

Foreword

Every family has its secrets, its mysteries, its half-truths. Ours is no exception.

When I was growing up I was fascinated by tales of my Grandad and his Irish mother. Her Irish origins seemed such a romantic and exciting notion that I was desperate to know more.

“She came from the poorest area of Cork,” my mum told me, “and was a great beauty, so we believe. Her name was Kate. Unfortunately she died when the children were quite young and their father had to bring them up.”

“Your Grandad, Joe, was one of four brothers,” she continued. “There was Ern, who was a hero in World War 1; he married your Gran’s sister. Then there was Bill, the youngest, who used to do magic tricks on stage; and of course, Fred, who no-one talks about.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“Well, they say he went bad and disappeared off somewhere.”

I was confused by what was meant by ‘*went bad*’. Had he been in prison, or worse? This intrigued me, but no-one seemed to know the answers.

After extensive research I have finally pieced together the truth of what happened to this family - a truth which is never plain, and rarely simple. The mists of time have parted briefly to reveal a glimpse of their lives. What I discovered was quite unexpected and surprising; including another brother who had never been mentioned before: Albert. Why has no-one talked about him? I’ll leave you to decide that for yourselves. I also found out what happened to Fred; but again, you’ll have to read on to find out.

Therefore I can now present the authentic stories of Kate, Fred and Joe, recreated through diaries, letters and my Grandad's memories. The mysteries are solved and the ghosts are appeased. I hope I've brought them justice at last.