

Redland Researcher



proudly supported by Redland City Council

*The newsletter of
Redland Genealogical Society Inc.*

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Redland Genealogical Society Inc.

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Patron: Les McFadzen

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2010 Denise Brady & Marel Donaldson - Foundation Members
Kaye Barber, Pamela Gilbert, Elaine Speck
2013 Les McFadzen

Past Life Members

2010 Glenda Webb, **2011** Les Callaghan,
2016 Jeanne Dixon, **2019** Pat Misson

General Meetings are held **on the second Wednesday of the month**, February to December, **12:15pm to 2:30pm**, at Donald Simpson Centre, 172 Bloomfield Street, Cleveland. An entry fee of \$2 applies to cover the room booking (and a lucky door prize ticket). Free parking is available at the Centre. Meals can be purchased from the Centre's café by those wishing to have an early lunch prior to the meeting.

The Annual General Meeting is held on the second Wednesday of July at 12:15pm, followed by a General Meeting.

The Management Committee meets on the first Wednesday of the month, February to December, at 2pm.

Meetings are not held during January.

The RGS Collections contain a range of resources **for world-wide genealogical research** in various formats. These are held in our Genealogy "Genie" Room in the Council's Cleveland Library, Middle St (opp. Bloomfield St), Cleveland.

RGS members can use the RGS Library and its facilities, including accessing available online research organisations, at any time the Cleveland Library is open. **To obtain the Genie Room key**, members must present their **RGS Redland City Council's Libraries Service card** to the Cleveland Library Reception staff. It is not the same card that you use for borrowing privately from the Council's Libraries. It is the card given to all joining members. You must activate this card at Cleveland Library each time you renew RGS membership by presenting it with your latest RGS Membership Card.

Genealogical Research Assistants (GRAs) are in the room **to assist RGS Members and the General Public**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9.30am to 12.30pm - Saturdays 12:30pm to 3:30pm

Volunteer GRAs: Karen Hawkes (Librarian), Bob Aldred, Val Burt, Margaret Clark, Russell Clarke, Annette Hall, Megan James, Bev McFadyen, Eddie Richards, Dianne Smith, Helen Veivers, Audrey Warner, Robyn Waters Christine Mines, Alison Louttit, Kristin Bain and Malcolm Goddard.

Redland City Council's Local History Collection: The Local History Collection is housed in the Cleveland Library with much of it available online at <https://rcc.spydus.com/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/HOME>. Kristianne Bucknall is Redland City Council's Local History Advisor; Gillian McNeill is Local History Technician.

A Note from the Editor

Pat McCallum

It's an exciting time to be involved in family history research. We are on the cusp of learning what AI can and can't do to help us in our daily search for our ancestors and their stories. Reports from the field are mixed. AI assisted text recognition and index construction are frequently producing anomalous results. There are not enough human quality checkers to keep pace with the quantity of output the computers can produce. All this can be simply an annoyance. However, it has the potential to lead researchers to miss key documents, if they place too great a reliance on these generated indexes. While they can do amazing work, the processes still quite frequently produce errors which are recognised by sceptical researchers. None of this suggests we avoid AI, only that we understand its limitations and develop strategies to minimise the risks. It is easy to be led astray by AI's apparent easy going demeanour or its less than transparent introduction into tasks that we take for granted. Don't let AI turn facts into fantasy in your family story unless you are writing historical fiction.

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Membership Fees & Payment

Single Membership \$35.00 per annum - Family Membership \$50.00 per annum

Membership fees & Membership Renewal fees can be paid by Cash, Cheque or Electronically at General Meetings, or by Cash or Cheque to a GRA in the Genealogy Room. Alternatively, fees can be Transferred Electronically to the Society's bank account, Bank of Queensland Cleveland, BSB: 124-025 Account Number: 2349 3170.

When paying by Electronic Transfer it is very important that:

New members include the word '**New**' and '**Surname**' in the 'Payment Reference'!

Renewing members include '**Membership number**' and '**Surname**' in the 'Payment Reference' and also email or hand in a completed Membership Renewal form to the Membership Officer!

Application for Membership forms are available on the website, at General Meetings, and in the Genealogy Room.

Membership Renewal forms are emailed to members prior to their membership expiry date.

Redland Researcher is free to Members. It is emailed unless otherwise arranged.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in Redland Researcher are not necessarily those of the Management Committee, nor of Redland Genealogical Society Inc. The responsibility rests with the authors of submitted articles; we do not intentionally print inaccurate information. The Editor reserves the right to edit, abridge or reject material.

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Society Updates

Monthly Meetings

We had a very entertaining and informative guest speaker for our November monthly meeting, in the person of Eve Terry from National Archives of Australia. Her topic "War Brides – Stories of Love and Adventure" promised to have us swooning over stories of true love across the oceans.

However, it turned out not to be the case, something Eve found herself apologising for unless we, her audience, might be feeling like she had the wrong presentation.



Eve and Helen (with Kevin photo bombing)

In fact, Eve's presentation was a great introduction to the real lives of young men and women as they connected through the chance circumstances of war service overseas. The vast numbers of couples caught up in this consequence of the Wars was staggering to the novice on the topic. As expected, there was true love. However, there was also disappointment, infidelity, diseases, military guidance on the risks in fraternising and the government struggling on how to

manage the repatriation of so many couples once a war was over.

