

THE Cedar Log

Issue No 166 – December 2025

Richmond-Tweed Family History Society Inc.

Ballina NSW Australia



In this issue we have several articles about marriage. This photo is of the wedding of King Edward VII (eldest son of Queen Victoria) and Queen Alexandra of Teck, Denmark, (then Prince and Princess of Wales) in 1863. See page 3 for more details.

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We acknowledge the Bundjalung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and rivers where this journal is produced. We pay respect to their elders past and present and honour their culture, history and tradition of storytelling.

Richmond-Tweed Family History Society Inc.

(Incorporated in New South Wales)

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The Marie Hart Library: Opening Hours: 10 am to 4 pm Monday, Wednesday & Saturday. Closed 1st Saturday of the month 1pm – 4 pm and Public Holidays

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Front cover: This photo is of the wedding of King Edward VII (eldest son of Queen Victoria and known as Bertie) and Queen Alexandra of Teck, Denmark, (then Prince and Princess of Wales) in 1863. It was the first Royal Wedding since the introduction of photography. Black and white images were hand coloured to give the appearance of a painting, as was this one. Photo courtesy <https://www.royal.uk/royal-wedding-traditions>

Editorial - By Carmel Crosby

Another year is coming to a close and hopefully our members have broken down some family history brick walls. If not, there is an article in this issue, by Ross **Glover**, which might give you some tips and help you with those difficult ancestors. In our November meeting, groups discussed their brick walls and came up with strategies to help solve them. See the Monthly Speaker section for more details.



Earlier this year we had a successful Saturday meeting where members displayed theirs or their ancestors' wedding paraphernalia. Some gave talks about marriage traditions or their ancestors' marriages and mishaps. We have four of those stories published in this issue, by Judy **Cosgrove**, Ross **Glover**, Robyn **Hilan** and Jill **McCann**, and they make interesting, and sometimes humorous, reading.

This year we had our first **writing competition** since 2014. It was on the theme of **School Days – Stories of our own or our ancestors' days as a pupil or teacher**. The winners are announced in this issue. The stories will be published in the March 2026 issue of *The Cedar Log*, with the permission of the authors.

In September we had our third fundraising **BBQ at Bunnings**, Ballina, for 2025. It was another great success raising approximately \$2,000 and we thank all those who assisted on or before the day. These will continue to be part of our fundraising activities and we have applied to do more in 2026.

Our successful fundraising has allowed us to maintain the electronic and other resources in the Marie Hart Library, which include an NBN internet connection and an upgrade this year to an **All Access Ancestry** subscription. This is the top level of Ancestry and covers their world-wide records plus access to **Fold3®** military records and **Newspapers.com™**. Pop into the library and check out what you might find!



Finally, we wish all members and readers a **Wonderful Christmas and New Year** and look forward to many research breakthroughs in 2026.

Seasons greeting from
The Editorial Team - Judy, Liz and Carmel

RICHMOND-TWEED FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC

HONORARY FELLOW

KERRIE ALEXANDER – Member - 823

Awarded Saturday, 1st November 2025



In April and August of this year, we recognised the huge contributions made by Carol **Brown**, and Robyn **Hilan**, to the Richmond-Tweed Family History Society (RTFHS). We did this by making them Honorary Fellows.

Today we recognise the dedicated and wide-ranging service of Kerrie **Alexander**, Member 823.

Kerrie joined the RTFHS in 2006 after moving to the area. This was a huge win for our Society, as she brought with her an incredible amount of experience, having previously been involved in setting up a Society in the Illawarra area in 1984. She also brought a willingness for hard work and

a practical, problem-solving way of thinking, for making the Society the best it could be.

On joining, Kerrie immediately became the Society's Secretary, a position she filled admirably for 12 years. In addition to her role as Secretary, she consistently kept members informed by sending out monthly emails, regarding new records and Society news, ensuring that everyone remained engaged and up to date.

Kerrie's involvement with the Committee of Management extended to 14 years, an incredible level of commitment, and she was and still is regarded as a cornerstone of operations.

Kerrie was also involved in several other sub-committees, including the Purchasing Committee, Review of Service Committee, and continues to be a member of the Library Committee. She also served as our Library Officer for 18 months and her involvement in the library was invaluable, resulting in her re-cataloguing both the cemetery and history sections of the Marie Hart Library, participating in numerous stocktakes, and by liaising with *Find My Past* and *FamilySearch*, securing our valuable library subscriptions and affiliate status.

Kerrie’s organizational skills have been obvious and benefited the Society in many ways. In the absence of dedicated officers she purchased supplies, organised the afternoon teas and roster, addressed members’ welfare by sending sympathy and get-well cards, all of which fostered a caring and inclusive community. Kerrie ensured new members felt welcomed by keeping the New Members Kit updated and even assembled and delivered the kits personally.

Kerrie has been an active member by presenting talks at our monthly meetings, the most recent being one detailing her experience using Artificial Intelligence to aid her research. I know I speak for many in saying that talk was extremely fascinating and an eyeopener to the future of research. Kerrie has also organised and provided articles for *The Cedar Log*.

I’m sure her consideration for our Society, also led to her daughter being asked to develop the current RTFHS website. This is an essential tool for enhancing any Society’s outreach.

Kerrie’s depth of knowledge and experience continues to be called on, to assist members and the committee. It seems there was nothing that Kerrie wasn’t prepared to do to assist the Richmond-Tweed Family History Society. If she saw a need, she acted.

