

Migration throughout the UK

Debbie Bradley

Following our AGM, we were joined by Debbie Bradley who is a professional genealogist and administrator of the Family History Federation. Debbie told us that her talk was based on her 20-year search for her ancestor George Henry Clarke who had been known by 7 different variations of his name and working on the construction of canals and reservoirs had moved around the country for his work. George had been located in Yorkshire, Northampton, Cheshire, Aberdare in Wales and Romsey in Hampshire. George had often “disappeared” and Debbie told us about some of the documents that she had found useful in her search to track his movements, including the census, newspapers, and official certificates. Debbie noted that it was often worth checking siblings and cousins and witnesses on certificates as these often gave a clue to tracing a missing relative who could be staying with extended family and that a missing relative could also have been living in a second “marriage” using a different partners name.

Debbie explained how in the past families had moved about much more than expected and outlined the common reasons for movement, which had included the highland clearances, the agricultural depression when labourers were forced off the land, the industrial revolution with the lure of better wages and improved quality of life in the towns and cities in factories or domestic service, London being the most common destination. Service in the armed forces could lead to postings throughout this country or overseas. The fishing industry and apprenticeship also led to people moving away to different areas. Of the 5,700 men in the Metropolitan police force in 1854 2.5% were Scottish and 6.5% Irish. The development of the railways led to many new job opportunities both in construction and the associated trades leading to movement and relocation of families. The growth of Felixstowe port had also led to movement of people for work with the 1881 census showing people having come to the town from all over the world. Debbie highlighted the importance of using original records and not relying on work carried out by others that might not have been verified, whilst considering the possibility of name changes and recognising that records might not be completely accurate when looking for your “missing” ancestors and advised trying to think of alternative sources to trace the person.

Debbie was thanked for a most interesting and informative talk and took a good number of questions from the audience.

Lorna Fraser

Membership No: 0170