

building and maintenance work, etc. The references to whole record series deserve special mention. Catalogue references for record series are made up of a department code and a single number, i.e. RAIL 539, whereas references for pieces and items have at least a forward slash and an additional number, i.e. RAIL 539/1, RAIL 539/2, RAIL 539/3. Pieces can be whole boxes, large volumes, etc. Items are smaller units, generally files, folders or small bundles. The fact that a keyword search delivers references for one or several record series (in this case RAIL 18, RAIL 538, RAIL 539 and RAIL 540) means that the whole record series matches our search requirements (i.e. RAIL 539 as a whole refers to the Northampton and Banbury Railway Company). It is also likely that the keyword 'Banbury' and the company name in the title of the series do not appear repeated again in every single piece or item description under RAIL 539. The terms 'minutes', 'reports', 'accounts books', 'stock and share matters' etc. do appear instead. As a result, those individual low level (piece/item) descriptions were not included in the list of search results and researchers need to look up an increased number of real hits. This should be good news for researchers although it represents some additional research work.

The important tip for researchers is: start by using the Search the catalogue screen and move on to the Browse screen if you get a search result for a whole record series such as RAIL 539. This will allow you to assess the real magnitude of information available and its relevance. The Browse screen works a bit like a paper list: it allows users to browse from any record series in order to look up all the descriptions under an area of the catalogue.

It is worth returning to the original summary list of results for Banbury now to sum up the content highlighted in the rest of the hit lists. The Home Office results cover an interesting mixture of materials on mines, burials, by-laws and census returns for 1841 and 1851. Census returns from 1861 onwards together with some birth, marriage and death registers are under the General Registry Office records (RG).³

The results listed under HLG (Housing and Local Government) include relevant descriptions on buildings, works, housing confirmation orders, planning schemes, planning applications, maps and plans.

³ To search the 1901 census returns on-line access
<http://www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk>