

Church of England Church Records

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England church records are among the best set of record types containing genealogical information. Church Records in England can be used from the 1500's to the present. Some difficulties arise in locating and reading the records. Many church records have been indexed and are available online and in other formats. The following information will assist you in identifying, finding and accessing England church records.

Church of England Historical Background

Learn important historical dates regarding the Church of England church records at:

- wiki.familysearch.org > type in the search box: **England Church History**

Learn historical information regarding a parish by accessing the following websites:

- England Jurisdictions 1851
Maps.familysearch.org
- Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of England (www.british-history.ac.uk) > click **Source Type** > click **Gazetteers and dictionaries** > click **Topographical dictionaries (Lewis)**
- Imperial Gazetteer of England (www.visionofbritain.org.uk)
- FamilySearch Wiki (wiki.familysearch.org)



Church of England Organizational Background:

Province = Highest church level jurisdiction led by an Archbishop

Diocese = Second highest jurisdiction led by the Bishop. Comprised of a number of parishes (Copies of the parish registers were sent to the Bishop each year. These are known as Bishops' transcripts).

Archdeaconry = Archdeacon (at times kept copies of the parish registers, known as Archdeacon transcripts; officiated if the Bishop was not present)

Rural Deanery = led by a Dean

Parish = led by the Vicar (he recorded the baptisms, marriages, and burials in the parish registers)

Church of England Record Types and Content

The Church of England is the Anglican Church. These records are the most complete and available church records. They can be found in many ways as original records in microfilm or digital formats. Many have been transcribed into book form by Family History Societies. The Family History Library has these records in book, fiche, computer and compact disc, and digital records (frequently added to www.familysearch.org). Many indexes are available online.

Baptisms/Christenings, Marriages, Burials

Baptisms, marriages, and burials were kept on the same register before 1813. In 1754 marriages were kept on separate pre-printed registers. Each year the vicar made copies of the Parish Registers, and sent them to the Bishop, and/or Archdeacon.

Baptisms/Christenings:

Provides:

- Name of child
- Christening date and place
- Full name of father
- Mother's given name (but not always)

Possibly provides:

- Residence
- Occupation of father
- Birth date
- Mother's maiden name (more so after 1812)

Burials:

Provides:

- Name of deceased
- Date of burial

Possibly provides:

- Age at death
- Residence
- Occupation
- Parents' names (if burial of a child)

Marriages:

Pre-1754- Provides:

- Name of bride and groom
- Date and place of marriage

Post -1753- Provides:

- Name of bride and groom
- Married by banns or license
- Signatures or marks bride and groom
- Name of witnesses

Both Possibly Provides:

- Residence
- Marital condition (widower, widow, or spinster)
- Age

Post-June 1837 Provides:

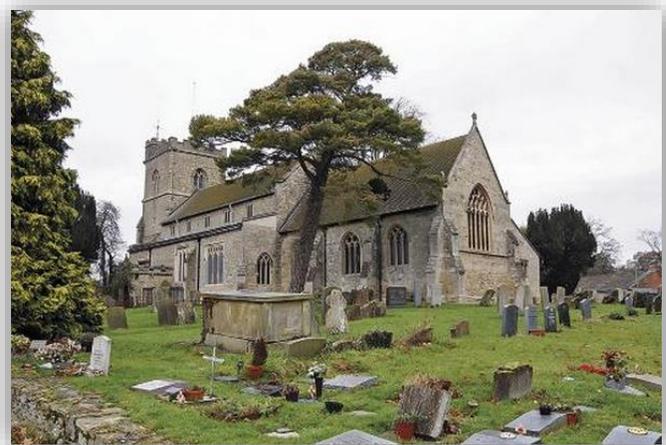
- Includes all of the above
- Residence of the bride and groom
- Name of father for both bride and groom
- Occupation of the father's

Bishops' & Archdeacons' Transcripts:

- Copies of the parish registers were sent each year to the Bishop of the corresponding Diocese.
- Began in 1598 but some of the early transcripts do not survive.
- They were supposed to be exact copies, but errors or corrections were made when copying the parish registers. Information therefore may be different.
- Copies of the registers were also sent to the Archdeacon every year each Easter.

