

Newspaper research

# READ ALL ABOUT IT

From notices and obituaries to coroners' reports and criminal stories, old newspapers can offer an incredible avenue of family history research if you know where to look

**N**ewspapers have a long history in the UK. There were no regular publications before the early 17th century, but one-off newsletters covering specific events were sometimes produced. For example, a 1513 pamphlet described the Battle of Flodden, while 1549 saw the production of a newsletter concerning the Devon and Cornwall Rebellion.


The first news periodical to be printed in England was the *Corante*, which first went to press in 1621. The publishers had to obtain a licence from the government, as there was a law in place at that time forbidding the publication of news in England. English language periodicals were in print before this date, but they were produced in Amsterdam, not in England. The circulation numbers of the early newspapers were small, with only a few hundred copies of each *Corante* being printed.

These early newspapers are unlikely to assist family historians to any great extent, as they were

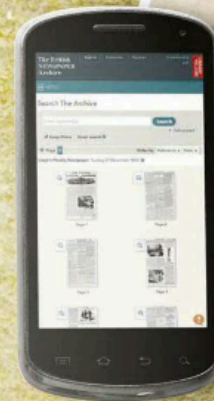
concerned with major national and international events. They were also very far from objective, with newspapers from the Civil War period in particular being used to circulate propaganda.

In 1665 the *Oxford Gazette* was published by licence from the government, as an official record of government activities. Charles II and his court were residing in Oxford at the time, due to the plague in London. When they returned to London, the *Gazette* went with them, commencing publication as the *London Gazette* in 1666. It still exists today as an official government publication.

You are unlikely to find information on working-class ancestors in early issues of the *Gazette*, but if your forebears were in business or in the military, you could come across useful information since the *Gazette* covered matters such as bankruptcy and awards of medals.

Ordinary people do feature in the *Gazette*, but generally in relation to fairly unusual or one-off events in their lives. For example, if you have foreign ancestry, you might well find a record of them being granted British citizenship. 

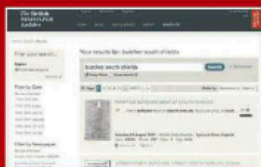
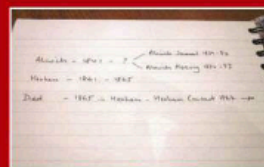
Words by Anne Corlett





## STEP-BY-STEP: TRACE AN ANCESTOR'S LIFE

If your forebears made the news, you might be able to establish key facts about their lives through newspapers

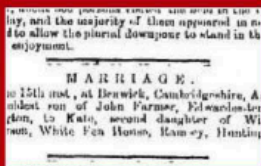
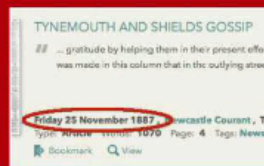


### BACK TO BASICS

**1** Make sure you have established as many facts as possible before you begin. Even if you don't know exact dates, try to narrow things down. Make a list of places where they were living at different times, and check the newspaper coverage for those areas.

### CHECK ONLINE

**2** Always start with online sources. This will save you a lot of time and effort. The British Newspaper Archive is the most comprehensive database. Search for your ancestors by name, or by other criteria such as profession and place of residence.

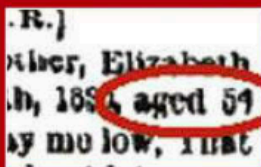


### GET YOUR DATES RIGHT

**3** If you can't find anything online, the next port of call will be microfilm copies of non-digitised newspapers. Try to find out when a weekly newspaper went to press in order to work out when a known event could have been reported.

### FOCUSED SEARCHING

**4** Focus your search around major life events and think about the purpose of any announcement. Search a couple of editions before a burial date to see if there's a funeral announcement, and for a few weeks before a baptism date for a notice of birth.



