

EVOLUTION OF GENEALOGY

Some of the issues we should be aware of when we start our search into our genealogy is how history has played a major part in both creating obstacles but also enabling the getting back to and through the potential 'Brick Walls' often mentioned.

Medieval period.

The period of European history extending from about 500 to 1400–1500 is traditionally known as the Middle Ages. The term was first used by 15th-century scholars to designate the period between their own time and the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

In medieval times there were no parish registers. For some years before the Reformation, in monastic houses (especially the smaller ones) the parish priest had been developing the custom of noting in an album or on the margins of the service books, the births, and deaths of the leading local families.

Quarter Days.

Michaelmas, or the Feast of Michael and All Angels, is celebrated on the 29th of September every year. As it falls near the equinox, the day is associated with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days; in England, it is one of the "quarter days".

There are traditionally four "quarter days" in a year (Lady Day (25th March), Midsummer (24th June), Michaelmas (29th September) and Christmas (25th December)).

They are spaced three months apart, on religious festivals, usually close to the solstices or equinoxes. They were the four dates on which servants were hired, rents due or leases begun. It used to be said that harvest had to be completed by Michaelmas, almost like the marking of the end of the productive season and the beginning of the new cycle of farming. It was the time at which new servants were hired or land was exchanged, and debts were paid. This is how it came to be for Michaelmas to be the time for electing magistrates and also the beginning of legal and university terms.

The Reformation from 31st October 1517.

Also known as the Protestant Reformation and the European Reformation, was a major theological movement in Western Christianity in 16th-century Europe that posed a religious and political challenge to the papacy and the authority of the Catholic Church. Towards the end of the Renaissance, the Reformation marked the beginning of Protestantism and in turn resulted in a major schism within Western Christianity.

It is considered one of the events that signified the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period in Europe. When the Reformation era ended is disputed among modern scholars.

Martin Luther (1483-1546).



Prior to Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers, there were earlier reform movements within Western Christianity. The Protestant Reformation, however, is usually considered to have started on 31st October 1517 with the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, authored by Martin Luther.

Over three years later, on 3rd January 1521, Luther was excommunicated by Pope Leo X.

On 25th May 1521, at the Diet of Worms held at Vurmz (pronounced Worms, in Germany), Luther was condemned by the Holy Roman Empire, which officially banned citizens from defending or propagating Luther's ideas. Luther survived after being declared an outlaw due to the protection of Elector Frederick the Wise.

The spread of Gutenberg's printing press provided the means for the rapid dissemination of religious materials in the vernacular. The initial movement in Germany diversified, and nearby other reformers such as Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin with different theologies arose.

In general, the Reformers argued that salvation in Christianity was a completed status based on faith in Jesus alone and not a process that could involve good works, as in the Catholic view. Protestantism also

introduced new ecclesiology. The Counter-Reformation was the Catholic reform efforts initiated in response to the Protestant Reformation and its causes.

Henry VIII (1491-1547).

In 1538, through the efforts of Thomas Cromwell, a mandate was issued by Henry VIII to keep parish registers. This order that every parson, vicar, or curate was to enter in a book every wedding, christening and burial in his parish.

The parish was to provide a sure coffer with two locks, the parson having the custody of one key, the wardens the others. The entries were to be made each Sunday after the service in the presence of one of the wardens. The mandate was enforced under a penalty of 3 sols, 4 deniers for the repair of the church. These entries were made on paper, sometimes upon loose sheets. The bishop in their visitations were to see that the names of sponsors were duly entered in the registers of baptism. The parishioner's penalty was divided between the poor box and repairs for the church.

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603).

1558 Act of Uniformity.

Queen Elizabeth passed another law that was a duplicate of her father's. This was an Act of Parliament passed in 1559 to regularise prayer, divine worship, and the administration of the Sacraments in the Church of England. In so doing, it mandated worship according to the attached 1559 Book of Common Prayer.

Many more registers began at this date. Many of these very early records are hard to read plus being written in Latin and are often very sparse - giving only the fathers name at a Christening and only the person's name in a burial entry. The registers were the property of the incumbent minister, and each parish was required to maintain a chest in the parish church for the safe keeping of the same. In time other records were kept in the chest such as poor law records, which were actually the civil parish records. Other records kept in the chest were removal orders, bastardy bonds, overseers of the poor accounts, Tithe award and Maps, Enclosure Awards and Maps, Church Wardens Accounts, etc.

1597 - Registers were to be made of parchment instead of paper.

The Convocation of Canterbury ordered that registers be kept on parchment rather than paper and in 1603 it became Canon Law to recopy old registers dating back to 1558 or 1538 if the incumbent preferred.

Annual reports of all parish register entries were required to be sent to the appropriate bishop, called Bishop's Transcripts (BT). No doubt the reason we have gaps in some of the early parish registers or they do not exist at all, is that the paper had disintegrated and were not available. In some areas earlier registers were destroyed at this time and some were recopied on parchment.

Some ministers made copies for the Bishop as entries were made in the register, some waited until the end of the year to make these copies. Some entries could have been missed. Most often the original parish entry is more complete.

It is worth noting that early records show Baptism dates and not always birth dates and in so arranging for a child baptism this could be for a number of children in the family, the point being it cheaper for one booking to accommodate a number of children, rather than a number of occasions.

1598 - The entries that were made on paper, sometimes upon loose sheets, and sixty years later these registers were ordered to be copied upon parchment in books, so that the registers which still survive dating back to 1538-1539 (perhaps about 1400 to 1500 in number). Therefore, any parish which survived this date are rarely the original entries. Some of the earliest paper registers had disappeared even before the transcription was ordered.

1603 - Every parish chest should have three locks one for Priest and two parish clerks to have keys. Only could be opened when all three could be present. Priests sometime keep notes in day books with entries of Christenings (Chr.), Marriages (Marr.) and Burials (Bur.) and was kept until all could get to the chest. Other problems with parish registers. Sometimes private baptisms did not get into the records.

Early registers did not have any form to follow in recording the date and was left entirely up to the ministers. So depended on minister how much information he wished to give.

1602 – 1640 – Pilgrim Ships.

The first of the Pilgrim ships sailed from Falmouth on 26th March 1602 with the current last record established sailing around 1640. In total approximately 320 sailing with of course some vessels making more than one journey. The ship Mayflower sailed on 6th September 1620 arriving on 11th November 1620.

The main Puritan migration to New England took place from 1620 to 1640, declining sharply afterwards. The term "Great Migration" can refer to the migration in the period of English Puritans to the New England including Colonies, starting with Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony. They came in family groups rather than as isolated individuals and were mainly motivated by freedom to practice their beliefs.

1631-1706 - A fee of 6 deniers was introduced for registration of births which was generally ignored. People were not having their children christened.

The minister was fined if he did not record the vital records and people were fined if they did not bring their children in. This was hard to enforce so did not last long.



The Dardenne is a French coin produced following the edict of October 16th, 1709, with a legal tender of 6 deniers tournois. The term "dardenne" comes from the fact that the sides were prepared at the Château de Dardenne, in the commune of Le Revest (Var), near Toulon, from the copper of old marine cannons reformed from Louis XIII's fleet.

Unlike other colonial powers, France, under the guidance of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu, encouraged a peaceful coexistence in New France between the natives and the colonists. Indians, converted to Catholicism, were considered as "natural Frenchmen" by the Ordonnance of 1627:

"The descendants of the French who are accustomed to this country [New France], together with all the Indians who will be brought to the knowledge of the faith and will profess it, shall be deemed and renowned natural Frenchmen, and as such may come to live in France when they want, and acquire, donate, and succeed and accept donations and legacies, just as true French subjects, without being required to take letters of declaration of naturalization."

