

# Oxfordshire

## FAMILY HISTORIAN



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**Front cover:**

A display board of arrows at the Wychwood Forest Fair 2015.  
Photo by Sue Honoré. The 600th anniversary of Agincourt is commemorated in this journal with an article by Ken Wise on Oxfordshire men who served in this period.



# Oxfordshire FAMILY HISTORIAN

*The Journal of the Oxfordshire Family History Society*

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## SOCIETY OBJECTIVES

1. to advance public education in family history and genealogy primarily within the county of Oxford
2. to collect, index, co-ordinate, publish and make accessible in the interests of genealogy any documents or records relating to the county
3. to promote the preservation of such documents or records
4. to encourage the study of genealogy
5. to assist educationally by lectures or otherwise in record research
6. to co-operate with Family History and other Societies with similar interests.



The Constitution of the Society is lodged with the Charity Commissioners and a copy is available from the Society's web site or, upon receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, from the Secretary.

Subscriptions are renewable annually on 1 January except that those joining during Oct, Nov, Dec have their membership carried forward through the following year.

**Membership renewal forms are distributed with the December journal.**

**UK members:** Individual £9.00, Family £10.00

**Overseas members** (incl. postage) £12.00

Cheques drawn in sterling and made out to Oxfordshire Family History Society should be sent to the Membership Secretary (see the Who's Who at the back of this Journal).

**Australian members** may pay via the Society's agent (member 2202) Mrs Barbara Geeves, 5 Esperance Court, Mount Martha, Victoria 3943, Australia  
Email: agent-au@ofhs.org.uk

Membership details are kept on computer and are used for Society activities only.

## Contributions to Future Issues

The *Oxfordshire Family Historian* is published three times each year with cover dates of April, August and December. Items for consideration should be submitted to the Editor. The earlier an item is received, the greater the chance of inclusion in the next issue. The deadline for the April 2016 issue is 15 January 2016. Urgent and short items may be submitted up to 1 February 2016.

The Editor reserves the right to edit, abridge, reject, or defer to a future date, all material submitted for publication. It is the contributor's responsibility to ensure that material submitted does not breach copyright laws. Contributions remain the copyright of OFHS and the authors jointly. The observations and opinions expressed in the articles and notices in the journal are those of their authors and not necessarily those of the Society.

## From the Editor

Do you have a common surname? For many years I have had a brick wall with my 2x great grandmother Sarah SMITH, who died young. Her baby daughter was farmed out to another family and only became reunited with her itinerant Baptist minister father and siblings as a young adult. My cousin, who lives in New Hampshire, was becoming interested in genealogy. Having seen the work I had done for her husband and having had some practice with her own Swedish family, she said she was keen on a project. I suggested Sarah SMITH, who had grown up in New Hampshire. I provided plenty of warnings about Ancestry public trees and books written by Victorian gentlemen, suggesting that Sylvia go for the hard-to-find documents in New Hampshire libraries/archives. Six months later, admittedly with a few clues from some public trees and Victorian gentlemen, but also based on several original documents and old New England town resources, I have a reasonable tree for Sarah. Now I can talk more about my pure maternal line (helpful for those DNA connections I am getting) and confirm that my maternal grandmother did come from many long lines of early New England pioneers (no

Mayflower, no Oxfordshire ancestors, but a fair smattering of repeat marriages within very few families and some interesting names and incidents along the way). So, having abandoned Sarah for 15 years, it was easier to find out about her in 2015.

By coincidence, a book appeared for review in this issue called *John Smith? – No problem!!!!*, by A & L Welsford, which tells the tale of another journey in tracking a Smith family back into Tudor times in Berwick, Ascott and Chalgrove in Oxfordshire. Not only that, but my stint at the Oxfordshire History Centre OFHS help desk this month consisted of queries for common surnames such as TAYLOR, CARTER, JONES and ADAMS. None of these surname searches will be easy, and all will be fraught with pitfalls, trying to separate multiple people with the same name, but in the end it is worth it. And like my cousin, along the way you will find out some fascinating stories of life in the past.

