



13TH FEBRUARY 2020

ISSUE NUMBER 75

# Sevenoaks Newsletter

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



**Welcome to NWKFHS Sevenoaks Branch**

**NOTE A CHANGE OF VENUE FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2020**

**We will be meeting at the Otford Methodist Hall, High Street, Otford, Sevenoaks, TN14 5PH.**

**Doors open at 7.15pm, meeting starts at 8pm, and refreshments are available. There is free car parking after 6.30 pm by the Memorial Hall which is a short walk to Otford Methodist Hall. 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.**

## NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING

**12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH - Annual Meeting +**

**"Women and the Official War Artists' Scheme of WW1 and WW2"**

**Speaker Carol Harris**

British official war artists were a select group of artists employed to produce specific works, during WW1 and WW2, and select military actions in the post-war period. Appointed by governments for information or propaganda purposes and to record events on the battlefield. They will have depicted some aspect of war through art; this might be a pictorial record or it might commemorate how war shapes lives. They create a visual account of war by showing its impact as men and women are shown waiting, preparing, fighting, suffering and celebrating. They illustrate and record many aspects of war, and the individual's experience of war, whether allied or enemy, service or civilian, military or political, social or cultural.

## OTHER BRANCH MEETINGS

**BROMLEY - 15th FEBRUARY 2020**

**"Dig for Victory" - Speaker Russell Bowes**

Dig for Victory looks at the period when England's gardens took on the might of Hitler's armies. Gardens great and small, public and private saw clematis give way to cabbage and roses replaced by radishes. We discuss the role of the "forgotten army" - the Land Girls - who helped to put food on the tables of the nation, advice and propaganda given to gardeners in print and over the airwaves, the role of the allotment and the public park, the arrival of the Anderson Shelter and the story of the century's most famous rose.

**DARTFORD - 7th MARCH 2020**

**"The History of Dartford Grammar School" - Speaker Dr David Lepine**

The school was founded in 1576 by Edward Gwyn, a merchant; William Vaughan, a philanthropist and landowner; and William D'Aeth, a lawyer. Lessons were initially given in the High Street above the Corn Market house, which was demolished in 1769. The school moved to its present location in 1864.

## **13TH FEBRUARY - THIS EVENING'S TALK - "The Apothecary's Garden"**

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.

**Speaker - Toni Mount**

## **KENT EVENTS**

**19th FEBRUARY - D-DAY REVISITED**

**OTFORD AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OTFORD MEMORIAL HALL, HIGH STREET, OTFORD, TN14 5PQ**

Speaker: Tony Sharp. Open 7.30 pm start 8pm. Visitors £3.00 (there is no charge for students).

**21ST FEBRUARY - 'THE SEVENOAKS SAVINGS BANK FRAUD 1888'**

**SEVENOAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SEVENOAKS, TN13 1JA**

Speaker Dr Iain Taylor - Time 8pm - Non-Members £3.00

**28TH FEBRUARY - MANOR HOUSES**

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

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

**3rd MARCH - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND FUN QUIZ**

**SWANLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ALEXANDRA SUITE ST MARY'S ROAD SWANLEY BR8 7BU**

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

## **KNOLE ATTIC TOURS (MARCH, APRIL AND MAY)**

On this tour of Knole's often-forgotten attic spaces, our knowledgeable guides will reveal the stories behind centuries of graffiti, lost 17th century letters, witch-marks and a curiously sloped floor, and more.

Price £7.50 booking is required. Car parking charges still apply (£4 for non-members, free for NT members).

For more information, contact 01732 462100 or visit <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/f6b798c4-9125-4a25-8dea-1628815720f2/pages/details>

## 27th January Holocaust Memorial Day

The Holocaust was the World War II genocide of the European Jews between 1941 and 1945. Across German-occupied Europe, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews; 90% of Polish Jews, and just about two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. The murders were carried out in pogroms and mass shootings; by a policy of extermination through work in concentration camps and the use of gas chambers and gas vans, in German extermination camps, chiefly in Auschwitz, Bełżec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibór, and Treblinka in occupied Poland; commonly under the deceptive guise of 'Resettlement'.

As you know this year was the 75th Holocaust Memorial Day and I went along to the Stag in Sevenoaks to watch a documentary: *'Helen Mirren presents Anne Frank: Parallel Stories, marking the 90th birthday of Anne Frank. One secret diary'*. Also in December last year I took a trip to Gdansk and while there I visited 'The Museum of the Second World War'. My two friends and I spent six and a half hours walking through the museum, without stopping. So many heartbreaking and thought provoking stories, we left with the sense of incredulity that it was possible that humans could imagine the massacre and persecution of a group people, and be capable of carrying it out, just because...

