

# Multi-Generational Family History Research: The Ultimate Truth-Telling

## The 2023 Tom Stannage Memorial Lecture

### By Dr Shauna Bostock.

20th September 2023 | 6pm-7pm | Murdoch Lecture Theatre, UWA Arts Building | Free

Book Online: <https://2023TomStannageLecture.eventbrite.com.au>

Dr Shauna Bostock is an Aboriginal woman whose family descend from Bundjalung Country, in the Northern Rivers region of Northern New South Wales. Her family members knew that the Bostock name came from a non-Indigenous settler, Augustus John Bostock, who married an Aboriginal woman in the 1800s, but there were huge gaps in family history knowledge from the present to the past. Shauna was immediately struck with a burning curiosity to find out more.

After she completed the genealogical work and constructed her family tree she still wasn't satisfied. Shauna wanted to know more about how her ancestors survived colonisation. As she accumulated vast amounts of information about the lived experiences of her ancestors, she realised that family history research—accomplished with scholarly, academic precision—would be an important, incredibly valuable contribution to national history. So her former job as a school teacher fell by the wayside as Shauna completed postgraduate study that culminated with a PhD in Aboriginal History.

The title of Shauna's thesis was *From Colonisation To My Generation: An Aboriginal Historians Family History Research Past to Present*. Her PhD Supervisors were Professor Ann McGrath, Professor Peter Read, and Associate Professor Maria Nugent, and she graduated from Australian National University in 2021. In February 2022 Shauna signed a book deal with Allen & Unwin Publishers in Sydney, and her first book, *Reaching Through Time: Finding My Family's Stories*, was nationally released on the 4th of July, 2023.

Tom Stannage, whose memory is honoured through this lecture, said in the handout for his legendary History 104 first year unit that:

*it is not enough to know what happened, one must seek to understand how and why things happened as they did, what the consequences were, and how our perceptions of people and events have been shaped.*

Like Tom, Shauna is passionate about teaching, and is convinced that there is no better way to understand 'how and why things happened as they did, and what the consequences were' than by examining the lived experiences of several generations of real-life, flesh and blood Aboriginal people in every era of Australian history. This lecture is about what the examination of five generations of Aboriginal family history research placed within the context of Australian History can reveal.

The Tom Stannage Memorial Lecture commemorates the exceptional contribution made by Professor Tom Stannage (1944-2012) to the Western Australian community. Professor Stannage was a prominent Australian historian who worked hard to foster a wider understanding of Western Australian history and heritage. He is remembered as an inspiring teacher and a passionate advocate for the study of history.

