THE LECTURE NOTES FOR THE PRESENTATION TO THE VENTURA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY.
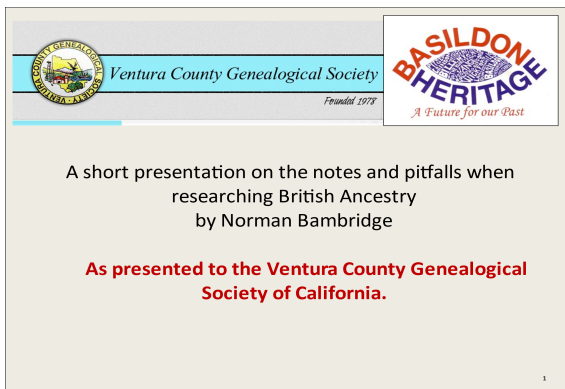
SCREEN 1: AN INTRODUCTION - Lecture by Norman Bambridge

Part ONE : **THE RESEARCH PATHWAY**

Most researchers will accept the challenge when asked, to undertake genealogical research, but firstly it is essential to discuss the factors needed to find a proven starting point and what their objectives are.

The best way, of course, is to interview and take notes, and to copy those notes back to the client, and highlight that some "Family Skeletons" may be uncovered.

Proof outweighs hearsay, so look for a starting point, such as what certificates are available and if not, permission to obtain those.

Bearing in mind the costs involved here in the UK the GRO (General Register Office) will charge £11 per legal copy or £7.50 for a PDF version.

The way I start a Tree, is to arrange to meet and document the questions and answers, and where or when 'family Skeletons' may or have been uncovered.

I have had people ask me to stop immediately as it was too distressing for them. Equally some will ask for the information to remain confidential even from their own families.

An explanation of the way UK records are held by Year and Quarter helps explain that Baptisms come after Births and that is a useful guide when multiple, same named people are found.

BUT, don't forget when you first see a Baptism date it could be many years after the birth date.

Establish if there are Family Bibles, Photos and most importantly, Birth locations and family Churches where the parish records, especially for pre-1837 records.

I realise that our geography will not be well known, however, a Registration location (such as West Ham, East London) can have actual locations from Canning Town in the South to Chingford in the North, from Stratford le Bow in the West to Ilford in the East.

Some thirty or more parishes, all part of this registration area. So, a family address may also prove helpful.

The County Boundary is another feature to establish, for example Essex starts technically on the East Bank of the River Lea and the West Bank is Middlesex and NOT London which people think. London in this context, is the old City of London.

People always think in current time NOT of a century or more ago. These same issue applies to the south of the River Thames with Surrey and Kent. For example, Lambeth Palace and Bridge are in Surrey and the Royal Observatory and Royal Naval College in Greenwich Palace and Park is in Kent.
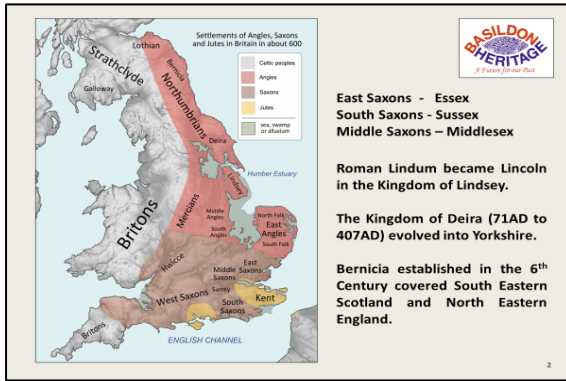
We can date some of our Parish Churches back to the Saxon times and of course how some of our County names evolved from the areas occupied.

And how we still use the imperial measurements of the time. For example:
An Acre – The area of one chain (22 yards) multiplied by one Furlong (220 yards).

One chain is still the measurement between the stumps of a Cricket Pitch! And one Furlong is still used in Horse Racing distance measuring!

SCREEN 3 : DANELAW (MAP OF BRITAIN)
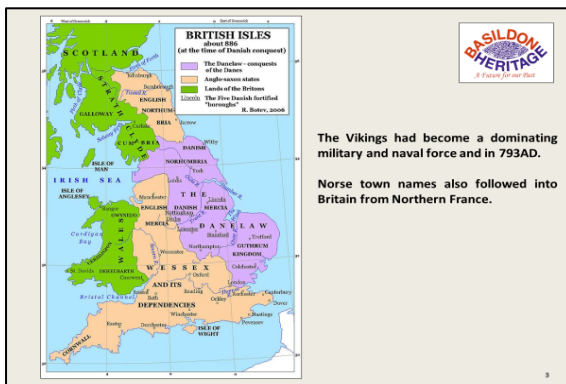
The Vikings had become a dominating military and naval force and in 793AD a group of Norwegian Vikings attacked the famous Abbey at Lindisfarne in Northumbria.

