



Newsletter - May 17 2009

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To visit the main LostCousins site please go to www.LostCousins.com

For a PDF version of this newsletter, which may produce a better printout, go to <http://lostcousins.com/pdf/may09news.pdf>

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

It was wonderful to meet so many members at the Barbican two weeks ago, and I can only apologise to any of you who didn't manage to find the LostCousins stand (we were upstairs, near the lecture rooms).

DID YOUR ANCESTOR GO TO SEA?

Joining the Royal Navy wasn't the only way to go to sea - many of our forebears sailed on merchant ships, and a wealth of records have survived!

The most numerous records are crew lists, which were generally completed twice a year for ships that sailed in British waters, or once per voyage for ships that sailed further afield. Indeed, there were so many crew



lists for the period from 1863-1913 that they were dispersed some time ago: a 10% sample was retained by the National Archives, 10% went to local records offices, about 10% to the National Maritime Museum, and the remainder ended up in Newfoundland, at the Maritime History Archive. None of these repositories has so far made their records available online, although if you know the name of the ship (and its official number), the MHA can tell you the years for which they hold lists.

Findmypast.com has now made available transcriptions of over 30,000 crew lists, which list of 270,000 personnel from British merchant ships. Although these represent only 1 to 2% of all the crew lists for the period, because many seamen would have been recorded on 30 or more lists during their careers there is a

reasonable chance of finding a given individual. You'll find the records under the 'Curiosities' tab at the findmypast.com site, and whilst the amount of data transcribed varies depending on the source, it's a great way to start fleshing out your knowledge of your maritime ancestors' lives.

KNOCKING DOWN 'BRICK WALLS'

In recent newsletters I've written about the way in which 'brick walls' are often of our own making - because we fail to look at the 'evidence' sufficiently sceptically. Many members have subsequently provided examples from their own experiences including Hilary who wrote from Australia to tell me about her great-grandfather's second marriage, which took place nearly 30 years later than implied by the censuses, and Patricia who told me of her ancestors who married an amazing 42 years after their first child was born.

Another excellent example came from Caroline: "I'm interested in the family-lore article, and how easy it is to be deluded when faced with an attractive idea. When I first met my husband's family, one of his uncles told me "*He's descended from Horatio Nelson you know*". I dismissed it as nonsense, as did most of the family, but they all said there was an ongoing rumour. I wasn't into family history then, but decades later I came across the evidence.

"Horatio Nelson is indeed in the family, and I have a marriage certificate to prove it. But he isn't the admiral. This Horatio Nelson was a pork butcher in Bakewell. He's not a blood relation, but the father of the first wife of my husband's great grandfather, and it's the second wife who's the direct ancestor. So it's just a grain of truth, and I have found that grain. It interested me how rumour can pass down the generations. At first, everyone must have known it was a different Horatio, but at some point, there was somebody distant enough to misunderstand, and they passed it on, and then nobody knew, but the rumour stayed."



So, the moral of these stories is: *always* double-check what you're told!

ESSEX ACCENTS PRESERVED ON CD

On Monday I was at the Essex Record Office for the launch of *How To Speak Essex*, an audio CD which preserves for posterity the accents and dialects of the county. It is available at £9.99 (including postage and packing) from the Essex Record Office - call 01245 244644 to place your order.

ARCHIVES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The National Archives has published a [consultation document](#) entitled *Archives for the 21st Century* and wants to hear from individuals and groups who use local archives. This is your chance to help shape the development of the archive services that are so important to family historians!

DEVON WILLS PROJECT

The [Devon Wills Project](#) aims to provide a consolidated index of wills and administrations for the county (to compensate in part for the loss of records when the Exeter Probate Office burned down during World War II). I was delighted to see that LostCousins member Brian Randell is one of the project coordinators and I hope that other LostCousins members will volunteer their services.

GENES REUNITED UPGRADES CENSUS SEARCHES

Searching the censuses at [Genes Reunited](#) has been made easier with a new feature that suggests near matches - but does this bring it up to the standard of well-established census sites like findmypast.com and Ancestry.co.uk? I thought this was something that would be of interest to LostCousins members, so I took out a Gold Membership (cost £34.95 for 6 months) in order to find the answer.

In my opinion there's still work to be done. A search for someone called Norah generated a list of 13 'close matches': 11 Ellens, 1 Helen, and 1 Eleanor - but it didn't include my relative, who was recorded on the census as Nora. There are other limitations too - for example, you can't use wildcard searches (a significant

limitation given the number of surnames that are likely to have been mistranscribed). I also found during the course of my research that much of the Help information related to censuses was wrong or out-of-date, and that's particularly disappointing for a site that attracts a lot of beginners.

