

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]

Annie Hoole's Story

Annie Hoole was born on 29 August 1890, the second of four children to joiner Peter Hoole and his wife Annie formerly Dale.¹ She was baptised at the Wesleyan-Methodist Chapel in Witton on 30th October the same year.²

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Birth Certificate of Annie Hoole, 1890: Source HM Passport Office, General Registrar Office

In the 1891 census Annie can be found listed, just a few months old, alongside her parents and elder sister Lily Matilda at 51 Penny's Lane, Witton, Northwich, ten years later when the enumerator came calling the family had not only moved but had doubled in size. A terraced house in Victoria Road was where the family called home, Lily and 10-year-old Annie now had

¹ GRO Birth Indexes, December Quarter 1890, Northwich, Vol 8a Page 233

² Cheshire Non-conformist Records, 1671-1900, accessed via www.FindMyPast.co.uk

another sister, Mary, and a brother, James.³ I noticed that living next door to the Hoole family were teachers and sisters Agnes and Maud Bowen and I wondered if that was perhaps where Annie first thought about a career in teaching for herself. Interestingly a few years before this 1901 census, on 23 January 1896, Annie's older sister Lily, together with her younger siblings Mary and James are all baptised on the same day. The incumbent of the Wesleyan Chapel in Witton, Mr Sherwell, noted alongside each baptism the words 'Private House'. This could refer to a baptism in the chapel in private, so without a congregation present, rather than a baptism in the parishioner's home. The child is baptised and received into the church in a private ceremony with just a few witnesses rather than with the prayers of the whole congregation.⁴

The next time we come across Annie's name is in the press of 1904, when that year's scholarships to enable pupils to move up to secondary education were announced. Annie unfortunately did not achieve a high enough grade to pass the initial examination but by dint of some districts within the country not having produced sufficient qualifying candidates her performance was enough for her to be granted a scholarship and she attended Leftwich High School.⁵ At the end of her secondary education in 1908 Annie sat and passed the Oxford Senior examination which enabled her to enrol as a trainee teacher at the newly opened Cheshire Country Training College in Crewe [CCTCC]. A note in the Cheshire Education Committee minutes of 7 September show that Annie has been accepted as a student providing she passed this entrance exam.⁶

Annie was a member of the very first cohort of students to enrol at the college and in its early days the students were taught at the Mechanics Institute in Crewe town centre while a purpose build campus was being constructed. Enrolment day was 15 September, Annie was student number 39 out of 65 who made up these very first students. Her address was noted as 38 Church Lane, Northwich, with Peter her father as guardian.⁷

The CCTCC programme spanned two years and was designed to equip students for real-life teaching roles. The comprehensive curriculum encompassed Teaching Theory, with modules on Discipline, Organization, Child Psychology, the Evolution of Public Education, General Pedagogy, and subject specific instructional techniques. Additionally, the course offered a diverse range of subjects including Crafts, Physical Education, Music, Health and Hygiene, Art, History, English, Geography, Mathematics, Outdoor Studies, Rural Science and Scripture. In their second year, students had the opportunity to apply their knowledge during teaching

³ 1891 England & Wales Census, RG12, Northwich Registration Dist, Piece 2838; 1901 England & Wales Census, RG13, Northwich Registration Dist, Piece 3342

⁴ Cheshire Non-conformist Records, 1671-1900, accessed via www.FindMyPast.co.uk

⁵ Cheshire Daily Echo, 9 June 1904, 2

⁶ Cheshire Education Committee Minutes, Training College sub-committee, 7 September 1908. Cheshire Archives

⁷ CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

placement at nearby schools.⁸ The female students were expected to dress smartly, in long sleeved blouses with high necks and ankle length skirts, with their hair 'upswept' and fastened securely with tape.⁹

Annie passed the Training College final exam in 1901 and by the time of the 1911 census she was a qualified teacher, living back home with her parents in Church Lane and teaching at an elementary school in Northwich. Her two sisters are both dressmakers and James her brother was at school. Her father, still a joiner, but now working for the local education authority.¹⁰

By the time of the first world war Annie is teaching as the Infants Mistress at St John's Primary School in Sandbach Heath. She was also a Red Cross Volunteer at the Ashfields Hospital in Sandbach which cared for injured soldiers. Her Red Cross records show that she lived at 158 South View, Sandbach Heath and that she was a schoolteacher who gave a whole week of evenings every 3rd week to undertake general work at the hospital.¹¹



St Johns Primary School, Sandbach Heath¹²

Annie is still teaching at Sandbach Heath in 1921, although enumerated at her parents' house 148 Witton Street Northwich. Intriguingly Annie along with her younger sister Mary are now both Assistant School Mistresses, Annie in Sandbach and Mary in Northwich, while brother James is an Assistant School Master also teaching at Northwich.¹³ James undertook his

⁸ Cheshire County Training College, Crewe, Prospectus 1908-1914.

