

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story is one of a series that relate to women and girls who were associated with The Mount School, York, as pupils, teachers, or other members of staff. This project began in June 2023, as part of the York Festival of ideas.

Rhoda Constance Clothier & Hilda Josephine Clothier

Family background and early life

Rhoda Constance Clothier and Hilda Josephine Clothier, both students at The Mount School, were the daughters of Eustace Henry Clothier and Rhoda Esther Cavill. Their father's family were long-established members of the Quaker community in Street, Somerset,ⁱ where they had intermarried with the Clark family (who established their shoe business in the town).ⁱⁱ

The girls' parents, Eustace Henry Clothier and Rhoda Esther Cavill, were married on 21 January 1890 at St Augustine's Church in Penarth, Glamorgan, where both were residing at the time of their marriage.^{iii,iv,v} Eustace worked as a merchant, and among the witnesses to their marriage was James Pyke Thompson, Rhoda's brother-in-law,^{vi} whose family made significant contributions to leisure and culture in Cardiff.^{vii}

Shortly after their marriage, Eustace and Rhoda relocated to Ireland. Eustace's arrival in Dublin is recorded in the minutes of the Dublin Meeting of the Society of Friends on 14 April 1890.^{viii} Their eldest daughter, Rhoda Constance Clothier, was born at Ardeevin, Dalkey, County Dublin on 02 January 1891. Her father was informant for the birth registration on 30 January 1891. Where her mother's maiden name ought to have been recorded, under the word 'formerly', it instead records their former place of residence (Penarth).^{ix}

On 24 January 1891, Mrs. Clothier of Ardeevin, Dalkey, advertised in the *Dublin Daily Express* for a "Plain Cook; must be Protestant and teetotaller; no washing".^x Entries in *Thom's Irish Almanac* for 1891^{xi} and 1892^{xii} give their address as 10 Ardeevin Terrace in Dalkey. The family were therefore living in Ireland at the time of the 1891 census, and presumably would have been enumerated there, however Irish census records from 1891 have not survived. The birth of Eustace and Rhoda's second child, their son Wilfred Eustace James Clothier, was registered in Cardiff registration district in the first quarter of 1893.^{xiii} His birthplace is recorded as Penarth in subsequent census records. The youngest child in the family, Hilda Josephine Clothier, was born on 11 October 1897,^{xiv} with her birth registered in Cardiff registration district in the fourth quarter of 1897.^{xv}

The 1901 census shows Eustace, Rhoda, Wilfred and Hilda (mis-recorded as 'Hildred') living at 26 Victoria Road in Penarth, with Eustace working as a miller's agent. Their household includes two domestic servants: Edith Page (a cook) and Sarah James (a housemaid).^{xvi}

Rhoda Constance Clothier appears on the 1901 census as ‘Constance Clothier’, a 10-year-old boarder in a household on Station Road in Llanishen, Cardiff. The other residents were Marion and Emma Stainer (joint heads of household, sisters, and private school mistresses), Ada Stainer (their sister, a housekeeper and gymnastics teacher) and assistant teacher, Alice von Pirch.^{xvii} Although Rhoda Constance Clothier is not recorded here as a scholar, she was almost certainly being educated at The Leas, a private school for girls, which had been opened by the Misses Stainer in Llanishen in January 1893.^{xviii}

On 10 October 1902, an application was made for Rhoda Constance Clothier to attend The Mount School from Easter 1905 (subsequently amended to 1906). She joined the school in January 1906 and left in December 1907. School records indicate that although her father was a Friend, she was not a member of the Society of Friends herself. The family’s address at the time of her admission to the school is recorded as Woodlands, Penarth.^{xix,xx}

By the time of the 1911 census, Rhoda Constance Clothier was residing with her parents in South Wales. She has no occupation recorded on this census. The family now lived at Garnhill in Dinas Powys, with Eustace described as an accountant for a miller.^{xxi} Garnhill, now a Grade II listed building, was designed by architect J. Coates Carter in 1893, said to have been “built for a clothier”;^{xxii} it seems more likely that it was built for Eustace Henry Clothier.

The 1911 census shows Wilfred boarding in Edgbaston, Birmingham, where he was training to be a chartered accountant, whilst Hilda was at The Leas in Llanishen, evidently attending the same private girls’ school where her sister had been boarding ten years earlier.^{xxiii}

School records show that Hilda Josephine Clothier was admitted to The Mount School in April 1911, although a handwritten note alongside her entry in the admission register states “postponed indefinitely (Sep 1912)”, so it may be that she did not attend until a later date. She was a pupil at the school until July 1913. Unlike her older sister, Hilda is recorded as a member of the Society of Friends in the school records.^{xxiv,xxv}

The Clothier family’s son, Wilfred Eustace James Clothier, who had attended Bootham School in York from 1906 to 1910,^{xxvi} sadly died aged 22 on 02 December 1914.^{xxvii,xxviii} He was buried three days later in the Society of Friends burial ground in South Wales.^{xxix} He was a student at the time of his death.^{xxx}

Rhoda Constance Clothier

On Thursday 12 August 1915, Rhoda Constance Clothier married Wilfrid George Hinde^{xxxi} at the Friends’ Meeting House in Street, Somerset.^{xxxii,xxxiii} Her husband worked for C & J Clarks shoe company, and was descended from the Clark family on his maternal side. Despite heavy rain, a large crowd reportedly gathered to see the wedding party, which included her younger sister Hilda Josephine Clothier as a bridesmaid. Rhoda Constance wore a white crepe dress, with a wreath of orange blossom, carrying a bouquet of carnations and sweet peas. After a simple religious service, there was a reception at Leigh Holt, before Rhoda Constance and her new husband departed for a motor tour of Cornwall.^{xxxiv}

Rhoda Constance Hinde – as she was now known – gave birth to her only known child, John Wilfrid Hinde, on 17 May 1916.^{xxxv} Just two months later, her

husband appeared before a military tribunal in Street. Wilfrid was seeking exemption from military service on the grounds that he believed warfare to be contrary to the will of God and the teachings of Jesus. Such were his pacifist convictions that he also objected to non-combatant service, as this facilitated warfare. Wilfrid, a member of the No Conscription Fellowship, was granted a conditional exemption subject to joining the Friends' Ambulance Unit within 21 days.^{xxxvi} He appealed against this decision, asking for absolute exemption, but this was refused.^{xxxvii} On 07 October 1916 he was sentenced to six months in prison with hard labour. Further refusals to serve and court martials followed;^{xxxviii,xxxix} he remained in prison until 1919.^{xl}

Whilst her husband was in prison, on 06 June 1917, Rhoda Constance was almost certainly the 'Mrs. Hinde' who spoke at a meeting of the Women's International League in Street about the punishment of criminals and the "*appalling monotony and extreme unloveliness of prison life*". She questioned the benefit of imprisonment, saying that evidence suggested it was a demoralizing experience. She believed a system based on love – not force – was required.^{xli} Later, her husband recalled that one of their son's earliest memories would have been visiting him in Exeter prison;^{xlii} it seems likely that Rhoda Constance had taken her son to visit his father on these occasions. In 1918 a 'Mrs. Hinde' was elected to serve on the committee of the Street Child Study Circle.^{xliii} Rhoda Constance Hinde continued to take an interest in social and political affairs after her husband's release from prison, and is named among those on the platform – as 'Mrs. Wilfrid Hinde' – for a Women's International League meeting in March 1921, where a resolution was passed in favour of withdrawing armed forces from Ireland, with provision for election

by proportional representation of a constitutional assembly, as the Irish people desired, including protection for minorities.^{xliv}