The first of many raids which were launched against Britain in the following centuries, with Norse raiding parties attacking areas in Scotland, the Shetlands, Orkneys, Hebrides, Isle of Man and Ireland.

The Danes focused their attention on Mercia as well as the kingdom of Wessex, thus necessitating a plan of action from Alfred the Great.

In this part of Essex, Benfleet, Ashingdon and Maldon were famous battle areas with the Vikings which arguably from these times, integrated with the late Saxon period and of King Alfred the Great, and so remained until the Norman Conquest of 1066AD.

What also may be of interest, was on their arrival in the English Channel around Appledore in Kent, Viking armies followed the same routes as the Romans nine-hundred years before.

Priory Park in Southend was the burial place of a former Saxon Royal Warrior, probably wounded at the Battle of Benfleet in 893AD and on his way back to the Viking fortress constructed at Shoeburyness.
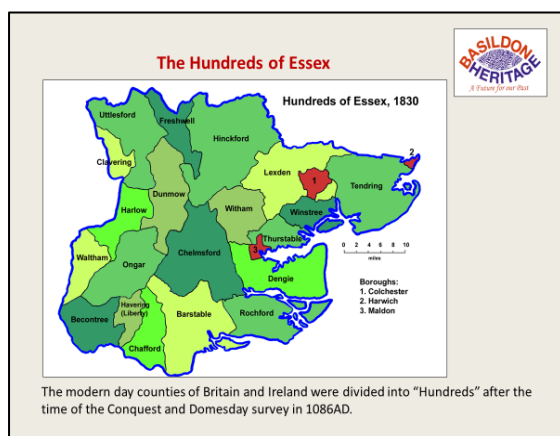
Saxon names also form the potential research lines, particularly with the Royal Blood and Lordship lines. I will not dwell on that history which is a whole separate subject, but to mention they also metamorphosed from the warrior to the agricultural life.
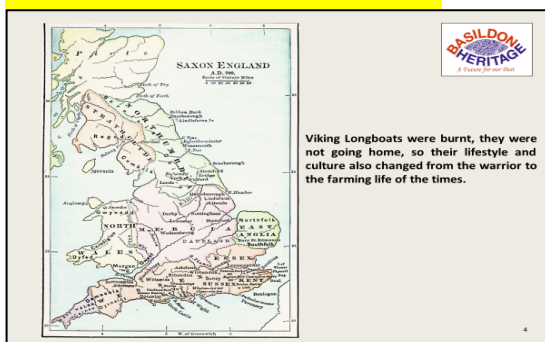
You will notice in modern day maps, how county boundaries have changed, another of the research idiosyncrasies when using systems and Volume numbering, that the borders can cross county lines.

The modern day counties of Britain and Ireland were divided into "Hundreds" after the time of the Conquest and Domesday survey in 1086AD.

The "Hundred".

A 'Hundred' was the division of a Shire for administrative, military and judicial purposes.

Originally, when introduced by the Saxons between 613AD, a 'Hundred' had enough land to sustain approximately one hundred households headed by a hundred-man or hundred eolder (elder).

He was responsible for administration, justice and supplying military troops as well as leading its forces. The office was not hereditary but by the 10th century the office was selected from among a few outstanding families.

Within each 'hundred' there was a meeting place where the men discussed local issues and judicial trials were enacted. The role of the Hundred Court was described in the Dooms Laws of King Edgar (943-975).

The name of the hundred was normally that of the meeting place. There is no specific area size for a "Hundred."

Hundreds were further divided. Larger or more populous hundreds were split into divisions (or half-hundreds). All hundreds were divided into Tithings which contained ten households.

Below that, the basic unit of land was called the hide, which was enough land to support one family and varied in size depending on the quality and fertility of the land.

Above the hundred was the Shire under the control of the Shire-Reeve (or Sheriff).

Hundred boundaries were independent of both parish and county boundaries, although often aligned, meaning that a hundred could be split between counties or a parish could be split between hundreds.

The system of hundreds was not as stable as the system of counties being established at the time and frequently differ on how many hundreds a county has.

The Domesday Book contained a radically different set of hundreds than that which would later become established in many parts of the country.

