

# Dust of Ages

Journal of the Armidale Family History Group Inc.

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## “Homeleigh” an Atypical legacy

*Dorothea Betts*

“Homeleigh” was part of Irish Town, the name given to a small settlement between Walcha and Uralla. Between the late 1850’s and early 1860’s around a dozen settlers, mostly Irish, took up land portions in this location. Irish Town comprised a number of small holdings, ranging from 16 to 92 acres. Most of the settlers on these small farms also worked on the neighbouring sheep runs of *Bergen-op-Zoom* and *Ohio*. When gold was found in the Glen Morrison and Tia areas south of Walcha in the 1870s, most of the families then settled at Irish Town sold their small holdings to move to selections closer to the goldfields

The property known as “Homeleigh” was originally settled in 1856 by Thomas BIRD and his wife Bridget (nee BIRMINGHAM), when Thomas was granted 40 acres of land.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Bird was actually Thomas McINEENY, a convict who arrived on the ship *Asia*, in 1825.<sup>2</sup> He was transported for life. After arriving in Sydney, Thomas was one of thirty prisoners sent to the Hunter Valley region. Thomas was assigned to James WEBBER at Tocal, Newcastle but later that year he was assigned to Edward Gostwyck CORY at Paterson. Thomas then spent a number of years assigned to Peter BRODIE, who had land around Peels River, part of the early settlement of Tamworth. In 1844 Thomas received a conditional pardon, and married Elizabeth (Bridget) Birmingham in 1845 at Peels River. It seems Thomas and Bridget remained in the Tamworth area after their marriage, with their children born in the area.



“Homeleigh”, 2018, showing the original slab hut on the right, the larger weatherboard house, middle, built in 1889, and on the left, the dairy. Photo courtesy of *Jennifer’s Pics*, Walcha.

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### Journal – Dust of Ages Information

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### Research Requests

AFHG can undertake research for a fee of \$35 per family group. Our website has a research request form with payment details available for downloading.

Information is generally provided by email, unless otherwise requested.

### DOA Contents

Homeleigh	1 & 3
President's report	5
Boring Ancestors – NEVER	6
What will happen to your family history – a fictional story	7
James and Margaret Doran buried in Armidale's First Burial Ground	9
Why do People Test Their DNA and what can it be used for	11
Interesting Podcasts	14
Books for Sale	15

### Diary Dates

### Research Centre Opening Times

Monday 1.00pm to 4.00pm

Wednesday 10.00am to 4.00pm

Closed public Holidays

**Meetings:** Meetings are held at 2.00pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month from February to November, unless otherwise advised. There is no cost and all are welcome to attend.

**Workshops:** Occasional workshops are undertaken. Details provided in dates for your diary section.

Non-members conducting research at the centre are charged \$10 per visit.

*Saturday October 12 Monthly Meeting – Group Discussion – Tell us about your parents lives*

*Saturday November 9 Monthly Meeting – Bill Oates – Photos from different sources. Deferred from the AGM presentation.*

### **Notice of Closure – the AFHG centre will be closed from Thursday 12 December 2024 to Sunday 19 January 2025.**

We are able to open by appointment if you are visiting the area during this time. Please contact us on our email address above.

## **“Homeleigh” an Atypical legacy continued**

By the time Thomas and Bridget moved to “Homeleigh” near Walcha they had been married for 11 years and had four children, being Mary, born 1848; John, born 1849; Elizabeth born 1852 and Thomas, born 1855.

It is worthwhile to note that from the original grant of 40 acres in 1856, by 1885 “Homeleigh” had been substantially increased. Bridget, now a widow, was identified as the owner of “Homeleigh”, with district stock returns for 1885 listing Bridget Bird as occupier of 1,327 acres at Irish Town, and owning 2,000 sheep. These holdings are atypical, being quite extensive in comparison to other family holdings in the district. By 1885 most of the original families of Irishtown had moved on, and only Bridget, and Richard BLAKE, brother of William who in 1890 married Mary, daughter of Bridget and Thomas, were listed as residing at Irishtown.

Thomas Bird had died aged eighty in 1876 at Bergen-op-Zoom, Walcha.<sup>3</sup> Thomas’ will regarding “Homeleigh” is quite extensive for the times, specifically making allowance for all his children, including daughters, to have equal shares in his estate on the demise of his wife Bridget. After Thomas’ death in 1876 Bridget was left, with her two daughters still at home, to manage the property at Irishtown, now known as “Homeleigh”. Armidale district stock returns for 1885 list Bridget Bird as occupier of 1327 acres at Irish Town, with 8 horses, 20 cattle and 2,000 sheep.

