

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in January 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of girls from Leeds, Girls' Industrial School, Yorkshire.

Sarah Ellen Hannah

On the 4th of February 1869 a 7 year old girl called Sarah Ellen Hannah was admitted to Leeds Industrial School. She was sentenced to 7 years, her offence Begging. Sarah's admittance records state she was born in Leeds, hadn't attended school and couldn't read, write or cypher. It lists her parents as James and Jane Hannah living at Garden Walk Behind St Mary's. Her parents occupations were listed as Blacksmith, Fiddler at Beer House. Doesn't work. (1) Unfortunately Sarah's records have no other family filled in or information about her time there. So what became of Sarah?

In order to know her story we must start from the beginning Sarah was born about 1863 in Leeds although I cannot find her birth register or baptism. Sarah was the second of five children. An older sister Selina registered under Jane's maiden name Kirveson (various spellings appear throughout the records

including Kerveson and Kirbyson). James and Jane married 1861 only a few months after Selina was born. Then two sons James William Hannah (Approx 1865) and John Thomas Hannah (Approx 1867) Finally they had another daughter Ann Eliza Hannah (Approx 1879).

While researching her siblings I found her brother James William Hannah had a daughter in 1889 who he named Sarah Ellen a nod to his sister I assume.

The 1861 census (2) shows James, Jane and Selina Hannah living at Silver Cottage, Silver Walk, Leeds. James is a Striker at a forge aged 30 and Jane is 21 it also tells us that Selina was born blind. Sadly Selina died aged 21 in 1881 at the Union Infirmary Leeds. Burial records show she was buried on the 18th April 1881 in Beckett Street Cemetery in an Anglican Burial. (3)

By the 1871 Census Hannah had moved to the Windsor Street Girls Ragged School Leeds. (4) She was 8 years old and listed as a scholar. I am unable to find the rest of the family on the 1871 census. I have found two possible 1881 census records that could potentially be Sarah one is transcribed as SH Hannah aged 18 a boarder living in Yeadon a Woollen Weaver, living with the Lee family. This fits with her occupation on her marriage register and the H is hard to decipher on the image. (5) There is also a Sarah Hannah living in Hunslet a cut nail maker aged 19 and a lodger with the Heslewood family. (6)

After her time in the reformatory school I can find no records of her being in trouble or begging again. It seems her time there gave her a basic education and skills to get a weavers job.

Sarah married Thomas Denison on the 23rd May 1885 in the parish Church of

Guiseley York (7) Sarah was 23 and working as a weaver living in Guiseley. She signed the register showing she had learnt to write whilst in the school.

Thomas was 23 and a felter.

The 1891 census shows the couple living in Haw Lane Yeadon (8) with their 3 children John Frederick aged 5, Thomas Arthur aged 3 and William Walter aged 2. Their surname was noted as Driver which was Thomas's father's surname although he was registered under his mother's maiden name Denison, these are interchangeable in the records. Also living with the family was Sarah's sister Ann Eliza Hannah aged 12 they seem to have taken her in after the death of Jane in 1889.

The 1901 Census (9) shows another son born Harry aged 9. The family were now living at 2 Harper Rock Yeadon Wharfedale. Thomas was a woollen weaver and their oldest sons John (on the census as Fred) and Thomas were cloth finishers. Ann was also a woollen weaver meaning four members of the family were working in the same trade possibly working together, in order to support themselves.

Interestingly all 4 children's baptisms can be found in the non conformist records for West Yorkshire, Guiseley. I believe the family were Methodists.

The 1911 Census shows the family still living in Harper Rock Yeadon (10).

Sarah is listed as being 48 years married 25 years and having 4 children.

Thomas is 49 and a felter in a woollen mill. Walter and Harry are both still at home, Harry is listed as a Dyer's Labourer, Walter has no occupation listed.

Ann is also still living with them aged 32 and a weaver in a woollen mill. John Frederick and Thomas Arthur had both married by this point and were living

with their families.

1914 brought huge change to Sarah and her families lives- war was declared. Ww1 would see her sons be called up to fight and sadly two would not return. John Frederick Denison a Gunner for the Duke Wellington (West Riding) Regiment passed away 31st August 1918 in France aged 32 years (11). Less than a month later his brother Harry Denison also died 18th Sept 1918 in Salonica, a Lance Corporal for the 9th Battalion(12). There is a medal record suggesting Thomas Arthur served as a mechanic with the B.S.A Police. William Walter also served in the York and Lancaster Regiment.

1921 Thomas and Sarah Ellen were again listed as living at 3 Harper Rock Yeadon Yorkshire. The census lists Thomas 59 years and 4 months a felter at Moorfield Mills. Sarah Ellen is 59 years and 2 months birth place New Wortly Leeds and occupation as Home Duties.(13) The family had made Harper Rock there home for over 20 years at this point. Sarahs sister Ann Eliza was no longer living with them she was a border with the Presten family and also working at Moorfield Mills. (14)

Sarah Ellen passed away 1926 aged 64 registered as Sarah E D Denison Wharfedale Yorkshire West Riding (15) Ancestry trees show a photo of her grave with the engraving:-

'In Loving Memory of Sarah Ellen beloved wife of Thomas Driver who died May 13 1926, aged 64 years. "Loves Last Gift" Also John Frederick who died in France Aug 31st 1918 aged 32 years and Harry who died in Salonica Sept 18th 1918 aged 27 sons of the above "After war's Tumult-Rest" Thomas Driver who died Aug 23rd 1928 aged 66 years' (16)

Sarah Ellen was buried in Yeadon Cemetery. (17)

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SOURCES

- (1) West Yorkshire, England Reformatory School Records 1856-1914- Ancestry
- (2) 1861 England Census- RG-9 Piece: 3375; Folio 96; Page:19
- (3) Leeds, England, Beckett Street Cemetery, 1845-1987 Ancestry
- (4) 1871 England Census- RG10; Piece: 4555; Folio: 115; Page:5
- (5) 1881 England Census- RG11; Piece: 4341; Folio: 125; Page: 20
- (6) 1881 England Census- RG11; Piece:4488; Folio: 125; Page: 19
- (7) West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935 Ancestry
- (8) 1891 England Census- RG12; Piece: 3531; Folio:94; Page:11
- (9) 1901 England Census- RG13; Piece: 4069; Folio: 142; Page: 37
- (10) 1911 England Census- Piece; 26043
- (11) Uk, British Army World War 1 Pension Records 1914-1920 - Ancestry- Under the name Fred Driver WO364; Piece: 1060
Uk Commonwealth War Graves, 1914-1921 and 1939-1947- Ancestry
www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/76971/john-frederick-denison - Shows details of War Grave
- (12) Uk, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919- Ancestry
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/334292/harry-dennison/> - shows details of war grave
- (13) 1921 Census of England and Wales Find My Past RG:15; Piece: 21166; Schedule Number: 313
- (14) 1921 Census of England and Wales Find My Past RG:15; Piece: 21167; Schedule Number: 195
- (15) England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007 Ancestry Volume:9A; Page:196
- (16) Taken from a photo of the Grave uploaded to Ancestry.

(17) <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/227326710/sarah-ellen-driver>