It is very fitting now, that the Honour Board for Honorary Fellows, that was organised by Kerrie, will rightly bear her name, alongside the other members, recognised for their dedication.

Kerrie Alexander represents outstanding service, leadership, and dedication. She is most deserving of the title of Honorary Fellow of the Richmond-Tweed Family History Society. Kerrie, we thank you for all you have done and continue to do for us.

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members:

\1073	Linda Trigg	Cumbalum
1074	Susie Howlett	East Ballina
1075	Patricia (Trish) Marron	Tevan
1076	Lynne Roy	West Ballina
1077	Deb Warren	East Ballina
1078	Kerri Goodger	Tevan
1079	Jann Rowe	Goonellabah
1080	Sallyanne Donnelly	Casino

Richmond-Tweed Family History Society (RTFHS)

Writing Competition Results

This year, the RTFHS held a writing competition on the theme of **School Days – Stories of our own or our ancestors’ days as a pupil or teacher**. External judging was done by the Writers Support Group of a Family History Society in New South Wales. They used detailed criteria so as to judge the entries consistently. The names of the entrants were unknown to the group. The editor of *The Cedar Log* was the only person knowing the entrants details etc. The competition was open to members and non-members and our short article advertising the competition in the *Ballina Wave* elicited some entries from non-members. The judges reported that they enjoyed the judging process and that they learnt a lot from the experience and we thank them for their generous contribution.



Below are the results of the competition.

1st place (\$100) – Colin **Summers** (RTFHS Member 154) with his entry, **A Legacy in the Classroom: Four Generations of Teachers**

2nd place (\$50) – Peter **Pine** with his entry, **Perks of Schooling in the Days of Old**

3rd place (\$20) – Jill **McCann** (RTFHS Member 1010) with her entry, **School Days**

Highly Commended by the judges – Helen **Davidson** with her entry, **School Days: More Education is Better**

Congratulations to the winners and to all those who entered the competition but were not placed in the top four. We appreciate the time and effort put into all entries. If agreed by the authors, the stories will be printed in the March 2026 issue of *The Cedar Log*.

A Brief History of Weddings and Marriage

By Ross Glover – Member 1046

Why do we have weddings? We have them because they are the celebration of the act of marriage.

How old is marriage as an institution?

The best available evidence suggests that it's about 4,350 years old. For thousands of years before that, most anthropologists believe, families consisted of loosely organized groups of as many as 30 people, with several male leaders, multiple women, with no real pair bonding, and children. As hunter-gatherers settled down into agrarian civilizations, more stable arrangements became the norm.

The first recorded evidence of marriage ceremonies uniting one woman and one man dates from about 2350 B.C.E., in Mesopotamia. Over the next several hundred years, marriage evolved into a widespread institution embraced by the ancient Hebrews, Greeks and Romans.

Early weddings

In times past, a couple could just say they were married and their village accepted this. Getting married in the medieval period was incredibly simple for Christians living in western Europe – all the couple had to do was to offer each other their ‘present consent.’ Often, this consent was expressed through the giving and accepting of an object called a ‘wed,’ and this ‘wed’ was often a ring. Thus, a ‘wedding’ was a ceremony where a man offered a woman a ring and she accepted it. This became the norm in the 8th century. Legal records show people getting married on the road, down the pub, round at a friend's house or even in bed. All that was required for a valid, binding marriage was the consent of the two people involved. In England some people did marry near churches to give greater spiritual weight to proceedings, often at the church door (leading to some rather fabulous church porches being added to earlier buildings), but this still did not necessarily involve a priest.

Confusion about the legitimacy of weddings was common, however. Since witnesses and clergymen weren't required to be present at the wedding, one or both of the couple could later deny that a wedding had taken place.

There were other simple ceremonies. Couples could be handfasted, where the couple's hands were joined by being tied at the wrist, as they stated their intention to be man and wife. Sometimes, this was for a trial period of 1 year and 1 day, after which they could decide whether they wanted to continue with the marriage or not.

In some places, the couple held hands and jumped over a fire, signifying the burning of their old single life and then landing as a married couple. In Wales, in particular, marriage could be solemnised by just jumping over a broom, while holding hands.

So, you can see, marriage has not always been the elaborate affair we often see today, involving costs that could almost buy a new car.

Marriage as a way to bind women to men and family to family

Often marriage was not about love but, especially amongst the moderately well-off and the wealthy, it was about creating ties between families, in order to safeguard bloodlines and wealth. Or it was to create mutual ties of security and perhaps ensure peace between the families, or countries. I mean, why would you attack a group in which your grandchildren lived?

Women were considered chattels or property, so their feelings often did not matter. They were a tool to be used for political, diplomatic or financial gain.

When did religion become involved?

As the Christian church became a powerful institution in Europe, the blessings of a priest became increasingly common. For much of the early Christian Era, the Church stayed out of weddings and let the state handle the legalities. But by the eighth century, Christian churches started to perform weddings, and the ritual became widely accepted as a sacrament.



The shift from "common law" marriages — where two people (or their families) simply declared they were married — to legal marriage began in the church, with the calling of "banns," or public announcements before the marriage in the 13th century. By the end of the Middle Ages, written marriage contracts had become a regular part of the marriage process.

Love as the basis for marriage

In the 19th century, society encouraged young people to select their marriage partners based on their romantic attachments. This represented a notable change from prior eras, when the feelings of the bride or groom were not of paramount consideration, when it came to selecting a partner. As parents and guardians took a backseat in attempting to find partners for their children, lovers needed to find one another and then determine the extent of mutual attraction. This is also when courtships became a significant part of finding a spouse. Since then, romance and attraction have become synonymous with marriage and weddings.

Marriage Traditions

By Judy Cosgrove – Member 989



Flowers - One of the most longstanding traditions is the bride carrying a bouquet of flowers. The practice dates back centuries with origins deeply rooted in symbolism and tradition. In Ancient Rome, they carried floral garlands to symbolise fertility, fidelity and new beginnings. They believed that flowers brought good fortune and warded off evil spirits.

The flowers served a practical purpose in eras where hygiene was a concern ... fragrant blooms were carried to mask odours!

Bouquets add an aesthetic element to the appearance of the bride and her attendants. Colours, textures and scents complement their attire, adding a touch of elegance and sophistication. Often a horseshoe was attached to the base of the bouquet. Flowers bloom and flourish, symbolising that the bride is entering a new chapter in her life.

Something Old. Something New, Something Borrowed and Something Blue.

This is a phrase borrowed from a poem written in Victorian times in England.

Something Old symbolises continuity with the past.

Something New — hope for the future.

Something Borrowed — happiness borrowed from others.

Something Blue — purity, love and fidelity.

The Blue garter wards off the “evil eye”, a curse that can lead to the first child being stillborn.

The Veil - The wearing of a veil dates to Ancient Greece and Roman times. It was to protect the bride from evil spirits. Over time, they have become an emblem of modesty and purity, evolving as a symbol of innocence and reverence in some cultures.

The Ring - The wedding ring symbolises love, commitment and a promise of a shared life. It dates back to Ancient Egypt where it represented eternity, and due to the circular shape, continuity. In Roman times, they were made from iron, which represented strength and permanence.



Today, rings are crafted using gold, silver or platinum. Symbols of wealth and value and the treasured nature of their commitment. They are a physical reminder of the emotional bond and promises made at the wedding ceremony. In western countries, the ring is usually worn on the fourth finger of the left hand, it is believed to have a vein that connects directly to the heart.

The Marriage Ceremony - Whether a person has their ceremony in a church, or a civil ceremony in a courthouse without religious content or a service performed by a marriage celebrant these words must be said:

The bride and groom have declared before me and all of you, their family and friends, that they will live together in marriage so long as they both shall live. They have made promises to each other. They have symbolised it with the giving and receiving of a ring. Through the powers vested in me I declare them to be husband and wife.

Modern Features

There has even been a change in terms and vocabulary. Some brides are referred to as bridezilla, Hens and Bucks parties have replaced a Kitchen Tea and often the Engagement Party, and a Telegram greeting is a thing of the past.

There is sometimes a Wishing Well at the reception and the couple request money instead of gifts. Invitations are often sent out by text or email rather than a formal invitation card and people who are to be invited to the wedding receive a save-the-date message or card. Same-sex couples can enter into marriage.

Enormous amounts of money are spent on makeup, hair styling, nail painting, jewellery as well as dress. Shoes, photography, car hire, the reception and entertainment. Many parents might encourage an elopement as a great alternative!

For Better or Worse – or Maybe not at All!

By Robyn Hilan – Member 488

For many years I have had the motto ‘if I had my life to live over again, I’d get married before I had sense enough not to!

By the mid-1970s I was three times the bridesmaid, but having passed on a couple of opportunities, still not the bride. I took a different direction – helping people get married. I obtained a celebrant’s licence.

The first public ‘proper’ marriage I conducted was in Townsville. I was nervous, there were nine people in the wedding party and a very large guest list. Why I am calling it a ‘proper’ marriage will become clear.

My first wedding as a marriage celebrant

There was an earlier marriage I had conducted — a patch-up job in Rockhampton in 1976. The young couple were on their honeymoon when the celebrant was notified the marriage had been annulled because the groom was under 18, and had only his mother’s permission, not that of a magistrate!

When the couple arrived back from their honeymoon the minister was sitting on the front steps waiting to give them the news. Even though the bride was pregnant the Magistrate did not deem it necessary to give the groom his approval when they approached him for a review. A year later when the groom was 18, (and a father!), it fell to me to repeat the ceremony and thus legalise the marriage. It was a bit of a farce to be honest.

I was the celebrant for three marriages between 1976 and 1978 and on the third occasion the bride was a friend. Carmel was determined she was not going to “love, honour and obey”. She insisted the vows would be to “love, honour and cherish”. “No obeying” she kept on saying whenever we met in the weeks prior to the event. At the rehearsal, I teased her by saying “love, honour and perish”. She was terrified I would slip up on the day.

Well, there was no slip up in the ceremony. **But!** Imagine my horror when *they* were on *their* honeymoon and I received a letter from the registrar advising I had “failed to alter paragraph 2 of the declarations on the reverse side of the official certificate of the marriage and,

therefore, the declarations made by the parties prior to their marriage were not in the prescribed form”.

My earlier experience came to mind. Surely this marriage was not going to be annulled. I had checked all the details with the local Registry Office during preparation for the event but just before the wedding there had been an amendment I was not aware of. Such changes were not notified directly to the celebrant; it was expected they would keep abreast through notices reported in the Government Gazette. Not on my reading list at the time.

How would I tell Carmel? Fortunately, the letter continued — “Please ensure that the necessary amendments are made when preparing certificates for any future marriages solemnized by you.” Much to everyone’s relief, I was warned and forgiven, and the marriage stood!

Leaving Rockhampton and Townsville, and going back in time 100 years brings me to my great grandparents William **Wagner** and Mary Elisabeth **Felsch**, who were married at Ulmarra, on 6 September 1875.

William Wagner is my most elusive ancestor (in photo on right). Sometimes when my aged mother had a moment of exasperation, she would say to me “I’ll be dead soon and then you won’t have to worry about me” and I would reply “Well, tell William Wagner I am still looking for him!”

Throughout his life William never told any of his children where he had lived in Germany, what work he had done, nor who his parents were. He had brothers who advised him to leave Germany before he was called up into the Army. He never said their names. What a nightmare for a family historian. For about the last 20 years of his life, he lived with his daughter, my Grandma **Hilan**, but apparently had hardly anything to say about his early life.



Much of my early research took place before computers were the ‘way to go’. My work meant constant transfers to towns and cities throughout New South Wales and Queensland with limited access records. Whenever there was an opportunity, I took a lot of time and effort to trawl through records such as shipping, immigration, naturalisation, marine engineer certifications. I wrote ‘snail-mail’ letters and made what seemed like endless applications for

births, deaths or marriage certificates. All in the hope somewhere there might be information which could take me back to my German ancestors.

Nothing! Occasionally the word ‘Germany’ appeared! But, the name of the **village** is usually essential in locating German ancestors.

Because William came to Australia alone, there were no other family lines through which I could trace him back to Germany.

Given I first gave this as a talk in a series on the theme of marriage, I looked again at a copy of the Registration Certificate for the Marriage of William Wagner and Mary Elisabeth Felsch.

Mary was underage at the time and her father’s permission is clearly recorded on the certificate. But crucial details are missing: **Birthplace** blank; **Age** – blank; **Father’s name** – blank; **Mother’s name and maiden surname** – blank; **Father’s occupation** – blank!

At the time of this marriage, it was the officiating minister who was responsible for filling in the parish record and for registering the marriage with the Registrar. Some ministers were a bit lax and details missing from this certificate are critical to researchers who look to it for information some 150 years later!

Time passed, I researched other lines, then Leonie **Oliver** alerted me to the fact that it was not the Marriage Certificate, but rather the **Parish Record** which was the primary document, and the details there had to be precisely completed. She advised that sometimes the minister didn’t put all the information on the copy for the Registrar. I even had an example in my research files.

I had two documents concerning the marriage of Mrs Wagner’s parents, Justus Felsch and Eva Elisabeth **Westerweller**, who were married by a different minister in Grafton in 1859.

Early in my research I had taken the usual route and sent for a copy of the marriage certificate. There was a helpful clue for the researcher by way of the inclusion of the names of the German villages where Justus and Eva came from. But I noted the same blank spaces for details concerning the fathers, mothers, and fathers’ occupations.

Taking up the suggestion from Leonie I obtained a transcript of the details in the Parish Record where *all* the details concerning the parents are clearly stated.

Because my ancestor Justus Felsch was better documented I have researched the Felsch line back to the 1600s in Germany, but can’t get out of Australia so far as William Wagner is concerned!

So far as the Wagner marriage was concerned the original record from the Parish Church became vital as it should have all those otherwise missing details. Locating it was a challenge - *Grafton Historical Society* could not help me, nor the Anglican office in Sydney. Once more the matter was shelved and other lines researched.

A few more years passed and *Family Search* was available in our *Marie Hart Library*. A search of the Grafton /Ulmarra marriages was a bust. No entry for the marriage of William Wagner could be found. How strange. Kerrie Alexander suggested I contact the Grafton Church of England Diocese. The archivist was very helpful.

In relation to the marriage there was no specific information about either William Wagner or Mary Elisabeth Felsch. But the Anglican archivist in Sydney had suggested trying to locate the parish records by using the name of the **minister** who performed the ceremony and this was the action taken up by the archivist at Grafton.

The officiating minister in this case was Charles R. **Curry**. The archivist in Grafton came up with some illuminating information. Referring to the time 1872 to 1876 “Curry was still describing himself as ‘incumbent of the Lower Clarence’ in wedding notices in the CRE (*The Clarence and Richmond Examiner newspaper*), **even though he had been dismissed from the end of 1871.**”

There is a certificate of marriage for William Wagner and Mary Elisabeth Felsch, **but the truth of the matter is their marriage was not conducted by a qualified celebrant!**

It states that the marriage was in accordance with the “rites of the Protestant Episcopal Church”, but because he had been dismissed there is no record in the Parish Church register because Charles Curry had no access to it, nor could he use the Church premises. As far as I know, the wedding took place at the bride’s home. The key issue is that Charles Curry may well have retained the necessary paperwork to register a marriage, but the bottom line is that **he had no authority to actually conduct the wedding in the first place.**

The implication of what I have presented suggests ***THE MARRIAGE WAS NEVER LEGAL.***

For better? For Worse? – Maybe it’s a case of Not at All!

Without a parish record that door closed on any opportunity of using it to trace my Wagner ancestors. I seem to have exhausted all potential avenues.

Mum, please tell William Wagner I am still looking for him!

The Wedding Dress

By Jill McCann – Member 1010



This beautiful bride is my grandmother, Josephine Dorothy **Morgan** (photo on left), on the occasion of her marriage to my grandfather, Frederick **Whitten**, which took place on 9 August 1911 in Tamworth, New South Wales.

Josephine, known as Jo or Josie, had not had an easy life to this point. There are clues to some of those hardships in the newspaper report of her wedding in the *Tamworth Daily Observer*, 16 August 1911.

