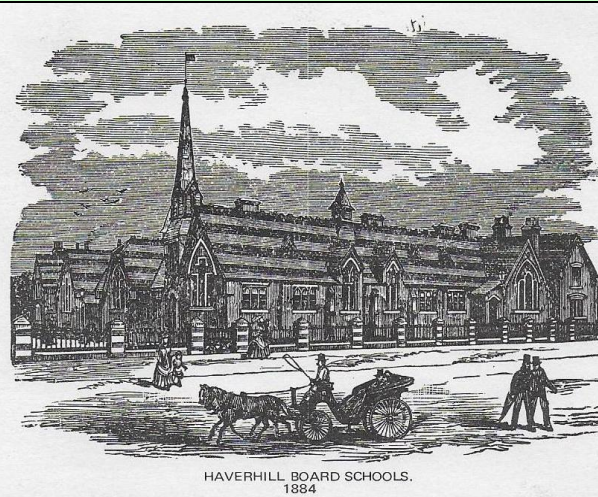




NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 1087748

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of one of our long serving members, Joan Key. Joan had not been well for some time but testament to her character she still worried and more concerned about others rather than herself.

Joan took on many roles during her time with the Family history Group, indeed it was her enthusiasm and friendly welcoming outlook that encouraged both Charmian and I to join the group for which we are eternally grateful.

Joan was involved in many charitable activities and in more recent years she was quite rightly awarded Freedom of the Town by the local Town Council. An award she richly deserved.

In honour of her work for the group and the people of the town the rest of this newsletter is devoted to Joan. You can read a poster and biography of Joan which was written in 2017 as part of our Haverhill People project.

Haverhill People

**VOTED 'GREATEST ASSET TO THE TOWN' BY
HAVERHILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Joan Key

Joan Margaret Lawrence was born on May 9th 1937, in Hammersmith Hospital West London. She was the first born of Edward (Ted) and Catherine (Kitty) Lawrence née Keane and elder sister of Joyce Rosalind (1941), Derek Edward Albert (1950) and Ann Veronica (1952). The family lived at 48, Boarders Road, Hanwell, West London in a first floor, one bedroom flat with an unattached garden.

In 1948 the family moved to 63 Browning Avenue W7. This was a bigger house with 2 bedrooms and gardens front and back. Her brother and sister were born there. In 1951 a family moved in next door and Joan met her future husband for the first time.

Joan attended Greenford County Grammar School leaving aged 16 without any 'O' levels. Joan had a Saturday job at Woolworths, working on the sweet counter, as rationing was still in force this meant cutting out the coupons from the ration books. The pay was 15/- for working 9 to 5.

Joan married George Key on 6th July 1957 at St Mary's Church Hanwell. They set up their first home together in a furnished room at 76 Gordon Road. They had 4 children between 1959 and 1963, Kevin, Jeanette, Sandra and Barry. In 1968 the family moved to Haverhill.



Joan has just celebrated her 80th birthday and also her Diamond wedding anniversary with husband George. She has seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Like her parents, Ted and Kitty, Joan has always helped friends and neighbours and supported local groups. Here are just some of the groups she has been involved with over the years:

PTAs	Swimming Club Committee	School Governor (Castle Manor and Castle Hill)
Volunteer at Clements C P School	Local Volunteer Centre	
Founder member of a Coffee Morning and Soup a Lunch, both of which still run		
Volunteer at WRVS – involved with Meals on Wheels for 18 years		
Haverhill Library Committee	Volunteer with the Blind and Partially Sighted Group	
Haverhill Family History Group	Walk leader and contact for Stepping out in Suffolk	
No wonder she was voted 'GREATEST ASSET TO THE TOWN'!		

