

Tracing ancestors beyond the National Archives

Many records of value to family historians are *not* held by the National Archives of Australia. This fact sheet describes some of the types of records that exist and the institutions you might approach in your research.

Colonial and State records

State government archival institutions are the main sources for pre-Federation (ie colonial) and post-Federation State records. Many records of interest to family historians have been copied and are available on microfilm or microfiche in the National Library of Australia, major State libraries and various archival institutions (see *Fact sheet 2 - Addresses of other archival institutions* for contact details).

Remember that some States or Territories may have been previously administered by other jurisdictions, and this may have a bearing on where early records are located. Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland were originally part of the Colony of New South Wales and the Northern Territory was administered by South Australia (before 1911) and the Commonwealth before gaining self-government.

- **Convict records** – these are generally held by State government archives for the place of arrival, while copies of particular convict records (especially indexes) may be held by libraries or genealogical societies.
- **Colonial migration, passenger arrival and shipping records** – these are generally, but not always, held by State government archives for the port of arrival; some twentieth century records are held by State archival institutions, while the National Archives of Australia holds nineteenth century records for some ports.
- **Colonial defence forces** – many records of British colonial units that served in Australia were copied under the Australian Joint Copying Project and copies are held by the National Library of Australia and major State libraries.
- **State government employment** – employment records for State government services (buses, railways, tramways, police, education, health and agriculture) are held by State archives.

- **Change of name by deed poll** – contact State and Territory registrars (see *Fact Sheet 89 – Births, deaths and marriages*).
- **Other State government records** – court records, coroners' reports, land titles, and local government records are generally held by State archives.
- **Colonial administration records** – these records are likely to be British and may be held by archival institutions in the United Kingdom (see *Fact sheet – 193 Addresses of other national archives* for the address of the National Archives in the United Kingdom).

Death – more than a certificate

Locating a death certificate may lead you to other records about the death of the person you are researching (eg a will, probate records, insurance claims or employment records). Try checking cemetery headstones, burial records and other monuments (eg war memorials); newspapers for death notices, obituaries, funeral or *in memoriam* notices; and online resources such as the *Roll of Honour* database on the [Australian War Memorial](#) website.

If your ancestor was a prominent figure locally, nationally or internationally, or died accidentally or violently, look for newspaper reports or findings of coronial inquests.

Where else might information be found?

- Trade union records, records of small or large businesses or companies (including pastoral companies), may be found at the [Noel Butlin Archives Centre](#), or check whether the company, if it still exists, has its own archives or library.
- Bank archives for information about accounts, mortgages and overdrafts.
- Church archives for registers and other records.
- University libraries and archives, or specialist libraries, archives and museums.
- Records of community, school, social or church organisations or interest groups for membership, awards, photographs and anniversary publications.
- The [National Film and Sound Archive](#) for records of any association with the media or film industry.
- The [National Gallery of Australia](#) or other art galleries or museums for involvement in the art world.
- The [National Institute of Dramatic Art](#) or other drama schools for involvement with theatre.
- Records of siblings and other family members, for each of whom different information (eg a different arrival date or additional correspondence) may be available.

- Records of other families connected with your ancestor. These might lead you to family archives, property and station records, and manuscript collections held in State and local libraries and universities. Remember that some institutions collect certain sorts of manuscripts worldwide and the information may be held overseas.
- Guides and almanacs such as those published by Bradshaw or Sapsford.
- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for records about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra) for records about Pacific Island peoples.

When the trail goes cold

Try these strategies:

- Search several years either side of the dates you have for events.
- Check old newspapers and *The Log of Logs* to verify the arrival details of particular ships.
- Check electoral rolls (held in the National Library and in State libraries) for clues to changes of address and information about marriage, divorce or death. Please see *Fact sheet – 104 Commonwealth electoral rolls held in Perth* and *Fact sheet 119 - Commonwealth electoral rolls held in Brisbane* detail some of the National Archives holdings of electoral records.
- Search the GeoScience Australia online place/name database, old maps, gazetteers, council records, books of Aboriginal place names and lists of rivers and streams for towns and localities you are unable to find. The name you are searching for might belong only to a district or landmark, or the spelling of its name might have varied (eg 'Barren Jack' for 'Burrinjuck') or even changed (eg German towns in the Barossa Valley during World War I).

Searching your family history can be an exciting and enjoyable adventure of discovery. We wish you well in your research.