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THE

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*City of York & District*

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FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

June 2020

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THE  
*City of York & District*  
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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## Newsletter

June 2020

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## UPDATE

Under current lockdown restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic it has been found impractical to produce a printed journal, and instead is this Newsletter on the Society's website. A copy can be emailed on request. Keep an eye on the website also for opening up of meetings.

The lockdown has, of course, caused other closures, such as that of the Society of Genealogists and The National Archives, both closed until further notice, along with many local family history societies, including Airedale & Wharfedale, Sheffield, Wakefield as well as our own meetings and Research Room. The Yorkshire Family History Fair normally held at the Racecourse in June has also been cancelled.

However, during the lock down, York Central Library have made their Findmypast and Ancestry accounts available to Library Card holders online for the time being, as people can't go into the libraries.

### DATA PROTECTION

All articles submitted will be published under the contributor's name and membership number, enabling interested readers to identify the source.

Contributors who wish their contact details to be published alongside must state this in writing. Readers may otherwise make contact with the contributor via the Editor or the Membership Secretary (see inner front cover).

### TNA Ordering

With effect from 31 March 2020, the document ordering procedure the The National Archives will change.

Readers will be able to order a maximum of 12 documents for the same day, plus up to 12 documents ordered in advance (i.e. a maximum of 24 documents per reader per day). There will be five document ordering slots available each day and you can order as many of your 12 same-day documents as you require in any of the slots. Documents will be delivered at set times each day.

The new procedure will run for an experimental 6-month period. More details can be seen at:

<https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/changes-to-document-ordering/>

Many thanks as ever to all those who have contributed to this Newsletter. Perhaps being largely confined to our homes has led to time being spent in researching family history. Let us have your findings to share with other members.

*Ed.*

## AGM 4<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

First of all, many thanks to all our members who regularly attend our meetings and keep faith with us.

Thanks also to our Committee members who meet regularly, to ensure the smooth running of all the functions of our Society.

Thanks to John Neale, our Vice Chairman, Catherine Richardson, Treasurer, Carol Mennell, Secretary. These are the three essential committee rôles.

Other committee members are Roz Gray, who performs an essential rôle as our Membership Secretary and also organises distribution of our journals; Pam Elliot, Research Room Manager and Archivist; Margaret Tadman, our Journal Editor, and Claire Brockway, our Projects Coordinator. We do not currently have a Publicity Officer.

Yvonne Clarke, although now retired from the Monumental Inscriptions work, is still a very valuable asset to the Society and to the Committee, being a regular volunteer at the Research Room and available to help. Thank you, Yvonne. Further on Monumental Inscriptions, our team of dedicated volunteers are standing by waiting for a new leader to take them into some more churchyards and cemeteries. There are several still to be done, and to produce the MI publications, complete with photographs of every monumental stone. There is now also a team of volunteers working to transcribe the completed MIs into a format acceptable to Findmypast, so that they can be accessed via that site which earns some royalty payments for our Society. Thanks to Claire Brockway and her team of volunteers for coordinating this project. Yvonne is our Publications Officer and responsible for the final publishing of our works on CDs, etc. Again, thank you Yvonne.

Thanks, too, to Mike and June Smith who retired from their rôles at the end of 2019, but for many years have looked after books sales, monumental inscription recording and many other background works on behalf of the Society.

Thanks also to those undertaking non-Committee rôles –

John Bibby has arranged the speakers at our monthly meetings for this year. Thank you, John, for a good and varied programme. John agreed to be our Programme Secretary for this year only, so we are still needing someone to step in to arrange the programme for next year. We do have a good list of local speakers, so this is not a huge task. It just requires contacting speakers, fixing the dates when they can come to us and contacting them again, a week or two before a meeting, to confirm final details.

Also at our monthly meetings, Paul Gliddon sets out his 'Help Desk' Thank you Paul for this useful spot. Can Paul help you? Why not give him a try?

Mary Clarke looks after exchange journals; ie. those from other societies. Always worth a look in, if you are researching in different areas.

Others who work behind the scenes, but are not on our Committee, are Roy Evans who looks after the members' interests and puts enquirers in touch with members researching the same names of interest, and our webmaster Jo Barnett, without whom our 'shop window' wouldn't happen. Thanks to you all.

The Research Room is well attended. As it gets quite busy, it is hoped to be able to open up on other days. At present it is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but requires more volunteers to be available to help. Full training is given to anyone who would like to join our band of helpers. You do not have to know everything, but be able to talk to visitors and, perhaps, guide them to the right places to find information.

Our Journal, with three editions annually, is a valuable link for our members, particularly those who are unable to attend meetings. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that stories and articles for inclusion in the journal are always very welcome. We all have a story to tell about our ancestors, so why not write a line or two?

As a Charity, our brief is Education. We are here to help our members to discover and learn about their ancestors, which involves a lot more than collecting a list of names and dates, as learning about local and social history to build a picture of our predecessors' lives is all education and enlightenment!

Finally, thanks to all those who volunteer their time and knowledge. Apologies if I have forgotten to mention anyone by name, but you are all appreciated. If you don't already volunteer and would like to, please talk to a Committee member or visit us at the Research Room.

*Janice Wood*

*In addition to thanks given in the Chairman's report, I would like to thank two regular contributors to the Journal: Lorna Begley, who reports the talks at meetings, and Jeanne Baxter who gives useful notes from exchange journals.*  
*Ed.*

### **TREASURER'S REPORT for 2019**

The accounts have been examined, as usual, by Brian Taylor, a Chartered Accountant, at no charge.

Membership has continued to fall, the drop in subscriptions being partly offset by the slightly reduced cost of printing and posting the Society's Journal. An increase in monies received by the Research Room has also helped.

Income from book and publication sales has also continued to fall. Our attendance at the Family History Fair on the Knavesmire raised approximately £150, after taking into account the payment for the use of tables. This is very similar to the amount raised in the previous year. Income from royalties increased a little.

General administration expenses, mainly insurance and subscriptions to the Family History Federation, have remained at about £600.

The deficit for the year is £452, a little lower than in 2018, but still a deficit, and so our reserves have decreased to £13,894. This is a healthy amount to hold, but obviously won't last for ever, if we continue to operate at a deficit every year.

Overall our income was £350 more in 2018 than in 2017.

The accounts overleaf are the abbreviated accounts, as required by law, but I have more detailed figures, which I am happy to supply to anyone interested.

*Catherine Richardson*

**YORK AND DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**Accounts for the year ended 31st December**

			<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
	Payments	Receipts		
Membership				
Subscriptions & gift aid	526	5300	4774	5083
Printing & stationery incl. Journals	924		-924	-1021
Monthly meetings	1012	1001	-11	-238
Research Room	6093	1325	<u>-4768</u>	<u>-4960</u>
			-929	-1136
Net Income/(Expenditure)				
Publications	82	386	304	379
Bookstall	59	551	492	574
Royalties		301	301	216
Bank interest		127	127	124
Equipment			0	-631
Knavesmire Fair Expenses	150		-150	-150
General Administration expenses	597		<u>-597</u>	<u>-617</u>
<b>DEFICIT FOR YEAR</b>			<u><b>-£452</b></u>	<u><b>-£1,241</b></u>

<u>Balance Sheet at 31st December</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<b>General Funds</b>		
Balance at beginning of year	14346	15587
Deficit for year	-452	-1241
<b>Balance at end of year</b>	<u><b>£13,894</b></u>	<u><b>£14,346</b></u>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
Bank & Cash balances	14269	14407
Research Room Bond	1150	1150
Prepayments	<u>180</u>	<u>180</u>
	15599	15737
Less Subscriptions, etc. rec'd in advance	<u>1705</u>	<u>1391</u>
	<u><b>£13,894</b></u>	<u><b>£14,346</b></u>

**NOTES**

1. The Society owns various items of equipment for the Research Room, projects, etc.  
The cost is written off in the year of purchase (2019 nil, 2018 nil)
2. No account is taken of the value of the stock of books, publications, library, etc., which are in hand.

C. Richardson

Hon Treasurer

31st Jan 2020

W.B. Taylor

Independent Examiner

8th Feb 2020

## **Findmypast English and Welsh Electoral Registers**

Family history website Findmypast have announced the online publication of over 116 million records of English and Welsh voters, in association with The British Library.

Electoral Registers are listings of all those registered to vote in a particular area. The lists were created annually (and later biannually) to record the names of eligible voters and their reason for eligibility, such as their residence or ownership of a property.

This vast update forms the second phase of Findmypast's exclusive *England and Wales Electoral Registers 1832-1932* collection and is the largest single release published by Findmypast this year. It enables researchers to trace ancestors between census years, uncover details of the property they occupied and explore the history of their home or local area. The registers can be searched by name, date, constituency, place, or keyword, allowing researchers to locate ancestors or properties in this vast resource with greater ease and accuracy than ever before.

Previously only accessible as printed volumes or on microfilm at the British Library's Reading Rooms at St. Pancras and Boston Spa, now over 6.7 million Electoral Registers spanning the years 1832 to 1932 can be explored online at Findmypast. Now available to search online for the first time, these new registers are the latest result of a mammoth digitisation project to scan 100 years of microfilmed copies of the British Library's unique collection of printed registers, housed on 2.25 miles (3.62 linear km) of shelving. The registers that are now available open up a treasure trove of material that was never before accessible to automated searching. No expert knowledge is needed, allowing anyone to trace their family across 100 years of English & Welsh history regardless of where they are or their level of experience.

They are a special resource for family historians who now have even more opportunities to locate ancestors between the census years, where they lived and when they were given the right to vote, or to explore the history of their home or local area.

The period covered by *England and Wales Electoral Registers 1832-1932* includes some of the most important events in the history of British democracy and demonstrates how the British electorate changed during the 19th and early 20th centuries: from the vote being extended to working class men and the reform of representation up until women's suffrage.

Highlights include records of the first eligible voters enfranchised by the *Great Reform Act of 1832*, the first working class voters following the *Representation of the People Act of 1867*, the first female voters in British history following the *1918 Representation of the People Act*, lists of absent voters on active service during the First World War, and much more.

## WILDBULLCHASE

*Paul Gliddon (member 2524)*

**W**e've all heard of a wild goose chase, and most family historians have had them while hunting for ancestors. Here's one of mine, though it might better be called a wild bull chase.

If there was an instigator, it was the chap who wrote up the burials at Batter Street Presbyterian Chapel in Plymouth 200 years ago. Laudably, he often added an extra titbit of information to the basic details (name, date, etc.) of the interments. Thus, my 4 x great-grandmother, **Catharine Ellis** (née **Rook**), buried in 1829, was noted as what looked like 'The Bull-Woman.'

A 'bull woman?' Here was yet another mystery concerning Catharine – she did seem to attract them. For instance, what happened to her first husband, **William Arkwright/Acwright** (my 4 x great-grandfather) before she married a **William Ellis**? I've never found a burial that fits. Why does the family keep disappearing from the records and then reappearing? And more to the point for now, what on earth was a bull woman?

The obvious lines of enquiry were Google, and then local histories of Plymouth, looked up during holidays in the West Country. Both lines turned up a smattering of information: various English towns and cities had a tradition of 'running' a bull through the streets before it was killed and eaten. In charge of these events would often be a 'bull woman' who collected money, dressed up, waved a stick around, etc. (please don't ask me why). Although nothing definite could be found about this in Plymouth, Batter Street Chapel was close to Bull Lane, and the Bull Ring where bulls were slaughtered. And until recently that was as far as I got: nothing certain, although here were several things that pointed in the same direction.

There's always a 'but', though, isn't there? Or in this case, a butt. One of the few benefits of the 'lock-down' forced upon us this spring has been the chance to go through family history files, tidying up, rechecking queries, and so on. And among the family history papers I've collected over the years is a document I'd copied at Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) about 10 years ago: '*A History of the Batter Street Congregational Church, 1704-1921*', a lecture transcript from 1944 by **Stanley Griffin** of Plymouth, who said: 'Women of the humble classes [in the 18C/19C] all wore pattens [clogs]. Some of them came late [to Chapel], forgot to take off their pattens in the Porch, and so disturbed the service. At one service they were admonished from the Pulpit, and so the Deacons provided a wooden frame in the Porch, in the charge of the buttwoman.'

It was re-reading this article that switched on the proverbial light bulb in my mind. Buttwoman? Could this after all be the 'bull woman?' Rechecking the burial register image that I'd printed out ages ago, I noticed that part of Catharine Ellis's burial entry had a short line through it, which I'd always taken to be a mark on the microfilm. However, it could instead easily be part of the original writing, changing 'Bull' into 'Butt' and making the remarks Butt-Woman', not 'Bull-woman.'

That still left the question, what was a butt-woman? (Apart from somebody who took charge of a wooden frame in a Presbyterian Chapel Porch.) Incidentally, I wonder as well whether the term is still used nowadays: has anyone out there heard of it? Another Google search discovered that a butt-woman is someone who cleans the church, opens up the pews during services, and so on.



That opens up a new line of research, as there's a chance my 4 x great-grandmother would be mentioned in the Presbyterian Chapel minutes, held at PWDRO. Might even find out one day if the 'noisy clog problem' ever got solved.

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## **JONATHAN MARTIN**

### **The Man who burned York Minster: the story of a Lunatic**

*First published in the Doncaster Ancestor*

**Jonathan Martin** is famous for being the arsonist who burned down a large proportion of York Minster in 1829. One of twelve children born to **William Fenwick Martin & Elizabeth** (née **Thompson**) near Hexham in 1782, Jonathan had a traumatic childhood as he witnessed the murder of his sister by his neighbour, and was sent off to his uncle's farm to recover.

He was brought up by his mother's sister, **Ann Thompson**, who is reputed to have had a very vivid belief of the horrors of hell, which she passed on to Jonathan. When 22 years old, Jonathan joined the Royal Navy and served for six years before becoming a Wesleyan preacher. He denounced the Church of England in 1817 and threatened to assassinate the Bishop of Oxford. It was this act that led to his being committed to West Auckland Lunatic Asylum, then moved to the Gateshead Asylum. He escaped a number of times and for several years lived what we could call a normal life. He even published his autobiography in 1829, and then moved to York in 1828.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1829 Jonathan was attending a service at York Minster when he became upset by a buzzing sound in the church organ. He did not leave the Minster at the end of the service, but hid in the bell tower. Later that night he set fire to the woodwork in the choir and then escaped through a window. Smoke was seen coming out of the Minster at 7 o'clock the following morning. The alarm was raised and the fire extinguished, but the roof over the central aisle had been totally destroyed, as had most of the woodwork in the interior, including the organ and the screen. It was the most horrific act of arson in the history of the city, and people wanted revenge.

Jonathan Martin was arrested a few days later and tried at York Castle. He was found guilty and would have been hanged in the judge had not declared him insane. He was sent to Bethlem Royal hospital, where he died on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1838.

## THE ROUTH FAMILY

Mrs. Stella Pedersen (member 3067),  
55 Stryd y Prior, Cydweli, Wales, SA17 4TY; [spthorshope@gmail.com](mailto:spthorshope@gmail.com)

The Routh family (original name **de So(u)rdeval**) lived in Yorkshire for centuries. My own direct ancestor, **Richard Routh**, innholder, took the Oath of Allegiance to the Hanoverian King George I in York in 1723. His son, **John**, like his parents, married at Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, and I feel privileged to have a connection with this enchanting little church. John married in 1735 and his bride was **Eleanor/Ellen Robinson**. Children were born, but then in 1744 the family uprooted and moved to Bristol.

What a journey this must have been with household goods and four or five young children. I know the route they took because Eleanor gave birth to another son, on the way, in the middle of Staffordshire. Baby **George** was baptised on 15<sup>th</sup> June at Yoxall, on the turnpike between Ashbourne and Lichfield. Chancing upon this baptism was a key piece in the family story. But it raised more questions.

Why had they left York when they did? From Eleanor's point of view the timing was abominable, especially given the state of roads at the time. Naturally Eleanor was almost constantly pregnant, but could they not have waited in York till the baby was born; they had the whole of summer before them. Or could something have happened in York necessitating a hasty departure?

I have spent years researching my Routh roots, building on the earlier work, *A Short History of the Family of Routh* by Lt. Col. **H. C. Edric Routh** (1953). My own work *More about Maria's Family* was published in 2008. However, the move from York to Bristol remains a mystery. I believe there was a newspaper at the time, the *York Courant*, but that is one source I have not yet managed to see. If John Routh was "wanted" or "run out of town" it might have been reported! Or was there some cataclysmic event in York in 1744?

Can anyone help? All letters and emails will be answered.

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### Horsefall by name, horse fall by nature . . .

On 19 July 1896 **George Horsefall** of 36 Bootham Square was admitted to York County Hospital. He worked as a groom, and had been admitted with a fracture of the tibia . . . as a result of falling from a horse, perhaps. He was discharged 5 weeks later, on 28 August.

This noted by the group indexing the records of the hospital held at the Borthwick Institute.

ref: YCH 6/1/1/7 - 526

**ANDREW GATENBY AND THE PENNY ROYAL MILL, TASMANIA**  
**www.pennyroyalworld.com**

*Ex-member Alex Hetherington received the following article, written by Roger Smith in 1978, from David Pool (alias Dennis Sanderson) in emails concerning their GATENBY forebears (see September 2004 Journal, Vol.5 No.3).*

**T**his fascinating and fully-working corn mill originally stood at Barton, near Cressy, about 38 miles from Launceston. It was built by Andrew GATENBY (baptised 1772 Egton) and his four sons in 1825, soon after they arrived in Tasmania as settlers from England. It was equipped with grindstones and machinery brought out by Gatenby and the *Berwick* in 1823 along with a wheelwright and millwright and was constructed in less than 12 months including a two-mile mill race, still in existence to this day, and a mill pond to act as a reservoir.

Today's corn mill is a replica of the 1825 mill, using much of Gatenby's machinery and including the two original pairs of French Burr grindstones. It has been rebuilt as faithfully as possible from the surviving scraps of information and sketches, and the remaining ruins at Barton. It was typical of English watermills in every way and the machinery was practically identical with that used for grinding corn for several hundred years.

When Gatenby arrived on the banks of the Penny Royal Creek in 1823, he used exceptional foresight in positioning the first corn mill on the escarpment near the crossroads at what is now Barton, for this proved to be an ideal position. The excavation of the mill-race (with the help of just one convict labourer, in 13 months, in addition to all the other work clearing land, establishing themselves and building the corn mill) was a monumental task in itself, as can be seen to this day if tracing its course back from the mill to the junction with the Isis River two miles upstream.

As water was very scarce, especially in the dry summers of 1823 and 1824, Gatenby banked up a reservoir to store water, as fair quantities were needed to turn the wheel fast enough to grind the corn effectively. This mill-pond is still in existence today beside the foundations of the original mill, and it fills with water every winter. Later, a much bigger reservoir was constructed for the larger 1840 stone watermill, and this was only levelled in recent times by Mr. HEADLAM, Senior, to improve the nearby pastures.

For years after the mills ceased to grind corn, local children would play on the waterwheels by opening the sluices and running inside the wheels on the lining or "sole", a very dangerous game but full of thrills! However, by 1910 the wheels had deteriorated so badly that they had collapsed on the bearing and never turned again until 1972 and 1976.

It is not known yet exactly when the mills stopped working but it is thought that the 1825 mill stopped in the 1840s and the Penny Royal between 1885 and 1895, its short life being caused by the building being situated on a low-lying plain which, due to frequent flooding, caused the support timbers of the machinery to rot and so jam up the finely-set cog wheels.

**MAYFLOWER**  
*Paul Gliddon (member 2524)*

**2020**, the 400th anniversary of the famous *Mayflower* sailing, seems a good time to admire some of the passengers' unusual first names, taking advantage of the 400th anniversary organisers' excellent research. Many thanks to them, who have put a list of all the passengers online; their website is well worth a visit:

<https://www.mayflower400uk.org/education/mayflower-passengers-list-an-interactive-guide>

So, here are my top six favourite names:

**Love Brewster**  
**Wrestling Brewster**  
**Resolved White**  
**Oceanus Hopkins**  
**Humility Cooper**  
**Digory Priest**

On reflection, are these first names so unusual as all that? A quick check on [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk) gives a rough guide to what might be expected in England and Wales, 1837 onwards, for all six names. This finds that two of them each have quite a lot of hits, while four have none at all. For anyone who likes a challenge: which are the two, and which are the four?

Before that, something else that occurred to me was to wonder whether the third name on the above list would be pronounced:

Re – solve – ed?

It seems to sound more like a 'name' that way – other people might disagree?

Thanks to Sara Read's item in *Discover Your Ancestors*, issue 9, I discovered that Oceanus Hopkins was born during the Mayflower sailing, on the Atlantic (should have guessed!). He made it to America but didn't survive childhood. Apparently there was a high death rate even once they'd landed.

\_\_\_\_\_

... and the answer to the poser: Love and Digory occurred as first names in various entries from 1837; the others generated no hits as first names on the freebmd website.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

*Roz Gray*

### Data Protection Law

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GPDR) any member who does not wish their personal details to be held by the Society should please inform the Membership Secretary. We use this information to record payments and send out the Journals.

Please remember to update your email addresses and changes to telephone numbers with the Membership Secretary (see inner front cover).

### New Members:

3348 Dr. Jonathan French  
3349 Mr Matthew Williamson  
3350 Mrs. Sharon Goodwin

### Change of address

3223 Stuart Plowman

### Deaths

2594 Mr. C. J. Brownbridge  
2865 Paul Thomas-Peter died 11<sup>th</sup> April. Paul acted as the Society's project co-ordinator and webmaster before the onset of illness some five years ago.

We have also heard of the death of ex-member A.D.F. (George) Gabb (no. 795) of Overton. He died on 29th March and a memorial service is to be held at a later date.

## MEMBERS' INTERESTS

*Roy Evans*

As we can no longer give out members' contact details without their written permission, contact with the contributing member may be made via the Members' Interests Secretary (see back page).

### Contributing Members

3339 Mrs P. Greening				3346 Ms E. Hawkins		
Interest	Place		County Code	From	To	Member
Bywater	Wakefield		WRY	1796	1832	3346
Collier	York (Shambles)	YKS	-	1938	3339	
Doherty	County Down		DOW	ALL	-	3339
Doherty	York		YKS	-	1910	3339
Teale	Leeds		WRY	-	1910	3339
Teale	York		YKS	-	1910	3339
Willson	Spalding		LIN	ALL	-	3339
Willson	York		YKS	ALL	-	3339



## BOOKSHELF



Books may be borrowed from the Library, viewed or purchased at the Research Room.

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### Strensall in the Mid-19th Century

Ryedale Family History Group has reprinted this book by Tessa Mitchell, nearly thirty years since it was originally published. Tessa is a volunteer with the group as a researcher with the War Memorial project.

The Strensall book was written with the aim of showing a rural community before mechanisation took hold and changed life completely. It takes the reader on a trip around the village and the outlying houses and farms, by local resident **John Spruce**, who was the schoolmaster and also a farmer. John sets off from his home on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1851 to take the ten-year census by recording the particulars of everyone who spent the previous night at Strensall. The book includes maps, drawings, family trees and photos of properties along with listing all the occupants.

Tessa Mitchell said, "The work for this book was carried out over a number of years whilst I was studying for a Certificate in Local History. I did this before computers and the internet were widely available, which meant spending time in libraries and archives. Friends and family encouraged me to publish the book; to fund the printing I offered subscriptions to the book in advance."

Janice Wood, Chairman of Ryedale FHG, said, "We are very pleased to be able to offer the book through our website and Research Room. Whether you are a resident of Strensall or not, this book is a good read as Tessa's style is accessible, engaging, well presented and full of information. For anyone interested in local history this book is recommended."

The book is priced at £10.

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### STORIES OF YORK

York Minster and the University of York announce the release of a new book exploring the fascinating history of York.

If you have ever wondered why there is a red devil on Stonegate or why the city always smells of chocolate, then *Stories of York* is the book for you.

Packed with stunning images from the collections of the University of York and York Minster, many never published before, you will discover the untold stories of York, previously hidden in the strongrooms of the city.

Find out how to buy your copy at:

**[www.york.ac.uk/stories-of-york](http://www.york.ac.uk/stories-of-york)**

## TRACING YOUR JEWISH ANCESTORS

*Nigel Grizzard; bradfordjewish@gmail.com*

*A talk given to the Society at its March 2020 meeting*

**G**ood evening everyone, it is good to be here and to meet the York Family History Society members. My name is Nigel Grizzard and if you want to contact me you can use the email. I live in Leeds and act as the tour guide for Jewish Yorkshire, taking tours of Jewish Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate, Ilkley and Huddersfield – as well as a tour of Jewish York and would be happy to take people on that tour.

I do research on all sorts of Jewish topics in Leeds and Bradford and also help people with their family research. A lot of people find their way to me! What I can say is that I greatly enjoy the work I do. I take people around Leeds whose families left Russia in the period 1880-1920, arrived in Leeds, stayed for a while and then left for the USA. They want to follow up addresses, look for tombstones and know what life was for their ancestors in Victorian & Edwardian Jewish Leeds. The other city I do a great deal of work in is Bradford, where we have a historic synagogue dating from 1880, lots of Jews who lived in the city when it was the Wool Capital of the World and lots of stories. In Bradford I only need to stop at a building on a tour and someone will tell me about it: I learn more from the participants sometimes than they from me!

So tonight I'm pleased to be in York to talk to you. York as you most probably know has a long Jewish history, with a tragic past with the massacre of Jews at Clifford's Tower, but now there is a thriving and growing young Jewish community. I took the Editor of the *Jerusalem Report* around York last summer. Jews and York used to have a strange relationship; if you lived in London it was a place you avoided – there was a perceived ban on going there. Relations were healed in 1978 with the unveiling of the plaque at Clifford's Tower and the arrival of the Chief Rabbi – **Lord Jakobovits** – in the city. York and the Jews is a subject for a separate lecture so back to the topic of tracing your Jewish ancestors.

