

History Detective



Greetings for the last time this year and thank you to everyone who has communicated with me by sending emails about the newsletters and/or supported my endeavours by ordering an advance copy of *Help! Historical and Genealogical Truth: How do I separate fact from fiction?* For those of you who would be just like me and say 'I must make the most of the pre-publication discount offer for *Help! Historical and Genealogical Truth: How do I separate fact from fiction?*' then forget about it until the next *History Detective*

newsletter arrived and, by its arrival, indicated that the deadline had passed, I have extended the deadline until midnight Sunday 2 November. The link is on the covering email. I am going on another holiday (my husband had a lot of holidays he had to use up) so the books will be posted after I get back on 9 December.

This past month, I've been having a wonderful time writing the 'how to' book that I've long been destined to write: a book for genealogists about surnames. If you've ever sat in a record office looking at a register that doesn't appear to include your ancestor's entry when it should, or faced a computer screen with an online database that refused to bring up your ancestor's entry when it should be there, and if you've then started sounding out the surname and thinking about possible letter combinations that scribes might have used (or misused), this is the book for you. Titled *Help? Why can't I find my ancestor's surname?*, it will offer you the benefits of my background as a genealogist, a transcriber, a prosographer (linking entries for individuals for the Biographical Database of Australia), a coding analyst (exploring the entries generated by surname grouping programmes like Soundex for a list of 29,000 surnames) and my unused – other than for surname analysis – linguistics degree. I will discuss the book further in the next newsletter, which will come out in February 2015.

Next year, I will also launch the *History Detective* website. I hoped to have it ready by now but, as usual, I've had too many deadlines. One feature will be an index to all the articles in the newsletters so, instead of having to go back through the newsletters looking for them, you can jump on the website, find the topic you want, and hyperlink to the relevant newsletter.

I have also decided to include a new topic in (most) newsletters: The Surname Sage. Each month I will discuss a surname so readers might be interested in offering suggestions. This month I will discuss one of my own ancestral surnames: *Quelch*.

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Inside this Issue:

Aussie Advice	2
Rave Reviews	3
Surname Sage	4

**Names are not
always what they
seem.**

**Mark Twain
(1835-1910)**

Aussie Advice: NSW Church Register Index

A reader asked me about the New South Wales church register indexes and, somehow, her email went missing so I thought I would resurrect an old blog post (now deleted) and elaborate on the subject here.

Civil registration began in 1856 in New South Wales. Prior to that, baptism, marriage and burial entries served as pseudo 'certificates' on the occasions they were needed. Of course, baptism and burial ceremonies were voluntary church ceremonies and were registered only if performed. Many children were not baptised and many bodies were dropped into holes in the ground without any clergyman in attendance.

While the New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages is the only source for certificates of births, deaths and marriages, the Registry can also provide certificates of baptism, marriage and burial for the pre-1856 period and, in some cases, for the period after 1856. However, entries from the NSW church registers can be accessed for free so long as family historians know how to decode the numbers in the index entries.

At the bottom of the page is a screen shot of an index entry from the *NSW Pioneers Register 1788-1888*, which is available on CD-ROM and serves as the foundation for the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Indexes that are now available online. It relates to Frederick Wordsworth Ward junior, the son of bushranger Captain Thunderbolt and his paramour Mary Ann Bugg.

The entry provides some useful information that is not available in the online indexes, probably because the NSW Registry wants researchers to purchase certificates from them rather than locate the entries for free. That the information comes from a church register is evident from the entry's reference number – V18681400 161 – which is recorded on the third last line. Additionally, the references to 'Wesleyan Methodist' and 'Tamworth Circuit' (which are not included in the online indexes) indicate that this

index entry relates to a baptism rather than a birth certificate. By contrast, Fred jnr's birth certificate has the registration number 1868 16881.

To understand the significance of the 'Volume Reference' number displayed on the screen shot, researchers need to decode it, as follows:

V18681400 161

V: for Volume. This means that the entry relates to a church volume (that is, a register of baptisms, marriages or burials) rather than a civil registration (that is, a certificate of birth, marriage or death).

1868: this identified the birth year of the child being baptised. As mentioned above, baptism entries served as pseudo birth certificates for the period prior to civil registration. However, a baptism ceremony could be performed at any time in a person's life, even when that person was an adult so, if the index entry for a person's baptism mentioned only the baptism year, the entry might be unlocatable. That being the case, the indexing staff listed the birth date rather than the baptism date to ensure that this information was readily accessible (although there were exceptions to this rule). So, the index entry "V1868" indicates that the entry refers to a baptism entry for a child born in 1868.

1400: this represents the entry number in the relevant church register volume.

161: this represents the volume number of the church register that contains the baptism.

Volume numbers 1-123 are available on microfilm in the Archives Kit (ARK), which is held by many large libraries. Unfortunately the entry for Frederick Wordsworth Ward junior, being found in Volume 161, is not available on ARK. However, a microfilm of the actual church register can be viewed at State Records, Kingswood, NSW. To find out what is available on microfilms 1 to 123 (and to identify the relevant microfilm number), researchers can access

the State Records Guide to the Church Register microfilms 1-123 via an internet link that is too long to include here so is made available in the covering email. This is an extremely handy guide so it is useful to include a link to the guide in your Favourites box. When I launch the History Detective website, I will also

RECORD #5 OF 38	
SURNAME	WARD
GIVEN NAME(S)	FREDERICK W
INDEX YEAR	1868
FATHER	FREDERICK W
MOTHER	MARY A
DENOMINATION	WESLEYAN METHODIST
PARISH	TAMWORTH CIRCUIT
VOLUME REFERENCE	U18681400 161
REGISTRATION YEAR	1868
REGISTRATION NUMBER	8

Aussie Advice: NSW Church Register Index (continued)

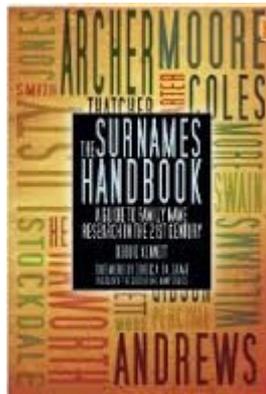
include a hyperlink there.

Sometimes, an entry appears twice in the index with two different numbers; for example, V18681400 and V18681500. This is because the indexing staff 'double keyed' the registers; that is, they input the entries twice, figuring that the same error wouldn't occur twice. When entries were identical, one version was eliminated. So, if two entries exist, it indicates that one at least contains an error. If you plan to pay for a certificate, check the above-mentioned guide to microfilms 1-123 to ensure that you don't waste money on a dud certificate. This will generally tell you the relevant church/parish (as will the old CD-ROM). If you know where the family was living at the time, it is a clue as to which entry is more likely to be correct.

But why are church register entries (like Fred's baptism in 1868) included for the period after 1856? Since many people failed to register their children's births (or other ceremonies), the Registry staff compared the certificate index entries with the church registers in their possession and included index entries for the latter when they couldn't find a 'matching' certificate. The indexes include entries for Fred's birth certificate and also for his baptism entry because the baptism entry named his parents as Frederick Wordsworth Ward and wife Mary Ann Ward while the birth certificate listed his mother only under her married name, Mary Ann Baker.

Rave Reviews:

In many ways, my surname book will be a companion volume to Debbie Kennett's *The Surname Handbook: A Guide to Family Name Research in the 21st Century* (The History Press, 2012). This excellent book should be purchased by avid genealogists, particularly those with an interest in a specific surname. The subject matter is aptly described by the contents page, as follows:



Chapter titles:

1. The History of Surnames
2. The Classification of Surnames
3. Variants and Deviants
4. Surname Mapping
5. Surname Frequency
6. Has It Been Done Before?
7. Laying the Foundations: the Key Datasets

8. Surname Origins: Pre-1600 Resources
9. DNA and Surnames
10. One-Name Studies

Appendices titles:

- A. Genealogy Websites
- B. Surname Websites
- C. Lay Subsidy Rolls
- D. Organisations and Journals
- E. Linguistic Resources
- F. Place-Name Resources
- G. Population Statistics

Not only is this book a must-purchase for genealogists, my advice is to do so sooner rather than later because, unfortunately, the book will date. One of its benefits is that it has website links embedded throughout the text so it is easy to jump on the computer and find the link. But we all know what happens with websites. One after another the links will be broken or the website shut down. Then it will be hit-and-miss as to whether the information is accessible. At that point the book will need updating, which would be a huge job in itself.

