



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

Supporting Family Historians since 1974

REALLY USEFUL Bulletin

No 55

March 2025

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

inside find...

Lead article *Locating Wills and Probate pre-1858 in England and Wales*

plus news from local FHS and from the Federation



Don't miss the...



REALLY USEFUL

Family History Show—South West

Hosted by Dorset FHS with Devon FHS

Saturday 29 March at Kinson Community Centre, Pelhams Park, Bournemouth BH10 7LH

EXHIBITORS

A Few Forgotten Women
 AGRA (Ass. of Genealogists & Researchers in Archives)
 Andy Punshon: photos and cards
 Beginner's Guide to Writing
 Bristol & Avon FHS
 Cassini Maps/This Way Books
 Christchurch History Society
 Church of the Latter-Day Saints (FamilySearch)
 Devon FHS
 Dorset FHS
 Families in British India Society (FIBIS)
 Family & Community Historical Research Society
 Family History Federation—plus bookstall
 Guild of One-name Studies
 Hampshire Genealogical Society
 Jewish Genealogical Society
 Kinson Historical Society
 Living DNA
 Longley Publications
 Martyn Lawrence: antique postcards + ephemera
 One-place Studies
 Poole Museum
 Romany & Traveller FHS
 Somerset & Dorset FHS
 Stalbridge History Society
 Sussex FHS
 The Crafty Genealogist
 Western Front Association (Wessex branch)
 West Surrey FHS
 Wiltshire FHS

TALKS—RUNNING MORNING AND AFTERNOON

Doors will open 15 minutes prior to each talk. Spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. A small fee of £2 pp will apply for talk attendance (cash please).

Debbie Kennett: Making the most of your autosomal DNA matches – 10.30 and 13.30.
Debbie presents a practical talk focusing mostly on Ancestry DNA showing how to work with matches to advance your research.

Janet Few: The A-Z of Family History – 12.00 and 15.00
Janet's presentation introduces a variety of less well-known sources with an alphabetical journey from Absent Voters lists through to Farm Surveys and Valuation Office records.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Reserve a slot on the day to meet the experts.

DNA—meet speaker Debbie Kennett to ask advice about your own DNA journey.

Photo dating with Sally Macdougall—bring photos with you for some tips and techniques to help you date them.

Reading difficult handwriting/palaeography with Laurie Page—bring wills with you to see if Laurie can help.

Research advice—bring your family history research challenges for Devon FHS and Dorset FHS members to help with.



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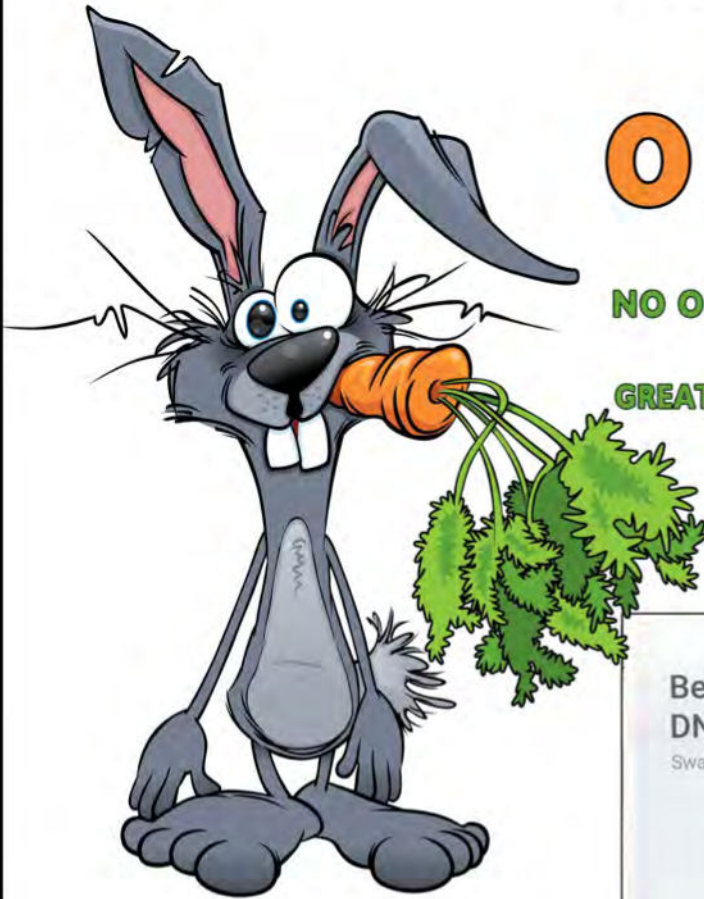


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Really Useful Bulletin

Locating Wills and Probate Pre-1858 in England and Wales

by Ian Waller

Many individuals made a will. Even those thought to be “lowly labourers” can

occasionally be found in the probate records of England and Wales. You may be surprised by what a will reveals – and it can be a will of someone other than your ancestor that solves a mystery.

