Peterborough and District Family History Society

February 2026

From the Chair

Most months have a special day and for February it is St Valentine's Day. That got me thinking about how our ancestors met and also that for our children we should record how we met.

Jan and I met at a party in Philip Ash's barn at Dyke near Bourne (the Lincolnshire one). Eighteen months later Jan was at home and answered the door to find the nursing friend who had invited her to the party. 'I have brought my Nan to see yours' and it transpired that Philip's mother was born Bertha Deboo, daughter of William who was the brother of Alice Deboo, the mother of Jan's Nan.

I thought that my great grandmother Emma Jane Hunting, born in Peterborough probably met her husband John Linley, born in Burton Joyce, Nottinghamshire, in the marshalling yards at New England. John was an engine driver; Emma was working with her father and uncle in their coal merchant's office. However, on looking at the 1871 census I found they were both living in Grove Street, Woodston.

If you have a story of how you met your spouse or how you found your ancestors initial meeting, let Sadie know so she can use it in a future newsletter/journal.

Alan Johnson

From the Secretary…

Today I spotted the first signs of spring-snowdrops have started to flower in my garden. Soon daffodils will join them, and then we will really know that warmer days are coming.

Family history really does have something for everyone. You can spend your time in archives tracing your family through the parish registers. You can visit cemeteries and find the last resting place of your ancestors. You can take a DNA test and find links with branches of your family tree that you never knew existed. You can research from the comfort of your own home, stumbling upon ancestors on a range of different websites. And you can listen to talks, in person or via Zoom, which aid and inform your research.

For me the advent of spring, and warmer days brings with it the prospect of days out, the prospect of visits to the village, town, or even street where my ancestor once lived and worked. To be able to visit these places is for me the ultimate joy of family history. To be able to walk along the paths they once trod, to see the views they once looked at, to walk by the school they once attended; to stand and imagine what that place may have sounded like, and smelt like before cars, before industry, before new housing estates, or before transport of any kind. And if you are unable to visit explore google street view, or local websites to see what they can reveal.

Please share with other members visits that you have made to the homes of your ancestors.

Sadie McMullon

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 February 4th

'Family Search' **Ian Waller**

Wednesday March 4th

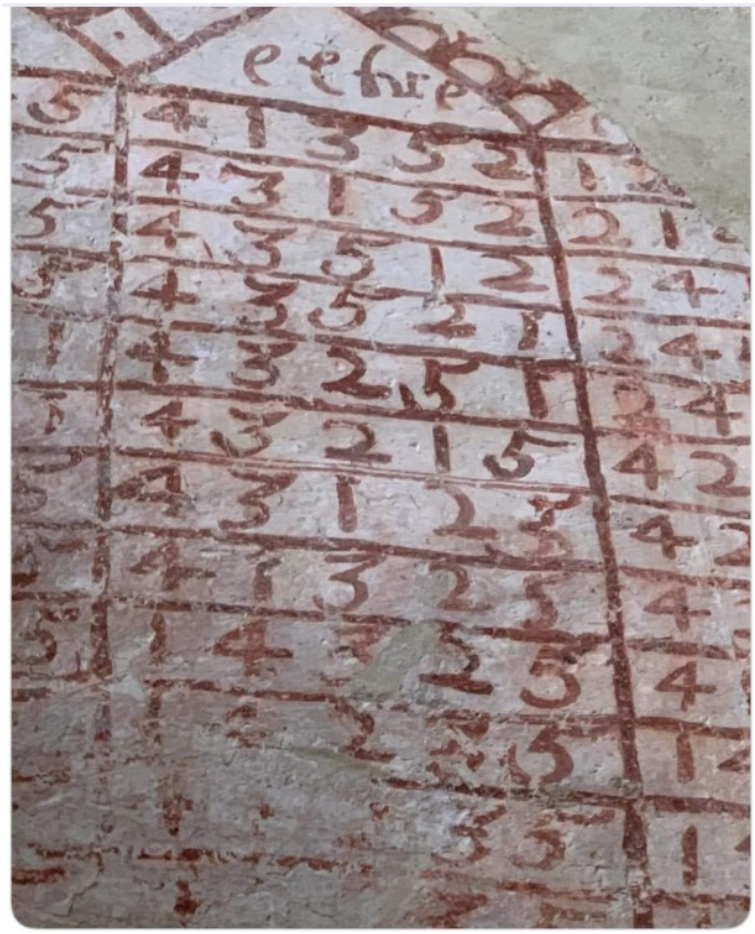
'Tracing a House History' **Gill Blanchard**

Wednesday April 1st

'Members' Meeting'

Memories of our childhood homes

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



Mystery Object

I wonder if you know what this is? And what it would be used for?

A clue.

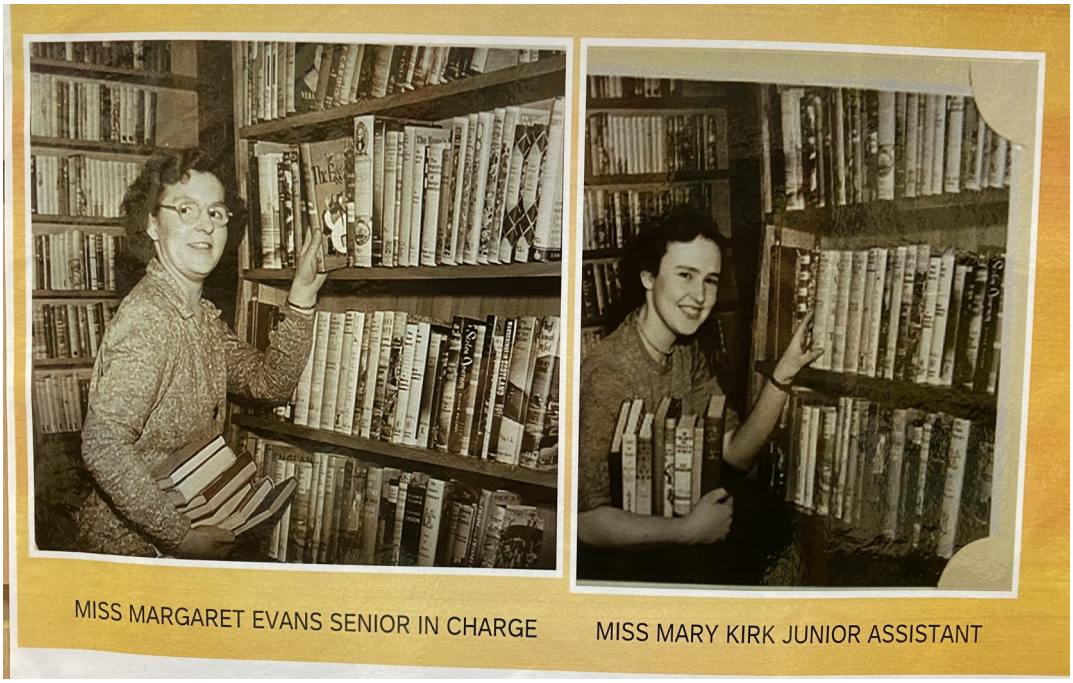
It isn't a household object.

If you know what it is then please send me an e.mail.

If you have memories of using one of these then I'm sure members would love to hear about it.

Urgent Search

Woodston (South Ward) library celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. The library was built on land donated by Mr. L. P. Hartley of Fletton Tower. There has been a campaign over the last two years to save the library from closure. As part of the anniversary celebrations the Friends of Woodston library would like to collect memories that locals may have of the library, either it being built or of using it. They would also like to get in touch with the families of two of the first librarians. If you can assist please contact Sadie: sasmc2000@yahoo.co.uk.



Local Event

Guild of One-Name Studies

From Waterways to Railways

Colonel Dane Memorial Hall, Church Street, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UU
09.30 for 10.00am, 21 February 2026

Come with us on a journey through Britain's working past researching the people who kept the country moving from watermen to railwaymen.

09.30 - 10.00	Registration and coffee
10.00 - 10.10	Welcome to the seminar - Alison Jones
10.10 - 11.10	**Yorkshire's Watermen:** Illuminating their lives through genealogy - Mr David Scrimgeour
11.10 - 11.15	Comfort break
11.15 - 12.15	**Harwich for the Continent**: The history of the railway ships – Mr Chris Turland
12.15-13.15	Buffet lunch
13.15-14.15	**Lives on the Ocean Wave**: Tracing the careers of British mariners in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries – Dr Nicholas Dixon
14.15-14.20	Comfort break
14.20-15.20	**The Country Railway Station** - Mr Brian Johnson
15.20-15.45	Refreshments
15.45-16.45	**What live working on the railways was really like** - Dr Mike Esbester
16.45-16.50	Close of seminar

We would like to ensure that any delegates with a disability can participate fully in this event. Anyone with any special requirements should telephone the Guild Help Desk on 0800 011 2182 or email seminar-booking@one-name.org

Seminar cost, including refreshments and buffet lunch £27.50.

