



Media Release  
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## Trace your family tree

Researching family history is becoming increasingly popular as records become more accessible to people. Selwyn District Council and Selwyn Libraries hold a wealth of information which can help people to find out about their family history.

Selwyn Digital Librarian Christine Grant says she has noticed an increase in interest in family history and genealogy in recent years – something she puts down to the internet making it easier for people to start researching their family story. “Looking into where we came from links our present to the past in a meaningful way, and can give a sense of belonging,” says Mrs Grant.

“Libraries provide free Wi-Fi and public access computers, which enable people to access records online,” she adds.

Selwyn Kete is a website where local groups or individuals can share and store images and records, and where communities can share news and events. The main collection is Soldiers of Selwyn, which has over 600 images and entries commemorating the soldiers from Selwyn who lost their lives during World War I. Another collection is School Days, which has over 100 images and entries about schools in the area.

Ancestry Library Edition is an extensive family history database which can be searched for free, both in the library and from home. This provides access to over 10 billion records from New Zealand, British, American, European and Australian sources such as census records, birth registers and immigration records.

The Selwyn Library website also has links to Papers Past which is a national newspaper database and New Zealand Yesteryears which has archives about early settler's ship listings, past population numbers and much more.

Free library membership is available to all Selwyn residents and provides access to these online resources from a library computer or from home at any time by visiting [www.selwynlibrary.govt.nz/online](http://www.selwynlibrary.govt.nz/online). You will need your library card number and pin to access some services. Your pin is normally the last four numbers of your library membership number unless you have changed this.

Council archives go back as far as the mid-1860s and can also be useful for research. The Council holds land records which indicate where and when people occupied land, and cemetery records which detail where people are buried along with some brief background information.

Selwyn Archives and Records Officer Stephen Wright says a lot of people are interested in finding out where their ancestors or relatives lived, and by checking old rates books and valuation rolls they can often find useful information.

As well as land and burial records the archives collection includes items such as old minute and letter books, files and documents on numerous subjects, maps, plans and photographs.

“We have all sorts of archives which may be useful to people. There is a large collection of old letters which can provide interesting glimpses into the history of the area – although the handwriting and spelling can be a challenge at times,” says Mr Wright. “One example is letters from original hut owners at the Rakaia Huts.”

The Council recently launched a new online database of cemetery records of Selwyn’s 19 public cemeteries which contains over 10,000 records which can be searched by name or location. It can be accessed online at [www.selwyn.govt.nz/cemsearch](http://www.selwyn.govt.nz/cemsearch).

The majority of the council archives are held at the Rolleston Council building in the records room. A request form to view archives is available online the council website under the My Property tab, on the Records and Archives page or call records staff on 03 347 2906.

Ends

*Photo attached: Selwyn Archives and Records Officer Stephen Wright laying out some of the maps and photos available in the council archives and records*

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