

# Family history research guide

## Research your genealogy and family history

### Rangahaua tō whakapapa me ngā kōrero tuku iho ā-whānau

Interested in tracing your family tree? Follow our family history research guide to get started.

### How to start

Start with yourself and everything you already know - collate names of family members, dates of birth, marriage and death.

Talking to family can be helpful. They can often provide:

- names
- dates
- photographs
- interesting stories
- certificates that you can transcribe or copy.

#### Tip

Treat anecdotal information as clues, rather than facts!

## Record your research

Start filling out a family tree. Use a notebook to keep your research together.

[Download a generation chart](#) to start recording your family tree.

[Text version of Generation chart](#)

Keep note of references and sources and include dates. That way you can always go back and make further enquiries.

### Tips

- Record women by their maiden names (the name they were born with).
- Be sure to write surnames (family names) in upper case, as some surnames can also be first names.
- Write dates in full, e.g. 11 June 1876, as date formats differ from country to country.
- When writing place names, follow the format 'suburb, city, country.' For example, 'Ellerslie, Auckland, New Zealand'.

## Finding records of births, deaths and marriages (BDM)

### Te kimi rēhita ā-whānautanga, ā-matenga, ā-mārena

When starting your family history research, you'll want to look at BDM records.

### BDM indexes

We have unique family history online resources, and provide free access to subscription websites like [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [Find My Past](https://www.findmypast.com) and [The Genealogist](https://www.thegenealogist.com). Many family notices can be found in historic newspapers online – [Papers Past](https://www.paperspast.govt.nz) for New Zealand and [Trove](https://trove.nla.gov.au) for Australia.

#### Access to resources

- Ancestry.com and The Genealogist are only available from a library. You cannot access these websites from home.
- Find My Past provides limited access to information without being signed in. Full access is only available at a library.

For New Zealand records, start your BDM index search on the [Department of Internal Affairs \(DIA\) website](https://www.dia.govt.nz) for:

- births more than 100 years ago
- marriages more than 80 years ago
- deaths where the person was over 80 years, or died more than 50 years ago.

**Tip**

Don't rely on indexes as your only source. We recommend that you request a printout, as these will have more complete information.

## Requesting BDM documents

You can track down New Zealand BDM documents from the DIA. Printouts are available for the following years:

- births and deaths - 1848 to 1997
- marriages - 1854 to 1997

[Visit the DIA birth, death and marriage historical records website.](#)

## Information listed on New Zealand BDM documents

### Births 1848-1875

- Date and place of birth
- Sex and names of child
- Name and occupation of father
- Name and maiden name of mother
- Signature, description and residence of informant
- Date of registration
- Signature of registrar
- Name of child, if added after registration

### Births 1875-1912

- Date and place of birth
- Sex and names of child, and whether present
- Name, age, occupation and birthplace of father
- Name, age, maiden name and birthplace of mother
- Place and date of parents' marriage
- Signature, description and residence of informant
- Signatures of witnesses if the entry is a correction of a former entry
- When registered, and signature of registrar
- Name of child, if added or altered after registration

### Births 1912 onwards

- Date and place of birth
- Sex and first names of child

- Name, age, occupation and birthplace of father
- Name, surname and maiden name, age and birthplace of mother
- Date and place of parents' marriage
- Previous issue of existing marriage, and whether living or dead
- Signature, description, and residence of informant
- Signatures of witnesses if the entry is a correction of a former entry
- When registered and signature of registrar
- Name of child, if added or altered after registration

### **Māori births 1913-1960**

Includes the same information as records for births 1912 onwards, but also provides the hapū details of the parents.

