



North West Kent Family History Society

(N W Kent and ancient Kent parishes now S E London plus incorporating TWFHS)

www.nwkfhs.org.uk

GOLDEN RULES TO RESEARCHING FAMILY HISTORY

If you are new to family history these principles will help you get the most from your time:

WORK BACKWARDS

However you go about your research, start with yourself and work backwards by generation. This will ensure you have verified your sources at each stage. Keep a copy of these sources for future reference.

BE ORGANISED AND HONEST

You must be systematic and methodical, as you'll inevitably collect a lot of information. Start with a simple filing system, and keep certificates and documents safe.

START WITH YOUR LIVING RELATIVES

Gather together all the available birth, marriage and death certificates. If relatives do not wish to give out the originals you can ask to take a copy or a photograph. Talk to as many relatives as possible, especially the eldest, as they'll all have useful information. Be aware some subjects might be taboo with elderly relatives so be aware and discreet. Don't forget to ask where people were born and what Christian names they were given – what they were known as was often different. Also ask what occupation they had. If they were born some distance away, ask why they moved to their current location. Many people, for instance, worked for the railways or the armed forces, or had a specialist occupation, and this meant their families were often born in different places.

SET YOUR SIGHTS

Don't try to research your entire ancestry at once - the data will overwhelm you. Decide early on which branch you want to concentrate on first of all and keep the information in a separate ring binder.

UNDERSTAND SURNAMES

Surnames are usually derived from places, occupations, nicknames or an early father-son relationship. The rarer the name, the easier searches usually are.

CLASSES & SOCIETIES

It's always worth joining a family history society local to where you live to get a good grounding in the research basics, and meet others with a similar interest. Check the full list of societies at www.ffhs.org.uk. North West Kent Family History Society's website is www.nwkfhs.org.uk.

USE THE RESOURCES THAT YOU HAVE

Technology is becoming an ever more vital part of family history research. Don't be afraid to make use of a computer and the internet. Local Study/County/FH Society Libraries are an excellent source of help, information and resources, especially if you do not have a computer at home. Remember too, the way one researches is the same wherever you are and were one needs to look.



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Even if your ancestors did not live in the area where you currently live, it can be very worthwhile joining a family history society in your local area. You will get to meet friendly people who share your enthusiasm for family history and who often have a wide range of experience, information and knowledge to help you solve your problems. These are usually similar, irrespective of the specific area of research.

Family history society membership represents very good value for money. Fees are normally less than £15 a year which includes a quarterly journal and one or more monthly meetings with interesting speakers.

The following *free* websites will also be of use:

www.familysearch.org

This is the largest free collection of genealogical data on the web. The most important dataset is the International Genealogical Index (IGI) with entries from thousands of British parish registers. The 1881 census index for England and Wales is also available to search here.

www.freebmd.org.uk

Over 10,000 volunteers are collaborating to create a searchable database of all the entries in the GRO birth, marriage and death indexes. The project is now more or less complete up to 1984.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

An extensive site offering authoritative introductions to family and local history, and reference guides to using records held by The National Archives (TNA) at Kew. The online catalogue can be used to order documents before visiting. The site also contains "Discovery" a search engine allowing you to search for specific names or places and providing you with results from the National Archives' own collection and county record offices etc.

www.cyndislist.com

The comprehensive directory of genealogy sites on the web, with over 260,000 links for all aspects of genealogy, both general and regional.

www.bbc.co.uk/history

The BBC's History website has a family history section containing material relating to the "Who Do You Think You Are" series and guides for both beginners and more experienced researchers.

<https://www.thelondonarchives.org/visit-us/opening-times>

The London Archives (previously called the London Metropolitan Archives) cover Greater London. You can download a leaflet that gives information about its holdings and how to make the most of a visit. Many of the parish records held at the LA can now be viewed, at a cost, through www.ancestry.co.uk. The LA website now includes "Collage" the London Picture Archive.

www.genuki.org.uk

The UK & Ireland Genealogy website is an online reference library containing a wealth of information and organised by historic counties. The gazetteer on this site is especially useful as you can input a place name and the site will provide you with an interactive map and other relevant material about the town or village.

www.ffhs.org.uk

The Federation of Family History Societies website contains some very useful tips and links to other sites.

www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/

Official GRO On-line Certificate Ordering Service: £12.50 with references, £16 without, or £8 for a Pdf. There are other options available