

Family History Interest Group – February 2026 Report

Nine members of the group and one visitor listened to a talk on North Atlantic Passenger Lists. This was followed by the usual 'Help Your Neighbour' practical session.

Emigrants have been leaving England for North America since the early 17th century but it was only in 1820 that lists of passenger arrivals began to be collected. These lists give the name of the ship, its departure and arrival details and passenger name, age, occupation and country of origin. If the researcher is fortunate an emigrant family will be listed together. This is little enough to go ahead with but details on US censuses and other documents often provide a much better picture.

For example 'The Manhattan, arrival 21 April 1869, Transcription "Fred Swindall, 20 M, Lab' (actually Swindells) leads to the story of Frederick Swindells who made his way up from a factory worker to running and then owning a woollen mill.

The talk went on to discuss fares (around £4 steerage for most of the 19th century) and journey times as sail gave way to steam.

In the discussion afterwards one of the members read out part of a letter describing boarding just such an emigrant vessel.

The talk was followed by coffee and then a useful practical session.

An index to PDFs of other past talks is to be found at [Teesdale U3A Genealogy Tutorials](#).

Alan Swindale