

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in September 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of pupils at the Royal Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor (later The Royal School for the Deaf), Margate, Kent and The West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Exeter, Devon.*

## **Lillie Robinson Hodgson's Story**

The 1901 census and the records of The Royal School for Deaf Children Margate, Kent, provided by Few Forgotten Women, is an excellent starting point for researching Lillie's life.

### **CHILDHOOD**

The 1901 census informs that Lillie was aged 12 years, born about 1889 in Easingwold, Yorkshire and was a scholar in Margate, Kent. The records for The Royal School for Deaf Children Margate add that Lillie was from Raskelf, near Easingwold.

From this information a birth record is identified; Lillie's birth was registered Q4 1888 in Easingwold, North Riding of Yorkshire, the registration district for Raskelf. [1] To date an online baptism record has not been identified for Lillie, parish registers are held at the Borthwick Institute, University of York.

An entry in the 1891 census is a reliable record relating to Lillie. Lillie Robinson Hodgson aged 2 years and living with her parents John and Sarah Hodgson at the Estate Office in Raskelf where her father was a woodman and joiner. This census states that John was born in Tholthorpe and Sarah in Raskelf, from other records this would appear to be an error and John was born in Raskelf and it was Sarah who was born in Tholthorpe, about 3 miles south of Raskelf. Lillie had 5 older siblings, in 1891 Amelia was 11 years, Mary Jane 10 years, Ada 8 years, George William 6 years and Pleasance was 4 years old, she had a younger brother Maurice Robert. At the age of 35 years each John and Sarah had 7 children. [2]

Raskelf/Raskelfe was a chapelry in the parish of Easingwold; in the early 1870s there were St Mary's church and a Wesleyan Chapel. The population at this time was 577 people, the children had a school in the village and the North Eastern railway ran half a mile from the village; this will probably have served the industry of brick and tile making local to Raskelf where the works were sited alongside the railway. Raskelf was predominantly a rural agricultural area. [3]



This photograph of Raskelf shows the local red bricks, these are the style that Lillie will have seen growing up in the village, she will see different landscapes in her later life.

JThomas, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

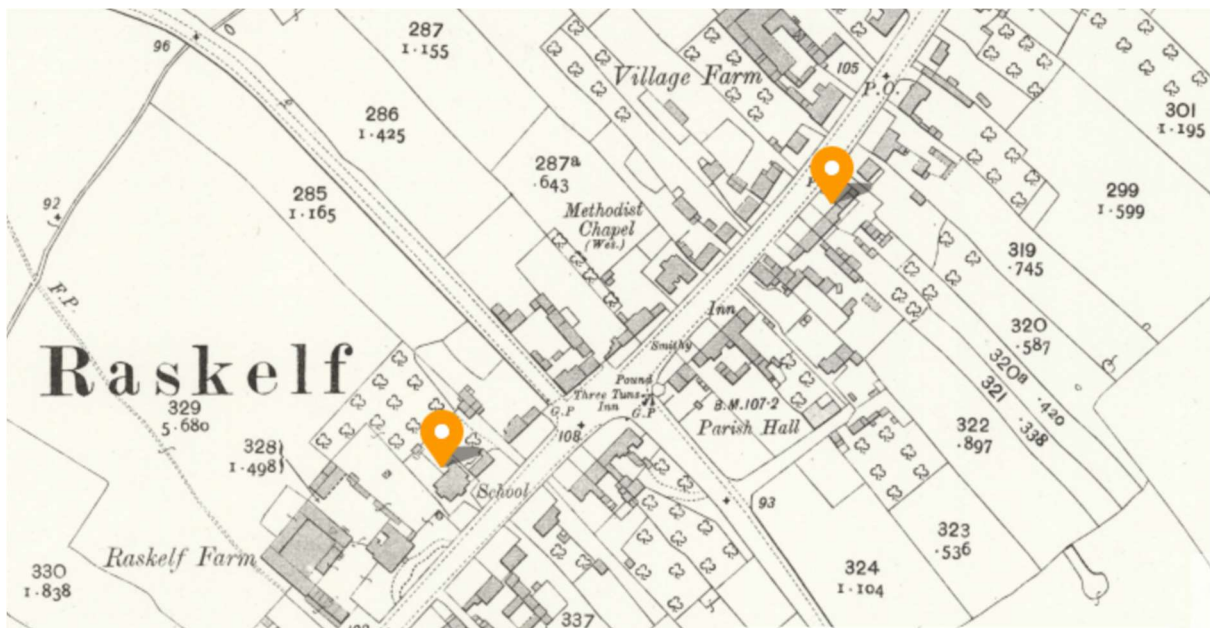
The red bricks are also seen in the village pinfold, stray animal enclosure, that Lillie will have passed as a girl.



