The Federation held its quarterly Council meeting on the 9 November at which a number of issues were raised that need to be relayed to member societies.

Requirements and Guidelines the Australasian Congress have not been updated for many years and the Council spent considerable time updating this document to bring it up to date and improve its relevance to the Congress Host in organising the triennial Congress.

AFFHO decided to become a member of the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisations. This option is also open to other Australasian family history societies.

Ralph Reid has been publishing the Bibliography of Australian family histories and genealogies for many years, both in hard copy and CD. He has been culling the information from material available from the National Library of Australia and publishing an updated bibliography for individual states and territories as the additional material warrants an updated edition. He is now of an age that he would like to pass on the editorship of this publication and has approached AFFHO asking for them to auspice the bibliography. It requires an editor which could be a member society or individual associated with a member society, who has Internet access and some computer experience. However, a rocket scientist is not required!

Therefore we are looking for a volunteer. There is the potential for a small profit, and the Federation would promote marketing. Therefore if you are interested send an email to secretary@affho.org

A promotional offer from Findmypast for society library access to their Australasian and UK data

Together we can achieve much more!
bases can be found in Newsflash.
Subscriptions will be sent out by the Treasurer shortly. We have found that some of the 2010 subscription cheques have not been presented. If this is the case with your society, please cancel the old cheque and pay two years’ subscription.

Andrew Peake
President

News and Notices

From member societies

Following winning a Highly Commended Award in 2009, the Western Australian Genealogical Society WAGS web site has won the Best Website Award for 2010 from the Federation of Family History Societies. The FFHS award gives recognition to Genealogy and Family History websites under a number of design criteria. Pictured: Chris Loudon, WAGS Webmaster, receiving the certificate from Liana Fitzpatrick, WAGS President. The award was announced in England at the FFHS General Meeting on 18 September 2010. As well as the certificate WAGS also received £100.

NSW & ACT State Conference

The Inverell District Family History Group Inc will host the 2011 NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies State Conference at the Inverell RSM Club from 16 to 18 September 2011.

The theme of the conference will be Pioneering the Country. As well as excellent speakers and society and commercial trading tables, there will be a Family History Fair on the first day with free entry.

Contact details:
IDFHG Inc PO Box 367, Inverell 2360
Email: info@inverellfamilyhistory.org.au
Web site: www.inverellfamilyhistory.org.au

Other news

Welsh Parish Registers

Family history web site, Findmypast is making available online for the very first time fully searchable indexes and images of the parish registers of Wales. The project is taking place with the permission of the Church in Wales and Welsh Archive Services and Findmypast is working with FamilySearch International, the world’s largest repository of genealogical records, to digitise the records.

Around 893 000 images containing 8M baptisms,
marriages and burials from across Wales will be filmed by FamilySearch and transcribed by Findmypast. Some of the records date back to the sixteenth century, making it possible to find Welsh ancestors as far back as the 1500s. The records contain entries in English and Latin.

The records will be made available over the next two years at Findmypast with an index search available on FamilySearch.

**Manchester Records**

Findmypast has been awarded the contract by Manchester Archives to digitise cemetery registers plus institutional (gaol, school, workhouse) records of Manchester and will work with FamilySearch International in a similar arrangement as outlined in the previous article.

An estimated 130,000 images and 8M records will be processed over the next two years. The records will cover all of Manchester and some parts of Lancashire, due to boundary movement over the centuries. The records will include entries going back to the sixteenth century. In the collection being released the 19th century prison registers of the area will also be made available.

The records available will include:

- Manchester Overseers of the Poor Apprenticeship Indentures.
- Giles Shaw transcripts for parish registers including Oldham St Mary: Baptisms 1662–1796; Marriages 1662–1816; Burials 1662–1826
- Rusholme Road Cemetery: burial registers, 1821–1933.
- Withington Workhouse: Creed registers 1898–1911.
- Withington Workhouse: admission registers.
- Manchester Workhouse, New Bridge Street, 1881–1899.
- Manchester Workhouse, New Bridge Street, Creed Registers 1900–1911.
- Manchester Industrial Schools: admission registers 1866–1912.
- Manchester Schools: admission registers ca1870–1915.
- C19th prison registers.

**English BMD Indexes**

There are indexes on web such as CheshireBMD, StaffordshireBMD and CumbriaBMD (due to go live on 15 October) and the indexes on FreeBMD, which have important differences.

The explanation to these differences is on the home page of the www.UKBMD.org.uk web site

There are two sets of Birth, Marriage and Death indexes in the UK; the original indexes held by the local register offices and a secondary index created by the General Register Office.

FreeBMD holds the GRO indexes and their volunteers are transcribing the GRO data accurately, but as the GRO indexes are well known for their errors and omissions, then FreeBMD will have these errors and omissions too.

Web sites such as CheshireBMD hold indexes based on the original data held by the local register offices. Although no index could ever claim to be 100% accurate, the local BMD indexes by virtue of being based on the original registers are more complete and with less errors.

