

## TRANSCRIPT of a letter of 1985 from Mrs Ashton-Hill

Beverley Nursing Home,  
8 Park Road,  
Cromer,  
Norfolk.  
1-5-85

The Manager, /ess  
Marks and Spencer Ltd  
Rampant Horse St.  
Norwich

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your letter (or the phone call, I believe) sent so promptly to me yesterday re the delivery of tights I requested, a few days earlier. I enclose a cheque value £10.30, (the price & postage you quoted), I got the price from a piece of paper given me by the sister on duty on my floor, so I hope the cheque bears the correct sum on it. Should there be an error, I'll send you an additional cheque for the balance. You will note I'm sure, that this notepaper was purchased at M&S as a present for last Xmas from one of my friends (to whom I had recommended M&S notepaper about 2 years ago). You really give excellent value and good taste in the choice of colours.

Thank you so very much,

Ruth. E. Ashton-Hill

P.S. I was born very near Leeds so have seen the company prosper from being a "penny bazaar" in Leeds Covered Market to the present wonderful company. In fact, my mother (born 1869) knew the original Mr Marks before the opening of the Penny Bazaars (full time in Leeds, weekends at stalls on Wakefield Market). Mother is (of course) dead now, but she remembered Mr Marks as a very kind person to children. My grandfather was a farmer & miller, just between Wakefield and Leeds and Mr Marks used to visit rather isolated farms each Autumn to sell knitting wool because all the farmers family – if female, had to hand knit every item of winter underwear, stockings & gloves etc for the his courage and courtesy. If you think, my story might interest any of the present descendants of Mr Marks I can tell them, or can write (slowly) - I cannot type much, much more of those earlier days that they not know (sic) – and made us as a young family, very keen on Marks & Spencer.

I'll be 90 on 15.5.85 – my mind is clear... I was born near Leeds and went north from Norwich every year on holiday with my parents from four and a half years of age.

Lady Marks died 18 years ago at a village near Middlesbrough (from which Captain Cook came too), I forget the name of the suburb now, but she left £3,000,000 to

rebuild the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Stockton? I think her name was often mentioned as a very kind person - no show - very good to her house servants etc.

I never saw her but I used to visit Nunthorpe near Middlesbrough after I retired (in 1961) at 66 years of age to look after two god sons whose parents had to go to France or Germany fairly often. My friends had worked with me after the war at the City Hall Norwich. The husband was the Deputy Director of Education, the wife was the psychologist, and I was number three after the Director and Deputy. I was a POW in Hong Kong during the war, and had worked at the Colonial Office before I married Mr HK my husband. He was a military POW who was sent to Japan and was buried there. I hope sometime when I die I may join him. I have no children. All Japanese were not cruel, I don't bear them any grudge. War is a desperate thing when you personally get mixed up in it. I'm so thankful that I can still reason quite well.

Yours sincerely

Ruth E Ashton-Hill

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