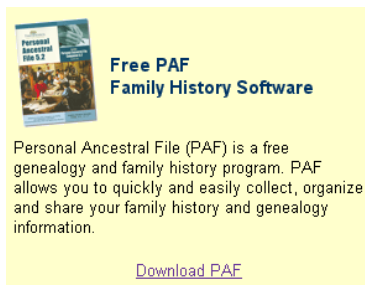


USING UNORTHODOX WAYS AND WEBSITES TO BREAK DOWN BRICK WALLS

When I began preparing this presentation I was concentrating on unusual websites as the answer to breakthroughs however, as I worked on some of my own problems it became apparent that computer technology also offers some solutions beyond the Internet. The most important tools in the modern genealogist's break-down kit are a computer, the internet and software. More specifically, a genealogy program, a web browser, an email program and an office suite. All of these are available commercially at a wide range of prices or for free as shown below.

www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/



**Free PAF
Family History Software**

Personal Ancestral File (PAF) is a free genealogy and family history program. PAF allows you to quickly and easily collect, organize and share your family history and genealogy information.

[Download PAF](#)

www.familysearch.org



**get
openoffice.org**
version: 2.1

www.openoffice.org



Free Download
1.5.0.9 for Windows, English (6.0MB)

www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird/



Browse the
web more securely.
Get **Firefox** with
Google Toolbar.

I want to concentrate on the office suite software. Whether you have MS Office, WordPerfect Suite, MS Works or a free package such as openoffice (shown above), the best tool in your break-down kit is the spreadsheet. I am going to refer to Excel for the purposes of this article but you can apply my examples to any spreadsheet.

Genealogists gather a lot of information from a wide variety of sources both on the internet and from the bricks and mortar type of locations. How do you consolidate all of this disparate information into one organized resource? Put it all in a spreadsheet.

There is only one caution here, spreadsheets were made for accountants and not genealogists and therefore, they don't handle dates before January 1, 1900 very well. There are plug-ins and macros to try and solve this but I have found that they cause more trouble than they are worth so I use a simple workaround. I include a 4 digit year field to facilitate sorting results and 8 character date field which only uses two letters for the month (eg: JA, FE, MR, AP, MY, JE, JL, AU, SE, OC, NO, DE). I do this so that Excel won't try to automatically format my dates as a date field as it would if I used all digits (yyyy-mm-dd) or 3-letter months. A date in my file would look like 15JA1857 for example.

What kind of information am I talking about including in this spreadsheet:

- Birth, marriage and death index entries from FreeBMD
- Ancestors found on census returns
- Information from vital record certificates including witnesses and informants
- Information from probate schedules or wills
- IGI entries from FamilySearch.org or microfiche
- Basically, anything with names, events and dates

Putting all of this information into a spreadsheet and sorting it allows you to cross match it from multiple sources which sometimes opens up new doors in your brick wall. I organize my research spreadsheets by geographic areas (i.e. Southeast England, Atlantic Canada, etc.) The following is an example of one of mine:

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	
	SURNAME	GIVEN NAMES	YEAR	EVENT	PLACE	SOURCE	REFERENCE	NOTES	BIRTH	EVENT DATE	SPOUSE / PARENTS	DOCUMENT	FOUND	LOCATION	
836	DAVES	Bertha	1871	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	2Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.201					Internet	1837 Binder	
837	DAVES	Elizabeth (59)	1871	Death	Brighton	GRO Index	2Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.132					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
838	DAVES	Frank Edmond (0)	1871	Death	Brighton	GRO Index	1Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.132					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
839	DAVES	Henry	1871	Marriage	Ardsingsley	IGI	M070051	STRAY		16 Se 1871	DAVES, Henry & GASTON, Elizabeth		2004 Trip	Red Memo	
840	DAVES	Jane	1871	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1872	V.2b-Pg.233					Internet	1837 Binder	
841	DAVES	Mary (72)	1871	Death	Uckfield	GRO Index	1Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.77					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
842	DAVES	Septimus William	1871	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	3Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.250					Internet	1837 Binder	
843	DAVES	William (52)	1871	Death	Brighton	GRO Index	2Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.127					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
844	DAVES	William Walter (7)	1871	Death	Uckfield	GRO Index	2Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.707					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
845	DAVS	Ann (23)	1871	Death	Brighton	GRO Index	3Q-1871	V.2b-Pg.124					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
846	GARDNER	Thomas	1871	Marriage	Falmer	Certificate	No. 99	Banns		24 Se 1871	VAKEFORD, Eliza Caroline of Falmer	Marriage certificate	1993 Trip	Originals	
847	VAKEFORD	Eliza Caroline	1871	Marriage	Falmer	Certificate	No. 99	Banns		24 Se 1871	GARDNER, Thomas of Brighton	Marriage certificate	1993 Trip	Originals	
848	BARINES	Ernest Spencer	1872	Baptism	Uckfield	ESPO	No. 641	Fig Driver		21 July 1872	BARINES, John & Sarah Anne	Uckfield Baptisms 1850-76	2004 Trip	Red Memo	
849	DAV	Ed (32)	1872	Burial	Uckfield	ESPO				2 Se 1872	Holy Cross Burials per Keith Eves	UDPS	Letter 1997		
850	DAVES	Alice	1872	Birth	Brighton	Certificate	No. 331		17 De 1872	17 De 1872	DAVES, Thomas & BOXALL, Sarah	Birth certificate	2004 Trip	Originals	
851	DAVES	Jane (0)	1872	Death	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1872	V.2b-Pg.146					Internet	1837 Binder	
852	GARDNER	Thomas William	1872	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	3Q-1872	V.2b-Pg.220		24 Ji 1872	GARDNER, Thomas & VAKEFORD, Eliza	Birth certificate	2004 Trip	Red Memo	
853	GARDNER	Thomas William Vakeford	1872	Birth	St. Peter, Brighton	Certificate	No. 10		24 Ji 1872	21M 1873		Holy Cross Burials per Keith Eves	UDPS	Letter 1997	
854	DAV	Edward (41)	1873	Burial	Uckfield	ESPO		Workhouse					Internet	1837 Binder	
855	DAVES	Alice	1873	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	1Q-1873	V.2b-Pg.219					Internet	1837 Binder	
856	DAVES	Henry	1873	Marriage	Vorthing	IGI	M071721	STRAY		3 Se 1873	DAVES, Henry & BURIN, Louisa		2004 Trip	Red Memo	
857	DAVES	Kate Elizabeth	1873	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1873	V.2b-Pg.233					Internet	1837 Binder	
858	DAVES	Arthur Albert (3)	1874	Death	Uckfield	GRO Index	3Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.65					Internet	1837 Binder	
859	DAVES	Florence Louise	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	3Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.185					Internet	1837 Binder	
860	DAVES	Joseph (38)	1874	Burial	Uckfield	ESPO	died at >	Hagwards Heath		5 Ja 1874		Holy Cross Burials per Keith Eves	UDPS	Letter 1997	
861	DAVES	Minnie	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.210					Internet	1837 Binder	
862	DAVES	William John	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	2Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.255					Internet	1837 Binder	
863	DAVS	Joseph (38)	1874	Death	Lewes	GRO Index	1Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.111					Internet	1837 Binder	
864	DAVS	Joseph (39)	1874	Death	Vivelsfield	Certificate	No. 66	Gardener		1 Ja 1874		Death certificate	By mail	Originals	
865	GARDNER	Alice Vakeford	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.239		18 No 1874	18 No 1874	GARDNER, Thomas & VAKEFORD, Eliza	Birth certificate	2004 Trip	Red Memo
866	GARDNER	Alice Vakeford	1874	Birth	St. Peter, Brighton	Certificate	No. 66						By mail	Originals	
867	GARDNER	Elizabeth Vakeford	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.239		18 No 1874	18 No 1874	GARDNER, Thomas & VAKEFORD, Eliza	Birth certificate	2004 Trip	Red Memo
868	GARDNER	Elizabeth Vakeford	1874	Birth	St. Peter, Brighton	Certificate	No. 67						By mail	Originals	
869	GARDNER	Frederick William	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	1Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.233					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
870	GARDNER	George	1874	Birth	Brighton	GRO Index	4Q-1874	V.2b-Pg.211					2004 Trip	Red Memo	
871	DAV	Mary (55)	1875	Burial	Uckfield	ESPO		Workhouse		10 De 1875		Holy Cross Burials per Keith Eves	UDPS	Letter 1997	

