

Footsteps



**Port Macquarie & Districts
Family History Society Inc.**

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Cover Photo: *Family outside their tin shack, called “Wiloma” during the Great Depression in NSW in 1932. Photo from Trove Pictures PIC 15611/31 96 LOC*

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

We extend our best wishes to everyone for ‘better times’ ahead in 2021.

We look forward to getting back together in person at our regular meetings and proposed seminars, and to socialising and sharing our common interests, experiences, and knowledge. May you keep safe and healthy throughout the coming year.

NEW MEMBER

A warm welcome is extended to Andrew Callander from Lake Cathie. We hope you enjoy your association with our Society and that you will benefit from the resources, meetings, and workshops available.



PRESIDENT'S TWO CENTS WORTH

Diane Gillespie

Last year provided a challenge for everyone as we adapted to the requirements imposed by health authorities to keep ourselves safe. Australia has been fortunate in imposing strict quarantine requirements early in the year as the Covid-19 pandemic runs rampant across the world. The cases of infection and deaths, though tragic for individual families, have remained low and our health and government agencies are to be commended for staying 'ahead of the curve.'

Zoom proved to be a blessing last year enabling us to maintain contact with members. It has been interesting to gauge our members' changing reactions to using Zoom rather than attending meetings in person. While some of our members have preferred to attend our General Meetings in person, many other members have accepted Zoom into their lives and homes and adapted to the use of new technology.

Personally, I have watched many webinars and attended Zoom meetings both here and across the world. Time zones can prove problematical but using the recorded versions of these informative seminars I feel I have broadened my knowledge and met new friends from far and wide.

Nothing, not even a pandemic, will keep family historians from their research!

Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society has many activities planned for the Bicentennial year of European settlement in Port Macquarie and we invite members to join us in person or possibly online in the coming months.

We have certainly come a long way in two hundred years when a small group of Volunteer Convicts and their guards and officers ventured along the largely unexplored NSW North Coast to establish a penal settlement on the banks of the Hastings River. The convicts had "volunteered" to establish the settlement on the promise of a Ticket of Leave after a period of service. They had various skills that were deemed necessary to build an outpost that would become a place of secondary punishment in the colony of NSW.

These settlers encountered members of the Birpai nation who had occupied the lands along the Hastings River for many generations. The newcomers displaced the indigenous people who were dispossessed and scattered. Two hundred years later we continue to grow as Australians, showing respect and acknowledging the events of the past but moving on together to build a better Australia for us all.

Your hard-working committee has been toiling behind the scenes planning events that will include the NSW&ACT Annual Conference in September, but we also have a major event planned in conjunction with other community groups at the time of the Bicentenary in April, where we will be launching a Bicentennial Legacy Convict Database. We look forward to welcoming Dr Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, Dr Perry McIntyre, Dr David Roberts, John Heath, Meg Keneally and Tamsin O'Connor to Port to launch this database.

Our meetings will gradually move back to the CC Mac Adams Centre and the Meeting Room at the Library - but once again we will be guided by local government authorities and their requirements on numbers and physical distancing in order to remain Covid-safe.

I hope members have taken advantage of the restrictions of last year to further their research, write stories and generally refine their family history. I look forward to seeing you again in the Library or at the CC Mac Adams Centre in the near future.

FROM THE EDITOR

Margaret Blight

In this edition of Footsteps, the focus is on family members and others whom we admire, perhaps for doing something special, or just because they are our family, and we are who we are, in part, because of them. In addition, there are a couple of articles about ‘outsiders’ – stories concerning Port Macquarie’s first convicts which will be included in a proposed new publication from the Port Macquarie Historical Society.

I always appreciate the stories I receive, as well as other snippets of information, poems, recipes, and funny newspaper articles. This issue has a few of these ‘other’ items - I hope you enjoy the mixture! Thank you again to all those who have contributed.

Next time would you like to write about the sporting, academic or workplace achievements of one or more of your family members or relatives? Or about someone who has had an interesting job or was a pioneer in his or her field of work? Or perhaps you have a special interest or skill, and you have since learned that one of your ancestors was particularly competent in that area. I have always admired delicate ribbons and laces, and fine hand embroidery, then I discovered that my grandmother, and her mother, and her aunties, and her sisters were all ‘lace-makers’ and competent dressmakers – I didn’t know these ladies, but perhaps I inherited some of their skills!

I’m sure there are many Members whose children, parents, grandparents, or ancestors have special skills, or have worked in interesting places, or have overcome obstacles to find creative solutions to everyday activities – I would love to print their stories. Submissions for the May edition of the journal will close on **Sunday 11 April 2021**, and don’t forget that everyone who contributes will go into the draw to win a one-year Membership subscription to our Society.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH MY RESEARCH CHARACTERS

Noeline Kyle

I have ‘fallen in love’ with many of my ancestors. I admire my great grandmother Nurse Mary **Kirkpatrick** and have become very fond of the female convicts in my father’s maternal line. But some of my favourite female historical characters are found working in senior roles in the NSW public service. Over the years and decades of my research on women in these senior

roles a few of them stand out as remarkably interesting and often they were a thorn in the side of their male superiors and the system.

In the 1880s it was determined that only women would be appointed to those institutions supervising women and girls, including the prison service, which is the focus of my latest research. It is not surprising that the women who took on these senior administrative roles were usually older, experienced, competent, and willing to challenge both inequities and the incongruity of much that governed their working lives and the women and girls they cared for.

One of these was Sarah **Cunynghame**, nee **Gibson**, an outspoken critic of the reformatory school system for girls, an early juvenile justice approach for the young. Her criticisms placed her into direct conflict with her superiors, especially the Acting Director of Charitable Institutions at the time, Mr **Hanson**.

Sarah had been in the NSW public service since 1875 and had been Matron at Erysipelas Hospital, Parramatta from 1876; Macquarie Street Asylum Parramatta from January 1881; and in July 1896 she was appointed an Officer under the Children's Protection Act in the Office of Charitable Institutions. She was appointed to Shaftesbury Reformatory for Girls in 1898. Shaftesbury Reformatory was established in 1878 under the Department of Prisons.

By 1900 Sarah was writing to the Acting Director of Charitable Institutions of New South Wales outlining her objections to policy and planning in the school. In particular she was concerned with its increasing large size, the policy being followed of dumping 'incorrigible' girls in the school, and the inadequacies and inconsistencies she found in the Industrial Schools Act and Reformatory Schools Act (of 1866). She stated that if *'more or less incorrigible' girls from the state boarding out¹ scheme were to be committed to the reformatory school then so should 'more or less incorrigible girls' from the whole colony.* There was, she said, *an inconsistency in the existing legislation, if only state children unblemished by crime could be treated by the authorities in this way.²* Successive magistrates had found the same inconsistencies and had great difficulty with decisions in allocating children between the various industrial and reformatory institutions and the boarding-out system.

Sarah **Cunynghame's** criticisms were not appreciated by the Acting Director and it is worth quoting in full, one part of his response to show the flavour of his initial reaction to a female administrator offering advice on official policy:



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“Mrs Cunynghame may be qualified to hold the position of Superintendent of the Shaftesbury Reformatory, but from my official knowledge of her judgement and ability I am not disposed to think that her opinions upon questions of public policy are entitled to serious consideration; and . . . Why she should feel called upon to give expression to such belief I am at loss to understand, but that she had done so confirms my opinion that she would act more judiciously if she confined her duties to the domestic work of the Institution under her control”³

Sarah **Cunynghame**'s considerable working experience and her substantial career in the field thus counted for nought in the eyes of her male superiors. The dismissal of her with demeaning remarks that she confine herself to domestic work was not uncommon for women at the time.

That Sarah **Cunynghame** was a strong character, even combative, is likely true. At the same time only a confident, assertive woman would challenge in this way. The women who followed Sarah **Cunynghame** and were appointed to senior positions with the NSW Prison Service would face similar barriers. Many stayed long enough to make significant contributions.

¹ Boarding out was introduced in NSW in 1881. This was a system whereby state-dependent children were placed with an ordinary family and most of the orphanages and other large child institutions were closed.

² *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, 1 February 1919.

³ Colonial Secretary, Special Bundles, Industrial School for girls, NSW State Records & Archives, 5/5229.

DEAR ANCESTOR

By Walter Butler Palmer (1868-1932) Contributed by Jenny Asher

Your tombstone stands among the rest,
Neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiselled out,
On polished, marble stone.