### TAKE A SAMPLE

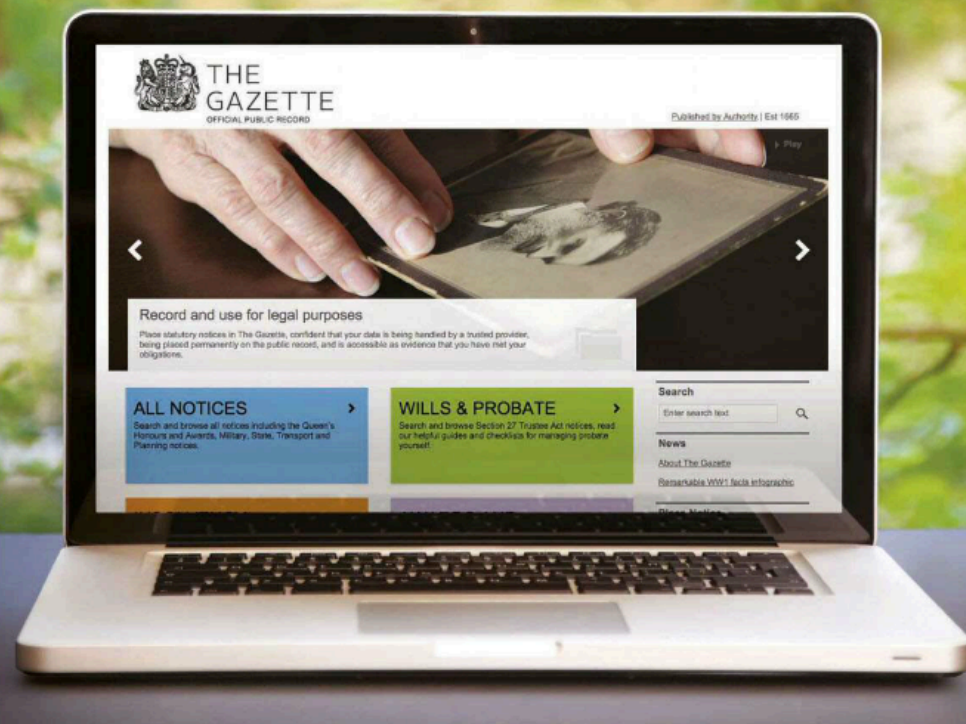
**5** If several branches of your family were living in the same area, it might be worth a wider search. Pick a time when several of your ancestors would have been alive, and then browse as many editions as possible to see if anyone appears in any capacity.

### GOING BACK FURTHER

**6** Once you've found information, use it as a jumping-off point for further research. Use obituary information to search for a birth or baptism. If relatives are mentioned, have a closer look at them to see if your ancestor features elsewhere in their lives.

"If your forebears were in business or in the military, you could come across useful information in the Gazette, which covered bankruptcy and awards of medals"

Record: The Gazette was first published in 1665 in Oxford, where Charles II was living, and became the London Gazette one year later. You can search old copies online



Until quite recently, searching the *Gazette* would have been a huge task, but the back issues have been digitised and you can search them at [www.thegazette.co.uk](http://www.thegazette.co.uk). Even if you think that your ancestors are unlikely to appear in the *Gazette*, searching is now sufficiently quick and easy that it's worth having a quick look, particularly for relatives with unusual names.

While the *Gazette* has a good claim to being the oldest English newspaper still in publication, some people claim that this title should go to the *Worcester Postman* (later *Berrow's Worcester Journal*), which began publication in 1695, following the lifting of licensing restrictions. While the *Gazette* was an official government publication, the *Postman* was closer to the type of newspaper we would recognise today, although it was still mainly concerned with major national and international events.

In 1702, England's first daily newspaper went to print. The *Daily Courant* was followed by several other publications, leading the government to introduce stamp duty on newspapers in 1712. This levy wasn't abolished until 1855, but it didn't prevent more and more

newspapers being established throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. After the abolition of stamp duty, newspapers grew longer and their readership expanded — more people were learning to read — with copies of newspapers becoming available in coffee shops and reading rooms.

### NEWS REPORTS

Newspapers from the 18th century are useful to family historians, but once again, you are more likely to find mentions of forebears who were well-to-do, or involved in major local or national events. But ordinary people did find their way into the news, often due to unfortunate happenings such as bizarre accidents or unusual deaths.

In the 19th century, your chances are better, as the boom in the publication of regional newspapers meant that there was more column space for matters of local interest.

It's in the late 19th and 20th centuries that newspapers really come in to their own for family historians, with many publications producing content aimed at attracting a working-class readership.

Researching your family history through newspapers involves a slightly different approach to that searching the major sources. With the census, BMD records and parish registers, for example, your starting point is that your ancestors should be there somewhere, making it worth devoting time to searching widely and thoroughly. With historical newspapers, there are absolutely no guarantees that the lives of your forebears were ever recorded in print publications. The majority of people went through life, and still go through life today, without ever having a brush with the media.

**Boston broadsheets**  
The British Library's newspaper collection moved to a new facility in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, after its home in Colindale, North London closed in 2013. You can still view copies in London at the Newsroom in St Pancras. Find out more at [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk).

