



Getting It Right

Starting your Genealogical Journey

Part 1 - Where to Start



Contents

The Genealogist's Job	3
Start with yourself	4
Building the Skeleton of your tree	7
Summary	8
Glossary	8
Where to next?	9

This is part 1 of a 4 part series "Getting Started". These notes should be read in conjunction with the accompanying video which you can find on the [NZSG website](#).

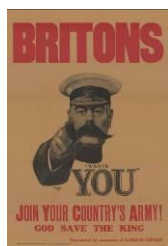
Cover Photo

Unidentified athletes at start line of running race, Hataitai Park, Wellington. Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1958/3906-F.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23257795](#)

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Alfred Leete (1882-1933). Britons (Kitchener) wants you (British / Kitchener / needs you). 1914 (reprint), 74 x 50 cm. (Slg.Nr. 552).

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The Genealogist's Job

It's very easy to say we're doing the family tree and discovering our family's history. But what does it entail?

The genealogist's job is to:

Start with a **question**

Then find **sources**

which provide **evidence**

that lead to **conclusions** about identities and relationships, and events

A question

This may be simple such as

"What was my grandmother's maiden name?"

"Where did my great-grandparents live?"

or more complex

"Is this family story true?"

Sources - records we find that are relevant to our research eg certificates, wills, newspaper articles, census records etc.

Evidence - a collection of sources that make "the big picture"

Direct evidence - (usually) a single source which is conclusive

eg. A birth certificate lists a person's date of birth and their parents

Indirect/Circumstantial evidence - a collection of sources which make for a reasonable inference

eg. A birth record cannot be found, but other documents such as death record, census records, school records provide an indication of birth information such as year and parents' names

Negative evidence - sources we are expecting are not there

eg. A person ceasing to appear on an electoral roll suggests they may have died or immigrated

Conclusions - our outcome - the answer to your question

Do note that you may not find a conclusion. There may be too many records or not enough. This is called a brick wall!



Start with yourself

Record what you know

Starting with yourself, record events you **know** about yourself and then move out into your immediate family. This can include events such as births, deaths, marriages, immigration dates, addresses and occupations. Don't guess details you don't know.



You will need to record this information. There are a number of options on how to do this. You can use generic computer software such as Word or Excel (or free/open source versions) or you can start looking at genealogy specific software (see the next presentation in this series "Keeping Organised"). Or you can use a pen and paper. The NZSG has some forms you can print out and write on: genealogy.org.nz/Forms--Charts/11155/

New Zealand Society of Genealogists Inc.
FAMILY HISTORY - PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE

PEDIGREE CHART

NAME: _____ SHEET NO. _____
ADDRESS: _____
DATE PREPARED: _____

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL NO. 1 ON THIS SHEET IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS CHART

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A **Pedigree Chart** allows you to complete details of your direct line ancestors.

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FAMILY HISTORY - PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE

FAMILY GROUP SHEET

PERSONAL INFORMATION: Name, Sex, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Date of Death, Place of Death, Date of Marriage, Place of Marriage, Date of Immigration, Place of Immigration

SEX	CHILDREN	JOHN	WHERE BORN	SEX	DEED	WHERE BORN	WHERE BORN	WHERE BORN
M	(List children in order of birth in order of age)	(Full Name)	Year	(M/F)	(Full Name)	(Full Name)	(Full Name)	(Full Name)
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

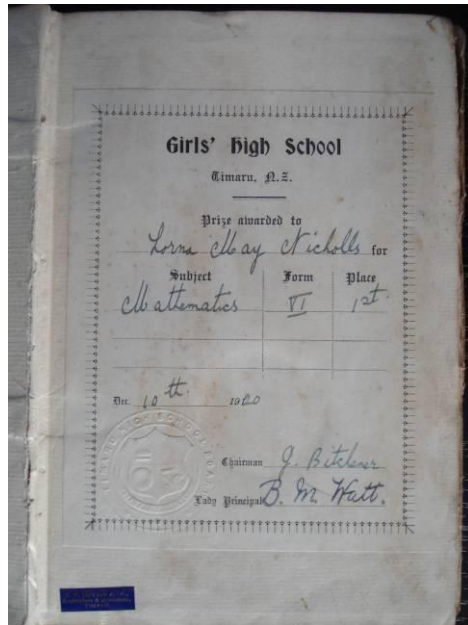
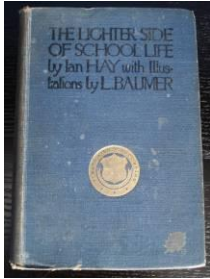
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A **Family Group Sheet** allows you to complete the details of a family - parents and their children.



Gather records you already have

Genealogy is all about finding records to prove events. You may already have some at home so have a look to see what you have. Records are not always paper - check out your family heirlooms.



A school book prize gives information on where and when someone was at school.



A war souvenir, such as these artillery shell casings and trophy cup, can indicate military or militia service.



These can point you in the direction of paper records which can provide further information on your family.

Ask your family

This is a great time to get in touch with family you only see at weddings and funerals. You'll find who else is doing genealogy in your family.

Interviewing other family members is a great way of finding out more information. A Google search will provide lists of questions. However, some things to think about:

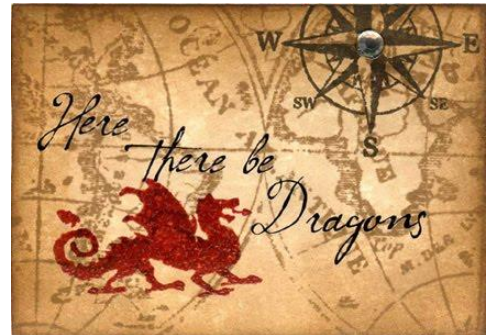
- Be aware of cultural protocols and family politics!
- Also be aware of differing generational attitudes to events
- Write down who said what and when they said it and where

And be aware that you might find things you don't like about people you know while doing your research. So if something unexpected turns up in your search results, take a moment to you decide if you want to view it.

The next step is to prove what you think you know and what your family have told you!

Genealogical Proof Standard

You don't want to be researching the wrong family. Sometimes the records aren't conclusive enough and we can be lead astray. To reduce the chances of this happening, following the methodology of the Genealogical Proof Standard can help. See the NZSG Presentation on it on the [NZSG website](#).



Building the Skeleton of your tree

To build the skeleton of your tree, you start with your birth record:

In New Zealand (and most countries) this will in the form of an official record kept by the Government - your birth certificate.

Your Birth Certificate

Contains: Father's name Mother's name

Leads to: Parents' Marriage Certificate

Contains: Grandfather's name Grandfather's name
 Father's age etc Mother's age etc

Leads to: Father's Birth Certificate Mother's Birth Certificate

Contains: Grandparents' names Grandparents' names

Leads to: Paternal Grandparents' Maternal Grandparents'
 Marriage Certificate Marriage Certificate

And so on....

However, we want to know more than just these details. We want to know the stories of our families so we need to broaden out into other records to find this information.

Other records can include wills, electoral rolls, newspapers and passenger lists.

There are many resources for researching your family in New Zealand that are freely available. Have a look at the NZSG Presentation on "New Zealand Sources" available on the [NZSG website](#) (but have a look at our other Starting Your Genealogical Journey presentations first!).



Summary

Key points from this presentation:

- The genealogist's job is to find sources that provide evidence to lead to conclusions and thereby answer a question.
- Start with yourself and work back.
- Information can be found on things that are not paper.
- Ask your family, but be beware!
- Our family's history is more than births, marriages and deaths.

Glossary

Terms used in this presentation:

Conclusions - the outcome of your research - the answer to your question.

Evidence - a collection of sources that make "the big picture". There are 3 types:

Direct evidence - (usually) a single source which is conclusive.

Indirect/Circumstantial evidence - a collection of sources which make for a reasonable inference.

Negative evidence - sources we are expecting are not there.

Genealogical Proof Standard - a methodology for genealogy which gives more detail on how to put your sources, evidence and conclusions together. Have a look at the NZSG Presentation on it on the [NZSG website](#).

Records - something that provides evidence about the past, kept in writing or some other permanent form.

Sources - records we find that are relevant to our research.



Where to next?

You have completed Part 1 of the *Starting Your Genealogical Journey* series in Getting It Right.

Part 2 covers [Keeping Organised](#)

For the other Getting It Right resources, see genealogy.org.nz/Getting-It-Right/10915/

Getting It Right:

- Starting Your Genealogical Journey

1. Where to Start
2. Keeping Organised (includes Computer Software)
3. Searching
4. New Zealand Sources

- Effective Research

- Sharing Your Family History

