

MINDPEBBLE HEALING

with Celia Heritage

- NATURE
- MIND
- FAMILY



I hope you enjoyed my talk “How Far Did Your Ancestor Travel?”

The handout is below.

To find out more about my pioneering work connecting family history with nature and mind healing sign up for my newsletter via the link below.

www.mindpebble.co.uk/newsletter

“Exploring our family history helps us understand where we come from, who we are, and why we feel as we do. It can reveal inherited emotional patterns - threads passed down through generations, shaped not only by our DNA but also by the experiences and emotions our ancestors carried, which may still be affecting you today. It can also bring a sense of belonging that may be missing from your life”.

How Far Did Your Ancestor Travel? —Handout

Introduction

- Railways (19th century) made UK travel faster and cheaper.
- Pre-rail, we assume people travelled far less and much less far – but how true is this?
- Missing baptisms could perhaps indicate birthplace far from later residence.

Travel by Water

- We often overlook this
- Extensive coastal trade around our shores – people could pay for passage or hitch lifts even if did not have their own vessel.
- Barge families baptised children along canal routes.
- Settlement certificates in ports show people arriving from long distances.
- Settlement law from 1662 controlled poor movement.
- Settlement Law – Key Points in Brief
 - Parish of settlement responsible for a person's poor relief.
 - Certificates allowed temporary/seasonal work elsewhere.
 - Useful records: settlement examinations, certificates, removal orders, appeals.

Travel by Road

- Roman + medieval road networks existed. Impressive coverage by 14th century and earlier.
- Gough Map (~1350) shows major routes (not complete).
- Road quality varied; many were poor.

Road Maintenance

- Pre-1350: manor responsibility.
- 1555: parishes – Surveyor of Highways appointed.
- Roads still poor quality and often impassable in winter

Turnpikes (from 1663)

- The turnpikes of toll roads improved travel greatly
- Expanded rapidly (18th century).
- 20,000 miles of turnpikes by 1830s.

Modes of Travel

Horse / Coach

- Horses expensive → poorer people mainly walked.
- Pack animals + hand carts. Cut across country to shorten route.
- Stage wagons from ~1550. Slow and cumbersome but very cheap. Carried good and people.

Stage & Mail Coaches

- Stagecoaches from 17th century. Opened up travel to many.
- 1784 mail coaches → much faster if more expensive (London–Bath: 36 hrs → 13 hrs).
- Long-distance relocation increased (evident in probate records).

Incentives to Travel

- Work was main driver.
- Walking: ~20 miles/day possible.
- Parish registers show itinerant baptisms/burials.
- Poor often travelled furthest They were the most desperate.

Maidstone (Kent) Removal Orders (1716–1819)

Removal back to parish of settlement is often evidence of the outward migration – which may have been made in stages or in one go. Gives idea of just how far poorer people were travelling.

- 333 family groups (922 individuals):
 - 21 >100 miles
 - 7 >200 miles

- Maximum distance covered = 265 miles
- Average distance: 43 miles.

Types of Migrant

1. Seeking better prospects
 2. Seeking survival
 3. Permanently itinerant
- Many long-distance migrants moved North → South.

Tramping (Work-organised travel)

- Trade societies (e.g. Brushmakers' Society 1747) organised routes for unemployed members.
- London circuit ~1,210 miles with stamped record book.
- Families sometimes settled en-route.

Apprentices

- From 16th century, many boys moved far for apprenticeships.
- 1630–1660 London: 6/10 apprentices from outside London.

Communication Networks

- Trade + family links informed people about work.
- Provincial newspapers carried national adverts.
- Carriers transported goods, people, letters + news.

Occupations Likely to Travel

- Coachmen
- Soldiers / Militia
- Clergy (appointments varied by location)

- Excise officers (posted away from home region)

Key Points

- Travel mostly work-related.
- Significant movement occurred long before railways.
- Don't assume ancestors remained local. Although many did – a significant proportion of the population travelled far from their place of origin and can account for many of our “brick walls”

Further Reading and Sources

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