

# GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

by Alan E. Mann, AG

Have you ever wondered why letters often begins with "Gentlemen:"? Use of this term originally was an attempt to use one word to describe a mixed group and which would neither offend the "high-born" nor unduly elevate the "low-born." "Gentleman" can refer to a person of noble birth, to one of high rank or achievement, or to a kind and refined person. Some fine men qualify as gentlemen in every sense of the word. My, father, for example, is a descendant of the Mann family (Baronets) of Linton, Kent, a high ranking officer in the U.S. Air Force (ret.), and a cultured and kind person (and a fine *Mann* he is, too!)

There is little doubt about which definition applies to a monthly magazine intended for gentlemen which commenced publication in 1731 called ***Gentleman's Magazine***. According to Oxford's English Dictionary<sup>1</sup>, the term gentleman, applied properly, is "*one entitled to bear arms though not ranking among the nobility.*" Originally called the ***Gentleman's Magazine or Monthly Intelligencer***, the magazine underwent several name changes (see Table I).

1731-1735	<i>The Gentleman's Magazine: or Monthly Intelligencer</i>
1736-1833	<i>The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle</i>
1834-1855	<i>The Gentleman's Magazine of New Series</i>
1856-1868	<i>New Series: The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review</i>
1869-1907	<i>New Series: The Gentleman's Magazine</i>

Despite its seemingly limited audience, the magazine is a very valuable source to genealogists. This article explains the time period included, the persons covered, and aids for genealogical use of the ***Gentleman's Magazine*** in three sections titled content, coverage, and indexes.

## Content

The original content included summaries of Parliamentary debates, interesting court proceedings, descriptions of battles in foreign lands, lists of new books, poetry, and "items of interest." The items of interest included obituaries, extracts of unusual wills, prices of commodities in London (for comparison), current foreign events, and notices of births, marriages, deaths, promotions, ecclesiastical preferments, and bankrupts. The content varied little from its inception until it was reorganized, first in 1834, then in 1856, and drastically between 1868 and 1870.

This article focuses on the content of the birth, marriage, death and other notices since they are of the greatest value to genealogists (and they are indexed), but one should not overlook the other items of interest such as lists of bankrupts or extracts of court proceedings or wills. Discussions of difficult or disputed pedigrees with related charts are found in some issues.

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<sup>1</sup>Sir James A.H. Murray, ed., *Oxford English Dictionary*, 13 vols. plus supps. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; FHL book Ref 423 M964o)

The notices themselves were chiefly drawn from local newspapers and magazines, and were often greatly abbreviated. This is important because the informed modern searcher might wish to seek out a local publication from the reported area for more details. For example, an obituary for my 3rd great-grandfather in the *Worcester Herald* containing the names and residences of his widow and eight children was condensed by *Gentleman's Magazine* to "Lately, at Hallow Park, Worcester, age 75, James Mann, Esq."

Most often, the births are few and contain very little information. A sample entry reads simply "on the 9th, the wife of Mr. Lucius Mann, at Hazelbrow, of a son." The marriage notices usually contain the names of both spouses, the place of marriage, and often the names and titles (or rank) of the fathers of the bride and groom. Death notices vary widely, from as little as a brief mention of name, date, and place of death to as much as a the name and marriage date to the deceased's spouse and a full list of children with their spouses.

More information was usually included in later years than at the magazine's inception. Some of the entries contain as little as this entry from the August 1732 issue "A young lady in Wiltshire of 4000£ fortune married to a Footman<sup>2</sup>". Early entries usually started by naming the place. In 1814, the format was altered and the notices were grouped by shire, starting with London and ending with "Abroad."

The magazine contains detailed descriptions of military engagements which frequently include fold-out maps of the battle site. Other fold-outs include maps of newly surveyed countries or areas, charts, and even a plan of the interior of Noah's Ark. For preservation, the fold-outs are usually separately bound (see 9 volumes of 942 B2g supp. at the Family History Library).

### Coverage

In general, the coverage (number and type of persons included) increased only slightly over time. The original intent was to publish notices of personal interest relating to gentlemen and higher classes (including royalty). The coverage was widest for deaths, sparse for marriages, and extremely limited for births. Notices of ecclesiastical preferments (assignments of ministers, etc.) were fairly complete, while promotions were far from complete, but covered the majority of officers (especially those above the rank of Captain). Table II shows the number of each type of entry for two randomly selected months.

