



Learn Computing

David Griffiths has kindly pointed us to his website: <http://www.learncomputing.ukpc.net/> with guided tutorials for basic computing. He hopes they may be useful for anyone who wishes to help family or friends learn the basics.

He also pointed us to some excellent beginner sites:

The BBC's 'First click':

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/connect/BBC_First_Click_Beginners_Guide.pdf

This is a 50 page downloadable tutorial starting from the very beginning ie Switching on Your Computer, through to a basic understanding of the internet, and sending and receiving email.

BBC 'Webwise':

'A beginner's guide to using the internet'. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/>, plenty of videos and explanatory guides to gain more confidence.

G C F 'Learn for Free':

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/computers> a wide ranging site with many free tutorials covering most aspects of computing, and Microsoft and Open Office software, eg different versions of Microsoft Word from 2000 through to 2010.

These tutorials are very easy to understand and age is no barrier, most people are frightened, because they read so many stories about hacking and security being compromised, but once you get the hang of safe surfing and secure passwords, computer software is much more intuitive and difficult to break than in the past. I've been running classes in family history for five years now and even students into their 80s are happily searching away as the classes draw towards the end.

It can be extremely satisfying to find the time to trawl through a microfilm of the town or village where your ancestor lived, and when used in conjunction with a large scale map, to visualise your ancestor waking up each morning with a view of the gasworks, or to find where pockets of your Irish immigrants congregated. To find a family living in a ginnel, or to find siblings or future partners living two streets away.

I still remember finding great granddad's original army records in a box four inches deep at the National Archives at Kew, but as these have since been digitised access to the originals is no more, now these images are available to download via Find My Past

There was a time when most of the genealogy sources on the internet were indexes only to records stored in various repositories, but commonly now series of archives are put out to commercial tender and actual images of original source material are available to download. Rather annoyingly this can mean multiple subscriptions to various pay sites, but if you are careful you can store up a stack of lookups to view in your local library via Ancestry.com's Library Edition or visit the Family History Society's Alderley Edge Resource Centre where they have free access to FindMyPast and The Genealogist.

Commercial Family History websites are now huge and unfortunately increasingly impenetrable and it is easy to give up when, after clicking the search button, you're faced with either *3,000* or *no results found*. Here's where you're likely to search out the expertise of experienced researchers who can demonstrate effective search techniques.

Gay Oliver, August 2011

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