

Feature Theme - Genealogy

Column Title - Growing Family Trees

Digging up the ancestors

One of the great benefits of the Internet is the ease of access to all sorts of records about the dead. Whilst this may sound a little morbid on first hearing, to family historians it is a cause for great joy and enthusiasm. To be able to search online archives and discover when great-uncle Fred landed at Ellis Island, or where Auntie Maud's grandmother was living in 1871, may provide the answer to a long-standing puzzle. Before the Internet, records were held in remote Libraries and Archives, full of dusty tomes often filled with crabbed, spidery, barely-decipherable scrawl. The joys of searching through the databases on sites such as www.rootsweb.com are only exceeded by the thrill of finding someone hunting for the same person you are seeking... could this be a long-lost cousin?

The proliferation of internet access has led to a wealth of personal sites telling maybe wonderful, sometimes mundane, often humorous stories of family members long gone, but not forgotten. Search engines such as www.google.com can be the start of a treasure hunt through cyberspace, the jewels being distant relatives, pictures and accounts of migrations or habitation, and putting flesh onto the bones of the few dry facts that may have been handed down from parent to parent. Digging up the ancestors - no, more like bringing them back to life once more!