

# 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/>