Before the national probate system came into existence on 11 January 1858, wills were proved or administrations granted by one of three hundred or more ecclesiastical courts around the country. Executing the terms of a will was the responsibility of the executors appointed by the deceased and specified in the will. Before they could act, all wills had to be proved by an ecclesiastical court to effectively validate the will. Where a person died intestate (without a will), letters of administration or “admons” were also issued by those courts.

Originally a will consisted of two elements - the will and the testament. Up until 1540, both had been essential under the feudal system because it was not possible to devise any property acquired by inheritance rather than by purchase. This was a time when the law stated that land and property should pass automatically to the heir who was normally the eldest son (primogeniture). The only exceptions to this were “gavelkind” where all sons inherited equally. The testament element dealt with personal property which could be a legacy to anyone, although one third passed to the widow and one third equally to the surviving children.

Legislation affecting wills and inheritance

Over the centuries there were many Statutes and Acts of Parliament which affected the administration of wills.

Statute of Uses 1535 – Up until this time, the restrictions on devising property meant that real estate could be handed to trustees who could alter the law by instigating a trust deed thus allowing other sons to benefit from the will. This practice was made illegal by the Statute of Uses but resulted in a public outcry, so further legislation was introduced to rectify the situation.

Statute of Wills 1540 – This was significant legislation which gave the ability to devise property, including real estate, amongst other sons rather than restricting inheritance to only the eldest son. The Act also allowed males over fourteen and females over twelve to inherit and to make a will; at the same time it prevented lunatics and criminals from making a will.

It was this piece of legislation which also ended the need to have both a will *and* a

testament as it combined them into one document. It only applied to freehold property and passed to the common law heir on the death of the holder. Land held by copyhold tenure did not become devisable until 1815. The other far-reaching effect was to allow unmarried women or widows over twenty-one to make a will. Under the law, a wife could only have a life interest in the husband’s property as she could not inherit, so would rarely be mentioned in the will. The law changed again in 1661 after which all freehold property could be devised without conditions.

Statute of Distributions 1670 - This legislation ensured a fair distribution of property amongst family members and especially the spouse where intestacy existed. The statute stipulated the proportions of the estate which widows and children should receive.

Wills Act 1837 - As a result of this Act, the age for making a will was declared to be ‘full age’ (then twenty-one years old). The Act barred traitors, heretics, lunatics, slaves or prisoners from making a will. A third or so of all wills made were oral or nuncupative so the law regulated the making of such wills. Because many oral wills resulted in disputes, the Wills Act invalidated the making of such wills. The only exception related to those serving in the military, provided they were on active service. It did not apply to soldiers confined to barracks. The Wills Act also made probate a civil matter removing it from the ecclesiastical court system.

The ecclesiastical court system

The ecclesiastical court system was a complex hierarchy with the senior courts (excluding appeal courts) being the Archbishops’ Courts. The country was divided into two provinces - Canterbury and York - each presided over by an Archbishop. The Archbishop of Canterbury was senior.

The Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) had jurisdiction over the province which covered the south of England and Wales, or when the deceased held property in both provinces, or those resident anywhere in England or Wales who died abroad.

The Prerogative Court of York (PCY) had jurisdiction over the province of York covering the north of England.

The location of the deceased’s property usually determined where the will was proved. Most probate matters were



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dealt with at a more local level by the Archdeacons' or Bishops' courts or the peculiars. Some nonconformists and those who held land in more than one archdeaconry in different dioceses had the will proved in the Prerogative Courts of Canterbury or York. The *Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* displays county maps showing the ecclesiastical jurisdictions for each parish.

See also [Interactive map to show dioceses, counties, parishes, etc](#) available on FamilySearch as below.



As a rule of thumb therefore...

- * Where land and property are all in one archdeaconry, wills were proved in the archdeaconry court.
- * Where land and property are in more than one archdeaconry but within one diocese, wills were proved in Bishops' Courts - either consistory and/or commissary.
- * Where land and property are in more than one diocese but all in Province of York, wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of York.
- * Where land and property are in more than one diocese but all in Province of Canterbury, wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
- * Where land and property are in both provinces, wills were always proved in the senior court - the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
- * Where land and property was held outside an archdeaconry but in a peculiar, the wills were proved in the peculiar court.

Province of York wills are held at the Borthwick Institute and the Province of Canterbury wills are held at The National Archives.

Courts such as the Court of the Dean and Chapter often

acted on the bishop's behalf in probate matters, so records for such cases are usually filed in the records of this court as opposed to Bishops' courts.

