

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]

Mabel Salter' Story

Mabel was born in Nantwich, Cheshire on the 22 October 1890. She was the eldest of three children born to Joseph Salter and Mary Elizabeth Davis. Mabel's parents married on 8 December 1889 in the parish church in the village of Marthyr Worthy, Hampshire. The entry in the marriage register shows Joseph's occupation as a groom and that he was living in Nantwich. Mary was living in the village of Marthyr Worthy.

Both Joseph and Mary Elizabeth were born and grew up in Hampshire and Wiltshire respectively. They came from a rural background with Joseph's father being a groom and later a cowman. Mary's father was a shepherd as were two of her brothers.

In 1881 Joseph was a boarder living in Aldershot and employed as a groom whilst Mary was living with her parents and several siblings in Chilton Candover, Wiltshire. At some point between 1881 and their marriage in 1889 Joseph had moved to Nantwich but returned to Hampshire to marry Mary. Not long after the marriage they both moved to Nantwich as that was where Mabel was born.

The 1891 census shows Joseph and Mary, together with Mabel living at 19 Highfield Place, Nantwich. Joseph is still a groom.

By 1901 the family now included two more children. Gladys who was born on 25 Jan 1893 and Albert Reginald born on 7 March 1895, both in Nantwich. They are living at Riverside, Nantwich, a property both Joseph and Mary lived in until Mary's death in 1945. Joseph is now described as a livery groom.

The family maintained their links with Hampshire with both Mabel and Albert being baptized in Marthyr Worthy in 1892 and 1897 respectively. An article in the Hampshire Chronicle on 13 September 1902 describes Mabel and her sister Gladys attending the wedding of their aunt Fanny Ellen at Marthyr Worthy as bridesmaids.

A notice in the Cheshire Daily Echo on the 9 June 1904 records Mabel being awarded a scholarship by Cheshire Education Committee enabling her to attend a secondary school. According to the school's admissions log Mabel attended Crewe Secondary School, later known as Crewe Grammar School, from 6 Sept 1904 until 16 Jul 1908. Her previous school was given as the Wesleyan school in Nantwich. Both her sister and brother also later attended the same schools.

On the 12 September 1908 the Crewe Chronicle published the names of the students, which included Mabel Salter, who had passed the preliminary exam and were now eligible to enter training college. This was known as the

Preliminary Certificate and was a two-part exam with Part one having compulsory subjects whilst Part 2 allowed some flexibility in the choice of subjects studied. Mabel then went on to attend the Cheshire Training College in Crewe when it opened in September 1908 so was part of the first cohort. The college was at that time temporarily housed in rooms above the Mechanics Institute in Earle Street, Crewe. The course at the college was over a period of two years and students had to agree that on leaving they would work in elementary or secondary schools for a set period of five years for women and seven for men. Whilst at the college female students were expected to dress smartly, in long-sleeved, high-necked blouses and ankle length skirts, with their hair neatly tied up.

An article in The Guardian of 25 Dec 1909 mentions Mabel taking the part of Celia, the daughter of Frederick, in the performance of As You Like It by the college students the previous Tuesday but that is the only mention of Mabel in the local newspapers during her time at the college even though, according to old student magazines, Mabel was made the Year Secretary between 1908 and 1910.

Mabel took her final exam in 1910 and although she doesn't appear in the Teachers' Registration Council Register of 1914 – 1948, the 1911 census shows her living at home with all the family and is a teacher employed by the County Council. There's no record of where she was teaching at that time but by 1921 Mabel was an elementary school teacher at the Borough School, Earle Street, Crewe and employed by Crewe Education Authority.

There was a small Wesleyan day school established in 1887 in the Chapel Sunday Schoolrooms in Earle Street which was transferred to the local authority in 1906. This school became the Earle Street Council School and in 1908 was described

as an annex for the Borough schools finally closing in 1915. According to Kelly's directory of 1910, a Borough School was opened in Earle Street in 1908 and had 370 senior mixed, 410 junior mixed and 370 infants mixed making it the largest school of its type in Crewe. It's reasonable to assume Mabel was teaching at either or both schools from 1911 to 1921.

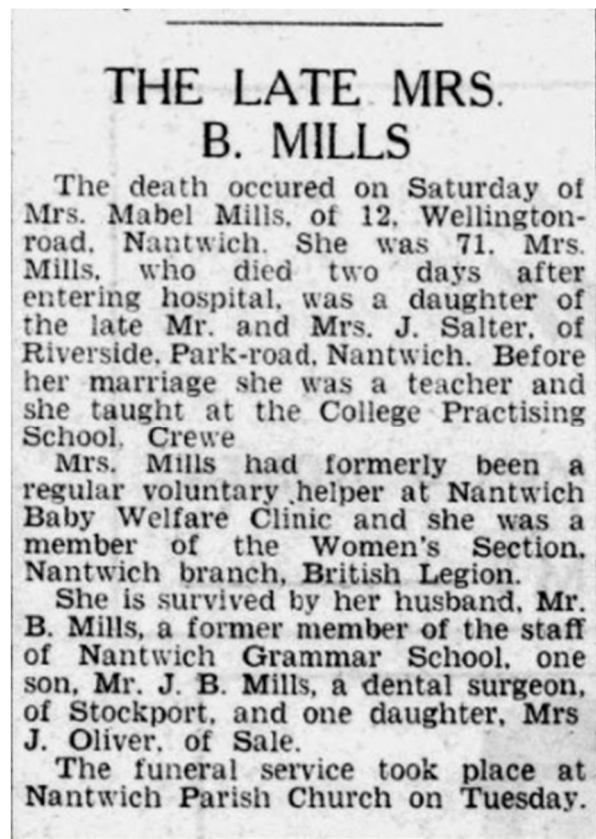
Mabel married Bernard Mills in 1922 and according to FamilySearch their intended date of marriage was 8th August 1922. Their marriage was registered at Nantwich in the 3rd Qtr 1922. Bernard had been a pupil at Nantwich and Acton Grammar School and on leaving in 1908 he went on to attend the Cheshire Training College in Crewe where he surely must have met Mabel. He began his teaching career at his old school, Nantwich and Acton Grammar in 1910, where he was a form master. He left in 1913 and went on to study for a B.Sc., in Agriculture at the Victoria University of Manchester now just referred to as Manchester University. He served as a gunner with the Royal Artillery from 1917 and was wounded and invalided home in 1918 spending some time in hospital in Manchester. After WW1 Bernard taught agricultural science at Stamford School, Lincs. for two years from 1919 to 1921. He left to return to teach at Nantwich and Acton Grammar School where he stayed until his retirement in 1951. At the time of his marriage, he was a Senior Science Master at the school.

Once married Mabel would presumably have resigned her position as a teacher. A statement by a senior British judge in 1925 'The duty of a married woman is primarily to look after her domestic concerns and it is impossible for her to do so and to effectively and satisfactorily act as a teacher at the same time'. Marriage bars in teaching weren't lifted for married women until 1944. This reflects the notion that "a woman's place is in the home"

Bernard and Mabel lived for many years at 12 Wellington Road, Nantwich, during which time they had a son and daughter. Both of their children married and had families of their own. According to the 1939 Register Bernard was a schoolmaster and a volunteer with the ARP. Mabel was a member of the Womens Voluntary Service Corps though there is no record of what her role was.

After her marriage Mabel was involved with several local groups including raising funds for the Nursing Association. She was a committee member of the Nantwich Welfare Centre and her reappointment was reported in the Evening Sentinel in 1935. It's interesting to note that she was referred to as Mrs B or Mrs Bernard Mills in newspaper articles.

Mabel died on the 16 June 1962 and her death was reported in The Chronicle on 23rd June 1962.



Source: British Newspaper Archives

Bernard Mills died on the 14 April 1975 and was remember during a speech given by the headmaster of Nantwich Grammar School at Prize Giving on 24 April 1975.

the future.

Mr. Rowsell also mentioned the late Mr. Bernard Mills, who had been connected with the School practically all his life. He began as a pupil, came back as a biology teacher and later became a governor, a post he held until he moved to Altrincham a few years ago. Many of the trees and shrubs in the grounds had been planted by Mr. Mills, and were a lasting memorial to him.

Source: British Newspaper Archives

Sources

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