



GETTING STARTED WITH FAMILY HISTORY



Where do I start?

There are many excellent resources available to help you at our libraries. Noarlunga, Aldinga and Hub Libraries have Local History collections containing printed, archival and electronic materials for local and wider research. We have a free family history drop-in service, Family Tree Tuesdays, to assist you one on one with expert guidance and advice.

Consider joining a Genealogical Society or local family history groups. Not only are they a good place to meet people with similar interests, they can also offer assistance and access to their own resources. They often run workshops and groups and have guest speakers on a range of topics.

The availability of records online is expanding continuously and offers great opportunities for the researcher. Libraries usually subscribe to genealogy websites and offer assistance with access. Firstly though, here are a few tips to help you get started.

We can help!

Come along to our free drop in sessions for help and advice at the following libraries:

Mondays 10am-12noon Aldinga
Tuesdays 10am-12noon Hub
Tuesdays 2-4pm Noarlunga

Record what you know

Begin with yourself and work backwards, one generation at a time. Record your progress on a pedigree chart or piece of paper. Speak to any older members of the family who can help with names and dates. They may also have photographs and other memorabilia that can help you with details. Always start with what you know and base your research on a firm line of descent.

Check that your family's history hasn't been researched or published by someone else. You can check at libraries or genealogical societies as well as online sites. Do take other people's research with some caution. Attempt to verify details for yourself.

Births, deaths & marriages

Where possible, obtain copies of birth, death and marriage certificates. They provide information which helps take another step backwards to a previous generation. If this is unaffordable, make use of indexes which are available for most Australian states and territories and some overseas countries.

When you get beyond the period of restricted access to records, which is usually 80-100 years for births, but less for marriages and deaths, you can start to make use of other records to search further back.

Births, deaths and marriages are your best starting point and usually contain the most accurate information, however that depends on who provided the details. Birth and marriage certificates tend to be more reliable than death certificates.

Information on South Australian certificates can be limited pre 1906 and are more expensive than other states. Making use of the SA Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes to Registrations, compiled by the South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society (Genealogy SA) are a great starting point. You can find these at public libraries with local history collections. Also check with your local library for access to local district registrar copies of certificates. Up until recently a selection of libraries were the custodians of duplicates of the original registers and are taking steps to digitise these before they return to State Records. Onkaparinga Libraries (Noarlunga Library) have the former districts of Morphett Vale and Willunga in our collection.

Always check for spelling variations in your search. Similar spellings should always be considered as mistakes were often made. For example, Reardon can also be Riordan.

Record all the information you have gathered in an organised fashion. Whether it be folders, charts, record sheets etc. Always keep sources to prevent going over the same records again. If you are storing information digitally, keep a copy in more than one location.

Family history software or online trees are a good option for getting started with sorting your information and are generally easy to use.



Can't get to the library?

Join Genealogy SA (membership fees apply) for access to full SA BDM Indexes.

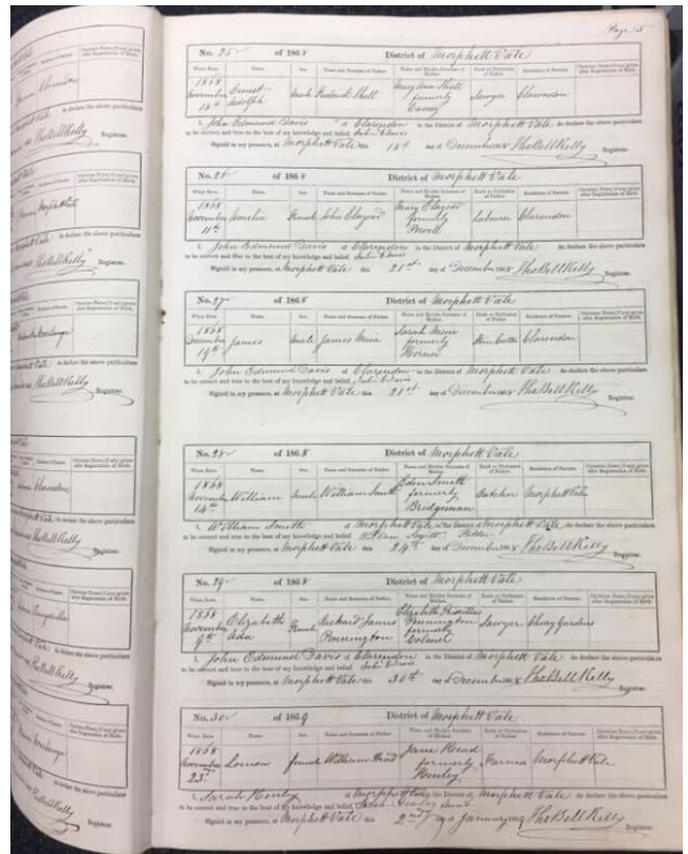
For interstate, Google the name of the state and use "births, deaths and marriages" in the search. Most other states have free online indexes which link to ordering.

Making use of online records and repositories

If you don't have internet access at home, the computers at your local library are free to use. The local history PCs at Noarlunga, Aldinga and Hub libraries have access to local databases as well as world-wide resources including Ancestry and Find My Past. You can access Ancestry at any library in South Australia, all you need is a library card.

There are also many quality free sites out there to discover. Ask us and we will assist you to find them.

Always be wary of the validity of data on the internet, especially with published family trees, including those on reputable sites such as Ancestry. Check records for yourself and never assume another person's research to be accurate. Also be aware that the information contained on sites like Ancestry is as good as the skill of the transcribers who create the indexes. Accuracy is often a problem, and it pays to view original records wherever possible.



The wider community

Another excellent resource is people. Try online forums like Rootschat to reach out for help. You simply set up a profile and post queries in the relevant forums (usually by place). You may get a helpful response from someone with access to records who is willing to look them up for you.



Enjoy yourself

Finally, enjoy what you are doing and don't be discouraged. It takes time but the investment is worth it.