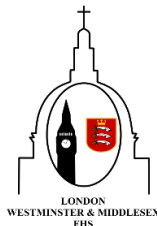


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# METROPOLITAN

The Journal of the  
**LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX**  
Family History Society



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**March 2024**

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Cover picture: Leathersellers' Almshouses, Barnet. See article on page 63

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## EDITORIAL

It seems only a short while ago that we were putting together the December journal. Now here we are with the March 2024 edition. The Annual General Meeting has been and gone and Spring is around the corner. It was good to see so many of our members at the AGM. All went smoothly and our new voting system worked well. The meeting was followed by a very interesting talk about criminal records and Graham's handout gave us hints and websites to help with our own research. If you have not attended one of our Zoom meetings, then do give it a try. There is a short informal chat before each talk and it is good to see and hear our members' news. Our Virtual Branch team have organised some great talks for 2024 and we look forward to seeing you.

We mentioned in the December journal that we had received some unwanted certificates regarding the ALLEN family. Within a week of publication, two members had requested to see copies of these! The surname ALLEN does not appear in our list of surname interests. Members might be missing a trick here, as information can be found from other people which cannot be found by any other means. Do please submit all the surnames you are researching to us (they don't have to be just in the London area) – it can be extremely helpful if another family historian has been researching the name. For a start, they are likely to be a lot more accurate than online hints! Send the surnames of all your great grandparents to Barbara at: [surnames@lwmfhs.org](mailto:surnames@lwmfhs.org)

We seem to have a dual theme running in this issue, with mentions of both Barnet and Wills. The Society has now completed Parish Guides for the whole of the London Borough of Barnet (see page 112) and the story of our cover picture is told on page 63. Beginners' Corner has more about Wills and how to read them, see page 89. Please also look at Chairman's Comments on page 66 for details of a petition to try and make sure that original Wills from 1858 to date are not destroyed by the Government.

We have contacted by email as many members as we can with the password for the members' area of our new website but a few of these emails have been returned. If you have not received the password. Please email us at [metropolitan@lwmfhs.org](mailto:metropolitan@lwmfhs.org) with your correct email address and we will send it out to you.

**Barbara, Elizabeth and Paul, the Editorial Team**

## LEATHERSELLERS' ALMSHOUSES, BARNET

The almshouses shown in our cover photo are owned by the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, one of the City of London's Livery Companies. These Companies have their origins in Anglo-Saxon religious fraternities of artisans and merchants, each connected with one type of craft, trade or business and centred around one of the City's churches.

The earliest mention of people described as leather sellers is in a document dated 1297, which names John and Roger POINTEL. In 1444 leather sellers as a group were granted a Charter by King Henry VI. This incorporated them into a company and gave them the authority to control the sale of leather in the City of London. These companies were known as Livery Companies due to the livery, or costume, which the senior members wore. The Leathersellers are a high-ranking Company, being 15th in the order of precedence out of 111 altogether.

Members of the Leathersellers Company would pay a subscription known as quarterage which was used to support the trade by ensuring decent standards of work and helping members. For example the Company supported several schools in Lewisham, provided benefits for those too old or sick to work and helped pay for funerals. Almshouses were constructed in 1535 behind St Ethelburga's Church in order to provide a home for impoverished elderly leather workers. This was close to their Hall, which was in buildings of the former Benedictine Priory of St Helen in Bishopsgate Ward (until a new one was built nearby in 1799).

New almshouses were built in Barnet in 1837 on land that the Leathersellers had owned for over 200 years. Mr Richard THORNTON, master of the Leathersellers' Company, together with other officials travelled from their Hall in St Helen's Place to Barnet for the laying of the first stone of the almshouses. A marquee was erected and a special silver trowel provided for Mr THORNTON to perform the ceremony. The builders and contractors, Messrs. WARD, then travelled to the *Castle* at Hampstead to dine with the Leathersellers' officials. On being presented with the trowel, Mr THORNTON immediately donated the £1,208 required to finish the almshouses. This was a generous gesture but he could easily afford it – when he died in 1865 he left an estate of £2,800,000. There is a bust of him at Barnet and the road directly behind the almshouses is called Thornton Road.

The first inmates of the almshouses, three men and three women, were elected by the Court of Assistants on 18 July 1838. The candidates had to be at least sixty years of age, Liverymen or Freemen of the Company or their widows, and be well recommended. More almshouses were added here in 1849 and another eight were built in 1865, at which point the City almshouses were closed and the remaining residents there transferred to Barnet. The impressive gates and a boundary stone were transferred with them.



The gates of the almshouses in Barnet were transferred here from the City.

The Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants of the Leathersellers Company made an annual visit to Barnet, in 1896 arriving in ‘six pair-horse broughams’, according to the report in the *Barnet Press* of 6 June. They would inspect the buildings, check on the welfare of inmates and have lunch, but not with the almspeople, who had their lunch directly afterwards.

The Leathersellers retain their own archives so if you believe an ancestor was housed here, you will need to contact the Company which you can do online via their website [enquiries@leathersellers.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@leathersellers.co.uk)

Other mentions of almsmen and women turn up in the local newspapers. The Petty Sessions report in the *Herts Guardian* of 21 July 1857 mentions Lucy PURCELL who lived in the almshouses and had been hit on the head with a stone by Ann TAYLOR. Ann was a girl who lived at Barnet with her parents

but had been refused access to a water pump in the almshouses by Lucy, who may also have kicked Ann's bucket over.

A story which was widely reported across the whole country concerned a 91-year-old resident. The *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* of 13 May 1898 reports that: 'At the Barnet Registry office on Monday was solemnised the marriage of a widower, 91 years of age, and a spinster of 73. The bridegroom, who has been for 26 years an inmate of the Leathersellers' Company's Almshouses at Barnet, is hale for his years, but his sight is so impaired that he had to put a cross instead of a signature in the register. The couple walked to and from the office.'

The *Morning Leader* of the same date adds further information, stating that the groom was Mr HARBORD and that this was his third marriage. Apparently he was with his first wife for 39 years, his second wife for 26 years and now, eight months after she died, he was marrying his housekeeper of four weeks. There is even a description of Mr HARBORD: 'He is a fine-looking old fellow and his eyebrows have a fierce curl which suggests that he is in the habit of ruling the domestic roost.'

A little family history sleuthing shows that the bridegroom was Henry William HARBORD and his bride was Mary Ann EASTON. Henry died in 1899 and by 1901 Mary, aged 76 and 'in receipt of relief' was living at nearby Bells Hill.

Despite their aged appearance, the almshouses were rebuilt as recently as 1964-1966. There are now 21 flats, which are still administered by the Leathersellers' Company and they continue to be primarily for people connected with the leather trade.

### Sources:

British Newspaper Archive on [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

'Chipping Barnet Leathersellers. by Colin Wilson on *Herts Memories*,

<https://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/towns-and-villages/barnet/chipping-barnet-leathersellers>

Richard Thornton [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Thornton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Thornton)

The Worshipful Company of Leathersellers website can be seen online here:

<https://leathersellers.co.uk/about-us/>



## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

When we download an image of a post-1858 Will from the Government's online probate search service, what we get, in fact, is an image of the registered copy of the Will rather than an image of the original Will itself. Does this matter? Actually it can be very important. The main difference between the two documents is that the original Will contains the actual signature of the testator (even if it is just an 'x') and also of the witnesses. These can be crucial for historians, especially with common names, to check against signatures on other documents such as marriage registers to see if they relate to the same person. It can also help in cases of mis-transcription.

The reason there are two copies of the Will is that the process of proving it creates a duplicate. Following the testator's death, the executors named in the Will take the original document to the relevant probate court to request the right to administer the deceased's estate. The original Will is then left with the probate court. A duplicate copy of the Will is registered in a book by the probate court, which it retains. As is stated in our article on page 89, the words used in the probate copy are identical to those in the original but the probate copy will have details of the grant of probate added at the bottom. The original might have extra annotations written by the clerks of the court, for instance, if there was a problem with one of the executors – these notes will not appear on the registered copy.

Whilst current legislation requires that the original Wills be preserved in perpetuity, the Ministry of Justice recently proposed that the law be changed to destroy these documents after 25 years and retain only the digitised copy, apart from those of people it deems 'famous'. This will save the Ministry an estimated £4.5m a year but result in the destruction of some 100 million Wills.

There are multiple drawbacks with this proposal. For example, online archives are not necessarily secure. The cyber attack on the British Library last October has played havoc with both their digital collections and also their catalogue and they are still not fixed. There is now a version of the catalogue online but it is one from April 2023 and does not include manuscripts, archives, journals, visual art content, audio or video content, or links to most online content. This shows just one problem which can occur with digital archives.



Another drawback was pointed out by Leonie Fitzgerald on our Facebook ‘Help and Discussion Group’, which concerns the fact that digital versions of paper records are only as good as the technician scanning them. She gives an example of a Will from the 17th century which she was trying to connect to her family. She eventually discovered that the three-page digitised Will was actually made up of the first page of her ancestor’s Will and two pages which were the end of another unrelated Will. She contacted The National Archives at Kew who were able to rescan the full Will for her from the original copy. Leonie says: “That wouldn’t have been possible if the original had been destroyed and my research would have been stymied”.

Then there is the problem with hardware. Floppy disks have come and gone, CDs are clinging on but who is to say what other changes in technology may occur in the future. Whatever the Wills are digitised onto will have to be constantly updated.

Whilst justice minister Mike Freer said: “Digitalisation allows us to move with the times and save the taxpayer valuable money”, of course, local historians are horrified by the plan, describing it as “sheer vandalism” and “obviously insane”. Freer, MP for Finchley and Golders Green in the London Borough of Barnet, resigned in February over fears for his safety, due to a suspected arson attack on his office (and not by enraged family historians I might add). However, Freer is not known for his love of our heritage. I live in Barnet and remember in 2011 when the Barnet council of the time, of which Freer was leader, shut down Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon and sold off most of its collections. The only other museum in our large Borough, Barnet Museum, only survived after a massive public campaign.

The Ministry of Justice plan is currently still just a plan and although the public consultation period has now ended, there is a petition still active which you can sign if you think the destruction of original Wills is a bad idea. This is here: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/654081>. The Government’s formal response will be published later this year. Richard Holt, creator of the petition says: “It is essential that you respond to the consultation to let the MoJ know what you think of the proposals. Your voice might be just one voice, but together we are strong. The tiny pebble thrown into the lake creates a ripple that has far-reaching effects. Imagine if we all throw in our tiny pebbles!”

**Elizabeth Burling**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

### **Flying Officer Herbert Horatio GAUNTLETT 1909-1943**

The September 2023 edition of *Metropolitan* (vol.9, no.4) contained a request from Dutch author, John Heideman, for help with finding information about F.O. Herbert GAUNTLETT, of Sudbury Middlesex, who had been shot down over Ymuiden during a bombing raid, and whose body was washed up at a nearby beach. He is buried, along with other downed servicemen in Bergen Cemetery. John is a high school teacher and historian who is writing a book about all 72 airmen who washed up on the Dutch shore during the war.

The first family home that I can remember was, oddly enough, a social housing flat in Sudbury called Gauntlett Court, though we subsequently moved to the Alperton/Perivale border, but the area was home until I left for university, so I felt that I was reasonably qualified to see if I could help.

The twins' father, Herbert senior, after whom the social housing flats were named, was headteacher at Sudbury Primary School, and subsequently became a leading figure in local politics, with a particular interest in education, serving two terms as Mayor of Wembley. Education was clearly important to the family, and I considered all the local secondary schools in the area that the boys might have attended, finally discovering that they both attended Harrow County School for Boys between 1921-1927. They are 'Old Gaytonians', a status they share with, amongst others, Michael PORTILLO, Clive ANDERSON and (Douglas) Cardew ROBINSON. Herbert seems to have been keen on outdoor activities, such as scouting, and his school achievements include a certificate of attainment awarded by the Royal Life Saving Society.

I was able to find out a considerable amount of background material for John, and suggested a couple of new avenues for him to explore, for which he was grateful but sadly we have yet to find a photograph of Herbert. John assures me he will let me know if he comes across one. I did ask him if he would be happy for me to use the material I discovered to contribute a piece for the 'For Evermore' site (CWGC) and he graciously agreed. I plan to do that later this year. May I conclude by saying that it was a privilege to assist John in a small way with such a worthwhile project.

**Lynne Overton, Member No. 7975**

Note: How lovely that you were able to help John using your local knowledge - this is surely what family history societies are all about! If anyone does have a photo of Herbert GAUNTLETT, do please get in touch.



## THE LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY

The London Corresponding Society (LCS) was formed on 25 January 1792 when a small group of men decided to create an organisation whose aim was to campaign for working men to be allowed to vote. The independence of America and French Revolution and taken place in the previous 15 years and these perhaps encouraged working people to think that they might be able to have more effect on processes previously beyond their control. They began to believe that it might be possible for them to have a say in how they were governed using information reported in a free press.

The first meeting was led by Thomas HARDY, a shoemaker who then had a shop at 9 Piccadilly. Although he had been born in Scotland, Thomas moved to London in about 1774, when he was 22. He married Lydia PRIEST on 21 May 1781 at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields and the couple went on to have six children (all of whom sadly died as babies).

The costs of the war with France meant that taxes were raised and Thomas came to the conclusion that members of Parliament were “falsely calling themselves the representatives of the people, but who were, in fact, selected by a comparatively few individuals, who preferred their own particular aggrandisement to the general interest of the community”. Thomas and his friends called a public meeting and LCS was born. It became part of a federation of local working-class reading and debating clubs with similar ideas.

Early members of LCS were quite a disparate group and included the following people:

Oludah EQUIANO had been born in the kingdom of Benin (now Nigeria) but was kidnapped and ended up a slave in Virginia. After an interesting life, he became an abolitionist and an active member of LCS.

John Horne TOOKE trained as a clergyman to please his father. John's election to the rotten borough of Old Sarum in 1801 led to a dispute which ended in a bill banning all clergymen from becoming members of the House of Commons.

John THELWALL was the son of a silk mercer and became involved in politics when he campaigned on behalf of John Horne TOOKE at an election in 1790 at Westminster.

Joseph GERRALD was born on the island of St Christopher, son of a wealthy planter. He came to England and was educated at Stanmore School before returning to the West Indies on inheriting the plantation. He ended up practising law in America, where he met political activist and philosopher Thomas PAINE. Moving back to England in 1788, Joseph became involved in the campaign for parliamentary reform.

Maurice MARGAROT, the son of a French wine importer, had been born in Devon but was living in France during the French Revolution. He travelled to Scotland on behalf of LCS where he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to transportation for sedition. He eventually returned to England and died in the St Pancras poor hospital in 1815.

Inevitably perhaps, the government of the day saw the LCS as a threat which had been influenced by French Revolutionary subversion. Thomas and the two Johns were arrested for High Treason, although after being tried they were all acquitted. Thomas lived to see the Great Reform Act, which was the start of a wider suffrage, finally passed a few months before he died in 1832.

There are quite a lot of records connected with LCS surviving. Because of the court case, many are in the archive of the Treasury Solicitor under 'Miscellaneous Papers of Sedition Cases' at The National Archives. In here are handbills, petitions to Parliament, addresses to various groups, letters asking for contributions from named people and more. Minutes and letter books 1791-1795 are in the British Library Manuscript Collections with other items in collections in Devon, Kent and Sheffield.

#### Sources:

LCS [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_Corresponding\\_Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Corresponding_Society)

TNA: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>



## **THE LAND OF PROMISE**

By Peter Todd, Member No. 7686

A few years ago, I wrote about my unsuccessful attempt to link George TODD (1857-1930), the husband of my great aunt Emily FOREY (1863-1940), to my family line. It was a continuation of my quest to find a plausible, rather than an indisputable (unlikely!), answer to the question who was my 3x great grandfather? I had been fortunate in establishing who my 2x great grandfather was by the discovery of a family Bible but then the trail went cold and I was left floundering at the beginning of the 19th century.

My 'eureka' moment came whilst re-visiting some old notes when I realised that my 2x great grandmother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth LEADER and who had been baptised (8 September 1793) at St Dunstan and All Saints on Stepney High Street shared the same christening venue as a William TODD, who had been baptised two years earlier on 14 March 1791 and whose birthday had been in the previous month.

I now strongly believe, since I have not come across any conflicting evidence, that this William TODD was my 2x great grandfather and the William TODD (1791-1854) who went on to marry the above Elizabeth LEADER (1793-1850) at St Botolph Church in the City of London on 27 June 1813.

Elizabeth's father Job LEADER (1763-1825) also resided in Poplar and was a carpenter. The thought has crossed my mind that my 2x great grandfather may have been apprenticed to Job, since I know that William was a carpenter. Since my 2x great grandmother was only two years younger than William they could well have met during those apprenticeship years.

William's parents were noted in the St Dunstan and All Saints parish record as being a Thomas and Mary TODD of Poplar. Thomas TODD (1762-1828) was a mast maker.

Thomas married Mary WARRINGTON (1766-1821) on 18 September 1788 at St Alphege Church Greenwich. The couple had seven children in the decade 1789-1798. There were five sons but only three, including my 2x great grandfather, survived beyond the turn of the century and only one son, my grandfather, appears to have married. One of the daughters, Catherine

TODD (1792-1830) married a local lad Richard EDMONDS (1788-1855) and the other daughter, Mary Charlotte TODD (1795-1811) died in her 'teens.

Usually, I would have been happy to have gleaned this much (pre-1841) information about an ancestor but this time I was curious to know more because until now my forefathers had mainly been born, raised and lived either in the Camden or Islington areas of London.

The districts of Stepney and Poplar, within an area known as Tower Hamlets, a London borough to the east of the City of London, sometimes deprecatorily called the 'East End' were to coin a phrase 'off the beaten track' from my previous search experience. The name 'Tower Hamlets' apparently dates to the 16th century and now includes some 29 localities on the north side of the Thames between The City to the west, Newham in the east and Hackney to the north. The sometime hamlet of Poplar on the edge of the parish of Stepney lies at the north end of the Isle of Dogs.

Prior to the beginning of the 19th century the 'Isle' or Stepney Marsh was mostly pasture land crisscrossed with drainage ditches. To minimize flooding from high tides on the river Thames a large earthen bank had previously been erected around the southern end of the Isle. A track ran from Poplar high street to a ferry (known as Potter's ferry) which crossed to Greenwich, which was on the Kent side of the Thames. In the 1750s up to a dozen windmills for grinding corn were erected to operate on the west facing banking, it is from this that the area now known as Millwall derived its name.

In 1771, when Thomas TODD my 3x great grandfather was about nine years old, a certain Robert TODD (1722-1796) - who is not related to my family line (but see footnote), a mast maker of Wapping bought a plot of land on Stepney Marshes (Isle of Dogs) adjoining the river Thames, known as the 'Land of Promise Estate'. The 'Estate' had previously been owned by a St Martin's in the Fields haberdasher and starch maker, Simon LEMON. Simon may have inherited the starch business from his father, also a Simon, who died in 1731 and whose Will described him as a starch maker and barber surgeon of London. The original 'Starch House' was located near Potter's ferry.

In the 18th century starch was generally made from refuse wheat grains which were fermented in water and further processed to yield starch. The younger Simon LEMON also had an interest in the southern-most flour mill on the marsh flood wall. This mill together with the mill house and workers' cottages survived until about 1766 when they were supplanted by a mast house and other buildings. From documents that I have read it appears that the mast works was being run by a Mr HARRIS when Robert TODD took over the leasehold. Sometime in the 1780s Robert, who was then in his sixties and looking to retire, went into partnership with my great grandfather, Thomas TODD, who would have been in his twenties, and



Isle of Dogs mast house.

presumably just starting out in the business of making ships' masts.

Before the advent of machinery mast making was labour intensive and required large areas of (covered) unobstructed space, hence the requirement for a mast house.

Oak and pine were the preferred wood for making masts and as the 18th century progressed a scarcity of suitable timber for single log mast construction led to the development by an English naval surveyor, Sir Robert SEPPINGS (1767-1840) of a system of iron banding together of crafted shorter lengths of tree trunk into the large masts required by the ships of the day.

The building, repairing, refitting and provisioning of sailing ships in the Pool of London was at its peak in the latter half of the 18th century and money was to be made in satisfying the demand for these services. It has also been said that there were so many trading ships coming into the Thames at this time, that there was scarcely room on the surrounding wharves and quays for them to unload or load. The acuteness of this problem eventually led to Parliament giving permission for enclosed docks to be built across the northern end of the Isle of Dogs. The West India Docks were opened in 1802.

Similar ship maintenance would have been going on opposite the Isle of Dogs where the town of Greenwich and the adjacent Royal Naval Dock Yard at Deptford were located. Britain's navy would have been under much pressure at the time to keep fully equipped ships afloat to ferry troops between North America and England, to fight in the American War of Independence (1770-1783) and to keep a reactive interest in Canada to counter the colonial and trading ambitions of our old adversary, France, whilst policing our shores here at home against possible invasion from Napoleon's forces. In addition, Britain was expanding its influence in India and the Far East via the East India Company. It was also a period of great exploration by Captain COOK and others culminating in the comprehensive charting of Australasia and other places in the Pacific.

Robert TODD retired to Greenwich in about 1787, leaving the business to continue in the names of HARRIS & TODD into the 1790s although the active partners in the firm seemed to have been Thomas TODD (who subsequently became an executor of Robert TODD's Will and Testament) and Charles Augustus FERGUSON (1757-1830), a shipwright from the Green at Deptford. Charles's wife, Elizabeth STEPHENSON (1784-1831) was a cousin of Robert TODD's late wife, and it was she who actually came to own the Land of Promise estate managed by her husband Charles, and Thomas TODD, when Robert died. Robert TODD died in 1798 aged 76 years and was buried on 21 January at St John's Church, Wapping.

I have not been able to find out any more about Robert's wife but I believe she died childless because there is no mention in Robert's Will of any children. A number of bequests, some of which were in the form of annuities, were made to friends and their sons and daughters, including those of his business partners (e.g. £500 - approximately £63,000 today - was left to Thomas's son William) as well as to charitable organisations, such as The Royal Naval Asylum & Orphanage School and The Greenwich Hospital School. The Will also tantalisingly mentioned that one of the beneficiaries, a Mrs Susan AUZOR, was Thomas TODD's sister. Naturally I have tried to follow this up but so far to no avail.

Charles FERGUSON lived in Robert TODD's old house while Thomas TODD had a new house built on some leasehold land owned by a George BYNG, MP (1764-1847). The lease was for 99 years at a ground rent of £6 per annum.



The start of the new century brought many changes to the Isle of Dogs and the surrounding River Thames as steam started to replace sail and so-called 'smoke-stack' industries began to appear around Millwall. The nearby chain-making works of Brown, Lennox & Company occupied Thomas TODD's house in 1817, which perhaps signals the point at which the mast-making business went into terminal decline. The Imperial Gas Light & Coke Company also constructed a chemical processing works in the vicinity.

It is unclear what happened to Thomas TODD during those early years of the 19th century and up to his death in Brighton aged 65 years in 1828. His eldest son Robert TODD (1789-1796) had died, closely followed by another son, Charles, who only survived a month after his birth in 1798. A daughter Mary, as mentioned previously, died in 1811. Thomas's wife died in 1821. Perhaps these tragic events, coupled with business problems hastened his retirement to Brighton. This destination is an assumption on my part based on the St Nicholas Church, Deptford parish burial record for 22 January 1828, which listed Thomas's abode at the time of his death as Brighthelmstone - the standard rendering for Brighton between the 14th and 18th centuries. From the 1780s Brighton became a fashionable resort and growth of the town was further encouraged by the patronage of the Prince Regent, who later became George IV.

Thomas TODD's Will and Testament, similar to that of Robert TODD's, bequeathed sums of money (e.g., £20-£100 which seem modest now but have the purchasing power in today's terms of £1,800-£9,000) and annuities to various (business) friends and family members, including an apparent 'brother' a Royal Navy lieutenant, Michael SMITH (1760-1829). I found no mention in Thomas's Will of a passing on of land, although I have to admit to experiencing some difficulty in reading the many pages of 18th century handwritten legalese featured in both these wills. The actual title to the Land of Promise estate seemed to lie with the FERGUSON family and this was subsequently borne out when following the death of Charles FERGUSON in 1830, and then his wife, Elizabeth in 1831, the estate passed to a nephew Charles Augustus FERGUSON (1798-1874).

The nephew sold the Land of Promise estate in 1835 to Scottish engineers Fairbairn & Napier, who were iron ship builders. Fairbairn developed the site to make mainly small ships under 2,000 tons. The works wasn't a financial success, though, and in 1848 it was sold to J Scott Russell & Co. This latter

firm was best known as the builders of the *SS Great Eastern* which had been designed by Isambard BRUNEL.

Whilst perusing Thomas TODD's Will I came across mention of money being put aside for the erection and maintenance of a family vault located in the church yard of St Nicholas, Deptford. Following a search online I came across the following description about a St Nicholas Church grave in a list of churchyard monumental inscriptions posted on the Kent Archaeological Society website.

On making enquiries to the Society on whether they had a photograph of the tomb I was directed to a Wikimedia site where the image below was found. As one can see the tomb is rather the worse for wear, but after 200 years and the WWII bombing when the church of St Nicholas was damaged by fire-it was rebuilt in 1955, it is a miracle that there is a monument to be seen today.

*'An altar tomb near the South door. On the South side. Sacred to the memory of Mrs Mary Todd, wife of Thomas Todd,*



The Todd Family Tomb, St Nicholas Church, Deptford.  
Attribution: Mike Quinn.

*esquire, who departed this life March 21st. 1821 aged 54 years. Also of the above Thomas Todd, squire, who departed this life January 12th 1828 aged 65 years. On the East side. Sacred to the memory of Master Robert Todd who departed this life December 9th 1796 aged 7 years and 4 months. On the North side. Charles Todd died October 13th 1798 aged 3 weeks. Mary Charlotte Todd died May 26th 1811 aged 16 years. In Memory of Catherine, wife of*

*Richard Edmonds and daughter of Thomas and Mary Todd died April 10th 1830 aged 38 years'*

The memory of the 'Land of Promise' is now encapsulated in the street names of Mast House Terrace and Ferguson Close, to be found on the modern estate of town houses and apartments built on the original site in Millwall, London.

My thanks to Ted Connell of the Kent Archaeological Society for sending me the Wikimedia Commons website details which contained an image of the family tomb.

*Footnote:* In the 'British History Online' article that I read Thomas was referred to as Robert TODD's godson.

**Sources:**

'Blind Alleys' by Peter Todd, *Metropolitan* Vol. 5 No. 4 September 2019 p.113

'Great Grandad's Bible' by Peter Todd, *Metropolitan* Vol. 36 No. 3 October 2013 p.24

A list of the descendants of Gilbert Ferguson, shipwright; the 'Fergus(s)on DNA Project' can be found at: <http://dna.cfsna.net/GEN/England/Kent/Deptford.html>  
Ancestry.co.uk

Brighton: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton>

George Byng MP: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Byng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Byng)

Kent Archaeological Society: [www.kentarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk)

Pool of London: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port\\_of\\_London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_of_London)

Poplar in the past (1933): <http://www.mernick.org.uk/thhol/poplarpa.html> and also:  
<http://www.mernick.org.uk/thhol/>

Sir Robert Seppings: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Seppings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Seppings)

*Survey of London*: Volumes 43 and 44, Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols43-4/pp375-387> also [pp466-80](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols43-4/pp466-80).

The Isle of Dogs – History at a Glance: <https://www.islandhistory.co.uk/>

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_Borough\\_of\\_Tower\\_Hamlets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Borough_of_Tower_Hamlets).

The Todd Tomb:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St.\\_Nicholas'\\_Church,\\_Deptford\\_Green,\\_SE8\\_-\\_tomb\\_near\\_the\\_south\\_porch\\_-\\_geograph.org.uk\\_-\\_1501816.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Nicholas'_Church,_Deptford_Green,_SE8_-_tomb_near_the_south_porch_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1501816.jpg)



# LONDON WESTMINSTER AND MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

The following are the draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 8 February 2024 via Zoom.

The Society's President, Michael Gandy, BA, FSG attended to chair the meeting. He welcomed 54 members, noting that the Notice and Agenda had been sent to all members.

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Received from Dawn Adams, Carolyn Greenwood and Paul Feetum.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD 9 MARCH 2023:

The minutes were approved.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING:

None.

## 4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The Chairman had previously published her report in *Metropolitan* and there were no comments other than to thank Elizabeth for her hard work on behalf of the Society.

## 5. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022/23:

This had been published in *Metropolitan*. April explained why administration costs had increased resulting in a small deficit. Given current reserves, however, the Society was in a sound financial position. They had been checked by two other members of the Society.

In answer to a question by Jim Nelhams about the absence of interest, April explained that HSBC had paid interest but this was outweighed by bank charges. The new account at Santander paid no interest but levied no charges. Nevertheless, research was underway to set up an interest-bearing account in addition.

Jim Nelhams also asked about whether they had been signed by an Independent Examiner. April confirmed that they had been reviewed according to the Constitution. A note is hereby made to this effect, as requested.

## 6. ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS:

Members were invited to vote on the Adoption of the Accounts as a true record of our finances. They were duly approved, with no contrary votes.

## 7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Elizabeth Burling confirmed her willingness to continue as Chairman and, there being no other candidate, was confirmed in Office.

Paul Feetum had been co-opted as Minutes Secretary and had been proposed by Elizabeth Burling and seconded by Barbara Haswell to the Office of Secretary. No other proposals had been received and the matter was put to the vote. This was unanimously in favour of Paul's election.

April Vesey confirmed her willingness to continue as Treasurer and, there being no other candidate, was confirmed in Office.

## 8. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Michael Gandy read the list of other Officers appointed by the Executive Committee, as follows:

Sylvia Thompson, Membership Secretary, Postal Sales and Virtual Branch Team member.

Barbara Haswell, Surname Interests and joint *Metropolitan* Editor.

Elaine Tyler, Projects Co-ordinator and Virtual Branch Team member.

Karen De Bruyne, Events Team Co-ordinator and Twitter administrator.

Clare Pollitt, Virtual Branch Team member.

Elizabeth Burling, joint *Metropolitan* Editor, Publications Editor, Postal Sales and Virtual Branch Team member.

In addition, since the last A.G.M. we have appointed:

Tahirih Miks, Family History Federation Liaison

Paul Feetum, joint *Metropolitan* Editor

Tony Allen, Rayner's Lane Branch

Andrea Olley, correspondence secretary

With the exception of Paul, who had confirmed this in writing previously, and Tony likewise but verbally, all confirmed their willingness to continue and were duly appointed for another year.

## 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Michael Gandy having raised the Members' Survey, Elizabeth Burling referred to her report and explained how and why it would be conducted, electronically, so at no cost, all of which was accepted by the meeting;

Simon Garbett wished to propose a vote of thanks to all of the Committee for their hard work. This was seconded by Michael Gandy and met with general approval;

Donald Berry asked on behalf of Stan Rondeau why he could not join this meeting, the computer denying him access. Sylvia noted that he was not currently a member and had perhaps not spotted a couple of reminders to pay fees to the new bank account. Donald was asked to explain the position to Stan, everyone hoping that he would renew his membership;

Jim Nelhams asked why the Society was not a Registered Charity allowing it to reclaim Gift Aid. It was noted that this was raised and rejected about two years ago. While it was quite in order to raise a question, no action could be taken absent a formal proposal submitted in advance but that remained possible for next year. In the meantime, various members of the Committee expressed their concern on responsibilities of serving as such Trustees, and for potentially limited benefit, and several stated that they would not be prepared to continue on such terms.

Michael Gandy, President, concluded any other business by expressing his thanks to all who served on the Committee and hoped that we would all continue to work together in furtherance of our mutual love of genealogy.

**11. CLOSE MEETING:**

Michael Gandy closed the meeting at 7.32pm. Thanks were expressed to him for his excellent Chairmanship.

**NEXT COPY DATE**

Please remember that the copy date for the next issue of *Metropolitan* is  
**1 May 2024**

Articles, letters, requests and comment should be sent to the Editors.

The Editors reserve the right to edit contributions.

Contributors should indicate if copy is being distributed to other family history society journals or family history magazines.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON: HIGHGATE

The district of Highgate is situated between those of Hampstead and Muswell Hill on a hill which has steep approaches on three sides. The summit of this hill is at 131 metres (446 feet) above sea level, level with the cross on top of St Paul's Cathedral. Highgate was well established as a small settlement by the 14th century and the etymology of the name 'Highgate' refers to the high hedge of a private deer park next to it, owned by the Lord of the Manor of Hornsey, the Bishop of London. The village stands at the junction of Highgate West Hill and North Street, which are crossed by Hampstead Lane and Highgate High Street. The route down North Street provided one of the main ways into London for drovers and there were many inns to serve travellers. One of these, in the centre of the village, is *The Gate House*. This takes its name from a tollgate here at which money was taken from travellers heading north through the Bishop's estate.

Highgate is always associated with Dick WHITTINGTON, who later became Lord Mayor of London, simply because of the legend that it was at the bottom of Highgate Hill he stopped to look back at the London he was leaving. On hearing the bells as he paused, he thought he heard a message in them telling him to retrace his steps and stay in town. He did, but whether it was actually there he changed his mind is uncertain, since to reach his home in Gloucestershire would have meant taking a different route. His association with Highgate has given the name to the Whittington Hospital.

Whittington Hospital was formed from the amalgamation after the Second World War of various local hospitals and infirmaries. The oldest of these was a Smallpox and Vaccination Hospital which the Metropolitan Asylums Board opened in 1848 to replace one at St Pancras which had been demolished to make way for Kings Cross station. This now forms the Grade II listed Jenner Building of Whittington Hospital. In 1896, smallpox treatment was moved to Clare Hall Manor at South Mimms and the Highgate site became a workhouse infirmary for Islington Board of Guardians. They built a Union infirmary next door which opened in 1900, becoming known as Islington Infirmary in 1914. In 1930, the Boards of Guardians were abolished and administration of the hospitals was taken over by London County Council and Islington Infirmary was renamed St Mary's Hospital, becoming the St Mary's Wing of the Whittington Hospital on the formation of the NHS in 1948. The St Pancras Union Infirmary opened in 1869 on the

St Pancras side of Dartmouth Park Hill. This was renamed Highgate Hospital in 1930 and in 1948 it became the Highgate Wing of the Whittington Hospital. Holborn Union Infirmary opened a hospital in 1877 on a site on Archway Road. In 1921 it became the Holborn and Finsbury Hospital. This

was renamed Archway Hospital in 1930. In 1948 it became the Archway Wing of the Whittington Hospital but has now been sold for redevelopment.



Whittington Hospital seen from Magdala Avenue. The open-air bridges used for tubercular patients can be seen in the centre of the picture.

Also in Highgate were the Whittington Almshouses, opened in 1824 and run by the

Mercers Company, of which Dick WHITTINGTON was master several times. These almshouses have now moved to East Grinstead in Sussex.

The Bishop of London gave land at the top of Highgate Hill for a hermitage and its chapel, dedicated to St Michael, which existed from at least 1387. This chapel was shut in 1539 during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the land was purchased by Sir Roger CHOLMELEY, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King’s Bench, who wanted to set up a school there. Queen Elizabeth I granted him a charter to found a grammar school ‘for the most liberal education and instruction of the boys and young men’ around Highgate. He died before this could be accomplished and it was his trustees who subsequently set up a Free Grammar School in his name. This is now known as Highgate School.

A chapel was added to the school in 1576 and, as the nearest churches were some miles away, local people also used this chapel and its attached burial ground. In 1832 the chapel was replaced by St Michael’s Church on South Grove – which stands higher than any other church in London – with a parish being created in 1834. Before this, residents were in one of three Ancient Parishes: Hornsey, Islington or St Pancras. Highgate is now divided between three London Boroughs: Camden in the south-west and Islington in the south-east and Haringey in the north.



The village of Highgate has many large houses and became a favoured residential area just outside the confines of London from the 16th century, with the fresh air a welcome change from the City's smoky atmosphere. There are many fine old buildings still to be seen. One of these is Lauderdale House, which was built in 1582 for Richard and Dorcas MARTIN, who benefitted from a share of the rich cargo of Francis DRAKE's 1577 voyage. The house now hosts exhibitions, concerts and other events. Waterlow Park, the former gardens of Lauderdale House, was donated to Londoners in 1889 by Sir Sydney Hedley WATERLOW as a 'garden for the gardenless'. Sir Sydney had been Lord Mayor of London in the 1870s.

Highgate is also famous for its cemetery which was consecrated in 1839 as one of several opened to relieve the overcrowding in central London churchyards. Everyone knows that Karl MARX (German socialist) is buried there but then so too are people such as George ELIOT (novelist whose real name was Mary Ann EVANS), Michael FARADAY (scientist who discovered much about electricity), William FRIESE-GREENE (inventor and photographer) and Douglas ADAMS (author of *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*). Guided tours are available to help visitors make the most of the cemetery, with its Egyptian Avenue and Terrace Catacombs.

Also started in 1839, the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, known affectionately as the Hi Lit and Sci was founded for the promotion of useful and scientific knowledge. Institutions such as this were part of a movement for self-improvement encouraged by the discoveries fuelled by the Industrial Revolution. The Hi Lit and Sci still occupies the building it moved into in 1840 in South Grove and continues a programme of social interaction and life-long learning.

### Sources:

Focus on Highgate by Susan Lumas in *Metropolitan*, October 1997

Highgate: <https://hidden-london.com/gazetteer/highgate/>

Highgate: <https://hornseyhistorical.org.uk/brief-history-highgate/>

Highgate School: <https://www.highgateschool.org.uk/about/our-history/>

*Parish Guide to Hornsey* (LWMFHS, 2022)

*Parish Guide to Islington* (LWMFHS, 2018)

*Parish Guide to St Pancras* (LWMFHS, 2019)



## JOTTINGS

### Enfield Local Studies and Archives

Way back in 2020, Enfield Council announced the closure of Enfield Local Studies and Archives Library (ELSA) at its home at the Dugdale Centre in Enfield town. Despite the purpose-built archive storage there and the offer from the Enfield Society of £20,000 to help keep it there, the Council split the service. The archive was moved to the basement of Ridge Avenue Library and the local studies went into a back office at the Civic Centre – which was not at all ideal for anyone wishing to use ELSA.

Both collections have hopefully now found a permanent home, the local studies reunited with the archives, at Ridge Avenue Library, Winchmore Hill, Enfield N21 2RH, where they opened in late January.

The collections cover the records of the London Borough of Enfield, the former boroughs of Edmonton, Southgate and Enfield and the various institutions and organisations that came before them. There are thousands of different documents dating from 1277 to date, covering a varied assortment of materials including printed materials and books, hand-written documents, photos, maps, plans, charts, prints and drawings. Images of some records and photographs have been added onto the catalogue and more images will be added in the future. Opening days are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11am to 3pm by appointment only (no walk-ins).

