**How to get started with your family tree**

The best place to start is by writing down the names and dates that you know, beginning with yourself, and then your parents. When and where they were born, where have they lived? If they are or were married, when and where did the marriage occur? If you have information about their parents, you can continue to move upwards, until you run out of information. It can be helpful to fill in a family tree chart as you go with the information you find. Talk to older relatives about family and ask if they have any registration certificates, old photographs, letters or postcards.

**Searching for a Birth**

To find the date of when someone was born from 1837 onwards, you can look at the General Register Office Index (GRO Index). This will tell you when and where the birth was registered, and you can apply for a birth certificate. From 1911, the mother’s maiden name is included in the index.

The information on a birth certificate usually includes the date of birth, child’s full name, parent’s names, mother’s maiden name, address at the time, and occupation of the father if named.

To find a birth before 1837, you will need to search the Parish Registers for a Baptism. Check for a local church near to where the family lived. If the family were not Church of England, you may need to look for the relevant records relating to their religion or denomination, as systems varied.

There are various sources of where to search for this information, from free websites such as [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk), and local regional variations such as [www.cheshirebmd.org.uk](http://www.cheshirebmd.org.uk). On [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) you can also search the IGI (International Genealogical Index). There are subscription websites which include further information [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), and although these cost money they can be viewed for free at Tameside Local Studies & Archives

**Searching for a Marriage**

You can do this in the same way as searching for a birth, looking at the GRO index, but there will be two names to look for, the husband and the wife. When you have found the first name there will be an index number after the registration district. This number should be the same for the spouse; this will ensure you have a correct match. From 1912, each name is cross-referenced with their spouse.

The information included on a marriage certificate is the place of marriage, date, names, ages, occupations, address, father’s names and occupations and witnesses.

Marriages before 1837 can be found in the Parish Registers and a useful index; Boyd’s Marriage Index. Check local Record Offices and Archive centres to find out which Parish Registers they hold.

**Searching for a Death**

From 1866, the GRO index includes the age of the person who died, after 1969 the index records the date of birth instead of the age of death.

Death certificates contain date and location of death, as well as name, sex, age, occupation, cause of death, relationship to the informant, their address. The death certificate also include the name and occupation of their partner.

Newspapers are a useful source to search for a death, there may be a death notice or obituary. Cemetery records may give place of burial; there may be a family plot with more than one person. Many churches have cleared their graveyards but may have a transcription of the monuments.

**Searching Census Returns**

A census is a population count taken every 10 years, but the personal information is closed for 100 years. The most recent census available is 1921, and the earliest with personal information is 1841.

The Census records are available on subscription websites – [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) and [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) or free from [www.freecen.org.uk](http://www.freecen.org.uk). Many libraries and Local Studies centres have these websites available to view free.

As the decades have passed, more information has been recorded on each census. In 1841 only the person’s name is recorded, occupation and ages of adults being round up to the nearest five. By 1911 the names, ages, relationship to the head of the house, occupations, place of birth, how long the couple have been married, how many children they have had and how many had died.

**Further Information**

Other sources available are electoral registers, rate books and trade directories.

Check [www.tameside.gov.uk](http://www.tameside.gov.uk) for further guides that will help with family history research. Check Record Offices, Local Studies & Archive Centres and Family History Societies in the area where your family came from.

**Some useful websites**

[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) subscription, free at libraries

[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) subscription, free at libraries

[www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk) free

[www.cheshirebmd.org.uk](http://www.cheshirebmd.org.uk) free

[www.lancashirebmd.org.uk](http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk) free

[www.lan-opc.org.uk](http://www.lan-opc.org.uk) free Lancashire Parish Register Society

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) free

[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com) free