

# *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.*

## **Annie Buttercase**

We first meet Annie Buttercase in the 1891 census, when she is working as a nurse at The Fleming Children's Hospital, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The only Annie or Ann(e) Buttercase, or variants, born in Scotland in the 1860s was Anne Hensley Buttercase, born on 25 July 1864 in Newburn registration district, the daughter of Thomas and Catherine Buttercase née Smith. The Valuation Rolls for 1865 shows that Thomas was farming at West Coates in the parish of Newburn. The Scottish Name Books, compiled about ten years before Annie's birth, describe the farm as follows: "A Small farm house and offices all in good repair Attached to it is a farm of ground the property of Andrew Rentoul Esqr. of Lahill Ho. [House] and Occupied by Mr Buttercase farmer."

The farm is described on the Listed Buildings website, “mid 19th century. Single storey, 3-bay farmhouse. Pinned whin rubble, with yellow long and short ashlar dressings and chamfered margins. Central panelled door and fanlight; sash windows with lying-panes to outer bays. 2 slated curved wall-head dormers with lying panes. Straight skewes, corniced end stacks and slate roof.”

Ann Hemsley Buttercase was christened at Newburn when she was four days old. The 1871 census finds Annie living with her parents in Kirkton, Largo. She was entered into Standard II of Kirkton of Largo School on 20 October 1873. She reached standard V and left on 19 July 1878.

In 1881, Annie, then aged sixteen, was lodging at 26 Springwell Place, St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, her occupation was listed as scholar, perhaps she was undergoing nursing training. A Robert Buttercase, a prominent doctor in Newcastle, was born a few miles from Annie's birthplace. It seemed logical to consider that he may have encouraged a young relative to come to the city to nurse. Unfortunately, this seems to be a coincidence as no close relationship between the two families has been found.

Annie returned to Scotland and in 1892, became the matron of Trinity Church Convalescent Home in Ravenscraig, Renfrewshire. This had been set up to take patients from the Glasgow Children's Hospital. They did not however take the most seriously ill children.

“Children shall not be sent to the Home unless they comply with the following further conditions:- are between 2 and 12 years of age and do not require regular night attendance or nursing; are convalescent and able to be out of bed practically all day; do not require active medical or

surgical treatment saving such treatment as simply dry dressings, treating superficial wounds with woodwool, wadding etc..”

Nor did they take any children who were suffering from infectious illnesses. It does seem that, when Annie was appointed, those suffering from tuberculosis was eligible. In 1911 however, the rules were altered to exclude children if they had “consumption of the lung with spitting.” At the time of the 1901 census, Annie was running the hospital with the aid of two servants, caring for thirteen children.

Annie remained in Scotland dying at the Murray Royal Hospital in Perth on 24 May 1928, at the age of 64. Her probate stated that she was of Ferndale, Hillside Homes, Dundee Road, Perth; her sister Agnes was the executrix. Her will was probated in both England and Scotland, suggesting that she had property in both.

## **Sources**

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1881 census index for 26 Springwell Place, St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh

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