

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



This story was written, in January 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of girls from Leeds, Girls' Industrial School, Yorkshire.

Emma Fletcher

As has already been mentioned by Ann Simcock when she was writing up Anne Schofield's story, sometimes in our research we are successful and at other times we draw a complete blank! This can be disheartening, but the reason for this may be that records are not available online at that particular point in time; that the person has somehow managed to avoid being recorded, evading the efforts of bureaucracy or simply that there are too many people with the same name in the same area at the same time to be able to prove without doubt that you have the right person.

Initially, I feared this was the case for Emma FLETCHER; however, returning to the research with fresh eyes, almost a month later proved a turning point! It was originally hoped that Emma FLETCHER might be the sister of Anne Mary FLETCHER another of the girls in Shadwell - despite their admittance just over a year apart - but unfortunately no connection between the two could be found.

The register for Shadwell Reformatory School shows that Emma was admitted to Shadwell on 26th March 1868 age 11 years of age. The only other information that was recorded about her was the fact that she was born in Hunslet (which had been transcribed as Hemslet)ⁱ.

Like many of her fellow Shadwell girls, Emma progressed from Shadwell to the Ragged School and can be found on the 1871 census as a scholar of the Girls' Ragged School with her age given as 13 and her place of birth as Leeds, Yorkshireⁱⁱ.

Checking the entries in the birth indexes for Emma FLETCHER, there were none in the registration districts of Hunslet or Holbeck during the years 1856-1859.

There were however a handful of other entries in the birth indexes when looking at the wider area:

June 1856	FLETCHER	Emma Ashforth	Ecclesall Bierlow	9c	202
Sep 1856	FLETCHER	Emma	York	9d	25
Mar 1857	FLETCHER	Emma Kilden Saville	Gt Ouseburn	9a	9
Dec 1857	FLETCHER	Emma	York	9d	16
Mar 1858	FLETCHER	Emma	Barnsley Union	9c	134
Jun 1858	FLETCHER	Emma Jane	Sheffield	9c	323
Dec 1858	FLETCHER	Emma	Barnsley	9c	114
Dec 1858	FLETCHER	Emma	Wakefield	9c	18

Unfortunately, with no immediate clues which if any of these might be our girl; these births needed to be cross-referenced using the GRO Online Index in order to determine the mother's maiden name ("MMN") for each birth.

Emma Ashforth FLETCHER born Ecclesall Bierlow had no MMN recorded so was likely illegitimate, with Ashforth being a possible clue to her father.

Emma FLETCHER born York in Sep 1856 also had no MMN, so again was likely to be illegitimate, but this time with no clues as to father's name.

I could not find an entry on the GRO Online index for Emma Kilden Saville FLETCHER, but searching on FindMyPast, there are two identical birth registrations, one for Emma Kilden Saville KILDEN and one for Emma Kilden Saville FLETCHER same registration district, vol. and page nos.as above. This possibly indicates that the parents subsequently married.

The Emma Fletcher born York Dec 1857 had a MMN of EXELBY; which can be ruled out as this Emma can be traced with her family via the censuses including crucially the 1871 census when "our" Emma was recorded in the Ragged School.

Emma FLETCHER born Barnsley Union Mar 1858 had a MMN of LITCHFIELD. Whilst there were 6 other births on the GRO Online index with surname FLETCHER and MMN Litchfield between 1850 and 1860, the only FLETCHER and LITCHFIELD marriage was in Radford, along with one birth for FLETCHER (MMN Litchfield) in Radford in 1860.

The Emma Jane FLETCHER born Sheffield with MMN of HAVENHAND in Jun 1858 was the daughter of John FLETCHER and Sarah HAVENHAND, and can be traced on the Censuses with her parents until adulthood.

The Emma FLETCHER born Barnsley Union with MMN of STRUTT in Dec 1858 was the daughter of Father Charles FLETCHER and mother Eliza STRUTT, but sadly died aged 6 in 1865ⁱⁱⁱ.

The Emma FLETCHER born Wakefield with MMN of WHITELEY in Dec 1858 was the daughter of George FLETCHER and Rachel WHITELEY and can be found on the various censuses with her family.

Having failed to successfully identify a birth or baptism within 2 years either side of her expected year of birth, attention then turned to the 1861 Census. An Emma FLETCHER, age 4 - the stepdaughter of John TAYLOR a Time Keeper age 25 and his wife Jane age 26 - was living at 4 Gideon Yard, Hunslet, together with the couple and their son Arthur Evelyn age 7 months – all were listed as being born in York with exception of Arthur, whose birth place was recorded as Potterage Field, Hunslet^{iv}.



2-6 Gideon Yard, Hunslet

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Further research revealed that Jane FLETCHER, a spinster age 23 years old of Meadow Lane had married John TAYLOR, a bachelor age 22 years old (occupation Time Keeper) of Neville Street on 8th November 1857 at St. Peter's, Leeds^y. Jane was the daughter of George FLETCHER a Coal Leader (someone who delivered or sold coal door to door) and John the son of John Taylor an Engineer.

Emma was likely therefore to be the illegitimate daughter of Jane; using that information and returning to the birth index entries for Emma FLETCHER mentioned above, it is possible the Emma FLETCHER whose birth was registered in 3Q 1856 in York, might be her birth entry.

If so, this fits in with the age of 4 years old given for Emma on the 1861 census (which was taken in April) and the age of 11 years old on the Shadwell Register in March 1868 when Emma was admitted.

Emma was recorded as aged 13 in the 1871 Census at the Ragged School; her age might not be entirely accurate and could possibly be a year out; if she was born 3Q 1856 she would have been 14 when the census was taken in April 1871.

In 1871, the TAYLOR family were still living in Hunslet, but this time at 45 Glasshouse Street. Sadly, their son Arthur had died – he was baptised on 10th January 1862^{vi} and buried just 4 days later in Hunslet Cemetery^{vii}. As 10th January was a Friday and he was the only child baptised on that day, he was most likely sickly or taken seriously ill and a private baptism was arranged hurriedly. The couple had a daughter Alice Edith born at the end of the same year^{viii}.

Emma was not living with them, but we were aware of that, having discovered her in the Ragged School on the 1871 Census, so that wasn't a surprise. John was 35 and working as a Newsagent, and gave his place of birth as York; Jane was 39 years old, and her place of birth was given as New Wortley, Yorkshire; Alice Edith was aged 8, attending school, with her place of birth given as Hunslet.

Researching the family further, it is interesting to note that Emma was baptised at St. Jude's Hunslet on 9th November 1862^{ix}, at the same time as Alice was baptised – in fact their entries appear adjacent to each other in the

register. Crucially, however, while addresses for both children are identical, Alice is baptised as Alice Edith Emmerson TAYLER daughter of John and Jane, but Emma is baptised as Emma FLETCHER daughter of Jane FLETCHER.

These entries clearly emphasise Emma's illegitimacy and occurring almost 4 years after John and Jane had married, perhaps indicates that John TAYLOR was unwilling or unable to accept Emma as his daughter and could be a clue as to the reason that she found herself in Shadwell, and subsequently the Ragged School. Unfortunately with no background details or sentencing information recorded in the Shadwell register and with no newspaper articles to be found, we can only speculate.

Attempting to trace Emma after she left the Ragged School, there are no records of an Emma FLETCHER born 1857 (+/- 2 years) living in Leeds on the 1881 census. There were however 8 Emma FLETCHERs in the wider county of Yorkshire; 7 of whom were married, meaning FLETCHER was their married name and not the name they were born with. The remaining Emma FLETCHER, born and living in Sheffield, a 22 year old (year of birth 1859) Pen Knife Case, living with her family; but she was quickly ruled out as she can also be found with her family on the 1871 and 1861 censuses and is in fact the Emma FLETCHER born 1858 in Sheffield whose MMN was HAVENHELD.

There are two marriages of an Emma FLETCHER in the Leeds area, one in 4Q 1874 and one in 4Q 1876 – which would place Emma at 18 and 20 years old respectively.

Following the TAYLOR family - in the hope of either finding Emma reunited with them or any clues which could help trace her - uncovered a marriage for Alice. Alice married Wharton BARBER on 25th December 1882 at St. Peter's Birstall, Leeds when they were both 20 years old^x. Wharton was an Engine Tender and the register entry reveals that Alice's father John TAYLOR, a Book keeper, was deceased.

