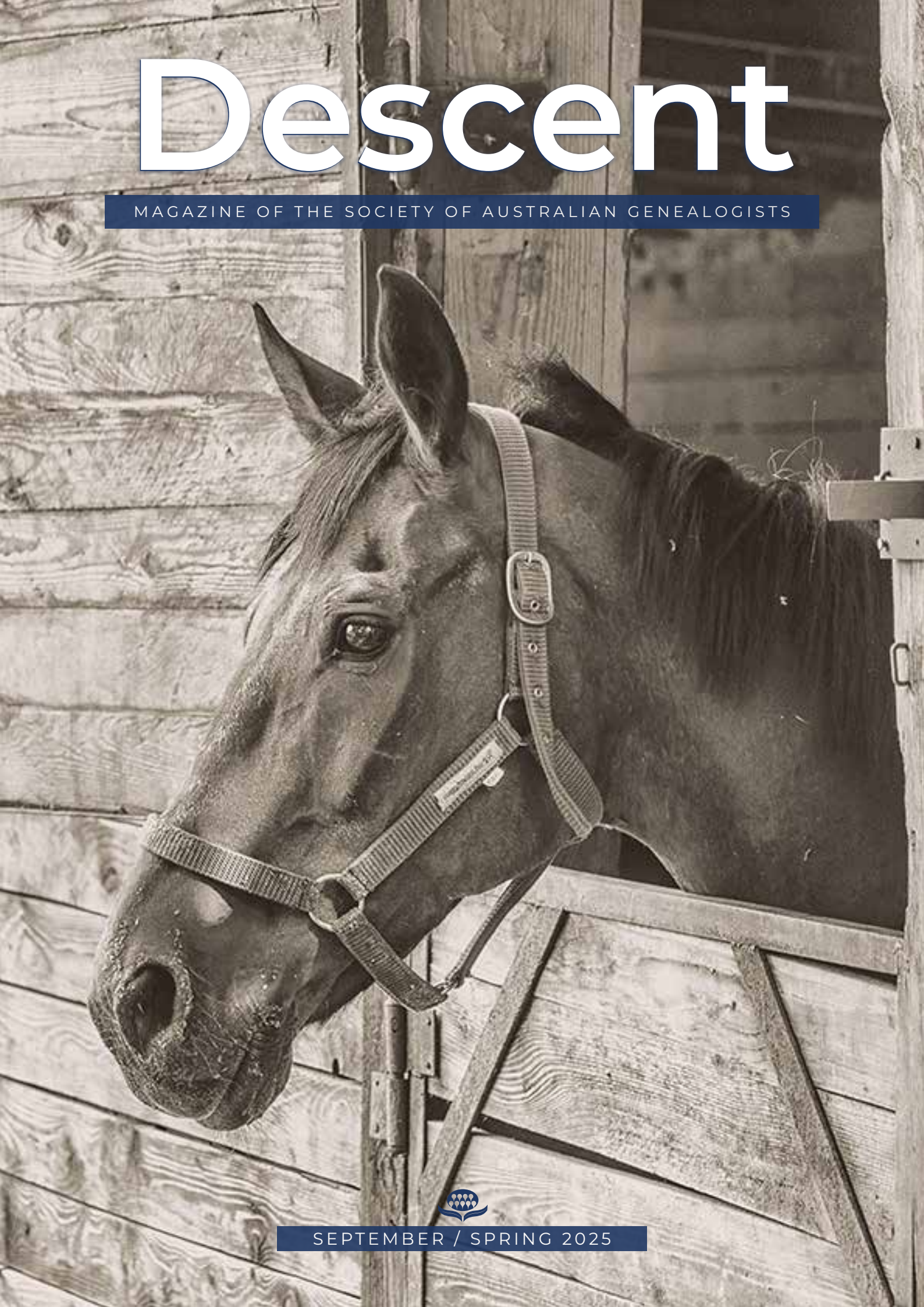

Descent

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN GENEALOGISTS

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Horse in stables. Image source: pickpik.com

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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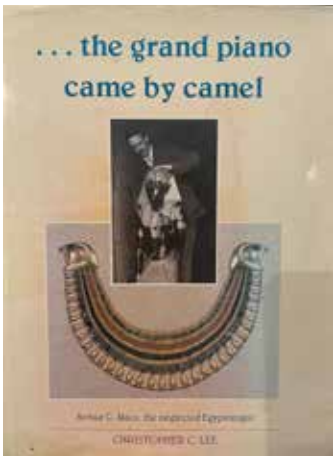
President's Message

PHILIPPA SHELLEY JONES

One of the enduring joys of family history is discovering the unexpected and this issue of *Descent*, themed on animals in family history, offers a delightful reminder of just how colourful our ancestors' lives really were. Whether it's a great-grandfather's faithful horse in a World War I diary, a beloved working dog on a rural property, or even a wayward parrot that made it into the family lore, animals have long been companions, workers, and even heroes in our family stories. Their presence adds a rich, often emotional layer to our understanding of the past.



It's wonderful to see contributors explore these connections, reminding us that family history is never just about names and dates. It's also about the texture of life – and the four-legged (or feathered) companions that helped shape it. My favourite personal connection to animals in family history is represented in the title of the book pictured, a treasured find on eBay from a couple of years ago that sits in an enormous pile of items flagged 'For when I have more time to work on my own family history'. Although largely brought up in Britain, Arthur Cruttenden Mace was born in Tasmania in 1874 and was my first cousin three times removed – his father and my two times great-grandfather were brothers. An Egyptologist, Arthur was one of the founding members of the Department of Egyptian Art at New York's Metropolitan Museum where he was the guiding hand behind the department's fieldwork. In 1922 he was seconded to work with Howard Carter on the tomb of Tutankhamun, where he played a major role that has never been fully acknowledged. The preservation of many of the Tutankhamun objects in Cairo was due to the on-site restoration carried out by my cousin.

Now to the animal bit – amongst Arthur Mace's archives, discovered by chance in his daughter's attic in the small Scottish village of Lochwinnoch in 1989, were letters, diaries, journals and photographs. Amongst the photographs, which gave a vivid social picture of life in Egypt during the early 20th century, was a particularly strange one showing a group of Egyptians holding a large wooden box outside a mud house. On being asked about it, Arthur's daughter said, "That's my mother's Bechstein grand piano you know … it came by camel." Apparently, Arthur's parents-in-law were so concerned about the lack of creature comforts in Egypt and "… the embellishments that went to make up a good, solid, respectable, middle-class domestic environment …" that they shipped out the grand piano, which arrived on the backs of baggage camels before being unloaded into the little mud house where Arthur and his wife lived. Needless to say, I am just itching to delve into more of my relative's exotic story.

Putting on another hat for a moment, had I been allowed to enter, Arthur Mace's archaeological journeys would have been excellent fodder for the Croker Prize for Biography theme this year – My Relative's Journey. This issue features the winning entry, which I encourage you to read. The annual prize continues to draw deeply personal and meticulously researched stories, showcasing the exceptional talent and passion within our genealogical community. Congratulations to this year's winner on an outstanding contribution. It is a fine example of the art of bringing ancestors to life.

Alongside these stories, I am pleased to report that the Board has made strong progress with the Society's strategic planning initiatives. We have been actively refining our goals for the years ahead, focusing on strengthening member engagement, expanding digital access to our collections and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Society. Whilst there have been some valid concerns raised about the Society's reliance on bequests to avoid concluding each financial year with an operating deficit, the reality is that the financial situation has been in a similar pattern for at least 10 years. We are now on a path of improvement to turn around the operating deficit by $100,000 a year so that by the end of 2028 the Society will be breaking even without any reliance on bequests.

As always, thank you for your continued support of the Society. We hope the stories in this issue inspire you to explore the lives (and the creatures) that have shaped your family's history. We also invite you to consider helping us further our mission by making a donation and consider a bequest to the Society as part of your estate planning. These contributions will support our ongoing work and help us continue to provide valuable resources for genealogists. Your contributions are deeply appreciated and help to ensure that we can continue our work for years to come.

Philippa Shelley Jones
President

From the Staff Desk

RUTH GRAHAM

As this issue is being compiled, we are navigating yet another busy Family History Month. There have been many captivating events and presentations, all the while prompting the question: how do we reach more people to let them know that family history societies, particularly the SAG, exist? We would be delighted to hear from anyone with media connections who might assist.

Looking ahead, our calendars are filling with a couple of exciting events. Firstly, as this issue goes to print, the 40th Annual Conference of the New South Wales and ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc., hosted by the Illawarra Family History Group Inc., will be held from 12–14 September. We are looking forward to participating with a stand at the event, where you can meet our directors and staff, learn about the Society's latest initiatives, and explore the resources we provide to support your genealogical research.

Secondly, our final virtual conference for the year, *Pathways to Professional Genealogy*, will be held on Saturday, 25 October, with bookings now open via our website.

This animal-themed issue of *Descent* is particularly welcome. While my current domestic arrangements do not allow for pets, I continue to delight in the stories of birds, dogs, goldfish, and cats that my family has nurtured over the years.

Ruth Graham
CEO

Biography

McCray, William Thomas: (1856–1905)

COLLEEN MCCRAY

William Thomas McCray (1856-1905), saddler and harness maker, alderman, publican, hotel manager, and mayor, was born on 19 February 1856 in Gladstone, Queensland. Son of John William, a boatman and civil contractor from Prince Edward Island, Canada, and his wife Ann, née Burney, an Irish Orphan from County Queens, Ireland, and Lady's servant for Captain Maurice O'Connell's wife. William was one of the first infants born in the early settlement of Port Curtis. After receiving an elementary education, McCray worked as an apprentice saddler for Henry Hawthorne before opening his saddler and harness shop at 1 Goondoon Street, Gladstone, by 1880.

On 22 January 1885, William, aged 29, married Rose Jackson, aged 18, born in County Cavan, Ireland.

William, his father John, and his younger brother Martin purchased land nearby at Calliope. On 3 August 1882, William purchased 160 acres at East Stowe with an annual rent of 8 pounds. The land was used to safely hold his racehorses and cattle with his brother.

William and his brother Martin were quite the racing enthusiasts. They loved horses and won many races in Gladstone and other regions in Queensland. McCray was appointed Trustee of the Gladstone Racecourse Reserve on 7 August 1885 and had been appointed a salaried Trustee for the Gladstone General Cemetery the previous year.

On 22 October 1885, following in his father's footsteps, William became an Alderman for the Municipal Council of Gladstone. Greatly supporting Gladstone's progress, William wanted to help build and nurture the town's future. Serving on the local Municipal Council as an Alderman until 1903, with a gap from 1888 to 1894, William helped improve the fledgling town of Gladstone.

The first one-storey Young Australian Hotel in Gladstone was built on Auckland Street in 1887 and run by William and his wife, Rose. From 1889 to 1912, William owned and leased four land blocks adjacent from Auckland Street to Tank Street, backing Off Lane.

The Gladstone Meatworks building was completed by the end of 1894, and the Gladstone Meatworks of Queensland Ltd. was registered. William, one of the original local subscribers, held 15 shares in the Company and is noted in the first photo taken as very tall and slim.

One of William's racehorses, Meteor, won the prestigious first Gladstone Cup Race in December 1892. The handsome trophy, a 925-sterling silver 30cm cup, is stamped on the underside by the maker of well-known Brisbane jeweller Flavelle, Roberts & Sankey.

1899 was a busy time in William's life. As an Alderman and publican, William became Gladstone's first native-born Mayor on 24 February 1899. During his term as Mayor of Gladstone, William championed a Sanitary Reserve established for depositing night soil and rubbish to an area west of the Racecourse in October that year. By the end of 1899, William had built the new two-storey fine hotel and boarding house on the corner of Tank and Auckland Streets, taking advantage of the newly constructed railway line from Bundaberg.

William Thomas McCray (1856-1905) by unknown photographer, c1880 Gladstone. Personal collection.

On 3 August 1900, William's appointment to the first Gladstone Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases, representing the Council of the Borough of Gladstone, was announced.

William stood for selection in the Port Curtis region for the Labor Party on Saturday, 1 March 1902, for the 1902 Queensland Elections but eventually lost by eight votes after redistribution of a candidate's votes.

By 1902, his health started to decline; William continued intermittently attending Council meetings and finally retired in February 1903. Diagnosed with throat cancer, William could not speak but communicated by using a chalkboard as he continued to run the hotel.

Baptised as a Roman Catholic two months before his death, William died on 27 July 1905 in Gladstone. He was survived by his wife, two sons, and four daughters. William had insisted on his university-educated sons returning to Gladstone to utilise their professional skills. Due to his father's passing, his eldest son Norman required time off to sit his last Pharmacy exam and returned to Gladstone to open his Pharmacy years later. Their youngest child, Hector, studied in Brisbane to become a Dentist to set up practice in their mother's house. William was buried on 28 July 1905 in the Gladstone Cemetery near the top of the hill overlooking and close to his beloved racecourse, as was his wish.

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 in the style of an Australian Dictionary of Biography entry. In each issue of *Descent*, we feature one such biography.

Croker Prize for Biography 2025
MY RELATIVE'S JOURNEY

PHILIPPA SHELLEY JONES
CONVENOR OF THE CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

The annual Croker Prize for Biography was set up 12 years ago to recognise two of the society's generous benefactors – Colin and Loas Croker. Submissions must be centred around the entrant's relative and tackle the annual theme, this year's being **My Relative's Journey**. All of the biographies for 2025 can be viewed on the Society's website and entries from the previous two years are also available.

This year, 28 entrants vied for the honour and the $1000 prize on offer. Although the majority of the entries were from NSW members, it was pleasing to again see some geographical diversity, with entrants from all other States and Territories except the Northern Territory. Encouraging was that six of the entrants, including the winner, are relatively new members of the society, having joined within the last 18 months.

The entries were, for the most part, well written and thoroughly researched, with an impressive use of an array of sources. Entries that score well tend to have an introduction and conclusion strongly linked to the annual theme; are engagingly written, well-structured, grammatically correct and thoroughly proofread; clearly state the relationship between the one biographical subject and the author; and show evidence of thorough genealogical research, evidenced by properly formatted source citations.

The theme this year was a broad one, allowing scope to explore the various definitions and interpretations of the word 'journey' – and whilst many entrants chose to focus on migration stories across the seas, others covered emotional journeys, tales of geographical relocation or journeys of personal discovery. The competition judges were treated to biographical tales of sentimentality, desperation, doubt, reflection, experimentation and resilience. A number of the entries this year were about people who lived in the 20th century and were obviously known and fondly remembered by the compilers. This came through in their writing.

Whilst we would love to provide highlights of all the entries, room only permits a selection to be showcased. These give some insight into the high standard of the biographies and the depth of individual research:

The Journey that Began in a Remote One-roomed School is the story of the author's paternal grandfather, Brian McQuillen, and engages the reader from the opening paragraph. It tells of Brian returning to a small rural one-roomed school – his first teaching post – to commemorate its 50th anniversary. His achievements are then revealed as we journey through his memories of those early years as an untrained teacher and his conscription to serve in the Pacific in World War II. Details of his marriage and children are interwoven through his recollections, as is his later work writing a textbook on environmental studies. The piece is written in an entertaining way, allowing a reflective style to narrate Brian's story without interrupting the flow with too many specific dates and details.

A Childhood Journey Spanning Four Continents tells the life of Polish-born Regina Smolinksi (née Sadowska) and the difficult journey she undertook after the Russian invasion of Poland in 1939 forced her mother and siblings to travel through Europe, Asia and Africa until their arrival in Western Australia as displaced persons in 1950. The subject's grandchild drew on both primary and secondary sources to trace her journey, drawing on Regina's personal recollections collected during interviews with her.

In **A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea**, the author successfully achieves the balance between writing to the annual theme whilst also presenting a biography through a gripping account of the sinking of a merchant schooner in 1867, captained by the writer's 3 x great-grandfather. The biographical material is then cleverly merged into the account as we read of the life and fortunes of the captain from initial appointment as 'boy' at the age of 14 through to master mariner and his career as a coastal trader lasting 50 years. The journey also includes meeting his wife and the births of their 11 children.

Thanks Jane: 'Twas All Because of You explores the journey of the author's Cornish 2 x great-grandmother, the matriarch of a copper-mining family. Whilst the men worked in occupations such as blacksmithing, the women and girls, known as bal maidens, "were employed in various tasks on the surface, such as breaking up rocks, washing ore, and picking out valuable minerals". Once the mining of copper was no longer viable, the family set off on another journey, initially to a lead seam in Cornwall. However, crop failures, famine and food riots forced them on to yet another journey, this time to Australia, where various members of the extended family worked as publicans, railway workers, farm labourers, graziers and teachers.

In **Earnestly Seeking Salvation,** we learn of the influence of early colonial chaplain Reverend Robert Cartright on young Mary Ann Gordon and her newlywed husband William Carlisle. The writer skilfully describes the repercussions of this influence after William's young bride's death as he attempted to "channel his sorrow into missionary work". While Carlisle's search for salvation was admirable, the author admits that at times it profoundly affected his family.

Chasing Prosperity: A Life on the Move brings to life the many trials of a family seeking a better life in the new world as they followed their fortunes on the goldfields. We learn of all that young Mary Ann Farnsworth would have endured caring for younger siblings as her father moved around. Further upheavals and moves followed after Mary Ann married, and children were born along the way until finally a property in the Parkes district was acquired. The author, whose own childhood has involved travel around Australia, acknowledges Mary Ann's "grit, resilience, resourcefulness and energy".

Francis Philip Toms' physical journey from Devon to New South Wales was overshadowed by his personal journey – from Royal Marine to remittance man to respected family man. Known as Frank, his personal journey of making good is the story behind **Redemption of a Remittance Man**. The author makes good use of family correspondence and diary material to describe young Frank's fall from grace, his reconciliation with family and eventual growth to maturity as a family man and a valued community member.

Although choosing a winning entry from an impressive array of entries was always going to be a challenge, the committee found a standout winner in **Leaving Home – Penelope Jenkins' Canadian Caper**, written by a deserving Helen Dennis from Armidale in New South Wales, who only joined the Society in

June 2024. Helen's entry, which can be found on the following pages, is a well-constructed essay about the life of Penelope Jenkins, born in an era when women were expected to confine themselves to supporting husbands and bearing children. Penelope left her marriage and, after qualifying as a nurse, embarked on an adventurous journey to Canada in 1957 with friends. She remained there for 41 years, providing medical care in remote areas to the Inuit. Penelope returned to Australia in 1988 and lived to almost 101. Helen tells the story of Penelope's remarkable life journey in an engaging and relaxed style, keeping her subject as the focus of the narrative. The reader is left with a wish to know more about the extraordinary life of Penelope Jenkins.

We hope you enjoy reading all the biographies and perhaps pick up some research ideas in the process. The theme for next year's competition will be announced in the March issue of *Descent.* We look forward to another absorbing group of entries which entertain, demonstrate sound genealogical techniques and showcase effective writing.

Thank you to the members of the committee for their hard work and generosity with their time. Marking so many entries is no small feat for the judging panel, which comprises 2023 and 2024 winners Michael Considine and Maxine Elder respectively, Heather Garnsey, and myself as committee convenor. It continues to be a pleasure to be involved and I look forward to seeing what the 2026 competition brings.

Croker Prize for Biography 2025 WINNER

LEAVING HOME – PENELOPE JENKINS' CANADIAN CAPER

HELEN DENNIS

In 1957, when most young Australian women were aspiring to make a good marriage, my 34-year-old aunt Penelope Jenkins shocked her conservative rural community by divorcing her well-to-do husband and sailing away on a little sugar boat to Canada. What had been intended as a brief, post-divorce working holiday was fortuitously extended by a medical emergency that prevented Penelope's return to Australia. Two years later, she found herself delivering babies in an isolated Inuit community that fringed the Arctic Circle.

Penelope Jenkins was born in Sydney on 20 November 1922 to prominent pastoralist Victor Jenkins and his socialite wife Evelyn, nee Rayner.[1] When she was seven years old, her parents separated and, as divorce was relatively uncommon in the 1930s, Penelope was sent to boarding school to shield her from the shame.[2] A short time later, when Evelyn intensified the scandal by marrying her ex-husband's brother, the family fled the gossipmongers of Sydney's affluent eastern suburbs and relocated to their farm near Armidale.[3] There, Penelope was enrolled in the region's premier boarding school with the aim of fostering social connections consistent with the Jenkins family's (perceived) superior social standing.[4]

Penelope left school in 1938 equipped with skills that would enable her to marry well and raise a family. There was no question of her joining the workforce. That is, until World War II upended Australia's societal norms.

During the war, women were encouraged to work to support the war effort.[5] Penelope travelled to Sydney and trained to be a nurse.[6] It was an arduous, but enjoyable, job and one that provided her with financial independence. At war's end, when women were cast back into the role of homemaker, Penelope returned to Armidale and married George White, a descendant of one of New England's most established farming families.[7]

Penelope was happy for a couple of years. George bought her a splendid new horse and Penelope amused herself entering events at local shows.[8] However, she loathed having to ask George for money, and quickly became bored of the endless, purposeless rounds of afternoon teas and cake stalls.[9] While the war had given women permission – albeit briefly – to eschew traditional roles, George explicitly forbade Penelope to work. Resentment bred and in 1953, after just four years of marriage, Penelope made the bold decision to leave. She returned to Sydney to study obstetrics, and it was there she met two young nurses who enticed her on an overseas working holiday.[10]

In the 1950s, Canada actively sought skilled, white immigrants and the girls had no trouble pre-arranging nursing positions with the Canadian Government.[11] On 15 November 1957, they departed Sydney aboard the cargo ship SS *Lakemba.*[12] At a time when women were not permitted to drink in public bars, it was unusual for young girls to sail alone, and Penelope's travel diary conveys a palpable sense of daring and excitement.[13] When the *Lakemba* stopped in Fiji to take on a load of sugar, the girls were feted by a wealth of handsome CSR Company employees. Penelope noted in her diary that she 'felt like Marilyn Monroe!'[14]

Penelope debarked in Canada on Boxing Day 1957.[15] She and her friends worked at several hospitals over the course of the next 18 months, travelling almost the entire width of Canada in a VW Beetle they'd named Tina. A depressing experience at a 'grubby' hospital in Cochrane, and a chance meeting with an inebriated man in a bar, led them to Moose Factory; a destination that was not, as it sounded, a factory that made moose, but a small Cree Indian settlement at the southern tip of James Bay, Ontario.[16] Penelope socialised with the township's handful of European workers and the pilots who dropped supplies to the otherwise inaccessible outpost.

In mid-1960, Penelope contracted spinal tuberculosis and was forced to exchange her role of nurse for that of patient.[17] She was strapped onto a Stryker frame – a contraption that resembled a body-sized splint – to immobilise her crumbling spine. For nearly two years, Penelope was unable to leave the frame even to go to the bathroom. She occupied herself by drawing, reading and listening to the pilots on a special radio that one of them had smuggled into her room.[18]

Patient in Stryker frame – photo courtesy Western Michigan University.[19]

Penelope underwent hip-to-spine bone graft surgery at Toronto General Hospital in 1962.[20] It took her several months to learn to walk again. Remarkably, rather than dampen her sense of adventure, this harrowing experience galvanised Penelope to accept a position in Puvirnituq, Quebec – a settlement 600 miles north of Moose Factory, on the doorstep of the Arctic Circle.[21]

For four years, Penelope and one other nurse provided the only medical care to the 430 Inuit living in tents and snow houses at Puvirnituq.[22] Penelope was provided with accommodation in the nurses' station, a native housekeeper and a translator. Access to the outpost was by boat or seaplane in summer, but in winter – when Hudson's Bay froze over – supplies were flown in by planes that landed on the ice. Penelope delivered babies, screened for infectious diseases and performed general medical duties. Severely ill patients were evacuated by air to Moose Factory.

Penelope remained in Canada for a total of 41 years, ultimately rising through the ranks of hospital administration to reach the position of Regional Nursing Officer.[23] Her courageous decision to leave George, and her hometown, in 1953 resulted in a decades-long personal odyssey that transported her physically to the other side of the world, and also led her along an illuminating path of self-reflection and growth.

In 1998, Penelope returned to Australia with an address book overflowing with telephone numbers and a photograph album bursting with intrigue.[24] She didn't ever re-marry. In her 90s, her favourite pastime was reminiscing over old photographs. Her album contained several photos of handsome young men, but when quizzed about them, Penelope simply smiled and responded cryptically, 'Oh, that's just someone I knew once', before tenderly turning the page.

Penelope died at Armidale in September 2023, two months shy of her 101st birthday.[25]

Helen Dennis had no enthusiasm for history until a 2017 overseas trip sparked an interest in old things. She began listening properly to her elderly aunt's reminiscences, and was surprised to learn that her own ancestry was bursting with fascinating, often salacious, tales. She has completed the UTAS Diploma of Family History, and is currently working on a biographical novel based on her aunt.

1 Birth certificate of Penelope Jenkins, born 20 November 1922, NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, 42357/1922.

2 Decree Absolute of Victor George Herbert Jenkins and Evelyn Mary Jenkins, Divorce papers, NSW State Archives, NRS-13495-14-42-849/1931: 14, https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/permalink/f/1ebnd1l/ADLIB_RNSW111771736; 'Divorces in Australia', Australian Institute of Family Studies website, https://aifs.gov.au/research/facts-and-figures/divorces-australia; Laura Carmichael, Archivist, Kambala to the author [email], 19 October 2021, original held by the author; Penelope White, conversations with the author [unrecorded], 2020-2023.

3 Marriage certificate of Richard Charles Cludde Jenkins and Evelyn Mary Jenkins, married 7 July 1932, NSW Registry of Births, Death & Marriages, 10890/1932.

4 Heather Fisher, Archivist, New England Girls' School, to the author [email], 11 November 2021, original held by the author.

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8 Penelope White, oral history interview with the author [digital recording], Armidale, New South Wales, 24 March 2022, original held by the author; 'Additional Awards: Horse Section', Armidale Express, 8 March 1950, 2.

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12 Passenger list entry for Penelope V White, SS Lakemba, arrived Honolulu 16 December 1957, in Honolulu, Hawaii, US, Arriving and Departing Passenger and Crew Lists, Ancestry.com; Penelope White, diary entry for 15 November 1957, Travel Diary (1957-1960), original held by the author.

13 'From the Archives, 1925: A woman drinking in an open bar? Outrageous!', 17 July 2020, The Age website, https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/from-the-archives-1925-a-woman-drinking-in-an-open-bar-outrageous-20200702-p558aj.html; White, Travel Diary (1957-1960).

14 White, diary entry for 21 November 1957.

15 White, diary entry for 26 December 1957.

16 Shaelagh Cull, 'Tracing the History of Northern Ontario at the British Library', 21 July 2020, British Library website, https://blogs.bl.uk/americas/2020/07/tracing-the-history-of-northern-ontario-at-the-british-library.html; White, oral history interview with the author, 1 March 2022; White, diary entry for 24 January 1960.

17 Heather J Duncan Clayton, My Life: Nursing from the Southern Cross to the North Star, ed Joan E Kieser and J Karen Scott, Kokum Publications, Ontario, 2016, 188.

18 Clayton, 148-151.

19 Photo of nurse with patient operating a Stryker turning frame, Ward Morgan Collection, Identifier 3293-K-8.tif, 1940-1949, published courtesy of the Zhang Legacy Collections Center, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States.

20 Clayton, My Life, 123.

21 Public Service Commission of Canada, Employee Summary for Penelope White, 26 January 1984, original held by the author.

22 Penelope White, oral history interview with the author [digital recording], Armidale, New South Wales, 12 June 2021, original held by the author; Clayton, My Life, 107-108.

23 Canadian Government, Health & Welfare Canada, Performance Review of Penelope White, 31 March 1986, original held by the author.

24 Benita Pakish, AMA Travel, Edmonton, Canada to Penelope White [facsimile enclosing copy of airline ticket dated 19/20 November 1998], 13 August 1999, original held by the author.

25 Death Certificate of Penelope Vaughan White, died 20 September 2023, NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 899528/2023.

HIDDEN HISTORIES
The Indian Diaspora Australia Collecting Project

by Rachel Croucher

Indians in Australia, photographs collected by the National Library of Australia, courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

The National Library of Australia (NLA) initiated the Indian Diaspora in Australia Collecting Project (IDCP) in 2024 to preserve materials that highlight the history and experiences of Australians with Indian heritage.[1] The collection documents the richness of Australia's Indian diaspora through various formats beneficial to genealogists and family historians, including oral history interviews, books, newsletters, newspapers, photographs, personal documents, published works, and personal archives

Genealogical researchers exploring Indian and South Asian ancestry struggle with traditional sources for a complex range of reasons. The British mainly kept records of European personnel during their three and a half centuries occupying the subcontinent, and the official registration of births and deaths did not start in India until the 1850s, and even then, only in urban areas. Further, thanks to the exclusion of non-Europeans from voting, the descendants of Australia's early Indians are unlikely to find their ancestors on the electoral roll. These obstacles limit access to quality resources for traditional genealogical researchers to break down brick walls, and the materials generated by the NLA project are already helping researchers fill that gap.

This article explores the project's objectives and scope by presenting four genealogical case studies to illustrate the project's potential to assist Australians of Indian descent to explore their ancestry, trace their lineage, and preserve cultural narratives.

Important to researchers across Australia and worldwide, the NLA will be digitising these materials and making them accessible online to ensure that the knowledge and records generated by the project are made accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Objects as Memory

Yask Desai is a Melbourne-based visual artist who was born in India to an anthropologist father and moved to Australia in his childhood. He works primarily with photography, video, archives, and text, and embraces the IDCP's potential to preserve objects.

Desai's long-term project, *Telia*, documents the history of hawkers in Australia through photographing their descendants. (Telia was the name given to Australia by some of the family members who remained in India.) "*Telia* is a lifelong passion for me," he says. "I can't ever see myself stopping." Inspired by a talk delivered at the Australia India Institute, the Telia series combines archival material

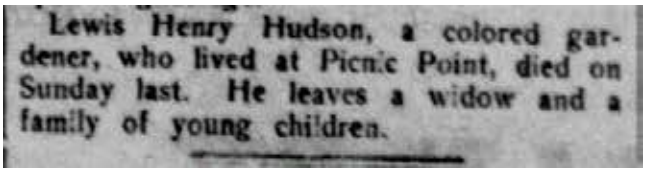
Indian hawker with his cart (van) and customers, likely in the Upper Murray region. Image by Gabriel Knight. 1902. Source: State Library of Victoria.

From left to right:

Susan (Sue) FARQUHAR: Portrait provided by Sue.

Donna Johnson and daughter Billie-Jo. Portrait provided by Donna.

'Obituary: Lewis Henry Hudson', Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle *17 Mar 1914, 2. Source: National Library of Australia.*



Lewis Henry Hudson, a colored gardener, who lived at Picnic Point, died on Sunday last. He leaves a widow and a family of young children.

and documentation with Desai's own photographs to 'reanimate and re-examine' the experiences of the men who migrated from undivided India and worked as hawkers (travelling salesmen) within rural Australia during the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries.

Desai has ventured to various locations across Australia to photograph descendants of hawkers in their homes and everyday surroundings. He excitedly discusses the unanticipated wealth of artefacts in family history associations and personal homes across the country he has encountered. "There are letters and objects and all sorts of things in quite obscure little museums and family history associations across the country," he explains, "and that's only just hawkers." The broader scope of the IDCP, with the NLA as its repository, will significantly expand the knowledge base of both researchers and the Australian public on the history of Indians and South Asians. "It will be great to see items of historical and social importance to the Indian community on a centralised database," Desai notes, "there are excellent research opportunities there."

So … How *Did* Your Ancestor Get Here?

Many descendants of Indians and South Asians face challenges tracing the migration paths of their ancestors in colonial and early post-federation Australia. Director of Collections at the National Library of Australia, Nicki Mackay-Sims, says that given the restrictive nature of the immigration laws against non-Europeans, the question most descendants of early Indians and South Asians wanted to explore through the IDCP was how their ancestors managed to get here.

Sue Farquhar is the great-great-granddaughter of "colored gardener" [sic] Lewis Henry Hudson. There was confusion among some of Hudson's descendants for generations as to whether Lewis Henry was Indian, South African, or even Spanish, with commercial genetic genealogical testing of his descendants eventually confirming southern Indian or Sri Lankan DNA. Farquhar says an informal collective of Hudson descendants has evolved to compare DNA results to further pinpoint their ancestor's elusive origin story.

According to a report commissioned by fellow Hudson descendant Donna Johnson, records indicate that Hudson was born in Cape Town, South Africa, between 1869 and 1871 and arrived in South Australia in 1894. Civil registration was limited in South Africa, making it difficult to confirm Lewis Henry's origins with certainty. However, genetic analysis suggests Hudson had parents from either southern India or Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). Furthermore, two men named Henry/Harry Hudson from South Africa arrived in Australia around the same time, complicating record attribution. The report also states Hudson worked as a showman and actor before becoming a gardener. Two passenger lists from 1886 and 1890 may relate to Lewis, but the report notes further evidence is needed to confirm.

So … how *did* Lewis Henry actually get here?

The transient nature of Hudson's life in Australia makes tracing his origins or family in South Africa, India, or Sri Lanka quite difficult, and this is where the IDCP hopes their collection will fill knowledge gaps for individuals like Farquhar and Johnson. However, it is known that Hudson married Maria Christina Tucker in Adelaide on 29 March 1894. Their first child, Charles, was born on 20 August 1894 in Menindie, NSW. The family moved frequently between NSW and Victoria, with Lewis Henry registering as a voter in 1903. Lewis's death certificate in 1914 stated he was born in 1869 in Cape Town, South Africa, to a father named Henry Hudson. Lewis Henry Hudson died at the age of 44–45 in 1914 in Bairnsdale, East Gippsland, Victoria. He left behind his wife Maria Christina and ten children.

Much to the disappointment of Farquhar, Johnson, and other Hudson descendants—and a familiar refrain to Indian and South Asian genealogical and family history researchers—the report also states: "Researching Lewis Henry Hudson's ancestry is challenging due to limited records in 19th century South Africa and Australia." The report then concludes, "Further investigation into Hudson's origins and family connections is currently not feasible." Farquhar and Johnson share the desire felt by many of finally understanding how their shared ancestor Lewis Henry managed to find his way to Australia. The collection built by the IDCP, containing recorded interviews, books, newsletters, newspapers, photographs, and personal archives, fills this gap by creating unique and comprehensive new record sets for Australians of Indian and South Asian descent to compare their current research against to answer that ever-elusive question: so, how did your ancestor get here?

Recording Resilience: Oral History Across Generations

A highlight of the IDCP is its oral histories. The NLA deployed skilled oral historians across the country to record stories from Australians with Indian ancestry—including members of my own family—to preserve contemporary experiences and make them accessible for researchers and the public.

The oral history catalogue within the IDCP now contains 40 interviews with Australians with Indian ancestry ranging in age from their early 20s to their late 80s. Since commencing interviews in 2023, the NLA team has captured a diverse range of perspectives across multiple generations, showcasing the lived experiences, challenges, and achievements within the diaspora from the oppressive days of the White Australia policy era in the early to mid-20th century to the flourishing of multiculturalism from the 1970s onwards.

An album of paintings of Indian native costume on mica, courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

From left to right:

Inder Singh and Nuttah Singh (circa 1902). Croucher family collection.

Florence Singh and husband Dan Croucher. Croucher family collection.

Notwithstanding the extensive professional possibilities the IDCP Oral History Catalogue offers researchers, I admit my initial interest was purely selfish. "Ha!" I thought. "Maybe this will finally get my father to open up a bit. Who knows?" Raised knowing I had Indian heritage and thinking it was cool, I was still filled with questions about who these Indians were and why no one in my family seemed to know anything about them. How did I know the lyrics to all the rebel songs and poetry of my maternal Irish heritage, yet my knowledge of my paternal Indian heritage was almost non-existent despite my Nan's turbaned Sikh stepfather Inder Singh being within my father's living memory? Why did my Australian-born Irish grandfather proudly play the fiddle and dance the jig at various Irish National Nights across inner-city Melbourne, but my Australian-born Indian grandmother powdered her face white with make-up and wore long sleeves in summer while pretending her surname was Mason and not Singh as stated on her birth certificate? My father and many older family members couldn't seem to answer my questions about our Indian heritage because they did not know or did not remember, or perhaps did not want to remember, my family's experience of being brown in white Australia.

I have written widely about my family's experience in historical and genealogical publications, but the IDCP offered me a chance of getting closer to the more visceral aspects of my family's experience. Despite being enthralled by the intrigue of my South Asian heritage growing up, I had no idea about the truth of my family's experience, or how it fitted within the broader social and historical context of Australia's colonial history, until I discovered genealogy. Then a new set of questions arrived: "Why can't I find my Indian ancestors on the electoral roll? Why can't I find their immigration papers? Why was my Punjabi great-grandfather's service to the British Indian Army not in the UK archives? Why did the clerk who registered my great-grandparents' 1909 marriage pencil the words 'Indian + White' into the margins of the certificate? What on earth is a certificate of exemption … From the dictation test? What even is a dictation test? There are archives and repositories for these questions, but I figured a trained oral history interviewer would have more success than me in coaxing out the 'truth' of my family's experience from my father and successfully convinced him and one of his Singh cousins to take part. When the application form asked why he wanted to participate, my father responded: "Because my daughter is a genealogist and told me to." I've been reliably informed by many Punjabi friends that directness is a trait my family has inherited in spades.

Do I know some of the content in the interviews? Yes. Have I listened to either of them yet even though they were recorded six months ago? No. I didn't realise I wasn't ready. Thanks to the IDCP, however, those recordings are ready and waiting for me and many more generations to come.

Connecting Community Through Collections

Jennifer Robson arrived in Australia from India 50 years ago as a teenager to escape the political turmoil in Bangladesh and pursue adventure by starting a new life. In contrast to previous waves of Indians who faced racial barriers to migration, the greatest frustration Robson faced in her migration journey was being made to wait until she was 18 to take up a work position she had already secured in Australia through a merits-based test and the support of her senior colleagues. Times had thankfully changed by 1975.

Jennifer Robson: Portrait provided by Jennifer.

Robson is Punjabi with English, Scottish, and Germanic European heritage confirmed through an Ancestry DNA test. The results of the same test further identified distinct elements of Robson's Indian heritage from across India and revealed connections to Bengal, Gujarat, the Deccan Plateau, the Gulf of Mannar, southern India, and the Gulf of Khambhat. However, while passionate about exploring her

Ephemera material containing documents of everyday life, collected by the National Library of Australia, courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

ancestry further, Robson does not subscribe to any commercial genealogy databases because they lack archival sources from India or elsewhere across South Asia. This lack of access to resources is a frustration shared by many genealogical researchers focused on the diverse regions traversing the borders of India and other South Asian countries.

In her research thus far, Robson has benefited the most from research assistance from the genealogical repositories of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. "I've confirmed great-grandfather James Francis Robson was born in Whitechapel, UK," says Robson. "However, I have not been able to locate any records as to how he happened to be in India or where his wife Alice Thompson's father, Samuel Thompson, was born." FamilySearch records indicate Robson's second great-grandmother was Indian, but she has hit a brick wall in trying to confirm this. Robson intends to explore her heritage further through the Families in British India Society and attending meetings of the Indian and South Asian Special Interest Group launched on 23 August 2025 at the Society of Australian Genealogists. The added value of the IDCP, being uniquely Australian compared to other repositories, is that it offers Robson an opportunity to explore the stories of other Australians with similar heritage and migration trajectories, and to cross-reference these with her own family's journey.

Conclusion

The Indian Diaspora in Australia Collecting Project gives genealogical researchers and Australians with Indian and South Asian heritage new ways to uncover stories long hidden in official records and sometimes beyond them. Its various formats and breadth of information bring new meaning to unknown experiences and will fill significant research gaps for generations to come.

Rachel M. Croucher is a highly credentialled genealogist and record agent with 20 years of experience in the practice of history. As a genealogist, she specialises in managing research projects to compile family histories and genealogies for clients. In contrast, as a record agent, she has extensive experience researching specific records and the holdings of specific archives.

Rachel has been vice president of the Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents (AAGRA) since 2020. She is also co-convenor of the Indian and South Asian Special Interest Group at the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG), a volunteer marker for the SAG Certificate in Genealogical Research, a judge of the Nick Vine Hall Award hosted by the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations, and a passionate mentor for beginner genealogists in the Writing Your Family Story course taught at the Genealogical Society of Victoria (GSV). Rachel also consulted on the SBS documentary series *The Secret DNA of Us*.

1 National Library of Australia, "Indian Diaspora in Australia Collecting Project," last modified March 4, 2024, https://www.library.gov.au/news-media/indian-diaspora-australia-collecting-project.

2 Sandeep Sachdeva et al., 'Early birth registration at a centre in rural India' (2013) 2(3) Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care 234; 'Catalogue Description: Indian Army Records of Service', The National Archives United Kingdom (Online) <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/8104f4f4-178f-4c70-bdc4-ac5e570e256d>; Anita Anand on 'Muhammad Ali Jinnah,' Empire Podcast, (October 2022, 43:02-43:21) <https://open.spotify.com/episode/4oT2ew1YbE8IemZeI8mEr1?si=2a8f7f1d99884449>.

3 Franchise Act 1902 (Cth) s 4 expressly states: "No aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa, or the Islands of the Pacific except New Zealand shall be entitled to have his name placed on an Electoral Roll unless so entitled under section forty-one of the Constitution."

4 Yask Desai, Telia, Blak Dot Gallery, June 17, 2021, https://blakdot.com.au/current-exhibitions/2021/6/17/telia-by-yask-desai.

5 Yask Desai, "Australia's Indian Hawkers, Their Descendants, and a Racist Legacy Still Permeating an Anglo-Centric Cultural Identity," Photography Studies College Blog, December 17, 2019, https://blog.psc.edu.au/blog/australias-indian-hawkers-and-tracing-the-legacy-of-modern-day-racism-in-its-most-insidious-form.

6 Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth)

7 'Obituary', *Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle* (Bairnsdale, 17 March 1914) 2.

8 Ancestry ProGenealogists. Research Report on Lewis Henry HUDSON commissioned for Donna JOHNSON. Salt Lake City: Ancestry ProGenealogists, 2025.

9 ibid.

10 "Catalogue of Interviewees," National Library of Australia, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog?per_page=100&q=%22%28AuCNL%2910017280%22&search_field=in_collection.

11 "Indian Diaspora in Australia Oral History Collection," National Library of Australia, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10017280; Laila Hafez, "Changes and Continuities: Australian Citizenship from the White Australia Policy to Multiculturalism and Beyond" (MA Research Thesis, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication, University of Wollongong, 2011), http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3407.

12 Birth Certificate of Florence Melba Singh, Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Event Registration Number: 23100/1911; 'Irish National Concert at the North Melbourne Town Hall', Advocate (Melbourne, 23 March 1918) 11; 'All-Irish Night', Advocate (Melbourne, 27 July 1918, 24.

13 Marriage Certificate of Nutha Singh and Emily Edith Bellingham, Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Event Registration Number: 1909/B/8008; The Real Face of White Australia: Living Under the White Australia Policy https://www.realfaceofwhiteaustralia.net/; Chinese Australian Family Historians of Victoria, Victorian CEDT [Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test] Index, https://www.cafhov.com/resources/vic-cedt-index/.

14 'I Wasn't Prepared for the Emotional Impact of Tracing My Ancestry,' SBS Life (online, 20 April 2018) https://www.sbs.com.au/voices/article/i-wasnt-prepared-for-the-emotional-impact-of-tracing-my-ancestry/w8p5e5534; 'Displaced: Exploring Family History in Post-Conflict Communities,' Association of Professional Genealogists Quarterly (Poulsbo, WA, March 2024); 'Echoes from a Faded Empire: A Punjabi-Australian Journey,' Descent (Sydney, Spring 2022).

15 "Families in British India Society," accessed August 16, 2025, https://www.fibis.org/; "National Family History Month 2025: Launch of The Indian and South Asian Special Interest Group at the Society of Australian Genealogists," Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents, online, August 12, 2025, https://www.aagra.asn.au/national-family-history-month-2025-launch-of-the-indian-and-south-asian-special-interest-group-at-the-society-of-australian-genealogists/.

Our next theme is:
Family History Education and the Professional Genealogist

Submissions are due 20 October 2025 for the December issue of *Descent*, with an online conference: ***Becoming a Professional Genealogist*** scheduled for Saturday 25 October 2025.

Photo: Roman Kraft, Unsplash

In Search Of …

Fur, Feathers and Family: INTRODUCTION

by Danielle Tebb

Photo: Feeding pet lamb, Trundle NSW, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW. Record identifier 1xqWVr6Y

While there are those who profess a dislike of animals, even the most hardened would find it hard to deny that we simply cannot exist without them, although equally, many animals would be much better off without us.

Human survival has revolved around hunting, herding and farming animals, often with the use of dogs and horses; our clothing initially consisted of animal skins before the silk and wool industries provided us with more luxurious garments, supplemented by the leather and felt industries. Until relatively recently, our transport was largely dependent on horses, mules and other beasts of burden and our economy was supplemented by the barter or sale of surplus livestock and produce. Australia, after all, was built on the sheep's back.

Far beyond mere survival, animals have enhanced our lives in so many ways – they have provided a figural role in heraldry, have supported our military and offered a unifying focus as group mascots in both military and sporting roles. We look to animals for entertainment and gambling, inspiration for art and literature, not to mention companionship and comfort, yet they ask for only room and board in return.

The unconditional love of a pet can get us out of bed when we don't feel like it, offer emotional support, reduce stress and anxiety, regulate a child's emotional response, enhance their social skills and focus their attention, not to mention increase our physical activity when the dog needs to go for a walk.

Family stories, both written and photographic, are full of the animals who shared our ancestors' lives, and although animals haven't featured with great frequency in the pages of *Descent*, or its predecessor, *The Australian Genealogist,* to date, one snippet stands out:

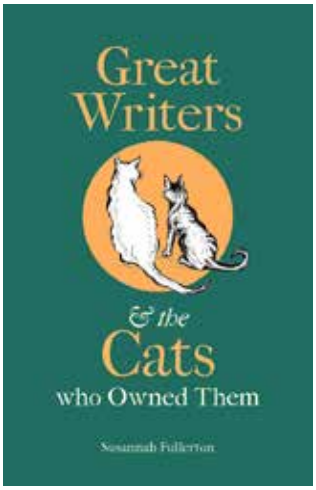
Cats!

Writes a contemporary: In the monster Family Bible left behind by an elderly Sydney woman, her descendants found not only all the family events entered on a flyleaf, but on a separate page the full generations of the household cats. Entries ran: "Tibby had kitten 9 May, 1878. Kept one, 'Nellie' … Nellie had kittens 5 October, 1880 … Nellie had kittens 2 Feb., 1883. Kept one, 'Marie.'" In the nearly 60 years the cats have run through 23 generations!"[1]

I was brought up on stories of my paternal grandfather bringing home a magpie chick in his great coat pocket – 'Jacko' survived many years, regularly flying through the kitchen window to let my grandmother know the boys had finished milking the cows and were heading up for breakfast. My late father, the youngest in his family, often recalled the carpet python which would curl up at his feet when the sun shone in the barn as he played with his toy blocks and delighted in the fact that 'Silver' the pony would only allow him and his next eldest brother on his back, where they would perch bareback. My maternal grandfather came from a well-known family of horse racing identities and was considered the 'black sheep' because he wasn't interested in racing of any kind.

Our enduring love of animals, particularly our pets, is continually evident in the exhibitions and books in production. The National Gallery of Victoria's recent *Cats & Dogs in Art and Design* exhibition showcased over 200 images, exploring our deep connection to animals. Nancy Cushing, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Newcastle was chosen as the State Library of NSW 2024-2025 Coral Thomas Fellow, with a project to discover the animals of Sydney in the State Library's collections, culminating with the publication: *Beauty and the Beasts: A History of Animals in Sydney,* scheduled for 2027, while she also completes *A New History of Australia in 15 Animals* for Bloomsbury Academic.

Still on the feline trail, Dr Jodie Stewart, the cat historian, researches and lectures on the history of cat companionship in Australia, with a book on the subject slated for publication in 2026. One of her themes relates to feline seafarers and the role domestic cats have played in the history of Australian shipping. Even as he circumnavigated what was to become Australia, Matthew Flinders was accompanied by his feline companion, Trim. Shipwrecked on the voyage back to England and imprisoned on the island of Mauritius, Flinders was heartbroken when Trim went missing, and was inspired to pen a moving tribute to Trim's superior feline qualities. A bronze statue of Trim[2] was unveiled in 1996, standing on a windowsill of the Mitchell Library in Macquarie Street, Sydney, positioned just behind the statue of Matthew Flinders.



Cover, Great Writers and the Cats who Owned Them *by Susannah Fullerton*

To round off the litter, Susannah Fullerton, President of the Jane Austen Society of Australia, recently had her latest manuscript, *Great Writers & the Cats Who Owned Them* published by the Bodleian Library. Detailing the relationships of 17 great authors and their cats, together with anecdotes about literary cats, this book is testament to the enduring love and interest we have for our feline friends. Copies of the book are available directly from Susannah Fullerton: **www.susannahfullerton.com.au/portfolio-item/great-writers-and-the-cats-who-owned-them/**

Even DNA, while a relatively recent research tool in our family history arsenal, has been employed in animal breeding for hundreds of years through genetics and selective breeding. Our ancestors didn't need to analyse DNA as their careful record keeping and awareness of genetic inheritance allowed them to improve bloodlines and target desirable qualities. Vanessa Cassin, SAG colleague and Education Manager, shares the following anecdote:

In 2021, like many other families during the COVID pandemic, my family decided to get a new dog. It had been about four

years since we had lost our last furry companion, an excitable Cocker Spaniel called Peggy who behaved like a toddler even at the ripe old age of 12.

Not wanting to train another puppy, we decided an older rescue dog would be more suitable and, following a couple of serendipitous events, settled on a greyhound as a good fit for our family composition and lifestyle.

A couple of months later an older gentleman named Flash (racing name Flash Cow) entered our lives. He was the size of a skinny Shetland pony and looked like a miniature cow with his black and white colouring. Flash immediately stole our hearts with his quiet, affectionate manner and the funny way he managed to tangle his very long legs when sitting down.

Having heard about my family history research his whole life, Nicholas, my then 10-year-old son was fascinated by the pedigree chart that came with Flash's adoption paperwork. As a registered racing Greyhound there was a lot of information available online about Flash and we spent quite a bit of time locating his canine siblings and ancestors, checking their racing histories and other details.

Fast forward to 2024 and we were all so smitten with our big cuddly boy that we decided he needed a companion. Nicholas, daughter Siobhan, and I took Flash along to a GAP (Greyhounds as Pets) adoption day, and while there were many gorgeous dogs present, none captured our attention as Flash had. When Nicholas and I were getting ready to leave, we realised Siobhan had wandered off.

It seems my daughter had spied a dog that she felt an affinity with, an older dog with a few battle scars and wonky eyes. Overwhelmed by the noise and crowd, staff had taken her off for some quiet time behind the scenes and Siobhan, always drawn to those who look like they need a friend, was on the ground calmly stroking her and asking all sorts of questions of the handlers. It became apparent we were not going home without Gizmo (racing name Zipping Gizmo).

What had everyone amazed was how alike Flash and Gizmo

Gizmo (back) and Flash

were – they were a perfectly matched pair and Nicholas was convinced they must be cousins. Everyone laughed and said lots of dogs look alike, but he was insistent. On arriving home, he hit the keyboard and shortly after triumphantly announced that he had found both dogs pedigrees online and he was correct. Flash and Gizmo had several common ancestors including their great grandfather Bombastic Shiraz, a set of 3 x great-grandparents in the pairing of Walkabout Sid and Fitzroy Lass and finally another 3 x great-grandfather called Malawi's Prince.

Perhaps this is the secret to getting the younger generation interested in family history – start with their pets.

1 *The Australian Genealogist* Vol III, Part 5, January 1940, 95.

2 Monuments Australia (www.monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/culture/animals) records the impressive number of animal statues throughout the country, depicting a clear partiality for horses and dogs, such as the famous Dog on the Tuckerbox at Gundagai.

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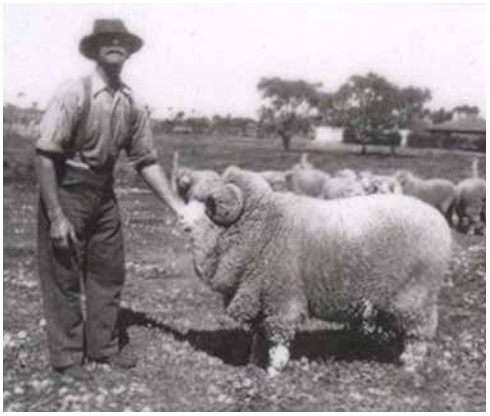
2/379 Kent Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

HOW THE MERINO SHEEP SHAPED FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE CRIPPS FAMILY

by Jenny MacKay



Tom Cripps with a prize winning merino, 1940

In the wheat and wool country around Northampton, Western Australia, Merino sheep did a lot more than just provide wool, they shaped the Cripps family's future. For four generations, these incredible animals helped turn the Cripps from struggling pioneers to respected community members, proving that livestock can create not just a living, but a lasting legacy.

Charles Thomas Cripps (1854–1923)

Charles' story started off with a wild adventure. At just 16, after getting horse-whipped by his stepdad for riding horses too recklessly through Epping Forest, Charles decided to bolt. He made his way to a southern seaport, as far from London as possible. That's when fate stepped in - he fell into the water, and was rescued by a sailor who offered him a job on board the *Palestine*, which was heading to Australia.[1]

After arriving in Western Australia, Charles reportedly jumped ship at a northern port and started cattle droving, before heading to Shark Bay to cart sandalwood. While visiting Northampton, he met Margaret Haigh, nee Williams, a widow with two young children. They married in 1882.[2] Charles kept carting to the Murchison goldfields, while Margaret ran the Miners Arms Hotel in Northampton.

In 1894, Charles traded a team of horses for 50 acres of land northwest of Northampton. That land later became known as Mumby Farm. Initially, he focused on grain, but Charles had a knack for growing fine citrus fruit and often won prizes at local agricultural shows.[3] It was his son Tom who recognised the potential in sheep.

The first Merinos came from Mr. T. A. Drage at Mt. View Station, which is further north near the Murchison. By 1924, the Cripps Bros were already making a name for themselves, winning the Dawson Cup for the best wool fleece at the Northampton Agricultural Show. The local paper said their fleece won "through superior bulk" after a close contest.[4]

Merino Sheep at Mumby, 1949

In 1927, everything changed when 200 two-tooth stud ewes arrived from Anama, South Australia. These ewes became the foundation of *Mumby Stud* No. 722, and they were paired with imported North Bungaree rams.[5] From that point on, sheep weren't just part of the farm, they were its heartbeat.

Thomas Charles "Tom" Cripps (1882–1958)

Tom wasn't just a sheep farmer, he was a true sheep man. He had an eye for spotting quality and was serious about breeding sheep that could handle the tough conditions of Western Australia. One of his rams sold for 50 guineas, and Tom even shelled out 135 guineas for a ram from M.S. Hawker and Co., Ltd., which was no small amount.[6]

Tom played a big role in the farming community. He helped run the Northern Stud Sheep Breeders' Association and was the President of the Farmers' Federation at Ogilvie. The sheep didn't just provide him with a living, they gave him a sense of purpose and a home.

But the success didn't end with him. Tom's younger brother Jack started *Woodville Merino Stud* in 1930, starting with 100 ewes from Mumby. By 1949, Woodville had grown to 400 sheep and 160 lambs spread across 600 acres.[7]

Sheep and shearing were a big deal on the farm. The wool was packed into bales, ready for sale, and marked with stencils showing its origin. These stencils, made from sturdy materials like metal or wood, were brushed with ink. They weren't just useful, they were part of the farm's identity.

My dad, Charlie Cripps, Tom's oldest son, has great memories of these traditions. The wool presses, the routine of shearing, and the pride that came with a good fleece all shaped his life.

Charles Thomas "Charlie" Cripps (1924–2000)

Born into Mumby's third generation, Charlie was the fifth child and the first son of Tom Cripps and Annie Lymburner. He went to the Mumby Assisted School, one of those small bush schools set up to help farming families who lived too far from regular schools. To qualify, a parent had to guarantee six children (usually their own plus a few neighbours') a suitable classroom and provide free board for the teacher. The Education Department would then send someone, usually with at least a Leaving Certificate, and pay them about six pounds a month. Dad remembered the deportment lessons they had on the lawn of the homestead.

Deportment classes with Miss Purcell, 1936

Dad tried to enlist twice during World War II but got turned down. His work producing food and wool was seen as essential for the war effort. Interestingly, his grandfather Charles managed to enlist in the First World War at 61 by claiming he was 49.

Charlie carried on breeding top-quality Merinos but also gave back to the community. He helped start the Northampton Lions Club and earned Life Membership at the Angling Club. In January 2000, Dad received the Order of Australia Medal. When he passed away later that year, the Angling Club remembered him with a memorial that said, "A Man for All Seasons and A Great Fisherman."

Like most farming families, the Cripps went through their fair share of good and tough times. Dad never forgot the 1976 drought when they had to put down their whole flock. Then there were Cyclones Alby in 1978 and Hazel in 1979, which wrecked sheds, fences, and even the original homestead. More recently, Cyclone Seroja in 2021 caused a lot of damage to community.

But the sheep always bounced back. And so did the Cripps.

The End of an Era

In 1990, Charlie baled the last wool at Mumby, marking the end of nearly 100 years of breeding Merino. The farm had grown from 50 acres to 8,000 acres (3,200 hectares), raising sheep, wheat, lupins, and barley. Through two world wars, the Depression, cyclones, and droughts, the Merino sheep were always there for the family.

Even though Mumby is no longer in the Cripps family hands, the legacy lives on. Charlie's grandson has kept the original stencils, along with the prize winning ribbons and trophy.

The sheep of Mumby didn't just produce Australia's best wool, they also wove a family story that spans four generations, from a teenage stowaway to a respected farmer and community leader.

Top: Charlie with Merino sheep on Mumby, 1949

Bottom: Charlie with last bale of wool on Mumby, 1990

The Cripps family's journey is a snapshot of rural Australia, filled with grit, adaptation, and a strong love for the land. The sheep brought them more than just a way to make a living, they gave them roots.

This legacy is preserved in the family history booklet *Beyond the Horizon: Centenary of Mumby Farm 1894–1994*, written by Charles' great-granddaughter, Jenny MacKay.[8]

Jenny MacKay is a Western Australian genealogist with over 40 years of experience researching family histories across multiple continents. Former President of Geraldton Family History Society, she has self-published three family history books including *Beyond the Horizon: Centenary of Mumby Farm 1894-1994* (1994), *In Search of Orphan Annie* (2022) and *From Highland Roots to a Land of Opportunity* (2023).

Through her online archive, Jenny brings genealogical data to life through compelling narratives, using letters, historical records, and family interviews to share ancestral stories. She completed formal study in convict records through the University of Tasmania and continues to publish family history stories that connect past generations to the present.

Jenny organised the 1994 Cripps family reunion at Mumby farm, celebrating the centenary of the family's Merino stud operation.

She shares ancestral stories through her online archive, *Jenny's Scrapbook of Family History Stories*.

1 Turner, Bert (dec). Personal recollection, nephew of Charles T. Cripps.

2 State Library of Western Australia. Gwalla Chapel Church Registers. Microfilm No. 524A/2. Marriage certificate, 25 January 1882.

3 "Local News", *Geraldton Guardian* (Western Australia: 1906–1928), 13 June 1908, 2.

4 "Northampton Show", *Geraldton Guardian* (Western Australia: 1906–1928), 18 September 1924, 2.

5 "Northampton District Stud Sheep", *Geraldton Guardian* (Western Australia: 1950–1954), 7 December 1954, 3.

6 "Midland Junction Ram Sales", *Great Southern Herald* (Katanning, WA: 1901–1954), 15 October 1941, 2.

7 "Woodville Stud", *Western Mail* (Perth, WA: 1885–1954), 11 August 1949, 14.

8 MacKay, Jenny. *Beyond the Horizon: Centenary of Mumby Farm 1894–1994* (Self-published).

Photographs from the personal collection of the author, Jenny MacKay

In Search Of ... Fur, Feathers and Family

FROM SUFFOLK TO THE CITY:

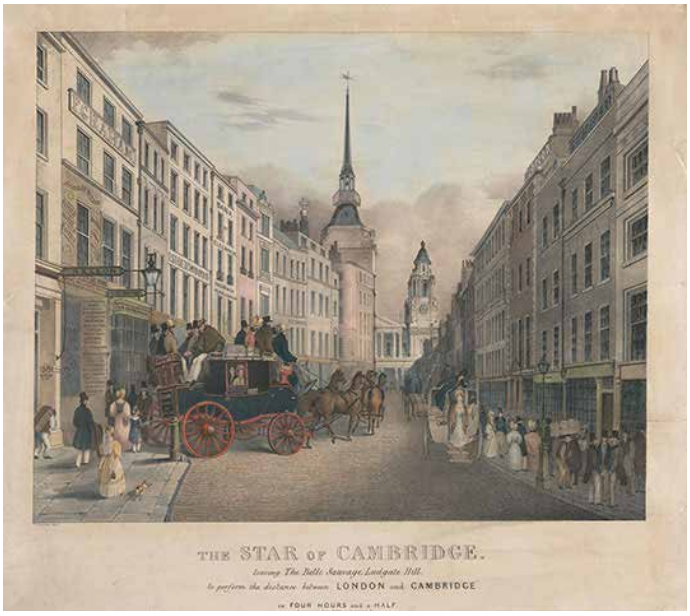
James Wallis's Stagecoach Journey in the Pre-Railway Age

by Ruth Graham

In October 1819, a young gardener named James Wallis stood at the threshold of a new life. Born in the rural parish of Kedington, Suffolk in 1797, James grew up amid England's rolling farmlands. Yet by the age of 22 he had left his village roots behind to marry in the great metropolis of London. His relocation from countryside to capital was not unusual for the era. The early 19th century Industrial Revolution was reshaping Britain's economy and society, drawing thousands of provincial young men and women from agrarian communities into booming cities in search of work and opportunity. For James, and others like him, the journey from a Suffolk hamlet to the teeming streets of London was a grand undertaking and made possible by the era's fastest mode of overland travel: the horse-drawn stagecoach.

Before railways stitched together Britain's cities, stagecoaches and their networks of coaching inns provided the vital arteries for long-distance travel. James Wallis's own path likely combined foot travel and stagecoach rides. Family lore and local records suggest he may have first walked about three miles from Kedington to the market town of Haverhill. There, a stagecoach service tellingly named "The Telegraph" departed the old Bell Inn on the High Street every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for London (by way of Saffron Walden and Bishop's Stortford). Climbing aboard, James would have joined a handful of other passengers on a jolting, day-long ride bound for the capital. His personal odyssey opens a window onto the broader story of how improved roads and coaching services enabled a generation of rural Britons to move to cities like London in the pre-railway age.

By the time James set out, stagecoach travel in England had reached its zenith. The early 1800s saw an unprecedented expansion of coaching routes, underpinned by major investments in road infrastructure. During the 18th century, Parliament authorised hundreds of turnpike trusts run by local companies that levied tolls to maintain and improve main roads. At their peak in the 1830s, over 1,000 trusts managed some 20,000–30,000 miles of turnpike roads across England and Wales. These efforts, coupled with engineering breakthroughs by men like Thomas Telford and John McAdam, led to all-weather roads with gentler gradients and durable stone surfaces. Such improvements dramatically cut travel times. For example, a journey from London to Manchester that took four and a half days in 1750 could be completed in roughly 26 hours by 1821, a striking testament to the speed of a well-run coach on good roads.



The Star of Cambridge, Leaving the Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill
Mary Young Ridenbaugh, Yale Center for British Art (Creative Commons)

Dozens of daily coach routes radiated from London by the 1820s, reaching deep into the provinces. These coaches linked London with county market towns in Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Surrey, Hertfordshire and beyond, hauling both people and information. Stagecoaches carried the Royal Mail, newspapers, and business correspondence along with their paying passengers. In fact, historians note that the stagecoach system became an information highway in its own right: from the 1780s onward, most letters and London newspapers travelled by mail coach, spreading news, market prices and even fashion trends from the capital outward. The stagecoach revolution helped knit together the country's economy and culture, the very forces that were drawing young workers like James Wallis toward London's expanding industries.

For all their relative speed, horse-powered coaches imposed significant realities on travellers. A typical stagecoach was a compact, spring-suspended carriage seating perhaps 6–8 inside and more on top. Four horses galloped in front, and a skilled coachman managed the team with a guard assisting (especially on mail routes). Coaches averaged about 7–8 miles per hour in summer conditions (slower in winter), with brief stops every 10–15 miles to change horses. On a good road, a distance of fifty miles, roughly the span between Haverhill and London, could be covered in a long day's travel. Passengers paid for their tickets and any luggage by weight, and they often endured cramped, swaying conditions on rough roads. Weather and daylight were also factors: heavy rain could mire wheels in mud, and night travel, though common on mail coaches, was generally riskier on unlit highways. In James's case, he might have left Haverhill at dawn to reach London by evening, weather permitting. Stagecoach schedules were tight, one 20-minute stop to grab a hurried meal was customary, although delays were inevitable if horses went lame or coach springs broke. Still, for those eager to reach the city, these coaches offered unprecedented reliability and speed compared to the alternatives of the previous century.

The indispensable backbone of coach travel was the network of coaching inns. These inns functioned as the service stations and social hubs of the Georgian road system. At major inns in cities and market towns, coaches would pick up and drop off passengers, while ostlers rushed to swap exhausted horse teams for fresh ones. In London, large galleried inns like the *Swan with Two Necks* or *Belle Sauvage* served as termini where multiple coaches arrived and departed each day. Such urban coaching inns became communication hubs complete with ticket offices and booking clerks who could plan a traveller's complex, multi-stage itinerary to virtually any corner of the country.

Many innkeepers were themselves partners in coach lines, coordinating with other inn owners along the route to ensure meals and beds for passengers at scheduled stops. Besides their logistical role, coaching inns often stood as the grandest buildings in town (aside from the church) and doubled as vibrant community centres. By the late 18th century, an inn's assembly room might host balls, lectures, club meetings or even cockfights. News and gossip flowed freely as travellers from distant places exchanged stories by the hearth. We can easily imagine James stepping down from the coach at a midway inn, perhaps in Bishop's Stortford, to eat a quick meal in a crowded parlour, surrounded by the lively din of an inn that was equal parts transport depot and tavern.

James Wallis arrived in London on the cusp of a transportation revolution. In 1819, the stagecoach was still king of the road. Yet within two decades, the rise of steam railways would all but dethrone horse-drawn coaches. The first English passenger railway opened in 1830, and by the early 1840s, rail lines out of London were siphoning away coach traffic. Passengers flocked to the new trains, which could travel at 20–30 mph and carry many more people at lower fares. Stagecoach companies fought back by slashing prices and touting the safety of coaches, but the writing was on the wall. Newspapers of the late 1830s marvelled at how quickly long-distance coach services vanished. "A few months ago, no fewer than twenty-two coaches left Birmingham daily for London," one report noted in 1838, but after the railway opened, only four remained – even though the coach fare was cheaper. The convenience and speed of rail simply overwhelmed the old system. By January 1846, the last London-based mail coach (to Norwich) was discontinued, marking the effective end of the stagecoach age in Britain. Many coaching inns closed or were repurposed as rail hotels and parcel depots, and thousands of coach horses were put out to pasture. The era of horse and highway so central to James's migration story proved relatively brief, peaking in the 1820s and almost entirely gone by mid-century.

For today's family historians, James Wallis's journey offers a case study in combining social history with family history. Reconstructing how an ancestor travelled in 1819 requires detective work across various sources. In James's case, archival transport directories provide crucial clues. *The Directory of Stage Coach Services, 1836* – published some years after James moved, confirms that a coach route through Haverhill to London did exist in the early 19th century. Local histories and pub records (such as those of Haverhill's Bell Inn) give additional depth of information, naming the coach ("Telegraph") and its thrice-weekly schedule. Such evidence strongly suggests the path James likely took. Contemporary travelogues and blogs can also help us envision the experience: for instance, the *Wicked William* Regency history blog[1] provides vivid details on stagecoach practices around 1819, from road conditions to the cost of inns. Meanwhile, standard genealogical documents anchor the narrative. James's marriage certificate from St John's, Hackney in 1819 places him in London that year, and successive census records trace his long life as a gardener in Bromley-by-Bow, East London. These records show he and his wife Susannah raised a family of eight children, illustrating the successful establishment of a new London lineage. By piecing together travel directories, historical commentary, and personal records, we gain not only dates and names but a richer understanding of *how* and *why* James made his pivotal move.

James Wallis's trek from a Suffolk village to the capital city encapsulates a larger pattern of rural-to-urban migration in the age of coaches and turnpikes. His story reminds us that our 19th century ancestors were far from static – they were willing to walk miles to the next town, endure bumpy coach rides, and embrace the unknown, all in pursuit of better livelihoods. The stagecoach network, with its thundering teams and bustling inns, was the essential enabler of these journeys before the railway. By understanding the stagecoach era's infrastructure and culture, family historians can better appreciate the leaps of faith and physical miles that lay behind a simple line in a census stating "born in Suffolk, residing in London." The road James travelled on may have been rough, but it led him – and countless others of his generation – to new horizons at a time when Britain itself was racing headlong into the modern age.

The George Inn, Southwark, a short walk from London Bridge Station, is one of the few surviving coaching inns. In the 19th century it was situated alongside the Marshalsea Prison, and was mentioned in the Charles Dickens novel, *Little Dorrit*. There is also an excellent blog site about this inn which includes detail of the former coaching timetable from Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire in 1809.[2]

1 www.wickedwilliam.com

2 https://alondoninheritance.com/londonpubs/george-inn-borough-high-street-southwark/

ERNIE CHESTER WALKER and his Affiliation with Horses

by Joy Jorgensen

Ernie was born on 22 April 1916 to William Henry John Walker, a carrier, and Amy Walker, nee Baker, at Forest Lodge NSW.[1] The Walker family not only relied on horses for transport and leisure, but also to facilitate their produce carrying business. Ernie's free settler ancestors, John and Maria Walker and their son William,[2,3] arrived in Sydney Town onboard the *Mary Hope* in 1827[4] founded the family company.

The family's residence faced onto Forest Street, Forest Lodge with the stables backing onto and facing the parallel thoroughfare of Lodge Street. By the time Ernie's father inherited the business, it had endured to survive recessions that resulted in customers being unable to honour their financial obligations, threatening the business' solvency. He and his six siblings each had their own horse and also the use of the grooms that were required for the business equines.[5]

Ernie's mother Amy Walker with his older siblings Harry, Eunice and Roger and his father's aunt Alice Mary, in Centennial Park, c.1915

Ernie Walker on his pony in front of the family's stables at Forest Lodge, c.1921

Life was comfortable for the family until the Great Depression of the 1930s set in. William resisted laying off his employees and directed any of his children who were about to enter the workforce to remain at school to prevent any family income earner losing their employment to a youngster.[6] William's decision, along with his determination to retain horse drawn vehicles rather than convert to mechanised vehicles, resulted in a severe business downturn and forced the family to relocate to Clan Alpine Street, Eastwood, and then to Orange Street, Eastwood, where they continued trading.[7]

It was during his time at Eastwood that Ernie came into contact with another equestrian – Jean Annie Whiteman of North Ryde. During their courtship, and while Jean was living with her sister, Pauline, in Lismore, Ernie received a letter from Jean expressing how much she was missing her horse, Ray. Ernie's response was to write to Jean to inform her that he would be leaving on Boxing Day 1936[8] to ride Ray to Lismore. According to correspondence from Ernie to Jean, he achieved this feat, a distance of around 730 km, in 10 days, with an additional day taken to assist his Coffs Harbour relatives to muster their cattle.

Around four months later, when Ray returned to Sydney by boat, Ernie made his way to Darling Harbour to ride Ray back to Jean at her parent's farm in North Ryde.[9] Ernie and Jean wed on 6 July 1940 at St Anne's Church of England, Ryde[10] just over a month after he enlisted in the Australian Military Forces, resulting in him becoming

Ernie Walker in the Middle East during WWII, prior to his deployment to North Africa, 1941

a Rat of Tobruk and a veteran of the Kokoda Track of WWII.

Ernie and Jean had two children and, up until the early 1950s, used horses, either astride or between the shafts, as their transport. Horses were also a significant part of their leisure activities with the family participating in equestrian competitions as well as breeding them.

Ernie's son Chris, heading off from the family home c.1942

In the mid 1980s, Ernie took up residence at Penrose where he established stud and training stables for Australian Stock Horses. In 1986, at the age of 80, he successfully completed a 200km fund raising horse riding trek organised by Multiple Sclerosis Australia. His mount was a young 17 hand high gelding that he had bred.

Eighteen months later he was part of the entourage for his eldest grandson's wedding when he escorted, on horseback, the bride who travelled to the chapel in a horse drawn carriage.

One of the horses of the Mounted Unit of the NSW Police has the parade name of Tobruk in Ernie's honour as a Rat Of Tobruk. Tobruk aka Louis's previous owner had been one of Ernie's grand daughters. Ernie's final significant association with the horse, unbeknown to Ernie, was when his coffin was placed upon a horse-drawn dray after his funeral at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Bundanoon as part of a funeral procession through the township on 1 December after his death at his Penrose residence on 22 November 2022.[11]

Left: Ernie Walker, in his finery, ready to escort the bride to her wedding ceremony, 14 March 1998

Below: Coffin of Ernie Walker on horse-drawn dray, prior to the commencement of his funeral

1 NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, Birth Certificate: Ernie Chester Walker, 20308/1916.

2 http://www.trove.nla.gov.au: *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (NSW: 1803-1842) Tue 27 Mar 1827, p.2, Shipping Intelligence.

3 Malcolm R Sainty & Keith A Johnson (eds.) *Census of New South Wales November 1828:* John, Maria & William Walker p.378.

4 http://www.trove.nla.gov.au: *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (NSW: 1803-1842) Tue 27 Mar 1827, p.2, Shipping Intelligence.

5 Personal conversation, Ernie Walker, ca 1965 with his daughter Joy Jorgensen.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Letter, Ernie Walker, December 1936, held by his daughter Joy Jorgensen.

9 Personal conversation, Ernie Walker, ca 1965 with his daughter Joy Jorgensen.

10 NSW Registry of Births, Death & Marriages, Marriage Certificate: Ernie Chester Walker & Jean Annie Whiteman, 18842/1940.

11 http://www.ryersonindex: *Southern Highland News*, Bowral 26 November 2022, Death Notice for Ernie Chester Walker.

Joy is retired from decades of working in forestry research involving soils, plant nutrition and hydrology. She became interested in genealogy in the mid 1980s after learning of her family connection to convict George Howe, alias Happy George, the printer and publisher of the first newspaper in the NSW colony, *The Sydney Gazette*. She became a member of SAG in 1998 and completed the Diploma of Family Historical Studies in 2003. Another of her current hobbies is scrapbooking and she takes pleasure in creating pages of both her ancestors and living family.

In Search Of ... Fur, Feathers and Family

WATMAN'S COACH AND STABLES

by Allan Cole

The Watman family operated a coach service between Crookwell and Goulburn, as well as a boarding house in Crookwell. The coach service was begun by James Watman, who was born on 23 October 1835 in Rolvenden, Kent, England, arriving in New South Wales with his parents, James and Elizabeth, aboard the *Maitland* in 1838. On 1 December 1855, James married Eliza Caunt in Crookwell, NSW. Eliza was born in Nottinghamshire, England and died on 21 August 1908.

The Watman family came as emigrants and initially settled in the Camden area, before moving to Crookwell to farm the land. In time, they established a coachline which must have helped open the district to the movement of produce and people. The family also operated a livery stable, and by 1888 were hiring out transport to take people anywhere in the district,[1] while the coach service remained a regular operation between Crookwell and Goulburn:

WATMAN'S COACHES,

Which formerly were so well known on the road between Crookwell and Goulburn, will commence running again on Monday next. The coaches will leave here on Mondays at 7 a.m. and on Wednesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m., returning next day, leaving the Imperial Hotel, Goulburn, at 10 a.m. Watman's coaches always maintained a reputation for punctuality and care; and as the fare is to be reduced to 5/- each way, there is no doubt they will again receive a fair share of the patronage of the travelling public.[2]

The Watman family sold the service to Mr Alexander McDonell in 1891, while retaining the mail coach service,[3] although the coach service was ultimately superseded by a spur line of the railway in 1902.

James Watman died in 1900 and the extensive obituary that was published in the *Crookwell Gazette* reveals the impact he had on the community:

(he) was widely known in the district where he carried on farming in the early days. He subseqeuntly relinquished his farm and opened a boarding house in Crookwell, up to the time of his death. He was also poundkeeper here for many years, combining also the running of coaches between here and Goulburn and livery stables. It is due to say in this direction that no one coach proprietor stuck to the roads like Mr Watman.[4]

Crookwell boarding house and adjoining livery stables, Denison Street, Crookwell.[1]

James Watman's involvement with animals through his early farming activities continued through his involvement with the coach service and the hiring of horses and buggies.

James's son, James John Watman (1858–1935)[5] was the father of my maternal grandmother, Ethel Florence Watman (1888–1954).[7] She married Alfred Leggott (1886–1960)[8] and their daughter, Valmai Marie Leggott (1921–2010)[9] went on to marry my father, Thomas Mitchell Cole (1918–2014).[10]

Allan Cole has been researching his family history for many years, firstly through assisting his father as he worked on the family story for Allan's grandmother, then continuing his father's work following his death, with the help of SAG's webinars and courses. Allan was educated at Berala Primary School and Birrong Boys High School and later attended the New South Wales Institute of Technology, now the University of Technology Sydney, to obtain his degree.

1 "New Business", *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW: 1885 –1954), 31 August 1888, 2. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article220831174 Retrieved 27 June 2025.

2 "WATMAN'S COACHES", *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW: 1885 - 1954), 5 December 1894, 2. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222271552 Retrieved 27 June 2025.

3 "Crookwell Express Coach", *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW: 1885 - 1954), 22 July 1891, 2. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222159083 Retrieved 27 June 2025; "Advertising", *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW: 1885 –1954), 2 December 1891, 3. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222153286 Retrieved June 29, 2025.

4 "OBITUARY.", *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW: 1885 –1954), 5 January 1900, 2. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222265201 Retrieved 27 June 2025.

5 James John WATMAN, NSW Birth Registration Number: 1858/13395.

7 Ethel Florence WATMAN, NSW Birth Registration Number: 1888/15067/ Ethel Florence LEGGOTT, NSW Death Registration Number: 1954/16803.

8 Alfred LEGGOTT, NSW Birth Registration Number: 1886/18371/ NSW Death Registration Number: 1960/30736.

9 Valma Marie LEGGOTT, NSW Birth Registration Number: 1921/21693.

10 Thomas Mitchell COLE, NSW Birth Registration Number: 1918/22552.

MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER AND A HORSE CALLED CHARLEY IN COLONIAL TASMANIA: Or How We Became Queenslanders

by Mary Collings

By 1848, my three times great-grandfather, Joseph Foote, a hatter in Bristol, had married Elizabeth Clarke and fathered seven children.[1] The combined effects of the depressed economic climate and political turmoil in England, however, led the family to emigrate, in stages, to Australia. Alfred William, the second son aged 19, arrived in Launceston on the *Arabian* on 24 August 1841[2] and was living at Red Hills, East Tamar, near Launceston when his father arrived in Launceston on the *Britannia* on 31 January 1848.[3] The youngest son, Joseph Jnr, arrived at Port Phillip, Victoria, on 18 August of the same year.[4]

In the early colony of Van Diemen's Land, attendance at church was mandatory for convicts on probation and such was the demand for pastors that the government supported the employment of ministers. Joseph Foote was interviewed by Reverend John West, pastor at the Congregational Church in Launceston, as a candidate for the role of pastor. West, who was to become the first editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, gave Joseph a detailed and glowing report, stating, "he looks demiclerical and wears spectacles …he displays imagination and throws into his discourse a warmth which is more sweet to me than all the spices of Homerton …"[5] On 7 February 1848, Joseph was asked to go to Hobart and was engaged as a lay minister in the Richmond district, becoming the second preacher at the Congregational Church at Richmond. He was expected to preach across the District – at Richmond, Cambridge, Carlton and Coal Creek. By 5 May he was ready to leave Hobart for his new post.

In Hobart, Joseph was supplied with a horse named Charley. They had an uneasy relationship, as described in a letter Joseph wrote to the Congregational Union of Tasmania, now held in the Tasmanian Archives:

Richmond May 5th '48

My dear Sir,

I am ashamed to write to you considering the trouble I have given you already. I am compelled to say the horse will not do for riding. In the bush he frequently shys at the stumps of trees and at gates even a bird will cause him to start aside. I was three hours riding him from Hobart Town to Richmond. My coat was quite damp with perspiration and notwithstanding my care he threw me once. I sustained no other injury than that of being unable to take Cambridge the following day. Yesterday I was obliged to alight and lead him through a part of the bush.

Mr. Hopkins has a mare that I think would do if he would dispose of her. I shall not be able to take Cambridge on Sabbath.

