



# JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER

## Upcoming Meetings

<p>Wednesday 19 July, 7 for 7:30</p> <p><i>On Scottish Resources: 'In Search of Scotland'</i></p> <p>Doug Miller (venue: The Hub)</p>	<p>Tuesday 15 August, 5:30 for 6:00 pm</p> <p><b>'A quick pivot': Family History Resources at Wellington City Libraries</b></p> <p>Gabor Toth (venue: National Library Auditorium)</p>	<p>Wed 20 Sept, 7 for 7:30</p> <p>to be announced</p>
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## CONVENOR'S CORNER



Kia ora koutou Although it is a sad way to start this message, I feel I should acknowledge that my mother died in June. As you can imagine, it has not been easy taking on this new role at the same time. I am very grateful for my supportive committee. Mum was pleased to have reached 90 in April, but she was very ill. Looking through her belongings makes me think about what I will leave behind – time to get on and sort those photos, label precious belongings and write up those stories as I know many of you have done and are doing. I also acknowledge that I am not the only one to lose a mother, I know five other people who have lost their mothers in the last two months!

I encourage you to attend the four **Family History Month** sessions to be held at the **National Library Auditorium on Tuesdays 1, 8, 15, and 22 August at 5:30 for 6:00 pm**. The four Wellington branches are each responsible for one session. See the full details on p. 8. **Note above**, under **Upcoming Meetings**, that the **Wellington**

**Branch's meeting** is on **Tuesday 15 August**. This is **instead of our normal monthly meeting** which would have been on Wednesday. If you can help our committee on **15 August** with registrations, refreshments, selling raffle tickets, we would be grateful. Sign up at the next meeting (19 July) or email us at [Wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:Wellington@genealogy.org.nz).

On to branch business, I would like to make a plug for a couple of branch services that have lapsed a bit. We have a library of books and whilst there are too many to bring to each meeting, we do have a catalogue, which we will bring to each meeting, and we will attach a copy with the newsletter email so you can browse it. If you would like to borrow a book email us ([wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:wellington@genealogy.org.nz)) and we will get the book to a meeting or to you. The Committee will review the library later in the year and look at next steps if it is not proving to be a useful service. We also have a list of members' interests for connecting people with similar research interests. Our branch lists are found on the NZSG website ([Genealogy.org.nz](http://Genealogy.org.nz) – Go to Community, then Regional Branch Listing, then Wellington). Our Committee is not sure how valuable our branch interest lists are, so we would be glad for your feedback. There may be alternative ways for members with similar interests to connect to share their research journeys. Any ideas are welcome.

To finish – a few bouquets. Pam Wilson was surprised to learn that she was the only member who had attended all our meetings in our last financial year. Well done and thanks, Pam. I would also like to recognise Robin Mossman who received a certificate of appreciation for her work for NZSG – see her story on p. 5 in this Newsletter.

Geraldine Needham-Girven, Convenor, Wellington Branch

## In this Newsletter

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p. 5 *Getting to know you*, Jacqui Bridges & Robin Mossman  
 pp. 6-7 *Visit your ancestral homeland*, Christine Franzen  
 p. 8 Wellington Branch News, Family History Month; Directory

## June's speaker, Rodney King

### Finding the Staffordshire-Born Ackley Children in Canada

Rodney King is Secretary of the Kilbirnie Branch and a familiar face at Wellington meetings. He gave a very entertaining and informative talk about a family mystery which he finally solved last year, during COVID, after 60 years. My summary below is much indebted to his write-up in Genealogix March 2023, pp. 4-6.

Rodney's mother, Elsie Bridgwood, aged 9, came to NZ with her parents in 1927 from Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. Elsie remembered fondly her mother's father, Samuel Ackley (whose occupation 'saggar maker's bottom knocker' is discussed below), and his sister Maggie. Their parents were Richard Ackley and Mary Turner. The story was that Samuel and Maggie had other siblings who had been taken to Canada by aunts and uncles. But despite searching for aunts and uncles for many years, Rodney had found nothing. Ackley is a common name, and other trees also showed only Samuel and Maggie as the children of Richard and Mary.

Rodney's first breakthrough came from noticing a record with a badly off-putting mis-transcribed spelling, Richard Eccles (for Ackley), though the handwritten record was clearly 'Ackley'. Also under the sidebar of 'Suggested records' (which we all too often ignore) was a marriage record from Ontario, the first ever connection to Canada he found. It showed Jane Ackley (b. 1876), daughter of Richard and Mary Ackley, all of Staffordshire, marrying William James Hogan, a Canadian, in 1897 in Kingston, Ontario. Another sidebar entry gave another marriage: George Ackley in May 1914, again with Staffordshire origins for him and his parents. More searches on George Ackley produced 9 military records, including a very detailed obituary and the information that he arrived in Kingston, Canada, in 1888, aged 3, at the House of Providence. A third Ackley was found in the 1901 Canadian census: William, aged 23. These were almost certainly the missing Ackley siblings, but Rodney had found no trace of any aunts or uncles.

Finally he decided to investigate what 'the House of Providence' was and found it under British Home Children. This solved the missing aunts and uncles problem – the Ackley siblings came to Canada as orphans. Rodney knew that their father, Richard Ackley, had died in May 1886, but had no idea what had happened to Mary, wife and mother. It

#### BHC Registry Search Results

Surname	Given Names	Gender	Approx. Birth Yr.	Ship	Arrival Age	Arrival Year	Sending Organization	Distribution Home
<a href="#">ACKERLEY</a>	William	M	1876	Polynesian	12	1888	Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society	Sisters of Providence, House of Providence, Kingston
<a href="#">ACKERLEY</a>	Jane	F	1880	Polynesian	8	1888	Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society	Sisters of Providence, House of Providence, Kingston
<a href="#">ACKERLEY</a>	Margaret	F	1881	Polynesian	7	1888	Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society	Sisters of Providence, House of Providence, Kingston
<a href="#">ACKERLEY</a>	George	M	1885	Polynesian	3	1888	Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society	Sisters of Providence, House of Providence, Kingston

was easy to search on the children on the BHC Registry, and a great deal of information was found there. They had been sent (along with 117 other children) by the Liverpool Catholic Children's Society on 30 April 1888 on the ship Polynesian. The

Sisters of Providence in Kingston acted as a kind of distribution centre at the other end, placing the children with families. Many English orphans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were sent to Canada, where they were much needed in that large, underpopulated, and (fortunately for them) unpolluted country.

As he continued to search, Rodney found evidence in death notices that the three siblings had kept in touch with each other, but none that they had any contact with anyone back in England. Finally, tying up loose ends, Rodney searched the UK General Record Office Online indexes via a little known bullet point which allows searches for children of a known mother. Only one more child was found: Sarah, who died 12 days old.

The last unsolved problem was what had happened to Mary Ackley. Rechecking Richard's death certificate, Rodney noticed that the spelling was 'Ackerley'. Using that spelling he found Mary, who had died 14 Nov 1887, 18 months after her husband. The three orphans were on their way to Canada in the following April. Only the two remembered by Rodney's mother Elsie, Samuel (18) and Maggie (7, and already living with cousins), remained in England.

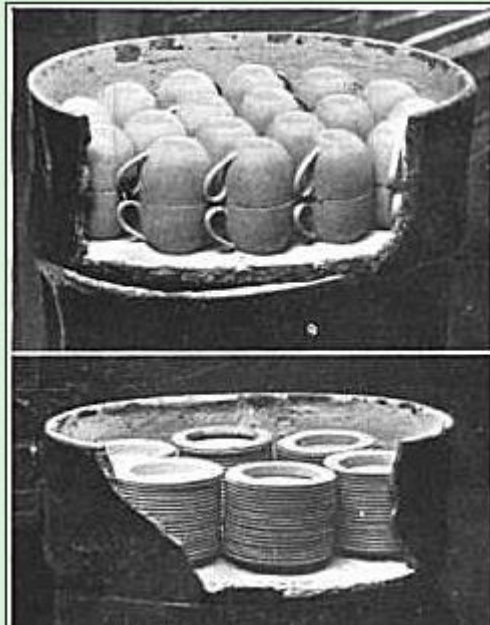
Rodney emphasised some of the things he learned (pay attention to suggestions on sidebars) or learned how to use in the course of investigating the Ackley children: British Home Children Registry, Canadian Marriage and Census records, Emigration shipping records, UK General Record Office Online indexes. It's so important for us all to share what we learn. I certainly agree that Canadian marriage records provide useful information on all four parents. I also recommend using wild cards to search for names with many alternate spellings, for example, over 300 years of various Betony, Betney, Bettaney, etc., surnames: [support.ancestry.com/s/article/Searching-with-Wild-Cards](https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Searching-with-Wild-Cards).

