



Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY, SEVENOAKS, KENT
www.nwkhfs.org.uk



NEXT BRANCH MEETING

NO JANUARY MEETING AT SEVENOAKS

11TH FEBRUARY

Private Horace Brooks of Halstead
KYLE GREENFIELD

OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

BROMLEY

NO DECEMBER MEETING AT BROMLEY

16TH JANUARY - Six Degrees of Separation

Speaker DAVID CUFLEY

DARTFORD

2ND JANUARY - Bygone Dartford: Posters and Adverts through the ages

Speaker KEITH WHITMORE

6TH FEBRUARY - Hops and Hop Picking

Speaker RICHARD FILMER

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 - "Smugglers and outsiders... and poachers and outlaws of Kent" by Geoff Doel and partner

A lecturer and author, Geoff will talk about traditional Kentish pursuits. This is sure to be an interesting talk.

NEWS ITEMS - Findmypast updates:

England & Wales, Electoral Registers 1832-1932 / Bradford area burials / Cambridgeshire, Ely Diocese Marriage Licences 1684-1811 Lloyds of London Memorial Roll 1914-1918 / Lloyd's Register of Merchant Ships Index 1843 master names / Stock Exchange Memorial Roll 1914-1918 / Surrey, military tribunals 1915-1918 / London Watermen Records / Australia Victoria, World War One Soldier Settlers / US Veterans Administration Pension payment cards, 1907-1933 - Website: www.findmypast.co.uk

NWKFHS - We are pleased to announce that Sandra Marchant has joined the Sevenoaks Branch Committee, we are very happy to have her aboard.

Prayer for Genealogists

Lord, help me dig into the past,
And sift the sands of time,
That I might find the roots that made
This family tree mine.
Lord, help me trace the ancient roads,

On which my father's trod,
And led them through so many lands,
To find our present sod.
Lord, help me find an ancient book,
Or dusty manuscript,
That's safely hidden now away,

In some forgotten crypt,
Lord, let it bridge the gap that haunts
My soul, when I can't find
The missing link between some name
That ends the same as mine.
Author Unknown

EVENTS

16th January - Researching Irish Family Life in the Famine Years - With Stephen Lally Society of Genealogists, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Rd. EC1M 7BA

80% of today's English people have Irish ancestry and this seminar looks at Irish lives in the rural west of Ireland in the famine years between about 1800 and 1850. The first half of the seminar looks at how people lived; their houses, possessions, food, work, education, entertainment, etc. It touches on politics, social attitudes and the reasons for mass poverty and emigration. The second talk discusses how to use such facts as these to build your own family history in places, like Ireland, where few real records survive. It looks at subjects such as additional places to search and how to follow leads how to put the story together and to what extent you can judge events of 200 years ago by modern standards. It opens up a whole area of family history beyond the collecting of birth, marriage, death and census data. If you have just a few facts, this seminar will start you on a family quest that will be engrossing, interesting and, with luck, extremely rewarding. Time 1400 - 1700 - Price £20.00 - need to book - website: www.sog.org.uk

Local Kent Events

December 11th to 13th - The Vine, Sevenoaks - Festive sounds from Fred Clark plus a festive fayre and goodies; from 10am-8pm Friday to Saturday, and 10am - 5pm Sunday

Until 31st December - Crowborough Community Centre - To remember the 70th anniversary of the end of the WW2, memorabilia from that era will be on display at Crowborough Community Centre. The display cabinet and some of the display items have been provided by Crowborough Town Council.

2016 AGM - There is an exciting change to the 2016 AGM which is to be held at the historical Cobham Hall, near Gravesend. The society is thrilled to have obtained the hall, which is one of the finest and most important historic houses in Kent. The meeting will be the typical all day event held on Thursday 7th April 2016, including guest speakers and weather allowing an optional walking tour by Chris Bull. There is plenty of free parking, including designated disabled spaces, and there will be transport to and from Sole Street Railway Station for those who cannot drive there. Please note that prior booking is essential. Forms are available from the Branches, the library, in December's journal & on our website where more detailed information is available. We look forward to seeing you there.





The Victorian Christmas

At the beginning of the 19th century Christmas was hardly celebrated. Many businesses did not even consider it a holiday. However by the end of the century it had become the biggest annual celebration and took on the form that we recognise today. The transformation happened quickly, and came from all sectors of society.

Many attribute the change to Queen Victoria; it was her marriage to the German-born Prince Albert that introduced some of the most prominent aspects of Christmas. In 1848 the Illustrated London News published a drawing of the royal family celebrating around a decorated Christmas tree, a tradition that was reminiscent of Prince Albert's childhood in Germany. Soon every home in Britain had a tree bedecked with candles, sweets, fruit, homemade decorations and small gifts.

In 1843 Henry Cole commissioned an artist to design a card for Christmas. The illustration showed a group of people around a dinner table and a Christmas message. At one shilling each, these were pricey for ordinary Victorians and so were not immediately accessible. However the sentiment caught on and many children - Queen Victoria's included - were encouraged to make their own Christmas cards. In this age of industrialisation colour printing technology quickly became more advanced, causing the price of card production to drop significantly. Together with the introduction of the halfpenny postage rate, the Christmas card industry took off. By the 1880s the sending of cards had become hugely popular, creating a lucrative industry that produced 11.5 million cards in 1880 alone. The commercialisation of Christmas was well on its way.

Traditional Victorian crackers, another commercial Christmas industry was borne by Victorians in 1848 when a British confectioner, Tom Smith, invented a bold new way to sell sweets. Inspired by a trip to Paris where he saw bon bons - sugared almonds wrapped in twists of paper - he came up with the idea of the Christmas cracker: a simple package filled with sweets that snapped when pulled apart. The sweets were replaced by small gifts and paper hats in the late Victorian period, and remain in this form as an essential part of a modern Christmas.

Decorating the home at Christmas also became a more elaborate affair. The medieval tradition of using evergreens continued, however the style and placement of these decorations became more important. The old custom of simply decking walls and windows with sprigs and twigs was sniffed at. Uniformity, order and elegance were encouraged. There were instructions on how to make elaborate synthetic decorations for those residing in

towns. In 1881 Cassell's Family Magazine gave strict directions to the lady of the house: "To bring about a general feeling of enjoyment, much depends on the surroundings... It is worthwhile to bestow some little trouble on the decoration of the rooms".

Gift giving had traditionally been at New Year but moved as Christmas became more important to the Victorians. Initially gifts were rather modest - fruit, nuts, sweets and small handmade trinkets. These were usually hung on the Christmas tree. However, as gift giving became more central to the festival, and the gifts became bigger and shop-bought, they moved under the tree.

The Christmas feast has its roots from before the Middle Ages, but it's during the Victorian period that the dinner we now associate with Christmas began to take shape. Examination of early Victorian recipes shows that mince pies were initially made from meat, a tradition dating back to Tudor times. However, during the 19th century there was a revolution in the composition of this festive dish. Mixes without meat began to gain popularity within some of the higher echelons of society and became the mince pies we know today.

The roast turkey also has its beginnings in Victorian Britain. Previously other forms of roasted meat such as beef and goose were the centrepiece of the Christmas dinner. The turkey was added to this by the more wealthy sections of the community in the 19th century, but its perfect size for a middle class family gathering meant it became the dominant dish by the beginning of the 20th century.

While carols were not new to the Victorians, it was a tradition that they actively revived and popularised. The Victorians considered carols to be a delightful form of musical entertainment, and a pleasure well worth cultivating. Old words were put to new tunes and the first significant collection of carols was published in 1833 for all to enjoy.

The Victorians also transformed the idea of Christmas so that it became centred around the family. The preparation and eating of the feast, decorations and gift giving, entertainments and parlour games - all were essential to the celebration of the festival and were to be shared by the whole family.

While Charles Dickens did not invent the Victorian Christmas, his book A Christmas Carol is credited with helping to popularise and spread the traditions of the festival. Its themes of family, charity, goodwill, peace and happiness encapsulate the spirit of the Victorian Christmas, and are very much a part of the Christmas we celebrate today.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/victorianchristmas/history.shtml> - 07/06/2015



ON THIS DAY

DECEMBER 10TH is the 344TH day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 21 days remain until the end of the year.

- 1394** King James I of Scotland, Dunfermline Palace, Fife, is born (1406-1437), (d. 1437)
- 1541** Thomas Culpeper and Francis Dereham are executed for having affairs with Catherine Howard, Queen of England and wife of Henry VIII
- 1582** France begins use of Gregorian calendar
- 1652** Sea battle at Dungeness: Lieutenant-admiral Maarten Tromp of the Dutch Army, beats English fleet
- 1799** France adopts the metre as its official unit of length
- 1868** The first traffic lights are installed, outside the Palace of Westminster in London. Resembling railway signals, they use semaphore arms and are illuminated at night by red and green gas lamps
- 1884** Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is published
- 1901** The first Nobel Prizes are awarded
- 1903** Nobel Prize for physics awarded to Pierre and Marie Curie
- 1909** Selma Lagerlöf, a female Swedish author, becomes the first female writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature
- 1947** Jazz musician Ella Fitzgerald (30) weds bass player Ray Brown (21)
- 1956** Abdication Crisis: Edward VIII signs the *Instrument of Abdication*
- 1963** 6-year old Donny Osmond's singing debut on Andy Williams Show
- 2013** Mary Barra of General Motors becomes the first female CEO of a major automotive company

*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 2016 - Merry Christmas*



The Sevenoaks Committee

Branch Chair - Barbara Attwaters

Committee Members

Christina Barnett, Debbie Hill, Karina Jackson,
Norma Holmden, Robert Barnett, Bernie Wilkins,
Barbara Stead, Sandra Marchant