Bridget’s granddaughter, also called Bridget, added to the female composition of “Homeleigh” during the 1880’s. Bridget was born on 11 August, 1880, at Irish Town, Walcha. The elder Bridget died from a carcinoma of the stomach at Irish Town, Walcha on 17 December 1886, aged 71 years. Mary and daughter Bridget stayed on at “Homeleigh”, and when Mary married widower William Blake in 1890, he moved from his freehold property at Mainies Creek, Walcha, to “Homeleigh”.

William died on 1 December, 1915 at Irish Town. William is buried next to his first wife, Susannah, in Walcha Catholic cemetery. In 1908 Mary’s daughter Bridget had married Robert BETTS at “Homeleigh”. Robert and Bridget lived in Uralla after their marriage, but a few years later, they moved to “Homeleigh” to live with Mary.

After Bridget and Robert moved in with Mary life for her at “Homeleigh” must have been easier, albeit defined by the day-to-day activities of maintaining the property and assisting in bringing up the eight children of Bridget’s marriage. Arthur Lawrence was the first born of Robert and Bridget’s family, born 1908. His birth was followed by Kathleen Mary, born 1910; Francis (Frank) Sylvester, born 1912; Douglas John, born 1914; Cecil Thomas, born 1916; Norman James, born 1917; Cecily May, born 1920 and Dorothy (Doris) Lucille, born 1922. Another daughter, Alice, was born in 1918, but only survived for one day.

Stock records for 1911 show Mary Blake as owner of 3 horses, 10 cattle and 500 sheep.<sup>4</sup> Son in law Robert was responsible for shearing the sheep, which were run in the remaining 160 acres on which “Homeleigh” was situated, and another 80 acres across the creek. Mary reared chickens and turkeys which she sold, and with the money earned, bought land at 5 shillings an acre. The turkeys were usually sold at Christmas time, and one was always given to the priest.<sup>5</sup> Mary remained living with Bridget and Robert Betts and their family at “Homeleigh” until her death in 1926.

Whilst Armidale district stock returns for 1885 list Bridget Bird as occupier of 1,327 acres at Irish Town, after Bridget's death Sands Pastoral records for 1905 identify Mary Blake as occupier of 500 acres of land at Irish Town. This seems to suggest that some land was sold or otherwise disposed of to provide the three other siblings with their fair proportion of the Bird estate to enable Mary, a single parent from 1880 to 1890, to remain in the family home. At the time of her death in 1926 Mary's will identifies land of just over "one hundred and eighty five-and-one-half acres in the aggregate".

Life for Bridget and Robert on "Homeleigh" was one of self-sufficiency, borne of necessity given the number of children and the difficulty of making a living from farming activities. A vegetable garden towards the creek at the rear of the property supplied potatoes and other vegetables. Fruit trees were planted, including plums, and fruit was preserved and stored in the dairy, along with the meat, milk and the cheese and butter which they made themselves.<sup>6</sup> A house cow was kept and milked once a day by Bridget, except when Robert was home to take on this chore. Bridget made bread and candles, and the family went to Walcha to buy flour, sugar, soap and material to make clothes. They often walked the four miles there and back, but were sometimes given lifts by people going to and from Walcha. Once a week a sheep was killed, the family eating mutton at most meals, and generally rolled oats for breakfast.<sup>7</sup> Arthur and his brother Frank would often go rabbiting to get a few shillings for their own use.<sup>8</sup>

"Homeleigh" remained with the Betts family, with brothers Douglas, Norman and Cecil, all bachelors, making it their home until it was sold in the mid 1980's and the buildings left vacant. The site was identified in the late 1990's as one of historical significance, with a sign out the front detailing the history. The sign has now disappeared as have some of the buildings including the barn. As at 2024 the original slab cottage still stands, as does the dairy (which has an alarming lean on it) and the weatherboard cottage. All are in a state of decay as weather, animals and human interaction takes its toll. "Homeleigh" was home to four generations of the Bird and Betts families. It represents an important part of New England history, its inhabitants encompassing convicts, white settlement and two world wars. From a more nuanced perspective, it reflects a strong commitment, starting with Thomas Bird, Irish convict, that the women in these families deserved a legal, and as such atypical recognition, as having contributed to that legacy.

