

RBDM Family History Journal



Issue 2 September 2013



Welcome to the second edition of RBDM's Family History Journal, the quarterly newsletter which keeps you up to date with the latest developments in our Family History Research service.

We had a great response to our first issue. Thank you for all your suggestions and messages of support. We now have more than 900 people signed up to the newsletter, which is fantastic for only our second issue.

The first newsletter was distributed to coincide with the Attorney-General's official launch of our enhanced family history research area, and you can read more about the launch in this issue. I had the pleasure of showing the Attorney-General around the registry and he is very supportive of our work here, particularly the area of family history research.

In this issue we also look through the registers at some more unusual ways Queenslanders are recorded as meeting their end; it proved a popular item in the first issue! We also showcase our new 'How to' videos and provide some hints and tips about searching with dates.

I hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative and please [forward it to interested friends](#) and encourage them to [subscribe](#) to receive future issues.

David John
Registrar-General.

Great state. Great opportunity.



In this issue



Back to the Future—The official launch of RBDM's enhanced family history research facility

On June 19 Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie officially launched RBDM's enhanced family history research facility making it easier and cheaper for family historians and genealogists to get their hands on history.



The Kenniff brothers' legacy

On the 100th anniversary of the last judicial hanging in Queensland we look at the career of the notorious Kenniff brothers, Australia's last bushrangers, and how Paddy Kenniff's fate in Boggo Road Gaol ultimately contributed to the repeal of the death penalty.



More strange deaths and dark tales

Continuing this popular item from issue one we deliver another dose of strange deaths and dark tales from the RBDM archive; from being eaten by sharks in the Brisbane River to being run over by a steam tram after being caught-short in Rockhampton!



Family History Research at the Ekka

RBDM's Family History Research took centre stage in the Government Pavilion at this year's Royal Queensland Show; highlighting the career of Australian international cricketer Bert Ironmonger who made his test debut 85 years earlier at the Brisbane Exhibition Ground.



Help with troublesome dates

In coming issues we're going to give you some hints and tips to make finding records with Queensland RBDM's historical search facility easier. In this issue we look at troublesome dates and how to make searching using date fields more effective.



Watch our 'How to' videos

We've developed two 'How to' videos to help you search the RBDM archive, order certificates and download scanned register images. Watch them now on YouTube.



Join our Twitter followers

RBDM now has its very own Twitter account to keep you up to date with the latest developments in family history research. Follow us by clicking on the link.

Back to the Future—The official launch of RBDM's enhanced family history research



Above: Registrar-General David John shows Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Jarrod Bleijie, through RBDM's paper archive of life event registers and church records.

On June 19 Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie officially launched RBDM's enhanced family history research facility making it easier and cheaper for family historians and genealogists to get their hands on history.

Searching the index is still free, but now when you have found the records you are interested in you can order a certificate online; and if the register's been scanned, you can download a copy of the original register entry immediately!

"Records can now be downloaded instantly at greatly reduced cost. Family historians then have the choice of ordering a hard copy certificate for \$28, or if the register has been digitised, downloading a scan of the original register page for just \$20," said Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Mr Jarrod Bleijie at the launch.

"Digitisation not only gives Queenslanders cheaper and easier access to their family history, it also preserves the records. The old canvas and leather-bound registers are sadly beginning to fall apart so we need to ensure our rich history isn't lost."

As well as the improved index search facility, a new [dedicated area for family history research has been set up](#) in the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces section of the Queensland Government website.

Mr Bleijie said the improved online services were specifically designed for Queenslanders tracing their family trees, but would also be welcomed by professional historians and researchers.

The Attorney-General showed he has a particular interest in history, spending time before and after the launch looking through the historical registers, talking to RBDM staff and searching for records using the enhanced family history research facility. "The registry's life event records date back to 1829 and offer a wealth of information about our people and past," he added.



The Attorney-General talking to bindery operations officer Ron Jarvis, who maintains and restores RBDM's priceless archive of life event registers and church records. [Ron was featured in issue one of the Family History Journal.](#)



A camera crew follows the Attorney-General as he looks through one of RBDM's historical registers.



Registrar-General David John being interviewed for ABC radio.

During the launch Mr Bleijie was shown around the Registry by Registrar-General David John, who echoed the Attorney-General's words.

"In our archive we have some fascinating records of famous Queenslanders," Mr John said.

"For example, we have the birth certificates for legendary aviators Bert Hinkler and Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, men that quite literally put our state on the world map.

These are just some of the famous people you can discover in our archive, as well as the millions of ordinary people who have called Queensland home."

The launch was well attended by the press, with TV camera crews from Channels 7, 9 and 10, and journalists from ABC radio, Brisbane Times and APN News Media.

