

Guidance for coach parties visiting The National Archives

1. A visit to The National Archives is most profitable for researchers who need to consult original records about specific aspects of ancestors' lives. There is no need to come to The National Archives to begin family history research. The basic sources are widely available online. All public libraries have computers for members of the public to use and many have subscriptions to services such as ancestry.co.uk. Please check what is available in your local area before making a long journey to Kew.
2. Visitors to The National Archives must be able and willing to do their research themselves. Staff are of course happy to advise and assist, but we cannot do your research for you. Our most popular records are increasingly available online. The system for ordering up original documents at Kew is also computer-based. In order to get the most out of a visit to The National Archives, readers must have at least a basic level of IT skill.
3. The National Archives does not hold copies of birth, marriage and death certificates. They cannot be ordered or viewed at Kew. We only have access to the online indexes which are widely available elsewhere. For example, the indexes from 1837 to the mid 1930's can be consulted free of charge at www.freebmd.org.uk. There is no need to come to Kew to search the birth, marriage and death indexes.
4. Many other popular family history resources, including the census and World War 1 campaign medals and service records, are available online and accessible without coming to Kew. For more details please see our website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.
5. Researchers will get the most benefit from a visit to The National Archives if they do some preparation in advance. Basic and detailed guidance on a wide range of topics is available on our website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/gettingstarted/guides.htm and www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/researchguidesindex.asp. Our catalogue can be searched online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/.
6. Researchers at The National Archives only need a reader's ticket to order up original documents. You do not need a reader's ticket to use online or microform resources, or to make photocopies and printouts. If you are likely to need a reader's ticket you should bring with you two forms of ID: one providing proof of identify and one providing proof of current address. For further details see www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/registration/.
7. The National Archives does not hold the following: birth, marriage and death certificates; parish records; World War 2 service records; electoral registers; basic family history sources relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland.