New electoral registers

Follow your family in-between census years – and right up to the 1960s – with lists of potential voters

When we set about discovering our ancestors from the Victorian period, we tend to focus on censuses and birth, marriage and death indexes. However, there's another type of record that lets you follow their movements with even greater precision – electoral registers.

We've released three new collections of these crucial records to help you find out what happened to your family in-between the census years. Plus, two of these collections go right up into the 20th century, so you can fill in the gaps in your more recent past as well.

The registers list everybody who was allowed to vote in a particular place and time. They were usually made every year – so if you have ancestors who moved house or mysteriously vanished, they let you pinpoint any changes to a specific year. When you're searching, remember that a single ancestor will often appear several times in the same collection, so you need to check all your results carefully.

You'll also gain a unique insight into a fascinating and controversial part of our history. In the early years, the lists only include wealthy men. As time goes on, you'll notice that more and more names are added as different groups were given the right to vote – particularly during the fight for women's suffrage in the early 1900s.

The largest of our new releases is London Electoral Registers, 1835-1965, with over 15 million names. Almost all of us have at least a few ancestors who moved to the bustling metropolis of London, particularly during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. These records can help you identify the exact year that your kin arrived, and follow their movements around the capital. Search now

Going even further back are the Dorset Register of Electors and Poll Books, 1676–1922. This collection includes a small number of poll books – the predecessors to electoral registers.

And for Scottish members, we've added the Fife Voters Lists, 1832–1894. On top of the usual names and addresses, these records also provide occupations, making it even easier to identify your ancestors.

Top tip

Follow the money

The men listed in early electoral registers usually had plenty of money and land. Discover how much they left behind in our National Probate Calendar.

Australian arrivals

Discover more about your ancestors on the other side of the world, whether they went voluntarily or were transported for their crimes

For over 200 years, Australia has been one of the most popular destinations for British emigrants. We already have millions of passenger lists that let you follow your family to the other side of the world. Now we've released two new collections that reveal their experiences in more detail.

Our first new collection focuses on the 160,000 convicts who were transported to Australia in the 18th and 19th centuries. New South Wales Convict Indents, 1788–1842, includes thousands of official lists of criminals carried aboard particular ships.

Many of these men and women are already listed in our transportation registers. However, the indents provide a wealth of extra details, including ages, occupations and even personal descriptions.

Plus, track down a relative here, and you'll often find we've provided a link to another crucial record, such as a Ticket of Leave, Conditional Pardon or Certificate of Freedom. This means that a single search can provide the complete story of your ancestor's time in Australia.

Our second new collection concentrates on those who set out Down Under of their own accord. New South Wales, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788–1825, contains thousands of official records that reveal everyday lives in the first British colony in Australia.

The Secretary was responsible for managing the growing population. So, his papers include requests for marriage, land grant applications, petitions from convicts and much more besides. Many of the records include vital names, dates and even physical descriptions.

Use these new collections alongside all our other Australian records to build up a picture of your ancestors' lives in the New World.

Top tip

Further discoveries

Once you've followed your ancestors' first steps in Australia, you can go much further with our other records from the country. Start with our birth, marriage and death indexes.

Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2012

With just days to go until the biggest family history show of the year, we have more details about what you can expect when you get there.

The wait is almost over! Over the past few months we've been counting down to Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2012, which takes place at London's Olympia exhibition centre from 24th-26th February. Now we can give you more detail about what you can expect when you get there.

Our main stand is number 616. There you can enjoy free access to our 8 billion records from around the world, plus get expert help from our advisors and experienced Ancestry Advocates.

While you're at our stand, take the time to pop into our video booth. This gives you the chance to record your favourite discoveries, and share your thoughts on our site. We'll select our favourite clips to appear on the site after the show.

Throughout the three days, you can enjoy a series of free workshops at the Ancestry Academy. We'll have regular sessions on our most useful records, and if it's search tips you're after make sure you attend a special 'Ancestry.co.uk revealed' tutorial from one of our expert technicians.

Learn about the latest version of our award-winning software in our Family Tree Maker 2012 workshop. Plus, on the Friday, Tony Robinson will give his unique take on the 18th and 19th centuries, and the records you can explore for that period.

For a complete Academy timetable, with further details on all the workshops, download our exclusive show planner. You'll also find further details of all our show attractions.

At the front of the planner, you'll find your invitation to our Members' Lounge. This is the perfect place to share family stories and research tips, and learn more about our site. Plus, this year our document and photo scanning service will be in the Lounge.

Do you have your WDYTYA? Live 2012 ticket yet? If not, take advantage of our exclusive single-ticket offer, and pay just £12.

Have you tried… Family Tree Maker for Mac 2

Now Mac users can benefit from the latest features in our best-selling family history software.

Family Tree Maker 2012 has already proved extremely popular with Windows users, thanks to a range of innovative features. Now we've brought many of those features to Apple computers, together with some extra improvements designed specially for the latest version of the Mac system.

The biggest news in Family Tree Maker for Mac 2 is the addition of TreeSync. This intelligent technology keeps an eye on all your Ancestry trees: in Family Tree Maker; on the site, and even on your phone. Any time you make a change to one, TreeSync updates all the others, so your information stays up-to-date wherever you access it next.

The new software is also far more flexible when it comes to complicated families. Let's say one of your ancestors had children with two different husbands – you can now combine the families to show all the different relationships on a single screen.

One of the most important uses of Family Tree Maker is sharing your discoveries. With that in mind, the new version has a brand new range of charts and reports. You simply choose the one that best suits your needs, and click to display your family's details in a professionally-designed template.

If you have OS X Lion installed on your Mac, you can now take advantage of a special full-screen mode, making full use of the Mac's capabilities. You'll also find a unique feature called Image Capture, which lets you upload photos straight from the iSight camera on your computer.

Of course, all the best bits of the original Family Tree Maker for Mac remain. It's easy to create and edit your family tree, and add dates, records and pictures. You can plot your ancestors' lives on a timeline, and publish stories of their lives. And there's even a map feature, so you can see how they your family moved across the country between the censuses.

Family Tree Maker for Mac 2 costs just £61.27, which includes a year's Premium membership to Ancestry.co.uk worth £77!

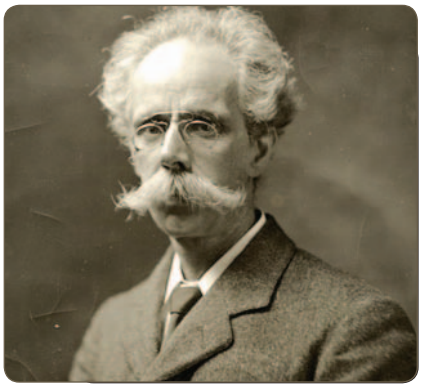
Top tip

Ancestry app

If you own an iPhone, iPad or Android phone, you can grow your family tree wherever you are with the free Ancestry app. Apple users can even see Hints on the go!

Ask the experts

Our resident professionals answer your questions on all things genealogical. This month, a missing death record and an Irish riddle.



Welcome to our Ask the experts section. This is where we answer your questions on all things genealogical, so if you have any pressing queries, send us your questions now*.

If your question doesn't appear here, you can email our Member Services team at support@ancestry.co.uk or call 0800 404 9723, and they'll help you with your research.

This month's questions are answered by Doreen Hopwood and Russell James

Bios

Doreen Hopwood is a professional genealogist for the City of Birmingham. She regularly talks at family history workshops all over the country.

Russell James is an expert writer and family historian at Ancestry.co.uk. Before joining us, he was Editor of Your Family Tree magazine for three years.

Question 1

Probate problem

My 2x great-grandfather, Thomas Henderson, was born in Warkworth in 1855. I have a probate record for a Thomas Henderson which states that he died on 12th June 1927 at Windsor Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne, and probate was granted to his wife Maria a couple of months later.

The only death registration at the Newcastle Register Office in that year for Thomas Henderson was in November, and he died at Gluehouse Lane. My question is how can there not be a record of death that corresponds to a probate record?

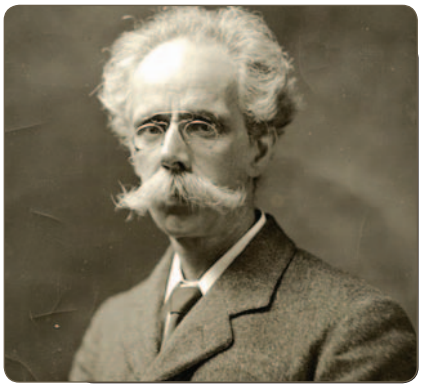
Mike Cox

Answer

I've checked using the National Probate Calendar, and it's apparent that both Thomas' home address and the address where he died are in Newcastle. All logic therefore suggests his death shouldn't be registered in a different place – but stranger things have happened!

I found Thomas H Henderson, who died in the last quarter of 1927, in the England & Wales, Death Index, 1916-2005 – his age is shown as 72. But there's also a registration for Thomas Henderson (no middle name) in Sunderland in the June Quarter of 1927 – he was aged 70. I suggest you apply for a copy of the certificate for it only to be issued if his widow is shown as Maria Henderson.

Ask the experts (continued)



Question 2

Irish emigrant

I've been researching my family history using Ancestry.co.uk, but I've hit a brick wall. It appears that my ancestors came from Newry, Ireland. I'm looking for a Henry Cregin, born 1807, but no records appear. Can you help?

Peter Cregan

Answer

A common difficulty with Irish families is the spelling of names. There often wasn't a standard way of spelling a person's surname, and various record-keepers just wrote it down as they heard it.

I can already see, Peter, that your surname is slightly different to Henry's, so you've probably tried searching using both spellings. But there are other possibilities. It could have been written Crogin, Cragin or Creggin. It could even have been extended to Carrigan or Kerrigan.

I suggest you search using wildcards. These are symbols that you can use if you're not sure of an exact spelling. Use a *?* in place of a single letter, or an * in place of any number. So, Cr*?*gin will look for Cregin, Crogin and Cragin, while Cr*gin will also pick up Creggin or Craggin.

Russell James