

EVERYONE HAS ROOTS

No. 5 – Baptism, Marriage & Burial Registers

You can search Anglican parish registers for baptisms, marriages and burials. They were first introduced in England and Wales in 1538, though in the period before around 1600 few churches maintained a complete set of records.

Baptism registers

If you are unable to find birth information for an ancestor then looking for a baptism record is essential. For most people baptisms traditionally took place as infants but you cannot rule out an adult baptism. Initially you should search a few years either side of an estimated year of birth. If you are researching pre-1837 then you will need to find a baptism to establish your ancestor's existence as there are no other means of tracing birth evidence. Some baptism entries may also record a date of birth. As with many historical records, the further back in history you research, the less information you will find in the entries.

Researching baptisms back to 1813 will provide the following information in a standardised format introduced as a result of Roses Act, legislation of 1812. This format began in 1813 and is still in use today. Register entries provide the following information:

When baptised (this column may also include the birth date) – some registers have a separate column in which the birth date was recorded.

Christian name.

Parents names (sometimes the maiden name of the mother is included).

Place of abode.

Occupation of the father.

Sometimes you will find entries for more than one member of a family baptised on the same day.

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BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <i>Luton</i> in the County of <i>Herts</i> in the Year <i>1864</i>						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents' Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
<i>1864</i> <i>April 10</i>	<i>Thomas Henry</i>	<i>George Wright</i> <i>&</i> <i>Mary Ann</i>	<i>Palmer</i>	<i>Luton</i>	<i>Warrant Officer</i>	<i>J. H. Fairbank</i>
<i>No. 321</i>						
<i>1864</i> <i>April 7th</i>	<i>Richard</i>	<i>Richard</i> <i>&</i> <i>Mary</i>	<i>Stannworth</i>	<i>Luton</i>	<i>Father was a Brick maker but this is a Posthumous child</i>	<i>J. H. Fairbank</i>
<i>No. 322</i>						
<i>1864</i> <i>May 8th</i>	<i>William</i>	<i>Thomas</i> <i>&</i> <i>Sarah Bosman</i>	<i>Manwaring</i>	<i>Luton</i>	<i>Miller</i>	<i>J. H. Fairbank</i>
<i>No. 323</i>						

Dade Baptism Registers contain more information than standard baptism registers. They commenced in the late eighteenth century but end in 1812 as they were superseded by the requirements of Rose's Act which required less information to be recorded.

The registers unique to areas of Yorkshire were introduced in 1770 by William Dade, who saw the value of including as much information on individuals as possible. In 1777 Dade's scheme of registration was introduced throughout the York diocese. The resulting registers include:

- child's name
- seniority (e.g. first son)
- father's name
- profession or occupation
- place of abode
- descent (i.e. names, professions and places of abode of the father's parents)
- similar information was included about the mother and mother's parents
- the infant's date of birth and baptism.

Infant's Christian Name, and Seniority.	Infant's Surname.	Father's Name, Profession, Descent, and Abode.	Mother's Name, and Descent.	Born.	Baptized.
Samuel Denton First Son	Fisher	Of Tho: Fisher of Selby Merchant Son of Tho: Fisher of Selby aged 70 years decent by Judith his wife Daughter of — Wood of Wood thorp near Wakefield	Rebecca Daw of Tho: Andrew of York Tanner by Catharine his wife Daughter of William Wofflet of Liffeld Gent.	March 6 th	March 6 th

These registers are a goldmine for the family historian with northern ancestors as they provide much needed information on earlier generations.

Pre 1813 registers of baptism had no set format but there are often valuable research clues contained within the entries.

*Sarah Ann Daughter of Richard Sutton, and Sarah Ann his Wife.
under sentence of Transportation in New City Goal was baptized
in this Church May 9 1793 Pauper.*

Marriage registers

Parish marriage registers dating back to 1837 record the same information that is found on a civil registration marriage certificate. There are some advantages in using a marriage entry in a parish register. Firstly, there is no cost involved in obtaining a certified copy from the GRO. Secondly, you will see the original register entry in the handwriting of the day therefore your ancestors signature or mark will be given. Remember the GRO certificates are taken from transcripts of quarterly returns not the original registers.

Finding a marriage in parish registers presupposes that you know which parish the marriage was solemnised at. As many towns and villages only had one parish church this should not present a major issue. The name of the church is often divulged in newspaper reports of the wedding or perhaps from information found in the family archive or after interviewing your relations.

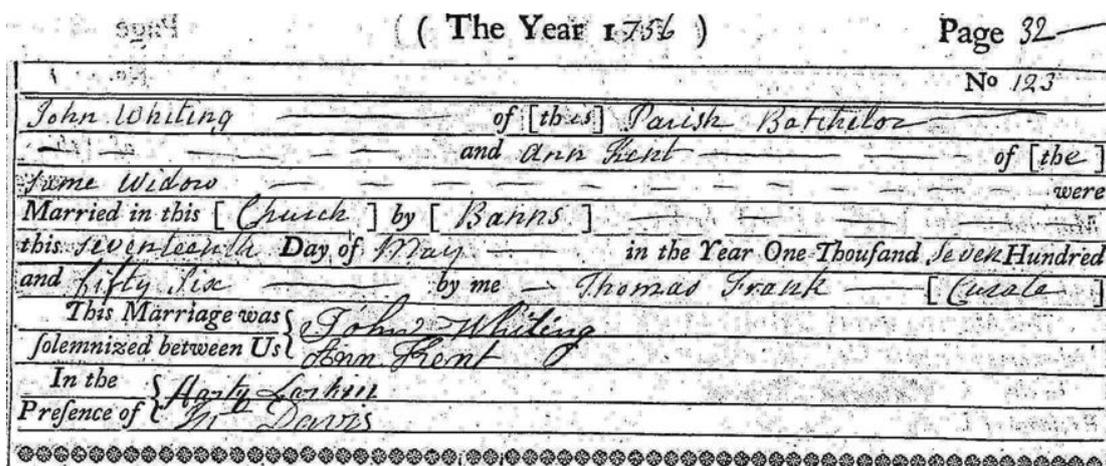
If the parish marriage register has been indexed then it is more straightforward to find the parish of marriage. Places like London which included many parishes, have digitised images and indexes online for the whole of the locality so even if you do not know the exact parish, by finding the names of the parties in the index, will enable you to view the actual image of the original register entry without too much research.

In marriage entries before 1837 there is less information given. Like the content of baptism entries, the details included can vary.

Between 1754 and 1837 there was also a set format for marriage entries as a result of legislation. The Hardwick Marriage Act 1753 came into force on 25 March 1754 from which time all marriages irrespective of religious denomination had to be performed in the Church of England except for Quakers and Jews who were exempt from the act because of their record keeping and the fact they recorded marriage information in greater detail in their own registers.

The effect of the Act was to eliminate the practice of clandestine marriages and to make sure that all marriages were legally constituted in the established church. The Hardwick system operated up to the start of civil registration.

The original Hardwick entries between 1754 and 1812 (four entries per page) were slightly modified from 1813 (three entries per page) but content and details in the register entries was basically the same.



The information provided was as follows:

Name of groom with parish of residence and sometimes marital condition at the time
 The same information for the bride

Whether married by banns or licence
Date of the marriage
Signature or mark of both parties
Signature or mark of the witnesses.

There may also be an indication of one or both of the parties being a minor (i.e. under 21 years of age) usually denoted by the words "with the consent of father" or similar. Very rarely was the name of the father given and if the bride was a widow at the time of marriage it was unlikely that her former surname would be shown.

Before 1754 there was no set format for the recording of marriages in parish registers and most entries give just the name of the two parties to the marriage and the date.

Marriage Licences or banns

Post 1754 (and sometimes before) you will notice that a marriage took place either by banns or by licence. If a banns book or the marriage licence allegation and/or bond are available then these should be researched in conjunction with the marriage entry. It is unlikely that you would find the actual licence. However, both the allegation and bond documents are useful supplementary resources for confirming ancestry.

Marriage banns are not proof that the marriage actually took place. Banns books generally only exist from 1754 onwards and their keeping was another requirement of Hardwicks Act. Marriages would not have taken place before the last date of the calling of the banns and publication should have been for three consecutive Sundays prior to the event. Some marriages took place immediately thereafter, but others could have been a month or two later. Often banns were only called in one parish although the parties to the proposed marriage may not have both resided in the same parish. Information in the banns book should provide a clue to the church the marriage took place which was frequently the bride's parish.

Marriage licences allowed a marriage without the necessity of calling of banns. Finding a marriage bond or allegation is extremely useful as they may contain information such as ages, father of bride and occupation of the groom. Licences were only valid for 3 months from the date of the allegation but many marriages took place on day of issue or shortly thereafter. Marriage by licences was chosen for a variety of reasons and often used where parties were away from home or if serving military or naval personnel were home on leave. Licences did not require the same time period of notice as banns.

The documents which are available for research are only the allegation and bond (often referred to as MLBs). Both of these are legal documents. The allegation is a statement of intention to marry and the bond is a monetary surety provided by

guarantors that both are free to marry and that it will take place in the specified parish recorded in the allegation

Burial register

Post 1813 the burials register contains base information only namely:

Name of deceased

Residence (Abode)

When buried

Age

The name of the incumbent who officiated at the burial.

A married woman or widow will be buried using her married surname not maiden surname. The abode will be where someone was at the time of death so this may be recorded as a workhouse or other institution. Sometimes the address given may be that of a relative and in some cases the abode will just be recorded as the village or town. As with death certificates the age recorded may be inaccurate.

Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
John Boice No. 145.	Chatham	June 7 2	29 4/4	Geo Harker Curate
Elizabeth Pinn No. 146.	Chatham	June 7 2	69	Geo Harker Curate

The fact that a burial entry is recorded in the parish burials register does not always mean that the burial was in the churchyard. In fact, many burials post 1853 took place in the municipal cemetery and are recorded in the parish register because the funeral service took place in the church prior to interment in the cemetery. However, in many villages the churchyards are still in use for burials today. It is a matter of further research for the grave to be located.

Again prior to 1813 there was no set format and information in a burial register varies from just a name and date. Sometimes entries may be as vague as "widow Smith"

Until the late nineteenth century, burial registers record many nonconformists, as nonconformists were often buried in Anglican churchyards when cemeteries belonging to their denominations were not established. Very often there were specific areas set aside for burials on dissenters in Anglican churchyards.

Using Bishop's transcripts

Bishops transcripts are supplementary records supposedly copies of parish registers with an annual return submitted to the diocese on or around Lady Day. Bishops Transcripts began in 1598 but in practice very few exist that early on. After the start of civil registration in 1837 many ecclesiastical authorities ceased to maintain them.

You should always use original registers if they are available as information in the original register is not always included in the transcripts. None were kept during the Commonwealth period (Oliver Cromwell and the civil war period) 1642-1660.

A Copy of a Register of a Parish (part of) of the County of the Shires of Wiltshire, in Burials from Lady day the 14th May 1735.

Baptized:

May 21	Suzannah of James & Suzannah Pope
John of John & Susannah Atway	
13	Mary wife of Richard Strawbridge & Daughter of Robert & Elizabeth Street, aged 36.
13	Elizabeth of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 18
13	Martha of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 15
13	Robert of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 14
13	John of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 12
13	Jane of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 10
13	Suzannah of Robert & Elizabeth, aged 7.
15	Elizabeth of Robert & Hester, aged 18.
30	Jarah of Thomas & Judith Parley
June 13	Joseph of Joseph & Mary Will.
September 6	John of Thomas & Mary Dwyer
October 3	Thomas of Thomas & Judith Pain
24	Jarah of William & Mary Brunger
December 28	Richard of Richard & Jane Hopper, aged 27

M. married.

December 28	Jeremiah John & Elizabeth Boyter.
March 1	John & Elizabeth Pope

Buried.

May 20	Hester	Edman	Wid.
21	Thomas	Edman	Inf.
June 19	Mary	Hopper	Wid.
30	Mary	Knight	Wid.
July 6	John	Edman	Atway.
August 6	Jane	How	Widow.
22	A Child	of John	Landrig.
September 7	A Child	of Mr.	Lambert.
November 5	A Child	of Mr.	Hobdens.
26	A Child	of Dan.	Kingsworth.
February 12	A Child.	of Mat.	Watts.

There is usually a mix of events not always recorded in the same format as in the registers.

Ideally, they should only really be consulted if originals are not available. The availability of Bishop's transcripts may vary from diocese to diocese and complete runs may not always exist. In some areas returns were made to the Archdeacons every seventh year so it may be necessary to search those as well for any missing BT years.

The way in which BTs are catalogued and stored also varies between diocesan record offices.

Nonconformist registers

Not all of our ancestors would necessarily have been Anglican as many followed other religious denominations. There is often a strong nonconformist connection running through most families.

From the mid sixteenth century up to the modern day, those who belonged to a denomination other than the Church of England were nonconformists. By 1850, many different groups existed including Independent protestants, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists. By the end of the nineteenth century, around 15% of the population of England and 80% of the population of Wales were nonconformists. Many different religious groups came and went very quickly and families often changed allegiance during their lifetime.

Nearly every nonconformist denomination kept their own church registers which are often very informative. Nonconformist birth and baptismal registers are fairly common, and they generally contain more information than those of the Church of England. Except for the Quakers and Jews, nonconformist denominations did not usually keep marriage records, especially after 1754. However, some denomination minute books record marriage details even if the marriage was performed elsewhere. Nonconformist burial records are also less common unless a graveyard belonging to their denomination was available locally.

Using parish registers

Here are some useful tips about using parish registers which will make researching straightforward.

In reality few registers exist before c1600. For someone beginning or who is new to family history, concentrate on using the modern registers (post 1813) in conjunction with civil registration certificates and the census returns. It is unlikely that you will want to purchase all the certificates for everyone in the family other than direct line relatives, but a baptism record used instead of a birth certificate or a burial record instead of a death certificate, will confirm arrival and departure in this life. Remember however a baptism cannot occur before a birth and a burial cannot occur before a death.

For finding a marriage if the location is not known, use banns and licence records to trace where a marriage was solemnised particularly if you cannot locate a marriage easily. Remember post 1837 it may have taken place in a registry office. Age at marriage is sometimes an issue because we are not always as open-minded as we should be about how old a person was when married. Until 1929 males could marry from age 14yrs and females from age 12yrs.

Most parish registers are now deposited in County Record Offices although modern registers will still be with the parish. There isn't a single nationwide index to the surviving registers and content of entries are not as detailed as found on the birth and death records issued by the GRO. However, more and more parish registers are being digitised, indexed and put online by the various websites. www.FamilySearch.org has the largest ever-growing collection nationwide and is

free to use. They may hold the same information which you would ultimately pay a subscription to view on a commercial website

A Google search should help you find out if there's an online collection for your ancestral parish or county. Many online portals exist detailing parish register holdings and online availability including www.genealogylinks.net, FreePAR, Forebears and GENUKI.

Ancestry and FindMyPast along with other subscription sites also have huge collections which are increasing almost weekly. The Genealogist has a good collection of nonconformist records.

There are also an increasing number of village/town heritage society websites that include parish records either in the form of transcriptions or digitised and indexed register images.

WHERE NOW?

Now that you have got yourselves organised you can progress further and begin the research. The following guides are available to help you gain an understanding of how to research and what you can discover about your ancestors.

EVERYONE HAS ROOTS (a series of helpful research guides)

No. 1 It starts with you

No. 2 Ready to begin your research

No. 3 Birth, marriage & death certificates

No. 4 Grow your tree with census returns

No. 5 Baptism, marriage & burial registers

No. 6 Records created after death

No. 7 Discovering more about your ancestors

No. 8 The military connection

No. 9 Tracing your ancestors when they moved

No. 10 Proving your research is correct