



Wetherby & District U3A Family History Group

Newsletter October 2026



GROUP NEWS -

The next meeting of the Family History group is **Friday 6th November 2026** starting at **10:00am** will be in the **(Main Hall)** St James Church Centre, Church Street, Wetherby LS22 6LP. We have a guest speaker, Barbara Dixon who worked in a registry office for thirty years and researched family history for twenty, with her presentation “**Lies, damned lies and registrations**” followed by a cuppa and general chat.

PLEASE NOTE ALL OUR MEETINGS WILL BE IN THE MAIN BUILDING!

For the safety of all in the group should you feel unwell or develop any of the symptoms related to Covid on the day, please do not attend the meeting?

PLEASE REMEMBER to enter your car registration number into the i-pad in the entrance if you park in the church car park or behind the church rooms! The usual fine is £60 rising to £100 if not paid and it is your responsibility to enter your registration to avoid a fine.

Please note the parking spaces adjacent to Innersense are reserved for Innersense and Berings Time UK, so should not be used.

Wetherby & District u3a Family History Group Information

The Wetherby & District U3A family history group normally meets on the first Friday of each month apart from January, in the (Main Hall), St James Church Rooms, Church Street, Wetherby, LS22 6LP.

It is a friendly group and caters for the sharing of knowledge along with methods of research and results in tracing our individual family history. If a member has a problem, there is normally someone in the room that can help.

Although we are unable to do live research, we have presentations at each meeting, mostly by our own members from within the group and occasionally by a professional genealogy speaker. The meetings finish with refreshments and a general chat.

I encourage you to look through this document as it has lots of useful information and links to websites that may assist you in your research.

If you are interested in joining The Family History Group please contact:- Jeff Britton

NEW

Barbara Duncan kindly advised of the introduction of a Free BMD newsletter, which gives an insight/update on the Free UK genealogy websites. If you would like to sign up for these newsletters, click on the text below for the link.

[Free UK Genealogy - Newsletters - Free UK Genealogy](#)

Barbara Duncan shared the following information from the Durham Family History e-Newsletter

"North Riding Electoral Registers 1832-1971 now available on Ancestry

For anyone with Yorkshire ancestors a new resource has just become available on subscription site Ancestry. If you have ever had the need to search the registers as part of your research, you will know how time consuming such searches can be. Now, using the record set North Yorkshire, Electoral Registers, 1832-1971 you can quickly find an individual name or address over a number of years. The registers cover the period 1832 to 1971 and were compiled each year except 1916, 1917 and the years 1940 to 1944 inclusive. Qualifications for inclusion in the electorate varied with universal male suffrage introduced in 1918 and votes for all women over 21 in 1930."

Researching Non-Conformist Ancestors.

The following information for researching Non-Conformist Ancestors was kindly shared by Jackie Depelle: -

[Ideas for Researching Non-Conformist Ancestors • RootsTech • FamilySearch](#)

If you click on the link and then on the web address it will take you to the YouTube video, you can decline all the cookies and will be able to watch her presentation, the links for the handout (Syllabus) for the presentation and slides used in her presentation at the bottom of the YouTube page. Jackie advised there may have been a few updates to the hand out but in the main it should be fine.

Barbara Duncan has kindly shared the following web-sites, used in her research. You will see there are a number of free websites.

The Henzells Part - 1 from September 2023 and Part - 2 from February 2024 – some online sources (plus a couple of others)

Subscription paid sites – Ancestry; Findmypast; Northumberland and Durham Family History Society.

FREE SITES

Familysearch (Mormon site) <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

Open a simple account which requires your name and email address. You can tick a box to be kept logged in for 2 weeks.

Archers software <http://www.archerssoftware.co.uk/igi/>

Part of the IGI (International Genealogical Index), the on-line database created by Familysearch so you need the same familysearch account as above for access.

Durham Bishops Transcripts –
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1309819>

If you google this you will get a link which is part of the Familysearch website where you can see scanned images of parish records (some in parts of Yorkshire as Durham had jurisdiction - check).



<https://www.freeukgenealogy.org.uk/>

Includes

FREEBMD/CEN and they are also doing a free census site but I haven't looked at it. The sites cover the country. With FREEREG you may be lucky as I was, or unlucky if volunteers haven't transcribed records in the area/period you want.

<https://www.freereg.org.uk> Parish records

[FreeBMD](#) Civil registrations

<https://www.freecen.org.uk/> Census Records

Durham University Probate records for wills etc. There may be info somewhere for Canterbury or other cathedrals or try the National Archives.

<https://n2t.durham.ac.uk/ark:/32150/s1bz60cw24m.xml>

BillionGraves <https://billiongraves.com/>

This is the world's largest resource for searchable GPS cemetery data.

Tyne Built Ships <http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/>

Although specific for the area, there are other sites in the same group which cover other local rivers, down to perhaps Whitby. Gives info about ships/builders/owners.

<https://www.theshipslist.com/>

– a recent interesting find which may be of interest - immigration reports for Canada, Australia etc.

Area information – see if there is a local history group for the county. Email the county archives – they may be able to help if you have a simple request that doesn't take much searching.

GOOGLE – do a general search with the name of the ancestor and rough date – you may be surprised! Could bring up details of books that have been scanned that you can search.

GOOGLE MAPS – use the Streetview facility with the map (little man in the legend) and drag to the street you want to see. Can do screenshots of houses (as well as making driving in an unknown area easier as you can 'drive' along the route you want to take!).

Bona Vacantia

The following information was shared by group member Barbara

McLean following her July presentation relating to **Bona Vacantia'**.

Official Explanation on Government website

Bona Vacantia' means vacant goods and is the name given to ownerless property, which by law passes to the crown to administer and the estates of people who die intestate (without a Will) and without known kin (entitled blood relatives) and collect the assets of dissolved companies and other various ownerless goods in England and Wales.

The Bona Vacantia office takes steps to find the next of kin and if no one comes forward after 30 years the assets are claimed by the crown.

Useful websites:

BONA VACANTIA: - www.gov.uk/government/organisation/bona-vacantia

Bona Vacantia list: - www.bonavacantialist.co.uk

Research on Convict transportation to Tasmania

Some useful websites connected with ships, shipping, the founding of Australia and the First Fleet.

maritimearchives.co.uk/lloyds-register - for a register of UK shipping listed annually covering the years 1796-1899, but some earlier records back to 1765 are also available. The register provides details of the ship's names, owner, master, size of ship, surveying port (for the purposes of rating the ship for sea-worthiness).

eicships.info - for ships owned by or leased by the British East India Company from 1600-1834. It is a 'work in progress' database, but if you are lucky, it will give details of ships, builders, owners, voyages and master(s).

danbyrnes.com.au/blackheath - this website contains a wealth of information about the founding of Australia, The First Fleet, the people involved, etc. Well worth a visit.

merchantnetworks.com.au - even more information on the founding of Australia, convicts etc. A companion website to the Blackheath Connection above.

firstfleetfellowship.org.au - gives a list of convicts, their occupation, their crime, date of trial, sentence, transport ship and final outcome in Australia.

Below are some useful links and information related to Convict research and transportation to Tasmania - kindly shared by Jane Lister.

Sources

www.libraries.tas.gov.au Free access to digitised convict records, plus plenty more

Sources referenced CON are documents held in Tasmania and can be found online at the Tasmanian Libraries website.

The CON14 series were called Indents. They were duplicated legal documents that were compiled during the voyage by personal questioning of the prisoner. They were used as a record on arrival in the Colony, for placing the convict.

CON18 series are description lists of male convicts. The documents were compiled on board the ship from individual examination, requiring the prisoner to strip to the waist.

The CON13 series are known as Assignment Lists.

The convicts were passed from the Crown to a contractor who was responsible for transporting them.

On arrival in the Colony the contractor then passed responsibility to the Governor.

The CON27 series were called Appropriation Lists and they recorded the trade of the convict and how his skill could be used. The record may also state the name of the settler or the department that the convict is assigned to.

CON31 Series of records were created to record the behaviour of the convict during his sentence.

The records were made retrospectively, so there were a lot of mistakes in chronology.

www.ancestry.co.uk

www.findmypast.co.uk

www.essexarchivesonline.co.uk Subscription site for digitised Parish Registers & Wills

www.discovery.nationalarchives

www.bdm.vic.gov.au Births, deaths & marriages in Victoria, Australia

www.trove.nla.gov.au Free access to newspapers

www.portarthur.org.au The resource centre offers look ups & document transcription, for a fee

www.slv.vic.gov.au

State Library of Victoria in Melbourne -

Digger Pioneer Index, Victoria 1836-1888

Melbourne Benevolent Asylum; Register of patients; burials at Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, Melbourne.

Tasmanian Family History Society - local knowledge, invaluable!

Note

You can research Ancestry.com free of charge at Wetherby Library.

Harrogate Library

Pam & Phil Westley, have informed me that Harrogate library has quite a large selection of family and local history resources in their local history area on the First floor. They also have a free advice drop in session for family history queries on Wednesdays between 9.30-11.00. They thought

that this may be of interest to the family history group and kindly shared it with us.

Please share any information that may be of interest to the group and I will add it to this our u3a Newsletter page.

Lesley Newnham, has made me aware of a website available if you have any Jewish Ancestry connections, it can be accessed via the following link
<https://www.jewishgen.org/new/>

The entries are translated, so you don't need to be able to read Hebrew.

Group Member Mike Bale has informed me that the GRO have added deaths up to 2021 and certificates or PDF's can be ordered if you have a known reference number. See website below:-

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/Login.asp>

The General Register Office has been providing PDF copies of historical birth and death records on line, since the 16th February 2019.

Applications for PDF's now cost £12.50, must be made online and include a GRO index reference.

England and Wales records are available to order in PDF format and include:

- 1. Certificates for birth, death, marriage, civil partnership and adoption events registered in England & Wales and for certain British Nationals, who were born, married, formed a civil partnership or died overseas.*
- 2. Commemorative marriage certificates for silver, ruby, golden and diamond wedding anniversaries.*
- 3. PDFs (Cost £8) for historical digitised civil registration records held by GRO (birth entries from 1837 to 1921 and death entries from 1837 to 1957)*

Of course you can also use the priority service, prices are from £38.50. (see GRO website for more information)

See GRO website for costs of other services.

Note: A PDF is not a certificate and has no “evidential” value, therefore a paper certified copy [certificate] is required for official purposes, e.g. applying for a passport, driving license or where required to give notice of marriage.

One hundred years since the end of WW1 and Collingham and Linton held several events during 2018 - see website

www.collinghamanddistrictwararchive.info

There were History Talks and a Heritage trail of Blue Plaques to commemorate the 23 soldiers who died in the war and for others who served or lived in Collingham and Linton.

The following are some useful websites that you may find of interest, to help locate information on family members, who served in the Great War:-

•**The National Roll of the Great War 1914-1918** – this gives a service history summary, for personnel involved with the First World War. Not all are soldiers, a number are civilians, and the entries include some women. However, not every soldier is listed, but you may be lucky. It is available via Find My Past or Ancestry.

•**RAMC-WW1.com** – this website is a vehicle for the staff of the RAMC museum at Aldershot, to add details of RAMC soldiers, as they become available. It also welcomes input from families.

•**Livesofthefirstworldwar.org** – an Imperial War Museum site, for remembering all personnel from the Great War. It is a useful list of names, regiments and army numbers, to aid further research elsewhere. **(Note: Officers do not have army numbers but use their rank as the identifier).**

•**The longlongtrail.co.uk** – is a very useful website for background information on soldiers in general, (although no specifics), regiments and battles of the British Army in the First World War. Nov 2017.

Lost Cousins is another site that offers some useful information and publishes a newsletter two or three times a year. You can decide if you wish to subscribe to view the newsletter for free follow the below link.

<https://lostcousins.com/newsletters2/midfeb18news.htm>

Phone Numbers Leeds Central Libraries.

Local and Family History/Information & Research Library – 0113 378 6982

Enquiry's (general information) – 0113 378 5005

To access Free Magazines & Newspaper Archives via Libraries.

You can access **Leeds Libraries** online resources from home at -

<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries>

Log in using your Library card Number LDP *****

Newspapers you will have access to over 5000 Newspapers from more than 100 countries in 60 different languages.

eMagazines A free eMagazine service offering a wide range of popular titles, which include, Who do you think you are? and Your Family Tree.

Library members can borrow up to 3 magazines for a timed period.

19th Century British Newspapers and much more.

