

DOs AND DON'Ts

arising from errors made by almost everyone:



DO...

- **Record where you have searched.** eg Local Record Office, Library, National Archives.
 - Type of record. eg Parish, GRO, Index / Births, Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths, Burials, Census.
 - What you were searching for, eg HUBBARD, Richard or HUBBARD.
 - The date you started and reached eg 1875 March quarter. eg 1870 Sept quarter.Why? You will be glad of it later when you have searched many places for many names.
- **Record exactly what you find and where and when you found it.**

When is particularly relevant for computer indexes which are being added to.
- **Record the whole of the entry,** particularly census, including visitors, servants, employers. Be careful to record the class and reference numbers.

As much as possible obtain a digitized copy of an original record.
- **Be aware of the difference between an index, a transcript, and digitized original information.**
- **Check other family history societies;** they may have members with interests in your county. If you are sent a matching family or find one on the Internet look carefully to see it makes sense and check with original records that the information is correct.
- **Watch your costs,** researching your ancestry need not be extremely expensive. Take care at the beginning not to be extravagant. Plan your actions and expenditure. Learn how to search a free index before paying to view the data. Some commercial sites may be viewed at record offices and libraries. Become familiar with them before subscribing.
- **Be considerate when contacting people** who may be able to help: If by email, make your enquiry to the point but do not be abrupt. Give some indication of the country or county where you live; this may have relevance to their advice.
- **Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request** if you are writing (not everyone has email).
- **Say thanks** when you receive helpful information reply. If you receive a lot of information which is not helpful, reply with thanks but explain it is not your line.

DON'T...

- **Include living people when sending data or publishing** without their individual express permission. See page 2 for two books on many more family history traps.
- **Expect a reply by return or assume that your communication has reached them;** letters and emails do go astray occasionally. Send a further letter (with sae) in about six weeks, saying in case the previous one did not reach them. A follow-up email could be sooner.

...and finally

Offer help to others. You will gain experience in using records.

PTO

Record Offices & History Centres

not all family history can be found on the internet



TOP TIPS...

Before you go

Visit the Website or telephone in advance to find out:

- Opening and closing times – many of these are changing.
- What identification details are needed to obtain a reader's ticket?
- Do you have to book a place?
- Are the records you want to view in the building or do they have to be ordered in advance?
- Check about parking and disabled access if appropriate.
- Look at any on-line catalogues and get references in advance.
- Ask whether you may have your laptop with you (mute the sound before you leave home) and if digital photography allowed?
- Find out the copyright terms. Remember that what may be allowed for individual research will require permission for any publication; there may be a licence fee to pay.

When you are there

- Always ask the advice of the searchroom staff, who are very knowledgeable about sources and their use, and remember to check the searchroom displays for leaflets that may help you.
- Use pencil only. Rubbers may be forbidden. Make sure that your hands are clean.
- Bags will not be allowed in.
- Clear folders for your own papers are advised. Consider using a bound notebook, rather than loose sheets.
- Take money with you for copies, locker key deposits (pound coins), etc. Turn off mobile phones on arrival.
- Have a magnifying glass for small or hard to read text.
- Remember to take breaks at intervals to stay fresh and limit errors of reading.

Staying a while

If you are planning to be there for a whole day consider taking refreshments with you. Never take food, drink or sweets into the search room. Find out whether there is somewhere to eat.

Further reading

Traps to avoid are humourously described in:

"Granny was a brothel keeper: 50 family history traps", Kate Broad and Toni Neobard.

ISBN: 978 1 906280 38 3

and

"Grandad did a dastardly deed: 50 more family history traps", Kate Broad and Toni

Neobard. ISBN: 978 1 906280 47 5

The Family History Partnership, 32 Slater Lane, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 1TN

Both currently available here (*Nov 2023*)

<https://www.familyhistorybooksonline.co.uk/>