

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in September 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of pupils at the Royal Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor (later The Royal School for the Deaf), Margate, Kent and The West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Exeter, Devon*

## **Ethel Maud Thorp's Story**

Ethel was born on 18 January 1890<sup>1</sup> in the small village of Milstead (sometimes Milsted), about three miles from the centre of Sittingbourne in Kent. Her parents were Charles William Thorp, a domestic coachman, and Eliza Ann née Charlesworth<sup>2</sup>. Charles and Eliza married in 1888 and they had eight children altogether. Ethel was their second child; her older sister Ada Gertrude was born in 1888.

On 9 February 1890, Ethel was baptised at the church of St Mary and the Holy Cross in Milstead. According to the 1891 census, Ethel and her family were living at Finch's Farm, Horne Hill, Milstead. By this time there was another sister, Bertha Florence, who was born a couple of months before the census was taken.

When Ethel was 4 years old, she contracted scarlet fever and this led to a persistent discharge from her left ear and to her losing her hearing<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, Ethel began her education at the National School in Milstead and was there for three years before an application was made

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<sup>1</sup> Ch192/R1/1/1 Entry 5454 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325/7615 (1880-1925)

<sup>2</sup> Ch 192/R1/1/1 Entry 5454 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325/7615 (1880-1925)

<sup>3</sup> Ch192/R2/1/6 Entry 175 Register of Children Old Kent Road [1-369] with transfers to Margate

for her to go to the Asylum<sup>4</sup>. The application form confirms the details of her birth and her family circumstances. The application was successful. Ethel was elected in July 1897 and admitted to the Old Kent Road Asylum on 8 September 1897. The local JP (probably Ethel's father's employer) and his solicitor provided sureties<sup>5</sup>.

Ethel was examined when she was first admitted<sup>6</sup> and it was found that her voice was "inward and weak" but that she had "slight remains of speech". Her "apparent intellect" was classed as moderate. As well as scarlet fever, Ethel had had measles and whooping cough during her early childhood. Under medical remarks it says that she was admitted conditionally because of a glandular problem. She received a largely positive report at the end of 1897 when she was 4<sup>th</sup> out of her class of ten. She did especially well in lip reading and in writing which were both rated Good. Ethel was clearly unwell a lot of the time as she was absent 422 times before her transfer to the Margate Asylum on 2 April 1899. She missed the whole of 1898.

Ethel's poor health and consequent low rate of attendance continued when she moved to Margate. She missed half of 1899 and all of 1900. Understandably her progress was therefore very limited. It was reported that she did not respond well to the oral method of teaching which, it was felt, should have been best suited to her since she had heard and spoken in her very early years<sup>7</sup>. Ethel is listed at the Asylum in Margate on the 1901 census which took place on 31 March.

Meanwhile, Ethel's family had moved away from Kent so Ethel would presumably have had very little contact with them. On the 1901 census, they were living at Keeper Lodge, Glendon, in Northamptonshire where her father was working as a coachman/groom. The family had expanded. Ethel's brothers Herbert Edward and William Charles were born in 1893 and 1896 respectively. Another brother, Percy, was born in 1897 but he died in 1898. Ethel's sister Mary Winifred was born in 1899 but she died in January 1901.

On 19 June 1901, a few months after the census, Ethel's name was removed from the roll of the Asylum "by order of the committee" and "on account of continued bad health". Her short life came to an end not long afterwards. Ethel died on 28 July 1901 at Glendon in Northamptonshire, with her family. Her cause of death was general tuberculosis<sup>8</sup>. Ethel was buried in the churchyard of All Saints Church in Rushton, Northamptonshire.

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<sup>4</sup> Ch192/R1/1/1 Entry 5454 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325/7615 (1880-1925)

<sup>5</sup> Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5405 Register of Children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

<sup>6</sup> Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5405 Register of Children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

<sup>7</sup> Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5405 Register of Children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

<sup>8</sup> GRO 1901 Sept KETTERING Vol 03B Page 106

**Other Sources** (in addition to those in the footnotes)

Accessed via [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) :

England and Wales Births 1837-2006  
England and Wales Marriages 1837-2005  
England and Wales Deaths 1837-2007  
Kent Baptisms 1813-1954  
National Burial Index for England and Wales  
1891 England, Wales and Scotland Census  
1901 England, Wales and Scotland Census

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