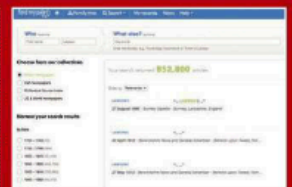
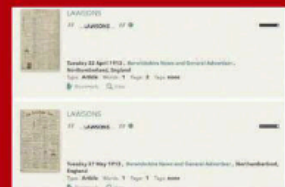


Pioneering England's first daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, first appeared in print in 1702



## STEP-BY-STEP: SEARCH FOR FREE

You can save time and money on newspaper research with clever search techniques



### USE FREE RESOURCES

**1** With most online newspaper images hidden behind a paywall, obtaining copies can sometimes be an expensive business. Consider using a mix of online and microfilm sources to save time and money. Perform as many initial searches as possible using the British Newspaper Archive or other websites, such as The Burney Collection.

### BE SELECTIVE

**2** You should be able to glean some information from the search results. Make a note of names, dates and the type of information, and use this to narrow down your search on the microfilm holdings of your local record office or archive. You should be able to go straight to the correct editions and relevant sections.

### FREE ACCESS

**3** The major commercial sites have various collections of newspapers, but these are generally only available on subscription or with credits. Take advantage of any free search facilities on these sites, and consider a trip to an archive with free access, such as the Society of Genealogists, which offers free Ancestry.co.uk access in the library.

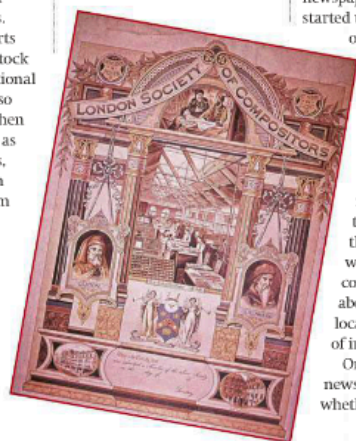
“Obituaries can provide a wealth of detail, as can coroners’ reports. Bankruptcy notices and adverts for sales of property can also be useful”

Old newspapers do, however, contain various different types of information relevant to genealogists, the most obvious being announcements of births, marriages and deaths. Obituaries can provide a wealth of interesting detail, as can coroners’ reports.

Bankruptcy notices, criminal case reports and adverts for sales of property and livestock can also be useful. Reports of local educational establishments or church events might also yield specific genealogical information. Then there are the miscellaneous reports, such as announcements of wedding anniversaries, or the doings of a particularly well-known local figure. The existence of these random snippets are very difficult to predict, and they are, more often than not, stumbled across by chance.

The approach you take, and the time you devote to this aspect of your family history, will depend greatly upon the social circumstances of the individual ancestors you’re researching. The starting point, however, is the same, as for any other area of genealogical

**Skilled** A London Society of Composers membership certificate 1880. Composers specialised in setting type for newspapers



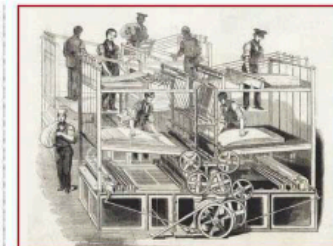
research, once you move beyond the universal starting point of census, civil registration and parish records. Make sure you know as much as possible about your ancestors from the basic sources, and then work out whether you are trying to fill in gaps or simply to pad out some fairly well-defined bones.

### CHANGING TIMES

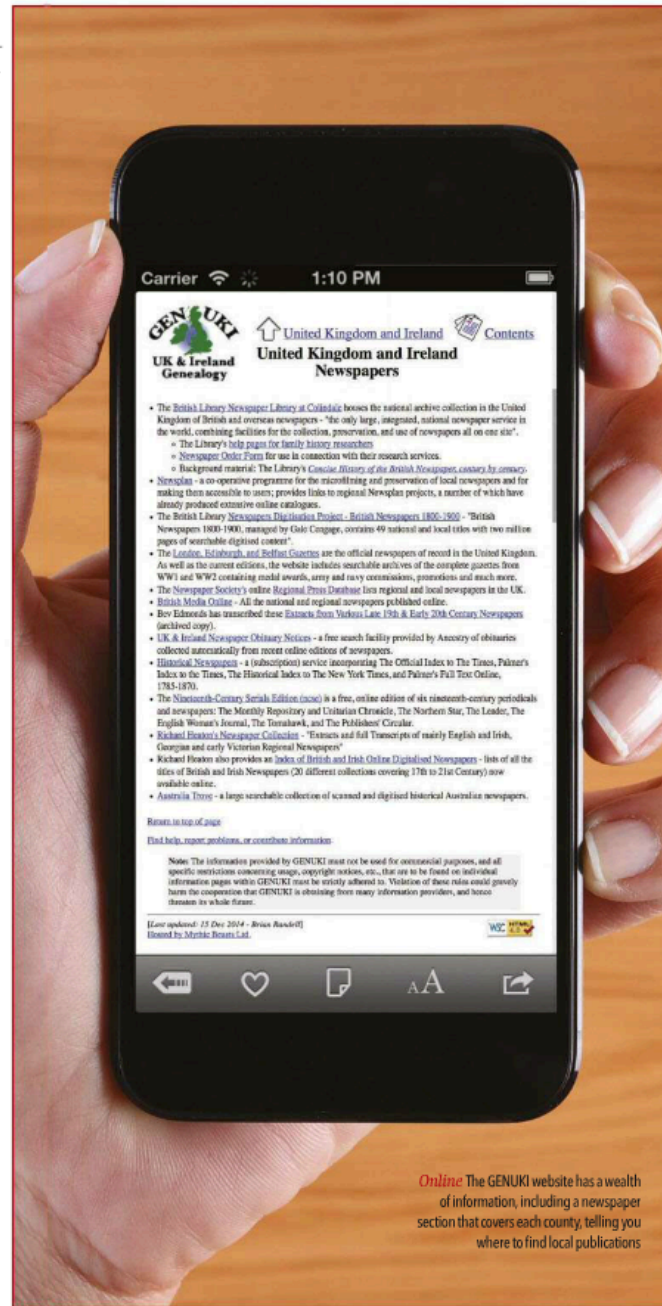
Before beginning your search, you need to establish which publications covered the area where your ancestors were living. This can sometimes be a slightly complicated undertaking as the local coverage changed as newspapers went out of print and new ones started up, or publications merged or took on a new name.

