

## Family Research - List of topic ideas, with alternatives, for 2023+ '4<sup>th</sup> Thursday' group

**Family Story Topic guidelines** "from 150 to 400 words or thereabouts, oral presentations fine too!" Please keep in mind the time limit of 6 minutes.

Month	New Theme	Topic Description	Alternative	These are often repeats of previously used topics for new members to write on, or 'universal' themes. Topic Description
February	<b>'Time Travelling!'</b>	Have you ever felt that you have been time travelling into the lives or your ancestors, or that you have grown very close to a particular person or family in your family tree? Share this experience with the group.	<b>'In search of...'</b>	Have you found yourself needing to search extensively for someone who holds a fairly central place in your family tree? Begin by describing the details you had at the beginning of your search. How did you apply yourself to get a better sense of their lives and their relationship with other people? What did you find out? Choose someone you haven't written about before.
March	<b>'Her Story'</b> <i>International Women's Day falls in March. We've noticed a tendency, even in our own stories, towards 'his' stories, so this March we've chosen the topic 'Her Story'</i>	The chance to write about a woman in your family research you have come to admire; someone who has struggled and prevailed; perhaps someone who experienced a family or other tragedy, or multiple tragedies; someone who fought for women's stories to prevail; who participated in the woman's movement; who had a particular gift which she shared with the world or other theme which you feel pertinent.	<b>The 'G+' (female) Collection</b>	Add a new story your 'G+' collection. Write about a (great, great great, or even great, great, great) grandmother or aunt you haven't written about previously.
April	<b>'The Anzacs' and other histories of war....</b>	Briefly survey the four 'grandparental' sides of your family reflecting upon their involvement in theatres of war over time. Focus on a particular ancestor in a particular war sharing with us your understanding of his or her experience of war. <i>(Feel free to adapt the wording of the question to enable it to apply to the story you discovered.)</i>	<b>"Where did I come from...Why am I like I am' (following on from Jim Burnell's talk in March)</b>  <b>(Note – one of our very first topics was 'Family Traits')</b>	Do you have a trait which you've found (or are still looking to find) among your ancestors? What is the trait? Describe whether and how you discovered them in your family history journey, how this made you feel. It's fine to describe it in a general sense... eg. someone who was good with their hands; someone who has an interest in social justice; someone who was entrepreneurial. If you have had a DNA test, did this throw any light on this trait?

<b>May</b>	<b>The clue or evidence that opened up my family story,,,</b>	Describe a piece of evidence which, when found, resolved a problem or enabled your family research to move on or consolidated it in some way. If you can remember the details, share your process in doing so with us and the avenues it opened up.	<b>“Out of my usual comfort zone...”</b>	Write about a branch of your tree which (or an ancestor who) has taken you out of your comfort zone (and perhaps current subscription level) into international records or a rather remote source of records. What did you discover that led you on this new journey, what committed you to pursuing it, what did you find out if anything? How did this help 'round out' your family tree. Was the journey worthwhile?
<b>June</b>	<b>Creatively writing family stories.... ‘using the left side of your brain’!</b>	Decide upon a person who is central or fairly central to your family history and an event or stage in their life which is particularly significant... Research into the period of time to add breadth and depth to the context in which you will be telling a story of a brief but significant time in their life... write it as a story using the tense/style of <a href="#">‘Elizabeth Pulley Sets Sail’</a> . or from Graham Jensen’s <a href="#">‘Leaving the Shore’</a> . This may be a bit tricky, but persevere and see what happens! It can be a ‘draft’, and there is no expectation that it will be added to our story collection unless you feel ready for this.	<b>‘Music and My Family Story...’</b>	Tell us about ‘music’ which has featured in your family story or which on hearing it helps you to explain your family story in some way. If you can, bring the music to play for the group – YouTube is a wonderful source! Explain how it relates to a particular family branch or member, their experiences, the historical period at the time.  Think laterally – the story could be about a family musician; family songbooks; an old instrument still in your or a family member’s collection... and more. Over to you.
<b>July</b>	<b>‘Inheritance 1’</b>	Stories relating to wealth, wills, inheritance, often ‘hot topics’ in their day, even leading to newspaper coverage, can arise during family research. Describe an ‘inheritance’ matter which you have come across, who and what it involved, the outcome initially and over time. (Be creative if necessary, perhaps considering relatively modern inheritance issues which relate to the handing down of cherished items).	<b>‘Inheritance 2’</b>	<b>Alternative 1</b> - Think of recipes or meals which remind you of people in your family tree, family dinners you attended including meals which have featured as a long-held family tradition, included in oral history or family recipe books over time. Perhaps you’ve chased them up from a family member and added them to your family recipe collection. Share the story behind one or more recipes, if you can the page from the recipe book involved, (Google if necessary), find the recipe to share with others and on the web site. <b>Alternative 2</b> – research the traditional foods/recipes of an area in which you forebears lived. Can you see any links in recipes, food culture of your family? Trial one of the recipes and report back on your experience.

