



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

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REALLY USEFUL Bulletin No 60

August 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Really Useful Bulletin*

This month's lead article is...

The Resurrectionists—Facts and Fictions of Body-snatching

Also news from local FHS, from the Federation and for Heritage Open Days



REALLY USEFUL GUIDES Family History Books

Ancestors who worked in the theatre

Includes details of specialist collections, archives and libraries

Alan Ruston

LAUNCH OFFER — just £5.95!

Ancestors who worked in the theatre

by Alan Ruston

Researching ancestors who worked in the theatre can seem daunting but this book will be your key to success! Sometimes we find an ancestor with an unexpected occupation and those who worked in the theatre can appear with varying occupations, not all clearly “theatre”. You may need to link a stage name to a birth name; this book has an example. Delve deeper and, using the wealth of material available, you can establish an interesting story. You may even unravel a mystery and discover untold riches for your family history.

Theatre collections are spread around the country and worldwide; they are quite unique and details are listed here along with specialist societies and much more.

The author has completely revised his popular earlier work to provide this ***Really Useful Guide***.

This book will enthrall, encourage and help you succeed in unravelling your ancestors connected with the theatre. *A5 format, over 90 pages. RRP £6.95.*

Full details [HERE](#)—use discount code **WAT25**



It is surprising how many people were involved in the theatre, music hall, etc and not only treading the boards, and astonishing how many relevant archives at local and national level are listed in this excellent volume.

The theatre, in all its forms, was the number one entertainment prior to TV! What performances around the country may our forebears have visited?

This **REALLY USEFUL GUIDE** is an interesting, helpful and affordable book for every family historian! It has considerably widened my understanding of all things ‘theatre’. *Ed.*

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The Resurrectionists

The Facts and Fables about Body-snatching and Grave-robbing

Kevin Goodman

The frequently conjured image of grave robbers and bodysnatchers: foggy, moonless nights in Edinburgh or London through which filthy, disheveled, thuggish men pushed wooden handcarts along cobbled back streets, the cargo not long exhumed from a grave - or just dead - to the nearest medical school where they would be sold to medical students, eager to dissect...

The work of the grave robbers (technically those who stole burial goods rather than bodies) and bodysnatchers (from hereon in to be called *resurrectionists* – due to resurrecting the body), who stole cadavers to supply medical schools is a macabre – yet fascinating – aspect of medical history in the United Kingdom. The fear

it engendered is evidenced by the metal and stone mortsafes in many Scottish graveyards and churchyards, created specifically to prevent the stealing of bodies. Whilst it was a secretive trade, there are also several misconceptions surrounding it, but fortunately there is a wealth of information available for historians wishing to explore possible family links. This article sets out to dispel the misconceptions, highlight some of the lesser-known aspects of the trade, and examine the repercussions of the 1832 Anatomy Act which ended the trade of the resurrectionists.



The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp (Rembrandt 1632)

The grisly trade emerged from a demand from anatomical and medical schools for bodies to dissect during the eighteenth century. In Europe, dissection had been permitted since the thirteenth century. In the British Isles it was not until 1505 when the Town Council of Edinburgh in

the “*Seal of Cause to the Barbers and Surgeons of Edinburgh*”, permitted the dissection of one condemned man a year, providing prayers were said for the man’s soul.

In 1540, King Henry VIII granted the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons of England and Wales the right to dissect four executed criminals a year. In 1565, Elizabeth I granted the Royal College of Physicians four cadavers annually for dissection, and Charles II

increased Henry's original grant to the Barbers and Surgeons to six in 1663. In 1694, the grant made by the Town Council of Edinburgh was extended for the medical schools to include the bodies of people who died in houses of correction, foundlings, the stillborn, and suicides. As part of the 1751 Murder Act under George II, common law provision was made for the statutory dissection of murderers:

It is thereby become necessary, that some further terror and peculiar mark of infamy be added to the punishment of death, now by law inflicted on such as shall be guilty of the said heinous offence ... which sentence shall be expressed not only the usual judgment of death, but also the time appointed hereby for the execution thereof, and the marks of infamy hereby directed for such offenders, in order to impress a just horror in the mind of the offender, and on the minds of such as shall be present, of the heinous crime of murder. (<https://statutes.org.uk/site/the-statutes/eighteenth-century/1751-25-geo2-c37-murder-act/>).

Dissection was used as a punishment as it was regarded as a desecration of the dead, and it was feared it would prevent a spirit's resurrection on Judgment Day.

In 1745, the surgeons left the United Company of Barber-Surgeons to form the Company of Surgeons. In 1800, the Company of Surgeons was granted a royal charter to



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become the Royal College of Surgeons in London; this later becoming the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1843. The London hospitals of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew were teaching anatomy, and private schools run by surgeons and former hospital lecturers, such as the brothers William Hunter (1718-1783) and John Hunter (1728-1793), soon appeared.

In Edinburgh in 1720, the number of medical students was fifty-seven, approximately 340 in 1780-90, and over 400 after 1800. In London, in 1793, there were over two 200 medical students and over 1,000 by 1823. Each student required three bodies during his sixteen months of training: two for learning anatomy and one on which to practise operating techniques. The surgeon Sir Astley Cooper estimated that in 1828 about 450 cadavers were dissected in the London schools in one season. The demand for anatomical subjects was escalating and the supply of executed murderers was insufficient. The surgeons and the students were competing for less than a hundred cadavers legally available each year. And the number was diminishing - in 1805, sixty-eight people were executed in England and Wales, by 1831 this had dropped to fifty-two as the punishment of deportation became more common. Regular supplies were desperately needed – and this is where the first misconception arises.

All resurrectionists were murderers

The infamous murderers William Burke and William Hare who sold the bodies of their sixteen victims to the surgeon Dr Knox in Edinburgh in 1828 added further speculation to this notion. In London, the resurrectionists John Bishop, Thomas Williams, and James May who drugged and murdered three people, including a 14-year-old Italian boy named Carlo Ferrari, thereby becoming known as the “Italian Boy murderers” or the “London Burkers”.



Bodysnatchers in a church cemetery, disturbed by the braying of an ass. Mezzotint, 1771.

Public domain. Wellcome Collection.

Such murderers were the exception

At first, the resurrectionists were usually medical students and hospital porters who stole for their own use or their surgeons, but the resurrectionists soon became organised. By the early nineteenth century several well-organised gangs of resurrectionists had appeared in London, Birmingham and other large cities. Over a period of fifteen months during 1830-1832, seven gangs were arrested in London. At that time, the London resurrectionists were estimated to number approximately two hundred. Some of the most effective resurrectionists were able to exhume, discreetly, about ten bodies during a single night. A fascinating account is “*The Diary of a Resurrectionist 1811-1812*” by Joshua Naples, a gravedigger turned resurrectionist and member of the London Borough Resurrection Gang who gives some insight into the methods they used.

They preferred to steal recently interred bodies from cemeteries and graveyards. Typically, a gang member would spend the day loitering in a graveyard waiting for a funeral or the gang could be tipped off by informers (corrupt sextons, gravediggers or undertakers). At night, members of the gang would dig up the body. Occasionally, bodies would be stolen from family homes where the body had been laid out, prior to burial.

The London Borough Gang, operated from 1802 to 1825 and supplied some of London's biggest anatomical schools, under the protection of the surgeon Sir Astley Paston Cooper (1768–1841). In Birmingham, protection was afforded by the surgeon William Sands Cox (1802-1875) who founded Birmingham medical school in 1825. Protection included using their influence to keep them out of jail and, if a member was imprisoned, paying the prisoner's family a pension while the breadwinner was serving his term.

A corpse did not belong to anyone; therefore, the theft of a corpse was not considered a felony, only a misdemeanour - unlawful disinterment - for which the punishment was either a fine or imprisonment. However, stealing a shroud, a coffin, or clothing from a corpse was considered a crime against the property of a dead person's heirs and subject to stiff punishment (including hanging), so such items were left. Petitions from the heads of medical schools on behalf of convicted resurrectionists can be found in The National Archives reference HO 17.

The medical and anatomy schools were at the mercy of the gangs. In 1816, in a dispute over payment, the gang cut off supplies to the St. Thomas Hospital Medical School, London. The school responded by using freelancers, but members of the gang forced their way into the dissecting rooms, threatened the students and attacked the cadavers. The police were called, but concerned about the negative publicity, the school paid the gang's bail and opened



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negotiations. The gang also put rivals out of business by desecrating graveyards - thereby rendering them unsafe to rob from for some time - or by reporting freelance resurrectionists to the authorities. The gangs were not averse to poaching on other gangs' territories. The *Birmingham Journal*, Saturday 17th November 1827 reported that a gang of resurrection men from London had visited Birmingham, intending to steal bodies.

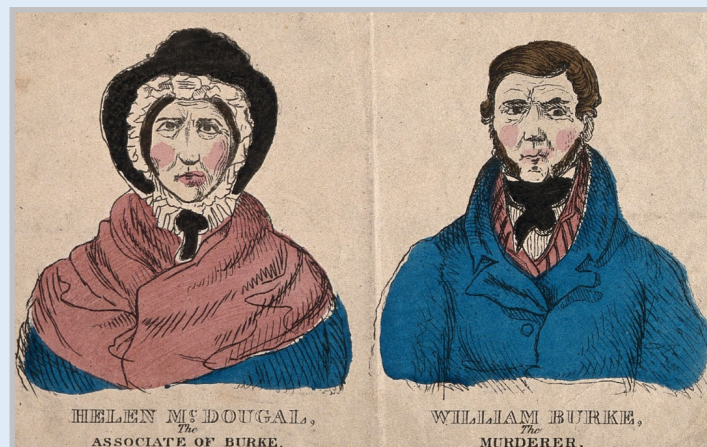
The financial rewards were great for the gangs. A weekly wage for a factory worker in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was approximately seven shillings; for a skilled tailor or carpenter, thirty shillings, and for a well-paid manservant in a wealthy household, one guinea a week. A cadaver, depending upon freshness and demand, could fetch between eight and twenty guineas. Some cadavers commanded a high premium. Fresh cadavers and limbs commanded a higher price than ones on the verge of putrefaction. Children's bodies (known as "smalls") commanded a high price as did specialty cadavers—those with congenital disorders or illnesses or had died in an unusual manner.

