



12TH DECEMBER 2019

ISSUE NUMBER 74

Sevenoaks Newsletter

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



Welcome to NWKFHS Sevenoaks Branch and to our new venue.

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Otford Memorial Hall, High Street, Otford, TN14 5PQ. Doors open at 7.15pm, meeting starts at 8pm. There is free car parking after 6.30 pm - 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 £2.00 donation to the society's funds.

NO MEETING IN JANUARY **NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING**

13TH FEBRUARY

"The Apothecary's Garden" Speaker - Toni Mount

Medieval apothecaries were the equivalent of our modern pharmacists. An apothecary's shop was full of various cures, mostly prepared by the Apothecary, who was usually a trusted member of the community; but at times, they were accused of practising magic or witchcraft. In an age before folk had easy access to doctors and when hospitals were religious foundations, more interested in curing your soul than your body, the apothecary was an ordinary person's best hope of a cure or relief from an illness. Because apothecaries saw different people with various illnesses each day, most had a huge knowledge of the human body and herbal remedies. Do come along to this talk to find out more.

OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

BROMLEY - 18th JANUARY 2020

"Catching Up With Family Search" - Speaker Sharon Hintze

The familysearch.org website has billions of names across thousands of collections. Find out about the databases which have been added, how to find this information, and how to best use the website.

DARTFORD - 11th JANUARY 2020

"The History of Buttons" - Speaker Alison Ellman-Brown

There is a wealth of history around buttons and their manufacture. Button collectors can be found in many fields, such as fashion, uniform buttons including military and livery, hunt, sporting, police, yacht clubs, golf clubs, shipping and transport buttons. I expect this talk will give us with an surprising appreciate of the history of buttons.

12TH NOVEMBER - THIS EVENING'S TALK

"Christmas. A Celebratory History"

In an uplifting presentation, Andy uncovers the fascinating background to the festive season. From the ancient ceremonies of light in the darkness, to the marking of the birth of a messiah, mid-December has long been a time for rejoicing. Yet Christmas traditions have splintered into many guises and seasonal celebration was even banned in Puritan times. Andy shows why, for all the modern commercialisation, Christmas has survived and still has meaning for us today. ?

Speaker - Andy Thomas

KENT EVENTS

7th JANUARY – HORRIBLE HISTORY OF HEXTABLE. Explore 'the dark side' of a local village pre 1066 to the present day
SWANLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ALEXANDRA SUITE ST MARY'S ROAD SWANLEY BR8 7BU

Speaker: Esme Hodge. Time 7.30 PM, (Doors open 7pm). Non- Members £2.00 (Note this is a new venue)

25TH JANUARY - 2000 Years of Fortification in Kent

KEMSING HERITAGE CENTRE, ST EDITH HALL, KEMSING, KENT, TN15 6NA

Speaker: Sir Paul Britton. Time 7.30pm, Visitors £2.50

1ST FEBRUARY - "THE CEMETERIES OF SOUTH LONDON" - Speaker BRIAN PARSONS

NWKFHS, DARTFORD BRANCH, Dartford Science & Technology College, Heath Lane, Dartford, Kent DA1 2LY

15TH FEBRUARY - "DIG FOR VICTORY" - SPEAKER RUSSELL BOWES

NWKFHS, BROMLEY BRANCH, BROMLEY METHODIST CHURCH, COLLEGE ROAD, BROMLEY, BR1 3NS

A GUIDED WALK OF KNOLE PARK ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, 11AM-1PM.

Discover more about the ancient parkland, understand its seasons and when and where to return to enjoy the seasonal changes. Meet at 10.45am at the walk sign near the Outdoor Cafe. Bring comfortable, grippy footwear and clothing suitable for the weather. Both cafes will be open on New Year's Day.

Children and families are very welcome to attend. Dogs on leads are welcome. This walk is unsuitable for wheelchairs.

This is a free event and booking is not required. Car parking charges still apply (£4 for non-members, free for NT members).

For more information, contact 01732 462100 or knole@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Society of Genalogists planned Seasonal closures:

Thursday 19 December - closes 6pm.

Christmas 2019 & New Year holidays and Stocktaking 2020:

Close at 3pm on Tuesday 24 December and reopen Thursday 9 January.



Phoebe Hessel

One fact is undisputed about the life of Phoebe Hessel is that it ended on 12 December 1821 when she was 108 years old. As for the rest, well, the events of her remarkable life, though substantially accepted, are still open to differing accounts.