Why not put some renewed effort into searching out your relatives with those common names?

*Sue Honoré*  
OFHS JOURNAL EDITOR

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
See middle pages for details

## From the Chairman

The AGM has come and gone, 'all change' has been both a small change and a big change. Small in that two members of the committee have stood down, leaving just nine of us round the table. Big in that one of those who stood down was the chairman, so the committee has a new chairman - me, Malcolm.

I must thank Wendy for all her years of service as a committee member and, for the last 8 years, as chairman. I am aware that I have a hard act to follow.

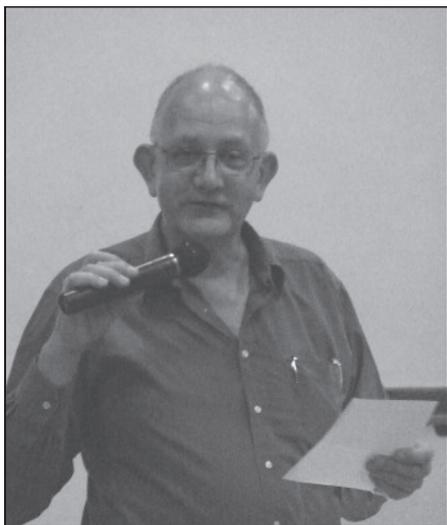
We also lost our minutes secretary, Sheila Tree, at the AGM so we have had several months in which Julie, our secretary, has stood in. I am pleased to say that member Sally Abbey has

agreed to take on the role of minutes secretary in a non-executive capacity.

With just nine of us on the committee, our meetings should take less time. However, the new chairman is less well practised in controlling the discussions and so short meetings are still an aim for the future. We are, of course, on the lookout for new committee members, but our aim is specifically to establish what skills are missing from around the table and to recruit people to fill those gaps. We are particularly seeking someone with publicity skills – everything from poster design through to delivery of publicity across multiple media. Please contact me if you know of someone who could fill this role.

So, what have we been doing recently? All the routine activities of managing the Society are running smoothly. Having been rather thrown in at the deep end, Simon has now found his feet in the role of treasurer. As this is being written rather late, I can report that Angie has also found her feet as organiser of our annual Fair which attracted a modest increase in footfall over last year and was considered a success by everyone I have spoken with. As well as our own fair, we have had a presence at a number of other events, most notably the Bucks FHS fair in Aylesbury, but also at smaller, local group events.

Our major project, the scanning of parish registers continues – the main



*Malcolm Austen taking on his first task as chairman, following a handover from Wendy Archer at the AGM*

scanned files are with Ancestry and a small batch of subsequent depositions are being prepared for scanning. Following on from this project, we are working with the Oxfordshire History Centre to identify suitable records for a follow-up project.

Alan has been cracking the whip on the MI teams during the summer and now has data from several churchyards

to turn into new CDs over the winter.

I think all that remains, given that you won't read this until early December, is to wish you all a Merry Christmas and please renew your subscription promptly in the New Year.

*Malcolm Austen*  
CHAIRMAN

## OFHS Family History Fair

The 2015 OFHS Family History Fair was a great success. We had 372 visitors this year, more than last year, which is excellent news. The new improved café arrangements were much appreciated, as they allowed people to have a good break between their visits to all the stands. We had some lovely comments from visitors including: "Our first visit and we are very impressed"; "Well presented and organised"; "Very helpful people providing new advice"; "Helpful advisors and friendly atmosphere".

Wendy Archer worked hard in the background on extra publicity and on

23rd September, Alan Simpson chatted 'on the sofa' to Alex and Craig from *That's Oxford TV* about Oxfordshire FHS and the fair at Woodstock. Alan had even researched some of Craig's PUNFIELD ancestry for him. To watch Alan, go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXLuMcOTT8o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXLuMcOTT8o)

I would like to thank all the volunteers and stallholders for their time and enthusiasm which made the event go so well. We look forward to seeing you all at the next OFHS Fair which will be on 1 October 2016.

