

Finding your Ancestors in England

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Three main record groups for genealogy research in England:

- Census records (1841 to present - 1921)
- Civil Registration records (1837 to present)
- Church records - parish registers (1538 to present)

Census records in England and Wales (1841-1851-1861-1871-1881-1891-1901-1911-1921)

The 1841 census may provide the following information:

name; age (rounded down to nearest multiple of 5 for all persons aged 15 and older); gender; occupation; indication of birthplace by county or country (specific birthplace not given).

The 1851 through 1891 censuses may provide the following information:

name; relationship to head of household; marital condition; age; gender; occupation; place of birth.

1911 Census images are the actual household schedules; likely will contain your ancestor's signature if they were literate.

1921 Census also uses actual household schedule as the official census record; added "divorced" as an option for marital status; shows age in years and months; asked for name of employer and place of work. The 1921 is the latest census available to public due to 100-year "closure rule".

Research the Census online at [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) and [Findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com).

Civil Registration of births, marriages and deaths

- began in England and Wales July 1837
- in Scotland 1855
- in Ireland 1864
- marriage allowed at age 12 for a girl, 14 for a boy. Consent of parents required under age 21 ("full age").

Birth certificate provides the following information:

when and where born; name; sex (gender); name and surname of father; name, surname and maiden name of mother; occupation of father; signature (or mark); description (relationship) and residence of informant; when registered.

Marriage certificate provides the following information:

when married; name and surname of bride and groom; their ages; condition (e.g. bachelor, spinster, widow); rank or profession; residence at the time of marriage; father's name and surname; rank or profession of father.

Death certificate provides the following information:

when and where died; name and surname; sex (gender); age; occupation; cause of death; signature, description and residence of informant; when registered.

Registration Quarters for civil records:

Jan – Feb – Mar:	March Quarter
Apr – May – Jun:	June Quarter
July – Aug – Sep:	September Quarter
Oct – Nov – Dec:	December Quarter

Order civil registration records through the General Register Office: <http://www.gro.gov.uk>

Church Parish Registers

- hand-written records for baptisms - marriages - burials kept by local parish minister
- history of parish record keeping - annual copy of register sent to diocese - "Bishop's Transcript"
- importance of location - county – parish
- use gazetteers for finding locations

Baptisms

- child and adult baptism
- printed parish registers - George Rose's Act of 1812

Marriages

- intention to marry – banns; published three consecutive Sundays
- Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753
- marriage by license

Burials

- burial vs. death – not to be confused
- stamp Duty 1783 - imposed duty of threepence on every burial, marriage, birth or christening entered in parish register; paupers exempt

Websites to search FREE for church parish records:

www.familysearch.org
www.freereg.org.uk
www.ukbmd.org.uk/online_parish_clerk
www.genuki.org.uk
www.google.com

To search FamilySearch website for church records:

<https://familysearch.org> > Search > Catalog (search by Place) > select "Church records" from results list

WEBSITES

- FamilySearch historical maps - England & Wales Jurisdictions 1851 <https://www.familysearch.org/mapp>
- Best overall list of England online genealogy records is in the FamilySearch Wiki:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Online_Genealogy_Records
- FreeBMD www.freebmd.org.uk - obtain index information first; then order birth, marriage and death certificates online at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates
- National Archives homepage <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>
- For info about non-conformist church records in England:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Nonconformist_Church_Records

- See https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Genealogy for a good summary of various topics related to England genealogy.
- Forbidden Marriage Laws of the U.K.: <http://www.genetic-genealogy.co.uk/Toc115570145.html>
- GENUKI gazetteer www.genuki.org.uk/Gazetteer
- FamilySearch research outline for England:
<http://files.lib.byu.edu/family-history-library/research-outlines/Europe/England.pdf>

Important Dates/History

- 1538 Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General to Henry VIII, ordered each parish to keep a register of births, marriages and burials.
- 1558 Earliest date of existence for registers in most parishes.
- 1598 Parish registers required to be kept on parchment and previous registers copied to parchment; Bishops Transcripts began.
- 1642-1660 Civil War/Commonwealth period – registers kept poorly - many lost.
- 1733 English was to be used in place of Latin in recording parish entries.
- 1752 Calendar changed from Julian (Old Style) to Gregorian (New Style). First day of the year changed from March 25 (Lady Day) to January 1.
- 1754 Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act – to prevent “clandestine marriages”; required all marriages to be performed in the Church of England (except for Jews and Quakers); required a separate register be kept for marriages using a printed register book.
- 1763 Minimum age for marriage set at 16 (earlier only with license from bishop); consent of parents was required for anyone under 21.
- 1783-1794 Stamp Duty of 3d imposed on parish register entries; paupers exempt.
- 1812 George Rose's Act required Church of England baptisms, marriages and burials to be kept in separate, printed register books – registers are essentially the same today.
- 1837 Civil registration began in England and Wales for all births, marriages and deaths (some parish registers continued to be kept and some parishes stopped making Bishop's Transcripts).

Selected Bibliography

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Humphrey-Smith, Cecil R., editor. *The Phillimore Atlas & Index of Parish Registers*. Third edition. Chichester, West Sussex, England: Phillimore and Co. Ltd., 2003. (OCFSL: REF 942 E7pa)

Smith, Frank. *A Genealogical Gazetteer of England*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1968. (OCFSL: 942 E5g)

Smith, Frank and David E. Gardner. *Genealogical Research in England and Wales*. Vol. 1. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft Publishers, 1956. (Vol. 1, Vol. 2, Vol. 3. also available in digital format on FamilySearch.org) (OCFSL: 942D2gs Vol. 01)

ENGLAND

PRE - 1974 COUNTY STRUCTURE

This map shows the county structure for England and Wales as it existed before 1974.