2017

Information and photos provided by Joan's daughter, Jeanette Key

Joan aged 3 years with her grandmother



Joan was not evacuated during the war, but remembers being hidden under coats in the windowless hallway or going to a neighbour's Anderson shelter when the sirens went. During the war her father worked as a universal grinder making parts for airplanes, and also volunteered as an auxiliary fireman. Her mother worked in a canteen preparing food for the factory workers whilst Joan was at school and Joyce was in a nursery. Her mother also looked after the chickens and grew vegetables. Joan never remembers going short of eggs. At the end of the war Joan and her sister were taken by their father to see lamp posts being lit up again and she was allowed to stay up late on VE day.

After leaving school in 1953 Joan started full time work at J Lyons, Cadby Hall, W14, as a comptometer operator. Her wages were £2 15s per week. The company trained the staff and anyone under 18 went to school one day a week. Joan passed her English and maths 'O' levels receiving 'student of the year' for which she won the complete works of Shakespeare, an Oxford English Dictionary and an Oxford book of prose.



In 1969, Joan found employment as an assembler at Pyes. She made circuit boards and worked a 30 hour week. She was a member of the works committee & treasurer of the social club. Joan left Pye in December 1974 for a new job, one that many Haverhill people will remember her for. On 1 January 1975 Joan started training to become the Traffic Warden for Haverhill and surrounding villages.





JOAN KEY

VOTED 'GREATEST ASSET TO THE TOWN' BY HAVERHILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Joan Margaret Lawrence was born on May 9th, 1937, in Hammersmith Hospital West London. She was the first born of Edward (Ted) and Catherine (Kitty) Lawrence née Keane and later elder sister of Joyce Rosalind 1941, Derek Edward Albert 1950 and Ann Veronica 1952.



(Photo left: Joan aged 3 years with her grandmother)

She lived with her parents at 48, Boarders Road, Hanwell, West London. This was a one-bedroom flat on the first floor with an unattached garden. She would see her maternal grandmother Rosa Ellen Keane née Goodfellow every weekend at her house in Acton W3 and met up with aunts Anne and Lillian who also lived there. On Tuesdays her paternal grandmother Louisa Eliza Wright née Lawrence visited in term time but in school holidays Joan and Joyce would visit her. Joan didn't know either of her grandfathers. Her maternal grandfather James Henry Keane had died on 7th April 1929.

She was not evacuated during the war but remembers being hidden under layers of coats in the hallway, because there were no windows there. Joan also remembers going to a neighbour's Anderson shelter when the sirens went. During the war her father worked as a universal grinder making parts for airplanes and also volunteered as an auxiliary fireman. Due to the shift work this meant Joan could go weeks without seeing him. Her mum worked in a canteen preparing food for the factory workers whilst Joan was at school and Joyce was in a nursery. Kit also kept busy looking after the chickens and growing vegetables and Joan never remembers going short of eggs.

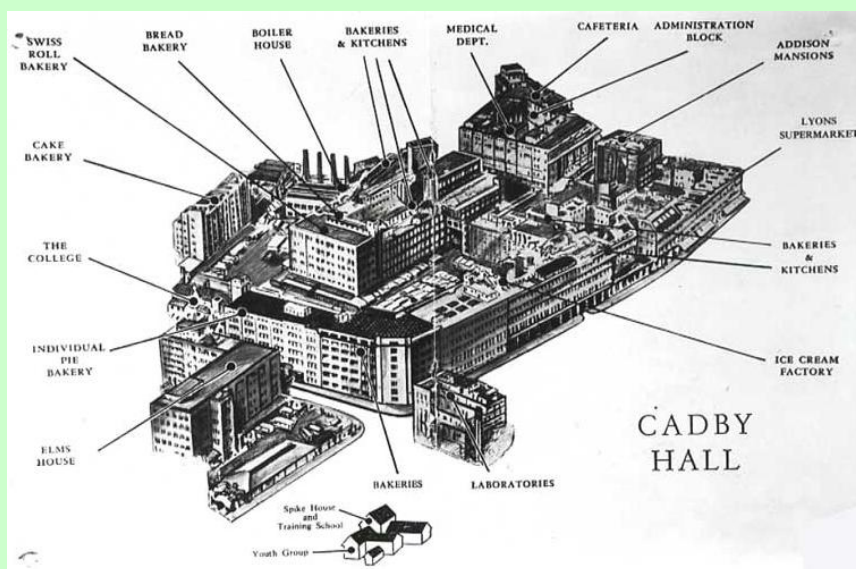
Joan was sent to an all-girls junior school. She remembers air raid drills but never had to put it into practice. When Joan was young, she remembers happy Christmases with mostly homemade toys and plenty of books. At the end of the war Joan and her sister were taken by their father to see lamp posts being lit up again and she was allowed to stay up late on VE day.



