

**Lives** The more information you can gather about your forebears' circumstances, such as the locations of their homes and marriages, the more it will help with your research

*How to...*


# MAP LIVES

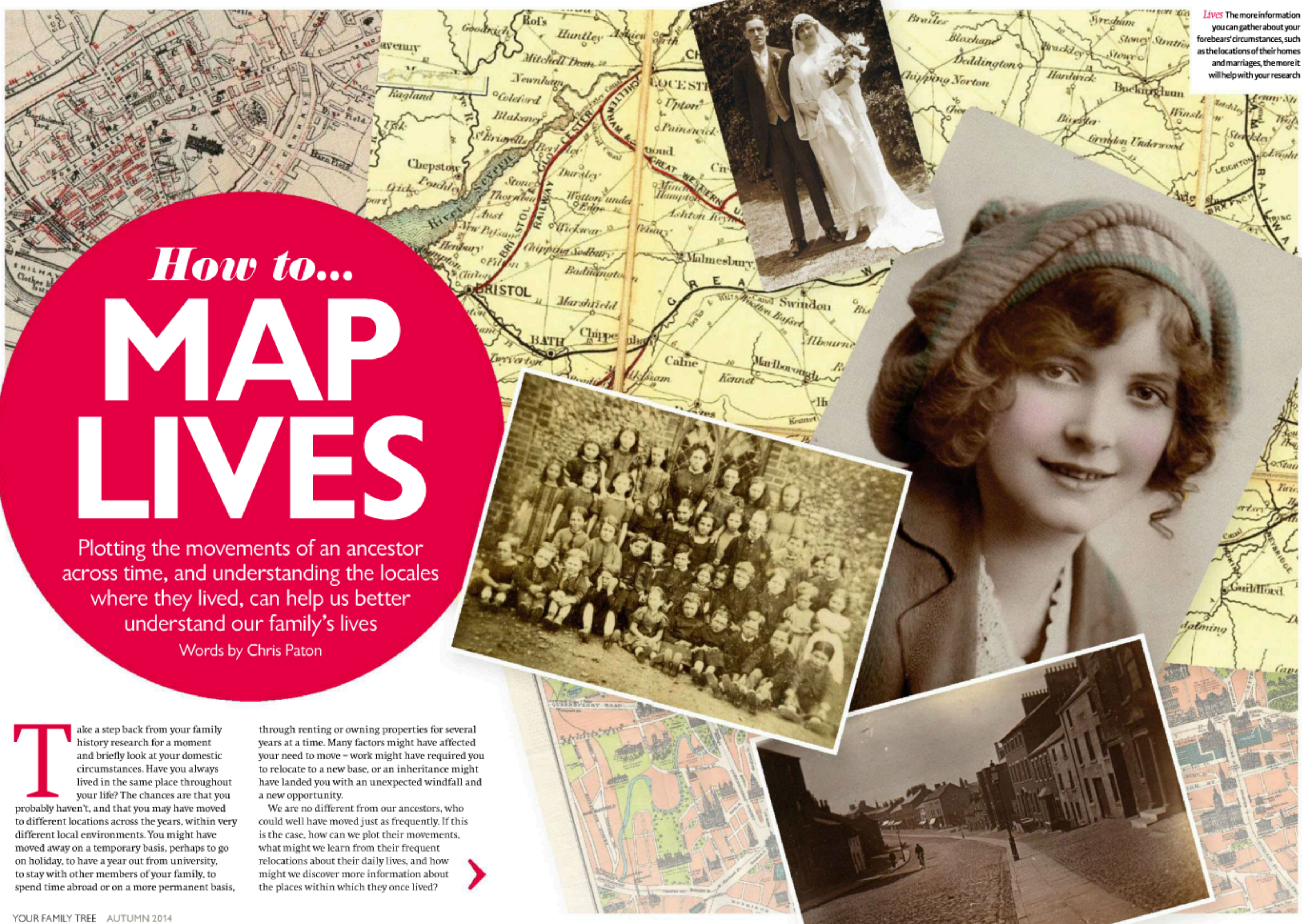
Plotting the movements of an ancestor across time, and understanding the locales where they lived, can help us better understand our family's lives

