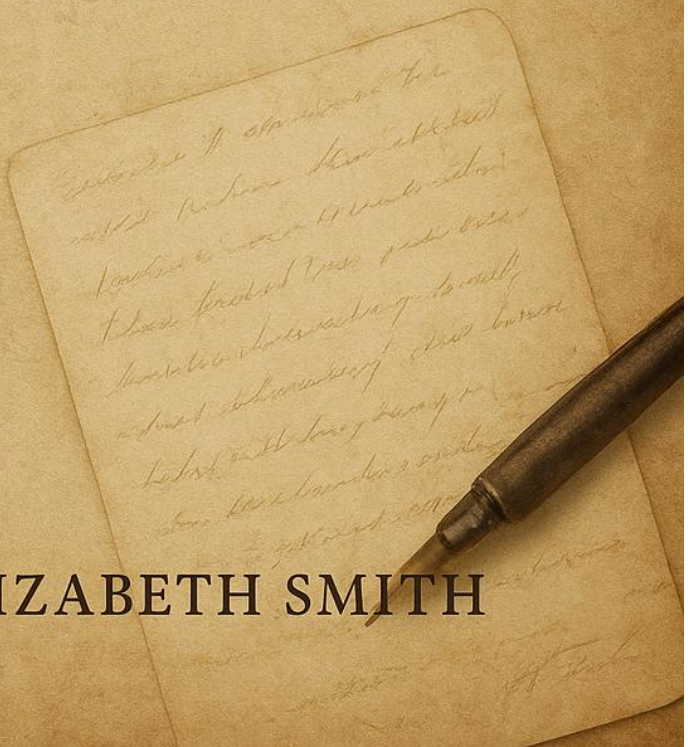


RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY TREE

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



BY SARAH ELIZABETH SMITH

Researching Your Family Tree – A Beginner's Guide

Genealogy can be a fascinating and very rewarding hobby for anyone to pursue, and is a valued legacy that you can pass along to your children and grandchildren. However, it can be a bit overwhelming when you first get started.

See my step-by-step guide which will hopefully simplify the process a little.

Step 1: Gather Information

Start by gathering together all the family information and photos you have, look for any birth, death, and marriage certificates as well as any old letters and diaries.

Begin to write down what you know, starting with yourself. It's a good idea to write the information on a family pedigree chart (you can find blank templates for this online – often for free) so you can clearly see what information you are missing.

Step 2: Speak to Your Family

Interview as many living relatives as you can and ask them what they remember about growing up. It may be a good idea to record the interview so that you can transcribe it later.

Make a note of everything as sometimes even what appears to be the most irrelevant detail can be a vital clue later on.

Ask them if they can help you with filling in the blanks on your pedigree chart with all the dates they can remember for births, deaths, and marriages.



Ask around too to see if anyone has any old photos, documents, or even newspaper cuttings that you could scan and keep with your notes.

It's also worth finding out if anyone else in the family has already researched the family tree. If so, you could reach out with a request to share information.

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY of BIRTH.
SUPPLIED AT THE SPECIAL FEE OF 6d. APPLICABLE IN CERTAIN STATUTORY CASES.

THIS CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED FOR THE PURPOSES OF Hereditary Education
and for NO OTHER USE OR PURPOSES WHATSOEVER.

Registration District: St. Mary's
BIRTH in the Sub-District of St. Mary's in the County of London

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sex	When and where born	Age	Registered Name of Child	Parents (Full Names and Surnames)	Rank or Profession of Father	Address of Father at Birth	Address of Mother at Birth	Signature of Registrar	Signature of Parent
M	1920 320, 9 York Place		Alfred	Rose Mary Collingbourne formerly (E. Army) Lygon	Wharf	9 York Place	20 York Place		
F	1920 320, 9 York Place		Nellie	Rose Mary Collingbourne formerly (E. Army) Lygon	Wharf	9 York Place	20 York Place		

I hereby certify that the above is a true Copy of an Entry of Birth in a Register Book in my custody.
Witness my hand this 15 day of September 1924.

David H. Evans
Registrar

Step 3: Organising Your Research

Now that you have your information, before you begin actively researching, it's a good idea to consider how you will organise your notes, as it can very quickly become overwhelming!

There is no right or wrong way to do this and every researcher has their own method. Jotting everything down in a notepad is a good start, but as you gather more information, you may wish to start organising everything into folders, or even digitising all the paper files and storing them on a computer. (This takes up much less space – but be sure to back everything up to a hard drive or onto cloud storage!)

Step 4: Gathering Evidence

Make a list of all the information you either do not have, or do not have proof of. For example; you know your grandfather was born in 1923, but do you have the birth certificate which proves this?!

Birth, death, and marriage records (also known as vital records) can tell you a lot – at the very least, the name of the previous generation. In some cases, you may be able to view these records online but often you will need to order them from the GRO website (links to follow).

Please keep in mind that there is a charge for this.

Step 5: Census Records

The England Census is an excellent resource for getting more information about your ancestors as is the 1939 Register.

You can view the census from 1841 up until 1921 and most will include information such as a person's age, place of birth, and occupation, as well as an address and who was living with whom.

You can view the census through online databases such as Ancestry and Findmypast, although these require a subscription.

You may be able to view some census records for free by visiting the National Archives or some regional libraries where you can see them in person.

Other things to try:

Look for published books that might document your family's genealogy or the history of the area where they lived. This is particularly useful if you are interested in the social aspect of your family history.



Conclusion

This is just the very tip of the iceberg when it comes to family history research. There are so many available resources out there to allow for in-depth research, such as military records, criminal records, parish registers.

My advice would be to start simple, look for birth, marriages, deaths, and census records to confirm names, dates, and locations. Once you have the basic facts proven, you can begin to broaden your search to discover more about your ancestors.

Best of luck, and most importantly... have fun!

How Can I Help?

As a keen researcher I am always happy to assist anyone who is looking to start their own research journey. I appreciate that the process can be daunting, I'm still learning new things myself every day!

I am always happy to advise and assist at no cost. Alternatively, if you would prefer the research to be undertaken for you, that is also a service I offer at competitive prices.

For more information contact me at sarah@dsheritage.co.uk

or see my website www.dsheritage.co.uk

Useful Resources

Available for Free:

www.freebmd.org.uk

www.gro.gov.uk*

www.familysearch.org

www.cwgc.org

www.oldbaileyonline.org

Requires Subscription:

www.findmypast.co.uk

www.ancestry.co.uk

www.myheritage.com

*free to view index but ordering certificates will incur a charge