Acadia was also developed under Louis XIII. In 1632, Isaac de Razilly became involved, at the request of Cardinal Richelieu, in the colonization of Acadia, by taking possession of Port-Royal (now Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia) and developing it into a French colony. The King gave Razilly the official title of lieutenant-general for New France. He took on military tasks such as taking control of Fort Pentagouet at Majabigwaduce on the Penobscot Bay, which had been given to France in an earlier Treaty, and to inform the English they were to vacate all lands north of Pemaquid. This resulted in all the French interests in Acadia being restored. In Brazil, the colony of Equinoctial France was established in 1612, but only lasted four years until it was eliminated by the Portuguese. In 1642, Louis XIII authorised French subjects to engage in the Atlantic slave trade provided those they enslaved were converted to Christianity.

1641-42 - Protestation rolls.

The Protestation Returns are the closest record we have to a census from 1642. By order of the House of Commons, all adult men were asked to swear an oath of allegiance to the Protestant religion in 1642. Their names were duly inscribed in a list in each parish, and the list sent back to Parliament. In a few areas such as Cornwall, people wrote their own names, and women were included. But usually, a local official wrote out all the names. The Protestation Returns survive for about a third of English counties.

The Returns are a list of adult male residents' names for a specific parish. Occasionally other information such as names of recusants (ie. those who refused to attend Church of England services), churchwardens and local government officials are given.

1643 - Ejection of clergy refusing covenant of Protestation.

Parliament finally passed an ordinance to hold the assembly on its own authority without Charles's assent on 12th June 1643. It named as many as 121 ministers and thirty non-voting parliamentary observers: twenty from the Commons, and ten from the House of Lords. The Assembly was almost entirely English; Parliament appointed Englishmen for the counties of Wales, but the French stranger

churches (churches of Protestant refugees from Catholic France) sent two ministers in place of any from the Channel Islands.

Many of the divines were internationally recognized scholars of the Bible, ancient languages, patristics, and scholastic theology. Many were also famous preachers. Most of these theologians had retained their positions in the Church during the tenure of William Laud. Some had been ejected from their churches or cited by ecclesiastical courts for their views. Some had fled to the Continent, and one to the American colonies. Nonetheless, they all considered themselves members of the Church of England and had received episcopal ordination. Most were conformists, meaning they agreed to follow the Act of Uniformity 1558 and the Book of Common Prayer.

The Assembly was strictly under the control of Parliament and was only to debate topics which Parliament directed. Assembly members were not permitted to state their disagreements with majority opinions or share any information about the proceedings, except in writing to Parliament. Parliament chose William Twisse, an internationally respected theologian, to be the Assembly's prolocutor or chairman.

Due to Twisse's ill health, Cornelius Burges, whom Parliament appointed as one of several assessors, served as prolocutor pro tempore for most of the Assembly. Twenty-two appointed members of the Assembly died before 1649, and they along with those who did not attend for other reasons were replaced by another nineteen members. Three non-voting scribes were also added in 1643.

From the beginning of the First Civil War, the Long Parliament recognized that they would need assistance from the Scots. In return for a military alliance, the Scottish Parliament required the English to sign the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, which stipulated that the English would bring their church into greater conformity with the Church of Scotland. The Scottish Parliament sent commissioners to London to represent Scotland's interests to the English Parliament. Eleven of these, four theologians and seven members of Parliament, were also invited to the Assembly. The commissioners were given the opportunity to become full voting members of the Assembly but declined, preferring to maintain their independence as commissioners of their own nation and church.

1644 - More parents' names appear in baptism register. and each parish or chapelry in the country should provide a fair Register Book of Vellum wherein were to be recorded the dates of baptisms as before, plus the dates of births and parents' names. The regulation as to marriage entries remained unchanged.

1649 - Oliver Cromwell is one of the most controversial characters in British history. After the execution of Charles I in 1649, Parliament was entrusted with governing England. However, Cromwell soon became dissatisfied with this system of rule. In 1653, with army backing, he sent MPs away and became the sole ruler of England. He was euphemistically named Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland: in reality, he ruled England as a virtual dictator until his death in 1658.

Cromwell pushed for the execution of Charles. His signature was third on the list of people who signed Charles I's death warrant. One, probably fictional, story concerns Cromwell visiting Charlie's dead body.

The guards around the body apparently saw a shadowy man - possibly Cromwell - lurking around the body. The man was heard muttering: 'Twas a cruel necessity, 'Twas a cruel necessity.'

