



TRACING YOUR FAMILY'S ROOTS IN DERBYSHIRE

Introduction

This guide is designed to assist those new to genealogy, providing advice on the best places to go to start research into their family history.

Starting out: sources in your own home

Assemble all information that you can from present day family members, such as birth, marriage and death certificates; family bible; photographs; correspondence etc. Speak to members of your family too.

Recording it all

It is important to keep clear notes, as you will quickly accumulate a lot of supporting material.

A few helpful hints



- **Work backwards**

It is advisable to work from what you know and go backwards.

- **Plan ahead**

Find out in advance the details about any place you intend visiting in the course of your research and the records you want to consult.

Record Offices will provide you with information including details of opening hours, location, booking arrangements, etc

- **Book your visit**

There are likely to be limits on reader spaces for the consultation of original documents and microfilm copies, so it is advisable to book in advance of your visit.

- **Check again**

Everyone will come across the problem of not finding the entry they had expected to see. It is always advisable to check again in case you overlooked it.

- **Note your sources**

You may want to look again at a document which you have a reference for in your notes. To make looking back easier, you should include in your notes a brief description of what you have seen and its reference number.

- **If at first...**

There are alternative sources that you can check, for example, the registers of neighbouring parishes and towns.

Baptisms and marriages may have taken place in a nonconformist chapel, or the census can be consulted to find a potential birthplace.



Record Offices and how to survive them

Record Offices have a few basic rules to ensure the safety of documents. There will be restrictions on bags or containers being taken into areas where records are consulted. No food or drink will be allowed in Search Room areas, and no smoking permitted. You will need to use pencil to make notes instead of biro or ink. These rules are all intended to ensure that records are not accidentally damaged.

On your first visit staff on duty will provide you with introductory explanations as to how their systems work, especially with regard to your initial enquiries. Staff will be on hand to help you, if you do have problems.

Civil Registration

The registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales started on 1 July 1837. Access is not allowed to the registers themselves, and any information has to be obtained by the purchase of certificates either from **district register offices** or online at www.gro.gov.uk.

Entries can be traced by searching the indexes held in many local studies libraries or online through either the **Free BMD** or **Ancestry** websites www.freebmd.org.uk and www.ancestry.co.uk.

The drawback to these records is that full details can only be obtained by the purchase of certificates. The advantage lies in the fact that the majority of the population is covered by it.

Parish registers

The records most commonly used by family historians are the registers of Anglican parish churches. Their existence pre-dates civil registration by almost 300 years, and they are essential for anyone trying to get back beyond 1837

For covering dates of Church of England parish registers held in the Record Office, please see the Office's **Parish Register Guide**, which is also available on our website www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice.

For fuller details, see the finding aids available for reference in the Record Office Search Room.

- **Baptisms**

It is important to note that baptism registers and birth registers are not the same, as not everybody was baptised. Some registers do note the date of birth but it should not be expected as a regular feature.

Census

The national census returns are useful for providing clues about people in the mid and late nineteenth century. It is only from 1841 that detailed returns have survived. Microfilm copies are available in the local studies libraries or you can access the census on the **Ancestry** website (address as before).

Transcripts and memorial inscriptions

Derbyshire Record Office holds copies of transcripts for the registers of many churches and chapels.

There are also copies of monumental inscriptions which have been taken from memorials and gravestones in and outside churches, which are often useful for identifying family relationships.

Other records

The longer you carry on your family history the more you will be aware of the wide range of records in Record Offices that supplement the basic source material of parish registers, certificates and census. There are, for example, electoral registers from 1832 which may give the address where a particular ancestor lived, or Tithe Maps and Awards of the 1840s which may show the land that someone owned or occupied.

Wills can be a very informative source, as they often help to establish family links by detailing provisions made for family members.

Other sources that may be mentioned include estate records, title deeds, company staff records, trade directories, taxation and rating records, newspapers, military, poor law, Quarter Sessions and school records.

For further information about these records in Derbyshire, consult **Derbyshire Record Office's Guide** which is available in the search room or can be viewed online via our website.

What to do next

For a more in depth guide see '**Tracing your Ancestors : A step by step guide**' which is available on our website along with '**Tracing your Ancestors : Family History resources on the Internet**'.

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice

