

Really Useful Bulletin

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Lead article is *Investigating Name Changes*

plus news from local FHS and from the Federation



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Really Useful Bulletin

Investigating name changes

by Ian Waller

The simple act of changing one's name can cause research challenges for family historians. Anyone over the age of sixteen years can call themselves by whatever name they wish but, over the past two hundred years or so, formal procedures have become common and are usually needed in order for changes to be recognised by government, commerce and many other organisations. However, less than fifteen per cent of those who changed their names did so through official documentation. Therefore people looking for a formal record of a change of name will realise that it frequently simply doesn't exist. You're more likely to find a trail of records in one name, and at a certain point another trail of records in another name. The challenge is to prove that the two names relate to the same person. There is unlikely to be a single document that links the two names, which is where the challenge becomes a reality for researchers. If you are lucky you may find a press announcement of the change, but there are other ways of finding information as detailed in this article.

Why a change of name?

The majority of people had no desire to draw attention to their name change so it just happened and was the easiest way to escape officialdom, fade into oblivion within society or to formalise a relationship.

People called themselves by another name for many different reasons, such as illiteracy, simplification, necessity, mispronunciation or they simply disliked the name given them by their parents. Other perhaps more legitimate reasons included fear of discrimination or persecution, to integrate as an immigrant, to cover up illegitimacy, to conceal marriage breakdown and even hide bigamy or avoid detection as a result of desertion from military service.

In days when it was too expensive or restrictive to divorce and in order to escape possible detection where bigamy was involved, a man who deserted his wife may have changed his name and the woman usually took their partner's new name to give the appearance of being



Memorial for Margret Leddin alias Gleeson © Ian Waller

married but alas no record of such event will exist.

Illegitimate children often assumed the surname of their mother's subsequent husband although he was only the stepfather. This effectively formalised the family relationship to the public face and is fairly easy to deduce from your research.

People also changed their name when entering the military if they had done so under age or without parental consent; which were common occurrences for First World War enlistments. It was not unusual in the early twentieth century for a person to enlist under the name of a brother or friend.

Military records are also sometimes annotated with the alias name, particularly any pension records.

The Western Front Association headed a project known as "Project Alias" which contains the names of thousands of men who enlisted under an alias name. Their database provides both original and alias names. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also established that around 3,500 soldiers have gravestones using an alias as well as a proper name. The key wording on their headstones being "served as". Similarly, many civilian gravestones in churchyards and cemeteries also indicate alias names so don't forget this element of research. Gravestones listing both names can be regarded as absolute proof of a change although they will not reveal when or why.

Some people had little choice and were directed to change their names on succeeding to property under the terms of a bequest in a will or a marriage settlement with the purpose of perpetuating the memory of a family in which a male line has become extinct. The only way of finding this out is to trace all the wills proved for all members of the family when you know a name change has occurred but do not know why.

Begin with the obvious - follow a simple process

Do the basics first. Before the advent of standardised spelling, names were written phonetically as heard and as shown in these examples. *ALBONE* – Alban, Owlbon, Auburn, Holborn, Holbone, Awlbun or *SHOULER* – Shewler,



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Shoulder, Showler, Soueller, Sheweller. This is something to be aware of when using alphabetical indexes and finding aids. The names had not changed but spelling interpretation had. In the case of Albone, look at indexes under the letters H and O as well as A. In many cases this resolves the issue. Never undertake research with the preconceived idea that there is only **one way** to spell your surname.



It is also possible that a record could be indexed under a nickname or pet name, such as someone named Robert Baker using Bob or Robbie. Hyphenated surnames are another variable along the same lines (e.g. Linda Peters, Linda Peters-Sullivan or just Linda Sullivan). Using a second forename prominently or converting that to a nickname was also common as was the use of alias names for no other reason than choice, particularly into the 1800s in the southern areas of the country. Then, of course, there is the complete misinterpretation of a name.

Consider guardianship. Guardians could be assigned under old poor laws for orphans or for children who had been deserted. Very often family members took over the care of children who had lost their parents without a formal recognition of the change of care or responsibility. Guardianship was also bequeathed under terms of wills and often the children took on the surname of the guardian nominated by the testator. Usually guardianship only applied until a child was twenty-one years of age so thereafter a name change could occur or they revert back to their original surname.

Since 1741 the names of foundlings were changed upon entry to the Foundling Hospital. 'Foundling' is an historic term applied to children, usually babies, which have been abandoned by parents and discovered and cared for by others. 270,000 children were part of the Foundling Hospital system prior to the Second World War. Children under twelve months were admitted after a petition from the mother explaining background. After admission they were immediately renamed on baptism and their original name would only be identified by reference to an admission number and the mother's token.

