

FAMILY HISTORY - TIPS AND IDEAS TO HELP YOUR SEARCH

Can't find that elusive relative? - Think laterally, be a detective!

100 year rule - Most records are closed for 100 years (census information and military) to protect people still living.

Comprehensive 1st World War records can be researched but as yet 2nd World War military records are not yet available to the general public. (You can get a WW2 military record on request but you must be a very close relative and there is a fee.)

However, current BMD records are open to everyone.

Names

It sounds odd but try searching with both more and less information.

- Start with first name and surname
- Try with middle names (If known)
- Sometimes a middle name was as a preference to a first name
- Try initials then surname (often used by the military)
- Try short names or nicknames (Bob, Liz, Betty)

Try searching for other family members wives, husbands, sisters and brothers.

Census information shows all members of a household and may link to the ancestor you are looking for.

Most sites have a 'sounds like' option so they will automatically display REED, REID READ etc.,

Literacy levels were considerably less in the past.

Ancestors would not have known if an enumerator had misheard a name.

Dates of Birth

Most sites allow you to search a range of dates, not being numerate, relied on a good memory, people forgot how old they were - or deliberately misled officialdom.

If you know when a relative died and their approx age then you can work out an approx date of birth.

If you have a date of a marriage then as a rule of thumb deduct 20-25 years to look for DOB. It is always worth a guess.

Baptisms

Sometimes happened years after a birth.

Occasionally whole families can be baptised at the one time.

Places and boundaries.

County and Parish boundaries have changed over the years. Most records will be under the original parish names

Maps.nls.uk (national library of scotland but includes England as well) Look at old maps for free. They give details of old boundaries and parish names.

Sometimes a record cannot be found, for many reasons people avoided officialdom, fines for non completion of official documentation were not mandatory until 1875.

Lost Irish Records

In Ireland (Eire) many records were destroyed by a fire in 1922, However quite a large number remain so it is worth a check.

Lost War Records

Some records were lost in the wars, but a great number still remain.

New Records

Thousands and Thousands of new records are being transcribed everyday, so it's worth a second look if it has been a couple of months since you last checked.