

## **Making the most of the County Record Office**

1. Prepare - sounds obvious but check opening hours, make an appointment, make sure we have what you need.
2. Check websites. "Is your journey really necessary?" Main websites are Cambridgeshire Family History Society's own, Cambridgeshire County Council(registrar) and A2A for documents here, but of course many others.
3. Ask for a copy of Genealogical Sources leaflet or for more detail buy the book. Also Gibson Guides give useful details on holdings.
4. Less used sources.

**Wills** - if you haven't explored them you could be missing a mine of information. If you have the time (and have drawn a blank with other methods) try looking at other wills for the place of interest to see if your ancestor acted as witnesses or shows up as a nephew, apprentice or friend.

**Manorial Court records.** Again they often have indexes to the main characters but if you want to find if your ancestor was there and playing a part in village life check lists of jurors, witnesses to transactions etc.

**Estate Records** - seldom give details of servants, although interestingly records of the Tharp family of Chippenham do contain quite detailed lists of Jamaican slaves and their origins.

**Bedford Level Corporation.** If you have ancestors from the Isle of Ely (in particular but also beyond) they may well appear in fen drainage records even if not a property owner. Again a quick check of key indexes is possible but the more you can browse the more chance of one of these chance finds that are the genealogical equivalent of the fisherman or golfer's tale.

So - although nothing but certificates and parish registers can provide the crucial birth, marriage and death it may be possible to put a lot of flesh on the bones by adopting a local history approach.

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