

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]

Maria Louisa Buckley's Story

"Lifetime of teaching

Miss Maria Louisa Buckley who has died at her home, Monwood Lea, Lower Withington, aged 72, entered the teaching profession as a girl and was a Sandbach headmistress when she retired in 1951.

Born in Sandbach, Miss Buckley qualified at Crewe Training College and held an appointment at Molesworth for a short time before taking a post at a Wheelock, Sandbach school.

Later, she was appointed Headmistress of the old Sandbach County Infants' School. On her retirement, she went to live at Lower Withington with a childhood friend, a Miss Leach, who used to teach in Manchester.

Cremation takes place at Macclesfield, on Monday."

This is the tribute that was published in the Staffordshire Sentinel on 23rd September 1961 on the event of Maria Louisa Buckley's death. And as it points out hers was a life dedicated to the education of children from the time of her training at Crewe, as part of the first cohort.

Maria Louisa Buckley was born on 11th November 1890 to James Buckley, aged 34 and Maria Johnson aged 37. She was baptized at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Sandbach, a chapel with which the family were to be involved for many years to come, on 15th December 1890. She was the youngest of 5 surviving children.

Maria Johnson came from a family of butchers from Holmes Chapel in Cheshire. In 1861 and 1871 we can see that the Johnson family were well established as butchers in Sandbach. Interestingly, it seems that when James Buckley married into the family he took on that profession. He had been brought up in a family of silk workers in Congleton.

On the 1881 census we see that James and Maria Buckley had another child, Harold Johnson Buckley who was born in 1878. Sadly, I found that Harold died aged 3 on 25th October 1881.

Maria Louisa Buckley was known to her family as Louie and because her mother and grandmother were also named Maria I have decided to use Louie as her name for the purposes of this story.

Louie had 4 surviving siblings:

Ellen Johnson Buckley born 1879 (Nellie)

James Edward Buckley born 1883

George Hibbert Buckley born 1885

Annie Lindhop Buckley born 1886

In the 1891 Census the family are living with the five children and five servants at a Lock Up Shop in the High Street, Sandbach.

In 1901 the family are at 159 High Street, Sandbach at the butcher's shop. Louie's brother James Edward Buckley is a 15 year old pupil teacher and her brother George Hibbert Buckley is a 17 year old butcher.

In 1904 Louie is recorded as attending Crewe Secondary School and in 1906 it is reported in the Crewe Chronicle that she her scholarship has been renewed for a third year.

On 12th September 1908 the same newspaper reports that Louie is one of the successful Crewe students who have passed the Examination for Admission , the preliminary certificate, and are eligible to enter the Cheshire County Training College at Crewe.

By 1911, the Buckley family are still living at the butcher shop in the High Street and Louie, a visitor at the home of the Leigh family in 5 Fairfield Road Stockton Heath, is described as an elementary school teacher. I imagine she and her fellow teacher Hannah Bragg were boarding with the family while working at a nearby school.

Over the next few years, it is possible to find out where Louie was through electoral registers and the British Red Cross Volunteers register mentions her and her sister Annie in 1918/1919 when she was "a school teacher who gave a whole week by evening every third week" to general duties at Abbeyfield Hospital, Sandbach.

Louie's father, James Buckley, died and his memorial service, held at the Wesleyan Chapel, was reported in the Nantwich Guardian on 13th October 1916. He had been ill for 12 months and had retired to the house in Elsworth Street on his retirement a few months before, Louie's brother having taken over the butcher's shop.

The same newspaper reports on 26th March 1918 about a social held by members of The Wesley Guild in the Wesley Schoolroom. It states that a music programme was gone through and that the Misses Buckley took part.

In 1921 Louie and her sisters are living with their mother at 57 Elworth Street, Sandbach, a property that was to remain the family home for years to come.

The 1925 Electoral Register shows Louie was living with her mother and her sisters Ellen "Nellie" and Annie at The Hawes, 57 Elworth Street, Sandbach.

In 1929 there is extra information from the 21st Anniversary Book of the Training College, which states that Louie is not married and her name is spelt as Mariah L Buckley and address noted as The Haw, Sandbach, Cheshire.

