

# *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]*

## **Ruby Winifred Stagg's Story**

In October 1889 the unusually named Murillo Stagg married Mary Jane Barker in Chorlton, Lancashire. Both lived in Cheshire, where they set up home and where Cedric, the first of their family of 7 children, was born the next year in Wincham, near Northwich.

Their second child was named Ruby Winifred, born at Wincham on 7 June 1892, and the subject of this story. Ruby was baptised just 3 weeks later at the Parish Church of Witton cum Twambrooks. Unless there was an infant death, no further children seem to have been born until 1899, when Algernon Murillo Stagg made his appearance followed by sisters Brenda, Bessie, Phyllis and finally Doris, born in 1912.

While Murillo Stagg was recorded as a 'joiner' in the 1891 census, by 1901 he had become a 'beerhouse keeper' in Marston St Paul, near Wincham.

In May 1905, when Ruby was 12, her name appeared in the Manchester Courier under the heading 'Cheshire Scholarships'. Ruby was one of the young people who had obtained sufficient marks to be awarded a County Junior Scholarship by the Cheshire County Education Committee. Some other names jumped out of the list at me – Ethel M. Bayley, Clarice M. Eaton, Elsie N Dodd and Elizabeth Mary Collins – as they are also being researched as trainee teachers on this 'Few Forgotten Women Friday'.

Ruby's School Record from The High School for Girls, Northwich, Cheshire showed that she had previously attended Witton Elementary School and the Council School, Northwich and that she began her school career at The High School on 19 September 1905, her fees for 3 years being covered by the County Junior Scholarship.

In December 1906 Ruby's name again appeared in the newspaper – this time it was the Crewe Chronicle, who listed all the successful candidates in the recent London College of Music examinations. Ruby had a First Class pass in Elementary Pianoforte Playing, a useful skill for a teacher.

It appears that Ruby was awarded another year of fees being covered under the 'Bursar System' in 1908 – this had only been introduced in 1907 and meant that she intended to become a teacher by attending school until she was about 17 or 18 and then proceeding to Teacher Training College. The Bursar System

replaced the Pupil Teacher system. The record also noted that Ruby had passed The Oxford Senior Local Examination in 1909 and she left The High School on 28 July 1909, heading for 2 years at Cheshire County Training College, Crewe from 15 September 1909.

By now, Ruby and her family were living at The Railway Hotel in Northwich. In the 1911 census, Ruby is living there with her parents, who run the hotel, and her siblings, with the exception of elder brother Cedric, who is away at The Church of England Training College in Cheltenham, training to be a teacher.

There is no sign of Ruby in documentation until she gets married to Sidney Baddeley in Northwich in September 1919. If she was teaching up to this point, she would have been unable to continue to do so after her marriage. In the 1921 Census we find her at 9 Princes Avenue in Northwich, Cheshire, with her 1 year old son Philip. Her husband, Sidney, was a master mariner who had served in the Merchant Navy in WWI and who must have been at overseas at the time of the census. There is no sign of him anywhere on the 1921 census. Ruby and Sidney's second child, Winifred Margaret, was born on 4 March 1925 and her birth was registered in Liverpool.

On 29 November 1930, we find Ruby, aged 38, and her 5 year old daughter Margaret travelling First Class on a passenger list from Liverpool to the Far East. Their destination is Sandakan, via Singapore and their intended future permanent residence is 'British North Borneo'. At this time son Philip would be 10 years old and probably at a boarding school. I would imagine that Ruby and Margaret are going out to live with Sidney, already working there.

There's no passenger list showing Ruby and Sidney's daughter Margaret coming back to England for schooling, but as the 1939 Register finds her at Leighton School, Cheshire, aged 14, it is safe to assume that this was what happened. Mary Jane Stagg, Ruby's mother, passed away in April 1931, a few months after Ruby and Margaret went to Singapore, so perhaps Ruby and Margaret returned at this time.

On 26 November 1932, 36 year old Captain Sidney Baddeley, a master mariner, is listed on a passenger ship named 'Perseus', of the Blue Funnel Line, leaving Birkenhead bound for Singapore, with his intended future residence being 'British North Borneo'. His last address in the UK is 'Silverdale, Chester Road, Old Hartford, Cheshire', which is not far from Northwich. Sidney was perhaps home to see his son, Philip or other family members.