Newspapers are a rich source of information in locating either a registered or unregistered name change. Even if you are looking for a name change that may have not been formally registered, newspapers are still a valuable reference for locating a person who has change a name by usage. Sometimes, people who changed their names have

announced the change in their local newspaper. Thus, it can be valuable to research the newspapers in the area to see whether or not there are any mentions of a name change or of the new or old name of the person you're looking for. In addition, you may find valuable information about the person and their name change by searching newspaper archives even if you're unable to directly find evidence of the change itself. Seek out any obituary notices or post-funeral announcements by family which confirm the deceased's alias(es).

Name added later to a birth certificate

It is possible, under certain circumstances, to record a different or new name on a birth certificate. This might happen where a factual mistake was corrected, the father's name was added to the birth certificate, the parents got married or a new name was recorded on the birth certificate.

A birth certificate is never amended. Any change made by the registrar would be made by annotating the birth register entry, either in the margin or at the foot of the document or making a new register entry, replacing the old one. When a certificate is changed, all new certificates will be issued from the new entry.

Most name changes were not usually recorded on civil registration certificates but an application to the Registrar General enabled changes to be detailed or annotated on birth or marriage certificates. Often these changes were subtle or purely by way of clarification but become very important when researching. The Christian name of any child can be changed within one year of the original registration usually entered in column ten of the original certificate. This column was also used to add a name after initial registration. If a name was added after the initial registration it is often a clue to a nonconformist allegiance because some religious customs used a Christening or Baptism to formalise a name. The original and subsequent entries will both appear in the GRO indexes.

Known by....

Think about how many people you know today, who are known throughout their life by a completely different Christian name to that which they were given by their parents. They progress through life, marry and die using that different name thus appearing in all manner of officialdom with the "other" name, so how do you link it back to the original birth certificate in a completely different name. Simply obtain all documentation and fully



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examine the facts found in census returns, baptism records and occupational sources to clarify a connection.

Sometimes conjecture even plays a role! Many people also used their second forename as the prominent name or inherited a nickname but such situations are normally fairly obvious or easy to detect.

In England and Wales, the law is slightly different for Scotland, you may call yourself what you like unless it is for criminal or fraudulent purposes. Many criminals used an alias name in an attempt to avoid detection. No legal documentation or public notice is needed to do so irrespective of motive. The situation was slightly different during the Second World War when a name change was only made after a statutory notice in the *London, Edinburgh*



or Belfast Gazettes. Such entries can be found by searching online.

Name change by deed poll or Royal licence

The most common type of document effecting the formal change to a person's name is a deed poll. A deed poll is a general term meaning a single legal document involving only one party and can also relate to other aspects of common law. Deed polls could be "enrolled" in the Close Rolls or the enrolment books of the Supreme Court but as it was not a legal obligation many were not. If an enrolled deed cannot be found the best place to try and locate it is within family or estate papers, privately held or within collections at local record offices as they were regarded as personal deeds.

From 1914 if a deed was enrolled you will be able to find a notice to that effect in the *Gazette*. The easiest way of finding these is using the indexed online *Gazettes* as finding the notice as well as locating the enrolled deed should provide a full picture. Name changes can frustrate research but are not always detectable.

A surname may also be altered or changed by Royal Licence which was common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were mainly issued where an inheritance depended upon someone taking the deceased testator's name. Marriage settlements sometimes required the husband to adopt his wife's name.

For armorial families a change of name required a change to a coat of arms. Arms granted to one family can only be transferred to another person not in the legitimate male line of descent from the original grantee by means of a

Royal Licence, followed by an exemplification of the arms. A petition for a Royal Licence was drafted by an officer of arms for signature by the petitioner. It was then submitted on his or her behalf by the officer of arms to the Home Office. A resulting Royal Licence and any subsequent exemplification of arms must be recorded in the official registers of the College of Arms to be valid. A Royal licence is usually granted after consultation with the Home Secretary. Following this procedure generates correspondence which can often be found in the Home Office files at The National Archives in series HO45 for the period 1841-1871 and HO44 for the period 1868-1959.

Change of name by Act of Parliament

Some changes of name were also made by a private Act of Parliament, usually for the same reasons as those made by Royal Licence. This system was more common in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but since 1907 there has only been one Act. These Acts of Parliament are published in printed volumes arranged by year so you will need to search through the list of Private Acts of Parliament which changed a person's name covering the period from 1539 to date. Confirm if an Act was passed and in which year then consult the original documents at The National Archives. The Parliamentary Archives are now held at Kew.

Aliens and foreign immigrants

Within other levels of society foreign immigrants frequently anglicised their names, usually to fit in with society so as not to appear "foreign". This situation was particularly true amongst the artisan and business community or to conceal racial origins because they were either ashamed, or to avoid any detection by their native country's officials particularly if they were refugees or had left because of persecution. A desire to conceal racial origin produced many changes. Jews, Germans, Russians and the Irish are very likely to change their names. Genealogically it may be noted that a certain prestige also appears to attach to surnames given the appearance of a French origin.

Aliens resident in Britain, particularly of enemy countries could not change their names between 1916 and 1971 and this ban was extended to all foreigners at the end of the First World War.

