

# History Detective



The two days of research and writing seminars offered by Unlock the Past at Adelaide on 9/10 May went brilliantly, so much so that Alan Phillips has invited me to give the seminar series – plus some writing workshops – on the Unlock the Past 14-day Baltic cruise, sailing on 11 July 2015. More information about the cruise is provided on page four.

I mentioned on my Facebook page (as I sailed from Sydney Harbour on 11 April) that, while my laptop had accompanied me, I hoped to be able to get through my 24-day holiday without opening it. Unfortunately, I didn't last 24 hours. The first book I opened began with a great quote, one that I realised might prove useful in a future book. I *had* to write it down. It's the quote shown to the right (although it's been tweaked from the original). When you think about what I write, you can probably understand why my eyes lit up as soon as I read it! Now I just have to find the story of that great crime. It's a reminder to keep our eyes and ears open for anything that might help us in our pursuits, whatever they may be.

Time constraints – caused by my rotten cold that hung on for three weeks despite Sydney's record-breaking balmy weathy, seminars and seminar preparations, radio interviews, meetings, author talk preparations, and a fast approaching manuscript deadline for *The Lucretia Borgia of Botany Bay* – has meant that this newsletter is shorter than usual (and the next one might be as well). It normally takes three or four days to prepare a five- or six-page newsletter and to update my mailing list but this month I have simply run out of time. My apologies!

Meanwhile, more great reviews have been published for *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable* in the Australia media and elsewhere (I must add them to my website). My calendar also includes the following author talks in Sydney and its suburbs:

Tuesday, 3 June, 6pm: **Hornsby Library**, 28-44 George St, Hornsby: 9847 6904

Thursday, 5 June, 1pm: **Campsie Library**, 14-28 Amy St, Campsie: 9789 9300

Thursday, 12 June, 1pm: **Stanton Library**, 234 Miller St, North Sydney: 9936 8400

Thursday, 26 June, 7pm: **Hurstville Library**, Queens Rd, Hurstville: 9330 6111

Wednesday, 16 July, 12.30pm: **Willoughby Library**, 409 Victoria Ave, Chatswood: 9777 7926

1 June 2014  
Volume 2, Issue 5

## Inside this Issue:

Publishing Pointers..... 2  
Words to the Wise..... 3  
Baltic cruise ..... 4

Behind every  
great fortune,  
there is a  
great crime.

Honoré de Balzac  
(1799-1850)

---

## Publishing Pointers: Categories of printed matter

When *Writing Interesting Family Histories* was first published, a reviewer described it as a *booklet*, which surprised me as it is in fact a *book*. This incorrect categorisation recently came to mind when I was thinking about the size and content of the 'how to' books I am writing, and I realised that the subject of the categorisation of printed matter may be of interest to readers, particularly to society and library volunteers who are tasked with accessioning such material. There don't appear to be many hard and fast rules, but here are some common terms:

**Handout:** printed information provided free of charge, usually to accompany an information session. In the genealogical world, handouts are sometimes published online after a seminar and are made available for only a short period of time.

**Flyer:** a cheaper version of a leaflet. Flyers are generally deemed to be throwaways.

**Leaflet:** a small, flat or folded sheet of printed matter that is usually no more than four pages in length and is distributed for free. When travelling, for example, we find lots of leaflets about tourist sites in the lobbies of hotels. Also, the 'sample bags' given to genealogists at conferences often include leaflets about useful services – like Ancestry.com or the main research libraries in the relevant town or state. Once, when I pulled out the leaflets from a genealogical sample bag, I had to smile. A leaflet advertised a local funeral home. I wasn't sure whether the funeral home was promoting its services because it figured that a genealogical conference was the right *target market*, or because it thought that these oldies might get so excited about what they were learning that one of them might expire on the spot and someone else – who had dutifully read everything in the sample bag – would say, 'Ah, I know who to call' ... and would reach into his or her sample bag and pull out the funeral home's leaflet. Or perhaps the owner included it just for a laugh!

**Brochure:** a paper-covered booklet that is usually no longer than 24 pages in length. The word brochure itself derives from a French word meaning 'to stitch'. When my daughter was a travel agent, my husband would get her to bring home all the brochures published by the major cruise-ship companies. He loves that I get to speak on cruise ships!

