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No 58**

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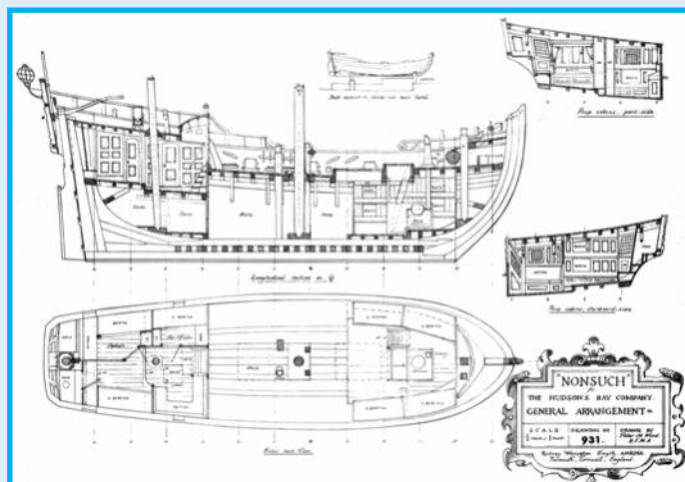
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HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

by Ian Waller



apparently no registration at the College of Arms until 1921 despite archive material showing that the company used its coat of arms from 1671 onwards.

How British was the Hudson's Bay Company?

From the voyage of the *Nonsuch* ketch in 1668 on a speculative voyage and its return a year later with news that fur trading in the Hudson Bay area was both possible and lucrative, HBC's administrative offices, warehouses and the most significant fur auction houses in the world were headquartered in London for almost 300 years.

Initially, the company's shareholders met at Prince Rupert's residence or one of London's coffee houses to conduct its business even though they had premises in London. From 1682 they leased premises at the Scriveners' Hall, Noble Street. They later moved to Fenchurch Street and then to Lime Street. In 1925, HBC opened Beaver House, Garlick Hill which contained administrative offices, fur auction rooms and a warehouse. In 1940 their head office relocated to Beaver House from Hudson's Bay House. Beaver House was the official headquarters until 1970. Throughout its lifetime the company employed around 20,000 people, many working in the United Kingdom as well as those living and working in Canada or on company ships.

The London-based officials, who rarely or never experienced the realities of life in Canada, were unable to comprehend the long winters, supply shortages and starvation which affected all engaged in Canada's fur trade.

HBC is still active with headquarters now in Toronto, Canada and New York, USA.

The Deed of Surrender

In 1869, HBC transferred Rupert's Land back to the Crown by a Deed of Surrender, and in 1870 the land was incorporated into the Dominion of Canada. The company

The records of genealogical value generated by the East India Company are well known, but what about another British company which was also established in the seventeenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company? It involved a significant number of British employees as well as the indigenous communities in present-day Canada.

Charter and seal of the Hudson's Bay Company

Hudson's Bay Company was established in May 1670 when Charles II granted a charter to his cousin, Prince Rupert. The king decreed that the land was his to give as no other monarch had claimed it and he did not recognise indigenous sovereignty; he named the area Rupert's Land. Over the years, supplementary charters modified the original, the last being in 1970.

Originally called *Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay*, Prince Rupert served as the first royal governor. Terminology used by the company may appear unfamiliar; the chairman was the governor and the investing stockholders were the adventurers. The stockholders were known as proprietors and their meetings were called general courts. The governor, deputy governor and committee were elected at the general court. The company was initially established as a joint-stock company, and in 1863 shares were publicly traded.

The original charter made HBC the proprietors of Rupert's Land which consisted of around a million-and-a-half square miles in what is now northern and western Canada surrounding the Hudson Bay drainage basin. The charter included large tracts inhabited by Inuit and First Nations communities.

The first company seal was made in 1671. There was



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received compensatory payment and extensive land holdings. For the first two hundred years of its existence the fur trade had been the chief trade of the company.

When Rupert's Land became part of the Dominion of Canada, HBC had to adapt and diversify as agricultural settlements began to transform Canada. The company established retail outlets across the prairies and throughout British Columbia, and was involved in the sale of farmland and urban building plots. HBC's mineral rights formed the basis of its oil business from 1926-1982.

Competition from the North West Company

The North West Company, which also traded in furs, was established in 1783 with operations around Lake Superior plus the Red and Saskatchewan Rivers. It expanded to include areas on the shores of the Arctic and Pacific oceans, as well as in the USA around Oregon, Washington State and Idaho. Competition with the HBC was intense after the company established a base on the Red River in Manitoba in the early 1800s, so much so that a major conflict occurred between the two companies with HBC destroying the North West Company's Fort Gibraltar and capturing Fort William. The two companies merged in 1821, subsequently trading under the HBC banner.

The beaver fur trade

The fur trade made HBC's shareholders wealthy. In the early/mid-1700s company imports from Rupert's Land totalled more than one million beaver pelts with a huge financial value. Driven by the demand for felt hats, the company built outposts along the rivers that fed into Hudson Bay. These were manned by officials and traders. These outposts became establishments where trappers came to exchange beaver pelts for largely European goods.

