



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

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REALLY USEFUL Bulletin

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Welcome to the July edition of the *Really Useful Bulletin*

inside find...

Lead article this month is *Catholic Ancestry in England and Wales*
plus news from local FHS and from the Federation

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Really Useful Bulletin

CATHOLIC ANCESTRY IN ENGLAND AND WALES

by Michael Gandy

In 1533 Henry VIII declared himself to be head of the Church in England and Wales and rejected the Pope and the international Catholic church.

After the pendulum had swung a few times, Protestantism was finally established with the Act of Supremacy in 1559 under Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). She had no wish to persecute religious belief but everyone had to attend church regardless of what they thought. It was expected that young people would grow up in the new religion while old people would steadily die off. Throughout the period of illegality, Catholics were called recusants from the Latin word meaning 'they refuse' (to come to church).

However, in 1577 Counter-Reformation missionaries began to persuade people to return to being Catholic. Then in 1584 William of Orange, ruler of the Netherlands, was assassinated and England went to war formally with Spain. The war (1584-1603), and above all the Armada of 1588, confirmed Spain, Catholicism and the Pope as rooted enemies and Catholics in this country were now treated as traitors. The anti-Catholic laws were toughened in 1581 and 1585 and were operated seriously. For ordinary people this meant heavy fines but it was *death for a priest to breathe the air of England* and nearly 200 people were executed - mostly priests but a few of those who harboured them. The Gunpowder Plot (1605) was also very bad publicity.

By the time James I succeeded to the throne in 1603 most Catholics had either died off or given up. In many parts of England there were pretty well none. But some areas remained more loyal and there were large numbers in parts of Lancashire, the North Riding of Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Monmouthshire. There were also lots of Catholics in London though not as a percentage of the city's population. Many of those were foreigners to whom the laws did not apply.

Throughout the 1600s and early 1700s Catholics tended



*St. Peter's Basilica and Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II
Vatican, Rome*

to be either upper class or lower class and it was practically impossible for ordinary people to be Catholic unless they lived in a parish where the gentry were Catholic. This is called seigneurial Catholicism. Thus in Puritan Essex there were only five parishes with Catholic communities all dominated by the very

Catholic Petre family. In Cornwall there was only one Catholic gentry family - the Arundells of Lanherne - who also provided a safe haven at Wardour in Wiltshire.

In the Civil War Catholics supported the King; later they felt morally obliged to support the Jacobites and suffered accordingly. Mostly they had now ceased to be thought of as a threat and they paid their fines and suffered the other legal disabilities but were known and were part of the local fabric.

Although active persecution died away they were still looked at askance and it was almost an accident that Catholicism was made legal in 1778 because of the need to recruit Catholic Irish and Highland Scots for the war in America.

Between 1778 and the mid-1840s Catholic numbers grew proportionately with the increase in population but then the Irish famine brought a vast influx of Catholic Irish who mostly settled in the northern industrial towns. At the same time a steady stream of Anglicans began to convert. Numbers were not enormous but they were upper- and middle-class people with money and influence. They could lobby their Anglican relatives and normalise Catholicism as odd but socially acceptable; they could also afford to build churches. The Irish immigrants mostly didn't have a spare penny and the money of the English upper-class converts was vital.

The survival of Catholicism in Scotland was more a question of clan loyalty. In the Lowlands the only Catholics were the Gordons of Huntly (Aberdeen and Banff) and the Maxwells of Kirkcudbright; in the



Really Useful Bulletin

Highlands the Chisholms, Frasers, McDonnells of Glengarry, McNeills of Barra and some McDonalds remained Catholic. Other Highlanders remained Episcopalian but after the 1745 Rebellion there was a concerted and largely effective campaign by the Presbyterians to 'missionise' both Catholics and Episcopalians.

In Wales Catholic survival was weakened by the inability to provide priests who could speak Welsh. In the nineteenth century some Breton priests went to Aberystwyth in the hope that Breton and Welsh would be comprehensible and that sort-of worked a bit!

State Records to 1778

Catholics appear in all the records which are not about religion. In the campaign to suppress, discourage or punish them they may be cited at quarter sessions for non-attendance at church. They were not cited in the ecclesiastical courts (as Baptists were) because the law was not concerned with their beliefs. No ordinary people were tortured or executed simply for Catholicism though some suffered for helping priests.

