

Carol Baxter, *Writing Interesting Family Histories*, 3rd ed, Carol Baxter, Sydney, 2016, ISBN: 978-0-9807046-5-5, \$24.00 including postage in Australia, 126pp, paperback.

Carol Baxter, *Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories*, Carol Baxter, Sydney, 2016, ISBN: 978-0-9807046-6-2, \$24.00 including postage in Australia, 137pp, paperback.

Carol Baxter is a well known Australian author, presenter and genealogist. I have on a number of occasions had the pleasure of giving presentations at the same events as Carol. This means that I have been able to attend her presentations on writing family history and she invariably manages to inspire people with her very fast paced presentations and impart lots of tips and tricks.

Carol's book *Writing Interesting Family Histories*, now in its 3rd edition, is the springboard for people interested in writing their own family history and *Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories* is the new, follow up companion book. In some ways I prefer the books because I can stop and think which you certainly can't do when Carol talks.

If you are just starting to consider writing up your family stories then *Writing Interesting Family Histories* is the place to start. The book has an Introduction, 19 chapters, a Conclusion, Reading List and an Index.

Carol writes as she speaks, fast paced, short sentences and quite often in the first person. She also uses lots of examples so that you know exactly what she is talking about. There are lots of questions asking you to think about various aspects that will add depth and interest to what you are writing. Don't just have names, dates and places.

You could easily decide to write a chapter or short story on your ancestors as you read this book. Put into practice what Carol is saying as you go along and see what you have written by the end of the book. Make a start and it definitely gets a little easier.

So what happens when you have written the family history? Most of us will want to publish it in some way whether it is just a few copies for the family and the local family history society or a full publication that may be of interest to others in the local community. Many people enjoy reading family histories, especially if they are interesting and gripping.

The next step is to read Carol's follow up book, *Writing and Publishing Gripping Family Histories*. This is similar in style with an Introduction, Part 1 is on Writing with 18 chapters, Part 2 is on Publishing with 2 chapters, Conclusion, Reading List and Index.

Most of the chapters in Part 1 expand on your writing skills and in particular focus on using our senses such as sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Character and personality also help to make our ancestors come alive for our readers.

Part 2 looks at various publishing options including a guide to self publishing.

In the Conclusion Carol says that if she could give just one piece of advice it would be this:

Don't stop at 'what' - Seek the 'why' and the 'how'

Both of these books are a must read for the family historian thinking of writing up the family history, or even if you are blogging your family stories online. The various tips throughout both books will definitely help your writing skills and will certainly keep you motivated.

Carol has a range of other genealogy help books on evidence analysis, surnames, research guides and true crime thrillers. More detailed information is available on [Carol Baxter's website](#) and the books can be ordered online.

Shauna Hicks

www.shauhicks.com.au

January 2017