

Researching your family history

Have you wondered who your ancestors were?
Where they lived? Or what they did?

Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre holds lots of information and records to help you research your family history.



GETTING STARTED

If you can, start at home. **Ask family members for help.**

Gather as much information as you can from immediate family and close relatives.

Copies of certificates, wills, employment records, service records, diaries, letters and photos can all help you start your tree. If you are lucky you may have an old family bible - these were often used to record births and marriages.

Listen to stories but be prepared to find alternative versions in the records – memories aren't infallible!



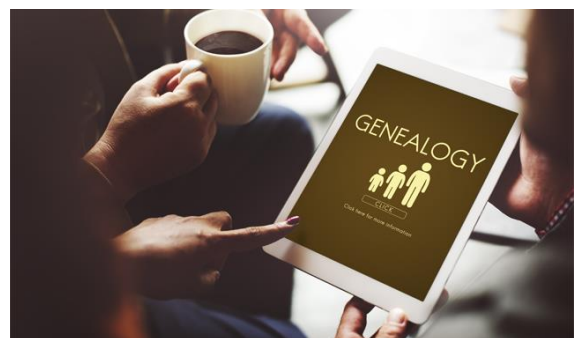
Once you have a basic tree or idea of your family, it's time to start looking for other records. Information that can help you search, and which you should record when you find it, includes:

- Names
- Family relationships
- Dates – births, marriages, deaths and any other occasion
- Occupations
- Where people lived
- Which church they attended and which parish they lived in

RESEARCHING ONLINE

There are now **many genealogy websites** available to help with family history research. Whilst many of these are subscription access there are also great free sites to get you started.

FreeBMD [www.freebmd.org.uk] contains civil birth, marriage and deaths for England and Wales from 1837 when civil registration began. The official General Register Office records can also be searched for births before 1938 and all deaths up until the most recent quarter [www.gro.gov.uk].



FamilySearch [www.familysearch.org] remains one of the family historian's essential resources and brings together sources from around the world.

ScotlandsPeople [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk] contains both civil and church records for Scotland. It is free to search the indexes and easy to buy credits to view digitised images of records if needed.

Other key family history websites are Ancestry UK and FindMyPast. The **library edition of AncestryUK is free to access at all Merton Libraries** – and whilst restrictions are in place – can be accessed free of charge from home from the E-Library [link](#). All you need is your library card number and PIN.

Researching at the Heritage and Local Studies Centre

The Local Studies Centre holds many different record you can use for research

- **Parish registers** can help you find baptism, marriage and burials for your ancestors. Parishes were obliged to keep them from 1538 – although few survive this far back – and the church was the only place couples could legally marry before 1837. Most original parish registers for the Merton area are held at Surrey History Centre (Woking), but the Surrey parish records have been digitised and are available on Ancestry. The Local Studies Centre holds transcriptions of parish registers up to 1812. We also have various books of registers published by family history societies elsewhere in the UK.

- **Census returns** can help find names and addresses of families – this is often one of the easiest ways to confirm family groupings especially in areas where there may be many families with the same surname. Census records in England & Wales survive from 1841 and were taken every 10 years; they are released after 100 years. The Local Studies Centre holds the Merton, Mitcham and Wimbledon census records for 1841-1871 and all years (up to 1911 currently) are available on Ancestry

Parish or Township of Merton	Ecclesiastical District of Merton	Other Borough of Merton	Town of Merton	Village of Merton
14	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
15	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
16	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
17	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
18	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
19	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
20	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
21	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
22	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
23	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
24	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
25	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
26	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
27	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
28	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
29	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
30	St Andrew's Church	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.	Wm. J. J. J.
Total of Persons				123

- **Newspapers** can be invaluable sources of information – they include notices of family events, births, marriages, obituaries, court cases and coroners' inquests. If your ancestors ran a business there is also a high chance they would have advertised in their local paper. We hold a large range of historic local newspaper collections from the late C19th to the present day both in hard copy and on microfilm.

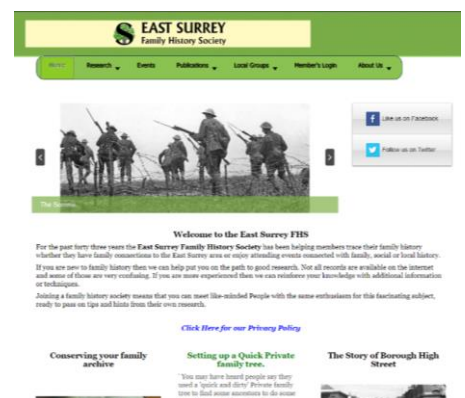


- **Maps and plans** can show how places have developed over time; more detailed local maps can also show individual buildings
- **Electoral rolls** show adult occupants of houses over time – but remember that not everyone always had the right to vote
- **Street directories** and trade directories such as Kelly's can also help identify where ancestors lived and often list occupations



Research Tips

- Keep a note of what you've found and where you found it as you go along – this can save a lot of time and effort if you need to go back and check
- Don't automatically assume you've found the right person or family just because they have the same surname – cross check with a many other records as possible and if you can view the original image then do! Transcriptions and indexes may miss out crucial details
- Remember that our ancestors and record keepers weren't perfect. Names might have been spelt differently or written down incorrectly. Nor did they always tell the truth – particularly about their ages, and occasionally their relationships. If you can't find what you're looking for try broadening your search (try different phonetic spellings or different variations and wild cards) to include more names and places. There is a good list of tips for online searching here [<https://www.hgs-familyhistory.com/category/tips-and-hints/>]
- Use research guides to help you understand the records available. The National Archives has a [large collection of guides](#)
- Contact your local family history society to see what resources they might hold. Most run regular events and meetings. The West Surrey Family History Society covers the old county of Surrey [www.wsfhs.co.uk] and has produced a number of [Research Aids](#) which are available to download for free. Much of the Merton area is covered by East Surrey Family History Society.



Help available:

Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre can also offer a research service to help with enquiries (chargeable at £20 per half hour up to a maximum of 3 hours).