

ROOTS and BRANCHES



Journal of the
FELIXSTOWE
FAMILY HISTORY
SOCIETY

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ROOTS AND BRANCHES



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CONTENTS

Article:	Page
Annual Accounts from the AGM	4
Secretary's Report for AGM 2017	5
Commonwealth War Graves	6
Mugs, MA possible future visitunchies and Memorabilia	6
Speakers's Meeting—October	7
We have a new Treasurer	8
A Holiday in East Anglia	8
Speaker's Meeting—November	9
Did you know that	9
Passchendaele 1917, and After	10-11
Two Mysterious Photographs	11
Christmas Yard Woods	12
Website Updates	13-14
Seafaring Ancestors	14
An Unconventional Childhood	15
The General Register Office	16

Regular Features

Chairman's Comments	3
Editor's Notes	3
Diary Dates	7

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Thank you to John Westall for permission to use the picture of Falkenham Church on the front cover.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

We have had two very interesting talks in October and November, first the history of St Audrey's asylum at Melton how it went from workhouse to asylum and secondly, Butley Abbey at Suborne.

As you know we needed a new programme secretary and Valerie Humphreys has volunteered to do next year 2018/19, BUT we will need someone to take over after that. The job entails organising ten speakers during the year, none for August or September. It can take a while as speakers have to be given a choice of dates and then one has to wait for them to reply, it needs to be started in January 2019 ideally. Valerie will make sure her programme runs smoothly till the new one kicks in. Many thanks Valerie for helping. The rest of this year's programme looks very interesting, if there are any queries please contact me.

Alan and I represented the society at the East Anglian Group of Family History Societies at Huntingdon of which we are members. We are not the only society who has lost members and, in fact percentage wise we are doing better than many, it boils down to the internet. I think we are lucky in that we have a set meeting place plus sharing our talks with The Felixstowe Museum. September we were represented at Suffolk Family History Fair and a very enjoyable day it was, by going to the fairs people then know more about us .

We are having a Christmas dinner at The Brook Hotel on January 12, if you would like to come please let me know by the 13 December, £20 pounds for three courses. All that is now left for me to say is Happy Christmas and New Year.

Gillian Smith

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to another issue of 'Roots and Branches', I hope you will enjoy this edition.

In the September issue I wrote an article about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and asked if anyone had ever visited one. I am very pleased to say that one member wrote about her visit to one of the more unusual cemeteries, thank you Marian. See page 8.

Last January 15 members enjoyed a late Christmas Dinner at The Brook in Felixstowe. Well, we are going to do it again!

Felixstowe FHS Christmas Dinner

Friday, 12th January 2018

Best Western Brook Hotel, Orwell Road IP11 7PF

Cost: £20 with a non-returnable deposit of £10

Contact Gillian Smith if you would like to come!

Broadway House: At the AGM the question of manning the Thursday morning sessions at Broadway House was raised. It was put forward from the floor that perhaps reducing it to one/two mornings per month might be easier to man. It has been decided that Nicholas Smith and his wife Pam will do the 3rd Thursday in the month. Gillian and Alan have kindly offered to go to Broadway House on Speaker's evenings from 6.15 pm for members to use FindMyPast and get advice: dates are 14th December, 11th January and on the Mugs, Munchies and Memorabilia evening on 18th February. So please use these opportunities to make them worthwhile.

Linda Negus Membership No: 0620

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR AGM 2017

At the end of July we had 147 members which unfortunately is 46 down on last year's figure of 193, this includes members who have died or moved away. We are continuing to look for venues that will be suitable to hold an Open Day in the Spring from which we hope to gain some new members.

As part of our self-promotion members of the Committee will be attending the Suffolk FHS Fair later this month, I hope some of you might come along.

As you know Jill Hickey was unable to continue editing the magazine which I took on again. I am pleased to say that a member has expressed an interest in taking it on, hopefully he will be starting with the December issue. I have received a few articles since my 'blank page' in the June issue, and the Committee are trying to play their part too with the articles taken from places on the Victorian map of Felixstowe as published in the September issue. I hope some of you will be sending in information on some of the places mentioned.

The Exchange journal is now sent out electronically to 19 societies, not just in the UK but also to Canada, Australia and the USA. At the moment only the Committee read these, but if you would like to receive any of them please let me have your email address at the end of the meeting and I will forward any you are interested in free of charge. I have a list with me of the Societies involved.