The new website and improved search facility have proved a great success with over half a million visits to the new family history web pages in the first three weeks of the launch, making it the most viewed area of the Queensland Government website during June.

The Kenniff brothers—Australia's last bushrangers

Story by Adrian Harrison

I must confess I had never heard of the Kenniff brothers, Australia's last bushrangers, until I stumbled across an obscure reference and did some digging in RBDM's historical death register archive. I had always thought Australian bushranging came to an end the day Ned Kelly uttered the immortal words 'such is life' and dropped into eternity through a trap door in Old Melbourne Gaol; however, the Kenniff brothers, Pat and Jimmy, were out fighting the law from the Queensland bush at the turn of the 20th Century and their story is well worth telling.

Some would argue that the Kenniff's were just common stock thieves not worthy of the bushranger epithet, never having 'bailed up' a single bank or stagecoach; however, their descent into a life of crime grew from the same sense of injustice as poor Ned, they were undoubtedly expert bushmen and used this knowledge to evade capture and their brutal slaying of members of a police patrol was just as heinous as the Kelly gang at Stringybark Creek. Others argue that as the Kenniffs most notorious crime was committed in the 20th Century—Pat was put to death in 1903—they shouldn't be allowed to taint the romantic myths of 19th Century bushrangers. However, no one would deny that Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were genuine Wild West outlaws, yet Butch and Sundance were holding up banks and trains across America's mid west at the start of the 20th Century and didn't get riddled with bullets in a Bolivian cantina until 1908¹.

What is undeniable is that like Ned Kelly, Pat and Jimmy Kenniff were true 'Wild Colonial Boys'. They were born during the 1860s near Grafton of Irish extraction and after notching up a few convictions for stock rustling—or duffing to use the Australianism—in northern New South Wales they moved with their father to the small Queensland town of Springsure, south of Emerald. Here they worked as stockmen and were by all accounts expert horsemen; unfortunately they just couldn't keep their hands off other peoples stock.

In 1893 they moved to the Upper Warrego where they leased a block of land with the peculiar name of Ralph. From here they launched their bushranging career in earnest, stealing cattle off neighbouring properties, rebranding and selling them on. By 1895 both brothers were back in jail, spending time on Moreton Bay's St Helena Island—then Brisbane's maximum security prison—for horse stealing. Their imprisonment also resulted in the government kicking the Kenniff family off their land, an act which only served to inflame the boy's sense of injustice.

On their release they took to openly carrying weapons and established a hideout at Lethbridge's Pocket, a deep and narrow gorge high up in the Great Dividing Range near the head of the Warrego River, similar to the Hole-in-the-Wall used by the notorious Wild Bunch in America. From this bolt-hole deep in a dense ironbark forest the Kenniffs began systematically plundering stock from stations up and down the district. They were particularly vindictive in raiding Carnarvon Station against whose manager—Albert Dahlke—they harboured a particular grudge; Dahlke had given Jimmy Kenniff a sound thrashing when the bushranger had picked a fight with him at a country race meeting.

¹ The dramatic end to Butch and Sundance as depicted in the 1969 film owes more to Hollywood romance than reality. After killing a soldier who had come to arrest them, the outlaws did shoot it out with their pursuers; however, surrounded, outnumbered, wounded and with little ammunition left—rather than go out in a blaze of glory like Paul Newman and Robert Redford in the film—they chose to cheat the hangman by committing suicide.

The Kenniffs most audacious raid was carried out in December 1897 when they stole 40 horses from in and around Carnarvon. They then held up Hunter's general store in Yuelba stealing goods and emptying the safe before creating a false tail out of town. The police set off in hot pursuit while the Kenniffs calmly circled back and loaded the stolen horses on the train for Toowoomba. The ruse bought the gang enough time to reach Toowoomba, sell the horses and enjoy a brief spending spree with their ill-gotten gains, before escaping back to their hideout in the Warrego.

It was a crime that humiliated the police and earned the gang many admirers for their audacity. Unfortunately Patrick Kenniff cashed a stolen cheque from the Yuelba store in a Toowoomba pub. The publican identified the now famous outlaw, and when the police caught up with the brothers a couple of months later Pat was brought in for the Yuelba hold up. He received another three years in jail, but evidently this failed to straighten the young man out, and on his release in November 1901 he went straight back to the family business of stealing stock.

Things finally came to a head in Easter 1902. On 28 March 1902, Good Friday, Constable George Doyle from Upper Warrago Police Station—which had rather provocatively been built on the Kenniffs' old land block Ralph—set out in pursuit of the Kenniffs. He was accompanied by Carnarvon Station manager Albert Dahlke—who was tired of being picked on by the Kenniffs—and an aboriginal tracker named Sam Johnson. They carried with them a warrant issued by Roma Police for the brothers' arrest on another count of horse rustling. On Easter Sunday the 'posse'—let's call them that—caught up with the Kenniffs, ambushing them at a camp in their remote mountain hideout. Taken by surprise, Jimmy was easily apprehended, however, his older brother managed to escape on horseback. Johnson was sent to get handcuffs from the police packhorses which had been tethered further up the trail so as not to alert the outlaws. On his way back he heard a short but fierce gunfight and witnessed Dahlke fall from his horse, apparently wounded.