Given the rewards to the gangs, it can be seen why relatives of the deceased were eager to protect the bodies of their loved ones using contraptions such as mortsafes, steel and stone cages, which protected bodies and hindered the efforts of the resurrectionists. These were often paid for via "death clubs" or burial societies, in return for small regular payments. Many mortsafes can be found in Scotland. This may have given rise to the next misconception.



Iron mortsafe

St Bride's Church, London



Portraits of William Burke (1792-1829) and Helen McDougal (b.c.1795), on trial in Edinburgh in 1828 for the West Port murders. Coloured etching, c. 1829. Public domain. Wellcome Collection.

It only happened in Scotland and London

While the majority of mortsafes have been found in Scotland, including other forms of protection like coffin collars which were a metal collar secured to the bottom of the coffin, they have also been found around the British Isles, including Birmingham and West Bromwich in the West Midlands, London, Northumberland and Sutton Valley, Wiltshire. Those in the West Midlands and London being discovered during archaeological excavations, so more examples may be found in the future.

In addition, the most infamous cases come from Scotland (Burke and Hare) and London (the Italian boy murderers), and while most of the medical and anatomy schools were in London and Scotland, there were provincial medical and anatomy schools in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Oxford.

However, a search of the *British Newspaper Archive* prior to 1832 reveals accounts from around the country of graves being robbed and resurrectionists being arrested and tried. Further, it was not unusual for cadavers to be packed up in chests, hampers, or boxes and sent across the country via mail coaches to the agents of anatomy schools or surgeons. On occasion, details from the coach office or from the destination note could assist in the apprehending of the resurrectionists and/or their customers. The *Birmingham Journal*, 17th December 1831, reported how packing cases containing cadavers were being sent to London and Edinburgh from Birmingham coach offices. In February 1831, the *Worcester Journal*, reported how cadavers stolen from Upton, Worcestershire were sent to London on a mail coach were tracked by police officers. One was sent to the home of the surgeon, Dr. John Pocock Holmes (1783-1858), who denied all knowledge of it.

More than once, large shipments of bodies from the public graveyards in Ireland and other countries, packed in piano cases and kegs were left unclaimed on the docks of



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*Surgeon and anatomist, John Hunter.
Oil painting after Sir Joshua Reynolds.
Public domain. Wellcome Collection*

Liverpool and London, which did not fail to attract the attention of the authorities. For example, in January 1830, the *Wolverhampton Chronicle and Staffordshire Advertiser* reported that: *A vessel recently sailed from Ostend, with a cargo of dead bodies, intended for the London resurrectionists.*

In 1832, the government halted the trade of the resurrectionists by introducing the Anatomy Act. While the crimes of Burke and Hare and the London Burkers, and the activities of the resurrectionists drew public condemnation and outrage, the introduction of the Act was for less than altruistic reasons.

The Anatomy Act 1832

Under the Act only licensed medical schools, physicians and surgeons had legal access to corpses which were unclaimed after death in prisons, hospitals, asylums, and workhouses, provided no relatives of the deceased objected. In other words, they could legitimately purchase these corpses. A person could donate the corpse of a relative in exchange for burial at the expense of the anatomy school. The Act also established the Anatomy Inspectorate, appointed inspectors of places where dissections took place and revoked legislation permitting the dissection of murderers. The aim was to end body-snatching and to protect the practice of anatomy by ensuring a lawful supply of corpses. This was something the medical establishment had long been calling for, breaking the medics' dependence on the resurrectionist gangs, who had been setting ever-increasing prices. A good source of information relating to the administration of the Anatomy Act are the *Home Office: Anatomy Entry Books*, at The National Archives (Reference HO 83).

The Anatomy Act was open to abuse. While relatives of the paupers who had died in such institutions could object to the bodies of their dear ones being dissected, they had to object within seven days of the death and provide the money to pay for a coffin and churchyard burial. If they couldn't afford this, the remains could - quite legitimately under the Anatomy Act - be sent to a teaching hospital for dissection in return for a fee which contributed to the income of the workhouse involved. Some unscrupulous workhouse keepers posted notices of deaths in such convoluted language, only those who were competent readers would be able to understand their relative had died and be able to protest. This does raise the question that post-1832, if someone does discover an ancestor died in a workhouse, and cannot find where they were buried - were they sent to a medical school for dissection?

However, some workhouse Boards of Guardians refused to cooperate with the requests from the medical schools and the Inspectorate. In June 1838, the Aston Union Workhouse guardians, Birmingham, refused the request for bodies from Queen's College, Birmingham, as did Dudley Union in 1858 and 1865.