Finally, may I thank everyone for their continued support of Felixstowe Family History Society. The Committee and other members work hard to support the Society, through arranging the Speakers Meetings and the Roots and Branches journal; both of these are still flourishing and I am sure the Society will go on for many more years.

Linda Negus
Secretary
13th September 2017

DIARY DATES

9th May 2018

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

Mark Mitchels

A young girl in Aldeburgh named Elizabeth Garrett wanted to become a doctor. When she was refused admission to medical school she studied on her own and gradually acquired the qualifications. She completed her course in Paris, and returned to England as the only female doctor. She established a dispensary and hospital for women in London. When she retired she was elected mayor of Aldeburgh, another first. There is much more to tell about this extraordinary woman.

13th June 2018

Forensics and Firearms

Brian Heard

Brian spent 15 years at New Scotland Yard. He has a reputation for giving very interesting talks, with supporting evidence!

RE: COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

During a holiday to the Far East in 1986 my husband Barry and I visited the Kanchanburi War Graves Cemetery near the Bridge on the River Kwai. As we were being driven towards the cemetery the driver played a moving tape read by Richard Burton of the story of the building of the railway and the bridge over the river Kwai.

Basil Broom a work colleague had asked us to look out for the grave of his brother who had died out there during the war. As we walked through the entrance to the cemetery we were told there were hundreds of graves and our hearts sunk as we thought we had an impossible task. Barry began looking from one end and I the other. Shortly a worker appeared, introduced himself as a supervisor and asked us whose grave we were looking for. We told him a G Broom and he immediately took us to the grave and called a young lady over and asked her to tidy the grave up. It looked quite tidy to me but she brushed it over and thanked us profusely for the coin worth about 50p that we gave her. We took lots of photographs for Basil.



We were really impressed as the graves were well looked after with flowers planted round them and the knowledge of the staff was amazing. We then visited the Museum nearby and were very moved by the horrific drawings and writings done by the prisoners who had built the railway and bridge. We also purchased some postcards there and were able to post one to our colleague Basil telling him that our mission was successful.



I have attached a photo taken by Barry of workers in the cemetery and one of the grave of G W Broom that we came to find.

Marian Jordan Membership Number: 1000

Mugs, Munchies and Memorabilia 4th February 2018

POSSIBLE FUTURE VISIT

This is the title of our Speaker's Meeting in February. The idea is that members bring along an item, or items, that they can then explain what it is, how did they come by it, what is its history? It could be a special certificate, perhaps one that you have found difficult to find, or an old garment that belonged to a relative, a photo, a household gadget, anything that you have that could come under the title of Memorabilia.

At our last Committee Meeting a possible visit to Christchurch Mansion was discussed. It is a lovely Tudor mansion set in beautiful grounds. They have several exhibitions coming in 2018, so we thought we could arrange a tour and perhaps lunch beforehand or follow the tour by an afternoon tea.

We will be offering soup and bread, sausage rolls as well as the usual coffee. We will also have available FindMyPast and the Guild of One Name software for members use.

If you would be interested in this, please contact either myself or Gillian Smith and we will see what we can arrange.

So please come along, if you can bring an item that would be great, but if you can't then just bring yourself and join us in soup and sausage rolls!

Linda Negus
Membership No: 0620

DIARY DATES

10th January 2018

On the trail of St Edmund

Chris Parfitt

This talk covers the East Anglian sites and churches with our local King and Saint.

14th February 2018

Mugs, Munchies and Memorabilia

This is the title for a members' memorabilia evening when you can bring along items of interest, perhaps give a short talk on why it is special to you, what is its history? **See page 20**

14th March 2018

Whistlecraft

Pip Wright

This is about a notorious poaching family from Rickingham in Suffolk. It spans a time from about 1880 to 1950. It includes a bit of family history and is presented in character. Joe Whistlecraft was tried and found guilty over 100 times. He served 20 years in various prisons and literally got away with murder. At the end of his life he became a gamekeeper.

Monthly Meetings are held at 7.30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month at Broadway House, Orwell Road, Felixstowe IP11 7DD

Meetings are free for members, but if you wish to bring a guest they will be charged £1.00. Refreshments (tea, coffee and biscuits) are available at the end of the meeting.