District fur returns were maintained by the departmental headquarters in Rupert's Land of the types and quantity of fur consignments. The returns also listed the number of animals that were traded at particular posts in the districts for each year. Records of furs collected at posts are in the account books created by those posts. Each post's account books are arranged chronologically.

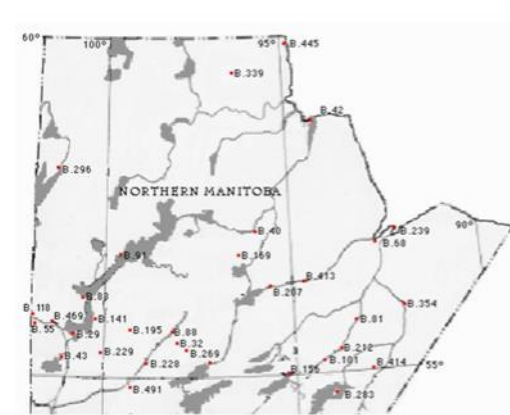
The "Made Beaver" currency



HBC did not use standardised currency outside of Britain. To standardise the terms of the trade, the company introduced its own currency, known as *Made Beaver*. Trade tokens were the earliest currency used in the fur trade, some being made of ivory. Fur-trade tokens or

beaver coins were made by cutting copper and brass from kegs into a rectangular or circular shape and marking them with the letters HBC and the initials of the trading post

Northern Manitoba



B.29 Carlton House (Three Points)	B.101 Knee Lake	B.269 Cross Portage
B.32 Chatham House	B.118 Loon River	B.283 God's Lake
B.40 Chipewyan Lake	B.141 Nelson House	B.296 Lac du Brochet
B.42 Fort Churchill (aka Fort Prince of Wales)	B.156 Oxford House	B.354 Sturgeon River (aka Shamattawa)
B.43 Cold Lake (English River)	B.169 Portland House	B.399 Caribou (not on map)
B.55 Duck Portage	B.195 Fort Seaborn (aka Nelson River House, Nelson House)	B.413 Gillam
B.68 Flamborough House	B.207 Split Lake House	B.414 Gisipigimack
B.81 Gordon House	B.212 Swampy Lake	B.445 Nonala
B.83 Granville House	B.228 Wegg's House	B.469 Pukatawagan
B.88 Hulse House	B.229 Wepiskow Lake	B.491 Wabowden

manager. Standard exchange rates were eventually enforced. The *Made Beaver* currency valued goods by placing them against the standard of one prime beaver pelt, which at the time could buy two pounds of sugar or a pound of black lead. The tokens were exchanged for goods and supplies available at the particular outpost. By the early 1820s beaver numbers had declined so trade managers stopped purchasing pelts and the *Made Beaver* slowly declined.

York Factory and the early trading posts

The first trading posts were established on James Bay in 1670/71. York Factory was a settlement and main trading post on the southwest shore of Hudson Bay at the mouth of the Hayes River. It was the second trading post built in 1684 becoming the company's regional headquarters between 1821 and 1873. It ceased trading in 1957. It was one of the most important posts and distribution points for the company and the centre of the HBC's fur trade and other business dealings with the indigenous peoples throughout all of Rupert's Land. Between 1788 and 1795, the company constructed a fort at York Factory known, due to its shape, as *The Octagon*; it was demolished in 1831.

By the mid-nineteenth century York Factory was an extensive trading post and settlement with a permanent workforce but declined in the 1860s and 1870s due to the creation of the Dominion of Canada and changes in the company transportation network. By the mid-1870s York Factory ceased to be a distribution centre.

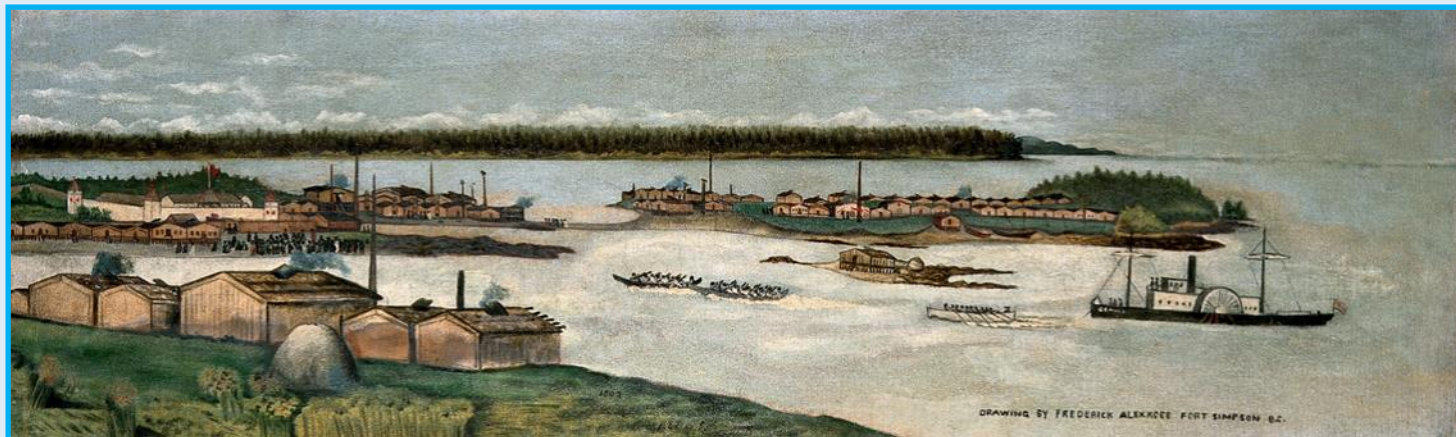
In 1936, York Factory was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada and is now operated by Parks Canada.

Fort Nelson

In 1684, Fort Nelson, a fur trading post, the first



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Fort Simpson. Oil painting by Frederick Alexkcee (Alexcee), 1902. Wellcome Collection, public domain.

headquarters of the company, was established at the mouth of the Nelson River, enabling access by canoe. Fort Nelson initially operated by drawing First Nations traders to the post as opposed to sending its own traders out into the field.

Fort Chipewyan

Fort Chipewyan is one of the oldest European settlements established as a trading post by 1788. The fort was named after the Chipewyan community close by. It was the first fort to contain a library with over 2,000 books by 1790.

Fort Wedderburn

From 1815 until 1821 HBC maintained a competing fort on Coal Island only one-and-a-half miles from Chipewyan and instrumental in the reorganisation of the fur trade.

Fort Vancouver

The original Pacific coast headquarters of the HBC operations was Fort Vancouver erected in 1843 and originally known as Fort Albert, and later as Fort Victoria, situated on the Columbia River, however, ships encountered difficulties when entering the mouth of the river. It was distant from the lucrative fur trade of New Caledonia to the north. In 1846, after the signing of the Oregon Treaty, the Fort was of no use to the company as Britain surrendered its claims to parts of the USA although it retained Vancouver Island. At its peak, Fort Vancouver became the administrative centre for a network of outposts and employed over six hundred staff.

HBC required more than just the fur trade and the Pacific north-west offered potential for agriculture. Self-sufficiency in foodstuffs reduced operating costs as the company would no longer be reliant on imported foodstuffs. Fort Vancouver's agricultural enterprise included orchards, crops and dairying along with cattle and pig production for meat.

In 1849, the company was granted exclusive proprietary rights over Vancouver Island on condition that it established a settlement within five years or the grant would be revoked. A town was laid out becoming the colony's capital. Despite the settlement, HBC business

changed as wild animal populations declined from excess trapping which ultimately slowed the fur trade. By 1850 the company was trading in salmon with Hawaii and furnishing Royal Navy ships with supplies for the Crimean War. The colony continued to prosper following a small shipment of gold by HBC's governor of Victoria which drew thousands of Californians to the Fraser River valley gold rush.

Trade, cultural and social values

The company gave its employees an adventure and spread British business and trade practices along with cultural and social values throughout the area. They mapped British Columbia's interior and charted the Arctic coast, utilising the talents of indigenous guides.

Although company officials viewed their venture as a business, many did not realise that it created a complex network of social relationships between the traders and indigenous communities, particularly women and children. The basis of the company's fur trade was simply the exchange of furs for goods and commodities. The fur trade, however, could not have worked without the indigenous peoples' labour and knowledge. Many fur trappers died of smallpox resulting, for economic reasons, the company providing vaccinations from around 1796.

The importance of indigenous women

Indigenous women were essential to the fur trade as their knowledge was key to newcomers' survival in an area they did not understand. There are very few written accounts in the archive expressed from a female viewpoint because most related to the fur trade written by the non-indigenous men. The indigenous women were, however, a driving force in the economy, cultural and social spheres of the area and formed intimate relationships with traders. Indigenous women ensured the health of many by fishing, hunting and gathering, and preparing food. They produced moccasins, snowshoes, and canoes facilitating travel along fur trade routes. Many also worked as traders. Indigenous women were invaluable within their communities and for the long-distance exploratory expeditions.

Intimate partnerships were entrenched in the fur trade despite the HBC trying to keep its venture all-male. Initially,



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policies were implemented to restrict women's presence at its forts and factories, and relationships between indigenous women and company men were prohibited. These policies failed because indigenous peoples defined the terms of interaction so much so that intimate partnerships actually strengthened commercial relations.

Often defined as "country marriages", intimate ties between indigenous women and fur traders were mutually beneficial. Fur traders benefited from their wives' knowledge and connections. Country marriages were complex relationships that could be stable or unpredictable, respectful or violent. As part of their work, the European fur traders accepted temporary or transient postings that sometimes resulted in indigenous wives and children being abandoned or living in poverty. In many cases, however, strong ties provided protection and support to indigenous women and their children. Ultimately, these families developed a unique culture that led to the emergence of the Métis people.

