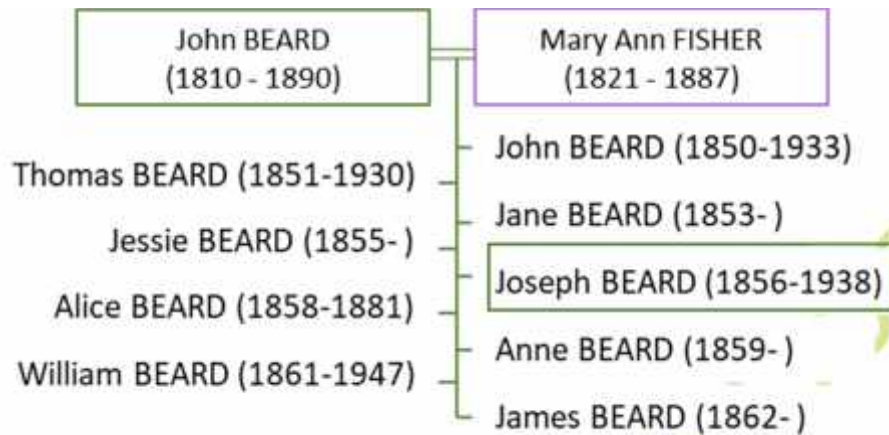


# John BEARD (1810-1890) & Mary Ann FISHER

## Great-great grandparents



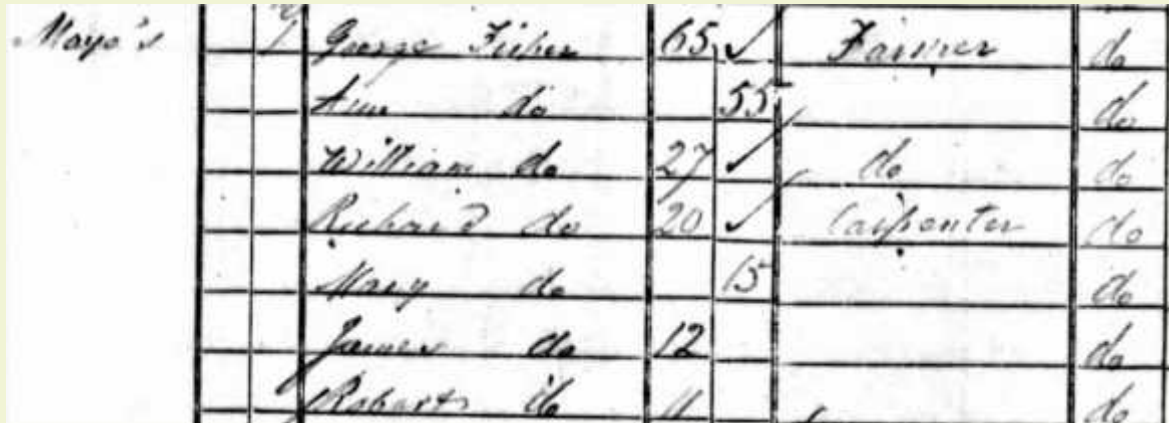
Your great-great-grandparents were John BEARD and his wife Mary Ann (FISHER). As we have heard, John was born in 1810 in the parish of Staunton, Worcestershire. He was baptised there on the 10 April 1810.<sup>1</sup> John's family then moved to Corse Lawn Farm when he was aged about 10. John and his parents were recorded at Corse Lawn Farm in the 1841 census.<sup>2</sup>

John was 37 when he married Mary Ann FISHER in Ledbury, Herefordshire on 06 August 1847.<sup>3</sup>

### Who was Mary Ann FISHER?

Mary Ann FISHER was born in 1822 in Pendock, Worcestershire. She was the daughter of George FISHER, a farmer, and his wife Ann. Mary Ann was baptised in Pendock on 22 December 1822.<sup>4</sup> George married Ann SHEEN on 11 May 1814 in Pendock.<sup>5</sup> George was aged about 43<sup>6</sup> and Ann about 22.<sup>7</sup> George was a farmer significant enough to be listed in the 1820 Directory of Worcestershire.<sup>8</sup> In the 1841 census, Mary Ann was recorded with her parents and four of her siblings at Mayo's Farm in Pendock.<sup>9</sup> Mayo's is about five miles north of Corse Lawn Farm where John BEARD lived in 1841. See Appendix 2 for the story of the Fisher family.





Mayo's	George Fisher	65	✓	Fairmer	do
	Ann do	55			do
	William do	27	✓	do	do
	Richard do	20	✓	Carpenter	do
	Mary do	15			do
	James do	12			do
	Robert do	11			do

Figure 1: 1841 Census for Mayo's Farm, Pendock, Worcestershire.

Having married in 1847, it is not clear where John and Mary Ann BEARD lived for the first few years of married life. John was not recorded in electoral rolls until after 1852. This may be because they lived with family in the area or they rented a cottage valued at less than £10 a year and so did not qualify to vote.<sup>10</sup> However, we do know that their first child, also called John, was born in 1849 and baptised later in Corse on 14 May 1850.<sup>11</sup>

In 1851 John took over the tenancy of Buck Farm, Orridge Street, Corse which was half a mile away from his parents at Corse Lawn Farm and on the same road – in farming terms, he moved 'next door'.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 2: Map showing proximity of Buck Farm to Corse Lawn Farm in Corse, Gloucestershire.<sup>13</sup>

Transcription of the 1851 census return for John BEARD & Mary Ann (FISHER)					
Corse, Gloucestershire, England <i>The Buck</i>					
Name	Rel	Cond	Age	Occupation	Born.
John BEARD	Head	Mar	38	Farmer of 50 acres employing 4 men	Staunton, Worcs.
Mary Ann BEARD	Wife	Mar	30	-	Pendock, Worcs.
John BEARD	Son		1	-	Corse, Gloucs.
Thomas BEARD	Son		3 mo	-	Corse, Gloucs.
Anne FISHER	Mother in law	Wid	62	-	Pendock, Worcs.
Eliza OXWORTH	Serv		14	House Servant	Ashleworth, Gloucs

As we can see, by this time John and Mary Ann had a second son Thomas. He was born in 1851 and baptised on 12 February that year in Corse, about a month before the above census was taken.<sup>14</sup> The record confirms that John worked as a farmer and that Buck Farm covered about 50 acres. Electoral rolls tell us that John remained at Buck Farm until 1861.<sup>15</sup> His family continued to grow, and the 1861 census recorded John and Mary Ann with seven children, including your great-grandfather Joseph BEARD.<sup>16</sup>

Transcription of the 1861 census return for John BEARD & Mary Ann (FISHER)					
Corse, Gloucestershire, England <i>Orridge</i>					
Name	Rel	Cond	Age	Occupation	Born.
John BEARD	Head	Mar	47	Farmer of 49 acres employing 1 man	Staunton, Worcs.
Mary Ann BEARD	Wife	Mar	40	Farmer's wife	Pendock, Worcs.
John BEARD	Son	-	12	Farmer's son	Corse, Gloucs.
Thomas BEARD	Son	-	10	Farmer's son	Corse, Gloucs.
Jane BEARD	Daur	-	8	At School	Corse, Gloucs.
Jessie BEARD	Daur	-	6	At School	Corse, Gloucs
Joseph BEARD	Son	-	4	At School	Corse, Gloucs
Alice BEARD	Daur	-	3		Corse, Gloucs
Ann BEARD	Daur	-	2		Corse, Gloucs
Anne FISHER	Mother in law	Wid	69	Farmer's Widow	Pendock, Worcs.
Ann YEEND	Boarder	Mar	49	Nurse	Pendock, Worcs.

