

Tracing your Family Tree – Beginner's Guide

Initial Research

From your own resources, find as much information as possible about your own ancestors.

Check: Any old correspondence, birth, marriage or death certificates, old family Bibles, deeds, photographs, wills or any family heirlooms.

Talk to: Any relative, especially elderly ones, or even friends of the family. Do not dismiss all the family legends but make a note of them as they may contain some elements of truth, even though some aspects may have been embellished over the years.

Try to: Ascertain some or all of the following facts about many ancestors as possible – but do not despair if this is not feasible.

- **Dates of birth, marriage, or death**
- **Names of immediate close family, especially surnames on the female side**
- **Specific names and addresses of everyone**
- **Jobs, trades, or professions of family members**
- **Religion and place of worship**
- **Significant life events e.g. awards, divorce, emigration, epidemics, prison, war.**



Figure 1 - Our Warm Welcome

The Borough Archives, Gamble Building

St Helens Archive Service holds records relating to local services, businesses and industry, transport, education, war, events, clubs and societies, religions, property, plans, photographs, family history and local history. The online catalogue can be used to find out the reference numbers of items that you are interested in; to search the records that we hold in the borough archives, please visit the [online catalogue](#). If you need additional help accessing the catalogue, please [contact us](#).



Figure 2 – St Helens Archive Service Storeroom

Other Local History resources and facilities

Other local and family history resources can be found in Eccleston and Newton Le Willows Library. These libraries hold maps, local newspapers (on 35mm Microfilm) and reference materials such as Census records, Parish Registers and Electoral Rolls.

Eccleston Library – ecclestonlibrary@sthelens.gov.uk, 01744 677575

Broadway
Eccleston
St Helens Council
WA10 5PJ

Newton Le Willows Library, NewtonleWillowsLibrary@sthelens.gov.uk, 01744 677885

Newton Le Willows Library
262 Crow Lane East,
Newton Le Willows,
WA12 9TX

Free access to Find My Past is available to St Helens Library Service members at any St Helens Library currently offering PC access. Please email libraries@sthelens.gov.uk for more details.



Figure 3 – Newton Le Willows Library

Directories

Directories starting in 1819 and continue in irregular intervals until the 2000s. The directories are both telephone directories and trade directories. After the 1960s, they may be online, but also contact your local library as they may have present day telephone directories. You can also search for historical directories here - <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/en/archive/20080211161145/http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/index.asp>

Birth, Marriages, and Deaths

Civil Registration Indices – Births 1837 -1990, Marriages 1837 – 1990, Deaths 1837 -1990. St Helens Archive Service has the civil indices on microform, from 1837 – 1990. However, you can now search for civil registration records on [Lancashire BMD](#) and [Free BMD](#) (Birth, Marriages and Deaths).

The General Register Office Index (GRO) provides an index of all births, deaths and marriages registered in England and Wales and should ideally provide enough information to acquire a copy of a full certificate, which can be obtained from a local

register office or purchased by post, telephone, or the Internet. The Register Offices in the county of Lancashire, England, hold the **original** records of births, marriages, and deaths back to the start of civil registration in 1837.

You can also search over 10,000 burial and cremation records from St Helens Crematorium/St Helens and Newton-le-Willows cemeteries online; <http://crem.oltps.sthelens.gov.uk/> All you need to enter is a surname or part of a surname. You can also enter a forename and/or a date range to narrow the search results. For more information, please consult the local register office or Bereavement Services webpage, <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/registeroffice>, or you can call **01744 677406/677407**.

Census returns

- Much of the UK census information for England and Wales 1841 - 1921 is now on www.findmypast.co.uk or www.ancestry.co.uk. These can describe each family unit, making it possible to discover names, address, occupations, age or birthplace.
- St Helens Archive Service has the census returns for 1841 – 1901 on microfilm
- Eccleston Library holds the returns on microfilms/fiche for the Borough from 1841 – 1901.

Local Newspapers

Our collection of local newspapers runs from 1880 to the present. Most newspapers can be accessed on microfilm at Eccleston or Newton-le-Willows libraries as well as bound newspapers and cuttings available to view at St Helens Archive Service. Free access to the [British Newspaper Archive](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/) is available to St Helens Library Service members at any St Helens library by PC or WiFi access and creating your own account. See our [Newspaper Guide](#) for more information.

They supply information on major local history events or incidents. Older newspapers tend to focus more on national news than local events.

Ordnance Survey and Tithe Maps

Tithe maps and apportionments are available at Eccleston Library, reference only. These maps can define ownership of land and may assist in pinpointing landowners, houses, land use and field names. They date from 1840. Ordnance Survey and general maps relating to the Borough are available to view at St Helens Archive Service. Please consult the catalogue www.sthelens.gov.uk/history, or contact archive staff for more information.

Parish Registers

Local registers held in both microform and transcript format. Please contact St Helens Archive Service on 01744 671748, archives@sthelens.gov.uk for more information.

Electoral Registers

Municipal Registers are held for the old Borough of St Helens from 1870 to the present date. The urban districts that form the current St Helens are only covered from 1974. Please contact St Helens Archive Service or Eccleston Library for more information.

Wills and Probate

The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire's volumes are available to locate wills, from 1457 to 1858, but these are held in either Cheshire Record Office, or the Lancashire Record Office.

Using Find my Past and British Newspaper Archive

Please consult the Online Reference page on the library website to find out how to access these sites for free in any borough library:

<https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/online-reference>

Other useful websites and resources

- Independent Researchers –
 - Grace Ancestry - <https://www.graceancestry.co.uk/>
 - Christine Wibberley - <https://www.christinewibberley.co.uk/>

Contact and information for St Helens Archive Service

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/archives>

01744 671748

archives@sthelens.gov.uk

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BOROUGH COUNCIL