



A Tale of the Unexpected

VIOLETTE'S **PLAYGROUND**

a documentary Pitch Deck by Jeanne Pope



*When playing in a Victorian cemetery Violette is
a catalyst for discovering an otherworldly link
between her grandmother and Philadelphia
Carman, a servant who died in 1851*

*Moving between past and present, the times of
tuberculosis and covid, friendship and spiritual
connections, Philadelphia peels back the veil as
she has something she wants to tell us*

Synopsis

This story begins with a woman named Philadelphia Carman. Like many meetings with the unknown, time is the secret. Time opens doors where we discover hidden stories which are waiting to be told ...



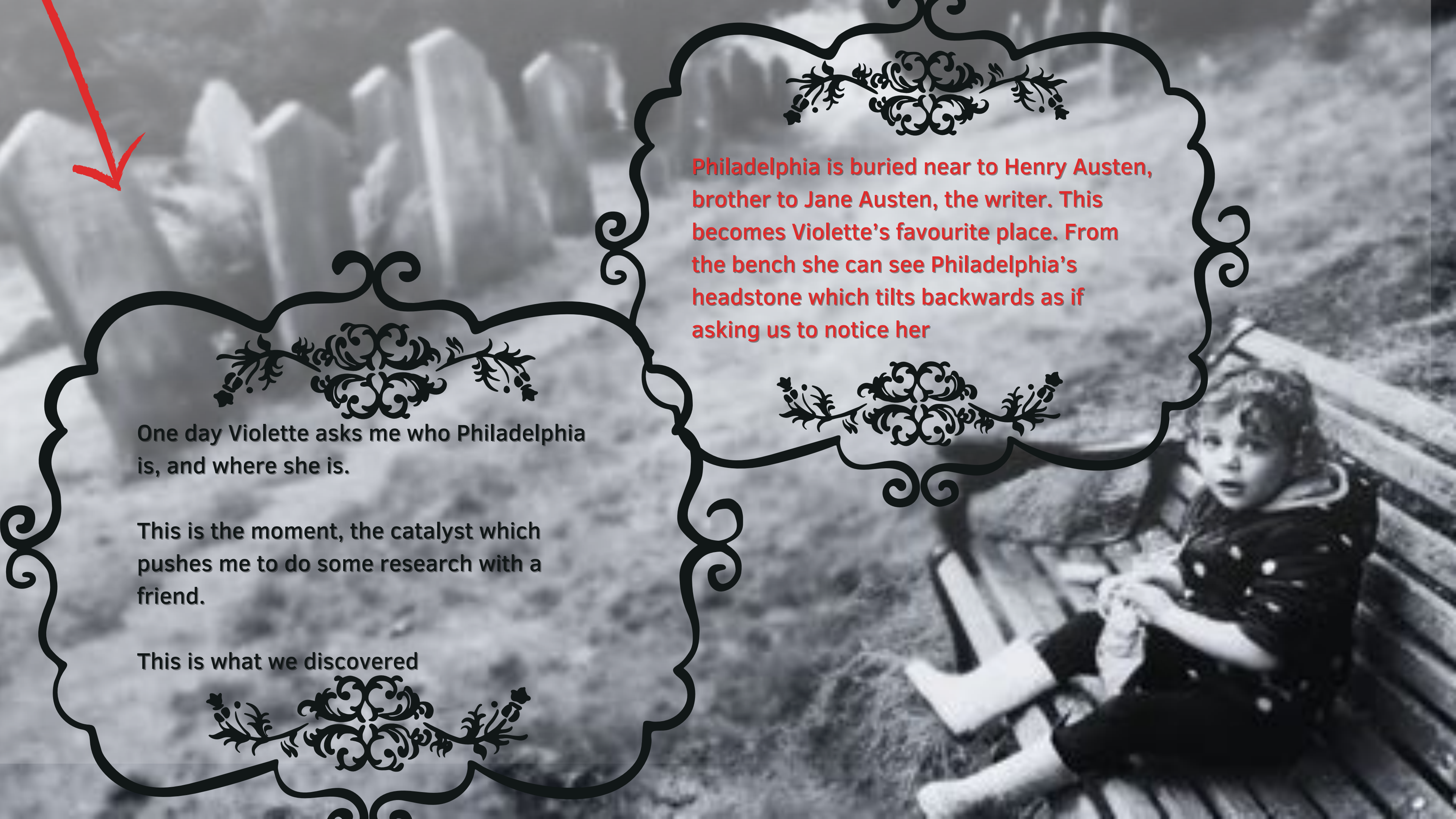
20 years ago I walk through the local Victorian cemetery when I spot an unusual looking tombstone of a woman named **PHILADELPHIA CARMAN**

I am intrigued by the stone as it is engraved on both sides. I feel an attraction to this woman and over time, she becomes my friend. I later adopt her grave through the local cemetery association. I know nothing else about her. I do not need to know anything else. She is simply my special friend



During the 2020 lockdowns, I take Violette, my grandchild, to the cemetery. She is 14 months old, and the cemetery is her first playground. She finds her favourite spots

- A large white slab which is easy to climb on
- The hide-and-seek-fountain which stands at the entrance
- The monument to Philadelphia Carman



Philadelphia is buried near to Henry Austen, brother to Jane Austen, the writer. This becomes Violette's favourite place. From the bench she can see Philadelphia's headstone which tilts backwards as if asking us to notice her

One day Violette asks me who Philadelphia is, and where she is.

This is the moment, the catalyst which pushes me to do some research with a friend.

This is what we discovered



Philadelphia Carman

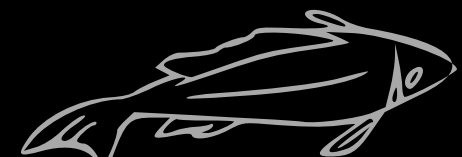
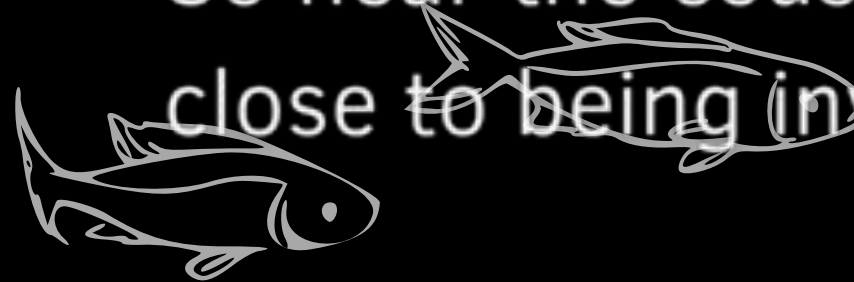
1803-1851

A girl was born on 13th July 1803 in Lewes, an East Sussex town in South East England to John and Philadelphia Jones. She was named after her mother. She had an older sister Mary. They called her after her mother

Philadelphia was born during the second wave of the Napoleonic wars which lasted much of her childhood, and no doubt influenced her

