

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]

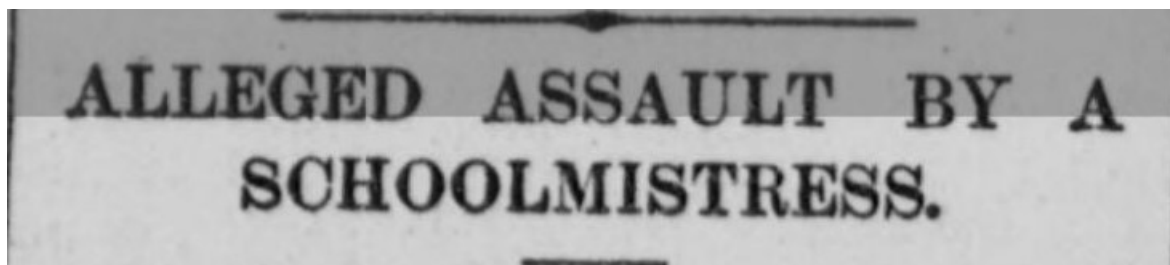
Elsie Heaton Sault's Story

It's perhaps no surprise that Elsie Heaton Sault became a teacher, as when she was baptised her address was given as School House, Great Meols, Cheshire¹. Perhaps more surprising is the fact it was her mother, not her father, that she followed into teaching. Elsie was born on 6 February 1892², the elder daughter of William Sault and Ann, nee Heaton.

William was born in Dublin in about 1858 and by 1871 William, his parents and younger sister were living in Grange Road, Birkenhead³. William senior was a tailor and the only one recorded as working on the census taken that year. The younger William became a mechanic and married Annie Heaton in 1891⁴. Annie was the daughter of Henry Heaton and his wife, also called Ann (nee Hunter). She was born in 1865 and grew up in Birkenhead, where her father worked as a mechanic or machinist in an ironworks. By 16 she was working as a pupil teacher⁵.

At the time of the 1891 census, taken shortly after their marriage, William and Annie were living in Paterson Street, Birkenhead, close to the park⁶. Annie was not working according to the entry. Perhaps she had given her job up when she married, as women were supposed to do. Perhaps the enumerator simply didn't enter an occupation. What is certain is that by the time her daughter Elsie was baptised on 10 April 1892 the family lived in the school house in Great Meols, which is a good indication she was working at the local school¹. William and Annie had a second daughter, Kathleen, the following year⁷.

In 1894 Annie was accused of cruelty⁸.



She was summoned to the Birkenhead County Magistrates Court for beating a boy of 10, "in such a manner as to cause unnecessary suffering". The boy had played truant the previous day, so "she took a cane and thrashed the boy very severely on the back, arms and legs". The boy testified that he "did not feel any pain from the blows after he got out of school". Other witnesses suggested the bruises had been caused by punishment given by the child's stepfather. Thankfully, she was found not guilty and cautioned to be careful in the administration of future beatings.

She continued working and in 1903 the local paper reported Annie helped stage an entertainment to raise money to buy additional railings for the school⁹.

It's likely both Elsie and Kathleen attended the school where their mother worked, at least at first. Later in 1903, Elsie was one of a number of girls who won an essay writing prize. It said she was at Great Meols Public Elementary School¹⁰.

In 1904, the Cheshire Daily Echo reported that Elsie got a Class 1 scholarship, enabling her to proceed to secondary school¹¹. She attended one in nearby Wallasey.

Two years later, Kathleen also got a free scholarship to attend the Girls Secondary School. It was reported that she had an excellent result, “almost succeeding in the only scholarship awarded in the district, being only four marks below the winning candidate”¹².

Elsie’s name appeared again in a paper when she was successful in getting an Oxford Local Examination (senior) and a Preliminary Certificate¹³. She enrolled in CCTCC, having passed the conditions of admission and started there on 15 September 1909².

I have not been able to find an entry on the 1911 census for Elsie, though she remained in Crewe as she passed her Final Exam at CCTCC later that year. Her parents and sister still lived in Great Meols, her father working as an iron turner, her mother a school mistress and her sister was a student¹⁴.

After Elsie left CCTCC she returned to Great Meols and started working as an elementary school teacher. It wasn’t all work for the young woman, she appeared in a play “Prunella” at the Central Hall¹⁵.

In 1921 she was living with her parents. Her father was out of work, while both Elsie and her mother worked as Elementary school teachers. Annie was still at Great Meols school, while Elsie worked at nearby Hoylake CofE school¹⁶. Kathleen was not living with them, because the previous year she married Stanley Gilderdale, who was a schoolmaster at All Saints CofE School, Thornton Hough^{17, 18}.

Sadly, the following year Annie died, leaving £1955 2s. 10d in her will¹⁹.

In 1928 Elsie travelled abroad, travelling on the SS Adriatic to New York. The records include a description, as well as naming her next of kin at home and where she was staying. They say she was 5 ft 2, with a medium complexion,

brown hair and blue eyes. She gave her sister Kathleen's name as next of kin and her address as The School House, Cove, Nr Farnborough, Hants. She stayed with Mr and Mrs Heaton, cousins of 41W 184th St, New York²⁰ for about 10 days before travelling home on the Olympic²¹.

In 1929, CCTCC celebrated its 21st anniversary²² and Elsie was made a life member of the Old Students Association as part of the 'Awards'²³.

A decade later Elsie was still working as a teacher, though now she lived in Hoylake²⁴, her father having died in 1930²⁵. Her sister was still living in Hampshire with her husband and their three children²⁶.

Elsie never married and died in 1987²⁷. Both her sister and brother-in-law had pre-deceased her^{28, 29} and it was their three children who described her as "a much loved aunt" in her obituary³⁰.

Narrative by Isobel Hoy

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