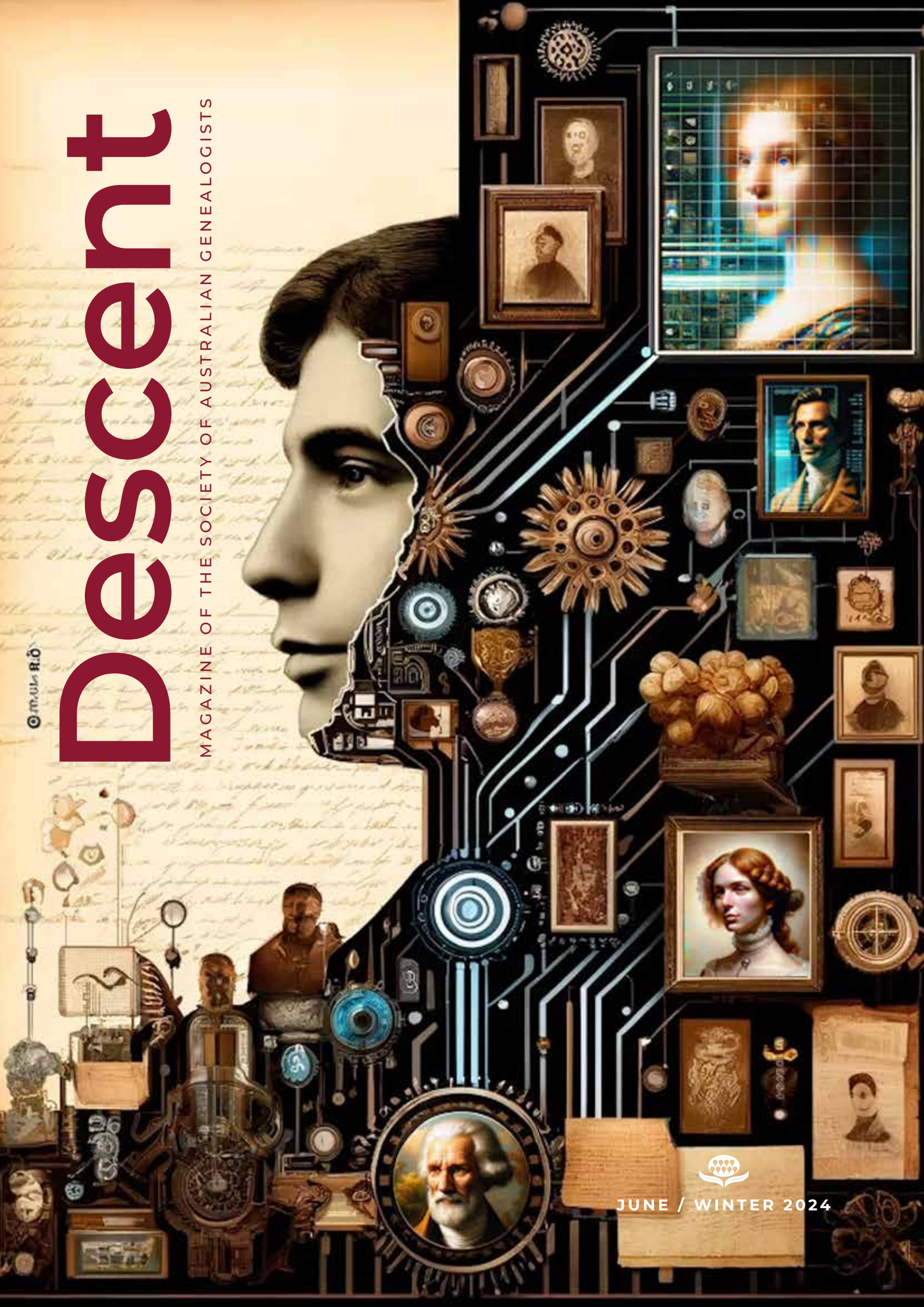


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# Descent

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN GENEALOGISTS



JUNE / WINTER 2024

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## Cover Image

Created using DALL-E as part of OpenAI ChatGPT subscription on 19 May 2024 with prompts provided by Andrew Redfern.

Vertical aspect ratio of magazine cover for family history society magazine that blends old and traditional with new and artificial intelligence inspired motifs.

There should be no distinction between the two but rather the old morphing into the new. Post edits made using graphics software.

## Descent

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## Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the First Nations peoples and we pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. The Society acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which Richmond Villa stands.

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# President's Message

MELISSA HULBERT

This is an innovative issue of *Descent* on the theme of artificial intelligence (AI) — it is exciting to realise how we can increasingly employ tools and techniques of AI into our family history research.

As much as these tools inject efficiency and creativity in our research, events of recent weeks have reminded me of what is at the heart of the Society of Australian Genealogists — the people who breathe life into its mission and values, and whose passion for the Society to progress and succeed is vital. Our dedicated staff, with their expertise and passion, are the backbone of our operations. They work tirelessly to support our members and the broader community in their genealogical pursuits.

Equally essential are our volunteers, whose selfless contributions of time and energy help us achieve more than we could alone. Their enthusiasm and commitment are evident in every project they undertake, from indexing records to assisting with events. Their efforts not only enhance our resources, but also foster a sense of community and shared purpose.

Our members, both seasoned genealogists and those new to family history, are the lifeblood of SAG. Their curiosity and dedication to uncovering their ancestral stories drive us to continually improve our services and resources. The collective wisdom and experiences of our members enrich the Society, creating a vibrant, supportive network. One of the ways we see this is in our groups and courses, with cohorts supporting each other.

Lastly, the public's engagement with SAG, whether through visits, inquiries, or participation in our programs, underscores the societal value of our work. By connecting people to their heritage, we fulfill our mission and support training and educational opportunities, of which moving into AI is a necessary facet of the latest learning in genealogy.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude and profound appreciation to our staff in their response to the recent flooding incident at Richmond Villa. This unexpected crisis put our beloved facility and its invaluable collections at risk, but their swift and coordinated actions ensured that we navigated this challenge with resilience and determination.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable teamwork displayed by each member of our staff. In moments of crisis, the true character of an organisation shines through, and I commend the collective efforts, especially of Alexandra Mountain, Gemma Beswick and Danielle Tebb, who were most visible on the ground. The way you all pulled together to safeguard our resources and ensure the safety of everyone involved was nothing short of extraordinary.

Collaboration has been another cornerstone of our successful response. The seamless coordination between our staff, directors, and external contractors was instrumental in managing this situation effectively. Your ability to work together, share information, and support one another ensured that our response was efficient and comprehensive. The Directors' guidance, combined with the expertise of external contractors, complemented the efforts of our staff.

I would like to particularly commend the efforts of those who went above and beyond, often working long hours and taking on additional responsibilities to protect Richmond Villa and its treasured collections. Your dedication to preserving our heritage, even in the face of such adversity, is truly inspiring.

This is my last column as president. After being reappointed last year, I advised the board that 2024 would be my last as president. The early advice was to give my fellow directors adequate time to assess the director best placed to lead the board and the Society through the coming years.

Thoughtful succession planning is crucial for the effective performance of the board

and orderly succession is a fundamental principle of good governance. It ensures a refreshing of the board while retaining vital corporate knowledge. Commonly for the Society, presidents have stepped back after five years.

I reflect on my time as president with overwhelming feelings of honour and privilege. Honour, to have been so generously appointed by a diverse, capable and experienced board. Privilege, to have had the opportunity to serve as president and to lead the Society through challenging times.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic completely changed many aspects of our operations. It saw us embrace online learning and develop a strong sense of community with our weekly Hang Outs. Both remain a key part of our regular member offerings. They not only emphasise just what a tech-savvy community family historians are, but also that community remains important moving forward as we develop our long-term strategic and premises plans. In the constructive, strategic way in which the directors, as a united board, responded to the challenges, I could not be more proud.

In 2022, we celebrated 90 years of tracing our families together with our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW hosting an afternoon tea at Government House. The Society hosted a number of special events to celebrate this milestone. A joint meeting of staff, directors and volunteer representatives successfully engaged in initial strategic conversations which helped in developing our survey designed to encourage all members to contribute to planning the future strategic direction of the Society.

Thank you to members, staff and board for your continued support over the past five years. I look forward to continuing to serve the Society as a director and to supporting our new president. Please join me in welcoming and supporting the Society's new president, Philippa Shelley Jones.



## Editor's Letter

DANIELLE TEBB

Welcome to the June edition of *Descent*.

As mentioned in the President's report, the past few months have been challenging for staff and getting this issue together has been somewhat fraught. I, too, want to extend my thanks to fellow staff for their efforts on 5 April and the subsequent days and weeks as normal services were largely maintained while some of us were pulled away to liaise with outside parties. Now we find ourselves in a place of calm as we wait for assessors and contractors to follow through.

With all of this going on in the background, this issue has been dragged kicking and screaming to our designer, while I hung on to the shirt tails. Our AI guru, Andrew Redfern, has developed an extended piece on AI and whatever your personal feelings on the technology, I urge you to read it, if only to keep informed on how to recognise its use in contemporary society. While AI is not necessarily something to be frightened of, it's definitely something you shouldn't ignore.

The successful manipulation of AI technology relies on critical thought, the interrogation of the resulting text or image, constantly refining it to achieve the desired result. This analysis is all too familiar to the researcher.

Many thanks to our members who have contributed articles to this issue. *Descent* is your magazine, so please keep them coming. Submission details and themes for the next two issues are on page 69.

## Edward Purser (1803–1888)

EMILY PURSER

Edward John Purser (1803–1888), orchardist, leatherworker, teacher and lay preacher, was born on 4 March 1803 in Edenbridge, Sevenoaks, Kent. He was the youngest son of John Purser, tanner, and his wife Hannah, née Cox. After initial learning at the village church of his baptism, Saints Peter & Paul Church, Edward's education expanded through the trade guild of his father, to whom he was apprenticed.

In a village long known for tanning, his father's trade brought steady work, and other opportunities. The shoemakers' guild fostered literacy, freethinking, political engagement and non-conformist religion, and like the sturdy boots they made, young men skilled in leatherwork were of value to the army. In 1821 young Edward made the decision that changed the direction of his life — he enlisted in the King's Own 4th Regiment of Foot.

Between years of service in the West Indies and Portugal, his regiment was stationed a while in Winchester, where Edward met Eliza Read. They married there, at St Thomas Church in June 1826, and their first child was born the following year. In 1828 Edward's regiment moved to Scotland, then Ireland and back to England, where, in 1830, the troops served as a royal guard of honour at the opening of the first railway line, between Manchester and Liverpool. The most significant move for the family though was in 1832, when the regiment was sent to guard convicts transported to the colony in New South Wales. Purser sailed on the *Clyde*, accompanied by Eliza and Edward jnr. Based mainly in Parramatta, the troops were in Sydney in 1834 where Eliza had their second child. She was due to have a third the following year when the order came to deploy to India. Edward bought his discharge instead, and the family settled permanently in NSW.

An avid reader of literature and science, Purser befriended Rev. W. B. Clarke in Parramatta, and it was likely a recommendation from him that led to Edward's teaching appointment at a small church school at Castle Hill, one of several villages Clarke served. Situated on the grounds of what had once been the third government farm, the school operated in or next to the old barracks, which had long since been repurposed as the colony's lunatic asylum, then again as the parish church.

The 1840s were particularly busy years for the Pursers in Castle Hill. Edward built a house on land he'd been granted, while Eliza produced and nurtured four more children. He collected weather data for Rev. Clarke and accompanied him on scientific field trips to gather and study insects and rocks. Edward purchased more land, established a tannery, made boots, shoes and harnesses, taught his sons to work with leather and took on an apprentice. He also planted an orchard,

one of the first orange groves in the hills district. His sons went on to develop their much more extensive orchards in the area. Son James became very well-known not only for his business, but also for his writing on horticultural methods and his talking tours around NSW and Victoria. Edward lived with him for many years after Eliza's death and died at James' estate Glenview in 1888.

Edward was buried on 4 September in the Wesleyan churchyard on New Line Rd, and the Purser family's connection to that chapel, and later church, is significant. Edward and Eliza were long remembered in the area for their support of the Wesleyan ministry. After initially holding prayer meetings in their home, Edward had a founding role in building the chapel where he then led prayers and Sunday school. He was also a great influence on his apprentice in advocating for the faith and for temperance.

While noted in his obituary as a thoughtful, quiet man, interested in everything, he was also and not least remembered for his storytelling, especially about the adventurous years as a soldier — keeping the peace and building the Empire, as it were. In many ways a man typical of his time, Purser was perhaps unique in his combination of interests. He used his keenly developed literacy well to explore opportunities no doubt beyond his parents' wildest imaginings. He instilled the valuing of education in his children too, who petitioned to establish the first public school in Castle Hill, then built on Edward's land. Purser's expansive interests, hard work and commitment to family and community gave his children and grandchildren an environment from which to make even more significant contributions to Australia.



