



Has it been done before?

Published Family Histories

If a family history has already been researched and published in book form you will find a reference to it in T R Thomson, *Catalogue of British family histories* (3rd edn, London, 1980).

Accounts of families are, however, also to be found in many local and county histories, biographical studies, national and local periodicals, transactions of archaeological and record societies, and in a multitude of out-of-the-way and forgotten books. In the last century, Dr. G W Marshall went through works of this nature making notes of every tabular pedigree or account of a family that he came across which gave at least three generations in the male line. These are all listed in his *The genealogist's guide* (4th edn, 1903; reprinted London & Baltimore, 1967).

Marshall's *Guide* provides references to most pedigrees printed before 1903, but some of those he missed and most of those published in the first fifty years of this century were indexed by Major J B Whitmore in *A genealogical guide* (London, 1953).

Continuing Whitmore's work, G B Barrow published another volume also called *The genealogist's guide* (London & Chicago, 1977) listing family history material which was published in the next twenty-five years.

Together, these three books - and all three must be consulted - list most material printed on any family in England, and they are quite indispensable. To come a little more up to date, there is in the back of Thomson's *Catalogue* mentioned above an Appendix of family histories printed between 1975 and 1980 which is the only compilation of its kind for this period.

Scotland & Ireland

These authors made no particular search for Scottish and Irish material. For references to printed pedigrees of Scottish families consult M Stuart, *Scottish family history* (Edinburgh, 1930), which is brought up to date by J P S Ferguson, *Scottish family histories held in Scottish Public Libraries* (Edinburgh, 2nd edn. 1986). The latter lists in addition those Scottish libraries known to possess copies of the books mentioned. Both works should be consulted.

For references to Irish printed pedigrees there are two books: B de Breffny, *Bibliography of Irish family history and genealogy* (Cork, 1974) and the more up-to-date but less comprehensive E MacLysaght, *Bibliography of Irish family history* (Dublin, 1982). Both should be consulted.

A large public library should have copies of these bibliographies but it will probably not have all the books and periodicals mentioned in them. Indeed it may not be easy to find copies of particular items. Many will be found at the Society of Genealogists. At the Society, the bibliographies are found on the Textbook Shelves in the Middle Library.

Unpublished material in the Society

If there is nothing in print, the Society may have a typescript or manuscript family history. The Family History section of its Library Catalogue will say if there is any bound material.

Unbound material is kept in the Document Collection in the Upper Library where there are files on about 14000 families in alphabetical order: new additions to the collection are microfiched and the fiche can be found in the Lower Library cabinets. The card index of pedigrees in deposited and other special collections, also in the Upper Library, will then need to be consulted.

The Society of Genealogists is always glad to add any pedigree to its collection and its receipt will automatically be mentioned in the quarterly *Genealogists' magazine*. If the donation includes the name and address of the donor, this is an effective method of getting in touch with other people interested in the same surname, both now and in the future.

Titled Families

If the family had an hereditary right to a coat of arms a pedigree may have been registered at the College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4BT (tel. (020) 7248 2762). No list of the pedigrees registered there has been printed and the collections are not open to public search. However, a pedigree may have been registered at the College at the time of a grant of arms and an index of many grants of arms before 1898 is to be found in *Grantees of arms before 1898* (Harleian Society, vols. 66-68, London, 1915-17).

Titled families are listed in *Burke's Family Index* (1976) and in Frank Leeson's *Directory of British Peerages* (1984). Pedigrees of European royalty and nobility are listed in F R Pryce's *Guide to European Genealogies Exclusive of the British Isles* (1965).

A pedigree may also have been given to the local family history society (addresses can be found on the back of *Federation News and Digest*) of the area to which it relates or to the appropriate county record office (for addresses see J S W Gibson & P Peskett, *Record Offices : How to find them* (1996)).

Family Search

The *Family Search* database compiled by the Genealogical Society of Utah contains the *Ancestral File* CD-ROM disks. These are comprised of genealogical information submitted for inclusion in the database. The files link individuals into pedigrees and contain the names, along with dates and places of birth, marriage and death, of millions of individuals. The contributors' names are included.

Family Search also contains the catalogue of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City which lists the thousands of printed family histories held in the library, many of which may be available for use on microfilm in this country. Both the *Family History Library Catalogue* and *Ancestral File* can be examined at the Society's Library, LDS Family History Centres and other record offices and libraries.

