

# Marginalised Women

## Tracing 'misfortunate' women on your family tree

Dr Janet Few



<http://thehistoryinterpreter.com>



@JanetFew.bsky.social

**A Few Forgotten Women** This site contains many stories of forgotten women, as well as helpful resources for tracing female ancestors

<https://fewforgottenwomen.com>

### Asylums

County and local asylum registers in county archives, some asylum admissions registers are on Ancestry and FindmyPast

Records of the National Royal Bethlem Lunatic Asylum in London, which took inmates from across the country, are at The National Archives. Case Books 1815-1919 and Admissions Registers from 1683-1932 are on FindmyPast

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/london-bethlem-hospital-patient-admission-registers-and-casebooks-1683-1932>

Bethlem records also available at

<https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/104/records-from-bethlem-royal-hospital-1559-1932>

See also The Museum of the Mind <https://museumofthemind.org.uk/>

UK Lunacy Patients Admission Registers 1846-1912 MH94 at The National Archives, available on Ancestry

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=9051>

England & Wales Criminal Lunacy Warrant and Entry Books 1882-1898 HO145 at The National Archives, available on Ancestry

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=9162>

The National Archives' Research Guide *Mental Health*

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/mental-health](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/mental-health)

### Disability

The Hospital Records' database [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/)

Voluntary Hospitals Database [www.hospitalsdatabase.lshtm.ac.uk](http://www.hospitalsdatabase.lshtm.ac.uk).

Lost Hospitals of London <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk>

From 1851, the disability column of the census records certain disabilities.

Hospitals, Asylums and Sanatoriums (worldwide) from Cyndi's List

[www.cyndislist.com/medical/hospitals/](http://www.cyndislist.com/medical/hospitals/)

The Historical Hospital Admissions Records' Project [www.hharp.org](http://www.hharp.org) covers admissions records between 1852-1921 for the Hospital for Sick Children at Great Ormond Street, the Evelina Hospital and the Alexandra Hospital for Children with Hip Disease in London and the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow.

Use Ancestry's Card Catalogue and FindmyPast's 'all record sets' to search for hospital records

A list of hospitals and asylums with the dates that they were founded can be found in John Richardson's *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia* (3rd ed. Historical Publications Ltd. 2003)

## **The Poor**

Survival of these records is patchy and rare before the eighteenth century.

County Archives may hold:

Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor

Lists of Parish Apprentices – included girls

Records of private charities

Documents created by Settlement Legislation of 1662:

Settlement Examinations—details of J.P.'s interviews with a person whose settlement is in doubt—potted biography.

Settlement Bonds—promises by an individual to support a named newcomer should they need poor relief.

Removal Orders—issued by J.Ps ordering individuals back to their parish of settlement.

Settlement Certificate—from 1696/7. Issued by parish of settlement, promising to support individuals if necessary—meant those named could enter new parishes and seek work without being examined.

Workhouse Records—mostly 1834-1945:

Registers of inmates

Lists of those receiving out relief

Account Books

Minutes of meetings of the Guardians

Birth and Death Records

Apprenticeship Records

Creed registers

Lists of Poor People's Goods on entry to Workhouse

Overseers of the Poor Accounts [www.genguide.co.uk/source/overseers-of-the-poor-accounts-parish-amp-poor-law/97/](http://www.genguide.co.uk/source/overseers-of-the-poor-accounts-parish-amp-poor-law/97/)

Poor Law Records pre-1834

[https://priesthood.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England and Wales Poor Law Records Pre-1834](https://priesthood.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_and_Wales_Poor_Law_Records_Pre-1834)

Settlement [www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/settle.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/settle.html)

Workhouses [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk)

1861 census of long-term workhouse inmates, available on Ancestry

Podcasts of relevance can be downloaded from The National Archives' website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). These include *Living the Poor Life: poverty and the workhouse in the nineteenth century*, which sees Paul Carter explore poverty in Victorian England and Wales and *Workhouse Records for Family Historians*, in which Simon Fowler considers conditions in nineteenth century workhouses and suggest ways in which you can research the people who lived therein. National Archives research guides are also available; these include *Poverty and the Poor Laws*, *Workhouse Inmates and Staff* and *Workhouses*.

## **Prostitutes**

Sources that may mention prostitutes include censuses, parish registers, workhouse and asylum admissions registers, court records and newspapers.

Records of prostitution at the National Archives

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/b4de3e9e-cf9b-477a-9935-c33b22a49a20>

## **The Illegitimate**

Documents created by the Bastardy Legislation of 1733 are:

Bastardy Examination—to discover the father of an illegitimate child.

Bastardy Warrant—instructions to apprehend putative fathers.

Bastardy Bond—promise by the father to pay maintenance for an illegitimate child.