The *Gibson Guide, Local Newspapers 1750-1920*, gives lists of extant historical newspapers for each county, including the date ranges of the surviving copies, and their location. Local record offices usually have an easily accessible list of their newspaper holdings, and you may find this online. It’s also a good idea to check the GENUKI website ([www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk)), which has a newspaper section for each county, including links to information about the coverage and whereabouts of local publications, and sometimes details of indexes or transcription projects.

Once you have identified the relevant newspaper, you will need to establish whether you’re going to be searching the



**Technology** A steam printing machine used for producing the Illustrated London News c1843



**Online** The GENUKI website has a wealth of information, including a newspaper section that covers each county, telling you where to find local publications

traditional way, with a visit to a record office or archive to view their holdings, or whether the information you need is online. Because of the sheer bulk of material involved, online newspaper research is considerably easier and more likely to pay dividends. If you have to search the actual print publications, you will probably need to limit your research to very specific events and date ranges, such as an obituary or funeral details where you already have a good idea as to the date of death, or a birth announcement where you know the baptism date.

For online publications, the best place to start is the British Newspapers Archive ([www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)), which is a vast online collection of digitised publications dating right back to the early 1700s. Coverage isn’t complete, but the site is very user-friendly with options to check availability by date range or by region, and it’s searchable. If there are any publications for the relevant date and place, it’s worth a general search of the archive to see what is thrown up. For example, a search of the name ‘Lewthwaite’ in the North East brings up entries as diverse as death announcements, drunk and disorderly convictions and adverts for the cheapest boots in the area.

If you have missing ancestors, or a family that moved around a lot, a general search of the archive may help to pin them down to a particular area at a particular time. Searching the whole archive by name may throw up too many results, but if you’re researching an unusual name, a general search can give a good indication as to the geographical distribution of a particular name or family.

When searching online, do be aware of mistranscriptions, particularly in digitised information, and try various spellings. It might also be worth searching various relevant terms such as ‘bootmaker South Shields’.



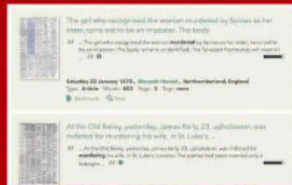
## TOP THREE: NEWSPAPER GLEANINGS

Genealogists sometimes focus exclusively on BMD reports, but make sure you check other sections of the newspaper for family information



### LOOK FOR OBITUARIES

**1** Newspaper reports of births, marriages and deaths often add little to information already gleaned, but obituaries are a rich source of genealogical detail. You may find details from official records of a person's birth, close family, and possibly even a photo or snippets of information about events in their life.



### CRIME MIGHT PAY

**2** Criminal matters were considerably more likely to make it into the newspapers than their law-abiding kin. Check for court reports, notices of arrests, and even 'wanted' type notices. Remember that your ancestors may have been victims of crime as well as perpetrators, so check all names when perusing reports of crime.



### BUSINESS DEALINGS

**3** If your ancestors were in business, there's a reasonable chance they might feature somewhere in the local newspaper. It's fairly quick and easy to scan the advertisements over several editions, and it's worth checking after a tradesman ancestor's death for any notice of a sale of equipment, or a family member taking over.