Between Anglo-Saxon times and the nineteenth century, the County of Essex was divided for administrative purposes into 19 'Hundred's', plus the Liberty of Havering-atte-Bower and the Boroughs of Colchester, Harwich and Maldon.

Working in collaboration with Lorraine West of SBCGS, her ancestral tree includes the Parishes of the Rochford Hundred and the likes of "Carenduna" now Canewdon and "Hacuuella" or Hawkwell and twenty three others.

Between the two of us we have researched all of the parish churches to establish (where readable) the family names, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, who may be inter-related as a means of confirming those names known when creating her family tree.

It is obviously time consuming, arguably skilful in interpreting, because of the writing styles and animal or berry inks used at the time and of course the occasional sojourn into Latin.

That said, an outcome in the historic sense also guides one to a greater understanding of the family, of its times and struggles, particularly with the Workhouses of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

We are now collaborating with Rosana Swing of SBCGS and her ancestral links more likely to include both Landed Gentry and Aristocracy than the Agricultural workforce. Rosana now also sits in with the Ventura discussion meetings courtesy of Steve Yarbrough.

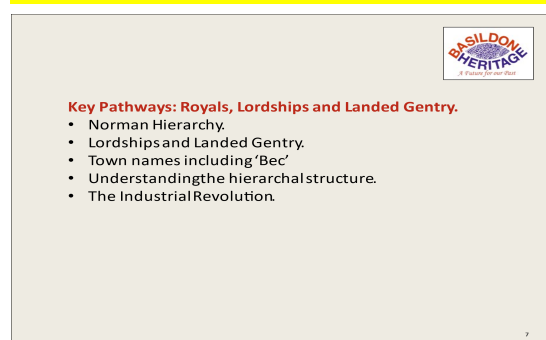SCREEN 6: THE HISTORIC COUNTIES NAME SUFFIXES
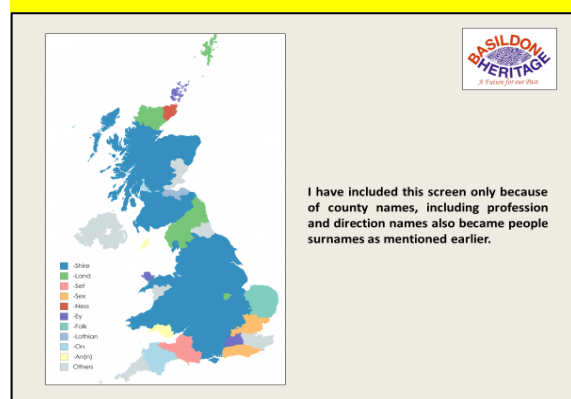
Throughout the histories of the four countries of the UK, a variety of languages have been used to name places. These languages were often used in parallel with each other.

It is often difficult to assess the genuine etymology of a placename, hence some of the entries below are assigned more than one meaning, depending on which language was used to originally give the place its name.

One of the most common words used in county names in the UK is the suffix -shire. A West Saxon word meaning division.

SCREEN 7: KEY PATHWAYS : ROYALS, LORDSHIPS AND LANDED GENTRY.

Key Pathways: Royals, Lordships and Landed Gentry.
- Norman Hierarchy.
- Lordships and Landed Gentry.
- Town names including 'Bec'
- Understanding the hierarchal structure.
- The Industrial Revolution.

From the time of, and before, when you include Norman hierarchy, the records of British and Irish Royalty are well kept and give many centuries of documented Family Trees.

This also continues into the Lordships and 'Landed Gentry' and includes their Castles and Manor Houses.

Some town names in Northern France are or course of Norse extraction, when their time of expedition and integration took place. Some of these names subsequently followed into our society.

So the occasional town name may be from Scandinavia, France, sometimes Spain and Britain.

For example Beck is commonly a place-name element in Normandy, deriving from Norse bekkr, 'stream'. Tooting Bec in South London probably takes its name from the Bec Abbey in Northern France.

At the time of Domesday Book, there were two Tooting manors. The more northerly of the pair was given by William the Conqueror to Richard of Tonbridge, who in turn endowed it to the Abbey of Notre Dame du Bec in Normandy.

Apart from Royalty and Lordships of the Manors, it is necessary to understand how the hierarchal structure worked, e.g. Agricultural Labourers formed most of the workforce.

Free-men or free-tenants held their land by contract of feudal land tenure and were essentially rent-paying tenant farmers who owned little or no service to the Lord. In 11th Century England Free-men made up only 10% of the peasant population.