To understand Cromwell, it is important to understand his religious beliefs. As a devout Puritan he was zealously religious and believed that people ought to lead their lives according to the Bible. The English Puritans wanted people to lead simple lives, stripped of the accoutrements of leisure and wealth. They believed that the reformation had not gone far enough and promoted 'purer' forms of worship and religious practice. Cromwell was keen to encourage Puritan religiosity across England.

Portrait by Samuel

Cooper.

1653 - Cromwell, whose army had defeated the Royalists, was made Lord Protector, and acted as king. The parish church of England was disorganized, many ministers fled for their lives, some were able to hide their registers and other registers were destroyed. Cromwell ruled that there



would be no one religion in England all religions could be practiced.

The government took away from the ministers not only the custody of the registers, but even the solemnization of the marriage ceremony.

The marriage ceremony was entrusted to the justices to form a new Parish Register (not Registrar) elected by all the ratepayers in a parish and sworn before and approved by a magistrate. Parish clerks of the church were made a civil parish clerk, and they recorded deaths, births, and marriages in the civil parishes.

The Puritans encouraged industriousness: it was believed that hard work helped a person reach heaven. As such Cromwell believed that 'pointless' enjoyment was a sin while sports and entertainment were banned - theatres and inns were also closed. Plain dress was also enforced. Sunday was a holy day under Puritan rule, which meant that work was not allowed - people who were found to be doing unnecessary work on a Sunday could even be put in the stocks, while even a walk to anywhere that wasn't church could result in a fine.

In Medieval England, feast days were held to celebrate saint's lives. In Cromwell's England, monthly fast days when people abstained from food - were held to encourage the English people to focus on God.

Cromwell divided England into eleven areas; each area was governed by one of Cromwell's trusted major generals, the majority of whom had served in the New Model Army with Cromwell.

One of the most extreme examples of Cromwell's Puritan rule was that Christmas was banned. He wanted Christmas to be a purely religious celebration in which people contemplated the birth of Jesus. Puritans viewed with consternation eating and drinking on Christmas day. Festive food was removed from the streets which meant that the smell of a roasting goose could also bring trouble, while decorations, too, were banned. However, Cromwell himself did not live a life of rigid self-control. He enjoyed music, hunting, and bowls. He even allowed entertainment at his daughter's wedding.

Cromwell abhorred Irish Catholics. He believed that they were all potential traitors who would willingly help any Catholic nation that wanted to attack England. During Cromwell's rule, he tried to 'tame' the Irish through military force and terror. English soldiers conducted brutal massacres at Drogheda (September 1649) and Wexford (October 1649). Irish children were sent to the Americas to work as slave labourers in the sugar plantations: more than 100,000 Irish children may have been sold as slaves in the 1650s.

By the time of his death, the English people were weary of Cromwell's strict rules. He became a figure of hate in England. Cromwell died in September 1658. His coffin was escorted to Westminster Abbey by over 30,000 soldiers. Was this a mark of respect for the man who had formed the elite New Model Army? Or was the army concerned about the coffin's safety in a city which had grown to hate Cromwell?

Cromwell was buried along with the kings and queens at Westminster Abbey. However, when Charles I's son Charles II came to the throne after the restoration in 1660, he ordered for Cromwell's body be dug up from the ground and he was put on trial as a traitor and regicide. He was found guilty and symbolically hanged from some gallows at Tyburn (near Hyde Park, London). What happened to his body has remained a mystery.

1654 – From 1654 some convicts were sent to the British colonies in America to work instead of being executed. This punishment became more common after the Transportation Act 1717. Convicts were sent to America until the outbreak of the wars of independence.

1660 - In the restoration of Charles II, they went back to the church to keep christenings, marriages, and burial. The civil records that were kept were filed in with the parish in their registers. it is quite usual to find entries explaining the situation during the Interregnum. One rector stated that on 23rd April 1643 "Our church was defaced our font thrown down and new forms of prayer appointed". Another minister not quite so bold wrote "When the war, more than a civil war was raging most grimly between royalists and parliamentarians throughout the greatest part of England, I lived well because I lay low".