*Angie Trueman*  
OFHS FAIR ORGANISER



*More photos overleaf*

# OFHS Family History Fair



*All photos of the OFHS Fair by Malcolm Austen*

# Manuscript to CDs

## *The history of how the Society has transcribed and indexed Parish and Census Records and made them available to all*

by Hugh Kearsley

*[Our President Hugh Kearsley, recognising that the history of OFHS' most popular offerings was little-known, has described the story of the development of the Society transcripts. Next time you purchase a CD to support OFHS, think of the long journey that has been travelled to produce it and the hard work of many volunteers over nearly 40 years. Ed.]*

Interest in transcribing and indexing Oxfordshire Parish Registers and other family history related resources started with the formation of the Society in 1977. The first *Oxfordshire Family Historian* contained mainly details of genealogically related documents of old Oxfordshire and where the records of the new parts of old Berkshire were located.

The earliest registers transcribed for the Society were done by Brigadier Goadby who was the Projects Organiser for many years. Other people were recruited by him and Colin Harris to do transcriptions. The Parish Registers were copied in manuscript in the church, Bodleian Library or later, at the Oxfordshire Record Office (Oxfordshire Archives and now Oxfordshire History Centre). They were often typed up by

others as a top and numerous carbon copies. Indexing, such as it was, was made from the transcript on to slips, which, at the end, were sorted and typed as a surname to year index only. Also, in some indexes, the year was often truncated to the last three digits of the year, perhaps to save on key presses, typewriter ribbon or paper! The top copy went to Oxfordshire Archives and other copies to the incumbent, the Society of Genealogists, the Bodleian Library and the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies (now Oxford Central Library). It was the copy at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies (often a photocopy of a carbon copy) that was filmed when we started producing microfiche. In most cases, a title page was typed and included a short description of the parish, the contents and acknowledgements to those people involved in the process.

Some early registers were badly faded and could only be read using ultraviolet light. Also some registers had been lost. Where possible the missing years were filled in using the Bishop's Transcripts. Again, some registers were copies of earlier probably damaged ones, leading to possible transcription errors.

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## Contributed Articles

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In the late 1980s, the facility for filming on to microfiche became available. The first OFHS films were of Monumental Inscription recordings. In 1992, while I was Project Coordinator, it was decided we should start filming the Parish Register transcripts. I had the job of borrowing the transcripts from the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies (COS) and taking them to a firm in Witney for filming and producing a master and copies of the fiche. Copies of these fiche could then be purchased by researchers to use at home. Unfortunately, the only copies we could borrow were from COS where they had been well thumbed and some pages were missing or out of order. Hopefully all these have now been spotted and corrected on our present CDs. There was also one sales problem! We were not allowed by the Bishop of Oxford to give or to sell our transcripts to the Mormons (the LDS, Church of the Latter Day Saints). We were, however, later allowed to transfer all our transcripts to CD with the same restriction as to the LDS church.

Parishes were always encouraged to deposit their old registers in the archives, where they were more easily accessed by transcribers. In some cases, registers were allowed by the incumbent to be withdrawn from the church or archives and worked on at home. They could then be given an indexed transcript which could be viewed by visitors without the incumbent having to produce the actual registers. The transcribed registers could then be happily deposited at

the archives!

The advent of computers allowed registers to be transcribed straight into spreadsheets from which clear printable copies with better indices could be produced. The aim of the project was to transcribe all registers up to the latest available with no stop date.

Then came the marvels of digitisation of images. We were able to have the old typed microfiche images converted to files that could be written to CDs and sold. As researchers were mainly interested in their families being in the same area, I took the decision to produce the CDs in series based on Registration Districts rather than alphabetically. This enabled many adjacent parishes to be on the same CD. The decision was also made to produce these files in Adobe Acrobat, pdf format, which could be read with a programme on the CD, or nowadays, available on all computers.

