

Are You Sitting Comfortably?: creating your family's story
Janet Few

www.thehistoryinterpreter.com @JanetFew.bsky.social

Making Decisions

Think about:-

WHY you are doing this

WHO you are doing this for

WHICH aspect of your family's history, or which branch of the family, you will work on first

WHAT format you will choose (there are pros and cons of each)

Consider:- Cost, longevity, appeal to a particular audience, expertise required

Formats include:- Books or ebooks, Articles/short biographies, Websites or Blogs, Videos, Power Point/Slide Shows, Displays, Various 'Outside the Box' methods

And WHAT you will include

Where you will start and stop?

Chronological or thematic?

Backwards or forwards?

Everything you know or the 'exciting bits'?

Overall theme?

Include research trail?

Faction?

Academic or popular?

WHEN you will do this

Set a realistic deadline and sub deadlines - Chapter 1 by x. Finish by y.

HOW you will organise your project

Collating Notes - Family Tree, List of characters, Biographies and Chronologies, Context.

Time line for each ancestor - add local and national events to personal timeline.

From start keep record of:- Sources - documentary, books, websites, people

Acknowledgements

National and Local Context

National Context:- Royalty, Politics, War, Religion, Science, The Arts, Special Events

Timelines:- www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/ www.information-britain.co.uk/famousdates.php
www.britainexpress.com/History/index.htm

Bertram, Neil and Smith, Angela *Tracing Your Family History Using the UK Historical Timeline* Pen and Sword 2021

Grun, Bernard *The Timetables of History* Simon and Schuster 3rd edition 1991

History Year By Year Dorling Kindersley 2011

Wikipedia

Local Context:- Terrain, Neighbours, Schools, Shops, Businesses, Farms, Fairs and Markets, Transport, Church, Pub, Weather, Local Events.

Finding out about the Locality:- Vision of Britain www.visionofbritain.org.uk

Local history groups:- www.local-history.co.uk/index.html <http://one-place-studies.org> <http://oneplacestudy.org> www.genuki.org.uk The British

Association for Local History www.balh.co.uk The Community Archives and

Heritage Group www.communityarchives.org.uk

General View of Agriculture

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_View_of_Agriculture_county_surveys

Occupations

Finding ancestors' occupations from:- certificates, censuses, parish registers, wills, leases, directories, newspapers, advertisements.

Books and Websites:- Shire publications www.shirebooks.co.uk

Milward, Rosemary *A Glossary of Household, Farming and Trade Terms from Probate Inventories* 3rd edition Derbyshire Record Society 1977

Raymond, Stuart *Trades and Professions: the family historians' guide* Family History Partnership 2011

Raymond, Stuart *Words from Wills* Raymond 2004

Waters, Colin *A Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles and Occupations* Countryside Books 2002

www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-Index.html

www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/glossary

www.taths.org.uk Tools and Trades History Society - also lists museums

Social Context

Few, Janet *Coffers, Clysters, Comfrey and Coifs: the lives of our seventeenth century ancestors*
The Family History Partnership 2012

Houses:- <https://heritagecalling.com/2016/09/20/a-brief-introduction-to-vernacular-houses/> www.buildinghistory.org/style/index.shtml includes all eras of domestic building for all parts of the country plus bibliography.

Furniture:- Fussell, G E *The English Rural Labourer; his home, furniture, clothing & food, from Tudor to Victorian times* Batchworth Press 1949

Gilbert, Christopher *English Vernacular Furniture 1750-1900* Yale University Press 1991

Clothing:- Wearing- Making - Laundering

Grafton, Carol Belanger *Victorian Fashions: A Pictorial Archive with Over 1000 Illustrations of Women's Fashions from 1855-1903* Dover Publications 2000

Styles, John *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* Yale University Press 2008

www.fashion-era.com/index.html

Food:- Utensils for cooking and eating - Cooking methods - Storage - Preserving
Hartley, Dorothy *Food in England* Piatkus 2009