So I too would like to remember another young girl who like Anne Frank had a 'parallel story', their paths did not cross but their stories and many, many others leave an undeniable scar in our recent history.



**Rutka Laskier** was purported to be born in the Free City of Danzig June 12, 1929 to Jakub Laskier and Dwojra nee Hempel. According to more recent discoveries Rutka was born in Krakow, where her parents stayed for a while. In the early 1930s the girl and her parents, Jakub and Dwojra, moved from Gdańsk to Będzin. Her family was prosperous, Jakub worked as a bank officer and her grandfather served as co-owner of Laskier-Kleinberg & Co, a milling company that owned and operated a grist mill. The Southern Polish city of Będzin, is said to be where her paternal grandparents came from.

*In 1939, the municipal government was taken over by the German Nazi Party (NSDAP) following the city's surrender during the German invasion of Poland. It quickly began to engage in anti-Semitic violence and state-sponsored discrimination. Many Jews were fired from their positions and fled Danzig (Gdansk).*

Following the German invasion of Poland and while in the Będzin Ghetto, Rutka Laskier, age 14, wrote a 60-page diary recording several months of her life under the Nazi rule in 1943. From 19 January to 24 April 1943, without her family's knowledge, Laskier kept a diary in an ordinary school notebook, writing in both ink and pencil, she wrote of her hopes and dreams and her disappointments, making entries periodically. In it, she discussed atrocities she witnessed committed by the Nazis, and described daily life in the ghetto, as well as innocent teenage love interests. She also wrote about the gas chambers at the concentration camps, indicating that the horrors of the camps had filtered back to those still living in the ghettos. The diary begins with the entry "I cannot grasp that it is already 1943, four years since this hell began." One of the final entries says "If only I could say, it's over, you die only once... But I can't, because despite all these atrocities, I want to live, and wait for the following day."

She describes how her faith in God is no more; "The little faith I used to have has been completely shattered. If God existed, He would have certainly not permitted that human beings be thrown alive into furnaces, and the heads of little toddlers be smashed with gun butts or shoved into sacks and gassed to death."

Rutka was deported from the ghetto to Auschwitz where the family were separated from her father who never saw his family again. She was believed to have died in a gas chamber, along with her mother and brother, upon arrival at Auschwitz concentration camp in August 1943. However, when her diary emerged it was revealed that she was not immediately sent to the gas chambers and perhaps lived until December 1943. Zofia Minc a fellow Auschwitz prisoner and survivor, testified:

*"My colleague, 17-year-old Rutka Laskier from Będzin, slept next to me in the block. She was so beautiful that even Dr. Mengele paid attention to her. Then an epidemic of typhus and cholera broke out. Rutka became ill with cholera and within a few hours she had changed up to be unrecognizable. She was the shadow of herself. I took her in a rubbish wheelbarrow to the crematorium. She pleaded me to take her to the wires so she could throw herself on them and the electric current would kill her, but an SS man with a rifle followed us and would not let it happen."*

While in Będzin, Laskier had spoken of her diary to 21 year old Stanisława Sapińska, whom she had befriended after Laskier's family moved into a home owned by Sapińska's Roman Catholic family, which had been confiscated by the Nazis so that it could be included in the ghetto. She asked Sapińska to help her hide the diary, and Sapińska showed her a hiding place under the double flooring in a staircase, between the first and second floors. After the ghetto was evacuated and all its inhabitants sent to the death camp, Sapińska returned to the house and retrieved the diary. She kept it in her home library for 63 years and did not share it with anyone but members of her immediate family. In 2005, Adam Szydlowski, the chairman of the Centre of Jewish Culture of the Zagłębie Region of Poland, was told by one of Sapińska's nieces about the existence of the diary. He obtained a photocopy of the diary and was instrumental in the publishing of it.

The diary, which has been authenticated by Holocaust scholars and survivors, has been compared to the diary of Anne Frank. Rutka's father, like Anne Franks, was the only member of the family who survived the Holocaust. Following World War II, he emigrated to Israel, where he remarried and had another daughter, Zahava Scherz; he died in 1986. According to Zahava Scherz he never told her about Rutka, until at the age of 14 she discovered a photo album which contained a picture of Rutka with her younger brother Henius. Zahava asked her father who they were and he answered her truthfully, but never spoke of it again. She went on to explain that she only learned of the existence of Rutka's diary in 2006, and she expressed how much it has meant to her to be able to get to know the young woman she regarded as her half-sister.

Coincidentally, Rutka Laskier was born the same day as Anne Frank.

The following link will take you to an interesting comparison of Anne Frank and Rutka Laskier's stories highlighting the parallels of their common fate: [https://www.holandiabeztajemnic.pl/?page\\_id=34623&lang=en](https://www.holandiabeztajemnic.pl/?page_id=34623&lang=en)

This further link will take you to a BBC documentary which is a poignant story revealing the journey of her half sister Zahava and her discovery of Rutka's story:

<https://www2.bing.com/videos/search?q=rutka+laskier&docid=607992125360442263&mid=AD5C34A0A247AF07ACD1AD5C34A0A247AF07ACD1&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Sources: [https://www.holandiabeztajemnic.pl/?page\\_id=34623&lang=en](https://www.holandiabeztajemnic.pl/?page_id=34623&lang=en) 09.02.20  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rutka\\_Laskier#cite\\_note-JerusalemPost-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rutka_Laskier#cite_note-JerusalemPost-2) 09.02.2020  
<https://text.npr.org/s.php?sid=11603688> 09.02.20

**GRO** permits users of FreeBMD to take screenshots of entries and share them online freeBMD is one of a suite of free to use, forever, family history database - users are already free to share screenshots of freeCen (nineteenth-century censuses) and freeREG (registers of baptism, marriage and burial from the Church of England and other bodies). The Gro has now given permission for free uK Genealogy to take screenshots of entries and share the online. free uK Genealogy is a registered charity, where thousands of volunteers - transcribers, developers and others - make historic documents freely accessible to all on its websites [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk), [www.freecen.org.uk](http://www.freecen.org.uk), and [www.freereg.org.uk](http://www.freereg.org.uk). Source: SOG newsletter - 09.02.20

**IrishGenealogy.ie** uploads Marriage Registers 1845-1864 Images of Ireland's Civil Registration Marriage registers from 1845-1864 have been added to the site. This means all civil marriage registers from 1845 to 1944 are now online for free.

**Note** that pre-1864 civil records relate only to non-Catholic marriages. Irish civil records now available on the site are:

- Births: 1864-1919 (images and index)
- Marriages: 1845-1944 (images and index)
- Deaths: 1864-1877 (index only); 1878-1969 (images and index)

Claire Santry, Irish Genealogy News - [www.irishgenealogynews.com/2020/01/irishgenealogyie-uploads-marriage.html](http://www.irishgenealogynews.com/2020/01/irishgenealogyie-uploads-marriage.html)

Source: SOG newsletter - 09.02.20

## **Family Tree Live 2020 - The show has a WW2 focus this year, in honour of the VE Day 75th anniversary.**

**Organised by UK Family History Magazine Family Tree in partnership with genealogy experts from the Family History Federation, Family Tree Live takes place at London's Alexandra Palace on 17 and 18 April 2020.**

The show boasts family and military history lectures, workshops, one to-one advice sessions, exhibition stands, living history and family fun, all included in the price of your ticket. Lectures ideal for those tracing relatives during the 1940s include Keith Gregson's Family records for Second World War service in which the stalwart genealogist and archivist will be looking at the kinds of records that might have been kept by both males and females who served in WW2. Military historian Graham bandy will be presenting Identifying your ancestors' Second World War military photos, giving a fascinating look at the clues to spot to help you trace your World War II service personnel, while fellow military researcher Simon Fowler will talk on Sources for World War 2 Army ancestors, looking at the essential paper trail resources to help you trace your family heroes. Tragically, many with Jewish ancestry will have family members affected by the Holocaust. If you have Jewish ancestors, then Michael Tobias's Researching your Jewish ancestry on the internet lecture will be a perfect place to start tracing your family.

The workshop programme will also appeal to those tracing the stories of WW2 relatives. The varied topics include Why is the 1939 Register invaluable? with Dr Penny Walters, Jewish ancestors with Jeanette Rosenberg and How to use Newspapers for Family History with Keith Gregson. The workshops are small groups led by a tutor and places go quickly, so organisers advise booking them as early as possible.

In addition, a team from the Ministry of Defence, which holds WW2 service records and medals, will be exhibiting and answering specific queries. and living historians from Basingstoke's Milestones Museum will also be there with treasures and handling boxes from its collections to explore.

