

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



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

## **The Furnace Sisters: Dorothy and Lizzie (Voluntary Aid Detachment Cumberland 18)**

The Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) records indicated that Dorothy Furnace and Lizzie Furnace both worked for VAD Cumberland 18. Research has determined that Dorothy and Lizzie were siblings who both undertook unpaid work at the Lingholm Auxiliary and Officers Hospital during World War 1.

Dorothy, the eldest child of John Anthony Furnace and Mary Elizabeth Gibson was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1895 in Keswick, Cumberland.<sup>1</sup> John and Mary had married the previous year in Crosthwaite, Keswick.<sup>2</sup> In the 1881 and 1891 census returns Mary was living with her widow mother, Susan Gibson and siblings.<sup>3 4</sup> John in the 1881 and 1891 census returns was living with his parents and siblings and employed as a jeweller/ jewellers assistant.<sup>5 6</sup> John's father Anthony had also been a jeweller.

Lizzie (also known as Elizabeth) Furnace was born two years later on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1897.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, Lizzie and Dorothy's mum, Mary Elizabeth died on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1897 and is buried at Crosthwaite Churchyard, Keswick, Cumberland.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, at the time of the 1901 census the family are living separately. John Anthony Furnace was residing with his younger brother, Joshua, at Bankend, Workington, Cumberland.<sup>9</sup> He was employed as a jeweller's assistant. John's two

daughters are living in Keswick, Cumberland. Dorothy is residing at 3 Lake Road, Keswick and is noted as the adopted daughter of Robert and Mary Birkett.<sup>10</sup> Lizzie, however, is living with her maternal grandmother, Susan Gibson, and maternal two aunts (Margaret Annie Gibson and Edith Gibson) at 21 Stanger Street, Keswick.<sup>11</sup> Dorothy and Lizzie's grandmother, Susan Gibson, died on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1903 and is buried at Crosthwaite Churchyard, Keswick.<sup>12</sup>

School admission records for Keswick established that Dorothy and Lizzie attended St John's Infant and then later St John's Primary School.<sup>13 14</sup> Dorothy left in year 4 to attend a private school.<sup>15</sup> Lizzie continued at St John's leaving in May 1911.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1911 census, Dorothy remained with Robert and Mary Birkett, and resided at Chestnut Hill, Keswick.<sup>17</sup> Lizzie lived at 45 Blencathra Street, Keswick with her two maternal aunts, Margaret Annie Gibson and Edith Gibson.<sup>18</sup> Dorothy and Lizzie's father, John Anthony Furnace continued to reside in Workington and lived with his brother, Isaac. John was working as an iron ore sampler. He is noted to be a widower having two children who were still alive.<sup>19</sup>

Both Dorothy and Lizzie were recorded as working at the Lingholm Auxiliary and Officers Hospital during World War 1. Lingholm estate is situated on the shores of Lake Derwentwater, Keswick and during World War 1 the Rochdale family passed the house over to the VAD to be used as a convalescent hospital for military officers. Lady Beatrice Rochdale, MBE was the officer in charge at Lingholm Officers Hospital, Keswick.<sup>20</sup>

A local paper state that both Dorothy and Lizzie had undertaken first aid training in Keswick.<sup>21</sup> They enrolled into the Cumberland 28 VAD on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1915. Both undertook unpaid work at Lingholm Officers Hospital. Dorothy was employed from the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1917 working in the pantry and ward and had accrued 373 hours.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Lizzie was engaged at Lingholm for the period 19<sup>th</sup> June 1917 – 15<sup>th</sup> May 1918. She accumulated 1400 hours working as a maid and in the pantry. It is noted on the VAD card that Lizzie had started at Workington Infirmary in May 1918.<sup>23</sup>

The 1921 census indicated that Dorothy remained with the Birkett family in Keswick.<sup>24</sup> Lizzie had continued her role at Workington Infirmary. She worked as a sick nurse and was known as Elizabeth.<sup>25</sup> Their father, John Anthony Furnace lived in Elizabeth Street, Workington with his brother, Isaac and sister, Elizabeth Ann. John was currently unemployed and had been a process foreman for the Workington United Steel company.<sup>26</sup>

Mary Jane Birkett, adopted mother of Dorothy died in 1923 whilst her adopted father, Robert Birkett died in 1930.<sup>27 28</sup> In 1923 Dorothy married George L Storey and Lizzie married Arthur Wilson in 1931.<sup>29 30</sup> Dorothy and Lizzie's father, John Anthony Furnace died in 1935.<sup>31</sup>

It is documented in the 1939 Register that Dorothy and George Storey lived at Stapen Hill, Millbank, Keswick. George was employed as a retail grocer and provision merchant.<sup>32</sup> Lizzie and Arthur Wilson were at Bridgend, Workington with their daughter, Dorothy Elizabeth Wilson. Arthur was a works manager at the water mineral factory.<sup>33</sup> Both Dorothy Storey and Lizzie Wilson undertook unpaid domestic duties.