Discovering a name change

There are a wide variety of government, military and occupational records which may mention both real, changed and alias names. Some of the more common ones show both names because maybe the family could not



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decide what to call a child at baptism. Maybe the person had been exposed as a criminal who had committed various offences using different names and the crimes had been linked, in which case the records usually give both real and all known alias names. Documents may exist in family papers relating to both names.

There was also a series of ways in which a formal name change could occur. A statutory declaration before a Justice of the Peace or a Commissioner for Oaths was sometimes enrolled in Close Rolls and these can be researched at The National Archives. Such documents serve only as written evidence that a change of name has occurred they do not operate to change a person's name. An "official" notice in a national or provincial newspaper was also made.

[Phillimore and Fry Index 1760-1901 - a composite index to name changes](#)

This index is invaluable to see if your ancestor changed his or her name formally. It was compiled from various sources and does not purport to be complete but it is all that you have to quickly find information. It includes information on notices in *The Times* from 1861 as well as those in the *Gazettes* and the College of Arms records. Some of the Close Rolls records, unless reported in *The Times* are not included so there are limitations. The index was originally published in 1905. It is now available online (see end).

It also contains a comprehensive introduction on the history of the law surrounding name changes.

[Patronymic name changes – a basic overview](#)

This was a common practice of creating last names from the name of one's father, usually the father's given name, or from the paternal side of the family. Common in Welsh, southern Irish and Scandinavian names. It is important to remember that in simple terms the surnames change with each generation for example: Robert, son of Tom would be Robert Tomson (Thompson); Robert Thompson's son, Edward, would become Edward Robertson. In England, names ending with the suffix "son" were often originally patronymic. The use of "Mac", in various forms, was prevalent in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man also to denote son of.

Patronymics can present a unique set of challenges. They usually occur pre-1813 but are the subject of modern revival amongst Welsh speakers. They also exist in the English counties which border Wales. When researching you should concentrate on one family unit at a time. You will be unable to research multi generations of a family at

the same time. Also be aware of second surnames occurring within the lifetime. Often used to distinguish two people in the same parish sharing the same patronymic name.

In censuses look for siblings using different surnames. Some may have taken the father's first name as a patronymic. Look for cases where the children have a surname other than their father's. If it is a patronymic the surname should correspond with his first name.

In the parish registers look for the occurrence of 'ab', 'ap', 'ach', 'uch', 'vch' and 'vz'. This means you are in patronymic country but your family may not necessarily be using patronymics. Look for instances of having apparently more than one Christian name. Look for the wife retaining her maiden name. Lookout for aliases. When looking for a female burial, check maiden name as well as husband's names.

[Conclusion](#)

If you suspect a name change has occurred it can appear impossible to find the origins of the person under their original name. However, trying various options set out above may provide leads and you could yet bring that brick wall tumbling down.

[Western Front Association – Project Alias:](#)

www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/project-alias-a-major-scheme-to-locate-men-who-served-using-a-different-name/

[Foundling Hospital Archive](#) – including online access to names:

<https://archives.coram.org.uk/>

[Gazettes online](#) (Belfast, Edinburgh and London):

www.thegazette.co.uk/

[Phillimore and Fry – An Index to Changes of Name 1760 – 1901:](#)

<https://archive.org/details/indextochangesof00philrich/page/n1/mode/2up>



[About the author](#)

Ian Waller is vice chairman and education officer of the Family History Federation and a retired professional genealogist. He is a Fellow of AGRA and also a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists.

We all encounter the infamous brick wall somewhere in our research. Ian Waller's *Family History Research Challenges and How to Solve Them* is well worth reading!

Available [HERE](#) use code FEB26.

See page 6 for 10% discounts.





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Suffolk FHS Fair



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11:00 Simon Partridge: Late Great Fishing Industry of East Anglia

12:00 Break (on site cafe or nearby cafes)

14:00 Cathy Shelbourne: Researching Your Maritime Ancestors: how Ipswich Maritime Trust can help

Saturday 9 May 2026

10am to 4pm

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Ipswich IP4 1LN
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Calderdale Family History Society

Projects update

Since our last update in the Bulletin last October, we have made great progress with our work on the monumental inscriptions for Brighthouse Cemetery, one of the largest cemeteries in Calderdale. Having initially aimed to complete the project in the early part of 2026, thanks to the sterling efforts by our transcription team, we completed the project just prior to the new year.

As a result, we have added 4,654 grave and remembrance details covering 11,858 individual people to our database. The names of these are available to everyone via the transcription index on our website www.cfhsweb.com and full details can be found, as a society member, on our online database.

We are now concentrating on two further projects, to start the year – transcription of the burial records for Bank Top Methodist church, Southowram and a “mills” project to provide details of employees of up to thirteen local mills at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This second project may be quite complex, as the records held for each mill are different, one from the other. However, it is likely to give information on our ancestors that is not available anywhere else.