Colonel Dane Memorial Hall is in Alwalton, a village 5 miles west of Peterborough city centre on the A1 and is easily accessible by train, bus, road and air; please contact us for help in finding a lift from Peterborough station.

X #GuildOccupations VAT Registration Number GB 989 291 648

Guild of One-Name Studies

From Waterways to Railways - Saturday 21 February 2026

You may photocopy this form or obtain another from the Guild web site.

Name (caps) _____ If a Member No _____

Full Address _____

_____

Post code _____ Telephone No _____

Email _____

Badge Name _____ Research Name _____

How to book and pay:

- Use this form if paying by cheque
- You can also book and pay online by Internet bank transfer, credit card or PayPal, see http://one-name.org/seminar-events

Please reserve ___ place/s at £27.50 per head (inc. VAT)
I enclose a cheque for £____ made payable to:
"Guild of One-Name Studies"
Send to: Alan Moorhouse, (Seminar Bookings), 8 Strachans Close, STROUD, Gloucestershire, GL5 3EB

Bookings close on 8 February 2026. All bookings will be confirmed by email, with full joining instructions, on or soon after this date.

For more information, look under Events tab at https://one.name.org or telephone the Guild Help Desk: 0800 011

Future Events

24-26 April 2026: Guild Conference, Portsmouth Marriott Hotel, Portsmouth
13 June 2026: Guild Seminar, Hops, Pubs and People
17 October 2026 Guild Seminar,

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FAMILY HISTORY Federation
www.familyhistoryfederation.com

East Anglia
FHF REALLY USEFUL
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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

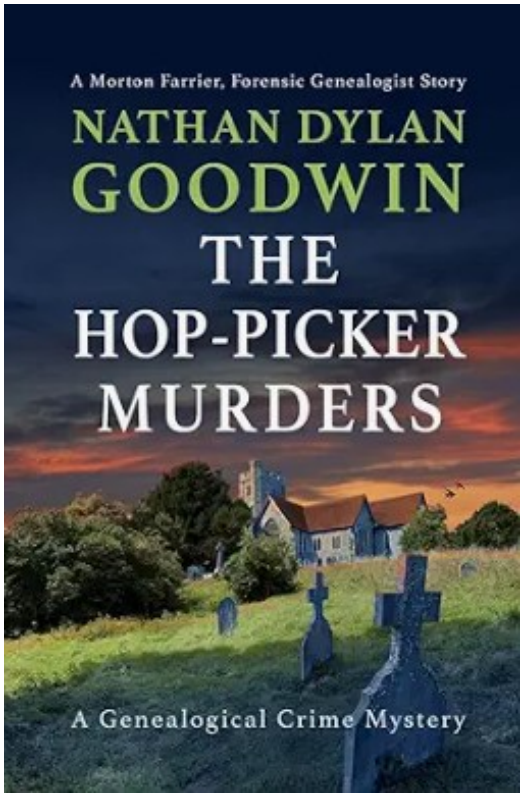
Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives,
Cambridgeshire, PE27 6WU
What3words: ///rash.sharp.remaining

#RUFHSStIves2026

LIVE IN ST IVES APRIL 18TH 2026

Book Review

Do you have hop pickers in your family tree? If you do here are a selection of books which should be on your book shelves. They are equally interesting if you are fascinated by different occupations and ways of life, or as an example of the occupational histories you could explore for your ancestors.



When Molly Moon discovers her aunt's discarded 1920 journal, hidden in the attic of her Kent cottage, she uncovers a chilling claim among its cryptic entries: that four missing hop-pickers, including her own uncle, were murdered. Desperate to learn the truth, Molly turns to forensic genealogist Morton Farrier for help. What begins as a challenging case soon becomes far more complex as Morton delves into a murky world of disappearance, deception, and murder—while battling an unknown menace bent on destroying his career.

