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My Grandmother’s Silver Vesta Case

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### A guest blog from Janet Coles

The silver vesta case belonged to my maternal grandmother, Emily Maria Gaskin, who was born in London in 1884 and died in York in 1956. Even sixty years later it reminds me of the happy times we spent together. Although I was only seven when she died, it clearly brings back the image I have of her: a tall, quiet, very elegant woman.

Vesta cases, or match safes as they were sometimes known, were designed to keep matches dry and carry them safely at a time when they could ignite simply by rubbing together. From the hallmarks we believe this one was made in Birmingham in 1920 by the silversmith William Henry Sparrow.

At this time my grandmother would have been in her mid-thirties. We have been unable to solve the mystery surrounding the case: was it a present? If so what was the occasion? Was it from the 'AW' whose initials are engraved on it?

We have found no-one with those initials among family members. However, my grandmother continued to use the case openly throughout her life, making it unlikely that it was a gift from a secret admirer... no doubt her friends and family knew the story behind it.

It seems improbable that we shall ever find out any more details about its background. Like so many other matters in family history, I regret not having asked more questions before it was too late. However, I shall continue to treasure the vesta case and the happy memories of my early childhood.

*Janet's grandmother's vesta 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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