

Starting Up...

A Personal Opinion

Geoff Beeson

Ask everyone, believe no-one

Before we begin...What are you looking for?

Where do you want to get to?

Paternal surname?

All branches?

“Equalise” the lines you’ve got?

As far back as you can, on any line?

- You won’t get all of them
- You have $1024 \text{ g} \times 8$ grandparents...

Just dates?

- With vocations ?
- With locations ?

And what do you want to keep?

Brothers and sisters at each level?

Their offspring (cousins) - can be useful

- finding other trees
- finding new avenues to search

Level of detail?

- month and day for everyone or some
- addresses for everyone or some
- jobs for everyone or some

You will need a way of recording it

- Your notebook will get confusing
- Standard trees with all branches will run out
- But record and source as you go (you will forget)

Define what you call the great-great-grandfathers and their brothers the great-great-great uncles

- otherwise it gets confusing the more greats you write...
- there is no standard

Before we begin...What do you know?

Talk to everyone

All reminiscences are useful

That doesn't mean they are reliable or accurate

Some may not wish to remember...
getting a bit close

And not everyone is interested !

Believe no-one

Faulty memory

Familiar names

Hidden histories

And of course the Skeletons In The
Cupboard

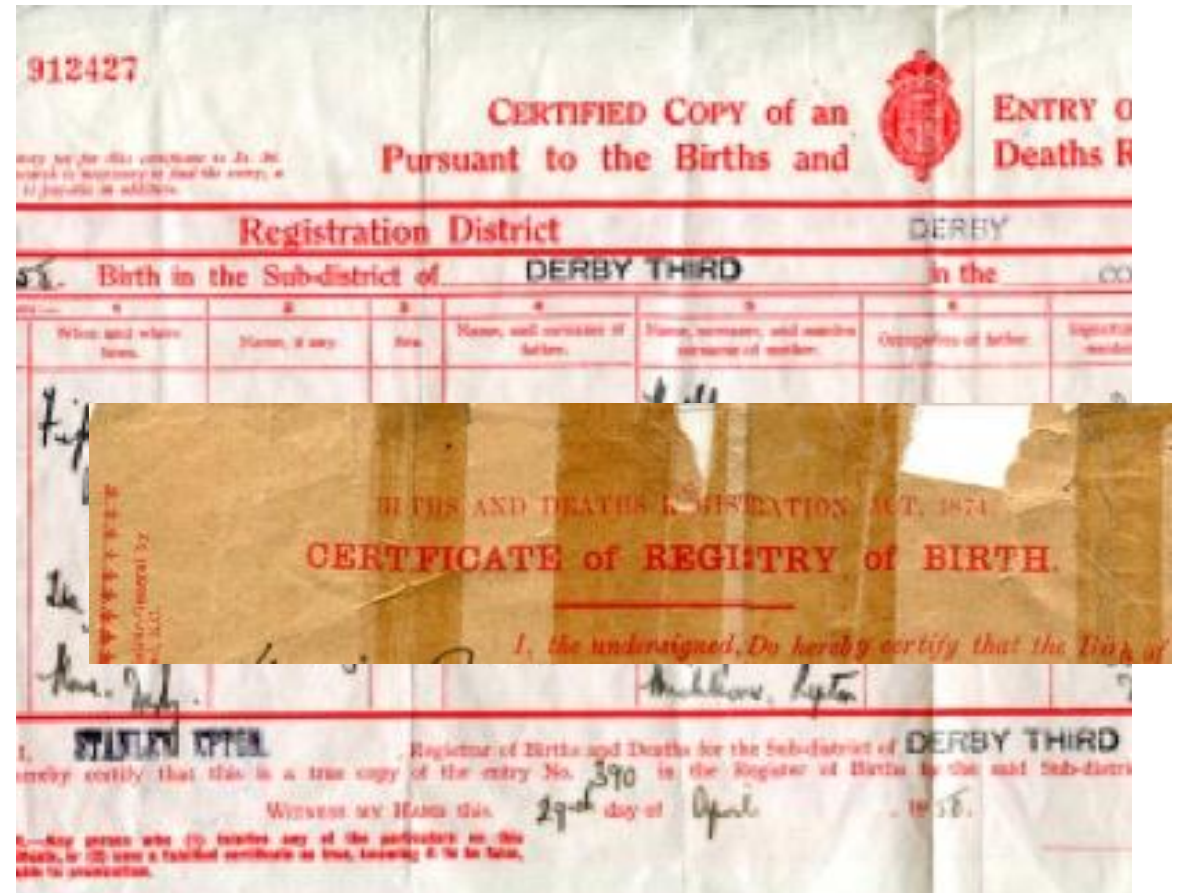
Where it usually starts

- Grandpa drew this 30 years ago
- “We found it when clearing out my aunt’s house”
- ... Or, “He gave it to my cousin a while back”



Where it often stops

- Found in the family documents
- BTW...
 - If you are buying these, always go directly to the GRO (see later) - cheapest and fastest
 - Can get online pdf's now for as little as £2.50
- And then...
- “Er, I’m stuck”...
- Or “I’m running out of cash”...
- But you don’t need to find or buy all the certificates all the time



A Neighbour Spoke.

“Geoff, you do this Family History Stuff
I’ve got to my grandfather
I’m stuck
Where do I go now?
The library? Somewhere on the Net?”

Setting the Scene

Don't keep going to the Library

It's a trip, it takes time

It's a lot more trips if...

... You forget something

... You have a lightbulb moment...

... You think you've gone down the wrong road
(warning - you will)

You could spend a lot of time going backwards
and forwards... unless you like that sort of thing

Let's look at the Big Three

Family Search

Find My Past

Ancestry

Similar data: census, war records

Different perspectives, search methods

So... decide what you want find out and have
an intense play-off

(Family Search is free, the other two always
have trial periods)

Health Warning... This gets addictive !

Family Search

familysearch.org

- Completely free
- From the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - world's largest Oracle database
- (No implication or hard-selling of Mormonism - Safe)
- Good early (before 1800) parish registers
- Search interface is less obvious than the others, but powerful once you get used to it.
- Search order less good than Ancestry or FMP.
- Some records are summarised but refer you to FMP for the image.

Find My Past

findmypast.co.uk

- Regular additions and newsletters
- Good search engine - can order results by date or specify, say, only 1911 to get the census.
- My preference out of the three search engine presentations.
- A lot of electoral register, though I tend not to use this.
- 1921 census is now an additional but reasonably-priced premium. You can find out who is living together at no cost by doing a preview. Sometimes this is all you want.
- War Records - contains the “partially burnt” records

And of course... Ancestry

- Lots of family trees. Useful as clues, but essential to validate. Some are ridiculous.
- If you're lucky, can be a source of photos.
- Search can be a bit random for what location triggers or does not trigger on.
- Minimum is to specify UK otherwise you get the US content first
- I seem to have found more Army records, but this may be coincidence. I've not been comparing.
- Has medal records - personally, I find these less useful.

[ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk)

(make sure you don't use the US version
[ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com))

The Government Record Office (GRO)

- Purchase registration certificates from 1837 gro.gov.uk
- But you can search for births for free to get a list (“search the GRO indexes”) – note there is a gap in the online search from 1934-1984
- Useful to find registered names, exact dates
- Careful – it is the registration date, not the birth or baptism date
- Shows maternal name where available
- Can search on maternal name

Other Useful Tools

Scotlands People

scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Essential for Scotland. Beware early Scottish surname declension (eg Donaldson = can be son of Donald, and not a family name)

UKBMD

ukbmd.org.uk

Good list of online sources

Links to local BMDs - aim to recreate records from original not transcribed sources

Links to parish registers and known surname trees from the county

Local Council Family History

Can be good, eg Lancashire, Derbyshire

Cheshire dodgy but recently improved

Find a grave

findagrave.com

Free - US-focused, but some UK

If you're lucky, you'll find an inscription/photo

British Newspaper Archive

britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

You may be lucky - supplementary stories – but for BDM, would your ancestors of the type who would list, or for that matter could they read

Useless transcriptions – look at the original image

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

cwgc.org

Good for war graves, details, cemeteries, etc.

But... er... no use if your ancestor survived!

The Really Useful Magazine

- First saw via Manchester FHS
- Web asks you for affiliation
- But you subscribe as an individual... for free



Family History Federation
Really Useful Bulletin
October 2022 Edition No 26

FMP 1921 Census Offer
Unlimited Access Subscription
Launches Tuesday 11th October

**More details in the attached
REALLY USEFUL BULLETIN**

**READ IT
NOW**

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<https://www.familyhistorybooksonline.com>
www.fhf-reallyuseful.com



Get lucky!

- Search on your surname (+ “genealogy” etc)
- I found the Bull family database
- Thousands of entries, searchable by surname
- It got my grandmother’ Bull’s line back to early 1600s
- But... you have to be lucky
- ... and be satisfied with their sources and or assumptions



Red Herrings

Forces War Records

- Chargeable
- Never found anything I could not get on Ancestry, Find My Past or CWGC.
- Complicated
- But Rowan would not concur...
- Each to their preference

Fold3

- An ancestry.com service
- Links from familysearch, ancestry
- Seems to be indexes not detail

Careful...

- Some sites sound good...
- ... But are indexes not records
- ... And state, “for detailed records, refer to FMP etc...)”
- So what’s the added value?

Don't make any assumptions ... And don't assume you're not making any

Fuzzy match on Names

Surnames evolve - my ancestor dropped a T

Names written as heard and hence change

First or second name

Accurate records in the first place

Accurate transcriptions by the websites

Shortand: Jno often for Jonathan, even John

Scottish early rules - Donaldson may be son of Donald of a different "surname"

Your ancestors were all decent, law-abiding, married, monogamous citizens, weren't they ?

Prepare to be surprised

Fuzzy match on Dates

Did not know

Guessed

Hiding age

(eg avoid prison, get into army, show as marriage age)

Is it Date Of Birth or Baptism

Baptism can be years later

Your ancestors all fought for England, didn't they?

I found a First World War veteran from the US Army in France – son of a cousin x times removed, who emigrated

And finally...

... If this were a coffee chat then...

1. Get together as much as you can remember or you can find
2. Work out what you want to find
3. Try FindMyPast for a free period
4. Then try Ancestry for a free period
5. Then compare with Family Search for while (or in parallel - it's free)
6. Back-fill by the other sites if appropriate

Got what you want? Good for you!

Hooked ? Want to go further ?

Do what I did and join both FindMyPast and Ancestry if funds are fine... if not, choose your preferred one and get as far as you can.