# **Using the General Register Office Index**

A Guide by Tim Manners, creator of the Online Genealogical Index

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The <u>General Register Office (GRO) Index</u> is similar to <u>FreeBMD</u> in that it lists government records of Births and Deaths in England and Wales for the following year ranges:

Births: July 1<sup>st</sup> 1837 – Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 1916

General Register Office
Official information on births, marriages and deaths

Deaths: July 1st 1837 - Dec 31st 1957

It is possible that marriages will be added in the future. For now, <u>FreeBMD</u> is recommended to see the complete England and Wales civil registration marriages from Q3 1837 and beyond. A graph showing the coverage can be found here: <u>FreeBMD</u> Coverage Charts

There are other online sites offering the Civil Registration records.

<u>FamilySearch</u> (which is <u>free</u> to use) offers births to 2008, marriages to 2005 and Deaths to 2007 (<a href="https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/location/1986340?region=England">https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/location/1986340?region=England</a>)

Subscription sites such as <u>Ancestry</u>, <u>findmypast</u>, <u>MyHeritage</u>, <u>The Genealogist</u> and others also offer the same information.

You may wonder why the <u>GRO Index</u> is more appealing than <u>FreeBMD</u>, but they both have their advantages and together they can be a powerful research tool.

The <u>GRO Index</u> adds some information not included in <u>FreeBMD</u>:

- Mother's maiden name for all births up to 1916 (FreeBMD covers the continued years)
- Death ages to 1957

FreeBMD does not include mother's maiden name until Q3 1911 and death ages only from 1866.

The additional information on the <u>GRO Index</u>, especially the mother's maiden name, is a HUGE advantage. Married women on your family tree with no maiden name can now be found with all their children born after 1<sup>st</sup> July 1837. With a maiden name, it is easier to find christening and marriage records using other online resources. If a birth place is known from a census record, you can now find her christening record by using, for example, the <u>Online Genealogical Index</u> to view online records in a specific place.

The death age from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1837 can assist in finding their birth year and christening, parents, siblings, etc.

There are a lot of references to the census in this guide so here is a quick overview.

The UK census occurred every decade and from 1841, the names and rounded ages were included. 1851 added actual reported age, marital status, relationship, occupation and birth place. This census has continued every ten years since then. The last census currently available online is 1911 which was completed by the resident (usually the head of household) and includes years married, children born to this couple, number of living children in 1911. <a href="FamilySearch">FamilySearch</a> has all England and Wales census available for free and the subscriptions sites (such as <a href="Ancestry">Ancestry</a>, <a href="findmypast">findmypast</a>, <a href="the Genealogist">the Genealogist</a>) also have the same information but often with better search capability. More info <a href="here">here</a>.

Here are the steps to get started with the GRO.

1. Go to the Registration page and create a free account (Register as an individual).

# Registration Please complete the form below entering the registration details These details will be used to determine the delivery address for any orders which you may place. You may change these details at any time or you can alter these details for an individual order if you wish to do so. All required fields are followed by the \* character. Please complete the form and press the "Submit" button to continue. Registration details Email address\* Confirm email address Password\* Instructions on how to set a password. Confirm password\* Title

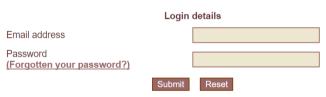
- 2. You will get an email to activate your account.
- 3. Once your account is activated, go to the GRO login page and login.

# Login

Please Note: This service requires your browser to accept cookies - please see our Cookie Policy for more information.

This service does not support the use of the browser BACK button, please only use links and button options to navigate the site.

First time users, please select a Registration option below.



Click on the link for Search the GRO Indexes



5. The current search options are **Birth** and **Death** so select one of those.

# Search the GRO Online Index Which index would you like to search? Events registered in England or Wales:

Birth

Death

- 6. You are now presented with the search form. Complete as much as you know.
- 7. To limit the results, you can specify the registration district and even volume and page number. Find suspected entries on FreeBMD and copy the same details across, if that is easier.

Other ways to find the correct registration district are by first finding a place on a census or church record. Recommended websites for matching a place to a registration district are:

http://maps.familysearch.org/

http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/census place (based on the 1891 census)

This site enables you to look up district name and see which parishes were included.

https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/

or use their A-Z list of district names:

https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/districts/index.html

They also offer a downloadable PDF of a master index of places to districts.

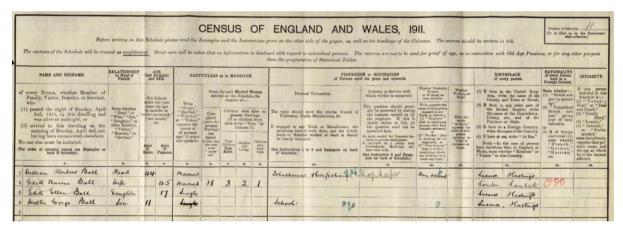
https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/places/index.html

# Finding children who were born and died between census years

There are often clues to missing children either on a census (large gaps between children), in local burial records (children buried in the same parish as siblings' christenings) or from other family records. A great tool for confirming total children and those still living is the 1911 Census.

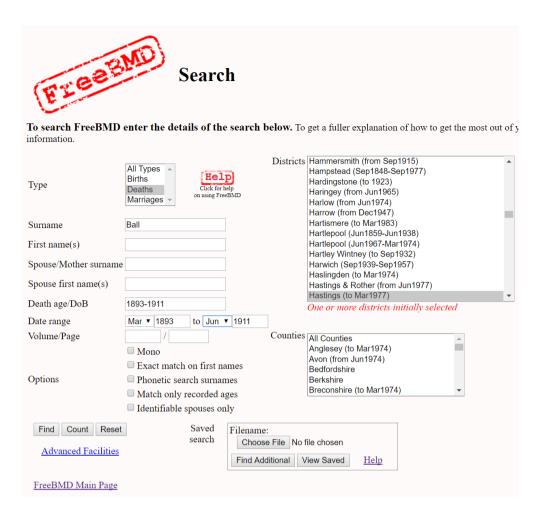
### Example:

The family of William Herbert Ball and Edith Naomi Richards are shown here on the 1911 Census.



It shows they had three children, two of which are living, namely Edith Ellen and Walter George. To find the details of the deceased child, the following process can be utilized.

Using <u>FreeBMD</u>, children with surname Ball who died in Hastings between 1893 (year of marriage) and 1911 were found using the criteria shown on the next page.



The results for this search are as follows:



To find the name of the deceased child, the <u>GRO Index</u> can be used. Look for children born with the surname Ball and mother's maiden name Richards in the district of Hastings, Sussex between 1893 (year of parent's marriage) and 1911. This list can then be cross-referenced with the <u>FreeBMD</u> results.

The search criteria in the **GRO Index** is as follows:

### Search the GRO Online Index Which index would you like to search? Events registered in England or Wales: Please enter your search criteria, mandatory fields are indicated with a Up to 250 matching results will be returned so providing any additional information you know will help locate the registration you are looking for. Who are you searching for? Surname at Birth:\* Ball Include: Exact Matches Only Search for records with a matching surname First Forename: Include: Search for records with a matching first forename Second Forename: Mother's Richards Male Maiden Surname: Exact Matches Only Search for records with a matching Mother's Maiden Surname When was the birth registered? Year:\* 0 1895 ▼ +/- 2 ▼ year(s) **②** Quarter: Select ▼ @ (used 1837-1917) Where was the birth registered? District of Birth: Hastings View list of registration districts Do you already know any GRO Reference details for the registration? Volume: 0 Page: 0 (used 1837-1917) (used 1837-1917)

As the <u>GRO Index</u> requires a gender setting and can only search in 5 year intervals (a specific year + and – 2 years), searches should be made in 1895, 1900, 1905 and 1910 for both male and female.

