

Provider Spotlight – Linda Rhead

Since Expert Connect launched at the end of June 2009, a number of professional genealogists have had a few months to try the service. They have found some great new clients and completed a number of family history research projects.

[Linda Rhead](#) registered on Expert Connect in September 2009 and has already finished 25 projects. Linda operates her Shires Genealogy business out of Shropshire, in the United Kingdom. We asked Linda to let us know more about her business.



EC [Expert Connect]: How did you first get interested in genealogy?

LR [Linda Rhead]: I first became interested in genealogy many years ago when I discovered that my father, who had died when I was only one month old from Leukaemia, had never known who his father was. I was a teenager at the time of my discovery and vowed that one day I would find out who my paternal grandfather was. The only person still alive at that time to give me any information was my aunt, my dad's sister, older than he by 19 years. She told me the surname of the man who had been my grandfather, that he was already married when my dad was born but had had two children with my grandmother. She told me the area he had lived in and that he too had been dead a long time, but, had been alive still when my father was ill in 1951, and that even though he had never acknowledged him as his son he wanted to see him. He had approached my aunt to seek permission, who in turn asked my mother, however, she refused to let him visit as my dad was seriously ill and she could see no further than that. In her defence she was only 21 and had only just discovered the husband she adored was going to die, plus she had only recently come out of hospital herself after giving birth to me, so understandably probably not in the best frame of mind to deal with such a request.

Anyhow, I stored away the information my aunt had given to me, having no clue at that time what I was going to do with it. I was 18, and this was long before computers were a household

thing. Then years later in my late thirties as my own children were growing up I began the long slow process of sitting in my local archive library searching for clues, so that I would have answers for them about their ancestry, sadly, all to no avail. Then along came Ancestry.co.uk and I took out a subscription, the rest as they say is history. I found without any doubt who my grandfather had been , I found him as a young man on the 1891 and 1901 census records, I found his marriage record , I discovered that his sister had married my grandmother's brother and that the families were closely connected by the community they lived in. I built up a whole family history for him right back to my 7 x great grandparents. I found new cousins both in England and Canada, but best of all I found exactly when my grandfather had died, and where he was buried, ironically, no more than 200 metres from the son who never knew him. I now visit them both, my father and my grandfather. It took many years but without Ancestry as my main research tool I truly believe would not have been possible.

EC: You are also a member of the [Association of Professional Genealogists](#) (APG). Do you find that membership helps you either win clients and/or complete project work based on experiences you've had as a member?

LR: In my opinion membership of APG does give a certain status which I do believe gives potential clients more confidence, and it has brought me several enquiries about my work which otherwise I don't think I'd have had.

EC: Do you actively participate in any other genealogy forums, societies, other groups?

LR: Yes I do, I belong to the British Genealogy group and take an active role in the forum, it's great to be able to help others and exchange experiences. Everyone within the group is so helpful and friendly. I am also an active member of several County Parish History Societies- Staffordshire, Yorkshire and Clwyd.

EC: You mention on your profile that you have also transcribed old and ancient parish registers. Can you give a little background on what registers are, and how you became interested in them?

LR: The registers I have transcribed have been for the Staffordshire Parish Register Society. These are Parish Registers held by the Church, documenting births, marriages and deaths for each particular parish dating back to the mid-1600s before it became mandatory in 1837 for birth, marriage and deaths to be registered nationally here in England. The actual original registers are photographed page by page and then volunteers such as myself transcribe them from their original form into documents that are then printed in book form or onto CD. At present I am working on the Parish of Eccleshall, Staffordshire, from 1653-1837.

EC: When did you decide to "set up shop" as an independent genealogy research consultant?

LR: I'd thought about it before, but to be honest didn't have the wherewithal to be able to do it on a vast scale, so I contented myself with working with people in my local community, friends and family, and then last September I discovered Expert Connect, and a whole new world opened up for me. Here was my opportunity to be able to help others, to teach and to encourage, to search and discover, unlock mysteries similar to my own. After so many years doing my own research and also building trees and histories for friends and family merely for the love of it, and doing research which had taken me, in a virtual world, not only across the length and breadth of the UK, but also to America, Canada, India, Sweden and Australia, I felt I had the necessary knowledge, experience and tenacity to help others.

EC: Describe your experiences on Expert Connect.

LR: Not only has my business increased several-fold, with some of my clients returning to me with a second project, some have also become firm friends. I love my work, the buzz I get from finding something new and interesting for a client is just brilliant, and their reactions are amazing. I put a lot into my research and aside from simply researching the family history I like to include photographs of places my clients' ancestors have live and worked, any interesting stories I may stumble upon. One client had an ancestor who was believed to have been a police officer of some rank in England in the late 19th, early 20th century and after several hours searching I managed to find a series of articles written about him documenting his whole life story , plus photographs and details of medals and awards he had earned. It was a brilliant moment, and she was thrilled to say the least. That's what makes it so worthwhile, that feeling of achieving something that makes someone else so happy.

EC: In addition to genealogy, what other interests do you have?

LR: Other than genealogy which I do from my home office, I am a hands-on grandparent, a keen gardener, I like to grow lots of my own produce , and have also recently successfully completed an Open University course on family history.

EC: Thanks for your time, Linda. Best of luck on the continued success of Shires Genealogy!

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