

## Our opening hours are:

Monday – Friday 9.00am - 4.30pm  
Saturday 9.00am - 12.30pm

To make an appointment, or, for further help or information please contact us at:

Pontefract Register Office  
The Town Hall  
Bridge Street  
Pontefract  
WF8 1PG

Tel: 01977 722670  
Fax: 01977 722676

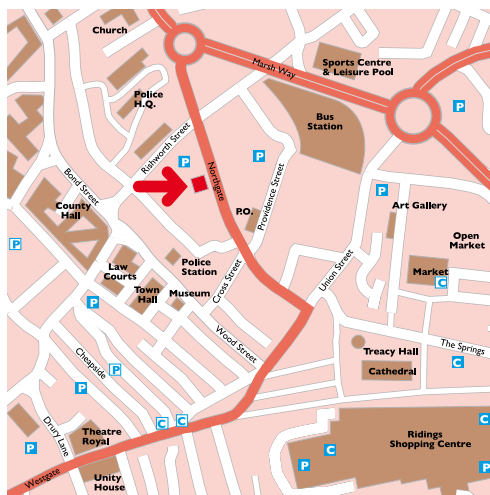
Email:  
pontefractregistrars@wakefield.gov.uk



Wakefield Register Office  
71 Northgate  
Wakefield  
WF1 3BS

Tel: 01924 302185  
Fax: 01924 302186

Email:  
wakefieldregistrars@wakefield.gov.uk



Please visit our website:

[http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/  
CommunityAndLiving/  
Registrars/TracingYourFamilyHistory](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/CommunityAndLiving/Registrars/TracingYourFamilyHistory)

Disabled access is available at both offices

WMDC will, on request, provide this document in another language, in Braille or **large print**.

Typetalk calls welcome

# Tracing Your Family Tree

## Information you need to know to Trace Your Family Tree

## Introduction

Researching your family history is now a popular pastime, and offers hours of enjoyment and fascination to those who undertake it. Nowadays nearly everyone who tries will succeed in following his or her family line back into the 19th century and probably beyond.

The staff at Pontefract and Wakefield Register Offices would like to help you along your journey of discovery by pointing you in the right direction and assisting you with advice along the way.

We hope that the following information will be of further help to you in your research:

## First Steps

There is no right or wrong way to go about it but it is a methodical process and there are certain principles, which you should try to stick to.

First of all, try to prove the links from one generation to the next, don't make great leaps forward or rely on guesswork. Keep in mind that the spellings of surnames haven't always stayed the same, and that often people used more than one name in their lifetime.

## Ask the Family

You probably already know a great deal about your family history, so, write everything down that you know, ask relatives for their support and input - perhaps they have documents and photographs to help you in your search. The most valuable records are the official documents such as certificates of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships, which provide a firm date of the event and also contain family addresses and occupations.

## Civil Registration Service

The Civil Registration Service began in 1837. Its main purpose is to create accurate and timely records of all Births, Stillbirths, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships occurring in England and Wales. You should be able to find a birth, death, civil partnership or marriage certificate for most of your relatives – and the dates and other details of the major events of their lives will help to form the basic shape of your family tree.

For the purposes of registration, England and Wales were divided into registration districts and registrars appointed to record births, deaths and marriages occurring within their district.

Registers for Pontefract and Wakefield Registration Districts are held at Pontefract and Wakefield Register Offices.

## Next Step

Once you are sure you have found the correct entry, you can apply for a certificate. Certificates contain a wealth of information. They confirm facts and open up lines of enquiry. One of the most important pieces of information you will find on the birth, death, marriage and civil partnership certificates is the address where the event took place and this will help you to find your family in the census returns.

## Applying for certificates

To apply for a certificate you will need to complete an application form, providing the following information:

- The date of the event (or the year and quarter)
- Where the event took place
- The name/s of the parties involved

You will need to apply to the register office in the district where the event took place, or, you may apply directly to:

## Certificate Services

The General Register Office  
Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road  
Birkdale, SOUTHPORT PR8 2HH  
Tel: 0845 603 7788  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/)

## Online information

[www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk)  
[www.1837online.com](http://www.1837online.com)  
[www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

## Local information

Microfiche copies of the St Catherine's Index, which contains quarterly indexes to civil registration events in England and Wales since 1837, are available at:

## West Yorkshire Archive Services

Registry of Deeds  
Newstead Road, Wakefield WF1 2DE  
Tel 01924 305980  
[www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.archives.wyjs.org.uk)

## Leeds Local Studies Library

Tel 0113 247 8290  
[www.leeds.gov.uk/living/libraries](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/living/libraries)  
(from 1837 – 2000)

## Wakefield Local Studies Library

Tel 01924 302210  
(from 1837 – 1940)

## Other local sources of information

### Pontefract Family History Society

[www.pontefractfhs.org.uk](http://www.pontefractfhs.org.uk)  
E-mail: [pontefhs@btinternet.com](mailto:pontefhs@btinternet.com)

### Wakefield Family History Society

Tel: 01924 373014  
E-mail: [secretary@wdfhs.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wdfhs.co.uk)

**we look forward to helping you....**