



1 November 2013  
Volume 1, Issue 7

# History Detective

## THE PECULIAR CASE OF THE ... CHURNING STOMACH (continued)

I have not been ignored! Phew! Two great reviews have come out of America. The *Library Journal* (which recommends books for the huge U.S. library market) wrote:

*'a fascinating glimpse into a point in time in England's history, when things were about to change ... This title is easily readable, interesting, and enjoyable, especially when one compares the techniques of the 1840s chemists and doctors with today's television and real-life forensic scientists.'*

The Book Addiction website wrote:

*'What a complex and gripping tale of murder, scientific revolution, passion, innuendo, and the pursuit to find justice! The murkier side of Victorian England during the nineteenth century is truly engrossing. I would recommend this title to anyone who enjoys historical true crimes, the invention of the electric telegraph, finding justice, toxicology, Quakers, criminal psychology, history, and the long ago buried story of John Tawell. A fascinating read to say the least!'*

With the official Australian publication on 30 October, I will be giving a number of author talks in Sydney as follows:

7 November: Ashfield Library, 1pm (Phone: 9716 1821)

14 November: Rockdale Library, 1pm (Phone: 9562 1824)

19 November: Hornsby Library, 6.30pm (Phone: 9847 6904)

20 November: Oatley Library, 6pm (Phone: 9330 9578)

22 November: St Ives Library, 10.30am (Phone: 9144 7834)

25-27 November: Wentworth Library seminars, near Mildura (Phone: 03 5027 5062). For further information, see page 2.

If you can attend any of my talks, come and say 'Hi'.

Speaking of libraries, while some of you may wish to purchase copies of your own, others may find it more affordable to borrow it from your local library. You can ask your library to order a copy. In fact, as that is a win-win for both of us, I would be grateful if you did so.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Wentworth Talks .....	2
Words to the Wise .....	3
Publishing Pointers .....	3
History Hints .....	4
Rave Reviews .....	5
BDA.....	6



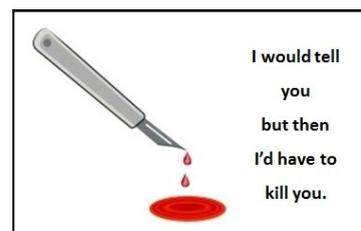
### BLOGS

- Carol's Chronicles
- History Hints
- Words to the Wise
- Rave Reviews
- Publishing Pointers

[www.carolbaxter.com](http://www.carolbaxter.com)

## WENTWORTH TALKS

During my years as a researcher and writer, I have determined that four separate processes are involved in producing a family history or other work of non-fiction: mining, combining, refining and publishing. This series of eight seminars covers all of these areas.



### **Monday evening, 25 November:**

#### **Introduction:**

1. Conversation: *Meet and Greet*. In this session, I will introduce myself and talk about my researching/writing journey and will give away a free copy of *Writing Interesting Family Histories*. I will also invite you to briefly describe your own research and writing interests.

### **Tuesday, 26 November:**

**Mining overview:** The following three seminars teach research fundamentals and reasoning strategies.

2. Seminar: *How to become a skilled historical detective*. In this seminar I discuss the principles and practices that all researchers like yourself need to know in order to achieve the maximum benefit from your research endeavours: for example, the distinction between primary/secondary-source records and primary/secondary-source information; the confusion caused by errors in original records; and how our natures influence our interpretation of information.

3. Seminar: *Help! Which information is correct? Strategies for determining historical truth*. In these days of information overload, you may struggle to know how to separate fact from fantasy. In this seminar I provide a dozen reasoning strategies you can apply to your own research endeavours—or even to everyday life.

4. Seminar: *Solving the unsolvable*. When I began the research for *Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady*, I was told that I'd never be able to discover the truth about Thunderbolt's lover, Mary Ann Bugg, because she had fallen through the archival cracks. In this 'journey of discovery' seminar, I offer practical advice about solving 'unsolvable' puzzles using strategies covered in the previous two sessions.

#### **Combining:**

5. Seminar: *Structuring a family history or other work of non-fiction*. In this seminar, I discuss basic structuring techniques, and offer guidelines for those of you writing family histories.

### **Wednesday, 27 November:**

**Refining overview:** The principles of good writing are the same whether the subject is fiction or nonfiction. In these three workshops, I provide writing insights and offer you the chance to gain some practical writing experience.

6. Workshop: *Crafting a good book*. In the same way that researchers need to understand research fundamentals, writers need to understand writing fundamentals. In this workshop, I discuss some of the tools found in a writer's toolbox, including authorial voice, narrative voice, style, tone, person and story-telling.

7. Workshop: *Gripping writing*. In this workshop, I show you how to use historical context, action, dramatic tension, dialogue and description to engage your readers.

8. Workshop: *Sensory writing*. Writing comes to life when we draw upon our senses. In this workshop, I show you how to use words—in particular, sensory images—to draw your readers in.

#### **Publishing:**

9. Seminar: *Publishing options*. My own works have been published in the mainstream, niche and self-publishing arenas as well as in journals, websites and ebooks. This seminar covers all of these publishing options.

## WORDS TO THE WISE: THESAURUSES

In order to bring history alive without fictionalising it, I draw upon all the tools in our writing toolbox. Not only do I try to use the right word for the occasion, I try, where possible, to find a word that is vivid and evocative. The internet is particularly helpful for this. My favourite dictionary/thesaurus website is: <http://dictionary.reference.com>.

Unlike a hard-copy thesaurus (or even the online fee-charging *Macquarie Thesaurus*), this website allows me to jump from one word to another. It's a great help when I am making stabs at finding the desired word, when I'm not quite sure what it is but hope I'll stumble across it.

Of course, even an online thesaurus isn't good enough for someone who would study linguistics for pleasure! For frequently used action words, I have built my own thesaurus. Take the words 'went' or 'walk', for example. They are among the bland words that slip past us as if they are almost meaningless whereas a more evocative word can communicate character or dramatic tension or something else meaningful. What else could we use? Below is the 'Carol Baxter Thesaurus Entry':



**Physical movement (humans, animals, vehicles &c):** amble, ascend, attack, back away, bang, beat, beetle, bend, blunder, boost, bop, bounce, bound, bow, burn, burst, bustle, canter, caper, career, cavort, charge, circle, clamber, clatter, climb, clomp, clump, coast, collapse, compress, contract, crash, crawl, creep, crowd, crush, dally, dance, dangle, dart, dash, dawdle, descend, dip, dive, dodder, drift, drive, droop, drop, edge, escape, fade, fall, falter, file, flag, flash, flatten, flinch, flit, flee, float, flop, flounce, flounder, flow, flutter, fly, force, frisk, frolic, gallop, galumph, gambol, glide, hang, hasten, heave, hesitate, hike, hobble, hop, hover, hurdle, hurry, hurtle, hustle, inch, jam, jar, jerk, jig, jog, jolt, jostle, journey, jump, lag, linger, lean, leap, limp, list, loiter, loll, lope, lull, lumber, lunge, lurch, march, mash, meander, mosey, mount, move, nip, nose-dive, oscillate, pace, pad, parade, patrol, paw, pelt, pitch, play, plod, plummet, plunge, posture, pounce, pound, prance, pressed, promenade, propel, prow, push, race, ram, ramble, range, react, rebound, recoil, reel, retreat, ricochet, rip, roam, rock, rocket, roll, romp, rove, run, rush, sag, sashay, saunter, scale, scamper, scoot, scrabble, scramble, scuffle, scurry, scuttle, shamble, shoot, shrink, shrivel, shuffle, sink, skate, skid, skim, skip, skulk, slide, slink, slip, slither, slog, slope, slump, sneak, soar, speed, spring, sprint, spurt, squash, squeeze, stagger, stalk, stamp, stampede, startle, steal, step, stomp, storm, straggle, stray, streak, stride, stroll, struggle, strut, stumble, swagger, sway, sweep, swerve, swing, swoop, tango, tear, teeter, thrust, thump, tilt, tiptoe, tire, toddle, topple, totter, trail, traipse, tramp, trample, travel, tread, trek, trip, trot, trudge, trundle, tumble, turn, vault, veer, waddle, waft, walk, waltz, wander, wane, wave, waver, wedge, whiz, wheel, whoosh, wilt, wince, wing, wither, withdraw, wobble, wove, wriggle, zip, zoom.

## PUBLISHING POINTERS: ISBN

Over the years, I have encountered researchers who have gone to great lengths to write a family history or local history but haven't obtained an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) because they didn't want the expense of purchasing one or of lodging copies of their book in the relevant copyright libraries.

Obtaining an ISBN is sensible. When you obtain an ISBN number, the details of your publication go into an international book catalogue and remain there forever. When you fulfil your associated legal obligation of depositing copies of your book in the relevant copyright libraries, your book goes into the legal deposit collection forever. In a century, if someone is researching the topic you wrote about, even if everyone who purchased your book is dead and their relatives have chucked out their belongings, the researcher will still be able to find your book in a copyright library.

Some writers think they can save themselves the expense and hassle by donating a single copy to their local library. However local libraries have limited space and regularly cull their collections. University libraries do the same. If a book is lodged as a legal deposit, the library is required to keep it.

In Australia, you can obtain an ISBN through Thorpe-Bowker at [www.myidentifiers.com.au](http://www.myidentifiers.com.au) for \$42 (or \$84 for ten). In USA, it costs \$150; see [www.myidentifiers.com](http://www.myidentifiers.com). Ebook publishers like Smashwords provide their own. Google 'ISBN your country' to locate the relevant agency in your area.

For further information about legal deposit in Australia, see: [www.nla.gov.au/legal-deposit](http://www.nla.gov.au/legal-deposit). For USA: <http://snipurl.com/282b3zm>.

## HISTORY HINTS: VOTES FOR WOMEN

The historic appointment by President Obama of the first woman to head the U.S. Federal Reserve spurred a fascinating opinion piece by Noel Terry published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* under the title *Why women should run the post-GFC world*. He reported that, in these nervous times following the Global Financial Crisis, research showing a strong link between testosterone and excessive risk-taking activity was being taken more seriously in the business world, that consultation, communication and collaboration had become the new business buzz-words, and that women's right-brain skills were being recognised as of great value to business rather than still being dismissed as 'soft'. Businesses were starting to recruit more graduates with humanities degrees (considered more the domain of women than men) and economists were predicting that, within a decade or two, women's average income would surpass that of men.

Terry's opinion piece provided a refreshing change from the spoutings of right-wing shock-jocks and other conservative mouth-pieces who regularly proclaim that 'women are destroying the joint' (seriously?) and that society is collapsing because men are being emasculated (yawn!).

History shows that societies fluctuate in power and prosperity as do customs, fashions, religions, businesses, indeed almost everything involving humans. One dichotomous arena that should also have seen power fluctuations—but hasn't—is that of human gender. While some claim that matriarchal societies have existed, anthropologists and archaeologists have been unable to find any genuinely egalitarian societies let alone matriarchal ones. However times are a-changing and one political leader who recognises this is President Obama. He recently told a women's college: 'You are now poised to make this the century where women shape not only their own destiny but the destiny of this nation and of this world.'

So what led to the situation where the twenty-first century might indeed become the Century of the Woman?

While major social change involves incremental developments in many different areas, two important developments in the area of women's rights—those of particular relevance to family historians, at least—are the Married Women's Property Act (discussed in Volume 1, Issue 5) and female enfranchisement.

Prior to the passage of these political acts, most women make few appearances in historical

records. That they existed at all is often documented only in their own birth, marriage and death records and those of their children—if any. And sometimes they failed to receive even the most basic recognition they deserved; I've seen baptism entries that merely recorded: 'James, son of John Smith, labourer' (nine long months and a very painful delivery: how dare they!!!).

The women we are most likely to 'hear' are those who broke 'the rules': that is, those who came before the courts on criminal charges and those who demanded that their voices be heard in the social and political domain rather than remaining silent as the dominant social, political and religious institutions demanded. Unless they were doing charity work, all were chastised by society as being 'unfeminine'—or worse. Indeed, here are some examples of male attitudes towards women in Australia in 1888; these comments were made by parliamentarians during parliamentary discussions as recorded in the official record of the NSW Parliament: Hansards.

Sir Henry Parkes, then Premier of NSW and an advocate for voting rights for women, said in 1888: 'We know that woman, when she yields to crime, is stayed by no consideration. The worse of crimes in the worst of times have been perpetrated by women. At all times, and under all circumstances, when woman once forgets the character of her sex, there is no barrier to the lengths she will go in crime.'

Political radical Thomas Walker had the same view: 'There was no character more sublimely terrible than that of Lucrezia Borgia. Though her relatives were villains, they could not compare with her in her atrocities.' Of course, history now recognises that Lucrezia has been horribly maligned, that her male relations were the villains and she herself another victim.

Walker continued, 'Women might be compared in many respects to hothouse flowers, which are protected from the violence of tempests and very carefully watched and sheltered, but when they find themselves suddenly exposed to the outbursts of passion they are carried away by temptation to crime and ill-doing. They have not the power of self-restraint and of self-correction which is possessed by the other sex.' Walker continued by stating that this was 'fact'.

It's extraordinary, when you think about it. The Eve mythology—which depicted women as corruptible and corrupting—continued to underpin the normal political and social discourse about women. Considering that these were the

views of the social progressives, it is astonishing that women succeeded in gaining the right to vote at all, let alone a mere fourteen years later.

So when were your female ancestors granted the right to vote? And have you wondered what they might have thought about it—whether they found it a nuisance or recognised the historic importance of this newly granted entitlement? In Australia, women were enfranchised at the federal level in 1902 although, at state level, the right to vote varied: South Australia (1894), Western Australia (1899), NSW (1902), Tasmania (1903), Queensland (1905) and Victoria (1908). I discuss Australian Electoral Rolls in Volume 1, Issue 3. In New Zealand, the critical date was 1893. In the U.K., women received limited voting rights in 1918: they had to be over 30 and to meet the minimum property requirements. The universal voting franchise was not extended to all women aged over 21 until 1928. The year 1918 saw the franchise extended to women in Canada, except for Quebec (1940). In 1920, women gained federal voting rights in U.S.A. although voting rights at state levels varied. In Switzerland, women were not granted voting rights until 1971.

The subject of women's rights, responsibilities and recognition is of particular interest to me at the moment courtesy of working on *The Lucretia Borgia of Botany Bay*, which tells the story of Louisa Collins, the last woman executed in New South Wales. In my books, I explore the social dynamics of the time and, in 1888, 'the women question'—as it was called—was of great social

interest. After Louisa was sentenced to death, many asked in horror: 'Should women be executed at all?' This led progressives to frame the question in political terms: 'Should women be executed for committing a crime when they have no voice in voting for death-sentence legislation?' Countering this was a philosophically-sound argument; however it was often spouted by conservatives as a 'Nah! Nah! Got you!' dismissal of the views of suffragists and their supporters: 'If women want to be treated as equal to men, then female criminals should be punished in the same way as male criminals.' The female vote was of greater social importance than merely their right to choose a representative at the ballot box.

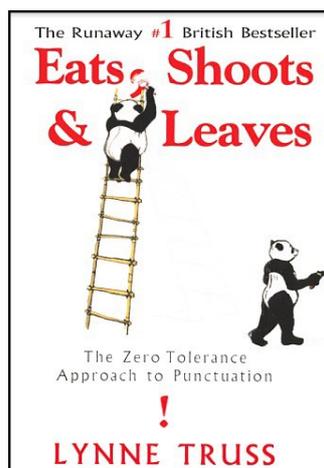
The historic importance of female enfranchisement is seen in *Time* magazine's choice of British suffragette Emily Pankhurst as one of the 100 most influential people of the twentieth century. The flow-on effects of voting rights can be seen most particularly in Sydney in latter 2010 when the city was totally under the governance of women: Queen Elizabeth, the ruling monarch; Quentin Bryce, Governor General of Australia; Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia; Tanya Plibersek, Federal Member for Sydney; Marie Bashir, Governor of NSW; Kristina Keneally, Premier of NSW; and Clover Moore, State Member for Sydney and also Lord Mayor of Sydney. Clearly, it was the 'Year of the Woman'. Will the twenty first century be the 'Century of the Woman?' Who knows.