Sadly, Annie Lindhop Buckley died on 30th June 1930. She had become ill just before Easter that year and was only 43. This is reported in the Crewe Chronicle on 5th July 1930. Her death was also reported in the Staffordshire Sentinel. Annie was obviously held in high esteem as there are various mentions of her over the next year:

Crewe Chronicle December 1930 "At a meeting on Monday in connection with the Wesleyan church, it was decided that the memorial to the late Miss A.L Buckley should, with the consent of relatives, take the form of an inscribed Christening font. After providing for the endowment of a cot at the Congleton branch of the National Children's Homes, which is to cost £50, the balance of the £66 raised goes to provide the font."

In the same edition of the Chronicle, it is reported that "At the Sandbach Wesley Guild on Friday Miss M. L Buckley presiding, there was an interesting debate on 'Should sweepstakes in aid of charitable objects be legalised?'

On 18th April 1931, The Crewe Chronicle reports further about the dedication of the Font at the Sandbach Wesleyan Church. In this article we learn that Annie was a devoted church worker and that her work was now being continued by her sister, Miss M.L Buckley.

On 27th February 1932 the Chronicle reports that Nellie Buckley has died and then on reports on her funeral on 5th March 1932 Nellie Buckley funeral, aged 52, St Mary's Church. We read that there were wreaths from Mother, Louie and Aunt Ellen, amongst others.

10th November 1934 Miss Buckley was judging the amusing competitions at a Guy Fawkes Social at the Wesley Avenue Schoolroom.

In the Crewe Chronicle we discover that Louie's mother died, unexpectedly, aged 82 on 3rd October 1935. The article also explains that her brother James died in January 1935 and that Nellie and Annie predeceased their mother. Interestingly, it also tells us that, as I suspected, the Butcher business in the High Street was owned by the Johnson side of the family "for a long period before it was taken over by the late Mr Buckley."

In the edition of the newspaper on 30th May 1936, I found that at a meeting of the National Savings Associations in Sandbach, Miss M.L Buckley, of Sandbach Council Infants School was appointed as a delegate to the Regional Conference at Southport in October.

The 1939 register shows Maria, now a Headteacher, is still at The Hawes living with another teacher, Edith L Evans.

12th September 1942 Crewe Chronicle reported: *A unit of the Girls' Training Corps has been formed in Sandbach and nearly 30 cadets will shortly be enrolled. At a meeting at the Senior Council School Miss M L Buckley was elected chairman.*

2nd November 1946 Crewe Chronicle National Union of Teachers – The annual meeting of the Sandbach and District Association was held on Wednesday Miss M.L Buckley was appointed a County Association Representative.

Teacher's Association Miss M.L Buckley, presiding, appointed treasurer. 21st October 1944 Crewe Chronicle. 1945 treasurer

Chester, Wrexham and North Wales Saving Bank appointed as one of the managers. Chester Chronicle 17th January 1948

24th July 1951 report on her retirement *"after 24 years as a teacher at the County Primary School, Sandbach during which she was the headmistress for a considerable period.....to mark the occasion a presentation was held in the school.....Tributes to the work of Miss Buckley were paid.....the gifts were a travelling case from the children and a pearl necklace from the staff and managers".*

In the Crewe Chronicle, 13th October 1951 I found The Haws, Offley Road for Sale by direction of Miss M.L. Buckley, the owner/occupier. The advert states that she had had the house built in 1937 and gives a fantastic description of the property. Looking at a local map, you can see that Offley Road and Elworth Street feed into each other.

There is also a note in the 1954 Old Students Magazine stating that –

Louis Buckley [Mariah L Buckley] – formerly Headmistress of Sandbach County Infant's School, Cheshire has retired and is now living with Florrie Leech [Florence A Leech] at Wilmslow [Florrie was a fellow student in the same cohort as Mariah].

Louie was cremated at Macclesfield Crematorium on September 29th 1961.

Maria Louisa Buckley was certainly a pillar of her community who devoted her life to good works, as a teacher, as a member of her faith community and as a support to various enterprises of the town until her retirement. She seemed to have a sense of civic duty and is a fine representative of those women who were part of the first cohort of the Cheshire Training College.

Sources

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