⁹ 1908-1929, Souvenir of the 21st Anniversary, CCTCC

¹⁰ 1911 England & Wales Census, RG14, Northwich Registration Dist, Piece 21674

¹¹ Red Cross Volunteer Records accessed via <https://vad.redcross.org.uk/search>; History of Sandbach, Part 1 accessed via https://sandbachwhatson.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/2/0/20204185/sandbach_history_part_1_a_to_c_in_words_new.pdf

¹² Still taken from a school YouTube video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kSzTZtHX5U>

¹³ 1921 England & Wales Census, RG15, Northwich Registration Dist, Piece 16924

training at CCTCC, enrolling in 1912 and according to the 1929 College retrospective he was at that time teaching at Danebridge School Northwich.¹⁴ Where Mary trained is a mystery, but it certainly wasn't at Crewe.

As World War One loomed the National Register, compiled on 29 September 1939, shows that Annie and Mary are still teachers and living in Hodge Lane, Hartford, just outside Northwich. Older sister Lily was married and living with her husband Herbert Hodgkinson in Northwich, while James, also married was noted as an Assistant Schoolmaster, living in Northwich.¹⁵

The following year Annie was awarded £750 damages against Lord Delamere, for personal injuries caused in an accident on 27 June 1939. Annie, referred to as a schoolmistress at Sandbach Heath school, was riding her bicycle in Northwich when Lord Delamere's car, driven by a Miss Rowell, a private tutor employed by Lord Delamere, overtook her and then pulled in immediately and stopped sharply in front of Annie. Unable to stop Annie crashed into the back of the car and was flung to the ground, sustaining a broken leg, necessitating a five week stay in hospital. As a result, Annie could not walk quickly or run and had to stop playing tennis, dancing, and taking PT lessons in school, in fact she was away from school for some six months. It seems that there were differing accounts of the accident from the varying witnesses, Miss Rowell said she had pulled over to stop for a set of traffic lights and that she noticed Miss Hoole bending over the handlebars, due to the direction of the wind. She insisted that she had indicated that she was pulling in to stop as an acquaintance, Miss Newall, waved to her and walked over to the car. Miss Newall in her statement suggested that Miss Hoole could have taken avoiding action but failed to do so. The judge in summing up decided that Miss Rowell was guilty of careless driving rather than dangerous driving and that counsel should try and agree on the amount of damages to be paid. The figure of £750 was set and judgement given to the plaintiff for that sum and costs.¹⁶

Annie, at the age of 52, married widower and master mariner Captain Donald McKenzie Ross in the September quarter of 1942.¹⁷ I was surprised to find no newspaper reports of the marriage, especially given that she had been teaching at Sandbach Heath since at least 1914. A few years later on 4 March 1946 her sister Mary died of respiratory failure at the Victoria Infirmary, Northwich.¹⁸ It is from her obituary that we discover the details of her teaching career, she taught at four different local primary schools and was an original member of the local Amateur Operatic Society. She enjoyed playing tennis, badminton, and folk dancing, as did Annie and had been a Civil Defence Warden during WWII. There were many wreaths

¹⁴ CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe; 1908-1929, Souvenir of the 21st Anniversary, CCTCC

¹⁵ 1939 National Register, RG101, Northwich UD Dist, Piece 4057A; 1939 National Register, RG101, Northwich RD Dist, Piece 4100F; 1939 National Register, RG101, Northwich RD Dist, Piece 4095G

¹⁶ Liverpool Evening Express, 2 July 1940, 4; Liverpool Daily Post, 3 July 1940, 5; Crewe Chronicle, 6 July 1940, 6

¹⁷ GRO Marriage Indexes, September Quarter 1942, Northwich Dist, Vol 8A, page 849

¹⁸ Death Certificate of Mary Hoole, 1946: HM Passport Office, General Registrar Office

including from the staff at Weaverham and Danebridge schools, the badminton club and the former women wardens of Hartford.¹⁹

