



All
Courses

Advanced AI
Masterclass

Spreadsheet
Mastery

Immersive DNA
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Workshop

Farm Life Reflections



Sometimes themes for a newsletter just happen by chance. A couple of items this week caught my eye; they were about agricultural labourers, our often unrecognised ancestors who play an integral part in sustaining our way of life. See: **In The News**. Naturally, that got me reflecting on my farming experiences.



I grew up on a sugar cane farm in Queensland, Australia, during the 1950s and 1960s. My parents worked incredibly hard to build the farm and provide for eight children. We had our own horses, cows, chickens, and pigs (plus numerous dogs), and a generator provided electricity until I was about twelve years old. We walked to school (and yes, without shoes), went swimming with the school in our creek every Friday afternoon and generally helped with farm chores. When we each reached high school age, we headed off on the rattler train to boarding school, about 400 kilometres away.

Between June and December, the crushing season was particularly busy, with the constant rumble of trains, passing by our house and school, collecting cut cane from sidings. We quickly learned the names of the train drivers, adding a personal touch to the rhythm of farm life.

Each season, cane cutters would arrive from all over Australia and beyond, earning enough in those six months to support themselves for the rest of the year, often returning the following year to work for the same farmers.

The farming community was a close one. Sunday mornings outside the church were spent yarning (whinging) about the weather, the price of sugar and farming machinery. One of my father's favourite poems, [*Said Hanrahan*](#), by John O'Brien, captured this exceptionally well. I recommend you read the whole poem.

"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,
In accents most forlorn,
Outside the church, ere Mass began,
One frosty Sunday morn.

Farming, with its early mornings and hard work, shaped my life and my siblings. We learnt the value of hard work and how to be resourceful and resilient. These same qualities - diligence, resourcefulness, and resilience - are invaluable in family history research, where persistence and creative problem-solving often unlock the doors to our past.

Cathie

[Author's images. 1. Cane cutters ready to work holding the knives used to cut the cane. Don't you love their hats? 2. The farmhouse in which I grew up. To the left is mature cane with pink flowers and the siding and rail line are on the right.]

Coming Up



The graphic is a vibrant collage representing the intersection of family history and artificial intelligence. It features a central digital family tree with glowing blue nodes, overlaid on a background of historical documents and family photographs. A magnifying glass is positioned over the tree, symbolizing deep research. In the top right, the Family History Academy logo is displayed above the website address www.familyhistory.academy. A purple circular banner in the bottom left corner contains the text 'ADVANCED AI FOR FAMILY HISTORY MASTERCLASS with Fiona Brooker Andrew Redfern', accompanied by small portraits of the two instructors.

**ADVANCED AI
FOR FAMILY
HISTORY
MASTERCLASS**
with
Fiona Brooker **Andrew Redfern**

This 2.5-hour masterclass with **Andrew Redfern** and **Fiona Brooker** focuses on advanced AI techniques for family history research. It's designed for those with some AI experience and covers:

1. Creating custom Generative Pre-trained Transformers (GPTs) for genealogy
2. Selecting the best AI tools for specific research tasks
3. Exploring new AI generative tools for family history discovery.

The workshop aims to help researchers leverage AI to gain deeper insights into their family history.

Date: 15 August US, Canada, UK/16 August AUS & NZ

REGISTER NOW



This workshop with **Fiona Brooker** teaches advanced techniques for organising, analysing, and visualising genealogical data using spreadsheets. It covers breaking down and reassembling data for accuracy, importing and cleaning GEDCOM files, and using tools like slicers and Pivot Tables to identify gaps and insights. It also addresses working with pre-1900 dates, creating useful date tools, and designing

charts and visuals to represent trends and demographics, making genealogical findings more engaging and accessible.

Date: 8 October US, Canada, UK/9 October AUS & NZ

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Immersive DNA Case Studies Workshop



DNA MYSTERIES



MICHELLE LEONARD



IMMERSIVE WORKSHOP

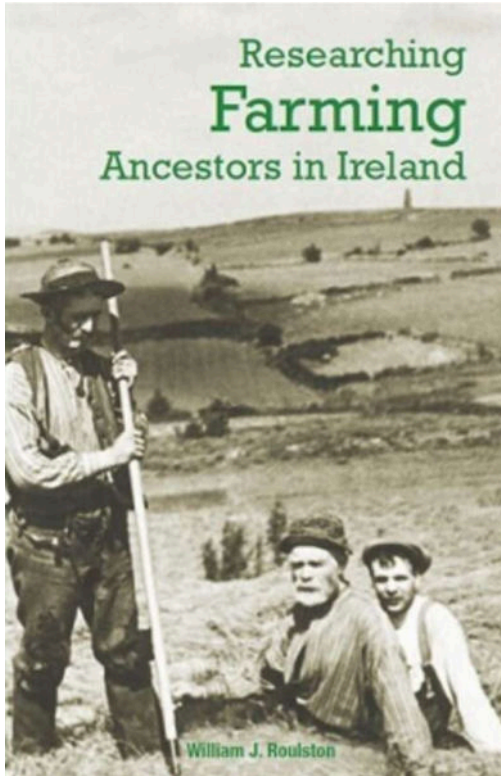
... taking you from evaluating mysteries to solving them



This three-part immersive workshop, led by DNA expert **Michelle Leonard**, advances your DNA research skills through hands-on case studies. Each session, increasing in difficulty, guides you from evaluating mysteries to solving them, focusing on best practices, tips, and techniques. Whether dealing with adoption, unknown parentage, or general DNA queries, you'll enhance your ability to identify DNA matches and confirm family trees, all under Michelle's expert guidance.

Dates: 14, 21 & 26 November US, Canada, UK/15, 22 & 27 November AUS & NZ

In the News



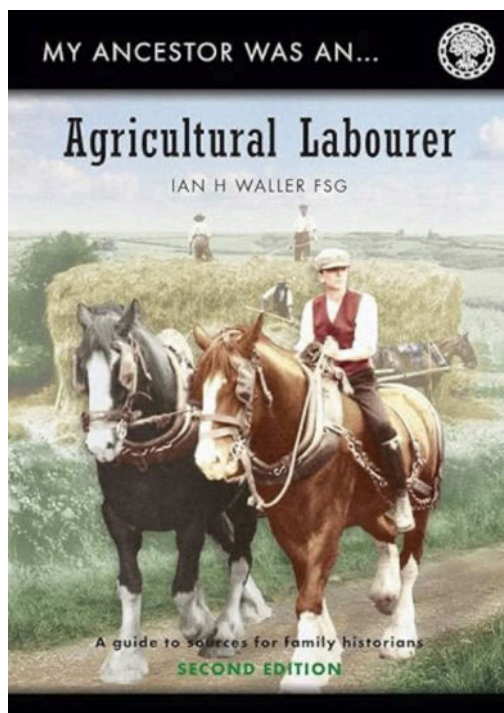
I am always on the lookout for resources which can tell me more about the lives of my Irish ancestors as most of my Irish families were tenants on landed estates, usually owned by absentee landlords. [This book](#) from the Ulster Historical Foundation is a great read, plus it is on sale for most of August for just £8.99.

FIND OUT MORE

Speaking of farmers, you could consider registering for the Society of Genealogists' (UK) [one-day conference on Agricultural Labourers](#). We might think that their lives were uneventful and boring, but you may be surprised at what can be found in historic records.



Photo by [Florian Weichert](#) on [Unsplash](#).



In the second edition of *My Ancestor was an Agricultural Labourer*, Ian Waller provides comprehensive insights into the lives of agricultural labourers, detailing their skills and the seasonal events that defined their work. He also outlines various records, such as quarter sessions, tithe schedules, and manorial records, to help trace the lives of these often-forgotten ancestors.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

AI and Ethics

There are so many ways that AI can help with our family history research. You just need to read the posts on the [Genealogy and Artificial Intelligence](#) Facebook group. We know too that AI doesn't always get it right and we need to verify the output for ourselves.

What about ethical issues? A group of ethicists are developing an AI tool that they believe could help guide end-of-life care. How useful would such a tool be and who would (or should) it benefit? You can read more about this tool in the [MIT Technology Review](#).

Making Archives Fun for Visually Impaired Students

Archives should be accessible for all and if fun comes into it, then that's even better. This [blog post](#) from The National Archives (UK) emphasises the importance of using tactile experiences, audio descriptions, and interactive sessions to bring historical documents to life. These methods ensure that everyone can have an engaging and inclusive learning experience with archival resources.

Yorkshire Records on Findmypast

[Findmypast](#) have released 3,853 baptism records and 16,137 monumental inscriptions for Yorkshire, which may help you unlock a mystery within your family tree.

Are You a Digital Hoarder?

I am a digital hoarder. I would hate to tell you how many thousands of emails I have stored and the same goes for photos. Why do I keep them? Well, one day they might just come in handy. I do know however, that when I die my digital footprint will end up in the virtual rubbish bin, joining my worldly possessions in a physical bin. [This article from The Guardian](#) describes how we end up with more and more digital 'stuff' and outlines some ways we can be more mindful of what we keep.

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Family History Academy

Capalaba, QLD Australia



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