At the Methodist Church, Tamworth, on August 9, Miss Josephine Dorothy Morgan, of "Leicester Vale," Duri, was married to Mr. Fred Whitten, of Gaspard, Quirindi. The bride wore a dress of cream silk striped ninon over glace silk, richly decorated with pearl and silver trimmings, with the customary wreath and veil. She carried a handsome shower bouquet of white hyacinths, camellias, snow drops and asparagus fern, the gifts of the bridegroom also a costly diamond ring. She was attended by two bridesmaids, Miss Emily Maunder and Miss Lucie Whitten (sister of the bridegroom.) They were attired in cream ninon and carried lovely bouquets of pink and white hyacinths and autumn leaves, and they also wore pretty wreath brooches, gifts of the bridegroom. Mr. W Chalmers, of Tamworth, acted as best man, and Mr. Dunning, of Duri, gave the bride away. Rev. James Colwell was the officiating clergyman, and Mrs. Colwell supplied the music. A goodly number of friends assembled to witness the ceremony, and afterwards adjourned to Mr Jarman's refreshment rooms, where the bride and bridegroom were the recipients of hearty congratulations. Upwards of 40 guests sat down to the wedding breakfast. The customary speeches were made and the usual toasts were proposed and honoured. The bride's travelling dress was of sax blue silk voile, nicely braided, with hat to match. The newly wedded couple went to Toowoomba and Brisbane.

What a pity that local newspapers don't do this anymore – we can learn so much from the report – the name of the Church, the names of the others in the wedding party, the bouquet and the gifts, the reception and the honeymoon destination.

We know that Josephine wasn't given away by her father, because she had not seen her parents since she was about 5 years old, and they separated. Her mother went with baby Edward and was soon living with another man. Her father took Josie and Elsie, her 2 year-old sister, to live with his sister (also Josephine) and her family at Summer Hill, in Sydney. We don't know if perhaps he visited in her early years but certainly, by the time she married, she had long believed that she was an orphan.

Both of her parents were actually still alive in 1911, but she was not to learn that until her mother died in 1933.

We know that Miss Emily Maunder was the sister of her best friend, Ruth, who was supposed to be Matron of Honour, but who had learned that she was pregnant. Nobody could possibly have guessed, but it was considered “not done” to be a pregnant attendant to the bride. My mother wrote that “Josie had met the Maunder family when she was brought to Tamworth *by family friends named Lonsdale. Mr Lonsdale was a traveller for Buzacotts, a farm supplies firm now defunct. He called on a Duri farmer named Will Maunder. The Maunders took a fancy to my mother and asked her to stay on as a companion to their daughters Ruth and Emily. While there, she was included in the social activities of the community, and it was during one of these that she met my father.*”

We know that this was Fred's second marriage and that his 8 year-old daughter, Gladys, was amongst the wedding guests. The first marriage ended tragically when

Annie Whitten died shortly after giving birth to Gladys in 1903. She was 22 years old and they had been married for less than a year.



When I was about 11, my sisters and I “dressed up” in Josephine's wedding dress. I don't think it fit me even at that age – my grandmother was about 5 feet (152.5cm) tall and Fred used to say he could “put his hands around her waist without her stays on”. Fortunately, before it could be ruined by us, my grandmother donated it to the Quirindi Museum.

In 2020 I visited the Quirindi Museum to see the dress.

Knowing of my impending visit, the volunteers of the museum had retrieved it from its tissue-lined archive box and laid it out for me. For many years it had actually been on display, worn by a mannequin, but the fabric is now too frail for it to hang.

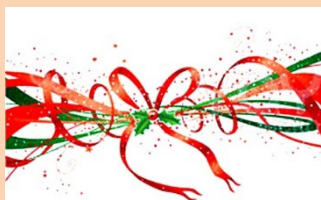
It's very fragile now. The cream silk has darkened and the glaze silk lining has disintegrated in places. The silver thread on the bodice has tarnished to a rather dramatic dark grey but the pearls are still intact. The rich embroidery is still evident, and most of the silk tassels on the sleeves and hem remain.

The newspaper account mentions: She carried a handsome shower bouquet of white hyacinths, camellias, snow drops and asparagus fern, the gifts of the bridegroom also a costly diamond ring.

It doesn't mention the horseshoe attached to the bouquet, which was traditional for brides of the era. Still attached to its ribbon, it lies with the dress.

It's nevertheless still a spectacular dress and I'm grateful that it's still here after 114 years and is lovingly preserved.

Small country town museums do a wonderful job on a shoestring. All of their workers are volunteers, who love their history and try hard to preserve it. This little town has been shrinking for years with faster cars and highways making the large nearby regional city of Tamworth easily accessible for shopping and services. I don't think there is anyone left in Quirindi to whom I am related or who would even remember much about my pioneering family, so I am especially grateful for their care of this precious family heirloom.



BREAKING DOWN THOSE BRICK WALLS

By Ross Glover – Member 1046

Researching to break a brick wall is much like building a stone wall.

I built a house in the 80s. It had a number of stone walls. And to build these walls, I'd collect a good pile of stones, and away I'd go; stone next to stone, stone on top of stone. Then suddenly, the flow of building stops. You just can't find the stone to fit just there. You go through the pile again. No luck. Maybe you look again. Still no luck. So, you have to go and find more stones, maybe from where you haven't looked before. And, voila! There's a rock that fits! And away you go again. Until the next point where you have to stop.