It was interesting to have Eve run a ruler through a number of wars and to highlight some lesser-known opportunities for war time relationships like the Empire Air Training Scheme for R.A.A.F. pilots in Canada and the deployment of Australians to the post war administration in Japan.

Thanks Eve, we were not disappointed. You had us all laughing along at some of the antics of our armed forces members in the past.

Genie Clinic

Each meeting features our Genie Clinic session which as always attracted lively contributions and discussions from members present. The clinics are an opportunity to hear about other members family history travels, problems with family history tools, and their successes along the way.

Memberships

Russell and Jean Clarke

Welcome to a new year of genealogical research and membership. We hope you learn some new information and maybe break through one of those brick walls we all have. And, importantly, we hope you enjoy the friendship of being part of a group with a common interest.

We gained three new members since our last report but, unfortunately, removed one member from the register due to inactivity. The current membership has reached 120.

A small number of overdue notices have been issued. No final notices have been issued.

We note renewals due in the month of February are the highest of any month. Naturally we encourage renewing before your due date to ensure both continued membership and so you can update your Redland City Council Genie Card which gives you access to the Genie Room and enables you to borrow from our library.

We advise that the ***Introduction to The Genie Room*** sessions will commence later this month with invitations issued to new members. However, any existing member is welcome to attend. The attendance is kept to a small number to give all attendees a chance to get involved. Additional sessions will be scheduled if required and as new members join the society.

Facebook

Yvonne Weston

In December, we reached 6,970 people which had a total of 17,638 views (an increase from the November results.) We had 16 posts during the month. We have increased our followers from 396 to 401, continuing our gradual upward trend.

In January (2026), we reached 9,100 people with 24,800 views – extraordinary results. We now have 410 followers which includes 9 new followers during the month.

Not surprisingly, the most popular posts continue to be our **Monday Murmurings** with well over 1,000 views each post in December. In January, it was a minimum of 4,818 views up to 7,329. Quite surprising but this is where the quirky and funny memes do show their value.

Please give us exposure with non-members by sharing our posts to your friends and in other Facebook groups.

A quick reminder that the 'members only' **RGS Members Chat** is quite active. It is a resource open to all members and is a great space for sharing hints, tips and ask questions related to furthering our endeavours to break down those pesky brick walls and build our family trees or genealogy research in general.

We have had a few requests to join from non-RGS members and after some direct messaging, this may eventuate in new RGS memberships.

If you wish to join the chat group, there is now a link to it on the Facebook page in the 'about us' section, simply find our group and request to join, remembering to answer the security questions so that I can verify that you are a member of RGS and then can approve your

request. Just remember, if I am away, it might take a day or so to be approved.

Insurance

The Society has taken note of comments by insurance providers, particularly in relation to issues involving volunteers. A series of forms and procedure documents is being drafted and will be under consideration or use in documenting incidents which may occur as we all go about our work for the society.

Website benefits

Members are reminded that the Member's Section of our website provides access to a number of exchange magazines. You can access the website from home and keep up to date on what is happening in genealogy societies such as our own, around Australia and more broadly.

Advance Notice

Date Claimer - Gatton visit

As reported by our Librarian, Karen, she has commenced arranging a field trip to the **Gatton Historical Village** where we will be hosted by members of the local historical society. The current proposal is to take this trip on **20 May 2026** arriving there at 10:00 a.m.

This date will be confirmed and detailed arrangements for the day will be notified closer to the time.



The National Archives of Australia has one upcoming Queensland event advertised. Details are available at <https://www.naa.gov.au/visit-us/queensland>.

24-27 Feb

Australia in focus – Tues and Fri 10 to 11 am

In person seminar, free, reserve a spot



From the Genie Room

"Where RGS lives"

Karen Hawkes, Librarian

Hello Everyone and **Welcome to 2026**. I hope all had a relaxing break and are now eager to return to our Genie Room for Researching and to Borrow a Book or Magazine. GRAs returned from holidays on Tuesday 20th January.

Our Society subscribes to the following sites, all freely accessible in our Genie Room –

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| • FindMyPast | • RootsIreland |
| • Biographical Database of Australia | • The Genealogist |

We also subscribe to Family Tree UK, Who Do You Think You Are? UK, and the Irish Roots Magazine. The latest copy of each can be viewed in our Genie Room and previous copies can be borrowed.

Also, a reminder that Books and CDs from our Collection **can be borrowed** only by RGS MEMBERS and MUST BE WRITTEN INTO THE BORROWING BOOK and ALSO CHECKED OUT THROUGH THE REDLANDS LIBRARY SYSTEM.

A List of our **Complete Catalogue** can be viewed on our Website, the Redland City Council Library Website and on Computer No: 3 in our Genie Room.

The **Redland City Council Library subscriptions** are – Ancestry and FindMyPast with access to the 1921 Census of England and Wales, both are available to members and visitors in our Genie Room.

We also have the benefits of our **Affiliate Membership with the Genealogical Society of QLD (GSQ)**, their subscription sites are –

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| • Irish Ancestors | • RootsIreland |
| • MyHeritage | • The Genealogist |

GSQs subscription sites are all free to access from your home computer for RGS Members.

The Banking Square is available for use in the Genie Room however there is a limited number of GRAs with access to this App. If making Membership payments in cash it would be appreciated you attend with the correct cash notes as we do not have a Petty Cash Float in the Genie Room.