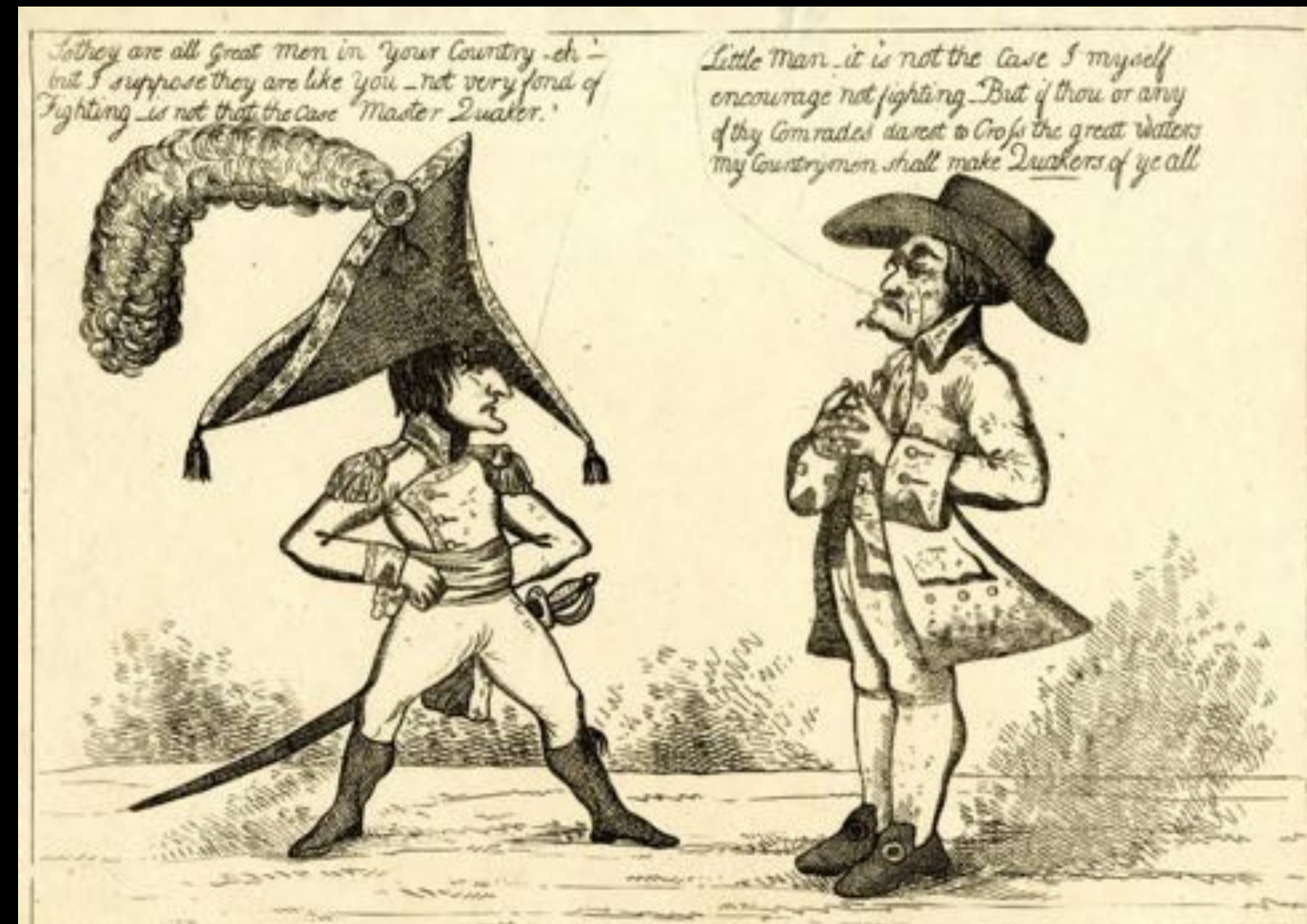


So near the coast, so near to France, and so close to being invaded





Due to the high taxes to fight the war, food prices escalated and many families were left in misery. Life was gruelling and oppressive, both politically and socially. Working as a servant was often the only way to survive for poorer families, with entire households working in service. Many died young, or died starving



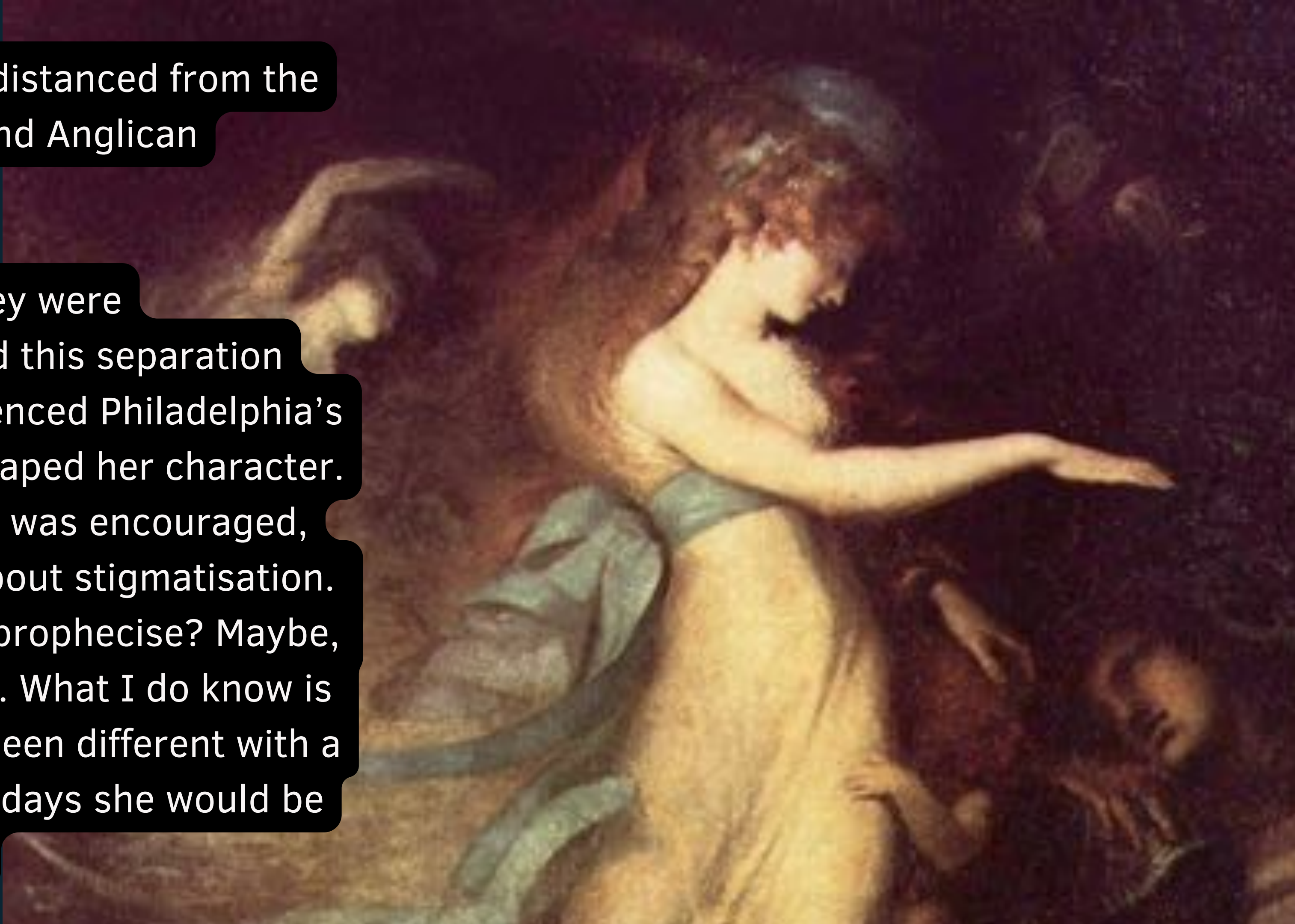


Philadelphia's family were 'Dissenters' or 'Independents' which meant they were reformed Baptists, Methodists or Quakers. They worshipped at the Ote Chapel in Wivelsfield, a small village not far from Lewes

