

10th July 2012 Meeting of Wadhurst History Society

Talk by Lady Teviot on Sources and Techniques for Researching Family History

Lady Teviot's talk was of great assistance to the many members who have become involved in researching the background to their families. She identified a number of helpful sources:

1. The knowledge of relations
2. Civil registration. Copies of birth, marriage and death certificates are available at a cost of £9.25. They go back to 1837.
3. Census returns, beginning in 1801, but only defining households from 1841. The latest available is 1911, and the only subsequent one we may see is 1921 as 1931 was destroyed and war prevented 1941. It is important to check an individual against a series of censuses since some information given may have been inaccurate.
US and Canada have census records, but Australia and South Africa have shredded theirs.
4. Parish Registers provide dates of baptism and burial but are dependent on the reliability of the incumbent or parish clerk. They sometimes give the cause of death. They began in 1538, became clearer after the 1754 Parish Marriage Act and an Act of 1813 requiring separate registers.
5. Wills and probate. Enquiries through the various early ecclesiastical courts are complex, but "Ancestry" helps for probate and National Archives.
6. Sites: Several helpful ones were suggested including Ancestry for military records; Find my Past for emigrants: Scotland's People; the National Archive for Ireland; Family Search, through the Church of the Latter Day Saints; Families in British India Society; the British Library; Ellis Island, covering immigration and emigration in US 1890 – 1926; Historical Directories, providing the detail of local directories; County Record Offices for tithe maps, school details etc
7. The Federation of Family History Societies provides a leaflet that identifies useful web sites, gives initial guidance on research, and the contacts of various family history societies.

Following a series of further suggestions and questions from members of the audience David James thanked Lady Teviot for the clear guidance that she had given and we enjoyed the range of documents that she had brought with her.