The point is, you just can't keep going back to the same old pile. You have to look elsewhere; you have to get more rocks.

Here are a few rocks you may consider adding to your pile. This is definitely not an exhaustive compilation but some of it may be new to you. I know I learnt something while doing the research for this introduction. I hope you will, too.

PLACES TO LOOK

- **Other members of your family**, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. Family stories may lead to a Trove search and articles in the newspapers. These will often have names and dates
- **Research other members of your family tree.** There could be hints there, about your “brick wall”, in the files and documents relating to their sibling or another relative
- Talk to other genealogists about the resources they use
- Also try just Googling a name
- Expand your known search sites - Church registries, newspapers, wills and probate, land deeds, census records

In Australia, a few sites to search are - the *Ryerson Index* <https://www.ryersonindex.org/> for newspaper death and funeral notices; the National Archives of Australia <https://www.naa.gov.au/>; State Registries for Birth, Deaths and Marriages; *Find a Grave*® <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial>; the Commonwealth War Graves Commission <https://www.cwgc.org/>; People Australia <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/>; the Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/>.

TIPS

1. **Review** what you've already done and check it for reasonableness. I did that the other day and realised that the problem I had finding a grandfather for my 3rd great grandfather was, that, after checking dates, the problem was that the supposed father was only 10 years old when he had the known son. Therefore, I had the wrong dad and so, could not find a grandfather.
2. **Understand your source.** What is it there for, what information does it provide, what are its failings.
 - **Indexes.** There is no point going to an index of any sort and expecting to find lots of detail. It might be an index with 2 names and births per quarter e.g. Harry Smith, born to mother Jenny in the 1st quarter. Just because you have a Harry Smith, doesn't make Jenny his mother or that he was born in that quarter.
 - **English Census Records.** The original forms were filled out by the householder, then transcribed into a summary book by an enumerator and these summaries are what we usually see. This summarising is open to misreading by the enumerator, especially if the handwriting was poor. Also, if the household head was illiterate, the enumerator would fill in the form for them. Any vocal accent, any strange place names or surnames would be up to the interpretation of the enumerator to write down. For example, Amelia could easily be misheard as Emelia. And remember, the truth in these censuses is only what the householder cared to make it. They may have added false details for various reasons.
 - Any **modern transcription or digitisation of the Census** summary can lead to further misreading because you have the same problems with the enumerator's handwriting.
3. **Expand the search years:** if you're having trouble using a set year of birth, maybe search over a range of years. This will bring more results. Your ancestor may have intentionally reported a different birth date or year, altering their recorded age. Common reasons for this include:
 - i. Needing to appear older for military enlistment or employment
 - ii. Wanting to seem closer in age to a spouse
4. **Family reconstruction technique:** Collect all references to a surname in an area, build family groups, and track movements and naming patterns to solve mysteries. I have Whitehouses in my ancestry. They come from around Birmingham. There are lots of them around Birmingham. So, in order to make some sense of who was who, I went down to our research room, and among other things, used our Ancestry subscription and

accessed a number of British newspaper articles relating to Whitehouse and Birmingham. A lot of these did not relate to my family but enough did, that I could start to put a few names to places and known members of the family. And with the ones that didn't fit, there was still some interesting reading.

5. **Importance of original sources:** Always check original records, not just indexes, as they may contain crucial extra information. Marriage certificates often have the fathers and their occupations. Even the names of the witnesses can give you a lead.
6. **Evidence over assumptions:** Don't rely on appearances; always seek documentary evidence to support conclusions. This is especially true if you start using other people's online family trees for your information. Unless they are citing sources, you cannot rely on their information. Again, using my own research as an example, in one of the online family tree services, I found a relative. All the information about my relative matched what this person had. I thought, "You beauty!" However, according to this other person, while my ancestor lived in South Australia, apparently, she was also having children in England! Two things to take away here. If I had taken this at face value, and just copied the information as it was, I would end up with relatives who just weren't my relatives. And secondly, as you can see, the person making the tree hadn't even proofread their own data. They did not REVIEW. I'm inclined to think that everything in the online tree maker sites is dodgy, unless the owner of the tree cites sources.
7. **Keep a logbook:** Here you can record the person you are researching, the date you are doing the research and the sites you have been to. That way you don't keep looking in the same old place. Keeping a log may save you frustration, if you return to your research after a break. A research log for family history includes: -
 - *date*
 - *location e.g. the name and URL of the site you used*
 - *purpose - exactly what you are hoping to find?*
 - *citation - the actual page and volume related to the source*
 - *results - what you found and, importantly, what you didn't find*
 - *next steps - where could you go from here?*
 - *where you've stored the information*

STRATEGIES WHEN SEARCHING

1. Try using fewer search terms. Less can be more.

- a. **Leave off the surname**, there are so many of them and they are really open to transcription error. Forenames are fewer in number and more likely to be known as to spelling. The case of searching for Blissett, which was transcribed as Blippell. This is because the old 's' went above and below the line, and the 'tt' at the end was not crossed. Combine this with poor handwriting and Blissett becomes Blippell. So, the shape of the word is an important feature to keep in mind, if you can't find that ancestor.
- b. Also, there may be a number of reasons why people use different surnames or spellings. However, they usually keep using their forename.

2. Use wild cards.

- a. A wild card is usually a symbol e.g. * or ?. A wild card character placed in a name tells the search engine to count any letter as a match and will return a diversity of results. e.g searching 'Folkes' with a wild card in the place of the 'l', will return results that includes 'Foakes' 'Foukes' 'Fookes', 'Forkes' etc.
 - b. Remember, that an * can replace a number of letters, a ? will only replace a single letter. It is possible to use a number of wild cards in the same search field e.g. Nolan can be written in a search field as *no*lan*. Use the question mark if you are sure only one letter could be wrong.
3. **Search outside your known locality.** Your ancestor may have lived on the border of a parish and had some of his children baptised or registered in one parish church and some in another parish. And then they moved! Especially if your ancestor is a woman, who has gone to live with her new husband. You may even need to change countries. I was researching for a friend recently. On his mother's side we could find records going back to convict days. (And that was a surprise to my friend, that there were convicts in his past!) However, finding anything on his paternal grandfather was impossible. We searched all the Australian records we could think of. Then my friend said the family had a strong connection to England and that his grandfather may have jumped ship to stay in Australia! We searched in the English records and bingo!

IN CONCLUSION - In family history, a brick wall isn't the end of the story. It's just the point where the challenge begins - and where your detective skills, persistence, and creativity come into their own. While genealogy brick walls can be frustrating, they can also lead you to unexpected discoveries. And the satisfaction you feel upon making that hard-earned breakthrough is just delightful.

References

<https://www.findmypast.com.au/blog/help/family-history-brick-walls>
<https://www.findmypast.com.au/blog/help/maximize-search-returns-with-wildcards>
<https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/brick-walls-and-lost-ancestors>

2026 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It is membership renewal time. Your support helps keep our *Marie Hart Library* and website up-to-date and operating! You have free access to our research officer and all our resources, including *Ancestry*, *Find My Past*, *Family Search Affiliate*, the *Biographical Database of Australia* and multiple overseas and Australian family history journals. You also receive *The Cedar Log*, 4 times a year. Members living at a distance can have 1 hour free research on your family by our Research Officer.

Fees are \$40 for a single or \$50 for a joint membership and are for the calendar year 2026. **Prompt payment early in the year would be appreciated as it makes our administration work much easier.** Please complete a Membership Form, even if you have done so before. It will be emailed and will be available when paying in person. Payment can be made via bank direct debit or by cash or cheque at the *Marie Hart Library* or at the Saturday afternoon meeting. Payment by card will be available at the meetings with a \$1 surcharge.

Bank details. BSB: 637 000. **Account No:** 720036355
Name: Richmond -Tweed Family History Soc. Inc.
Reference: enter “Subs”, surname and member number

News from the Marie Hart Library

By Jill McCann – Library Officer

Now that our long-running computer issues have been resolved, we have begun to update the Duty Officer Manual and to hold sessions for all Duty Officers to familiarise themselves with it.

These sessions will continue where possible through the next couple of months, and we ask that all Duty Officers take part.

Because of our problems this year there has not been much activity with new and donated books, but that too is now being resolved.

We have conducted part of a stocktake which will continue and should be complete by the start of the new year.

Thanks to everyone for their forbearance during this time and particularly to Vicki, Ann and Ross who worked hard to get things fixed.

Gleanings of Journals in the Marie Hart Library

By Janine Thomson – Research Officer

Get More from Social Media. Social media has become an unmissable resource – expert advice for making the most of different platforms.

French Genealogy. Shares expert advice if you have French ancestry.

Around Britain – West Midlands. Finds new facilities and digital collections for research in the West Midlands.

Who Do You Think You Are – June 2025 - Page 14, 28 & 64

The Establishment of Mounted Policing in New South Wales. The story of this essential service that has lasted for 200 years.

HISTORY – Royal Aust. Historical Soc.- September 2025- Page 12

Research after 1946. Expert tips for overcoming the challenges of tracing relations in the latter half of the 20th century.

Jewish Research. Rounds up the most useful online resources for tracing Jewish ancestors.

Around Britain – Oxfordshire. Find out what's new for genealogists researching their roots in Oxfordshire.

Who Do You Think You Are – August 2025 - Page 29, 35 & 64

The Channel Islands. Tells the story of the Channel Islands and shares the best resources for researching relations from the area.

Royal Air Force. Eighty years on from VJ Day, these recommended sites may help you trace RAF personnel.

Around Britain – Tyne and Wear. Shares exciting news of heritage projects in north-east England.

Who Do You Think You Are – September 2025 - Page 30, 35 & 64

The Birth of Goonoo Goonoo. Tells the story of the history and development of the Australian Agricultural Company.

The Tamworth Family Historian – November 2025 – Page 8

“Jiggi Made Good”: Herbert Moffitt from bush teacher to Judge. The inspiring story of a Jiggi local who left his mark on the local area.

RRHS Bulletin – September 2025 – Page 1

SOCIETY and JOURNAL DETAILS

The Richmond-Tweed Family History Society Inc. was established in 1983 to serve the family history needs of researchers initially with a special interest in North East New South Wales, Australia, in the area bounded by the Richmond and Tweed Rivers, often referred to as the Northern Rivers.

The Marie Hart Library (MHL) holds numerous local records including the Local Schools Admission Registers, Cemetery and Burial Records, Honour and Memorial Rolls from many locations within the Northern Rivers, plus death and funeral notices and obituaries from The Northern Star (1876 – 2020).

Over the years, the library has expanded and now holds a wealth of information from across Australia including electoral rolls, historical and pioneer records, war records, shipping lists, probate records, landholder returns, Colonial Secretary papers and cemetery books. There are family history journals from within Australia or overseas countries, either as hard copies or in electronic form. The latter can be accessed on the computers in the MHL or from home.