It was built in 1778 by Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, herself a Methodist. Admired by King George III who wished there were “more like her”

Dissenters were distanced from the social, political and Anglican establishment

In many ways they were marginalized, and this separation would have influenced Philadelphia's childhood and shaped her character. Female prophecy was encouraged, which brought about stigmatisation. Did Philadelphia prophesise? Maybe, I can never know. What I do know is she would have been different with a strong will. Nowadays she would be called a feminist



There is a long gap between the life of the young child Philadelphia and her next appearance in records

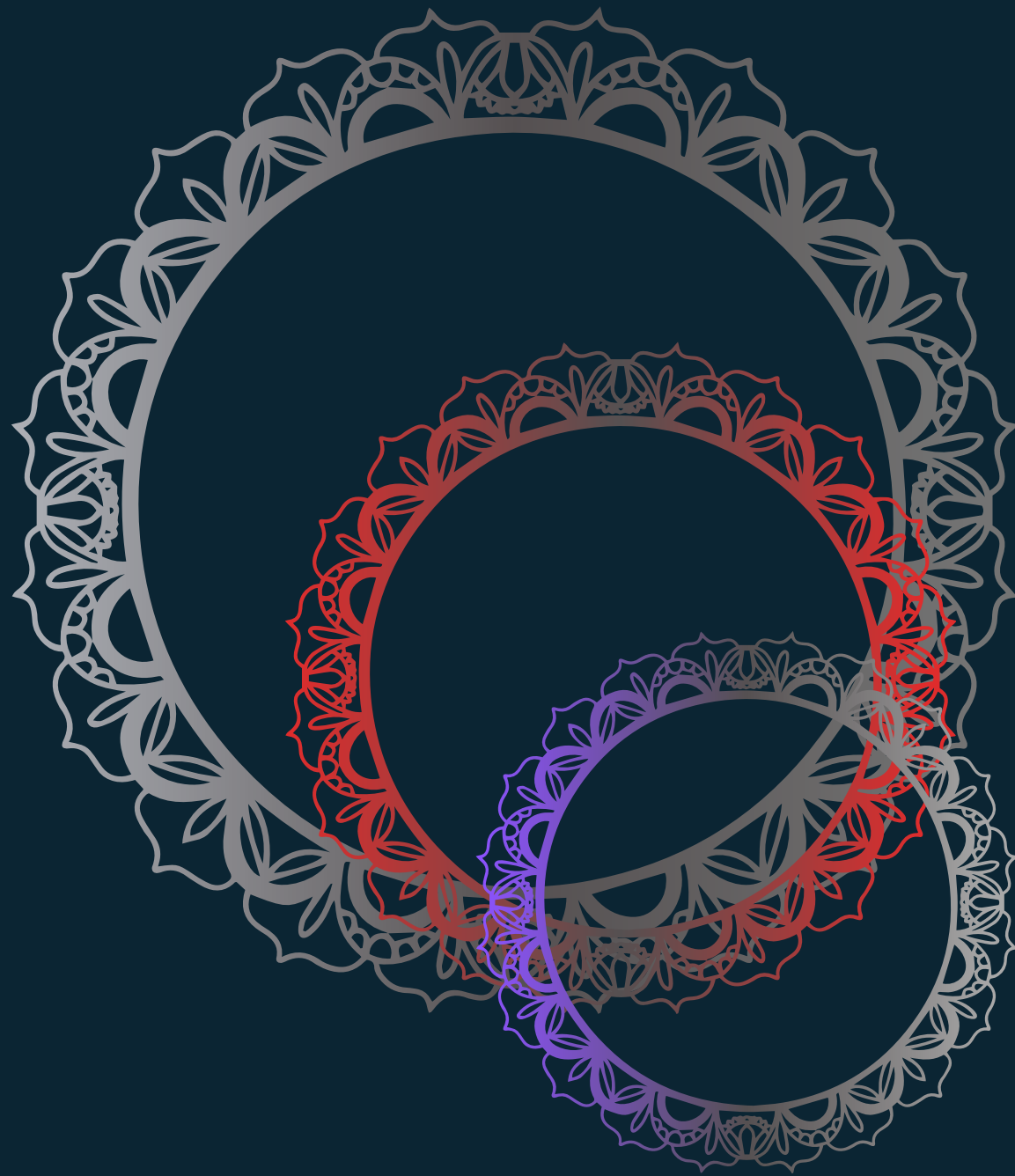
Philadelphia eventually arrives at the fashionable town of Tunbridge Wells 24 miles from Lewes. Work opportunities would have brought her to this rapidly developing place

The only records found describe Philadelphia working for herself as a 'jobbing cook,' which means she has clients she cooks for



This gives an insight into her character, as the work demands an entrepreneurial spirit, good cooking skills, good grace, communication, and tolerance, with a strong desire to remain independent

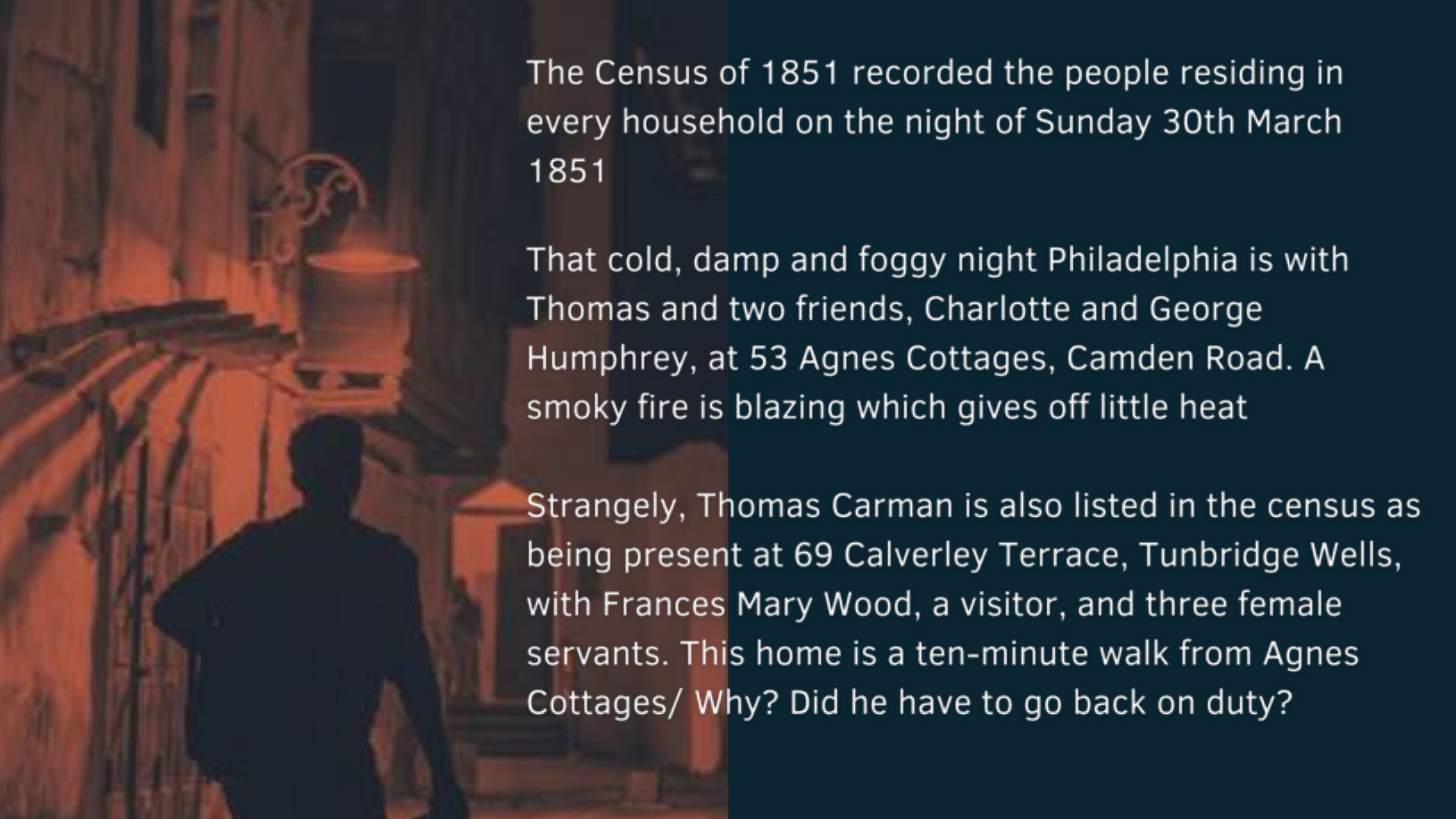
As a jobbing cook, you have the great advantage of being a good deal alone, and can therefore indulge in the pleasures of philosophy (From Punch, a British weekly magazine of humour and satire established in 1841 by Henry Mayhew and wood-engraver Ebenezer Landells)



