

Genealogy - October Report

The October meeting welcomed nineteen members for a presentation on 'Using Parish Registers for Family History'.

In 1538 Thomas Cromwell ordered all parishes to keep written records of baptisms, marriages and burials. It took another century for these records to become anything like comprehensive and many parish registers have succumbed to flood, fire, mice and other accidents of time but they are the main basis for tracing your family history before the advent of civil registration in 1837 and the census in 1841.

If the researcher is fortunate a marriage will be followed by a series of baptisms in a single parish nearby but a family may move from village to village in search of work and intuition may be required to follow the trail and to distinguish between different families with the same surname.

Online search tools such as those provided by FamilySearch, Ancestry or FindMyPast aid the researcher by suggesting records that may be relevant. Common sense enables many suggestions to be rejected leaving ideally just one that is in the right place at around the right date. The more prosperous the family the more clues that it leaves behind – wills can provide invaluable confirmation of family relationships. A family farm may be listed as the abode in the parish registers. Favoured Christian names often descend in the family.

Parish registers are not enough on their own to trace your family back to Elizabethan times but you will never succeed without them.

On Thursday November 3rd Pam Taylor will give a talk titled 'Thicker than Water', a discussion of using DNA testing for Family History Research. The meeting will start at 2pm in the Dales Room at Enterprise House.

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