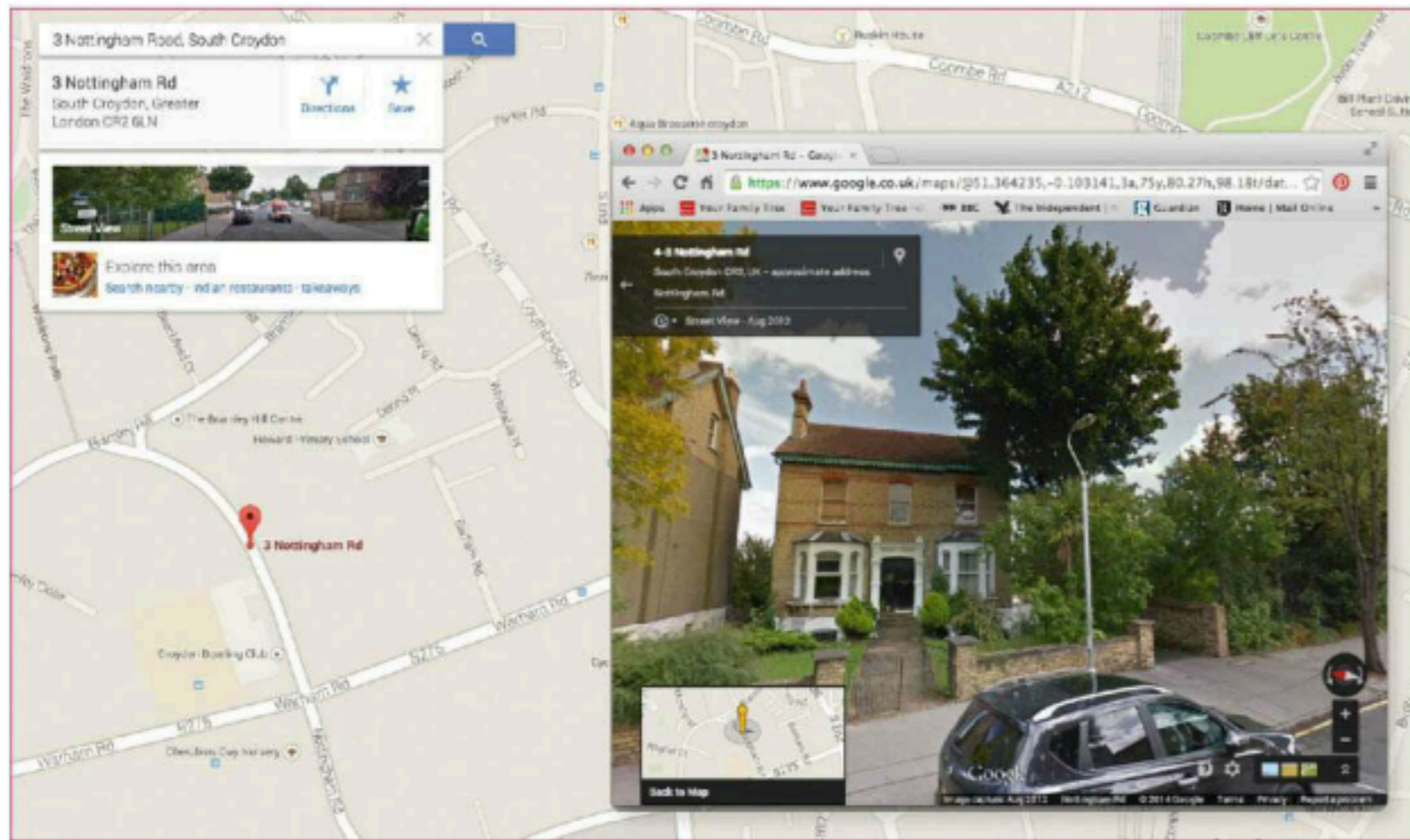
Words by Chris Paton

**T**ake a step back from your family history research for a moment and briefly look at your domestic circumstances. Have you always lived in the same place throughout your life? The chances are that you probably haven't, and that you may have moved to different locations across the years, within very different local environments. You might have moved away on a temporary basis, perhaps to go on holiday, to have a year out from university, to stay with other members of your family, to spend time abroad or on a more permanent basis,

through renting or owning properties for several years at a time. Many factors might have affected your need to move – work might have required you to relocate to a new base, or an inheritance might have landed you with an unexpected windfall and a new opportunity.

We are no different from our ancestors, who could well have moved just as frequently. If this is the case, how can we plot their movements, what might we learn from their frequent relocations about their daily lives, and how might we discover more information about the places within which they once lived? 





**Roots** If you can find the postcode of your forebear's home, which is simpler if it was located in a city or town as opposed to rural areas, then you can type it into the Google Maps website. As well as finding the street you might even be able to find the exact house where your ancestor lived

A good starting point in tracing the movements of our ancestors is to consider the vital records that recorded their 'hatches, matches and dispatches'. Birth, marriage and death records are the main vital records, although there are others such as divorce records, adoptions and vaccination certificates. Whenever the State recorded such events, the place of residence will be noted. The detail can vary, dependant on where in the UK the event took place. If resident in a city, for example, an actual address may be recorded, eg 3a Lombard Street, with records in more recent times being even more specific, giving postcodes for the residence, which you can find by using a website such as Google Maps (<https://maps.google.co.uk>).

In more rural areas, the detail may perhaps not be quite so specific, particularly further back in time, where you might simply find the parish

or village noted. In Irish records, rural-based events are usually accompanied by the names of the townlands within which the relevant party resided. A townland is a smaller division than a parish and is often crucial to unlocking the specific person that you might have found in the area, especially if there are many possible candidates who have the same name.

### HIDDEN CLUES

Such places of residence are often not quite as straightforward as it first appears. The birth of a first child might not have taken place at the family home at all – an address recorded could in fact turn out to be the location of a hospital, workhouse or perhaps even an asylum.

Alternatively, the first child might have been born in his or her maternal grandmother's house, the help of family often being sought with such a new, and perhaps frightening circumstance for the first time mother. In a marriage record, the addresses of both parties could be listed as the same address. However, does that mean that they lived together, or that the address given was simply one that was recorded to fulfil the legal residency criteria required before a wedding could take place?

