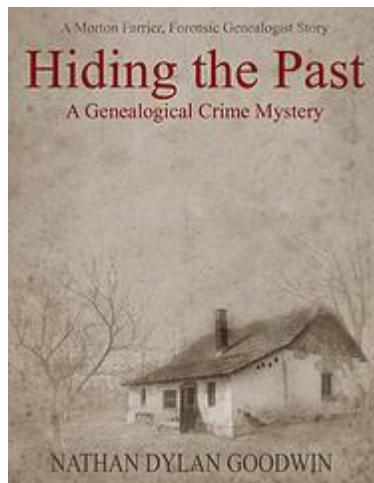


Review of *Hiding the Past* and *The Lost Ancestor* by UK author Nathan Dylan Goodwin www.nathandylangoodwin.com - available in print or as an e-book.

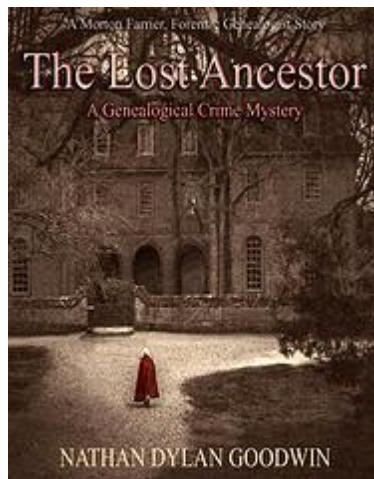


Nathan asked me to review his two books and not having read a genealogical mystery novel before I was keen to see what the books would be like. Described as genealogical crime mysteries, *Hiding the Past* is the first in the series with *The Lost Ancestor* continuing the cases (and adventures) of Morton Farrier, a young forensic genealogist.

Both books have parallel stories, the one in the past which Morton has been engaged to solve and the one in the present telling how he goes about investigating and solving his clients cases.

Hiding the Past is looking at a genealogical mystery in England during the World War Two era while *The Lost Ancestor*'s mystery is from pre World War One. If you are my vintage you are probably familiar with the TV show Upstairs Downstairs but if you are a bit more modern, then you will recognise a Downton Abbey type setting for *The Lost Ancestor*.

There are lots of twists and turns. If you want to know more about the story lines, there is a blurb for each book on the website. As I do not want to give any spoiler alerts, I will not talk about the mysteries but rather why I enjoyed reading both books.



I found both books an easy and an entertaining read. The story lines are believable but not that obvious that you solve the mystery before Morton. Although I was close in *The Lost Ancestor* to beating Morton. The pace keeps up throughout and it is often hard to put the book down as you really want to know what happens next.

I identified with the characters on a number of levels. Like Morton I work as a professional genealogist and help people solve their family mysteries, although I don't seem to get anything near as exciting to investigate. The internet has changed how we do genealogy research these days but it is good to see that Morton not only uses the internet but still visits archives and libraries and even does some old fashioned foot walking around the areas he is researching.

As an archivist who first started working in a reading room in the early 1980s I can identify with the reading room archivists (I love Miss Latimer) and their interaction with clients such as Morton. Some of this interaction brought back my own reading room memories. I often found myself smiling and recalling both people I have worked with and clients we helped in the reading room.

Then there is the interaction between Morton and his long term girlfriend Juliette. Again I identified with the characters and their relationship. Quite a few smiles and laughs here. Morton's relationship with his immediate family (father and brother) also has its own story line throughout the books. I enjoyed the way this unfolded in *The Lost Ancestor*.

The multi level story lines are part of what keeps the books fast moving with no boring moments. In *Hiding the Past* I did start to wonder if there was also a bit of James Bond in Morton's character but I think those encounters just make him a little bit more exciting. Certainly a pleasant departure from the usual stereotype for professional genealogists.

With Christmas just a few weeks away, both books are a perfect gift idea for those who love reading and genealogy.

What didn't I like about the books? The one thing that did bug me were little typo errors in both books which a good editor or proof reader should have picked up. For example, 'is the marriage certificate you have the copy of made from General Register Office', the 'of' should not be there. Another example, 'he mother wailed' should be 'her mother wailed'.

Little mistakes like this probably don't annoy most readers but part of my career was also editing and proofreading so I tend to pick up a red pen whenever I start reading anything. Also friends will say that I can generally pick a typo at 20 paces, although I find it harder in my own books as we do not usually see our own mistakes.

Coincidentally after Morton's adventures I started reading a [Phryne Fisher](#) adventure (author Kerry Greenwood) which I borrowed from the local library. I was surprised to pick up these same little typos (from a well known publisher) and obviously I am not the only one who finds them annoying. A previous reader had circled in pen and commented on various errors through the book! At least I don't deface a book, must be a legacy from my librarian days.

Typos aside, I am really looking forward to the third adventure of Morton Farrier, forensic genealogist. I hope it is not too long a wait!

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