



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

Supporting Family Historians since 1974

REALLY USEFUL Bulletin

No 36

August 2023

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

inside find...

Lead article this month is *Exploring the World of your Freemason Ancestor*
plus news from FHS, free heritage events in September, and news from the Federation

Plenty to read and enjoy!

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Really Useful Bulletin

Exploring the Secret World of your Freemason Ancestor

by Yetunde Abiola

Freemasonry, the teachings and practices of the secret fraternal order of Free and Accepted Masons, is the largest worldwide secret society. Spread by the advance of the British Empire, this secret order remains most popular in the British Isles and in other countries originally within the empire. Established in England in 1717, the Freemasons are synonymous with elitism, mystery and secrecy. However, Freemasons who believe in a *Supreme Divine Being* and the immortality of the soul, strongly deny this. They maintain that they are a society deeply rooted in a religious and philosophical system and that this is expressed in their dramatic ceremonies, intended to answer the following questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life?

Freemasons come from a variety of backgrounds: royalty, presidents, writers, composers, educators, doctors, tradesmen and other cultural, social and civic leaders. There are many famous people who were Freemasons: Oscar Wilde (playwright), Neil Armstrong (astronaut), Louis Armstrong (jazz musician) to name but a few. Freemasonry has a presence all over the world, with a sovereign body in each country called a Grand Lodge; in the United States there is one Grand Lodge for each state. Most of the membership (an estimated six million) is in the USA and Canada.



Edward the VII, King of Great Britain

Do you wish to research the masonic past of an individual in your family? Do you suspect that your ancestor may have been a Freemason? Freemasons

often kept details about their involvement with the fraternity private from their families and non-Freemason friends. If your relative was a Freemason, chances are that there will be a record of their masonic life out there, waiting to be uncovered.

Why did your ancestor join the Freemasons? Some of the reasons could be: for brotherhood and friendship, to contribute to charitable causes (fundraising events, scholarships/grants, training and apprenticeships); character building and self-confidence to be a better person; for entertainment (ceremonies, parties, balls and other events); the very impressive regalia (aprons, jewels and other accessories); to be part of the moral fabric of society or to meet in unity and peace with people from all walks of life, irrespective of race, class and social background.

First things first, oral history. When the opportunity arises, interview relatives to get some initial information and see if there is any to find. This must be done with sensitivity and respect. Simple and well thought out questioning is needed, one question at a time. Then, you will need to search for the name of your relative in the relevant membership registers and other available records. Freemasons kept their involvement with the fraternity a secret, but it was not uncommon for them to encourage other menfolk to join the brotherhood. It is also well worth reading up as much as you can on Freemasonry to inform your search; there is a lot to read in libraries, archives and online. Here are two tried and tested free online resources: Archive.org <https://archive.org/details/cu31924030281459> and Google Books <https://books.google.co.uk/?hl=en>.

Grand Lodges often kept records of their membership, however, searching for masonic records can be challenging, but with persistence and focus you can reveal unknown and useful information about an ancestor. So, what next? Do you really need to know any more?

Here are some useful tips:

- ♦ ask your local Grand Lodge whether your relative was a member. Keep in mind that lodges get a lot of requests for help in genealogical searches, so patience is needed.



- ◇ other sources are: Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonryry <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/>, Masonic Periodicals Online www.masonicperiodicals.com and *Who's Who in Freemasonry*, 1913-1914; *Masonic Who's Who*, 1926 www.thegenealogist.co.uk
- ◇ do not overlook social media—the Grand Lodge you are interested in may have a Facebook page. Run a search and message the page's administrator and members asking for information. It is always worth a try.

