



Press Release

14 September 2007

Did you know that Frankenstein's author was a nonconformist?

The National Archives' collection of nonconformist birth, marriage and death records from 1567 go online today for the first time, allowing instant worldwide access to this unique resource. These records, previously only available on microfilm, are a jewel for family historians as they pre-date the civil registers, revealing otherwise unobtainable information about an individual's genealogy.

Birth, marriage and death records are a crucial tool for anyone researching their family history. Church registers are the most important source of information on births, baptisms, marriages and burials before 1837, when central civil registration was introduced. The National Archives holds 5,000 registers of a huge variety of nonconformist congregations, including Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Independents and also registers from a small number of Roman Catholic communities. This large collection in The National Archives' RG 4 and RG 5 series opens up a treasure trove of information for researchers tracing their family history before the establishment of civil registration. The entries are rich in detail and may include material about up to three generations of a family, helping family historians to add many branches to their family trees at the click of a button.

The new user friendly website (www.BMDregisters.co.uk) will allow users to search by first name and/or surname. The project is a Licensed Internet Associateship between S&N Genealogy Supplies and The National Archives, and the digitisation and transcription took a year to complete.

Notes for editors:

The National Archives, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk, is a **government department**; and also an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also www.opsi.gov.uk.

The National Archives is at the heart of information policy – setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK, and providing a practical framework of best practice for opening up and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensure that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

The National Archives is also the UK government's official archive, containing 900 years of history from Domesday Book to the present, with records ranging from parchment and paper scrolls through to recently created digital files and archived websites. Increasingly, these records are being put online, making them universally accessible.

The vision of The National Archives is to:

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone

Birth, marriages and death records:

The National Archives holds the largest single collection of these registers consisting of nearly 5,000 thousand registers from a huge variety of nonconformist congregations, including Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Independents and Congregationalists. The collection also includes a small number of Roman Catholic registers as well as some from the congregations of a number of European and Scottish communities settled in England and Wales. Some of these records contain more information than their Church of England counterparts from the same period, and may include details of three generations of a family.