The Surname Sage: Quelch

I have long had a passion for surnames – and for given names as well – and it led me (during my 'misspent' youth), to write an analysis of the origins of the surname *Quelch*.

While living and researching in England in the early 1980s, I discovered that I had ancestors

with this fascinating surname. To make it even more interesting, my *Quelch* married a *Froom(es)*, another intriguing surname. I looked up surname dictionaries to discover *Quelch's* origins. All agreed that the surname was locational in origin and referred to a 'Welsh' ancestor but most differed in

About the author

Carol Baxter is the award-winning author of four works of narrative non-fiction (otherwise referred to as 'true-crime thrillers'), of which three were published by Allen & Unwin: *An Irresistible Temptation* (2006), *Breaking the Bank* (2008), and *Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady* (2011). Allen & Unwin will also publish *The Lucretia Borgia of Botany Bay* in 2015. Carol's fourth book, *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable*, was published by Britain's Oneworld in 2013, receiving critical acclaim from the mainstream media in Britain, America, Canada and Australia.

Carol has also written a genealogical 'how to' writing book called *Writing INTERESTING Family Histories*, and an evidence-analysis book called *Help! Historical and Genealogical Truth: How do I separate fact from fiction?* She has another half-dozen 'how to' books in the pipeline.

Carol is an adjunct lecturer at the University of New England (NSW), a Fellow of the Society of Australian Genealogists, and has edited many volumes of early Australian records.

The Surname Sage: Quelch (continued)

their analysis of its derivation. So how could I determine which was correct. Indeed, how could I work out where this *Welshman* (for the sake of convenience) was living such that the thing about him that distinguished him from other people in the area was that he had come from Wales.

I was living in London at the time so I went to the local post office and pulled out all the telephone directories and counted the number of Quelch entries in each, then plotted the frequency on a county map of England. I went through the International Genealogical Index for each county, counted the number of entries in each century (1500s, 1600s, 1700s, etc), and plotted those on county maps. From these maps, it soon became clear that the surname had an original focal point in Berkshire, with a large number of entries also found in neighbouring Oxfordshire in the early years.

That being the case, the surname derivations suggested by the surname dictionaries didn't gel with what I had discovered. Then I made a breakthrough, purely by chance. While looking through a Berkshire church register transcription for references to my ancestors, I found an entry for the marriage of a man named 'Jeffery ap Richarde'; a comment was appended by the transcriber saying, 'Evidently the Quelsh? – ap Richard'. As 'ap' is Welsh for 'son of', this indicates that the transcriber used 'Quelsh' to mean 'Welsh'. This suggested that the origins of the surname *Quelch* lay in the Berkshire/Oxfordshire area of England in a dialectal variation of the word 'Welsh'. The important point here is that none of the surname dictionaries suggested this etymology for the surname. You can read the full analysis on my website which can be accessed via this link or the covering email: www.carolbaxter.com/surname-quelch.html.

So, be wary about trusting even the surname experts. Remember that most are not devoting dozens of hours to tracing families who actually bore the surnames they are writing about. In fact, many collect their information from other surnames dictionaries. If you are passionately interested in a particular surname, gather the historical data, plot it on maps, and see if your findings tally with the etymologies suggested by the surname dictionaries.

Donning my writing hat, it is interesting to see how dry and analytical my writing style was when I was just out of university. While the paper has a copyright date of 2012, I actually wrote it thirty years ago.

Farewell for the year

Until the next issue (in February 2015), the History Detective bids you good researching, writing, and reading.

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