Philadelphia marries Thomas Carman at 41, late in life for a Victorian woman

Thomas is a Londoner from Limehouse, the docks, in East London. He works as a butler for Frances Mary Wood, a wealthy widow also from Limehouse, who lived in Tunbridge Wells

It is not known if Thomas came with Mrs Wood from London. There is no record of this, and there is no mention of children for Philadelphia and Thomas. I have to conclude there are none

The background image is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a street at night. In the foreground, a man is seen from behind in silhouette, standing and looking down the street. The street is foggy, and a warm, orange light emanates from a window of a building on the left and from a street lamp. The overall mood is cold and mysterious.

The Census of 1851 recorded the people residing in every household on the night of Sunday 30th March 1851

That cold, damp and foggy night Philadelphia is with Thomas and two friends, Charlotte and George Humphrey, at 53 Agnes Cottages, Camden Road. A smoky fire is blazing which gives off little heat

Strangely, Thomas Carman is also listed in the census as being present at 69 Calverley Terrace, Tunbridge Wells, with Frances Mary Wood, a visitor, and three female servants. This home is a ten-minute walk from Agnes Cottages/ Why? Did he have to go back on duty?

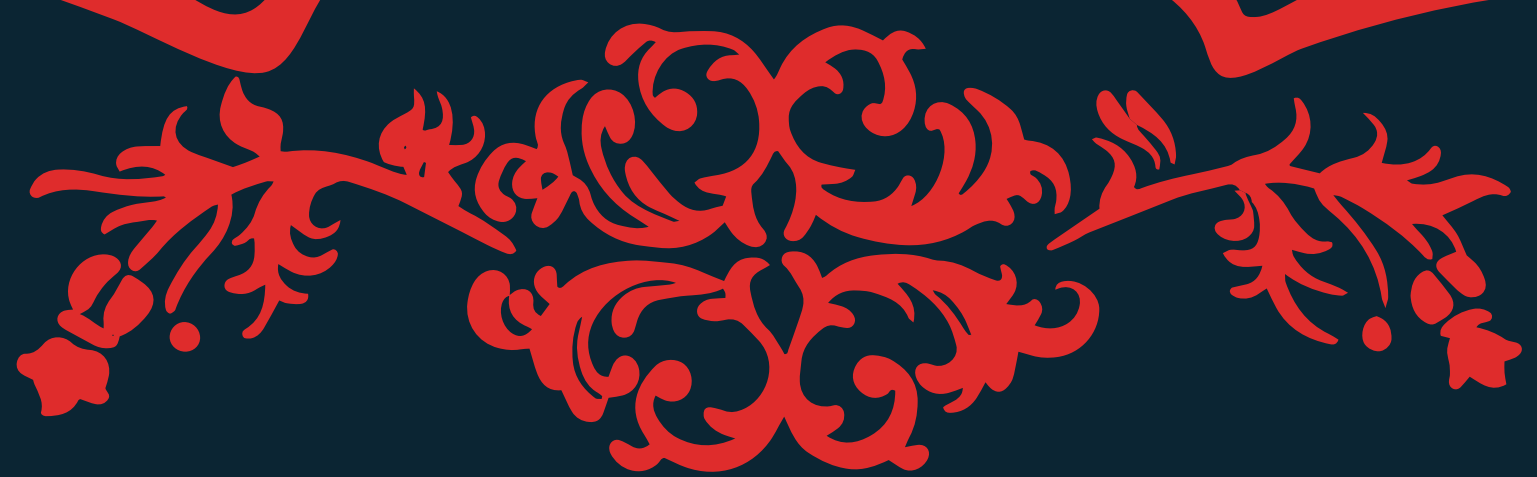


Philadelphia dies three weeks later on the 22nd April 1851 of phthisis, the Victorian given for tuberculosis

This means that three weeks prior she was already weak and dying

Her death certificate is not signed by her husband, but by Charlotte Humphrey with an X. This indicates that Charlotte is with her when she dies. The X shows she is illiterate

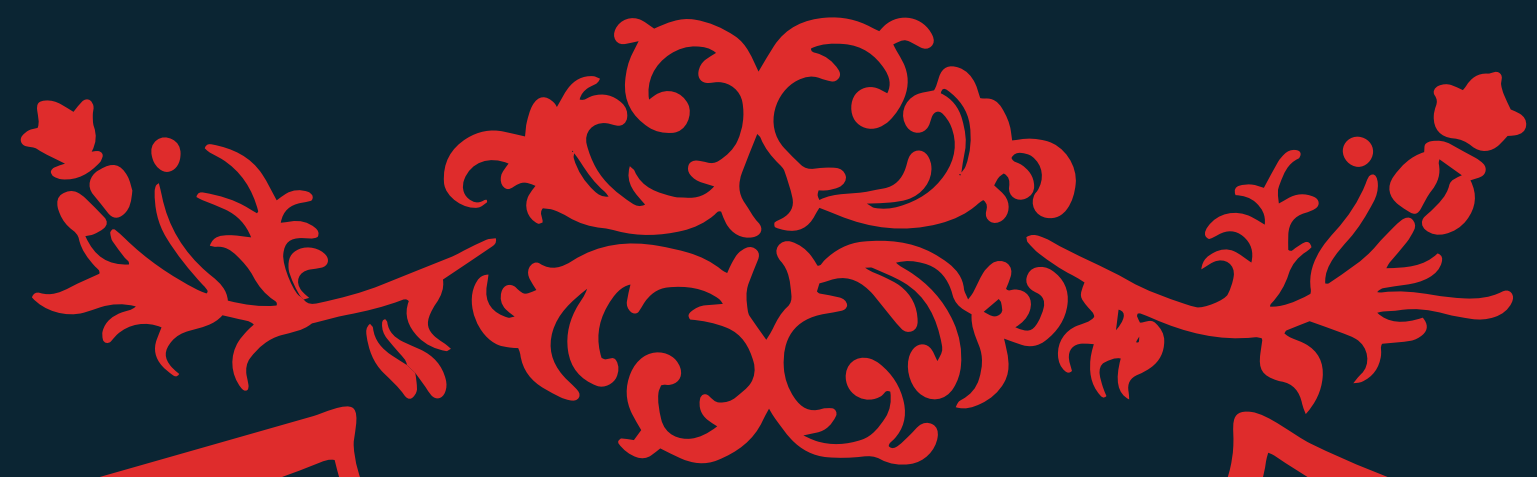
Edvard Munch. A portrait of his sister, who died from tuberculosis, Wikimedia



