

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in April 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women staff and female patients associated with the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital, Jesmond, Northumberland.*

## **Maggie Cameron's Story**

Maggie, also referred to as Margaret, was born on 19 August 1863 in Elie, Fife, Scotland, to John Cameron and Ann nee Noble.<sup>1</sup> John was in the Coast Guard service and by 1871 he and the family had moved to Northumberland, working at the Coast Guard Station in Newton by the Sea. The couple lived in one of the coast guard cottages with their seven children, of which Maggie was the middle child.<sup>2</sup> Ten years later John had left the coast guard service and was working as a labourer in a limestone quarry, with 18-year-old Maggie being noted as a female agricultural worker.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marriage certificate of John Cameron and Ann Noble, 4 March 1857 in Cromarty, Scotland; Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950 via [www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk); Birth Certificate of Margaret Cameron, 19 August 1863, Elie, Fife

<sup>2</sup> 1871 England and Wales Census, RG10 Alnwick Registration District, Piece 5176

<sup>3</sup> 1881 England and Wales Census, RG11 Alnwick Registration District, Piece 5124



Coast Guard Cottages, Newton by the Sea. Courtesy of <https://simplyseaviews.co.uk/>

Disaster befell the family in 1888 when John was killed in an accident at the quarry. It appears that John oversaw the explosives used in the blasting operations and was *'frightfully mangled'* when a charge went off prematurely. He was taken to his home in Longhoughton as quickly as possible but died within half an hour of arrival, rendering the services of Dr Thew *'of no avail'*. It was further noted that John having previously been in the coast guard service was in receipt of a considerable pension.<sup>4</sup>

Maggie is listed as a nurse in the 1891 census at the Fleming Hospital, although her age has been mis-transcribed as 27 rather than 21.<sup>5</sup> Her mother Ann is still living in Longhoughton with Maggie's younger siblings.<sup>6</sup> Maggie's change of occupation from that of agricultural worker to a nurse does seem a huge leap, which led me to wonder how and why she made this decision to train as a nurse, but that is something that will perhaps remain a mystery. The history and details of the hospital itself can be found on the Few Forgotten website.<sup>7</sup> Whatever the

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<sup>4</sup> *Shields Daily News*, 17 January 1888, 1

<sup>5</sup> 1891 England and Wales Census, RG13, Newcastle upon Tyne Registration District, Piece 4219

<sup>6</sup> 1891 England and Wales Census, RG13, Alnwick Registration District, Piece 4265

<sup>7</sup> See - <https://www.fewforgottenwomen.com/general-8-3>

reason for such a major career transition, Maggie didn't nurse for that many years, as in 1895 she married a William Teanby Tyer.<sup>8</sup> William was the son of a bank clerk, born in Brixton, Surrey, and living in Middlesex in 1891 with his widowed father George, and sister Emily. William himself was listed as a dental student, so presumably training to be a dentist.<sup>9</sup> Another conundrum then is why William would have made the long journey to the North East from London in order to practice his craft, again something we may never learn. A newspaper report in 1897 states that W T Tyer '*wishes to intimate that on and after Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> his address will be 66 Upper Ravensdowne*', it is from this address that he seems to run his dentistry practice until 1920, when it is taken over by a Mr Webster.<sup>10</sup>

William and Maggie had their only child, a daughter they named Mary, on 4 January 1899. The Ravensdowne Road address was also their home as that is the place of birth listed on Mary's birth certificate, William's occupation was noted as a master dentist.<sup>11</sup> The Google Street View image below shows that it was quite a substantial residence. The couple were enumerated at that address in 1901, William as a dentist and Maggie along with 8-year-old Mary, referred to as Molly, and William's unmarried sister Emily.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly the adverts for William's dentistry business invariably state that there was a '*Lady in Attendance*', obviously as a chaperone for the women that attended for treatment. Mary obviously kept in touch with her nursing past as in 1910 she was supporting the Berwick Ladies Nursing Association in their efforts to support

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<sup>8</sup> GRO Marriage Indexes, 1895 April Quarter, Newcastle upon Tyne District, Vol 10b, page 166

<sup>9</sup> 1891 England and Wales Census, RG12, Edmonton Registration District, Piece 1064

<sup>10</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1897, 1; *Berwick Advertiser*, Friday 25 November 1904, 1; *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 9 November 1909, 1; *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 24 December 1912, 1; *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 15 Mat 1917,1; *Berwick Advertiser*, 8 October 1920, 1;

