TRACING YOUR GERMAN ANCESTORS
PART ONE

by

Peter Towey
What do we mean by “German”? 

Until 1871 there was no Country called Germany.

Previously there were 100s of different States – some big, some small.

Only because of the political situation Austria-Hungary did not become part of “Germany” in 1871.
AGFHS Name Index

- Contains:
- Indexes to German Church Registers in Great Britain;
- “Metzner” indexes to TNA records including KGL & Army records; Aliens’ arrival records;
- WW1 Internment records from Koblenz archives.; Miscellaneous records from members, etc.
Researching in Germany

- No National indexes or sources.
- All records held locally – normally in the town or village.
- Like needing to know the parish before you can start researching!
- No national censuses with personal details.
- No civil registration indexes.
What can you do?

- Use British records to discover the immigrant’s place of origin.
- First identify the immigrant.
- Do you know his town or village of origin?
- Did he or she naturalise?
- Did he or she attend one of the German churches in UK?
- Was he interned in WW1 or he or she in WW2?
Watch the spelling! German surnames often change in UK: Wehmann to Weyman; Schneider to Taylor; Schröder to Schroeder; Schutte to Shooter; Messerschmidt to Smith.

Germans generally known by their last first name. Rufname often underlined in German records.
Censuses do not normally give more than the country of birth.
Check all British censuses – just in case!
Check siblings and known relations.
If an apprentice or worker, check German master.
Other Germans in the same house or street?
Try different spellings and first names!
NB “Naturalised British Subject” often misleading.
Useful British Records?

- British Government not normally interested in immigrants.
- Few immigrants bothered to naturalise.
- Virtually no passenger lists from the continent to UK.
- Some 19th century Aliens’ arrival records but not usually very informative.
Before 1844 naturalization was only by Act of Parliament and so very expensive.

The best sources are the Huguenot Society’s published volumes covering 1509-1603; 1603-1700 & 1701-1800, which are fully-indexed.

Denization remained by Act until abolished in 1873

Naturalization could be by Act until 1900.

The Acts are held in the House of Lords Record Office.
Naturalizations from 1844

- The Home Office records are at TNA, Kew.
- The files are most informative and should be indexed on TNA’s Discovery.
- The certificates are indexed there from 1870.
- Ancestry has copies of the certificates 1870-1912.
- In most cases the place of birth and parents of the applicant are given.
The certificates to 1969 are indexed on Discovery.

The files 1934-1968 are being transferred to TNA Kew.

Files, etc less than 100 years old are closed to public but ask to see them under FOI Act.
Hamburg Passenger Lists

- These are available on ancestry.co.uk.
- 1850-54 there is a single list but it does not usually give a great amount of data.
- 1854-1914 & 1920-23 they are indexed but only by initial letter of surname and then by date of voyage.
- The lists continue to 1934 but unindexed.
- There are two series 1854-1910: direct & indirect. “Indirect” lists related to ships that called into ports in Europe before travelling onwards.
- The list only covered passengers leaving Europe.

Other published Bremen & Bremerhaven lists appear to be made up from US passenger arrivals.

Only stray lists survive for other European ports: Antwerp, Calais, Rotterdam and Le Havre.
The Huguenot Society has published several 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century lists of aliens in England.

The TNA has an index containing lists only of Aliens’ certificates 1826-35.

Ancestry.co.uk contains indexes to and pictures from:

- Alien arrivals August 1810-May 1811.
- HO2 Certificates of Aliens’ arrivals 1836-52.
- HO3 Returns of aliens passenger arrivals 1836-61 & 1867-69.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 2443</th>
<th>Port of LONDON</th>
<th>Certificate of Arrival.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Arrival</td>
<td>Name and Country</td>
<td>From what Port arrived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th June, 1839</td>
<td>Neumann, Wehmann</td>
<td>Hamburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Manufactures</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native of</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of the Bearer: Neumann
Signature of the Port Officer: Fabian
From the 17th century there were many German Protestant churches in London.

St Boniface German RC Church, Whitechapel, opened in 1862.


AGFHS has indexed the registers of all these except those asterisked.
List of all the known registers and other records

Research Guide Twelve
The Records of German Churches in the British Isles 1550–1900

and other related records
First Edition

Anglo-German Family History Society

Founded 1987
A mutual self-help group
I am now working on a new book for AGFHS incorporating details of the registers, etc but with histories of each church and, where, possible, pictures.
Several of the German Churches here record where in Germany the parents of baptised children, the bride and groom or the person buried came from!

The place is often the parish (except in the case of cities)!

That information is in the AGFHS Name Index database.
Other options!

- Occupations can help.
  - Sugarbakers came usually from western Hanover, Bremen & Hamburg.
  - Pork Butchers came from Württemberg.
  - Street musicians came from the Palatinate (Pfalz).
  - Clock and Watchmakers came from the Black Forest in Baden.
  - Soldiers in the King’s German Legion came from Hanover (at first!).
Elbe-Weser-Dreieck, District (Landdrostei) of Stade, Kingdom of Hanover, with bailiwicks (Amtsbezirke), seats of bailiffs (Amtssitze) and places of origin of migrants to UK. (map by Thomas Fock based on an original by Henry Lange, 1859)
SUGARBAKERS
FROM SWEAT TO SWEETNESS

BRYAN MAWER

NEW EDITION
FULLY REVISED

ANGLO-GERMAN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
Mainly came from Hohenlohekreis in north east Württemberg starting after Napoleonic War.