In October 1958 the CCTCC celebrated its 50th anniversary and the great and the good of education in Cheshire were in attendance. All past and present students were invited for a weekend of celebrations and Annie, as the oldest ex-student present planted a flowering cherry tree, alongside Miss Christine Bennett, the youngest student currently at the college.²⁰



Mrs Annie Ross, formerly Hoole, planting a cherry tree at the Golden Jubilee celebrations, watched by Miss Christine Bennet, youngest student²¹

Annie continued to be part of local activities around Northwich, being an active committee member of the Cuddington and Sandiway WI,²² arranging folk dancing lessons among other activities.²³ Annie's older sister Lily, also a member of the same WI died in 1962²⁴ and sadly after 26 years of marriage Donald died on 31 July 1968. The couple lived in a bungalow on Riddings Lane, Northwich and Donald was cremated at the Landican Crematorium in Birkenhead on 5 August,²⁵ where he is memorialised in the book of remembrance.

¹⁹ Winsford Chronicle, 16 March 1946, 7

²⁰ 'The Torch', CCTCC Old Student Magazine, 1959 Edition, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe; Nantwich Chronicle, 11 October 1958, 18; Crewe Chronicle, 11 October 1958, 18

²¹ CCTCC Golden Reunion Event 1958, CCTCC Archives, Under the care of the Family History of Cheshire, Crewe

²² Winsford Chronicle, 28 November 1953, 10; Winsford Chronicle, 23 November 1957, 11; Chester Chronicle, 18 October 1958, 18; Runcorn Guardian, 17 May 1962, 17; Winsford Chronicle, 19 May 1963, 6

²³ Winsford Chronicle, 25 September 1954, 4

²⁴ Winsford Chronicle, 4 May 1963, 19

²⁵ GRO Death indexes, September Quarter 1968, Northwich Dist, Vol 10a, page 400; The Guardian, 2 August 1968, 2



Courtesy of Landican Crematorium, Birkenhead, Book of Remembrance

Donald's will, penned in 1967, leaves small legacies to his nephew and grandchildren, as well as a good friend, the rest of his estate being left to Annie.²⁶ Shortly after the death of Donald, Annie writes her will, or perhaps updates a previous one, in which she leaves all her personal effects to her niece Margaret, the rest of her estate to be shared equally between Margaret and her brothers Philip and Peter, who were the children of her sister Lily.²⁷ James, Annie's brother was also a school master, as indeed was his wife Elizabeth, and although this is Annie's story it would be remiss not to mention that fact and that three of the four Hoole siblings made a career from the profession and were well-respected in the area.²⁸

Annie was the last surviving sibling and continued to live in her marital home at Riddings Lane until her death at the age of 86 on 21 August 1975.²⁹ Probate was granted on 14 October the same year, the record noting that Annie died in Davenham Hospital.³⁰ Annie's nieces and nephews published an acknowledgement for all the messages of sympathy and for tributes and thanks especially to kindness shown by the Doctors, Matron, and staff at Davenham Hospital, unfortunately there does not seem to be a full obituary or funeral report in the press.³¹

It is a shame that there is not more to learn about Annie and her teaching career, one of the first female students to enrol at the Cheshire Country Training College and who devoted nigh on 30 years of her life to the profession, most of it in the same school. I think she must have been very proud to have been selected to plant the tree at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the College in 1958, she was a regular attendee at the annual Old Student weekends so obviously kept in touch with her friends from those days.³²

Research by Rosie Rowley

Narrative by Margaret Roberts [Few Forgotten Women Team]

²⁶ Will of Donald Ross dated 7 November 1967, drawn up by Walls Solicitors of Crosby

²⁷ Will of Annie Ross dated 10 January 1969, drawn up by Hazelhurst Solicitors of Northwich

²⁸ Winsford Chronicle, 1 August 1970, 6; Winsford Chronicle, 19 January 1994, 5

²⁹ GRO Death indexes, September Quarter 1975, Vale Royal Dist, Vol 35, page 809;

³⁰ Grant of Probate, Sheffield Probate Registry Office, October 1975

³¹ Winsford Chronicle, 4 September 1975, 5

³² Various editions of the Old Student Magazines give lists of the students who attended these weekends and Annie's name was prevalent among these. 'The Torch', CCTCC Old Student Magazine, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe