A 21st Century 'Victorian' Family Album

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One of the world's fastest growing hobbies is Genealogy. Inspired by remarkable books such as Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976), and more recently, television series such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, where celebrities aided by professional researchers, discovered their family origins. Heartbreaks and 'rattling skeletons in the cupboard' were re-discovered, while raw emotions were captured by the probing documentary camera. Today, websites such as 'Ancestry.com' allow any of us to delve far into our own families past, from the comfort of our home office desk. However, these 'cloud based' data discoveries are very fragile archives indeed, particularly if subscriptions are terminated, or relatives who are unaware of a deceased's research, loose access. The Victorian Family photo album and notes were archived as 'Hard Copy' and thus, many still survive today from well over a century ago. Updating the advantages of the Victorian Family Album, combined with the latest online technology, opens up many exciting opportunities for today's online genealogists. This research describes a safer way to send their carefully researched family histories forward in time to their yet unborn, great, great, grandchildren, hundreds of years into the future.

Genealogy. Curating. Archival. Self-publishing. Photography. Image manipulation, Book design. Colour management. Scanning. Copyright.

1. INTRODUCTION

A mere 25 years ago, most Genealogy research was only possible by visiting actual parish churches, museums, newly set up local Heritage Centres, or central National Archives. Today, many hand-written records dating back to the 16th and 17th Century have been digitised, and can be viewed and assessed online, and then easily logged against the data-base record of particular ancestors. Bringing together parish birth, marriage and burial records, with census forms, immigration lists, probates and military documents, we can now envisage life stories in far more detail. We can imagine some of their joys, and moments of despair, the risky decisions that brought family wealth and security and mistakes that led to 'Riches to Rags', and the grinding poverty of 'The Workhouse'.

However, all this data format information remains 'cloud based' and 'screen based'. We may log on and view it, but we do not actually own it. It is 'ours' to access, as long as we continue to pay the annual subscription. I have no doubt, that all these Ancestry servers and data archives are very robust and safe. I could also make an A4 hard-copy

printout on my Desk-Jet. However there is no way of reconciling all these online discoveries, with our actual family heirlooms and oral histories, passed down to us from one generation to another. The two are incompatible.

Figure 1: A family heirloom. Detailed silhouettes of my 3x Great Grandparents, made for their 1825 wedding. Source: Diprose family archive.

2. ROBUST VICTORIAN SOLUTIONS

The Victorians of the 19th Century certainly knew how to build everything to last. Family Album's became popular from the early days of Photography in the 1860's. The 'Carte de Visite' 'fad' from that decade lead to social climbing Victorian middle classes aspiring to be photographed, both for their social introductions, and also to be recorded for posterity. Thus they were inspired by the very expensive portrait painting and cameo silhouettes, favoured as status symbols of the wealthy, in previous generations.

Notes and dates were often included in albums, often made over one hundred years ago. Sometimes, rudimentary family trees, gathered from oral histories, were drawn up. These can still prove a very useful starting point for any researcher today who is lucky enough to have access to a hard-copy Victorian family album of their ancestors, even if they only covered small parts of the overall family tree.

3. ANCESTRY DOWNLOAD BUTTON

Hence, thanks to a growing list of Internet sites such as Ancestry.com, Geni.com Family Search.org, Find My Past.co.uk, etc., we are now able to sit at our home office desks and research online. These programmes give us a remarkable range of additional information such as wills, newspaper cuttings, bankruptcies, military pensions, or admission to jails, or asylums.

By augmenting these specialist websites with other online information, we can build far more detailed information than from a basic family tree. Here, for example, is the Baptism in 1802, of John Woodhouse, (the Gentleman in the silhouette left), along with the names of his parents and exactly which village in Derbyshire, was their home, when he was born.

Figure 2: Screen-grab showing a tiny button with a hammer and spanner on the right, which pops up a menu with the Download option hidden away. Source: Ancestry.com.

I had initially anticipated that I would only be able to screen-grab all these online images. By the time they had been resized to 300dpi for printing, the picture size would have been quite small. However, I then found that the 'Download' button, hidden in a menu, produced a large jpeg that would convert to a 50–60Mb tiff file, without any losses from enlargement. Some files downloaded into Greyscale and required conversion to RGB in Photoshop. RGB also allowed a little aging colouring of older documents, or the introduction of a highlight colour, to point out something of particular interest in a census form.

Many of these hand-written documents from two or three hundred years ago, were far more readable, thanks to the much larger reproduction. Amalia and I decided that this would allow us to make a much bigger '21st Century Victorian Family Album', sized to 30cm square. Apart from obvious visual impact of using larger pictures, the greater detail in records really helped to tell the story, whether images of our own heirlooms, or downloaded files.

For example, scanning, enlargement and image manipulation revealed that Mary Stokes silhouette (above) had a beautiful headdress of the finest Nottingham lace. We also discovered that the three white feather plumes signified that she must have once been presented, as an 18 year old, at the Court of the Prince Regent in London, during the 1820's. This gave us a much clearer idea of the wealth and status of her Nottingham Lace industry family, which could afford expensive silhouettes.

We also learned to check more obscure sources, from the very earliest 16th century parish records, through Tithe Maps and lists, from 1809 and 1838, (a 19th century equivalent of the Domesday Book, to help identify ownership, and claim tax!), to the ten year 'snapshot' of UK census' dating from 1841 (presently published up to April 1911). We even knew exactly what date that these were taken. In 2021, the 1921 UK census should be released, which will tell us far more about deaths from The Great War and Spanish Flu epidemic. We found a regimental diary from first Battle of Ypres in Oct. 1914, and the last 3 days of Thomas Bates life, moved us all to tears.

Thus, with some careful organisation and acquired skills, we could combine, collate and curate our family heirlooms and photographs, with downloads that we had discovered online. A self-published book gave us a very attractive means of storytelling, both to our present families, and to any new generations still to come.

Figure 3: A very delicate 7cm x 5cm Dr Johnson's Dictionary belonging to my Great, Great, Grandmother photographed in soft daylight, as described right. Source: Diprose family archive.

Family photographs were generally flatbed scanned in RGB colour, as 600dpi tiff files. Books that might be damaged in a scanner could be photographed using the Macro setting that any reasonable digital camera offers. I own a Fuji X-Pro1 Camera with a 'Shoot Without Lens' menu option. This allows me, (via an adaptor), to attach my 1979 Macro Nikkor 55mm f2.8 lens to my digital camera body, producing quite stunning results. Lighting was simply soft fairly even daylight, and for any researcher considering embarking on a similar project, any small digital camera, or high quality mobile phone, should be successful.

Images were resized in Photoshop and any dust spotting, or damage, could generally be retouched out, (provided it did not affect the history of the image). With white paper documents, a two pixel black 'stroke' line was generated to delineate edges against the white pages of the book. Inherently, some sourced portraits from the web, were smaller. We noted this early in the design stage, and could choose to add our own Victorian picture frame.

4. THE GENEALOGY METHODOLOGY

As researchers, most of us are already used to compiling information from many sources, images and contexts, before beginning to write up our own theories, or present a paper. Also some of us, through writing a Masters Dissertation, a PhD, or authoring a book, have gained skills and experience in developing the structure of Chapters, and the order that these should appear in the book, to achieve a narrative.

With the many branches in any Family Tree, or events happening in very different parts of the country, (or world), a standard single timeline would not work at all. Nor can we aim to follow every

branch back to the 16th Century. Apart from some records not existing, overall it would be far too complex for the reader to follow and a long list of 'who begat who' would be boring.

It is much better is to select the most interesting family lines, those already with sound information and rich content, to build characters that the reader will 'care about', (similar a novel), and then, to follow their story in more depth. Where one has already described one strand and are exploring another, we might refer back for an interesting comparison. For example, in Spring 1818, my 3x Great Grandmother Hannah Bates, was giving birth to next generation son, Thomas, in a tiny hovel in the (now totally derelict) hamlet of Snap, Aldbourn, Wiltshire. At the same time as another 3x Great Grandfather, Robert Clarke, was marrying Elizabeth Ashwell, who was the eldest daughter of The Mayor of Nottingham! In the last chapters, all the various strands will come together with our Grandparents and Parents. We decided not to write about my own generation, for fear that it would seem unpleasantly like composing my own obituary!

Figure 4: Family skeletons sometimes 'rattle in the cupboard'! In this 1888 photo, 15-year-old Martha Rose (right) was probably already pregnant, but the family asked her older sister Edith (left) to come back home for the village church baptism, and claim the baby was hers. Source: Diprose family archive.

As with any good research, outside influences also need to be included. New railway employment in Swindon Works, combined with the reduced wages for farm workers, following the repeal of the Corn Laws, both massively affected my family, and their moving into cities and 'service'.

5. COPYRIGHT LAW & ISSUES

All of us working as genuine researchers, may have suffered infringements of our own work, and thus would wish to respect copyright. Hence, for this project, wherever possible I have always asked the copyright owner's permission, when compiling the material for 'The 21st Century Victorian Family Album'. The fundamental point is that, at most, there will only ever be about 8 copies of this book, to be a gift, just for immediate members of my family.

Nothing will be published online outside of this very limited print run. Possibly, in return for some remarkably generous assistance, I may offer a copy to a couple of council run Heritage Centres, but only as Hard Copy, with restrictions over how visitors view it and can copy small sections

The outcomes from taking the trouble to write and asking permission have been quite remarkable. In consequence, the first book of 'The Bates and the Tylers' will now run to two volumes of over 100 pages each, instead of one. For example, I asked a website contact page for permission to use an image of a Reading Brewery where a Victorian ancestor of mine once worked. I received back a kind personal e-mail in response, along with a big 60mb file. A further request to a website for information concerning a small Methodist Chapel where my family once worshipped, lead to me receiving some high resolution copies of pages of notes, hand written by my 2x Great Uncle, John Bates, Chapel Warden.

Figure 5: The generosity of complete strangers in assisting with this project, all fully credited in the book.
Source: with kind permission of the Ken Hillier Collection.

How does the UK Copyright Law work here? Please note that it seems to be similar in the US, but that you may need to check. A very limited run self-publish book like this, really counts as 'Non Commercial Research and Private Study'. This is fair for sources like National Archives, Kew, where I have downloaded Hi. Res. census forms from Ancestry, or marriage records held by Swindon and Wiltshire Heritage Centre. The Album is only for my family, and will never be for sale, since it is only of any interest to my immediate relations. If I were to publish the book online, or make a website, or indeed, publish pictures other than those I own, or have permissions, in this paper, I would be infringing copyright.

There are a small number of images where I have found them online, but am unable, after some considerable efforts, to trace any owner to ask. These certainly fall within the spirit of 'orphan works', and it would be very unlikely indeed to be considered an infringement, for this usage.

Where any original source is known, particularly on occasions where there might be any 'grey areas' in copyright, the image that I wished to publish has been fully acknowledged, in detail. For example:

Source: Taken From 'Ridge Way Country', by H.W. Timperley, published by J.M.Dent & Sons 1935, Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

Source: Drawing with kind permission by Ken Watts from his book 'SNAP', published in 1989 and sourced by him from the 1900 O/S Survey.

Source: London, Church of England Marriages and Banns 1754-1921 London Metropolitan Archives.

Summing up, while there is no statutory definition of 'Fair Dealing', if the owner has not suffered any losses and the amount of work taken is reasonable and 'fair-minded', then there is no legal infringement. Any publishing of these images online to a wider audience would be illegal.

6. WHY BLURB BOOKS WAS CHOSEN

Blurb are one of the few self-publishing book companies that use HP Pigment Inks. Most other book printers use dye based inks that may fade in time, or suffer deterioration, if poorly stored. While Blurb offers a choice of paper surfaces, some with artificial whiteners, they also use a paper that they call 'Proline Uncoated'. This is a 148gsm archival quality paper with an eggshell textured uncoated finish manufactured by Mohawk Fine Papers.

Having carried out considerable research of pigment inks and archival papers for our EVA 2018 Paper 'An Alternative Method of Very Long-term Conservation of Digital Images and their Historical

Context for The Archive, University College, Oxford', we are confident that our chosen combination of Blurb Pigment Inks and this Mohawk paper, will produce Family Albums with an archival life of at least 3-500 years.

In our EVA London Proceedings Paper from 2017, 'Voices from the Savannah: An Innovative Approach to Self Publishing' Amalia Toyas and Graham Diprose both described their workflow, where a book could easily be written, or edited, in the UK and produced, using Adobe 'InDesign' software. Amalia lives in Greece, and we used Skype for discussions and WeTransfer to send pre-prepared text and images. Blurb make an excellent plug in for Adobe InDesign, and also have downloadable software, to calculate spine width etc. depending on the selected type of cover or Book Jacket and paper thickness.

The 'Blurb' self-publishing system is very flexible indeed. It is perfectly possible to run just one copy of a version of the book for a cousin, who is only concerned with their part of the family, and another version for my own children, who would wish to know the history of all four of their Grand Parents. The initial plan was to self publish four very similar looking books, one for each of my own, and my wife's parents, changing the cover colour and title pages. This original plan has now been modified by practicalities. With all the generous additional material and support that the first project has so far received, plus my Mother's careful notes on the back of photographs, The history about her side of the family, will now run to two 100+ page volumes. This will allow copies to be made, not only for my children, but also my three cousins who share the same Grandfather with me.

Wiltshire Author, Ken Watts, who has been exceptionally helpful, will have a special version of the first volume. This will only cover our family life in Wiltshire, and may also be perfect, if we donate a copy to two very generous local heritage centres there.

By having total control over the book design and production, it will be perfectly possible to produce bespoke versions, then only run one or two special copies, to suit a particular relatives interests, or as a 'thank-you' to any very helpful historian.

7. THE DESIGN PROCESS

Once we knew we could download large tiff files of many old 18th and 19th century documents, we could plan to make the larger book, 30cm square, and the detailed design brief could be devised. On one hand, the function of the book, or books, was to be a detailed history, gathering as much relevant

information as possible, to send forward, and assist any future family scholar, in a couple of hundred years time.

The Family Album could legitimately have a 'Victorian' visual theme, as much of 'the action' took place in the 19th century, but to appeal to my family today, and in the future, it also needed to look very modern and contemporary, for future generations.

Part of the brief was that the book had to look incredibly beautiful. It was important that it became such an attractive artefact that any future generation, even if they were not interested in their own family history, could never consider discarding it rather than passing it on to a relative.

Finally, I could also imagine some, as yet unborn, great-grandchild, perhaps aged about eight, sitting on a parents knee and just looking at pictures while they listened to the stories about their fore-bears. Hence with the '21st Century Victorian Family Album', book designer Amalia Toyas was given quite a complex brief to resolve.

The design process began with the book format in 'Adobe InDesign'. The big (30cm x 30cm) size was large enough to show the plethora of photographic material that had been collected, not only to view the old photographs, but also to show off the beautiful 'copper-plate' penmanship of the hand-written records of the time depicted.

Our next task was to choose a typeface to suit the period and also be classic enough to be easily read by all ages, now and in the future. We chose Garamond, a serified old typeface that not only looked good, but also is well known to read very well with any OCR scanner, for future re-digitisation.

Figure 6: The cover and back of Volume 1 of our 21st Century Victorian Family Album (spine design to follow). Background colours and photos will change for future volumes about other family branches. Source: Design by Amalia Toyas.

Figure 7: A spread from the *Bates & the Tylers*, showing marriage record from 1824, the hamlet that the couple then went to live in, (but after it became deserted by 1909), and a 2018 photo of the overgrown village.
Source: Design by Amalia Toyas.

We decided that a 3-column grid system would work well with the photographic materials that we had collected, but that the outside 3rd column would only be used for white space, pictures and their captions.

For the cover, we decided to use designs and lettering from the period and a photo on the back of each cover, depicting the relevant family tree's grand-parents.

Figure 7 illustrates how differently sourced images could be compiled together. The 1824 Marriage Certificate was downloaded from Ancestry.co.uk (as already shown). The photograph of the derelict Snap farmhouse from 1937, was first discovered on a website, but then sourced on a visit to Swindon and Wiltshire Heritage Centre, Chippenham. It was then copied using my own camera from the original book. The colour photograph was taken during a spring 2018 visit to the few remains of the hamlet of Snap, Aldbourne, Wiltshire.

8. COSTS AND TIME ESTIMATES

Assuming that genealogy and discovering one's past can be considered to be a hobby, I would be very wise to avoid costing up my own time, for research and authorship, of these books. To reach the point of writing this paper, this project has taken me a little over a year of work, probably averaging 20–25 hours per week.

Volume 1 of 'The Bates and the Tylers' is now fully designed and awaiting last proofreading and editorial corrections. It will be ready well before my EVA London 2019 conference presentation. Volume 2 is half written and may possibly have a 'proof' stage ready for EVA next July. The book on my wife's family, and a final volume about my own Father's ancestors, will probably each take another 6–9 months, given this new research must also run along-side other projects of mine.

I am very fortunate that Book Designer Amalia Toyas, with whom I had worked on the Blurb Self-Publish book, 'Voices from the Savannah', (a previous EVA London Paper in 2017), agreed to collaborate with this project. We both wished to discover the viability of compiling family histories and artefacts into very short print run large book format Albums. Generally to design a 100-page book, should cost an absolute minimum of £20–25 per page, or £2,000+. The design input is vitally important to ensure that our 21st Century Family Album is an artefact that it will always be carefully sent forward in time, as an extremely precious, long term, family heirloom.

Working on current UK. Blurb prices (at March 2019), a basic 20 page, 30cm Sq. Photo-book should cost £47.99. Volume 1 of our Album has an additional 95 pages at £0.45 each, making £90.74 for each copy. There is a small extra charge to add end-sheets, which look very attractive. The Blurb logo could be removed at a cost, but neither this, nor having an ISBN number, is relevant at all, in this particular case.

Once set up, via Adobe In Design, Amalia Toyas will use a downloadable Blurb template to calculate and design the spine width, for the book cover. Each book's page layout file will then be converted into a pdf, including the conversion of the RGB photographs into the correct HP Pigment Ink printer CMYK profile. Obviously, we always order one book initially, to check for any typos, or poorly reproduced images, downloads, or maps, a massive advantage of the Self Publishing workflow.

Blurb regularly run promotions of 30–40% off of the full price, or discounts for multiple copies, and by choosing these days to order, considerable savings can be made. Any VAT or taxes are included in the price, but shipping is extra, and I anticipate this as £10–12 per Album. It would be much less for any smaller books or larger orders. Books can then be ordered again in the future, perhaps for a birth or baptism gift.

9. CONCLUSION

The year's research for Volume 1 of 'The Bates and the Tylers' has been quite a remarkable personal journey. I only exist today, thanks to their existence. Hence I can easily empathise with all their many struggles, successes and stories of rags to riches, and back again. It would be terrible if I only held my research in 'The Cloud', and risked losing contact with all my ancestors again. It would seem similar to a large series of close family bereavements.

Yet all today's Internet based genealogists seem quite happy to rely on cloud technology, and oblivious to the fact that do not really 'own' their research. They will have to continue to subscribe, year on year, and generation upon generation, to keep their access to their ancestors, and family trees.

In boxes stored in other parts of the house, our family heirlooms are inherently totally disconnected from all the information that I can find online, and view on screen. A 21st Century Victorian Family Album therefore seems the only way to bring together all elements of my family histories as a single narrative, with an informed probability of preserving both for generations to come.

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