raised local interest<sup>8</sup>. The firm used to be based in Portugal Place, the scene of much of Harold's work<sup>9</sup>, although a newspaper report of the time hinted that he was often seen eating his lunch near the bank's City of London office<sup>10</sup> (their offices at the time were in New Street, EC2, opposite Liverpool Street Station). The exhibition proved to be popular<sup>11</sup>, with but a few sold on the first day. The money raised, £2,000, was deposited in a Cambridge Building Society for the benefit of Harold<sup>12</sup>.




(from Stemp, 1989)

It was said he carried all his possessions, including his painting equipment, in a backpack, dressed in homemade clothes from blankets. It was also reported that at the time Harold, after moving from the vicar's garage, had temporary shelter 'on a veranda in Chesterton'<sup>13</sup>.

The Gallery on the Cam held Harold's second exhibition from 26 February to 18 March 1989, this time sponsored by Chesterton Autocars Ltd, part of the Hallens Motor Group<sup>14</sup> and, again, proving to be very popular with even a television programme described as 'Folio Visits the Cam Gallery, Cambridge, for

HAROLD FORDHAM



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAINTINGS

(from Collins, 1989)

Harold Fordham's exhibition of paintings' aired on Anglia TV on 21 February 1988<sup>15</sup>. 'More people came forward with work of a very high quality and we decided to hold another exhibition'<sup>16</sup>. This time there were 40 paintings in the



Paintings exhibited in Cambridge,  
1988 and 1989  
at  
The Gallery on the Cam

exhibition which was accompanied by the booklet *Harold Fordham. A journey through the Paintings* that also included paintings from his 1988 exhibition<sup>17</sup>. The brief biography at the start of the booklet is signed 'J.D.' – perhaps John DAVISON. Queues built up for the exhibition, which was described as being different to previous year's, the works included self-portraits, Cambridge scenes, flowers and fantasy landscapes<sup>18</sup>. An Opinion piece in the local paper queried Harold's interest in the exhibition<sup>19</sup> but was soon refuted by the Gallery on the Cam's administrator:

*As the exhibition organiser I have on numerous occasions spoken with Harold about his works and I can assure you that he is absolutely delighted with the astonishing popularity. For all those attending the private view, it was a joy to see Harold happily accepting compliments from surrounding admirers. I believe he found the whole experience extremely moving.*

*I share the concern felt by many for Harold's welfare. He is a very single-minded character and, if the general public acts responsibly, I believe he will not allow this great success to alter his content existence....*

*I'm sure many people will agree with me when I say that one of the most gratifying aspects about this exhibition is that Harold Fordham so obviously enjoys his new-found sense of respect and recognition as a worthy artist.<sup>20</sup>*

The exhibition was, again, a success with a sell-out, and it was hoped that the proceeds, again deposited in a building society account, could be put towards a caravan for Harold and his painting equipment. Harold, it was reported, was sleeping at the crypt in St Andrew's Church, Chesterton<sup>21</sup>. The biography refers to Chesterton Autocars and Chesterton Hospital as places Harold would find washing facilities<sup>22</sup>.

A third exhibition of 40 mixed media pictures was held from to 2 -22 June 1991, again in the Gallery on the Cam. These pictures had been given to John DAVISON at whose home near Jesus Green – probably Park Parade - Harold often used to call<sup>23</sup>. Like previous shows, it was



"Bag man" Harold Fordham visits his exhibition of paintings at The Gallery on the Cam.

from *Cambridge Evening News*,  
27 February 1989, p5

reported that no-one knew if he would attend. Rebecca KELLY, the gallery's administrator said 'we keep saying to people if they see Harold to tell him to come to Sunday's opening'<sup>24</sup>. Happily, Harold, to the delight of organisers, did arrive to see a private viewing<sup>25</sup>. The paintings were on sale for £70-£200. Again, the proceeds were for the good of Harold, and as he was shortly to have to leave the summer house he was 'living' in, friends were looking for land for a caravan for him. KELLY said '[i]t is a comforting thought to know that it will provide some security for Harold's future'<sup>26</sup>.

Alas, Harold died on 13 November 1998 at Addenbrooke's Hospital<sup>27</sup>. He had been living in a shed near the Sargeants-Hallens garage, the same as the address given - The Shed, 1 Union Lane, Cambridge - on his death certificate. Before his funeral service on 4 December 1998 at St Laurence Roman Catholic Church, Milton Road, Cambridge, Denise COLLINS, the one-time administrator of the Gallery on the Cam now owner, organised a memorial exhibition that was held on 28 November 1998 at the Cambridge Contemporary Art Gallery<sup>28</sup>. She revealed the gallery had some 210 of his paintings and:

*[he] used to come here most Saturday mornings and insisted we have some of his paintings, so over the years we have built up quite a collection*<sup>29</sup>

The pieces on sale raised £1,595 in total went to the charity Emmaus, which then had a self-help community in Landbeach and the chairman of the time, John DURRANT, hoped that a couple of paintings donated to the charity would hang, after being framed by the gallery, in the soon-to-be completed new accommodation. In the obituary piece in the local newspaper a call went out for anyone to help arrange Harold's funeral<sup>30</sup>. This would seem to imply Harold had no close relatives and certainly only sister Hilda DOGGETT, a widow, survived him. Louisa GAWTHROP, Harold's sister recounted how her brother once came close to marrying a Romany woman<sup>31</sup>. This would tally as Harold did, in fact, marry, Lily SMITH on 12 November 1949 at the Cambridge Registry Office and her address on the marriage certificate was given as 'Caravan, Chesterton Fen Road, Cambridge' – cf Harold's given address at his court appearance in 1950 as 'The Encampment, Fen Road', described in Part One. On the same certificate Harold was still living with his parents at 132 Kendal Way and was a builder's bricklayer – with, perhaps, John Brignell as he was before the War – and Lily described as a 'land worker'<sup>32</sup>. He then married Rose Kathleen JOHNSTON (nee GUNDRY) on 24 October 1962, again at the Cambridge Registry Office Their marriage certificate records that both their previous marriages were dissolved and were both living at 4 Heath Farm, Newmarket Road, Melbourn, Cambridgeshire<sup>33</sup>. He was still a bricklayer.



At his funeral, before a cremation at Cambridge Crematorium<sup>34</sup>, parish priest Father David PAUL, used words 'eccentric', 'colourful' and 'lively' to describe Harold. Perhaps fitting, a nephew of Harold said of the address he gave 'I made the point we don't all have to be the same. His life was a lesson to us and the service was a celebration of his life.'<sup>35</sup>.

Is there anything in the way of an assessment one can make of Harold Fordham? He had an itinerant lifestyle, voluntarily homeless, undoubtedly badly affected by his experiences in the Second World War, that then contributed to a criminal side to that life. He then 'found' art. John Davidson, who for years welcomed Harold into his Park Parade home, said he had

*...obviously had some mental problems but seemed happy, did not care for material things and communicated best through his paintings... I think that is where the essential Harold is to be found. My concern in all of this was to make sure he was seen as a man of character and talent, not just as a funny old man with strange clothes.*<sup>36</sup>

John had previously characterised Harold as:

*...a man seeking peace and discovering beauty. 'I like to think of the World as the beautiful colours of paint' – surely the words of a true artist and master of materials.*<sup>37</sup>

His art was characterised by swift brush strokes and paint which had come directly from the palette to the paper, with no time for mixing. He usually painted in some form of watercolour on paper of variable quality, cardboard (including Cornflake packets<sup>38</sup> and the reverse of side of shop notices. The materials were sometimes given to the artist and sometimes bought from local shops<sup>39</sup>. Denise COLLINS said, he had:

*...a really charming, naïve style. Some of his most interesting paintings come from when he would choose a spot in Cambridge we all know, like Midsummer Common, and add a fantasy element into it*<sup>40</sup>

What a character and I am a proud, distant, relation.

**This is not the place to reproduce Harold's works  
but a number can be seen at**

**<https://haroldfordham.wordpress.com/2023/11/10/harold-fordham/>**

<sup>1</sup> STEMP, Robin and COLLINS, Denise (1989), *Harold Fordham: a journey through the paintings: paintings exhibited in Cambridge, 1988 and 1989 at The Gallery on the Cam*, The Gallery on the Cam, ISBN-13: 978-0-906782-43-9, ISBN: 0-906782-43-0

<sup>2</sup> Works cancel gallery shows, *Cambridge Evening News*, 15 February 1988, p7

<sup>3</sup> Eccentric Harold told to pack bags, *Cambridge Evening News*, 5 April 1988, p4

<sup>4</sup> *Chesterton. The Revd John Carre, Vicar of St Andrew's from 1974 - 1987* [https://chesterton.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue\\_item/chesterton-the-revd-john-carre-vicar-of-st-andrews-from-1974-1987](https://chesterton.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/chesterton-the-revd-john-carre-vicar-of-st-andrews-from-1974-1987)

- <sup>5</sup> Diary dates, *Cambridge Evening News*, 18 June, 1988, p6
- <sup>6</sup> STEMPE and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*
- <sup>7</sup> Picturing fame's hard for Harold, *Cambridge Evening News*, 24 June 1988, p25
- <sup>8</sup> Bank backing for artist for artist dossier, *Cambridge Evening News*, 22 June 1988, p18
- <sup>9</sup> Eccentric Harold told to pack bags, *ibid*
- <sup>10</sup> See Trump art nets £2,000 [Unreferenced newspaper cutting] copied in Ancestry.co.uk rosemary jayne loveridge family tree, Rosemary Jayne STURGESS <https://tinyurl.com/52u9vupw>
- <sup>11</sup> Harold Fordham Print, <https://objectivehistoire.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/harold-fordham-print/>
- <sup>12</sup> STEMPE and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*; Colin HUGGINS, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Fordham-852>
- <sup>13</sup> Picturing fame's hard for Harold, *ibid*
- <sup>14</sup> STEMPE and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*
- <sup>15</sup> 24 Hour TV & Radio Guide, *Cambridge Evening News*, 21 February 1989, p2
- <sup>16</sup> 'Bag man' Harold to stage a second show, *Cambridge Evening News*, 22 February 1989, p16
- <sup>17</sup> Copies available in Rare Books Reading Room, Cambridge University Library, call no. Cam.b.989.33, and Fitzwilliam Museum Reference Collection
- <sup>18</sup> Harold's exhibition is a real picture, *Cambridge Evening News*, 27 February 1989, p5
- <sup>19</sup> Wandering star, *Cambridge Evening News*, 27 February 1989, p6
- <sup>20</sup> Success 'moves' artist, *Cambridge Evening News*, 6 March 1989, p6
- <sup>21</sup> 'Bag man' Harold to stage a second show, *ibid*
- <sup>22</sup> STEMPE and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*
- <sup>23</sup> Bags of interest in Harold, *Cambridge Evening News*, 30 May 1991, p29; see also Obituary, John Davison, *The Guardian*, 13 September 2005 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/sep/13/obituaries.readersobituaries1>
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>25</sup> Star of the show manages to arrive, *Cambridge Evening News*, 4 June 1991, p7
- <sup>26</sup> Bags of interest in Harold, *ibid*
- <sup>27</sup> Given as 'Cardiorespiratory arrest; myocardial infarction; ischaemic heart disease' on his death certificate; Fordham, *Cambridge Daily News*, 26 November 1998, p10
- <sup>28</sup> Colourful character and artist dies at 78, *Cambridge Evening News*, 23 November 1998, p13
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>31</sup> Colin HUGGINS, *ibid*
- <sup>32</sup> The marriage certificate gave her age as 27 (b. ca 1922) with father Rodney SMITH. She went on to marry Dennis William KEEBLE (1 July 1931-12 Sept

2003), also in Cambridge, in Q3 1955. She died 12 April 2002 in Cambridge with her age 82 ie b.ca 1920 – possibly 23 Feb 1920, source Ancestry Whitehead family tree <https://tinyurl.com/2nfmaav2> .

