PRIAULX LIBRARY

Bringing local history to life

A guide to

Civil and Parish Registers

and Census records

at the Priaulx Library

Civil Registration

A Short History

Civil Registration (i.e. the statutory declaration of births and deaths to local authorities) began in England in on July 1st 1837. Guernsey was quick to follow suit and adopted a law very similar to the English debated by the States in 1840, the *Ordonnance* coming into effect later the same year. The speed with which Guernsey adopted Civil Registration was partly due to a petition delivered to the States by the Ministers and clergy of all the different chapels of the island ('not confined to the Church of England').

The regulations for registration were fairly straightforward and followed the English pattern: The Greffier was to become the Registrar, Deputy Registrars were to be appointed to each of the country parishes (usually the parish schoolmaster) and the central register updated by parishes entries once a month, with both a register and (later) an index being maintained separately for births, marriages and deaths.

Registration of birth had to take place within 30 days of the child's birth or a fine of 20 shillings was imposed (quite expensive!). Despite this, birth registration did not really 'catch on' until the 1860s. Many early births (1840-1850) are missing from the register.

Death registration had to take place within 8 days of death, with again a fee not exceeding 20 shillings to be imposed for non-compliance. Again, there are many deaths 'missing' from the 1840s and 50s, mainly in English or visiting families, or non-conformist families.

The marriage regulations were (and remain) more complicated, but the civil system allowed for legal marriages outside of the Church of England, of great importance to the large non-conformist population of the Bailiwick. However, the system was not comprehensive and the Marriage Register held only non-conformist and civil records until 1913. Until that time, all Roman Catholic and Anglican marriage records were maintained by the church. After 1913, the system was standardized to include all denominations and a centralized index began.

Civil Registration began in Jersey in 1842, but differs from the Guernsey system considerably in that no new registers were started: parish registers became civil registers and the records maintained by the parish as they always had been. This method remains in place to this day. Compulsory registration did not begin in Alderney or Sark until 1924.

Birth Registration

Began: 1840
Index: The Priaulx Library has the index of births from 1840-2004, but the registers only up to 1998.

The Civil Birth Register is the simplest of the three to use, being an alphabetical index by surname. Bear the following in mind:

- Some common surnames (e.g. Le Page, Sebire etc). may run to several pages. It is not always easy to single out a specific individual, so write down all possibilities before moving on.
- Spellings of family names can change over the years, this does not mean that an unfamiliar spelling is wrong. The index tends to collate similar spellings together to avoid confusion.

Once an individual has been found on the index, ALL relevant information should be written down, as the following example shows:

LAINÉ						
CHRISTIAN NAME	**YEAR**	**MONTH**	**DAY**	**PARISH**	**FOL.**	**NO.**
Marie L.	1841	Apr	3	C	260	21

Thus, Marie L. Lainé, born April 3rd, 1841 in the parish of the Vale ('C'), page 260 of the register, no. 21 on the page.

The Parish of birth is designated by a code (as demonstrated above). All of the parishes are shown below:

A	St. Peter Port	F	St. Pierre du Bois
B	St. Sampson's	G	Torteval
C	Vale	H	Forest
D	Castel	I	St. Martin's
E	St. Saviour's	J	St. Andrew's

Finding the register entry

Once the date, parish and number are known, finding the register of birth should be an easy matter. Bear the following points in mind:
- Entries for each parish are kept SEPERATELY and in SEQUENCE by code letter. Thus, St. Peter Port first, then St. Sampson's etc.
- Although parishes are separate on the central register, the pages are numbered CONTINUOUSLY
- Finding the entry does not guarantee a good result – handwriting varies enormously!

Birth registration should contain the following information:
- Date of Birth
- Christian Names
- Sex
- Names of Father and Mother (with Maiden name)
- Place of birth
- Rank/Profession of Father
- Registration date.

Marriage Registration Index

The records at the Priaulx Library cover Civil Marriages from 1841-1998, both indexes and registers.

