

# I found 300 relatives on trip to Mexico

Writer discovers great-grandfather's secret family across the Atlantic

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Chief Arts Correspondent

ONE man's quest to follow in the footsteps of his adventurous great-grandfather has uncovered a secret extended family of more than 300 people in South America.

Robin Bayley, 43, of Hampstead, discovered an astonishing skeleton in the family closet when he travelled to Mexico inspired by his grandmother Ruth Jones's stories about the adventures of her father Arthur Greenhalgh.

Taking up a job offer in the country a century ago, Mr Greenhalgh encountered bandits, jungle, hidden bags of silver and bloody revolution.

But what his grandmother and none of the British family knew was that

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Arthur, who was known in the country as Arturo, had taken a Mexican lover, Maria, while managing a mill in a small village in western Mexico. The relationship produced a daughter, Quitita. The Mexicans knew about Mr Greenhalgh's British family and believed, wrongly, that he had died on the Titanic. Mrs Jones believed only that her father used to write regularly to his friends in Mexico. In truth, he was writing to Maria. However, none of his letters was received.

Mr Bayley arrived in Mexico with half the picture, but the full



**Meet the family:** Robin Bayley with grandmother Ruth Jones, left. A small part of the extended family in Mexico, above, and Arturo Greenhalgh, right

tales about Arturo Greenhalgh were remembered from the other side. The truth was to prove a shock. "My grandma was horrified initially. Her father was somebody who she spoke of in very reverential terms," Mr Bayley said.

But she became intrigued by her new family and decided, at the age of 90, to go to Mexico to meet them.

It took her grandson another decade to write a book about the family saga, and Mrs Jones learned of his publication deal just before her death last year aged 102. The Mango

Orchard is dedicated to her. For Mr Bayley, the discovery has been a joy and he receives daily Facebook messages from his extended clan. He is due to take them a copy of the book this summer.

"When my grandma told me all these exotic and fantastic stories about my great-grandfather, I always felt there was something missing he left behind," he said. "To our sensibility, it might seem acceptable if they had been bitter towards me because of my great-grandfather. But they remembered him very warmly."