*(At this point Nigel asked for a show of hands of how many people in the audience are looking for or have Jewish ancestors in their family tree – there were three – and offered, at the end of the talk, to discuss how he could be of help.)*

So what's my story? Born in the London Hospital in Whitechapel in March 1952 – so a cockney – in a maternity ward called the Marie Celeste. As you know, the Marie Celeste was a ship found floating on the high seas with all the tables laid for a meal and no crew so I sometimes think of myself as a foundling. We are a Jewish family, my father was born in London, as was his father and grandfather. They came from a family of Dutch Jews who immigrated to London in the 1840s and 1850s. At that time many Jews left Holland, particularly Amsterdam, to live in the area around Petticoat Lane in Spitalfields, East London. The name **Grizzard** is Dutch and has been spelt in the UK in various ways. My mum was born in Sheffield, her mother had been born in London and moved to Manchester after World War 1. She met my grandfather and got married in Manchester and then went to live in Sheffield where my mother was born.

My grandfather had been born in a village called Zemel in Lithuania, part of Czarist Russia, arriving in the UK just as war started in 1914. He served in the British Army in World War I in France, came back to the UK, but didn't get naturalised.

When he married in 1923 in Manchester he was a Russian citizen. My grandmother, who was born in the East End of London, when she married him became a Russian citizen. She had never left the UK but had to carry around an Alien's passbook saying that, although she was a UK life resident, she was now a Russian.

So that's a bit about my family.

My wife was born in Leeds, whilst her Mum was born in Paddington, London, to parents who had come from Gomel, in what is now Belarus, to Paris where their son Henri was born, and then moved onto London. My wife's father, whom I never knew, arrived in Britain during World War 2. He came with the Polish Army, leaving behind a wife and child in Warsaw. They were murdered by the Nazis either in Warsaw or in the Treblinka extermination camp. In Leeds, when he realised there was nothing in Poland to go back for, he married my mother in law and started life again.

So in two families we have roots in Amsterdam, Lithuania, Belarus and Poland, and have lived in many places in the UK. Are we unusual for Jews? No. Many Jewish families have roots all over the place. **Ashkenazi Jews**, who are the majority of British Jews, have roots in Russia, Poland, Romania, Germany, Austria, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Slovakia etc., and **Sephardic Jews** have roots in Spain, Portugal, North Africa – the Maghreb, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and then Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, the Yemen and Lebanon. Then there's Israel which is a mixture of Jews from all over the world. So it's a complicated world out there!

If any of you are into DNA testing for your origins, they tell you if you have Jewish roots and whether you're Sephardic or Ashkenazi. My cousin in Boston, USA, had his DNA done, and found he was 98.5% Jewish. So my question is: are the answers real, or is there someone in the lab looking at the name, sticking it into google and deciding from the entries (e.g. orthodox synagogue members, wears a yarmulke etc.) in his pictures, "let's give him 98.5% Jewish and make him guess at the about 1.5%!" . . . or is it really scientific? In the USA DNA testing is a big thing, here it has only just started.

So back to the family story – if you're into family history where do you make a start, which line do you follow?

I have a friend with the name **Yanovsky** – he's lucky he has a good distinctive Jewish name and one that's fairly unique, so if he started researching there's a fair chance he can find roots easily. If you've got a good Jewish surname like **Cohen**, **Goldberg** or **Levy** that's lovely, but you're going to find it difficult as these are very common Jewish names. So where can you search and I'll give you some hints.

First there's been a project to put Jewish Cemeteries worldwide on line. Most, but not all, Jews are buried and Judaism frowns on cremation.

Alan was a nuclear scientist. Originally from Glasgow he moved to Bristol. While there he was the leader of a project to photograph the tombstones in the two Jewish cemeteries which numbered about 1,000 stones and put them online in a searchable format. He moved to Leeds and a friend of mine met him. He told Alan that we had a Jewish cemetery called the Hill Top on the way to Gildersome that we couldn't visit. It had been subject to mining subsidence and the worry was that you went up the dirt track that led to the cemetery and ended up disappearing down a disused coal-mine shaft never to be heard of again. He had photos of the 2,000 stones that still survived and he wondered whether Alan could put them online.



Alan did this, was thanked and then was asked, we have another four Jewish cemeteries with a further 18,000 stones can you help? The answer was yes and Alan put together a team to photograph and transcribe the inscriptions on the stones and then to put them online. Miraculously he finished the project and now if you put Leeds Jewish Cemeteries into google you can search for a person's stone. It is a great project for family researchers; you'll find on the stones someone's Hebrew and English names, their age and date of death and possibly some information about them. I say possibly because on many stones there is basic information, maybe mention of a husband, wife, a brother, children and grandchildren but little more. There are also the coordinates of where to find the stone in the cemetery, which Jewish cemetery, which block, which row and which grave, as our cemeteries are designed on a regular basis here in the UK. After Leeds we put on the information for Jewish cemeteries in Bradford, Doncaster and Harrogate and, as we undertook the work in Yorkshire, other researchers were doing similar work in the rest of the UK, Europe and all over the world.

The next source I use is free BMD – free births marriages and deaths online – which is easy to use, give lots of information including all sorts of information about individuals and families.

Then there's *The London Gazette* – it lists naturalisations and business deals, military promotions and more. After World War 2, many tens of thousands of Jewish refugees to the UK were naturalised, and I have printed out a page from the issue of January 1949. Not every name here is Jewish but the vast majority are. The name, the profession, the address, often in Stamford Hill, North West London or North Manchester and Salford is a great help. Then there are name changes shown: **Leib Goldstein** of Ilford became **Louis Grayson**; **Lola Katz** of London W1 became **Suzanne Kaye**.

What about census records you ask? Well for the last two censuses there has been a religious question to identify those who marked themselves down as Jewish, however we have to wait 100 years until the first one becomes available in 2101 – a long wait. Those who know Jewish names can manually comb census records but I'm interested in the 1921 census which comes out in 2022. I'd like to look at Leeds where the Jewish Community numbered some 20,000 people and see how we can identify them using birthplace Russia or Poland for someone in the house, area of residence and distinctive Jewish names using AI (Artificial Intelligence) rather than a manual search name by name. It is a task we have to start thinking about.

So what other records are there? There's a resource called Jewish Gen online which provides lots of links and also enables you to search for a particular Jewish name or place. So if you know your family came, like mine did, from Zemel in Lithuania, you see who else is researching the village, and if they've been there either physically or electronically it can help.

There are the records relating to the Holocaust – many of which are being digitised as we speak. In Israel Yad Vashem holds the names of over 4 million of the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. In Europe records that no-one thought existed have become public.

In Britain World Jewish Relief, who in a previous life organised the bringing to England of the 10,000 Jewish children on the Kindertransporte before WW2, some of whom came to York, have put their records online together with thousands of other Jews who found refuge in Britain in the years 1933-1939.

The Chief Rabbi's Office in London has records of authorisations for Jewish marriages and you can apply to them to see whether information exists in their records.

Then there are communal directories and local records. In Leeds where I live, pre GDPR (data protection) days the Jewish Community through the Jewish Welfare Board used to publish lists of donors to this community wide appeal in their annual reports, and the United Hebrew Congregation, one of Leeds' major synagogues, used to publish in their Annual Report names and addresses of their members. These are two examples for Leeds. Looking in the West Yorkshire Archives there are records of all different varieties; it is often pot luck.

I want to finish with the question that I am often asked: 'I think Grandpa or Grandma was Jewish – how do I find out?'

Well let's start by saying that not all Jews married Jews, intermarriage between Jew and Gentile happened and still happens. Often, in the past, the Jewish community cut off those who married out, so relationships were strained, documents were lost and only a vague memory remained.

So how do we find out? First what do we know about them:

- their name
- their place of birth
- their occupation
- where they lived and any further information.

Free BMD may help, a google search, a look through a Kelly's directory – all can be pointers. If they came from abroad that may be a clue.

In Bradford in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were many German Jews who intermarried with local Bradfordians. BUT not all Germans in Bradford were Jewish and not all Jews in Bradford came from Germany – it is confusing!

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century many of the refugees who made new lives in England disappeared from Jewish life for a whole variety of reasons. Now when it is Holocaust Memorial Day their grandchildren find that they had relatives who were murdered in the Holocaust – great grandparents, great great aunts and uncles and family members who were never talked about.

Again it is about assembling the facts and seeing what is available – often it is like opening a Pandora's Box and out emerge stories, family and relatives you have never known about in Israel, the USA, South America or England.

You need someone who is a keymaster and I count myself as one of those – someone who can help you navigate and find that lost family. I know how to open doors and more important there are other keymasters who can help you.

Discovering your Jewish Ancestors is a fascinating journey and I hope I have sparked interest tonight!

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*Nigel finished this comprehensive talk by an answering members' questions, and with further discussion.*

## GLEANINGS FROM EXCHANGE JOURNALS

*Jeanne Baxter*

Up to three exchange journals per month can be borrowed at meetings on signature in the book provided, alongside the name of the journal borrowed. These journals from other societies will be retained for 12 months, after which they may be taken in return for a donation. The following is a selection of material from recent arrivals:

Following the Drum (British troops ordered abroad on active service took their wives with them)

and

Research tips (canal-related research)

and

The story of pub signs

and

Family Search indexing

Shropshire F.H.S. Journal 40, Part 4, December 2019

Death duty registers at the National Archives

Hertfordshire People, No.151, December 2019

Some common Latin words and phrases that may occur in our family documents

and

Parish registers (in Ryedale)

Ryedale Roots, No.58, January 2020

Your cotton and wool mill ancestors

The Yorkshire Family Historian, Vol.45, No.3, Winter 2019

The Victorian English hiring fair

Herefordshire F.H.S., Vol. XIV, No.4, January 2020

Medieval Christmas

The Flowing Stream: Journal of the Sheffield & District F.H.S., Spring 2020

Ellis Island (gateway for immigrants into the U.S. 1892–1954)

The Doncaster Ancestor, Vol. 30, No.1, Spring 2020

Timeline for family history researchers.

The Manchester Genealogist, Vol. 56, No.1, 2020

Your ancestors in newspapers

W. Surrey F.H.S. Root and Branch, March 2020

More unusual Scottish records

Airedale & Wharfedale Journal, March 2020

Beginners articles

Bedfordshire F.H.S. Journal, March 2020

A look at the census and how they were carried out

and

The History of York Cemetery

and

The Changing Face of Pickering - demolition

Ryedale Roots, No.59, April 2020

Genealogical research tips for beginners

Cleveland F.H.S. Journal, April 2020

In the May 2020 *Wakefield Kinsman*, journal of Wakefield & District F.H.S., on p16 is an article about Foundlings, mentioning that in 1757 what is now Ackworth School was founded as branch of the famous Thomas Coram Foundling Hospital in London, saying that:

“Babies were brought from there to Ackworth to gain advantage of the more salubrious surroundings (if they survived the long coach journey) and to relieve pressure in London. It is highly possible that they were baptised there. The Ackworth Hospital only lasted until 1773 but within those 16 years 2,664 were cared for. When old enough the children were apprenticed to local farmers and tradesmen, boys going to smiths and sweeps, etc., and the girls often employed as house-servants. If you are very lucky you may find some trace of this among Poor Law papers at the Archives.”

