

RECORDING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

“Everyone has a history and archives have a bit of yours!”

(Archive Awareness Campaign)

Family history is a personal means of exploring your family’s lives across time. The historical research that family history entails enables the lives and experiences of your descendants to be detailed and explored.

The starting point for many in their family history research is the documenting of memories, which can offer a wealth of information about family members, relationships between them, locations, as well as anecdotal evidence that may add ‘colour’ to the hard facts of their life events (such as births, deaths and marriages). Examples of family memories that have been recorded as part of the research work of Timescapes can be seen and heard within this exhibition in the Oral Accounts section. Collecting memories to aid family history may also be done by speaking to extended family members, specifically the elders within families who may be able to offer their perspective back across time.

Once memories have been explored, archives are the next key resource for the pursuit of family history information. Archived material can unlock lots of key information, not only personal details of family members in terms of Census returns, but also more general contextual information about the eras and areas in which family members lived. Archives are a rich and valuable source for family history research that can both unlock the past and help preserve for the future. Exhibits within this exhibition demonstrate both contemporary material that will be archived as well as historical material, giving a sense of the flexibility and value of archives for both larger formalised social science research as well as more personal family history research.

Family history information can be displayed in the traditional ‘tree’ format, showing the branches and lines that connect people together over time (see the ‘Local Leeds Family Tree’ exhibition board) and can be illuminated with visual aspects such as photos as well as with memory extracts to add more personal depth. The production of a tree is a good example of how family history information can be captured for use by future generations, enabling its value to persist over time.

HELPFUL WEBSITES AND BOOKS

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com
 www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
 www.genuki.org.uk
 www.ukbmd.org.uk
 www.genesreunited.co.uk
 www.familysearch.org
 www.ancestry.co.uk
 www.bbc.co.uk/familyhistory
 www.archiveawareness.com

Teach Yourself Tracing Your Family History by S Colwell (McGraw Hill, 1997).
The Family Tree Detective: Tracing your Ancestors in England and Wales by Colin D Rogers (Manchester UP, 1997).
Ancestral Trails by M Herbert (Sutton, 2000)..
Tracing Your Ancestors at the PRO by A Bevan (Public Records Office, 1999).