In 1948 the family moved to 63 Browning Avenue W7. This was a bigger house with 2 bedrooms and gardens front and back. Her brother and sister were born there and three years later a new family moved in next door and Joan met her future husband for the first time. Joan attended Greenford County Grammar School (left) and left there at the age of 16 without any 'O' levels.

Before leaving school Joan had a Saturday job at Woolworths in Acton, London, W3, working on the sweet counter, as this was 1952 this meant cutting out the coupons from the ration books, as rationing was still in force. The pay was 15 shillings for working 9 to 5. She caught the bus from Hanwell, a 20-minute bus ride each way. Joan worked there for a year, until she left school at 16. During the school holidays she worked six full days and expected 15 shillings per day, but received less than £3, so financially, with the bus fares, it was not worth it.

After leaving school in 1953 Joan started full time work at J Lyons, Cadby Hall, W14, as a comptometer operator, she was very proud to get this job. Her wages were £2/15s per week. The company trained the staff and anyone under 18 got to go to school one day a week. Joan got an English and maths 'O' level from this schooling, and also received student of the year, winning the complete works of Shakespeare an Oxford English Dictionary and an Oxford book of prose. Later the company introduced computers and Joan's job changed to check that the computers did everything correctly.



In 1954 the family moved again to a bigger house with three bedrooms at 51 Boarders Road. Three years later on the 6th July 1957 Joan left this house to marry George Key at St Mary's Church Hanwell. They set up their first home together in a furnished room at 76 Gorden Road.

When Joan married her employer gave her a free wedding cake, however this was small, so she had to add to this. In 1958 with Joan now married she found out that her single female colleagues were given pay rises, but she did not receive one, so she decided to leave the company. Joan moved to Currys for about 7 or 8 months, as an office clerk, and then moved to Sudbury Motor Factors for 3 months, again as an office clerk. She then left in April 1959 to start a family.

Joan had 4 children between 1959 and 1963, Kevin, Jeanette, Sandra and Barry. She worked various part time evening jobs to help support the family. These jobs included office jobs, factory work, cleaning and child minding.



Housing was at a premium in London and in 1968 the family moved to Haverhill and she and George have remained in the same house since then.

In 1969, now in Haverhill, Joan started working at Pyes as an assembler, making circuit boards and working a 30 hour week. Whilst she was there, she was a member of the works committee & treasurer of the social club. Joan left Pyes in December 1974 for a new and stimulating job.

On 1 January 1975 Joan started training to become the Traffic Warden for Haverhill and surrounding villages. This was done in Bury St Edmunds where there was a senior Traffic Warden, and Joan was the only female out of 8 traffic wardens. The training consisted of learning to read bylaws, write statements & control traffic. The training lasted two weeks then Joan started to work in Haverhill. The duty sergeant was responsible for Joan's workload for each day, but after a few weeks they all decided to let her work her own routes. She worked a five-day week on a rota system, so only having one Saturday off in 6 weeks. Working Wednesdays was very quiet as it was still half day closing and she never had to work on a Sunday as all the shops were closed. Joan also spent time in the surrounding villages when special events were on such as Clare antique sales. There were no financial incentives for issuing tickets, or targets to meet; the rule was the safe flow of the traffic and pedestrians. Being in uniform Joan was often stopped for advice and soon became the local tourist office as at that time there was nowhere else to go. One year the Haverhill chamber of commerce voted her 'greatest asset to the town' and presented her with a basket of fruit and a bouquet of flowers. She also gave talks to many clubs in the town and surrounding areas about being a traffic warden. Joan decided to retire after twenty-one years of service in January 1996.

