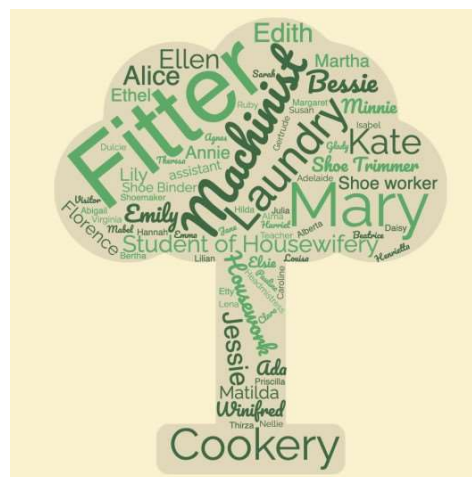


# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in November 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who studied at The Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset.*



## **Margaret Evans' story**

### **Introduction**

The Minute Book for the Somerset School of Cookery and Housewifery noted on 28 November 1990 that Miss Evans had arrived at the school on 6 September 1900 and was engaged on a salary of £35 per annum.<sup>1</sup> From the 1901 Census we learn that she taught laundry skills and dressmaking.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Somerset School of Cookery and Housewifery, Minutes 1897 – 1916. South West Heritage Trust, Somerset Heritage Centre, C/E/1/145

<sup>2</sup> 1901 England Census; RG13, Piece 2319, Folio 59, Page 19

Minute Book noted on 28 November that her salary was increased to £50 per annum.<sup>3</sup>

## Early life

Margaret was born on 1 February 1865 to mother Mary (formerly Davies) and Thomas Evans at Beaufort Hill, just outside Ebbw Vale in south Wales.<sup>4</sup>

340	1 <sup>st</sup> February 1865	Margaret Ann	Thomas Evans	Mary Evans formerly Davies	Tallow Chandler	Mary Evans Mother	Beaufort Hill	1865	David Davies Registrar
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By the time of the 1871 Census the Evans family was enumerated in the Civil Parish of Llangattock,<sup>5</sup> which at the time included Beaufort.<sup>6</sup> Thomas, aged 47, is shown as a chandler employing two men. Also enumerated were his wife Mary (43) and children Elizabeth (15), David (13), Marriah (12), Thomas (10), Sarah (7), Margaret (6), Ellinor (4), Claudia (2) and Charlotte (1). Mary and the eldest three children had been born in Dowlais (near Merthyr Tydfil) while the younger children were all born in Beaufort.

Thomas Evans died on 2 March 1880, as reported in the South Wales Daily News:<sup>7</sup>

“Evans— March 2, at Beaufort Hill, Mr Thomas Evans, tallow chandler, aged 57. The above-named gentleman has for the last few months suffered greatly from weakness in his chest. All that medical aid and

<sup>3</sup> Somerset School of Cookery and Housewifery, Minutes 1897 – 1916. South West Heritage Trust, Somerset Heritage Centre, C/E/1/146

<sup>4</sup> 1865 Q1, Crickhowell RD; volume 11B, page 134. General Register Office

<sup>5</sup> 1871 Wales Census. RG10, Piece 5586, Folio 26, Page 7.

<sup>6</sup> This is made clear by the 1881 Census entry for Mary Evans, where the description of the location is the Civil Parish of Llangattock; Town, Village or Hamlet of Beaufort, and Urban Sanitary District of Ebbw Vale.

<sup>7</sup> South Wales Daily News, 4 March 1880, page 2. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

careful nursing could procure proved to be of no avail. He was a faithful member at Carmel Welsh Independent Chapel, where he also served as deacon for some years. He leaves a widow and six children, for whom great sorrow is felt in their sad bereavement.”<sup>8</sup>

While Mary and three of her children were recorded in Beaufort in the 1881 Census, Margaret was not with them. Margaret – and her younger sister Eleanor – were both boarders at Summerfield Hall School for Girls in Maes-y-cwmmer, about 15 miles south of Beaufort.<sup>9</sup> There was a headmistress and three governesses, 21 girls aged 11 to 18 and two servants. Various advertisements in old newspapers indicate that this was a private fee-paying school.

By the time of the 1891 Census both Margaret (25) and Eleanor (24) were back living in the family home in Beaufort, working with their elder sister Elizabeth (33) as dressmakers.<sup>10</sup>

## **Career**

Margaret’s Teachers’ Registration Council certificate from 1919 outlines her teacher training and subsequent teaching roles.<sup>11</sup> This shows that she did her training at the South Wales and Monmouthshire Training School in Cardiff, and at Gloucester Training School for Domestic Subjects.

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<sup>8</sup> The reference to Thomas leaving six children is unclear given that nine were recorded in the 1871 Census. Marriah (Mary / Polly) died in 1879, and the two eldest Elizabeth and David had presumably left home by this point.

<sup>9</sup> 1881 Wales Census. RG11, Piece 5272, Folio 4, Page 1

<sup>10</sup> 1891 Wales Census. RG12, Piece: 4575, Folio 76, Page 24

<sup>11</sup> Teachers’ Registration Council Registers 1914-1948, Register No. 24922. Accessed via FindMyPast.co.uk

In addition to teaching at The Grange School of Housewifery Margaret also taught at the Technical Schools in Street:<sup>12</sup>

“During the past year every working day of the week except Saturday has had its afternoon and evening classes, and the subjects for instruction have been of a most comprehensive character embracing— Drawing, Painting, Designing, Clay Modelling and Building Construction [...] Hammered Brass Work [...] Wood Carving, Carpentry [...] Advanced Dressmaking (instructor, Miss Evans of the Somerset School of Housewifery at Street)”

Two years later we can read about the annual Visitors’ Day held at the Grange:<sup>13</sup>

“This is an important event in the year for the students, and much looked forward to by them, as it gives their friends and relatives a chance of inspecting the splendid building and of observing the girls engaged in the useful and interesting work now carried on within its precincts. [...] The visitors made their way into the house, going in turn through the different departments and watching the students at work, which is so ably supervised by the Principal of the school. Miss Acheson, her efforts being loyally seconded by the teaching staff, who have the following departments under their control: laundry and dressmaking, Miss Evans; housework, Miss Vibert; and cookery, Miss Harris.”

According to her teacher registration, Margaret left the Grange in 1905 and took on a new role as teacher of Cookery and Laundrywork at the Albert Street

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<sup>12</sup> Central Somerset Gazette, 19 April 1902, page 5. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

<sup>13</sup> Central Somerset Gazette, 16 July 1904, page 5. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

Cookery Centre in Nottingham in 1907. No newspaper articles noting her departure from the Grange have been located. In total, Margaret worked at four different establishments in Nottingham:

1907-08	Teacher of Cookery and Laundrywork	Albert Street Cookery Centre
1908-11	Teacher of Housewifery	Raleigh Street Housewifery Centre
1911-12	Teacher of Cookery and Laundrywork	Clarendon Street Cookery Centre
1912-28	Teacher of Housewifery	Forest Fields Housewifery Centre

In the 1911 Census Margaret is enumerated at 57 Raleigh Street, Nottingham.<sup>14</sup> She is the head of household, aged 46 and single, working as a teacher of housewifery. Living with Margaret was Henrietta Cullis, a boarder. Henrietta was aged 34, single, and worked as an elementary school teacher.



*Raleigh Street, Nottingham © National Library of Scotland*

<sup>14</sup> 1911 England Census. RG14, ED21, Schedule 58, Piece 20613

Raleigh Street sits north-west of the city centre, and – in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – was close to many lace-making factories, an industry for which Nottingham was famous. As the map shows, the area was characterised by dense terraced housing, much of it back-to-back with an alley between two rows of houses. These days the area has been completely redeveloped, as shown below.



*Raleigh Street, Nottingham, looking north-east towards All Saints' Church  
© Google Streetview*

Little information has been found relating to Margaret's time at the Cookery Centres and Housewifery Centres in Nottingham. It appears, however, that domestic education was thriving during this period. Under the heading "Particulars of Useful Work Done in Nottingham Schools" the local newspaper reported in 1910:<sup>15</sup>

"New and up-to-date cookery, laundry and housewifery centres have been opened in the technical block of the Forest Fields School. Practical housewifery at the Raleigh-street centre is reported to have been very successful."

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<sup>15</sup> Nottingham Evening News, 16 June 1910, page 7. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

In the 1921 Census Margaret (now aged 56) is a boarder living at 20 Addison Street, Nottingham.<sup>16</sup> Her occupation is described as a teacher of domestic subjects, working at Forest Fields Housewifery Centre.