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution when inwards movement of Labour (Inwards towards central cities) before again radiating outwards with the advent of railways.

The cultural change of professions also impacted on family links. Traditional farm workers left farms for the potential of greater wages offered by the earlier need for labour to manage that industrial impetus.

CORE NAME MEANINGS

The Poll Tax can arguably be dated to the reign of King John (1199-1216) who wished to collect more money through a new system called 'Taxation' – You may have heard of it!

So names like Peter would then have a profession attached such as Peter the Fletcher, Peter the Smith, Peter the Butcher etc. etc. In Wales there are still only about seven core surnames such as the Jones, Pugh, Evans etc.

In England, they also had place names and structure names attached including Ford, Bridge, a town, village or hamlet or location name. All of these names, of course, evolved into derivations of the modern surnames.

SCREEN 8 - AFTER HENRY VIII

Firstly, the spelling and the changes around the sixteenth century when names were written in Latin, and later anglophiled after Henry's divorce from the Catholic Church, for example Jacobus to Jacob, Petrus to Peter and the reverse.

Another important search engine is London's Central Criminal Court or "Old Bailey" as known.

Their case records run between 1674 and 1913 and of course, the very many types of criminal trials (before civil), meant that transportation to the Americas and then to Van Diemen's Land, was the standard for the time.

America won the wars of independence and Australia the "Ashes" in Cricket!

KEY : DEMOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT.

The demographic movement of people brings into question their backgrounds and how that evolves into our modern society. Examples of this could include those from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the end of a thousand years of history at the turn of the 18th Century.

The Prussian movement, southwards and westwards.

The Huguenots or French Protestants persecuted in the 16th Century, where some 50,000 emigrated to Britain.

The German revolution in 1848/49 where some 5% of the emigrees, including Jewish, came to this country and probably as with those going to the USA, changing the prefix and suffixes of their names.

What was noticeable about their arriving, was the types of professions they brought with them particularly Master Baker and Master Shoemaker or Leather trades.

The Irish Potato famine between 1845/50 caused a similar emigration of people, again mainly to the Americas.

KEY : INDUSTRIAL MOVEMENT

The movement of Miners for example, from Tin Mining in Cornwall to Coal Mining in Somerset and then across the River Severn into Cardiff and the welsh mining valleys.

Similarly, to The midland mining counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to the North Eastern counties around Newcastle-upon-Tyne where this also transposed into ship-building.

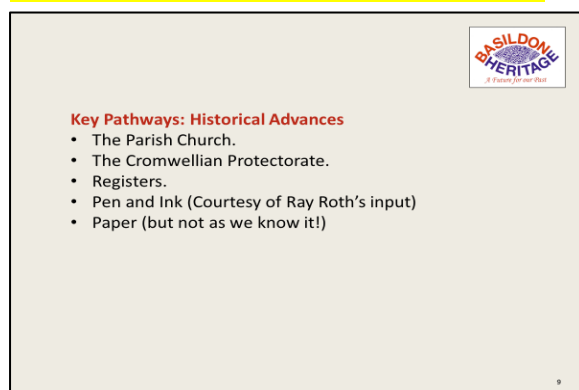The nineteenth century also saw this movement extend to Chile in South America.

Whereas today, land-based Fossil Fuel mining has finished, in Derbyshire Salt Mining is still a very big industry.

It must be mentioned also, that Miners were extensively used in the First World War for their expertise in tunnelling.

KEY : THE COMING OF THE RAILWAYS

This generated an exodus of Agricultural Labourers to the towns and centres of the emerging railway industry. Then of course, they followed outwards, the progression of the lines to the towns and cities elected to have a rail connection.

SCREEN 9 - HISTORICAL ADVANCES

I have already mentioned that the Parish Church was the source of record keeping, which includes the transition from Latin to an evolving English and of course the style of writing and spelling of the time.

One problem here was that Baptisms or Christenings after the 'divorce' from the Catholic Church, were more important than date of birth.

At the time of the Cromwellian Protectorate (Oliver Cromwell) (1653 – 1659) And for about eleven years in all, Parishes were told **NOT** to keep records.

Another issue, was that there were no recognised standard of record or register keeping. Also, until a much later time, Catholic and other non-conformist churches kept their own records.

The Pen and style of writing and Spelling, were of course dependent upon the ability of the Rector, Vicar, Curate or even the Church Warden of the parish and of course, the types of inks available.