				<b>Alternative 3</b> - consider which family recipes from your collection of old family recipes you would like to hand on in a recipe collection for your children/nieces and nephews – who do you remember, or were you told, had made them. Select three, including a short intro to the recipe featuring key memories of the person who made them.
<b>August</b>	<b>‘Correspondence 1’</b>	Time to delve into your email/other records and find a letter/other missive you wrote when/to make contact with someone in relation to a family tree, or someone wrote to you. You'll need to add a brief introduction to contextualise it, and a brief conclusion summarising 'What Happened Next'!	<b>‘Correspondence 2’</b>	Write about some correspondence from the past involving your ancestors which revealed something of particular interest to you and perhaps helped to shape your research. Who wrote the correspondence? Who to? About? Tell us about the difference/all the differences it made, the value it added, to your research.
<b>September</b>	<b>‘Setting the Record Straight’</b>	Share a story about a time when you felt you needed to 'set the record straight' about an element of your family story - perhaps to your family, perhaps to a wider audience eg. community; family history community such as <a href="http://ancestr.com">ancestr.com</a> , etc...	<b>‘Family Mystery – the Case of the ....’</b>	‘There is usually more than one mystery in a family tree! Tell us about a family mystery that still, or for a long time remained, unresolved, on your family tree...’
<b>October ‘Out and about’</b>	<b>‘Contact with a local Historical society’</b>	Write about an actual or planned contact with a local historical society to find out more about a particular person or branch of your family... What....? Where? When? Why? How? Outcomes? It's over to you! If you haven't done this already, perhaps it's a good time to do so! Let us know what you are planning.	<b>‘An Interview with a family member’</b>	Write about a time when you made contact with a member of your family to find out more about their lives and other family members. Who, What, When, Where, Why, Outcomes, Reflections??? It's over to you! If you haven't done this already, perhaps it's a good time to do so! Let us know what you are planning.
<b>November</b>	<b>‘Reflecting on Family Research’</b>	How have you found the family research experience this year? Have you had any highs and lows? Tell us about the most memorable. How have people reacted to you during your journey - for example, did this change over time? What do you think may have caused the changes? Did anyone say anything which troubled you, made you think about the journey differently? On the other hand, were there moments of pure joy? Share	<b>‘Sharing my family stories over time’</b>	It's the end of the year and a good time to reflect on the stories you have written this year, and in previous years, and how you would like to share them with other people now and over time. It's still worth doing this, even if you have written them 'just for me'. What are the possible options? Which one is your preferred option. Share with us the categories you think you will use, whether you will use an online story collection/publishing tool, how you will 'sync' your story collection with any photographs, online records etc.

		your journey - it's fine to reflect -- it's about reflective practice* in family research!		
<b>Back up topics....</b>	<b>Member's Choice</b>	Having writer's block with the topic choice/alternative? Think about a problem or issue you are currently working through in family research. Turn your learning in to a presentation to share with the group. Examples from 2022 include David's presentation on 'The Irish Record Repository'; Jane's presentation on 'Ethical Practice in Family History Research'; Malcolm's presentation on 'Headstone Restoration'.	<b>Or – Revisit the List or - make up your own topic!</b>	Perhaps you missed a topic, or like an alternative from a previous month. If desperate for a topic, you could choose from these. Or perhaps you could make up a topic which fits with your research!

“The reflective practice is essential in research, since it aims at raising a thoughtful eye on oneself, which allows the subject to gain self-awareness (Dahlberg et al., 2002, p. 139). Read article this was drawn from Mortari, L (2015) Reflectivity in Research Practice – an Overview of Different Perspectives - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1609406915618045>”