<sup>33</sup> Born in Kingston, Surrey on 27 December 1926, Rose Kathleen had already been married to (James Samuel Henry) Clifford (Barnhill) JOHNSTON in Q3 1946 in Surrey. She went on to marry Donald F BARRY in Q3 1978 in Merton, Surrey. Rose died in July 1985 in Sutton, Surrey.

<sup>34</sup> On the Register he is recorded as ‘widower’ of ‘no fixed abode’, *see* DeceasedOnline

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> STEMP and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Ancestry.co.uk ‘rosemary jayne loveridge family tree’, *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> STEMP and COLLINS, 1989, *ibid*

<sup>40</sup> Colourful character and artist dies at 78, *ibid*

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## **OUT & ABOUT WITH CHFHS—**

### MEMBERS’ VISIT “Behind The Scenes @ The Archives”

A bright Autumn day in mid-October saw a party of CHFHS members taken on a tour around the “back rooms” at Cambridgeshire Archives by Archives Manager, Alan Akeroyd, with Archives Assistant Laura (see cover photo). All thanks to CHFHS Secretary, Muriel, for arranging the visit.

The Archives Service has now been based at The Dock, Ely for over 4 years, having opened (and then promptly closed) a matter of weeks before the C-19 lockdown took effect. In his welcome, Alan reminded us of the background story to their “taking up residence” in the former bowling alley premises at Ely following an ultimatum to the Council by the National Archives that, effectively, new facilities had to be provided for records’ storage, or else! Quite by chance, the old bowling alley had two distinct areas which were ripe for conversion to “storage” (the bowling lanes area) and “front of house” (the soft play and foyer area)—other potential sites would have needed extensive additions to provided both areas. The storage area has state-of-the-art environmental controls across 3 secure rooms, and a water-based fire suppression system (yes! water-based—Alan assured everyone that this is preferred over a system using gas—a gas supply would be both dangerous and finite, whereas wet documents can be well managed by tried and trusted conservation techniques). A few facts and figures: 891 tons of “stuff” was eventually moved into the new storage area; 45,000 archival quality storage boxes; 11 miles of shelving on movable racking; everything is bar-coded by location allowing optimal use of space with boxes stored by size, easily relocated if necessary and still readily found with a few mouse clicks.

We went on to visit the conservation room and digitisation suite where equipment and techniques for cleaning/conserving documents and scanning of images were described by Alan's colleagues:

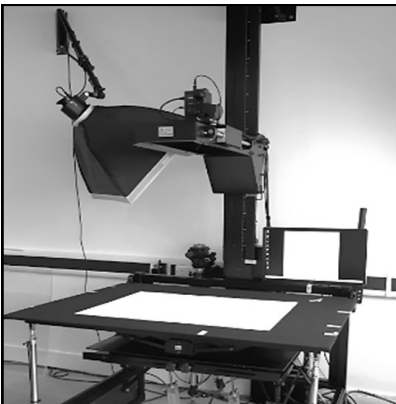
We saw the humidifier cabinet and heard how it is invaluable to help relax folded/rolled documents, and how once flatter, the dirty documents can be cleaned and stabilised—the



before & after of a bundle of pages ably illustrated the process.



Examples of conserved wax seals and documents were out on display. We then saw the process of digitising documents of all sizes. After passing through the accessions office (which is shared with the Registration Service for issuing local BMD certificates), we ended back in the Search Room for some research time.



Our thanks go to Alan and his colleagues for their welcome on a “closed” day. *It's very likely there will be a further visit sometime next year—if so, do take the opportunity to join us for a fascinating sneaky peek “behind the scenes” ...*

## OUT & ABOUT WITH CHFHS—

### Cottenham Dissenters Cemetery Open Day : Sept 2024



*Arranged as an event in support of the 2024 "Heritage Open Days" programme, the committee managing the Dissenters' Cemetery at Cottenham put on an Open Day to showcase and publicise their work in conserving and preserving this historic site. CHFHS's visit is reported by Karen Orrell, CHFHS Publicity Officer ...*

On a beautiful early September Saturday morning, Society Secretary Muriel, Research Officer Lisa and I set up an information stall at the Cottenham Dissenters' Cemetery Open Day.

The sun was shining and the gentle breeze blowing through the trees surrounding us made for a very pleasant day. The addition of homemade honey slices and cups of squash added to the enjoyment! Our stall was fully stocked with a selection of information leaflets, all of which may be downloaded for free from the online shop on our website (<https://www.chfhs.org.uk/library-chfhs>), CHFHS bookmarks, copies of the Journal and information sheets on the lives of some of the people buried in the cemetery.



Our information sheets demonstrated to visitors what records they could access and where they could be found to enable them to research their ancestors, showing where to find birth, marriage and death certificates, how to access census returns, where to find parish and nonconformist records and how useful the online newspaper databases can be. We uncovered the stories of James Alma Day, who died of the Spanish Flu aged 21 and Ivy Grace Duncan, who never met her father Alfred Pont, as he was killed in WW1 before she was born. We explored military ancestors with Albert John Gifford, who was awarded the DCM in WW1 and Herbert Cawthorn, who was



awarded the MM and a bar to the MM, looking at war diaries, medal rolls and citations. We discovered that Hubert Hazel had made his own contribution during WW1. A Cambridge chemistry graduate, he worked at a Royal Naval cordite factory, producing the material needed for munitions. The sad story of Solomon Cole was revealed, killed in a tragic accident as he helped with the harvest when he was only 12 years old. A look through probate records revealed that James Doggett had died at the world's first cancer hospital in Brompton. A life of service to the village was uncovered through the census returns – Laura Diddell taught the children of the village at the Cottenham Board school for almost 50 years. The school was partially destroyed by fire in 1936 and one of our visitors told us her husband had attended the school at the time. Finally, we told the story of Millard Bowers, a champion

ploughman, who didn't let being wounded in WW1 get in the way of winning ploughing matches!

Plenty of visitors stopped by and looked through our offerings, many taking away a handful of information sheets. We answered questions about the Society, researching your family tree, DNA and genetic genealogy and explained exactly what a 3rd cousin and a 2nd cousin once removed are!

The Cottenham Dissenters' Cemetery trustees had their own displays on show as well. The hand bier, which is over 100 years old, was out, there were information boards for the three Commonwealth War Graves in the cemetery, for Sergeant Albert W Beaumont and Privates Arthur H Waters and Lionel V Milton, three non-commemorative war graves for Private Charles H Cox, Orderly Charles M Norman and Nurse Florence Todd, plus those who were buried overseas during the two world wars and are

## WHAT'S MY STORY?

### Laura Diddell

I taught at the village school for almost 50 years.

NAME: DIDDELL, LAURA	Mother's Maiden Surname: CROSS
CARD Reference: 1868. M Quarter in CHESTERTON. Volume 03B. Page 474	

SOURCE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE BIRTH CERTIFICATE SEARCH

I was born in 1868 to parents Britian Diddell and Caroline nee CROSS.

BIRTH DATE: 1868	BIRTH PLACE: COTTENHAM
FATHER: Diddell, Britian	MOTHER: Cross, Caroline

SOURCE ANCESTRY 1891, 1901 & 1911 CENSUS

In 1891, 1901 & 1911 I was living in the High Street and my occupation was school teacher.

SOURCE FIND MY PAST 1921 CENSUS

In the 1921 census, I was visiting my sister Agatha and I was still a teacher.

SOURCE ANCESTRY MEMBER FAMILY TREE

I taught at the Cottenham Board School from 1893 to 1936. I am 2nd from the left in the middle row in this picture, taken at the school. The school was partially destroyed by fire in 1936.

**SERIOUS SCHOOL FIRE**

Cottenham Buildings Partly Guttered

ONLY a week after opening school following the Christmas holidays, Cottenham Board School was gutted when the guttered end of the roof of the school building.

SOURCE FIND MY PAST NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE & CAPTURING CAMBRIDGE WEBSITE

commemorated on family graves. There were explanations of grave symbology and details of how and why the Dissenters' Cemetery came to be. After we had packed up, I wandered through the cemetery visiting the many graves of my ancestors who rest there – my grandfather who repaired Spitfires and Lancasters during WWII, 4 of my great grandparents, all ag labs and farmers, my great great grandfather who was the village blacksmith for many years as well as several great and great great aunts and uncles and numerous cousins. I have researched all of them (I knew all my great grandparents so little research required there!) and we hope that we inspired a few people during the day to explore their family history too. If you have ancestors buried in the cemetery and would like to share their story, please email us – we would love to hear about them. Don't forget, you will find transcriptions of the graves in the cemetery on our Monumental Inscriptions A-I CD or download (CD/MI/002) which is available to purchase in our online shop.

