

2nd edition

Family History on the Cheap



an Unlock the Past
guide book...

Shauna Hicks —



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About the author



Shauna Hicks

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Shauna has a number of tertiary qualification including a BA in History and Anthropology from the University of Queensland and a MA in Australia Studies from Griffith University (Qld). She also holds a Graduate Diploma in Library Science from the Queensland University of Technology and a Diploma in Family Historical Studies from the Society of Australian Genealogists.

Shauna is also a Fellow of the Queensland Family History Society, in 2007 was awarded a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Australian Society of Archivists and in 2009 received the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations Award for Meritorious Services to Family History.



Unlock the Past is about promoting history, genealogy and heritage in Australia, New Zealand and beyond. It is a collaborative venture involving a team of expert speakers, writers, organisations and commercial partners throughout Australia, New Zealand and overseas.

What is Unlock the Past?

- a major events resource—supporting existing events and running major events of our own
- a publisher of important guide books
- a major go-to place for genealogy, history and heritage products, services and other resources—with online general and events directories
- a significant free content site

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- Genealogy ebooks (2013) — www.gen-ebooks.com
- Unlock the Past cruises (international) (2013) — www.unlockthepastcruises.com

Family history
on the cheap

Shauna Hicks

2016



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Abbreviations

AAGRA	Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
APG	Association of Professional Genealogists
BDA	Biographical Database of Australia
DDSS	Demographical Database for Southern Sweden
DipFHS	Diploma of Family Historical Studies
FHC	Family History Centre
GEDCOM	GE nealogical DA ta COM munications genealogical standard data format
GIN	Genealogical Index of Names
GOONS	Guild of One Name Studies
GRD	<i>Genealogical Research Directory</i>
GRO	General Register Office
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
MI	Monumental inscriptions
NLA	National Library of Australia
OPC	Online Parish Clerk
QFHS	Queensland Family History Society (Brisbane)
SAE	self addressed envelope
SSAE	stamped self addressed envelope
URL	Unique Record Locator
UTP	Unlock the Past

Preface

Many years ago I attended a seminar by the late Janet Reakes on how to save time and money when doing family history research. I purchased her publication *Short cuts and money saving ideas for genealogy* (1989) and it saved me time and money. I quickly recouped the cost of the book and it paid for itself many times over.

Twenty years later in 2009, I wrote the first edition of this publication. By then there were even more ways to save time and money doing family history research. Now another seven years later, the internet and social media have changed the way we do research. Now it is so much faster and we can almost do it instantaneously. Of course we need to remember that not everything is online and that personal visits to archives, libraries and other research institutions are still necessary.

This second edition of *Family history on the cheap* offers a wide range of tips and tricks for saving time and money while doing family history research in the 21st century.

Throughout the book I have given examples from my own research over the years. These are just an indication of the type of information that can be discovered. I encourage all readers to think laterally and not restrict themselves to the 'usual suspects' when researching.

I trust that readers find this second edition as equally useful as I found Janet's book all those years ago. Let me know your success stories and if you have any further tips and tricks, please share them so that we can all benefit.

Best wishes with your family history research.

Shauna Hicks

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<http://diaryofanaustraliangenealogist.blogspot.com.au>

Introduction

In recent years we have all experienced increased costs of living and, where necessary, genealogists and family historians have cut back spending on their research. Rather than giving up on their addictive hobby, they have looked for ways of doing it cheaper.

Technology allows us to look to the internet for faster and easier ways of doing our genealogy and family history research. Today we can logon and see, for example, digitised copies of English census records within minutes of putting in an ancestor's name. Previously we would spend hours peering into a microfilm reader after having waited weeks for the microfilm to arrive. Assuming that we already knew where they were on census night!

However, the internet is a huge area which is constantly changing and it is a challenge to keep up with new resources. This is where Google and other search engines can be our best friends. This edition has a new section on making the most of Google searches and it also looks briefly at other Google tools useful for genealogy and family history research.

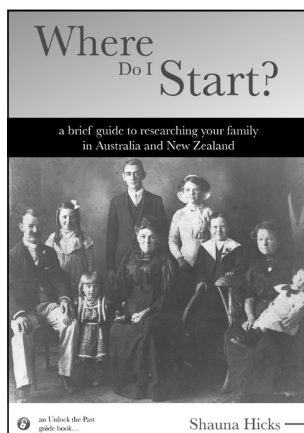
Another new section looks at online learning. There are some wonderful free courses, webinars, podcasts and other resources to help us learn new skills and keep up with exciting new technology.

It is simply not possible to list every time and money saving tip of interest to everyone. This edition therefore attempts to capture the various types of savings, in both time and money that can be made when doing research in this digital world we now live in. From this broad approach, you will be able to narrow down to your own specific needs and find your own time and money saving tips.

Brief introduction to family history

The terms family history and genealogy are often used interchangeably but they are quite different although related. Simply put, genealogy is usually the tracing of a pedigree line whereas family history includes genealogy but has more context. It places a family within the history of the times and community in which they lived.

Both family history and genealogy can be addictive, expensive and time consuming but it is also the kind of research that can be done piecemeal, as time and money permit.



*'How to' guides can be good
places to start your research*

For those who are just starting out, my research guide *Where do I start?: a brief guide to researching your family history in Australia and New Zealand* introduces people to research in a weekly program. Chapters include:

- Week 1 Look for home sources and stay tuned
- Week 2 Build strong foundations - certificates, history and geography
- Week 3 Has your family been researched by others?
- Week 4 Flesh out the family using archives
- Week 5 Flesh out the family using libraries
- Week 6 Get help from genealogy and family history societies
- Week 7 Discover more family stories
- Week 8 Use social media to discover more relatives
- Week 9 Write your family stories and learn more
- Week 10 Overseas research

There is also a select timeline, bibliography and index. The guide is published by Unlock the Past and is available online from Gould Genealogy & History **www.gould.com.au**.

There are also many 'how to' books and one of my favourites in Australia is *Family history for beginners and beyond* published by the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra **www.hagsoc.org.au** and now in its 15th edition (2016). It has the usual information such as where to begin, how to get organised, using family history computer programs, resources in archives and libraries, birth death and marriage certificates, immigration and other family history subject areas.

It is worthwhile to read more than one 'how to' book as they quite often have different tips or ideas which just might be relevant to your own research.

There are more 'how to' and source books listed in the Bibliography. The majority of them may be in your local library or available through interlibrary loan.

Although purchasing your own books costs money, sometimes it is useful to have basic text books on hand to save time. There are a number of places to purchase family history books and quite often the larger societies such as the Genealogical Society of Victoria, Melbourne **www.gsv.org.au**, Queensland Family History Society, Brisbane **www.qfhs.org.au** and the Society of Australian Genealogists, Sydney **www.sag.org.au** have bookshops at their premises and also online.

Commercial suppliers / publishers of genealogical material include Gould Genealogy & History **www.gould.com.au** and Archive Digital Books Australasia (available from Gould Genealogy & History). Other online suppliers include eBay **www.ebay.com**, Amazon Books **www.amazon.com** and Google Books **www.googlebooks.com** especially if you are looking for out of print books.

As well as books, there are also genealogy and family history magazines which are available as a subscription, for purchase at your local newsagent or maybe available for loan at your local library. There are a range of UK genealogy magazines and two Australian magazines which I think researchers should be aware of.

Inside History Magazine **www.insidehistory.com.au** is published every two months and has excellent articles on social history and heritage topics as well as in depth advice on genealogy and family history.

Australian Family Tree Connections **www.aftc.com.au** is a monthly magazine for Australian and New Zealand family historians. The majority of articles in *Australian Family Tree Connections* are written by individuals researching their own family history. It is one way to have your own ancestor stories published and you may even find family connections.

Both magazines are an easy way to keep up to date with what is happening in Australasia and are available through newsagents, libraries, societies and by subscription.

If you are totally new to family history, there are some basic rules that should always be complied with. For example, in *Australian Family Tree Connections* every issue lists the *Golden Rules of Genealogy*. Many are simple common sense such as not believing everything in a document, being aware of spelling variations for names

and places, having at least two separate sources of proof for each event and working back from yourself generation by generation.

In recent years we have been privileged to hear UK, US and Canadian genealogy speakers at genealogy conferences in Australia and New Zealand and also on Unlock the Past's genealogy cruises **www.unlockthepastcruises.com**. These overseas speakers have introduced us to a slightly different, more rigorous genealogical methodology including evidence analysis and the Genealogical Proof Standard.

In *Professional genealogy: a manual for researchers, writers, editors, lecturers and librarians* edited by Elizabeth Shown Mills, chapter 17 'Evidence analysis' written by Donn Devine explains in detail how the Genealogical Proof Standard is met by the following tests:

- research has been systematic and exhaustive
- evidence is reliable and correctly interpreted
- any contradictory evidence is soundly rebutted
- each statement of fact is scrupulously documented
- every deduction is clearly reasoned and persuasively explained

Devine gives two further cautions which are that this is the minimum and that it is always subject to re-evaluation with any new evidence. You may be able to obtain a copy of this chapter by inter-library loan if you do not have ready access to Shown Mills' book.

For more on this topic see also *Evidence: citation & analysis for the family historian* by Elizabeth Shown Mills and *Genealogical standards of evidence: a guide for family historians* by Brenda Dougall Merriman.

Free downloadable genealogy charts and forms

There are a number of places on the internet where you can access various free charts and forms so start with your local genealogy or family history society. Societies often place pedigree charts and family group sheets online to help beginners.

A useful portal site is *Cyndi's list of genealogy sites on the internet* **www.cyndislist.com**. Cyndi even has a category called *Free Stuff* **www.cyndislist.com/free-stuff**. This category is further subdivided into:

- databases
- education
- general resources
- getting started
- printable charts & forms
- software
- translation tools
- trial subscriptions

Commercial sites may also have free downloads. When visiting websites online, make sure you explore the resources area or the learning sections as this is where free resources are usually offered.

Research tips

These tips apply to all the various sections in this publication. If you adopt good habits early on in your research, you will not find yourself covering old ground. Although it does pay sometimes to relook at your research as new resources are made available or you gain new information which has an impact on previous research. Tips to think about include:

- clearly define what it is you want to know or find out before visiting libraries or archives; have a research plan – this will allow you to focus and staff or volunteers will then be able to give you more concise advice or assistance
- be prepared for your visit – do your homework by looking up any online catalogues or resources
- take copies of key documents with you but not all your research as reading rooms only allow you to take minimal items in
- order material in advance if this is an option
- be realistic about what can be achieved in a single visit – it takes time to research and multiple visits may be necessary
- keep a research log of what you have looked at, when and where and remember to record negative searches as well; this will save doing a search twice but keep in mind that new information may warrant repeating a search
- always keep a bibliography of resources used – not just books but also online indexes, websites and other resources
- always record the full citation of the material you have noted or copied from so that you or others can go back and look at the same material; remember to also note where you saw the item, especially if it is unique or rare

Online learning

In recent times we have seen a growth in online genealogy learning opportunities. Some courses are offered by societies, companies and universities for a fee while other courses are free. There are a variety of options and it depends on your own requirements.

Fee based structured courses

In Australia the Society of Australian Genealogists **www.sag.org.au** offers a Certificate course and a Diploma of Family Historical Studies.

The University of New England **www.une.edu.au** has an Advanced Diploma in Local, Family and Applied History. This course attracts a HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) fee.

The National Institute for Genealogical Studies **www.genealogicalstudies.com** offers an online Australian certificate course as well as certificates for other countries, genealogy methodology and other topics.

Pharos: Teaching and Tutoring Limited **www.pharostutors.com** offers a range of online genealogy courses, mostly for the UK.

Free structured courses

The University of Tasmania offers a number of online courses including a Diploma of Family History **www.utas.edu.au/arts/diploma-of-family-history**:

Foundation units:

- Introduction to family history **www.utas.edu.au/arts/introduction-to-family-history**
- Convict ancestors **www.utas.edu.au/arts/convict-ancestors**
- Writing family history **www.utas.edu.au/arts/writing-family-history**
- Place, Image, Object **www.utas.edu.au/arts/placeimageobject**

Second level units:

- Writing the family saga **www.utas.edu.au/arts/familysaga**
- Convicts and their legacy (commencing August 2016)
- Oral history (commencing late 2016)
- Families at war (commencing 2017)

These courses (as at May 2016) are offered with a HECS scholarship for domestic students which means the four foundation units are free for Australian citizens. With the second level units, the HECS scholarship will only cover half of the tuition fee.

The University of Strathclyde with FutureLearn offers an online Genealogy: researching your family tree course **www.futurelearn.com/courses/genealogy** for free.

Most of these online courses are offered in a specific semester or a designated time and you progress through the course with other students. There is usually provision for you to see other students' comments which is another way to learn from others' experience.

Less structured online learning

There are also lots of opportunities to do single topics in a variety of ways including webinars, podcasts, YouTube videos and other formats.

Webinars

These are usually live events and can be held anywhere in the world. It is a simple matter to register and listen in. Not all are free and some may only be offered to a society's members.

Legacy Family Tree Webinars <http://familytreewebinars.com> offer both subscription and free live webinars, although the times do not always suit us in Australia and New Zealand. If the topic is what you want, it may be worth staying up late or getting up early to listen.

The online library, as at May 2016, offered 71 free webinars on topics such as organising your records, DNA, using specific genealogy resources such as FamilySearch, newspapers, citation and even scrapbooking. With a subscription you have access to every webinar and syllabus.

Podcasts

These are simple pre-recorded audio and/or video files of presentations about given topics and can be listened to or watched on your computer or tablet at home. Many archives, libraries, genealogy and family history societies now have podcasts available on their websites.

Examples include:

- Genies Down Under: Genealogy with an Australian twist
www.geniesdownunder.com.au/podcasts.html has podcasts from October 2011 onwards with Episode 55 in May 2016 – all free to listen and cover a wide variety of subjects
- The National Archives UK <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk> has free podcasts on family history, military history, social history, political history, law and order, archivists and archives and international topics

Genealogy videos

YouTube

YouTube www.youtube.com has thousands of videos under the search term 'genealogy' including lectures and interviews. You can narrow the search down by specifying a country, for example, 'Australian genealogy'.

Jill Ball (also known as GeniAus) www.youtube.com/user/bibliaugrapher is an Australian social media enthusiast and has recorded many genealogy videos and regularly hosts Google Hangouts.

Jill quite often hosts online events during National Family History Month <http://familyhistorymonth.org.au> which is in August in Australia and New Zealand every year.

Some genealogy conferences also do live streaming or record presentations for later viewing on YouTube. Rootstech www.rootstech.org is a huge genealogy conference which is held in Salt Lake City every year and a search on YouTube for Rootstech returns a large number of results. The Rootstech website also has its own media archive.

Genealogy and family history societies & public libraries

Remember it is not all online and it can also be useful to attend an event in person and meet other researchers. Many genealogy and family history societies have education programs for members which may be free or on a fee basis. Often non-members can also attend these sessions.

Public libraries with genealogy sections may also run a free program of local and family history talks.

Research tips

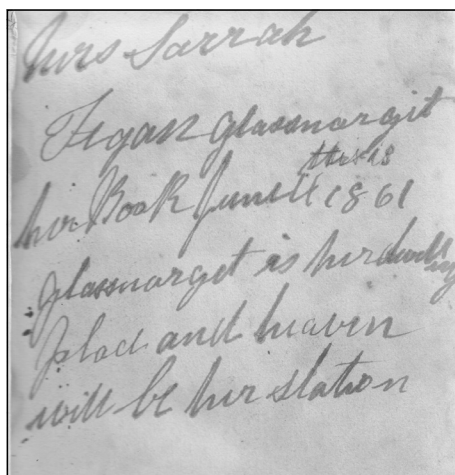
- take advantage of the free online courses when they are offered
- even experienced researchers can benefit from refreshing their skills and knowledge
- listen to a webinar, podcast or video - you just might get hooked!
- visit your local society or public library and see what events are planned

Relative savings—tap into family knowledge

It is often amazing what relatives know about the family so talk to older generations in particular, before it is too late. Information gained may save you hours of searching. Sometimes other family members may have copies of birth, marriage or death certificates or other family documents which will save you money.

Also remember to look for collateral lines (the siblings of your grandparents or great grandparents and so on) because sometimes photographs, documents, letters or family heirlooms get passed down a particular line of the family.

I have been blogging some of my family stories and a distant cousin found my posts on the Finn family of County Wicklow, Ireland. We made contact and I was totally thrilled to find that my long lost cousin had a copy of my great great grandmother Sarah Finn nee Fegan's bible which she had brought out with her from Ireland in 1882.



Family bible of Sarah Fegan nee Cane of Glasnarget, County Wicklow. Bible still held by family.

The bible had originally belonged to her mother, Sarah Fegan nee Cane and inside is a sample of my great great great grandmother's handwriting. It is dated June 1861 in Glasnarget, County Wicklow and this tied in with information from certificates.

Family blogs are often referred to as 'cousin bait' as they can attract long lost cousins and reunite families. My locating a family bible is a perfect example of what can be discovered and we will look at blogging in more detail later.

When visiting relatives take along copies of photographs or documents as these might trigger memories and lead to interesting information on the family. When I met my distant cousin mentioned above, I took along my Flip-Pal mobile scanner **<http://flip-pal.com>** which is portable, light and easy to use.

With the scanner I was easily able to scan photographs and pages from the bible without damaging the items. With larger documents the scanner has software that allows you to merge a number of images into a single image. This way I was able to do copies on the spot and my cousin did not have to arrange for copies or send them to me.

Flip-Pal mobile scanners can be purchased from overseas companies such as My History in the UK **www.my-history.co.uk** or direct from Flip-Pal in the US, depending on who has the cheapest and best deal. Watch out for sales and specials and it would make a wonderful birthday or Christmas present. Without a doubt it is one of my best genealogy tools and travels with me whenever visiting family.

If you cannot personally visit then it may be best to send a letter or email requesting information but try not to overwhelm them with too many questions at a time. Correspondence may be preferable to telephone calls as it gives them longer to think about a reply which they can do at their convenience.

It is better to establish an ongoing relationship and learn about the family over time. If your relatives have email, then this will save you time and money with your correspondence.

If you are sending a letter, include a large stamped self-addressed envelope to assist them in replying quickly and easily. Sometimes a telephone call may be sufficient to quickly learn or check a piece of information.

Keep a correspondence and telephone log so you know whom you have contacted, when and what you asked them. This will save time by not duplicating the request at a later date plus they might not appreciate you repeating your enquiries.

Social media also offers cheap opportunities to contact distant family quickly and easily. Facebook, Skype and Google Plus allow you to share news and keep in contact. We will look at these in a later chapter.

Note all family stories but consider that they might not be totally true. All stories should be checked against official records and confirmed. Do not dismiss stories that sound unbelievable because there is usually a grain of truth in the story somewhere.

My great great grandfather Adam Johnston intrigued me as the family story was that he was taken by a crocodile in Oxley Creek in Brisbane. Now there have never been crocodiles that far south so I knew that something was odd especially when no death certificate could be located and there was no inquest.

I assumed that he had probably deserted the family and that is why he was never spoken about. As it turned out he had deserted the family and spent some time in prison for non-payment of maintenance and other offences. Prisons and asylums are good places to look for any missing ancestors that the family are reluctant to talk about.

Often relatives will be interested in what you are doing and would like copies for their own interest. If you are lucky, they may offer to assist with research costs such as

certificates or to pay for copies. Or they may have records that you would like copies of, and a simple exchange of copies may be appropriate.

This is particularly relevant with old photographs and documents. Digital cameras have made it very easy and cheap to copy photographs and documents held by other family members and to share copies with others.

It is also possible to take photographs of physical items such as war medals, family silver, sporting trophies and other family heirlooms. You may not have physical custody of the items, but at least you know what they looked like and who has them.

Research tips

- contact all older members of the family as a priority
- do not neglect collateral lines of the family
- keep a correspondence, telephone and email contact log
- use a digital camera to copy photographs and documents
- purchase a portable scanner

Has it been done before?

One of the quickest and easiest ways to save money is to check if anyone else has already traced the family you are interested in.

Australia has seen a family history boom since the late 1970s and many research directories have been published since then. While it is fun to do all the research yourself, we all have 16 great great grandparents and if we choose to investigate all 16 of them, then some assistance from other family members can be rewarding.

However, do not simply accept what has been done by others. They may have misinterpreted documents or there may be new evidence available. You should check that it is accurate and hopefully they have cited complete references to allow you to do the checking.

Research interests

The largest research directory is the *Genealogical Research Directory* (GRD) which was published annually 1981–2007. It lists people from Australia and all over the world and the surnames that they are researching. Each year has different subscribers and surnames so it is recommended to search all years.

The *GRD* can be found in most libraries and societies. It is also now available on CD ROM as fully searchable scans 1981–1993 while 1994–2007 is available as a searchable database on CD ROM.

Genealogy and family history society journals often have web pages listing the research interests of members or they may have a regular section in the society journal or newsletter.

Unfortunately there are no overall indexes to these research interests but it can be worthwhile browsing back issues of journals from places where your ancestors lived. Also some societies have created name indexes on cards or databases so it is worth checking in the area that your family came from.

Mailing lists and their archives are another online area where I have had success finding people researching the same families or localities as myself.

RootsWeb is an Ancestry.com community and has a wide range of free resources on its home page **www.rootsweb.ancestry.com**. Joining a mailing list is another way of advertising your research interests and getting free assistance from other researchers. You can also do an archives search **<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/search>** of specific lists or of all mailing lists in a single search.

A drawback of finding older research interests is that if a subscriber has changed email addresses or is no longer living, you may have difficulty finding a new email address or next of kin. Thankfully, the internet has made it much easier to find people researching the same family and many family historians now have their own websites.

The screenshot shows the Rootsweb website with the 'Archives Search Engine' section. It includes a 'START SEARCHING HISTORICAL NEWSPAPERS FREE' section with input fields for 'First Name' and 'Last Name', and a 'Search now' button. Below this is a 'Keywords' section with a 'Search' button and a 'Search tips' link. The website header includes the Rootsweb logo, the tagline 'Finding our roots together.', and the Ancestry.com logo. A navigation bar contains links for Home, Searches, Family Trees, Mailing Lists, Message Boards, Web Sites, Passwords, and Help. A 'Welcome to RootsWeb.com' message with a 'Sign in' link is also present.

The Rootsweb mailing lists archives search screen

A Google search can help find families doing the same research and we will look at Google search tips and other Google tools for genealogy later.

The Guild of One-Name Studies (GOONS) is the place to check if anyone is doing a dedicated study of an ancestral name. A search can be done on the GOONS website at www.one-name.org. As at May 2016, the Guild has nearly 3000 members studying almost 9000 surnames. The difference in number is because most surnames have variant spellings and members undertake to look at all variants of a surname.

The screenshot shows the Guild of One-Name Studies website. The main heading is 'Guild of One-Name Studies'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Is your Surname registered?' and a 'Search' button. To the right of the search bar, it says 'Our 2,851 members have registered 8,731 study surnames with us. Is your surname one of them?'. Below the search bar is a section for the 'Pepler One-Name Study'. This section includes a logo for the study, a 'Study details' section, and a list of 'Variants' (Peplon, Peplow, Peppier, Peplar, Peplio, Beppler). It also includes a 'Category' (3 - A study where research using core genealogical datasets and transcriptions is well under way on a global basis), a 'Website' (pepler.one-name.org), and a 'DNA website' (www.familytreeDNA.com/group/Join.aspx?Group=Peplar).

One of my family names is Peplow and this one name study has its own website and even a DNA website

A similar group is the Surname Society <http://surname-society.org> whose members also research a single surname, either at a global level or a more limited area such as Australia only. It was established in 2014.

While not concerned with surnames, the Society for One-Place Studies <http://one-place-studies.org> was established in 2013. Its members focus on a particular location and if you are lucky, someone may have lots of information on a place you are interested in.

Online linkup sites

There are linkup sites that people can join, either free or by subscription, and post their research names and hope that another line of the family contacts them. Some of the more popular sites include in alphabetical order:

- Ancestry ancestry.com.au - a subscription site with branches in various countries around the world. It also allows people to enter their family tree data or upload GEDCOMs so that others can see their research and perhaps get in touch. You can mark your family tree data private.

- FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org> - a free site but you need to register to establish an account. It is then relatively simple to add your family details.
- Findmypast www.findmypast.com.au - a subscription site where you can add a family tree or import data to save rekeying information. Again there is a choice of making the tree public or private and you can attach digital images of photographs and documents.
- Genes Reunited www.genesreunited.com.au allows you to build and search family trees online for free. If you want to contact others or see other family trees, there is a subscription fee or a pay as you go option.
- LostCousins: putting relatives in touch www.lostcousins.com is a free site that matches people researching the same families by using specific census records. Some of the censuses are also available on subscription sites so if you already have a subscription, check to see if any of the records are part of your subscription. The following census records can be used:
 - » England & Wales 1881 FREE – findmypast.com.au and FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org>
 - » England & Wales 1841 – findmypast.com.au
 - » England & Wales 1911 – findmypast.com.au
 - » Scotland 1881 – ScotlandsPeople www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
 - » US 1880 FREE – FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org>
 - » Canada 1881 FREE – FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org>
 - » Ireland 1911 FREE – National Archives of Ireland www.census.nationalarchives.ie
- MyHeritage www.myheritage.com is another site for sharing family trees and photographs with basic membership free and subscription required to access other features.
- World Connect <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com> - a free site on which I have had success finding distant relatives. In May 2016 it claimed to have 640 million names on file which is staggering.



Blog posts can suggest lots of research tips to follow up

One of my success stories with World Connect is outlined in my SHHE Genie Rambles blog *Is My Family Already On The Internet?* www.shaunahicks.com.au/is-my-family-already-on-the-internet. I suggest reading this account of my search for an elusive ancestor because it clearly demonstrates that if I had used World Connect earlier, I would have saved myself research time and money.

Using another ancestor, George Pyers as an example, World Connect returns 38 results (as at May 2016), all of which relate to our family and connect us to other distant relatives tracing the same family.

Advantages

As you can see from my examples, it can be worthwhile to see who else might be researching the same families as you.

A question I am often asked is 'which one should I join or use'? This is really a personal decision based on your own situation and needs.

For many years I was only in Genes Reunited and connected with many family members in both Australia and the UK. In the last few years I have also started up Ancestry, Facebook, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage sites which have all connected me to other family members both here in Australia and overseas.

Had I not set up an account with MyHeritage, for example, I would not have made contact with a line of my Queensland Trevaskis family that returned home to Ireland in the early 1900s. I have not found descendants of that family listed in any of the other databases.

Disadvantages

There are advantages to being in 'everything' but it is not always practical and subscription sites can be expensive, especially if you join more than one. Remember that you may be able to access subscription sites as part of your membership of a genealogy or family history society. Your local council library may also have access.

It can be time consuming to maintain these online family trees even if you only put in minimal information. Most of the sites send you tips and reminders as well as emails from people wishing to make contact.

There are also issues associated with putting your family history information online. Privacy is a major concern and no living people should be named on a website without their permission. Be careful not to reveal dates of birth of living people as identity theft can be a problem.

An issue that is often discussed is that some researchers simply take all of your research and add it to their own, often without acknowledgement or sharing their information in return. This has always been a possibility but the internet and family tree sharing sites make it easier than ever. You need to decide just how much information you put online and where and whether you make it public or private.

Remember too that other researchers may not be as accurate or detailed with their research and put incorrect information online that is then copied and repeated by others. Any information that you do find online should be checked and proved against original records.

Always read the terms and conditions of any internet site that you decide to join.

Finally, be aware of internet security and do not give out user names and passwords to others.

Research tips

- look at back issues of the GRD just in case your family names are listed
- investigate social and family tree networking sites and see if any of your families are already being researched by others
- advertise your family names either online or in your local family history or genealogical society journal
- remember to prove and confirm all information received from others
- be aware of the need for privacy and security on the internet

Stay organised and on top of the paperwork

Most people only have a limited time to spend on their family history research and you do not want to waste it by spending time looking for information or searching for something that you already have.

Research methodology and context

It is essential that you approach your research in a methodical manner so that you know what you have already done, what still needs to be done, where it can be found in your own records and more importantly, so that it is able to be understood by others.

The software programs mentioned below can assist with some of these tasks. All too often, many genealogists and family historians do not prepare to hand on their work to others in the event of their death. Sadly their research is often thrown out by family members who do not understand or appreciate its significance.

As well as being organised, it is very important to place ancestors in the context of their times because they did not live in isolation. They were part of communities and participated in events that contributed to Australia's overall history. In some ways family history is lots of little histories combined together to make a total history of an area or time period.

This is what distinguishes family historians from genealogists who are simply interested in gathering the names of their ancestors rather than finding out what role their ancestors played in a community or what they experienced in their lifetimes.

By placing an emphasis on context, it opens up a much wider group of records to family history research beyond the basics of family sources such as birth, marriage and death certificates, and wills and probates. These types of records allow researchers to go back quickly through generations but you do not learn much about the people themselves. By broadening out your research, for example, to include occupations, land records, education records and military records, you will find out more about what your ancestors were really like.

Software

A majority of people now use a genealogy and family history software program. Some of the more popular programs include (in alphabetical order):

- Family Historian **www.family-historian.co.uk**
- Family Tree Maker **www.mackiev.com/ftm** – for Macs and Windows machines
- Legacy Family Tree **www.legacyfamilytree.com**
- Reunion **www.leisterpro.com** – for Macs
- RootsMagic **www.rootsmagic.com**

There are many timesaving benefits to using these programs including allowing:

- the production of standard genealogical charts such as pedigree charts and family group sheets – these standard forms are easily understood by others and can be useful to take when researching in libraries and archives
- quick and easy family tree charts
- the inclusion of scanned documents and photographs
- the exchange of information between families and also people researching the same set of ancestors

Software programs can be purchased at genealogy and family history societies, genealogical supply companies and computer stores. Most programs have a trial version that can be downloaded from the internet for free. This allows you to try out the different products before making a final decision.

Louis Kessler, a Canadian genealogist, reviews genealogy software programs at GenSoftReviews www.gensoftreviews.com. It may be useful to look at some of the reviews and compare the various programs.

Remember to back up your computer files on a regular basis. Many people do it on the first day of the month as it is easy to remember and quickly becomes a habit.

For my genealogy program I use MyHeritage's backup *mytree* www.backupmytree.com. This is a free program and you do not have to have a subscription to MyHeritage to use it. It automatically saves a copy of my family history program updates and as my data is private, no one else can see it.

In a worst case scenario, I could go online and retrieve my data which I keep in Legacy Family Tree www.legacyfamilytree.com.

Family history forms

As well as the standard pedigree chart and family group sheet, there are a number of other forms that can be used to document research, to exchange information, or to keep track of what still needs to be done.

Many family history society websites have a range of downloadable forms, usually for free. Why not see what your local genealogy or family history society has?

Cyndi's List under the category *Free Stuff* has a sub category *Printable Charts and Forms* www.cyndislist.com/free-stuff/printable-charts-and-forms. Here you can download copies of a range of documents including:

- basic charts and checklists
- census forms for UK, Canada and the USA
- form letters
- record worksheets
- relationship charts
- research logs
- timelines

Have a look at as many of these different kinds of charts and forms as you can to see which ones best suit your own research needs.

Original documents

There are many ways to store original certificates and paper documents. One system could be to have individual files for each family name which are then stored alphabetically. These could be further subdivided by individual given names if necessary.

Alternatively some people keep all birth certificates together and similarly with marriage and death certificates.

The important thing is to set up a recordkeeping system early and then follow it so that you always know where your information is. There is nothing worse than wasting time looking for something or repurchasing a certificate that you already have.

Original certificates and other documents can be stored in protective copy safe sleeves available at all stationary suppliers and even supermarkets and chain stores. Never laminate original documents or photographs as this process is not reversible. It can even damage the document or photograph as it traps acids inside.

Remember to include your digital files, emails, scanned documents and digital photographs. It is equally important to have a filing system on your computer to keep track of your digital records. Again there are many systems so it is important to decide on how you want to organise your records, and then stay with that system.

Finally, how are your personal research library books, journal and magazines organised? Can you find a book when you need it or do you have to hunt for it?

I use LibraryThing www.librarything.com to organise the books in my study. Each bookcase and shelf has a number which is noted in the record for that item in LibraryThing. If I cannot find something, a quick check of LibraryThing tells me which bookcase and shelf to go to.

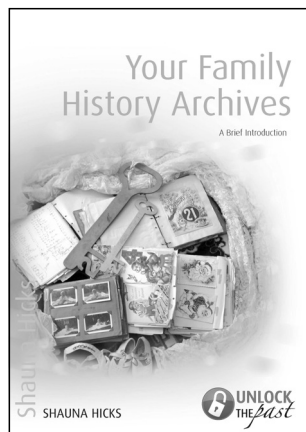
You can put 200 items into LibraryThing for free or as many as you like for \$10.00 a year or \$25.00 for life (prices as at May 2016). I took up the life option as I have more than 200 books!

Another interesting, inexpensive and simple program to use is Collectorz.com, www.collectorz.com. I know a few people using this program and it meets their needs.

Further information

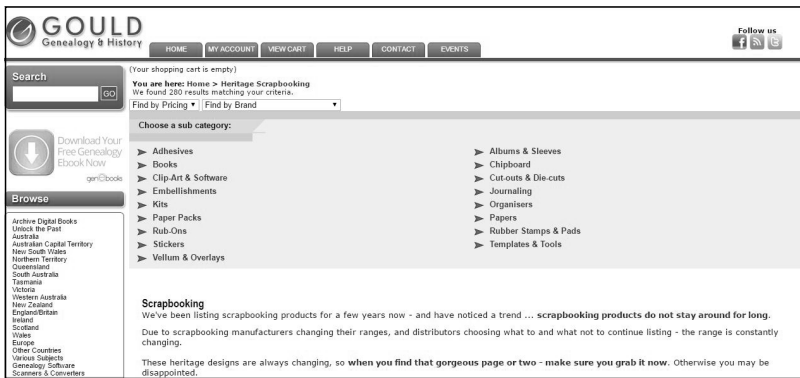
My book *Your family history archives* has sections on research methodology, conservation and future preservation of family history research. It contains a broad range of advice and tips to ensure that your research is available to future family members and researchers.

*Ensure your family archives
are kept for the future*



Archival supplies can be obtained from companies such as:

- Albox Australia **www.albox.com.au** produce a range of archival friendly storage systems specialising in photographic, archival, records management and scrapbooking products made from polypropylene, all archival and acid free
- Archival Survival **www.archivalsurvival.com.au** markets a wide variety of archival paper and board products including boxes, folders, wallets and copy paper—they also supply archival photograph albums, adhesives and specialist conservation tools and materials
- Conservation Resources **www.conservationresources.com.au** market a broad range of archival storage and presentation products
- Gould Genealogy & History **www.gould.com.au** has online sales of photo albums and binders, photo negatives and binders, archival storage products and scrapbooking supplies



Browse online catalogues to see what is available

- Preservation Australia **www.preservationaustralia.com.au** is a conservation business if you need to have a document professionally restored—they also conduct training programs, seminars and workshops around Australia
- Zetta Florence **www.zettaflorence.com.au** provides a wide range of archival and object friendly materials for all preservation needs

Research tips

- download free trials of family history software and try before you buy
- use family history software to easily organise and exchange information
- follow a research methodology that puts your ancestors into context
- use forms to keep track of your research
- keep a filing system for both paper and digital records
- back up your files regularly
- preserve your original records and save them for future generations
- leave well-organised and documented research to a designated person or institution

Technology savings on communications

The internet has been a boon for family historians in many ways as it has allowed researchers to:

- have personal websites and blogs
- join mailing lists
- make use of email
- order certificates online
- participate in online forums
- telephone family and see them using webcams
- use common websites for sharing family trees and discovering distant relations
- use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+
- use internet banking
- use online digitised records

All included in the cost of an internet service. The savings on postage, telephone costs (especially if it was interstate or overseas) and travel costs to view records are considerable.

Now we will have a look at some of these features in more detail.

Correspondence

The widespread adoption of email around the world has made family history research much quicker and cheaper. Before email you had to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your enquiry or if it was overseas, buy international reply coupons from the post office and enclose them with your letter. Then you had to wait patiently for a response which could be weeks.

If you wanted to enclose copies of charts or documents, you had to go somewhere and do the copying. Then the weight of the documents would increase postage costs or you needed a bigger envelope. Now you can simply scan and attach any document or chart to an email and the person receives it within seconds. The use of email saves both time and money and it is hard to imagine doing family history without it.

It is also possible to have free email accounts by signing up with Google www.google.com.au, Yahoo <https://au.yahoo.com> or other online email providers. This can be even preferable to an email address with a provider because if you change providers, then your email address changes too which can mean that people lose track of you.

The downside of the technology is that some people now receive so many emails that they do not always have the time or inclination to reply to everyone that contacts them.

Spamming is also a problem and it is advisable to have a good internet security system to help block spam emails.

Sometimes email does disappear, computers crash or get viruses and people lose everything, if they have not regularly backed up their research. So it is worth making contact more than once if you do not get a response to an email but do not expect instant replies. Most people have work commitments or family responsibilities and only spend their spare time doing family history.

If you are contacting someone who does not have email, you should still send a large stamped self-addressed envelope with your enquiry.

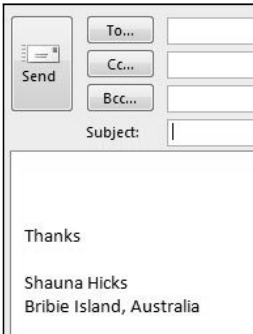
Email etiquette

This is really the same as for letter writing and you should give sufficient information for the person receiving your enquiry to decide if there is a connection or not. Also you should identify yourself and give a place for your address.

For example, I sign my emails with my name Shauna Hicks and put Bribie Island, Australia so that the person has some idea of where I am based.

Most email addresses do not identify the name or place of the person sending the email. I believe it adds credibility to your enquiry and I am reluctant to reply to people who do not give me sufficient information to judge if it is a valid enquiry.

Always offer to share information but do not send everything you have until you have established a relationship. Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to share or acknowledge research done by others.



The screenshot shows a typical email composition window. At the top, there are buttons for 'To...', 'Cc...', and 'Bcc...' next to empty text boxes. Below these is a 'Send' button. Further down is a 'Subject:' label followed by a text box. The main body of the email contains the text: 'Thanks', 'Shauna Hicks', and 'Bribie Island, Australia'.

Ensure that your name and address is on all emails sent

Overseas payments

Internet banking has made it easier and cheaper to pay accounts overseas with direct payment into accounts or secure systems such as PayPal www.paypal.com/au/home. However, make sure that your computer system is securely protected from viruses, hackers and scammers. There are a range of commercial online security products as well as public domain software which is free to use.

Voice communication

This is another relatively cheap method of contacting someone elsewhere in Australia or overseas.

It is now a very simple matter to gain access to telephone numbers and addresses from around Australia. The *Australian White Pages* www.whitepages.com.au and the *Australian Yellow Pages* www.yellowpages.com.au are free to access online.

Remember to always ask if it is a convenient time to talk when ringing as the person may be involved with preparing dinner, looking after young children or about to go to work or some other activity.

Also remember the various time zones within Australia and if ringing overseas, make sure you know the time difference. A useful site to determine what time it is elsewhere is Time and Date **www.timeanddate.com**. It can also be used to establish what day of the year an event occurred on.

Another cheap option is to use voice communications software such as Skype **www.skype.com**. Its basic services are free to download and use. I find the basic service sufficient for my own needs but you can pay for more advanced services if you need them.

Skype can be used for chats with relatives or other researchers or for group meetings. Skype can also be used as a quick text messenger service either with individuals or in specific groups.

You can use a webcam with Skype and actually see the person you are talking to. This facility is very good when talking to friends, family members or the grandchildren.

Online chat with friends and family members is also possible through social networking sites such as Facebook and Google+.

So talk to others and see what they are using and give it a try yourself. It will save you money and you will probably find that you will 'talk' to family members more often and perhaps see more family photos than you might in person.

Photocopies and postage costs

Many archives and libraries now allow researchers to take their own digital cameras to take copies of documents subject to copyright provisions. Others have scanning equipment that you can use and download images onto USBs, either your own or one that you have to purchase from them.

This is an excellent way to save money and sometimes it is even quicker as some archives have a time delay in providing photocopies for researchers.

Some archives and libraries are also making digital copies of documents freely available online. These can be downloaded, saved and enhanced subject to copyright provisions. Again, this is much cheaper and quicker than travelling to the repository and placing a photocopy order or doing the photocopy yourself.

Similarly, commercial genealogy sites offer indexes and digitised copies of original records which, while not free, it is still much cheaper than visiting and ordering photocopies in person.

Most home printers these days can also scan photographs and other documents and family history software allows them to be captured into genealogy programs. It can be cheaper to send electronic copies of family history records by email to family members than it is to print and surface mail them. It all depends on just how technology aware your family is.

If you are sending a lot of digital documents and photographs to others, then it may be more practical to set up a Dropbox **www.dropbox.com** account. The basic version is free and it allows you to share online folders with others.

It is a simple matter to upload documents and images into a folder that you share with another family member. Dropbox can also be used for online backup

of important family documents in case of a computer crash or a house fire or other disaster.

Technology has certainly made family history research much easier, quicker and cheaper over the last two decades. But how do you stay up to date with all the new technology and software?

One way that I stay up to date is to subscribe to Dick Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter <https://blog.eogn.com>. There is a free daily online newsletter but I subscribe to the Plus Edition of the newsletter for a modest annual subscription.

Eastman reviews genealogy products, is keen on making genealogy research easier using technology and often draws attention to free software that I might not learn about from anywhere else. Plus he also has the latest genealogy news from around the world.

I also pick up a lot of tips from Facebook. There are many genealogy groups and individuals who are sharing news and websites. You can do a simple search for genealogy or Australian genealogy and see what sites are returned.

Katherine R Willson's Genealogy on Facebook compilation as at May 2016, included 245 pages with over 8000 links <http://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list>. Browse this list to see how people are using Facebook for genealogy.

Other social media sites useful for keeping up with genealogy news include Twitter (try using the #genealogy tag) and also Google+.

Research tips

- take advantage of a free email address
- identify yourself in emails and give sufficient information for someone to assist you
- investigate Skype and talk to (and see) the family and distant relatives for free
- try online chat facilities and chat to relatives more often for less cost
- look at how others are using social media for genealogy
- purchase a multifunction printer that scans, prints and photocopies

Certificates: why pay full price

Birth, marriage and death certificates provide essential information for family history research and are a necessary expense. One easy way to save money is by looking up indexes and providing a reference number to obtain the certificate at a discounted price.

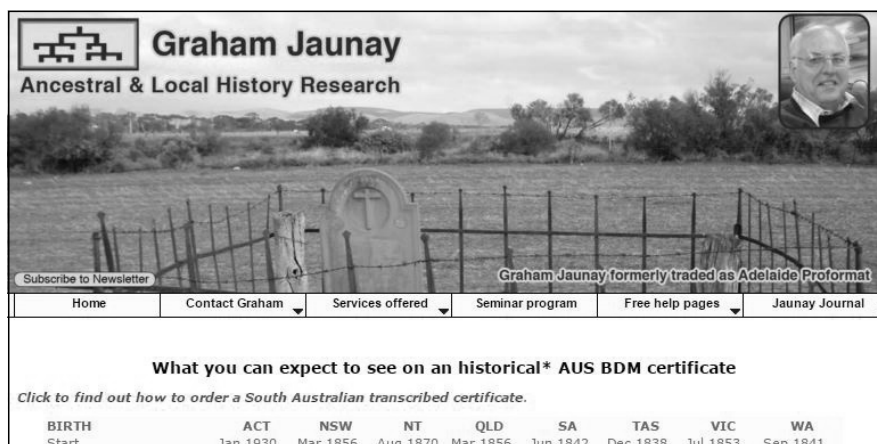
Australian indexes

Most Australian states now have free online indexes to births, deaths and marriages. In some states you can also download an image of the certificate once you have purchased it. No more waiting for the postman!

Alternatively, indexes have been published on microfiche or CD ROM and are available at libraries, archives and genealogical and family history society libraries.

CoraWeb *Helping you trace your family history in Australia and elsewhere*
www.coraweb.com.au is an easy way to link to all the Australian civil registration websites.

A checklist of what information is actually on certificates for each state can be found on Graham Jaunay's website **www.jaunay.com/bdm.html**.



BIRTH	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Start	Jan 1930	Mar 1856	Aug 1870	Mar 1856	Jun 1842	Dec 1838	Jul 1853	Sep 1841

It is important to know what information was captured on certificates at different times and in different states

New Zealand indexes

Like Australia, New Zealand has placed its birth, marriage and death indexes online at **www.dia.govt.nz/Births-deaths-and-marriages**.

What if an event is not in the index?

There are occasions when an entry is not easily found in an index. Some of the more common reasons include:

- indexing errors
- spelling variations with both given names and surnames
- the event is registered under a surname that you are not expecting or looking for
- the event was simply not registered
- the event was registered in another state

Experiment with variations of spelling and even try just searching given names or just a surname. Look for births under a mother's maiden name just in case they were not married. Lateral thinking is essential when trying to find some ancestors!

Some examples from my own research will demonstrate how easy it is to not find someone in the indexes. I could not find the birth in Queensland of Clara Stanley Carnegie even though I was fairly certain of the date and place. For years I puzzled over it and wondered where they got the name Stanley from.

When New South Wales indexes became available on microfiche, on the off chance that they might have gone south of the Queensland border for some reason, I tried the indexes.

First I looked for Clara under the Carnegie name, but again a nil result. I then put in Stanley as a surname in case it was an indexing error and up came Clara Stanley with matching parents, only with the surname Stanley not Carnegie.

Cutting a long story short, they had left Queensland for a short period of time and moved to northern New South Wales where they had lived under an assumed name. A few years later they moved back to Queensland and resumed the Carnegie name as if nothing had ever happened.

Another personal example is where the birth appears to have never been registered. I purchased the birth certificates of the two children on either side of the person I was looking for. Queensland certificates produced from the microfilm are exact copies of the original record and as such, have annotations on them.

In this instance, there was an annotation giving my relative's birth on a sibling's birth certificate and also their death information as even the Registrar had not been able to find the birth entry when they had gone to annotate the death entry. These annotations on Queensland certificates are invaluable for solving some family puzzles but they are not on typed or transcribed copies of certificates.

Alternative paths for births, marriages and deaths

Cemeteries are an alternative way to obtain death dates and many societies in Australia have been transcribing tombstones and either publishing or making the transcripts available in their libraries or online. Monumental inscriptions (MIs) can provide other information such as birth dates, occupations, places of origin, other family members, cause of death and other clues.

A useful internet site for locating and linking to Australian cemeteries online is Australian Cemeteries www.australiancemeteries.com. Remember not all cemetery

transcripts and MIs are online. Some may only be available in local or family history society libraries.

A similar cemetery site for Australia is <http://interment.net/aus/index.htm> although it also has links to online cemeteries in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada, Germany and other countries.

Find A Grave www.findagrave.com and BillionGraves <https://billiongraves.com> are two other world sites that have some Australian graves. Both are free to search and view. Individuals upload images of tombstones to these sites which are being added to from time to time.

Another useful source for death dates are probate indexes and a number of the state archives are gradually putting these indexes online. Public Record Office Victoria has even digitised the wills and probates to 1925 in partnership with FamilySearch. These are freely available online and searchable through an online probates index <http://prov.vic.gov.au/research/wills-and-probate>.

Tasmania's Archives and Heritage Office www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage has indexed and digitised Tasmanian wills to 1989. These are freely available at www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/wills.aspx.

Certificate transcription services

This service only operates in New South Wales and South Australia. Using a transcription agent can be cheaper than paying for a full certificate.

The South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society, business name Genealogy SA, holds copies of South Australian district birth, marriage and death records. The Society have permission to provide a transcription service. Details of the service are on the Society's website at www.genealogysa.org.au.

The three recognised transcription agents in New South Wales include:

- Joy Murrin Family History Services www.joymurrin.com.au
- Transcriptions.com.au by Marilyn Rowan www.transcriptions.com.au
- Turtle Consolidated Services <http://home.iprimus.com.au/lturtle>

NSW pre 1856 church registers of christenings, marriages and burials are also on microfilm and available at major state and public libraries and some genealogical and family history society libraries.

Remember, if the volume number is less than 123 then you can see the original on microfilm and copy out relevant details. This is exactly the same as what would appear on a certificate so do not pay money if you can access the microfilm.

Tasmania has made its BDMs up to 1900 free of charge and the microfilms can be seen at most state libraries and some genealogical and family history societies. They can also be searched online and images downloaded free via the Tasmanian Names Index which is on the Family History page of LincTasmania www.linc.tas.gov.au/family-history. BDMs are only available to 1899, however baptisms are available for 1900–1933 and burials for 1900–1933. The Tasmanian Names Index includes lots more than just BDMs so if you have Tasmanian ancestors, check it out.

England and Wales

The General Register Office (GRO) offers an online ordering system. As of May 2016, the cost of ordering certificates online with a GRO reference number, using the standard service is now £9.25. Surprisingly this is still the same price that I quoted in April 2010 in the first edition of this guide!

Indexes on microfiche are available at various libraries and genealogical and family history societies. The indexes are also online via a number of commercial/subscription sites. There is a useful listing at UKBMD: Births, Marriages, Deaths and Censuses on the internet **www.ukbmd.org.uk**.

Free UKGEN

This is an ongoing project conducted by volunteers who are indexing parish registers, birth death and marriage records and census records. It is necessary to revisit the websites on a regular basis to see what has been completed to date.

The aim of FreeBMD **<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>** is to transcribe the civil registration index of births, marriages and deaths for England and Wales from 1837 to 1983, and to provide free internet access to the transcribed records.

The aim of FreeCEN **www.freecen.org.uk** is to transcribe UK census data for the 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1891 census and to provide free internet access to the transcribed records.

Note that the 1881 census for England and Wales is not included in FreeCEN because it is already freely available on the FamilySearch website **www.familysearch.org**.

The aim of FreeREG **www.freereg.org.uk** is to provide free internet searches of baptism, marriage, and burial records that have been transcribed from parish and non-conformist registers of the UK.

Please remember that these Free UKGEN indexes are works in progress and to see what has been completed to date, check the website regularly.

Online Parish Clerks (Genealogy) UK

This is a group of volunteers who are collecting information about a specific parish in a county or a complete county and who will answer genealogical enquiries for free. Not all counties have an online parish clerk.

More details can be found on the main home page **http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/online_parish_clerk**. Counties with an online parish clerk have their own individual websites and there are variations on what is available and how.

Cornwall, for example, has an online searchable database that covers baptisms, marriages and burials (not all parishes have been completed yet) as well as other records such as banns, hearth tax, muster rolls, voters' lists and other records.

Counties included in the scheme with their own websites (as at May 2016) are:

- Cornwall **www.cornwall-opc.org**
- Dorset **www.opcdorset.org**
- Hampshire **www.knightroots.co.uk/parishes.htm**
- Kent **www.kent-opc.org**
- Lancashire **www.lan-opc.org.uk**

- Leicestershire **www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~engleiope**
- Somerset including Bristol **<http://wsom-opc.org.uk>**
- Sussex **www.sussex-opc.org**
- Warwickshire **www.hunimex.com/warwick/opc/opc.html**
- Wiltshire **www.wiltshire-opc.org.uk**

Remember to check the Online Parish Clerks home page **http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/online_parish_clerk** for information on individual parishes and other counties.

Deceased Online

Deceased Online **www.deceasedonline.com** is a central database of UK burials and cremations. You can search by country, region, county, burial authority or crematorium free of charge. There are millions of records online and over eight million for London alone as at May 2016.

You need to register as a user and if you find something of interest there is a fee. There are two payment options – pay to view or subscription vouchers depending on what your needs are.

Scotland

ScotlandsPeople **www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk**

This is a pay to view site that includes statutory BDM registers for 1855–2006, parish registers 1538–1854, census records 1841–1911, valuation rolls, soldier's wills and other records.

There is a free wills and testament search 1513–1925 with pay to view if you do find an entry that matches your enquiry.

Ireland

Roots Ireland **www.rootsireland.ie**

This site contains data from 34 county genealogy centres in Ireland with more than 20 million records. It is free to search but a fee is charged for each record viewed.

World

FamilySearch **www.familysearch.org** is a mega website where you can search for indexed records, digitised images, family trees, books, and other records in their online catalogue and for information in their wiki.

It includes all countries but is particularly useful for the UK, Scotland, Ireland and the USA. Remember you still need to check the original entry in the parish registers for any additional information and to confirm that it is the correct entry for your family. FamilySearch has the potential to save you lots of time in searching for a family, especially if they may have moved parishes, counties or even countries.

There is a separate section on FamilySearch Family History Centres later in this guide which looks at additional information on parish registers and other records available through the FamilySearch online catalogue.

Summary

There are just so many potential tips here it is simply not possible to list them all. As mentioned elsewhere, portal sites such as Cyndi's List <http://cyndislist.com> and CoraWeb www.coraweb.com.au can assist you to find sites relevant for your own areas of research interest.

Research tips

- use online indexes where available to obtain discounted certificates
- images of certificates may be cheaper or use a transcription service if you do not need a certified certificate
- check progress of the UK volunteer projects regularly
- look for an online parish clerk for your parish/county
- remember indexes are only indexes, check original records for full information

Utilise the benefits and services of genealogy and family history societies

There are many reasons to join a local family history or genealogy society near where you live and perhaps also a society near where your ancestors came from.

Membership of a local family history or genealogy society provides:

- Regular access to their library which may be quicker and easier to access than travelling to a state library. Perhaps the best way to learn what is in a society library is to volunteer to assist with library duty. Most family history and genealogy societies are run by volunteers and are always looking for members to assist in keeping the library open. By assisting library users with their research queries, volunteers often learn about resources that are useful to them as well.
- Society library catalogues may be online and this allows searching at home so that you can plan your visit and get the maximum benefit from a research trip.
- Access to specialised databases or other resources and services available only to members. For example, the Genealogical Society of Victoria www.gsv.org.au has a specialist database Genealogical Index of Names (GIN) which is available online but only to members. GIN contains nearly 4 million entries as at May 2016 to references in the Society's library and elsewhere. There are also over 62,000 images or documents attached. GIN is being added to on a regular basis and most entries relate to Victoria.
- Some societies have bookstalls and you can purchase the latest books, microforms, CD ROMs and magazines. Some even operate online bookshops and you do not have to be a member to purchase from them. Two Australian examples are the Genealogical Society of Victoria www.gsv.org.au and the Queensland Family History Society www.qfhs.org.au.

*Society publications
often provide easy
access to a wide range
of genealogy resources*



- A regular newsletter or quarterly journal in which you can advertise your research interests or even write a small article on the family for publication. This is another way to get further help or advice on your research.
- Regular meetings are a good way to get to know others in the society with similar research interests. There is often a mutual sharing of tips and experiences from those present.
- At most regular meetings there is a guest speaker and an opportunity to learn more on a specialist topic.
- Seminar days on topics of interest and other training sessions or workshops. Some of these may only be available to members or non-members may be required to pay a higher fee for attending.
- Useful information and links on their websites to assist with research not only in their geographic area but often elsewhere as well.

Also think about joining a genealogy or family history society in the area that your ancestors were from. The society's journal may have useful tips for researching in that area. You can also advertise your family names on their website or in their journal. There may be guides, free resources or other links that you can access online so remember virtual visits are an option too.

Research tips

- join your local genealogy or family history society and become a library volunteer
- attend meetings, seminars, write articles for the society's journal or newsletter
- share your knowledge and experience with other members
- look at societies in the areas your ancestors came from as they quite often have free resources on their websites

Libraries and archives: all free to look

There is a wealth of information for family history research in libraries and archives. In most cases there are no entry fees and the only costs are for photocopies or microfilm printouts.

The majority of libraries and archives now have online library catalogues making it even easier and quicker to find information without having to travel to do the search in person. If you are really lucky, the information you are after has been digitised and you can see it online.

National Library of Australia (NLA)

www.nla.gov.au

The NLA is, for those living in the ACT, a wonderful resource but the NLA also strives to make its collections available to everyone. The Library's free online portal is *Trove* and it searches the following simultaneously:

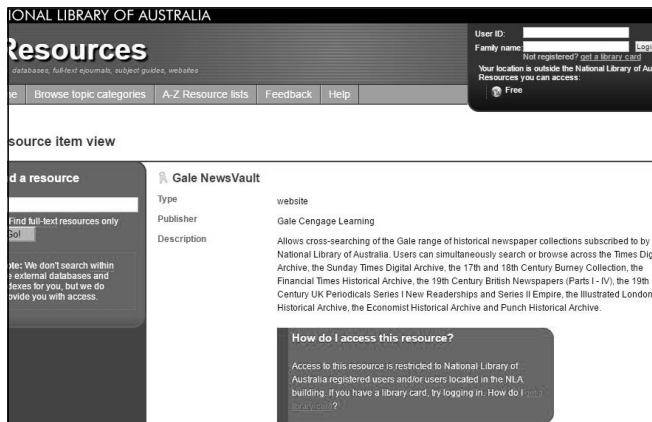
- Digitised newspapers and more
- Government Gazettes
- Journals, articles and data sets
- Books
- Pictures, photos and objects
- Music, sound and video
- Maps
- Diaries, letters, archives
- Archives websites (1996 - now)
- People and organisations
- Lists

As at May 2016, there were almost 490,000,000 Australian and online resources in *Trove*.

Being able to search digitised newspapers from 1803 onwards for free has led to many exciting family discoveries. Not every newspaper has been digitised yet so remember to check coverage for an area that you are interested in.

Another useful service provided by NLA is eResources **www.nla.gov.au/app/eresources** which provides access at home to any Australian resident who holds a NLA library card. You can apply online for a free library card and get access to 119 licensed resources that are available as at May 2016.

These include some databases frequently used by family historians including a range of biographical dictionaries and newspapers including *The Times Digital Archive 1785-2010*. The Gale News Vault includes 19th century British newspapers Parts I-IV and this includes an amazing list of newspapers all digitised and searchable at home free with your NLA library card.



eResources allow access to digitised British newspapers in the comfort of your own home

Trove and eResources have really changed how we do genealogy and family history. A huge fan, I have written *Trove: discover genealogy treasure in the National Library of Australia*, also published by Unlock the Past.

State libraries

Like the NLA, state libraries have much to offer and a researcher can save lots of time and money by fully exploring the services and resources on offer. Perhaps the most exciting one is the ability to search online indexes and databases at home.

Simply look for the eResources link on their website. To obtain a library card you must live in the relevant state. My local council library also has free eResources that I can access from home. There may be some overlap or duplication of eResources between the three different libraries but I find it useful to have a national, state and local library card.

Also look for online guides for genealogists and family historians. A good example is the State Library of Victoria's Family History Guides <http://guides.slv.vic.gov.au/familyhistoryguides>. There are 14 guides as at May 2016 including:

- Aboriginal people and family history
- Adoption and forgotten Australians
- Australian colonial forces and family history
- Australians in World War 1
- Early Australian census records
- Gold miners and mining
- Maps for family history
- Publish your family history
- Researching your ancestors from Great Britain and Ireland
- Researching your multicultural ancestors
- Researching your Victorian ancestors
- Ships and shipping

- Victorian immigration and emigration
- Victorian Sheriff's Office warrants

Research guides can assist you to learn more about a subject area and lead to you easily accessible and perhaps lesser known resources. Free online guides are definitely worth seeking out.

Sometimes a library will have a web page for family history with links to a wide variety of genealogy and family history resources. A good example is the State Library of Queensland's web page on Family History

www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/family-history.

CoraWeb **www.coraweb.com.au** has links to all state and territory libraries.

Local libraries

Investigate what services are available at your local council library. One useful service provided by most libraries is inter-library loans where users can arrange through their local library to borrow an item from another library if it is not held locally. This saves you having to either buy a copy of the book or pay to have someone look it up for you elsewhere.

Rare books, original manuscripts, archives and other similar items are not usually available for inter-library loan but it is worth enquiring about. It is also possible to request copies of specific pages, a chapter or the contents or index of a particular book you are interested in.

Many local government libraries in Australia have dedicated local history and genealogy collections so make sure you investigate what is at your local library before spending time and effort to visit a state library.

The Goldfields Libraries **www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au** in Bendigo, Victoria has a Goldfields Research Centre **www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/libraries/goldfieldsresearchcentre** that offers specialised resources including local history, gold mining history, a newspaper collection dating from the 1850s, maps, photographs, Australianiana, family history research, and genealogy books and databases. Research volunteers from the two local societies, the Bendigo Family History Group and the Bendigo Regional Genealogical Society, assist researchers on designated days of the week.

In addition, the Goldfields Libraries work in partnership with the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre **www.brac.vic.gov.au**. The Centre, which is located within the Bendigo Library, holds government records such as rate books which makes for a 'one stop shop' for anyone researching Bendigo ancestors.

Ebooks

While you can get access to ebooks through your library cards, there are also some online sites that may be useful too. Sites to look at for free, out of print digitised ebooks include:

- FamilySearch - Books **<https://books.familysearch.org>** (discussed in more detail in the section on FamilySearch & Family History Centres)
- Google Books **<https://books.google.com.au>** (sometimes only part of a book may be available)
- Internet Archive **<https://archive.org>**

- Many Books <http://manybooks.net>
- Project Gutenberg www.gutenberg.org
- Text Queensland www.textqueensland.com.au
- Wikibooks <https://en.wikibooks.org> (mainly text books)

Overseas libraries

Whatever country you are researching in, always look for a national library as well as county or local libraries. They may all be useful for your research with free online resources.

The British Library www.bl.uk has digital collections, subject guides, podcasts and other online resources.

The National Library of Ireland www.nli.ie also has some wonderful online resources including Catholic parish registers (searchable through Findmypast and Ancestry), photographs and the 1901 and 1911 Irish census records. Start with their online guide for family history www.nli.ie/en/family-history-introduction.aspx.

You can search and view Welsh newspapers online for free at the National Library of Wales <http://newspapers.library.wales>. As at May 2016 there are over 15 million newspaper articles covering 1804 to 1919. A current project is to digitise the tithe maps of Wales so remember to revisit sites as new material is being added from time to time.

Archives

There are many areas where it is possible to save both time and money when researching at archives. More online catalogues, indexes and digitised records mean that it is possible to search at home and perhaps avoid the cost of an unnecessary trip to the archive.

By planning your trip in advance, you will get more done in a single trip than if you do not do any preplanning.

CoraWeb www.coraweb.com.au has links to all state and territory archives.

Document ordering

Sometimes it is easier and cheaper to simply order a document from an archive than it is to visit and view in person. Online catalogues now make it easier to find items of interest and the ability to request copies, either online or by traditional mail, is offered by some archives.

There may also be some record agents who offer a simple copying service. For example, I have used Marilyn Rowan's service www.transcriptions.com.au to order digital copies of files held by State Records New South Wales for which they do not offer a copying service.

State Records New South Wales www.records.nsw.gov.au has a number of indexes and databases online with attached copy services. You can order copies of a wide range of documents once you have found a relevant entry in their indexes. However, not all records are covered by the copying service, which is why you might need the services of an independent record agent.

The National Archives of Australia has a digitisation service and fees are outlined in Fact Sheet 51 – Copying charges www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs51.aspx.

When you find an entry in their online catalogue, you can request a copy, pay the fee and the document will be digitised and placed online usually within 30 days if the item is open for access.

Investigate these types of services before you make the decision to travel any distance or if you have difficulty finding time away from work, family or other commitments.

Some archives even allow pre-ordering of records so that the records are already waiting for you on arrival. Public Record Office Victoria www.prov.vic.gov.au allows users to pre-order up to 24 units or items prior to visiting. As records are only retrieved at pre-set times, this can be very useful if travelling any distance and saves time on the visit.

Digitisation

In recent years many libraries and archives have been busy digitising parts of their collections, especially those records that are frequently used. This can save researchers time in that they can now see records without leaving home. There are also money savings in that digital copies can be downloaded, saving both photocopy and postage costs.

The National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au has indexed, digitised and placed online all the World War I Australian service records for the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF). These individual dossiers on service personnel are free to access and download or print at home. This saves the need to travel to Canberra, or pay for a research agent or wait for a fee based postal enquiry.

You can also access these files through Discovering Anzacs <http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au> and add your own family photos and stories to a soldier's dossier.

Digital cameras in reading rooms

When personally visiting an archive, remember to take along your digital camera so that you can take your own copies and save on photocopy costs.

Most archives have guides on the usage of digital cameras in reading rooms and it is recommended that you consult these online before visiting an archive. This is to ensure that you can take your digital camera into the reading room and under what conditions.

Examples include Public Record Office Victoria's PROVguide 24: Use of digital cameras in PROV reading rooms <http://prov.vic.gov.au/provguide-24> and the National Archives of Australia's Fact Sheet 230 – Using cameras in the reading room www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs230.aspx.

You will be able to take more images of archival documents with a digital camera as there is no cost factor limiting how much you copy.

Most archives do not allow photocopying from registers so taking digital images of registers with a camera is the only way you can obtain copies of records you would not have previously been able to copy.

Where there is a time delay in providing photocopies, this will also save you time and postage to have the copies sent to you.

Microfilm readers in reading rooms

Another wonderful invention is technology that allows users to get digital images from microfilm copies of records. Queensland State Archives copying services www.archives.qld.gov.au/Researchers/Runcorn/Pages/CopyingServices.aspx includes microfilm readers that allow researchers to scan records on microfilm and then save the scanned digital image to a USB memory stick for free.

No more paying for microfilm printouts that fade over time. Some of my early copies are almost unreadable now but I can revisit Queensland State Archives and get digital copies for free.

Overseas archives

Similarly, you should look for national archives in the country you are researching. Remember too that county record offices and local archives may also have relevant resources.

The National Archives UK www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has a wonderful range of resources online. Look for research guides, search the Discovery catalogue, listen to podcasts and explore their digitised collections.

The National Records of Scotland www.nrscotland.gov.uk has a useful online guide for researching family history in Scotland www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/family-history.

The National Archives of Ireland www.nationalarchives.ie Introduction to genealogy online guide www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy1/introduction-to-genealogy has links to Irish census records, tithe applotment books, soldiers' wills and other records.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni has online will calendars and valuation revision books. Use the online family history guides to discover more records.

Trap

Remember that not everything is digitised, online or indexed. Most archives have not described their holdings down to item level. In fact probably only a very small proportion of archives in Australia are listed at item level. It is still necessary to follow the usual research methodology if you have not found a reference to what you are looking for, but only after investigating any shortcuts.

Research tips

- make use of the wonderful online resources provided by libraries and archives
- obtain a library card at national, state and local level
- familiarise yourself with what is available in your local library
- explore online guides and fact sheets for additional areas to research
- throw out any old paper copies of online guides and fact sheets as these are regularly updated
- take your digital camera and a spare USB with you when visiting libraries and archives and other research organisations
- remember to look at overseas libraries and archives online too

FamilySearch and Family History Centres

FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org> has been microfilming genealogical records around the world for decades. They willingly share these records with others. Using their resources can save you a lot of time and money.

FamilySearch has a number of Family History Centres (FHCs) throughout Australia where the public can visit for free. At the Centres you can order and use microfilms of parish records, census records and other genealogical records located in the FamilySearch online catalogue <https://familysearch.org/catalog/search>.

The centres are staffed by volunteers who can assist you with your research. The cost of hiring microfilms is quite minimal and helps to recover costs.

In addition, a number of the larger genealogy and family history societies in Australia have been designated official places to order and use FamilySearch microfilms. Check with your local society to see if they have this designation.

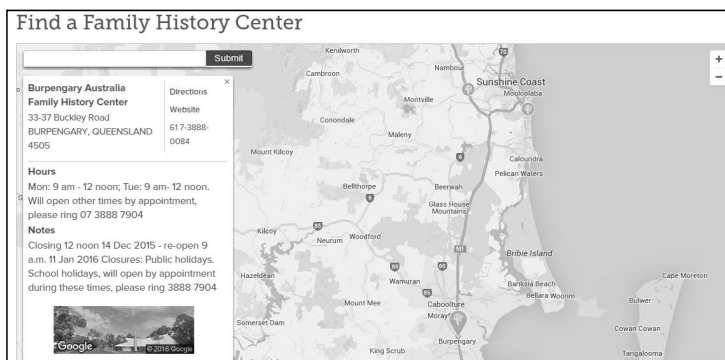
You can even order microfilms and fiche online. All you need is to sign up for a free account and then locate the microfilm/s you want to order, pay on the secure shopping cart site and the items will be sent to your designated family history centre <https://familysearch.org/films>.

Being able to order in microfilms of original parish records for the United Kingdom and elsewhere has the potential to save you a lot of money as you progress your family history research. This way you still have the thrill of the chase yourself at a fraction of the cost.

The alternatives would be to visit the UK or Europe personally, hire a professional researcher or use some of the commercial sites which are putting indexes and digitised records online.

To locate a Family History Centre near you, use the map at <https://familysearch.org/locations> and enlarge the map of Australia to show where you live. You will be able to easily see the nearest Family History Centre.

*Locating
the nearest
Family
History
Centre is easy*



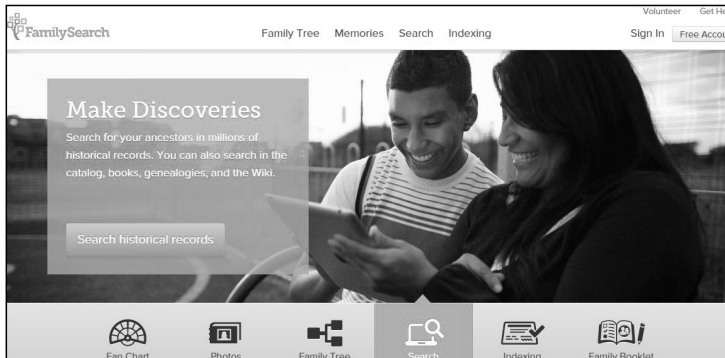
It is necessary to check current opening hours before visiting. The address and opening hours are listed when you click on the symbol for the closest FHC to you.

Remember your local genealogy or family history society may also be a designated centre and closer than a FamilySearch Centre.

FamilySearch website

Before visiting a Family History Centre, thoroughly explore the FamilySearch website. There are billions of free online genealogical records and digital images from over 100 countries.

There are many resources available and often researchers simply use the search features without realising what else can be done using the website.



FamilySearch home page menu, more than just Search

In the image above, the top menu has four main options, each further subdivided as follows:

- Family tree
 - » Tree
 - » Person
 - » Find
 - » Lists
 - » Family Booklet
- Memories
 - » Gallery
 - » People
 - » Find
- Search
 - » Records
 - » Genealogies
 - » Catalog
 - » Books
 - » Wiki
- Indexing
 - » Overview

- » Find a project
- » Help resources

Now we will look at some of these options in greater detail.

Family Tree

Once you have created your free account and logged in, you can enter your family tree data. Like other genealogy software this creates a tree that you can view in a variety of chart formats or even generate as a family booklet.

Memories

In this section you can store photographs, family stories, documents and audio recordings.

Search

With Search there are a number of options on the Search records web page <https://familysearch.org/search>. Most people simply search the historical records by entering key data about an individual or family. However, you can also search within a specific collection or you can browse by collection.

I often find it useful to browse because I might spot something useful that I would not think to search for. Another option is to search by location and you simply click on the map of the world for the country or area that you want.

For example, by selecting Australia there are 25 collections with almost 8 million indexed records and almost 6.2 million images as at May 2016. Collections may be indexed only, or indexed with images and some are images only. An example of the latter is the *Tasmania Government Gazette* from 1833 to 1925.

Still under the Search option is Genealogies and here you will find family trees submitted to FamilySearch. As these records are compiled by other people you need to check and validate the information.

Within Catalog you can search for books, online materials, microform and publications held by FamilySearch. As mentioned above, some of this material can be personally used in a Family History Centre or other designated centre.

Searching the Books option gives you access to a collection of more than 200,000 digitised genealogy and family history publications. There are family histories, local histories, genealogy magazines, 'how to' books, gazetteers, medieval histories and pedigrees. Although US centric, it is surprising what can be found in this section.

For example, I searched for Wednesbury in Staffordshire where my Price family lived in the 1850s. There were 347 references as at May 2016 and in particular an online *History of Wednesbury* by John Ede. The book is 437 pages, published in 1962 and includes maps, illustrations and there is even an index. It has been digitised and I downloaded a copy for free.

Finally the Wiki is the last option under Search and this is where you can find help on an incredible range of subjects and places. For example, I selected Europe, then Ireland to see what was written for County Wicklow. The entry has general information, a list of archives and libraries with internet links, civil jurisdictions and parish research information, maps, probates, societies and other useful internet links. It is a great way to get an overview of an area that you are researching.

Indexing

The last top menu item is Indexing and you can volunteer to help index a series of records with others or you can elect to index something directly relevant to your own research. No experience is needed just some time to spend indexing in the comfort of your own home. With lots of people involved in the indexing program, more records are made available quicker.

Palaeography

If you are looking at original parish registers on microfilm through a Family History Centre, or a digitised record online, then it is useful to have some knowledge of palaeography, the art of reading old styles of handwriting. There are a number of useful publications and tutorials online which will help researchers become familiar with common writing styles.

Graham Jaunay has written an article 'Old Forms of Handwriting' which is available on his website www.jaunay.com/article1.html. Jaunay's publication *Cracking the code of old handwriting*, published by Unlock the Past, has more detailed help on how to interpret some early styles of handwriting.

The Scottish Archive Network www.scan.org.uk has a free interactive tutorial in Scottish Handwriting and other similar sites can be located using Cyndi's List www.cyndislist.com/handwriting.

Spending a little bit of time learning the basics will save researchers a lot of time when trying to read original parish registers either online or on microfilm. You may even need to have a guide to Latin words handy as some of the older registers may be written in Latin.

For German handwriting, to learn the basics of the style to read the old registers go to www.suetterlinschrift.de/Englisch/Sutterlin.htm.

Research tips

- visit FamilySearch online and explore all the various resources
- if you have a Family History Centre nearby, visit if you have not been before
- check if your local genealogy or family history society is delegated to host microfilms for use
- practice reading old handwriting

Travel for maximum benefit, least cost

If you can personally visit the areas that you are researching, this will save the expense of having someone else do the research for you. You need to plan all trips carefully to make the most of a research trip, especially if you are travelling any distance.

Local

The internet is a wonderful time saver when planning a research trip as most archives and libraries now have websites with all the relevant information online.

There are some basic things you need to know before visiting any research facility including:

- address and how to get there, public transport information and parking facilities if driving
- hours of opening
- any registration or membership requirements
- any requirements to book resources or equipment – do this in advance to avoid disappointment or delays on the day
- pre-ordering of records – if available, this can save considerable time
- procedures or processes to comply with – most facilities do not allow bags into reading rooms so be prepared to put your bag into a locker and pencils only are to be used in most archives
- digital camera or USB usage – can you take your own equipment in?

Queensland State Archives www.archives.qld.gov.au has a small leaflet available online that has a map of the route from the train station to the Archives as well as major roads if travelling by car.

There are opening hour details, information on bus and train timetables and information on their free taxi service that operates only on a Tuesday (as at May 2016) from the Fruitgrove Railway Station to the Archives and must be pre-booked. This can save researchers time walking or the expense of a taxi.

Services such as these may not be widely known so remember to investigate services and resources before you travel.

Interstate and overseas

Do not do anything that you can do locally. State libraries and major family history societies often have the major published resources for all Australian states. This means that you can do the research in your local area and when visiting interstate, you can focus on searching unpublished records or records that are only available interstate.

This also applies to overseas research. For example, it is possible to research English parish registers here on microfilm through a Family History Centre or an affiliate library (most of the major genealogical and family history societies are affiliated with FamilySearch) rather than spend time doing it over in England. Or you may find that the records you want have been digitised and are available through one of the commercial genealogy companies.

Your time in the UK, Europe or wherever, can then be spent visiting churches and cemeteries and other places associated with the family. Those are activities that you definitely cannot do here.

Transport

Plan your itinerary carefully and allow time to get to places. It is often necessary to allow for traffic or public transport delays so where possible give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination. In Australia we can travel long distances in a single day but that is not the case, for example, in the United Kingdom. They have more people, more traffic and fewer highways so it takes longer to get from place to place.

Here again the internet can be useful in planning how long a trip might take. If visiting Melbourne, Visit Victoria **www.visitvictoria.com** has a route planner that allows you to enter a point of departure, Sydney for example, and then it calculates that it will be approximately 879 km taking approximately 10½ hours.

GPS systems also allow this type of calculation and can make driving in a different city or state much easier.

If flying to your destination, hiring a car is usually more efficient and will definitely get you to the places that you want to see.

Public transport may not give you the flexibility that you need and takes longer as you have to work to timetables and connections. However, it might not be more economical depending on whether or not all the research facilities you want to use are located in the same area.

Accommodation

There are lots of useful sites on the internet for discounted accommodation and some of the more popular sites include:

- Last Minute.com.au **www.lastminute.com.au**
- Need It Now **www.needitnow.com.au**
- Wotif **www.wotif.com**

Most of these can be booked in advance and it is often worth trying more than one as they do not always list the same accommodation places or cover the same geographical areas.

Airfares

Discounted airfares are offered by all airlines and the earlier you book, the better chance you have of obtaining a cheap seat. It is often easier to travel mid-week rather than at busier weekends or during school holidays.

Each of the airlines has email newsletters which are free to subscribe to and notify you in advance of special deals and sales before they are advertised publicly.

Remember to compare airlines and a useful online site is Webjet **www.webjet.com.au** which allows a comparison of all Australian and major international airlines.

Wi-fi and phones

These days most airports and even some hotels offer free wi-fi to travellers. McDonalds is also well known for having free wi-fi as do some public libraries and archives. Do your homework before you go to discover where you might be able to access free wi-fi while travelling.

Buy a local 'pay as you go' SIM card for your phone as it will be cheaper than having roaming access from your regular provider.

Relatives, friends and the local genealogy or family history society

Notify any relatives or friends in the area that you are visiting. They may be able to do some organising in advance for you and may even be able to assist with accommodation and transport.

Similarly, by contacting the local genealogy or family history society you may attract the attention of someone who is happy to show you around the area or give you advice on what places to visit.

Placing an advertisement in the local newspaper might also be worthwhile and alert any distant relatives to your visit. It might also raise community interest in your visit and a further story in the newspaper when you arrive.

Again, the more planning and preparation that you do in advance; the more profitable the trip will be for your research. It will also be easier and more enjoyable as you will already know some people before you arrive.

What to take

There are lots of research tools to consider but it also depends on whether you are driving or flying. Most airlines only allow 20 kg for packed luggage. Suggestions include:

- mobile phone
- digital camera (and spare memory card)
- portable scanner
- audio recorder
- laptop or tablet
- USB or memory stick
- batteries, device chargers and USB cables
- power converters if going to the UK or US
- your research plan

Research tips

- use your computer to plan your research trip
- book as much in advance as possible to save time
- take advantage of discounted airfares and accommodation online sites – subscribe to their free email newsletters for advance notice of specials
- notify relatives and friends of your visit
- place a notice in the local newspaper
- remember to take your gadgets!

Professional researchers – when to use

Most people find that at some point in their research, they require the services of a professional researcher. This may be because of distance and the repository that holds a particular record of interest is too far to travel to. Petrol, accommodation and airfares all cost money and it might be cheaper simply to engage a search agent to obtain the information you require.

It may also be because you are stuck on a particular line and require expert advice and assistance.

The Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents (AAGRA) have accredited members who can be engaged for a fee to assist with your research. The AAGRA members directory is available at **www.aagra.asn.au**.

There are also other professional genealogists and record agents who are not members of AAGRA. They usually advertise their services via genealogy magazines, attendance at events and word of mouth.

Australian Family Tree Connections **www.aftc.com.au** has a classified ads section where various people advertise their services. Most family history magazines both in Australia and overseas have advertisements from professional researchers and search agents.

Archives and libraries quite often have a list of search agents who regularly do work in their reading rooms. For example, Public Record Office Victoria has PROVguide 15: Research Organisations – Search Agents **<http://prov.vic.gov.au/provguide-15>**.

Genealogy and family history societies also have people who are prepared to do research for a fee, often with payment going to the societies to help purchase more library items for members.

As we saw earlier, the Society of Australian Genealogists **www.sag.org.au** conducts genealogy courses in Australia. People who have completed the Diploma in Family Historical Studies are often available for research commissions and the Society has a list available at **www.sag.org.au/downloads/diplomates.pdf**.

As a general rule, most professional researchers require a deposit equating to two hours work and then charge an hourly rate thereafter. The cost of photocopies, certificates and other expenses is additional.

Most professional researchers have their own website with details of their expertise, services and fees. Email a brief outline of your enquiry to discuss what is required and what fees might be involved. The professional researcher can then provide a quote for the work and confirm that they can do that type of enquiry and within your timeframe.

I have used professional search agents overseas to obtain copies of documents from county record offices. I have even engaged someone to take photographs of one of my ancestral areas in Wiltshire as I knew that I would not be visiting in the near future.

Using a professional researcher may cost money but it can save you travel costs or time while still letting you continue researching that branch of the family.

Some websites for overseas professional genealogists and record agents include:

- Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) **www.apgen.org** (includes a number of Australian and New Zealand genealogists)
- Professional Genealogists and Genealogy Services Directory
http://genealogypro.com (includes a number of Australian and New Zealand genealogists)

When to use a genealogist or search agent

Some reasons to seek help include:

- no local access to the records which are either interstate or overseas
- encountered a problem that you cannot resolve
- records are complex and require expertise to use
- records are in a language other than English
- it is a specialist area
- you do not have the time to do the research yourself

Research tips

- remember to check commercial subscription sites for interstate and overseas material
- get a quote for any professional work clearly outlining what is required
- check genealogy magazines and professional researcher organisations for who is available in the area that you want

Internet – vast opportunities

This is an area that is increasing so fast that it is often hard to keep up with new resources. This section just lists some of the main resources and it is strongly recommended that you do your own searches based on individual research needs.

Internet search engines and browsers

There are a number of search engines and browsers that can be used to search for family history and genealogy.

Popular browsers include:

- Chrome **www.google.com/chrome**
- Firefox **www.mozilla.com**
- Internet Explorer 11 **www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer**
- Safari **www.apple.com/au/safari**

Some programs and websites do not work with all browsers so I find it useful to have a number of browsers available on my desktop.

The more popular search engines include:

- Bing **www.bing.com**
- Google **www.google.com**
- Web Wombat **www.webwombat.com.au** (an Australian search engine)
- Yahoo **<https://au.yahoo.com>**

These search engines all have advanced search options that should be used to define searches. Date range searching is a useful search facility to narrow down the number of hits in a search.

Try the same search on different search engines and you will more than likely return different search results. Remember to search worldwide and do not just limit to Australia, New Zealand or a specific country.

In the next chapter, we will look at using Google for genealogy in more detail.

Of course just because something is online does not necessarily mean that it is accurate and you should always check the information yourself against original records.

Portals or gateways

There are a number of portal or gateway sites including:

- CoraWeb: Helping you trace your family history in Australia and elsewhere **www.coraweb.com.au**
- Cyndi's list of genealogy sites on the internet **www.cyndislist.com**
- Genuki UK and Ireland genealogy **<http://genuki.com>**
- The National Archives UK Discovery **<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>** (details of over 2500 archives as at May 2016)

- Scottish Archive Network **www.scan.org.uk** (catalogue search of over 52 Scottish archives as at May 2016)

Software

There is a wide range of software and applications that can be downloaded for free and not just for genealogy and family history.

OpenOffice **www.openoffice.org** is a free 'office productivity suite of programs' including a word processor, spreadsheet program and a presentation program similar to PowerPoint.

As mentioned earlier, I find Dick Eastman's *Online Genealogy Newsletter* **http://blog.eogn.com** a very good source for software and hardware updates. The daily newsletter is free and the Plus edition with full articles is available by subscription.

Email/mailling lists

Get assistance by joining mailing lists and asking others for advice or lookups. For example, if you need something looked up at an archives or library in another state, by placing your request on a mailing list you may find someone who will do your enquiry when they next visit the archives or library themselves. You should always reimburse the person for any expenses they may incur such as copying fees or postage.

Remember to reciprocate if you can with advice or lookups in your local area.

Mailing lists are also a useful way to keep up to date with what is new in a particular geographical or subject area as people share information and news.

There is a mailing list for almost everywhere and remember to look for specific topics or surname mailing lists too. Best of all being on a mailing list is free.

The easiest place to find mailing lists is from the home page at Rootsweb **www.rootsweb.ancestry.com**. Under the Mailing Lists heading there are subheadings for:

- Find a List Search
- Index (which lets you browse what lists are available)
- ROOTS-L mailing list (provides background history)
- Surname List Finder
- Archives Search (lets you search all the mailing lists since 1998)
- Archives Browse
- Requests for Mailing Lists (to start a new list)

On the right is a snippet from the Australia mailing lists **http://lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com/index/intl/AUS**. Note the different areas and subjects covered.

Mailing lists on Rootsweb offer a way of connecting with others researching in the same area

Australia Mailing Lists

ANZ-GEN-MAT | ARIA | AUS-ABORIGINE | AUS-ACT | AUS-ADELAIDE-ASYLUMS | AUS-AIE | AUS-ARMY-NURSING | AUS-BUSHRANGERS | AUS-CHINESE | AUS-CHRISTMAS-ISLAND | AUS-COCOS-ISLANDS | AUS-CONVICTS | AUS-FHS-WEBMASTERS | AUS-GEN-EVENTS | AUS-GERMAN | AUS-HIST-WOMEN | AUS-HOSPITALS | AUS-IMMIGRATION-SHIPS | AUS-IRISH | AUS-KOORI | AUS-MELBOURNE | AUS-MEMORIES | AUS-MILITARY | AUS-NEWSPAPER-EXTRACTS | AUS-NEWSPAPERS-DIGITISATION-PROJECT | AUS-NORFOLK-IS | AUS-NO | AUS-NSW | AUS-NSW-BLUE-MOUNTAINS | AUS-NSW-CEMETERIES | AUS-NSW-CENTRAL | AUS-NSW-CENTRAL-COAST | AUS-NSW-CHURCHES | AUS-NSW-COLONIAL-HISTORY | AUS-NSW-HILLS | AUS-HAWKESBURY-HUNTER-VALLEY | AUS-NSW-Hume-Valley | AUS-NSW-LIVERPOOL | AUS-NSW-MACLEAY-RIVER | AUS-NSW-MANNING-VALLEY | AUS-NSW-NEW-ENGLAND | AUS-NSW-NORCO | AUS-NSW-ORANGE-DISTRICT | AUS-NSW-PARRAMATTA | AUS-NSW-PENRITH | AUS-NSW-PILLIGA | AUS-NSW-RIVERINA | AUS-NSW-SE | AUS-NSW-SOUTHERN-HIGHLANDS | AUS-NSW-SURNAMES | AUS-NSW-SYDNEY | AUS-NSW-UPPER-LACHLAN | AUS-NSW-WEST | AUS-NT | AUS-ORPHANAGES | AUS-PT-JACKSON-CONVICTS | AUS-OLD | AUS-OLD-BRISBANE | AUS-OLD-BUNDABERG | AUS-OLD-CAIRNS | AUS-OLD-CHARLEVILLE | AUS-OLD-GATTON | AUS-OLD-GOLD-COAST | AUS-OLD-IPSWICH | AUS-OLD-MACKAY | AUS-OLD-MARTYBOROUGH | AUS-OLD-NINDAH-DIST | AUS-OLD-ROCKHAMPTON | AUS-OLD-ROSEWOOD | AUS-OLD-SALISBURY | AUS-OLD-SE-GRANBARRIE | AUS-OLD-SUNSHINE-COAST | AUS-OLD-TEXAS | AUS-OLD-TOOWOOMBA | AUS-OLD-TOWNSVILLE | AUS-OLD-WARWICK | AUS-OLD-WESTERN | AUS-OLD-WYNNUM | AUS-RAN | AUS-

Most people do not have the time to subscribe to many lists and I find searching the archives a great way to look for new enquiries on families or places that I am interested in. I try to do annual searches on my research names.

Facebook is another way of seeking genealogical help online by using social media.

Look-up exchanges

These are similar to mailing lists in that they register lists of volunteers who are prepared to do free look-ups in particular resources. There is no central register but a Google search may turn up one if you use a place name together with 'look-up exchange' in your search string.

For example, I have a number of families from Wiltshire and by doing a Google search on Wiltshire and 'look-up exchange' turns up the Wiltshire Look-up Exchange http://sjdeez.tripod.com/wiltshire/Wiltshire_Look-up_Exchange.htm. These types of sites are usually managed by volunteers and some are more active than others.

Similarly, the Australasian Births Deaths and Marriages Exchange www.ausbdm.org offers free look-ups in a wide range of resources for both Australia and New Zealand.

Blogs

The term blog is short for web log and it is written to communicate with others sharing a common interest. Readers can post comments on a blog and provide further information or feedback.

On the Unlock the Past Resources website page there is a link to all Australian Genealogy & History Blogs at www.unlockthepast.com.au/australian-genealogy-history-blogs and New Zealand Genealogy & History Blogs at <http://unlockthepast.com.au/new-zealand-genealogy-history-blogs>. Both lists have a wide range of blogs and it is worth browsing to see what may be relevant to your own research or for ideas on what to include in your own blog.

Another useful site is Geneabloggers www.geneabloggers.com where you can search for blogs all over the world and also by type. It really is amazing just how many blogs are available with a genealogy focus.

You can also search for genealogy and other blogs using a search engine such as Google. This allows you to search for a topic within a blog which can be quite useful.

Another example is Chris Dunham's Genealogy Blog Finder <http://blogfinder.genealogue.com>.

As you can see, there are lots of ways to discover what blogs are available and how to search them. This is a rapidly expanding area of genealogy on the internet and I strongly recommend that you start following a few blogs. Or write your own!

My own blog SHHE Genie Rambles www.shaunahicks.com.au/shhe-genie-rambles started in September 2009. Back issues are arranged in a monthly archive. The exciting part is that as the blog posts are searchable by Google, a number of distant relatives have found me through Google searches.

One of my St Patrick's Day blogs on my Irish ancestors put me in touch with other descendants of my Johnston/Jeffers Irish ancestors in Ireland, the USA and Australia. It certainly does pay to write up your family stories and share them online.

How do you start your own blog? Well you can use the free Google Blogger **www.blogger.com** if you have a Google account which is also free. You do not need your own website to do this and to prove it really was simple, I started in July 2011 my Diary of an Australian Genealogist **http://diaryofanaustraliangenealogist.blogspot.com.au** using Google Blogger.

By following the instructions I chose a template, created my profile and set up the pages to include a page for all the family names I am researching. I think the hardest part was choosing a name for the blog!

Wordpress **https://wordpress.com** and Tumblr **www.tumblr.com** are two other free blogging options to try.

Many genealogists are using free blogs to tell their family stories and to link up with others researching the same families. Have a look at some of the blogs mentioned above and give it a try.

Ezines

Many of the commercial genealogy and family history companies have their own email newsletters or magazines. Often these are free to subscribe to and you simply receive the publication as a regular email. These can be a great way of keeping up to date with what is new and happening in family history circles. Back issues may also be online and could be worth looking at.

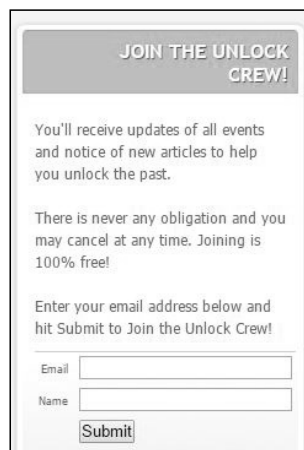
When you visit a website that you use on a regular basis, look for a link that says 'Subscribe to our newsletter' or similar. For example, the Unlock the Past **www.unlockthepast.com.au** email newsletter subscription panel is on the left side of the home page and is headed 'Join the Unlock Crew'.

An excellent free online monthly Irish genealogy magazine is Irish Lives Remembered **www.irishlivesremembered.ie**. Issues are free to view for 12 months.

Social networking

Meet and network with other genealogists and family members. There are a range of sites but three of the more popular applications are listed below.

- Facebook **www.facebook.com** allows people to set up their own accounts and share information and photographs with friends and family. Unlock the Past has a Facebook page at **www.facebook.com/unlockthepast**. Find out all the latest UTP news by becoming a fan.
- Twitter **www.twitter.com** - to see what it is all about visit Unlock the Past or myself on Twitter. To follow us you need to join which is free. **http://twitter.com/HicksShauna** and **http://twitter.com/UnlockThePast**



The image shows a web form titled "JOIN THE UNLOCK CREW!". The form is enclosed in a thin black border. At the top, the title is in white text on a dark grey background. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text: "You'll receive updates of all events and notice of new articles to help you unlock the past." This is followed by another paragraph: "There is never any obligation and you may cancel at any time. Joining is 100% free!". Below this, there is a prompt: "Enter your email address below and hit Submit to Join the Unlock Crew!". There are two input fields: one for "Email" and one for "Name". Both fields are empty. At the bottom right of the form is a "Submit" button with a black border and white text.

Subscribing to the Unlock the Past newsletter is easy



Twitter provides lots of opportunities to connect with other genealogists and family historians

- Google+ <https://plus.google.com> allows you to have circles of friends, family or genealogy or other interest groups. Similar to Facebook, you can post items of interest, chat to people, comment on posts and other activities.

Further reading

A useful publication that explains social networking in more detail is Drew Smith's *Social networking for genealogists* which may be available at your local society or library.

Carole Riley's *Social media for family historians*, 2nd edition, is also a good introduction to the topic as the author talks about 25 websites useful for genealogy. It is published by Unlock the Past and available from Gould Genealogy & History www.gould.com.au.

The State Library of Queensland has a very useful free online learning program Looking at 2.0 <http://learning.slq.qld.gov.au>. There are four levels including:

- Beginners - get connected, search the web, access webmail and social media
- Intermediate - save time online, money management, find and use ebooks, social media
- Advanced - share and grow, use the cloud, online learning
- Skill up 4 work - look for a job, workplace culture and communication and on the job skills

Not all of these topics may be useful for genealogy and family history but it is a great way to explore and learn about new technologies.

Research tips

- check out social networking sites and visit Unlock the Past on Facebook
- read some of the Australian and New Zealand blogs on Geneabloggers or Unlock The Past
- follow me on Twitter to see what it is like - use the #genealogy tag to follow only genealogy tweets
- experiment with different browsers and search engines
- do the State Library of Queensland free online course

Making the most of Google

Although I had been using Google for some time, it was not until I heard Dan Lynch talk in 2010 about all the things you could do with Google that I realised what I was missing out on. Dan's book *Google your family tree: unlock the hidden power of Google* is a must read for tips on Google even though it does have American examples. It is easy to put your own search terms in to Lynch's examples and follow his methodology.

Google has changed quite a bit since then and continues to change on a regular basis. Helen Smith's *Google: the genealogist's friend* was published in early 2016 and is more up to date with Google features. Search methodology does not really date so I still recommend you read Lynch's book too.

Both publications should be available via inter-library loan. Just ask your local librarian or you can purchase a copy through Gould Genealogy & History www.gould.com.au.

In a Google search you can look for information on the families or on the areas where they lived or whatever else may be relevant to your family. For example, some of my Brookes family from Wednesbury, Staffordshire all died on the same day. I 'googled' the date and the place and found that the town was in the midst of a severe cholera outbreak. This probably explains why the whole family died on the same date.

I was also a fan of Picasa, a free computer program offered by Google with basic photo editing features. Some of these are colour adjusting, red eye removal, tagging and facial recognition which allowed me to identify and tag all of my digital photographs quickly and easily.

However in early 2016 Google retired Picasa and I now have to access my photos via Google Photos <https://photos.google.com>. I can still see and search my photos, arrange them into albums and share them but facial recognition is no longer an option.

As technology and applications change so frequently, you need to be prepared to adapt and learn new skills.

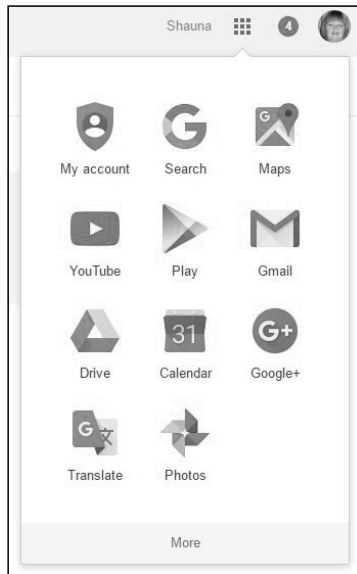
How many Google features do you use?

Most people are unaware of Google features so I will briefly list the ones I use on a regular basis including:

- Alerts (let Google search for you)
- Blogger (used for my Diary of an Australian Genealogist blog)
- Books (lots of digitised books for free)
- Chrome (my favourite browser)
- Earth
- Google+ (chat and share posts with others)

- Hangouts (live chat or watch later via You Tube)
- Images
- Mail
- Maps (street view images too)
- News
- Photos (storing online and arranging into albums - replaces Picasa)
- Search (including Web and Images)
- Translate (foreign text and websites)
- YouTube (watching videos and webinars)
- and more!

The easiest way to see all the features is to look for the small square of nine dots on the top menu bar after you have logged in. At the bottom of each screen there is a message More and you just keep clicking until you have seen them all.



Lots of Google apps are useful for genealogy and family history

Research tips

- read *Google: your family tree* and do your own searches based on suggested queries
- read *Google the genealogist's friend* and explore the different features
- be aware that Google is constantly changing

Some more favourite sites

There are just so many sites that I could include here but hopefully some of my favourites will be relevant to your research too. Also think about searching for similar sites for where your families are from.

Free sites

The Ryerson Index **www.ryersonindex.org** is an index to contemporary death notices and obituaries in Australian newspapers. In May 2016 there were almost 5.5 million entries in the database. There is coverage of over 310 newspapers for most of Australia with volunteers adding extra entries on a regular basis.

UK Genealogical Directories and Lists (GDL) **www.ukgdl.org.uk** is a companion to the UKBMD website. The aim of the site is to assist researchers to find online directories and lists including school lists, trade directories, old photographs etc.

The site is organised into categories but researchers can look at resources by county although some of the sites relate to the whole of the UK. It is a directory of links so there is no overall search facility and as at May 2016 there were 1972 links.

The Internet Library of Early Journals **www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej** is a digital library of 18th and 19th century digitised journals available for searching:

- *Annual Register* – established in 1758, is an annual survey of European and world events from a British perspective, including biographical notices, parliamentary and legal reports and some book reviews. It is divided into topical sections with chronological sub-divisions.
- *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* – established in 1817, it is a medium for imaginative literature, publishing English poetry, essays and especially prose fiction, and pioneering the presentation of European literature (particularly German) to a British audience.
- *Gentleman's Magazine* – established in 1731, it is a British focused miscellany of information about people, places and events, including news summaries, parliamentary reports, biographies and obituary notices, poems, essays and a register of current publications.
- *Notes and Queries* – was established in 1849 as 'a medium of intercommunication for literary men, artists, antiquaries, genealogists, etc.', carrying brief reports of completed research on humanities and related subjects and questions inviting answers in subsequent issues.
- *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* – established in 1660, initially as a forum for the publication of scientific papers of both a general and a specialised nature, although increasingly a learned journal carrying refereed papers from established scientists.

I find just browsing these early journals fascinating and they can provide interesting context on the places and times in which our ancestors lived.

British History Online **www.british-history.ac.uk** is a digital library of key primary and secondary sources for the history of Britain and Ireland between 1300 and 1800 in particular. There are guides, calendars, maps, data sets, secondary texts and primary sources.

London Lives 1690 to 1800: crime poverty and social policy in the metropolis **www.londonlives.org** has over 240,000 manuscripts as at May 2016 from eight archives and 15 data sets with almost 3.5 million names.

The Internet Archive **<https://archive.org/index.php>** is a non-profit library of free books, movies, software, music and more. Part of the Internet Archive is the Wayback Machine **<https://archive.org/web>** where you can see archived websites. It includes both current and non-current websites.

At Dansk Demografisk Database **http://ddd.dda.dk/ddd_en.htm**, is a free Danish Archives site you can search for individuals in census, emigration, immigration and four small databases covering probate and other records. It also includes some records for Schleswig-Holstein. Remember to select the English language option.

The aim of the Norwegian Historical Data Centre **www.rhd.uit.no/indexeng.html** is to ease access to historical sources. Researchers can search for free computerised Norwegian censuses from 1865, parish registers (covering baptisms, funerals, confirmations, marriages and migration) and other sources from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Demographical Database for Southern Sweden (DDSS) **[www.ddss.nu/\(S\(5ehmw1id1pmy0l55lwh5qb3w\)\)/english/default.aspx](http://www.ddss.nu/(S(5ehmw1id1pmy0l55lwh5qb3w))/english/default.aspx)** consists of three separate databases containing information extracted from the original Swedish parish church records (for the counties of Halland, Skåne and Blekinge). It includes births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials and as at May 2016 covers the years 1650 to 1900.

It is an ongoing project and each of these sets of records constitutes a separate database. A migration database compiled by Scania Demographic Database (the predecessor of the DDSS) is also available free to researchers.

Find your towns in German areas ceded after World War I and II in Kartenmeister **www.kartenmeister.com/preview/databaseUwe.asp** the most comprehensive database of its kind in the world. All locations are east of the Oder and Neisse rivers and are based on the borders of the eastern provinces in Spring 1918. Included in this database are the following provinces: East Prussia, including Memel, West Prussia, Brandenburg, Posen, Pomerania, and Silesia. Searches are free.

The Baden Emigration Index **www.germanroots.com/emigration.html** is an A to Z listing of those who left Baden from the 17th to the 20th centuries and received official permission to emigrate. On the same website is the Württemberg Emigration Index which covers 1808 to 1890, for those who had permission to emigrate only. Both indexes are free to search on Ancestry with a registered account.

Commercial sites

This is a rapidly expanding area with the number of commercial companies expanding or merging each year. It can be confusing knowing which site offers the best value

for accuracy and ease of use. Some of these sites have the same information as others although the indexes and search and navigation options may vary.

Some points to consider when deciding which site to use or subscribe to are whether you can search the index freely to find information. This allows you to decide if you then want to view for a fee.

All information indexed or digitised on the site should be clearly listed and any limitations in coverage noted. Make sure the records you want to search are there before you pay. Also look to see if original records have been digitised or simply transcribed or indexed.

One of the golden rules of family history is that you always go back and search the original record, so do not simply rely on an index or a transcribed record, as there may be errors.

Also the records should be clearly cited so that they can be compared with the original records in a repository.

Ancestry **www.ancestry.com.au** has sites around the world including the USA, Canada, UK and Australia. To find out what is included in the various subscriptions visit the Ancestry website and browse the list of records. Categories include:

- Birth, Marriage & Death
- Census & Voter Lists
- Immigration & Travel
- Military
- Schools, Directories & Church Histories
- Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills
- Reference, Dictionaries & Almanacs
- Family Trees
- Stories & Publications (includes memories, newspapers, periodical and magazines)
- Photos & Maps

The card catalogue lists the Australian collections currently available and you can filter by collections, locations, dates or languages. If you have a UK or World subscription you can search the card catalogue for them too.

Findmypast **www.findmypast.com.au** has categories of records including:

- Armed forces & conflict
- Census, land & surveys
- Churches & religion
- Directories & social history
- Education & work
- Institutions & organisations
- Life events (BDMs)
- Newspapers & periodicals
- Travel & migration

One of the reasons I like using Findmypast, especially for my Queensland research, is that it includes data from:

- Archive Digital Books Australasia **www.archivedigitalbooks.com.au**
- Queensland Family History Society **www.qfhs.org.au**

The Genealogist **www.thegenealogist.com** is particularly strong for British genealogy from 1127 to 2005 and includes:

- Births, marriages & deaths
- Census records
- Court & criminal records
- Directory records
- Education records
- Immigration, emigration & travel
- Insolvents & bankrupts
- Military records
- Newspapers & magazines
- Non-Conformist and non-parochial records
- Occupational records
- Parish records
- Polls & electoral rolls
- Reference books
- Tithe & landowner
- Trade, residential & telephone
- Wills

MyHeritage **www.myheritage.com** as at May 2016, SuperSearch had nearly seven billion historical records. It is particularly strong for Europe. Categories include:

- Birth, marriage & death
- Census & voters lists
- Family trees
- Military
- Newspapers
- Immigration & travel

Most of these commercial sites have trial offers, bonus vouchers and other money saving opportunities from time to time. Also many libraries and some archives now have what is available locally. Subscribe to their free e-newsletters to keep up to date with new additions and free or discounted offers.

Remember that your local genealogy or family history society may have some or all of these sites available for members as part of their membership. Again this can be a cost saving and makes membership of societies well worthwhile.

Research tips

- take the time to browse sites thoroughly, not just the search facility
- subscribe to any free e-newsletters to keep up to date with new additions and free or discounted offers
- find out what commercial sites are available at your local library or genealogy / family history society
- taking up a subscription for a limited time may be good value and certainly cheaper than travelling to a place to do research in person

Serendipity – the art of finding elusive ancestors

Anyone who has ever been to one of my talks will know that I am a great believer in serendipity which is where you accidentally find something that is of great relevance to your research. Many years ago I found a good percentage of my father's family in various police, court and prison records which was totally unexpected. Since then I check all sources because you just never know.

I have had numerous people tell me how they have also found ancestors in places they would never have expected to find them. Or they have walked into a cemetery and found graves without really knowing that their family members were buried there.

Is there some cosmic link between us and our ancestors drawing us to find them and to bring their lives back into the family memory? I like to think there is. If you have had any similar experiences, please write and tell me as I find this a really fascinating area.

Listed below are some websites and databases researchers may not be aware of, which are worth checking for any elusive ancestors.

The Biographical Database of Australia (BDA) www.bda-online.org.au is free to search and as at May 2016, there are over one million records in the database. It is added to from time to time and is particularly useful for early New South Wales, Tasmania and Norfolk Island. Anyone who has convict ancestors should definitely have a look.

The RootsWeb website www.rootsweb.ancestry.com has a range of indexes and databases that should be explored. I will highlight just one of them, the Book Indexes database but strongly suggest that you explore the website thoroughly.

As at May 2016, the Book Indexes database <http://userdb.rootsweb.ancestry.com/bookindexes> contains almost 550,000 entries contributed by volunteers. There are quite a number of Australian local history books in this database which are listed under Australia. I entered the surname Pyers and the search gave me references to the surname, page number and book titles in which the name appeared.

There were references to the surname in two books – *The story of the Mallee* with just the Pyers surname and *Warracknabeal* with reference to a George Pyers. If I was not already aware of those publications, I could then look for them in a library and perhaps discover further information on the family.

This is serendipity because you may not be aware of publications in which your ancestors are mentioned and this in turn, may provide leads not able to be established elsewhere. Not all Australian books are indexed in this database but it is worth a look or perhaps even contributing too.

Tips for looking for those elusive ancestors

Everyone has brick walls at some stage of their research and just one new piece of information can demolish a brick wall.

Do not be rigid with the spelling of family names. Many people were illiterate, or spoke with accents, indexers may have had difficulty interpreting old handwriting and as humans, we can also simply make a mistake.

There are many reasons why researchers need to think laterally when looking for ancestors. One of my own family lines is Johnston but I have seen it spelt without the 't' and also with an 'e' on the end. This means that I always look for all three surname spellings whenever I research this family. Given that it is a common surname this is a particularly lengthy process but vital if I am not to miss a critical piece of information.

Judy Webster has a very useful *Using and Compiling Indexes* guide freely available on her website www.judywebster.com.au/methods.html. There are lots of tips and examples on how to compile indexes and a very useful section on *Traps involved in using indexes*.

Information on certificates is only what the informant said and may not be totally correct. This is especially true for death certificates as the informant may not know the information and on marriage certificates one or other of the parties may have had something to hide.

For example, my great grandfather, James Carnegie's marriage certificate gives a set of parents for him that confused my research for some time. I finally established that they were in fact his grandparents and not his parents.

James was born illegitimate to their eldest daughter Helen and there are two possible explanations for the incorrect information on the certificate. My great grandfather either did not want his new wife to know about his illegitimacy or he may not have been aware himself that he was brought up by his grandparents. I am still trying to establish what the family situation was, although I may never know for certain.

Study maps and the layout of the land where they lived as this may provide clues on how our ancestors met each other, where they went to church or school or how they travelled from one place to another.

This is particularly true of mining ancestors as I can follow my Bullen and Potter families from Sydney to the Ballarat goldfields of the 1850s to the Gympie goldfields of the 1860s, then to the Gladstone goldfields in the 1870s before they ended up on the Western Australian goldfields in the 1890s. This example also highlights the need to be aware of what else was happening in Australia that might have impacted on our ancestors lives.

Listen to family stories and note the facts but do not necessarily believe everything without checking and confirming the details. There is usually a grain of truth in most family stories but perhaps not the whole truth.

As my earlier story on my great great grandfather Adam Johnston's alleged death from a crocodile attack demonstrated, family stories often arise when someone disappears and the family are trying to explain the disappearance.

When people go missing from families it usually means that they have gone somewhere else. Perhaps the most common places to look are prisons, asylums or the military, especially in times of war.

Asylums were not only for the mentally ill but also those who were too old or sick to care for themselves, alcoholics and those who had nowhere else to go. Another sad aspect of asylum records is the number of women who were obviously suffering from what we know today as postnatal depression.

I discovered a number of my own ancestors in asylums and became so fascinated with the wealth of information in asylum records that I wrote *My ancestor was in an asylum: brief guide to asylum records in Australia and New Zealand*. It is published by Unlock the Past and is available from Gould Genealogy & History www.gould.com.au.

Both prison and asylum records give very good biographical information on inmates and are definitely worth trying for any missing ancestors.

Do not assume anything about your ancestors. Just because the family were poor does not necessarily mean that they did not have a will and probate when they died. If there is an index, check it just in case.

Similarly, if they died in a town or city that does not mean they were not once on the land so check indexes to land records. One of my early immigrant families settled on a farm outside of Nambour in Queensland.

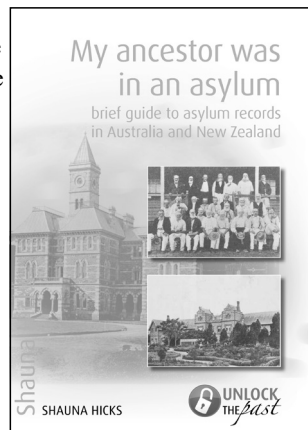
The land selection file contains a number of letters written by my great great grandfather John Finn describing the hardships they faced and explained the eventual loss of the land due to non-payment of rent. Both John and his wife Sarah died in Brisbane. It was only because some of their children were born in the Nambour area that I checked the indexes to land selections.

Check every index for your family names. It may take a few minutes but serendipity is a wonderful thing. You can discover information about the family that you might have totally missed because there were no clues pointing in that direction.

Read relevant books, journals, visit websites, subscribe to mailing lists and attend family history society meetings to learn more and to talk to others and seek their expertise. Family history as a pastime is very much a sharing experience. Other family historians love the experience of trying to break down someone else's brick wall.

Research tips

- investigate family stories
- advertise your brick walls or help others with their missing ancestors
- search indexes such as asylums or prisons 'just in case'
- read Judy Webster's indexing traps
- contribute to indexing projects and help others



Asylum records may solve the secrets of many families

Conclusion

This book has covered broad subject areas and provided a range of tips and tricks to save both time and money when doing family history and genealogical research. There are lots more tips and tricks out there and I hope that readers share their own favourites with fellow researchers at conferences, meetings, on mailing lists, social media, blogs and their own websites.

There is an explosion of information on family history research courtesy of the internet and Web 2.0 technology. It can be extremely hard to keep up with all of the latest developments. I find that most of my updates are through social media posts on Twitter, Facebook or Google+ or from free e-newsletters that I subscribe to.

Through sharing everyone benefits and our research is all the more enriched by access to the new material being made available almost daily.

My love affair with family history research has lasted for almost 40 years. I suspect that I will never lose interest. I hope that your research is as rewarding.

I am always pleased to receive any feedback or new tips and tricks from readers.

Best wishes with your research.

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<http://diaryofanaustraliangenealogist.blogspot.com.au>

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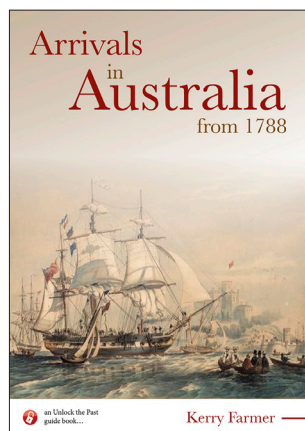
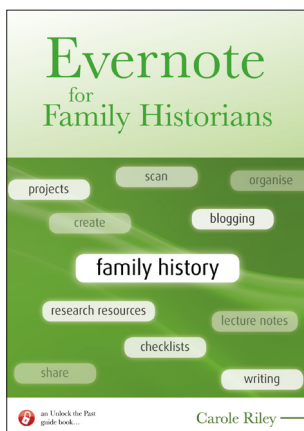
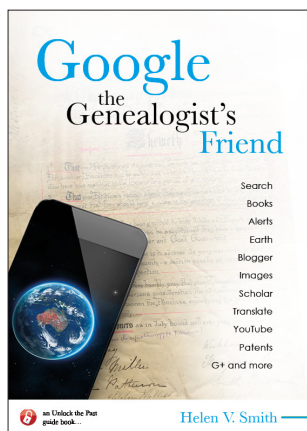
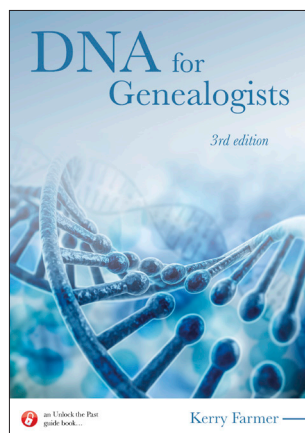
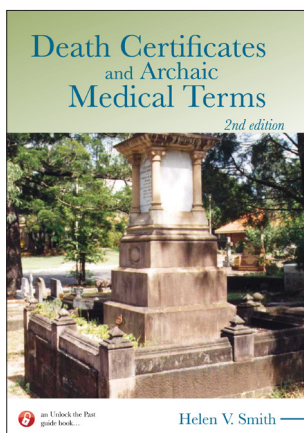
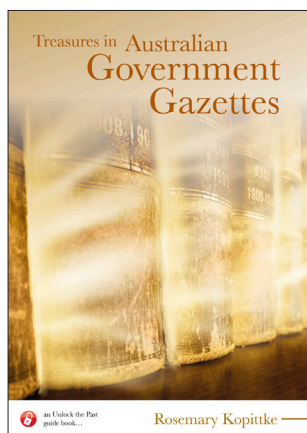
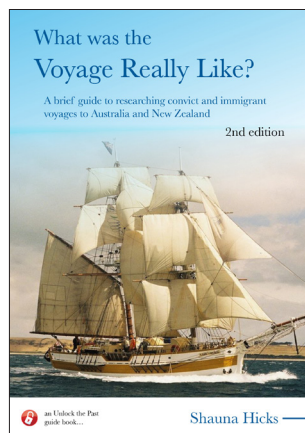
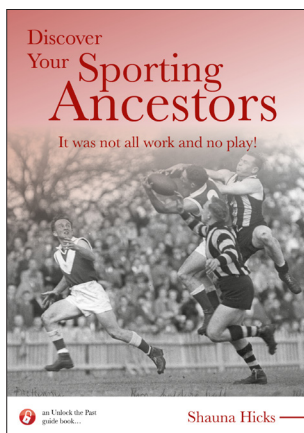
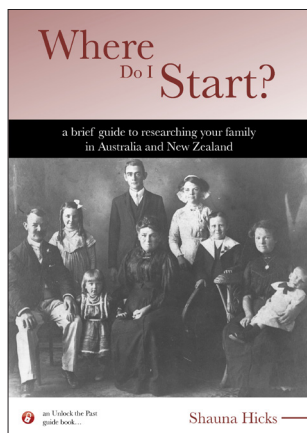
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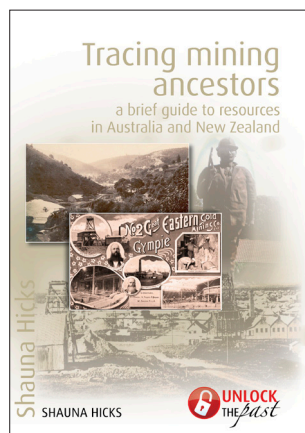
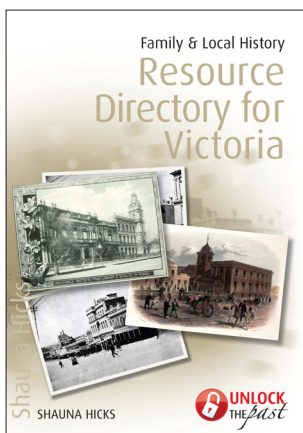
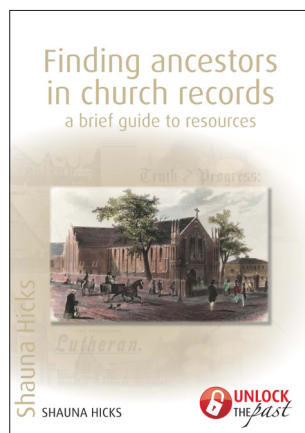
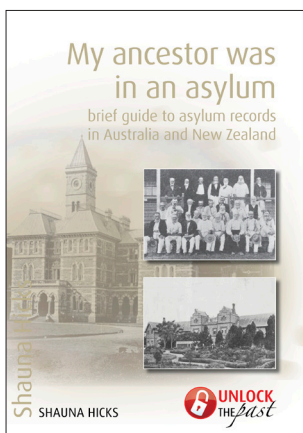
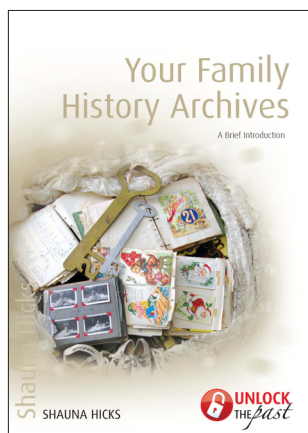
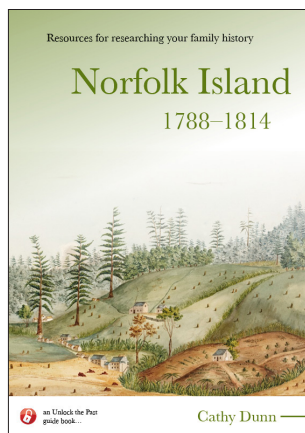
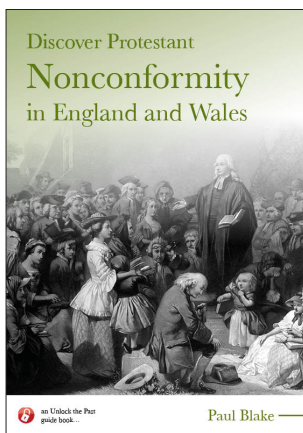
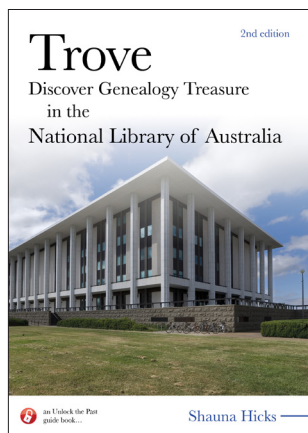
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Genealogy is one of Australia's favourite hobbies but it can be expensive and time consuming looking for family history information. With the growth of the internet and more records and indexes online it is, however, becoming easier and quicker if you know where to look.

This second, revised and updated edition of *Family history on the cheap* examines a broad range of topics including family sources, whether someone has already researched the family, when to use professional researchers, how and where to obtain discounts, what sites are free, how to plan and organise your research, making the most of Google and using social media for family history research.

Finding births, marriages and deaths are the cornerstones of family history research and this guide looks at various ways of discovering this information in a variety of sources such as wills and probate records, cemetery records and newspapers without spending money.

This second edition of *Family history on the cheap* highlights numerous tips and tricks for how to get the most from research trips to archives, libraries, family history and local historical societies, visits to relatives, social networking sites, commercial websites, and of course, Google. You will quickly recoup its purchase price many times over with the money and time savings outlined throughout the book.