On an individual basis, a record can often be as misleading as it is informing, as the full context of a circumstance might not be immediately forthcoming. Within a chronology, however, compiled from many records across time, it often becomes much easier to note what may seem to be a glaring anomaly. One residence listed might stand out as odd when set against the locations of other events, but at the same time, it could

# How to follow in your family's footsteps

Top tips for uncovering your ancestors' movements throughout the years

- 1 Start with a chronology of a person's movements from the information contained within their vital records, from when they were a child (including their siblings' birth records), their marriage entries, the birth records of their children, and ultimately when they eventually died.
- 2 The regular decennial censuses from 1841 onwards are a useful aid to identifying members of the family for whom you need to find such information are. These will note the addresses where they resided every ten years. The 1911 Census will also help to identify if any children have died between censuses.
- 3 Now try to close any glaring gaps in the chronology. Using the last known address at one end of a gap, and at the first end at the other, try to locate your ancestor's presence with information recorded within annual lists such as voters rolls, rental rolls or street directories.
- 4 If they suddenly disappear, knowing the occupation of our ancestors could help. A shipbuilder might have regularly migrated to look for work in Barrow, Glasgow or Belfast, for example, which allows you to try to locate them elsewhere, while a soldier's service record might note where he was during an absence from home.
- 5 It's possible that your ancestor has disappeared simply because he or she has travelled overseas for a period, perhaps temporarily, or more permanently as an emigrant. Detailed passenger lists from 1890 to 1960 are available for those travelling to and from the UK, on sites such as [Ancestry.co.uk](http://Ancestry.co.uk) and [Findmypast](http://Findmypast).
- 6 If an ancestor suddenly disappears, records from other family members could help to provide clues, a wife abandoned by her husband, for example, might have subsequently claimed poor relief to support her family, with details of her husband's whereabouts noted in the application. You can find workhouse records at [www.workhouses.org](http://www.workhouses.org).

equally become apparent that the household did indeed relocate on a regular basis – something not uncommon, for example, with agricultural labourers. Sometimes we are tempted to concentrate on obtaining the vital records of our direct ancestors only, particularly for those that are expensive to source. For England and Wales, for example, we need to pay a hefty £9.25 per birth, marriage or death certificate for every event after July 1837 from the GRO in Southport.

Records are indexed online through several websites, such as FreeBMD ([www.freebmd.org](http://www.freebmd.org)) or Ancestry.co.uk ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)), with purchases then having to be made online from the GRO via [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk). For Scotland access is approximately £1.40 per digitised record, either via the pay per view ScotlandsPeople website at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) or for unlimited access to the records at the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh ([www.scotlandspeoplehub.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeoplehub.gov.uk)), at a daily rate of £15.

For Northern Ireland, you can visit the GRONI in Belfast ([www.nidirect.gov.uk/family-history](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/family-history)). Expense is certainly a factor, but by not exploring the circumstances of all the members of a family – for example, the birth records for all the children born to a couple, and others such as records for those who perhaps died in infancy – we may well be losing out on essential location information concerning the parents at every event.

Another handy set of records to help us with our research are those of the censuses, recorded every ten years in Britain from 1801 (with the exception of 1941), and in Ireland from 1821 (although on a more erratic frequency in the 20th century).

The censuses in Britain only contain, for the most part, genealogically useful information

## HOW TO USE BMDs TO LOCATE PEOPLE

- Although most of our ancestors were members of the established churches, there will be some who will have belonged to Nonconformist denominations. You can find records for English and Welsh Nonconformists at [www.bmdregisters.co.uk](http://www.bmdregisters.co.uk), while some for Scotland are held at the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh ([www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)).
- The BMD Registers website also lists some records from British personnel overseas, but many more, including those involving military personnel, are indexed within the Findmypast BMD collections at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk). Once you find an entry, order the record from the GRO at [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) via a dedicated application form for overseas records.
- If your ancestors are missing from England or Wales, try Scotland and Northern Ireland, and vice versa – if only to rule out the option. Scotland and Northern Ireland are fortunate to have records online at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) and [www.geni.com/projects/Northern-Ireland-portal/8442](http://www.geni.com/projects/Northern-Ireland-portal/8442). Note that ScotlandsPeople has Roman Catholic records for all British armed forces personnel, not just for Scotland.



“Birth, marriage and death records are important, and you can use them to trace an ancestor's location”

## “Census records provide a much larger image of the community where our ancestors lived”

from 1841 onwards, and have only been released up to 1911 thanks to a closure period of 100 years to protect people's privacy in more recent years. The 1841-1911 records for England and Wales have been made available through various websites such as The Genealogist ([www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk)), Findmypast ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)), Ancestry.co.uk ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)) and Family Relatives ([www.familyrelatives.com](http://www.familyrelatives.com)).

For Scotland, the only website providing the images to the records from 1841-1911 is ScotlandsPeople. Transcripts from the 1841-1901 Scottish censuses are available on sites such as Ancestry.co.uk and Findmypast, but these are in fact incomplete. Details such as the number of houses with one or more windows, as recorded in the later censuses, aren't included, details that can tell us a great deal about the type of property the household inhabited, and the overcrowding often found, particularly in the tenements of cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh.