Seeing the Kenniffs galloping toward him the tracker fled into the bush. Returning to the scene some while later, accompanied by another employee from Carnarvon Station who had been camped on nearby Meteor Creek, they found Dahlke's blood soaked horse along with evidence of the gunfight, but no bodies. Scared that the Kenniffs were still in the vicinity, they high-tailed it to a nearby station to raise the alarm. A police patrol arrived two days later and found Doyle's horse wandering the bush with bulging saddlebags slung across its back. Checking for contraband, the police were shocked to find the bags packed with 200lbs (about 90kgs) of crushed and charred human remains mixed with the burnt remnants of Dahlke's and Doyle's possessions.



CSI circa 1902. This picture—courtesy of the Queensland Police Museum—was taken deep in Lethbridge's Pocket about one mile from where Doyle and Dahlke were murdered. This crime scene photograph shows the cremation site. The white patch on the rock in the centre of the picture—flanked by members of the police patrol—is evidence of intense burning. The police discovered human teeth and flecks of bone in the ashes around the rock.

Following the gruesome discovery, a more detailed search of the area revealed ashes from a fire containing human teeth and flecks of bone, and nearby two charred skulls. Apparently the Kenniffs had cremated their victims in an attempt to hide their crime. It was surmised that they had been planning to bury the remains well away from the ambush site, but Doyle's police

mount—which was known to be jumpy—had bolted into the bush before all the remains had been bagged up.

The Queensland Government immediately posted a £1000 reward for the capture of the bushrangers and a massive manhunt was initiated with 52 mounted police supported by 16 aboriginal trackers drafted in to comb the area.

With echoes of the manhunt for the Kelly Gang, Kenniff family members and sympathisers were rounded up and imprisoned to prevent them helping the fugitives. There were reported sightings across the Warrago but the Kenniffs managed to elude the police for three months, during which time panic raged among the inhabitants—particularly station managers. Convinced the Kenniffs were intent on unleashing a merciless reign of terror upon them, many simply up and left in fear for their lives.

The Kenniffs were eventually cornered on 23 June at Arrest Creek just south of Mitchell (I suspect the creek was renamed after the event or it would have been a foolhardy place for the wanted men to camp). Unlike the Kelly gang's last stand, these wild colonial boys gave themselves up meekly without a fight. Pat and Jimmy were taken to Brisbane where crowds packed Roma Street station in the hope of getting a glimpse of the notorious bushrangers. They were tried in the Supreme Court and a jury quickly found the brothers guilty of the murder of Dahlke and Doyle.

The judge—Chief Justice Sir Samuel Griffith—had little option but to sentence them both to death; however, news that the Kenniffs were to hang was met with shock and an outpouring of public support for the condemned men. Many drew parallels with the treatment meted out to Ned Kelly a quarter of a century earlier and saw in the convictions the same vindictive state siding with the rich landowners against the poor. Supporters argued that although the evidence was fairly damning, most of it was circumstantial, it was impossible to say who actually fired the fatal shots and that rather than being tried before a jury of 12 of their peers the Kenniffs had been swiftly convicted by a special jury of just four 'wealthy' and 'educated' men who were biased against the accused. An appeal on the Kenniffs' behalf was funded by sympathisers and although it failed to save Pat, it did manage to get Jimmy's conviction commuted to life imprisonment.



Left: Mug-shots of Pat and James Kenniff taken shortly after their arrest. **Middle:** Pat Kenniffs grave (in the background) in the section of South Brisbane Cemetery reserved for executed criminals. His family were given permission to erect a wooden marker over the grave, later replaced with a concrete headstone and cross. It is the only marked grave of the 42 people executed in nearby Boggo Road Gaol. The plaque in the foreground—**detail right**—lists all the executed criminals buried in the plot.

Pat Kenniff was hanged in Boggo Road Gaol on 12 January 1903, proclaiming his innocence to the last. He was buried in nearby South Brisbane—Dutton Park—cemetery and it was estimated more than 1000 people packed the graveyard for the interment—the biggest funeral ever held for an executed criminal in Queensland.

The bush poets immediately set to work mythologising the Kenniffs, with *'The Hanging of Paddy Kenniff'* becoming a popular fireside ballad. Controversy over the execution was such that 'Paddy' Kenniff's hanging became a rallying cry for the abolition of the death penalty across Queensland. One of the Kenniffs most influential supporters was bush author Steele Rudd—real name Arthur Hoey Davis—a civil servant who at the time held the post of Brisbane's Under Sheriff. He had the difficult duty of signalling the moment the hangman should pull the lever and drop Pat Kenniff to his death.

Convinced by Pat's protestations of innocence on the scaffold, Steele Rudd became a firm opponent of capital punishment and in 1917 wrote a highly emotive—and controversial¹—play *The capture and trial of the Kenniffs* as an indictment of the brothers' treatment. Steele Rudd pinned blame for the killings firmly on the Kenniffs' father who had conveniently died in 1908.



Extracts from RBDM's death records.
Above: Pat Kenniff's death record shows 'Judicial Hanging' as his cause of death.



Right: George Doyle and Albert Dahlke have 'Murdered by James and Patrick Kenniff' entered as their cause of death. The entry was made in 1904 after their remains were interred at Tamrookum churchyard.

September 2013 sees the 100th anniversary of the last judicial hanging in Queensland². The death penalty was officially abolished in 1922; Queensland becoming the first Australian state, and indeed the first part of the British Empire, to do so.



Left: The memorial erected over the victim's remains in the graveyard of All Saints church Tamrookum. The inscription states—In Memory of Constable George Doyle and Albert Christian Dahlke whose uncompromising fidelity and heroic endeavour to do their duty and vindicate the law led to their murder under revolting circumstances at Lethbridge's Pocket near the head of the Warrego River, Easter Day 1902. In order to destroy traces of the crime their bodies were burnt but their ashes having been subsequently recovered were interred in this place 13th January 1904.

On the reverse it says Erected by sympathisers and admirers of true manliness throughout Australia. A small memorial plaque was also placed on the grave by the Queensland Police Union to acknowledge the men's sacrifice on the 100th anniversary of the murders.

¹ The Kenniff trial was a landmark in that it was the first time a white settler had been sentenced to hang based largely on the testimony of an Aborigine. At the trial the defence had tried unsuccessfully to discredit the tracker Sam Johnson's testimony and Steele Rudd continued to refer to him in disparaging terms in his 1917 play.

² The last person executed in Queensland was Earnest Austin who was hanged on 22 September 1913.

James Kenniff was released from prison in November 1914 following a royal pardon—granted on the grounds that as he had been apprehended and disarmed prior to the gun battle there was sufficient doubt he had fired any of the fatal shots. He died in Charters Towers in 1940. The charred remains of the victims—Dahlke and Doyle—were interred two years after the murders in a common grave in the cemetery of All Saints church Tamrookum, near Beaudesert—Tamrookum station being the home of Dahlke's employers.

More strange deaths and dark tales

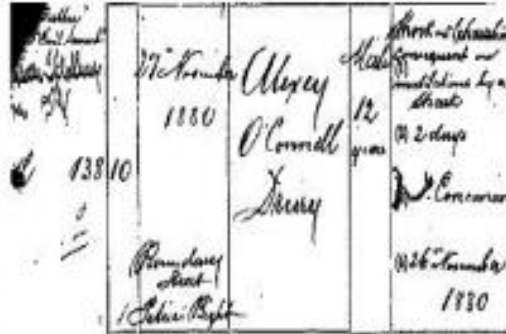
In the first issue of *The Family History Journal* we featured some strange and unfortunate stories of how Queenslanders have met their end as recorded in RBDM's registers. It proved so popular, we have taken another dark journey through some of our historical death registers.

While fatal shark attacks on swimmers are not as common as films like *Jaws* would lead us to believe, RBDM's records show there have been three recorded deaths from shark attacks in the Brisbane River—the last at Bulimba in 1921—and numerous other fatal attacks in the surrounding rivers and estuaries. The river is home to a large population of Bull Sharks, something the first recorded casualty, young Alexey Drury, found out to his cost in 1880. On a balmy November evening 12-year-old Alexey was out swimming with four of his friends in the Brisbane River at Petrie Bight—roughly where the northern pier of the Story Bridge now stands—when he was attacked by two large bull sharks. Although his friends rushed to Alexey's aid and bravely fought off the attack, by the time they managed to drag their friend to the bank he had lost a lot of blood and both legs were so badly bitten they had to be amputated. He died a few hours later.



Picture courtesy of State Library of Queensland
Neg No 152706.

Above: A picture of Petrie Bight, Brisbane, taken in 1882, just two years after Alexey Drury was taken by Bull Sharks at the spot.



Above: Alexey Drury's cause of death is shown as 'shock and exhaustion consequent from mutilation by a shark'. His address is shown as Boundary Street which now runs under the Story Bridge.

Proving that 'Eaten by Crocodile' isn't just the preserve of NT News headline writers; we found the tragic tale of poor little Betty Doherty. On Monday January 4, 1932, four-year-old Betty was playing with her brothers and sisters on the banks of the Seymour River near Halifax, just north of Ingham, when a four meter crocodile lurched from the water.