### **Later life**

The remainder of Margaret's life seems something of an enigma, with large gaps in the timeline and perplexing questions left unanswered. On 9 April 1926 Margaret wrote her will.<sup>17</sup> In doing this she gave her address not as Nottingham (which might have been expected given that she taught there until 1928) but "Number Five, Ida Place, Ebbw Vale in the County of Monmouth". In her will Margaret appointed Cyrus Golyddan Davies – of the same address – to be her sole Executor. All of Margaret's personal effects were to be left to Hannah Jane Jones, the wife of Revd. William Jones of Mozerah in the parish of Llanfihangel Gobion. After the payment of debts and expenses the remainder of Margaret's estate was to be split two-thirds to Hannah Jones and one-third to Cyrus Davies. In the event of either of these people predeceasing her Margaret bequeathed their shares to Jonathan Arthur Davies, also of 5 Ida Place.

Despite extensive research the author has been unable to establish a definitive link between Margaret and the Davies family of Ida Place in Ebbw Vale. Cyrus' father Jonathan Arthur Davies lived at the address as far back as the 1881 Census,<sup>18</sup> and had four children in total: Cyrus, Hannah, Miriam and Arthur Joshua. Hannah married the aforementioned Revd. William Jones, meaning

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<sup>16</sup> 1921 England Census. RG15, Piece 16044, RD 430, Schedule 73.

<sup>17</sup> Obtained from <https://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate>

<sup>18</sup> 1881 Wales Census. RG11, Piece 5245, Folio 120, Page 33.

that Margaret's two main beneficiaries were siblings. Jonathan Arthur Davies was Cyrus' and Hannah's nephew, being the only son of their brother Arthur.

Cyrus Golyddan Davies was a local businessman, variously noted in the records and newspapers as a furniture dealer, jeweller and building society agent. He was a local councillor for many years, a magistrate and also a freemason.

Jonathan studied at Cambridge University and became a lawyer.<sup>19</sup>

Curiously, the electoral registers of the 1920s and 1930s do not show Margaret living at 5 Ida Place.<sup>20</sup> From 1923 to 1930 there is an Elizabeth Evans at the address, and from 1935 to 1939 someone named Doris Chandler. My working assumption is that these two women were housekeepers to Cyrus. Elizabeth died in 1933, after 52 years' service to the Davies family.<sup>21</sup> One possible connection that can be ruled out is that of Elizabeth Evans being Margaret's sister; her death register entry describes her as the "daughter of John Evans, steelworks labourer" – the wrong name and occupation.<sup>22</sup>

While not recorded on the 1939 electoral register at Ida Place, Margaret *is* shown there in the 1939 Register.<sup>23</sup> This shows Cyrus (building society agent), Margaret (domestic science teacher (retired)) and Alice Cunningham (paid domestic duties, so presumably the housekeeper).

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<sup>19</sup> Western Mail & South Wales News, 30 April 1931, page 6. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

<sup>20</sup> Electoral Registers for Gwent, 1832-1969, Gwent Archives. Accessed via ancestry.co.uk C/ROFE/160 and subsequent entries

<sup>21</sup> Merthyr Express, 11 February 1933, page 16. © British Newspaper Archive (accessed via FindMyPast)

<sup>22</sup> Digital image of death register entry: Elizabeth Evans. Q1 1933, Bedwellty, vol 11a page 107

<sup>23</sup> 1939 Register, RG101/7449C/002/6. Accessed via ancestry.co.uk



Margaret died at 5 Ida Place on 15 October 1944, aged 79.<sup>24</sup>

298	Fifteenth October 1944 5 Ida Place Ebbw Vale U.D.	Margaret Ann Evans	Female	79 Years	Spinal Domestic Science Teacher (Retired). Daughter of Thomas Evans (Deceased)	Ia Senile Decay Certified by F. M. Fonseca FRCS	Jonathan A. Davies Present at the Death 5 Ida Place Ebbw Vale	Seventeenth October 1944	B. Harold Registrar
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The cause of death was given as senile decay, and the death was registered by Jonathan Davies. Margaret's will was proved on 5 March 1945 and the net estate of £1,752, 2 shillings and 4 pence was all passed to Jonathan; his aunt and uncle had both predeceased Margaret. The extensive newspaper reports of Hannah's and Cyrus' funerals (in 1933 and 1942 respectively) make no mention of Margaret, either as a family member or as a mourner. No newspaper report of a funeral for Margaret has been located during this research.

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<sup>24</sup> Digital image of death register entry: Margaret Ann Evans. Q4 1944, Bedwellty, vol 11a page 58