I am Dear Sir your obliged Servant

Joseph Foote

Two weeks later, Joseph was managing Charley better, with a technique probably frowned on today, writing:

Richmond May 21st '48

I rode the Horse on Sabbath to Cambridge with Spur. Am happy to say with the Spur he went well.

By 1 July 1848 Joseph reported he was preaching at Richmond, Cambridge, Carlton and Coal Creek. Sadly this was not to last. On the 10 July he was "Seixed by apoplexy"[6] (likely a stroke) and died while preaching at Richmond. It is unknown if his fall from Charley contributed to his early death. Joseph Foote is buried in the Torrens Street burial ground in Richmond, Tasmania, which has since been converted into a council recreation area.

The remainder of the Foote family emigrated to Moreton Bay, Queensland, on *The Emigrant*, arriving on 11 August 1850. Eventually, Alfred William and Joseph Jnr also moved to Queensland with their families, and the Foote family became well known in Ipswich. Perhaps Charley's bad behaviour led to the family settling in Queensland rather than Tasmania.

Mary Collings is a retired teacher librarian and has been exploring her colonial ancestors in her retirement. She holds a M.A. in Children's Literature (Macq), B.Sc. & Dip Ed (USYD) and Grad Dip Librarianship (UNSW).

1 Photograph from Ancestry.com.au originally shared by Kellie Ivory on 6 September 2023.1 John Clarke born 1822; Alfred William born 1823; Clarissa born 1825; James born 1829; Joseph born about 1831; Lucy born 1833 and Harriett born 1837.

2 Nancy Foote, *The Cribb and Foote families* (Brisbane: N. Foote, 1976); papers in *Nancy M Foote collection* in John Oxley Collection, SLQ.

3 Trove: *Colonial Times* Friday 4 February 1848, Shipping Intelligence, 2.

4 Foote.

5 Letter from Rev. John West to Mr. Haller, Secretary of the Van Diemen's Land Colonial Missionary and Christian Instruction Society, 7 February 1848. Held in State Archives of Tasmania. Copies in Rev. Joseph Foote file NG352.

6 Foote; *Courier* (Hobart) Saturday 15 July 1848, 2.

BAREBACK HORSES AND POSING DOGS: The foundations of a circus family

by Mark St Leon

Scene in the Grand United Circus, 1874: Young [Gus] St Leon and Walter Ernest St Leon, Australian Town & Country Journal, 11 July 1874.

When the modern circus emerged as a recognisable form of entertainment in England in the late 18th century, the only animals to be seen in a circus ring, besides humans, were domesticated animals, horses and dogs specifically. In the hierarchy of itinerant entertainers, the early circus people regarded menageries of wild and exotic 'beasts' as lesser forms of entertainment and not to be confused with circus. This original concept of 'circus' spread throughout Europe, reached the United States in 1793, and eventually the colonies of Australia in 1847.

Advertisement for Jones's Royal Amphitheatre, Geelong, 1854, Geelong Advertiser, *3 August 1854.*

My own family, the St Leons, can be counted amongst Australia's earliest circus people. Over five generations, the family was active in the circus profession for 116 years, from 1847 until 1963, travelling Australasia and almost every continent of the world. At first, the family was known by its prosaic, original name of 'Jones' until 1865 when the professional name of 'St Leon' was adopted, eventually to become the accepted family name. In an advertisement announcing the "amphitheatre" that my great-great grandfather, John Jones (1823-1903), opened in Geelong in 1853, my original circus ancestor is depicted performing on horseback without benefit of saddle, bridle or surcingle.

Matthew St Leon, circus proprietor, Brisbane, 1882, Mark St Leon Collection, Mitchell Library

The First Generation

Apart from a brief period in the 1880s when a "wild beast show" was attached to the St Leon circus, the family's reputation rested on its employment of domesticated animals, chiefly horses and dogs. So it was that, in 1878, my great-great-grandfather, by then known by the pseudonym of "Matthew St Leon", proudly asserted that his circus was "no penny wild beast show but a genuine circus".[1] A versatile performer in his youth – bareback rider, acrobat and tightrope walker – he could still make a deep impression on audiences at the age of 60, when he brought his large circus to Sydney over the summer of 1883-84:

> *There was a large assemblage at St Leon's Circus and Menagerie last night on the occasion of Mr St Leon's benefit. The performance of the clever company was greatly admired and Mr St Leon, who is one of the cleverest equestrians who has visited Sydney was received with great applause.*[2]

Upon his death in Melbourne in April 1903, my great-great-grandfather was described as a "remarkably clever trainer of animals" and "one of the finest trainers of horses in the world".[3]

> *… Some years ago, two big bears, owned by a couple of Russians, were left in a hotel stable in one of the northern Victorian towns, the Russians having committed some crime and fled to avoid the law. The bears had been in the stable so long that they were famished and quite unmanageable and made furious dashes at anyone going near the door. The greatest terror prevailed in the neighbourhood, it being feared that the brutes would break out. The police were sent for and preparations were made to destroy the animals when St Leon turned up and offered to quieten the brutes and feed them. He opened the door and went in and presently came out with a big brown bear on each arm and conducted the animals into the circus cage that had been brought for their reception exactly as if they had been ladies. Then he rode in the cage with the bears through the street to the circus where the Russians [sic] were fed.*[4]

The Second Generation

Matthew St Leon raised and trained three of his sons from infancy: Gus (1851-1924), my great-grandfather Walter (1855-1943) and Alfred (1859-1909). Each emerged as a fine circus performer and each raised a circus family of his own to carry the family name into the 20th century.

In Hobart in 1873, the eldest son, 22-year-old Gus, joined Henry Burton's National Circus; at that time, the leading circus in the colonies:

> *There was scarcely standing room inside the pavilion, and hundreds had to be refused admission when the sale of tickets was stopped shortly after eight o'clock. The great attraction was the first appearance in Tasmania of Mr Augustus St Leon, who certainly performs some of the most daring feats of horsemanship we have ever witnessed. He appeared first by himself on a horse, with only a surcingle and bridle, and after going through a series of very clever feats, took Master Willie Cousins up with him. He then held the little fellow in various positions as the horse galloped round the ring, and at last having stripped the horse he rode of the little harness it had upon it, he went through some still more daring feats. But Mr St Leon's greatest performance was with two bare-backed horses. Dressed as an English foxhunter, he stood with one leg on each horse and then made them clear a hurdle about four feet high several times, without a mistake. He was loudly and deservedly applauded.*[5]

Gus was later joined in Burton's Circus by his brother Walter, the pair billed as "Young St Leon" and "Walter Ernest" respectively. A fine illustration of the brothers performing in Sydney was published in 1874 (see image, above). Gus could ride and drive as many as eight horses at once around the circus ring.[6] The third St Leon brother, Alfred, perfected the art of somersault riding, at the time a daring novelty in circus riding.

The Third Generation

The eldest son of Gus, known as "Litle Gus", began performing before the public from the age of six. While most critics were impressed, some had reservations:

> *Little Gus … is quite a phenomenon. He has no fear and rides a couple of bare-backed ponies with surprising skill. It is a performance, however, which excites pity rather than pleasure in the minds of many people who hold with us that babies like little Gus should be in bed instead of being taught to look for the plaudits of the crowd at an hour when all children of his age are, or ought to be, sound asleep.*[7]

Another son of Gus, Phillip St Leon, enchanted audiences throughout Australia dressed in female costume and bewigged, an expedient solution to the chronic shortage of (but healthy demand for) female

Left: "Little Gus" St Leon, about 1888, about 7 years of age, State Library of Victoria.

Above: Wally St Leon, about 1886, about 4 years of age, Mark St Leon Collection, Mitchell Library.

riders. Presented in his father's Great United Circus as "Senorita Phillipina" during the years 1909-16, few suspected the disguise:

> *One of the best items was the bareback riding of Senorita Phillipina. Bareback riding is a sort of stock turn with the average circus, but this lady's performance raised it above that standard by a long way, and her cleverness, her difficult evolutions, and her neatness of execution go a long way to support the championship claimed for her.*[8]

Two sons of Walter, Wally and Leslie, became exceptional riders. Like other circus children, Wally was trained from infancy.

> *… Wally St Leon – you couldn't pull him off a horse. From the time he was four he had a wonderful balance. He and Les used to do a jockey act. Les was the better style. He was taller and better looking. But Wally could run up and jump on the horse's back and stand on his feet. Les used to do it but he would miss occasionally. Wally never missed. He would turn somersaults on the horse … I don't know that I have ever seen as good performers as the St Leons …* [9]

A daughter of Walter, Alice, herself a fine rider, married an American horse-trainer and circus proprietor, Ellsworth L. Probasco. Probasco had come to Australia in 1895 under engagement to FitzGerald Bros Circus to present his renowned "talking horse", Mahomet.

Another son of Walter, my grandfather Norman (1888-1963) entertained Australians for many years with his troupe of posing dogs that he had originally acquired from an American animal trainer, William Kinney, professionally known as known as "Tex" Bailey. Bailey and his three English setters arrived in Australia in 1913 to tour with Wirth's Circus, presented as "Bailey's Posing Dogs". When Bailey retired from show business in 1919, he sold (or perhaps gave) the act to my grandfather, Norman St Leon. Now promoted as "St Leon's Posing Dogs", the act remained popular in Australian circus and vaudeville for many years afterwards. Sometimes, too popular, and Norman reverted to the original billing of "Bailey's Posing Dogs" when performing in rival theatres. There were over 20 different scenes performed by the three setters, each accompanied by appropriate music from the circus band or theatre orchestra. Norman's wife, Vera, took her place in the act and their young son, Val, held up a placard to announce each statue scene the three dogs – Prince, Patch and Puppy – were about to perform. Presented on the stage of The Valley Theatre in Brisbane in February 1924, an observer described the act in these words:

> *Three fine thoroughbred English setters, Bailey's Posing Dogs, along with their master, provided an interesting turn at the Valley Theatre on Saturday. They appear in a series of tableaux, including, amongst others, Forsaken, Faithful Friends, The Wounded Paw, Rock of Ages, The Long Trail, and Auld Lang Sale [sic]. To look at them one would think they were white carved statuary. Not a move nor a flicker of the dogs or their master could be seen except at the conclusion of the last tableau, when the dogs get down from their pedestal, shake themselves happily, come to the front of the stage, and make the acquaintance of the audience. It is a splendid piece of animal training and will be a great attraction to Valley audiences. Prior to doing their act a moving picture of the dogs was taken in front of the Valley Theatre. Each of them, by the way, carries an insurance policy of £1000 …*[10]

Above: "Auld Lang Syne", St Leon's Posing Dogs, about 1924 Mark St Leon Circus Collection, Mitchell Library.

Below left: The Four Riding St Leons (Peggy, Stella, Jack, Joe), Wirth's Circus, 1946, Mark St Leon Collection, Mitchell Library

Below right: The St Leons (George and Elsie May), acrobats and equestrians, Luna Park, Coney Island, New York, 1910. Billboard*, 6 August 1910..*

St Leon's Posing Dogs were also seen in picture theatres and boxing stadia, amusing audiences and spectators at intervals. In the mercurial world of show business, the posing dogs enabled Norman to maintain himself in full employment during the darkest days of the Great Depression.

In 1895, Alfred, the youngest of the three original brothers, mentioned earlier, left Australia with his young family to tour Southeast Asia and the islands of the Pacific with Wirth's Pacific Circus. Once Alfred and his family reached the shores of America's West coast, they began their relentless climb through the ranks of American circusdom. By 1908, a daughter of Alfred, Sydney-born Elsie May, was promoted as "one of America's most accomplished equestriennes … the only living woman who successfully performs a somersault on the back of a galloping horse".[11] That year also, Elsie May and her younger sister Ida Jennie, performed a two-sister act on horseback in the outdoor circus at Luna Park, Coney Island.[12] In August 1910, the cover page of *Billboard* featured a portrait of Elsie May and her brother George, standing with their Percheron horses in the Luna Park circus ring.[13]

The Fourth Generation

Most travelling show activity was prohibited during World War II and, by this time, most of the family had exchanged circus life for a conventional suburban existence. Nevertheless, with the coming of peace in 1945, the grandchildren of Gus St Leon set about re-forming the bareback riding troupe which had had its genesis before the war. The Four – later Five – Riding St Leons was one of the most popular acts in Australian circus in the post-war period. While the outcome of the Korean War remained undecided, an invitation to tour the United States had to be declined and the troupe disbanded.

> *… The riding St Leons have decided to call it a day in circus business and have gone into business for themselves along various lines. We circus people will miss them very much for there is no doubt that this troupe was one of the best that Australia has ever seen …*[14]

While circus remained a highly popular form of entertainment in the immediate post-war period, it had to compete with the growing popularity of cinema and increasing urbanisation. The automobile was replacing the horse in public esteem. With the passing in 1963

of my grandfather, Norman St Leon, the family's active involvement with circus and circus animals ceased. By that time, television had begun to severely erode both the number and quality of Australian circus companies. For the few companies that managed to survive, circus animal-keeping practices came increasingly under the scrutiny of the media and many local councils banned circuses with animal acts. Today, the only 'animals' to be seen in an Australian circus are the human variety.

Mark has been assisting on *The Colleano Heart*, an 85-minute feature documentary of interest to family historians, Indigenous communities and those interested in the circus.

Premiering at the Adelaide Film Festival on Sunday 19 October, more information can be found here: **https://www.adelaidefilmfestival.org/program/2025/the-colleano-heart**

Dr Mark St Leon, now retired, served the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding body, as senior finance officer, 1983-94. He subsequently pursued an academic career, lecturing in accounting, economics and management. In 2007, he was awarded a PhD by the University of Sydney for his dissertation, later the basis for his book, *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne Books, 2011). He is presently Vice President of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

1 'Advertising', *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* (NSW), 13 February 1878, 3.
2 'Amusements', *Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW), 5 January 1884, 13.
3 'About People', *The Age* (Melbourne, Victoria), 16 April 1903, 5; 'Personal', *Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria), 16 April 1903, 5.
4 *Punch* (Melbourne), 23 April 1903, 4.
5 *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), 7 March 1873, 2.
6 *Warwick Examiner*, 22 April 1882, 2.
7 *Evening Post* (Wellington), 23 December 1885, 2.
8 *Wagga Wagga Express* (NSW), 24 June 1909, 2.
9 Gladys Lewis, interviewed by Mark St Leon, Bellevue Hill, 30 May 1975.
10 *Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 10 February 1924, 10.
11 *Chicago Journal*, 11 September 1908.
12 *Variety* (New York), 16 August 1908, 7.
13 *Billboard* (New York), 6 August 1910, 1.
14 *Outdoor Showman* (Melbourne), July 1952.

In Search Of … Fur, Feathers and Family

A BUDGIE BY ANY OTHER NAME

by Michelle Goldsmith

Following a period where our dog and two cats crossed over the rainbow bridge in quick succession, my father declared that there would be no more animals in our household. He claimed he could no longer handle the family's subsequent pet-death related tears and melancholy. Eventually, after much pleading, he acquiesced and allowed a budgie into our home, stating that "it's only a bird" and "you can't become too attached to a bird". How wrong he was.

After a misstart with a broody female, we eventually adopted a common green and gold male budgerigar into our lives. My mother decided that he had to have a budgie-worthy name and promptly christened him 'Prettyboy Goldsmith'. No one else in the family was prepared to call him by such a highfalutin' name and so he quickly became 'Bird'.

Bird entered my life at age 10 and became my close companion. He would sit on my shoulder, assist me with my homework and accompany me in singing and dancing in my bedroom, come for a scratch before I left for school and be happy when I returned. He also provided company for my mum, who was a housewife and at home by herself for much of the day. He did learn to 'talk', with a fine repertoire including the obvious "Hello", "Who's a pretty boy" and, at my mother's insistence in case he ever escaped, "My name's Prettyboy Goldsmith, what's yours?"

Bird also displayed his sporting preferences with renditions of "Up the Bulldogs" and "C'mon Aussies, C'mon".

Bird's cage was on an enclosed verandah, near the kitchen, where he could watch the family come and go. Every night he was witness to me and my brother washing and drying the dishes. As is common among siblings during this activity, it often developed into tea towel flicking and dishwater fights. Mum would then yell "Wayne, Michelle!!!" loudly and repeatedly. Bird quickly mimicked this and would join in with his own cries of "Wayne, Michelle". Somehow his timing was impeccable and, sadly for mum, this only encouraged us.

When I commenced work, Bird still received his scratch before I left and attention when I returned. We discovered that if I whistled one note when I reached the halfway point crossing the park opposite our home on my return from the station, Bird would start chirping and flying from perch to perch, alerting my parents to my imminent arrival. One morning, as I left for work, Bird came over for his usual scratch but seemed subdued. I rang my mum at lunch time to check on him, only to be told that he had passed away just after I had left. Yes, I know I am being anthropomorphic, but it seemed to me that he waited for one last scratch and for me to leave before he flew over the rainbow bridge.

So much for Dad not wanting any more pet-related tears. Mum and I were despondent for ages. My brother, who had left home, would comment, upon visiting, on how quiet the house was without Bird in his familiar spot. Even Dad admitted the house seemed strange 'without that damn squawking'. This little, nondescript bird had been in our lives for 10 years, had seen me grow from primary school student to a 20-year-old worker, had made all of us laugh, and given unconditional love to all family members. He was an example of how pets, no matter how small or commonplace, are so important in our lives. I may be a crazy cat lady now, but Bird will always hold a special place in my heart.

Michelle Goldsmith is a family history librarian who enjoys encouraging and assisting newbies with their family history research, as well as discovering more about her own. She credits listening to the stories of her older relatives with starting her down the family history rabbit hole, but wishes she had asked them many more questions!

OUR GLORY

by Susan Ducksbury

In researching this story, I have been looking at pedigree charts of a different type: those verifying purebred animal parentage. My father Alan Ducksbury's beloved German Shepherd, Will-Ann Glory, was highly trained and frequently won events, with five generations of earlier championships and multiple title holders. In the early 1960s, she was successful in becoming the youngest bitch in the Australia to gain all her titles and my father received a letter from Germany (the world centre for the breed) in recognition of this achievement.

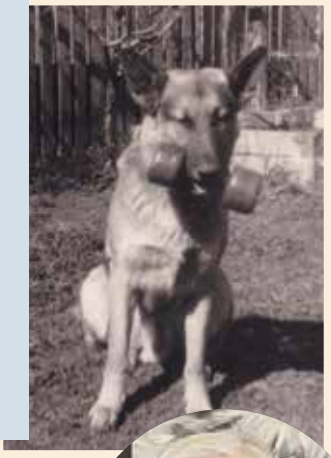
I recall several of her prizes: a set of silver salt and pepper shakers and an ornate silver tray. I also have a black pocket with "German Shepherd Dog Club" embroidered on it from his club blazer. My father was also involved in judging dogs and also wrote a regular column for one of the Illawarra papers. I think the title of the column was "by Glory", although I have not been able to locate a copy to date.

At my Father's command, Glory attempted to rescue a baby from a house fire in a neighbouring property, but despite her great efforts she was unsuccessful in gaining access to the room, due to debris obstructing the door, and sadly the baby did not survive.

Glory had around 10 pups; all went to loving families and had successful careers, by virtue of the intelligence and temperament they inherited. One of these, Rex, was kept by my Father and trained for security work for businesses in the Illawarra, while another pup was owned by Del Cartright, compere of *Your Home*, a popular 1960s Australian TV show, and the pup even appeared on the show – I still have a note that Cartright sent to my Father.

Glory tragically died following a fall from the back of a truck – this was at a time when dog restraints were not even thought of, let alone required – and the family was heartbroken. While my father continued to train and use dogs for security work and later for stock work, none were the like of Our Glory.

1 'Night Watch Service for Kiama', *Kiama Independent*, Tuesday 9 February 1965, front page.



I love a challenge and digging for information. I am creative, adore family stories and like to tell my own, helped by SAG's Family History Fundamentals and units of Family History Diploma through the University of Tasmania. I am also a member of the John Nichols Family Society.

Over three decades, I volunteered at the local history library, assisted with the compiling of the family history register, delivered talks on my family members in the Pioneer Cemetery at Berkeley, contributed to Illawarra Remembers on behalf of my Great Uncle who was killed in France in WWI and have attended large reunions concerning my First Fleet Ancestor.

Clockwise from top left:

Alan Ducksbury's beloved German Shepherd Will-Ann Glory in action

My older brother Graeme with pups

My father Alan, then aged 24, with Glory by his side, presumably at a dog event as his shirt has a German Shepherd Emblem on the pocket.

Glory with a dumbbell

Myself as a baby in our backyard in the care of Glory, with my Mother within reach

Some of Glory's certificates

Glory in the backyard of our home

My brother Graeme with Glory at a Dog Club event.

