



10 DECEMBER 2022

ISSUE NUMBER 88

# 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

Our meetings are held at Otford Memorial Hall, 28A High Street, Otford, TN14 5PQ

*Doors open at 1045 am, meeting starts at 11am - Nominal parking fee*

*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 - £2.00 donation to the society's funds.*

***Sanitiser and masks available and chairs placed at a friendly distance for those concerned about Covid***

## Today's talk

10 DECEMBER 2022

### The Goose is Getting Fat! The History of Christmas Traditions

What's behind the Wassail and why do we kiss under mistletoe and let loose women into York at Christmas? Every family hones its own traditions, but mainly they are based on a central theme: filling our houses with greenery and bling, sending cards, eating too much, wearing a silly hat, singing songs and playing games that we don't bother with for the rest of the year. How has all this come about? Some are based on pagan festivities that either honoured spirits or simply helped to break up the winter. Others, such as advent calendars and crackers, are much more recent.

This talk cannot possibly cover all our traditions, but it gives a glimpse behind the scenes to see our ancestors preparing for the day, stirring-up puddings and dragging Yule logs into the house on Christmas Eve and the rituals that went with it. We see Lords of Misrule lording it over rowdy parties, how pantomime developed and how a few carollers sent out a coded message.

**Speaker IMOGEN CORRIGAN**

## NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING

**14 JANUARY 2023 - Oh No It Isn't! A history of pantomime**

What is it about Pantomime that attracts us to this strange concoction of fairy tales, dance, jokes, songs and cross-dressing? And what is it really like to play the back end of a Pantomime Cow?

All this, and the answer to whether something really is behind you will be answered in this festive talk about one of the great British Christmas traditions.

Pete works extensively as a professional theatre director and filmmaker and all his talks are accompanied by visuals and include time for questions and answers.

**Speaker PETE ALLEN**

## DARTFORD BRANCH MEETING

**7 JANUARY 2023 - Tracing My Ancestors During Lockdown**

When Clare Walker set out to research her husband's ancestors, she never imagined the astonishing stories she would unearth and the many frustrating mysteries that would both enthrall and frustrate her. She also didn't bargain on the shocks she would have to deliver to her family: ancestors who were executed (they backed the wrong side); murdered in their bed by a best friend; a missing RAF crewman; a doctor who left his young wife and two small daughters to travel to Australia where he drowned; and a Gaiety Girl who voyaged to South Africa with her wedding dress in her suitcase to marry a "stage-door Johnny"

Clare Walker is a former journalist, author, and pilot with over 30 years' experience of thrilling audiences with her engaging, entertaining, and informative talks on a wide range of topics. Clare's presentations are highly visual, using rarely seen historical footage, photos and fascinating anecdotes and are based on in depth interviews and research.

**Speaker CLARE WALKER**

## 26 JANUARY - ZOOM TALK – A GRANDMOTHER'S LEGACY - MY FAMILY HISTORY WITH JENNY MALLIN

As a public speaker, Jenny delivers a fascinating insight into five generations of her family who lived during the days of the British Raj in India. Seen through the eyes of their granddaughter, Jenny captures a period of British history through her Powerpoint presentations with extensive collection of family sepia photographs, and manages to bring her stories to life: her grandmothers' lives as memsahibs and the "legacy" that Jenny has been given, a 170 year old cookbook penned by Jenny's great 4 x grandmother in 1844 when she was aged just 15 and a newlywed bride, married to an English schoolmaster.

Jenny also describes her grandfathers, uncles and relatives who served in the British Army as early as 1798, The Royal Indian Navy, the Railways in Madras, a co-founder of an English Medium School in India in the early 18th century and a great uncle who rose up through the ranks of the ICS to become Postmaster General in the telegraph industry.

Now a writer, Jenny has had a successful career at the BBC in television production. Jenny has travelled extensively throughout India and has also visited many other countries, including Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, and America. Her travelogues and written anecdotes of her journeys are much enjoyed by her family and friends.

A collection of talks based on generations of her British Raj Family with fascinating sepia photographs and interesting facts about the history of the infrastructure of India.

North West Kent FHS is a charity and membership fees and donations are an important part of our income. If you are not a NWKFHS member, please consider making a donation via our web shop towards the cost of our Zoom licence & speaker's fee

Link to meeting to be advised, check our website for updates: [www.nwkhfs.org.uk](http://www.nwkhfs.org.uk)

Time 19:00 for 19:30 start - Capacity 100

**Please visit our website for details of further workshops and updates *and sign up for our free twice monthly Society eNewsletter***

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### **Society Library is back to pre-pandemic opening hours**

The library is now open on Wednesdays from 10am to 4pm and there is no need for booking.

**Note the Library is closed Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December**

Library at: 80 Summerhouse Drive, Joydens Wood, Kent DA5 2EE (On the corner of Summerhouse Drive and Eden Road) Parking in Eden Road or other nearby roads.

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### **Membership Renewals Due 1<sup>st</sup> January**

You will find a renewal form in the December 2022 Journal which requires your prompt attention unless you pay by standing order. Please complete the form as soon as possible and hand or post it to the Renewals Secretary.

**Note** this does not apply to new members who joined the Society on or after 1<sup>st</sup> October and who are not due to pay a further subscription for up to 14 months.

Please write or email to the Renewals Secretary to let us know if you are not going to renew, it saves time and expense in sending out unnecessary reminders. Email address – [renewals@nwkhfs.org.uk](mailto:renewals@nwkhfs.org.uk)

Any member may pay by Credit Card online – please go to the NWK FHS page at [www.genfair.co.uk](http://www.genfair.co.uk) or [www.prishchest.com](http://www.prishchest.com) to renew by this method. **Note** there may be a fee for this service.

All cheque payments must be in Sterling (GBP)

Those members already paying by Standing Order need take no further action.

Many thanks

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### **ON THIS DAY: December 10 is the 345<sup>th</sup> day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 21 days left until the end of the year**

**1317** The "Nyköping Banquet": King Birger of Sweden treacherously seizes his two brothers Valdemar, Duke of Finland and Eric, Duke of Södermanland, who were subsequently starved to death in the dungeon of Nyköping Castle

**1541** Thomas Culpeper & Francis Dereham are executed for having affairs with Catherine Howard, Queen of England & wife of Henry VIII

**1582** France begins use of Gregorian calendar

**1652** Defeat at the Battle of Dungeness causes the Commonwealth of England to reform its navy

**1768** The first edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica is published

**1799** France adopts the metre as its official unit of length

**1891** Nelly Sachs born, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966, and a voice for Jewish heritage and loss after WWII (d.1970)

**1901** The first Nobel Prize ceremony is held in Stockholm on the fifth anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death

**1936** Edward VIII signs the Instrument of Abdication

**1953** British Prime Minister Winston Churchill receives the Nobel Prize in Literature

**1993** The last shift leaves Wearmouth Colliery in Sunderland. The closure of the 156-year-old pit marks the end of the old County Durham coalfield, which had been in operation since the Middle Ages

**2020** Barbara Windsor, English actress died this day (b. 1937)



## The Legend of The Mistletoe

Mistletoe is one of the most famous symbols of Christmas, and most recognisable; it is one of the most sacred and magical plants in Christian folklore. The sprigs of this plant are extensively used in Christmas decorations, and it is believed that the plant can protect the house from lightning and fire. Consequently, many people leave the sprigs all the year round. There is a traditional belief that mistletoe is a plant of peace and that a kiss under this plant ensures undying love and friendship. The belief that no lady standing under decorated mistletoe can refuse to be kissed, is obviously a major attraction for young men. A kiss under mistletoe is often interpreted as a proposal of marriage. Although most of these beliefs and superstitions are of pagan significance, they are still prevalent in all their glory; the legend of mistletoe being a widely celebrated one.

