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ISSUE NUMBER 100

Sevenoaks Newsletter

THE NORTH WEST KENT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY, SEVENOAKS, KENT
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 10:45 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.

Guests we appreciate a £1.00 - £2.00 donation to the society's funds.

We hope you enjoy your visit.

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

Today's talk Christmas on the Home Front 1939 - 1945 with Mike Brown and Christmas nibbles

The outbreak of war in 1939 saw the disappearance of many traditional British celebrations. Guy Fawkes' Night went immediately – gunpowder production was needed for the war effort and bonfires contravened the blackout. Summer holidays became a thing of the past and Easter all but disappeared as chocolate – and even real eggs – went 'on the ration'. Despite this, the nation remained determined to celebrate Christmas as a time of family and community; a time when war could be set aside, if only for a day.

Drawing upon personal recollections, contemporary Mass Observation reports, newspaper articles, advertisements, and personal and archive photographs, Mike Brown looks at each wartime Christmas on the British Home Front, from 1939 to 1944. He explores how people celebrated Christmas despite the problems of shortages, rationing, the blackout, Luftwaffe raids and the absence of family members who had been called up or evacuated.

Life in Britain changed dramatically as the war progressed; the annual celebration of Christmas provides fascinating yearly 'snapshots', illuminating the changes over six years of conflict.

Mike Brown is an experienced speaker whose TV credits include Time Team and Timewatch. His entertaining, seasonal talk will be enhanced by a collection of artefacts such as ration books, uniforms and toys.

Speaker MIKE BROWN

NEXT SEVENOAKS BRANCH MEETING

13th January - 1066 The Battles of Fulford Gate and Stamford Bridge

While King Harold is down on the South Coast, waiting for an expected invasion by Duke William of Normandy, the north lies unprotected and ripe for invasion by Harald Hardrada's Vikings. Such riches, such wealth, such land there for the taking and if the Norwegians get a foothold in England before William it will be much harder for the Duke to gain complete control over the Kingdom.

On September 9th the invasion fleet assembled at the River Tyne in Northumbria to sail down the coast to the Humber.

Any rumours of civilised Vikings are far from the truth it is revealed. It is as if the clock has been turned back nearly 300 hundred years as towns south along the Northumbrian coast are sacked and ravaged. Viking by name, Viking by nature as the old saying goes.

Battle lines are drawn, first at Fulford Gate and later at Stamford Bridge, battles that led to the death of Harald Hardrada and Tostig Godwinson and preceded the Battle of Hastings.

This talk reviews the battles and their unforeseen and devastating effect on the events of 1066.

**Speaker DAVID
CLARKE**

DARTFORD BRANCH MEETING

6TH January 2023 - Boxers, Bandits and a Blind Beggar, (A History of Bethnal Green)

Bethnal Green was a medieval hamlet to the east of the City of London long before the term "East End" was invented.

It became popular with rich merchants in the 16th century, but immigration began in the 18th century and Bethnal Green soon developed into one of the first manufacturing districts in the area.

By the end of the 19th century foreign immigration had turned Bethnal Green into the over-populated scene of poverty which we find in the census returns. Slum clearance and post war redevelopment swept away most of these communities.

Ian Bevan is an experienced speaker who has been a regular visitor to our Society over the years.

Many of us have ancestors who lived in or passed through the East End of London and his illustrated talk will explain the history of the area and the clues which are left to show how our families lived and worked there.

Speaker IAN BEVAN

UP AND COMING LIBRARY WORKSHOPS

DNA and General Family History with Jack Ellis and Pam Goddard

17 January 10:30

Booking essential

MONTHLY ZOOM DISCUSSION GROUPS

Zoom DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln

24 January 10:30

The topic for each meeting is agreed by the members by notifying the leader through workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk.

Please visit our website for further details, dates and times www.nwkfhs.org.uk

Changes and up-to-date details will be on the website and in the e-mail information service newsletter.

Since re-opening the library post Covid the number of attendees is down. There are many reasons for this but if it is safety fears, we would like to reassure you that we will do all we can to make you feel and be safe. The tables can be spaced further apart, furthermore, we can seat you on your own table and nobody will object to you wearing a face covering.

We would be pleased to hear from any volunteers who would like to be involved with any workshops, along with any new topics that interest you. Contact us through bookings and enquiries by e-mail workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk

17TH January – Zoom Workshop – Settlement, Examinations and Removal Orders with David Cufley

We will discuss the methods of qualification for settlement and how the people were removed to another parish. Examples of the documents will be shown. The sources and archives where they may be found will be explored.

Settlement, Examinations and Removal Orders.

