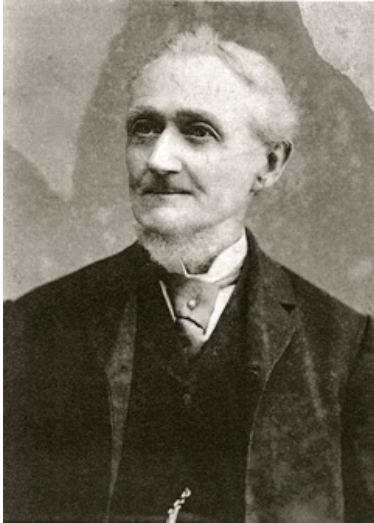


Bootmakers of Clunes

John Mulcahy 1824 - 1913

Sarah Payne 1823 -1901



John Mulcahy. Source: Elaine Medlin

The Mulcahys: Irish bootmakers

John Mulcahy's parents were **John Mulcahy** and **Ann (Hannah) Mulkay**, both born and married in Ireland. Their first child we know of was Elizabeth who was born in Adare, Co. Limerick in 1822. A farming family, they soon felt the economic strain of rural life in Ireland and like many other Irish decided to emigrate. Their first stop was Wales and here in Pontypool, Monmouthshire, John junior was born in 1824.

Like many Irish before and after them, the family soon traveled to London, and in 1841 were living in the parish of St. Luke Finsbury, at 14 Crown Court (now beneath the Milton Gate building). John and his father made a living as bootmakers, a very common trade amongst Irish immigrants, and a trade John would

successfully carry on in Australia many years later. In these very poor parts of London, tradesman and artisans were neighbours of beggars and thieves, living in overcrowded and usually unsanitary conditions. The Mulcahy family at 14 Crown Court included nine members and shared this address with the Kent family, also Irish shoemakers, a family of six.



Cross's New Plan of London 1861 shows the vicinity of the Mulcahys in 1841 at Crown Court, north of Fore Street, below White Street. Source: MAPCO.net

The Mulcahys living at this address on the census night in 1841 included the parents John and Ann and six of their children: John 15, Catherine 14, Edward 12, Thomas 9, Ann 7 and Victoria 3. Also there was infant grandson Stephen Grainger, son of eldest daughter Elizabeth (she was not listed at this address). Elizabeth was a dressmaker and married Henry Grainger, a boot maker, in 1838. They lived at Sun Court, Golden Lane, another very poor area of London, not far from her parents.

The Paynes - English bootmakers



Sarah Mulcahy (nee Payne)
Source: Elaine Medlin

The Payne family origins are unclear. The name is common around Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire where **Sarah Payne** was born on December 23rd 1823 (according to the non-conformist baptismal records from Reading in Berkshire). However, there are no birth records in Great Marlow to confirm this and I can find no records of her parents there – **Charles Payne**, a shoemaker and **Ann Gunnell**. There were also many Gunnells in Marlow at this time. There is a record of the marriage of Charles Payne and Ann Gunnell in Frimley, Surrey in 1816, although the bride's name is spelt Gurnell.

The family were Non-conformists (dissenters from the Anglican church) and records of Charles and Ann's children's baptisms are to be found in the Nonconformist Registers of Dr. William's Library in London. The register also gives the name of the mother's father – **Thomas Gunnell**. Charles and Ann had at least six children found on this register with their birth dates – William Charles 5/8/1817;

Sophia 25/9/1819; George Gunnell 3/12/1821; Sarah 23/12/1823; Frances 15/9/1827 and Ann 11/11/1832. There is also a record of Sophia and George being baptised at the Albany Congregational Church Hounslow, Middlesex and it states the parents were from Old Brentwood and later, New Brentwood. So, this is the first record of where this family lived, not far from London.

Non-conformists in Reading

In 1841 the family was living in Reading, Berkshire, now part of the London metropolitan area but then a country town on the road to London. Charles aged 45, Ann aged 45, and three of their children William, aged 20, Frances aged 11 and Ann aged 7 (the approximate ages from the 1841 census) were living at Cambridge Place, off Hosier Street, but now gone beneath a shopping centre. Sarah aged 15 and her sister Sophia aged 20, appear to be servants of the Vines family at Castle Street. None were recorded as being born in that parish. George Gunnell Payne, their child listed in the non-conformist registers, is unaccounted for. In 1849 Sophia Payne married Henry Lovelock, a plumber. They were living in Stoke Newington and Sarah was one of the witnesses to this marriage in the parish church.