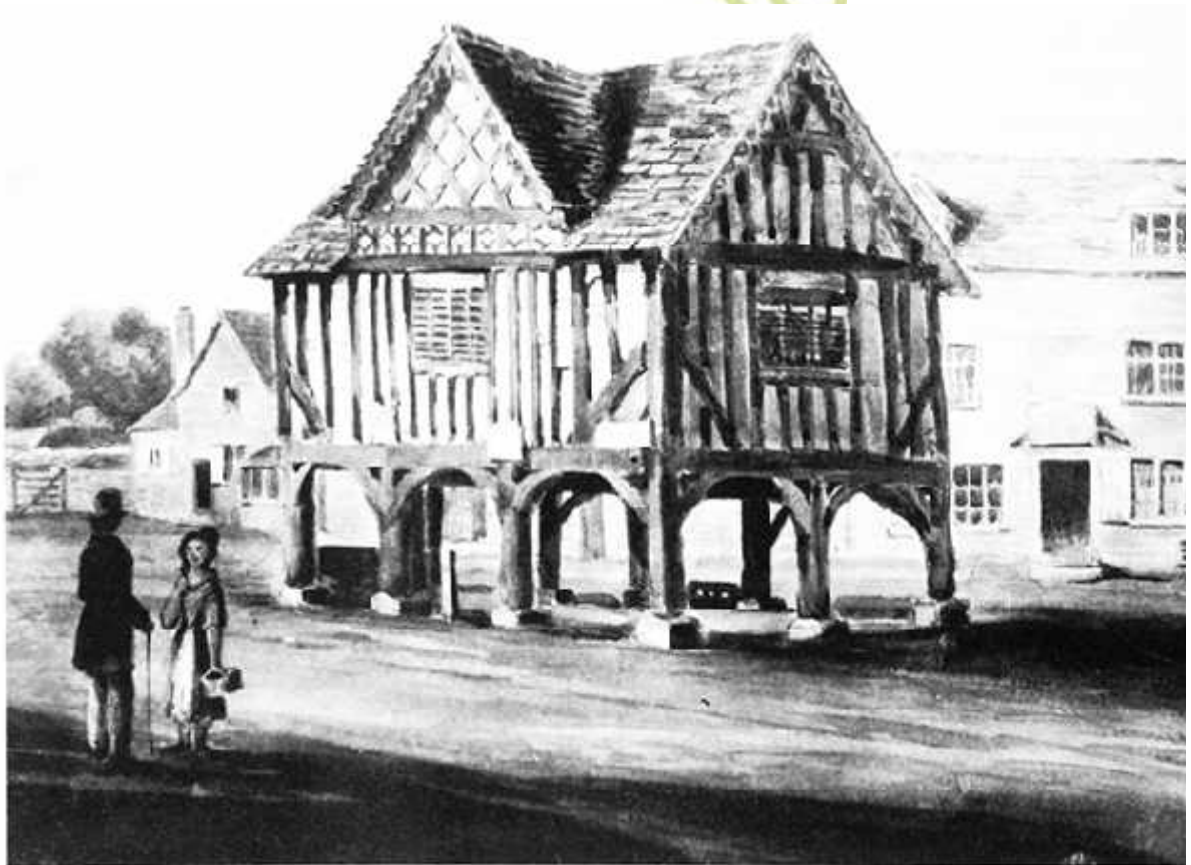




A month after the census was taken the landowner of Buck Farm put it up for sale by auction. It was described as a desirable freehold estate of 61 acres of orchard, pasture, and arable land with a convenient farmhouse in excellent repair. The advertisement said that one of the farm's fields commanded extensive views of the Malvern and May Hills and was ideally suited for someone who wanted to build a house there.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps this was a signal to move because in 1861-62 John relocated about six miles west to the nearby parish of Oxenhall, Gloucestershire. John's father had died in January 1861, so this also may have contributed to the impetus to move farms. By the time they moved, John had another son, William, who was born and baptised in Corse on 23 June 1861.<sup>18</sup>

Oxenhall, like Corse, was a rural parish but had no village, being made up of scattered farms and homesteads that housed about 200 people. It had no shop or pub and John and his family would have travelled to the nearby town of Newent for the market or for any social life.



