

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



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.

Mabel BURT's Story

Mabel BURT was born 1 August 1887 at Long Sutton in Somerset to Henry and Eliza BURT. She was christened on 7 June 1891 at the parish church of Long Sutton, on the same day as her sister Ethel. Their father was described as a Gentleman's Servant¹.

Long Sutton was and still is a village and parish within Somerset. It is set near the river Yeo and 3 miles south of Langport². It is a rural community and Mabel must have grown up within a country setting.

The parish church where Mabel was christened is a beautiful fifteenth century church.



Figure 1. Long Sutton Holy Trinity parish church Copyright Michael Garlick³

The 1891 census shows the family living at Long Sutton in a house with four rooms. Henry BURT is a coachman aged 37, his wife Eliza is aged 31 and they have four children, Sydney aged 13, Jesse aged 9, Mabel aged 3 and one month old Ethel. All were born at Long Sutton⁴.

On the 1901 census Mabel BURT is described as a 13 year old pupil doing laundry work at The Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset⁵. The Grange

The following photograph was taken in 1897, just four years before Mabel is listed as a pupil at the school. No doubt Mabel would have been dressed in the same way.



Figure 2. 'Girls at The Grange November 1897' County Council School of Housewifery by W Tully⁶

Mabel is mentioned in a newspaper article on 17 February 1911. She is listed as a servant attending the funeral of her employer, the late Mrs Susan Westgarth PATRICK of the Manor House, Martock, Somerset⁷.

Two months later Mabel BURT is listed on the 1911 census as a housemaid at the Manor House, Martock⁸. Mabel and another servant, the cook are listed at the address.

The following year, on 3 August 1912, Mabel married Benjamin George COLLINGS at the parish church of Martock in Somerset. Her father was listed as Henry John BURT, a gardener. Mabel signed the register indicating that she was literate. There were three witnesses to the marriage, Ethel BURT, Jesse BURT and Clement Norman COLLINGS. Ethel and Jesse were Mabel's siblings, indicating that they were a close family.

Mabel and Clement Norman had at least two children together, Gwendoline Ethel Mabel COLLINGS born 1913 and Clement Wilton George COLLINGS born 1919. Another evidence of Mabel's closeness to her family is the naming of her children. She gave her daughter the name Ethel after her own sister.

On the census dated 19 June 1921, the family were living at 23 Church Square, Midsomer Norton, Somerset. Mabel is described as performing Home Duties as her occupation. Her husband's occupation was colliery smith and his employer was The Earl of Waldegrave, the Radstock collieries at Radstock. The children Gwendoline and Clement were aged 7 and 2 respectively⁹.

Sadly Mabel died just three years later. Her death is registered in October 1924 in the registration district of Shepton Mallet, Somerset. She was only 36 years old¹⁰. A newspaper announcement in the Deaths column of the Western Gazette, stated "COLLINGS, Mabel, the beloved wife of Benjamin George Collings, 31, Whitelands, Radstock, aged 36 years"¹¹.

Mabel's death certificate shows she died on 27 October 1924 at The County Sanatorium, Shepton Mallet. Her usual address was 31 Whitelands, Radstock and she was the wife of Benjamin George Collings, a blacksmith journeyman. Her cause of death was pulmonary tuberculosis¹².

Mabel seems to have lived her whole life within Somerset, her place of birth and her place of death being just 25 miles apart.

Her children were only very young when she died, Gwendoline about 10 and Clement about 5. One can only imagine the grief in the household at Mabel's untimely death.

Written by Valerie Bladon

Sources

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 - ³ Images. Geograph. ST4625: Long Sutton, Holy Trinity Church. <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/5937166> accessed 24 November 2023.
 - ⁴ Census records. England. Long Sutton, Somerset 05 April 1891. RG Langport. ED 1. PN 1889. FL 7. <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 24 November 2023.
 - ⁵ Census records. England. Street, Somerset. RG13; Piece: 2319; Folio: 59; Page: 19. <https://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 24 November 2023.
 - ⁶ Alfred Gillett Trust, The Grange, Farm Road, Street, Somerset BA16 0BQ PHOTO/3/2/5/43 Black and white photograph of 'Girls at The Grange November 1897' County Council School of Housewifery by W Tully
 - ⁷ *The Western Gazette*. (1911) The late Mrs Patrick. 17 February. p. 4e. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <https://findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 24 November 2023.
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 - ¹⁰ Death index (CR) England & Wales. RD Shepton Mallet, Somerset. 3rd Qtr. 1924. COLLINGS, Mabel. Vol. 5c. p. 439. <https://www.gro.uk> : accessed 24 November 2023.
 - ¹¹ *The Western Gazette* (1924) Deaths. P. 12. Collection: England, Newspaper Death Notices. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 24 November 2023.
 - ¹² Death certificate. Shepton Mallet, Somerset. . 27 November 1924. COLLINGS, Mabel. Entry