

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 1

Family History at London Metropolitan Archives



Are you interested in discovering the secrets of your family history? If so, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) may hold the records to unlock the secrets of your past.

If your ancestor came from the London area, then the LMA is the place to visit. We hold over 70km of archives so there is a good chance that your ancestor may appear in our records in one form or another. Our holdings include some of the most important family history sources for London, including Parish Registers, Electoral Registers, Land Tax records, Parish Poor Relief and Boards of Guardians, which include workhouse records.

Our opening hours are Monday 9:30am-4:45pm and Tuesday to Thursday 9:30am-7:30pm. We also open on some Saturdays, usually one each month, ([check out our website for full details www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma)). So if you work during the week there are still opportunities for you to visit.

If you are still unable to visit us, or feel that you would like us to do the work on your behalf then you can use our dedicated enquiry team. For brief enquiries you can send us an e-mail (ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk) or call the enquiries team (020 7332 3820). If we can answer your question there and then we will do, otherwise we will try to get back to you with the answer as soon as possible. If your enquiry requires a good deal of time searching through our archives then you would need to use our paid Family History Research Service instead. Full details of this are available on our website.

Civil Registration

Records of births, marriages and deaths have been officially registered since 1837. Microfiche copies of the complete set of indexes to these events are available at the City of Westminster Archives Centre and the British Library as well as at five libraries in other parts of the country. You can also access this information via websites such as Ancestry and FreeBMD which are available free of charge at both LMA and Guildhall Library. Once you have obtained a reference you would then need to contact either the General Register Office or alternatively the registry office where the event was registered.

Postal applications for copies of certificates should be sent to the Postal Application Section, Office of National Statistics, General Register Office, PO Box 2, Southport, Merseyside PR8 2JD. Certificates can be ordered on-line at the [ONS Website at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates) or by telephone on 0845 603 7788.

LMA cannot issue certificates or provide any further details than those included on the indexes.

Census

LMA does not hold any original census returns, however you can view census records from 1841 to 1901 via Ancestry.co.uk which is available free of charge on the computers in the Information Area. The 1911 census is currently being added to Ancestry.

No detailed census returns survive centrally before 1841. A few census returns dating from 1801 to 1831 can be found amongst parish records, but they may not give the names of all the members of a household. We have census returns for some of these years for a few City of London parishes (available by prior appointment only) and for Christ Church, Southwark 1811, St Saviour, Southwark 1811, Holy Trinity, Clapham 1801-1821, St Andrew, Enfield 1801 and St Mary, Harrow 1831. Early census returns for City parishes are detailed in *London Rate Assessments and Inhabitants Lists in Guildhall Library and the Corporation of London Records Office* (Corporation of London, 1968). Other census returns may survive in London Borough archives.

Digitisation project

LMA is currently working in partnership with Ancestry to digitise the most important family history sources held by both the LMA and the former Guildhall Library Manuscripts section.

Currently available are over 11 million records of baptisms, marriages and burials from the original deposited parish registers and nonconformist registers for the City and Greater London areas held at LMA. Bishops' Transcripts from the 19th century, admissions to the Freedom of the City of London 1681-1925, original wills 1507-1858, Surrey marriage bonds and allegations, school admission registers 1840-1911 and many electoral registers from the late 19th century until 1965 are also now available and can be searched by name. Many registers from workhouses and children's homes run by the London Board of Guardians can be browsed page by page on Ancestry, but not searched by name.

If you are looking for Baptisms between 1538-1906, Marriages between 1538-1920 and Burials after 1538 - 1980, these are all now indexed by name and are searchable via Ancestry, which is available free of charge at both LMA and Guildhall Library. It is important to note that some churches within the areas of the City and Greater London have not deposited their records with us and so these will not be available, whilst a few churches, notably Saint Giles in the Fields and All Hallows Barking by the Tower, are only available to search via microfilm. Also due to reasons such as bombing during World War 2 and other events outside our control, some parishes do not have a complete set of surviving registers.

London Generations

London Generations is the name of the collection of our main family history sources. If the records that you are interested in have not yet been digitised then this is a good starting point.

The major family history sources include 8 different types of records: Parish records, Bishops' Transcripts, Non-Conformist registers, Electoral Registers, School Admission and Discharge registers, Parish Poor records, Boards of Guardians and the Land Tax. We have arranged the system alphabetically by modern London borough. If you are not sure what borough an area would come under then don't worry, there is an index to show you exactly which borough binder you need to consult. Each series of records is also listed on different coloured paper so you can quickly see if you are looking at the right thing.

Let's look at an example of how the system works.