Our thanks to the Cottenham Dissenters' Cemetery trustees for inviting us to participate and for making us feel so welcome. We hope to be asked to come back next year and that some of you will join us, either as a helper or just visiting. If you would like to volunteer to help with events, please email [secretary@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chfhs.org.uk)

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## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE ANCESTORS OF US PRESIDENTS**

With the latest US Presidential election results imminently due in a day or so (at the time of writing), a quick bit of googling revealed a number of online articles citing local connections with at least 3 presidents:

- **Calvin Coolidge** : perhaps the best-known local connection is that of 1920s President, Coolidge. The ancestral “local” was one John Coolidge who was baptised at Cottenham in 1604 and emigrated around 1630; he went on to settle in Watertown, Massachusetts.
- **Joe Biden** : according to research compiled by the FindMyPast team, “the Biden family line stretches back to William H Biden, born in the late 1780s in Sussex”. The exact location that this William hails from has, however, been debated, and once included Cambridgeshire (Houghton, in Hunts, to be exact). It's now accepted as likely some undetermined place in Sussex. Either way, William emigrated to America in 1820, and the rest is history ...
- **Barack Obama** : originally published on the BBC website, et al, back in 2014 and revived earlier this year, where researchers claim Mr Obama as a descendant of a couple from Gt Shelford—Thomas and Ann Blossom later moved to Stapleford, before leaving on the second Mayflower for Salem in the 1620s (incidentally, the couple have links with five other Presidents)

# BOER WAR MEMORIAL

## Great St Mary Church, Cambridge

Received from Norman Gentry

A chance conversation with Norman at the recent Cottenham Dissenters' Cemetery Open Day led to this transcribed listing being offered to CHFHS for



publicising in the journal. By way of background to the memorial, CHFHS's Dave Edwards adds:

*"This is the County memorial for the Boer War. Mainly listing Cambs men who*

*served in the Suffolk Regiment, but also all other Cambs men serving with other regiments. The Isle of Ely has its own memorial inside Ely Cathedral and there is one for Hunts near the church in the centre of Huntingdon. Peter-borough Cathedral has one for Northants, including the bits now in Cambs".*

Additional information can be seen at <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Cambridgeshire/BoerWarCambridge.html>

And, an account of the troops departure and war actions is in <https://www.ipswichwarmemorial.co.uk/the-suffolk-regiment-during-the-boer-war/>

Men of Suffolk Regt. Lieut. Colonel A. J. Watson Major: W. R. De-la-Pere Lloyd Captain: A. W. Brown Captain: R. M. Dowll Captain: W. G. Thompson Captain: & Adjut. F. A. P. Wilkins Lieutenant: S. J. Carey Lieutenant: C. A. White Sergeant. Dr. L. Orbell Sergeants: J. Baker F. Coleman E. C. Garrad E. Morgan W. Palmer Lance Sgt: H. Arrowsmith I S N I A C O D I U M N M 1	In memory of Cambridgeshire men and their Comrades of the Suffolk Regiment who died gallantly defending their country in the South African War 1899 Suffolk Regiment 1902 Sgt A. Howden, Swaffham Prior Pte A.W. Daynes, Cambridge Pte S. Hancock, Cherry Hinton Pte D. Peters, Trumpington Pte J. Plumb, Cambridge Pte J. Rosendale, Bassingbourn Pte W. Smith, Pampisford Pte W.J. Stock, Cambridge Pte E. Taylor, Cambridge Pte F. Thompson, Shingay Pte H.H. Wilson, Cambridge Pte W.S. Woollard, Kirtling Other Regiments Captain Herbert Foster Wentworth Stanley 9 <sup>th</sup> Lancers, Longstowe Tr. A Jaggard, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Life Guards. Hinxton. Tr. B.W. Williams, 1 <sup>st</sup> Kings Dragoon Guards. Cambridge. I Tr. T.S. Warren, 1 <sup>st</sup> Royal Dragoons. Harston. S Tr. G. Cornwall, 5 <sup>th</sup> Lancers. Cambridge. N Tr. H. Smith, 17 <sup>th</sup> Lancers. Cambridge. I Tr. J.C. Clayton, 19 <sup>th</sup> Hussars. Dullingham. A Sergt. W. E. Bulman, Impri Yeomanry. Cambridge. Pte S.C. Few, Imperial Yeomanry. Cambridge. Pte W. Day, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grenadier Guards. Bassingbourn. Pte G. Wallis, Northumberland Fusiliers. C Stretchworth. O Pte H. Parker, Norfolk. Cambridge. L Pte H.J. Smith, Bedfordshire. Cottenham. M Pte W. S. Cowell, York Light Infantry. Chesterton. N Pte F.S.H. Best, 3 <sup>rd</sup> King's Royal Rifles. Cambridge. S Sergt W.T. Hogg, 1 <sup>st</sup> York & Lancaster. Cherry Hinton. 2 Cpl H.J. Hauley, Rifle Brigade. Cambridge. Pte A. Howard, Army Service Corps. Cambridge. Sergt F.M. Newling, Capetown Highlanders. Isleham. Sergt B. M. Head, Kitcheners Horse. Balsham. Cpl A.R. Townsend, Thorneycrofts M. Inftry. Fordham. Pte Fredk Chas King, Saffron Walden 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cambs. Volunteer Battn. Suffolk Regt.	Men of Suffolk Regt. Privates: W. Fulcher G. Garrod A. Gill E. Goddard G. Greenwood A. Griggs C. Hackett W. Hearne W. Heaume S. Hemmings A. Hicks G. Hicks E.E.G. Holland B. R. Holland A. Howe H. C. Howell F. Hunt W. Johnson C. Kidd H. Knights J. Lambert J. Last W. Lewis I J. Maloney T. Malyon I S W. Manchester A. Martin S N E. Martin A.H. May N I C. Mayes A. Meade I A T. Murton F. Musckett A R. Newson H. Norman W.C. Norris A. Norwood C O. Wlley J. Parmenter C O J. Pearson H. Podd O L T. Pollard G. Pomeroy L U G. Prigg S. Pryke U M R. Purmsey W. Radley M N T. Ransom T. Read N C R. Rue H. Risby C 3 J. Robinson G. Rogers 4 W. Rogers E. Scott S. Seamans J. Sharman A. Sillitoe J. R. Skeet L. Soames A. Southgate H. Staggles W. Stollery E. Stutley R. Taylor E. Taylor E. Thornhill R. Tooke T. Tufts J. Vaughan H. Wallace J. Ward W. Watling A. Watson T. Webb C. Wilson C. Wood A. Woodgate P. Wright
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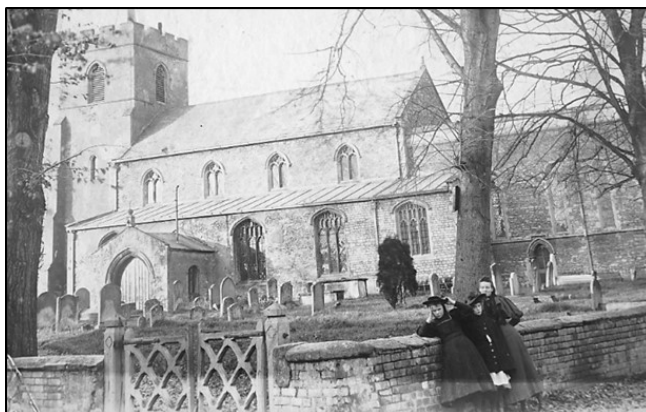
# A Tangle Of Families & A Windmill

by Michael Stephenson

*[This article was one of the most difficult to research that I have ever attempted. Two families, the HOLDICH and LEEDS families were associated with the old windmill in Somersham and I set out to find out who was the principal miller through the 19th century and into the 20th, until the mill was demolished in 1926. To help to untangle the families I assigned a number to various individuals and I have decided to retain these in what follows. Despite this, the lines of the two families can still be difficult to untangle.]*

When I bought this photograph (now in the Huntingdonshire Archives), I was intrigued ...

I recognised the church as being St John's in Somersham, but who were the three individuals who were leaning on the wall of the churchyard? It



was obviously not a posed, commissioned, photograph; in fact, the two girls appear to be typical stropy youngsters, determinedly not to co-operate with the photographer. On the rear of the image it gives the name of that photographer – Alfred George HOLDICH, “photographer”, of the High Street, Somersham. So I am fairly confident that it was Alfred (1) who had taken his wife and two of his three daughters to the church wall to photograph them for some reason, perhaps to try out a new camera.

Within an hour I was at the same spot as I had noted a bright, white gravestone in front of the south door to the chancel and hoped that this would pin-point the date of the photograph. Sadly it proved to be an eighteenth century tomb, long before the advent of photography. But I was able to trace Alfred's gravestone nearby which gave his dates as 1861 to 1923 and those of his wife, Annie Marie née Watson as 1868 to 1942. Trawls through the relevant censuses, parish registers and directories showed that as a schoolboy he lived with his parents at The Waypost, close to the stone milepost at the junction with the road to St Ives. In 1881 he was a gardener,

and after his marriage in 1892 he started his photography business from his house to the west of the village. He continued with this occupation in Somersham until his death. I know of only two further photos made by Alfred; an attractive image of three old men playing dominos and another of a smiley man standing on the cap of the windmill, which stood on the north side of the road to Pidley, and close to “The Windmill” pub. The hostelry still serves thirsty travellers today. It is most likely that the chap at the top of the windmill was Alfred’s elder brother, Thomas (4) (1859-1948). He took over running the mill from their father George (2) (c1824-1896). Directories give Tom as the wind-miller from the following year until the mill was demolished in 1926. The following year he was listed as a beer retailer at “The Windmill” public house.

Going one generation back, Alfred, Tom and five other siblings were the children of George (2) and his wife Elizabeth (5) (née LEEDS c1835-1888). A generation further back George was one of the children of John (3) (1778 Old Hurst – 1861) and his wife Mary (née WALLMAN c1783-1851); they had married at Somersham in 1805. Although the family seem to be mostly associated with Somersham and Old Hurst they most likely lived and farmed in nearby Wood Hurst in the eighteenth century. On South Street, Wood Hurst today is “Holdich’s Farm” a large, red-brick house of seven bays. When John (3) was living in Church Lane, Somersham in 1841 he was given as being of independent means. Their house was next to that of Robert LEEDS (6) below and their son George (2) was with them.

In the same 1841 census two brothers, Robert LEEDS (6) (born Nov 1st 1800 – bur Apr 20th 1849) and Edward LEEDS (7) (born Jun 6th 1806 – 1846) lived in Church Lane and Church Street, Somersham. Robert was the wind-miller at the time and Edward was given as a farmer. Their father was John (8), who had run the mill from the early 1830s until his death in 1837. Son Robert only attended to the running of the mill for the following twelve years, until he too passed away in 1849. His widow, Mary née DARE took over for the following three years, until she married Ekin ARNSBY in 1853 and moved to St Ives, closer to her birthplace of Hemingford Abbots.

The first inter-marriage between the LEEDS and HOLDICH families took place in 1837. Edward LEEDS (7) above had married Mary SPRIGGS in Somersham in 1830 and the couple had a daughter, Mary Ann (Peggy).

Mary passed away in 1833 and in 1837 Edward took Mary HOLDICH (9) (c1820) for his second wife, before moving to Orton Waterville near Peterborough. Mary was a daughter of John HOLDICH (3) and thus a sister of George (2) and aunt to Thomas (4) and Alfred (1). The death of Edward at Orton Waterville resulted in an initially confusing 1851 family census there :

Mary LEEDS	head	widow	31	b.Oldhurst	[Mary née HOLDICH (9)]
John HOLDICH	father	widr	73	"	[(3)]
Peggy LEEDS	dau	u	20	Somersham	[Mary Ann, mother Mary SPRIGGS]
Elizabeth HOLDICH	lodger	m	19	Dressmaker	[(5) wife of George (2) below]
Susannah LEEDS	dau		12		}
Jane LEEDS	dau		10		}
John LEEDS	son		8		}
Edward LEEDS	son		6		}
Joseph WALMAN			29	Tailor	[relative of John HOLDICH (3)'s wife]
George HOLDICH	lodger	m	26		[(2) husband of Elizabeth (5) above]

The revelation gained from the above census is that George HOLDICH (2), father of our photographer, had married Elizabeth LEEDS (5), step-daughter of his sister, Mary HOLDICH (9) the second wife of Edward LEEDS (7). The couple had married at Orton Waterville, the same year as the census.

Mary LEEDS and her children soon left Orton Waterville for Walsoken, for they were listed there in the 1861 census with a new child, Charles aged 7. She remarried in 1868 and passed away in 1889. Later, Charles moved to his mother's birthplace, Somersham, as a cabinet maker.

If the photograph is that of Annie Marie HOLDICH, wife of the photographer, the girls are most likely to be two of the following:

- 1) Elsie May HOLDICH who was born in 1893. She married William Elkarah Taylor in 1916. But their happiness was sadly very short. William joined the Northumberland Fusiliers and was sadly killed on October 26th 1917, the first day of the second battle of Passchendale. Elsie did not remarry and "died suddenly" in 1942, the same year as her mother.
- 2) Cicily Eva HOLDICH who was born in 1894. In 1921 she married Jonathan D Benton (he appears to have preferred his distinctive second name of "Diver"). He was a farm labourer from Chatteris. The couple had one female child and Cicely lived into her seventies.
- 3) Ella Marion HOLDICH who was born in 1896. In 1922 she married Ernest Gunton (1893-1961), a smallholder, also from Chatteris. She died in her nineties and is buried, with her husband, in Chatteris cemetery.

One wonders how Alfred's photographic enterprise could function in such a village as Somersham. But one of the photographs has J GOODENOUGH on the rear, alongside Alfred's stamp. Joshua Goodenough (1849-1931) ran a chemist and druggist shop in the Main Street, and it is possible that the couple had joined together to promote and distribute the photographs.

*Or, I may be totally wrong!!*

# Parish Registers & The Burial Laws Amendment Act 1880

by Sue Asbee

I'd been up to Swaffham Prior cemetery one morning to tidy family graves and then I wandered across to the churchyard to say hello to my great-great-grandparents, Charles (1784-1862) and Jemima Asbee (1791-1855), side-by-side under a yew tree by the wall. I know more Asbees had been buried there, but their graves and headstones must have weathered away over the years. I'd been thinking a lot about another great-great-grandfather that day, Thomas Webb (1794-1868), because I'd recently discovered that he had been a Particular Baptist Minister – as well as a grocer in the village – and I'd found reference to him in the *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire* (vol. 10). He presided over the Zoar Chapel from when it was built in 1821 until his death in 1868. Like all other ministers of any denomination Thomas completed the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census Return, so we know that at that time his chapel had 16 benches and 5 pews, providing seating for 120 people. On Census Day his congregation was 76 in the morning, 160 in the afternoon (standing room only), while the evening was less crowded with just 40 people. In comparison in the same year the village's Anglican church, St Cyriac's, averaged attendance of between 140-170.

Victorian religion was diverse, and while there was conflict within the Church of England itself, its relations with nonconformist denominations – Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Unitarians amongst others – were also sometimes troubled. The problem was that the Church of England had privileges which nonconformists and Roman Catholics did not. These disadvantages and discriminations included the fact that nonconformists were not allowed to take degrees at Oxford or Cambridge, that they were obliged to pay church rates for the upkeep of the parish churches they did not attend, and they were prevented from being buried in Anglican churchyards. Or so I thought! It turns out burial matters were slightly more complicated than that.

Having said hello to Charles and Jemima and tidied a few dead leaves from their graves, wishing the yew trees weren't so gloomy and that they had a bit more sunshine, I walked across the grass stopping to see who else was buried nearby – and there was Thomas Webb. The very same Particular Baptist Minister where I'd never have thought to look for him – surely his burial would not have been allowed in this churchyard? Thomas was quite well-known in his day. In August 1862 the *Cambridge Independent Press*

reported the Baptist Chapel's anniversary celebrations with Mr Thomas Webb officiating. The event was held in Mr Palmby's barn which afforded 'ample accommodation' for the 'large and attentive audience' who had been seen coming from all directions that morning. Indirectly the use of someone else's barn also points to the burial problem: lacking the Church of England's wealth, in general nonconformist denominations had little money to buy land for building or burial. Thomas's flock were 'paupers and labourers'. Anyway, the news report ascribes great praise to Mr Thomas Webb 'for the trouble he has taken, having done so for many years, and still continues to take, at his advanced age'. Clearly he did not adhere to Church of England practices, among other things he only baptised adults, not babies or children, and he did so in the river at Reach (Swaffham Prior lacking a river of its own). So how come he, his first wife and his second, his son, daughter and his grandchild were all buried in the Church of England churchyard – in a much more prominent position than the unexceptionally conformist Charles and Jemima?

The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census had shown that although the Church of England had the largest attendance that day, it did not outnumber attendance for other denominations and this was an anxiety for the authorities. Times were changing and the Established Church's dominance was waning, for example the Compulsory Church Rates Abolition Bill of 1868 did away with that piece of discrimination. Other Parliamentary Acts over previous decades addressed the increasing need for inter-denominational cemeteries. Churchyards were full and the ever-expanding population's health depended on space for sanitary burial arrangements. It was also becoming more important to allow nonconformists to conduct their own burial services. And the Burial Laws Amendment Act passed in 1880 provides evidence of the need for such regulation across the country. Here is what it said:

*Any relative, friend, or legal representative having the charge of or being responsible for the burial of a deceased person may give forty-eight hours' notice in writing, indorsed on the outside 'Notice of Burial', to, or leave or cause the same to be left in the usual place of abode of the rector, vicar, or other incumbent, or in his absence the officiating minister in charge of any parish or ecclesiastical district or place, or any person appointed by him to receive such notice, that it is intended that such deceased person shall be buried in the churchyard or graveyard of such parish or ecclesiastical district or place without the performance, in the manner prescribed by law, or the service of the burial of the dead according to the rites of the Church of England, and after receiving such notice no rector, vicar, incumbent or officiating minister shall be liable to any censure or*

*penalty, ecclesiastical or civil, for permitting any such burial as aforesaid. Such notice shall be in writing, plainly signed with the name and stating the address of the person giving it, and shall be in the form or to the effect of Schedule A annexed to this Act.*

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/43-44/41>)

In other words, any earlier nonconformist burials on Church of England ground must (legally, at any rate) only have taken place with the clergyman administering rites of the Church of England (which must have been galling for mourners whose deceased did not subscribe to them). If the clergyman officiating had not observed that law, he was liable for ecclesiastical or civil penalties.

The new 1880 Act changed all that. A note in parish registers after that date listing a name (of the relative, friend, or legal representative referring the burial) followed by the phrase 'under the Burial Laws Amendment Act' signifies that the deceased did not belong to the Church of England.

But that still didn't explain how, twelve years before the Act, Thomas Webb the Particular Baptist minister had been accorded a prime spot in St Cyriac's graveyard. Much, I think, would have depended on the local clergy's attitude to ecclesiastical or civil decrees, whether they were liberally minded and willing to overlook the law, or stick to it. Thomas Preston was vicar in Swaffham Prior when Thomas Webb died. On no evidence whatsoever I like to think that the two men must have known each other in their daily lives, and that they had mutual respect for each other's beliefs despite their differing religious persuasions. Perhaps they had even reached an agreement for internment of Thomas's remains before he died. But whether Vicar Preston made Thomas Webb an exception, or if he granted the same courtesy to other nonconformists who resided in his parish, there's no way of knowing without painstaking scrutiny of church records

There's one more thing to say about Thomas Webb: I think my great-great-grandfather would have been pleased that the cause of death on his certificate reads 'Visitation of God'. This I know was often used when no particular reason for fatality presented itself, but it seems especially fitting in Thomas's case. It's still just possible to see a band of inscription across his grave stone which reads: 'Mark the perfect man and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace' (Psalm 37:37). That such a proud inscription was allowed on an outsider's memorial suggests that discrimination against nonconformists did not flourish at that time, in that parish.

# What's In A Name

by Wendy Doyle

Sometimes the Christian names of our ancestors can be fairly boring; endless strings of Johns and Marys, Edwards and Ehbeths. But just sometimes a name sticks out and makes you smile.

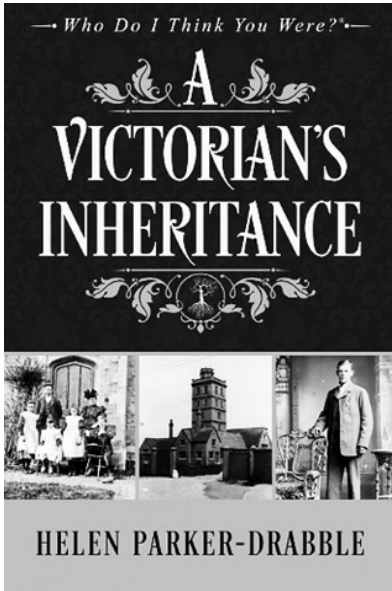
Then I wonder whether the vicar was hard of hearing (or spelling), or whether the father's accent was so thick nothing could be understood, or whether the parents just felt frivolous that day.

Here are a few of my favourites, collected over the years from here and there, but mostly from the West Midlands. I like to think of them being read by Rowan Atkinson in a sketch I once saw - he was calling a register in school - with much grimacing and smirking, rolling of eyes and smacking of lips!

Clobery Aston  
Zipporal Beddall  
Minerva Brownill  
Armelia Cox  
Methusulah Cumberbatch  
Eccas Envy, a travailer (sic)  
Brittain France  
Jemshiah Hobson  
Sillenea Hodson  
Onesiphorous Holt  
Mehatabel Hunt  
Ambrose Ickabottom  
Irenonimus Lightwood  
Parthener Lowbridge  
Happeylonia Marsh  
Ma~&len Mullintoil  
Abiather Wormlighton  
Azariah Wiggin  
Zarmy Webb  
Pitpela Thompson  
Zipporah Taylor  
Arodeas Shale  
Lot Salt  
Theoffle Paget

And oh! wouldn't it be nice to have some of them hanging on my tree?  
(To which the Editor [at the time this was Russell Palmer] added his personal favourites of 'Hayfield Palmer' and 'Ashfield Hayfield')

**Reprinted from The Cambs FHS Journal - Nov 1998, p281**



## A Victorian's Inheritance

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Using archival sources, testimonies, and her grandfather Walter Parker's experiences, the author not only paints a vivid picture of life in Victorian Thorney, but she also draws upon psychological theory to explore the lives of her working-class ancestors

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Available from your local library, your favourite bookshop or at [www.helenparkerdrabble.com](http://www.helenparkerdrabble.com)

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### RECEIVED FROM LES WATERS :

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The Cambridgeshire Police History Notes site, [www.arumgo.com](http://www.arumgo.com)

#### Police History Resources

Cambridgeshire Police History

[www.arumgo.com](http://www.arumgo.com)

, has a recent addition – a transcript of a police charge book covering the period May 1848 to December 1855. The book was kept by the small Soham Police Force until December 1851 when it was taken over by the Newmarket Division of the newly formed Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Around 1600 names of alleged offenders and victims of crime are listed, covering Soham and surrounding villages. And if you are interested in the formation of the new County Police, you can download from the site, free of charge, Peggy Watts' 2001 book on the subject .