Overseas membership update

In common with many societies, we have a vibrant membership from outside the UK. Last year, we decided to pay more attention to their specific needs and so we have set up an “overseas” group within the society, which is controlled by two of our US members. This involves conducting bi-monthly meetings over Zoom, to discuss matters of particular interest to our overseas membership. These meetings are, of course, open to UK members as well, so we are getting valuable interaction between the two types of member.

There are two meetings every alternate month, a day or so apart, so that we can cater for the time differences. These cover, broadly speaking, a meeting for the eastern part of the world followed by one for the west.

Our society welcomes input and comment from anyone who has an interest in either the Calderdale area itself (basically Halifax and surrounds) or on the running of family history societies in general. Such views can be sent to chairman@cfhsweb.com



Suffolk Family History Society

Ipswich Branch invites you to begin researching your family's history

Three in-person talks of one-and-a-half hours each at 10.30am on Saturday 14, 21 and 28 March

Salvation Army Citadel, 558 Woodbridge Road, Ipswich IP4 4PH with easy, free parking at rear

Society members £5 per session, three for £10

Non-members £6 per session, three for £15

Pay by cash, cheque or bank transfer

To book, email: ipswichChairman@suffolkfhs.org.uk

Phone: 01473 274300



Family History Societies



North of Ireland Family History Society

The Great North of Ireland Family Tree is a project to encourage anyone with North of Ireland (Nofl) ancestry to add their ancestors to Wikitree and to add their DNA to FamilyTreeDNA to give us all a better chance of finding connections with each other. A shared ancestor from someone's tree or a DNA match could be the missing link you need to extend your tree.

Finding our ancestors

Many people with Nofl (Ulster) ancestors have a brick wall in the early 1800s in those lines. The main cause of this was the 1922 Four Courts fire in Dublin which destroyed centuries of Irish historical records. However, not everything was lost - some records had been duplicated and sent elsewhere, others were in private custody and institutions such as churches kept their own records.

NIFHS holds many niche records in its research centre near Belfast that can lead to a valuable discovery. Plus it has transcribed many church records and gravestone inscriptions, some dating back into the 1700s. Indexes to these records are now available to search on the NIFHS website [here](#) and society members can request the full transcription if they can't get to our research centre.

If someone else has researched one of your lines, they may have found a record that can extend your tree. Or you may hold some information that could help an unknown cousin! Sharing your ancestors' profiles (and sources) on Wikitree could be the key to unlocking a vital connection.

DNA connects us

We can only match people on the same site so if everyone with Nofl DNA added their tests to FamilyTreeDNA, imagine how much easier it would be to identify our common ancestors. We already have more than 11,000 kits in our [Nofl DNA Project](#) - the largest database of people with Nofl ancestry. Put your DNA there to find that elusive match!

Need help?

If you want to add your branch to The Great North of Ireland Family Tree or upload your DNA to FTDNA, follow the links to videos and instructions on the [Tree page](#).

Are you connected to a famous face?

Check the [Famous Faces](#) page on our website! You could be connected through your DNA or through a profile on Wikitree. We will be adding to those famous faces in the weeks to come, so keep looking regularly.

Collaborate : Connect : Discover!

Add your ancestors to Wikitree. Share your DNA on FTDNA. Let's grow the Great North of Ireland Family Tree together.

www.nifhs.org



Lincolnshire Family History Society

Lincoln is one of four branches of Lincolnshire Family History Society which was formed in 1990. As with many societies, numbers can fall, volunteers move on, and branches sometimes close. Luckily Lincoln branch is still thriving, albeit slightly differently than in 1990. We also have branches at Bourne, Grantham and Grimsby.

Many Lincolnshire records are on FindMyPast thanks to volunteers. Our research centre, open on Mondays 10.30-14.30hrs, has a well-stocked library, microfiche and computer access to such as Ancestry, Findmypast and the Genealogist, we have stewards on hand to help if needed.

Branch meetings have a speaker presentation on a local, social or family history subject, with the chance for everyone to mingle and chat before and after our in-person meetings. Our society always welcomes members and non-members to meetings and research centre. Since the Covid pandemic, we have moved with the times, we try to provide hybrid meetings for everyone with meetings in-person with the speaker, as well as using Microsoft TEAMS for people from anywhere in the world to join us! We record our presentations if speakers allow, so members can access it on the members-only section (MOA) of our website, a bit like catch up tv! Three ways of seeing a great speaker!

We are lucky to have some famous speakers within family history circles joining us this year including Helen Tovey, editor of *Family Tree* magazine with hints and tips on how we can get better organised, use our time effectively with a research plan to help with our family history research. Also Dr. Sophie Kay with a fascinating talk on how to use maps within your family history research to help show what resources could be used or might have been missed!

Well worth it do I hear! A suggested £1 donation, to help towards paying our speaker costs, is asked on the door or via bank transfer. All donations are very much appreciated and help no end! We look forward to you joining us in person or via TEAMS or watch on our MOA!