After the laws were toughened in 1581 and 1585, Catholics who were fined appear in the Pipe Rolls until 1592 and all references have been published by the Catholic Record Society (CRS). In 1592 a special series of Recusant Rolls was established and operated until 1691 except during the Civil War and Commonwealth period when there was no Established Church so people could not be fined for not attending it! The first few volumes (to 1596) have been published by the CRS but the rest have to be searched at The National Archives. They are arranged by year and then county. The paragraphs are quite dense and full of information but the records are easy to browse as the name of each individual fined comes first in the paragraph.

Once fines had become standardised and were looked on almost as an annual tax or licence Catholics were cited before the Committee for Compounding (1627-1642). The records of the Northern Committee (where most Catholics were) have been published by CRS but the records of the Southern Committee have not survived.

Catholics appear in the Lay Subsidies (an occasional tax to finance war) and Parliament decided at a certain point that foreigners should pay double but also Catholics ('who are foreigners at heart').

The Protestation Oath of 1642 was intended to identify Catholics who would refuse to declare their allegiance to the King as head of the Church but quite a lot of Catholics just signed anyway. Life's hard enough...

Between 1662 and 1689 there was a campaign to suppress all groups outside the Church of England and large numbers of people were brought before quarter sessions and fined. This was aimed more at Baptists, Quakers and other 'sectaries' but Catholics were also involved, maybe labelled as 'popish recusants'. However, quite often the lists don't distinguish the reason why people were not Anglican so detective work is needed to sort out the Catholics from the others.

The Association Oath Rolls of 1696 were aimed at identifying Jacobites. Many Catholics naturally supported the deposed King James II but others may have signed for simplicity as in 1642. There was a later Oath in 1723 aimed at identifying people who did not support the Hanoverian succession.

After the Jacobite Rising of 1715 anti-Catholic laws were toughened. Catholics were not supposed to hold or inherit land and from 1717 we have the Registration of Papists' Estates (The National Archives) which details what they owned. The landholders were Catholics but many tenants' names are given though they may be Protestants. The law for registration ran until 1778 but it soon died away and the majority of the entries are for the years immediately after 1717.

At various times Parliaments asked quarter sessions to list the Catholics in their area. This overlaps with the many occasions when bishops instructed parish clergy to list the non-Anglicans of all sorts. Survival is a bit random but there are a lot of lists, some in print. National lists were asked for in 1705, 1767 and 1780. The 1767 return is the fullest; this was probably the lowest point for Catholic numbers and they seemed to amount to about one per cent of the population but concentrated in the usual counties, above all Lancashire. The full returns are in the House of Lords and the one for 1767 was published by CRS. Apart from the diocese of Chester (which covered south Lancashire) names were omitted and substituted with initials from which it is often possible work out the full names. However, the House of Lords returns were a fair copy of material which survive in a number of cases - with full names - in quarter sessions.



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State Records from 1778

Apart from the return of 1780 Government now had no reason to list or punish Catholics. Individuals appear undifferentiated in all the standard sources; nor did Catholics object to being in them. Until 1834 a lot of local administration was carried out by the Church of England parishes but both nonconformists and Catholics could distinguish between the religious aspects and the non-religious aspects, especially with the Poor Law.

Religious definition sometimes crept back in a positive way. From 1862 workhouses and other Poor Law institutions kept creed registers and poor Catholic children were entitled to be transferred to specifically Catholic institutions taking their funding with them (to use the modern phrase).

Anglican Records

Catholics had no objection to burial in the Anglican churchyard, nor was the prayer book burial ceremony objectionable as it is not a sacrament. Even in the nineteenth century and with the influx of the poor Irish who had quite different traditions (the wake) the Last Rites were given at home and Catholic prayers read at home before the body was taken to the church. From 1854 there were borough cemeteries with a designated Catholic area.

Marriage too was negotiable. The imposition of strict rules came slowly and, although most people were married at church, other types of marriage were acceptable (irregular but not illegal) and until 1754 you were married if you both agreed you were. The problem was proving it if you had no witnesses. Many Puritans and nonconformists objected to church marriage since they did not believe marriage was a religious act so that a Catholic marriage was less objectionable legally than a Quaker one. After 1754 everyone (except Quakers and Jews) had to be married in their local parish church and Catholics all did this. Many Catholics also had a Catholic ceremony and there are some records of these. However, everyone knew they had no legal force.

Baptism felt more important than marriage or burial and many babies (always babies - an adult will be a convert) were baptised by a Catholic priest. We cannot usually prove this although occasionally there is a reference to it in the parish register.

Once nonconformity became legal in 1689 and the pressure against Catholics also diminished, a law of 1696 provided for baptisms and births of any sort to be written into the register. This was part of a movement to establish that the register was for anyone in the parish, not just Anglicans, but the movement failed and Anglicans ring-fenced the register for themselves. There are quite a lot of nonconformist and Catholic entries in parish registers after 1696 but the custom died away by about 1704.