My advice is to stick to findmypast.com and Ancestry.co.uk for now.

TRACING FEMALE RELATIVES

It's a lot more difficult tracing female relatives through the censuses as they change their surname on marriage, and as a result many researchers don't bother - which inevitably means that their family tree is woefully incomplete. A few years ago, when there was very little information available online, this may have been an understandable compromise, just as so many researchers in the old days focused solely on the paternal line - but now, with far greater resources at our finger tips there is no excuse.

Where the maiden surname is a rare one it's often possible to focus in on a handful of possible marriages in the GRO marriage indexes - very few women married for the first time after the age of 30, which narrows down the search. You usually won't have to buy any marriage certificates to identify which is the correct marriage - just look for the married couples on the following census to see which of the wives is around the right age and gave the appropriate birthplace.

But there's a free resource that's also worth trying - the Index of Maiden Names at the LostCousins site. This includes nearly 150,000 maiden names of women who married prior to the 1881 Census, which means you've got about 1 chance in 40 of finding the person you're looking for - fairly long odds, but then it only takes 10 seconds for each search. Furthermore, if you do find your relative in the index, this means that they have been entered by another LostCousins member - so as a bonus you can look forward to discovering a living relative!

Only LostCousins members can search the Index of Maiden Names - so please remember to [log-in](#) first.

REMEMBER D-DAY

June 6th is the 65th Anniversary of D-Day. To find out more, or to donate to the Royal British Legion appeal and help support the survivors please click [here](#).



A CENSUS TIP - FOR 2011!

LostCousins member Cyril Blount recently wrote to *Your Family Tree* magazine to suggest that when we complete the 2011 Census form we should photocopy or scan the form before submitting it. A very simple idea, but what a great way to help future generations of genealogists - nice one, Cyril!

PETER'S TIPS

LostCousins member Sheila was delighted to discover that she could



use her Tesco Clubcard vouchers to buy an annual subscription to *Your Family Tree* - for just £16.50 in vouchers you get 13 issues of this excellent magazine, which costs £4.99 per issue at the newsagents! Alternatively, if you don't collect Tesco vouchers, you can take out a subscription [here](#) for £45.40, equivalent to just £3.49 per issue.

Last month I wrote about a very attractive offer for new subscribers to the *Radio Times* - but didn't make it clear that you get [12 issues for £1](#) in total (you may have thought I meant £1 each). Considering that the RT costs £1.10 per week normally, it's an outstanding offer since you only pay 80p after the first 12 weeks.

James in York wrote to tell me about the [clearance sale](#) at Francis Frith, who publish books of old photographs (mostly from the first half of the 20th century) which cover a particular town, city, or county. At an amazing 70% off many titles have sold out already, so don't delay!

If, like me, you were brought up to believe that "you get what you pay for" it can be hard to believe that a low-cost product can be better than an expensive one - but that's what *Which?* magazine discovered when they tested sun tan lotions (or sunscreens as they're called nowadays). Asda's SPF 15 lotion at just £3 a bottle comfortably outperformed well-known brands that cost 3 times as much - or more!

Two-for-one offers are not unusual these days, and there are several products that I buy *only* when they are effectively half-price, such as wine - and those delicious Bahlsen chocolate biscuits that have more chocolate than biscuit. But it's not often that you can find two items for less than the price of one - so my head went into a spin when I noticed that Tesco had bags of delicious Jazz apples at £2.29 each, or 2 bags for £2. Indeed, I found it so hard to believe that I checked my bill even more closely than usual!

A couple of months ago I wrote about Airmiles, and the risk of losing all your accumulated miles if you haven't collected any miles recently - and now it seems that Airmiles are using this rule change to cajole members into signing up for the Lloyds TSB Duo credit card. Normally I'd object to this sort of marketing, but when I realised I could get 1500 Air Miles (enough for 2 flights from London to Paris) simply by signing up and spending £10 I decided to take advantage of their generosity. If you're like me, and can't turn down a bargain, see [here](#) for the terms and conditions.

Finally, LostCousins member Ann wrote to tell me of her husband's experience when he needed some copper piping connections (he's clearly a useful chap to have around the home!). He was quoted £14 at B&Q (for 10), but at their local [Plumbase](#) the same items were just £3.45 for 10. Another supplier I've personally found useful in the past is [Screwfix](#).

STOP PRESS

This is where any updates or corrections 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
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