

SANDHURST ANCESTORS IN THE BRAC ARCHIVES

Checklist & Guide

There are lots of places for ancestors who spent time in the Bendigo district to leave footprints in the BRAC collection and related primary sources. This checklist will help you work through the likely places to find their traces, and the *Guide* will help to navigate the collections.

We always recommend having some basic details about the person or organisation you're researching, such as full name, dates of birth or establishment, streets or districts they were from etc. Refer to the last page of the *Guide* for a list of resources to start your search; the Library also offers regular, free genealogy starter classes at various branches.

BRAC COLLECTION

- City of Sandhurst-Bendigo Inwards Correspondence (1855-1899)
- Rate Records
- Council Minute Books
- Licencing Registers
- Cemetery Records
- Court Records

PROV COLLECTION

- Inquest Deposition Records & Body Cards
- Wills in the Master of Supreme Court
- Registrar of Probates
- Other Records

WIDER LIBRARY & ONLINE COLLECTION

- Library Database – Funeral and Cemetery Records
- The Horsefall Collection
- Perfect Pictures Database
- Goldfields Library Local History Collection
- Bendigo Annals
- Bendigo & District Directories
- TROVE Newspaper Archives
- Bendigo Family History Group Online Indexes
- Victorian Parish Plans Collection
- National Archives WWI Records
- Victorian Electoral Rolls on Ancestry

TIP: If you take photos (no flash) of any BRAC collection items, you will need to reference the Public Records Office of Victoria if you use publish them in any format

Bendigo Regional Archives Centre Collection

City of Sandhurst-Bendigo Inwards Correspondence (1855-1899)

Letters & Reports

Your ancestor may have *written* to council, either by themselves or as a representative of the many businesses and organisations that dealt with council. Your ancestor may have been the *subject* of correspondence, for example many children who had contracted infectious diseases were listed in the Health Officer's regular reports to Council.

Use the [City of Sandhurst Inward Correspondence 1855-1899 Index](#) on our website to search for names of people, businesses or organisations who appear in the correspondence. Make a note of the unit and date range to order via PROV (Refer to *Guide: Ordering Public Records to the BRAC Reading Room* if you aren't familiar with this process).

Sometimes it is possible to trace responses to these letters in the **City of Sandhurst-Bendigo Letter Books** (1856-1930). These are not indexed but if you order the book which corresponds to the time period of the letter, any responses will appear in the weeks following the date it was sent. You can see the date ranges covered and order any of the Letter Books on the PROV website (search Bendigo + 16341).

Petitions

Within the Correspondence are several hundred petitions – joint letters signed by multiple ratepayers asking for council action in areas as diverse as road works to health issues to the postal service! Petitions are listed in the overall [Correspondence Index](#) by topic, but there is a separate index for individual signatories within each petition to 1899 ([City of Sandhurst Inward Correspondence – Petition Signatory Index](#)) which will help you locate an ancestor within these letters in the series.

Rate & Valuation Books (BRAC)

Use the *Guide: BRAC Rate Books* for information on how to navigate the rate books. All Rate Books in custody are catalogued and can be ordered through the PROV site.

City of Sandhurst-Bendigo Rate Books

If your ancestor lived in or owned property within the City of Sandhurst-Bendigo, then they will appear in the **Rate Books**. For the period 1856-1903, you can use the [Bendigo Rate Book Index](#) in the Goldfields Library site (eLibrary Family History section) to search. Each index entry gives a transcription of their record from the Rate Book, including their rate number if you wish to undertake some house hunting (see *Guide: Bendigo House Hunting at BRAC*).

There is no index for 1904-1958 and 1972-1994 so having an address for your ancestor or organisation will help greatly in finding them; otherwise the Bendigo house hunting *Guide* can help.

Outer Bendigo Rate Books

Eaglehawk, Raywood, Marong, Huntly & Strathfieldsaye Shires

If you ancestor lived outside the City of Sandhurst-Bendigo area, you will find them in one of the surrounding **Shire or Borough Rate Books**. Maps showing how pre-1994 City of Greater Bendigo was divided are in the [Maps & Plans](#) page of our website to help you decide which set you will need.

You can access the [Eaglehawk Rate Book Index](#) for 1855-1899 on Goldfields Library computers (ask the reference desk librarian about accessing the Library Database). All other Rate Books are sorted by occupant surname, by council ward or parish.