Exhibitors also include the British Library, the National Library of Wales, Royal British Legion, Jersey Heritage, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, families in British India Society (FIBIS), and a wonderful array of other family history organisations to help visitors trace their roots.

The Association of Genealogists and researchers in archives (AGRA) will be running bookable advice sessions while show sponsors FamilySearch and FamilyTreeDna (look out for the special DNA lectures and workshops if this is your interest area) will have plenty to offer family history enthusiasts of all levels of experience.

Tickets to the event that celebrates all things family history cost only £13 a day (children free), including all lectures, workshops, one-to-one advice sessions, exhibitions and living history entertainment. It is ideal for everyone interested in their heritage, so head to Family Tree Live this April to learn and treasure your family's story.

Find out more and book tickets at [www.Familytreelive.co.uk](http://www.Familytreelive.co.uk)

Source: SOG newsletter - 09.02.20

**What is the PERiodical Source Index?** The Periodical Source Index (PERSI) is the largest subject index for genealogy and local history periodical articles in the world. Created, maintained and expanded by the Allen County Public Library (ACPL), PERSI is a valuable resource for genealogists and family historians. Seasoned and professional genealogists know all about PERSI, and they've been using this little secret to their advantage for years - but Findmypast and the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center have been working to evolve PERSI in a major way, making it invaluable for everyone interested in their past. See link for full details: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/search?title=periodical>

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

Venue: West Heath School, Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1SR (same venue as 2017)

*If you haven't booked yet, please do so as soon as possible so our volunteer organisers know the numbers to plan for.*

*There is a deadline for advising the caterers of numbers, should you wish to book lunch or afternoon refreshments.*

The booking form, including lunch choices and costs for lunch and afternoon tea/coffee and slice of cake (or of course you can bring your own lunch etc), are on the yellow insert in the December Journal. Or download the booking form at:

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/community/meetings-house-groups/family-history-day-agm-2020>

## **NWKHFS - NEW WORKSHOPS FOR 2020**

### **15 July 2020 – Drawing Charts and Trees by Hand as a Research Tool**

This workshop will explain how to draw by hand a Family Group sheet (FGS) chart to understand the time line and relationships of a family. It will discuss the symbols and abbreviations used on charts and diagrams. Gaps on charts and re-occurring data may indicate trends that suggests future research needed. The workshop will also look at other types of charts including 'Drop Charts', 'Total Descent Charts', 'Birth Briefs' and 'Mind Maps'.

**David Cufley**

### **23 September 2020 – Who are the Travellers?**

The workshop will cover the background and history of Travellers and then how to identify them and research them in our family trees. Also looking at the different groups including Irish Travellers and Romanies who are separate ethnic groups.

**Carol Mellors**

**English Heritage podcasts** - If you have a spare half an hour you might be interested to listen to one of the English Heritage podcasts. Episode 44 is '[Dover Castle's secret Cold War tunnels](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/podcast/)'. In this episode they will take you on a tour, of Dover Castle in Kent, of the 'Dumpy' level of its secret underground tunnels with Cold War expert Mark Bennett. Once fully equipped and designed to keep those inside 'safe' from nuclear fall-out, the austere rooms and tunnels are now largely devoid of their equipment, furnishings, fixtures and fittings, but still retain a chilling air of the Cold War. Discover when the tunnels were built, why Dover Castle was selected and how you can take a tour of the tunnels today.

To find out more go to <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/podcast/>

**ON THIS DAY: February 13th is the 44th day of 2020 in the Gregorian calendar; 322 days left until the end of the year**

**1322** The central tower of Ely Cathedral falls on the night of 12th–13th

**1462** The Treaty of Westminster is finalised between Edward IV of England and the Scottish Lord of the Isles

**1542** Catherine Howard, the fifth wife of Henry VIII of England, is executed for adultery

**1689** William and Mary are proclaimed co-rulers of England

**1945** WW2: The siege of Budapest ends with the unconditional surrender of German & Hungarian forces to the Red Army

**1945** WW2: Royal Air Force bombers are dispatched to Dresden, to attack the city with a massive aerial bombardment

**1990** German reunification: An agreement is reached on a two-stage plan to reunite Germany

**2008** Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd makes a historic apology to the Indigenous Australians and the Stolen Generations

**2017** Kim Jong-nam, brother of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un, is assassinated at Kuala Lumpur International Airport

### **The Sevenoaks Committee**

**Branch Chair - Barbara Attwaters**

**Committee Members**

**Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins, Barbara Stead, Sandra Marchant, Bill Chopping**