

Hebden Bridge Local History Society

Family History Group

Newsletter
Happy New Year.

January 2011

The Family History group continues to flourish, the Thursday meetings proving more popular than the Saturday afternoons. We have a core of original members who regularly attend but also a steady increase in new members. It is good to see new faces. We now have wifi available as well as extra computers, which gives us more scope to access various resources online.

Edith Bowman tells me that there is presently an offer on for 5 issues of the Who Do You Think You Are Magazine for £5.00, if you take out a subscription. - call 08448440262 and quote JSGWC11 or www.bbcsubscriptions.com/januarysale and quote same reference. Closing date is 31st January. It is a useful source of information concerning Family History research and especially keeps you up to date with recent developments in the availability of archives. Many of the tips I send out are from this source.

A recent addition to the ancestry site are the 1911 census summary books. I am finding these quite interesting in locating families and houses. The census was probably more logically collected than the previous ones and allows you to look at neighbourhoods and addresses but only records the head of household name. Remember that access to Ancestry.com is free at libraries.

At the end of the newsletter is a page from Ancestry that I thought you might find useful. It lists the 10 most common research mistakes.

Monumental Inscriptions

The massive task of transcribing the graves in the churchyard at Heptonstall is nearing completion. There is still a fair bit to do inputting our results onto a data base and then all the inscriptions will need to be checked before we can forward them to Calderdale Family History group for publication. We will probably meet sometime in the spring to do the checking. Let me know if you would like to be part of that group. Our task was made so much easier thanks to Jan Parrott and Mike Edwards who did a fantastic job clearing all the growth from around the graves. Our many thanks.

We have had several requests for information about the Birchcliffe cemetery. It is a massive task especially as the graveyard is very overgrown and the state of many graves quite hazardous. Looking at the Calderdale archives catalogue, there seem to be some documents from Birchcliffe available, including a plan of the graveyard. If anyone would like to take on the task of looking at these and see if we can discover any other records, we would be grateful for your help.

Edith Bowman and the Blackshawhead History Group are in the process of transcribing the graves in the churchyard there.

Dates for your diary

These are the dates when the Archives will be open for the Family History group in the next few months. Dates *tend* to be the first Saturday and the third Thursday each month. All openings are from 2 pm to 5 pm.

	Thursday 20 th January
Saturday 5 th February	Thursday 17 th February
Saturday 5 th March	Thursday 17 th March
Saturday 2 nd April	Thursday 21 st April
Saturday 7 th May	Thursday 19 th May

George Redmonds talks to the History Society on **Wednesday 26th January** on West Yorkshire Placenames. He is the author of numerous books on name topics, lectures widely on the subject and in 2001 he presented the BBC Radio 4 series *Surnames, Genes and Genealogy*.

For further information please contact
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Ten common research mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes! And a mistake while you're researching your family just helps you move up that genealogy learning curve. Here are ten of the most common mistakes we all make to help prevent as many as possible in your journey of discovery.

1. Forgetting to record information on family history forms

Organisation is key when researching your family. Either get hold of standard forms, or chart your findings using appropriate software and keep it in one place. Not only will this help you, but it will help future generations carry on your work.

2. Ignoring your ancestors' siblings

Don't narrow your search too much. Siblings can be incredibly valuable in unlocking important family clues. When looking at a census, for example, you might find the parents of an ancestor living with one of their other children. Which means you get the names of the parents, and potentially a new location. Researching siblings could lead to a previously unknown relative who is also doing research on the family. Paying attention to the names of all the siblings in a household will also help confirm that you have the right family, especially if one of the members has an unusual first name. If you can see all the names you expect to see in a household as you go back through the census years, it's likely you are following up the right family.

3. Overlooking the maiden names of female ancestors

It's easy to think of our female ancestors by their married names, enter the information, and then ignore their birth names. Birth names can provide a valuable clue for future research since some families use the mother's maiden name as a middle name for the oldest male child, for instance. This information could help identify the correct male ancestor when there are two or more candidates in the same place and time.

4. Assuming you are related to a famous person

It is tempting for people with a family name such as McCartney to assume they are related to a famous person with the same name. Then, based upon that assumption, they try to work from the famous person to themselves. This is not a good research approach. Always start with yourself and work backwards, proving the connection between each generation. Then, if you prove you're related to Sir Paul, you'll really have something to brag about!

5. Skipping a generation

In lots of families, it's common to have the same name running through three or more generations of male ancestors. This can easily trip you up if you're not methodical, leading you to list someone as the father when he is the grandfather. Record as many dates as possible and carefully evaluate things like place names to avoid this happening.

6. Assuming a family name is only spelt one way

Family names can be spelt in a number of different ways as our ancestors (and the people who recorded their events) were very fallible! Smith can be Smyth, Rawlins can be Rawlings and Kitson can be Kidston. Make sure you check all the phonetic variations of your name just in case – although this is time-consuming the results could make it all worthwhile. One thing that could help save time during your searching is using the wildcard search character, an asterisk, in your searching. Enter the surname as 'Rawlin*' and you'll get occurrences of both Rawlins and Rawlings. 'John*' will bring back all surnames starting with John, such as Johns, Johnston, Johnstone and Johnathan.

7. Jumping to conclusions

Genealogy is all about proof. Start your research with yourself and work backwards, one generation at a time. The key to success is to prove conclusively the link between the generations, and you can only reach a conclusion if you have enough evidence. Reaching a conclusion based upon incomplete evidence can throw your whole tree out. If you're not sure about a connection, make a note of your theory first, and then try to prove that theory – but don't assume it as fact! Whenever you find a record that possibly matches a person you are looking for, you can put it in your Shoebox. This feature is available to anyone with a monthly or annual membership.

8. Researching the wrong family

This can happen so easily. If you jump to conclusions (mistake number 7) you can easily set off in completely the wrong direction and end up researching many generations of the wrong family. Do not start working on the next generation of research unless you have concrete proof of a link!

9. Relying on data found in an online family tree

While the internet is a fantastic aid to our research, not least on Ancestry.co.uk, it is a big tool to navigate and you should be wary of which sites you rely on. Even the smallest piece of incorrect information posted on a forum could infect a huge number of research projects. Always approach an unfamiliar source cautiously: just because you've found the information doesn't make it accurate.

10. Failing to document your sources

The biggest mistake you can ever make is not documenting where you found your information. Remember that your research is only part of a much larger body of information. We owe it to future generations to be accurate so that we don't set off a chain of events that could mean someone out there is jumping to conclusion (mistake number 7) or researching the wrong family entirely (mistake number 8). See your research as your heritage, and your story!