For more information call 0113 378 5005 or speak to Library staff.

If you would like to become a member of The British Library, Thorpe Arch, please follow the instructions in the following link on how to get a reader

pass - <https://www.bl.uk/help/how-to-get-a-reader-pass>

=====

Recent Meetings

October 2026

This month's meeting was a joint presentation by Peter Burr and Sue Dyke whose family history research results included ancestors involved in this presentation entitled "**Bewitched**" which told the story of the Scottish Witch panics, and appalling atrocities inflicted on those accused of witchcraft. King James VI was convinced Witches were trying to kill him following a voyage to Denmark to marry Anne of Denmark when violent storms nearly sank his ship. The Danish authorities blamed witches and several women were executed for raising storms against the Royal Voyage. James became convinced witches were trying to kill him and this fear followed him back to Scotland and set off a chain reaction.

The "Witches of Tranent" were part of the wider Scottish Witch panics, when a young servant girl Geillis Duncan was suspected by her employer, David Seton, of witchcraft! The torture was barbaric and Geillis was tortured using thumbscrews, and under torture, named others and these confessions spread out forming a chain of accusations against over 70 people.

James VI wasn't just a king during the witch trials — he was a **driving force** behind them. His fear of witchcraft, his involvement in interrogations, and his publication of *Daemonologie* helped ignite Scotland's most intense period of witch persecution.

James VI wrote **the only book on witchcraft ever published by a reigning monarch**.

It argued that:

- Witches were real and worked directly for Satan.
- Torture was justified to extract confessions.
- Witchcraft was a capital crime that must be eradicated.

The book helped legitimize witch-hunting across Scotland and England.

September

Group Member Lesley Newnham gave an interesting and humorous

presentation entitled (**I read it in a newspaper, it must be true!**) Lesley gave examples of miss information for some events relating to her own Family History research as well as some completely wrong narratives of many serious crimes and events.

August

Group Member Phil Westley gave an entertaining and interesting presentation on his family history French connection! Phil did the reverse of what we see in all family history programs, by starting with himself and working backwards, concentrating on his parents and their parents etc... As he told us he has been researching his family connections for many years and by just following parentage's he has connections all the way back to Alfred the Great as well as French Royalty (hence the French Connection). Phil finished up by offering Burnt Cake and Garlic bread to members with their cuppa.

Sources:

Here is a list of the sources used in addition to the normal key records. Where there is now internet availability (often via the Anglo-American Legal Tradition (AALT) project) I have given a link that would take you to a page from where you can peruse the book.

A Genealogical History of Montford-Sur-Risle and .. by R.M. Deely, 1942.
#45 - A genealogical history of the dormant, abeyant, ... v. 2. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library

Burkes (Dormant) Peerage. Many older editions are available online through HathiTrust and the Internet Archive

Conqueror and his companions by Planche, 1874.
The Conqueror and his companions : Planché, James Robinson, 1796-1880 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

History of Walsall by F.W. Willmore publ. 1887.

A History of Walsall and Its Neighbourhood : Frederic William Willmore : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

I.G.I. (research done on microfiche in Latter-day Saints Church family history centres) International Genealogical Index (IGI) Records | FREE Search

Pedigrees from the Plea Rolls (AD 1200-1500) by Maj Gen the Hon G. Wrottesley (Society of Genealogists, public records, top floor, library).

Pedigrees from the plea rolls: collected from the pleadings in the various courts of law, A.D. 1200 to 1500, from the original rolls in the Public Record Office : Wrottesley, George, 1827-1909 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

Records of Beaudesert by William Cooper, 1931.

The Beaumont Heritage by R.M. Beaumont.

The Complete Peerage.

The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom : extant, extinct, or dormant : Cokayne, George E. (George Edward), 1825-1911 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

July

With no speaker available for our July meeting, Group leader Jeff Britton gave a presentation entitled **“Why Family History Matters”** as it introduces us to relatives we never knew, where our families came from, provides insight into occupations, traditions and migration, as well as preserving stories for future generations.

June

Group Member Sue Dyke gave (Part Two) of her presentation “**My Scottish Ancestors**” and the stories about members of the Seton family members she has identified from the enormous family tree she has discovered.

