



Newsletter - August 8, 2009

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GENES REUNITED TAKEOVER ANNOUNCED

I've been a member of [Genes Reunited](#) since they began in 2002, but as regular readers of my newsletter will know, there are a number of aspects of the site that are - in my opinion - in need of improvement. Now, at last, we could see some positive changes - because brightsolid, the company that owns findmypast.com and runs the [scotlandspeople](http://scotlandspeople.com) website is buying Friends Reunited and its subsidiaries from ITV (subject to clearance by the competition authorities, which should be a formality).

This is very good news indeed for family historians - at last [Genes Reunited](#) is under the control of people who really understand their needs. If the new owners can retain the good features of the site, whilst improving the bits that don't work very well (such as not being able to use wildcards when you search censuses before 1901, and the somewhat erratic 'hot matches') we will all benefit.

ARE YOU AN HISTORIAN?

If you are researching people who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries but who are not relatives of yours (or have done so in the past), I'd be interested in hearing from you. We are introducing a new feature that will make it easier for historians and those writing historical biographies to contact living descendants of the *dramatis personae*.

THE SCOTTISH WAY OF BIRTH AND DEATH

Sometimes I come across a website and wonder - this is so good, how is it that I've never come across it before? Peter Higginbotham's [Workhouses](#) site was one of those - and another which I have just uncovered is [The Scottish Way of Birth and Death](#), created by the University of Glasgow with funding from the Wellcome Trust.

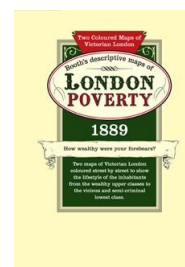
Even if you don't have Scottish ancestry you'll find the section on Irregular Marriages fascinating - and please remember that thousands of English couples travelled to Gretna Green, just over the border, to marry. Something I hadn't realised is that divorce was also easier and cheaper in Scotland, especially for women - who in England could not divorce their husband for adultery until 1923!

LONDON POVERTY - CHARLES BOOTH'S MAPS

In the late 19th century Charles Booth produced remarkable maps of London which mapped not just the areas, but the streets where the worst poverty was to be found. There are numerous sites where you can view these maps online, such as the [Charles Booth](#)



[Online Archive](#) at the London School of Economics, but it isn't easy to study these highly detailed maps on screen. It is possible to buy a complete set of maps from the LSE for £79.95, but that's beyond my price range - so I was delighted to learn that [Old House Books](#) are now offering full colour reproductions for just £12.99! If you do decide to purchase these maps please mention LostCousins, as we'll get a small commission that will help finance future development



of the site.

Tracking down London streets from the 19th and early 20th century can be tricky, and the best solution I've found is the facsimile edition of the [1938 London A-Z](#) since it has an invaluable cross-index of new street names and old names.

IS THIS THE OLDEST PERSON IN A PHOTOGRAPH?

There has recently been a correspondence on the Letters page of the Daily Telegraph asking who is the oldest person to be recorded in a photograph - that is, of all the people who have ever been photographed, and whose photograph survives, who was born first? Until now I'd have guessed that it was [Sir John Herschel](#), who was 75 when Julia Margaret Cameron created one of the world's most famous photographs in 1867 - but Telegraph readers were able to do better.

Two of the leading contenders submitted by readers are George III's 11th child, Princess Mary - who was born in 1776, the year that the American colonists declared independence, and photographed with her niece Queen Victoria in 1856. However, this image from 1857 shows a Lincolnshire shoemaker who was reputedly born a year earlier, in 1775.



My oldest family photograph is of my great-great grandfather Robert Wells, who was born in 1815 - the year that Napoleon met his Waterloo. I'm sure that LostCousins members can do better than me, but can you beat the Telegraph readers - or even come close? I'll look forward to featuring the most impressive examples in the next issue of my newsletter.

VISITING THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT KEW

Last month I wrote about the changes that are proposed at the National Archives, and I know from the correspondence I've received since then that many of you feel as incensed as I do. It's not just people living in Britain who are affected - closing on Monday will make it more difficult for researchers from overseas to

organise their schedules, particularly since the Society of Genealogists library is also closed on Sundays and Mondays.