To make an appointment to view the collection or research something specific, contact Enfield's Local History Librarian John Clark by telephone: 020 8132 1226, or by email: [local.history@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:local.history@enfield.gov.uk)

You can find out more following this link, which also includes access to the online catalogue: <https://www.enfield.gov.uk/services/libraries/enfield-local-studies-and-archive>



Large amounts of natural light at the new ELSA should make it much easier to look at the archives.

## **Harrow Local History Collection and Archive**

The London Borough of Harrow and Headstone Manor & Museum have made the joint decision to partially close the Harrow Local History Collection & Archive (HLHCA) and museum collections to public enquiries and in-house appointments from the period of 2 October 2023 until 2 June 2024.

The reason for this is that the research room and archive store will undergo significant changes to improve public access, the care of the collection and future preservation. It is hoped that they will then gain accreditation by The National Archives, which sets standards for managing and accessing archives.

During the period of closure, there will inevitably be disruption but HLHCA will be able to answer some enquiries. For more information, visit their website: <https://headstonemanor.org/>

## **East Surrey FHS Fair**

This fabulous virtual event was held on Saturday 27 January and LWMFHS went along. This fair has a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere as it consists of a series of rooms which people can join for a chat. Each room contained a different family history society and provided an excellent opportunity to speak to experts and help break down brick walls. Elizabeth and Karen manned our LWMFHS room and welcomed a constant stream of visitors, including quite a few members – if that was you, it was great to see you!

This event is free to attend and next year's will be on Saturday 25 January, so make a note in your diaries now.

## **London Blue Plaques for 2024**

The English Heritage London Blue Plaques scheme celebrates the link between significant figures of the past and the buildings in which they lived and worked. The scheme runs on public suggestions, the main conditions of acceptance for which are that a subject should have been deceased for at least 20 years, and that at least one building in Greater London in which they lived or worked should survive with a substantially unaltered exterior. The charity launched its 'plaques for women' campaign in 2016, encouraging the public to nominate more remarkable female figures from the past and this initiative is now bearing fruit on the streets and buildings of London. These first five were announced in January.

Irene BARCLAY (1894-1989) studied history at Bedford College, London and, following the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919, then became

the first woman to qualify as a chartered surveyor. She was a pioneer of social housing, having also been secretary of the St Pancras House Improvements Society for many years, and is commemorated at her former office in Somers Town.

Diana Jean Kinloch BECK (1900-1956) believed to be the UK's first female neurosurgeon, studied at the London School of Medicine for Women and then worked at the Royal Free Hospital and elsewhere. In 1947 she was appointed as a consultant at the Middlesex Hospital, where she ran the neurosurgical department. Her Blue Plaque is on the house where she lived at this time.

Christina BROOM (1862-1939) a photographer who published many picture postcards and who is believed to have been Britain's first female press photographer, has a Plaque at her home in Fulham. She took some 40,000 images in her 36 years of work and there are collections at many museums including the Museum of London, the National Portrait Gallery and the Imperial War Museum in London.

Adelaide Louise HALL (1901-1993) was an American-born pioneer of 'scat' jazz singing who released material over eight decades, from *Creole Love Call* recorded with Duke Ellington in 1927. She moved to London in 1938 and was one of the first black artists to broadcast regularly with the BBC. She eventually died in Charing Cross Hospital aged 92, and is commemorated at her Kensington home.

Joan Violet ROBINSON (1901-1983) was an influential economic theorist who had studied at Girton College, Cambridge and went on to write many books on her subject. She is also remembered in Kensington, where she had been born.

Further Blue Plaque recipients will be announced throughout the year.

### **The Society of Genealogists**

The Society of Genealogists has opened its doors at its new home to members of the public. Opening hours are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday plus the second and fourth Saturday of the month from 10.30am to 4.00pm. Their address is now 40 Wharf Road, London N1 7GS.

Their Research Hub encompasses their library, archive, and computers with access to online subscription sites. They are open to all members and to non-members for £20 for a day pass. However, not all of the collections are kept on-site and all collection items must be ordered at least a week in advance. To guarantee access to the material you need or to reserve a computer, please book in advance. You can find out more here: <https://www.sog.org.uk/>

## **Broomfield House**

This mansion was built in Palmers Green in 1550 for leather merchant John BROOMFIELD (see page 63 for other activities of leather merchants) and was surrounded by a formal Baroque landscaped water garden. London merchant Joseph JACKSON bought the house in 1624 and his family then lived there for over 150 years. They added a grand staircase and murals painted by Flemish artist Gerald LANSCROON. The mansion was granted English Heritage Grade II\* listing in 1950 with the gardens and stable block both being Grade II listed as sites of historical interest.

In 1903 the house and garden were sold to Southgate Urban District Council who opened the park to the public as Broomfield Park. The mansion and its museum opened in 1925 until they caught fire in 1984. Further fires in 1993, 1994 and 2019 have meant that over 80% of the original material of the building has been lost. Luckily the Lanscroom murals and other original features of the house were cut out after the second fire and have been preserved. Most are currently in storage.

The National Heritage Lottery Fund has now granted an initial £532,490 to help Enfield Council apply for a full National Lottery grant to develop the site. This would include plans to dismantle the unsafe parts of the now derelict shell of Broomfield House and to reinvigorate its garden by restoring the unique original water features, showcasing the rich heritage of the site and providing space for community activities there.

Various restoration proposals have been made over the years, none of which has come to fruition. It is to be hoped that this one is successful. You can find out more about Broomfield House and its history on its website: <http://www.broomfieldhouse.org/index.html>

## **Bruce Grove Station**

The Victorian waiting room at Bruce Grove station in Tottenham has been restored to its 1872 design using a grant from the Railway Heritage Trust. Other disused rooms at the station have been converted for community use and these also reference the station's history with hand-crafted reproduction benches and other Victorian-inspired features. The green and cream colour scheme is the original one favoured by the Great Eastern Railway, which opened the station. Bruce Grove was one of three stations (the others being at Seven Sisters and White Hart Lane) built by the Great Eastern Railway in Tottenham when they constructed this line from Bethnal Green to Edmonton. This website provides a useful history of railways of Tottenham: [https://tottenham-summerhillroad.com/early\\_railways\\_of\\_tottenham.htm](https://tottenham-summerhillroad.com/early_railways_of_tottenham.htm)

If you are researching local ancestors, Bruce Grove station is only a ten minute walk from the Haringey Archive and Local History collections at Bruce Castle Museum. You will need to book an appointment for the archive, which can be done here: <https://www.brucecastle.org/visiting-archive>. The museum, however, does not need to be booked and is open from Wednesday to Sunday, 1pm to 5pm.

### **The Finchley Society's archives**

The Finchley Society's archivist, Alison Sharpe, is giving a talk at 7.30pm on 25 April about *The Finchley Society Archives*. The Society holds thousands of local photos and artefacts which will be showcased in this talk, taking place at Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley N3 3QE. Non-members are welcome for which a contribution of £2 is requested.

You can contact the Finchley Society to find out more about them via their website here: <https://www.finchleysociety.org.uk/>



## **HARINGEY LOCAL HISTORY FAIR**

One of the Saturdays in May, but we don't know which yet!  
Check their website to find out: <https://www.brucecastle.org/>

We do know that it will be from 11am-4.30pm  
at Bruce Castle Museum, Lordship Lane, Tottenham N17 8NU

Discover more about Haringey's history and community heritage.  
You can visit the Archive search room to see special displays from its collections and talk to Archive staff to find out how to use the service and undertake research.

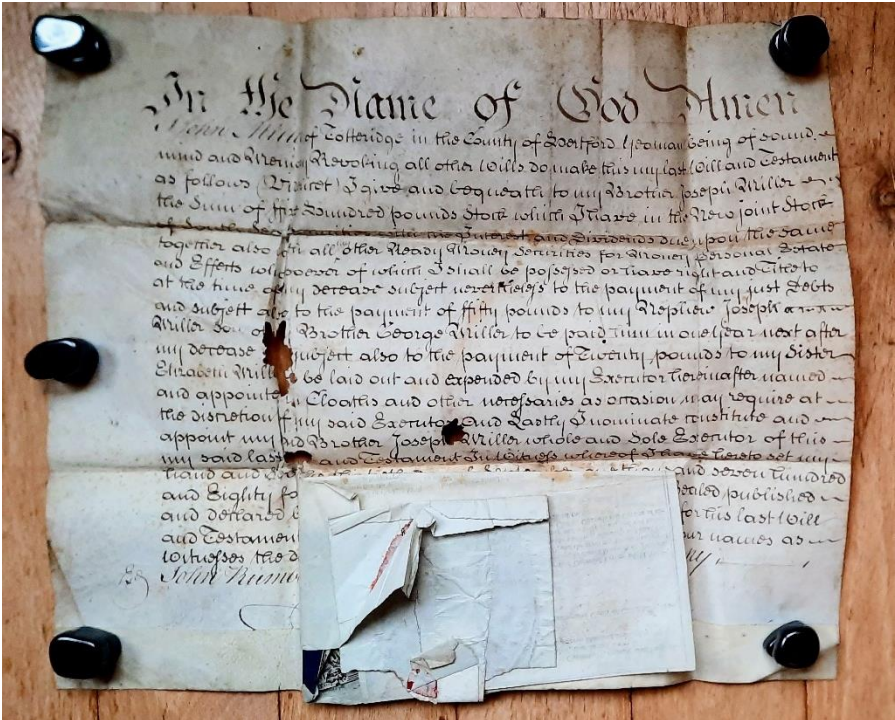
**London Westminster & Middlesex FHS** will be there!  
Email: [eventsteam@lwmfhs.org.uk](mailto:eventsteam@lwmfhs.org.uk) if you would like to help for an hour.

There is free admission to the fair  
and there will be a series of free local talks.  
The Old Kitchen will be serving teas, coffee and cake all day.

## BEGINNERS' CORNER

Further to our Beginners' Corner article on Wills and Probate, the Editors were contacted by Linda Roberts who wrote that a rather battered original copy of a Will had come into her possession which, as far as she could tell, had no connection to her family research. She thought it would be good to think that it might eventually be seen by a relative and duly sent it to us. This seemed to present the perfect opportunity to investigate a real Will.

Here it is. The parchment did not want to lie flat, hence the stones holding it down at the edges. Attached to it at the bottom is a printed page and a seal, which are obscuring the writing in this image.



The testator was John MILLER of Totteridge, who was described as a yeoman, which is defined as a farmer who owned his piece of land. The Will was written in a clear hand on parchment and was dated 30 September 1784. Probate was granted on 29 February 1789.

The burial register of St Andrew Totteridge records that ‘Mr John MILLER’, a farmer aged 78 years, was buried on 1 February 1789 so this would seem to be the testator. It looks likely that he was born in Totteridge too as John, the son of Samuel MILLER, was baptised on 23 September 1711. He is the fourth child and third son of nine children baptised at Totteridge to Samuel (who we discover from the baptism of his daughter Mary in 1713 was also a farmer) and Mary his wife.

There are a few things which are worth pointing out in older Wills such as this one. The top line of text, for instance, is often written in very large letters. You might even be able to make out that in this Will it says ‘In the Name of God Amen’. This is a very common opening for a Will, another being ‘This is the Last Will and Testament of ...’.

Another thing to notice is that the words on the right-hand side of the Will go right to the edge of the paper, and if there is any room left over a wiggly line is written to use up this space. This is so that miscreants cannot add words in here which might change the meaning of the Will.

Here is a transcription of the Will, which shows various other typical features which we will look at below.

*In the Name of God Amen.*

I John Miller of Totteridge in the County of Hertford Yeoman being of sound mind and Memory Revoking all other Wills do make this my last Will and Testament as follows (Videlicet) I give and bequeath to my Brother Joseph Miller the sum of Five Hundred pounds Stock which I have in the New joint Stock of South Sea Annuities with the Interest and Dividends due upon the same together also with all my other Ready Money Securities for Money Personal Estate and Effects whatsoever of which I shall be possessed or have right and Title to at the time of my decease subject nevertheless to the payment of my just Debts and subject also to the payment of Fifty pounds to my Nephew Joseph Miller son of my Brother George Miller to be paid him in one year next after my decease subject also to the payment of Twenty pounds to my Sister Elizabeth Miller to be laid out and expended by my Executor hereinafter named and appointed in Cloaths and other necessaries as occasion may require at the discretion of my said Executor and Lastly I nominate



constitute and appoint my said Brother Joseph Miller whole and Sole Executor of this my said last [there is a hole here - the missing word is likely to be 'Will'] and Testament In Witness whereof I have hereto set my hand and Seal the thirtieth day of September one thousand seven hundred and Eighty four John Miller x his mark Seal Signed Sealed published and declared by the said John Miller the Testator as and for his last Will and Testament in the Presence of us who have subscribed our names as Witnesses the day and year first above written. Wm Sheppey, John Rumball.

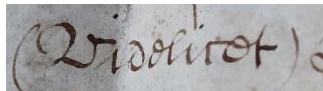
A word about transcription. Type exactly what you see. Documents should always be transcribed using the original spelling, capitalisation, abbreviations and so on. They can be interpreted afterwards. There is only one word with unusual spelling in this Will, which is 'Cloaths' – not too tricky to work out what is meant here!