Thank you, Rodney!

## An Unusual Occupation: A Sagger Maker's Bottom Knocker

Many years ago, long before my TV-watching days, there was a programme in the UK called 'What's My Line?' where the panellists had to guess what someone's occupation was ([What's My Line? \(UK\) – Nostalgia Central](http://www.whatismylife.com/)). A famous episode of this programme was when the sagger maker's bottom knocker appeared. 'A what??' I can hear you say. My father worked for Royal Doulton, in the Industrial division, and although we didn't live in the Potteries, we grew up knowing what this strange-sounding job was, although I never actually saw one in action.

To understand what the occupation is you need to break the name into its component parts. Firstly, what is a sagger? This is a larger container, made of clay that pottery items were put in in the kiln when they were fired. This protected the delicate porcelain from damage in the kiln.



JOSIAH WEDGWOOD & SONS, LTD.  
ETRURIA, Stoke-on-Trent  
England

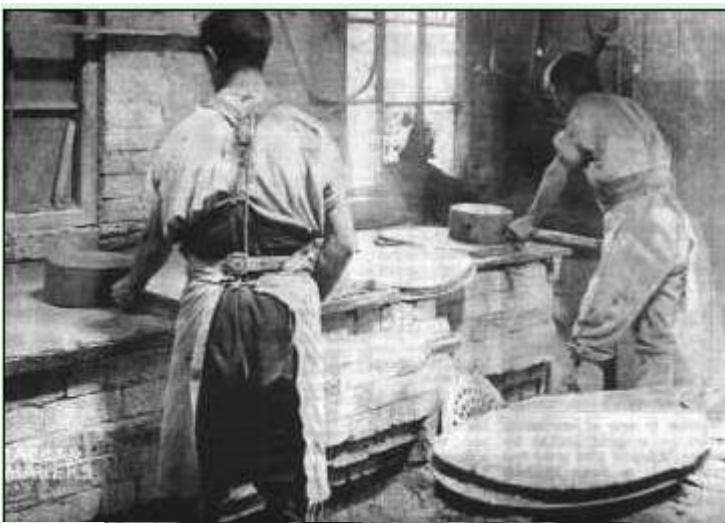
A "Sagger"

OR fireclay box, which contains the clay ware while it is being fired in the bisque oven, or first fire.

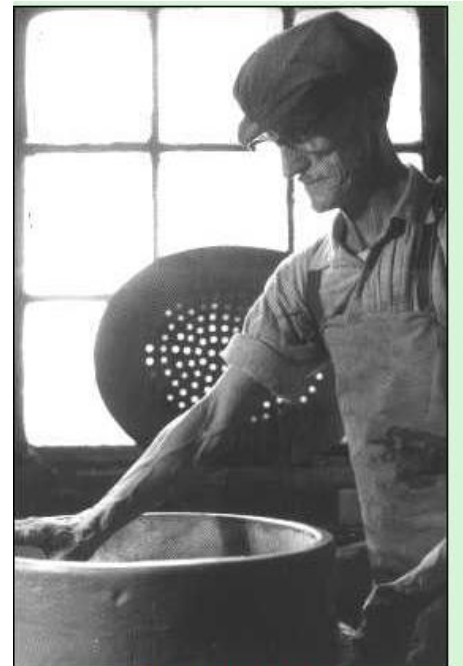
Source: [www.thepotteries.org/Bottle\\_kiln/sagger.htm](http://www.thepotteries.org/Bottle_kiln/sagger.htm), accessed 14 June 2023

The sagger maker assembled these containers. This was a skilled job, particularly shaping the sides and assembling the sagger. The saggars were often oval but could be rectangular with rounded corners. They could survive thirty to forty firings in the kiln.