A pre-1858 wills search strategy

Search the indexes to the death duty registers 1796-1903 online at FindMyPast. If this proves negative then try the following.

Try the Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills. These can be located online and include over 1,000,000 wills proved between 1383 and 1858.

If your ancestor died in the north of England, try the Prerogative Court of York wills. There are indexes from 1389-1858 at The National Archives, online at FindMyPast and at the Borthwick Institute in York.

Then try locally. Identify the location of the will if held locally – usually the diocesan record offices which are often the same as the county record office, however, not all county record offices are diocesan record offices. Some dioceses included parishes in more than one county; for example the old Lichfield and Coventry diocese covered all of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, along with much of Warwickshire plus north Shropshire, therefore it held probate documents for many individuals from outside Staffordshire which is the record office that holds the diocesan archive including probate records.

Use the *Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* maps to locate the ecclesiastical court – available online. A colour-coded key shows the extent of the various jurisdictions and lists the peculiars.

Most diocesan record offices will hold comprehensive indexes to the wills they hold. These may be organised by the ecclesiastical court in which they were proved or alphabetically for their total holding, or by year of probate.

Above all make sure that you are in the correct place to look for the wills.

Peculiar jurisdictions

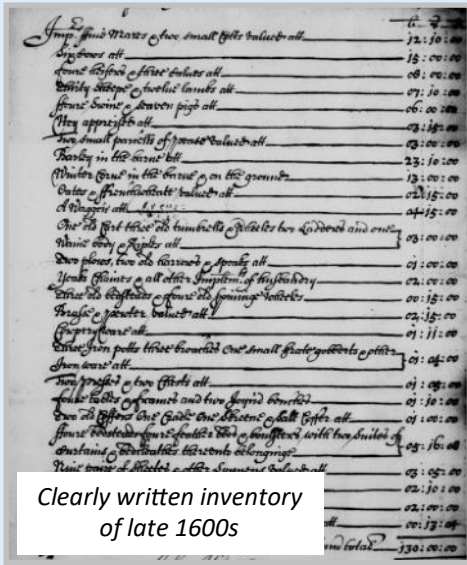
Peculiars originated in medieval England and covered an area exempt from the jurisdiction of the bishop in whose diocese it lay and they therefore controlled their own probate matters. A peculiar could be just one parish or a number of parishes, but not necessarily adjacent to each other and sometimes spanning different counties. There were different structures to peculiars with the ecclesiastical system.

- Cathedrals under the 'Dean and Chapter'
- Manors
- Liberties - former abbeys and monasteries
- Universities
- Royal Peculiars.



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Probate inventories



Between 1529 and 1782 it was a legal obligation for the executor to arrange the compilation of an inventory of the deceased's personal or moveable goods, assets and chattels. After 1782 an inventory was no longer legally required although "interested parties" could request one be taken.

The assessors compiled a detailed listing of the entire contents of the deceased's dwelling, along with tools of trade, stock of goods or animals, attaching an estimated value of each item. These were compiled to ensure that any unpaid debts owing at death could be financed.

These inventories, where they survive, form an integral part of the probate records. They are likely to be found attached to the locally held wills at county record offices although some inventories are held in a separate series from the wills. The inventories filed with wills proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury are held at The National Archives with some searchable online.

Inventories are magical! You see a listing of everything - all the personal household contents along with the goods and tools, including livestock, relating to the work of your ancestor. You can virtually walk around the home and out-buildings, visualising the contents and assessing the standing of your ancestors through these and the values applied. In fact, an inventory can clarify the occupation of the deceased through the tools, stock and produce included in the inventory. This is helpful when the occupation has not been clear in other documents during their lifetime.

If your ancestors remained in a particular parish for any length of time, it is well worth looking at the probate documents of other people in that same parish during the period your forebears lived there. You will discover much about occupations, lifestyle and the community as a whole. You may also find your ancestor acting as a witness or executor for another in the parish; they may even have been a beneficiary!

Bank of England will extracts

These will extracts were drawn up by the bank officials after 1717 in order to keep track of those who held

investments in government stock or public funds. The records cease in 1845. These can be searched on FindMyPast.

The officials also compiled extracts to record changes of ownership in these investments as a result of sales or transfers, death, bankruptcy or being declared a lunatic.

Most but not all of the wills extracted were proved by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Letters of administration

Letters of administration, commonly referred to as admons, were usually issued if property was valued above £5. They enabled family members to dispose of the estate in the absence of a will.

The administrator drew up an account which detailed the assets and the benefactors of the estate. They do not contain much by way of genealogical value but can name family members and provide other valuable information. This will usually be in the administration act books or sometimes the probate act books.

