

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]

Lilian Maud Surridge's Story

Lilian was born in Crewe on 7 November, 1891¹, the seventh child of eleven² born to George Thomas Surridge and his wife Martha, nee Webb. When she was baptised at Christchurch in December 1891 the family's address was 22 Lawrence St³.

The railway brought her father's family to Crewe. Like many others, the Surridge family moved to the town to work for London and North Western Railways (LNWR). Her father George was born in Haversham, Buckinghamshire on 11 November, 1854^{4,5}. The 1861 census shows young George's father was a machinist at Wolverton Railway Station⁶.

Wolverton Railway Works was built in 1836, to manufacture locomotives for the London and Birmingham Railway Company, as it was sited half way between those cities with access to the Grand Union Canal. By 1862 the London and Birmingham Railway had become part of LNWR and they had a new chairman, who decided the sole manufacturing centre for locomotives should be in Crewe, only maintenance work continued in Wolverton⁷.

The Surridge family stayed in Haversham until later in the 1860s, though by George's 14th birthday they had moved to Crewe, where he started work as an apprentice fitter⁵.

He married Martha, who was from Liverpool, in 1876⁸. Of their 11 children, 8 survived to adulthood: Arthur, Annie Gertrude (Gert), Florence, Mary Beatrice (who sometimes used her middle name), Clara (Claire), Lilian and Frank². Arthur and Frank followed their father into employment at LNWR, becoming fitters there⁵. The sisters had various jobs²: Florence and Clara at a local shirt factory, Mary a printer's typesetter, May became a ledger clerk at LNWR in 1916⁵, while Gert worked as a servant and waitress before becoming a shopkeeper by 1914⁹. Only Lilian went into further education. On 6 Sept 1904 she was admitted to Crewe County Grammar School, on a scholarship¹⁰. The Admission Register shows that she studied maths, inorganic chemistry and freehand drawing and when she left, she entered Crewe Training College (CCTCC)¹¹.

To enter CCTCC students had to "pass the Preliminary Certificate Examination of the Board of Education, or an examination approved as equivalent", one of the principal ones being a Matriculation Examination¹². Lilian had the London

Matriculation 1909 with Distinction in English and she also sat the Preliminary Certificate 1909 with a Distinction in Geography¹³.

As a local girl, it's not surprising to find Lilian lived at home while she studied. The 1911 census shows her as a student, living with her parents and siblings at 10 Samuel St, Crewe.

CCTCC was set up in 1908 and the prospectus of 1914 said that since then "students had very little difficulty in obtaining places in Schools". Therefore, it seems likely she moved straight into employment, when she finished studying in 1911.

On 21 April 1913 King George V and Queen Mary visited the LNWR Works in Crewe. In celebration, LNWR held a banquet for about 400 of their oldest employees and as Lilian's father had worked for the company for over 40 years, he was invited¹⁴. Imagine the excitement in the town as the Royal couple arrived! Sadly, later that year George died¹⁵.

By 1921 Lilian was living at home with her widowed mother, sisters Gert and May and brother Frank. She was working as an Elementary School teacher for Crewe Education Committee at the Borough School, Crewe¹⁶. Later that year, May emigrated to Australia¹⁷ and in 1923 her brother Arthur died¹⁸.

In 1929, CCTCC celebrated its 21st anniversary and Lilian was mentioned in a souvenir book produced at the time, where she was described as single¹⁹. Her marital status changed, which gave cause to celebrate again later that year as she married James Pickston²⁰, who was also an Elementary School teacher.

By 1939, Lilian and James were living together in Lewe, Hale, Cheshire. James was working as a Schoolmaster and Lilian's occupation was recorded as 'Unpaid domestic duties'²¹.

In 1945, Lilian's mother died and a local paper reported about her funeral, listing the mourners²². It reported that her two daughters, May and Florence, lived abroad with their families and had sent flowers.

With Florence and May living abroad, the surviving siblings were separated until 1964 when they reunited in Crewe.



Image courtesy of British Newspaper Archive

Two local papers picked up the story and published a picture (above)²³. Confusingly, the description says: "The family reunited (left to right), Mr and Mrs McIlwraith (Florence), Mrs Darlington (Gert), and Mr and Mrs Thomas (May).

Back (left to right): Mrs Simpson (Mary), Mrs Jones (Clara), Mr Surr ridge (Frank) and Mrs Pickston (Lilian).” (For ease, I have added the family forenames.)

Lilian Maud (or Maude) Pickston died on 3 May 1965 in the Barony Hospital, Nantwich, Cheshire²⁴ and was cremated 3 days later. She wrote a will and the executor of her estate was her husband, James, retired schoolmaster. He died in 1971²⁶.

Narrative by Isobel Hoy

Sources:

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3. Cheshire Diocese Of Chester Parish Baptisms 1538-1911, accessed on Find My Past (FMP). (Name recorded as Lilian Maude. Day of baptism not recorded.)
4. GRO Birth Index, Quarter 4, 1854, Newport Pagnell, Vol 3A, Page 405.
5. UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956, LNWR Miscellaneous Depts.
6. 1861 census, RG9, Haversham, Buckinghamshire, Piece 875
7. Wikipedia entry: Wolverton railway works.
8. GRO Marriage Index, Quarter 4, 1876, Nantwich, Vol 8a, Page 544.
9. UK, City and County Directories, 1766 - 1946, Kelly's Directory, Cheshire, 1914.
10. Runcorn Guardian, 11 June 1904, Cheshire Scholarships, page 5, accessed on FMP.
11. National School Admission Registers & Log-Books 1870-1914, held by Cheshire Archives & Local Studies, Archive reference SL 236/7, viewed on FMP.
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13. CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe
14. Crewe Guardian, 25 April 1913, The Royal Visit to Crewe, page 5, accessed on FMP.
15. GRO Death Index, Quarter 3, 1913, Nantwich, Vol 8a, Page 367.
16. 1921 census, RG15, Monks Coppenhall, Crewe, Piece 16999.
17. UK and Ireland, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960. Last name recorded as Surridge, accessed on Ancestry.
18. GRO Death Index, Quarter 1, 1923, Macclesfield, Vol 8a, Page 174.
19. 1908-1929, Souvenir of the 21st Anniversary, CCTCC, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe.
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21. 1939 Register of England and Wales. Lewe, Hale.
22. Nantwich Chronicle, 9 June 1945, Funeral of Mrs. Surr ridge, page 3, accessed on FMP.
23. Crewe Chronicle, 30 May 1964, Reunited after 45 Years, page 11. Also in Nantwich Chronicle, same date. Accessed both on FMP.
24. England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995. Probate date 2 Aug 1965. Accessed on Ancestry.
25. Web: UK, Burial and Cremation Index, 1576-2014, transcript viewed on Ancestry.
26. GRO Death Index, Quarter 1, 1971, Crewe, Vol 10a, Page 879.