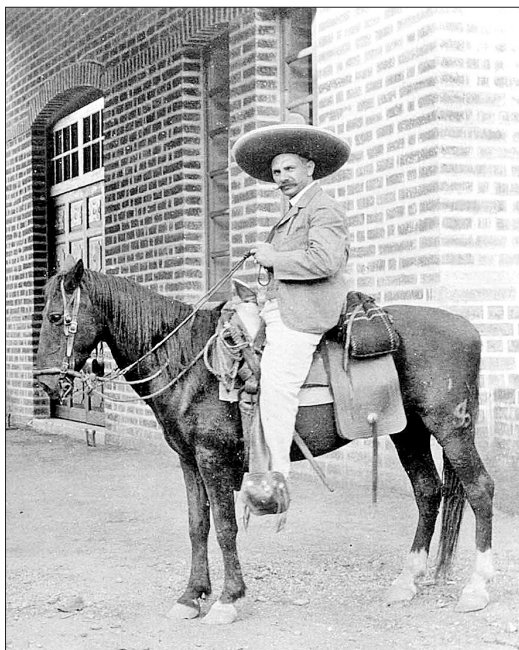


Ruth Jones (left) and grandson Robin Bayley (right) were united with uncle Arturo and the rest of their 300 newly discovered Mexican relatives for the first time in 1996. Bayley's great grandfather Arthur "Arturo" Greenhalgh (pictured on horseback) was forced to flee the country and abandon his Mexican sweetheart during the Revolution. The letters he sent her from England were stolen and for many years his Mexican family believed he died on the Titanic on his way back to visit her.



A family affair: One man's tale of discovery in Mexico

By Duncan Tucker

When a young Englishman set out to retrace his great grandfather's steps in Mexico he had little idea of what was in store for him. The quest he undertook to uncover his family history was by no means easy. Indeed his only lead was to look for "a cloth factory in a small village near a small town near Guadalajara."

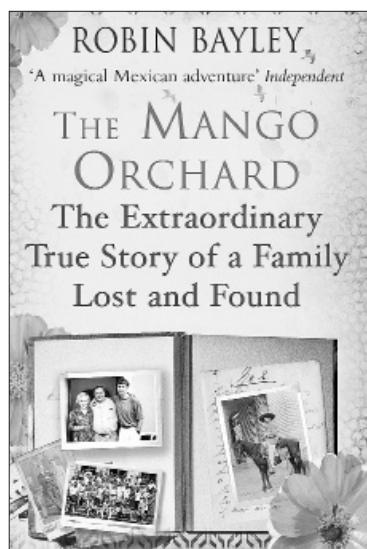
Having sold his apartment in London and abandoned a successful media career, Robin Bayley embarked on a great adventure that took him to New York, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and finally to Mexico. He eventually returned home with a lot more than he had bargained for: a long-lost family.

Bayley's unique and personal story is the subject of his first book, "The Mango Orchard," due out in the United States next spring. Much of it is set in and around the state of Jalisco.

"Guadalajara has always been very central to the story," says Bayley. "I didn't actually know where my great grandfather had gone, I just knew Guadalajara was the last place that he went through on his way to wherever he was going. So this was the only town I really had a link to."

Bayley's great grandfather Arthur (or Arturo as he became known) Greenhalgh first left England in 1899 to travel through the Americas. As Bayley grew up he was always enchanted by his grandmother Ruth Jones' tales of her father's exotic Mexican escapades. In 1995 he decided it was time to relive them himself.

He began by learning Spanish in Guatemala, where he soon fell in love with a local girl. Forcing himself to press on, Bayley went to Colombia, where he bumped into



Bayley has held talks with a number of film directors on bringing his unique story to Hollywood in a movie adaptation of "The Mango Orchard."

the head of a regional paramilitary group who was responsible for the deaths of thousands. Bayley recalls what his friend Pedro told him at the time: "He wanted to know what you were doing here or if you were CIA. You don't want to know what they do to CIA people."

Bayley made one last detour in Venezuela before finally arriving in Mexico. After a long process of delving through archives and hunting down leads, he managed to track down his great grandfather's former workplace: a cotton processing factory in the small town of Bellavista, just outside of Tepic, Nayarit.

"The state of Nayarit didn't actually exist when Arthur was there, it all used to be a part of Jalisco," Bayley explains. Aside from this, he says, it hasn't changed much since his great grandfather's era.

"It was never really commercialized. There's not a lot of bars or restaurants there. But anyone who's getting married within a 100-kilometer radius has their photograph taken in front of the factory. It's very iconic."

Bayley's story even inspired one reader called Nina to travel over 800 kilometers from her home in Mexico City to have her photo taken holding a copy of the book in front of the Bellavista factory.

When he eventually reached Bellavista, Bayley was shocked to learn that "the whole village" shared his old family surname of

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Greenhalgh. His great grandfather had left behind a Mexican lover and an illegitimate daughter, whose offspring had multiplied over the course of a century to form a 300-strong clan.

Bayley's newfound family welcomed him with open arms and implored him to bring his 90-year-old grandmother to visit them.

'My grandmother really loved Guadalajara. She always referred to the trip as 'the highlight of her life' and she lived until 103.'

In a role-reversal, upon returning to England, Bayley was now the one captivating her with stories of Mexican life. These tales of long-lost relatives were enough to convince Ruth to join him on a second voyage in 1996.

"When I first came back with my grandmother we stayed in Guadalajara and we traveled all around Jalisco," says Bayley. The local area made a great impression

on them both.

"Guadalajara is a very romantic city and it still conjures up the colonial period of my great grandfather's day, with the mariachis, the plazas, the architecture and those horse and carts in the historic centre. It's a very evocative, beautiful city. My grandmother really loved it. She always referred to the trip as 'the highlight of her life' and she lived until 103."

From Guadalajara the pair traveled to Tepic and then on to Bellavista to meet their estranged cousins. "Travel had changed" from his great grandfather's day, remarks Bayley. "I think he went from Mexico City to Guadalajara on the train and from there he traveled by horse and cart. The journey to Tepic now takes about two hours, back then it took five days."

In Bellavista they were greeted by mariachi fanfare and swaths of Mexican relatives in an emotional family reunion. It was here that Bayley, after rooting around for his great grandfather's historical records, learned of Arthur's role in the onset of the Mexican Revolution.

"There was industrial action at the factory in March 1905. Although it failed this was one of the first strikes in the country and my great grandfather was in charge at



Bayley and his grandmother pose with their new extended family in front of the cotton-processing factory where Arthur Greenhalgh worked in Bellavista, Nayarit. A factory strike in 1905 acted as one of the first sparks of the Mexican Revolution.

the time," explains the author.

This was followed in May 1906 by another strike at the Cananea copper mine in Sonora, led by Esteban Baca Calderon, and widely "acknowledged to be one of the first sparks of the revolution."

"I found a letter from the Cananea strikers, written before the strikes took place. It was addressed to Señor Greenhalgh," Bayley reveals. "Calderon learned from the Bellavista strike and ensured they didn't make the same mistakes."

Arthur Greenhalgh had to leave the country when the revolution began hotting up in 1912. "He came back to England and never returned to Mexico," says Bayley. "One of the reasons for this was that all the letters he was sending to his lover were stolen (for the money they contained). So he didn't know what happened to her, and they never knew what happened to him, until I showed up."

In 2004, nine years after first

coming to Mexico, Bayley started writing the book, having made four more visits in the interim.

"The reason for the delay was because I wasn't ready to write it at the time," he says. "Part of what 'The Mango Orchard' is about is my own self-discovery. I was quite young and I was looking for my great grandfather, but I was also trying to work out what I wanted from life."

Bayley had previously worked in television and advertising and had never written a book before. He suffers from dyslexia and it took him five years to complete the writing process.

It was worth the wait. Bayley says the reaction to the book has been "fantastic" and he has yet to read a bad review.

"One of the most gratifying reactions to the book came at the paperback launch," he says. "The staff from the Mexican embassy in London said it was very heartening and refreshing to read a book that gives another side of Mexico and talks about the importance of family and the warmth with which people welcomed me."

"My experience in Mexico was almost entirely positive and I'm sure most of your readers would also concur that the experience you have when you go to Mexico is not the same one you read about

in sensationalist newspapers," says Bayley.

"The Mango Orchard" has been translated into French, Portuguese and Romanian and Bayley is hoping to release a Spanish-language edition in the near future so that everyone in Mexico can enjoy his story too.

"It was important for me that my family liked the book, as well as Mexicans in general, because it's not just my story, it's also a family story, and the story of one person discovering a country," says Bayley.

"Before it was published the manuscript was available online, so some of my family read the whole thing through dodgy translation websites. But some of the younger generation can speak English well and at least two of them have read the actual book. They loved it and obviously relayed what it was all about to the rest of the family."

"I went back in June 2010 to give a copy to each group of family. It was very sweet, they took the books with massive pride as if I were showing them my first born. They looked through all the photos and made me translate every part in which they're mentioned."

Above all else, Bayley wrote the book for his grandmother. Despite having to cope with the news of her father's infidelities, Bayley says she embraced her new Mexican heritage. "I bought my grandmother silver the first time I was there and she never ever took it off," he recalls.

Ruth Jones lived to read her grandson's completed manuscript twice over. She died at peace shortly after learning that he had been offered a publishing deal and would dedicate the book to her.

Discussions for a Hollywood film adaptation of "The Mango Orchard" are ongoing and offers have even been made for an Anglo-Mexican opera based on the book. Meanwhile Bayley says he plans to begin writing a second book about a family he met in Colombia.

"The Mango Orchard" is due to be published in the United States in March 2012 and is available now from www.amazon.com. For more information visit www.themangoorchard.com.