



# SussexLink



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*A Newsletter for the Sussex Family History Group*

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## Online Parish Clerks

Collecting and sharing local and family history data related to one particular place such as a parish has been an interest of family historians for many years. The ease of communication through Email and the Internet has encouraged this recently, and in several counties in the west of England this interest has resulted in the development of what have come to be known as Online Parish Clerks (OPCs). These of course are not to be confused with real Parish Clerks, either historical or present day. They are simply people who have knowledge about a particular place, its history and records, that may be of value to other family historians.

In Sussex there has been a gradual exploration and development of this idea through the Local History Database provided by Sheila Maynard. The number of people interested in signing up as parish clerks is growing. Recently a member, Mark Collins, has expressed an interest in developing a web site devoted to Online Parish Clerks in Sussex. As this complements the ideas that we have been developing we are more than happy to support it, as it should help to provide access to data that is accurate and hopefully checked by local researchers. The March edition of *The Sussex Family Historian* will include a response form for potential OPC volunteers.

Making accurate family history information more readily available is clearly part of what SFHG is all about. However, we like other family history societies normally expect to both cover our costs and support other aspects of our work through our publications. Making data more freely available on the web, whether through OPCs or sites such as FreeBMD and FreeCen, may well have as much effect on our income as the commercial data providers such as Ancestry.com. Of course the world of family history is changing, and we do not always have full control over what is happening. Our first and overriding priority amidst such change and innovation must be, however, to promote the study of family history by all possible means, and that includes knowing where to find all of the data.

## Baptism Index

Brian Cutler is now co-ordinating the SFHG Baptism Index. Although in the end John and Rosemary Lea have not moved away from Sussex, the change was in response to their announced intention made last November. John has developed this database over the last five years, and done a great job in getting it to the present stage of development, with over 110,000 records.

## SussexLink

With this issue SussexLink moves into its second year. Hopefully it will continue to be of interest and provide information about what is going on within the Group, but to do this it does need contributions other than my own. I am always open to contributions and comments. Brian Cutler (chairman@sfhg.org.uk)

## How can you help?

### What skills can you offer to the Group?

We particularly need members who can:

Organize events

Write copy for the media

Negotiate

Liaise with people or the press diplomatically

Input data

Work with figures

Understand the legislation and regulations surrounding charities.

## Where Have All The B\*st\*\*ds Gone?

A one-day conference at the West Meads Meeting Centre

Saturday 30th October 2004

There will be a second conference this year in the west of the county at West Meads Hall at the end of October. This in part has been planned as a follow on to a five week introductory course in Family History that West Meads will be running in September and October, led by John and Rosemary Lea.

There will be four lectures given by two speakers, Lady Teviot and Michael Gandy, covering Unusual Sources, London Ancestors, The Parish Chest and Irish Ancestors.

Tickets will cost £10 and a pre-booked lunch will be available for £5.50.

Further information about the conference and the beginners' course will be available in the June edition of the Sussex Family Historian, but early booking is advisable as space will be limited. Contact the West Mead Meeting Centre ([westmeads@sfhg.org.uk](mailto:westmeads@sfhg.org.uk)) or Mrs. Mary Churchill, 5 Old Farm Close, Aldwick, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO21 4AX.

## Your Group still needs you!

Further to my plea in the last edition of SussexLink we still urgently need volunteers to help run the Group. At the time of writing it is still not clear whether we will have anyone to take over as treasurer, and the other vacancies remain to be filled. We also now need someone to co-ordinate the work of volunteers across the Group, as Alan Stables has decided that he must pass on this responsibility to someone else. Please look at the vacancies and the skills in the panels, and if you are able to help in any way get in touch ([chairman@sfhg.org.uk](mailto:chairman@sfhg.org.uk)).

## Conference & AGM

Bookings for this year's Annual Conference are coming in quickly, so if you intend to come, and particularly if you want to come to one of the two workshops on Tithes Maps send your application to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible. Time is also running out to get your nominations in for the AGM. Remember we need two additional members of the Executive and we need to find a Treasurer and Vice Chairman to replace David Steel and Joan Goddard who are stepping down from their respective roles.

## Get Mapping with the SMI

No, sorry, the Sussex Marriage Index isn't quite ready. Almost. Some of us have seen a Beta copy and it will be worth the wait. Steve Archer has incorporated a version of his mapping programme, which will enable you to plot the whereabouts of your family, and their movements over time, throughout Sussex.

## Situations Vacant

Treasurer

Secretary

Conference and Events Organizer

Publicity Officer

Volunteer Coordinator

Please contact the Chairman if you are at all interested in any of these important roles in the Group.