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## Preface

About ten years ago when I found myself hurtling toward the grand old age of fifty, I began, for the first time, to feel mortal. It was about this time that the BBC series “Who Do You Think You Are?” was first aired and one of the first celebrities to participate was the actress Amanda Redman, who had been in my class at school. This got me thinking about my own ancestors. I realised that I didn’t even know the Christian names of my grandparents or my grandmothers’ maiden names! Fortunately for me, the wonderful World Wide Web had now taken a firm foothold and it was possible to find these things out. Unfortunately for me, my parents had both passed away and I had lost all contact with elderly aunts and uncles, so I didn’t have much of a starting point.

However, with patience and determination over the next couple of years I spent a lot of my spare time delving into that strange country they call the past, or at least the areas of it that were graced by my ancestors.

I discovered chimney sweeps and gamekeepers, blacksmiths and agricultural labourers, fishmongers and midwives to name but a few. I uncovered dark secrets of illegitimacy and crime and sad tales of poverty and the workhouse. I suppose when I began I was hoping to find I was descended from an Earl or a famous scientist, perhaps even a renowned actress, but it wasn’t to be. Like the majority of people from Britain’s past, my ancestors were working class. They were poor, illiterate and they often met with disease and early death. I think by learning all this, not only did it connect me to my ancestors, it also made me thankful that I was born in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and did not have to endure the hardships of the past.

Since tracing my own family tree (and it is an ongoing project as more and more resources become available), I have had the pleasure of discovering the ancestors of friends and extended family, many of whom said to me “You should do this for a living!” So I did and the rest is history.

I now want to help others on their own voyage into the past. Hiring a professional is not always an option, but with time and patience and a few tips on the dos and don'ts, it *is* possible to Grow Your Own Family Tree.

In this book I will stick to what I know best, that is the British Isles. With all its variations in language, culture and class it is as fascinating a journey as anywhere in the world.

Good Luck and I hope your journey is as exciting and enlightening as mine.

Pauline Golds  
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Grow Your Own Family Tree-A Comprehensive Guide to Tracing Your Ancestry