Well, it’s been six months since my last newsletter. Lots has been happening.

_The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller_ was published in April to critical acclaim. Reviewer Ross Fitzgerald wrote in the _Australian_: “This spellbinding tale of an extraordinary woman is one of the best books I have read in years.” Imagine my nervousness when I saw the review coming up on my computer and my delight when I read it!

I have now decided to make a special September offer for my _History Detective_ readers: If you purchase a copy of _Mrs Miller_ for $29.50 instead of RRP $33.00 (plus postage) you can have any of my genealogy “how to” books for the price of $10.00 each (instead of RRP $22.00 or $27.50). As the postage for _Mrs Miller_ allows more books in the same envelope, and as I could do with clearing out some book stock and generating money for renovations, I decided to make this one-time offer. This is an opportunity to buy early Christmas presents for yourself or others. Further details are included on page two and a link to the website page is provided on my email covering letter. If you prefer to pay by bank transfer or cheque, you can contact me via email.

Meanwhile, we have lined up a female lead for the feature film _Captain Thunderbolt’s Lady_. It’s still early days yet so I won’t say who she is. Contracts need to be signed. But it’s a big step as she has lots of contacts.

I was also sent a preview of the game app based on one of my other books. Interesting.

Additionally, I was contacted by a company that is producing science/archaeology/forensic documentaries. They are interested in two of my books for series two (series one airs on the History Channel next month).

And I have been accepted as an enrichment speaker by an agency that provides entertainers for cruise ships. I was offered a 22-day cruise from Vancouver to Sydney next month but frustratingly I am already on a cruise from Hawaii to Tahiti next month. Our ships will pass in the Pacific! The speaker needed to be able to provide eight-plus talks and I had pitched nine so I am busy preparing more talks, some ocean-going talks, just in case. It’s so much fun researching great stories.

Also, being a compulsive writer, I am writing more genealogy “how to” books which are being published by Alan Phillips of Unlock the Past. My first one is already published: _To Trace or Not to Trace: a family history overview for the curious_. It is a humorous introductory talk filled with cartoons and jokes and I wrote it to go with a pre-beginners talk I had prepared for cruise ship audiences (see page three). Others are in the pipeline.
Miller’s forgotten tale soars with derring-do

Jessie Miller is one of our most fascinating adventurers, even if she is little known today. In the 1920s and 30s she was world famous.

She was born in Western Australia in 1901, the year Queen Victoria died. Four years earlier Mark Twain published Following the Equator, a nonfiction travelogue about his whistlestop tour of the British Empire. Of his time in colonial Australia Twain wrote: “It is full of surprises, and adventures, and incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.”

America’s most beguiling writer could well have been talking about the fascinating life and times of Miller. It’s not for nothing Carol Baxter’s book is subtitled An Australian’s true story of adventure, danger, romance and murder.

This spellbinding tale of an extraordinary woman is one of the best books I have read in years. It is enthralling to learn what happened when, in early 1927, the petite 26-year-old Miller left suburban Melbourne and her newspaperman husband Keith Miller to travel to London by ship. She would go on to become the first woman to complete a flight from England to Australia, which, as Baxter documents, was difficult and dangerous.

Along with the great Amelia Earhart, this plucky Aussie, nicknamed “Chubbie”, flew in a celebrated air race for women known as the Powder Puff Derby. She then disappeared in a flight over the Florida Straits but, as Baxter tantalisingly puts it, “only to charm her way to a rescue”.

There are some engaging illustrations in this delightful book and two stand out. The first is a portrait photograph, taken in October 1929, of Miller landing in Cleveland, Ohio, at the finish of the Powder Puff Derby. Inserted is a snapshot of a beautifully designed winged bracelet presented to each participant in this first women-only national air race.

The second, which complements Baxter’s vibrant narrative, is a photo of Miller and Bill Lancaster — soon to be her lover — standing in front of their single-engine, open-cockpit, dual-control Avro Avian biplane, the Red Rose, on October 14, 1927. This was as they prepared for their historic 12,000-mile journey from Croydon aerodrome in London to Port Darwin on the northern Australian coast.

Baxter stresses that Miller’s remarkable story is neither historical fiction nor fictionalised history. It is narrative nonfiction; history told as a story about what actually happened. The dialogue in The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller is taken from original records: newspaper accounts, court records and interviews with and by Miller.

Writing such a fine work of nonfiction involved huge amounts of research, including foraging for materials in libraries throughout Britain, Australia, India, Southeast Asia and the US, especially in Florida.

The book benefits enormously from first-person sources. Baxter specifically thanks her protagonist — to whom the book is dedicated — for her “consideration in leaving so many personal accounts describing your activities, thoughts, feelings and conversations”. They are, as Baxter puts, “a writer’s dream and a reader’s delight”.

Perhaps the highlight is Baxter’s detailed forensic examination of how, in the early 30s as an international celebrity, Miller found herself at the centre of one of the US’s most notorious and controversial murder trials. … [The next section is omitted as it is a spoiler for readers.]

Baxter rightly concludes that the irony is hard to miss: “Chubbie’s aviation achievements and popularity had eclipsed Bill’s in life but Bill eclipsed her in death.”

At the very least, The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller has righted this wrong and highlights the hitherto little-known exploits of a great Australian adventurer and a pioneering aviatrix.

By Ross Fitzgerald, Emeritus Professor of History and Politics, Griffith University

I think he liked my book! As I mentioned on the previous page, the book usually sells for $33.00 but my offer is that you can buy the book for $29.50 plus postage ($12.00) and you can also add in any of my genealogy “how to” books for $10.00 each. Unfortunately, this is an Australia-only offer because of the horrendous cost of overseas postage.
Blurb: To Trace or Not to Trace: a family history overview for the curious

Have you ever asked yourself “Who am I?” or “Why am I here”? Some people seek answers in philosophy or religion or other forms of spirituality. But there’s a really simple scientific explanation that overrides all others. We are here because an awful lot of people had a Fantabulous Time. And as genealogists – as family history researchers – we are trying to identify them so we know who, exactly, we should blame ... for everything.

So begins the first chapter of To Trace or Not to Trace: A family history overview for the curious. Full of humour and cartoons, this is a light-hearted guide for pre-beginners, those who are dipping their toes in the water but are not yet ready to dive in.

It talks about information we might already hold for our families, including photographs and family stories about famous or infamous ancestors (says one genealogist dryly: “My family tree is more like a noxious weed.”).

It discusses basic sources that family historians use including birth, marriage and death certificates, church records, newspapers, census returns, migration records and probate records.

It confronts the brick walls we might face (says the despairing genealogist, “I should have asked them before they died.”) And it explains that, if we go back far enough, we are all related ... relatively speaking.

To trace or not to trace ... a simple guide to the art of chasing our own tale.

Unlock the Past price: $15.00. September offer: $10.00 (if purchased with Mrs Miller), Website: $12.00.

Other genealogy “how to” items available with this one-time offer:

**Writing Interesting Family Histories**
New updated edition published 2016
RRP $22.00; One-time Mrs Miller offer: $10.00
It is essential that you read this book before ...

**Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories**
Companion volume published in 2016
It has a strong focus on story-telling within family history writing and communicates the skills that generated the review on page two
RRP $22.00; One-time Mrs Miller offer: $10.00

**Help! Historical and Genealogical Truth:**
**How do I separate fact from fiction?**
RRP $22.00; One-time Mrs Miller offer: $10.00

**Help! Why can’t I find my ancestor’s surname?**
RRP $27.50; One-time Mrs Miller offer: $10.00

**Associated cheat sheets for Help! books:**
RRP $7.50; One-time Mrs Miller offer: $3.50
The Surname Sage: Surname distortions

Have you ever heard a genealogist say that their ancestor’s surname was always written the same way? Or have you been guilty of saying the same thing yourself?

When I published my book *Help! Why can’t I find my ancestor’s surname?*, I was astonished at how many people told me that they didn’t need the information contained in the book because their ancestors’ surnames were always spelt the same way. As I continue my work for the Biographical Database of Australia, I am regularly surprised at the number of surnames that are actually spelt in a variety of ways. So I decided to do a survey for the benefit of *History Detective* readers.

I was linking together entries from the convicts indents (the lists of convicts transported to Australia on a specific ship) with entries from some Tasmanian databases provided to the BDA by the late Garry Wilson. Afterwards I went through the lists and noted down every variant of the surnames of each of the 200 male convicts transported on board the *Indegetigable* in 1812. Note that these were all British or Irish convicts being documented by British or Irish clerks.

In the following lists, the surname spelling on the left reflects the spelling of the convict’s surname in the convict indents. The surname variants to the right reflect one or more spelling variants for the individual in question as recorded in the colonial lists I was given for linking purposes. Importantly, these are not the only spelling variants recorded for these individuals’s surnames, merely the variants found on the lists I was given to process.

I wasn’t able to crosslink all the entries. Sometimes the convict’s name was recorded in the indents in such a way that I couldn’t identify the person in later lists (or vice-versa). This is possibly because:

a. the surname was completely distorted;

b. the surname was common and the individual used different given names; and/or

c. the ship of arrival was listed wrongly in the colonial records.

In generating the links, I had some linking tools at my disposal that most researchers do not have. Most researchers locate entries for their ancestors in one of the following four ways:

a. Eyeball - we glance through lists or text;

b. Index - we glance at a strict or loosely alphabetical index;

c. Algorithm - we (usually unwittingly) use a surname grouping algorithm in an online database (e.g. Soundex);

d. Wildcard - we use wildcard characters in an online database search.

These are broadly covered in the explanations below.

I tried to make the following lists simple, dealing with one critical issue at a time. Sometimes multiple problems occurred in multiple variants and these are discussed in section twelve. If a surname was noted in brackets, it indicates that it was a variant for the individual concerned but that the variant wasn’t complex enough to affect whatever subject was under discussion.

1. **First letter distortions that affect searches via eyeballing, indexing, algorithms and wildcards:**

The following variants will not be found via eyeballing or index searches or surname grouping algorithms or wildcard searches unless researchers know to exchange all vowels with ‘H’ and all consonants with their sound pairs (discussed in the *Help!* book). As you can see, the Soundex code, which is used by some online databases, is different for each surname spelling which is why the latter variants are not brought up in a search for the first name listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Soundex code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charman/German</td>
<td>C655/G655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock/Alcock</td>
<td>H522/A422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haves/Eaves</td>
<td>H120/E120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinsworth/Ainsworth</td>
<td>H526/A526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver/Calliford</td>
<td>G416/C416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Second letter distortions that affect most types of searches:**

The following variants might be noticed in an eyeball search but would be problematic in any of the other searches because of the intrusion of an additional letter early in the surname. For example, the underlined
The Surname Sage: Surname distortions (continued)

letters generate an underlined number in the surname grouping algorithm which is why the two variants are not brought up in the same search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biggs/Briggs</th>
<th>B200/B620</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewing/Frewing</td>
<td>F520/F652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the following individual, the Soundex codes are the same even though on surface appearances the surname variants are quite different. This is because of the way Soundex treats “s”, “k” and “h” (explained in the Help! book).

| Skeffington/Shiffington | S152/S152 |

3. Second (plus) letter vowel distortions that probably only affect index searches:
The following variants have the same code in surname grouping algorithms and would also be noticed in eyeball searches and accounted for in wildcard searches. However a researcher might not think to look for the vowel variations in an index search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Byrne/Byrne</th>
<th>B650 for both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egan/Egan</td>
<td>E250 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calliford/Culliford</td>
<td>C416 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costello/ Castillo</td>
<td>C234 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culliver/ Colliver</td>
<td>C416 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manofie/ Minifie</td>
<td>M510 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanly/Manly</td>
<td>M540 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitchey/Petchey</td>
<td>P320 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridsdell/Ridesdell/Redesdale</td>
<td>R323 for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rymley/Rymley</td>
<td>R540 for both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techener/Tickner</td>
<td>T256 for both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Letters “he” probably mistranscription of “k”)

4. Third (plus) letter consonant distortions that affect most types of searches:
Some of the following surname variants for convicts on the Indefatigable would be recognised in an eyeball or index search but others wouldn’t be. All generate different Soundex codes making them more difficult to find in online database searches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everest/Evans</th>
<th>E162/E152</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given/Gibbons</td>
<td>G150/G152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henley/Hembly</td>
<td>H540/H514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitchey (Petchey)/Peachey</td>
<td>P320/P200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles (Rolles)/Roads</td>
<td>R420/R320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simerson/Siverson</td>
<td>S562/S162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart/Stewart</td>
<td>S363/S366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratford (Strefford)/Stafford</td>
<td>S363/S316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waters/Walters</td>
<td>W362/W436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(v/b almost a sound pair but code affected by word-final “s”)