Reset

Results matching these criteria will include the living children, Edith Ellen (born Mar 1894) and Walter George (born Dec 1899).

Here are the GRO results for the year ranges mentioned earlier.

### Male:

Name: Mother's Maiden Surname:

BALL, - RICHARDS

GRO Reference: 1896 D Quarter in HASTINGS Volume 02B Page 43

Name: Mother's Maiden Surname:

BALL, WALTER GEORGE RICHARDS

GRO Reference: 1899 D Quarter in HASTINGS Volume 02B Page 36

### Female:

Name: Mother's Maiden Surname:

BALL, EDITH ELLEN RICHARDS

GRO Reference: 1894 M Quarter in HASTINGS Volume 02B Page 48

This shows that a male child born in the fourth quarter ("D Quarter") of 1896 is the missing child. You may be able to locate the child's burial record or headstone by researching in the area of residence. Use the <a href="Online Genealogical Index">Online Genealogical Index</a> (OGI) to find online records for specific places in England, Wales and the Isle of Man.

An illegitimate child on the <u>GRO Index</u> is shown with the mother's maiden name as a dash (-) and the child will have the same surname as the mother. Example below:

Name: Mother's Maiden Surname:

HUXLEY, ELEANOR GEORGIE

GRO Reference: 1882 D Quarter in WORCESTER Volume 06C Page 306

## Finding deaths in the GRO

You may wonder why the death information in the GRO is advantageous.

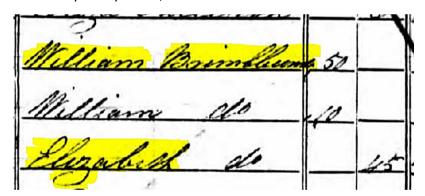
- 1. Knowing the death age for your ancestor can help locate their birth or christening records (especially pre-1837) which will lead to their parents and siblings.
- 2. Knowing the death place for your ancestor can help locate a headstone which may include exact birth and death dates. There may also be other relatives buried in the same grave or graveyard. The <a href="Online Genealogical Index">Online Genealogical Index</a> will show all known online records for a specific place in England, Wales and the Isle of Man.

To find the correct death, use the search features of <a href="FreeBMD">FreeBMD</a> to locate options.

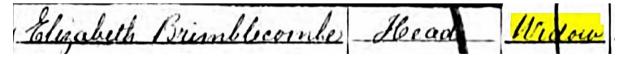
You can narrow down a decade of a death by following the individual on the census. If the spouse survived until the next census, you will see them as a Widow or Widower. Also, the last census where they are living, note the district in which they reside. This can help find the death record.

### Example:

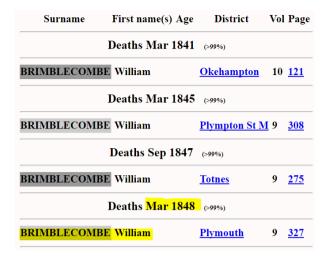
William Brimblecombe appears here on the 1841 census with his wife Elizabeth. He lived in the district of Charles the Martyr in Plymouth, Devon.



On the 1851 census, his wife is shown as a widow.



A quick search on **FreeBMD** finds his death but without an age.



We can use the Volume and Page number to find this record on the GRO Index.

Which index would	d you like to search?			
Events registered in	n England or Wales:	Birth	De	ath
Please enter your so Up to 250 matching registration you are		ields are ind providing a	icated with a	a <sup>*</sup> ıl information you know will help locate the
Who are you sear	ching for?			
Surname at Death:*	Brimblecombe	7	Include:	Exact Matches Only     ?
	with a matching surname			
First Forename at Death:	William	7	Include:	Exact Matches Only
Search for records	with a matching first foren	ame		
Second Forename at Death:		?		
Gender:*	Male ▼ ?		Age at Death in years:	(Enter 0 if less than 1 year old)
When was the dea	th registered?			
Year:* ?	1848 ▼ +/- 0 ▼ yea	ar(s) 🔞	Quarter:	Jan-Feb-Mar ▼ (used 1837-1957)
Where was the dea	ath registered?			
District of Death:	Plymouth		<b>?</b>	View list of registration districts
Do you already kn	ow any GRO Reference	details for t	he registra	tion?
Volume: ?	9 (used 1837-195	<u>7)</u>	Page: 🕡	327 (used 1837-1957)
		Search	Reset	

