

## **Family History**

This section is designed to serve two purposes: firstly, to provide a guide for those starting to research their family's history, revealing the most obvious sources of help and online information; and, secondly, to indicate sources of genealogical information in Hook Norton and Oxfordshire, to assist both beginners and those from outside whose researches may have brought them to Hook Norton.

### **1. A Beginners' Guide**

Researching family history involves the study of many subjects but the focus is on 'Genealogy' - the study of an individual's descent and relationships. This reveals facts such as names, dates and places, and answers questions such as "Who were my great grandparents, when were they born, where did they live, and which occupations did they follow?" A visit to the area where they lived leads to a study of the history in that place; it is often a good idea to join the local Family History Society where you may find others also researching your family. Some of them may already have birth, marriage and death certificates (BMDs), copies of wills and photographs which they will be willing to share with you and enable you to start to draw up a family tree.

The beginner needs to start work backwards through the generations, and a good place to begin is by questioning family members and especially elderly relatives. Look out for any birth, marriage and death certificates, wills and photographs which they may have and then draw up a family tree with as much information as you already know. It is relatively simple to research a family back to the late eighteenth century, through the records of births, marriages and deaths (BMDs) and in census records.

Civil registration of BMDs began in 1837, the year that Queen Victoria came to the throne; before that date one needs to consult parish records. In 1538 King Henry VIII decreed that every parish church should obtain a strong chest with two

locks in which to store their records. As the majority of people were baptised, married and died in the same area, it is often possible to trace a family over several generations. Be aware, though, that early records are of baptismal (not birth) and burial (not death) dates. Some religious dissenters did not believe in infant baptism, or were unwilling to baptise their children into the Church of England, but kept separate records.

Before the advent of the computer age most records were available at County Record Offices and various London repositories. Now an amazing amount of information is available on the Internet. The main free sites can be found under:

[www.freeukgen.rootsweb.com](http://www.freeukgen.rootsweb.com): this is a "free to view" online searchable database transcribed by volunteers and includes:

--free BMDs, births, marriages and deaths from 1837;

--free CEN, censuses from 1841 to 1891.

--free REG: these records are transcribed BMDs from Parish and Nonconformist registers; they are by no means complete as this is an ongoing project.

[www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk)

[www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (the International Genealogical Index compiled by the Mormon Church).

There are many other sites which can be accessed for information, but one usually needs to purchase credits or a subscription in order to obtain the information. A few of the best are:

[www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk)

[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) - wills, emigration and passenger lists (for free access, see below).

[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) - includes BMDs, censuses and much more (for free access, see below).

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) - Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

[www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk) - Society of Genealogists.

[www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) – British Newspaper Archive

[www.gro.gov.uk/content/certificates/default.asp](http://www.gro.gov.uk/content/certificates/default.asp) Use this site to order actual BMD certificates. Currently they cost £9.25 each including P&P.

## 2. Village and County Sources

Within Hook Norton you will find many transcribed records at the Village Museum and Archive, but copies are more readily available at Hook Norton Village Library. These include the parish registers of births, marriages and deaths, which are available both transcribed in red ring files and as reproduced copies of the originals on CD. There are also copies of the decennial censuses from 1841 to 1901, as well as plans of the church and chapel graveyards and the parish cemetery. Other relevant sources include copies of *Who Do You Think You Are?* from Christmas 2010 to the present, as well as some very helpful modern guides.

In addition, the Library provides free access to [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk), [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), and other online sites. It is also possible to access some of these sites online from home if you go to the county library site (<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk>) and input your library card number. This includes some of the digitised nineteenth-century newspapers including both *Jacksons Oxford Journal* and *The Times*.

There are also other institutions in the county where assistance and advice may be found:

**Oxfordshire Family History Society** (OFHS) provides many services:

see [www.ofhs.org.uk](http://www.ofhs.org.uk) for details.

**Oxfordshire History Centre** (formerly the County Record Office), St Luke's, Cowley, Oxford.

## H o o k   N o r t o n   L o c a l   H i s t o r y   G r o u p

Opening hours are Tuesday, 10am – 5pm, and Wednesday – Saturday, 9am – 5pm.

The OFHS has an advisor available every Tuesday and Thursday, 10am – 4pm.

### **Oxford Central Library**, Westgate Centre, Oxford

Open Monday – Thursday 9am – 7pm, Friday & Saturday 9am – 5.30pm.

The OFHS advisors staff the Family History Help Desk several days a week (currently every Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday 10.30am – 3.30pm, Thursday 10am - 4pm, and Friday 10.30am – 3.30pm).

The library has an invaluable guide entitled “Resources for Family Historians at Oxford Central Library”, available at

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordcentralibrary](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordcentralibrary), which is strongly recommended.

### **Scotland**

If you have ancestors in Scotland the research method is different from England and Wales. The records are searchable online at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk). Civil registration in Scotland started in 1855, some eighteen years after England and Wales. The information on the certificates is more comprehensive as the Scots realised the limitations of those in England and Wales. As with some of the other paid-for websites, in order to see Scottish records you have to purchase credits after having registered on the site. However, what you will see after searching online is a digitised version of the original certificate. These can either be saved to your computer or printed at home. All your previous searches are saved on the website and can be viewed at any time in the future at no extra cost. You can, of course, order a copy of the actual certificate at additional cost, but most family historians are happy with what they have seen online.

Good hunting!

**Barbara and Patrick Summerell** (with Jennie Bell and David McGill)