

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO FINDMYPAST

Week /01



Getting Started





WEEK 01 / Getting Started

Thank you for choosing Findmypast for your journey into your family history. This is the first instalment of your educational course. In week one, we'll be covering some of the basics of using Findmypast, including importing or building a family tree and getting the most out of your record searches.

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If you have any questions about anything in this guide, please just let us know on **Facebook** or **Twitter** and we'll help to clear things up.



twitter - @findmypast

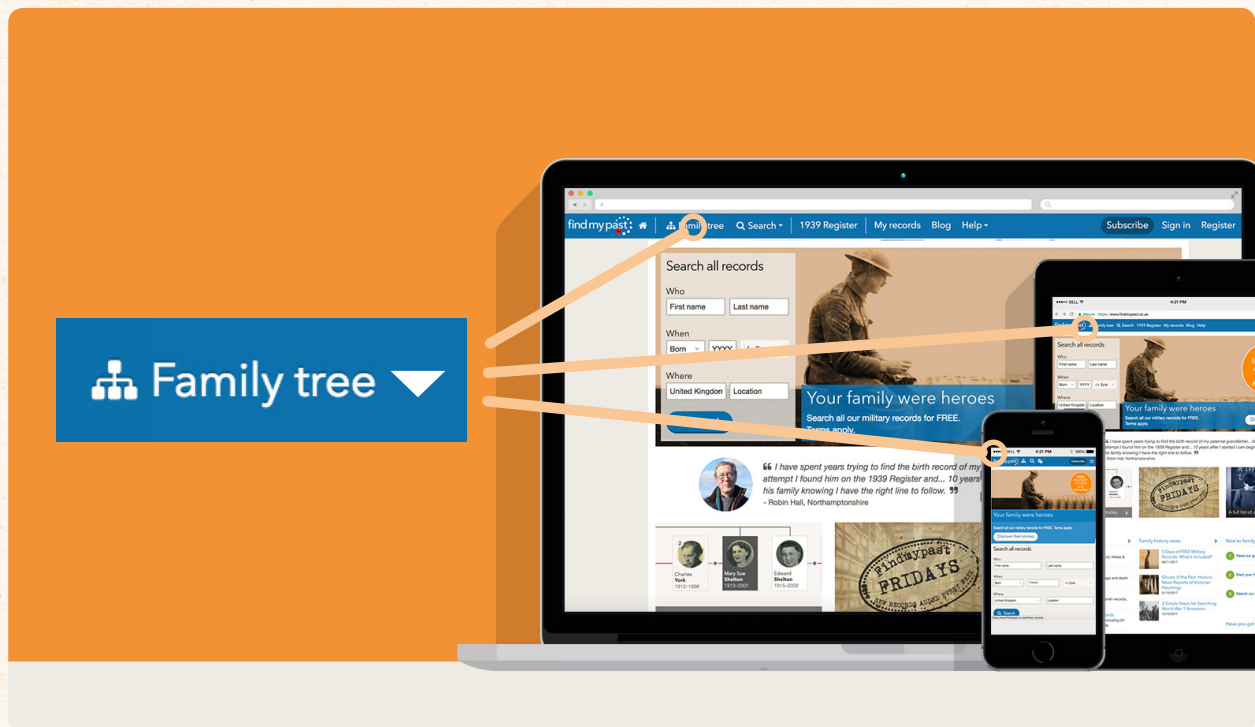
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STARTING OR UPLOADING A TREE to Findmypast

One of the most important things to do when starting to use Findmypast is to upload or create a family tree.