It is useful to keep the ends of lines of your transcription as they are in the original because this really helps when you are trying to decipher difficult words. We could not do this in our transcription above as the font we would need to use would be too small for you to read. When transcribing, if there is anything you cannot read, put square brackets around your best guess, such as we have done above where there is a hole in the Will. Square brackets can also be used for any notes you need to add, such as [seal attached here].

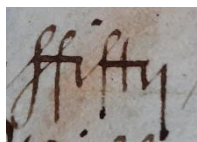
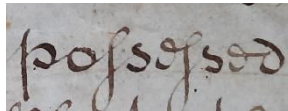
Straight after the top line of text, there will be a statement about whose Will it is. Wills are all written in the first person, as if by that person's own hand. This one starts in a typical fashion: 'I John MILLER of Totteridge in the County of Hertford Yeoman' so gives the name, place and county of residence and occupation or status. They will often continue with the testator stating that they are of sound mind, and so competent to make a Will. Knowing that this comes first will help you transcribe Wills on your own as you will know what to expect. It will also familiarise you with the script you will see later in the document.

After the introduction, some Wills will go on to mention where the testator would like to be buried but many go straight on to what they want to be done with their money and property after their death, as in this one.

The next word in John's Will is in Latin and it is also in brackets. This word is 'Videlicet' which means 'namely' and is normally abbreviated as 'viz'. As mentioned in our Beginners' Corner article on Wills in *Metropolitan* December 2023, letter formation is not as we would instantly recognise today. The 'c' looks like an 'r' and the two 'e' letters almost look like they have been written backwards.



Another letter to look out for is 's'. This can be written in two different ways: the normal one we write today and the long 's'. The word on the right is 'possessed' and shows good examples of both.



Capital letters can be very difficult to figure out but working out the rest of the word is a big help here. One point worth noting is that capital 'F' looks like two lower case 'ff', as in this word. Note also that the 't' is just a crossed straight line.

As we mentioned before, the longer you look at these texts, the easier you will find them to read. Words you found indecipherable on first reading often become clear on the second or third reading. There are many online resources to help you, such as these:

<https://www.sog.org.uk/education/hints-tips/palaeography-part-1/>

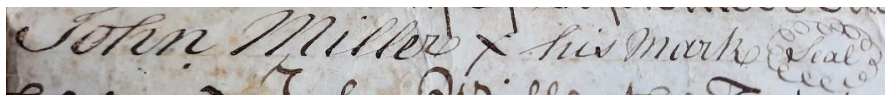
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/palaeography/>

In John's Will, he goes on to name his beneficiaries. One of the most useful things about Wills is that they usually mention family members and they just about always mention the relationship of the beneficiary to the testator. (In fact, the only time that I have seen the relationship not mentioned is one in which a very well-off elderly gentleman was leaving all of his estate to a woman who may well have been his illegitimate daughter.)

John mentions his brothers Joseph MILLER and George MILLER, sister Elizabeth MILLER and George's son, also called Joseph MILLER. The Totteridge parish registers include George born in 1716 and Elizabeth born in 1717 but there is no sign of Joseph. A later burial record indicates that a Joseph MILLER was born about 1721 but there is no baptism for him. A look at the first page of the second parish register of Totteridge (which includes baptisms, marriages and burials from 1723 to 1746) gives a possible

reason why. It states: ‘Recovered from the People their Births before my time there having been no Register kept in the time of Mr Chas Cubald’ and although seven births are recorded dating from 1719-1723, Joseph is not one of them. However, the Will and the parish registers provide mutual support that they belong to the same family. (By the way, the next page of the parish registers states: ‘This Register being torn by the Puppy of a Greyhound it was thought proper to be Recovered and to be entered in the Manner following, one Leaf containing the Transcriptions of one Year.’ – you just never know why you cannot find an ancestor!)

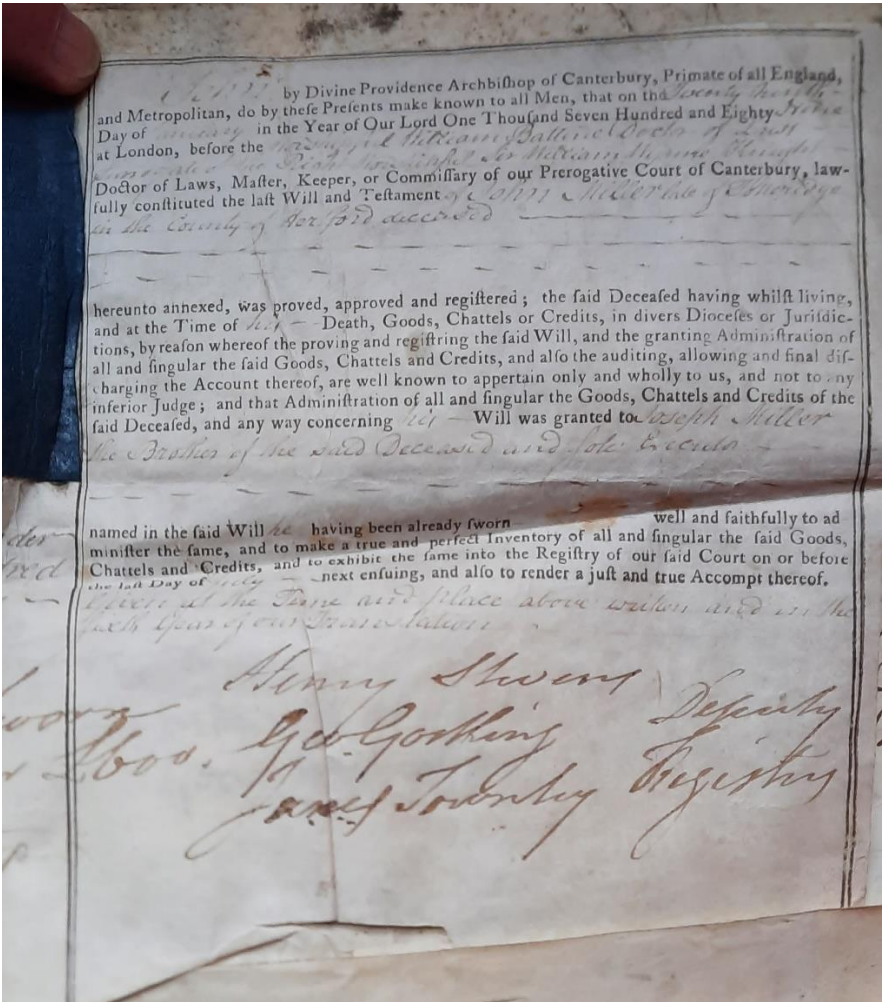
Wills finish up with the testator stating that this is indeed what they want to happen to their estate after their death and signing the Will (or making their mark as John did) in the presence of at least two witnesses.



Witnesses must be over 18 and should not be related to the testator or have any personal interest in the Will. Family friends, neighbours and local businessmen are ideal candidates. Looking again at the Totteridge parish registers, there is a William SHEPPEY who was a farmer there and could well be the first witness. No John RUMBALL is to be found in Totteridge but there are men of this name in nearby Barnet and Monken Hadley.

The piece of paper attached to this Will is the probate document, which is mainly pre-printed with space left to write the particulars of any attached Will. An image of it is on page 94 and here is the transcription:

I John by Divine Providence Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Metropolitan, do by these Presents make known to all Men, that on the Twenty Ninth Day of January in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Nine at London before the Worshipful William Battine Doctor of Laws Surrogate of the Right Worshipful Sir William Wynne Knight Doctor of Laws, Master, Keeper, or Commissary of our Prerogative Court of Canterbury, lawfully constituted the last Will and Testament of John Miller late of Totteridge hereunto annexed, was proved, approved and registered; the said Deceased having whilst living, and at the time of his Death, Goods,



Chattels or Credits, in divers Dioceses or Jurisdictions, by reason whereof the proving and registering the said Will, and the granting Administration of all and singular the said Goods, Chattels and Credits, and also the auditing, allowing and final discharging the Account thereof, are well known to appertain only and wholly to us, and not to any inferior Judge; and the Administration of all and singular the Goods, Chattels and Credits of the said Deceased, and any way concerning his Will was granted to Joseph Miller the Brother of the said Deceased and Sole Executor named in the said Will he having been already sworn well and

faithfully to administer the same, and to make a true and perfect Inventory of all and singular the said Goods, Chattels and Credits, and to exhibit the same into the Registry of our said Court on or before the last Day of July next ensuing, and also to render a just and true Accompt thereof. Given at the Time and Place above written and in the Sixth Year of our Translation.

[In margin:] Sworn under Six Hundred Pounds

[Signatures]

Again, as a legal document it is written in a certain style and with certain stock phrases which you will recognise if you transcribe many of these. 'Translation', for instance, means the year that the author became a Archbishop of Canterbury. The printed section of this document uses the long 's' throughout except where 's' occurs at the end of a word.

Copies of Wills such as this one which were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury before 1858 can be downloaded for free from The National Archives' website. John's Will appears there written word for word with the exact spelling, albeit in a less careful hand, but this is useful as a double check for the original. It is possible to confirm, for instance, that the word missing due to a hole in the document is, indeed, 'Will'. Under the copy of the Will is a shortened version of the probate document.

It is a privilege to be able to investigate an original Will such as John's, so thank you very much to Linda for sending it to us. And it is useful to us family historians to be able to compare it to the copy version at The National Archives.

**Sources:**

St Andrew Totteridge parish registers on [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

The National Archives at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

## **Have You Changed Your Email Address?**

Please make sure you let Sylvia know by emailing your new address to:

[membership@lwmfhs.org](mailto:membership@lwmfhs.org)

## **MOLLY J CROWTHER née VARNAM: 1909-2006**

By Janet Hewitt Winch. Member No. 7643

Curiosity getting the better of me as usual, not to mention miserable cold and wet weather, prompted me to take a look at the life of our delightful and much-loved teacher at E.P. Collier School in Reading, Berkshire, Mrs M. J.



E.P. Collier School, Swansea Road,  
Reading.

CROWTHER. Having access to not only public records available on-line, I was also able to look at family history research sites to which I have subscriptions. My researches found the following:

Molly Joan VARNAM was born on 29 May 1909 in Holloway, London to parents Charles and Ethel Rosina VARNAM. Charles VARNAM aged 33 of 108 Savernake Road, Hampstead, had married Ethel Rosina NEWTON aged 24 of 73 Cambridge Mansions, Battersea on 18 August 1902 at St Stephen's Church, Battersea. Charles' father was Thomas VARNAM a farmer and Ethel Rosina's father was Frank NEWTON, a schoolmaster.

Ethel Rosina NEWTON was found on the 1901 census living with her sister Lilian and grandparents Henry and Sarah FRAMPTON at 32 The Green, Marlborough, Wiltshire. Ethel is aged 22 and her occupation is a teacher but at which school it is not known. Her parents can be seen on the 1881 census returns, which show Frank NEWTON aged 26, with his wife Mary A. (possibly also known as Marianne), living at Trinity School, Heresa Road, Ramsgate, Kent. They were married on 19 December 1875 at St Philip, Battersea, Frank was aged 22 and gave his occupation as a schoolmaster and Mary Ann HOLLINS was aged 23, who gave her profession as schoolmistress. One can presume from this that Molly's career was most probably influenced by her maternal grandparents and later, her mother.

Molly had an older brother, Clifford Paul, born on 4 September 1905 also in Holloway, London. He was baptised on 22 October 1905 at St Luke's, West Holloway. At this time, the family were living at 9 Parkhurst Road and

Charles VARNAM's occupation was a chemist. The 1911 census shows Molly Joan aged 1, Clifford Paul aged 5, with Charles and Ethel living at 40 Hillmarton Road, Holloway. Charles' occupation is a commercial photographer and he states he was born Derbyshire.

Looking at various entries in the London Electoral Registers (not all years yet transcribed), in 1928 the family are living at 426 Camden Road, Islington although Molly is not included as she has not yet reached 21. Clifford Paul was registered at this address until 1928 when he married Ida E. EGAN in Islington.

Molly's mother Ethel Rosina died aged 52 on 3 August 1930 at the Camden Road address. Her Probate dated 25 November that year states that she left her estate of £226.16s.5d to Alfred Ernest GRANT, a photographer. Research into Alfred Ernest GRANT found he was a lodger/boarder with the VARNAM family at 40 Hillmarton Road, Holloway from c1913 until 1954 during which time, of course, the family had moved away. One poses the question as to why Ethel Rosina left her money to Alfred rather than her husband or children. Had her relationship with Charles deteriorated over time?

A Google search for Molly J. VARNAM produced only one result, that of the Oxford University Exam Results for 1930. It appears she graduated from Kings College, Oxford with a degree in English. However, as her mother had just died she returned to the family home and is listed as living with her father at the Camden Road address until 1935, although this was more accurately 1934 as Electoral submission forms are completed for the forthcoming year. However, Electoral Registers list her in 1932 as living at 63 Park Road, Kempston, Bedfordshire and in 1933 living at 32 Cardington Road, Bedford. It is possible she had taken a teaching post in the area at this time and living in temporary accommodation whilst also retaining her place at the family home in Camden Road, London. Presumably during this time she applied for a job and secured one in Reading as it was there in the third quarter of 1935 she married Albert W. CROWTHER. He was born on 3 August 1911 in Edmonton, London.