### **Deaths 1848-1875**

- Date and place of death
- Name, sex, age, and rank/occupation of deceased
- Cause of death
- Description and residence of informant
- Date of registration and signature of registrar

### **Deaths 1875-1912**

- Date and place of death
- Name, sex, age and rank/occupation of deceased
- Causes of death, duration of last illness, name of medical attendant
- When last seen by medical attendant
- Name and occupation of father, name and maiden name of mother
- When and where buried
- Name and religion of minister, or name of witness
- Birthplace of deceased and how long in New Zealand
- Marriage details of deceased
- Place of marriage, age at marriage and name of spouse
- If issue living, state number and sex
- Signature, description and residence of informant
- Date of registration and signature of registrar

### **Deaths 1912 onwards**

- Date and place of death
- Name, sex, age, occupation and usual place of residence of deceased

- Causes of death, intervals between onset and death, name of medical attendant
- When last seen by medical attendant
- Name and occupation of father
- Name and maiden name of mother
- When and where buried
- Name and religion of minister, or name of witness
- Birthplace of deceased and how long in New Zealand
- Marriage details of deceased
- Place of marriage, age at marriage, name of spouse, age of widow if living
- If issue living, state ages of each, and sex
- If applicable, Māori blood and tribes of father and mother
- Signature, description and residence of informant
- Date of registration and signature of registrar

### **Māori deaths 1913-1961**

Includes the same information as records for deaths 1912 onwards, but also provides hapū details of the deceased and their parents.

### **Marriages 1854-1880**

- Place and date of marriage
- Name, age, occupation and marital status of groom
- Name, age and marital status of bride
- Names and residences of the witnesses
- Name of officiating minister/priest

### **Marriages 1880 onwards**

- Place and date of marriage
- Name, age, occupation, marital status, birthplace and residence of groom
- Name, age, marital status, birthplace and residence of bride
- Names and occupations of fathers of both parties
- Names and maiden name of mothers of both parties
- Names and residences of the witnesses
- Name of officiating minister/priest

### **Māori marriages 1911-1951**

Includes the same information as records for marriages 1880 onwards, but also provides hapū details of the bride and groom.

# New Zealand family research sources

## Ngā mātāpuna rangahau whānau nō Aotearoa

As you continue researching your family history, there are a number of other places you can look for more information.

## Funeral directors' records

Funeral directors' records will give you similar information to a death certificate, however, it's best to only contact funeral directors when you have proof of which funeral director was involved (from a death notice) and the date of death.

### Auckland funeral directors

#### C Little and Sons Ltd

- We have an index, held at [Research Central](#), compiled by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists (NZSG).
- The order books from 1897 to 1937 are available in the [Sir George Grey Special Collections](#).
- For information beyond 1937 contact [C Little and Sons](#)

#### Watney Sibun and W H Tongue

- [Sibuns Funeral Services and Advisors](#) hold the records for both Watney Sibun (from 1903 onwards) and W H Tongue (from 1920 onwards).

#### Weirs Funeral Services

- [J. Weir and Co.](#) holds records from 1882 onwards.

## Cemetery records

Along with funeral directors' records, cemetery records can provide information about parents, siblings, children and spouses.

### New Zealand Society of Genealogists (NZSG) cemetery records

- Transcriptions between 1812 - 2007 are available on microfiche at [Research Central](#), or on [Ancestry.com](#)
- The full NZ Cemeteries Collection is held at the [NZSG library](#)

## Auckland cemetery records

- [Cemetery Records database](#) (Waikaraka Cemetery, Ōtāhuhu Public Cemetery, Hillsborough Cemetery, Waiheke Cemetery)
- [Auckland Council](#)
- [Purewa Cemetery](#)
- [Symonds Street and St Stephens \(Parnell\) cemeteries](#)
- [Maps of Symonds Street Cemetery](#)

## Finding family notices

### Historic newspapers

Many birth, death and marriage (BDM) notices and obituaries can be found in historic newspapers online:

- New Zealand newspapers - [Papers Past](#)
- Australian newspapers - [Trove](#)

### Death notice index and obituary notices

- [Research Central](#) has a death notice index, clippings scrapbooks, and obituary scrapbooks that go beyond the dates available in online historic newspapers.

### Family notice websites and databases

- You can search for family notices on [Knowledge Basket Newztext](#)
- For more recent deaths search [A Memory Tree website](#)

## Census and census substitutes

New Zealand doesn't keep genealogical information from censuses. There are a number of census substitute sources you can use.

Search the [library catalogue](#) for:

- street directories
- phone directories
- local body electoral rolls

- burgess rolls
- habitation indexes.

Other sources to try include:

- general electoral rolls on [Ancestry.com](#)
- [Auckland Police census 1842–1846](#)
- land records on [Auckland Council archives](#)
- school records on [Archives New Zealand](#)

For census information for other countries, visit:

- [Ancestry.com](#)
- [Find My Past](#)
- [The Genealogist](#)
- [FamilySearch](#)

#### Access to resources

- Ancestry.com and The Genealogist are only available from a library. You cannot access these websites from home.
- Find My Past provides limited access to information without being signed in. Full access is only available at a library.

## Immigration to New Zealand

### Te haere manene mai ki Aotearoa

In your journey to complete your family tree, you might need to think about when your ancestors moved to New Zealand and find the answer to the following questions.

### Where did your ancestors come from?

Until the end of the 1840s, Auckland arrivals were mainly from New South Wales and Tasmania, and then primarily from Great Britain. Mail steamers did bring some immigrants from North America from the 1860s, and large numbers came from Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s.

Recommended reading:

- [The farthest promised land](#) by Rollo Arnold.
- [Over the mountains of the sea](#) by David Hastings.

## Where did your ancestors arrive in New Zealand?

The main Auckland region ports were:

- Auckland (Waitematā Harbour)
- Onehunga (Manukau Harbour - mainly coastal)
- Bay of Islands (mainly pre-1845)
- Hokianga (mainly pre-1840).

We have some information for other parts of New Zealand, but depending on the port of entry you may need to contact:

- [Petone Settlers Museum](#)
- [Toitū Otago Settlers Museum](#)
- [Puke Ariki \(New Plymouth\)](#)
- [Canterbury Museum](#)
- [Archives New Zealand](#)

## When did your ancestors arrive in New Zealand?

You can find this information from:

- family stories
- [death registrations](#) after 1875, which include details of how long the person was in New Zealand
- obituaries
- marriage date or birth date of first child in New Zealand, and/or last child born before emigration
- 'Intention to marry' registers at [Archives New Zealand](#)
- first appearance in directories and electoral rolls
- naturalisation records. If your ancestors were not British, other evidence of residence in New Zealand.

## Did your ancestors arrive before 1838?

If your ancestors arrived in New Zealand before 1838, the following are excellent sources of information:

- [Roll of early settlers and descendants in the Auckland Province prior to the end of 1852](#) (1940)
- Index to ship musters 1816 - 1825 passengers & crew departing Sydney [microform] (1990)
- [Index of passengers and crew in and out of Sydney from Sydney newspapers](#) [microform] (1997-1998).

## Did your ancestors arrive after 1838?

If your ancestors arrived in New Zealand after 1838, try the following resources:

- [Auckland area passenger arrivals lists](#) (1838-1889 and 1909-1921)
- [Ancestry.com](#)
- [Find My Past](#) (1890 onwards)
- Records of [fencible settlers](#) of south and east Auckland
- [Passenger lists, Victoria, Australia outwards to New Zealand, 1852 onwards](#) [microform]
- [Papers Past](#) can be searched for “shipping intelligence” and other passenger lists, e.g. New Zealander (to 1852), Southern Cross (to 1876), Auckland Star and New Zealand Herald (to 1945), and the Evening Post for Wellington inwards passengers (to 1945)
- The [Puhoi Settlers' Index](#) gives names of Bohemian settlers and descendants (to 1990)
- New Zealand Shipping Company passenger records 1875 - 1950
- [Archives New Zealand](#)
- Manukau and Waitemata Company 1841-42
- Auckland Provincial government 1853-1876, assisted (indexed)
- General government 1870-1888, assisted (indexed)
- Social Security Department passenger lists in [FamilySearch](#)

### Access to resources

- Ancestry.com is only available from a library. You cannot access this website from home.
- Find My Past provides limited access to information without being signed in. Full access is only available at a library.

