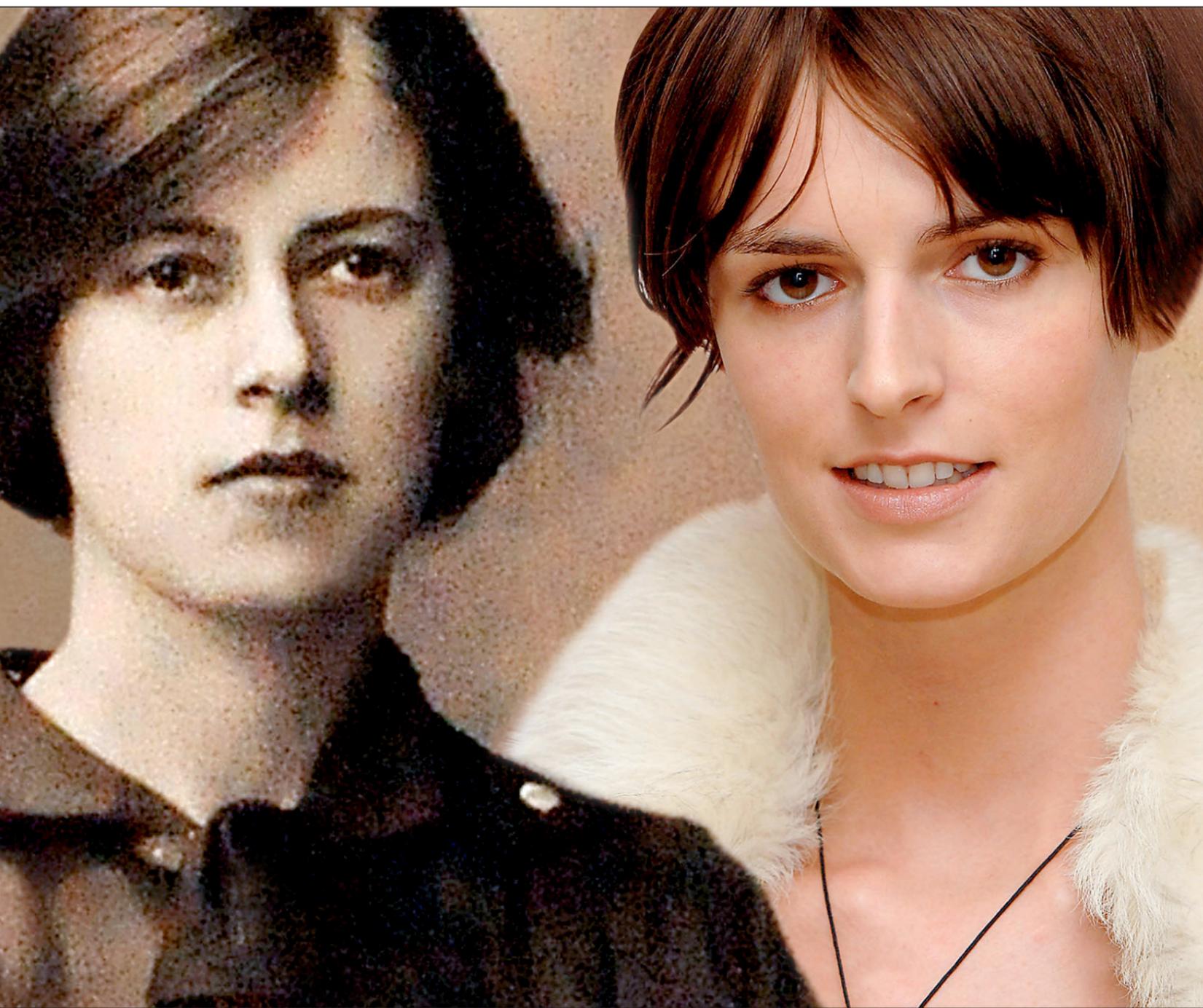


my mother for 30 found a new family



REX

LOOKS FAMILIAR: Jacquetta Wheeler bears a striking resemblance to a photograph of her grandmother Chrissie Cleland, taken in 1915

three daughters – Sarah, Jacquetta and Charlotte.