Alice and Wharton do not appear to have had any children; with Wharton enjoying frequent stays at Her Majesty's pleasure. His first conviction was in 1891, when he was sentenced to 28 days at HMP Wakefield for stealing 3 ducks, he was released on 11 April 1891 which meant that he appeared on that year's census as a Prisoner.

In 1898 he was committed at Dewsbury on 28 November, before being sentenced at the assizes in Leeds on 2nd Jan 1899; this time for the offence of stealing 2 cockerels and 2 pullets for which he received 6 months; he was released on 1st July 1899.

On his release, he appeared in the Habitual Criminals Register, which states he had 3 previous offences^{xi} In 1906 he once again appeared at Dewsbury but this time charged with being drunk; he served 7 days before being released on 15th July.

As Wharton was in prison when the 1891 census was taken, Alice was recorded separately and was living at Long Fold, Liversedge age 28 and working as a Rover – a cotton rover in the textile industry transferred cotton yard onto bobbins. Whilst her husband was in prison Alice was not living alone, she had

a niece Martha SIMKINSON age 12 years old, who was born in Liversedge, living with her^{xii}. Martha's occupation was listed as doffer - someone who removed ("doffs") bobbins, pins or spindles holding spun fibre such as cotton or wool from a spinning frame and replaced them with empty one.

As one of the two possible marriages identified for Emma FLETCHER in Leeds was to a Henry Normanton SINKINSON, this discovery helped identify Emma's marriage.

Emma FLETCHER and Henry Normanton SIMKINSON – both of Wells St, Leeds, were married after the calling of banns at St. Phillip's, Leeds on 25th October 1874^{xiii}. Henry was listed as of full age and an Engine Tenter. Interestingly Emma was correctly recorded as a minor, but listed her father as James Taylor FLETCHER, a Blacksmith. As a minor she would have needed parental approval to marry, however neither of the two witnesses appear to be related to her.

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1874. Marriage solemnized at <i>St. Philip's Church</i> in the Parish of <i>St. Philip's</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
177	<i>Oct 25</i> <i>1874</i>	<i>Henry Normanton</i> <i>Sinkinson</i>	<i>Full</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Engine Tenter</i>	<i>Wells Street</i> <i>Leeds</i>	<i>James Sinkinson</i>	<i>Blacksmith</i>
		<i>Emma Fletcher</i>	<i>Minor</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Wells Street</i> <i>Leeds</i>	<i>James Taylor Fletcher</i>	<i>Blacksmith</i>

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by _____ or after *Edwards* by me, _____

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Henry Normanton Sinkinson* in the Presence of us, *Andrew Pickson* and *James Taylor Fletcher*

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The couple's first child, a daughter called Jane, was born in the first quarter of 1875^{xiv}; soon followed by a son named James in 1876^{xv}. Sadly James died just

after his 2nd birthday in the summer of 1878^{xvi}. A second daughter Martha was welcomed early in 1879^{xvii}.

In April 1881 when the census was taken, Emma is recorded as living at Back Fold, Liversedge, supporting her two daughters by working as a Worsted Mill Hand. Henry is not recorded with them^{xviii}.



St Philip's Church, Wellington Street, 1845 (from an old engraving)

(Photo: Leodis)

On 28th March 1884, Henry was sentenced to 14 days in H.M.P. Wakefield or a fine of 21/9 for being drunk & disorderly^{xix}. His occupation is given as Blacksmith and he was described as pot-marked; he was released on 10th April, 1884 having served his sentence. The entry in the register revealed that he had 4 previous convictions, the last one being in 1880; which may explain why Emma was on her own with their two daughters when the 1881 census was taken on 3rd April 1881. Images of Wakefield Prison can be found at <http://maggieblanck.com/Land/WakefieldPrison.html>. The Register of Prisoners reveals that his other convictions were in 1879 and two in 1880, but unfortunately the registers covering those dates are not digitised/available on Ancestry.co.uk currently.

We already know that at the time of the 1891 census Martha was living with her aunt Alice - Emma's younger half-sister. Her father Henry and sister Jane were found living at 6 Duke William Court, South East Leeds. Henry was described as married, age 37, a Joiner who was born in Cleckheaton and Jane as single, age 16, a Worsted Spinner, also born Cleckheaton; however the census states his wife was Mary, age 25, born Leeds^{xx}.

Sadly, this suggests that Emma had probably died and an entry in the death indexes in 1886 for an Emma SINKINSON^{xxi} of similar age appears to support this, though of course the death certificate would need to be ordered to be certain.

Mandy Geary February 2023

ⁱ Emma FLETCHER, www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Reformatory School Records, 1856-1914, Shadwell Children's Centre, Commitments Register 1862-1879, record no. 159; original data: West Yorkshire Archives Service, accessed 20th January 2023

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- ⁱⁱ Emma FLETCHER, 1871 England and Wales Census, www.ancestry.co.uk; ref: RG10; Piece: 4555; Folio: 115; Page: 5; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023
- ⁱⁱⁱ Emma FLETCHER, GRO Death Index; Registered 1Q 1865 Barnsley; Vol: 9c; Page 104; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 18th February 2023
- ^{iv} Emma FLETCHER, 1861 England and Wales Census, www.ancestry.co.uk; ref: RG9; Piece: 3365; Folio: 114; Page: 9; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^v Jane FLETCHER and John TAYLOR marriage; www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935; Leeds, St. Peter, 1857; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Leeds, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: RDP68/5/53; accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{vi} Arthur Evelyn Emmerson FLETCHER, Baptism. www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910; Hunslet, St. Jude, 1862; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Yorkshire Parish Records; New Reference Number: RDP44/14/1, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{vii} Arthur Evelyn Emmerson FLETCHER, GRO Death Index; Registered 1Q 1862, Dewsbury; Vol: 9b; Page: 274; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{viii} John and Jane FLETCHER and family, 1871 England and Wales Census, www.ancestry.co.uk; ref: RG10; Piece: 4513; Folio: 93; Page: 5; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{ix} Alice Edith Emmerson TAYLOR, baptism entry, www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910, Hunslet, St. Jude, 1862; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Leeds; accessed 16th February 2023
- ^x Wharton BARBER and Alice TAYLOR marriage, ; www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935; Birstall, St. Peter, 1882; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Leeds, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: WDP5/1/3/30; accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xi} Wharton BARBER, www.ancestry.co.uk; UK, Registers of Habitual Criminals and Police Gazettes, 1834-1934; original data: The National Archives; MEPO 6: Metropolitan Police: Criminal Record Office: Habitual Criminals Registers and Miscellaneous Papers; Reference: MEPO 6/10; accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xii} Alice BARBER and Martha SIMKINSON, 1891 England and Wales Census; www.ancestry.co.uk; RG12; Piece: 3726; Folio: 94; Page: 7; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xiii} Emma FLETCHER and Henry Normanton SIMKINSON marriage ; www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935; Leeds, St. Phillip, 1874; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Leeds, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: RDP62/21/4; accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xiv} Jane SINKINSON, GRO Birth Index: Registered 1Q 1875, Bradford; Vol: 9b; Page: 2; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xv} James SINKINSON, GRO Birth Index: Registered 2Q 1876, Leeds; Vol: 9b; Page: 597; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xvi} James SIMKINSON, GRO Death Index: Registered 3Q 1878, Dewsbury; Vol: 9b; Page: 464; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xvii} Martha SINKINSON, GRO Birth Index: Registered 1Q 1879, Dewsbury; Vol: 9b, Page 676; www.gro.gov.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xviii} Emma SINKINSON, 1881 England and Wales Census, www.ancestry.co.uk; ref: RG11; Piece: 4555; Folio: 94; Page: 34; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023.
- ^{xix} Henry SINKINSON; www.ancestry.co.uk; West Yorkshire, England, Prison Records, 1801-1914; HMP Wakefield, Nominal Register, 1884 Mar-Jun; original data: West Yorkshire Archive Service; Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England; Nominal Register Number 9; Year Range: 1884 Mar - Jun; Reference Number: C118/119, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xx} Henry SINKINSON and Jane SINKINSON, 1891 England and Wales Census; www.ancestry.co.uk; RG12; RG12; Piece: 3683; Folio: 102; Page: 7; original data: The National Archives, accessed 16th February 2023
- ^{xxi} Emma SINKINSON, GRO Death Index; Registered 2Q 1886, Dewsbury; Vol: 9b; Page: 379; www.ancestry.co.uk; original data: General Register Office, accessed 16th February 2023