

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 in the parishes of Wem, Shropshire and Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk.

Ann Smithbone's Story

Ann Smithbone was baptised on Monday, 25 January 1819. She was the daughter of Read Smithbone, a gardener, and his wife Mary. At the time of Queen Victoria's birth on 24 May that year, Ann was approximately four months old.

Queen Victoria's Coronation took place on Thursday, 28 June 1838, a year after she became Queen at just 18 years old. Around that time, Ann was unmarried and expecting a child; her daughter Ellen was born later that year, on 12 December, and baptised on 30 December.

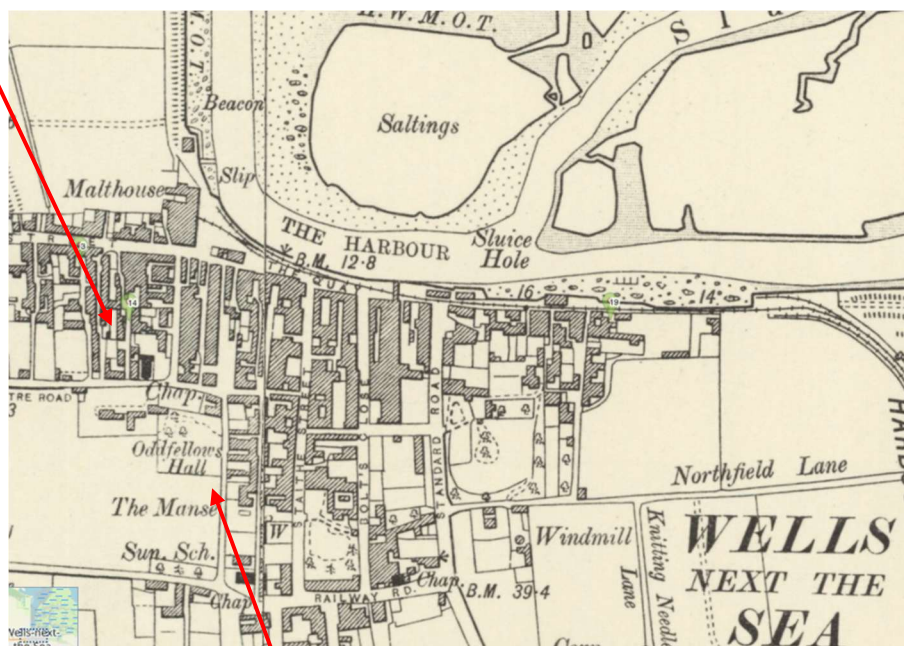
In 1840, Ann was working as a servant when she married Richard Everitt, a sailor, on Sunday, 25 October at the Parish Church in Wells-next-the-Sea. They were married by banns. At the time, both were of full age but signed the

register with their marks, as did their witnesses, John Bunting and Ann Dunn. Richard's father, James, was a porter, and Ann's father, Read, was still employed as a gardener. John Bunting was the brother-in-law of Richard Everitt, having married Richard's sister, Ann Everitt, on 7 September earlier that year.

When the census was taken on 6 June 1841, Ann's daughter Ellen Smithbone was living at Clubs Lane with her grandfather Read and seven of his children. Read Smithbone died in 1849. Ann and her husband Richard cannot be found on the 1841 census despite using different surname spellings and wildcards.

By the time of the 1851 census, taken on 30 March, Ellen was living around the corner with her mother Ann and Ann's husband Richard at Lugger Yard, and her surname was recorded as Everitt. Ann's mother, Mary, was working as a nurse and, following her husband's death, continued to live at Clubs Lane with several of her children and later grandchildren, until her death in July 1875.

Lugger Yard

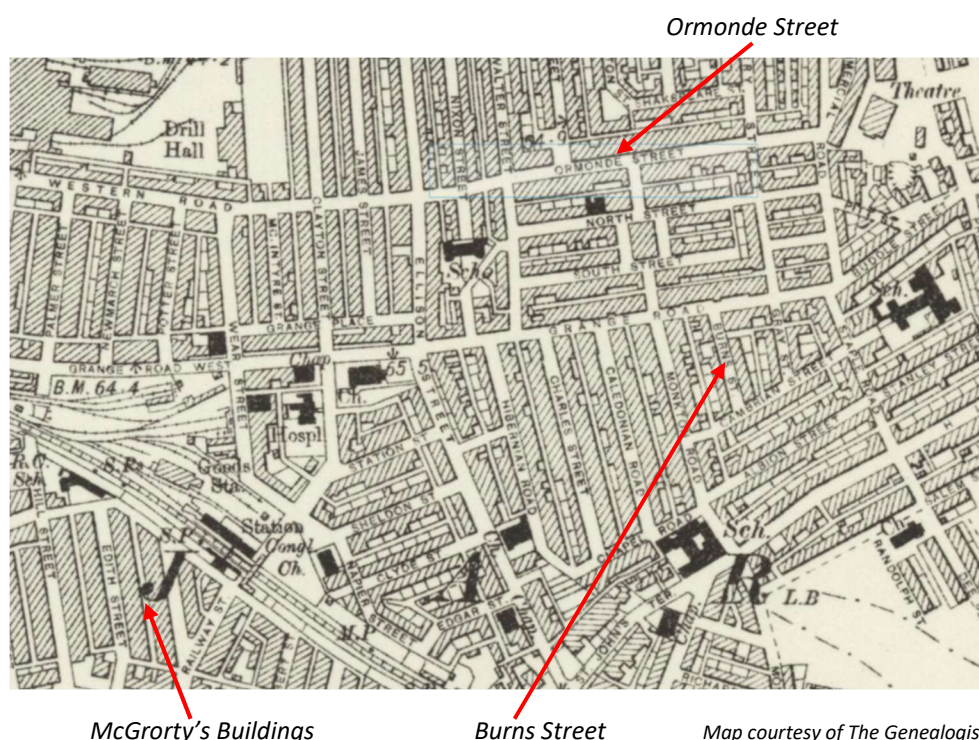


Clubs Lane

Map courtesy of The Genealogist

In the 1861 census, Richard was recorded as an able seaman aboard the vessel *Venture* at Jarrow Quay on the River Tyne, while Ann and Ellen's address was recorded as Mr Gale's Garden in Wells-next-the-Sea. Notably, Ellen's surname was once again recorded as Smithbone, suggesting that Richard was not her biological father. The couple appear not to have had any children together during their marriage.

Ann and Ellen moved north to Durham to join Richard shortly afterwards. Ellen married Edward Lynch, an Irishman, in South Shields in 1866, using the name Ellen L. Smithbone. By the 1871 census, Richard was working as a labourer and living with Ann and a 15-year-old lodger, Abraham Smithbone, at 50 Ormonde Street, Jarrow. Abraham was Ann's nephew, the son of her brother William and his second wife, Louisa. Ellen, Ann's daughter, was living just half a mile away at McGrorty's Buildings with her husband Edward, a furnaceman, and their three children: Mary Ann (age five), Thomas (age four), and Elizabeth (age two).



Map courtesy of The Genealogist

Richard died on 22 March 1872 at 58 Ormonde Street from angina pectoris. His death was registered by John Smithbone, also of that address, who gave Richard's age as 57. Richard had been baptised in Wells on 12 June 1818, with no birth date recorded in the register, so it is possible he was younger than reported. John was likely the younger brother of Abraham, another of Ann's nephews.

437	Tuesday March 1872 58 Ormonde Street Jarrow	Richard Everett	Male 57 years	Iron Shipyard Labourer	Angina Pectoris Certified	The master of John Smithbone In attendance 58 Ormonde Street Jarrow	Tuesday March 1872	Geo. S. Shotton Registrar
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Following Richard's death, Ann moved to 30–32 Burns Street, Jarrow, to live with her daughter Ellen and her family. In the 1881 census, Ann was recorded as living with them and their three children: Mary Ann (15), Thomas (14), and Elizabeth (12). Her son-in-law Edward was listed as working as a labourer in white lead manufacturing. Tragically, Ann's youngest granddaughter, Elizabeth, died aged just 19 in 1889.

By 1891, in her early seventies, Ann was an inmate at the South Shields Workhouse, on Harton Lane, Harton (now the site of the South Tyneside District Hospital).

She died at Ingham Infirmary (part of the South Shields Workhouse) on 29 December 1900 following surgery for an intestinal obstruction. Her death was registered by Nurse Dorothy Stonehouse on 4 January 1901, with "shock" also noted as a contributing cause.

III.	Twenty ninth December 1900 Ingham Infirmity South Shields -68	Ann Everett	Female	1/0 Years	Widow of Richard Everett a Seaman (Merchant Service 1st Stanley Street Garrison)	Intestinal Obstruction Operation. Shock. Certified by Harry Brighton M.D.	Dorothy Stonehouse Nurse present at the death Ingham Infirmity South Shields	Fourth January 1901.	James Sedcole Registrar
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Although Ann died just under a month before Queen Victoria's death on 22 January 1901, she was actually around three months older than the Queen at the time of their respective deaths. Queen Victoria was a widow for almost 40 years, while Ann was a widow for 28 years – though it's not known whether Ann wore her "widow's weeds" as long as Queen Victoria did. The Queen had nine children and 42 grandchildren, far more than Ann's one daughter and three grandchildren, but Ann, one of 12 children herself, was part of a large extended family with many nieces and nephews.

It's remarkable to think that both women were born in 1819 and lived into the 20th century. They would have witnessed over 80 years of extraordinary change which included the growth of the railways, enormous changes in industry, and the arrival of photography and electricity etc. Though their lives were worlds apart, Queen Victoria lived in palaces and ruled an empire, while Ann lived a quieter life of domestic work, family, and the challenges of working-class England.

At one point, they were geographically close too, as Wells-next-the-Sea, where Ann was born and lived for many years, is less than 20 miles from Sandringham House in Norfolk. Following Prince Albert's death in 1861, Queen Victoria completed his plan to purchase Sandringham for their son, the Prince of Wales, beginning its long history as a royal residence. It is thought that Queen

Victoria visited Sandringham only twice though, and it is likely that Ann had moved north to Durham by then.

Despite the contrast in their circumstances, both women shared the quiet strength and resilience familiar to many women of their era. While Queen Victoria's legacy is widely remembered, Ann's story stands as a tribute to the countless forgotten women whose stories rarely make the history books, yet whose lives were every bit as enduring and important.

Ann's married surname Everitt is recorded/transcribed as Everitt, Everett and Everatt in different records, but they all give her place of birth as Wells Next the Sea, Norfolk.

There are several photos of South Shields Workhouse and Ingham Infirmary online but sadly none in the public domain.

Mandy Geary

Sources

Parish Registers for Wells Next The Sea, Norfolk Record Office, images accessed via Find My Past and Ancestry.

England and Wales Census 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891.

The General Register Office online Indexes of births, marriages and deaths

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Websites

Sandringham House, <https://sandringhamestate.co.uk/a-model-estate-1884/> (accessed 11 July 2025)

Widow's Weeds, <https://thevictorianbookofthedeath.wordpress.com/2020/09/30/royal-widows-and-their-weeds-1889/> (accessed 11 July 2025)