

Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy & Heraldry London Branch Newsletter.

V o l 9 : 3 J u l y 2 0 0 8

Editorial

The 9th Annual Business meeting took place before the April talk, I'm afraid I wasn't there it clashed with my parents 50th Wedding Anniversary. Paddy Davies stood down as Chairperson and committee member David Kerr was duly voted in. Robert Vaughen stood down from the Committee and Deryn Hawkes was appointed to the vacancy.

David has provided the writeup of the lecture that followed on agricultural labourers. He would like to hear form anyone that could display posters of forthcoming meetings or pass on details to other organizations, and he will e-mail them a poster quarterly.

5th July Speaker at the SoG

Doreen Hopwood 'Off the Beaten Track - the West Midlands'

- The talk will include locating and accessing material from the major repositories in the West Midlands
- Information about special collections of use to family historians
- Details of some of the smaller repositories and their holdings
- ie Museums and other organisations holding useful material/records - such as the West Midlands Police Museum/National Trust properties etc and how to access these records.
- Some of the "lesser-known" or under-utilised records - such as The Aliens Registers (WW1), vaccination records etc.
- On-line records and data-bases - I'll provide a list of addresses/contacts and websites for participants.

Doreen has been employed by Birmingham City Council as its genealogist since 1990 and is based at Birmingham Central Library which has a superb collection of material not only relating to the area, but also genealogical sources for the whole of England and Wales. She has been lecturing in family, local and community history at the University of Birmingham for twelve years as well as running workshops and giving talks on genealogy and is a regular contributor to family history magazines and journals.

2008/9 Meetings.

- 4th October (SOG) - 'Police records and where to find them' - Fred Feather
- 10th January (HPFHC) 'Discoveries and Reflections from Members'
2 talks by London branch members
- 4th April (SOG) '18C Old hand writing' - Chris Beardsmore
- 4th July (HPFHC) 'Standard of 19C living in W Mids' - Wendy Anderson
- 3rd October (SOG) tbc

Meetings from 2009 will alternate between the Society of Genealogists,
14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London, EC1M 7BA
in the Lecture Room on the Ground Floor

Nearest tube Barbican (turn left) or Farringdon (left, left, then right when you
get to Clerkenwell Road)

and

The Hyde Park Family History Centre, Exhibition Road
Nearest tube South Kensington (Circle/District & Piccadilly lines) follow the
signs to the Museums, past the V&A, opposite the Science Museum.

**(Free coffee/tea and biscuits are available before the meetings at the Society of
Genealogists, doors open at 10.00)**

Current Committee

Paddy Davies paddy.davies@waitrose.com
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The branch website is now being hosted by the BMSGH, to access it go to <http://www.bmsgh.org/> , select **Branches** and scroll down to find the London branch. Click on the shield to the left. Or if you just want to know when the next meeting is, select **Programme** from the home page and then the month required.

Up with the Lark – a story of Agricultural Labourers.

Ian Waller

Ag Lab was a term introduced in the 1841 Census to cover all manner of farm and agricultural labourer – including shepherds, ploughman, dairymen. Before then, with regional differences, they were known as servant or labourer. A servant would have been on a contract and living on a farm, with hiring fairs determining the contract term. Agricultural Labourers were often termed Yeoman and they were tenant farmers.

There are several milestones recognised in agricultural working. The Swing Riots of the 1830's came after years of high taxes and low wages, and unemployment. Greater mechanisation after enclosure had cut the agricultural labour force by two thirds! This was eventually followed by the Agricultural Labourer's Union – from Tolpuddle in 1833, to Joseph Arch of Wellesbourne in 1873, the real father of the union.

Ian went on to talk about the life of an Ag Lab. The senior labourer wore a Billycock, which got higher every year. Smocks had regional variations depending on the job. The standard of housing of labourer's cottages varied greatly by region. Labourers would be up at five, and possibly had to walk two or three miles to work – and back again at the end of a long day. Women and children would also be working in the fields – probably with a later start.

Have you failed to find an Ag lab in the census? Shepherds would often be away during the lambing season, which seemed to coincide with the census.

Farming had a fairly set year. January to March saw ground preparation and sowing, April and May cleanup, and June to September sheep shearing, harvest, haymaking, scarifying (and the annual hiring fair, which was something of a social occasion as well). October and December was road mending and ploughing.

There was an increasing amount of migration and emigration – moving from the countryside to towns for higher wages, despite a decrease in the quality of life through disease and poor housing. The Poor Law encouraged emigration – often recorded in Vestry Minutes.

There are many records available to track our Ag Labs. These include the Census, Quarter Sessions, diaries, Manor Court Rolls, maps, Poor Law, charities, benefit societies, certificates of merit, disputes, tithe and enclosure maps, and so on.