

# Just do it!

Susie Zada

Do what? Write an article for *Ancestor*! That is what I did. I wrote 'Finding Lawrence Ryland ... or not!' which appeared in the June 2009 edition of *Ancestor*. As I searched for an appropriate closing sentence for that article, I knew what I wanted to say but I really was not confident of a successful outcome: '... oh what I would give to find a photo of Priscilla Ryland!' I should not have been surprised — but I was — and delighted at the response. Seven people connected to the Ryland family contacted me after the article was published.

Priscilla Ryland died in 1867 and I thought it unlikely that I would find photos of her. How wrong could I be? One of the seven contacts was Elizabeth Walder, great-great-great-granddaughter of James and Priscilla Ryland. I was so excited to hear that she had photographs of ALL the family, including Priscilla (pictured left), her sister, Elizabeth Williamshurst (pictured right), and even a portrait of her husband James (pictured) who died in London in February 1841. Although James did not come to Australia he was an integral part of the story of the house which became known as 'Toorang', built on the shore of Lake Connewarre.

Elizabeth researched her ancestors in the days before the Internet and many of the indexes we take for granted today. More importantly she was happy to share her information and give permission to publish these family photographs.

I had presumed that Priscilla brought her nine surviving children to Victoria following the death of her husband. However, Elizabeth was able to confirm her great-great-grandparents, James Herman Ryland and Annie, née Livingston, with their daughter arrived first

in 1850 on the *Anna Maria*. Perhaps as a 'forward scout' before the rest of the family made the long trip. Priscilla, the matriarch of the family, travelled out in 1851 with three daughters, three sons, and her sister Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, the Ryland descendant, has collated wonderful detail on the Ryland family in Victoria to complement the terrific collection of family photographs and documents. I am pleased that I can repay Elizabeth's generosity by providing her with copies of various Ryland documents that I have obtained whilst researching the local family home. Looking at the photographs of the Ryland family, I feel I have come to know them so well. None of this would have been possible if I had not taken the plunge and written the article for *Ancestor*.

So what sort of closing sentence should I produce for this short article? I cannot guarantee similar success for each article in *Ancestor* but who knows? Just do it! ♦



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