In the vast majority of cases the marriages are paired fully and also they tell you the venue for the wedding. Where the registrar has allowed it, the birth indexes also contain mother’s maiden name for all years, and the death indexes have age at death for all years.

The UKBMD web site was set up to provide links to all known BMD web sites, hence its menu contains Local BMD and GRO BMD pages to steer you to appropriate BMD web sites.

When sites such as CheshireBMD are completed it could be argued that the GRO’s flawed indexes are redundant.

For example, the result of a search for Mary Carr in 1842 in Yorkshire, showing her spouse and also the second marriage on the same register page:

From FreeBMD
Marriages Sep 1842 (more than 99% complete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Vol page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARR</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Pickering</td>
<td>24 393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAYLOR</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Pickering</td>
<td>24 393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALLS</td>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Pickering</td>
<td>24 393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From YorkshireBMD
Marriage Indexes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>CARR</th>
<th>HOGGARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forename</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s Surname</td>
<td>WALLS</td>
<td>TAYLOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s Forename</td>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church / Register Office Registers</td>
<td>Middleton St Andrew</td>
<td>Middleton St Andrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Ryedale</td>
<td>Harrogate YKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Reference</td>
<td>C42RY/1/49</td>
<td>C42RY/1/50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indexes based on the originals tell you more and are not missing names for partners.

**WW1 Royal Navy ship logs**

Readers attention is drawn to [www.OldWeather.org](http://www.OldWeather.org), which launched in mid-October.

Attention is not necessarily due to the main topic of weather and climate change but because users will be able to retrace the routes taken by any of 280 Royal Navy ships including historic vessels such as HMS Caroline, the last survivor of the 1916 Battle of Jutland still afloat.

The naval logbooks contain a treasure trove of information but because the entries are handwritten they are incredibly difficult for a computer to read. By getting an army of online human volunteers to retrace these voyages and transcribe the information recorded by British sailors we can relive both the climate of the past and key moments in naval history.

**New Publications**

**Murwillumbah General Cemetery**

The Tweed Gold Coast Family History & Heritage Association Inc has produced its first data CD—Murwillumbah General Cemetery on Byangum Road, Murwillumbah NSW including full indexes, transcriptions and over 1700 images.

Price: $50.00 plus $4.00 p&p.

An order form can be found on the society’s web site: [tweedgoldcoastfamilyhistoryheritageassociation.bravehost.com/](http://tweedgoldcoastfamilyhistoryheritageassociation.bravehost.com/)

**How To Get More Family Tree Time - Tips for the Time Poor!**

*How To Get More Family Tree Time - Tips for the Time Poor!* Resulted partly from the work of the author, Megan Gibson, as a freelance researcher on some episodes of *Who Do You Think You Are? (AUS).*


**Old handwriting 2**

A significant number of British parish registers date back well into the past, and with any luck you may find a set that features your ancestors. If you do, you can expect a little difficulty in deciphering the hand writing in their earliest pages. Indeed the handwriting on many nineteenth century documents is quite difficult to decipher.

There are several factors that impede your understanding of writing. Firstly the font itself may be unfamiliar to you and this can be compounded by the individual’s writing style. You only have to trawl through an old parish register noting how all the parish clerks may be using the same form but some individual’s styles make their writing more difficult to read. Often the more flowery the hand, the more difficult it is to read.

Reading old handwriting can also be impeded by the use of abbreviations and these can also have distortions caused by an individual’s style to add to the confusion. Abbreviations come in three basic forms; abbreviations themselves, which are technically words with their endings left off, contractions that are words with letters within omitted, and ligatures that come about by the grouping of common letters with an entirely new letter. It is the latter of these that cause modern readers the most problems.

The best way to tackle the issue is to read the handwriting in context. Often being faced with a slab of old handwriting can be quite daunting but it is surprising with just how quickly you resolve the problem using the whole word approach. Scan the
lines of text for familiarly shaped words. As you progress, contextual clues will suggest others. Old language and spelling may hamper this process and you may be left with some words that need to be tackled letter by letter.

Sorting out K and R; O, G and E; W and M; T and C; t and c; G and C; u, n, m, and i; are probably the most difficult of all. The old form of F that looks similar to ff is often interpreted as H. In the seventeenth century u and v are used almost indiscriminately. The commonly used long s which looks rather like an f is still widely confused by transcribers. It appears at the beginning of words and within them sometimes leading to transcriptions like fight instead of sight. As you work through the material prepare a chart to aid your translation.

We are familiar with modern abbreviations purely because they are used consistently. In past times individuals invented their own abbreviations and there are numerous examples of the same words being abbreviated differently in the same text! Often the writer was writing for a known audience and assumed the now obscure abbreviation would be known.

The top family history web sites?

Just what are the top web sites for family history? Well that rather depends on who you ask and where they live!

