



Beginner's Guide To Family History



Beginner's Golden Rules

1. Work Backwards

To start your research work backwards from yourself, then parents, grandparents, great-grandparents. Noting down names, dates and places on a family tree ensuring that you have verified your sources at each stage. (a blank chart is included in the folder to help you.)

2. Start with your Relatives

Assemble all the information you can from relatives. Take copies of all available documents they may have – certificates of birth, marriage, death, Military documents etc. Talk to as many relatives as possible to find out what they know about the family. They will all have information some accurate and some not so – always check whatever is told to you! Make comprehensive notes.

3. Set Your Sights

An early decision needs to be made on where to concentrate your researches. Don't aim to research your total ancestry all at once – the data could soon overwhelm you. Once you have filled in your chart to your Grandparents then choose which branch you wish to follow first. You can always come back to the other sides of the family later.

4. Be Organised

Start with a simple folder where you can put your tree, copies of certificates any other documents you may have. Notes you have made on various family members. Make a list of questions you want answered, information you want to find out. This is useful if you are coming to a Family History Society's helpdesk we can help you more effectively.

Useful Websites:

Paying - both these sites do offer free 2 week trials fairly regularly if you want to see whether they will be useful.

www.findmypast.co.uk

www.ancestry.co.uk

Ancestry Library Edition free in all Sefton Libraries which includes all worldwide records.

Findmypast available in Lanc Libraries, Lanc Archives & Liverpool Library.

www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk – our Societies website includes information on all groups, where and when they meet and information on all helpdesks. Also a forum for members who can ask and answer questions on family history.

www.gro.gov.uk – for ordering certificates online

www.freebmd.org.uk – free online bmd indexes

www.lancashirebmd.org.uk – free online bmd indexes for Lancashire – useful for marriages as they list the name of the church if Church of England

www.ukbmd.org.uk – free online bmd indexes for all counties

www.cwgc.org – Commonwealth War Graves Commission

www.onlineparishclerks.org.uk parish register transcripts for some counties and www.lan-opc.org.uk specifically for Lancashire

www.familysearch.org - IGI

www.freereg.org.uk & www.freecen.org.uk – incomplete site with parish register and census transcriptions on

Useful Abbreviations:

c.	circa	abt.	About
bet.	Between		
bach.	Bachelor	spin.	Spinster
m or marr.	Married	unm	unmarried
Hus.	Husband	w.	wife
Dau.	Daughter	s.	son
g-fath.	Grandfather	g-moth	grandmother
g-son	grandson	Inf.	Infant
g-dau	grand-daughter	wid.	Widow
wit.	Witness		
b.	born	bpt.	Baptised
d.	died	bur.	Buried
lab.	Labourer	Sch.	Scholar
Ag Lab	Agricultural Labourer		
App	Apprentice	Vis.	Visitor
Emp.	Employed	unemp	Unemployed
Dom Serv D	Domestic Servant		
FS	Female Servant	MS	Male Servant
Ind	Independent	wvr.	Weaver
MI	Monumental Inscriptions		
PR	Parish Registers		
W.	Will		

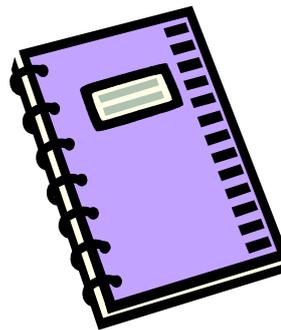
Counties can be abbreviated

5. Classes and Society's

It is always worth joining a Family History Society. You'll get a good grounding in the essentials of family history research. You will meet people with a similar interest and drive. Our Society, for instance, run various help desks across SW Lancashire and Liverpool, we also have an online forum where you can ask questions and get help from lots of people. We also run "Getting Started" and "Moving On with your Family History" Sessions.

6. Use Technology

Using technology is not a necessity, but it can be a great help, and you'll find that more and more resources and organisations are gearing up to take advantage of it. A computer is an efficient tool for storing, copying, sharing and presenting data. There are programs specifically designed to help you draw up and publish your family tree and history. The internet also is home to a great deal of useful information.



Next Steps

You may need to purchase a certificate of birth, marriage or death to give you more information to start your research. Registration of births, marriages and deaths started in 1837 for England and Wales. There are indexes available to search for the relevant information and references which will then allow you to order the certificate from www.gro.gov.uk for £9.25.

The Indexes are available on various websites they are complete on www.findmypast.co.uk and www.ancestry.co.uk which are both subscription sites. Sefton Libraries have a free subscription so you can use the library computers to look at Ancestry. www.freebmd.org.uk and www.lancashirebmd.org.uk are both free sites but the indexes aren't complete.

