

Help! What do I do before 1837?

Researching your Ancestors before Civil Registration

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Why 1837?

- Civil Registration in England Wales began 1st July 1837.
- The 1841 is the earliest census available – but not as complete as others (age, relationship, birth place)
- Up to that time you can generally look in one place for records, before then, there is no single source for records.

Parish registers: baptisms, marriages, burials

- Started from 1538 in England & Wales and about 1660 in Scotland
- Parish boundaries based on manors
- Can range in size

Problems with Parish Registers

- Can be incomplete, damaged or missing
- Layouts and information vary
- Need to look at local geography
- Families moved
- No central repository for registers
- Need to be careful proving the facts
- Always check the original if possible
- Non-Conformists: may be in local Parish church registers

Locating Parishes

- FamilySearch.org/MAPP
- GenUKi.org.uk
- Phillimore Atlas & Index of Parish Registers (Book)
- County Record Office lists

Finding Registers Online

- County Record Offices: original registers
- Transcriptions and scans of registers
- FamilySearch
- FindMyPast
- TheGenealogist
- Ancestry
- BMDRegisters
- Online Parish Clerks (OPC)
- Family History Societies
- Genealogylinks.net
- Forebears
- FreeReg

A Little History Lesson!

- 1538: Introduction of parish registers in England & Wales
- 1558: Date many older registers started
- 1598: Bishops' Transcripts introduced
- 1642-1660: Civil War: many registers incomplete
- 1752: England & Wales changed from Julian to Gregorian Calendar
- 1754: Hardwicke's Marriage Act: all marriages, except Jews & Quakers, had to take place in a Church of England. Registers required to be kept in a set format
- 1777-1812: Dade registers introduced in Diocese of York
- 1812 – Rose's Act: set format for baptism and burial registers
- From Jan 1813: baptism and burial regs kept separately

How to get back before 1837?

- Locate ancestors in the 1851 census: gives age and place of birth.
- Always best to go forward into other censuses to confirm all the information.
- Then go back to 1841 and see if you can find them.

No Parish Registers!

- Bishops Transcripts
- Parish Records
- Newspapers
- Directories
- Wills & Probate records
- Gravestones

Boyd's Indexes

- Marriage Index: 1538-1840: Transcriptions searchable on FindMyPast.
 - Covers more than 4,300 parishes.
 - All counties in included: none completely.
 - Best coverage: Yorkshire, Cambridge and East Anglian.
- London Burial Index: 1538-1872: Transcriptions searchable on FindMyPast.
 - Over 240,000 burials of male deaths.

Pallot Indexes

- Marriage Index: 1780-1837: Searchable on Ancestry.
 - Covers all but 2 parishes of the old City of London.
 - Over 1.5 million marriage entries from London & Middlesex and some from 38 counties outside this area including Wales.
- Baptism Index: 1780-1837: Searchable on Ancestry.
 - Covers about 22 London & Middlesex parishes as well as 27 other parishes.
 - 200,000 entries.

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