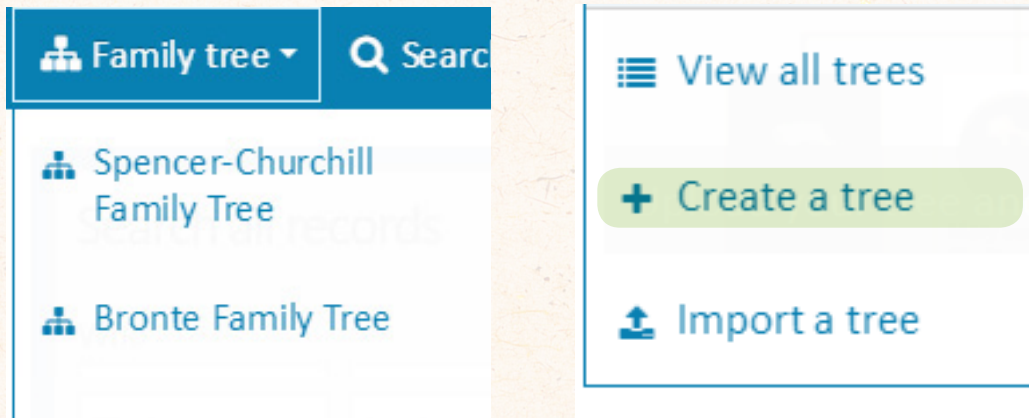
Our family tree builder is not only a secure online place to store all of your research; it also offers hints. Hints is our clever feature that searches the records on your behalf, identifying potential matches to the individuals in your tree and, in turn, helping you to grow new branches faster than ever before.

- 1 To start a new tree on Findmypast, click **'Family Tree'** at the top of the page:



2

Then, click **'Create a tree'** from the dropdown menu:



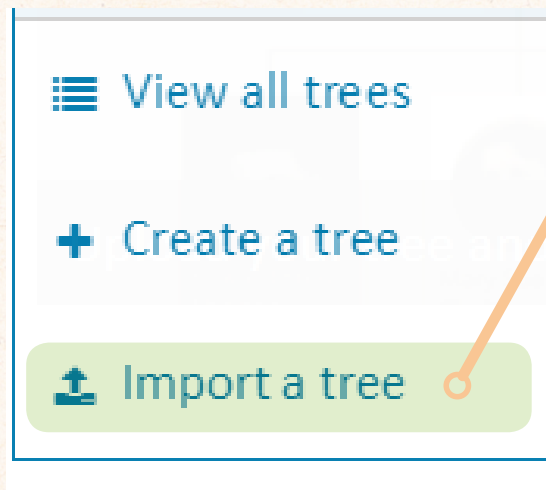
3

This will take you to this page, where you can fill in all of **your details**, or **the details of whoever the person from whom the tree will grow**:

The image shows a web browser window with the title 'Trace your Family Tree Online'. The page is titled 'Create a tree' and has a button for 'Import GEDCOM' in the top right corner. The form contains the following fields and options:

- Name** (Required): Two input fields for 'First and middle names' and 'Last name'. Below them is a checkbox labeled 'Is this you? Why do we ask?'.
- Gender**: Radio buttons for 'Male', 'Female', and 'Unknown'.
- Status**: Radio buttons for 'Living', 'Deceased', and 'Unknown'.
- Birth**: Three input fields for 'Date', 'Place' (Town, state, country), and 'Address' (Street or building).
- Death**: Three input fields for 'Date', 'Place' (Town, state, country), and 'Address' (Street or building).
- Name this tree** (Required): A single input field. Below it is a checkbox labeled 'Public tree. Why should I keep my tree public?'.

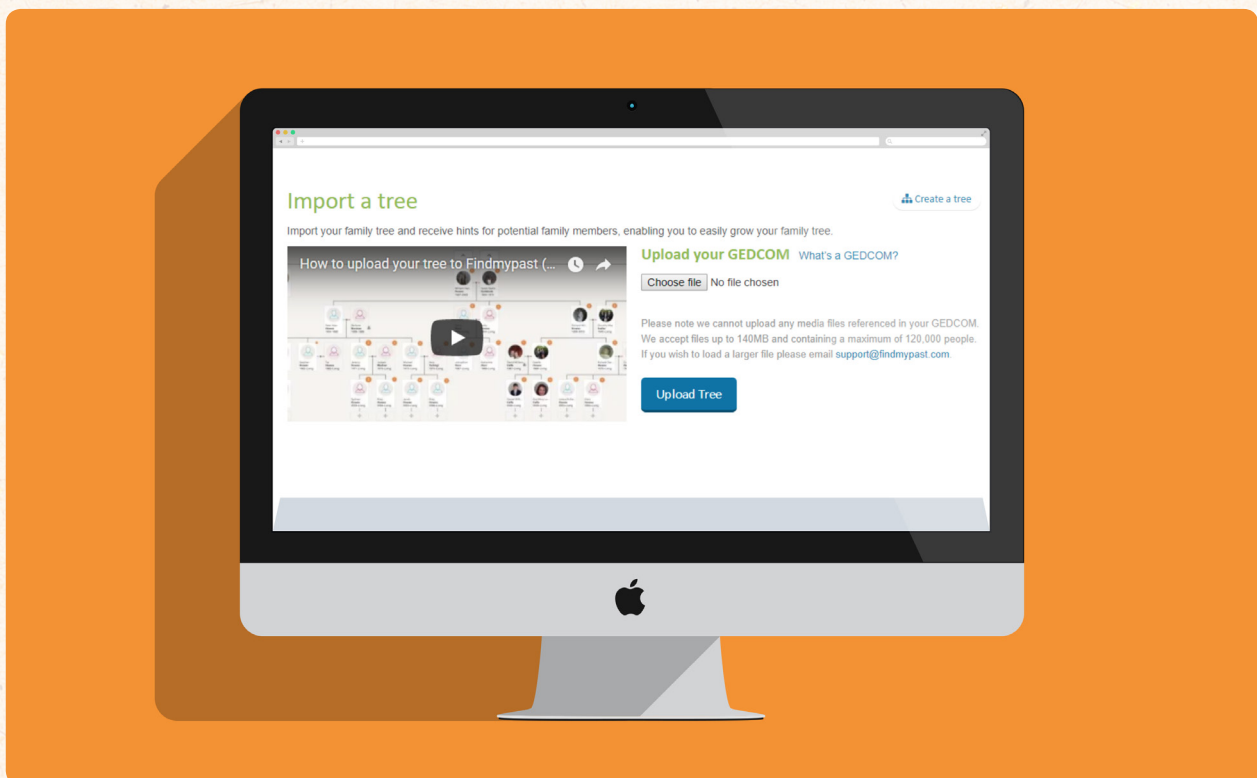
At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Create tree' and 'Cancel'.



UPLOAD AN EXISTING TREE

To upload a tree to Findmypast, visit your tree wherever it's stored online or in your genealogy software, and export it as a GEDCOM file. Once that file is stored on your computer, go through the process outlined previously, but instead of clicking 'Create a tree', you'll click '**Import a tree**'.

This will take you to a page where a helpful video will explain the process of uploading your tree to Findmypast.

