

## Family Research Projects 2024

### Family Stories - topics from 2021 to 2023, plus a complementary list of topics for 2024!

Family stories were introduced during Covid, when social distancing made it difficult to sit together to problem solve at our devices and we time available to write stories. The number of people writing or otherwise presenting stories from our monthly topic list scaled down during 2023. Sharing stories on monthly topics as a full class activity is not continuing in 2024, however we have a list of topics for 2024 along with a list of topics from 2021 to 2023 for family researchers who might like to draw upon them. If you would like to add a story to the 'Family Stories' page on the web, email it to [bevlee47@gmail.com](mailto:bevlee47@gmail.com)

**Family Story topics** — “from 150 to 400 words or thereabouts, oral presentations fine too in a classroom setting”

2021/2	<b>'Family Trait'</b>	Did you inherit a family trait? What is it? Who in your family seems to share this family trait – go back as far as you like. How does it play out in your life? How did it seem to play out in their life/lives? 2/21	Inheritance
2021/3	<b>'A Family Treasure'</b>	In this session, bring along a family treasure, however humble, which you can't bear to part with yet, together with a story about it to share with others. 3/21	Things
2021/4	<b>'Grandparents' x eg. 8 stories if you include great grandparents!</b>	Describe your relationship with a grandparent using one fond memory. Draw on your senses to recall specific details and reflect on the impact he or she made on your life. It may be the time Gran nearly set the kitchen on fire with the Christmas pudding, or the time your 92-year old Grandpa rode the Octopus with you at Luna Park. It could be a story about your Grandmother's heritage & how she came to Australia; or about the era your grandfather represents, the role he played in your upbringing, a special ritual you shared. 4/21	People and Places
2021/5	<b>'In search of '</b>	Write about someone who is proving, or proved to be, difficult to find. Who were they, what did you find out about them and what would you still like to know. If you face or faced obstacles along the way, describe them and how you managed to resolve them. Are you 'happy enough' with your findings to date? 5/21	The Family Research Process
2021/6	<b>'An Unexpected Contact'</b> (original title 'Found' was a bit confusing)	One of the thrills of family research is unexpected contact with someone who is also working on your family tree. They may even be a close, but long-lost family member. Write about the first contact, how you/they followed up, what you learnt or gained from the contact Do you keep in touch? 6/21	The Family Research Experience
2021/7	<b>'I wish I'd met/known...'</b>	Sometimes while we are researching we come across someone we wish we'd met or known. Write about them, what intrigued you about them and what you would like to ask them if you met. 7/21	People and Places
2021/8	<b>A Family Secret'</b>	'Have you come across, or do you suspect, a family secret or two in your tree? Write about a family secret you don't mind sharing with others. 8/21	People and Places
2021/9	<b>'Memories treasure chest'...</b>	(1) Create or draw upon a 'Memories Treasure Chest' in a shoe box or other chest, drawer, cupboard, shelf containing	Things

		<p>objects and artefacts that capture your family history in some way, through scent and feel. Maps, menus, theatre programs, an old report card, vials of perfume, a garment, treasured photographs, a souvenir, an expired passport can sometimes trigger a family story rich with detail.</p> <p>(2) Select one or two items from your treasure chest as creative prompts – who do they relate to, and how do they relate to your family? What were they doing, who were they with, at the time this object related to their life? What else do they suggest or mean to you? (250 words for each object) 9/21</p>	
2021/10	<b>‘A black hole...</b>	<p>Write about a ‘black hole’ you are still perplexed about in your research. Who does it involve? What do you know about them? Where is the gap in your research? What do you think may have happened ie. What are your ‘hypotheses’/What is your hunch? Why do you think you are still finding it hard to make a breakthrough? Where to next? 10/21</p>	The Family Research Process
2021/11	<b>‘Census’</b>	<p>Find one of your favourite families in your family tree. Pick a year for a census in which you describe what you know about where they were living, who was likely to be living there, what their occupations were, what else was happening in the country, world at the time... in fact anything else you know about them then. Create your own census, or draw upon a census document you have found during your research to develop your ‘census report’ around. 11/21</p>	People and Places
2022/2	<b>“A sense of place”</b>	<p>Write about a place which was important to your forebears - why did you choose this place? How did it feature in your family story...why was it important to family members in the past? Share your reflections in 150 to 400 words, accompanied by a photograph/s, hopefully captured close to the time in which it featured in one or more of their lives. 2/22</p>	People and Places
2022/3	<b>‘Hunch’</b>	<p>Sometimes when researching we find ‘a black hole’, however have a fairly strong hunch about a possible resolution of the problem. Our dilemma - we don’t want to record it if the evidence isn’t strong enough. Describe a fairly strong hunch you continue to have during your research. Who does it involve, why do you think it might apply; what is stopping you from including it in your family tree. (If you have resolved one, you could describe this instead. 3/22</p>	The Family Research Process
2022/4	<b>‘They were there when....’</b>	<p>Did someone in your family tree experience a significant news, historical or cultural even first-hand? Share your understanding of what may have been their experience. 4/22</p>	People and Places
2022/4	<b>‘A Ha Moments’ and/or ‘Disappointments’</b>	<p>What stand out among the memorable ‘a ha moments’ and/or memorable ‘disappointments’ you have experienced while doing family research? Pick one (or two) and write about it, explaining when it happened, who in your family</p>	The Family Research Experience

		tree was involved, what effect it had on you. It may be an 'a ha moment' or 'disappointment' you have felt for the person involved, or for you as you negotiated your family research journey. 4/22	
2022/5	<b>Eulogy/ Obituary</b>	Write a eulogy for an imagined funeral (or an obituary for a newspaper) for someone in your family tree you never, or barely met (preferably at great grandparent level or earlier) based on the research you have done and any family stories passed down about them (see <a href="#">How to Write a Eulogy</a> ) 5/22	People and Places
2022/6	<b>'Myth Busting'</b>	It is wonderful when a family story handed down over time and assumed to be a possible myth turns out to be grounded in 'evidence based' fact. Choose and describe such a family story, highlighting how you were able to confirm it and what this meant to you and your family. 6/22	The Family Research Process
2022/7	<b>'There's No Place Like Home'</b>	Describe a family tree related home you remember from your childhood or that you have located in your research – where was it, who lived in it, what were your childhood impressions of it if you knew it/as you look at it through a 'family history lens? What has become of it? 7/22	People and Places
2022/8	<b>'Correction'</b>	Write about a need for editing, or completed correction, which has arisen in your research. Who has it involved, why is the correction needed, what is your chief concern about it remaining as uncorrected? How have you, or do you plan, to deal with it. What problems came up/may come up in doing so. If completed, how do you rate the success of your efforts? 8/22	The Family Research Process
2022/9	<b>'Occupations'</b>	Looking at occupations of your forebears, are there any patterns? Describe them and try to find out about the circumstances surrounding them. Do you see any links in terms of yourself and your generation? 9/22	People and Places
2022/10a	<b>'From the Bookshelves' (a)</b> <i>A book/books which have historical significance in terms of your family/family research...</i>	Do you have any books on your bookshelves which belong to or remind you of your ancestors; can you remember the books on your parents and grandparents' bookshelves? Browse through your bookshelves, or through your memories of bookshelves in days gone by, selecting a number of books to write a little about which are related in some way to the lives of your forebears. OR 10a/22	Things
2022/10b	<b>'From the Bookshelves' (b)</b> <i>A book/books which have historical significance in terms of your family/family research...</i>	Have you read any historical fiction or non-fiction books which are relevant to your family story? (If not, perhaps you could Google to discover some). Who wrote them, and how did they relate to your family history, and what impact did they have on you? 10b/22	Things
2022/11	<b>'Heroes and Villains'</b>	Leaders, Eccentrics, Heroes and Heroines, Villains and Villainesses, Victims and Survivors....	People and Places

