



# Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY, SEVENOAKS, KENT  
[www.nwkhfs.org.uk](http://www.nwkhfs.org.uk)



## NEXT BRANCH MEETING

NO MEETING JANUARY

12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY SEVENOAKS

Royal Regiment of Artillery

(Commonly known as the Gunners; the Royal Artillery provides firepower to the British Army)

Speaker PAUL EVANS

## OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

NO MEETING DECEMBER

17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY BROMLEY

London Labyrinth (Resources) - Speaker KATHY CHATER

3<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY DARTFORD

RNLI HISTORY - Speaker TERRY SMITH

7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY DARTFORD

What the Victorians did for Us! - Speaker IAN BEVAN

Welcome to NWKFHS Sevenoaks Branch. In addition to the talks, we have a number of interesting tables for you to browse. These include a bookstall, old magazines and journals, exchange journals and a reference book library. Plus don't forget to take a look at our notice board.

The books from our library may be borrowed at no charge and the magazines are a snip at 20 pence each. You might just find the publication or book you are looking for.

Do visit our computer help desk where Karina will make every effort to assist with your family history brick wall.

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Sevenoaks Community Centre, Otford Road Sevenoaks, TN14 5DN. Doors open at 7.15pm, meeting starts at 8pm. There is free car parking - and refreshments are available.

We welcome visitors and new members, and we aspire to offer all the helpful advice that you might need, we hope you enjoy your visit.

Guests we appreciate a £1.00 donation to the society's funds.

**THIS EVENING'S TALK IS 'A MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS IN COSTUME'** by Mrs Toni Mount, author, history teacher, speaker and historic interpreter. Medieval Christmas was a time of magic, when pagan mid-winter traditions took on a new life as a Christian festival and developed into a month long celebration of feasting, hospitality and present giving.



*We would like to thank you for helping us to celebrate the Centenary of the outbreak of WWI at last month's meeting. Your contributions to the evening were tremendous and we hope you enjoyed the meeting as much as we did.*

## NEWS ITEMS

**RootsIreland** - has added seven new databases for Derry City from Derry Genealogy Centre. These databases date from 1628 to 1921 and most fall into the category of census substitutes. They are: **1.** The earliest census of the city, namely the rent roll of 1628. **2.** The names of 905 men from Derry and surrounding estates who defended Derry's walls during the 1641 Rebellion. **3.** The names of 1660 supporters of the 1689-91 Williamite campaign, many of whom fought at the Siege of Derry in 1689. **4.** The names of 226 citizens of the city who signed a petition condemning a Jacobite plot to assassinate King William III 1696. **5.** The names of 110 leaseholders within the walled city in 1738. **6.** The names of 191 Derry men and women who were held in the County Jail on Bishop Street from 1839 to 1856 awaiting transportation to Australia. **7.** Reconstruction of census for Derry city during 'the Troubles' of 1920, extracted from Derry Almanac of 1921, which names 8367 heads of households against their street address and house number. Visit their website at [www.irishgenealogynews.com](http://www.irishgenealogynews.com)

**Essex Ancestors** is a subscription service, run by the county record office that provides access to about 681,000 images of a range of historical documents relating to the county. The website has just uploaded another 22,500 wills, so all its wills from earlier than c.1720 can now be seen online. As a result, about 42,500 of the 70,000 wills held at Essex Record Office are readily accessible by people across the world. Subscriptions are available for various periods between 1 day and 1 year. For further information see following link <http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/EssexAncestors.aspx>

## EVENTS

**24<sup>th</sup> January - How to find out where your Ancestor is Buried or Cremated in London & the Magnificent Seven Cemeteries - SOG, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Rd, EC1M 7BA**

The "Magnificent Seven" is an informal term applied to seven large cemeteries in London which were established in the 19th century to alleviate overcrowding in existing parish burial grounds. This course will take a closer look at these cemeteries and also learn more about finding the final resting places of our ancestors. A half-day course with Matthew Pridham - Time 1030-1300 - Cost £20.00 - Pre-book at [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk) or call 020 7553 3290