Picture courtesy of the Queensland Police Museum.

Above: Hunters and townspeople from Halifax crowd around what they believed to be the croc that killed poor Betty Doherty.



Above: The register entry for Betty Doherty. Not being an expert in reptilian taxonomy—the science of classification—the registrar has entered ‘taken by alligator’ as the cause of death!

The hungry croc took hold of poor Betty while her elder brother, John, tried desperately to wrestle her from its powerful jaws; unfortunately it was too strong and dragged the little girl into the river. Two weeks later hunters snared a large crocodile about 100 yards south of where Betty had been taken; however, no human remains were found in the reptile's stomach and the body of Betty Doherty was never found. Her brother was awarded a Bronze Medal for bravery from the Royal Humane Society of Australia for trying to save the life of his little sister.

Having a home among the gumtrees—with or without a couple of plum trees—can also be dangerous. Gumtrees have an unfortunate habit of dropping branches as they grow, particularly during droughts when the trees shed whole limbs to save water. Early settlers wisely nicknamed them 'widowmakers' and avoided camping underneath them. One lived up to its name when a tree fell on farmer Robert Stubbin in October 1876 leaving his wife, Louisa, with four kids to care for.

[illegible]

Left: English émigré Robert Stubbin, a farmer from Rosewood Scrub near Marburg, died of injuries caused from a tree falling on him in November 1876. **Right:** The same West Moreton register page shows Carl Cussell, a German born labourer from Walloon, died in October 1876 of injuries caused from being trod on by a horse. German settlers arrived in the area during the 1860s and by 1900 nearly 80 percent of Marburg's population came from Germany or was of German descent.

Horse power dominated Queensland transport until well into the 20th Century and not surprisingly horse related accidents were common. The West Moreton register for 1876 also lists Carl Cussell, a German émigré from East Prussia who died when a horse trod on him. Like English born farmer Robert Stubbin—listed just two places below—Carl left his wife, Emily, with four kids to care for.

Other types of horse transport also took their toll. In the 1866 register for Peak Downs is recorded the death of 20 year old Mary Mills and her husband Josiah. Peak Downs was a new registration district created the year before to accommodate the rapid growth of Clermont, 320km west of Rockhampton. The town was experiencing a mining boom at the time. Gold had been discovered in the area during 1861 and people flocked to Clermont in search of their fortune; the boom was compounded soon after when prospectors struck a rich vein of copper.¹

[illegible]

¹ The town was proclaimed in 1864 and so many people flooded into the area that Peak Downs was created as registration district in 1865. By 1873 Clermont had grown so big it became a registration district in its own right.

Above: The consecutive entries for Mary Mills and husband Josiah from the Peak Downs register.

Originally from Maryborough, like so many others Josiah and Mary Mills moved to the boomtown for work and the chance of striking it rich; Josiah is listed as a 'hawker' so he would have sold portable goods—pots, pans, and assorted hardware—to the army of miners in and around the town. Unfortunately on March 5 his young wife Mary was struck by a dray. A dray was the heavy goods vehicle of its day; a low, strong cart without fixed sides, used to carry heavy loads and often pulled by a team of horses or oxen. Mary died of her injuries nine days later and what is worse her husband, obviously traumatised by the event, died a day later of 'Exhaustion, caused by nervous excitement' leaving their two young children—a two year old girl and six month old boy—orphans.

The railways came to Queensland in 1865 and as the rails stretched out across the state the first rail related deaths weren't too far behind. The Central Railway reached Longreach in 1892 and a tragic accident was recorded just outside the town two years later. The Welch family from Gloucestershire in England—father Henry, his wife Mary-Anne and 3-year-old Charlotte—were returning from Longreach to a railway labourer's camp 8 miles (about 13kms) out of town¹. They were travelling along the railway track with another man, William Jenkins, on a trolley.²

Henry Welch (the first press reports incorrectly report the family name as Walsh) is referred to in the register—and in initial press reports—as a lengthsman; a labourer who would have carried out maintenance on a particular section of track. However, this has been changed in the register's margin to 'ganger', the foreman of a gang of railway labourers. As foreman Henry Welch would have used a trolley to transport heavy tools and to travel around to check sections of track under his control.

He'd commandeered the vehicle to rush little Charlotte to Longreach hospital where doctors had set her badly broken arm. Unfortunately it was a dark night and the trolley ran headlong into an unscheduled goods train on its way from Barcaldine; the train apparently had faulty lights. The two men were able to jump clear before the collision, but Mr Welch's wife and child were tragically killed.



Left: The entry for Mary-Anne and Charlotte Welch states 'Killed on line by goods train running over her'. Rather gruesomely it also says in Mary-Anne's entry death was 'instantaneous' as she had been 'cut to pieces'!