It reaches out to all who care,
It is too late to mourn.
You did not know that I exist,
You died and I was born.

Yet each of us are cells of you,
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse,
Entirely not our own.

Dear Ancestor, the place you filled,
One hundred years ago,
Spreads out among the ones you left,
Who would have loved you so.

I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew,
That someday I would find this spot,
And come and visit you.



VIOLET ADA PEERS

Greg Hearne



Violet, or as she was known in the family “Vi,” or Nanna, to me, was my maternal grandmother.

Her story is one of romance during the First World War, leaving her siblings in England after the conclusion of the War and migrating to Australia to start a new life, a life, that was to be vastly different from the one she was enjoying in England. The decision must have been a difficult one in 1920, but with her parents both deceased, she did not have to worry about their security.

Violet was born 12 March 1889, in the No. 3 Infirmary Quarters in Parkhurst Prison, Northwood on the Isle of Wight¹. Her father, Arthur **Peers**, was an Assistant Prison Warder and her mother was Emily **Langdown**. Violet was one of thirteen children, being the ninth born. Two of her siblings died young, one in infancy and the other at nine years of age.

In 1901, the family were living at 4 South View Cottage, Carisbrooke, where Violet was attending school.² In 1911 at the time of the Census, she was a boarder, living at 32 Hunnyhill, Newport, Isle of Wight, with the **Clacey** family and working as a schoolteacher employed by the local borough council.³ Her father, along with her stepmother, sister Minnie Joyce, and step sister, were at Dartmoor where her father was a Principal Warder, residing at 1B Quarters, Princetown, South Devon.⁴

Between 1911 and 1916, Violet journeyed to the west of London, to Southall, where she took up a teaching post, either at the St. Marylebone School in South Road, Southall, or the Beaconsfield School, a high school for girls. (I have been unable to determine which one of these schools.)

In August, 1916 the St. Marylebone School was taken over by the Australian Imperial Forces as a military hospital that was named the No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital. Towards the middle of September 1916, the Beaconsfield school was requisitioned to increase the number of beds. Initially, the Hospital was utilised as a clearing station but in November 1916, it specialised in caring for amputees and the fitting of artificial limbs.⁵ With both schools being commandeered, Violet stayed on in a clerical position. It was here that Violet met her future husband and my grandfather, John Brown **Black**. Sadly, she had lost two younger brothers during the War.

John was attached to the Australian 56th Infantry Battalion and was wounded on the Western Front at Polygon Wood on 28 September 1917, where he lost his left leg. Eventually, after being evacuated from France, he was transferred to the No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital on 15 January 1918⁶. Originally from Ayrshire, Scotland, he had emigrated on board the ship *Marathon*, arriving in Sydney on Tuesday 28 November 1911⁷. His parents and siblings followed a couple years later, and they all settled in the Narrandera area of NSW.



*Grandfather, John **Black** and Nanna, Vi Peers in England abt. 1919. Photo from **Hearne** family collection*

From his arrival at Southall in 1918 until his departure, John was recovering from the trauma of being injured and it was here that he received his artificial leg. It was during this time, he and Violet most probably became friendly and she would have thoroughly understood his war injury and its future implications. On 6 May 1919, John left England on board the hospital ship *Karoola* and arrived in Sydney 27 June 1919.⁸ Prior to his war service, John had worked for the railways at Junee as a Relief Officer.⁹

A year later, on 7 July 1920, Violet arrived in Sydney from London, as a 2nd Class passenger, on board the ship *S.S. Osterley*¹⁰ and Violet and John were married at Auburn on 12 July 1920¹¹ five days after she arrived in Australia! John was working at Granville at the time.

My mother, Betty Jean, their only child, was born 23 April 1921 at Stanmore. In May of the same year, John was transferred to the Sydney Ticket Office at Central due to his disability¹². The family were then living at 10 McKenzie Street, North Strathfield.

My grandmother had a younger sister, Minnie Joyce, known as ‘Joyce’, having been born 20 May 1900 at Parkhurst, Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight¹³. Growing up was awfully hard, as her stepmother treated her very harshly so her elder sisters in England allowed her to stay with them, alternately, to escape the abuse. Eventually the sisters in England pooled enough money to buy Minnie a ticket to come to Australia to visit and stay with her older sister, Vi. Minnie arrived in Sydney on the *Moreton Bay* 16 November 1925¹⁴.

My grandmother was an accomplished pianist, and she taught my mother to play. My mother later went on to perform in local concerts and eisteddfods. I can recall my mother telling me that she and her mother had a difficult time with her father, my grandfather. Unfortunately, he had a bad temper probably resulting from his war trauma, the loss of his leg, and the discomfort of wearing his artificial limb. Because of the uneasiness at home, my grandfather often went into respite care.



*Nanna Vi **Black** and grandfather, John **Black** – Photo from **Hearne** family collection*



*Violet Ada **Black** and her sister **Minnie Joyce Shawyer** circa 1950s. Photo from **Hearne** family collection*

Like my grandmother, her sister Joyce, married here and lived at 10 Nepean Avenue, Normanhurst raising a family of two sons and a daughter. The two families were close but when Joyce's husband, died in 1949, their bond became stronger.

My grandfather died suddenly on 26 December 1953 (Boxing Day)¹⁵. I was only about two and half years old, when he died, so I did not know him. However, I do have photo of him with my older brother, Bill and my Nanna, who is holding me.

My grandmother never returned to England to visit her surviving younger sister, Gertrude, in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Her sister, Joyce, died at Normanhurst in January 1967¹⁶ and her only surviving sister in Cheltenham, Gertrude, died in January 1970¹⁷. My grandmother, the last of her siblings, died 2 March 1970¹⁸ at Kogarah whilst visiting friends.

¹ GRO Year 1889, Vol. 26, Page 587 Mar Quarter, Isle of Wight

² Ancestry.com.au 1901 England Census, Hampshire, Carisbrooke; RG 13/1022

³ ancestry.com.au 1911 England Census Isle of Wight,93, Newport; RG 04/5701

⁴ ancestry.com.au 1911 England Census Devon; Lydford; Tavistock

⁵ <https://anzac-22nd-battalion.com/hospitals-england>

⁶ ancestry.com.au Australia, World War 1 Service Records, 1914-1920

⁷ ancestry.com.au NSW, Australia, Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922

⁸ ancestry.com.au Australia, World War 1 Service Records, 1914-1920

⁹ NSW State Archives NRS 12922 Railway Personal History Cards

¹⁰ ancestry.com.au NSW Australia, Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922

¹¹ NSW BDM-marriage 1920/14816

¹² NSW State Archives NRS 12922 Railway Personal History Cards

¹³ GRO Year 1900 Vol. 26 Page 600 June Quarter, Hampshire, Isle of Wight

¹⁴ Ancestry.com.au UK & Ireland, Outward Passengers. 1890-1960

¹⁵ NSW BDM Death 25841/1953

¹⁶ NSW BDM Death 10903/1967

¹⁷ GRO Cheltenham 7b Page 839

¹⁸ NSW BDM Death 1459/1970



***John and Vi Black** with grandchildren, **Bill Hearne** (standing) and **Greg Hearne**. Photo from **Hearne** family collection*

THE DAIRY FARMER WHO NEVER MILKED A COW

Bill Dawson

The name on the cream cans read “T J **Dawson**, Oxley Island”. This indicated that T J **Dawson** was a dairy farmer who supplied cream in those cans to the Manning River Co-operative Dairy Company. From the time I could read I had seen these cans in the dairy, on the slide being pulled along by a draught horse and on the river wharf where the cream was collected by the cream boat.

T J **Dawson** was my father’s father, so I called him Grandfather. Sometimes he was Grandfather **Dawson** to distinguish him from my mother’s father, Grandfather **Durie**. People of his age called him Tom, his daughters called him Dad and his sons called him Father.

As the cream cans showed, Tom **Dawson** was a dairy farmer, but as far as I know he never milked a cow. In fact, I can rarely remember seeing him at the cow bails during milking or at the dairy where the milk was separated into cream and skim milk.



*Perc, Harold and Bill **Dawson** milking by hand in 1949.
Photo from **Dawson** family collection*

Although Tom **Dawson** didn’t milk a cow, his children did. From the time he bought his farm at the northern end of Oxley Island in 1923, family members did the milking by hand and this continued well into the 1940s. Early on it was any of his eight children who were the right age. Later, it was two of his sons, Perc and Harold, who remained to run the farm, and Perc’s wife Rita.

