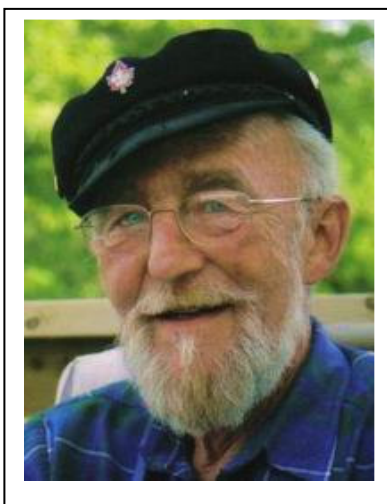


# The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #26

## Readers' Corner



One of the joys of writing this column is the number of wonderful people I meet who have read a column and contact me. Marion Brooks of Kars picked up a copy while visiting family in Pakenham and she e-mailed the note below. I think the query and response will be of interest to a number of readers so, with her permission, I am sharing it with you.

“Hello: I read your article ...- I found it of interest as I am wanting to research my husband’s family name . Would you have any other tips or information that would be useful to me - The family came from England - I have found a few websites. I hope to hear from you and thank you. Marion ”

“Hi Marion

Welcome to the bewildering world of Family History research. There are many people in a similar situation to yours and most of us who have been involved for some time started in

much the same way. The short answer to your question is yes I can suggest a number of resources that might have helpful information BUT there are a few things that must be done first.

There are thousands of people and hundreds of families who have the same name but are not related, so you have to be in a position to know that the person you are researching in England is, in fact, related. The only way to do this is to work backwards from what you know to what you want to know.

Knowing where information can be found only becomes really important when we have a very specific piece of information we are looking for, otherwise it is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The next column will deal with asking the right questions, please watch for it.

I wrote a column a few weeks ago on “Getting Started” but, in case you missed it, I am including a copy as an attachment to this e-mail. You will have to trace your husband’s family back to the first one who arrived in Canada. Who were his parents? Where did they come from? Grab every scrap of information you can and document it because some family stories are not 100% correct and no one’s memory is perfect.

At that point you can start looking for his parents in England and work backwards from them to earlier ancestors. I have dealt and will continue to deal with a variety of sources for researching English ancestors in subsequent columns but, if you are ready for them before that, let me know where you are in your research and what specifically you are looking for and I will fast track the information to you .

Lots of luck with your research and please make sure to have fun with it. Lots of us find it addictive. Patrick”

The early days of research are also the best time to start using a standardized form for recording your findings. A good form will have spaces for all the key information, including the source of it, and the empty spaces are a reminder of what still has to be looked for. Sample forms are available in introductory books on genealogy and family history. I listed a number of sources of free forms in a previous column and I can e-mail the information to anyone who needs it.

As your files start getting a little unwieldy, you might consider using a computer program as most researchers do. There are a number of these on the market and most of them are very user friendly. You really don’t have to know much about computers to use them. I have not tested them all but I am very happy with the one I use, *Personal Ancestral File* (PAF) .

PAF is available at no charge from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and can be downloaded right into your computer. It comes with an extensive help manual. You can find it at: [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) . It is one of the most popular and the price is right.