

Planning Your Research

Planning Your Research:

Decide what your aim is for researching your family history and develop a plan. Several choices are available to the beginner in ancestry research: -

Ancestor Chart

Family Tree

Extended Family Tree

One-name Study.

Many people set out to find all their ancestors through both their male and female lines, and so produce what is termed an Ancestry Chart. For those ambitious to trace their descent as far back as possible, this is the choice to make, because with every newly discovered generation the number of ancestors doubles; two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents and so on. (See Game of Numbers). When the scent on one trail dries up or is temporarily difficult to follow ("Wanted Names" or "Brick Walls"), there are plenty of other lines to turn to.

Some people just like to trace their own family with its surname, their Family Tree showing their male-line ancestors (father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc.) and the wives, brothers and sisters of these ancestors. It is of course possible to concentrate on female-line ancestors, but the types of records that were kept, and the common practice whereby a wife took her husband's surname at marriage, can make this difficult before the 19th century. However, the maxim Mummy's baby, daddy's maybe! shows why concentrating on the male line only is not the most reliable method of recording your family history!

Yet others try to produce what is sometimes termed an Extended Family Tree. Such a tree shows all the collateral branches of a family, i.e. all the descendants with their spouses of some earliest known ancestor. An extended family tree therefore will grow to include many of your distant cousins. People with a fairly uncommon surname may decide to trace all people of the same surname, just in case they may be distantly related. This is called a One-name Study.

Whichever aim you set yourself, it is best to concentrate on just a small part of the tree or chart, at any one time - you can always move to another part when you get stuck.

But do not forget to visit us here at Family History UK regularly. Post your "Wanted Names" and ask questions in the Forum.