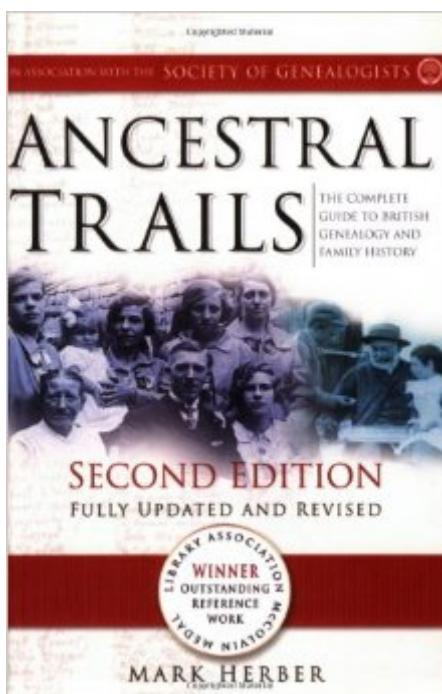


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Ancestral Trails. The Complete Guide To British Genealogy And Family History, Second Edition



Synopsis

his is the second edition of the book that has been called the Bible of British genealogy. Originally published in 1997 in association with the Society of Genealogists (London), and now revised and updated to reflect the latest developments in the field, Ancestral Trails enables the researcher to form a coherent picture of past generations by describing virtually every class of record in every repository and library in Britain. The early chapters help beginners take their first steps by dealing with such matters as obtaining information from living relatives, drawing family trees, and starting research in the records of birth, marriage, and death, or in census records. Later chapters guide researchers to the records that are more difficult to find and use, such as wills, parish records, civil and ecclesiastical court records, poll books, and property records. So the book is ideal for the beginner and the experienced researcher alike, and will enable those who are persistent enough to trace their ancestry back to the Middle Ages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"No other publication gives such comprehensive and up-to-date guidance on tracing British ancestry and researching family history. Illustrated throughout with more than ninety examples of the major types of records, and with detailed lists of further reading, Ancestral Trails will be the essential companion and guide for all family historians." Anthony Camp, Director, Society of Genealogists. This excellent publication was created in association with the prestigious Society of Genealogists, perhaps akin to the US' National Genealogical Society. The author Mark D. Herber is a solicitor who began researching his family in 1979. He has successfully traced some of his lines back to around 1580.Indeed I was impressed with this 674 page "encyclopedia." (Quotes added for

emphasis!) The bibliography alone is twenty-two pages. My experience with English records has been limited to early parish records in Devon and some Court of Canterbury wills, so I was most eager to have the opinion of three friends who do extensive English, Welsh and Irish research, and indeed are successful in helping others make strong headway in their research. You can imagine the excitement at our local LDS Family History Center as they poured over the book with uncustomary enthusiasm! The consensus is that ANCESTRAL TRAILS is as definitive of British research as Ancestry's THE SOURCE is of American genealogy. Lew, a 1st generation Brit, was impressed with the chapter on military records, and made a note to order the book forthwith. Elsie, born of English immigrant parents, had been inquiring previously about manor court records and found this publication provided more than she had found in explanation elsewhere.

The field of genealogical research in Great Britain is littered with literature. This scepter'd isle has a long history of excellently preserved source records, an enthusiastic community of genealogists, and a wealth of authors willing to guide the enthusiasts through the records. Given this background, it is difficult to imagine that a new work on British genealogical research could quickly become a new "standard reference". Mark Herber has made his Ancestral Trails just such a standard. Ancestral Trails, written in association with the Society of Genealogists in the United Kingdom, is 688 pages of top quality writing, organization, and completeness of coverage. It takes a textbook approach to the subject of genealogical records, leading the reader from the more basic sources such as civil registration and parish records on to the more specialized such as military and educational records. Far from being dry in style, the author uses well chosen examples from his own years of researching his ancestors to explain how the record types in question can be used by the family historian. Some authors who use examples from their own research can detract from their work by doing so. In contrast, Mark Herber has made his personal examples of real research situations enhance the text because of their relevancy to his topics. Nearly one hundred examples of significant records are included as illustrations. Researchers experienced in using British records as well as beginners will find this encyclopedic guide useful. The author covers newly-available resources such as the 1881 Census Index and provides excellent research advice and several clever shortcuts to using this new finding aid.

When a new edition appears of a genealogical reference book I have found especially useful, I don't necessarily, automatically, buy the new edition. If the updated information is primarily new addresses and phone numbers, but the meat of the book has stayed essentially the same, . . . well,

one can always look up that sort of thing on the Internet. The first edition of Herber's fine work -- which has already acquired the label "Bible of British genealogy" -- appeared in 1997 and ran to 674 pages of extremely thorough discussion of sources for research in Britain. The second edition, published in association with the Society of Genealogists, is fully one-third longer. After paging through it at a conference, I counted up my pennies and bought it. And I haven't regretted the expense. While most of my own family lines are what some would call "Old American," their progenitors having arrived here before the 19th century, the same is not necessarily true of many of the in-laws and friends on whose behalf I have carried out research. And even though our legal system owes much to the English common law, there are decided differences between the bureaucratic history of Britain's unitary form of government and our own federal system. Until comparatively recently, Britain's principal record-keeping body was the civil parish, and while many of the old volumes from the "parish chest" are now held by the Public Record Office and its branches, they are still organized by the old jurisdictions. Britain never had "public lands" open for claim and settlement, so ownership of real property was traditionally proved by a thick stack of successive title deeds and conveyances. This system, too, has been modernized, but the family researcher will need to understand the older system.

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