2018 March meeting: Members' evening

Elizabeth Hervey (née Marsh)    Dianne Barre

Dianne gave a talk about Elizabeth Marsh (born in 1748) who was an extraordinary woman. She married William Hervey in 1774 and was widowed nine years later with two young sons, Thomas and William.

After her husband's death she travelled extensively but in 1792 she began to write a journal each and every day until the day before she died in 1820. She not only kept a record of her daily life but commented on the wider affairs of the time: the French Revolution and Wars, Statesmen, persons of note and gossip all contribute to reveal a contemporary view of historical events.

Dianne read out some passages in which Elizabeth’s sharp wit and observations rang out over the centuries. Dianne is the first researcher who has studied these journals, which deserve to be better known.

These journals amount to 72 books, each about 90 pages. They are kept in the Staffordshire Record Office and Dianne showed what a fascinating reading they make. They were part of a Lane family deposit; they came into the Lane family of Kings Bromley when John Henry Bagot Lane married Sarah Anne Vincent, whose father had eventually inherited Elizabeth Hervey’s fortune.

Sarah Holte’s Chancery Case    Allan Howard

Sarah Holte was John(2) Newton of Kings Bromley’s sister and the widow of Sir Lister Holte of Aston Hall. The last set of documents deposited at the Stafford Record Office by Jane Lane in 2013 contain 21 letters relevant to this Chancery case brought by Charles Holte 3 years after Lister Holte’s death in which he challenged the will - both the complex ‘entail’ by which his daughter would only inherit if 3 other male relatives died without male issue and the provisions made by Sir Lister for his widow, Sarah and her sister Elizabeth.

The letters make it clear that Sarah Holte engaged the barrister John Lane to act for her in this case, which she eventually won – the will being upheld in its entirety. Other reports of the case, see ‘The Grand Old Mansion’ by Oliver Fairclough - written for the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, have failed to notice either that the case was brought by Charles Holte (and not by Heneage Legge or the other entailies) or that John Lane was so instrumental in Sarah Holte’s success.

This case further explains the unusual will of Elizabeth Newton whereby the Lane brothers inherited the lions share of the wealth of the Newtons, including the Kings Bromley estates and the Barbadian plantations of Seawells and Newtons. This has been examined before in Kings Bromley Historians publications ‘The Lane Inheritance’ and ‘The Scandalous Divorce of John Newton’. The Newtons not only had good reason not to want to enrich the Arden family, but also had good reasons to be thankful to the Lanes. A publication on this case will be produced in due course.
2018 April Meeting

At our April meeting Allan shared with us the findings of his most recent research into the Lane family.

Scott Mahoney, amateur American genealogist, who has been researching the ancestry of Jack Brooksbank, fiancée of Princess Eugenie, has shown that his six times great grandmother was Jane (née Mattenley/Mattingley) Harrison, illegitimate daughter of John Lane, the first Lane Lord of the Manor of Kings Bromley. John Lane had had six illegitimate children by Melissa Mattenley whilst living in London before marrying Sarah Amler; he acknowledged and supported these children and was a witness at some of their marriages. Elizabeth Newton, a distant relative of the Lanes, who left John and Thomas Lane the greatest part of her massive fortune, including Kings Bromley Manor, also left Jane Mattingley, who was only 11 at the time £1000 in her will – she was clearly a favourite of the Newtons and Holtes.

John Lane’s grandson, Cecil (born 1836) had a career in the diplomatic service, rising to become Resident for four years on the island of Cephalonia. He returned to Kings Bromley in 1864 with a CMG and a pension paid for by the Greek government. His brother John Henry had recently married and his mother, Agnes, who had relied on him, began to rely on Cecil instead. When the ‘weak and fidgety’ John Newton Lane died in 1869 Cecil looked after Kings Bromley Manor and estates for John Henry, who preferred to live most of the time at his other house at Lily Hill, Essex. Cecil later married Adela Bertie, daughter of the Hon. Rev. W. Bertie, an old family friend, and they went to live at Whiston Hall, Shropshire, where Cecil acted as land agent for Lord Dartmouth (a Legge relative) at nearby Patshull. Photographs of Adela, her parents and her sister have just become available at the National Portrait Gallery. Cecil and Adela had 4 children, Georgina, John Roland, Percy (killed at Ypres in 1915) and Newton (killed at Messines Ridge in 1917). The latter two are commemorated by a plaque in the chancel of All Saints, Kings Bromley. Cecil died in 1897 and Agnes in 1925 – they are both buried in our churchyard.
2018 June meeting - Talk by Richard Stone on ‘The Story of Map Making’

Richard Stone, our speaker on 29 June, showed us an amazing map of the world, produced in 150AD by Ptolemy, using the principles of longitude and latitude. Given that he lived in Alexandria so long ago, the features were instantly recognisable as a map of the known world with the British Isles clearly visible. It was a lot easier to understand than the slides of the later ‘Mappa Mundi’ maps centred on Jerusalem with East at the top of the map and the British Isles tucked away in the bottom left-hand corner.

The Gough map of 1360 was a fairly detailed map of Great Britain, as it showed 600 settlements, 200 rivers and 3000 miles of routes.

The first ‘Road Atlas’ was produced in 1697 by John Ogilvy. Prior to this, roads were always ‘Highways’ and routes between towns were given as lists with particular landmarks to look for to ensure you were still on the right route.

Later still came the famous Ordnance Survey maps drawn for the army, firstly 1 inch: 1 mile, then 6”: 1 mile, then 25”: 1 mile. What a map that must have been!

We have no meeting in July as we have a stall at Kings Bromley show on 28 July. On 11 August, we are visiting Melbourne Hall and our next meeting is on 28 September in the Village Hall at 8pm. All are welcome.
2018 September meeting

At the 28th September meeting of the Historians Allan Howard talked on three subjects:
1) the Kings Bromley milestones.
2) the last National Trust magazine article on the Van Hoogenstraten painting at NT property Dyrham Park. This connects Dyrham Park to Samuel Pepys to the Agard and Newton Lords of the Manor of Kings Bromley.
3) families from across the world with ancestors who lived in Kings Bromley who had been in touch through the website.

The information on the milestones and the painting can be found on this website under the ‘articles’ tab.

The website provides an essential tool for families across the world to research into their ancestors who lived in Kings Bromley. These are some of the families who have recently been in touch:
The Williams Family. A lady from New Zealand wrote the following “I live in New Zealand and I have been researching my family history which has led me to your website. My great great great grandparents (Arthur and Elizabeth Williams) ran the Fighting Cocks in the 1830s to 1850s (it was their daughter, Sarah, who came out to NZ in 1856 with her husband Edward Taylor). I noted a reference to “The Story of Fighting Cocks Inn” by David Butcher Jan. 1993, but couldn’t see that it is available for purchase. Can you advise me please if it available?”

I was able to send her the David Butcher article, and another one of my own ‘The Williams Family of Kings Bromley” which can be found on this website under the ‘articles’ tab.

The Smith Family. A lady from Canada wrote the following: “I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and am researching family history. My grandmother, Lucy Smith, came to Canada in 1913 from Nottingham. I have recently found out that her ancestors on her father's side were from Kings Bromley. I have the following information and am curious if your organization might have any further information on this family. (She included extracts from the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses)

I was able to send her the article “The Smith Family of Kings Bromley” which added to the census information from the Parish Registers and 1851 Tithe Award. This is available under the ‘articles’ tab.

The Robinson Family. A gentleman from Melbourne, Australia wrote asking for information about his ancestor Josiah Joseph Robinson (1847-1924), piano maker who emigrated in 1868. He married the recently emigrated Alice Dixon in 1870 and built a ‘charming and elegant house’ which they called ‘Kings Bromley’ at Kew, Melbourne where they raised eleven children. According to the gentleman, both Josiah and Alice were born in Kings Bromley as were Josiah’s father James, grandfather James and great grandfather Josiah.

Kings Bromley Historians were able to confirm from census and parish records that, indeed, Josiah’s father, grandfather and great grandfather were born in Kings Bromley, but that his father James moved to London some time before 1841. He worked as a sub-postmaster, married Hannah and they had 5 children born variously in Lambeth, Middlesex and Lambeth.

Historian Helen Price has identified several Alice Dixons living in and around London, who may have been the lady that Josiah married, but there are no records of any Alice Dixon in Kings Bromley.
Why then the strong connection that Josiah had with Kings Bromley - which his father had left years before Josiah was born? I suspect that the real connection that Josiah named his house ‘Kings Bromley’ was that he visited his Ferneyhough relatives there on holidays when he was a child. His great aunt Harriet Robinson married John Ferneyhough in 1850, when Josiah was 3. John & Harriet moved to Crawley Lane, and the 1851 census shows him there, his father Thomas living at Forge House and his uncle Lewis living in the Alrewas Road. Thomas and John were blacksmiths and Lewis was a retired blacksmith.

For a boy born and brought up in London, holidays in Kings Bromley would have seemed idyllic. Harriet had children Thomas, James and John born 1851, 1853 and 1855, and these near contemporary cousins would have been ideal playmates for Josiah. John & Harriet were still living in Kings Bromley in 1861 and 1871, so were there throughout Josiah’s life in England. The Trent Valley railway had been built in the 1840s, making travel between London and Kings Bromley relatively easy.
Our first taste of 'Christmas Past and Present' was a view of Stonehenge. Mary Bodfish, our speaker, explained that not only was it a sacred site for the summer but also the winter solstice. The sun was fading in the sky and to ensure its return, evergreens and berries were used to represent returning life. The Roman sun god was Saturn, hence their winter festival was Saturnalia; for the Persians it was Mithras who was celebrated on December 25, the shortest day, according to the Julian calendar.

When finally Christianity reached Rome, the emperor Constantine decreed that Christians could worship openly and that the date of Christ's birth be fixed as December 25th. In the Orthodox church it is 6th January.

The winter festival in Scandinavia was Yuletide, when the god Odin rode an eight-legged horse to bring gifts to good children. Mistletoe berries represented the tears of Odin's wife, Frigga, who wept on the death of her son Balder, killed with a mistletoe-poisoned dart by his blind brother on the instructions of the treacherous Loki. Holly and ivy therefore were used to decorate churches, ivy regarded as female and holly male. Together they represented peace, stability and fertility.

The tradition of the Christmas tree began with Queen Charlotte. It was also mentioned in the diary of the 13-year old future Queen Victoria "after dinner two trees hung with lights and ornaments". Martin Luther decorated a fir tree with candles, a tradition carried on until 1903, when EverReady produced a string of electric tree lights. Much Wassail. December 6th is the feast day of St Nicholas, whose name became Santa Claus.

Mary was a great, theatrical orator and we all enjoyed her presentation.

The following day was our Christmas lunch at the Royal Oak, where we all enjoyed an excellent meal. Allan spoke of the highlights of last year and Lynne outlined the considerable progress made in the archive. For most of us this was the start of our Christmas.

Following our Christmas walk on 30th December, our next meeting will be in the Village Hall on 25th January at 8pm, when Allan will talk about Major General Sir Ronald Bertram Lane. All are welcome.