Most wrote with a goose-quill pen and an iron gall or carbon-based ink. Iron gall ink was made up from galls (usually oak-galls), copperas [copper sulphate] or green vitriol [ferrous sulphate], and gum Arabic, in varying proportions; carbon inks were developed using soot.

To either mixture could be added other ingredients affecting the colour and the consistency to suit the immediate purpose: a rapid writer might want his ink runnier, a professional scribe preparing a formal text, a blacker and stickier ink.

Different writing surfaces might also call for inks of different viscosity. The commonest writing surfaces were paper and vellum, or parchment. Paper was invariably rag paper, less than perfectly smooth, and naturally absorbent.

Paper for writing was treated with size, a gelatinous substance made from the hooves and skins of animals, applied to the surface after the paper had been removed from the mould, rather than mixed with the pulp as it has been in later years.

A problem, confronted those wishing to make marginal notes in printed texts, and a remedy was to rub the margins with powdered gum sandarac, a resin, so as to make them easier to write in.

Vellum, except when an earlier text had been scraped off, presented a different problem, as it was likely to be greasy, notwithstanding prior treatment with chalk and pumice during manufacture.

There was room for improvisation: some writers commended crushed egg-shells with powdered incense, others a mixture of Allum and resin. The flesh side would be greasier but smoother than the hair side.

Even now, some records only sixty to eighty years old, but written in blue ink (Bic style pen), have faded, almost to a point of not being readable, let alone of some four centuries ago.
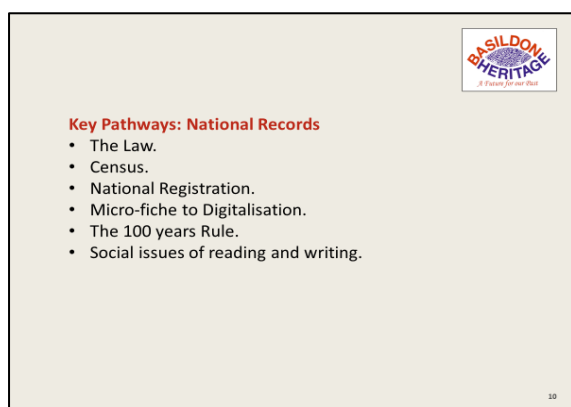
With these industrial advances on land and sea, it became necessary to change the law and expand the way records were kept at parish to national level.

Some Census started in 1831 but more commonly the first National Census in 1841. And of course compiled on a ten-year cycle similar to yours in America.

Such changes also include the start of a National Registration system for Baptism, Deaths and Marriages.

This came about in July 1837 when parishes were given time to have their records transferred, and although they are still kept by the parish churches, or those that remain, the local County Archives are the main recipient of these registers, when full.

In modern times, these have been copied onto a microfiche system and are now being digitalised for on-line research. Our National Archives are held at Kew.

England still retains the 100 years rule for the publication of data so the next national census will be available in 2021. Released in April 2022.

THE SOCIAL ISSUES OF READING AND WRITING

Reading and writing was not taught formally in schools until around the 1880's. Therefore and up to the 1911 Census, Enumerators were used to compile the census and these of course relied on their interpretation of the verbal language used.
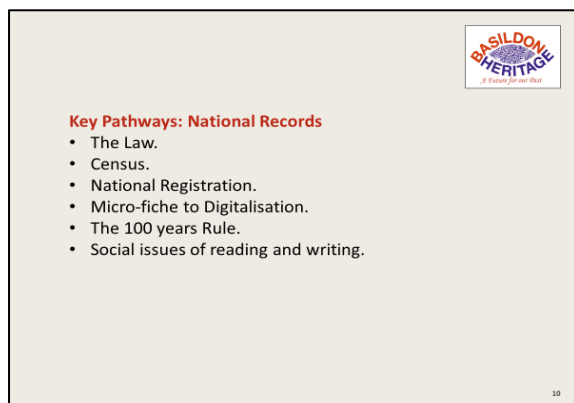
The 1911 Census was the first to be compiled by the head of the household and along with previous changes, a couple of required entries were of interest, namely number of children born in the marriage, which of course is of great help in research and how you interpret the entry "Imbecile" !!

Abbreviations are also a common source of misleading research. i.e. "Jack" for John also Jno., "Jas" for James, "Harry" or Hy. for Henry, Nellie of Ellen (perhaps this from London 'cockney' slang language (Back-slang) where letters are reversed. (Not rhyming slang).

Another problem also evolved from the 'local' differences in the English language across counties and the spellings used. The prefix used in Scottish and Irish surnames being cases in question and earlier where the French prefix of 'de' formed part of the name.

