

Research Resources for Sixteenth-Century Personae

This list of research sources includes most of the first places to look for information on a real character of the noble or gentry class or in government service. There are many other sources; this is Just The Beginning!

These publications are not always consistent about how they index peers: sometimes it varies from volume to volume whether they are indexed under their titles or family names. Check both ways. It is also worthwhile to check alternate spellings, e.g. Burleigh vs. Burghley, etc.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. London, Oxford University Press, 2004.

This is a "Who's Who" of people in British history. It gives copiously annotated brief biographies of prominent people. Relatively few women are covered; they are usually included in the entries of their fathers, husbands or children.

Wives and Daughters: The Women of Sixteenth-Century England. by Kathy Lynn Emerson. Troy, NY, Whitston Pub. Co., 1984.

This work is a "Who's Who" of 16c Englishwomen, giving very brief biographies mostly of noblewomen. No sources are given, and there are some errors in it, but there is no other comparable source for this kind of data.

Calendars of State Papers (CSP)

Great Britain. Public Record Office:

- Calendar of state papers, Domestic series, of the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1625 preserved in the State paper department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office.
- Calendar of state papers, foreign series, of the reign of Edward VI, 1547-1553, ...
- Calendar of state papers, foreign series, of the reign of Mary, 1553-1558 ...
- Calendar of state papers, foreign series, of the reign of Elizabeth ...
- Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth ...
- Calendar of letters and state papers relating to English affairs, preserved principally in the Archives of Simancas, [Spain].
- Calendar of state papers and manuscripts, existing in the Archives and collections of Milan.
- Calendar of state papers and manuscripts, relating to English affairs existing in the archives and collections of Venice ...
- Calendar of state papers relating to English affairs, preserved principally at Rome in the Vatican archives and library.
- Calendar of state papers, relating to Scotland, preserved in the State Paper Department ...

Great Britain. General Register Office (Scotland): Calendar of the state papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603...

These are lists of papers in the Public Record Office collection, arranged as far as possible by date, and often (though not always) giving most of the text of the item. Many of these documents are not really government documents; in particular, many private papers of the Cecil family are included. They are divided into several series for ease of access. Some of them, such as the Spanish papers, are listings of papers relating to England held in foreign libraries.

Great Britain. Public Record Office: **Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office.**

This is a multi-volume list of all the patents granted by Her Grace during her reign. It includes grants of land, reversions, monopolies, pardons, licences, etc. The text of the patent is summarized.

Great Britain. Public Record Office. **Acts of the Privy Council.** (APC)

These are the minutes of the Privy Council meetings. They list who attended each meeting and what was discussed. The agenda items range from matters of national importance to some very small beer, and often include information about people not on the council.

Great Britain. **Historical Manuscript Commission. Reports.**

This is an attempt to do the same sort of thing as the Calendars of State Papers for privately held documents of the period. They are listed by the owner, e.g. "Mss. of the Earl of Rutland," or "Mss. of the Marquess of Salisbury held at Hatfield House." These lists are not as detailed as the CSP; often they only list a document without giving the text (e.g. "Letter from Sir Edward Stafford to Lord Burghley").

Victoria County Histories

This massive series, as yet uncompleted, is attempting to give a complete description of all facets of all the counties of England. It covers the history of each county down to the manor level, tracing changes of ownership through the centuries. It contains much useful genealogical and heraldic information. Not all volumes on each county have been published. Wales and Scotland are not included. Some maps.

The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom; extant, extinct, or dormant. by G.E.C[okayne], London, St. Catherine Press, 1910-59.

An excellent source for the basic information about the descent of titles in England. Gives a great deal of information in very abbreviated form; often includes family trees.

A genealogical and heraldic history of the commoners of Great Britain and Ireland enjoying territorial possessions or high official rank, but uninvested with heritable honours. by John Burke. Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing Co., 1977. (Burke's Commoners)

This work does for lower ranks what Burke's Peerage does for members of the nobility. Can be useful.

Ordnance Survey: Gazetteer of Great Britain. London, Macmillan, 1987.

This index to place names is the most detailed that I have found, giving the names of manors which are too small to be listed in atlases. It gives county, latitude and longitude for each place, as well as sheet number for the Ordnance Survey Landranger map series (1:50,000).

Survey Atlas of England and Wales. Edinburgh, Bartholomew, 1939.

This atlas has excellent detail and very readable maps. Most atlases of Britain will probably serve your purpose, but this one is my favorite. For historical research, it is best to use an older atlas, since in the early 1970's Britain redrew several county lines, especially in the North country and Western Midlands.

Periodical Publications

Notes & Queries

This periodical publication is a source for much miscellaneous information. It is a forum for antiquarian discussion, where questions from the readers are printed, and any answers offered by the readers are printed in a later issue. The subject matter is extremely eclectic. [N.B. This journal has been in publication for a very long time; anything printed in the 19th century should be taken with a grain of salt, and used more as a guide for further research than as gospel.]

County Historical Societies

Most British counties and many towns have a historical or archaeological society, and their publications can be a mine of otherwise difficult-to-find information. It is usually worthwhile to check the index of every volume for your family name, title, and the names of any manors or towns your character is connected with. They often publish the full text of historical documents. See attached appendix of names of societies.

Partial List of County Historical Societies & Publications

Archaeologica Aeliana [Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne]
Archaeologia Cantiana (Kent)
Bedfordshire Historical Record Society
Berkshire Archaeological Journal
Bristol & Gloucester Archaeological Society
Bury & West Suffolk Archaeological Institute: Proceedings
Chetham Society (Lancashire & Cheshire)
Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society
Derbyshire Archaeological Journal
Devon & Cornwall Notes & Queries
Devon & Cornwall Record Society. Publications
Dorset Natural History & Archaeology Society. Publications
Dorset Record Society. Publications
East Midland Archaeological Bulletin
 Bulletin of Local History: East Midland Region (later title)
Essex Archaeology and History
Essex Archaeological Society. Transactions
Gloucester Notes & Queries
Kent Archaeological Review
Leicestershire & Rutland Notes & Queries & Antiquarian Gleaner
Leicestershire Archaeological Society
Lichfield & South Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society. Transactions
Lincoln Record Society
Lincolnshire History & Archaeology
London & Middlesex Archaeological Society
Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany
Norfolk Archaeology
Northamptonshire Past & Present
Notes & Queries for Somerset & Dorset
Rutland Record; Journal of the Rutland Record Society
Staffordshire Record Society: Collections for a History of Staffordshire
Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & Natural History. Proceedings
Suffolk Record Society
Surrey Archaeological Collection
Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin; Research Papers
Surrey Record Society
Sussex Archaeological Society: Sussex Notes & Queries
Western Antiquary, or Devon & Cornwall Notebook
Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Magazine
Wiltshire Notes & Queries
Wiltshire Record Society. Publications