She was born in East London in 1713 and first entered official records in 1728 when she enlisted in the army to serve with the Fifth Foot Regiment. Women could not serve as soldiers, of course, and there are two versions of how and why this came about.

The first has it that Phoebe was young when her mother died and her father struggled to look after her. This turned into a crisis when he was called up for active service. Desperate times call for desperate measures and he decided to disguise Phoebe as a boy so that he could take her with him. A completely different account says that Phoebe was in love with a soldier named Samuel

Golding and joined the army at 15 to be with him. Whichever tale is true, it is a fact that Phoebe served with the regiment for 17 years, her fellow soldiers – except, presumably, Samuel Golding – apparently blissfully unaware that she was a woman.

Her military career took her across Europe and to the Caribbean, culminating in the Battle of Fontenoy where the total casualty rate of 17,000 was the highest in Western Europe for half a century. Phoebe was wounded in the arm by a bayonet during the battle but it was only when Golding was also wounded and invalided home that she decided it was time to quit. Allegedly, she went to the commanding officer's wife and revealed her secret, after which she was discharged. Or so the story goes. Another claims that her sex was revealed when her tunic was removed for a whipping after she had committed an unknown offence. "Strike and be damned!" she is said to have shouted, though no punishment was administered by an astonished whip-wielding soldier assigned to the task.

Phoebe married Golding and lived with him in Plymouth for about 20 years. They had nine children, though all but one died in infancy. After Golding's death, Phoebe moved to Brighton on the South Coast of England, where she met and married a fisherman named Thomas Hessel. She outlived him, too, and in her eighties became a local celebrity selling gingerbread, fruit and toys from a donkey as she told tales of her military service.

They came to the notice of Prince George (later Prince Regent and King George IV), who spent much time enjoying himself in Brighton. When he heard that Phoebe, in her nineties, had been forced into the workhouse, he granted her a pension of half a guinea a week – a sizeable sum in those days. The royal patronage went further: in 1820 the newly crowned king invited Phoebe to his coronation parade in Brighton.

Blind by the time of her death, Phoebe is still remembered in Brighton where her gravestone was restored in the 1970s by the Northumberland Fusiliers, the successors to her regiment.

By Ray Setterfield - Published: July 21, 2017

Phoebe Hessel's tombstone can be found at St. Nicholas Church, Brighton.

Source: <https://www.onthistoday.com/articles/king-salutes-remarkable-woman-soldier>

AGM and Family History Day 2020 Announced - Thursday 9 April 2020 - Add it to your diary now...

Venue: West Heath School, Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1SR (same venue as 2017) more details will follow.

ON THIS DAY: Nov. 14th is the 346th day of 2019 in the Gregorian calendar; 19 days left until the end of the year

- 1781** American Revolutionary War: Second Battle of Ushant: A British fleet led by HMS Victory defeats a French fleet
- 1866** Oaks explosion: at Hoyle Mill nr Stairfoot in Barnsley. The worst mining disaster in England kills 361 miners and rescuers
- 1901** Guglielmo Marconi sends the first transatlantic radio signal, from Poldhu in Cornwall to Newfoundland, Canada
- 1911** Delhi replaces Calcutta as the capital of India
- 1911** King George V of the United Kingdom and Mary of Teck are enthroned as Emperor and Empress of India
- 1915** Frank Sinatra, American singer, actor, and producer is born (d. 1998)
- 1941** WWII - The UK declares war on Bulgaria. Hungary & Romania declare war on the USA. India declares war on Japan
- 1941** Adolf Hitler declares the imminent extermination of the Jews at a meeting in the Reich Chancellery
- 1956** Beginning of the Irish Republican Army's "Border Campaign"
- 1957** Jerry Lee Lewis weds his cousin Myra Gale Brown, 13, while still married to his 1st wife Jane Mitcham
- 1963** Kenya gains its independence from the United Kingdom
- 1988** The Clapham Junction rail crash kills thirty-five and injures hundreds after two collisions of three commuter trains—
One of the worst train crashes in the United Kingdom.



*Sevenoaks Committee would like to wish you all a
Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful
New Year - we look forward to seeing you again in
February 2020*

The Sevenoaks Committee
Branch Chair - Barbara Attwaters
Committee Members
Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden,
Bernie Wilkins, Barbara Stead,
Sandra Marchant, Bill Chopping