



Newsletter - July 19, 2009

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For a PDF version of this newsletter, which may produce a better printout, go to <http://lostcousins.com/pdf/july09news.pdf>

NATIONAL ARCHIVES CUTBACK SCANDAL INFURIATES RESEARCHERS

At a time when there are more people than ever before interested in family history (or history of any kind) I find it absolutely astonishing that the National Archives in Kew should be cutting their opening hours by 20%, and planning a 10% reduction in their running costs between now and next year.

The National Archives must be making a fortune from the 1911 Census and the other records that are now available online - shouldn't this money be reinvested in improving services, not curtailing them? [Dr Nick Barratt](#), a long-time friend of LostCousins who - though he has featured in countless programmes since - is probably still best-known as the expert from the first series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, wrote to [The Times](#) earlier this month to deplore the changes. I hope that you will join me and thousands of other concerned researchers in writing to your local MP so that this proposal gets binned before any lasting damage is done.

SECRETS OF THE 1841 CENSUS

There are two things unique to the 1841 Census that we all learned long ago: (i) instead of telling you the county where someone was born it only tells you whether or not they were born in the county where they are living, and (ii) ages of adults are rounded down to the nearest multiple of 5.

But it isn't always the case - indeed there are numerous instances of precise ages being provided, for example 24 instead of 20, or 43 instead of 40. One thing that tells us is that those ages are probably *more reliable* than ages shown on later censuses - after all, why would somebody give a precise age that hadn't been asked for unless it was accurate?

Where Born	
Whether Born in same County	Whether Born in Scotland, Ireland or Foreign Parts.
<i>Somet</i>	
D	
D	/
D	/
D	/
D	/
2	
2	✓
2	/

When you're searching for relatives in the 1841 Census you need to bear in mind that their age may or may not have been rounded down. On other censuses you'd probably look 2 years on either side, for example 42-46 for someone who was actually 44 - but in 1841 they should have been shown as 40, so a range of 40-44 would be more likely to find them. Remember too that the 1841 Census was taken in June, not in March/April like the other censuses, so people would have been more likely to have had their birthday.

A surprising discovery I made recently is that on part of the census for Southampton the county of birth information has been extended way beyond the usual Y or N. I found H (Hampshire), D (Dorset), I (Ireland or, maybe, Isle of Wight), S (Sussex or, perhaps, Southampton) and there were even some counties outside the local area which were written in full (eg Buckinghamshire). Then, in another part of Southampton I found non-conventional entries in the final column ("Whether Born in Scotland, Ireland, or Foreign Parts") for Wales and Jersey! So you never know, you may discover more information on the 1841 Census than you'd normally expect.

[By the way, did you know that in the past Hampshire was often referred to as Southamptonsire, or the 'County of Southampton'?]

Another distinguishing feature of the 1841 Census is the use of the abbreviations F.S. and M.S. for 'female servant' and 'male servant' respectively; you're unlikely to see these on later censuses, and as a result their presence in 1841 can be confusing. You're also more likely to see a long 's' - the one that looks more like an 'f' - in the 1841 Census, and that's another pitfall for the unwary.

If you haven't yet started entering your relatives from the England & Wales census on your *My Ancestors* page please read the [FAQ](#) about census references first - it will save you a lot of time.



GENES VS COUSINS?

Every time I highlight the differences between [Genes Reunited](#) and LostCousins I get correspondence from members who've had lots of matches at Genes Reunited and few (or none at all) at LostCousins. So let me state here and now that so long as we have just 72,000 members LostCousins can't possibly produce as many matches as a site that has nearly 10,000,000 members (that's 140 times as many!).

What I can promise you, however, is that whereas the vast majority of automated matches (they call them 'hot matches') you get at Genes Reunited and other sites will be false, over 99.9% of the automated matches at LostCousins will be spot on. Just to underline how significant this difference in accuracy is, let me tell you a very interesting statistic - I've personally had more *incorrect* matches at Genes Reunited than *all* 72,000 members have had at LostCousins since we started 5 years ago!

No matter how many members we have at LostCousins, our matches will still be just as accurate - so why keep [LostCousins](#) a secret? With your help and that of other members we could easily grow the membership - not to 10 million (because I don't believe there are that many serious researchers who have British ancestry), but perhaps to 1 million or more. At that level of membership you'd have a match - and I mean a correct match - for the majority of the relatives on your *My Ancestors* page, so just think of all the new cousins you'd discover (and all without having to lift a finger - thanks to *accurate automated matching*).

