

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in April 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women staff and female patients associated with the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital, Jesmond, Northumberland.

Esther Hartley

Esther Hartley is listed on the 1891 census as a patient of the North Routh, Fleming Children's Hospital, age 1, born at Newcastle on Tyne.¹

Given Esther was age 1 on the census, taken on 5 April 1891, she would have been born c.1889 or early 1890. In order to identify Esther, birth records were searched on *General Register Office (GRO)* website. No records were found for an Esther Hartley, even with a fuzzy search of similar sounding surnames. Similar searches were then attempted on *FreeBMD*, which offers more search options than *GRO*, but again no birth was found. Various options for surname, wildcards and different options were also unsuccessfully tried. Then

¹ 1891 Census for Newcastle upon Tyne, RG12/4219, Folio 75, page 20.

searched for a child named Hartley, b. Newcastle upon Tyne and found an Edith Hartley b. 16 July 1889 at 42 Cottenham Street, Newcastle, daughter of Roger Hartley and his wife, Jane Hartley nee Robson. Could this be the same child?

Extensive searches were made of subsequent 1901 census, to see if Esther or Edith was with her parents, but again no entries were found for a child with either of these names. Had she died shortly after the 1891 census? No death was recorded for an Esther or Edith Hartley in Northumberland between 1891-1901. Searches for her parents found them still living at the time of 1891 Census at 42 Cottenham Street with four children:

Rodger (sic), age 38, occupation: Tailor, born Tweedmouth,
Northumberland

Jane, wife, age 35, occupation blank, born Spittal, Northumberland

Jane, daughter, age 12, scholar, born Tweedmouth, Northumberland

Benjamin, son, age 11, scholar, born Berwick-on-Tweed,
Northumberland

Meggie, daughter, age 8, scholar, born Newcastle-on-Tyne,
Northumberland

Alice, daughter, age 5, scholar, born Newcastle-on-Tyne,
Northumberland.²

Importantly, the 1891 Newcastle-upon-Tyne census return does not include their youngest daughter Edith and probably confirms that Esther's name had been incorrectly recorded on the census while a patient in the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital.

² 1891 Census for Newcastle upon Tyne, RG12/4191, Folio 130, page 23.

Despite searches for the family on the 1901 census, no entries were found. Could the family have emigrated? Using publicly available family trees on *Ancestry*, suggestions were found that Roger and Jane may both have died in 1893 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A search of deaths on *FreeBMD* confirmed this sad information.

Roger's full name, Edward John Bains Rogers Hartley, is recorded in the death register. Roger, age 40, died at the home of his sister, Margaret Bailiff, 3 Fife Terrace, Newcastle, on 28 June 1893. His death is also recorded in a local newspaper:

Deaths:

*HARTLEY – At 3, Fife Terrace, at the residence of his sister, on the 28th inst., aged 40, Rogers Hartley, much and deservedly respected. Internment at Elswick Cemetery at 2 p.m., July 2nd. All Co-operative employees kindly invited.*³

The cause of Roger Hartley's death was phthisis, a form of tuberculosis or similar disease.

Less than three months previous, on 9 April 1893, Edith had also lost her mother when Jane died following an accident with a paraffin lamp. The local newspaper, dated 1 April 1893, records the event:

PARAFFIN LAMP EXPLOSION IN NEWCASTLE

Last night a shocking burning accident occurred to Mrs Jane Hartley, of 42, Cottenham Street, Newcastle, through the explosion of a paraffin lamp. It appears that whilst a lamp was being trimmed by Mrs Hartley's daughter, it exploded, igniting Mrs Hartley's clothes.

³ Deaths – Rogers Hartley, *The Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, Thursday, June 29, 1893, p.2.

*Three men were called into the house to render assistance, but before they succeeded in extinguishing the flames, she was severely burned about the arms, chest, and lower limbs. Her wounds were dressed by Dr Farquharson, and afterwards she was removed to the Royal Infirmary. Fortunately, the daughter escaped unhurt.*⁴

Subsequent articles on 10 and 11 April 1893, provide updates on the outcome:

A Sad Case – *Jane Hartley, 36 years of age, died at the Newcastle Infirmary yesterday from the effects of severe burns caused by the explosion of a paraffin lamp on the 31st of March. Deceased resided at 42, Cottenham Street, Newcastle, and is said to leave a husband in ill-health, and a large family of little children, the youngest of whom is only a few months old.*⁵

The Fatal Lamp Accident at Newcastle

Last evening, Mr Theodore Hoyle, city coroner, held an inquest on the body of Jane Robinson (sic) Hartley, 36, of Cottenham Street, who died in the Newcastle Infirmary on the 9th inst., from the effects of burns received on the 31st ult. From the evidence it appeared that a daughter of the deceased's lit the house lamp. Scarcely had she done so when the globe broke into fragments, and the wick dropped into the oil. The deceased endeavoured to put out the flames by dashing her apron over it. Whilst doing so, her clothing caught fire, and she

⁴ Paraffin Lamp Explosion in Newcastle, *The Newcastle Daily Journal*, Saturday, April 1, 1893, p.5.

⁵ A Sad Case, *The Newcastle Daily Journal*, Monday, April 10, 1893, p.8.

was so much burnt that she died as stated. A verdict of accidental death was returned.⁶

By Edith's fifth birthday, she and her siblings were orphans.

Edith could not be positively identified on the 1901, 1911 or 1921 censuses. She may have been taken in by close family, or sent to a children's home, such as Barnardo's, and again her name incorrectly recorded.



Figure 1: Bradley Hall, Wylam, Northumberland

In the 1939 England and Wales Register, an Edith B. Hartley was found living at Bradley Hall, Ryton, Durham, unmarried and working as a housemaid in the household of Frank R. Simpson, Managing Director, and his family.⁷ The name has a middle initial added and the date of birth of this Edith is given as 15 July 1888, slightly different from the subject of this paper, but no birth was found listed for an Edith B. Hartley in 1888.

A search of death records, shows Edith Beatrice Hartley, birth date given as 19 July 1889, died in 1969 at Northumberland, aged 80.⁸ The date of birth is within three days of being correct for the subject. Probate records show this Edith died on 2 July 1969 and was of 7 Hardman Gardens, Runhead, Ryton, Durham, and her estate

⁶ The Fatal Lamp Accident in Newcastle, *The Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, Tuesday, April 11, 1893, p.5.

⁷ 1939 Register for England and Wales for Ryton, Durham, schedule no. 6; reg. district 550-1; enumeration district Ffxk.

⁸ 1969 England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index 1916-2007, Vol. 1b, p.806.

amounted to £836, worth today approximately £12,000.⁹ Edith's will, written in 1963, gives her marital status as spinster, and lists her address at the time, of Bradley Hall, Wylam, Northumberland.

A search of old newspapers did not reveal any information on Edith Hartley. Looking at available online family trees for the family, they do not include Edith, probably due to her not being included with the family on the 1891 census.

Edith seems to have lived her whole life quietly as a single woman, in domestic service. In all senses a truly Forgotten Woman – until now.

*Researched by: Alison Kennedy
April 2024*

Website Sources:

Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

British Newspaper Archive: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Free BMD: <https://www.freebmd.org.uk>

General Register Office: <https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/>

National Archives: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>

Probate Records: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/>

⁹ 1969 England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1905.