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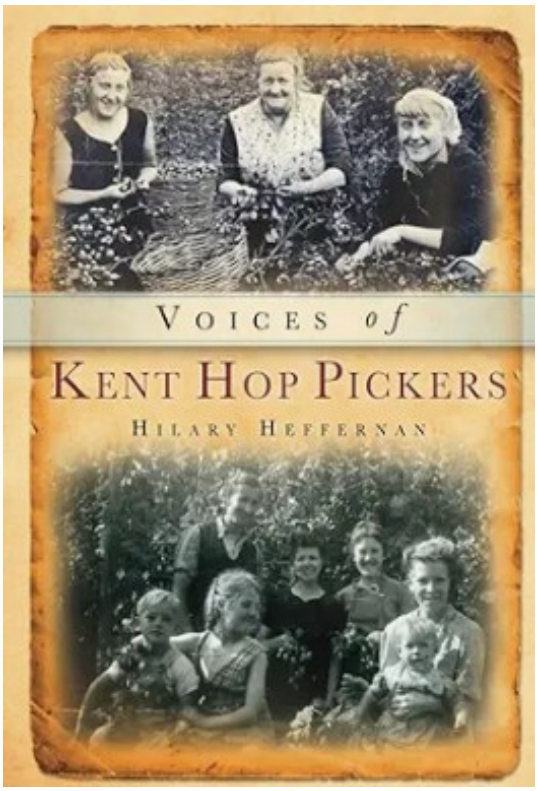


Before the advent of machines in the late 1950s, hop-picking was undertaken by an army of people, many of whom saw the countryside only during these four to six weeks of picking. It was work and a way of earning some much needed extra money, but it was also their annual holiday, an opportunity to which they looked forward all year. For the 'home-dwellers' (the people local to the farms) it meant extra work, sometimes unpaid and always hard. This fascinating and informative collection of reminiscences has been compiled using the contributors' own words. It captures the lives of the hop-pickers in every detail, from the preparation and anticipation before departure, through the epic journeys to the hopfields and tiring work during the harvest, to the evenings and days off spent at the pub, round a fire or with the family. Throughout, the collection is brought to life by numerous anecdotes, both humorous and moving. Despite hardship and poverty, there is a deep-rooted nostalgia for a way of life that no longer exists. One-time hop-pickers miss the warm camaraderie, the open honesty and the satisfaction of working together for a common purpose: to harvest the hops. These emotions are all recorded here.

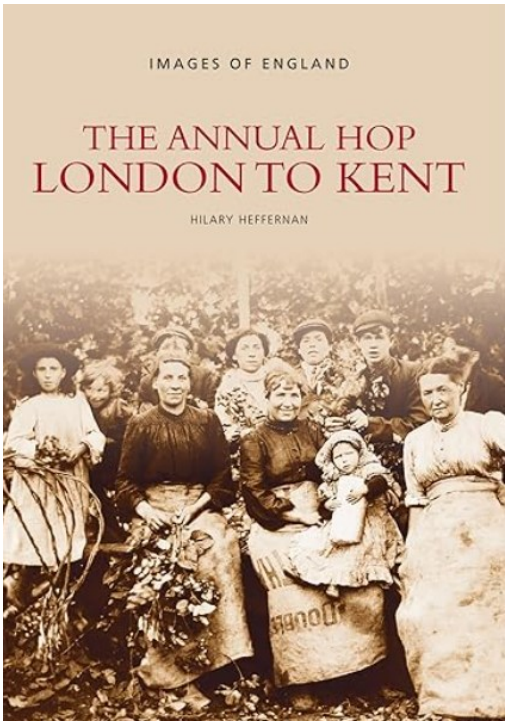
ISBN-13 : 978-0752411309

In the years just before the war, Sheila and her family went away each year on what was known as a poor man's holiday. It was a working holiday for her parents, hop picking to earn some extra money, but also an opportunity to meet up with relatives.

In a little village in East Hampshire, they met with people from all walks of life - from circus and fairground folk to log and flower sellers - and worked daily in the hop fields with their children by their sides.

This nostalgic recounting of those days, filled with tears and laughter, takes us back to bygone days and is beautifully illustrated by the author's husband.

