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# Sevenoaks Newsletter

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



## NEXT BRANCH MEETING

11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER SEVENOAKS

A Medieval Christmas in Costume

MRS TONI MOUNT

## OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER BROMLEY

The Men behind the Pen: The Life of the Scribe in  
The Middle Ages

Speaker IMOGEN CORRIGAN

6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER DARTFORD

The Curious History of Christmas Food (from Yorkshire  
Pies, Christmas Pottage to 12<sup>th</sup> Night Cake &  
Temperance Mince Pies)

Speaker DR PETER ROSS

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 'WALKING IN FLANDERS FIELDS'**  
by Melanie Gibson-Barton.

A poignant walk through the well known, and lesser known, sites of WWI battle fields in Flanders.



## NEWS ITEMS

**London Metropolitan Archives announces new digitisation partnership with the Wellcome Library** - London Metropolitan Archives is excited to announce a partnership with the Wellcome Library which is funding the digitisation of the archives of St Luke's Hospital as part of an ambitious project to make 800,000 pages of mental health archives available online. The Wellcome Library began its digitisation programme in 2010; its ambition is to make freely available over 50 million pages of historic medical books, archives, manuscripts and journals by 2020. For more details of the project see the Wellcome website - Link <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/News/Media-office/Press-releases/2014/WTP057722.htm>

**Families in British India Society** - FIBIS Over 4200 records of births, marriages and deaths extracted from Allens Indian Mail 1884 and 1885 have been uploaded to the FIBIS database. Visit their website Link - <http://search.fibis.org/frontis/bin/>

**The National Archives online - RootsIreland.ie - New Waterford Civil Birth Records** - RootsIreland.ie have made available 120,000 civil birth records from Waterford City and County. The Districts covered are: Waterford Urban 1 - 1864-1911, Waterford Urban 2 - 1864-1912, Ballymacarberry 1864-1912, Cappoquin 1864-1911, Clashmore 1864-1911, Rathgormack 1864-1912, Ringville 1864-1912, Seskinane 1864-1912, St Mary's 1864-1912, Templemichael 1864-1911, Whitechurch 1864-1911, Kilsheelan 1864-1916, Kilmeaden 1864-1912, Ballyduff 1864-1912, Dungarvan 1864-1911, Woodstown 1864-1912, Portlaw 1864-1912, Tramore 1864-1911, Ardmore 1864-1911, Lismore 1864-1911, Tallow 1864-1911, Bonmahon 1864-1911 and Kilmacthomas 1864-1912. Visit their website at [www.rootsireland.ie](http://www.rootsireland.ie)

## EVENTS

**26<sup>th</sup> Nov - The Broken Branch: Name Changes & Brickwalls - SOG, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Rd, EC1M 7BA**

A change of name can completely stump family historians and provide an often insurmountable brick wall. This talk examines ways of determining a name change and how to overcome the problem using patronymics and finding aliases, deed polls etc. Many people of course just chose to change their name! A one-hour lecture with Ian Waller - Time 1400-1500 - Cost £8.00 Pre-book at [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk) or call 020 7553 3290

**11<sup>th</sup> December - A game for Christmas: Football on the Western Front, December 1914 - TNA, Talks Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU**

Any mention of football and World War I will bring forth discussions of the Christmas Truce of 1914 and the mythical football match played between British and German troops in No Man's Land. At the time many denied that a truce had occurred, let alone a football match between the combatants. This talk utilises British Army War Diaries, individual soldier's diaries, letters and newspapers to examine how citizen diplomacy apparently subverted the wishes of higher command, at least temporarily, to possibly have allowed some soldiers to enjoy a game for Christmas. Iain Adams is the Principal Lecturer at the International Football Institute, a research partnership between The University of Central Lancashire and The National Football Museum. He lectures in sports history and culture and has published papers on the Christmas Truce and the football charges of the Great War. Time: 1400 - 1500 - Free Event - Book a place on line, website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) or contact 020 8876 3444

## The Society of Genealogists advice to Finding London Wills

The indexes to wills of some of the London church courts have been published for this period and the indexes are of course held at the SoG. David Wright has compiled an index to all the London Courts that proved wills (excluding the PCC) for the period 1750-1858. And this London Wills Index can be searched on [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk). The first section of this index covering letters A-D is published on CDROM and a copy is held at the Society of Genealogists. [www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk) has indexes and images to original wills from records of church courts held at the LMA (and those formerly at Guildhall) but the index does not include act books and other testamentary material at LMA or other record offices.

## *Twelve interesting facts about World War I that you may not know...*

### **1. An explosion on the battlefield in France was heard in London**

While the war raged on in the mud and trenches, a very different war was taking place beneath the soldiers' feet. A group of miners, operating in total secrecy, dug tunnels up to 100ft underground, to plant and detonate mines beneath the enemy's trenches. Their biggest success was at Messines Ridge in Belgium where over 900,000lbs of explosives were simultaneously detonated in 19 underground tunnels. Much of the German front line was destroyed, and the explosions were heard 140 miles away by the British prime minister in Downing St.

### **2. Journalists faced execution**

A handful of journalists risked their lives to report on the realities of war. As the Government sought to control the flow of information from the frontline at the start of the war, journalists were banned. Reporting on the conflict was, in the opinion of the War Office, helping the enemy. If caught, they faced the death penalty.

