

# The Bookworm

BY BETTY WARBURTON

You have traced your ancestry in the British Isles through civil registrations and census documents to the early nineteenth century and now these familiar sources are no longer available to consult. Your handy genealogical manual, whether it is Sherry Irvine's *Scottish Ancestry: Research Methods for Family Historians* or Mark Herber's *Ancestral Trails: the Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*, refers you now to the contents of the parish chest. You are advised to consult parish registers of baptisms, burials and marriages, tithe books and the minutes of the vestry committee. Two hundred years ago lifestyle, laws and customs were vastly different. To better understand that era the Brian O'Regan Memorial Library offers several reference books.

The first reference book you will need to use is *The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers*, edited by Cecil Humphery-Smith. The atlas, with topographical county maps on one page and, on the facing page, the parish maps showing the pre-1832 parochial boundaries, is an essential tool in locating the your ancestor's parish. The index lists the parishes by county with grid reference to the county maps and indicates the present whereabouts of originals and copies and whether the parish is included in Boyd's or Pallot's Indexes or in the International Genealogical Index.

The late W. E. Tate wrote *The Parish Chest* in 1946 to fill the need for a "text book which should indicate the principal classes of record for the use of the parish historian and should give help in interpreting these records". Now in its third edition, this book has become a classic and an essential tool for the local historian or genealogist. In the introduction, Tate offers a brief history of the English parish and a detailed account of the structure of the parish and its administration. He compares the administration of the modern village with the practices of the past. The next section of the book looks at church records—parish registers (baptisms, marriages, and burials), church wardens accounts and tithes and fees. The third section deals with civil records—vestry minutes, petty constables' accounts, poor law administration, highway maintenance and open field enclosures. There are copious notes, appendices, a bibliography and an index.

*Village Records* is, perhaps, a more comprehensive guide to English village documents. Author John West offers plenty of "how to do it" advice and illustrates it with numerous examples taken, where possible, from the records of the village of Chaddesley Corbett in Worcestershire. The book is divided into five sections. The first section, "The Approach to Local Documents", is an overview of the field of local history in England and is well worth reading before you venture further into the book. The remaining four sections deal with different eras in English history. The book has a good index as well as numerous bibliographies and lists.

*The Local Historian's Encyclopedia*, by John Richardson explains many of the unusual terms you will encounter, as well as detailing legislation that affected the lives of everyone. Entries are arranged alphabetically within sections, such as land and agriculture, local community, taxes services and rents. The book includes an index.

The library is fortunate to have several histories devoted to the many changes that occurred in the British Isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the seven-volume classic *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, by William Edward Hartpole Lecky.