

HINTS AND TIPS FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY RESEARCH DURING CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in a new era of family history. Face-to-face meetings have been put on hold. Many institutions and libraries are currently closed or inaccessible to those who are sheltering or in isolation, and a number of key services supporting genealogists have been temporarily suspended. However, a wide range of resources and services, many of them free, are still available, and new services have sprung up to fill the gaps.

This document outlines a selection of resources and websites, most of which I have used over the past couple of months. I hope that the document will encourage you to:

- find new and alternative resources, including websites and databases, that are still accessible;
- take advantage of the wide range of online training and education that is still available;
- continue your research and develop your family tree;
- connect with relatives – both those who are close, and also those who are more distant. This can include getting your children and grandchildren involved, and sharing your stories with them. Or, perhaps, interview your parents or grandparents to gather information and preserve memories. (See section below titled “Interviewing family members”.)

If you are finding it difficult to motivate yourself, then do not try to do everything at once, which can be overwhelming. It can sometimes be better to focus on just one ancestor or one branch of your family tree to research first.

During this period, some types of records (e.g. copies of some non-digitised records from the National Archives) may be impossible to obtain or may only be obtained after a long delay, so start researching individuals or branches where the information is likely to be accessible.

For those who have not yet started a computerised family tree (either online or using genealogy software), then now might be a good time to start. See section below titled “Genealogy Applications and Software for Building Family Trees”.

Most of the websites and activities mentioned in this document are free, but if there is a charge then this is indicated with a (£) symbol.

Some of the services, documents and videos mentioned in this document are only available to members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB), and these are indicated. If you are interested in joining JGSGB (£) then please see the Benefits of Membership <https://www.jsgsb.org.uk/benefits-membership> and the application form at <https://www.jsgsb.org.uk/application-forms>.

JGSGB MEMBERS – IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Most of our planned meetings and lectures have been rearranged as online meetings, many using Zoom. We hope that the increased number of online meetings and presentations will be of particular benefit to those of our members in the UK and abroad who previously found it difficult or impossible to attend many of our meetings. Our Education webinars will continue online as normal. *Shemot* (our journal) and our JGSGB Newsletter will also be published as usual. Our Library sessions, and face-to-face meetings and lectures, are currently suspended until we decide it is safe to offer these activities again.

For the latest JGSGB Programme, see <https://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/current-programme>. Please check this frequently as, in the current situation, it is subject to change at short notice.

Online JGSGB resources include:

- ❖ JGSGB website (for members & non-members) <https://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/>
- ❖ JGSGB Facebook Group (for members & non-members) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JGSGB/>
- ❖ JGSGB Resources (for members & non-members) <https://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/resources-category>
- ❖ JGSGB Blog (for JGSGB members only) <https://jgs.gbnews.blogspot.com/>
- ❖ JGSGB Members' Corner (for JGSGB members only) <https://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/members-section> contains a wide range of useful items including:
 - Training videos – Getting started with DNA Boot Camp
 - JGSGB 2018 and 2019 Conference videos
 - Back copies of all editions of *Shemot* (JGSGB journal) and JGSGB Newsletters.
 - A variety of browsable genealogy data lists
 - Approx. 17 Education leaflets on a variety of topics
 - JGSGB Register of Professional Genealogical Researchers, Translators, and Related Services.
 - JGSGB Mentoring (members only) – If you would like a mentor or would like to volunteer as a mentor, please contact mentoring@jgs.gb.org.uk

ARCHIVES, MUSEUMS & RECORD REPOSITORIES

National Archives (UK)

The National Archives is currently closed but many (digital) services are still available <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/coronavirus-update/>

Currently there is free access to some National Archives (Kew) digital records including:

- First and Second World War records, including medal index cards
- Military records, including unit war diaries
- Royal and Merchant Navy records, including Royal Marine service records
- Wills from the jurisdiction of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury
- Migration records, including aliens' registration cards and naturalisation case papers (1801–1871)
- 20th-century Cabinet Papers and Security Service files
- Domesday Book

See <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/digital-downloads/> for details of how to access these free digital records.

National Archives (UK) Boredom Busters <https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/boredom-busters>

National Archives (UK) Blog <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

National Archives Podcasts <https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> including

- Introduction to wills
- Introduction to birth, marriage and death registers in England and Wales
- Introduction to the census

Jewish Museum London

Jewish Museum is temporarily closed but some free talks are available online – see events calendar at <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/events/>.

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

The LMA is temporarily closed. Some access to their digital collections and some interesting free films are online at <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/visitor-information/Pages/covid-19-while-lma-is-closed.aspx>.

General Register Office for England and Wales – Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates. <https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/Login.asp>. Access to GRO birth and death **indexes** (limited range of years) is still available at this site. Orders for birth, marriage, and death certificates (from 1837 to date) are being

delayed, and the GRO are requesting that you should delay your order until a later date if you are able to do so.

Find a Will

UK Government official site for searching for and ordering copies of UK Wills & Probates <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills> is still operational.

Society of Genealogists (SOG)

Many of the planned SOG lectures that were due to take place at the SOG are now being offered as online talks (£). See <http://www.sog.org.uk/books-courses/events-courses/>

Beit Hatfusot – Museum of the Jewish People (Israel). The museum, in Israel, is temporarily closed. However, there are a number of online presentations and activities at <https://www.bh.org.il/staying-indoors-visit-beit-hatfutsot-home/>.

WEBINARS, PODCASTS AND VIDEOS

Legacy Family Tree

- Over one thousand genealogy webinars, on a wide variety of topics including many specialist areas – at levels varying from beginners to advanced – are available to view (£ and free) at <https://familytreewebinars.com/>.
- Approx 9 free webinars scheduled each month until December 2020 – <https://familytreewebinars.com/upcoming-webinars.php>

MyHeritage

A selection of free-to-watch videos and recorded webinars, some on general topics and others specific to MyHeritage products, at <https://education.myheritage.com/learn/all/webinar/>

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

A selection of videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/IAJGS/videos>

Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA)

A selection of videos relating to Jewish genealogy plus notifications of upcoming online presentations (most in English and some in Hebrew) are at <https://genealogy.org.il/videos/>

Center for Jewish History Genealogy Webinars

A series of past webinars on a variety of genealogy topics (some USA-oriented and some general) can be found at

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/centerforjewishhistory/501317183869918>

Yad Vashem

Holocaust-related educational videos at

<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos.html>

RootsTech

RootsTech is the largest annual genealogy conference in the world. They have a wide range of high-quality speakers on a range of family history topics. A selection of past presentations and sessions for the years 2015–2020 is available at

<https://www.rootstech.org/video-archive>.

DATABASES AND WEBSITES

Jewish Communities and Records (JCR-UK)

If you have UK Jewish ancestors then you might want to try and find them in the JCR-UK database <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/UK/>.

Ancestry.com

Ancestry.com has a YouTube channel with many free informational family history videos at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsc0AQkAh_2cQmxqwD6VWRw

MyHeritage

MyHeritage has a YouTube channel with many free informational family history videos at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT_enUFR_ZjlfuA6s55y_Lw

FindMyPast

FindMyPast has a YouTube channel with many free informational family history videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/findmypast>

FamilySearch

FamilySearch has a useful blog at <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/>. They also have a large number of training articles and videos on many aspects of family history at <https://www.familysearch.org/indexing/help/training?search=web+indexing>. Just type your topic of interest into the search box. Also try their Research Wiki with 92,000 articles on family history at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page. And there is a guided research tool to find online records by geographical area at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Guided_Research_for_Online_Records

Jewish Genealogy Society – Long Island (USA) (JGSLI)

JGSLI has a variety of instructional videos at <http://jgsli.org/youtube/>.

Yad Vashem

Many of us have contributed Pages of Testimony relating to Holocaust victims or have searched the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names at Yad Vashem for details of Holocaust victims <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/>. Yad Vashem has a new project to create personal files for Holocaust victims <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf-drupal/en/archive/clusters.pdf>. So, if you have ever submitted a Page of Testimony or have found any relatives in the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, then consider spending a little time to see if you can also create a "Personal File" for them.