Bastardy Examinations, Bonds and Warrants may survive in County Archives A few are online at Ancestry and FindmyPast

Scotland's Antenuptial Relationship Index 1661-1780 is available on FindmyPast

## **Criminals**

The British Newspaper Archive [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) can also be accessed via FindmyPast

Index to trials at the Central Criminal Court 1674-1913 [www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org)

National Archives Research Guide to researching Criminals and Convicts  
[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/criminals-and-convicts/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/criminals-and-convicts/)

Habitual Criminals Register and Police Gazettes in class MEP06 at the National Archives available on FindmyPast and Ancestry

The Calendar of Prisoners tried at the Assizes, in class HO140 at the National Archives available on FindmyPast and Ancestry

Prison Records in class PCOM2 at the National Archives and available on FindmyPast

## **Witches**

List of English witch trials [www.witchtrials.co.uk](http://www.witchtrials.co.uk) Although this site is ostensibly about the Essex witch trials, it contains a great deal of general information including details of the witchcraft acts and a long list of those tried for witchcraft in Essex.

Witchcraft legislation

[www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/overview/witchcraft/](http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/overview/witchcraft/)

Witches in Early Modern England <http://witching.org/>

## **Ethnicity**

Slave registers for 1813-1834 are held at The National Archives in class T71 most of which are available on Ancestry. They can be searched by the name of the owner or the enslaved person.

The Legacy of British Slave-ownership [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/)

Slave Voyages [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)

Searching for Jamaican Families

[www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples/Registers.htm](http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples/Registers.htm)

Fairground Heritage Trust [www.fairground-heritage.org.uk](http://www.fairground-heritage.org.uk)

Gordon Boswell's Romany Museum

[www.romaniarts.co.uk/the-boswell-romany-museum/](http://www.romaniarts.co.uk/the-boswell-romany-museum/)

Access to Gypsy Lore Society Journals

<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000499763>

Their archives are held at Liverpool University Library

National Fairground and Circus Archive is held by the University of Sheffield

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca)

RomArchive [www.romarchive.eu/en/](http://www.romarchive.eu/en/)

Romani Diaspora [www.wikiwand.com/en/Romani\\_diaspora#/overview](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Romani_diaspora#/overview)

Romany and Traveller Family History Society <http://rtfhs.org.uk/>

Romany Wales [www.valleystream.co.uk/romhome.htm](http://www.valleystream.co.uk/romhome.htm)

## Further Reading

- Burlison, Robert *Tracing your Pauper Ancestors: a guide for family historians* Pen and Sword (2009)
- Burtinshaw, Kathryn and Burt, Dr John *Lunatics, Imbeciles and Idiots: a history of insanity in nineteenth century Britain and Ireland* Pen & Sword (2017)
- Chater, Kathy *My Ancestor was a Lunatic: a guide to sources for family historians* Pen & Sword (2014)
- Cole, Anne *An Introduction to Poor Law Documents before 1834* FFHS 2nd edition (2000)
- Few, Janet *Tracing your Marginalised Ancestors* Pen and Sword (2024)
- Floate, Sharon *My Ancestors were Gypsies* (Society of Genealogists 3rd edition 2010)
- Fowler, Simon *Workhouse* The National Archives (2007)
- Hawkings, David T *Pauper Ancestors: a guide to the records created by the poor laws in England and Wales* The History Press (2011)
- Higginbotham, Peter *The Workhouse Encyclopedia* The History Press (2014)
- Keet-Black, Janet *Gypsies of Britain* (Shire 2013)
- Loveridge, Pat *Calendar of Fairs and Markets held in the Nineteenth Century* (Romany and Traveller Family History Society 2003)
- MacFarlane, Alan *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: a regional and comparative study* Routledge (1970)
- Martin, Lois *The History of Witchcraft* Pocket Essentials (2007)
- Maxwell-Stuart, P.G. *Witchcraft a History* Tempus Publishing Ltd. (2000)
- Paley, Ruth *My Ancestor Was a Bastard: a family historian's guide to sources for illegitimacy in England and Wales* Society of Genealogists (2011)
- Stevens, Mark *Life in the Victorian Asylum: the world of nineteenth century mental health care* Pen & Sword (2014)
- Webb, Cliff *An Index of London Hospitals and their Records* Society of Genealogists (2002)
- Am I Descended from Gypsies ? Who do you Think you Are?* Magazine article [www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tutorials/am-i-descended-from-gypsies](http://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tutorials/am-i-descended-from-gypsies)
- Winsham, Willow *Accused: British witches throughout history* Pen & Sword (2016)
- Winsham, Willow *England's Witchcraft Trials* Pen & Sword (2018)

