

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.

Laura Blanche Grey

Born into a family of wealth and dedicated service, Laura Blanche arrived two days before Christmas in 1835. She was born at The Oaks, Woodmansterne, Surrey and baptised along with two of her siblings on 28 April 1840 at the parish church of St. Peter's Church of England.[1]

Her father, Charles Edward Grey was a well educated man, born circa 1785 in Earsdon, Northumberland. He attended Eton; graduated University College in 1806 with a BA; earned his Master Degree from Oriel College in 1810; was called to the bar in 1811 and appointed Judge of the Supreme Court at Madras in 1820. He was Knighted and made Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bengal (India) in 1825. In 1835, Charles was the Commissioner of Affairs for Lower Canada

(present day Quebec, Canada). From the years 1841 to 1864 he was Governor of Barbados and St. Vincents; Tobago; Trinidad; and St. Lucia, and then the Governor of Jamaica. [2]

Laura's mother, Elizabeth Clark-Jervoise, was the daughter of Rev. Sir Samuel Clark-Jervoise, 1st Baronet of Idsworth.

Charles Edward Grey and Elizabeth Clarke-Jervoise were married at Saint George, Hanover Square, London, Middlesex on the 30th of April 1821. It is recorded that Elizabeth was a minor and consent was obtained from her father. [3] After their marriage, the couple travelled to India, where Charles took on his new position in Calcutta. While overseas they welcomed seven of their twelve children. [4]

Children of Charles and Elizabeth:

Elizabeth	born 14 Jan 1822	Madras, Madras, India
Catherine Elizabeth	born 5 Dec 1822	Madras, Madras, India
Charles William	born 8 Dec 1824	Madras, Madras, India
Ann Eliza	born 16 Jan 1826	Madras, Madras, India
Jervoise John	born 30 Aug 1828	Calcutta, Bengal, India
Jane Lucy	born 29 Jan 1831	Calcutta, Bengal, India
Edward	born 18 Dec. 1831	Calcutta, Bengal, India
Henry Rowland Ellison	born 12 Feb. 1834	The Oaks, Woodmansterne,
Laura Blanche	born 23 Dec. 1835	The Oaks, Woodmansterne
Victoria Mary	born c. 1838	The Oaks, Woodmansterne
George	born c. 1836	The Oaks, Woodmansterne
Donna Maria Louisa	born 8 Dec. 1839	The Oaks, Woodmansterne

Lady Elizabeth is listed in the 1841 British Census, under the household of her mother-in-law along with her son Jervoise John (12) and oldest daughters, Elizabeth (19) and Anne (17).[5] Her youngest children, however, are listed as “independent” in Radford Semele, Warwickshire – Jane (10), Edward (9) , Henry (7) , George (6), Blanche (5), Victoria (2) and Donna (1), in the care of household servants.[6]

Lady Elizabeth’s health rapidly deteriorated. She arrived in London mid- October in 1850 to seek medical care from her physician, who diagnosed her with kidney disease. On November 15th, she passed away leaving her loved ones to mourn.[7] Laura and her young siblings were now in the care of their Governess in Havant, Hampshire. Sir Charles Grey remained in Jamaica to complete his Governorship. [8]

With the return of her father, the Grey family under one roof again continued with the comforts and privileges bestowed upon them. Their residence in Tunbridge Wells, in Kent, was staffed with Ladies Maids, Kitchen Maids, Upper and Lower Housemaids, Butlers, Valet and a Footman. [9]

Sir Grey died in 1865 leaving his substantial estate to his living children. With these funds, Laura, her brother, Jervoise John and sister, Jane Lucy, jointly purchased 39 Haus Place in London (Chelsea). [10]

Laura's strong Christian faith played a significant part of her life. Her mother was instrumental in this area, being a daughter and granddaughter of ministers. It provided Laura comfort after the death of her mother. As she grew older, so did

her commitment to become part of the 'church family', taking on volunteer positions. This is how she came to be part of the 'Sisters of Mercy' under the Essex Diocesan in Great Maplestead.^[11] Houses of Mercy were Anglican institutions that began operation during the mid 19th century. There were eight such institutions in all of England. They were to house "fallen women" - many entering were unmarried mothers.^[12] On 3 April 1881, twenty-five women ranging in age from 16 years to 24 years of age were listed as 'special inmates'. Laura and six other unmarried women were volunteers that day under the direction of Dorothy Walker, Superior Nun.

By the early 1900's she was volunteering with the Sisters of Mercy in London, on her own means. Living on St. Augustine's Road, London (St. Pancras), she employed a cook and on occasion would have female church workers stay at her home. ^[13,14]

Laura Blanche Grey died on 2 May 1914 at Bexhill-on-the-Sea, Sussex. ^[15] She was buried on 7th of May at Saint Peter's Church in Woodmansterne, Surrey, – Section L, Row 2, Number 5. ^[16] Her will was read and probated in London on the 2nd of June. She bequeathed her estate to Rev. Reginald Albert James Malyon Waldram, Vicar at Saint Peter's Church and to Alice Maria Grey, spinster, in the Effects of £11689 16s 11d. ^[17]

Narrative by: Gail D. Faibish

Sources

- [1] Surrey History Centre; Woking, Surrey, England; Surrey Church of England Parish Registers:
Reference: 6120/1/5 <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/4772/records/2644614>
- [2] <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/1981/records/26289>
Dictionary of National Biography, Volumes 1-22 – London, England: Oxford University Press;
Volume: *Vol 08*; Page: 623
- [3] <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/61867/records/832163>
Marriage of Charles Grey & Elizabeth Clarke-Jervoise – St. George Hanover Square, London
- [4] familysearch.org – India Baptism Records
- [5] 1841 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/8978/records/1917859>
- [6] 1841 British Census - <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/8978/records/10869838>
- [7] Newspapers.com - Article pertaining to the Death of Lady Elizabeth Grey by her physician
The Examiner - 14 December 1850 page 6
- [8] 1851 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/8860/records/3382449>
- [9] 1861 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/8767/records/7156619>
- [10] 1871 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/7619/records/12545799>
- [11] 1881 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/7572/records/5195903>
- [12] House of Mercy – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Mercy
- [13] 1901 British Census - <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/7814/records/2159670>
- [14] 1911 British Census – <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/2352/records/2277816>
- [15] Findagrave.com – <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.
- [16] Surrey History Centre; Woking, Surrey, England; Surrey Church of England Parish Registers;
Reference: 6120/1/10 <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/4786/records/2588661>
- [17] Principal Probate Registry; London, England: Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of
Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England
<https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/1904/records/2227759>