## RAVE REVIEWS: LYNNE TRUSS'S 'EATS, SHOOTS AND LEAVES'

This little gem, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss, was a runaway bestseller and should be on the bookshelves of every writer—not only because it's about punctuation, but because it's hilarious.

*'When we point out illiterate mistakes we are often aggressively instructed to "get a life" by people who, interestingly, display no evidence of having lives themselves. Naturally we become timid about making our insights known, in such inhospitable conditions. Being burned as a witch is not safely off the agenda.'*

I remember, when I first read the book, being



curled up on the lounge chortling away when my husband came in and asked what I was reading. 'It's a book about punctuation,' I said between laughs. 'It's so funny!'

My husband, who is an IT man, looked at me as if I had finally lost it (I mean, what sort of person would voluntarily study subjects like grammar, syntax and semantics for a university degree—and, worse, say that they found them interesting?). But others find the book

'so funny' as well—hundreds of thousands of them, in fact.

Treat yourself!

General Muster  
and  
Land and Stock Muster  
of  
New South Wales

1822

### About the author

Carol Baxter is the author of three works of narrative non-fiction published by Allen & Unwin (*An Irresistible Temptation*, *Breaking the Bank*, and *Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady*), and these, along with her just released international book, *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable* (Britain's Oneworld), have all been published to critical acclaim. In 2015, Allen & Unwin will publish her fifth book, *The Lucretia Borgia of Botany Bay*. Carol is also the author of a genealogical 'how to' book, *Writing Interesting Family Histories*, and has more 'how to' books in the pipeline. She is a Fellow of the Society of Australian Genealogists and an adjunct lecturer at the University of New England (NSW), and has edited many sets of early Australian records.



## BIOGRAPHICAL DATABASE OF AUSTRALIA

After decades in the pipeline, the Biographical Database of Australia (BDA) is now online. The idea for this project began around 1980 when Malcolm Sainty AM and Keith Johnson AM established the Australian Biographical and Genealogical Record (ABGR). Their aim was to input original records and to use computers to generate biographical reports; these, along with contributor-financed biographies, were to be published in book form around the bicentenary (1988). I was appointed as 'Project Officer' in 1984 and in that role edited a half-dozen transcriptions of muster returns (similar to census returns), as shown in the image to the left. ABGR also published four volumes of contributor-sponsored biographies before the project was forced to close in 1989 due to lack of funding.

The project was officially relaunched a decade ago as BDA with the aim of publishing pay-per-view biographies online. My role was 'General Editor' until I left the project in 2012. My focus was on linking together entries for individuals recorded in NSW records between the years 1788 to 1828; that is, in church records, convict records, muster and census returns and so on. The first generation of BDA also includes biographies published around the centenary (1888), and in the ABGR volumes.

BDA generates 'Biographical Reports' rather than prose biographies. Each individual is allocated an exclusive number. When entries from church or muster/census or other records are identified as relating to that individual, the individual's number is attached to these entries. When a researcher requests information for that individual, all these entries are brought together online in the form of a biographical report. The full entries are published within the report in individual blocks in chronological order. Hyperlink programming allows researchers to jump from that individual's report to the report of any other individual named in one of the entries (e.g. spouse, child, parent, employer). Over time, more advanced search facilities will also be made available.

The website details are:

[www.bda-online.org.au](http://www.bda-online.org.au)

## FAREWELL

So, until the next issue, the History Detective bids you good researching, writing, and reading.

© Carol Baxter 2013

[www.carolbaxter.com](http://www.carolbaxter.com)

[c\\_baxter@optusnet.com.au](mailto:c_baxter@optusnet.com.au)

A big thanks to Stephen Ehat for proofreading the newsletter.