

Finding Your Story

Aboriginal Family History at the State Library of Western Australia

National Family History Week - 2nd-5th August 2010

The State Library of Western Australia would like to pay respect to the Indigenous members of our community by humbly acknowledging the traditional Noongar owners of the land on which we meet today.

Records and information relating to Aboriginal people of Western Australia are becoming increasingly accessible as the need for information grows. The advent of technology is also making it easier to access information and photographs from home as well as in libraries and through other collection holders.

The Battye Library really is one small piece of the puzzle when it comes to tracing family histories but there is still a wealth of information and photographs to be found. I would like to show you today the types of records you can find here at the State Library and touch on what's further afield at the State Records Office and other Government Departments. I will also show you some key online resources to get you started and help you with your research.

Battye Library

The Battye Library offers a wealth of information and records relating to Aboriginal people of Western Australia. Our collection includes photographs, oral histories, some church and mission records, published books, newspapers, films and music, and maps of indigenous language groups throughout WA.

Searching the State Library's Online Catalogue

Most material held within the Battye Library and other collections within the State Library can be found using our online catalogue. To start searching the catalogue, visit the link below: <http://henrietta.lis.wa.gov.au/search~S2>

If you don't have a specific book in mind, the best way to start searching is by doing a **keyword search** using words relating to the information you are looking for. If you would prefer to browse any material about or by Aboriginal peoples you can do a **subject search** for *Aboriginal Australians*.

Books

What would a library be without books! Books are a naturally rich source of historical and contemporary information. A growing number of communities are telling and publishing their unique stories, and these are a wonderful place to

start. Many books now bring together photographs and information or stories about the history and families from a region or place.

Some of the most popular titles in our collection include:

- **Yammatji: Aboriginal Memories of the Gascoyne** / by Bryan Clark
Battye Library, 305.89915 CLA
- **A Drop in a Bucket: The Mt. Margaret Story** / by Margaret Morgan
Battye Library, 266.009 MOR
- **The Badjaling Story** / by Beth & Wilf Douglas
- **Nyungar Tradition: Glimpses of Aborigines of South West Australia 1829-1914** / by Lois Tilbrook
Battye Library, B/994 TIL [microfilm]

Nyungar Tradition has been digitised and made accessible online by AIATSIS. It includes an index of names, family trees and photographs of families from the South West. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/nyungar-tradition>.

Aboriginal Biographical Index

The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has developed an online index of names which appear in published material, from books to newspapers to official government reports including the Chief Protector of Aborigines reports. This is a nation-wide index covers names and material from across Australia. Much of the Western Australian material indexed is held in the Battye Library.

To search the index go to: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/abi.html>

Indexes and Registers

Indexes can provide a short cut to finding information contained in archival sources or in published material, such as newspapers.

Some good indexes to start with are:

- **Personal names index** / compiled by Jennie Carter, Aboriginal Planning Authority
Battye Library, Q 353.5349 WES
The Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority is now what we know as the Department of Indigenous Affairs. This index offers an alphabetical list of names that appear on the personal files they hold. You can access your files from the Department of Indigenous Affairs, but to protect the privacy of individuals they aren't accessible to researchers and you do need to identify your family relations to be able to view the files of other family members.
- **Archival files index for Western Australian missions** / compiled by Jennie Carter, Aboriginal Planning Authority
Battye Library, Q 266.008 WES
This is similar to the Personal names index, however it lists the files associated with Missions throughout WA, and these can contain personal

and family information.

- **Aboriginal Names of the Murchison District c1848-1890** / compiled by Neville Green
Battye Library, Q B/994 GRE
- **Aboriginal Names of the South West c1841–1890** / compiled by Neville Green
Battye Library, Q B/994 GRE
- **Aboriginal Names of the Pilbara c1870-1890, the Gascoyne c1880-1890, and the Kimberley c 1880-1890** / compiled by Neville Green
Battye Library, B/994 GRE

The Dictionary of Western Australians

This multi volume publication includes four volumes devoted to Western Australian Aboriginal people, compiled by Neville Green and Sylvia Hallam:

- **Aborigines of the Albany Region 1821-1898** (Vol VI)
Battye Library, B/994 GRE
- **Aborigines of New Norcia 1845-1914** (Vol VII)
Battye Library, B/994 GRE
- **Aborigines of the Southwest Region 1829-1840** (Vol VIII)
Battye Library, B/994 HAL
- **Far From Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest Island 1838-1931** (Vol X)
Battye Library, B/994 GRE

Records of Births, Baptisms, Marriages & Deaths (plus general biographical information)

It is important to be aware that for many Aboriginal people, there are sometimes no official government records for births, deaths and marriages but this information can be gleaned from other sources, so let's take a look at some of those.