The other Anglican records don't have a religious content to which Catholics might object. The parish was the source of most local administration until 1834 but the whole of the Poor Law system was religiously neutral and Catholics either paid their Poor Rate or applied for Poor Relief. Settlement examinations have plenty of

poor Irish who were probably Catholic but the issue was residence, not religion.

Catholic records

Until 1778 Catholicism was illegal and simply being a priest made you definitely subject to a death sentence in the early years though not in practice later. So in the 1500s and 1600s priests did not sign their own death warrants by keeping registers. The only exception was in 1687, during the short

reign of James II when Bishop Leyburne travelled round the north of England administering confirmation for the first time in probably fifty years. The list of about 19,000 names, arranged geographically, was published in 1997 by the North West Catholic History Society.

A few baptism registers exist from the mid-1700s but numbers grew substantially after 1778. All Catholic registers (mostly of baptism, confirmation and marriage and including Scotland) are listed in *Catholic Missions and Registers 1700-1880* (M.Gandy, 6 volumes, 1993). They are all in Latin.



Westminister Cathedral entrance, London



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In the late 1830s most nonconformist registers were handed in to the London courts for safekeeping and formed one of the bases of the Public Record Office (now The National Archives). Catholics had the offer but mostly did not take it up and the only substantial group of registers handed in were from Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire. However, a large number of registers have now been handed in to Catholic diocesan archives. The Catholic system of dioceses with bishop was re-established in 1850 but this has no consequences for genealogy except that a few dioceses kept central registers of confirmation.

In the late 1500s, during the period of heaviest persecution, seminaries and schools specifically for English Catholics (both boys and girls) had been set up in France, the Low Countries, Spain and Italy. Many of their records have been published by CRS. They were largely intended for young people who would hopefully go on to be priests and nuns but lots of their students returned home to found families. In 1792 when England declared war on France during the French Revolution, all the surviving institutions came to England and put down roots as the great Catholic schools (Ampleforth, Downside, Stonyhurst, etc) and convents. Only a year earlier (1791) Catholics had been permitted to build chapels and there was a steady increase in numbers wherever there were enough Catholics. London was the exception as the embassies of the Catholic countries (Portuguese, Bavarian, Sardinian, Venetian, French and others) had offered open-house to Catholics since the 1500s. Thus in 1791 London had as many chapels as it needed and only a couple were founded (St Patrick, Soho, was the most important). Slowly the embassy connections died away.

With the enormous growth in the number of poor Catholics (mostly Irish) in the industrial towns Catholics tried to set up schools, orphanages, old people's homes and specialist refuges (eg for the deaf). All Catholic institutions are listed in the *Catholic Directory* though it is best to use old copies if possible as a great many institutions have closed over the last fifty years (mostly because they had been run by priests and nuns whose numbers have declined dramatically).

For ordinary Catholics, the basic genealogy is best traced through ordinary state records (births, marriages and deaths, census and cemeteries plus wills to a lesser extent). Although it is good to document where your ancestors were baptised the registers give less information than a birth certificate. After 1908 there is

a system of cross-referencing baptisms and marriages (and confirmations) so that a baptism certificate may tell you if and where the child married.

In describing a chapel we need to be careful. The poor Irish had no money but it was the custom not to dedicate a church until the building debt was paid off. So a chapel may exist for its first twenty years without a name ('baptised at the Catholic chapel'). Then it gets a name ('baptised at St Mary's, Wolverhampton'). Then, in some cases, the name is made more exotic as (particularly) French fashions came in. Thus St Mary's may be revamped as Notre Dame or Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The *Catholic Directory* (which is annual) makes the position clear for any given date.

The records of formal Catholic institutions can be extensive but certain voluntary organisations may also produce records. Once Catholic urban congregations got established many parishes got a branch of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (which gave practical help rather than money) or the Society of a Happy Death (Bona Mors) whose members attended funerals and had a monthly Mass followed by a get-together. The bigger parishes may have had a parish magazine.

Summary

Before 1837 Catholic ancestry is as traceable as any other type of non-Anglican ancestry, that is, the big problem tends to be with baptisms. English Catholics are usually grouped together in specific (known) centres and those who are not gentry tend to be yeomen or artisans like other nonconformists. In many areas there were no Catholics for 200 years from, say, 1600 to 1800+ and the re-introduction of Catholicism is a function of where the Irish went plus a few English middle-class converts. The formal records of state persecution and punishment are mostly in The National Archives or the House of Lords Record Office (this is only because the records of the House of Commons were largely destroyed by fire in 1834).