Being killed by a Brisbane tram was also a fairly common occurrence during their 84 years of operation. Tram deaths were so common Brisbane Tramways maintained a 'Fatal Book'³ detailing fatalities from the first tram death in 1897—when Joseph Fox fell from a moving tram at Roma Street—to the start of bus-only operations in 1969. In that time there were over 500

¹ It is referred to in the register as 8 mile camp.

² This was either a push or hand pump trolley. Push trolleys were simply pushed along the track where as the hand pump trolley was propelled by moving a central beam up and down.

³ The Brisbane Tramways' Fatal Book is preserved in the archives of the Brisbane Tramway Museum in Ferry Grove.

deaths—including a number of suicides—listed as having occurred on, or having been caused by, Brisbane's trams and trolleybuses.



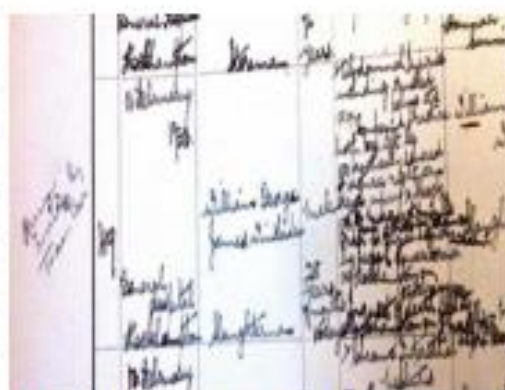
Left: The entry for John 'Jack' Lappin a 45-year-old 'fencer and dam maker' from Charleville, one of the 500 deaths recorded in Brisbane Tramways fatal book. After a day at Eagle Farm Racecourse in late January 1914, during which time Jack got very drunk—a witness at the inquest said he had had at least 15 drinks and could hardly walk—he was, as the register states 'knocked down by a tram car' as he lurched across Hamilton Road.

However, it wasn't just Brisbane where a tram could end your life. Rockhampton ran steam trams from 1909 to 1939 and as the only provincial city in Queensland to have street cars—Rockhampton had a network of 10km of tramway—it not surprisingly caught some people unawares and they ended their days under the Steam Tram's wheels. William Winslade, a 28 year old butcher, was one. He suffered horrendous injuries when on the evening of February 13 1933 he rushed from the gent's lavatory at Wandal Tram Terminus—the northern end of the Rockhampton tram network—straight into the path of the No 15 tram. The driver saw a figure rush out of the lavatory but it was too late to stop the heavy tram; it had to be jacked-up to extricate William—who's last words were reportedly "Take the tram off me!"—he died soon afterwards at Rockhampton General Hospital. The inquest surmised that poor William had been caught-short while riding his bicycle and he had abandoned it on the tram line before rushing into the gents. On hearing the approaching tram he rushed out to save his precious bike, only for it and him to be run down. His mangled bike—and a leg of pork he was bringing home from the butchers shop where he worked—were found nearby. The newspaper reports state this was the third fatal accident associated with the Number 15 tram!



Picture courtesy of State Library of Queensland, Neg No 167977

Above: Pedestrians, bikes, motor lorries and even a horse and buggy mix with the Steam Trams on East Street, Rockhampton in 1923.



Above: The 1933 register entry for William Winslade. The registrar has diligently detailed all his injuries—which were extensive—making it hard to read; however, they have succinctly summed up the cause of death in the margin as 'Run over by Tram Car'.

The Brisbane Tramways fatal book records 23 incidents of people being knocked down by a motor vehicle while attempting to board, or alight from, a tram. One, Amelia Down, is fairly significant in Queensland History as it's regarded as the States first motor car related accident resulting in a death. On October 4 1907 Miss Amelia Down was crossing Brisbane's Wickham

Street with her niece, with the intention of catching a waiting tram car, when her dress was caught in the mudguard of a passing car.

The driver, noted physician Dr Arthur Charles Halford, had been passing the stationary tram at a reckless speed estimated to be in excess of eight miles an hour (just short of 13km/h). The doctor had sounded his horn repeatedly but unfortunately 49-year-old Amelia was a little hard of hearing and was startled when she saw the speeding car. She was dragged down the street and although she was rushed to the nearby Alexandra private hospital, she died of her injuries 12 hours later. The hooning doctor was charged with manslaughter.

Run over by motor car	5 October 1907	Amelia Down	49 years	fracture of the skull fracture of the skull pressing on brain (3) Syncope. Alex N. Thoms (8) Port Gordon 5 October 1907. (4)	Housekeeper	Naomi slaughter
B	Alexandra Hospital William Street.	Housekeeper				

Above: The register entry for the first person in Queensland killed by a motor car, Miss Amelia Down, who died of a fractured skull after being dragged down the road by a passing motor car. She had been crossing the road to board a tram. Again the entry has been helpfully annotated with 'Run over by motor car' in the margin.