JEAN ANNIE WALKER AND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH DOGS

by Joy Jorgenson

Jean Walker, nee Whiteman, with her first Silky, Mitzie, in the 1950s

Jean was born on 5 February 1920 to John Albert Whiteman, a motor mechanic, and Irene Mary Caroline, nee Cottrill, at Parramatta, NSW.[1] Although her father was a motor mechanic, the family maintained the strong connection to the land established by her two and three times great-grandfathers, William Mobbs junior, who arrived in 1801 onboard the *Earl Cornwallis*[2] as a ten-year-old free settler child, with his mother and three siblings, and William Mobbs senior, who arrived as a convict on the *Barwell,*[3] orchardists of Carlingford. Additionally, about a decade of Jean's childhood was spent in residence on *Terrigong*, one of the family sheep grazing properties of pastoralist James Brindley Bettington, situated on the road to Scone out of Merriwa in the Hunter Valley.[4]

Jean Whiteman with her Kelpie at her parents' property, Cabul Road, North Ryde, December 1940

Jean had an astute understanding of animal anatomy and a deep relationship with all animals, especially dogs. As a young girl she was eager to volunteer to tend any injured animal on the family's farm[5] and it was during this stage of her life that she developed a deep attachment to the Australian Kelpie breed which was also deeply rooted into her son's psyche as youngster.

In the early 1950s, whilst residing at North Ryde, Jean became the proud owner of what was then known as a Sydney Silky. In 1959[6] this breed became officially known as the Australian Silky Terrier.[7]

Although still having both Kelpies & Silkys around the home, Jean decided to register the breeding prefix of *Guruga* under which she predominately bred the Australian Silky Terrier, and guided her son with breeding Australian Kelpies under his breeding prefix of *Butterbone*. Later, she applied for a license to establish a breeding kennel, which was granted on 26 June 1963.[8] Her husband Ernie constructed a small kennel block to house the dams and their pups, designed by Jean, enabling her to fulfill her dreams. Her Silkies were very much her pets and had freedom to wander around the farm. When she move from rural North Ryde to greater acreage at Luddenham, Ernie constructed a larger complex for Jean and her canine companions, again designed by Jean, enabling her to cater for boarding any breed of dog. Here too, the dogs roamed at will around the property. It was said that Jean's canine boarders arrived eagerly and left reluctantly because of the love and attention she gave them during their stay.

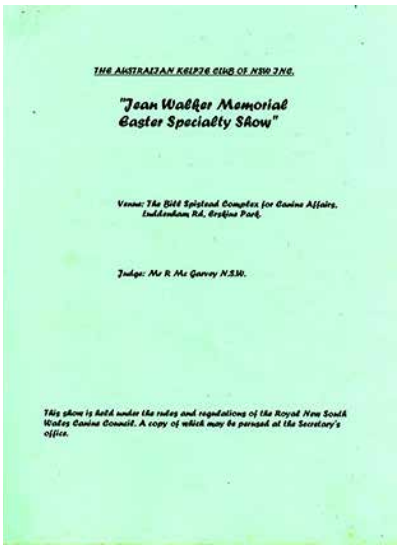
Jean also had great success in the show ring with both her Silkys and her son's Kelpies, with both breeds winning major awards at various Sydney Royal Shows. This lead to increased interest in Jean's breeding stock, with some *Guruga* Silkys taking up residence interstate as well as overseas in New Zealand, USA and Sweden, further championing the breed and creating life-long friends for Jean.

With a dedicated interest in both these Australian breeds, Jean joined two separate like-minded groups who wished to form specialty clubs interested in preserving and enhancing the breeds' characteristics. Thus, she was a founding member of both the Australian Silky Club of NSW & the Australian Kelpie Club of NSW. Her continual assistance to both these societies and their members resulted in them each awarding her with Life Membership. In the ultimate recognition of her dedication to the two breeds, the Kelpie Club formed an Honour Guard leading from the Chapel at Forest Grove Memorial Park, Leppington after her funeral on 9 February 1996 and both clubs dedicated their Specialty Easter Shows for that year in her name.

Forever helpful, Jean earned the admiration and respect of many, many people because of her willingness to eagerly impart her knowledge, on many and varied topics, to people when requested of her.

Right: Australian Kelpie Club NSW, Cover of their 1996 Speciality Show

Below right: Australian Kelpie Club NSW March–April 1996 Newsletter, page 4



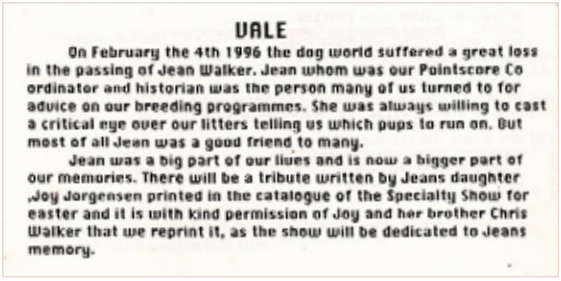
THE AUSTRALIAN KELPIE CLUB OF NSW INC.

"Jean Walker Memorial Easter Specialty Show"

Venue: The Bill Spigland Complex for Canine Affairs, Luddenham Rd, Orchard Park.

Judge: Mr R Mc Garvey N.S.W.

This show is held under the rules and regulations of the Royal New South Wales Canine Council. A copy of which may be perused at the Secretary's office.



VALE

On February the 4th 1996 the dog world suffered a great loss in the passing of Jean Walker. Jean whom was our Pointscore Co ordinator and historian was the person many of us turned to for advice on our breeding programmes. She was always willing to cast a critical eye over our litters telling us which pups to run on. But most of all Jean was a good friend to many.

Jean was a big part of our lives and is now a bigger part of our memories. There will be a tribute written by Jeans daughter Joy Jorgensen printed in the catalogue of the Specialty Show for easter and it is with kind permission of Joy and her brother Chris Walker that we reprint it, as the show will be dedicated to Jeans memory.

1 NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, Birth Certificate: Jean Annie Whiteman, 11935/1920.

2 Malcolm R Sainty & Keith A Johnson (eds.) *1828 Census of New South Wales:* John, Maria & William Walker p.270

3 Ibid.

4 Personal conversation, Irene Whiteman, ca 1965, with her granddaughter Joy Jorgensen.

5 Personal conversation, Jean Walker nee Whiteman ca 1960, with her daughter Joy Jorgensen.

6 http://www.dogsaustralia.org.au/BrowseBreed/browse-a-breed/43/Australian-Silky-Terrier

7 Ibid.

8 Chief Secretary's Department, Letter & Receipt, 1963, held by Jean's daughter, Joy Jorgensen.

LET THEM OPEN ON SUNDAYS

by Bronwyn Paschalidis

Figure 1: Extract from Ordnance Survey Map, Middlesex Sheet XVIII, surveyed 1868-1873, published 1880-1882, National Library of Scotland, https://maps.nls.uk/view/102345964.

Kathleen McBean was born at the end of October 1866 in London, England[1], one of 11 children to Edwin Knight McBean (1842-1898), a decorator, and Elizabeth Lucy Sandford (1841-1881). Edwin was working as a painter in May 1870 when Kathleen and three of her siblings were baptised together. They lived on Drummond Street which ran along one side of Euston Road Station (circled blue), with Gower Street Station two blocks south, Regent's Park on the left (circled purple) and St Pancras and Kings Cross Stations on the right (circled pink).[2]

The sounds of four working railway stations in close proximity to the family residence on Drummond Street were ever present in young Kathleen's life. But so were the sounds coming from the direction of Regent's Park; during the day it was the high-pitched squeals of the primates, while at night, the low frequency rumble of a lion calling, interspersed with a staccato elephant's trumpet.

Regent's Park was the location of what we now know as the London Zoo, but back then it was the Surrey Zoological Gardens. Founded in 1826, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) wanted to *create and study a collection of living animals for the general advancement of zoological science.*[3]

For 20 years, full access to the collection was limited to ZSL Fellows and the wealthy classes who had the financial means to visit. Ordinary people were allowed the occasional visit, but under tightly-controlled circumstances, and never on the Sabbath. In July 1840, the merits of opening public exhibitions on the Sabbath was being debated in the House of Commons, with some suggesting the comfort and happiness of the humble classes would be much improved should public places such as the British Museum and the National Gallery be open. Opposing voices saw it as a conscious dismantling of morals and the start of a system whereby the Lord's Day was treated as a common one.[4]

Eventually, in 1847, the variance between the amount of money coming in and the amount going out gave ZSL's auditors cause enough for concern that they recommended immediate action to restore the Society to its "former gratifying and prosperous position".[5] This included opening the Gardens to the public without needing to obtain an order from an existing Fellow. Thus from May 1847 on every Monday and Tuesday, any person could be admitted to the Gardens upon payment of one shilling.[6]

Fast forward to 1866 when Kathleen was born, and over half a million people visited the Gardens because they were open to the public every day, not just Mondays and Tuesdays. Notable additions to the aviaries that year from Australia included a pair of straw-necked Ibises (a close relation to the White Ibis), a Little Whimbrel believed to be the first of its kind introduced into England, and a rare Feejeean Parrot.[7]

There is no way to confirm if Kathleen ever visited the Gardens during her childhood or as a young woman growing up in Victorian London. If she did, it would only be captured as part of the overall visitor statistics for a given year. Perhaps the memory of the cacophony of animal sounds from Regent's Park was simply … enough.

Bronwyn Paschalidis is an emerging writer from south-west Victoria. Bronwyn is the author of four published stories based on real people from her family's history: *The Pretty's of Pilcot Farm*, *Dear Marjory*, *A Savory Tale* and most recently, *Three Irish Thieves* for the Convict Women's Press publication *Convict Lives Mothers' trials and triumphs*. Since completing the UTAS Diploma of Family History, she has applied her research skills to uncovering the stories of her female ancestors, as they are so often silent in the records. Her newest project is collating a set of stories drawn from some of the more colourful characters in her family tree: the Scottish nanny who married an embezzling goldsmith, the socialite who disappeared from an ocean liner en route to Africa, and the English nanny who grew up nearby to the London Zoo.

1 Ancestry.com.au. London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1920 [database online]. Original data: London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; London Church of England Parish Registers; Reference Number: P90/PAN1/039. Kathleen McBean, baptism, 17 May 1870, St Pancras Old Church, Camden, Middlesex, England.

2 Ordnance Survey Map, Middlesex Sheet XVIII, surveyed 1868-1873, published 1880-1882, National Library of Scotland, https://maps.nls.uk/view/102345964.

3 London Zoo website, Time Traveller's Guide to London Zoo, https://www.londonzoo.org/zoo-stories/history-of-london-zoo.

4 UK Parliament, Hansard, 'Opening of Public Exhibitions On The Sabbath', volume 55, debated in the House of Commons Chamber, Tuesday, 14 July 1840, https://hansard.parliament.uk.

5 Zoological Society of London Archives, Series: REP/1 – ZSL Annual reports, 1829-2024, Item: REP/1/19 – Annual Report,1847, 26, https://zsl.maxarchiveservices.co.uk/search-the-archive/.

6 Ibid, 4.

7 Zoological Society of London Archives, Series: REP/1 – ZSL Annual reports, 1829-2024, Item: REP/1/38 – Annual Report,1866, p 19-20.

LEARNING TO LOVE THE AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

by Denise Fowler

In the early 1850s my ancestors came from the banks of the Rhine to a property called Paradise on the banks of the Macintyre River, near Inverell. My great-great grandfather, Wilhelm Stenz, had been a shepherd *(schäfer)* in Prussia, and he would eventually have sheep on his own property at Kangaroo Creek. His wife, Barbara Dreis, had come from a family of vine dressers from the same region along the Rhine.

They married in Australia and their children grew up alongside dogs, horses, sheep, kangaroos, dingoes, snakes and birds (among other things). I get a glimmer of this life through newspaper articles, short stories and poems, as well as two published books of poetry by Willie Stenz, their oldest son.

Living on a property in rural NSW the family would have become aware of the interesting native animals that surrounded them. I wonder how quickly they discovered that Australian snakes were some of the most poisonous in the world?

In 1873, a story appeared in *The Maitland Mercury*[1] about two of the daughters, Catherine and Tilly, aged four and nearly two, 'playing' with a death adder in front of their house (although the article called it a deaf adder). Luckily, they were discovered before they were bitten, and the snake was quickly 'dispatched'. Snakes were not protected in Australia until the 1970s.

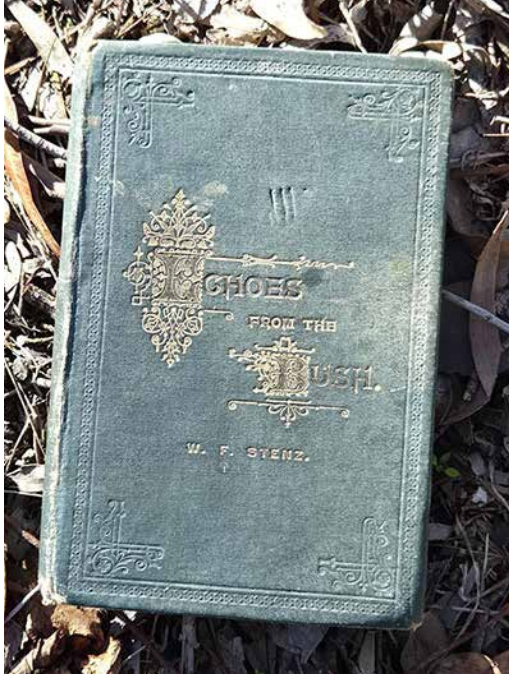
A few years later, according to another newspaper report,[2] one of the brothers was almost bitten by an adder, as he sat down to read while minding sheep – 'he drew himself out of danger, and then easily destroyed the reptile'. It seems the bush was alive with death adders!

I sometimes wonder what my ancestors made of this amazingly unique country. For the parents it would have been difficult, learning the seasons, learning the patterns of drought, learning about snakes. But for the children it would have been the background to their lives. Something to almost take for granted.

For the younger brothers, kangaroos provided an opportunity for great adventures. The youngest, Frank, wrote a short story about a kangaroo drive, where he and his brothers, Andrew and Christopher, would take turns chasing kangaroos past the others, who would be hiding with their guns.[3]

> *I bounded down after him, caught hold of his mighty tail and brought my rifle down between his ears. That settled him. I skinned him and went home in great triumph. That was the first kangaroo ever I lowered. When I got home and after we had had our tea, we told each other the adventures of the day.*

Willie, the oldest son, grew up to be a naturalist, as well as a carpenter. He could name the animals and plants, and recognise bird calls. He discussed observations with the well-known naturalist of the time, Alec Chisholm, via Alec's column in *The Argus*.[4]



Echoes of the Bush, by W F Stenz

Willie also became a published poet, with wonderful verses describing the birds and country where his family lived.[5]

> *I would like to*
> *behold the big*
> *mountain,*
> *And the grandeur of*
> *Paradise Hills,*
> *Where the gullies are*
> *dear to the wonga,*[6]
> *And the lute-voiced tumbling rills.*

After becoming deaf from an accident, he wrote sadly of remembering the songs of birds.[7]

> *Whilst the New England robin sings*
> *The song that springtime gladness brings.*
> *…*
> *The screeching parrots in the sky*
> *Shoot gleams of gold when passing by.*
> *…*
> *The butcher bird makes answer straight:*
> *"Three-quarters sold, for four and eight."*
> *…*
> *And I may listen long in vain,*
> *I shall not hear one glad refrain.*

It's hard to know how long it took my ancestors to love the country to which they had emigrated, so different from where they had come. They probably never loved the snakes, or even dingoes, which they called mutton-eaters, but some at least came to love the birds.

Perhaps I owe my love of birds, which set the direction of my life, to my great-great uncle Willie. I've even been known to write a poem or two.

For many years I worked as a national park ranger and environmentalist and so have a keen interest in my ancestors' impressions of Australia's unique plants and animals. Australia would have been so different to what they were familiar with. I am also interested in how Australia has changed since their arrival in the 1850s. I am now retired and so have more time to spend researching my family history.

1 *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW), 7 January 1873, 4.

2 "A Narrow Escape", *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (Grafton, NSW), 1 May 1877, 4.

3 Frank Stenz "A Kangaroo Hunt: An Exciting Day", *The Catholic Press* (NSW), 28 July 1900, 4.

4 Alec H. Chisholm "Nature Notes and Queries", *The Argus*, 3 July 1937, 30.

5 W. F. Stenz, Echoes from the bush (Sydney: Geo Murray and Co Ltd, 1897), 42.

6 The wonga is a native pigeon.

7 Stenz, Echoes from the bush, 10-11.

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Click **View Sample** to see what we do on www.bda-online.org.au

Biographical Database of Australia (BDA)

Trying to tackle those difficult research problems?

SAG has a fantastic range of online, volunteer led research interest groups, bringing together members with common focus areas.

Whether you're interested in a particular software package, a geographic area, genetic genealogy or writing, peruse the groups page on our website to discover what groups we have and when they meet:

www.sag.org.au/Research-and-Software-Groups

Museums of History NSW

ON THE RECORD

by Beth Sciffer, Lead Archivist, Collection Discovery Access Services

Great Migration: Irish immigration records and government schemes in NSW

Date: Friday 17 October 2025, 9:30am-3:00pm
Location: Conference Room, Western Sydney Records Centre
Price: $50 per person

Join us for a half-day-seminar on Irish immigration records featuring a series of talks by renowned expert historians Dr. Richard Reid, Dr. Perry McIntyre, and Dr. Damian John Gleeson. The talks will focus on the different government immigration schemes and the large paper trail of official documents that they left behind. This includes not just the ships' lists (the delight of family historians), but also the thousands of other records that provide a picture of how the system was set up and experienced by immigrants. As a bonus original State archives will be on display and there will also be the opportunity for a behind the scenes tour of the Western Sydney Records Centre

Find out more:
https://mhnsw.au/whats-on/events/great-migration-irish-immigration-records-and-government-schemes-to-nsw

Above: MHNSW: NRS-905-1-[4/2115]

Below: MHNSW-StAC: NRS-21054-4-5-D11626

New Index: Sentenced to the Parramatta Female Factory

During Family History Month, we were delighted to announce the addition of a new index to our website that has been created by listing all of the women sentenced by the Sydney Court to time in the Parramatta Female Factory. The names and information have been extracted from part of our series NRS-2514 Sydney and Darlinghurst Gaol Entrance and Description Books for the years 1819 to 1829. Information in these volumes include such things as the names of sentenced women, ship of arrival, offence and sentence. Any other names the women were known by such as married names or aliases are included and there is extra information in the 'Remarks' regarding other documents about the women such as Certificates of Freedom or census entries. Keep watching this space as work is continuing on the index, extracting further names from the 1830s and 1840s in the Sydney and Darlinghurst Gaol Entrance and Description Books. They will be added as each year is completed.

This index has been created by Margaret Jones and David Jones, who not only generously donate their time as MHNSW Collections Volunteers, but have also created this index in their spare time as a personal project and made it available to all of us.

Search the index by given name, family name or Ship:
https://mhnsw.au/indexes/female-factory/sentenced-to-parramatta-female-factory/

The photographs of the Newcastle State Dockyards

The NSW State Dockyard, Newcastle, opened in 1942 at the height of World War II. Brought under State jurisdiction by the NSW Government Engineering and Shipbuilding Undertaking Act, 1943, the dockyard played a large role in the war effort by meeting the increasing demand for 'ships, more ships, and still more ships.'

By the end of the war, 21 new vessels had been completed at the dockyard and more than 600 vessels had docked there and been repaired, many of which had been heavily damaged by enemy action. The dockyard remained a significant manufacturing asset for the state until its closure in 1987.

Our series NRS-21054 Photographs, negatives, slides and microfilm documents the range of activities undertaken at the State Dockyard, including the building, repairing and launching of new ships. These photographs have recently been digitised and are now available via the State Archives Catalogue for you to view at home!

Search for 'NRS-21054' in the State Archives Catalogue: https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/

Collections on Tour

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.

From missing wages to disputes between neighbours, the Courts of Petty Sessions (now known as the Local Court) were long a place where communities sought justice. From 1846, the courts settled claims for debts of up to £10, and their Small Debts Registers document countless cases.

As part of our Archives for Everyone project, we've partnered with NSW community groups to digitise and index these valuable records.

Join us at our upcoming events in Armidale and Newcastle for a unique opportunity to view these original documents and gain insights from our archivists. Featuring material from Museums of History NSW's State Archives, Caroline Simpson Library and museum collections, this talk will uncover fascinating histories of local communities in NSW and the people who shaped them.

