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My Mother's Writing Case

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Date

Monday 15 January 2018



A Guest Blog from Marie Songhurst

This writing case belonged to my mother - Ethel Mary Tee (Mayhew).

I believe the writing case was a birthday or Christmas Present given to her during the 1930s.

Mum was born in Wisbech in Cambridgeshire the day before Armistice was declared in 1918, ending the First World War. Her parents were William (Bill) Tee and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Johnson (Tee). She was their first child. Her sister was born 5 years later. Elizabeth Johnson had been born and brought up in the Wisbech area and it was in Wisbech that William and Elizabeth made their home at the end of the First World War. William returned to the seed merchant and florist trade after having been a driver with the Royal Field Artillery.

Mum, Dad and I often went to London in November so that Mum and her Aunt Ethel could celebrate their birthdays together. Aunt Ethel always said that her birthday in November 1918 was one of her most memorable: not only did she have a baby niece, but also, working as a nurse, the declaration of Armistice on her birthday meant the never ending stream of injured soldiers she was nursing would come to an end.

Known as Mary, my Mum spent her childhood in Wisbech where she married my Dad, Sidney Ralph Mayhew, in 1944 at Ely Place Baptist Church, which they had both attended and had been involved in church activities.

In 1947 Mum and Dad moved to Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, where her father had bought his own Florist and Seed Merchants business. Initially they lived with her parents above the shop before buying a house. Apart from her parents Mary had no family in Middlesbrough and neither did my Dad. Dad worked for British Railways.

When I was growing up in the 1950s families kept in touch by writing letters to each other about day to day events. My memory is of Mum having 'done her jobs' for the day often sitting down in the middle of the





afternoon with a cup of tea, to get the writing case out and write letters presumably not only to her sister and Aunts and Uncle, but also to her in-laws and my Dad's brothers and sister.

Daily life to some extent revolved around the florists business and Mum would help out in the shop every Friday and extra days around Christmas and when there was a big order, for wreaths for a funeral or flowers for a big wedding. For a couple of weeks in the summer Mum and Dad would run the shop so my grandparents could visit my Grandmother's sisters in London and other friends in the Wisbech area.

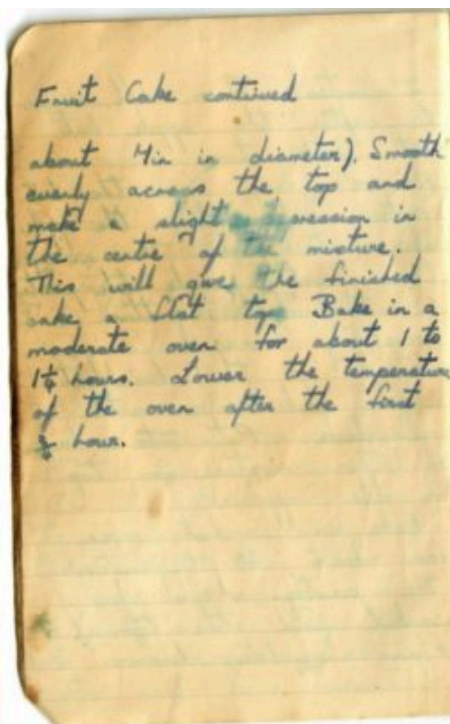
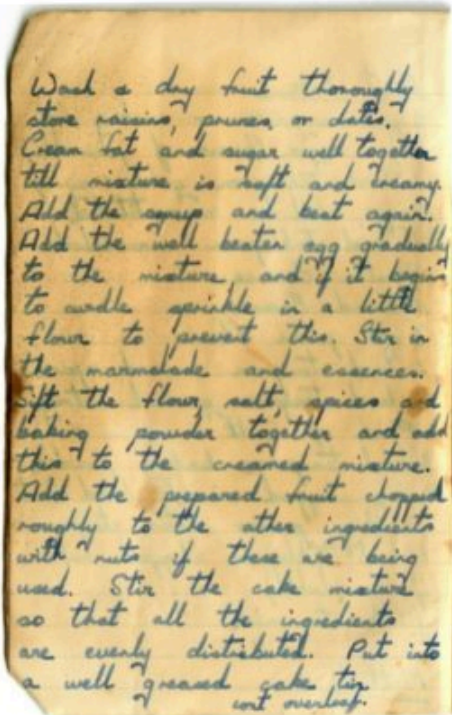
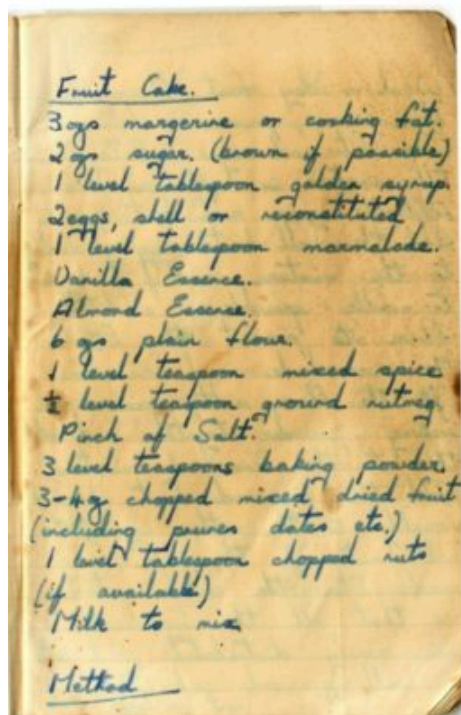
Grandad retired and sold the shop in about 1959 and they moved to Knaresborough to be near their other daughter and her family.



In 1960 we moved to York when Dad got a job in the LNER (London North Eastern) Head Offices there.

Mary died in York in 1967 from Bronchial Pneumonia following a diagnosis of Metastatic Breast Cancer, aged 47.

I still have a copy of a recipe she wrote in what I refer to as the family recipe book. This is one of the few examples of my Mum's writing I have. It must date from when she was first married as it refers to some of the ingredients which can be used 'when available'. This must refer to wartime food rationing and post war food/ingredient shortages. The fruit cake was always made and taken on holiday with us to eat with our picnic lunches or as a special treat at bedtime.



Marie's mother's writing case is one of the objects which will be on display at Abbey House Museum as part of the 'Remembrance' exhibition, opening 3 March. We are including examples of public remembrance as well as

more personal items like this one. Use the comments form below to let us know what you would include in the exhibition.

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