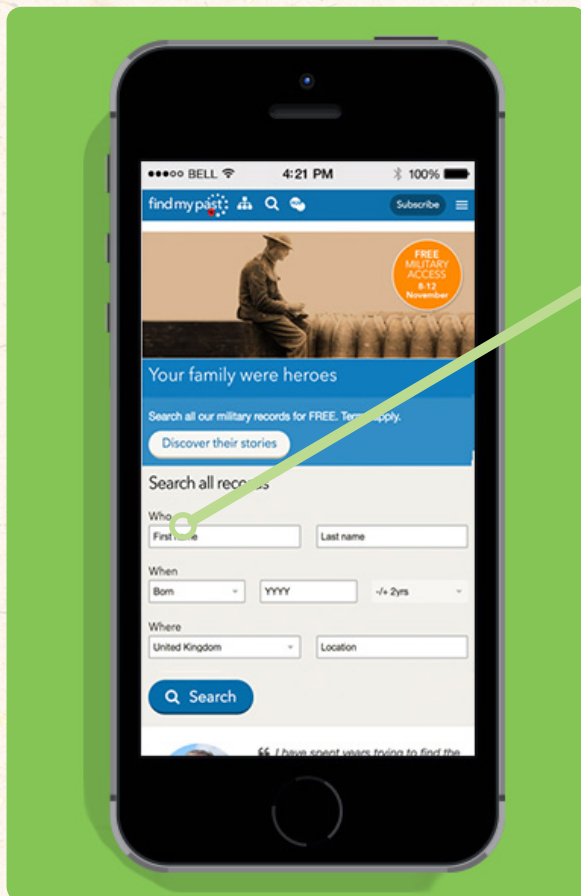


Uploading or adding a tree is key to getting the most out of your Findmypast experience, so make sure you don't miss out!

GETTING STARTED WITH SEARCHES on Findmypast

Your Findmypast Premium subscription gives you access to over 8 billion records, so it's good to know exactly how to get the results you want.

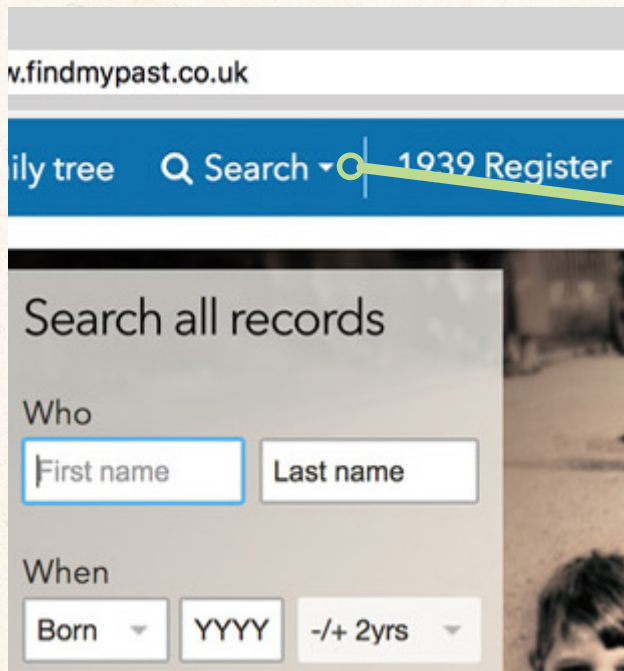
We've put together some of the approaches we use when searching the records.



1 Homepage search

If you know the bare minimum about the person for whom you're searching, like their name, date of birth, marriage or death and the country in which they live(d), enter it here to begin your search journey.

With this approach you may find that the number of results you receive can be overwhelming. More on that later.



2 Category search

At the top of your screen, you'll see a button marked '**Search**'.

Click that, and this menu appears. Here, you can select a category of records to which your search can be restricted. *This is one way to avoid the overwhelming number of results that may come from using approach 1.*



If you select a category, you'll be taken to a **category search page**, where you have a number of fields to refine your search, as well as subcategories seen on the left of screen:

The screenshot shows the 'Birth, Marriage, Death & Parish Records' search page on Find My Past. The page title is 'Birth, Marriage, Death & Parish Records' and the URL is 'https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-birth-marriage-death-and-parish-records'. The page includes a navigation menu on the left with categories like 'Civil Births', 'Civil Deaths & Burials', 'Civil Marriage & Divorce', 'Parish Baptisms', 'Parish Burials', 'Parish Marriages', 'Parish Registers', and 'Religious Ceremonies'. The main search area is divided into sections: 'WHO' (First name(s), Last name, Name variants), 'WHEN' (Year Of Marriage, Year Of Birth, Year Of Death), 'WHERE' (Location), 'SUBCATEGORY', and 'RECORD SET'. There are also buttons for 'A-Z of record sets' and 'Edit Search'.

As with most genealogy searches, it's better to start with a broad search and then narrow down. When on the results page, if you click **'Edit Search'**, you'll be brought back to this page.