**Until 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015- Exhibition - 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Magna Carta at the City of London Heritage Gallery - Guildhall Art Gallery & Roman Amphitheatre, Guildhall Yard, London, EC2V 5AE**

Discover more about one of the key moments in British history at the outstanding Magna Carta exhibition, hosted at the new City of London Heritage Gallery. Coinciding with the UK-wide celebrations to mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, this is a rare opportunity to get up close to the best surviving 13th-century version of the document in existence. Cost Free - Contact 020 7332 3700 or see [www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/whats-on/art-and-exhibitions/museum](http://www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/whats-on/art-and-exhibitions/museum) for more information

## A Genealogists' Poem

Your tombstone stands among the rest:  
Neglected and alone.

The name and date are chiselled out  
On polished, marbled stone.

It reaches out to all who care  
It is too late to mourn.

You did not know that I exist  
You died and I was born

Yet each of us are cells of you  
In flesh, in blood, in bone.

Our blood contracts and beats a pulse  
Entirely not our own.

Dear Ancestor, the place you filled  
One hundred years ago  
Spreads out among the ones you left  
Who would have loved you so.

I wonder if you lived and loved,  
I wonder if you knew

That someday I would find this spot  
And come to visit you.

Author Unknown





## International Christmas Traditions

*What Christmas traditions did your ancestors celebrate?*

**Australia** - While most Australian traditions are English in origin, Christmas cards feature native animals such as koalas. Palm leaves, ferns and flowering plants decorate houses.

**Eastern Europe** - Ukrainians hang spiders and webs on their trees as part of a folkloric tale about a woman who was too poor to decorate her tree so a spider spun webs for decoration during the night. In Russia before the 1917 revolution, an old woman named *Baboushka* brought children treats. During the Communist era, she was changed to Grandfather Frost. Slovakian children put polished boots in their windows for St. Nicholas to deliver gifts on Dec. 5. Moravians set up Christmas pyramids decorated with a star and shelves, one reserved for a nativity scene. A propeller on top of the structure turns from the heat of the candles on the shelves.

**Ethiopia** - The Coptic Church celebrates *Ganna* (Christmas) on Jan. 7. *Ganna* is named after a popular game similar to field hockey, which legend says the shepherds played upon hearing of Jesus' birth. Everyone wears white to a church service following a day of fasting.

**France** - Young children think of Advent as a calendar with a prize on every day between Dec. 1 and Dec. 25. Originally, Advent was a time to think about the future spiritual events of the season. Advent dates from 490 AD when the Bishop of Tours advocated fasting three days a week for the 40 days prior to Christmas. Extended families gather together after midnight Mass for *réveillon*, a banquet on Christmas Eve.

**Germany** - Most sources credit Germans for starting the tradition of decorating Christmas trees. Elaborate hand-blown glass ornaments also first appeared in Germany. The German city of Lauscha was the manufacturing centre for glass ornaments, although ornament production slowed after it became part of post-war East Germany. Children write letters and lists and leave them for Christkindel (southern Germany) or Weihnachtsman (northern Germany). Many towns hold a *Christkindelsmarkt*, selling handmade gifts and treats during the holidays.

**Greece** - St. Nicholas, patron saint of sailors and fishermen, gives out gifts. Gift giving takes place on Jan. 1, St. Basil's Day, in honour of one of the four fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church. On Epiphany, known as Greek Cross Day, crucifixes are blessed by dipping them into water.

**Latin America** - *Las Posadas*, a daily procession that re-enacts Joseph and Mary's search for shelter, is traditionally performed in

the days before Christmas. Children leave their shoes in the window on Epiphany for gifts from the Magi. In Mexico, the holiday season ends with Candlemas, a religious ritual on Feb. 2. A Mexican folktale recounts the story of a poor girl who presented the infant Jesus with a branch from a simple plant. As she laid it beside the manger, it turned red. Joel Roberts Poinsett, a botanist and the first US ambassador to Mexico, brought the plant to this country, where it came to be called a poinsettia.

