

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.

Evelyn Altham Jackson's Story

Evelyn Altham Jackson was a nurse, aged 24, on the 1901 census. She was working at the Fleming Memorial Childrens' Hospital in Jesmond, Northumberland.

What took her there I wonder? She had been born in Brinkley, Cambridgeshire on the 19th July 1877 to Francis William Jackson and his wife Sybil Bliss. Francis was a vicar in the Church of England, born in Great Horton in Yorkshire, but clearly - from the birthplaces of Evelyn's siblings - had travelled around the country and beyond. In 1891 he was near Pickering, but had been at Bolton Percy (also Yorkshire), Brinkley and even Madras. In fact he had married Sybil, who was born in Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, in Madras, India, on the 5th of November 1872. Her father – Thomas Bliss – was also a churchman who spent time in India. In fact his wife and Sybil's mother, Sophia, died in 1871 and was buried in Madras.

Is it too much of a stretch to suggest service to one's community was instilled in Evelyn at a young age?

Evelyn married in 1909, on the 24th of May, to a doctor named Arthur Hamilton Lowe. He was 39 and she 31. This was in Norton in Yorkshire although Arthur was living in Grantham in Lincolnshire at the time. Evelyn's father is listed of course but had by this time passed away, but two of her siblings acted as witnesses. Arthur's father and brothers were all doctors. The next time we pick Evelyn up – in the 1911 census – she has moved to Harrowby Road in Grantham with her husband who is now the County Medical Officer of Health. Evelyn has no profession now. No children yet and indeed no children were ever born to this couple.

The couple are absent from the 1921 census. Maybe they were travelling as one later record points to the fact they did venture abroad. Records show that Evelyn and her husband had visited Japan as their names appear on the records of the ship *Memnon* arriving back in London from that country on the 28th June 1935.

The 1939 register show the couple, Arthur now retired, in Bournemouth in a house named *Lincoln Green* on Harland Road. One wonders if they named it so after their previous life in Lincolnshire. Arthur is also retired from the RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps). At the side of Evelyn's record is the phrase *TFNS retired*. This is the first reference I have found to nursing since that original 1901 record. TFNS refers to the Territorial Force Nursing Service, formed in 1908. Women over the age of 23, and with three years' experience in a hospital could apply for this voluntary role. By 1914, of course, this experience was vital and by the end of the war over 8,000 nurses had served both at home and in casualty clearing stations abroad. Although there are some records of TFNS nurses, sadly Evelyn's name is not amongst them. But Lincolnshire had a number of facilities at which she could have worked – The County Hospital, The 4th Northern General, Sobraon Barracks Depot Hospital and Boultham Hall. There is a tiny, unsubstantiated clue, in the Grantham Journal of the 15th April 1916 when it was reported that a Mrs Lowe had left the Red Cross facility at the Barracks and moved to Leeds to continue her nursing work in the Military Hospital there.

Arthur died in 1945 leaving behind a substantial amount of money. An obituary in the Grantham Journal says he served in France and Belgium in the First World War and had been awarded the King George V Coronation Medal.

Evelyn lived on until the 18th of May 1964. Her younger sister Margaret had been living with Evelyn and Arthur in 1839 and was mentioned in Evelyn's probate record so Evelyn was not alone in those long years of widowhood.

Sources

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