Peterborough and District Family History Society

January 2026

From the Chair…

I hope you all had a happy Christmas. I know people say the decorations go up earlier each year but there were some involving the Society that were ready on 19 November. It was thanks to Pauline Kennelly who spotted in October that there were 2 days left to register for the Peterborough Cathedral inaugural Christmas Tree Festival.

The Festival would open on 19 November and close on Twelfth Night (5 January). We thought it would be a good place to advertise. the Society's work. Pauline agreed to take the lead and Sadie, Sue Barnett and Peter Clarkson were the initial helpers with Carol Abell joining once she heard about it. My thanks to them and those of you who contributed pictures to the

Peterborough & District Family History Society Christmas (Family) Tree

Our theme was to identify people, places and/or events with a connection to both Peterborough (especially the Cathedral) and members of the Society and then produce an A4 or A5 size "decoration" with a photo and text. Sue Barnett also made 'family Christmas Tree' decorations plus hangings with the Society Logo and address for people to take away with the flyers we also made available. Pauline made family history paper chains and lanterns made from BMD certificates.

There were 42 entries. It was not a contest, but I received favourable comments from all the people I know who saw it. You can judge for yourself as on the website Home Page is a link to pictures of the event and many of the decorations.

As I suspect the event will be repeated next year, I invite you to send me pictures and text which connects you to Peterborough so we can have a stock of decorations ready.

Finally, I hope that 2026 is good to you.

Alan Johnson

Peterborough Military History Group

Many of us have ancestors who have been involved with the armed forces.

The Peterborough Military History Group hold a full programme of monthly talks on a wide range of topics.

Their website has a valuable section where members have written on a wide range of topics. Some highlights include: 'Restaurants and Rationing', 'The Duke of Bedford WW2', and 'Peterborough Home Guard Notebook'.

Military Research Page

Let us know what you find via an article in the newsletter or journal.

Zoom Talks

Please find below the programme of meetings for the next few months.

All meetings are currently being held by Zoom. Joining instructions will be sent in the week prior to the meeting.

Wednesday January 7th

'Anthony Crosby: historian, artist, and advocate of practical design'

Gillian Cable

Wednesday February 4th

'Family Search' **Ian Waller**

Wednesday March 4th

'Tracing a House History' **Gill Blanchard**

All meetings start at 7pm to allow social time prior to the talk at 7.30pm

From the Secretary…

The New Year is about new beginnings, resolutions, and promises. If you are like me you have a long list of family history related tasks to do: sort out BMD certificates, find a record in the archives, write up the biography of an ancestor, write an article for the journal.

But top of everyone's list should be - ask parents and grandparents about their memories, their childhoods, their schooling, their work, their hobbies etc etc, before it's too late.

Even though I remind everyone to do this, I myself learnt the hard way and didn't ask enough questions, and even now as I do a piece of research I think to myself, I wish I had asked mum or dad that, when I had the chance.

So promise yourself one thing this year, that you will ask those questions that you have been meaning to ask, but never got round to. And for ideas of what to ask, and how, head to the book reviews.

Sadie McMullon

Records

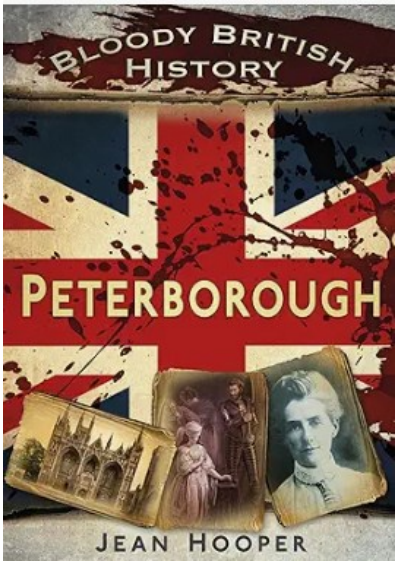
For many years Peterborough was part of Northamptonshire. The Northamptonshire Record Society holds a wealth of publications which can aid you in your research.

Head over to News, Articles and Events to see what you can find.

Don't forget to share your findings with members by writing an article for the journal.

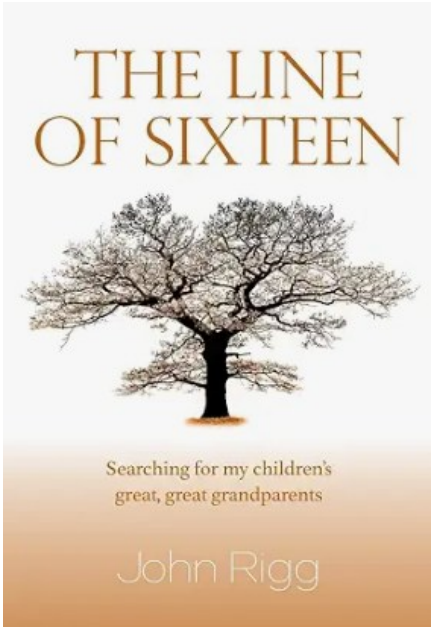
Book Reviews

If you were lucky enough to receive an Amazon, or book store voucher, then here are a few suggestions.



Razed by Vikings! Deadly Danish assaults and demolitions. Neolithic murders! The tragic tale of Britain's earliest recorded homicide! A deadly game of thrones! The last remains of two royal victims in the Abbey. Murdered by the Ripper! Was one of Jack the Ripper's victims from Peterborough? Find out inside! 'I Can't Stop While There Are Lives to be Saved': The incredible story of British spy nurse Edith Cavell. There is the darker side to Peterborough's history. All manner of incredible events have occurred in the city: Roman occupations; Saxon murders and miracles; riots and revolts; battles, diseases, disasters and plagues. Including more than 60 illustrations, and with the history of institutions such as the prisoner-of-war camps of the Napoleonic era and the slums and workhouses of the Victorian age, you'll never see the city in the same way again.

ISBN: 0752482718



'Highly recommended to anyone contemplating writing their own family history and an excellent genealogical read for anyone else interested in the subject. This is a book which contains practically all you could think of – the section on sources and the bibliography are in themselves amazing!' **(Cleveland Family History Society Journal)**

The Line of Sixteen: Searching for my children's great, great grandparents is based around the cohort of direct ancestors four steps back from the two children (who are now adults) in John Rigg's family.

Some lines go back further to 16th Century Yorkshire and Hannover and 17th Century Suffolk – but the author has not simply sought as many pieces as possible of the (never-ending) jigsaw puzzle. Rather, the focus is on the lives led by the members of the cast list.

There are no Prime Ministers or Admirals of the Fleet in this narrative. Instead, there are the 'ordinary' people whose resilience and determination have taken this family story through to the present day.

They were the ones who raised their families, worked hard and migrated to better their prospects. They were the ones who experienced the Great Famine in the Ireland of the 1840s, the horrors of the First World War and the perils of service in the Merchant Navy during the Second World War – and whose personal stories deserve to be told.

By describing his detailed research methodology, the author provides valuable insights on the sources to be explored and the pitfalls to be avoided when compiling any family history.

ISBN: 1800422946

Book Reviews contd

This book *Reality of War at Home* (the **second** in a series of three) about Peterborough and the Home Front in WW2 is 94 pages long and has chapters about the Police, Fire Brigade, Women, Welfare, and Youth, the Railways, Industry, Cinemas and Theatres, Air Raids, American Servicemen in the City and the Robert True Diary (a man living in the city recording his thoughts).

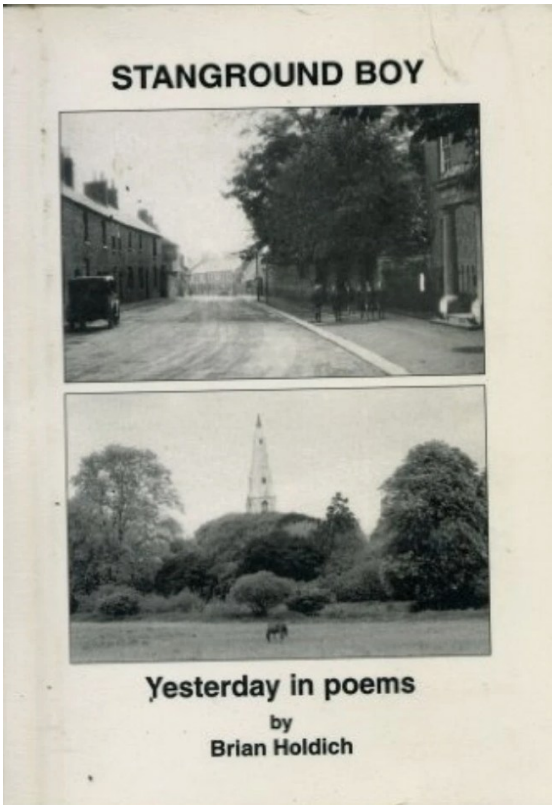
The first book *A.R.P. and Civil Defence* in this series which is still available covered A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions), Air Raid Shelters, Rescue, Repair Salvage and Decontamination Squads, Home Guard and Medical and First Aid Services.

The third book *Maximum Effort at Home*, looks at the Salvage Campaign, the huge contributions made by the Rotary Club, National Savings in Peterborough, VE -Day, What is Left, and pictures of various documents associated with the city in wartime.

This set of three books covers the W.V.S. (Women's Voluntary Service), Auxiliary Fire Brigade, Rotary Club, the Police, Fire Watchers, youth organisations, air raids, salvage, the railways and much more, which we have been able to identify. Ordinary people, who did extraordinary jobs. Details such as names and addresses are so ephemeral in histories as momentous as world wars. This type of information becomes buried under the 'greater' deeds and is forgotten as soon as the people themselves go back to their normal lives. This book is a testament to the people of the city who worked hard to protect Peterborough while the fighting was taking place across the globe.

