



Somerset Archive and Record Service

Information Leaflet

Parish Records in Somerset

OTHER PARISH RECORDS

The law of Settlement and Removal, 1662, required that when members of the poorer classes moved into a parish they should bring with them a *settlement certificate* (or indemnity certificate) from the parish in which they were settled. If they failed to do this or became a financial burden on the parish in which they had arrived they could be moved back again by means of a *removal order*. To determine which was their parish of settlement such paupers were questioned and a detailed statement of their life history to date, a *settlement examination*, was written down. These three classes of document survive from the late 17th century and are of great help when tracing movements of individuals before the census returns, as well as including details of great human interest. It must be added, however, that many Somerset parishes, particularly the small ones, have no surviving settlement papers: others, such as Wells St Cuthbert and Shepton Mallet, have them in profusion. For the illegitimate children of paupers there are also *bastardy examinations*, *bastardy bonds* (executed by the putative father), and *bastardy orders*. These documents are of particular value when the identity of the natural father is not indicated in other sources such as the parish registers. A name index to settlement and bastardy papers is available, and a selection of such documents is printed *in extenso* in Thelma Munckton's *Somerset Paupers: Unremembered Lives* (1994). Apprenticeship indentures for pauper children apprenticed by parish officers also survive from the 17th century up to 1836. An index is in progress. These are the principal parish sources likely to interest family historians, but details of other types of parish documents will be found in W. E. Tate's *The Parish Chest*.