Library of Congress

Many thousands of British family histories are held in the Library of Congress in Washington. These are catalogued in M J Kaminkow's *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* (1972 with Supplements 1986 & 1991).

Surname Interests

As there are many thousands of people throughout the world who are tracing their ancestors it is as well to see if there is anyone else working on the same line as yourself. An enormous number of families in which people are interested have been listed in various commercial directories and these should not on any account be overlooked. Check as many as you can; duplication of effort is wasteful, but sharing research with relatives can be of great benefit to both parties.

Many people advertised the surnames on which they were working in the *National genealogical directory* which was published annually between 1979 and 1993 (originally by M J Burchall and latterly by I. Caley). Many more entries appear in the *Genealogical research directory* (ed. by K A Johnson & M R Sainty, Library of Australian History, Sydney) which has been published annually since 1982. Each issue contains at least a hundred thousand entries. Those who advertise their interests in one issue, however, may not do so in the next and it is worthwhile to check as many editions as possible. The *Genealogical research directory*, which relates to families being researched all over the world, also contains the addresses and other details of most family history societies worldwide.

Many local family history societies have published lists of their members' 'interests' and other searchers publish their interests in the monthly *Family Tree Magazine* mentioned above. The Society of Genealogists (see below, Section 12) maintains a card index of its own 'Members' Interests'.

The largest single index of this kind is the *British Isles genealogical register* or '*BIG-R*' (2nd edition 1997) which lists families being researched in the United Kingdom only and is published on microfiche by the Federation of Family History Societies. It contains over 300,000 entries and should not on any account be overlooked.

As mentioned above many family history societies have published lists of the families on which their members are working, and articles about their research may also appear in their magazines. A card index of articles on families and other matters which have appeared in local family history society magazines since 1976 is maintained at the Society of Genealogists.

As your search develops and you go further back in time and find perhaps that your ancestors have moved from one county to another you will need to consult these various indexes again. References which seemed irrelevant when you commenced your work may later suddenly acquire greater relevance.

Caution

Remember, however, that a published or manuscript pedigree is not necessarily either complete or accurate. Its accuracy can only be judged by the extent to which it quotes the authorities on which it has been based. You may, therefore, need to check it carefully against parish registers, wills and other original documents.

Another warning needs repeating here. Because a family of the same surname has been traced in the past, even in the same locality, that does not mean that there is necessarily a relationship. Concentrate on your own immediate family and work steadily back on that; resist all temptation to work down from some presumed ancestor with the same surname. That is a sure way of tracing other people's ancestors.

One-name studies

Some genealogists trace everyone with a particular surname and if they are willing to share and exchange information about it they may belong to the Guild of One-Name Studies or 'GOONS' (Box G, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7BA). The Guild has about 1,000 members and a list of the families on which they are working is given in the Guild's *Register of one-name studies* which is published annually (GOONS, 13th edn. 1997). Other 'one-name' searchers are listed in the *Genealogical research directory*. Those listings of particular surnames which have been taken from the indexes at the General Register Office and given to the Society are detailed in *General Register Office one-name lists in the library of the Society of Genealogists* (1997).

Family Associations

There are also many family associations worldwide. Those which publish some kind of periodical or newsletter are listed in I J Marker & K E Warth, *Surname periodicals: a world-wide listing of one-name genealogical publications* (GOONS, 1987). Many others, particularly those overseas, may be found in a microfiche index periodically issued by the Genealogical Society of Utah and called 'The Family Registry'. Copies are available worldwide at Family History Centres.

A list of the Chiefs of Clans and Names in Scotland, with their addresses, is published annually in *Whitaker's Almanack* and a list of the family surname organisations which have been dubbed 'Clans of Ireland' can be obtained from the Clans of Ireland Office, 2 Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

Conclusion

With all this activity you may think that there is little left to be done, but the great majority of people tracing their ancestors find that the work they are doing, at least in the early stages, is unique and has not been done before. After that there is quite likely to be an overlap with someone somewhere. If you deposit copies of the fruits of your labours at the Society of Genealogists as soon as you can, you are likely to make contacts and discover long-lost cousins much sooner than you think.