For another decade he worked furiously at expanding his business but the mystery of his mother's life gnawed at his subconscious. But in 1988, when Betty was in the final stages of senile dementia, he began looking for his birth mother again. Betty died two years later.

'I don't think Betty's dementia prompted me to start looking again,' Wheeler says. 'I don't know why I suddenly got interested, but I wrote letters to anyone named Cleland in the London telephone directory, asking if they could help me in any way. None of them was able to shed any light on it. I was disappointed.'

On one occasion he drove to Uvedale Road in Enfield, North London – the address on the birth certificate – to see where his mother had been living when he was born. He sat for so long outside the semi-detached house that the police were alerted by worried residents.

'I stopped the car about 50 yards from the house,' Wheeler recalls. 'I then went to see a local authority officer who was helping me with my enquiries. By an extraordinary coincidence, halfway through our meeting, he got a call from a friend of his who lived in Uvedale Road who mentioned she had called the police that morning because somebody had been sitting in a car staring at a house, presumably with a view to burgling it.'

After a lucky break, one of the neighbours put Wheeler in touch with a former resident of the street. Margaret Seward, 73, remembered Chrissie and had a photograph of her. Mrs Seward told him her adoptive parents, Jack and Mary Mitchell, had been friends with Chrissie at Kilmarnock Academy in Ayrshire, where they all grew up. It was to their house in Uvedale Road, that Chrissie had fled when she got pregnant.

'My mother was a great friend of Chrissie's,' Mrs Seward said at the time. 'They used to have school reunions. After my mother died, my father kept in touch with Chrissie. She came down and they had a holiday together, and then he visited her in Scotland. His sister once told me that when he got the phone call saying Chrissie had died he was devastated.'

Unfortunately, Mrs Seward did not realise Chrissie had any living relatives so, yet again, the trail ran cold. Wheeler was left with just those few tantalising details about his mother.

It was only when The Mail on Sunday stepped in earlier this year and began researching Wheeler's genealogy that he was able to fill in much of the rest of the picture. And some fascinating details emerged.

One of the first shocks was discovering that Chrissie was 42 when he was born. 'I found that surprising as I had assumed that she had made a silly mistake as a teenager and had me adopted,' he says. Like so many unmarried mothers in the Thirties,

he had taken out a £5,000 loan to set up the company IG Index, which allowed investors to speculate on the price of commodities. In doing so, Wheeler had created the new industry now known as spread betting. This allows people to bet not just on a fixed result but on a set of variables that can include anything from the price of gold to the number of corners awarded in a football match.

His birth certificate arrived in the post at his terrace home in Chelsea. It revealed his mother was called Chrissie Cleland.

'It didn't give me a lot of information, just my mother's name,' he says. 'I was disappointed that my father's name wasn't on it but the first thing was to try to find out whether my mother was alive. I went to St Catherine's House in Holborn, where birth, marriage and death records for England and Wales were held, and went through all the death certificates. I remember getting very nervous when



FAMILY MAN: Stuart celebrates his 70th birthday in 2005 with his wife Tessa and their three daughters

I went through them hoping very much that she had not died.'

Unknown to Wheeler, she had died in Scotland in 1969.

Around that time he talked to Betty about looking for his birth mother. 'She wasn't very enthusiastic about it. She didn't say anything but it was the impression I got. I suppose she loved me very much and didn't want to think of anybody usurping her position. I was very, very fond of her and she of me, but she obviously felt sensitive about it.'

It was at this time that Wheeler, who was becoming increasingly successful, met Tessa Codrington, a society photographer, at a dinner party. They married on July 14, 1979 and would go on to have