Terms for Illegitimacy:

- Base child or base born
- Bastard
- Byblow
- Chanceling
- Filia populi
- Lanebegot
- Merrybegot
- Natural
- Spurious
- The son of the people



To understand more about Church records go to wiki.familysearch.org > type in the search box: **England Church Records**.

Tips for reading Old English handwriting:

Church records from the 1500's to the present day can have different types of handwriting.

There are online helps for reading Old English handwriting:

- Google “**FamilySearch Learning Center**” > then type **English handwriting**
- www.nationalarchives.gov.uk (Search box: type “Handwriting”)

Other types of Church of England Records:

These records contain rich information and may give a historical background on your ancestor.

They are known as parish chest records. A few of them include:

- Church Warden Accounts
- Vestry Minutes
- Poor Rates & other poor law (Overseers of the Poor)
- Settlement Certificates, Examinations, Removal Orders, Bastardy records
- Monumental Inscriptions

To find Parish Chest records at the Family History Library go to www.familysearch.org > click **Catalog** > Next to the **Places** search type the name of the Parish > click **Church records**, or **Poorhouses**, **poor law**. If not available at the Family History Library, contact the parish minister or record office for location of the records. Go to Google, or Crockford's Clerical Directory, available for some years on www.ancestry.com.

For more information on Parish Chest Records go to wiki.familysearch.org > In the search box: type, “**Parish Chest Records**” or “**England and Wales Poor Law Records.**”

Accessing Church of England Indexes and Images

Indexes are a very helpful listing to help us locate ancestors. Below are some great websites for Church of England church indexes & images online:

Free websites:

- www.familysearch.org
 - Go to **Search** > click **Records** > on the map click **England**.
 - Currently contains some images for the following Counties: Cornwall, Cumberland, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Kent, Lancashire, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northumberland, and Yorkshire. Also contains images for England & Wales Non-conformist church records.
- www.freereg.org.uk
- <http://www.onlineparishclerks.org.uk/>
- www.ukbmd.co.uk
- fhlfavorites.info



- www.google.com
- www.genuki.org.uk

Subscription websites:

- www.findmypast.com
 - Go to **Search records** > click **A-Z of record sets** > type the name of the County.
 - Currently contains images for the following Counties: Dorset, Lancashire, London, Surrey, Warwickshire, and Yorkshire.
- www.ancestry.com
 - Go to **Search** > click **Card Catalog** > in the Keyword(s) search type the name of the County followed by 'parish registers.'
 - Currently contains images for the following Counties: Cheshire, Devon, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Yorkshire.
- www.thegenealogist.co.uk
- www.parishregister.com
- www.bmdregistres.co.uk



Church records on microfilm at the Family History Library:

1. Go to www.familysearch.org, then click the **Catalog** tab
2. Next to the **Places** search type the name of the **Parish** (for baptisms, marriages, burials, Archdeacon and Bishops' transcripts, and Parish Chest records).
3. Click the **Church records** for the images on microfilm.
4. To find County-wide marriage indexes; in the Places search of the Catalog type the name of the County then click Search. Click the **Church records- Indexes**
5. There are also CDs of transcripts of parish registers at the Family History Library.

Church records in England if records are not found online:

- County record offices and local ministers can have original parish registers (or copies of) Go to: <http://www.ancestor-search.info/CRO-INDEX.htm>, click the County to find a local County Record Office in England. If researching overseas, they can usually be contacted by email and will reply with how they can help you in finding and using parish records. Most have a fee associated with searching records.
- Family History Society Publications
- Crockford's Clerical Directory lists the clergy for the Church of England, the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church [and] the Church of Ireland. Go to www.ancestry.com. This yearly published book can help provide recent information, but can also help with early ministers and their genealogical information.
- Local libraries may have historical information on the town or parish or family histories. This could help in locating family in church records.