

Have you heard of website *www.weare.xyz?*



Every cloud has a silver lining, and one such very good thing to come out of Covid is WeAre.xyz – an innovative online family archive builder by **Simon Davies**. Read on to discover what it can do for your family history. Interview by **Helen Tovey**

Simon Davies had long been interested in family history but it was when he was struck down by a serious case of genealogy during the Covid years that he realised that he needed to do something to 'get the stories out of his head' and shared out to his wider family, indeed the wider world.

Simon's background is digital product design, in particular social networking (his first company became part of Facebook way back in 2011). "Perhaps unsurprisingly," explains Simon, "I could not resist applying my experience to the personal challenge of socialising my family history simply and effectively."

"The result is WeAre.xyz, a product, but also a new approach and philosophy for expressing and preserving our family histories."

A few weeks ago I caught up with Simon Davies for a tour, so let's dive in and see how it works (and in the process you'll also probably soon be realising why you need WeAre in your family history life).

Who is WeAre aimed at?

Good question. And the answer is twofold...

- Firstly, it's aimed at each family's Family Historian – yes, you! It's aimed at the person

who does the research, knows the stuff, treasures the stories, scans the photos, builds the tree and so forth.

- Secondly, WeAre is also aimed at your loved ones, cousins and kin... you know, the people in your family who have perhaps just a passing interest, but who nonetheless do wish to reflect and remember family history tales and factoids from time to time. (These are people you definitely wish to get involved: the older and contemporary generations to yourself may

Simon.

"Initially I did make a website, but that's just the digital equivalent of writing a family history book; both are completed tomes of the author's perspective that then tend to gather dust."

"With WeAre I establish my family's own shared archive; just like a county or a country has an archive. I happen to be busy in it (very busy and for years to come), but all my relatives are welcome to drop by, contribute, comment, and have the potential to be inspired, to reflect on their

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very well have nuggets of info or copies of photos that you don't yet have; the younger ones are 'the future' – and it is to them that we wish to pass the family history torch, isn't it!). "With WeAre, you set up an archive so it's there when your family are ready," explains Simon.

What is the thinking behind WeAre?

"Well first up, WeAre is not a website builder, it is a family archive builder – and the difference is striking," clarifies

own childhoods, raising their children... and ultimately may start to record life events into their archive as they happen.

"At the end of the day, a family's archive is a part of the family and is implicitly handed on as a birth right to future generations."

What does this mean for you?

- *For you, as the family's Family Historian*, WeAre has a slick and intuitive, completely editable, GEDCOM compatible online archive



builder. An automatically generated structure underpins the archive with specific sections for Families, Individuals, Media, Occasions, Places, and Artefacts.

- Your tree, facts and source citations will seamlessly import with your GEDCOM.
- The next step is to add media (photos, documents etc), stories and research. Photos can be added in batches to save time, and tagged to family names and or to individuals too, and created into albums.
- YouTube urls can be embedded on your WeAre pages; meanwhile your WeAre family tree, stories and so forth can be embedded on your website or blog – the aim of WeAre is to meet the needs of today's family historians, making your family tree and research connected and enticing for all.
- **For your family** – WeAre's tree builder function puts them at the centre of the tree – immediately allowing them to see how and where they fit into the story. Using WeAre you can also share your family history with your family in digestible chunks. Share just a photo or story, and invite people to comment (perhaps they can recognise someone in a long-lost portrait, or know that vital detail you're seeking).

"Fundamentally, this is an opportunity for us, the family historians, to give a focal point to our wider family as a community with an inherent common interest... our past, present, and future past," Simon summarises.

How else might WeAre be used?

Simon continues: "Professional genealogists are already using WeAre to create an online

highly visual family archives for their clients, wholeheartedly adopting this fresh approach. The professional first sets up the family archive, enrolls their client *and* their relatives. Only then does the professional set to work, writing their findings as they go in the archive. Clients and kin, in turn, are immediately experiencing information that can stimulate and inspire them to join in the discovery process

don't want to transfer, well you can embed trees and other content from your WeAre archive into your existing blog.

"Oh and one more last thing, For those interested in the next generation of content creation tools," expands Simon, "you can also make use of AI to write your blogs, with all the added fun of our AI 'ghostwriter' powered by chatGTP."

"Professional genealogists are already using WeAre to create an online highly visual family archive for their clients"

– not just be the recipients of a completed tome or digital documents."

The collaborative nature of the interface lends itself to group projects too, perhaps appealing to family history societies, or researchers with shared topics or locations of interest.

Can I use WeAre to blog?

"There is one last piece of magic which for some of us may be a good enough reason on its own to create a WeAre family archive..." enthuses Simon, "integrated blogging!"

"Do you blog, or harbour a secret desire to give it a go? If so, WeAre may persuade you to take the plunge.

"The magic is that you can post content created in your archive into your blog. And, vice versa, you can tag blog posts so that they are fully indexed within your archive.

"One particular delight is that you can build fabulous custom family trees within a blog post.

"Additionally if you have a well-established blog that you

How to get the word out about your research?

By setting your WeAre tree to 'public' (as opposed to 'private') you can ensure that not only your tree, but also your research, media and written accounts are all publicly viewable. You'll see 'share' buttons dotted all over the website. The good news is that the level of public/private is totally in your hands. For instance you can opt to set your tree to private, and then make specific photos, documents, stories etc public and shareable. Note too that you can have several trees – you may like to have one completely private, one public. This granular level of control is an aspect of WeAre that many family historians are likely to very much welcome – precise control over what to share and with whom.

[Turn the page for a step-by-step guide to getting started with WeAre. We'd love to hear how you find it: please email editorial@family-tree.co.uk]

Join the Facebook Group

Check out the WeAre Facebook Group "We Are [enjoying our family histories]" at www.facebook.com/groups/weare.xyz

ESTABLISH YOUR FAMILY'S ONLINE ARCHIVE

How to get started with WeAre? Step-by-step guide

Step 1

Head over to [WeAre.xyz](https://weare.xyz) and sign up for a free 30-day trial. Should you wish to continue, WeAre membership costs £4.99 per month.

With a 30-day free trial there's a good amount of time to explore and experiment in full, however Family Tree readers can get 90 days if they email support@weare.xyz and simply say hi and request it

Step 2

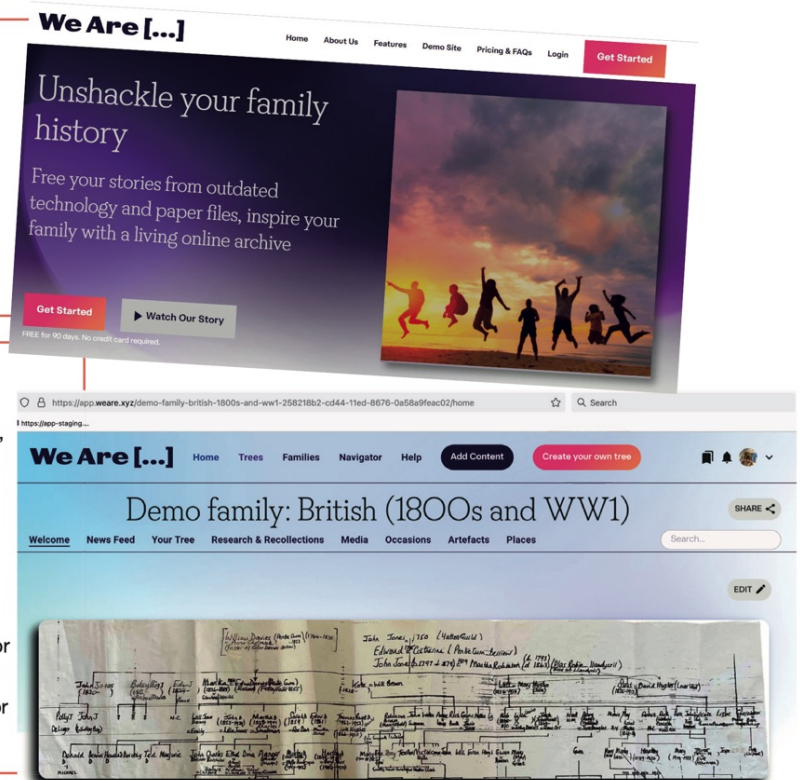
Click the 'Create your tree' button at the top of the page, and follow the onscreen steps to:

- Set it 'Public' or 'Private' (you can change this later if you change your mind)
- Opt to import your GEDCOM, or build a family tree from scratch
- Name your tree/archive before GEDCOM imports
- Select yourself as home person (for when you log in), or indicate you are not in the tree and select your preferred home person (you may create an archive for a friend, or have an interest in a noted family)

Step 3

You will soon be finding your way around the menus; here we're just flagging up a few particularly useful features.

Help – has 4 very useful video guides to help you add photos, stories and tags and learn how to create custom trees



Occasions – themed categories of information – created and determined by you and tagged to photos and stories. For instance, 'Occasions' you may wish to set up might be Weddings, Childhood, Military and Holidays so far, and you can add further ones as you continue collecting and curating content on WeAre

Artefacts & Places – WeAre creator Simon is passionate about the stories of the artefacts handed down in families, and the places associated with our ancestors, so has created dedicated sections for you to showcase your family treasures and stamping grounds too

Embed – it's here that you can get the code to embed your content on a website or blog

Tagging – a huge help is that content is automatically tagged to reflect the section it was created in. For instance, if you have photos of your Great Grandfather, go to his page's media section and upload them there; they will be tagged to him and his family surname. Keep an eye out for the tagging functionality across the website



Families – Choose 'Families' from the home screen menu to see a surname visual of your paternal and maternal side names

Navigator – Choose 'Navigator' from the home screen menu to move around your tree

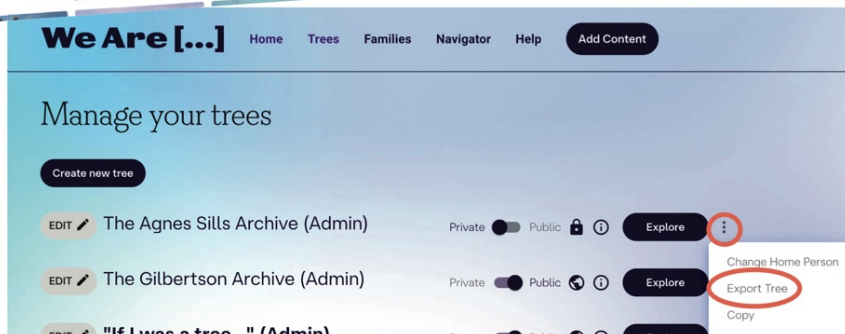
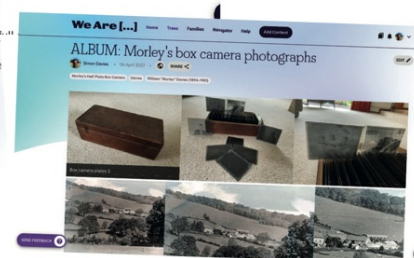
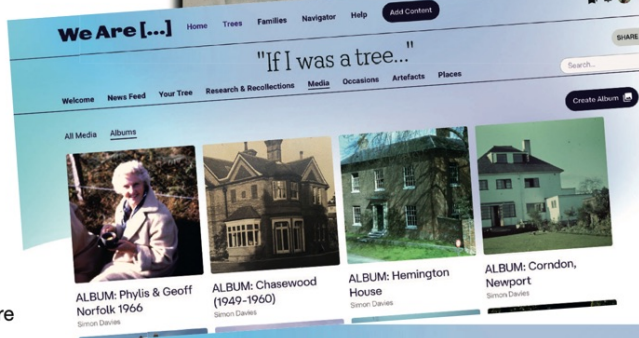
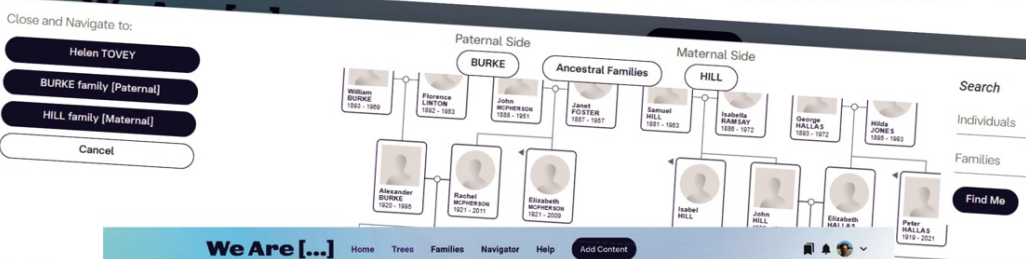
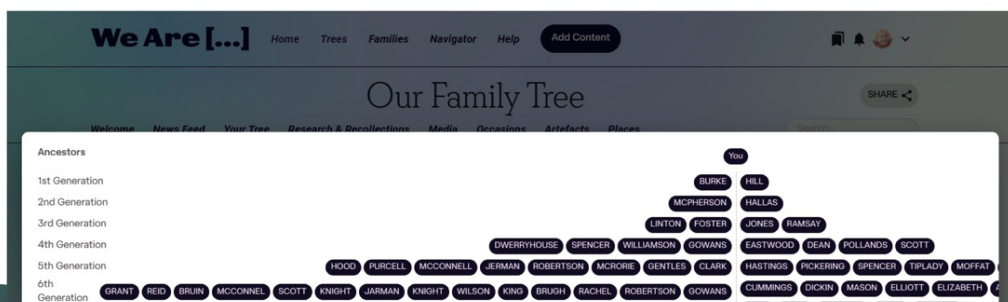
Research & recollections – it's here that you add articles based on your research, memories, anecdotes, etc. Note you can add links to other articles (indeed any other content page, as well as external links), you can also add inline sources that generate footnotes

Media – it's here that you add your collection of imagery (as jpg, png or pdf files) which may be organised into albums. Note you can also include urls to YouTube videos.

Step 4

Backing up – How can WeAre material be backed up?

Go to: Trees / select the 3 dots (on the right-hand side of the tree for which you wish to back up the associated content and media) / select 'Export Tree' – and your content and media will be exported. (Note: At this stage your tree itself will not be exported). This can be a sizeable and time-consuming task (it will depend on the amount of content and media you have uploaded). However the download will organise your material into labelled folders, based on the tags and categories that you have created within WeAre, helping to keep you super-organised.



Find out more

Tune in and watch an interview with Simon Davies on "How (& Why) to use WeAre.xyz" at www.family-tree.co.uk