

# INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY HISTORY

## HAWKESBURY LIBRARY SERVICE - LOCAL STUDIES FACT SHEET

### FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

People start researching their family history for many reasons but it is about discovering who you are and where you came from. It provides an understanding of history, where your family fitted into the puzzle. It can be time consuming and may involve patience but is also very rewarding. This Fact Sheet outlines some of the steps if you are starting on your journey and is part of a series of helpful guides to navigate your family and local history research in the Local Studies Collection as well as Family History - Hawkesbury Internet Resources.



Photo: Family group. Courtesy Hawkesbury Library Service

### START WITH YOURSELF

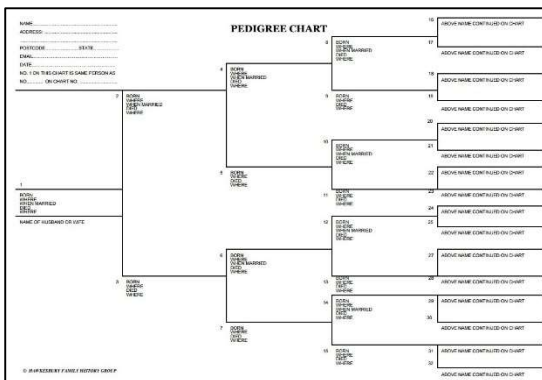
When undertaking family research, it is important to **start with yourself and work backwards** to your parents, grandparents and great grandparents, verifying your information with certificates, church records, family papers and other sources. Start collecting information now. You may have access to some of the best sources at home, or with relatives. Contact family and distant relatives and ask for copies of any material that may be useful, i.e. birth, death & marriage certificates; baptismal cards; letters; diaries; newspaper clippings; legal papers.

### TALK TO OTHERS

Discuss with your family and older relatives anything they can recall about the family history. Spread the net far, not only immediate family but also great aunts, and second cousins! How far back do they remember? Do they have any photographs or memorabilia? What family stories do they know? Record anything they can remember and copy any photographs or documents.

### CHART YOUR TREE

Record what you know on a blank **Pedigree Chart**. Start with YOURSELF work backwards with the male surnames on the top line (line of descent) and female surnames underneath. A **Family Group Chart** has room for more details about a person, their spouse, parents and children. A variety of forms are also available from website below

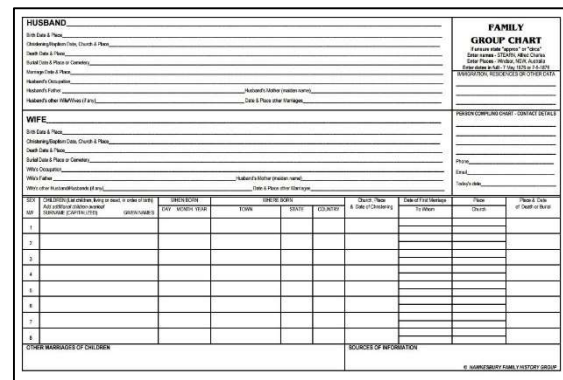


**PEDIGREE CHART**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 POSTOFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NO. ON THIS CHART IS SAME PERSON AS NO. \_\_\_\_\_ (ENCLOSED NO.)

1. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 7. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 8. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 9. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 27. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 28. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 29. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 30. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 31. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 32. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 33. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 34. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 35. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

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**HUSBAND**

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHANGING THE BIRTH DATE, CHECK IT HERE \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLACE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLACE OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 MARITAL STATUS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELIGION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OTHER INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**WIFE**

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHANGING THE BIRTH DATE, CHECK IT HERE \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLACE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLACE OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 MARITAL STATUS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELIGION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OTHER INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NO.	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	TOWN	STATE	COUNTRY	DATE OF MARRIAGE	DATE OF DIVORCE	NAME OF SPOUSE
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**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

OTHER MARriages OF CHILDREN: \_\_\_\_\_

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Pedigree chart (left) and Family group chart (right) help locate the gaps

Download for free with other useful forms from <http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/community/hfhg/forms.html>

## DATES & DETAILS

For each person in each generation you should aim to collect the basic details. If they are alive, ask them in person.

- Name in full (maiden name for women)
- Date & place of birth
- Date & place of marriage
- Date & place of death & burial

Write dates in full, 12 March 1927 or 19-3-1927 and place names in context as later there might be confusion, whether it is in NSW, Victoria or England?

When exact dates are not known, try and narrow down the dates. e.g. If you do not know the exact date of your Grandmother's death but know she died when you were about 10 years old. Fill in details: died about 1954. You will need to confirm this later.

## SOURCES FOR LOCATING BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGE INFORMATION

When you have completed the chart with as much information as possible, your next step is to try and fill in the gaps. The most reliable resources are certificates and church registers.

**Civil registration** (registration of births, deaths and marriages) established in most countries from the 19th century. Details recorded in Australia, vary state to state. NSW Births, Deaths & marriages were made compulsory after 1856 and are available online for free from Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages (NSW) <http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/Pages/family-history/family-history.aspx> Many indexes available online check <http://www.coraweb.com.au/> for Australian states. For information for Great Britain see <http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp> The indexes start in 1837 can also be searched at [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk)

DEATH REGISTERED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA.												
No.	Date and place of death	Name and occupation	Sex and age	Cause of death Duration of last illness, medical attendant when he last saw deceased	Name and occupation of father Name and maiden surname of mother	Informant	Particulars of registration	When and where buried: name of undertaker	Name and religion of Minister and names of witnesses of burial	Where born and how long in the Australian Colonies or States	Place of marriage, age, and to whom	Children of marriage
170	17th October 1865 Bell Town Road	James Pendergast Farmer	Male 65 years	(1) 4 Months (2) 10 1/2 days (3) 3 days before death	(1) John Pendergast (2) Frances (3) Jane McNamee Portland Head	Arrived Bell Town Sister of the deceased Lamer Portland Head	George Walker Windsor	20th October 1865 Windsor Thomas Phillips	Conv. Wesleyan in N.S.W. during life George Goeman Edward Robinson	18th Newcastle 6 1/2 years (1) 2nd Newcastle (2) Windsor (3) 1847 Windsor	1st Marriage Jane - 36 James - 36 Edward - 32 Susan - 28 Sarah - 25 Margaret - 23 Elizabeth - 20 Living 2 Males 1 female deceased	2nd Marriage John - 37 James - 35 Edward - 31 Susan - 27 George - 23 Robert - 20 Living 3 Males deceased

Death certificate for James Pendergast who died Windsor in 1865

Consult **Church registers** to check details of religious events such as baptism, marriage and burial. These records do not always give as much information as a certificate, particularly on those created before 1856 in NSW. Church registers may be available at some public libraries, historical societies, record offices and church archives. The State Library of NSW holds a vast collection of NSW church registers. Databases such as Ancestry, Find My Past and Familysearch also have records to consult. Ancestry and Find My Past are subscriptions databases however can be accessed for free when visiting Hawkesbury Libraries.

Other sources for births, deaths and marriages include wills, cemetery records and newspapers.

## WILLS & PROBATE

A will is a legal document outlining the disposal of property and effects after death. Wills are often a lengthy legal termed document and have created useful records for family research. The NSW Will Books 1800-1983 are available to view on Find My Past (available to use in the Library for free or requires a subscription). Deceased estate files and Probate Packets are other material created as a result of wills in NSW and held by State Records. Check their guides for more information <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/research-a-z> For other sites relating to wills and probate see <http://www.coraweb.com.au/categories/wills-and-probate-records>

## CEMETERY RECORDS

Check if your relatives have a headstone. Information transcribed from the inscription of a headstone can provide some useful clues for your research. Not everyone that has died has a headstone. Information can include:

- Date of death and age
- Cause of death
- Address or country of Origin
- Family relationships, i.e. families buried together
- Occupations and symbolism

For Hawkesbury cemeteries visit the Local Studies Collection. Also check Hawkesbury Cemetery Register <http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/cemetery/> For Australian cemeteries <http://www.australiancemeteries.com/> or <http://www.coraweb.com.au/cemetaus.htm>



Windsor Catholic Cemetery

## NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers can be very useful in family history research and may contain:

- birth, death & marriage announcements
- obituaries
- advertising and news
- general background information



For Australian newspapers titles check the wonderful Trove website <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper> for digitised newspapers. The Library has sponsored the digitisation of Hawkesbury newspapers. Australian newspapers not digitised can be borrowed via the Inter Library Loan system from your local public library. New Zealand-Papers Past are available at <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/> Overseas newspapers can be accessed via the State Library of NSW databases see <http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/databases/athome.cfm> Other useful websites include the Ryerson Index for contemporary Australian deaths <http://www.ryersonindex.org/> and the Obituaries Australia website <http://oa.anu.edu.au/>

## NOTE THE SOURCES

Always note the source of your information, in case you need to refer back. Be accurate with your notes and research. Always write down the source of a piece of information, you may need to refer back to it at some stage. If you copy information from a book, write down the exact title, author, publisher and publication date, as well as page number. If you copy a newspaper or magazine article, make sure you write the title, the exact date and page number. Keep track of information from websites as well including the name of the web page.

Take into account all of the possible spelling variations. Names may have been incorrectly recorded, handwritten records transcribed the wrong way.

## MAIN REPOSITORIES

State Library of NSW [www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

National Library of Australia [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au) and <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

State Records NSW [www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au)

National Archives (Australia) [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)

Land Information (Parish maps) [www.lpi.nsw.gov.au/land\\_titles/historical\\_research](http://www.lpi.nsw.gov.au/land_titles/historical_research)



## NAMES & MORE NAMES

Names are one of the vital keys in family history. Record first names, middle names as well as last names. You may find that Christian names were handed down through the generations. You can investigate the meaning of a surname. Be sure to take note of the different spellings as the further back you research, the spelling may vary. In the past not everyone could read and write and spelling often depended on the pronunciation as well as the accent. Running writing is not always easy to decipher.

## DATABASES & CD-ROMs

The library has a large collection of electronic resources that can be accessed online or by CD-ROM. Check the catalogue for a full list of titles. The Library has a subscription to Ancestry, Find My Past and British Newspaper Archives. These have a wide range of materials including Census, parish registers, shipping and a great deal of Australian content. Familysearch is a free database <https://www.familysearch.org/> from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Search online databases regularly as new records continually added.

## ATTEND A CLASS &/OR JOIN A FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

Family history classes may assist in broadening your knowledge on particular topics. Hawkesbury Library Service runs regular classes, check the current events calendar or contact the library for more information. Join a family history group. Not only will you meet like-minded people but you can learn more. The Hawkesbury Family History Group meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month (except January) at the Library. For speakers and topics see [www.hawkesbury.net.au/community/hfhg/meetings.html](http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/community/hfhg/meetings.html)

## USE YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

Public libraries hold a plethora of information that can assist with local and family history research. You can access books, magazines, DVDs, databases as well as obtain material on Inter Library Loan. Hawkesbury Library Service has an excellent Local Studies Collection which is free to use. Useful "how to" books and magazines are available to borrow. The catalogue is available online to search from the link from our website The Library has a wide range of resources relating to local and family history, see our Fact sheets for more information.

## WRITING UP THE STORY

It isn't necessary to publish a huge big book on your family research, however it is valuable to write up your research and share it with others. This may be as simple as preparing some short stories about your grandparents to share with family, donating material to the appropriate local library and family history group. Family and local history magazines are often happy to include articles prepared on local families. Some families share information online with personalized websites, private Facebook groups or via a Blog. Don't forget to record your own story. See **Some of my memories** at <http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/community/hfhg/forms.html> which is a form to print out and fill in with some good prompts.

## RECORD, PLAN & ORGANISE YOUR RESEARCH

As you gather your family history research you need to record the information, plan your research as well as organise your records. When you find some useful information you need to:

### RECORD

- Using charts and keeping good notes
- Using a computer or specialised genealogical software

### EVALUATE

- What does your research tell you, what is the next step? Evaluate the information you have.
- Did you find what you were looking for?
- What does it tell you?
- Are there any clues?
- Is anything missing?
- Does it conflict with what you know or already have?

## ORGANISE

- Organise your research.
- Update research with newly acquired records
- File records in a convenient, yet organized way, such as by family.
- When things are organised it is easy to locate your records.

## SHARE YOUR RESEARCH

- Share your information and people will become aware of your research which may assist in tracking down additional information
- Share your discoveries with interested family members
- Send copies of your research to libraries, family history/historical groups in area of interest
- Write articles for newsletters of above
- Join mailing lists on the internet
- Publish your research on the internet, create a blog. Also produce in print form
- Stay in touch with fellow researchers/relatives via email
- Make use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

## ACCESSING THE INTERNET

It is myth that everything is available online however much material has been digitised over the last few years and made accessible online in a variety of ways. It is still necessary to access some original material by visiting various repositories. There are many collections that have not been indexed or made easily accessible. Try some of the following gateways to locate more information.

## GENEALOGY GATEWAYS

These gateways provide vast lists of family history related sites

- Websites for Genealogists (Australian) [www.coraweb.com.au/](http://www.coraweb.com.au/)
- Genuki [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk)
- Cyndi's List of Genealogy sites on the internet [www.CyndisList.com](http://www.CyndisList.com)

## KEEP IN TOUCH @ HAWKESBURY LIBRARY SERVICE

Throughout the year Hawkesbury Library presents a variety of events relating to local and family history. We also hold sessions to learn more about family history research. These are all promoted through our quarterly 'WHAT's ON' brochure, media releases in local newspapers and on Facebook. You can also be informed of events by subscribing to our newsletter. We use Eventbrite for bookings <http://hawkesburylibrary.eventbrite.com>

## Hawkesbury Family History Group

The above group meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month (except January) at Hawkesbury Library from 10am. All welcome to attend, its free. We have a guest speaker followed by morning tea. If you are unable to attend, we have a free monthly news sheet with information about events and resources. Current and archived copies can be accessed at [www.hfhg.hawkesbury.net.au](http://www.hfhg.hawkesbury.net.au) If you would like to be placed on the mailing list email [history@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:history@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au) Enquiries, reunions & news items are always welcome. The "Hawkesbury Crier" quarterly newsletter is available by subscription. See contact details or [www.hfhg.hawkesbury.net.au](http://www.hfhg.hawkesbury.net.au)

## Facebook

Social media is another fantastic way to learn more about family history. Many local family groups have Facebook pages YouTube channels and Instagram accounts.

Check out the **Hawkesbury Family History Group** [www.facebook.com/HawkesburyFHG](http://www.facebook.com/HawkesburyFHG)  
Find **Hawkesbury Library Service** [www.facebook.com/HawkesburyLibrary](http://www.facebook.com/HawkesburyLibrary)

## SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

### Australia

Websites for Genealogists [www.coraweb.com.au/](http://www.coraweb.com.au/)  
NSW Registry of BDM Index [www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/familyhistory](http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/familyhistory)  
Victorian BDM index  
<https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/bdm/indexsearch.doj>  
QLD BDM index  
[www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/family-history-research](http://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/family-history-research)  
Trove newspapers <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>  
State Records [www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au)  
National Archives of Australia [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)  
State Library of NSW [www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)  
Australian War Memorial [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)  
Australian Cemeteries [www.australiancemeteries.com.au/](http://www.australiancemeteries.com.au/)

### Overseas

FreeBMD [www.freebmd.org.uk/](http://www.freebmd.org.uk/)  
UK BDMs Coraweb [www.coraweb.com.au/ukbmd.htm](http://www.coraweb.com.au/ukbmd.htm)  
FreeREG-Free REGisters [www.freereg.org.uk/](http://www.freereg.org.uk/)  
UK BMD [www.ukbmd.org.uk/](http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/)  
Scotlands People [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/)  
General Register Office [www.gro.gov.uk/](http://www.gro.gov.uk/)  
General Register Office Ireland [www.groireland.ie/](http://www.groireland.ie/)  
Public Record of Northern Ireland [www.proni.gov.uk/](http://www.proni.gov.uk/)

### Online Databases

Familysearch [www.familysearch.org/](http://www.familysearch.org/)  
Ancestry [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com)  
(FREE TO USE IN HAWKESBURY LIBRARY)  
Find My Past [www.findmypast.com.au](http://www.findmypast.com.au)  
(FREE TO USE IN HAWKESBURY LIBRARY)

### Newspapers online

Trove (Australia) <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>  
Papers Past (NZ) <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>  
British Newspapers Archives [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/)  
(FREE TO USE IN HAWKESBURY LIBRARY)  
Irish Papers [www.irishnewsarchive.com/](http://www.irishnewsarchive.com/)

### Genealogy Checklist

<https://lusalouisecooke.com/2015/01/21/evernote-for-genealogy-australia-checklist-template>

### Cemeteries

Australian Cemeteries [www.australiancemeteries.com.au/](http://www.australiancemeteries.com.au/)  
Hawkesbury Cemetery Register [www.hawkesbury.net.au/cemetery/](http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/cemetery/)  
Find a grave [www.findagrave.com/](http://www.findagrave.com/)  
Find my Past [www.findmypast.com.au/](http://www.findmypast.com.au/)  
Ancestry Library [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com)

### Wills & probates

Probate & Will records  
[www.coraweb.com.au/categories/wills-and-probate-records](http://www.coraweb.com.au/categories/wills-and-probate-records)  
State Records  
[www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/research-a-z](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/research-a-z)  
Australian Probate  
[www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Australia\\_Probate\\_Records](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Australia_Probate_Records)  
UK Wills [www.gov.uk/search-will-probate](http://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate)  
Scottish Wills  
[www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/wills-and-testaments](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/wills-and-testaments)  
Northern Ireland  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/will-calendars](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/will-calendars)  
Ireland  
[www.nationalarchives.ie/article/wills-and-administrations/](http://www.nationalarchives.ie/article/wills-and-administrations/)

### Census & Electoral rolls

Australia Cora Web  
[www.coraweb.com.au/categories/electoral-census-records](http://www.coraweb.com.au/categories/electoral-census-records)  
NSW State Records [www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au)  
UKFreeCen [www.freecen.org.uk/](http://www.freecen.org.uk/)  
NSW Electoral rolls  
[www.coraweb.com.au/categories/electoral-census-records](http://www.coraweb.com.au/categories/electoral-census-records)  
Victoria  
<https://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/melbourne-history/exhibits/show/melbournedirectories/browsemelbournedirectories>  
Victoria  
[http://digital.slv.vic.gov.au/R/?func=collections&collection\\_id=3907](http://digital.slv.vic.gov.au/R/?func=collections&collection_id=3907)

Prepared by Local History Librarian & updated 7/4/2020

### Contact Information

#### ADDRESS

Hawkesbury Library Service  
Hawkesbury Central Library  
Deerubbin Centre (Ground floor)  
300 George Street  
WINDSOR NSW 2756

#### HOURS

Monday to Friday 9am-7pm  
Saturday 9am-1pm  
Sunday 2pm-5pm  
Closed Public Holidays

#### LOCAL HISTORY CONTACTS

(02) 4560 4466 or 4560 4460  
[history@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:history@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au)  
<http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library>  
<http://www.facebook.com/HawkesburyLibrary>

Access the catalogue <https://aurora.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library/>