- If you don't know the modern borough then consult the areas guide.
- Choose the appropriate borough binder, check the outside of the binder to make sure it includes the records you are interested in e.g. Parishes
- Look in the binder to find your reference number, binders are usually arranged alphabetically.
- If your reference number starts with an X, it means it is a microfilm. Most of these have to be ordered by completing a paper application form. There are collections every 20 minutes and you can order 5 microfilms per collection.
- When it is ready, collect your film from the white trolley next to the counter in the Information Area. Choose your microfilm viewer; if you haven't used microfilm before then ask a member of staff who will be pleased to give you a demonstration.
- When you have finished with the film, return to the boxes on the counter.
- Not all of our family history records have been microfilmed. If the reference does not begin with an X, it means you will be consulting an original document. You will need to order this by completing an order slip or ordering online using your History Card. There are collections every 20 minutes and you can order 5 documents per collection. It will usually take about 15 or 20 minutes before the documents are ready to be viewed in the Archive Study Area. Look at the digital display for collection information.

Sources previously held at Guildhall Library Manuscripts section

London Generations does not include any of the sources that were previously held by Guildhall Library manuscripts section. These are all now accessible from LMA, however it may be best to ask a member of staff whilst the collections are amalgamated. Advance notice may be required for access to some ex-Guildhall Manuscripts collections, but many major genealogical sources are freely available on microfilm at LMA.

Useful sources include, parish records from the City of London, records of many of the London Livery companies, records of the Sun Fire Office, Lloyd's captains' registers and records of marriage licences and wills from the Diocese of London, registers of pilots licensed by Trinity House and registers from some Anglican churches overseas.

Other records you may be interested in

Whilst London Generations comprises some of our most popular family history archives it is just the starting point. Our vast holdings will include many other records that may be of interest to the family historian. These include:

- **Boards of Guardians:** whilst early poor relief was dealt with by the parish the majority of late 19th and early 20th century records including workhouses, asylums and residential schools will be found in this series.
- **Wills:** from the church courts of the Diocese of London and Archdeaconry of Surrey.
- **Hospital Records:** including Guy's and St. Thomas's as well as the former county lunatic asylums of Hanwell, Colney Hatch and Banstead.
- **Photographs and Prints:** arranged topographically and by subject.
- **Maps and Plans:** including parish maps and bomb damage maps.

Making the most of your visit

If you are going to visit LMA you are going to want to make the most of your time.

Here are 10 handy hints to make sure your visit is a success:

- 1) Do your homework before you come. Make the most of the resources you have open to you. Talk to your older living relatives to find out what they know. If you have access to the internet there are a multitude of sites out there to help. Bring any information with you that you already have that might help, e.g. census record or certificates.

- 2) Come prepared. Have an idea of exactly what it is you want to achieve. If you have got back to a certain point, what is the next logical step to follow? It's very easy to get sidetracked by something else.
- 3) Before you arrive, find out our opening hours, late nights and last ordering times, so you can plan your day effectively. All this information is available on our website. Don't arrive an hour before closing and expect to get everything done.
- 4) Are you in the right place? Do we have the records you need?

Although we have many hundreds of parish records we do not cover every Anglican parish in London. Some archives are still held at the churches, others are deposited elsewhere, e.g. parishes in the City of Westminster are held at the City of Westminster Archives. It is always best to check first that we hold the records you want. A simple 'phone call or e-mail to the enquiry team should do the job.

- 5) Make full use of our range of free information leaflets. We have produced leaflets on some of the more popular subjects of research.

These are available in print from the Information Area or on our [website at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma)

- 6) If you are a complete beginner, why not sign up for one of our regular introductory talks. We often run Use LMA sessions for beginners to show them how to use the archives and particularly London Generations. You can book a place on our next session either by 'phone or at reception.
- 7) Bring a pencil or two. If you need to order documents you can only do this in pencil. You will also need to use pencil when taking notes from original documents.
- 8) We do not operate a booking facility for microfilm readers or computers, so it's first come first served. It is unlikely that all machines will be in use, but this has happened on occasions, particularly Saturdays which can often be busy.

Remember arrive early to avoid disappointment.

- 9) Ask for help and advice, that's what we are here for. If you are new to the archives or simply can't remember where something is don't be afraid to ask a member of staff who will happily put you on the right track. Similarly, if you have hit a brick wall in your research we may be able to give you a new idea of how to tackle your problem.
- 10) Bring a camera. If you are viewing an original document and you want to get a copy, it's the easiest way to do so. All you need to do is disable the flash and then pay a fee for a day's licence. If you don't have a camera you can still make use of our in house reprographics service. Alternatively, if the document is on microfilm we have reader printers that will allow you to take a copy

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