I hope to organise an excursion to the Gatton Historical Village this year for our Society, this will hopefully be around May or June after the weather cools down.(See date claimer above)

New Acquisitions-

- Letters from Emigrants to Queensland. 1863-1885. No:1. Author-Queensland Family History Society. Category-Immigration. Location-Queensland. Donated By-Audrey Warner.
- Coochiemudlo: A Mariner's Mystery. A Question of Latitude for Edward Field Jones. Author-Christine Leonard. Category-History. Location-Queensland. Donated By-Helen Veivers.
- Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records. A Guide for Family Historians. Author-Chris Paton. Category-Guide. Location-Scotland. Donated By-RGS Society.

THANK YOU to all who have donated.

We start the year with 17 GRAs. **If you would like to join the GRA Team, please contact the Librarian**. The next GRA Meeting will be on Monday 23 rd March 2026 at 10am in the Elders Meeting Room at the Cleveland Library.

I would like to Thank all GRAs for their Time, Knowledge and their Dedication in Our Genie Room especially those who have filled in to do extra Duty Days and extra tasks.

Looking forward to seeing all Members and Visitors in our Genie Room in 2026.



RGS Christmas 2025

Another successful Christmas function at the Donald Simpson Centre. What a caring and supportive group we are, more than ably demonstrated by the overwhelming number of raffle prizes donated and 'secret Santas' shared.



Raffle Prizes

The honesty system broke down a little as we all tried to complete the challenge to unscramble the names of Christmas Carols from their quirky cryptic hints. Some side eyeing was noted as couples struggled with the more obscure Carols. The prize for the most unfamiliar carol would have to go to "Coventry Carol".



Secret Santa



The Donald Simpson centre again put on a substantial lunch and attended carefully to our needs. Notwithstanding the number of alcoholic beverages amongst the raffle prizes, the members maintained their discipline under Helen's ever vigilant eye.

Behind Brick Walls – Expect the Unexpected

Esther Johnson and ‘Yankee Charlie’ – Part 1

‘Soldier’

‘Soldier’ would appear to be an unusual nick name for a woman. However, this was said to be Esther Johnson’s nick name.

This is part one of my story. ‘Yankee Charlie’ is another part which is deserving of a telling on its own.

A few years ago, I took over the paper research of an old and distant relative of mine. The Johnsons are ancestors on my mother’s side. William Johnson, my third great grandfather was born in Essex in 1796, the son of a soldier. He was himself a member of the Royal Staff Corps. While stationed in Barbados William married Martha Sarsfield Donovan also born in 1796 and a native of Barbados.



An often-used British military uniform illustration associated with William Johnson (no attribution)

William then travelled with the Royal Staff Corps to New South Wales in the 1820s with his wife and newborn son. After 10 years or so William would leave the army and grow his family while working his way to the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales. Along the way, Esther was born at Patrick Plains in 1833.

There is a coloured illustration of a soldier holding a drum in dress uniform in front of St Paul’s Cathedral, London, which is often used with William’s profile. While depicting the standard ‘Red Coat’ scarlet, it is not likely a depiction of the Royal Staff Corps uniform. It is often repeated, as these things are in Ancestry. It is tempting to think that Esther may have come into possession of one of her father’s coats, scarlet or otherwise, which would have been useful to her in staying warm, but it

also in her mind may have projected a no nonsense ‘style’ she would adopt to survive in the harsh environments in which she soon lived. In any case ‘Soldier’ it was, giving us a hint of the resilient character Esther possessed.

Esther is my second great grandaunt. That is about as far as anyone’s research went. Ancestry family trees still generally stop there. As is the case with brick walls, they often get broken down by chipping away at seeming disparate places until a crack appears and grows and runs to join up with other cracks until dismantling seems possible. By piecing together snippets of information a story began to appear which hadn’t so far been discovered by my older cousin in her extensive research and collaborations on the Johnsons.

With her family Esther grew up in the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales. At the young age of 17, in 1851, Esther married William Kent who was 15 years her elder. One can imagine that this might have been cause for an elopement. The marriage is registered in Sydney and likely occurred there. The next year, in 1852, she had her first child, a son, baptised in Sydney when she would have been at most 19 years of age.

In 1855 and 1859, Esther and William had two daughters. Ada and Susan who were born at Campbells Creek in the Victorian Goldfields. Whether William was a fortune seeker in the diggings or one of the many who seized on the opportunities which arose to service those who were, is not well documented. However, by this time William was into his forties, and it is more likely that he was engaged in one of the many service activities which kept the miners alive and entertained.



Miners pan for gold in a stream near Beechworth and Yackandandah in northeastern Victoria, Australia. This engraving dates from the 1870’s. (State Library of Victoria, Australia accession no. H3603)

The young Esther, her children and her entrepreneurial husband established themselves in what was a rough

settlement, emerging from a canvas-tent shanty town. In 1853 there were 3,000 people from all walks of life and countries living along the Campbells Creek diggings.

William Kent was later a boarding-house keeper and this may have been more to his liking than the rigours and daily disappointments of working the diggings. This was an environment to test the resilience of his young wife. The death of her first-born son at Campbells Creek in 1859, at just seven years of age, was to be just one of the many disruptions in her life during her near 10-year residence at Campbells Creek.

The Gold Rushes were literally rushes, as waves of fortune seekers would descend overnight on any opportunity to try their luck, wherever the opportunity might arise. Just as abruptly, miners could 'pull up stumps' and take off for the next strike, often on the basis of the merest of rumours. A township could be bustling one week and be all but abandoned the next only to be reinhabited later if another strike was found in the old diggings.