Housekeeper at Eltham Palace

The 1851 census shows Sarah Payne aged 25, was a nursemaid to solicitor Richard Bloxham and his wife Elizabeth when they were visiting friends in Charlton, Kent. The Bloxham family lived at Eltham Palace in Kent - not really a palace, but the ruins of a 15th century palace, where residences, such as the Bloxham's, had been erected in later centuries. These were demolished by the Courtauld family in 1933 to build their art deco mansion, now a great tourist attraction. The Bloxham's house was abutting the Great Hall (the only part of the medieval palace still remaining) and they used it as their very grand entrance hall. Three Tudor style gables from the Bloxham's house were also maintained as part of the new build and can still be seen today, although somewhat obscured by the rest of the mansion.



The Courtauld Mansion almost concealing the Tudor gables of the Bloxham's house, Eltham Palace.
Photo: Euan McGillivray 2018



View of Eltham Palace from the moat. Taken in 1930 showing the Great Hall to the left and adjacent houses. Source: British History Online

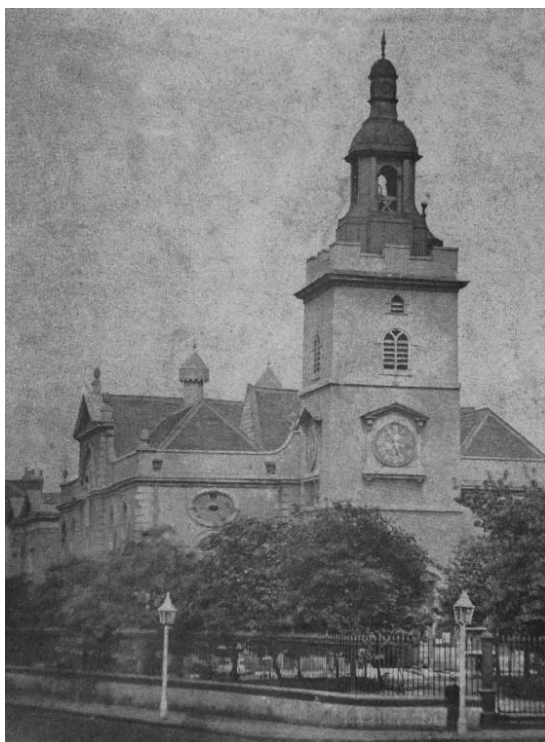
From at least 1851 to 1871 the census returns show Sarah's mother Ann was housekeeper to the Bloxhams at Eltham Palace (address also called Court Yard and Palace Yard). So it was that both mother and daughter worked for the Bloxhams at different times. It was here that Ann died on August 18th 1874 of heart disease and Bronchitis at the age of 79. The death certificate states she was 'widow of Charles Payne, Shoemaker' and George Beeson, a coach maker, was in attendance. Ann is buried in St John the Baptist churchyard, Eltham, and at one time had a headstone to her grave which has since been destroyed. I assume the Bloxham family paid for the headstone. Interestingly, also buried in the same grave is a 6-month-old child Henry Brown, but I have not been able to find out who he was. Ann left a Will showing effects under £200. The executor was one of the Bloxhams.

Whitechapel marriage

Around the time Sarah was working for the Bloxham family, she met John Mulcahy. After banns were published, they were married at St. Mary's, Whitechapel on March 19th 1852. They were both living in Charlotte Street, Whitechapel at that time, in the east end of London where many Irish, Jewish and other migrants had settled. Henry Lovelock and Ann Payne (Sarah's mother or sister) were the witnesses to the marriage. Charlotte Street is now incorporated into Fieldgate Street. The church of St. Mary's, once an ancient church, rebuilt in the 19th century, was destroyed during bombing in World War II. Sarah may have met John through her father, both being bootmakers. Four months after their marriage, their first son John Stephen was born in the newly developing area of Islington at Albion Place, Holloway Road (probably near the present-day Furlong Rd intersection).



Charlotte Street Whitechapel, running east-west, south of Whitechapel Road, north of Commercial Road. From Weller's Map of London 1868. The Mulcahys lived there in 1852. Source: MAPCO.net



St. Mary's Whitechapel 1870 where John and Sarah married in 1852. Source: fanpop.com



John Stephen Mulcahy, Sarah and John's first child, born in London in 1852. Source: Elaine Medlin

Leaving the slums

In the early 1850s there was much talk and promotion about the Victorian goldfields in Australia which attracted thousands of British migrants. London at that time was growing fast and although it provided more opportunities than the countryside, there was much social and economic upheaval due to the ongoing effects of the industrial revolution and the consequences of the enclosure system. Huge influxes of migrants from all over Britain and elsewhere in Europe, many rural poor, could not be well accommodated. Slums grew and city improvers and developers sought to demolish 'problem areas' in order to clear away the unsightly, the unhealthy and the criminal. Certainly, the condition of most of the areas of London where the Mulcahys had lived would not have encouraged them to remain. Better opportunities could be found in Australia.

On July 2nd 1853, John, Sarah, one-year-old John Stephen and John's younger sister Ann Mulcahy, boarded the government ship *Standard* at Plymouth dock and set sail for Port Adelaide, arriving there on October 13th. During the 104-day journey, Sarah gave birth to their second son William Henry, one of nine babies born on the ship. The family settled in Adelaide for a few years and in 1855 their third child, Thomas George, was born.

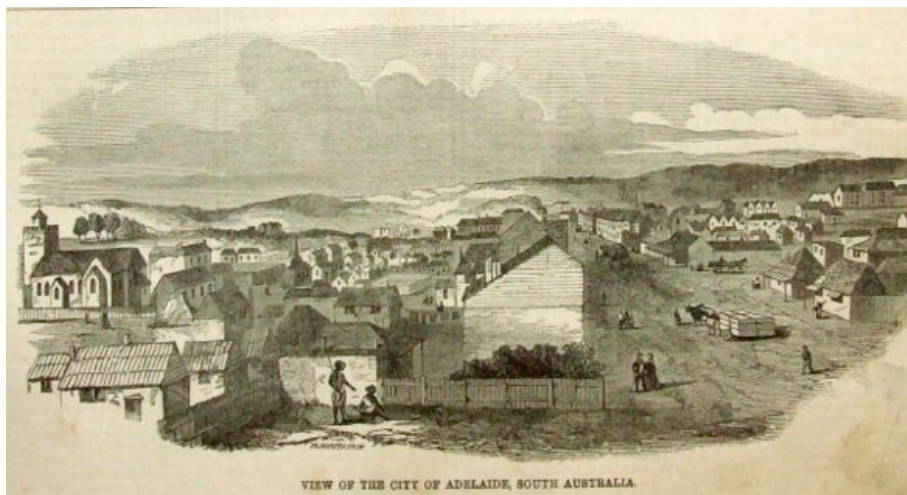


William Henry Mulcahy born on the journey to South Australia in 1853. Source: Elaine Medlin

Escaping jury duty in Adelaide

There are two newspaper reports in the *South Australian Register* of November 23rd and December 16th 1853, regarding a John Mulcahy, shoemaker of Currie Street Adelaide, who was amongst a group of jurors who were fined for 'not answering to their names when duly called upon'¹ for jury duty. They were each initially fined 20 shillings, but refusing to pay, were subsequently fined £1 each. If this is our John Mulcahy then he wasted no time in finding employment after arrival in the colony. As all the other jurors were also tradesmen and businessmen, none would have been too pleased at having to give up their working time to serve as jurors on a murder trial.

John's sister Ann settled in Adelaide and married John Foote in 1857, and later Joseph Townsend. She died there in 1868.



View of the City of Adelaide in the 1850s when the Mulcahys lived there. Wood engraving by W. Wurzbach 1854. Source: *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 1854

Boot shop in Clunes

Around 1857, John, Sarah and their three children travelled to Victoria, settling for a few years at Ballarat, a fast-growing town on the Victorian goldfields and the scene of the famous Eureka Rebellion of 1854. The next two Mulcahy children were born there: Charles Gunnell in 1857 and Sarah Ann on October 3rd 1859.