Hudson's Bay Company and the Orkney connection



Stromness 1821 by William Daniell (1769-1837).

From the early-1700s Orcadians were recruited to join HBC with the incentive of higher wages and avoidance of the Navy press-gangs. Recruitment was so successful that each June, when the ships docked in Stromness to take on supplies, they would remain for a couple of weeks when up to a hundred men would be engaged. By 1791, HBC had appointed a Stromness merchant as their local agent which resulted in three-quarters of the company workforce in Canada being from the Orkney Islands.

Until the 1890s, the company's ships used Stromness harbour as the last stop before crossing the Atlantic and a place where fresh water supplies were taken on board. Ships would return to Stromness in November bringing back those who had completed their service, some brought indigenous wives with them. These men brought news from those still in Rupert's Land and any requirements such as books, clothing, sweets, etc., which were sent out on the ships the following June. After service of between five and ten years most of the men returning from Canada had saved enough money to purchase a croft.

Stromness Museum has *Orkney and the Hudson's Bay Company* interactive exhibition online (see end) which includes maps of HBC outposts.

The Bay Steamship Company

The Bay Steamship Company Limited was incorporated in January 1916 in London as a subsidiary of HBC to purchase and manage vessels supplying goods during the First World War. From 1919, the company gradually reduced operations and in 1921 transferred the remaining steamships to the French government but continued to exist without trading. From 1928 it operated SS *Baynain* until sold in 1932. Four vessels were purchased in 1957 and were originally chartered for ten years but were disposed of by 1962. The company was officially dissolved in 1974.

Archives

From 1670 the company kept a comprehensive archive of its staff and operations. Most of the records are continuous. Many of the company records are available on microfilm at The National Archives in Kew (see later). The earliest record is a minute book of the governors and committee commencing in 1671. Since then most of the minutes to c1970 have survived although there is an unexplained four-year gap.

London's head office arranged the pre-1870 company records to allow better research access and the archives opened to the public in 1931. In 1934, a review took place resulting in the commencement of classification and cataloguing plus instigation of conservation, storage facilities and subject indexing. In time, the location became problematic as the archives were in England and many researchers were based in Canada and North America.

The Hudson's Bay Records Society was created in 1938 to publish an official history of the company. The Society annually published volumes of selected records from the archives including minutes, correspondence, journals of trade and exploration together with personal letters of officials (list of titles <https://www.mhs.mb.ca/info/pubs/hbrs.shtml>). Most editions are out of print but may be accessible in some Canadian libraries or digitised online.

A project to microfilm the company records up to c1870 took place from the 1950s up to 1966. The archives department in London sent copies to Canada. Although the company's head office moved to Canada in 1970 it was not until 1974 that the archives followed. Twenty years later, the archive was given to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba to establish the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. The company also donated to the Manitoba Museum thousands of artefacts, mainly from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries relating to indigenous and fur-trade cultures.

Besides the company records, there are numerous private records such as diaries and letters which complement the official records and give a valuable personal insight into people's experiences.



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The archive includes some 130,000 images (some were used in the *Who Do You Think You Are?* TV programme featuring Kevin Clifton). Most of the photographs are twentieth century but some date from the 1860s. Many were used in the *Beaver* magazine, originally a company publication. The collection provides an illustrated record of HBC employees, the fur trade and an insight into the indigenous peoples and their cultures. The *Beaver* magazine was published by the company from 1920 and related to Canadian history in which the company played a pivotal role. The *Beaver* became *Canada's History* magazine in 2010, which is supported by the HBC History Foundation. Some editions of the *Beaver* are available on the Internet Archive (see end).

The archive includes a superb collection of fur trade maps covering northern America, dating between 1563 and c1982. Many of the maps were drawn by company employees but a number are by indigenous people. A collection of architectural drawings includes plans of the forts around Hudson Bay.

The archive includes films, videos and sound recordings, some of which are raw footage from company employees in various locations, mainly the inter-war years and include images of company posts and ships, people and wildlife. Part of this collection includes films of Inuit and First Nations communities. These films were originally preserved by the British Film Institute. Sound recordings include oral histories of interviews with retired employees which, by their nature relate to the twentieth century and provide a further personal perspective of working for the company.

Other records in the company archive reveal detailed daily transactions at the various outposts and forts, daily records of journals kept at each post, and exploration maps.

Ships' histories cover vessels owned or chartered by the company. This series may not be complete but the information included about the ships includes: name and type of ship; geographical area of operation; description including dimensions, tonnage, builder, number of crew, etc; significant events in each ship's history; name of the master and dates of service; photos and drawings; source references for microfilms and other archival material.

