

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This is one of a series of stories about those who served with the  
Voluntary Aid Detachment.*

Elizabeth Poskitt

Elizabeth served as a VAD nurse during World War 1, born in Pontefract in the West Riding of Yorkshire she travelled further afield during 1917 spending time between 20th January and 14th April at Bleakdown Auxilliary Hospital, Weybridge and between 5th September and 19th December at Uppingham VAD Hospital.

1917 looks like an interesting year for Elizabeth as her younger brother [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Poskitt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Poskitt) was ordained on 15th July that year having converted to Catholicism. It seems that Elizabeth and another sister Frances also converted as all three siblings were buried at St Edward King and Confessor Catholic Church, Clifford.

But let's go back to the beginning, Elizabeth was born in 1885 in Pontefract, her parents were John Poskitt, a farmer and Sarah Senior.

Elizabeth was baptised on 22nd April 1885 at Birkin, the ceremony was performed by HF Barnes Lawrence, Rector worth a mention for the neatness and clarity of his handwriting. Further baptismal records and censuses show that Elizabeth was the second child, she had an older sister Mary, a younger sister Frances Ann and the youngest of the family and only boy was Henry John.

I'll briefly talk about Elizabeth's siblings as they give you some idea of her background and it is through her interaction with them that it is possible to find a little about Elizabeth.

Mary born in 1884 is sadly described as an imbecile in both census records in which she appears, the 1891 records her as imbecile from a child which implies that maybe some illness or accident caused her disability. I wonder if helping care for Mary gave Elizabeth the empathy and some of the skills that resulted in her volunteering for nursing duties during the war. Mary died in 1908 aged just 24, surprisingly leaving £200 in a will.

Frances Ann born in 1886 was the only one of the three siblings to marry. She married agricultural auctioneer Percy Bentley in 1917 (an auspicious year for the family) and Elizabeth was a witness at the wedding. It is worth noting that the marriage took place at All Saints Church, a Church of England church. The 1939 register records auxiliary nursing for both Frances and Elizabeth's part in the war effort. There seems to be a family interest in health care, Frances's

son became a doctor and her daughter Ruth married a doctor having previously been a medical secretary.

Henry John the third sibling was born in 1888, his baptism again beautifully recorded by HF Barnes Lawrence has an addition written in red "Became Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds", it is not possible to work out that this was written in regret as to him leaving the Church of England or whether in recognition of what he has become.

So what of Elizabeth? After her baptism the first record I could find for her was not surprisingly in the census for 1891, but not living with her mother and siblings (father Joseph had died by this stage). She was, on census night at least staying at the home of her maternal grandmother and another cousin. Elizabeth is recorded with the name of Lily, which is quite possibly what her family called her.

In the 1901 census Elizabeth is back home with her mother, siblings and two servants, she is attending school. In the 1911 census Elizabeth is living with just her mother, sister Frances and a sixteen year old female servant, by this stage sister Mary had died and brother Henry can be found residing at theological college in Ely.

After her 1917 adventures in nursing, it seems that Elizabeth returned to Pontefract and is living in 28 Mayors Walk in 1921 (the year of her mother's death) with a female servant and a young visitor, her nephew, two year old Mark Stainsby Bentley.

Electoral records show that Elizabeth stayed at this address until at least 1946. In the 1939 electoral register she is living there alone and as mentioned earlier has auxilliary nursing listed as her role in the war effort.

Newspaper reports show that Elizabeth attended the funeral of her brother the Bishop of Leeds and just four years later her own death is reported in the paper. The short article contains some surprises. Firstly, Elizabeth died in Derbyshire, near Burton-on-Trent where she appears to have been living. Secondly she has a Roman Catholic funeral service back in Clifford, near Pontefract. Thirdly, she had a nickname "Diddy", I wonder if this is a childish mispronunciation of Lily as she was called in the 1891 census.

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Elizabeth died aged just 69 on 14th October 1954 and has a small headstone in her honour, she left an estate of the very exact sum of £2338 6s 1d, her will was administered by her niece Ruth Willis.

It seems that Elizabeth led a relatively quiet life but stayed close to her family. Her family were not rich but "comfortably off" and Elizabeth did no paid work. Nevertheless she played her part in both wars as an auxiliary nurse and this took her away from her home town in 1917, this would have widened her horizons although she did return home fairly quickly, maybe to nurse her mother who died in 1921.