May 2026

Group Member Barbara Duncan followed up on her past presentation with the story of her Duncan ancestors, also from the North East of England who were in India at the time of the Indian uprising with a presentation entitled “My India Bits and Pieces”. The Duncans from Northumberland were a family long connected with the East India Company and had several members of the family in India during the mid 19th Century and were also involved in the India Uprising, both in the siege of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow. The presentation also gave the information of the voyage in 1859 of the Great Tasmania, a large Black Ball Line sailing ship, chartered by the government for the return of around 1000 soldiers from Calcutta to Liverpool. These men were largely those that refused transfer from the East India Company to the Crown following the abolition of Company Rule. Of the 1000 soldiers shipped at a cost of £7 per head, 60 died during the voyage and 100 were hospitalized to the workhouse infirmary on docking in Liverpool. The voyage was subject to an inquiry due to the putrid food and lack of hammocks for the number of soldiers transported. Following the inquiry the Officers who signed the General Inspection of the food for the voyage were the only ones named as **culpable**.

Sources

Paid for sites:

Ancestry (Family and DNA), Find My Past.

Free Sites:

FIBIS - Families in British India - Annual Subscription £15 though information obtained from their (open Access data base)

Family Search - Some searches give you records, but for actual details you are forwarded to a paid for partner site (Findmaypast)

Books - The Bengal Directories (Some are appearing online at Ancestry etc.

The Great Tasmania- Various newspapers reported the inquiry, but the best is from <http://www.old-merseytimes.co.uk> (Great Tasmania)

=====

April 2026

No Meeting (Good Friday)

March 2026

Sue Dyke gave Part One of her presentation “**My Scottish Ancestors**” which she researched on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) at her local Library in Wetherby, which is free to members of the library in the first floor computer room in the Library. Staff will help, however Sue has produced a guide, copies of which are available at our monthly meetings or a copy can be sent by email on request. Sessions are limited to one hour, but can be extended and any documents of interest can be forwarded to your personal email account.

Sue was researching her paternal grandmother with the surname of SETON. After research she was able to get back to her 8 times Gt Grandfather and after searching the family name on Google for Cullen and Fordyce using the “AI Mode”.

The results gave Sue the substance to get further back in her family story and after finding a digitised copy of a Book entitled “The Annals of Banff, volumes I and II printed in 1896 gave great detail of the Seton family dating back to 1306 and The Battle of Bannockburn and in 1568 the involvement of George Seton, 6th Lord Seton and his daughter Mary in assisting Queen Mary of the Scots escape from Loch Leven Castle to

Niddry Castle, which was owned by George Seton.
I know I for one am looking forward to part two!

Sources

- Websites: Ancestry.com, Wikitree, Wikipedia and Geni.com
- Book: An Old Family, or the Setons in Scotland & America, 1899.
- Book: The Annals of Banff, Vols I and II, published in 1896.
- Book: The House of Seton, A Study of Lost Causes by Sir Bruce Gordon Seton, 1939.
- Book: A History of the Family of Seton during Eight Centuries, Vol II by George Seton, 1896.
- Book: Memoir of Alexander Seton, Earl of Dunfermline by George Seton, 1883.

=====

February 2026

Glenys Pengilley gave a very informative presentation entitled “**Cornwall to Yorkshire via Pennsylvania**” with excellent slides from visiting the local areas in Cornwall, speaking with the archivist from the Cornish family History Society and purchasing material (postcards and books) in detailing the history of her husband's ancestors who were originated from Cornwall and had been hard rock miners, involved in mining iron stone, lead and copper. Her research was inclusive of many original documents, some of which varied in the detail of information given.

Glenys has kindly shared the Sources used in gathering the information for her research which she presented to the group at our February meeting.

Sources;

1. Family legend

2. JPs letter
3. Cornish Family History Society
4. World heritage site notice boards & leaflets
5. NT second hand bookshop booklets
6. Church gravestones
7. Postcards
8. Kirkleatham museum
9. Records of family talks re history & relations
10. Ancestry
11. Find my Past – US census records as well as UK info.
12. Free BMD

=====

December 2025

As we had no speaker, we completed a live demonstration of the New FreeBMD2. It was established that the old site for Births, Marriages and Deaths was still active and we found it difficult to access the new Web Page. Since the meeting I have established that the following link works.