Hyphenated names also seem to be a problem in the Ancestry translations. The first part of a double-barrelled name often finishes up in the forename section.

SCREEN 11 - TO BELIEVE, OR NOT!

Key Pathways: National Records
- The Law.
- Census.
- National Registration.
- Micro-fiche to Digitalisation.
- The 100 years Rule.
- Social issues of reading and writing.

When you see a typewritten register page, ask yourself the question, who transcribed it and when were Typewriter's invented. So, another source of transcript error.

Inserting text for systems to interrogate – remember the differences between American English and UK English.

Until 1911/12 Marriage records transcribed will invariably have the comment "eg. Tom Atkins married one of these people." Because the transcript taken off the parish Marriage record will have the names in Alpha order and not who married who!

Birth Certificates added the fathers name from late 1911 and Marriage to actual people marrying in 1912. Another issue from the change to Marriage certificates in 1912 was that if brothers married sisters, still only the surname of one of the spouse lines is used.

Death Certificate registration still today, does not need a Birth Certificate for the registrar, so verbal memory of a person's date of birth can still be inaccurate especially for the year of birth and therefore the age in years at death.

Records relating to serving forces deaths in the two world wars are still the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and not the National Database.

About 70% of WWI Military Records were destroyed by Bombing raid fires in WWII. And another issue you may have come across, is that most German records, and one assumes Jewish records held in Berlin, were destroyed or taken back to Moscow at the end of the War.

Also, and digressing a little, is that the use of the Guillotine as a means of execution might also prove of interest to your members and a couple of points stand out in that the Nazi Party, in power from 1933 to 1945, used that means of "disposal" extensively for the Slavs they wished "eradicated" as well as the 39 or so "prisoners" held in Berlin Prisons at the time. Those "prisoner" names are documented.

The guillotine remained France's standard method of judicial execution until the abolition of capital punishment in 1981. The last person to be executed in France was Hamida Djandoubi, who was guillotined on 10 September 1977.

SCREEN 12 - THE NUANCES IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Women nearly always wished to be two years younger than their husbands, supposedly to enhance the marriage link. So always check the female birth date.

Key Pathways: Nuances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- The age of women!
- Sharing of children.
- Marshland Marriages.
- Birth Certificates.
- Plagues and Burial grounds.
- Parental consent in Marriages.
- Monastery's.
- The Mormon Church.

Children would occasionally be shared between family sisters where a large family existed in the one, and a small or no children in the other. This, similarly, when mothers or children themselves were ill.

Marriages, particularly in Marshland areas would be very numerous in the early seventeenth through to the nineteenth century. You could find marriages almost bi-annually. This, normally caused by plague or pestilence such as mosquito.

One of the most annoying features of the Baptism Records is that some Rectors, Vicars or Curates would append a known date of birth, whilst the majority would not.

A good idea is to document when plagues occur, for example and say every twenty years you can expect something … Diphtheria, Cholera, Small Pox, etc. and learn of the burial grounds used as often these were not churchyard burials but mass burials possibly outside of the city wall or city limits.

When trying to establish marriage dates and up unto 1929, Boys and girls could marry with parental consent, if conducted by an ordained minister, under the age of 21 years.

Over that age parental consent was not needed. BUT, the lowest age for a legal marriage was 14 years for boys and 12 years for girls (the legal age of puberty). On 30 April 1929, this was raised to 16 years, with parental consent and that age is still current.

The 1841 Census has, unfortunately, anyone over the age of 15 years often rounded down to the nearest five years.so, dependent upon the enumerator in question, and what age he decided to record, ages were not too reliable.

Also, in this country, the Church are the biggest landowners , so establishing a knowledge of the Monastery's linked to the area or research is useful, even after some may have gone after the good King Henry VIII so decided!

For example, in the Basildon Borough area there are links to Stratford Langthorne Abbey in West Ham (now East London).

AND FINALLY…

We are aware that the transposing of records from Parish to become National, was predominantly undertaken by representatives of the Mormon Church, but their lack of geographical knowledge is another area in which care is needed.

The 1931 Census due out in 2032, will be a problem as it was destroyed by fire in the London Blitz of the second world war!

The 1939 Housing Register now used, was not officially a Census but was used for Identity Cards and Rationing Books and to administer conscription and then in 1948 with the coming of the National Health Service, again this was the base record. There was no Census in 1941!

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

Thank you for Listening
– Any questions?