*This is a condensed version of the original article written by Dorothea Betts. Further information is held by the group.*

1. Notice of Deeds of Grant Ready for Delivery, Surveyor General's Office, Sydney, 26 Sept, 1856
2. Copy of record of pardon obtained from State Records of NSW, pardon no. 44/174
3. Death certificate Thomas Bird
4. NSW Government Index 1911
5. Interview with Doris Perrett 31 Oct 1995 conducted by Jillian Oppenheimer & Bruce Mitchell, in Conservation Plan for Homeleigh, Walcha, NSW, prepared for the Walcha District Historical Society, March 1997
6. Interview with Cecil Betts 21 Jan 1996 conducted by Annette Gill, Max Harris, Linda Bedford and Heather Burke, in Conservation Plan for Homeleigh, Walcha, NSW, prepared for the Walcha District Historical Society, March 1997
7. Interview with Doris Perrett 31 Oct 1995 conducted by Jillian Oppenheimer and Bruce Mitchell
8. Personal interview with Doris Perrett (nee Betts), 2000

## President's Report

Wayne Hoppe

We have reached the end of another year. They seem to go past so quickly. Our AGM was held in September and I would like to welcome back the committee. Margaret Creagan, Mike Keating and Peter Hoare have all been re-elected to their positions. Dianne Hoppe has been elected to the vacant position of Correspondence Secretary.

We have recently been donated a few boxes of the Armidale Express newspapers. The majority of them relate to the period from 1970 to 1976 but there are also some from the early 1960's. This is a great resource as these years are not scanned in Trove. In addition, there were a number of Women's Weekly magazines from the early 1960's, which make fascinating reading.

I would like to farewell and thank Mel Gibbs, who has recently left the UNE Heritage Centre and Archives. Her assistance has been greatly appreciated during her time in the role of Archive Coordinator. David Bioletti has now been seconded to this position.

Our twin projects of the Convict Register of New England and the First Armidale Burial Ground are both proceeding well. We now have over 1,000 convicts listed as having been in the broader New England area. We are working our way through this list to record more detailed information on those that have a stronger connection to the area we are focusing on. We have over 150 completed submission forms giving details of not only their convict lives, but their life after they became free. If you have a convict that settled in the area from Bendemeer in the south to Tenterfield in the north and from Ebor in the east to Warialda in the west, we would love to hear from you.

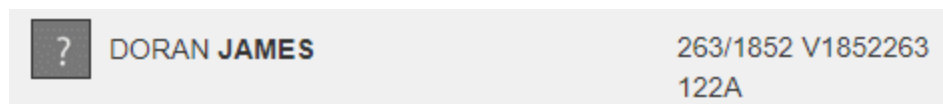
We are also always on the lookout for articles for future editions of Dust of Ages. If you would like to showcase your ancestors, or have found an interesting article you would like to share, please contact us.

Wayne Hoppe President.

### You Can't Just Rely on Indexes

While checking the records of those people buried in Armidale's first burial ground we came across the entry for James Doran.

The NSW BDM indexes has James' death recorded in the year 1852 as shown below:



However, when we checked other records they all showed the year 1853. There was a mention of his death in the *Maitland Mercury*, the headstone states 1853 and when we obtained the probate records it also confirmed his death date as 20 October 1853.

This example shows the importance of not just relying on BDM or other indexes and where possible it is advisable to check multiple sources.



## **Boring Ancestors? - NEVER**

*Jane Driessen*

Have you ever found yourself thinking that you have “boring ancestors”; that they didn’t do anything exciting or worth writing about? Well, if you look closely at their lives you will find that you are wrong. There is no such thing as a boring ancestor. Some ‘boring’ ancestors I have been researching are:

**Driessen Family** - tenant farmers, farm hands and day labourers

My Driessen ancestors, from 1700’s (this is as far back as I have been able to go) to late 1800’s lived in Limburg a rural province in The Netherlands and worked as tenant farmers, farm hands or day labourers. Couldn’t get more boring than that right? Wrong.

Farming has the same challenges no matter what period. They would have had to contend with the Great Frost of 1739-41 that had record low temperatures, the eruption of Laki in Iceland in 1783 that sent a pall of ash and gas over most of Europe and the eruption of Mt Tambora in 1816 (this became known as “The Year Without a Summer”). These events would have caused crop losses, harvest failures, increase in food prices, famine, illness, and death.

If they were a day labourer, it meant that they did not have a fixed employer but were hired and paid per day. Day labourers were more likely to rely on charity during winter, when daily wages were low if work could even be found.

They also had to contend with development in technology due to the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). This would have led to changes in farming practises, for example from manual labour to using horse and plough; new machines (seed drill and threshers), new methods of production and to diversification of crops and livestock.

### **Alfred GIBSON - a shopkeeper**

He was born in Denmark and in 1876 sailed halfway around the world to Australia and began a new life as a storekeeper. He had to learn a new language and customs. He started with a tobacco shop in George St, Sydney then moved to Captains Flat (a mining town) and on to Corowa. As the depression of the 1890s took hold Alfred had various court cases either trying to get unpaid monies from people who owed him or vice versa. He applied for a hawker’s licence to help with generating income but eventually in 1897, he had to declare voluntary liquidation and his stock was put to tender. In 1899 Alfred died of TB, from which he had been suffering with for the past 12 years, leaving his wife with their 3 surviving children aged 11, 8 and 3 months.