Using the **'Optional Keywords'** box that is available on certain record sets is particularly useful when search censuses or BMD records, as you can add the name of a parent or cohabitant to help pinpoint your results and also to confirm the correct person has been found.

This page also gives you the chance to opt whether to use name variants, which approach 1 does not. If you're unsure of a name, or are getting zero results for an individual, try searching again with name variants checked. Names may have been mistranscribed, misrecorded or simply absent due to damaged records.

USING A - Z of record sets

One of the most useful features of the Findmypast search experience is our A-Z of record sets.

Rather than going through the process of finessing an advanced search in our search pages, which can take a number of steps, the A-Z gets you straight into the records you want.

1

To use the A-Z, click on the **'Search'** dropdown at the top of the page and select **'A-Z of record sets'**:



2

This will take you to a search screen:

The screenshot shows the 'Search A-Z of record sets' page on the Find My Past website. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records>. The page title is 'Search A-Z of record sets'. On the left, there is a sidebar titled 'Showing record sets from' with a list of countries and regions: World, Australia & New Zealand, Ireland, United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Other Britain & Ireland, Overseas / Unknown), United States & Canada (Canada, United States), and a 'Show all' link. The main search area has a search box containing 'e.g. Canada, Burials, Ships Lost at Sea or Census' and a 'Clear search' button. Below the search box is a table of search results with columns: Title, Category, Subcategory, and Records.

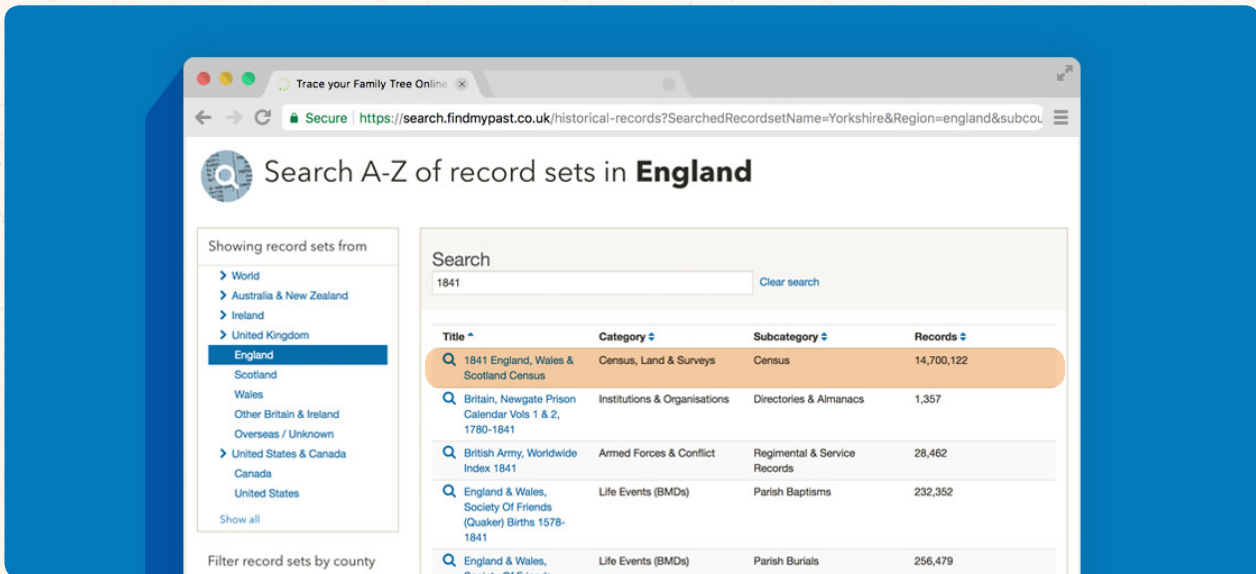
Title	Category	Subcategory	Records
1798 Claimants and Surrenders	Armed Forces & Conflict	Civil War & Rebellion	8,440
1801 Kent, Dartford Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	2,583
1821 Kent, Dartford Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	613
1840 United States Census, Revolutionary War Veterans	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	21,008
1841 England, Wales & Scotland Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	18,436,264
1851 England, Wales & Scotland Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	20,660,119
1861 England, Wales & Scotland Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	22,612,918
1871 England, Wales & Scotland Census	Census, Land & Surveys	Census	26,158,984
1881 British Census, Crew and Passengers On Ships Arriving In New	Travel & Migration	Passenger Lists	19,352