<sup>11</sup> Birth Certificate of Mary Tyer, 4 January 1899

<sup>12</sup> 1901 England and Wales Census, RG13, Berwick Registration District, Piece 4833

the less fortunate members of society, donating a house plant as a gift. These gifts of kind were disturbed among the sick and needy of the area.<sup>13</sup>



66 Upper Ravensdowne, Berwick. Credit: Google Street View

The lives of Maggie and William, as a married couple then becomes rather complicated. At the time of the 1911 census William was still living at Ravensdowne with his sister Emily, his employment listed as that of '*dentistry and dental anaesthesia*'. He claimed to be married and crossed out on the return by the enumerator was the fact that he had been married for 16 years and had one child still living.<sup>14</sup> Maggie herself confirms as much on her census return, although she was living with their 12-year-old daughter Mary at Sealodge, Cresswell, Morpeth. There were also two visitors and two domestic servants detailed alongside Maggie and Mary. This may well suggest that Maggie was running a boarding house and given the position of the residence, overlooking

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<sup>13</sup> *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 18 January 1910, 8

<sup>14</sup> 1911 England and Wales Census, RG14, Berwick upon Tweed Registration District, Piece 31120

Cresswell Beach, as shown in the Google Street View image below, it was definitely well placed for a holiday by the sea.<sup>15</sup>



Sealodge, Beach Road, Cresswell, Morpeth. Credit: Google Street View

It is not clear whether William and Maggie have gone their separate ways, but it certainly seems as if they had separated. William appeared in both the 1921 census and the 1922 UK Register of Dentists with a registered address of Ottinge, Elham, Canterbury. At the time of the census, he once again listed his work as dentistry and was living alone, although still stating that he was married.<sup>16</sup> Maggie and Mary were in Catterick, Yorkshire, Maggie recorded as undertaking home duties and still claiming to be married, while Mary was a motor driver for Timber Merchants, Thomas Walker & Co, quite an usual occupation for a young 22 year old woman.<sup>17</sup> A few years later, in Cardiff, Mary married merchant seaman Roland Dakers Smith,<sup>18</sup> Maggie seemed to live with the couple and remained with them as they moved from South Wales to Grayshott in Wiltshire sometime between 1932 and 1939. The 1931/2 Glamorgan Electoral Registers show Roland, Mary and Maggie living in Seafeld, Station Road, but unfortunately, I cannot find out what Roland's occupation was at this time.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 1911 England and Wales Census, RG14, Ellington Cresswell Registration District, Piece 31049

<sup>16</sup> 1921 England and Wales Census, RG15 Elham Registration District, Piece 04587; UK Dentist Registers, 1879-1942, accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>17</sup> 1921 England and Wales Census, RG15 Catterick Registration District, Piece 20243

<sup>18</sup> GRO Marriage Indexes, 1924 December Quarter, Vol 11a Page 952

<sup>19</sup> Glamorgan Electoral Registers, 1832-1978, accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

As WWII loomed and the National Register was collated, Maggie was recorded as living in a property called Homestead, Headley Road, Grayshott. She was listed as a semi-invalid while Roland and Mary lived nearby at the Post Office in Grayshott, as Post-master and mistress.<sup>20</sup> Four years later on Christmas Day 1943 Maggie died at the age of 81. The cause of death was heart failure, and the informant was her son in law, R D Smith, Maggie died in their home, The Post Office, Grayshott. Interestingly she is noted as the widow of William Teanby Tyer, retired dentist.<sup>21</sup> William had predeceased Maggie, dying on 28 November 1942.<sup>22</sup>

The reasons behind Maggie and William's estranged married life will perhaps remain a mystery, especially given the passage of time. In his will, dated 23 December 1938, William, left bequests to his daughter, sister, nieces, nephews, and wider family. Strikingly, Maggie is conspicuously absent from any mention.<sup>23</sup> Maggie's life spanned nearly the entire country, living as she did in places from Scotland to Cardiff. It is however somewhat regrettable that the motivations behind her life choices, whether self-made or influenced by others, remain unclear from our vantage point in history.

### **Narrative by Margaret Roberts Few Forgotten Women Team**

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<sup>20</sup> 1939 National Register, RG101, Alton Registration District, Piece 2361A

<sup>21</sup> Death Certificate, Margaret Tyer, 25 December 1943

<sup>22</sup> Death Certificate, William Teanby Tyer, 28 November 1942

<sup>23</sup> William Teanby Tyer, will dated 23 December 1938, Tyer and Terry, Solicitors, Bloomsbury, London