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## RESEARCH SURGERIES—scheduled locations/dates/times

CHFHS volunteers hold regular help & advice sessions at society meetings and at public libraries around the county there are no charges for these services  
**enquiries** : [secretary@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chfhs.org.uk)

<b>Ely Library</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed alternate mths	Jan / Mar / May / July / Sept / Nov	drop in between 10.00-4.00
<b>Norris Museum St Ives</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed alternate mths	Feb / Apr / Jun / Aug / Oct / Dec	drop-in between 10.30 & 3.30
<b>Bar Hill Library</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon <u>every</u> mth	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 1.30-4.00
<b>**Huntingdon** Archives</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Wed <u>every</u> mth	This surgery is to be re-located to St Neots Library from Jan 2025 ***	drop-in between 1.30-4.00
<b>March Library</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues <u>every</u> mth	*** <b>TWICE MONTHLY</b> ***	drop-in between 10.00-4.00
<b>Cambridge Central Library</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sat <u>every</u> month	Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 11.00 & 2.00
	<b>NB : we are now working from a table in the foyer outside the Cambridgeshire Collection (3rd floor)</b>		

<b>*** St Neots *** Library</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> THURS <u>every</u> mth	<b>NEW FOR 2025</b> Jan / Feb / Mar / Apr / May / Jun Jul / Aug / Sept / Oct / Nov / Dec	drop-in between 2.00-4.00
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### Project co-coordinator, Terry, updates on progress of WisMus

With the end finally in sight, work on completing this project had, unfortunately, to be temporarily suspended to enable the switch over to a new data management system embedded in the new website. This transition has been slower than was initially anticipated has been slow to get restarted.

**If any of the old volunteers, or new ones (and particularly if you have skills with old handwriting and/or reading Latin) would like to help with the final push to completion and get the project finished over the coming months—**

**—please get in touch via my Projects e-mail**

**MARCH BRANCH  
PROGRAMME**

**Wednesday Face-2-Face Meetings**

**1<sup>st</sup> Wednesdays at 2.00pm**

March Library, March

**enquiries : [march@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:march@chfhs.org.uk)**

<b>Wed 4 Dec</b>	<b>Seasonal Social Afternoon</b>
<b>Wed 8 Jan</b>	<b>Cambridgeshire War Memorials</b> with Dave Edwards <i>A look at the county's war memorials from the Crimean War onwards, particularly the more unusual and some of the men and women commemorated.</i>
<b>Wed 5 Feb</b>	<b>Superior Seats : where did we sit in church</b> with John Vigar <i>The talk looks at the story of church seating through the centuries from the solid stone benches that made "the weak go to the wall", to the monumental private pews that still dominate some church interiors.</i>
<b>Wed 5 Mar</b>	<b>Four People's Stories That Deserve Telling</b> with Charlotte Paton <i>The four are from Norfolk and Suffolk — listen to Charlotte bring them to life.</i>



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**2024**

**FHF REALLY USEFUL  
Family History Show**

Explore Your  
Genealogy

Friday 15th November 10 am - 10 pm GMT and  
Saturday 16th November 10 am - 6 pm GMT



**PLEASE NOTE :**

We have received notification that the **November 18-19 RUS Online** has been postponed and that we should look out for further **LIVE** events from the FHF in 2025

**CAMBRIDGE BRANCH PROGRAMME**      **3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays\*** of the month at 7.30pm  
 enquiries : [programme@chfhs.org.uk](mailto:programme@chfhs.org.uk)  
 Cambridge Branch talks are Zoom only—**NB \* new day \* from 2025**

<b>THURS 12 DEC</b>	<p><b>Did Cromwell Ban Christmas?</b> with Stuart Orme</p> <p><i>One of the things that everyone thinks they know about Oliver Cromwell, is that “he banned Christmas”. There <u>was</u> a real ban, —but what was behind it, was it effective, were mince pies outlawed? Did Cromwell really have very much to do with it? This talk will reveal the fascinating story behind the myth from the 1640s.</i></p>
<b>* Wed * 15 Jan</b>	<p><b>Gatward Family Stories—from the Civil War &amp; Restoration period</b> with Terry Gatward</p> <p><i>Having found 83 records for the Gatwards from the Civil War period I was curious what effect the War had on these families. After researching the historical accounts of the War, I have been able to create stories for five Gatward Families. The talk will outline the research approach and the stories that link Family History and Local History. A significant family in these stories are the Gatward Coat of Arms Family of Wicken.</i></p>
<b>* Wed * 19 Feb</b>	<p><b>Following In Family Footsteps</b> with Andy Browning</p> <p><i>They say a picture paints a thousand words, well not this one. Having stared at the same unremarkable photo on his grandparent’s wall for years, Andy was surprised to discover not only was this picture taken in Sudan, but also the slightly dusty and angry looking man holding a bicycle was in fact his Great Grandfather – a revelation which could only lead to one thing.</i></p> <p><i>“Following in Family Footsteps” is the story of how an old sepia photograph inspired a three-month adventure following 80-year-old family footprints through the mountains and deserts of East Africa. As well as negotiating sandstorms, pool sharks, rogue bus drivers, active volcanoes, and some of the hottest temperatures the planet has to offer, this is also the story of an often-misunderstood corner of Africa through the eyes of two people, three generations apart.</i></p>
<b>* Wed * 19 Mar</b>	<p><b>Was this the ‘Woman In White’?</b> with Alan Powell</p> <p><i>A Victorian scandal that shocked the nation. The inspiration for an enduring classical mystery novel creating a link between Ely, Canterbury, Lincoln, Liverpool and York, with the final chapter closing in Switzerland—and as a bonus, there’s a family history connection as well!!!</i></p>
<b>* Wed * 16 April</b>	<p><b>My Family—it’s complicated!!</b> with Claire Topping</p> <p><i>Further details will be in the newsletter/website nearer the time</i></p>

# MEETINGS REPORTS

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

## BEYOND HATCHES, MATCHES & DISPATCHES

WITH SARAH DOIG

(MARCH BRANCH : MARCH 2024)

Sarah Doig was the speaker in March. She provided a light hearted and interesting talk entitled, 'Beyond Hatches, Matches and Dispatches'. Sarah showed many examples of snippets from Suffolk Parish Registers found whilst carrying out her own family research. She commented that parish priests sometimes used the registers as their notebooks and she became distracted by the jottings as they give an insight into parish life.

Parish Registers are rare to find before 1559. In 1538 Thomas Cromwell issued a mandate for all clergy to keep written records. These can be found in different formats until 1753 after which a pre-printed format was used for marriages. After the 1813 Act, baptisms and burials were also recorded using a pre-printed format. Once completed using these formats, we as family historians, can hopefully find relevant information needed as opposed to earlier records when clergy could record what they wished. For example, often only the father's name was recorded for a baptism. However, using the provided formats meant that clergy were less likely to add interesting snippets about the individuals.

The first snippets came from baptism entries. Sometimes a note can be found stating that the baptism is private. This means the child would have been baptised at home shortly after the birth, usually because it was feared the child would not survive. These baptisms could be carried out by anyone as long as they had already been baptised themselves and could be a member of the family.

In the parish of Lawshall, the midwife was identified, for example in 1567 '*John, son of John Symon "was baptized of the Mydwife"*'. In 1580, '*John, son of Thomas Abbott, "was baptized by the midwife"*', in 1582, '*Joane, daughter of John Death was "baptised by the hand of the midwife and dyed and buried the 12<sup>th</sup> July"*'.

In the parish register of Drinkstone 1679, the priest recorded, "*Thomas the son of Laurence Wright & Elizabeth his wife was in case of great necessity baptised privately at his house the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Memorandum: 'I was sent for*

*& called out of bed about 12 o'clock in the night & in 30 years I was never sent for in the night upon such an occasion”.*

Illegitimate child baptisms are recorded usually with only the mother's name. However, on some occasions the father's name also appears. When the Parish was responsible for supporting the poor, an illegitimate child could be a financial burden. Bastardy Orders were issued to lessen this burden. Also in the parish of Lawshall in 1566, Jesse Renold gave birth to an illegitimate daughter named Katherine. The entry reads “ *The father a married man whose name is Robert Kinge of the towne of Cockfielde. This child was born in base, and christened. But the mother was not purified by the order of the church she ranne away the next day that the child was baptized and toke the child with her this last day of March*”.

In the parish of Bramford a baptism was recorded in 1681 as “ *Ralphe and Isaac Hood two base children of the common whore Sarah Avis*”. In 1609 at Whatfield a baptism for Sissy Hunt is recorded “*borne incest of Katherine Hunt by John Hunt her father*”. In July 1638, Little Waldingfield an entry for “*base born Mary Brewster or Bowman, child begotten in incest by Edward Bowman upon the body of Margaret Brewster the sister of his late wife*”.

Sarah had found an interesting example in the Kelsale parish register that has been translated from Latin, 1545. “ *In June was born a wonder, a monster, whose father was Richard Baldwey of Kelsale, begotten in lawful matrimonie, which childe from the sholders upwards had growing ij (2) severall necks with ij(2) fayre heds standing upon them in like quantity eche heade having moths, nose, eies, eares, and winde pipes goying downe in the throte into the breste, whose body was like the forme and shape of all other children which was sene by many credible people of Kellsall*”. Sarah explained that in Tudor times conjoined twins were viewed as freaks of nature with suspicion and caution.

Unusual names can also be found such as in Beccles, “ *Baptised January 31<sup>st</sup> 1802 born on the same day Maharshlahashbaz son of Henry and Sarah Clarke*”, followed two years later by his brother Francis Edward, with a note saying “ *Zsphanaphpaaneah Isiah Hededon Nicodemus Francis Edward Clarke*” was the name the child was baptised!

When it came to marriages, Sarah explained she had not come across so many unusual entries. One she did find was in Bury, 1832 between Christopher Newson and Charity Murrell. The groom had signed with a cross and the bride with her signature. Although this was not uncommon, an explanation in the margin said that Charity was without arms, the ring was placed on the 4<sup>th</sup> toe of her left foot and she signed using her right foot.

