

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]

Elizabeth Mary Collins' Story

Elizabeth Mary Collins was born in Crewe, Cheshire on 3 December 1891, the second child of Benjamin Robert Collins and Martha Elizabeth Collins (MS Thornley). Her older sister, Constance Ivy, had been born a year earlier in 1890.

Elizabeth was baptised on 21 August 1891 at St Paul's Church, Coppenhall, Crewe, Cheshire.¹

¹ England and Wales Christening Records, 1538-1975; source Ancestry.co.uk



*St Paul's Church, Coppenhall, Crewe*²

Her brother, Robert William Thornley Collins, was born in the summer of 1896 and baptised on 2 July 1896³ but sadly only lived for a short time, dying as an infant in the summer of 1897.⁴ In 1899 the family was joined by another daughter, Dorothy Annie, born on 22 April and baptised on 2 July 1899 at Christ Church, Crewe.⁵



*Christ Church, Crewe*⁶

² Image courtesy of Family History Society of Cheshire

³ Cheshire Diocese Of Chester Parish Baptisms 1538-1911; source findmypast.co.uk

⁴ Source - FreeBMD

⁵ Cheshire Diocese Of Chester Parish Baptisms 1538-1911; source findmypast.co.uk

⁶ Image Courtesy of Family History Society of Cheshire

The family were living at Walthall Street, Crewe and Benjamin Collins worked as a County Court Clerk. The family also had a general domestic servant – Mary Davies, aged 17, living in the house.⁷ The final family member was Isabel Margaret, born 13 Feb 1904 and baptised 17 May that year at Christ Church, Crewe.⁸ Sadly Isabel died aged 2 in 1906.⁹

This is 258 Walthall Street, Crewe today, not looking that much different to how it would probably have looked in 1906.¹⁰



Elizabeth gained a County Junior Scholarship as reported in the Runcorn Guardian on 3 June 1905.¹¹ She attended the County Secondary School in Crewe and passed the Preliminary Certificate in 1909 with a Distinction in Maths, which gained her a place at the Cheshire County Training College, Crewe (CCTCC) as a trainee teacher.¹²

⁷ 1901 census, source ancestry.co.uk

⁸ Cheshire Diocese Of Chester Parish Baptisms 1538-1911; source findmypast.co.uk

⁹ England & Wales Deaths 1837-2007, source findmypast.co.uk

¹⁰ GoogleMaps

¹¹ Source - Newspapers and Periodicals; findmypast.co.uk

¹² CCTCC Student Registers [1908-1935]: CCTCC Archives, Unpublished data, under the care of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

The course at CCTCC was over two years, the stated aim being to prepare students for actual schoolwork. The curriculum covered the Theory of Teaching, which included Discipline and Organisation, Child Study, the History of Public Education, General Methods, and Methods of Teaching Individual Subjects. Handiwork, Physical Exercise, Music, Hygiene, Drawing, English, History, Geography, Maths, Field Work, Rural Science, and Scripture were among the myriad of other subjects the students were expected to master. Students were sent out on actual teaching practice to local schools in their second year. ¹³

On the 1911 census Elizabeth is shown as a student (teaching profession) and is living at home with the family at the same address. Her older sister Constance is shown as a dressmaker (apprentice) while little Dorothy is still school. Sadly, their mother Martha died in 1925 aged 60. ¹⁴

Information about where Elizabeth might have taught has not been discovered, but in 1929 in the Old Students Magazine, it is noted that she was made a member of the Old Students Association as part of the 21st Anniversary 'Awards'. ¹⁵

In 1939 we find Elizabeth and her sister Constance living at home. Constance has assumed household duties while Elizabeth is noted as Elementary School Teacher. ¹⁶ Their father is missing, as he died April, May or June of that year aged 75. ¹⁷

Elizabeth Mary Collins died at the age of 73 on 28 September 1964. She was buried in Crewe cemetery with her two sisters; they were all spinsters. ¹⁸ An

¹³ Cheshire County Training College, Crewe, Prospectus 1908-1914

¹⁴ Source freebmd.co.uk

¹⁵ 'Old Students Association. Coming of Age Magazine, May 18th 1929', part of the CCTCC Collection at the Family History Society of Cheshire, Crewe

¹⁶ 1939 Register; source findmypast.co.uk

¹⁷ Source freebmd.co.uk

¹⁸ Source ancestry.co.uk

image of her grave can be seen on the website Find A Grave

[\[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/206652416/elizabeth-mary-collins\]](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/206652416/elizabeth-mary-collins)

In her will she left £10,418 to her sisters, Constance and Dorothy, who both survived her.

Narrative by Leona Thomas