SPEAKER'S MEETING - OCTOBER

St Audry's, Melton; From Workhouse to Asylum

David Phelan

October's Speakers meeting featured a talk by David Phelan about St Audry's at Melton – from Workhouse to Asylum. He covered the history of St. Audry's from 1765 when the Melton Workhouse (House of Industry) was opened. We heard how families were divided within the workhouse, often only allowed to meet together for a few hours on a Sunday. The average age of a Workhouse inmate was surprisingly young. The speaker described the grim routine of daily life – inmates often earning a small amount of 'money for old rope' by unravelling and plaiting the strands of rope to make new lengths.



However after the Workhouse closed in 1826, it reopened in 1829 as the Suffolk County Asylum for Pauper Lunatics. This was managed by a very forward thinking Governor who introduced many modern methods of treating mental conditions with a humane and progressive routine. David also explained how Asylums were often approached from the road by a curved drive which meant that the building was not visible from the road. Hence the saying 'going round the bend'.

In 1993 St. Audry's was closed and the site redeveloped for housing. We heard how the old mortuary slab had been incorporated into a kitchen worktop in one of the more unusual properties!

© Image: East Anglian Group

WE HAVE A NEW TREASURER

After more than 30 years stalwart service to the Society, Jean Voller stood down from the position of Treasurer at the AGM. She has kept the many varied Committees she has served with over the years solvent, and dealt with all the financial problems of recent years with The Tree House. We want to say a huge thank you to Jean for all that she has done and wish her all the best for the future.

Nicholas Smith was elected unopposed to fill the vacancy. He is the son of a Chartered Accountant, he learnt book-keeping at an early age but did not follow his father into the profession. Instead he spent over a quarter of a century with British Rail, working in a variety of departments before becoming an internal auditor with particular responsibility for fraud prevention. When B.R. got disintegrated he found himself unemployed so he reinvented himself as an administrator and book-keeper eventually becoming Financial Controller for a radio engineering company in Birmingham. From 1985 until British Rail disintegrated, he was Secretary to the Midlands Section of the Chartered Institute of Transport.

He also became Hon. Treasurer to his local Council of Churches and to the Church Computer Users Group, a national charity which was founded in 1983 and is now wound up, having done the job it set out to do. He also used his computer programming skills to organise three swimming galas each year for his town's Cubs and Scouts.

When family changes precipitated a move from the Midlands to Suffolk, he kept the wolf from the door by giving private tuition in Mathematics and Science to year 11 pupils. Then he landed the job of Financial Controller with The Royal Institute of Navigation at their H.Q. in London. He retired from this job earlier this year.

He now has more time to spend on researching his family history and listening to classical music, his two main hobbies.

A HOLIDAY IN EAST ANGLIA

My Grandmother Florence Amy Gerrett was born on 3 December 1877 at 7 Old Cavendish Street, Marylebone. She was educated at home by a Governess. She never worked. Until she married my grandfather Arthur Edwin Pickering on 27 June 1908 she was a lady of leisure. One of her main hobbies was visiting churches, sometimes with her sisters and cousin. She travelled extensively, even visiting Southern Ireland.

One holiday was spent in East Anglia in July and August 1904. Among the many places she visited were Trimley St Mary and Trimley St Martin. On 19th July she tells her sister that:

“We arrived here by train yesterday evening. It is only about 3 miles. It is only a very small village, yet there are the two churches you can see in one churchyard. They are both used and there are two vicars. We cannot find out the reason for it. The right-hand church of the two is beautiful inside and very interesting.!”

What Florence did not manage to discover was that the parish boundary runs down the centre of the graveyard between the two churches, which stand only 100 yards apart.

What Florence could not have known was that in 1939 her daughter Eileen Pickering would marry George Sutton, who had ancestors at both Trimley St Mary and Trimley St Martin. John Lord was christened on 18 April 1813 at Trimley St Mary. His parents were William Lord and Mary Ann York who were married on 22 February 1808 at Trimley St Martin. William Lord was christened on 7 March 1784 at Trimley St Martin. The Lord family of Suffolk has been traced back to 1686.

SPEAKER'S MEETING - NOVEMBER

The History of Butley Priory

Sheila Harrison

A very good meeting, Sheila spoke for just on an hour, she held the audience spellbound. She spoke about how the Priory was built, it is a 14th century monastery located near Woodbridge, the visits by the Kings and how they would send their retired retainers to the monasteries to be looked after, giving us the excuses as why they should not look after them! Butley was in financial difficulties although the King refused to take no for an answer, how one prior committed suicide and was buried three times because he could not be buried in sacred ground, he was finally buried beneath the road! The visitation by The Earl of Brandon and his wife, Henry's sister who had married firstly the King of France. All in all, a very entertaining evening.



