

GETTING STARTED on your Family History

First, however old you are, the very best way to start your research is by writing down your own essential details, which are:

- Date and place of birth
- Your education, occupations and where you have lived
- Religious denomination
- Date and place of marriage, and to whom (if applicable)
- Date and place of children's births and marriages (if applicable)

Then repeat the same process for your siblings, parents, their siblings, your grandparents and so on, adding details of when and where people died, if applicable.

Next, **the oral tradition** of asking around the family what they know, you may encounter relatives claiming to know your family history. Never believe what they tell you without checking it out and don't be surprised if what they tell you is wrong. This is not to say that you should ignore other peoples' efforts, but you should always check their advice whenever feasible.

Then there's **the power of paper**, these come in so many forms: letters, school reports, memorial cards, passports, vaccination and ration cards, not forgetting the queen of all family papers, the family bible, and collect as many **family photographs** especially family reunions because they contain so much valuable information.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

- Make notes on what you know
- Constantly update your notes
- Ask immediate family
- Network with remoter family

BASIC RESEARCH

- Civil Registration: Births, Marriages, Deaths (from 1837)
- Census (from 1841 – 1911)
- Wills and administrations (from 1858)
- The 1939 Registration

MORE IN-DEPTH RESEARCH

- Parish Registers (from 1538)
- Bishops' Transcripts (from 1598)
- Electoral Registers (kept annually since 1832, with exception of 1916-17 & 1940-44)
- Manorial records, (beginning mainly in the early to mid-1200s)
- Wills and letters of administration (before 1858)
- Gravestones (mainly from 17th century)
- Newspapers for obituaries, etc. (mainly from 18th century)

Start with the free information online websites or visit your local library which usually now has some subscription websites free - to do some basic research and start with the **1911 Census**:

Ancestry (subscription but free at some libraries) www.ancestry.co.uk

Family Search, the Latter-day Saints (free) <https://familysearch.org>

FreeBMD with access to **FreeCEN** (Census Data) and **FreeREG** (Parish Registers)
www.freebmd.org.uk

Find my Past (subscription but free at some libraries) www.findmypast.co.uk

The Genealogist (subscription) www.the-genealogist.co.uk

ScotlandsPEOPLE (subscription: BMD, Parish & Catholic Registers, and Census Records)
www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Other sources of information:

UKBMD (free research information) with access to **UKGDL** (Genealogical Directories & lists) and **UKMFH** (Military Family History) www.UKBMD.org.uk
also available, a series of [online tutorials](#) to help with your research into BMD

Genuki (free UK & Ireland research information) www.genuki.org.uk

YOUR ARCHIVE RECORD OFFICE

Find the details of a UK Archive from over 2,500 searchable archives online, for more local information on your ancestors:

The National Archives, Kew (free) www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive

FIGHTING FORBEARS

If you need help finding military records after researching the above, the government website is a good place to start especially for **World War I & II**:

The National Archives, Kew (free) <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org

Another recommended **free** website is www.familytreeforum.com where you can seek the help of other family historians, especially if you have a research block aka. 'brick wall'...

Finally, which subscription website is right for you ?

Family history websites can be a huge help with research, providing you with information about your ancestors in the comfort of your own home. But how do you decide which one's right for you?

Firstly, why would you need to spend money at all, there are certainly many great free of charge family history sites, but once you've explored these; there'll come a point when you need to pay to get further with your search.

Subscription/pay-as-you-go family history websites, including the 'big three' – Ancestry, Findmypast and TheGenealogist – offer huge amounts of information about our ancestors.

When deciding which website to sign up to, whether on a pay as you go or subscription basis, it's important to bear in mind that no one site is going to hold all the information you need. Each of the 'big three' websites has its own unique set of records, this is why it can be useful to try before you buy, taking advantage of the trial period offered by Ancestry, Findmypast and TheGenealogist.

The 'big three' compared...

Ancestry

Ancestry is billed as the world's 'largest online family history resource', and the UK Ancestry site offers wide coverage of UK birth, marriage and death (BMD), census and parish records, along with more specialised datasets such as criminal, military, immigration, tax records and Irish records. The site also has a helpful forum and member connect network, while the Ancestry Academy video courses offer handy user tips.

Findmypast

Findmypast is home to over a billion records, with new record releases announced every Friday. The site has forged partnerships with family history societies around the UK in order to make available their region-specific records, many of which are difficult to find elsewhere. Findmypast is also the sole home of the 1939 Register (available to annual subscribers), which bridges the census gap between 1921 and 1951, and has the most comprehensive online collection of British military records – from 1656 to 2005.

The Genealogist

The Genealogist is a UK-focused site which – in addition to the key census, BMD and parish records – offers complete tithe maps for England and Wales, and unique datasets including wills, directories and occupational records. The site's records date from 1127 to 2005, and highlights include a surname concentration map and the official non-parochial BMDs for Nonconformists. It has a large archive image database.

For more information, check out the website comparison's on the following:

www.britishgenealogy.net/compare_genealogy_subscriptions.php