Lincoln branch meets on the second Saturday of the month except December at 14:00hrs at Queen's Park Community Hub, South Park, Lincoln, LN5 8EW. To request a Teams link or for enquiries about Lincoln branch email lincolnbranch@lincolnshirefhs.org.uk

For enquiries about our research centre email resourcecentre@lincolnshirefhs.org.uk or visit our website <https://lincolnshirefhs.org.uk> or social media where you can find us on Facebook, Instagram, Threads and Bluesky for events and news.

Tracey Fairhurst, chairman, Lincoln branch



Family History Societies



Hatcher Families Genealogy Association

Seeking Hatchers with roots in Surrey

The Hatcher Families Genealogy Association is a US-based worldwide society focused on anyone with a Hatcher surname. It is a member of the Family History Federation. Nel Hatcher started the Hatcher research project in the 1990s, trying to document her husband's ancestors. Dozens of researchers contributed to the effort over the decades. We started the Hatcher surname DNA project in early 2001, with the Y-12 tests then available from FamilyTreeDNA. Results from those tests and the later Y-25, -37, -67, -111, and the latest Big Y-700 tests have proven connections between disparate families, helped us identify and correct errors in our tree, and show where non-paternal events like adoptions appeared. We put our large database of Hatcher information online in 2008; it now has profiles for over 75,000 people, with photos, images, and document transcriptions.

Two substantial Hatcher families have roots in England. The one appearing in the earliest records found to date begins with John "Crowter" Hatcher (1555-1617) in Marnhull, Dorset, England. For the next century he and his descendants can be found using either the Crowter or Hatcher surname until eventually the Crowter name disappears from the records before 1700. We have traced descendants to a large family which begins with a Quaker, William Hatcher (1700-1781), who emigrated from England to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, USA by 1724. DNA has proven connection to other Hatchers who settled in Minnesota, USA, Newfoundland, Canada and a few other places, while others remained in England. Ultimately, we were able to connect records for these DNA descendants into a single large tree. We call this our Quaker/Dorset Hatcher family.

The largest Hatcher family in our database begins with William "The Immigrant" Hatcher (1613-1680) who arrived in Virginia by 1636. We call this our "Henrico County" Hatcher family. Almost a century ago, in 1936, a USA based researcher claimed that William was a son of one of the Careby Hatchers of Lincolnshire, but we have seen no records that support the connection. William of Virginia served as a politician in the Virginia House of Burgesses for several disconnected terms from 1645 to 1658. In 1676, he sided with Bacon during Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia. Thomas Hatcher of the Careby family (1589-1677) served in Parliament in London for several terms from 1624 to 1660, and as a Captain of Horse for Parliament during the English Civil War. To some researchers, these career parallels

seemed too much for mere coincidence. However, a decade of work in English archives has failed to uncover any link between William of Virginia and Thomas of Careby. In fact, one of our researchers claimed to have firmly disproven any such link.

We still lack any solid clues as to the origin of our William Hatcher in Virginia. We suspect a connection to Surrey because William was familiar with the Tyburn Tree gallows and because the Careby Hatchers of Lincolnshire had connections to Croydon (now in London but then in Surrey). Our attempt to use a hired researcher to locate any William Hatcher in Surrey in the early 1600s ended with a parish record book that burned up in a fire. We would like to connect William Hatcher of Virginia to some family in England.

Paper records show a large Hatcher family in Surrey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We want to expand that Surrey Hatcher family within our genealogy database. We also want to add descendants from that family to our DNA project. Results from Y-DNA tests for those men should reveal if the sample donors connect to William of Virginia, to the Dorset/Quaker family, to other Hatcher families with ties to Kent and Somerset, or if they represent other genetically-unrelated Hatcher families. We are willing to pay the cost of tests for Hatcher men with good genealogical connections to places in or near Surrey. We are also willing to assist in genealogy research for anyone with the Hatcher surname, and to help interpret Y-DNA test results for Hatcher men. We are interested in whatever we can find out about any Hatcher family, whether in Surrey, elsewhere in England, in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or anywhere else in the world.

Website: <https://hatcherfamilyassn.com/index.php>
<https://hatcherfamilyassn.com/>

DNA Project: <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/hatcher/about>

Email: <mailto:hfga@googlegroups.com>



Doncaster and District Family History Society

Family History Fair 2026

The society will be holding their family history fair on **Saturday 18th July 2026** at the Doncaster Corn Exchange, 9.00am – 2.00pm.

We will be having our helpdesk and raffle table plus a lot of other heritage societies will be joining us, so something for everyone.

Marion Baxter, secretary D&DFHS

Information: <https://doncasterfhs.co.uk/>



Family History Societies



Family History Society of Cheshire

Support, Expertise and Community

The Family History Society of Cheshire (FHSC) is a lively, active society offering practical support, shared expertise and a welcoming community for family historians at every stage of their research. While we are firmly rooted in Cheshire, our activities and membership extend far beyond county boundaries, reflecting the increasingly connected and collaborative nature of modern family history research.