1665-66 - The year of the plague and many burial entries in the parishes.

This was the worst outbreak of plague in England since the black death of 1348. London lost roughly 15% of its population. While 68,596 deaths were recorded in the city, the true number was probably over 100,000. Other parts of the country also suffered.

The earliest cases of disease occurred in the spring of 1665 in a parish outside the city walls called St Giles-in-the-Fields. The death rate began to rise during the hot summer months and peaked in September when 7,165 Londoners died in one week. Those who could, including most doctors, lawyers, and merchants, fled the city. Charles II and his courtiers left in July for Hampton Court and then Oxford.

Parliament was postponed and had to sit in October at Oxford, the increase of the plague being so dreadful. Court cases were also moved from Westminster to Oxford.

The Lord Mayor and aldermen (town councillors) remained to enforce the King's orders to try and stop the spread of the disease. The poorest people remained in London with the rats and those people who had the plague. Watchmen locked and kept guard over infected houses. Parish officials provided food. Searchers looked for dead bodies and took them at night to plague pits for burial.

All trade with London and other plague towns was stopped. The Council of Scotland declared that the border with England would be closed. There were to be no fairs or trade with other countries. This meant many people lost their jobs – from servants to shoemakers to those who worked on the River Thames.

1666 - The Great Fire of London.

The Great Fire of London engulfed 13,000 houses, nearly 90 churches, and scores of public buildings. The old St. Paul's Cathedral was destroyed, as were many other historic landmarks. As estimated 100,000 people were left homeless. Within days, King Charles II set about rebuilding his capital.

The great architect Sir Christopher Wren designed a new St. Paul's Cathedral with dozens of smaller new churches ranged around it like satellites. To prevent future fires, most new houses were built of brick or stone and separated by thicker walls. Narrow alleyways were forbidden, and streets were made wider. Permanent fire departments, however, did not become a fixture in London until well into the 18th century. It of course destroyed many of the records of London.

1666-80. Woolen Shrouds.

Were Acts of the Parliament of England (1666), (1678) (1680) which required the dead, except plague victims and the destitute, to be buried in pure English woollen shrouds to the exclusion of any foreign textiles.

1673 - Affidavit from Magistrates required for burial in woolen shroud. If "Affidavit" appears on burial records it means that the person was buried in wool.

It was a requirement that an affidavit be sworn in front of a justice of the peace (usually by a relative of the deceased), confirming burial in wool, with the punishment of a £5 fee for noncompliance. Burial entries in parish registers were marked with the word "affidavit" or its equivalent to confirm that affidavit had been sworn; it would be marked "naked" for those too poor to afford the woollen shroud.

The legislation was in force until 1814 but was generally ignored after 1770. The 1666 Act was repealed by the Statute Law Revision Act 1863.

1694 - A duty of 2 shillings per birth, 2 shillings 6 denier per marriage and 4 shillings per burial of all non-paupers with a sliding scale rising to 30 pounds for the birth of the son of a Duke, 50 pounds for a duke's marriage and burial. All births were to be notified to the rector or vicar within five days, under a penalty of 40 shillings and he was to record them for a fee of 6 denier under a like penalty. The government thought it would be a good way to raise money for the crown to carry on the war against France, It was specially provided that a birth should not be exempt from tax merely because the parents failed to have the child christened, but nevertheless it seems likely that in many parishes such births were not registered and presumably no tax was paid. In other parishes, however, there is clear evidence that the parson in his capacity of tax-collector looked up the neglectful parishioner and collected the tax, plus, his six pence. Many pleaded poverty at the time of burial.

1695 - A fine of forty shillings for anyone failing to report birth within 5 days of the birth. Vicars were likewise fined for failure to keep a record of those who were born and not christened. Such recording cost the parents sixpence.

1705 - This act was not carried out very well and it was thought necessary to pass an act of indemnity on behalf of the clergy who had neglected to obey this mandate.

1733 - Latin was discontinued in parish records.