[Search Query | FreeBMD](#)

Be warned, there are advertisements which will take you to site like MyHeritage.

I have since learned it a bit better by searching for known information first. It does give everyone the opportunity to research their Ancestors without having to subscribe to Family History sites like Ancestry, Find My Past and My Heritage. (Good Luck in your research)

November 2025

Guest speaker Phil Taylor from (Folk Finders) in Patley Bridge gave an in depth presentation on using DNA results to find your ancestors to prove your family line is actually your family line using DNA results. He did a live search to demonstrate the effectiveness of the system and proved that the [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) web site was by far the best for DNA testing due to the vast volume of participants using their service. Phil finished his presentation with avenues of further information on this subject.

- Crista Cowan, the Barefoot Genealogist - Web Site and You Tube Video's
- [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) - website tutorials & white papers.
- Debbie Kennett - website & You Tube.
- The DNA Geek - www.thednageek.com with up to date news.
- International Society of Genetic Genealogy - www.isogg.org
- Google - find anything DNA and family history related.

October 2025

Group member Lesley Newnham gave a presentation entitled "Hunt the Policeman".

Her presentation described her search for her Policeman ancestor in York who she discovered in the 1861 census. It showed up the necessity for investigating name changes and that the early policemen were unpopular with the rest of the population and that York Minster had its own police force.

September 2025

Group member Jonathan Park gave a very interesting talk relating to his research for one of his ancestors and his voyages and what life would have been like for the family left at home in the 1800's.

Jonathan has kindly shared the sources used in his presentation below:

Family history sources for William Chambers (1805-1884)

The details in this talk come from a wide variety of sources. Many of them are from websites like Ancestry and FindMyPast. Other details are from the GRO – a great advantage now is being able to get images of the birth and death entries at low cost, without having to order a full certified copy as in the past.

The National library of Scotland is excellent for historic maps.

Newspapers provide a lot of the information which helps to bring the dull listing of names and dates to life. But in this case publications like Lloyd's Register or the Shipping and Mercantile Gazette provided details of ships' sailings.

More information might have been available from the Hull Maritime Museum, but this has been closed for a complete renovation for the past year and hasn't reopened yet. However the new Hull Historic Centre has lots of information, and a visit to the Hull General Cemetery proved useful.

The following notes give more details of these various sources, including some URLs for the relevant web pages. Ctrl-Click on them should take you to your web browser.

Ancestry

The Ancestry web site provided most of the basic details. If you have a subscription or access to Ancestry, the URL links should work.

Baptism – parish records:-

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FYORKSHIRE%2FBAP%2F207593035>

Marriage – parish records

https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=9852&h=23405538&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=9852

Census – I get most of the census details using Ancestry, but most genealogy web sites include census records. This one is for William Chambers on board the SS Beatrice:-

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/8767/records/13994195>

Other documents – there is a wide range of other document collections in ancestry. This one is the Master Mariners Certificate:-

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2271/records/597183>

FindMyPast

Marriage:-

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FYORKSHIRE%2FMAR%2F500130850%2F1>

GRO

Birth or death index and certificate, after 1837

The index records are free at:-

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>

Click on 'Order Certificates Online' and then set up your own free account. Login and then 'Search the GRO Indices'.

Once you have found the right person, you can just copy the index record or select either certificate, pdf or image. Image at £3.00 is the cheapest and quickest. It is also better if the transcription has been incorrect.

FreeBMD

GRO only has the birth and death records in the searchable index. For marriages use FreeBMD:-

<https://www.freebmd.org.uk/search>

This can sometimes be a quicker way to find births and deaths as well.

Newspapers

I use FindMyPast to search newspapers. They have a good system now whereby you can create a personal collection and save the newspaper cuttings in it. The following URL may not work as it refers to my collection of clippings:-

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/collections/collection?id=57ba6353-8763-4748-96b9-68add9b862ea&route=my-collections&view-mode=mcm>

FindMyPast newspaper collection also includes Lloyds Register and the Shipping and Mercantile Gazette.

FamilySearch

This can be very good for finding baptisms, marriages and burials recorded in Parish Registers. However many of the original images are not available unless you go to a Family Search Center – the website has a searchable index to find where these are. This used to be the IGI and I have found that many of the matches and family trees they have put together are rather doubtful. But it is improving.