	<b>/'Heroines and Villainesses'</b>	Somewhere in our family tree is a person of some fame or infamy! They are the person often first identifiable in discussions with people also working on your family tree. Choose such a person from your family tree and share their story with the group. 11/22	
2023/2a	<b>'Time Travelling!'</b>	Have you ever felt that you have been time travelling into the lives of 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. 2a/23	The Family Research Experience
2023/2b	<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. 2b/23	The Family Research Process
2023/3a	<b>'Her Story'</b> <i>International Women's Day falls in March. We've noticed a tendency 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. 3a/23	People and Places
2023/3b	<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. 3b/23	People and Places
2023/4a	<b>"Where did I come from...Why am I like I am' (following on from Jim Burnell's talk in March)</b>	Quite often on SBS's <i>Who do you think you are?</i> participants search for a family trait that may have presented in their ancestors. For example, Rove McManus, who grew up in a family in which the males were jockeys and football players, found his interest in art/illustrating didn't fit the mold. 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. Obviously, people on WDYTAY are celebrities of some sort—however it's okay to find someone who had a more mundane trait, career, life experience! 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. 4a/23	Inheritance
2023/4b	<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> 4b/23	People and Places

2023/5a	<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. 5a/23	The Family Research Process
2023/5b	<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? 5b/23	The Family Research Process
2023/6a	<b>‘Creatively writing our family stories’!</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 is time consuming so can be a ‘draft’, and there is no expectation that it will be added to our story collection unless you feel ready for this. 6a/23	People and Places
2023/6b	<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. (6b/23)	‘Things’
2023/7a	<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). 7a/23	Inheritance
2023/7b	<b>Inheritance 2 - ‘Foods, recipes and meals’</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.	Things

		<p><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.</p> <p><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. 7b/23</p>	
2023/8a	<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'! 8a/23	Things
2023/8b	<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. 8b/23	Things
2023/9a	<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 ancestry.com, etc... 9a/23	The Family Research Process
2023/9b	<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...’ 9b/23	People and Places
2023/10a	<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. 10a/23	The Family Research Process (NB This topic may also generate 'People and Places' info.)
2023/10b	<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. 10b/23	People and Places
2023/11a	<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	The Family Research Experience

		<p>anything which troubled you, made you think about the journey differently? On the other hand, were there moments of pure joy? Share your journey - it's fine to reflect -- it's about reflective practice in family research!</p> <p>"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).</p>	
2023/11b	<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. 11b/23	The Family Research Experience
<b>2024</b>		These topics have largely been chosen from the remaining topics on our list when we decided to move the focus away from sharing stories. A few others have been added which arose during the planning period. Feel free to vary.	
2024/2a	<b>'A Ha' Moments</b>	What stands out as a memorable 'a ha moment' experienced while doing family research? Explain when it happened, who in your family tree was involved, what effect it had on you. It may be an 'a ha moment' you felt for the person involved, or felt yourself as you negotiated your family research journey 2a/24 <b>OR</b>	The Family Research Experience
2024/2b	<b>'Disappointments'</b>	Write about a time when you felt profoundly disappointed when doing your research. What triggered this? Who in your family tree was involved, what effect did it have on you? It may be a disappointment you felt for the person involved, or you felt as you negotiated your family research journey. How did you deal with it?	The Family Research Experience
2024/3a	<b>"The Too Hard Basket"</b>	Sometimes in our family history journey we decide to 'give up' on a particular line of research. Describe your experience and how you have, for example, worked around it or gone back to it over time. 3a/24	The Family Research Experience
2024/3b	<b>'Her Story'</b> (International Women's Day falls in March)	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. 3b/24	People and Places
2024/4a	<b>"A moral dilemma"</b>	Have you faced a moral, an ethical dilemma in your research? Perhaps it relates to what to include on an online website; a family object in your possession; whether to	The Family Research Experience