5. Third (plus) letter distortions that algorithms account for but affect other searches:
The following variants have the same Soundex code but will probably not be identified in any other search.

| Flaherte/Flearty    | F463 for both |

6. Third (plus) letter distortions that probably only affect index searches:
These variants have the same code in Soundex searches but might be tricky in other searches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bailey/Bayley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beavis/Bevis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush/Brash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churton/Chereton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogling/Dowling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Other distortions that affect grouping algorithms and wildcard searches:
While the following variations are fairly easy to identify visually, there are issues with surname grouping algorithms. To put it bluntly, Soundex generates a code for some letters (often silent letters) which means that two variants of the same surname will not necessarily come up in a single search. However it is important to note that Soundex, for example, focuses on the first four consonants alone (after deleting double-ups like “gg”) so spelling variations in the fifth and later consonants are ignored.

Problems caused by the inclusion or omission of “c/k”:
- McCarr A/Mc Carrack M260/M262

Problems caused by the inclusion or omission of “g”:
- Fewin/Fewin G520/F500
- Flutte/Flughute F430/F423
- Layton/Leighton L350/L235
- Tiffin/Tiffing T150/T152

Problems caused by the inclusion or omission of “l”:
- Okey/Oakeley O200/O240

Problems caused by the inclusion or omission of “r”:
- Dunkerly/Dunkley D526/D524
- Gallaga/Gallagh G420/G426
- German/Guman G655/G550

Problems caused by the inclusion or omission of “s”:
- Burns/Byrne (Burne) B652/B650
- Noke/Nokes N200/N220
- Sumner/Sumners S560/S562
- Gravets/Gravatt G613/G613 No code problem because “s” is fifth consonant.

Multiple problems
- Mulcarty/Mulcahey M426/M420

Problems probably caused by a transcription error:
- Holdsworth/Holasworth H432/H426 Probably mistranscription of “d” with small upstroke
- Stanton/Stawton S353/S335 Probably mistranscription of “n” as “w”

8. Other distortions that affect indexes and wildcard searches:
As discussed in detail in the Help! book, most consonants have a “sound pair” or a sound they are often exchanged with. Surname grouping algorithms take these into consideration except at the beginning of surnames. Unless a researcher knows to keep these “pairs” in mind, the following variants might be missed in eyeball, index or wildcard searches. Either two or more wildcard searches will be required or critical letters must be omitted resulting in a broader range of surnames being brought up:
- Claydon/Clayton t/d form a found pair
- Masgall/Maskill/Mas Gilli c/k/g form a sound pair
- Queenby/Queemby n/m look and sound alike and are often exchanged
- Tedder (Tidder)/Tither t/d form a found pair

9. Other distortions that can affect wildcard searches:
The variations below document distortions involving the last letters of the surname. While these variations are obvious to the naked eye and will also be picked up by surname grouping algorithms, the variations in the ending require either looser wildcard searches or multiple searches. For example, a wildcard search for “br*n” will not bring up Browne; a broader request is required such as “br*n*” (which will also bring up Browning, Brownent and other surnames) or two or more searches need to be made.

Brown/Browne
Cooley/Cooly
Margets/Margetts/Margates

10. Other distortions that are easy to identify (consonant commencement):
The following surname spelling variants would be easy to visually identify in any eyeball or index search. Surname grouping algorithms bring up these variants if the first surname is searched for. Wildcard searches will also easily identify them if all vowels are replaced with the wildcard symbol. It is a good idea to replace the letter “r” with a wildcard character as well (as shown below) because speakers of English or Australian English do not articulate the “r” (unlike American English speakers) so spelling variants can occur that omit the “r”.

Beagant/Beagiant
Burrill/Burrill
Carnel/Carnell
Charmen/Chairman
Dickinson/Dickenson
Fogerty/Fogarty/Fogharty
Jemott/Jemett/Jemmott
Jessup/Jessop
Millar/Miller
Pullan/Pullen
Vardan/Varden/Vardan/Vardun

11. Other distortions that are easy to identify (vowel commencement):
All vowels can be exchanged with each other so it is important to take this into consideration when undertaking searches for surnames commencing with a vowel. While the obvious wildcard search listed below will bring up the two variants listed below, it will not identify variants that commence with a different vowel or with ‘H’ (e.g. Allan/Hallan). This needs to be taken into consideration in any index, surname grouping algorithm or wildcard search.

Allan/Allen
Anthony/Antonio Anglicisation/foreign name

12. Problems caused by multiple distortions:
A few individuals had multiple variants with multiple problems as shown below:
Charmen (Chairman)/German/Guman C655/G655/G550
Flahertee/Flutte/Flaghute/Flearty F463/F430/F423/F463
Fewing/Fewin (Fewen)/Frewing F520/F500/F652
Gulliver/Culliford (Culliford) G416/C416
Hopsall (Hobsall)/Hobson H124/H125
Turtora/Tortosa/Foretsto/Fortosa T636/T632/F632/F632

13. Given name changes:
Problems with surname variants were not the only issues affecting the linking process. Some individuals used different given names (or the given names were mistranscribed) as shown below:
Daniel/David Cook
The Surname Sage: Surname distortions (continued)  
Francis/Thomas  Haves/Havis/Eaves (so Francis Haves was recorded as Thomas Eaves)  
George/Thomas  Northam  
John/James  Marsden  
John/Joseph  Burrows  
John/Richard  Francis  
Patrick/Peter  McCabe  
Richard/John  Hutchinson  
Thomas/John  Speak/Speek  
Tryce/Price  Okey/Oakeley  

14. Complicated combinations:  
Some given name/surname combinations were particularly complicated as shown below:  
Juan Baptista Peniza/John Peniza Baptista/John Peniza/John Bte de Penizo  
John/Peter/Edward  Gallaga/Gallaghar/Gallagher/Gallicher  
William Lawrencewood/William Lawrence Wood  

Summary  
Of the individuals listed on this one ship alone, approximately half experienced an issue with their name in the few lists I was given to process. These were by no means all the references to these individuals that have survived. In fact, the more research you do, the more likely it is that you will find your ancestor’s surname recorded in a different or even unexpected way.  

So, when you hear people say that their ancestor’s name was always spelt the same way, you can do what I try not to do: laugh and say “You have got to be kidding!”  

Words to the Wise: Hidden Figures  
Have any of you seen the film or read the book Hidden Figures? It was a good book but a great film and the film was in fact nominated for a number of Academy Awards including best adapted screenplay.  
It tells the story of a team of brilliant female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. The backdrop is, unsurprisingly, the racism and misogyny they suffered as they strove to prove their worth.  
The book itself is written as an account rather than a narrative. It is a good read but a frustrating read in a sense because the author made no attempt to bring the scenes to life, to set the atmosphere. It reads a bit like an encyclopaedia entry.  
The film collapses the twenty-year story into a single year and builds a strong narrative arc that focuses on story-telling. This makes it gripping to watch.  
The art of story-telling is what turns dry prose into something exciting to read. My second writing book, Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories, focuses on story-telling. I will also be giving a seminar on story-telling at the Australasian Genealogical Congress to be held in Sydney in March 2018. And I will be giving a series of writing seminars at History Illuminated at the Lake Macquarie libraries at the start of September 2018.  
I have also been thinking of giving a full day of writing seminars at Gordon library (a suburb of Sydney) in May 2018. Let me know if you are interested and I’ll put you on a special mailing list.
About the author

Carol Baxter is the award-winning author of six works of narrative non-fiction (otherwise referred to as ‘true-crime thrillers’), of which five were published by Allen & Unwin: An Irresistible Temptation (2006), Breaking the Bank (2008), Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady (2011), Black Widow (2015) and The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller (2017). 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 five genealogical ‘how to’ publications: Writing INTERESTING Family Histories, Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories, Help! Historical and Genealogical Truth: How do I separate fact from fiction?, Help! Why can’t I find my ancestor’s surname? and To Trace or Not to Trace: a family history overview for the curious. In fact, Carol is the author or editor of 22 publications and more are in the pipeline. Carol is an adjunct lecturer at the University of New England (NSW), a Fellow of the Society of Australian Genealogists, and a speaker on land and sea.

History Detective Shop

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Farewell for now

The History Detective bids you good researching, writing, and reading.

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