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**Dr Williams' Library and the  
Wesleyan Methodist  
Metropolitan Registry**

**Dave Annal**  
18 May 2009

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# Dr Williams' Library



- The pre-eminent research library of English Protestant nonconformity
- Established under the terms of the will of Dr Daniel Williams
- Opened at Red Cross Street, London in 1729 – at Gordon Square since 1890
- [www.dwlib.co.uk](http://www.dwlib.co.uk)

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## Dr Daniel Williams

- Born in 1643 – probably in Wrexham
- Became a preacher by the time he was 19
- Moved to Dublin and then to London in 1687 where he became pastor of Hand Alley chapel in Bishopsgate Street
- One of England's most influential dissenting ministers
- Died in 1716 in London – buried at Bunhill Fields

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# The will of Dr Daniel Williams

- Written in June 1711, proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 6 November 1716
- ‘Contained in Six Sheets of Paper’
- Dr Williams’ estate was worth £50,000 – the equivalent of nearly £4,000,000 (four million pounds) in today’s money
- The will includes instructions to the executors to establish a ‘publick library’

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## The will of Dr Daniel Williams

my death As for my library my Will is that superfluous  
and useless books and unfit to be set in a public library be  
given away to such as they may be usefull to and want them  
(my dear wife reserving what she likes) The residue I appoint  
for a public library where to such as my Trustees appoint  
shall have access for the perusal of any book in the place  
where they are lodged And to obtain my Executors with  
the advice of my Trustees to purchase some or other an  
freehold Edifice in some cheap and convenient place an  
without or within the walls of the City of London as or in  
the Masters book house or the like with one room for a single  
person whom they my Trustees shall from time to time in  
trust to keep the said books whereof two Catalogues shall be  
kept one by the keeper of the library one by such as the  
Trustees shall name of their own number where in any  
other persons gift of books may be inserted under their  
the names of such as shall add to the said library

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## The Background

- The registers of Dr Williams' Library and The Wesleyan Methodist Metropolitan Registry record the births of around 60,000 people, between the years 1713 and 1837
- The registries were set up as part of a campaign by nonconformist communities to gain official recognition and equal rights with members of the Church of England
- The records of both registries are held by The National Archives and can be seen online at [BMDRegisters.co.uk](http://BMDRegisters.co.uk) and also on microfilm at The National Archives, Kew

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# The History of the Registries #1

- The Corporation & Test Acts (1661 & 1673) excluded nonconformists from public office
- Many nonconformist congregations kept their own registers of births/baptisms but these were not acceptable for most legal purposes
- The General Body of the Three Denominations was formed in 1727 to represent the interests of Presbyterians, Independents & Baptists

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## The History of the Registries #2

- In 1742 the 'Three Denominations' established a registry of births
- The registry was housed in Dr Williams' Library in Redcross Street, London which had been established by Daniel Williams, and opened to the public in 1729
- In 1818, the Wesleyan Methodists established a similar registry

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## The History of the Registries #3

- Both registries encouraged retrospective registration and entries recording births as early as 1713 have been found
- Initially very few births were registered – only 309 in the first 26 years
- Numbers gradually increased and eventually nearly 60,000 births were registered
- The registries closed on 31 December 1837



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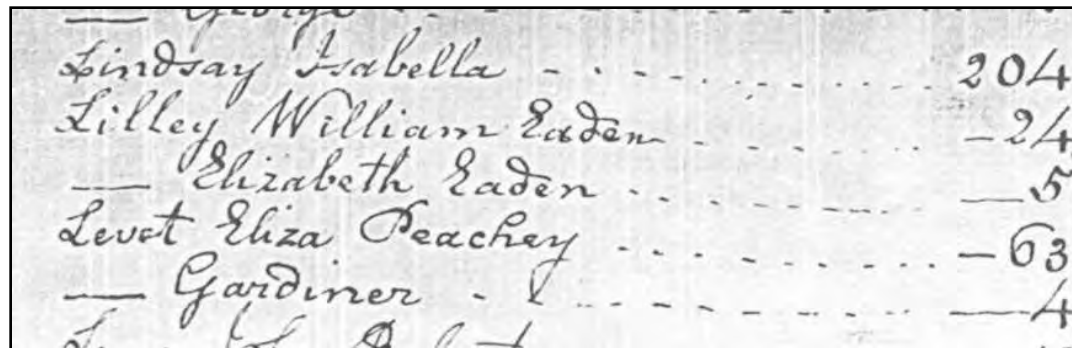
# The Records

- The records (including the indexes) are arranged by date of registration rather than by date of birth
- This has always made them difficult to use because:
  - retrospective registration was encouraged
  - many thousands of births were registered in the last few months of 1837
- Good news! The BMD Registers website has made access to the records very straightforward
- The British Isles Vital Records Index also provides access to approximately 85% of the records

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## The Indexes

- There are eight indexes to the registers in Dr Williams' Library and one for the Wesleyan Methodists
- The indexes:
  - are arranged by initial letter of surname then in order of the date of registration
  - give references to registers/certificates



A photograph of a handwritten index card. The card is lined and contains several entries in cursive handwriting. Each entry consists of a name followed by a reference number. The entries are: Lindsay Isabella - 204, Lilley William Eaden - 24, Elizabeth Eaden - 5, Levot Eliza Peachey - 63, and Gardiner - 4. There are also some faint, partially visible entries at the top and bottom of the card.

Lindsay Isabella	204
Lilley William Eaden	24
Elizabeth Eaden	5
Levot Eliza Peachey	63
Gardiner	4

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# The Registers

- There are eleven volumes of registers for Dr Williams' Library and three for the Wesleyan Methodists
- The registers:
  - are arranged by certificate number
  - give full details of the birth, usually including the mother's maiden name and *her* father's name

203	No. Morgan Eiza Peaches Lovet Par. Soham County of Cambridge Regd. Nov. 24 <sup>th</sup> 1820	E. Finch-	# 25. Sep <sup>r</sup> 1818
	Thos. Morgan	Elijah Lovet, &	Mannah Lovet
	Gardiner Lovet Par. Soham	Eiza, Daughter of Stephen & Elizabeth Gardiner	Mannah Lovet



James the Son of Richard Guest of Astley Farmer in  
the Parish of Leigh in the County of Lancaster and of  
Ann his wife, who was the daughter of John and Betty Monks was born at  
Town Lane on the First day of August in the year of our Lord One Thousand  
Eight Hundred and Twenty at whose birth we were present Thomas Pendlebury Surgeon  
Sarah Swindal <sup>her Mother</sup> of Worsley Attendant

The first above mentioned James Guest was solemnly baptized with water, in the name  
of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, on the Tenth day of September in the  
year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty at the House of  
Richard Guest by me Joseph Worsvall Minister

We, the Parents of the above named James Guest do hereby attest the truth of the above  
Record of the Birth and Baptism of our said Son  
Richard Guest Father.  
Ann Guest Mother.

Registered at the Methodist Register Office, No. 66, Paternoster Row, near St. Paul's  
Church, London, this twentieth day of August in the year of our Lord One  
Thousand Eight Hundred and twenty one by me  
Thomas Blanchard Registrar.  
Folio A 15 No. 1246

# Finding an entry in the registers

40 93

Parish of <i>Lindfield</i>		Ecclesiastical District of		City or Borough of		Town of		Village of		
No. of House	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851		Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind or Deaf, or Lame
		Male	Female			Males	Females			
116	<i>St. Peter Lane</i>	<i>Stephen Mitchell</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>44</i>			<i>Shematter</i>	<i>Sussex, Lindfield</i>	
		<i>Mary A. Esq.</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Wid.</i>	<i>24</i>				<i>Es. Hartman</i>	
117	<i>St. Peter Lane</i>	<i>James Thomas</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>30</i>			<i>Agricultural Laborer</i>	<i>Sussex, West Hove</i>	
		<i>Mary Esq.</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>29</i>				<i>Es. Esq.</i>	
		<i>Elizabeth G. Esq.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>8</i>			<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Es. Lindfield</i>	
		<i>Thomas Thomas</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>10</i>			<i>Agricultural Laborer</i>	<i>Es. West Hove</i>	
		<i>Samuel Mason</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>7</i>			<i>Bricklayer</i>	<i>Es. Hartman</i>	
		<i>Harriet Esq.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>33</i>				<i>Hampshire</i>	
		<i>Mary Esq.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>7</i>				<i>Es. Hartman</i>	
118	<i>St. Peter Lane</i>	<i>Joseph Bennett</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>40</i>			<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Sussex, Pulborough</i>	
		<i>Elizabeth Esq.</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>44</i>				<i>Es. Hartman</i>	
		<i>Lidia Esq.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>21</i>			<i>Servant</i>	<i>Es. Lindfield</i>	
		<i>Robert Esq.</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>10</i>			<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Es. Esq.</i>	
		<i>William Bennett</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>8</i>				<i>Es. Esq.</i>	
		<i>Mary Bennett</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>5</i>			<i>Domestic Wife</i>	<i>Es. Esq.</i>	
		<i>Mary Esq.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>3</i>				<i>Middlesex, Highbury</i>	
		<i>Richard Esq.</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>1</i>			<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Es. London</i>	
		<i>Arthur Esq.</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unm.</i>	<i>1</i>				<i>Es. London</i>	
Total of Persons					10		8			

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE  
Reference H.O.107 / 1642  
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1851 census of Lindfield, Sussex

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## The Official Non-Parochial BMDs Service

For records of birth, baptism, marriage, death and burial taken from non parish sources

### Search

Forename  Surname

Names may include wildcards [\[tell me more\]](#)

Exact match  Yes  No [\[tell me more\]](#)

Event type  
All

Tick to search **all** names [\[tell me more\]](#)

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- [RG6](#)
- [RG7](#)



# The Official Non-Parochial BMDs Service

## Advanced Search

Forename: lydia Surname: knight

Names may include wildcards [\[tell me more\]](#)

Exact match  Yes  No [\[tell me more\]](#)

Event type: Births & Baptisms

Tick to search all names [\[tell me more\]](#)

Search within: All records

Search place:   
e.g. 'London' or 'Bristol' (enter 'Russia' for St Petersburg records)

Year of event (+/- 5 years): 1828

Search

Advanced search cost: 1 credit

Less options: [Standard Search](#)

Credit Balance: 49,884

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This shows possible matches to **Lydia Knight** within **Births & Baptisms 1828** (+/- 5 years).

10 results found: Displaying results 1 to 10

Order results by: [Name](#)

Page 1 of 1

Some matches are to a relation of the subject because you ticked the 'search all' box.

Surname(s)	Forename(s)	Relation	Year of Event	Event Type	Place	Recordset	View	
Knight	Lydia		1823	Baptism	Berkshire	<a href="#">RG4_0300</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1823	Baptism	Wiltshire	<a href="#">RG4_2229</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1824	Birth	London	<a href="#">RG5_116</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1824	Birth	London	<a href="#">RG4_4665</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1825	Baptism	Warwickshire	<a href="#">RG4_3039</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia Jane		1828	Baptism	Devon	<a href="#">RG4_0865</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1828	Birth	Sussex	<a href="#">RG5_129</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1829	Birth	London	<a href="#">RG4_4665</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia		1831	Baptism	London	<a href="#">RG4_4674</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>
Knight	Lydia Frances		1832	Birth	Devon	<a href="#">RG4_1215</a>	<a href="#">Full Details</a>	<a href="#">Page Image</a>

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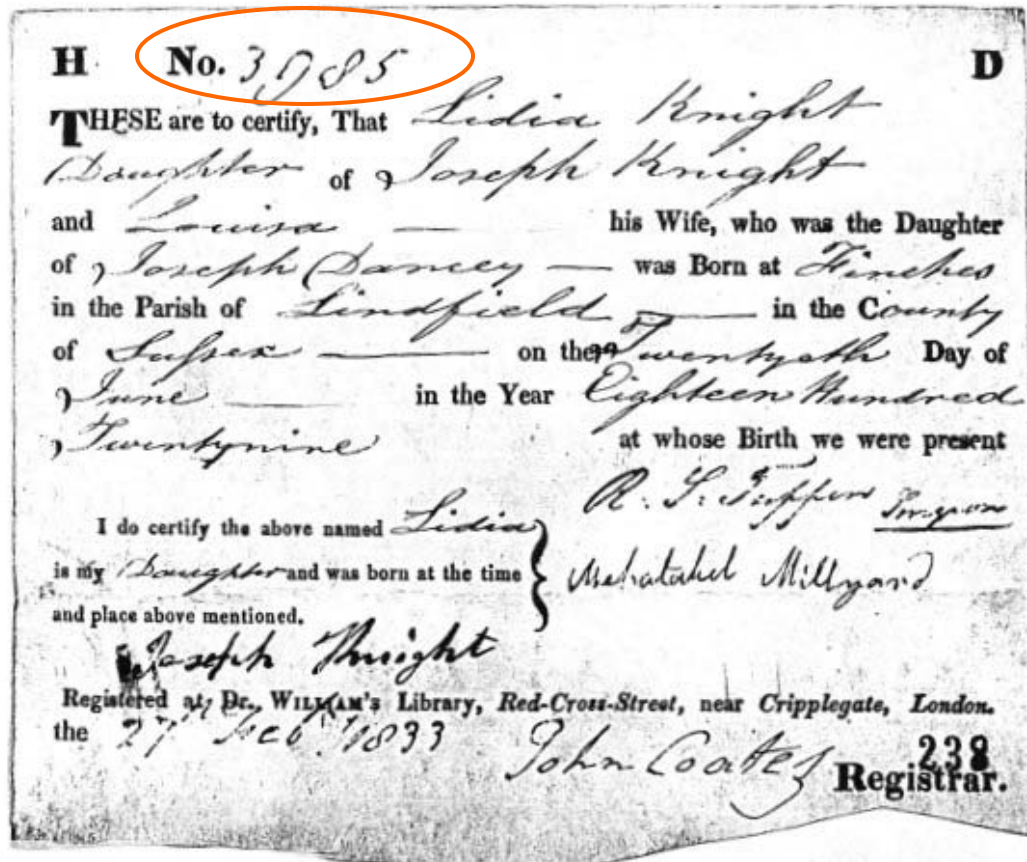
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# Finding an entry in the registers