Learn more: https://mhnsw.au/collections-on-tour/

WSRC Open Day – Save the date!

Join us on Darug Country on Saturday 22 November as MHNSW celebrates 50 years on site at the Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood.

Come and see the collections close up, hear from experts on a range of fascinating topics, take a behind-the-scenes tour and relax with good food and coffee in our unique environments.

Keep an eye our website for further details and announcements. See you there!

Registration of Brands: large stock branch cards available online

MHNSW-StAC: NRS-122-1-[13/8887]-[1069]

The Registration of Brands Act, 1866 required owners of large stock (including horses, sheep, and cattle) to register their unique brand with the NSW Government. By the 1920s, the Department of Agriculture was tracking the registration of large stock brands through thousands of index cards, which recorded the owner of the brand, their holding, their post town, as well as a visual depiction of the brand itself.

Emma McCosker is one of the thousands of registered owners of large stock brands captured within these records. After the death of Emma's husband, she successfully carried on a farming and grazing business in Inverell for several years with the help of her children. At the time of her death in 1947, Emma owned 165 cattle and 1 horse branded with her signature mark – an upside-down horseshoe enclosing the letter 'H'. Her sons Algie and Bruce, trustees of her estate, would apply to make the brand their own and continue on the family business.

The series NRS-122 Large stock brand registration cards (1923-1963) are digitised and available via the NSW State Archives Collection. Search for the series number 'NRS-122' and a name or location to find a card!

Search the State Archives Catalogue:
https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/

'New' Mental Health Records

An important set of mental health records has recently been transferred to the State Archives Collection from Western Sydney Local Health District. The transfer is particularly exciting as we thought that these records had not survived the test of time! The State Archives Collection has included some material for Parramatta Hospital and Rydalmere Hospital, but there were obvious gaps.

The new transfer contains a range of records, including patient admission registers, case books, administrative records and staff files. Admission registers are vital records, containing the details of patients admitted to the hospital, while case books provide treatment information for patients admitted to the hospital for long-term care.

We are very excited about these series that have now been added to the State Archives Collection:

- NRS-23957 Register of patients and admission books [Rydalmere Hospital] 1873–1968
- NRS-23968 Medical case books [Rydalmere Hospital], 1891–1934
- NRS-5135 Copies of letters sent [Parramatta Psychiatric Centre] 1872–1915

Learn more: https://mhnsw.au/news/new-transfer-parramatta-rydalmere-hospital-records/

A Farmer's Best Friend: images from the Government Printing Office

The Government Printing Office was established in the 1840s to assist in the printing and publishing of government publications. The office began taking photographs of the colony of NSW in the 1860s at the request of the British Government. Over time, the role of these photographers expanded, and they were instrumental in taking promotional photographs for all branches of the NSW State Government. This included over 6,000 glass plate negatives taken on behalf of the Department of Agriculture to be published in the Agricultural Gazette of NSW, 1890-1913.

The Agricultural Gazette of NSW aimed to spread information about agriculture and arboriculture, give advice to farmers, and educate the young seeking to be farmers, orchardists and vignerons. Photographs featured within the publication including everything from insects, pests, ensilage, grading merino sheep, rust in wheat, manures, and vineyards.

A sequence of images taken for the Gazette demonstrate the use of explosives in clearing land for agriculture. These images show a Mr Marks setting up the explosives for the clearing of the land. But he's not alone! A little canine helper can be found in several of the photographs assisting him in his work. Two hands and four paws make light work.

Watch the webinar: https://mhnsw.au/webinars/raising-the-farmer/

MHNSW-StAC: NRS-4481-4-371-[AF00218156]

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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.

OUR SAG COMMUNITY

BY DANIELLE TEBB

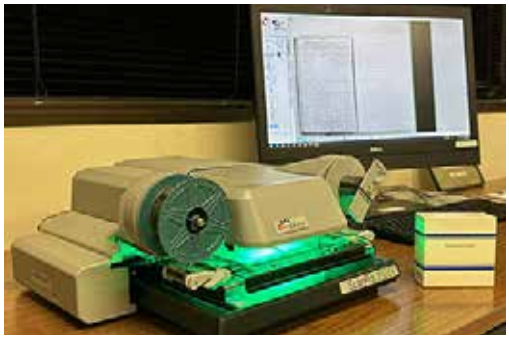
King's Birthday Awards

Congratulations to SAG member Kathleen Margaret Smith for her well-deserved Medal of the Order of Australia (AOM) for service to history preservation.

Kathleen has been a SAG member since 1993 and received the Diploma in Historical Studies in 1998 for her thesis: *The Matchetts, City & County* and recently published The *Matchett Family*. Kathleen is a founding member of the Liverpool Genealogical Society and a life member of the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society. Since 1987 she has supported the former by holding all positions on the committee, as well as volunteering in the Library, researching, publishing, and contributing regularly to their quarterly publication: *Links 'n' Chains*.

Kathleen Smith in the Genealogy Room, Liverpool Regional Museum, June 2025, taken by her daughter Neryda

ScanPro



Our new ScanPro scanner in action

A very big thank you to everyone who donated to our recent digitisation appeal. Your contributions allowed us to reach our targeted amount and, after seeing the latest model in action at Brisbane's Congress earlier in the year, we made the decision to add to the amount and invest in the top-of-the range model. While it doesn't look noticeably different on the outside, everyone who has used it has commented on how crisp and sharp the on-screen images are. Most importantly, all the various bits of software are now speaking to each other, so we anticipate smooth days ahead.

We congratulate the following members of the Society who recently completed the Certificate of Genealogical Studies:

Megan Atkinson, NSW
Nicola Bailey, WA
Harry Bell, NSW
Darren Bethell, WA
Kylie Brown, UK
Katherine Buchanan, NSW
Anne Desborough, VIC
Rosslyn Escott-Russell, NSW
Rebecca Franklin, WA
Janne Gorman, TAS
Jennifer Kirk, NSW
Karen Lonsdale, QLD
Christine Lowndes, NSW
Janet Lynch, QLD
Leah-Anne Newton, QLD
Bronwyn Paschalidis, VIC
Rachel Procter, NZ
Aletha Rowan, NSW
Leanne Seignior, NSW
Kylie Seretis, NSW
Leah Maree Stennett, QLD
Amanda Taylor, TAS
Thomas Wilson, WA

If you would like to enrol in our February or August 2026 intake for the Certificate of Genealogical Research, or want to find out more about our other online and in-person courses, visit: **www.sag.org.au/StudyOnlineWithUs**

Deaths

The following death of a member was notified to the Society in May 2025.

We extend our sympathies to his family and friends.

Geoffrey Byrne
Wyoming, NSW
9 April 2025

Photo: Chris Lawson, Unsplash

SAG CEO Ruth Graham speaks at Goulburn Mulwaree Library for Family History Month

I took the opportunity of a couple of days off and accompanied Ruth to Goulburn for her scheduled talk at Goulburn Mulwaree Library. We were lucky to encounter dry weather and had a number of pit stops at historic cafes and pubs. On our way to dinner, we passed this art installation (right) on the corner of Auburn and Verner Streets, which I found very appropriate given the theme of the issue.

Nil tenure by Dr Amanda Stuart was installed in Goulburn in 2017 and is a companion piece to one in Canberra. A former park ranger, Amanda was aware of the problem causes by feral dogs and created these sculptures after seeing the carcasses of wild dogs shot by farmers, allowing her to reflect on opposing views of dog and human relations.

Ruth's talk: *My Family in 20 ships (and counting)* went very well and we were able to catch up with a handful of SAG members: Emily, co-lead of the Writers' Group, Susan, coincidently a contributor in this issue and Jeanette.

1 Marg Wade, 'Story behind Civic's sculptures of menacing, ghostly dogs with pyjamas' (*Region Canberra*, 9 January 2022) https://region.com.au/story-behind-civics-sculptures-of-menacing-ghostly-dogs-with-pyjamas/522988/

The three sections of Nil Tenure by Dr Amanda Stuart, Goulburn NSW

Do You Know This Family?

Member Ishbel recently submitted this image, asking for assistance in identifying the people in the photo. The photo has been in her family for over 100 years and was taken in the studio of Adam Maclay of Colombo Street, Stanmore, Christchurch, New Zealand. Ishbel has traced her family history extensively, but hasn't come across any links to New Zealand: "I am hoping that someone in Australia or New Zealand may recognise the people and solve the mystery of their identity. I have been trying for many years to find out who the people are and would appreciate any information regarding them."

Ishbel can be reached at: **ozscot12@gmail.com**

SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN GENEALOGISTS

We help people find their family & share their stories.

Will you help us continue this legacy?

For more than 90 years, the Society of Australian Genealogists has been at the heart of family history in Australia. Every day, we help people preserve stories that would otherwise be forgotten.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we rely on the generosity of our members and supporters to continue this vital work. Your donation, no matter the size, helps us:

- Preserve and digitise irreplaceable records and donated family histories
- Maintain our library and collections for the future
- Deliver education and resources to members & the public

Leave a Legacy That Lasts

By including a bequest to the Society in your will, you ensure that your passion for family history lives on, helping others discover their past long after you are gone.

Whether you are honouring your own ancestors or helping someone find theirs, your support makes a real difference. Please consider donating today — or leaving a gift in your will. Together, we can make sure every family story can be told.

Visit www.sag.org.au/gift or call us on (02) 9247 3953 to learn more about donating or leaving a bequest.

EDUCATION@SAG

BY VANESSA CASSIN
EDUCATION MANAGER

As we (hopefully) put the wet, cold winter months behind us, Spring is the perfect time to get out and do some good, old fashioned family history fieldwork. We got into the spirit early with a SAG member tour of Rookwood Cemetery, held on the last day of winter. Once again, Geoff Bovard, our wonderful library volunteer and member of the Friends of Rookwood, led a fully-booked group around many of the heritage areas of this incredible cemetery, entertaining and informing them with his stories of the significant monuments and people buried there. Why not make the most of the sunshine and mild temperatures by visiting some of your ancestors' grave sites.

SAG staff and education volunteers are discussing for our program of events and courses for 2026, and it is already shaping up to be an exciting year of learning. Many of your favourite events will be returning, some will be getting a makeover, while we'll also be adding some fabulous new courses, conferences and lectures to the program.

While this is going on, there's still lots for you to enjoy in the final months of 2025. Many of our research interest groups have their final meetings of the year coming up and we are looking forward to welcoming another cohort into our online Beginners Practical Introduction to Family History, commencing on Wednesday 1 October. This course is not just for new researchers, it is also suitable for those who are picking up their research after a break, especially if most of that research experience occurred prior to the widespread use of online resources and genetic genealogy. Join us to discover how to navigate the multitude of online platforms and resources now available.

For those of you looking for something more advanced, London-based New Zealand professional genealogist Donna Rutherford will be joining us in November to present a two-session series on visual phasing. Donna recently presented a very successful series of webinars on working with segments in genetic genealogy and we are very excited to have her deliver further sessions. In what appears to be an invasion of our neighbours from across the ditch, Fiona Brooker is also presenting a very useful four-part workshop on working with DNA matches, with the final two parts to be presented in late October. If you missed the first two sessions and want to join this program, it's not too late, as recordings are available for you to catch up on the sessions – just contact the SAG office for assistance.

We also have a final virtual conference for the year, scheduled for Saturday 25 October. The theme is 'Being a Professional Genealogist' and if you have ever wondered if you could turn your passion for family history into a side hustle or full time job, come along and hear from those who have done just that and learn from their experiences.

Many of amazing volunteer group leads and course presenters have been working hard to bring interesting and informative sessions to our members. There have been some impressive presentations and stories shared so far. Thank you to all the volunteer group leads who bring so much passion to their topics of interest.

We have also added two new groups since the last issue of *Descent*. The Indian and South Asian Group enjoyed a well-attended inaugural meeting where we heard the story of SAG member and Group Lead, Rachel Croucher's Punjabi ancestors and learnt about the importance of oral history and family heirlooms for keeping family stories alive from guest speakers Dr Alice Garner and authors Cassie and Shaun Gilmartin.

The One Place Focus Group also had their inaugural meeting, lead by volunteer Yvonne Masters and our Library Manager, Gemma Beswick. This group sprung from one of our Family History Connect sessions and I want to thank both Yvonne and Gemma for acting on the suggestions raised at this session and arranging the first group meeting in record time. We have already received some great feedback from the attendees and I'm looking forward to hearing more about the various topics our members are researching.

I would like to acknowledge all the people and organisations who have presented at an event between May and July this year, the vast majority of whom do so on a voluntary basis. Those assisting since the end of July will be acknowledged in the next issue of *Descent*. We could not bring our busy schedule of events to members without their contributions. Any omissions from this list are purely accidental.

Event	Names
Presenters: Webinars, Book Club, Let's Talk About	Brad Argent (Ancestry Studios), Kathryn Barrett, Patrice Connelly, Larry Czarnik, David Deasey (The Institute for Defence and Security Studies NSW), Dr Damian Gleeson, Vicki Hails, Christine Harris (FamilyHistoryWA), Christine Hingerty, Kate Horan, Melissa Hulbert, Jenny Joyce, Danielle Lautrec, Lilian Magill, Dearbhla Moroney (University of Limerick), Kristine Newton, Christine Woodland, Kirsten Wright (Find and Connect)
Presenters and Assistants: Courses	Dr Fleur Creed, Christine Hingerty, Carole McCulloch, Jeffrey Madsen, Dr Betty O'Neill, Andrew Redfern
Conferences	Lisa Apfel, Nicholas Dixon, David Hearn, Martin Spencer, Michael Veitch, Ian Waller, Christine Yeats
Presenters: Family History Connect	Patrice Connelly, Christine Hingerty, Yvonne Masters, Andrew Redfern
Presenters and Leads: Groups	Gemma Beswick, Sally Byatt, Jo Callaghan, Elizabeth Capelin, Judith Charlton, Larry Czarnik, Heather Garnsey, Elizabeth Gordon, Kathleen Hackett, Lyn Hudson-Williamson, Melissa Hulbert, Suzanne Hyde, Kieran Jordan (Ireland XO), Stephen Lally, Allison Leathart, Lorraine Luks, Brian Maclachlan, Dr Hilda Maclean, Deborah Martin, Yvonne Masters, Kristine Newton, Irene O'Brien (City Archivist for Glasgow), Diana Pecar, Emily Purser, Sandy Pullen, Andrew Redfern, Sharon Shelley, Helene Shepherd, Sally Skulte, Professor Scott Smith, Maureen Trotteer, Sharion Watson, Dr Michael Williams, Veronica Williams, Christine Woodlands
DNA One on One Action Planning session volunteers	Christine Hingerty, Melissa Hulbert

DNA CORNER

BY CHRISTINE WOODLANDS

Making sense of your DNA matches: The new AncestryDNA clustering tool

In July 2025, AncestryDNA introduced a powerful new feature – Matches by Cluster - that helps us visualise how DNA matches relate both to the tester and to each other. Released as part of the Pro Tools suite and currently in Beta, this is an important step forward for family historians looking to organise and interpret their genetic matches.

Clustering itself isn't new in genetic genealogy. MyHeritage has offered AutoClusters since 2019 and third-party tools such as GeneticAffairs AutoClusters, DNA Painter's Cluster Auto Painter (CAP), and GEDmatch Tier 1 Clustering have been available for years. The key difference is that clustering is now built directly into AncestryDNA, giving users of the world's largest consumer DNA database the convenience of analysis without needing to export data elsewhere.

Understanding clustering and its benefits

A cluster displays matches who share DNA with both the tester and each other – often pointing to a shared ancestral line. Instead of analysing matches one by one, visual clusters help identify branches of the tester's family tree more efficiently.

Clustering can:

- speed up the process of organising DNA matches,
- help determine which ancestral line a match belongs to, and
- reveal connections among matches even when the common ancestor is unknown.

How the AncestryDNA clustering tool works

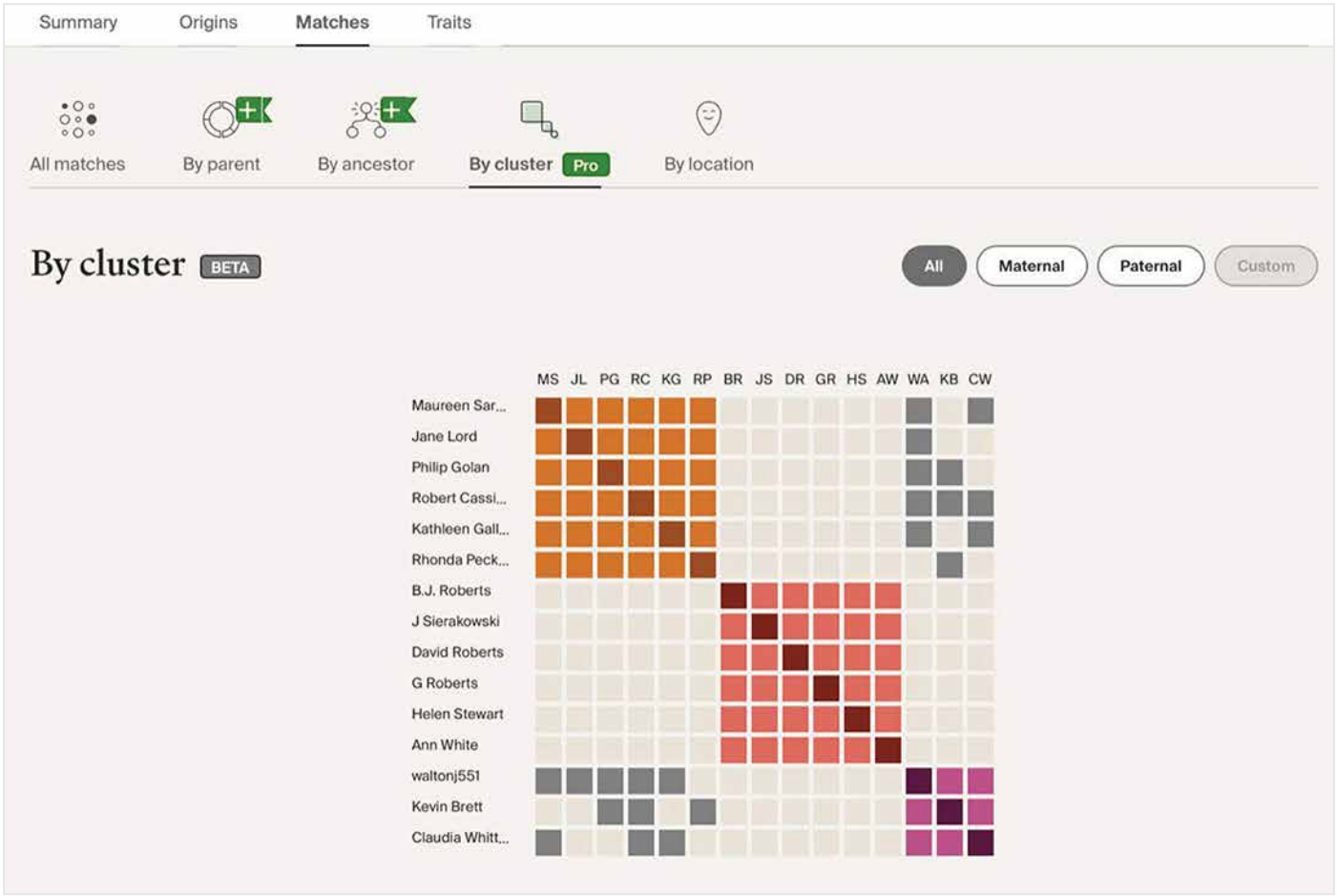
AncestryDNA identifies 'shared match' connections, grouping together matches who share DNA with the tester and with each other to form a cluster. There are two display options:

- Grid – A colour-coded matrix where each cell shows whether two matches share DNA. Coloured blocks highlight clusters - groups of matches who share DNA with each other and with the tester.
- List view – Lets you expand each cluster to see more details about its matches, with the option to add or remove all matches in a cluster from groups in one click.

Example of AncestryDNA clustering in action

This Matches by Cluster grid is a visual map showing how the tester's DNA matches connect to one another. Each square represents whether two matches share DNA with each other (and with the tester).

- Coloured blocks (orange, coral, purple) – Each colour represents a distinct cluster, likely matches who descend from the same ancestral couple.
  - Orange cluster (top left): Matches MS, JL, PG, RC, KG, and RP are interconnected, suggesting they belong to the same branch of the tester's family.
  - Coral cluster (middle): Matches BR, JS, DR, GR, HS, and AW form another genetic group.
  - Purple cluster (bottom right): Matches WA, KB, and CW form another genetic group.



