

Emigration

Introduction

Neither county archive offices nor The National Archives at Kew near London hold comprehensive lists of emigrants. Lists of emigrants on particular ships may have been compiled at the port of disembarkation (where passengers left the ship on arrival in their new home country). Passenger lists which listed all types of passengers, including visitors to overseas countries, were compiled at the port where passengers left the ship, and some of these survive. However, even today, there is no compulsory record of the emigration of individuals from their country of origin.

Nevertheless, there are various types of record held in the United Kingdom, which may prove useful if you are looking for an ancestor or a relative who emigrated.

Emigration Records held at Devon Heritage Centre

Convicts

There is some evidence surviving for the transportation of convicts, to America until 1776 and Australia from 1787 to 1868, with some being sent to South Africa between these periods. Some cases can be found in the papers of Devon County Quarter Sessions.

For information on the few specific original sources which are held at our heritage centre relating to transportation of convicts to the Americas and Australia, see our Crime and Punishment Research Guide, available on the Research Guides page of the Devon Archives and Local Studies website.

Free settlers

There are also some letters, papers and references to emigration and to specific emigrant families in parish, family and estate collections held at the Devon Heritage Centre. Here are a few examples taken from [our online catalogues](#):

- Kenton Parish (ref. 70A/PO/8097-8110) List of people emigrating to Australia from Kenton, with records of expenses and correspondence, 1848-1849
- Cheriton Bishop Parish (ref. 132A/PO/823, 839) Letters from George Fewings in Kansas concerning his family, abandoned in Crediton, & concerning an assisted passage for his family, 1850-1851
- Ref. 152M/C – letters to Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth, relating to emigration from Scotland -- particularly the Scottish Highlands – and other places in England, also emigration to Canada, 1793, 1802-1803, 1815-1819.
- Ref. 558M/F/18 to 23 - Prowse family, correspondence from Australia and New Zealand, concerning William Prowse, emigrant, his family and friends, 1883-1888
- Ref. 877M/F/1 - Log Book of vessel 'Selkirkshire' on voyage to Queensland, kept by wife of ship's medical officer (Mrs. Thornton), formerly of Newcastle Infirmary, 1882
- Ref. 1765Z/2/PO/38 - Brodie Family of Alphington collection (acc: 1765 add 2), "Notice of meeting to consent to raising or borrowing money for emigration purposes", 1849
- Exeter St Leonard Parish (ref. 1862A/PW/114), page 155 - Newspaper photo of group of emigrants to Australia from St. Leonards parish, 1913
- Ref. 3557Z/F/1-2 Templer – Two bundles, photocopies, part of journal of James Lethbridge Templer in Australia, 1839-1840.

- Ref. 4961Z – Chapple Family – Typed extract (photocopy) from diary recording the journey of John Chapple and family from Adelaide, South Australia, to gold digging settlements in Victoria, 1855, and Bealiba, Victoria, 1864.
- Ref. 5143Z/Z/1 Webber family – letter from James and Sarah Webber of Stafford, New York State, U.S.A., to William Webber of Somerset, with news of life in America, 1850.
- Ref. 5598Z/Z/1 – Australian Letters - Transcripts of letters sent to Henry Townsend, son of James and Mary Townsend of Honiton, emigrated to Western Australia in 1833.
- Ref. 5900Z/Z/1 – Bucknell family history – emigrants to Iowa, U.S.A., mid-19th century
- Ref. 51/12 Acland of Killerton collection. series 51/12/1 includes correspondence relating to emigration to New Zealand, 1851-1854; series 51/12/4 includes letters from New Zealand, 1856-1880.
- Ref. Z19/29/22 Devonshire families resident abroad – letters to Sir Roper Lethbridge from emigrants and their descendants, 1901

In the early 19th century, there was a labour shortage in the colonies and a corresponding belief at home that the British Isles were overcrowded. Therefore, both the state and local authorities began to offer assisted passage to those who wanted to emigrate. Poor Law Unions were allowed to support emigration of adults after 1834 and of children over 16 after 1850. The records of local Devon Poor Law Unions are therefore also worth checking.

Printed sources in the local studies collection at Devon Heritage Centre

Shelf references are given at the end of each source.

Emigrants and expats: a guide to sources on UK emigration and residents overseas, Roger Kershaw, The National Archives (2002) [929.3]

The Devon-American Story, Charles Owen (ed.), Exeter:Exeter Rare Books (1980) [p973/DEV/DEV]

The Cornish miner in America: the contribution to the mining history of the United States by emigrant Cornish miners - the men called Cousin Jacks, Arthur Cecil Todd, The Arthur H. Clark Co. (1995) [338.2730973]

Cornish emigrants to Ontario, compiled by the Toronto Cornish Association (1998) [304.871]

Cornish Methodists and emigrants, John Rowe, Cornish Methodist Historical Association (1967) (in Series: *Cornish Methodist Historical Association Occasional Publications, no.11*) [LS:301.328/COR]

Making Moonta: the invention of Australia's little Cornwall, Philip Payton, University of Exeter Press (2007) [994.235]

The voyage of the Atalanta, Plymouth to South Australia colony 1866 : the diary of Edward Allchurch, Tim Hallchurch (ed.), Horton-cum-Studley (2000) [s301.32894/PLY/ALL]

Criminal ancestors: a guide to historical criminal records in England and Wales, David T. Hawkings (1992) [s364.1/GEN/HAW]

Bound for Australia, David T. Hawkings, History Press, Stroud (2012) [364.48/GEN/HAW] .

