OVERVIEW

This presentation will examine sources for identifying your ancestors occupation, trade directories, records of apprenticeship, guilds and freedom records. Then look specifically at sources for information about the occupation or trade itself and will conclude with some resources to help put the ancestor into context.

Sources to Identify Ancestor's Occupations

Look for records that will identify your ancestors occupation remembering that it may change over time, or it may be stated higher than it really is to impress. Search records such as:

- Civil Registration
- Census
- Church Records
- Marriage Licences and Bonds
- Probate Records
- Settlement Examinations
- Bastardy Papers
- Apprenticeship certificates
- Freedom records
- Directories

If you identify the occupation and don’t know what it is try the following: //rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html or www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html


Bibliographic Guides

Localized geographic guides can be used to assist in finding other resources

4. Raymond, Stuart A. Trades and Professions: The Family Historians Guide. Bury, Lancashire:

Family History Partnership. 2011..

Stuart Raymond Bibliographic Guides, were published by the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS), for the following counties: Buckinghamshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Cumberland/Westmorland, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire/Bristol, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, London/Middlesex, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire, Yorkshire. All have a section addressing occupational records within the relevant county.

Contact the relevant County Record Office to see if a bibliographic guide has been produced


Trade Directories

One major online site is the Digital Library of Historical Directories, provided by the University of Leicester at www.historicaldirectories.org. National coverage is provided for the 1850s, 1890s, and 1910-1920, with one digitized directory from each period selected for each county and main county town.

The 1850s were the decade when directories began to be published more widely and with information at the parish level. Examples of some very early directories, from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are included, with a more detailed approach to Leicestershire, London and Wales.

Numerous trade directories are also available at Ancestry.com. Note that Ancestry provides two different datasets for UK directories. One is U.K. and U.S. Directories, 1680-1830 which are predominately UK directories and primarily before 1800. This dataset is provided by Avero Publication from their three CD Biography Database. The
second dataset is *U.K., City and County Directories, 1600s-1900s*, which actually has fewer directories, may only provide one directory for a particular county. This dataset is provided by ArchiveCD Books.

Check the county pages on GENUKI to see what may be available online for your county.

Remember also that many directories were published for different professions: clergy, medical, dentists, lawyers, civil servants, military, etc. Some are online.

12. Shaw, Gareth and Allison Tipper, *British Directories: a Bibliography and Guide to Directories Published in England and Wales (1850-1950) and Scotland (1773-1950)*

**Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeships have been required to enter a trade since the 1563 Statute of Apprentices. Subsequent Acts of Parliament modified this statute but it remained on the books until 1814. The typical apprentice would be 14 years old, plus or minus 2 years, and will serve a 7 year apprenticeship. At the end of which he would have been free to apply his trade within the city.

From 1710 to 1811 the Commissioners of Stamps kept registers of the money they received from the duty on indentures. These now form the Apprenticeship Books (IR 1) at The National Archives. The duty had to be paid within one year after the expiry of the indenture. You may need to search for a number of years even when the date of indenture is known.

The Apprenticeship Books record the names, addresses and trades of the masters, the names of the apprentices and dates of their indentures. Until 1752 the names of apprentices’ parents are given, but rarely after that year.

The easiest way to access these records is at [www.origins.net](http://www.origins.net) or [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com). You can search: 350,000 Apprentices of Great Britain records for 1710-1774 created as a result of this tax.

Not all apprenticeships are recorded in these books. In many parts of the country the acts were not enforced, e.g. Yorkshire woollen industry, and in some industries they are almost non-existent, e.g. cotton industry.

Some indentures were exempt from stamp duty. These included those who apprenticed their own sons, or those taken on at the expense of the parish or a public charity. The former may be found in the freeman records and the latter in the parish chest records.

Some apprentice records are to be found in the records of the: War Office, Admiralty, Registrar General Of Shipping And Seamen, Board Of Trade, and Poor Law Union Papers. For further information on apprenticeship records see The National Archives Research Guides at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).


**Guilds and Livery Companies**

For excellent information about and an index to the apprenticeships within the London Livery Companies see introductory material and index at English Origins [www.origins.net](http://www.origins.net). These indexes contain information on 165,000 apprentices from 61 London companies.
Until the mid-seventeenth century an apprentice in a guild will likely have followed that particular trade. After that it became increasingly common for the apprentice not to follow the trade of the guild.


**Freeman**

There is a distinction between freedom of a city or borough, and the freedom of a livery or guild. It is common for an individual to have both but it was not guaranteed. The person may be found in one or both sets of records depending upon what has survived.

There are three ways to become a freeman:
- By patrimony (born to a freeman after that father’s own admission)
- By servitude (serving an apprenticeship to a freeman)
- By redemption (purchasing his admission)
Some were granted honorary freedom (e.g. Nelson and Churchill)

Those individuals who were freeman of a city or borough had rights governed by the charter, but usually included a right to vote in elections for the city or borough council, to elect local representatives to Parliament, and the exclusive right to carry on a trade or craft within the city or borough, becoming harder to enforce and by the end of the eighteenth century was largely ignored. Exclusive rights were abolished by the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.

The Freeman rolls usually record names, dates of admission, and maybe his trade and parentage. Rolls for Exeter, York, King’s Lynn and Norwich have been published. The original records or indexes for other cities may be available through the Family History Library (e.g. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne).

**Professions and Trades**

For Links to United Kingdom and Ireland Occupations see [www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Occupations.html). Also check out the Occupation listings on Cyndis List at [www.cyndislist.com/topical.htm#Occupations](http://www.cyndislist.com/topical.htm#Occupations). Check out the web-site for Shire Books at [www.shirebooks.co.uk](http://www.shirebooks.co.uk). This company publishes small inexpensive guides to a large variety of occupations, industries and history. There is a very large collection dealing with the Victorian era. These are great introductions with, lots of good illustrations and photographs, plus bibliographies to get you into further titles. Download the 45 years historical bibliography for complete listing of past publications at [www.shirebooks.co.uk/pdf/45years.pdf](http://www.shirebooks.co.uk/pdf/45years.pdf).

There is a guide to trade unions for different occupations online as a pdf available through the Modern Records Centre at [www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/occupationalguide.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/occupationalguide.pdf). The Modern Records Centre also provides a listing of occupations covered by trade union archives for which genealogical guides are available at [www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/family_history/)

**Pen & Sword: Guides for Family Historians**

There are a number of occupation related guides in this excellent growing series of books that will help put your ancestors occupations in context and to research the lives of the individuals. All published by Pen & Sword of Barnsley, South Yorkshire. The US Distributor of these books is Casemate at [www.casemateathena.com](http://www.casemateathena.com).


There are numerous sources for the study of occupations. Once you find a book or article dealing with a profession or occupation carefully read the bibliographies, seek bibliographic guides, etc.


# Putting Your Ancestor into Context

Put your ancestor into their correct social context. Read about their life, the time period, and examine different aspects of their lives. Look at modern studies and contemporary documents. If unfamiliar with this approach start with Sturdevant’s book.