Two less-skilled jobs, however, were the frame filler and the bottom knocker. The frame filler made the sides of the sagger, and the bottom knocker, the bottom. Boys often started as bottom knockers and progressed to frame fillers later in their apprenticeship.



**A frame-filler and a bottom-knocker at work side by side in the early 1900's**  
A filled bottom ring on a shord (metal plate) sits on a lump of marl in the foreground.  
*Photo: Gladstone Pottery Museum*



**A sagger-maker assembling a base and side**  
*Photo: Memories of Stoke-on-Trent*



**Pottery lads in 1921 with two mawls, the tool used for bottom knocking.**  
*Photo: Gladstone Pottery Museum*

The bottom knocker put a large piece of clay into a metal frame and then flattened it into the frame using a large heavy looking mallet called a mawl (pronounced mow).

The following youtube clip shows a bottom knocker at work [Saggar maker's bottom knocker - YouTube](#) and [Saggar Making Video - YouTube](#) shows how the saggar was made.

I don't know if saggars are still used when firing porcelain, but I'm fairly sure this back breaking occupation has since been replaced by a machine. So saggar maker's bottom knocker is not just an unusual occupation now but one that has likely died out completely, along with many others.

By Ann Ball

## Researching Family in Canada

With Rodney King's talk on researching his Canadian cousins in this issue and with Canada Day celebrated on 1 July, it seems fitting to offer more tips for researching family in Canada. **Sue Dinsdale** had published these hints in Genealogix May 2023, p. 3. She very kindly has allowed me to reproduce her work from that issue:

'Looking for ancestors in Canada?

'Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is currently preparing the 1931 Census to bring you free access to the LAC Census Search Database. By law, the personal information in this Census cannot be made public until 92 years after the Census was completed. As a result, access is not available until after June 1, 2023.

'Library and Archives Canada holds an extensive collection of Canadian Census Records from 1640 to 1926 and for Newfoundland from 1671 to 1945.

'If you look on their website, you will find a list of their holdings [www.baclac.ac.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.asp#b](http://www.baclac.ac.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.asp#b) Here you will also find Canadian Directories; Maps; Details about the 1940 National Registration and Voters Lists.

'They also have a database with World War I Military Personnel Records including those from the Canadian Expeditionary Force; Soldiers; Nurses and Chaplains. It includes files of those who served in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and Newfoundland Forestry Corps. There is a transcription of the person you are searching for, together with their Attestation Papers. The service file is digitized and this can be downloaded.' Thank you, Sue!

[www.baclac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx](http://www.baclac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx)

## STOP PRESS!!

### Some Birth And Death Records Now Available Instantly for £2.50

GRO for England/Wales have just released the ability to download a digital image of birth records from 1837-1922 and death records from 1837-1887, for £2.50 each. I have bought a few and once payment by credit card is confirmed, the download is available instantly. A big saving on pdfs or certificates and you don't have to wait!

[www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/images/CGOVPublicBeta.pdf](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/images/CGOVPublicBeta.pdf) Contributed by Kaye Batchelor

## Intentions to Marry

Archives NZ have spreadsheets of the Intentions to Marry Indexes from 1882--1899 which can be downloaded. You can then search the spreadsheet using the Find function. To access these go to the Life Events page and scroll down until you come to the heading for Intention to Marry Records. Click on the downward arrow to expand that section and scroll down until you get to the Intention to Marry Indexes.

