

# *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.*

## **Charlotte Yates's Story**

In 1851 a 22 year old woman called Catherine Wilmott was living as a servant at 9 St Leonards Terrace, Chelsea. There was another servant in the household called Charlotte Yates, from Windsor.<sup>1</sup> This Charlotte had a younger brother called John. Charlotte Emma Yates, the subject of this study and daughter of Catherine Wilmott and John Yates, was born on 18 December 1852 at 9 Yeoman's Terrace in Chelsea. John was a private in the Royal Horse Guards Blue.<sup>2</sup> An impressive man in his uniform, John was over 6 feet tall, sixteen stone and according to later reports a steady well conducted young man. Charlotte was baptised on 17 August 1853 at St Luke's in Chelsea, London. Her parents' home address on this record was 8 Ovington Square.<sup>3</sup>

Tragically on 13 September 1854 when Charlotte was only 21 months old, John died after falling from his horse. He was only 25 years old. The newspaper

report of his death says that he left a widowed mother and eight sisters. It makes no reference to a wife and child.<sup>4</sup> There is no record of a marriage between a John Yates and a Catherine Wilmot so it seems likely that they did not marry. Maybe they had plans to do so but that hope died with John. So Catherine was left an unmarried mother and Charlotte would never know her father. It is sad to think that if it had not been for the accident, Charlotte might have lived a perfectly ordinary life. However, after her baptism in 1853 her next appearance in the records is her residence in the House of Mercy at Great Maplestead in Essex in 1871.<sup>5</sup> To be admitted as a 'penitent', as the women were known, Charlotte would have required a recommendation from a clergyman or other responsible person and a certificate of health.<sup>6</sup> The usual stay was two years unless her health required removal to a hospital or her behaviour was disruptive in which case she would be dismissed. How Charlotte got on at the home is unknown. I have not been able to find her in any records following her stay in the House of Mercy.

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## Sources

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<sup>1</sup> Census records England. Chelsea, London. 30 March 1851. WILMOTT, Catherine. Class: HO107; Piece: 1472; Folio: 381; Page: 2; GSU roll: 87795 [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 9 November 2024

<sup>2</sup> Births (CR) England. Kensington, London. 18 December 1852. YATES, Charlotte Emma. Vol 1a, Page 64. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>3</sup> Baptisms (PR) England. Chelsea, London. 17 August 1853. YATES, Charlotte Emma. London Metropolitan Archives; "London, England, UK"; London Church of England Parish Registers; Reference Number: P74/Luk/197b. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>4</sup> London Morning Herald (1854) Lamentable Accident to one of the Horse Guards Blue. *Morning Herald*. 16 September. Page 8, col c. British Newspaper Archive. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk); accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>5</sup> Census records England. Great Maplestead, Essex. 2 April 1871. YATES, Charlotte E. Class: RG10; Piece: 1698; Folio: 117; Page: 7; GSU roll: 830745. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>6</sup> Essex Herald (1869) Great Maplested. *Essex Herald*. 13 July. Page 5, col c. British Newspaper Archive. [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk); accessed 8 November 2024