

Births and Mother's Maiden Names Published.

We have just published another 57,000 birth records, and that brings Births complete up to 1959, and some 64% complete in total. All of these have the Mother's Maiden Name data complete, and Father's forenames where only (boy) or (girl) is shown in the register. On this latter point, in the last Newsletter, I reported that we had some 4,000 records to improve that had only (boy) or (girl) as a forename. We were going to add the father's forename as well, so the record would say something like (boy) Son of Albert as the forename. This work is progressing well, and we are now down to 1,400 records that need this extra detail. Of those that are done, not all are yet published. The recent update 14 included only the new and extra 57,000 records.

The reason progress has been slow here is that we are doing this task in parallel with a much larger task of backfilling a new field - Mother's Maiden Name. This data has been included in the National GRO index from 1911, so we felt we ought to include it as well. We are filling in this data for the records that were already published, and we have done about 142,000 of them. The remaining 110,000 birth records are still to do. By the next update, ALL birth records have Mother's Maiden Name data. Ian has already enhanced the search results page to display this field, (thanks Ian!) and the next stage will be to add it to the search input criteria. When that is done, you will be able to search for names that have a specific Surname **and** specific Mother's Maiden Name. That should give births from the same family.

The inclusion of Mother's Maiden Name is a boon for genealogical research. If you know a person existed at a point in history - say you found the family on a census return, you will want to get the Birth Certificate. The census will list all those living at the time of the census, but it will not list any children that were born since the previous census, ten years earlier, and have subsequently died. Census returns also only list those living in a house on census day. Anyone away from those premises for census day will be listed elsewhere or nowhere at all!

But our search outputs will list all births and display the Mother's Maiden Name. There is a very high chance that all names with the same surname and Mother's Maiden Name are brothers and sisters, regardless of whether they lived or died. This therefore includes all those children born that may not have survived. We still recommend ordering up the birth certificate to be sure the parents are the same, but you can now do this with a high degree of confidence. Before, there may have been hundreds of occurrences of a surname, and you would not have known which were possible offspring for your ancestral family. It will take a couple of months to back fill the remaining 110,000 Mother's Maiden Name details, so please be patient. We WILL get it all done. The next update will fill in the blanks for the 252,000 records currently on line.

Diverting to Deaths.

Volunteers doing Stage One typing may have noted that they are now working on Death indexes while Births are far from complete. There is a good reason for this. We are diverting to Deaths as there is a high demand for Birth Certificates from living people at this time of year, and having data out for indexing affects the service that the Register Office is able to supply to their customers. At the same time, there is a much greater genealogical value in old deaths than modern births. Births are completed

to 1959, so we have covered most of the genealogical requirement. Deaths, however, have a much greater genealogical value right up to a couple of decades ago. It will be nice to get the Births finished, right up to the current day, and if this can be done without any conflict with certificate requests, we shall do it, but in the meantime, we have a lot to keep us all occupied!

Volunteers.

I welcome a number of new volunteers to the active team. It's great to get new volunteers as some of the others that have helped us have moved on for various reasons. I did a survey the other day and found that we have had a total of 60 volunteers at one time or another and that 40 of them are currently active to various degrees. They certainly keep me busy in keeping them fed with work, and in processing the data they have transcribed. 40 is more than we have ever had, so as the volunteer base expands so the total length of the project can shorten. I am still estimating completion of all Births and Deaths by December 2007, and that will be four years after we started.

What's still to do?

There are a total of 837 Death Registers that we need to Index. Of these, volunteers have done 165 stage one indexes, and are working on another 57. None have yet been processed to Stage two, but this work will start as soon as we have done the final Mother's Maiden Names on Births. We have done 633 of the 1141 Birth registers, so we have 508 to do. The good news is that these 508 are generally smaller registers of 200 or 300 entries as opposed to 500 entries, and the registers from 1992 do not need the stage one typing exercise as the names can be exported from the Register Offices own computer system.

What do you mean by Stage One and Stage Two?

Stage one typing is done by volunteers that can only work by post and e-mail. They get photocopies of index books by post and they type them up and e-mail them back. Bear in mind that an index book exists for each register and lists only names and the pages of the register they are included on. This makes the second stage of the work a lot easier, and this is the stage two work. This involves comparing the typed up stage one index file to the register. We first sort the file on the page number column so the records on each page come together. The stage two work comprises the following elements:-

- The records on each page are uniquely identified to the register ENTRY number. Any missing entries are added.
- The Surname is checked to make sure it is accurate.
- The forenames are checked to ensure they are accurate. Middle initials are expanded to full names.
- Any Stage One queries or missing data on names or page numbers are resolved.
- Terminology is standardised for entries with no forename - (boy) or (girl) for birth records, (male) or (female) for death records
- Un-named birth records additionally have the fathers forename added as part of the child's name, i.e., (boy) Son of Albert.
- The year of the event is added in a new column.
- The 'Mother's Maiden Name' is added for Birth Records, or the 'Age at Death' for Death records.
- Extra entries are added for double barrelled names, or (for births only) for parents that were not married.

- If we really cannot decipher what is written, we create an index entry for every possible spelling commensurate with the 'near', 'vague' and 'soundex' search options.

The result is a file that is hopefully composite and accurate. It has been created by referring to the actual register, so the chances of errors or omissions ought to be the minimum possible. I will not pretend that errors do not creep in, but any that are brought to our notice are investigated and corrected where appropriate.

What is accuracy like?

It is hard to define the current accuracy level, as any errors we know about are investigated and corrected where we find the transcribing has been at fault. Therefore we do not know of any outstanding errors! But having the data transcribed has allowed searching and cross referencing that was not possible before. Already we have created cross reference files of surnames against mother's maiden names. Where for example, a surname has various Mother's Maiden Names of Dailey, Daly, Daily, Daley, then this could point to a possible error. But often when such cases are investigated, we find the parents are the same, and the Mother's Maiden Name HAS been transcribed correctly. It is up to the users to decide which of the spellings has been given correctly for their family. This is not a transcribing error and it is not up to us to list anything other than what the register says. My advice to users when searching using both a Surname and a Mother's Maiden Name, is to only define the first two characters at most of the Mother's Maiden Name. In the case I gave above, searching on 'Da' would return all of the spelling variants. Note that you cannot search 'yet' on the Mother's Maiden Name, but it will be coming soon.

Other goodies to come.

Ian tells me that he is also working on the 'Cross County BMD search' facility and that the work is nearly complete. This will allow users to search ALL the BMD sites that use the Cheshire search code and website design, in one search. Each county will still retain its own search, so BathBMD will still be there and will still operate as it does now. The extra facility will be available as an extra available from the UKBMD site.

This facility will hopefully show other counties the benefits of not only getting their data transcribed and on-line, but also in using the standard 'Cheshire' search code.

Feedback...

We welcome feedback from any volunteers, past, present or future! Tell us what you think is good, or bad. Tell us what you want to do, or what you want us to do. Send all comments to Submit@BathBMD.org.uk.

John Fairlie.

Thank You for Helping and Supporting BathBMD