

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in November 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who studied at The Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset.

Daisy Selina Hawker's Story

On 19 August 1886, John Hawker married Frances Turvey in St John Glastonbury¹. He was a miller. Their first child, Daisy Selina Hawker was baptised in St Benedict Glastonbury on 3 July 1887². Her father was a baker and the family were living in Magdalen Street Glastonbury. By 1891, the family had grown with the addition of two brothers – Reginald b. 1889 and Allan John b. 1891³. Their address was 5 The Armoury which was/is a terrace on Magdalen Street. The family were still at this address in 1901 with the addition of a daughter Elsie b. 1893⁴. John Hawker gave his occupation as a miller in 1891 and a corn miller in 1901. Eldest son Reginald was employed as a leather dresser.

Daisy, aged 13, was not with the family on the 1901 census. She had become a pupil at the Abbey Grange School of Housewifery in nearby Street⁵. She was

one of 30 pupils aged between 13 and 17. The students were accommodated in dormitories on the 1st floor of the house⁶. The Headmistress was Miss Louisa Acheson, who also taught cookery and laundry⁵. She lived in Abbey Grange as did three teachers. Miss Margaret Evans taught laundry and dressmaking, Miss Pauline Calazel taught cookery and laundry while Miss Emma Tyler taught housewifery. From an exercise book kept by a student in 1910, Daisy would have also learnt to manage a household budget, make home remedies and provide home nursing⁷. The training the girls received would stand them in good stead as a wife or a domestic servant.

Daisy put her training to use as a wife and a mother. On 25 February 1911 she married Horace Leslie Pople in the Registrar's Office in Wells⁸. Horace had been born in Street in 1889. It is most likely the couple met while Daisy was a pupil at Abbey Grange. Horace and Daisy were living at 2 Woods Batch Terrace in Street on the 1911 census, occupying 2 rooms⁹. Their postal address was The Elms in Street. Both Daisy and Horace were employed in Clark's shoe factory⁸, Horace as a Laster and Daisy as a machinist⁹. She had obviously taken up employment that kept her in Street and, most likely realising that as a machinist in a factory she would earn more and have better working conditions than if she entered domestic service.

Aged 18 years and 2 months, Horace had enlisted as a driver with the Royal Engineers on 20 December 1907, having previously been rejected as 'medically unfit'. When war was declared, Horace was mobilized on 6 August 1914 as Driver 17031 with the 2nd Field Company Royal Engineers. He saw service overseas before being discharged on 21 July 1917 as he was no longer physically fit for war service⁸. It was noted that Horace had been a boot maker

for 14 years, and had worked for Clarke's in Street for the 3 years prior to mobilization.

Horace returned to Street in 1917, presumably to Clarke's. On 18 January 1918, the Central Somerset Gazette reported that a branch of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors had been formed in Street¹¹. Mr Horace L Pople was the chairman.

Between 1918 and 1920, the family had moved to Burham-on-Sea. Horace was voted in as a local councillor in March 1920¹⁰. He served for a term of four years¹¹. Daisy would have been putting all she learnt at the Abbey Grange School of Housewifery to good use, setting up a new home, looking after her growing family and ensuring that her husband was well turned out.

In 1921, the family was living in a five roomed house at 16 High Street in 1921¹². Horace was a boot and shoe repairer working on his own account. Given they were living in High Street, one room was presumably Horace's work room/shopfront. Daisy's day would have been taken up with domestic duties including looking after children Marjorie Winifred b. 24 January 1912 Street and Leslie Jack b. 19 April 1914 Street⁸. Another son, Allan Horace aged 12 months, had been buried in Street Cemetery on 9 March 1914¹³. Later that year, Horace continued his involvement with returned service men, becoming the chairman of the newly formed Burnham branch of the British Legion¹⁴.

By 1939, the Popel's had moved from the centre of town to 10 Worston Lane¹⁵. Horace had also changed occupations – he was now a house painter and decorator. Another son Keith Horace had been born on 19 April 1922 and he

was the only one of their children still living at home. Keith was an Auctioneer's clerk who volunteered with the St John's Ambulance. His sister Marjorie had married Albert G Skuse in 1936¹⁶ and was living in Burton-on Sea¹⁵. Brother Leslie was an aircraft fitter, boarding with a family in Chipping Sodbury¹⁷.

Horace died in on 9 March 1976 aged 87¹⁸ and Daisy died in April 1978 aged 90¹⁹. Throughout her life, Daisy would have used all she learnt from the Abbey Grange School of Housewifery. Rationing during the two wars would have tested her skills both in the kitchen and making do and mending clothing etc. She would also have benefited from the many labour-saving devices which were introduced. How wonderful it must have been to have a twin tub washer let alone a fully plumbed front loader, an electric iron rather than one heated on the range, and a vacuum cleaner rather than a carpet beater.

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