

North West Kent FHS November 2025 enews

Welcome to this month's edition of our enews. Thank you for reading, and if you are receiving this for the first time - welcome.

The photo is Downe Church.

Downe village, formerly in Kent, has been located within Greater London, since April 1965, although situated far from the urban sprawl.

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If you are not already a Society member now is a brilliant time to join - because joining now gives you membership until 31 December 2026. It is still only £10 (£12 joint members same address).

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/about/membership/our-membership>

Membership benefits include:

- A quarterly journal (print and online) featuring a wide range of fascinating articles.
- Monthly online events: Zoom workshops, discussion groups, and talks.
- In-person talks at our Dartford and Sevenoaks (Otford) branches.
- Workshops and group sessions held at our Joyden's Wood library.
- Exclusive Wednesday access to the library for personal research.
- An up-to-date events calendar on our website, now covering most of 2026.

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings>

And you have access to all this for just £10 a year (£12 joint members).

Many, many thanks to all the volunteers who arranged and hosted these events. The Zooms are especially welcomed by our members in other parts of the UK and abroad and those who find it harder to travel.

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Before reading on to the monthly events, and in particular a reminder about our AGM on Saturday 1 November, I want to draw your attention to a very special Zoom talk on 13 November : Andrew Redfern speaking on how AI helps with Family History research.

Scroll down for further details of Andrew's talk but in the meantime,

If you're curious about how Artificial Intelligence can enhance your family history research, we're delighted - thanks to Pam's permission - to share an article written by Pam Goddard for our September Journal about her experiments with AI.

Society Members may have already read it there, but for those who aren't yet part of our community, this piece offers a great example both of using AI and of the fascinating articles featured in our quarterly publication.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist with my research by Pam Goddard

After watching various videos on the Roots Tech 2025 conference, I was keen to use AI. Firstly, my intention was to use it as a research tool and to see how much more information could be gained using AI as well as comparing results from different platforms.

I used two different AI platforms, CoPilot and ChatGPT and for both of these I used the same request. *'As a family historian I am doing research in Ceylon for the period 1945-1955. The ancestor I am looking for was an engineer for Allis Chalmers. Can you recommend key sources and archives to explore?'*

The results received from the two platforms were quite different but both were very useful and for this reason I would use more than one platform when doing any research.

One AI platform was definitely better for research purposes and after a few more prompts I had a very detailed list of specific archives, libraries, historical societies and various journals to look into as well as advice on researching the company in the Belgium Congo. I had already done a lot of research but much of what was on the two lists was unknown to me.

To test the system, I also sent a request asking for contact details for one of the historical societies and seconds later I had an address, telephone number, email address and the website URL along with some basic instructions on using the website. It was definitely quicker than a lookup by me.

After completion of each task both platforms asked if they could help any further with the research. These lists provided so many more unknown avenues of research.

Delving once again into AI I used a newspaper article regarding a Belgium award. I sent a request using the newspaper details to request where I could find further information on this award. The reply provided details on what the award was and where I could find more details along with asking if I would like help drafting an inquiry to them. Of course, I said yes even though I might not use what they

provided. An excellent letter was created very quickly and after the offer of providing specific contact details I had everything I needed to make that contact.

I emailed rather than sent a letter and was amazed to receive a very quick detailed reply with everything I needed from a Belgium Foreign Affairs department.

My third use of AI was using information I had already had that could be converted into a table. Using my ancestors' listing from the Crockfords directory I sent a request asking for all entries to be listed in date order. This was completed in seconds and the table was in a very clear concise format which would be a very good addition to include in any written articles.

If necessary, I will use AI in future to assist with specific research queries rather like the two detailed examples given. There are so many ways we can use AI. Taking time out to watch some videos on AI provides you with the best tools to take the plunge. Take a look.

- <https://chatgpt.com>
- <https://copilot.microsoft.com>

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Dartford Branch 1 November AGM and Family History Day

See the Journal or the website for the full day AGM and speakers'

programme: <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/family-history-day-agm/annual-general-meeting>

Doors Open 9.45am for registration, AGM is 10.30am

Dartford Science and Technology College, Heath Lane, Dartford Kent DA1 2LY

Next Dartford Meeting

6 December *Cribs, Cards and Christingles* with Mark Lewis

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Sevenoaks Branch 8 November The life of Helen Thomas and Otford in the 1920s with Alan Williams

Doors open 10.45am meeting starts 11am

Otford Village Memorial Hall 28A High Street, Otford, Kent TN14 5PQ

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/sevenoaks-branch-meetings/sevenoaks-branch-talk-the-life-of-helen-thomas-otford-in-the-1920s-with-alan-williams>

Next Sevenoaks Meeting

13 December Christmas in the Middle Ages with Toni Mount

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13 November Zoom Talk: Artificial Intelligence and Family History with speaker Andrew Redfern



<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/zoom-talks/zoom-talk-artificial-intelligence-and-family-history-with-speaker-andrew-redfern>

This talk is for everyone, beginner and experienced genealogist alike, who is interested in exploring the exciting possibilities of Artificial Intelligence in the realm of family history research, and specifically generative tools such as ChatGPT.

Learn how AI is transforming genealogical research, documentation, preservation, and sharing family histories. Gain valuable insights into this new technology, and discover strategies for making use of generative tools like ChatGPT to develop your family history.

A resident of Sydney, Australia, Andrew trained as a primary school teacher and taught for eight years before establishing his technology consultancy business. With an ancestor arriving in Australia in 1801, colonial Australia has always been a focus of his family history research.

Andrew Redfern is a passionate family historian and accomplished presenter, technology specialist, educator and AI devotee. His expertise spans research methodology, innovative applications of Artificial Intelligence and Technology, convict history, DNA investigations, and land records. His talks include live demonstrations, practical examples, and interactive techniques to present the usefulness of technology to genealogy.

To Get the Zoom Link

Any society member who would like to receive the Zoom link for this talk needs to submit their name, email address and membership number via <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/contact> stating "Please send me the Zoom Workshop links" . Then you will automatically be emailed monthly with the Zoom links for all the Zoom events during that month. You can then attend any Zoom event that you wish to without any booking.

All Zoom Talks, Workshops and Discussion Groups are members-only events.

But Society membership only costs £10 a year (£12 joint members). <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/about/membership/our-membership/#options>

If you're still curious about how Artificial Intelligence can enhance your family history research, we're delighted—thanks to Pam's permission—to share an article written by Pam Goddard for our September Journal. Members will have already seen it there, but for those who aren't yet part of our community, this piece offers a great example of the fascinating articles featured in our quarterly publication.

Future Zoom Talks

11 December Unlocking Your DNA with speaker Donna Rutherford

<https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/zoom-talks/zoom-talk-unlocking-your-dna-with-speaker-donna-rutherford>

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Workshops, Special Interest and Discussion Groups - for Members Only

<https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings>

There are dozens of Workshops and Discussion Groups via Zoom to cater for members who cannot get to our Library - which is the venue, on Wednesdays, for our in person workshops.

The wealth of expertise amongst the Society members who volunteer to lead these groups is amazing. I wonder if other Societies put on this number of training sessions for their members.

Membership of our Society is only £10 a year and if joining AFTER 1 October lasts until 31 December 2026. <https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/about/membership/our-membership/#options>

If any Society members missed a workshop which they would have liked to attend, or it filled up, see here for videos of some past workshops: <https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/events/workshops/past-zoom-workshop-videos>

Note the above link will only work for Society members logged into the website.

Attending Workshops and Discussion Groups

Groups meeting at the Library

These must be booked individually - the website link explains how to reserve your place. This is essential as numbers have to be kept to ten due to space restrictions.

Zoom talks, discussion group and workshops

These do not have to be booked individually, but you do need to register in order to be sent the Zoom links. The website link for each Zoom group explains how you register.