Charlotte Brontë wrote in 1849
“Consumption, I am aware, is a flattering malady”

*Beautiful victims of tuberculosis were a
common theme throughout the Victorian period
Countless paintings can be found of delicate,
pale victims in bed surrounded by grieving loved ones*

From: Tuberculosis Became the Victorian Standard of Beauty
Trista - September 12, 2018

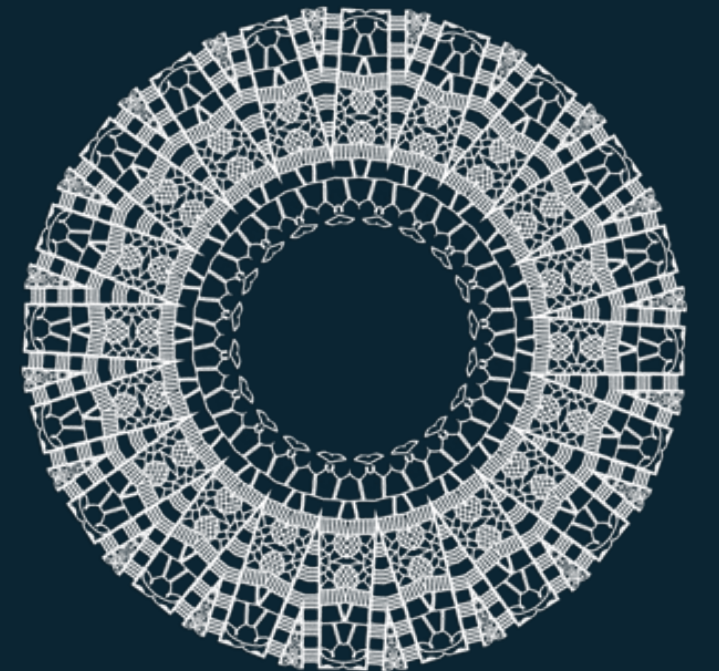


Charlotte is with her beautiful and frail friend as Philadelphia draws her last breath

I imagine Philadelphia as a small, thin woman, dark-haired, with pale skin, a Sussex soft accent, lying on white sheets, waiting ...

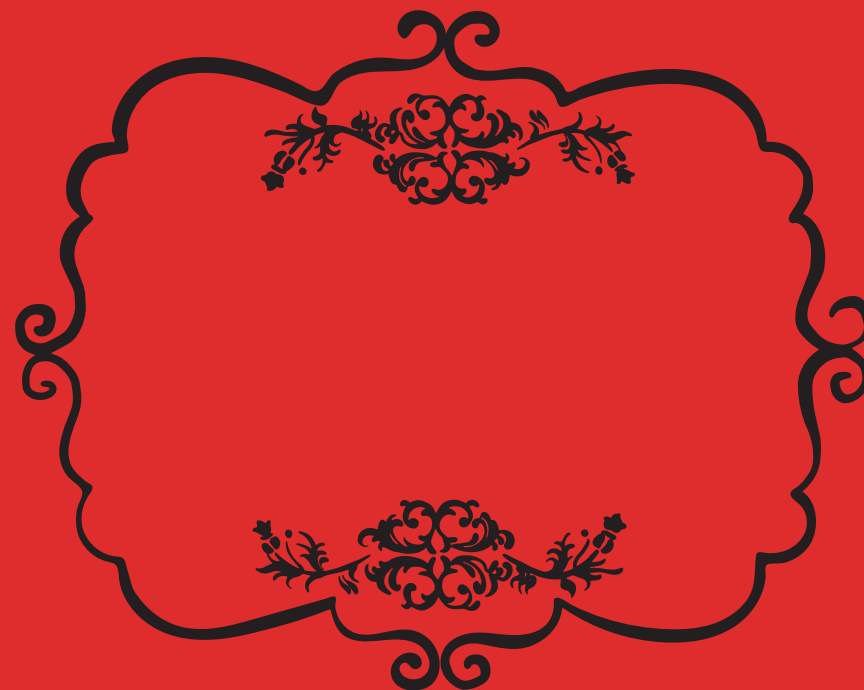
What I am trying to understand is why Thomas is not there, and does not sign the death certificate as his work is only ten minutes away by foot

- Maybe he is out of town on duty
- Maybe he does not love Philadelphia
- Maybe he loves her too much
- Is there another love interest?
- Maybe Charlotte is the one who tended to her friend during her illness and as a woman with a husband to support her could give up her time more easily



Once we had gathered the elements to Philadelphia's life story, we could have let it rest. However, I wanted to know more about my friend, her last moments. I wanted to go and visit her home, pay my respects and try and imagine how she lived

For, even in the most insignificant passing, of a person so unimportant time leaves traces. I had this *feeling*, there was more to discover”

