

# *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.*

## **Wilhelmina Morris 's Story**

Wilhelmina was born 12<sup>th</sup> October 1870. Her birth certificate records her parents as Leonard Morris, an earthenware manufacturer, and Mary Ann Morris, formally Robson. Their address was 21 Buxton Street, Newcastle.<sup>i</sup>

Leonard and Mary Ann married at All Saints Church, Newcastle on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1857. Leonard was 22, and Mary Ann was 19. Leonard's father was John Morris<sup>ii</sup>. The report of their marriage in the Newcastle Courant, Friday January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1857, records Mary Ann's father as the late Mr Robert Robson, of Byker.<sup>iii</sup>

The 1861 census records Leonard aged 26 was a potter and was born in Tunstall, Staffordshire. Mary Ann was 24 and born in Newcastle. They lived with their children Jane M Morris aged 5, Mary A Morris aged 3 and John Morris aged 2. They all lived at 171 Mount Street, Tunstall.<sup>iv</sup> Tunstall at this time was an area of potteries and it became widely known for its decorative tile manufacturing.<sup>v</sup>

The transcript of Wilhelmina's christening at All Saints, Newcastle Upon Tyne records her date of birth as 12<sup>th</sup> October 1870 and her christening date was 15<sup>th</sup> November 1870.<sup>vi</sup>

At the time of the 1871 census Mary Ann aged 33, a china dealer was living at 21 Buxton Street with her children John aged 15, Mary aged 13, John aged 11, Caroline aged 5, Sarah aged 2, and Wilhelmina aged 5 months. Also in the household was Mary Anns mother in law Jane Morris, aged 66.<sup>vii</sup> I could not find Leonard on this census anywhere. I did find him in the 1871 electoral register though living at 21 Buxton Street, Newcastle, which was recorded as a dwelling and shop.<sup>viii</sup> I wonder why he was missed off the census, was it a mistake on transcription or was he elsewhere at the time?

The family at the time of the 1881 census were living at The Black Boy public house in Groat Market, Newcastle. Leonard aged 46 was a licenced victualler, born in Tunstall, Staffordshire. He lived with Mary Ann aged 43, born in Newcastle, and their children John aged 21, Caroline 15, Sarah 12, Wilhelmina aged 10, Leonora aged 4 and Hannah E Ellison aged 19, a servant.<sup>ix</sup>

Electoral registers first record Leonard living at The Black Boy in 1879, before that he lived at 21 Buxton Street.

The Black Boy, or Blackie Boy in Groat Market, Newcastle is one of the oldest pubs in Newcastle.<sup>x</sup> It dates back to the eighteenth century and was named after the blacksmiths who used to work on the site.<sup>xi</sup> The Groat Market was one of several markets which from medieval times were clustered around St Nicholas church. Its name is derived from the old Northumbrian word for wheat.<sup>xii</sup>

At the time of the 1891 census Wilhelmina, aged 20, a dressmaker, was living with her sister and brother in law, Sarah and Frederick W Tait at 69 Croydon Road, Elswick.<sup>xiii</sup>

Leonard died 4<sup>th</sup> April 1892. His death notification in the Newcastle Daily Chronicle, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1892, records his address as 66 Gosforth Street, Shieldfield. He was 57, and late of the Black Boy Inn.<sup>xiv</sup>

Sometime between 1891 and 1901 Wilhelmina did her nurse training and started working as a nurse. I have not been able to trace any records of a nurse registration for her.

Wilhelmina began her nursing career during a period of great change which transformed nursing from casual low paid work into a profession. Reformers like Florence Nightingale, seen as the founder of the modern nursing profession, recognised the importance of training nurses and set up training schools. State registration of the medical profession began in 1858 and there were calls for a similar system of registration for nurses. In 1860 Florence Nightingale opened the first school of nursing at St Thomas Hospital in London and this led the way for other nursing schools to open to give nurses appropriate training and education before they began practice in the field.<sup>xv</sup>

In 1887 a non-statutory voluntary register for nurses was established by the Hospital Association. The British Nursing Association was founded in 1887 which united nurses in membership of a recognised profession which would demonstrate on registration that nurses had received systematic training. This resulted in there being two voluntary nursing registers.

Wilhelmina worked as a nurse at the Fleming Memorial Hospital, Moor End and the 1901 census records her as a nurse here.<sup>xvi</sup> The Fleming Hospital was built with money given by Newcastle solicitor John Fleming. He gave £25000.<sup>xvii</sup> The hospital was officially opened by Lord Armstrong on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1888. It was a children's hospital. The hospital closed in 1988 when the children's services were moved to The Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle Upon Tyne.<sup>xviii</sup>

Wilhemina's sister Leonora also went into the nursing. The 1901 census records her as a hospital nurse at Adel Cum Eccup in Yorkshire. This is likely to have been The Cookridge Convalescence Hospital. It was built in the 1860s for the reception and accommodation of patients from Leeds General infirmary and other places.<sup>xix</sup>

The 1911 census records Wilhemina lived at Walby Hill, Rothbury. She was aged 40, single and still working in nursing but now as a maternity nurse. She was living in the household of Edwin and Mary Clarkson and their children. Their youngest child was Margaret Francis Clarkson who was 5 weeks old.<sup>xx</sup> I wonder if Wilhelmina was employed by the family as a maternity nurse for their youngest daughter. The 1911 census also shows her sister Leonora was working as a hospital nurse. She was single and lived at 63 Newlands Road. It did not record at which hospital she was working.