For Ireland, only the 1901 and 1911 censuses survive in their entirety, although with the original household schedules surviving for both, it's possible to uncover very useful information about the properties inhabited, such as the number of outbuildings on a farm, or the names of the landlord from whom property might be leased. Some pre-1901 Census fragments have also survived, from 1821-1851, along with the 1901 and

1911 records, which you can find online for free at [www.genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.genealogy.nationalarchives.ie).

Census records aren't only useful in telling us about individual households directly, they can also provide a much larger image of the community where our ancestors resided. They might describe, for example, the make up of a small village in rural England, with only a small number of residents present that our forebears must have known on a more intimate basis than those lost in the midst of a densely packed urban conurbation.

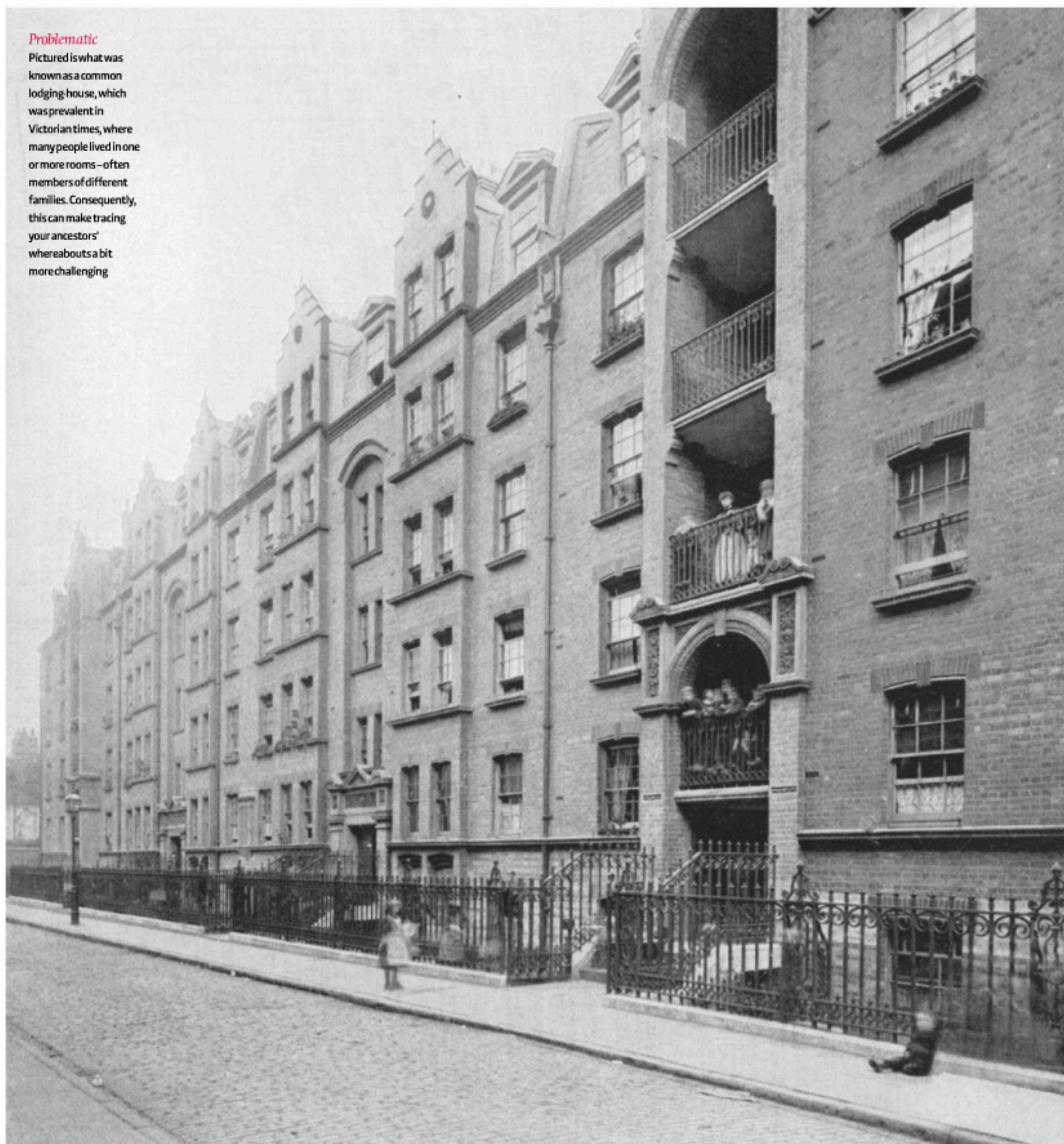
### IMPORTANT POINTERS

In the cities, however, we might equally find that the wider population in an area can provide clues about our ancestors' lives. A good example here are the Irish migrants who flocked to Britain in the aftermath of the famine in the late 1840s, settling in cities such as Liverpool and Glasgow.

Where a census record might tell us that our direct ancestor could have simply have been 'born in Ireland', a look at the surrounding houses and streets could provide clues from the details of other residents that where a more precise place of origin may be noted. If several of the neighbours are noted as being from County Donegal, could that mean our own ancestors might have come from there also, perhaps via chain migration? It might be not be hard proof, but it's certainly a lead that's worth pursuing.

