



HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

IMAGE: VICKERY FAMILY, 1901. EBENEZER AND JANE'S GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

WHERE DO I START?

The best place to start is with yourself. Using your own birth certificate, draw up a simple family tree and begin searching backwards through birth, death, and marriage records. Your birth certificate will provide enough information to track down your parent's details, then subsequent generations. Waverley Library recommends investigating only one side of your family tree at a time, particularly as you venture further back through your family history.

Take your time with your research and confirm information with official documents. You may have to purchase copies of historic birth, death, or marriage certificates to verify names, places and dates. If there's an existing family tree, make sure to confirm and verify that the information is accurate.

Privacy restrictions prevent you accessing records in NSW from:

- Birth records: the last 100 years
- Marriage records: the last 50 years
- Death records: the last 30 years

You may be able to find this information from newspaper reports, headstones, shipping records, or military records.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

TALK TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Collect documents, photographs, and records and ask older members of your family for their thoughts and memories. You may wish to prepare a list of questions, or record the conversation to help with your record keeping. Make sure to verify any information, sometimes there's a lot of skeletons hiding in the family history closet.

If there's any photos that other members of your family have, ask if you can copy, or digitise them.

RECORD KEEPING

Use a research log to record your notes and research. This is useful for checking information and finding errors. Make sure to note down the details of the records you've checked (even if you don't find anything) as you might need them again in the future. Using resources such as pedigree and descendent charts can also be helpful, particularly as you go further back in your research.

Respect personal privacy. Do not record details of living relatives in public forums, you can use initials or maintain a full account offline. Make sure to digitise any certificates, photos or documents that you receive and keep the originals in archival sleeves.

WHERE TO RESEARCH

Information about your family history is often created from collecting paperwork from official life events. This can include birth, death, and marriage certificates but also things like divorces, wills, adoption records, parish records, electoral rolls, military records and cemetery records.

Adoption records

Legal adoption started at different times across Australian states and territories. Records began around the early 1920s. Access conditions are different for each state agency, and you'll need to contact the relevant authority for information.



149 Bronte Road, Waverley.
Seidel Family, circa 1906.



Note down the resources you've checked even when you don't find anything. You can download free research log templates from many family history research websites.

DEATHS.

ANNABEL.—May 19, 1915, at her late residence, Beulah, 23 Mary-street, St. Peters, Eliza, beloved wife of John Annabel, senior, in her 72nd year. Peace, perfect peace.

BERRY.—May 15, 1915, Clara Anne Berry, late of Gumbelab, aged 63 years. Interred Monday, May 17.

BROOKS.—April 19, 1915, at Polding-street, Drummeayne, Emma Louisa A., relict of the late Captain Alfred Brooks, daughter of Captain John Nixon, grand-daughter of Captain Daniel Nixon, 10th Royal Veteran Battalion, and great-granddaughter of Colonel the Hon. James Cuthbert, 42nd Highlanders, sister of the late Lieutenant Frederick Nixon, and beloved mother of Mrs. Henry R. Weale, senior, and Mr. F. Brooks. Born at the Island of Guernsey 1827.

CHAMBERLAIN.—May 20, 1915, at Mater Misericordiae Hospital, North Sydney, Francis George, late of Wahroonga, aged 51 years.

CROUCH.—May 10, 1915, at his late residence, Wol-longong-road, Arncliffe, William Henry, dearly beloved husband of Annie Crouch, aged 58 years.

DAVIS.—May 21, John L. Davis, third son of the late Rev. A. B. Davis, aged 55 years.

DOBBIN.—May 19, at his residence, Woodbridge, Lawrence, Clarence River, Charles B. (late lieutenant, R.N.), beloved father of J. Henry Dobbin.

DOLAN.—May 12, at the Little Sisters of the Poor, Randwick, William (Kiernan) Dolan, aged 80. Interred at Rookwood May 14.

EYLES.—May 21, at the Marrickville Cottage Hospital, Catherine Eyles, aged 63 years.

FRITH.—May 18, 1915, Carrie Frith (nee Dolly Bentley) (suddenly), lifelong companion and friend of Eleanor E. Cannon. Peace, perfect peace.

GLASSON.—May 3, 1915, at Gavutu, Solomon Islands, Eric Blakwell, infant son of Eric Stylton and Mattie Glasson, aged 15½ months.

GLASSON.—May 3, at Tulagi, Solomon Islands, Eric Blakwell (Peter), dearly loved younger son of Eric and Mattie Glasson, of Pepeala, Solomon Islands, and grandson of Mrs. G. R. Glasson, Birkley-road, Manly, aged 15 months.

Family notices, Sydney
Morning Herald, 22 May 1915,
pg. 12



Use family group sheets, pedigree charts, and descendent charts to record relationships outside the direct family line. Templates are freely available from family research websites, societies and handbooks.



WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

Australian parish records

Before civil registration began in 1856, church records of baptisms, marriages, and burials are the main record of major life events. Indexes of church records can be found at the different State Libraries, and the National Library of Australia.

Australian births, deaths, and marriages

Birth, death, and marriage records can provide useful information on your family history. Most Australian states and territories publish indexes to historic births, deaths and marriages. Information such as the date and place of the event, parents' names and ages may be provided in the indexes, but more information is generally accessible in the full record. Certificates can be purchased or transcribed. Transcriptions cannot be used as a legal document, but the agent can record comments on the original records that are not allowed on an official certificate. Waverley Library holds indexes for NSW, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, NSW and New Zealand on microfilm or CD. The NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages provides access to online indexes of the following:

- Births/baptisms 1788 - 100 years ago
- Marriages 1788 - 50 years ago
- Deaths/burials 1788 - 30 years ago

Cemetery records and the Ryerson Index

The amount of information supplied in published cemetery records can vary. The records may provide links to other family members buried in the same cemetery, or provide information regarding surviving family members. Death notices may provide information about what cemetery the grave will be located at. Sometimes cemeteries change their names, or no longer exist and you may need to contact the local council to see whether it holds burial records. Many cemetery records are now available online, including Waverley Cemetery and South Head General Cemetery. Waverley Library also holds a transcript and index of Waverley Cemetery on microfilm. The Ryerson Index (sometimes colloquially called the

1935.

4481 Kenny, Frances Mary, 414 Bondi road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4482 Kenny, Hilda Teresa, 287 Old South Head road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4483 Kenny, James Valentine, 287 Old South Head road, carrier, M
 4484 Kenny, Margaret Maria, 7 Brassie street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4485 Kenny, Vincent Patrick, 7 Brassie street, Bondi, presser, M
 4486 Kenrick, Edith Anne, Mia Cara, Wairoa ave., Bondi, shop assistant, F
 4487 Kenrick, Kate, Mia Cara, Wairoa avenue, Bondi, ———, F
 4488 Kent, Amy Lilac, 28 Brighton boulevard, Bondi, home duties, F
 4489 Kent, Ernest Gordon, 28 Brighton boulevard, Bondi, printer, M
 4490 Kent, Herbert Richard, Cooimoo, Gilgandra road, Bondi, fitter, M
 4491 Kent, Marjorie Barbara Hopcroft, Gilgandra rd., Bondi, home duties, F
 4492 Kerr, James Alexander Cameron, Pacific Mansions, 72 Campbell pde., —, M
 4493 Kerr, Joan Alexa, 19 Campbell parade, Bondi, ———, F
 4494 Kerr, John Walter, 309 Bondi road, Bondi, tailor, M
 4495 Kerr, Mary Alexa, 309 Bondi road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4496 Kerr, Morpeth Frances, 55 Sir Thomas Mitchell road, Bondi, home d., F
 4497 Kestevan, Phyllis Leighton, 25 Blair street, Bondi, secretary, F
 4498 Kettlewell, Edgar John Stuart, 8 O'Brien street, Bondi, salesman, M
 4499 Kettlewell, Myrtle Iris Daphne, 8 Blair street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4500 Key, Alice, 50 Sir Thomas Mitchell road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4501 Key, Beatrice Jane, 50 Sir Thomas Mitchell rd., Bondi, dressmaker, F
 4502 Key, Harold George, 50 Sir Thomas Mitchel road, Bondi, farrier, M
 4503 Kidd, Mary Hannah, 67 Hastings parade, Bondi, home duties, F
 4504 Kiddle, Arthur Kingsley, 36 Hall street, Bondi, manager, M
 4505 Kiddle, Ethel May, 36 Hall street, Bondi, hairdresser, F
 4506 Kiely, Margaret, 4 Palo Alto Flats, Wellington street, Bondi, home d., F
 4507 Killingworth, Lily, Streatham, Wallis parade, home duties, F
 4508 Killingworth, Thomas Avern, Streatham, Wallis parade, traveller, M
 4509 Kilminster, Henry George, 4 Knoll Court, Forest Knoll ave., clerk, M
 4510 Kilminster, Merua Grace, 4 Knoll Court, Forest Knoll, home duties, F
 4511 King, Clarence Joseph, 6 Hampton Hall, Sophia street, Bondi, traveller, M
 4512 King, Emma Lillian, 27A Hall street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4513 King, Eva Blanche, St. Lucian Flats, Hall street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4514 King, Hettie, 9 Sophia street, Bondi, accountant, F
 4515 King, Ivy Irene, 9 Rickard avenue, home duties, F
 4516 King, Leonard Yabsley, 27 Hall street, Bondi, traveller, M
 4517 King, Percival John, 31 Curlewis street, Bondi, wharf labourer, M
 4518 King, Roy Allan, 27 Hall street, Bondi, clerk, M
 4519 King, Russell Kathleen, 23 Sophia street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4520 King, Thomas, Tarana, 9 Rickard avenue, Bondi, painter, M
 4521 King, Violet Alice, 19 Chamber's avenue, Bondi, home duties, F
 4522 King, Wm. John George, 19 Chamber's avenue, Bondi, carpenter, M
 4523 Kingham, Caroline Gertrude, 11 O'Brien street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4524 Kingham, William John, 11 O'Brien street, Bondi, laundry proprietor, M
 4525 Kinghorn, Alan James, 23 Sir Thos. Mitchell road, Bondi, draper, M
 4526 Kinghorn, Harry Eaton, 23 Sir Thos. Mitchell road, Bondi, clerk, M
 4527 Kinghorn, Minnie Jane, 23 Sir Thos. Mitchell road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4528 Kinghorn, Muriel Helen, 23 Sir Thomas Mitchell road, Bondi, typiste, F
 4529 Kingsmill, Kathleen Camillus, 49 Wellington street, Bondi, home d., F
 4530 Kingsmill, Raymond Beresford, 49 Wellington street, B., traveller, M
 4531 Kingston, Claris Alice, 56 Gilgandra road, Bondi, home duties, F
 4532 Kingston, James Clifton, 56 Gilgandra road, Bondi, clerk, M
 4533 Kington, Cecelia Maud, Cairo Mansions, Bondi road, Bondi, tailoress, F
 4534 Kington, Eleanor, Cairo Mansions, Bondi road, Bondi, milliner, F
 4535 Kinnings, John Egan, Wima Court, Ramsgate ave., Bondi, accountant, M
 4536 Kinnings, Myra Winifred, Wima Court, Ramsgate ave., Bondi, n.d., F
 4537 Kirk, Francis Thomas, 32 Hastings parade, Nth. Bondi, collector, M
 4538 Kirk, Marguerite Elsie, 32 Hastings parade, North Bondi, home duties, F
 4539 Kirkby, Violet Marion, 74 Curlewis street, Bondi, home duties, F
 4540 Kirkby, William Henry, 74 Curlewis street, Bondi, stoker M

