



Newsletter - February 21, 2009

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To visit the main LostCousins site please go to www.LostCousins.com
If you would prefer to view this newsletter in HTML format click [here](#)

CANADA 1891 CENSUS FREE ONLINE

At the Library and Archives Canada website you can now search the entire [1891 Census](#) and view the handwritten enumeration schedules - completely free!

AT LAST - SEARCHABLE BIRTH INDEXES!

Isn't it tedious browsing quarter by quarter through the GRO indexes for England & Wales? For some time FreeBMD has had virtually complete searchable indexes from 1837-1915, whilst you could search after 1984 at both findmypast.com and Ancestry - but finding entries for the key 1916-1983 period has been a real chore.

Now there's good news for anyone with relatives living in England & Wales in the 20th century. Ancestry has made available a complete searchable index of [births from 1916-2005](#) and I understand that marriages and deaths will follow shortly. (Note: the link will take you to the correct page but when I visited just now the text had not been fully updated, and refers to 1984-2005 only. However the births search does cover the entire 1916-2005 period.)

Because the mother's maiden name is shown in the index for the entire period it's easy to find the correct entries - and, like me, you will probably be able to add quite a few names to your tree.

Another approach to searching for births, marriage, and deaths is to use local indexes (where they exist). These are indexes created from the records held by local registrars, and on occasion you'll find entries that have been accidentally omitted from or mistranscribed in the central GRO indexes. You'll find links to many local indexes at the [UKBMD](#) site.

PARISH RECORDS ONLINE

Nearly a million records from Cornwall have been transcribed by volunteers and can be searched free at the [Cornwall Online Parish Clerks website](#) (thanks to Michael in Canberra for this information). Meanwhile, over at [findmypast.com](#) they've been busy adding nearly a million extracts from memorial inscriptions.

SCOTTISH PARISHES IN THE 18TH & 19TH CENTURIES

If you have Scottish ancestry then you'll find that the [Statistical Accounts of Scotland](#) prepared in the 1790s and 1840s provide useful background information, with detailed information relating to individual parishes that not only describes the geography, but also the lifestyles of the inhabitants. (Note: you can browse without logging-in.)

WORKHOUSES AND THE POOR

Nowadays some of us worry about impoverished immigrants arriving from overseas - but if you had lived in the 19th century you'd have been more likely to have been concerned about poor people who came from another parish. From the time of Queen Elizabeth each parish was responsible for the maintenance of its own paupers and, as this was funded by 'rates' levied on the inhabitants, no parish wanted to take responsibility for the poor of another parish. In some ways it was quite a modern system - the unemployed were helped to find work, and wages would be subsidised according to need.

In 1834 the system changed completely. Instead of 'care in the community', people in need of support had to enter a 'workhouse', a prison-like institution where families were separated, and provided with drab clothing and even drabber food, including gruel (a thin porridge) made famous by Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. No inmate was allowed to partake of food or drink other than that prescribed - except on Christmas Day. (My great-great-great grandmother died in Watford Union workhouse in 1855 - I find it amazing that her three adult sons could have allowed this to happen, but perhaps they had problems of their own? Sadly very few records from this workhouse have survived.)

There's an excellent [website](#) all about workhouses which was created by Peter Higginbotham, who has recently published a fascinating book, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (available from [Amazon](#) for under 10 pounds). To learn more about the way that the Poor Law was administered take a look at *The Handy Book of Parish Law*, the 1859 edition of which is available free through [Google Books](#). Chapter XXVI relates to settlement and removal, issues of particular interest to genealogists since the records that have survived can be quite informative.

WHO OWNS YOUR INFORMATION?

Believe it or not, if you post information to certain websites they'll claim ownership of the data, and retain the rights to use it in any way they wish, even if you have deleted it from the site! Most recently social networking site Facebook was involved in controversy after changing their terms and conditions (they've now put the changes on hold), but in the past genealogy sites including Ancestry have also been accused of misusing their members' data.

I'm very careful about what information I post on the Internet, and I think others should be too. That's why the LostCousins matching system works behind the scenes matching cousins automatically and accurately, so that it isn't necessary to display information from your tree for all to see.

ARE 'SOCIAL NETWORKING' SITES UNHEALTHY?

An article in the journal of the Institute of Biology asks whether social networking sites like Facebook could be harming users' health by reducing the amount of face-to-face contact with friends and relatives. According to Dr Aric Sigman, "Social networking is the internet's biggest growth area, particular among young children. Social networking sites should allow us to embellish our social lives, but what we find is very different. The tail is wagging the dog. These are not tools that enhance, they are tools that displace."

I don't know whether LostCousins would fit Dr Sigman's definition of a social networking site, but there's one thing I do know - communicating with living relatives is a lot more healthy than focusing only on long-dead ancestors!

USING SKYPE TO FIND LIVING RELATIVES

Phil in Canada wrote to tell me how he'd found a 'lost cousin' in Australia using Skype, the service that offers cheap or free phone calls over the Internet. Phil sent text messages to Skype users who shared the same, fairly unusual, surname as some of his known relatives - and struck lucky!