The other important use of a spreadsheet is to consolidate valuable information found on a website. Have you ever used a search option on a website only to be presented

Prince Edward Island Genealogical Society
Home CMNI Store Events Membership Newsletter Links Contact

Search for surname "ellis" returned 1149 results.

Given name	Title	Location	Year	Age	Religion	Source
(FEMALE)		CAMBRIDGE	1892	0		DEATHS OF P. E. ISLANDERS IN MASS
(MALE)		NEWTON	1891	0		DEATHS OF P. E. ISLANDERS IN MASS
(MALE)		25 AUBURN ST., CAMBRIDGE	1898	0		DEATHS OF P. E. ISLANDERS IN MASS
(MALE)		CAMBRIDGE	1893	0		DEATHS OF P. E. ISLANDERS IN MASS
--			0			PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 3 (OCT)
--			0			PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 45 (NOV)
--			0			PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 4 (FEB)
--	MISS					PAST & PRESENT OF PEI 1907 INDEX
--	REV.					PAST & PRESENT OF PEI 1907 INDEX

with pages and pages of results and wished you could view or sort it all together? By using the copy and paste utility I was able to turn this search on the PEIGS website, which resulted in 1149 results on 45 pages, into this nice uniform spreadsheet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Given name	Title	Location	Year	Age	Religion	Source		
1	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
2	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 4 (NOV 1893)		
3	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 4 (NOV 1893)		
4	ELLIS						DAVIDSON OF BURNHAMCHAPPEL VOL 1 (PEIGS PUBLICATION)		
5	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
6	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
7	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
8	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
9	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
10	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
11	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
12	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
13	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
14	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
15	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
16	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
17	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
18	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
19	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
20	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
21	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
22	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
23	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
24	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
25	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
26	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
27	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
28	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
29	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
30	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
31	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
32	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
33	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
34	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
35	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
36	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
37	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
38	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
39	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		
40	ELLIS						PEIGS NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 (OCT 1893)		

Carefully select the data areas only on the website with your cursor and press <Ctrl><C>; open the spreadsheet and press <Ctrl><V> to paste, go back to the web page and repeat until you have it all.

This works really well with IGI batch searches on the FamilySearch.org website.

By Bob Dawes

Page 2

Where do you find information that you can build into your spreadsheet? Start by using a search engine such as Google. Look for societies or organizations involved in genealogy or local history by structuring your search criteria using quotation marks and the plus symbol. For example, ["Prince Edward Island" +genealogy] will return everything of value within the first two or three pages of results. The quotation marks glue your criteria into a string and the plus [+] symbol adds an additional filter. You can experiment by changing your filter word to see how the results vary.

Another interesting use of Google is Google Groups. In the early days of the Internet, the Usenet was the place to find and share genealogical information on what are called newsgroups. These were difficult to use and you had to subscribe and use a news reader which was like a special browser. A company called Deja-News put the newsgroups on the web and then Google bought Deja-News and made them Google Groups. The syntax for groups starts with a 3 letter code followed by its name kind of like a reverse web address. There are general groups and some very specific ones that drill down to be very unique. There are 28 groups under [soc.genealogy...] and since these have been running from the late 1980's you might just find an old posting or discussion thread that gives you a new lead on your family.



The next spot to look are the societies directly. You can find most of these through services such as Cindy's List [www.cyndislist.com], the Canadian Genealogy Centre [www.collectionscanada.ca/genealogy/] or GENUKI [www.genuki.org.uk]. Since more and more societies are putting their material or parts of it on-line, it is important to visit the geographic groups that represent your ancestors origins. Using GENUKI and the Cambridgeshire FHS as an example, I found they had all of their published burials in

Year	Surname	Forenames	Age	Abode	Condition	Parish	Indicator
1817	RAYNER	Edward	84	----	----	Whittlesford	-
1813	RAYNER	Elizabeth	65	----	w. of William	Whittlesford	*
1818	RAYNER	Elizabeth	47	----	----	Whittlesford	-
1826	RAYNER	Frances	83	----	----	Whittlesford	-
1825	RAYNER	Mary	52	----	----	Whittlesford	-
1815	RAYNER	William	70	----	----	Whittlesford	*

a searchable database. This is something that you would normally have to pay for through either FamilyHistoryOnline [www.familyhistoryonline.co.uk] or the National Burial Index CD-ROM's. As you can see from the example, a lot of

information is provided. You have to be creative and experiment to find the information you need. You can be sure that this information has been popped into my spreadsheet.

Another unusual website is the Scottish Strays Marriage Index maintained by the Anglo-Scottish FHS which is a Special Interest Group of the Manchester & Lancashire FHS [<http://mlfhs.org.uk/>]. Here you can post your Scottish ancestors that came to Canada in the hope of linking up with others looking for lost ancestors who emigrated from Scotland. I wouldn't have a photograph of my 2nd great-grandmother if it wasn't for this site. Look for the link at the bottom of their main page to connect to the index.

If a large body of water is your brick wall and you have no idea where to start looking try the surname profiler found at [www.spatial-literacy.org]. This will give you a colour coded map of your surnames based on their distribution in the 1881 census or the 1998

electoral rolls. As long as you're not looking for SMITH or JONES this may help. To carry the electoral rolls concept further try using [www.192.com] which is something like an expanded canada411 for the UK. It is a pay site but does offer some limited free search information which can point you in a particular direction.

Finally, lets look at some websites that are seldom used for genealogy.



Starting with Ebay Canada [www.ebay.ca] there are generally anywhere from a thousand to several thousand items in the genealogy categories under Everything

Genealogy
[Births, Marriages, Deaths](#)
[Census Records](#)
[City, State Directories](#)
[Coat of Arms](#)
[County, State History](#)
[Family Trees](#)
[Immigration, Passenger Lists](#)
[Maps](#)
[Military Records](#)
[Other](#)

Else. I find it useful to try a general search from the Ebay home page first since many vendors don't always get their items in the right category and you may get a bargain as a result. Of course, you should prepare yourself in advance by setting up a PayPal account [www.paypal.ca] so you can pay for your item if you win it. My rule of thumb is to make one bid for what I think the item is worth and let the Ebay computer manage my bids for me. If I don't win, I find that the same or a similar item comes up for sale very shortly and you can save your searches to be notified by email when this happens. Also, remember to take the shipping and currency exchange into consideration when evaluating what you are willing to pay.

My next favourite site is the advanced book exchange at [www.abebooks.com] Thousands of book sellers and individuals around the world are offering everything from brand new volumes to tattered, well used books for sale. This is not an auction and you can compare prices between vendors based on the book's condition. You can find everything from published family histories to local histories which give your ancestors some life and may help you pass the time while waiting for your brick wall to develop a crack. Again, be aware of the shipping and currency exchange in calculating your total cost. In this case, abebooks.com handles the financial transaction using your credit card so no alternative payment arrangement is necessary.



Breaking through brick walls takes perseverance and creativity. Search through your geographic origin, in general, to see what is available and to understand the nature of the locale in different timeframes. Try to track down a sibling of the elusive person. Organize all of your disparate data into a spreadsheet and sort it different ways to see if something you already have jumps out at you. Build a Word table or Excel spreadsheet of a family line, decade by decade, including new spouses and offspring and then colour code the repeated people in each decade. Join an inexpensive website such as LostCousins [www.lostcousins.com] which works for both UK and Canadian connections using the 1881 census as a common denominator.

Remember if the only tool in your toolbox is a hammer then all of your problems will look like nails and you have lots of different tools at your disposal.