Coffee tent and sly grog shop, digger's breakfast, S. T. Gill, 1852. Image source: State Library Victoria.

Perhaps hoping the environment might be different for the family after the loss of their son, William, Esther and their two young daughters left Campbells Creek to try their luck in New Zealand. Esther would soon live at Westport in the Buller District. Gold had been discovered upstream in the Buller River and nearby tributaries around 1864. The ensuing rush attracted prospectors from across New Zealand, Australia, and even the United States. The life at Westport would have been very familiar to Esther from her time on the Victorian Gold Fields.

William and Esther Kent had two sons born in New Zealand in 1862 and 1864, William (a second time) and Edmund. A few years after moving the family to New Zealand, in 1867, Esther's husband William Kent died.

At the time of his death, he was a boarding house keeper. His house was at Smailes Point, near Auckland.

At this time Esther would have been about 34 years old and her daughters Ada and Susan 12 and 8. Her New Zealand born sons would hardly have been at school. Later notices put the daughters in Auckland, and it is not clear that Esther was with the family at this time. She would soon be noted in Westport. She was perhaps already estranged and living there. She does not receive a mention in William's death notice.

About 80 people lived in a small trading settlement at the end of 1861, in a township then known as Buller and soon to become Westport on the North West coast of the South Island of New Zealand. The name Westport was proposed for the settlement by J. C. Richmond in 1863, apparently because of its similarity to Westport in County Mayo, Ireland. At the height of the gold rushes in 1867 the population grew to 1,500. Esther was drawn to Westport in the very earliest years of its establishment as a town.¹

In September 1869, Esther (Kate) Kent was keeping house for a Charles Sibree in the neighbourhood of the Westport Cemetery. On Tuesday morning 21 Sep 1869, Esther had cooked a boiled piece of pork and three sheep tongues. She and Charles and a neighbour Robert Cassells had a few drinks during the morning. Cassells was charged with stealing the cooked meat. Cassells was living nearby in a tent where the stolen goods were found. Also in 1869, Esther had another son, this time to Charles Sibree with whom she was living at the time. She named her son Charles Patrick Sibbery Kent in 'a tell' as to whom the father was.



Westport Wharf 1880s²

In May of 1870, Esther was keeping house in the wharf district of Westport where a number of incidents involving Esther occurred. As was typical of these West-Coast ports (e.g., Greymouth, Hokitika and West Port) accommodating a concentrated influx of

¹ West Coast New Zealand History (31st Dec 2021). Westport. 1870s.. In Website West Coast New Zealand History. Retrieved 4th Feb 2026 10:26, from <https://westcoast.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/11979>

² West Coast New Zealand History (27th Aug 2021). Westport Wharf.. In Website West Coast New Zealand History. Retrieved 4th Feb 2026 10:34, from <https://westcoast.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/2020>

mostly male labourers around a modest wharf necessitated a handful of taverns and boarding houses as well as gambling dens and "houses of ill-fame" in the localities close to the dockside.

In this area of Westport, on 6 May 1870, in premises referred to as Mrs. Kent's, Ann Connolly said she went to see Sibree about helping her move a house. She was taken to task by Jane Lockyer, using obscene and abusive language. Esther was the witness in support of Jane Lockyer's case. Connolly and Lockyer were well known to the court. Of Connolly it was said, that she had never been known to do any work and that improper characters had been in the habit of resorting to her dwelling. Of Lockyer it was said, that she was of similar circumstances and known for drunkenness. Of Esther's associates it was said:

*both characters were a nuisance to the neighborhood in which they resided, and it would be a relief to the community if both were imprisoned for three months.*³

Despite the judicial sabre rattling they were generally not imprisoned.

In Oct 1873, Esther, identified as Esther Josephine Kent, was still in dispute with her old nemesis Ann Connolly. Esther complained that she was out walking in the wharf district and encountered Connelly who was drunk. Connelly abused her and threw a stone which hit her behind the ear. Esther denied having any previous quarrel but objected to her coming to her house. She was perhaps annoyed by Ann coming to see Charles Sibree as she was on the previous occasion. None the less Charles supported Esther's evidence.

In reports from Reefton in 1872, Charles Sibree, alias "Yankee Charlie" and George Barton alias "Yorkey" were brought up on a charge of the murder of Thomas Costello on 31 Jul 1872. The case would drag on over a number of years with many twists and turns along the way. The search for Costello's body was unsuccessful and Sibree was released for lack of evidence. However, this would not be the end of the affair.

Notwithstanding that in 1869 Esther had already born a son to Charles, it wasn't until 1874 that she married Charles John Hickey Sibree. It was conjectured that Charles made this move to ensure that Esther could not be a witness against him in the alleged murder.

The couple may not have always been living together at this time. Perhaps Charles would come and go as he got work. Prior to his marriage Charles was said to be a

carpenter living in a shanty at Boatman's Creek on the Buller road about nine miles from Reefton.



A Home in the bush - diggers hut near Westport, New Zealand⁴

In any case, Esther's relationship with Charles appears to have been rough from the start. In July 1874, Esther was involved in the following incident.

RESIDENT MAGISTRATE COURT

(Before Joseph Giles, Esq., R.M.)

