

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP REPORT

We have had several enquiries recently and some new visitors to the group, all of which have resulted in new members to the society. We now have access to the *Find My Past* web site for members use and this includes the 1911 Census.

The Local History web site has been updated and we have a selection of local photographs dating from the 1890s to the 1960s in the Family History section. Some of these are from the archives and some are personal photographs. Initially these will be of groups of people from in and around Hebden Bridge and from a variety of past times. We hope that they will be of interest to people with local connections and hope that, in some cases, you may be able to help with identification.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

These are the dates when the Family History group meet at the Birchcliffe Centre 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.

Family History Opening Times 2011 - 2012

	Saturday 2 - 5 pm	Thursday 2 - 5 pm
2011		
September	3rd	15th
October	1st	20th
November	5th	17th
December	3rd	15th
2012		
January	7th	20th
February	4th	16th
March	3rd	15th
April	7th	19th

Barbara Atack

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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!