“Check local family history societies to see if any partial indexes exist. Local history groups often published quite eclectic snippets of information”

While the archive is free to search, you will need to purchase credits or a subscription to view the actual images, but you can glean a reasonable amount just from the brief text under each search result, and there is generally enough detail there to make an informed decision as to whether it's worth paying for the full item. If you have a subscription to a commercial genealogy site such as [Ancestry.co.uk](http://Ancestry.co.uk) or [TheGenealogist](http://TheGenealogist), you will already have access to various searchable collections of publications.

### ARCHIVE SEARCH

If the British Newspaper Archive hasn't digitised the publication you need, check your local archive to see if there are any indexes or finding aids. Look at the information on GENUKI to see if any individuals or organisations have extracted

material from the relevant newspaper. For example, there is an ongoing project to transcribe the birth, marriage and death information from *The West Briton* and *Cornwall Advertiser*, as well as various other news items such as inquests and court reports. The site has a searchable index, and would save a good deal of time for any researcher interested in that part of the country.

In this digital age, it's often easy to forget that genealogists were transcribing and indexing information long before the widespread use of the internet for family history research. Check local family history societies to see if any partial indexes or transcriptions exist. Sometimes local history groups published quite eclectic snippets of information, so you might be lucky. It's also worth asking your local archivists if they are aware of any pre-existing research. Earlier researchers sometimes deposited their information at their local record office, and this can provide a useful jumping-off point for your own research. The Society of Genealogists holds a number of indexes for some specific publications, some covering a large time frame.

If there is no online coverage for the date range or location you're interested in, you



Industry Making paper for daily newspapers, c1945

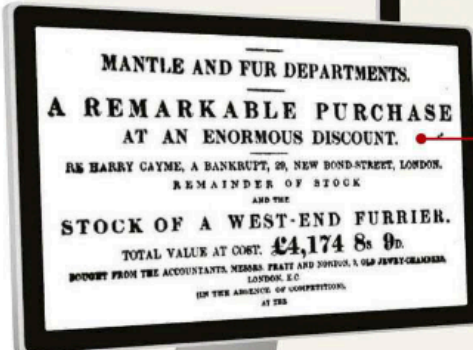
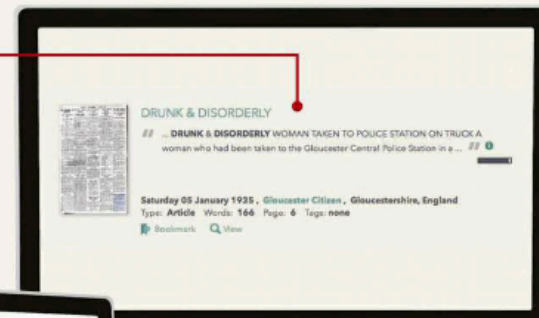


## TOP THREE: NAUGHTINESS IN THE NEWS

People were far more likely to make the newspapers for wrongdoing than obeying the law

### DRUNK & DISORDERLY

**1** Serious crimes weren't the only law breaking stories that made it into the local papers. If your ancestor was prone to drunken carousing you may find a note of them being brought to book. On the other side of the equation, publican ancestors were at risk of being fined for not keeping their houses in order.

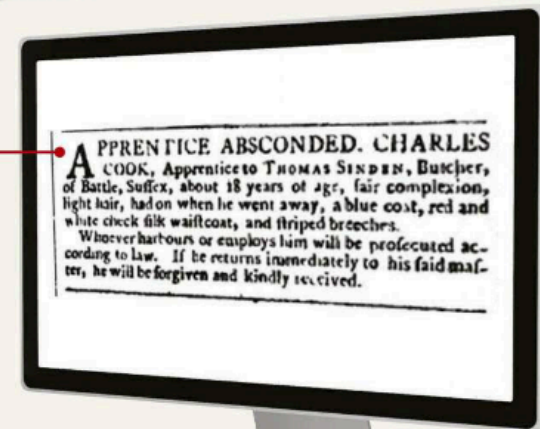


### BANKRUPT ANCESTORS

**2** If any of your forebears fell on hard times they may well have featured in the press. If you know or suspect that someone went out of business at any point in their life, it's worth having a look for bankruptcy notices. If any of your ancestors divorced or separated check for any financial disclaimers.

### ON THE RUN

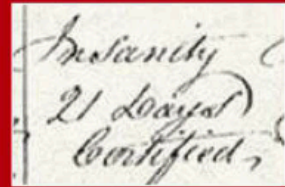
**3** Notices were often posted in relation to missing apprentices, and these sometimes included physical descriptions and details of the individual's known movements. Various 'wanted' type notices appear in historical publications, as people went missing for all sorts of reasons, and from all sorts of situations.





