

Here are some specific websites we find useful

|                     |  |  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| WAGS                | Great links to lots of Australian sites    | <a href="http://www.wags.org.au">www.wags.org.au</a>                       |
| Cyndi's List        | An encyclopedia of links                   | <a href="http://www.cyndislist.com">www.cyndislist.com</a>                 |
| Familysearch        | Parish records, census (LDS site - free)   | <a href="http://www.familysearch.org">www.familysearch.org</a>             |
| Genuki              | Fabulous UK site; great for beginners      | <a href="http://www.genuki.org.uk">www.genuki.org.uk</a>                   |
| War Graves          | Commonwealth deaths during the World Wars  | <a href="http://www.cwgc.org">www.cwgc.org</a>                             |
| Perth Cemeteries    | Searchable index of burials                | <a href="http://www.mcb.wa.gov.au">www.mcb.wa.gov.au</a>                   |
| Ancestry***         | Lots of useful indexes and databases (pay) | <a href="http://www.ancestry.com.au">www.ancestry.com.au</a>               |
| Scottish Records*** | Scottish censuses, OPRs and BDM (pay)      | <a href="http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk">www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk</a> |
| Findmypast***       | Lots of useful indexes and databases (pay) | <a href="http://www.findmypast.com">www.findmypast.com</a>                 |
| FreeBMD             | English/Wales BDMs (free, not complete)    | <a href="http://www.freebmd.org.uk">www.freebmd.org.uk</a>                 |
| GRO                 | Order English certificates online          | <a href="http://www.gro.gov.uk">www.gro.gov.uk</a>                         |
| Google              | The very best of the search engines        | <a href="http://www.google.com">www.google.com</a>                         |

\*\*\*access to this paysite available at the WAGS library and at many local libraries

## 6. Preserving and publishing your story

Once you've completed some research, you'll want to show it off, to friends and family members. They'll be interested. There are a number of ways to do this:

**Charts** People like to see where they fit in to the big picture. Charts, like ancestor charts, descendant charts or relative charts are a great tool to communicate; they can have timelines added, or pictures or maps.

**Reports and indexes** Most genealogy programmes will automatically produce comprehensive reports which can be adapted and edited to fit your needs.

**Write a book** Many people have a desire to write and produce a book for the family. This can be an absorbing, time-consuming and highly satisfying task. Or it can be an expensive nightmare. Don't underestimate the effort required.

**Tell your story on video** A video documentary of your story (and/or your family history) would be a wonderful legacy for genealogists of the future, as well as a great way to share the story with the rest of the family.

## Contact Details

Mike Murray and Lesley Silvester are long standing members of WAGS and are convenors of the Computer Interest Group and the London and South of England Group. They also run TimeTrackers, a local genealogy business that specialises in British and Australian genealogical research, teaching, publishing and video-making.

You can contact Lesley or Mike at TimeTrackers:

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Or visit TimeTrackers website at [www.timetrackers.com.au](http://www.timetrackers.com.au)

# Stepping Stones to the Past

A (very) quick Introduction to Tracing your British and Australian Ancestors

Presented by Mike Murray

**TimeTrackers**

## Contents

- 1 Getting started
- 2 Vital records: birth, death and marriage certificates
- 3 Other records: parish registers, census, shipping records
- 4 Organising your research
- 5 Using the Internet
- 6 Preserving and publishing your story

## 1. Getting Started

- Start with yourself and work backwards
- Verify everything
- Limit your search initially
- Talk to relatives
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Join Family History Societies

## 2. Vital records: birth, death and marriage certificates

These certificates are your first real 'stepping stones'. They are the best way to trace your ancestors back to around the mid-1800s. Civil registration (the 'official' recording of births, deaths and marriages) first started in England and Wales in mid 1837, Scotland in 1855 and the Australian Colonies at different times between 1838 and 1856. Ireland started with Protestant marriages in 1845, and all events by 1864.

A birth certificate will usually give you the names of both the child's parents, and a marriage certificate usually names the father of both the bride and groom. Treat death certificates carefully; they may be inaccurate or incomplete. Scottish and most Australian certificates give more information than English ones.

To obtain a certificate, you will need to look up information in an INDEX. When you are looking up names in an index, note that:

- dates may be wrong...always check a couple of years either side
- names may be spelt differently
- you might need a magnifying glass... microfiches can be hard to read

When you have found your entry, record the year, the quarter (if required), the name of the person(s), the registration district and the reference numbers. With this information you can order the certificate from the appropriate office. Check with the office for fees and any restrictions on availability.

UK and Australian indexes are available on the internet and also on microfilm or microfiche at WAGS and at various RECORD REPOSITORIES in the Perth area; you'll need to contact them to find out their opening hours:

- WA Genealogy Society (WAGS), 6/48 May St, Bayswater, 9271 4311
- Alexander Library, Francis St, Perth, 9427 3111
- LDS Church Family History Centres (Mormons)
  - o Dianella: 163 Wordsworth Ave, Yokine, 9275 2608
  - o Melville, 308 Preston Point Road, Attadale, 9330 3750
  - o Warwick, 44 Hawker Ave, Warwick, 9423 1429
  - o Armadale, 105 Carawatha Ave, Armadale, 9497 2932
  - o Rockingham, 38 Casserly Road, Rockingham, 9527 8846

Most indexes are available online, sometimes free, usually for a fee. Check the genealogy links on the WAGS website for the country/state you're interested in. The costs can mount up if you're looking for a common name, but the convenience is well worth it.

### 3. Other records

#### Parish registers (PRs)

Some of the earlier parish registers in England date back to 1538, but most haven't survived that long. Parish registers record baptisms, burials, marriages and (sometimes) banns. The earlier ones may be in Latin, and can be quite difficult to read. Parish clerks were expected to compile an annual listing of the events of the parish and send that in to the Bishop with authority over that parish. These records are called Bishops' Transcripts.

Many digitised and indexed parish registers are progressively appearing on websites. Important collections are available on [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (Free), [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au) (pay), [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com) (pay). Scottish PRs are available on [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) (pay). Many Irish PR transcripts are now available at [www.rootsireland.ie](http://www.rootsireland.ie) (pay).

The LDS Church has progressively microfilmed parish registers and Bishop's Transcripts from all over the world. Copies of these microfilms can be ordered on the internet to be delivered to WAGS or your local LDS Church Family History Centre for a modest fee, and viewed on microfilm readers. Before ordering microfilms, check their website ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)) first because they may now be on the internet as part of their digitising projects. Indexed transcriptions of the parish may also be on the website.

This is certainly a growth area for genealogists - if the parish registers for your area of interest aren't on the internet keep checking, they may appear soon!

#### Census records

Apart from some early musters, Australian censuses are not available for research (they have been destroyed). UK censuses (Ireland for 1901 and 1911 only) are available and are very useful 'stepping stones' to trace your ancestors; from 1851 census records show ages and places of birth, which gives you a time and place to look for births. Information provided in the various censuses varies from country to country, and all eight of the English, Welsh and Scottish census records from 1841 to 1911 are now available online (mostly on pay-sites). There are also transcripts and indexes on CD and in books, but these are becoming less relevant.

#### Shipping records

All the Australian Colonies kept their own records of immigrants and passenger arrivals. Some of these are easily accessible on the internet, others are on CD or microfiche, and others don't exist. Passenger lists for ships leaving and arriving the UK between 1890 and 1960 are available on pay sites, which is very helpful for Australian researchers. Check the WAGS website genealogy links for some good information.

## 4. Organising your research

We keep our papers in loose leaf binders. We find that dividers for each surname, in simple alphabetical order, with papers filed chronologically behind each divider is an adequate system.

Before very long, you'll need a specialised computer program to make sense of everything you find about your ancestors. The WAGS Computer Interest Group is worth contacting for advice (meets monthly on a Saturday morning). There are some good programs available free over the internet (e.g. Legacy Family Tree) which are quite suitable to get you going. Whatever program you get, make sure that it can export GEDCOM files; that means you can upgrade to something more powerful in the future without entering everything again. There is a growing use of online family trees on websites like ancestry, but frequently the information on those online trees is not well sourced, so may not be reliable.

## 5. Using the Internet

The internet is an essential tool for genealogists for:

- contacting people who are interested in the same ancestors as you are (mailing lists, surname lists, genealogy sharing sites, social media)
- accessing information direct from databases, either free or 'pay per view' (indexes, censuses and other records, digitised images, more becoming available daily)
- general information about genealogy, places, surnames, history, etc.

We use a low value credit card for our internet purchases, and have never had a problem. Vouchers are available for some pay-sites; check with WAGS.