Sarah spoke about registers of banns, often overlooked by family historians,

but some snippets can be gleaned. Sometimes, after banns were read, marriages did not take place and we are left in the dark as to why. But, in the case of East Bergholt, between 1783 and 1803 the banns provide reasons. In 1799 the banns between William Camplin, widower (a resident of Great Bromley in Essex) and Elizabeth were only read once. A note reads *“It appeared on enquiry that Camplin’s wife was living”*.

Moving on to burials, Sarah explained there is a wealth of comments written by priests relating to the lives of the deceased. The first was from records for Wilby on 12 April 1627 for John Gosling, it reads: *“Being as was thought more than 100 years old, and of able and lustie strength of Body till within a week of his death, and of perfect memorie till his last”*. Sarah commented that if he had been born in 1527, he would have lived through the reign of 6 monarchs.

Another example was from the parish of Preston, *“Edward Farrow an aged and diseased pore man having that disease of a strange swelling exceeding big and hard around about his throat from his one ear to his other and was so painfull as he coulde neither eat or drink anything this man was buried on Sunday in the afternoon after evening prayer the 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1635”*. Sarah explained that the disease described was called Kings Evil, another name for Scrofula, thought to be cured by being touched by the monarch.

In 1745 the rector of Shrimpling recorded *“William Barker who was bit by a mad dog on the 12<sup>th</sup> day morning & though he had the wound burnt deep on the same day and used other means eleven weeks after was taken with a pain in the part wounded & the strongest signs of the hydrophobia and dyed raving mad”*.

A number of deaths are recorded as taking place in local hostelries. Some of the examples Sarah gave are: Creetingham where Ann Nunn aged 21 died, the entry reads: *“dropped down dead whilst dancing at The Bell on 26 September 1835”*.

In 1648 an entry in the Bradfield St Clare register reads: *“John Hayward being at the Spread Eagle at Burie drinking all Saterdag night the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Feb & continuing Sunday till Munday morning there quarrelling & fighting received many bruises whereof he languished. And died the 15<sup>th</sup> of Feb”*.

Sarah spoke about historic events that impacted on parishes and have been recorded in parish registers. An example was the excitement in 1578 when Queen Elizabeth 1 and her considerable entourage, made a summer progress through East Anglia. People were able to see the monarch in person, rather than just on coins. The Queen could expect the best hospitality at large country estates, one was Melford Hall. Moving on to Bury, Sarah found an entry in St James register for the burial of William

West, on 8<sup>th</sup> August; he had died of the plague ( indicated by a 'P'), less than a month after the royal visit. Sarah suggested he may have been a courtier and has noticed many other losses in towns near the route.

Found in Bradfield St Clare register in 1588 reads: *“ Robert Bragg the son of Robert was baptised the 21<sup>st</sup> July at Munckes Bradfields there being a publyke feast by reason of the spanyshe invation and unseasonal blewes of the weather at which tyme God scattered the spanyshe flete upon the seas and made the sea a grave to many of them and caused sea and wynde to fight for us and for owre queen and so saved her and us owte of the bludey hands for which his name be forever and ever praysed of us”.*

Other entries give us an indication of some severe weather at the time. The curate at Hawstead recorded *“On the 29<sup>th</sup> day of October in this year 1836 there fell a great quantity of snow, which covered the ground from 4 to 5 inches deep; it froze during the night; the following day October 30<sup>th</sup> the whole country hereabouts was still covered with snow, and more fell in the morning; but it begun to thaw during the day, and there was but little snow remaining at the end of the succeeding day October 31<sup>st</sup>. The weather during three days was quite Christmas like”.*

*“ On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of December also in the above year 1836, there began to fall much snow which increased the following Christmas Day, when a storm of wind and snow set in, at about half past four of the Clock in the evening and continued almost without intermission during three nights and three days – The oldest people remembered not so much snow on the roads before. The roads between Hawstead and Bury were impassable during 5 days; and this was the case throughout the island; All communication between London and the country was cut off for four days; the mails could not pass. Even horse travelling was impossible. This state of difficulty continued more or less, according to the nature of the country and the depth to which the snow was drifted, in some places 14 or 15 feet, during ten days”.*

In one of the Hasketon parish registers is written: *“Memorandum: That on March the sixth 1716 about six in the evening, in the north east, were several streams of light arising from beneath the horizon to a great height and, there seeming to break and flash against each other in a terrible manner. Observed in most places of England and something of the like nature often afterwards taken notice of: Aurora Borealis”.*

Also found were references to church towers and steeples that collapsed. One such collapse was at Woolpit in November 1703 when *“A very handsome pinnacle of about 66 foot in height was blown off this steeple by a strong southwest wind which did considerable damage to the north part of the church”.* *“In the year 1708 a pinnacle was built again of about 42 foot in*

*height by Stephen Bacon and Ambrose Taylor, churchwardens, encouraged by the generous contributions of the persons underwritten.....". Followed by a list of donors, most of whom gave building materials.*

*Reported by Linda Peckett  
I acknowledge that much on this content indicated by " " and italics are direct copies from Sarah's script, complete with the spellings written in the parish records. Without her permission for this, much of the relevant detail of the talk would be lost.*

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## **THE STORY OF A HIGH STREET MARKET TOWN INN : THE GEORGE INN, MARCH**

**JENNIFER LAWLER**  
**(MARCH BRANCH : APRIL 2024)**

Jennifer Lawler provided us with 'The Story of a High Street Market Town Inn, The George Inn, March'.

During the Anglo Saxon period March was an island with local travel by water. By 1566 the Isle of March was a port, consisting of two settlements – Merche where the church of St Wendreda is situated joined by a causeway to the newer settlement (12<sup>th</sup> century) of Mercheford, where there was a ford of the river. The surrounding land was swamp. Later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century The Griffin Inn, The White Hart and The Ship are recorded. These are situated either side of the river in Mercheford. Nearby, in the overcrowded area known as Little London, cottages housed agricultural labourers; some were Irish working locally either permanently or on a temporary basis.

With the draining of the Fens, March became more prosperous with fairs and trading. A turnpike road enabled travel between March and Wisbech meaning more people wanting overnight accommodation at the inns as well as drinking houses and community gathering places. Additional public houses listed at the time, namely: The Red Lion, Seven Stars and The Cock were all busy hostelries.

By 1732 the main road to March had a turnpike; the road was blocked by a gate through which coaches could not pass without paying a levy toll. These were 'not for profit' with a maximum toll. The money was used to repair and widen roads. At this time March was prosperous with several wealthy merchants whose graves are located at St Wendredas Church. The first post office arrived in March in 1793, located in Nene Parade. In 1799 the Baptist Church was built.

Records for the George Inn date back over 200 years when The Hythe would have flowed openly across the front: disease was rife. The George Inn is a 2



story building of brick construction, now rendered, with a later extension on the right side similar to other 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings in March. It has a steep pitched tiled roof. Originally this would have been thatched, gable ended with chimney stacks, attic rooms with dormer windows and arched brickwork over other windows. The bay windows were added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At one time the extension was a shop with doors on the side and to the rear. Records from the 1820s show March to be a prosperous town.

Jennifer gave an account of the various owners and landlords of the George Inn she has been able to trace. In 1830 Mr Joseph Hudson was the landlord of the George Inn as well as the Shoulder of Mutton (on the site that is now March Quality Meats). It was owned by Mr Daniel Fryer of Chatteris Brewery. Auctions were held regularly. In 1839 Mr William Major auctioneer sold 40 houses there. In 1842 a criminal case for allowing drunkenness against William Major was dismissed.

In the 1840s the railway arrived. This provided more opportunity for public travel and increased trade. Many prestigious meetings were held at the George Inn, including for the Independent Order of Oddfellows – a charity to help families in need and to bury their dead. In 1841 a meeting for the proprietors of Middle Level Drainage Board land was held with owners and engineers of the drainage scheme.

In 1857 the George Inn was sold to Mr Ambrose Ogden who was licensee until 1867. His father had founded a brewery in 1800. In 1885 Mr Ambrose also bought the Rising Sun (on the site now occupied by Amical Vets). During this time the George Inn was well established with stables at the back, a skittles alley, 6 sleeping rooms, a ball room and cellar. John Peck a farmer and brewery owner from Parson Drove became the owner in 1867. A fire broke out in 1870, probably caused by paraffin catching alight. James Proctor raised the alarm and the fire engine called. Water was hosed through the shop window managing to put the fire out and keeping it contained to the shop.

1872 saw an advance in wages. One sixth of all work was paid by the hour at the rate of 5d for carpenters and bricklayers with no work after 5pm on Saturdays. The Workmen's Committee held their meetings at the George.

1885 saw changes at the George Inn with a connection to travelling theatres, thus becoming a more lively place. Mr C Belmore was the landlord with Mrs Coyne the pianist. She was the wife of William Coyne an Irish labourer who settled in March. He became the landlord of the George Inn from 1890, when it was sold to Morgans, a Norwich Brewery, until 1897.

In 1906 Hannah Heigh was the licensee, with Morgans still the owner. During this time the front windows were changed to bay windows and other changes

were made to the downstairs. The George was still owned by Morgans Brewery in the 1960s when a driving school was registered there. In 1986 the owners became the Norwich Brewery.

From 2011 until 2019 the George became a music venue owned by the Wellington Pub Company. It is now sadly empty and has been up for sale for a few years.

*Reported by Linda Peckett*

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## **FURTHER STEPS IN FAMILY HISTORY**

*WITH MICK RAWLE*

*(MARCH BRANCH : MAY 2024)*

Mick Rawle visited us again in May. This time his talk was entitled 'Further Steps in Family History' and focused on some of his personal family research into the Rawle family using war stories, records from The National Archives, the Poor Laws, Court Records, newspaper and magazine obituaries.

Starting with military records, Mick told us about Thomas Rawle, an army Private. Thomas was born in Cardiff in 1864 and joined the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1885. A record on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1890 shows him as a deserter in Wisenburg, leaving South Africa on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1890. Thomas gave himself up in Beverley, Yorkshire 6 months later. He was Court Martialled on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1890, tried, found guilty on all charges and imprisoned for 84 days. Thomas appears in the Defaulters Book for being drunk and disorderly and being absent without leave, also for 'losing by neglect' his tunic, frocks, trousers, boots, helmet, bag and socks. His punishment included being fined the value of all these items. He then went on to serve in the Boer War and although he retired in 1903, obviously his behavior improved as records show his education as Class 3 and was awarded the South Africa Queen's Medal and later the South Africa King's Medal. Mick found records in The National Archives showing Thomas re-enlisted in 1914 as the start of WW1, stating his age as 44 (actually he would have been 50). His service was short, joining on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1914 and being discharged on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1914 as being unfit for service. Thomas Rawle died on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1940 in Barry, South Wales at the age of 75. His death was due to 'acute odema of the brain following a fall from bed'.

