

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



This story was written, in November 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who studied at The Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset.

Jessie Lemon

Jessie Lemon was born on 14 March 1887 in Wells, Somerset, the daughter of James and Harriet Eliza Lemon née Brooks. She had two older brothers, one of whom died in infancy and two older sisters. Her father was a baker and they lived at 94 Southover in Wells. On 28 April 1887, Jessie was taken to St Cuthbert's Church in Wells to be baptised. Twin younger brothers died in infancy in 1890. Jessie's youngest brother was born in 1894 and in the same year her father died. The *Wells Journal* of 4 March 1897 tells us that St Cuthbert's Sunday School awarded a prize to Jessie Lemon of class XI.

By 1901, the family had moved to 17 South Street in Wells, where Jessie's mother was supporting the family by dressmaking. By this time though, Jessie had been enrolled in the Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset to learn cookery. In order to attend, Jessie would have had to apply for a council bursary and be accepted as a suitable candidate in order to have her fees paid. The reported that Jessie was one of the students at the School of Housewifery who had been awarded. Perhaps this was a subsequent grant as Jessie was already at the school in April 1901.



The School of Housewifery 1897

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It seems that Jessie may have had to withdraw from the school for some reason. The Minute Book kept by the Committee of Managers of the school reports that on 13 December 1901, “the case of Jessie Lemon be left in the hands of Mrs Hodgkinson”. Mrs Hodgkinson was a member of the committee. On 9 May 1902 the committee noted that “Jessie Lemon had not returned to the school”. There is a possibility that Jessie is the pupil who is mentioned in the minutes of a meeting held on 29 March 1901 and reports, “Agreed on the motion of Mrs Clark, seconded by Miss Spiller that Miss Acheson be allowed discretion as to the amount of fine to be levied in the case of a girl who repeatedly breaks crockery”.

The *Central Somerset Gazette* of 4 October 1902, reported that Jessie Lemon of wells had been awarded a senior scholarship by the Female Industries Sub-committee of the Education Committee. Unfortunately, it does say what establishment Jessie then went to.

The Jessie secured employment as a servant for John Beresford, the vicar of Wells. Although there was only the elderly vicar and his wife to be cared for, there were fourteen rooms in the vicarage and Jessie was one of only two servants.

On 29 September 1913, John Beresford performed the ceremony when Jessie married Alfred Haggett, a porter on the Somerset and Dorset Railway. As son, Wilfred T Haggett was born at the end of the following year. In 1921, the family were living at 4 Market Street in Highbridge, Somerset. The next sighting with have of Jessie is the 1939 register, when she and Alfred are living at 5 Eton Road, Burnham on Sea in Somerset.

Jessie died in 1979.

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Sources

General Registrar's Indexes of birth, marriage and death

1891 census for 94 Southover, Wells, Somerset RG12 1914 folio 4

1901 census for Grange School of Housewifery, Street, Somerset RG13 2319 folio 59

1901 census for 17 South Street, Wells, Somerset RG13 2316 folio 94

1911 census for The Vicarage, Wells, Somerset RG14 14522 SN 87

1921 census for 4 Market Terrace, Highbridge, Somerset RG15 11398 SN83

1939 Register for 5 Eton Road, Burnham on Sea, Somerset RG101/7024H/O19/31

Baptism register of St. Cuthbert's, Wells, Somerset, originals held by South West Heritage Trust, accessed via www.ancestry.com

Wells Journal 4 March 1897 p.5 col.d

Central Somerset Gazette 4 October 1902 p.5 col.c

Western Gazette 2 August 1901 p.10 col.c.

PHOTO/3/2/5/43 Black and white photograph of 'Girls at The Grange November 1897' County Council School of Housewifery by W Tully. Held by the Alfred Gillett Trust, The Grange, Farm Road, Street, Somerset BA16 OBQ

Somerset School of Cookery and Housewifery - Minutes, 1897-1916 South West Heritage Trust C/E/1/146