

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]

Sarah Evelyn Billington's Story

On Saturday, 27 June 1891 [1] in Eaton, near Tarporley, Cheshire, Sarah Evelyn Billington made her entrance into the world. Her proud parents, Henry and Ellen welcomed their third child, and second daughter. The Billington's were living at Arderne Park Lodge [2]. On August 2nd, then five week old Sarah was baptised at St. Helen's Church in Tarporley by Rev. W. O. Hughes, as number 1414 in baptismal register.

Henry Billington married Sarah Ellen Turner on 3 February 1887 at the Parish Church of Tarporley. [3] Henry was from Tarporley and Ellen (as she was called) was born in Acton, Cheshire. During Henry and Ellen's marriage they had five children: Arthur, Ann Elizabeth, Sarah Evelyn, Mary Josephine and Helen Catherine.

Henry was employed as a 'wheelwright' when he married. It's safe to say he apprenticed under his father, Thomas Billington, a Wheelwright himself. Either unsatisfied or skill lacking in the craftsmanship, he took the position of 'farm bailiff' around 1890. In the 1899 Cheshire Observer Newspaper he was a local success - he won second prize in the maiden class of the Northern and Midland Sheep Dog Club with his collie, Honest Jack, a first in sheep dog category. [4]

When Sarah was four and half years old, she was enrolled at the Tarporley National School on 30 December 1895. [5] The 1901 Census shows the family at Rhuddal Heath, Arderne Parish Lodge. Her older brother Arthur is working part-time as a public school teacher. [6]

On 23 January 1905, Sarah was enrolled at the Chester City and County High School for Girls. She passed her exam in Matriculation in 1909 with a distinction in 'English'. She continued her studies and applied to Cheshire County Training College in Crewe. [7]

As a student at the Training College, nineteen year old 'Evelyn', as she preferred to be called by her classmates, was boarding with Mrs. Elizabeth Hodkinson, a Widow and her daughter Lucy, at their home at 18 Clipton Avenue, Crewe. A possible fellow student, Miss Marion Holden Moffat, was also boarding. [8] Sarah Evelyn completed her final examinations and graduated from the Training College in 1911. [9]

Men in the same profession as women teachers did not necessarily see eye to eye. "Men cannot teach the babies nor women the big boys" expressed Mr. George Boyer from the County School in Holywell. Educationally a man's work

is different from a woman's. It is very often “different”, however, it is equally important and equally well performed. [10]



Image of CTCC student Sarah Evelyn Billington, 1910

Source: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

A marriage announcement was posted in the Chester Chronicle, and Cheshire and North Wales General Advertiser. [11] S. Evelyn Billington and Lieut. Clement Cooke, of the Suffolk Regiment, married at St. Helen's Church in Tarporley on 22 August 1917. The bride was well known and very popular in the neighbourhood of her home. As the guests arrived in the church, the organist played several hymns. The bride's father walked her down the aisle and her sister, Josephine was her bridesmaid. A number of guests attended the reception held at the Billington home. The pair left for Worthing where they spent their honeymoon. Clement was also a graduate of Cheshire County

Training College, Crewe. He received his Board of Education Certificate from the Teachers Registration Council on 1 September 1920. [12]

Sarah and Clement had one child, a daughter, Helen Barbara Cooke, born 4 May 1922. In the 1939 British Register, Sarah, her husband and daughter are living at Ellesmere Port, Arderra, Cheshire. Clement is employed as an Elementary School Master. His civilian Role is Air Raid Precaution [ARP]. Sarah is recorded as 'unpaid Domestic Duties' and her civilian role is 'British Red Cross'. [13]

Sarah Evelyn Billington Cooke, died 5 July 1951 at the Clatterbridge General Hospital, Bebington, Wirral. [14] Her Will was probated at Liverpool on 31 December 1951, and the effects of her estate given to her daughter, Helen Barbara Beck, who married Peter William Beck at the same church as her parents on 4 September 1947. [15]

Narrative by Gail D. Faibish

1. Church of England. Record Office; Chester, England. Cheshire Diocese of Chester Parish Baptisms - 1538-1911. Chester, Tarporley Parish; Page: 177; No.: 1414 Findmypast.co.uk; Ancestry.ca
2. 1891 Census - Ancestry.ca
3. 1887 Marriage - Findmypast.co.uk
4. Cheshire Observer Newspaper 11 March 1899 - findmypast.co.uk
5. England, Cheshire School Records, 1782-1950. 1895 Tarporley Nation School. Findmypast.co.uk.
6. 1901 British Census - RG 13; Piece: 3367; Folio: 23; Page: 3; Arderne Park Lodge, Ruddall Heath, Tarporley, Cheshire, England Ancestry.ca
7. Chester Girls School - findmypast.co.uk
8. 1911 British Census - England, Cheshire, Monks Coppenhall, Crewe, 18 Clifton Avenue. RG: 14; Piece: 21797; Schedule: 167; Ancestry.ca and Findmypast.co.uk
9. 1911 CCTC final exam - CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History of Cheshire, Crewe
10. <https://www.jstor.org/site/university-college-london/the-woman-teacher/> [19 December 1919 - Volume 1 - Number 13 - Page 99]
11. Chester Chronicle, and Cheshire and North Wales General Advertiser; 25 August 1917; Page: 6 Source: newspapers.com
12. Teachers' Registration Council Registers 1914-1948 - findmypast.co.uk
13. 1939 Register - RG101/40151/00431; England, Cheshire, Ellesmere Port U.D., Arderra, Berrick. Source: Ancestry.ca and findmypast.co.uk
14. Cheshire Observer Newspaper 13 September 1947 - findmypast.co.uk
15. National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995 - Ancestry.ca