

GUIDANCE NOTES

SHRIVENHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Parish Registers of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials 1575-1641

Registers originate in reign of Henry VIII. Many only survive from Elizabeth's reign (as in case of Shrivenham). Civil War and Interregnum (Commonwealth/Republic) 1642-60 caused disruption (as maybe Shrivenham). After 1660 fewer people gave allegiance to Anglican Church - therefore necessary to examine records of Dissenting (Nonconformist or Independent) congregations

Baptisms (not Births). Counting (possibly by decades). Look for monthly fluctuations.

Marriages. Again counting (perhaps by decades). Also note monthly fluctuations.

Burials (not Deaths). Counting (by decades). Note again monthly fluctuations.

How do decennial or monthly totals/fluctuations in Baptisms, Marriages, Burials compare? Do Baptisms/Burials exceed one another?

A more complicated, demanding, and lengthier project is **Family Reconstitution**, using the three registers to reassemble family histories (genealogies).

Difficulties. Identical first names; incomplete registration; more people after 1660 (e.g. Quakers) not baptised/married in parish church.

Shrivenham Parish Overseers' Accounts 1738-59

Parish overseers introduced by Tudor Poor Laws (especially Great Elizabeth Poor Law 1601) as part of devolution of responsibility to parishes for levying rates to maintain deserving poor - the old, orphans, sick, disabled, unemployed - "on the parish". The undeserving poor were the vagrants - unemployed, orphans, disabled, discharged soldiers, wandering university students, players - who did not belong to the parish. In the 18th. century costs for poor relief increased - some parishes built workhouses to house their poor and let these out to the highest bidder.

Who were the parish overseers? (Elected annually; served voluntarily.) Provides evidence of who were leaders of parish community? (Compare with parish registers)
What were they spending annually? Any evidence of sources of income?

How used? What evidence of causes of poverty? (Look for names of recipients in parish registers)

Shrivenham Churchwardens' Accounts 1764-1878

Churchwardens (guardians of the church) were among the oldest parish officers. Annually elected; served voluntarily; usually two, but might be more (e.g. one representing outlying chapelries). Responsibilities include fabric of church building, moral conduct and orthodoxy and attention to duties of parson, and moral welfare and religious orthodoxy of parishioners.

Who were the churchwardens? (Evidence of who were leaders of parish community.) Compare with parish registers. What were they spending annually? Any evidence of sources of income? What were the items of expenditure? Any indications of religious attitudes, beliefs?

1716 Map of Shrivenham

Early maps drawn usually to provide landowners with survey of estates. Not interested in features which were irrelevant to estate. Experimenting with symbols, scales, etc. before Ordnance Survey began in 1824. Therefore cannot take early maps literally - treat with caution.

Look for indications of parish boundary landmarks, old footways, bridlepaths, field boundaries, field systems, land ownership and tenancies, location of buildings.

Shrivenham Tithe Map and Tithe Documents/1851 Census Classification.

Tithe (lit. tenth) established in Anglo-Saxon law, paid in kind from every farm in parish (defined parish). Commuted for cash payments by Tithe Commutation Act. Tithe documents record and value land liable for tithe commutation, usually give location information about buildings and land use.

Compare the names, etc. in the Tithe documents with the names in the **1851 Census** (first to require organised details of population - marital status, position in household, age, occupation, birthplace).

Bourton and Watchfield Enclosures

Documents dramatic change in parish landscape and land ownership. Possible to use written Enclosure Commissioners' Award (verbal description of allocations of land to those who have successfully proved claim to ownership) which usually refers ancient names of pre-Enclosure furlongs and open and common fields, pastures and grazing to numbered plots on map of parish as it will be after enclosure completed, in order to reconstruct pre-Enclosure map of parish. Superimpose on modern "6 inch" (?metric equivalent) O.S. maps.