

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in January 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of girls from Leeds, Girls' Industrial School, Yorkshire.

Elizabeth's Story

Elizabeth Eastburn was born in 1857 to John and Frances (Fanny) Isabella Eastburn née Crooks, in Leeds, Yorkshire. She was the fourth of five known children by John and Frances. (No baptism has been found for Elizabeth.) Her father was a chimney sweeper and was found in the 1841 census in Plane Street, Leeds age 13 as a chimney sweeper. In 1851, John and Frances were living at Balls Yard, Leeds.

In 1861, the family were living in Times Street, Leeds. Between 1861 and 1866, her father left the family home. Elizabeth's school admission of 1866 says that her father was dead, but I found no death for him. I finally located him in the 1871 census at 19 Station Street, Darlington, County Durham, where he was a boarder. He died December 1873 in Darlington, aged about 55 years.

In 1865, Elizabeth's brother John was admitted to a reformatory school. He was 10 years old. His notes says that he was often sleeping out and in bad company. Also, his notes is says he is illegitimate, which is incorrect. Frances was living with a man called John Redden or Reeden. Young John thinks they have been in and out of prison about 20 times. John was in school for three years.

Both Elizabeth and her brother James were admitted to a reformatory school 1st May 1866 for six years each. Elizabeth was nine years old, and James was seven years old. In Elizabeth's notes it says she was sent out to beg and wander about at night, and had no home to sleep in. It also says that her elder sisters, Martha and Malinda, were in service, and that her parents were often in prison. James' notes also say that his parents have been in prison about 20 times. I have not found any prison records for John Redden/Reeden or Frances Eastburn. James' notes also say that they are often in the workhouse. In the 1871 census, I found Frances Eastburn in Leeds workhouse. Her entry says that she was married (not a widow) and that her occupation was charring.

In 1870, Elizabeth's eldest sister, Martha, married George Ellis. Also in 1870, Elizabeth's sister Malinda gives birth to a son, Thomas, who is baptised Thomas Green. In 1871, Malinda marries the father, also Thomas Green – although I think it may be debatable as to whether he is the father. In the 1871 census, before Malinda married, the baby is named Thomas Eastburn. There is a Thomas Ellis Eastburn in the GRO index whose mother's surname is also Eastburn. Sadly, Malinda died in April 1875, aged 23.

In November 1875 Elizabeth marries Stephen Sledill – that's how he spelled his name at their marriage – later this is changed to Sledding. (Her brother-in-law,

Thomas Green, is one of the witnesses). They have four known children together. In 1877, Elizabeth gives birth to son named William Henry Sledding. In 1881, Elizabeth gives birth to a daughter, Malinda. Sadly, Malinda is born paralysed. In 1883, Elizabeth gives birth to another daughter named Agnes. In April 1886, Elizabeth gives birth to another son, Stephen. Sadly, Stephen died in the December, aged 8 months. In May 1887, her husband Stephen also died, aged about 34 years. In September 1887, Elizabeth's mother, Frances, also died, aged 59 – almost 14 years after her husband. Her sister, Martha, died between 1881-1891.

A couple of months later, Elizabeth takes up with Isaac Blenkinship. (No marriage is found for them). In 1888, Elizabeth gives birth to a daughter, Ellen. In December 1890, Elizabeth has another daughter, Mabel. Elizabeth loses two children that month, as both Mabel and William Sledding both died. Mabel is three weeks old (buried 30th December), and William about 13 years old (buried 20th December). In February 1892, Elizabeth gives birth to Clara. In July 1894, Elizabeth gives birth to another daughter, Evelyn. Sadly, in 1895, Clara died, aged three. In October 1896, Isaac Blenkinship died, aged about 50.

Her daughter, Agnes, married John William Bullough in 1901 in Buslingthorpe, Leeds. Her daughter, Ellen, married George Richardson in 1906.

The next place I find Elizabeth is in the 1911 census at 4 Foster's Buildings, Leeds. She is living as the wife of Louis Sawyer. There is a marriage in the GRO index for an Elizabeth Blenkinship to a Lewis Sawyer in 1902.

Elizabeth's daughter Evelyn marries in 1914. Her daughter, Ellen, died in 1915, aged 26. Elizabeth's disabled daughter, Malinda, died October 1918 from pneumonia, aged 37.

Elizabeth died 1st July 1937 at 4 Foster's Buildings, aged 79, and was buried on the 5th July. She outlived both her sisters, six of her eight children, and at least two husbands.

Charlotte Clark January 2023

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