Tuesday, July 7

POLICE CASE

*Esther Kent, accused of unlawfully and maliciously smashing a window at Maguire's Hotel, in Lyttelton street, pleaded guilty. Her "Charlie, darling," she said, was inside "pitching: to the barmaid, and wouldn't come home and so she tried to scare him. She was fined 40s for the offence, 35s for damages, and 9s for costs, with the alternative of one month's imprisonment with hard labour.*⁵

Whatever the foundation for the relationship between Esther and Charles it did not appear to be based in common cause in money matters. At least in so much as it involved Esther having any claim on Charles' money.

NOTICE.

I HEREBY CAUTION any one from Trusting MRS SIBREE, as I will not be answerable for any debts she may contract.

CHARLES J. H. SIBREE.⁶

Charles was clearly inclined to violent behaviour. In April 1870, Charles was staying at the Hibernian Hotel in Westport (and not with Esther) when two seamen, who were intoxicated at the time, destroyed property in the room. It was observed that the men bore evidence of having been somewhat severely handled by Sibree.

³ Westport Times, Volume IV, Issue 656, 10 May 1870, Page 2.

⁴ West Coast New Zealand History (7th Feb 2023). Diggers Hut near Westport.. In Website West Coast New Zealand History. Retrieved 4th Feb 2026 10:11, from <https://westcoast.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/13511>

⁵ Westport Times, Volume VIII, Issue 1192, 10 July 1874, Page 2.

⁶ Westport Times, Volume IX, Issue 1326, 22 October 1875, Page 2.

In what was a more serious offence, in June 1876, Charles was charged and convicted of kicking John Ryan in the head while he was on the ground drunk after some push and shove between the two. While Charles denied he had done so intentionally, he did give evidence of ill feeling between himself and Ryan, accusing Ryan, while drunk, of forcing his way into the Sibree house and attempting to pull the clothes off Esther while she was in bed. Charles was sentenced to two years hard labour in Nelson goal. After serving his sentence, Charles would arrive back in Westport on board the Kennedy on 7 Jan 1878.

Charles' return to Westport was not good news for Esther who by now had her own interests to pursue which did not include a role for Charles. So, in early 1879 she approached the police to offer evidence on the location of Thomas Costello's body. It was seven years since Charles had been a suspect in the killing of Costello. As a result, Charles was charged for a second time. It was said at the time that Charles:

appears to have been thrashing his wife, and in revenge she went straight to the police and gave a full account of the murder, brutal in its details. She had helped to rebury the body three times to elude the police. A search was made for it at the time, but the police are reticent, and particulars cannot be got at.⁷

Esther assisted in a search, but the body was not found. Esther was not believed and Charles was released for a second time.

The Inspector said that the investigation he had made showed not the slightest ground for believing the statement of the prisoner's wife, upon which alone the man had been apprehended. The prisoner accordingly was discharged.⁸

Public opinion was divided between scorn for Esther in turning her husband in, as an example of the devious nature of women and, criticism of the authorities for taking the absence of a body to amount to a complete absence of proof in the face of the detailed evidence that Esther added to the evidence assembled for the first trial.

Esther's life now appeared in decline. In January 1880 she was charged with vagrancy. The case was dismissed with a caution. The caution appears to have not had the desired effect for in April 1880 she was again charged with vagrancy.

Esther Sibree did not appear in answer to a charge of vagrancy, and a warrant was ordered to be issued for her arrest.⁹

These events occurred around the time her husband Charles Sibree passed away in early 1880. His back story as 'Yankee Charlie' is a whole other matter.

These police reports give the impression of a woman in depressed circumstances surviving on the streets alone. Both Esther's daughters by William Kent lived during this time but do not appear in any of the incident reports concerning Esther. There is no indication that Esther was connected with her daughters at this time. Ada Maria Kent passed away in June 1880 in Auckland, aged 25. No mention was made of her mother in her death notice. Her daughter Susan married in 1881 and passed away in 1892 aged 33 in Auckland. Esther was not mentioned in the notices for either Susan's marriage or death. It is not known what happened to her two sons born to William Kent in New Zealand.



Palmerston Street, Westport, New Zealand¹⁰

In the 1893 New Zealand Electoral Rolls, Esther Sibree was registered at Palmerston Street, Westport.^[18] This was her registration until her passing. She continued to be listed as married even after Charles had passed away in 1880.

In 1907, Esther's passing was noted in the following terms.

Mrs Sibree senior, an old West Coast identity; aged 74 years, and for many years resident in Westport, died in the District Hospital, on Wednesday night, from general break-up of the system.¹¹

The reference to Esther as Mrs. Sibree senior is to differentiate her from her son Charles' wife Elizabeth. Charles Jnr and Elizabeth also lived in the Buller region

⁷ Evening Post, Volume XVII, Issue 349, 20 February 1879, Page 2.

⁸ Evening Post, Volume XVII, Issue 362, 7 March 1879, Page 2.

⁹ Westport Times, 30 April 1880.

¹⁰ West Coast New Zealand History (2nd Jul 2024). Palmerston Street, Westport.. In Website West Coast New Zealand History. Retrieved 4th Feb 2026 10:04, from <https://westcoast.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/16398>

¹¹ Grey River Argus, 14 October 1907, Page 2.

at this time. This suggests that Esther had some family around leading up to her death.

In the end 'Soldier' succumbed in her battle against the life circumstances she was dealt. Esther withstood physical abuse and adverse social pressures in the most difficult of environments and lived to a good age until she was finally worn out. It is not for us to second guess the life choices she made along the way.

Breaking the brick wall that Esther represented in the Johnson family tree led to an unbelievable character in 'Yankee Charlie'. This is the subject of Part Two.

