

Welsh family history sources

➤➤➤ A guide for researchers in welsh family history

getting started

our 10 online favourites

[Archives network wales](#)

[Gathering the Jewels](#)

[Congregational ministers](#)

[Marriage bonds](#)

[Crime 1730–1830](#)

[Merchant mariners 1830–1945](#)

[Cambrian newspaper 1804–1930](#)

[Wills — pre 1858](#)

[Family history societies](#)

[Coalmining accidents 1878–1979](#)

The growing availability of online resources has revolutionised family history, no longer is distance a barrier to finding out more about your ancestors, at least not in the initial stages. The starting point for research is always your existing family members and papers, maximise this information to identify your ancestors, what locality they were from and when they were born. Having done this you set forth on the adventure that is family history research.

The first port of call will probably be the free databases such as www.familysearch.org. This site has numerous welsh records but beware, it can be extremely frustrating when used for common welsh surnames.

www.freebmd.org.uk has listed births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales from 1837 through to the early 20th century. However, this will only provide exact matches of the names you input and although there are wildcard options, this limits alternative spellings, specifically anglicisation of Welsh names. From 1912 births specify the mother's maiden name which makes it easier to narrow down potential matches. This database will give you the registration district, year and quarter of registration, volume and page number – the information you need to order a copy of the certificate. These can be obtained directly through the British Home Office at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates which is considerably cheaper than through a commercial site.

This brings us to the main paid-for research sites for the UK: www.ancestry.com, www.findmypast.co.uk and www.bmdindex.co.uk. They offer subscription/pay-per-view services but frustratingly the National Archives, in digitising its extensive collection, has opted to share projects with the result that the information you need is distributed across all of them. For example Find My Past hosts the 1911 census and has recently added many Welsh parish records to its databases, BMD index is strong on non-conformist records, while Ancestry has the most extensive passenger lists.

On the subject of the National Archives, its website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records is a font of knowledge although you could be

excused for thinking you need a PhD to search the site. However, by selecting 'find a person' from the menu, and then focusing on your area of interest you can access their invaluable research guides which will direct you to their own collections and also other sources. Their own collections cover national level information for England and Wales and should be the first port of call for passenger lists, military records and professional listings such as doctors, lawyers and clergy.

Sooner or later you will need access to more local information. An invaluable source is www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal which will guide you to its information on all things Welsh. Much of the best information will be listed at parish level so if you don't know where your ancestors' place of birth fits, simply enter the place name together with genuki in your search bar and browse the list.

This will inevitably point you to parish records, their baptism, marriage and burial records being the primary sources of information pre 1837. The website will detail the years for which records are available and also where they are kept.

On the subject of parishes, you will frequently need to reference a map of historic parishes as your missing ancestors will have a tendency to whizz across parish boundaries. Family History Societies will often supply parish maps of their countries, alternatively you'll find C19th and C20th maps with parish boundaries at the [Vision of Britain](#) website.

on the ground

We're very lucky in the number of records now available online, and that number is increasing daily. However, there does come a time when you have to visit repositories to continue the search.

Here in Wales records are divided between the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth and the various county archives. The apportionment can appear arbitrary to the lay person so we recommend checking on the [Archives Network Wales website](#) for the records you wish to consult. This will also give access to reading times, id required for readers tickets etc.

Before civil registration in 1837 the main source of information is parish registers (baptisms, marriages and burials) and these are available at county archives offices (often on film) with duplicates at the NLW in Aberystwyth. Some archives such as Glamorgan have computerised indexes which can save an inordinate amount of time. However, if your family's trail is likely to span more than one county Aberystwyth makes for a good 1-stop shop.



There is a wealth of records for you to consult that may yield fascinating information on your family. These include:

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| poor law records | court records |
| local newspapers | poll books |
| electoral registers | trade directories |
| census returns | manorial records |
| pedigree books | estate records |
| tithe or enclosure maps with apportionment books | |

www.familyhistorywales.com

info@where-youre-from.com

44 1656-768 992

44 7816-873 465

And finally, if you cant visit these repositories in person then commission an independent researcher such as Where You're From to work on your behalf.

family history societies

The Family History societies of Wales, based on the old counties, are an invaluable source of information specific to their areas such as marriage transcripts and memorial inscriptions. They have dedicated websites and also publish journals with informative articles and often offer a look-up service. Membership is not expensive (although if your family spans three or more counties it can add up) . Contact details for the societies can be found on the [Family History Societies of Wales](#) website.



follow my blog for all that's new, exciting or downright quirky in family history in Wales.

where you're from

Where You're From are the people who bring your Welsh ancestors to life. Names and dates are all very well but we put them into a social and historic context through **Tours**, where you visit the places they lived, worked, were married and buried, and personalised **Books** that tell the story of your ancestors and of their community. We specialise in Wales and bring you a depth of knowledge and expertise in genealogy, social history, narrative writing and, not least, a passion for the subject.

As part of our commitment to further understanding of welsh family history we have produced a series of free guides which are available at our website. These guides are intended for reference only and may not be reproduced in full or part without permission.