There are two microfilms for the INDEX OF MARRIAGES for 1841-1966 and a second from 1954-1998 which are entirely hand-written. The following points should be noted when using them:

- Like the death indexes, the marriages are arranged in date segments and letter by letter within the segments (see below)
- All though broadly alphabetical, individual names within letter headings MAY NOT be alphabetically arranged.
- The book number, entry number and date of marriage should all be written down in order to find the registry entry, not just the bride/groom's name.

There is also a paper index of marriages drawn up by the Family History Society that covers the years 1841-1913. This is much easier to use than the film and should be consulted first if the marriage falls between these dates.

Marriage Register

The register should be fairly simple to decipher once the relevant facts are known. It is purely chronological and provides the following facts:

- Place of marriage (i.e. when not Register Office)
- Name and Surname of bride and groom
- Age and Condition (e.g. 'Spinster')
- Rank/Profession
- Residence at time of marriage
- Father's name and surname
- Rank/Profession of father

Death Registration Index

The death index is by far the most 'tricky' to use! One becomes curious as to why an alphabetical index was not compiled as with the birth index. However, life has been made simpler in recent years with the generation of a paper index for the early years of registration. This index is in several volumes and runs from 1840-1925. They are arranged in strict alphabetical order by name with date of death, Folio number and Entry number.

After 1925, the microfilmed original indexes must be relied upon. These are arranged Parish by Parish on two microfilms:

Film 1: Castel, Vale, St. Sampson's, St. Peter Port (in order)
Film 2: St. Andrew's, St. Martin's, Forest, Torteval, St. Pierre du Bois, St. Saviour's

Each parish consists of a number of date 'segments' and within each segment, names are arranged alphabetically by first letter (although not alphabetical under same letter heading).

Please bear the following points in mind:

- The death is registered in the parish in which it occurs. THIS IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS. Factors effecting place of death include Hospital stays, nursing homes, visiting family and friends, accidents etc.
- The 'Title' page explaining the dates and parish of each segment occur *after* the segment in question
- Some sections of the Index have come 'adrift' and while reading in the Index will provide a page reference for a missing segment, be careful when looking for it as some of the page numbers do not run in order either!

Priaulx Library indexes

The Priaulx Library has the following death indexes on microfilm: 1840-1964 in the parish-by-parish sequence and 1964-2004 in alphabetical sequence by surname.

Alderney

Finally, the Priaulx Library also holds transcripts of some of the Alderney Civil Records. As stated above, registration did not become compulsory until 1924, so some records may be missing. The records held are:

Births: 1850-1885 and 1962-1997
Deaths: 1925-1968

PARISH REGISTERS

The Priaulx Library has ALL parish registers for baptisms, marriages and burials on microfilm. There are a limited number of indexes and transcripts also, many of which have been compiled by the Family History Section of the Société Guernesiaise. Below is a list of all the indexes, plus a list of all transcripts and copies (generally photocopies) of the registers.

Indexes to parish registers at the Priaulx Library

PARISH/CHURCH	BAPTISMS	MARRIAGES	BURIALS
Brock Road Methodist		1880-1955	
Brothers' Cemetery			1847-1858
Candie Cemetery			1832-1924
Castel Church	1674-1920	1674-1920	1674-1921
Deslisle Methodist		1919-1927	
Ebenezer, New St.	1841-1863	1898-1924	
Forest Church	1700-1920	1700-1920	1700-1920
Galaad Methodist		1926-1951	
Holy Trinity	1858-1930	1858-1963	
Morley Chapel	1898-1939	1864-1937	
Notre-Dame	1836-1848		
Rohais Methodist		1919-1928	
St. Andrew's	1661-1920	1574-1920	1658-1920
St. Andrew's Methodist		1919-1977	
St. John's		1858-1925	
St. Martin's	1660-1920	1660-1920	1660-1920
St. Martin's Methodist		1919-1927	
St. Matthew's	1854-1920	1855-1920	
St. Paul's Methodist	1841-1935	1841-1935	
St. Pierre du Bois	1641-1920	1660-1920	1660-1920
St. Sampson's	1713-1920	1713-1920	1713-1920
St. Saviour's	1670-1920	1669-1920	1664-1920
St. Saviour's Independent	1841-1927		
St. Stephen's		1885-1920	
Torteval Church	1684-1920	1684-1930	1739-1977
Town Church	1563-1628; 1682-1930	1707-1947	1689-1920
Town Hospital	Lists of inmates:	1743-1822	
Truchot Chapel	1874-1933		
Vale Church	1671-1920	1674-1920	1671-1920
Vale Methodist	1907-1989		
Victoria Road Methodist		1919-1939	

Tips on using Church Registers

The majority of entries in Church Registers, up until the 20th century, will be in French (or Latin for the Catholic Churches). For those with few French language skills, this can be a little daunting, but once a few key phrases have been learned, all the relevant information in a record can be gleaned without direct translation. Here are a few of them:

Phrases common to all types of records

Family relationships
- **Son of…/daughter of…/wife of…/widow of…**
  French: *"Fils de…"/"Fille de…"/"Femme de…"/"Veuve de…"*

- **His wife**
  French: *"Sa femme"*

- **Wife of the late…**
  French: *"Femme du feu…"*

Dates
- **Months of the year in French are:**

January – *janvier*	May - *mai*	September – s*eptembre*
February – *février*	June – *juin*	October – o*ctobre*
March – *mars*	July – *juillet*	November – *novembre*
April - *avril*	August - *août*	December - *décembre*

(NB – months in French do not usually have a capital letter)

- **Common abbreviations:**
  9bre instead of *novembre*
  Xbre instead of *décembre*
  1^{ier} instead of *prémier*
  Occasionally, "*le prémier mois de l'an*" instead of *janvier*

- **Other date phrases:**
  "*…du dit mois*" – "…of the said month"
  "*…le premier jour de…*" – "…the first day of…"
  "*…18e…*" – short for '*dix-huitième*' – 'eighteenth'

Baptisms

- **He/she was born:**
  French: "*Il est né*" OR *"Il fut né"*
                        "*Elle est née*" OR *"Elle fut née"*

- **He/she was baptised:**

French: "*Il est batisé*" OR "*Il fut ba(p)tisé*"
               "*Elle est batisée*" OR "*Elle fut ba(p)tisée*"

- **He/she was presented for baptism**
  French: "*Il est/fut presenté pour bâ(p)teme*"
         "*Elle est/fut presentée pour bâ(p)teme*"

- **For Godfather…/For Godmother…**
  French: "*Pour Parrain…*"/"*Pour Marrain…*"
         (Sometimes *Parian/Marain*)

- **Twins**
  French: "*Fils jumeaux*" OR "*Filles jumeaux*"

- **Mid-wife**
  French: "*Sage-Femme*"

- **Private Baptism**
  French: "*Baptême particulier*"

An example from Forest Parish Register:

Marie fille de Richard Ingrouille, & de Marie Guilbert sa femme, fut née le 18e 9bre 1755, & batisée le 19e du dit mois, est pour Parrain Jean Lucas, & pour Marrains, Marie Heaume & Elizabeth Ingrouille

Marriages

- **They were married**
  French: "*Ils ont mariés*"
         "*Ils ont mariés ensembles*"
         "*Ils furent mariés*"

- **Licence**
  French: "*la licence de M. Doyen*" (i.e. The Dean)
         "*avec licence après la permission de M. Le Doyen*"

NB: This is not necessarily a 'Special' Licence (i.e. licence to marry without publication of Banns) but sometimes the form the marriage entry takes depending on the preference of the Rector.

- **Calling of the banns**
  French: "*…après la publication de leurs annonces trois fois consecutivement…*"

- **Abjuration of Catholic Faith**
  French: "*…après son abjuration des erreurs de l'église Romaine a été marié…*" (etc.)

An example from St. Pierre du Bois Parish Registers

Jean Le Gallé, fils de Jean de St. Pierre du Bois et Elisabeth Jehan, fille de Nicolas, de la paroisse de St. Sauveur ont été mariés ensemble le 8 d'août 1796 suivant de la licence de M. Durand, Doyen.

Note on spellings of surnames/parish names/place names etc.

Do not depend on consistent spelling of proper nouns. The language and spelling in a register depends entirely on the relative literacy and education of both the vicar and the individuals of the congregation involved. In the example above, *Le Gallé* could as easily be spelled the more usual way of *Le Gallez*, or simply *Gallez*. *Jehan* is often spelled *Gehan*. Other surnames, such as Allez and Allès, of which two versions exist today could be spelled interchangeably even 100 years ago. Allès may also appear as *A˜lès* or even *alès* – the capital letter, as is usual with French, being applied less often than in English. Another example of the same name with variable spelling, even within the same register entry is *Le Feuvre, Le Feyvre* and *Le Febvre*. Although alternative spellings can often be guessed at, or at least worked out, there are occasions where one surname has been mistaken for another, a classic example being *Rougier* and *Rouget*.

Burials

- **Aged**
  French: *"âgé de…"* (for a man)
  　　　　　　 "âgée de…"(for a woman)

- **Year/Month/Week/Day**
  French: *"An (or Année)/mois/semaine/jour*

- **Died**
  French: *"Il est/fut décedé"*
  　　　　　　 "Elle est/fut décedée"
  　　　　　　 OR *"est morte"* - dead

- **Buried**
  French: *"Il est/fut enterré"*
  　　　　　　 "Elle est/fut enterrée"

- **In the cemetery**
  French: *"…au cimitière"*

- **Drowned at sea/shipwrecked**
  French: *"noyé en mer*
  　　　　　　 "naufragé"

Two examples from registers:

Câtel Church

Henriette guille, fille de Jean et veuve du feu Joseph Nicolle décédée 29 juillet à Bordeaux, Valle, enterée Août 2, 1892, agée de 49 ans et 6 mois

Forest Church

Marguerite Le Maître, feme de Thomas fillaître de St. Brelade en l'Isle de jersey ayant esté naufrager dans un navirs á Pety bot le 24^{ieme} 7bre 1728 & son corp ayant esté trouvé a esté enterez au cimitière de la forest le 8e 8bre 1728

NB

Notice spellings and lack of capitalisation, e.g. *Pety bot*. The word *esté* is the old spelling of *été,* the 's' being silent. The '*ê*' of the latter spelling indicates a missing letter (i.e. 's'). Other examples of this include *Le Maistre/Le Maître*, *Le Fillaistre/Le Fillaître* and *Castel/Câtel*.

Census Records

A short history of the census

Census taking has been with us almost as long as records exist. The Egyptians used census data to build the pyramids and a Roman census ordered by Caesar Augustus brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. The reasons for these 'headcounts' were almost certainly for military or taxation purposes and it is unlikely that the information gleaned would have been considered of long-term benefit.

Although it could be argued that the Domesday Book of 1086 was one of the first European censuses, it is in the enumeration of *individuals* that the foundation of the 'modern' census lies. In that respect, both the UK and Channel Islands came fairly late to census taking. There had been attempts from around the globe at various points in history to 'count' the population, or at least establish their political, religious or economic background. The first known census was in Quebec as early as 1666 – possible done as a means of establishing the makeup of the largely immigrant population. Iceland had a census in 1703, Sweden in 1749 and Germany soon afterwards. The first United States census was taken in 1790.

The first attempts to introduce a census bill into the House of Commons occurred as early as 1753. This was rejected on the grounds that:

> "…an epidemical distemper should follow the numbering…"

This was interpreted as meaning a disaster akin to the Plagues of Israel. The second Census Bill of 1800, however, was more successful, the first full census of the United Kingdom taking place on March 10th 1801.

This census, and the ones following (1811, 1821 and 1831) have little of interest for genealogists being simply headcounts and categories of employment. These early censuses were undertaken by Overseers of the Poor and were not generally very accurate. It was not until 1841 that

enumerators were employed and a whole raft of rules and regulations put in place to ensure accuracy and additional personal detail demanded. Full records survive from this date, and every 10 years after.

In Guernsey, the first full and enumerated census also took place on the same day in 1841, the States of Guernsey deciding to follow suit. It was not until 1971 that the Bailiwick finally broke away from the UK manner of doing things and instituted a specific Guernsey census which now takes place every **5** years. The reasons for this shorter timescale lie in the nature of a smaller area and population within a very complex social and economic infrastructure.

There had been earlier attempts at census taking, albeit on a parish level. For example, there is a land survey of the Clos du Valle taken between 1725 and 1727 that whilst only detailing landowners, at least provides a useful and early record of households and house names. There was also a partial census of the island in 1827 and some records exist for St. Pierre du Bois and St. Peter Port. This census, like the survey of the Clos du Valle, only lists head of household names and no others, and with an emphasis on landowners.

According to the Guernsey Census website (www.gov.gg/census), the first census took place in 1821, although no apparent records for this exist. There was certainly a census in 1831, but again, no records exist. The only 'survivor' of this year was the statistical breakdown of population published in the Billet d'Etats on October 6th 1831.

Full records exist for the censuses taken from 1841 onwards. Only those censuses taken on or before 1911 are available as there is a 100-year closure rule in place. The Priaulx Library holds microfilm copies of the 1841-1901 censuses and the Family History Section of the Société Guernesiaise has helpfully produced indexes for all of them. Here is a brief guide to the use of the indexes:

Census Indexes

ALL indexes are primarily in alphabetical order by SURNAME, although some have additions and not all are organised in the same way:

1841; 1851; 1861; 1871; 1891; 1901
These are all arranged in the following format:
>   Surname/first name/age/birthplace/parish/piece no./folio no.

>   [The 'piece' number refers to the area the census was taken and can be   found   on the right hand vertical edge of the census page. The 'folio'   number is a   page number which can be found at the top right hand   corner of each double spread]

Additional information:
- Index of all residents born in Jersey
- Index of all residents born in France
- Alphabetical list of addresses
- Numerical list of addresses by Piece No.

1881
Very similar in format to 1841 etc., but with extra codes in place. Instead of a three-letter abbreviation for place name and parish, this index uses an alphanumeric code system which is available to view in the front page of the folder.

Online Census records

It should be noted that the 1911 census is ONLY available to view online. It can be accessed from www.findmypast.co.uk and from www.ancestry.co.uk . Both of these sites allow you to search the index for free, but the census returns cannot be viewed without a subscription. In addition to the 1911 census, all Guernsey (and Jersey) census from 1841-1901 can also be searched from these sites, however, the indexing is not always perfect, particularly with local surnames.

Tips for using Census Records

- It is perfectly possible that your ancestor *lied about their age*. This may have been done for reasons of vanity, but some people, especially before the advent of civil registration, may have only had a very vague idea of their true age.
- In the 1841 census, the ages of adults was usually rounded up or down to the nearest multiple of 5. E.g. somebody of 42 years may be listed as being either 40 or 45. Because the enumerators were often inconsistent about which way they rounded the ages, some of the number may be wildly inaccurate. Ages can be as much as 8-10 years out.
- If you don't find your ancestor in the index, try under a different spelling. Transcription errors were *very* common, especially if enumerators were not local
- For a quick and easy way of checking if two individuals in an index are from the same household, check their piece and folio numbers and see if they match!
- It may be obvious, but remember that *all* married women in the census will be listed under their married name as this is a record of *households,* not births. On the same note, be aware that in the 'Relationship' column, the relationship is always to the Head of Household.
- The Road or House name may have changed since the census was taken, but this is a relatively solvable problem in Guernsey
- Watch out for oblique lines next to names. '**/**' is used to separate different families *under one roof* and '**//**' is used to separate different *households*
- The enumerators were *human* and often made mistakes!

Tracing the history of a house

The census is one means of finding out about the house you live in. However, in the early censuses, particularly 1841 and 1851, not every house is given a name, in fact, it is common to have consecutive pages of households apparently sharing the same address! Some of the census indexes will give an indication of the piece and folio number designated to specific areas and streets and this is often helpful in finding individuals.