Ireland, Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland Membership Registers, 1733-1923

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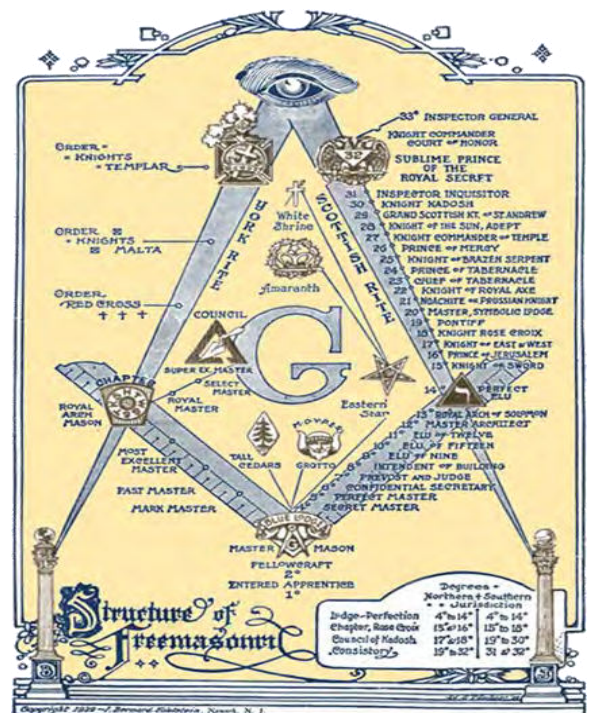
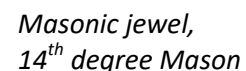
Date Range and Volume

- 1733-1808 (Volume I)
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- 1760-1859 (Volume I)
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Related data collections

[England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1761-1921](#)
[Master Mason in the family? Find out with these membership registers from English lodges.](#)

◇ register as a reader and do some research at the Freemason Museum, England and Wales <https://www.ugle.org.uk/freemasons-hall/museum-freemasonry>, the Freemason, Museum, Library and Archive, Ireland <https://freemason.ie/museum-library-archive/> and/or the Freemason Museum and Archive, Scotland <https://www.grandlodgescotland.com>



*An illustration showing the organisational structure,
orders and degrees*



Really Useful Bulletin

Very few Grand Lodges accepted women, however, female family members may recall being asked to join the Order of the Eastern Star, a women's group affiliated to the Masons. The Order of the Eastern Star is about charity, service and fellowship and was initiated by Dr Bob Morris and his wife Charlotte in the mid-nineteenth century. There is also the Order of Women Freemasons which was founded in 1908. The Order of Women Freemasons initially had both men and women as members, but by 1935 it became an exclusively female organisation.



Zuzanka Penn: Grandmaster, Order of Women Freemasons

For some people, the discovery of a Freemason ancestor may bring about feelings of suspicion, shock, embarrassment or shame. For others it is just a matter of fact. What do you do next? Do you really need to know more? You may be hesitant on whether to tell the family or wondering how to present this information on the family tree. You can find some useful chapters on ethical dilemmas in the following books by Dr. Penny Walters: *Ethical Dilemmas in Genealogy* and *The Psychology of Searching*, both available in paperback and on Kindle from Amazon.

More and more information is being made available for family historians to explore and learn about their ancestors and their past lives. We are increasingly finding ourselves armed with specific information about our ancestors. This encourages us to look more closely and differently at our family histories and at the world we live in. Understanding who we are and where we come from helps in providing a great sense of self, identity and belonging. For most of us, the ideal is that we should appreciate and celebrate who we are, and where we come from.



Grandmaster, Mason: The Grand Lodge of India



Grandmaster, Mason: The Grand Lodge of Africa



Freemasonry in Egypt – a tombstone



About the author:

Yetunde Abiola has been researching her family history for eight years. As a black British woman of Nigerian and Jamaican descent, Yetunde is conversant with the interplay of histories and politics in today's multi-cultural world. Her special interest areas include Church Missionary Society records for family research purposes, maximising the use of Freemason records, the impact of ancestor stories on the lives of future generations and the complexities and intricacies of Caribbean, diaspora, and colonial genealogies. She has served as an Ambassador for RootsTech at London and Salt Lake City and RootsTech Connect. She is also a regular speaker at events worldwide. Yetunde is a member of the executive committee of the Family History Federation.