Scant Army records list Albert William CROWTHER as serving in the Royal Artillery during the First World War, his regimental number was 194429 and he was a T/Captain. I think this means a 'Temporary Captain' as I then found

an entry in the *Gazette* for him in 1946 referring to him as a 'Temporary Major'. He was mentioned in despatches as having served time in Italy and was discharged from the Army on 4 July 1941 - maybe through injury. By finding this later entry it would indicate he could have re-joined the Royal Artillery. By Googling Albert William CROWTHER, I found an entry in a supplement to the *London Gazette* dated 29 July 1941 merely listing his name (with others) and regimental number but no other details. A list published in the *Supplement to the London Gazette* dated 23 May 1946 confirms he was a Temporary Captain.

Charles VARNAM died on 23 November 1946 aged 78 at 426 Camden Road, Islington. His Will and Probate show his occupation as a commercial photographer and he left his estate to his son, Clifford Paul, a commercial photographer in the amount of £2,818.7s.6d. Perhaps he thought that as Molly was married (and also a female) she was not in need of part of his estate although, of course, there could have been other reasons.

The 1939 Register lists Molly J. Crowther, born 29 May 1909, occupation schoolteacher, living at The Osborne View Hotel, Fareham, Hampshire.

Molly and Albert lived at 170 Kidmore Road, Caversham for the majority of their married life. I remember Susan CROCKER and myself deciding to pay her a visit one evening after school during the summertime and turning up, unannounced on her doorstep. She made us feel incredibly welcome, invited us in and produced some liqueur chocolates which (at the time) I found truly revolting and wondered why anyone could actually enjoy something so awful. Susan CROCKER enjoyed hers! Interestingly, Molly had changed out of her smart work suit and wore a summer blouse and full skirt and her hair was hanging loose, a change to see her in such casual attire, but she still looked immaculate.

The Electoral Registers for 2002 show Molly Joan and Albert W. CROWTHER living at 17 Church Road, Reading, which I think is a small terraced house, so presumably they 'down-sized' to a smaller property for their remaining years. However, Albert William CROWTHER died in the last quarter of 2003 and is registered in Reading. Molly is still shown living at this address until 2005. Her death occurred in October 2006 aged 96 and she is registered in Aylesbury. Maybe she had spent her final year in a nursing home or went to live with family. Although she and Albert had no



children of their own, her brother Clifford and his wife had two daughters, who were born in the 1930s.



Teachers at E P Collier School, c1961.  
Mrs Crowther is in the front row on the left.

What a pity my curiosity hadn't kicked in 10 years ago (although at the time the 1911 census details weren't available on-line and which were to provide invaluable information to work from). It would have been a privilege to have visited her at Church Road, just to let her know what a wonderful influence she had been on not only my life, but all those of us who were taught by her and how her interest, enthusiasm, encouragement and belief in us has shaped our lives. A truly wonderful lady in every respect.



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See inside front cover for address.

## WEBSITE NEWS

### **Transcript – for handwritten documents**

If you have any handwritten documents which are difficult to read, such as historic wills, letters, maybe even images of gravestones, then this app may very well help you.

In Transcript, the screen is divided into two with the upper half showing an image of whatever you are working on and the lower half being where you can transcribe it. Images can be loaded from your computer or any other media and Transcript then allows you to zoom in or out and change the brightness level to help you investigate the text. You can start the top screen at the line of text you are working on so you don't lose your place. Transcript does not have any Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology so will not try and work out what your document says for you, just allows you to manipulate your image to help you work out what it says yourself.

Transcript is a transcription assistant for Windows in particular and may not work so well with other operating systems. It is free for personal use. Transcript version 2.6.0 was created in 2018 although a beta version from 2022 is available via their Facebook page or on their website here: <https://www.jacobboerema.nl/en/Freeware.htm>

### **Online OCR – for printed documents**

This will give you an automatic online transcription of text, rather than handwriting, which can be uploaded from a PDF document or a scanned image. OCR stands for optical character recognition and it is a way to create a searchable text document from a printed book or suchlike. If you have looked for articles in historic newspapers collections online, you may have noticed that the little thumbnail which comes up in the list sometimes includes odd characters or spellings and this is due to the text having been scanned by OCR. Despite the occasional anomaly, this is much faster than having to type whatever it is yourself, even if you then might want to read through to double check the results.

With this website, you just upload your PDF or image, select which language it is in and the format you would like it to be produced in (which can be a Microsoft Word docx, Excel or plain text file) and press the convert button. This gives you a searchable file which can then perhaps be uploaded to your family tree. This website is free to use and allows you to convert five files per hour without having to even register and can be found here: <https://www.onlineocr.net/>

Please set out your *Help!* request as clearly and succinctly as possible.

All surnames should be in CAPITALS.

Members may have one free entry per journal. There is a £3 charge for each

subsequent entry and for all entries from non-members. Don't forget to include your contact details and your membership number.



## SAVAGE

My Great Grandma was Elizabeth SAVAGE. She married Thomas Frederick Toms HAYWARD in 1896 at St Martin-in-the-Fields, when she was stated to be aged 19 and her father Edward Savage, Labourer. The 1939 Register gives her date of birth as 26 July 1877.

I cannot find birth registration or any census prior to her 1896 marriage. All later censuses give her birthplace as Westminster. Her sister Alice Savage is living with Elizabeth and Thomas in the 1911 census returns, born about 1880, also in Westminster.

Possible other siblings are Alf, Sarah and Kate. Their mother may have been Jewish – the name Selina STEINBERG floats around in family lore but I can't find her either.

***Karen Boudreau of Seattle, Washington, Member No. 8490***

Note: Well Elizabeth is certainly not making herself obvious in the records and we could not find anything before 1896 for her either. However, in looking for her sister Alice, we found the baptism of a Rosetta Alice SAVAGE, daughter of Edmund John and Elizabeth SAVAGE, carpenter of 1 Cardigan Street, Islington. This took place at St Philip the Evangelist, Arlington Square, Islington on 17 September 1879. Her birth date is given as 1 August 1879. Also baptised on this day was her sister Emma Eliza, whose date of birth is given as 25 July 1877 - just one day out from the one Elizabeth gave in the 1939 Register.

Of course Islington is not Westminster and a carpenter is not a labourer but the family might be worth a further look. Edmund John SAVAGE had married Elizabeth BISHOP in 1871 in Bromley, Middlesex and the couple can be followed through the censuses. He appears variously as Edmund or Edward and daughter Rosetta Alice appearing as Mary in 1881 and Sarah A in 1891!

Looking in FreeBMD, there is no birth for Elizabeth or Alice SAVAGE registered in Westminster from 1870-1897 nor, indeed, for a Sarah or a Kate.

We also could not find anything much about Selina STEINBERG but if you have Jewish ancestry, it will show up on a DNA test, so that might be a way forward with that bit of family lore.

## **JAMES LAPORT**

I am trying to find a James LAPORT. He lived in 122 Drury Lane as I have his Sun insurance £100 for goods insured. Then I found his son JOHN LAPORT, born 1775 in St Giles-in-the-Field, his mother was Mary but not sure if they were married. I found Apprenticeship papers for JOHN in 1790 where it states his father JAMES a button maker - deceased.

There is a JAMES LAPORT in Shug Lane paying rates in 1786 and 1787, but not sure if he is mine.

*Maureen Farrer, Member No. 8488*

Note: The Baptism Register of St Giles-in-the-Fields on Ancestry UK states that 'John Thomas LAPORT, son of James and Mary' was baptised on 22 October 1775. Because both parents are named, this will mean that they were married. A child of unmarried parents will only have its mother mentioned at this date.

A John LAPORT aged 48 of 18 Red Lion Street, Spitalfields, was buried at St Botolph Bishopsgate on 27 January 1824. This would give a birth date of about 1776 and would seem a good candidate to be the same man, given the dearth of other people with this name.

His second (at least!) marriage is recorded in the same church. John LAPORT, widower of Christ Church, Spitalfields married Catherine MILLINGTON spinster of the parish of St Botolph Bishopsgate on 22 February 1806 at St Botolph Bishopsgate by License. The baptism of their first son, Alexander Thomas LAPORT at Christ Church in 1807 shows that his father John was a salesman of Red Lion Street.

When Alexander was apprenticed in 1834 (also to a Vintner), he was admitted because of the Patrimony of his father, who had been admitted on 3 September in the 37th year of the reign of George the Third, so 1797. This confirms the details which you found about John. It might be

worth checking the Vintners' archive, which is at LMA, Ref: CLC/L/VA and includes various papers which might be relevant.

Findmypast has a transcript of a marriage license for a John LA PORT to a Mary Ann SMITH dated 15 January 1800. The original of this is at the Society of Genealogists, so it might be worth checking this too.

There are many records of this family going forwards (sometimes with the name spelled LAPORTE) with insurance documents for both John and his widow Catherine together with John's Will showing that the family had several properties and were financially well off. It would seem likely that James or other members of the family would have left a Will too so you may just have to collect all mentions of the name and then try and sort them into families.

LAPORT is a French name so it must be worth consulting French Huguenot records. You can find out more about these records here: <https://www.huguenotsociety.org.uk/>



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Have you looked at the parish information under the Research tab?

Here you will find the brief history, plans and church photographs of our Middlesex and Westminster parishes.

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## SURNAME INTERESTS

The research interests listed here were submitted by members between December and mid February.

Each quarter's members' interests are put onto the website just before the journal is published. If you would like to contact a member whose interests are listed, please go <https://lwfmfs.org/surname-interests/> In the search box, type the name you are interested in and a list of entries will appear if a match is found. Click Contact and this brings up an email for you to fill in.

Interests shown are from members: 4992; 8218; 8488; 8490; 8491

Name	Period	County	Parish / Area	Mem.No.
<b>BAINES</b>	1750-1850	LEI	Leicester	4992
<b>BAINES</b>	1840-1950	SRY	Carshalton	4992
<b>BULL</b>	1750-1850	LEI	Loughborough	4992
<b>BURNELL</b>	18c and 19c	DEV	Chudleigh	8218
<b>CAWSEY</b>	18c and 19c	DEV	Chudleigh	8218
<b>COOKE</b>	1600-1920	MDX	St George in the East	8491
<b>CULLEN</b>	1740-1810	MDX	Clerkenwell, St James	8491
<b>CULLEN</b>	1690-1820	LND	Holborn, St Andrew	8491
<b>CULLIN</b>	1690-1820	LND	Holborn, St Andrew	8491
<b>CUNNINGHAM</b>	Early 19c	DUR	South Shields	8218
<b>DAVIS</b>	1851-1935	MDX	St Luke	8490
<b>DOWDING</b>	1780-1850	LND	St Anne's Limehouse	8491
<b>FARRER</b>	1781	MDX	Westminster, Drury Ln.	8488
<b>FULLICK</b>	All	All	All	8491
<b>GIBBS</b>	18c and 19c	DEV	Chudleigh	8218
<b>GODFREY</b>	Early 19c	DUR	Westoe	8218
<b>GOODBARNE</b>	1750-1850	LIN	Tetford	4992
<b>GREGORY</b>	1878	MDX	Holborn	8490
<b>GRIMES</b>	1800-1900	LND	St Ann Blackfriars	8491
<b>HAYWARD</b>	1878	MDX	Holborn	8490
<b>KNIGHT</b>	pre 1851	MDX	St James, Westminster	8490
<b>LAPORT</b>	1781	MDX	Westminster, Drury Ln.	8488
<b>LITTLE</b>	1500-1750	CUL	Kirk Andrew-on-Esk	8491
<b>LITTLE</b>	1740-1960	SRY	Camberwell	8491
<b>LITTLE</b>	1800-1960	SRY	Lambeth	8491
<b>MAYHEW</b>	1800-1880	LND	St Andrew by the Wardrobe	8491
<b>MOFFIT</b>	Early 19c	DUR	South Shields	8218
<b>REVELL</b>	pre 1841	MDX	St James, Westminster	8490
<b>RICE JONES</b>	1830-1900	MDX	Any	4992

<b>SAVAGE</b>	1840	MDX	Islington, Westminster	8490
<b>SOULBY</b>	1700-1800	LIN	Edlington/Fulletby	4992
<b>THOROLD</b>	1600-1800	LIN	Cranwell/Marston	4992
<b>THOROLD</b>	1700-1750	MDX	Westminster	4992
<b>TOMS</b>	1873-1891	MDX	St James, Clerkenwell	8490
<b>WALLIS</b>	1862-1928	MDX	Clerkenwell, Islington	8490
<b>WENLOCK</b>	1600-1820	LND	St Dunstan in the West	8491
<b>WHITTENBURY</b>	1795-1900	MDX	Stepney, St George in the East	8491
<b>WILSON</b>	1780-1850	LIN	Alford	4992
<b>WOOD</b>	1700-1850	LIN	South Thoresby	4992
<b>WRIGHT</b>	1750-1900	CAM	Cambridge	4992

These are the Chapman codes for the English counties which are a helpful shortcut universally used by genealogists:

<b>ENG</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>HRT</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>SAL</b>	Shropshire
<b>BDF</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>HUN</b>	Huntingdonshire	<b>SFK</b>	Suffolk
<b>BKM</b>	Buckinghamshire	<b>IOM</b>	Isle of Man	<b>SOM</b>	Somerset
<b>BRK</b>	Berkshire	<b>IOW</b>	Isle of Wight	<b>SRY</b>	Surrey
<b>CAM</b>	Cambridge	<b>KEN</b>	Kent	<b>SSX</b>	Sussex
<b>CHS</b>	Cheshire	<b>LAN</b>	Lancashire	<b>STS</b>	Staffordshire
<b>CON</b>	Cornwall	<b>LEI</b>	Leicestershire	<b>WAR</b>	Warwickshire
<b>CUL</b>	Cumberland	<b>LIN</b>	Lincoln	<b>WES</b>	Westmoreland
<b>DBY</b>	Derbyshire	<b>LND</b>	London	<b>WIL</b>	Wiltshire
<b>DEV</b>	Devon	<b>MDX</b>	Middlesex	<b>WOR</b>	Worcester
<b>DOR</b>	Dorset	<b>NBL</b>	Northumberland	<b>YKS</b>	Yorkshire
<b>DUR</b>	Durham	<b>NFK</b>	Norfolk	<b>ERY</b>	Yks East Riding
<b>ESS</b>	Essex	<b>NTH</b>	Northamptonshire	<b>NRY</b>	Yks North Riding
<b>GLS</b>	Gloucestershire	<b>NTT</b>	Nottinghamshire	<b>WRY</b>	Yks West Riding
<b>HAM</b>	Hampshire	<b>OXF</b>	Oxfordshire		
<b>HEF</b>	Herefordshire	<b>RUT</b>	Rutland		

## SPECIAL INTERESTS

8490 My great great grandmother Elizabeth **SAVAGE** born 1877 Westminster  
 8491 **FULLICK**: Unofficial One-Name Study

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the new members, number 8472 – 8493 who have joined the Society over the past few months and wish them well with their research.

## **BRANCH LINES: THE PEARSONS OF PIDDINGTON, NORTHANTS**

By Sheila Clarke, Member No. 7900

I've been thinking a lot about the East End recently. My paternal grandparents were both born there, one in Hackney the other in Dalston and I have happy memories of my childhood in Bethnal Green; the market where I held a large snake, wallabies in Victoria Park and the stocks I was allowed to sit in as a special treat. But it was not to last. Uprooted from her close-knit family my mother grew increasingly homesick and so we left the place I loved and returned to the Welsh countryside, but I remained a city girl and a Londoner at heart.

I have always felt a deep affection for London and genealogical research showed why that might be. Knowing little of my family origins I was delighted to discover links to the East End, the place that had meant so much to me. Is it too fanciful to claim London is in my blood? I don't think so - those who went before made choices that would ultimately affect us in any number of ways. In the case of my grandmother's ancestors it was the decision to leave Northamptonshire for London in the first half of the 19th century.

The village of Piddington is located close to the Buckinghamshire border, its one claim to fame being the Roman villa discovered in 1781. It must have caused quite a stir among the four hundred or so inhabitants but the largely rural community would also have had more pressing things on its mind. Life was becoming increasingly challenging for the average villager following the passing of the 1773 Land Enclosure Act. This controversial legislation took away the ancient right to use common land for animal grazing and provision of food, fuel and timber, and the remaining land fell into the hands of a wealthy few with devastating results. Unable to feed their animals and without essential supplies villagers found themselves either evicted or forced to relocate to the towns and cities in search of work. 'Before enclosure the cottager was a labourer with land, and after enclosure he was a labourer without land ...' wrote J.L. and Barbara Hammond. E.P. Thompson goes further, referring to the poor becoming 'strangers in their own land', while fellow historian Joseph R Stromberg strongly condemns the attitude of those who took advantage of the situation and points out the lasting effects on the country as a whole: 'The political dominance of landowners determined the



course of enclosure ... it was their power in Parliament and as local justices of the peace that enabled them to redistribute the land in their own favor ... It was not surprising that the great landowners awarded themselves the best land and the most of it, thereby making England a classic land of great, well-kept estates with a small marginal peasantry and a large class of rural wage labourers.'



St John the Baptist Church, Piddington.

My 2x great grandfather Richard Adderson PEARSON, was born in Piddington in 1801, the eldest son of John PEARSON and Sarah, née ADDERSON. John PEARSONs can be found there from the early 17th century, but I have yet to establish Richard's father's ancestry for certain. Was he John PEARSON baker and shopkeeper, who appears in a 1792 insurance document, or perhaps the one selling 'part of his household furniture; consisting of bedthings ... feather beds; linen; drawers, tables and chairs; brass and pewter; brewing copper, tubs and calks' plus a road mare in foal, one filley and a fat hog?'

Things are more definite where Richard is concerned: in 1822 he married Hannah PINKARD, a lace maker from Stoke Goldington, Bucks., and their first child, also named Richard, was born four years later followed by Mary Ann (1838), William (1840), Hannah (1844), and James (1850). By 1841 Richard, Hannah and their young family had moved to London and settled in Islington, consolidating my links to the City and ultimately the East End.

Llewelyn the Last was not impressed: the year was 1277, and in London to pay homage to the King the Welsh prince and his barons were quartered in Islington where they found little to their liking and complained about the wine, ale, and bread and of a shortage of milk, which was apparently ‘the principal article of their consumption.’ The locals also incurred displeasure by staring at the visitors’ unfamiliar dress and following them when they ventured out. ‘We will never visit Islington again except as conquerors,’ vowed the Welsh, and one can’t help thinking if they could threaten invasion over a few relatively minor inconveniences King Edward may have had a point when he described them as troublesome.

It is to be hoped Islingtonians were more accustomed to change by the time the Pearsons arrived. The Regents Canal and Great North Road were both begun in 1812 and by the end of the century much of Islington had become a residential suburb of elegant squares and busy shopping centres, with new housing catering for the workers who poured into the City each day. London had always acted as a magnet - after all, were the very streets not paved with gold? The reality of course was somewhat different, but that did nothing to stop the constant influx of those in search of a better life.

So why would the PEARSONs have chosen this particular area of London? It’s tempting to think they may have been influenced by conditions back home. Piddington had been enclosed in 1783, so Richard would not have seen the medieval open fields being replaced by a linear landscape of hedges and roads. However, the resultant poverty would have been only too evident, and he must have been aware of the desperate migration and perhaps even known a fellow villager who had settled in Islington.

Although I’ve learned never to speculate where genealogy is concerned, there is no doubt the North London area had the reputation as a haven for anyone who felt they’d had a raw deal. The history of Islington radicalism goes back to the ‘great uprising’ of 1381 when Wat TYLER led the Peasants’ Revolt against King Richard’s tax increases, followed in the 16th century by the movements of Lollards and Chartists. Thomas MAN wrote *The Rights of Man* there and in 1816 it was the scene of the mass meeting that resulted in the Spa Fields riots. Later LENIN and TROTSKY would meet in the Angel Pub to plan the overthrow of Tsar Alexander and the establishment of communism in Russia.

Geography was a major factor: situated just outside the City the area was not subject to the same law and order and Clerkenwell Green in particular became an important rallying point for protest and demonstration. In 1836 it was where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were welcomed on their return from exile, and in 1848 served as a meeting point for the Chartists' largest ever march. Copenhagen Fields (now Caledonian Park) was also used for mass gatherings and had been the site of protest at the Martyrs' transportation in 1834, and a huge rally in support of Hungarian Lajos KOSSUTH, exiled leader of a revolt against monarchies, took place there in 1851. Such was the area's reputation that when a local carpenter visited Russia for an International Labour Organisation meeting he was asked by LENIN why all the radicals came from Islington.

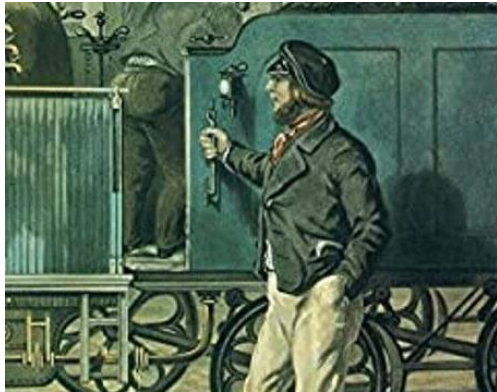
Much of this activity would have been witnessed by the PEARSONs who in 1841 were at Hornsea Back Cottages, St Mary Islington East. Richard was a general dealer, which could have been anything from a hawker to a small shopkeeper. By 1851 the family had moved to West Street, and to Vittoria Street ten years later, when Richard is described as a wood, coal and coke dealer.

By 1861 second son, my grandfather William Adderson PEARSON, was married to Mary Ann DOBSON the daughter of a local cobbler. In 1867 they were living at 5 Henry Place when four of their children – William (1860), Richard (1862), Charles (1863) and Mary Ann (1865) were christened at St Silas Church, Pentonville. Five years later daughter Emma Jane, my grandmother, would be baptised at the same church despite being the first of her siblings to have been born in the East End. It would seem the couple were keen to maintain ties to the area of North London where William's parents had settled some fifty years earlier.

William and Mary Ann left Islington for the East End sometime between 1867 and the birth of Emma Jane three years later. We know this because their address is given as Blomfield Street, North Dalston at her christening in 1870. (There is evidence of William working in Hackney in 1865 but more of that later).

Records for Dalston – originally 'Derlestone' – go back to 1294, but what finally put this part of the East End on the map was the arrival of the railways. Starting life as one of London's many hamlets, Dalston had seen major

development throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and by the 1860s was



A Victorian railway worker.

firmly established as part of suburbia, with networks of terraced housing built to accommodate the workers who had flocked to the East End, many of them seeking employment on the burgeoning railways. Known as a good employer, the railway industry was among the first to offer workers' pensions and sick pay, along with housing and community facilities. Pay may not have been that good but

railway workers were well regarded and the combination of a secure job with benefits would have made it a good choice for anyone with a growing family to support.

In 1871 William was a ticket inspector on the North London Railway. Originally the East and West India Docks & Birmingham Junction Railway it was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1846 and by the autumn of 1850 trains were running from Bow Junction to Islington, with further expansion before the end of the year. 1865 saw the opening of an extension from Dalston Junction to Broad Street, the main terminus.

The advent of rail travel had a huge impact on Victorian society. Offered the chance to travel more easily many ventured beyond their home environment for the first time. Families were brought together, holiday destinations became popular, while business and commerce also ran more smoothly. But this modern wonder did not come without risk and in 1864 a North London Railway carriage became the scene of the first murder on a British train when Thomas BRIGGS, a seventy-year-old banker travelling on the 9.50pm from Fenchurch Street to Chalk Farm, was robbed and thrown from the train by Franz MULLER, a German tailor. The investigation led detectives to New York where MULLER was arrested and extradited to face trial at the Old Bailey. Despite the intervention of the future Kaiser, who tried to delay the case, MULLER was hanged outside Newgate Prison. The case naturally caused much public alarm and led to the creation of carriages with side corridors and the installation of communication cords.

I am grateful to the website ‘Railwaymen and Women of the North London Railway’ for enabling me to see William’s employment record from his appointment in September 1865 to retirement forty-three years later. Starting as a porter he progressed to ticket inspector, foreman porter and finally Head Guard. Two mishaps are detailed – an unspecified injury in 1867 ‘whilst attempting to close a carriage door of the ... train whilst in motion,’ and a sprained foot in 1893. In 1908 he was awarded a weekly good conduct retiring allowance of 10s 6d. Sons Richard and Charles followed their father onto the North London Railway, while eldest son William was also involved with transport, first as a coachman in Downs Park Road and later as a North Metropolitan Tramway driver. Both Richard and Charles started their working lives aged fourteen, Richard as a train book boy, which involved recording the arrival and departure of trains, and eventually Inspector at Poplar Station. Charles held a variety of posts, starting as a ticket sorter at Camden Town and finishing as Senior Booking Clerk, Dalton.

William Adderson PEARSON died at the home of his daughter in Brantham, Suffolk, in 1918. His headstone in the churchyard of St Michael the Archangel shows wife Mary Ann predeceased him by ten years. In 1896 daughter Emma Jane had married William Hawke HEADLAND, another Hackney railway worker, bringing together two branches of my family with connections to both the railways and the East End. So it would seem that the area ‘East of the Aldgate Pump’ was always destined to have a special place in my heart.