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In our own Society’s journals of May and September 2011, member Mike Addy wrote in detail of his own family’s foundlings connection, including the following paragraph:

“**Charles Southcoat** is believed to have survived smallpox in 1763, and was returned to the London Foundling Hospital in 1766 at the age of 7 years, only to be sent on to the Ackworth, Pontefract, annex eleven days later, on 21 April, to continue his schooling until apprenticed in husbandry on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1768 at the age of 9 years and 4 months. The property in Ackworth was sold in 1778 to *The Society of Friends* to become a Quaker School and still remains so today. Nothing is known of his life on the farm except that he was apprenticed to **Wil Abbey** of Rufforth.”

*Ed.*

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## HELP WANTED



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### Unknown uniformed male on photograph

Is there any way in which I might be able to find information about a photograph left to me by my mother? It is of a uniformed soldier and the photo is a studio one taken by .....? **Masser** (first name missing) of Tower Street, York, and may be dated around the early 20th century. We believe it is of my father's father; my father was born in York, but have no way of finding any further information.

Unfortunately, my maiden name is "Smith", so we in for the long haul. Any help would be great.

*Ann Kennedy* <[annron12@iprimus.com.au](mailto:annron12@iprimus.com.au)>

## MEETING TALK REPORTED

**February – Jonathan French & Helen Graham**  
**Lost Knowledge? York 1820–2020**  
**Oral, written & unrecorded histories**

Our two speakers shared the talk. Jonathan French spoke of how and why accurate records are lost.

He spoke of the many records that have been filed away in archives and libraries, along with artefacts, photos, ceramics and art. The distribution is not always known or, in some cases, is buried by newer records. Unrecorded oral histories, family history and the stories of communities become mixed with myths and the complexity of issues is lost as people retire or die.

An example of this was the story that the walls of York were saved by William Etty. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century active decision-making saved the walls. Despite the wish to expand the city and make it more accessible for the residents and visitors, the walls were kept after vigorous debates by local organisations leading to a compromise between the preservation and functionality of the city. High spending visitors were considered important to the city and to be encouraged. The narrow gateways hindered the expansion of the city and it was decided to remove the barbicans from three of the gateways, leaving Walmgate as the only gateway with a barbican. The wealthy residents of York contributed to a fund to save the walls and the Abbey. William Etty helped raise awareness of the existing campaign.

In the 1820's houses in the area of Parliament Street were cleared to make place for markets. The Water Lanes, which ran from Castlegate, near St Mary's Church, down to the river, were overcrowded and impoverished, and crime was rife. When cholera broke out the residents were moved and the area was demolished. The space was used to create Clifford Street and the Magistrates Court as well as other municipal buildings.

Helen Graham spoke about the social impact of the changes that have been made in York and how many communities were disrupted by the well-meaning intentions of the authorities. There are still letters in existence which were written to the council describing the reluctance that residents felt at being moved out of their communities, although the new housing was welcomed.

The audience was invited to join in and talk about the experience that their families had when their communities had been broken up in the past. The discussion led on to the new changes taking place in York, including the development of the "tear drop" area next to the station. The importance of communities being established as well as new and affordable housing in any development was discussed. Recreational facilities and shops are thought to be bonds that develop community spirit.

The meeting closed with the wish that the planners may be mindful of this when planning new housing in the future.

*Lorna Begley*

And to finish . . . one for the ladies

**A POEM BY PAM AYRES**

I'm normally a social girl  
I love to meet my mates  
But lately with the virus here  
We can't go out the gates.  
You see, we are the 'oldies' now  
We need to stay inside  
If they haven't seen us for a while  
They'll think we've upped and died.  
They'll never know the things we did  
Before we got this old  
There wasn't any Facebook  
So not everything was told.  
We may seem sweet old ladies  
Who would never be uncouth  
But we grew up in the 60s -  
If you only knew the truth!  
There was sex and drugs and rock 'n  
roll  
The pill and miniskirts  
We smoked, we drank, we partied  
And were quite outrageous flirts.  
Then we settled down, got married  
And turned into someone's mum,  
Somebody's wife, then nana,  
Who on earth did we become?  
We didn't mind the change of pace  
Because our lives were full

But to bury us before we're dead  
Is like a red rag to a bull!  
So here you find me stuck inside  
For 4 weeks, maybe more  
I finally found myself again  
Then I had to close the door!  
It didn't really bother me  
I'd while away the hour  
I'd bake for all the family  
But I've got no flaming flour!  
Now Netflix is just wonderful  
I like a gutsy thriller  
I'm swooning over Idris  
Or some random sexy killer.  
At least I've got a stash of booze  
For when I'm being idle  
There's wine and whisky, even gin  
If I'm feeling suicidal!  
So let's all drink to lockdown  
To recovery and health  
And hope this awful virus  
Doesn't decimate our wealth.  
We'll all get through the crisis  
And be back to join our mates:  
Just hoping I'm not far too wide  
To fit through the flaming gates!

# THE *City of York & District* FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No.1085228 - Founded 1975

*Affiliated to the Family History Federation*

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# *City of York & District*

—FAMILY - HISTORY - SOCIETY—

**Family History Research Room  
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All Society resources available for use, including  
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under the drop down link "Services" and click on "Research Room

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