

YOUR ULTIMATE FAMILY PHOTO PROJECT

been investigated, remaining photographs can be deleted or discarded. By the way, it is also OK to keep all of your photographs; they are your family history photographs and you are building your legacy – it is entirely up to you what you keep or don't keep.

While organising, you may find photographs of unknown people which can cause a dilemma: to keep or to discard? Having an "Unknown" folder in your Digital Photo Hub as a home for these orphan photographs is a prudent solution. You may not know who the subjects are at the moment but with further research they may be identifiable and then the photographs will become a valuable part of your family collection.

To help with the task of identifying people in photographs you can ask relatives, refer to a family tree or timeline, consult reference books and websites, or conduct additional genealogical research. If you intend to sort chronologically, photograph dating knowledge will be essential. Photograph dating is a fascinating and absorbing activity. Many resources are available to help you. Especially useful are those from Jayne Shrimpton,

who has authored several books and articles including many for this magazine (see Jayne's regular Photo Corner column). Robert Pols and Stephen Gill have also authored excellent books, and there are many useful online resources available.



Step 3: Preserve

Every time we handle physical photographs, we cause damage. Wearing gloves protects photographs from the harmful oils on our skin but does not prevent handling damage, no matter how much care is taken. Preserving your photographs will help prevent damage while still allowing you to enjoy and share the memories they hold.

The best way to preserve your physical photographs is to convert them to high quality digital versions by scanning, add the scans to your Digital Photo Hub, and then store the originals in archive-quality materials and conditions.

When planning your scanning project you may consider using a professional scanning service, choose to follow a DIY approach, or a combination of the two. If following the DIY path, an all-in-one or standard flatbed scanner is suitable if the scanner's settings are adjustable and your photographs fit.

Right: Ann found a photograph of an unknown soldier in a collection she inherited from her nan. Ann writes: 'With the help of my family tree, army records, and the knowledgeable folk at Forces War Records, I was able to identify the soldier as my great uncle, Thomas Holding, who was sadly killed during WW1.' See ("The Unknown Soldier" FT November 2017)



A3 size scanners are available for larger photographs but are expensive. Alternatively, stitching software can combine multiple scans into one image. Unlike all-in-one and flatbed scanners which are slow, much faster alternatives exist, including specialist film and photographic flatbed scanners. These use ICE software (Image Correction and Enhancement) and can accommodate slides and negatives. Auto feed scanners are faster still but are not recommended for old or fragile photographs. Camera scanning, the method used by professionals, is fast, can accommodate any size photographs and 3D objects, is non-damaging and high quality, but comes at a price.

Mobile apps are also available for scanning, which although quick, convenient and often free, may provide little control over settings and therefore quality. Even so, the mobile phone option may be suitable depending on the intended use of the scans. Recently, Ancestry and Photomyne have teamed up to offer scanning directly into your account via the Ancestry mobile app. Although an attractive option, you should think about how you

Below: Physical photographs in archive-quality sleeves and ringbinder box





A damaged photograph of an unknown WW1 soldier before and after digital restoration



will back-up these scanned images and review their access and ownership status in the Terms & Conditions.

Following scanning, the best way to store your physical photographs is in archive-quality materials and conditions. This means deciding where you will keep the photographs and how you will store them. 'Where' is quite simple: NOT in the garage, basement, loft or shed because these places are often damp and too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. A cupboard or a bookcase is best, not on an outside wall and preferably away from light. Constant temperature and humidity, maintained within a strict range, provide ideal conditions, but realistically the temperature and humidity range you usually maintain in your home is fine... if you are comfortable, then your photographs will be too!

'How' you store your physical photographs depends on how you wish to use them: will they be stored as a repository, not regularly accessed, or do you think you would still like to spend time with them? If the answer is a repository, then the photographs can be stored in archive-quality envelopes and

boxes. If you intend to view and enjoy your physical photographs after scanning, then archive-quality sleeves and ringbinder boxes are an excellent choice.

At this point in your photogenealogy journey, your family history photographs, both digital and physical, will be gathered, efficiently sorted, safely backed-up and preserved, quickly searchable and easily shareable.

But photogenealogy doesn't stop there...



Step 4: Enhance & Share

Enhance your family history photographs

Restoration, colourisation and animation are options that can enhance your digital photographs. Digital restoration can remove scratches, dust spots, tape marks, folds and tears. Even missing pieces can be recreated digitally.

A range of software exists for enhancing photographs: Paint.net (free, donation optional), Vivid-Pix and Adobe Photoshop Elements (one-off payment), and Adobe Photoshop (subscription) are just a few examples. All take a little time to learn but reasonable results can be obtained with practice.

MyHeritage offers online colourisation, enhancement, animation and DeepStory services, that are free to try and easy to use. The animation option uses a photograph of your ancestor to produce a short video showing your ancestor moving and smiling. Using DeepStory, your animated ancestor can narrate their own life story. Opinion seems to be divided about whether animation brings ancestors to life in a unique and magical way or is just plain creepy! MyHeritage services can be tried for free and, if they appeal, a subscription



Through Ancestry Ann was able to connect with a distant cousin to share family history photographs, including this stunning WW1 image of her great-grandfather, that she had not seen before. Ann writes: 'Colourising this photograph with MyHeritage really brings it to life.'