Joan's parents, Ted and Kitty, were always helping friends and neighbours, supporting local groups etc. so it was inevitable that Joan would too. She was soon on the schools' PTAs, and the Haverhill swimming club committee to support her children and their hobbies. Joan, who has a fear of water, also undertook swimming teaching exams and swimming official's exams. As the children grew and became more independent Joan became a school governor at Castle Manor Upper School and four years later was asked to join Castle Hill Middle School as a governor too. Joan was a school governor for 28 years and became the Chair of Governors at Castle Manor for 2 years. She stayed involved with schools and volunteered at Clements School reading with some of the pupils until two years ago when she finally retired. The school still invites her to special shows and performances, so she hasn't lost contact completely.

Soon after starting work as a Traffic warden, she was also asked to help support the growth of the local Volunteer Centre and became one of their first trustees. During these years, Joan carried chairs for concerts at the Town Hall, made teas for The Haverhill shows on the

Recreation ground, and took courses for Victim Support, Befrienders, Child Protection and Counseling.



(Photo left: Joan presents Duke of Edinburgh Awards)

Following retirement in January 1996 Joan continued her voluntary work and became a founder member of a Coffee morning instigated by the local Salvation Army

Captain. When the Shop used by the coffee group had to be closed for financial reasons, the members decided to rent a room in the Leiston Centre to continue their meetings. Joan agreed to give her name and address to which the rent bills should be sent.

When George became a part-time worker in 1997 he joined Joan as a volunteer with the WRVS, and together they made a formidable team delivering Meals on Wheels in and around Haverhill for 18 years.

Soon after her retirement, when using the local bus route on a regular basis, she was surprised how many people, living on their own, felt it was not worthwhile cooking for one, and no fun eating alone, she thought there was a need for somewhere these people could get together, to enjoy being waited on for a change and to enjoy some company. Luckily Joan met up with a rep from Age Concern, who also saw there was this need, and following a survey distributed around the town, further support came from Town Councilors and a monthly Lunch club has been running since April 2015.



When the Library no longer came under the local authority it became a charity and they were looking for local committee members for support, Joan volunteered again for the first year.

Joan also joined the Haverhill Group of the Suffolk Family History Society and was the Secretary and programme organizer for a few years, and is still a committee member now.

Continuing with her volunteering she still helps with the local Blind and Partially Sighted group.

Stepping Out in Suffolk, a health walk initiative also benefited from Joan's involvement. She led some walks and also acted as the contact for village pick-ups.

As Joan worked at the police station she was asked if she would be a Poll Clerk during elections, she agreed and has been doing this until fairly recently.



Joan has just this year celebrated her 80th birthday and her Diamond wedding anniversary with her husband George. She has seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Written by Joan's daughters, Jeanette & Sandra Key.

2025 Programme of Meetings & Events

Usually, 2nd Thurs of the month, **unless stated otherwise**, start 7.30 pm,

Old Independent Church Hall (**CB9 9EF**), members £1 visitors £2.50 inc. tea/coffee

NB members £2, visitors £3 from September 2024.

11 Sept 2025	History of Art	Edel Pinnock
9 Oct 2025	Borley Rectory the most haunted house in England	Bryan Thurlow
13 Nov 2025	CWGC	Mac Macdonald
11 Dec 2025	Christmas Quiz A light-hearted social evening with refreshments	Ourselves

Wednesday afternoons, help with your Research at Haverhill Library 2 - 4pm

Guided use of the Internet, especially for newcomers or those 'stuck'

telephone 01440 848095 to book your place