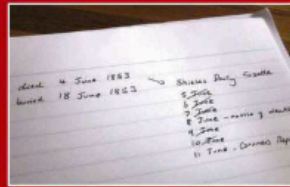
## STEP-BY-STEP: FIND A SUSPICIOUS DEATH

Nothing is more likely to make the newspapers than someone coming to a sticky end



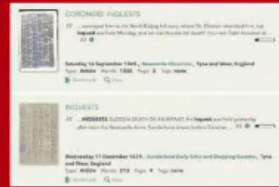
### MYSTERIOUS DETAILS

**1** The vast majority of your ancestors probably died of old age or other natural causes, but sometimes the death certificate indicates that something untoward befell them. Sometimes the death certificate will indicate that an inquest took place, but it's worth checking for newspaper reports in the case of any unusual death.



### DOUBLE-CHECKING

**2** If you can establish the death and burial date, then you are most likely to find any newspaper coverage falling between the two, although it's worth checking past the burial date in case of delayed reporting. Depending on the nature of the death, there might be more than one report.



### WHAT HAPPENED?

**3** Look for specific reports of your ancestor's death, and also check for accounts of a larger incident, such as a ship sinking or a fire. A murder would almost certainly attract fairly extensive coverage, so check for different types of information, such as an initial account of the death, inquest details, and perhaps a court report.

“Survival of coroners’ records is patchy, so a newspaper report might be your only chance of finding out how your ancestor met an untimely end”

✎ will need to decide whether you want to begin the potentially much more daunting task of searching through the newspapers themselves in the hope of uncovering relevant information. This is where you need to carefully consider the social circumstances of your ancestors, as well as your existing data.

Often it will be worth pressing on, but you may want to conduct the kind of genealogical ‘risk assessment’ that we all carry out when trying to make the most of limited time at an archive, or when working out whether a research trip is viable or necessary.

For example, if you don't know the exact date of a 19th-century ancestor's death, your approach will be determined by the information you do have available. If you know he died in the second half of 1860 and was working as a butcher in a small town at the time, there is a reasonable chance of finding a notice of his death, since the date range is relatively small, and he would probably have been of sufficient local standing for his death to make it into print. However, if you only know that an ancestor died some time after

the 1861 Census, and he was a labourer, you are looking at a huge body of material, and the chances are that his death would have gone unrecorded in any event.

Searching newspapers on microfilm can often be time consuming. Even if you are limiting your search to the birth, marriage and death announcements, for example, they won't always appear in the same place in every issue, meaning that you will have to search slowly and carefully to avoid skipping over vital information. The more you can narrow down your search, the better your time will be spent. Nevertheless, scanning through old newspapers this way can prove fascinating.

### FAMILY AFFAIR

Try to work out the odds of finding your ancestors in a particular newspaper before committing yourself to searching through pages and pages of print. For example, if you don't know an ancestor's exact birth date, but you do know the date of birth of her sibling, or her parents' marriage date, have a look for those events in the relevant local newspaper. If they are recorded, then this was a family that did make newspaper announcements, and it might well be worth the time commitment involved in searching fairly widely. If there is no mention of the family in relation to any other life events, you should probably not devote too much time to that search.

Have a think about the timeframe involved in major events in your forebears' lives. If you have a date of burial, then make sure you

**Useful** You can visit the Society of Genealogists office in London, which has indexes for specific publications



## FIND YOUR WAR HEROES IN PRINT

Track down military forebears using the London Gazette and more

The *London Gazette* ([www.thegazette.co.uk](http://www.thegazette.co.uk)) is an extremely useful source of information for genealogists with military forebears. As far back as the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the Gazette published lists of officers who had been killed or wounded in action, and from the Crimean War onwards, all known casualties were listed. Researching military ancestors can sometimes be complicated, and the Gazette is a good place to start, particularly since it is searchable online.

The Gazette didn't just list casualties of war; officers' commissions for all branches of the military should be recorded there, as an officer was supposed to be 'gazetted' before the commission became official.

From the mid-1800s onwards, the Gazette includes lists of gallantry awards for all ranks. The entry should include at least the recipient's name and unit, and more detail may be included for higher awards. If your ancestor was mentioned in dispatches, they might also appear in the Gazette.