Mainly in North and Midlands.

Sue Gibbons book now out of print.

Karl-Heinz Wuestner, a local teacher, will be producing a book on Pork Butchers after he retires!
Hohenlohekreis, N.E. Württemberg

Where most Pork Butchers came from
German Bands and Musicians

- Many German musicians emigrated here over the centuries: Handel, J C Bach, Haydn, Mendelssohn, etc.
- Orchestras and military bands often contained many Germans.
- Between about 1860 and 1914 travelling German Street bands were very common.
- AGFHS publishes booklet on the wandering musicians of the West Pfalz [Palatinate].
Musikantenland Region
This area is approximately 30 km × 40 km (1200 sq km), say 20 miles × 25 miles or 500 sq miles. Based on a modern-day map, this is only intended as a guide to the area with just villages or towns named that the musicians came from. Also shown are three additional main towns (greyed-out) in region to help with location.
THE WANDERING MUSICIANS OF WEST PFALZ

BY JOHN WILLRICH
Jenny Towey is currently working on a book for AGFHS on German clock & watchmakers in UK.

They mainly came from the Schwartzwald [Black Forest] in the Grand Duchy of Baden.

To start with they made clocks, etc in the long winter time and sold them as pedlars from their backpacks.

Many came to UK as pedlars but settled here.
German Hairdressers

- Many hairdressers in the 19th century in London and elsewhere were German.
- Unfortunately we cannot pinpoint their place of origin from their trade.
- In London in the 19th century there was even a German hairdressers’ school.
- They were organised in East London by the London Concordia and in West London by the International Union of Journeyman Hairdressers.
German Hairdressers in the UK

Their effect upon the British way of life

JENNY TOWEY
The King’s German Legion

- This is the former Hanoverian Army which escaped to England after Napoleon conquered Hanover.
- There are good records at TNA and most are indexed in the AGFHS Name Index – including later pension records from Hanover.
- Because of losses during the war recruits were often from other German-speaking parts of Europe.
AGFHS has published two books on the KGL.

In Napoleonic Wars many German-speaking regiments formed under British or German officers.

Prisoners or deserters from French Regiments often recruited into British Regiments.

“Foreign Depots” distributed recruits to regiments.

Many Germans served in British Regiments – drill sergeants and bandsmen.
In the Crimean War, the British German Legion was recruited and trained though few arrived in the Crimea before the war ended.

Personal records are in AGFHS Name Index.

Some BGL soldiers stayed here. Many went to South Africa and to India in the Mutiny.
Other typical German trades

- Furriers
- Baking and Confectionery
- Banking and Finance
- Art
- Trade
- Science
- Musical instrument making
- Gardening
Contrary to popular belief few German immigrants before the 20th century were Jewish.

The main influx of Jewish people from Germany came in the 1930s and later with the rise of the Nazis.

The best sources for Jewish immigrants at that period are the Home Office naturalisation and Aliens files in TNA. Their website provides a useful guide.
The JGSGB is the best society to help you with researching German Jewish ancestry, here and in Germany.

Their website: [www.jgsgb.org.uk](http://www.jgsgb.org.uk) contains much useful material and advice.

Their Special Interest Groups (SIG) introduce you to other members researching in the same places.
At the outbreak of the war there were thousands of German families living in UK.

Few had naturalised so the males of fighting age were interned and German businesses were confiscated.

The wives and children were left to fend for themselves.

Those sons born in UK were British citizens so, in 1916, they were called-up with all the other British adult men.
Civilian Internment camps holding adult male Germans and Austrians were set up around UK.

The main camps were on the Isle of Man at Knockaloe and Douglas.

There were many camps elsewhere in UK – but mainly in England.

Unfortunately virtually all the British records of WW1 internees were destroyed by bombing in WW2.
From August 2014 the ICRC has put its records of civilian and military POWs online at grandeguerre.icrc.org

The website is in French but you can get an English language version there.

The site is very clunky and takes some effort to master.

However it contains all the ICRC’s records of civilian internees which normally give the place of birth.
KIR

Nom, prénoms et adresse du disparu.

Kirchner Johannes
ou Kircher

Remarques diverses sur le disparu.

Carte retour du 31.10.18 37071
35 ans

18.6.18 admis hôp. (canton) D. 202-11
31/1/16 4.12.91

Sorti hôp. 24.8.18. Mut. Ruis of Nazi Camp
Knebelkob Paul, Isle of Man 1485.02


Interné à :

Het. 8502

En traitement à :

Corrigeun nom D. 247-2

Décédé :

Rahuri D. 247-7.

Liste officielle

N° 45 Date 10/7/45 Page de notre registre

XLIII / 2
Those Enemy Aliens in UK in September 1939 were interned – male, female and children.

After the sinking of the Arandora Star on 2\(^{nd}\) July 1940 the Government stopped shipping them overseas. She was taking German and Italian internees to Canada – many of whom were German Jewish refugees. Most were drowned.

Tribunal System set up to separate Jewish refugees and non-Nazis from Nazi sympathisers.
Record cards of Tribunal are on microfilm at TNA in HO396.

Name index in TNA’s Discovery catalogue.

Where released, front and back of card are available.

Where not released, only the front of the card is available.

Gives date and place of birth and much more.
If all this fails

- Don’t give up!
- Try writing to selected people with the same German surname in Germany
- Join the German FHS covering the area you think your ancestor came from
- Come to Part Two of this talk in December!