It was a landmark case as there was no precedent for the prosecution of the driver of a motor vehicle involved in a fatal accident and although he was sent for trial on a count of unlawful killing the then Attorney-General, James Blair, intervened to dismiss the charge. However, the case showed that something had to be done to control the growing number of motor vehicles on Queensland roads and the result was the 1907 Traffic Act which brought in Queensland's first vehicle regulations, including the introduction of vehicle registration numbers.¹

These are just a few of the more unusual accidents recorded as having befallen Queenslanders since death registration began in 1856, taken from only a handful of registers. With over 150 years of records in our archive, there are still 100's more tragic and gruesome tales waiting to be discovered.

¹ There is small display about this landmark incident in the Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre located on the ground floor of the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law.

Family History Research takes centre stage at the Ekka

RBDM's Family History Research area took centre stage in the Government Pavilion at this year's Royal Queensland Show (Ekka) held during August at Brisbane Exhibition Grounds. RBDM is part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) and this year the DJAG stand was designed around a journey through life with a large section of the display dedicated to Family History Research.



Above: The design for the back wall of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's stand at this year's Ekka.

As well as encouraging people to start searching for their ancestors by using the enhanced family history research facility, the Ekka display was designed to get school children involved with a specially developed history activity sheet. This had some simple questions about famous Queenslanders which could be answered by using the search facility to display the person's entry in the RBDM birth index.

Three famous Queenslanders were featured, [Mary Poppins creator P.L.Travers—who we featured in the first issue of the Family History Journal](#)—aviation pioneer Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, and a lesser known Queensland, international cricketer Bert Ironmonger.

Bert Ironmonger's story was particularly relevant for this year's Ekka which coincided with the Ashes test series in England; the fourth test taking place during the 10 days of the show. Bert played in six Ashes tests during his career and even took a hat-trick—that's three wickets in three balls for non-cricket aficionados—for Victoria against England in 1925.



Above: Bert Ironmonger as he was immortalised in B.D.V Cigarettes 1932-33 series of test cricketer cigarette cards. B.D.V was a popular cigarette brand produced by Godfrey Philips Ltd and specialised in cigarette card promotions.



Above: The Australian cricket team—including debutantes Bert Ironmonger and Don Bradman—walk out in front of the Exhibition Grounds' grandstand at the start of the 1928 Ashes test in Brisbane.

Bert 'Dainty' Ironmonger was born on the family farm in Pine Mountain, North West of Ipswich in April 1882, the youngest of 10 children; RBDM's records show the Ironmongers also had another child in 1860, a daughter, who sadly died at birth. As a child Bert lost the forefinger of his left hand—his bowling hand—in an accident while cutting wood in the farm's sawmill. The fact that he only had four fingers and a stump on his left hand earned him the nickname 'Dainty'; however, he was able to use the disability to his advantage when playing cricket, spinning the ball effectively off the remains of his forefinger!

He actually came to the game of cricket late, making his first-class debut at 27 and making his test debut for Australia in 1928 at the grand old age of 46, the fourth oldest test debutant in cricketing history.



Left: A view of the Exhibition Grounds' grandstand—with fewer spectators than the Ashes test match in 1928—at this years Ekka show.

His test debut was also particularly relevant to the Ekka. His debut came in the opening match of the 1928-29 Ashes series against England, a match which was played at Brisbane Exhibition Ground, home of the Ekka; the cricket pitch was in the centre of the main parade ring. Bert walked out in the baggy green alongside another test debutant who was to become an Australian cricketing legend, Don Bradman. It wasn't a great start for either player, Bert took 4 wickets for 164, while Don Bradman made just 18 and 1 with England winning the game by 675 runs, Australia's biggest ever losing run margin. Bert went on to play alongside Don Bradman during the notorious Bodyline tour of 1932/33 when Bert made his name as one of Australia's top bowlers, taking 15 English wickets.

As he didn't make his test debut until the age of 46, not surprisingly Bert's international career spanned just five years and 14 matches, retiring after the unsuccessful Bodyline Tour. However, during his short test career he still took 74 wickets, giving him a very respectable international average of over five wickets per game and costing a shade under 18 runs per wicket. This included a haul of 9 wickets for just 89 runs in a win over South Africa in Brisbane in December 1931, although this game was held at the Gabba. In fact only two test matches have ever been held at Brisbane Exhibition Grounds and Bert played in both, his debut against England and a win over the West Indies in January 1931. Following the West Indies game, the Queensland Cricket Association moved all games to the Gabba; although attendance at both games had been healthy, revenue from the Exhibition Ground tests had been disappointing due to the large number of people who got in for free as members of the agricultural society!