*Figure 3: Newent Market Hall, where John BEARD would have traded.<sup>19</sup>*

In Oxenhall, John took on the tenancy of White House Farm.<sup>20</sup> White House was an ancient farm, recorded as early as 1443 and by 1659 was the largest farm in the manor. Its buildings



then included a timber-framed, single storey farmhouse with rooms in the roof, a barn and a cider mill-house.

The buildings underwent extensive remodelling in the 1750's when their timber frames were faced with brick and the rooves covered with clay tiles. A second storey was added to the farmhouse.

The farm is still there today but the house was extensively altered in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, long after the Beards had left it, so it now no longer looks like the place where they lived and worked.<sup>21</sup> However, there is still a barn at the farm entrance which appears to be made from the original timbers faced with brick.



*Figure 4: White House Farm, Hawthorne Hill, Oxenhall, Gloucestershire, GL18 1RJ in 2010.  
(Courtesy Google Maps)*

Shortly after they moved to White House, John and Mary Ann had their eighth and last child. James BEARD was baptised in Oxenhall on 16 August 1862.<sup>22</sup>

The 1871 census found the family still at White House Farm.<sup>23</sup> At 140 acres it was substantially larger than either Buck Farm or Corse Lawn Farm.



Transcription of the 1871 census return for John BEARD & Mary Ann (FISHER)					
Oxenhall, Gloucestershire, England					
White House Farm					
Name	Rel	Cond	Age	Occupation	Born.
John BEARD	Head	Mar	55	Farmer of 140 acres	Staunton, Worcs.
Mary Ann BEARD	Wife	Mar	50	-	Pendock, Worcs.
Thomas BEARD	Son	-	20	Farmer	Corse, Gloucs.
Jane BEARD	Daur	-	18	General Servant	Corse, Gloucs.
Joseph BEARD	Son	-	14	At School	Corse, Gloucs
Alice BEARD	Daur	-	12	At School	Corse, Gloucs
Ann BEARD	Daur	-	10	At School	Corse, Gloucs
William BEARD	Son	-	8	At School	Oxenhall, Gloucs
James BEARD	Son	-	6	At School	Oxenhall, Gloucs

The census shows that the younger children were all in school. The local school had closed by 1868, presumably through lack of funds, but children of the parish were not left entirely without instruction: some attended Newent's National school, others, perhaps the girls and infants, were taught in a small schoolroom near the church twice a week by the daughters of the lord of the manor, R.F. ONSLOW. Around six boys attended a night school taught by the vicar T.P. LITTLE.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps your great-grandfather Joseph was one of these.

Shortly after the census, between 1872-73, John moved from White House Farm to Oxenhall Court.<sup>25</sup> Originally the farmhouse of the rectory estate, Oxenhall Court was a substantial farm that included a pigsty, stable and hayloft, cider-mill, five bayed threshing barn and a cart shed.<sup>26</sup>

However, John was only at Oxenhall Court for a few years because his fortunes clearly changed. Around 1876-77 the family moved to Shaw Common, Oxenhall and from this point onwards Electoral rolls show that he still qualified to vote but now as a man who paid rent of £12 a year or more. This was a significant reduction from all his previous residences when he paid over £50 a year.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that he now rented a cottage rather than a farm, perhaps one like Quince Cottage in figure 10 below.

So why was John no longer a tenant farmer? Firstly he was not alone in his change of circumstances. His successor at White House, John CADLE, had quit farming and sold all his stock, tools and produce (including 1000 gallons of cider) in 1878,<sup>28</sup> and Oxenhall's George WATTS was one of many British farmers who went bankrupt at this time.<sup>29</sup> Britain was in the





grip of the Great Agricultural Depression and those who earned their living from the land were suffering.<sup>30</sup>



*Figure 5: Quince Cottage near Shaw Common, Oxenhall, Gloucestershire.<sup>31</sup>*

The period from 1853-62 was known as the 'golden age of English agriculture'.<sup>32</sup> However, the end of the Crimean War and American Civil war re-opened free trade and the US economy in particular was booming. Furthermore, cheaper coal meant the costs of steam transportation fell dramatically, reducing the cost of importing goods. To make things worse, England suffered a series of successive poor harvests between 1875-78.<sup>33</sup> This 'perfect storm' of events meant that a farmer's income in 1878 was about 25% of that in 1875 and many land owners sold their farms.<sup>34</sup> John was clearly one of the many who suffered and had to abandon his profession.

From 1878 onwards John disappeared from the electoral registers, suggesting that he no longer rented a cottage big enough to qualify to vote. In addition, the financial pressure probably caused a family separation, because in 1881 John and his wife Mary Ann lived apart in different houses.

John lived with his married daughter Jane and her husband Charles FAULKS at Cleeve Mill in Newent, Gloucestershire.<sup>35</sup>





Figure 6: Cleeve Mill, Newent, Gloucestershire c.1923.<sup>36</sup>

Transcription of the 1881 census return for John BEARD					
Newent, Gloucestershire, England					
Cleeve Mill					
Name	Rel	Cond	Age	Occupation	Born.
Charles J. FAULKS	Head	Mar	34	Miller (Corn)	Astle[?], Gloucs.
Jane FAULKS	Wife	Mar	28	-	Corse, Gloucs.
James FAULKS	Son	-	9	At School	Oxenhall, Gloucs.
Annie FAULKS	Daur	-	7	At School	Newent, Gloucs.
Mary FAULKS	Daur	-	5		Newent, Gloucs.
Charles FAULKS	Son	-	4		Newent, Gloucs.
Florence FAULKS	Daur	-	2		Newent, Gloucs.
Henry FAULKS	Son	-	2 mo.		Newent, Gloucs.
John BEARD	Father in law	-	68	Miller	Staunton, Worcs.

The census shows that John worked as a miller along with his son-in-law. So it may be that the separation of John and his wife Mary Ann was purely a practical one, driven by John's need to find work. Mary Ann stayed in Oxenhall in a cottage with their two sons William and James, both of whom worked as agricultural labourers.<sup>37</sup> Their other son, Joseph (your great-grandfather) lived next door, but more of him later.





