

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.

Margaret Anderson Watkins' Story



Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital

At the time of the census in 1901 Margaret Anderson Watkins was recorded as 'head nurse' at the Fleming Memorial Hospitalⁱⁱ. Margaret was twenty-six years of age at that time, having been born in South Shields, Co. Durham, on 2 October 1874.

Margaret was the fifth child of Thomas Watkins and his wife Margaret née Swan and in the census of 1881 when daughter Margaret was six years old her father, Thomas, was listed as a steamship owner and clerk, living at 12 Challoner Grove, South Shieldsⁱⁱⁱ.

In 1891 when Margaret was sixteen, the family had moved to Woodbine Place in Gateshead, with Thomas' occupation having changed from steamship owner to agent and broker^{iv}. Margaret's four older siblings had been launched into the adult world: Dora, born July 1864, had married John G Cater in 1886 and was living in Gateshead with her husband and children^v; Elizabeth, born February 1867, was a school teacher living at home; Clara, born January 1869, had left home to become a music teacher, and John Swan, born March 1873, was an assistant chemist (analytical), also living at home. Margaret, at sixteen, was living in her parents' home with no occupation assigned to her. In addition there were seven younger siblings in the household: Eleanor, Mary, Wilhemena Octavia, James Arthur, Thomas Railston, George Newton and Frank Burrington, all recorded as scholars, except Frank who was only four years old at the time. It appears that teaching was the preferred option for the daughters of Thomas and Margaret Watkins, with the exception of Margaret Anderson, who chose nursing as a career.

Margaret joined the Fleming Memorial Hospital in Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, situated just three miles from her home in Woodbine Place, Gateshead, and in 1901 she was recorded as 'head nurse' at the Fleming Hospital^{vi}. Ten years later at the time of the 1911 census Margaret was a patient in Nottingham General Hospital. She was admitted on 28 February 1911 and discharged on 12 April 1911. Her condition was given as Paratyphoid Fever and her place of employment listed as General Hospital Nottingham^{vii}.

It is not known how long Margaret spent in Nottingham, but she had definitely returned to the Fleming Memorial Hospital by 1918 when she was recorded on the Electoral Register for Newcastle (North) at Fleming Memorial Hospital House, Moor Edge, North Road^{viii}. She appeared on the Electoral Registers for Newcastle subsequently in 1919, 1920 and 1921. On the 1921 census she is recorded as Margaret A Watkins, aged 44 yrs 8 mths, single, born Durham South Shields, with her occupation: Matron of Fleming Memorial Children's Hospital, North Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne^{ix}. Truly a success story for Margaret who had risen to the top of her profession.

Towards the end of 1921 Margaret married James Moffat, a bachelor, born on 26 August 1862 in Horton, Northumberland, who became a successful entrepreneur from origins in working class roots.

James was the youngest son of parents Robert and Mary Moffat. Robert Moffat was an agricultural labourer living in East Lilburn at the time of the 1871 census when James was nine years old^x. Also in this East Lilburn household were three older brothers: Alex aged 23, Robert aged 20 and George aged 16, all of whom were agricultural labourers like their father. There were two younger boys: John aged 13 and James aged 9, both of whom were recorded as scholars. Together John and James escaped the family tradition of agriculture as an occupation to join forces and become successful retailers in drapery. In 1881 James had moved to Newcastle where he was living at Avery's Monument Temperance Hotel, Nos 1,3,5 & 7 Blckett Street, and was employed as an apprentice draper^{xi}

Ten years later in 1891 James was listed at 32 Sanderson Road living with his brother John and family at 23 Holly Road, Jesmond, Newcastle, where both brothers were recorded as drapers^{xii}. Four years later both John and James Moffat were listed in the Electoral Registers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Municipal) of 1895, living at 32 Sanderson Road, with their shop at 73 Blckett Street, the street where James had been lodging as an apprentice^{xiii}.

In censuses over the next twenty years: 1901, 1911 and 1921, James is listed in the household of his brother John, living at 125 Osborne Road, Jesmond, which is just half a mile distant from the Fleming Memorial Hospital where Margaret was both working and living. The 1921 census required details of the place of work which, for both John and James was 20 Eldon Square, Newcastle, where both worked as drapers 'on [their] own account'^{xiv}.