There were protests against the Act. When people discovered their recently deceased loved ones were being sent to anatomy schools, it led to unpleasant consequences. In early 1853, a body was taken from Wolverhampton Union Workhouse to Queen's College Birmingham. Shortly after, some relatives called at the Union and upon hearing what had taken place, caused a great disturbance. The Poor Law Inspector intervened, and the Board of Guardians was summoned. The resolution allowing bodies to be given to Queen's was immediately rescinded, and the supply from that Union was lost to the medical school (The National Archives MH 74/10, 6th January 1858).

For the researcher, correspondence with the Anatomy Inspectorate from hospitals and workhouse unions can be found at The National Archives MH 74, which contains: ... *anatomy registers and correspondence of the Home Office, the Ministry of Health and the Anatomy Office and Inspectorate relating to the lawful acquisition of bodies and the granting of licenses to practise anatomy. Supply of Bodies to Schools of Anatomy is the register of all bodies available to anatomy schools; the Anatomy Register lists all those whose bodies were dissected in schools of anatomy.*

The 1832 Anatomy Act was not repealed until the introduction of the 1984 Anatomy Act which was introduced to address the issue of organ transplants. This was superseded by the Human Tissue Act 2004 (the Human Tissue Act, 2006, in Scotland) which made it illegal to remove, store or use human tissue without appropriate consent.



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Final thought

The world and work of the resurrectionists is a fascinating area to research, with a wealth of available resources. Yet there is one final misconception to address. The patrons of the resurrectionists - the surgeons - were not sadistic demons as Dr Robert Knox, patron of Burke and Hare is frequently portrayed; they were men dedicated to science and education, who cared about improving the lot of their fellow man. A good example is the case of Birmingham Surgeon William Sands Cox. In 1832, Sands Cox was approached by the Reverend William Leigh of Bilston, near Wolverhampton, for help. Bilston was in the grip of the Asiatic Cholera pandemic of 1832, and the town authorities were struggling to cope with the number of casualties and fatalities; however, Sands Cox responded by sending a team of surgeons and a supply of coffins to assist the relief effort. The irony is the Rev. Leigh, who was also a magistrate, had a loathing of resurrectionists; when brought before him, they would be sentenced to hard labour.

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Useful databases

British Newspaper Archive: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

The National Archives catalogue: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

About the Author

Kevin Goodman is a medical historian and author. His areas of interest range from the history of arrow wound treatment to the epidemiological history of the West Midlands. He is the author of *The Diggum Uppers: Body Snatching and Grave Robbing in the West Midlands*. His most recent book is *The Strangling Angel: Diphtheria in the Black Country*, published by Bows, Blades and Battles Press in June 2025. He has also appeared in documentaries for The Smithsonian Channel, Channel 4, Channel 5, the History Channel, and for the History Hit Channel. More information can be found at: <https://bowsbladesandbattles.tripod.com>. Kevin is available for talks live or via Zoom for local groups. See *The Time Travelling Medicine Man* section on his website.



Tip from Debbie, FHF Admin

Listen to **The Grave Robbers** series on BBC Sounds. You could be surprised at what goes on with fake wills etc!! www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/m002fvvgg We all use wills for research—make sure you make yours!



**Button badge
available from the
online shop**

www.familyhistorybooksonline.com/button-badge-i-see-dead-people-186



Family History Societies



Hampshire Genealogical Society

CONFERENCE DAY SATURDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

Wickham Community Centre, Mill Lane,
Wickham, PO17 5AL
9.30am - 4.00pm

*Please note this is a **change of venue** to that previously advertised*

Our theme is

**Celebrating Our Hampshire Connections:
Discover, Share and Celebrate
Hampshire's Rich Heritage!**

Booking closes Thursday 4th September 2025

**Hidden in Plain Sight:
Reminders of WWII in the New Forest**
Speaker – Marc Heighway

The Saxon Family Tree (from arrival to 1066)
Speaker – Laurie Page

The Friendship of Jane Austen and Martha
Speaker – Jane Glennie

**The War Graves Photographic Project –
it all began in Hampshire**
Speaker – Steve Rogers

For booking and further details, including full programme and speaker information, please visit news and events at www.hgs-familyhistory.com

The ticket price is **£24.50**, which includes four talks, refreshments, and a buffet lunch. Everyone is welcome—HGS members, non-members, and anyone interested in Hampshire. Feel free to invite friends!



Wickham Community Centre



Discover more with DNA

Family History Societies and One-Name Societies are often running projects using DNA. Individuals also undertake family-wide projects often with interesting results.

- ⇒ **Use DNA** to prove your paper research
- ⇒ **Use DNA** to explore who may link to you genetically
- ⇒ **Use DNA** to seek the “unknown” links on the tree
- ⇒ **Use DNA** if you are prepared for the unexpected! You will not be alone if you find a “not the expected father” or other blip in there somewhere!

Want to get started?

