

# Occupation, Guild and Freeman Records

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## OVERVIEW

This presentation will examine sources for identifying your ancestors occupation, trade directories, records of apprenticeship, guilds and freedom records. Then look specifically at sources for information about the occupation or trade itself and will conclude with some resources to help put the ancestor into context.

### Sources to Identify Ancestor's Occupations

Look for records that will identify your ancestors occupation remembering that it may change over time, or it may be stated higher than it really is to impress. Search records such as:

- Civil Registration
- Census
- Church Records
- Marriage Licences and Bonds
- Probate Records
- Settlement Examinations
- Bastardy Papers
- Apprenticeship certificates
- Freedom records
- Directories

If you identify the occupation and don't know what it is try the following:

[//rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html](http://rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html) or

[www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html)

1. *Unabridged Oxford English Dictionary*. Good for old English terms and variants.
2. Twinning, Andrew and Sandra. *Dictionary of Old Trades and Occupations*. Woodcroft, SA, Australia. 2nd ed. 1995
3. Waters, Colin. *A Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles and Occupations*. Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside Books. Rev. 2nd ed. 2005.

### Bibliographic Guides

Localized geographic guides can be used to assist in finding other resources

4. Raymond, Stuart A. *Trades and Professions*:

*The Family Historians Guide*. Bury, Lancashire: Family History Partnership. 2011..

Stuart Raymond Bibliographic Guides, were published by the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS), for the following counties: Buckinghamshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Cumberland/Westmorland, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire/Bristol, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, London/Middlesex, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire. Yorkshire. All have a section addressing occupational records within the relevant county.

Contact the relevant County Record Office to see if a bibliographic guide has been produced

5. Hodgson, Henry. *A Bibliography of the History and Topography of Cumberland and Westmorland*. Carlisle: The Record Office. 1968.

### Trade Directories

One major online site is the Digital Library of Historical Directories, provided by the University of Leicester at [www.historicaldirectories.org](http://www.historicaldirectories.org). National coverage is provided for the 1850s, 1890s, and 1910-1920, with one digitized directory from each period selected for each county and main county town.

The 1850s were the decade when directories began to be published more widely and with information at the parish level. Examples of some very early directories, from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are included, with a more detailed approach to Leicestershire, London and Wales.

Numerous trade directories are also available at Ancestry.com. Note that Ancestry provides two different datasets for UK directories. One is *U.K. and U.S. Directories, 1680-1830* which are predominately UK directories and primarily before 1800. This dataset is provided by Avero Publication from their three CD *Biography Database*. The second dataset is *U.K., City and County Directories, 1600s-1900s*, which actually has fewer directories, may only provide one directory

for a particular county. This dataset is provided by ArchiveCD Books.

Check the county pages on GENUKI to see what may be available online for your county.

Remember also that many directories were published for different professions: clergy, medical, dentists, lawyers, civil servants, military, etc. Some are online.

6. Goss, Charles. *The London Directories 1677-1855: A Bibliography with Notes on Their Origin and Development*. London: Dennis Archer. 1932.
7. Herber, Mark D. *Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2nd ed. 2004.
8. Mills, Dennis R. *Rural Community History From Trade Directories*. Aldenham, Hertfordshire: Local Population Studies. 2001.
9. Milner, Paul. "Using Directories for British Isles Research" p. 5-9, *Ancestry*, Vol. 14, No. 2, March/April 1996
10. Milner, Paul. "Trade Directories: A British Isles Research Tool" *British Isles Family History Society U.S.A. Journal* Vol. X, No. 4, Winter 1997/1998
11. Norton, Jane. E., *Guide to the National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales, Excluding London, Published Before 1856*, London: Royal Historical Society Guide and Handbook No. 5, 1950.
12. Shaw, Gareth and Allison Tipper, *British Directories: a Bibliography and Guide to Directories Published in England and Wales (1850-1950) and Scotland (1773-1950)*

## Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have been required to enter a trade since the 1563 Statute of Apprentices. Subsequent Acts of Parliament modified this statute but it remained on the books until 1814. The typical apprentice would be 14 years old, plus or minus 2 years, and will serve a 7 year apprenticeship. At the end of which he would have been free to apply his trade within the city.

From 1710 to 1811 the Commissioners of Stamps kept registers of the money they received from the duty on indentures. These now form the

Apprenticeship Books (IR 1) at The National Archives. The duty had to be paid within one year after the expiry of the indenture. You may need to search for a number of years even when the date of indenture is known.

The Apprenticeship Books record the names, addresses and trades of the masters, the names of the apprentices and dates of their indentures. Until 1752 the names of apprentices' parents are given, but rarely after that year.

The easiest way to access these records is at [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com). You can search: 350,000 Apprentices of Great Britain records for 1710-1774 created as a result of this tax.

Not all apprenticeships are recorded in these books. In many parts of the country the acts were not enforced, e.g. Yorkshire woollen industry, and in some industries they are almost non-existent, e.g. cotton industry.

Some indentures were exempt from stamp duty. These included those who apprenticed their own sons, or those taken on at the expense of the parish or a public charity. The former may be found in the freeman records and the latter in the parish chest records

Some apprentice records are to be found in the records of the: War Office, Admiralty, Registrar General Of Shipping And Seamen, Board Of Trade, and Poor Law Union Papers. For further information on apprenticeship records see The National Archives Research Guides at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

13. Tate, W.E.. *The Parish Chest*. 3rd edition 1969. Repr. Chichester, Eng. Phillimore & Co. 1983.

## Guilds and Livery Companies

For excellent information about and an index to the apprenticeships within the London Livery Companies see introductory material and index at English Origins [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com). These indexes contain information on 165,000 apprentices from 61 London companies.

Until the mid-seventeenth century an apprentice in a guild will likely have followed that particular trade. After that it became increasingly common for the apprentice not to follow the trade of the guild.

14. Doolittle, I.G. *The City of London and its Livery*

- Companies*. Dorchester: Gavin Press. 1982.
15. Raymond, Stuart A. *Londoner's Occupations.: A Genealogical Guide*. Birmingham: Federation of Family History Societies. 1994.
  16. *City Livery Companies and Related Organizations, a guide to their records at Guildhall Library*. Guildhall Library Research Guide 3. London: Guildhall Library. 3rd edn. 1989. This is the standard guide to the voluminous records of the guilds in the Guildhall Library.

### Freeman

There is a distinction between freedom of a city or borough, and the freedom of a livery or guild. It is common for an individual to have both but it was not guaranteed. The person may be found in one or both sets of records depending upon what has survived.

There are three ways to become a freeman:

By patrimony (born to a freeman after that father's own admission)

By servitude (serving an apprenticeship to a freeman)

By redemption (purchasing his admission)

Some were granted honorary freedom (e.g. Nelson and Churchill)

Those individuals who were freeman of a city or borough had rights governed by the charter, but usually included a right to vote in elections for the city or borough council, to elect local representatives to Parliament, and the exclusive right to carry on a trade or craft within the city or borough, becoming harder to enforce and by the end of the eighteenth century was largely ignored. Exclusive rights were abolished by the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.

The Freeman rolls usually record names, dates of admission, and maybe his trade and parentage. Rolls for Exeter, York, King's Lynn and Norwich have been published. The original records or indexes for other cities may be available through the Family History Library (e.g. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne).

### Professions and Trades

For Links to United Kingdom and Ireland Occupations see

[www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html). Also check out the Occupation listings on Cyndis List at [www.cyndislist.com/topical.htm#Occupations](http://www.cyndislist.com/topical.htm#Occupations) Check out the web-site for Shire Books, now part of Bloomsbury at [www.bloomsbury.com/us/non-fiction/history/heritage/](http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/non-fiction/history/heritage/). This company publishes small inexpensive guides to a large variety of occupations, industries and history. There is a very large collection dealing with the Victorian era. These are great introductions with, lots of good illustrations and photographs, plus bibliographies to get you into further titles. Download the 45 years historical bibliography covering all books produced between 1962-2007 from the wayback machine at <http://web.archive.org/web/20120904225745/http://www.shirebooks.co.uk/pdf/45years.pdf>.

There is a guide to trade unions for different occupations online as a pdf available through the Modern Records Centre at [www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject\\_guides/family\\_history/occupationalguide.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/occupationalguide.pdf). The Modern Records Centre also provides a listing of occupations covered by trade union archives for which genealogical guides are available at [www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject\\_guides/family\\_history/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/). Some of the trade union records have been indexed and digitized and are available through [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com).

### Pen & Sword: Guides for Family Historians

There are a number of occupation related guides in this excellent growing series of books that will help put your ancestors occupations in context and to research the lives of the individuals. All published by Pen & Sword of Barnsley, South Yorkshire. The US Distributor of these books is Casemate at [www.casemateipm.com](http://www.casemateipm.com).

17. Brooks, Richard and Matthew Little. *Tracing Your Royal Marine Ancestors*. 2008
18. Brown, Jonathan. *Tracing Your Rural Ancestors*. 2011
19. Burton, Anthony. *Tracing Your Shipbuilding Ancestors*. 2010
20. Crail, Mark. *Tracing Your Labour Movement Ancestors*. 2009.
21. Drummond, Di. *Tracing Your Railway Ancestors*. 2010.
22. Elliott, Brian. *Tracing Your Coalmining Ancestors*. 2014
23. Emm, Adele. *Tracing Your Trade & Craftsman*

- Ancestors*. 2015.
24. Fowler, Simon. *Tracing Your Naval Ancestors*. 2011
  25. Higgs, Michelle. *Tracing Your Medical Ancestors*. 2011
  26. Teasdale, Vivien. *Tracing Your Textile Ancestors*. 2009
  27. Tomaselli, Phil. *Tracing Your Air Force Ancestors*. 2007
  28. Wade, Stephen. *Tracing Your Police Ancestors*. 2009
  29. Wade, Stephen. *Tracing Your Criminal Ancestors*. 2009
  30. Wade, Stephen. *Tracing Your Legal Ancestors*. 2010
  31. Wilcox, Martin. *Fishing and Fishermen*. 2009.
  32. Wilkes, Sue. *Tracing Your Canal Ancestors*. 2011
  33. Wills, Simon. *Tracing Your Merchant Navy Ancestors*. 2012

#### Additional Sources

There are numerous sources for the study of occupations. Once you find a book or article dealing with a profession or occupation carefully read the bibliographies, seek bibliographic guides, etc.

34. Benson, John, Robert Neville and Charles Thompson, *Bibliography of the British Coal Industry: secondary literature, parliamentary and departmental papers, mineral maps and plans and a guide to sources*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
35. Burt, R and P. Waite. *Bibliography of the History of British Metal Mining Exeter*: University of Exeter Press, 1988. Bibliography of books, theses and papers published between 1945 and 1987. Full text available online at [//projects.exeter.ac.uk/mhn/bibliography.html](http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/mhn/bibliography.html) updated [//projects.exeter.ac.uk/mhn/bibtoc.html](http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/mhn/bibtoc.html)
36. Cale, Michelle. *Law and Society: An Introduction to Sources for Criminal and Legal history from 1800*. Public Record Office Readers' Guide No. 14. Kew, Surrey: PRO. 1996
37. Edwards, Cliff. *Railway Records: A Guide to Sources*. London: Public Record Office. 2001.
38. Fowler, Simon. *Researching Brewery and Publican Ancestors*. Bury, Lancashire: Federation of Family History Societies. 2003.
39. Hardy, Frank. *My Ancestor was a Railway Worker*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2009.

40. Hawkings, David T. *Criminal Ancestors: A Guide to Historical Criminal Records in England and Wales*. Stroud: Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing. 1992.
41. Hawkings, David T. *Railway Ancestors: A Guide to the Staff Records of the Railway Companies of England and Wales 1822-1947*. Stroud: Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing. 1995.
42. Richards, Tom. *Was Your Grandfather a Railwayman?* Bury, Lancashire: Federation of Family History Societies. 4th ed. 2002.
43. Samuel, Raphael. *Miners, Quarrymen and Salt Workers*. History Workshop Series. London: Routledge & Keegan. 1977.
44. Shearman, Andrew. *My Ancestor was a Policeman*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2000.
45. Tonks, David. *My Ancestor Was a Coalminer*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2003.
46. Waller, Ian. H. *My Ancestor was an Agricultural Labourer*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2007.
47. Waller, Ian. H. *My Ancestor was a Leather Worker*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2015.
48. Ward, Margaret. *Female Occupations: Women's Employment 1850-1950*. Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside books. 2008.

#### Putting Your Ancestor into Context

Put your ancestor into their correct social context. Read about their life, the time period, and examine different aspects of their lives. Look at modern studies and contemporary documents. If unfamiliar with this approach start with Sturdevant's book.

49. Carter, Paul and Kate Thompson. *Sources for Local Historians*. Chichester: Phillimore. 2005.
50. Emmison, F.G. *Elizabethan Life: Home, Work & Land From Essex Wills and Sessions and Manorial Records*. Chelmsford: Essex County Council (Essex Record Office). 1976
51. Ereira, Alan. *The People's England*. London: Routledge and Kegan. 1981. Looks at the daily life of labourers, servants, soldiers, factory hands, seamen, immigrants, shopkeepers and miners.
52. Mingay, G.E. *Rural Life in Victorian England*. London: Book Club Associates. 1976.
53. Pols, Robert. *My Ancestor was a Studio Photographer*. London: Society of Genealogists. 2011.
54. Reader, W. J. *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1966. Social history of professional classes.