### **Myself**

Surely, I will be a ‘boring’ ancestor to my descendants. Now let me think ... I have visited my ancestral homeland of The Netherlands, travelled through Europe, Britain and USA, lived in New Zealand, Tasmania and Queensland. Grown up in a capital city (Sydney) and currently living on a rural property just outside a regional centre (Armidale). I have seen developments

in technology (computers, communications, AI), science (DNA, space travel) and medicine (DNA, organ transplants). I have lived through major world events such as moon landing, AIDS, 9/11 and Covid to name just a few. Well maybe I won't be so 'boring'.

For most of us our ancestors may not have been aristocratic, or have been well-known in their time, but they lived their lives as best they could just like everyone else. How do you make your ancestors interesting:

- Learn about the times in which they lived;
- Learn about their job and tools of trade;
- Learn about historical events that impacted their lives;
- Learn what it was like for someone in their situation.

Remember, everyone has a story to tell and one person's 'boring' is someone else's 'not so boring'. And sometimes even the most ordinary seeming life can have its moment; and it is those moments that make researching your tree worth it.

## What will happen to your Family History

### *A Fictional Tale*

Although the following story is **fictional**, the lesson is there to make sure this doesn't happen to your family history.

It has been nearly a year since fictional genealogist Barbara passed away. Her daughter Charlene reflects upon that year in a letter to her friend Karen. Barbara is probably rolling over in her grave.

Karen, as usual, my cards are late. It has been a busy year. We spent much of the year settling up Mother's estate. The house sold well, but cleaning it took longer than we expected.

You are probably the only person who did not know Mother was a genealogy buff. She told practically every human she encountered. I'm convinced that genealogy "nut" was the most accurate phrase. The stuff was all over the house. The inheritance would have been enough to pay for my new Mercedes had she not insisted on spending money on that blasted hobby. I don't know why she couldn't be more like Tom's mother. Nadine spends her day doing needlepoint and watching reruns of 50s television shows. Tom just does not realize how lucky he is, but men never do. My mother had to run off to cemeteries and courthouses. She even went to a conference in Hobart, Tasmania, last year! Can you imagine? Hobart, Tasmania! After she got back, she was so excited about all that she had learned and all the fun she had. She was planning on going to another one in Adelaide this year.

Because of my promotion to head of knick knack sales at Garbageforless.com, I had not been home for several years. I was appalled to learn that Mother had converted my old bedroom into her family history "headquarters." My shelves of Teen Beat and other magazines documenting my adolescence had been replaced with old family photographs, copies of old documents, and something called family group sheets. She even got rid of the pants I wore to my first junior high dance. I cried at the thought.

I could not bear to go in the room and be reminded that my childhood had been stripped from me and replaced with an obsession with the past. I told the children that if they would clean the room and prepare the items for the garage (should I say “garbage”?) sale they could have the proceeds. I learned what true entrepreneurs they are.

Kenny stripped Mother’s hard drive in under ten minutes. I kept hearing him say “GedCom is GedGone . . . GedCom is GedGone . . .” I have no idea what it meant, but the computer fetched a good price. Before he unplugged the computer, he erased all Mom’s files and downloaded public domain games. He sold these at a nominal price.

Susan took the old photographs to a flea market and was able to sell many of them. Some special labels had to be taken off and we had to take them out of protective envelopes. Mother had written the names on the back of many of them. At least none of those pictures of depressing old dead people had our last name written on them. I don’t want to be associated with such sour people.

Mother had some type of old plat book — whatever that is. Kenny tore out the pages individually and sold them separately on Ebay. It was so clever. His dad said he got much more than if he had left the book in one piece.

Susan didn’t tear the bibles apart though. I thought that showed tremendously good sense. She’s learning that not everything can be marketed in the same way. The 1790 bible brought her a good penny, but she couldn’t get the one from 1900 to bring more than fifty cents. She donated it to a local church, and here is where I am so proud of her. We can write it off as a charitable deduction. Someone had written what they had paid for the bible on the back cover. Susan converted that to 2024 dollars and will use that for our tax deduction amount.

There was some old large certificate of written on heavy paper. The silly thing wasn’t even in English, so why would Mother keep it? Kenny used the other side to keep track of the things he had sold. Waste not, want not. When we were finished we put the paper in the recycling bin. The kids put an old wedding dress from the 1870s in the washer to get the stains out. It was terribly filthy. The worthless thing didn’t even survive the extra long cycle and the half-gallon of bleach. It’s doubtful we can even use it for cleaning rags.

The dress was in some kind of old trunk. I’m not certain what it was for, but it had a name stencilled on the front in huge letters along with the name of a town. Susan gave it a good coating of red paint and sold it as a toy box.

