President’s message

Over the years family historians have been avid indexers in order to make records more accessible. Many archival repositories have active volunteer recruiting programs and many records have as a result been indexed. The Ryerson Project is perhaps one of the largest programs based in Australia to index death notices in newspapers. FreeBMD is another major project to re-index the birth, marriage and death indexes for England and Wales and to make them available for free on the Internet. The Public Record Office of Victoria has also been active in using volunteers to index records, particularly of late with probate records in association with FamilySearch.

I recently came across an instance where a set of records at the Adelaide Branch of the National Archives of Australia were being indexed for the third time. I knew that the Archives had a card index of the Deserters’ Register from 1852 in their reading room, which had been there for at least twenty years. Some years later the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society re-indexed the records on to loose sheets. I have now learnt that a new index is well advanced, and of course with advances in data management it will appear on the Internet. When I contacted the convenor of the indexing project and pointed out that these records were now being indexed for the third time and surely there were other records that have no index, I was informed that they are finding many errors. Not surprising considering the poor handwriting.

It does raise the issue that enthusiastic researchers should carefully check whether a series of records has already been indexed and whether their labour of love would be better directed to records that

Together we can achieve much more!
are crying out to be indexed. Archival repositories should also have a short list of records that would benefit from an index, to which an enthusiast could be directed, if they are approached.

The same scenario applies to transcribing cemeteries. Too many cemeteries have been transcribed multiple times with the end result that the latest transcription lacks the older monumental inscriptions that have been lost and gains the inscriptions from the more recent headstones. But does this justify a re-transcription!

Another issue that arose was the destruction of mental health records in New South Wales. These are relatively modern records, even though the individual clients have had no contact with mental health services for quite some time. Working in the mental health sector, I am well aware of client’s who present with post-natal depression may only re-present themselves in their older years, with no contact in between. It costs little these days to digitise records, no space is taken up, the records are available in the future for mental health clinicians and in the more distant future, after the confidentiality period has passed, accessed by historians.

Probably the most concerning issue concerning Australia recently involves the massive Queensland floods, which have inundated three-quarters of the state. These floods have extended into New South Wales and also Victoria. On the other hand Western Australia is still in drought. QLD, NSW and VIC representatives report that they have not heard of any member societies that have been adversely affected.

Australia is gearing up for National Family History Week in the first week in August. AFFHO encourages you to organise events to promote family history in your local community. Encouraging new participants and membership to our societies is crucial to our interest. More details can be found on the website, www.familyhistoryweek.org.au

Planning for the 2012 Congress to be held in Adelaide from the 28 to 31 March is well advanced. Information on some of the overseas speakers can be found on the website, www.congress2012.org.au and registration details will appear in the next few months.

Andrew Peake

Reciprocal Rights

Since before the establishment of AFFHO, there has been a widespread agreement between many family history societies, that they recognise the visitors’ membership of interstate societies, when they visit. This is still the case—if you want to use the resources of an interstate library, you can do so at no cost, on production of your membership card.

The only complication with this arrangement is if you have membership of a local or regional society. Sometimes the reciprocal rights do not apply, so it would be wise to phone and check what the arrangement is.

The other complication may be with the membership card. Some family history societies no longer create a new card each year indicating that membership is paid up. In this case it may be worthwhile getting a short note or letter from your society indicating that you are financial.
China’s love cheats set for online exposure

Officials plan to put marriage records on the web to stem rising culture of secret mistresses and second wives says the Guardian newspaper (5 Jan 2011)

China’s exploding wealth has created a culture of secret mistresses and second wives. Now officials are putting marriage records online so lovers and spouses can check for cheats.

State media has said Beijing and Shanghai will be among the first places to put marriage databases online this year. The plan is to have records for all of China online by 2015.

Bigamy is illegal in China and corruption inspectors with the ruling Communist party have said several officials have broken the law. That includes the former head of the National Bureau of Statistics, Qiu Xiaohua. He was called a vile social and political influence and expelled from the party in 2007.

China’s growing economy over the past few decades has led to a high degree of mobility among cities and regions, creating what the Beijing-based lawyer Chen Wei described to China Daily as a strangers’ society.