From 1691 Settlement could be gained to a parish who would be responsible for poor relief if they fell on hard times. The system lapsed in the 19th century.

The settlement certificates, examinations to prove settlement and what happens when a person is proved not to be of the parish are dictated by the Act. In this case removal orders would be made to be remove them back to their parish of legal settlement.

31ST January – Zoom Workshop – Breaking Down Brick Walls with David Cufley

Breaking Down Brick Walls

Brick walls are not a hurdle but a learning experience. At a 'Breaking down brick walls' workshop a member said that she thought you had to submit a research problem to attend. Not so. The workshops are designed to explain sources and how you can organise your research to help find that elusive ancestor. Other members' 'brick walls' can be of help to other family historians as the thinking process explained with the sources used can apply to everyone's research.

Methods are supported by the guides and bibliographies in the members only area of the website www.nwkfhs.org.uk (MOA) along with the recordings.



Don't forget that the suggestions at a BDBW workshops can help everyone. So come and hear how we try to solve the 'brick walls' that other members have encountered.

Having the chance to discuss the research problems we all encounter may help you solve your 'brick wall'

(Please submit ancestral brick walls by 17 January to David Cufley via workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk)

These are members only events.

Please log in from 7.15pm for both events and enjoy chatting amongst participants before the discussion starts.

As its on zoom you will need to bring your own coffee and biscuits!  

Numbers are restricted to enable all participants to ask questions, share knowledge and engage with other members.

Please reserve a place with workshop.booking@nwkfhs.org.uk including the event, title and date together with your name and membership number.

Workshop leaders freely give their time, but a donation via the web shop is appreciated:

<https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/shop/nwkfhs-shop/services/society-donation>

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



The society now has 25 recorded talks and 49 recorded workshop videos which members can view at any time. A wide variety of subjects are covered on family research, why not have a look

Some amazing facts about the history of Christmas:



The first Christmas crackers were known as 'Bangs of Expectation'

Crackers came about because confectioner Tom Smith needed a way to market French-style sweets wrapped in paper. The story goes that he was inspired to add an explosive element by the sight of a log crackling on the fire. But in reality, it was his brother who came up with the idea, possibly inspired by magic tricks he'd witnessed while working in the music halls.

Launched in the late-1840s and known as 'Bangs of Expectation', Tom Smith's crackers sparked a whole new Christmas custom, later evolving to include jokes, hats, gifts and jewellery. The company still exists today, and supplies crackers for the royal family each Christmas.

Victorian Christmas cards were the stuff of nightmares.



Christmas cards were invented by Henry Cole in 1843, and by the end of the century everyone was sending them. But the festive illustrations favoured by the Victorians were far wilder and weirder than the penguins and snowmen that adorn our cards today.

Artists produced such unusual images as: a dead robin, children riding flying bats, a man being attacked by a bear, a mouse riding a lobster, and two small children being harassed by a giant wasp.

The cards were treated as works of art, being displayed in exhibitions, and even critically reviewed.

The idea that Coca Cola first dressed Father Christmas in red and white is a myth.

Father Christmas has been part of British culture and folklore for centuries, appearing in various guises as a jolly festive spirit, symbolic of feasting and celebration. Over the years, he's been depicted in almost every colour, from brown, green and yellow to reflect nature, to purple and gold. In the Victorian era, he was often depicted in red and white. So, while Santa Claus may appear clad in red in early Coca Cola ads, this isn't where the image originated.

Mince pies were originally shaped like coffins.

Victorian mince pies bore minimal resemblance to the sweet pastry treats we enjoy today. Filled with a mix of meat, fruit and spices, they were oval-shaped to represent either a coffin or the manger of the baby Jesus.

Queen Victoria's Christmas dinner was sent to the Isle of Wight by train and royal yacht.

The royal family's festive feast was as lavish as you'd expect, including beef, a boar's head, turkey, goose, plum pudding and mince pies, all served on gold plates. Oddly though, the food was all cooked in Windsor before being transported for three hours by special train and yacht to Osborne House – Queen Victoria's holiday home on the Isle of Wight. Whether it was still hot when it reached them, we don't know.

Our Christmas tree tradition came from Germany.



Christmas trees became incredibly popular during the Victorian era and are often associated with Prince Albert, who enthusiastically embraced the tradition. However, the idea actually first came to Britain from Germany with Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III, who hung baubles and gifts on a yew tree.

One thing the Victorians did give us is the practice of putting a star or an angel on the top of the tree. People in the 19th century also took to decorating their houses with foliage such as holly and ivy. This may have been a reaction to the industrial revolution, which had pushed millions of people away from the countryside and into urban living.