The *London Gazette* isn't the only official record of military activities of interest to genealogists. Various other publications include lists of individuals involved in the country's wars. The *Police Gazette* published lists of deserters during WWI, often including physical descriptions. The *Territorial Service Gazette* published information similar to that included in the *London Gazette*, but focused on the territorial battalions. Many photos of individual soldiers were printed. The *Nursing Times* and



*Journal of Midwifery* published lists of awards to wartime nurses, while *Lloyd's List* published lists of shipping casualties. Check the British Newspaper Library for surviving copies of these publications.

search a couple of editions after that date, as well as the editions preceding it. Newspapers have print deadlines and a notification might just miss one such deadline, meaning that an announcement appears later than you

### Business adverts

Local businesses have always put adverts in newspapers to drum up trade. It's worth searching through old copies to see if you can find an advert placed in the paper by your ancestor or the company they worked for to add detail to your research.

Remember that the information in a newspaper report is only as accurate as its source. Be careful about ages and dates. An age in an obituary is a good jumping-off point to search for a birth or baptism record, but remember that the information would generally have been provided by a surviving friend or relative who might not have been entirely accurate. If you have a death certificate indicating that a

relative died from anything other than old age or illness, it's probably a good idea to check a few editions of the local newspaper following the date of death. There may well have been an

inquest. Survival of coroners' records is patchy, and a newspaper report might be your only chance of finding out what happened to an ancestor who met an untimely end. Sometimes the death certificate will indicate that an inquest was held, but even if there is no such indication, it's probably worth checking local newspapers.

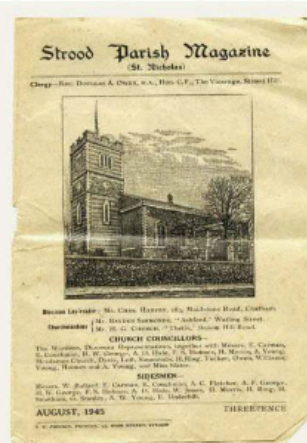
If you know that a relative spent time in prison, you may well be able to find a report of the criminal proceedings against them. You might be able to establish rough sentence dates from the census — inmates of institutions were listed in the returns — and you can then search backwards from that date.

### Donegal Presbytery Men Schedule Picnic

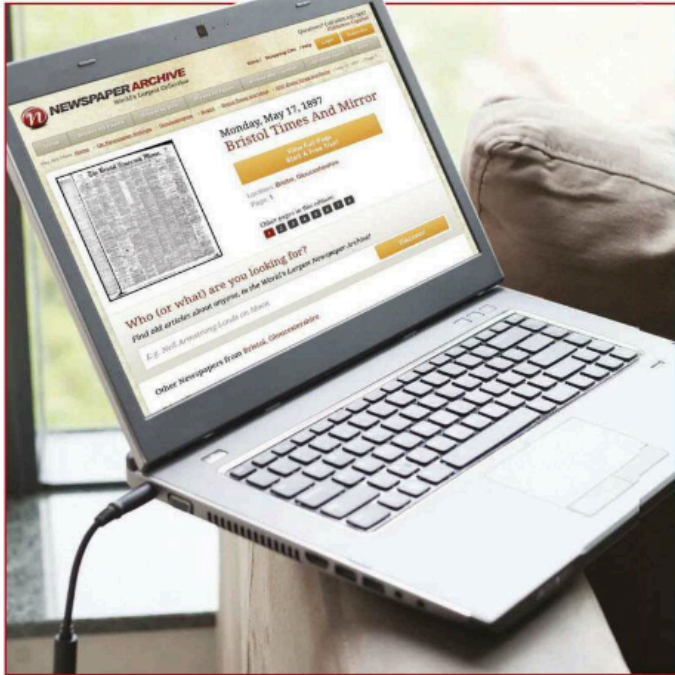
The Brogue — Donegal Presbytery church will hold a family picnic July 25 at the new Presbytery campsite near Sunnyburn. A basket lunch will be served at 1 p.m. News about the campsite development will be given at 2 p.m. Linda Riale became a member of New Harmony Presbytery church on Sunday. The following infants were baptized by Rev. Charles W. Best: Cindy Roberts, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Criswell; Brian Lee, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Trout; and Chris Eugene, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Linsmore.

**Baptism** This announcement regarding a family picnic appeared in Donegal's Gazette and Daily, 14 July 1959. Quirkily, a list of christenings is tagged on the end. It always pays to check back from a baptism date, as they could often take place a long time after the actual birth of the baby





© The Stroud Parish Magazine



© The Newspaper Archive

## PARISH MAGAZINES

What is recorded in these local periodicals

Parish magazines are a useful and little-known source of information for family historians. These publications were entirely focused on the local area, and on day-to-day life in the parish. If your ancestors were baptised, married or buried in the parish, a record is likely to exist in the local magazine. Church officials are often listed, along with details of some of their administrative activities, and if any of your forebears were clergymen, there is a good chance that their doings will be recorded in the parish magazine.

