

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in April 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women staff and female patients associated with the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital, Jesmond, Northumberland.

Amelia Pressly's Story

Amelia Jane Pressly was born at 47 Thompson Street, Old Machar, Aberdeen on 23 February 1881¹. Her parents, David Leith Pressly and Isabella Pearson had married on 14 January 1879 in St Nicholas, Aberdeen¹. Her father was a newspaper reporter². Amelia was one of 12 children. Five siblings were born in Aberdeen— Isabella Pearson b. 1879, David George b. 1882, Grace Marjory b. 1895, Alice Penny b. 1897 and Edward G Matthew b. 1902³. By 1883, the Pressly family had moved to Londonderry, Ireland. David Pressly was now the Editor of the Londonderry Sentinel. Six children were born in Ireland – William Morrison b. 1884, twins Thomas Douglas and Joseph James b. 1886, Edith Winifred b. 1888, Norman McLeod b. 1889 and John Seymour b. 1893⁵. The family lived in Londonderry until 1894 when they returned to Aberdeen. Sadly, the twins and their older brother David George died in 1887⁵. Youngest son Edward also died as an infant in Norwich⁴.

Amelia, Norman and Edith were enrolled by their father in Ashely Road School, Aberdeen in September 1894. David was now the Editor of the Aberdeen Daily Journal⁴. It was noted that all three had previously attended school in Belfast⁷. By 1901, Amelia was working as a nurse in the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital⁸. As she was only 20, it is possible that she was undergoing training onsite. Her parents and siblings were living in Aberdeen⁹. Eldest sister Isabella was attending university and eldest brother William was a newspaper reporter.

By 1911, Amelia was nursing in the Hull Infirmary¹⁰. Her father had taken up the position of Editor of the Yorkshire Herald in 1904 and the family were now living in York. Her sister Isabella was a teacher.

On 23 October 1913, Amelia set sail for Canada, arriving in Quebec on 29 October¹¹. She intended on continuing her career as a nurse with the Victorian Order of Nurses¹². Amelia's stay in Canada was short lived and she returned to England shortly after the outbreak of war to join Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service¹². At the time, she was employed as a district nurse in Whitby, Ontario¹³. Her brother Norman returned from Assam to join the Scottish Horse and her brother John returned from Winnipeg to join the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry¹². John died near Ypres in 1915⁴.

The Aberdeen Press and Journal of 31 October 1917 ran an article entitled 'Miss A.J. Pressly, York, Decorated'¹³. At that time, she was a sister in the Lakenham Military Hospital in Norwich. However, it was 10 December 1919 before Amelia attended an investiture at Buckingham Palace where she was presented with the Royal Red Cross by King George V¹⁴.

Amelia continued her nursing career when the Great War ended. In 1921 she was employed by Croydon County Council as a Health Visitor¹⁵. Her parents were still living in York, her father editing the Yorkshire Herald and her brother employed as the sub-editor and journalist. Sisters Isabella and Alice were teaching in York¹⁵. In 1922, after months of declining health, Amelia's father died¹⁶. Her mother died 3 years later in 1925¹⁷. Amelia's nursing career began at the start of the century in Fleming Memorial Hospital tending to infants and children. Almost 40 years later, when the 1939 register was compiled, she was employed as a nurse in a home for the aged in Penge, Kent¹⁸. It was a small establishment of 10 residents, employing five women - a matron, Ameila, another nurse, a maid and presumably a cook.

Amelia Jane Pressly died in York in 1979 at the age of ninety-eight¹⁹.

Sources

1. Birth <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-results/1416259682661e3a3fb1037>
2. www.ancestry.com.au *Old Machar*; ED: 32; Page: 35; Line: 15; Roll: *cssct1881_53*
3. www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
4. www.findagrave.com.au
5. www.irishgenealogy.ie
6. www.freebmd.org.uk
7. www.ancestry.com.au Aberdeen City Council; Aberdeen, Scotland, UK; *Aberdeenshire School Admission Records*; Reference Number: *ED/GR65/A4/2/187*.
8. www.ancestry.com.au 1901 census Class: *RG13*; Piece: *4781*; Folio: *154*; Page: *56*
9. www.ancestry.com.au 1901 Scotland census Parish: *Aberdeen Rubislaw*; ED: *38*; Page: *21*; Line: *21*; Roll: *CSSCT1901_58*
10. www.ancestry.com.au The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911*
11. www.ancestry.com.au *UK and Ireland, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 and Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935*
12. www.findmypast.com.au Aberdeen Daily Journal 22 October 1915

13. www.findmypast.com.au Aberdeen Press and Journal 31 October 1917
14. www.findmypast.com.au Register of Royal Red Cross 1883-1994
15. www.findmypast.com.au 1921 census
16. www.findmypast.com.au Aberdeen Daily Journal 12 April 1922
17. www.findmypast.com.au Aberdeen Press and Journal 14 December 1925
18. The National Archives; Kew, London, England; *1939 Register*; Reference: *Rg 101/1272e*
19. www.ancestry.com.au General Register Office; United Kingdom; Volume: 2; Page: 2897