© Image is from Bushfire Photography

DID YOU KNOW THAT

The Royal Humane Society was originally the 'Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned'. It was founded in 1774 by two doctors, William Hawes and Thomas Cogan who were concerned at the number of people wrongly believed drowned. Both men wanted to promote the new, but controversial, medical technique of resuscitation and offered money to anyone rescuing someone from the brink of death. Their five aims were, to publish information on how to save people from drowning, to pay 2 guineas to anyone attempting a rescue in the Westminster area of London, to pay 4 guineas to anyone successfully bringing someone back to life, to pay 1 guinea to anyone allowing a body to be treated in his house and to provide volunteer medical assistants with some basic life-saving equipment.

Today the aim of the Society is to recognise the bravery of men, women and children who have saved, or tried to save, someone else's life. The most famous person to win an award is probably Grace Darling. She was just 22 years old when she helped her father, William, rescue nine people shipwrecked off the north-east coast of England in 1838. She became an instant national heroine. The following year, both Grace and William were awarded specially minted Royal Humane Society gold medals. The most unexpected person was Tsar Alexander I who received the award for resuscitating a Polish peasant. People who received awards would be mentioned in newspapers, and the archives of the society are held by The London Metropolitan Archives.

Passchendaele 1917, and After

In the centenary year of the battle of “Passchendaele” (3rd Ypres, 31st July to 10th November 1917), I would like to share with you all my Grandfather's First World War record, as far as I have been able to discover it over the years. Like most of the survivors of the conflict I suspect, not surprisingly he recounted as little as possible of his war experiences in the years afterwards. He died in 1971.

His name was Harold West, and he was first enlisted (as a Private) into the East Surrey Regiment on the 11th of December 1915, at the age of 26. He was “mobilised” (called forward) on the 1st of February 1917, posted to the Territorial Force Depot the next day, and then posted to 2/6th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment four days later on the 6th of February.



I have it on good authority that “...the 2/6th had formed at Kingston-Upon-Thames in September 1914, as a training and home defence battalion. In February 1917 they were in billets in Margate in Kent, where they remained until April 1917 when they moved to Gore Street in The Isle of Thanet”.



Harold is fourth from the right in the front row.

Presumably, after training with them, he was posted to the 13th Battalion of the East Surreys, on 15th of September 1917. By that time the Passchendaele offensive had been raging for well over a month.

Harold was posted to the 13th (Service) Battalion (Wandsworth) which was in France when he joined them in the area of Villers-Plouich which lies about 10 miles South-West of Cambrai. The 13th was raised in 1915 by the Borough of Bermondsey, in the 120th Brigade, 40th Division. My source also said that “he may not have reached this unit.” ...and: “He was, perhaps, diverted at the Base Depot, Etaples, and transferred to the Loyals.”



Harold is in the middle of the photo, wearing his steel helmet, standing directly in front of the tent.

The “Loyals” were the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, to which Harold was transferred and posted, on the 19th of September, to the 4th/5th Battalion. My source goes on to say:

“Raised in 1915, the 4/5th was one of the few Fourth Line Territorial Battalions raised, and more unusually, one which went overseas. It was formed in the 170th Brigade, 57th (West Riding) Division” and:

“The 57th Division was engaged in the Battle of Ypres between 26/10/1917 & 7/11/1917 and the Second Battle of Passchendaele [XIV Corps & XIX Corps, Fifth Army].”

Harold was wounded (I assume) during the Passchendaele offensive which commenced on the 26th of October 1917. A copy of his wound report document says that (on the 27th, or 29th of October 1917 - I think it was, if I read the writing correctly). He had: “gunshot wounds in his left thigh and right arm” and he had been: “...admitted to 18 General Hospital, Dannes Camiers, France”. The next item in his record that I have is that he was: “posted to depot” on the 9th of November 1917.

Source: “Posted to Depot (Indicates a home based unit)”.

On the 13th of February 1918 he was Posted to “Western Command Depot”. Then on the 29th of May he was transferred to The Machine Gun Corps, and posted to 8th Battalion. “8th Battalion, which was probably the 8th [Reserve] Battalion, a training unit in the UK, for instruction on the Vickers Machine Gun”.

After this new training period he was posted back to France, to “Base Depot” on the 29th of August 1918. [Source1: “Machine Gun Corps Base Depot in France - suspected to be at St. Omer”. Source2: “Base Depot, at Camiers on the French coast”.]

