Handout - A to Z for Tracing Missing Ancestors

A for Adoption

- Introduced in WA in 1896, Tas 1920, NSW 1923, SA 1925, Vic 1928 and Qld in 1936
- Prior to that adoptions were informal arrangements made privately between the people concerned
- The unofficial nature of these adoptions means that no official records exist
- Check CoraWeb - Asylum and hospital records – Child welfare – Shipping and migration - *Child migration*

tinyurl.com/bswrhvl
State Library of Victoria – Research Guide – Adoption and Forgotten Australians, includes child migrants
TIP: Check state libraries and state archival repositories for similar guides. Most offer *Ask a Question* or other forms of assistance.

B for Bigamy

- In 1828 the British parliament passed an act allowing remarriage if one spouse was 'continually absent for the space of seven years and shall not have been known to be living within that time'
- In Australia it was widely believed that if a couple were parted by water for 7 years, even if both living, they could remarry
- In early Australia many just lived together by choice or circumstance
- Many men deserted their wives and re-married bigamously and vice versa
- Desertion notices can be found in police gazettes and newspapers
- Police Gazettes are at Findmypast ($) Qld, Tas and Vic. Ancestry ($) NSW, Qld, SA, Tas and Vic . The State Library of Western Australia has WA gazettes online 1876-1900 (free)

trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper
Trove Digitised Newspapers offers free access to the full text of 1089+ Australian newspaper titles 1803 to 1954 (some later). See my book *eRecords for Family History* for details on how to search and use Trove Digitised Newspapers.

C for Convict ancestry or prison record

- Prison is worth considering for those who suddenly disappear
- Records are held by various state archives with some indexes and digitized records online
- See CoraWeb – Convicts - Criminal and court records

tinyurl.com/yc6cu62
State Records New South Wales, *Index to Gaol Photographs* 1870-1930. Currently covers Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Berrima, Biloela, Broken Hill, Darlinghurst (Sydney), Deniliquin, Dubbo, Goulburn, Grafton, Maitland, Parramatta (Sydney), State Reformatory for Women (Long Bay), Trial Bay and Young gaols. Records already digitised are available online for free otherwise use the online copy service ($).
This series is also available on Ancestry.com ($) search.ancestry.com.au/search/db.aspx?dbid=1783
Records from 1870 onwards may contain a photograph.
TIP: Ancestry is available for free at the Eurobodalla Libraries.

adb.anu.edu.au/
Australian Dictionary of Biography Online. The key word searching is useful to find mention of those who did not rate a biography.

D for Destitution

- England Poor Laws of 1834 made local rate payers financially responsible for the poor of their parish
- In Australia it was decided that the poor were the responsibility of charities not rate payers
- Many became destitute due to pregnancy, illness, desertion or death of the breadwinner
- If there were no family or friends to rely on the only places to seek help were the destitute asylums
- See CoraWeb – Asylum and hospital records.

E for Ethnic background
- From 1901 the White Australia Policy excluded and discriminated against certain ethnic groups. So there was an incentive to hide an ethnic background
- Consider possible German, Chinese, Scandinavian or coloured origins
- Names were anglicised in an effort to assimilate or to hide German origins (WWI)
- Use records held by National Archives of Australia – Naturalisation, Alien Registration, Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test and more
- See CoraWeb – Shipping and migration - *Naturalisation*. Indexes and some records available online for NSW, Qld, SA and Tas

F for Forenames
- A child can be registered one name and called something entirely different
- Nicknames can appear in official records. Irish nicknames can bear little resemblance to the original name. Jeremiah (Darby, Dermot) or Bridget (Delia, Phidelia, Bidelia, Biddie, Bride)
- In the 19th century if a child died it was common to name the next born child the same name
- Names that can be Christian or surnames can become reversed during indexing - Craig, James, Russell or Warren
- Maiden names (mother/grandmother) often used as Christian names (Ada Boatman Moore)
- James Romsdal Makins was named after the *Romsdal,* the ship the family arrived on

G for Gold fever
- During the gold rushes people were very mobile. Always check the records of other states
- Many goldfield deaths went unrecorded or were recorded with minimal information
- See CoraWeb – Occupations - *Miners - Gold diggers*

H for Hyphenated surname
- Usually involve existing family names. Possible combinations- husband/wife, husband/mother
- Often introduced following marriage or formed to prevent a family name dying out
- Used by unmarried couples for their children
- Used when a step child is adopted combining the biological father's name and adopted name

I for Illegitimacy
- Missing a 1st child's birth record? Check under the mother's maiden name for a registration
- After any subsequent marriage the husband's surname would have been used
- A large family's older daughter's illegitimate child could be raised by her parents as their own
- Fictitious dates and a father, who died prior to the birth of the child, were invented to protect the child from the stigma of illegitimacy and to make awkward situations respectable

J for Jesuit
- Could your missing family member have joined a religious order? Were the family Roman Catholic?
- Initially the best source of information is family members
- Once some details are known contact the respective orders for details of records held
- See CoraWeb – Occupations - Religious

web.stbedes.catholic.edu.au/Other/nuns/
Women of Vision. Index and History of Nuns and Sisters of the Catholic Church in Australia 1838-1918.

www.delanyarchive.ie
The Delany Archive in Ireland holds collections covering Australia
- Brigidine Sisters collection - c1807 covers Ireland, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Mexico and Papua New Guinea

- Patrician Brothers collection - c1808 covers Ireland, India, Australia, USA, Papua New Guinea and Kenya
- Carlow College educated priests for 200+ years. Dates from 1783, details of students and staff. Many of the priests who trained at Carlow College lived, worked and died in Australia.

www.flickr.com/photos/delanyarchive/
The Delany Archive - Photos on Flickr. This collection currently has 56+ albums and 1,112 photos.

K for Koori ancestry
- Use the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies site
- The family history unit can assist with indigenous heritage and Stolen Generations
- Most state archives and libraries have fact sheets for researching indigenous ancestry
- See CoraWeb - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

www.aiatsis.gov.au/
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

L for Lies
- Little white lies to big whoppers about all manner of things
- People lie about ages and dates. Always check 10 years either side of an expected date. On marriage certificates age can be as much as 15 years out, especially if the woman was older than the man

M for Mental illness
- 19th century mental hospital patients often suffered from epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease, alcoholism, post natal depression and nervous breakdown
- Existing records held by the various state archives (PROV has online records)
- SRNSW hold Broughton Hall Psychiatric Clinic records. This clinic, run by Australian Army Medical Corps 1915-1920, treated WWI soldiers suffering from shell shock and other mental disorders
- See CoraWeb – Asylum and hospital records

N for Name change
- Alias surnames commonly used, often by those with something to hide
- In the 19th century very few altered their names legally
- Often mother's or grandmother's maiden name was used or a combination of other family names
- In Scotland women used their maiden names after marriage. This tradition can be reflected in the Australian records so check both married and maiden name for Scottish females

O for Overboard
- Desertion was common especially during the gold rush era. Many Scandinavians jumped ship because they had been press ganged to serve on these ships
- Most deserters assumed new names and identities to cover their tracks
- When a seaman or military man deserted a warrant was issued and a notice was published in the government and police gazettes and sometimes the newspaper
- Government gazettes are online, some on Trove Digitised Newspapers

gazette.slv.vic.gov.au/
Victoria Government Gazette Online Archive 1836-1997. Includes the *Sydney Gazette* 1826-1851.

P for Performing arts
- Consider circus and theatre performers, musicians, dancers, stage personnel, magicians, boxing troops and carnivals
- They moved around a lot and often changed their names or used a stage name
- Try and find out, from family members, who they worked for, when and where

- There are biographical dictionaries of actors, musicians, dancers, managers and other stage personnel. Use Trove to search for these. Also do a Trove *People and Organisations* search
- See CoraWeb – Occupations - *Circus – Performing Arts*

Wattle in the Sawdust: The History of Circus in Australia. This book series, by Mark St Leon, has an *Index of Australian Show Movements 1833-1969* which lists thousands of names and movements of travelling entertainers. M St Leon, *Genealogical Database of Australia's Travelling Showpeople,* 2009, CD-ROM.

www.pennygaff.com.au/index.html
Australian Travelling Entertainers. This site by Mark St Leon is dedicated to Australia's circus history and to travelling entertainers.

ozvta.com/
The Australian Variety Theatre Archive: Popular Culture Entertainment 1850-1930.

Q for Quaffing or alcoholism
- This is often the reason why nobody talks about Uncle Albert or Auntie Susan
- Try asylum, mental hospital, police and destitute records
- Newspapers and police gazettes will record if Uncle Albert had brushes with the law

R for Registration or indexing errors
- Those who were illiterate were unable to control the way their names were recorded
- On arrival in Australia your family spoke with an accent and names were often recorded as they were heard - Ray as Wray - Harmer as Armour
- O and Mac can be interchanged or dropped - Gorry, O'Gorry or McGorry
- When indexed, names can be misinterpreted. The letters L & S, C & G and I & J are easily confused
- Names can be typed incorrectly. Check the keyboard. What letter is either side of the first letter of the name? Does the created name make sense? Gorman/Forman - Garrett/Barrett - Bail/Vail

S for Service personnel
- Most of us would have a near or distant relative who served during WWI or WWII
- It is important to know who served as it can explain extended absences or disappearances
- Personnel records for Australian servicemen and women held by the National Archives of Australia
- Check resources held by Australian War Memorial
- See CoraWeb – Military records

www.cwgc.org/
Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The online search covers 1.7 million Commonwealth deaths.

T for TB tuberculosis, polio or influenza
Can't find a death date. Consider a death during an epidemic. There were:
- Influenza epidemics in 1826 (37 deaths in Sydney in two days) and 1851 an epidemic in all colonies
- The European influenza epidemic was in Australia by 1919 with 10,000+ Australian deaths
- There were polio epidemics in 1937, 1938 and 1949

U for Up marketing surnames
Some people deliberately tamper with their surname
- Sometimes an e was added to a name - Crow/e
- The pronunciation altered - Sidebottom to Sidebotham
- Spelling altered from Smith to Smythe
- The surname Unwin up marketed from Onion

V for Veneering the family mythology

Record all versions of the family mythology. Stories can vary from very accurate accounts to those bordering on fantasy but there is usually a grain of truth in all family stories, perhaps the vital clue.

W for Wills and probate

• These records are useful for finding an exact date and place of death
• A will is the written, dated, signed and witnessed instructions for distribution of an estate after death
• Executors carry out the requests once it has been proved. The proving of a will is known as probate
• If no will exists the next of kin or creditors can apply for a grant of letters of administration
• Wills or letters of administration copies are available ($) from state probate offices or archives
• Many indexes and some records are online. Records for Victoria and Tasmania are online (free)
• See CoraWeb – Probate and will records

X for eXiting

Did they go back home or move to New Zealand or the USA? There are some online departure records available for New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. Also check Trove Digitised Newspapers.

search.ancestry.com.au/search/db.aspx?dbid=1518
UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960. This site is also useful if your family went for a holiday to the United Kingdom.

Y for Yesterday - social and local history clues

• Check to see what was happening historically in the area where the person disappeared
• Was there fire, flood, cholera, gold rushes, drought, factory or mine accidents or closures?
• Contact local family history groups or historical societies. They can hold records only available locally
• See CoraWeb – Local history – Societies and groups

Z for Zero - Help I'm stuck

A tip is to check along your ancestor's brothers or sister's line if you have drawn a blank with your own line. Also think laterally, be systematic, patient and persistent.
See CoraWeb – Search for your family

CoraWeb publications

eRecords for Family History, 2013 (updated 2015)
Irish Research on the Internet, 2nd edn, 2013 (updated 2015)
Internet Family History, updated 2013 (updated 2015)
Shipping and Migration Research on the Internet, updated 2013
How Did they Get Here? Arrivals after 1924, 2nd edn 2012
Use the CoraWeb store to buy online *store.coraweb.com.au*