

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in September 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of pupils at the Royal Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor (later The Royal School for the Deaf), Margate, Kent and The West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Exeter, Devon

Eliza Crouch 's Story

On the 11th September 1888 twins were born to James & Emily Crouch of Boscombe, Wiltshire, The father James was a mason by trade and in his late 50's, his wife Emily was 19 years younger him. Emily was James's second wife which would explain why she was so much younger than him.

Twelve days later on the 23rd September the two girls were baptised at Boscombe Parish Church and are given the names of Mary and Eliza Crouch.

By 1891 James and Emily had a growing family consisting of 4 sons and 2 daughters with the twins Eliza and Mary being 2 years old. James was listed on the census of this year as a bricklayer and there was a nephew living with them also named James Crouch who was aged 40 and labouring with his uncle in the bricklaying trade. James was no doubt contributing to the family's rent which

would have been a welcome extra income at a time when poverty was rife and families lived hand to mouth.

In the late 1880's and early 1900's there were many infectious diseases due to the poverty and living conditions of the poor but it was scarlet fever that was the leading cause of death in children. The Crouch family were not immune from these childhood diseases as in some of Eliza's school records it states she had had whooping cough and also measles but it was scarlet fever that left Eliza Crouch deaf at the tender age of 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old. On the 8th July 1895 Eliza was elected for entry into the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in Old Kent Road. Her sureties were Edward Cusse from Boscombe and James F. Butler a farm bailiff also from Boscombe.

Eliza's attendance at the school started on the 13th September 1895 at the age of 7 years. On the records it stated she had 'little remnants of speech, natural voice, says only a few words - indistinct'. It also stated she was of 'moderate intellect'. The admission records also state that none of Eliza's relations are deaf and that she had attended national school for 2 years prior to being elected. The family at this time were living at 1 Spire View, St. Anne's Terrace, Salisbury, Wiltshire. On the 21st January 1897 Eliza is transferred to the asylum in Margate where conditions were thought to be better for the children particularly the clean, sea air. Eliza's family moved again in 1897 to 65 St. Ann's Street, Salisbury.

It is clear from the records kept that Eliza's poor attendance had an impact upon the progress and a note was made to this effect stating 'prolonged absence greatly hindered progress'. It is unknown as to the reasons for her absences but her total absences were noted as 592 during her time there.

On the 9th May 1904 at the age of 15 years (2 days before her confirmation into the Anglican church) she must have had some kind of physical examination as her weight is recorded at 6 stone 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds and her height is 5ft 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Eliza left the asylum on 28th June 1904. Sadly her father James had died 10th February of the same year aged 70 years. Upon leaving Eliza was in the Special Oral Class. Her teacher had been M. E. Wilcher. Her conduct was described as 'good' and her intellectual capability described as 'very fair'. She had very neat handwriting as is clear from the way in which she signed her name on her leaving records.

An address is given for Eliza for October 1905 which is 4 Peniston Court, Culver Street, Salisbury. Having carried out searches on some of the main family history websites I have not been able to locate Eliza after this date.

Sources

Ch192/R1/1/1 Entry 5312 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325-7615 (1880-1925)

Ch192/R2/1/6 Entry 65 Register of Children Old Kent Road [1-369] with transfers to Margate

Ch192/R2/2/2 Page 52 Headmaster's Register of Children: Old Kent Road (1891-1904)

Ch192/R2/3/1 Page 1 Headmaster's Register of Children 1895-1913

Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5295 Register of children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

Ch192/R8/1/3 Entry 96 Leavers Records: Registers of Children Leaving School (1902-1912)

Census Record - Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Children, Margate - 1901 RG13 824 folios 30-35 Ancestry.co.uk

Census Record - Boscombe, Wiltshire - 1891 RG12 1616 folio 19 - Ancestry.co.uk

Wiltshire, England Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813 - 1922 - Ancestry.co.uk