

Genealogy

April 2019 Report - The Civil Registration Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes of England and Wales

We started by looking at an unlabelled photograph found loose in an album. By the end of the discussion we had decided that it was probably a merchant seaman officer cadet who had probably had his photograph taken in a studio in a French port around 1920. We still don't know who it was – oh, well.

Then, for a change we watched a video presentation of a lecture by Audrey Collins at last year's RootsTech conference. Audrey works at the National Archives and has specialised on the General Records Office. A colleague had apparently said of her "What Audrey doesn't know about the BMD indexes isn't worth knowing – and the same applies to a lot that she does know." Think about it!

She explained the process by which births, marriages and deaths have been recorded since 1837 and how the records ended up in the General Record Office and how the indexes were then produced. The civil registration records are unusual in that you are legally forbidden from viewing the original records and instead must identify the record in the index and then request a copy from the GRO. Errors in the index can stymie the family history researcher and Audrey explained how they could arise. However, she also pointed out that the Local Registrar's records – and church registers for marriages - provide an alternative source where the GRO record is suspect or missing. A good lecture.

The May meeting will be a discussion meeting to agree the programme for the next twelve months and also to discuss any problems that members of the group care to raise, why they are interested in family history and how they treat 'lost sheep' amongst their ancestors – extra effort or use that effort elsewhere? The meeting will be, as usual, on the first Thursday of the month, that is May 2nd, at 2:00 pm at Enterprise House, but downstairs rather than in the Dales Room.

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