The 1921 census, postponed due to fears of a General Strike, was eventually completed on 19 June 1921. It was a warm weekend, with many people enumerated away from their usual place of residence, enjoying fine weather at popular holiday locations.^{xlv} The Hinde family appear to be among these holiday-makers, as they were enumerated at Half Way House, Brean, Somerset on the 1921 census; although not specified as visitors, there is no other evidence to suggest that they had moved (briefly) away from Street at this time, and Wilfrid's place of work continued to be C & J Clark in Street. Rhoda Constance Hinde's occupation at this time is recorded simply as 'home duties'. The household also included their 5-year-old son John, a domestic servant (Minnie Ogborn) and a private children's governess (Ethel Maud Voike), presumably employed to educate John.^{xlvi}

Holidays abroad appear to have been a regular feature of life for the Hinde family in the inter-war period. Wilfrid gave slideshow presentations about visits to Switzerland (in 1927^{xlvii} and 1929^{xlviii}) and a motor tour of Norway (in 1934^{xlix}). Although not explicitly stated, it seems likely that Rhoda Constance and their son John would have accompanied him on these holidays. Rhoda Constance certainly travelled to South Africa with her husband and son during this period. Now living at Wraxleigh in Street, they sailed for Cape Town on board *Demosthenes* in December 1927^l for what seems to have been an extended trip, returning to Southampton on *Ceramic* in May 1928.^{li} In 1930, Rhoda Constance and her sister Hilda inherited their father's estate, their mother having predeceased him.^{lii}

Rhoda Constance's son, John Wilfrid Hinde, was either born with a physical disability,^{liii} or developed an impairment following an illness in early childhood.^{liv} This affected his left leg, and he spent much of his early childhood lying on his back.^{lv} The HIndes were first introduced to Christian Science around 1920.^{lvi} Wilfrid's cousin, Alice Clark, had embraced Christian Science around this time,^{lvii} and may have been instrumental in the HIndes' introduction to this doctrine. By Wilfrid's account (in 1939), they left Mary Baker Eddy's book unread until around 1929, when the "*need arose again and Christian Science help was sought*" which had "*greatly exceeded my expectations*".^{lviii} Treatment for John was reportedly obtained from a Christian Science practitioner, which the HIndes believed allowed him to lay aside his crutches and splint within a few years, leading them to become members of the Christian Science Church as a result.^{lix}

John developed a keen interest in photography at a young age, a field in which he went on to have a noteworthy career.^{lx} He obtained his first pinhole camera in 1927, and his parents built a studio for him at the top of their house.^{lxi} By 1939, he had studied at the Reimann School in London and was an associate of the Royal Photography Society.^{lxii} The 1939 Register^{lxiii} records the Hinde family living at Wraxleigh, with a domestic servant and school teacher in their household. Wilfrid continued to work at the shoe factory, and John is described as a commercial photographer. Rhoda Constance Hinde's occupation is recorded on the 1939 Register as 'Christian Science practitioner', indicating not only that she subscribed to this belief system, but also that she actively participated in seeking to provide healing through the power of prayer. John's

obituary, in *Wells Journal* in 1998, refers to his “*Christian Scientist mother Constance*”.^{lxiv}

After the Second World War, Rhoda Constance Hinde and her husband made several trips across the Atlantic. In 1947,^{lxv} 1948,^{lxvi} 1950^{lxvii} and 1952,^{lxviii} passenger lists record that they were travelling to Boston, Massachusetts. This is the location of the administrative headquarters and mother church of the Christian Science church, which was most likely the reason for this choice of destination; certainly, in 1952, the *Central Somerset Gazette* reported that Mr. and Mrs. Hinde of Street had attended the annual meeting of the mother church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts.^{lxix} Wraxleigh, the Hinde family home in Street, was sold in 1948. A newspaper advertisement for the sale by auction describes a large detached property, with a garden, out-buildings and a tennis court.^{lxx} Rhoda Constance and her husband have their address subsequently recorded as 75 High Street, Street, Somerset on passenger lists up to and including 1955.