Ruby and Sidney made many trips back and forth to the Far East throughout the 1930s, moving from 'British North Borneo' to 'Malaya'. Sidney worked as Marine Superintendent for the Straits Steamship Co. Ltd. In Singapore. Even after World War II had started, Ruby was to be found travelling back to Singapore in September 1940. Life was to change dramatically with the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941. The Japanese invaded Malaya on 8 December 1941 and the Allies surrendered on 16 February 1942 – the date that Sidney was captured by the Japanese and eventually sent to Fukuoka Prisoner of War Camp. He was recorded as a civilian at that time but later POW lists show him as a Merchant Navy Captain.

Meanwhile, Ruby and Sidney's son, Philip Baddeley, was following in his father's seafaring footsteps and had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

He was listed in the UK Navy Lists on 24 April 1941 as a Temporary Sub Lieutenant. It appears that in that year he was posted to the shore establishment at Tyne & Wear, HMS Calliope, which was a training base and also to HMS Malvernian, which was bombed by German aircraft on 1 July 1941, off the coast of Spain. It finally sank on 19 July 1941 with the loss of 24 hands. I don't know if Philip was aboard, but if he was, he survived.

Ruby was evacuated from Malaya to Australia on 24 January 1942, along with over 400 others, on the SS Narkunda. She left Fremantle with many other British evacuees and landed at Liverpool on 17 August 1942. She went to her sister Brenda's home at Hodge Lane, Hartford, Nantwich. Her family must have been so relieved to have her back home safely, but what mixed feelings she must have had to leave Sidney behind in Malaya, not knowing what would happen.

Ruby and Sidney's son, Philip, was again named in the UK Navy Lists, this time to show that he had been made a Temporary Lieutenant on 24 October 1943. He seems to have spent the remainder of the war at HMS Calliope. After the war he married Ethel Winifred Florence Martin from Middlesborough, and they had twin boys named Philip and Simon and a daughter named Sarah Jane. He is found on passenger lists with his family coming back from Tanganyika, where he worked as a Company Executive, and staying at an address in Middlesborough, Yorkshire in 1952, coming back from Kenya in 1956 to stay in Grange over Sands, Cumbria and finally coming from Tanganyika in 1958 to stay at Bishopsgate in London for 4 months. The family eventually returned to England, living in Cumbria.

Ruby and Sidney's daughter, Margaret, trained as a nurse after the war, qualifying in 1948. She married William Ian Hart, who was in the RAF and they had 2 children. Very sadly her husband was killed in 1952 in a flying accident in Lincolnshire. Margaret and the children went to live in South Africa, perhaps to be with her parents, but then returned to England where Margaret became a midwife.

Captain Sidney Baddeley, against all the odds, survived the Japanese Prisoner of War Camp and was liberated on 2 September 1945, by which time most of the POWs were in a desperate state of health, many with beriberi. The British prisoners had been used to work in the zinc mine, had starvation rations and were freezing in the winter with no heat provided. Sidney, aged 49, is named on a passenger list arriving in Liverpool from Hong Kong, via Manila on 27 October 1945. His intended destination was 'Newlands', Sandway, Northwich, Cheshire. As he had also been named on lists of POWs I think that Ruby and the rest of his family would have known that he had survived and was coming home.

After recovering from his ordeal, Sidney must have returned to Singapore as we next find Ruby sailing there on 12 April 1947, on the 'Oranje', and intending to once again live in Malaya. However on the 6 July 1951 Ruby and Sidney were headed together for Mombasa on the 'Warwick Castle' with South Africa as their intended future residence. Ruby came home in 1956 for a visit to see family and friends.

Sidney died, aged 64, in Estcourt, Natal on 22 July 1960, far from the sea where he had spent most of his life. I presume that Ruby returned to England, where

in the next few years she suffered further bereavements when her father, Murillo Stagg, died in 1964 and her brothers a couple of years later. Ruby passed away in Cheshire on 16 Nov 1973, her funeral being on 20 November. If she ever got to use her education at college as a teacher, it was only for a few years after qualification in 1911 – but she could never have imagined the life she would lead and the places she would live in her 81 year life span.

#### Sources:

- *CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe*
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