DNA testing kits

Available from Family History Books—see www.familyhistorybooksonline.com/dna-kits-376. The basic autosomal/FamilyFinder kit is just £40.



Want to learn more about using DNA?

Take a course!

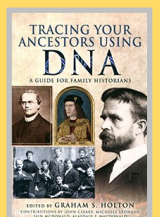
Federation member-society in North of Ireland—NIFHS—is running its **DNA Summer School** 1-5 September. Ten classes which can be booked separately. Full details on the society website: www.nifhs.org/events-and-courses/courses/.



Want some bedtime reading?

Tracing Your Ancestors Using DNA is available from Family History Books at £15.99 + p&p.

Click [HERE](#) for details.



STOP-PRESS NEWS

Scottish adoption charity fined for **shredding records!**

Report: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj4wn00pz48o

Precious documents gone forever.



Family History Societies



The Metcalfe Society

One of the strengths of a society such as ours is that we can trace the name back to a fairly limited area in the dales of north Yorkshire. Formed in 1980 and with over 2,400 members since then, the benefit of the society must be that our records are based on original records in parishes and record offices across the country.

The card index created by those early members in the 1980s and 1990s on 20,000+ cards was computerised in the 1990s, and there are now over 110,691 individuals listed. All collected over the forty-five years of the society's existence.

The earliest record of a variant of Metcalfe was in 1278, with Adam de Medecalf de Dent. The name can now be found in over forty variants, spread across the world.

As far as new members are concerned, we try to confirm the individuals that they know about and trace any additional information available from our own records.

All members are entitled to attend our annual general meeting, which we combine with our 'muster' – a meeting of the Clan Metcalfe. This is always very useful and friendly as we are all related somewhere along our family trees.

We now produce an electronic newsletter six times a year containing news, stories and photos from members and edited by a Canadian member. In 2007, *Mecca News*, which preceded the electronic version, won the Elizabeth Simpson award for the best family history journal for one-name societies.

While the database is free to members, they are encouraged to search it and other sources to find, and share, as much information as possible. We try to help wherever needed, and our archive team are available to help as and when

necessary.

The amount of information in each record does depend on what is or was available at the time it was entered on to the database. Births, marriages, deaths and wills were originally culled from parish, record and archive offices. Where possible, the text of the will is a true record of the wording of the original. More recently, we have included information from the commercial sites, newspapers and the media as well as information submitted by members of their own family data.

In 2024 we reprinted our bestselling *Metcalfe – History of the Clan* volume and in 2020, we expanded the research on some of the stories and items in *Mecca News* to produce *Metcalfe Family Histories*. All publications can be ordered through our website <https://metcalfe.org.uk/shop/> or the FHF Parish Chest <https://www.pariahchest.com/the-metcalfe-society-5309.php>

45th Anniversary Muster

Saturday 4th October 2025

**being held in Leyburn,
North Yorkshire**

Details available from the address/email below.



Members at the 25th Anniversary Muster in 2005, held at West Burton



Nappa Hall, Wensleydale, ancestral home of the Metcalfes, originally built c. 1459

Contact Information:

Membership Secretary, Mrs J Heron,
17 Bailey Walk, Wakefield, WF4 3QW
Tel: 07866202785

Email: membership@metcalfe.org.uk
or enquiries@metcalfe.org.uk

You can join by post, by cheque, through our website
www.metcalfe.org.uk, Paypal.

Or the FHF Parish Chest: <https://www.pariahchest.com/>
(look for *The Metcalfe Society* crest)



Family History Societies

Heritage Open Days / Open Doors

Huddersfield and District FHS Newsome Centre, Jackroyd Lane, Huddersfield, HD4 6QU. Opening times are 10.00am to 3.00pm on **Saturday 13 September** and 10.00am to 2.00pm on **Sunday 14 September**. The former St John's Church is now a community focal point keen to retain and record its history. Exhibition by our memorial inscription team, along with a display of research into WWII service personnel inscribed on the pulpit. Churchyard tour with interesting stories uncovered by our volunteers. We will be available for family history advice. Refreshments available.
www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/the-newsome-centre-1-2025.html



Leicestershire and Rutland FHS at 7-9 Every Street, Town Hall Square, Leicester, LE1 6AG. Look down onto Town Hall Square from a different vantage point! Visit the LRFHS Research Centre in Leicester's famous Every Street. Small exhibition of photographs of Town Hall Square and of the *Picture House* which once backed onto 7-9 Every Street. In addition, the society's family history resources will be available plus free research help. Free, no need to book. **Saturday 13th September** 10.30am – 1.00pm and **Saturday 20th September** 10.30am – 1.00pm. <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/leicestershire-and-rutland-research-centre-visit.html>



Norfolk FHS Research Centre, 70 St Giles Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1LS. On Heritage Open Days, we will welcome visitors to the research centre in Norwich to show them more about what our society does and explain the benefits of members. We will have volunteers available to assist visitors with their family history research. The centre will be open from 10.00am until 5.00pm on the **13, 16, 17, 18 and 20 September**. Come along! www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/norfolk-family-history-society-2-2025.html



Northamptonshire FHS—**Saturday 13 September** at Wootton Hall Park, Northampton NN4 8BQ. Northamptonshire Archives will offer a behind-the-scenes tour, work and demonstrations of preservation, digitization and conservation. Plus an exhibition relating to the 1675 Great Fire of Northampton. Northants FHS will be there to help with family history enquiries. Booking required www.westnorthants.gov.uk/northamptonshire-archives-service



Nuneaton and North Warwickshire FHS

will be supporting St Mary and All Saints church, Fillongley CV7 8EW. Open 11.00am till 4.00pm on **Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September**. Help with local family history research. There will be displays about the village past and present including links to George Eliot. Refreshments available. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/st-mary-and-all-saints-church-fillongley-fillongley-now-and-then-2025.html



Pontypool branch of Gwent FHS

will be at St Cadoc's church, Trevethin, Pontypool NP4 8JA on **Saturday 20 September** for an open doors heritage day. Open 10.30am – 3.00pm. We will have family history advice, copy registers, various databases and the monumental inscriptions list for the church to help locate gravestones. Church has a military chapel dedicated to the 2nd Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment. Bell tower will be open. Tower tours weather dependant. Refreshments available. <https://gwentfhs.org.uk/>



Image © Jaggery CC BY-SA 2.0.



In September there are many free events and buildings open free on designated heritage days.

ENGLAND—Open Days: www.heritageopendays.org.uk/whats-on/search-2025-events.html

WALES—Open Doors: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/whats-on/open-doors-events>

N. IRELAND: [//discovernorthernireland.com/things-to-do/arts-culture-and-heritage/european-heritage-open-days](http://discovernorthernireland.com/things-to-do/arts-culture-and-heritage/european-heritage-open-days)

SCOTLAND—Doors Open: www.doorsopendays.org.uk/find-a-building



Really Useful Bulletin

Choosing social media platforms

There are many social media platforms, with new ones being invented from time to time. At the time of writing some of the big ones are Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, TikTok, Bluesky and Threads. You don't have to keep up with all of these to use social media!

Most people just use one or two platforms regularly. It is better for our time to not get too bogged down in too many but to focus our attention. They are also all different which means we can choose what works best for us. With this there is some degree of research beforehand for you to find out what kind of things a platform does. You can do this by reading online but one of the best ways is to ask friends and family what they use, and hopefully to get them to help explain!

There is also a good amount of trial and error. Join a platform, see what it's like and if it isn't for you then there is no skin off your back if you leave. Any mainstream platform will be entirely free to use particularly for an ordinary person or charity organisation (like a family history society), and sometimes there are paid-for additional functions for businesses.

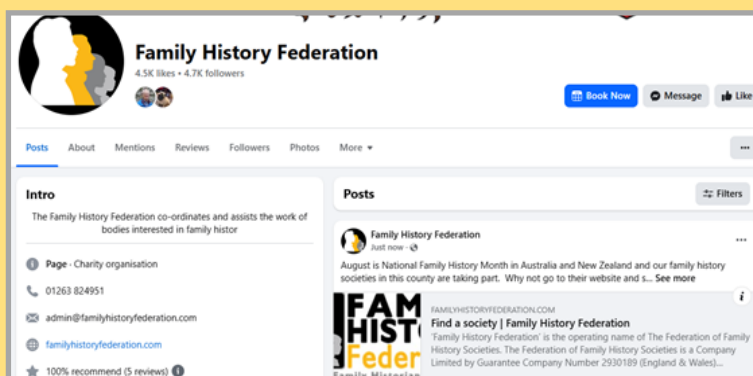
Most social media platforms have very similar functions such as connecting with people, building a social network, having a profile about yourself or your society and posting information (as well as engaging with posts from others).

This all being said, here is a starting point with information on some of the main platforms that you or your society might want to use.

Instagram is all about pictures. One of the most popular sites and popular with a range of people. Its image-first approach makes it bright and fun. Less used by family historians to discuss as it is less about information and conversation, it can be a great way to 'see' what others are up to and share.

Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms and is especially used by older people. It is

The Federation's Facebook page

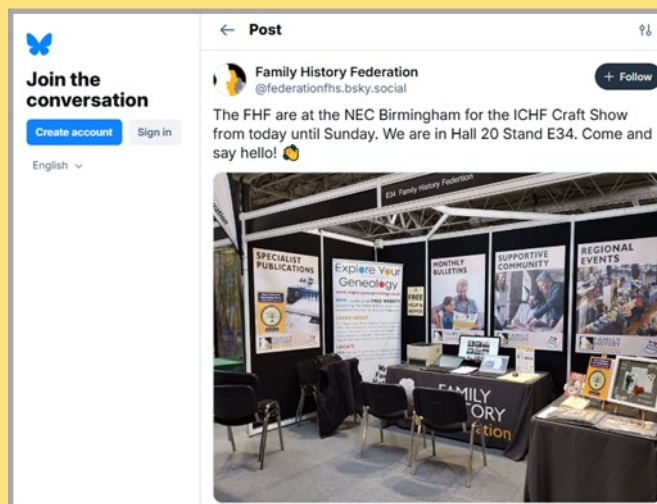


distinct by having Groups and Pages you can join (or set up yourself) around particular interests. In many respects it is akin to old-school forums. You can post a mixture of text and images.

X / Twitter has been one of the most popular platforms and used by a wide demographic, though not the youngest generation very much. It is a 'micro-blogging' site which means post text length is restricted, though you can use images and videos as well. The use of #Hashtags are a particular feature. It is less active now than it used to be.

Bluesky is the young rival to the above and operates in a very similar way, though with some distinct features such as 'Starter Packs' which are list of accounts to follow which help grow your network quickly. It is still a growing platform.

The Federation's Bluesky page



Threads is Meta's (Instagram and Facebook) answer the two previous micro-blogging sites and works in a similar way. It has been well adopted by organisations who can create accounts and post as an extension of their existing accounts. However, it is not very well used.

LinkedIn many professional researchers use LinkedIn — the social media platform for work and business. Perhaps not the one for the ordinary family historian, unless you are looking for someone to do some work for you.

There are other forms of social media for those of us who want to share in a range of ways. If videos are your thing then platforms like YouTube and Vimeo might suit you well. If you like a newsletter form then sites like Substack allow you to build a mailing list and share posts with them. Perhaps one of these forms of social media might suit you.

Joe Saunders

Family history groups are welcome to join the Family History Federation—see

www.familyhistoryfederation.com/society-join



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

Out and About

The Federation and Family History Books' bookstall will be at the following events. Come along and fill your bag with bargains.

New books will be available along with usual titles—there are always offers at live fairs—and no postage to pay!

Please use the links to discover full details of each event.

Card or cash payments gladly accepted for our books!

- 6 Sept **Peak District U3A Family History Conference**,
Palace Hotel, Buxton SK17 6AG
<https://peakdistrictnetwork.wixsite.com/familyhistory/about-5>
- 13 Sept **Bristol and Avon FHS Family History Fair**,
Turnberrie's Centre, Thornbury BS35 2BB
www.bafhs.org.uk
- 20 Sept **Secrets and Lies Conference: 19-21 Sept**
Bookstall Saturday only Holiday Inn, Peterborough West PE3 6SG
See Bulletin No 57—May.
<https://secretsandlies.org.uk/>
- 4 Oct **The Family History Show London**
Kempton Park Racecourse
<https://thefamilyhistoryshow.com/london/>
- 25 Oct **Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair**,
Cherwell School (North), Oxford OX2 7EE
www.ofhs.uk/fair2025

The Federation with some selected books and providing advice, especially for beginners, will be at:

- 5-7 Sept **ICHF Creative Craft/Hobby Show—Farnborough**
- 25-27 Sept **ICHF Creative Craft/Hobby Show—Exeter**
- 23-26 Oct **ICHF Creative Craft/Hobby Show—Glasgow**
www.ichfevents.co.uk/whats-on/



LATE PLACES ANNOUNCED—BOOK NOW!

Peak District U3A Family History Conference,
Palace Hotel, Buxton SK17 6AG

Saturday 6 September 9.00am—5.30pm

Four great talks, stalls, lunch and refreshments all included in ticket price of just £30.

Special offers for overnight accommodation

What more could you want? See you there!

Get booking NOW!

<https://peakdistrictnetwork.wixsite.com/familyhistory/about-5>

Find my past

'Was Justice Served?' podcast returns

Rav Wilding kicks off second season in August by challenging listeners to solve real historical crimes

The crimes covered include a scandalous love triangle which led to the poisoning of the husband, a potential fraudster or a shipwrecked son returning to claim a family fortune, a brutal murder fuelled by alcohol and love rivalry, two murders which occurred two weeks apart in the same town, and a shooting in a fascinating LGBTQ case.

Listeners can explore archive materials brought together in curated 'Case Files' for free using Findmypast's Collections feature. **Was Justice Served?** can be downloaded via Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts. For each episode, a complete collection of the historical newspapers referenced is available online at www.findmypast.co.uk/wasjusticeserved.

Why History Matters—October Study Days

The Countess of Derby is running two one-day study events. 15 October - The Life and Legacy of the 13th Earl of Derby and on 16 October - The Life and Legacy of the 14th Earl of Derby. Opportunity to tour Knowsley Hall with the Countess of Derby as your guide.

Full details: <https://knowsleyhallvenue.co.uk/events/>

Roots Revealed

Irish Genealogy Online Course

Sep-Nov 2025

Commercial course which may be relevant to readers who have island of Ireland roots. This ten-week course focuses on Irish records. Delivered via Zoom.

