

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story is one of a series that relate to women and girls who were associated with The Mount School, York, as pupils, teachers, or other members of staff. This project began in June 2023, as part of the York Festival of ideas.*

## **Florence Mary Pettifor-Catchpole (Catchpool)**

**Florence Mary Pettifor-Catchpole** was born on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1882 in Leicester. Her parents were Thomas Kingham Catchpole and Florence Emma Pettifor. The Quaker faith went back to Thomas Kingham's father who married widow, Mary (Priscilla) Martin on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1832 in the Brighton Society of Friends House. Florence Emma's parents were chemist and druggist, William Pettifor and Susannah Withers who married by licence on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1852 in the Register Office in Leicester. Did they marry in the Register office as there was no Quaker church close by? However Thomas Kingham and Florence Emma did not follow the tradition and they married at Leicester, St. Peter's on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1881.

Thomas Kingham's career had followed an academic route becoming an articled clerk with Law examinations in French in 1867 and by the 1871 census he was a Solicitor's Articled Clerk, boarding in King Street, Chelmsford. Was it through he work in law which brought him into contact with the firm of

Anderson and Son, hosiery manufacturers, with whom he eventually went into partnership? A month before he married Florence Emma in 1881 he shared a house with his sister, 35 year old, Frances in 5, Sare Coburg Street, in Leicester.

Daughter, Florence, our subject, was born a year after Thomas and Florence's marriage.

According to the 1911 census the couple had 7 children, 5 of whom were alive but 2 had sadly died. The two who died were Hugh William born in 1886 and Edward Francis born a year later. The 2 boys died together on a visit to the Society of Friends in Lurgan, County Armagh, Ireland. The boys had gone on a sailing trip with 5 others in the "Lough Neagh" sailing boat. It is not certain what had caused the accident but sadly all on board perished, Hugh William, a 19 year old engineering student, at University College London, was the only one whose body was recovered. A verdict of "Death by Drowning" was returned. Hugh William was buried in Lurgan:

Friends Burial Ground, Lurgan, County Armagh, Northern Ireland. (The Epitaph however recorded a memorial for both boys.)

Epitaph: Hugh William Pettifor-Catchpool aged 19 years and Edward Francis Pettifor-Catchpool aged 18 years. 2nd & 3rd sons of Thomas K & Florence Catchpool of Ronceval, Guernsey, who were drowned together in a squall on Lough Neagh 23rd of 8th month 1904.

The siblings were frequently separated, as education appears to have been important to the parents. Florence was enrolled in the Hammond Street School, Hackney in 1887. Her parents apparently been happy to have her receive religious instruction as no indication to the contrary was given,

probably although it would not have been in Quaker values. Moving then to The Mount Quaker School in York. Thomas spent some time with his paternal grandmother in 1891 in Essex while the rest of the family were in Leicester. Thomas, along with Violet then boarded in Sidcot School, York, another Quaker institution as was The Mount, York, which Florence attended. Thomas left Sidcot in 1902 and spent time in pupillage with a Mr James Holden, eventually being admitted to be a Civil Engineer.

Before his untimely death Hugh William had attended Winscombe School in Somerset. It could be surmised that Egerton also attended Sidcot School as in 1921, he and his wife, Ruth (formerly) Allason, whom he married on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1920, were visiting the Headmaster, Mr Bevan Lear.

The family frequently made trips abroad to America and Germany. At first glance it appears that Thomas and Florence were living apart as in 1901 Thomas is a boarder, in either a lodging house or an hotel in Dover, whilst Florence is with 3 of their children in "Ronceval", Vale, Guernsey. However the family's propensity for travel could just mean that Thomas was either waiting for a ferry to return to Guernsey after a trip to England or he was indeed going abroad on business.

