

A celebration of life
Gladys Flora Gertrude Chapman

February 1927 – 31 October 2019

Fenland Crematorium Cambridgeshire 2.30 pm Tuesday 19/11/ 2019

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

Gladys's life and memories written by her daughter Cynthia.

Where do you start, to tell you about such a talented, hard-working, determined and independent lady, who could charm anyone. She certainly had the Irish charm and also the temper, if you got on the wrong side of her, as she did when she faced someone trying to rob them at the bottom of their garden! They even said sorry and that they would buy her a box of chocolates - she told them what to do with the chocolates!

Mum was an artist in oils, a dressmaker (I have seen her make a wedding dress) a wonderful cook, she played the organ and much, much more, all self-taught.

Mum was born in Birmingham, one of eight children - one little boy died as a baby.

She soon helped her mum doing housework and was quite bossy she told me. Poor sister Joan was told off if she didn't clean in the corners and also, she had run errands for the elderly.

She wasn't a fan on pets as her dad bought so many strays home, did cause trouble, once, an organ grinder's monkey which did quite a lot of damage! But they had a whippet called Nancy who waited outside the school on her own until the children came out, but she loved our dogs to pieces.

Mum's dad's family came from County Mayo in Ireland. His parents lived next door. They only got the house because, she told me a man murdered his family and then hung himself. She said also she saw his ghost.

Her dad was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. Aged about 29 he voluntarily kept important communication lines repaired, under heavy fire, for three days. He was in France for nearly 3 years. Sadly, as they were poor, the medals soon got pawned to raise cash.

Mum said she used to run through the bombing to get to her Mum's so that they could sit under the stairs together. She later worked in the ammunitions factory, but flattened her finger in the machinery.

She soon joined the army as a cook and she was sent to cook for the Officer's Hospital at Harewood House under Princess Royal, Princess Mary (who was the great granddaughter of Queen Victoria). She was so proud of that as she asked her to stay on after the war, but mum said no because she was to get married to my dad.

My dad was in the army and they met because he picked up the girls in his lorry to take them to the dances. Whilst he was in the army he was sent all over the world and they wrote to each other for ages from Italy, Africa from many faraway lands.

They married and lived in lodgings with an old man called Fred, they had the upstairs. Now mum being mum, soon took over the house and Fred, for which he was very grateful.

When I was three my mum got really poorly and had to go to hospital far away as she had TB, for a year. Dad worked all day at his job and in the evenings, he spent his time doing up a council house for when she came home. He travelled every weekend to see her. My dad was a loving, quiet man, who could climb mountains and mum would be hand-in-hand beside him in whatever they did. I felt sorry for mum, she left a little princess when she went to go to hospital and when she returned, she got a tomboy, with a taste of freedom back, when she returned from hospital-bless her. Dad and I lived with his mum when she was in hospital.

Mum had a great sense of humour even though she was very straight laced and her way was the right way and if you said something naughty she would find it funny.

Mum and her sisters Renée and Joan were a giggling mess when they got together always doing tricks mostly on the men. For example, sewing up pockets et cetera., or once Uncle Bert complained his runner beans weren't doing very well, so, mum bought some from the market and tied them with cotton, on to his bean plants!

When we went to Birmingham and met family at the club for dancing, my aunt Joan who taught me to dance, and here, a big thank you from me to her, my favourite dance was the Charleston. Family was always important to mum, in the early days there was always lots of meetings. They always helped other people and the family.

I learnt a lot from my mum and dad, if you wanted anything, you did it yourself, you didn't need money, you found a way to make it yourself. Further, you always pay your own way and always be in work - whatever it was.

My mum was a very lucky lady - my dad taught her to drive on the milk float, she went on holidays all over the world, and had most things she wanted, but most of all the love of my dad, they were always holding hands; after losing him she was never the same, but she bravely soldiered on. Now they are in each other's arms again.

Bless you both.

Sonny, Gladys's grandson has asked me to read his memories for him...

I would like to start with this nice anecdote from one of my dad's old friends and work colleagues, Johnny Cockerill, who sent me this memory last week, on hearing of Nan's passing. I think it gives you a good idea of Nan's character, back before I was born.

John wrote...

Many years ago, way before I knew your mum and dad, I used to get sent to Layton's Dry Cleaners on Lynn Road, to either drop things off or pick them up. It would be the late 60s or early 70s, so I was only a kid - and we moan about having to do errands such as that. However,..... I never moaned about that particular chore, for one reason only, that was because of the lovely lady Mrs. Chapman who worked there. She always had time to chat, and I'd be in there for ages - I thought she was wonderful! I never knew my mum's mum as she died before I was born, so I would have loved a Nan like her.

Sonny himself writes

I have many fond memories of Nan, but the ones I bring up more than others are the summer holidays we used to spend together at Heacham and Skegness, my brother Leo, Nan and grandad and me in our holiday caravan..... my brother and I loved those holidays and Nan would always take us into Hunstanton to check out the seaside, penny arcades and the joke shop.

When we were at Butlins in Skegness one year, I particularly remember Nan going backstage to get us Freddie, from the 1960s band "Freddie and the Dreamers" autograph. Apparently, he wasn't very friendly, but Nan wasn't going to take "No" for an answer!

Nan was very proud of her clothes collection and would quite often show Leo and I her latest outfits. She also enjoyed getting her hair cut and styled by Sue at her home and always took pride in her appearance, which she carried on throughout her life.

She enjoyed her arts and crafts and was good at all of them. Whether it be playing songs on her organ, painting pictures, knitting a jumper or weaving a tapestry, she excelled at all of them.

I remember my Nan being a very social person and her and grandad always entertaining guests at their home in Osbourne Road. There was always a buffet laid out or a delicious cake in the oven, which Leo and I were always more than happy to eat.

When Nan picked us up from school on Fridays, we would wander around Wisbech town centre, and she would seem to know and talk to absolutely everyone. At times, we wondered whether we would ever get home, but she would reward us with a slap-up meal at Terry's Burger Bar.

Around this time, I was fascinated by the local punk rockers in town with their weird and wonderful hair. Nan said, if I ever turned out looking like that she would cross the road. Fast forward a few years, and she was spiking up my very own weird and wonderful hair in her kitchen.....

These are very important words and memories for me, dedicated to a very important lady in my life. I will always treasure those fond memories and wish her eternal peace in her beloved Walter's arms forever more.

XXX