I know that many members have never visited Kew, so I asked Celia Heritage, of Heritage Family History to write a brief introduction for anyone who is visiting TNA for the first time, and you'll find this on the [Help & Advice](#) page. Please make a point of going on a Monday, if you can - it'll send a message to the powers that be!

FREE ACCESS TO THE 1911 CENSUS

[Findmypast.com](#) in association with the National Archives already provides free access to the 1911 England & Wales census at Kew, but there are to be 7 other sites across the country with free access points - see this [news article](#) at the National Archives site for more details. Of course, whilst access to the online information will be free, if you want a printed copy you may have to pay as much as 40p a page, so unless you live very close to one of the 7 centres - or were planning to visit anyway - you could be better off accessing the 1911 Census website from home when travelling costs are taken into account. Remember that if you buy units at [findmypast.com](#) they can be used at both websites.

STAYING CONNECTED ON THE MOVE

Most phones these days allow Internet access, but I prefer to use a notebook computer when I'm on the move - and recently I discovered a solution that's ideal for people like me. For around £30 you can buy a [Vodafone TopUp and Go](#) Mobile USB modem which includes a £15 credit (so you're really only paying £15 for the dongle). For each £15 top-up you get 1gb of data, which in my case should last me at least a year. Only one snag - you can't use it outside Britain.

DID YOUR ANCESTOR FIGHT AT AGINCOURT?

Tracing ancestors before the commencement of parish registers in the mid-16th century is virtually impossible, so news of a database of 250,000 English soldiers, including archers who fought at Agincourt in 1415 is really exciting. [The Soldier in later Medieval England](#) is a collection of data held by the National Archives, and this project serves to underscore the depth and incomparable value of the records held at Kew.

Do let me know if you are able to find someone you believe to be *your* ancestor in the database!

MILITARY WEBSITES

There are numerous military websites of relevance to family historians, and often they focus on a particular regiment, squadron, or ship - for example, the [East Yorkshire Regiment database](#) is one of the newer sites. [Forces Reunited](#), the networking site for veterans, has a section devoted to military genealogy - though you'll need to take out a subscription (£4.95 for one month) to see detailed results. If you know the unit that your ancestor served in, why not try a Google search?

ARE ANCESTRY GOING PUBLIC?

[Ancestry](#) has filed a document with the US Securities and Exchange Commission in preparation for a public offering. According to this document they have almost 1 million subscribers, who on average pay \$16 a month (about £10), and in the first half of 2009 they earned over \$8 million in profits - a considerable increase on the previous year, possibly because of the big increase in subscription prices.

MORE CANADIAN RECORDS

The website of the [New Brunswick Provincial Archives](#) provides access to well over a million records, including birth, marriage, and death records (Myrna and Heather, who independently drew my attention to the site, particularly recommend the Newspaper Vital Statistics); records for [Manitoba](#) are also online. A site I've mentioned in the past, but which deserves another mention is [Automated Genealogy](#), where volunteers have transcribed and indexed the 1901 and 1911 Canadian censuses; there's also a very exciting project to link records relating to the same person taken from different sources.

[Library and Archives Canada](#) has recently completed a 206,000 entry database of people who applied for naturalization between 1915-32; in most cases they were not from Britain or the British Commonwealth, but when I checked the index I noticed that quite a few came from the US.

FIND THOSE COUSINS NOW!

Entering information about your relatives who were recorded on the 1881 Census may sound like a chore, but it's actually very quick and easy. I'm sure you've already found most of your relatives on the census, so now all you need to do now is enter them on your *My Ancestors* page. Sounds easy - **and it is!** Just enter is the name and age of each relative as shown in the census, plus (for the first person in each household only) the references that specify the precise census page - whichever site you use they're shown as part of the transcription. For example, here's what [findmypast.com](#) shows for my grandfather Harry Calver and his family:

Name	Relation	Condition	Sex	Age	Birth Year	Occupation Disability	Where Born
CALVER, John	Head	Married	M	37	1844	Gardener	Barton Suffolk
CALVER, Emily	Wife	Married	F	38	1843		Rickingham Suffolk
CALVER, George	Son	Single	M	15	1866	Gardeners Son	Thetford Norfolk
CALVER, Alice	Daughter	Single	F	13	1868	Scholar	Ixworth Suffolk
CALVER, Ernest	Son	Single	M	8	1873	Scholar	Acton Middlesex
CALVER, Florence	Daughter	Single	F	6	1875	Scholar	Acton Middlesex
CALVER, Harry	Son	Single	M	4	1877	Scholar	Acton Middlesex
CALVER, Elizabeth	Daughter	Single	F	2	1879		Acton Middlesex
RG number: RG11		Piece: 1354		Folio: 34		Page: 4	
Registration District: Brentford		Sub District: Acton		Enumeration District:		Ecclesiastical Parish	
Civil Parish: Acton		Municipal Borough:		Address: High St "grove House", Acton		County: Middlesex	

The census references are neatly labelled - not difficult to find at all - and remember, you only have to enter them once for each household. Here's a screenshot that shows me entering my great-grandfather John Calver:

Add an Ancestor

Please note that all fields marked * are compulsory. Start by selecting the source of the information you are going to enter using the drop-down menu - the input form will change according to your selection:

Source * England & Wales 1881 ▼

Find more relatives in the 1881
Census at



Now enter the following information *exactly* as it appears in the census transcript even if you know that it is wrong or incomplete. Do NOT take information from the handwritten census schedule, as it may prevent your relative being matched with the same person entered by another member.

Piece * RG11/ 1354

Folio * 34 (do not enter 'A' if present)

Page * 4 (for vessels enter '0' if missing)

Surname * calver

Forename * john

Middle names or initials

Age * 37 (if shown as 3/12 enter 3m or 3 months)

That wasn't hard, was it? And when I entered the rest of the household the top four boxes were already filled in, so it took just a few seconds for each.

Should you experience any difficulty finding your relatives on the census then I'd recommend an article I've written called "Key Tips for Census Success", which you'll find on the Help & Advice page at the LostCousins site. The most important tips are listed on the first page of the article - and if that doesn't solve your problem you can always ask for my help.

PETER'S TIPS

Apologies to overseas members, but I'm going to start this time with another Tesco supermarket tip - you can currently buy a bag of Granny Smith apples for £1, and get 50 extra Clubcard points - worth up to £2. But check your receipt to make sure the extra points have been added on - an offer like this seems too good to be true.

If you have a notebook or laptop computer which you use only occasionally, make sure you power it up at home before taking it on a trip and install any updates, especially for Windows and your anti-virus program. You certainly don't want to be downloading updates using mobile broadband, nor do you want to risk getting a virus.

Recently I've been discovering some of the in-and-outs of care homes, and in the process I discovered that many people don't receive the benefits to which they are entitled - in particular a lot of people are told that when they go into a care home they will no longer qualify for Attendance Allowance. However, that is only the case if the local authority are paying the fees - anyone who is paying their own fees continues to receive the allowance.



As usual the LostCousins site will be totally free over the August Bank Holiday weekend (that's the last weekend in August), and if you're not going to be around then, it's all the more important that you bring your *My Ancestors* page up to date now, so that your cousins will be able to find you when they search.

Think you've done it already? Remember that it's not your direct ancestors who were on the 1881 Census who are most likely to lead us to your 'lost cousins' - it's their brothers, sisters, and cousins - especially the ones who by 1881 had

families of their own.

Finally, a reminder that it's much cheaper to take out an annual subscription to your favourite genealogy magazine than it is to purchase it from a newsagent - for example, you can [save 30% on Your Family Tree](#).

STOP PRESS

This is where updates or amendments will appear.

That's all for now - I hope you've found some of it relevant to you and your family tree. Please do keep sending in your comments and suggestions for future issues.



Peter Calver
Founder, LostCousins

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