Family History Societies



Devon Family History Society

Tree House in Exeter is the research centre of Devon Family History Society. We are open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays to welcome visitors. Although our speciality is Devon research, we are happy to help people whose ancestors are from other counties.

Over the years, our members have transcribed hundreds of thousands of Devon records which are available to search at Tree House. We have access to the usual commercial websites and we are a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. Our own library is also a fantastic resource – the catalogue is available on our website under the Tree House tab. We are also happy to answer queries and receive research requests by email, phone or by letter or you can book a one-to-one Zoom session with one of our experienced volunteers.

The last few years have presented all family history societies with challenges but also with opportunities. Devon Family History Society instigated regular Zoom meetings early in lockdown and these have been very successful. For the first time, it has enabled members who live far away from Devon to play an active role in the society. We also host small group meetings which meet online to chat about a group of Devon parishes. These now cover the whole county and its 500+ parishes and have proved mutually beneficial to people who have research interests in the locality as well as local inhabitants. All these meetings are open to everyone, please look at our website for details of the programme and how to join

<https://www.devonfhs.org.uk/meetings/>

These online meetings have now been joined by face-to-face meetings too.

Our volunteers are often out and about promoting family history to beginners and more experienced researchers alike and raising the profile of the Society. In September we will be at the Romany and Traveller FHS's day at the Mint in Exeter on 16th (see events page) and the same weekend, if you are in north Devon please come and see us at the Great Hobby Weekend at RHS Rosemoor (admission charges apply).

Our website:

www.devonfhs.org.uk/

Picture from Devon FHS website.



Ormskirk and District Family History Society

We aim to produce a series of two short publications on various aspects of life and times in the west Lancashire area over the past three centuries, using our unique collection of material and resources. This will involve researching our subject, gathering together all the information we have and verifying the authenticity of the information. With the use of a desktop publishing programme this will then be formatted into a book of approximately twenty pages. The publications will be:

- ◇ Interesting to the general public
- ◇ Historically accurate
- ◇ Attractive and engaging
- ◇ Enjoyable to read
- ◇ Freely available

The inspiration behind this project is our need to share the wide range of material we hold in our library. At present it is seen by the relatively few people who visit.

Although we are continually expanding our website, this is seen mainly by those members with digital skills, leaving a huge number of local people who can't access this material.

In undertaking this project we will share images, stories and information of long ago in west Lancashire, keeping alive the history and heritage of the area.

We, as a society, will benefit from new skills learned, increased publicity and improved profile and be doing something we are passionate about.

The publications will help people identify more with their community and gain a sense of the importance of the area in previous centuries.

A more civic minded population who will take pride in where they live and want to be more involved, resulting in economic benefits and profile.

Our heritage is important and must be preserved.

We estimate that we will need £3084 to enable us to produce two small books, which will be available to our members and the public at no cost.

We have applied to Lancashire County Council for a grant towards this, and if we can raise fifty per cent of the money they will hopefully match fund up to fifty per cent, depending on the size of their budget.

To achieve this project we are trying to raise funds via a *Spacehive Crowdfunding* platform. Our idea is to share the history of west Lancashire as far and wide as possible in an easily readable paper format.

Full details of the project are at www.spacehive.com/sharing-west-lancs-historical-archives

Our website: www.odfhs.website/



Family History Societies



Family History Society of Cheshire

Celebrating in Crewe

Here in Cheshire, and especially in Crewe, there is great excitement about celebrating the 180 years of Crewe Works. The Crewe Heritage Centre has a summer of events to demonstrate how locomotives were a catalyst for change in the town. There is a community-led exhibition *Forging History – 180 Years of Crewe Works* which will tell the story of how the works shaped the development of Crewe into becoming one of Britain's key industrial engineering towns.