Here is one for William Chambers marriage:-

<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/NNWC-FQS>

Maps

The best source for historical maps is the National Library of Scotland.

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

This URL will get you to some historical maps of Hull:-

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=14.2&lat=53.74223&lon=-0.35359&layers=5046>

&b=ESRIWorld&o=100

Friends of Hull General Cemetery

This website has full details of most of the burials made in this cemetery. Here is the record for William Chambers:-

<https://www.friendsofhullgeneralcemetery.com/burial-search/?surname=Chambers&forenames=William&noname=&yearOfDeath=&compartment=&grave=&page=1>

August 2025

Group leader Jeff Britton gave a talk entitled “**Enhancing Family History Research using ChatGPT**”. Following a brief overview of AI and natural language processing and why it was relevant to genealogy.

It can help with the traditional challenges of genealogy, with fragmented records, handwritten documents and language barriers and in organising complex family trees and dead ends in your research.

Tips for Effective use

- Be specific in your prompts.
- Use follow up questions to refine your answers.
- Remember ChatGPT doesn't access live records.
- Always verify historical claims with sources.

Limitations & Cautions

- It does not replace genealogical databases.
- It can not access private or restricted records.
- It may guess if it lacks data.
- It is not a substitute for documentation.

We completed a live demo and followed with a Q & A session.

Closing Thoughts

- ChatGPT is a research assistant, not a researcher.
 - It helps turn dry data into stories.
 - Encourages curiosity and exploration.
-

July 2025

Group member Barbara McLean gave an interesting presentation on three individuals buried in Beckett Street Cemetery. Leeds who died in the war, but not by enemy action. Barbar had assisted "The Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery" with some research from which the information was obtained.

Sources: -

Ancestry.co.uk---Census,, Military history, BMD

Findmypast.co.uk-----Newspapers,Military history

Friends of Beckett St Cemetery-----History of cemetery, burial records

Leodis----Photos of old Leeds, Maps old Leeds,

Find a Grave-----Photos of graves

National Roll of Great War---Details from families of soldiers enlisted/died in WWI

June 2025

Group member Barbara Duncan's presentation entitled "**The Earlier Duncans**" told how she managed to find her Duncan ancestors and the methods used. It was interesting that Barbara discussed birth year discrepancies and touched on a possible answer of when the Julian calendar changed to the Gregorian Calendar in 1582 losing ten days!! Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar in 1582, however the switch happened gradually with England adopting it on September 2nd

1752.

The Earlier Duncans – some online sources (plus a couple of others) June 2025

Subscription paid – Ancestry; Findmypast; Northumberland and Durham Family History Society (NDFH).

NDFH have a useful section 'Wills and Probate Bonds 1701-1858' which records a list of individuals mentioned in a particular will (in whatever capacity). Let me know if you want to try and find someone this way.

FREE SITES

Familysearch (Mormon site) <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

Open a simple account which requires your name and email address. You can tick a box to be kept logged in for 2 weeks.

Archers software <http://www.archersoftware.co.uk/igi/>

Part of the IGI (International Genealogical Index), the on-line database created by Familysearch so you need the same familysearch account above for access.

Durham Bishops Transcripts –

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1309819>

If you google this you will get a link which is part of the Familysearch website where you can see scanned images of parish records (some in parts of Yorkshire as Durham had jurisdiction - check).

FREEREG/BMD

With FREEREG you may be lucky as I was, or unlucky if volunteers haven't transcribed records in the area/period you want.

<https://www.freereg.org.uk/> Parish records

<https://www.freebmd.org.uk/> Civil registrations

(You could use the General Register Office for a search – need a to set up a free account. This is a useful search facility as it gives the age of the deceased a lot sooner than BMD does <https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history>).

Durham University Probate records for wills etc. There may be info somewhere for Canterbury or other cathedrals or try the National Archives.

<https://n2t.durham.ac.uk/ark:/32150/s1bz60cw24m.xml>

Find a Grave for memorials <https://www.findagrave.com/>

Area information – see if there is a local history group for the county. Email the county archives – they may be able to help if you have a simple request that doesn't take much searching.

Eg. Lancashire Online Parish Clarks <https://www.lan-opc.org.uk>

I found information about marriages in Garstang Lancashire this way.

