Get started with… Family trees

Make the most of our exclusive Family Tree Builder to keep track of your ancestors' stories and make new discoveries

Your family tree is the web that connects all your discoveries about your family's past. Our onsite Family Tree Builder not only makes it easy to record all your ancestors' details – it also provides a host of extra features to help you dig deeper into your family's past.

It's a good idea to begin your family tree as soon as you start using our site. Start with yourself, then add your parents, grandparents, and as many generations as you can. Don't worry if you're not sure of birth and death dates – just have a guess and you can always change them later.

Very quickly, you'll find that green leaves – or Hints – appear above some of your relatives' names. As you add each person, we automatically search for them in our records – every time we think we've found someone, we give you a Hint.

Click on a leaf to see what we've found. The hint may provide new information about that person, or even suggest further relatives for you to explore. You can add these people to your tree, then see what new Hints appear about them – continually working your way back through your family history.

All the information you collect about each person is kept on their profile screen. As well as key details such as dates and places, you can save your ancestors' actual records to this screen, so you can find them again easily. You can even upload photos and stories, to really bring them to life.

You can choose to keep your tree private. However, if you're willing to share it, you'll find it's a useful way to share your findings with other members. Click on the Member Connect tab on each profile screen to see who else is looking into your ancestors and compare your information – perhaps you'll discover some long lost living cousins!

Top tip

Why start again?

If you've already started your family tree, either on another website or using software such as Family Tree Maker, you don't need to start from scratch – you can import your work as a GEDCOM file. Find out more

Search millions of Irish records

Discover some of the most fascinating stories in your family history by exploring our huge range of Irish record collections

Ireland has a rich and fascinating history, of which its inhabitants are rightly proud. But it's not just the modern-day Irish that have a connection to this past – 70 million people all over the world have roots in Ireland. If you're among them, discover your part in its story with over 45 million Irish records on our site.

You can read about our new Irish Catholic parish records in our main article this month. We've also just released a huge collection of birth, marriage and death indexes covering 1845-1978.

These national lists are the equivalent of our England & Wales civil indexes. They provide the basic information you need to piece together your family tree – names, dates, places and often details of parents.

We're also giving you Ireland Births and Baptisms, 1620–1881. This lets you follow your family's story further back in time, and provides a third option for those later births – if you have no luck in the Catholic registers or civil lists, try this collection.

All these new releases join an already vast selection of Irish records. One of the most important of the existing collections is Griffith's Valuation, 1848-1864.

Because many Irish census records were destroyed, it can be difficult to trace your family in the 19th century. Griffith's Valuation bridges that gap – it includes details of more than a million landowners, revealing exactly where your ancestors were living.

A similar, earlier example is Tithe Applotment Books, 1823-1837. This is a fantastic pre-famine census substitute, and again gives details of where each person was living. You can use both these records and Griffith's Valuation alongside the civil births, marriages and deaths to work your way back through the generations of your family.

Top tip

War casualties

Despite confrontation with Britain, tens of thousands of Irish fought alongside their neighbours in World War I. You can find details on those who made the ultimate sacrifice in Ireland, Casualties of World War I, 1914-1918.

Got a spare 15 minutes?

Take a break everyday, learn new tips and tricks, and try your hand at some new family history records

We'd all love to dedicate hours every day to our family history discoveries. Unfortunately, sometimes life gets in the way! That's why this month we're giving you the chance to try 15 of our most popular record collections from all over the world, with just a spare 15 minutes each day.

Every day until October 15th, we're providing hints and tips on a different collection. These handy articles – which you can find on our blog – give you a taste of what you can find in the records, and suggest some quick tricks you can try in a quarter of an hour.

At the same time, we're making these entire collections completely free. So, everybody can try out the skills they've learnt, and discover their ancestors' stories – regardless of which of our memberships they're using .

'15 minutes with 15 collections' kicked off on October 1st. We've already taken time with the US Social Security Death Index, Ireland's Griffith's Valuation, electoral rolls from Australia and several other valuable collections.

Don't worry though, you can still catch up with everything you've missed. We'll leave the tutorials on our blog indefinitely – so you can try our tips at any time – and all the previous record collections will remain completely free until October 15th .

Looking ahead, we'll be introducing you to many more important and useful collections over the next few days. Here's a complete rundown of what you can expect each day:

October 1st – US Social Security Death Index
October 2nd – Ireland, Griffith's Valuation, 1848-1864
October 3rd – California Marriage Index, 1960-1985
October 4th – Bavaria, Germany, WWI Personnel Rosters, 1914-1918
October 5th – 1920 US Federal Census
October 6th – Australian Electoral Rolls, 1903-1954
October 7th – Texas Birth Index, 1903-1997
October 8th – Sweden, Births from the Swedish Death Index, 1947-2006
October 9th – US WW I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918
October 10th – England & Wales, Birth Index, 1916-2005
October 11th – Historical Newspapers, Birth, Marriage & Death Announcements, 1851-2003
October 12th – Quebec Vital and Church Records, 1621-1967
October 13th – 1930 US Federal Census
October 14th – 1901 England Census
October 15th – US Obituary Collection

Got a spare 15 minutes? Continued…

Keep checking our blog to make sure you don't miss a thing.
http://blogs.ancestry.com/uk/

Top tip

Blog categories
You can narrow down what blog articles you see using the categories on the right of the http://blogs.ancestry.com/uk/
To read all the '15 minute' tutorials, just click on the category with that name.

Have you tried… Member Services

Our Member Services team is here to help! We spoke to one of our expert researchers, to find out exactly what they can do for you

Whether you've been discovering your family history for five minutes or 50 years, there are always areas where you'd like a bit of help. That's why our Member Services team is on-hand seven days a week to answer your calls and emails.