Mission Records are a key source for finding this type of information. The Battye Library holds copies of records from *some* missions in Western Australia, and also church records from religious groups and churches associated with missions. Some mission records have restricted access to protect the privacy of individuals and families, as well as to comply with restrictions adhered to by the Registrar General's office. If you wish to view a record which is restricted, you will need to seek written permission by the owner. Library staff can assist you with this.

Some significant collections include the records of:

Title	Call No.
Beagle Bay Mission Baptism Register, 1896	ACC 1851A
Forrest River Mission, 1911-1968	MN 545

Forrest River Mission (Anglican Church Records), 1915-1983	MN 614
Gnowangerup Mission, 1927-1962	MN 2398
Kalumburu Mission, 1942-1981	MN 1235
Kunmunya Presbyterian Aboriginal Mission at Mowanjum Station, 1921-1944	ACC 951A
Mt. Margaret Aboriginal Mission, 1921-1966	MN 1518
Sister Kate's records, 1934-1991	MN 957

Police Gazettes can also offer biographical information including location and date of birth and death. The Police Gazettes have been digitised from 1879 to 1900 and these are available through the State Library's website. To find them, visit: http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/electronic_resources/police_gazettes

Editions beyond 1900 can be found in the Reading Room in the Battye Library.

Newspapers

Newspapers often printed information about events or occurrences, and these can include helpful information and photographs. The Battye Library holds all major newspapers (West Australian, Sunday Times, Daily News) as well as community and regional newspapers which cover most regions and localities throughout Western Australia. Most of these are kept on microfilm and you can make copies of any information you find.

There are two electronic resources for digitised Australian newspapers and these can be accessed from anywhere in Australia as well as through the State Library's website at www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/electronic_resources/newspapers.

The first one is the National Library is digitising Australian Newspapers, including The West Australian from 1803 to 1954 and bringing them together on their website at <http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/>. The articles are fully keyword searchable, and you can save, print and email articles of interest.

The second one is The West Australian Digital Archives which provides full digital access to editions published from 2004 until yesterday. This can be accessed by visiting www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/electronic_resources/newspapers.

Oral History

The Battye Library's oral history collection contains over 400 interviews relating to Aboriginal experiences and history. Some of these are from mission times, with both staff and people who lived there sharing their memories and stories.

The collection is primarily cassette-tape recordings with typed transcripts. The State Library has a Public Order service to provide CD copies of oral history recordings on request. Please visit our website for current information on pricing and to access order forms at www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/services/pictorial_orders.

Oral histories can be found through our online catalogue. They can be searched by individual names of people, or by a subject search for **Aboriginal Australians**

Pictorial Collection

The pictorial collection in the Battye library depicts all aspects of Western Australia's social history. A considerable portion of photographs in the collection are of Aboriginal people and missions across WA.

Some of the key collections the Battye Library holds are:

Title	Call No.
Badjaling Mission	BA1400
Forrest River Mission	3611B
Kimberley region	3231B, BA368/6
Kimberley, Murchison and Western Desert regions	BA1611
Mt. Margaret Mission	BA1340
Moore River	BA863, BA368/4
New Norcia Mission	856B
Roebourne & Murchison region	BA1373
South-West region	BA368/6
Warburton Mission & Ranges	BA1611

There are three ways to access photographs:

Digitised Photographs on the State Library's online catalogue

Many photographs in our collection have been digitised and can be viewed online using our catalogue. A keyword search is a good option to get started.

1. Go to www.slwa.wa.gov.au
2. Click on **Our Catalogue** on the top right corner of the page
3. Choose **State Library Pictures** from the drop-down menu alongside
4. Enter your search words into the box and click **submit**
5. Click on records marked as **Online Image** to see them online

Card Catalogue

Photographs can be found using the card catalogue in the Battye library. Aboriginal photographs are generally grouped together and prefixed with the word *Aborigines*. For example: **Aborigines, Kalgoorlie**. These comprise the first 3 drawers of the card catalogue.

