

BANBURY in THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES CATALOGUE

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Did you know you can access over nine and a half million historical document descriptions within minutes using The National Archives online catalogue on the internet? Less than five years ago you would have had to visit Kew and trawl through a hundred metres of paper lists to search for documents from central government, courts of law and other UK national bodies.

The majority of our users (70% of both physical and remote visitors) are interested in family history but records in the catalogue may refer to a variety of other subjects including medieval tax, criminal trials, UFO sightings, atomic energy, Prime Minister's papers or the history of many countries.

Almost seven million searches have been carried out on the Catalogue (formerly PROCAT) since its launch in 2001. Most of these searches have been triggered by family historians from the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. Everybody can access the Catalogue over the internet at <http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk> (remember that it is not necessary to have a reader's ticket or to sign in to use it). Although the Search and Browse screens are the most widely used, first time users should not miss the Research Guides screen, as it provides a means of searching the content of a variety of guides (formerly known as information leaflets). The guides contain specific advice that can be applied when using the Search or Browse screens in the Catalogue.

A great part of the catalogue data comes from the old paper lists (*Class Lists*), the *PRO Guide* and information leaflets. Bear in mind that improved and new descriptions are being loaded onto the Catalogue daily at the staggering rate of 24,000 entries per week! These new descriptions are the result of two processes: the transfer of new records from government departments and the cataloguing work being carried out by staff at The National Archives. If you would like to know more about current cataloguing projects and the process that we follow to enhance the Catalogue, consult the 'About' pages from the Catalogue welcome page.