In summary, the administrative records contained within the archive include:

- * Governor and Committee records:
- * Governor and Committee fur sales books, 1763 - 1810, 1858 - 1923
- * Fur trade importation books, 1799 - 1913
- * Hudson's Bay Company farm land agreements, 1879 - 1961
- * Officers' and servants' ledgers and account books 1719 - 1922
- * Lists of servants 1774 - 1841
- * Servants' contracts 1776 - c1926
- * Servants' character and staff records 1822 - 1832, 1851 - 1905

- * Northern Department servants' engagement registers 1823 - 1895
- * Confidential reports on clerks and postmasters 1873 - 1894
- * Departmental and district staff records 1871 - 1915
- * Fur Trade Department general personnel dossiers 1896 - 1976
- * London staff salary books and records of service (1901-1972)
- * Management personnel files 1903 - 1977
- * Ex-long-service employees files 1903 - 1973.

Company names index and biographical sheets

You can also search the HBC Archives Name Indexes and Biographical Sheets but please be aware that there are omissions. They include employee biographical sheets for individuals who worked for both the HBC and/or the North West Company. The sheets are organised alphabetically by surname but be aware that some spelling variations exist. These are available online at www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/index.html

Information contained within the individual biographical sheets includes name; place of origin; date entered the service; date of birth and occasionally death; appointments including occupation, position, location and district and the document reference within the archive where there maybe more information.

Occupations within the company

The following are some of the occupational terms used by the company that you will encounter on the biographical sheets.

Boute: skilled bowsman (the crewman in the bow of a canoe or boat) and steersman in a canoe or boat.

Chief factor: the highest ranking commissioned officer, usually in charge of districts with the right to sit at the annual meeting of the council and to vote on promotions for clerks and chief traders. They were also entitled to just under one per cent of the fur trade profits in each outfit.

Chief trader: the lower rank of commissioned officer with a share of profits equal to half that of a chief factor. They could take charge of districts.

Clerk: employees one step below the officers. Salaries varied dependent upon responsibility.

Factor: a man in charge of a company post; were the third rank of commissioned officers.

Freeman: an employee who had completed his contract and was free of any obligation to the company. Many continued to trade with the company or work as casual labourers.

Furlough: leave of absence usually granted to employees between contracts.

General charges: Those employees not yet assigned to a particular post.

Guide: an employee who conducted people through



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unfamiliar territory and usually presided over and commanded two to five craft

Inland trader: This was an early term for a man in charge of an inland post.

Interpreter: an employee who could speak the local language, often their mother tongue, to help the man in charge of a post conduct the trade.

Labourer: an unskilled employee.

Master and Trader: an early term for the man in charge of a post.

Master of schooner: person in charge of a sloop or schooner.

Middleman: a crewman in the middle of a boat or canoe.

Postmaster: Most were Scottish, Canadian or Métis labourers and tradesmen who had risen to clerical or junior managerial posts.

Servant: general term for a company employee.

Slooper: a crewmen on company decked vessels or schooners on Hudson Bay

Steersman: the crewman in the steer of a canoe or boat, responsible for guiding the boat.

Trader: employees stationed in outposts who undertook negotiations and dealings with indigenous peoples in their camps. Many were not classed as permanent servants.

Tradesman: men skilled in a particular trade such as carpenter, joiner, blacksmith, stonemason, boatbuilder, etc.

Writer: an early term for a clerk

Hudson's Bay Company records available in England

The National Archives at Kew has around 3,640 microfilms of some of the HBC records within series BH1 including headquarters' records; records concerning posts in northern American; logs, books and papers relating to company ships; governors' papers and records from the commissioner's office; miscellaneous records which include correspondence and journals of some individuals as well as records of the Red River Settlement 1811-1890, Vancouver Island Colony 1848-1861 and Arctic expeditions 1824-1866; records of allied and subsidiary companies; manuscript and published maps, charts and plans of HBC forts, coalmines, etc; pension and promotion records of staff; fur auction catalogues; accounts relating to officers and servants; and wills of prominent people.

It is essential to refer to The National Archives' *Discovery* catalogue using the exact search term "Hudson's Bay Company Official" for more information and to look for documents relative to the company in other series of records. The films are on closed access so need to be ordered in the usual way. A current readers' ticket is required.

Conclusion

The Hudson's Bay Company was London-based for virtually three hundred years and played an important role in the colonisation of northern America and in the development of Canada. Over the centuries it employed many thousands from Britain who worked in what was to become Canada. It is well worth searching the online indexes and records from the HBC Archives for a "missing" ancestor.

Ian Waller

About the author

Ian Waller is vice chairman and education officer of the Family History Federation and a retired professional genealogist. He is a Fellow of AGRA and also a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists.



Glossary:

Canada: In this article refers to today's Canada, and those places initially colonised by HBC.

Factory: HBC trading post operated by a factor (agent).

First Nations: Those indigenous peoples who do not identify as Inuit or Métis.

Indigenous peoples: A collective name for the distinct societies of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Some use the term aboriginal.

Inuit: Specific groups of people generally living in the far north.

Métis: A collective term of cultures and ethnic identities that resulted from unions between indigenous and European people in what is now Canada.