Tannahill, Reay *Food in History* revised edition Penguin 1988

Prices and Wages:- www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk

Illness and Medicine:- www.localhistories.org/medicine.html

Creighton, Charles *A History of Epidemics in Britain: Volume 1 From AD 664 to the extinction of the plague* 1894 reprinted Cambridge University Press 2013

Creighton, Charles *A History of Epidemics in Britain: Volume 2 From the extinction of the plague to the present time* 1894 reprinted Cambridge University Press 2013

Few, Janet *'Til Death Us Do Part: causes of death 1300-1948* Gould publishing 2015

Illustrating Your Family History

Photographs Old and New:- Of people - names, dates and locations if possible. Of places - homes, churches, gravestones, businesses. Of events. Of tools. Of clothes and uniforms. Of ships. Of mementoes.

Postcards:- Be aware of copyright

Maps:- Commercial or your own? Illustrate voyages and migrations - be aware of copyright

Documents:- Think about how many to include - be aware of copyright issues

Family Trees:- Large or small? Beware of including living people

Books and Websites

Barratt, Nick *Nick Barratt's Guide to your Ancestors' Lives* Pen and Sword 2010

Blanchard, Gill *Writing Your Family History* Pen and Sword 2014

Fitz-Hugh, Terrick V H *How to Write a Family History* Alpha Books 1988

Titford, John *Writing up your Family History: a do-it-yourself guide* Countryside Books 2003

Publishing

Lynnmore, Michael *Publish your Genealogy* Kindle Publishing—available on Amazon as an ebook

www.lulu.com www.smashwords.com www.blurb.co.uk

Amazon self-publishing https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/1/print-on-demand

Ingram Spark print on demand www.ingramspark.com/plan-your-book/print/print-on-demand

www.selfpublishingbooks.co.uk/Self-Publishing-a-Book/Print-on-Demand

Janet's 5 week online course *Are you Sitting Comfortably? Writing and Telling your Family History* run by Pharos Teaching and Tutoring www.pharostutors.com is available each year. The next presentation is 20 April 2026.

Continues on next page

Six Steps to Success

Task 1

Fill in the sheet at the end of this handout. Come to decision about starting and stopping points, what to include, approach and format. Begin a chronology (30-100 years - maybe for the life of one key person). At this stage, only include family information (born, married, died, when parents died, where living, occupation, children born - may want to include sources (suggest different colour or column for this). If you do this on a computer, perhaps as a spreadsheet, you will need to print it so you can see it when you are writing. Alternatively, it is possible to use split screens but this may mean it is difficult to get a complete overview..

Task 2

For one individual or generation, collect information under each of the national context and local context headings.

National:- Royalty, Politics, War, Religion, Science, The Arts, Special events

Local:- Terrain, Neighbours, Schools, Shops, Businesses, Farms, Fairs and Markets, Transport, Church, Pub, Weather, Local events.

Add events to your chronology.

Task 3

Find out about the occupation of one of your ancestors:- working conditions, tools, uniform, anything significant that occurred during your ancestors' lifetime.

Task 4

For one generation of your ancestors:-

Find out something that comes under each of the domestic life headings:-

Houses, furniture, clothing, food, prices and wages, illness and medicine.

Task 5

Find 6 illustrations of different types for your family's history.

Task 6

Start writing your family's history. Good luck!

Golden rules:-

Start small

Break the project down into manageable pieces

Making Decisions

What is my initial aim?

Why am I doing this?

Who are my target audience?

What format and content is most likely to appeal to my target audience?

What/Who am I focusing on?

What format do I plan to use?

How am I going to arrange my family history?

Where am I starting and stopping?

Will my account be backwards or forwards?

Will I have a theme?

Am I including an account of the research - if so at what point?

Am I writing fact or fiction?

How academic do I want this to be?

What are my deadlines?

Overall?

Short term?