

THE QUEST FOR YOUR ENGLISH ANCESTORS

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Focus

The basic tools for any genealogical research are civil and church records of births, marriages and deaths as well as census records. The British Isles is no exception with its vast amount of local and national collections of records. Getting back to at least 1837 should be relatively easy due to the fact that many of these collections are now on the Internet. Once you reach 1837, parish registers are the next step which can be done through microfilms and microfiche assuming the records are available. Adding a variety of other records available, it is now possible to take your research back to the 1600's.

Types of Records

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Websites: Free and For Fee | Census Records | Civil Registration |
| Parish Records | Cemetery | Monumental Inscriptions |
| Parish Chest | Relief Accounts | Poor Law Records |
| Directories | Military Records | Probate Records |
| Land & Property | Manorial Records | |

SOME HELPFUL ENGLISH INTERNET RESOURCES:

Free BMD: <http://freebmd.rootsweb.org.uk>
Genuki: <http://www.genuki.org.uk>
England GenWeb: <https://www.worldgenweb.org/england>
One Name Studies: <http://www.one-name.org>
Family Search: <http://www.familysearch.org>
FS England Wiki: https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Genealogy
Cyndi's List: <http://www.cyndislist.com>
\$ Ancestry: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>
\$ FindMyPast: <http://www.findmypast.com>
\$ The Genealogist: <http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk>
\$ Deceased Online: <http://deceasedonline.com>
\$ My Heritage: <http://www.myheritage.com>

Sites Reviewed
throughout
Presentation

ENGLISH NAMING PATTERN: 1st son named after father's father, 2nd son named after mother's father, 3rd son named after the father, 4th son named after the father's eldest brother, 5th son named after 2nd oldest brother or mother's eldest brother. 1st daughter named after mother's mother, 2nd daughter named after father's mother, 3rd daughter named after the mother, 4th daughter named after the mothers' eldest sister, 5th daughter named after 2nd oldest sister of father's eldest sister.

Often the mother's maiden name was used as a middle name for the first son. If the pattern resulted in duplication of names, then skip to the next one on the list. If a child died in infancy or very young, if the next child was of the same sex, that name would be given to the child in 'memory'. More often than wanted, we are all human and it can be difficult to follow if those names are connected to abuse of any kind. Also, there may be an exceptional good friend or a popular hero chosen as a name instead of following the pattern. This information is provided as it is possible to help identify and break through brick walls if your family a few generations ago followed this naming pattern.

ENGLISH CENSUS RETURNS: Each householder was required to complete a census schedule for the 1841 census. This included the address, names, ages, sexes, occupations and places of birth of each individual residing in his or her home. Most of these census records are available online and are on microfilm at the FHL. There were census records taken earlier and some of them have survived and provide the head of household covering the years 1801-1831. Remember that any moment in time is a census of those in attendance and can be used as substitutes. It's important to remember that the English have had what is known as a "standing military" for centuries. This means that they were always ready to go to war. When census records began in 1801, the military were not included and were not included until 1851, remember this when searching the census records for your military ancestors.

ENGLISH CIVIL REGISTRATION: These are the Vital Records of Births, Marriages and Deaths which started on July 1, 1837 to the present. Currently these records are available from the General Register Office and at County Record Offices. The Indexes are online in multiple locations including [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [FindMyPast.com](https://www.findmypast.com), [the Genealogist.co.uk](https://www.theGenealogist.co.uk), [myheritage.com](https://www.myheritage.com) and [FreeBMD.org.uk](https://www.freebmd.org.uk). These indexes are also online, on microfilm and microfiche at the [FHL](https://www.familysearch.org). This civil registration is a little different for the military. There are separate records for their births, marriages, and burials. Many died at sea and others died on the battlefield. It is because of these out of the ordinary circumstances that we have a different set of records for them and includes their service in the [East Indies](https://www.familysearch.org).

ENGLISH PARISH REGISTERS: In 1538 all parishes were required by law to keep registers for Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, this continues up to the present. A back-up measure was implemented in 1593 called [Bishop's Transcripts](https://www.familysearch.org). When parish registers were destroyed by fire or floods, the Bishop Transcripts are the backup. In 1754, the Lord Hardwicke's Marriage act went into effect. This required that a separate register is used to record marriages. In 1813, the George Rose's Act creates a standard form for Baptisms and Burials as well as a separate register for each. [Phillimore's](https://www.familysearch.org) provides a full listing of parish register locations. Some parish records are online at [theGenealogist.co.uk](https://www.theGenealogist.co.uk), [FindMyPast.com](https://www.findmypast.com) and [Familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org).

INTERNATIONAL GENEALOGICAL INDEX: These are a combination of births and marriages that were extracted from the parish registers of England starting around 1500. Additionally, church members turned in various generations on pedigree charts, together these records add much to aiding individuals in their family history research.

BRITISH ISLES VITAL RECORDS INDEX: Over five million records, this index includes good coverage of baptisms and marriages for Derbyshire, Dorset, Gloucester, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Lincoln, Northumberland, Nottingham, Stafford, Sussex, Wiltshire, Yorkshire. These records are now available online at [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org).

ENGLISH LICENSES, BONDS AND ALLEGATIONS: Bishops granted *licenses* for marriage under special circumstances since the 14th century. The Hardwick Marriage Act allowed a license for individuals to marry without the calling of banns or handling those who were not in their normal place of residence. These licenses have many details on the couples involved, however the one and only copy stayed with the office. A groom and the father of a bride would enter into a *marriage bond*. An *Allegation* was usually done by the groom to indicate there were no impediments to the marriage as well as the location of the marriage. These records are at the County Record Office and are being put online at [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) and other online databases already mentioned. There is much genealogical information on these records. Check out the FamilySearch Wiki on this subject to learn how to access these records.

ENGLISH NON-CONFORMIST CHURCH RECORDS: There were other religions that kept records of birth and death or burial if allowed. Lawful marriages could only be performed by the Church of England, Society of Friends or Jews up until the mid-1800s. This situation caused these marriages to be included in the Anglican records. Most of the non-conformist records were sent to the Public Record Office in 1837 except for the Catholic records. Many are online at [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org), [FindMyPast.com](https://www.findmypast.com) and [the Genealogist.co.uk](https://www.theGenealogist.co.uk).

CEMETERIES & MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS: FamilySearch.org, FindAGrave.com, BillionGraves.com, Ancestry.com, MyHeritage.com, Deceasedonline.com, Warmemorialsonline.org.uk, cwgc.org, twgpp.org, burial-inscriptions.co.uk, interment.net/uk/eng/index.htm, jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery, National Burial Index for England and Wales on FindMyPast.com, Genuki.org.uk. It is wise to join the local Family History Society of the area your ancestors come from as this puts you in contact with others who are researching in that same area.

ENGLISH POOR LAW RECORDS: According to “*The Dictionary of Genealogy: A Guide to British Ancestry Research*”; Poor Law was “The system of public relief of the poor laid down by Acts of Parliament since the original great *Poor Law* Act of 1601. The care of the poor was then placed in the hands of the parish, where it remained until the ‘New Poor Law’ replaced the ‘Old Poor Law’ in 1834. The responsibility was then removed to Poor Law Unions (of several parishes) administered by Boards of Guardians of the Poor through the government. The records created by the working of the Poor Law sometimes enable the descent of a really poor family to be more easily traced than that of a more prosperous one.”¹

Slowly these records are coming online through the National Archives in their Digital Records and Ancestry.com as well as locations of work houses provided by Genuki.org.uk and the website by Peter Higginbottom at workhouses.org.uk. There are many on microfilm through the Family History Library. Cyndislist.com has a great list of additional resources on this topic. The British Library has the Newspaper collections online for a fee. There is a “Poor Law Unions' Gazette” available that lists individuals who are being sort after, descriptions are provided with addresses and family members on many.

ENGLISH APPRENTICESHIP RECORDS: Learning a skill or a trade often required a young man to be indentured; this was signed by their parents and the master to whom they were apprenticed for either 5 or 7 years. A tax was later added in 1710 which created a central registration register. The Public Record Office holds the original registers. The Family History Library has an index which covers 1710 to 1774 by county. There are also local apprenticeship records available. The information obtained from these records includes the names of the young man, his father or widowed mother, the master, the trade being learned and the amount of money involved and where they lived.

