

The Lovelace Story – A Short History



Keith Michel

LOVELACE STORY – A SHORT HISTORY

THE BEGINNING



In 1836 Augusta Ada Byron, only daughter and heiress of Lord Byron and his wife Annabella Milbanke, married William, the Eighth Baron King.



William was descended from a long line of landed gentry whose fortunes were founded by Peter King who became Lord Chief Justice of England in 1725.

Both Ada and William had wealthy aristocratic connections which led to their becoming well known in early Victorian society. William achieved considerable success in public life, acceding to the title of Viscount Ockham, Earl of Lovelace in 1838 and being appointed as Justice of the Peace and Lord Lieutenant of Surrey in 1840.

William and Ada, now Countess of Lovelace made their home at Ockham Park and had three children. Following the death of their first child, their second son Ralph, would become the Second Earl of Lovelace on William's death in 1893.



ADA – AN ACADEMIC STAR OF THE DAY

Ada was born in December 1815 but soon after her birth, in 1816, her father, by now a notorious adventurer and Romantic poet, departed for Europe never to return or to see his daughter again before his own death in 1824.

Anne Milbanke resolved that, as a young girl, Ada should be brought up away from the social limelight. She was tutored privately by leading academic figures of the day and was regularly chaperoned. Anne herself was interested in mathematical theory and had, it is said, been disparagingly described by her errant husband as “The Princess of Parallelograms”.

Having found that her daughter had similar academic interests and ability, Anne ensured that her daughter’s early life maintained a strict balance between her aristocratic lineage and her studies in maths, science and languages.

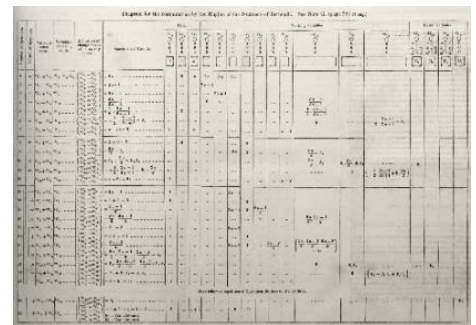


Diagram of an algorithm

It is recorded that Ada was presented at court at the age of seventeen and that soon afterwards she was introduced to Charles Babbage, a greatly respected mathematician of the day.

He was the designer of the Difference Engine and the later Analytical Machine both of which involved ground - breaking theory and practice in methods of mechanical calculation. Ada formed a strong professional relationship with Babbage throughout the rest of her life.

Her research work is credited as an early form of computer programming and led Babbage to describe her as the “enchantress of numbers.” Her skills and creative forward thinking have resulted in significant recognition in modern times.

Her name has been adopted in computer language and her portrait (by Margaret Carpenter), right, has become part of the United Kingdom Art Collection. It presently hangs in the Prime Minister’s residence, 10 Downing Street. She is also remembered by an international award each year and an Ada Lovelace Day is celebrated annually on 9th October.



Unfortunately, Ada's personal life was less successful. She was said to be somewhat unmaternal, preferring pursuit of her academic career and increasing her friendships within the higher echelons of Victorian society to the quiet life of Ockham and Horsley.

She and her husband William also had a serious propensity for gambling on the horses which led not only to their incurring a major debt profile but also, reportedly, resulted in her becoming critically ill with uterine cancer. Ada died at the early age of 36 in 1852 and at her request was buried alongside her father on the family estate, Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire.

THE DYNASTY CONTINUES

In 1865, Lord Lovelace married Jane Crawford, formerly Mrs Jenkins. She was the widow of a civil servant, who had died in India in 1859, whom he had met during an earlier visit to the sub –continent. Their son, Lionel, would succeed to the title, as the Third Earl, on the death of his half-brother Ralph in 1906.



During the following decades, Lord Lovelace undertook the reconstruction of Horsley Towers, (above) as the family home, the restoration of St Martin's Church (in 1869), and the development of East Horsley village with its distinct architectural style, having acquired the whole two-thousand-acre estate in 1840.



St Martin's Church

Lovelace Buildings

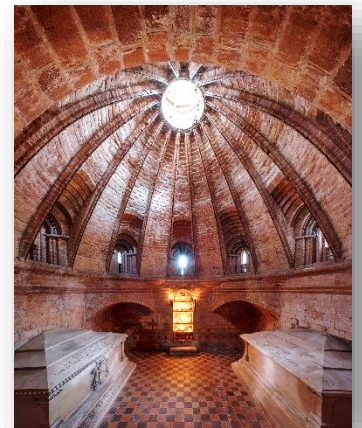


Lord Lovelace also commissioned the construction of a Mausoleum and Gazebo in the Church grounds.



END OF AN ERA

After decades of public service in civil, military and judicial matters, as Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, and as an entrepreneurial landowner, businessman and architectural visionary Lord Lovelace died in 1893. Over three hundred people attended his funeral after which his body was interred in the Mausoleum.



His widow placed a wreath on his tomb which was found preserved and intact when the restoration of the Mausoleum took place in 2008. Jane died in 1908 and her body was interred in the second tomb in the Mausoleum.

A CHURCHYARD LEGACY

By a Deed of Conveyance dated 25th March 1909, the Right Honourable Lionel Fortescue (the son of Lord Lovelace and his second wife Jane), as The Third Earl Lovelace (having succeeded his half-brother Ralph, the second son of Lord Lovelace and his first wife Ada in 1906) donated to St Martin's Church the land now occupied by the middle graveyard "to be held forever as part of the Churchyard."

The Deed however reserved a specific portion of the land to "myself, my heirs and assigns the exclusive right in perpetuity of burial and placing monuments and gravestones." This part of the Churchyard comprises what is today known as "The Lovelace Plot."

By an Instrument of Consecration dated 20th April 1910, signed by the Bishop of Winchester, it was provided that "the piece of ground added to the Churchyard...be consecrated ground."



The graves of the following members of the family, descendants of Lord Lovelace are found in the Lovelace Plot – Lionel Fortescue, the Third Earl (died 1929), his wife Lady Edith Anson (died 1932), Peter, the Fourth Earl (died 1964), his wife Doris (died 1940), Diana daughter of the Third Earl (died 1955), her husband Martin de Hosszu (Hungarian, died 1953) and Lady Penelope Allen (died 1947).

THE FINALE

The connections between the village of East Horsley, St Martin's Church and the Lovelace family had long become remote during the last century but were finally severed on the death of Peter King, the Fifth Earl (born in 1951) on 31st January 2018.

He was described in an obituary as “The last scion of a noble family, whose antecedents included Byron and an early computer programmer”. With the sale of the family seat in Scotland, Torridon House, and all the family treasures in 2015, the death, without issue, of the last person entitled to bear the Lovelace banner, the final chapter has been written.

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Author's note

There have been many scholarly and highly researched publications and broadcasts on the subject of this note. What is written here does not seek to challenge or compete with such works. It merely represents a brief summary of matters of local interest.

Photograph acknowledgements:

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