

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]

Eleanor Harnaman's Story

Eleanor was born on the 1st January 1891 in Alvanley to Kate (nee Blythe) and Joseph Morris Harnaman¹. She was baptised in the village, at St. John's Church on the 1st February 1891².

In 1901, Alvanley's population was 319. Alvanley is a village located on the B5393, near Junction 14 of the M6. It is located in the civil parish of Helsby, near to Frodsham and is part of the Cheshire West and Chester local authority. From 1875, Alvanley was part of the Runcorn Sanitary district.³ The Church of St. John was erected in 1860 and is Grade 11 listed. The primary school, an

¹ *England and Wales Civil Birth Registration Index 1837-1950*

² *Cheshire England Parish Registers 1538-1909*

³ www.wikipedia.org/alvanley

integral part of Eleanor's family is still open and along with the schoolmaster's house is Grade 11 listed.⁴

Eleanor's mother Kate Blythe was born in Alvanley in 1865, the daughter of Abel Blythe, a wheelwright and Sarah Wood⁵, who had married in the nearby village of Frodsham in 1847.⁶ Like her daughter, Kate was baptised at St John's⁷. Kate and Joseph Harnaman married on the 19th May 1888 in Runcorn⁸. Kate died in 1948 and left £1,525 and 3s to her son in law Arnold Gibson, the husband of Eleanor. Kate died at 10, Park Road Dudley, Eleanor's home address.⁹

Joseph Morris Harnaman, Eleanor's father, was born in 1859 in Llandegla, Denbighshire. In the 1861 census Joseph's father is a Police Constable and his mother a dressmaker.¹⁰ The Wrexham Advertiser of the 23rd April, 1891 identifies Joseph as having just completed 2 years' training at Chester College where he gained several science certificates and a full drawing certificate; passing the Final Examination of the Teacher's Certificate in the School of Science at Art. He had previously been employed as a pupil teacher at the Boy's National School, Wrexham.¹¹ He gained a Queen's Scholarship at the end of his apprenticeship which enabled him to study at Chester.¹² Joseph died on the 11th December, 1942 at 2, Alvanley Cottages, Alvanley. His probate dated 3rd

⁴www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk

⁵ *England and Wales Civil Birth Registration Index 1837-1950*

⁶ *Cheshire England Parish Registers 1538-190*

⁷ *Cheshire England Parish Registers 1538-1909*

⁸ *England and Wales Civil Marriage Registration Index 1837-1915*

⁹ *England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1995*

¹⁰ *1861 Wales Census*

¹¹ *Wrexham Advertiser 23rd April 1891*

¹² *Cheshire Observer, Chester 3rd August 1895*

February, 1943 leaves his estate of £3.482 4s £d to his widow Kate and his daughter Dorothy Rose (wife of Betram Rose).¹³

In the 1891 census Joseph and his family are living at the School House, Alvanley where he is Schoolmaster. As well as Joseph and his wife Kate, there are James aged 2, Eleanor aged 3 months and a servant Alice Cowaf.¹⁴ By the 1901 census, 2 more children had been born, Dorothy aged 8 and Percy aged 6 and the family is still in Alvanley. There is also a boarder, Florence Humphreys aged 21 from North Yorkshire, who is the Assistant School Mistress.

Local newspapers in 1904 reported on the outcomes of the Cheshire County Scholarship Awards. Six of the awards have been given in the Runcorn Rural Area and one of the recipients was Eleanor. These Class 1 awards enabled recipients to proceed to secondary school and are held in connection with the local science and art scholarships of the Board of Education. It appears that Eleanor was now at the start of a career her father had followed.¹⁵

On the 1th September 1908, Eleanor enrolled at CTCC, her admission preliminary certificate is dated 1908 and her Final examination is awarded in 1910. She had previously attended Runcorn Pupil Teacher Centre. Whilst at CTCC she was a member of the student hockey team.¹⁶

¹³ *England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1995*

¹⁴ *1891 England Census*

¹⁵ *The St. Helen's Examiner Saturday July 11th 1904; The Widnes Examiner Saturday July 11th 1904; Cheshire Daily Echo Stockport 19th June 1904*

¹⁶ *CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe*



Eleanor in the 1908-09 Hockey Team, seated far left, front row¹⁷

After CCTCC, Eleanor appears to have moved back to Alvanley to teach at her father's school. The 1911 census states that Eleanor is an Assistant Teacher Elementary School where her father, Joseph is Head of the Elementary School CE. It further identifies that Joseph and Kate have been married 22 years and have had 7 children, 1 of whom has died. Percy's occupation is a fitter, engineering. Dorothy and James are not mentioned on the Census return but are both marked as alive. Another son has been born, Geoffrey aged 7 and an Aunt Elizabeth Wood aged 80 and single is also present. ¹⁸

