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## A message from the President

Although last term's Fiftieth Annual Dinner represented the undoubted climax of the Society's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, there remain some landmark events before this year's programme comes to an end. Whereas events such as the Annual Dinner and the Mountbatten Commemorative Lecture were chiefly concerned with commemorating the Society's past, this term's main ones, namely the Annual General Meeting and Accession Banquet, both taking place in late June, will be concerned with the Society's immediate future.

The term began with the usual single speaker meeting, a stimulating talk by Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith, and an additional outing to the Society of Genealogists which although attended by a rather smaller number than this year's previous outings, was much enjoyed by those able to participate.

I have greatly enjoyed the privilege of acting as Secretary, and then President, of C. U. H. & G. S., especially during such an important period in the Society's history. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the two Committees, for the years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, for their continuous support throughout my time in office- the success of events like the Fiftieth Annual Dinner was a fitting tribute to the Committee's enthusiasm and, indeed, that of a large proportion of the membership who attended. At this point I also would like to convey my best wishes to my successor as President, to be elected at the Annual General Meeting. I now look forward, as a member of the Society to all its future events.

*Rohan Stewart-MacDonald*

# THE LIVES OF OUR ANCESTORS

Michael Gandy

*Earlier in the Academic Year, Michael Candy spoke to the Society about a number of books which he would recommend to anyone who was anxious to gain an appreciation of the way our ancestors saw the world about them. He has given us the following list of titles with his comments.*

**From Lark Rise to Candleford**, Flora Thompson, 1939

Account other childhood in an Oxfordshire village in the 1880s and 1890s. If you can find a parallel account for your own area, read it as well.

**The World we have lost**, Peter Laslett, 1965 (and later edition)

First attempt to provide statistical evidence (largely from parish registers) about the conditions of the general population during the 1600s. How big were families? At what age did people marry? Who looked after the elderly? Did country people starve when harvests were bad?

**Old Farm Implements**, Philip A Wright, 1961

What tools were used for each of the farm tasks and how did they develop as mass production and more economical transport reduced prices to the point where machines were cheaper than men. Includes incidental information about those who made and used the equipment.

**The Wheelwright's Shop**, George Sturt, 1963

224 pages on a trade I knew nothing about although I had ancestors who were both coopers and sawyers. What a skill, to size up a tree in the forest and know how many planks of a given length it will yield and how they can be used to best effect. I never knew that a cartwheel was made of so many different types of wood and that it was concave. I certainly never thought of the difference between the top sawyer, bobbing up and down all day with the sun on his back, and the bottom sawyer, with the sun and the sawdust in his face. No wonder my William coughed up his lungs at the age of 50.

There are bound to be equally good books dealing with the trades your ancestors practised. Many have been written by old craftsmen who had run their own businesses and knew what they were talking about from the inside. The excellent "Shire Albums" are good starting points.

**Pattern under the Plough: aspects of the folk life of East Anglia**, George Ewart Evans, 1966. We often watch on television all those interesting anthropological programmes about the customs of the Amazonian Tribes without realising that we are just as quaint ourselves. In a sense Evans' book contradicts my view that things keep changing but it is fascinating on the magic of the house, rites to ensure fertility in the field, and herbal cures for everything under the sun. It makes one look at horse-shoes in a new way but, as for corn dollies I wouldn't have one in the house

**The Common Stream**, Rowland Parker, 1976

This is about the village of Foxton in Cambridgeshire. It is far and away the best book I have ever read on our medieval ancestors. Drawn from a single series of Manor Court Rolls, so nothing that we couldn't hope to find for some lines of our ancestry given a bit of time and better Latin. The poor peasants were fined for just about everything.

**Some Kentish Houses**, Elizabeth Melting, 1965

A collection of examples from the County Record Office. Kent was a prosperous county and these magnificent timber-framed yeomen's farmhouses still cover the countryside. But what does "timber-framed" actually mean? What did they cost? How were they built? How were they furnished? Why were so many of them built over a comparatively short time-span? Elsewhere there were parallel developments and specialist volumes dealing with vernacular architecture are available for most counties.

**The History of Myddle**, Richard Gough, (*First published 1834 but many more recent editions*). In 1700 an elderly yeoman in a Shropshire village sat down to write about everyone who lived there. He worked systematically round the pews of the church describing their occupants row by row: what they were like, what their forefathers had been like and how the villagers were related to each other. You couldn't wish for an account more tailored to the needs of the family historian. If only my ancestors had come from there!

**London Life in the Eighteenth Century**, M Dorothy George, 1925 (Republished)

If you think there is a drugs problem in our generation read about the gin-sodden Londoners of the 1720s or Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital to which 4000 babies were given away by parents in the first year. So many problems were drink-related as jobbing workman had to spend their days in the pub waiting to be hired and also their Saturday evenings there waiting to be paid. The rate of death in London was always so high that the population would have declined drastically in every generation - except that new arrivals were always flooding in. Furthermore the sanitation was appalling but, nevertheless, rather better than what had gone before.

**The Fields Beneath**, Gillian Tindall, 1980

This is the history of the parish of St Pancras in North London, originally field and now entirely urban (Camden Town, Tufnell Park, Kentish Town, Gospel Oak part of Highgate). The author's view is that all the main features and many of the very minor ones in most cities, still follow the lines of the old farm tracks and the estate boundaries that were there centuries ago. If you think that "before television we used to make our own entertainment" read about the young people indulging in hanky panky in the churchyard (about 1700) while their elders were half-drowning a poor old couple to see if they were witches. Thank God for mindless video games.

**London Labour and the London Poor**, Henry Mayhew, 1861-2 (Often republished & selections) Mayhew was a journalist who, for years, filled his weekly column with snippets of London life including many examples of individuals describing their day.

Try "the London Street Markets on a Saturday Night", "The Life of a Coster-Lad" (plenty of fancy clothes and cash to treat his 'Liza), the "Running Patterers" (selling Famous Last Words" at the foot of the gallows), the "Sheep's Trotter Women" going around the pubs trying to stop the drunken woman taking a bite and refusing to pay. If you ever feel your life is hard try the "Pure-Finders" - collecting dog's mess by the bucket and hauling it down to Bermondsey for use in softening leather, or - even more harrowing "The Crippled Street-Seller of Nutmeg-Graters".

**A History of Shopping**, Dorothy Davis, 1966

**Shops and Shopping 1800-1914**, Alison Adburgham, 1989

These two make a great pair, the first concentrating on the earlier period. The civic authorities were paranoid about hoarding. Shops were forbidden so all traders had to sell in the open market, on the same day, at the set times, at the fixed prices - witness the punishment for "fore-stalling". Since food would not keep fresh and so many of the population lived from hand to mouth there had to be a permanent supply of the right amount of beer, bread and meat. Fast food is not a new thing: these rickety old lodging houses had no facilities for cooking - they caught fire often enough as it was - so a lot of our town ancestors just ate out of pie shops. As for junk food, some of you may know the original Sunday School chorus on which this little rhyme is based:

*Little drops of water,  
Little grains of sand,  
Make the milkman mighty,  
And the grocer grand.*

Chalk in me flour, vitriol in the beer, brickdust in the tea and cocoa, verdigris to make the pickles nice and green, rat's bane in boiled sweets to give them a nice sparkle ....!

The difficulties of obtaining food in the towns were mirrored by the problems of getting anything else in the country. Packmen brought round anything they could carry and - eventually - standard items became available in the market towns. However luxury goods, usually were manufactured in London, so the logistic problems of delivering a large mirror to Leicestershire or a piano to the Lake District, were of almost military proportions. The second book concentrates more on clothing and ways of bringing luxury wear within the financial reach of the middle classes. In earlier times people had ordered what they wanted (by letter, often unseen) or asked the shop assistant to produce a specific item. By the 19th century entrepreneurs had introduced the department stores, displays and the opportunity for customers to browse, making "shopping" the most popular outdoor leisure activity in the world. We tend to forget that it was a significant step for ladies to take a cup of tea in public, let alone go to a dress shop to be fitted as opposed to having the dressmaker call on them at home.

**Sweet Saturday Night: Pop Song 1840-1920**, Colin Maclnnes. This is a delightful history of the old music halls in London from "Willikins and 'is Dinah" to "Oh! Mr Porter", both of which my Grandma used to sing. The entertainment scene was not

national (and certainly not international) so many stars had a great local reputation which often did not transfer elsewhere. There was also the middle-class parlour repertoire ("Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar ...") and the religious top ten ("The Lost Chord" and "Jerusalem"). Even people who had never been drinkers still loved to sing "Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine" (an American import).

**Hampstead and Highgate Directory, 1885-6 (Reprinted 1985)**

There are literally hundreds of local directories for virtually every part of the British Isles in the 19th century. Apart from the simple alphabetical lists - court and commercial - they are like a map of the area in which our ancestors lived. Many of them are arranged by street so we can see our ancestors' neighbours and how near they were to shops churches theatres, industrial developments, etc. Some have integral maps but there are plenty of reprints of old maps which are now widely available.

**A Child of the Jago, Arthur Morrison**

Many who lived in Bethnal Green and Shoreditch (London) in the 1880s had a hand-to-mouth existence often having to supplement any casual earnings with the proceeds of petty crime. These were people whom our ancestors would tell their children to avoid. At St James', couples were married in job-lots at cut rates with no questions asked. The Vicar was a do-gooder, not a shyster, but the Bishop closed him down.

**Round About a Pound a Week, Maude Pember Reeves, 1913 (Reprinted 1979)**

In 1909 a number of working class women with husbands in regular work were helped to keep detailed records of exactly how they spent their housekeeping. These were our respectable grandparents who worked very hard but it turned out that they simply could not manage on the income. Their total budgets were scrutinised to see what they spent on furniture, bedding, cooking, hygiene, clothing, and every mouthful they ate. They were utterly decent people. Surely there is no justification for any of us to complain about our own circumstances.

**The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Robert Tressell, c1911 (*Many later reprints*)**

The lives of painters and decorators in Hastings, Sussex early in the last century. Details the way the trade operated together with the political overtones.

**A Hoxton Childhood, A S Jasper, 1969**

Lovable cockneys from the 1920s who drink, row, fight, sober up and fight again. You might think that this would have been the same story if it had been written about the back streets of Liverpool, Newcastle, Nottingham or Dublin but not so. These places are all different now, and were even more different a couple of generations ago.

**The English: A Social History 1066-1945, Christopher Hibbert**

Over 700 pages but a very light read. An enjoyable overview with lots of classic quotes largely drawn from literature. Something on virtually everything.

**A Cartoon History of Architecture**, Osbert Lancaster, 1975

Beautifully detailed line drawings with intelligent, often tongue in cheek, descriptions of the changing styles in both exterior and interior decoration up to the 1960s. The Why? Is as interesting as the Who? and What?, especially where our parents and grandparents are concerned.

**Bonfires & Bells: National Memory & the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan & Stuart England**, David Cressy, 1989. In the Middle Ages the ordinary person's round of holidays was based on the church. After the Reformation, Puritans disapproved of all of them (including Christmas) except Sundays. This book shows how a new series was slowly established (The Monarch's Birthday, Thanksgiving for the Defeat of the Armada, Bonfire Night, The Martyrdom of Charles I, Oak-Apple Day) which broke up the year and also helped to mould English patriotism.

**For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present**, John R Gillis, 1985. This book traces the development of marriage from a private contract into a public ceremony. It moved into the market square and then the church porch, men into the church itself. At the same time parents asserted their control over the marriages of their offspring so that for many years no-one could marry under the age of 21. Many of the 16th Century Puritans had felt that it should never be permissible for someone to marry without the consent of their relatives.

## **Forthcoming Conferences and Other Events**

5 August 2000	Local and Family History Fair <i>Llandrindod Wells, Powys</i>
1-3 September, 2000	Weekend Conference - Lincolnshire FHS Incorporating FFHS Council Meeting <i>Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln</i>
23-24 September 2000	Family History Experience Society of Genealogists <i>NEC Birmingham</i>
25-28 September 2000	Victorian Times Week Exhibition and Lectures <i>Public Record Office, Kew</i>
27 September to 1 October, 2000	Perth Congress 2000 <i>University of Western Australia</i>

Please note that further details of the above events are available on the Genealogical Websites [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk) and [www.pro.gov.uk/events/eventlist.htm](http://www.pro.gov.uk/events/eventlist.htm)

## BOOK REVIEW

**An Introduction to Friendly Society Records;** *Roger Logan*, pub. by FFHS (Publications) Ltd, Bury, Lancs, 2000. 46 pp, A5 format, pprback. ISBN 1 86006 115 X, £3-95.