Research has suggested that Dorothy and George had no children and Dorothy died on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1967 at Keswick Hospital.<sup>34</sup> Lizzie and Arthur had no further children and Lizzie died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1987. On the probate record it indicated Elizabeth was also known as Lizzie.<sup>35</sup> Dorothy Elizabeth Wilson, daughter of Lizzie Furnace, grand daughter of John Anthony Furnace and Mary Elizabeth Gibson and niece of Dorothy Furnace died on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010.<sup>36</sup> Dorothy Elizabeth Wilson had never married and had no children.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> 1939 Register, England. Keswick, Cumberland. STOREY, Dorothy. 29 September 1939. Schedule 67. RG101/3054J/13. National Archives (Great Britain) Kew, England. Collection: 1939 Register. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

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<sup>2</sup> Marriages (PR). 6 February 1894. GIBSON, Mary Elizabeth & FURNACE, John Anthony. Source Film Number: 1472290 [Transcription] Collection: England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 3 April 1881. GIBSON, Mary E. RG11. PN 5170. FL50. ED 3. P17. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 5 April 1891. GIBSON, Mary E. RG12. PN 4300. FL 51. ED 3. P 34. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 3 April 1881. FURNACE, John Anthony. RG11. PN 5170. FL 72. ED 4. P 3. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 5 April 1891. FURNACE, John A. RG 12. PN 4300. FL 70. ED 4. P 8.

<sup>7</sup> 1939 Register, England. Workington, Cumberland. WILSON, Elizabeth. 29 September 1939. Schedule 288. RG101/3065d/576-3/2. National Archives (Great Britain) Kew, England. Collection: 1939 Register. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Monumental inscriptions. England. Crosthwaite Churchyard, Cumberland. 17 March 1897. GIBSON, Mary Elizabeth. Photo added by Randy Orrison. Find A Grave Memorial: 218177249. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Census records. England, Workington, Cumberland. 31 March 1901. FURNACE, John A. RG 13. PN 4883. FL 13. ED 11. P 18. Collection: 1901 Census. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023

<sup>10</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 31 March 1901. FURNACE, Dorothy. RG13. PN 4878. FL 100. ED 6. P. 16. Collection: 1901 Census. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Census records. England. Keswick, Cumberland. 31 March 1901. FURNACE, Lizzie. RG13. PN 4878. FL 27. ED 2. P. 12. Collection: 1901 Census. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Monumental inscriptions. England. Crosthwaite Churchyard, Cumberland. 29 December 1903. GIBSON, Mary Elizabeth. Photo added by Randy Orrison. Find A Grave Memorial: 218177246. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) : accessed 18 June 2023

<sup>13</sup> School Admissions Registers. St. Johns Infant School, Keswick. 1901. FURNACE, Dorothy. DS 93067/10. Collection: National School Admission Registers & Log Books 1870-1914. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>14</sup> School Admissions Registers. St. Johns Infant School, Keswick. 1901. FURNACE, Lizzie. DS 93067/10. Collection: National School Admission Registers & Log Books 1870-1914. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>15</sup> School Admissions Registers. St. Johns Infant School, Keswick. 1903. FURNACE, Dorothy. SSR 1/147/10. Collection: National School Admission Registers & Log Books 1870-1914. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

<sup>16</sup> School Admissions Registers. St. Johns Infant School, Keswick. 1903. FURNACE, Lizzie. SSR 1/147/10. Folio/Page Number 9. Collection: National School Admission Registers & Log Books 1870-1914. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

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- <sup>19</sup> Census records. England, Workington, Cumberland. 2 April 1911. FURNACE, John Anthony. RG 576. PN 31437. ED 11. Collection: 1911 Census. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.
- <sup>20</sup> The History of Lingholm. <https://thelingholmstate.co.uk/the-estate/history-of-lingholm/> : accessed 24 June 2023.
- <sup>21</sup> West Cumberland Times (1914). *Ambulance Work*. *West Cumberland Times*. 12 December. P.5; Column 3. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 24 June 2023.
- <sup>22</sup> British Red Cross. FURNACE, Dorothy. Collection: British Red Cross Volunteers during WW1. [www.vad.redcross.org.uk](http://www.vad.redcross.org.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.
- <sup>23</sup> British Red Cross. FURNACE, Lizzie. Collection: British Red Cross Volunteers during WW1. [www.vad.redcross.org.uk](http://www.vad.redcross.org.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.
- <sup>24</sup> Census records. England, Keswick, Cumberland. 19 June 1921. FURNACE, Dorothy. RG 576/1. PN 25848. ED 4. Collection: 1921 Census. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.
- <sup>25</sup> Census records. England, Workington, Cumberland. 19 June 1921. FURNACE, Elizabeth. RG 576/3. PN 25869. ED 10. Collection: 1921 Census. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.
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- <sup>27</sup> Monumental inscriptions. England. St John Churchyard, Keswick, Cumberland. 05 March 1923. BIRKETT, Mary Jane Hall. Photo added by Randy Orrison. Find A Grave Memorial: 247648799. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) : accessed 18 June 2023.
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<sup>34</sup> Testamentary records. England. 03 February 1967. STOREY, Dorothy. Principal Probate Registry. Calendar of the grants of probate. p.678. Collection: England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of wills and administrations) 1858-1995. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.

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<sup>36</sup> Deaths index (CR) England & Wales. RD Cockermouth, Cumbria. 06 April 2010. WILSON, Dorothy Elizabeth. Collection: England & Wales Death Index, 1989 - 2021. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) : accessed 18 June 2023.