

Tracing your family tree - tips for beginners

One of the most frequent questions we are asked in the Centre for Local Studies is how to go about researching family history. Here are some top tips to help you get started:

- Start with yourself. Take a blank sheet of paper and write your name on it. Then add the names of your parents and grandparents if you can. Keep going back until you get stuck.
- Next to the names add any other information you might have. Dates and places of birth, marriage and death for example. If you aren't sure of the date but have a rough idea make a note, Harry Brown born c.1895-1905 for example.
- Do you have any old birth, marriage or death certificates? These are valuable documents for family historians and may help you fill in some blank spaces.
- Speak to your relatives. Ask other family members, particularly the older generation, for information. Do they have any certificates or photographs that might help you?

Once you've done the above you should have the beginnings of a basic family tree.



The next step - accessing resources

Using your notes decide which branch of the family to research first. You can now get started on filling in the gaps and tracing earlier generations. The most useful resources will be birth, marriage and death indexes, parish records and census returns, all of which can be found in the library. Call in and see us and an experienced member of staff will show you round and help you get started.

Things to remember:

- Be patient. Family trees do not grow overnight!
- Be methodical. Check all details and try to prove your connections.
- Have fun! For many people genealogy is an interesting and rewarding hobby.