ADDITIONAL RECORD SOURCES

ENGLISH CITY DIRECTORIES: Started in the early 1800’s, these are available for all counties. There are some counties which go back to the 1700’s. The directory contains valuable information about each town, hamlet and village. Family heads of upper and middle class were usually included along with their occupation and addresses. The FHL has these available on film as well as they are located at the various County Record offices and local libraries. Some are available online at English Historical Directories.

ENGLISH MILITARY RECORDS: There are military records available, but most not indexed and located at the UK National Archives at Kew. Knowing which military service your ancestor was part of along with his regiment is the best possible way to locate your ancestor. Some of these records are at the Family History Library, along with Ancestry.com, findmypast.com, cwgc.org and cyndislist.com.

ENGLISH PROBATE RECORDS: There are wills, testaments, administrations, inventories, act books and bonds. These records contain information about family relationships, religion, property and monetary values. Although these probate courts did not start till around 1540 some began as early as 1383. In England, only about 10% of adult males left a will except for the military, they were allowed to file their will in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) for free as a soldier.

Most probate records have been indexed. Most wills and administrations prior to 1858 have been filmed by the Family History Library. Wills from 1384 to 1858 are held by the Public Record Office and also being

¹ Fitzhugh, Terrick V. H.:” *The Dictionary of Genealogy, A Guide to British Ancestry Research*”, NJ, 1985, p. 234.

made available through their [Documents Online](#), [theGenealogist.co.uk](#) and [ancestry.com](#). [Genuki.org.uk](#) has a listing of probate locations by county. Wills and administrations after 1858 are held only by the Court of Probate. The index to death duty registers from 1796-1903 are available on [findmypast.com](#) with the original inventory on film at the FHL. Access and purchase of these are at the Probate Search Room, First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London. WC1V 6NP.

ENGLAND LAND & PROPERTY: Following the Norman Conquest in 1066 all the land of England was technically owned by the Crown. Someone who held land in this way direct from the Crown was a ‘tenant-in-chief’ and if a tenant-in-chief held several villages he might sublet one or more of them to other men in return for similar services. In 1925 an Act of Parliament decided that those to whom property had been conveyed within the last thirty years did not in future need to provide evidence of their title going back more than thirty years. To learn more and access these records read the full story in the [wiki here](#).

ENGLISH MANORIAL RECORDS: These records date back to the 12th century, for the genealogist these records hold information on tenants’ deaths, relationships between an heir of the tenant and the new tenant, payments of marriages of tenants’ daughters as well as widows remarrying and death dates of tenants and legal matters pertaining to minor offenses or rental violations. The major difficulty with these records is that some are in Latin. Some records are at the National Archives, country record offices and still on the manors themselves. The *National Archives* has a [Manorial Register](#) tells where they are located. Here is a [link to a map](#) which shows the progress made on digitizing these records. Many are filmed at the [Family History Library](#) and located by looking in the county of the manor. These are slowly coming online so the best thing is to do a browser search for your area of interest.

Various English records are becoming available continually online, some free and some for a fee, take the time to check your favorite websites often, search and discover new websites, blogs and forums for the latest and greatest. Volunteers, genealogical societies and individuals are always adding new records to make our research easier. Lastly, ask questions, the answers could lead you to another great discovery and don’t give up the search!

In conclusion, there are many more record sets **not** covered in this class. They are listed in the research wiki and at the National Archives as well as many other locations. Some records will never be digitized due to copyright and their condition, however, as technology improves these things will too be overcome so that we will be able to find our ancestors.

FINAL THOUGHTS

“I have often dreamed about meeting my ancestors one day. I have learned so much about them that in some ways I know them better than people who are alive today. Once I dreamed that the first thing you do when you get to heaven is go down a receiving line shaking hands, hugging and kissing your ancestors.”²

² Kurzweil, A. (2011). *From generation to generation: How to trace your Jewish genealogy and family history*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint.