

# EARLIEST RECORDS OF IMMIGRANT ARRIVALS TO THE UK NOW ONLINE – WORLD FIRST

*European unrest drives early UK border control as Government seeks to protect British monarchy from French revolutionaries*

- **610,000 immigrant journeys now online**
- **Half of all Brits descended from immigrants<sup>1</sup>, yet 25 million (84 per cent) know nothing of their foreign ancestry<sup>2</sup>**
- **Collection details spikes in UK immigration, including the French Revolution and Irish Famine**

**\*\*Embargoed until 00:01 on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010\*\***

Ancestry.co.uk, the UK's number one family history website<sup>3</sup>, today launched online the **Alien Arrivals Collection**, which details the arrival of more than **610,000** immigrants into the UK between the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The collection, which includes some of the earliest surviving records of immigrants who went on to shape the ethnically diverse Britain that we live in today, will be unveiled by actor and historian **Tony Robinson** at **Who Do You Think You Are? LIVE** – the UK's largest family history show, which is being held at Kensington Olympia from 26-28<sup>th</sup> of February<sup>4</sup>.

Digitised in partnership with **The National Archives** (where the paper originals are held), the records were originally compiled by the Government's **Alien Office** after the **1793 Aliens Act** was passed. It stipulated that immigrants arriving into the UK be recorded at their port of entry.

The Act was created to log and monitor the large numbers of non-British nationals or 'aliens' arriving into the UK in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular the thousands of French fleeing the **French Revolution** (1789-1799). Their arrival prompted government concern that the social unrest being witnessed on the continent might spread to England.

In 1792, the emergence of the revolutionary **Jacobins** as a dominant force in French politics prompted talk of political reform in England. With their arrival, fear quickly grew for the safety of the British monarchy, and following the execution of **King Louis XVI** of France, Prime Minister **William Pitt the Younger** promptly passed the **Aliens Act**.

**32,000** French citizens arrived in England during this period, many of whom were clergy and aristocracy fleeing the revolution<sup>5</sup>. Today around **six million** Britons have French ancestry, including Harry Potter star **Emma Watson** and TV presenter **Davina McCall**.

The **610,000** arrivals are detailed in two collections: the **England, Alien Arrivals, 1810-1811, 1826-1869** and the **UK Aliens' Entry Books, 1794-1921**. Individual records contain information such as the passenger's name, nationality, profession, date of arrival and the last country visited.

Together with the **UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960**, which detail the arrival by sea of **16 million** passengers from outside of Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these collections will be of relevance to the **30 million** Britons with immigrant ancestors - **84 per cent** are unaware of their foreign roots.<sup>6</sup>

Those who have uncovered an immigrant ancestor predominately have roots in Ireland (23 per cent), France (10 per cent), Germany (9 per cent) and Scandinavia (6.5 per cent).<sup>7</sup>

A number of famous names from history appear in the **Alien Arrivals Collection**, including:

- **Prince Albert** – *the husband of Queen Victoria (who was also her first cousin) is listed as arriving with 14 attendants on 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1839 in London*
- **Jacques Offenbach** – *the arrival of the German born French composer famed for the operettas 'Orpheus in the Underworld' and 'La belle Hélène' is listed on 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1844*
- **Paul Reuter** – *the arrival of the German entrepreneur, who was a pioneer in journalism and founder of Reuters news agency, is listed on 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1837 with the profession 'director of electric telegraph'*

Other Britons with immigrant heritage include modern day celebrities **Boris Johnson** (Turkish, French, and American), **Helen Mirren** (Russian) and **Victorian Beckham** (German).

**Ancestry.co.uk** International Content Director Dan Jones comments: *"Most people think of immigration to Britain as very much a 20<sup>th</sup> Century trend however as these records prove, immigrants have been arriving on our shores for literally centuries, some fleeing political or religious persecution, others famine or civil war, and many simply to take advantage of their status as citizens of the British Empire.*

*"Literally half of all Brits have immigrant ancestors and with more historical immigration records now online than ever before, there has never been a better time for Brits to start exploring where they may really have come from."*

**The National Archives** Migrant Specialist Roger Kershaw comments: *"These collections highlight the growing diversity of cultures, languages and skills prevalent in nineteenth century Britain - a time shaped by great industrial expansion and optimism.*

*"The professions ranged from composers, writers and artists to industrialists, politicians and royalty and it's their contribution we still see reflected in our cosmopolitan society today".*

[Click here](#) to search the **Alien Arrivals Collection** on **Ancestry.co.uk**.

### **ENDS**

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#### **NOTE TO EDITORS**

1. Source: PCP Omnibus (December 2008). 500 Brits who have traced their family tree three generations were surveyed, 50 per cent confirmed having found immigrant ancestors.
2. Source: PCP Omnibus (December 2008). 2000 Brits were surveyed, 84 per cent of whom stated that they did not know if they have immigrant ancestry. 84 per cent of 30.5 million Brits with immigrant ancestry = 25,620,000.
3. Source: Based on market share of visits among all UK websites in the Hitwise Lifestyle - Family industry, January-June 2009
4. For more information visit [www.whodoyouthinkyouarelive.co.uk](http://www.whodoyouthinkyouarelive.co.uk)
5. Source: 'The Incidence of the Emigration During the French Revolution', Donald Greer, (1951)
6. See footnote 2
7. See footnote 1 – the top 5 is as follows: Ireland (23 per cent), France (10 per cent), Germany (9 per cent), Scandinavia (6.5 per cent), and Canada (5 per cent) – full breakdown available on request.

**ABOUT ANCESTRY.CO.UK**

Officially the UK's Number 1. family history website, Ancestry.co.uk contains more than 860 million records in collections including the most comprehensive online set of England, Wales and Scotland Censuses from 1841 to 1901, the fully searchable England and Wales Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes, the World War One British Army Service and Pension records, UK Parish Records and the British Phone Books.

Ancestry.co.uk was launched in May 2002 and belongs to the global network of Ancestry websites (wholly owned by Ancestry.com Operations *Inc.*), which contains four billion records. To date more than 13 million family trees have been created and 1.4 billion names and 30 million photographs and stories uploaded. (Figures current as of 18 February 2010)

The Ancestry global network of family history websites: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) in the US, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) in the UK, [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) in Canada, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au) in Australia, [www.ancestry.de](http://www.ancestry.de) in Germany, [www.ancestry.it](http://www.ancestry.it) in Italy, [www.ancestry.fr](http://www.ancestry.fr) in France, [www.ancestry.se](http://www.ancestry.se) in Sweden and [www.jiapu.com](http://www.jiapu.com) in China.