ISBN-13 : 978-1784659028

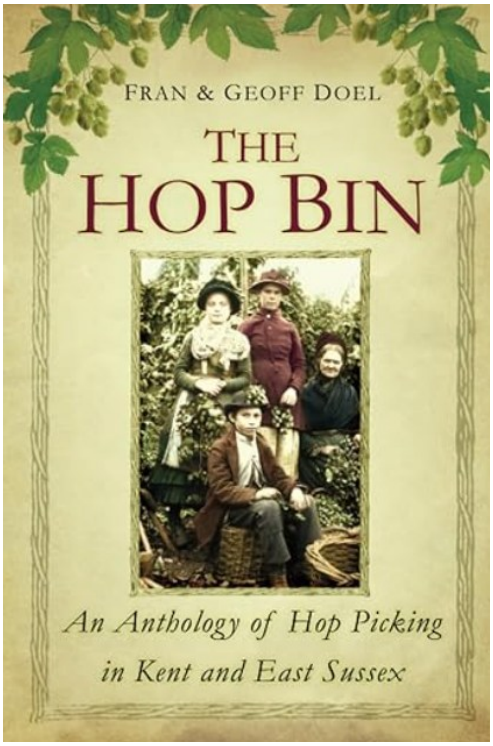


This fascinating collection of over 200 old photographs illustrates, in heart-warming detail, the traditional working holiday of London EastEnders which was known, affectionately, as the 'Annual Hop.' As a welcome escape from the poor working and living conditions of the city, the annual trip to Kent was for many families an important event. It was a chance to earn some extra money in the hop gardens but was also a 'community event' to be enjoyed for its opportunity to breathe country air and share open space for a while with friends and neighbours. The work was hard, especially in the extremes of weather, but most of those who went hopping remember those times fondly.

The early part of the book sets the scene by showing examples of the working and living conditions that were typical of some parts of inner London in the first half of the century. The stark contrast between these views and those taken in the fields of Kent in summer illustrates clearly why the Annual Hop was such an attractive prospect.

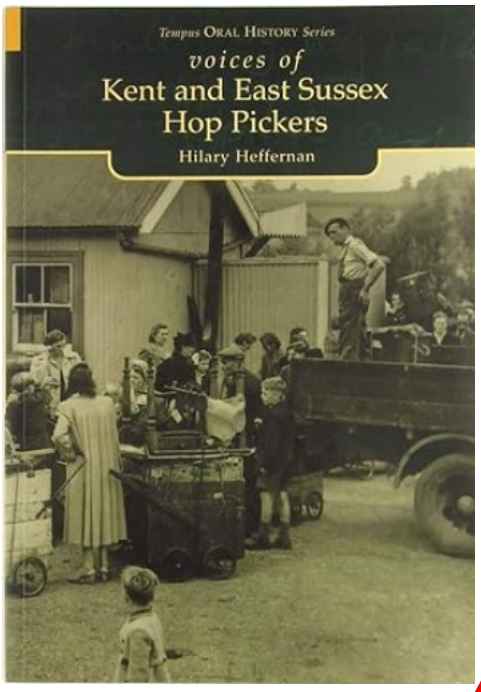
The author has collected the stories of Hoppers from London and across Kent and has borrowed photographs from family albums as she travelled. The unique collection she has assembled forms a timely record of a traditional way of life that is gone forever. This intimate record of the hop-picking tradition will appeal to all ex-Hoppers and anyone who would like to see and hear more of this once-important annual event.

ISBN-13 : 978-0752403793



For 400 years Kent and East Sussex were vividly and visibly associated with the cultivation of hops. Fran and Geoff Doel have evoked this bygone world of hopping by gathering together a wide range of social and literary accounts, poems and songs from the Tudor period to the present day, each with a contextual introduction. The selection illustrates both the 'rose-tinted' image and the harsher reality of a distinctive aspect of rural life in the south east.

ISBN-13 : 978-0752493619



This book provides a rich oral representation of an industry that has almost fallen from living memory.

ISBN-13 : 978-0752432403

Website

Hands up if you have walked down Westgate Arcade? I haven't recently but as a child it always fascinated me, the glass ceiling, the small shops, the secret upstairs.

Arcades are wonderful examples of a very unique type of architecture. But more importantly each contains a rich history of not only the arcade itself, but of shop owners, shop workers, and the people who visited them.

This excellent website aims to record each arcade that still exists both nationally, and internationally. It's really worth a browse, and takes you on an indulgent trip down memory lane.

Vintage shopping arcades in the UK - An Arcades Project

Please share your memories of arcades with other members via a small article.