

The Henry Smith Charity

founded in 1628

Kindred Widening Frequent Questions

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What is the Kindred programme?

When Henry Smith died in 1628 he left money in his Will to help people in his family (his 'Kindred') who were in financial need. We have maintained a family tree of people registered with us since that time. Many branches of the family tree date back to the 1600s. Henry had no children. Everyone on the family tree is descended from Henry's sister Joan.

Who was Henry Smith?

Today we would describe Henry as a philanthropist. He was born in Wandsworth in 1548 and spent his adult life in London. He died a wealthy man as a result of his business dealings, and set up a range of trusts to govern how his fortune should be used. The Henry Smith Charity has existed since Henry's death in 1628 and was registered in its current form in 1963.

Why are you contacting me now?

Throughout the centuries the onus has been on Kindred to contact us if they wanted to register themselves or other family members (e.g. when they married or had children). However, we know there are many branches of the family who, for one reason or another, stopped registering with us. Lots of these families will not have passed on information about the Kindred programme to their descendants, so many people are unaware of their link to our family tree, or the help we can offer. Because of this we are undertaking a research project to see whether we can find and reconnect with these families.

Why haven't you contacted me before?

This kind of research has only recently become possible with the arrival of genealogical websites such as Ancestry, and in recent years there has been a big increase in the amount of other information available online, which has helped our research.

How did you find my address?

Our main way of finding people is the Electoral Roll. A version of it can be searched online.

Not everyone in my family received a letter from you. Why is this?

If someone is not registered to vote, opts out of the published version of the Electoral Roll or if there are lots of people that share the same name, it is more difficult for us to find an address for them, or be sure we are writing to the right person.

Can I pass the information on to other family members?

Yes, please do, and ask them to get in touch. We are hoping people we contact will help us find other family members. However, please contact us first to clarify which part of your family is on our tree. Only relatives who share the same link to our family tree will be eligible to register. For instance, cousins on your father's side of the family would not be eligible if the link to our tree is through your mother's family.

How big is the Kindred family tree?

There were 6,000 people on the family tree when we began our research, of which we estimated around 1,500 were alive. The tree is growing all the time now that our research is underway - more than 3,000 living Kindred are now registered with us.

Where can I find more information about the Kindred programme?

There is more information in the Kindred section of our website, including a downloadable guide to the type and range of help we can offer.

What will I need to do to register?

We will need to ask you a few questions to verify we have found the right person, but unless you wish to make an application most people will not need to provide us with any other information at this stage.

I don't need help at the moment. Should I still register?

It is a good idea to be registered with us, regardless of whether or not you need help now as there may come a time when we can help you or your descendants. If you were to need help in a hurry – e.g. because you encounter a crisis, we would be able to respond far more quickly if you are already registered.

We also hold a family tree dating back to the 1600s and can provide you with information about your ancestors if you are interested in finding out more.

I would like to make an application or find out more about my family tree. What should I do?

Please phone us on 020 7264 4970 and select option 2 from the menu to reach the Kindred Team, or email us at kindred@henrysmithcharity.org.uk. Our address, should you prefer to write to us is The Henry Smith Charity, 65 Leadenhall Street, London EC3A 2AD.

I think I have received your letter in error. What should I do?

Please get in touch. We have been as careful as we can to ensure we write to the right people, but it is not always easy to be 100% sure. We will be able to clarify with a couple of quick questions if you are not the person we are looking for.

What else does The Henry Smith Charity do?

We are best known for the grants we make to organisations throughout the UK. Our grant programmes distributed £39.8m in 2021, mainly to support projects that help people and communities at a time of need and to bring about positive change. You can find out more about our work on our website

You can also check us out using the 'Search for a charity' section of the Charity Commission's website. Our charity number is 230102.