But please, please, please don't give up your membership of [Genes Reunited](#) or other similar sites - because the people you meet on those sites, especially the ones you meet by mistake, are the very people I'd like you to invite to LostCousins. They may not be your cousins, but I bet you they are the cousins of other members - who would be absolutely delighted to hear from them!

PARISH REGISTERS - LATEST TIPS

If you have ancestors who came from Bedfordshire then you might like to know that transcripts from the 16th century to 1812 are available in booklet form from [Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Services](#) (many thanks to Eric, a great supporter of LostCousins, for this tip).

Many other county archives and family history societies make copies or transcripts of registers available, often on microfiche - and though you probably don't have a microfiche reader of your own, public libraries often have one for use by the public. Another option is go to your local archives to use their machines - I'm sure they won't mind you bringing in your own microfiche, though I recommend you explain this on arrival to avoid any confusion.

[Findmypast.com](#) now has over 23 million entries in the Parish Records Collection; over at [Ancestry](#) they seem to be making very heavy weather of the London Metropolitan Archives collection of parish records - though no statistics are given, a search for John Smith threw up only 5 matches which suggests that they are so far only scratching the surface.



FAMILY HISTORY ON RADIO KENT

Amongst the LostCousins membership there are many well-known names from the world of genealogy including Celia Heritage, who runs [Heritage Family History](#). I had the pleasure of meeting Celia for the first time in May, at the Family History Event in London, and you can hear her on [BBC Radio Kent](#) this Saturday (25th July) between 11am and noon. I'm sure Celia will be mentioning LostCousins during the broadcast, but if you phone in or email a question, perhaps you too could give us a namecheck?

Of course, in this modern Internet age you don't even need to live in Kent to hear the broadcast - just tune in online!

DO YOU HAVE CANADIAN RELATIVES?

There are lots of Canadian records that are available free online at [Library and Archives Canada](#), the Canadian national archives - and even if you're not aware of any Canadian connections it might be worth searching for some of the rarer surnames in your tree, because there were a lot of migrants who arrived in Canada in the 19th and 20th centuries. I discovered that several of my relatives fought with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First World War - this [link](#) will take you straight to the index.

Another useful site with free indexes is [BC Archives](#), the official archives site for British Columbia - and I'd like to thank Betty in Australia for telling me about this one.

FREE ONLINE BACKUP FOR YOUR FAMILY HISTORY DATA

You wouldn't believe how often I get emails from members who have lost all their data as a result of theft or hard drive failure - so I was very interested to learn about a new free service.

[Microsoft Live Mesh](#) offers 5gb of free online storage where you can keep copies of important folders, and to make sure you always have the latest versions they are updated automatically. But that's not all - Mesh also allows you to access your home PC from anywhere in the world, provided it is switched on, of course! I'm not just talking about accessing files on the hard drive - you can actually run a program on your PC at home whilst you're sitting in an Internet café on the other side of the world. I was able to use my family tree program, something I couldn't normally do in an Internet café.

Currently you need to be running Windows XP SP2 or Vista, but I'm sure that Windows 7 will be added to the list once it is released. Microsoft may not be my favourite company, but they certainly seem to have come up trumps this time!

PETER'S TIPS

If, like me, you're thinking of upgrading to [Windows 7](#) please DON'T wait until it is released in late October. If you place an advance [order now](#) through [Dixons](#) you can get a full copy - not just an upgrade - for a mere £44.97 (with free delivery), a saving of over £100. Better be quick, though - because the offer ends on August 9th or even *sooner* if Microsoft reach their sales target.



Tesco have started giving away Clubcard points like confetti, and sometimes the points on offer are worth more than the price you pay. For example, they have been selling bottles of Spanish cava for £10.99 - far more than they are worth, admittedly - but with 300 bonus Clubcard points. Considering that 300 points could be worth £12 off your next holiday, it might be worth buying a few bottles (buy 6 and you get 5% discount, so that's just £62.64 for 6 bottles of pluggable sparkling wine and £74.48 off your holiday). Other items with bonus points that make them free, or nearly so, are Finest Earl Grey tea bags and Lurpak butter.

Definitely not such a good buy from Tesco is a Lexmark X2670 multifunction printer at £29.97. Yes, it will scan, photocopy, and print in black and white or colour - but when the time comes (and believe me, it won't be long) to replace the ink cartridges you'll find that they cost more than you paid for the entire printer!

Sites like [findmypast.com](#) and [Ancestry.co.uk](#) won't show you any images unless you're a subscriber (or have purchased credits) but they sometimes reveal sufficient information in their free search results that you can eliminate a line of enquiry. Even if you're a member of one of these sites it's worth trying the other one if you get stuck, particularly since they have different search options.

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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Peter Calver'.

Peter Calver
Founder, LostCousins

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