		share a story with others; etc. Write about it in 150 to 400 words. 4a/24 <b>OR</b>	
2024/4b	<b>'We hope our ancestors are good people'</b>	Write a story drawing upon your family research which relates to this topic--perhaps your hopes that particular ancestors were good people proved founded, perhaps they were unfounded. Share the story of your discovery. (Note Penny's story - <a href="https://www.digbystories.com/blog/always-hoping-your-ancestors-will-be-good-people">https://www.digbystories.com/blog/always-hoping-your-ancestors-will-be-good-people</a> ) 4b/24	People and Places
2024/5a	<b>'People I've met'</b>	Write about people you've met – online, on the phone, or in reality - during your family research quest and what this has meant to you in your family history journey 5a/24. <b>OR</b>	The Family Research Experience
2024/5b	<b>My family research network - 'heroes' and 'nuisances'</b>	It is wonderful when a family story is confirmed by the careful family research of another, however frustrating and sometimes devastating when the family story being shared by others about members of your family is totally incorrect or otherwise misleading. Write about a scenario or two which illustrates this from your own family tree. 5b/24	The Family Research Experience
2024/6	<b>"Now ... Where did I come from?" #1 (DNA)</b>	Have you, or a close member of your family, had a DNA test? Was there a particular reason for the test? Describe the test chosen, the process involved, and the results received, both initially and over time. Share the story of particularly strong and significant results, any contacts made, any disappointments you may have had. What has having a DNA test meant to you and your family? 6a/24	Inheritance (DNA)
2024/7a	<b>'Overseas Adventures'</b>	As we research we sometimes discover, to our surprise, that we have a relative/relatives overseas who experienced life changing events while in other countries - for example, a relative who was a govt official in Hong Kong in 1942 who was interned in a Japanese prison camp in HK during the war; a great-uncle and his young family living in Illinois during the Civil War. Don't worry if the ancestor/s are a little distant, tell us how you became aware of and came to understand the overseas adventures/experiences of those concerned.	People and Places
2024/7b	<b>'Travel Tales'</b>	A number of our class members have been able to travel to places in which their forebears lived, visit local historical societies there, even meet distant, and sometimes not-so-distant relatives, all as a result of their passion for family research. Photographs are taken, journals/blogs written, relationships formed which continue through emails and phone calls. Share your most memorable family research 'travel tale'. (Note –You may be able to write a number of different stories on this topic).	The Family Research Experience
2024/8	<b>Disaster/Tragedy</b>	Looking back through your family tree, write about a time when a disaster or tragedy struck one of your forebears, perhaps a whole family or even generation/generations. Locate them in your family tree, set the context in which they lived, describe the disaster or tragedy, perhaps using newspaper records if available, and what the impact on the family is likely to/appears to have been.	People and Places



		<i>Alternative wording</i> - 'Tragedy' - Share a story of a tragedy which enveloped the life/lives of your ancestors. What happened? Who did it affect? What may have been the impacts on your family members at the time/over time?	
2024/9a	<b>'The role of Letters in my family research' (Correspondence 3)</b>	Share two or three interesting letters or emails about a shared ancestor which provided information and supported problem solving during your research. Set the context first, include the letter (or in the case of long letters, the relevant part), then comment on the aftermath.	The Family Research Process
2024/9b	<b>'The role of books and other resources in my research'</b>	Tell us about books (from historical novels to memoirs, autobiographies, academic essays, edited papers, researched ....., etc) you have read during your research which have solved problems or otherwise strengthened your research ... As we are living in the online environment, which resources available on the internet have given you leads, provided information, solved mysteries and more?	The Family Research Process
2024/10a	<b>'A question answered....'</b>	"Tell us about a time when someone asked you a question/sought information for which you were able to find answers because of the work you have completed on your family tree. What did you find? Did responding to them lead you to develop further understanding of the lives of the forebears involved; your family tree - if so how?"	The Family Research Process
2024/10b	<b>'Institutions'</b>	"Tell us about a person or family you have come across in your research who for some period of their life was 'institutionalised'. After locating them in your family tree, explain the circumstances of their institutionalization? (Who, Why, When, Where, How etc). Explain the context and eventual outcome. Could range from being imprisoned on old ship hulls before transportation; workhouses; mental institutions; etc....	People and Places
2024/11a	<b>Family Research, the gift that keeps on giving!</b>	Over time, family research typically results in opportunities to meet with people connected to your family tree in some way. In time, perhaps when you think you have 'bedded down' your family tree, another opportunity arises to meet someone interested in your family tree to exchange information, documents, photographs, visits. Write about some connections you have made over the years, including the most recent experience based 'gift' your family research has offered to you.	The Family Research Experience
2024/11b	<b>'Publish or Perish?'</b>	What to do with all our research? We at times lived in hope that one day someone would be interested, often experiencing disinterest from family members when we were passionately involved in our research. How best to share our work with others? Share your story, whether you have published, or are working towards, publishing your research in some form. Or perhaps you have decided not to?	The Family Research Process