Admon with Will

This record grants administration to someone else when the executor named in the will is deceased or is unwilling or unable to act as executor. A copy of the will is attached to the administration.

Welsh wills pre-1858

For Welsh wills, search wills proved in the Welsh church courts at the National Library of Wales (pictured).



These are available online. These can include other probate records including inventories. If the deceased held land in more than one Welsh diocese, the will would have been proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

The Commonwealth period 1642-1660

During the English Civil War the probate process was partially disbanded. Parliament abolished the ecclesiastical courts in 1653 but they were restored in 1661. Wills proved during this period were all dealt with by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.



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Guardianship

When a father or widow died leaving minor children, it was usual for close relatives to take in the children without court sanction. Sometimes the courts appointed a guardian to look after the children's interests until they were twenty-one. If a child was under the legal marriage age (twelve years for girls and fourteen years for boys) guardianship was known as "tuition." If the child was of marriageable age but under twenty-one, then guardianship was known as "curation." This terminology is often found in wills.

Appeals relating to disputes over wills

If a decision of a court was disputed, then additional records may be found among later records of the same court or in those of a court of higher jurisdiction.

There were three courts of appeal. If a dispute arose in matters from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury cases were referred to the Court of Arches of Canterbury. Appeals from disputes involving the Prerogative Court of York were to the Chancery Court of the Archbishop of York and if needed to the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Final appeals were to the Court of Delegates until 1831 and thereafter all final appeals were made to the Privy Council.

Post-1857 Wills and Admons

After 11 January 1858 probate became a civil process. See the official government website for details

The above article is based on that appearing on [Explore Your Genealogy](#) where there are many research guidance articles.

About the author



Ian Waller is a retired professional genealogist who is currently vice-chairman and education officer of the Federation. He is a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and also of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives

Useful websites

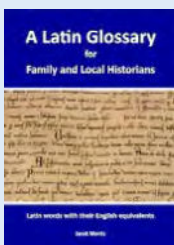
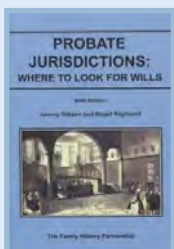
- ◆ The National Archives – guide: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/
- ◆ National Library of Wales – guide: www.library.wales/catalogues-searching/help-to-search/family-history-help/records/wills-and-probate-records
- ◆ ScotlandsPeople guide to Scottish wills: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/wills-and-testaments
- ◆ Borthwick Institute: www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/
- ◆ FindMyPast – death duty registers: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/index-to-death-duty-registers-1796-1903>
- ◆ FindMyPast – Bank of England wills extracts: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/bank-of-england-wills-extracts-1717-1845>
- ◆ FindMyPast – index to Prerogative Court of York wills: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/prerogative-and-exchequer-courts-of-york-probate-index-1688-1858>
- ◆ FindMyPast – diocese of Lichfield and Coventry wills: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/staffordshire-dioceses-of-lichfield-and-coventry-wills-and-probate-1521-1860>
- ◆ UK Probate Search post-1858 guide: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/help>
- ◆ Ancestry – Phillimore's Parish Atlas: www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/8830/
- ◆ Explore Your Genealogy – free information website: www.exploreyourgenealogy.co.uk/
- ◆ Family History Books Online: www.familyhistorybooksonline.com/

Further reading

A useful reference book is [Probate Jurisdictions: Where to Look for Wills](#) (Jeremy Gibson and Stuart Raymond) - which costs £5.50 from Family History Books.

[Sin, Sex and Probate – Ecclesiastical Courts, Officials and Records](#) (Colin Chapman) explains the various courts for the historian. This is also available from Family History Books—price £6.50.

Buy these two books together for just £10 [plus p&p] while stocks last – [click HERE!](#)



Also available are two helpful guides published by Family History Books

[A Latin Glossary for Family and Local Historians](#) by Janet Morris and

[Making Sense of Latin Documents for Family and Local Historians](#) by

Brooke Westcott.

Buy separately or [click HERE](#) for the twin-pack.





Family History Societies



Essex Society for Family History

Staying Relevant— Celebrating Fifty Years of the Society

The Essex Society for Family History (ESFH) has been helping family historians for fifty years, marking its milestone anniversary in 2024. Over the decades, we have remained committed to supporting researchers whilst evolving with the times. While traditional records remain at the heart of what we do, we have embraced new techniques and technologies, particularly in the field of DNA for genealogy.

DNA for Family History—A Growing Focus



Image supplied by Essex FHS

One of our key initiatives in recent years has been supporting members in using DNA to complement their family history research. To that end, we launched a year-long Genetics for Genealogy Beginners course, helping members understand the basics of DNA testing, interpreting their results, and using them to break down brick walls in their research. This has proved incredibly popular, showing just how important DNA is becoming in family history.