Mick went on to speak about War Diaries found at TNA reference WO95. All army battalions kept records of officer's names. John Rawle of Selworthy, Somerset was a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Devon Regiment. From War Diaries of this battalion Mick has worked out where he served in India and Palestine (1917). At a fateful battle starting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1917, 28 officers and 934 ranks are recorded. The diaries give a daily account. Major

Clark was killed on 19<sup>th</sup> November at Jerusalem; fighting went on all the following day when Captain Phillips and 2 ranking soldiers were killed. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November the Gurkhas are recorded as taking part. Mick read out a timed report from 23<sup>rd</sup> November of the Battle of El Jib (a village about 7 miles from Jerusalem). Mick talked about the brutal shelling and intensive attack that took place during the day. At 16.40 it is recorded that only 4 officers and 110 ranks were left alive out of over 300 men. At 18.40 the wounded were collected. The 11 officers killed are named. Pte John Rawle is buried in a cemetery near Jerusalem. His wife Ada remained a widow for the rest of her life. Mick speculated that she may never have known how her husband died or where he was buried. Mick went on to say that many War Diaries are available on line now.

The Radford family came from north west Leicestershire. Mick has traced records containing their names in Poor Law documents and examinations of settlements. Thomas Radford of Ashby-de-la-Zouch has his last settlement dated as 24<sup>th</sup> December 1785. He was born in Derby and moved to Market Bosworth at the age of 5 years. Henry Radford can be found in an apprenticeship indenture to a breeches maker in Leicester. The next document Mick found for Thomas and his wife is a settlement Certificate dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 1786 in Swepestone (a village not far from Ashby-de-la-Zouch), meaning if they happened to become troublesome the parish of Swepestone would be responsible rather than Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Another record for John Radford – son of Henry, still of Market Bosworth, Mick had found another apprenticeship indenture in Desford, as a framework knitter. Henry, a carpenter paid £2.2s.0d.

Following the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, there was a huge depression across the country. Thousands of soldiers returned from the war looking for work, many of them injured. In the accounts book of the Overseers of the Poor for Swepestone, Mick had found a record of John Radford being given money for Poor Relief between 1815 and 1834. The Poor Rate had to double in 1816 as many former soldiers had no job after being discharged from the army.

Another member of his family tree, William Starsmore was baptised at Brigstock, Northants, in 1803. In 1813 his apprenticeship debenture shows William, aged 10 years as an apprentice chimney sweep to Thomas Norris of Oakham for 6 years. The debenture states that William will be provided with 2 suits of 'every sort of cloth'. In 1824 William, then living in Barrowden, Rutland, can be found again in court at Oakham Castle for stealing a pig. He was sent to the house of correction for hard labour. Mary, his wife was living in Uppingham whilst William was in prison but was removed to Oakham as she was pregnant. His second court case, where the jury was told about his

earlier conviction, was for stealing soot at Barleythorpe from Henry Lowther, value 5 shillings. For this he was found guilty and transported to Australia for 7 years. Records from New South Wales show William was freed. In the obituary notice for William, Mick found he had worked in the pharmaceutical business in Melbourne. He was a founder member of Pharmaceutical Association of Victoria.

Another relation, Ann Starsmore and others were found guilty of stealing 11 stones of flour and 12 lbs of pork, again at Oakham Castle court. A full account of the robbery was found. The police searched Ann's house and found some of the pork, the remainder had been eaten. All parties were transported for 14 years.

Back to the Rawle family, Edward Rawle was born in Boscastle in 1821. He went to sea at the age of 15 in 1836. In 1853 he is named as a master for fore and aft rigged vessels. He can be found in the records in 1855 as captain of 'The John' a three-masted vessel, registered in Plymouth, sailing to Quebec with a crew of 20. The ships record also lists previous sailings, money and amount of food provision for each crew member. The ship was wrecked off the Lizard, hitting The Manacles with 263 people on board. The mate was concerned about not picking up the Lizard light, but Edward Rawle was reported as not being concerned and went to bed. Passengers were thrown into the sea whilst the crew fought for rescue boats. Edward Rawle was charged with manslaughter and imprisoned.

*Reported by Linda Peckett*

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## **A FAMILY HISTORY FOR JONATHON** *WITH HELEN GREEN* *(MARCH BRANCH : JUNE 2024)*

At the June meeting we were delighted to welcome one of our members, Helen Green who gave us an insight into her family history with 'A Family History for Jonathon'. Helen started her interest in family history about 40 years ago through an interest in what people did in the past. Jonathon, Helen's son has served as a Captain in the Army, and he was aware of a military aspect running through the family by handed down oral testimonies.

Helen started telling us about her grandmother, Lily Smith Jones who was born after the relief of Ladysmith Her mother died in childbirth two years later. She had worked on the Coal Pit Banks in the Shropshire coalfields. After women and children were banned from working underground in the coal mines with the Miners and Collieries Act 1842, women continued to work on the surface climbing over the heaps picking up the lumps of coal. After the death of his first wife, Lily's father remarried. Later Lily left home to become

a nurse at the Coventry & Warwick Hospital. Helen has been able to confirm this through the 1921 Census. Lily then trained further to become a midwife, registered in 1931 under her married name of Pickering. She worked in poorer areas of Birmingham. Helen gave an account of an inquest for the death of a baby that Lily had to give evidence at. The mother had given birth at home into a bucket of water, drowning the baby. Lily had taken the police with her to the house.

Her brother Maurice Jones was reported as being killed by a sniper in 1916. On the Commonwealth War Graves website he is listed as being buried at Ypres. However, in the Soldiers of Shropshire Museum at Shrewsbury the death is reported differently. Helen has read copies of letters from the Shropshire Star, the local newspaper on microfilm.

William Pickering, Helen's grandfather, served in the Shropshire Regiment. William had suffered from rickets as a child, leaving him short in stature. As a result of how he was treated after WW1 and during the General Strike he went on to become a fervent socialist. William never spoke to Helen's mother about his war experiences but he did speak to her mother's brother. He didn't admit to killing anyone but described an incident when a German soldier came towards him with a hand behind his back, then a grenade went off.

Helen went on to show a drawing of a pit shaft. She talked about a fatal accident in Shropshire where the mines had a unique system for raising and lowering men using a winding mechanism. Miners were sitting on the chains whilst the young lads sat on the top. They attached themselves by chains to a link fixed at the end of the shaft chain. When being hauled up the links snapped plunging the men to their deaths. Eight died, their ages were between 15 and 22 years. Negligence by the owners was the verdict at the inquest. A booklet has been published with lists of fatalities in Shropshire pits from 1850 until 1979.

Thomas Jones, a collier and father of 10 children became a sinker in the mines. This occupation paid more money, but the work was more dangerous. After a mine shaft was dug out, the sinkers cleared the stone away before the miners went down. Helen showed a photograph of his house that shows the family was more prosperous than many and would have lived fairly well.

Helen moved on to speak about Elizabeth Bradley, mother of William Pickering. A rumour in the family was that she had been born in the USA. She was the daughter of Elizabeth Lealand and John Francis Bradley. A family photograph on a postcard - frequently used for correspondence - has a message saying 'Dear Winnie, Auntie died last week ...'. Helen found

Elizabeth's details on passenger lists of those going to the USA and a picture of the ship. John Francis Bradley died in the USA. The family legend is that he fell in a mine in Pennsylvania, but Helen found him on the 1911 Census listed as a 'Beer Seller'. Helen talked about the benefit of using local records offices and to always look in their catalogues. She also gave advice on using Census records: families become separated and can be found in all sorts of places, not always where you would expect.

Alfred Reeves married Rachel Horton. In letters to his father, Rachel's brother Joseph regarded the Crimean War as being badly organised. He describes the journey to the Crimea, being fired on and not being allowed to shave as it was too cold. Water was in short supply, only for drinking, the men were only allowed to wash once a month. William describes the filth and dirty conditions.

Helen then spoke about her father's side of the family who had lived in Barrow-in-Furness. Great grandfather Wilford Pyne worked in the shipyards in 1860 after being recruited from Sheffield. The family, including his son James, moved between Birmingham and Barrow as there was demand for good metal workers at the time. James travelled between the two places by motorbike. Helen showed a family photograph of Wilford, his wife Jane and their daughter, Helen's grandmother. Helen found her grandmother had a twin. Sadly her sister died aged 1 year.

Family members also worked in the cotton mills (some are now open to the public), in Lancashire People living in the Manchester area were impoverished in the 1820's until the emancipation of the working class.

Eric Charles Reeves, the only son in a family of five, served in the RAF and was killed when the SS Lancastria was torpedoed in June 1940. The SS Lancastria was requisitioned by the Government to evacuate British nationals and troops from France. At the time the news of the sinking was suppressed by Winston Churchill as the ship had been loaded excessively. It was the largest loss from a single ship in British Maritime history. Helen looked him up on the Commonwealth War Graves records and found Eric one of only 12 to be found washed up on a beach. His grave is a traditional raised grave, typical in France.

Helen warned not to rely on family trees online as many contain mistakes. Remember to be persistent online and to make varied searches for the same person. She also advised not to underestimate the use of museums and local exhibitions of working life. By using Census records family members can be traced moving quite long distances to find work of their own particular skill.

Moving on to the Dixon side of the family - (David's ancestors) from records found for South Shields, James Dixon was a glassworker later found in St

Helens and Warrington working for Pilkingtons glassworks. Helen showed a photo from the World of Glass Museum in St Helens. She found that James had moved from Warrington to St Helens due to the closure of the Warrington glassworks.

The Green side of the family are from Lancashire and Staffordshire, information was found through records of the Estates of the Duke of Sutherland. An inventory for Mary Green dated 1688 lists furniture and effects valued at £5.17s.0d. Her husband had died not long before; he left her 'freedom of the fireplace'. David has found many more wills and inventories on this side of the family.

*Reported by Linda Peckett*

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## **THE TREASURES OF RAMSEY ABBEY** *WITH IAN MASON* *(HUNTINGDON BRANCH : JULY 2024)*

Our guest speaker was Ian Mason of the Warboys Archaeology Group and Curator of Chatteris Museum. He reviewed the Heritage Lottery-funded Ramsey Abbey Community Project excavations, and the treasures found; and the only remaining part of Ramsey Abbey, the gatehouse and the secrets of this once great monastic estate.

Ian began by describing the early history of abbeys and the symbolism and iconology in the third century. Christianity was spread by word of mouth and monastic orders became the centres of education. They started at sacred places from pagan times with wooden buildings, and little was written down. In the Anglo-Saxon period Monasticism reached Ireland and buildings were now of stone but copying the earlier wooden building designs. Gradually the walls were plastered and highly decorated and paintings depicted bible stories, which were largely lost after the 1530 dissolution, only to return again in the Victorian era.

St Benedict was the main instigator of the church in the earliest English era, and women were seen as leaders in the church as shown in Canterbury and Ely. The Romans did not follow this and the idea was gradually suppressed by the Roman Catholic church in Ireland.