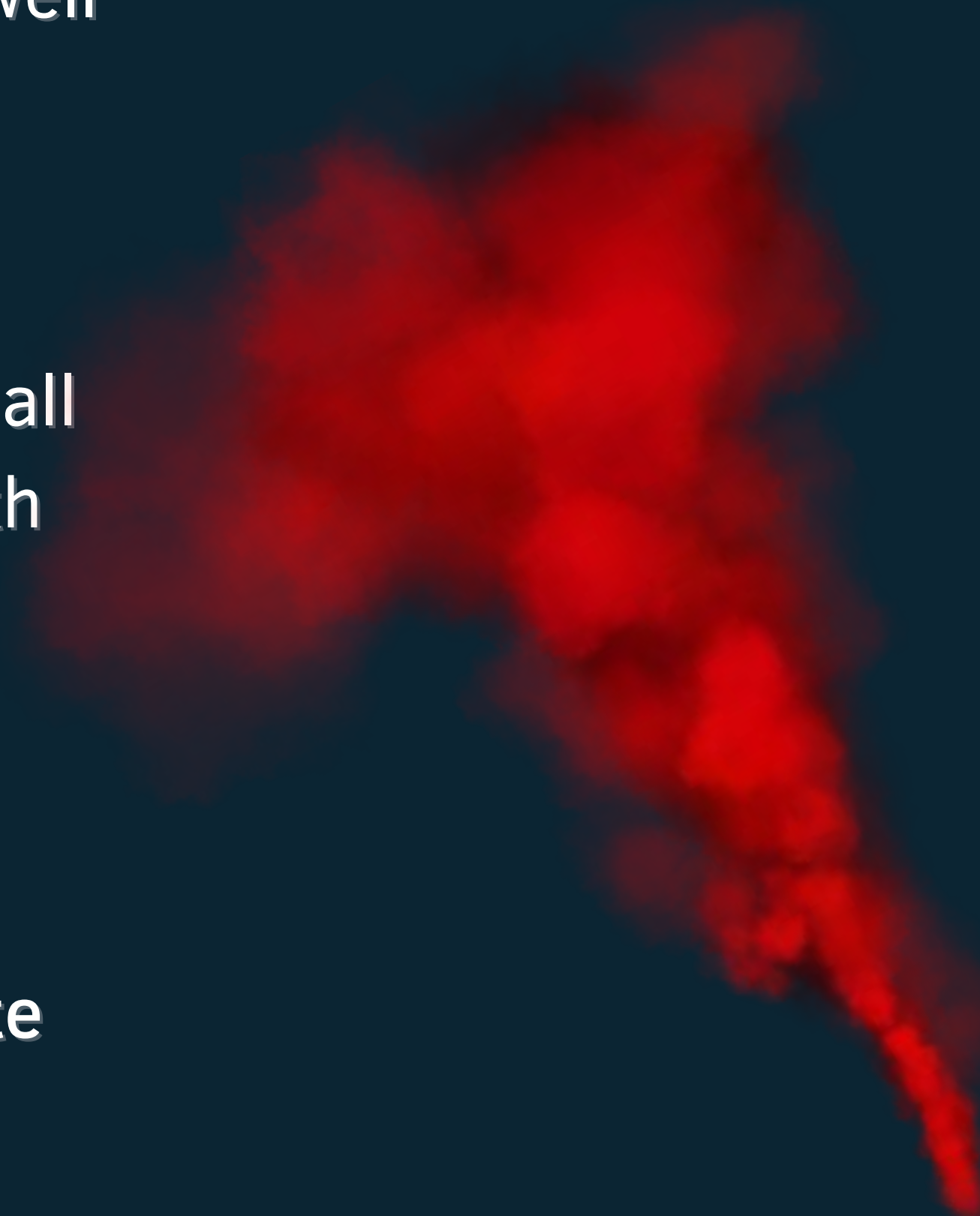


We order a copy of Philadelphia's death certificate as well as the Tunbridge Wells town plan for 1851

I locate the exact site where Agnes Cottages stood. A street which today is still one of vibrant transience, small businesses, local produce, and migrant newcomers with big dreams, who help make Camden Road the most exciting street in Tunbridge Wells

And it is here, on this street, at her home, the otherworldly connection between Philadelphia, Violette and me comes to light

It is also the spark for this documentary



I have spent much of my life in other countries and only worked twice in the UK for brief moments. Both times were at the same spot in Tunbridge Wells, at 12 - 14 Camden Road, as a Kitchen Assistant

I was 18 the first time and the restaurant was called Beefeater, run by Geoff and Wendy



9 years later, I was 32, and Beefeater had transformed into a cafe called Delicious 2, which I loved, run by Molly and Alan

This is exactly the same site that Philadelphia had lived and died at, which then was 53 Agnes Cottages



53 Agnes Cottages
Camden Road

Beefeater
Delicious 2





Here I am at 18 Years old

I worked here for 6 months before leaving for Morocco. This was the T-Shirt we had to wear

There are three people that remember me working there who have accepted to be interviewed



GOOD-BYE

GOOD-BYE, good-bye, Miss Rosie ;
A word that is sad to say ;
Though you are young and bonny,
And I am old and gray :
Your life is only beginning,
And mine drawing near its end,
But Death's face at the close of my journey
Is the quiet face of a friend.

Finding this out confirms the sentiment I have always believed: connections between the living and deceased exist. We simply need to sense them in order to uncover them

I am drawn to Philadelphia, Violette is drawn to her, and Philadelphia is drawn to us

My question is **WHY?**

Is there something Philadelphia is trying to tell me?

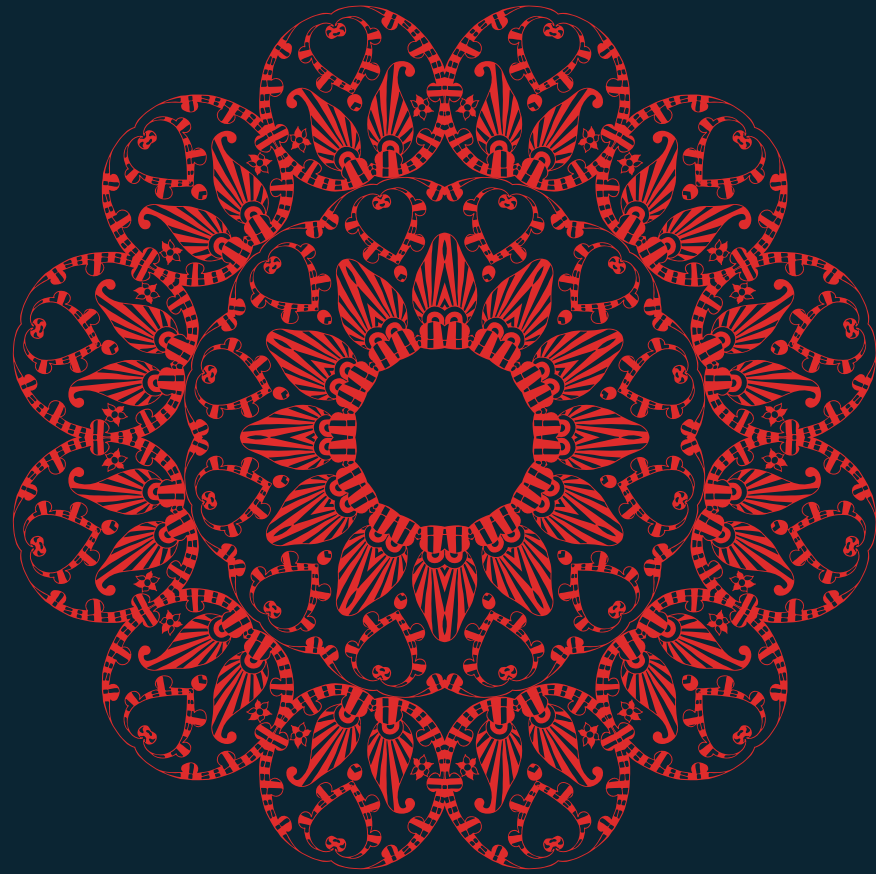
This is one of the quests of my documentary

THE QUESTS and EXPANDING AND DEVELOPING THE STORY



- Is Philadelphia asking me to communicate something to the world?
- What are the similarities between myself and Philadelphia, and where are the stark contrasts?
- Explore Violette's connection with Philadelphia

Without it becoming didactic, the story in part could be about contrasts: my good fortune, freedom and abilities to overcome the constraints of my time, unlike her whose life was torn between work, hardship and dying slowly from consumption



- What are the connections between TB, which still exists, and Covid? Was it treated like a plague in Philadelphia's days, was she isolated or in quarantine?

Explore the Victorian romance with Tuberculosis or "romantic disease" through some of the female Romantic writers and poetess'



- Learn more about the history of the Cemetery
- Find pictures of the era - Gustave Doré's London prints?
- Look at the coincidences and discrepancies in the certificates and documents
- Find out about Thomas Carman
- Tell my own story about growing up around the Cemetery

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED



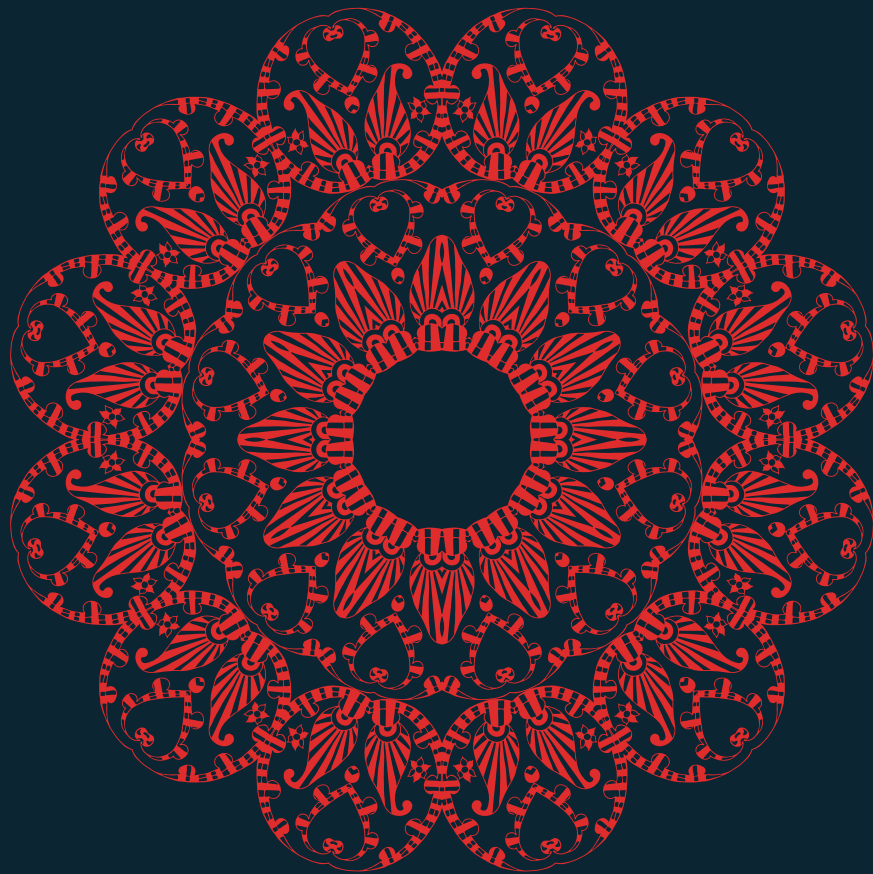
- Why is Philadelphia's headstone inscribed on both sides?
- Why is she buried in the same spot as Henry Austen? Who paid for her burial? (A simple burial cost around £11 12s 6½d, the equivalent of around £3,000-£4,000 in today's money). A benefactor? Her friends, her husband? Did she have private savings?

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED



- Charlotte and George Humphrey, her friends, ended up in the workhouse and are buried in a paupers' grave. What is their story?
- How many paupers are buried in the Woodbury Park Cemetery?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



- Ask a psychic medium to try and communicate an answer for me
- Leave the story as it is and for what it is
- Sometimes you have to click on the bottom here

DIRECTOR'S NOTES - Artistic Treatment

The story begins as a poetic documentary, with a loose visual narrative following Violette in a non-linear way. The mood is slow and rhythmic, a preamble into this serene and isolated space. There is no voice-over, only Violette's childish chatter

Time and seasons pass, Violette also changes; however, we return to the same monuments over again, especially Philadelphia's tombstone which begins to overshadow the other monuments



Opening

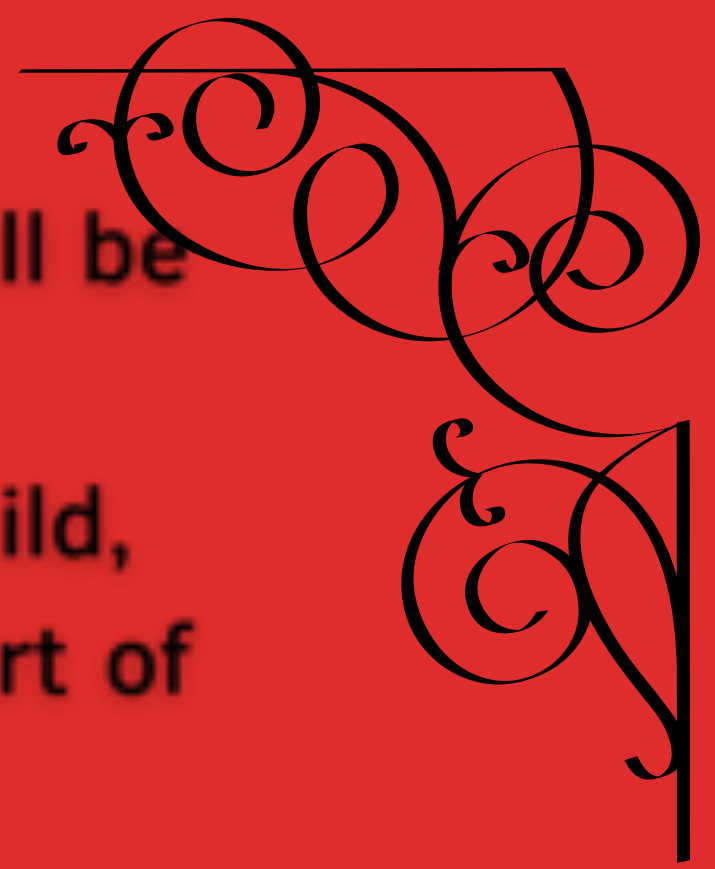
I use voice-over to tell the story of the cemetery. Interspersed will be archival photos and found footage

I also tell my own story of growing up around the cemetery as a child, the same age as Violette, and how the cemetery is a mythical part of my childhood

I reveal my attraction to Philadelphia in 1992

I read some lines from a story I wrote for her called THE LADY'S MAID - a story of freedom from life as a servant

Unknowingly, I had advocated for Philadelphia to rise above the repressiveness of her life and to have a different narrative, one of self-determination, and independence



Philadelphia transforms, becoming universal, representing the millions of unknown Victorian women who were servants and England's backbone, keeping families alive through their relentless hard work and who died unhonoured

Denouement

The documentary finishes with Philadelphia telling her story; fact is mixed with fiction. I anticipate an actress doing the voice-over. Violette continues to play around her stone during Philadelphia's monologue.