The First World War was a very difficult time for the family in many ways. Being Quakers and against all forms of violence they had to choose whether to obey the law and join the army when conscripted or refuse. In 1914 Thomas joined the Friend's Ambulance Unit. However 1916 saw him imprisoned until April, 1919, for refusing to go to war and kill, after the Compulsory Military Service Act was passed. He resigned the FAU in protest. Despite this Thomas and

Egerton both appeared in the medal rolls. Egerton was awarded the British Red Cross & Order of St. John, medal being a member of the Friend's Ambulance Unit, Dunkirk, France, in the rank of Orderley. Disembarkation was 28 Apr 1915.

It was not only the national conflict which brought distress to the family but 2 days before Christmas, 1915, the children's father, Thomas Kingham Catchpole died aged 65. "Ronceval" must have been a special family name as the house where Thomas died in The Green Wanstead, Essex bore the same name as the family home when they had lived in Guernsey. He left the not inconsiderable amount of £21,168. 2. 1d.

1921 saw upheaval for many families as they adjusted to their changed situations after the war.

Before the war Florence Mary was already of "private means" in 1911 when she was a visitor in Colchester. It was in the middle of the war when on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1917 she married Herbert Dinsdale Headley, a newspaper man, at the Friends Meeting House, Wanstead, Essex. In 1885 he was recorded as the Co-proprietor of the Kent & Ashford Chronicle. Florence and Herbert had a son, John Stephen, who was born in 1918. Herbert had previously been married to Margaret Ann Green, they had had 2 children both of whom died as babies, Margaret had died 1913.

After the difficulties of the war Thomas married Gwendoline Mary Southall in the September quarter of 1920 and they probably spent the first months of their married life with his sister, Florence, as they are all living at "The Bays"

Challock, Ashford in Kent. Violet was looking after her widowed mother, Florence Emma, whilst helping her nurseman husband in his business in Woodford.

This time of readjustment after the war gave way to the family following very divergent paths. In 1931 Thomas moved his family to Berlin, when he was Secretary of the Quaker Centre, Friends' Service Council. By 1933 the Gestapo looked on Quakers with suspicion for their assistance of those adversely affected by the Nazis – including Jews and French civilians. Thomas was arrested, interrogated but fortunately, released. He returned to England in 1936. Later again moving abroad and dying on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1952 in Monte Rosa, Zermatt, Valais, Switzerland. The District Bank took charge of the probate of Thomas' estate of £24,513.12.1d

Violet and Brian moved to Welwyn Garden City where they lived in the Warden's Lodge, in Digwell Park Road and were wardens at the centre there in 1939. When Violet died on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1968 she left £39,382.

Sometime after his visit to Sidcot, Egerton must have travelled to America as on 7 Jul 1924, he travelled from New York to Glasgow, giving his address as 28, Commercial Street, London. Their next destination was Bombay on 21 Sep 1954, both his and Ruth's occupations listed as Warden, address Meadow Cottage, Welwyn Garden City. They had been there since before the 1939 Register was compiled. Was this a joint venture with sister Violet? He was a pioneer of the Youth Hostel movement, and was the first secretary of the England and Wales Association. His work was rewarded with a CBE in 1951. His death occurred on 13<sup>th</sup> of March, 1971 in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, 2

months after his wife, Ruth. Her estate was worth £78,401 while Egerton's was valued at £11,770. His death was marked with obituaries in several newspapers.

Henry had married Dorothy M. Kemp in June 1921 which was round about the time of the census and they were Castle Bdyleown, Panswick Hill, Stroud. Henry's occupation was recorded as "motor manufacturer". Were they on honeymoon?

Florence Mary was made a widow when Herbert died 17 Aug 1937, at the Old Barn House, Charing, Kent, leaving £5038. By 1939 Florence Mary had moved to Green Meadows, Forstal Rooting Street, in West Ashford and her Quaker upbringing does not appear to have deserted her as crossed out, is her entry of "Pacifist". Living with her are a number of seeming refugees. She lived until 10<sup>th</sup> November when she died in Ashford hospital leaving £11,472.6.4d, probate being granted to her actor son, John Stephen and brother, Egerton. Throughout their lives the Catchpole/Catchpool family it appears, tried to adhere to their Quaker family beliefs and upbringing.

***Research by Catherine Southeran and Ann Simcock***