Tom’s grandson, Trevor, was the last person to own and run the farm. In 2021, Trevor still lives on part of the original farm in the house, much changed, that his grandfather moved into in 1923.

While Tom took no part in the milking, he was in charge in those early years and was busy in other aspects of the farm’s life. He worked on the crops and with the pigs. The pigs were fed on corn and lucerne grown on the farm and on skim milk from the dairy. For years, even long after he had given up ploughing, he headed for the river bank each evening with a scythe and a corn bag to cut lucerne for the pigs. He could squat down on his haunches for hours in the barn husking corn. To break the husk, he used a large nail on a leather thong.

For nearly all his life Tom smoked a pipe. Late each day he sat on a long stool on the front verandah and cut from a plug of tobacco enough to fill his pouch for the next day. From there he saw the grassed paddock sloping down past a big willow tree and rising again to the tree lined bank of the Manning River. To the left of the lucerne paddock lay the track to the wharf. From across the river came the sound of cars rattling across the old highway bridge at Ghinni.



Grandfather Tom Dawson smoking his pipe outside the laundry in 1953. Photo from Dawson family collection

Thomas John **Dawson** was born on 12 February 1866 at Taree Estate, an area south of the present city and across the river from Tinonee. Tinonee was a bigger and more thriving settlement than Taree at that time. He was the second child and eldest son of William **Dawson** and Sarah Ann **Bishop**, who were on one of the Flett Estate farms. He spent all his life on the Manning River. His schooling was at Tinonee, where Mr Richard **Churchill** was the headmaster.

In his younger days, Tom was “a very keen and enthusiastic cricketer and old wielders of the willow” could remember “the way the googlies came fast and furious down the wicket when his turn at bowling came.” Iron quoits was another game he liked to play. He was also “recognised as a worthy exponent of the gun and took part in many pigeon shoots which were popular on the Manning in the early days.” His double-barrelled shotgun hung in the kitchen at Oxley Island for many years, a small hole in the side of one barrel, caused, he said, by dripping water.

For three years Tom worked in the bush at the back of Tinonee, mainly cutting sleepers and bridge girders. Even in his later years, he could use an adze with care and precision. He often told the story of the goanna who got off with his tucker bag and lunch.

For the rest of his life, he was a farmer. When twenty, he rented a farm on the Flett Estate near his father. Four years later he moved to Hector **Gollan**'s farm at Mondrook and stayed there for the next thirty-three years, growing maize and millet. He and his family moved to Oxley Island in 1923 and he then became a dairy farmer.

The Tinonee correspondent for the Wingham Chronicle on 3 February 1900, reported that “*Mr Thos Dawson of Tilkah was married today to Miss Mary Clunne of Taree in the Wesleyan Church at Taree. I wish the happy couple all good wishes for a prosperous future.*” A further report in the same paper on 14 February headed “*A Very Pretty Wedding*” said that the bride “*looked very nice in a dress of cream cashmere trimmed with cream Bengaline and cream silk lace, and the customary wreath and veil. The happy couple,*” it concluded, “*left by the Coraki for Sydney to spend their honeymoon.*”

Tom was a teetotaler and a member of the Rechabite Lodge for 64 years. He was also prominent in the Good Templars. He had a keen interest in politics and farming affairs. He subscribed to The Sydney Morning Herald, The Land and The Primary Producer. He received them by post, and he read each carefully. His memory went back from the time of Robert **Menzies** to the politicians of Federation. He had special recollections of big George **Reid**, one of the first of our larrikin lawmakers.

Probably because he had had to work so hard, Tom was a careful and sometimes hard man. Mary ran the house on a small allowance and they never had the benefit of electric power. His beliefs sometimes led to his treating some family members less well than he should have. On one particularly hot day, Tom told his youngest son Alf to stop working the horses and let them rest in the shade. He then told Alf to get a hoe and get to work cutting some burrs!

Tom had a large number of stories and reminiscences - some true tales and some tall ones. Many of the true ones related to his younger days around Tinonee - the goings on at Joe **Chapman**'s store, the times when patrons came out of the hotel to find the shafts of their sulky through a fence, sulky on one side, horse on the other. There was the young bank manager who took his first deposit, "a good man" said Tom, even though he was later charged with embezzling money. Maybe he was right, though, because the man later became the respected Town Clerk in another town. One of his clear memories was of seeing the captured outlaw, Jimmy **Governor**, jaw bandaged as the result of a gunshot wound. Jimmy was on the deck of the *S.S. Electra* heading down the river from Wingham on his way to trial and execution in Sydney. The date was 5 October 1900.



Mary and Tom near their back verandah in 1949. Photo from Dawson family collection

Tom liked to tell his stories and often did so as he sat in the evening on the long sofa on the back verandah. Inside, Mary cooked tea on the big black wood stove. As darkness came, she lit the Tilley lamp that hung from the hessian ceiling over the long kitchen table.



Tom and Mary at their 50th Wedding Anniversary in 1950. Photo from Dawson family collection

I was fortunate in getting to know Mary and Tom Dawson very well. In 1942, my brother Ken and I moved from Sydney to live on the farm with our grandparents. It was one of the best years of my life. I respected, admired, and loved Mary and Tom and I never tired of listening to my grandfather's yarns and recollections. For years after that I spent all my Christmas holidays at the farm. Before and after Enid and I were married we visited and stayed with them and they became part of her life as well.

Thomas John **Dawson**, died on 23 May 1957 in the old Mayo Hospital in Taree at the age of 91.

He is buried in the Anglican section of the Dawson River Cemetery, Taree. Mary survived him and he outlived all but two of his brothers and sisters. His own eight children were all living, along with 25 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

ANCESTORS WORTHY OF ADMIRATION

Diane Gillespie

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants” claimed Isaac **Newton** in a communication to a fellow scientist, Robert **Hooke** in 1675. By learning from our ancestors and building upon this knowledge, we all ‘stand on the shoulders of giants’.

Our ancestors, whether they came to the colonies in chains at the pleasure of his Majesty or whether they saw an amazing opportunity to relocate on the other side of the world, have created a better life for us, their descendants, here in Australia and so I believe they are all worthy of our respect and admiration.

The convicts sent initially to NSW, then to Tasmania and later to Queensland and Western Australia had no choice in their destiny after they had been found to be on the wrong side of British justice. Their fate was determined by circumstance and often did not reflect the harsh reality of the Justice System.

Very few of the convicts would have considered they were ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’ as they toiled in a foreign land, often in terrible circumstances for little or no remuneration. Some early arrivals were lucky to spy an opportunity to build a better life and took every chance to ensure their children were better off than they were. With little or no education these poor unfortunate creatures were often limited in their ability to improve their situation.

My earliest ancestor to arrive in NSW was James **Martin** in 1825. He came from Ireland and could neither read nor write and earned his living by the sweat of his brow. He was listed as a ploughman on early documents but was noted as a labourer on later documents. However, he ensured his son, James, received at least a rudimentary education, allowing him to petition the **Macarthur** family in 1865 about the tenanted land his father was farming at the time of his death. James was unsuccessful on that occasion, but he had ‘stood on the shoulders’ of his father’s labour and tried to improve his life and that of his wife and children.

Assisted immigrants, Malcolm and Mary **Paterson** took a leap of faith when they came from Scotland at the latter stages of the Highland Clearances in 1837. Their prospects in the often-infertile highlands of Co. Argyll, Scotland were bleak, but the lure of possibly owning their own land drew them to NSW. They initially worked as farmers for William **Bowman**, before striking out on their own. Malcolm and Mary found that the prospect of owning their own land was surmounted by the need to ‘earn a living’ and they applied for publican’s licences in various hotels in central and later in western NSW. They not only ‘stood on the shoulders of giants’ by learning farming skills in Scotland, but they were able to apply these skills and learn new ones in another country.

The Chinese race generally portray a strong filial piety and are duty bound to pay homage to their ancestors. To leave the ‘old country’ and venture forth settling in the land of the NEW



Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) – English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, theologian and author – Image from Wikipedia

Gold Mountain was really a break in tradition. Many young men were sent from their homes in Guangdong or the Pearl River areas to ‘make their fortune’ before they were expected to return home as wealthier individuals and better able to support their extended families, but these men did not always return home and settled in the colonies, ensuring a better life for their descendants. Chin Lang Tip had strong ties to his homeland as he arrived in Victoria, already married, and he was expected by his family to increase his standing in the community and ‘make his fortune’ before he returned to China to support his extended family.

What caused the change in circumstance and attitude with Chin we may never know but he was a pioneer as well. He could see opportunity in Victoria for his rapidly growing Australian family and seized it with both hands. He sent some of his sons back to China to be ‘educated’ but had not taken into consideration the cultural differences his sons would encounter. Yet, by the time he died in 1901 he owned several parcels of land, as well as interests in quite a few small businesses.

Ancestors worthy of admiration? These are just a few of those I admire – why on earth am I documenting their exploits if I don’t have admiration for them? Isn’t that why family history is so compelling?

After following the times, trials and tribulations of my many ancestors through this obsession of family history I stand in awe of the hardships and challenges that each one has overcome within his or her lifetime.

Acknowledging ancestors from a Twenty First Century perspective is a challenge as we tend to apply our thinking from now to their circumstances many decades ago. Even our parents’ and grandparents’ generations lived in times that we, today, could not imagine surviving, let alone thriving in.

DAUNTLESS HOOD

Bev Mulcahy



*Front page of the Sydney Morning Herald
5 April 1924*

It was a warm day in Sydney – 9 April 1924. May was heavily pregnant and would be so relieved when this baby was born, this pregnancy had seemed so long. It would be number seven (7) for her and Bert, and hopefully this would be the last.

She did not know how they would be able to feed any more, especially now that Rosie, her eldest was back home with her own baby. A Grandmother at the age of 37 and still having her own babies!

May had started to feel that uncomfortable feeling in her abdomen in the early hours of the morning and Bert had gone to fetch Mrs. **Smith** – the local midwife. She was very well respected in the neighbourhood and had helped May with five of her seven children.



*Ruby Dawn **Brown**
09.04.24 – 13.04.2019 –
Photo from **Mulcahy**
family collection*

With Mrs. **Smith** now taking care of May, Bert and Grandfather took the children in to town in the buggy to see the British warships that were in dock at Woolloomooloo. It was a terribly busy day in town with people coming from all around to see them.

Bert was pleased to see May was sitting up in bed when they returned, holding their newborn daughter. Bert proceeded to tell May about his favourite ships which were the *HMS Dauntless* and the *HMS Hood*.

“*I think we should call her Dauntless Hood*” said Bert. Both May and Mrs. **Smith** were quite taken aback at that suggestion from Bert and very promptly replied,

“*I don’t think so Bert! We will call her Ruby Dawn*” and that is how my mother got her name.

VALE CARMEL DANIELS 1930 - 2021

Carmel Daniels passed away peacefully on Friday 29 January 2021 in the Palliative Care Unit at Wauchope Hospital. She was born on 1 May 1930 in Maitland NSW, the 14th child of John Thomas **Fuge** and Alice Margaret **Fuge** nee **Heiler**

At the age of 15, her parents decided to move to Pelican, Lake Macquarie, where she instantly made friends, including Nola **Dyson** (nee **Crooks**) with whom she remained. They were to remain friends for the next 75 years.

Carmel’s interest in family history developed during the lead-up to her mother, Alice’s 100th Birthday in 1986 and she produced a wonderful document which was unveiled on the night. Her love of research and chasing family lines was to continue for the rest of her life. However as many know not all research is fruitful – her nemesis was Henry – her paternal grandfather. Try as she might, Henry remained a mystery for her for decades, but despite not finding enough information to satisfy her curiosity, she still enjoyed the challenges and advice offered by members of our Society.



She was always a bundle of energy and had a kind word for everyone. We will miss her ready smile and of course, her many wonderful jokes.

We also send our sympathies to the family of John **Younger** who passed away on 28 December 2020. John had been a Member of our Society since the year 2000.

In addition, we acknowledge the passing of Jim **Pearson** who was a Member of PMDFHS for five years. We send our sympathies to the family.

Looking Forward – Looking Back

➔ **Looking Forward:** In April 2021 we commemorate 200 years of European settlement of Port Macquarie - for more than 40,000 years the Birpai people have been the original inhabitants of the Port Macquarie-Hastings region. Some of the first European visitors were convicts sent to the newly established penal settlement in Port Macquarie to serve time for secondary offences.

↶ **Looking Back:** On 10 Mar 1821 Captain Francis Allman was appointed as Commandant of the new settlement of Port Macquarie, as follows:

“GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL ORDERS.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

10th March 1821.

CIVIL DEPARTMENT.

“HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR and COMMANDER of the Forces has been pleased to appoint Captain FRANCIS ALLMAN, of the 48th Regiment, to act as Commandant of the New Settlement about to be established at Port Macquarie, with a Salary of Seven Shillings and Sixpence per Diem, commencing on and from the 1st of the present Month of March, and to be paid from the Colonial Police Fund, until His Majesty's Pleasure shall have been received thereon.

“HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR and COMMANDER of the FORCES has also been pleased to appoint Lieutenant WILLIAM WILSON, of the 48th Regiment, to act as Engineer and Inspector of Public Works, at the Settlement of Port Macquarie, with a Salary of Five Shillings per Diem, commencing on and from the 1st Instant, and to be paid from the Colonial Police Fund, until His Majesty's Pleasure shall have been made known thereon.

By Command of His Excellency,

F. GOULBURN, Colonial Secretary.”

(Sydney Gazette 10 Mar 1821 - <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2180126>)

On 21 Mar 1821, the “First Fleet” Expedition sailed for Port Macquarie.

“The Expedition for the intended new settlement of Port Macquarie, under command of Captain F. ALLMAN, of His Majesty's 48th Regt. sailed for its destination on Wednesday last. His Majesty's brig Lady Nelson, schooner Prince Regent, and Mermaid cutter, are the vessels that have taken down the troops, prisoners, and stores.”

(Sydney Gazette 24 Mar 1821 - <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2180153>)

Save the Date

NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies

Virtual Conference

Saturday 11 September 2021

Port Macquarie

Email: conference2021@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.conference2021.wixsite.com/pmdfhs>

GEORGE COOKE FROM THE *BATAVIA* 1818

Clive Smith

On 25 March 1823 James **Bowman**, the Principal Surgeon, wrote from the General Hospital, Sydney, to the Colonial Secretary that “*George Cooke a Convict who has performed the medical duties at Port Macquarie ever since that settlement was made, is now become free by the term of his transportation having expired*”¹. This seems to indicate that George **Cooke** was amongst the first volunteers at Port Macquarie.

On his arrival at Sydney aboard the *Batavia* on 5 April 1818, George **Cooke** gave his age as 21, his place of birth as Gloucester, and his trade as Surgeon & Apothecary. He was described as being 6ft tall, with a fair ruddy complexion, brown hair and hazel eyes.² He had been convicted at Maidstone, Kent, of larceny on 18 March 1816 and sentenced to transportation for 7 years.³ On 2 May 1816, he was received aboard the hulk *Retribution* at Woolwich; it was not until 14 October 1817 that he was transferred to the *Batavia* for transportation to New South Wales.⁴

On 7 November 1820, he was issued a Ticket of Leave No 375/2398, following the Governor’s response on 3 June 1820 to his petition (undated). According to his petition, after his arrival in the colony he had been appointed as an assistant at His Majesty’s General Hospital at Parramatta. He had then held a medical situation for almost 18 months under Lieutenant King aboard H.M. Cutter *Mermaid*. His petition was supported, and signed by, Lieutenant Phillip P. **King**⁵. George **Cooke** would have been aboard the *Mermaid* when **King** and John **Oxley** visited Port Macquarie in May 1819.

On 21 July 1820, George **Cooke** gave evidence at an inquest, as to the cause of death, having opened and examined the body of the deceased, held at the Field of Mars.⁶ On 14 May 1823, the Colonial Secretary advised Captain **Allman** that George **Cooke**, free by servitude, was allowed to proceed to Port Macquarie by the Cutter *Sally*.⁷ On 8 July 1823, Captain **Allman** certified that George **Cooke** had been “*in medical charge of the Prisoners at Port Macquarie from the 18th Octr. 1821 to the 5th July 1823.*”⁸ This was in relation to payment for his services, and carries annotation calculating the salary due to him from 18 March (the anniversary of his conviction, and the date his sentence expired) to 5 July 1823. [It might also indicate that George **Cooke** did not, in fact, arrive at Port Macquarie until 18 October 1821. If that is the case, it would appear that the settlement was without a medical officer for the first few months, contrary to Macquarie’s instructions.]

¹ NSWSA: NRS897,4/1815, p 183

² NSWSA: NRS12188, 4/4006, p 4

³ TNA: HO 27/12, p 181

⁴ TNA: HO 9/7, p 13

⁵ NSWSA: NRS 900, 4/1861, pp 73,73a

⁶ NSWSA: NRS 1024, 4/1819, p 201

⁷ NSWSA: NRS 992,4/3864, p 46

⁸ NSWSA: NRS 897,4/1815, p 153

JAMES SEVENCROFT BLOMFIELD - PORT MACQUARIE'S SCOUNDREL CONVICT

Rex Toomey

By the early 19th century, London had grown to be the largest city in the world and in 1835 it had a population of nearly two million people. The main form of communication was through the dozens of newspapers issued both daily and weekly. In June 1835, the local citizens would have been surprised and shocked to read the following newspaper heading: '*Extraordinary Charges Against a Clergyman*'. This headline presaged the downfall of a pillar of society, an ordained Minister of the Church of England who was also a cousin of the Bishop of London. That person was the Reverend James Sevincroft **Blomfield**, who had been charged with the theft of a pair of gold spectacles. Sadly, this was not the first time the good Reverend's name had appeared in the newspapers!

James **Blomfield** had been baptised on 23 December 1793 at Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, the son of John and Sarah, nee **Mann**. On 23 July 1817 at St James', Bury, St. Edmunds, he married Mary Ann **Friend**, the daughter of a well-known Bury confectioner. There were three known children from this union, Henry Sevincroft, Marianne Eliza and Jane. On 14 October 1821, he was ordained a Deacon at Norwich Cathedral and shortly after took up residence with his family at the Vicarage House, Aldeburgh.

On 4 April 1827, a trial was held at Bury, St. Edmunds, at which an action of libel was brought by **Blomfield** against Mr **Tempest**, a Magistrate of the County. **Tempest** had written several letters 'imputing ... conduct unbecoming a clergyman and habits the most degrading to human nature.' Later, **Tempest** had called **Blomfield** a 'blackguard'. During the trial, several allegations against **Blomfield** were revealed, including improper advances to two local sisters. However, the result was that he was awarded eight hundred pounds in damages.

Just prior to the trial, **Blomfield**'s wife Mary, aged 29, died after a 'short but severe illness at her father's house on 17 March 1827'. This occurred immediately after giving birth to their daughter Jane. It was later reported her '...heart (was)... broken by unkind treatment' by **Blomfield**. At the same time, **Blomfield** had already sold the contents of the Vicarage House, at Aldeburgh, on 13 February 1827. His second child Elizabeth died in Paris on 13 February 1829, aged eight years.

After the death of his wife Mary, **Blomfield** married again and because of his suspected activities became '...a regular blot in the **Blomfield** family escutcheon.' In the early 1830s, he asked his cousin (the Bishop of London) for four hundred pounds so that he could go to Van Diemen's Land as a settler where he would be 'made for life.' The money was quickly raised to get rid of this troublesome family member, and it was used to pay for his passage out, the purchase of sheep and farming implements, and everything needed for the voyage. However, instead of reaching his destination, **Blomfield** left the ship at the Cape of Good Hope, sold the sheep and farming equipment for a good profit, and returned to England.

In London, **Blomfield** began another dubious venture in which he promoted a book in which he intended to write about, and illustrate his travels to, the Cape of Good Hope. The scheme involved going into the countryside and approaching clergymen and other town officials from

whom he sought a five shillings subscription for this future work. Later evidence stated **Blomfield** was ‘a good-looking man, of gentlemanly exterior and imposing address’ and suggested he had been collecting subscriptions for over three years!

Everything came to a head on Friday, 12 June 1835. **Blomfield** had gone to the home of Mr. Charles **Douglass** of Pentonville and was taken into the parlour by the servant. Whilst there, he gave his spiel about publishing the Cape of Good Hope book and solicited **Douglass** to become a subscriber stating, ‘*it would be a very interesting work*’. However, when **Douglass** declined to be a subscriber, **Blomfield** left the house and took with him a pair of gold spectacles which **Douglass** had left on a table in the parlour.

On Tuesday 23 June 1835, **Blomfield** was charged before a magistrate at Tottenham with obtaining money under false pretences for the proposed book and stealing Douglass’ gold spectacles. The false pretences charge was dismissed; however, the magistrate felt the evidence was so strong regarding the charge of stealing, that he committed **Blomfield** to trial. On Monday, 6 July 1835 at the Old Bailey, the now 41 year old **Blomfield** was tried and found guilty and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Now in custody, **Blomfield** became one of the many thousands of felons to feel the full weight of British justice. In one respect, he was fortunate that the gold spectacles were only valued at ten shillings because had they been assigned their true worth of ‘greater value than five pounds’, he would certainly have faced the death penalty! At least one newspaper intimated his family ‘connections’ resulted in the lower value of the goods and other charges being ‘hushed up.’ The report continued ‘*while hundreds of starving wretches were sentenced to the worse than death, yet that the Bishop’s nephew [cousin] would not have to encounter the Earthly Hell.*’ So, what was driving **Blomfield**’s behaviour? One newspaper stated that ‘*His present degraded position is the result of gambling speculations. For years the reverend culprit has been a kind of dependant on the low hells of the metropolis... (and) ...lost large sums at play*’.

On 17 July 1835, **Blomfield** was taken from Newgate Central Criminal Court to the prison hulk *Hardy* at Portsmouth. He only spent a short time on board before being moved to the convict ship *Royal Sovereign* which sailed from Portsmouth on 29 July 1835 arriving in Port Jackson on 12 December 1835. During the voyage, **Blomfield** spent a month being treated for ringworm by the surgeon.

On arrival in Sydney, **Blomfield**’s ‘clergyman’ occupation and education placed him into the category of ‘specials’ and a short time later, he was despatched 230 nautical miles north to Port Macquarie on the Hastings River. The previously mentioned ‘good-looking man’ was now described as having sallow complexion, with a missing front tooth, a scar inside the left elbow and a large round scar outside the left leg. This indicated the voyage out had required some physical readjustment into his new prisoner society!

In the 1837 New South Wales General Muster of Convicts, **Blomfield** is shown as employed by the ‘Government’ at Port Macquarie. In November that year, he was a constable at ‘Brickfields’ making a statement against the convict John **Carter** for only processing five

hundred of his required daily allotment of one thousand bricks. He also petitioned the Governor in 1838 to be allowed to provide religious instruction to settlers at Rollands Plains.

On 30 April 1840, **Blomfield** received his Ticket of Leave allowing him to remain in the Port Macquarie district. Ten months later he requested permission to marry 38-year-old convict, Catherine **Hogan**, but this was declined because it was recorded on his indent that he was already married with three children. A different record shows that the marriage was approved on 15 March but never took place. When the census was taken on 2 April 1841, he was living in a brick house at Port Macquarie, with three other males, two of whom had Tickets of Leave.

His Certificate of Freedom was issued on 7 September 1841 and **Blomfield** left Port Macquarie for Sydney. Obviously eager to earn some money, he advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* his intention to give a lecture at the Olympic Theatre in Hunter Street on Monday 19 September. Entitled '*The Prodigal Son*', the lecture was 'for the benefits of the rising generation' to be given by the 'Rev. Sevenscroft **Blomfield**, Christ College, Cambridge (after a banishment of many years from his native country)'.

By January 1843, **Blomfield** appeared to be once again up to his old tricks. An advertisement at that time stated, "*If Mr. J. S. **Blomfield**, formerly a Minister of the Established Church, but lately a Portrait and Landscape Painter, does not call and pay the amount due for Board, the things left will be sold in fourteen days from this date to defray the same. P. H. Colbron*".

Blomfield also came to the attention of the Sydney Police, who recorded the following in the *Register of Flash Men*:

*'**Bloomfield** (sic) is lately free from North – Port Macquarie. He dresses and apes the Clerical in his coat, neckcloth and step...he is an enormous glutton...he is now at **Kene**'s with a little girl, [a] young [woman] whom he is pleased to style his niece ... I have lost sight of this personage 1843.'*

On 24 April 1843 at St Peter's Church, Newtown, **Blomfield** married Eleanor Anne **Banks** and records show a son Vernon was born in 1844 but he died shortly after and was buried in the Liverpool Cemetery.

Sometime around 1845, **Blomfield** made his way back to England but it is unknown if he took his wife with him. In London, he put his literary talents to good use in a 64-page book published in November 1845 entitled '*Talent and Trial, or The Adventures of a Good Son*'.

On 7 May 1846, his son Henry Sevenscroft **Blomfield** married Charlotte **Spencer** at St George's Church, Southwark. James Sevenscroft **Blomfield** is clearly shown as the father of the groom but it is unknown if the father attended. This could indicate that the family had not completely disowned James Sevenscroft **Blomfield**.

However, there is ample evidence that **Blomfield** had not learnt any lessons from his transportation to Australia. His name regularly appeared in the English newspapers associated with larceny and embezzlement cases over the ensuing ten years. In 1850, the public of Wereham, near Stoke Ferry, were urged caution in dealing with a person calling himself '**R. Bradford**' and '**R. LeBradford**' where he had obtained goods from various tradesmen in the

neighbourhood. He was also identified as the same person ‘as the clerical swindler – the Rev. J. **Blomfield**, who has for years lived by the most barefaced acts of swindling... carried on... under all sorts of names and disguises, of which the following are a few - the Rev. J. **Kandale**, A.B., the Rev. J. **Kenney**, the Rev. J. Sevenscroft **Bloomfield** (sic), Mr. **Simpson**, the Rev. Mr. **Bradley**, Dr. **Case**...’

In November 1851, **Blomfield** was the subject of an article in the *Reynolds Newspaper* under the heading of “A Swindlers Career”. This article mentioned his early life as a curate of Albury (Aldeburgh) and his being transported for seven years to Sierra Leone (this must be New South Wales as no convicts were transported to Sierra Leone). It mentioned some of his early career and misdeeds together with recent dealings that resulted in the final paragraph stating, “*How such a man can have been for years leading the degraded life of a swindler is one of those mysteries that it is difficult to unravel.*”

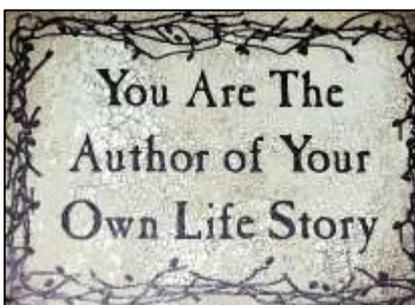
Following a trial at the Old Bailey on 26 November 1851, under the name of Robert **Collingwood** aged 55 years, he was convicted of unlawfully obtaining goods to the value of six pounds ten shillings and ordered confined for six months. Back at the Old Bailey in January 1853, **Blomfield**, together with his wife Mary and under the names of James (now aged 58 years) and Mary **Bradley** were convicted of intent to defraud. The sentence was an order to be confined for 12 months.

After this time, the name of James Sevenscroft **Blomfield** disappears, which must have been a relief for many of his former victims. Whilst no record of his death has been found, the Suffolk Lunatic Asylum has a James **Blomfield** passing away on 7 March 1875, but there does not appear to be any way of knowing if this is the same person.

(References related to this article are numerous but can be supplied on request.)

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HISTORIANS, GENEALOGISTS & FAMILY HISTORIANS

Yvonne Toomey



There has always been a rivalry between Historians and Genealogists, with each claiming to be better than the other in many ways.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines an ‘historian’ “*as a writer of history; especially one who analyses events critically, as opposed to a chronicler or compiler*”. This means that an historian is a person who studies and writes about past events relating to people and the study of history in time.

An article by J. Stephan **Edwards**, Ph.D, dated 17 August 2012, stated: “*Virtually anyone can call themselves an ‘historian’ if they do indeed read and study history, even if they do so at the most basic level and without any prior formal training. All manner of amateurs and quasi-professionals can and do lay claim to the more generic title ‘historian’.*”

A quasi-professional is an occupation that requires advanced knowledge and skills but is not widely regarded as a true profession, unlike, e.g., doctors, lawyers or accountants.

However, the individual ‘historian’ can have some formal training in history and research techniques. They may also have knowledge of the basic facts of history and human events and know how to seek out and make use of source material. It is also necessary to know how to analyse and transform the results and findings into a well-written form for publication. This is whether it be for public information or for academic purposes in universities. Therefore, this training more often can involve some university degree.

In summary, an ‘historian’ is a term ranging from an untrained amateur writer to a fully trained and accredited academic. So, those who have minimal training and write non-analytical narrative accounts of past events and submit their writings for the general public, should be called ‘writers of history’, whereas those who have training, accreditation and write for a specialist reader and publish through academic presses, should be called ‘historians.’

A simple definition of a genealogist is someone who builds the skeleton to discover ancestors. They compile a pedigree of the family referring to the lineage. Like a family historian, they use oral interviews, research historical and genetic records to obtain information about one family, their traditions and their pedigree. The results are often displayed on charts or in written narratives.

The general definition of a genealogist is someone who begins their research on a person who is deceased, and their descendants are traced forward in time. Genealogists often specialise in a group, like the Scottish Clans, One Name study and medical studies of genic conditions. Research can also be performed for scholastic or forensic purposes, whereas a family historian, is someone who puts the ‘meat’ on the bones set out by the genealogist. They add stories to their research and begin with a living person and trace their lineage backwards. This creates a biographical narrative and the desire to establish a place for one’s family in the larger historical picture and to preserve the past for future generations.

The terms genealogists and family historians are often used synonymously. The groups sometimes join forces to learn from each other. Members may also index records, cemetery details, census records and much, much more, to make the information more accessible for researchers and to help preserve public records.

In general, a **family historian** is someone who studies all aspects of a family history. A **genealogist** works to discover ancestors and descendants. There are, however, other titles that can be used for various reasons:

1. **The Bragger** – this is someone who grabs hold of a juicy family story, about a notorious convict, a connection to royalty or bushranger, just to name a few, and lets everyone know they are related.
2. **The Grave Walker** – this is someone who plans outings and holidays around cemeteries they wish to visit. The highlight is finding a relative’s name.
3. **The Colour Coder** – is a highly organised researcher. Everything is labelled, filed and colour-coded to make it easy to find.

4. **The Dabbler** – is one who believes that family history can be done in one day or a week and uses Google to find their family.
5. **The Die-Hard Family Historian** – this person goes beyond the name and dates, to find the stories and happenings of the time and verifies all information.
6. **The DNA Tester** –this is someone who does a DNA test and expects to get their entire family tree as a result.
7. **The Name Collector** –this is someone who likes to add as many names and dates to their tree as possible, no matter how remote the link is - the more the merrier!
8. **The Night Owl** – anyone who spends every evening and many long hours sitting in front of the computer looking at old records.

Source Details:

Oxford English Dictionary

J. Stephan Edwards, Ph.D

Wikipedia

Lonetester HQ

Images/quotes from Google



FOOTSTEPS CONTRIBUTIONS



The next edition of Footsteps will be published in May 2021 and members are invited to submit stories and articles to the editor@pmdfhs.org.au by **Sunday 11 April 2021** so they can be **included in the May issue. Next time perhaps you can tell us about the sporting, academic or workplace achievements of one or more of your family members or relatives, or maybe someone has had an interesting job that you can tell us about.**

These topics are however, only ‘suggestions’ as other stories on any topics relating to your research or your family members, or to helpful articles or web sites, are also sought and gratefully received. Funny snippets and interesting newspaper articles are also most welcome.

Articles should be limited to between 1500–1550 words with up to four photos, or up to 1800 words without photos. It is always important when researching to cite your references and sources. When inserting the references or sources in your articles, it is requested that you use numbers i.e. 1,2,3, etc. (not Roman Numerals) and that you place them as ‘endnotes’ not ‘footnotes.’

Stories that are submitted for publication in Footsteps should generally be the work of the author or the contributor submitting the story. If the writing is not the work of the author, please seek permission from the original author where possible, and indicate the source of the work when the article is submitted.

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What a year 2020 was – in DNA terms of course! It was a year of new ownerships for Ancestry, GEDmatch and FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA)

Ancestry

Blackstone, a private equity fund investment company, finally acquired 75% of Ancestry in December 2020 for \$US4.7 billion.¹ Ancestry had previously been owned by Silver Lake and several other equity companies. Only one previous shareholder will stay. GIC – previously known as Government of Singapore Investment Corporation – will maintain its investment through ownership of the remaining 25%.

In a press release two of Blackstone's directors David Kestnbaum and Sachin Bavishi said: *"We are very excited about Ancestry's future ... we look forward to partnering with Ancestry in the years ahead to help the company further expand its product offerings and drive ongoing technology innovation so that an even greater number of families can discover more about their histories and themselves."*²

Whereas most commentators appeared underwhelmed by the news³ a few couldn't help themselves, with CBC suggesting that *"the [USA] nation's largest private equity firm is interested in buying your DNA data"*.⁴

According to Singapore's Straits Times newspaper: *"The acquisition's price tag represents a significant jump to Ancestry.com's valuation from four years ago, when Silver Lake and GIC invested in the Utah-based company at a US\$2.6 billion valuation."*⁵

GEDmatch

GEDmatch was another company that changed hands but with less benign reporting. They started the year with major changes to their web site and continued to go backwards from then on. In 2018, GEDmatch caused a media stir when it announced it had allowed law enforcement (LE) to use its database to catch a serial killer called the Golden State Killer (see more below). Emanating from the minor backlash caused by this event, and subsequent use by other LE agencies looking to solve their cold cases, in 2019 GEDmatch tightened its rules to require its members to "opt in" to let law enforcement use their DNA data.

Amidst this kerfuffle, in December 2019, GEDmatch announced that it had sold the company to the forensic genomics firm Verogen, Inc. A press release at the time by Verogen CEO Brett Williams said that:

*"In the coming months, GEDmatch users will begin to see improvements to the website, such as an enhanced homepage that offers increased functionality. Verogen will also bolster the GEDmatch platform, resulting in increased stability and optimal searchability [which] in fact, will make searching the database easier."*⁶

Unfortunately, for those of us who are regular users of GEDmatch, none of this new enhanced functionality has been seen during the past year – perhaps COVID is to blame?

But things didn't get any better for them. In July 2020, the company reported that GEDmatch had:

“experienced a security breach orchestrated through a sophisticated attack on one of our servers ... We became aware of the situation ... and immediately took the site down. As a result of this breach, all user permissions were reset, making all profiles visible to all users. This was the case for approximately 3 hours. During this time, users who did not opt-in for law enforcement matching were available for law enforcement matching, and, conversely, all law enforcement profiles were made visible to GEDmatch users.”⁷

Fortunately, “no user data was downloaded or compromised.”⁸ The site was taken down while a full review was conducted.

One bright spot in all this was the emergence of a new profession called “Forensic Genealogist” or “Investigative Genetic Genealogist”. The roles of these new positions are similar to those of a genetic genealogist in that while we look for cousins and ways of breaking down brick walls, their function is using these same tools to search for cold case suspects and families of John and Jane Does. There is even a Facebook page called Investigative Genetic Genealogy hosted by CeCe Moore with over 13,000 members.⁹

FTDNA

FamilyTreeDNA was the first company I used to test my DNA and that of many of my close relatives – some of whom are, unfortunately, no longer with us. Therefore, because I have invested heavily in this company, I have a strong desire for it to survive. Of the big four testing companies, FTDNA has the smallest database of users even though it is the foremost site for mtDNA and Y-chromosome testing. It also provides the more popular atDNA tests that are offered by the other companies. Other benefits are that it supports surname, haplogroup and location projects as well as tools such as a chromosome browser.

But 2020 saw changes here too. At the end of last year, the word was out that FTDNA was to be merged with an Australian company called myDNA. Like many of my peers I had not heard of the acquiring company before and so I went into a flurry of googling to discover who they were. It turns out that myDNA's background is in customised pharmaceuticals (also known as pharmacogenomics) and "Personalised Wellness" in that it provides individual medical advice based on the user's DNA. It also using DNA to devise fitness, nutrition and skin-care plans. The CEO of the new group will be the current myDNA boss Dr. Lior Rauchberger. Some are saying that this could be a great fit for both companies but more importantly of greater benefit to the consumer – us.

Last year there were several changes to the various DNA web sites that affected us as customers.

AncestryDNA

Midway through 2019, AncestryDNA began removing its DNA Circles. Circles was an early attempt to provide the consumer with a graphical means of looking at a shared match who also shared a common ancestor. Prior to them being removed, we were exhorted by many bloggers to save our information before it was lost¹⁰ – this theme was to be repeated last year.

During 2020, in a move that is now seen to be a precursor to its sale, Ancestry informed us that they would be removing shared matches that fell below an 8cM threshold. Once more we were advised to save these low matches, especially if they had a tree showing common ancestors. This was done by many of us either manually or by using a small program to “dot” these matches using Ancestry’s custom coloured group markers.

The company was further criticised by its customer base for sending “cease and desist” orders to companies such as Genetic Affairs and GenomeMate Pro to stop them “scraping” their database to form autoclusters. These valuable tools can still be used with other companies such as FTDNA while GEDmatch and MyHeritage have their own versions of autoclusters.

Ancestry improved its ethnicity estimates by increasing its reference size and changing the algorithm. The total number of regions were increased to 70 and its Communities were updated to help “members who have ties to Asia, Polynesia, South Africa, and Australia [to] better pinpoint where in the world your ancestors were most likely from”.¹¹

Ancestry introduced AncestryHealth in 2019 which offered genetic testing to provide insights into a consumer’s genetic health risks – the service was not available outside the USA. It was ended in January 2020, resulting in the sacking of almost 80 employees in the process.

According to the company’s Chief Communications Officer Julie Miller:

*“More people around the world are embracing family history to bring their families closer together and build more meaningful connections, and we want to capitalize on this movement and focus our investment on our core business,”*¹²

Although firmly committed to NOT providing us with a chromosome browser, AncestryDNA now shows us the number of segments we share with matches as well as giving us information about the largest segment size.

My Heritage

MyHeritage moved on apace in 2020, adding new records and an enhanced search engine. It also introduced the fan-view for its family trees. This was the year that its Theory of Family Relativity – introduced in 2019 – was made available to more users. The tool is similar to Ancestry’s ThruLines where computer algorithms attempt to find shared ancestors through DNA, records and on-line family trees. And like Ancestry’s ThruLines it comes with a caveat: we must authenticate each shared ancestor offered to us before adding the information to our trees.

MyHeritage has an interesting suite of tools including autoclusters and a remarkable photo-enhancement package. The latter does such things as colourising black and white photos as well as enhancing them – even down to individual faces. The latest offering is to restore faded colour photos (January 2021). All of these tools enrich our experience with this database.

FTDNA

In September FTDNA upgraded their ethnicity estimates – known as My Origins – to version 3. They are claiming that the new version samples 90 reference populations to make our admixture results clearer. People are now using ethnicity references as part of their matching

processes – looking to see where their shared matches also match them at ethnic locations. Of course, because this is based on our atDNA, the ethnicity shown can only go back about 5 or 6 generations.

COVID kept us indoors in 2020, forcing us to use virtual means to communicate.

Zooming

Of course, we zoomed a lot last year. Webinars, presentations, and talks were shown live – providing that we in Australia got up early enough – or recorded for later viewing. Some required payment but others, such as the upcoming RootsTech, were provided without cost. N.B. The dates for the 2021 RootsTech conference are 25-27 February and at the time of writing was still open for registration.¹³

Virtual conferences offered huge benefits for us, allowing us to visit global events and listen to world-class speakers; options that for many would ordinarily have been out of the question. Unfortunately, there were many live conferences scheduled for 2020 that were cancelled – RootsTech London and the NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies being just two. The latter was to be held in Newcastle, NSW but has now been rescheduled to 2022.

2020 saw an increase in the use of genetics in Archaeology.

Ancient DNA

Ancient DNA testing was another area that moved ahead during the year. In previous years we had read about the identification of Richard III using, in part, DNA from living descendants. We also saw how soldiers who died on the WWI battleground of Fromelles were being identified using similar profiling.

Over the past 10 years, DNA has been sequenced from ancient Irish remains and last year it was discovered that the original inhabitants may not have been Celtic.¹⁴ Scientists from Trinity and Queens Universities in Dublin have suggested that the population of Ireland over 5,000 years ago were genetically related to modern-day peoples from the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Subsequent waves of farming immigrants from Northern Europe, Scotland and Wales have provided that island with its current genetic mix.

To bring these concepts closer to home, Ancient DNA is now being linked to FTDNA surname projects. Irish DNA samples have been taken from more than 100 remains collected and stored in museums over the past 200 years – some of them 6,000 years old. In May of last year, archaeologists discovered the 17th century burial site of an Irish prince known as Red Hugh O'Donnell. DNA testing was able to match the remains with living relatives.¹⁵

Yes, it is controversial, but genetic genealogy profiling is scoring goals with law enforcement.

Cold Cases

Since the Golden State Killer (GSK) was charged in 2018 with murder and kidnapping, the number of cold cases solved using investigative genetic genealogy techniques has rocketed. The DNA test used is known as Familial DNA Searching (FDS) to distinguish it from Profile

Matching where DNA is used to search national law enforcement databases (such as CODIS) for an exact match with a person already recorded. Familial DNA searching is exactly the same method we use to find relatives after taking a DNA test, by building trees to find where a particular shared match fits into our branch. Britain, the USA and Australia are all beginning to solve cold cases in this manner.

Parabon Nanolabs in the USA is a leader in this type of investigation, solving 50 cases last year for an average of just under one case per week. In all they have solved over 150 cases since introducing genetic genealogy to law enforcement, some investigations dating back over 50 years. In 2020, Joseph DeAngelo, aka GSK, was given a number of life sentences with no chance of parole after pleading guilty at his trial.

Will 2021 be as eventful?

¹ <https://www.blackstone.com/press-releases/article/blackstone-completes-acquisition-of-ancestry-leading-online-family-history-business-for-4-7-billion/>

² *ibid*

³ <https://dna-explained.com/2020/08/05/blackstone-group-acquires-majority-interest-in-ancestry-com/>

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/blackstone-private-equity-ancestry-com-dna/>

⁵ <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/blackstone-buys-ancestrycom-for-us47-billion-as-gic-retains-stake>

⁶ <https://verogen.com/gedmatch-partners-with-genomics-firm/>

⁷ <https://verogen.com/gedmatch-incident-response/>

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/investigativeGG>

¹⁰ <https://dna-explained.com/2019/06/26/reminder-ancestrys-dna-circles-will-vanish-july-1-act-now-to-preserve/>

¹¹ <https://www.ancestry.com/corporate/blog/ancestry-unveils-updated-communities-for-members-with-ties-to-asia-polynesia-south-africa-australia>

¹² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-14/ancestry-pulling-health-dna-test-just-over-a-year-after-launch#:~:text=Ancestry.com%20LLC%20is%20ending,the%20consumer%20DNA%20testing%20industry.&text=On%20Thursday%2C%20Ancestry%20said%20it,lead%20to%2077%20job%20losses.>

¹³ <https://www.rootstech.org/rootstech-connect-2021-registration?lang=eng>

¹⁴ <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/ancient-bones-irish-celts>

¹⁵ <https://dnaandfamilytreeresearch.blogspot.com/2020/08/digging-up-your-ancestors-citizen.html>

IRISH JOURNAL TINTEAN SEEKING ARTICLES

Information submitted by Dr Noeline Kyle

Are you, or someone you know, interested in submitting an item for *Tintean*? The magazine welcomes material that relates to Ireland and Australia and the connections, historical and current, between the two countries.

You can submit articles that are fiction or non-fiction and between 500 and 2000 words. If you have a story and are not sure if it will suit, the magazine's staff are happy to help you get it into shape for publication at no cost. However, as a voluntary group, they are unable to pay for submissions published in *Tintean*.

If you are interested, please contact info@tintean.org.au (mailto:info@tintean.org.au)

SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FEES

	Renewals	New Members*	
	Payable at 1st July each year	1st July to 30th June	1st Jan to 30th June
Single	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$20.00
Family	\$40.00	\$45.00	\$25.00
<i>Footsteps</i> Journal editions—November, February, May, August	4 issues included in Membership fees		
	Subscription is available to Non-Members at \$15.00 for one year.		

*Includes a one-off \$5.00 joining fee.

FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

The Society will undertake family history research for an initial fee of \$20 and will include a list of records used, entry into *Footsteps* (where appropriate) and suggestions regarding other resources. There may be an additional fee for further research.

Please make your initial enquiry to the Research Officer at secretary@pmdfhs.org.au and include as many details as possible about the person/family and any other relevant information including sources already researched. Alternatively, enquire via mail and include a business size, stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Research Officer, PO Box 1359, Port Macquarie NSW 2444.

INFOEMAIL

Our Society newsletter, *InfoEmail*, is emailed on a regular basis to members who have provided an email address. Remember to keep your email address up to date so you do not miss out. Please email us if you are not receiving the *InfoEmail*.

If you do not have an email address, but have a computer with internet access, the *InfoEmails* are available on our website at www.pmdfhs.org.au to download and read. Journal reviews now have their own separate tab on the left side of the Society's website.

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

General assistance with family history – local, Australian and overseas – is available for members and non-members in the Local Studies Room at the Port Macquarie Library. Our volunteers are normally on duty to help on most Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 3pm, with a break over Christmas. This service has now resumed but please continue to observe Covid-19 restrictions within the Library.

RESEARCH SUPPORT GROUP

The Research Support Group for members, previously held at Port Macquarie-Hastings Library in the Technology Room from 1pm to 3pm on the Wednesdays, has been suspended until further notice, but continues to be conducted via 'Zoom'. The topic is advertised in the latest *InfoEmail* and at the most recent General Meeting.

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

Publication Name	Member Price	Normal Price	Weight
Port Macquarie's Last Convicts; The story of the end of the convict establishment in 1847, 204 pages, soft cover	\$18	\$20	737g
Tile Tales; Stories behind the names on the front wall of the Port Macquarie Swimming Pool, 752 pages, hard cover	\$60	\$60	2kg
Cemetery Trail; Port Macquarie – Hastings Full colour, 224 pages (glove box sized)	\$27	\$30	425g
Can You Remember? Memory Joggers for writing a Life Story (A5 booklet – pink cover – 16pp)	\$3	\$3	25g
Starting Your Family History (A5 booklet – yellow cover – 20pp)	\$3	\$3	30g
Pedigree Chart & Family Group Sheets 1 chart, 16 group sheets (A5 booklet – blue cover – 40pp)	\$5	\$5	54g
Certificates of Freedom Records for PM Convicts: Runaways, Robbers & Incurable Rogues (CD-ROM)	\$8	\$12	n/a
Port Macquarie Index to Colonial Secretary's Papers 1796-1825 (CD-ROM)	\$8	\$12	n/a
Harvesting the Hastings – Farming Families (CD-ROM in colour)	\$17	\$20	n/a
Sydney Gaol Records for Port Macquarie Convicts April 1821-1826 (CD-ROM)	\$8	\$12	n/a
General Cemetery Port Macquarie – Transcriptions & Images (CD-ROM)	\$8	\$12	n/a

Note: All CD-ROM purchases include postage

Postage Australia Wide		
Up to 250g (Large letter)	\$5	Holds one book only
250g to 500g (Large letter/Package)	\$12	
Over 500g (Prepaid satchel)	\$18	Holds several books

Postage charges must be added to the cost of the items purchased. When ordering several books, calculate the total weight and use the table above to calculate postage cost. For ALL overseas rates, please contact the Secretary. To collect items instead of paying postage, please also contact the Secretary (see telephone number on page 2).

An order form is available at: www.pmdfhs.org.au – please complete the order form and send with your payment to: The Secretary, Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society Inc. PO Box 1359, Port Macquarie NSW 2444.

Cheques and money orders should be made payable to Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society Inc. or alternatively, send an email to secretary@pmdfhs.org.au to obtain the Society's banking details, and direct deposit reference, in order to pay by direct deposit via the internet. Pre-payment is required; however Local Government Libraries can be invoiced.

PORT MACQUARIE & DISTRICTS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.

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Our Research Home

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Our Meeting Room

CC Mac Adams Music Centre
Gordon Street
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(between Port Macquarie Olympic Pool and Players Theatre)

Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society is affiliated with:

Royal Australian Historical Society
Parramatta Female Factory Friends
Australian Federation of Family History Organisations Inc.
NSW & ACT Association
of Family History Societies Inc.

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