

RESEARCHING YOUR

Family History

Thinking of finding out
about your family's past?

Let this document guide
you as you embark on an
exciting family adventure.



Hancock family and friends at 30 Robinson Street, Subiaco

Who are you?

Where did your family come from?

Are there any surprising stories in your family?

Research into your family tree can explain a lot about your family's background, provide a sense of belonging, and reveal information about family illnesses, talents, and achievements. Be prepared, you may also discover information which is surprising or shocking. Whatever you discover, exploring your family's history can be quite an adventure.

For many, a casual interest can lead to an engaging passion as you discover more about the times and circumstances of your ancestors: their relationships, hardships, and successes.



Balding family photograph circa 1920



Mr and Mrs Morrison with baby Ailsa circa 1900, Roberts Road Subiaco

Before you begin

The prospect of discovering your family history is exciting, but before you get started, consider the following essentials.

Handle with care: Treat irreplaceable, original documents and photographs with the utmost care. Here are some basic tips for looking after your precious family records:



keep your hands clean while handling original documents and photographs



consider **wearing** white cotton or nitrile **gloves**



never laminate documents as this process is irreversible



use a soft pencil (2B) to take notes



avoid using sticky tape, metal paper clips, or staples



where possible, scan or photograph original documents and **use copies for your research**

Store original documents and photographs flat with no folds, ideally in archival quality plastic protectors; and keep your records in a safe place, minimising their exposure to light and heat.

If in doubt, contact conservation experts from local museums who may be able to offer free advice.

Get organised

Before beginning your research, think about how you will organise, document, and share your findings.

- Decide how you will organise the information you find and collect. You may prefer to keep hard copies of your research, or use a family history software program, or a combination of both.
- Consider using loose-leaf binders which allow for additional information to be added as you go. Alternatively, you may wish to use a phone or camera to quickly copy and digitise any records and information that you find.
- Find out about basic copyright issues by checking the Australian Copyright Council's website.
- Devise a systematic way to record details of your information sources, including titles, authors, dates, page numbers, volumes, publishers and locations. This should include records of any online or digital sources, including the title, the author, web address and date accessed.
- Investigate strategies and protocols for recording family histories.
- Consider if and how you might like to share your findings. Family members and local history organisations may be interested in your research.

Questions to ask

Family history research is like a jigsaw puzzle - each piece of information adds detail and richness to the story of your family and its unique past. Here are some fundamental questions to ask:



'Who' were your ancestors? The correct names of family members, and their relationships to each other, are crucial to any family history research.

'What' did they do? Information about how your relatives spent their lives, such as occupations and pastimes, is not only interesting but may also be useful for identifying people with similar names.

'Where' did they live and work? Addresses of homes, workplaces, and key life events are helpful for tracking people through archival records. Many Australians have family origins overseas so you may need to cast a wide net to trace them.

'When' did key events take place? Births, deaths and marriages are usually the easiest facts to trace. Some general knowledge about the period people lived in will provide a better understanding of their life and assist your hunt for more facts.

'Why' did they do it? Establishing the reasons behind life-changing events can contribute to a more detailed family story. They may also provide important clues for where to look for additional information.

'How' did they do it? Answering the 'how' will require broader research of the time and place in which your ancestor lived.

Using these questions to inform your detective work will help you establish many of the facts necessary to the construction of a detailed and informative family tree. While some pieces of information may never be found, you will be able to gradually build a picture that can provide some fascinating insights into your family and the lives of its individual members.



Councillor T.W. Hetherington and Family, 1900

First steps

Working backwards from what you know about yourself, and other family members, is the easiest way to begin your family tree.

1

Write down everything you know about your family, including yourself, and map out a family tree. You can find templates for family trees, pedigree charts, and family group sheets online. Record any dates you know, making it clear if any are guesses or estimates.

2

Identify and collect any material you already have which may help with your family tree. Items you might have include certificates, diaries, letters, photographs, medals, family bibles, wills, contracts, and other legal documents.

3

Speak to other family members to confirm, and hopefully add, to your account of your family tree. Be aware that family stories may not be entirely factual, and you should confirm personal recollections with other sources.

4

Consider recording older relatives' memories by undertaking an Oral History style interview to record their memories.

5

At this point it is also worthwhile checking with family to make sure some of the work hasn't already been done for you!



Thomas Street School Basketball Team 1951



White family 1927

A note on records and sources

During the course of your research, you will come across many different types of records and sources of information. These can be categorised as either 'primary' or 'secondary' source material. While primary sources are usually more credible as evidence, good research will utilise both types of records.

Primary sources provide raw information or first-hand accounts of an event or time period. Most will have been created at the time the events occurred. Examples include:

- ✓ original documents, certificates, diaries and correspondence
- ✓ interviews, speeches, oral histories and court and trial transcripts
- ✓ personal record keeping such as ships' logs, family bibles, biographies, autobiographies and manuscripts
- ✓ government documents, statistical data and research reports
- ✓ creative art works and literature
- ✓ newspaper articles and advertisements.



In contrast, **secondary sources** are usually created after the fact, often to explain, describe or evaluate primary source material. Examples include:

- journal articles or dissertations that comment on or analyse research
- textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopaedias
- political commentary and biographies
- newspaper editorial/opinion pieces
- criticism of literature, art works or music.

Register No. 16347/277
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Certificate of Discharge of No. _____ (Rank) Private
(Name) Greenberth William Ernest
(Regiment or Corps) Army Reserve Band
born at or near the Town of Madira
in the State or County of South Australia
Attended at Blackboy Hill West Australia on the
10th day April 1918 for the Blackboy Hill
Camp Band Regiment or Corps at the age of 19 1/2 years.

He is discharged in consequence of Demobilization

Service towards completion of engagement 1 year 307 days Medals _____ and _____
Service Abroad _____ years _____ days Decorations _____

Signature of Officer Commanding Regiment or Corps. Camp Adjutant
Place Karrabatta N.A.
Date 10th February 1920

Discharge confirmed at Karrabatta Camp Western Australia
Signature A. Bennett Capt. Camp Adjutant
Date 10th February 1920

SEEKS THE CERTIFICATE IN FULL OR WILLING TO SURRENDER IT TO HIS OFFICER

REFERENCE TO EMPLOYERS.—This certificate has been issued without any investigation or enquiry of any kind, and with all particulars entered in full faith, and with the assurance that the same are true and correct.

AMSL: 17-1-1918

Daisy Bell cottage Jolimont, circa 1910



Active research

It is usually best to start by searching reliable primary source material such as Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates (BDM), making sure you always cross-check details with any other available sources. Importantly, BDM certificates may record your ancestor's name, birth date and place, as well as names, occupations and addresses of the individuals involved.

Each jurisdiction maintains their own repository of BDM records, with many indexes available online through local libraries and/or paid genealogical subscription services.

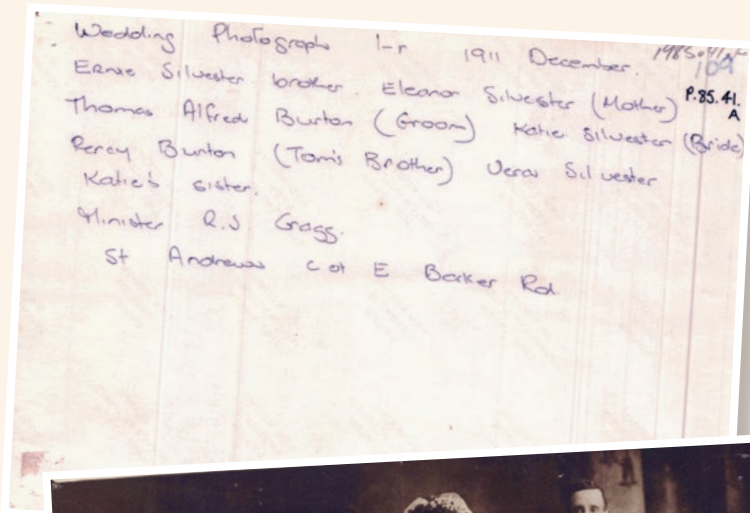
The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (WA)

In Western Australia, registration of births, deaths and marriages began in 1841. These records are controlled by the Department of Justice, which allows free, online index searching via their website. While the index only usually allows you to see the basic details of the event recorded, full certificates with more details can be purchased when required.

Prior to 1841, local churches recorded the details of baptisms, marriages and burials. Indexes to church records are often available through local libraries, or through online repositories. In WA, these are available in the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History.

Once you have established key details such as names, occupations and addresses, try to find additional documentary evidence to support your initial findings. The following records may assist you in tracking your ancestors between significant life events such as births, deaths and marriages:

- military service and immigration records
- early settler histories
- biographical dictionaries
- photographic collections
- newspapers and journals
- legal and court records
- oral histories
- postal directories, electoral rolls and census records
- council rates and minutes
- burial, wills and probate records.



Wedding portrait of Thomas Alfred and Katie Burton, 1911

Hint

Census records are available for up to 100 years after the recording.



Broader research possibilities

Many records are available online or from institutions such as libraries, local history centers and museums. Please note, there may be a fee for access to some of these records. See the list below for suggestions of where to start your search.

Western Australian resources

Collections WA	The Royal Western Australian Historical Society
Family History WA	State Library of Western Australia
J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History	State Records Office
Looking West (A Guide to Aboriginal Records in Western Australia)	Western Australian Museum



National resources

Australian Dictionary of Biography	National Library of Australia
Australian Copyright Council	The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
Australian War Memorial	Noel Butlin Archives Centre
National Archives of Australia	Oral History Australia

Online Resources (* denotes a fee may be required)

Ancestry*	Find and Connect (Out of Home Care)
Convict Records	Find My Past*
CoraWeb	Jigsaw (Adoption)
Digital Panopticon	My Heritage *
Family Search (Church of Latter Day Saints)	TROVE



Subiaco resources

If you have family members who lived or worked in Subiaco, the City of Subiaco might be able to help!

Subiaco Museum



The Subiaco Museum holds over 10,000 items in its collections. These include documents, photographs, manuscripts, council publications, research files, oral history recordings, and transcriptions, as well as three-dimensional objects. Some items are associated with family and house histories and can be found on a searchable database located in the museum.

Visitors to the museum are always welcome during opening hours, and a research service is available if required. You can submit a request online via the City's website to find any objects, documents or photographs relating to a particular area of research. If available, these may be reproduced, subject to copyright conditions and a service charge.

Subiaco Library



The local history reference collection at Subiaco Library holds published and unpublished documents relating to the history of the City of Subiaco. These include information about the general development of the area, as well as specific research on some of the people and places of Subiaco.

As well as the local history collection, there are a number of resources available via the library catalogue. There are also a range of online library services which Subiaco Library card holders can access.

Subiaco Library is a subscriber to Ancestry Library Edition which gives access to online genealogy and family history records. It is accessible for free from many libraries, including the Subiaco Library, and allows searches of a wide variety of genealogical records including Western Australia's Electoral Rolls.



Peggy Henwood and family at Crawley Beach, 1922



Encountering problems

Expect the unexpected

It helps to be prepared for the unexpected as you do your research. The readily available sources are variable and the information you gather should not always be taken at face value, even when it is found in official records. Some issues that can lead to incorrect information include:

- Changing street numbers, lot numbers, even street and place names.
- Changing local government boundaries - records may be held by different authorities and institutions at different times. For example, the City of Subiaco is now comprised of the suburbs of Subiaco, Daglish and Jolimont, however it previously also included parts of Wembley, Leederville and Nedlands.
- Occasionally, published information can be out of date or even incorrect.



Hint

Check H. Wise & Co post office directories via the State Library

Remember

Even public records contain mistakes

What is in a name?

- Be creative when considering how names may have been spelt. With differing regional accents and spellings, as well as variable levels of literacy, the names you are seeking may appear in a number of different ways (e.g. Neale, Neal, Neil, Neill or Kneale).
- Keep in mind that people's names were also sometimes given differently in different records. For example, a 'Mary Ellen Brown' may have been formally known as either Mary or Ellen, and informally as Nell or Nellie.
- Women may be referred to by their maiden or married name. A woman who has been married more than once may also have multiple different surnames, as might her children. Once married, women were also referred to by their husband's name, so if Mary Ellen Brown married Alexander John Whyte she would have often been referred to as Mrs A. J. Whyte or possibly Mrs Alex Whyte.
- Even street and place names can change over time. The suburb of Daglish, for example, was once known as West Subiaco.

Where to get help

If you find yourself at a genealogical dead end, you can seek help from a variety of organisations. You might like to contact Family History Western Australia (FHWA) which supports genealogical research in Western Australia. There are also many genealogists offering a range of services who may be able to assist you with your research.

*Subiaco State School
6th November 1907*



Sharing your research

What sort of family history will you create?

There are various ways of capturing, recording, and sharing, your family history:

- Family genealogies, otherwise known as family trees or pedigree charts, provide basic information such as your ancestors' names, births, deaths and marriage details.
- Family histories and biographies include more narrative than genealogies and usually record and reveal more than the typical births, deaths, marriages and occupations.
- Personal memoirs and autobiographies are written records of memories about childhood, adolescence, adulthood and family roles.

Remember, while the facts are crucial elements of your family tree, you can add further richness and a tangible connection to your ancestors through objects, photographs and documents.

Regardless of how you collect and present your family history, you may find that there are many other people interested in your family and your findings.

An invitation: When compiling the history of your family, please consider donating a copy of your research, or any relevant photographs, documents or objects, to an appropriate institution or library. If your family's history relates to Subiaco and its people, please consider donating to the Subiaco Museum – we would love to discuss any potential donations with you.



Thomas Street School Football team, 1927



The Smithers family 1927



Cathryn and Archibald Veitch, 1955



The City of Subiaco has produced this booklet to assist people interested in researching the history of their family. Intended as a guide, this booklet outlines how to begin your search, get organised, avoid unexpected traps and search further afield for information. It includes numerous resources that will help you get started on this rewarding pastime. Although specifically designed with the history of Subiaco, Daglish and Jolimont in mind, this guide will assist anyone researching a family member with connections to Western Australia, and even Australia more broadly.

All images courtesy of Subiaco Museum.

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All organisation names and contact details were correct at the time of publication.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

Subiaco Museum | 239 Rokeby Road, Subiaco
www.subiaco.wa.gov.au/museum