

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written in August 2023 as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who enrolled in the first two cohorts [1908 & 1909] of Trainee Teachers at the Cheshire Country Training College, Crewe [CCTCC]

Warning, this story includes an account of suicide.

Ellen Aitken Bayley 's Story

Ellen Aitken Bayley was born in Dalston, a district of Stoke Newington in London, on 3 January 1892, the second child of Henry James Bayley, a railway foreman born in Staffordshire, and his wife Jane (MS Aitken), a Scottish lass born in Echt in Aberdeenshire. Ellen's older sister Agnes had also been born in London in 1890, as was her younger sister Olive Annie, born in 1895. In 1901 the family were living at 87 Prince George Road, Stoke Newington, London.¹ Ellen attended the County Secondary School at Crewe in Cheshire prior to the family's move to

¹ 1901 England Census RG13, Stoke Newington, London, Folio 57

Coventry. By 1911 the family were living at Station House, Grosvenor Road, Coventry and their last daughter, Gladys May, was 4 years old having been born in 1906 in Crewe.² According to the census, there was another child born to the family who had died as, on the 1911 census return, Jane is shown as having had five children but only four were living. Ellen was not living at home by then as she had enrolled at Cheshire County Training College, Crewe (CCTCC) on 15 September 1909, having gained a Preliminary Certificate in 1909 with Distinctions in Maths and Science.³ Her older sister Agnes was also a schoolteacher, living at home and working locally for the County Council, as shown on the 1911 census.

The course at CCTCC was over two years, the stated aim being to prepare students for actual schoolwork. The curriculum covered the Theory of Teaching, which included Discipline and Organisation, Child Study, the History of Public Education, General Methods, and Methods of Teaching Individual Subjects. Handiwork, Physical Exercise, Music, Hygiene, Drawing, English, History, Geography, Maths, Field Work, Rural Science, and Scripture were among the myriad of other subjects the students were expected to master. Students were sent out on actual teaching practice to local schools in their second year.⁴

From the Teachers' Registration Council Registers 1914-1948⁵ we are able to follow Ellen's teaching career. She appears to have been happiest when teaching young children and the largest part of her teaching career was in infant schools in the city of Coventry, where she lived at home with her parents. From 1911-1912 she taught at Frederick Bird Infants School in Swan Lane.⁶

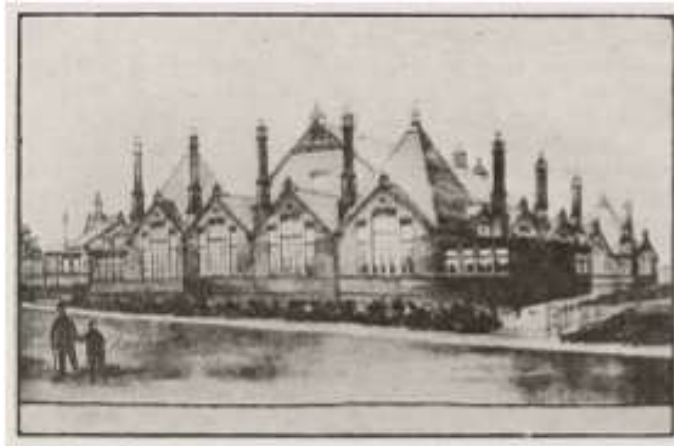
² 1911 England Census RG14, Coventry, Warwickshire accessed at ancestry.co.uk

³ CCTCC Student Register [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

⁴ Cheshire County Training College, Crewe, Prospectus 1908-1914.

⁵ Teachers' Registration Council Registers 1914-1948 accessed at findmypast.co.uk

⁶ Image from VOIP Insider Website



The Frederick Bird School,
c. 1907

She next worked at Stoke Council Girls School for a year from 1912-1913, then went to Edgewick Council Infants School where she remained for the next eight years until 1921. In 1921 she moved to Folly Lane Council Infants School where she stayed for the next five years before moving to Spon Street Infants School, which had opened in leased premises as Spon Street Ragged School in 1891 and was enlarged from 1903-6.

This is what remains of the Victorian Spon Street School. This is the old infants school building and was constructed between 1903 and 1906 and has been closed since 1999. Adjoining the site of this building used to be other buildings, including a 1869 'ragged school' with free education. ⁷

⁷ Image and text from 'Today Around Coventry' website



Image Courtesy of <http://lofrompasa.blogspot.com/2012/03/victorian-spon-street-school.html>

Sadly Ellen's mother died in 1933, aged 64, but there was happier news for the family the following year when Ellen's oldest sister Agnes married Frank Gascoigne and lived a few doors down at 321 Broad Lane.⁸ The Gascoignes had no children and lived out their lives in Coventry.

Her younger sister Olive had married Thomas Allcott in 1919 and they had a little girl called Sybil in 1921. A terrible tragedy occurred when Olive and her daughter were found gassed in August 1934 at their home at 221 Broad Lane, just next door to the Bayley's home at 219 Broad Lane. What was even more tragic was that it was Ellen's father Henry Bayley, living next door, who had been summoned to the house when gas was smelt and he broke into the bedroom, finding mother and daughter dead. An inquest passed a verdict of 'suicide while

⁸ 1939 Register accessed at findmypast.co.uk

of unsound mind' on Olive but one of 'murder' on her daughter in light of the letter Olive had left explaining the reasons for her actions.⁹

By 1939 Ellen, her father and her youngest sister Gladys were still living at 219 Broad Lane in Coventry. Ellen is recorded as Elementary School Teacher and her sister as Housekeeper. Ellen has also taken up the role of ARP Warden to do her bit to help the war effort.¹⁰ This information is also recorded in 'Wheatsheaves', the CCTCC Old Students Magazine.¹¹

On 6 June 1944 Ellen's father Henry died leaving his estate to his daughters Ellen and Gladys, both spinsters living at the family home.¹²

According to 'The Torch', the CCTCC Old Students Magazine, Ellen had undergone a small operation in 1968 for which they wished her 'a speedy recovery of her usual good health'.¹³ We can only assume that Ellen continued teaching up to the statutory retirement age of 60 for women at that time, which she would have reached in January 1969. She was unable to attend the CCTCC Reunion in 1970 as she had intimated that she was now unable to travel far on her own. They hoped she would remain in touch through the magazine.¹⁴

Her oldest sister Agnes was widowed in December 1954 and died on 9 October 1977 at Tamworth Road in Coventry. Ellen died aged 88 on 20 February 1980

⁹ Coventry Herald 31 August 1934 accessed at findmypast.co.uk

¹⁰ 1939 Register accessed at findmypast.co.uk

¹¹ 'Wheatsheaves', CCTCC Old Students Magazine, 1946/7, unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

¹² Probate records from ancestry.co.uk

¹³ 'The Torch', the CCTCC Old Students Magazine, 1968, unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe1

¹⁴ 'The Torch', the CCTCC Old Students Magazine, 1970, unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

at Queenswood Nursing Home, Tamworth Road in Coventry, possible the same place as her sister. In her will she left the sizeable sum of £13,549.¹⁵ She was survived by her youngest sister Gladys who died on 14 July 1988 in Walsall.¹⁶

Narrative by Leona Thomas

¹⁵ Probate records from ancestry.co.uk

¹⁶ Source – ancestry.co.uk