Certificate for Lidia Knight, daughter of Joseph & Louisa Knight in RG5/120

# Finding an entry in the registers

342

No.	Names of Children.	Names of Parents.	Witnesses.	Time when Born.		
				Day.	Month.	Year.
	<i>Lydia Knight Finches Pch. of Lundfield. Supex</i>	<i>Joseph &amp; Louisa Dau of Joseph Dancy</i>	<i>M. J. Tupper M. Millyard</i>			

342

No.	Names of Children.	Names of Parents.	Witnesses.	Time when Born.		
				Day.	Month.	Year.
<i>3985</i>	<i>Lydia Knight Finches Pch. of Lundfield. Supex Reg. Feb. 27. 1899 John Coates</i>	<i>Joseph &amp; Louisa Dau of Joseph Dancy</i>	<i>M. J. Tupper M. Millyard</i>	<i>20<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>June</i>	<i>1899</i>

3990

<i>Sarah Finrose L.</i>	<i>Robert James &amp; Sarah Dau of Richard Stanley</i>	<i>J. B. Sphlett J. Buckhove</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Sept. 1891</i>
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RG4/4665

Register entry for Lydia Knight, daughter of Joseph & Louisa Knight in RG4/4665

# Finding an entry in the registers

Number	Names of Children	Names of Parents	Minister	Time when born	15 Remarks
61	Lidia Knight Finches in the Parish of Lindfield County of Sussex Reg. March 2, 1833 by George Withall	Joseph Knight Louisa his wife Daughter of Joseph Dancy	R. S. Tupper, Surgeon Mehalaleel Millyard	20 June	Registered at St. Williams Library 27 Feb 1829 1833. N. 3985

## Entry in the Ditchling Baptist Baptismal Register

60	by George Withall Joseph Knight Finches in the Parish of Lindfield County of Sussex Reg. March 2, 1833 by George Withall	Joseph Knight Louisa his wife Daughter of Joseph Dancy	R. S. Tupper, Surgeon Mehalaleel Millyard	14 November	Registered at St. Williams Library 27 Feb 1827 1833. N. 3984
61	Lidia Knight Finches in the Parish of Lindfield County of Sussex Reg. March 2, 1833 by George Withall	Joseph Knight Louisa his wife Daughter of Joseph Dancy	R. S. Tupper, Surgeon Mehalaleel Millyard	20 June	Registered at St. Williams Library 27 Feb 1829 1833. N. 3985

F. No. 4050

D

THESE are to certify, That *Florence*  
*Daughter* of *William Edward Nightingale*  
and *Frances* his Wife, who was Daughter of  
*Wm. Smith Esq. M.P.* was Born in  
in the Parish of  
in the City of *Florence* the *twelfth*  
Day of *May* in the Year *eighteen hundred*  
*and twenty* at whose Birth we were present.

*Frances Gale*  
*Frances Lombard*

57

Registered at Dr. WILLIAMS'S Library, Redcross Street, near Cripplegate, London.

*July 12<sup>th</sup> 1820* *Thos. Morgan* Registrar.



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