

Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 37

King's Lynn Family History Sources

These notes briefly describe some of the main sources for tracing a family tree as they relate to King's Lynn. They should be used together with Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 8, Tracing Your Family Tree. Please that the King's Lynn Borough Archives are kept at King's Lynn: see Information Leaflet 34, Consulting the King's Lynn Borough Archives.

1. Civil Registration

Registers of births, marriages and deaths in King's Lynn from 1837 onwards are held by the Superintendent Registrar at King's Lynn. They are not open to the public, but certified copies of entries can be obtained for a fee.

Indexes to births marriages and deaths in the whole of England and Wales, 1837-1992 can be seen on microfiche at the Norfolk Heritage Centre, Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, The Forum, Millennium Plain, Norwich, NR2 1AW (e-mail <norfolk.studies@norfolk.gov.uk> tel. 01603 774740). They can also be consulted at the Family Records Centre in London.

2. Census Returns

Census returns, 1841-1901, for King's Lynn can be seen on microfilm or fiche at the Norfolk Record Office, King's Lynn Library (London Road, King's Lynn PE30 5EZ, telephone 01553 772568/761393), in the Norfolk Heritage Centre and at the Family Records Centre in London.

3. Parish Registers

Registers from St Margaret's church, its daughter chapel of St Nicholas and All Saints' church, South Lynn (all starting in the mid sixteenth century) and from St John's church (starting in 1846) are all held by the Norfolk Record Office. Most are on film or fiche and many are also available at King's Lynn Library.

4. The Free Churches

The Norfolk Record Office has some registers from nonconformist churches, including the Society of Friends from 1775, Stepney Baptist Chapel from 1796, the Independent Chapel, New Conduit Street, from the mid nineteenth century and some Methodist chapels from the nineteenth century. The registers of many nonconformist churches before 1837 are at the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office), but the Norfolk Record Office has microfilm copies of them. Microfilm copies of the registers of St Mary's Roman Catholic church are also available at the Norfolk Record Office: they cover baptisms, 1802-1939, marriages, 1820-1939, and burials, 1848-1935.

Copies of some Methodist baptism registers can also be found in King's Lynn Library.

5. Cemeteries

Registers of burials at Hardwick Road Cemetery, beginning in 1855, and indexes to them, are held by the Borough Council's Cemeteries Superintendent and Registrar at Mintlyn Crematorium, Lynn Road, Bawsey, King's Lynn PE32 1HB.

6. Wills

Although some fourteenth-century Lynn wills were enrolled in the borough records (King's Lynn Borough Archives), mainly in the Red Register, most wills before 1858 were proved in church courts. Lynn wills are most likely to be found in probate records of Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Norwich Consistory Court, or the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Wills proved in the first two of these courts are in the Norfolk Record Office, wills proved in the last court are at the National Archives and can also be seen at the Family Records Centre.

Since 1858 wills have been proved in District Probate Registries, and the Norfolk Record Office has copies of wills from Norwich Probate Registry (which covered Lynn), 1858-1941. Wills indexes covering the whole country from 1858 onwards can be seen in the Norfolk Heritage Centre.

7. Registers of Electors

Registers of electors, mainly for local, not parliamentary, elections, 1834-1915, are in King's Lynn Borough Archives; they are also on microfilm to 1901 in the Norfolk Record Office. From 1918 King's Lynn registers of electors are with the Norfolk County series in the Norfolk Record Office. King's Lynn Library has a series of parliamentary electoral registers from 1846 and poll books for parliamentary elections, 1768-1869.

8. Freemen, Apprentices and Mariners

The names of freemen, or burgesses, of Lynn are recorded in King's Lynn Borough Archives from 1292 to 1868, and are also available on microfiche in the Norfolk Record Office. A published version (*A Calendar of the Freemen of Lynn, 1292-1836*) can be seen at the Norfolk Record Office and King's Lynn Borough Archives and also in King's Lynn Library and the Norfolk Heritage Centre. Serving an apprenticeship to a freeman was one way of qualifying, and there are separate registers of these apprenticeships, 1648-1851, at King's Lynn Borough Archives and on fiche at the Norfolk Record Office. Receipts from muster rolls naming each ship and the ship's master, 1748-1827 (with gaps), and records of payments to injured sailors and the dependants of those who died, 1748-1800 (with gaps, are with the King's Lynn Borough Archives.

A small group of private mariners' apprenticeships, 1740-61, was enrolled in a series of deeds in the King's Lynn Borough Archives; an indexed calendar of them can be seen there and also at the Norfolk Record Office.

9. Records of The Poor

The Guardians for the parish of St Margaret administered a workhouse converted from St James's Chapel until its partial collapse in 1854; a new workhouse opened north of Exton's Road in 1856. The Poor Law Union records in the Norfolk Record Office include several series naming inmates of the workhouse from 1737, including some admission and discharge and other registers, 1780-1951, with some gaps. There are also outdoor poor books and lists, 1736-1843 and 1870, records of payments to families of sailors who had been impressed, 1755-81, a list of the poor in the parish, 1770, and case books containing copies of settlement examinations, 1847-66. South Lynn was included in King's Lynn Union from 1834. It is not so well documented before that date, but the Union records do include South Lynn overseers' accounts, 1753-90, and records of South Lynn paupers, 1826-40.

10. Quarter Sessions

Records of the Borough Sessions begin in 1620: they include minutes relating to poor law and apprenticeship matters as well as criminal cases. They are in the King's Lynn Borough Archives but are also available on microfilm up to 1865 at the Norfolk Record Office.

11. Schools

Records of several King's Lynn schools, mainly of local authority schools which have closed, are in the Norfolk Record Office, and include some records of pupils, among them an unusually detailed admission register of the Jubilee School, 1808-49.

12. Property Records

Deeds survive in many different archives: deeds to the Borough's Corporate estates from the 13th century and some private deeds from 1571 are in King's Lynn Borough Archives, and there are Lynn deeds in several collections in the Norfolk Record Office. King's Lynn Borough Archives also has some tax lists and rentals for various dates from the late 13th to the early 19th centuries (there are some especially full tax assessments for 1689-94 and 1702-5 which are also on fiche at Norfolk Record Office), while the Norfolk Record Office has good series of rate books from 1727. Also available at King's Lynn Borough Archives are indexed transcripts by Peter Sykes of detailed rentals for 1604-5, 1622-3, 1764 and 1849, and the poll tax lists, 1689 and 1702. Copies of the last two are also at King's Lynn Library. For more information about property records, ask for the separate leaflet on Sources for the History of Houses in King's Lynn.

13. Published Sources

Directories, published intermittently for Norfolk from the early 19th century, name the main borough and other public officials and, more selectively, private residents and tradesmen: King's Lynn Library has a good series of these, and many can also be seen in the Norfolk Heritage Centre. Mayors, recorders, town clerks and MPs up to 1890 are listed in Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists* (1890).

Around two hundred eighteenth-century Lynn aldermen, councillors, merchants and others are listed, with additional biographical information, in an unpublished compendium by J. M. Barney, available at King's Lynn Borough Archives. An unpublished list and index by Peter Sykes of 'Mayors Aldermen, Common Councillors, Officials and some others', 1524-1835' can also be seen in the searchroom at the Borough Archives.

Local newspapers from 1869 and an index to obituaries from 1848 (with some gaps) are available in King's Lynn Library.



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