# New Zealand Chinese

## Ngā Hainamana o Aotearoa

We hold a large collection on both Chinese settlement history and Chinese genealogy.

## Useful resources for Chinese genealogy

- [New Zealand Chinese Journals](#)
- Chinese immigration records at [Archives New Zealand](#)
- [Index Auckland](#)
- [1881 Electoral Rolls](#)
- [Auckland Area Passenger Arrivals 1838-1886](#)
- [Cemetery Records - Hillsborough - Onetangi, Waiheke Island - Ōtahuhu Public - Waikaraka](#)

## Recommended reading

- [Windows on a Chinese past](#) by James Ng
- [Unfolding history, evolving identity: the Chinese in New Zealand](#) by Manying Ip

# International family history research resources

## Rauemi rangahau mō ngā kōrero tuku iho ā-whānau o te ao

Sources of family history research information for Australia, England and Wales, Ireland, Pacific Islands and Scotland.

### Australia

#### Australian Capital Territory

Civil registration commenced 1 January 1930

[ACT Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Deaths 1930-1949 [2 AUS BDM ACT]

#### New South Wales

Civil registration commenced 1 March 1856

[NSW Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1788-1918, Deaths 1788-1945, Marriages 1788-1945 [2 AUS BDM NSW]

## **Northern Territory**

Civil registration commenced 24 August 1870

Note: 1856-1863 - New South Wales, 1863-1870 - South Australia

[Northern Territory Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1870-1918, Deaths 1870-1913, Marriages 1870-1913 [2 AUS BDM NT]

## **Queensland**

Civil registration commenced 1 March 1856

[Queensland Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1856-1919, Deaths 1856-1954, Marriages 1856-1939 [2 AUS BDM QLD]

## **South Australia**

Civil registration commenced 1 June 1842

[Government of South Australia](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1842-1928, Deaths 1842-1970, Marriages 1842-1937 [2 AUS BDM SA]

## **Tasmania**

Civil registration commenced 1 December 1838

Registration prior to 31 December 1899: Registrar-Generals Department pre-1900 births, deaths and marriages records

[Registration after 31 December 1899: Tasmania Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1803-1905, Deaths 1803-1919, Marriages 1803-1919 [2 AUS BDM TAS]

## **Victoria**

Civil registration commenced 1 July 1853

[Victoria Government - search historical indexes \(pay by view\)](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1837-1913, Deaths 1837-1980, Marriages 1837-1942 [2 AUS BDM VIC]

## **Western Australia**

Civil registration commenced 1 September 1841

[Western Australia Government](#)

Indexes held at Auckland Libraries: Births 1841-1905, Deaths 1841-1980, Marriages 1841-1965 [2 AUS BDM WA]

## England and Wales

### English and Welsh family records

Civil registration for England and Wales started 1 July 1837 and compulsory registration began in 1874. These are known as the General Register Indexes (GRO), but were formerly known as the St Catherine's House Indexes.

[Research Central](#) holds the Civil Registration indexes from July 1837- 2001.

### Quarterly indexes from 1837 – 1983

You will need to check quarterly indexes from 1837-1983, as indexing is based on the date of registration and not on the date of the actual event. For example, someone could be born in December 1890 but not registered until January 1891. Therefore the reference will not occur until the first quarter (January - March) of 1891.

### Annual indexes from 1984

The information given on the indexes is very limited: name, registration district, volume, page number.

The volume number is a geographic code.

Age at death is included in the index from 1866, and name of spouse is included in marriage indexes from 1912.

### How to request a certificate for England or Wales

It is possible to get a certificate from the [General Register Office](#) or Local Registry Office in England, or from a New Zealand based certificate service.

#### New Zealand based certificate services

- [New Zealand Society of Genealogists](#) (members only)
- GenBritz down under. Contact: Vivienne Parker, phone

(09) 578 2525 or [email vivparker@xtra.co.nz](mailto:vivparker@xtra.co.nz)

It's important to know that requesting copies of documents will incur a fee.

### Parish registers

Prior to civil registration (before July 1837), and even after to some extent, you will need to search parish registers.

- We have some parish registers available in book or microfiche format at 4 ENG BDM (followed by the county abbreviation) or 4 WLS BDM (followed by the county abbreviation).

- Some parish registers are on CD ROM, for example Phillimore's Marriage Registers for some counties.
- International Genealogical Index - from about 1500 to the end of the 19th Century.
- Vital Records Index British Isles (CD Rom) contains 5 million births, christenings and marriages taken from a partial collection of records in the British Isles dating from 1538-1888.

### Recommended reading

- [St Catherine's House](#) by Eve McLaughlin
- [An introduction to British civil registration](#) by Tom Wood

## Ireland

### Irish indexes

- Registration of births, deaths and marriages started in 1 January 1864. The records are at the [General Register Office in Dublin](#)
- The indexes have been microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah (Mormon Church) 1864-1921 and can be ordered through any LDS Family History Centre. Auckland Libraries is an accredited LDS Family History Centre.
- Summaries of the birth certificates 1864 - 1867 are included in the International Genealogical Index.
- From 1921 the entries for Northern Ireland are at the [General Register Office in Belfast](#)
- Search International Genealogical Index for baptism and marriage records.
- [Vital Records Index British Isles](#) (CD Rom) contains 5 million births, christenings and marriages taken from a collection of records in the British Isles dating from 1538-1888 - this includes Ireland.

### Recommended reading

- [Tracing your Irish Ancestors](#) - Chapter 1. Civil Records by John Grenham
- [Irish records: sources for family and local history](#) - p 10 by James Ryan

## Pacific Islands

Records may be in the local language or the language of the country that controlled the territory at the time.

Niue records are copies of the original registers. As they are not certified by the registrar-general, they may not be acceptable for legal purposes.

Research Central has a range of resources for many Pacific countries, including:

- missionary/church records
- embassy/consulate records
- adoptions
- civil registration records
- land and probate records
- immigration records
- compiled genealogies.

#### Pacific records held in Research Central

- Fiji circa 1871 – 1950
- Tahiti circa 1818 – 1950
- Tonga circa 1830 – 1980
- Samoa (American and Western) circa 1852-1993
- Niue 1900 – 1997
  - birth registration records for Niue 1900-1997 (3 NIU BDM)
  - birth indexes (3 NIU BDM)
  - death and stillbirth registration records 1899-1997 (3 NIU BDM)
  - death indexes (3 NIU BDM)
  - marriage registrations (3 NIU BDM)
  - various genealogies (3 NIU FAM)
  - genealogies of Niue women (3 NIU FAM)
  - emigration from Niue (3 NIU IMM)
  - European immigration to Niue (3 NIU IMM)

## Scotland

We have a growing collection of Scottish family history resources.

### General Register of Births Deaths and Marriages

This is housed at New Register House, Edinburgh, and dates from 1 January 1855.

#### Scotland's People

This is the official governmental source of genealogical data for Scotland. It is a "pay as you view" database of indexes from the genealogical records of the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS). It includes Statutory Registers of births and marriages 1855-1899 and Statutory Registers of deaths -1855-1924. An additional year of births / deaths / marriage index data is added every year.

The restriction to data over 100 years old is GROS policy, to protect the privacy of living persons.

#### Old Parochial Registers (1740 - 1855)

Christening and marriage records of some 900 Presbyterian parishes were kept by their ministers, and most date from about 1740.

Research Central has the index to these registers on microfiche at shelf number 4 SCT BDM.

## International Genealogical Index

Visit [FamilySearch](#) for baptism and marriage records.

## Vital Records Index British Isles (1538 – 1888)

[Vital Records Index](#) contains 5 million births, christenings and marriages taken from a partial collection of records in the British Isles (includes Scotland).

Recommended reading

- [Tracing your Scottish ancestry](#) by Kathleen Cory

For other countries try:

- [Ancestry.com](#)
- [Find My Past](#)
- [The Genealogist](#)
- [FamilySearch](#)

### Access to resources

- Ancestry.com and The Genealogist are only available from a library. You cannot access these websites from home.
- Find My Past provides limited access to information without being signed in. Full access is only available at a library.

# Locating birth parents

Tips and resources to help you find information about your birth parents.

## Apply for an original or pre-adoptive birth certificate

Providing there is no veto placed, you can apply for your pre-adoptive birth certificate once you turn 20 years old.

This certificate shows details of your birth registration prior to your adoption, including:

- Your birth name (if registered)
- Your date and place of birth
- Your birth mother's name, age and birthplace (the birth father's details are generally not registered).

## Request a copy of your birth certificate

For application forms and more information, visit the [Ministry of Internal Affairs website](#) .

You will need to supply:

- Your full name (post-adoptive)
- Your place of birth
- Your date of birth
- The full name(s) of your adoptive parent(s)
- Your address and phone number
- Your signature
- Payment for the certificate of NZ\$15.30 (includes postage to anywhere in the world)
- A nominated counsellor (the Registrar-General can provide a list of approved counsellors for you to choose from).

Nominating a counsellor does not apply to applicants living outside of New Zealand and is not required for people who were adopted after 28 February 1986.

Post the forms to:

The Registrar-General

Central Registry

PO Box 10526

Wellington

New Zealand

## Finding your birth mother

Once you've received your original or pre-adoptive birth certificate, it will usually show your birth mother's full name, age, her maiden name (if married), and her place of birth.

There are different ways to find more information about your birth mother.

### Get your birth mother's birth certificate

Request a copy of your birth mother's birth certificate from the Central Registry. This will provide details of her birth parent(s) and if she has any older siblings.

### Check electoral rolls

Look at electoral rolls from the date of your birth for your birth mother and for other family members (parents and siblings). Auckland Libraries holds every New Zealand electoral roll from 1853 to present day.

### Tip

It may be easier to trace your birth mother through her parents and siblings, especially if she was very young at the time of your birth.

## Look for parents' death certificates

Search for death certificates for either parent. They will not only show the date of death but also how many surviving children (if any), their sex and ages. Their death notice in the local newspaper will give names of family members and possibly the married name of the birth mother and where she resided at the time of the death.

### Tip

This can sometimes be the easiest way to trace your birth mother, as searching for indexes for her marriage or death can be time-consuming and may not provide successful results, especially if birth parents are living and married or have died overseas.

## Adoption records research sources

- [The Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki](#) , may hold more information about your adoption. Phone 0508 326 459 to find out what records they hold
- [Department of Internal Affairs](#) - includes an application form for requesting your pre-adoptive birth certificate
- Your adoptive parent(s) and other family members
- Organisations involved in adoption place, including [Barnardos](#) ,[the Salvation Army](#) and other church groups
- [Jigsaw Incorporated](#) - an organisation that provides information and services to people separated from family
- [New Zealand Society of Genealogists](#) - provides assistance to people wishing to compile family histories from sources in New Zealand and overseas
- [Archives New Zealand](#) - for full and accurate records kept by public sector agencies
- Libraries, museums, schools, cemeteries, clubs and associations also hold a wealth of information that may help with your search.

# Ask an expert

## Pātai atu ki tētahi mātanga

Once you've gathered and recorded as much information as you can, you can:

- [contact a research librarian to ask a question](#)
- come and see one of our specialist research librarians at [Research Central](#) or [Research South](#).

