

The Irish Setter, Fairy & Jacob.

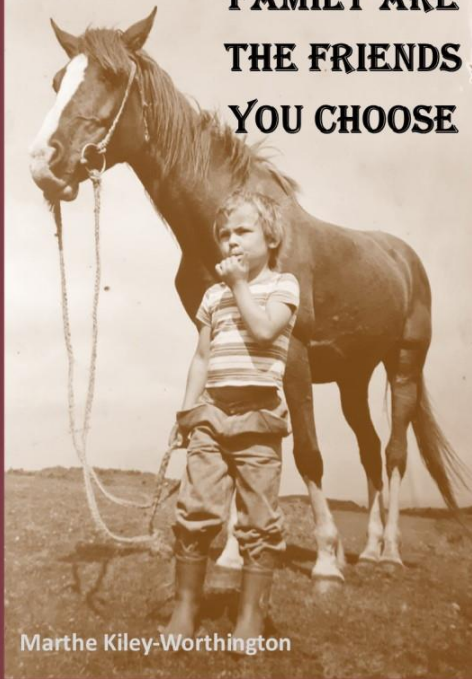
Setting the scene

It was 1939 and my pretty dark-haired mum was very pregnant for the fourth or fifth time, she already had produced two girls and then had a couple of miscarriages. The upper middle-class family she had married into, very badly needed a boy to carry on the family name and do all the other things that only boys were allowed to do. It was considered by her mother-in-law and the aunts of both sides of her husband's family, that she should have the baby in London. So, at a time when everything was heating up for the beginning of the Second World War and the bombing of London, she was packed off to 1 St John's Wood in London, where one of the female relatives resided, so she could have the baby under the strict eye of the best doctors in London.

May 16th, 1939 arrived. According to Google, Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany was opened on that day, and my mum went in to labour late at night. The family waited, holding their breath and probably counting worry beads, or whatever they did for wishes to come true. All the signs were that it would be a boy, surely, for the Worthington line to continue. Much anxiety as my black-haired scruffy head appeared followed by the rest, and alas, despite everyone's efforts it was another girl ... what a disappointment. Instead of celebrations, my mum and I were quickly packed off back to the Lake District where my father was running a research station, finding out about the life of eels, trout, perch and all the other living things in the numerous small tarns dotted about in the moors.

So that was that, another girl. But, my earliest memories are not about what eventually was considered a "fiasco". They are rather the pleasure of lying in my cot next to the window of the family's beautiful Georgian mansion just outside Hawkshead (where Wordsworth lived) in the Lake District with the dangling blue

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Marthe Kiley-Worthington

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