I disclose our connecton





The story ends as it begins, with Violette wandering alone along the path she knows so well, with the same background sounds, while everything appears the same

But it is not the same. It will never be the same. For we now know something that we did not know before. The life of an unknown woman who lived and died, and would have remained unknown until someone walked onto her path of the past and found strange and coincidental connections which are worthy of being documented

The viewer has now also reached back into time to pay honour to a woman who has come before us, and who represents the ordinary women of the time



Point-of-view

As I bring in a voice-over I will use archival material with Philadelphia's P.O.V. and mine. I envisage sitting on a chair in front of her gravestone as we talk

I finish with Violette and the denouement. She is now transformed to a five-year-old who can talk and put sentences together



Sound

The soundscape comes from the sounds of cemetery: wood pigeons and larks, overhead planes, far-off voices and Violette's childlike murmuring

I will consider an old English Kentish/Sussex song for the credits, sung without instrumentation or Violette singing



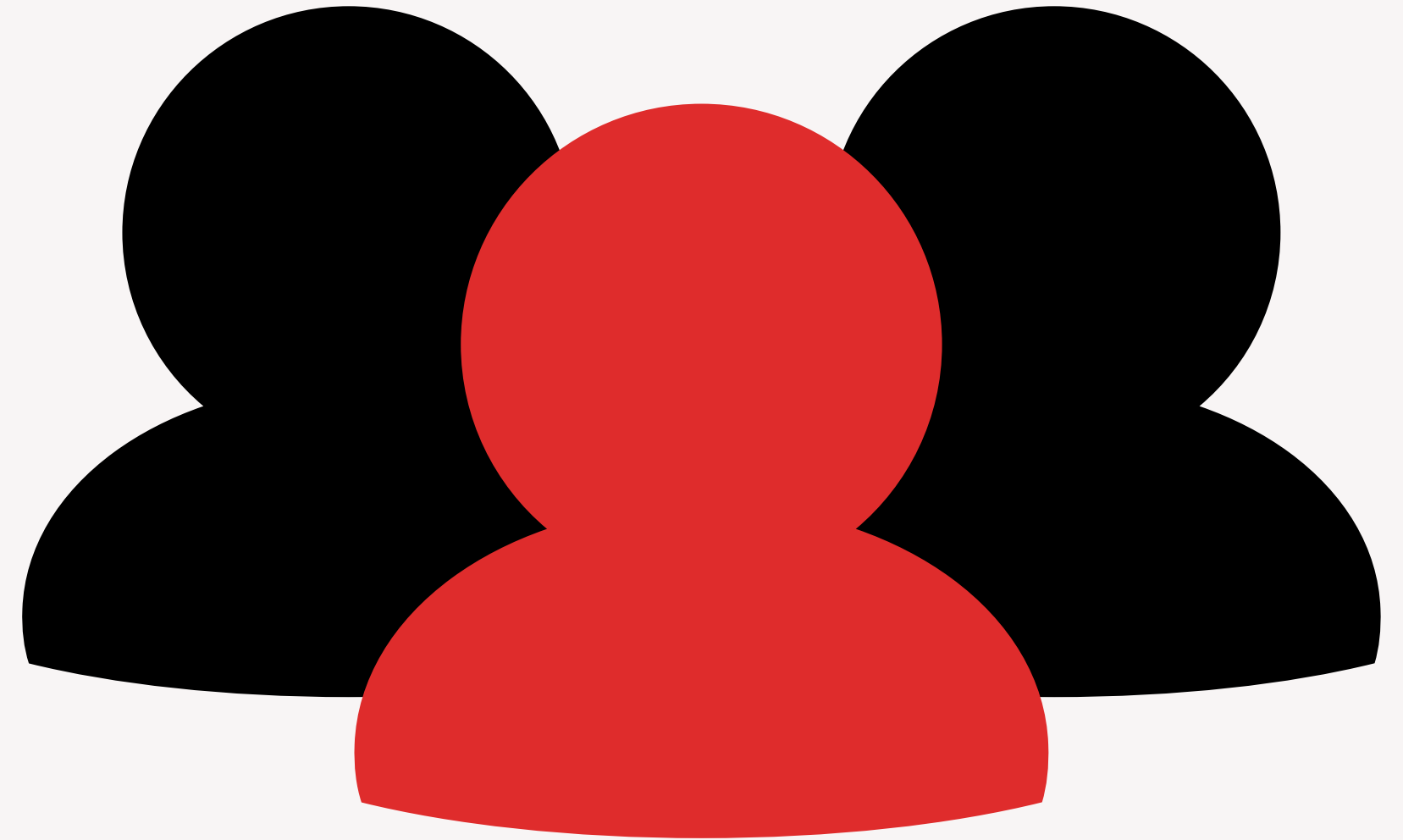
Target Audience

Support

Tech Specs

Timeline

Funding



Target Audience

Spiritualists

Cemetery enthusiasts

Victorian enthusiasts

Local historians

Local community

- Spiritualist Church, Tunbridge Wells
- Rusthall Community Cinema
- Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Nationwide/International

Spiritual Film Festival, London

Gaia online: consciousness-expanding videos



Support

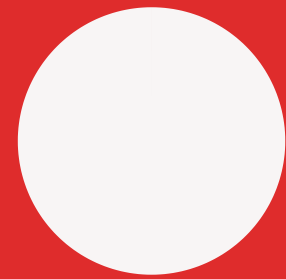
- Friends of the Woodbury Park Cemetery.(confirmed)
- Rusthall Community Cinema (confirmed)

Tech Specs

- I will have captions in English for those with hearing problems
- I will have French and Chinese subtitles as I wish to distribute the documentary in these countries
- I will have different formats for different platforms

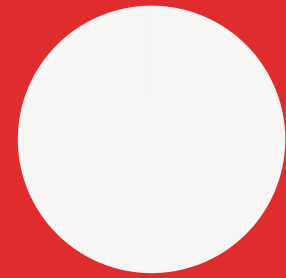


Timeline & Strategy



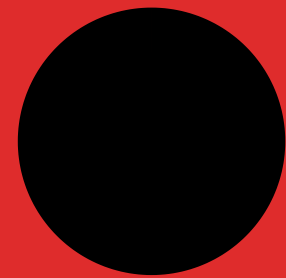
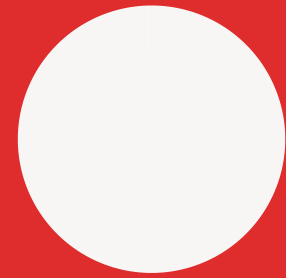
MAY - 2024
Begin promotion

FBook Page/Instagram/Blog/trailer



Complete work by
Autumn 2024
Festival Circuit

Pre-premiere: Rusthall Community Cinema
FilmFreeway
Gaia



Post-Production
Editing and Sound Mix

20-30 minute sound mix
Cost: approx 1,500 GBP

Funding needed
for a 20-30
minute sound
mix





CREDITS

Violette: Little girl

Philadelphia: Special friend

Director/camera/editor: Jeanne Pope

Drone: Andrei

Research: Andrew Bailey and Friends of
Woodbury Park Cemetery

Consultant and co-editor: Wang Ying
Shannon Walbran

Writer: Jeanne Pope

Philadelphia Voice: To be decided

Interviews: Terry Worthington. Ivan Paps
Robert Irvine

History of cemetery: Emma Vidler

Medium: Geoffrey Beitz ?

Extra: Alyosha Pope at 16

about me

I am a BFA graduate of The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, with many years experience in indie/DIY production. A passionate, award-winning documentary filmmaker and educator, I love sharing and exchanging my knowledge and experience. I consult on documentaries and collaborate with other artists and have worked teaching documentary production in many countries.

From 2015-2020 I lived in China and worked at the prestigious Beijing Film Academy, Qingdao Campus and hold an honorary post as visiting professor there. I currently live in Europe, moving between the UK and my home in southern France, hosting film production workshops.

In the UK I am a committee member and videographer with the Woodbury Park Victorian Cemetery where I work with a dedicated team to preserve this historic space. I also volunteer at the Rusthall Community Cinema with bi-monthly screenings, and was a judge for our first international film festival which was a great success.

Since October 2022 I have been employed by Kent County Council to teach Documentary Production with the Smartphone, Scrapbooking and Digital Storytelling. There is always a project brewing, an idea forming, a story waiting to be told and have three projects in post-production at the moment.

Please see more at my website: [SCATTERFLIX](https://www.scatterflix.com)

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