A recent image of Old Eldon Square, Newcastle^{xv}

When Margaret and James married in 1921, it was a first marriage for them both; Margaret was forty-five years old and James was fifty-nine.

The next appearance of Mr and Mrs Moffat in the public domain occurred in 1939 at the time when the 1939 Register was taken for planning purposes at the outset of WW2. The couple were living at 'Cranford' Westfield, Gosforth, Northumberland, and Margaret was recorded in the usual manner for married women, with 'Unpaid domestic duties', and James as a retired draper^{xvi}. There was another member of the household listed: Kathleen McEnery, born 6 November 1903, who was single and employed as a cook.



Cranford, Westfield, Gosforth, Tyne & Wear^{xvii}

This is a recent photo of the house where Margaret and James Moffat lived for many years. When James died in January 1955 the couple were still living at this same address. Probate was granted in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to National Provincial Bank Ltd and Robert Alexander McKinnell Dickson medical practitioner. Effects: £62,800 13s. 8d^{xviii}.

Margaret's life continued eleven years beyond James' demise and at her death in January 1966 she was living at 20 Moor Court, Gosforth. Probate was granted in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Barclays Bank: her Effects £14,727^{xix}.

It appears that both Margaret Anderson Watkins and James Moffat pursued their respective careers with the utmost dedication, and it was only when they had achieved their professional/business goals did they allow themselves the luxury of a personal relationship.

NB Further details relating to the Fleming Memorial Hospital for Children are held by Tyne & Wear Archives as follows and are available to researchers visiting their archive:

Fleming Memorial Hospital for Sick Children, 1863-1963 Reference L/PA/1845

The Fleming Memorial Hospital for Sick Children, Newcastle, 1887-1987 Reference L/PA/863

Nurses registers, including details of each nurse's career and comments on performance, character etc., 1911- 1926 Reference HO.FL/6/1-2

ⁱ[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:W.T. Pike Contemporary Biographies London \(illustrations\) \(105 a\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:W.T._Pike_Contemporary_Biographies_London_(illustrations)_105a.jpg) *Contemporary Biographies*, by W.T. Pike, including "London at the opening of the Twentieth Century". (Pike's New Century Series no.15). Published in 1905 by W.T. Pike & Co., 19 Grand Parade, Brighton.

- ii Source: 1901 census RG13/4781/154 Accessed via Ancestry April 2024
- iii Source: 1881 census RG11; Piece 5010; Folio 9; Page 11 Accessed via Ancestry April 2024
- iv Source: 1891 census RG12; Piece 4178; Folio 136; Page 28 Accessed via Ancestry April 2024
- ^vSource 1891 census RG12; Piece: 4178; Folio: 58; Page: 5; Accessed via Ancestry May 2024
- vi Source 1901 census RG13/4781/154/55 Accessed via Ancestry April 2024
- vii Patient lists at General Hospital Nottingham Accessed via University of Nottingham Libraries, Manuscripts and Special Collections May 2024
- viii Source Tyne & Wear Archives; Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Collection: Newcastle Electoral Registers; Reference No: MD.NC/D/2/3/1918N
- ix Source National Archives RG15/25360/10/1 Accessed via FMP May 2024
- x Source: 1871 census RG10/5192/28/2 Accessed via Ancestry May 2024
- xi Source: 1881 census RG11/5059/87/8 Accessed via Ancestry May 2024
- ^{xii}Source: *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891*; Class: RG12; Piece: 4219; Folio: 43; Page: 23; GSU roll: 6099329
- xiii Source: Tyne & Wear Archives: Newcastle-Upon-Tyne; Collection: Newcastle Electoral Registers, Reference No: MD.NC/D/2/2/1895
- xiv Source: 1921 census RG15/25363/48 Accessed via FMP May 2024
- xv Attribution Hayley green/Old Eldon Square, Newcastle/CC BY-SA 2.0
- xvi Source: 1939 Register: Reference: Rg 101/2972 Accessed via Ancestry May 2024
- xvii Image capture:Jun 2023 Copyright 2024 Google
- xviii Source: probatesearch.service.gov.uk Accessed May 2024
- xix Source: probatesearch.service.gov.uk Accessed May 2024