- Grey squares – two matches share DNA but are not in the same cluster, often because they connect to the tester through more than one branch. For example, first cousins with multiple shared ancestral lines may appear here. In this example, the orange and purple clusters are on the maternal line, while the coral cluster is on the paternal line
- Blank/off-white squares – these pairs of matches don't share enough DNA with each other (below the 20 cM threshold) to be linked in clustering.

Beta version – What this means for you

The clustering tool is still in Beta, which means:

- Features and settings may change.
- The layout and match results could be updated as development continues.
- Ancestry is collecting user feedback to refine the final release.

Because results may change, it's a good idea to save screenshots or notes for future reference.

Current and future match range settings

At present, the tool only includes matches between 65 cM and 1,300 cM – typically first to third cousins.

- Close family matches (over 1,300 cM) are excluded to avoid linking too many clusters together.
- Distant matches (under 65 cM) are excluded to keep results focused.
- Matches must also share at least 20 cM with each other to be grouped into the same cluster.

Coming soon: You'll be able to choose exactly which DNA matches to include and set your own cM range — without being limited to matches above 65 cM — allowing you to create clusters tailored to your research goals.

Access — Pro Tools subscription required

The clustering feature is part of Ancestry's Pro Tools, a paid add-on for subscribers. Charges are monthly and can be started or stopped at any time. For short-term projects, you might subscribe for just a month, while ongoing research may benefit from the six-month discounted option.

When the subscription ends, you'll lose access to the clustering view, but any saved notes and match groups will remain in your account.

Clustering vs. manual sorting

Until now, many researchers have relied on AncestryDNA's colour-coded groups to sort matches manually. While this can be precise, it's time-consuming and lacks an at-a-glance overview. Clustering, by contrast, is automated and groups related matches in minutes. It provides an excellent starting point for deeper research.

My suggested approach: Use clustering first to get a quick, big-picture view, then use manual tagging to keep your research organised for the long term.

Practical benefits of clustering in research:

- Breaking brick walls – Unknown matches in a cluster with consistent locations or surnames can point to missing branches.
- Distinguishing ancestral branches - Clusters often naturally split into branches.
- Spotting endogamy or pedigree collapse - Overlapping clusters or many grey cells may indicate interrelated ancestries.
- Prioritising matches - Smaller, tightly connected clusters can be the fastest route to breakthroughs.

Final thoughts

AncestryDNA's Matches by Cluster tool provides a clear visual roadmap through the complexity of DNA matches. Even in its Beta form, with a limited 65 to 1,300 cM range and a Pro Tools subscription requirement, it's already saving researchers time and revealing hidden connections.

With upcoming adjustable cM ranges, this tool will become even more flexible and powerful. Whether you have used clustering on MyHeritage or third-party tools, having it built directly into AncestryDNA is a genuine game-changer, making complex match lists more manageable and family mysteries more solvable.

Sources Used

- https://www.ancestry.com.au/c/ancestry-blog/dna/dna-matches-by-cluster?srsltid=AfmBOoqNgEmTjcjaYF3OjJPrcMzTgHnhTJ02cM2-75CObiZaQw4E0bvo
- https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Science-of-Matches-by-Cluster?language=en_US
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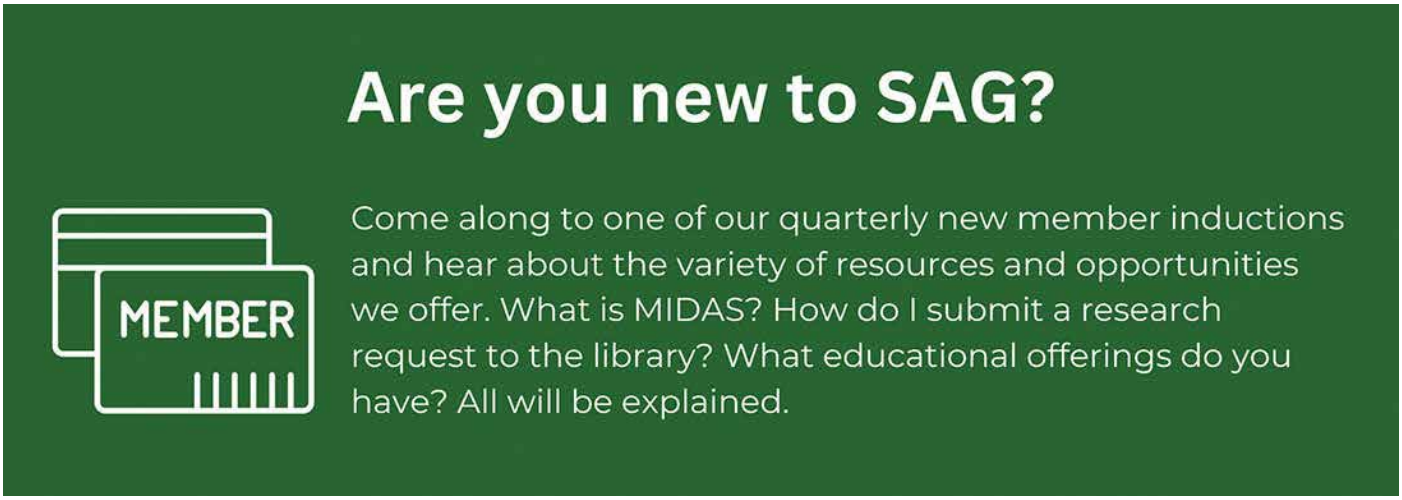
- https://aimeerosehaynes.com/breaking-down-your-dna-matches-a-look-at-ancestrys-new-pro-tools-cluster-feature
- https://blog.kittycooper.com/2025/07/the-new-clustering-tool-at-ancestry/
- https://dna-explained.com/2025/07/10/how-to-use-ancestrys-new-match-clusters-and-what-they-mean/



RETRO RESEARCH
that never goes out of style!

BY GEMMA BESWICK
LIBRARY MANAGER
and personal assistant to a pocket-sized dog with the confidence of a lion and a penchant for lounging in the sun

Animals have long played an important role in family life—not just as beloved companions, but as vital contributors to daily survival and well-being. They offer comfort, loyalty, and a deep sense of connection, often becoming full members of the household. Beyond companionship, animals have supported families through their work—providing food, income, transportation, and protection. Many have served in more demanding roles as well, assisting in war, search and rescue missions, farming, and law enforcement. In this issue, we highlight library resources that celebrate the many ways animals have supported, shaped, and stood beside families through the years.

Farming and livestock

Australia

- *The stockman* by Hugh Sawrey, Mary Durack, Marie Mahood, Keith Willey, R.M. Williams, Ron Iddon, Olaf Ruhen. A3/9/5 (Book)
- *The shearers* by Patsy Adam-Smith. A3/45/3 (Book)
- *Buttabone Stud Park 1878-1978: Merinos bred by the Millear family for a century*. A3/60/Pam.3a (Pamphlet)
- *Droving days* by H. M. Barker. A3/60/32 (Book)
- *Merinos, myths, and Macarthurs: Australian graziers and their sheep, 1788-1900* by J. C. Garran and L. White. A3/60/39 (Book)
- *Cattle country: an illustrated survey of the Australian beef cattle industry; a complete directory of the studs* edited by Frank O'Loghlen and Frank H. Johnston. A3/60/69 (Book)
- *No Sundays in the bush: an English jackeroo in Western Australia. 1887 - 1889* by Tom Carter. A6/CAR/9 (Book)
- *Brothers George and Joseph Gorton: pioneer cattlemen, sesqui-centenary 1826.7 - 1976.7* by Joyce May Clarke. A6/GOR/1 (Book)
- *A family of farmers: a history of the Leitch family, 1836-1989* by Duncan Burrows. A6/LEI/4 (Book)
- *Dust, flies and livestock: the life of a stock agent* by Ian Murray. A6/MUR/9 (Book)
- *Memoirs of a stockman* by Harry H. Peck. A6/PEC/1 (Book)
- *Pie for breakfast: reminiscences of a farmhand* by Harry Reffold. A6/REF/1 (Book)
- *A stock agent remembers: anecdotes from a life in the pastoral industry in Australia* by Alec Watson. A6/WAT/Pam.7 (Pamphlet)
- *Bees and oranges: the Wiggins of Bee Farm Road, Springwood 1885-1950* by Patricia Ann Sutton. A6/WIG/1 (Book)

New South Wales

- *Sale-O Sale-O: history of livestock auctioneers, carriers, buyers and drovers on the North Coast* by Helen Trustum. B3/12/1 (Book)
- *Springfield: the story of a sheep station* by Peter Taylor. B3/60/19 (Book)
- *Ollera, 1838 to 1900: a study of a sheep station* by A. V. Cane. B4.365/20/2 (Book)
- *Genesis of cattle on central North Coast* by C. E. Dick. B4.444/1/CD.3 (Electronic Resource)
- *Hoof beats and whip cracks from the past: reminiscences of an old stockman together with instructions on horse training* by Wilfred Ingram. B4.550/1/Pam.2 (Pamphlet)
- *Sheep and shepherds (sheepwashers & shearers) on Bibbenluke 1851-1867* by Barbara Dawson. B4.632/12/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- *Index to itineraries and returns of the Commissioners of Crown Lands 1837-1849 and itineraries of Foster Fyans returns of population and livestock 1844-1846* compiled by Kaye Vernon and Billie Jacobsen. B8/29/1 (Book)

Victoria

- *On Mount Emu Creek: the story of a nineteenth-century Victorian sheep station* by Mary Turner Shaw. C4.271/20/1 (Book)
- *Cattlemen & huts of the High Plains* by Harry Stephenson. C5/90/12 (Book)

Tasmania

- *Snarers and cattlemen of the Mersey High country: the Lees of Lees Paddocks* by Simon Cubit. D4.304/1/2 (Book)

South Australia

- *Puttapa, springs from Beltana: half a century on a sheep station in the Flinders Ranges* by Richard W. & Margaret E. Ragless. E4.730/20/1 (Book)
- *Land of mirage: the story of men, cattle and camels on the Birdsville track* by George Farwell. E4.733/1/1 (Book)

Queensland

- *Barcoo saga: the story of Portland Downs, a Queensland sheep station* by G. W. Lilley. H3/51/5 (Book)
- *Story of Lansdowne: the history of a western Queensland sheep station* by Graham Wodehouse Lilley. H3/60/3 (Book)
- *'Toobrack': pictorial history of a Queensland sheep station* by Joyce Rogers. H4.730/51/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- *Queensland horse and cattle brands index, 1872* QLD-DIR-LND:9 (Microfiche)
- *Queensland horse & cattle brands index 1873-79* QLD-LND:13 (Microfiche)
- *Sheep brands, 1877-1885* QLD-LND:10 (Microfiche)

New Zealand

- *Tutira: the story of a New Zealand sheep station* by H. Guthrie-Smith. K4/20/7 (Book)

War and conflict

- *Light Horse: the story of Australia's Mounted Troops* by Elyne Mitchell. A3/71/22 (Book)
- *Maygar's boys: a biographical history of the 8th Light Horse Regiment AIF 1914-19* by Cameron Simpson. A3/71/53 (Book)
- *Sand, sweat & camels: the Australian companies of the Imperial Camel Corps* by George F. and Edmée M. Langley. A3/72/23 (Book)
- *The man with the donkey: John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the Good Samaritan of Gallipoli* by Irving Benson. A6/KIR/1 (Book)
- *The Australian Commonwealth Horse* by George Newbury. A8/20/10 (Book)
- *The Boys in green: a centenary history of the 1st Australian Horse and the Light Horse Units of Harden and Murrumburrah, New South Wales*. B4.587/71/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)

- *The galloping guns of Rupertswood and Werribee Park: a history of the Victorian Horse Artillery* by Lindsay C. Cox. C3/71/1 (Book)
- *Vets in uniform, 1841-1941: Aberdeenshire's veterinary surgeons in the armed forces* by Sandi Howie. P4.1/70/1 (Book)
- *Calcutta light horse A.F.(I.) 1759 - 1881 - 1947* Anon. V4.IND/71/3 (Book)

Local history and Transport

- *Camels and the outback* by H. M. Barker. A3/69/2 (Book)
- *Coachbuilder book of designs*. A3/45/5 (Book)
- *Australian horse drawn vehicles* by Michael Stringer. A3/69/3 (Book)
- *The horse and buggy days* by H. McGregor. A3/69/5 (Book)
- *With camera, horse and wagonette: the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie photographs of Ralph Snowball* by Norm Barney and Bert Lovett. B4.300/1/9 (Book)

Dogs

- *Lead with a watchful eye: the silver jubilee of guide dogs in Australia* by V. M. Branson and W. B. C. Rutt. A3/61/49 (Book)
- *Dog owners, 1830: being a list of persons who have given description of their dogs at the Police Office, Hobart Town* by Rosemary Davidson. D4.000/2/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)

Horse breeding and racing

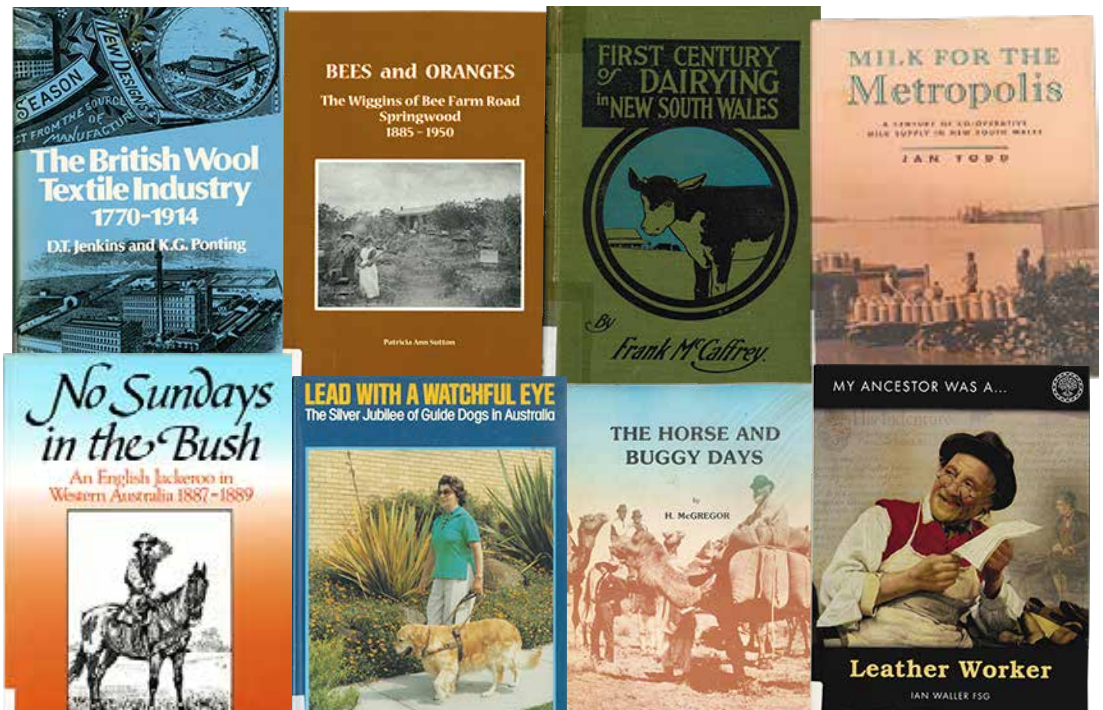
- *The prince of whips: the life and works of Blue Mountains pioneer, Harry Peckman* by John Low and Jim Smith. A6/PEC/3 (Book)
- *Horsemen of the first frontier (1788-1900) and the Serpent's legacy* by Keith R. Binney. B3/30/18 (Book)
- *Kings for a day: the story of one hundred and fifty years of horse racing in Goulburn and district* by John Bartley. B4.580/11/1 (Book)
- *Farriers' Company, 1619-1800* abstracted and indexed by Cliff Webb. N8.23/12/36 (Book)

Dairying industry

- *Jim Sawyer talks about life and dairy farming in Yering* by Mary Howden. A6/SAW/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- *Three lifetimes of dairying in Victoria* by Ken Sillcock. A6/SIL/1 (Book)
- *First century of dairying in New South Wales* by Frank McCaffrey. B3/60/9 (Book)
- *Milk for the metropolis: a century of co-operative* milk supply in New South Wales by Jan Todd. B3/60/17 (Book)
- *The Hunter Valley: an anniversary tribute by the Hunter Valley Co-Operative Dairy Co. Ltd., Hexham, N.S.W. 1903-1953.* B4.300/10/1 (Book)
- *The Oak and the dairy industry from the beginning* by P.D. (Tom) Scarr. B4.324/10/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- *Green gold: the story of the Gloucester Dairy Industry 50th Anniversary, 1905-1955.* B4.422/10/1 (Book)
- *Illawarra pastures: celebrating the diamond jubilee of the Illawarra Co-Op. Central Dairy Society Limited, 1899-1959* compiled by W. A. Bayley. B4.527/10/1 (Book)
- *Diamond jubilee: Nowra Co-Op Dairy Co. Ltd., 1902-1962* by W. A. Bayley. B4.540/10/1 (Book)
- *Gold from gold: the history of dairying in the Bega Valley* by Stephen B. Codrington. B4.550/10/1 (Book)
- *Dairying: from foundations to deregulation: a history of dairying in Wagga Wagga and surrounding districts* by Des Crowley. B4.650/12/1 (Book)
- *Dairying history of the Darling Downs* by Doreen O'Sullivan. H4.350/10/1 (Book)

Leather and wool

- *History of the founding of the wool industry of Australia* prepared by Charles T. Burfitt. A3/60/2 (Book)
- *Flanders in Australia: a personal history of wool and war* by Jacqueline Dwyer. A3/70/69 (Book)
- *The Hon. Thomas Holt, MLA:* wool merchant, politician, churchman, Lord of the Manor by M. Hutton Neve. A6/HOL/Pam.1 (Pamphlet)
- *Robert Benjamin Stevens, leather merchant* by Sue Thompson. A6/STE/6 (Book)
- *Wool and ships: the story of John Sanderson and Co* by Joan Gillison. C3/60/2 (Book)
- *100 years of the Midland Agricultural Association: a pioneering story of the inception and development of the merino wool industry in Tasmania* by N. A. Nicolson and G. A. Finlay. D3/61/Pam.3 (Pamphlet)
- *Living on the land: glimpses of a community working with wool* edited by Julieanne Richards. D4.210/1/2 (Book)
- *The bale fillers: Western Australian wool, 1826-1916* by Christopher Fyfe. F3/60/4 (Book)
- *My ancestor was a leather worker: a guide to sources for family historians* by Ian H. Waller. M2/10/158 (Book)
- *The British wool textile industry, 1770-1914* by D.T. Jenkins and K.G. Ponting. M3/60/8 (Book)
- *'Wool-our hope': a short history of the Worshipful Company of Woolmen*. N4.23/12/13 (Book)



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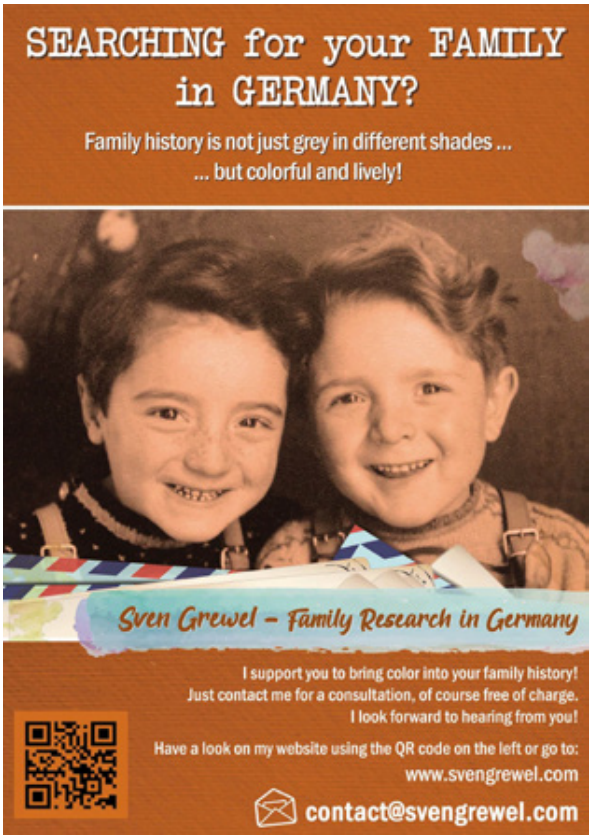

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