UK Genealogy websites

Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB) <https://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/>

JGSGB Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JGSGB/>

British Jewry Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BritishJewry/>

Jewish London Genealogy & Family Research

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/JewishLondonGenealogy/>

JewishGen

- Start at <https://www.jewishgen.org/>.
- If you are not already registered with JewishGen then you will need to register (which is free).
- Learning Centre – Free Educational Resources
<https://www.jewishgen.org/Education/edu-resources.html>
- Mentored Courses (£) <https://www.jewishgen.org/Education/edu-mentor.html>
- Home Study Courses (£) <https://www.jewishgen.org/Education/edu-home.html>
- JewishGen InfoFiles <https://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/>

Cyndi's List

Cyndi's List is a massive list of links to more than 300,000 genealogy websites and web pages <https://www.cyndislist.com/>

Burials and Graves – Online websites

JewishGen - JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry

<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/>

Find a Grave <https://www.findagrave.com/>

Billion Graves <https://billiongraves.com/>

United Synagogue (UK) <https://www.theus.org.uk/category/find-grave>

Federation of Synagogues (UK) – Rainham cemetery <https://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Cemeteries/Federation/Rainham/INDEX.HTM> or <https://www.federation.org.uk/burial/genealogy-search/> .

Federation of Synagogues (UK) – Edmonton <https://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Cemeteries/Federation/Edmonton/INDEX.HTM> or <https://www.federation.org.uk/burial/genealogy-search/> .

Adath Yisroel burials at Cheshunt cemetery and at Enfield cemetery <https://www.jgsqb.org.uk/browsable-lists-non-members> .

DNA

The leading providers of autosomal DNA test kits are:

- Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/dna>
- MyHeritage DNA* <https://bit.ly/JGSGBDNA>
- FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA)* <http://www.kqzyfj.com/click-9128141-13779595>
- 23andMe <https://www.23andme.com/en-gb/>
- LivingDNA <https://livingdna.com/uk/>

* Ordering a DNA kit using the special links marked * provides JGSGB with an affiliate commission (at no cost to the DNA kit purchaser) which helps to fund our activities.

Whilst autosomal DNA tests are the most popular type of DNA test, if you specifically want to have a Y-DNA test or an mtDNA test then the main vendor offering such tests is FamilyTreeDNA.

GEDMatch <https://www.gedmatch.com/> does not sell DNA test kits but does accept test results from most major DNA test kit vendors, and offers DNA matching tools and other DNA tools.

There are approximately 150 webinars on a wide variety of DNA topics (mostly (£) but some free) at Legacy Family Tree Webinars <https://familytreewebinars.com/category/249/dna>.

Utah University, USA, has six one-minute videos explaining the different types of DNA at <https://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/basics/molgen/> .

APPLICATIONS AND SOFTWARE FOR BUILDING FAMILY TREES

Online family tree building platforms include:

- Ancestry (£ or Free) <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- MyHeritage (£ or Free) <https://www.myheritage.com/>
- FindMyPast (£) <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Genealogy tree building options include:

- Family Tree Maker (£) <https://www.mackiev.com/ftm/>
- Family Tree Builder (Free) <https://www.myheritage.com/family-tree-builder>
- RootsMagic (£) <https://www.rootsmagic.com/>

INTERVIEWING FAMILY MEMBERS

If you are considering interviewing relatives then we suggest you read “10 Tips for Interviewing Family Members” <https://blog.myheritage.com/2013/06/10-tips-for-interviewing-family-members-2/> and “How to interview a Relative Remotely” <https://blog.myheritage.com/2020/04/how-to-interview-a-relative-remotely/> .

Are you helping with childcare or schooling of children or grandchildren? If so, consider involving them in a family history project. This might involve them interviewing you or other adults. There is a useful list of suggested questions at <https://www.bh.org.il/wp-content/uploads/6-Interview-Questions-PDF.pdf>. Also see tips and resources for how children can interview older family members at <https://www.bh.org.il/mfs-interviews/> and telling family stories creatively at <https://www.bh.org.il/our-family-story/>.

GENEALOGY COURSES

Researching your family tree - Strathclyde University

A Free Online Genealogy course run by Strathclyde University in association with Future Learn – 6 weeks with approx. four hours of study per week.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/genealogy>.

ZOOM

Zoom is a popular application that enables online audio-visual meetings and presentation. As with many organisations around the world, JGSGB is likely to be using Zoom increasingly for enabling its Society meetings and presentations. Learn how to use it so that you can listen and participate in lectures from JGSGB and other organisations. You may also wish to use it as one way of keeping in touch with family members. Details of how to use Zoom can be found in their video tutorials at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>.

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