

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in July 2025, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who were born in the same year as Queen Victoria, 1819.

Honor Poll n   Bunn 1819-1865

Named after Grandmother

On the 19th July, 1819, Honor Bunn, was baptised in the parish church at Wymondham, Norfolk. She is my 3x great aunt, a sister to my 2x great grandfather, Augustus Bunn.

I have no doubt that Honor was named after her paternal grandmother, Honor Proctor. Infant Honor was the 5th of 13 known children of Owen Bunn and his wife Ann (n  e Reeve). The couple had married in the very same parish church on the 12th October, 1812.



Wymondham Abbey Church
Author's Collection

However by the time Honor was born, three earlier children of Owen and Ann Bunn had died. They were all daughters, including two infants previously given the name Honor. The couple's son, Augustus, was around the age of four when Honor (the third!) was born.

Weavers

Like many other local families, 'the Bunns' had been in Wymondham for centuries, and were weavers.

When Honor was born in 1819, her family lived in (or near) to the centre of the town. She may well have been born whilst her parents were living at Town Green. However, Owen and Ann Reeve appear to have frequently moved around the town. In 1815, they lived in Damgate. By 1818, the couple were at Chandler's Hill and by 1827, they lived at the Fairland.

When Honor was 8 years old, her father Owen was caught up in local riots. This unrest related to the introduction of new looms and machinery. As a result, many traditional weavers feared loss of work and, in consequence, their income.

The *Norfolk Chronicle* of the 11th August, 1827, tells us that Owen Bunn is amongst the 14 men and one woman who pleaded guilty to riotously assembling at Ashwellthorpe earlier in the year. This disturbance also resulted in the destruction of machinery, although I do not know the extent of Owen Bunn's involvement.

Death of Father

Honor was 17 years old when her father died in the August of 1836. Owen Bunn was 44. He left his widow Ann with eight surviving children, the youngest being four years old.

Given that the later national census of 1841 captures Ann Bunn working as a weaver, I have no doubt that following Owen's death, Ann Bunn took up (or, went back to) weaving to make ends meet.

I think it is fair to say that it fell on Honor to look after her mother's household including the care of her siblings.

Son, William Robert Bunn

Nonetheless nearly two years later Honor gives birth to an illegitimate son, William Robert on the 7th March, 1838. According to William's later marriage record, his father was brick maker William Bunn. I have yet to find a connection between the families of William Bunn and Honor Bunn but I am sure there will be one!

1841 census

At the beginning of the following year, Honor's widowed mother, Ann Bunn, gives birth to George.

The 1841 census captures Ann Bunn's household living at The Lizard, Wymondham. The census states Ann Bunn's age as 45

(due to the ages been 'rounded down' to the nearest multiple of 5). In fact, Ann Bunn was nearer 50!

The household also includes Honor (now 21) and her siblings Edward 12, Benjamin 10, Robert 8 and George 2. Honor's son, three-year-old William, completes the household.

Ann Bunn is a silk and worsted weaver. Honor has no occupation. However, I feel sure that she is keeping house and looking after the children.

Marriage

'Life chances' for Honor were few and far between. At the time of her marriage in 1843 to local man, James Poll, Honor was unable to sign her name but (like her husband), put her mark 'X' in the register. Accordingly, I think it is fair to say that Honor had very little or no schooling.

Just before her marriage, Honor is living with her family at The Lizard, Wymondham. Her husband-to-be James Poll is also living at The Lizard.

The Lizard



The area known as 'the Lizard' is a little way out of the town of Wymondham. Access to 'the Lizard' is through the arch of a railway bridge. With Wymondham Railway Station being built in 1844, the bridge which would have been familiar to Honor and James Poll.

Along with other dwellings and at least one shop, there were (and still are) two rows of flint-knapped terraced houses - known as 'Long Row' and 'Short Row'. These houses were generally 'two up-two down'. With none of the modern services, the families on the Lizard drew their water from a nearby well.

Generations of my family lived in these houses, including Ann Bunn and her children.



Son, James Poll

However by the 1851 census, Honor and James Poll (both now in their early thirties) together with Honor's son, William (now 13), are living in Burnt House Lane, Wymondham.

On the 28th October, 1852, Honor gives birth to her second son, James Poll Jnr.

The national head count of 1861 finds James and Honor Poll and their 8 year old son James living in Right Up Lane, Wymondham. This is not far from Burnt House Lane or indeed The Lizard.

Death of Honor Poll

Sadly on the 9th April, 1865, 49 year old Honor Poll died. The cause of death being phthisis pulmonalis (pulmonary tuberculosis or commonly referred to as consumption). It may be that Honor had been living with the disease for some time.

Honor's death was registered by her sister-in-law, my 2x great grandmother Elizabeth Bunn, the wife of Honor's brother, Augustus.

At least three children of Augustus and Elizabeth Bunn also died as a result of consumption, including my great grandfather John Bunn, who died of the disease in 1902.

Honor's Legacy - her Sons

There is no doubt that Honor spent most of her life caring for her family. I feel sure that when her father died in 1836, 17 year old Honor took over the running of her mother's household.

Upon her marriage to James Poll, Honor will have continued keeping house whilst at the same time caring for her own sons William Robert Bunn and James Poll. Nevertheless with 14 years between the birth of William and James, it is possible that William 'left home' before or not long after James was born.

What became of Honor's sons?

William

On Christmas Day 1858, 20 year old William Robert Bunn married Maria Lincoln. Unlike his mother on her marriage, William signed his name in the marriage register. Accordingly, it follows that William had some schooling.

Their daughter, Emma Honor Bunn, was baptised in the parish church at Wymondham on the 8th May, 1859.

By 1881, 43 year old William Bunn is a master bricklayer and publican at the Brickmaker's Arms in Doddington, Cambridgeshire.

James

Honor's youngest son, James Poll, married Elizabeth Florence Lake in 1891.

The 1911 census captures James and Elizabeth Poll living at Eagle Yard, Attleborough. They had been married for 20 years. However, no children had been born to the couple during their marriage.

James is a shoe and boot maker and has his 'own account'.

Measuring Success

Sadly, Honor did not live long enough to witness the success (or otherwise!) of her sons.

Unless an individual recorded their lives by way of journals, diaries and such like, we have to rely on what we can discover about our families - and this can prove difficult and challenging.

Many good deeds and happenings go unrecorded. However, there is sometimes a record of misdemeanours!

On the 20th June 1884, the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* reported on the case of William Bunn, a beer house keeper of Doddington. Bunn was charged with furiously driving (a horse & cart) as well as being drunk in charge of a pony and cart. The case was adjourned.

On the 31st January, 1885, the *Cambridge Independent* reported on an alleged assault. William Bunn, a bricklayer, of Doddington was charged by Maria Bunn with assaulting her.

It is reported that on the 27th January, William Bunn had got up in the middle of the night and went downstairs. On returning, he began swearing at his wife and struck her violently in the face. Maria was partly dressed when she fled to her neighbours.

In the event, William Bunn was found guilty and sent to prison for one month with hard labour.

The following year, the licence for the Brickmaker's Arms was transferred from William Bunn to a new landlord.

We do not, of course, know whether the occurrence of 1885 is 'out of character' for William Bunn. Unfortunately, this family is quite elusive. I lose track of William and Maria after this date. Further I do not know what happened to their daughter, Emma Honor.

With no children from the marriage of Honor's son, James Poll, I do not know whether Honor has left a legacy of living direct descendants.

Heather Etteridge. July 2025

Sources:

Wymondham Parish Registers. Norfolk Record Office PD 184. Viewed via www.ancestry.co.uk

Attleborough Parish Registers. Norfolk Record Office PD 438. Viewed via www.ancestry.co.uk

11th August 1827 Norfolk Chronicle

20th June 1884 Cambridge Chronicle

31st January 1885 Cambridge Independent

23rd January 1886 Lynn News & County Press

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1841 census HO107/767/25

1851 census HO107/1817/353

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1881 census RG11/1689/79

1911 census RG14/11471/97

Death Certificate Honor Poll 9th April, 1865