Electoral roll, Wentworth
 District, Waverley 1935.



Can't find a record for a birth, death or marriage? It might be because it took place in a different parish, state, country, or even at sea!

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

Dead Persons Index) is an online index of past and present death notices in Australian newspapers. Older death notices often record the names of both direct and extended family members and funeral details.

Census information

Australian census data is generally fragmented and incomplete. Prior to 2001, it was government policy to destroy all census records with names on them for privacy reasons after statistical analysis was completed. The only census to survive in full is the NSW Census of November 1828, which was inscribed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register in 2019. The census aim was to record all the inhabitants of the colony at the time, and provides the individual's full name, age, place of residence, ship of arrival, occupation employer's name and place of residence. Waverley Library holds a physical copy of the census information in the Reference Collection, and a digitised version is available at the [NSW State Archives](#).

Divorce records

Early divorce records are usually found in the Supreme Court records or each state's archives. [NSW State Archives](#) has an online index of divorce cases 1873-1975. After 1976 the Family Court of Australia became responsible for divorce records, however the date that each State and Territory started varies. Divorce files may include marriage certificates, correspondence, and information about the family. Access to divorce files may be restricted, depending on the date.

Electoral rolls

Electoral rolls list people who are registered and eligible to vote at federal, state, territory and local government elections and referendums. They provide full names, addresses, gender, and occupations (prior to 1983). Electoral rolls are useful research tools to identify residential addresses for an ancestor for a particular year,

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide



Studio portrait of three brothers of the Clarke family from North Bondi, NSW, who all served in the First World War. Left to right: 5993 Private William Reginald Quintus 'Reg' Clarke, 2nd Battalion; 1582 Private Hercules Lionel 'Bob' Clarke, 19th Battalion; and 1593A Private Julius Ordo 'Ordo' Clarke, 19th Battalion. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.



Take into account different ways of spelling names. Your ancestor's name may not be spelt the same on all records.

Using search techniques such as wildcards and truncations, and all possible spelling variations can help if you run into trouble during your research.

or changes of address across a period of time. They can also help identify other adult family members at the same address who are registered to vote. Historic electoral rolls can be accessed at the State or National Library. Waverley Library holds physical copies of state and local electoral division rolls from 1963-2004.

Immigration, passenger lists, and shipping records

Until 1924 each State or Territory was responsible for keeping records of arrivals. Arrivals after 1924 are kept in the [National Archives of Australia](#). Early NSW shipping records can give you a wealth of information, including the town where your ancestor came from, if their parents were still alive, and the names of family members already living in Australia who sponsored their voyage. [NSW State Archives](#) have transcribed many shipping records and shipping lists, including convict arrivals. Free settlers and military staff also travelled on convict ships.

Military records

If one of your ancestors served in the army, air force, or navy you may be able to access their service records, military engagement records, and embarkation rolls. Personal service records are generally held by the [National Archives of Australia](#), with some service records prior to 1901 being held by State authorities. The [Australian War Memorial](#) holds records relating to military engagement including embarkation rolls, photographs, information about military units, and some private service records.

Rate books

Rate and valuation books give unique information about home ownership and property values. They are of most research value when used in conjunction with other sources, such as the SANDS Directory. Waverley Council holds rate books on microfilm, from 1860-1930. Rate books after 1930 are not microfilmed, and an appointment to view the later books is required with the Local History Librarian.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide



Mr and Mrs Sydney Elliot and daughter. Mr Elliot was a butcher at 73 Bondi Road in the early 1900s. The Elliot family lived at "Branxton".

SANDS Directory

The SANDS Directory was published annually from 1858-59 until 1932 (excluding 1860, 1862, 1872, 1874, 1881). The directory contains the names and addresses of householders, addresses of business and commercial organisations, and is a useful tool for finding where ancestors lived or worked before electoral rolls were instituted. SANDS can be used in conjunction with rate books to establish ownership of a building. The SANDS Directory is available online at [City of Sydney Library](#), or on microfiche at Waverley Library. A print copy of the Waverley section is also available to read in the Local History collection.

Wills, probates, and intestacies

Wills can provide information difficult to access elsewhere, such as the surnames of daughters whose marriages occurred outside date ranges covered by birth, death and marriage indexes, or informal adoption arrangements. Also included are details of assets, occupations, and the names and addresses of beneficiaries. NSW State Archives hosts the indexes to Deceased Estate Files 1880-1939, Intestate Estate Case Papers 1821-1913, and early probate records 1790-1875. For copies of wills, probate and intestacies you'll need to apply to the relevant Australian Supreme Court, or contact a transcription agent.

FAMILY HISTORY RESOURCES, BOOKS, AND GUIDES

There's a wealth of excellent information about family history research available at Waverley Library, online, and at local family history groups and societies. If you're looking in the library, you'll find family history and genealogy guides and resource books located in our non-fiction collection at ANF 929.1072. General Australian history and local history books are also available for loan.

Ancestry

Your Waverley Library membership gives you in-library access to Ancestry.com, a leading database of family history records. The Ancestry Library Edition database provides access to historical



Check out Waverley's collection of books, magazines and online databases to help in your family history research

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

documents, photos, oral histories, indexes and other resources from archives around the world. There are tutorials and videos under Ancestry's Learning Centre to help you with your research.

Family History magazines and journals

Waverley Library subscribes to a number of print and digital family history magazines which are available for loan. These include Inside History, Who Do You Think You Are?, and Family Tree in addition to other general history journals.

Images and digital library collection

Waverley Library also holds a wide collection of local history books, topic files, and historic images in the Local History department. Many of the images from the photographic collection are available to be viewed online at our local history [image library](#). Appointments to access some materials may be required.

Newspapers

Use [Trove](#) to browse digitised collections of state, local, regional, and special interest newspapers. Newspapers can help you discover the context and background of your family history, and help locate death, birth and marriage notices. State libraries or the National Library of Australia may also hold other digitised newspaper materials not held on Trove. Waverley Library also holds physical or microfilm copies of some local newspapers, including the Wentworth Courier.



Images from top:

Allen family at Bondi Beach, 1901. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Library and SLNSW.

Dennis (Dinny) Brown, two daughters Elizabeth and Margaret and his wife. Dinny Brown was Waverley Council's first paid lifeguard, and the family lived upstairs from Bronte dressing sheds.



WAVERLEY COUNCIL

FAMILY HISTORY

A Waverley Library Research Guide

NEED HELP?

Waverley Library staff can help you find the resources that you might need to access in your family history research.

Subscribe to our [Library newsletter](#) for details on upcoming Ancestry training sessions and local history talks.

The [State Library of NSW](#) holds a variety of family history courses, and has a collection of family history research guides available to help you in your research.

The [NSW State Archives](#) have guides, indexes and webinars to help you research and use their collections.

August is Family History Month with events, training courses and talks being held across Australia. See [National Family History Month](#) for more information and to register for events.

The [Society of Australian Genealogists](#) hold regular training courses, workshops and events on family history research.

There is a wealth of online resources for family history research, both in Australia and overseas. Some helpful websites that collate further links and provide information include:

- [Cyndi's List](#)
- [CoraWeb](#)
- [Family Search](#)



Images from top:

Joseph Edward Searson,
Waverley Council clerk 1897,
and his wife c. 1890s.

Miss Daisy Wise, Mrs Ivy King
and daughter Bonnie at Bondi
Beach, 1924.