By the early 1860s the Mulcahys had moved to Clunes, another busy gold mining town in central Victoria, where they set up their own boot making business. Their sixth child Sophia Elizabeth was born at nearby Mt. Beckworth on October 1st 1861. Records of the Mulcahys' activities in Clunes are found as early as 1863 where the rate books show their residence being on the Back Creek Road. The Burgess' Voters' Roll of 1864 shows John Mulcahy as having rateable property in Short Street and in 1866 adding a property in Creswick Road. By this time, their seventh child Eliza Catherine had been born on December 23rd 1865.



View of Clunes looking towards the Port Phillip Mine c1861. (section of photo) Photo: Richard Daintree Source: State Library Victoria

J. Mulcahy & Son boot shop, Fraser Street Clunes. Said to be John, Sarah and four of their children, but may be John Stephen Mulcahy and his wife and family. Photo: 1880s Source: Elaine Medlin



Mulcahy and Son

On April 10th 1867, their eighth and last child **Fanny Caroline** was born. Vaccination records show this baby was immunised on December 11th 1867 at the age of 8 months. At about this time, their eldest son John Stephen, had joined his father in the boot business, as was recorded on the shop window in Fraser Street, the main street of Clunes.



Upper Fraser Street, Clunes
c1886 showing Robertson's Butchery
which was next to Mulcahy's Boot
Shop. Source: Clunes Historical
Society



Three of John and Sarah's four daughters, Sophia Elizabeth Mulcahy (left) born at Mt. Beckworth near Clunes in 1861, (centre) Eliza Catherine Mulcahy born in Clunes in 1865, and (right) Fanny Caroline Mulcahy born at East Clunes 1867. Source: Elaine Medlin and Glenys Foreman

Mulcahy takes the *New Lothair Mining Company* to court

Prior to having a boot shop in the main street of Clunes, John had carried out his boot making business from his home in Thornton Street, south of the town centre. The Mulcahys' house is described as having a garden full of fruit trees and vines. However, being a mining town, the surrounds were not so salubrious and in 1875 John had complained about the *New Lothair Mining Company*² being given permission to mine in close proximity to his property. When its operations began, John asserted that the company had filled the road outside his house in Thornton Street with ash and other mining debris and piled firewood on another side of his land. In September that year John was granted an injunction against the company to cease the quartz crushing battery's operation pending a court case in February the next year where John would claim £500 in damages.

When it came to court in February 1876 John described the damage and inconvenience caused by the mining company: the ash pile had increased, wind and rain had spread the mess, passing pedestrians and cattle had pushed the debris closer to his fence burying its lower railing. This had impacted access to his property, discouraging his customers and as a consequence he since had to move his business to Fraser Street. He also had to vacate his house and rent another on the southern side of his block further away from the mining works. The case reported in *The Ballarat Star* (22nd Feb. 1876) continued describing John's testimony:

'The company had a large steam engine on the road (Thornton Street) and when the steam was discharged it flowed over on to his fruit trees and vines preventing the trees bearing.....The battery worked sometimes day and night and the noise was a great nuisance and inconvenience.'³

Sarah and their son John Stephen also gave evidence in court as to the detrimental effects of the mining operation:

'Sarah Mulcahy, plaintiff's wife deposed that the battery deprived herself and family of rest.....Smoke used to come into the house and steam over the trees.... She had become deaf and owing to the battery's noise could not sleep day or night.'⁴ Their son John Stephen also gave testimony to the same problem.

The defence asserted that John made his accusations because he could not sell his land at a high enough price to the company, also that the battery was too far away from the Mulcahy's house to cause problems. They also stated that the ash heap that John complained of was left by the (old) *Lothair Mining Company* and therefore they (the New) company was not responsible. This was supported by the judge who did not accept John's arguments and said: 'Well, if he don't want a noise he shouldn't live at Clunes'⁵.!!! The jury of four men retired for just 5 minutes, then returned a verdict in favour of the mining company.