	Aug Oct	
<u>Event Type</u>	<u>1735</u>	<u>1826</u>
Births	7	14
Marriages	16	53
Deaths 51	108	
Obituaries	0	36
Promotions	18	33
Preferments	27	18

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<sup>2</sup>*Gentlemen's Magazine* 303 vols. (London: [s.n.], 1731-1907; FHL book 942 B2g; film, 844665-710)  
Vol. II, page 928

The coverage changed abruptly in 1868, when notices were discontinued. A few obituaries were published between June 1868 and December 1869, and are indexed in a one page index to obituaries at the end of the volumes for 1868 and for 1869. From January 1870 on, no notices or obituaries were included in *Gentleman's Magazine* (except when an obituary was part of an article in very rare instances--usually for royalty). The magazine itself did not cease publication until September 1907, but the volumes after 1869 are of little use to the genealogist.

## Indexes

From the first year of publication, each volume (year) of *Gentleman's Magazine* contained a fairly good index (separate name and subject indexes) to all twelve issues for that year. These indexes ceased in May 1868, when a very brief index to the few obituaries was placed in the back of the volume. Both the obituaries and the index last appeared in 1869. Later issues did not contain notices. An index to the names mentioned in articles, record extracts, or pedigrees might have been helpful, but no indexes of any kind exist for issues after 1869.

The index at the end of each volume through May 1868 includes names mentioned in obituaries and personal notices. Some other indexes have been made for specific notices, such as marriages or deaths. These indexes include Edward Alexander Fry's *Index to the Marriages in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-1768*<sup>3</sup> and the *Index to the Biographical and Obituary Notices in Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-1780*<sup>4</sup>. Marriages from *Gentleman's Magazine* for the years 1731 to 1768 were included in *Boyd's Marriage Index*<sup>5</sup>, and obituaries were included in *Musgrave's Obituaries*<sup>6</sup>. For those fortunate to have a surname beginning with a letter between Aa and Alexander, there is Joseph Foster's index to marriages<sup>7</sup>,

### Who should use *Gentlemen's Magazine*?

People whose ancestors were living between 1731 and 1868 who fit one of the following categories:

- ▶ had a coat-of-arms
- ▶ were knighted (Sir...)
- ▶ were wealthy
- ▶ held an important civil position
- ▶ were Church of England clergymen
- ▶ were Army or Naval officers
- ▶ were magistrates
- ▶ were Members of Parliament
- ▶ were prominent tradesmen
- ▶ were referred to as "Mr.", "gent.", or esquire ("esq.") in records

<sup>3</sup>Edward Alexander Fry, *Index to the Marriages in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-1768* (London: [s.n.], 1922)

<sup>4</sup>Edward Alexander Fry, *Index to the Biographical and Obituary Notices in Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-1780*, (London: British Records Society, 1891; FHL book 942 B2g Index 1731-1780)

<sup>5</sup>Percival Boyd, comp., *Boyd's Marriage Index*, 555 volumes, (London: Society of Genealogists, 1938-1962; FHL book; film; fiche; various call numbers--too many to list)

<sup>6</sup>William Musgrave, comp., *Musgrave's Obituaries*, 6 vols. (London, Harleian Society, 1900; FHL book 942 B4h Vols. 44-49; films 162064-066)

<sup>7</sup>"Marriages of the Nobility and Gentry, 1650-1880", an article in *Collectanea Genealogica*, 1881-1885

which includes marriages from this periodical as well as the *Historical Register* and *The Times* (1865-1880 only).

The most useful index is *Gentleman's Magazine Index*<sup>8</sup>. It is not well known, and is often omitted from reference works that discuss *Gentleman's Magazine*. It consists of 75 typescript volumes compiled by the College of Arms and typed by the Genealogical Society of Utah. It has been microfilmed and microfiched. It indexes all obituaries and notices of births, marriages, deaths, promotions, and ecclesiastical preferments for 1731-1850. While this index does not include names contained in the individual articles and letters of the magazine, it does include the greatest span of years of any of the indexes. This index is available to be ordered at any Family History Center anywhere in the world (ask for microfiche number 6026701). The magazine itself is available on microfilm through the Family History Center system, or in print at the Family History Library in Salt Lake.

There is no index for the years 1851-1869 except the indexes at the back of each volume of the magazine.

A few of the initial years have been indexed on a CD-ROM by Averro Publications (reviewed in *Genealogical Computing*), but it has only a small fraction of the years available in the printed index.

*Gentleman's Magazine* is a potentially valuable source available at most major libraries (even libraries in the United States, if they have a British collection). I've taught History 407R (Applied British Research) to students at BYU for several years. I tell most of my classes a little about *Gentleman's Magazine*, and invariably am thanked by at least one of my students for opening a treasure trove of information about their family. Perhaps **you** should give it a try.

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<sup>8</sup>College of Arms, *Gentleman's Magazine Index*, 75 vols. (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1958-60; FHL book 942 B2g Index; film 599738-761; fiche 6026701, 126 fiche)