

Beginner's Website Information v3.1

There is a wealth of information available to get you started researching your family tree, however it can be both overwhelming and confusing – this guide is available to help make sense of it all. You should get to know these websites before parting with any money.

Types of information available:

- Primary: official records - church records, certificates, wills, military information, i.e. should be accurate
- Secondary: diaries, history books, with sources, i.e. attributable information
- Tertiary: oral history, newspaper articles, gossip, i.e. un-sourced data

Remember though, people lie even on official documents. There are a variety of reasons. To appear younger or older, to hide a birth, to escape from their past. Sometimes women, who could write signed an "X" on the wedding certificate, so that they didn't embarrass their husbands who couldn't.

Family history websites can, generally, be either data providers or "help centres".

Prime data usually costs money, however, indexes are often free and are an important finding tools. However, ALWAYS, ALWAYS check the original document.

General Information

Certification began in the summer of 1837 and are useful because they consist of

Birth – includes full names, dates, father's name may be missing if illegitimate

Marriage – includes full details of couple and father's names and occupations

Death - the name of the informant can often provide a vital lead if you've reached a brick wall and are stuck. Later ones give birth details.

Prior to 1837 information is available from Parish Registers, but more limited.

Data Providers

Main Providers

- ❖ Free BMD (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>) – is the national index for birth, marriage and death certificates. It is still incomplete but has 253 million records transcribed so far. You can search by name, date and/ or place – it can be very useful for filling gaps.
- ❖ Free REG (<http://freereg.org.uk>) – is a comparison project for free BMD and Free CEN and provides free internet searches from early parish and non-conformist registers. However it only has about 10 million records, but is useful to use with the, now out of date, IGI (International Genealogical Index) included now on FamilySearch – see below.

- ❖ The Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-day Saints (<http://www.familysearch.org>) - Mormons love family history. You can find lots of information on their website, however you must remember that this is just an index and has many mistakes and omissions, particularly if it says 'submitted'. In addition, there are, increasingly, images of the data to go with index text.
- ❖ For fatalities in WW1 and WW2 try the Commonwealth War graves Commission website (<http://www.cwgc.org/>)

Portals

- ❖ UK BMD (<http://www.ukbmd.org.uk>) is a useful directory from which you can access birth marriage and deaths at a local level. It also provides a portal to numerous other websites and information. Well worth exploring.
- ❖ National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>) –useful to explore. As are the Irish National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/>)
- ❖ BBC – (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>) and search family history – a lot of information and helps you get started.
- ❖ <http://www.cyndislist.com/> – A worldwide portal which is a comprehensive, categorised and cross-referenced index to genealogical resources on the internet. Over 330,000 links
- ❖ www.genuki.org.uk – is a virtual library which covers parishes within the UK and Ireland
- ❖ <http://www.bromsgrovebmsggh.co.uk> – useful to explore, especially for local, Worcestershire, available resources

Forums

Everyone gets stuck and need help sometimes e.g. lost a street, can't find a family in a census, don't know how to find a criminal – these are all reasons people ask for help. Forum boards leave a message on a website, for anyone to view. If someone replies, you are sent an e-mail linking you back to the reply. These are free but you do have to subscribe. They all have search engines for you to see past enquiries.

- ❖ <https://www.british-genealogy.com>
- ❖ www.rootschat.com
- ❖ <http://www.genforum.genealogy.com>
- ❖ <http://www.boards.ancestry.com> – linked to ancestry.com but free.
- ❖ <http://www.bromsgrovebmsggh.co.uk> – the forum can be accessed from the main page. Posting and Replying to Topics requires registration, which is free.

There are numerous genealogical websites you can join, but these cost money, however you can often use them on a pay to view basis, which is useful and allows you to view records such as the census returns – here are just some examples of pay-for sites used by genealogists researching specialist information:

- ❖ Find My Past
- ❖ Ancestry
- ❖ My Heritage

Maps

Having a good map can often help. These days maps are easily available on the Internet e.g. Google maps.

- ❖ <http://www.multimap.com> (aka Bing Maps) is similar, but in addition to an aerial view, sometimes you can see the target from several angles, so you may be able to see the house from 4 directions, not just the roof! Look for the drop down road menu on the upper right.
- ❖ <http://maps.nls.uk> – The National Library of Scotland, covers the whole of Great Britain and has a facility to allow you to view good quality maps side by side (geo-referencing).

Search Engines

Search engines like Google, are themselves useful for family historians, particularly when using the Advanced Search facility. https://www.google.co.uk/advanced_search

Other Things - *Internet Safety*

Always keep your browser up-to-date, i.e. use the latest version. You must also use the latest version of anti-virus and firewall. By doing research on the internet you will be breaking the golden rule of the internet by accepting unsolicited contact. Therefore regularly back up your data, preferably to an external hard drive.

You can also set your browser up so that it always opens at specific pages. It's called Tabbed Browsing. All 5 of the main browsers allow this – **Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Opera and Internet Explorer.**

There are many, many other free websites where good quality information is available for free.

Finally, consider joining a family history society as you often get a discount on books and data sources. They're usually helpful and friendly places – you never know a relative may just walk in!

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The Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry (BMSGH) <http://www.bmsggh.org/>

The Bromsgrove Branch of BMSGH <http://www.bromsgrovebmsggh.co.uk>