

101 Top Tips to help you with your Genealogy Research Part 3

Visiting Archives

41 Call in advance to make sure that they have what you are looking for and there is space for you.

42 You can make the most of precious time at the record office by carefully planning your visit. Have a short, achievable list of specific goals - facts to check, sources to view.

43 Many archives produce leaflets (both printed and online) about their sources and how to use them.

44 An increasing number of catalogues are online, which can help you pre-plan your trip. www.a2a.pro.gov.uk

45 Many local record offices have detailed card indexes to their holdings. It is always a good idea to check them in case you uncover a reference to an ancestor or the place they lived.

46 Take pencils, a notebook and any notes you may have. Pens, pencil sharpeners and erasers are frowned upon, so leave them at home.

47 Don't forget some identification, including something which shows your home address. You may need this to obtain a reader's ticket.

48 Record offices and family history societies often offer research or 'look up' services. However they will need a minimum amount of information for an individual - name, approximate birth date, etc.

49 Always send an SAE with any request for information. Overseas enquiries should be accompanied by two International Reply Coupons (available from post offices).

Recording Sources

51 Note down as much as possible - there's nothing more annoying than realising you had the answer in your hands but failed to realise its importance.

52 Watch your handwriting - it's easy to let it slip when you are making lots of notes and not be able to read them when you get home.

53 Each archival item will have a unique reference. It is important to record this information in case you need to see the document again.

54 If you find useful information in a book, note down the title, author, publisher, page number, publication date and, if the book is borrowed, where it came from.

55 For websites, write down the URL, date, and if applicable, contact names and email addresses, although it's probably simpler to print out the page itself.

56 Bring plenty of change for the photocopier and a pound coin for the cloakroom locker.

Building Blocks

57 After 1837 it was a legal requirement in England and Wales to register births, marriages and deaths. They are indexed alphabetically for each quarter of each year from 1837 to date.

58 Microfilmed copies of the registers are widely available at large reference libraries. They can also be found at www.1837online.com.

59 Once the reference number has been found, the certificate can be ordered direct from the GRO in Southport or in person at the FRC.

60 Before 1837, you will need to look at parish registers, which officially start in 1538. Few survive before 1604.

61 Look out for bishop's transcripts (BTs) - duplicates of parish registers which may survive even if the original has been destroyed.

62 Many family history societies have transcribed and indexed local parish records, while others are available at local record offices and the Society of Genealogists. To find out what is available consult The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers.

63 Try taking a genealogy course designed for beginners - the Society of Genealogists runs a selection of courses suitable for both beginners and more experienced genealogists: www.sog.org.uk.

64 The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has transcribed many parish records in the International Genealogical Index (IGI) and the more recent British Isles Vital Records Index. The IGI is available free online, or on CD-ROM and microfiche. These indexes are very useful, but riddled with errors.
www.familysearch.com