

FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY



Above: A JPEG or wooden shield showing a family's crest/coat of arms. Available at A Family Name in Print.



Below: Scroll from the Soldiers Died in the Great War database courtesy of Naval and Military Press Ltd 2006



HE whose this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who at the call of King and Country left all that was dear to them, endured hardships, faced danger and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

19011, SERVIC John Jeffrey

(Illustrated Form), Royal Army Medical Corps, killed in action, France & Flanders, 1917/1918. Born: Tottenham, Middlesex, England. Catholic St. W.

by Natalie Ceeney,
Chief Executive at
The National Archives

Family history and genealogy are now one of the most popular hobbies and pastimes in the UK. It used to require a lot of leisure time to visit the General Register Office and plough through the indexes to births, marriages and deaths, trawl through census returns in The National Archives, or undertake research in record offices, but it is now easy to begin research online and you can find a lot of information about your ancestors very quickly. In the past few years more and more records have been indexed and made searchable online, and many records can now be accessed in the form of digital images.

Family history is the natural extension to genealogy, or the study of lines of descent and pedigrees, which are the basic details of names, dates and relationships making up a family tree. Family history goes further placing your ancestors into an historical context, by looking at their social position and economic circumstances, and how they form part of their community. It is the process of putting people into context, in one sense bringing them back to life, which is the fascinating and addictive aspect of family history. It is part of The National Archives' vision to bring history to life for everyone.

It cannot all be done online, however. You need to begin at home with you and your immediate family and then the extended family, drawing up a basic family tree with dates of births, marriages and, where known, deaths. Question all the family members you can; it is even a good idea to draw up a questionnaire with a standard set of questions, especially for family members who live miles away. Ask for access to any family papers especially birth, marriage and death certificates, school reports, certificates, letters, copies of wills, photograph albums and if one exists the old family bible. Once you have a basic tree and dates to go on, you can apply for other birth, marriage and death certificates for earlier generations and access the census returns online to establish family groups, relationships, ages and places of birth.



Above:
A bespoke family
history pack from Family Folios.

BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH CERTIFICATES

Civil or statutory registration of births, marriages and deaths began in England and Wales from 1 July 1837. The records are held by the General Register Office (GRO) for England and Wales, which is part of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). They are in the process of being digitised, but are not yet available online. Microfiche copies of the GRO indexes are available online and many other country record offices and libraries. Civil or statutory registration in Scotland began from 1 January 1855 and you can search and order certificates on the Scotland's People website and in Ireland registration began from 1 January 1864 and records are held by the General Register Office of Ireland (except for Northern Ireland from 1922) and the General Register Office of Northern Ireland.

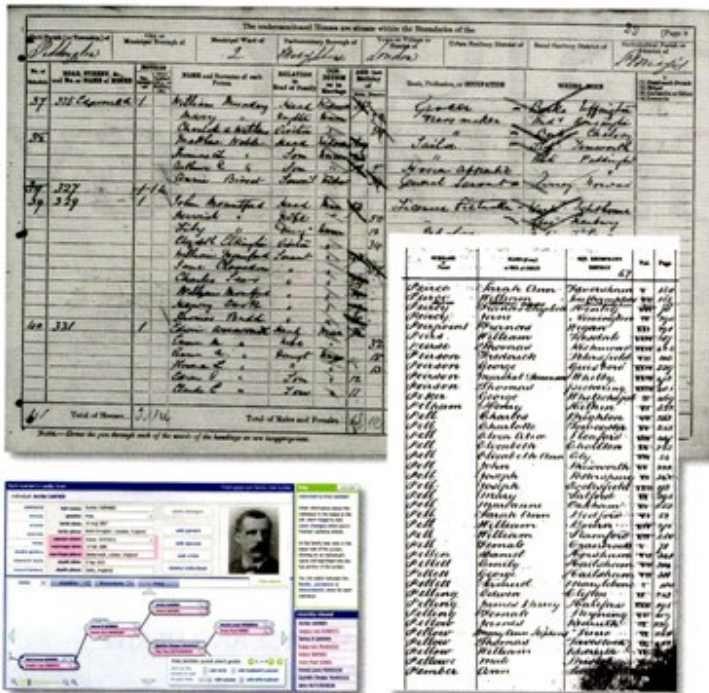
CENSUS RETURNS

There has been a census in the UK every ten years from 1801, with the exception of 1941 during the Second World War. Censuses are usually opened >

Useful Websites

- The National Archives
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- Scotland's People
www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
- General Register Office of Ireland
www.groireland.ie
- General Register Office of Northern Ireland
www.groni.gov.uk
- Moving Here
www.movinghere.org.uk

FAMILY HISTORY



Above: An array of family records and a computerised family tree all courtesy of FindMyPast.com

Below: A protective jewellery box from Memory Boxes.