One study of extramarital affairs in China, published in the US in 2005, said 20% of 1,240 married men surveyed in urban China and 3.9% of 1,275 married women admitted to having an affair in the past 12 months.

The details of some secret romances have found their way online before a captivated public. In one of the most recent cases a county official in the central province of Hubei was detained last month on suspicion of killing his mistress, who was pregnant with twins, after she reportedly asked him to marry her or give her 2M yuan (£193,000).

The number of divorces in the country is rising. The civil affairs ministry has said 2.47 million couples split in 2009, up almost 9% from the year before.

News and Notices

Brigadier Edward James (Ted) Compton (Retd) AM, former President of GSV died 4 Feb 2011. Condolences are extended by the Council and members to his family.
• digitisation
• mobile discovery tools
• oral history
• displays and exhibitions
• presenting local history to Gen Ys
• engaging with the community
• creating indexes
• library history projects
• promoting history, genealogy, heritage
• impact of social media
• volunteers
• challenges for local studies libraries.

For conference enquiries: Judith Bundy 08 8278 4363 email: info@auslib.com.au

For study tour venues and information about libraries in New South Wales contact Ellen Forsyth State Library of NSW email: eforsyth@sl.nsw.gov.au

PORT MACQUARIE & DISTRICTS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY - FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

Venue 1 Bay Street Port Macquarie NSW
9:00am to 4:00pm 21 May 2011

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: inverellfamilyhistory.org.au

OTHER NEWS

NOT JUST NED THE IRISH IN AUSTRALIA

17 March to 31 July 2011

Discover the surprising but true history of the Irish in Australia at Not just Ned, a major new exhibition at the National Museum of Australia opening on St Patrick’s Day 2011.

The exhibition will cover the Irish presence in Australia from the day in January 1788 when a small number of Irish convicts, marines and officials walked off the transports of the First Fleet to the continuing arrival in our own time of young Irish backpackers.

This exhibition features rare objects from across Australia and around the world, including:

• the armour of the four Kelly gang members — rarely seen together, and on show for the first time outside of Victoria
• a pistol from the Burke and Wills expedition
• fragments of the Eureka flag
• the Rajah quilt, sewn by convict women transported to Australia in 1841 and usually on show to the public just one day each year.

There is also a dedicated resource room where you can explore your Irish heritage.

See: nma.gov.au/exhibitions/irish_in_australia

COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
15 MAY 2011

Speakers: Ann Manley—Trove; Ben Clark—AJCP; Christine Yeats—State Records; John Graham—Country newspapers.
New Online at Origins.net

1. BRS Probate Collection

*Origins.net* has introduced the British Record Society (BRS) Probate Collection to its National Wills Index!

Covering over 500 years, this growing collection makes it much easier to find wills. The BRS probate indexes show the names and dates of several million wills and other probate documents. Most of this data is unavailable anywhere else online.

Over time, as the BRS volumes are indexed individually on the National Wills Index, users will be able to order hard copies of the wills online, and eventually be able to access the documents themselves.

2. Surrey Marriage Records 1500–1846

This index by West Surrey FHS, covers nearly 270,000 marriages for the whole of rural Surrey, portions of Metropolitan Surrey, some Middlesex parishes, and strays from all over the UK, especially London, Middlesex and Sussex.

The Index is complete for Surrey up to 1837 except some Metropolitan parishes—it contains all the parishes of West and rural East Surrey. There are also a substantial number (43,000) of entries from Middlesex parishes for the period 1813–1837 derived from a slip index created by Cliff Webb for this period.

York Marriage Bonds & Allegations Index: 1613–1839

This Index to The Dean and Chapter of York’s Marriage Bonds and Allegations covers over 150,000 marriage licences.

The Archbishop of York granted marriage licences for the Diocese of York and the remainder of the Northern province when more than one jurisdiction was involved.

Information in the marriage bonds includes the couple’s names and the date on which the bond was taken out. After 1753, when the use of English was enforced for all legal documents, a printed form was introduced for marriage allegations, which shows ages, parishes and the church named for the ceremony. Bonds were no longer taken out after 1823, but allegations were kept.

New Publications

A habit of dying

DJ Wiseman; *A habit of dying*, A new novel carried along on the thread of family history research. The story of Lydia Silverstream and her attempts to reunite a family heirloom with its rightful owner. Amongst the box of old photo albums she discovers a sinister journal, both the key to one puzzle and an enigma in itself. Lydia’s enquiries take her from her home in Oxford to Cockermouth and the Lake District, to Cambridge, Essex and the Sussex coast.

See: [ahabitofdying.co.uk](http://ahabitofdying.co.uk)


This CD index, published by Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc, lists the names of over 310,000 people, with their dates and parishes, in the Land Tax records of 108 Devon parishes, including the 42 parish indexes previously published by AIGS in booklet form.

Price: $55.00 incl GST plus P&P $5.00


London Synagogue Records

*The marriage records for the Great Synagogue London 1791–1885* compiled by Harold & Miriam Lewin (published 2004)

- Includes 42 record years combining data from synagogue register with marriage certificate information.
- Sorted in two sections according to family name of groom and bride.
- Contains records of some marriages solemnised in Prince’s St., Sandy’s Row, Bayswater and other synagogues.

*The birth records for the Great and Hambro Synagogues London* (2009)

- Great Synagogue birth records from 1791–1877.
- Hambro Synagogue birth records from 1770–
• Sorted according to father’s family name.
• 11,440 London Jewish births in 461pp.
• Most records comprise birth date, civil & Hebrew names of infant & parents and home address.

• New Synagogue birth records from 1774–1896.
• New Synagogue marriage records from 1790–1823 & from 1837–1860.
• Hambro Synagogue marriage records from 1797–1837 & post 1862.
• Over 2000 marriages and 1550 births in 614pp.
• Marriages sorted according to family name or patronymic of groom & bride.

For more information: harmir908@gmail.com

50 Most Popular Genealogy Websites for 2011

Kory L Meyerink, MLS AG FUGA

These rankings were determined in January 2011 and they are based on the popularity of websites as measured by four major ranking companies. The 2010, 2009 and 2008 rankings are given, in that order, in parenthesis after the website description. Sites new to the list for 2011 are so identified. $ indicates a pay-to-use site.

1. Ancestry.com $ - Ancestry.com is the leading genealogical data site, and includes articles, instruction, and reference help. (1>1>1)
2. MyHeritage.com - Focuses on genealogy community building and networking. (3>3>3)
3. FindAGrave.com - This database of 57 million cemetery inscriptions adds about a million per month and often includes tombstone photos. (7>7>7)
4. FamilySearch.org - This major data website sponsored by the LDS Church includes the IGI, census records, the library’s catalog and a growing collection of historical records from throughout the world, along with instruction and reference help. (4>5>5)
5. Genealogy.com $ - A major data site, includes family trees, instruction and reference help. (5>2>4)
6. Geni.com – Free, with the world’s largest collaborative family. (31>8>18)
7. MyFamily.com - Hosts family websites for sharing photos, genealogy, and more. (33>5>5)
8. FamilyLink.com $ - One of the most popular FaceBook applications helps people identify and network with their family and search billions of records. (2>80>72)
9. RootsWeb.com – One of the largest, free, user-contributed data sites, includes 575 million names in family trees, also instruction and reference help. (6>4>2)
10. AncestorHunt.com – Free genealogy search engine linking to free data. (11>11>12)
11. AccessGenealogy.com – Millions of names in 250,000 pages, along with links to free data; especially useful for Native American information, and some data. (13>14>13)
12. SearchForAncestors.com - Interactive directory of free genealogy websites and data. (12>19>21)
13. GenealogyBank.com $ - 1 billion exclusive records from 4500 newspapers and historical books. (19>31>41)
14. USGWArchives.net – A large collection of free data, arranged by state and searchable across the entire collection. (8>not ranked)
15. CyndisList.com – The best subject catalog of genealogy webpage links. (14>17>15)
16. Interment.net - Transcribed and indexed cemetery inscriptions. (16>16>16)
17. OneGreatFamily.com $ - A family tree sharing and collaboration website. (9>11>9)
18. GenealogyToday.com - Includes instruction, reference articles, and some unique data collections. (10>12>11)
20. FindMyPast.co.uk $ - (Back in) 650 million British records of many types [formerly Find-MyPast.com]. (57>46>50)
21. Geneanet.org - (Back in) A European collection of 400 million names in family trees, community, and submitted records. (58>42>36)
22. DeathIndexes.com - Lists of links to United States death records, by state. (23>25>31)
23. Linkpendium.com – Nine million genealogy links organized by state/county and surname. (24>24>35)
24. EllisIsland.org - Database of 24 million New York passenger arrivals that is free to search. Actual passenger list images can be printed or purchased. (15>20>14)
25. GeneBase.com - A DNA ancestry cataloguing project with 675,000 users. (21>24>24)
26. GenealogyTrails.com - Five year old site with free US data contributed by volunteers. (25>35>NR)
27. GenealogyBuff.com – A free genealogy search site with hundreds of data sources. (27>134>NR)
29. USGenet.org - Historical and genealogical web hosting service. (18>15>17)
Destroying records is an act of vandalism

The government website ordained that inpatient psychiatric files could be kept for 15 years after the last patient contact. But patient records prior to 15 years ago could be pulped. In essence, records from 1960-1995 were to be destroyed (apart from those patients who had continuing treatment with the service).

The problem—it was explained to me with an air of justification—was that accumulating paper files simply cost too much to keep. Those pesky files took up space that had to be maintained and were a fire risk.

There has been almost no consultation with any psychiatric staff in NSW about these guidelines, and certainly little consideration given to the loss of historical, literary, and scientific value of these notes. Nor any consideration, I dare say, for the rights of patients and families; nor the work of professionals in caring for patients.

I don’t believe any psychiatric records should be destroyed. A 21st-century solution is obvious—scan them and store them digitally. The entire Rozelle hospital collection could have been saved on compact discs and kept in a hatbox. No problems with space; no fire hazard to torment an administrator. But not now; because they’re all gone.

The period from 1960 through to 1990 covers a critical period in psychiatry. The first great wave of new medications came into being during the late 1950s allowing many patients to be discharged from hospital. This momentous change—recorded in the lives of the thousands of patients that flowed from beyond the asylum’s gates and into the community—is now largely unrecorded. This medical and political move to discharge patients into the community—deinstitutionalisation—has largely been lost to the historian.

To destroy psychiatric records with the human and scientific value they hold for us and future generations is unconscionable.

When you obliterate medical records you erase a culture, a history, and you kill the memory of thousands of lives, and no historian, regardless of how determined or tenacious can ever uncover these lost stories.

We should not, as a community, allow the work of generations and the care of the mentally ill and their families to be trampled upon by filthy boots; nor pulled apart by the sticky fingers of false economy.

To remain mute will contribute to this act of vandalism.

Dr Greg de Moore is a psychiatrist and clinical lecturer at Sydney University and author of Tom Wills: His Spectacular Rise and Tragic Fall (Allen & Unwin).

30 November 2010

Heads should roll over records cull

I read with disbelief Greg de Moore’s piece on the destruction of psychiatric medical records ("Destroying records is an act of vandalism", November 30). Who are these administrators and what are their qualifications to make such a decision?

I am sure current records are electronically filed so storage problems have now ceased. Preservation of the old files for research and social history could not be all that much of a problem; we live in a big country.

In 1993, through freedom-of-information laws, I was able to obtain from Callan Park a copy of my father’s small file from 1943. This was of great help regarding a familial depressive illness before and after that time. I suppose files from that period too are now gone.

The stigma of psychiatric illness has lessened in recent years and the outrageous decision to destroy these files is unhelpful in more ways than one. Someone’s head should roll.

Jennifer Sims Terrigal

Stop records cull

Greg de Moore rightly calls for a stop to the bureaucratic cull and destruction of psychiatric records (Letters, November 30). Not stated, though, is his first-hand experience as a historian and practising psychiatrist in recovering the life of Tom Wills (1835-1880), a great colonial cricketer, supporter of Aboriginal teams and (largely unheralded) principal creator of Australian Rules Football (1859).

In his biography, Tom Wills: His Spectacular Rise and Tragic Fall, Dr de Moore relates how he uncovered vital clues to Wills’ condition leading to suicide from hospital records, papers that had been preserved from the 19th century. Surely, for better understanding of our own times, as in the revolution any practices of psychiatry, we can, as Dr de Moore says, do as well with our technology in the 21st.

