

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



Was She Pushed? Did She Jump? Or Did She Fall?

This story originally appeared on The Chiddicks Family Tree website <https://chiddicksfamilytree.com>. It contains a detailed description of death by injury, that some readers may find distressing.

Every once in a while you stumble across a story, almost by accident and you wonder how on earth have I missed that! Well recently I did just that, whilst doing some random searches on the newspaper archives section of the FindMyPast website. It was while I was revisiting some old searches, that I found an entry that particularly caught my eye, for the death of an Elizabeth Chitticks, aged 16, in Barking in Essex. Now I knew immediately that Chitticks was very much a variant of my own name and that 118, Axe Street in Barking in Essex, was the home of my ancestor John Chitticks and his family, so was the Elizabeth Chitticks in the newspaper article also my relative?

Elizabeth Chiddicks/Chitticks was indeed my relative, she was the third oldest child born to John Chiddicks (my 2 x great uncle) and Jane Susannah Chiddicks (Elmore) and she was born on 30th July 1885 at 9, St. Ann's Road, Barking, Essex.


 CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF BIRTH
 Pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953

CK 706463

B. Cert.
S.R.

Registration District <i>Romford Union</i>										
1885. Birth in the Sub-district of _____ in the _____										
Columns—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10*
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name, and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar	Name entered after registration
15	Thirtieth July 1885 9 St Ann's Road Barking U.S.D.	Elizabeth	Girl	John CHIDDICKS	Jane CHIDDICKS formerly HARDING	Labourer at the Gasworks	Jane Chiddicks Mother 9 St Ann's Road Barking	Twenty Seventh August 1885	Richard Daniel Widding Registrar.	

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

*See note overleaf

For the remainder of the story I will use the surname as Chiddicks, although we know of course that the newspaper report has stated the name as Chitticks. Because Elizabeth was on an outlying branch of my tree, although I had her birth details, her family's census returns and her burial location, I had never really followed up why she had died at such a young age of sixteen. On finding this newspaper report, I uncovered a remarkable and extremely sad story.

The following is the full transcription from the newspaper report dated 26th October 1901 that appeared in the Barking, East Ham & Ilford Advertiser.

Barking Girl's Sad Death The Registrar Reprimanded

Mr. Coroner Ambrose held an inquest on Saturday at the Public Offices, Barking, on the body of Elizabeth Chitticks, aged 16, lately residing at 118, Axe Street, Barking. Jane Chitticks, the mother, said deceased lived at home, but she did not know she was enceinte. Deceased went to Mrs. Mysan's, 122, Axe Street on Tuesday, to do some cleaning, and soon afterwards witness heard a scream and went into the back garden. Someone said, "Come round; Liz has fallen out of a window;" and ongoing round she saw deceased in a fit, sitting on

the ground. There was a dreadful wound on her head. Deceased had never had a fit before, and was in a fit till she died. She was conscious only five minutes, and then said, "I sat out of the window and my head went round". Deceased was taken home and Dr. McDonald called in.

(I had to Google the word enceinte, which means she was pregnant at the time)

Early on the following morning deceased was delivered of a child. After that she never spoke, and died on Thursday morning.

By the Coroner: The nurse went for the Doctor; and he gave the certificate produced. The Coroner: Do you know what was in it? Witness: I think it had something to do with the brain. There were three words. I can't think of them now. What was done with that? I took it up to Mr. Pink the registrar. I told Mr. Pink that the deceased fell out of the window. And he gave you this bluish paper? Yes Sir.

Mary Ann Mysan, 122, Axe Street, deposed that deceased came to her house and started cleaning the back room window. Witness was washing in the scullery, when she heard a noise like something falling down the wall, followed by a bath. She went out and found deceased sitting in a corner. There was a cut on the side of her face, as if she had come in contact with a scraper, which was standing in the yard.

Dr. McDonald said deceased could give no account of herself. He was told that she had fallen out of a window, and the wound on the left temple was quite

consistent with that. He bound up the wound, and she then had a convulsive seizure, which convinced him that there was something wrong with the left side of the brain, as a result of the fall.

About one o'clock a male child was born. Deceased was in a comatose state, and remained so til her death. Death was due to compression of the brain and bleeding from the wound, as a result of the fall, and probably from a fracture of the skull.

Mr. W. Pink, the registrar of births and deaths, deposed that he gave the certificate of death produced. The Coroner remarked that there was a very curious thing about the registering of the death, and that was the reason he asked Mr. Pink to be present. Mr. Pink said that when he read the Doctor's certificate he looked upon it as an ordinary case, as a result of a fit. After what he had heard there that afternoon, and he had asked the question, he might have seen it that it came under the head of "Accident".

The Coroner: In any case, it would have come under the head of "accident" if a child had fallen in a fit in the street, and died from compression of the brain, it must be an accident.

Mr. Pink: I can follow all you say now, and I am prepared to act so in the future.

The Coroner: I hope so.

Mr. Pink : It was simply in this way – I looked upon it as an ordinary case.

The Coroner: Mrs Chitticks told you that the girl fell out of the window.

Mr. Pink: I seemed to think that it was caused through a fit, but when she told me she had fallen out of a window, I had the entry made.

The Coroner: You were aware that she had fallen out of the window before you gave this certificate. Continuing, the Coroner pointed out to Mr. Pink that it

was his duty to report to the Coroner's Officer any case of this kind, and that it was for him (the Coroner) to decide whether an inquest was necessary. This was a serious thing. It might have been in the interest of the father of the child, to have thrown the deceased out of the window, but there was nothing to show that it was. He (Mr. Pink) had, however, brought this matter upon himself by issuing a certificate. It was his business to report the case at once. He (the Coroner) wanted him to understand this, because he (the Coroner), must not have anything of the kind in the future.

Mr Pink: Can I have the certificate?

The Coroner: No; I shall keep that, as I have to give my own.

In addressing the jury, the Coroner said it was a very unfortunate thing for Mr. Pink to decide whether there should be an inquest or not. If it had not been for the acumen and public spirit of one of the fellow townsmen in informing the police, the case might have been passed over.

In answer to the Coroner, Inspector Beer stated that there was no bye-law in force in the district with regard to window cleaning.

A verdict in accordance with the medical testimony was returned.

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Rainford</u>									
Registrar's Sub-District <u>Barkings Town</u>									
18 <u>407</u> . DEATHS in the Sub-District of <u>Barkings Town</u> in the County of <u>Essex</u>									
Columns:—									
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When registered.	Signature of Registrar.
<u>174</u>	<u>Seventeenth October 1907</u> <u>118 Wren Hotel</u> <u>Barkings</u> <u>W.D.</u>	<u>Elizabeth</u> <u>Sheddicks</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>16</u> <u>years</u>	<u>Daughter of</u> <u>John</u> <u>Sheddicks</u> <u>a labourer</u>	<u>coma following</u> <u>compression of the</u> <u>brain following an</u> <u>accidental fall on</u> <u>the 15th inst.</u>	<u>certificate received</u> <u>from a Ambrose</u> <u>for her</u> <u>Inquest held</u> <u>17th Oct. 1907</u>	<u>Twentieth</u> <u>first</u> <u>October</u> <u>1907</u>	<u>William</u> <u>pink</u> <u>Registrar</u>

[Insert Notes, &c., in this Margin.]

This entry 1847 relates to the same death as entry No 142.

The Coroner, after reprimanding the Registrar, was obviously sufficiently satisfied that there was no foul play involved with Elizabeth's death and was happy to return a verdict of accidental death. After checking various record

offices for the area, it would appear that the original inquest report has not survived, so all we are left with is the newspaper article above. The newspaper report is quite graphic and gives a lot of the details of the case and perhaps reports the details in a way that we are not accustomed to seeing today and although we have the 'official verdict', there are so many questions that are left unanswered and open to speculation, with nobody alive today who can tell us what actually happened.

Putting aside the details of the case, I am left wondering how Elizabeth's parents would have coped with such a devastating set of circumstances. One minute their lives were relatively normal, the next their world was turned upside down with the news that their daughter had suddenly and tragically died. If that wasn't enough of a shock, they were to find out that their daughter was 'with child' when she died and then they were to become grandparents and carers overnight to Elizabeth's newly born child. This must have been overwhelming and the grief must have been insurmountable. There is a false assumption that because death was more common back then, that the loss was somehow less. I don't agree with that theory, I am sure that every loss and every life was equally missed and the loss would have been equally as devastating as it is today.

Elizabeth was buried at Rippleside cemetery in Barking in Essex on 20th October 1901, her young life over almost before it had begun.



So whatever happened to poor Elizabeth's child, I hear you ask? Baby Frederick Henry Chiddicks was born, as indicated in the press story above, on 16th October 1901, the day before his mother Elizabeth died. Baby Frederick was baptised a month later, on November 13th 1901 at Barking, Essex, the baptism entry records just a mother's name, the father's name has been left off the record. I am left wondering, did she know who the father was? Did the family know who the father was? Did the father himself know that young Elizabeth was with child? Did he know what happened to poor Elizabeth? So many questions that are left unanswerable.

The tragedy did not end with Elizabeth, sadly little baby Frederick Henry Chiddicks only lived for 10 months, he died in September 1902 and was buried alongside his mother at the Rippleside Cemetery in Barking in Essex. I wonder if his father ever knew he had a son and I wonder that if he did know, whether he saw baby Frederick before he died?

A truly sad and tragic tale for a young pregnant mother and her unborn child, this is truly one of the most difficult stories that I have uncovered whilst researching my family history. Like many of the family history stories that we discover, I am left with more questions than I have answers and there is far more to this story than I will ever be able to uncover from the archives, records, or newspaper reports.

I am left with an overwhelming feeling of sadness, I feel sad that a young girl's life was tragically cut short, I feel sad that a young girl was probably too scared to tell anybody about the baby and I feel extremely sad that a young baby's life was over before it had begun. For now at least, her life and her story will be remembered.

Not all the family history stories that we discover are happy ones.....

Paul Chiddicks January 2023