There are extensive records and macro-indexes of priests and nuns to 1914.



Author Michael Gandy is a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists. He has been tracing his ancestry for many years gaining specialist knowledge with London and nonconformist ancestors, especially Catholics, Huguenots and Quakers.



Family History Societies



Mid Norfolk
Family History
Society

Mid-Norfolk Family History Society

Mid-Norfolk FHS usually meets at Trinity Methodist Church in Dereham, on the third Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm. Please contact the secretary, or check on the website, to confirm that the meeting is on as planned and, if you are in the area, please come and join us. Everyone is very welcome. (We ask for a small contribution for refreshments.)

The society collects and transcribes records relating to the town of Dereham and the villages within a ten-mile radius and you can see a map of this area on our website at www.mnfhs.org. If you have family from this area we will be able to help you with your research.

Our August meeting is a **guided tour of Dereham** town centre to learn more about the history of the town and you are more than welcome to join us. Please email secretary@mnfhs.org for more details.

We have an additional meeting in August for our members who are not able to attend in person **Using Photographs in your Research** on Wednesday 23rd August 2023 at 7.30pm and if you would like to attend please email: secretary@mnfhs.org for the Zoom link. There will be another meeting in September and then again in November 2023 and we would love for you to join us.

We are also trying NEW **Zoom helpdesks** each month for our members so if you have a family history question you would like answered or some suggestions of where to go next, please join us. These are on Monday 25th September at 3.00pm and Friday 20th October at 10.00am so please register and email secretary@mnfhs.org for the Zoom link.

We are at **Church House, Dereham on Saturday 9th and Saturday 16th September for the Heritage Open Days** so please come and see us if you are out and about. We will be there answering questions about family history and would be delighted to meet you.

We have transcribed many memorial inscriptions in the area and those we have produced are available to download on Parish Chest so please go to www.parishchest.com and make a purchase.

Our annual membership is only £12.00, which is just £1.00 per month, (much less than a cup of coffee), so it is great value. Come and learn more about your ancestors and you will be made very welcome.

Go to www.mnfhs.org for more information and join via Parish Chest. www.parishchest.com

Family History Books plus some local FHS
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11th U3A Peak District Family History Conference

Saturday 16 September 2023
at the Palace Hotel in Buxton



Presents.....

Mary Evans – Chasing those Brickwalls!

Dave Annal – Death and Taxes

Jackie Depelle – Digging into the Parish Chest

Dr Penny Walters – Why the Welsh left Wales

Tickets: £30.

Book early to avoid disappointment - it's always very popular. Includes talks, refreshments and two-course finger buffet lunch.

Parking:

- ⇒ Blue Badge holders – may park or drop off at hotel
- ⇒ Others - use side streets or the pay & display car parks
- ⇒ For car parks in Buxton see: <https://en.parkopedia.co.uk/parking/buxton/>

Exhibitors:

Once again, about fifteen exhibitors will be there – old friends and new.

Delegates:

We plan to offer delegates a free goody bag and a free prize draw again.

To book:

Please complete the booking form on this link:

<https://forms.gle/mXnsgpBhQpmafuNU6>

[You may need to copy and paste the link into your browser.]

Please put your **surname and postcode** as a **reference** if paying by BACS, so we can match payment with your form.

Tickets will NOT be posted but will be issued on the day at our reception desk.



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Open Doors and Heritage Open Days 8-17 September 2023

Each September **Heritage Open Days** (England) and **Open Doors** (Scotland and Wales) feature places open to the public free of charge, plus some venues not normally open also throw open their doors to welcome the public in.

What is your local society doing for the open days? If you let us know by 7 August, we will fit as many dates and places into the next *Bulletin* as we can in order to promote your activities and, hopefully, encourage people to come along, learn more and maybe join their local FHS! Please email: admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



Mid-Norfolk FHS is at **Church House, Dereham** on Saturday 9th and Saturday 16th September for **Heritage Open Days** so please come along and say hello. Members will be answering questions about family history and will be delighted to meet you.



Launching now and at Heritage Open Days...

**New partnership between
Findmypast and National Trust
to reveal stories from inter-war Britain**



**National
Trust**

Find My Past and the National Trust have announced a new partnership to uncover stories from the 1921 census and bring them to life at ten places looked after by the National Trust.

