

Wee Granny by Faith de Sancha

I had intended to write an article about my granny who is an ancestor who inspires me. So I opened the big black album she gave me when I was a teenager, it is full of photographs of her family all taken before and a few years after 1900. All the people in the album were well-dressed, the women with waists all corseted to unreal hourglass small sizes, the men also well-dressed and some wearing white spats over their shoes. The main picture I wanted to look at was of my granny as a wee girl. In the picture she is about a year old, sitting on her mum's knee, her dad beside them and her brother who looks about three or four-years -old is standing on a low chair.

Looking through the album at all these people who were related to my granny, I felt annoyed with myself for not taking time to sit down with her and find out more about them. I suppose as a teenager it didn't bother me, I just liked looking through it, at the clothes the sitters were wearing. So I decided to give my mum a call and ask her if she could remember much about Granny's family. About one and a half hours later, I had pages of scribbles and was amazed at the story of the family. There are still a lot of blanks to be filled, which I intend to research.

My granny's mum and dad came from Sligo, a small place called Ballymote (where Brother Walfrid; who started the Celtic football club in Govan, came from). In Scotland my great-gran's maiden name was known as Bone, but it was in fact Bohan, it was easier for the Scots to say and write. My great-gran could read and write, but her husband couldn't. She was also known for her feistiness. She had what was called a Seven Day Pawn Shop. One interesting fact was that my great-grandfather was in the British army when he was in Sligo; in Scotland he was a labourer. Granny's brothers were well-known in Port Glasgow and Greenock as they ran dances, up to three a week. They also had trades and worked during the day, so they must have been relatively well-off. I have some of the programs for the dances; they dated form around the 1880s to 90s.

My granny was born one hundred and fourteen years ago; she was, for me, one of the most special people I have ever met. She was one of five children, brought up in Port Glasgow, and worked in the Gourock rope works there, where she damaged her hearing permanently. She

married my granda who was a riveter and they had seven children, one died as a child. He was not a bad man, but was often grumpy and, like most of the men of that generation and background, drank a lot.

We lived about ten minutes walk away from Granny and Granda, on one of the new council estates in upper Port Glasgow. My mother had seven children, all close in ages. So Granny was always around at our house, helping with a shopping for Mum and taking us for walks, in any sort of weather. At that time the area was still quite rural. There was a farm not far away, one of our walks was going to feed the hens with stale bread and crusts, this was one of our favourite walks, but not for Mum, as we always came back with dirty shoes or boots. Our little troupe was made up of a baby in the pram, usually a toddler sitting on a seat on top of it, a larger toddler holding on to the frame with my brother and myself walking by her side. Granny would sing for most of the walk, and when she sang "Shoes to keep my feet a-dancing " she would attempt a couple of little dancing skips; this must have looked funny as she was short and overweight. We had no inhibitions and skipped along with her. Her pockets and handbag were always full of sweets which were distributed generously between us.

Granny was not practical like my mum, and things didn't bother her at all. She made the minimum effort at sewing repairs, and there was always a pile of clothes waiting for sewing. Her belief was that if she ever got through the pile, God would think she had nothing to do and might invite her up to be with him. Her hankies were torn bits of granda's worn-out shirts. She was not in the least bit house-proud, and thought nothing of bringing in her dahlia tubers and leaving them on the top of the wardrobe, where they would be warm and dry for the winter. Like many of her generation she had strong memories of rationing and the lack of food during and after the war, so she was a big hoarder of food; but, she didn't want granda to know how much she had or he would try and borrow money from her. In her clothes-drawers and cupboards in her bedroom all sorts of tinned food would be squirreled away. She would often forget about the fresh fruit, which ended up as brown mush in drawers. Vain she was not, although she never left the house without a hat or a

brooch on her coat.

While talking to my mother about the family background, she also commented on how-easy going her mum was and told me that she hardly ever gave the children a row. When my mum was small she took a gold ring, and bit hard on it to make it stay on her finger, which then started to swell up. Granny took her to the jeweller who had to cut the ring off, but she never got into trouble for this. . She was one of the easiest going and genuinely happy with her lot people I have ever met.