



# Genealogist, Beware!

## Robbie Gorr looks at scams targeting genealogists and how you can avoid being the target

**T**HERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GENEALOGY IS ONE OF THE MOST popular pastimes, engrossing millions of people worldwide. As one of the most accessible hobbies and one of the most lucrative businesses, it is consequently one of the most targeted by fraudsters, phishers, scammers, swindlers and other dodgy scoundrels. Genealogists and family history researchers should be aware and be vigilant of the scams that might be encountered. Carefully scrutinize and evaluate all available consumer options in order to safeguard and preserve your valuable time and money.

ancestor was extremely prosperous and wealthy.

There are many variations of this scam. For example, you may be told that for a fee, professional estate locators or research specialists will search for any legacies left by your ancestors. You will probably be told your inheritance will be difficult to access due to government regulations, outstanding taxes or bank restrictions, and they will ask you to provide money and personal details to claim it. Many people, in their excitement and enthusiasm, forget their common sense, as the grifters expect you to, and comply before rational thinking reasserts itself, only to find themselves the victims of a swindle.

Some fraudsters use the long play method where fake documents and legal papers are presented to establish a façade of legitimacy. Initially, small fees may be requested, but over time they may ask you to make further increasingly larger payments or to provide your personal banking details in order to receive the settlement. These confidence tricksters specialize in making things look aboveboard and trustworthy.

It may be worthwhile to do your own due diligence with some research and to contact authorities before sending money or revealing any personal information. The website **Scamwatch** ([www.scamwatch.gov.au/types-of-scams/unexpected-money/inheritance-scams](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au/types-of-scams/unexpected-money/inheritance-scams)) details all the warning signs of such a fraud and offers advice to protect yourself. **Fraud Guides**



Genealogist, beware! There really are nefarious individuals and felonious groups who will attempt to take advantage of you and your interests. (Photo by cafecredit on Creative Commons)

### You Could be the Heir Head

It may seem too good to be true if someone contacts you by mail, phone or through social media and tells you of your entitlement to an unclaimed legacy. But you know the old adage says if it's too good to be true, it probably is. Be wary of such an unexpected windfall because one of the oldest frauds aimed at genealogists is the phony inheritance grift. Genealogists make the perfect target because many would be fascinated and delighted to discover that an



"You may be the heir!" If you are contacted by mail, phone or through social media that you are entitled to an unclaimed legacy, beware, because one of the oldest frauds is the phony inheritance scam. (Photo by milkisprotein on Creative Commons)