

Family History Group

#3 – The wealth of resources



Once you've looked at the vital records (ie. births, marriages and deaths,) and the census and electoral rolls that give you the key details of your ancestor's life it is time to throw yourself into the wealth of records that are available.

1. **Records, Records, Records...**

Wherever your ancestor dealt with the government or other bureaucracy, a record was created. Your ancestor and their family also created documents about themselves, such as diaries and letters, or even lodging advertisements and family notices in the newspaper. Consider the following record possibilities:

- Newspapers
- Rate books, land records, maps
- Employment and company records
- Clubs & societies
- Directories, including Sands & McDougall Post Office Directories
- Education & training records
- Legal Records including: courts, prisons, inquests, convicts, adoption, divorce, wards of the state, insolvency/bankruptcy
- Immigration & naturalisation
- Military Service & repatriation
- Wills & Probate
- Cemeteries
- Local Histories and Oral Histories
- Diaries, letters, family bibles, birthday books
- Family heirlooms and other objects
- Government Gazettes

2. Where do I look for these records?

To find the relevant records for your ancestor you need to determine who had jurisdiction over that part of your ancestor's life.

- Which country would they have been in at the time?
- Which level of government?
 - National/Federal? Colonial/State? County or Local?
- Where does that organisation archive it's records?

Key agencies to get you started:

The National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au

The Public Records Office of Victoria: www.prov.vic.gov.au

3. Looking beyond Australian records – resources across the world:
 - Family Search Wiki: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page [Church of LDS]
 - Cyndi's List: <http://www.cyndislist.com/>
 - Cora Web:
 - Genealogy "How to" videos on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/>
 - Findmypast – 120 + videos
 - ancestry.com – 346+ videos
 - *Don't forget the special interest groups in genealogy societies.*
 - www.gsv.org.au – Genealogical Society of Victoria
 - www.aigs.org.au – Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies

4. Newspapers
 - Australia: Trove, 1803-2007 - www.trove.nla.gov.au Free!
 - New Zealand: PapersPast, 1839-1948 - www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz Free!
 - United Kingdom: British Newspaper Archive, 1710-1959 – www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk Fee-based, but free access at EHHHC.
 - United States: Chronicling America, 1836-1922 www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers Free!
 - Findmypast.com – has British, Irish, USA and some other world newspapers.
 - Useful guide on Wikipedia: List of online newspaper archives: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_online_newspaper_archives

5. Immigration Records – passenger lists, naturalisation records, alien registrations.
 - There are lists for departure (outward) and arrival (incoming/inward) passengers.
 - These records may include: name & age, occupation, nationality, religion, travelling companions, style of travel, port of embarkation and destination.
 - Ancestry.com and Findmypast.com are both good places to start for immigration records. Both are available for free at EHHHC.
 - In Australia 19th century immigration was managed by colonial governments. This responsibility was taken over by the federal government after 1923.
 - Check the relevant State Records Office or Archive.
 - Check the National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au See especially their guide Making Australia Home for 20th century immigration.
 - The Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) has free, searchable indexes online for assisted and unassisted passengers, 1839-1923. See www.prov.vic.gov.au (access the collection/digitised records and online indexes.)

6. Military Records
 - Your ancestor's birth date tells you what war they may have fought in.
 - Enlistment ages changed during conflicts, but as a guide for Australian soldiers:

WW1 – born 1870-1900	WW2 – born 1904-1927
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 - See www.naa.gov.au for Australian service personnel.

- Upon enlistment a new recruit fills out an 'Attestation Paper'. Look for the service number and unit name in order to help you search other records related to their war service such as Unit Diaries, Embarkation or Nominal Rolls, and photographs of their unit. See www.awm.gov.au
- During the conflict: WW1
 - One stop shop: www.discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au
 - Battle locations: www.ww1revisted.com
 - War Letters: www.warletters.net
 - Photographs: www.thediggersview.com.au
- What happened to them after the war?
 - Shrine of Remembrance: for honour rolls - www.shrine.org.au
 - National Archives: Repatriation files & Albany Project (coming soon) www.naa.gov.au
 - PROV: Battle to Farm – www.soldiersettlement PROV.vic.gov.au

7. Cemeteries

- Vic: Greater Metro. Cemeteries Trust: www.gmct.com.au/deceased-search
- International: Find a grave: www.findagrave.com May include photos!

8. Some further inspiration

- Books
 - Graeme Davison's *Lost Relations: Fortunes of my family in Australia's Golden Age*, Allen & Unwin, 2015.
 - Christine Kenneally's *The Invisible History of the Human Race: How DNA and History shape our identities and our futures*. Black Inc. Books, 2014.
- Podcasts
 - An interview with Christine Kenneally was aired as part of the *Life Matters* program on Radio National – 14 July 2015. <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/the-invisible-history-of-the-human-race/6617158>
 - You'll find other great podcasts relevant to family history on *Life Matters* and on Richard Fidler's *Conversations* – both on Radio National.
 - Ancestry.com did a series of podcasts on Australian family history issues in 2013.