Nurses at this time were forbidden to get married and if they did they were asked to leave the profession. Hospitals did all they could to retain their nurses so there was a lot of incentive to limit a nurse's personal life as much as possible. They were required to live on the hospital premises and abide by strict curfew rules. If nurses had been given time and freedom to go out with men, some of them would have given up nursing to get married and raise a family.<sup>xxi</sup> These restrictions were lifted in 1944.

The 1921 census records Wilhelmina living with Arthur Stott and his wife. Their address was Highfield Half Hull Drive, Newcastle Upon Tyne. She is recorded as a nurse (maternity). The place of work column is noted no fixed place so it's likely she worked in people's homes rather than a hospital setting.<sup>xxii</sup>

Wilhelmina spent her later life living with her sister and brother in law Caroline and James Bowie. Caroline was older than Wilhelmina. All Saints, Newcastle baptism register records Caroline was born 16<sup>th</sup> August 1864 and was christened 6<sup>th</sup> November 1865. Her father Leonard's occupation was a potter.<sup>xxiii</sup> She married James Bowie from Elgin at St Phillips, Newcastle on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1889. In 1891 they lived in 21 Institution Road, Elgin. James was an ironmonger. Also with them was Caroline and Wilhelmina's sister Leonora. She was 14.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Electoral registers from 1922 to 1932 record Wilhelmina living with her sister and brother in law Caroline and James Bowie at 132 Glenthorn Road, Newcastle.<sup>xxv</sup> Her brother in law James Bowie died 13<sup>th</sup> August 1931 and his death notice is in the Evening Chronicle Friday August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1931.

The 1939 register shows Wilhelmina living with her widowed sister Caroline Bowle at Manor House, Blanchard, Durham. Wilhelmina is listed as a retired nurse.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The next trace of Wilhelmina is her death certificate which records she died 26<sup>th</sup> October 1944. Her occupation is recorded as a former maternity nurse. It notes she was the daughter of Leonard Morris, occupation unknown, deceased. She was 74. Her address was 182 Dilston Road, Newcastle. Her sister Leonora registered the death.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Her death notice in the Newcastle Journal and North Mail on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1944 records her date of death as 20<sup>th</sup> October 1944 and her address as 182 Dilston Road, Newcastle.<sup>xxviii</sup>

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- <sup>i</sup> GRO birth certificate, Wilhelmina Morris, GRO Reference: 1870 D Quarter in NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE Volume 10B Page 101
- <sup>ii</sup> England, Northumberland, Parish Registers, 1538-1950, All Saints, Newcastle marriage register, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org>)
- <sup>iii</sup> Marriages, Newcastle Courant, Friday January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1857, Page 8, Column 5, [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk)
- <sup>iv</sup> 1861 *England Census*, Class: Rg 9; Piece: 1926; Folio: 73; Page: 26; <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>v</sup> Tunstall, Staffordshire, Potters, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunstall,\\_Staffordshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunstall,_Staffordshire)
- <sup>vi</sup> England Select Births and Christenings 1538-1975, transcript of baptism register, All Saints, Newcastle, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>
- <sup>vii</sup> 1871 *England Census*, Class: RG10; Piece: 5100; Folio: 22; Page: 37; <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>viii</sup> 1871 Newcastle Upon Tyne electoral register,
- <sup>ix</sup> 1881 *England Census*, Class: RG11; Piece: 5061; Folio: 18; Page: 6; <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>x</sup> <https://www.higgy.com/hauntings/the-blackie-boy/>
- <sup>xi</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9597587/Blackie-Boy-pub-Newcastle-renamed-fears-cause-offence.html>
- <sup>xii</sup> <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/history/changing-face-newcastles-groat-market-21757394>
- <sup>xiii</sup> 1891 *England Census*, Class: RG12; Piece: 4199; Folio: 127; Page: 35, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Deaths, The Newcastle Chronicle, Tuesday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1892, Page 2, Column 1, [Findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk)
- <sup>xv</sup> <https://www.news-medical.net/health/History-of-Nursing.aspx>
- <sup>xvi</sup> 1901 census,
- <sup>xvii</sup> <https://charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/what-we-do/our-history>
- <sup>xviii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleming\\_Memorial\\_Hospital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleming_Memorial_Hospital)
- <sup>xix</sup> <https://forebears.io/england/yorkshire/adel/cookridge>
- <sup>xx</sup> 1911 *England Census*, Series RG14, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>xxi</sup> <https://nursegrid.com/blog/list-nurse-rules-early-1900s/>
- <sup>xxii</sup> 1921 census of England and Wales, Series RG15, Piece 25253, Schedule 8, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Bishops Transcripts, Newcastle Upon Tyne All Saints, 1856-1868, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> 1891 Scotland census, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>xxv</sup> Newcastle Upon Tyne Electoral Registers, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>xxvi</sup> 1939 England and Wales Register, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>
- <sup>xxvii</sup> GRO death certificate GRO Reference: 1944 D Quarter in NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE Volume 10B Page 64
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Death notices, Wilhelmina Morris, Newcastle and North Mail, Page 2, Column 2, [Findmypast](http://findmypast.com).