



## Exploring City Directories Online in England and Wales

Ed Storey offers suggestions for researching your ancestors from across the pond

**W**E ARE PROBABLY FAMILIAR WITH THE MANY BENEFITS OF using city directories in North America to learn more about our ancestors. Being annual, printed and in alphabetical order means that they are both easy to use and a source of information not otherwise found. For those of us with English ancestors, the benefits of directories from across the pond can be a great help. In the US, directories seem to have been only available from private companies. In England, some were likely printed by the government or by the mail delivery service.

Alternately, there could be a charge. The online directories are probably the place to start. Pursue the libraries if more information is required.

British directories evolved over time, as in other countries. Frederick Kelly, a postal official, produced directories primarily to assist addressing and delivering mail. The letter carriers both collected addresses and sold the directories. Business directories were produced to help customers find what they were looking for. Other directories not only provided a little history and features of each hamlet, but occasionally contained maps, showing boundaries of parishes. Many included women, both married and single.

In many directories, the residents of each hamlet are listed in order. First, those of nobility. Next, we find gentlemen and the clergy. Finally, the ordinary people are listed, in alphabetical order. Many times, the subjects were first listed by profession and then alphabetized. In any case, it will be wise to peruse a few pages of the directory before trying to hone in on a resident. This will help find your quarry, with a minimum of mis-steps.

The British Library also has copies of directories from some of the properties in the British

WATTON, THE DISTRICT COMPRISES THE FOLLOWING places:—Attleborough, Banham, Besthorpe, Breccles, Bridgham, Buckenham (New), Buckenham (Old), Car-	
<b>PRIVATE RESIDENTS.</b>	Harwood Thomas,
Allen Richard M.B. The Pines	Buckenham road
Amis John Riseborough, Hargham rd	Houchen Fredk. Va
Amis Walter John, The Beeches	Jones Arth. Wansb
Andrews Arthur, Hargham road	Jones Edward, Lon
Bacon Frank Mace, Fir lodge	Kershaw Richard, l
Bacon Horace Henry, The Laurels	Ketteringham Mrs.
Balls William, Connaught road	Ketteringham Robe
Barnard David, The Ferns, London rd	Kidner Miss, Conna
Bayes Mrs. New North road	Le Grice Samuel,
Boast Mrs. Mill house, Hargham road	Le Grice Samuel,
Bone Miss, Connaught road	London road
Brooke Melancthon Wm. Henry Lombe,	Livingston Wm. Th
Point cottage	Long Arthur
Childerhouse Frederick, Shrn house	Long Herbert Char
Cloud Arthur Thomas, Point house	Lovett Mrs. Tenby
Cooke Miss, High street	Mann Frank Thom
Crowe Misses, Glebe view	Matthews Mrs. Har
Dawes William, Queen's square	Mills Miss, Queen's

In this example from the 1904 Kellys Post Office Directory for Norfolk, there are several women, married and single in the left hand column.

Here, we will look at how to find directories online for many of the counties of England and Wales. Additionally, many local libraries as well as the British Library have copies of directories in their collections. These are best located by email queries to the library of interest. In some cases, a librarian might copy and email back a few pages.