Further information:

Orkney's Stromness Museum interactive resource exploring the connections between Orkney and the HBC—well worth viewing: www.stromnessmuseum.org.uk/sites/stromnessmuseum.org.uk/files/hbc/index.html.

The Beaver online examples [you may need to copy/paste into your browser]: <https://archive.org/details/no4beaver01hudsuoft/page/n1/mode/2up> and www.canadashistoryarchive.ca/canadas-history/the-beaver-november-1921/flipbook/1/

Glencoe and the Indians by James Hunter includes sections on HBC operations along with family history connections. (Mainstream Publishing, 2010)

Who Do You Think You Are TV programme featuring Kevin Clifton and his connections to HBC and indigenous communities. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001n3ps



Family History Societies



Powys Family History Society

The society was founded in the early 1980s with the first publication being produced in 1981. Powys covers the counties of Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire, each with their own group branches and local meetings. The three groups have their own individual identities, and foster research among their members with visits out and about. They also transcribe various Powys documents to help produce more publications.

We have a good relationship with Powys archives; we have supported them in the past and will continue to do so.

In April 2017 we celebrated the 100th edition of *Cronicl*, the journal for members which is produced three times a year in April, August and October.

Over the years an enthusiastic team has working on, recording monumental inscriptions, producing a vast array of publications including parish registers, vaccination registers and census CDs. If anyone has queries or difficulties with their family tree, there is a helpdesk – a free service for members, with all the full resources of Powys FHS available. We can sometimes point members to areas they may not have considered before—for example the many and varied society publications are helpful in locating people. There is no guarantee of a successful outcome but two heads are always better than one! Another search option is a 'help wanted' section in the journal, which gives readers opportunity to respond. This usually brings good results.

The Powys website: Powysfhs.org.uk



Bryngwyn Rhosgoch Chapel
from Powys FHS website gallery



The website includes a gallery of photos, items of interest to members, with some accessible to non-members, an archive of *Cronicl*s, and the Powys FHS Facebook page which lists details of upcoming events.

There is always a lot of interest in the Facebook page which is maintained by our membership secretary. Through this route we are able to promote activities within Powys, either as Powys FHS group activities or from other groups to inform people about forthcoming activities they may like wish to find out more about. It also enables us to share postcards etc. from other societies to help people who live at a distance to visualise places and how they looked in the past. They may even discover individuals to whom they may be related! It is a good place to put up information about the society and to announce new publications.

Part of Quaker
burial ground,
Pales Meeting
House



An important and relatively recent addition has been the Powys FHS online shop. Publications are listed on the website and may be ordered direct from the shop.

Some good has certainly come from the covid era, as we are now all so much more familiar with Zoom meetings and logging on! Our Zoom meetings take place over the winter months, and the next one will be in September, with the title *Transported to Tasmania*, with speaker Kelly Cornwell. The meetings start at 7.30pm, with an opportunity to log on early (7pm) and get to speak with other members. There is usually a lively debate afterwards, before the meetings close around 9pm. This is especially important for our overseas members as we can see each other face to face.

Visit website at: www.powysfhs.org.uk/



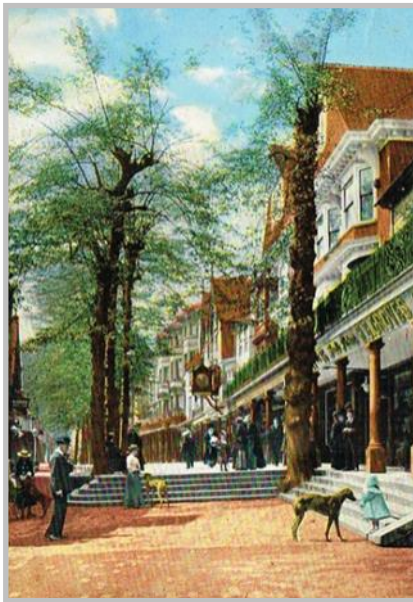
Family History Societies



North West Kent Family History Society

North West Kent Family History Society (NWKFHS) is a dynamic genealogical organisation dedicated to supporting family history research in north west Kent and south east London. Established in 1978, the society has grown to encompass around 1,000 members, both locally and internationally, all united by a shared passion for uncovering their ancestral roots.

Our area covers north west Kent and the ancient Kent parishes that are now part of several south London boroughs that border the river Thames with our eastern boundary running from Gravesend to Frant on the Sussex border. We also cover the parishes of Withyham, Rotherfield, Wadhurst and Ticehurst that were covered by the now defunct Tunbridge Wells Family History Society until its closure in 2016.



The Pantiles, Royal Tunbridge Wells, 1916 postcard. From NWKFHS website

For those interested in exploring their family history, NWKFHS provides a supportive and resource-rich environment. Whether you're a seasoned genealogist or just beginning your journey, the society offers tools, knowledge, and community to aid in your research endeavours. Annual membership is only £10 until 31 December each year.