According to Kory L Meyerink MLS AG FUGA, rankings determined in the first quarter of 2010, based on the popularity of websites as measured by four major undisclosed ranking companies the top ten are ($ indicates an access fee):

1. Ancestry.com $ – Ancestry.com is the leading genealogical data site, with some articles, instruction, and reference help.
2. FamilyLink.com – (New) One of the most popular FaceBook applications helps people identify and network with their family.
4. FamilySearch.org – This major data website sponsored by the LDS Church includes the IGI, census records, the library’s catalogue and more, with instruction and reference help.
5. Genealogy.com $ – This is major data site, with instruction and reference help.
6. RootsWeb.com – Rootsweb is a major data site, with free instruction and reference help.
7. FindAGrave.com – A database of more than 45 million cemetery inscriptions and photos.
8. USGWArchives.net – A large collection of free data, arranged by state and searchable across the entire collection.
9. OneGreatFamily.com $ – Primarily a family trees sharing and collaboration website.

This list seems rather US-centric with few UK sites making the cut. For example Findmypast, which is popular in Australia and no doubt in the UK, is now 93rd according to his sources.

Looking at the rankings by Family Tree Magazine we get a differing list although Ancestry still features.

The State Library of WA suggests (not ranked):

- Australian Cemeteries: australiancemeteries.com
- Australian Convict Index (on Ancestry) $
- Australian Medical Pioneers: medicalpioneers.com/
- Australian Anzacs: aif.adfa.edu.au:8080/index.html
- Australian War Memorial
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Convict Transportation Registers: slq.qld.gov.au/ info/fh/convicts
- National Archives of Australia
- OzShips: blaxland.com/ozships
- Picture Australia: pictureaustralia.org
- World War Two Nominal Roll

Is this a more acceptable list for Australian users?

Interestingly just one of my top ten personal favourites appear on any list! They are:

- The Genealogist $: thegenealogist.co.uk
- Findmypast $: findmypast.com.au
- FreeBMD: freebmd.rootsweb.com
- A vision of Britain: visionofbritain.org.uk
- British history online: british-history.ac.uk
- Historical directories: historicaldirectories.org/hd
- NSW, QLD, WA BMD online indexes
- Australian cemeteries: australiancemeteries.com
- Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters: mariners.records.nsw.gov.au
- Scotlands People: scotlandspeople.gov.uk

What would be your list? Send your top ten listings to the editor and we may get some form of AUS-centric listing!

Findmypast.com.au is a family history and genealogy website and one of the leading suppliers of online family history records. The site currently offers access to a collection of over 50 million historical records covering Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. These are mainly family history records, plus we also offer thousands of social, government and general history records which are of great interest not only to anyone researching their family tree, but also to people interested in social and local history.

Findmypast.com.au is pleased to offer Australian libraries access to our vast range of records with two options to meet your requirements.

**Option 1 – Findmypast Australasia Edition**
Access to our Australasia collection including:

- Cemetery records
- Death records
- Probate, land & court records
- Migration records
- Criminal reports
- Electoral rolls
- Directories, Almanacs & Government gazettes
- Military records

Key features of Findmypast Australasia Edition

- Unlimited access to entire Australasia collection – currently over 50 million records and growing

**Option 2 – Findmypast AUS/UK Edition**
Access to our entire UK & Australasia collections* including all of the above plus:

- Complete UK census collection 1841–1911. This is the most complete online census collection. The 1911 census is only available through findmypast.
- UK Births, Marriages and Deaths dating from the mid 1800s to 2005/2006
- Divorce indexes 1858-1903
- Parish records dating from the early 1500s
- Boer War, WW1 and WW2 UK records

Key features of Findmypast Aus/UK Edition

- Access to both UK & Australasia collections*
- Over 650 million records, including the 1911 census—the most detailed census ever produced, 16 million full colour scanned images of the original forms completed by each household and a gateway to newcomers to family history.
- A brand new reporting and administration tool that allows you to see just how much your subscription is being used**

Both subscription options offer login based on recognising the IP address(es) that you use, freeing up your colleagues from managing usernames and passwords. Cost certainty - a fixed price for a fixed term. You can also increase the number of users at no extra cost, for example to run a training session for newcomers to family history. Plus free Call support from anywhere in Australia.

**Free Trial**
We are so certain you will find the service of great benefit to your members that Findmypast are offering you the ability to trial the Australasian Edition free for three months!

To accept the free trial to the Australasian Edition or to subscribe to either of our collections, please contact me as soon as you can. This will enable you to take advantage of the service immediately.

We have plenty more data acquisitions in the pipeline and really look forward to sharing these with you. If you have any comments or queries please feel free to contact me on the details below.

* Due to contractual reasons, some UK datasets may only be included in the AUS/UK subscription after a twelve month exclusivity period on the findmypast.co.uk website.

** UK collection component only.

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