In September 1954, Rhoda Constance and her husband once again sailed to New York, this time expressing an intention to live permanently in the USA.^{lxxi} It seems that this was, at the time, a quite definite plan, as they registered for US Social Security numbers in October 1954.^{lxxii,lxxiii} Twelve months later, however, they returned to England; the passenger list for this voyage records their last permanent residence as USA, with intended place of future residence initially recorded as USA, then crossed out and replaced with ‘England’.^{lxxiv} On returning from a further visit to the USA in 1958, it was recorded that they intended to spend 12 months in England before returning to live in the USA. Their address in the UK at this time was given as 238 Pembroke Road, Clifton,

Bristol.^{lxxv} There may have been further trips to the US after this date, however passenger lists after 1960 are not available to consult.

Ultimately, both Rhoda Constance Hinde and her husband ended their days in England. She died on 04 April 1965, at which time her address was Marymead Cottage, 88 High Street, Haslemere, Surrey. Probate of her estate, valued at £61,899, was granted at Bristol on 11 June 1965.^{lxxvi,lxxvii} Her husband, Wilfrid, died on 17 February 1973, and was living at 23 South Close Green, Merstham, Surrey at the time of his death; he left an estate valued at £32,014.^{lxxviii,lxxix}

Hilda Josephine Clothier

During the First World War, Hilda Josephine Clothier undertook canteen work in Cardiff and Penarth, before volunteering as a nurse for the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment between October 1916 and January 1917 at the auxiliary home hospital in Dinas Powys.^{lxxx}

The 1921 census shows Hilda residing with her parents at 88 Westbourne Road in Penarth, the same address at which she had lived during her wartime nursing service. The census records Hilda's occupation as a general land worker, but frustratingly neither a location nor a specific employer has been included. Her father's employer is shown as Spillers and Bakers in Cardiff, whilst her mother undertook domestic duties at home.^{lxxxii}

The marriage of Hilda Josephine Clothier to George Woods Hutchinson was registered in the third quarter of 1926 in Axbridge registration district.^{lxxxiii} Her husband was from a large Quaker family who grew up at a farmhouse between Fernhurst and Haslemere in Surrey.^{lxxxiii} He had been an orderly in the Friends'

Ambulance Unit during the First World War^{lxxxiv} and, by the time of their marriage, was a science master at Sidcot School,^{lxxxv} a co-educational Quaker school in Winscombe, Somerset.^{lxxxvi}

In May 1928, Hilda gave birth to a stillborn baby, who was buried at the Friends' Burial Ground in Winscombe. Records do not state whether the child was a boy or a girl. A note accompanying the burial record indicates that the child's birth was not recorded in the minutes of the Friends' Monthly Meeting because "*it is not usual to record such in the minutes*".^{lxxxvii,lxxxviii}

The birth of a surviving son, Herbert Clothier Hutchinson, was registered in the first quarter of 1930 in Bristol registration district.^{lxxxix} Another son, Christopher Cavill Hutchinson, had his birth registered in Midhurst (Sussex) registration district in the third quarter of 1932.^{xc}

The electoral register for Chichester in 1932/1933 records Hilda and her husband at Eagles Crag, Kingsley Green, Fernhurst, Sussex, which accounts for the registration district of Christopher's birth.^{xc} This was close to George's childhood home, so it may have been family matters that brought them to Sussex, however it was evidently not a permanent move. In 1937, George was appointed as headmaster of Sidcot School, having been acting head for the preceding six months.^{xcii}

The 1939 Register shows George and Hilda living at Williscot, Bristol Road, Winscombe, Somerset, with George's occupation recorded as headmaster of Sidcot School. In addition to unpaid domestic duties, the entry for Hilda states

that she was 'Hostess of School, unpaid', indicating that Hilda was involved in day-to-day life at Sidcot, albeit without remuneration.^{xciii}

