



WHAT I TREASURE

Whether precious or humble, rather than stowing sentimental objects away, reinventing or reinvigorating them as something new can help embed memories of loved ones in our daily lives

Words: **KATE YOUDE**



My grandma's chair

The restoration of a familiar armchair to its former glory reminds Katy Collier of the security of her grandmother's love

"One of my earliest memories is of the chair. Now I'm older, it doesn't seem that big but I remember sitting in it with my grandmother and she was teaching me how to knit and to tie laces. I call it Grandma's Chair.

I was close to my grandparents – they only lived down the road from where I lived with my mum in Worsley in Greater Manchester – and they were like parents. My mum is a bit like Eddie out of *Absolutely Fabulous*.

My grandma was the most loving person I've ever known. It was really sad when she developed Alzheimer's; you don't lose the person per se but their personality. She'd sometimes say, "Bewitched, bewildered and bothered," and you could see she didn't really know what was going on. I'd lost her before she died really so keeping things like the chair helped remind me of who she was.

I'd had the chair for a while and thought that it looked a bit sad. I wanted to get it back



to looking like it should, so I had it reupholstered but I didn't want to change it too much. I felt like if I changed it to a different colour it would tarnish the memories of Grandma in some way. Orange isn't what I would have chosen, but I felt like it had to stay.

I've since moved the chair to the dining room and it's now a place of solitude. When I'm not on my own with the kids I'll often take the baby and feed him in there to get away from the hustle and bustle.

Every time I see the chair, it makes me smile and sitting in it brings this warmth. It means a lot and I feel really grateful that I had the opportunity to have something of my grandma's and the memories that go with it. It sounds a bit cheesy but, seeing it or sitting in it, I feel her love more than I've ever been loved by anyone."

"I felt if I changed its colour it would tarnish my memories in some way"



"Paul loved a patterned shirt, and they all lent themselves to a quilt"

dinner together. It's strange when you're bereaved – it's not the special occasions but the day-to-day routine stuff that you miss.

I remember speaking to someone a few days after he died and saying that I wanted to do something special with his shirts. Paul loved a patterned shirt, and they all lent themselves to a quilt.

A few months later there was an open arts festival around the Peak District, where I live. I visited Textile House, where they made these intricately designed patchwork quilts. That reinforced the idea of making a quilt but at the time I wasn't ready to sort through his clothes.

About two years later, when I was ready, I found a local quilt-maker – By Lisa Watson. I looked at several patterns before deciding on what would work well with the shirt patterns, what would go with my room, and also what would fit with Paul's taste.

Memories of Paul are all over the house, but it's nice to sleep under the quilt. It's quite comforting knowing that it's there and walking into the room to it. To me, it means more than having a picture."



My husband's shirts

A quilt made from the shirts that belonged to her late husband, Paul, brings daily comfort to Sharon Youngson

"The shirts that I had made into the quilt were his work shirts so it reminds me of the day-to-day Paul: the Paul when we'd drive to work together; the Paul when we'd have



My family jewels

Rachel Rogers gave a new life to pieces of inherited jewellery that she didn't wear – a reminder of life, as much as those who had passed before

"My mum died in 1996 and left me her engagement ring and her mum's engagement ring. Then a couple of years later, my aunt died and left me my other grandmother's engagement ring. They were all made of sapphires and diamonds but none of them fit or suited me. I also had a diamond solitaire ring from my paternal grandma. All these things sat in a drawer doing nothing.



Then, just over six years ago, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I'd only just turned 50 and was suddenly very conscious of my own mortality.

One of the things that I've always really enjoyed is the Dorset Art Weeks open studio »

event. The weekend after my diagnosis was a bank holiday and my husband and I spent all three days visiting arts venues, to take our minds off it, as much as anything. We were both in a bit of a trance. One of the places we visited was jewellery maker Sian Evans.

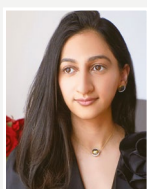
At the time I didn't know whether I was going to be alive a year later or not. I don't have children but I have a niece and I didn't want to leave her the jewellery in the state that it was in. Later that week, I went back to see Sian and took her the rings and a pair of earrings that my husband had accidentally

bought two identical pairs of. Sian made five rings out of all the stones and precious metals, with the stones all mixed together.

I had a bit of gold leftover and one more stone, so a year later, when I was doing well, I got her to make me one single solitaire sapphire ring. I call it my recovery ring.

Once I had the rings reworked they suddenly took on a life of their own. As well as having sentimental value, they also had this other significance, which was that I've brought them back to life in the same way that I feel that I've been brought back to life."

"When I was doing well, I had a solitaire sapphire ring made. I call it my recovery ring"



My fabric from home

When Akansha Sethi went to her cousin's wedding she was dressed in material passed down through her family, including textiles once part of her grandmother's trousseau

"My great grandparents lived in India, in a city called Indore, and we used to visit in the Christmas holidays. I have wonderful memories of their big swing and a sweet dish that would be waiting every time we arrived.

I remember my great grandfather being very frail, but whenever anyone came into the room he'd sit up straight and proud. That was one thing both him and my grandfather would always say to me, "Sit up straight" – because sometimes I slouch.


There's lots of material and outfits that have been passed down through the family, too. For my cousin's wedding, I had my great grandfather's pink silk brocade jacket – which he wore for his brother's wedding in 1939 – made into my lehenga (a traditional ankle-length skirt). Having real gold and silver thread, it's maintained that shine and is incredibly strong. When transforming it into the skirt we had to add extra lining and



panels to give it volume and added a border at the bottom to make it the right length.

I'd had the pink silk that I used for the top for years. It has gold wire work called *zardosi*, a type of embroidery, and we realised that it went well with the skirt. It'd been part of my grandmother's trousseau, put together by her parents when she got married in 1956. Even though the trousseau included new clothes, there were also lots of materials to play around with. This one never got used – I guess it was meant for me.

It was a beautiful wedding, and it felt very fitting to wear my special outfit there. My grandmother was very happy.

It's a lovely feeling wearing things passed down through the family. It has a certain charm to it. Rather than saying that I got it from some random designer, it feels nicer to say that, actually, it's from home." 

"Part of my special outfit was made from silk from my grandmother's trousseau"