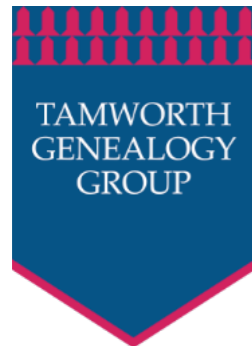


# Tamworth Genealogy Group

## 40 THINGS TO ASK YOUR RELATIVES





Tamworth Genealogy Group are a group of like-minded family historians and genealogists who meet socially on a monthly basis to exchange information, ideas and assist each other with their research.

Anyone is welcome to join the group, whether you have a historic family connection with the area, live locally or are simply interested in family, social or building/house history. contact [info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk](mailto:info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk)

**THE GROUP DO NOT CARRY OUT RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR INDIVIDUALS, but are willing to assist those who are carrying out their own research into families who have connections to Tamworth and the surrounding villages.**

**We do NOT look for living persons. We only research into past generations.**



[Tamworth Genealogy Group](#) is part of [The Holloway Society](#) and works closely with [Tamworth History Research Group](#) to uncover the rich history of the Tamworth area and the people who lived here. As such we are helping build [Tamworth Digital Archive](#) as a resource and publish in [Tamworth Heritage Magazine](#).

For more information contact [info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk](mailto:info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk)

If you spot any errors in this document, or can offer suggestions for this document please also [contact us](#)

In conjunction with Tamworth Heritage Magazine we can publish family histories, also community, club/team/society and business histories. Contact the [Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

Contact either the Genealogy Group [info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk](mailto:info@TamworthGenealogy.org.uk) or the Editor of the Heritage Magazine [Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

40 Questions to ask your relatives  
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**There are ways of asking the questions and recording the answers.** You want to maximise the information you get from the "interview". Below are some notes on how to do that from some of the team who have done a lot of interviews to help you make the most of it.

### Asking the Questions

To start with you may want to tell the subject in advance why, in general, you want talk to them. Do not give them the questions but telling them you want to talk to them about family history will get them thinking about it in advance. They may even dig out some photos, birth, wedding or other certificates.

The best place to do this is somewhere quiet and comfortable which will probably be their or your, front room, lounge etc. out in the garden, or even a quiet corner of a cafe or pub.

When speaking with your subject it is important that you are both comfortable. So: comfy chairs, tea/coffee/water and biscuits, maybe, even a cake are usually a good idea. The other thing is to allow time to talk with out rushing.

These sorts of chats often take longer than you think. Usually, because you get more than you expect in the answers, even in close families where you think you already know the history. Allow an hour or two so you are not rushed.



Once you have a time and place sorted, have bought the good biscuits, all you need are the following questions all genealogist's need answered.

Read them a few times before the day of the interview. There are some you might think you already know the answers to, or look irrelevant, but ask them anyway. You may be surprised at the answers.

## Recording the answers

You need to record the answers to the questions, and know to which question the answer relates.

The obvious answer is a notebook and a pen. Yes, this solution is centuries old but it works. You will need a notebook anyway if you are doing research. So get a fresh one specifically for this project. It doesn't have to be fancy.

Also some pens, it sounds obvious but we have seen people turn up without a pen. All you need is a working Biro; it doesn't need to be expensive. Some people prefer to use a pencil. A highlighter pen is also useful, though not essential.

A notebook and pen is the fail-safe, there are other options. Recording the audio is a good idea for two reasons:

Firstly you can check what was actually said later, it often saves the need for asking the person again when you need clarification of your written notes.

Secondly the person actually talking is a fantastic thing to keep, imagine if we had audio of your great, great, great grandmother answering similar questions from the Victorian era!

This is quite easy for most people to do with a smart phone. Most of them have audio recording apps on them. There are a few things to be careful about:

Firstly make sure your phone is fully charged before you start.

Secondly clear some space in memory by deleting (or saving to a computer or cloud) photos or other media.



Thirdly turn off Bluetooth and WiFi and set the phone to Aircraft mode this will give you more recording time and ensure you don't get interrupted with a phone call.

Fourthly place the phone on a something soft so it is not on a hard table. This will stop background vibrations.

You could also record the discussion on video but that is probably a step too far for most people unless you have a proper video camera. However do take a few photos of the person being interviewed and the set up just for reference and context. When you write up the information you will want a photo of the day you did the interview.

Finally talk to [Tamworth Genealogy Group](http://www.TamworthGenealogyGroup.org.uk). We can help direct your research and writing it up. In addition we can typeset and produce a book for you. We are collecting stories of the lives of Tamworth People so that the information and the people are not lost or forgotten.

