

How to start researching your family history

If you are interested in finding more out about your family history, this information sheet for Saltford residents provides guidance on good places to start.

Researching your ancestors and learning more about them can be more interesting than you might think and can help you to understand how you and your family came to be who you are today. A great place to get started with this task would be to write down everything you already know about your family, and then talk to your relatives to see if they could fill in some of the gaps that you may have. Another place to look for clues would be old documents and photographs. Digging through boxes of old photographs and asking your relatives if they could identify anyone in them can help you to find other people that may know about your heritage. The next step would be to organise a family tree. Take what you already know, information from family members and research that you have done and compile it onto one piece of paper, with lines joining relatives and marriages. The combination of following these steps and conducting further research can lead you to find things about your family history that you would never have even thought of.

South West Heritage Trust

To locate documents linked to the Somerset and Devon area, use the South West Heritage Trust website. They operate a research and copying service so that you can do your own research on documents that are held at the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton. They can also carry out research on the archives and other resources at the Somerset Heritage Centre for a fee. You can use this resource to find out about family history, house history rights etc and much more. They also have a section on their website where you can access documents online such as historic postcards and maps of the local area. The South West Heritage Trust also carry out talks and tours and complete conservation work on top of the research service that they provide. They also hold baptism, marriage and burial records.

More information can be found at www.swheritage.org.uk

Libraries West

Another source of information that could be used to find out more about your family history is Libraries West, which is a partnership of seven public libraries in the south west of England. Through this search engine you can find books about the history of the west of England which could help you to find out more about your family history. You can then reserve books and pick them up from a public library, including your local community library in Saltford. Visit <https://www.librarieswest.org.uk> for more information.

Bath Record Office

The Bath Record Office hold historic records that date back to 1189. They have online catalogues, family history records, house history records and collections that can all be accessed. They offer advice for beginners and more advanced in their service providing records for family history. They have records of births, marriages and deaths starting in 1837 and census returns from 1841-1911 which are available to help you to find out more about your family history. You can also search the Bath Ancestors database to see if you could find any of your ancestors. Find out more at <https://www.batharchives.co.uk/>

Saltford Environment Group

To find out more about life in Saltford in the past, including some of its inhabitants, a great place to start is Saltford Environment Group's History pages at <http://www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk/history/index.html> as well as their Online Museum at <http://www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk/history/history005.html> The Saltford Heritage Centre is also open on occasion where knowledgeable volunteers are present. They also have a great range of maps on their 'Online map room' page which is being added to <https://www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk/history/history014.html>

Bristol and Avon Family History Society

The Bristol & Avon Family History Society was formed in 1975 to encourage the study of family history and genealogy in Bristol and what was then the county of Avon. This includes the southern parishes of Gloucestershire, the northern area of Somerset, and the City of Bath.

The Society holds regular meetings at Bristol, Bath and Yate where members can hear a variety of speakers, seek advice, and meet likeminded people. The Society also organises a program of visits to libraries, record offices and other places of interest to the family historian. The Research Room, at the rear of the Bristol Record Office foyer, is open to the general public and has Internet access, as well as other resources on CD, microfiche and in printed format. The quarterly journal, Journal of the Bristol & Avon Family History Society, enables members at home and further afield to enjoy general articles on family and local history, general genealogical information, events and activities of the society. Similar information is also found on the website including details of their own publications of local records and how to join the Society.

Bristol and Avon Family History Society contributed to the National Burial Index. These records are available as part of the Findmypast Britain or World subscription. Find out more at <http://www.bafhs.org.uk/>

General Register Office

The official government General Register Office lets you order birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership and death records to help you to research your family and your family tree. The records held trace back to 1837; if you wanted to look back any further you can use parish records. This service generally provides more detailed information than parish records, and you can get certificates sent straight to your door. See <https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/> and <https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate> for more information.

War Memorials Register - Imperial War Museum (IWM)

The IWM is compiling the War Memorials Register - the comprehensive national register of UK war memorials and the names of the individuals they commemorate. They currently hold records for over 77,000 memorials in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. If you are searching for a relative or ancestor who died in service from all wars, whether a member of the armed forces or a civilian, the War Memorials Register is a valuable resource. Find out more at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials>