

We Are Nearly There!

It's that time again to update everyone with progress on the BathBMD Project.

Register Copying

In the last Newsletter I reported that the supply of register copies was the limiting factor to how fast the project could progress. We had over 800 registers still to be copied, and these were being done by one of our volunteers attending the Register Office for an hour or two, a couple of times a week (thank you Marian!), and Register Office staff who could work an hour or two's overtime before or after the normal days work. I am pleased to report that the Register Office has now employed a temporary full time staff member specifically to copy registers. Initially this was just for three weeks, but it has been extended, and I am now told that it will last until all registers are copied. This is great news. Already, I have amassed a stock of register copies as the copying is now going faster than our volunteers can process them. It is a strange fact of human nature that now, with an increased flow of material to work with, the volunteers are also speeding up their rate of work! The project can now work as fast as it ever did, and some of the lost ground can be recovered. As I write, the death registers should now all have been copied leaving just the remaining 433 birth registers (and a few marriage registers) to do.

Progress on Death Data

The recent publication of deaths (Update 19) was a massive 69,095 records from 231 registers. That only left 125 registers to do to complete deaths, and work is now racing ahead on these. We now have over 300,000 death entries on line which comprise nearly 90% of the expected total. Most of the people born in the 19th century now have their death records on line. The oldest person we have found so far is a staggering 111 years old, and we have another at 109 in the pipeline. The comparison of death age profiles between now and the mid 19th century is dramatic. The appalling infant mortality rate has almost been eradicated, albeit there are still the occasional unwarranted and untimely entries. The final episode of deaths will certainly be later this year, and may be as early as September. This is a little later than I estimated in the last newsletter, but now that I hold that vast majority of the data needed to base the publication on, I can be quite confident that the date will not slip further. Therefore Update 20 will be the final wad of deaths. Keep an eye on our Updates page for the latest news about the next update.

Finishing the Project

It has been decided that formal 'completeness' will be when we have indexed all records to 26th March 2007. This was the date when a new 'on-line' registration system was officially started across England and Wales. There is therefore a definite boundary to the scope of records we cover, at least for Births and Deaths. Marriages may be a different matter. We intend to complete deaths in total, that means, any death recorded in BANES between 1st July 1837 and 26th March 2007, will be in Registers held by Bath Register Office, and will be indexed on BathBMD.

When deaths are complete to this date, we shall commence the final 433 Birth registers to the same date. That will still be a substantial package of work, but if we can maintain the supply of register copies, it should mean the publication of the final Birth data by next spring. Births and deaths that are registered after that date are subject to a different method which BathBMD will not attempt to cover.

The records have already been made 'on-line' so it is not for BathBMD to repeat them in a second on-line system. I am not sure that the first on-line system enables public searching, but my morals tell me that it is better to pursue a public search facility on the new system, than to repeat all the data a second time on the system covering older data - namely BathBMD. When we have done Deaths, and then Births, will we have finished? Not quite!! I know there are a few marriage registers that have been completed and added, and these predominantly list marriages before the March 2007 date. I believe marriages are still recorded in registers after 26th March 2007, but it has not yet been decided if we will list later marriages on BathBMD or not. In any case, marriage registers will continue to be handed in for many years yet that will list marriages performed in the years up to 2007. So BathBMD additions will probably not stop for many a year yet, but otherwise, we are nearly there.

BathBMD's Final Work Plan

		2007						2008		
		Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Stage 2	Final Deaths	Births to completion								
Info to web site	Deaths to 2007 in September 2007	Births to 2007 in March 2008								

The Petition

On 2nd May 2007, I raised an e-Petition on 10 Downing Street to further the cause of local indexing projects such as BathBMD. You can read and sign the petition 'electronically' by going to this web site:-

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/LocalBMDIndexing/>

So far, no less than 1,750 people have signed, and it is the 138th most popular petition of about 7,500 that are in existence at any one point in time. That's not bad going! The petition will remain open until 1st January 2008, by which time I am hoping that we can amass about 5,000 signatories. If you have not signed, please do so now. I am hoping that other areas that have not started publishing local indexes can be convinced, or coerced into doing so. They can certainly reap the benefits that Bath has benefited from, and those are benefits to the local Register Offices, as well as to the genealogists that use them.

Contact e-mail addresses

Due to the volume of unwanted e-mails that were being sent by spammers to the submit, help and webmaster e-mail addresses, all three have been deleted! Some of these spam messages were quite offensive, and the spammers were unaware of who might be the recipients of their mailings. The submit address has not been replaced. Volunteers now use my personal e-mail address. The help and webmaster e-mail addresses have been replaced by on-screen forms available from the BathBMD web site. Just type your message into one of these forms, and it will be routed to the people who need to see it. There is still an e-mail address behind the scenes that is used to distribute your messages, but it is now invisible. You don't need to know it, and the spammers certainly don't need to know it! Since the new systems were introduced, I have not had a single spam message passed via the BathBMD system.

John Fairlie.

Thank You for Helping and Supporting BathBMD