In addition to structured courses, we also run regular DNA Surgeries. These sessions provide members with the opportunity to seek one-on-one help with their DNA puzzles, whether it's understanding their matches, working out unknown parentage, or using third-party tools to analyse their results. Our commitment to education ensures that even those new to DNA testing feel confident using it in their research.

Local Projects with a Lasting Impact

While we look to the future, we also work hard to preserve the past. We supported the initiative of St Mary's Church in

Woodham Ferrers with funding towards their Graveyard Mapping Project. During the summer of 2024, the Heritage Hub team embarked on an exciting project to become the first church in Essex to digitise their burial records and make them readily available and publicly accessible for all using cutting-edge digital and GPS technology. This pioneering work ensures that burial records are preserved and easily accessible to researchers and the wider community for free.

In another exciting project, we are working with the Essex Record Office to digitise records that might otherwise get overlooked. This ensures that valuable historical documents remain accessible for future generations, and that researchers—both local and global—can access Essex's rich archival history more easily.

A Thriving and Supportive Community

The ESFH is an active society that continues to provide a wide range of resources and support for family historians of all levels. We host regular talks, meetings, and online events to keep our members engaged and informed. We also have Branches in Harlow, Colchester and Westcliff-on-Sea. Our members benefit from a wealth of expertise, whether they are beginners looking for guidance or experienced researchers tackling complex family puzzles.

By embracing new methodologies like DNA research and continuing to preserve and share historical records, we ensure that family history remains accessible, engaging, and relevant in the digital age. We welcome anyone with Essex ancestry, or a just a passion for genealogy, to join us in our mission.

To find out more about us, visit our website www.esfh.org.uk



Advance notice

Devon Family History Society

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE

9—11 October 2026

at the Durrant House Hotel, near Bideford

Renowned international and local speakers

www.devonfhs.org.uk/devon-fhs-conference-2026/



Family History Societies



Coventry Family History Society

The Oath of a Freeman

Coventry Family History Society (CFHS) prides itself on being open to any and all enquirers and we provide an active research service. We have handled requests for help in breaking brick walls and even researched the history of a car! But a most fascinating case appeared in November 2024.

We were contacted via our website by a member who lives around twenty miles away. He had visited a local charity shop and to his surprise, had spotted an old framed *Oath of a Freeman* certificate. It had been issued in Coventry in 1942 to one Harold James Walton, an apprentice draughtsman. Our member thought this was fascinating find but knew that the shop could eventually dispose of the certificate if it remained unsold. He couldn't bear the thought of that and so gathered it up and took it home. He promptly emailed our secretary with the details and asked if we would be interested.

You bet....



The email was forwarded to all our committee, who promptly jumped into action. Our researchers did some investigations on Harold James Walton, whilst arrangements were made to collect the certificate and deliver it to our chairman. Having his own *Oath of a Freeman*, the chairman was really pleased to receive it, and started to look for a good home for it. There were a number of options - find family members, pass it to the Freeman's Guild, or ask the Coventry Archive Centre if they were interested in displaying it.

A lot of information was researched about Harold's personal and working life, which included that he had two daughters, Amanda and Jane. Once we had this information, it was time to look at where the daughters could be. We found that one daughter had married and, on delving deeper, found an address about two miles from the chairman's house! Was this the same person and would she be interested in having the certificate?

At this point, we started to get cold feet. Did they still live at the address? Did they throw the certificate away? Was it discarded in a house clearance? There was only one thing to do and that was to knock on the door. A letter was written in case there was nobody at home, the certificate put in the car and we 'went for it'.

Arriving at the house, there were two cars on the drive, so the doorbell was rang. A man opened the door and we started our questioning. Talk about 'cold callers' who quiz you to sell double glazing! It felt really strange. The man stood back and must have thought, 'what the heck is going on, and who are these people?' The situation was quickly explained before he could close the door, and we had his interest.

From the car the framed document was produced for him, which he took and started to read. Yes, it was his father-in-law; yes, he was a draughtsman; but, no, he was not aware the certificate even existed. The look of concern on his face started to change to a broad smile, and he said he couldn't wait to show this around the family. It was fabulous outcome for both the relatives of Harold, and the Society.

We at CFHS have all said in the past that these are the type of actions which we enjoy doing, and seeing the smiles make it even more worthwhile. The original instigator of all of this has been informed of the outcome and was elated that we found a place for this to belong. A great result for everybody involved.

Paul Salisbury

Chairman

Website: www.covfhs.org





Family History Societies



Calderdale Family History Society

Overseas Members – how are you treating them?

It was a chance exchange with an overseas member that made our society realise that we may not be serving that group as well as we should. We contemplated that they may have different needs to those members within the UK. Consequently, we emailed all sixty-one of our overseas members asking what they felt was important to them and asking if any would like to act as a coordinator for future meetings and discussions.

Gratifyingly, thirty-eight replied of whom only four said they were not interested, for various reasons. Those who expressed interest were split more or less 50/50 between the west and the east of the world.

We had two volunteers to coordinate, both from the USA. Such was their enthusiasm that, within an hour they were on the phone to each other, planning the next steps which resulted in each taking responsibility for half of the world – one for North America, Europe and Africa and the other for Australasia and the Far East. In truth, this was dictated by world time zones more than anything else.

It is early days, but the first Zoom meeting has taken place with members from Australasia, with the second, for the west, shortly.

The response has been very positive and has already spawned two initiatives. The first is for a Calderdale-based volunteer to be the focus for specific geographical queries from members. It became apparent that members' research was being hampered by lack of knowledge of where places were in relation to one another. Places may look close on a map, but sociological and geographical knowledge can make a big difference. Two villages may be only a mile apart but in Calderdale, the local authority with the most hill gradients over 1 in 5, it is quite common for the travelling distance to be four or more miles. Although Halifax is situated more or less equally distant from Huddersfield and Bradford, Queensbury, up on the hill between Halifax and Bradford, has always been more of a "cultural" barrier than that with Huddersfield, with the result that Halifax has many more ties with Huddersfield.

Comments about use of (or lack of) facilities offered by the society meant that methods of operation are not as transparent as we thought. As a result, better methods of describing the workings of our systems (such as our online database which is free to members) will be explored – a move that will benefit all our members—everywhere!

So it may be that other societies could benefit by looking at the different needs of their non-UK members and make changes to accommodate them.

Website: www.cfhsweb.com/



East Surrey Family History Society

Another first!

Up for yet another challenge, East Surrey FHS will be holding its annual Study Day in the amphitheatre* at The National Archives in Kew on Saturday 5 April. We have a stunning line-up of speakers; two staff members from TNA and Sophie Kay. The theme of the day is *Letters from Life* so Paul Carter will kick off the day by sharing some of the correspondence between the poor law commissioners and the local poor law guardians. After his talk some original documents will be available to view. Then comes the society's AGM and a display of original documents, mostly pertaining to Surrey. Sophie Kay will speak after lunch, sharing correspondence from India and Ruth Selman will finish the day in her inimitable style with a selection of personal letters. The day promises to alternate from pathos to hilarity as our speakers elaborate on their specialist topics. This is an event not to be missed.

*The amphitheatre has an induction hearing loop. Use of the car park is free to attendees at events at TNA. We will explain how to exit the car park on the day!

10.00 Welcome

10.10 MH 12: *Poor Law Correspondence* - Paul Carter

11.10 break with hot drink

11.40 AGM

12.10 doc display (non-members could view from 11.45)

Lunch – choice of two cafes or use ground-floor eating area

1.30 *Letters from India: Mem sahib and Mother* - Sophie Kay

2.30 Break with hot drink

3.00 *Personal correspondence 1500 – 1700* - Ruth Selman

4.00 end of day, which allows people one hour for bookshop and café

As we are not the hosts we need to have a good idea of numbers attending so we can order drinks from TNA caterers and provide enough seating. Would non-members please book a ticket for the day by clicking on the link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdD1fDiayuPYKbrl0pCelzxW_79r8Cnu2fs8QYcEuiJHAP8Jw/viewform?usp=dialog

and complete a short questionnaire that will enable us to provide safe beverages for you, and to prepare your name badge. This will be your ticket. Payment of £8.00 may be made on the day in cash or by card. Please note that the form does not forward forms linked to Virgin or personalised email addresses.

Website: www.eastsurreyfhs.org.uk/



Family History Societies



Suffolk Family History Society

Transcriptions

Our teams of volunteers transcribe and index parish registers which we then publish as either a CD or a download. Clearly the latter does not incur postage and is immediately available.

The transcriptions of the Anglican registers have been in four phases. The burials for the whole county were done as part of the National Burial Index but ours have been updated and have more information (comments etc). For the rest...

1813-1900	all baptisms and marriages done
1754-1813	all baptisms and marriages done
1650-1753	baptisms and marriages mostly done
1538-1649	about 20% done for both

The transcripts are released by deanery, with each deanery having about twenty-five parishes. Some of the smaller deaneries are combined. Our website has clickable maps and locators to help people wanting to know what is available and for where. The transcripts cost £10 for a marriage index for a deanery, and £15 for a baptism index. A number are available as composite CD/downloads.

Burials for the whole county	£15
Baptisms 1813-1900	£25
Marriages 1813-1837	£15
1754-1812	£25

We have recently published a baptism index (1650-1964) for nonconformists and workhouses at £25. Members can get a 20% discount on such publications (not for postage) so with membership costing from £10, one can soon recoup the cost of membership. All available from our online shop at <https://suffolkfhs.co.uk/shop/index.php/>

Our latest release is the marriage index for Carlford and Wilford deaneries 1650-1753. These deaneries are to the east of Ipswich and include Woodbridge plus smaller parishes to the east.



Devon Family History Society

In 2026, Devon Family History Society will be celebrating its fiftieth birthday. Over the decades, Devon FHS has established itself as one of the country's leading societies. Our expertise and in-depth local knowledge allows us to help both those with Devon ancestry and those who live in Devon whose origins lie elsewhere. The resources at our HQ enable us to help in-person visitors and we also offer research help virtually.

We have a comprehensive website www.devonfhs.org.uk, with plenty on offer including images of many parish registers, some of which are exclusive. We also have an extensive Methodist collection. You can access many photographs of Devon churches, memorial inscriptions, the Devon wills project, our online shop and much more. Our journal offers quality articles and items of interest.



Devon FHS was one of the first societies to take their lecture programme online, allowing worldwide access. We also host 'small group' meetings online, each of which focuses on a handful of parishes enabling attendees to learn

more about that area and to share surname interests. Although Devon has over four hundred parishes, we cover the whole county each year. We hold face-to-face day conferences, usually working with local history and other like-minded organisations. In addition, there are regular, monthly, in-person meetings in the south of the county. Devon FHS can found flying the flag at family history fairs across the country, as well as at virtual shows.

Our enthusiastic volunteers take part in wide variety of projects to index and make available a wide variety of records. We are particularly proud of our long-standing *Acorn Club*, which encourages young people to take an interest in family history and heritage. Over the years, we have worked with several schools and youth groups.

To celebrate our golden anniversary, we invite family historians from far and wide to visit our beautiful county and join our **residential, weekend conference from 9-11 October 2026**. We have a line-up of internationally-known speakers supported by the very best local presenters providing high-quality lectures of local and more general interest. We promise that the programme will also include something a little different. The venue is on the edge of an area of outstanding beauty and close to the coast. You will want to spend longer exploring the area as there is plenty to do, or to amuse non-conference going partners, who accompany you. More information about the conference can be found on our website www.devonfhs.org.uk/devon-fhs-conference-2026.



Family History Societies



Doncaster and District Family History Society

This year marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the Doncaster and District Family History Society.

We were wondering how to celebrate it as this year we were not going to have a local family history fair, we were going to give ourselves time to look for a good venue. After some thought the Corn Exchange had been newly refurbished and is now open to events. So we will now be holding a 2025 fair!



Local History Fair
Saturday 16 August
10.00am—4.00pm
Corn Exchange
Doncaster
open to everyone as it is a public building

We will be having our own helpdesk and quite a few heritage societies attending. Doncaster Archives, Doncaster Civic Trust, the Sandhouse, Sandtoft Trolleybus Association, GNR, Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery, and Doncaster Waites just to name a few.

Website:

<https://doncasterfhs.co.uk>



Oxfordshire Family History Society

Family History Fair

Saturday 25 October 2025

10am – 4pm

**Cherwell School (North),
Marston Ferry Road, Oxford OX2 7EE**

For more information see the fair page on our website:

www.ofhs.uk/fair2025

Information, including details of stall holders, will be added over time.

To book a stall
please email fair-stalls@ofhs.uk



Societies' Data on Find My Past

A bumper month with lots of new datasets ready for publication

All member groups of the Family History Federation are entitled to make their transcriptions available to the public using the facilities provided by the Federation through Find My Past (FMP). All material added to the FMP datasets brings income for the society involved.

February's submissions have been extensive and varied with the following societies contributing datasets:

Bradford FHS – memorial inscriptions for Allerton/Manningham/Thornton (1825-1989)

Lincolnshire FHS – more workhouse guardians' minutes (1836-1901) – this dataset covering Holbeach Poor Law Union

Powys FHS – another 4,000+ burial records (1662-1851)

Suffolk FHS – bumper datasets with over 364,000 baptisms (1722-1855) and 95,000 marriages (1753-1816)

Wiltshire FHS – a particularly busy month with the society providing some very interesting records including constabulary police officer records (1839-1926), apprentice records (1655-1693), St James' Church, Trowbridge bell book (1797-1855), early census returns (1650-1887), vagrants passing through records (1702-1818), Great Western Railway Hospital admissions (1883-1916), *Swindon Advertiser* newspaper BMD notices (1854-1899).

Watch this space as all these will be published with FindMyPast in the next month or so.

In the meantime FindMyPast published the following four datasets in February:

Herefordshire FHS – yet more National Burial Index additions, covering the period 1580-1812

Morley & District FHG – baptisms for Rothwell [Yorkshire] Holy Trinity (1690-1729)

Northamptonshire FHS – early militia lists for the period 1546-1783

West Middlesex FHS – more Isleworth MIs (with images!) covering 1867-2022.

It's great to see all the societies' project efforts resulting in some wonderful dataset additions being made accessible to a wider audience, whilst promoting the society and generating some royalty fees for them, too.

If your society has transcriptions that are available for publication with [FindMyPast](https://www.findmypast.com) then please get in contact with the Federation's data manager at:

data.manager@familyhistoryfederation.com.



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

OUT AND ABOUT



We apologise to regular visitors to our booth at **Creative Crafts** at the NEC. We were moved at last minute to the other hall but unfortunately visitor information was not updated! Our apologies if you failed to find us.

The bookstall was at **The Family History Show** held at Malvern on 15 March where we met many friends—and sold a few books, too! Thank you to all customers for your support which is greatly appreciated.

Upcoming events

The bookstall will be at the **REALLY USEFUL Family History Show** on **29 March** (see front page).

Also, the bookstall will be at the **Suffolk FHS Fair** at The Hold, Ipswich on Saturday **26 April**.

Come along and bag a book or three! There will be offers on various titles so do come and view the range.



FamilySearch – England Jurisdictions 1851

It is actually England and Wales:

www.familysearch.org/mapp/

If you have not used this website – try it now! Click on the county, scroll to enlarge, click on a parish and select the details you need. Many researchers love this site but we have been aware of some issues of late.



We have been advised by Dan Poffenberger, Senior British and Irish Research Specialist at the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, that the technology on which this site is built is old and the site will no longer function after 25 May. They have been working on a replacement with much of the same functionality and look of the current site. However, they don't know if it will be ready by 25 May. We all hope it will not be too long a wait!

In addition, Dan would like to hear from those who have used the website (PoffenbergerDS@familysearch.org). This can be feedback sharing how useful the website is or isn't and also suggestions for possible improvement.

Unlock Your Family History with DNA

Family Tree's **DNA Discoveries** online event returns



Family Tree magazine's 'DNA Discoveries' online event is set to take place from 24 March to 24 April, featuring eight expert talks designed to help family

historians understand their DNA results and use the information to uncover more about their ancestry.

Full details and tickets are now available at: www.family-tree.co.uk/how-to-guides/webinars/dna-discoveries-2025

Is Your Name in the Federation's Surname Interests Database?

Did you know that the Federation holds a database of surname interests submitted by members of the Family History Societies?

The link is

www.familyhistoryfederation.com/surname-interests

This database currently holds over 75,000 names, submitted from over twenty societies. Each name search result provides a link back to the submitting society. This not only enables the researcher to be put in contact with the person who submitted the surname interest but also promotes the family history society as a potential source for further information relating to the name search.

As for the previous item on FamilySearch, if you do not already use this website, why not try it now for the various surnames you are researching?

If your society has a members' surname interest list and would like to get your names added to the *Surname Interest* database then please make contact with the Federation's data manager at data.manager@familyhistoryfederation.com who will explain how it all works to widen access to names held by local FHS.



FHF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The Federation's AGM followed by talks will take place on **Saturday 10 May** **Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission**, City Road, London EC1Y 1AU.

Full details, agenda, reports, etc., will be sent to the relevant person at each member society this month. Please ensure your society reviews the details and is represented. Any problems, please contact: admin@familyhistoryfederation.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

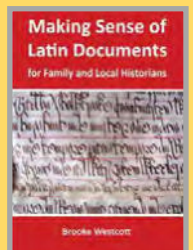
www.familyhistorybooksonline.com

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.

FHB welcomes contact from authors! Works of general and specific interest to family historians with wider social history topics are of interest. FHB does not publish individual family histories or fiction. If you have a book in the making, then do contact FHB via

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com

Recent publications include a revised edition of [*Making Sense of Latin Documents for Family and Local Historians*](#). Gives English equivalents to Latin phrases from a range of documents. Indispensable! Only £6.95!



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 Family History Show Live show 29 March near Bournemouth

See full details on front page

Online 14 and 15 November 2025

Please view www.fhf-reallyuseful.com for full details



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Family History Federation: www.familyhistoryfederation.com; admin@familyhistoryfederation.com

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Company Number 2930189 (England & Wales) Registered Charity Number 1038721
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