A temporary London kitchen fed 22,000 people on Christmas Day

The idea of being kind to others at Christmas was very important to the Victorians. With millions of people living in poverty in major cities, temporary kitchens sprung up to offer food and cheer to the poor and homeless. In London in 1851, volunteers took over Leicester Square, decorating it with flags, flowers, and festive lights. They set up a Christmas kitchen that dished out food including roast beef and rabbit pies, goose, potatoes, bread, biscuits, chestnuts, tea and coffee. It fed 22,000 people and got through 5,000lbs of plum pudding.

Source: [BBC Radio 4 - You're Dead to Me - 8 amazing facts about the history of Christmas](#)

Did you know?

Donner and Blitzen originally had different names. They were originally called Dunder and Blixem which is German for thunder and lightning.

All the presents in the 12 days of Christmas add up to 364, a gift for every day in a year.

Not all carols are joyous, some carols have darker origins, for example, The First Noel is believed to be an ominous carol about a terrible apocalypse.

ON THIS DAY: December 9th is the 343rd day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 22 days remain to the end of the year.

November, the twelfth month of the year, was the tenth month of the Roman Calendar and its name derives from the Latin *decem*, ten.

536 Gothic War: The Byzantine general Belisarius enters Rome unopposed; the Gothic garrison flees the capital.

1688 Glorious Revolution: Williamite forces defeat Jacobite's at Battle of Reading, forcing James II to flee England.[6] (Date is Old Style; the date in the New Style modern calendar is 19 December.)

1775 American Revolutionary War: British troops and Loyalists, misinformed about Patriot militia strength, lose the Battle of Great Bridge, ending British rule in Virginia.

1851 The first YMCA in North America is established in Montreal.

1868 The first traffic lights are installed, outside the Palace of Westminster in London. Resembling railway signals, they use semaphore arms and are illuminated at night by red and green gas lamps.

1905 In France, a law separating church and state is passed.

1916 Kirk Douglas, American actor, singer, and producer is born (d. 2020)

1917 World War I: Field Marshal Allenby captures Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire.

1935 Student protests occur in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, and are subsequently dispersed by government authorities.

1960 The first episode of Coronation Street, the world's longest-running television soap opera, is broadcast in the UK.

1979 The eradication of the smallpox virus is certified, making smallpox the first of only two diseases that have been driven to extinction (with rinderpest in 2011 being the other).

2012 Patrick Moore, English lieutenant, astronomer, and educator dies (b. 1923)

2017 The Marriage Amendment Bill receives royal assent and comes into effect, making Australia the 26th country to legalize same-sex marriage.

Regency Christmas

There are no such things as Bank Holidays in Regency Britain. Christmas is widely celebrated however, although not quite as you know it. Christmas cards won't be invented until 1843. There is no commercial run up to Christmas Day as in modern times indeed many people work on the day itself. Nor are you likely to see a Christmas tree. Although Queen Charlotte has set them up in the past, the custom won't catch on until the royal family resurrects it in the 1840s. However, mince pies roast chestnuts and plum puddings are ubiquitous, and people are keen to restore the old tradition of decorating their houses with evergreens such as mistletoe holly and Ivy. They now hark back to the days of merry England when the Lord of the Manor flung open the door of his hall to his tenants and offered them a handsome feast. Thus, Regency people might invite friends to join them and their family at Christmas in eating a joint of roast beef, a Turkey, or a goose and perhaps Braun sausages and oysters, as well as apples, oranges, and pears. Twelfth Night sees the baking of twelfth cakes made of flour, honey, ginger, and pepper. Employers also give their workers presents or money in small boxes on Boxing Day, and some people give similar boxes to the poor. And that is probably the most firmly established thing about Christmas, its spirit of generosity. The way in which people express their goodwill might alter down the ages but that general mood remains the same. As a result, you are more likely to feel at home in Regency Britain on the 25th of December than perhaps on any other day in the year.

Source: Book 'The Time Traveller's Guide to Regency Britain' by Ian Mortimer, published 2020 by The Bodley Head, pages 153 & 154.

Did you know?

An Ankle Beater was a young boy who assisted a drover in driving cattle to market.

An Antigropelos Maker was a shoemaker who made waterproof leggings.

An Ashbank Fairy was a labourer who removed waste ashes from ashpits and tipped them onto an ash dump.

An Assayer was a taster of food in noble or royal households to guard against poisoning.

*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 2024.*



The Sevenoaks Committee: Branch Chair – Vacant

**Committee Members: Karina Jackson, Norma Holmden, Bernie Wilkins,
Sandra Marchant, Barbara Attwaters, Maureen Berry, Bill Chopping**