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Initial investigations into our branch of the HOLMES family indicated that its origin in Australia was Edmund Augustus HOLMES. Tracing Edmund's family was quite difficult for many problems arose. No-one among our known relatives knew anything of him or about him. There were no photographs or any memorabilia, at least not in the beginning.

We did as genealogists recommend, and started with my husband. I knew the details of his father, Francis William George (Bill) HOLMES and also of his grandfather Francis Carter Galbraith HOLMES, with reasonable accuracy. Verification[1] of these details put me on the path of Edmund August HOLMES and his family near Springsure in Queensland. I soon found his marriage, births of five of his six children, and his death[2].

Edmund August HOLMES and Caroline GALBRAITH were married on 21 April 1870 at Echo Hills where Edmund was the station overseer and Caroline the governess. Edmund's parents were Henry HOLMES and Harriet CARTER and he was born in Bristol, England about 1837[3]. On 4 December 1897, Edmund died[4], aged 61, in Rockhampton and was buried in the old cemetery there. His age at death indicated his birth may have been 1836. Edmund lived 35 years in Queensland – did this mean he arrived from England about 1862 or that he came from interstate?

There is a gap in the history. When did they move to Rockhampton? The births of the children reveal that they were born at Echo Hills or at Mantuan Downs, two adjoining properties near Springsure. Frank was born in 1881 at Mantuan Downs. Later discoveries showed a photograph of him, aged about seven, taken at Springsure and a letter from Frank to his mother when he mentions Rockhampton as being the place of his childhood. Thus the closest we get to the move to Rockhampton is about 1888 to 1890.

Fortunately in about 1993, on a visit to Rockhampton cemetery, we found Edmund's grave and discovered his eldest daughter, Constance, was buried beside him. She was the child whose birth was not yet found. Knowing she died in 1896, I searched the records and found she was born in Sydney in 1872[5]. In later years it was revealed that her mother's sisters lived there.

While in the Rockhampton Library I searched *The Morning Bulletin* newspapers for death notices and obituaries. The death notices revealed the family lived in Kent Street, Rockhampton at the time. There were no obituaries. This seemed to be as far as I could go in this direction. It was time to look at purchasing certificates.

The certificates gave me a big step forward, so I was ready for the next step. When did Edmund come to Australia and did he come with parents and siblings? The journey by ship had to be between his birth in Bristol in 1836 and 1870 when he married in Queensland. This was when I hit my first brick wall.

The shipping records[6] for all States of Australia revealed no person by the name of Edmund Augustus HOLMES had reached the shores of Australia. There were many with the surname HOLMES but no suitable Henry, Harriet or Edmund and, as his siblings were unknown, they could not be found.

I looked to find details of his parents and siblings in Bristol. His parents, Henry HOLMES and Harriet CARTER, married in 1817 in Bristol[7] but the births of their children occurred before compulsory registration commenced in England in 1837. I searched the IGI[8] but drew a blank as these Bristol church records had not been filmed.

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[1] Queensland Birth, Death and Marriage certificates
[2] Queensland Birth, Death and Marriage certificates
[3] Queensland Marriage Certificate 1870/C503
[4] Queensland Death Certificate 1897/C3743
[5] New South Wales Birth Certificate 1872/1372
[6] Assisted Shipping Indexes for various Australian States
[7] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *FamilySearch* at *www.familysearch.org/eng/Search/frameset_search.asp*
[8] International Genealogical Index is part of *FamilySearch*

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Then a small chink in the wall emerged. On a visit to my husband's uncle Noel in Canberra, I asked if he knew of any Family Bible for the HOLMES family. Other family members had not known where it was. I could hardly contain my excitement when Noel said, 'There's a pile of Bibles downstairs. Take your pick.' I did. Looking at the Bibles I chose one. Between the Old and New Testaments were the family details of Edmund and Caroline HOLMES. Unfortunately, while it gave the full birth date for Caroline, it gave only 'Bristol 31st July' for Edmund. I now knew the full names (three for each child), birth details and baptisms of their six children and death details for two. Three different people wrote the entries in the Bible. I later identified them by comparing handwriting on other documents. Edmund had been the first keeper of the records.

However, no new light had been shed on Edmund's family in Bristol or his arrival in Australia. I tried many methods of finding some new information, to no avail. Then, in utter desperation, I went to Google on the internet. I was very new to the process. Entering the names Harriet CARTER and Henry HOLMES, I clicked the button, as on previous occasions. Up came a chart for a Victorian family giving an email address and with it the beginning of a breakthrough in our family history search – I was about to scale the brick wall.