The society has a wealth of resources to assist members in their

genealogical pursuits. The society's library and resource centre, located at 80 Summerhouse Drive, Joydens Wood Estate, Bexley, Kent, DA5 2EE, is open every Wednesday from 10am to 4pm. Here, members can get research help from our friendly volunteers, fostering a sense of community and shared learning; use the computers to access Ancestry and Find My Past; and consult a variety of datasets, including census indexes, cemetery records, land deeds, and documents related to the Royal Arsenal Woolwich and World War I centenary projects.

Regular events form a cornerstone of the society's activities. Monthly branch meetings are held in Dartford and Otford (Sevenoaks Branch), featuring talks from an outside speaker on various aspects of family and social history. Additionally, the society hosts a wealth of weekly workshops and discussion groups, both online and in-person, covering topics such as DNA research, record-keeping, and breaking down genealogical brick walls. The many Zoom talks, workshops and discussion groups are of value to members who live outside the area.



Dartford High Street, nineteenth-century print, from collection on NWKFHS website

The society maintains an active online presence, including an up-to-date website with events listed for the year ahead so members can plan their diaries; blog, enews, Facebook, BlueSky, Flickr and a shop for genealogical publications.

A team of transcribers are busy digitising parish records. These records, kept by churches, dating back many centuries, are a goldmine of genealogical information. Transcribing them so they can be accessed online makes the valuable content accessible to people who cannot travel to the relevant archive. The website shop contains details of available CDs and digital downloads:

www.nwkhfs.org.uk/shop/nwkhfs-shop

NWKFHS membership provides numerous benefits, including access to quarterly journals, monthly electronic newsletters, and a range of research aids and publications as well as access to all our talks and workshops.

For more information or to join, visit the North West Kent Family History Society's website at

www.nwkhfs.org.uk

or contact

publicity@nwkhfs.org.uk

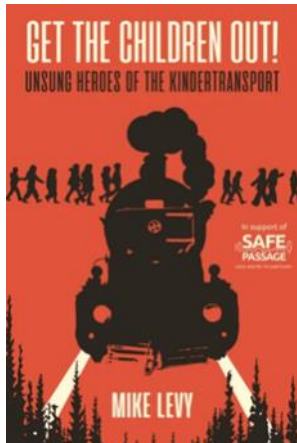


Family History Societies



Felixstowe Family History Society

The *Kindertransport* was a unique act of rescue. Some 10,000 mostly Jewish children were brought over from Nazi Europe in the months leading up to the war. They were not allowed to bring their families with them.



Mike Levy talks about his book which uncovers the unsung heroes who helped save the lives of so many youngsters. Mike Levy was chair of the Harwich Kindertransport Memorial and Learning Trust which placed a new memorial to the rescued children on Harwich quayside.

Join us at Broadway House in Orwell Road on **Wednesday 9 July 2025** at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start. There is a large, free car park (in the evenings) adjacent to Broadway House, the entrance is in Highfield Road, IP11 7BZ.

There is no charge for Felixstowe Family History Society members. Felixstowe History and Museum Society members and visitors are most welcome; £3 payable at the door. Membership details on our website. Raffle and refreshments after the speaker has given their talk.

Friday drop-in session - 25 July 10.15am—12.00 noon with Nick Smith at Broadway House.

For further information about the society, please view our website: <https://felixstowefhs.onesuffolk.net>

Next meeting: No meeting in August - we'll be back on 10 September.

Next Drop-in: No drop-in session in August - we'll be back in September.



Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair

Saturday 25th October 2025

10am – 4pm

Free entry, free parking
**Cherwell School (North),
Marston Ferry Road, Oxford, OX2 7EE**
Wheelchair and child friendly

Get help with your research – particularly in Oxfordshire but also in other counties and countries.

A variety of subject experts will be present, browse and buy books, CDs, maps, postcards and materials from specialist companies.

Refreshments available (until 3.15 pm)

==oOo==

Comments from the 2024 Fair:

Very informative - friendly people.

Great show! Well laid out and good signing.

Great refreshments.

Good venue for public transport.

Really good fair, the best one we've attended so far.

==oOo==

For more information

including advice on how to get to the fair visit:
www.ofhs.uk/fair2025 email: fair@ofhs.uk Tel:

OFHS Helpline: 01865 358151

Registered Charity Number 275891



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

Christopher Makepeace

We are very sorry to report the passing of Chris.

Many family historians will know Chris, and his widow Hilary, from fairs and shows where they sold an amazing array of specialist maps—many with notes written by Chris. Chris was also author of a number of books on Manchester and was much involved with the local history society in Disley. Chris will be much missed by many. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to Hilary and family.

Peak District Family History Conference 6 September 2025

The Palace Hotel, Buxton SK17 6AG

This year the conference has been organised by U3A Peak District Family History Network in partnership with the Family History Federation and we warmly welcome all members of family history societies who wish to attend the conference.

Great talks—Family History Books will be there too! Please visit the website for more information about the conference.

Just £30 which includes talks, refreshments and lunch.