### Problematic

Pictured is what was known as a common lodging house, which was prevalent in Victorian times, where many people lived in one or more rooms—often members of different families. Consequently, this can make tracing your ancestors' whereabouts a bit more challenging



## THE BEST CENSUS SUBSTITUTE FOR FINDING A FAMILY'S WHEREABOUTS

- The 1939 National Identity Register was a census substitute for military draft purposes, with entries from England and Wales currently being digitised by Findmypast. You can order those for Scotland from the NRS (<http://tinyurl.com/39mbvhd>), while you can request Northern Irish entries from PRONI ([www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)) via a Freedom of Information request.
- Despite the loss of most of Ireland's censuses, some information from 1841 and 1851 has been preserved thanks to the documents being used to support Old Age Pension applications, for which they provided evidence of age after 1908 (applicants had to be 70 or over). You can find surviving entries at <http://tinyurl.com/d54y2nt>.
- A useful site offering online access to census substitutes is Census Finder at [www.censusfinder.com](http://www.censusfinder.com). This provides links to a range of lists hosted online, including militia attestation lists, directories transcripts, communicants lists and more. It even includes some pre-1841 Census enumerations that were compiled locally before the information was used to create statistical returns.

# Top three: Searching directories

Find information about ancestors in these annual publications



**1** Street directories become more detailed from the mid-18th century onwards, often noting people in several places within a single edition. City coverage tends to be fuller, with information on residence and occupation recorded. Rural areas are often less so, usually favouring tradesman and landed gentry only, particularly in earlier editions.

**2** First look for an ancestor within the book's alphabetical listings, and when you find it note the address where he or she was residing. Now turn to the street listings section of the books to find a corresponding entry, as sometimes you can find additional details. Likewise, cross-check with the occupations section.

**3** If your ancestor was in business, you might also be fortunate enough to find a trade advertisement at the front or the rear of the book. These are sometimes indexed at the very start of the publication, but not always. You might even find an illustration alongside showing the business premises.

“As the 19th century progressed the heads of individual households were represented in trade directories”

Other records can also help us to trace the movements of ancestors between the censuses, or in the years where no vital records were recorded for the families in question.

For many towns and cities there are street and trade directories, compiled in most cases on an annual basis, from the late 18th century. The earlier directories tend to deal with the wealthier in society or those engaged only in trade or public life, but as the 19th century progressed the heads of individual households were increasingly represented. You can find these directories in local archives and libraries across the country, but many have also been digitised and put online, either freely or through a subscription.

For England and Wales, you can find a great sample of directories from 1750-1919 courtesy of the University of Leicester at <http://tinyurl.com/pn62acs>, with most dating from 1850 onwards. The English Trade Directories of the 19th Century website (<http://tinyurl.com/4pyjnm>) also contains a searchable database of records from 16 counties, predominantly from 1830 onwards.

North of the border, the National Library of Scotland has worked with the Internet Archive

to place more than 1,000 directories online – 700 of these prior to 1911 are available on the NLS website via [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk), while you can find the whole collection, which for many cities extends to the 1940s, at <https://archive.org/details/nationallibraryofscotland>.

There are two very useful collections for Northern Ireland, with a 19th-century collection freely available on the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland website at [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk), and many others transcribed by Mary Lennon and hosted on [www.lennonwylie.co.uk](http://www.lennonwylie.co.uk). The mainstream genealogy records vendors have also been hard at work gathering records from directories, with various holdings accessible on Ancestry.co.uk, The Genealogist and Findmypast, among others.

Annual electoral rolls are a further source that can also help you fill in the gaps from the mid-to late-19th century onwards. These are held at local archives or at the various national libraries in the UK, and can give you information on those able to vote, listing both names and addresses within electoral wards. Remember that sometimes if a family disappeared from an address they might have moved elsewhere within the

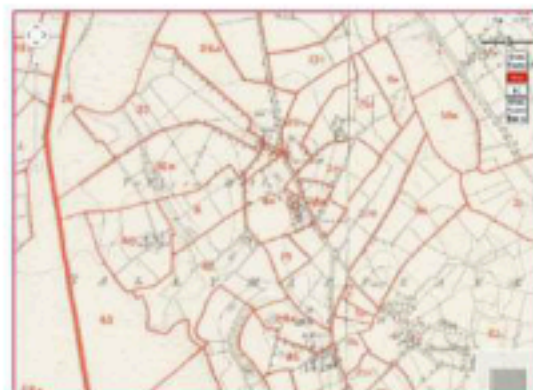
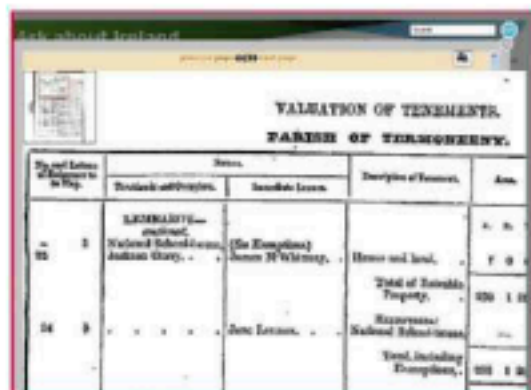
**Work in progress** Trade directories are an excellent method of finding out more about your forebears' lives and you can find them in many libraries countrywide. Many have also been digitised, including those by the University of Leicester covering England and Wales. In Scotland the National Library of Scotland has over 1,000 directories. Pictured are two Scottish fishermen working on their lines



© The National Library of Scotland

# Step-by-step: Track your Irish roots

How to unearth your ancestral home in Ireland in three easy steps



**1** The Ask About Ireland website ([www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie)) is free and allows you to search for ancestors in Griffith's Valuation from the mid-19th century. You can search by given name and surname, county, barony, parish and townland. An initial result provides a transcript of the tenant's and landlord's details for a residence.