I emailed the website owner outlining the situation. Within a short time I had a response. It was his wife's family and he gave me the names of eleven children (we later found another one) including Edmund, the youngest. Apparently Harriet and some of the children emigrated to Victoria after Henry's death in 1840. I was referred to another family member who had done more research. So one brick wall was down and I was making headway.

Soon the story of the HOLMES family grew very fast. The Victorian HOLMES knew very little of Edmund's family and had met none of his descendants.

When the HOLMES family members arrived in Australia at various times around 1850, they settled in Victoria in Leigh Creek near Geelong where they had an inn[9]. Later they moved further on. Some became involved in searching for gold, both in Victoria and New Zealand. Others turned to farming.

The mystery of Edmund's shipping record was now revealed. Harriet (CARTER) HOLMES arrived at Port Phillip in 1852 with two daughters, Adelaide and Catherine, a son Edwin and a nephew James[10]. This sounds pretty normal except that Harriet arrived as Mrs HOLMES (no christian name) aged 40, when she should have been 51. Her son was named Edwin instead of Edmund, the children were all about two years too young and the nephew James we knew nothing about. It was the daughters' names that confirmed this could be the family.

A search of records[11] contributed many details to the growing family. Newspapers, local histories and land records added more information. From one newspaper was the account of the shipwreck of the *Lyee-Moon* on which Edmund's brother and sister were travelling to Queensland from Melbourne[12]. Another told of the inquest into the death of Albert, another brother. Contact with the Victorian HOLMES family certainly boosted our knowledge.

A trip overseas included a visit to Bristol where we were able to get a feel for the area where the HOLMES family had lived and worked. Even though many of the buildings had been destroyed during World War II, some remained. We explored the ruins of Temple Church where many of the family, including Henry, were baptised and buried, and the Quay area where Henry had worked.

Then followed a HOLMES Family Reunion (these are held every five years) in Arawata, Victoria. We posted on the wall our contribution to the family tree – their missing link.

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[9] Victorian Licencing Records and List of Publicans
[10] Victorian Shipping Index
[11] Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages and Shipping Indexes
[12] *The Sydney Morning Herald* published many extensive reports on the wreck

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The remoteness of Edmund in Queensland had isolated our part of the family and we needed to know how he came to be there. Then all was revealed. Edmund's sister, Adelaide, married Robert REID. Edmund accompanied them to Queensland to take up land at Echo Hills near Springsure. The 'A Reid' on Edmund's marriage certificate was his sister. Though misled by an entry in the Queensland Post Office Directory for R Bird instead of R Reid as the owner of Echo Hills (it also mentioned E A Holmes) we managed to overcome this through another source[13].

At first, much detail of the REIDs eluded me. Now their story has emerged (though after the book's publication). Adelaide and Robert's children, being very adventurous, were to lead very exciting lives – searching for gold in Kalgoorlie and California, and exploring in the Congo. After Robert's death in Blackall, Adelaide travelled to England and lies buried in Brighton Cemetery with one of her sons.

Later, a great-granddaughter of Edmund's, from Seattle USA, found letters among her mother's memorabilia which revealed that in 1904 Edmund's widow Caroline, accompanied by her two spinster daughters Madge and Wilhelmina, moved to the Sydney suburb of Stanmore. These sisters became the owners of a Nursing Home in Marrickville. Son Frank married in Longreach and in 1916 took his family to Sydney. Frank's brother Will also settled in Sydney where he died in 1921 leaving a widow and infant daughter who have not as yet been traced.

Following a wonderful reunion with descendants of Edmund HOLMES' siblings in Arawata, I felt the need to tell the story, not just of Edmund but of all the family. It was important to tell the story so our children would know about their ancestors and be proud of them. As a culmination to many years of research, I published a book, *Bristol and Beyond*, that tells the HOLMES family story – a story that bridges many generations, moving back further than Henry to his grandparents, parents and siblings. The book, in A4 format, has 164 pages filled with stories, maps, photographs and charts. However, information has a way of popping up from time to time, and my copy of the book has lots of bits and pieces written in the margins.

Meeting brick walls proved very frustrating, but when a breakthrough came, a sense of exhilaration atoned for the earlier frustrations.

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[13] Marie Reid, *A History of Emerald: A Place of Importance*, Central Queensland University Press, 2001

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The Morning Bulletin
The Sydney Morning Herald

Other resources
Electoral rolls
Family Bible
Family letters and photographs
IGI at LDS Family History Centre, Campbelltown NSW
NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages
NSW Shipping Indexes
Queensland Births, Deaths and Marriages
Queensland Shipping Indexes
Sands Directory
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Victorian Shipping Indexes