Bert was close to 51 when he retired from test cricket—giving him another notable record as the second oldest player in test history, seven days older than cricketing legend W.G. Grace in third—but he continued to play first-class cricket until the age of 53! Although he started his cricketing career in 1910 for Queensland, he moved to Victoria in 1914 and he settled in the state after his career ended. He died in May 31 1971 in St Kilda, aged 89; as the old adage goes, he'd had a good innings!

Help with troublesome dates



In coming issues of the Family History Journal we will focus on hints and tips that will make finding records using Queensland RBDM's historical search facility more effective. In this issue we'll look at troublesome dates and how to use date field searching more effectively.

There are two ways you can search using the date of an event; by entering the specific date you believe the event occurred, or a range of dates to search between (this is a better option if you are not 100 percent sure of the date you have). It's important you choose one of these options and don't enter both; this will result in no records being found and an error message will be displayed informing you of your mistake. If you are entering a date range, remember to enter both a date to search from and a date to search to i.e. a start date and an end date for the search.

Enter a specific date for the event here

or

a date range to search between here. You must enter a date to search from and a date to search to.

It's also important to remember the date you search for in the index is the date the event actually occurred—so the date when the person you are looking for was born, died or got married—and not the date the event was registered at the Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, which could be a quite different date.

There are three ways you can enter the date information; either **dd/mm/yyyy**, **mm/yyyy** or **yyyy**. If you specify an exact date (dd/mm/yyyy) or month and year (mm/yyyy) you must use a **slash /** (sometimes called a forward slash) to separate the date/month/year figures.

Using any other date format or separators simply won't work. For example, entering 01-01-1827, 01.02.1922, 1 Jan 1912 or 2nd September 1894 will all result in error messages telling you of that the date is not in the specified format.

If you are still unsure when you enter the date move your mouse pointer over the '?' symbol—found next to date entry boxes on the search screen—and the acceptable formats will be displayed.



The image shows a search interface with several input fields. The 'Date of Death' field has a yellow tooltip box next to it containing the text 'dd/mm/yyyy, mm/yyyy, or yyyy'. Below it are fields for 'Date of Death Range', 'From *:', and 'To:'. A black arrow points from the text 'Hover mouse over the ? to see valid date formats displayed during your search.' to the tooltip box.

Hover mouse over the ? to see valid date formats displayed during your search.

Sometimes searching using dates can be troublesome, particularly if the date information you have for the event does not match the information in our historical records. This can be due to any number of things; incorrect transcription from the original source record to the registers, incorrect reporting of an event, people being economic with the truth about their age—which could be for any number of reasons—or simple confusion about the exact date when the event happened, particularly if it wasn't registered at the time (some events may have been registered months or even years after the event occurred). Obviously this can make the correct record hard to find.



For example, the birth record the registry holds for John Job Crew Bradfield—who built Brisbane's Story Bridge and is most famous for designing and building one of Australia's most iconic structures, the Sydney Harbour Bridge—records his date of birth as Boxing Day 1866, yet most biographies of him state he was born on December 26 1867. The birth was recorded in 1880, a full 14—or 13—years after the event and it's impossible to know now which date is correct!

If you don't find the record you are looking for using a specific date, try searching using the month and year or just the year of the event. If that fails, widen the search further using a date range to search between; normally searching five years either side of the date you think is correct will be enough. This may not be possible, however, with a common surname such as Smith or Jones as searching a date range may find too many matching records and result in the search engine timing out. In this case widen the date search in smaller steps, and as the date search gets wider, narrow other parameters—by adding in parents names for example—to keep the number of found records to a minimum.

Another trick is to experiment with the name information you have entered; you can't search with just a date, you have to enter at least some last name information. Try different name combinations or abbreviations and wildcards; again there may have been errors in transcription or the person may have been recorded under a different first name. Even if the date you are searching for is correct, the search engine will not find the record if the name is in any way different. We will look further at tips for name searching in our next edition, in the meantime [see the 'Tips' section on our website](#).

If you are unsure or can't find a record, the maxim is try, try and try again! Remember searching the index is free and you can't break the search engine! If you enter something wrong, the worst that will happen is you'll be rebuked with an error message! Until next time, happy searching.

Watch our 'How to' videos



We've developed two 'How to' videos to help you search the RBDM archive, order certificates and download scanned register images. Watch them now on YouTube.

There are two videos:

How to search the index

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVbX6xdpm88>

How to order records

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpw6cheQKJY>

Note this item was not a story but a link to RBDM's 'how to' help videos on YouTube.

Join our Twitter followers



RBDM now has its very own Twitter account. To keep you up to date with the latest developments in family history research follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/RBDMQLD>.

Note this item was not a story but a link to RBDM's Twitter account.

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