

## Important Finds in the General Register Office

By Dani Crossley

I recently learned that the General Register Office (GRO) in the U.K. has begun offering digital copies of Birth and Death Register entries for £2.50 each for England and Wales. I requested five records, had immediate access to the downloads, and it only cost me a little over \$16 in all with the exchange rate and transaction fee.

The current range of dates for instant digital certificates comprises births certificates (1837-1922) and death certificates (1837-1887). Here is the address: [www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content). You will need to select Order Certificates Online, then create an account and login on the next page. After doing that, select Order a Digital Image. There is a search form where you can input your ancestor's information. If you don't get any results, try removing some of the qualifiers.

In my family tree, I have two lines that came from Wales. They emigrated in the mid-nineteenth century. William Henry Williams and his wife Anna Bateman Williams arrived in New York City in July 1857 with my 5-month-old great-great-grandfather, William Henry Louis Williams. The rest of their children were born in the US. I had a death certificate for William's mother Mary, but not his father. He died in 1881, perfect candidate, except for the fact that he had such a common name. It helped that he went by his middle name Henry and his will stated he died in Graig Cottage. Gotta love how they named even the humblest of abodes. Henry was a coal miner. This is what I received when I submitted my request:

The death "certificate" provides Certificate No., When and Where Died, Name and Surname, Sex, Age, Rank or Profession, Cause of Death, Informant, When Registered, and Registrar. The information in the above certificate is transcribed thus:

No. 365

Thirtieth January 1881 Penyrheol, Panteg, U.S.D. (Urban Sanitary District)

Henry Williams

Male

74 years

Coal Miner

Senile Decay, Bronchitis, Certified by S. B. Mason, L.R.C.P

X The mark of Thomas Smith, son-in-law, present at the death, Penyrheol, Panteg, U.S.D.

First February 1881

Martin Edwards, Registrar



Because of this information, I was able to find the cemetery where Henry is buried: St. Mary's Churchyard, Panteg. I searched the burials at their website, but he's not listed. I went to findagrave.com and there he was. His daughter, Ann Williams, died before him at age 26, so her name is at the top of the headstone. Under Ann's epitaph, Henry's name is just barely visible. I haven't been able to decipher the entire stone.

What I was able to decipher:

*Ann, daughter of Henry & Mary Williams, of Graig Cottage, Penyrheol, died June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1873, Aged 26 years.*

*And all wept and bewailed her; but He said weep not. She is not dead, she sleepeth.*

*And in loving memory of the above Henry Williams, died January 30, 1881, aged 71 years.*

*Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*

My husband and I were lucky enough to walk the streets our ancestors walked in Pontypool, Wales. I wish I had known about the cemetery then.

This was not my only valuable find in the five records I requested. Anna H. Bateman Williams (my immigrant 2x great-grandmother) had a brother, George, about whom no one knows what happened. My database said, "presumed died as an infant." I found his birth and death record.

184	Birth of February 1839 Lower Race Pantegue	George	Boy	George Bateman	Eliza Bateman formerly Saunders	Collier	Eliza Bateman Mother Lower Race	Seventh of March 1839	Thos. Edwards Deputy Registrar
-----	--	--------	-----	----------------	---------------------------------------	---------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------------

364	Death of May 1839 Lower Race Pantegue	George Bateman	Male	3- Months	Son of George Bateman Collier	Convulsions	The Minister Sarah X Davis present at the Death Lower Race	Eleventh of May 1839	Thos. Edwards Deputy Registrar
-----	--	----------------	------	--------------	-------------------------------------	-------------	---	----------------------------	-----------------------------------

The birth certificate gives the following information: Certificate No., When Born, Name (if any), Sex, Name and Surname of Father, Name and Maiden Surname of Mother, Rank or Profession of Father, Informant, When Registered, Registrar, Baptismal Name if Added after Registration of Birth.

From the two certificates I was able to determine that George had been born 05 Feb 1839 in Lower Race, Pantegue, and died 10 May 1839 of convulsions, aged 3 months. He was the son of George Bateman and Eliza Bateman, formerly Saunders.

If you have ancestors from England or Wales, I urge you to search for their certificates. Perhaps you will knock down a brick wall, find a burial location, solve a family mystery or obtain a cherished photo.