*Photo: From collection of Ralph Hawkins  
<https://hornsbyshire.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/3407>*

SAG runs a Certificate in Genealogical Research to assist members to hone their research skills and explore areas of study they may not be familiar with. The course also functions as a prerequisite to our Diploma in Family Historical Studies. One exercise is to write a biography of an ancestor between 500 and 750 words in the style of an Australian Dictionary of Biography entry. In each issue of *Descent*, we feature one such biography.





# Harnessing the power of ChatGPT: A versatile tool for family historians

by Andrew Redfern

While it may seem that artificial intelligence (AI) has only recently become a thing due to its increased media presence and almost ubiquitous nature in our everyday lives, it has in fact been around since the 1950s.

The term was first used by John McCarthy in 1955 when he held a workshop at Dartmouth on “artificial intelligence”. His work built upon that of previous scientists and academics, including Alan Turing, who in 1950 published “Computer Machinery and Intelligence” which proposed a test of machine intelligence called The Imitation Game.

In November 2022, OpenAI launched ChatGPT, a chatbot and virtual assistant which amassed one million users within just five days of its launch. It has continued to grow and develop with numerous features and capabilities being added over time. The models have been updated with new version releases and the latest models have knowledge of events that occurred up to late 2023.

Within this rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence, ChatGPT has emerged as an invaluable tool for family historians, revolutionising various aspects of research, analysis, and sharing ancestors’ stories. With its remarkable ability to generate human-like text, ChatGPT offers a wide range of applications, from assisting in writing engaging narratives to aiding in data analysis, organisation, transcription, translation, and more.

To make the most of this versatile tool, it is crucial to understand and apply certain principles when engaging with artificial intelligence tools. Here, we explore seven key principles for effectively utilising ChatGPT, irrespective of the domain or area you are engaged in. These principles have been developed by me, Andrew Redfern, through continual exploration of using large language models such as ChatGPT in a wide variety of areas and specifically within work as a genealogist.

## Principle 1: Probability, Not Facts

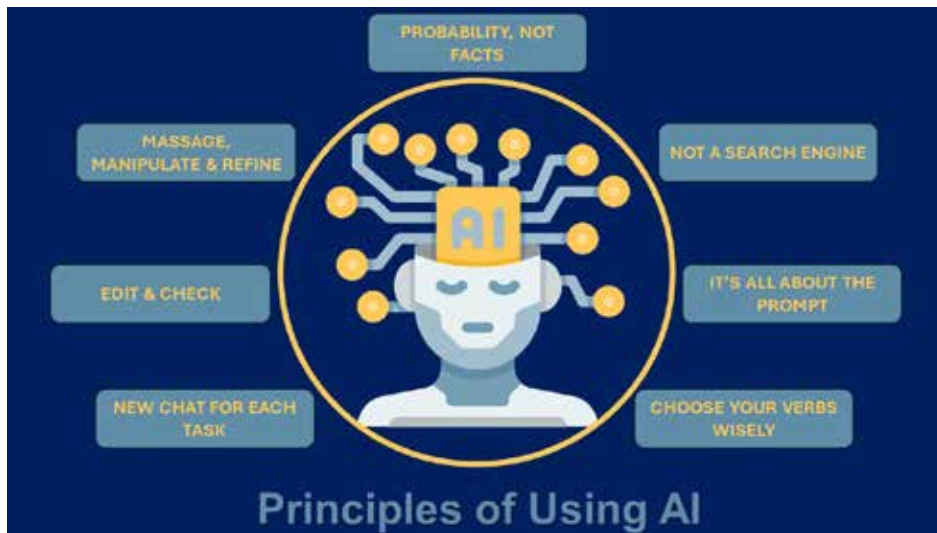
Large language models like ChatGPT operate by predicting the most likely next word in a sequence, which often means they do not prioritise factual accuracy. Blaine Bettinger, known as The Genetic Genealogist, emphasises “Words, not Facts” to remind genealogists that ChatGPT is designed to produce text rather than be a source of verified information.

By carefully crafting prompts, genealogists can guide ChatGPT to generate useful and accurate text. For example, family historians can use ChatGPT to craft captivating narratives about their ancestors from a given timeline or by providing verified research. Generating ideas, developing outlines for presentations, drafting emails to DNA matches, or writing blog posts about recent research discoveries are all other uses of AI.

## Principle 2: It’s Not a Google Search

ChatGPT should not be treated as a substitute for a search engine. It is designed to generate text based on provided prompts, not to retrieve specific information from the web. Remember, it is not connected to the internet but uses the data it has been trained on. In fact, it is not up to date with current events as it only draws on information on which it has been pre-trained.

Rather than asking direct questions, frame your prompts in a way that stimulates a creative response. If you want it to use specific data, explicitly provide that data as part of the prompt. Tasks like retyping a badly formatted newspaper article, creating a table of DNA matches, or writing a short biography using given facts are effective ways to utilise ChatGPT.



### Principle 3: It's All About the Prompt

Crafting a clear and precise prompt is crucial for obtaining the desired output from ChatGPT. The model generates responses based on the context it receives, so make your prompts specific and focused. Include relevant details and provide clear instructions to guide ChatGPT towards the desired result.

By investing time in creating thoughtful prompts, you can enhance the quality, relevance, and accuracy of the generated response. Often it is best to provide longer, detailed prompts rather than short general instructions to ensure the tool responds in a way you are expecting. Providing sufficient information about your ancestor, limiting ChatGPT to a certain number of words, and specifying the type of output you require are examples of crafting effective prompts.

### Principle 4: Choose Your Verbs Wisely

ChatGPT responds to the verbs you use in your prompts, so the choice of verbs is crucial. Use strong, action-oriented verbs that align with the desired outcome. Some verbs, though similar, can produce very different results.

For example, asking ChatGPT to “reformat” an obituary will generate a completely new piece of text, while asking it to “retype” the obituary will use the exact words of the original text.

Think about the role you want ChatGPT to perform and choose verbs that match that role, such as sort, filter, or organise for a data analyst, and draft, write, or outline for a writer.

### Principle 5: New Chat for Each Task

Start a new chat session for each new task to ensure the model doesn't retain context or biases from previous conversations. This practice maintains clarity and focus, improving the relevance and coherence of the generated content.

If desired outcomes aren't forthcoming, start over with the same task, using different verbs and rewriting your prompts.

Conversely, there's no need to repeat instructions unnecessarily, as ChatGPT builds an understanding during a task. For instance, after generating a list of topics for a family history talk, you can ask for a summary of each topic and then a detailed outline in the same chat session.

### Principle 6: Edit & Check

While ChatGPT can produce coherent text quickly, it is essential to review and edit the generated content. Check for grammatical errors, clarity, and overall coherence. If analysing data, ensure all data is included. Since ChatGPT is not connected to the internet, it cannot provide sources, so correctly citing information is necessary.

Rarely will anything produced by ChatGPT be perfect without further editing. Proofread to ensure the text aligns with your intended message and voice. If not, specify the voice and tone in the prompt for closer results.

Like any tool, always check, edit, and recheck the output. Also check for bias that may be contained in any response, ensuring the output does not exclude any key players, and that the language is inclusive and representative of current thinking.

### Principle 7: Message, Manipulate & Refine

The first response from ChatGPT may not be exactly what you want. Through iterative refinement, the results will become closer to your desired outcome. This process can include reworking the prompt, providing additional information, or clarifying your intention.

Use the same piece of information for various purposes to maximise ChatGPT's utility. For example, retype a badly formatted wedding newspaper article, then list the attendees and their relationships to the bride and groom, and subsequently identify the locations mentioned in the article. This demonstrates the message and manipulation process to achieve desired results.

By applying these seven principles, family historians can harness the power of ChatGPT across various dimensions of their research and storytelling endeavours.

From crafting engaging narratives to conducting data analysis, transcribing interviews, translating documents, and more, ChatGPT offers a versatile set of tools to enhance the practice of family history.

With these principles in mind, family historians can unlock new insights, share compelling stories, and preserve the rich tapestry of their family's history for generations to come.

## Glossary of Key AI Terms

**Artificial intelligence (AI):** The simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. These processes include learning, reasoning, and self-correction.

**Bias:** In AI, bias refers to systematic errors that can occur in the model's predictions due to prejudiced assumptions or imbalances in the training data.

**Deep learning:** A subset of machine learning (ML) that uses neural networks with many layers (deep networks) to analyse various factors of data. It's particularly effective in tasks like image and speech recognition.

**Ethics in AI:** The field concerned with the moral implications and considerations of AI systems, including issues of fairness, transparency, accountability, and the impact on society.

**Generative pre-trained transformer (GPT):** A type of language model developed by OpenAI that uses deep learning to produce human-like text based on the input prompt.

**Hallucination:** In AI, hallucination refers to a phenomenon where the model generates information or responses that are not based on the input data or are factually incorrect.

**Machine learning (ML):** A subset of AI that involves the use of algorithms and statistical models to enable computers to learn from and make predictions or decisions based on data.

**Neural network:** A series of algorithms that mimic the operations of a human brain to recognise relationships between vast amounts of data. Neural networks are the foundation of deep learning.

**Prompt:** In the context of AI, particularly language models like GPT, a prompt is the input text or question that you provide to the AI to generate a response.

## Resources for AI & Genealogy

### Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogyandai>

This group is intended to explore the intersection of genealogy and artificial intelligence (AI) in its many difference facets. We want to help genealogists harness the power of AI while understanding both the benefits and limitations of new AI-based technologies. (Group created January 20, 2023)

### Podcast: The Family History AI Show

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-family-history-ai-show/id1749873836>

The Family History AI Show is a podcast with the latest news and views on artificial intelligence and family history. Steve Little, world-class authority in AI and genealogy, and Mark Thompson, professional genealogist, educator, and technology expert, explore the fascinating intersection of family history and AI.

In each episode, Mark and Steve unpack the latest news and tools in AI, delivering clear, accessible insights on how you can transform your personal genealogy journey using AI and how AI is reshaping the genealogy community as a whole.

## AI & IT Special Interest Group

Why not join SAG's newly formed AI & IT Special Interest Group where we discuss all things Artificial Intelligence and Technology related to Family History.

Each session features a range of segments that are designed to be member-driven and members are encouraged to participate and share. Additional content, such as AI, software, hardware, tools etc. can be slotted into these broad categories:

- » **Latest Updates** – Developments in AI, software and hardware
- » **News and Views** – Opinions, discussion points, recommended software/hardware
- » **Quick Tips** – 3 minutes or less
- » **Show & Tell** – like at school – share something you've done with AI or Tech
- » **In Depth Focus** – longer demonstration of tools, software
- » **Helpdesk** – problems and support, suggestions

All skill levels are welcome.

Group Leads: Andrew Redfern, Yvonne Masters, Sandy Pullen and Maureen Trotter

Held online, the next meetings are:

31 July; 25 September, 27 November, 7.30–9pm AEST





# “I put the petticoats around its shoulders ...”

— Mary Ann Morey

by CJ Eddington

The first official record of Mary Ann Morey<sup>1</sup> is in 1797 from the Old Bailey court documents.

Mary Ann had been convicted of grand larceny on 25 October 1797<sup>2</sup> and sentenced to seven years transportation. The Old Bailey court report<sup>3</sup> is very clear — she had removed the pinafore and frock of a small child, valued at 11 shillings.<sup>4</sup> Legally the apparel belonged to John Thomas, the child’s father. The child’s age (or gender) is not stated — but given they were able to walk across London Bridge, the child was probably between four and six years of age.<sup>5</sup>

**601. MARY ANN MOREY** was indicted for feloniously stealing, on the 7th of October, a cotton frock, value 9s. and a stuff skirt, value 2s. the property of John Thomas.

**JAMES DYSON** sworn.—I am a fine-drawer: Last Tuesday was a week, coming through Spital-square, I saw the prisoner sitting upon a step, and stripping the child; I seized her, and asked her whose child it was, she said, it was her brother’s, and she was taking the clothes off to put them on in a more comfortable manner.

**SARAH CASTLE** sworn.—I live in Spital-square, I saw the prisoner take off the child’s pinafore, and its frock; I asked her why she did that, and then she doubled up the petticoat, and put it on over the frock; I stopped her till the last witness took hold of her.

**Dyson.** I took the child home; the child told me its name, the Bellman was crying it on London-bridge, she said she had it the other side of the square.

**JOHN THOMAS** sworn.—I live in Harrod-street, near the Mint, about a mile and a half from Spital-square, the child was missing between four and five in the afternoon.