The 1921 census, exclusive to Findmypast, offers a unique snapshot in time of life in inter-war England and Wales. Helen Antrobus, Assistant National Curator at the National Trust says, *We're delighted to be partnering with Findmypast to tell these rich and fascinating stories, which we hope will connect current and future generations with the people that helped shape these places over 100 years ago.*

Alongside the 1921 census, the team has drawn extensively on data from Findmypast's collection of historical records and connected family trees to trace the stories of these places.

Activities for the partnership will begin in **July** at one of Britain's best-preserved industrial heritage sites, **Quarry Bank** in Cheshire. A further nine places cared for by the Trust across the UK will launch their activities in **September** as part of **Heritage Open Days**. This will involve curatorial displays, exhibitions, games, tours and much more, to bring these fascinating century-old stories to life. Places include:

A la Ronde, Devon
Avebury, Wiltshire
Back to Backs, Birmingham
Blickling, Norfolk
Cotehele, Cornwall
Knightshayes, Devon
Sizergh, Cumbria
The Workhouse, Nottinghamshire
Wordsworth House, Cumbria (right)



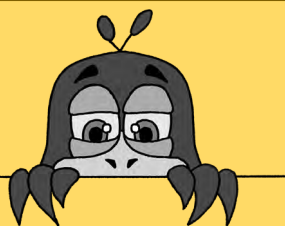
Image courtesy of Find My Past/NT

Records relating to the sites taking part in the pilot activity will be made available to browse for free on a dedicated hub on Find My Past's website, alongside details of the stories of the places and people themselves.



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation



READER SURVEY

- ♦ Are you thinking of joining a family history society?
- ♦ What would you hope to get from that society that would entice you to join?

Don't be shy! We will pass on ideas to our member societies but not your names.

suggestions@familyhistoryfederation.com

Do please drop an email with your answers!

THE REALLY USEFUL FAMILY HISTORY SHOW 2023—ONLINE



Reminder to order your ticket before
31st August at the special **Bulletin**
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Getting Out and About

In September, attendance is planned for the following shows and fairs. If attending, do find our stall and stop for a chat!

- 1—3 September **The Creative Craft Show** at
Farnborough International
- 2 September **The Family History Show—London** at
Kempton Park
- 16 September **U3A Peak District Family History
Conference**, Buxton
- 21—23 Sept. **The Creative Craft Show** at
Westpoint, Exeter

Copies of our latest publications will be available.

THEIR FINEST HOUR

Their Finest Hour is a
new digital history
project funded by the
Heritage Lottery Fund
and based at the
University of Oxford.

The project's aim is simple: to collect and digitally archive as many of the stories and objects that have been passed down to us from the WWII generation as possible. The stories and digitised objects will be made available in a free-to-use online archive in June 2024.

The primary method of collecting stories and objects is by training an army of volunteers from across the UK to organise 'Digital Collection Days' in their communities - in libraries, museums, places of worship, schools, universities, and so on. Members of the public can also directly upload stories and photos of objects to the online archive.

To learn more and join in, visit

<https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/>



Really Useful Back Page

Family History Research Aids from the Experts



Parish Chest, a service from the Family History Federation, has over sixty family history societies and some twenty-plus traders, at a one-stop online shop, offering a wide range of family history materials in some sixteen categories including:

- Parish register transcriptions and more from local FHS
- Memorial inscriptions information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHS
- Nonconformists: Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers and many more nonconformist lists
- Wills and Probate Indexes of wills and administrations
- Folders, printing facilities, giftware
- ..and more!

Societies and suppliers regularly add new lines, so visit to see what is there to help you add to your family tree.

www.parishchest.com

Societies and other vendors interested in joining

Parish Chest should initially contact:

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



FAMILY HISTORY BOOKS

www.familyhistorybooksonline.com

Family History Books (FHB) is an online bookshop and publisher; it is owned by the Family History Federation and the aim is to provide a service to the genealogical community. Family History Books offers a range of relevant titles relating to family history research.



The latest title is *How to Discover Your Family History Using Free Resources*—a subject we all need to know more about! This book is great for beginners too, providing step-by-step guidance to using many online free sources. A few days remain for you to use your SUMMER10 discount code from last month's *Bulletin*, to get ten

per cent discount on the seven latest titles from Family History Books! [*Special reader offer extended to 23.59hrs on 30 July.*] New books are in the pipeline, too!

In addition to its [online shop](http://online.shop) Family History Books can also be found at major live family history events around the country. Come and visit us and see all the latest titles available. The stall is always very popular!

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The REALLY USEFUL Family History Show

17-18 November 2023

Open for booking at: www.fhf-reallyuseful.com



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