¹⁷ CTCC student hockey team 1908-1910, CCTCC Archives, Under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

¹⁸ 1911 England Census

However, Eleanor's teaching career is curtailed when she married Arnold William Gibson in October 1920 in Runcorn.¹⁹ According to the 1921 Census, Eleanor and Arnold are in Hull and are visiting a Mr William Herbert and Rose Rea. Mr Rea is a Master Mariner. Their daughter Rosie born in 1903 is an Assistant Teacher for Miss Garden. Perhaps Miss Garden or Rosie have also attended CCTCC? Arnold's occupation is given as Engineer (Mechanical) Lecturer at Hull Corporation and Municipal Technical College.²⁰ By 1923 Eleanor and Arnold are still in Hull; Arnold's proposal to be a Graduate of The Institute of Mechanical Engineers on the 27th January 1923 gives his address at 22 Gladstone Street, Hull.²¹

By 1928 Eleanor and Arnold have moved to Dudley. CTCC's anniversary programme of 1929 identified her as Mrs F.W. Gibson, residing at Cliff, Hindley Road, Dudley, Worcestershire. Unless 'F' was a nickname it is assumed this is an error and it should read A.W. Gibson.²² By 1939 they had moved but remained in Dudley. Their address is now 10, Park Road, Dudley and Arnold's occupation is Principal, Technical College, with Eleanor listed as unpaid domestic duties. One entry is redacted but also living at the address is Lillian A. Harnaman, previously known as Alice Lillian Mars, married to Geoffrey Harnaman and thus, Eleanor's sister in law.²³

Eleanor's husband Arnold was born on the 7th September 1896, his father was an Auctioneer and Valuer and they lived at 53, Gainsborough Road, Crewe,

¹⁹ *England and Wales Civil Marriage Registration Index 1916-2005*

²⁰ *1921 England Census*

²¹ *UK Mechanical Engineer Records 1847-1938*

²² *1908-1929, Souvenir of the 21st Anniversary, CCTCC, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe*

²³ *1939 England and Wales Register*

Cheshire.²⁴ His World War 1 records describe him as 5ft 8” with light brown hair and brown eyes with his civil occupation being an apprentice fitter. His rank is given as Able Seaman/Petty Officer and on the 30th March 1914 he is at the Royal Naval Division in Greenock. His service number is 2/2575 and Arnold is identified as a member of the Hanson Battalion of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve that had taken part in the defence of Antwerp before departing to the Dardanelles. On the 5th July 1915 Arnold suffered a gunshot wound and is ranked as a temporary Sub-Lieutenant. Arnold is invalided in 1916 as medically unfit due to the wound. Between 1914 and 1919 he is employed at Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd, Greenock.^{25 26 27}

In 1928, Arnold and Eleanor leave Hull where Arnold was Head of the Engineering Department at the Municipal Technical College. Out of 86 applications, Arnold is promoted to Principal of Dudley Technical College, on a salary of £650 rising in annual £25 increments. The salary was to be reconsidered when the new College is completed.²⁸ Arnold appears to have had an illustrious career, achieving a BSc from Manchester University (Manchester Technical College) and an OBE. An annual Arnold W. Gibson memorial medal is awarded by the Association of Technical Institutes, an Institute where Arnold had been President.²⁹ Arnold served on a number of government committee concerned with technical education, which took him to the USA, Ghana, Singapore and Hong Kong.³⁰ Arnold died age 63 on the 24th July, 1960 at the Corbett Hospital,

²⁴ *England and Wales Civil Birth Registration Index 1837-1950*

²⁵ *UK Navy Lists 1888-1970*

²⁶ *UK WW1 Pension Ledgers and Index Cards 1914-1923*

²⁷ *UK Naval Medal and Award Rolls 1793-1972*

²⁸ *Cheltenham Chronicle, 19th May 1928*

²⁹ *Crewe Chronicle 6th August 1960*

³⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post 26th July 1960*

Dudley. His obituary just states “he leaves a widow.” His estate of £28,154 12s 10d is left to Eleanor.³¹ There are no children from the marriage.

The legacy and Arnold’s travels with his work appears to have afforded Eleanor some foreign travel, although they are not listed together on any manifests unearthed so far. On the 26th June 1954 Eleanor travels from Liverpool to Bombay and in 1960 as a recent widow she travels on the 16th September, 1960 to Madeira. Both times the address is given as 10, Park Road, Dudley.³²

Eleanor died aged 87, on the 27th April, 1978.³³ Probate records give her address at 33 Oakhill Cottage, Edge Hill London, SW19 which is in the Wandsworth registration area. Her estate was £37,607 and no details of bequests were given.³⁴

Narrative by Clare Brindley

References

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1911 England Census

1921 England Census

1939 England and Wales Register

³¹ *England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1995*

³² *UK and Ireland Incoming Passenger Lists 1878-1960*

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