Detailed references to this narrative are available at:

- WikiTree contributors, "Esther Josephine (Johnson) Sibree (1833-abt.1907)," WikiTree: The Free Family Tree, (<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Johnson-104909> : accessed 03 February 2026).
- WikiTree contributors, "Charles John Hickey Sibree (abt.1830-1880)," WikiTree: The Free Family Tree, (<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Sibree-13> : accessed 03 February 2026).

STATE LIBRARY¹ QUEENSLAND

Upgrade to Indexes in One Search

History Queensland passed on the following information provided to it by the State Library of Queensland.

In relation to the upgrade of our indexes to be found in [One Search> advanced](#) > family history indexes, it is now possible to connect, in many of them, to the original material, rather than having to go to the microfilm.

This means in the case of *Persons called before Government Committees 1860-1920*, that not only can you access the direct words of someone giving evidence and information about them, you may find nowhere else, but also you can pick up significant detail about places and events.

For instance, a search for Barcaldine shows that there are 260 records for victuallers' licences, 1901-1914; 20 records for soldiers' portraits; 42 records for national service records and 11 records for a government inquiry. It is therefore worth adding the word 'inquiry' to 'Barcaldine' in the search box. The inquiry relates to the meat industry not just in Barcaldine but in other parts of Queensland. However, 4 people from Barcaldine gave evidence and, in the process, they let us know in their own words, about themselves and conditions in Barcaldine at the time.

Apart from this convenient direct access and special personal and local information, the documents are keyword searchable - easier than a microfilm search.

In relation to the extension of railways many people gave evidence for a specific route.

These family history records, for the most part, are significantly enhanced.



Visit the Genealogical Society of Queensland web site for details of their upcoming events for the new year.

<https://www.gsq.org.au/gsq-events/>



SNAP SHOT!

This is one of my favourite photographs from my mother's photo album. A good number of her photographs survive. Others were handed out to her children as she cleaned house in later years. She kept a number of pictures of her younger and only sister who died unexpectedly when she was a young woman. A death which affected the whole family, but particularly my grandfather at the time.

The picture shows my mother and her sister, brother and parents in the grounds of All Hallows Catholic girls school situated on a prominent steep rise on the border between the Brisbane CBD and Fortitude Valley overlooking the Brisbane River to Kangaroo Point.

The camera incidentally captures in that moment of time a partially completed Story Bridge over the Brisbane River from Kangaroo Point to Fortitude Valley. There is still a way to go building out the Kangaroo Point end to meet up with the section coming out from Fortitude Valley.



Which bridge is that?

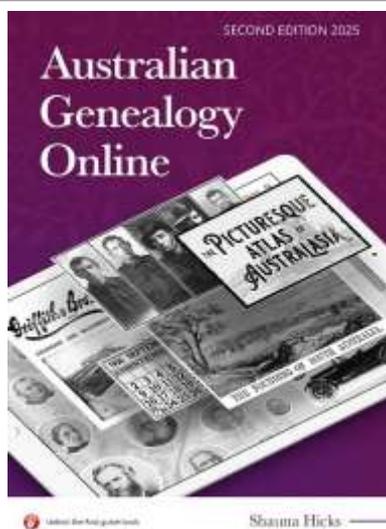
Pat McCallum

Construction on the bridge began on 24 May 1935 and the gap between the two sides of the bridge was closed on 28 October 1939. The bridge was opened on 9 July 1940.

This photograph shows the bridge superstructure still under construction with not all the prefabricated structures bolted in place. The Kangaroo Point end is still well short so this photograph likely would be 1938 or even a year before. At this time my mother had finished her schooling at All Hallows and her sister would have been 13 or 14 years old.

The bridge is now considered unmaintainable by the Brisbane City Council which is in search of a solution to maintain its serviceability.

Knowledge of the construction timeline helps date this photograph. It's a good example of how a close examination of photographs can add to family history research



In Case You Missed It.

This is the second edition of *Australian Genealogy Online* from Gould Genealogy & History. You can get it for \$29.95 As a book or for \$12.95 as a downloadable e-book.

Gould is well known for making historical records available and some of their collections are included in Ancestry subscriptions.

This research guide is for Australians who are researching their family history in Australia and want to make the most of records online. It is also for those overseas who may have had family members come out to Australia as convicts, emigrants, or perhaps temporary visitors during the goldrushes.

This is an invaluable guide for your research plan for family history in Australia.

<https://www.gould.com.au/australian-genealogy-online-2nd-edition/utp0012-2/>

Hints and Tips

Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?

Malcolm Goddard

As genealogists and family historians, family stories are what pulled many of us into a family history research journey. And it is likely that those stories are only passed along as oral history. Get those tales down in writing in order to leave a legacy for future generations.

- **Getting started.** Realise that commitment to documenting family stories is a project that will require effort and time. Start by creating a list of stories recalled. Keep it short and simple.
- **Use a Family Story Template.** The goal is to document as best as possible the details of the family story.
 - **Title:** Record the title of the family story.
 - **Source:** Name the author, or who told you the story, or if it is personal knowledge, how the story was delivered (verbally, recording, email, etc.) and on what date and in what location.
 - **Text:** Write up the text of the family story.
 - **People:** Enter names of people as they appear in the text; enter full name as well as any nickname and add relationship information explaining how each person is related to each other if known.
 - **Locations:** Enter location names as they appear in the text; enter full location name and add contextual information explaining how the location fits into the story.
- **Don't forget to make a backup copy,** (either paper or on a USB drive or backup disk) to ensure the story doesn't get lost again.

For more information, see Genealogy Bargains at www.genealogybargains.com.

Wandering Through the Web



LostCousins - Peter Calver is lost to the genealogy community.

The world-wide genealogy community has been paying tribute to Peter Calver who passed away during January 2026 following a battle with cancer. Family history researchers will know Peter as the force behind the web site LostCousins. What they may not know is that Peter had a significant involvement in the early days of computer software and hardware development. His company Audiogenic Software Limited was the firm behind early sports computer games titles. However, he will be more broadly remembered for LostCousins which he created in 2004 using an innovative database matching technique linking people with common ancestry. It was Peter's wish that people continue adding to his database after his death.

<https://www.lostcousins.com/>

Empty Branches on the Family Tree

From BlueSky I found this blog by family history researcher Linda Stufflebean. The focus is US genealogy research. It is a professional and well populated blog site. What caught my eye was her page listing the best family history finds of the week. Here is a list of links to articles of interest curated by an experienced and well organised genealogist.

<https://emptybranchesonthefamilytree.com/2026/01/fridays-family-history-finds-443/>

Ancestry – AI Stories beta version being tested

The latest ‘thing’ is to have AI integrated into whatever you are doing whether you like it or not. This often comes with mixed results and many failures to live up to the marketing hype.

This is a proposed new feature from Ancestry currently in beta mode. It pushes hints to Ancestry members that come with audio explanations and written backgrounds. The Climbing My Family Tree blog site discussed this feature recently. The blogger comments:

AI Stories can be accessed from the record page of a document in your hints or attached to an ancestor. They are not yet available for every record. Left is, an image of a document record page that has the notation Listen and Explore. That leads to the AI Stories page for this particular record. I like the background for these records more than listening to a "story" about the ancestor in the record. See what you think!

Access the full blog at:

<https://climbingmyfamilytree.blogspot.com/>

New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957

View image
View record
AI Listen and explore

Name Edgar Wood
Gender Male
Ethnicity/ Nationality American
Age 25
Birth Date abt 1903
Departure Port Boulogne Y Mer
Arrival Date 28 Sep 1928
Arrival Port New York, New York, USA
Ship Name Nieuw Amsterdam

Members’ Interests

Please contact Members through the Society’s email: redlandgs@gmail.com

Member’s Name: Heather STEELE Membership No: 195

SURNAME	COUNTRY	Town or City -STATE, COUNTY, PROVINCE, ETC	Year or Range of Years
ECCLES (McCANN)	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1860-1922
ECCLES	IRELAND	SLIGO	1860-1889
ECCLES	AUSTRALIA		1860>
McCANN	IRELAND	ARMAGH(?)	1860-1922
WEBSTER	SCOTLAND	Aberdeen ABERDEENSHIRE	1855>

Member’s Name: Tim O’DAY Membership No: 348

SURNAME	COUNTRY	Town or City - STATE, COUNTY, PROVINCE, ETC.	Year or Range of Years
BLACKET	AUSTRALIA		1800>
COX	AUSTRALIA		1800>
GRAY	AUSTRALIA		1800>

Member's Name: Annette HALL Membership No: 360

SURNAME	COUNTRY	Town or City - STATE, COUNTY, PROVINCE, ETC.	Year or Range of Years
CHAMPION	AUSTRALIA	Mudgee NEW SOUTH WALES	1842-1980
COCKS	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1875-1980
DALY/EY	AUSTRALIA	Parramatta NEW SOUTH WALES	1854-1950
DEANS	AUSTRALIA	Gulgong/Mudgee NEW SOUTH WALES	1831-1940
EMERY	AUSTRALIA	Ipswich/Cairns QUEENSLAND	1857-1935
FESTER	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1863-1935
HEWITT	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1872-1970
HOGAN	AUSTRALIA	Penrith NEW SOUTH WALES	1840-1975
KENNEDY	AUSTRALIA	Camden NEW SOUTH WALES	1844-1940
LAMAN	AUSTRALIA	Stroud/Gloucester NEW SOUTH WALES	1828-1950s
MURDOCH	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1877-1980
SMITH	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1862-1935
THOMPSON	AUSTRALIA	Port Stephens NEW SOUTH WALES	1870-1970s
TOOMEY	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1877-1920
TWOMEY	AUSTRALIA	Brisbane QUEENSLAND	1877-1920

Member's Name: Judy BOGE Membership No: 414

SURNAME	COUNTRY	Town or City -STATE, COUNTY, PROVINCE, ETC	Year or Range of Years
BOGE	GERMANY	Wierenkamp SCHMALFELD HOLSTEIN	1700-1800
BOYE	GERMANY	Wierenkamp SCHMALFELD HOLSTEIN	1700-1800
GRAY	ENGLAND	Bath, Bathford SOMERSET	1700-1900
HENDERSON	SCOTLAND	Dunfermline FIFESHIRE	1700-1900
HOLDSWORTH	ENGLAND	Selby YORKSHIRE	1700-1900
LODDER	ENGLAND	Bath SOMERSET	1700-1900
OGDEN	ENGLAND	Hulme SOMERSET	1700-1900
SIMMONS	ENGLAND	Leckhampton SOMERSET	1700-1900

Member's Name: Natalie VOGELSANG Membership No: 423F

SURNAME	COUNTRY	Town or City -STATE, COUNTY, PROVINCE, ETC	Year or Range of Years
GHEDAN or GAHAGAH	AUSTRALIA/ ENGLAND	Queensland; Thornborough Goldfields	1847- 1879
MILLIGAN	AUSTRALIA	Maitland, New South Wales	1847



North Stradbroke Island MUSEUM on Minjerribah

Located on Minjerribah, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island.