Crewe Works early 1920s

The Heritage Open Day fair is on Saturday 9th September – see events listing—at the Centre.



FHS of Cheshire has been instrumental in helping those with railway connections to discover their ancestors using some of the unique records held at its Crewe Research Centre and drawing on the vast breadth of our volunteers' tacit knowledge. To mark Heritage Open Days, the society's Crewe research centre will be open on Monday 11th, Tuesday 12th and Thursday 14th September between 10.30am and 3.30pm for members and non-members alike to visit and discover what is on offer in terms of physical records, online records and also to receive assistance from FHSC volunteers. See events pages.

We really are busy during HODs week! *Women Educating Cheshire: The History of the Cheshire County*



Training College, Crewe [1908-1974] is a talk being presented by our very own Margaret Roberts on the evening of Monday 11th at the Crewe Engineering and Design University Technical College. This is a fascinating talk on the lives of the women who trained to be teachers at Crewe Training College, which was established in 1908 when lectures originally took place at the Mechanics Institute. Early picture of the College buildings above (now demolished). Follow the link on events pages.

Finally, FHS of Cheshire is delighted to be welcoming Mike Esbester of the *Railway Work, Life and Death Project* who, together with local railway historian Di Drummond, Reg Instone of the LNWR Society, and Margaret Roberts of FHSC will be presenting an afternoon and evening of workshops entitled *Crewe: Your Railway, Your Family*. Held at Crewe's Engineering and Design University Technical College on Thursday 14th September. The event will allow visitors to learn more about Crewe's railway heritage, working on the railways and tracing your railways ancestors. The format will be a series of talks to help visitors understand more about the important railway history of Crewe, how it fits into the national picture, what work on the railways in and around Crewe involved and how to find more about your own railway ancestors. When not giving talks the presenters will be available to discuss all things Crewe, railway and family history with you. There are a few last minute timings to be firmed up – see events pages. Alternatively contact: publicity@FHSC.org.uk

Our website: <https://www.fhsc.org.uk/>



Family History Societies

FREE-TO-ATTEND HERITAGE EVENTS

Family history societies are running or taking part in free-access events as part of the national Heritage Open Days or other local festivals. We have listed contributions from member societies and encourage readers to support local events. Entries are brief – use the links for further detail. Enjoy a few trips – with apologies to overseas readers (look for the Zoom events!).

Images have been sourced from websites of organisers or venues to promote the events.



East Surrey FHS on **Saturday 2 September** at West Norwood Library and Picturehouse, 1-5 Norwood High Street, Norwood, SE27 9JX part of Lambeth Heritage Festival. Members will be present to help with family history. <https://www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk/>



Gloucestershire FHS on **Saturday 2 September** will be at Gloucestershire Heritage Hub's event, *Curious about the Hub*. FHS members available to help with research 10-4; main event 1-4 featuring talks by Ben Nicholls, John Chandler and Mia Bennett. www.heritagehub.org.uk/events/curious-about-the-heritage-hub/



Nuneaton and N. Warwickshire FHS on **Friday 8 September** *Tour of North Warwickshire in Pictures Old and New* by John Parton as part of North Warwickshire Festival of History coinciding with HODs. 10.30am-4pm. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/nnwfhs-at-atherstone-heritage-centre



Mid-Norfolk FHS on **Saturday 9 and Saturday 16 September** is at Church House, Dereham so please come along and say hello. Members will be answering questions about family history. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/mid-norfolk-fhs



FHS of Cheshire on **Saturday 9 September** will have a stall promoting family history at the Crewe Heritage Centre Fair, Vernon Way, Crewe CW1 2DB special which is celebrating 180 years of Crewe Works. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/forging-history-180-years-of-crewe-works



Huddersfield & District FHS will be at Colne Valley Museum, Golcar on the weekend of the **9 and 10 September** and again for **16 and 17 September**. For more information go to <https://hdfhs.org.uk/our-events/>