Contributed by Jenny Martin

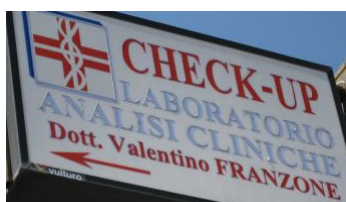


## My Best Research Tips, #2: Visit Your Ancestral Homeland

In 2010, my husband and I retired and began to travel. We went to Sweden and had a fantastically successful family history hunt there, looking for my mother's family. The following year we went to Sicily, where my father's family were from; his parents and two oldest brothers left for America in 1896-97. In last month's Newsletter I wrote about how I found out they were Sicilian in 'My Best Research Tips, #1: Don't believe everything you're told'. This carries on with that story. Note: There aren't any more tips in this series; these two are my best. Please contribute yours!

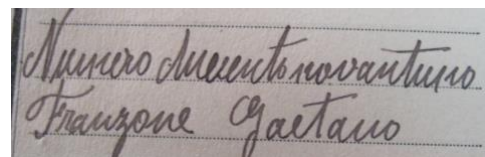
When we travel, I keep a diary. Because the day's events were of interest to family members, I wrote this diary entry as an email. With some minor corrections, this is it:

'21 Apr 2011, Dear all: Yesterday we drove to the hill town of Agira. Cousin Grace has traced back our mutual ancestors (my father's parents) seven generations, and many of them going back all that way were from Agira. I have a lot of names, the name of the church where some of them were married, and the street address where my father's father was born in 1868. I found a few Franzones in the phone book but didn't want to try ringing....



So just after we crossed into the town, Robert said jokingly keep your eye out for signs with 'Franzone' on. About 10 seconds later, I saw one and we nearly drove off the road. 'CHECK-UP Dott. Valentino Franzone.' So we went in and met him. Alas, he didn't recognise any of the names on my list or speak English, but since Franzones go back 7 generations in Agira, we must be related. After that excitement, we passed the Town Hall and

decided to see what documents they might have. They were very helpful, though they also spoke no English, and Sicilian is beyond even Robert's comprehension. They examined my list of names and my grandfather's birth certificate and eventually found the equivalent in a register. All the other records have burned (we think) if the pantomime meant what it seemed. We asked for a map and sent the place into a panic. They found brochures about churches, a history of Agira, all of which they pressed upon us, but no map. So we said goodbye, she took my email address and said she would let me know if she found any relations for me (most of what I am claiming people said to us is guesswork). We walked around the square towards a sign for tourist quarter. This didn't seem to exist but there was a small urban office of some kind. We tried 'carta?' (map in a few languages) but same reaction—disbelief, horror, panic and we were taken back to the Town Hall where the woman (no idea who she was) went straight back behind the scenes, shouted for a while, popped back a couple of times to make sure we were still there, and eventually reappeared, mapless. She drove us to the church instead of pursuing map hunting. So there we were, in front of the Church of S Pietro Apostle where my great-grandparents and many other



relations were married. It was closed of course, but we found it. Now we were still without a map, our car was somewhere back down the hill, and we had no idea how to find the street where my grandfather was born. We asked a couple of workman outside the church, a group of passing schoolchildren, and finally two young women walking down the road if they had heard of Via Saraceni. One of the latter thought it might be down the hill but none of the rest knew anything. We decided for some reason to go up the hill (don't ask). Agira is a maze of twisting narrow roads and alleyways, changing name every few metres. [When we finally found Via Saraceni, it was less than 20 metres long.] I quickly realised why maps might be hard to come by. Maybe nobody has ever managed to map the place. It is conical and very steep. We were walking up a narrow public path (or trespassing) when a woman stepped out of a doorway. Women stand in doorways a lot, or hang over balconies. She asked (I guess) where we were going. Despite probably being related to at least half the town, I am very conspicuously alien. Robert tried to explain that we were looking for my grandfather's house. And there began a long comic day....



Unmappable Agira with Etna in the background

For some reason Robert's normal gift for languages (even ones he doesn't know) abandoned him and he used 'grandpadre'. Padre means 'priest' in Italian but is derived from Latin pater, 'father'. Perhaps she thought we were looking for the Pope. Papa, she said, finally getting it. Papa, very firmly. Grandpapa. [In fact the Italian word for grandfather is 'nonno']. Via Saraceni? we asked. Within a minute we were inside her kitchen and she had sent her son (?) down the street to get his laptop. Google map, they said. They didn't have a map of Agira either.... While all this was going on we had a chance to look around; built into the rock, a tiny kitchen, immaculate, with a large table



were going to take us to Via Saraceni, because it was too complicated to explain how to get there. We were sent off with emotional farewells and I asked if we could take a photo. They were enthusiastic and all posed happily several times. Then we trotted after Antonio and his friend, back down the hill. It was necessary (?normal) to speak to everyone passing by, hanging over balconies, etc., to ask advice or just pass the time of day? Sometimes people



The view across Agira from no. 26 Via Sarceni

joined us and we had a trail of advisors at various points. Despite google map, Antonio seemed to have no idea where Via Saraceni was, but eventually one of the people we encountered did and there we were! No. 26 is now an unmarked door between 24 and 28. [Fortunately no one was home.] The entry from the street was a bit rundown, but Antonio undid the barrier down the alley next to it and we clambered out onto the balcony and could see from that

side it was renovated and has a fantastic view out across town and countryside. The (inevitable) woman hanging out of the window across the way had never heard of my grandfather but it was 1868, after all. So having found a Franzone, the church, and the house, mainly by completely disrupting the town and most visible people within it, I was ready to call it a day but Antonio and his friend wanted to show us Agira now. I wanted a drink, so we stopped at a bar and had limonsoda and



*cassetelle* (the local specialty, pastry stuffed with chocolate, to die for). We found the car and Antonio directed Robert off to a local lake, good for fishing and picnics. Then to the Canadian war cemetery [Canada again!], all beautifully cared for, and then back into Agira and all the way up to the top to the Norman castle, all around the ruins and the unbelievable panorama. All the time Antonio kept up a constant incomprehensible commentary, with lots of fantastic, come on, OK scattered through. He took over the driving at one point, and the photo taking. Finally about 5 pm (this whole adventure started at the Town Hall about noon)

we were all exhausted, Robert gave them some money for all their efforts, they headed off to a bar, and we set off looking for food. What a day! I never even found a postcard in Agira... lots of love, your cousin Christine.'

Back to the present. Of course, I went about this all wrong. I can see that now. But I have always been overwhelmed by my father's relations. Confronted by a whole country full of them, over the top, loud, generous, mercurial, I panicked. I should have asked the owners of the B&B where we were staying to phone the Franzones I found in the phone book. I got a good story, but was ridiculously unprepared for serious family history hunting. We hadn't even learned how to say 'grandfather' in Sicilian. The list of names I was carrying around was useless for finding living relations: it ENDED with my grandfather's name and birth date, 10 Oct 1868, and began 7 generations before that. There were problems I knew about then but didn't and still haven't followed up: my grandparents were married in Agira Town Hall in 1892, very odd for Roman Catholics. Was there a scandal? She wasn't pregnant. Four years later my grandfather was living in New Jersey. Why did they leave? A family falling-out? My grandfather had 7 siblings; I must have lots of second cousins in Agira. Maybe some of them even speak English now. I fear I will never find out.



Christine at no. 26 Via Sarceni with woman hanging out of window at top.



*cassetelle*

By Christine Franzen

# WELLINGTON BRANCH NEWS

**August is Family History Month** and in Wellington four talks will be put on by the four NZSG Branches: Kilbirnie, Porirua, Wellington, and Hutt Valley, respectively.

Tuesday 1 August, Sarah Hewitt:

*Starting your Genealogical Journey with the NZSG*

Tuesday 8 August, **Ann Ball and Kaye Batchelor**:

*What to do when you have done your DNA?*

Tuesday 15 August, **Gabor Toth**:

**'A quick pivot': Family History at Wellington City Libraries (pre- and-post closure of the Central Library)**

Tuesday 22 August, Kelly Dix and Jason Murphy:

*Family History Research using Papers Past and DigitalNZ*

The venue is **National Library Auditorium, Aitken St.** Tea, coffee, nibbles, raffle tickets, and chatting will be available from **5:30. Talks begin at 6:00 pm.**

Please come to all four talks, if possible, but even more importantly, encourage friends who are not members to come. One objective of **FHM** is to make ourselves known to the wider community and attract new members. The sessions will be informal and welcoming to all: no preregistration, no charge, just walk in.

