

# *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]*

## **Dora Nicholson's Story**

Dora Nicholson was born on 13 February 1891<sup>1</sup> to John Nicholson and his wife Mary. She was baptised in Christ Church, Heaton Norris, on 19 April 1891<sup>2</sup>. John had married Mary Bourne in Altrincham in 1889<sup>3</sup>. The family of five were living at 50 Heaton Lane in Stockport in 1901. John was a Chemist, working on his own account from home<sup>4</sup>. Dora was the eldest of three daughters. She was educated at Stockport High School and was admitted to the Cheshire County Training College, Crewe (CCTCC) on 15 September 1909, having passed her Cambridge Local Senior exam prior to 1 August of that year. Her father, J Nicholson Esq. was named as her guardian. Dora provided a home address of 50 Princes Street, Stockport<sup>1</sup>. Her parents and sisters were living at this address in 1911<sup>5</sup>.

Stockport was approximately 35 miles from Crewe so it was impractical for Dora to commute to college daily. Instead, for the two years of her course, she boarded in The Hostel for female students which was onsite at CCTCC. Fees were £10 per annum. Students of any denomination were accepted on the condition they attend worship at a local church. Visitors were permitted between the hours of 10am and 12 noon on Saturdays. The college year ran

from 15 September to 7 July with a three week break for Christmas a further three-week holiday at Easter. The students attended classes from 9.30am to 4 pm daily with the exception of Sunday. No classes were held on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons. Dora would have undertaken approximately 5 months of practical training in local schools during her two years at CCTCC<sup>6</sup>.

Harriet Alice Carson, 45, the Vice Principal of CCTCC lodged the census return for those residing in The Hostel on the night of 2 April 1911. She was one of 10 single women listed along with Emily Ward, 34, one of the college lecturers, Dora Nicholson, Nellie Guest, four other students aged 18 and 19, a cook and a housemaid<sup>7</sup>.

The college had a broad curriculum. Besides the basic subjects of English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Biology and Nature Study and Scripture, students had a grounding in Physical Education, Rural Science, Singing, Music, Hygiene and Drawing. Female students could opt to specialise in the teaching of infants or juniors in their second year. Dora graduated in July 1911. Under the terms of her admission into CCTCC, she was required to teach for the next five years in an Elementary or Secondary School which was in receipt of Government Grants<sup>6</sup>.

In 1915, Dora married Norman Josiah Barten Venner in Gravesend, Kent<sup>8</sup>. Norman was a teacher when he enlisted as Private 18989 in the Grenadier Guards in Fulham on 4 September 1914<sup>9</sup>. The attestation papers note he was discharged on 23 February 1915 without having left England. Medal Roll Index cards show Norman had transferred to the 20<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant<sup>10</sup>. Dora and Norman were living at 8 Goldhurst Terrace, Hampstead in 1921 with son Michael aged 4 and a servant<sup>11</sup>. Norman was now a journalist with the Daily News Ltd.

Norman died on 19 September 1929<sup>12</sup>. The family were now living at 13 Wildwood Road, Hendon. Dora had moved yet again by September 1939 as she was recorded as a widow of private means living at 26a Church Street, Saffron Walden<sup>13</sup>. Son Michael was single, living in Manchester and employed as an electrical engineer<sup>13</sup>.

Dora died on 20 April 1975 with an address of 4 Cedar Close, Wokingham, Berkshire<sup>14</sup>.

***Narrative by Karen Cousens***

1. CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe
2. Ancestry.com. Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1915 [database on-line]
3. England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915 [database on-line].
4. 1901 England Census Class: RG13; Piece: 3287; Folio: 92; Page: 2
5. The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 Class: RG13; Piece: 3287; Folio: 92; Page: 2
6. Cheshire County Training College, Crewe, Prospectus 1908-1914, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe
7. The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 RD449, Crewe, Cheshire, Piece 21767
8. FreeBMD. England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915 [database on-line].
9. Ancestry.com. UK, British Army World War I Pension Records 1914-1920 [database on-line]
10. Army Medal Office (In the Care of the Western Front Association Website); London, England; Wwi Medal Index Cards
11. The National Archives 1921 Census of England & Wales RG15 Piece 00661
12. Ancestry.com. England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995 [database on-line]
13. 1939 register on [www.findmypast.com.au](http://www.findmypast.com.au)
14. Ancestry.com. England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995 [database on-line]