

Exercise 7 – Palaeography (Handwriting Interpretation & Analysis)

Due: Tuesday 19 October 2021 (11.59pm)

Weighting: 10% (Parts A & B are of equal weighting)

Scenario:

A relative has emailed you two PDFs of varying quality that contain scans of various original documents. The documents are of Australian, English or Scottish in origin. You are asked to transcribe and interpret **PARTS A & B** of these documents according to the below instructions.

Instructions:

PART A

1793 Scottish Testament & 1899 Letter

For the letter and the testament of these documents you need to:

1. **Transcribe the document verbatim** (with the Testament, starting from the 16th line: The Testament...)
2. Provide a summary of the genealogical information contained in the document.

For the transcription we are expecting you to:

- maintain the format of the original
- number the lines of text in the document sequentially and transcribe line by line
- maintain the original document's spelling and grammar
- use square brackets to indicate an interpretation by the transcriber
- use any abbreviations found in the original, expanding them using square brackets, if the full version is known. So, for example, if the word is **Serv^t** you would transcribe this as **Serv[an]^t**
- indicate any words for which the spelling is uncertain by the use of square brackets
- indicate any alternative interpretation of words using square brackets and a question mark where there may be uncertainty [?].

For the summary of genealogical information we are expecting you to:

- give a brief summary of the main facts (so in the case of the letter we would expect you to summarise when and to whom it was written and what it was about). This should be no more than a few lines.

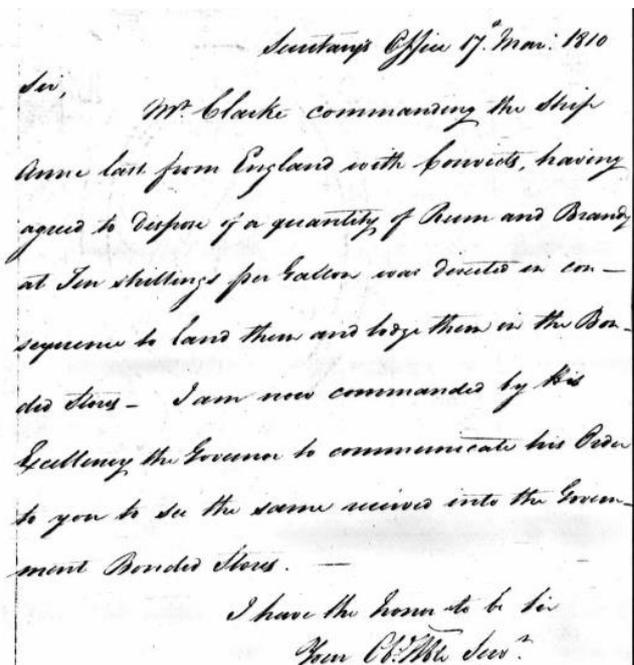
We anticipate you will find some words in these documents difficult to decipher; this is not uncommon when you are working with any historical document. Obviously the more complete and accurate your transcription is the better the grade you can expect, however remember this exercise is also about demonstrating you know what to do when you can't decipher a word or phrase. Be sure to follow the points given above.

And don't underestimate how long it might take you to work through each document – this exercise looks deceptively simple but can be quite time consuming.

A short sample transcription and summary is given below to show what your final submission should be like.

Example document, transcription and analysis

The following is an extract from an 1810 letter taken from the NSW Colonial Secretary's correspondence (State Archives NSW; NRS 897, 4/3490B p.132, Reel 6002):



The transcription of the document would be:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Secretary's Office 17 th Mar[ch] 1810 |
| 2 | Sir, |
| 3 | Mr Clarke commanding the Ship |
| 4 | Anne last [late?] from England with Convicts, |
| 5 | having |
| 6 | agreed to dispose of a quantity of Rum and Brandy |
| 7 | at Ten shillings per Gallon, was directed in con- |
| 8 | sequence to land them and lodge them in the Bon- |
| 9 | ded Stores. I am now commanded by His |
| 10 | Excellency the Governor to communicate his Order |
| 11 | to you to see the same [rec.....?] into the Govern- |
| 12 | ment Bonded Stores. |
| 12 | I have the honor to be Sir |
| 13 | Your [Cbt?] [?ble] Serv[an]t |

In the above example, the person transcribing the letter has had difficulty deciphering the word "received" in the 10th line and "Obedient Humble" ("Ob[edien]t H[um]ble") in the last line and has indicated this by placing the words in square brackets. They have also indicated an alternative interpretation of the word "last" as "[late?]" in the 4th line.

The above transcription has been set out as a table in Microsoft Word, with 'no borders' selected for the print format.

The genealogical summary for this document might read – Letter sent from the NSW Colonial Secretary's Office on 17 March 1810 advising that the Governor has ordered that rum and brandy brought to the colony by Mr Clarke per the ship *Anne* is to be taken to the Government Bonded Stores.

PART B

For this part, provide a summary of the key genealogical information from the attached documents and any associated commentary. No more than 250 words per item.

3. Essex marriage (the last marriage on the document only)
4. 1818 Burial (Robert's burial only)
5. 1878 Passenger List (McNamee family only)
6. Certificate of Discharge
7. NSW death

Submission of Assignment

Please send your completed work as **ONE PDF document** to diploma@sag.org.au making sure you include the cover sheet clearly giving your name and membership number and renaming the file to your own name following the naming convention

DO NOT include images of the original document in your submission – just the transcription and the summary.

Assignment Issued – 13 August 2021

Appendix – Resources

There are several publications and many online tools you will be able to use to help you with this assignment. However, they are not essential and be sure to follow **OUR** instructions on how to prepare the transcriptions as this is what you will be marked against.

Publications:

McLaughlin, Eve. *Reading Old Handwriting* (A McLaughlin Guide). Federation of Family History Societies, 1987.

Marshall, Hilary. *Palaeography for Family and Local Historians*, Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 2004. Held in SAG library at N2/5/5] See attached extract.

Online sources:

National Archives UK (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) has some useful tutorials on palaeography on its site which you'll find at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/reading-old-documents/>

Useful Tips for Reading Handwritten Documents on State Archives & Records NSW's website – found under Research A-Z – direct link is <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/handwritten-documents>

English Handwriting 1500-1700 <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/> - prepared by several Cambridge colleges with funding from CARET, the Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies, in Cambridge

Learning to Read Old Handwriting with James Tanner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FA2iXKr09Lo>

What Does That Say? More Palaeography Tips and Tricks | Ancestry with Crista Cowan
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQVZfQRXLjo>

Additional reading (to further knowledge on the subject not required for completion of the exercise):

The key to the family deed chest. How to decipher and study old documents: being a guide to the reading of ancient manuscripts by Thoyts, Emma Elizabeth, 1860-1949; Martin, Charles Trice, d. 1914
<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029487968/page/n13/mode/2up>

Ancient handwritings; an introductory manual for intending students of palaeography and diplomatic by Saunders, William <https://archive.org/details/ancienthandwriti00saun/page/16/mode/2up>

Early Welsh script By Lindsay, W. M. (Wallace Martin), 1858-1937
<https://archive.org/details/cu31924008207502>