



Getting Started with Family Research

Official documents such as birth, death and marriage certificates are essential to your research. Still, at times, people neglect to check home sources – items that, thankfully, have been hoarded by older relatives.

Always take care not to offend when asking about such records. People, particularly the elderly, can be suspicious when approached, wondering whether you are trying to raise old scandals, so reassurance may be necessary.

Personal memories should always be thoroughly checked (see Fact or Fiction handout). Documents revealed or loaned should be treated with the utmost care and returned quickly if required.

Some of the home sources you could be looking/asking for are:

Personal Records: journals, diaries, autograph albums, photos, baby books, visitors' books, funeral cards, letters, memorial cards

Family Records: family bible, family histories (written and oral), local histories (written and oral)

Newspapers: announcements - births, deaths, marriages, engagements, funerals, obituaries

Legal Papers: wills, deeds, mortgages, land grants, leases, solicitor's records, contracts, divorce papers

Military Records: service books/records, pension records, discharge papers, medals, photo albums, slide collections, pay books

Citizenship Records: passports, visas, naturalisation papers, immigration records

School Records: report cards, yearbooks, awards, diplomas

Employment Records: apprenticeship papers, pensions, union papers, awards, newspaper articles

Membership Records: cards, badges, programs, publications, awards, sports club

Licenses: driving, hunting, sporting, professional association

Household Items: silverware, jewellery, souvenirs, samplers, memorabilia

Health Records: medical records, insurance papers

Financial Records: accounts, bank statements



How To Get Started

Buy a folder, plastic sleeves, dividers, a notebook, pencils and a bag to keep them all together.

Fill out your pedigree chart, starting with yourself.

Check with relatives for any names or details you can't remember or aren't sure about.

Ask relatives for copies of any certificates, paperwork or photographs that might be helpful.

Photocopy original documents and keep them in a safe place at home; never laminate original documents.

Start putting any documents in your folder; this keeps them together and in good condition.

Over time, you can create a system to keep them in order, e.g., family groups.

Come to the Gold Coast Family History Society rooms. There are always room assistants available to assist you, and each assistant has conducted research at different levels, both here and overseas.

Different assistants have varying levels of knowledge, gained through their research, and are very happy to help.

This is a hobby, so enjoy yourself. Come and meet people, swap stories and have fun!

Useful Websites

Qld Births, Deaths & Marriages

www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/family-history-research

NSW Births, Deaths & Marriages

www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/Pages/familv-history-research/family-historv-search.aspx

Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages

www.bdm.vic.gov.au/home/family+history/search+your+family+historv

Google 'State and BMD' (i.e. WA BMD) for the other State websites.

Trove - www.trove.nla.gov.au

FamilySearch - www.familysearch.org/search/

National Archives of Australia - www.naa.gov.au Click on 'Search the collection'

Australian Cemeteries Index - www.austcemindex.com

ScotlandsPeople - www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Irish Certificates - www.civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-search.isp



Fact or fiction?

- What can we believe about those family stories?
- The first and foremost rule of family history/genealogy is check everything!!
- What can you believe? Not much when you come to family histories! Every detail has to be checked out.

Human memory can be notoriously inaccurate, whether on purpose or otherwise. Cover-ups occur all the time. Just because you found the information written in the family bible does not mean it is correct - in fact, this is one source which should be thoroughly checked - hidden scandals abound in this little tome. Some of the pitfalls to look for are given below, but please bear in mind that a lot of the fiction was not intentional.

Item	Believable	Watch for Pitfalls	Check Sources
Surnames & Place names	Yes Usually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling - might be spelt as heard by an illiterate clerk/ancestor - place name could be quite different. English placenames in particular are often not pronounced as they are spelt. • Ancestors using more than one name - maiden/married, mother's, father's, first husband's/second husband's • An illegitimate ancestor might use the father's or the mother's name. • Woman using their lover's name. Yes, it happened even back then. 	BDM Certificates Baptism Certificates Parish Registers Census/ Musters Records Phillimore's Parish Atlas ALWAYS check place names against maps
First Names	No, great confusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicknames • Use of the middle name instead of the first name • Use of a similar name that the ancestor thought was the same name. • Parents giving the same name to more than one child (often because the earlier child died, but not always) • Similar spellings due to illiteracy • Latin names in early records 	BDM Certificates & Parish Registers
Dates	No, never trust a date As it can be the least accurate fact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People reduced their ages for various reasons • Adding years - particularly in marriage records • Wrong age on census - esp. 1841, when ages were rounded up or down accordingly. • Baptism/christening does not mean birth - can take place years after birth • Birth/marriage dates adjusted to cover up indiscretions. 	BDM Certificates Parish Registers Headstones Family Bibles
Occupation	Yes, usually at least partly right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ancestor having different jobs at different times. • Wishful thinking - farmers who turn out to be labourers; Master mariners who were really sailors. 	BDM Certificates Parish Registers Census Records Trade Directories
Birth Place	Unfortunately no, spoken accents were a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ancestor could give the last place of residence instead of the birthplace in error • Those who travelled a lot were quite confused about their birthplace • Birthplace given by a third party, i.e., maid at the door for census, or second wife for stepchild. 	BDM Certificates Census Records Shipping Records Phillimore's Parish Atlas



Abbreviations commonly used in Family History

NLA	National Library of Australia
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages
BTs	Bishop's Transcripts Copies of Parish Registers, which were sent to the Bishop
CP	Conditional Pardon - for Convicts
CRO	County Record Office Each County in England has a CRO, which holds records for its own County
FHS	Family History Society
GRO	General Register Office GRO for obtaining certificates of England and Wales
GROI	General Register Office of Ireland
GRONI	General Register Office of Northern Ireland
LDS	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - also known as Mormons, and who founded and maintain the FamilySearch website
MIs	Memorial Inscriptions found on gravestones.
NAA	National Archives of Australia - located in Canberra
OPR	Old Parochial Records - for Scotland
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury - Wills proved 1384-1858
PCY	Prerogative Court of York - Wills proved 1389-1858
PRs	Parish Registers
TNA	The National Archives is the UK government's official archive.
TOL	Ticket of Leave - for Convicts
VR	Vital Records - as in births, deaths and marriages, etc



Using our Library Catalogues

Whilst the internet is great for family history research, it does not hold all the answers a family historian needs.

- Our Research Rooms hold around 16,400 items - including books, microfiche, CDs, DVDs, and maps.
- The GCFHS Catalogues are in both a printed format and also on our computer network.
- It helps to understand that the catalogues are written in 'Japanese style'. Meaning you read from right to left. **e.g.**, On the right side of the page is the country, then the county, then the town, working across the page to the left. The subject catalogue works in the same way.
- The numbering system used in our library is different to the system used in the local libraries. It is a system especially developed for family history societies. The system is broken into geographical divisions, **e.g.**, New Zealand books, Australian books, United Kingdom books, etc.
- Each country is allotted a letter, which is on the spine of the book. You will find this information at the front of the catalogue and pasted at the end of the bookshelf closest to our printed catalogues. **e.g.**, M is for the British Isles, N is for England, and Y is for the World.
- The Chapman Codes are codes devised for genealogists to identify administrative divisions in the United Kingdom. If you have UK research, it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with these codes. **e.g.**, NBL - Northumberland, SSX - Sussex, IOW - Isle of Wight, etc.

The Family History Books Shelves (written and/or published)

If you are looking for a book about a family's history, it would be numbered 310, followed by the first three letters of the predominant family's surname. **e.g.**, A book on the SAWTELL family history would be found at 310/SAW on the family history bookshelves. These books are now located in the back room, as the majority (over 400) have been digitised by our volunteers.

The digitised versions of these books are available via the Syn-Scan computer on the second white computer table. A folder beside the computer explains how to search for a book/file. Each book has been scanned to a professional standard; however, if you require a higher-quality book or image, it can be re-digitised.

If you wish to photograph or photocopy information from these books, feel free to seek out the original from the back room.

Large Maps

There is a separate catalogue for these located near the map cupboard. The catalogue will link you with the number on the map that you wish to view.

Cemetery Records

The Society hold many cemetery records. Those relating to Australia are indexed using the last three digits of the cemetery's postcode. A postcode booklet is included with the catalogue for your information.

If you need assistance with how the resource you are looking for works, there are usually instructions at the beginning. **e.g.**, often on the front pages of a book or on the first microfiche of the resource.

Most of our material can be photocopied.

For articles in our precious book section or oversized books, you are welcome to use your camera.



How to use the Network Computers

When using for the first time, please seek the assistance of a Room Assistant

- Right-click on the virtual CD icon
- Slide the cursor up to the E Drive
- Slide the cursor to 'Insert'
- Slide the cursor to select the appropriate folder, e.g., Australia
- Continue to slide the cursor across to the side arrow and choose the data disc
- Left click to activate

Please Note: Some discs need the desktop shortcut icon at this stage, e.g., Digger Macbeth. For these, load as above, then double-click on the appropriate desktop shortcut icon.

Some data is stored in folders on the desktop.

These folders can be opened without the virtual CD, and the files can be opened by double-clicking.

Adobe Reader (PDF) will load automatically if necessary.