The filing cabinets were emptied of their contents, as were the three shelves of binders. Kenny got the bright idea to shred the paper and sell it in bags as New Year’s confetti. The file folders were too heavy to shred.

The baby did not react well to any of this. She cried and fussed almost the entire time. Kenny thought she wanted tea, which made no sense to me at all. As she cried, it sounded like she was saying “family tee.” She can’t even talk yet and I think Kenny was hearing things. The baby does look exactly like my mother though, it’s the oddest thing. The fussing didn’t stop until she spit up an entire bottle of strained prunes on my junior high jeans, which we did find in the basement. They were ruined — it was the one real loss. Now my past has really been taken from me — magazines and all.

Charlene



## James and Margaret Doran

*The First Armidale Burial Ground – Faulkner Street*

The AFHG are currently looking for information on people buried in the first Armidale Burial Ground. Below are details about James and Margaret Doran who are both buried in this cemetery and it provides an idea of the type of information we are hoping to collect. If you have any ancestors buried in Armidale before 1862 it is likely they are buried in this first cemetery and we would love to hear from you so that we can record their story.

<b>Name</b>	James Doran	Margaret Doran nee Grieve / Green
<b>Date of Death</b>	20 October 1853	26 March 1854
<b>Parents Names</b>	Patrick and Sarah Doran	Fergus and Mary Grieve
<b>Birth Details</b>	1813	Aug 1815
<b>Cause of Death</b>	Disease of the heart	
<b>Religion</b>	Catholic	Catholic
<b>Occupation</b>	Publican and Storekeeper	Publican and Storekeeper's wife
<b>Spouse</b>	Margaret Grieve / Green	James Doran
<b>Children</b>	Mary b. Jan 1835 (Maryborough, Ireland) m. Henry P Buckler 1851 Laurence b. Dec 1836 (Maryborough, Ireland) James b. 1841 (b. Yarrowitch - baptised Port Macquarie, Presbyterian) m. Mary Ann Burke Sarah b. 1843 (b. Yarrowitch - baptised Port Macquarie, Presbyterian) m. Lawrence Madden 1862 John b. 13 May 1845 (b. Armidale, baptised Port Macquarie, Catholic) Anne b. 2 Apr 1847 (b. Armidale, baptised Port Macquarie, Catholic) d. 5 Feb 1851 and buried in the old Armidale cemetery William b. 14 Apr 1849 (b. Armidale, baptised Patricks Plains, Catholic)	

James Doran married Margaret Green / Grieve on 2 February 1834 at Maryborough, Queens County, Ireland. Their first two children were born in Ireland. At the age of 27 James and Margaret and their two children came to Australia, arriving on 21 April 1840 aboard the *Clyde*. James was recorded as a labourer and Margaret as a farm servant and both could read and write. James' brother William also travelled across on the same voyage.

In 1844 when children James and Sarah were baptised, James' occupation was given as a publican. This may have been at Yarrowitch. He was recorded in December 1846 as giving 10s to the Irish Orphans Relief Fund. The funds were collected by S H Darby, the owner of *Tiengha Station*, which indicates he was in the New England area by this time.

By 1847 when his next two children were baptised he was listed as a store keeper. He was likely running a store in Beardy Street on lots 2 and 3 of section 3. This was recorded as Cohen's store on the 1849 Galloway map. The *Maitland Mercury* from 30 August 1848 states Messrs Simmons and Cohen had opened a store recorded as "Armidale New Store".

On 15 May 1848 James obtained his publican's licence for the *Horse and Jockey Inn*, which he held until May 1853, when it was transferred to Henry Peach Buckler, James' son-in-law. The inn was located in Beardy Street, just east of the *New England Hotel*.

James was a substantial land holder in the early years of Armidale. In total he purchased six blocks of land within the Armidale town boundary, five of them in Beardy Street and one in Taylor Street, as well 15 acres just on the eastern side of the Armidale town boundary. The first land title was issued on 22 October 1849 and the last titles were finalised in February 1854.

James passed away on 20 October 1853. He had made out his will on 26 January 1853 and left everything to his wife. In February of the following year there was a vitriolic letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* from Phillip COHEN the purchaser of James Doran's store, accusing him and others of habitual drunkenness and bad behaviour. This was very strongly refuted in a reply letter to the editor of a rival paper, by R FURNIFULL, another of those mentioned by Cohen.

Margaret passed away just 5 months after James, and her will left all her estate in the trust of Thomas MARKHAM and George ALLINGHAM. The real estate was to be sold and the funds shared equally amongst her children when they turned 21. The will was dated 9 January 1854 and signed by Thomas RAE on behalf of Margaret Doran who 'was unable to write' at this time. Her shipping records show that she could both read and write, so this indicates that Margaret may not have been well enough to sign her name. The probate indicates the estate of close to £2,000, which was a considerable sum in 1854.

Sarah was escorted to the Callaghan's in West Maitland by her mother before she passed away. Sarah was then sent to Mrs Edye (?) for a better education and church every Sunday. After their parents died James and John were sent for boarding and education with Mr Waugh in Port Macquarie.

James soon tired of his education and wanted to become a common stockman. The trustees attempted to send him to Maitland to learn a trade instead. Six years later he marries Mary Jane Bourke. He then returned to the New England area making it as far as *Kangaroo Hills* before he took a job working for the Bourke's as the stockman he had wanted to be when he was at school. Dispute becoming insolvent in 1865 he ended up being quite successful. It appears his brother John completed his education in Maitland, but little more is known about his life.

### **Lest We Forget**

World War 2 personnel records are now all scanned and free online at the National Archives of Australia website (<https://www.naa.gov.au/>)

These records usually include:

- attestation form, giving personal details such as age, next of kin & former occupation
- service & casualty form, giving details about units and postings, injuries & disciplinary charges
- discharge form, summarising the person's service (not included in all cases)
- head-and-shoulders photograph may be included
- other documents or correspondence sometimes included

## Why do people test their DNA and what can it be used for?

Helen Dennis

The popularity of DNA testing has increased markedly in recent years and there are now several companies that provide testing services. When used in conjunction with traditional family history research, DNA analysis can help break down brick walls, confirm relationships in your family tree or help solve family mysteries. You might even – as I did - stumble across a scandalous skeleton in your family's closet.

There are two facets to DNA test results: your ethnicity estimate, and your DNA matches. Your ethnicity estimate provides information about your possible historical origins - 'estimate' being the operative word, as percentages are based on modern populations of people *that have tested their DNA with the various companies*. Your estimate can vary wildly depending on which company you test with. Personally, I found this part of my results interesting, but not particularly useful.

A far more useful and accurate component of your DNA results is your match list. When you receive your results, you'll get a list of people with whom you share enough DNA to indicate that you have a common ancestor. Once you've worked out who that ancestor is, you can use your match's family tree to help establish a genealogical 'paper trail' for that family line.

Distant relations can be particularly useful in solving family mysteries. They may have access to family information that you don't have. They might, for example, have inherited the old family bible. Once you know which of your matches belongs to a particular family line (or ancestor) you can focus your research more productively.

To work out how all these distant matches fit in to your family tree, it is necessary to 'group' them into family lines. Numerous websites explain how to do this. I found the following particularly helpful:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81OsvG81SyU&ab\\_channel=AimeeCross-GenealogyHints](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81OsvG81SyU&ab_channel=AimeeCross-GenealogyHints)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErWHYCLjxM&ab\\_channel=GenealogyTV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErWHYCLjxM&ab_channel=GenealogyTV)

Once you've grouped your DNA matches, you can see at a glance which family line each of your distant cousins belongs to.

### Things to note:

1. Ancestry's database is the largest and will provide you with potentially more DNA matches. However, it pays to fish in more than one pond. Once you've received your DNA results, consider uploading them to alternative testing sites, eg My Heritage. [Ancestry and 23andMe do **not** accept DNA tested at other companies. Currently, the most economical way to test with multiple companies is to do your initial test through Ancestry and upload those results elsewhere later.]
2. Be sure to 'link' your online family tree to your DNA results.
3. If your DNA matches don't have family trees, you won't be able to glean any useful information from them as you can't see who their ancestors are.

4. Build your online family tree sideways and down (include great aunts and uncles and their children etc where you can). The more extensive your tree, the more distant DNA matches you're likely to identify.
5. Family trees are created by normal people who sometimes make mistakes. Don't believe everything you see on someone's tree. Check, double-check and verify.
6. DNA doesn't lie, but it can be misinterpreted.

#### **Other useful links:**

1. Blaine Bettinger's Shared cM project chart:  
<https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Shared-cM-Project-Relationship-Chart.png>
2. Professor Turi King's analysis of the percentage of DNA inheritance in families using Jelly Babies:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMopI93kL\\_M&ab\\_channel=ProfessorTuriKing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMopI93kL_M&ab_channel=ProfessorTuriKing)

### **DNA Discovery Case Study - The Double Life of Edwin Tyrrell Sayers**

On the surface, my great-great-grandfather Edwin Tyrrell SAYERS led a conventional life. If you scratch the surface, however, Edwin's life turns out to be anything but ordinary. Edwin, in fact, led *two* lives - with two names, two separate wives and two distinct broods of children. Edwin's secret was discovered with the help of DNA analysis.

Documentation reveals that Edwin Tyrrell Sayers was born in Melbourne in 1843. His mother, Anna TYRRELL, died at the tender age of 28, just a few months after Edwin was born. In 1861, at the age of 17, Edwin got a job as a clerk at the Post Office in Sydney. Three years later he married Minnie (Mary Ann Bray McDONNELL) and, over the next twenty-three years, Edwin and Minnie lived in the suburbs of Sydney and had twelve children.

Meanwhile, also in Sydney, John Edward RYAN had six children with Clara REHARDT. The children's extant vital records name John as their father, and allege that he was also Clara's husband. Curiously, however, John Ryan left no paper trail. He has no birth record and there is no record of his marriage to Clara. When Clara re-married in 1883, she stated that she was a widow, but descendants have not been able to find a death record for her supposed first 'husband' John Edward Ryan.

A few years ago, I had my DNA tested. As I trawled through other people's Ancestry family trees looking for clues about Edwin's life, I stumbled upon an interesting discussion. Two of my (unknown) distant cousins had matching DNA but they didn't appear to have any common ancestors. For reasons I didn't fully understand at the time, this led them to believe that John Edward Ryan and Edwin Tyrrell Sayers were the same person. I decided to test the theory using our DNA match results.

The first thing I did was organise my unwieldy list of Ancestry DNA matches. I 'grouped' my matches which revealed that numerous Ryan relatives shared DNA with me and several other confirmed Sayers connections. There was a consistent DNA link between the two families. Next, I used the Ryan family trees to identify which of John and Clara Ryan's children I shared DNA with. Were all my DNA matches descended from just one of their children? Or was it possible that Edwin (if he was the culprit) could have fathered all six?

Two of Clara's children died either at birth or as very young infants. Her eldest son (John) died before he had children, and I have not been able to trace the whereabouts of his youngest son (Henry Robert aka Harry). That left two possibles: William Joseph Ryan and Harriet Grace (aka Agnes) Ryan. I share DNA with descendants of both William and Harriet. So, it appears that my ancestor fathered both William and Harriet.

Next. What if it wasn't Edwin? The Sayers DNA is there, but what if Edwin's father or brother was the culprit? I was able to exonerate Mr Sayers senior by establishing that the Ryan descendants also matched with Edwin's mother's side of the family - which they wouldn't have done if Edwin's father had been the philanderer. Further, Edwin didn't have any full brothers so there is no possibility that his sibling could've fathered Clara's children.

By now, Edwin's situation was looking a little awkward. But before condemning him, I needed to place him at the scene of the crime. Using the surviving birth records of 16 of Minnie's and Clara's children, I was able to establish that Edwin had been living in Randwick in Sydney, with his wife Minnie, when Clara's first child was born there in 1870. He then moved to the Newtown area where all of Clara's, and the next three of his wife Minnie's, children were born. Clara did not have any more children after Edwin and Minnie relocated to Canterbury in 1879. Edwin's wife Minnie had six more children, the last of which was born at Kogarah Bay.

The final tool at my disposal was a chart, (see useful link 1 above or collect a copy at the AFHG research centre) the 'Shared cM Project', which can't be used as a stand-alone, but is a useful guide to help determine 'expected relationships'. The amount of DNA you share with people indicates your predicted (or expected) relationship – that is, whether you are cousins, second-cousins-once-removed, half-somethings, and so on. Using the chart, I was able to confirm that, if Edwin *had* been the father of Clara's children, the amount of DNA I share with each of my Ryan matches falls within the 'expected range' for that particular relationship.

Based on the above analysis, it seems that Edwin Tyrrell Sayers was the man referred to as John Edward Ryan on the birth records of Clara's children. He appears to be the common link between me and my Ryan and Sayers DNA matches. We all share DNA on the Sayers line, within the expected range; Edwin's father and siblings have been ruled out; and Edwin was living in the same part of Sydney as Clara when her four live children were born.

Clara and John Ryan's relationship ended after Edwin and Minnie relocated to the outskirts of Sydney in 1879. Clara remarried in 1883 – declaring she was widowed - and moved to Scone. Ryan family lore states that John Edward Ryan simply disappeared, leaving no trace of his whereabouts.

Unfortunately, we will never know how complicit Clara was in the subterfuge. Was she aware that her 'husband' John was already married? Did she record the name 'John Ryan' on her children's birth certificates to disguise her and Edwin's affair? Or did Edwin deceive Clara? Did he present himself as John Edward Ryan, single railway employee?

Clara died in Scone in 1898 and was buried with her young son, also named John Ryan and a generation of intriguing secrets.

## Interesting Podcasts

Wayne Hoppe

Don't forget our website [www.armidalefamilyhistorygroup.com](http://www.armidalefamilyhistorygroup.com)

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Have you ever listened to podcasts? There are some great history and family history related podcasts which can be accessed through your computer, or your phone. These are great to have playing in the car (through your hands free phone) or playing in the background at home through your computer. So if there is nothing to watch on TV or listen to on the radio why not search out a podcast. If you find you are enjoying the selection you can always search for more on google or in your podcast app on the phone. Let us know if you have found a great podcast so that we can share it with others.