Council Minute Books (BRAC)

Sandhurst-Bendigo, Marong, Heathcote-McIvor, Huntly, Raywood, Strathfieldsaye, Eaglehawk (various years – refer to the PROV catalogue for details)

If your ancestor was a councillor or council employee, or if they were a contractor or were engaged with a council issue, it is likely that they appeared in the **Council Minute Books**. Unfortunately, this collection is not indexed however if you have their years of service, or the date of a specific issue upon which your ancestor or organisation dealt with Council (i.e. from a newspaper article), you can order the book that includes that time period. Minutes are recorded in the chronological order of the meeting date.

Licencing Court Registers (BRAC)

The Licencing Courts oversaw permits to sell or make alcohol (either as an ongoing concern or for special events) or sell products as a hawker, including transferring these licences. The **Registers** aren't indexed but are ordered by year, and in the case of hotel permits, alphabetically by hotel name within licencing district. You can often find references in TROVE for ancestors engaged in this trade for a guide to dates.

Cemetery Records (BRAC)

If your ancestor was from the Goornong area, you may find them in the **Goornong Cemetery Trust** series. If they are buried at the Cemetery, they will appear in the **Interment Book** (which is indexed); if they lived in the area, they might appear in the **Trust Minute Books** (unindexed). These can both be ordered on the PROV site.

Court Registers (BRAC & PROV)

There are various registers for the Sandhurst-Bendigo Courts (including the Court of Mines) between 1858-1933 but few are indexed. Often reports on more serious cases, and lists of cases heard can be found on TROVE, and generally will have as much – if not more – information on the case.

PROV COLLECTION

Inquest Deposition Records & Body Cards (PROV)

An inquest was an inquiry held to establish the exact cause of death of a person if they died in certain circumstances, mainly if the death was sudden, unexpected or occurred in a public institution such as a hospital. Body Cards (1959-1985) record investigations by the Coroner that did not require a further inquest.

On the PROV website, enter the name in the search bar and refine the results by selecting 'Inquests' under Series in the Filter list on the left. Results for 1925 and earlier can be downloaded and viewed as a PDF. Body Cards and Inquest Deposition Files created after 1925 can be viewed at the North Melbourne Reading Room OR you can order a copy to be sent to you (for a fee).

Inquest records are held by PROV up to 2003 but access from 1986 is closed and requires a request to the Coroner's Court for access.

A reminder that descriptions, medical reports and photographs can be quite confronting; researchers are able to request one of several private spaces at the North Melbourne room if required.

TIP: Inquests between 1962 and 1971 can't be searched by name in the PROV catalogue, you will need to search Macbeth's Digger series (Inquest Index), available on library computers.

Wills & Probate (PROV)

Wills & Probate records for deaths occurring up to and including 1925 are available for digital download on the PROV site (regardless of the year they were proved). On the PROV website, enter the name in the search bar and refine the results by selecting 'Wills' under Series in the Filter list on the left. Often Probate & Administration papers will be spread across two separate documents.

The information available in a Will varies greatly however can offer clues about address, occupation, relatives, and general state of health and relationships.

Probate papers will generally include an inventory of assets which can be very useful when trying to trace property or putting together a picture of the day-to-day life of your ancestor.

Wills and Probate for deaths occurring in 1926 up to 2016 can be viewed at the North Melbourne Reading Room OR you can order a copy to be sent to you (for a fee). Later Probate files will often include a copy of the Will.

TIP: Avoid using second names as often only an initial is recorded. For a common name, try using 'John Smith' plus the year and/or place of death in the search bar.

Other Records (PROV)

People from Sandhurst may also appear in various series held by PROV, some available to view online, others which need to be ordered for viewing at the North Melbourne Reading Room or in some cases, copies ordered (for a fee).

The **Bendigo Receiving Ward Register of Patients** 1874-1908 is available as a PDF from the PROV site (an **Index** is available on our website) and lists basic details of all patients as well as their dispatch (to an asylum, gaol or home).

The **Register of Male, and Female, Prisoners** contain individual records for people (including those from Sandhurst) incarcerated up to 1947, and information can include:

- Full name and aliases, age, physical & general description and sometimes a photograph
- Particulars of their contact with the courts over time (offences, sentences, prison etc)

Search the name and refine by finding Series in the Filter list on the left by selecting Register of Prisoners for the relevant gender; records are digitised and can be downloaded as a PDF.

