

This guide is designed to help people who have lost contact with a friend, a former work colleague or a relative in the recent past and wish to try and trace them. It is not intended for those compiling their family tree or tracing distant ancestors. The suggestions offered here will give some indication of the information sources available and some ideas about how to approach the problem.

Please note that the British Library neither endorses, nor can be held responsible for, any information provided by external websites or publications listed herein.

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USING TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES

If you are looking for someone in the UK, but do not know the town they are living in, visit your local library and systematically check their set of printed telephone directories. There are several Internet sites which offer access to UK telephone directories, but to use them you need to enter the name town where the person you are looking for might be living:

British Telecom Directory Enquiries

<http://www.thephonebook.bt.com>

Search by surname + town or post code.

UKphonebook.com

<http://www.ukphonebook.com/>

Search by surname + town. You must register before you can use the service. Five free credits are available daily.

There are several Internet sites which you can use to access web versions of telephone and email directories for foreign countries:

Cyndi's List

<http://www.cyndislist.com/>

The Finding People page of Cyndi's List gives hotlinks to online national telephone directories of individual countries, and to directories of postal and email addresses

Telephone Directories on the Web

<http://www.infobel.com/teldir/default.asp>

Offers over 400 links to white pages, yellow pages, email addresses and fax listings for 184 countries worldwide

Numberway

<http://www.numberway.com/>

Free independent and up-to-date guide to telephone directories on the web, covering white and yellow pages

USING MARRIAGE AND DEATH INDEXES

If you are looking for a young person, try searching the **General Register Office's** (GRO) marriage indexes for a possible marriage. The marriage certificate should include the address at which each of the parties married were living when the ceremony took place. You can then check that address in the electoral registers to confirm the names of the residents, who may know the subsequent whereabouts of the couple.

If you suspect that the person you are looking for may have died, try checking the GRO death indexes. Not finding a death entry in the GRO indexes is not conclusive as the person may have died abroad on holiday or on business. It is therefore also worth checking the index of wills kept at the Principal Probate Registry Search Room, First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NP.

A guide to how to use the GRO indexes, and where they are available for public consultation, is available on the Directgov website at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevents/Familyhistoryandresearch/DG_175464. A set is hosted at the British Library and is available for consultation in the Social Sciences Reading Room.

BMD Index

<http://www.bmdindex.co.uk/>

Searchable online version of the index for civil birth, marriage and death records for England and Wales, 1837-2005. Access is fee-based, at a minimum of £5.00 for three months.

FreeBMB

<http://freebmd.rootsweb.com/>

An ongoing project which aims to transcribe the Civil Registration Index of births, marriages and deaths, 1837-1983, and make the transcribed records available free via the Internet.

Tracesmart

<http://www.tracesmart.co.uk/>

Computerised birth, marriage and death records, 1984-2005, can be searched via the web site for a charge of £14.95 per 100 credits.

USING ELECTORAL REGISTERS

The electoral registers are currently available for personal consultation by members of the public in printed form only. The printed registers for each constituency are arranged by polling district. The arrangement within polling districts is normally by street in alphabetical order, within which properties are in street number order. There are no alphabetical indexes of voters.

Because of this arrangement, the printed electoral registers are of very little use for tracing named individuals. All they can do is help you to establish how long a known individual lived at a given address. The disappearance of a name from the electoral registers usually means that the person has moved home, married or died. The registers will not tell you which.

From 2003, two versions of the electoral register are being produced:

The full version of the register contains names of all voters and is used primarily to support the electoral process. Public access to it is strictly controlled. Individual registers can be seen at local public libraries or at the council's electoral registration office, but they must be consulted under supervision and copied solely by means of handwritten notes. You should contact the appropriate office to check local access arrangements. Contact details for your local electoral registration office can be found on the About My Vote website [<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/>]. You can search by postcode or local authority.

The British Library holds the full version of the printed registers for all constituencies. These may be consulted under supervision by personal visitors to the Reading Rooms, and again copied only by means of handwritten notes. The law also prevents the Library from disclosing any information from the full version over the phone or in writing until 10 years have passed since its publication, so you will have to visit the Reading Rooms in person to use them.

The edited version of the register is available for sale for commercial use for direct marketing, advertising, etc. It leaves out the names of electors who have exercised their right to opt out to protect their privacy. The edited version of the register is not held in printed form by the British Library.

Earlier registers up to 2002 contain the names of all voters. The British Library holds a complete set for the whole country (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) from 1947. Registers for individual constituencies can also be found in local public libraries and record offices, but as a consequence of the **Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006** (SI 752) and **Representation of the People (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2006** (SI 834), registers that are less than ten years old can only be consulted under supervision by personal visitors and again copied only by means of handwritten notes. The Library cannot disclose any information from them until ten years after publication.

Registers are now compiled in machine-readable form by local authorities. These files are purchased by certain commercial firms who compile databases comprising the contents of all the registers for the country. These databases can be searched by personal name, but are normally priced services. The ones listed here charge comparatively nominal fees.

192

<http://www.192.com/>

This Internet based service allows you to search the edited registers from 2002 to the present, the UK telephone directories and births, marriages and deaths indexes from 1837-2004.

Info Disk CD-ROM

<http://www.192.com/products/>

Gives access to information on residents of the UK based on data from electoral registers and the telephone directories.

The UK Electoral Roll

<http://www.theukelectoralroll.co.uk/>

Provides searches of the UK Electoral Register, Births, Deaths, Marriages Indexes and UK Property Ownership data. The enhanced UK electoral register search claims to provide customers with the address of any UK individual, their phone number, their date of birth and the names of anyone else at the address. Charges from £3.25 for one month's access.

Tracesmart

<http://www.tracesmart.co.uk/>

Searches entire electoral register (edited version), computerised birth, marriage and death records, 1984-2005, and Tracesmart's own register containing 38 million records and 34 million dates of birth. Charge of £14.95 per 100 credits.

UKroll.com

<http://www.ukroll.com/>

Offers data from the electoral registers 2004 onwards, and births, marriages and deaths indexes for England and Wales 1984-2005. One month's access costs £9.95.

USING MESSAGE POSTING SERVICES

A number of web sites offer facilities for finding people by leaving or viewing messages on 'virtual noticeboards':

Missing You

<http://www.missing-you.net/>

Free service allows you to place a message on their web pages with details of the person you wish to contact. In exchange, you are invited to read messages already posted in case you have information that may help to find someone currently being sought.

Missing People

<http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>

Missing People provides support for missing children, vulnerable adults and families. It offers a freephone helpline and email address that enable those who have run away or gone missing to leave a message to be passed on to a relative, social worker or friend.

Trace Lost Friends and Relatives

<http://wikiworldbook.com/trace-lost-friends-and-relatives>

Uses all the major Search Engines as "Bulletin Boards" to create a unique missing persons notice for the person sought. This means that users will get the widest possible audience for the fact that they are searching for that person, and will also give the missing person the means of making contact (without the searcher having to reveal their contact details to anyone).

USING TRACING SERVICES

If all else fails, you may wish to use a fee-based service or charity which specialises in tracing people:

Adoption Contact Register

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevents/Birthandadoptionrecords/Adoptionrecords/DG_175603

The Adoption Contact Register puts adopted people and their birth relatives in touch with each other, if that is what they both wish

Adoption Search Reunion

<http://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/>

This site has been developed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering to be the first port of call for anyone thinking about researching an adoption that took place in the UK. It contains a searchable database to help people locate adoption records in the UK as well as some in Ireland. Users can search for homes, organisations, staff members and local authorities, and links are provided to where adoption records may now be located.

Friends Reunited

<http://www.friendsreunited.co.uk/>

This is a service for finding old friends from school, university, clubs, sporting activities, the armed forces, workplaces and even pubs. The database contains profiles which people associated with any school, university, club, pub, etc have registered.

Look 4 Them

<http://www.look4them.org.uk/>

This website is the joint initiative of seven reputable organisations which specialise in helping to find missing people, or those who have lost touch with their families.

LookupUK.com

<http://www.lookupuk.com/>

Site offers advice to people looking for lost friends and relatives, and to adoptees and birth parents hoping to contact each other. It offers access to several databases, including telephone and email directories, the electoral roll, and births, marriages and deaths indexes. You can also search the messages posted on the site and leave your own.

My Old Mate

<http://www.myoldmate.net/>

If you are looking for an old friend, enter a name and see if there are any matching records. If you want to be found, enter your details and wait for a response.

Missing People

<http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>

Missing People can assist with searches for a missing person through web and media appeals. It provides a 24-hour service for recording sightings of missing persons. Finally, it offers a tracing service using a network of confidential contacts. These contacts will

not disclose the address of the missing person, but will forward a letter.

NORCAP - Supporting adults affected by adoption

<http://www.norcap.org.uk/>

NORCAP offers searching assistance, counselling for adoptees and parents and also has a list of approved researchers.

Salvation Army Family Tracing Service

http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www_uki.nsf/vw-dynamic-arrays/79FF668A8768F77480256F19005BE0C0?openDocument

A unique, confidential service for tracing relatives where contact has been lost either recently or many years ago.

Searchline

<http://www.search-line.co.uk/>

Specialises in searching for, finding and reuniting lost relatives, especially those separated by adoption. They also offer an intermediary and counselling service when contact is made.

Traceline

Traceline is a fee-based tracking service run by the UK Office for National Statistics. They will not disclose information about a person's whereabouts, but will forward a letter. Application forms can be obtained from: TraceLine, PO Box 106, Southport PR8 2WA. Tel +44 (0)151 471 4811

There are also a large number of commercial tracing agencies and private detective agencies who will search on your behalf for a fee. The **Association of British Investigators** [<http://www.theabi.org.uk/>], or the **Institute of Professional Investigators** [<http://www.ipi.org.uk/>] will supply names and addresses of members in your area who offer a complete tracing service. Tracing services also promote themselves on the web and can be found through any of the major search engines.

USEFUL BOOKS

For general guidance on searching, directories of useful organisations, etc. we suggest you consult:

Rogers, C. D.

Tracing missing persons: an introduction to agencies, methods and sources in England and Wales

Manchester University Press, 1986

Stafford, G.

Where to find adoption records: a guide for counsellors, adopted people and birth parents 3rd ed.

BAAF Adoption and Fostering, 2001

Tracing Missing Persons (PDF format)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/RdLeaflet.asp?sLeafletID=418&j=1>

The National Archives (Domestic records information; 138)