We caught up with Daniel Bunker, one of our expert researchers, to learn more about what his team does, and how they can help you find your ancestors.

Daniel, exactly who are our Member Services team?
We're a group of talented, dedicated, professional individuals, who work hard to help our members over any hurdles they may encounter in their Ancestry experience.

What can you do for our members?
We fill in the gaps that come up for members when they're doing their family history. We can help them when they're unfamiliar with technology, when they're not sure which subscription is right for them, or when they're not sure what the next step is in their research. We're also there if they've made a mistake that they need help fixing, or even if they're just frustrated and need someone to talk to, to give them that little push in the right direction.

What are the most common problems you deal with?
We often hear from people who are unfamiliar with the internet and help with the problems that come because of that. For example, someone might accidentally cancel their account, or they may not know how to get to the records that they want.

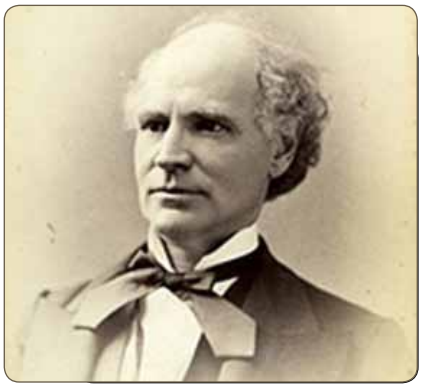
Can you remember a favourite question?
I was once answering an email from a member in Australia who was searching for his ancestors in the UK. I recognized one of the surnames that he was searching for and mentioned that it was a part of my heritage as well. This created a curiosity that we couldn't put aside and through a little digging we concluded that we had mutual ancestors that came from Devon! We decided to share trees and now I have a cousin in Australia that no-one knew about.

Do you have one great tip to help our members?
Read everything! In our internet culture it becomes very easy to skim through paragraphs of information without fully reading it on the website. Our site is so full of valuable information, it's very helpful to stop and read every detail that's available. You can learn so much from the description of the database you're searching just by scrolling below the search fields.

You can call our Member Services team on **0800 404 9723**, Monday to Friday, 9am-10pm, or Saturday and Sunday 9am-8pm. Or, send them an email at support@ancestry.co.uk. They're waiting to help!

Ask the experts

Our resident professionals answer your questions on all things genealogical. This month, fishing forebears and military medals



Welcome to our 'Ask the experts' section. This is where we answer your questions on all things genealogical, so if you have any pressing queries, send us your questions now*.

If your question doesn't appear here, you can email our Member Services team at support@ancestry.co.uk or call **0800 404 9723**, and they'll help you with your research.

This month's questions are answered by our resident family historian Russell James and professional genealogist Doreen Hopwood.

Bios

Russell James is a family historian working for Ancestry.co.uk. Before joining us, he was Editor of Your Family Tree magazine. He's now responsible for writing and editing your newsletter and different parts of the site.

Doreen Hopwood is a professional genealogist for the City of Birmingham. She regularly talks at family history events around the country, and lectures in social history at Birmingham University.

Question 1

Leading Edge

I'm trying to follow a line back from my maternal grandmother. She was Beatrice A. Edge, born in 1915 in Barton upon Irwell, Lancashire.

Unfortunately, I don't have the names of her parents. I've ascertained from Beatrice's birth record that her mother's maiden name was Duffy, but I've been unable to track down any marriage between an Edge and a Duffy to try to ascertain their first names.

Is there any other line of enquiry that I might try?

Yvonne Kerry

Answer

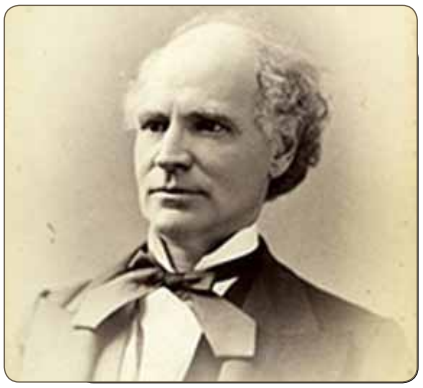
The civil birth, marriage and death lists on our site are only indexes to the complete records. As you've found, they do include some really useful information, such as mothers' maiden names in more recent birth records. But we're not allowed to scan in people's actual certificates.

So, your next step is to buy a copy of the birth record you've found. When you view the index on the site, look for an option on the left that says 'Order birth certificate for Beatrice Edge'. Click on this to buy the certificate – bear in mind that you will have to pay for it, as the records are supplied by the General Register Office, not by us.

Ask the experts (continued)

The certificate will reveal several crucial details, including the date and place of birth, both parents' full names and even the father's occupation.

Russell James



Question 2

Finding Flowers

Please can you help me as I've hit a brick wall. My husband's grandfather's marriage certificate shows him as Edwin Ernest Flower and he married Laura Beatrice Honeybourne in Salford in 1920.

His father was Edward Ernest Flower, and although I've searched through every Edwin and Edward I can find in your records – and there are a number of them – none of the entries have a father named Edward.

Please can you give me some idea of where to go from here?

Anne Clemans

Answer

You haven't said when your husband's grandfather, Edwin Ernest Flower, was born, and like you, I couldn't link an Edwin Ernest to a father named Edward Ernest on the 1881 to 1901 censuses.

However, I have found an Ernest Edward Flowers on the 1881 and 1891 censuses, indicating that he was born in Byfield, Northamptonshire, in about 1865. There's also a death record in this name in Salford in 1944, where the age is shown as 73 years.

If this age ties in with what's shown on the 1920 marriage certificate, it suggests that your husband's grandfather had been married before, which should be indicated on the certificate. It's possible that if father and son both had the same forenames, the younger Edward may have become 'Edwin' to avoid confusion.

Doreen Hopwood