This is a list of some resources that are available to help you start your family history research if you have links with Africa.

**Finding documents for your research**

**UK records**

Records of births marriages and deaths England Wales 1837: Ancestry, Find My Past, and Free BMD

Census returns for UK 1841 – 1911 on Ancestry, Find My Past,

Military records:
- WWI solders records (Service and Pension) online at Ancestry and Find My Past,
- Memorabilia, diaries at Imperial War Museum.
- Commonwealth War Grave website for military deaths in WWI and for civilian and military deaths in WW2

Newspapers:
- Held at the British Library,
- In local archives and libraries.
- British Newspaper Archive.

Probate: Indexes to wills from 1858 are on Ancestry and Find My Past
Pre 1858, The National Archives

Ship Passenger records: c1878 – 1960 on Ancestry and Find My Past

Slave Registers/ Slavery: Slave Registers c1814 – 1835 at The National Archives, also Ancestry.
- Your best chance of finding a record of an individual who was enslaved is to find them on a slave register. However, there are no registers of enslaved people before 1812. The best place to find information about an enslaved person before 1812 is in the private papers of the slave owner, or in records about the owner or his or her property. Papers might still be with the family or deposited in a local archive or library where the family lived or settled. A search for records of an enslaved person will be much more difficult if you do not know at least two of the following:
  - the name of the enslaved person and the slave owner, including possible variations in spelling – bear in mind that not all enslaved people had surnames
  - where they lived, including the parish if possible
  - as much information as possible about dates of births, marriages and deaths

**African Records**

Most Caribbean people have African ancestors. It has been estimated that more than 1.6 million people were transported between Africa and the Caribbean between 1640 and 1807. Once in the Caribbean, these people were enslaved and forced to toil on the plantations and in households. Although the British slave trade from Africa was abolished in 1807, emancipation of the people did not occur until 1 August 1834. See our guide on Caribbean family history resources for more information.
Civil registration: They are usually be held at the record office, archive department or similar government department, if they exist. Coverage varies greatly across the continent.

Census: These are usually held at the record office, archive department or similar government department. Most are very recent and only give statistical information.

A South African Domesday Book: the first Union census of 1911

The Union of South Africa was established in May 1910. The first census of the new united states took place in May 1911. It may therefore be regarded as a foundational, Domesday survey of the country, covering its population, housing, livestock, agriculture and industries. Some of the details have been lost and with the destruction of most of the original records, there is only a limited possibility of reconstructing the unpublished data. Nevertheless, in scope and inclusiveness, it was never repeated, and therefore remains an under-utilised landmark in the history of the country.

The enumerators’ summary books have survived and are retained by Statistics South Africa in Pretoria. Currently, access to them is restricted.

Online parish records of baptism, marriage and burial:
Very limited coverage, Family Search Resource Wiki, is very good with links for different areas of Africa. Ancestry has some records, mainly for South Africa.

Original parish records: These are usually held at record offices, archive department or similar government department, Family Search Wiki has lots of links and guidelines

Probate: These are usually held at the record office, archive department or similar government department.

African links and resources

Borthwick Institute
Borthwick Institute of Historical Research

Holds extensive primary source materials on southern Africa with a strong emphasis on Rhodesia and parts of South Africa in the post Second World War period.

British Library
www.bl.uk/collection-guides/african-manuscripts-and-archives

The British Library’s manuscript collections includes material from across the African continent. They also have important records and private papers connected with Africa.

Manuscripts and archives from and about Africa include:
• manuscripts from Ethiopia and North Africa
• small collections of manuscripts from West and East Africa, mainly in Arabic and Swahili
• private papers of many prominent British administrators, politicians and military men connected with Africa
• digital images of archives held elsewhere, which have been preserved by the Endangered Archives Programme.
• Digitised Manuscripts and the Online Gallery give access to a selection of African material, and some manuscripts are also showcased in the West Africa online exhibition.
The National Archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

UK Government records on Africa are held at The National Archives, and their catalogue also allows you to locate archives in other institutions.

South African Wars (1899 – 1902) Units raised in South Africa, includes details of men who enrolled, alphabetically and by unit name (WO128 & WO 129)


Royal West African Frontier Force (1900 – 1912) Formed from various West African Forces 1900, correspondence relating to CO 442 & 820


Long Service and Good Conduct award Registers (WO372)

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/africa/

Explore incredible photographs spanning over 100 years of African history, from the 1860s onwards, taken from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office photographic collection (CO 1069). The full collection can be seen on Flickr, where you can add comments and tags.

Black Cultural Archives

www.bcaheritage.org.uk

Black Cultural Archives is the only national heritage centre dedicated to collecting, preserving and celebrating the histories of African and Caribbean people in Britain.

Other Links and Resources

https://archives-africa.org/

Archives Africa, enabling online access for the first time to a wealth of previously unexplored records on the history of Madagascar.

https://guides.library.columbia.edu/basic_guide_to_research_on_africa/archives

Basic Guide to Research on Africa

Family Search

www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/South_Africa_Archives_and_Libraries


Guide to South Africa Online Genealogy Records for researching ancestry, family history and genealogy: birth, marriage, death, census, church, military, immigration, and naturalization records.
Bodleian Library

**Commonwealth and African Collections of the Bodleian Library**

This has very extensive collections of the papers of individuals and organisations relating to Africa.

Durham University

[www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/sudan/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/sudan/)

This is a specialist archive at the University of Durham.

Missionary Collection

[www.mundus.ac.uk/index.html](http://www.mundus.ac.uk/index.html)

Gateway to missionary collections in the United Kingdom

Reading

- [Researching African-Caribbean family history](http://www.genuki.org.uk/) in the family history section of the BBC website.
- Read the articles on [slaves and slavery](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) on Your Archives. Also see The National Archives’ exhibition pages on the [abolition of slavery](http://www.ancestry.co.uk).
- Use the database on the [Legacies of British slave-ownership](https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/governance/services/south-african-genealogy) website to search for a slave-owner or an individual related professionally or personally to a slave-owner. This can act as an index to slave compensation returns in T71 (see above).

Genuki: [www.genuki.org.uk/](http://www.genuki.org.uk/)

Cyndi’s List: [https://www.cyndislist.com/africa/](https://www.cyndislist.com/africa/)

Find My Past: [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

Ancestry: [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

Research South African genealogy on the internet

[https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/governance/services/south-african-genealogy](https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/governance/services/south-african-genealogy)

A branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa


Genealogical Society of South Africa


Stamouers Website

[https://www.stamouers.com/](http://www.stamouers.com/)

My Heritage
https://www.myheritage.com/search-records

South African Government

South African ancestry and family tree research
http://www.ancestor.co.za/

Book List

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<td>Tracing Your Boar War Ancestors</td>
<td>Jane Marchese Robinson</td>
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<td>A tree without roots: the guide to tracing British, African and Asian Caribbean ancestry</td>
<td>Paul Crooks</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>Immigrants and aliens: guides to sources on UK immigration and citizenship</td>
<td>R Kershaw &amp; M Pearsall</td>
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<td>The Trader, the Owner, The Slave: parallel lives in the Age of Slavery</td>
<td>James Walvin</td>
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<td>Miranda Kauffmann</td>
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<td>Black and British: a forgotten history</td>
<td>David Olusoga</td>
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<td>Black Poppies: Britain’s black community and the Great War</td>
<td>Stephen Bourne</td>
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<td>The Motherland calls: Britain’s black servicemen and women 1939-1945</td>
<td>Stephen Bourne</td>
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