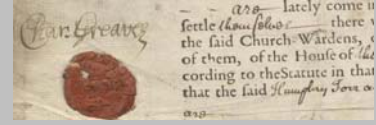




Tracing Your Ancestors: A Step-by-Step Guide



1. Begin with what you already know

You may be surprised at the amount of information you already know or have to hand regarding the history of your family. Begin by writing down everything you know about yourself and your closest relatives; make a note of the date and place of key life events such as births, marriages and deaths. Maybe you have certificates of such events; check in cupboards or in the attic for birth, marriage or death certificates, school records, military papers or medals etc; ask relatives for copies of records they may have. Don't discount family tales; check the details with relatives; many may be based in fact and help point you in the right direction.

2. Get organised

During the process of researching your family history you gather together lots of information and copies of documents, it is, therefore, important to record each piece of information as you collect it and make a note of the source, this will help you later on should you need to clarify your information.

3. Select which line you are going to work on

Choose whether you wish to trace your father's or mother's ancestors. Most people begin by tracing their father's side of the family, as in most cases, they will share a surname. If you decide to follow your mother's side you will need to know her maiden name. It can be confusing if you are tracing more than one line at a time; by focusing your search you are more likely to succeed and avoid taking a wrong turn.

4. Work back in time

Begin by working backwards from the present, one generation at a time starting with yourself. Once you have this information, move on to find out about your parents then your father's or mother's parents, then their parents and so on. By going back one ancestor at a time, you will discover clues which can help identify older generations.

5. *Be sceptical!*

Check your findings and eliminate unrelated people with the same family name. If you use indexes such as the International Genealogical Index www.familysearch.org.uk you are likely to find many entries for people who might or might not be ancestors of yours, as they share the same name. It is important to remember that not everyone with the same name is related, even if they live in the same area. Try not to confuse different generations, especially where male children share the same name, often for many generations in succession. Keeping records of the information you gather on each individual, especially dates of birth and death, will help you distinguish one ancestor from another.

6. *....and be patient!*

Researching your family tree is an interesting, enjoyable and rewarding pursuit, but it is research and can take time. The further back you follow your ancestors the more sparse the sources become as well as more difficult to read. You may encounter problems along the way; records may not survive for the place or time you need, especially before the introduction of birth, marriage and death registration in 1837; the information on early records may be much more limited than in present-day equivalents. Your ancestors may have moved around the country, or further, and you may have to visit numerous record offices to find information on them.



Breadsall composite register, 1590

There are no satisfactory shortcuts, but you may be able to benefit from other people's research. Websites such as Genes Reunited www.genesreunited.co.uk provide the opportunity to connect and share information with fellow family historians, view other member's family trees and build your own tree.

Where to Start

1. Records of births, marriages and deaths from 1837



Birth certificate, 1845, GRO

Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths began in England and Wales in 1 July 1837. Register entries have been indexed and are organised quarterly by name and district. Microfiche copies of these indexes are available for reference in many larger local libraries e.g. Local Studies Library, County Hall, Matlock.

Indexes are also available to view online at FreeBMD www.freebmd.org.uk which provides free access to transcribed records. Commercial websites such as Ancestry.com www.ancestry.com and Findmypast www.findmypast.com also provide access to birth, marriage and death indexes, although in order to view all the material available, a subscription is required. You can, however, access Ancestry.com for free in the search room at Derbyshire Record Office. Once you have obtained information from the indexes, copies of birth, marriage and death certificates can be purchased online from the General Register Office (GRO) www.gro.gov.uk. Postal applications should be sent to the General Register Office, PO Box 2, Southport, Merseyside PR8 2 JD (Telephone: 0845 603 7788). If you already know the district in which an event took place, you can buy a copy of the certificate direct from the register office for that district.

2. Records of births, marriage and deaths before 1837

Before the introduction of civil registration in 1837, parish church registers provide the main source of information for family history. Records from this period record baptisms, rather than births, marriages and burials, rather than deaths. Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for over 250 Anglican parishes in Derbyshire are available for reference in Derbyshire Record Office. They cover various dates from the 16th century to the present day. Unlike civil registration, parish registers are not indexed by name and you will need to know the area your ancestors were from and approximate dates in order to use them. See the *Parish Register Guide*

| Name | Sex | Age | Date of Burial |
|-----------|--------|-----|----------------|
| Elizabeth | Female | 82 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 78 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 75 | 1837 |
| Elizabeth | Female | 72 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 68 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 65 | 1837 |
| Elizabeth | Female | 60 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 55 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 50 | 1837 |
| Elizabeth | Female | 45 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 40 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 35 | 1837 |
| Elizabeth | Female | 30 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 25 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 20 | 1837 |
| Elizabeth | Female | 15 | 1837 |
| Mary | Female | 10 | 1837 |
| John | Male | 5 | 1837 |

Elton Burial register, 1837

for a list of parish registers held at Derbyshire Record Office

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/PARISH%20REGISTER%20LIST_tcm9-17013.pdf

If the register for a particular period does not survive, it may be possible to obtain the required information from the *bishop's transcripts* (abbreviated to BTs). These are contemporary copies of the registers which were sent periodically to the bishop. Throughout the period in which BTs were made, Derbyshire was in the diocese of Lichfield and Coventry. As a result the bishop's transcripts for the county are kept as part of the Lichfield diocesan archives at the Lichfield Record Office, Lichfield Library, The Friary, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6QG. A copy of the BTs held by Lichfield is available for consultation in the Derbyshire Record Office search room.

