



## **THE INTERNATIONAL GENEALOGICAL INDEX**

One of the most valuable resources for family historians is the International Genealogical Index (usually referred to as the IGI).

Compiled by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), it is online at the free FamilySearch site. The British Isles is particularly well represented - not just England & Wales, but Scotland and Ireland too.

<http://www.familysearch.org>

There are two types of entry, and it's important to distinguish between them. Many were transcribed from baptism and marriage registers by volunteers as part of a systematic project. These entries were carefully checked and are almost always accurate.

Other entries have been submitted later by individual members of the Church, and usually appear with the note "Record submitted after 1991 by a member of the LDS Church".

Such entries are sometimes no more than speculative guesses, and this is most obvious when no precise date and location are given, or a place name appears instead of a church name. In these circumstances it is best to completely disregard the entry.

It is very important to note that the IGI is a partial index - some parishes are not covered at all, perhaps because the registers were lost, or otherwise unavailable, or because permission was not granted for them to be copied. Other parishes are included only for certain periods. For many parishes the transcriptions end when civil registration began (1837 in England & Wales, 1855 in Scotland).

The easiest way to find out whether the parish you're interested in is included for the relevant period is to visit Hugh Wallis's site (see the My Links page). However, even if the parish is included, the entry you're looking for may have been omitted.

It has been discovered that very occasionally as many as half of the entries for a year are missing, so the fact that you can't find your ancestor in the index doesn't necessarily mean that the record isn't in the register (though it is usually a strong indication).

Once you have found an entry in the IGI it's always a good idea to get a copy of the source record if you can - which may mean a trip to the records office or archives holding the relevant register. But there are also hundreds of LDS Family History Centres around the world which can usually obtain microfilm copies of registers on your behalf at a very low cost.

[http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHC/frameset\\_fhc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp)

These centres are open to all researchers, not just members of the church and wherever you are in the world there's a good chance you'll find one near you!

One reason for checking the source is that the IGI doesn't usually give the entire register entry. For example, after 1813 baptism registers for England & Wales show the father's address and occupation - but you won't see this information in the IGI.

Similarly, from 1753 onwards marriage registers in England & Wales show the signatures of all the participants, including the witnesses. Knowing if someone could sign their own name can be a valuable clue, especially when the surname is a common one.

The IGI is an incredibly valuable resource, one that it's well worth getting to know. (We'd recommend reading the help information - click "Tips on How to Search the International Genealogical Index" on the IGI Search page.)

For example, when you've found the baptism of one of your ancestors, it is very easy to search for other children of the same parents. Do bear in mind, though, that the mother's maiden name is only shown in a minority of entries.

Last, but not least - when you're using FamilySearch *always* search the resources individually. Though tempting, the "All Resources" Search never delivers the best results.