



Family History

Margaret Dickinson



Here are some ideas to help you to begin tracing your Family History.

Please remember that these are only brief pointers and it could take months or years to find some members of your family. I found it difficult to find my Grandfather, it took me years. I didn't look at different spellings or different forms of names. Harry was Henry. But dates and addresses on certificates are really useful. You have to match information on certificates to census data.

I must stress that these are just brief notes. There are many twists and turns, it all looks so easy on paper. This is why, as a Family History group, we try to help each other with cracking 'brick walls' when we become completely baffled.

1. Talk to family members especially elderly aunts and uncles, cousins etc. They may have old papers, photos etc which will be a useful start. Don't leave it too late to talk to these relatives.
Write down what they tell you but do not take all they say as true. Sometimes stories start in the family but they have no truth in them.
2. Start with you and your parents.
Start with your Birth Certificate. Then look at your parent's marriage certificate on www.gro.gov.uk. This will tell you their age, where they lived and the names and occupations of your grandfathers. You can send away for these certificates. BUT BE CAREFUL. You have to pay for each one so please check facts before you order.
Take one step at a time and always check your facts and you can also try <http://freebmd> and www.familysearch.org.
You can also use the other websites listed below.
Once you get back to the early 1830's you will have to look at Parish records.
3. Look at census returns. These started in 1841 and listed homes and who lived there and their age, occupation and relation to the head of the house. These are produced every ten years and you can look at census from 1841-1911. We are all waiting for the 1921 census to be released. You can join a website such as www.ancestry.co.uk www.findmypast.co.uk www.genesreunited.co.uk.
You will have to pay for these.
You can also use <https://www.familysearch.org>
Write information down as you find it as it is so easy to get excited about findings and click the button and then not to be able to find it again.

4. To go back before 1837 you will have to look at parish records which at the present time is difficult. But some parish records are on some of the websites listed above.

It is important to check your facts at every step. It is easy to get the same name but wrong date of birth or the wrong father or mother.

All these different types of information give you the bare facts. You can then go onto finding facts about the places and the times they lived in. Newspaper archives are another source of information.

Margaret Dickinson – one of the U3A Family History Convenors.