**2** Having viewed the summary report, you also have an option to view the original page as originally printed in the Primary Valuation. On the left-hand column of each of these printed entries is a series of numbers and letters, which provide a specific reference for each property noted.

**3** The Irish OS maps used for the valuation are also available, marked up with red boundary lines for each property, within each of which is the previously noted reference. Find the correct area, then mix through to a modern Google map using the slider at the top of the page.

“Local parish records note baptisms, burials and marriages, and can also record the addresses of the people in question”

same ward, so it's always worth checking the surrounding streets if you lose the trail. As well as noting when a household might have moved, you can often also work out when various children left the family home in their early adult lives. There isn't much online as yet for electoral rolls, although some collections are available on Family Search (<http://familysearch.org>).

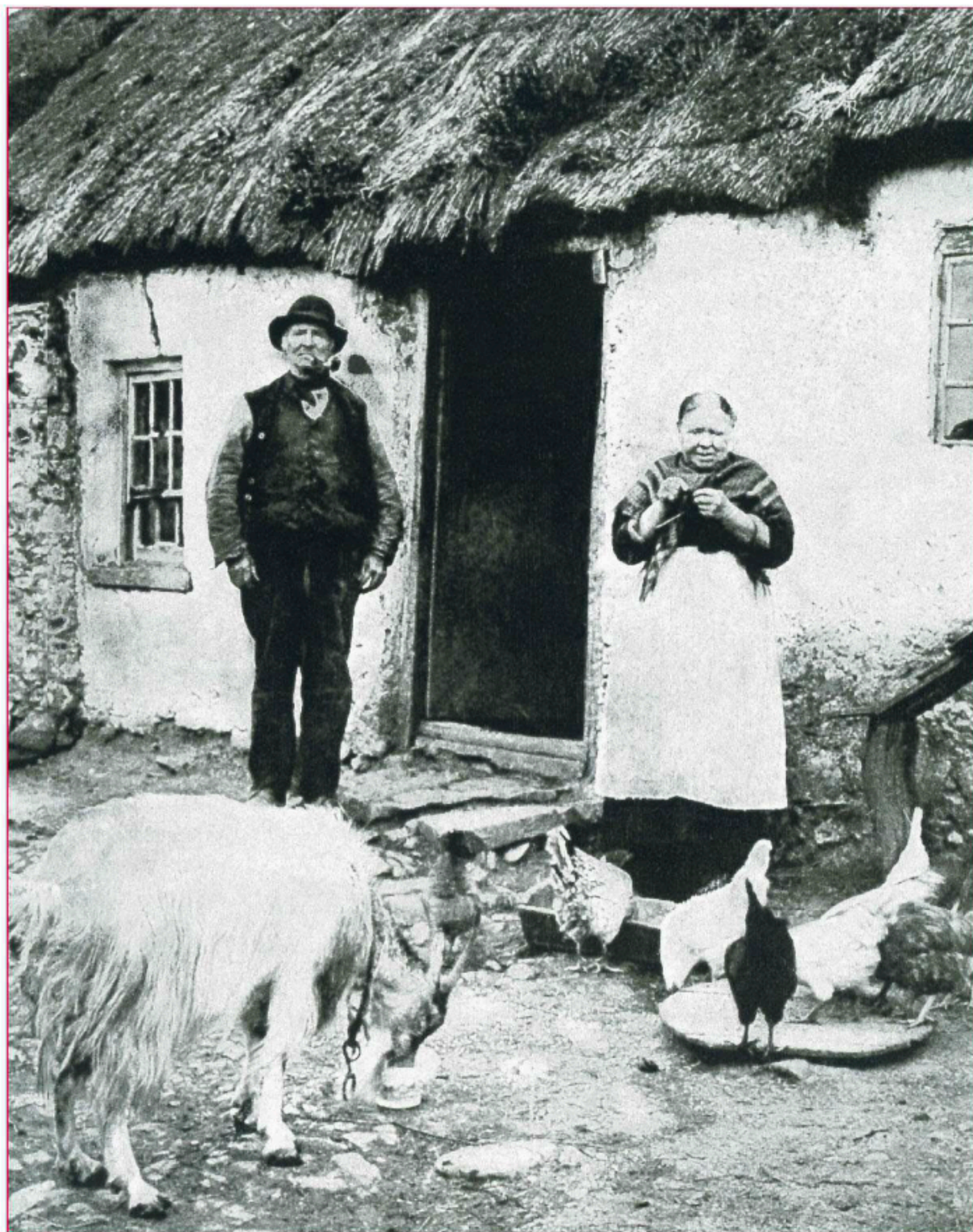
Various land ownership lists can also help you. In Ireland, a property record called Griffith's Valuation was compiled across the island between 1847 and 1864, noting who owned land and who the principle tenants of landowners were. As each property changed hands in subsequent years, either by sale, exchange or inheritance, the new owners were recorded in a series of 'revision books'. The records are on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie), with contemporary maps identifying the exact location of each property. Those for Northern Ireland are freely available on the PRONI website, up to 1930. Similarly in Scotland, an annual series of 'valuation rolls' are available at the National Records of Scotland ([www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)) from 1855-1984, noting tenants and vassals, owners ('feudal superiors'), and the rents payable. Many

of these are now on the ScotlandsPeople website, with more yet to come.

