

Partnerships

Catherine Roylance and Nick Roylance

Genesis Publishing – a creator of high-end, handmade books – was launched in the 1970s by Brian Roylance, who downsized his home to raise funds. Today it is run by his children. They discuss running a family business and the impact of Brexit

Vital stats

Founded 1974

Location Guildford, Surrey

Staff 12

Turnover £2.3m

Products The family-owned independent publisher creates signed limited-edition books and prints. Subjects have included David Bowie, The Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton. It recently published *Vogue: Voice of a Century*, a 504-page anthology limited to 1,916 craftsmen-bound copies

International It has email subscribers in around 90 countries. Some 60-70 per cent of books are bought by returning customers. "Some have been collecting with us since the 80s or 90s, but somebody might buy their first book in 2015 and then start buying back" says Nick Roylance.

Interview
Behiye Hassan

Nick Roylance Our father's first book was a facsimile of the journal of the voyage of *HMS Bounty*. It sold out to libraries around the world, so a series of historical books followed. We were a strong historical book publishing business until he met George Harrison and published his autobiography.

Catherine Roylance Dad loved music and felt you could treat that subject in the same way as historical books, with the same idea that these lyrics and these bands are going to go down in history.

Nick Roylance We've both grown up around the business and I would work here in the holidays. When I graduated I worked in photography, television and documentary making, but was always doing freelance editorial on a project here. I moved here full time two years prior to my father's passing.

Catherine Roylance I studied design, became a designer and was lucky that my dad was a permanent client. I was involved in doing one or two books a year but it also enabled me to get other clients. When our father died I joined Nick and we took over... It was a challenging time. Dad had made it very clear that he wanted the shares to go to us, but at the time there were other shareholders involved and everything was held in trust for a short period.

Nick Roylance Thankfully we got full ownership and kept going with projects my father had left unfinished. And in doing so, new projects came along, so it had a natural momentum. Turnover has doubled since then.

Catherine Roylance A lot of people inherit a business at a sad time, it's not necessarily 'here are the keys, we are now retiring',

so you might not have had that preparation, it can be difficult. It's feet first, but it's a case of knowing that you're doing it because you want to do it, and it's yours.

Nick Roylance At such junctures, stopping and reflecting is healthy. That's made us able to commit to it. The period of succession is very interesting because you're looking backwards and forwards and you're really thinking deeply about what the business stands for.

“The succession period is interesting - you're looking backwards and forwards and thinking deeply about what this business stands for”

Nick Roylance

Catherine Roylance Considering the future when you've got so much going on in the moment can be difficult, but you need to be always thinking of what's coming up.

Nick Roylance We make all the decisions of running a business together as we have that shared understanding of what works best.

Catherine Roylance Nick does more of the day-to-day holding down of the business. We both oversee the editorial and then I oversee the design of it all. We have to think carefully about what we want to make, to ensure we deliver both what we envisage and what the author envisages too.

Nick Roylance Managing a work-life balance is a challenge. When we go out for family dinners we make sure we don't bring up work, everyone bans it! Our spouses are familiar with everything and both

work in creative industries so it is difficult not to talk about it.

Catherine Roylance When you run your own business it's hard to have a boundary. There's a benefit to working your own hours, but you are always carrying the business. You always have to work at that. Whenever we meet up, we think of that collectively.

Nick Roylance With Brexit, people say it's going to be fantastic for exports but most of our books are sold overseas. Part of that supply chain is in Europe, so our costs will go up with the pound falling. We have to be as astute as possible and keep talking with our suppliers.

Catherine Roylance Although we make an expensive product it is good value for money for our subscribers and that is key in the economic climate. Our costs may go up, but all our books are handmade, so we can still deliver.

Nick Roylance It is also a strength in terms of providing value for an American reader. If we're publishing a new book that is a few dollars cheaper than it would have been, there's even more value there.

Catherine Roylance Looking to the future it would be lovely to think that Genesis could continue with the next generation if any of them were inclined to take on the mantle. We will both encourage all of the children to follow their own path and interests, but if any of them dream of creating wonderful books, then so be it! **D**

I Me Mine – The Extended Edition by George Harrison is out now, £39.99

For more information, visit genesis-publications.com

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Catherine and Nick Roylance in their Guildford office as Eric Clapton, subject of several of their books, looks on