

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in April 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women staff and female patients associated with the Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital, Jesmond, Northumberland.

Annie Binks' Story

Annie was born on 16 July 1877 in South Shields, County Durham, the daughter of Thomas Binks and Fanny Elizabeth Robson. She was baptised at St Hilda's parish church in South Shields on 29th August 1877; an image of her baptism entry gives her birth date and shows her father's occupation to be an accountant:



Baptism Annie Binks, St Hilda's Parish Church, South Shields
Durham Bishops' Transcripts, Reference: PBT/2/227/5726

Thomas and Fanny Elizabeth had married in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Fanny's birthplace, in 1869. In 1871, they can be found living at 7, Pier Terrace, Westoe, South Shields with their first child John Housby Binks, aged 3 months, born in South Shields. Thomas, born in Alnwick, Northumberland, was aged 26 was at this time and an Assurance Agent; as they were able to employ a general servant, Isabella Smith aged 18, it is presumed that the family were living quite a comfortable life.

Ten years later, in 1881, the family were still in Westoe, at 22 Sea View, and was now enlarged by six more children, including Annie. Thomas was now Clerk to the Guardians and Burial Board:

SOUTH SHIELDS UNION.
TO PLASTERERS.
TENDERS WANTED for PLASTER-
ING the NEW HOSPITAL, at the Work-
house. Particulars may be had on application to
Mr CRAIK, master of the Workhouse, West Harton.
Tenders will be received at the Union Offices, Bar-
rington Street, up to 5 o'Clock on Wednesday next
the 14th inst.
THOMAS BINKS,
Clerk to the Guardians.

Jarrow Express September 16 1881 page 4

Annie's new siblings were Elizabeth aged 9, Frances H[ousby] aged 7, Mary aged 5, Ethel aged 2 and William R[obson] aged 11 months. With seven children to support, the family were still able to afford a servant, Annie Barkus, aged 16.

Two more children were born to Thomas and Fanny Elizabeth; Margaret Blandford was born in the latter part of 1881 and Ada in 1884.

In 1885, tragedy struck the family. Firstly, baby Ada died on 9th March 1885, then later the same year, Thomas Binks, Clerk to the Guardian, breadwinner for his large family, died at the early age of 40 years from Phthisis on 3rd December at Logan Terrace, Westoe. His death

was registered the following day by his brother, Annie's uncle, R[ichard] Binks, who also lived in Westoe:

315	Third December 1885 Logan Terrace Westoe W.S.D.	Thomas Binks	male	40 years	Clerk to the Guardians	Witness Certified by W ^m Dalziel L.R.C.P.	R. G. Binks Brother In Attendance 34 Charlotte Street Westoe	Fourth December 1885	R. S. Robson Registrar
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This left Fanny Elizabeth a widow at the age of 40 with eight children under the age of 15 to feed, clothe and educate. This number reduced to seven in 1888, with the death of Margaret Blandford on 4th January, aged 6 years.

By 1891, Annie's eldest brother, John Housby Binks, had entered the Merchant Navy while her mother had become a Lodging House Keeper at her home 8 Logan Terrace, Westoe. All her surviving children are found with her on the census for that year except Annie who would have been about 13 years old.

Annie was found living as a scholar at the North Road Abbot Memorial Orphanage in Jesmond, Northumberland, one of 60 girls aged between the ages of 6- 15 years old, drawn mainly from the North-East of England. The Northern counties Orphan Institution was established on March 25th 1864, its aim to 'clothe and educate fatherless and, in exceptional cases, motherless children of indigent circumstances'. In 1867, Mrs Catherine Abbot, the widow of Gateshead Industrialist John G Abbot, made a gift of £5000 for a new building subsequently called the Abbot Memorial Building.



Abbot Memorial Building, Jesmond, Northumberland

Next door to this building is the North Road Philipson Memorial Orphanage for Boys and next door to that is the North Road Fleming Children's Hospital where, in 1901 Annie became a Hospital Nurse. It is not known why only Annie was sent to the orphanage while the three other youngest children were kept at home.

At the time Annie was nursing sick children in Jesmond, her mother had moved to 4, King Street in South Shields and this is the address found for Annie in the Midwives Roll where she appears under number 22942. From an entry of eleven applicants, she was appointed as Inspector of Midwives and Female Health Visitor in 1906 on a salary of £75 per annum, and was one of only sixteen people, out of thirty-six entrants, who passed an examination to become an Inspector of Nuisances in November of the same year. These were individuals who were tasked with walking around poor neighbourhoods and stamping out insanitary habits. They also checked the fitness of food for human consumption.

By 1911, Annie's was living with her brother Thomas, now a bank manager, sister Ethel, a school teacher and mother, Frances Elizabeth, together with a servant, Dorothy Fish aged 17 years, at Bank House, Chester-le-Street, Durham. No occupation for Annie is given. Frances Elizabeth died on 23rd July 1918 and the siblings continued to share a house. By 1921 they were living at 4, Sea View Terrace, South Shields. All had remained unmarried. Ethel later became the successful head Mistress of Baring Street Junior School followed by Stanhope Road Junior Girls' School, both in South Shields.

In 1923, Annie and Ethel had been left a bequest of a share of £500 from Mr J E Macpherson, a wine merchant '*equally between the daughters of his sister-in-law-Fanny Binks of South Shields*' which may have given the two spinster sisters the chance of independence away from the house of their brother. By 1931 Annie and Ethel had moved to 8 Harton Grove, South Shields.

Annie was probably what one would term a community 'mover and shaker'. She had become treasurer for the South Shields Ingham Infirmary Guild, begun in 1929. The Shields Daily Gazette in 1937 reports her as saying:

I don't think there is any organisation in this town, or in any other town, which has such a splendid band of workers as we have. We can never be grateful enough for their work and both the committee and the patients in the hospital appreciate it. The work must go on and far more women should be interested in it'.

Eight years later, according to the 1939 Register, the two sisters were still living together on the same road, now at number 8 Harton Grove, Annie born 16th July 1877, Unpaid Domestic Duties and Ethel, born 28th September 1878, is 'Head Mistress Board of Education, Retired'.

Annie Binks of 92 Grosvenor Road, South Shields, Spinster, died on 20th April 1964 at the Preston Hospital, North Shields, aged 86 years after leading a full and productive life.

Fiona Stone

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Northumberland & Durham Family History Society Transcriptions © Northumberland & Durham FHS

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