Records from the **Sandhurst Prison** are available to view at the North Melbourne Reading Room and includes Correspondence (1929-39), Officers & Staff Records (1851-1958), the Warders' Offence Book (1861-99) and the Governor's Diary (1970-80).

Children who were taken into State care were recorded in the **Wards of State** registers, which can be searched on the PROV website, with downloadable PDF records available up to 1894 and can include details about the child, their family circumstances and where they were placed. For records after 1894 up to 1910, you can access the **Index Books to Ward Registers** at the North Melbourne Reading Room and then order the relevant volume, or for 1911-1918, order the volume for the most likely year.

If your ancestor was a teacher in the Sandhurst district, it's likely he or she will appear in the **Teacher Records**. The records largely note the remarks made by the inspector after his regular visits, but often records the schools taught at, subjects, teaching method and personal details (sometimes including a date of retirement or death). Currently records up to 1959 have been digitised and are accessible for free via Ancestry.com.au via subscription or by using the free version on the Library computers or on your device connected to the Library Wi-Fi; however, the process for finding the relevant record is convoluted and we recommend visiting the PROV site for specific directions.

Many records for schools are held at the North Melbourne repository within **Department of Education** collection and sometimes as their own Agency – the content varies for each school but can include Student Registers, Annual Reports, Photos, Correspondence & History files. A simple search of the school name on the PROV site will bring up all available records which can be ordered and viewed at the North Melbourne Reading Room.

The **Victorian Assisted & Unassisted Passenger Lists** from the United Kingdom will often list the name and location of future employers for many passengers, this can confirm when or why an ancestor came to the Sandhurst district. Digitised records are available on Ancestry.com.au ,and also on microfiche at most libraries.

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR SANDHURST RESEARCH

- Bendigo Family History Group (Wednesday & Saturday – Bendigo Library, First Floor) have a wealth of databases & support for people researching Sandhurst and district ancestors (refer also to the **Resources** page on our website for links to other regional historical and genealogical societies and resources)
- Library Database Search - Funeral Records (includes family, address and burial information) with **search function** (available on Goldfields Library computers only)
- Perfect Pictures – Photos of people, buildings and events around Bendigo with **search function** (available at the Bendigo Library branch on Family History Computer 1 – ask at the reference desk for access)
- TROVE – Try restricting searches by newspaper (local papers *Bendigo Advertiser*, *Bendigo Independent*, *Bendigonian*, *Mclvor Times* but also bordering areas such as *Kerang New Times* and *Mt Alexander Mail*, and generic papers like *The Weekly Times* and *The Argus*)

The **Local History and Resource Collection** at the Bendigo Library also has places where you might find your ancestors, or information to help find them in the BRAC collection:

- Local History, Gold & Genealogy Collection – books on various groups, businesses, events, families, localities, mines, churches, schools etc which contain many names and photos
- Horsefall Collection – historic newspaper clippings and other ephemera divided into subject (i.e. Hotels, Churches, Societies)
- *Bendigo Annals* (1856-1996) – an indexed collection of events every year in and around Bendigo, from obituaries to theatre, sports to council events. The Bendigo Family History Group has an online index to the photos in the Annals on their website.
- *Bendigo & Sandhurst Directories* (1856-1965) – listing of residents, their residence and occupation
- Parish Plans – a full collection of Parish Plans for the County of Bendigo
- National Archives Australia: Defence Records – WWI records will often provide information about age, residence, relations and employment both at enlistment and beyond
- Bendigo Family History Group Indexes – a great collection of online and physical indexes for Bendigo and district hospitals, mines, schools and other organisations; a full listing is on their website

Having basic details can help with your research – **vital records** can be found using these resources:

- Digger Indexes – comprehensive and searchable free indexes to Victorian birth, death and marriage records (including those recorded at sea)
- Victorian Birth, Death & Marriage Registry – free search of historic indexes (with historic certificates available for immediate PDF download for a fee)
- Ancestry – subscription service or access free from any Victorian library, the Victorian Electoral Rolls in particular (from 1903) are very useful in placing an ancestor in the Bendigo district over time
- Find My Past – subscription service or access free from most Victorian libraries
- Remembrance Parks Central Victoria Deceased Search – burials with full dates at Bendigo-Back Creek, Eaglehawk, White Hills, Kangaroo Flat, Axedale Public cemeteries and Eaglehawk Crematorium
- Other City of Greater Bendigo cemeteries – refer to **Resources** page on the website