

Useful Information

General Register Office (GRO)

www.gro.gov.uk

FreeBMD

<http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>

Lancashire BMD

www.lancashirebmd.org.uk

Ancestry

www.ancestry.co.uk

findmypast

www.findmypast.co.uk/search/parish-records/manchester-burials

BMDregisters

www.bmdregisters.co.uk

FamilySearch

www.familysearch.org

Manchester Burial Records

www.burialrecords.manchester.gov.uk

Tameside Metropolitan Borough

www.tameside.gov.uk

The National Archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk



For more detailed information:
www.mlfhs.org.uk/guides

Archives +

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Death and Burial

Identifying the death of your ancestors is an important part of Family History. Along with birth and marriage it is a key event. By finding their death, you will avoid the situation where you build a family tree, only to find that the man you had assumed to be your great-grandfather, actually died as a child.

Civil Registration of Deaths

Civil Registration of deaths in England & Wales began on 1 July 1837 (1855 in Scotland). A Death Certificate records the date & place of death, name, cause of death, age and occupation of the deceased. It also names the informant, who may have been a family member. The place of death could be a hospital or workhouse or a domestic dwelling if the person died at home. Death certificates also record the date of any inquest which might have been held to establish cause of death. Most useful is the column for the informant, which may give a home address of another family member. Ages may be reliable if the informant was a family member but should be treated with caution otherwise.

It is believed that most deaths after 1837 were registered, although the deceased is not always identified. Death Certificates may be purchased from the Register Office covering the area where the death occurred or from the General Register Office (GRO) by ordering online. For deaths in the last 50 years there are checking procedures to prevent criminal use of certificates but otherwise certificates can be requested if you can supply a name and date of death. A GRO register reference will speed up the response from the GRO.

There is a national index of deaths, which gives the register reference. This is available online at Ancestry, findmypast or on the FreeBMD web site. FreeBMD covers from 1837 to around 1970. The commercial sites extend

index coverage to about 2005. The most recent deaths can be found in microfiche indexes held at Manchester Central Library. There are also county BMD sites for Lancashire, Cheshire and several other counties, which contain indexes to the local Registrars' death registers and which can offer some advantages over the GRO indexes.

For more detailed information concerning birth, marriage and death indexes see our companion Research Guide *'BMD Indexes on the Internet'*.

Burial Registers

Burial Registers have been kept by Church of England churches since the 16th century. They are the prime source of information about deaths before the advent of Civil Registration but also continue after 1837, so should not be ignored for this later period. For the first two hundred years burial registers generally recorded only limited detail, often no more than the name of the deceased and the date of burial. The age of someone who reached an exceptional age might be recorded and the nobility might be accorded a few more details. Otherwise additions only appear where the Vicar or Sexton wanted to distinguish those of the same name by recording their abode. In some registers the death of children was identified by the formula *"son/daughter of"*. Despite this, in small parishes and with limited mobility, it is often possible to identify the person who was buried with reasonable certainty. Towards the end of the 18th century rather more detail begins to appear in registers. Some record age at death, which is vital information necessary to link back to the person's birth or baptism. Occupations are frequently given for men and widows are identified alongside their late husband's name. Nonconformist chapels often kept more informative registers than Church of England churches.

From 1813 onwards the Church of England began to use burial registers with pages printed with columns for name, abode, age and date of burial. This guarantees consistent information about each deceased person but the rigid format means that other information, such as date of birth or cause of death, which might have been included in the earlier free-form books, is no longer recorded. Nonconformist churches were not required to use these

books and their registers generally continue to be kept as before.

In the early 19th century private cemeteries began to be established, initially promoted by nonconformists who did not want to rely on the Established Church for burial. One of the first in England, established in 1821, was on Rusholme Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock, often called the Dissenters Cemetery. The much larger Manchester General Cemetery at Queens Park in Harpurhey followed in 1837 and Ardwick Cemetery in 1838.

After 1854 the government passed Burial Acts which enabled them to close the church graveyards in most city centres for health reasons. The Burial Acts also enabled corporations to open municipal cemeteries. Manchester Corporation subsequently opened large cemeteries at Philips Park in 1866 and on Barlow Moor Road (Southern Cemetery) in 1879. These included separate sections consecrated for the burial of members of the Church of England and Roman Catholic churches as well as an unconsecrated section for the burial of those of other faiths or none. Jewish sections were added to both at a later date

Both the private and municipal cemeteries kept more detailed registers than those of the churches. They maintained a register of burials as before, but in addition kept a grave book to record who had been buried in each grave. Since, at least in private graves, those in the same grave are likely to have been related, grave books are a particularly useful source.

Finding the Location of a Burial

Finding the location of a burial is not always easy since if the person died in a town or city there might be many possible burial places. Even after the start of civil registration of deaths, it is no easier as the death certificate does not show the place of burial. See our companion Research Guide *'Finding Burials and Monumental Inscriptions in the Manchester Area'* for suggestions on how to go about a search.

