

Hello, I'm Imogen Wegman. I'm a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania, and as a landscape historian I spend my days asking maps to give up their secrets. I'm going to talk today about how maps are useful in Family History, and I will be using a lot of visual examples in this video.

It's always fun to try to identify particular places on maps, and finding the farmhouse in 19th century Dorset that your great great grandmother was born in is particularly satisfying. But maps are of more use to the family historian than just providing some end detail. Say, for instance, your family has a story about your convict ancestor James. The records say he was born and married in the English county of Shropshire, in a town called Knighton. Family history is adamant that until he was transported, he never, ever, ever left Wales. There's even the Bible he brought out, in Welsh.

Something there doesn't work, but who do you trust? The family heirloom or the records? Before you throw the whole lot away, have a look on a map. You'll soon see that Knighton straddles the English and Welsh border. So both stories have truth, but together they give a better picture.

It can also be important to look at maps from the period you're researching. Place names often change, or even transfer – in the 1820s Tasmania had a district called 'Sorell', to the mountainous western side of the Midlands. Today that name has been forgotten there, while a town on the water's edge, east of Hobart is called Sorell. But land sale records show people buying and selling land in the 1820s in 'Sorell'. A map from 1828 shows both of these places, so I know it's necessary to look for my landowners in both locations.

There are a number of sources of historic maps, and a few traps that can be easily avoided if you look out for them.

As with names of people, it is important to first remember that until the mid-19th century, place names were often spelled phonetically and could vary according to accent or dialect. If you know the county or region, it can be helpful to try imagining the name in a local accent – recently I had to find 'Darum' in Norfolk, but by putting on a terrible 'Narfowk' accent I worked out it was Dereham. There's a great collection of audioclips of regional dialects on the British Library website if you want some tips! Google can sometimes also interpret phonetic spellings, particularly if you have a state or county. But always double check its ideas!

There are also a lot of duplicate place names, so look for any extra information you can find. Say your maternal great grandfather was born in 'Norton, England'. There's a lot of places with that name. But his sister was born in Stockton. There's a good chance those two places are close to each other. Find one settlement on a map and then check the neighbouring settlements for the other name.

Boundaries can change over time – I recently asked someone if there's a current map of parish boundaries in Tasmania, and she laughed at me. Some things, like parish boundaries can be quite amorphous, shifting all over the place. Sometimes colonies may have had several different systems before settling into modern regions – Van Diemen's Land was broken up and redivided multiple times into different sized administrative units. And the current English counties have only been established

since 1974 – there were several reorganisations in the centuries before this. Just because you can't find a name on google maps doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

There are a number of places to check for old maps. Some are online, in various formats, but most are in archives and libraries. And different periods have different types of maps, with varying accuracy and information. It is only in the 19th century that we see consistently reliable and accessible maps become available, but before this there are still options.

For a lot of family history research, a contemporary state or county-wide map might be the most useful. My first port of call when looking for Australian locations is to do a maps search in Trove – even if it can't give you access to the particular page, it will tell you what exists, and how it might be classified. A search can be as simple as 'New South Wales', and then narrowed by decade or availability if the results are overwhelming. A lot of state libraries and archives have these maps available online, and Trove should help you work out where to find them.

In the UK these large areas are best covered by the first and second editions of the Ordnance Survey maps. These are available at different scales from the National Library of Scotland, and show England, Scotland and Wales in the 19th century.

Sometimes you might be looking for a particular place that is too small to appear on a state map, or you need a little more detail. In Australia some states, such as Tasmania, NSW and Queensland have large collections available online, although to my knowledge Tasmania's LISTMap is the most user-friendly and has the broadest coverage available online. Parish maps will often also give the same information from a similar time. There are some web addresses included in this week's resources, but remember that if you find the website's unwieldy it can often be easier to note down what you're trying to find and head into the archives or library. Often you'll find maps that look very familiar but come from a different catalogue, this is just because people were copying from each other and adding their own details, especially ones of larger areas.

In the UK there are more options to look for, including earlier enclosure and tithe maps. As with Australian maps, each county has its own way of storing and providing access to more local maps. Enclosure maps often show the names of landowners, and the earliest come from the 17th century. Tithe maps were used to determine the amount to be paid to the church, and often have numbers rather than names, but still show the layout of a settlement. Some counties, such as Norfolk and Devon have collections online to explore, such as Norfolk's Historical Map Image Viewer, while others are still held only in archives. If you're looking for maps of a particular area, it can be helpful to google something like 'historic maps online Yorkshire' or 'digitised maps Somerset', and you'll find the local collection if it exists. The National Archives and the British Library also have some collections online.

Finally, have fun with the maps you find! And be creative! Here you can see where I've quickly plotted a few of the birthplaces of my Dutch ancestors, just using Google Maps. It's interesting to see the little clusters they come from, and as a work in progress I'm looking forward to seeing the patterns of travel across the country. A farm or settlement may have disappeared, but look for their names fossilised in the

roads or rivers. Use GoogleEarth or StreetView to get a feel for the landscape, look for interactive websites that let you move the map around or lay it on other maps, look up the origins of interesting place names, and you'll come out of it with a much better understanding about where your ancestors lived.

Websites

Map collections – each state and territory organises theirs differently, but these are starting points to see what might be available. There will always be more available in the library and archives.

Trove Maps: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/map/>

Tasmania: <http://maps.thelist.tas.gov.au/listmap/app/list/map>

NSW: <http://images.maps.nsw.gov.au/pixel.htm>

Qld: <https://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/mapping-data/maps/research-history>

NT: <http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/historicMapImf.jsp>

SA: <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=691#southaustralian>

Vic: <http://services.land.vic.gov.au/maps/interactive.jsp>

WA: <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/archive-collection/collection/maps-online>

ACT: None known

A collection of Australian and international links:

<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/maps/map-links.html>

National Library of Scotland (including England Ordnance Survey):

<http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>

Ireland (collection of resources): <http://tiara.ie/maps.php>

British Library Sounds: (<http://sounds.bl.uk>) a collection of British accents and dialect recordings.

GenUK: (<http://www.genuki.org.uk/index.html>) Lists map resources in each county profile.