

# Unlocking key to their past

**Sisters are doin' it for themselves**

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LIKE pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, Irene Smith and sister Catherine Beatty joined forces to uncover their family's past.

Two hundred years after their paternal Holmes ancestors first arrived in Australia, the pair have prepared to release their historical book, *Accidental Pioneers: Stories of the Ancestors and Contemporaries of Alfred James Holmes in Australia*.

Their launch will be held on Saturday, September 28 at the Frenchville Sports Club from 11am to 4pm.

The year was 2010 when Irene and Catherine's Holmes research began. It was decided they would compile a book after they realised how little their immediate family knew about their father's side.

"The particular exploits of the Holmes family (we) thought should be written down for future generations," Irene said.

Irene and Catherine's great grandfather, Alfred D'Arcy Holmes, landed on New South Wales shores aged 22 before he



ACCIDENTAL AUTHORS: Authors Irene Smith and Catherine Beatty have written a history of the Holmes family.

Photo: Contributed

found his way to Central Queensland.

Alfred moved to Mackay where he married an Irish im-

migrant before they moved to Rockhampton.

They stayed in Rockhampton from 1871 onwards, and

called Alma St their home base.

"When he came down here, they had a reasonably sized

family ... he bought land in Alma St, went broke a couple of times," she said. Alfred died aged 44, but had

a close call to death in June 1898 when the *Vlissingen* and *Leichhardt* ships collided at Archer's Crossing on the Fitzroy River.

He had been alone in the engine room of the *Vlissingen* when the ship's engineer was asleep on deck and found the door "stoved in and managed to open the hatch for his escape" before the ship sank.

Irene, 82, couldn't pinpoint why he moved to the region, but guessed it could have been to try his luck at one of the gold fields which had sprouted up during that era.

Alfred's son (Irene's grandfather) worked on a boat on Fitzroy River which carried goods from Port Alma before they were delivered to the wharf at Quay St between the 1880s and about 1910.

Born in Bardcaldine in 1937, Irene had first dived into her ancestry about the 1980s.

When she spoke to *The Morning Bulletin*, their book was about to be printed, and Irene had been given the job of proofreading each page to look for mistakes.

While she had no plans to write another book in the future, she hoped younger generations of her family would "pick up the pieces and keep going".

Irene's passion for family history research hasn't died yet, and she will continue to delve into her past.

## Getting active stimulates path to positive thoughts



DOLLARS AND SENSE  
DAVID FRENCH

RIDING a bike to work is perhaps not what you'd expect of a 50-something-year-old whose day job is managing a business responsible for hundreds of millions in client assets.

But that's exactly what I, managing director of The Investment Collective, do pretty much every day.

I have been riding on and off for years.

It started when I lived in Melbourne, where there are great bike tracks along the Yarra, and riding to work was, apart from the cold, quite easy.

But after moving to Rockhampton with a young growing family, I was hit with some big-ticket emotional challenges one after another.

Any one of these challenges would have, on their own, been in a day's work, but anyone who has experienced these blows in quick succession will understand how you can be wrong-footed.

This wrongfootedness became increasingly difficult to deal with and I became clinically depressed, leading to an unhealthy lifestyle, and putting on weight.

The result is I started feeling worse, and despite the best efforts of my wife, I would not

listen. Eventually at her insistence I went to the doctor, and with his help, and that of my wife, I eventually stabilised.

But stabilisation is not enough. Somehow you've got to regain a desire to really live. Depression is an incremental slope that leads nowhere good.

I'm no MAMIL, but I do like riding a bike.

I like the adventure of it, especially on some excursion with the family or in cities with which I am unfamiliar. And one has to get to work, so why not ride for the exercise?

One Saturday morning I was walking the dogs near Yeppen Lagoon, and a few runners came towards me.

At first that was a little novel, but soon the few turned into hundreds.

"Where did all these people come from?" I thought, and then I spotted my friend Suzie Blair. "What ya doing Suzie?" I yelled. "Parkrun - look it up," she replied.

That was more than two years ago and I've now done about 95 runs in places as diverse as Launceston, Wagga and Emerald. The parkrun crowd is really friendly.

I've never heard a bad word said by anyone there, and people take an interest in you. Cheryl Bookallil, an experienced local runner, was one who encouraged and chided me into realising I could actually improve.

So over two years my running time for 5km has gone



ALL-AGES EXERCISE: Runners head for home at the Rockhampton parkrun at the Botanical Gardens.

Photo: PAM MCKAY

from 38 minutes (not including the time I ate vindaloo the night before the run) down to a consistent 25, and I think there's more in the tank.

Recently I ran 23km in an off-road event at Great Keppel, and coming up I'm going to do 9km at Seonee Park.

About the same time I was introduced to Live Life Get Active, which is held every weekday in the Botanic Gardens. It includes boxercise, CrossFit and yoga and like parkrun, it's free and the people who attend are out to do something constructive for themselves.

Mostly women, they're a great bunch, and they included me in some "extra-curricular" workout sessions over the Christmas break. Some of those workouts were simply

mean, but this small group motivated me even more and seemingly helped me crash through a barrier in my metabolism.

My newfound interest in myself led me to having an operation on my shoulder that virtually eliminated pain that I had not recognised as near debilitating.

With that fixed I was lighter, slept better and found I could get out and exercise more.

I stopped raiding the biscuit tin at work and became much more interested in what I ate.

As a result weight started falling off me. To date I've lost 16kg, feel fitter and more alive than at any time in recent memory. I now have a goal that's dependent on no one but me.

Showing my addictive side,

**"I DO IT BECAUSE IT'S GOOD EXERCISE AND I ENJOY IT."**

I recently joined Rockhampton Road Runners.

I was reticent to join because they would "obviously" be "running freaks".

Actually they are a great bunch of people too. I am amazed how many positive people are out there, doing their best to improve on their own goals and terms.

With all of this going on, my mind began to move to a better place. I realised that not all of our thoughts are worth listening to, and neither are those of plenty of people around us.

Importantly, the simple act of challenging negative or un-

### GETTING ACTIVE

**Parkrun** - <https://www.parkrun.com.au/rockhampton/>  
**Live Life Get Active** - <https://livelifegetactive.com/>  
**Rockhampton Road Runners** - <https://www.rockyroadrunners.com/>

determining thoughts opens up the opportunity for one's mind to generate positive thoughts. Ideas. Possibilities. I forgot what it was to have these spontaneously generated.

Back to riding my bike. I do it because it's good exercise and I enjoy it.

It reminds me of catching up with friends before school, and I am always amused when some ex-schoolfriend paces me in their car to give me cheek (that's you Scottish). I can scoot round to a meeting and dump the bike outside.

I can go as fast or slow as I want. It reminds me of trips from Frenchville to the Woolwash at 3am to catch barra.

It's time to think about just riding - no screens.

So what's with all this? When I look at what interests me, it's outdoors, it's not a massive impingement on my time (about two hours a week plus riding to work which is 10 minutes each way), it's positive, and it's either with others, or set to a need (you have to get to work).