The mystical power of mistletoe, and the tradition of kissing under this plant, owes its origin to the legend of Goddess Frigga and her son Balder. Frigga was the Goddess of Love and her son, Balder, was the God of the Summer Sun. Once, Balder dreamt of his death. He was obviously worried and told his mother about the strange dream. Frigga was worried not only for the life of her son but also for the life on Earth because she knew that without Balder, all life on Earth would come to an end. Thus, she did her utmost to avoid such a mishap by going everywhere and appealing to every being in air, water, fire and earth, to promise her that they would never harm her son. She was promised the safety of her son by every animal and plant under and above the Earth.

However, Loki, the God of Evil, who was an enemy of Balder and always had evil designs in his mind, was aware that there was one plant that Frigga had overlooked. It grew on apple and oak trees and was known as Mistletoe. Loki made an arrow and placed a sprig of this plant at its tip. He then beguiled Hoder, the blind brother of Balder and the God of Winter and made him shoot this arrow at Balder. Balder immediately died and everybody was worried as the Earth turned cold and life became dreary. For the next three days, every creature tried to bring Balder back to life, but he was revived only by Frigga and with the help of mistletoe. Her tears on the plant became pearly white berries and she blessed it such that anyone who stands under the mistletoe would never be harmed and would be entitled to a kiss as a token of love.

Source: [The Legend of The Mistletoe - Christmas Legends - Stories For Christmas \(worldofchristmas.net\)](http://The Legend of The Mistletoe - Christmas Legends - Stories For Christmas (worldofchristmas.net))  
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### HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE ON CHRISTMAS DAY

#### 800 AD: Charlemagne crowned 'Emperor of the Romans'

On Christmas Day 800 AD, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne the 'Emperor of the Romans', reviving the title some 300 hundred years after the fall of the ancient Western Roman Empire

#### 1066 AD: William the Conqueror crowned King of England

On the 25th December 1066 in Westminster Abbey, William was crowned King of England becoming the country's first Norman king, ending a period of over 600 years of Anglo-Saxon rule. The Norman era brought about huge cultural, social and political changes that would have a massive impact on English as well as European history

#### 1642: Isaac Newton was born

Born on Christmas Day 1642, his contribution to humanity via our understanding of the world around us cannot be understated

#### 1776: George Washington crossed the Delaware River

The American Revolutionary War: In dire need of a victory, General George Washington, the future first president of the United States, led his 2,400 strong army in a dangerous and bold operation across the icy Delaware River in the night of the 25th of December 1776. The raid was a success, the tide of war had been turned and American history was changed forever

#### 1914: Christmas Day truce in the trenches

The First World War: A moment on Christmas Day 1914 that gave many a hope that humanity could still exist even on the killing fields. British, French and German troops spontaneously decided to put down their arms and met in No Man's Land to exchange gifts, sing songs and perhaps (historians still debate this one) kick around a football together

#### 1977: Charlie Chaplin died

With a career spanning more than 75 years, the comedic British actor is regarded by many as one of the most significant figures in the history of the film industry. On the 25 December 1977, Chaplin passed away in his sleep at the age of 88

#### 1991: The resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev marked the fall of the Soviet Union

Formed in 1922, the Soviet Union played a monumental role in global politics during most of the 20th century. On Christmas Day 1991 the last president of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, resigned from his post. The very next day, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. As one era ended, another began for Russia, under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin

Source: [Historical events that took place on Christmas Day | Sky HISTORY TV Channel](https://www.history.com/news/christmas-history)

*Sevenoaks Committee would like to wish you and your families a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year - we look forward to seeing you again in 2023*



**The Sevenoaks Committee: Branch Chair - Bill Chopping Committee**

**Members – Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins, Sandra Marchant, Barbara Attwaters**