Prior to the advent of civil registration, local parish records note baptisms, marriages and burials. These can record addresses within them, but often tend to be less detailed, instead perhaps just noting the parish, farm, village, or in the case of Ireland, townland. Many parish records are increasingly being made available online, but you can also access them at various local archives across the country.

An equally valuable source, although one that can at times be much more difficult to find, are the records of the great estates across the British Isles. These are often remarkably useful, including records such as rental rolls, leases and estate maps. If they have survived they may be held by local archives, the various national archives based at Kew, Belfast and Edinburgh, or might even still lie within private hands. The National Archives' new version of the Discovery catalogue (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>) now includes other catalogues such as Access to Archives, the National Register of Archives and the Manorial Documents Register, which may list where

**Tenants** Many people across Ireland suffered a terrible fate at the hands of unscrupulous landowners, especially during and following the Irish Great Famine in the 1840s. You can find land ownership lists in Griffith's Valuation, which was compiled between 1847 and 1864, encompassing the whole of Ireland



Bryce Case/Getty Images

# Step-by-step: Online record hunt

Track down your ancestors in local records using the Victoria County History website



**1** The Institute of Historical Research's well-established Victoria County History series is one of the longest running history publishing projects in English history, giving detailed accounts for many English parishes. Its site at [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk) offers a useful starting point to locate which parishes and counties have already had published historical accounts.

**2** An interactive map shows the progress across the country in terms of what has already been published and what is still under way. Each county has a dedicated page providing the latest news on progress, local events discussing the work, links to buy the books, or to access the accounts online.

**3** Many published VCH accounts are freely available to view on the British History Online website ([www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)). Most of the county histories are published across several volumes, with the parishes discussed displayed in alphabetical order, each covering a range of subjects including manors, schools, churches, poor relief and more.

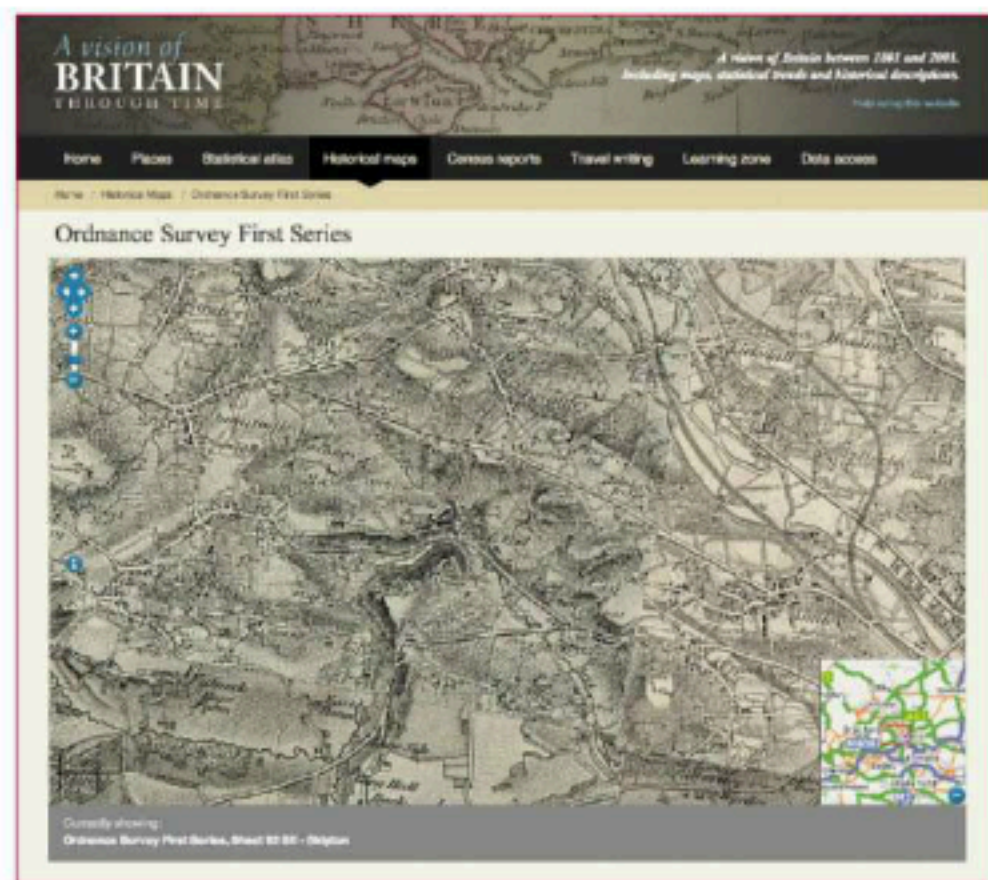
they are held. For the Scottish equivalents visit <http://nas.gov.uk/catalogues/default.asp>. Knowing where an ancestor was based at any time is certainly half the battle in trying to map their lives, but understanding the nature of the environments within which they once lived is also important. There are many ways to do this, but the two most useful are through the use of maps and gazetteers.