Many, many thanks to our volunteer workshop coordinators for arranging our exciting programme of workshops, and to the workshop leaders who all give their time freely.

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November Workshops and Discussion Groups

5 November 10.30am Zoom Discussion Group with Ann Clarke: Did you have unusual occupations in your family?

<https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/zoom-discussion-group/zoom-discussion-group-with-ann-clarke-9>

12 November 10.30am Library DNA and General Family History Discussion Group with Pam Goddard

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/discussion-group/library-dna-and-general-family-history-discussion-group>

12 November 10.30am Zoom Talk *Migration Throughout the UK* with speaker Debbie Bradley

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/workshops/upcoming-zoom-workshops/migration-throughout-the-uk-with-speaker-debbie-bradley>

19 November 10.30am Zoom DNA Discussion Group with Laura Lincoln

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/zoom-discussion-group/zoom-dna-discussion-group-leader-laura-lincoln>

26 November 10.30am Library Writing Group

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/future-workshops/library-writing-group-with-pauline-heathcote-11>

26 November 7.30pm Zoom Discussion Workshop: Breaking down ancestral brick walls with David Cufley

<https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/events/overview/all-upcoming-meetings/zoom-workshop/zoom-discussion-workshop-breaking-down-ancestral-brick-walls-with-david-cufley>

Brickwalls to be submitted to David Cufley two weeks before the workshop

date via <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/?location=1#Contact> marked for the attention of David Cufley).

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Society Library – Wednesday Open Days

The Society Library is usually open every Wednesday for members to carry out their own research, enjoy a cuppa, socialise, and take part in workshops and discussion groups held at the library. Our team of volunteers is also on hand to offer help and guidance.

Members are welcome to use the library's PCs and WiFi to access both *Ancestry* and *FindMyPast*, which now include the 1921 census. We recommend joining **Kent Libraries**, as this allows you to access these websites on your own device while at the library—helping to reduce demand for the library's PCs.

Not yet a member? You're welcome to join the Society in person at the library on any Wednesday.

📍 **Address:** 80 Summerhouse Drive, Joydens Wood, Bexley, Kent DA5 2EE

🚗 **Parking:** Free in nearby side roads

🕒 **Opening hours:** 10am to 4pm

To assist our volunteers, we kindly ask that visitors with research queries aim to arrive earlier in the day if possible. Please bring along any existing information you have about the ancestor you're researching, and consider bringing a **USB memory stick** to save any discoveries you make during your visit.

On 26 November the room with maps and books cannot be accessed until after 1- 2pm as it is being used for a Committee Meeting.

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Don't forget, our Journal Editor Pauline would love to hear your stories and receive your images for inclusion in the Journal.

SEND a brief message to Pauline right now using <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/contact> Pauline will be delighted to hear from you and all such communications will receive a response.

You will then have her email address to submit your photo and/or research story.

The Journal is sent to all members, and is available online to logged-in Society members here <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/community/nwkhfs-quarterly-back-journals/past-quarterly-back-journals>

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Next Enews – Submissions Welcome

The next enews will be sent out on **1 December** If you have any items you'd like included, please send them to me **as soon as possible**, and no later than **28 November**. Simply reply to this email to submit your content.

Or contact me via <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/contact>

Going forward, the enews is circulated **monthly at the beginning of each month**. I may occasionally send a mid-month update as a reminder about an upcoming Zoom talk, as some other societies do.

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Click on our other links <https://www.nwkhfs.org.uk/community/news-journals/blog> [Facebook](#) [Flickr](#) <https://bsky.app/profile/nwkhfs.bsky.social>

I am a volunteer creating this e-news in my 'spare time' but, if you do notice any errors, please tell me, so that they are not carried forward to the next edition.

Please contact me if there's anything you want to say about enews. Just reply to this enews.

Please mention it to others and encourage them to sign up so that we can keep society members and anyone interested in family history informed of NWKFHS activities.

Stella Eames, Editor

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