**Pamphlet:** a paper covered booklet containing sheets of paper that are printed on both sides and are stitched or stapled together. The pages can be folded into halves, thirds, or quarters and the result is usually no longer than 100 pages in length. While the word *pamphlet* is often used interchangeably with *brochure*, I,

as an historian, tend to see brochures as those modern, glossy, sale-promoting things (like cruise-ship promotional material) whereas pamphlets are more like cheap books – in price as well as in appearance. For example, in my research for *The Lucretia Borgia of Botany Bay*, I came across a self-published pamphlet titled *The Botany Poisoning Case* which outlined the author's views on the protagonist's intelligence and personality as determined by his assessment of her facial configurations and the bumps on her skull – the 'science' of physiognomy (I adopted a tongue-in-cheek tone in *that* chapter, I can assure you!).

**Booklet:** a small, thin book that is usually bound with a paper cover and saddle-stitching or stapling and is between 4 and 48 pages in length (some definitions mention a limit of 20 pages, yet the definition of pamphlet above refers to it as a booklet that is usually no longer than 100 pages). It mostly comprises letter-sized paper (A4) that is printed on both sides and folded in half so the booklet's page length is divisible by 4. Most booklets contain information about a particular (non-fiction) subject. They can cover a wide range of topics including instructional manuals, recipe books and 'how to' books.

**Book:** pretty much anything else that looks like a book is probably the best description. These entities are usually over 48 pages in length; they have a cardboard or hard cover; they are usually either case-bound or perfect-bound; and they can vary considerably in paper size and other dimensions.

NB. This suggests that the distinction between a booklet and a book is determined as much by the nature of the cover and binding as by the page length, although I suspect that most people define a *booklet* merely as a *short book*.

In the days of computers and printers, the terms A4 (a sheet of letter-paper) and A5 (a sheet of letter paper folded in half) are familiar to most of us. But most printed books don't fit these dimensions. While writing this article, I have picked up six books that happen to be sitting on my desk (yes, it definitely needs a clean-up!) and compared them. None were the same size, although two weren't far off, with their page height and width differing by only a couple of millimetres.

Using my own books as examples: my four mainstream books were first published as 'C Format' or 'Trade Paperback'. The trade paperback size is the large paper-back that many publishers now use for the first edition instead of the more expensive hardback. In the past, only hardback books were reviewed by the mainstream press; now trade paperbacks are treated simi-

larly. Interestingly, all of my Allen & Unwin books were exactly the same size; however, *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable*, which was published by a British publisher, has a page height and width that is about 15 millimetres less than the others. Two of my mainstream books have come out in mass paperback (or B format) size. Despite one being published in Australia and the other in England, they are almost the same dimensions.

I will provide more information about 'book' terms for genealogists in my companion volume to *Writing Interesting Family Histories*.

As I was hunting for terms and definitions, I came

across some other interesting items. For those writing fiction, a narrative can be classified as follows:

**Short story:** up to 10,000 words

**Novellette:** 7500 – 17,500 words

**Novella:** 17,500 – 40,000 words

**Novel:** 40,000 words plus

Just as an aside, the extension 'ette' is the French feminine form of the diminutive suffix -et. Hence *kitchenette* (a mini kitchen) and *cigarette* (a mini cigar). I'm not sure why the feminine diminutive was chosen for *cigarette*, but *kitchenette* ...

## Words to the Wise: Malapropisms

In my endeavours to improve my skills as a speaker, I recently attended a full-day seminar hosted by an American professional speaker. His focus was on adding humour to presentations. One humour strategy he mentioned involved the use of malapropisms.

The term *malapropism* comes from the French word *mal à propos* meaning 'inaccurate', and refers to the incorrect use of a word that sounds similar to another word. The term came into the English language largely through the name given to a character in Richard Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals* (1775). His character, Mrs Malaprop, was guilty of misusing words in this way, often with hilarious results.

As the seminar speaker was American, I mentioned the clanger of all clangers that introduced our current Prime Minister onto the world stage. 'No one,' claimed Tony Abbott to a crowd of older Australians as he attempted to lop off the head of the current throne-holder, 'however smart, however well-educated, however experienced ... is the suppository of all wisdom.'

And he went on without missing a beat. Needless to say, the video clip went viral!

To state the obvious, Abbott intended to say 'the repository of all wisdom'. Of course, the full irony of his malapropism lay with the nature of his crowd: elderly. It was a Freudian slip if ever there was one!

Then came the headlines: Abbott is the 'butt of the world's jokes'; Abbott makes an 'arse of himself'. Headline writers must rub their hands with glee when celebrities hit 'bum notes' like that.