**Italy** - Italian children leave their shoes or stockings near the fireplace to receive gifts on Epiphany from La Befana. They also receive presents from Father Christmas on Christmas Day. Nativity scenes are part of Christmas displays.

**Netherlands** - Black Peter disciplines naughty boys and girls on St. Nicholas Day (Dec. 6), while Sinterklass, or St. Nicholas, rewards good children with candy and gifts.

**Poland** - At midnight on Christmas Eve in Poland, many go to *pasterka*, or Shepherd's Mass. Afterward, the head of the family breaks an *oplatek*, a thin wafer made of wheat flour and water with a nativity scene stamped on it. Each family member breaks off a small piece and eats it. Later, they might feast on fish, sauerkraut, potato pancakes and beet soup.

**Scandinavia** - In Scandinavian countries, trees are strung with straw goats. Danes use red-and-white hearts and strings of miniature Danish flags. Finnish children believe that their gift giver, our Santa Claus, lives in Korvatunturi, in the northern part of their country. Swedes honour Santa Lucia on Dec. 13 by selecting a child to dress in a white gown with a red sash. The child wears a wreath on the head with lit candles and delivers traditional food. The *tomte*, or Christmas gnome, brings gifts on Christmas Day. In Norway, Christmas, or *Juledag*, is a quiet prelude to Dec. 26, when Norwegians start eating, drinking and celebrating until Jan. 13.

**United States** - Various regions of the United States also dealt with Christmas in their own unique ways that may be reflected in your family's heritage. Conservative Puritans in Massachusetts tried to outlaw Christmas in the 17th century, while Southern settlers brought over carols, Yule logs and greenery from England. Christmas in New England was a time of religious devotion; the southern colonies welcomed the holiday by making as much noise as possible. Many of these regional differences grew out of the diversity of people in the area. In Alaska, for instance, Russian descendants still follow the traditions of the Orthodox Christmas on Jan. 7 with a procession carrying wheels trimmed with tinsel to resemble stars.

From an article by Maureen A. Taylor in *Family Tree Magazine* 12.15.10  
Source <http://familytreemagazine.com/article/Holy-Nights> - 24.11.2014



**ON THIS DAY 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER - The 345<sup>th</sup> day of the year in the Gregorian calendar, 20 days remain until the end of the year.**

- 1282** Battle of Orewin Bridge: Llywelyn ap Gruffudd the last native Prince of Wales, is killed at Cilmeri, nr Builth Wells, in mid-Wales
- 1688** James II of England, while trying to flee to France, allegedly throws the Great Seal of the Realm into the River Thames
- 1792** French Revolution: King Louis XVI of France is put on trial for treason by the National Convention
- 1866** First yacht race across the Atlantic Ocean
- 1851** Telegraph connection between London-Paris linked
- 1913** "Mona Lisa," stolen from the Louvre Museum in 1911, recovered
- 1936** Edward VIII announces in a radio broadcast that he is abdicating the British throne to marry Wallis Simpson
- 1997** The Royal Yacht *Britannia* was decommissioned at Portsmouth Naval Base

# RAFFLE

**DON'T FORGET TO BUY YOUR RAFFLE TICKET TONIGHT -**

**SEE BARBARA STEAD - WINNERS WILL BE DRAWN AFTER TONIGHT'S TALK - GOOD LUCK!**

**You know you are addicted to Genealogy when you would rather browse in a cemetery than a shopping centre**

**Corny Christmas joke - Why does Santa Claus like to work in the garden?**

**Because he likes to hoe, hoe, hoe! 😊**



*The Sevenoaks Branch Committee members would like to wish  
you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year;  
We look forward to seeing you in February 2015  
Merry Christmas*



**The Sevenoaks Committee**

**Branch Chair - Barbara Attwaters**

**Committee Members**

**Christina Barnett, Debbie Hill, Karina Jackson**

**Norma Holmden, Robert Barnett**

**Geoff Webb, Bernie Wilkins, Barbara Stead**