Mining death in Ballarat

The early 1880s saw two family tragedies. The first was on November 3rd 1882 when son Thomas George was killed in a Ballarat mining accident. He was 27 years old and unmarried. The news reports tell how he fell down a shaft at the Williams Freehold Mine, Redan:

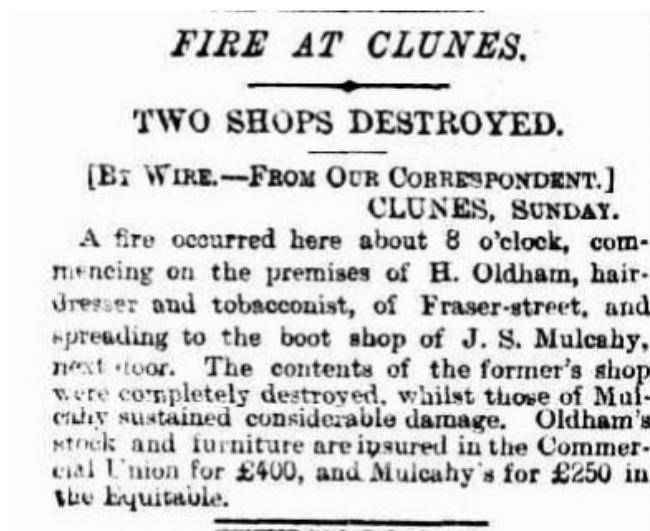
'...The evidence showed the men were coming to the surface at the change of shift and had arrived at no. 1 plat. The three had started up the logging (the machinery was under repair) when the deceased missed his hold and fell to the next level. When taken up he was alive and spoke, but he died almost immediately afterwards. The men could have reached the surface by means of a windlass and rope, but preferred climbing up the logging. Mr. Stewart, Inspector of Mines, gave evidence that the shaft was in good repair, and that he could not discover the exact spot where deceased lost his hold, or the cause of it....'⁶

The cause of death was a fractured skull and internal injuries.

The next year in 1883, there was another very sad occurrence when the son of Margaret and John Stephen Mulcahy, Richard Charles, died at the age of 5 years. Thomas and Richard are both buried in the Clunes Cemetery.

Fraser Street fire

Misfortune continued with John Stephen nearly losing the Fraser Street boot store when a fire destroyed the hairdresser and tobacconist's shop next door. Luckily, he had some insurance as this small article in the Melbourne Age newspaper of October 15th 1888 reported:



Happier times in Clunes

From the late 1870s the Mulcahys also owned property in Short Street as well as renting property on Creswick Road. In 1875, son John Stephen married a Cornish woman, Margaret Roberts. John Stephen became a very active community member involving himself in many sporting clubs, social and community groups and later moved to the Melbourne suburb of Auburn and continued his association with his home town through the 'Clunes in Melbourne' social group. He also remained in the boot business as a boot dealer. In 1878 John and Sarah's second eldest son William Henry, a miner at the time and later a carter and driver, married Phillippa Grace Perry from Creswick. They also eventually moved to Melbourne living in the suburbs of North Melbourne, Carlton and later Essendon.



John and Sarah Mulcahy, probably taken at Clunes, Victoria. Source: Elaine Medlin

Costumiers of Melbourne

Sometime between 1888 and 1891 John and Sarah left Clunes to live in South Yarra, Melbourne, and eventually all their children left Clunes to live in Melbourne. In 1886 Sophia Elizabeth, described as a 'costumier' on her wedding certificate, and John Harrington Langdon, a railway employee from Beaufort near Ballarat, married at her brother William's home in Palmerston Street Carlton. Over the years she moved from the inner suburbs, and when widowed lived in Oakleigh and Malvern. In January 1891, Charles Gunnell Mulcahy, a compositor, married his housekeeper, a widow Charlotte Mary Snellgrove. He later moved to Sydney. On his marriage certificate he describes his father's occupation as a 'foot costumier'!

1891 is also the earliest record of John and Sarah in Melbourne, when they set up house (and probably shop) at 8 Toorak Road South Yarra. It was here in June that Fanny Caroline married **George Vining Rogers**, a mercantile clerk from South Australia. Also married at this address were Eliza Catherine to Samuel Joseph Lanceter, an assistant manager born in Warrnambool. They eventually lived in The Broadway in Camberwell, and later in Caulfield.

Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians

All of John and Sarah's children were married by Non-conformist ministers, some were Primitive Methodists and some were Bible Christians. These evangelical forms of Methodism eventually became absorbed into the Methodist church by the early 20th century and amalgamated with other protestant denominations into the Uniting Church by the 1970s. Their origins and greatest followers were amongst the English working classes and as these were a large proportion of migrants to Australia, their religion came with them. There were many Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians where the Mulcahys settled, in South Australia and in Clunes, and they were also well established in Melbourne in the mid 19th century. The Mulcahys had close connections with these churches probably due to their mother's influence (the Paynes being Non-conformists, specifically Congregationalists, in England). John Stephen was a member of the Clunes Bible Christian church and his brother Charles' marriage was conducted by the head of the Primitive Methodist church in Melbourne and performed at the church Manse in Carlton.