**Prisoner’s defence.** I was coming through the Borough, and saw the child crying; I asked it where its mammy was, and it pointed it out, I led it over London-bridge, till I got to Spital-square, and I put the petticoats round its shoulders to keep it warm.

**GUILTY (Aged 19).**

Transported for seven years.

Tried by the second Middlesex Jury, before M. Justice HEATH.

*Old Bailey Proceedings transcript.*<sup>6</sup>

James Dyson, the first witness, said that when he saw the prisoner stripping the child in Spital Square, he seized her. It is unclear if he knew either her or the child; but it is possible he became suspicious when he saw a young child being undressed on a cold October afternoon. The historic temperature records of Central England show that for the three or four years prior to 1800 the month of October was cooler than normal.<sup>7</sup>

Sunset on 7 October is about 18:30 — so when the child went missing between four and five in the afternoon it would have still been light and while it doesn’t say, it was probably not raining. James Dyson then took the child home, about a mile and half across London Bridge<sup>8</sup> toward Borough. The child had told Dyson their name and he heard the name called out by the Bellman<sup>9</sup> on London Bridge.

John Thomas, the third witness (and the child’s father), stated that the child went missing between four and five in the afternoon. He said he lived in Harrod (Harrow?) Street<sup>11</sup> near the Mint. The Mint, also known as the “Liberty of the Mint”, was a very poor area of London. It was below river level, damp and a breeding ground for diseases. As an aside — Charles Dickens, as a child, lived nearby in Lant Street in 1824.

Mary Ann was sent to Newgate Prison.

It is unknown whether Mary Ann lived in this area or who her parents were. She was aged 19 years and born in Hampshire [Hants] and had a fair complexion, brown hair, black eyes, and was only 4 feet 3 inches tall.

The administration of justice in England at the end of the 18th century was not yet recognisable to the modern eye. The prosecution of criminals was largely in the hands of the victims. Each parish was required to have one or two constables but they were unpaid volunteers. Magistrates too were laymen — unpaid and often reluctant to sit on the bench. By 1751 in London, Bow Street runners provided a permanent body of men to investigate and arrest wrongdoers. In London serious crimes were tried at the Old Bailey.<sup>12</sup>

Most felony cases did not involve defence barristers until the end of the century, and witnesses were usually examined directly by the judge and even by members of the jury. The vast majority of cases lasted for only a matter of minutes, and it was not uncommon for dozens of cases to be heard in a single day.<sup>13</sup>

It appears that Mary Ann was not represented and provided her own defence. Her sentence of seven years transportation to Australia was a common form of punishment in Georgian England; and over 160,000 criminals were sent to Australia.





Spital Square  
May 2018<sup>10</sup>.

Although Georgian Britain saw the start of both the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions which generated wealth for some, it also created poverty for many. The provision of charity was administered by each parish. Applicants for relief were required to meet residency requirements — and it appeared that prior to 1750 this system worked.

If Mary Ann was born in Hampshire, this may be why she resorted to stealing because she wasn't eligible for parish relief in London. In addition, at 19 years of age she was just 4 feet 3 inches tall. Even by 18th century standards this was very short — average height for women was just over 5 feet.<sup>14</sup> And in light of her son William reaching a height of 5 feet 10 inches, her height was indicative of someone who was malnourished as a child.<sup>15</sup>

However, increased population coupled with widespread movement of people meant this system of parish relief was overwhelmed by those needing help. Workhouses were introduced in 1722 and various acts of parliament refined their operation throughout the 1700s. The Poor Law allowed for both outdoor relief or indoor relief in a workhouse. Workhouses were generally despised by the poor.<sup>16</sup> And it was only those in the most dire circumstances who would enter a workhouse.

Mary Ann sailed on the *Britannia* (III) on 17 February 1798 for New South Wales.<sup>17</sup> She arrived on 18 July 1798 after 152 days at sea. Due to the war with France, these 94 women and the 287 from the *Barwell* were the only prisoners transported in 1798.<sup>18</sup> The total British population of New South Wales in 1798 was only 4588.<sup>19</sup> The British Navy needed all available ships to fight the French. There being no specific government accommodation for female prisoners at Port Jackson, it is almost certain that the women were distributed among the free population.<sup>20</sup>

The colony had been expecting a ship, the *Lady Shore*, to bring provisions for the struggling community. Unfortunately, there had been a mutiny and the mutineers had sailed the *Lady Shore* to Buenos Aires. The *Britannia* had been provisioned for

the nine-month voyage so the remaining stores were welcome by Governor Hunter — but no extra stores had been brought.<sup>21</sup> According to David Collins, the lack of provisions was softened somewhat by the arrival of the contingent of females — there being an excess of men in the colony.<sup>22</sup>

There are no records for Mary Ann between her arrival in New South Wales in 1798 and the birth in March 1800 of her and William Abel's first child on Norfolk Island. They had another three children on Norfolk Island, but sadly their second child, Thomas, died aged 3 months.

The Abel family were evacuated in December 1807 and were five of 800 evacuees from Norfolk Island to Hobart. The move from the subtropical climate of Norfolk Island to Hobart with its colder climate was not easy. Hobart had only been settled by Europeans since 1804 and this rapid population increase of Norfolk Island evacuees placed enormous strains on the tiny town. Food, clothing, bedding and housing were all in short supply.

The Derwent settlement was almost wholly dependent on Sydney for food supplies. By 1808 it had become so desperate that Hobart's Governor Collins offered one shilling a pound for kangaroo meat.<sup>23</sup> This payment lasted for over a year before the situation eased.

Mary Ann and William Abel were married in 1811. Life for her must have been hard, and while she had neighbours, the family was in a very isolated area at New Norfolk. The family were attacked by both bushrangers and an Aboriginal gang.

Mary Ann had her last two children after her oldest son had started his own family. She died in 1856 aged 74.

Mary Ann and William had a total of 12 children and 72 grandchildren.

- 1 Also known as Moree, Marie, Morah, Moreh.
- 2 PCOM2/180 Newgate Gaol. Mary Ann Morey. <https://search.findmypast.com.au/record?id=TNA%2FCCC%2F-PCOM2%2F180%2F00141&parentid=TNA%2FCCC%2F-PH5%2FMX%2F0591127> [accessed 4 Jul 2022]
- 3 Many court cases in this period were published, most notably in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers but also in volumes of criminal conversation and state trials. Because these were published records for general consumption which had a readership outside legal professionals, these works were also distillations which can readily be read as texts akin to fictional productions. Seth J. Denbo, (2001) *Speaking relatively: a history of incest and the family in eighteenth-century England*. (PhD thesis, University of Warwick), 21 <http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b1377700~S9> [accessed 18 Jul 2022]
- 4 Grand larceny – theft over 1 shilling in value. The proceedings of the Old Bailey <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Crimes.jsp#grandlarceny> [accessed 12 Jul 2022]
- 5 L. Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Yale University Press, 2002).
- 6 Old Bailey Proceedings Online ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), version 8.0, 04 July 2022), October 1797, trial of Mary Ann Morey (t17971025-20). Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial4.0 International (CC-BY-NC 4.0) license.
- 7 D. E. Parker, T.P. Legg, and C.K. Folland, “A new daily Central England Temperature Series, 1772-1991” *International Journal of Climatology*, Vol 12 (1992), 317-342 (PDF) [accessed 4 Jul 2022]
- 8 Until 1750 it provided the sole crossing of the Thames. In 1762 London Bridge was cleared of houses but it required extensive maintenance and in 1832 was replaced, and replaced again in 1972.
- 9 Town crier.
- 10 Paul the Archivist, Wikimedia Commons, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Spital\\_Square\\_including\\_number\\_37,\\_London.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Spital_Square_including_number_37,_London.jpg) Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.
- 11 In 1888 there is a Harrow St that crosses Mint St. Now called Sanctuary St and Disney Place.
- 12 M. White, British Library. Georgian Britain. “Crime and punishment in Georgian Britain. Law enforcement”. <https://www.bl.uk/georgian-britain/articles/crime-and-punishment-in-georgian-britain> [accessed 7 Jul 2022]
- 13 M. White, British Library. Georgian Britain. “Crime and punishment in Georgian Britain. The courts”. <https://www.bl.uk/georgian-britain/articles/crime-and-punishment-in-georgian-britain> [accessed 7 Jul 2022]
- 14 R. Jackson, “The heights of rural-born English female convicts transported to New South Wales”, *Economic History Review* XLIX 3 (1996), 584-590 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1468-0289.1996.tb00583.x> [accessed 8 Jul 2022]
- 15 Abel, William (Jnr). Convict record 1845. Libraries Tasmania.
- 16 The Workhouse. <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/poorlaws/oldpoorlaw.shtml> [accessed 7 Jul 2022]
- 17 The Britannia made a number of voyages to NSW. This was not the hell voyage.
- 18 Charles Bateson, *Convict ships 1788-1868*. (NSW: Aust Ed 1974), 157, 171.
- 19 Australia Bureau of Statistics, Population size and growth, Table 1.1, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/historical-population/latest-release> [accessed 6 Apr 2023]
- 20 Free Settler or Felon. Convict ship Britannia. [https://www.freesettlorfelon.com/convict\\_ship\\_britannia\\_1798.htm](https://www.freesettlorfelon.com/convict_ship_britannia_1798.htm) [accessed 5 Jul 2022]
- 21 Free Settler or Felon.
- 22 D. Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*. 1798. PDF <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/setis/id/colacc1> [accessed 7 Jul 2022]
- 23 James Backhouse Walker, “The deportation of the Norfolk Islanders to the Derwent in 1808”, *Papers & Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* (1894), 24. <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/16640/> [accessed 17 Jun 2022]

Carolyn Eddington was born in Tasmania but raised in Western Australia. Her ancestors migrated from Britain in the days of sailing ships, and building on her parents' research using internet resources she has uncovered a bigamist, a traitor and several publicans. She has completed the University of Tasmania Diploma of Family History to better equip herself, particularly with convict records. Using DNA has both confirmed her documented family tree and found new branches for it.

In 2023 she wrote the stories of her 22 migrant ancestors and published them on her blog: [fromoaktogumtree.wordpress.com](http://fromoaktogumtree.wordpress.com)





# THE TWISTED OLIVE BRANCH

by Louise Millar-Hoffman

The only photograph I have of my maternal great-grandmother Olive was taken on the day of my baptism in May 1966. As the baby in that photo, I was yet to learn of the tangled web of stories Olive wove throughout her lifetime: stories that were inconsistent, just didn't add up, and had frustrated my family for decades.

Within nine months of that photo being taken, Olive died of stomach cancer aged 77.<sup>1</sup> However, it wasn't until the year 2022, more than half a century after her death, and after taking the Ancestry DNA test, that I discovered the truth behind Olive's many secrets and lies.

Olive had many names during her lifetime. At death she was the widow Mellor. Her marriage<sup>2</sup> to Tom Mellor in 1942 at age 52 was easy to verify with the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Vic BDM), as was Mellor's death only seven years later.<sup>3</sup> At the time of their marriage, Olive was the widow Connolly. Again, her marriage to Matthew Connolly in 1918<sup>4</sup> at age 28 was also easily verified, as was the death of Connolly in 1930.<sup>5</sup> On that marriage certificate, Olive is the widow Muller and the date of her first husband's death was listed as February 1912. However, these last two facts were not able to be verified. There is no Australian marriage certificate available for Olive and a man named Muller in the period up to 1912, nor is there an Australian death certificate available for a man named Muller in 1912.

On the two marriage certificates available, Olive's parents are recorded as Anthony Dean, Journalist, and Marie née Duschene. Family oral history indicates that Olive was born in Victoria in 1890 and that her full name was Olive Veronica Dean. Her story included being an only child, the death of both parents whilst she was young, and being supported thereafter by a woman known in the family as "Aunt Sophie". It was never quite clear who Sophie was an aunt to, and what her last name was. Again, these facts were not able to be verified. There is no Australian birth record for Olive Veronica Dean circa 1890 with the parents Anthony and Marie. Additionally, no Australian marriage certificate is available for an Anthony Dean and Marie Duschene, nor death certificates for either.

Olive only had one child, my maternal grandfather, Francis (Frank), born in Melbourne in November 1911. Olive told Frank his name at birth was Francis Patrick Muller and that his father was James Francis Muller. Once again, this was not able to be verified as no such birth certificate can be found.



When Olive married Matthew Connolly in 1918, Frank was six years old. Although never formally adopted by Connolly, Frank became known as Connolly from that time. When Frank married in 1941, he signed the register "Francis Patrick Muller known as Connolly"<sup>6</sup> and later that year enlisted in the Australian Army under the name Connolly.<sup>7</sup> Frank's wife and subsequent five children, including my mother, all took the name Connolly.<sup>8</sup>

It was not until Frank, aged in his sixties, applied for a passport in 1976, that he discovered there was no record of his birth under the name Muller. He'd worked and paid taxes for over forty years, and had served his country in World War II without ever needing to produce his birth certificate. It devastated Frank to find out in the last months of his life that his birth had not been recorded as he'd been told.

The clerk at the Vic BDM was intrigued by Frank's dilemma and conducted a thorough manual search. He unearthed a record for the same date of birth in 1911 for a Francis Joseph Miller born to Harry Miller and Olive née Squeen, married December 1910.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the clerk couldn't find that marriage certificate or any evidence of Harry Miller. There was no guarantee that this birth certificate was the correct one. However, it was noted how similar the names Miller and Muller were and likewise, Squeen and Dean.

Olive's branch of the family was proving to be a twisted tale leading to nothing but dead ends. It was a challenge that

hooked me right in and one I was determined to solve. There was no evidence to say who Olive was or her history in the years prior to the first verifiable record, her 1918 marriage to Connolly. These missing years also included the birth of Olive's son, Frank. There was also no evidence to say exactly what Frank's name was, or the identity of his father. Family oral history quotes Olive as stating, "Don't bother going looking as you won't find anything".

Over the years after Frank's death in 1977<sup>10</sup> several family members made fresh attempts to discover the truth behind both Olive and Frank's origins, but to no avail. Even the digitisation and online indexing of the Vic BDM couldn't provide the answers to these enduring mysteries.

In 2022 I undertook DNA testing with the Ancestry platform along with my mother, denoted as "EJ" and one maternal cousin, denoted as "SL". The match between me and EJ confirms a mother-child relationship<sup>11</sup>, the one between me and SL confirms a first cousin relationship<sup>12</sup> and the match between EJ and SL confirms an aunt-niece relationship.<sup>13</sup> These confirmations give validity to the use of my DNA results as a method to unblock the "brick walls" in my maternal genealogy caused by Olive's secrets.

Ancestry displayed close to 8,000 matches on my maternal line. A search for the family name of Dean, Olive's alleged name, within this pool revealed 15 matches<sup>14</sup> to a John Samuel Dean (1807-1894), inclusive of four matches to his second wife Anne née Horan (1840-1925) and an additional 14 matches<sup>15</sup> to his parents William Dean (1776-1847) and Elizabeth née Hollingsworth (1779-1839). Both William and Elizabeth were convicts<sup>16,17</sup> transported separately from England to New South Wales (NSW) where they married in 1806.<sup>18</sup> Their second child, John<sup>19</sup> was born in NSW before relocating to Victoria later in life, where he married Anne<sup>20</sup> after his first wife died.<sup>21</sup> Over his two marriages, John Dean fathered 22 children over a 55-year period: twelve with his first wife and ten more with Anne, 33 years his junior.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, the DNA results uncovered a considerable number of Dean ancestors and present-day cousin matches, thus confirming Olive's name at birth was most likely Dean as she'd claimed. Based on Olive's probable birth date of circa 1890 in Victoria, it is highly likely she was the grandchild of John and Anne Dean of Bulla, Victoria.<sup>23</sup> However, only four of their ten children were sons, one of whom died as a baby and none of whom was Anthony<sup>24</sup>, as Olive had claimed her father was named.

More likely, as Olive felt it necessary to invent her parents' names, she may have been born outside of marriage to one of the Deans' six daughters. As the last two daughters were only twelve and eight years older than Olive,<sup>25</sup> it was more likely that Olive's mother was one of the four elder daughters: Sophia, Sarah, Catherine or Louisa Dean.<sup>26</sup>

One of those Dean daughter's names really stood out — Sophia — which is very close to the name of the known "Aunt Sophie". Sophia Dean never married, nor was recorded as having had any children. She lived to old age<sup>27</sup> and is buried at Box Hill Cemetery in Victoria with the name "Sophie" engraved on the headstone.<sup>28</sup> As such, it is quite possible that Olive might have been Sophia's unacknowledged child born outside of marriage and who maintained an adult relationship with Olive as "Aunt Sophie".

Returning to my entire maternal match pool, a search for the family name Duschene, claimed to be Olive's mother's maiden name, didn't reveal any matches. Likewise, there were no matches to the names Muller or Miller, claimed to be possible names for the man with whom Olive later had a child. After further research and analysing various clusters of maternal matches, two family names with significant numbers of matches were revealed: Lloyd and Spiller. As all other names on my maternal genealogical tree are known and have been confirmed by DNA matches elsewhere, it is highly probable the names Lloyd and Spiller relate to Olive and Frank's branch of my family tree.

I have eight DNA matches<sup>29</sup> to a Joseph Lloyd (1794-1862) and his wife Sophia née Woodlands (1817-1900) who migrated from England to Tasmania with their children in 1855.<sup>30</sup> I also have many matches to members of the Lloyd and in-law families of earlier generations. All James and Sophia's children remained in Tasmania for the rest of their lives. However, one of their grandsons, William Ernest Lloyd (1865-1946), is their only known descendant of that generation to have relocated to Victoria. He is of a likely age to have potentially fathered Olive with Sophia Dean in 1890. There is a Victorian death certificate<sup>31</sup> and burial record<sup>32</sup> for him in 1946.

The name Spiller within my match pool intrigued me as it rhymes with Miller, the name on the possible birth certificate found by the Vic BDM clerk for Olive's son Frank, my maternal grandfather. Similarly, the mother's maiden name on that certificate, Squeen, rhymes with Dean, Olive's probable birth name. It begged the suggestion that perhaps Olive accurately stated the first names, Harry and Olive, on that certificate and simply invented rhymes for their last names. This led to the hypothesis that Frank's father may have been a Harry (or Henry or Harold) Spiller. That birth certificate also recorded the baby's father as being 33 and born in England.<sup>33</sup>

Further analysis of my maternal matches revealed three matches to a Henry Spiller (1823-1875) and wife Hannah née Shute of Somerset England<sup>34</sup> who had a grandson named Henry Charles Spiller (1879-1949). I also have many matches to members of the Spiller and in-law families of earlier generations. Henry Charles (HC) Spiller had married and had four children in England<sup>35</sup> before abandoning them to migrate alone to Melbourne in 1909 aged 30.<sup>36</sup> There is a Victorian death certificate<sup>37</sup> and burial record<sup>38</sup> for him in 1949.

On the Ancestry platform I located a man (denoted "AS") of similar age to my mother living in England who is a grandson of HC Spiller via one of the abandoned sons. AS had not taken a DNA test but consented to do so. The results revealed a half first cousin once removed match with me<sup>39</sup> and a half first cousin match with my mother.<sup>40</sup> As such, these results confirmed the hypothesis that my grandfather Frank's father was Henry Charles Spiller, born in England, who would have been 33 years old in 1911 when Frank was born to Olive Dean in Melbourne. These facts make it highly probable that the birth certificate found by the Vic BDM clerk is the correct one for Frank. Olive falsified the record by simply choosing rhyming names to cover up the fact she was not married. However, it still remains a mystery as to why, and when, Olive changed Frank's name from Francis Joseph Miller to Francis Patrick Muller before finally settling on Francis Patrick Connolly.



If I could meet my maternal great-grandmother Olive today, I'd love to tell her, "Remember when you held me in your arms on my baptism day? Well, more than a half century later, I did go looking and I did find the evidence to untangle the twisted mess of your family branch. I now know you were born as a Dean circa 1890 and outside of marriage. You were a granddaughter of John and Anne Dean of Victoria, most likely via their daughter Sophia. You were also a granddaughter of a Tasmanian couple named Lloyd, most likely via their son William Ernest who relocated to Victoria. You had a son named Francis in 1911, also outside of marriage, with a married man named Henry Charles Spiller".

However, I don't think Olive would be at all pleased to hear that I've finally discovered the truth behind her many secrets.

- 1 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Olive Veronica Mellor 5431/1967
- 2 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate Thomas Mellor and Olive Connolly 52/1942
- 3 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Thomas Lutner Mellor 12170/1949
- 4 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate Matthew Connolly and Olive Muller 562/1918
- 5 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Matthew Connolly 246/1930
- 6 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate Francis Muller and Doris Roberts 8427/1941
- 7 National Archives of Australia, Series B884, Connolly, Francis Patrick Service Number – V75849,
- 8 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Francis Patrick Connolly 3160/1977
- 9 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Birth Certificate Francis Joseph Miller 26898/1911
- 10 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Francis Patrick Connolly 3160/1977
- 11 Ancestry, DNA match between Author and EJ (3483 cM across 24 segments), retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 12 Ancestry, DNA match between Author and SL (823 cM across 38 segments), retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 13 Ancestry, DNA match between EJ and SL (1732 cM across 49 segments), retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 14 Ancestry, DNA Matches between Author and T7500 21 cM; GK 21 cM; BS 18 cM; EM 18 cM; KS 15 cM; MG 14 cM; 81M 13 cM; SB 12 cM; KW 10 cM; JR 10 cM; BC 9 cM; VLC 8 cM; HB 9 cM, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 15 Ancestry, DNA Matches between Author and FD 30 cM; WB 29 cM; IB 24 cM; SO 22 cM; WD 21 cM; AC84 18 cM; ZF 18 cM; FR 14 cM; SB 13 cM; GM 12 cM; BK 10 cM; KH 9 cM, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 16 New South Wales, Australia, Convicts Ship Muster Rolls and Related Records, 1790–1849, 1799 Hillsborough, accessed on 10 April 2023, <https://ancestry.com.au>
- 17 New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convicts Musters, 1806–1849, NSW General Muster 1806, accessed 10 April 2023, <https://ancestry.com.au>
- 18 NSW, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate William Dean and Elizabeth Hollingsworth 345/1806, District of Parramatta St John's
- 19 NSW, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Birth Certificate John Dean 2239/1807, District of Parramatta St John's
- 20 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Marriage Certificate John Dean and Ann Horan 2798/1861
- 21 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate John Samuel Dean 5097/1894
- 22 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Anne Dean 15524/1925
- 23 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate John Samuel Dean 5097/1894
- 24 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Anne Dean 15524/1925
- 25 *ibid.*
- 26 *ibid.*
- 27 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Sophia Dean 23050/1945
- 28 Find a Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/123866414/sophia-dean>): accessed 1 August 2022
- 29 Ancestry, DNA Matches between Author and AG 36 cM; CM 35 cM; MM 32 cM; AL 21 cM; MC 20 cM; LN 10 cM; ER 8 cM, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 30 Tasmania, Australia, Passenger Arrivals, 1829–1957, Film Number: SLTX/AO/MB/139; Series Number: CB7/12/1/13-6; *Whirlwind* 1855, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 31 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate William Ernest Lloyd 21662/1946
- 32 Find a Grave, database and images <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/208223105/william-ernest-lloyd>: accessed 8 August 2022
- 33 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Birth Certificate Francis Joseph Miller 26898/1911
- 34 Ancestry, DNA Matches between Author and WF 71 cM; KB 16 cM; 1 W 11 cM, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 1 August 2022
- 35 United Kingdom, 'Henry Charles Spiller' (1901), Census return for Gloucestershire, Bristol, St Paul District 12, retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 11 November 2022
- 36 Inward Overseas Passenger Lists (see Microfiche Copies: VPRS 7666 United Kingdom Ports; VPRS 7667 Foreign Ports; VPRS 13439 New Zealand Ports), VPRS 947, *Orient* 1909, retrieved from <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au>, accessed 2 August 2022
- 37 Victoria, Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate Henry Charles Spiller 11613/1949
- 38 Find a Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/244389857/henry-charles-spiller>): accessed 2 August 2022
- 39 Ancestry, DNA match between Author and AS (269 cM across 10 segments), retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 11 November 2022
- 40 Ancestry, DNA match between EJ and AS (467 cM across 19 segments), retrieved from [ancestry.com.au](https://ancestry.com.au), accessed 11 November 2022

Louise Millar-Hoffmann has been interested in her family history for almost 40 years and has just completed the SAG Certificate of Genealogical Research after previously completing the Intermediate Research Methods course.

She is a contributing author of the SAG 2023 Colonial Women's Writing Project and an entrant in the SAG Croker Writing Prize.



**COLLECTIONS ON TOUR 2024**

We're on the road again with our annual program Collections on Tour, sharing stories through items in our collections with the people of regional NSW.

**Wages Paid to the Irish Orphans, 1849–51**

To celebrate National Family History Month in August, our experts will be travelling to Bathurst, Yass, Goulburn and the Central Coast to share stories about some of the 4,100 young Irish women who came to Australia between 1848 and 1850 as part of Earl Grey's Famine Orphan Scheme.

Recruited from workhouses in Ireland, the women became an integral part of the workforce in their adopted country. The register of wages paid to orphans from 1849–1851 is a key source in researching the stories of many Irish girls and women who arrived in NSW under the scheme. It contains details of the orphans, their employers and the wages paid.

Join our archivists for an illustrated presentation about these Irish women and take advantage of this rare opportunity to view the original register from the State Archives Collection.

Find out more about these exciting talks, go to: <https://mhnsw.au/collections-on-tour/>



**LIVERPOOL STATE HOSPITAL RECORDS**

Our Collections Volunteers have successfully listed over 57,000 patient admission cards from Liverpool State Hospital and Home, dating from around 1884 to 1959.

<https://mhnsw.au/guides/liverpool-state-hospital-and-home-guide/>

Liverpool State Hospital and Home was originally established as a branch of the Sydney Benevolent Society in 1851, and provided refuge for infirm and destitute men. In November 2000, the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society returned to the State Archives Collection a number of records from the Liverpool State Hospital and Home that had been in its custody since the closure of the hospital. As part of this arrangement, all

records, including inmate records, created by the Liverpool State Hospital and Home, 1890–1959, are open to public access. (This is an exception to the access direction that closes all patient identifying medical records for 110 years.)

The volunteer project covers the records in two series:

- NRS-23159 Admission cards – Deaths [Liverpool State Hospital and Home], 1884–1958
- NRS-23160 Admission cards – discharges – [Liverpool State Hospital and Home], 1891–1959

The item listings, along with the digital copy of each card, are being progressively added to our online catalogue. Over 33,400 cards (78% of the series) from NRS-23160 have been digitised and are available to view in the catalogue (type NRS-23160 First name, Last name into the search box to search the records in this series).

The entire item list, with images, will be accessible online in the coming months.

**STORAGE ON A SHOESTRING: COLLECTION CARE**

Our Collections Care and Digital teams have been hard at work making a suite of vocational videos called Storage on a Shoestring. The videos have been developed primarily for staff and volunteers working in small to medium-sized museums, particularly in regional and remote NSW, but they are full of tips and tricks for anyone with precious collections or items they want to protect and store.

A dedicated space for storing collection items is an important part of collection management, but for many smaller museums it can be difficult and costly to create and maintain an effective storage space. In these videos, members of our Collections Care team step viewers through the process, from finding the right space and initial setup to choosing the best materials to protect and house individual collection items — all with a focus on achieving the best outcomes in cost-effective and achievable ways.

You can explore these videos on the MHNSW website at: <https://mhnsw.au/news/collections-care-videos-launched>



## CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAROLINE SIMPSON LIBRARY

### Rose redacted: a woman erased from an official narrative

27 Feb 2024 – 12 July 2024

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Caroline Simpson Library. The Caroline Simpson Library began as the Lyndhurst Conservation Resource Centre in 1984. It was renamed in 2004 in recognition of the extraordinary cultural gift donated by the children of Caroline Simpson OAM (1930–2003) to the Historic Houses Trust of NSW (now Museums of History NSW). The gift included furniture, artworks, books and decorative arts from their mother's collection, along with an endowment for the library. A keen collector, Caroline had a passion for colonial history and heritage, and an eye for rare and significant material.

This display draws from Caroline's collection of objects related to the incredible voyage of Rose de Freycinet (1794–1832) aboard the French scientific vessel *Uranie* in 1817–20. It offers just a glimpse of the breadth and importance of the objects acquired by one of Australia's great collectors.

Find out more about Rose de Freycinet and the Caroline Simpson display at:

<https://mhnsw.au/stories/general/rose-redacted/>

<https://mhnsw.au/whats-on/exhibitions/celebrating-the-20th-anniversary-of-the-caroline-simpson-library/>



Indexing records at the Western Sydney Records Centre  
Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INDEXING AND DIGITISATION PROJECT (UPDATE)

We would like to thank everyone who responded to our recent call for expressions of interest in our Community Partnership Project to digitise and index small debt registers from across the State. We are thrilled with the response, receiving 14 expressions of interest from family and historical societies. This will result in the digitisation and indexing of 172 Small Debts registers.

The project is now underway, and we look forward to publishing the resulting indexes and associated digital images later this year.

If your society is interested in participating but you haven't yet contacted us, we are leaving the Expression of Interest Form open on the website — please get in touch.

<https://mhnsw.au/news/community-partnership-indexing-digitisation-projects/>

## WEBINAR PROGRAM

### Colonial Secretary's Minutes

In 1826 Governor Darling instituted a system of conveying official instructions to the Colonial Secretary through minutes and memoranda. These range from brief administrative instructions to comprehensive documents that dealt with the more important matters of government.

This webinar highlights examples of these largely untapped records — from rules and regulations at the Female Factory, to enquiries about convicts from family members back in England, and investigations of immigrant ships. Learn how these documents that dealt with government policy, detailed plans and proposals also captured the lives of individual people, and how to find them.

Watch the recording at:

<https://mhnsw.au/webinars/colonial-secretarys-minutes-1826-1927/>

### Upcoming webinars

Register on our website for our upcoming webinars at:

<https://mhnsw.au/whats-on/>

21 June Oyster Leases

5 July First Nations Community Access to Archives

30 August "Equitable relief": Equity Court records in the State Archives Collection

Missed one of our webinars? Watch the recordings of our recent webinars on Married women teachers' declarations and Unlocking past lives on our website, or search our many webinars for a topic that interests you via our Subject A-Z.

<https://mhnsw.au/webinars/married-women-teachers-declarations/>

<https://mhnsw.au/unlocking-past-lives/>

<https://mhnsw.au/archive/subjects/?filter=webinars>

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To stay up to date with the NSW State Archives Collection, Caroline Simpson Library Collection and Museums Collection at Museums of History NSW simply select

**Collections** as one of the options you'd like to hear about.



# Genealogical Serendipity

by Vanessa Cassin, SAG Education Manager

In my role as Education Manager at the Society, I have the pleasure of hearing about the research interests of many of our members. I am regularly amazed by the twisted journeys, unexpected stories and interconnections that are uncovered by our community.

Many of you will be familiar with one of our volunteer presenters, Michelle Patient aka The Patient Genealogist, and will have heard her remark that she almost always discovers a relative in the room when she gives a presentation. I used to think Michelle was exaggerating, to make a point about collaborating and sharing our stories when she said this; however, the longer I have worked at SAG the more I am discovering just how true her comment is!

In the past three years I have discovered a 2021 Croker Prize entry written about my four times great-grandfather, had someone contact me via Ancestry.com about a branch of my family only to discover they were a distant cousin who was in the process of completing the SAG Certificate in Genealogical Research, been twice contacted by potential family connections after showing examples of certificates from my own distant ancestors in SAG's Beginners Practical Introduction to Family History course and, finally, discovered that another candidate in the Certificate program was writing a biography about the husband of the person I chose as the subject for my submission for the same exercise when I

completed the program as a SAG member back in 2017.

We often talk at the SAG about the importance of community and collaboration. One of the most valuable aspects of belonging to a family history society is the opportunity to share our discoveries with like-minded people. Here at the SAG, we are thrilled with the generosity members regularly display when they share their research at our Friday Hangouts, in *Descent* articles, and as case studies for our various conferences, groups and webinars. You may not end up submitting a "pigeon pair" of biographies for the SAG Certificate the way Kathryn and I did; however, let's keep the connections flowing. Perhaps you have a similar story of genealogical serendipity you could submit to a future issue of *Descent*?

Sadly, I am yet to locate a photograph of the subject of my biography, but I live in hope that one day one will be unearthed in an archive somewhere! If anyone is related to either John Bland, Mary Anderson or their extended families email me at [education@sag.org.au](mailto:education@sag.org.au) and we can keep the web of connections growing.



**Vanessa Cassin** has been researching her family history for about 20 years. So far she has traced her ancestors back to England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany (Hanover) and Italy.

She completed the SAG Certificate in Genealogical Research in 2018 and has also recently completed the SAG Diploma in Family Historical Studies. She has been a member of the Society since 2004 and joined the staff as Education Manager in late 2020.

Photo by Udo Butcher & Cindy Yeung 2022



**Kathryn van der Mei's** interest in family history was sparked when she wrote her first biography at age 12 on her Dutch political activist great-grandfather for a school assignment. An occasional hobby for over 30 years, Kathryn decided to finally undertake some formal studies in genealogy; completing both the Society's Certificate in Genealogical Research and Intermediate Research Methods Course in 2023.

Motivated by a desire to preserve her family's history for the benefit of her children, Kathryn is currently researching her family's ancestors who were early colonial arrivals to South Australia and the Port Phillip District as well as post World War 2 arrivals from The Netherlands and England.



# Bland, John (1815–1865) by Kathryn van der Mei

John Bland (1815–1865), merchant, was born on 8 January 1815 in Edinburgh, Scotland, the fourth of five children, to James Bland; clerk of St John's Episcopal Church and Keeper of the Chapel Royal at Holyrood, and his wife Stewart, née Easton.

In 1833, Bland commenced employment as a clerk of the Sheriff's Court in Edinburgh, a position he held for seven years, before emigrating as an unassisted passenger aboard the *Isabella Watson* from Leith, reaching Melbourne on 11 August 1840. Upon arrival, Bland secured employment with James Montgomery: partner in the law firm Montgomery & McRae, Clerk of the Peace, and later the first Crown Solicitor for the Port Phillip District until January 1842.

Bland's first foray into business was with John Carfrae, a fellow Scot and a man 18 years his senior. In March 1842, they formed Carfrae & Bland, auctioneers and commission agents. The new business won high praise from the editor of the *Port Phillip Gazette* for their sale of books being "the means of spreading more cheap literature through the colony in a few months than what was previously obtainable in the course of years". The partners also invested in a pastoral run in the Portland Bay district, one of multiple investments in the pastoral industry that Bland would make. Bland was left to run the Melbourne business when Carfrae departed for Sydney in October 1843, intending to expand the business and headquarter it in George Street, Sydney. However, 1843 was a turbulent year for the economy. The Carfrae & Bland business soon failed and the partnership was dissolved on 23 December 1843.

In mid-1844, Bland moved to Belfast (Port Fairy), initially finding employment as the accountant for William Rutledge. The merchant and shipping firm William Rutledge & Co. was the largest in the district before collapsing in 1862. In 1847, Bland entered into partnership with master mariner, John Cowtan. Within a few years Cowtan & Bland, merchants and shipping agents, stood second in importance to Rutledge & Co.

Whilst Bland pursued multiple businesses and investments for profit, he possessed a strong community spirit. A man of considerable ability, it was said there was no charitable cause in the district that sought his assistance in vain. He was generous with both his time and money. He was a well-read, outgoing

and social character, affectionately known as "genial wooden-legged John". He held numerous community roles over the years including being a member of the Belfast Road Board; the Municipal Council and as Chairman; secretary and treasurer of the Race Club; a trustee of the St John's Anglican Church land, cemetery and Belfast Hospital & Benevolent Asylum; a Justice of the Peace and Magistrate; trustee of the Belfast Savings Bank; visiting Justice of the Belfast Gaol; and returns officer for parliamentary elections.

In the late 1850s, another economic crisis was emerging. Unfavourable agricultural conditions and devaluation of landed securities severely affected Belfast's merchants. In 1860, Bland attempted to move into flour milling. The Cowtan & Bland partnership was dissolved on 31 December 1860 with a deficiency of over £7400. Bland assigned his property to his creditors on 28 January 1861. His intended purchase of the Moyne Flour Mill, which he managed, never eventuated due to his insolvency. Bland remained involved in the merchant business which traded as Cowtan & Co. until 1863. He also occupied himself as a commission agent following the crash.

Bland married Mary Cassady in Belfast in July 1852. They were blessed with three daughters. Sadly, Bland was widowed in February 1860. He found happiness again on 21 June 1864 with his marriage to Mary Anderson but it was short-lived. Bland passed away at age 50 on 24 April 1865 from visceral congestion.

As a measure of the esteem in which he was held, Bland's Belfast associates: Messrs Macgregor, Phillips, Dilmond Howes, Stanislaus Bayly, George Barber, Alexander Russell, Robert Whitehead, Frederick P Stevens, Ernest Bostock, William Armstrong and Roderick Urquhart raised a fund to support his young daughters and paid his funeral expenses.

Bland, as a merchant and pioneer, represented a small capitalist who was prominent in commerce, community development and affairs in early Port Fairy, although financial stress cast a gloom over his later years. Following the family tradition of public service and record keeping, Bland's eldest daughter Joanna became the Registrar for births and deaths for Woodford in 1908.

John Bland was buried in the Port Fairy Sandhills Cemetery which fell into disrepair. The location of his grave is now unknown.

## Select Bibliography

### Books

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### Correspondence

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- Bland, John. Letter from John Bland to His Honour C. J. La Trobe Esq. dated 19 June 1848, held by the Public Records Office Victoria. VRPS 19/P0000, 48/1850.

### Newspapers and Gazettes

- New South Wales Government Gazette* (Sydney, NSW): 14 November 1843, 1503; 23 January 1844, 172; 28 March 1849, 549.
- The Port Phillip Gazette* (Melbourne, Victoria): 12 August 1840, 2; 23 March 1842, 2; 11 May 1842, 3.
- Port Phillip Government Gazette* (Melbourne, Victoria), 21 February 1849, 112.
- Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser* (Melbourne, Victoria): 18 November 1839, 5; 21 March 1842, 3; 13 August 1840, 2.
- Sydney Record* (Sydney, NSW), 28 October 1843 page 27.
- Victoria Government Gazette* (Melbourne, Victoria): 11 August 1857, 1515; 13 August 1857, 687; 13 April 1858, 687; 25 February 1859, 357; 11 August 1859, 1687; 5 March 1860, 425; 14 September 1860, 1721; 8 January 1861, 53; 8 February 1861, 280; 20 January 1864, 139; 20 May 1908, 2680.

### Additional Resources

- Obituary *Hamilton Spectator* and *Grange District Advertiser* (Hamilton, Victoria), 3 May 1865, 3, reprinted from the *Belfast Banner*.

## Bland, Mary (1832–1909) by Vanessa Cassin

Mary Bland (1832–1909), nurse and Lady Superintendent, was born Marianne Anderson on 28 March 1832 at Mortlake, Surrey, England. She was the third of nine children of Scottish-born gardener and later railway policeman, Alexander Anderson and his English first wife, Julia Ann née Hunt. The untimely death of her mother in 1841, when Mary was only nine years old, led to the family being split up. At the time of the 1841 census, Mary was residing with friends of her parents in London, whilst her father and brother worked on the railways in Wales. By 1851 Bland was working as a servant for the Lockwood family in the parish of St Mary-Le-Bon, Middlesex, England.

Most likely at the urging of her cousin, William Anderson, a member of the Legislative Assembly in the Colony of Victoria, Bland followed in the footsteps of a number of her siblings and cousins and emigrated to Australia around 1862. She settled in the Belfast (Port Fairy) area where she married John Bland, a widower with three young children on 21 June 1864. Sadly, her marriage was short lived with John Bland dying only 10 months later on 22 April 1865, leaving her a childless widow at the age of 33.

Following the death of her husband, Bland travelled to New South Wales where she was employed as a nursery governess and housekeeper for a Mrs Tucker in Double Bay.

In 1868, at the request of the Colonial Secretary, Henry Parkes, Florence Nightingale sent a group of nurses to establish a nurse training school at Sydney Hospital under the leadership of Lucy Osburn. In May 1869 Bland applied to train as a nurse and was accepted. Although other women had previously commenced as Probationer Nurses, Bland became the first Sister Probationer to train as a nurse at Sydney Hospital. Sister Probationers were from a more educated background than the general probationers and in a letter to Florence Nightingale dated 19 May 1869, Lucy Osburn credited Sister Bland with being “somewhat of a check upon evil tendencies” amongst the other nurses.

After completing her training and gaining valuable experience at Sydney Hospital, it was announced in the NSW *Government Gazette* of 21 October 1873 that Mrs Mary Bland had been appointed Matron of the Hospital for the Insane, Gladesville.

### Select Bibliography

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Lucy Osburn-Nightingale Museum, Sydney Hospital, Transcript of Lucy Osburn's Original Nurses' Register, entry for Mary A. Bland, 17.

As a marked progression of the time, Sister Bland was the first trained general nurse in Australia to be appointed Matron of a hospital for the insane. She held the position of Matron of Gladesville Hospital until 17 June 1881 when she resigned to take up a new position in Tasmania.

Sister Bland was chosen from a field of seventeen candidates to replace another of Lucy Osburn's graduates as Lady Superintendent of the General Hospital in Hobart. She commenced her role in late June 1881; however, her tenure was marked by disputes with the Hospital Board, particularly concerning the recognition of the professional skills of her nurses and the conditions of the nurses' living quarters. She resigned just over two years later in October 1883. The Hospital Visiting Committee urged Sister Bland to reconsider her resignation; however, she stood by her decision as a matter of principle, apparently feeling some members of the Board had professionally undermined her.

Little is known of Sister Bland's later years, although from brief mentions of her in the diary of her sister Elizabeth Cassady née Anderson, it appears she returned to live in the Koroit/Port Fairy district in 1893/94.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, Sister Bland was living in Sydney, NSW, where her brother George Anderson was also living.

A likely result of Sister Bland's influence is that a number of her nieces, including all four daughters of her brother George, trained as nurses in various Sydney hospitals in the 1890s. Between them they served in the Boer War, World War I and as Matrons of a number of hospitals in Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales. The family carried on Sister Bland's efforts to have the skills of nurses professionally recognised and at least two of her nieces were instrumental in the establishment of the Australasian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA).

Mary Bland died in North Sydney, New South Wales on 11 February 1909 having never remarried or had any children. She is buried in Gore Hill Cemetery.

### Newspapers and Gazettes

*Launceston Examiner*: 13 October 1883, 2; 20 October 1883, 2.

*The Mercury*: 10 June 1882, 3; 15 October 1883, 3.

*New South Wales Government Gazette*: 21 October 1873 (issue no. 243), 2925; 13 September 1881 (issue no. 361), 4667.

*The Tasmanian*: 4 June 1881, 522; 20 May 1882, 542; 20 October 1883, 19; 27 October 1883, 1270.

# EDUCATION@SAG

BY VANESSA CASSIN

As the daylight hours become shorter and we descend into the Winter months, we have the perfect opportunity to snuggle up somewhere warm and focus on our family history research. The SAG's program of virtual events makes it easier than ever to develop your research skills and knowledge as you don't need to venture out in the cold to attend our array of webinars, group meetings and courses!

The schedule between now and Spring is jam-packed with events, culminating in National Family History Month in August. The SAG staff and education volunteers work hard all year round to provide a variety of workshops, webinars and courses; however, National Family History Month is the highlight of our year when we come together to celebrate how understanding our family stories enriches our lives.

Final details are not yet confirmed but we will be presenting several free events for members and the public during August. If you are new to researching your family history, we will also be presenting an intensive version of our popular Beginners Practical Introduction to Family History face-to-face in our Research Centre and Library on Friday 30 and Saturday 31 August. (The next virtual course will commence on Thursday 26 September for those who prefer to attend via Zoom.)

For more experienced researchers, Danielle Lautrec will commence the next cohort of her highly regarded Intermediate Research Methods course from Monday 1 July. Members who are ready to work with genetic genealogy techniques at an advanced level are also eagerly awaiting the commencement of our 2024 Analysing your DNA using Chromosome Analysis course, presented by SAG Fellow Veronica Williams with a team of passionate DNA researchers from our DNA Research Discussion Group.

For those feeling a little more creative, Dr Betty O'Neill is presenting one of her wonderful one-day workshops on writing your family history on Saturday 29 June. This will be

an online workshop, however, a face-to-face workshop has also been scheduled for Friday 6 September for those who prefer an in-person experience. These workshops are ideal for both novice and experienced writers as Betty provides plenty of inspiration for all skill levels to stop procrastinating and start putting pen to paper!

Along with these more in-depth courses and workshops, our regular program of free events, research interest groups, and webinars continue to roll along. June will see the return of our Book Club for 2024 — a little later in the year than planned, however we hope to inspire the avid readers amongst our members with both a Book Club session and a Meet the Author event in June. The focus of the Book Club session is the upcoming new release *Nuclear Family* by Kate Davies, while for our Meet the Author event, the SAG will host Tessa Morris-Suzuki as she introduces her new book *A Secretive Century: Monte Punshon's Australia*, revealing Australia's modern transformation through the life of an extraordinary woman.

Not to be left out, July sees a triple threat of fabulous webinars presented by SAG members: Michael Flynn discussing the latest additions to the Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Lillian Magill taking us on an investigation of the City of Sydney Archives, and Yvonne Masters helping us mine more information from the English censuses.

You can find more details about all these events plus much more by visiting the events page of our website at [www.sag.org.au/events](http://www.sag.org.au/events).

Join us for...

## FAMILY HISTORY CONNECT

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We're seeking proposals from members who would like to facilitate one of our Family History Connect sessions in 2024. Family History Connect sessions are small in-person, themed sessions, focusing on a particular area of genealogy research. Sessions are normally held on Tuesdays.

People interested in providing small consultations on specific topics in our Family History Research Centre & Library (2/379 Kent Street, Sydney) are invited to contact us to discuss. If you can only offer an online session, please do get in touch anyway to discuss.

Please email [admin@sag.org.au](mailto:admin@sag.org.au) for further information and see [www.sag.org.au/FHC](http://www.sag.org.au/FHC)



# OUR SAG COMMUNITY

## Out & About BY DANIELLE TEBB

### Government House Open Day

SAG Director Sonya Russell attended the celebrations at Government House, Canberra on Saturday 16 March and had a great day speaking to the public about the Society. She was ably supported on the day by SAG member Kaaren Sephton.

When the Governor-General and SAG Patron-in-Chief, the Honourable David Hurley stopped for a visit, Sonya was able to give him a book that fellow SAG Director Dianne Snowden had compiled on their common ancestor.

Friday Hangout participants were also treated to a live stream from Sonya as she set up for the event.

Our thanks go to both Sonya and Kaaren for attending and promoting the Society.



*From left: Director Sonya Russell, Governor-General and SAG Patron-in-Chief, the Honourable David Hurley, and Kaaren Sephton*



*From left: Keith Johnson, Heather Garnsey, Mike Turner, Joy Pronk, Angela Phippen.*

### Former SAG volunteer, Joy Pronk, turns 100

Five SAG members, Past President Keith Johnson; Former Librarian Angela Phippen, Retired Executive Officer Heather Garnsey, Membership Officer Danielle Tebb and member Mike Turner with his wife, Alison, attended the 100th Birthday of former SAG volunteer Joy Pronk on Wednesday 5 April at Hornsby RSL.

Sixty relatives, friends and neighbours gathered together, along with representatives from both SAG and the former Australian Turf Club Heritage Society, Randwick, where she also volunteered.

Joy joined the Society in December 1968 and quickly engaged with various volunteering positions, including the work needed to clean Rumsey Hall for occupation in the early 1990s, our annual Showcase event which ran from 1996 to 2006, and latterly volunteering every Monday at Richmond Villa doing conservation on damaged books, together with fellow members Delores Cummings and Michael Turner.



*This photo of Joy celebrating her 50 years of SAG membership appeared in March Descent 2019, Vol. 49 No. 1, page 4.*

## FamilySearch VIP Symposium

In April, SAG Library Services Manager, Gemma Beswick and Archives Manager, Alexandra Mountain, were invited to attend the FamilySearch VIP Symposium held at the Westin, Brisbane, Queensland, to celebrate 130 years of preserving records. They were joined by SAG Board members Darryl Low Choy and Sonya Russell for the full-day event, which focused on the new AI initiatives of FamilySearch.

Alexandra was a panelist on the discussion on the future of preserving records for family historians, alongside David Fricker (The National Library and Archives United Arab Emirates), Josephine Secis (National Archives of Australia), Kylie Poulton (State Library of Queensland), Wayne Metcalfe (FamilySearch International) and Martyn Killion (Museums of History NSW).

The robust discussion ranged from how technology and digitised records have influenced records stewardship, to how family history institutions can entice younger generations to get involved. It was an incredible day with many leading family history experts invited to rethink the way we manage, collect, and preserve records.

## Hambledon Cottage 200th Anniversary Dinner

Education Manager, Vanessa Cassin, and Membership Officer, Danielle Tebb attended an anniversary dinner at the Rydges Hotel, Rosehill on the evening of Saturday 20 April, ending a week of events celebrating the bicentenary of Hambledon Cottage. The keynote speaker, Carol Liston, spoke about the neighbours of Hambledon Cottage and how they changed over time, thus affecting the residents of the cottage. We enjoyed a lovely buffet dinner, coincidentally sharing a table with a couple of SAG members.

Hambledon Cottage, constructed of rendered sandstone brick in the colonial Georgian style, was built by John Macarthur in 1824 as a second house on his Elizabeth Farm Estate. The basic design of the Cottage is attributed to Henry Kitchen. The resident most associated with the building is Penelope Lucas, former governess to Macarthur's daughters Elizabeth, Mary and Emmeline, and later companion and friend to Mrs Macquarie. Penelope named the cottage after the township

of Hambledon in Hampshire, England and she was given the use of the cottage during her lifetime in the Macarthur's will. Following her death in 1836, the cottage was occupied by a series of friends and retainers of the Macarthurs, including three governors, and the sale of the estate in 1881 led to a succession of tenants and owners.

In early 1950, the Whitehall Pharmaceutical Company purchased Hambledon Cottage, its outbuildings and grounds and donated the cottage to the Parramatta City Council. After the Council conducted restoration work on the building, it was leased to Parramatta and District Historical Society for use as its headquarters and for display to the public as a house museum. The Society furnished the cottage in the style of the 1820s–1880s and thousands of visitors are shown through annually.

*Keep an eye on our events listing for the second half of the year as we plan to have a tour(s) of the cottage for SAG members.*



## Deaths

The deaths of the following members and former members were notified to the Society between February and April 2024. We extend our sympathies to the family and friends of them all.

**Kylie Harrison**  
Marrickville  
2 March 2024

**Mervyn Dan Montague**  
Katoomba  
21 August 2023

**William Arthur Squair**  
Cairns  
14 April 2024

**Charmian Warden**  
Edgecliffe  
8 December 2023





## Former SAG Volunteer, Peter Trebilco, honoured with street in Canberra

For those members who used to frequent Rumsey Hall (24 Kent Street) and later, our Library and Research Centre at 379 Kent Street, on a Saturday, you will doubtless remember library volunteer Peter Trebilco. Peter died suddenly in 2017, shortly before his 90th birthday, and his obituary was published in the December *Descent* Vol. 47 Part 4, page 156.

We are delighted to report that Peter has had a street/crescent named after him for his services to mental health and the LGBTQI community. Trebilco Crescent is in north-west Canberra, in the new suburb of Denman Prospect, where the streets are named after activists and reformers.

SAG staff were alerted to this honour by a regular SAG library user and further investigation found an article by Adjunct Professor Terry Slevin, Chief Executive Officer of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) in PHAA's *Intouch Public Health* on 18 September 2023. PHAA had been approached by the ACT Government for information on Peter and a recommendation for why he deserved the honour. Their reply to the ACT Place Names Advisory Committee of the ACT Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information follows:

"Peter served Australia in many ways. He was a pioneer in establishing the Public Health Association of Australia, which has supported and helped advance disease prevention for more than 50 years. He helped guide its establishment and served it in many roles over many decades. He did so



voluntarily and with distinction. He fostered public health leaders of the future and gave generously of his time and expertise. He has been made one of the very few Life Members the Association has anointed.

Peter also served in an academic role. He was involved in training Public Health professionals through his work at the University of New South Wales in a paid and then voluntary capacity for a span of more than 40 years.

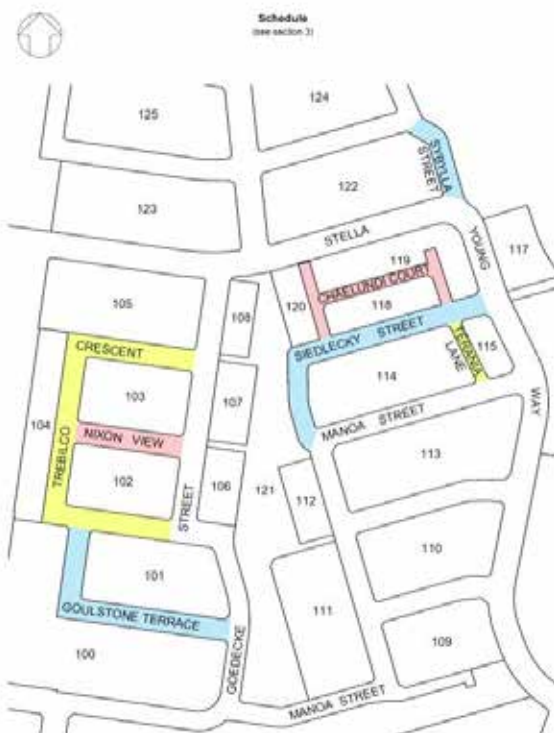
Peter was an early and leading advocate for gay rights and in support of LGBTQI rights. Again, in a voluntary capacity he donated his time and expertise to the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service as well as displaying the courage to contribute to the planning and participating in protests and rallies at a time when such action brought with it serious personal risk. In addition, Peter was also involved in the Mental Health Association of NSW and in 2004 received an OAM for his work in these areas.

He was also a commissioned officer (Major) in the artillery (CMF Citizens Military Force, now Australian Army Reserve) who was brave enough to also protest Australian involvement in the Vietnam war.

Peter Trebilco was a thoughtful, gentle, clever, witty and selfless contributor to making Australia a better place, who pushed social boundaries, often to his own detriment. We could not be more enthusiastic to support and applaud any effort to recognise his contribution in this important and lasting manner."

Confirmation of Trebilco Crescent may be found here and the full story, first published in PHAA *Intouch Public Health* can be located on the Intouch website at:

<https://intouchpublichealth.net.au/trebilco-crescent-a-tribute-for-a-wonderful-phaa-leader/>



DIVISION OF DENMAN PROSPECT

Diagram



# ADVERTISING DIRECTORY

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Laurence Turtle is an authorised transcription agent for NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages, holds a Diploma in Family History Studies and has completed the Archives Course at NSW State Archives.

Lorraine Turtle has conducted courses in family history for U3A and regularly visits NSW State Archives for research.

Both Lorraine and Laurie were teachers in "former lives" and are available for talks to family history groups.

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# RETRO RESEARCH ...

*that never goes out of style!*

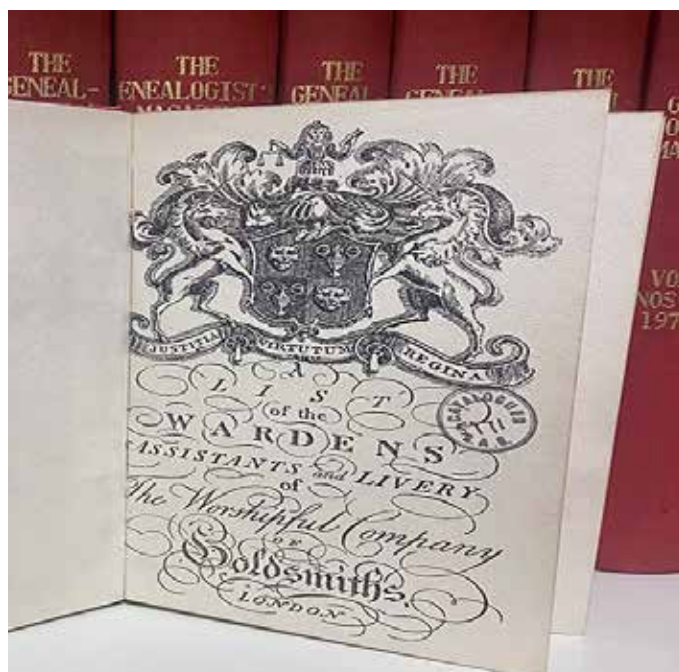
BY GEMMA BESWICK

## Butchers, feltmakers and scientific instrument makers ...

Long before the application of artificial intelligence became ubiquitous in our daily lives, our ancestors performed a variety of occupations, many of which no longer exist and others we struggle to imagine! In the same way, if our ancestors had had a portal to the present, they couldn't have imagined the types of occupations available to us.

In the spirit of "retro research", looking at our resources either not easily available or unavailable online, we have compiled a list of occupational directories in the collection and those you may not have thought to look at (or request a look-up of) before. Occupational directories are a great source of information to provide context to the lives of our ancestors, providing information about working life, colleagues, periods of service, evidence of relationships, and much more. This list of resources below is not exhaustive by any means. Go forth and explore the library catalogue!

[www.sag.org.au/Using-our-collections](http://www.sag.org.au/Using-our-collections)



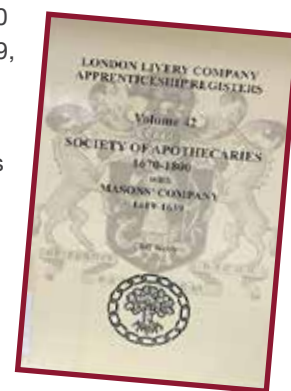
### Apothecary and allied healthcare

Nosological index 1863 and staff and registrars of the Registrar-General's Department, Victoria, 1862 by Marjorie Morgan.  
C3/3/Pam.2.

Society of apothecaries 1670–1800 with Mason's Company 1619–1639, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb. N8.23/12/50.

Register of applicants and licenses issued to keep lying-in homes: 1900–1910, compiled by Graham J. Savage.  
SA-OCC:1 [microform].

Apothecary list, 1815–1840  
UK-DIR-APO [microform].



### Food and beverage trades

Poulterers' Company, 1691–1729, 1754–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/26.

Cooks' Company, 1654–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/34.

Vintners' Company 1609–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/51.

Butcher's Company apprenticeships: 1604–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/55.

Skinner's Company apprenticeships: 1604–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/56.

### Glass trade

Glass-sellers' Company 1664–1812, Woolmens' Company 1665–1828, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.  
N8.23/12/13.

The Worshipful Company of Glass-Sellers of London: from its inception to the present day, compiled and edited by Alexander L. Howard.  
N8.23/12/13b.





## Gold and silversmiths

19th century Australian gold and silver smiths by Kurt Albrecht. A8/12/2.

List of the wardens assistants and livery of the worshipful company of goldsmiths, London.

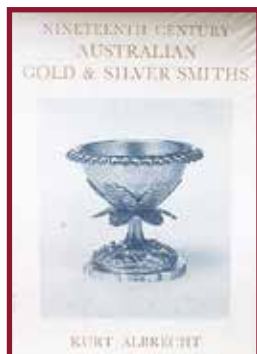
N8.23/12/1928.

Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers' Company, 1693–1837, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/22.

Dumfries silversmiths: by Kirkpatrick H Dobie.

P8/12/Pam.1.



## Fabric, clothing and personal items

Watchmakers and clockmakers of the world by G. H. Baillie.

L8/12/1a.

Watchmakers and clockmakers of the world: volume 2 by Brian Loomes.

L8/12/1b.

Stationers' Company apprentices, 1701–1800, edited by D. F. McKenzie.

N8/12/3.

Scientific instrument makers of Victorian London, 1840–1900 by Hayden J. Downing.

N8.23/12/5.

Glovers' Company 1675–79, 1735–48, 1766–1804, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/12.

Needlemakers' Company 1664–1801, Pinmakers' Company 1691–1723,

abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/17.

Patternmakers Company, 1673–1805, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/20.

Spectaclemakers' Company, 1666–1800; Loriners' Company 1722–1731, 1759–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

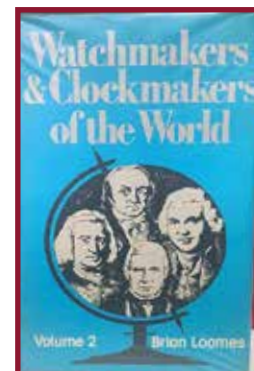
N8.23/12/21.

Upholders' Company 1704–1772, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/27.

Feltmakers' Company 1676–1682, 1692–1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/45.



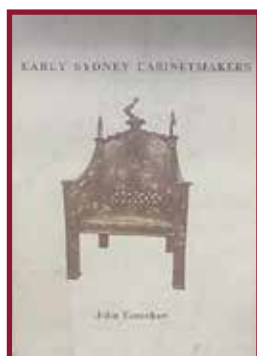
## Furniture

Directory of chair and furniture makers by Kevin Fahy, Christina Simpson, Andrew Simpson.

A8/12/Pam.4b.

Early Sydney cabinetmakers, 1804–1870: a directory with an introductory survey, by John Earnshaw.

B5/20/1.



## Musicians, musical instruments, playing cards, saddlers, and tobacco pipemakers

Historic organs of New South Wales: the instruments, their makers and players, 1791–1940 by Graeme D. Rushworth.

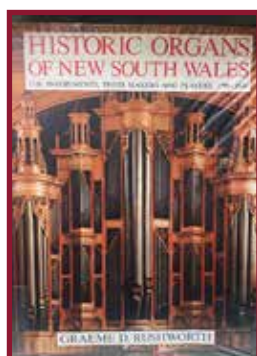
Rushworth.

B3/32/2.

Makers of Playing Cards' Company, 1675–1760; Musicians' Company 1765–1800; Saddlers' Company 1657–1666, 1800; Tobacco

pipemakers' Company 1800, abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb.

N8.23/12/23.





# LIBRARY NEWS



BY KARLIE FRELINGOS

This is a selection of books, pamphlets and other format items accessioned from February to April 2024.

The information provided is the title of the record, library classification number, format and donor's name.

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Consult the Library Catalogue at [www.sag.org.au](http://www.sag.org.au) and click on the "Using our Collections" button to locate full details of the items included in this list.

## Australia

- Women of colonial Australia. Volume 1: towards a better life, edited by Rose Cutts. (2023) A3/8/5a (Book)
- Women of colonial Australia. Volume 2: slan, agus beannacht de leath, edited by Rose Cutts. (2023) A3/8/5b (Book)
- Women of colonial Australia. Volume 3: convict and currency, edited by Rose Cutts. (2023) A3/8/5c (Book)
- In the wake of first contact: the Eliza Fraser stories by Kay Schaffer. (1995) A3/11/44 (Book)
- The immigration of Irish lawyers to Australia in the nineteenth century: causes and consequences by John Kennedy McLaughlin. (2024) A3/20/150 (Book) [Donated by the estate of the author]
- Moving stories: an intimate history of four women across two countries by Alistair Thomson & Phyllis Cave. (2011) A3/20/151 (Book) [Donated by the Sandra Blamey]
- Boddam-Whetham: a family history by John Mervyn Anderson. (2017) A6/BOD/5 (Book) [Donated by Susan Kelly]
- Farquhar Family Folio: The Story of John David Farquhar and His Wife Rhoda Jane Webb and the Descendants. (2003) A6/FAR/9 (Book)
- Frankston pioneers, the McComb family: the story of one of the pioneering families of Frankston by Ruth M. Bradbury. (1995) A6/FRA/9 (Book) [Donated by Kendall Webber]
- The Henderson story: Granny Donelan remembered by Frances L. Donelan & Michael J. Roache. (2021) A6/HEN/15 (Book) [Donated by the author].
- Kissin cousins: a collection of family histories of the Havard, Harrison, Bristow, McLean, Kendall, Thomas, Laing, Melville, Evans, Power, Chipp, Langley, Nash, Haynes and Lees families and those whom they married by Marjorie Kendall. (1989) A6/KEN/11 (Book) [Donated by Margaret Hamon]
- The Lawler story: ... the remarkable Miss Molly (1876–1948) by Frances L. Donelan & Michael J. Roache. (2020) A6/LAW/13 (Book) [Donated by the author]
- Folklore collector, photographer, writer, performer, John Meredith: a tribute by Kevin Bradley. (2006) A6/MER/5 (Book) [Donated by the Sandra Blamey]
- Meg Mulvey: a memoir by Leonie Star. (2006) A6/MUL/7 (Book)
- Mary Bridget Reardon: this is her story by Michael J. Roache. (2022) A6/REA/5 (Book) [Donated by the author]
- A family history: Joseph James Smith & Agnes Thompson Brown by Carolyn Irvine. (2021) A6/SMI/42 (Book)
- The Underwoods: lock, stock and barrel by Liz Parkinson. (1989) A6/UND/1 (Book) [New edition].
- Historical sketch of New South Wales by G. B. Barton. (1980) B3/1/40 (Book) [New edition]
- Dead & Buried: a curious history of Sydney's earliest burial grounds by Warren Fahey. (2022) B4.141/48/2 (Book)
- Narooma's Past: steamers, sawmills and salmon by Laurelle Pacey. (2001) B4.546/10/1 (Book)
- Camden Haven's 'Avenue of Honour' WW1 memorial trees. 1916–1918: the first 'Avenue of Honour' planted in New South Wales and the third in Australia commemorating the soldiers of the First World War by Phillip R. Bowman. (2018) B4.570/47/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- Cootamundra 1901–1924: past imperfect by Patricia Caskie. (2000) B4.590/1/2 (Book)
- Tumbarumba: a sketchy heritage by George Martin. (1994) B4.653/1/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- Temora yesterday and today: 1880–1980. (1980) B4.666/1/1 (Book)
- Bathurst pioneers: a register of pioneer families of Bathurst NSW and district before 1900 by Family History Group Bathurst Inc. (2007) B5/90/65 (Book)
- Monumental inscriptions, Young cemetery by Jan Grant & June Penny. (2004) B7/11/415 (Book) [New edition]
- Monumental inscriptions & burials Harden Shire cemeteries: Harden-Murrumburrah, Currawong, Galong, Jugiong and Wonbat by Jan Grant & June Penny. (2005) B7/11/429 (Book) [New edition]
- Bungonia and district cemetery and burial records: a list of people who died or are buried in the Bungonia area 1829–1996 by Moira McGinity & Ann Smith. (1996) B7/11/463 (Book)
- God and the city: a history of St David's Cathedral Hobart by Peter Boyce. (2012) D3/92/3 (Book)
- South Australian divorces: from 1859 to 1954 by Frank Hall & Elaine Hall. (2020) E7/5/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)

## New Zealand

Colonial outcasts: a search for the remittance men by Nell Hartley. (1993) K3/9/2 (Book) [Donated by Patricia Smith]

Hokianga by Jack Lee. (1987) K3/60/15 (Book)

The Royal New Zealand Fencibles, 1847–1852 by Ruth Alexander. (1997) K3/70/5 (Book)

## Handbooks & Guides

Oral history for the family historian: a basic guide by Linda Barnickel. (2006) L2/7/1 (Book) [Donated by Sandra Blamey]

Genealogy standards by Board for Certification of Genealogists. (2021) L2/20/1 (Book)

## England

The colonials in South Africa, 1899–1902 by John Stirling. (2002) M3/70/33 (Book) [Donated by Patricia Smith]

A to Z atlas and guide to London and suburbs by Geographers' Map Co. (2008) M8/42/20 [Donated by Kendall Webber]

Family skeletons: exploring the lives of our disreputable ancestors by Ruth Paley & Simon Fowler. (2005) N3/30/35 (Book)

Ceremonial barges of the river Thames: a history of the barges of the City of London livery companies and of the crown by Kenneth Nicholls Palmer. (1997) N4.23/21/1 (Book) [Donated by Kendall Webber]

The parish registers of Thomas Crockford 1561–1633 by John Chandler. (2020) N4.41/2/73 (Book)

The farming diaries of Thomas Pinniger 1813–1847 by Alan Wadsworth. (2021) N4.41/2/74 (Book)

Kidderminster compiled by Robert Barber. (1999) N4.42/4/3 (Book) [Donated by Sue Stenning]

Stanford in the Vale Churchwardens' Accounts 1552–1705, edited by Joan Dils. (2023) N7.2/1/4 (Book)

The registers of the chapelry of Church Kirk 1813–1851, Lancashire Parish Register Society. (2022) N7.20/1/198 (Book)

The registers of St Mary, Lancaster, 1801–1820, Lancashire Parish Register Society (2023) N7.20/1/199 (Book)

The registers of St Mary, Lancaster, 1821–1837, Lancashire Parish Register Society. (2023) N7.20/1/200 (Book)

## Scotland

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary deaths recorded: index compiled by Margaret Wilson and Sheila Smith (1998) P7.1/5/1 (Book)

## Ireland

Ireland: the heritage trail by Richard Reid. (1992) S3/4/Pam.1 (Pamphlet) [New edition]

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# ARCHIVES REPORT



BY DR ALEXANDRA MOUNTAIN

## Family history has changed ...

Family history has always been a global endeavour. Tracing ancestors, particularly in colonial countries like Australia, has more often than not meant looking outwards for relatives, heritage, and connections. Therefore, family history has always also been a collaborative exercise, with various degrees of cousins, aunts, and a lost great-great-grandparent or two fuelling the creation of a vast network of family. These truths about family history have not changed, but the methods and techniques used to uncover information about ancestors' lives have dramatically shifted within the past half century. Driven by advancements in technology, accessibility of records, and the integration of genetic testing; family history is a very different landscape now.

Fifty years ago, researchers had to rely almost solely on physical records at archives and libraries, necessitating travel to various repositories to access records. Cemeteries had to be clambered through, and international records had

**Driven by advancements in technology, accessibility of records, and the integration of genetic testing; family history is a very different landscape now.**

to be painstakingly transcribed and brought back to Australia for further investigation. Microfilm and microfiche were essential for the wider access of historical documents, and grappling with the oversized, bulky film readers was a right of passage. This was a time-consuming process that required a lot of dedication and patience.

The late twentieth century marked the beginning of a new era in family history, with the advent of personal computers and software programs designed for genealogical research. Family historians began the slow integration of their paper and digital

records, making research easier to manage and manipulate. Once realms of paper, now large tracts of information were centrally located and easily shareable.

However, it was, of course, the rise of the internet that revolutionised research and sharing in the 1980s and 1990s. Online databases and genealogical websites and messageboards began to pop up across the world, revolutionising the way family history research was conducted. Commercial family history platforms provided vast repositories of digitised records from anywhere in the world. Archives began to digitise their records too, meaning that now researchers no

longer had to travel extensively to gather new and valuable information. Instead, family history could transport researchers across the globe from the comfort of home.

The digitisation of records has also made genealogy more accessible on a global scale. Many countries have digitised their historical records and made them available online, often with multilingual support. This has enabled researchers to trace their ancestry across borders and overcome language barriers, opening up new possibilities for understanding family histories. In 2021, the National Archives of Australia reported that more than 62 million pages of their collection material were freely available online.

As the scale and scope of family history has been reshaped, so too has the way that research materials are stored and managed. Increasingly, family historians are caught between paper and digital worlds, with records and writings both physical and online. Sometimes, this means the doubling of records, with statutory certificates found as paper and digital copies. It can also make it hard to find useful materials, with so many different formats and types of records mixing together. Finally, it can be difficult to know what to keep and how to best preserve your family history research materials.

## So the way we keep our family history has changed ...

With this in mind, here are some tips and tricks to better manage your family history research materials so that they are easy to navigate, preserve important details and resources while removing extraneous materials, and also have significant items conserved for generations to come.

Some things to think about when considering your research materials:

### 1. Could someone else understand your system?

This rings true for the organised and the disorganised amongst us.

For the disorganised: it can be extremely difficult to sort through research materials that are just bundled together with no real rhyme or reason. Without a system of organisation in place, it means that if you want to share your research or donate it to an archive for continued preservation, it will take a very long time for someone else to understand the significance or importance of your work. It is important to have order to your materials for others to understand.



Equally for the organised: you could have the best and most clinical management system in place for your records, but you also need to ensure that you have an explanatory document at the beginning of your work to make sure that others can understand how your system works. Family historians are amazing detectives, but we haven't quite become mind-readers yet.

To make sure that your research can be easily understood and its value recognised, a good system of organisation and a clear set of instructions is integral.

## 2. Do you have multiple copies of the same document?

Although having multiple copies of the same document might help the research process along, keeping doubles, triples, or even quadruples of the same certificate or census record will make it more difficult for other researchers to understand your work. In addition, archives and libraries, where your research materials might be donated for future preservation, do not usually keep more than one copy of a single document. To streamline your research materials, and make it easier for future archivists to sort through your work, ensure that one copy of any record is kept.

If you're worried about the record getting lost, you can record the information on the document in another format, like in a family tree, group sheet, or written biography. This way, there are two different instances of the information of the document, without having two physical copies of the record.

## 3. Are your records original or copies?

This is an important question to ask when considering the conservation of your records. Internet print-outs, transcripts of certificates, and copies of family trees all contain valuable information; but their format is not necessarily valuable on their own. As such, they can be easily filed or stored physically with little concern about their long-term preservation. To save space, consider digitising and then disposing of these records so that they are more easily accessible, and do not clutter your research collection.

Original documents — like diaries, letters, wills, or photographs — have a greater significance outside of their genealogical information. They can hold a valuable social or cultural history, or they might be a rare example of a document. These original documents and their future preservation should be more carefully considered than copies of research materials.

## 4. Are your photographs identified clearly?

Photographs are an incredible genealogical resource, but only if the family members are clearly identified. Even a generation later, names of once familiar faces can be quickly forgotten. Therefore, if you have family photo albums, it is very important to clearly label every person you recognise. Otherwise, the incredible family portraits and holiday snaps will be pretty, but ultimately useless as a genealogical research tool.

### UPCOMING IN SEARCH OF ... THEMES

September  
Gold Rushes

December  
Wills & Probate

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Would like to submit an article to *Descent*, or present a paper at one of our online conferences in August or November? We welcome submissions or suggestions for papers and presentations on these topics — please email: [editor@sag.org.au](mailto:editor@sag.org.au)

### Gold Rushes (Australia, NZ, USA and others)

Submissions due: **18 July 2024**

Conference scheduled for 17 August

### Wills & Probate / End of life records

Submissions due: **15 October 2024**

Conference scheduled for 30 November.

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The Society welcomes articles for publication in *Descent*. Preference is given to articles which demonstrate methods, sources and tactics which will help others with their research. Family is about sharing — so we encourage you to share your stories with your fellow family historians.

**Length:** 2–3 page articles (1,000–2,000 words) although longer articles will be considered; 1 page articles (700–900 words); short articles (100–400 words).

**Copyright Clearance:** Copyright clearance is your responsibility and you must ensure that written and illustrative material does not breach copyright and all sources are correctly acknowledged.

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