

DUBBO & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC



Newsletter 24 – May-June 2016

Location: Ground floor – Two storey Community Arts Building Western Plains Gallery, Cnr. Gipps and Wingewarra Streets, Dubbo.

Opening hours: Tuesday 1.00-4pm, Thursday 2.00-6.00pm, Friday 10.00-1.00pm, Saturday 10.00-4.00pm

Society webpage: www.dubbofamilyhistory.org.au

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Management Committee

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Management Committee Meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 10am in DDFHS Library. Members are welcome to attend these meetings, or simply contact any of the committee listed above if you have anything you would like discussed at the meeting.

Newsletter Information The Newsletter is sent every 8-10 weeks with the next one due out in early August 2016. **Please share** any interesting information, news of an interesting website, or maybe a breakthrough with your family history, with other members. Contact Kathy Ph.68825533 or email johnnkathy7@bigpond.com if you have anything that can be shared. We would love to print your item as it is exciting to hear about our members' research.

Website and Facebook Don't forget to check out the website and Facebook for our society. Regular updates, with information for our members, are being made to both, and don't forget to 'like' our Facebook page.

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Society News

Share Your Story This forum, being held on the third Friday of each month, continues to be popular with members. Due to the sudden amalgamation of our council we no longer had a mayor on the 20th May, so Mathew Dickerson was unable to address our group. He has however promised to appear as a guest at a later date. We have to thank long serving committee member Robyn Allan for appearing at short notice. Robyn gave an entertaining talk on the heritage of her home "Eastonville". She also shared some of the memorabilia contained in her family home, which was extremely interesting. Thank you Robyn for stepping in for us.

Share Your Story this month will be held on the 17th June, when we will host member **Lesley Abrahams** who will enlighten us on the mysteries of **Heraldry**. This topic is possibly quite new to many of us but Lesley is an expert in this field and will show the importance of Heraldry in Family History. Lesley will show how Heraldry which relates to family coats of arms as well as genealogy, has assisted her in family history research, as well as her ongoing research on the history of Hungerford. You must RSVP for this event by Tuesday, 14th June to June Wilson on 6882 5366 or 0417 690 495. Her email address is juniwil@clearmail.com.au

Returning to Irish Research Those of us with Irish Ancestry know how frustrating it has been in the past trying to trace Irish heritage. However there is an interesting update to Irish research in the February 2016 issue of the United Kingdom Family Tree magazine. Family historian Chris Paton, who runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service, gives an update of records now available in this area. Check it out in the library when you are next in the rooms.

More Irish research information The Roots Ireland website has recently added many new records on relating to the County Westmeath in Ireland. These include Mullingar death records, Westmeath gravestone inscriptions and various baptisms and marriages between 1900 and 1920. Have a look at the website at www.westmeath.rootsireland.ie for full particulars.

Royal Australian Historical Society Conference 2016 This year the RAHS will hold its conference on the 22nd-23rd October 2016 at Centro CBD, Wollongong. There will be pre conference get together on Friday night, 21st October 2016. More information will become available in the near future.

Share Your Family Story - William Ritchie McKay My Scottish Heritage and the interaction of the McKay, Laurie, Ritchie and McKinley families, along with their involvement with life in the New Colony.

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People emigrated from Scotland for a variety of reasons as life for the majority was quite hard in the early and mid-19th century. The flow on effects of "The Clearances" when many tenant farmers were evicted, the population increase from Ireland due to the famine and potato crop disease, which actually spread to Scotland, and subsequent hardship. The Industrial Revolution resulted in the closure of many "Cottage Industries" such as weaving and textile manufacturing.

Various schemes arose to assist emigration with the English Government introducing a Bounty System or Assisted migration. Rev. Dunmore Lang used Colony funds to bring 4,000 Presbyterians who agreed to repay the fare of \$25 in weekly instalments. Rev. Lang had another motive, as he thought he would cleanse Australian society of the evils of Convicts and Catholics. Scottish immigrants were mainly well educated, included skilled tradesmen and experienced agricultural workers.

In 1840 Janet Laurie, only daughter of Joseph Peter & Elizabeth Laurie, married John Higgins and sailed to Sydney on the "Isabella Watson" where they quickly gained employment on a property owned by Thomas Barker at Goulburn. Janet's parents and six brothers missed her so much, that the eight Lauries sailed on the "Sydney Herald" from Greenock on the 16th April, 1841, arriving in Sydney on 15th July, 1841. As their original sponsor and employer was unable to proceed with the arrangements, Joseph and four sons were immediately engaged by the Australian Agricultural Company and located to the Port Stephens Area. In 1849 Joseph Laurie (Snr) had purchased his own property at Gloucester, later adding land at Nowendoc to his holdings. While working on his Father's property at Nowendoc, Joseph (Jnr) discovered gold, which enabled him to expand his own business interests. These included timber milling, and ship building on the Camden Haven River.

In 1886, having leased the timber mill to William McKay, my Grandfather, he sailed to Europe to promote Australian hardwood and the export industry to England, Scotland and Germany. As a reward the Town of Laurieton bears his name.

My great grandparents, William and Isabella McKay from Aberdeen Scotland arrived in Melbourne in 1854 with son William McMillan McKay (b 1849). They eventually settled in Bright, Vic. where William was employed as the post master.

William McMillan McKay moved to Camden Haven and was involved with the timber industry. He married Janet Laurie, and at the expiry of the lease of the mill, established a general store at Laurieton. Their son Gordon Leslie, (my father) after education at Laurieton, assisted in the store, before travelling to Sydney by sea to study and qualify as a school teacher. As a child I enjoyed stories of his career and life of a single teacher at remote schools in New South Wales.

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Maria McKinley married William Ritchie who was employed on the railway, and my mother, Margaret was born on the 11th January, 1900. In December 1900, at the age of 30 he died of peritonitis at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. In the absence of superannuation or social security 116 years ago, Maria Ritchie requested employment with the railways plus a house. She was given a position as full railway station mistress - a very rare situation. She carried out this role with great dignity for 36 years at the Sydney stations of Waitara, Wahroonga, Cheltenham, and Normanhurst. My mother Margaret Elizabeth Ritchie was educated to leaving certificate level as a boarder at Rosebank convent at Five Dock, before proceeding to Sydney Teachers College. She met Gordon Leslie McKay when they were residents of the same boarding house at Kendall. They married in 1926, and as was the rule in those days, my mother had to resign when she married.

They built a home at Normanhurst, and lived there for 43 years. They had two sons, John Leslie (b1928-d1996) and myself (b 1932). Mum died in in 1969 and Dad accepted Maureen and my invitation to join our household in Dubbo where we enjoyed his company for seven years.

Meanwhile in Gloucester and Taree areas the Lauries and Higgins prospered and multiplied providing 25 cousins for the 1st AIF. There were 11 Lauries, 2 Higgins, 3 Kellys, 3 McIntyres, 2 Gunns, 1 McKay, 1 Moore, 1 Smith and 1 Webber, with 20 returning from active service.

My uncle, Mick McKay (Oswald Keith) 54th Battalion, required his mother's permission to enlist, aged 17 yrs. He visited our home quite often, rarely mentioning the War, but later in life spoke more openly. We have had the honour of visiting the Memorial at Villiers Bretonneau in France, where Uncle Mick took part in the offensive which turned the tide in the Allied favour.

My cousin, Maureen and her husband, Rod Kirkpatrick, have researched and published the book "Cobbers and Cousins" which is the history of the Laurie family and descendants.

Our thanks to Ritchie McKay for making this information available for the newsletter.

'Legacy' users group Members may be aware of a software programme called 'Legacy' which can be used for your family history research. One of our members is a long term user of this programme, who has offered to run a group each month to share her experience and knowledge of the programme. The first two meetings have been well received, with those taking part exchanging lots of information and tips on using Legacy. However this group is only open to members of Dubbo and District Family History Society. If you are interested in taking part, please contact *Jennifer Bruce* on 6882 9050 to register for the next gathering on 28th June 2016.

How to improve our society The society is always looking for ways to improve its facilities and the services available to our members. This is why there is a suggestions box in

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the family history rooms. We are looking for ideas and suggestions from our members. If you have something in mind why not write it down and put it in the suggestion box, or if you would prefer, contact one of the committee members and discuss your suggestion.

Social Events at Family History Rooms Ever wondered what happens to all those photographs taken at our social gatherings? Firstly they are placed on the wall in in our family history rooms. After each event new photos are placed on the wall.

Those taken down are filed in a bright green Lever Arch folder labelled "Social Events". This folder is stored in the second library room on one of two brown bookcases. They are filed under each social event. Please feel free to take a look at the folder when you next visit the library. You may even see yourself in one of the folders! Thank you to committee member Karlyn Robinson for taking these photos, posting them on the wall and then filing them.

Think Tank Group – Lost Someone? Can't find them anywhere? Maybe we can help! The Think Tank Group meets to discuss research with like-minded people. They discuss how to use the various websites for family research, and how to utilise the fantastic resources available in our rooms. Our core group of June Wilson, Jenny Bruce, Jo Murphy and Robyn Allan would love to have other people join them in this morning gathering. The group meets in the family history rooms on the first Wednesday of each month, at 10.00am. The remaining meeting dates for 2016 are 6th July, 3rd August, 7th September, 5th October, 2nd November and 7th December. For more information contact Jo Murphy on 6882 9426 or June Wilson on 68825366, email juniwil@clearmail.com.au but remember this group is *only available* to our members.

Share Your Family Story by Karlyn Robinson My 2 x Great Grandfather Edward Gegan was a colourful character to say the least but I am going to focus on just one area of his life.

Edward was born into a Roman Catholic family in Kells, County Meath, Ireland in 1813 and as a young man had been employed as a butcher until around 1834 when he joined the Regiment – the 17th Lancers, where he worked initially as a groom and later as an Officers servant. I believe that Edward was not a person who took kindly to orders and commands and I do not think he responded very well to authority so I was not surprised when I discovered that he deserted from the Lancers, not once but twice, in 1835 and again in 1836. The first time he was captured and returned to the Regiment after spending time in goal but on the second occasion he did a runner and left the country.

He joined the Queens Spanish Legion, which was made up of volunteers from Ireland and England, and at the request of the Spanish Government, went to Spain to fight in the First Carlist War for Queen Isabella (1834-39). Edward was a military professional and had been trained in the use of horses, pistols and of course lances. He signed up for a year with the Legion to take part in this most horrific war. Conditions were grim and it was not for the faint hearted, it was either kill or be killed. At the end of his time in Spain he was given a passport signed by General de Lacy Evans which showed that he had served his time and

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was now free to return to England. He decided instead to go to Paris, France, I guess for a little R & R but as he was leaving Spain, he was confronted by three soldiers of the opposing army. He had little choice but to defend himself and succeeded in killing two of the soldiers with the third retreating, he was able to help himself to their pistols and other items. He spent some time in Paris and then made his way to Calais where he caught a boat back to London alighting at the Tower Steps. Here he caught a packet sailing around southern England and on to Liverpool. His eventual destination was Manchester, a city he knew well, since he had been stationed there with the 17th Lancers. From Liverpool, on the Quay packet, he made his way along the Mersey Estuary to a shipping canal that eventually brought him close to Manchester. And this is where Edward's troubles first began in earnest.

Having spent a year at war, he found himself in very poor financial circumstances with no income and nothing to fall back on when he arrived home. He could hardly go back to the Lancers! Edward needed food and shelter quickly and since he was carrying a fine brace of Spanish pistols the quickest way he could think of for making money was to rob someone. He found an accomplice, one James Turner and on the evening of August 5th 1837 they set about their work. They attacked a man walking home late in the evening, bailing him up and demanding money. The gentleman protested that he had none but Edward knew better and proceeded to search his pockets. A struggle ensued and the man called out, "Help, murder". A watchman who was not far away came to the gentleman's rescue and the robbers ran off dropping a few things as they fled – a horse pistol, some French address cards, a passport from the Spanish Legion, two silk handkerchiefs and a booklet titled "History of Celebrated Highwaymen"! I suspect he was reading up on his job description as he went along!

These attacks went on for several weeks until Edward and his accomplice were finally apprehended. On 18 August 1837, newspapers across the Midlands exclaimed – "Apprehension and Desperate Resistance of a Highwayman. A series of robberies have been committed over the past few weeks which, in respect of violence and daring, can only be equalled by events recorded in history by the celebrated Dick Turpin". His capture was well recorded and shows that seven police officers went in search of him and once surrounded Edward produced a double-barreled pistol, firing it at the head of one of the police officers. Fortunately for the officer the pistol misfired. Another officer hit Edward on the head from behind, knocking him out, just as he tried to produce a dagger from under his trouser leg. Suffice to say Edward was detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure at the New Bailey at Salford. His trial was held at the South Lancashire Assizes in Liverpool on 22 March 1838 where he was charged not only with Highway Robbery prior to inciting violence but attempting to assassinate a Police Officer. He was found guilty and handed the death sentence. The Secretary of State commuted his sentence to 'Transportation to a penal settlement'. Edward was 25 at the time of his trial. He was then taken to Kirkdale Gaol before being moved to the prison hulk *Fortitude* moored at the Medway at Chatham, Kent, where he awaited transportation.

And there I will stop Edward's story. Suffice to say I had been searching for information on

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Edward for many years with little success. From his convict papers obtained from the Tasmanian Archives I knew he had been charged with highway robbery. I also had found out that he had joined the 17th Lancers and had deserted once. Really, I had only very skimpy information. My success came a few years ago when I accessed the British Newspapers on findmypast, here at our family history library. I was amazed when I found around seven newspapers, giving great details of the case. From these I found out the following:

*Edward's activities in Hernani, Spain. How he returned to England

*His use of an alias, - he used the name Stenson.

*His engagement to a servant girl in Manchester with the Banns having been published at St. Ann's Church in Manchester. Edward had only been in Manchester for one month before he was apprehended, so I suspect he was a really fast worker!

*The papers also gave the name of the girl, Elizabeth Brennan and that it was her intention to pay for counsel for her intended.

*A description of him – a 'big man, upwards of six feet and very strong, displaying muscles of apparently immense strength'.

There were many, many other details that gave me points of reference for further research.

For successful Family History Research use the resources available in the Family History Library.

There is no charge to *members* for using international sites like Ancestry.com and findmypast that includes the digitised British newspapers.

The books in our library contain many treasures and the journals hold hidden gems – yours for the finding.

Come along to our Think Tank on the first Wednesday of the month. This is a good way to seek advice from other more experienced researchers.

Volunteer for some of our projects – it is very social and friendly and you are helping improve the resources of our library at the same time. As well you will find yourself learning by working with other like-minded people.

Volunteer as a librarian, it is amazing how much you actually know when you assisting others with their research and it is amazing what you learn from other librarians and people using the library.

Offer any ideas or suggestions you may have for improvements to our Society. There is a members suggestion box in the rooms.

Keep your membership up to date.

Our thanks to Karlyn Robinson for making this information available for the newsletter.

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Family Tree Maker Earlier in the year it was indicated by Ancestry that they did not intend to continue to support this software. They subsequently made a further announcement that “they had listened to feedback” and had signed new commercial arrangements with two companies which will allow Family Tree Maker to continue to be developed and supported into the future. Software MacKeiv has been developing Family Tree Maker on behalf of Ancestry for the past six years, and will now become the sole publisher and distributor for both the Mac and Window versions. Family Tree Maker users will continue to be able to integrate their Family Tree Maker database into the online Ancestry trees if they wish to do so, and will have access to Ancestry Hints and searches, as they do now.

Ancestry has also set up a new partnership with RootsMagic, another desktop software program, which will connect with the Ancestry website the end of 2016.

The message to Family Tree Maker users continues to be that there is no need to make any changes to what you are doing at present. Evidently this latest announcement will ensure that desktop users can continue to use their program in the foreseeable future and be sure that it will be supported and updated. (*For the full story on this see the Descent journal of March 2016, page 42*).

The Birth of Civil Registrations We all know how useful birth, baptism, marriage and death registrations are when trying to find information on your family tree. In the April 2016 issue of the United Kingdom Family Tree magazine there is an interesting article on “How civil registrations came into being”. This is followed in the May 2016 issue by an article called “Getting to grips with birth certificates”. If you are involved in family history research at all, you should check these articles out when you are next in the family history rooms. This is one of many interesting articles in these monthly magazines which are available in the family history rooms to our members.

Huguenot families Does the word Huguenot ring a bell with you? The original Huguenots (French Protestants) bought the word “refugee” into the English language when they fled to seek refuge in other countries such as England, Ireland and other countries to avoid religious persecution. Descendants of these original Huguenots then looked for a better life in other new countries such as Australia. There is even a Huguenot Society of Australia. An article on this subject appears in the March 2016 issue of Descent, another fantastic magazine received by our family history group. There are also two books on Huguenots on the shelves in the family history rooms.