

Notes from a lecture by Ann Simcock given to Midland Ancestors 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021

There are many reasons for beginning family history. There are different formats people use to record their research No matter the way you conduct your research it is important to remember that our ancestors were people just as we are and had to make decisions based on the social conventions of the time. They also lived in a society which was composed of a variety of people who all influenced our ancestors. Families could have very complex relationships – research widely Who can influence and/or help find our ancestors?

**The People:** Children and siblings: consider names, naming patterns, maiden name of ancestor as middle name, pet names. Repeated names used for deceased children. Are there gaps in ages? Death/still births? Death of mother Where were children born? Is the family mobile? If not records in different place suspect, even if only one. Children of broken families live with relatives, Elderly relatives live with children or siblings – no pensions/social security, only alternative the workhouse. Locating family members confirms correct family.

**Informants and witnesses:** Informants on birth and death certificates, witnesses on marriages and wills. These can be family members even if not stated. If a female has unrecognised name is she a married relative? Is the information from informant reliable? Are they in position to know the correct information? The Coroner can suggest may be inquest. He can give permission for burial even if no death cert. Sometimes baptisms done together also siblings sometimes married together. Check surrounding marriages in register in case witness if parish clerk.

**Landlords, boarders, lodgers, visitors, neighbours, servants, and apprentices:** On the census these people may be recorded alongside your relatives but not named as such. Check each one. Servants may be children of relatives, visitors' relatives from another area. Check through census pages to see if there are other people from your ancestor's birth place. Check apprentice indentures for information.

### **The Records**

Birth, marriages and deaths: Use indexes, GRO, FreeBMD, FamilySearch and the pay to view sites BUT do not use indexes as definite proof, they are only hints. You need the record itself. Enhance information from basic records with information from other sources e.g. baptisms, pictures of churches, photographs. Always check exactly what causes of death mean do not think for example that "general paralysis" is a stroke.

Causes of death give an indication of some aspects of ancestor's lives Censuses: Don't only look at your ancestor, scroll through the pages. Look at size of families, occupations, places of birth, relationships. Always record the reference. Make use of the 1st page of enumeration district, the enumerator's route. Check it in the maps. Use the 1939 Find My Past map of the house you are interested in, it shows 1881, 1939 and present day, easy way to look at large scale map of area. Be aware of legislation regarding rules for the records. Google Acts of Parliament for Genealogists

<https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~framland/genealogy/acts/actind.htm>

### **Other Records:**

Newspapers but beware of bias, moral and political. Don't ignore adverts for jobs as can give lots of information not seen elsewhere. Adverts for house sales can provide a wealth of information. Google "Old Occupations" to gain details. Maps, National Library of Scotland, (split screen facility), Alan Godfrey, Cassini. Use Google Earth to see house now in "Street View". Make a collage of the area, types of houses, where did ancestors go to church? What did they see on their route to work? If it was some distance, how did they get there – train, walk (some agricultural labourers could walk as many as 6 miles to their farm) Where did they get their entertainment – which pub. Trade Directories: introductory paragraph gives details of town or village, fly boats, stage coaches rail services. Also public buildings, churches. Then addresses and businesses. Remember that the directory was probably compiled a year + before publication.

War Diaries: also CWGC, army records can give descriptions, family information and illnesses. War Memorials. The Police Gazette gives descriptions.

### **Topics to Research:**

The area/environment

Houses – consider how many people lived in the house.

School, employment, religion, sport, leisure, holidays, were

rich/poor? Military

Use The National Archives Research Guides to find where to find information.

The British Newspaper Archive has a more comprehensive search facility to FMP so use BNA to find reports, make a note of the newspaper then find on FMP.

Use all the Freebmd, Freecen, Freereg

Use Ukbmds these are indexes from local register offices, occasionally there are certificates which for whatever reason were not transferred to GRO

Libraries often have Ancestry and FMP you can use for free

Genuki, Cyndi's List, Family Search.

To Sum Up

Look at all aspects of basic records.

Evaluate each fact and its impact on story

Check all information given no matter how reliable source

Keep returning to online records being updated all the time

Consider carefully sensitive information and what you do with it.

Look at ancestors "in the round", they were people but who lived at different time with different social values.

We are recorders of history - not judges

Ann Simcock ©

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