1752 - The Gregorian Calendar was adopted and the first day of the year was changed from March 25th (Lady Day) to January 1st. Up to 1752 use double dating between Jan.1st to Mar. 25th.

This gives us a potential little problem when recording dates before March 25th in each year. If March 25th was the first day of the year, and let's say a couple were married on that day, in 1750. They could quite easily have a baptism of their first child on March 24th, 1750 - a year later!

That's the problem. Some genealogists record precisely what is recorded in a parish register. Some record it as written but didn't realise that in our modern calendar they could actually be referring to a different year. Some genealogists make an allowance and record 5th January 1750 as 5th January 1751 because 1751 is the "real" year in our modern calendar.

The big problem with either, is that we don't know if a genealogist or transcriber has written it literally or made allowance for the modern calendar! So, the correct standard for writing these dates in our records (and when we transcribe registers) is in the form 1750/1. It is then extremely obvious that 1750 is what was written in the register, but it was really 1751 in the new calendar. 1749/50, 1630/1, 1699/00 etc. Easy! No confusion.

So, for all years up to and including 1751, dates between 1 January and 24th March inclusive, are written with double dates. 23rd Jan 1751/2. The UK Tax Year now commences on the 6th of April! The tax year prior to 1752 started on New Years Day i.e. "Lady Day" the 25th of March - eleven days difference.

1754 - Lord Hardwick's Act.

This Act required separate registers for marriages (plus banns books). These were recorded on printed forms. The act exempted only Quakers and Jews from being married in the Church of England. The act was passed for the preventing of Clandestine (secret) marriages. This law required that separate registers be kept for marriages. Prior to this time the record of marriages had been entered with the christenings and burials. To make the Act more effective, a special printed form was devised which called for the signatures of the officiating minister, the two witnesses and those of the bride and groom. An indication of the marital status of the bride and groom (spinster, bachelor, widow, widower) and their resident parish was given. Marriages were to be either by banns (announced from the pulpit on three successive Sundays) or by license and could not be performed in parochial chapelries unless special permission was obtained.

It ordered that records should be kept both of banns and of marriages, that these should be in books of vellum or good and durable paper, to be provided by the churchwardens. The entries were to be signed by the parties and to follow a prescribed form, and the registers were to be carefully kept and preserved for public use.

1763 - Minimum age for marriage is set at 16. Those under 21 still needed the consent of parents.

1783-1793 - The Stamp Act of 1783.

It granted to the crown a stamp duty of threepence upon every register entry of burial, marriage, birth or christening, the officiating minister, who collected the duty being allowed a commission of 10 per cent for his trouble. Two years later this act was extended to cover Nonconformists. This legislation was the 2nd attempt to use the register for fiscal purposes.

1787 – Transportation of Convicts to Australia.

Around 162,000 convicts were sent to Australia between 1787 and 1868.

Transportation was often a punishment given to people found guilty of theft – 80 per cent of transported convicts were guilty of theft. Most were repeat offenders.

Transportation was also a punishment given to protesters. Some of the Luddites, Rebecca Rioters and the

Tolpuddle Martyrs were transported. Only 15 per cent of transported convicts were women. Many judges used transportation as an alternative to the death penalty at the time of the Bloody Code. Sentences were for seven years, 14 years, or life. Only 1.2 per cent of transported convicts were Welsh. Around 69 per cent were English, 25 per cent were Irish and 5 per cent were Scottish.

1812 - After the 31st of December 1812, registers of public and private baptisms, marriages and burials were to be made and kept by the rector, in books provided by the King's printer at the expense of the parishes.

George Rose's Act required the use of pre-printed forms for Baptisms, Marriages & Burials. Baptism registers now had to show the names, addresses and occupation of the parents. Burial entries had to include the age and place of residence of the deceased and Registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials to be made in separate books.

The rector, etc., as soon as possible after the solemnization of the rite, to enter in the proper register book the several particulars described in the schedules and to sign the same; and in no case (unless prevented by sickness or other unavoidable impediment) later than seven days after the ceremony. The register books to be kept in a dry, well-painted iron chest, in some dry, safe, and secure place within the usual residence of such rector, etc.