Access is available to microfiche, CDs and computers connected to genealogical websites, to which we subscribe, including *FindmyPast*, *Ancestry* and the *Biographical Database of Australia*. We are also a *FamilySearch* affiliate, which gives access to more than the standard *FamilySearch* site. Ask the member on duty, during opening hours, if you need assistance with any of the library's resources.

Family History Research Requests can be done by the Society for a fee of \$15 per hour. Please include a 22x11 cm stamped, addressed envelope and research fees where applicable. Email the secretary or send details to our PO Box (addresses are on the inside front cover).

The Cedar Log – Journal of the Richmond-Tweed Family History Society Inc. Published March, June, September and December

The Editor would be pleased to accept articles for inclusion in this journal. Ideally, they should be sent by email to editorcedarlog@gmail.com but hard copy is also welcomed. Contribution deadline is 6 weeks before the month of publication. The format preferred is Times New Roman font; 11 point; single spacing. Please have any surnames in bold, the first time they appear in your article, after the heading. Add sources or references at the bottom of your article if possible. Please add your contact details as the Editor may need to discuss editing of material submitted for publication. It is your responsibility to ensure that your article does not infringe copyright and the views of authors are not those of the RTFHS. **Items remain the copyright of the Richmond-Tweed Family History Society and/or the author.** Members' input is important and makes for interesting and diverse reading and you might be lucky enough to connect with someone who has read your article, either in Australia or overseas. We would love to hear about how you broke down those brick walls or any interesting information you have found out about an ancestor or research sources or techniques that others may find helpful. **Material and articles in this journal may only be reproduced with written permission from the Society. Please contact the editor via email.**

Monthly Speakers

2 August 2025: John **Fraser** gave a short presentation on his wife Joan's book, *The Girl from the Mountains*, which she published recently. It includes 70 or so short stories of her life, commencing in Urbenville, north west of Lismore, New South Wales, where she was born 90 years ago. Joan has donated a copy of her book and it is available in our library.

Ann **Emery** presented a webinar on how to research on TROVE, which showed the range of categories where resources can be found other than newspapers. These include: - diaries, letters and archives; people and organisations; images, maps and artefacts and several more. So don't limit your search to just newspapers.

6 September 2025: Narissa **Phelps** is an historian and genealogist of considerable experience and she gave us an excellent and inspiring presentation about the **Significance of Landholding for the Early Colonial Women**. She described the different convict experiences that women had and how some women were very willing to engage with authorities and accumulate the means to purchase properties. 1788 – 1810 was a unique and very different era. When convicts arrived in the colony everyone had to find their own home. It was good to hear how proud women were to acquire land, which was something they would never have been able to do back in Great Britain or Ireland. It gave them independence, helped them to gain employment and be able to stay in the colony.

4 October 2025: For the October meeting of the Society, the committee decided to experiment with a workshop. Coordinated by Jill **McCann**, members were invited to come prepared to talk about the brick walls that they had experienced, or were currently experiencing, in their research.

Ross **Glover** gave an excellent introduction to the types of problems which create brick walls and presented some strategies to solve them. His talk is printed in this issue of *The Cedar Log*.

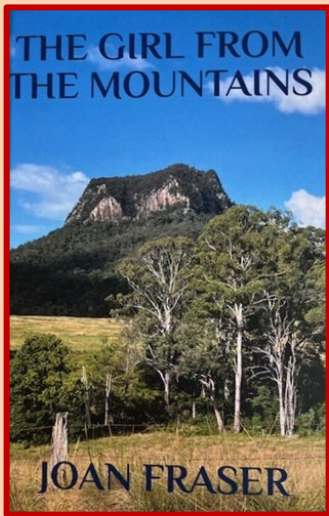
The meeting broke into six groups of 5-6 people each and everyone was encouraged to share their story and contribute ideas about how each problem might be approached. After about 40 minutes, each group reported on their discussion.

Some of the tactics suggested included:

- checking for name changes or aliases – spelling was very fluid until about the mid-20th century
- Looking in local histories of the ancestor's known place of residence
- Researching collateral relatives (siblings and cousins)
- Accounting for historical events, which may have led to changes in the family story. (e.g. "the troubles" in Ireland)

Members enjoyed the collaborative nature of the exercise, so perhaps this might be done again next year, on another topic.

Photos from our Monthly Meetings



Narissa Phelps



Happy Volunteers at our September BBQ at Bunnings



SOCIETY EVENTS

Society meetings are at the Players Theatre, 24 Swift Street, Ballina at 2pm on the first Saturday of each month. There is no meeting in January or December.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Contact the Secretary or the Co-ordinator if you would like to participate in one of the presentations listed below.

Saturday 6 December: Christmas Lunch – Cherry Street Sports Club, 68 Cherry St. Ballina, 11.30 am for 12 noon. Cost \$32.00. If you would like to attend, contact Bonnie Bennett on 0414 927 361

Saturday 7 February: Myths, Legends and Family Secrets – Co-ordinator Jill McCann

Saturday 7 March: Accidents, Near Misses and Survival – Co-ordinator Victoria Evans

Christmas/New Year Closure of the Marie Hart Library: Closed 4 pm Saturday 13 December to 10 am Wednesday 7 January 2026.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership fees for the year 1 January to 31 December are \$40 Individual or \$50 Joint Membership. Journals will be sent to financial members only.