

## Jurisdiction Levels Affecting England Genealogy Research

SOC CGS England SIG – February 12, 2024

### Geographic – Civil Jurisdictions and Placenames (demographic jurisdictions)

- Country
- County
- Parish
- Hamlet
- Village
- Town
- City

### Civil Jurisdictions at the local/county level

- County
- Poor Law Unions
- Civil registration district
- Principal and District Probate Registries
- Civil parish (township)

Poor law union: Jurisdiction charged with the responsibility for the relief of the poor, beginning in 1834. A township is a division of a parish for levying a separate Poor Rate, or poor tax, for providing care for the poor.

Civil registration district: Divisions created for the reporting of births, marriages and deaths for an area, beginning July 1837.

Probate Court: The body charged with the settling of a deceased person's estate, beginning in 1858.

### Land Divisions

- County
- Hundred (Wapentake in the Danelaw counties)
- Hide
- Other special divisions:
  - Yorkshire – ridings
  - Kent – lathes
  - Sussex – rapes
  - Lincolnshire – parts
- Manor

A Shire court, or **moot** was an Anglo-Saxon government institution, used to maintain law and order at a local level, and perform various administrative functions, including the collection of taxes for the central government. (Wikipedia) Replaced by the manor court.

Wapentake – a land division, similar to a hundred, but used in shires that were in the area of the former Danelaw.

Danelaw – that part of northern and central England once controlled by the Danes and, later, Norwegians, where Scandinavian laws, customs and language prevailed.

Danelaw Shires: Leicester, York, Nottingham, Derby, Lincoln, Essex, Cambridge, Suffolk, Norfolk, Northampton, Huntingdon, Bedford, Hertford, Middlesex, Buckingham.

1841 Census was organized by hundreds; thereafter by census enumeration districts which were based on the Poor Law Union boundaries.

If you want to search the hearth tax records or the militia and muster rolls you need to know which *wapentake* your ancestor lived in.

## **Church Jurisdictions**

- Province/Archdiocese
- Diocese
- Archdeaconry
- Rural Deanery
- Parish/chapelry

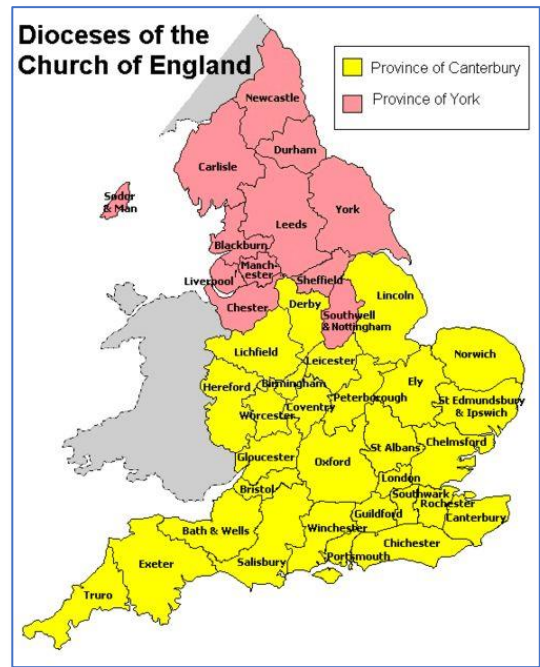
Province > Archbishop

Diocese > Bishop

Archdeaconry > Archdeacon

Rural Deanery > Dean

Parish > Minister: Rector, Vicar, Curate



The FamilySearch website has several specialized webpages related to jurisdictions. Go to the Research Wiki; in the search box enter “england” and select a relevant topic from the dropdown menu selections. To go to these specific webpages directly, click on the link below:

- For England Jurisdictions: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Jurisdictions](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Jurisdictions)
- For England and Wales Poor Law Unions: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England and Wales Poor Law Records 1834-1948](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_and_Wales_Poor_Law_Records_1834-1948)
- For England Hundreds: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Hundreds](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Hundreds)
- For England Civil Registration: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Civil\\_Registration](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Civil_Registration)
- For England Parish Church Records: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Church\\_Records#Parish Chest Records](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Church_Records#Parish_Chest_Records)
- For England Church History: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Church\\_History](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Church_History)

## **Online Gazetteers**

- GENUKI Gazetteer: <https://www.genuki.org.uk/gazetteer>
- Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of England: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100188159>
- The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/272349?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
- Association of British Counties Gazetteer of British Place Names: [www.gazetteer.org.uk](http://www.gazetteer.org.uk)
- Bartholomew's Gazetteer of the British Isles: <https://archive.org/stream/surveygazetteero00bartuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>

## **Bibliography**

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FitzHugh, Terrick V. H. *The Dictionary of Genealogy: A Guide to British Ancestry Research*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1985; 320 pages. (OCFSL: 942 D26f)

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Smith, Frank and David E. Gardner. *Genealogical Research in England and Wales*. Vol. 1. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft Publishers, 1956. (Vol. 1, Vol. 2, Vol. 3. available in digital format on FamilySearch). (FSL-SLC: 929.142 G172g V.1, V.2, V.3)

Steel, D.J. *National Index of Parish Registers Volume 1: Sources of Births, Marriages and Deaths Before 1837*. Society of Genealogists, 1968, Edition: reprinted 1980. (OCFSL: 942 K2s vol. 1)

Tate, W.E. *The Parish Chest: A Study of the Records of Parochial Administration in England*. Third edition. Cambridge University Press, 1969. (FSL-SLC: 942 K2t 1969)

## **Websites:**

England Jurisdictions, FamilySearch Research Wiki;  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_Jurisdictions](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Jurisdictions)

England Jurisdictions 1851 Maps project, FamilySearch.org; <https://www.familysearch.org/mapp>

England and Wales poor Law Unions;  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England\\_and\\_Wales\\_Poor\\_Law\\_Records\\_1834-1948](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_and_Wales_Poor_Law_Records_1834-1948)

Manors and Manorial Records (research guide), The National Archives;  
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/manors/#2-what-is-a-manor>

Manorial Documents Register (research guide), The National Archives;  
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/manorial-documents-lordships-how-to-use-manorial-document-register/>

Dropbox cloud folder with reference material for further reading:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zw8i602p86prnfh483fj/h?rlkey=6vwcp2n7ego1629cmjksi4b5l&dl=0>

This map shows the county structure for England and Wales as it existed before 1974.