In the second issue of the *Oxfordshire Family Historian* in 1977, the Brigadier said that he had just transcribed Besselsleigh. This has since been retyped and extended in 1999. However some, like Cassington, are still available as photos of his old typescript, which go back to 1974.

Although it was intended that the early transcripts should be indexed individually and now all have been, these had to be produced manually. County-wide indexes were an aim. The first indexing project was a marriage index. It was first done for the old Oxfordshire Diocese parishes in

sections. Each entry was written on to slips in duplicate – one to be sorted for husbands and one for the wives. These were initially only available at the Oxfordshire Record Office – at that time in the basement of County Hall. The slips were filmed by the LDS church and a copy was given to the Record Office. It was then cut up and turned into a ‘microfiche’. Unfortunately many of these slips were missed in filming. When computers became available, these boxes of slips were borrowed and keyed in, producing the index of the complete county from the start of all registers up to 1837, which is now available on our Search Services (searches@ofhs.org.uk or available at OHC, Central Library and Abingdon Library). 1837 was chosen as a finishing date, as from then the GRO Indexes were available. However when Oxfordshire acquired North Berkshire, the marriage index was prepared as a separate index direct to computers and the finishing index date extended to 1851, and later to 1861, due to a need for researchers to fill in between the end of many transcripts in 1837 and the 1851 census, which had become available.

Having produced the marriage index, I then began, with the help of members all over the world, to work on a pre-1974 county-wide index for baptisms and burials. Microfiche could be posted to helpers anywhere in the world! These indexes led me to design our Search Services databases, which were relational databases written in

DOS Basic - before the term ‘relational database’ was invented! Having first written the programme, it has now been extended and updated to run on modern computers by Alan Simpson. However, the basic files are still produced using these old Basic programmes. Needless to say, these old programmes will no longer run on the latest version of Windows! Now new indexes have been produced for monumental inscriptions and cemetery records. Again, early on it was thought that indexes were only needed for up to 1837, as after this date censuses and the GRO Index were available, but family historians still wanted the extra information available in registers, such as the churchyard where they were buried. So we are now extending the baptism and burial Indexes to the latest date available.



*The Parish Register microfiche, first produced in 1994. They are still being sold, as long as stocks last*

## Contributed Articles

Another major transcription and indexing project was the county censuses from 1841 to 1901. We started using films of the 1851 Census. Paul Betteridge had to use the full power of Oxford University's mainframe computer to produce an index for just Oxford City! Later I was able to use my home computer to produce the indexes for the whole county, which in 1990/1 were then printed and sold as booklets. We then digitised the films, fully transcribing and indexing the 1841 and 1851 censuses, and at the same time also producing an index and transcript for use by our Search Services. The indexes were then produced for the 1861 to 1901 censuses. All the digitised films were then published on CD.

The first CDs were produced and sold by me in 2005, but demand soon meant we had to use a commercial firm. These came and went and we eventually found one here in Gloucestershire. The firm then moved to Cyprus, but continues to duplicate our CDs.

All the proceeds from the sales and searches was intended to be spent on digitising and helping to preserve the old documents. At present all original deposited parish registers and, in the case of Oxford St. John the Baptist borrowed from Merton College, have recently been scanned by the Society and offered to Ancestry, hopefully giving the Society an income for the future. However the Bishops Transcripts were not filmed. This means our transcripts and indices will still hopefully



*Some of the well-known CDs produced by OFHS to raise funds for further Oxfordshire family history work*

be more usable than Ancestry, particularly as many of our transcripts also cover those North Berkshire parishes, which since 1974 have formed part of present day Oxfordshire. Here we also cover a wider range of dates than will be available on Ancestry and the entries which are only available on the Bishops Transcripts.

There came a time when the sales of microfiche and CDs became too much for me, so I must acknowledge with thanks the help of those who took over these jobs from me. However, I still do updates to the CDs and continue to add more information to the Search Services indexes.

*Hugh Kearsey*  
OFHS PRESIDENT  
*hugh@windmillplace.org.uk*

Congratulations to Hugh and Jean Kearsey on their 60th wedding anniversary in October 2015.

# Who's Who in Oxfordshire FHS

## **Book Reviews:**

Contact the Editor – see inside front cover  
– book-reviews@ofhs.org.uk

## **CD/DVD and Microfiche Sales:**

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– fiche-sales@ofhs.org.uk

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Temple Road  
Cowley, OXFORD  
OX4 2HT

If you cannot find the role you are seeking in the list above, please contact the Helpline (see column 1 on this page).

# Diary Dates

For more dates, especially the many events hosted by the Society of Genealogists in London, see the joint GENUKI/FFHS event calendar at [geneva.weald.org.uk](http://geneva.weald.org.uk).

Events in bold will have an OFHS presence.

## December 2015

- Dec 1-Feb 2 Oxford, OXF  
40 years, 40 objects –  
History of Oxford  
Museum of Oxford,  
Oxford Town Hall
- Dec 1-Jan 31 Tower of London, LND  
The Battle of Agincourt:  
600th Anniversary  
Exhibition
- Dec 1-20 Oxford, OXF  
Ada, Countess of  
Lovell: Computer  
Pioneer exhibition  
Weston Library, Oxford
- Dec 3 Abingdon, OXF  
Christmas Customs  
Friends of Abingdon  
Museum  
Talk by Christine Bloxham
- Dec 8 Kew, LND  
Using the 1939 Register:  
Recording the UK  
Population before the  
War  
National Archives
- Dec 17 Witney, OXF  
Fawler Mines - Why  
Oxfordshire did not  
become the Black Country  
Witney & District  
Historical Society  
Talk by Alan Cobb

- Dec 17 Banbury, OXF  
Who Do You Think You  
Are? Telling your family  
story  
Banbury Museum

## February 2016

- Feb 13 Alwalton, CAM  
Guild of One-name  
Studies: The 20th Century  
is now History

## Feb 15 Bicester, OXF

### **Exploring your Roots Bicester Local History Society**

- Feb 20 **Talk by Alan Simpson**  
Canterbury, KEN  
Heraldry Day School

## March 2016

- Mar 12 Poole, DOR  
Dorset Family History Day
- Mar 19 Banbury, OXF  
The City of Oxford during  
the British Civil War  
1642–6  
Banbury Museum

## April 2016

- Apr 7–9 Birmingham WMD**  
**Who Do You Think You  
Are? Live**

# Meetings at Exeter Hall

## Oxford Road, Kidlington

### OX5 1AB

General meetings take place in the large hall.  
Bookstall and computer advice from 19:15. Talks start at 20:00.  
Computer meetings (\*) usually take place in the small hall.  
Doors open at 19:15. Talks start at 19:30.

**7 December 2015\***

*Computer Group Christmas Forum*  
*Bring your challenges for discussion/help*

**25 January 2016**

*Was your Ancestor a Morris Dancer? – John Frearson*

**1 February 2016\***

*A Good Read – Old Books Available on the Internet – Alan Simpson*

**23 February 2016**

*Who were the Hildesleys? – Tony Hadland*

**21 March 2016**

*Benson to Bruern—Recent Victoria County History Discoveries from the  
Chilterns to Wychwood—Simon Townley*

**4 April 2016\***

*Burial Grounds – Are they a Dead End? – Alex McGahey*

**25 April 2016**

*Detained in Britain 1914-1920: Germanic Internees and  
POW Camps – Colin Chapman*

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#### **Back cover:**

Part of the display of commemorative poppies for ANZAC Day, including those created by Leila Miller, described in her article in this issue. Photo courtesy Marilyn Healey.