Huddersfield & District
Family History Society



Rodbourn Community History Group on **Saturday 9 September** a GWR Factory Trail, free guided tour of the designer outlet and associated GWR factory buildings with guide from the RCHG. Booking essential: secretary@rodbournehistory.org



Huddersfield & District FHS on **Saturday 9 September** we will be at All Saints Church and Community Centre, Netherthong, Holmfirth with a *History Day* event. We also have researchers at St John the Evangelist Church in Golcar for their open day. For more information go to <https://hdfhs.org.uk/our-events/>

Huddersfield & District
Family History Society



Northants FHS on **Sunday 10 September** is taking part in the Northamptonshire Heritage Fair at Abington Park Museum – large variety of stalls and displays. 11am-4pm. Free entry. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/northamptonshire-heritage-fair-apm





Family History Societies

MORE FREE-TO-ATTEND HERITAGE EVENTS



Nuneaton and N.Warwickshire FHS on **Sunday 10 September** at St Leonard's Church Open Day, Over Whitacre from 10.30am. NNWFHS members available to help with family history. Talk by popular local historian Rita Poulson at 3pm in the church. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/open-day-at-st-leonards-church-over-whitacre



Leicestershire and Rutland FHS on **Saturday 9** and **Tuesday 12 September** visit the Society's Research Centre in Leicester's famous Every Street, find out more and see photographs of Town Hall Square. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/leicestershire-and-rutland-family-history-society



FHS of Cheshire's Crewe research centre will be open on **Monday 11, Tuesday 12** and **Thursday 14 September** 10.30am-3.30pm for members and non-members alike to visit and discover what we have to offer. Use physical records, online records and get assistance from FHSC volunteers. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/introduction-to-the-family-history-unit



Nuneaton and N.Warwickshire FHS on **Thursday 14 September** a *Tour of North Warwickshire in Pictures Old and New* by John Parton. Part of North Warwickshire Festival of History and HODs especially for those unable to visit the area; via Zoom 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Free booking opens 1 September – see <https://www.facebook.com/nnwfhs/> or [EventBrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)



FHS of Cheshire Women Educating Cheshire: The History of the Cheshire County Training College, Crewe talk by Margaret Roberts on the evening of **Monday 11 September** at the Crewe Engineering and Design University Technical College. www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/women-educating-cheshire-the-history-of-the-cheshire-county-training-colleg



FHS of Cheshire is running workshops on **Thursday 14 September** with the theme *Crewe: Your Railway, Your Family* at the Crewe Engineering and Design University Technical College with experts Mike Esbester, Di Drummond, Reg Instone and Margaret Roberts. Awaiting HODs listing. See *Societies* in this Bulletin. <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/crewe-your-railway-your-family>



Rodbourn Community History Group on **Saturday 16 September** at 10am, take a walk through the history of Rodbourne with a guide from the RCHG. Booking essential: secretary@rodbournehistory.org



Romany and Traveller FHS and **Devon FHS** on **Saturday 16 September** are jointly holding a HODs event in Exeter. Open to all, not just those with travelling ancestors. Drop in for a chat over a cuppa, meet up with cousins and more! www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/passing-through



Hampshire Genealogical Society on Saturday **Saturday 16 September** will be at *Explore Hampshire Archives* heritage day at Hampshire Record Office, Sussex Street, Winchester SO23 8TH. 11am-3.30pm. www.hants.gov.uk/librariesandarchives/archives/events/art-in-the-archives-160923-11am





Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

Getting Out and About

In September, attendance is planned for the following shows and fairs. If attending, do find our stall and stop for a chat!

- 1—3 September **The Creative Craft Show** at Farnborough International
- 2 September **The Family History Show—London** at Kempton Park
- 16 September **U3A Peak District Family History Conference**, Buxton
- 21—23 Sept. **The Creative Craft Show** at Westpoint, Exeter

Copies of our latest publications will be available.



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The *Bulletin* is **FREE**. Just sign up and get your copy on day of issue and never miss a great offer again.