The results show the recorded age at death (in this example, 57)

Name: Age at Death (in years):
BRIMBLECOMBE, WILLIAM 57
GRO Reference: 1848 M Quarter in PLYMOUTH Volume 09 Page 327

This shows that William's birth year was 1790-1791. Through this information, his christening, parents and siblings were all found in parish registers. The OGI helped to locate this information.

### Finding a maiden name using the GRO

The GRO will show the maiden name of the mother of any child born after 1<sup>st</sup> July 1837. The maiden name can also help clarify a marriage found on <u>FreeBMD</u> where two women have the same first name. This process only applies to marriages after 1<sup>st</sup> July 1837.

### Example:

Suppose your ancestor Henry Wilson married a Sarah in the December quarter of 1837.

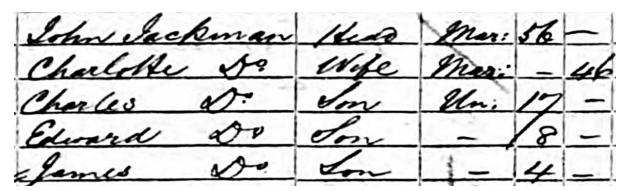
Surname	First name	e(s) District Vol Page	
Mai			
CLAY	Sarah	<u>Halifax</u> 22 <u>190</u>	Info G
GLEDHILL	Edward	<b>Halifax</b> 22 <u>190</u>	Info G
HARDY	Mary	<b>Halifax</b> 22 <u>190</u>	Info G
Kershaw	William	<b>Halifax</b> 22 190	Info G
OGDEN	Hannah	<b>Halifax</b> 22 190	Info G
SHEPHERD	Sarah	<b>Halifax</b> 22 190	Info G
SMITH	David	<b>Halifax</b> 22 190	Info G
WILSON	Henry	<b>Halifax 22</b> 190	Info G

The results shown above from <u>FreeBMD</u> show the dilemma of two women names Sarah with surnames Clay and Shepherd. By finding children born to this marriage in the <u>GRO</u> (matching known children seen on a census), you can determine which Sarah is correct.

Often, a family will be found on a census but the mother's maiden name is unknown as the marriage has not been located, possibly as it was before civil registration began (pre-1837). The <u>GRO</u> can be used to find the mother's maiden name if there are children born after 1<sup>st</sup> July 1837.

### Example:

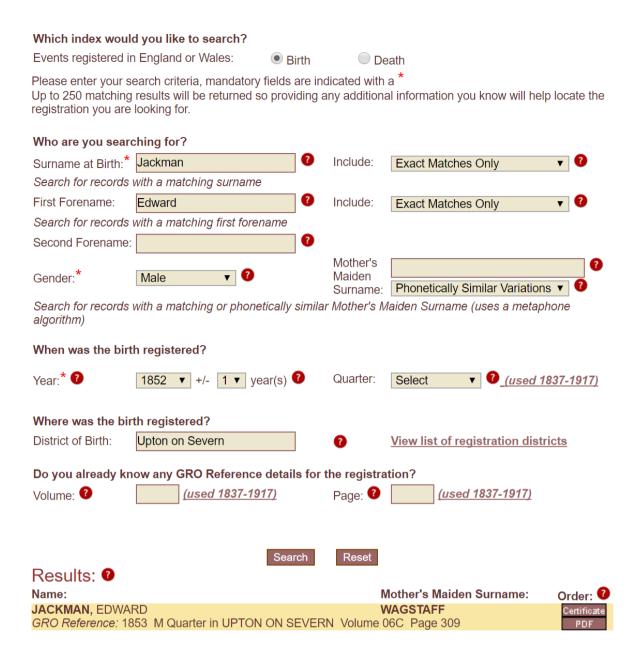
Here is John Jackman and his wife Charlotte on the 1861 census living in Worcester.



