

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in October 2025, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who were working in the Ulster linen industry.

Sarah Jane Mallard's Story

Sarah Jane Mallard was born on 2 May 1871 in Edenballycoggill. (www.irishgenealogy.ie). Edenballycoggill is a townland in the Parish of Magheralin, Co Down (www.townlands.ie). Her parents were Thomas, a weaver, and Mary (formerly Henry). Sarah Jane had one brother and three sisters – Maria, Elizabeth, William and Charlotte, born in 1867, 1868, 1874 and 1877 respectively (www.irishgenealogy.ie).

Another sister, also named Charlotte, was born in 1865 and presumably died at a very young age. Deaths of babies were not always recorded, and it was not unusual for parents to give the same name to a child born after the death of a

previous child. All of Sarah Jane's siblings were born in Tullynacross, another townland in the Parish of Magheralin.

Two of Sarah Jane's siblings died at a young age – William in 1875 (measles) and Maria in 1883 (typhoid) (www.irishgenealogy.ie). Maria was working as a hemstitcher when she died at the age of 16. Typhoid was common in Ireland in the late 19th Century.

Sarah Jane's father died on 1 December 1893, due to dyspepsia and peritonitis. The family were living at Ballymagin, a townland not far from Edenballycoggill (www.townlands.ie).

Charlotte, Sarah Jane's sister, married Adam Mullen in 1897 and Elizabeth, her other sister, married William McGrath in 1900 (www.irishgenealogy.ie).

The next record we can find for Sarah Jane is the Ireland 1901 Census. Sarah is 26, single and living with her widowed mother and her niece Mabel, the daughter of Charlotte and Adam, in Magheralin, Co Down. The precise townland is not specified but could be Edenballycoggill. The family are recorded as members of the Church of Ireland. Their house had five rooms. Sarah Jane can read and write and is working as a hemstitcher. Hemstitching was originally done by hand and carried out on fine linen, often handkerchiefs. In 1893 the first hemstitching machine was invented by Karl Friedrich Gegauf (www.weallsew.com/the-beauty-of-hemstitching-history-and-techniques). It is not known if Sarah is working at home or in one of the many factories which had been established in the area (www.lurgan.ancestry.com).

Sarah Jane married Samuel Lackey, a 53-year-old widower, on 20 May 1907 (www.irishgenealogy.ie). Sarah is 36 and is now working as a veiner. This occupation was connected to hemstitching and, again, she may have been working at home or in a factory. The family are still living in Ballymagin.

Samuel's address is given as West Hartlepool (now Hartlepool). However, as we can see from the England 1901 Census, Samuel and his first wife, also called Sarah, were both born in Ireland. It looks like Samuel returned to Ireland after the death of his first wife. By 1907 all of his children were adults and presumably leading their own lives in England. Sarah Jane and Samuel had a daughter, Alma, born on 25 March 1908 (www.irishgenealogy.ie), but, surprisingly, Samuel's address is again given as West Hartlepool.

In the Ireland 1911 Census, Sarah Jane is living with her mother, sister Elizabeth, and her daughter, Alma in a five-roomed house in Magheralin. She is still a veiner. In 1912 Sarah Jane signed the Ulster Covenant (also known as Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant). Just under half a million men and women signed this in September 1912 to show opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill. Men signed the 'Ulster Covenant', and women signed the parallel 'Declaration' (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/about-ulster-covenant).

It is possible that Sarah Jane's husband, Samuel, returned to England to work, but in the England 1911 and 1921 Censuses he is still there living as a boarder and, in the 1921 census, still working as a shipyard labourer. In both these censuses we see that he was born in Co Down. In the 1921 census Samuel is listed as a widower, which would imply that Sarah died between 1911 and

1921. Samuel died in 1927, in Hartlepool (www.ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007).

Despite the fact that Samuel declared himself to be widowed in the England 1921 Census, Sarah Jane did not actually die until 6 December 1928. By then she was living at 135 Victoria Avenue, Lurgan and was still working as a veiner (www.geni.nidirect.gov.uk). Lurgan is a town in Co Armagh. Its name is derived from the Irish word 'Lorgain', meaning 'the long ridge'.

The cause of Sarah Jane's death was stomach cancer, and the death was registered by her daughter, Alma. She was just 57 years old.

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Sources:

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