

15th October 2025

Family

**“God made all the creatures, and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign we and they are his children, one family here.”**

Robert Browning, *Saul, 'Dramatic Romance and Lyrics'*

I've been doing research on my family-tree on and off for a number of years. My late aunt did too, and we enjoyed comparing notes. And I've discovered that a cousin has been involved in more extensive research than I've been doing – taking one branch of the family back to 1760. We've not come across any “skeletons in the cupboard”. But we've unearthed our fair share of typical family issues: early deaths; interesting occupations; movements across the country; times of poverty; accidental deaths; second marriages; quirky characters; big families.

But while we know about names, dates, places, jobs and a little about some of the lives of past generations, we know nothing of personalities, or how people coped with the circumstances of their age. From 1760 till now is a lot of history. How did people feel about the invention of the steam engine? Did anyone read Walter Scott – if they could read at all? Did they know about the Tay Bridge disaster? Were they fascinated by the opening of the Glasgow Subway? Did they fight in World War I? How did they cope with the Depression? Were any of them in the Clydebanks Blitz? We know about the more modern stuff. But what about “back then”? How did they look? How did they feel? How did they live? How did they cope?

Given that the information on all of us is now “digitised”, there should be no problem for future generations doing family-tree research on us. Names, dates, places, jobs, and the like, will be easy to find. But what about feelings, attitudes, how we've coped, dreams, aspirations, achievements, failures? And what about me, what about the *real* me, and not just the digitised one? In many ways, I suppose that's why I write something every day. Whatever people make of my writing, I'm leaving future generations more than just easy-to-access facts and figures – five years' worth of these “Thought for the Day” pieces, for example – something for them to read, about me, the parts that *really* matter.

And you? Might you give future generations pleasure, insight and understanding if you leave them something of *your* own story?

A prayer for today

Unique in all the world, a child of the universe, who bends history? A story worth telling.

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