

English Genealogy on the Internet – 4 April 2018

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The Internet is **the** place to start English genealogy research. There are four major English websites. FamilySearch, www.familysearch.org is free, but the digital images are sometimes browse only or available only at Family History Centers, partner libraries or in Salt Lake City, or through one of the two partner websites, Ancestry.com, www.ancestry.com, or Findmypast.com. These sites are NOT free. Ancestry.com, Findmypast.com and a third UK site, The Genealogist, www.thegenealogist.co.uk are subscription websites. Ancestry.com and Findmypast.com are freely available at family history centers in the US. Ancestry.com is also available at many libraries. Limited time requires I focus primarily today on some important free English (and Welsh) sites and the types of information or records they have.

Background Information Sites:

GENUKI: [http://www.genuki.org.uk/](http://www.genuki.org.uk)

Good for Scotland and Ireland as well as England and Wales. The site is a virtual reference library with country-specific and county-specific information available. This is the go-to place when searching a new county or country to learn what's special about the locality. As with all volunteer sites the information available for places is variable.

British History Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

The Local History Section and particularly the Lewis's Topical Dictionaries or Gazetteers (published in the 1840s) are good sources of local information. Browse to find other information including local maps.

Victoria County Histories <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/> exist for most of the counties of England. Each County History is a multi-volume set with typically a section for each parish within the county, information on non-conformist chapels and the history of the local parish and manor(s).

Record Search:

English and Welsh research strategy depends on whether your starting point is pre or post 1841. Civil registration (vital records) began in July 1837 and the first every-name census was conducted in June 1841. These record sets have national indexes so although it's still helpful to know the parish, town or village where your ancestors were from, knowing the county may be sufficient. Pre-1840 it's more important to know the Church of England parish of origin. However knowing the parish is now less important for areas where the parish records (births, marriages and burials) are on Ancestry.com or FindMyPast.com as searchable digital images.

Census Research

English and Welsh census images (1841-1911) are available at all three of the paid websites mentioned above. I don't recommend FamilySearch because one is directed to the partner site www.findmypast.co.uk to view the actual images. If you can't find your relations in one index try another site as the indexes were made independently and it's unlikely every site will index an entry incorrectly. Use www.findmypast.co.uk if www.ancestry.com or www.thegenealogist.co.uk has poor quality images. Findmypast.co.uk digitized the census images for the National Archives UK and some images, particularly 1841 census images and the water-damaged 1851 census images for the Manchester area were enhanced over what was available on FHL film.

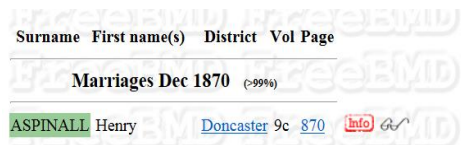
Civil Registration Research

National Indexes

Search for the national Civil Registration indexes on Ancestry.com, The Genealogist or the UK site Free BMD, www.freebmd.org.uk. This latter site is completely free and extremely popular with UK researchers. Currently Free BMD indexes are complete from the start of civil registration to 1962 for births, 1963 for marriages and 1973 for deaths. Each index is for 3 months periods, so there are four indexes per year. The information you need to determine in addition to the year and quarter is the name of

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the district where the event took place, and the volume and page numbers. Henry Aspinall's marriage took place in the 4th or December quarter of 1870 in the civil registration district of Doncaster, volume 9c, p. 870. This is important for making sure you are ordering the correct certificate.



Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page
Marriages Dec 1870 (c-99%)				
ASPINALL	Henry	Doncaster	9c	870

Fig. 1 - Search result from www.freebmd.org.uk

No civil registration certificate has yet been declared a historical document so only the indexes are searchable online. Once you have found the reference for the certificate you wish to order, you can do that online too at the General Register Office website

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp>. Registering at the site is free and something you need to do before ordering certificates. Each certificate costs £9.25 each. When using the indexes remember to just put in the name and range of dates you wish to search. Too much information can give a negative result. The following was added to the indexes after 1837:

- Death Indexes – date of death – 1866
- Marriage Index – surname name of spouse – 1st quarter 1912
- Birth Index – mother's maiden surname – 3rd quarter 1911

Local Indexes: UKBMD

National Civil Registration Indexes were known to have problems – up to 10% of registered births, marriages, and deaths were missing from the indexes. Local family history societies began creating on-line indexes on a county or local basis. There are two sets of civil registration indexes. The primary indexes are at the local register offices and a secondary index was compiled by the General Register Office from the local indexes on a quarter by quarter basis. The national online index was created from this secondary index. UKBMD: <http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/> is the master site where one can search countrywide or county by county – the choice is yours – using the locally-created Civil Registration Indexes. I'm partial to searching county by county as there is often additional information in some but not all of the locally-created indexes. The Doncaster example from of the Yorkshire marriage index containing the full name of the spouse and the location of the marriage (specific church) is just one of many examples where local indexes are enhanced.

New Indexes at the GRO: https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes_search.asp

- Births from 1837 – 1916 with the mother's maiden name
- Deaths from 1837 - 1957 with age at death

There is no new marriage index yet with the spouse's surname from 1837 onwards. These indexes require exact names and can only be searched for +/- two years. They are best used in conjunction with the Free BMD indexes (either the free site or www.ancestry.com for births before 1911 and deaths before 1866) so one can distinguish which children belong to a couple and which of many same-named deceased individuals is your ancestor or relative based on age at death. An example of searching for a birth record using this index in conjunction with the ancestry.com index will be presented. Currently the GRO is running a pilot whereby birth of death certificates from 1837 to 1817 may be downloaded as a .pdf for £6 instead of purchasing a certificate for £9.25. The trial will run through July 2018.

Parish Records:

Most US citizens with English and Welsh origins had families that arrived from England or Wales prior to 1840. For these families one needs to start with church records and probate records.

Church of England Parish Records

Between 1754 and 1837 the Hardwick Act mandated that all marriages (other than for Quakers or Jews) had to be in the Church of England or the marriage was not valid and the children of the marriage were not legal heirs. Even if your ancestors were “non-conformist” which strictly speaking means were not Church of England their marriages are likely in CofE Parish Registers. Some but by no means all protestant non-conformist chapels had their own burial ground. If the chapel did not have its own burial ground, your ancestors would likely be buried in the Church of England churchyard as well. The following websites have digital images and transcriptions of parish records online.

Ancestry.com: Digital images are typically searchable for birth and burials from 1812 onwards and for marriages from 1754 onwards. Older images may be searchable or browse only. Large cities are London (records from the metropolitan archive), Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. The counties/archives of Derbyshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire (but not Bristol record office), Lancashire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Yorkshire (record office) and Wiltshire have also allowed www.ancestry.com to put digital parish records online. Additional transcripts or extracted parish records may be available for other counties.

Findmypast.co.uk: This database is the parish record site for the following English record offices; Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cornwall (transcriptions only), Devon, Northumberland and Durham (transcriptions only), Hertfordshire, Kent (transcriptions only), Lincolnshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and the whole of Yorkshire. Welsh parish records for all 13 Welsh counties are available. Additionally some transcriptions for some counties may be available.

FamilySearch.org Browsable digital images for Cornwall and Devon (some but not all of these are images of transcriptions) Durham, Kent and Norfolk. Cheshire, Derbyshire and Essex are available in transcription and are searchable. These bases may not be complete and there is no way to determine what parishes are included in these searchable databases.

On-Line Parish Clerks: <http://www.genuki.org.uk/indexes/OPC.html>

The goal is to transcribe historic records of genealogical value, particularly the parish records. The following counties have On-line Parish Clerk programs with at least some searchable data on-line. Each program is different. Some are well developed (Cornwall) whereas some are still stubs.

Cheshire – parish register project – 44 parishes to date but fully searchable &, project is still growing

Cornwall – excellent OPC website – searchable on multiple parishes simultaneously or a single parish

Devon – OPC provide a lookup service only and only parishes with a link in GENUKI Devon are covered

Dorset- search within parishes. Not all parishes have OPCs and some are One-place Studies.

Hampshire – searches by parish & record type (baptisms, marriages or burials) not all places transcribed.

Kent – not much information yet as few parishes have an online parish clerk

Lancashire – searches need to be conducted within a parish and many have register transcriptions

Somerset – searchable database by parish but few parishes have an OPC – website under maintenance

Sussex – searchable database by parish, parish coverage for about a quarter of the parishes

Warwickshire – About half the parishes covered but most only have memorial inscriptions transcribed

Wiltshire – search within parish only and approx. half the parishes are covered.

Before using any of these databases check what is included and not included. The information available varies greatly by parish. Cyndi's list, <http://www.cyndislist.com/volunteer-projects/opcs/> is the best place to look for OPC updates.

One Place Studies: <http://one-place-studies.org/>

On September 1 2013 the society for One Place Studies was founded and three years later there are many places that belong, but most of these places are smaller. The larger website One Place Study Worldwide <http://oneplacestudy.org/world/> and the English portion, One Place Studies England <http://oneplacestudy.org/england/> has 1740 places. A particularly large study included is...

Sheffield Indexers: <http://www.sheffieldindexers.com/>. The original Wirksworth study,

<http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/> is no longer a part of these larger studies. It is very dated but still useful.

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Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Records

These records were deposited at the National Archives prior to 1856 and refer to Protestant Non-Conformists, primarily Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers. Non-parochial records, such as the records of the lying-in hospital or the clandestine marriages (Fleet Marriages) prior to 1754 may contain Anglicans as well as non-conformists. The record set is available as pay-per view on the National Archives UK website, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, on www.ancestry.com and www.thegenealogist.co.uk/. The search is superior on Ancestry.com.

Probate Research

1858 and later

Search the www.ancestry.com database "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966." Wills need to be ordered online at "Find a Will or Probate (England and Wales)" <https://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate> for a cost of £10 plus shipping.

Pre 1858

England - Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) Wills – National Archives UK

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> (Free index, pay-per-view downloadable wills) this is the highest court in the land so always check first because it's easy. Now the images are available at

www.ancestry.com but these probate records are listed under Kent databases on Ancestry – illogical!

Lichfield and **Coventry** wills are on line at FindMyPast.org and are digitized. To see what other probate material is present go to the "A-Z of Record Sets" and type the word "probate." If a county isn't there then try looking for a separate probate site for the county. Some examples are:

Northumberland and **Durham** Probate Records <http://familyrecords.dur.ac.uk/nei/data/intro.php>

Wiltshire wills are now on Ancestry.com as of January 2018 and the Wiltshire wills website has closed.

Buckinghamshire <http://www.bucksfhs.org.uk/index.php/database-searches/family-history-news/25-other-bucks-news/384-bucks-wills-index-on-line> - searchable online index – wills can be mailed

Wales Welsh probates for all of Wales except border parishes in an English diocese – National Library of Wales <http://www.llgc.org.uk/> (digital images of Welsh wills cost £5 per record but the images of Welsh newspapers – many of which are in English – are free at the library website)

Additional websites

Court Records - Proceedings of the Old Bailey - <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/> - here you can find the names of all the people involved in cases (even jurors) not just the criminals

Criminals – Black Sheep Ancestors - <http://www.blacksheepancestors.com/uk/blacksheep.shtml>. Mainly a North American site but also has UK Black Sheep records. Prison records, outlaws and criminal records, court records and executions also available at Ancestry.com.

Historical Directories – The historical directories are part of Special Collections online at the University of Leicester and there are directories from all over England and Wales at:

<http://cdm16445.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/historical%20directories/order/nosort>. The collection appears to be growing. Many historical British directories are also at Ancestry.com.

Manorial records – manorial documents register <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr/>

- Guide to manorial records <http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/sources/manorial.shtml>

Deceased Online - <https://www.deceasedonline.com/servlet/GSDOSearch> free search, images are £2 per image pay-per-view, or £89 for a one year subscription.

Findagrave: - <https://www.findagrave.com/> Best for finding military burials in England. Site has many fewer burials in England and Wales than for US states.

Federation of Family History Societies - <http://www.ffhs.org.uk/index.php> THE place to go to find a family history website for the part of England in which you are interested.

Note: All links are up-to-date as of 18 March 2018