Open Wed-Sun 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Exhibitions (include)

- Aboriginal Room and Pioneer Room
- WW1 Soldiers in Dunwich Cemetery
- Dunwich Benevolent Asylum
- Shipwrecks around Straddie

Friends of the Museum

You can support the aims and objectives of the Museum by becoming a Friend of the Museum.

Friends of the Museum receive life membership of the Museum, invitations to all Museum events and functions, and acknowledgement in the Museum.

<https://www.stradbrokemuseum.com.au/>



60 Smith Street
Cleveland QLD 4163
07 3286 3494

General Hours

Open 7 days a week — 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Rotary Heritage Library Hours

Open Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., for research and quiet exploration.

Holidays

The Museum is closed on ANZAC Day, Good Friday, and during the Christmas period.

<https://redlandscostmuseum.org.au/whats-on/>

National Archives of Australia

16 Corporate Drive, Cannon Hill

Phone: (07) 3249 4200

Website: www.naa.gov.au

Important! Before visiting, you should check NAA's requirements at <https://www.naa.gov.au/help-your-research/research-centres#before-you-visit>. Bookings are not essential but may be required if busy. Phone 07 3249 4200 to plan your visit and to find out more about COVID-19 health and safety measures in place.

Open - Wednesday to Friday 9:00am to 4.30pm
Closed – Saturday to Tuesday and Public Holidays

Free on-site parking is available.

The strengths of their Brisbane facility collection are -

- immigration records that date from the 1850s
- post office and mail service records and photographs
- works plans which cover everything from iconic buildings such as the General Post Office and Customs House, to defence service homes built in typical Queenslander fashion.

For details of regular Events, you can register on their website to arrange a subscription to their free newsletter.

Queensland State Archives

435 Compton Road, Runcorn

Phone: (07) 3037 6777

Website: www.archives.qld.gov.au

When visiting the Reading Room, it is advisable to pre-order items on the "ArchivesSearch" catalogue to ensure that they are available on your arrival - <https://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/>

Open hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm & second Saturday of each month 9.00am to 4.30pm. The Reading Room is not open on public holidays or during the Christmas to New Year holiday period.

QSA's archival collection comprises of millions of public records dating back to the early Moreton Bay penal settlement of 1823. Free on-site parking is available.

The QSA holds informative Seminars and Events throughout the year, some on their premises, some at external venues. Check "*What's on*" in their website for details. You can keep informed of these **by arranging a free subscription** to "*qsa bulletin*", using the link on their website. The bulletin is sent by email.

Where to get your BDM Certificates

Prices are based on Historical Certificates, where available

This information is a guide. Please check websites for full details of types of certificates available, how to place orders and how to make payments.

Prices are changed regularly by government agencies.

Queensland

Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages (Qld)
Level 32/180 Ann St, Brisbane City QLD 4000
PO Box 15188, City East, Qld 4002
Phone: 13 74 68
Hours: Monday-Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm
\$25.55 Historical Image – Download
\$25.55 Historical Source Image – Download
\$35.90 Historical Certificate – Postage included.
<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/rbdm>

New South Wales

NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 30, Sydney, NSW 2001
Phone: 13 77 88
\$41.00 with Registration Number
\$56.00 w/out number (includes 10-year search)
Postage included
Credit card charges extra
www.bdm.nsw.gov.au



Transcription services:

www.joymurrin.com.au
<http://www.transcriptions.com.au/>
(Transcriptions can be cheaper and quicker than official certificates.)

Victoria

Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 4332, Melbourne, Vic 3001
Phone: 1300 369 367
\$22.00 Uncertified Historical Image - Download
\$57.50 Historical Certificate – Postage extra
www.bdm.vic.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

(Pre 1930, apply to NSW)
Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 158, Canberra City, ACT 2601
Phone: (02) 6207 3000
\$74.00 – Postage included
Historic Death and Marriage Indexes are available.
<https://services.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/public-registers>

South Australia

Births, Deaths & Marriages
Consumer & Business Services
GPO Box 1351, Adelaide, SA 5001
Phone: 131 882
\$69.50 Basic historical Images - Emailed
<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/births-deaths-and-marriages/family-research>



Also use their link to [Genealogy SA](http://www.genealogy.sa.gov.au) for an online name search for BDMs **also** to search a number of other worthwhile resources!

Western Australia

Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
PO Box 7720, Cloisters Square, Perth, WA 6850
Phone: 1300 305 021
\$24.00 Uncertified Copy – Postage included
<https://www.wa.gov.au/service/justice/civil-law/searching-family-history>

Tasmania

Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 198, Hobart, Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 135 513
\$59.21 – Postage included
<https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm/indexes>

Northern Territory

Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 3021, Darwin, NT 0801
Phone: (08) 8999 6119
\$56.00 – Postage extra
(1856-1863 check NSW)
(1863-1870 check SA)
<https://nt.gov.au/law/bdm>



New Zealand

Registry of Births, Deaths, Marriages & Citizenship
PO Box 10-526, Wellington 6143 New Zealand
\$(NZ)25.00 Printout - Emailed
Printout has more information than a certificate
(Visa, MasterCard & American Express accepted)
www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/Home/