

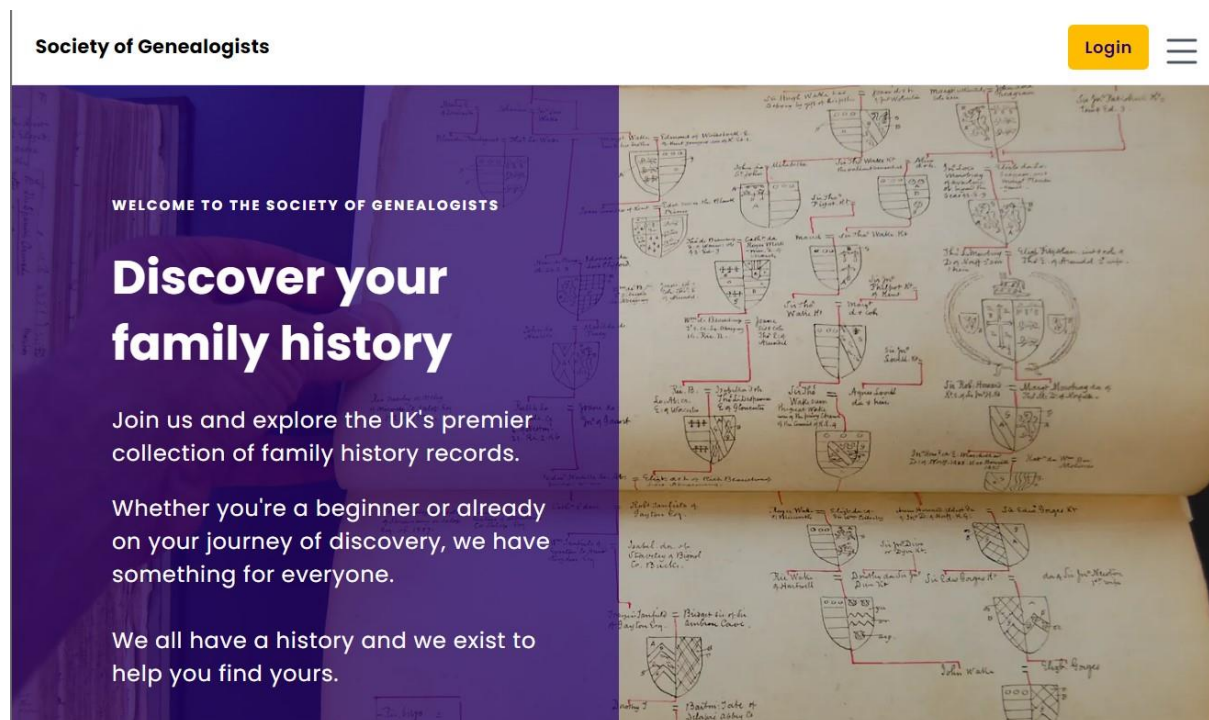
## Family History Societies

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Family history societies ‘promote and assist the study of genealogy and family history in a particular county, city, area or district’ or for particular interests, occupations or religious views.<sup>1</sup> The first family history society in Britain was the Society of Genealogists, founded in 1911. The Society,

*is a charity with a unique purpose – to help people discover their place in history. We preserve the records of everyday lives and make them available to anyone wanting to understand where they’ve come from – grassroots sources, rich data of unlikely origin, exceptional assets that capture the unfolding, unofficial history of us all.*<sup>2</sup>

The Society has a base in London and holds a large specialist genealogy library including books, journals, manuscripts, indexes, microfiche, and databases. Their unique indexes include Boyd’s Marriage Index which has over 7 million names, indexes of wills and marriage licences, London City Apprenticeships, Boyd’s Inhabitants of London as well as records such as the Bank of England will abstracts, Trinity House petitions and information on Teachers and Civil Servants.<sup>3</sup> The Society holds regular meetings and publishes guides to records.



Society of Genealogists website homepage, <https://www.sog.org.uk/>

<sup>1</sup> Mark D. Herber, *Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History* (2000), 168.

<sup>2</sup> [About us \(sog.org.uk\)](https://www.sog.org.uk/about-us)

<sup>3</sup> [About us \(sog.org.uk\)](https://www.sog.org.uk/about-us)

Until the 1960s the Society of Genealogists was the only society for family historians. In the 1960s a range of local and regional societies were established, and this growth continued apace in the 1970s and 80s to cover every part of Britain. People often join a number of societies, both near where they live and for places related to their family history. Societies carry out many activities including holding regular meetings and visits, publishing a journal, providing a library, recording monumental inscriptions and transcribing records. Family history societies have been a significant contributor to the popularity of family history in the last half-century.<sup>4</sup>

The Federation of Family History Societies was formed in 1974 to co-ordinate the growing number of societies. The Federation undertakes a range of activities including publishing useful texts and holding meetings and conferences to inform family historians. The Scottish Association of Family History Societies is the umbrella association for Scotland with members across Scotland and further afield providing a forum for information exchange amongst members.

There is a search function on the Family History Federation website to find member societies which includes English, Welsh, Northern Irish and overseas societies: [Family History Societies | Family History Federation](#). Scottish family history societies can be found here: [The Scottish Association of Family History Societies \(SAFHS\) - Membership](#)

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options: HOME, NEWS & EVENTS, FIND A SOCIETY, SURNAME INTERESTS, SPEAKERS, RESOURCES, ABOUT (highlighted), SHOP, and JOIN US. The main heading is 'About the Federation'. A sidebar on the left lists: About us, Who's who, Service company, and Contacting us. The main content area has a breadcrumb 'Home | About us' and a sub-heading: 'The Federation of Family History Societies promotes interest in researching family history and encourages membership of member societies.' Below this, it states 'The Federation:' followed by a bulleted list of four points: 1. Was formed in 1974 and granted charitable status in 1982. 2. Represents the interests of our members and family history generally. 3. Makes representation to official bodies on matters which affect the study of family history, the availability of records and other kindred topics. 4. Regularly liaises with government bodies and archives. We forge and maintain links with other relevant organisations. We focus on issues such as the preservation, security and accessibility of archival material. Organisations with whom we meet include The National Archives, General Register Office and London Metropolitan Archives.

Family History Federation 'About the Federation' webpage, <https://www.familyhistoryfederation.com/about>

<sup>4</sup> David Hey (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History* (1996), 174-5.

The historian, and especially the family historian, benefits from membership of relevant family history societies. They can be invaluable resources to discover the location of records and ways to meet other researchers to share advice. Membership is usually a small annual fee for which access to books, indexes and transcripts, series of talks, online resources and publications is the reward.

#### **Further References and Resources:**

Information for this post was taken from the websites of the [Society of Genealogists](#), [Family History Federation](#), and [The Scottish Association of Family History Societies](#). You can find more information about these organisations and their activities through these sites.

The Society of Genealogists and the Family History Federation have a tradition of informing members of news and events in the family history world. Both continue this tradition into the digital age with their monthly *Newsletter* and *Bulletin* which you can sign up to via their respective websites.