Sitelines Gateway to the Tyne and Wear's Historic Environment Record.

<https://www.twsitelines.info/>

GOOGLE – do a general search with the name of the ancestor and rough date – you may be surprised! Could bring up details of books that have been scanned that you can search.

GOOGLE MAPS – use the Streetview facility with the map (little man in the legend) and drag to the street you want to see. Can do screenshots of houses (as well as making driving in an unknown area easier as you can ‘drive’ along the route you want to take!).

May 2025

Group member Phil Westley had everyone involved in his very entertaining presentation entitled “**How I met my 4th cousin, once removed**”. Phil took us back in time in finding your relatives without the aid of the genealogy sites that just might share your data where you don’t want it, like (23andMe) which has just gone bust.

Phil illustrated this process using the example of how he discovered his 5th cousin, once removed. Along the way he gave everyone opportunities to do a little detective work with him, to try and solve various mysteries of some of his ancestors involved.

April 2025

Group member Lesley Newnham gave a presentation on a subject of which most will have an ancestor! “**Ag Labs the Salt of the Earth**”. Lesley explained in detail the lifestyle of an agricultural labourer within their contemporary environment. The presentation covered an understanding of the social and economic conditions which surrounded them in their daily lives and built up a picture of the type of work they did, what their living conditions were like and what the local influences were that affected each and every member of usually large families. The presentation was supported by some very interesting slides and statistics.

Sources

My ancestor was an Agricultural labourer by Ian H Waller

Findmypast - particularly the newspapers and census

Find a grave - findagrave.com - monumental inscriptions

Genuki - Information on population and trades/status within the villages
Google Images - the pictures may lead you into useful sites that don't appear in other searches.

March 2025

Group member Glenys Pengilley presentation came about after discovering the detail of a true story which she discovered by accident at an Alderson one name study group meeting. Her presentation entitled "The Stainmore Outrage" referred to a controversy in the early 20th century involving John George Lax, the vicar of St Stephen's chapel in Stainmore, Cumbria. After restoring the chapel in 1904, Lax's wife refused to reside in Stainmore. Subsequently, his association with Miss Mary Rennison, while still married, led to a scandal. This situation culminated in his deprivation of clerical duties in 1911, facilitated by a £500 payment from the Bishop of Carlisle. Glenys had researched the FMP newspaper archive which gave up over five hundred articles on the subject. Her knowledge of the area and postcards saved by her grandmother added volume to the presentation.

Sources of information for Stainmore Outrage presentation

Old postcards and photographs

Alderson Family History Society [Guild of One-Name Studies – One-name studies, Genealogy](#)

Book based on the events; Riding the Stang by Doreen Robertson. Pub'd by Hatloft

Find My Past subscription resources; census & newspapers

Google

Wikipedia

Cumbria Archives Service Catalogue – North Stainmore School - [Log book, 4 October](#)

1901-24 September 1926

February 2025

Sue Dyke gave a very interesting presentation relating to eight generations of her husband's maternal family tree dating back to 1764.

Sue initially created a family tree using BMD and Census records. From there she searched newspaper records at the British Library at Thorpe Arch as well as online.

She then began to look at where each generation of the family was at any one time and what was happening locally and nationally. Her presentation

included the change in occupations through the generations and the areas they lived.

The presentation covered the life of a weaver in the 1700's, the Industrial revolution and the installation of steam powered Mills and the unrest with the Luddite revolt and destruction of Mill Buildings and the newly installed looms in Horley in 1812.

Rivers and waterways were the new highways to transport raw and finished goods to these Mills and later generations became Waterman and later generations as Master /Barge owners.

Life on a barge in the 19th century was often hard and cramped, as barges were small, narrow boats used for transporting goods along rivers and canals. The crew typically lived on board for weeks or even months, dealing with long hours of work, unfavourable weather, and the constant demands of navigation. Space was limited, and living conditions were basic, with little more than a small cabin for sleeping, cooking, and storage. Many bargemen and their families worked together, with women and children often helping with tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and keeping watch. The constant movement meant a life of mobility, but also isolation, as they spent much of their time away from towns and villages. Despite the hardships, the barge provided a livelihood for many, and communities often formed around specific waterways, with a shared understanding of the hard-working, nomadic lifestyle.

