

## *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.*

### **Isabella Elizabeth Holmes**

Isabella Holmes was a pale, frail, slip of a girl as she stood waiting to be admitted to Leeds reformatory school on 19 September 1870. She had been to court and was sentenced to 7 years for stealing 10 shillings and several other things from a shop. Her description was added to the admissions register - slender, pale complexion, hair black-brown and eyes brown too. It seems she was known to have been pilfering for about 2 years.<sup>1</sup>

She had been born in Leeds 9 years earlier, and had learned to read and write a few things along with some basic mathematics, which was then called cipher, at Miss Jowitt's school St Matthews. (I have been unable to track down this school, probably a 'dame school'). Her father, Thomas, a greengrocer, and

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<sup>1</sup> West Yorkshire, England, Reformatory School Records, 1856-1914. Record Type Commitment Vol date range 1862-1879 Ref LC/SS2/1/1 Register numbers 1-461 Shadwell Children's Centre Accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) January 2023

step-mother Mary Ann, of 121 Buslingthorpe Lane (near Chapeltown Leeds) were documented on admission. Newspaper reports of her conviction or court records are not available online.

This link shows the position of Buslingthorpe

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/gaz/WRY/LeedsBuslingthorpe> A list of Leeds streets can be found:

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/WRY/Leeds/LeedsStreets1853>

(Incidentally in 1932 a scholarly journal *Notes and Queries* noted that Buslingthorpe contains 13 different letters, none repeated. Exactly half the alphabet).<sup>2</sup>

Her baptism on 27 April 1862<sup>3</sup> usefully states a birth date of 17 February 1862 in the margin. Isabel or Isabella Holmes is not an uncommon name. The Buslingthorpe Lane address and her father, a fruiterer, confirm it is her. It shows her mother as another Mary Ann and gives Isabella's middle name - Elizabeth. This baptism record enabled me to find the correct birth through the General Register Office online index (GRO)<sup>4</sup> giving her mother's maiden name as Best. It is likely she was named Isabella for her maternal grandmother and Elizabeth for her paternal grandmother.

Searching the [GRO.gov](https://www.gro.gov.uk) online index revealed a brother, Henry William Holmes, born 1864. Baptism records gave his date of birth as 7 Jan 1864, and baptism

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buslingthorpe,\\_Leeds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buslingthorpe,_Leeds)

<sup>3</sup> West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910 West Yorkshire Archive Service; Wakefield, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; New Reference Number: RDP68/3A/19. Accessed via Ancestry January 2023

<sup>4</sup> General Register Office England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915 Leeds, Yorkshire West Riding, England 1862 Mar Vol 9b p422

21 Feb 1864. Thomas Holmes had married Mary Ann Best on 2 May 1861 at St Peter.<sup>5</sup> Her father was William Best a Cordwainer. His father David Holmes, a Smith.

Sadly Mary Ann, Isabella's mother died 29th September 1865, at 1 Buslingthorpe Court, aged 38 years, due to puerperal peritonitis for 8 days. No child was registered so both her mother and the baby she was expecting must have been lost. This must have had a profound effect on Isabella. So too would her father re-marrying and having a new family. Half-siblings Emily and Arthur were born before her sentencing and two more later.

Mary Ann, named as Isabella's 'stepmother' on admission, is Mary Ann Routh who married Thomas Holmes and whose siblings are named as uncles and aunts on the Ragged School admission register: Aunt and Uncle Thomas and Emma Ruth, paper mill, anchor street, Hunslet; Uncle Booth and Aunt Maria Harrison, Grandmother, Aunt Emma and Aunt Hannah, and Uncle Joseph are all listed.

We find Isabella at the Ragged School on Windsor Street Leeds in the 1871 census<sup>6</sup>. Her seven year original sentence, was up on September 19th 1877. This is marked in blue on the original admission register. However, in 1881 we find she is back at the Ragged School on Windsor Street Leeds, now working as

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<sup>5</sup> West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935 West Yorkshire Archive Service; Leeds, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: RDP68/5/61 Accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

<sup>6</sup> 1871 England Census Class: RG10; Piece: 4555; Folio: 115; Page: 6; GSU roll: 847137. Windsor Street Leeds, Yorkshire Accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) January 2023

a seamstress.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps she never left but was employed straight away. This suggests she was now regarded as trustworthy and a good worker of reasonable character.

Jumping to the 1939 register we find Isabella E. Childerson with the same birth date. This confirms her marriage to Hiley Backhouse Childerson in Hunslet 1887.<sup>8</sup> In 1891<sup>9</sup> they are living at No.6 Baron street, Hunslet, Leeds with 6 month old daughter Amy. He is a waiter. In 1901<sup>10</sup> they are at 57 Elford Grove, Potter Newton, Chapeltown, Leeds. Amy is 10. Hiley is working as a waiter and billiards marker. By 1911<sup>11</sup> after 23 years of marriage, they have had just one child. Hiley continues to work as a billiard marker and waiter. Both Isabella and Amy are 'Caretakers', presumably where they are living at 25a Park Square, Leeds. This is a 12 room house.

Wikipedia tells us Park Square was part of a fashionable West End housing development, completed in 1810. It featured a private garden square. St Paul's church, on the south side had been demolished in 1906 and a large warehouse and cloth cutting works was built in 1878 for ready-made mass production

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<sup>7</sup> 1881 England Census Class: RG11; Piece: 4521; Folio: 117; Page: 22; GSU roll: 1342085 Windsor Street, Leeds, Yorkshire accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023 (mistranscribed Ealsabella)

<sup>8</sup> FreeBMD. England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915Registration 1887 Jul-Aug-Sep Hunslet, Yorkshire West Riding Vol 9b p458 accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

<sup>9</sup> 1891 England Census Class: RG12; Piece: 3665; Folio 136; Page 35; GSU roll: 6098775. Hunslet, Yorkshire accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

<sup>10</sup> 1901 England Census Class: RG13; Piece: 4250; Folio: 16; Page: 23 accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

<sup>11</sup> 1911 England Census TNA RG14 Reg 500 West Leeds ED 65 Piece 27046 accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

tailoring, notable as the first planned and designed clothing factory.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless it was a very grand house for this family to be looking after.

By 1921<sup>13</sup> Amy has married Harold Hassall a sub-postmaster and draper, and works as his assistant. Daughter Marjorie is 8 years old. Hiley and Isabella are living with them at 47 West Street, Leek, Staffordshire. By 1939<sup>14</sup> Marjorie works as a shop and post office assistant. They are all living in Claremont Spring Gardens, Leek. Isabella, 77 years old, does unpaid domestic duties. So it seems Isabella lived a long and fulfilling life with a small but successful family. She outlived her husband and died aged 82 years.<sup>15</sup>

***Helen Shields January 2023***

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<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park\\_Square,\\_Leeds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_Square,_Leeds) accessed February 2023

<sup>13</sup> 1921 Census RG15 Piece 12779 Schedule 139 District Ref: RD 362 RS 3 ED 7 accessed February 2023 via [FindMyPast.co.uk](http://FindMyPast.co.uk)

<sup>14</sup> 1939 England and Wales Register RG 101/5400d reg 362 line 28 Schedule 54/5 accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) February 2023

<sup>15</sup> England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007 St Asaph, Denbighshire July 1944 Vol 11b p158 accessed online index [GRO.gov.uk](http://GRO.gov.uk) February 2023