Peter Pockley Geelong
30. WorldVitalRecords.com $ - The data collection provided by Family Link, with over a billion records, as well as instruction and reference help. (17>13>10)

31. FamilyTreeDNA.com - DNA testing service focused upon family history test types. (20>26>27)

32. Footnote.com $ - In conjunction with the U.S. National Archives, Footnote offers data, original records images, and more. (37>9>8)

33. KindredKonnections.com $ - Grassroots created data site with compiled family trees, and some extracted records. (29>22>19)

34. CensusFinder.com - Links to free census records. (22>29>40)

35. Archives.com $ – A major new subscription data site, launched in July 2009 and already with more than a billion names. (41>New)

36. DistantCousin.com - An online archive of genealogy records and images of historical documents. (34>23>22)

37. FamilyHistory101.com - Grassroots created data site with compiled family trees, and some extracted records. (38>47>107)

38. ThePeerage.com – A genealogical survey of the peerage of Britain as well as the royal families of Europe. (44>53>58)

39. TribalPages.com - Family trees hosting with 300,000 members and 80 million names. (35>28>25)

40. RootsChat.com – (New) Free family history messaging forum with almost 3 million mostly UK messages. (57>54>NR)

41. HeritageQuestOnline.com $ - Census, PERSI (the periodical index), books, all free to you at many libraries. (32>39>39)

42. NewspaperObituaries.net – (New) A directory of obituary databases and archives on the web. (91>84>126)

43. AncientFaces.com - Share genealogy research, community pages, family photos & records more for free. (46>48>38)

44. JewishGen.org - Jewish, reference, instruction, coordination, and databases. (26>32>28)

45. PoliticalGraveyard.com - Comprehensive source of U.S. political biography that tells where many dead politicians are buried. (36>33>34)

46. CousinConnect.com - A large free queries website. (39>27>23)

47. DAR.org - Site of the largest lineage society; includes their library catalog and 32 million name index. (43>49>67)

48. FamilyTreeMagazine.com – (New) Website for popular magazine that includes shopping, links, and research tools. (55>67>47)

49. AmericanAncestors.org $ – (New) The new name for the NEHGS website and their 3,000 databases. (73>89>87)

50. GenealogyLinks.net – 50,000 links to free sites, arranged by state and county. (53>50>43)

Dropping out of the top 50 (with their new rank):

54. GenWed.com- Online marriage records, where to order, some indexes, and more. (42>43>42)

57. ObitLinksPage.com- State-by-state directory of obituaries and obituary resources. (47>not ranked)

58. Genuki.org.uk- Large collection of genealogical information pages for England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. (50>34>32)

60. GenoPro.com- Genealogy software that produces genograms (40>37>53)

65. US-Census.org- Census abstracts (U.S. GenWeb Census Project) (49>45>37)

84. Genealogy.org– (New) A listing of 400+ registered websites, ranked weekly by hits. (45>69>56)

135. FamilyTiez.com– (New) A site where families can establish their own pages to share news, photos, events and genealogy with each other. (30>not ranked)

**Bringing Family History to Life for Aussie Kids**

According to research released by Ancestry.com.au, almost one third of Australians do not know when their ancestors arrived in Australia, with one in five not knowing the occupation of their grandparents.

Conducted by The Online Research Unit, almost 60% of Australians believe it is important for children to know about their family history in order to better understand who they are today, and why Australia is the way it is.

To coincide with this research, Ancestry.com.au, has launched My Place In History, a free web-based educational program designed for teachers to assist them in teaching their students about family history.

My Place In History is a fun, educational resource for students and an opportunity for teachers to upload and explore their family history too.

The online teaching resource includes a step-by-step teaching program (including learning outcomes, lesson outlines, discussion topics, and cross curricula activities), questionnaires, and space to upload teachers’ own personal resources.

The free website also includes a tool for teachers and students to build their family tree and a range of interactive activities that are designed to make learning fun and engaging for students and teachers alike.

Teachers can register and get started by visiting: myplaceinhistory.com.