### **3. 12 million letters were delivered to the front every week**

Astonishingly, it only took two days for a letter from Britain to reach the front in France. The journey began at a purpose-built sorting depot in Regent's Park before being shipped to the trenches. By the end of the war, two billion letters and 114 million parcels had had been delivered.

### **4. War work turned some women's skin yellow**

When a generation of men went to fight the war, more than a million women took their place in the workforce. They worked long hours, often in poor conditions and with dangerous chemicals. The so-called 'canaries' were women who worked with TNT, which gave them toxic jaundice and turned their skin yellow.

### **5. WW1 sparked the invention of plastic surgery**

Shrapnel was the cause of many facial injuries in WW1 and unlike the straight-line wounds inflicted by bullets, the twisted metal shards produced from a shrapnel blast could easily rip a face off. Horrified by the injuries he saw, surgeon Harold Gillies, took on the task of helping victims and pioneered early techniques of facial reconstruction in the process.

### **6. Wilfred Owen was unknown at the end of the war**

Wilfred Owen is one of the best known poets of the WW1, but when he died on the frontline, just a week before the end of the war, he was relatively unknown. At the time, his view of the war as one of pity and horror was in the minority. It wasn't until the 1960s that a literary elite decided this was the most authentic view of the conflict because it chimed with their own anti-war feelings. This resulted in the publication of

two key war poetry anthologies which heavily featured Owen.

### **7. The youngest British soldier was 12 years old**

Sidney Lewis was just 12 years old when he lied about his age and joined the army during World War One. He was one of thousands of eager underage boys who enlisted and ended up fighting alongside their adult counterparts on the front. Some were motivated by patriotism, but for others it was an escape from their dreary lives.

### **8. WW1 nearly caused a financial meltdown in Britain**

At the turn of the 20th century, Britain was an economic superpower, but the world's first global war would cost more than any that had gone before. For example, the cost of bullets fired in one 24 hour period in September 1918 was nearly four million pounds.

### **9. Blood banks were developed during WW1**

The British Army began the routine use of blood transfusion in treating wounded soldiers. Blood was transferred directly from one person to another. A US Army doctor, Captain Oswald Robertson, established the first blood bank on the Western Front in 1917, using sodium citrate to prevent the blood from coagulating and becoming unusable. Blood was kept on ice for up to 28 days and then transported to casualty clearing stations for use in life-saving surgery where it was needed most.

### **10. Colourful makeovers meant WW1 ships hid in plain sight**

It was crucial to protect the merchant ships carrying the food and military supplies to the front from enemy torpedoes. Norman Wilkinson, an artist and Royal Navy volunteer came up with the idea of covering ships in bold shapes and violent contrasts of colour. The complete opposite of normal camouflage, dazzle camouflage was supposed to confuse the enemy rather than conceal the ships.

### **11. 9 out of 10 soldiers survived the trenches**

Being in the firing line was rare for a British soldier. They constantly moved around the trench system - meaning more often than not they were kept from the dangers of enemy fire. The more typical experience for the British Tommy would have been a life of boredom and regular routine.

### **12. Generals were banned from going over the top**

The stereotype is that the ordinary soldiers of WW1 were lions led by donkeys - the donkeys being incompetent generals who sat out the war in comfort while thousands died unnecessary deaths. In fact, so many of the generals wanted to be closer to the fighting they had to be banned from going over the top because they kept getting killed. The experience required to be a general was too significant to lose.

Source BBC History - [www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/26936615\\_10/09/14](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/26936615_10/09/14)



**ON THIS DAY 13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER - The 317<sup>th</sup> day of the year in the Gregorian calendar, 48 days remain until the end of the year.**

**1002** English king Ethelred II (the 'Unready') launches 'St Brice's Day' massacre of Danish settlers

**1553** English Lady Jane Grey and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer accused of high treason

**1642** Battle at Turnham Green outside London: King Charles I vs. English parliament

**1789** Ben Franklin writes "Nothing . . . certain but death & taxes"

**1841** James Braid, Scottish Surgeon & 'Gentleman Scientist', first sees a demonstration of animal magnetism, which leads to his study of the subject he eventually calls hypnosis

**1851** Telegraph connection between London-Paris linked

**1887** Bloody Sunday clashes in central London - a demonstration against unemployment, coercion in Ireland and to demand the release of MP William O'Brien, imprisoned for incitement as a result of an incident in the Irish Land War

**1901** The Caister Lifeboat Disaster occurred off the coast of Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk, during what became known as the "Great Storm" which caused havoc down the East coasts of England and Scotland. Eight men lost their lives.

**1913** 1st modern elastic brassiere patented by Mary Phelps Jacob

**1916** Prime Minister of Australia Billy Hughes is expelled from the Labour Party over his support for conscription

**1954** Great Britain defeats France to capture the first ever Rugby League World Cup in Paris in front of around 30,000 spectators

**1969** Quintuplets born: Britain's first live quintuplets born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at Queen Charlotte's maternity hospital in London

# RAFFLE

***DON'T FORGET TO BUY YOUR RAFFLE TICKET TONIGHT -  
SEE BARBARA STEAD - WINNERS WILL BE DRAWN AFTER  
TONIGHT'S TALK - GOOD LUCK!***

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## **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**