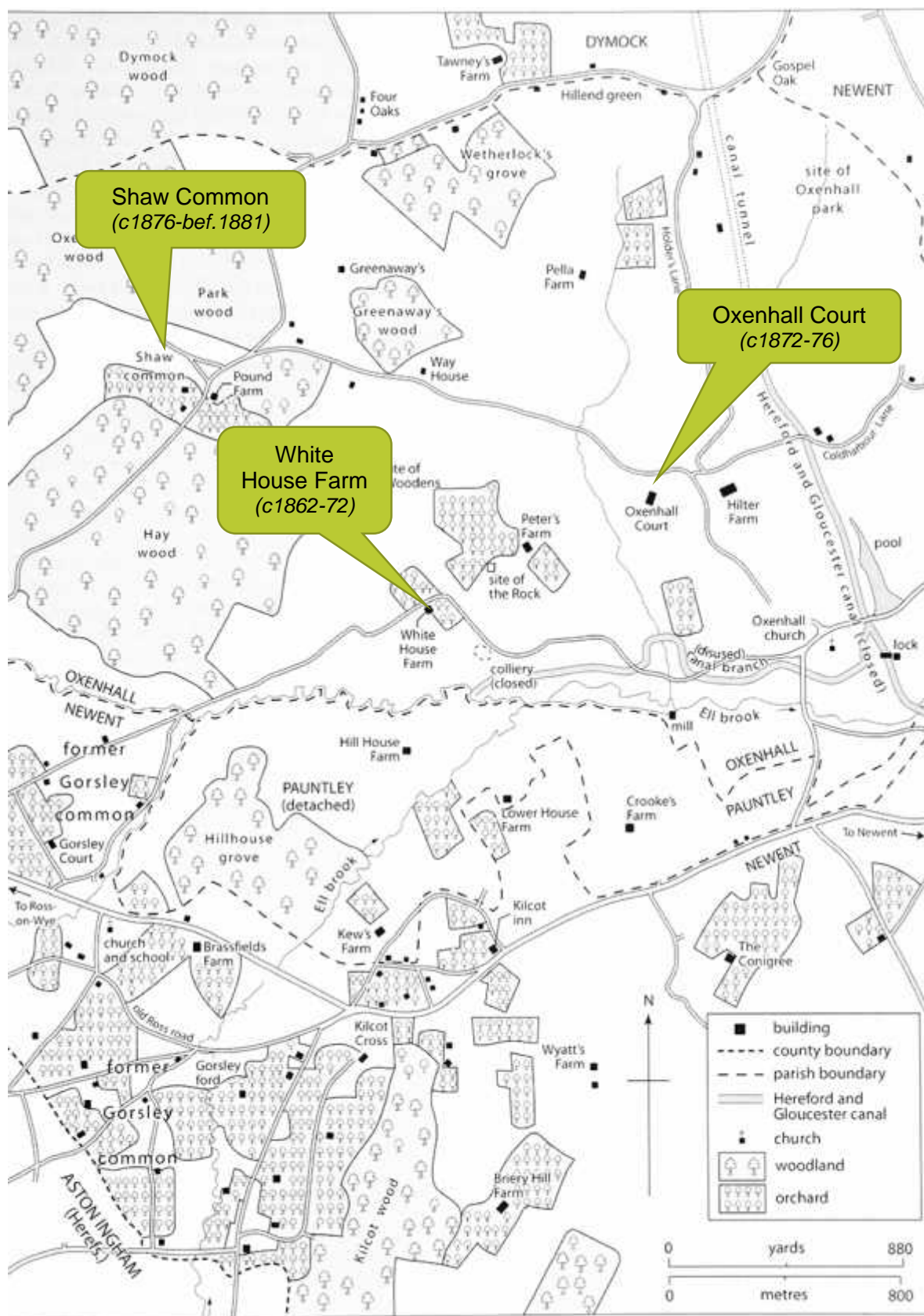


Figure 7 : Map showing where John BEARD and family lived in Oxenhall, Gloucestershire.



Your great-great grandmother, Mary Ann BEARD, died six years later on 29 December 1887, aged 68.<sup>38</sup> She was buried in Oxenhall on 04 January 1888 in the same grave as her daughter Alice.<sup>39</sup> John died two years later on 01 July 1890 and was also buried with his wife and daughter in Oxenhall on 05 July.<sup>40</sup> (See Appendix 4) The burial record says he was 78 and his gravestone says he was 84 but he was nearer to 80 years old. John was recorded as a resident of Newent, so apparently still lived with his daughter at Cleeve Mill when he died.<sup>41</sup> No record of a will or probate was found for either Mary Ann or John.

Package Details – What sources were used to construct this report?

- ✓ Birth, marriage, and death indexes
- ✓ Parish records – baptism, marriage, and burial
- ✓ Census records
- ✓ Testamentary records – calendars of probate etc
- ✓ Newspapers
- ✓ Maps
- ✓ Directories
- ✓ Electoral registers
- ✓ Monumental inscriptions
- ✓ Parliamentary records
- ✓ Land & tax records
- ✓ Secondary sources – other historical texts
- ✓ Archive catalogues
- ✓ Etc