100 years after they are taken (to protect the confidentiality of the respondent) so the census returns taken up to 1901 are now all available to use. The earlier censuses were mainly statistical, but from 1841 the names of every individual are recorded, and from 1851 specific relationships, exact ages and places of birth. The census returns for England and Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man from 1841 to 1901 can be accessed through a variety of genealogical websites (see The National Archives website for details). Census returns for Scotland from 1841 to 1901 are available on the Scotland's People website. Unfortunately most of the nineteenth century returns for Ireland no longer survive, but the 1901 and 1911 returns are held by the National Archives of Ireland, who are in the process of digitising them. We are currently in the process of digitising the 1911 census, which we hope to open parts of in early 2009, with full opening in 2011.

Wills are also a fantastic source of information on family history. All wills granted probate and letters of administration in England and Wales from 1858 are held by the Principal Registry of the Family Division in London, where you can access them in the Probate Search Room. Alternatively, you can obtain copies

of wills and administration grants by post from the Court Service, York Probate Sub-Registry in York. The National Probate Calendar covering 1858 to 1943 can be consulted in many archives and libraries. Before 1858 wills and letters of administration were granted in one of a number of church courts, the court usually depending on where the deceased left property. The National Archives holds the records of the senior court for England and Wales the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and the Borthwick Institute holds the records of the Prerogative Court of York. The records of Bishops and Archdeacons' courts are held locally in diocesan and county record offices.

Parish Registers can also be invaluable. Created by order of Thomas Cromwell in 1538 these are the records of baptisms, marriages and burials, which are the primary source for tracing ancestors before civil registration in 1837 (and they continue to the present day). Unfortunately not all registers survive from this date. Early registers will have been lost, there will be gaps, and during the civil wars and interregnum between 1642 and 1660 many parishes were without properly kept records. It is really a matter of luck which parish or parishes your ancestors lived in, and whether you can trace them back to the sixteenth century or only the eighteenth. There are other parish records, where they survive, that can be consulted for additional information on your ancestors; vestry minutes, churchwardens' accounts, and the overseers of the poor accounts.

Migration is also a key factor. Britain is a nation of immigrants from earliest times to the present day and there are many records that can help trace immigrant ancestry, including alien registration and naturalisation records held in The National Archives. Consult the Moving Here website for information on tracing immigrants and migrants over the last 200 years.

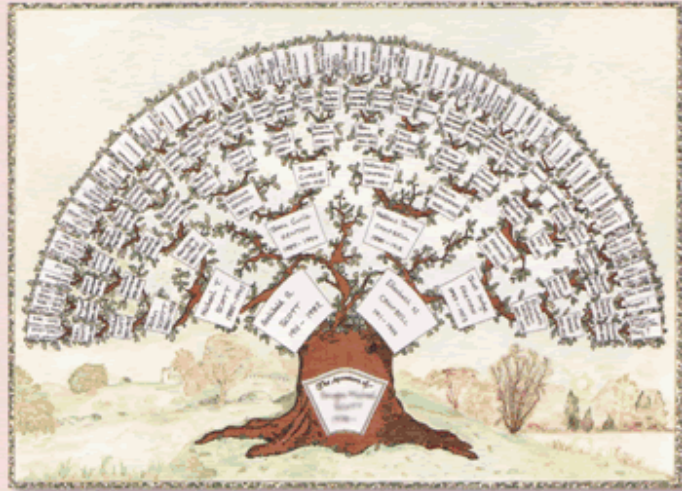
It is always worth joining your local family history society for help and advice. There are county, regional and some international societies. If you have moved away from where your ancestors lived >



Above: The homepage of Ancestry.co.uk's website.

join the society covering the area or county from which they came. Family history societies have lots of local resources, county indexes and databases you can use for your own research. Local knowledge and advice from other members is often extremely helpful.

And finally, there are also pitfalls to avoid! Treat all family stories with an open mind and look for documentary evidence before you treat them as fact. Also be prepared for family skeletons. Illegitimacy was much more common than people realise. You may well discover criminal ancestors and in some cases disturbing events. People need to be put in their historical context, so keep an open mind and be sensitive to the feelings of other family members. It is the discovery of the unknown, good or bad, rich or poor that makes family history so fascinating and addictive. ■



Above: This Family Tree and others like it are available from www.familybookshop.co.uk

BUY IT

■ **A Family Name In Print**
020 8426 5168
sales@afamilynameinprint.co.uk
www.afamilynameinprint.co.uk

■ **Memory Boxes**
01636 830108
sales@memoryboxes.co.uk
www.memoryboxes.co.uk

■ **Family Folios**
01279 755089
angela@familyfolios.co.uk
www.FamilyFolios.co.uk

■ **Family Tree Magazine**
The Worlds Best Selling British
Genealogical Publication
0870 7662272
www.family-tree.co.uk

■ **National Archives**
020 8876 3444
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

■ **FindMyPast.com**
020 7549 0990
info@findmypast.com
www.findmypast.com

■ **Ancestry.co.uk**
0800 345 7922
www.ancestry.co.uk

■ **Family Traits**
07706 459048
enquiries@familytraits.co.uk
www.familytraits.co.uk

■ **Family History Monthly**
0870 732 8080
www.familyhistorymonthly.com

Start Your Family Tree

If you feel inspired to start researching your family history, the businesses below will be able to help you on your journey whether you're looking for hints and tips on how to start, how to find your family's armorial history, something safe to keep your family mementoes stored in or even if you want someone else to research your family history for you.

As the leading family history website Ancestry.co.uk has helped millions of people discover their family history thanks to their extensive record collections and easy-to-use tree building tools. Ancestry.co.uk has the largest collection of UK family records on the web including the complete England, Scotland and Wales censuses, the English and Welsh Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes from 1837-2005 and British Army World War One Pension records, as well as much more.

To get started with Ancestry's quick and easy tree building wizard just fill in as many names and details as you can and Ancestry.co.uk will automatically search through their records to find potential matches with people in your tree. Take out a 30 day free trial and you will be able to view the record and, if it's a match, attach it to your family tree.

Findmypast.com also provides essential resources for researching your family history; some 500 million UK records spanning 350 years. These include complete birth, marriage and death indexes for England and Wales from 1837 to 2005, Victorian censuses, military records and long-distance passenger lists, among others. You can download, save and print high quality scanned images of original historical >

Below: Recent issues of Family Tree Magazine



FAMILY HISTORY



Above: Memory Boxes sells an array of protective storage boxes, such as the one above used to store precious photographs in.

documents - some in magnificent copperplate handwriting. Guidance for the beginner includes a 'Help & Advice' section, search tips on every dataset and historical background on the original records.

The site provides free online access to family tree software and customers can sign up to receive newsletters for the latest tips, advice and details of special offers.

Choose from pay-per-view units or one of the cost-effective subscriptions giving you a year's unlimited access to certain records.

Family Tree Magazine is a great read and brings readers the past, the records and the websites for your family history. Each month the magazine is packed with expert and fascinating advice to help you learn about your ancestors.

With Family Tree Magazine you can discover a wealth of material available to family historians, both online and in numerous archives and will guide you to all the relevant sources of information and records to find your family from the past.

With expert tips, readers' experiences and thoroughly researched advice, the magazine provides the key building blocks to create your family tree and social history articles will help you put your family history in context.

The magazine explains family history research in simple terms for the beginner, and tackles more complex subjects and documents for the more experienced researcher; it is the essential tool for every genealogist. Family Tree Magazine is about helping you find your ancestors, which is why it has been the world's best selling British family history magazine for more than 20 years.

Researching your family tree can be a fascinating and absorbing hobby, but

many people who would like to know about their ancestors simply don't have the time to devote to it. Angela Aldam of Family Folios has 15 years' experience in genealogy and many more as a professional information researcher and editor and she will produce a carefully researched book detailing several generations of your selected ancestral line in England, usually back into the late 1700s. The book will include relevant illustrations and printouts and transcripts from the original sources used, as well as a discussion of the origin and distribution of the surname. To complete the package there will be attractive family tree diagrams and a CD containing a detailed browser-friendly version of the data. The high standard of presentation makes this an ideal and unique gift. Vouchers are also available.

For a souvenir of your family history visit A Family Name in Print who, along with armorial histories of your name, also sell shields, paperweights and blazer badges relating to a family crest.

A Family Name in Print has been operating now for over 10 years and the database has over 550,000 family surnames and 350,000 family crest/coats of arms, all of which have been fully researched world wide for accuracy. Additional names and nationalities are being continually updated and added to the database.

Researchers have been paying meticulous attention to producing surname histories and heraldic artwork and accurate texts and registers from all over the world have been collected to make the source library. All of the histories are in English and many now can be printed in French or Spanish.

The Surname history includes the first recorded instance of the name, often year 1100 AD or earlier, etymology of the name, variations of the spelling, branches, castles, nobility etc. Plus past and present notables, first Coats of Arms, crests and mottos associated with the name.

As you compile your family history, you will come across precious items and family mementoes that you will want to keep safe. It has become very important, in this increasingly digital and virtual world, that we seek to preserve those keepsakes and mementoes that are the unique markers of our social and family histories. By utilising proven means and methods of conservation Memory Boxes of Nottingham will be able to successfully protect your precious collections and heirlooms for the future. Memory Boxes believe that by offering a range of museum quality conservation products to home historians and private collectors they will all be able to contribute to the vital task of safeguarding a record of past lives for the enrichment and enjoyment of those generations to come. ■

Below: Family records © Crown Copyright. Published by permission by the Controller of HMSO and the Office for National Statistics.

