

Information sheet no. 2:

Family history resources

Your local public library is the best place to start your research. Here you will be able to access local history databases, borrow books to assist you compiling your family history and find contacts for local family history groups.

Look for books in the library's lending collection held at classification no. '929' (Dewey Decimal System) which is where all genealogical material is held. Publications on how to research, compile and even publish your family history will be held here.

When you are compiling your family history it is easy to be waylaid by long-held family rumours, false leads, unproven assumptions and hearsay. To make sure you don't get caught follow the Genealogical Proof Standard (www.genealogyexplained.com/basics/genealogical-proof-standard/). This guideline has been developed to help family historians establish, with reasonable certainty, the reliability, or proof, of any genealogical conclusion.

Here are some key resources to assist you with discovering your family history:

Ancestry.com. This family history database is a valuable start point in any genealogical research. Ancestry.com has many layers, so spend time exploring all the levels of the database.

You can access Ancestry.com for no cost at your local public library, or, if you feel it is more convenient, take out a yearly subscription allowing you to access the site at your convenience and at home. Free access through your local library does mean that you will need to be in the Library, at a public access computer, to use Ancestry.

Find My Past. This is another family history resource. You should be able to access it at no cost through your local public library, or take out a yearly subscription and access it at your convenience and at home. For free access through your local library you will need to be in the Library, at a public access computer to use it.

State Library of NSW (www.sl.nsw.gov.au) The State Library has a dedicated family history area with extensive family history records and resources as well as Librarians available to help you. The State Library's website has numerous research guides for genealogists whether you are a novice or an experienced researcher.

NSW State Archives and Records (www.records.nsw.gov.au). The Archives has dedicated family history research guides available on their website. These will help you explore if your ancestor appears anywhere in NSW government records.

Australian Society of Genealogists (www.sag.org.au). It is a good idea to have a look at the extensive resources of this organisation. Here you will find all the assistance you need for your family history research. There is some free information on its site, but as it is a membership-based organisation you will certainly get more information and assistance as a member.

Trove (www.nla.gov.au) This true treasure 'trove' of the resources of the public library sector from the National Library of Australia. It is also a valuable tool for doing family history research. If you haven't used Trove before have a look at 'A Guide to Trove' on the home page and 'Using Trove'. Interestingly the example they use in this introduction to Trove is how to search for a particular ancestor.

Births, deaths and marriages. Birth, death and marriage records in Australia are held by each state government agency. In NSW this is the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (www.bdm.nsw.gov.au), agencies in different states are easily found via a Google search.

An overview of the history of documenting births, deaths and marriages, how you can find early records and why you can't find others, can be found in this NSW State Archives & Records guide: <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/births-deaths-and-marriages-guide>

Ryerson Index (<https://www.ryersonindex.org>) The Ryerson Index is a free online index to death and funeral notices appearing in Australian newspapers from 1803 until the present. Sometimes it also includes probate notices and obituaries.

Free online genealogy sites. A simple Google search using the word 'free genealogy sites' will bring up lots of sites with a great deal of information to help you get started with your research. Two of these are: www.myheritage.com and www.heritagequestonline.com

Genealogy gems (www.lisalouisecooke.com). Lisa Louise Cooke's website provides lots of free resources, you can subscribe to her business for even more. Her website also has online training courses and she has an active social media presence.

Family Tree magazine (www.familytreemagazine.com). This publication has a good website with lots of free resources. In 2017 they reviewed the best free genealogical sites: www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/best-big-genealogy-websites-2017

Family History Group, Cessnock Historical Society. This family history group keeps files on local families. They meet on Mondays and Tuesdays in Cessnock Library. Contact: Cessnock Family History Group, c/- Cessnock City Library, PO Box 152, Cessnock NSW 2325. Email: cfhgmon@gmail.com

Maitland and Beyond Family History Inc. This family history group is in the Local Government Area adjoining Cessnock, however they collect information on families outside the Maitland area and may have information which will assist you with your research. Contact: 17 Lindesay Street, East Maitland. Phone: (02) 4905 1878.