

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in November 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who were found residing or working in various homes for Fallen Women in the census returns.*

## **Emma Jane Fulford 1842 – 1910**

In the nineteenth century when a prisoner finished his or her sentence, the provision of aftercare varied across the country. The provision for those leaving convict prisons was different from the provision for those leaving local prisons. There was no formal aftercare and any after care was provided by charities, almost always faith based. Any residential care for ex-prisoners was extremely varied and was entirely provided by faith-based charities.

The Staffordshire County Industrial Home for Discharged Female Ex-Prisoners and Friendless Women was built by subscription to provide for homeless women, specifically those who had been discharged from Stafford prison. It was erected on Sandon Road close to Stafford prison. The County Refuge, as it was known, was opened in 1878 at a cost of £9,000 and was the first of its kind in Staffordshire. It was said to hold 42 women excluding staff and was under the direction of the Horbury Sisters.

The Sisterhood of St Peter was established in 1858 at Horbury near Wakefield. They were also known as the Sisters of Mercy, an Anglican order, often referred to as The Horbury Sisters. They were the first new Anglican community to be founded in the north of England since the Reformation. Their objective was "*reclaiming fallen women and training them in the pursuit and practice of industry, virtue and Christian principles*". They were involved with the establishment of institutions in various locations such as Manchester, London and Leeds, as well as Stafford.

Although the aim of the refuge was to assist women discharged from Stafford prison, very few from the prison took up the offer of a place. This was possibly because of the length of commitment they had to make, which was two years. Inmates were taught needlework and

laundry skills with a view for a placement as a domestic servant afterwards. Due to the lack of uptake from Stafford female ex-prisoners, places were offered further afield, and not all the admissions were discharged prisoners. In 1883, of 23 admissions, fourteen were discharged prisoners and in 1884, out of 25 admissions only eight were discharged prisoners.

The home was dependent on subscriptions and the sale of industrial work carried out by the inmates. The home advertised in local papers for laundry work and a new large laundry machine was installed in 1895 with a view to increasing the refuge's income.

Emma Jane Fulford was recorded as the Lady Superintendent of the Home in 1891.

Emma Jane was born in 1842 in Barford St Martin, a small village in Wiltshire, five and a half miles from Salisbury. She was the youngest of seven children born to Henry Fulford and Maria Musselwhite and was baptized in the village church on 18 September 1842. Her father Henry was the village grocer for many years. Two of her brothers, John and Edward both died within three weeks of each other in 1835 some years before she was born. Another sibling, her sister Ann, died in 1845 just before Emma was three years old. Only one of her siblings, Mary Young Fulford, married and then emigrated to Australia not long afterwards. Neither of her other siblings, her sisters Sarah Maria and Elizabeth, were recorded as having a profession or occupation. Described as annuitants or living on their own means it can only be assumed that they had inherited enough money to live independently. Sarah Maria died in Feb 1906 at Barford St Martin and Elizabeth in March 1907 at Camberwell House, a lunatic asylum, having been admitted there in Nov 1892. In both cases probate was given to Emma Jane.

The 1851 census shows Emma Jane living with three of her sisters and a cousin a few doors away from her parents' house on Salisbury Road, Barford St Martin.

In 1861 Emma Jane was living at Ropley Cottage, Ropley and was employed as a governess. The head of the house was Ellen Mason, the widow of Rev Thomas Wall Mason who had died on 7 December 1860, a few months before the census was taken. Ellen had seven children from her marriage, the eldest being nine years old and the youngest one year old. There were also five servants in the household so Emma's role would have been solely to educate the children. There is no record of how long Emma was in the employment of Mrs. Mason.

In 1871 Emma was living at Clifton House, Clifton, Bristol. Clifton House was a private boarding school run by the head of the household, Jane Gaskin, a widow and schoolmistress. Jane's husband had been John Gaskin, a clerk in holy orders who had been the Rector of St Cuthberts, Bedford. Emma was listed as an assistant English governess. One of three governesses. There were 17 girl pupil boarders at the school. Again, there's no record of how long Emma was employed at the school.

1881 finds Emma listed as a visitor at Mowbray, Albemarle Road, Beckenham, Kent. The head of the household is Katherine E Dalton. Katherine, whose first name was usually spelt as Catherine, was the widow of George William Dalton, a landowner, who died in 1876. Also listed is Charlotte Beatrice Ripley who was Katherine's sister. Both were born in Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire. Their father was Thomas Hyde Ripley, the vicar of Wootton Bassett. A position he held for many years.

As mentioned previously, the 1891 census lists Emma, at the age of 48, as the Lady Superintendent at The County Refuge in Stafford. She would have been responsible for overseeing the smooth running of the refuge. There were seven other members of staff.

Assistant Superintendent, Frances A Macdonald. A Superintendent of laundry and her assistant. A matron and assistant matron, a laundress and a cook. There were 40 inmates, most of whom were born in Staffordshire with seven born outside of the county. There are no online available records of the Refuge so it's not possible to know when Emma was appointed nor how long she was employed at the refuge.

In 1901 Emma is a visitor to the home of Frances A Macdonald in Blomfield Street, Paddington. Frances was living on her own means and had been recorded in the 1891 census as Emma Jane's assistant at The County Refuge in Stafford so they must have maintained a friendship over the intervening years. There is no entry for a profession or occupation for Emma. Interestingly Frances was the daughter of Douglas Macdonald, a clerk in holy orders who had been the vicar of Kingbridge, Devon. A post he held for twenty-nine years until his death in 1865. Emma and Frances were of a similar age and by a strange coincidence they died within days of each other. Frances died on 5 March 1910 in Middlesex and Emma died 10 March 1910 at York Nursing Home, Salisbury.

Why did Emma Jane take up employment when neither of her sisters, Sarah and Elizabeth did? Perhaps she felt a sense of duty to support others in need. She obviously had a strong connection to the Anglican church but there's nothing to indicate how this came about as none of her family appear to have had any involvement with Anglican church.

## References

### Census

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1861 – RG9 Piece 702 Folio 3 Page 2 Sch 9

1871 – RG10 Piece 2539 Folio 10 Page 11 Sch 48

1881 – RG11 Piece 849 Folio 8 Page 10

1891 – RG12 Piece 2139 Folio 139

1901 – RG13 Piece 3 Folio 95 Page 40

### Newspapers

Yorkshire Post 1894

Staffordshire Chronicle 1891

Lichfield Mercury 1895

Summary Justice for Women – Joanne Turner

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