1814 - Burial in Woolen Act repealed.

1832 – Examples of Welsh Transportees.

Lewis Lewis was one of the leaders of the Merthyr Rising. Like Dic Penderyn he was sentenced to death. However, his sentence was commuted to transportation, and he was sent to New South Wales in 1832.

John Frost was one of the leaders of the Chartist movement in the Newport Rising. He was initially sentenced to death, but his sentence was later reduced to transportation.

Rebecca Riot leaders Dai'r Cantwr and Shoni Sguborfawr were also transported to Australia and sent to work in Tasmania.

Once free, many settled in Australia and did not return home. This was partly because few could afford to pay for the return journey. Dai'r Cantwr received his ticket of leave in April 1854 and was conditionally pardoned on 31 October of the same year. Shoni Sguborfawr was awarded a ticket-of-leave in 1856 and was conditionally pardoned in 1858.

1837 - Since Civil registration of 1837 church marriage registers are now kept in duplicate, the incumbent sending each quarter a copy of all marriage entries to the district superintendent registrar, who sends it to the Registrar general, together with records of births, marriages, and deaths he has collected through his secular registrars. When the marriage registers are filed, one copy is retained in the parish and the other goes to the secular registrar.

1837 - From July, Civil Registration began in England and Wales. From this date, if the marriage takes place in a Register Office, then there will be no entry in the Parish Register. Marriage Registers had to show the names of the Bride and Groom, their marital status, occupation, place of residence and the names and occupation of the fathers. Full age is 21 years.

Until 1929 girls could marry at 12 and boys at 14.

1845-1852 – The Irish Potato Famine.

A period of starvation and disease with the worst year being 1847 in which roughly one million people perished. Emigres sailed to Boston, which at the time was a small Protestant City and with the influx of Catholic Irish, became a predominantly a major Catholic city.

At least a million people are thought to have emigrated as a result of the famine. There were about 1 million long-distance emigrants between 1846 and 1851, mainly to North America. The total given in the 1851 census is 967,908. Short-distance emigrants, mainly to Britain, may have numbered 200,000 or more.

1848-1849 – The German Revolution.

Sufficed to say, this was also the political culmination of the breaking up of the Austro-Holy Roman Empire with many states as was deciding to form

Liberals were forced into exile to escape political persecution, where they became known as Forty-Eighters. Many emigrated to the United States, settling from Wisconsin to Texas. Also, an estimation of about 5% arriving in Britain, particularly those with Leather and confectionery skills.

1868 - When were Typewriters invented?

In the U.S., one of the first commercially made typewriters was patented in 1868 (US 79,265) by Christopher Latham Sholes, Carlos Glidden, and Samuel W. Soule.

While the history of typewriter development can be traced as far back as the 16th century and Francesco Rampazzetto, it wasn't until the mid-19th century that the modern version took shape and started to be marketed around 1873.

Cemetery records held in The London Archives.

Before the mid-19th century most burials in London took place in churchyards and were recorded in parish registers. During the 1850s the overcrowded churchyards and burial grounds of inner London were closed by a series of Acts of Parliament. Consequently, many burial registers for parish churches in inner London stop by 1855 or 1856. subsequently burials took place mainly in municipal and commercial cemeteries.

For cemetery burials, there was not always a connection between the area where the death occurred, and the cemetery chosen for interment. Start with the cemeteries closest to the place of death and last known address but be prepared to widen your search.

Bunhill Fields Burial Ground.

Interment order books, gravestone inscriptions and plans in CLC/271.

Original burial registers, 1713-1854 are held at The National Archives and can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936.

City of London Cemetery, Little Ilford.

Registers of private graves, monuments, and cremations in CLA/052.

Original burial registers, 1856 to date are held at the cemetery and can be searched on the City of London Cemetery website.

City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

Burial registers, day books and registers of private graves in CTHC. These records can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Registers, 1841-1966.

Highgate Cemetery.

Bishop's transcripts of burial registers in DL/T/063/001-028 can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-2003.

Kensal Green Cemetery

Burial registers in B/GC.