Maps are useful in many ways. They may describe geographical features that directly had an impact on our ancestors' day-to-day lives, for example their residence may have been on the shore by a lake or on a mountainside, which may suggest why they migrated in one direction rather than another when they did eventually move. They can also note the evolution of an area across time.

## SCOUR THE MAP

As the 18th and 19th centuries progressed in particular, there were many changes both in the countryside, as the agricultural revolution led to the enclosure of fields, and in the towns and cities, as networks of canals, railway lines and roads completely redefined the environment as the Industrial Revolution progressed. Such changes might have prompted your ancestors to settle in a particular area, or indeed to move away.

The most popular online mapping collections, and by far the most detailed, are those for the Ordnance Survey. The origins for this go back to the second Jacobite rebellion in Scotland, when 'The Duke of Cumberland's Map' was created by William Roy to help the Army to control the Highlands following the rising. Following the success of this initiative, Roy took the principles of triangulation



Online A Vision of Britain Through Time website contains the First Series of Ordnance Survey maps for England and Wales covering 1805 to 1873

used to create the maps further, and thus the Ordnance Survey was born. Several websites offer access to historic OS maps. Old Maps, located at [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk), provides online access to the earliest County Series mapping collection, while the A Vision of Britain Through Time website at [www.visionofbritain.org.uk](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk) hosts the First Series of the OS for England and Wales, covering 1805 to 1873. For Northern Ireland, use the OSNI website at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/osni-mapping-helpdesk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/osni-mapping-helpdesk), which provides access to different maps of Ulster from 1820-1851,

# Top three: Unique maps online

Websites combining maps and data are a powerful research tool



**1** Addressing History (<http://addressinghistory.edina.ac.uk>) is a collaboration between the National Library of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh. It plots information on individuals recorded in post office directories from 1794-1905 for Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and plots them on fully searchable contemporary maps. You can search by name, address or occupation.

**2** Were your London ancestors forced to move as a result of enemy action during the Blitz of World War II? If so, the bomb sight map at <http://bombsight.org> will be of interest, noting where every German bomb landed on an interactive map, and with many contemporary photos from each location.

**3** West of Yorkshire Archives Service's Tracks in Time website hosts the Leeds Tithe Map Project at [www.tracksintime.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.tracksintime.wyjs.org.uk). This allows you to search for ancestors, and to explore the area in and around Leeds from 1838-1861, with apportionment data for the city and digitised tithes maps that you can compare to modern OS maps.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM HISTORICAL MAPS

- Did your ancestors live beside a main road? Other stops on the route may be useful to explore if they suddenly disappear.
- If an ancestor was based beside a waterway, they might well have also used this as a means of communication.
- The nearest market town to your ancestral home will likely have been frequently visited by an ancestor for regular purchases and trade.
- How did your ancestors obtain water for daily use? Look for a well or stream as an important locale within the neighbourhood.
- Compare maps – when do new features (roads, railways) suddenly appear? This may be the reason why your family moved to or from a location.
- Which parishes were adjacent to your ancestral parish? Checking records within these might help to pick up the trail of missing relatives.
- If your ancestor lived and worked in a city, look for the nearest factories, schools and graveyards to help locate records.
- Estate maps might specifically note exactly where your ancestor resided on an estate, listing his name and the boundaries of property held.
- Note that place names, in English or the Celtic languages, can provide important clues about the topography of an area.
- Street names on modern maps may also refer to older buildings or settlements no longer standing, abandoned in the name of also 'progress'.

1851-1883, 1883-1920, 1920-1951 and 1951 to latest. By far the biggest online mapping collection in the UK is that of the National Library of Scotland at <http://maps.nls.uk>, which not only includes OS maps, but also other more historic collections. Despite being a Scottish project, increasingly many English collections are also being digitised and added to the website, particularly for London.

Gazetteers, and indeed good parish histories, can work hand-in-hand with such maps, in that they can provide contemporary written descriptions about a place, noting the main industries present, the names of landowners, even the denominations of religion followed at any one time. The A Vision of Britain Through Time website also carries contemporary descriptive entries from the *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (1870-72) and *Bartholomew's Gazetteer of the British Isles* (1887).

The British History Online website at [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk) includes many published volumes from the long running Victoria County History series of descriptive volumes for many English counties.

In Scotland, the Statistical Accounts of every parish, as recorded by Church of Scotland ministers in the 1790s and the 1830s and 1840s, provide a great way to compare and contrast how every settlement in Scotland developed over 50 years at the height of the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions, which you can find at [www.edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot](http://www.edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot). Also for Scotland, the NLS has recently provided 20 19th-century gazetteers on its website at [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk) and via the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/scottishgazetteers>.

For Ireland, the three volumes of the *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland from 1844-46* are all freely available on Google Books (<http://books.google.co.uk>).