



## Change of Name

### Information from Archives L2

#### The crucial information needed for a search in the archives

The National Archives holds records which might contain the information you require and we can:

- either search for it on payment of a fee and supply you with the information (if found)
- or enable you to search for the information in other ways.

Please send as much information as you can. The following details are particularly important:

- The full new name of the person\*.....
- The full old name of the person\*.....
- The approximate date of the change\*.....

If you have all of the information marked with an asterisk\*, the standard charges for our searches will apply and these are shown on this leaflet. *To make payment on a secure link, choose the search you require and please click on the link to our website:[insert link].* If you do not have this information, the standard charges will not apply, as the search time will increase by a large amount, and therefore the search will require a very high fee to be paid.

Please contact us if you still want to proceed at:

[enquiry@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiry@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

---

#### 1. Supreme Court Enrolment Books and Indexes (1903 to 1997)

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: J 18

These documents record the copy of those changes of name by deed poll that *had* been formerly enrolled in the Supreme Court by the solicitor.

Information that this source should reveal:

These records contain the new and former names, address, date of the change of name and that of its subsequent enrolment at the Supreme Court.

---

Factors affecting success of a search:

Under English common law, a person may take a new surname, perfectly legally, without drawing up any formal record, provided that such action is not undertaken for the purpose of fraud. Very often a proof of change of name either never existed or no longer exists. Enrolling a deed poll in the Supreme Court was therefore a voluntary process and extra fees were payable. Consequently, very few changes of name were enrolled in these records.

From 1916, enemy aliens resident in Britain had been forbidden to change their names. This ban was extended to all foreigners in Britain in 1919. The only exceptions made were when a new name was assumed by royal licence or by special permission of the Home Secretary. These restrictions were removed in 1971.

---

## 2. Chancery Enrolments and Indexes (1851 to 1902)

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: C 54 and C 275

These documents record the copy of those changes of name by deed poll that *had* been formerly enrolled by the solicitor.

---

Information that this source should reveal:

These records give the new and former names, witnesses, the date of the change of name and that of its subsequent enrolment.

---

Factors affecting success of a search:

Under English common law, a person may take a new surname, perfectly legally, without drawing up any formal record, provided that such action is not undertaken for the purpose of fraud. Very often a proof of change of name either never existed or no longer exists. Enrolling a deed poll on the Close Rolls was therefore a voluntary process and extra fees were payable. Consequently, very few changes of name were enrolled in these records.

---

## 3. Warrants for Changes of Name by Royal Licences (1700 to 1869)

Standard charge: £120

Catalogue references: SP 44 and HO 38

These documents contain the details of warrants that authorised the issue of the royal licence for a change of name.

---

Information that this source should reveal:

These records contain the new and former names as well as the date of the warrant authorising the royal licence. Sometimes the reason for the change of name is also given.

---

Factors affecting success of a search:

Under English common law, a person may take a new surname, perfectly legally, without drawing up any formal record, provided that such action is not undertaken for the purpose of fraud. Very often a proof of change of name either never existed or no longer exists.

Changes of name by royal licence or individual Acts of Parliament were a common method of officially changing a name during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was a costly process however, so only the wealthy would have been able to afford it.

Each volume covers between 3-6 years so an approximate date is essential.

---



## Searching for information: your options

### **Our Search Service**

This brand new service is being introduced in advance of the Freedom of Information (FOI) search service to be launched next January. We are beginning with a selection of popular subjects, and will gradually be extending the range. From January 2005 we shall offer paid searches in all The National Archives records, under the Freedom of Information Act.

The searches will be done in a prompt and professional manner and will reflect the expertise of The National Archives in the field of historical records. If you wish us to do the search we shall provide the information within ten working days of receipt of payment.

Our charge is £15 per 15 minutes.

### **Independent researchers**

There are many independent researchers whom you can hire to carry out research for you. These researchers may charge significantly less than our 'full cost recovery' service. I enclose a list of some who undertake research in your area of interest. These lists are also available at our web site ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk))

### **Our on-site service**

You are welcome to visit us - we can help you to do the search yourself, and admission is free.

If you visit us, you will need to register as a researcher. To do this, please bring with you some proof of identity. If you are a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, please bring either a driving licence, a banker's card or a passport. If you are a citizen of any other country, please bring your passport or national identity card. If you do not have this identification, please ring us on 020 8392 5200 before you visit. Please allow time at the beginning of your visit for familiarisation with our procedures. You can register in advance as a reader at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/registration/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/registration/)

You can carry out some initial research by accessing the research guides and on-line catalogue on our web site ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)).