

Birth, marriage and death records

The main records for growing your family are birth death and marriage certificates. The object is to work from yourself and go back one generation at a time, proving each step of the way.

- Obtain a full copy of your own birth certificate. This should provide your father's full name, age, birthplace and your parents' date and place of marriage.
- Next, obtain a full copy of your parents' marriage certificate which should provide the full names, ages and birthplaces of both parties to the marriage, the names and occupations of your two grandfathers, and names and maiden names of your two grandmothers.
- You should now repeat the procedure and obtain a full copy of your parents' birth certificates, which should provide similar information to that appearing on your own full birth certificate.
- This will provide the necessary information to obtain a full copy of your grandparents' marriage certificates and they should provide you with the names of your eight great grandparents.

Your aim is to keep your family tree growing by repeating this process and so pushing your direct family line back generation by generation. It is recommended that you prove each step back by obtaining relevant certificates for each ancestor, or by verifying index entries with the original records e.g. parish registers, census records.

Eventually you will come to a point where your ancestors started to arrive in this country. You will then need to progress to shipping or convict records to find a point of entry for them



Birth Death and Marriage Indexes

All publicly available BDM indexes for Australia are available at Lake Macquarie. Many states have online indexes which can be accessed via the internet. To see what years are covered by the indexes access the resource list section of this site.

Indexes are available on both CD-ROM and microfiche. These two formats should be used in conjunction, as each complements the other. The microfiche indexes are the best place to start, as you can often garner family links by looking through the records for one name. The CD-ROM can be useful when there are variants in spelling, as you can search by parents Christian names, date or place of registration.

Indexes will give you basic information only – enough to verify that you have the correct person. Each entry has a registration number. It is important to record this number even if you are not going to purchase a certificate straight away.

It is more difficult to fill in details for your recent ancestors, as privacy legislation often restricts access to 20th Century records. For this reason it is vitally important to obtain as much information from living relatives as possible.

Be prepared to spend money in purchasing copies of key birth, death or marriage certificates. It is false economy to try to research family history without referring to key primary documents. Use of indexes on their own can often be highly misleading, and can result in you following a family line that is not yours.

Remember that there is no such thing as a "correct" way of spelling particular surnames, only "your way". Always check variations in spelling when looking for ancestors.



Saving money

■ Church records

Official registration of births, deaths and marriages in NSW did not begin until 1856. Entries found in the index covering the years before 1856, are early church records. These early church records have been microfilmed, and are available at the library. You need to obtain volume and entry numbers from the microfiche index before you can access the reels. If you find an entry in the church records, it is not necessary to send away for a certificate, as no additional information will be provided.

■ Transcription Agents

NSW BDM Registry has accredited Transcription Agents who are able to provide genealogists with full transcriptions, partial transcriptions or verification of certain fields of a birth, death or marriage record. Transcription Agents are particularly useful when you do not need full-certified copies of a birth, death or marriage certificate but just want the information in order to be able to continue your research.

Fees vary according to the request, but are generally around half the price of an official certificate.

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British BDMs

■ FreeBMD <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com/>

This ongoing project offers free access to the civil registration indexes for England and Wales (1837-1983). Currently 184.5+ million records are available plus access to scanned images of the original indexes. This great site is fully searchable and is regularly updated with new material

■ International Genealogical Index (IGI) <http://www.familysearch.org>.

The Latter Day Saints Familysearch site offers access to the largest collection of free genealogy records in the world. These include the *International Genealogical Index* Official registration of births, deaths and marriages in Great Britain began in 1837. The IGI only contains British records up till about this date. containing upward of 180 million birth/christening and marriage records. There are no death or burial records in the IGI.



Other Sources

- Australasia Births, Deaths and Marriages Exchange. <http://www.ausbdm.org/>
A free resource for sharing details on Australian and New Zealand certificates. A surname search is available plus links to 40+ international BDM exchanges.
- The Ryerson Index <http://www.ryersonindex.org/>
This ongoing project is indexing contemporary death notices and obituaries in Australian Newspapers (mostly NSW). The online database currently contains over 1,973,684 entries from 144 newspapers.
- Australian Obituaries <http://www.obituary.com.au/obituary/>
This site is posting obituary, death and funeral notices appearing in Australian newspapers. There is a free basic search facility with the full text of the notice returned, but not the reference to the original source (newspaper). Notices are available from August 2006.
- Obits.com.au <http://www.obits.com.au/>
Australian death and funeral notices plus obituaries obtained from funeral directors or though contributions by members of the public. Notices are available from January 2006. The Obits Quick Search only searches recent notices so check the *Archived Notices* also.
- Reverse Western Australia Marriage Lookup 1906-1965 <http://www.wamarriage.info/>
by the Perth Dead Persons Society. The WA registry site (above) offers online marriage indexes to 1936. This site offers searches beyond this date and identifies both husband and wife, something that is not possible using the microfiche index 1906-1965. There is also a county marriages index available 1951-1965.
- Divorce Index Victoria 1861-1900 <http://www.macbeth.com.au/indexes/divsearch.html>
This index to divorce case files held by the PROV lists the names of both parties, any co-respondents and file references.