3. Nonconformist registers

Nonconformist is the general term used for members of religious groups other than the Church of England. Many different denominations are represented in the archives in Derbyshire Record Office and include groups such as Protestants, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Independents and Catholics. If you have been unable to locate entries in Anglican registers, this may be an indication of nonconformity. As with Anglican registers, these are not indexed by name and a parish and approximate date is needed. For a list of nonconformist registers held at Derbyshire Record Office see our *Nonconformist Register Guide*

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/PARISH%20REGISTER%20LIST_tcm9-17013.pdf

4. Census records

| Name and Surname of each Person | RELATION to Head of Family | Age last Birthday of | PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| George H. Hetherington | Head | 45 | Book Binder |
| Mary A. Hetherington | Wife | 44 | None |
| Alice C. Hetherington | Daughter | 11 | None |
| William Hetherington | Son | 8 | None |

Once every ten years, a census is taken which records information on the country's population. Census returns provide details of members of households on census night, which include relationship to head of household, age, occupation and birthplace and can help you build up a picture of a family unit. The censuses of most use to the family historian are those for the years 1841-1911. Images

and transcripts of the censuses for 1841-1911, together with name indexes, are available at The National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/census/ and, for the years 1841-1901, are available to view online for free at Derbyshire Record Office. Census records are also available via commercial websites; see our information leaflet

Family History Resources on the Internet for a list of websites. At Derbyshire Record Office you can access, free of charge, digitised images of the 1861 census for Derbyshire and name indexes for the 1891 census by using the public computers in our search room.

5. Wills

Derbyshire Record Office holds wills proved by Derby District Probate Registry for the period 1858-1928. These can be consulted in the search room and copies can be taken or ordered by post. A surname index is available in the Record Office website at

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record_office/our_collection/derbyshirewills/default.asp. Wills which dates

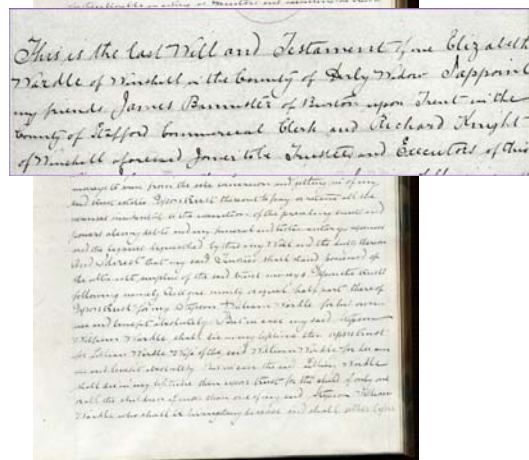
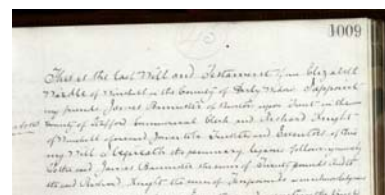
after 1928 are held at Nottingham District Probate Registry. Copies of wills and administrations for outside Derbyshire (proved after 1858) can be viewed in the Probate Search Room, The Probate Service, Principle Registry of the Family Division, First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NP. Copies of wills can be ordered by post from The Court Service, York Probate Sub-Registry, First Floor, Castle Chambers, Clifford St, York YO1 7RG.

Until 1858, wills were proved by the church. Historically, Derbyshire was part of the Diocese of Lichfield, therefore, pre-1858 wills and administration can be found at Lichfield Record Office.

6. Electoral registers

Electoral registers, sometimes called electoral rolls, are lists of individuals residing at a particular address who are entitled to vote in an election. Electoral registers can be used to trace the history of a building or its residents, however, it is important to remember that not all those living in a property will be listed, only those eligible to vote. Derbyshire Record Office holds electoral registers dating from 1832 to about 1990 (with some gaps covering war years) which are available to view in the search room.

Electoral registers are not indexed by name so you will need to know where exactly your relative was living and that they were entitled to vote at the time the register was drawn up. If you have access to the internet, you can search electoral registers between 2002 and 2008 on line at www.192.com. Electoral registers for more recent years are available at district council offices.



Will of Elizabeth Wardle, 1905

Where to look next.....

There are many more collections held at Derbyshire Record Office which can help you when tracing your family history, many of which help provide a picture of how our ancestors lived. Below is just a small selection of sources, held by Derbyshire Record Office and elsewhere, which can help to further your family history research.

School records

School records can provide a wealth of information about our ancestors' formative years. Records such as admission registers and log books can not only provide information on a child's education but also a child's date of birth, parent's names and address. Derbyshire Record Office hold the records of over 800 schools throughout the county. For information on our collection see the *Education* section of our *Guide* at <http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/onlinecollectionguide> or consult the copy available in our search room.