Many of the photographs of Aboriginal people are unidentified and not listed by name. In some instances you may be able to find a family photograph under a family name, but you should also look at other headings such as the name of the area, the station or mission where your family lived.

Picture Australia

The National Library has created a website called **Picture Australia** which brings together digitised photographs from State Libraries and other collections right across Australia. This is particularly useful for when communities are very close to borders and may have connections to more than one State and where border lines cut through language groups.

To experience Picture Australia, visit www.pictureaustralia.org

Government Departments

As the Batty Library is just one piece in the puzzle of places that hold information and records, it is also worthwhile visiting the following places:

State Records Office

The State Records Office holds government archives and has a lot of information for Aboriginal family history. Their website has a lot of information about the different types of records they hold. Of great significance is their **Index to the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files 1898-1908**.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines Files comprises one of the most significant collections of unrestricted Aboriginal related material held by the State Records Office. This index contains a comprehensive listing of all the names of Aboriginal persons mentioned within the files, as well as the names of settlers, officials, stations and locations. You can access these indexes online through their website

State Records Office of Western Australia

Alexander Library Building, Ground floor
Perth Cultural Centre
Perth WA 6000

t: 08 9427 3360

f: 08 9427 3368

e: sro@sro.wa.gov.au

w: <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/community/aboriginalhistory.asp>

Department of Indigenous Affairs

Department of Indigenous Affairs: Aboriginal History Research Unit holds personal files relating to Aboriginal families throughout Western Australia. You can apply for access to your own personal files and those of your family. As the files contain highly sensitive and personal information, they are not open to researchers or the public.

Department of Indigenous Affairs

Aboriginal Family History Information Service
Level 1, 197 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000
PO Box 7770, Cloister's Square, Perth WA 6850

t: 08 9235 8000

f: 08 9235 8088

e: info2@dia.wa.gov.au

w: www.dia.wa.gov.au

Family Information Records Bureau

Similarly, the Family Information Records Bureau holds files personal files of a similar nature, and can assist you with finding information in cases where children were taken away from families. As the files contain highly sensitive and personal information, they are not open to researchers or the public.

Department for Community Development

Family Information Records Bureau

189 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004

t: 08 9222 2777

f: 08 9222 2767

e: generalenquiries@dcp.wa.gov.au

w: <http://www.community.wa.gov.au/DCP/Resources/FindingOutFamily/>

Getting Started

There are a number of resources which have been developed to help you navigate through the maze of records and agencies. These helpful titles can be found online and in the Battye Library.

- **Katitjin: A guide to Indigenous records in the Battye Library** / Heather Campbell
Battye Library, Q 016.30589915
Or view online: www.slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/katitjinsep03.pdf
- **Looking West: A guide to Aboriginal records in Western Australia** / Records Taskforce of Western Australia
Battye Library, Q 929.3941 LOO
Or view online: www.lookingwest.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au
- **Lookin' for your mob: a guide to tracing Aboriginal family trees** / Diane Smith & Boronia Halstead
Battye Library, 929.1 SMI
- **Finding your family photographs: major photographic collections of Aboriginal people in Western Australia**
Battye Library, Q 026.7792 FIN
- **Signposts: A guide for children and young people in care from 1920** / Department for Child Protection
Battye Library, Q 362.73 SIG
Or view online: www.signposts.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au

Support

Finding your family history is a journey that can affect people in different ways, particularly for people affected by previous government policies. But there is support and services in place to help you to find your records as well as provide emotional support.

You'll find the details of some services throughout WA on the State Library's website at the link below or contact us for more information or help with getting in contact with an organisation or service close to you.

www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/guides/indigenous_material/indigenous/indigenous_ngo_family_history_support

The main message for today's talk is that you are never alone when you come into the Library and there is always staff here to assist you with your research.

For more information on aboriginal family history at the State Library of Western Australia or to arrange a one to one consultation, please feel welcome to contact Gemma on (08) 9427 3480 or email indigenous.spec@slwa.wa.gov.au.