War heroes at sea

World War I wasn't just about trench warfare in the Somme and Ypres. While the front lines clashed in France and Belgium, an equally important conflict was being fought at sea. Our new collection honours those who lost their lives in this conflict.

Royal Navy and Royal Marine War Graves Roll, 1914-1919, is the largest collection of British WWI naval casualties available anywhere online. It details over 40,000 sailors from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines who died all over the world.

Find a naval ancestor here, and you'll discover their rank, service number, the name of their ship, date and cause of death, and where they were buried. You may even find a next-of-kin – providing a vital clue for further research. The records include both officers and ratings.

You can use the records to follow the marine services' fate through the War. Their biggest blow came at the Battle of Jutland, off Denmark, when HMS Queen Mary was sunk, taking over 1,200 souls to the sea bed with her.

HMS Invincible, Good Hope, Defence and many other ships also sank in WWI, causing thousands more deaths. However major sea battles were rare and in many smaller encounters only one or two sailors were killed.

Often they gave their lives protecting cargo vessels from the new threat at sea – U-boats, used in an attempt to blockade Britain. The Navy responded with heavily armed, steel-hulled battleships, cruisers and minesweepers, providing security for trans-Atlantic convoys.

Top tip

Perhaps your family's war heroes served on land? If so, check our collection of World War I service records, medal records and other crucial resources.

Irish roots

Ireland is famed for its history and tradition. If you have connections to this remarkable land, you'll often find that it provides some of the most fascinating chapters in your family's tale.

There's a myth that it's near-impossible to trace your Irish roots back any distance. It's true that there are differences to research around the rest of the UK – thanks largely to the mass destruction of Irish 19th century censuses. However, there are resources you can use to work around such problems – and our new records are great examples.

Griffiths Valuation, 1848-1864, includes over two million records of people who owned or rented land throughout Ireland. Its key use is that it tells you where your forebears were living, but it also reveals the size and value of your relatives' property, so you can work out how wealthy they were.

The Tithe Appointment Books, 1824-1846, form a similar collection from an earlier period. They're the result of a Church tax, as each home was surveyed to work out how much its occupier should pay. The records again provide names, places, amounts of land and amounts of money involved.

Our other two new collections provide some fascinating background, and help to bring your ancestors' experiences to life. The Lawrence Collection of Photographs, 1870-1910, is a compilation of 40,000 historical images from across the length and breadth of Ireland. Meanwhile, our Ordnance Survey Maps, 1824-1846, provide over 19,000 detailed six-inch-to-the-mile maps of almost the whole country.

To make your search even more rewarding, we've connected three of these collections together. Find your ancestors in Griffiths Valuation, then link to detailed maps of their land in Ordnance Survey Maps and actual photographs from their county or town in the Lawrence Collection.

Top tip

The best way to start your search is to build your family tree at Ancestry.co.uk. We can then use Member Connect to put you in touch with others who share your connections to the Emerald Isle.

Have You Tried... Tree Viewer part 2

In last month's Updated, we introduced our new Family Tree Viewer, and explained some of the handy new features we've added to it. So, let's now take a look at each individual in your tree, and how you can add some colour to your picture of their lives.

Profile screen

As you find out more about each ancestor, you can save this information to their Profile screen. To go to someone's profile, roll over their entry on the tree itself and click on 'View profile'.

Find more records

You can search for more records about a person quickly and easily from their Profile screen. Simply click 'Search records', just below their picture box, and we'll use the information you've already found about them to look for other historical documents.

Individual timelines

When you've found a record that relates to someone on your tree, you can save it to their Timeline, a key part of their Profile screen. For instance, if you find someone on a census, view the record image and click 'Save' on the top right, then choose 'Attach this record'. If the census reveals new family members, you can automatically save these to your tree.

Multimedia

If you're lucky enough to own photos of your ancestors, you can add these to their profiles. You'll need to scan them into your computer, then choose 'Upload photos' on the Profile screen. Similarly, you can add audio and video clips, and even stories from your ancestors' lives.

Member Connect

The Profile screen is also the place to make contact with living relatives. Choose any person in your tree and click on 'Member Connect' to see other Ancestry.co.uk members who are researching that same person. You can then see their tree, and even send them a message.

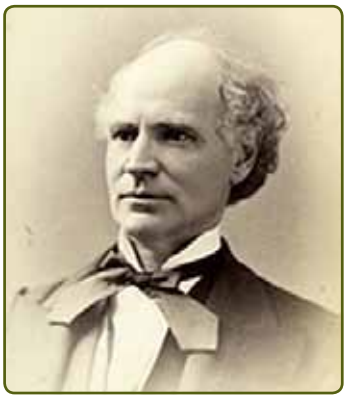
Tracing relationships

To see how a person in your tree relates to you, click the 'View relationship to me' option at the top of their Profile. Or, to make them the 'root' person of the family tree, select 'View his/her family tree'.

Top tip

Using the Media Gallery in an ancestor's Profile, you can link images to events on their timeline, such as a marriage certificate for their wedding, or a photo of the person's headstone for their death.

Ask the Experts



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*.

Thank you for all your questions so far. If your question doesn't appear here, you can email our Member Services team at support@ancestry.co.uk and they'll help you with your research.

This month's questions are answered by professional genealogist Chris Paton.

Census mystery

Q. I'm unable to find many of my relatives on the 1891 Census – in particular Joseph Fordham, born in Suffolk in 1849. I've searched for two years in vain.

He married Elizabeth Isabella Drake in 1872 and had three children in Camberwell, Surrey.

His wife died and he appears to have married again – on the 1881 Census his wife is named as Harriet, and they have two children in Peckham and Lambeth, London. Harriet died in 1883.

Then I can find no record of him again until 1901, when he's living with Emma Louisa Fordham as man and wife, although I've not been able to locate a marriage record for them. Then they disappear and I can find no deaths or remarriages.

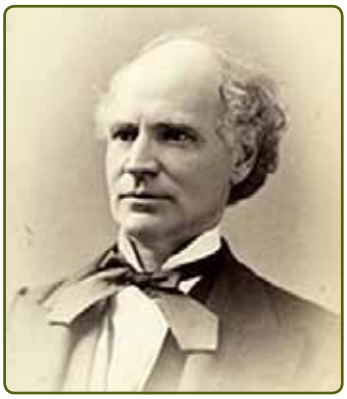
Lisa Tudor

A. Like you, I've been unable to trace what became of Joseph – or his family – in the 1891 Census England, Wales or Scotland. It's possible they may have been in Ireland, which was part of the United Kingdom at the time, but sadly Irish censuses don't survive for this time.

There may be other possibilities. Perhaps they were overseas; they may not have been enumerated in the census; or if they were, they may well have been listed under some other name, for whatever reason. The 1911 Census may help when it's released at Ancestry.co.uk.

In the meantime, it's worth checking the National Probate Calendar for any possible wills or probate material concerning Joseph and his children, and also the city directories just after the 1881 Census, which may list Joseph.

Ask the experts (continued)



Marriage proposal

Q. I've been unable to find the marriage details of my paternal great-grandparents Henry and Isabella Champion. They were married in about 1877.

Henry was born in about 1858 in Hove, Sussex and Isabella was born in about 1859 in Tavistock, Devon. Unfortunately I haven't found Isabella's maiden name and hence have been unable to follow her family history.

Henry was a coachman and the family lived in mews accommodation in Kensington for many years. Could you advise me how to proceed?

Christine Champion

A. The 1901 Census shows that the couple had six children, Isabelle (aged 24), Henry (22), William (18), Ben (16), Charlotte (14), and Arthur (6), all born in Kensington. To find Isabelle's maiden name, find these children's births in the indexes at Ancestry.co.uk, then order their birth certificates within which it will be recorded.

If we take Charlotte, for example, a search in approximately 1886 (from her 1901 census age of 14) reveals she was born in the fourth quarter of 1886 in Kensington, and that her full name was Charlotte Mary Champion.

Ancestry.co.uk has another database which can confirm you have the right candidate – London, England, Baptisms 1813-1906. This shows that Charlotte Mary Champion, daughter of Henry and Isabelle, was baptised on October 24th 1886.

Once you've found Isabelle's maiden name, you can then search for the marriage record in the marriage index from 1837-1915 and order the certificate in the same way.

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