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ISSUE NUMBER 37

# Sevenoaks Newsletter

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



## NEXT BRANCH MEETING

14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

Edith Cavell-British nurse in WW1 shot as a spy

Speaker: MELANIE GIBSON-BARTON

## OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

BROMLEY

19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH Bethlem Hospital: Archives and Museum

Plus Branch Annual Meeting

Speaker THE ARCHIVIST

DARTFORD

2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL - Information on Findmypast

Plus Branch Annual Meeting

Speaker MYKO CLELLAND

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.

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**THIS EVENING'S TALK** - "The Great Houses of Sevenoaks" by Ian Walker, retired Head of History at Sevenoaks School. A previous speaker on the history of Sevenoaks at our meetings, this is sure to be a very interesting talk on our historic town.

## NEWS ITEMS

**RootsTech 2016** - Watch it at home - RootsTech is an annual event held in Salt Lake City, home of the largest family history library in the World. Most recently held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> February, providing the thousands of enthusiasts present with talks, classes and opportunities to share their insights and stories. Now, some of its benefits are rolling out online. Just can log onto your computer to view any of the presentations in a collection of 27 free videos that are available free of charge on the RootsTech website. The wide range of topics covered means there should be something of interest for almost all family historians.

Link: [www.rootstech.org/video2/4739804696001](http://www.rootstech.org/video2/4739804696001)

**Thegenealogist** have this month released WW2 Prisoner of War Records - 150,000 records which detail Officers and other ranks from the British Army, Royal Navy, RAF and those members of the British Empire land forces that were held as Prisoners of War in Germany and German Occupied territories. These records should enable researchers to discover servicemen held by the Germans between 1939 and 1945, and include many of the brave escapees. For more detail visit Website: [www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk)

## EVENTS

**19<sup>TH</sup> April 2016 - Deciphering Old Handwriting (intermediate) - LMA, 40 Northampton Rd, Clerkenwell, EC1R 0HB**

This practical session gives expert help in reading different types of handwriting from the 16th and 17th centuries. You will practise with copy documents from LMA's collections and get tips for deciphering early historical writing. Some experience of reading historical documents is required. Time 1400 - 1530 - Cost £8.00 booking essential - contact 020 7332 3851

**20<sup>th</sup> April - New Member Orientation Tour - Society of Genealogists, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Rd. EC1M 7BA**

This tour of the society's building, with Else Churchill, will provide you with a good overview of what the Society holds in its unique collections, to help you with your research. Free event (must be pre-booked) Time: 1200 - 1315 - Duration 1 hour 15 minutes. Website: [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk)

**7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> April - Who do you think you are? Live - NEC Birmingham - See [www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/wdytva-live-2016](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/wdytva-live-2016)**

## Kent Events

**1<sup>st</sup> March - A talk about Crowborough twinning with Montargis- Crowborough & District Historical Society, Pine Grove, Crowborough TN6 1FE** - by Friends of Montargis. This year is the 50th anniversary of the twinning of Crowborough and Montargis. Time 7.30pm for 8pm start, non-members £4.00

**16<sup>th</sup> March - The dregs of the people remain: The Black Death and its aftermath. Kent Family History Society, The Birchington Village Centre, Alpha Road, Birchington, Kent CT7 9EG** - Speaker Imogen Corrigan - Time 7.30 pm

**16th March - The interesting and quirky history of London's underground railway - Otford and District Historical Society, Otford Village Memorial Hall, High Street, TN14 5PQ** - Speaker Alan Williams - Time 8 pm - Visitors £3.00

**18<sup>th</sup> March - Chaucer's Canterbury Tales - Kemsing Heritage Centre, St Edith Hall, High Street, Kemsing, Kent TN15 6NA** - Speaker Geoff Doel - A story written in the 1380's about a group of people heading to the shrine of martyred Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas à Becket. Time 7.30pm, non-members £2.50

**22<sup>nd</sup> March - Ordnance Survey Ancient and Modern, The History of Ordnance Survey - Tunbridge Wells Family History Society, Groombridge Village Hall, Station Rd, Tunbridge Wells TN3 9QX** - by Colin Brown. Time 7.30pm for 8pm start.

**5<sup>th</sup> April - Talk on the life of Queen Elizabeth II - Swanley Historical Society, White Oak Indoor Bowls Club, Garrolds Close, off Hilda May Avenue, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7BF.** Speaker historian D. John Ray - Time 7.30 pm, non- members £2.00

**13<sup>TH</sup> April - The Poor of Otham and nearby parishes: The Coxheath Poor House - Kent Family History Society, St. Paul's Church Hall, Boxley Road, Maidstone ME14 2AN** - Speaker Dr Hugh Vaux - Time 7.30 pm

## Historical Kent

23 September 1849 the Rev. Henry Wilberforce, vicar of East Farleigh, buried 43 'strangers' in a mass grave in his churchyard. They had suffered a terrible death in one of the work outbreaks of cholera Kent has ever known.

The victims were hoppers working for Mr Ellis of Court Lodge Barming, the largest grower in Kent. It was believed most of the dead were from Ireland and they lived in the most appalling insanitary conditions. 30 more died among hop pickers at nearby Yalding and Loose.

It was on Sept. 12 that the epidemic broke out at East Farleigh and Dr Plomley of Maidstone, who arrived four days later, found a terrible scene. In his medical report he said: "Sixty two persons were suffering more or less from the disease. Four were in the agonies of death and eight more in the most profound collapse, all of whom died before the following morning. The melancholy was much heightened by the almost incessant wailings of the Irish in the 'waking' their lost friends."

East Farleigh School was hastily converted into a hospital and a cholera ward prepared at the union workhouse nearby. Dr Plomley was joined by the union surgeon and other doctors including some from Guy's Hospital. Despite the contagious nature of the disease ladies of the district bravely volunteered to form a nursing team. They included the wife of the vicar and Mrs Thomas Rider from Boughton Monchelsea Place, nr Maidstone.

Although the disease was not yet under control and its basic cause unknown, blame was been put on Mr Ellis for allowing his roving pickers to live in such feculent conditions. Dr Plomley had pointed out that those who slept at home had avoided infection. "Cholera is linked to the accommodation with which the 'strangers' were provided".

He said: "The disease arose entirely from causes which are remediable and removable; namely impure air rising from overcrowded and ill-ventilated apartments, impure water derived from wells containing the soakage of cow yards and human filth and impure food sold at a cheap rate by unprincipled itinerant vendors of putrid fish and adulterated bread".

In one room of 700 cubic feet Dr Plomley found 14 persons including a child suffering from cholera. The 'effluvia' was so powerful that he could not enter. "Mortality for extra metropolitan Kent is 1,208" he said "which is much below that of London and ten other counties in England and Wales. Such precautions as had been taken quickly lapsed".

Some 15 years earlier cholera killed 34 pickers on the same farm. It appeared that no lessons had been learned. The lingering question was: Does medical responsibility for "strangers" lie with the hop farmers of the Poor Law guardians? The debate raged.

It's believed those buried in East Farleigh's churchyard were refugees from Ireland, faced with the potato famine back home, they had travelled to Kent in order to find a better life. They had arrived at the peak of a cholera outbreak that had been ravaging the British Isles for two years. It had been taking as many as 2,000 lives a week and in London alone had killed 12,847 in three months. In the ceremony performed by Rev. Henry Wilberforce, the lives of these forty three hop pickers were briefly marked but who they actually were is now a mystery.

In St Mary's church graveyard, East Farleigh, a simple headstone marks the mass grave of these forty three 'strangers', there are no names on the cross or fancy markings and the inscription is barely legible; it simply says: In Memory of Forty-Three Strangers who died of Cholera, September 1849. RIP

Sources: [Bob Ogley's Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century - Kent 1800-1899](#)  
<http://historymagpie.com/9/3/2016>

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***The National Archives online*** – If you are unable to visit TNA, you can find most of their talks available as podcasts in audio and video format online. Podcasts and Webinars include 'Using the 1939 Register, recording the UK population before the war' – An introduction to emigration sources for family historians' – 'Why did people fear the Victorian Workhouse' – Army musters – more than just accounts', and many, many more. As well as Family History podcasts there are many other topics which include Military History, Social history, Political history, Law and order, Archivists and archives and International. This is a great source which you can access at any time of the day, and pause whenever you wish. Visit their website at [www.thenationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.thenationalarchives.gov.uk)

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### **ON THIS DAY**

**MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup> is the 69<sup>th</sup> day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 296 days remain until the end of the year.**

- 1629** Charles I of England dissolves Parliament, beginning the eleven-year period known as the Personal Rule
- 1801** The 1<sup>st</sup> census of England, Scotland and Wales. The returns gave a population of 10.9 million people living in 1.8 million houses.
- 1876** Alexander Graham Bell makes the first successful telephone call by saying "Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you."
- 1862** The first US banknotes were issued
- 1880** The Salvation Army's pioneer party, aiming to spread the organisation in the USA, landed in New York City
- 1906** London Underground's Bakerloo Line was officially opened
- 2000** Fifty five Oscar statuettes for the annual Academy Awards ceremony were stolen
- 2003** Motorcycle racer Barry Sheene died

**And on the 11<sup>th</sup> March** - The Luddites, a group of framework-knitters, who regarded the new machinery that had been introduced into the hosiery trade as a threat to their livelihoods. Apparently led by one Ned Ludd, they formed themselves into groups bent on destruction; during the night of 11 March 1811, they smashed a number of stocking frames at Arnold, a village near Nottingham. Similar acts were perpetrated in the following weeks, and it was a full year before the situation was brought under some semblance of control.

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### **New Photographic Competition with a Difference!**

*Photographic Competition for the 2017 NWKFHS Calendar Entries needed from you for the second NWKFHS calendar (2017). Whilst full details are in the March journal you might like to start thinking about your entries, which must be loosely connected with Family History and the areas covered by the NWKFHS. (See our notice board for more information)*

**Details:** *It should be your own work, a digital image (preferred) minimum 300 dpi, and colour or black and white prints should be 8 by 5 inches. Closing date for entries will be 30th June 2016. (Copyright statement in March Journal)*

### **2016 AGM REMINDER** –

*The 2016 AGM is to be held at the historical Cobham Hall, near Gravesend. 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.*

**NWKFHS WORKSHOPS** – A walk around the historic brick wall that surrounds Greenwich Park is planned during the late spring; lead by David Cufley. Please send expressions of interest to [workshops@nwkfhs.org.uk](mailto:workshops@nwkfhs.org.uk)

### **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**