The Home Front was a dangerous place. Those who inhabited it were fighting a different war but one equally as important, and the best way to pay tribute to that hard work and dedication is to know their names. Using newly discovered documentation and much research we have tried to look at every aspect of Civil Defence activity on the Home Front to find out who was playing their part and record what they did in Peterborough and the Soke. Where we have managed to identify people, we have recorded their details.

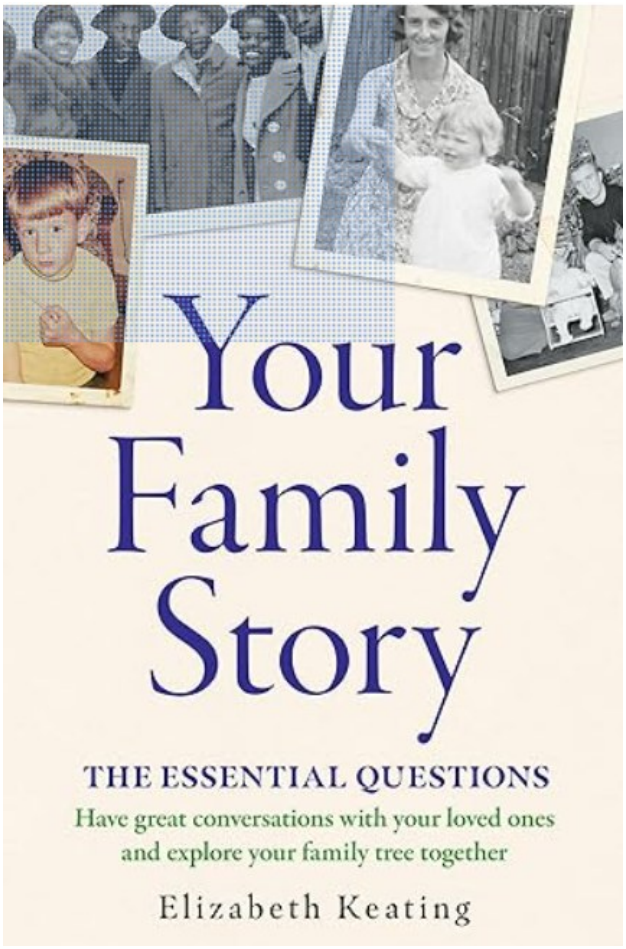
Available from eBay



A fascinating book of poetry, recounting the author's life in Stanground. Interspersed with the poetry are amazing pictures of the Stanground area. A treasure trove of memories of a world long gone. Highly recommended.

ISBN: *0952101734*

Book Reviews Contd



What are the questions you'd regret not asking when they're gone?

In *Your Family Story, anthropologist Elizabeth Keating helps you to uncover the unique memories of your parents and grandparents and to create lasting connections with them in the process.*

By asking questions that make the familiar strange, anthropologists are able to see entirely different perspectives and understand new cultures. Drawing on her lifelong work in this field, Keating has developed a set of questions that treat your parents and grandparents not just as the people who raised you, but as individuals of a certain society and time, and as the children, teenagers, and young adults they once were.

Your Family Story helps you to learn about the history of your closest family members and to help you understand their perspective on the world.

'If you've ever thought of asking a parent or elderly relative about their past, read *Your Family Story* first. After asking the questions Keating suggests, you'll better understand not only your relatives and your heritage, but also your world and yourself' **Deborah Tannen, New York Times bestselling author of *You Just Don't Understand.***

'If you've ever heard anyone say, 'I wish I'd asked my mom about that,' then this is the book for you' **Sarah Bird, author of *Daughter of a Daughter of a Queen***

'Down-to-earth and easy to use, it's a wonderful guide' **Michael Erard, author of *Babel No More***

'It has been a long time since I read a book that felt as urgent, timely, necessary, and utterly relatable throughout' **Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes, professor of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics at Kings College London.**

ISBN: 1835982387

The above book was recommended by Pauline Kennelly. Thank you Pauline. If you have a recommendation then please get in touch.

I have a small stock of articles for the March journal, but more articles are always appreciated.

Thank you.

FAMILY HISTORY Federation
www.familyhistoryfederation.com

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Family History Show

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The FHF Really Useful Family History Show is coming to East Anglia!

AGRA, Alde Valley Suffolk FH Group, Bedfordshire FHS, Burwell Museum, Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire FHS, Cambridgeshire Archive Services, Cambridgeshire Collection, Cromwell Museum, FamilySearch, Family Tree Maker, East of London FHS, Essex Society for FH, Family History Federation, Fenland FHS, FIBIS, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertfordshire FHS, Lincolnshire FHS, London, Westminster & Middlesex FHS, Northamptonshire FHS, Nuneaton & Warwickshire FHS, Overdale Postcards, Orders & Medals Research Society, Peterborough & District FHS, Pharos Tutors, RA Longley Publications, Romany & Traveller FHS, Suffolk FHS, This Way Books & Cassini Maps, WeAre.xyz

10AM - 4.30PM

Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives,
Cambridgeshire, PE27 6WU
What3words: ///rash.sharp.remaining

#RUFHSStIves2026

LIVE IN ST IVES APRIL 18TH 2026