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Newcastle Family History Group - <https://nfhs.org.au/podcasts/>

We recently found this great resource and the first one we listened to, surprisingly, gave us the history on one of our Uralla pioneers, Margaret Poole. The Newcastle Group also have a youtube channel that they have recordings of their guest speakers and a brief check indicated this was also available for free - <https://nfhs.org.au/youtube/>

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Society of Australian Genealogists - <https://sag.org.au/Podcasts>

SAG have a number of recommended podcasts that can be accessed through this link. The Ironclad Sisterhood explores convict women and looks very interesting.

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The Family History Podcasts - <https://familyhistoriespodcast.com/category/australia/>

This site covers a worldwide selection of podcasts which allows you can select the country or the topic you are interested in.

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Convict Australia Podcasts – This does not have a separate website, but can be accessed via any of the podcast sites (i.e. apple, listen notes etc). Just search “Convict Australia Podcasts” and you will find this series.

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Australia Histories Podcast - <https://www.australianhistoriespodcast.com.au/>

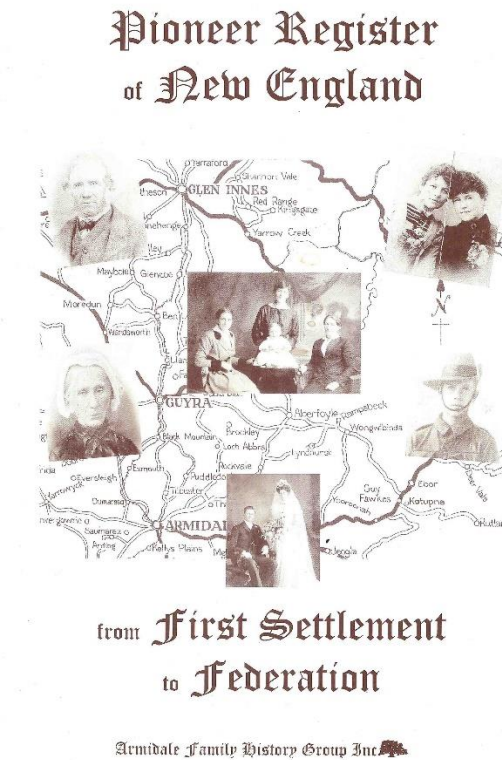
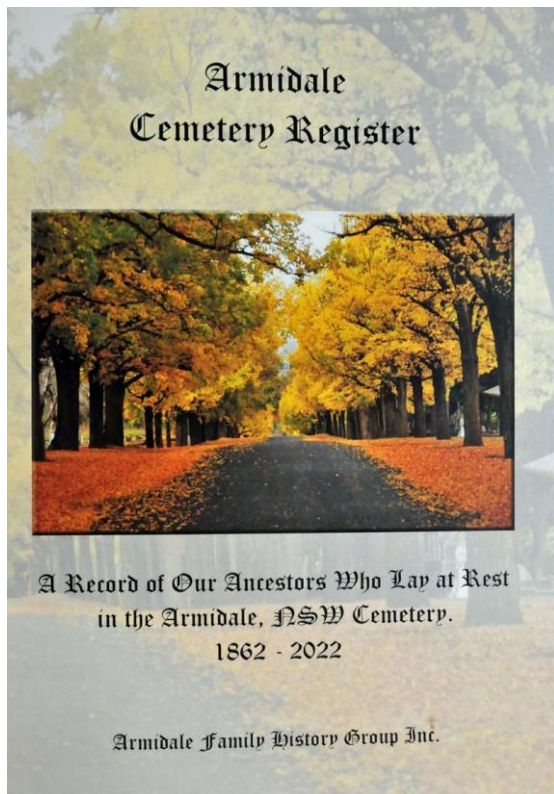
This series focuses on Australian history. If you wanted to find out more about the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Bass and Flinders, Bligh and the Rum Rebellion, The Overland Telegraph or many other interesting Australia history items, this is well worth the listen.



## Books for Sale

AFHG

The Armidale Family History Group now has a number of publications for sale. These include the Pioneer Register of New England and the Armidale Cemetery Register both of which are published by the group. The cemetery register is available in both book and digital formats.



Members – book	\$60
Members – Thumb drive	\$50
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Book	\$40
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In addition, we also have the following local history books published by our members:

The Story of Kingstown, by Jim Swales	\$25
Coopers Burial records, Uralla by Robert B Schofield	\$25
George's Creek Bundarra, by Di and Wayne Hoppe	\$25



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