Social events feature quite heavily in these publications, giving a good insight into the leisure time of your forebears. If your ancestors attended Sunday school as children, or were members of local scout or guide troupes, you may find their names listed, and some magazines also include group photographs.

Most parish magazines only began life in the 20th century, so they are unlikely to be a primary source of basic information, but they may allow you to fill in some of the gaps between your ancestors' major life events, and gain insight into what their lives were like. Ask at your local record office for details of parish magazines, or search online.

**Information** The Newspaperarchive website is useful for finding information when compiling your overseas research

⚡ Ancestors in business may make an appearance in the adverts section of a local publication. Check local trade directories to see if they appear. If they're listed in a directory, they might also have advertised in the paper, so an investment of time to scan the advertisements in a few issues might well pay off.

### WIDEN YOUR SEARCH

While searching for specific events within a narrow timeframe is good practice, you can also approach matters from the opposite direction, and search for major events and incidents, both national and local, and see if your ancestors were caught up in them.

Wars were obviously reported nationally, but there was also regional coverage, with names, and sometimes photos, of local casualties.

“Wars were obviously reported nationally, but there was also regional coverage, with names, and sometimes photos, of local casualties”

## TOP TEN: ONLINE MEDIA ARCHIVES

Visit these websites to get a broad set of newspaper data

- ⚡ **British Newspapers Online:** This is the most comprehensive of the British online archives ([www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)). It has a free search facility but payment is required to view the actual images.
- ⚡ **Ancestry.co.uk:** The best known of the commercial genealogy sites ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)). There are various searchable collections including national and regional publications and magazines.
- ⚡ **Findmypast:** This is another major player in online family history research ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)). You can search thousands of publications from across the UK, between 1710 and 1953.
- ⚡ **London Gazette archive:** This has digitised versions of all surviving editions. The index at [www.thegazette.co.uk](http://www.thegazette.co.uk) is searchable by different data sets, such as military awards or bankruptcy notices.
- ⚡ **Internet Archive:** This is a vast ongoing project to digitise books, music, films etc at <http://archive.org/index.php>. It includes various historical publications, including newspapers and magazines.
- ⚡ **Last Chance to Read:** A pay-per-view website ([www.lastchancetoread.com](http://www.lastchancetoread.com)) containing digitised images of a wide selection of newspapers. It has over 3,000 publications available, although coverage is patchy.
- ⚡ **Newspaper Archive:** Though it's primarily a US site, <http://newspaperarchive.com> contains images from several British publications, which means it's useful for any US and British research.
- ⚡ **Internet Library of Early Journals:** This is a collaboration of several academic institutions and [www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej) includes several 18th- and 19th-century magazines. The *Gentleman's Magazine* probably has the most general application.
- ⚡ **The Times Digital Archive:** A digitised set of editions of this British institution, covering 1785 to 2009. Over one million pages are available at <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times.aspx>.
- ⚡ **Gale Digital Collections:** This is an online archive (<http://gdc.gale.com>). The *Times* digital archive is part of this collection, along with several other publications.

If any of your ancestors were involved in local government, or were high up in the military, you might find them mentioned in connection with large-scale happenings. Major disasters, such as a mining accident or the loss of a ship at sea, will probably be reported, and there may be lists of casualties.

With traditional research, be disciplined, and decide your parameters in advance.

With online searching, keep a list of names you've already

tried and try to be as thorough as possible.

### Scottish & Irish papers

You can search old copies of the Scotsman and Irish Times at <http://archive.scotsman.com> and [www.irishtimes.com/search](http://www.irishtimes.com/search) respectively. For the former you can search papers from 1917-1950, while the Irish Times archive spans 1859-2008. Costs vary for both.

Newspaper reports were written to be interesting to the paper's readership. As a result, they can offer a unique insight into the lives of your ancestors. With a bit of persistence and some good research habits you might find that your forebears

become much more real and vivid than is possible with the often very dry information of other genealogical sources. ■

### DIG DEEP

It's also a very good idea to look at your family history in context. Even if the chances of finding specific genealogical detail are remote for whatever reason, it's probably worth scanning through a few editions of the main local publications, just to get a sense of what life was like, and how ordinary people were being affected by the big, world-changing events.

Also, if a large number of family members lived in a particular area, then a quick skim through a number of editions may yield some random snippets of information.

Newspapers aren't generally a genealogist's first port of call, but they are certainly a source worth dipping into. Try to be as methodical as possible, and make sure you know what it is you are looking for. Historical publications are often full of local colour and interest, and it's all too easy to become engrossed in the long-ago doings of people entirely unrelated to your forebears.

**Vendor** A newsagent outside his shop in 1950s, which would have sold newspapers and magazines



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### CONTACTS

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