On the 4th of September 1918 he was posted to the 9th Battalion.
“The 9th Battalion of the Machine Gun Corps (MGC) was formed in the 9th (Scottish) Division on the 1st March 1918, from unification of the 26th, 27th, 28th and 197th MG Companies. These companies were then re-titled “A”, “B”, “C” & “D” Companies.”

Whatever did the 9th Division, so did the 9th Battalion MGC:-
THE FINAL ADVANCE IN PICARDY:
28/9/1918 – 2/10/1918: Battle of Ypres [II Corps, Second Army]
14/10/1918 – 19/10/1918: Battle of Courtrai [II Corps, Second Army]
25/10/1918: Ooteghem [II Corps, Second Army]

“On the 5th Nov. 1918 the King of the Belgians inspected the 9th Division and presented silver thistle badges, enough for every member of the formation.”

“On the 10th Nov. 1918 the Division moved to Harlebeke and Cuerne and was occupying billets there when hostilities ceased the next day.”

He was finally “...discharged, on completion of his engagement, on 31/3/1920.” and later went on to be “...enlisted into the (National Defence Corps) Territorial Army Reserve West Yorkshire Regiment attached to the 45th Tank Regiment” on the 27th June 1939, more than two months before the Second World War was declared.

This is the Passchendaele Memorial Pin.



Ken West
Membership No: 1260

TWO MYSTERIOUS PHOTOS

A little while ago I was given some photos, no names or places, by my cousin. The two small photos were of my Great Grandparents, the other two were a mystery. One of the large gate posts I'm still working on that one, the other of a street about 1900. I thought it might be Cambridgeshire as the pub had Ely brewery. We went to the EAG meeting and Fenland FHS were there, they suggested I send it to them. They were really great and sent it to their members. I had thought it to be either Ely or Wisbech, no luck; finally someone recognised it, Heckington Lincs where Great Grandfather had been a doctor. Also they sent an up to date photo to compare them. Many thanks to Fenland.

Gillian Smith Membership No: 0366

CHRISTMAS YARD WOODS

In the September issue Ann Sanderson sent in a piece on Christmas Yard Woods, a place name taken from the Victorian map dated 1840. She has now sent some additional information from Margaret Lake.

.....
“The following comes from a Manuscript inserted into (I believe) a book by William Stephenson Fitch which is available at the Suffolk Record Office and transcribed with notes by Chris & Jane Leffler. I cannot easily put a date to it but Mr Cook paid fines around 32 H.8 which I take to be 32nd year of King Henry the 8th which would be 1547. There is a mention of a Sir William Barker Baronet who died in 1731. But the way they named their children this might not be the right generation - the Barkers’ Baronets range from John Barker of Grimston Hall who died 1664, Jermy Barker Bart (his heir and son?) also died 1664, Sir John Barker Bart died 1696 and William died 1731. Another John died 1757, and yet another John died 1766 when the baronetcy became extinct.

.....
Objections to the clayme made on behalf of Mr Cook of Coppyhold alledged to be holden by Sr Wm Barker of Mr Cooks manor of Candelent

The parcel of Land Claymed by Mr Cooke to be copyhold and to be holden of his manor of Candelent are in ye copy of Sir John Barker’s admission described as follows viz.

- 4 acres 3 Roods and an halfe ...(crossed out)..... of ye tenement Christmass
- 3 Roods lying at Fagbery Cliffe
- 5 Acres of ye tenement Talburghe called Marshes
- 2 acres of ye tenement Talburgh in Trimly

Note:

It is not p[re]sented by this copy that ye late house called Christmas is or was Coppyhold. But those 4 Acres 3 Roods and an halfe of ye said tenement called Christmas was Coppyhold

Note:

The next parcel viz ye 3 Roods are said to lye at Fagbury Cliffe which is a place well known at ye foot of which it is (crossed out) alledged that ye House called Christmas stood. But whereas ye first 4 acres 3 roods an half lye non conf---- (now illegible but probably ’had’) they lain near Fagbury Cliffe they in all likelihood would have been so discribed in ye copy
The other parcells viz ye 5 acres and 2 acres are (illegible) in the copy mentioned to belong to ye Tenement Talburgh
(line crossed out and this added above) if it can now^ be made appear^ or if any one now knows (deleted text beneath these words) where the tenement Talburgh is or was. For ye copy says only in Trimly, whereas there being 2 Trimlyes it is wholly uncertain in which of the Trimlyes those land lye or are to be found.”

With thanks to Margaret Lake, Membership No: 0053 for the above.

Ed: If anyone else would like to do some research on one of the places on the Victorian Map I would be happy to receive it.

WEBSITE UPDATES

The National Archives

- PIN 26, Ministry of Pensions and successors: Selected First World War Pensions Award Files

FamilySearch

- British Newspaper Archive, Family Notices
- Essex Parish Registers, 1538-1997
- Hampshire Bishop's Transcripts 1680-1892
- Scotland Censuses 1861 and 1881
- Irish Civil registration digital images births 1864-1913, marriages 1845-1870 and deaths 1864-1870
- Denmark Censuses
- Netherlands, Archival Indexes, Public Records
- Uruguay, Civil Registration Index Card, 1900-1937

FindMyPast

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Debt Of Honour
- British Armed Forces, Roman Catholic Registers
- British Army, Army Lists 1839-1946
- British Army, First World War Casualty Lists
- British Army, East Surrey Regiment 1899-1919
- British Army, Railwaymen Died In The Great War
- British Army, Irish Regimental Enlistment Registers 1877-1924
- British Army, Northumberland Fusiliers 1881-1920
- British Army, First World War Soldiers' Medical Records
- British Armed Forces, First World War Widows' Pension Forms
- British Army, Royal Welch Fusiliers 1807-1948
- Military Historical Society Bulletins
- Portsmouth Military Tribunals 1916-1919
- Harrow School Photographs Of Pupils & Masters 1869-1925
- Surrey Court Cases 1391-1835
- Surrey Lay Subsidies 1524-1645
- Catholic Diocese of Westminster records
- Wales Probate Abstracts 1544-1858
- New York State Religious Records 1716-1914 Image Browse
- The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record
- New York State Death Index Browse

Ancestry UK and Ireland

- England, Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital Admissions and Discharges, 1826-1930
- Berkshire, Electoral Rolls 1840-1965
- Suffolk, Extracted Church of England Parish Records, 1538-1850
- UK, Absent Voter Lists, 1918-1925, 1939
- University of London Student Records, 1836-1945
- Fife, Electoral Registers, 1914-1966
- Fife, Scotland, Criminal Registers, 1910-1931
- Queensland, Australia, World War I Soldier Portraits, 1914-1918
- Ontario, Canada, Roman Catholic Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1760-1923
- Canada, Census Mortality Schedule, 1871
- Ontario, Canada, Toronto Trust Cemeteries, 1826-1989

WEBSITE UPDATES

Ireland Genealogy Projects Archives

- Monaghan Clones Parish Burial Registers, 1811-1814, 1819-1821
deceasedonline

- West Norwood and Lambeth Crematoria

MyHeritage

- Ellis Island and other New York Passenger Lists
- New York Newspapers, 1806–2007
- New York Marriage License Index, 1908–1929

TheGenealogists

- The Lloyd George Domesday Survey 1910 (part release)

Renfrewshire Heritage Centre <https://libcat.renfrewshire.gov.uk/iguana/www.main.cls?surl=PoorLaw>

- Paisley Poor Law 1839-1942

SEAFARING ANCESTORS

If you have seafaring ancestors, you may find them to be elusive! Marine forebears were excluded from early censuses and will only appear on a later census if they were in port on census night. That is not the end of the story if you have marine ancestry, however. They may be listed in other records, such as agreements, crew lists and muster rolls.

Before 1747, no systematic records of the crew of merchant ships were kept. The majority of records are post-1835, when merchant shipping began to be regulated by the Board of Trade. Records kept before that rarely mention individuals.

While the National Archives is a key repository for merchant shipping records, there are also collections kept at the [Guildhall Library of London](#), the [Maritime Museum](#) in Greenwich, the [British Library](#) and the [Memorial University of Canada](#). Fortunately some records are now digitised! The [General Record Office](#) indexed some births, marriages and deaths which happened at sea.

Many local archives hold records relating to their ports. A search of Discovery using terms like 'ship register' or 'registrar general shipping and seamen' will bring these up. The National Archives also publish [guides](#) to merchant seamen records, which are a good finding aid.