There were five abbeys in our area: Peterborough, Ely, and Thorney founded in the first phase of Christianity between 655 and 716, destroyed by 870, and then re-founded by 972. Crowland and Ramsey were founded in the second phase of Christianity, Ramsey being the last one in 969AD. Ian advised that these dates were subject to change as new discoveries were being made.

Ian then turned to Ramsey Abbey which was thought to be of a similar size to

early cathedrals such as Winchester Old Minster of the seventh century, and so should be easy to find. This has proved not to be the case despite much historical evidence that Ian presented.

Initially a temporary building was erected in Ramsey dedicated to St Benedict, originally for three monks and later enlarged to accommodate 12 monks. Some surveys suggest it was not exactly in an east-west alignment. Ten years later it was changed from wood to stone but cracks appeared after just ten years and it was totally rebuilt and consecrated on 8 November 974. The founder, Earl Ailwin, presented the new church with organs and a 'tabula set' for the high altar and it was re-dedicated in 991 by Archibald Oswald. Ian then told a side story about King Canute and his connection to Ramsey Abbey.

By 1066 the monks of Ramsey Abbey received licence to use Barnack stone for the abbey, which was provided by Peterborough Abbey as they were one of the largest owners of quarrying rights. Before then there was no clue what type of stone had been used.

In 1116 the Abbey was demolished and rebuilt yet again, now in Gothic style with pointed arches replacing the older rounded arches, and aligned correctly in the east-west direction.

At this point Ian concluded the history of the various stages of the Abbey and confirmed that no evidence of the building had been found despite many attempts in the past. This was the starting point of this project to find Ramsey Abbey and despite using every modern detecting technique, as seen in Time Team TV programmes, and other methodologies including water dowsing, we still do not know where the Abbey stood.

However, Ian described, and illustrated with many pictures, what has been achieved by the project:

- Metal detecting had yielded coins connected to King Canute and Henry IV.
- Stonework on a road called The Hollow.
- Possible Anglo-Saxon wall below the current stonework, not of the Abbey but the surrounding wall.
- Found a scale model of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Lady Chapel in the present Ramsey Abbey House which could have seated 50 monks. The original use is unknown but it could represent the chapter house of the Abbey.
- A boss stone (part of a vaulted ceiling) found in Warboys which may have been in the Abbey based on its size.
- In the walled garden stands a one ton stone and coffin lid from the 12<sup>th</sup> century; the cross suggests it belonged to an abbot.
- During the digging a trench and jetty were found that could have been used



in the transport of the Barnack stone. The project team also found a cow's head that was often placed near an entrance to an Anglo-Saxon building. What they didn't find were the foundations of the Abbey.

Ian described how the Team had reviewed all the previous attempts to find the Abbey, including the excavations from 1967 to 2020 by various bodies. A map showed different areas around the site, such as a possible dock area and industrial area including a flint store. There was also evidence of shards of relief tiles at the site but not found elsewhere in the UK. These had been reconstructed and are similar to tiles found in Denmark.

Ian then took us on a tour of the many treasures found in the museums and collections in the county and further afield that may be related to the Abbey. They cannot all be included in this review but some idea of the range of artifacts can be seen from this list:

- St Ives bridge – relics of St Ivo were moved to Ramsey Abbey. Houghton water mill gifted its flour as a tithe to Ramsey Abbey. Chatteris Abbey was built on land gifted by the same family (Ailwyn) as Ramsey land.
- Ramsey Church – effigies from the pulpit, double lectern from 15<sup>th</sup> century, bible cover and documents, the font – all thought to be associated with Ramsey Abbey. Other churches have door knockers, jug, ram's head and bull carvings, again connected to the Abbey.
- The original main gate of the Abbey was moved to Hinchingsbrooke Gatehouse.
- Silver, pottery, lecterns, books, carvings from many sources that can be linked to the Abbey.

Finally, Ian returned to the present and the unanswered question – where is the Abbey? Ramsey was on two islands at the time and the Abbey was on one of them but we do not know which one. Early charters do not give any clues to the location. The hunt goes on.....Work is continuing on conservation on the items found and others still being discovered in conjunction with many other groups and experts.

There were some technical issues with the zoom set-up but these were overcome and we were treated to a unique and fascinating talk, supported by many photographs, maps and drawings, that probably only scratched the surface of this major project. For a fuller picture the reader is encouraged to view Ian's video on the Society website

Some comments and questions followed Ian's presentation and a show of appreciation closed the meeting.

*Reported by John Bownass*

## **THE SPINNING HOUSE**

*WITH CAROLINE BIGGS*  
*(CAMBRIDGE BRANCH : JULY 2024)*

Caroline Biggs has recently published a book on a notorious Cambridge establishment known as the “Spinning House”. The talk gave a summary of the shocking story she had discovered from research into records held in the Cambridgeshire University Library.

Although world-renowned for its university, the relations between the university and the townspeople of Cambridge were always fractious. Over the centuries the University had acquired special legal privileges that rankled with the town. One such was a Charter obtained in 1561, from Queen Elizabeth I, granting the University of Cambridge the power to arrest and imprison any woman “suspected of evil” (in other words, soliciting). The ordinary law of the land required there to be proof before a woman could be arrested for prostitution, but under this Charter, senior members of the University known as Proctors could legally arrest any young woman out on the streets after dark simply on just suspicion that she was up to no good. Prior to this Charter any arrested women had been sent to the town prison under the control of the town mayor who would often set them free for lack of evidence.

In 1823 the building known as the Spinning House (formerly Hobson's Workhouse – the name derived from spinning being taught as a craft for inmates) which had by then become a prison shared by both town and University, was no longer needed by the town when a new town prison was built. The University then took sole possession of the Spinning House and it became the University's private prison! The University now stepped up its “morality” enforcement. A law was passed to legalise a special university constabulary (nicknamed “bulldogs”) who, together with a Proctor, would patrol Cambridge streets at night during term time, arresting any single, unchaperoned, women they considered suspect – invariably young, working class girls.

Arrested women were tried by the Vice Chancellor in a private court; there were no sworn witness statements; they were not allowed a legal defence; and the women themselves were not allowed to speak except to say their names. Then they were incarcerated in the Spinning House which was notorious for its terrible conditions.

Between 1830 and 1890, records show 2,500 women were arrested. Some may have been prostitutes but such was the zealotry of the university special constables (the Bulldogs) any woman walking in a street in Cambridge at night was at risk of being arrested and imprisoned. Mere suspicion was enough to

warrant arrest and there was no right to appeal or to a trial by jury. Obviously mistakes were frequently made and innocent victims suffered damage to their reputations.

Riots broke out as the townspeople protested about the outrageous situation. It was abundantly clear how the town was being run for the benefit of the University not the townspeople. The University wanted to run things to suit themselves and used every underhand legal and financial means to do so.

Caroline's talk concentrated on the experiences of four of the unfortunate women who found themselves incarcerated and the consequences, in one of the cases fatal.

Elizabeth Howe was accused of being "a loose and disorderly person" merely for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Less than a month after arriving at the cold, damp prison she died of rheumatic fever, aged nineteen. A friend had rushed off to get a doctor for Elizabeth but was stopped by a Proctor who threatened to arrest her if she didn't get off the streets immediately, so she went home empty-handed. Elizabeth died that night.

Emma Kemp was sentenced to fourteen days after being "found in the company of members of the university". In fact she was not even "streetwalking" but dragged off an omnibus! Town groups raised funds to defend her, the case being that it was wrongful arrest under the Charter since clearly she wasn't 'on the streets'. The expectation was that a court case would be held locally but the University cynically arranged for the case to be held in Westminster Hall in London, purportedly to avoid any trouble in Cambridge. This inevitably raised the costs considerably (to deplete the town's limited defence fund) to the detriment of the accused when faced with expensive lawyers determined to blacken her reputation.

Jane Elsdon was given two weeks for "not coming quietly" when hauled off the streets but escaped from the Spinning House to the University's embarrassment.

The scandalous nature of the University's persecution of Cambridge women was often condemned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century press but, hiding behind the term of the Charter it held out until 1894. The Spinning House was then forced to close after Daisy Hopkins, committed for "walking with an undergraduate", sensationally won her case for wrongful arrest in the Royal Courts of Justice. The infamous Spinning House was then demolished in 1901 and replaced with the police station.

*Reported by CJ*



## FURTHER MUSINGS ON A ONE-NAME STUDY ...



**Starting Point:** After many years of indecision over how to actually go about it, lockdown provided the opportunity to finally get on with starting on a One Name Study! The ensuing months of enforced inactivity over and beyond just going to work were filled with systematically re-extracting and listing BMDs, censuses, probates, indexes, etc for the name and a number of select variants—the bones or “data” of an ONS.

**What Came Next:** Some basic crunching of numbers gave a measure of the broad distributions and frequencies of the various spellings over time. Simple graphs and maps helped enormously in being able to, literally, visualise the data and to highlight changing patterns and numbers. Invaluable for this exercise has been the three online courses on One Name Studies offered by Pharos Tutors. Based around guidelines compiled by the Guild of One Name Studies: the advice outlined the consensus on what constitutes a “good” study, and encouraged gaining an awareness of the theory and practice of ONS-ing, and the learning from the experiences of others.

**Next Steps:** Collecting and crunching “data” while an end in itself, it is only half the story. Next steps, going forward, revolve around what one does with the data. The numbers of instances here were felt to be sufficiently few to embark on “total reconstitution” and to see whether it might be possible to account for all bearers of the surname(s). Could everyone really be attached to one of a, yet to be defined, number of family lineages—initially to c1837, then into earlier generations, undoubtedly bringing some lineages together?

### **Preliminary findings:**

- three relatively small “home zones” account for vast majority of early-C19<sup>th</sup> instances, with almost all later instances tracking back to these areas alone
- variant spelling are not unique to any one of these areas—and census mis-transcriptions compound spelling variants distorting statistics/distributions
- migration among distinctly separate lineages find later descendent in same places—ie. despite the rarity, same-namers later found in the same location are not necessarily related to their now neighbouring same-namers

*... and the work goes on ...*

**This research has but passing occurrences in Cambs/Hunts—is anyone who is doing a ONS on a local name fancy writing about their study??**

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

*The Editorial Team*

## MEMBERSHIP

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

## SEARCHABLE RECORDS & SHOP

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

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

## RESEARCH SERVICES

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

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

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

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

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE & HUNTINGDONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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ANCESTRY

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FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION

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LOST COUSINS

CAMBS ASSOC FOR LOCAL HISTORY

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# PUT SOMETHING BACK INTO FAMILY HISTORY



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*OUR EFFORTS ARE HELPING TO PRESERVE CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S LOCAL RECORDS AND TO MAKE THEIR CONTENTS AVAILABLE FOR COUNTY RESEARCHERS TO USE AT ANYTIME ANYWHERE*

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