

# Wargrave Local History Society

## Latest News - February 2007

### Researching your Ancestry

The February meeting of Wargrave Local History Society was "Researching Your Ancestry" - a guide to tracing family history, presented by members of the Society.

The best starting point is with what you already know, and so asking family members will often give useful clues to beginning the research. Old documents may be borrowed and copied - and so the beginnings of a family tree drawn. The main 'sources' of information, however, will have to be discovered in the archives - either locally or nationally, and include records such as birth marriage and death certificates, census returns, parish registers and wills.

Examples of birth, death and marriage certificates were shown - each giving clues to the previous generation - the parents' names (including mother's maiden name) and occupation on a birth certificate, the bride and groom's ages and the fathers' names and occupations on a marriage certificate, etc. By using the census records, 'family groupings', can be seen, the age of each member being shown, as well as the place of birth, which narrows the search for the 'right' "Joe Bloggs" in the records. The various ways - either using original documents, microfilmed copies of them or computer aided searches, were then explored, and the ways in which birth death and marriage certificates can be ordered. (Using as specific examples, vicars of Wargrave). It was pointed out, however, that people move much more - and further - than is often realised. One vicar of Wargrave, for example, does not appear in the village census, as he arrived, and left again, between those of 1851 and 1861.

Having found the 'death' records of a person, the age is known, and so a search can be made for their birth. However, civil registration only began in England and Wales in July 1837, and so before that time different types of records are needed - and these are usually the parish registers of the relevant local church. Again, examples, and ways to search them, were shown.

Such 'official' records of course, only tell part of the family history story, and so many other

sources are useful - to add detail to the 'story' or to confirm the information discovered elsewhere as being about the 'correct' family ! Local, or national, newspapers may contain information about relatives. This will not just be about 'notable' people, but will include all classes of society if they, for example, appear in court or are the subject of a coroner's inquest. In such cases, details not available any other way may be revealed about an ancestor. The records of the poorer classes may also appear in the records of the local workhouse - one of many types of record likely to be found in County Record Offices.

Another type of document that is very useful are wills. They not only tell what a person owned when they died, but normally add family relationships, and these can confirm the details found in other sources. (a daughter's married name, for example). Again, ways to find these were demonstrated

Sometimes, the records are not easy to locate. The clerk will have written what he 'heard' - so spellings may differ (and computer indexes will record what the transcriber thinks the writing says too). In other cases, the name recorded at birth (if any) may differ from that which the person was later known by, and an example of how that could be unravelled was illustrated.

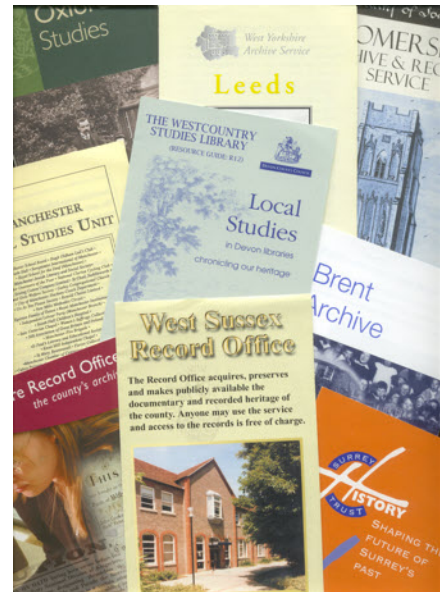
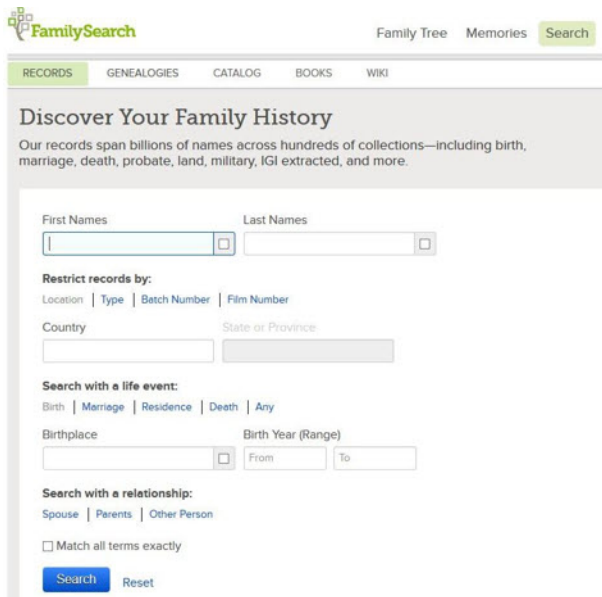
#### Some Vicars of Wargrave

James Hitchings	1826 -1850
Edmund Peel	1850 -1855
H. H. Swinny	1855 -1859
Simon Sturges	1859 -1890
Arthur Henry Austen-Leigh	1890 -1911

Having found out 'who' the family members are, other information - such as postcards of where they lived, can 'illustrate' the history. If possible, they should be annotated with details of 'who, where and when'.



*Family history websites that enable on-line searches of records to be made include Find My Past (above left), Ancestry (above right) and Family Search (below left), whilst original records can be found in the relevant county record office (below right).*



With such a range and quantity of material, it is necessary to have a way to store and organise it. This might be by files and index cards, but computer programs also exist to help. Some of these also enable various ways to 'present' the information to other family members. Examples of more traditional ways were also shown - a family Bible, a chart drawn as a tree, and a genealogy chart drawn with heraldic crests from the 14th century onwards.

A range of sources and useful books were available for members to sample, and they were given a sheet of useful hints and suggested internet sites .