Of course, sending unsolicited messages to multiple recipients is technically spamming - but in this case all the feedback Phil got was positive. However it's worth bearing in mind possible negative reactions if you pick someone's name out of the phone book - not everyone shares our interest in genealogy!

HOW MANY COUSINS DO YOU KNOW?

If you've been researching for a few years you're probably in touch with dozens of living relatives who share your interest in family history. But have you ever thought about introducing them to LostCousins?

For a start, there will be other cousins of theirs who are LostCousins members (you only share half your ancestors with a 1st cousin, and a much lower proportion with more distant cousins). Secondly, if you use your My Referrals page you can easily send them information on the relatives on your My Ancestors page that you share, so that they don't have to retype it (when they log-in for the first time there will already be entries on their My Ancestors page!).

But best of all, you can keep track of your living relatives much more easily if they are listed on your *My Cousins* page. Cousins (who share your ancestors) and separated from other relatives (who don't), and it's easy to see how you're related, because ALL the relatives you've both entered are listed (not just one, as at another well-known site). Any notes that you enter can be displayed on your My Cousins page, and even if you choose not to display the note itself, there will be an icon to indicate that there is a note - compare that with the way that [you-know-who](#) does it!

A SLICE OF HISTORY: THE WINTER OF 1709

Here in Britain the winter of 2009 has been the coldest for many years, causing widespread disruption of road, rail, and air transport. But 300 years ago, before trains, planes, and tarmacadam were invented, it was far, far worse. William Derham - Rector of Upminster, meteorologist, and (according to [Wikipedia](#)) the first person to measure the speed of sound - recorded a low of -12 degrees Centigrade on January 10, 1709. Across the Channel in France it was even colder, registering -15 for 11 consecutive days.

Those were the days before double-glazing, central heating, and electric blankets - so it must have been desperately cold. For more information about the Great Frost of 1709 see this *New Scientist* [article](#).

PETER'S TIPS

Isn't it annoying when you have to pay for calls to 0845 and 0870 numbers even though you have an inclusive package? So it's useful to know that should you need to call the General Register Office for England & Wales in Southport there are two 'ordinary' numbers that you can use: 01704 569824 and 01704 550010 (thanks to Margaret for this tip). By the way, did you know that most BT customers now get free calls to 0845 and 0870 numbers as well as 01 and 02 numbers?

These days the cost of making telephone calls is lower than ever before: for example, I can make calls from England to Australia using the [18185](#) service for just 1p a minute (plus a 4p connection fee). Whilst email is free, actually hearing your relative's voice is so much more exciting, isn't it? But please remember there's usually a time difference - even your favourite cousins won't want to be awakened in the middle of the night!

Here in the UK utility bills are going up again - this time it's water. The good news is you may be able to save 50% by having a water meter installed - I certainly did, and my water bill is now just half what it was 5 years ago! Most water companies provide a ready reckoner so that you can check how much you're likely to save by having a meter installed. It's a shame that the [Switch with Which](#) website only covers gas and electricity, and not all utilities - but on the other hand you can't choose to buy your water from the cheapest supplier.

I'm still getting emails from members asking me to repeat the pension tip that I gave in the autumn. It's very simple - if you live in the UK and receive a state pension, then by switching from monthly to weekly payments you'll gain an extra week's income (because weekly payments are made in advance, whereas monthly payments are made in arrears). All you need to do is call the Pension Service on 0845 60 60 265 and have your National Insurance number to hand - and you'll soon have around 100 pounds extra in the bank!

A free holiday sounds like a scam - but my wife and I have just come back from a week in the sun that was paid for almost entirely with Tesco Clubcard points! Did you realise that they're worth 4 times as much when you convert them into tokens, rather than using them against your grocery bill? I know that a lot of members are Tesco shoppers because since I mentioned the 10p bottles of Tesco Value Shower Gel last month the shelves have been empty!

Most of the tips in this column only work for members who live in the UK - so here for a change is one that will only work for members who *don't* live in the UK! When you're ordering certificates from the GRO (or taking out a LostCousins subscription) you'll find it a lot cheaper to pay by credit card than to use a money order or buy currency. Usually the only additional cost is the 3% that the card issuing bank charges for the currency exchange - and on a certificate costing 7 pounds that's only 20 pence extra. If you don't have a credit card yourself, ask a friend or relative to pay on your behalf (but please don't do this if it's a recurring charge such as an [Ancestry](#) subscription!).

Finally a warning about investing in index-linked savings products, such as National Savings index-linked Savings Certificates. The published rate of inflation is an annual average, ie they take the index value from a year ago and compare it with the present value. When prices are rising steadily it's a pretty good guide, but we are living in tempestuous times, and the Retail Price Index has been *falling* since September last year. In fact, it has fallen by 3.8% in just 4 months, giving up almost all of the gains made in the previous 8 months. So before taking the plunge look at what the index itself is doing - you'll find it in the first column on [this page](#) at the National Statistics website.

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		Rickinghill 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 *

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 *

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

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

Surname *

Forename *

Middle names or initials

Age * (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.

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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