



## Seeking Elizabeth Sims: Gender, opportunity and risk in an emigration story

Tuesday 13 October 2020 4.30 - 5.30pm

### Speaker

**Prof Penny Russell**  
University of Sydney

### Location

Online seminar

### Registration

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/seeking-elizabeth-sims-gender-opportunity-risk-in-an-emigration-story-tickets-122929544577>

### Enquiries

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**This seminar is free and open to the public**

Presented by:

**Humanities Research  
Centre**

and

**School of Sociology**

**ANU College of  
Arts & Social Sciences**



For women of the vulnerable 'middling sort' in nineteenth-century England and Australia, family was the first defence against destitution or ruin. But the net of family could prove fragile indeed, leaving them to navigate dangerous waters of emigration, male support, and a chancy welfare system in their bid for survival. The lives of such women can be difficult to piece together, harder still to interpret. In this paper Professor Russell will follow a patchy archival trail to compare the emigration stories of two sisters who left London in the 1830s: Elizabeth Sims and her more prosperous sister Mary Thompson. The contrast in their lots shows how important family support could be – and how easily it could fail.

**Professor Penny Russell, FAHA**, is Bicentennial Professor of Australian History at the University of Sydney. Her research focuses on families, intimacy and social encounters, seeking out the intricacies of education and culture, gender and class, race and colonisation in nineteenth-century Australia. Recent books include (with Nigel Worden) *Honourable Intentions? Violence and Virtue in Australian and Cape Colonies, c. 1750 to 1850* (Routledge, 2016) and *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (NewSouth 2010). Penny has served as editor of the journal *History Australia* and is currently the Head of the History Section of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.