Birth Certificates

will contain the full name of the child, it's birth date and place of birth. The name of the father and mother, including her maiden name. The occupation of the father and the person who registered the birth.

Marriage Certificates

contain date and place of marriage, full names of bride and groom, also their marital status, ages, occupations and address. Their father's names and their occupations. Also names of witnesses.

Death Certificates

contain date and place of death, full name of deceased, their age, address, occupation, marital status. Cause of death and information on the person present at death.

Scottish Ancestors

All Scottish Records are on one paying website www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk they include Statutory Registers of birth, marriage and deaths from 1855 to 2006, all Old Parish Records, Catholic Registers, Census from 1841 to 1911 and Wills

You can buy 30 credits for £6 but each time you search costs 1 credit. Then viewing each document costs 5 credits, so search carefully!

Irish Ancestors

There are a couple of helpful websites for looking into your Irish family history. www.rootsireland.ie – this website aims to create a database of Irish genealogical sources which enables those who wish to trace their Irish ancestry to have access to all the relevant data in one place. The website has been created by the Irish Family History foundation. You can search for people for free but if you wish to obtain further details from the records you do have to pay. You can search births/baptisms, marriages, deaths/burials, gravestones, Griffiths Valuations and Census.

If you want to search the 1901 and 1911 census for Ireland (these are the only census to survive!) you can search them for free on: www.census.nationalarchives.ie

Military Ancestors

There are a few ways of finding out more about your World War 1 ancestors. If they were killed during the war there is likely to be a monumental inscription at one of the cemeteries and these can be searched at www.cwgc.org

They would have been awarded a medal for serving in WW1 and these can be searched at www.ancestry.co.uk they also have the WW1 pension records for those who were invalided out and entitled to a pension. There are only 10% of WW1 service records in existence and again these have been digitised and can be searched on Ancestry.

Records of Britain's Army, Navy and Air Force are still classified documents and are held by the Ministry of Defence. If a member of your family was killed whilst serving in the British Army they should be listed in the UK, Army Roll of Honour 1939-1945 searchable on Ancestry.

The Indexes divide the years into 4 quarters March qtr (Jan-Mar), June qtr (Apr-Jun), September qtr (Jul-Sept), December qtr (Oct-Dec). Then everyone in England and Wales is listed in alphabetical order. The only information you will be able to see on the index is Full name, District where registered, volume and page number, as well as the Quarter the event was registered and the year. From 1911 the mother's maiden name is included in the birth indexes. From 1866 the age at death is included in the death indexes.

So for instance, if I was looking for information on Isabella Highton who was born in Southport, Lancashire in about 1851 this is what I would find on www.freebmd.org.uk

Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page
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Births Dec 1851 (>99%)

Highton	Isabella	Ormskirk	21	595
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Her marriage:

Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page
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Marriages Jun 1875 (>99%)

HIGHTON	Isabella	Ormskirk	8b	1035
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Her death:

Surname	First name(s)	Age	District	Vol	Page
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Deaths Mar 1914 (>99%)

Wright	Isabel	62	Ormskirk	8b	1110
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The Census

The census is taken every 10 years and the first useful census in England, Wales and Scotland is the 1841. It records details from every household in the UK. 1841 has the name of everyone staying in the house at midnight on 6th June, their occupation. Their ages were rounded down to nearest 5 yrs for adults. Children under 15 yrs their ages weren't rounded. They were also asked whether they were born in the county in which they are living. The censuses after this date listed names, ages, relationship to head of household, marital status, occupation and place of birth. The latest census 1911 includes the number of years the couple have been married and the number of children born to the marriage and how many have died and are living.

The census is available on www.findmypast.co.uk and www.ancestry.co.uk , ancestry library edition free in libraries

Parish Registers

Church registers that are filled in when Baptisms, Marriages and Burials took place at local churches. There are registers available for Church of England churches, Roman Catholic Churches and Non-Conformist Churches. The registers are usually held at Local County Record Offices, where they have usually been filmed and can be view either on Microfiche or Microfilm. In some places registers can be found as early as the 1600's and can go upto modern times.

If you know where your family were living and which church they attended to get married or have their children baptised you can search the registers to find out the information you need, instead of having to buy a lot of certificates. If your family lived in a certain place for decades you can trace your family back several generations using the church registers.

There are also the churchyards to go and have a walk around. Gravestones can have lots of useful information on them.

There are a few websites that have information from parish registers it differs from county to county

www.onlineparishclerks.org.uk – various counties across England. Volunteer based so not complete

www.ancestry.co.uk – London Parish registers

www.findmypast.co.uk – various county information

www.familysearch.org

www.freereg.org.uk

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