

HERITAGE HUB FACT SHEET PRESENTING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

*You have done your family history research, gathered lots of papers,
but what do you do with it all?
How are you going to present your findings and share your research with others?*

Here are some personal thoughts and ideas.

Create a Scrapbook

I compiled one for my father's 80th birthday, before I had a computer. Think of "This is Your Life" or "This is My Life" using photographs, postcards, newspaper cuttings, family papers, images from tourist brochures, extracts, illustrations from publications etc. I included, for example, sections on:

- Ancestors, with family photographs of parents, grandparents etc. with a family tree
- When and where he was born and events happening at that time (consult our local newspapers)
- Where he lived
- Where he met my mother
- Wartime experiences
- Where he worked
- Holidays they enjoyed together
- Activities, interests, hobbies
- His descendants - children and grandchildren

Compile a Personal Memory Book eg.

- Your earliest memory
- Your grandparents' house
- What clothes did you wear as a child (think liberty bodices to mini skirts)
- What were your meals like?
- How did you celebrate birthdays, Christmas, New Year
- Where did you go on holidays?
- What were winters like?
- Toys and games you played with
- School days
- Radio, film and TV
- Getting about – travel and transport
- First car
- First job
- Family weddings
- Sports, hobbies, pastimes

Write "Stories from My Family History" inspired by your family history research.e.g. short profiles on:

- A feisty female
- A self-made man
- A talented ancestor
- A black sheep of the family
- My ancestor was a cornet, pauper, poacher, schoolmaster, farmer, fisherman, printer, councillor, policeman, soldier etc.

Write the Full Work - a fully documented account of your research and your findings of your family history. This can be a life-long project!

- Think out clearly your arrangement - it is easier to focus on one line at a time - either the maternal or paternal line and concentrate on your direct ancestors.
- Are you going to write a chronological account of the family, starting at some significant point in the past and work forward; or will you follow the ancestral trail of “how you did it” by working backwards from the present as you discover each generation?. Write a chapter per person.
- Focus on narrative stories connected with each ancestor – his or her life/work/circumstances. Are there mysteries in the family? Unusual names? Tragic events?
- Include copies of the documentation, feature photographs and maps, give background information on places associated with the family and a timeline to set your own family in the wider context of local, national and international events.
- An introduction can give a brief overview of your research – how far back you got, places associated with the family, occupations, key findings.
- A conclusion can draw all the threads together, summarising the main family story or highlighting what you would still like to find out.
- Include acknowledgements and a list of your source material

Start a Blog to record and share your family history, and make contact with fellow enthusiasts:

- Look up www.blogger.com to set up a site, which is a half way house to a full website, but does not need such expert technical skills and is FREE. You need to enjoy writing, have a subject where you want to share your thoughts and knowledge, and have the time to post articles regularly e.g. once a week. If you prefer writing in short bursts, on many of the topics highlighted above, this can be for you, with brevity the key and it is also a great opportunity to feature your family photographs online.
- Join www.geneabloggers.com – a network site which promotes your postings and provides daily blog prompts to inspire your writing. It is primarily American but with contributors from Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and it is a good way of getting your own research to a wider audience, making contact and learning from other family historians.

A Reminder:

- Copying from online family trees is not research. Whatever your style and method of writing, be sure to quote the sources of information and documentary evidence e.g. census returns, old parish records, newspaper article, poor law records, school records, or whether merely family recollection or hearsay. You can still include family anecdotes but make it clear they are no more than that e.g “we were told we were descended from Sir Walter Scott”,
- Also be mindful of copyright regulations. At the Hub you may have signed a copyright declaration form accepting that copies you obtained were for personal and private use only. You cannot lift images from a publication or website and use them, without permission in anything you intend to publish, whether online or in book form. This is a complex issue and archive staff will be happy to give general (not legal) advice.

Writing about your family history is all about telling the stories of your ancestors' lives.

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