Bishop's transcripts of burial registers in DL/T/041/001-040 can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-2003.

Original burial registers are held at the Cemetery and can be searched on Deceased Online (charges apply).

New Bunhill Fields Burial Ground, Islington.

Burial registers and burial fee registers in B/NBF.

Nunhead Cemetery.

Bishop's transcripts of burial registers in DW/T/0514-0539 can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-2003

Original burial registers are held at Camberwell New Cemetery and can be searched on Deceased Online (charges apply).

Velho and Nuevo (Novo) Cemeteries.

Burial registers in LMA/4521/A/02/04. You must get permission from the S&P Sephardi Community to view these records.

A transcript of the burials at Novo Cemetery, 1733-1918 is available in our library at shelfmark 60.58 SPA.

The Sephardi Velho Cemetery opened in 1657 and was the first Jewish cemetery to be established with Oliver Cromwell's approval.

Victoria Park Cemetery.

Plan to show the position of graves in 1891 and lists of names and dates of death taken from tombstones in O/190. The plan can be viewed on the London Picture Archive under record number 345891.

Original burial registers, 1853-1876 are held at The National Archives and can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk See also Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936.

West Norwood Cemetery

Bishop's transcripts of burial registers in DW/T/0899-0969 can be searched on Ancestry.co.uk. See Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-2003.

Original burial registers are held at the Cemetery and can be searched on Deceased Online (charges apply).

Whitechapel Quaker Burial Ground.

Vallance Road Recreation Ground includes the former Society of Friends Burial Ground. The site was formerly a Quaker Burial Ground established in 1687, the last burial taking place in 1857.

1911 – 1912 Marriage Certificate.

When the spouse only name was entered of Marriage Certificates. In this context it explains why researchers before that date show who got married in the church on a particular day, NOT who married whom.

1912 – Birth certificates.

The change here was that Mothers Maiden name was now included on the Birth Certificate. This enables a multiple search selection of children born to two named people.

Records of Stillbirths - Stillbirths are a category unto themselves and create an entry that's both birth and death certificate. The compulsory registration of stillbirths only began in 1927, with the cause of death only added after 1960. Prior to 1874 you didn't need a certificate to bury a stillborn child. A stillbirth has to be registered within three weeks of the event. Before 1983 the baby couldn't be named, and still can't be named in retrospect.

June 1969 - The deceased's date of birth started to be shown instead of their age at death.

1978 - The Parochial Registers and Records Measure requires all records over 100 years old to be stored at the local Record Office, unless the Church has adequate storage conditions. If the Church, no longer stands then the register is held at the Records Office.

The Essex Record Office (ERO) holds registers from over 400 parishes, covering the present county of Essex, including Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, and also those parts of north-east London that used to be in Essex. Most parishes have registers from the 17th or 18th century onwards, but some go back to 1538.

2021 Marriage Certificates - The new style marriage certificates, or marriage schedules, began in England and Wales on May 4, 2021. The new system replaced marriage registers and certificates and is intended to modernize the way marriages are registered.

Electronic marriage registers were introduced, and paper marriage registers will no longer be used for the registration of marriages. This applies to all marriages, both civil ceremonies and ceremonies taking place at churches and places of worship. It does not apply to civil partnerships. The introduction of the electronic register on 4 May gives the couple the opportunity to add parents (mother/father/parent) to their marriage certificate, instead of only their fathers' names, which is currently the case.

Records of Deaths Abroad: Outside England or Wales

If a British citizen dies abroad, the death should be recorded in the same manner as a birth or marriage - that is by the consul or high Commissioner, as has been the case since 1849. However, if the body is returned home for burial, the registrar in Britain has to issue a "certificate of no liability" (curiously, nothing is necessary if the person is cremated abroad, and the ashes brought home). You can find these records at the National Archives.

As of September 9, 2024 - England and Wales will begin using a new medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) as part of a wider reform of the death certification process. The new MCCD will replace the current certificate and will be used by medical examiners and attending practitioners. The Department of Health and Social Care will send the new MCCD to all organizations that currently use the MCCD.

**Compiled by Norman Bambridge.
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