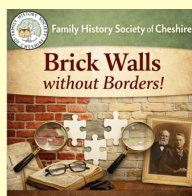
Central to our work are our nine local groups spread across the county. These offer a varied programme of talks, research evenings and informal discussion, alongside something just as valuable, encouragement, shared experience and friendship.

We also provide practical research support through a network of library helpdesks and two research centres. Our research centres are open to both members and non-members and offer access to specialist collections, including books, transcripts, indexes, maps, photographs and local histories. Visitors benefit from free on-site access to major subscription genealogy websites, alongside the experience, encouragement and tacit local knowledge of our volunteers.

Looking ahead, we have been working closely with Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALs) on the integration of our collections and services into the new Cheshire Archives buildings in Crewe and Chester. This partnership will secure the long-term future of our resources, improve accessibility, and place our services within a modern archival environment. As part of preparations for this relocation, the Mobberley Research Centre will close to visitors at Easter. Researcher support will continue throughout this period, with the Crewe Research Centre remaining open until the move is completed.

At FHSC we have always embraced new ways of meeting and sharing knowledge and early in 2020 took the step to move some of our meetings online, these meetings now form a core part of our membership benefits and include;

- **Our Seminar Series:** Regular talks delivered by national and international speakers, alongside local experts, covering a wide range of family history topics and enabling members to take part regardless of location
- **Discussion Groups:** On a range of specialist topics
 - DNA
 - family history software
 - historical newspapers
 - publishing research
 - Mac users



- **Our Computer Club:** Exploring genealogy software, databases and good computing practice
- **Research Buddies:** Meetings relating to specific areas of the county
- **Zooming in on Family History:** Our relaxed and chatty sessions on all things family history

We also actively collaborate with other societies, reflecting our belief that family history is strongest when expertise is shared. One example is our *Brick Walls without Borders* initiative, which brings societies together to help members tackle particularly stubborn local research problems by pooling experience and offering fresh perspectives.

Bringing all of this together is our website, which acts as a central hub for information on groups, events, resources and publications, alongside members' areas, discussion forums and materials produced by our volunteers. This is supported by an active social media presence on both Facebook and Bluesky, helping us share news, discoveries and updates more widely.

Taken together, these activities reflect what we offer today, practical support, shared knowledge, flexible ways to take part, and a welcoming, collaborative community. At our heart, we exist to help researchers dig deeper into the who, what, why, when, and where of your family's past, from wherever that journey began, and to wherever it may lead.

As one member recently observed, *To be honest, the seminar programme is worth the membership fee alone. And then there are regular chats about software, DNA, using newspaper records etc — you certainly don't need Cheshire ancestors to benefit.*

That neatly captures our spirit, grounded in Cheshire, generous in scope, and always ready to share knowledge, experience and encouragement. If this sounds like the kind of society you would value, we would be delighted to welcome you.

Membership of FHSC is open to all, no matter where you live or whether or not you have Cheshire ancestors. Subscriptions start from £13 per year and provide access to talks, discussion groups, online resources and regular communications. Membership options also include our quarterly journal, *The Cheshire Ancestor*, available in print or digital form, with online access to the full archive.

Links

Website: <https://fhsc.uk> to find out more

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CheshireFamilyHistory>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/fhsofcheshire.bsky.social>

Email contact: chair@fhsc.uk



Family History Societies



Northamptonshire Family History Society

Following the success of previous years' Heritage Fairs, the 2026 fair will once again be hosted by Wicksteed Park, and organised by Angela Malin and Janet Lawrence, with support from Northamptonshire Family History Society and Discover Northamptonshire.

Sunday 26 April 2026

**Wicksteed Park, Kettering NN15 6NJ
10am-4pm**

The event will host a large variety of stalls and displays which will showcase Northamptonshire's history and heritage including museums, societies, historic homes, Archives and other heritage sites from across the county.

Northamptonshire Family History Society will be there celebrating their fiftieth anniversary with a display reflecting the changes in family history research over the last five decades. Also attending are the Romany & Travellers Family History Society and Northamptonshire Archives.

There will be different activities and demonstrations from various stallholders. See [HERE](#).

The event is free to enter although normal car parking charges at Wicksteed Park will apply. The site is fully accessible and there are refreshment outlets on site. There will be something for everyone with an interest in the county's history and heritage – whatever form that takes!

Wicksteed Park is a Grade II listed unique urban park with over twenty-five exciting rides and attractions. As well as attending the Fair, you can explore 147 acres of lush parkland and a further 134 acres of meadows, lovingly cared for by the Wicksteed Charitable Trust. See: <https://wicksteedpark.org/>



Wicksteed Park © image used with permission



Explore your Genealogy is a website from the Family History Federation. This website is designed to provide family historians with hints and tips to assist you to take your research further. The website provides valuable insights, research tips, and educational content as well as past copies of the FHF REALLY USEFUL Bulletin and access to the FHF REALLY USEFUL Podcasts.

Whether you are beginner or a more advanced researcher there is something to help everyone. If you are starting out and need to know more about civil registration, census records or other records this website will provide you with guides on how to begin, and if you are more experienced there are guides on where to search next.

There are articles aimed at the more advanced researcher to smash those brick walls, read old documents or hints of other sources you have not tried.

Some of the Federation's member family history societies have included details of the unique records that they hold which is invaluable. See if the family history you belong to is mentioned there. If not encourage them to submit an article (see how to contribute:

www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/how-to-contribute).

You can always contribute your own article – submissions are always welcomed. If you have a subject on which you are particularly knowledgeable and would like to share this resource with others then you are welcome submit. You can either submit this to us as yourself or on behalf of the family history society you are a member of (with their permission, of course).

Included on the website is a resources section which has a list of free websites to search, and free online resources as well as a chance to listen to the FHF REALLY USEFUL Podcast.

So make this weekend the time to look a bit deeper into this amazing—and totally free—resource to help you enhance your family history journey.

www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk

Debbie Bradley, administration officer



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

The East Anglia REALLY USEFUL Family History Show is BACK for 2026!



Following our successful show in 2024, we are back with an even bigger and better show
Saturday 18 April 10.00am – 4.30pm Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives, PE27 6WU

This **FREE** live event will be jam packed with exhibitors and experts.

Ask the local experts of fourteen family history societies covering East Anglia and beyond for help and advice.

Receive help researching your military ancestors and their medals.

Browse thousands of old photographic postcards and buy images of where your ancestors lived.

Buy genealogy supplies, books, maps, data CDs, war medals and more.

Attend a talk with renowned DNA expert Donna Rutherford.

Find new ways to research your family tree for free at our research session hosted by a panel of family history experts.

Take part in tutorials with the team at Family Tree Maker and learn how to make the most of their software.

Learn about the new additions to their website with FamilySearch.

Plus chances to win some fabulous genealogy prizes!

Join us for a great day whether you are an experienced family historian or a complete novice – we have something for you!

Follow us on Facebook [#rufhsstives2026](https://www.facebook.com/rufhsstives2026) for more information

Free parking is available at the venue and light refreshments will be available to purchase

Exhibitors at the Really Useful Show

AGRA; Alde Valley Family History Group;
Bedfordshire FHS; Burwell Museum;
Cambridge Ancestry; Cambridgeshire Collection;
Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire FHS;
Cambridgeshire Archives; Cheryl Cade Tours;
Cromwell Museum; Essex Society for Family History;
Family History Federation plus Books and Maps;
Family Tree Maker; FamilySearch; Fenland FHS;
Families in British India Society (FIBIS);
Fiona Clare Genealogy; FMP Medals;
Guild of One Name Studies; Hertfordshire Archives;
Hertfordshire FHS;
Huntingdonshire Local History Society;
Lincolnshire FHS;
London, Westminster and Middlesex FHS;
Northamptonshire FHS;
Nuneaton and North Warwickshire FHS;
Orders and Medals Research Society;
Overdale Postcards; Peterborough and District FHS;
Pharos Tutors; R A Longley Publications;
Ramsey Rural Museum; Romany and Traveller FHS;
St Neots Museum; Suffolk FHS;
This Way Books and Cassini Maps; WeAre.xyz

List as at 1 February 2026

Family History Books and
Maps will be at the
**REALLY USEFUL Family
History Show on 18 April**



Tables loaded with books and maps for you to
browse and buy! Cash or card accepted!
Come along, stop, browse and buy —
and talk to our friendly, helpful team!



Don't miss these events!

Live events this spring—come along!

The Federation's volunteers will be at two large
craft and hobby shows run **by ICHF**:

Glasgow's SEC	5 – 7 March
Birmingham's NEC	12—15 March

The team with bookstall will be at:

The Family History Show – Midlands	14 March
RU Family History Show—East Anglia	18 April
The Family History Show – Liverpool	9 May

NEW titles from Family History Books will be available at the
bookstall along with titles from various publishers along with
maps, too. There are usually discounts at events...and no
postage costs to pay!

PLEASE NOTE *Family Tree LIVE* scheduled for June 2026 has been
postponed to 2027. See www.family-tree.co.uk/family-tree-live/



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

New records published by Findmypast (Jan/Feb 2026)

This year has already seen the publication of an impressive range of records from the Family History Federation's contributing societies which are available to explore **now** on Findmypast.

Northamptonshire: Thanks to the fantastic contributions from the **Northamptonshire FHS**, you can discover an extended run of Northamptonshire **militia lists** 1774-1803. The 7,687 new records cover over 327 distinct locations in Northamptonshire. There are also 2,630 new records covering Northamptonshire **land, poll and window tax** records covering eighty-one locations across Northamptonshire between 1625 and 1805. Thousands of new **monumental inscription** records are also available to search now, covering twenty-one distinct churches and graveyards in Northamptonshire for 1404-2022, which may help you add multiple new branches to your family tree.

Suffolk: We have published an impressive 101,463 new **hearth tax lists** for Suffolk (1662-1675) with thanks to the **Suffolk FHS**. The records cover 561 different place names in Suffolk which document householders and the number of hearths within the household. This is a wonderful resource for locating ancestors and can be a good indicator of social status.

Lincolnshire: Thanks to ongoing contributions from **Lincolnshire FHS**, **Lincolnshire workhouse guardians' minutes** collection now boasts over 50,000 records for you to explore. This month, we have published another 5,122 records specifically covering the Grantham Union Workhouse 1863-1902. With these new additions, you can now browse records for seven distinct poor law unions in Lincolnshire – Boston, Bourne, Caistor, Gainsborough, Grantham, Holbeach and Lincoln.

BMD records

New **marriage** records have been released for Emmanuel Church in Attercliffe (1883-1926), Sheffield, with thanks to contributions from **Sheffield & District FHS**.

New **marriage and banns** records for ten distinct churches across Essex (1537-1935) have also been released with thanks to contributions from **Waltham Forest FHS**.

For those with ancestry in Eastbourne, over 7,000 new **baptism** records have been made available for St Mary's Church in Eastbourne (1837-1907) thanks to contributions from the **Eastbourne FHS (Family Roots)**.

Our collections of **burial records** and **monumental inscriptions** have grown notably thanks to our January and February releases. Over 1,500 new records can be found in our collection of Middlesex Monumental Inscriptions for Bedfont Cemetery (1935-2024), with thanks to the **West Middlesex FHS**.

Our collection of **Cumberland and Lancashire burials** has seen the addition of over 80,000 new records pertaining to forty-six distinct parishes across Cumberland and Lancashire (1650-1952), with thanks to contributions from **Cumbria FHS**.

Over 17,000 new additions from the **North West Kent FHS** have been added to our collection of **Kent burials**, covering multiple cemeteries in the Kent area.

For those with family roots in West Yorkshire, additions from the **Huddersfield & District FHS** have seen the publication of over 8,000 new **monumental inscription** records which cover ten churches and graveyards across West Yorkshire between 1706-2024.

Lastly, **Herefordshire FHS** has contributed over 5,500 new records which have been added to our **National Burial Index** for England and Wales. These cover eleven different churches across Herefordshire between 1660-1812.

Kevin Todman

Data Manager – Family History Federation

E: data.manager@familyhistoryfederation.com

*If your society has records it would like to place on FindMyPast—
and earn some money—contact Kevin for information.*





Really Useful Back Page



Family History Research Aids from the Experts

Parish Chest, a service from the Family History Federation, has over eighty family history societies and associated suppliers at a one-stop online shop, offering a wide range of family history materials in some eighteen categories including:

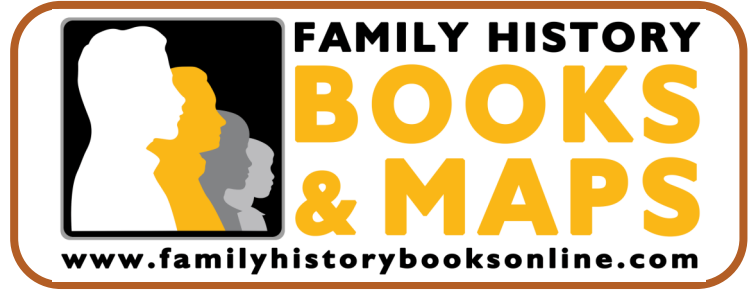
- *Parish register transcriptions and more from local FHS*
- *Memorial inscriptions information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHS*
- *Nonconformists: Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers and many more nonconformist lists*
- *Wills and probate indexes of wills and administrations*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

Societies and suppliers regularly add new lines, so visit to see what is there to help you add to your family tree.

www.parishchest.com

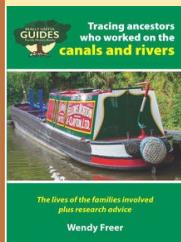
Societies and others interested in joining Parish Chest should initially contact:

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



Family History Books (FHB) is an online bookshop and publisher; it is owned by the Family History Federation and the aim is to provide a service to the genealogical community. Family History Books Online offers a range of relevant titles relating to family history research, plus a range of specialist maps for historians.

FHB welcomes contact from authors! Works of 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 in the making, then do contact FHB via admin@familyhistoryfederation.com. We would love to hear from you about your ideas.



The latest book is in the *Really Useful Guides* series. **Tracing ancestors who worked on the canals and rivers** by Wendy Freer, is an interesting read even if your only connection is a walk along a tow path! Full details can be located [HERE](#) and a snip at just £7.95 + p&p.

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 available. 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.



The REALLY USEFUL Family History Show

LIVE on Saturday 18 April 2026—Burgess Hall, St Ives, Cambs.

Can FHF members get together and put on a regional show— assistance available.

Contact: chairman@familyhistoryfederation.com



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