AN UNCONVENTIONAL CHILDHOOD

My great grandmother was Louisa Elizabeth Hale. She was born on 26 June 1848 at the Waterloo Hotel, 85 Jermyn Street, St James, Westminster. The hotel had been owned by her family since the 1820s when her grandfather Jonas Rowe was the proprietor. The hotel had about 35 rooms. It might reasonably have been expected that Louisa would grow up at the hotel. Instead, by the time of the 1851 census she and her sisters were living with a nursemaid (but apart from their parents) at 24 Underdown Road, Herne Bay, Kent. The house had an extensive garden and orchard designed by William Mallert and Sons, landscape gardeners of Canterbury.

We can only speculate why these arrangements were made. Louisa's father was Stephen Hale. Her grandfather was Thomas Hale and a portrait of him in Lloyd's insurance office confirmed that he was a member of Lloyd's. The family had plenty of money. When Stephen Hale died in 1883 he left £16,477. He could well afford to buy a property in Herne Bay and hire a nanny to look after his three daughters.

By the time of the 1861 census the situation had changed. The Hale daughters were now living at 7 William Street, Herne Bay and had been joined by their mother Amelia Pain Hale. Louisa Elizabeth Hale, aged 12, and her sister Mary Margaret Ponsonby Hale, aged 14, were both scholars. Their older sister Amelia Matilda Rowe Hale, aged 19, was described as independent. This meant that she was not working. It was very unusual for middle class girls to work. Stephen Hale continued to run his hotel. Living with him was his son George Stephen Stanton Hale, aged 18, a banker's clerk, a job which then had far more prestige than it does today.

London was an increasingly unpleasant place to live. Its population had grown from less than a million in 1801 to 2.36 million in 1851. The air was filthy with smuts, the Thames stank like a sewer and the stench of horse manure and overflowing cesspits was everywhere.

By contrast, the Registrar-General described Herne Bay as "the healthiest watering place in England". It was within easy reach of London by train and had become recognised as the resort par excellence for families and weekenders. Herne Bay was entirely modern and was symmetrically laid out. The principal thoroughfares ran parallel to the sea, with short connecting streets at right angles.

In the light of this, it seems reasonable that the decision was taken to buy a property in Herne Bay, although the personal cost was the considerable disruption of conventional family life. Louisa would have had very little experience of London life. Instead, she seems to have been enchanted by life on the North Kent coast. She was widowed in her 30s and during her very long life she names several of the properties she owned "Reculver" after the small resort just 3 miles east of Herne Bay.

Louisa married my great grandfather Charles Gerrett on 4th February 1868 when she was only 19. His parents had moved from Marylebone to Herne Bay. The marriage was conducted by Rev. Buchanan, Vicar of Herne Bay. The young couple moved to Marylebone, where Charles Gerrett succeeded his father in the family business.

As a widow, Louisa lived in both Worthing and Brighton. She was therefore close to the sea she had loved as a child. She was 91 when she died in Brighton in 1940. Perhaps her longevity was linked to the fact that she had grown up in Herne Bay, the low death rate of which had more than once excited the enthusiastic comment of the Registrar General.

This article was inspired by "The Victorian Traveller's Guide to Canterbury", which has a chapter devoted to Herne Bay.

Roger Sutton
Membership No: 1126

THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

This is a new and cheaper way of gaining information from the General Register Office.

The General Register Office (GRO) is looking at different ways of providing civil registration services to our customers and as part of that it has looked to test the customer demand for providing records in a format other than a paper copy, via a Portable Document Format [PDF]. The GRO ran a pilot in three distinct phases between 9th November 2016 and 12 April 2017. It has been decided that the first phase of the Pilot will be extended from 12th October 2017, offering customers the ability to order a PDF copy of a historic birth or death record for a fee of £6.00. The intention is to run this extended pilot over a minimum of three months, which will help the GRO better understand the level of demand for such a service.

The extended Pilot covers PDF copies of those historical digitised civil registration records held by GRO (i.e. birth entries from 1837 - 1916 and death entries from 1837 - 1957). A GRO index reference is required to be provided with the application. You can find the GRO index references by logging on to the GRO online ordering service and accessing the GRO online indexes. A PDF will cost £6.00 each.

The certificate you receive will contain the same information that is present in a certificate apart from the official crest and signature of issuing authority. The image may contain some imperfections as the records date from 1837. A PDF will have no "evidential" value, and therefore a paper certified copy [certificate] is required for official purposes, e.g. if applying for a passport, driving licence, or where required to give notice of marriage.

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FELIXSTOWE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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