Some people are particularly adept at spouting malapropisms. The one-time American president, George W. Bush, suffered from foot-in-mouth disease so badly that his little offerings became known as *Bushisms*.

'I'm going to put people in my place, so when the history of this administration is written at least there's an authoritarian voice saying exactly what happened,' Bush declared.

Yes, we all know how much *authoritarian* voices en-

deavour to rewrite history. Bush's gaffes were many and varied, and were not restricted to malapropisms. Here are some more: 'Too many OB-GYNs aren't able to practice their love with women all across this country.'

... and ...

'Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?'

... and ...

'It will take time to restore chaos and order.'

And a malapropism from onetime US vice-president, Dan Quayle:

'Republicans understand the importance of bondage between a mother and child.'

Apart from serving as a great source of amusement, malapropisms provide an insight into the speaker. They are sometimes committed by those climbing the social ladder, who have encountered such words but aren't quite sure of their meaning.

From a literary perspective, DON'T INCLUDE THEM ... unless it is intentional. If so, make sure they are witty and easy to understand. And make sure that your reader/listener recognises that you are not making a slip-up, that the 'error' is intentional either to communicate a point or to add some light relief.

If you are writing about an ancestor who regularly committed social suicide by malapropism, don't try to polish their words to boring glory. Many genealogists are so wrapped up in ancestor worship that they fail to see the humanness, the wonderful weaknesses, of their ancestors. Who wants a series of Stepford wives and husbands as ancestors? And remember, unless our ancestors are alive, we are all writing unauthorised biographies anyway. No Abbott biographer – authorised or otherwise – would ever omit that suppository clanger.

A final piece of advice from the American professional speaker: seek the fun in everything. We laugh; we live!

Mind you, with the income he is making, I'm not surprised he is laughing!

## About the author

Carol Baxter is the award-winning author of four works of narrative non-fiction (otherwise referred to as 'true-crime thrillers'), with three being 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. Her fourth book, *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable*, was published by Britain's Oneworld in 2013, receiving acclaim from the mainstream media in Britain, America, Canada and Australia.

Carol has also written a genealogical 'how to' book called *Writing INTERESTING Family Histories*, and has half-a-dozen more '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 early Australian records.

## Unlock the Past Baltic Cruise

As mentioned on the first page, I am one of the lead presenters on the Unlock the Past Baltic cruise leaving Southampton, England, on 11 July 2015 and returning there on 25 July. Ports of call are: Bruges (Zeebrugge), Belgium; Berlin (Warnemunde), Germany; Tallinn, Estonia; St Petersburg, Russia (two nights); then three ports in Scandinavia – that is, Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark – and then back to Southampton. The ship is the Celebrity



Eclipse. My recent cruise to Hawaii was on its sister ship, the Celebrity Solstice, so I can attest to the fact that it is AMAZING!

The lead presenters are:

- Paul Milner (USA), an expert on American and British research, who has also spoken on previous Unlock the Past cruises;
- Chris Paton (Scotland), an expert on Scottish and Irish research, who has spoken on previous Unlock the Past cruises;
- Cyndi Ingle (USA), of Cyndi's List fame;
- myself (Australia); I've spoken on two previous Unlock the Past cruises.

More details on these and other speakers are found on the Unlock the Past website, with a direct link to the website provided on the covering email.

On this cruise, I will be giving my eight-seminar researching and writing series. This comprises sessions on evidence-analysis (three seminars), structuring and publishing a family history (one seminar each), and writing interesting family histories (three seminars). The latter sessions incorporate a lot of new ideas; these will also be included in another 'how to' book coming out in the next year.

I will also be giving a series of small, interactive, writing workshops where we can expand on ideas communicated in the three writing seminars. I have long wanted to offer these types of workshops but they need to be conducted after the seminar series to ensure that all the attendees are on the same page (couldn't resist that pun!). A cruise is the perfect environment for conducting these workshops because of its length and flexibility. And if we have some slots at 4pm, as Alan Phillips has suggested, attendees can grab a drink from the nearby bar (if they are so inclined), relax, and really let the creative juices flow! Hope to see you there.

## FAREWELL

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

© Carol Baxter 2014

www.carolbaxter.com  
c\_baxter@optusnet.com.au

A big thank-you to Stephen Ehat for proofreading the newsletter and for his suggested amendments.