



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

September 2019

Meetings

Thursday 12 September 2019 – 8pm

Speaker: Dr Rosemary Francis

Topic: Finding the Links

Dr Rosemary Francis will speak about Italian migration to Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century through the story of two relatives Ferdinando and Federico Gagliardi, who arrived in Melbourne in February 1877. Dr Rosemary Francis is an Associate of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, a Member of the Professional Historians' Association and the Foster and District Historical Society.

Thursday 10 October 2019 – 8pm

Speaker: Dr Ros Otzen

**Topic: From Ragged School to Modern Academy:
Melbourne City Mission's "Hester Hornbrook Academy"**

Dr Ros Otzen will speak about Hester Hornbrook, one of the founders of the Melbourne City Mission which was set up in 1854 to assist the poor and those in need. She managed the Mission from 1856 to 1862. She also founded nine Ragged Schools for the children of the poor in Melbourne between 1859 and her death in 1862.

Thursday 14 November 2019 – 8pm

Speaker: Pete Smith OAM

Topic: "From vaudeville to radio, TV and beyond".

Pete Smith has had a long and illustrious career on radio and television. He is well known for his work as announcer, compare, quiz program host and comedian. He worked on numerous shows such as *New Faces*, *Sale of the Century* and Bert Newton's *Tonight* program.

**Meetings are held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs

BHS Membership Fees Overdue

The fee remains the same as for the last financial year.

\$25 - single membership

\$35 - joint membership i.e. 2 adults at the same address.

Come along and renew your membership at the next meeting. Payment may be made by cash or cheque (payable to *Balwyn Historical Society*). Please place your payment in an envelope marked with your name(s). Cheques can be sent to **The BHS Treasurer, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103.**

For membership enquires contact Barbara Russell – 9857-6416

Recent Speaker: Dr Helen Doyle

Dr Helen Doyle is a senior heritage consultant with Context Heritage Consultants and is an expert in Australian historical research and the preparation of histories. She began her talk on the changing landscape Balwyn by discussing an early map of Nerm (the Boonwurrung word for Port Philip Bay) created in the 1840s by William Thomas, followed by an early map of Boroondara “Place of Shade”.

In 1841 Henry Elgar purchased eight square miles in Boroondara, including Koonung Creek, for £5,120, i.e. £1 per acre becoming legal owner of the Special Survey. Due to financial difficulties he later sold this land. The area covering the survey became more populated in the 1850s and building started in Balwyn in the 1860s and 1870s. The population increased in the latter decades of the 19th century with the building of the Outer Circle Railway line. The Deepdene Station, located between Abercrombie Street and Whitehorse Road, opened on 24 March 1891 and was named after the nearby Deepdene House. The last train ran on this line in 1927, replaced by road bus.

Helen Doyle discussed a few examples of the various sub-divisions in Balwyn. One such subdivision took place in Deepdene in the late 1880s and included present day Creswick, Pretoria, Kitchener streets and Wolseley Crescent. By the early 1920s much of the land along Gordon Street was up for sale. Slowly new homes followed with the State Bank offering very favourable terms to homebuyers, i.e. £5 per lot deposit. The bank also provided a wide range of plans for new owners to choose from, describing them as pretty, picturesque, solid and modern. Detached houses including two or three bedrooms, an indoor kitchen and bathroom were among the range of designs created by the Bank’s architect. Development of North Balwyn took place in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Helen Doyle also showed us a map of the network of creeks and gullies originally in the area. Over the years Balwyn’s landscape also gradually changed as these waterways were barrelled, used as rubbish tips and eventually developed into parkland. (Matthew ETTY-LEAL)

Balwyn Historical Society - Contact details

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Who are we? Where are we from? DNA testing and family history

By Marilyn Poole



A Strand of DNA, DNA double helix diagram

Introduction

We hear of DNA testing in many areas. One of the most common has been forensic DNA used by police to assist in solving crimes – an approach popularised by crime and mystery novels. Another well-known use has been in paternity testing. Perhaps less known and less understood is the use of DNA in genomic medicine. There is now enormous interest in the use of DNA testing in family history. This popularity has been given an impetus by TV programs such as “Who Do You Think You Are?” and “Every Family Has A Secret” both aired on SBS in Australia. Many people all over the world are sending in samples of saliva to different genealogy sites in order to be given an analysis of their DNA to determine close relatives and the geographic locations of their ancestry. According to BBC news (5 August, 2-0190) at beginning of 2019, 26 million people had added their DNA to four large companies i.e. Ancestry, 23andMe, MyHeritage and Gene by Gene.

The following article is aimed at readers who may have already sent in a DNA sample or who are contemplating doing so. The article may seem rather dry and technical, but I hope to provide some useful information to readers which may aid decision making and also help readers understand their results if they already have sent in a sample.

The uses of DNA for family historians

Genomic DNA is passed down equally from both parents and codes for hair colour, height, shape of nose or ears and most things that we inherit. It should be recognised however, that inheritance is not the only factor that determines who we are. This is sometimes referred to as the nature vs nature debate. Inheritance is important but lifestyle and environment play an important influence in determining who we are and what we become.

For the purposes of family history, our cells have other types of DNA namely mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), Y-DNA and autosomal DNA.

mtDNA We all inherit mitochondrial DNA from our mother, her mother and her mother before her and so on. Although we all inherit mitochondrial DNA only females can pass it on to their children. Maternal ancestry can be traced back for thousands of years and is used by scientists to track human migration patterns in modern populations. It is through mtDNA that we know that the ancient humans existed first in Africa and at least 170,000 years ago humans migrated out of Africa both east and west spreading slowly throughout the world.

Y-DNA We all have 23 pairs of chromosomes, the last pair being X-Y for men and X-X for women. The Y chromosome does not recombine during procreation and so remains virtually unchanged from generation to generation (except when mutations occur). It is possible to trace our ancestors via the male line for generations. A man will have the same Y-DNA as

his father, sons, his paternal grandfather and his paternal great-grandfather. The Y-DNA test is used by those who are interested in tracing their father's family name back through the generations.

Autosomal DNA is used to check 22 of the 23 pairs of chromosomes. It describes the DNA inherited from the autosomal chromosomes as opposed to the sex chromosomes i.e. that is from the 22 pairs which are not X (female) or Y (male). Autosomal DNA can be inherited from both maternal or paternal ancestral lines. However, as it changes somewhat every generation it may not go back far (perhaps to great-great grandparents or even six generations). This test is useful for those who have already constructed a family tree or pedigree chart. The best way to use the autosomal DNA test is to use it in combination with a well-constructed and evidence-based family tree so that you can identify blood relatives. Generally, speaking the test is accurate for parents, siblings half siblings, aunts and uncles. Once you are beyond close relatives then the test results are dealing in probabilities.

The largest autosomal database is Ancestry DNA. Initially, Ancestry DNA was only available in the US but since 2015 has been available in Australia, New Zealand, The UK, Ireland and Canada and is adding more countries each year. One of the most useful things about AncestryDNA is that it matches DNA with family trees. However, one must remember that DNA matching is only done within that particular database.

MyHeritage is another large database and is useful in that it accepts tests inwards from other companies. MyHeritage also offers a genetic risk and ancestry report in terms of whether you have a decreased, average or increased risk of certain health conditions such as hereditary breast cancer, late onset Parkinson's disease, late onset Alzheimer's disease and others. However, it would be wise to seek further information before making decisions on the basis of genetic risk reports.

AncestryDNA, 23andMe, MyHeritageDNA, Living DNA and FindmyPast DNA are all autosomal tests. Family Tree DNA sells the Y-DNA and mitochondrial DNA tests as well as autosomal.

Taking the test is easy and the method depends on the company. AncestryDNA and 23andMe do saliva samples whereas FamilyTree DNA, MyHeritage DNA and Living DNA do cheek swabs. The sample is then sent off to the company in a pre-addressed packet and the results returned online.

Some considerations in taking a DNA test

Currently, insurance applicants in Australia must disclose all known genetic test results if requested to do so by the insurer. However, if the insurance benefit amount falls below a certain threshold then the individual does not have to disclose the results of a genetic test a matter that obviously needs to be checked. Individuals should be aware that genetic testing (particularly those that give genetic risk reports of certain diseases or conditions) could result in higher premiums.

Another concern is privacy as many countries do not have the same privacy laws as Australia. For example, in the USA crime police uploaded the DNA of a man suspected of multiple rapes, murders and burglaries to a free online database where people share their genetic code in order to search for relatives. The police created a complex family tree which eventually led to relatives of the criminal who was finally arrested and charged.

Some personal experiences of using a DNA test submitted to Ancestry.

I submitted a DNA sample about two years ago with mixed success. Some people find the geographic regions from which their ancestors came to be immensely useful. This was not so in my case. According to my “Ethnicity Estimate” 89% of my heritage is from England, Wales and North Western Europe. I have 6% Swedish ancestry and 5% from two other regions. No surprises or even interest except for the 5% from the two other regions.

Ancestry uses starred matches and in my case these matches were my son and granddaughter. As I happen to know that other close relatives have not submitted their DNA for testing all this means is they will not be found on the Ancestry DNA database!

However, the test was useful in that it turned up a 2nd-3rd cousin with whom I have been in contact for a while. He is the grandson of my grandmother’s sister (our common ancestor was our great-grandmother) and this was interesting as he filled in quite a few family stories for me about my great-grandmother’s family and her children.

I have dozens of other matches. Most of these are just frustrating as the people do not have a family tree so it is impossible to find a link or Ancestry states that although there is shared DNA it cannot find a common ancestor. Without a well-constructed family tree on both sides of the DNA match finding where people fit is a difficult business.

The other service offered by Ancestry is by “ThruLines”. People on your family tree with whom there is a DNA match are identified. No match can be disconcerting as occurred in an episode of “Every Family Has A Secret” when a man found that the ‘father’ who had brought him up was not his biological father.

ThruLines are a very good means of checking the accuracy of a family tree. However, again it is dependent on whether there is a match on the Ancestry DNA database and a family tree on Ancestry connected to that match. I have been fortunate in being able to identify a number of ancestors born in the late 18th century and to know that the family tree is likely to be accurate. This is probably stretching autosomal DNA results about as far as they can go!

In conclusion, family history is a fascinating and time-consuming hobby enjoyed by millions of people all over the world. There is a saying that you see the world through your ancestors’ eyes – not entirely true of course, but perhaps that is what drives us.

Sources

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