

# National Archives Indexes

## South Africa “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

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### GOAL

Learn to use the online index of the South Africa National Archives, and how to use the online index to identify death notices held in the Family History Library.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Archives of South Africa is creating an online index of the holdings of all of their repositories. Available at the National Archives' website, the index is called **NAAIRS**, which stands for **N**ational **A**utomated **A**rchive **I**nformation **R**etrieval **S**ystem. NAAIRS is a central finding aid for all archives repositories in South Africa. They are still adding entries (estimated at 250,000 entries per year). The holdings of the National Archives includes genealogically valuable records such as death notices, estate files, wills, inventories, distributions, divorce records, and some gravestones, as well as historically interesting records including property, court disputes, photographs, audio/visual items, and oral records.

### HOW TO

Although the National Archives has numerous collections, the records that are by far most useful in genealogical research are death notices and estate files. All death notices and estate files have been indexed by the NAAIRS website, and most pre-1950 death notices have been microfilmed and are available at the Family History Library.

#### Accessing the NAAIRS site

- Go to [www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs.htm](http://www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs.htm). You can do a google search for “NAAIRS” and it should be the first entry that appears.
- Click on “Search National Automated Archive Information Retrieval System,” located in the left bar of the website.
- The archives are organized by pre-1994 provinces. You can limit the geographical results by choosing one provincial archive, or you can search all collections. The following abbreviations will help:

**KAB:** Cape Province

**NAB:** Natal

**TAB:** Transvaal

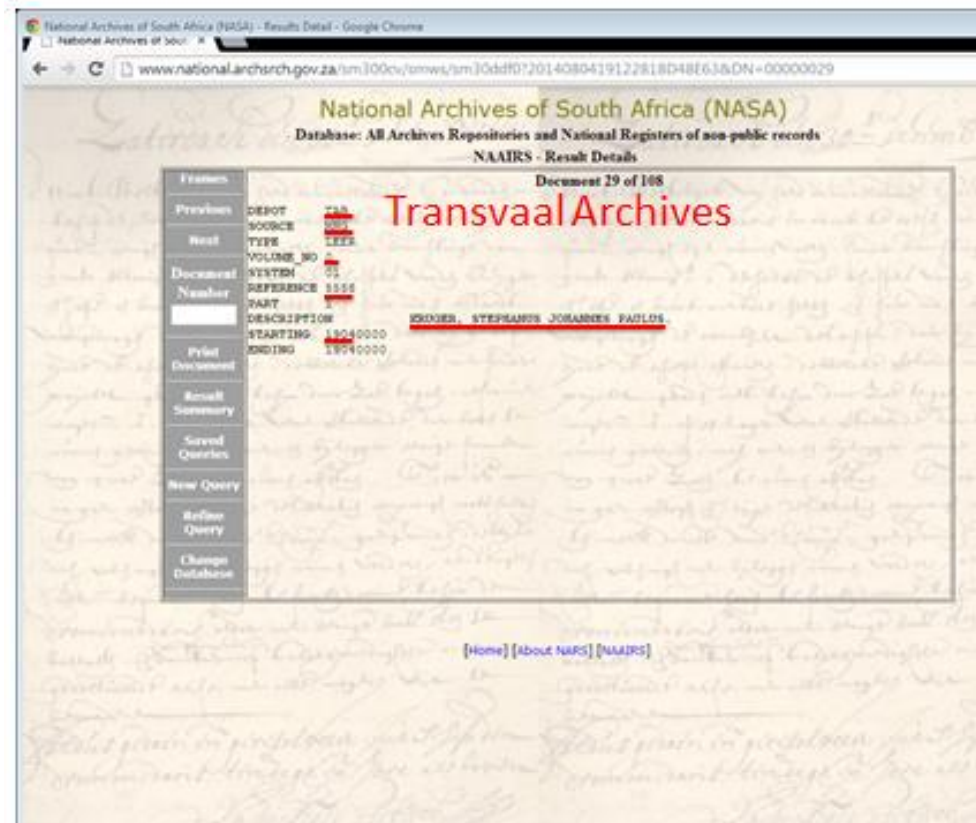
**VAB:** Orange Free State

**RSA:** Search in all archives

When a result is found, note all important data. This includes:

- Archive Depot
- Source Type
- Volume
- Reference
- Name
- Year

You will need this information to find the document, whether in the collections available at the Family History Library or at the archives in South Africa.



## Search Tips

- You can only do a search for exact search (no wild cards). Enter multiple fields to limit data, both under “Search Words” and date.
- If the province of residence is known, search only that provincial archive.
- Consider using both the husband’s and wife’s maiden surnames when searching a couple. Bear in mind, however, that in some cases only the husband’s surname was indexed.

## Accessing the Archival Records

- Identify the type of document. If it is a death notice or estate file, it is likely that the record is available at the Family History Library. In many cases, the words “death notice,” “estate,” or “estate file” appear in the indexed record. Other non-death notice records will contain descriptions like liquidation, divorce, will, administration, or other descriptions. If the record is just a name, it may very well be a death notice.
- If the record is unclear, look at the source type. Death notices and estate files have specific source types that are only used for these records. Use the following list to determine the type of record:

- **MOOC** – Death notice or estate file of the Cape Province
- **MHG** – Death notice or estate file of the Orange Free State and Transvaal
- **MSCE** – Death notice or estate file of Natal
- Most death notices before 1950 are available at the Family History Library on microfilm.
- Many post-1950 estate files are available digitally at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), including Orange Free State files 1951-2006 and Cape Province files 1951-1953, 1962-1971, and 1974.
- Other death notices are only available at archival research centers in South Africa.
- Wills, inventories, divorce records, disputes, and court records are all only available at the archival research centers in South Africa.

### **Acquiring Death Notices and Estate Files from FamilySearch:**

- A FamilySearch Wiki article has been created discussing death notices. To access this article, click on [www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/South\\_Africa\\_Genealogy](http://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/South_Africa_Genealogy) to get to the main South Africa Wiki page.
- In the bar on the left side of the page, find the entry “Probate Records” and click on it.
- Choose the province of interest.
- Under the heading “Microfilmed records at the Family History Library”, click on the link provided. This will take you to the FamilySearch Catalog page for the death notice collection for that province. Read the Wiki article for instructions on how to locate the Family History Library microfilm number for the death notice or estate file.
- Each province organized their death notices and estate files differently. The Orange Free State, for example, organized them by first letter of the last name until 1922, when they switched to a strictly numerical system. Others used numerical systems that ran for several years, then later switched to restarting numbering the death notices for each year. Note carefully how the records are organized. The FamilySearch catalog will list the estate file numbers, followed by the year or years which are covered.
- Use the information from the NAAIRS index entry, including reference number and year, to locate the microfilm number. If the death notice or estate file is available in the FamilySearch online digitized collections, go to the following link: [www.familysearch.org/search/collection/location/1927115](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/location/1927115) to access the South African collection. Please note that those records listed under the “Indexed Historical Records” section aren’t necessarily fully indexed.

### **Acquiring other documents from the South African Archives vis eGGSa:**

For records not available at the Family History Library or from FamilySearch, including many post-1950 estate files and all wills, inventories, and other records found in NAAIRS, the eGGSa,

or virtual branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa, has volunteers who will perform searches and gather documents on-site from the archives in South Africa. To order these documents, do the following:

- Go to the website [www.egggsa.org](http://www.egggsa.org)
- Find the section “Document Ordering Service”, located on the right side of the website. Click on the “FAQ” link in that section.
- Read through the information on this page. Then click on the option, “How do I place my order”
- Read through this section of the website, as well as the section labeled “Terms and Conditions”. Under “Terms and Conditions,” click on the link under item 3, labeled “Online shopping service.”
- After you have read the terms listed on this screen, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on “I accept these terms”. Make sure to note the charges for the documents, as this fee must be paid prior to receiving the documents.
- Fill out the information on the form provided, and click on “Continue”
- Use the form to order the requested document. Be sure to fill out all requested information: Quantity, Depot/Repository, Source and Volume number, Document Description, and Notes, explaining what types of documents are requested (e.g., death notice, will, inventory, etc.). All of this information will be found in the NAAIRS database index entry. Multiple documents may be ordered at a time.
- NOTE: Any records from the Cape Town archive cannot be ordered via eGGSA, as the archive has banned all duplication of the documents in their archive except by staff members. Contact the archive at [rmwcape@dac.gov.za](mailto:rmwcape@dac.gov.za) for further information.

## PRACTICE

1. Go to the NAAIRS website. You may do a Google search for “NAAIRS” or go to the website at [www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs.htm](http://www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs.htm).
2. On the left bar of the webpage, click on the link titled “Search National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System.”
3. Click on the option “RSA – All Archives Repositories and National Registers of non-public records.”
4. Under “Search Words”, type in the surname “Brits.” Click on the Search button.
5. The query was located in 12377 documents. This is too many to search through. Look in the darkened headings and click on “New Query.”
6. Under “Search Words”, type in the surname “Brits” and the given names “Rudolph” and

“Marthinus.” **Type each name on a separate line.** Click on the Search button.

7. This query resulted in much fewer documents – 18. This is much easier to manage. Under the darkened headings, click on “Result Summary.”
8. Each result of the search is now displayed. That there are different types of documents displayed for the search terms. Locate the entry for Brits, Rudolph Marthinus, with a begin date and end date of 1898. Click on Rudolph Marthinus Brits’ name.
9. This is the detail view of the entry for Rudolph Marthinus Brits. The following information for this entry is necessary to find the record for him in the Family History Library:

Depot	Source	Reference	Description	Starting/Ending
VAB	MHG	B1509	Brits, Rudolph Marthinus	1898 - 1898

10. Using the list at the beginning of this document, identify the province that the Depot covers. In this instance, the Depot VAB indicates that the record came from the Orange Free State.
11. With this information, it is now possible to identify the microfilm number where the record can be found. Go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). Hover or click on the heading “Search.” Select “Wiki” from the drop list or from the heading under “Search.” In the search box, type the country “South Africa” and press the Enter key.
12. From the list that appears, click on the entry “South Africa Genealogy.” It should be located at the top of the list.
13. On the left side of the page, under “Topics,” find and click on the bulleted entry labeled “Probate Records.”
14. The province has been identified as Orange Free State. Click on the link entitled “Orange Free State.”
15. Read through the description on the Wiki page. Under the heading “Microfilmed records at the Family History Library,” click on the word “**here**” in the sentence. This will open up the FamilySearch Catalog entry for the death notices available at the Family History Library for the Orange Free State.
16. The catalog entry is called “Estate files, Orange Free State, 1832-1989.” Notice that the collection contains 385 microfilm rolls. Scroll partway down the list until you are in the “B” section. Identify the microfilm description that includes the estate file B1509. Follow the entry across, and the microfilm number will be listed, in this case, 1367718.

## ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.