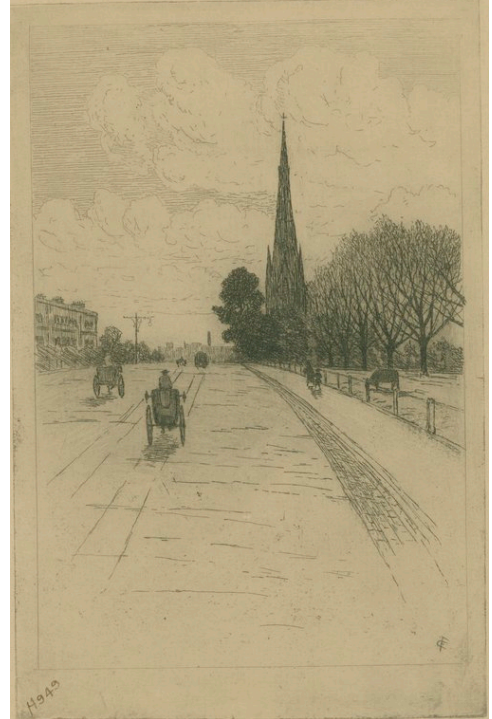


Primitive Methodist Church cnr Lygon and Queensberry Streets, Carlton c1865. Source: State Library of Victoria

Final years

John and Sarah spent their last years together living in Toorak Road South Yarra at number 8, and finally at number 34 in 1901 when Sarah died. She was 77 years old and the cause of her death was heart and kidney disease. She was buried in the Wesleyan section of the Melbourne Cemetery. Sometime after that John went to live with his eldest daughter Sarah Ann Porter and her family at 187 Bell Street Coburg. This is where John died in 1913. He was 89 and died of senile decay. The *Clunes Guardian* reported:

'The death is announced of a former highly respected resident of Clunes, in the person of Mr. John Mulcahy, in his 90th year. The death took place at Coburg on Saturday last. He leaves a family of three sons and four daughters, one of former - Mr. J. S. Mulcahy - for many years carrying on a business as boot merchant in Fraser Street.'



Right: Top of Toorak Road, South Yarra looking east towards Christ Church. c1890 -1910, when John and Sarah lived there. Source: State Library of Victoria



Looking west along Bell Street Coburg from Hudson Street c1915. Source: PictureVictoria

Ann Hurley

2020

See my story **Sports Obsessive** for more about their daughter Fanny Caroline Mulcahy.

hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au

Notes:

¹ *South Australian Register* November 7th 1853 (the trial was an inquest into the suspicious death of a 12-week-old baby boy).

² Although it was now called the '*New' Lothair Mining Company*, the earlier 'old' version was the cause of a strike-breakers' riot only a few years earlier in 1873. The company sought to increase miners' hours of work, causing the miners to strike. The company, with the help of an armed police escort, brought Chinese miners from Ballarat, but who were fiercely repelled on the outskirts of Clunes by the local community including miners, their wives and families. This was also at a time when Peter Lalor, the hero of the Eureka Rebellion back in 1854, was now one of the company's directors. The 1873 riot was the first time armed police were involved in an industrial dispute in Victoria.

³ *The Ballarat Star* February 22nd 1876. Case also reported in the *Ballarat Courier* February 22nd 1876.

⁴ *The Ballarat Star* February 22nd 1876. Case also reported in the *Ballarat Courier* February 22nd 1876.

⁵ *The Ballarat Star* February 22nd 1876. Case also reported in the *Ballarat Courier* February 22nd 1876.

⁶ *The Argus* November 3rd 1882 - *Trove* (National Library of Australia)

⁷ The *Clunes Guardian* May 13th 1913 - Clunes Historical Society Vic.

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Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

Birth Death and Marriage certificates - General Register Office England

Dr. Williams Library records - non-conformist records UK (Ancestry.com)

England and Wales census records (Ancestry.com)

Medlin, Elaine -Vic., Mulcahy descendant

Mount Rommel Mining Ltd.

PROV Immigration lists and shipping

Victorian Birth, Death and Marriage certificates