

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

Twiglets Entwine

by Sue Thompson

There are a lot of things we don't want to know about the people we love, yet still I wanted to delve deeper into the lives of my ancestors. It drew me in, an obsession that I did not want to stop. Searching deeper and deeper into their past; my family, my ancestors. Would I like what I found? Did I care?

The branches of one's family tree stretches out forming a path back through history, twiglets entwine, unravelling the knowledge of the past.

Our families come alive and our loved ones secrets surface like a reluctant sleeper stirring from his slumber.

There are secrets to be had as I dig deeper, lost relatives who we never got to share our lives with.

The heartache of a marriage breaking up and the siblings being separated, my grandfather who never saw his mother or sister again, only for me years later to find her but too late for them, the sadness of seeing her beautiful face staring out at me from a photo, her huge eyes, hiding the pain of growing up without her brother, she looked graceful yet so desolate.

So grief-stricken, she had named her son after her brother. An aunt I would have loved to have met.

Deeper I go jumping from twiglet to twiglet.

The great aunt who married her widowed love, she died in early January 1918 and he in August of the same year in the great war, their daughter only 5 years old, what happened to her where did she end up. Another family member lost to us as her branch runs off in another direction and fades into the past.

The secrets of an illegitimate birth way back in the early 1800s, stalling my path back through time.

Who am I? Was I a Gough? How can I get back past this brick wall, it seems so high I cannot progress further.

The name changes that seemed so easy to undertake, my great grandfather losing his surname, discarding it as if his personal heritage did not matter. All because he had absconded from the Navy. Another brick wall but as time goes on you manage to break them down, clawing at the bricks one by one to reveal the truth.

I have come to understand my family, my loved ones more on this journey. I look at my father and my mother and realise they are who they are because of their ancestors.

I have got to know them all, I carry a piece of them with me every day. They are in my bones, in my soul. They have made me who I am and who my siblings are, and who my children and grandchildren are.

I love each one of them even though I have not had the privilege to meet them and be part of their lives, yet I am part of their lives, that can never change.

And so to the question are there things I do not want to know about the people I love?

No I want to know it all. I crave the knowledge of the past. I want to walk where they have walked, I want see what they saw. I want to feel their lives. I want them to know I will never forget them. They are after all my blood, my DNA.