This welcome addition to the Federation of Family History Societies' introductory series provides a valuable insight into a very large group of records relating to Friendly Societies which, hitherto, very few family historians have utilised in their research.

The movement towards establishing these "self-help" groups within villages and small communities began to gather momentum in the 18th Century, so that by 1793 the Friendly Societies Act was on the Statute Book. The legislation authorised any number of persons ... to form themselves into ... societies of good fellowship ... for the mutual relief and maintenance ...in old age, sickness and infirmity or for the relief of widows and children of deceased members. By 1803 almost 40 of English families were associated with a friendly society. Ten years later the concept of the friendly societies was enlarged to encompass national bodies to which local groups could be affiliated, giving rise to the now familiar orders of Oddfellows, Foresters and others.

Over the last 200 or so years, the many societies which have come into existence have generated a substantial number of records, including in each case a registered set of rules financial bonds in respect of the principal officers, certificates for members exempting them from the law of legal settlement, details of meeting places and property, application forms, cash books and membership lists. The archives of the trade-based, county and national societies often contain more formal material including branch directories membership registers, journals and magazines, illustrated biographies, minutes, reports' details of specific funds, etc.

A great deal of the above material has been transferred to local record offices but at the present time there is no central index enabling the researcher to locate specific information Roger Logan has included appendices, indicating the numbers of local and national societies which have deposited records in English Scottish and Welsh county collections However he points out that although there are some references in the National Register of Archives, these are not comprehensive. Nevertheless sufficient data are accessible to the family historian to make the use of Friendly Society records a worthwhile proposition.

It should be possible to find firm evidence of the presence of individuals and families in particular places at given times, In the case of anyone who happened to be an officer of a friendly society then a great deal more information is likely to be available. Such detail can be supplemented by checking local newspapers which frequently reported on friendly society functions.

In this booklet, Roger Logan has introduced us to a remarkably comprehensive series

of documents which are capable of providing access to evidence which we may have been unable to discover in some of the more orthodox sources. I now look forward to following up his very practical suggestions in my own research.

*Derek A Palgrave*

## **Editor's Postscript**

The Escutcheon is compiled for and by the members of the Society. I would like to thank all those who have sent in articles and reports for inclusion in future issues of our Journal. I look forward to receiving further contributions from them and from any other members with information of interest to our readership. If you wish you may contact me by E-mail (see address below), but conventionally posted typescripts, Word files on floppy disk or attachments are all acceptable.

So far we have been able to produce around eight pages per issue and, on a few occasions we have increased the number of pages to twelve. With additional contributors we might be able to justify even more pages each term. Often we have visiting speakers who cover topics which are of more than usual interest to our members and in such situations it is the custom for the Society to invite edited transcripts for publication in these pages.

Original articles are always welcome irrespective of their precise subject matter although items related to the University and its Colleges have an obvious appeal. For instance Eve Logan's recent two-part article, devoted to marriages in Cambridge College Chapels during the Eighteenth Century, was particularly apposite. It is the Society's intention to publish the whole of the resultant indexed transcripts in microfiche form provided the copyright holders give their full permission.

The Society's affiliation to the Federation of Family History Societies allows us to submit abstracts of the articles that we publish in The Escutcheon in the Federation's publication Family History News and Digest. In general each issue of the latter contains approximately 600 abstracts thereby drawing the attention of researchers around the world to the considerable body of genealogical literature which is continuously appearing in print. In the longer term it seems likely that this material will appear on the Federation Website.

Incidentally readers who are already on the Internet may like to visit the Society's website <http://www.c3m.ac.uk/societies/cuhags> which features several back numbers of *The Escutcheon* published during the period 1995-1999. John Horton has inserted links so that individual articles may be accessed with ease.

In the past we have published lists of surnames, associated with specific locations, which occur in the ancestry of our readers, This was to enable others with similar links to make contact. If you would like to take advantage of this option please let me know.

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