<https://peakdistrictnetwork.wixsite.com/familyhistory/about-5>

2026 Federation Annual Meeting

Please note that the date has been changed!

This will now take place on Saturday 6 June 2026 and will be via Zoom only.

It would be appreciated if member organisations could keep the date free.

The 48th Latin and Palaeography Summer School

formerly the Keele Latin and Palaeography Summer School

Online 14 – 18 July 2025

The school for beginners and improvers is organised by the Ranulf Higden Society and will be online. The school is for those who wish to acquire or improve their skills in reading and transcribing medieval and early modern documents in Latin, English and Anglo-Norman French. There are four courses – two introductory courses in medieval Latin or medieval palaeography, and two for more experienced students, examining specific classes of records. Documents featured will be those used by historians, not printed texts.

For more information and booking details, please see <https://ranulfhigdensoc.org/the-latin-and-palaeography-summer-school>

Latin books—twin pack just £11.90. Great to use at home and on research trips. [Click here](#) for details.

Another 250,000 records published with Findmypast

In conjunction with the Federation, various family history societies have made available another 250,000 new records with Findmypast. May's publications include:

- Nottinghamshire—Baptisms - 1547-1911
- Herefordshire—NBI Additions – 1660-1812
- Bradford—Monumental Inscriptions - 1825-1989
- Wiltshire—Apprentice Records - 1655-1693
- Wiltshire—Vagrants' Passes – 1702-1818
- Wiltshire—St James, Trowbridge Bell Book – 1797-1855
- Wiltshire—Swindon Labour Certificates – 1878-1906
- Wiltshire—Contagious Diseases (Farm Animals) - 1878-1888
- Wiltshire—Salisbury Infirmary Hospital Admissions - 1767-1832
- Wiltshire – Coroners' Reports - 1640-1901
- Sheffield and District—Baptisms - 1846-1925

New datasets continue to be submitted from the various family history societies so watch out for upcoming releases of more new records on Findmypast.

If your society has transcriptions that may be suitable for publication with FindMyPast then please get in contact with the Federation's data manager at data.manager@familyhistoryfederation.com.



**Find
my
past**



Really Useful Back Page



Family History Research Aids from the Experts

Parish Chest, a service from the Family History Federation, has over eighty family history societies and associated suppliers at a one-stop online shop, offering a wide range of family history materials in some eighteen categories including:

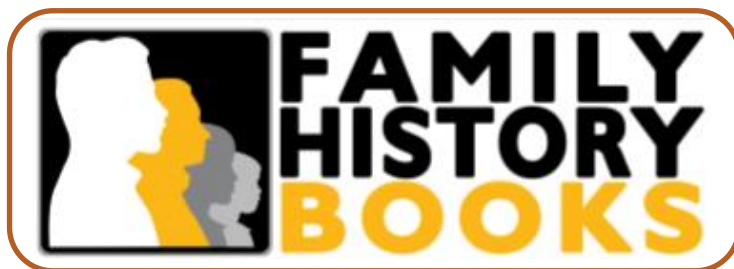
- *Parish register transcriptions and more from local FHS*
- *Memorial inscriptions information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHS*
- *Nonconformists: Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers and many more nonconformist lists*
- *Wills and probate indexes of wills and administrations*
- *Folders, printing facilities, giftware*
- *..and more!*

Societies and suppliers regularly add new lines, so visit to see what is there to help you add to your family tree.

www.parishchest.com

Societies and others interested in joining Parish Chest should initially contact:

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



Family History Books (FHB) is an online bookshop and publisher; it is owned by the Family History Federation and the aim is to provide a service to the genealogical community. Family History Books offers a range of relevant titles relating to family history research.

FHB welcomes contact from authors! Works of general and specific interest to family historians with wider social history topics are of interest. FHB does not publish individual family histories or fiction. If you have a book—especially a shorter one—in the making, then do contact FHB via admin@familyhistoryfederation.com. We would love to hear from you about your ideas.

Subscribers to the Bulletin receive early notice of new publications from Family History Books. There is a book researching brickmakers in the pipeline. A range of shorter guides will soon appear, the first about ancestors who worked in the theatre. Watch this space!



In addition to its [online shop](http://online.shop) FHB can also be found at major live family history events around the country. Come and visit us and see all the latest titles available. The stall is always very popular!

Happy browsing!

Please explore the range, and place your orders, at

www.familyhistorybooksonline.com

The *REALLY USEFUL Bulletin* is published monthly and circulated free of charge. Members of the Family History Federation are encouraged to provide information about their projects and activities for inclusion. The Federation policy is to not include paid-for commercial advertising. However, when space allows, the editorial team is happy to include mentions of activities relevant to readers which are offered by other organisations—plus any relevant special offers, too.



The REALLY USEFUL Family History Show

Saturday 23 August **LIVE at PRONI, Titanic Quarter, Belfast**
Hosted by North of Ireland FHS—[details here](#)

There is **NO** ONLINE REALLY USEFUL Family History Show in 2025



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