To find the mother's maiden name, we need to look up the birth of a child born after 1837 in the GRO Index.

According to the 1861 census, Edward was born in Kempsey which is in the Upton on Severn district of Worcestershire. His age is shown as 8 on the census (which was taken on 7 April 1861). This places his birth between 1852 and 1853.

The search and results using the GRO are shown on the next page.



We now know that his mother was Charlotte Wagstaff.

By searching the parish registers for a marriage of John Jackman and Charlotte Wagstaff, we find the following at <a href="FamilySearch.org">FamilySearch.org</a>.

John Jackman England Marriages, 1538–1973	
Name:	John Jackman
Spouse's Name:	Charlotte Wagstaff
Event Date:	15 Dec 1834
Event Place:	Croome D'Abitott, Worcester, England

By using the <u>FamilySearch.org Catalog</u>, the film for Croome D'Abitott was located and the marriage entry found.

John Jackman Backelo	of The Parish
and Charlotte Wagotoff  Spinster	of thi Parish
were married in this Church by Banns	and therty four
This Marriage was solemnized between us Charle  In the Presence of Martha wagslift	Jackmen the hongstaff

Once the maiden name is known, other children of this family can be found on the <u>GRO Index</u>. Also, by using the full name of the mother, her age from the census and birthplace, a christening record can be found along with her parents and, therefore, siblings christened in the same parish.

Here is her christening found on <a href="FamilySearch.org">FamilySearch.org</a>:

Charlotte Wagstaff England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975			
Name:	Charlotte Wagstaff		
Gender:	Female		
Christening Date:	12 Sep 1813		
Christening Date (Original):	12 SEP 1813		
Christening Place:	CROOME D'ABITOT, WORCESTER, ENGLAND		
Father's Name:	Joseph Wagstaff		
Mother's Name:	Susanna		

Now that her parents' names are known, a search in the same area with these parents shows the following siblings:

Henry Badan Wagstaff England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975	christening:	3 May 1807	GREAT AND LITTLE HAMPTON, WORCESTER, ENGLAND	Joseph Wagstaff Susannah
Mary Wagstaff England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975	christening:	30 April 1809	GREAT AND LITTLE HAMPTON, WORCESTER, ENGLAND	Joseph Wagstaff Susannah

As the maiden name is now known, the marriage of Charlotte's parents was quickly found on <u>FamilySearch.org</u>.

# Joseph Wagstaff mentioned in the record of Joseph Wagstaff and Susannah Ruck Name Joseph Wagstaff Spouse's Name Susannah Ruck Event Date 21 Sep 1804 Event Place Saint Clement, Worcester, Worcester, England

The examples above highlight the value of the options available in the <u>GRO Index</u> combined with <u>FreeBMD</u>, the census, <u>OGI</u> and other online tools.

### **Referenced Websites:**

GRO Index - https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes\_search.asp

FreeBMD – <a href="http://www.freebmd.org.uk">http://www.freebmd.org.uk</a>
FamilySearch – <a href="http://familysearch.org">http://familysearch.org</a>

FamilySearch Maps - <a href="http://maps.familysearch.org">http://maps.familysearch.org</a>

FamilySearch Catalog - <a href="https://www.familysearch.org/catalog/search">https://www.familysearch.org/catalog/search</a>
Genuki 1891 Places - <a href="https://www.uk/big/census\_place">https://www.uk/big/census\_place</a>
Registration District Search - <a href="https://www.uk/bmd.org.uk/reg/">https://www.uk/bmd.org.uk/reg/</a>