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www.familyhistoryfederation.com/



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DNA



**Next month's lead article will be
all about DNA**

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Really Useful Bulletin

TIME TO BREAK DOWN THOSE BRICK WALLS!

Four helpful books with practical ideas to take you through, under or around the brick wall!

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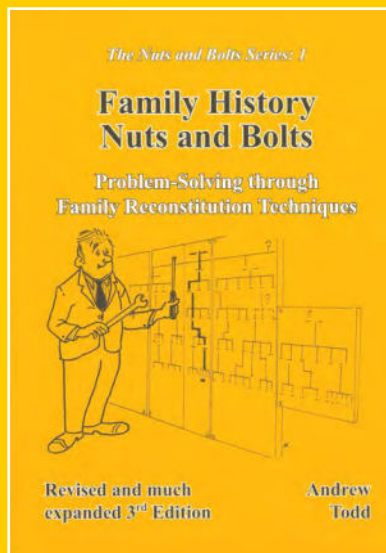
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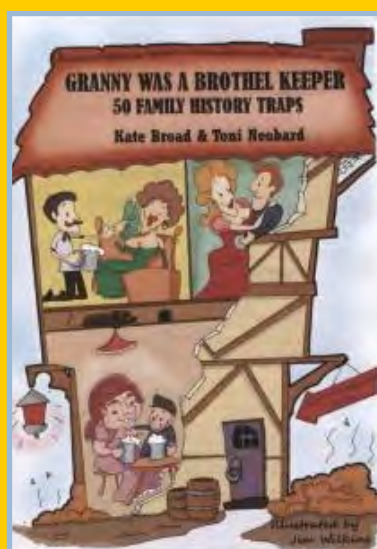
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Let's help you to demolish your brick wall!

Family History Research Challenges and How to Solve Them should be on every desk—and in use! Tried and tested recommendations from retired researcher, Ian Waller. Usually £8.95 + p&p



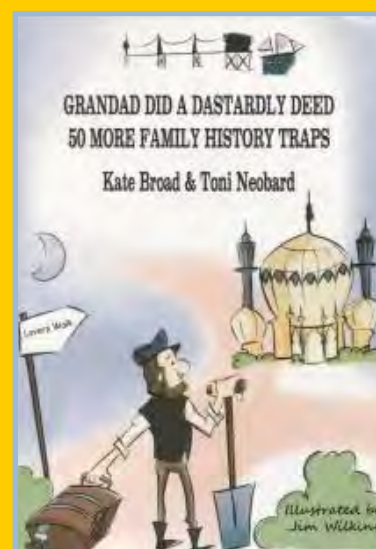
Family History Nuts and Bolts: Problem Solving through Family Reconstitution Techniques The expanded third edition of Andrew Todd's useful guide to family reconstitution. Usually £8.00 + p&p



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Order two or more of these books today and pay a fiver per book!

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www.familyhistorybooksonline.com



Really Useful Back Page

Family History Research Aids from the Experts



Parish Chest, a service from the Family History Federation, has over sixty family history societies and some twenty-plus traders, at a one-stop online shop, offering a wide range of family history materials in some sixteen 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

www.familyhistorybooksonline.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 offers a range of relevant titles relating to family history research.

The latest title is a fantastically detailed research guide—featured on the cover of this edition. It will become the 'must have' book for nonconformist family history research. Written by Ian Waller who is education officer and vice-chairman of FHF.



Did you miss the great offer on page 10 of this edition? All family historians have a brick wall somewhere. This month's offer has some super-helpful books to learn tricks to get around those pesky brick walls! These books will also make good stocking-fillers for your genealogical pals this Christmas! (*Hint!*)

In addition to its [online shop](http://www.familyhistorybooksonline.com) 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 Family History Show

17-18 November 2023

Book now at www.fhf-reallyuseful.com



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Family History Federation P O Box 62, Sheringham, NR26 9AR

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