George and Hilda had chosen to remain living at Williscot rather than moving into the headmaster's house at Sidcot when George was appointed to that position in 1937.^{xciv} Christine Gladwin's book, *Reflections of an Island: Reminiscences of Sidcot School 1930-1958* provides an excellent account of the period during which George was headmaster of the school, describing him as a shy man who did not initially want to become headmaster, but was persuaded to do so.^{xcv} It is said that "*Hilda supported him very well*", and although neither were naturally extrovert, they were warmly hospitable to both pupils and visitors.^{xcvi} The role of headmaster's wife at Sidcot is described as "*that of hostess*",^{xcvii} which corresponds with the entry for Hilda's occupation on the 1939 Register.

One Sidcot pupil recalled that: "*Sunday evenings before Meeting, the lower form boys were invited down to Hilda Hutchinson's readings at Williscot. There, once seated by the fire in the sitting room, Hilda would read from books such as 'White Fang' by Jack London, or 'John McNab' by John Buchan*". This pupil goes on to say that: "*Williscot was a house I came to know very well, as it came to be a second home for me on the death of my mother in 1935. The quite extraordinary kindness shown to me by George and Hilda I have never forgotten, nor am likely to do so*".^{xcviii}

George and Hilda "*steered Sidcot through the difficult days of WWII*", and on their departure from the school in 1946 established a travel award for students

that “*commemorates the long association which the Hutchinson and Clothier families have had with the school.*”^{xcix}

In May 1946, the *Derby Daily Telegraph* reported that G. W. Hutchinson had been appointed as head of Orchard Street County Modern Secondary School with effect from 01 September 1946.^c This school, in Orchard Street, Derby, was renamed Lancaster School in 1947.^{ci} Hilda evidently continued to be involved with school life during the Hutchinsons’ time in Derby. A newspaper report in 1954 about rehearsals for a production of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Iolanthe* refers to “*Mrs. H. J. Hutchinson, the headmaster’s wife, who does all the accompanying on a piano.*”^{cii}

George retired from teaching at the end of August 1956.^{ciii} The previous month, he was presented with a reading lamp from pupils, staff and former scholars; a newspaper report concerning this gift is accompanied by a group photograph that includes both George and Hilda.^{civ}

Electoral registers in 1957,^{cv} 1959^{cvi} and 1961^{cvii} give the Hutchinsons’ address in retirement as Williscot, Weycombe Road, Haslemere, Surrey. Notably, this is the same name as their previous house in Winscombe, perhaps indicating that they had renamed their new residence out of fondness for their former family home. Certainly, there continued to be an association with Sidcot School. In January 1959, a trust deed established Sidcot Building Trust, with George and Hilda as joint Presidents of the trust from outset. The trust was for building, maintaining and improving the buildings, playgrounds, gardens and playing fields of Sidcot School.^{cviii}

On 18 December 1959, George and Hilda departed from London on *M. V. Rangitoto*, travelling first class to Wellington, New Zealand.^{cxix} It seems they spent several months overseas, returning to London on *Durban Castle* on 03 September 1960.^{cx}

Hilda died on 11 November 1976, at which time her home address was Williscot, Haslemere, Surrey. Probate of her estate, valued at £38,489, was granted at Nottingham on 25 January 1977.^{cxii} Her husband, George, died on 07 December 1993, residing at Bilton Hall Nursing Home in Harrogate at the time of his death. Probate of his estate, of a value not exceeding £125,000, was granted at Manchester on 06 January 1994.^{cxiii,cxiv}

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We are aware that there are living descendants of the sisters, whom we have not been able to contact. We hope that they are pleased to see their ancestor's lives recorded in this way and hope they will get in touch if this is not the case.

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- ^x *Dublin Daily Express* (1891). Situations Vacant. 24 January. p. 2d. <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk> : accessed 18 June 2023.
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