Printed sources at Exeter Central Library

Stack shelf references are given at the end of each source.

The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660 (1 volume), Peter Wilson Coldham, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. (1987) [ECL stack 929.3]

Emigrants in chains: a social history of forced emigration to the Americas 1607-1776, Peter Wilson Coldham, Alan Sutton Publishers, (1992) [ECL stack 973.2]

Bonded passengers to America (9 volumes), Peter Wilson Coldham, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. (1983) [ECL stack 380.144]

Emigrants from England, 1773-1776, New England Historic Society (1913). Reprinted from the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vols. 62,63,64,65 [ECL stack 929.1]

Passage to America: a history of emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the mid-nineteenth century, Terry Coleman, Pimlico (1992) [ECL stack 301.32842073]

The Cornish in America, A.L. Rowse, Macmillan (1969) [ECL stack 325.7094237]

The Cornish Miner in Australia, Philip J. Payton, Dyllansow Truran (1984) [ECL stack 622.340994]

British Emigration to Australia, R.T. Appleyard, Weidenfeld (1964) [ECL stack 325.2420994]

The search for prosperity: Emigration from Britain, Richard Garrett, Wayland (1973) [ECL stack - oversize 301.3250941]

Emigration from Europe, 1815-1914, Charlotte Erickson (ed.) (1976) [ECL stack 301.325]

British emigration policy: 1815-1830, H. J. M. Johnston, Clarendon Press (1972) [ECL stack 325.242]

Sailing ships and emigrants in Victorian times, Alison Grant, Longman (1972) [ECL stack 387.542]

Emigration Records held at North Devon Record Office

There are some letters, papers and references to emigration in collections held at the North Devon Record Office. Here are a few examples taken from our online catalogues:

- Ref. 3197Z – Pile and Maldram Papers – includes letters from emigrants in North America, 1850-1857
- Ref. 3964A/PO/6 Instow Parish Council - Accounts relating to the parish relief of a family called Cavinett, for emigration to Australia, 1840
- Ref. 50/11/181 - Bundle of papers concerning emigration to Australia and New Zealand, including emigration agent's prospectus, & a certificate signed by vicar and parishioners as to the character of William German of Bratton Fleming, a proposed emigrant

Publications held at North Devon Local Studies Centre

The Americas

Bibliography of Ship Passenger Lists, Harold Lancour (1963), The New York Public Library

The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660, 1661-1699, Peter Wilson Coldham (1987, 1990) Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. (2 volumes)

A List of Emigrants from England to America 1718-1759, Jack and Marion Kaminkow (1966) Magna Charta Book Company

Passengers who arrived in the United States, September 1821-December 1823 (1969), Magna Carta Book Company

Passage to America: a history of emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the mid-nineteenth century, Terry Coleman, Pimlico (1992)

The Cornish in America, A.L. Rowse, Macmillan (1969) and Dylansow Turran (1991)

American Colonists in English Records, George Sherwood (1969), Genealogical Publishing Company

English Adventurers and Virginian Settlers, Noel Curren-Briggs (1969). Phillimore & Co. Ltd. (3 vols.)

Australia

Bound for Australia, David T. Hawkings (1987), Phillimore & Co. Ltd.

General

The Cornish overseas: a history of Cornwall's 'great emigration', Philip Payton, Cornwall Editions (2005)

Emigrants and expats: a guide to sources on UK emigration and residents overseas, Kershaw, Roger, The National Archives (2002)

Sailing ships and emigrants in Victorian times, Alison Grant, Longman (1972)

References on Genuki Devon website

Open the Genuki Devon webpage and click on the linked heading Emigration and Immigration for links to online databases and articles, and a list of publications relating to Devon emigration and immigration.

Records held at The National Archives

There are many references in records held at The National Archives to people emigrating to other countries, but no single index of names exists. Many of the records held at The National Archives do not deal with individual emigrants, but deal with emigration as a subject.

Convicts

Brief guides to help you find records of a transported convict, are available on the National Archives website. The National Archives holds records of criminal trials and convictions, including those of people sentenced to transportation, as well as of convict voyages, censuses and pardons. Some of these records are not indexed by name, but others are now indexed and available online. National Archives-held records of Devon felons transported abroad can be found in the indictments, depositions, etc. of the Assize Courts for the South-Western Circuit 17th-18th centuries, and also the Admiralty Board registers of convicts on ships, 1819-1834.

Free Settlers

For a comprehensive guide on emigration records held at the National Archives and elsewhere, read the National Archives webpage guide on Emigration.

The National Archives hold registers of emigrants leaving England and Wales for the Americas 1773-1776, passenger lists from 1890 onwards, and passport registers 1795-1898 (although it is important to note that passports were not issued to everyone who emigrated during this period).

For a brief guide to surviving passenger lists held at The National Archives, read the guide available on The National Archives website.

Passenger Lists of those leaving the UK from 1890-1960 have been digitized and are available, in partnership with the National Archives, on the Find My Past website.

For a brief guide which will tell you how to trace historical passport records at The National Archives, read the guide Looking for records of a passport on The National Archives website.

Indexes of names of passport applicants between 1851-1856, 1858-1862 and 1874-1903 have been digitized and are available, in partnership with the National Archives, on the Find My Past website.

The National Archives also has its own set of Poor Law Union records which include material on parish-assisted emigration from 1834 to 1890; these can include lists of persons with their occupations and destinations, though there is no such comprehensive list.

There are other series of records held in The National Archives which may contain references to emigrants as well as to those resident in Britain.

General Records of Emigration

These records are held at The National Archives but are not necessarily digitised and found online.

- The Chancery Patent Rolls contain entries relating to grants of lands and offices abroad.
- The declared accounts of the Audit Office c.1779-1827 include references to pensions and allowances paid to emigrants; some of these include lists of individuals.
- Other general records relating to emigration include Privy Council registers from 1540 to the present day, which contain entries concerning the petitions and letters of emigrants and potential settlers; plantation books, 1678-1806 which include copies of orders and letters concerning colonial officers; medical journals of the Admiralty Board, including those of convict ships, 1817-1853 and emigrant ships, 1815-1853; Colonial Office entry books from 1814 onwards, which can list applications for land grants; and original correspondence of potential colonists from the Colonial Office records, 1817-1896.

Emigration to the Americas

- The Colonial Office's papers on 'America and the West Indies, Original Correspondence, etc.' contains much information on the life and work of people in the American colonies. The 'Colonial Papers, General Series' cover the same area for the specific period 1574-1738.
- Registers of 'Licenses to Pass Beyond The Seas' include lists of persons travelling abroad, mainly to Holland, 1624-1632 and of emigrants to the American colonies 1634-1639 and 1677.
- The Treasury Solicitor's West New Jersey Society Records, 1675-1921, include correspondence, deeds and registers of transfers of shares, all relating to the division of land in West and East New Jersey.

To find out what records relating to convicts sent to North America are now available online you are advised to consult the National Archives webpage. From 1718 to 1776 transportation was entirely to North America, but few records survive about individual convicts who were transported to North America and the West Indies. After 1776 no convicts were sent to North America.

- The Treasury's 'Warrents Relating To Money' include lists of criminals transported to America from 1719 to 1744.
- References to grants of lands in East Florida, 1765-1783, estates in New Jersey, and the wills of persons in Philadelphia, 1775, can be located in the 'Chancery Masters' Exhibits'.
- After the American War of Independence there were a number of claims for compensation from British loyalists; these 'American Loyalists Claims' 1776-1831 and 1780-1835 can be found amongst the papers of the Audit Department. Similar claims by loyalists in East Florida, ceded to Spain in 1783, can be found amidst the papers of the East Florida Claims Commission.

Emigration to South Africa

- The Colonial Office's 'Cape Colony Original Correspondence' includes settlers' letters and papers concerning land grants at the Cape of Good Hope 1814-1825. Entry Books for the colony exist from 1795, along with registers from 1850 giving the names of individual colonists.

Emigration to Australia

- To find out what records relating to convicts sent to Australia are now available online on the Ancestry website, on Find My Past, and on various Australian-based websites, you are advised to read the National Archives webpage guides

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Some of the records mentioned below are now online, and others are held in original form at the National Archives.

- Convict Transportation Registers, 1787-1871, list transported convicts, not only to Australia but also to the Americas and South Africa, by the ships that transported them.
- Convict transportation records can be used in conjunction with Criminal Registers, which give names and sometimes personal information on all persons charged with indictable offences. Criminal Registers (in series HO 26 and HO 27), covering 1791 to 1892, are available online on the [Ancestry](#) website.
- The Home Office's 'Convicts, New South Wales and Tasmania' lists the convict population, sometimes with their families, 1788-1859. Perhaps more useful, though, is the New South Wales census of 1828, which also includes the reasons for each person's arrival on the colony, the name of their ship and year of arrival. Both the copy held at The National Archives and the one held in Australia are online on [Ancestry](#).
- The Colonial Office also holds entry books relating to convicts 1788-1825, New South Wales; the same office's 'New South Wales Original Correspondence' includes a list of settlers and convicts 1801-1821. The Treasury Solicitor's 'General Series Papers' include a set of transportation contracts 1842-1867.
- The Colonial Office's records also include entry books from 1786 and registers of arrivals from 1849.
- Correspondence concerning Army pensioners encouraged to emigrate to New South Wales and New Zealand 1846-1851 can be located amidst the papers of the War Office.

Devon Heritage Centre
Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Exeter
EX2 7NL

01392 888700

devonarchives@swheritage.org.uk

Website: www.swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives

South West Heritage Trust is a charity and a company limited by guarantee registered in England.
Registered office: Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6SF
Company number: 09053532 Charity Number: 1158791 VAT Registration Number: 197221592