Here, you can narrow down by country on the left, and search on the right. This search simplifies the process of getting the record sets you're looking for. For example, if I'm looking for baptisms in Yorkshire, I would set the location to 'England' and type 'Yorkshire' into the search box:

The screenshot shows the 'Search A-Z of record sets in England' page on the Find My Past website. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records?SearchedRecordsetName=Yorkshire&location=england&subcou>. The page title is 'Search A-Z of record sets in England'. The sidebar is filtered to show only 'England' under 'United Kingdom'. The search box contains 'Yorkshire' and has a 'Clear search' button. The table of search results is as follows:

Title	Category	Subcategory	Records
Bradford Parish Church Burials, Yorkshire	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Burials	36,783
North Yorkshire Baptisms	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Baptisms	25,627
North Yorkshire Non-Conformist Baptisms	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Baptisms	6,094
South Yorkshire Asylum, Admission Records	Institutions & Organisations	Hospitals	17,368
Yorkshire & Derbyshire Methodist Baptisms	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Baptisms	23,731
Yorkshire & Derbyshire Methodist Marriages	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Marriages	10,372
Yorkshire Banns	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Marriages	608,936
Yorkshire Baptisms	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Baptisms	5,297,470
Yorkshire Burials	Life Events (BMDs)	Parish Burials	4,790,021

Or if I was looking for the 1841 census of England, Wales and Scotland, I could just type '1841':



Searching using the A-Z can require some lateral thinking, as record sets may not always be named as neatly as one would like, but once you master the tool it can be a real boon to your research.



USING WILDCARDS in your search

When dealing with older, handwritten records you may find that there are gaps in transcription. This means that you may not be getting the right results - or any results at all - for a record that does actually exist. This is where wildcards come into play.

A wildcard serves a similar function in genealogy searches as it does in card games - essentially, it can count as anything you (or the search engine) wants.

A wildcard character placed in a name tells the search engine to count any letter as a match and will return a diversity of search results.

For example, searching the last name Folkes with a deployed wildcard character in place of the letter L (Fo*kes) will return results that include last names Foakes, Fokes, Fookes, Forkes, Foukes, Foulkes and Fowkes.

Two varieties of wildcards

Keep in mind that each search engine handles wildcards a little differently, and some do not have this ability at all. The following will work at Findmypast, but isn't guaranteed to work elsewhere on the web.

When you want to use a wildcard, select a character in the word you're searching and replace it with either an asterisk (*) or a question mark (?).

By using an asterisk, you're telling the computer that the * can represent more than one letter. Going back to our previous example, we can see that entering Fo*kes sometimes returns results where there is more than one character in place of the *, such as Foulkes. On the other hand, using a question mark instead limits the wildcard to just one character.

It's best to use the * in most cases, but if you're sure that only one letter may be mistaken, you can narrow your results down a little bit by using the ? instead.

For instance, if we think one of our Smith family members may have been recorded as a Smyth, we can use Sm?th instead of Sm*th.

Wildcards for more than just names

It's useful to know that you can use wildcard searches for more than just names - they'll work for keywords too. When placed at the beginning or end of a word, a wildcard search can return some really interesting results.

For instance, if you're searching occupations in the 1911 census for England and Wales and you enter the search term piano* you will receive all occupations with the word piano in them. We see results for pianoforte tuner, pianoforte teacher, pianoforte stringer and more.

We hope this guide helps you to get started using Findmypast.

In next week's guide, we'll be looking at how to trace that all-important first North American ancestor.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, just let us know on **Facebook** or **Twitter**. Thanks!



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