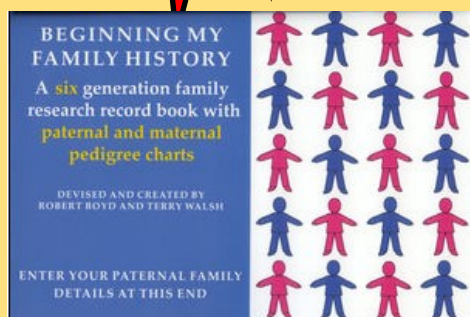
Full details www.rootsrevealed.co.uk/genealogy-courses/ £160 or £140 if booked before 31 August.



Really Useful Bulletin

Family History Books

This month's offer....



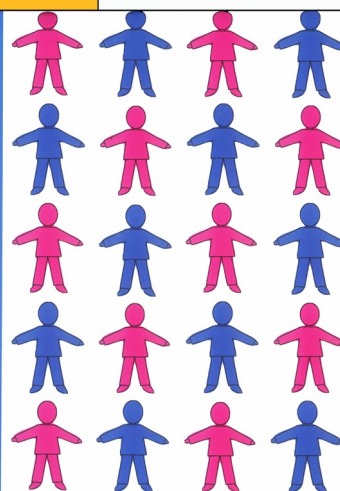
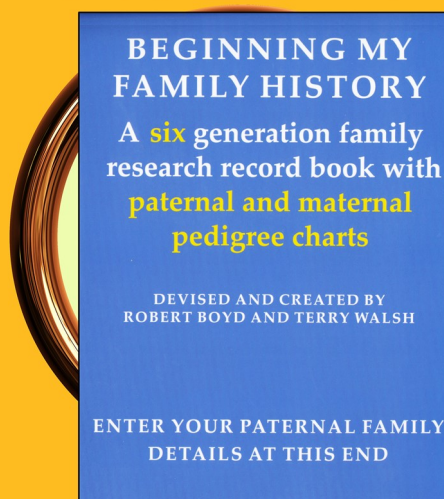
NEW to Family History Books is ***Beginning My Family History***. This is a six-generation recording system launched especially for those setting out on their family history journey. The authors listened to comments about their ten-generation book and have launched this compact version with additional space for notes. Designed to open flat for adding entries.

It is suitable for younger researchers to use, too.

Available from
Family History Books
for **£7.50** + p&p.
See [HERE](#) for details.

How to Discover Your Family History using **FREE** resources!

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Anthony E. Trice

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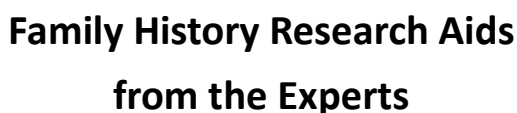
***How to Discover Your Family History
using FREE resources!***

The perfect combination to get started, record people,
keep notes—and avoid undue expense

Family History Books twin pack for just **£12.45** + p&p

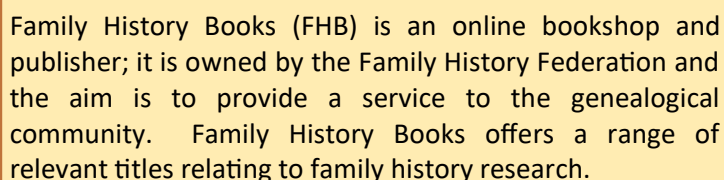
Offer ends on 20 September

[Full details click HERE.](#)



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- *Memorial inscriptions information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHS*
- *Nonconformists: Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers and many more nonconformist lists*
- *Wills and probate indexes of wills and administrations*
- *Folders, printing facilities, giftware*
- *..and more!*

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



FHB welcomes contact from authors! Works of general and specific interest to family historians with wider social history topics are of interest. FHB does not publish individual family histories or fiction. If you have a book—especially a shorter one—in the making, then do contact FHB via admin@familyhistoryfederation.com. We would love to hear from you about your ideas.

Some recent publications by Family History Books include:



All and more are to be found in the shop!

In addition to its [online shop](#) FHB can also be found at major live family history events around the country. Come and visit us and see all the latest titles. The stall is always very popular!

Happy browsing!

Please explore the range, and place your orders, at
www.familyhistorybooksonline.com

The *REALLY USEFUL Bulletin* is published monthly and circulated free of charge. Members of the Family History Federation are encouraged to provide information about their projects and activities for inclusion. The Federation policy is to not include paid-for commercial advertising. However, when space allows, the editorial team includes mentions of activities relevant to readers which are offered by other organisations—plus any relevant special offers, too.

The team is considering the option of including relevant commercial advertising for 2026.

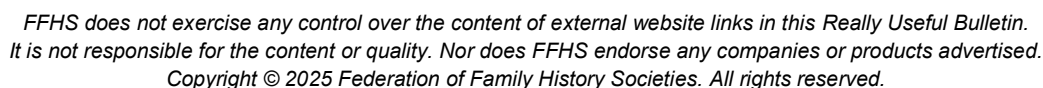


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Can FHF members in your area get together and put on a show in 2026?

Assistance available with hall hire, etc.

Contact: chairman@familyhistoryfederation.com



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