Workhouse/Poor Law records

The workhouse system was set up in England and Wales following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which placed the responsibility for looking after the destitute on individual parishes. Parishes formed Poor Law Unions which built workhouses to house its poor. Men, women and children unable to support themselves entered these institutions, working long hours in exchange for food and board. Workhouse, or Board of Guardian records, as they are also known, can provide information on who was receiving assistance and can tell us what life was like for our ancestors who spent time in the workhouse.

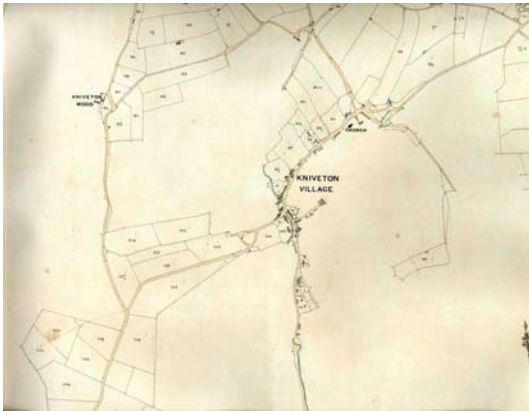


Poor Law Removal Order, 1727

Records of those receiving poor relief can also be found in parish collections. These records can tell us about family relationships, and the movement of families and individuals between parishes or counties.

Records can cover issues such as unemployment, illegitimate pregnancy, desertion and illness. For more information on records relating to the Workhouse and poor relief held at Derbyshire Record Office see our online *Guide* <http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/onlinecollectionguide> or consult the copy available in our search room looking under the sections *Parishes* and *Board of Guardians*. General information on life in the Workhouse can be found at www.workhouses.org.uk

Maps & Plans



Kniveton Tithe Map, 1850

Maps and plans can provide information on urban and industrial development, agriculture, transport, public utilities and so on. But perhaps of most use to the family historian, they can provide information on the history of buildings, helping you to discover the period in which the property in which your ancestor lived was built, who owned it if your ancestors were tenants etc.

Derbyshire Record Office holds many different types of maps and plans spanning the 18th-20th centuries, including tithe and enclosure maps, ordnance survey maps and those privately drawn up by landed families. For more information on map collections held at Derbyshire Record Office, please see our guide *Introduction to Maps* at http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/Introduction%20to%20Maps_tcm9-17000.pdf or consult the guide available in our search room.

Family and Estate records

The estates of landed families were major business enterprises, employing large numbers of people either directly as staff or indirectly as tenants of their land. Although few family archive collections hold personal details of employees; if your ancestor was a tenant, renting property or land, you may find reference to them in records such as rent or account books. Maps privately drawn up for the family often list tenants and show the location of the property they rented. Derbyshire Record Office holds the personal and estate papers for many major Derbyshire families. For information on our collection see our *Guide* at <http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/onlinecollectionguide> or consult the copy available in our search room.

Records of Orphanages

If a child's parents were deceased or they were otherwise unable to care for them, the child may have been made a *ward of court/state* and entered an orphanage.

Orphanage records can provide much information on a child's early life and family background. Although Derbyshire Record Office holds few records for orphanages, its collections do include the records of the St Christopher's Railway Servants' Orphanage in Derby (Reference: D3732) which spans the years 1874-1990 and includes admission and discharge records. Children's charities, such as Barnardo's www.barnardos.org.uk, provide family history services through which they will search their records and provide information on individuals who were cared for by that charity.

Tracing living relatives

Although Derbyshire Record Office cannot put you in touch with living individuals, there are various sources available which will help you to trace your living relatives. Online, you can search electoral registers, for the years 2002 to 2008, at www.192.com. Telephone directories are also a useful source of information; those for the years 1880-1984 can be searched online at www.ancestry.co.uk. People may also be traced through their old workplace or school via networking websites such as Friends Reunited www.friendsreunited.co.uk or through contact with local people by a letter published in a local newspaper.

If you are looking for long lost relatives, The Salvation Army runs a family tracing service www2.salvationarmy.org.uk. Norcap, a charity providing support for people affected by adoption, can also help in tracing or searching for family members, please see their website at www.norcap.org.uk for more information.

Internet sources

Thanks to the wealth of information available on the Internet, tracing the history of your family has never been easier. The wide range of websites dedicated to genealogy, the study of family history, contain information and guidance which can help you begin to trace your family tree. See our information leaflet *Family History Resources on the Internet* for a list of useful websites.

Visiting Derbyshire Record Office

Do you want to find out more about how to use the services and facilities mentioned in this leaflet which are available at Derbyshire Record Office? Then come to our introductory sessions. These last thirty minutes; there is no need to book in advance and you will be given an information pack. Even if you only want to find out how to access sources some time in the future, you will be welcome; see our website for forthcoming dates www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice . The Record Office also holds Outreach events, such as open days and specialist talks, covering a wide range of topics, including family history. Keep checking our website for information on up and coming events.



We hope this step-by-step guide helps you on your way to creating your family tree and discovering more about the lives of your ancestors.