

## **Where are they? Parish Registers**

**By Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens**

### **The Question to be answered**

I found my ancestor over 14 years old in the 1851 census. Where can I find their birth certificate?

Civil Registration (Birth, Marriage and Death certificates) started in England and Wales in July 1837.

Before then your best alternative is Parish Registers

For example, Richard Nicklinson is recorded in the 1851 as being aged 70 with a birthplace of Leicesters, Wilson.

1841 census simply says he was born outside of the county in which he was living (Derbyshire).

### **Parish Registers**

Each Church of England Parish should have recorded baptisms, marriages and burials in their registers since 1538. Dates of birth and deaths were not normally recorded, and the information is more limited than on modern certificates.

Parish registers are still in use today but may not survive complete from 1538.

### **How do you find the parish?**

The birth places are recorded in the census:

- May vary between censuses
- May be better known to the parents than the grown up child
- Be vaguer the more distant they are from the census place
- Be misspelt or spelt phonetically if unfamiliar to the householder or enumerator
- May not use the current spelling e.g. Courage is now Curridge, Berkshire
- May not be the same as place where baptism took place

### **Help finding parishes in your area**

Parloc3 by D M Bennet found at <http://www.parloc.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk>

GENUKI church database at <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/churchdb> links to Google maps but needs more entries for some counties.

Both of these will help you find churches near your place of search whilst ignoring county boundaries.

*Phillimore's Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* published by Phillimore is county based. It has a map of the parishes for each county and the index for each parish tells you where the registers are deposited and the years covered, the years covered in the International Genealogical Index (at [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org)) and whether or not the parish is included in Boyd's or Pallot's marriage index. Unfortunately, there is no information to tell you about its availability on other web sites. Which parishes you may still have to look at it is essential information.

## National Index of Parish Registers

These orange books for each county are more detailed than Phillimore's Atlas and published by the Society of Genealogists. Shows gaps and where transcripts and indexes might be found. However they do not include maps or give direct information about neighbouring parishes.

These books are often several years old and the information may be out-of-date as more registers are found or deposited, and record offices are moved, renamed or reorganised.

## Resources

### International Genealogical Index

This database includes perhaps 60% of christenings and marriages in England and Wales.

Find via [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) then choose **Advanced Search** from the **Search Records** drop down followed by International Genealogical Index. To exclude other countries set the region to British Isles and then set the country to England, Wales, etc.

- Don't be too specific
- Check for surname variants and misspellings
- You can order film of parish registers used for extracting records for the IGI at Latter-day Saints (LDS) Family History Centres. You can view the film at the Centre for several months. Use the FamilySearch library catalog place search to find other films.

[pilot.familysearch.org](http://pilot.familysearch.org) is a pilot project that now includes images from Norfolk parish registers and the Diocese of Durham Bishops' Transcripts.

The Hugh Wallis web site provides a quick way to search a parish's register for a particular surname – either use Google to search for 'Hugh Wallis' followed by the county name or go to

[freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hughwallis/IGIBatchNumbers.htm](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hughwallis/IGIBatchNumbers.htm)

The British Isles Vital Records Index CD from the LDS includes additional information not currently on the FamilySearch web site, including some non-conformist records.

## FreeReg

[www.FreeReg.org.uk](http://www.FreeReg.org.uk) – transcription of parish registers by volunteers in similar way go FreeBMD.org.uk

## Local Family History Society

See what publications and research services they offer.

## Check all web sites

[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) – has tens of millions of records in its Parish Register Collection, many from family history societies.

[www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk) have many databases, including records for London from the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) and the Guildhall Library (not Westminster). Also Pallot's indexes. [check]

You need to look at the parish registers or images of them

- but you may need practice to read the writing
- or try and find another index created by someone else

Be careful if the surname is common in the area.

See what other information the GENUKI pages for the county can provide via [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk) and use a search engine to search for “<county name> parish registers”

See Steve Archer's *Surname Atlas* program ([www.archersoftware.co.uk](http://www.archersoftware.co.uk)) or [www.nationaltrustnames.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrustnames.org.uk) for where names appear in the 1881 census

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