### Sources:

BBC The Rural Exodus – British History in Depth: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/exodus>

British History Online: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk>

E. P. Thompson is quoted in ‘A Tribute to E. P. Thompson, Chronicler of the Dispossessed’ by Katherine Van Wezel Stone, published in *The Georgetown Law Journal* (WordPress.com, 1994) available on: <https://legalform.files.wordpress.com>

Joseph R. Stromberg, Library Historian, is quoted on the University of Delaware website: <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki>>

Islington Life: <https://islingtonlife.london>

pastinthepresent.net: <https://pastinthepresent.net>

Railwaymen and Women of the North London Railway: <https://railwaymen-nlr.org.uk>

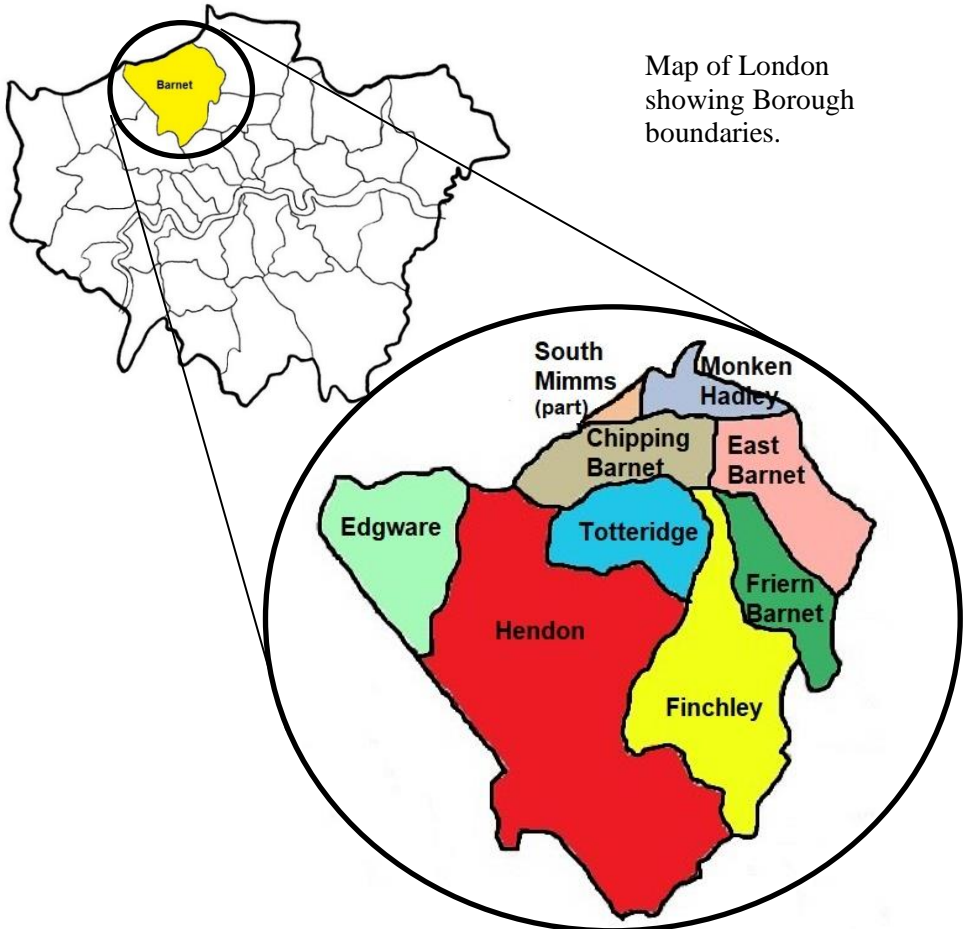
The North London Railway Historical Society: <https://www.nlrhs.org.uk/history>

*The Village Labourer 1760-1832. A Study in the Government of England Before the Reform Bill* by J.L. and Barbara Hammond (Longmans Green & Co, 1911)

Welsh Sketches by Ernest Sylvanus Appleyard: <https://books.google.co.uk>books>

## ANCESTORS IN WHAT IS NOW THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET

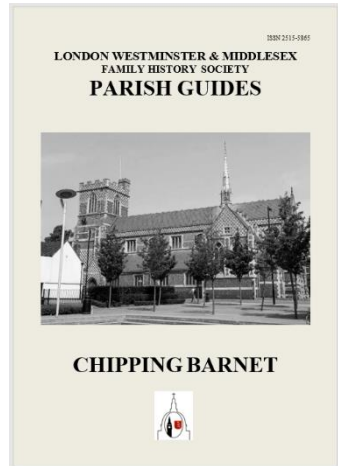
Before 1965 this area was divided into five Urban Districts: Barnet, East Barnet, Friern Barnet, Finchley and Hendon, which in turn were called Local Government Districts from 1894-1955. However, since Tudor times, this area was covered by the Ancient Middlesex Parishes of Friern Barnet, Edgware, Finchley, Hendon, Monken Hadley plus South Mimms (most of which has now been transferred to Hertfordshire) together with the Hertfordshire parishes of Chipping Barnet, East Barnet and Totteridge.



Map of London showing Borough boundaries.

Our Parish Guides are based on these Ancient Parishes, although the information they contain goes from the earliest known records available right up to date. With the publication in March 2024 of Chipping Barnet, we now have the whole of the London Borough of Barnet covered.

Although the church of St John the Baptist has its origins in one built around 1250, it was a chapel of ease to St Mary's Church at East Barnet and only became a separate parish in 1866. The manor of Barnet included both Chipping and East Barnet and was owned by the Abbey of St Albans. The Abbey was the centre of the powerful Liberty of St Albans, which had been privilege of being able to run its own affairs, almost as a separate country. These benefits were claimed to have been granted by King Offa of Mercia, when he founded the Abbey in 793.



In 1974 the Liberty, also known as Cashio Hundred, was absorbed into Hertfordshire and this is why older records of Barnet are kept at Hertfordshire Local Studies and Archives at the Register Office Block, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8EJ. Later records, those pertaining to the London Borough of Barnet, may be at Barnet Local Studies & Archives at The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4BQ.

For those researching ancestors in Chipping Barnet, there is a further complication. Barnet town actually straddles three parishes, with the west side of the High Street north of the church belonging to South Mimms (and known as Mimms Side), the east side being in Monken Hadley and only the part around and south of the church and directly east of it is in Chipping Barnet parish. South Mimms and Monken Hadley were in Middlesex, so archives from these areas are more likely to be at London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, Clerkenwell, London EC1R 0HB.

Of course, we point out which relevant records you can find at which archives in our Parish Guide. You can get this from the shop link on our website here: <https://lwmfhs.org/shop-links/>

## FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

**Virtual Branch** – Talks are on the second Thursday of the month. ‘Doors’ open at 7.45 for an 8pm start. To attend, you have to initially register an interest by emailing: [virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org](mailto:virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org) (This is once only - you do not need to register for each talk). The details of each Zoom meeting will then be emailed to you a few days prior to the event as well as being announced in *Metropolitan*, on our website and Facebook page.

The talk will be recorded (with the speaker’s permission) and reshown the following morning at 10am so that members who live abroad or those who can’t make the live event can watch it at a hopefully more convenient time.

Branch Contact: Clare Pollitt, Email: [virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org](mailto:virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org)

14 March

*Understanding your Old Photos* by Stephen Gill.

When you look at an old photo of yours how long do you actually look at it for? A few seconds or a couple of minutes at the most. When restoring a photo I am looking at it for up to a couple of hours and get to see all sorts of details within the picture. If you can ‘see’ those details to them maybe you’ll be able to understand your own family history better and get more information from the photos than you ever thought possible.

11 April

*The Walloons and the Huguenots* by Sandra Robinson

What were their Protestant beliefs? Why were these people persecuted in the Spanish Netherlands and France from 16th centuries? This illustrated talk comes complete with heroes, villains and the invention of our word ‘refugee’. Understanding their background will help your research into and understanding of their lives and records in the British Isles.

9 May

*The Ill, the Impoverished, the Illegitimate and the Insane: researching our marginalised ancestors* by Janet Few. The many and fascinating records of the workhouse, hospitals, asylums and the overseers of the poor will be explained.

13 June

*Victorian Life Upstairs and Downstairs* by Dr Judith Hill. In the 19th century there was a vast increase in the number of domestic servants. We will look in detail at the operation of a Victorian household.



**Rayners Lane Branch** – Talks are on the first Monday of the month unless that is a Bank Holiday, in which case the meeting will be on the second Monday. Doors open at 1pm for a 1.30pm start at Roxeth Community Church, Coles Crescent, South Harrow, Middlesex HA2 0TN.

Branch Contact: Tony Allen, Email: [raynerslanebranch@lwmfhs.org](mailto:raynerslanebranch@lwmfhs.org)

- 4 March            *Turning your tree into a tale* by Kathy Chater  
This talk is about how to write up your family history to tell a good story and to put ancestors into the social and political context of their times.
- 8 April            *Investigation of the 1939 Register* led by Tony Allen  
This Register was taken on 29 September 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War in order to produce Identity Cards. It contains the details of 41 million people who lived in England and Wales at that time and provides the most complete survey of this population between 1921 and 1951.
- 13 May            Members' afternoon
- 3 June            *My Cousin Sophia and how I Uncovered her Story* by Karen de Bruyne

## **FHF REALLY USEFUL Family History Show**

Saturday 20 April 2024, 10am-4.00pm  
Burgess Hall One Leisure, Westwood Road, St Ives, PE27 6WU  
Free entry, free parking, £1 programme, £2 talks

There will be friendly family history societies, workshops, help desks, local groups and commercial stands, knowledgeable speakers and more.

**London Westminster & Middlesex FHS** will be there!  
Do drop by and say hello to us if you are going.

Email: [eventsteam@lwmfhs.org.uk](mailto:eventsteam@lwmfhs.org.uk) if you would like to help for an hour.

## FOCUS ON FACEBOOK

By Elizabeth Burling, Member No. 4992

It was the 236th anniversary of the arrival of the first batch of convicts in Botany Bay, Australia, on 18 January. The 736 prisoners had set sail from Portsmouth on 13 May 1787, some eight months previously. Sue wrote that people who have Australian convict ancestors may be interested to know about some extensive historical doctoral research that Dr Heather Blasdale-Clarke has carried out on the convict culture in the early colony from 1788 to 1840.

Music and dance were important aspects of social life, especially in rural areas but ones that do not really appear in the regular run of documents which family historians access. And yet, music and dance probably played a large part in our ancestors' lives. For example, even before the convicts had disembarked, Newton FOWELL, Midshipman and Lieutenant aboard the *Sirius*, the flagship of the First Fleet, recorded that '...one of the Party took a fife on Shore, played several tunes to the Natives who were highly delighted with it especially at seeing some of the Seamen dance'.

Heather's interesting website provides all sorts of mentions of dance, such as a list of colonial police incidents, dating from 1803-1840, in which dancing was mentioned. You can search for the offender by surname. For example, William BALL is said to have been dancing a saraband in a Sydney street to a mouth organ in 1833 whilst Mrs BROWN, who kept a disorderly house in Castlereagh Street, Sydney, hosted midnight revels in an elegantly furnished upstairs ballroom in 1840.

There are examples of traditional music and the steps used to dance to them and there are dances you can attend (in Australia) to learn to dance as your ancestors might. You can buy books and accompanying CDs should you wish to learn them at home.

Heather has appeared on, 'Who do you think you are' with Craig Revel Horwood and has curated an exhibition that toured Australia called *Dancing in Fetters: the culture of convict dance*. Sue provided a link to Heather's website, which is called 'Australian Historical Dance' and is at: <https://www.historicdance.au/> - it's well worth a look! There's a Facebook page as well.

## AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- 1 To encourage the study of family history, genealogy and heraldry, primarily in the City of London, City of Westminster and the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, part of Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, part of Hillingdon, and Islington.
- 2 To help to co-ordinate efforts to make local records more accessible.
- 3 To carry out such activities as are relevant to a family history society

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual subscription covers all family members living at one address, with one journal and one vote per subscription.

There are three subscription rates: £12, £15 and £20 depending on where you live and how your journal *Metropolitan* is delivered.

Our year runs from 1 October until 30 September the following year.

Members joining during the Society's year will receive back copies of journals.

£12 UK & Overseas: to receive *Metropolitan* electronically by download

£15 UK: to receive *Metropolitan* by post

£20 Overseas: to receive *Metropolitan* by airmail post

## CHEQUE PAYMENT BY UK OR OVERSEAS MEMBERS

UK cheques are payable to LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FHS.

Overseas members' payments must be made in pounds sterling by cheque, drawn upon a London Bank, made payable to: LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FHS.

All cheques should be sent to the Membership Secretary, address on the inside front cover. Please give your name and, if possible, membership number (which is on the email notifying you of your electronic version of *Metropolitan*, or on the address sheet sent with your paper copy).

CANADA: Canadian Postal Money Orders cannot be accepted.

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND: Most banks will provide sterling cheques.

## OTHER WAYS TO PAY

- Set up a standing order payable on 1 October annually (bank details below);
- Make a payment directly into our bank account (details below);
- Pay through Parish Chest directly from our website [lwmfhs.org.uk](http://lwmfhs.org.uk) or our stall on the Parish Chest

**BANKERS**: Santander Business Banking, Bridle Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L30 4GB

Sort Code: 09-01-29; Account Number: 70580978

Business account name: London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society

Please include your name and membership number as payment reference.

## MEMBERS' DATA

A labels-list of members is held on computer for the purposes of administration and distribution only.

Data from the members' list will NOT be given out to commercial enterprises.

Anyone objecting to his or her name being on this list should write to the Membership Secretary.

**METROPOLITAN** Copy Dates: **1 Feb, 1 May, 1 Aug, 1 Nov.**