**Wellington Branch's meeting on Tuesday 15 August is INSTEAD of our normal monthly meeting.** If you can arrive early to help our committee with welcoming, giving out refreshments, and selling raffle tickets, we would be grateful. Sign up at the next meeting (19 July) or email us at [Wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:Wellington@genealogy.org.nz).

Also note that **Wellington Branch members Ann Ball and Kaye Batchelor** are giving the talk on Tuesday 8 August. Let's be sure to support them by attending and encouraging non-members to do so as well.

More information will be available nearer the time on the raffle costs and prizes, and on how to watch sessions on zoom: [Wellington Family History Month](#) (Facebook) and **National Library Events page** ([natlib.govt.nz/events/2023/8](http://natlib.govt.nz/events/2023/8)). We will also let members know via email.

We extend our deepest condolences to Geraldine and others in our Branch and amongst our family and friends who have lost precious family members. As genealogists we understand the importance of preserving memories. (Mary Potter Hospice has a wait-list for their 'biographer' role.) Perhaps we can offer something positive to those grieving or dying: help and encouragement to write those stories and sort those photos. Do we need an informal group to help with this?

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this newsletter. A lot of behind-the-scenes discussion of FHM (**whole committee**). **Rodney King** and **Sue Dinsdale** of Kilbirnie happily offered their research. **Ann Ball** has made any further search for the world's most unusual(ly named) occupation pointless. **Jenny Martin** and **Kaye Batchelor** offered some press-stopping and fantastically useful research tips. **Jacqui Bridges'** and **Robin Mossman's** research journeys definitely are inspiring. **Antonio**: I will never forget you but I hope you have learned a bit more English.

Christine Franzen, Newsletter Editor ([wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:wellington@genealogy.org.nz))

## DIRECTORY



### Committee

Convener	Geraldine Needham-Girven	021 180 5166
Secretary	Robin Mossman	021 1587848
Treasurer	Barbara Marriott	021 756 860
Minute Secretary	Kaye Batchelor	027 2276734
Membership Secretary	Robin Mossman	021 1587848
Speakers' Program	Ann Ball	027 6410646
Newsletter Editor	Christine Franzen	021 1129730
	Prue Theobald	04 232 0241
Library Liaison	Sallie Hill	04 232 4622

### POSTAL ADDRESS

9 Cashmere Ave  
Khandallah 6035

### EVENING MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of the month  
February through November  
7:00 for 7:30 pm start  
Collective Community Hub  
33 Johnsonville Road

### COMMITTEE CONTACT

[wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:wellington@genealogy.org.nz)

### BRANCH WEBSITE

[genealogy.org.nz/Branch-details/11084-s1100084/](http://genealogy.org.nz/Branch-details/11084-s1100084/)

### FACEBOOK PAGE

[Facebook.com/NZSGWellington](https://www.facebook.com/NZSGWellington)

## WHAT'S ON AT YOUR LOCAL BRANCH?

KILBIRNIE	PORIRUA	HUTT VALLEY	KAPITI
<b>Thursday 3 August, 10 am</b> Jenny R Jones <i>Journey to NZ in 1842 on 'The London'</i> Matairangi Room, Ākau Tangi Sports Centre, 72 Kemp St	<b>Wed 12 July, 7 for 7:30 pm</b> Luke Howison: <i>NZ Ancestor Search Helper Website Tool</i> & Debbie Evans: <i>Find a Grave</i> Helen Smith Room, Pataka Art + Museum, Porirua	<b>Thurs 20 July, 7 for 7:30 pm</b> Lisa Duggan <i>So you are thinking of taking a DNA Test...</i> The Masonic Centre, 65 Udy St, Petone	<b>Tuesday 25 July, 7 for 7:30</b> Jonathan Newport (Archives NZ) <i>The Updated Collections Search</i> Coast Community Church, 57 Hinemoa St, Paraparaumu