



Guardianship (adoption) & fostering

Until 1927 there was no formal adoption process, although the term adoption was often applied to what we call guardianship or fostering. This did not entail a legal, or formal, change of name for a child, but the child would usually use the guardians' or foster parents' surname. Because these were primarily private arrangements, it is extremely difficult to locate relevant records, even if any were prepared and have survived.¹

The legal process of adoption was introduced in 1927 and the GRO holds the Adopted Children's Register which records legal adoptions under the Adoption Acts since 1st January 1927, a certificate provides the register entry which was made by the Registrar General after a court made an adoption order. It gives the court's name, the date of the order, the date of the child's birth and the names, occupation and address of the adoptive parents. The country and place of the child's birth are shown from 1950 and 1959 respectively however; the register and certificates do not reveal the child's name prior to the adoption.

The '**Adoption Certificate Application Form**' is available on the following link; (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-certificate-application-form>). Many adoption records have not survived and those that have may be held by any one of many different public or private agencies, social services departments of local authorities or archives, a detailed guide to British and Irish fostering and adoption agencies with notes on the survival and location of agencies' records can be found in Georgina Stafford's book, available from Amazon, details later...

Dr Barnardo's homes were established across the country in 1867 and about 300,000 children were assisted, many of them were orphans or illegitimate, but some were sent to Barnardo's because of their parents' poverty, or because a widowed parent couldn't cope. Many of the children were subsequently fostered and thousands were sent to Australia, Canada and other parts of the British Empire to start new lives, Barnardo's kept detailed records from 1867, including admission registers that note the reasons for a child's admission. Applications to search their records by using the '**Making Connections Enquiry Form**' on the following link; (<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/former-barnardos-children>)

Most people know if they have been adopted and usually have a copy of their adoption certificate. An adopted person over 18, if not aware of the names of their true parents, may apply for this information to be released to them after a course of counselling on the problems of taking this course of action.¹

Access to adoption papers can be granted to others, such as an adopted person's children, but an application to court has to be made (and an applicant should obtain legal advice on the procedure). Even with information from a birth certificate, an adopted person (or their descendants) may find it difficult to research the family tree. An address given on a birth certificate may be a hospital or a temporary address of the mother. Many adopted children were illegitimate and it may be difficult to discover the father's name. The child's mother may have died since the adoption, or perhaps remarried, and so be difficult to trace (or she may not wish to be traced).¹

Finally, there is the **ADOPTION SEARCH REUNION**, that may be of help and they can be found at (www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/Channels/) Good luck in your quest for those lost family records, which I hope will bring peace of mind...

CITATIONS:

¹Herber, Mark. 2005. *Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*. 2nd ed. Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., in association with the Society of Genealogists, London

Stafford, Georgina. 2002. *Where to find adoption records, a Guide for Counsellors, Adopted People and Birth Relatives*. 3rd revised ed. British Association for Adoption & Fostering