## 40 THINGS TO ASK YOUR RELATIVES

These questions were compiled by our genealogist who has many years' experience working in a family law solicitor's office in the Tamworth Area. It covers the majority, if not all the questions you need. Some may seem irrelevant but ask them anyway. For example military service, when you know none of the family served. The person you are talking to might say *"No, but your aunt was engaged to a lad who went to war and didn't come back."*

We did cheat as some of them are multi part questions but 40 Questions echoes the Biblical 40 days and nights, where 40 means "lots". Also *"200 questions to ask your granny"* would be a bit off putting. For most of the questions each sub part leads into the next sub part and are just to remind you the points you need to cover or as prompts to keep the conversation going.

Above all relax! This should be a [guided] friendly family chat like you have had many times before. **Have fun with it.**

1. What is your full name? How did your parents choose your name & does it have a special meaning?
2. When & where were you born? Where have you lived?
3. What are the full names of your parents & siblings?
4. When & where were your parents born?
5. When and where did you get married?
6. Where were your parents from originally & how did they come to live in the area you were born?
7. Were there other family members in the area?
8. What did your parents & siblings do for a living? Where did they work? How old were they when they started work?
9. Did you or your siblings have to work to contribute to the family income?
10. Did the family suffer hard times or were times good?

11. Did you know your grandparents? Who was the oldest family member you remember from your childhood?
12. What other relatives do you remember from when you were growing up?
13. What do you remember about their personalities, looks, did they have any physical characteristics that run in the family or do you have any special memories of them?
14. Do any illnesses run in the family?
15. Did anyone who wasn't a relative live with you and your family?
16. What is your earliest childhood memory?
17. Was there a naming tradition in the family e.g. the first born son being named after his paternal grandfather?
18. Have any stories been passed down about family members such as famous or infamous relatives, whether anyone played a musical instrument or served in a public office?
19. Did you or anyone serve in the military? What Service did you or they serve in? What was your or their regiment or rank? Did you or they serve in any military combat? Did they die in service, if so where and when?
20. Are any family members immigrants or a child/children of immigrants? How many of them came over? What do you know of the country from which they came? Why did they come? How did they come? Did they find it difficult when they first arrived? Have any difficulties got worse or better over the years? Did they all settle or did some return home?
21. Did any family members emigrate abroad? How many of them went? Where did they go to and why? How did they travel? Did they all settle or did some return home?

22. Are there any special heirlooms in the family such as photos, bibles, memorabilia, or objects of sentimental value? What is their origin and how have they been passed down? Was there a special item in the household that you remember?
23. What was your family home like? Did it have a bathroom? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? A telephone? Did you have to share a bedroom with your siblings?
24. What Schools did you attend? What were your favourite subjects at school? Did you enjoy School? Did you get involved in any after school activities?
25. Did you have a part time job as a teenager? What was it? Can you remember how much you earned? Did you have to contribute to the family income? How did you spend your earnings?
26. What was your first job when you left school? Where was it? Can you remember how much you earned?
27. What did you want to be when you left school? Why?
28. What were your favourite songs, books, games, toys, childhood heroes, movies, things that you liked to do?
29. Did you have any hobbies? What were they? Did you win any prizes for taking part in your hobby? Were you good at your hobby?
30. Did you have any pets? What were they & what were their names?
31. What fashions, hairstyles or other fads do you remember from your youth?
32. What inventions, social change, or developments affected your life? How did it change?
33. Can you remember life before mobile phones and computers? How was it different?

34. What activities did the family do together?
35. What did the family do on Christmas, Birthdays or holidays
36. Which historic events can you remember? (World Wars, Elizabeth II coronation, First Man on the Moon, Prince Charles and Lady Diana getting married etc)
37. What was the area you lived in like, describe it? Was it a large town, a city or a rural village? Did it have shops, transport links? What did you enjoy or was special about living there?
38. What things did you learn from your parents that have been most valuable to you during your life?
39. Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of?
40. What would be the one thing you would most want people to remember you for?



You have asked the questions and now you have a lot of information. You need to organise it and research around it. See our book on "[Where do I begin to Research my family History](#)" this will tell you where to locate the additional records to build the story. Tamworth Genealogy Group runs face-to-face meetings in Tamworth where you can ask for help.

You should start collating all the information to put it into a single story. Whilst you can put it on the various genealogy web sites, you should also construct your own document, usually using a word processor on a computer or laptop. Always have a backup copy on a USB stick as well as an online backup if you have that.

You should also scan any photos or documents. If you don't have a scanner, then photograph them as carefully as possible with a camera or a phone. And make sure you have a backup of any audio recordings you made.

Always rename the photos or scans so that the file name is descriptive. Eg **SusanBirthCert1958.jpg**. In addition, organise your notes and images into folders and back them up to a USB drive (and online cloud if you have it).

As you near completion, [Tamworth Genealogy Group](#), as part of the Holloway Society, can help produce a book for you, normally a PDF but also softback and hardback books.

Good luck and have fun with it!

The most important advice is to ask these questions sooner rather than later.

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