A Grade II listed pinfold, probably from the late 1700s. [4]

David Rogers / *Raskelf Pinfold* / , [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/), [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raskelf_Pinfold.jpg)

The map below shows the likely location of where Lillie lived on Jesanine Terrace and where she will have walked to her village school, passing the Wesleyan Chapel, pinfold, smithy and two inns. [5]



## SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF

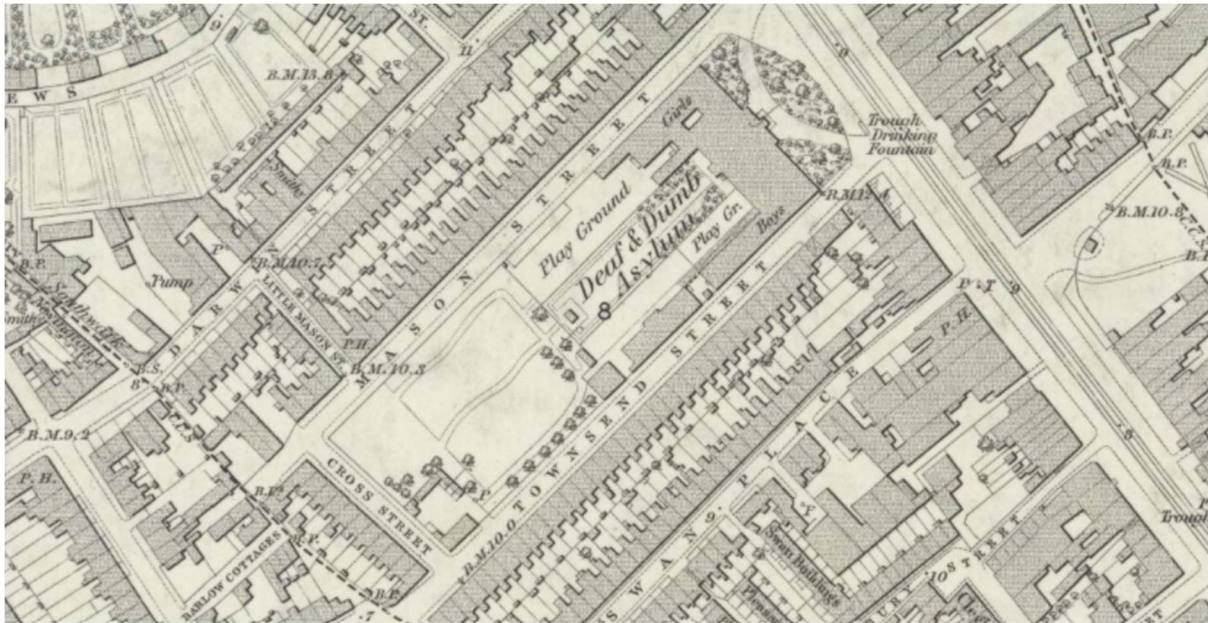
According to later census returns it is assumed that Lillie's family continued living in Raskelf; however, in 1901 Lillie was living at The Royal School for Deaf Children in Margate, Kent.

The records of the school for the deaf state that Lillie was deaf from birth; however, the 1891 census when Lillie was 2 years old does not record any deafness. The records state that Lillie had not had small pox, scarlet fever or whooping cough but she did have measles; it is possible if she contracted this as a young child she could have acquired deafness. Another possible cause of Lillie's deafness is that her parents were cousins, this information is shown in the school records as it is believed this could have be a cause of a child's deafness. Rare genetic disabilities such as deafness are known to appear more frequently in children of first cousin marriages. [6]

The records available for Lillie from The Royal School for Deaf Children provide more information about her childhood prior to her admission. She was born on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1888 and baptised on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1888. Lillie attended her local parish school for 3 years and was elected for a place at The Royal School for Deaf Children on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1896 when she was 7 years and 9 months. Two men from Raskelf acted as surities for her place at the school, these were Reverend William Balls and farmer H Haw Liney.

Lillie was admitted to the Old Kent Road Asylum on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1896 when she was almost 8 years old. This must have been an enormous life event for her, leaving her family in Yorkshire to move to London, leaving a rural area for a busy capital city. It will have been seen as a great opportunity for Lillie to be able to progress in life and to learn how to manage her deafness. The school, known as an asylum, on Old Kent Road was set in large grounds within a residential area, the map below identifies the different sides of the school for girls and boys with their own playgrounds.

Deaf & Dumb Asylum, Old Kent Road [7]



The children were admitted due to being deaf and dumb and were not to be lacking in intellect. Some children paid £20 per year for board and the school also received private pupils. The children were expected to stay at the institution for five years and were taught to read, write, draw, and cipher and to speak by signs. An aim was for the children to be able to articulate well enough to be clearly understood as well as having instruction in working trades. [8]

The Royal School for Deaf Children also had a school in Margate, Kent for the older children; Lillie was transferred from London to Margate 20<sup>th</sup> January 1898 when she was 9 years and 3 months old. The school records for Lillie provide details of her progress at the school, she had made good progress and was generally in the top third of her class. She was very painstaking in her work, neat in sewing and displayed excellent conduct. As well as gaining very good grades in her school subjects she was marked at 92% in lip reading, 80% in articulation and she was able to talk intelligibly, being able to make herself understood.

Her time at the schools will have given Lillie more opportunities to be included in society and to gain employment. She left the school in Margate 20<sup>th</sup> December 1904 when she was 16 years and 4 months old. [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14]

While Lillie was away at school her family remained in Raskelf and she gained more siblings.

The 1901 census return shows 8 year old Elsie, Hilda 6 years and Ernest 2 years, her older brother George William was now working for the nearby North Eastern Railway; Hilda was identified on the census as being deaf and dumb. [15]

### **SIBLING HILDA**

The records for The Royal School for Deaf Children also provide information about Lillie's younger sister, Hilda, also deaf. She was born 28<sup>th</sup> September 1894 and baptised 1<sup>st</sup> November 1894. Lillie also attended the school in Raskelf and was elected for The Royal School for Deaf Children 9<sup>th</sup> December 1902 with farmers James Shepherd and Thomas Wright, of Raskelf, acting as surities. Hilda was admitted to the Old Kent Road school on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1903 when she was 8 years and 4 months; on the same day she was transferred to the Margate school where her older sister Lillie was. The sisters will have had almost 2 years together and this will have been quite a change for Lillie and reassuring for Hilda. On her admission it is noted that her parents were cousins who had 10 children, two of whom were deaf and dumb – Lillie and Hilda.

Hilda is recorded as having been born deaf and that her right leg was ½ inch shorter than the left, therefore, she will have had a slight limp. In May 1903 Hilda contracted scarlet fever which led to her having a lot of time off school, it is unknown whether she returned to her parents during this time of illness.

During her time at the school Hilda was reported as being intelligent with very good capability and she had a clear voice. She left the school on 19 July 1910 when she was approaching 16 years of age. [16] [17] [18]

### **EMPLOYMENT**

The next record located for Lillie is the 1911 census return. Lillie Robinson Hodgson was living with her older sister Amelia, who was now 31 years old, at 26 High Street, Steeton, West Riding of Yorkshire. Lillie was 22 years old and recorded as being deaf from birth. [19]



26 High Street,  
Steeton.

Private Collection  
Jude Rhodes

The building above the cottage appears to have been a warehouse, the neighbours of Amelia and Lillie were the Hall family, Mr Hall was a wholesale grocer. Amelia was employed in domestic work and Lillie worked as a stuff weaver; she will have been weaving coarse cloth, woollen worsted. There was a large worsted manufacturer very near to the cottage in Steeton and it probable that this is where Lillie worked.

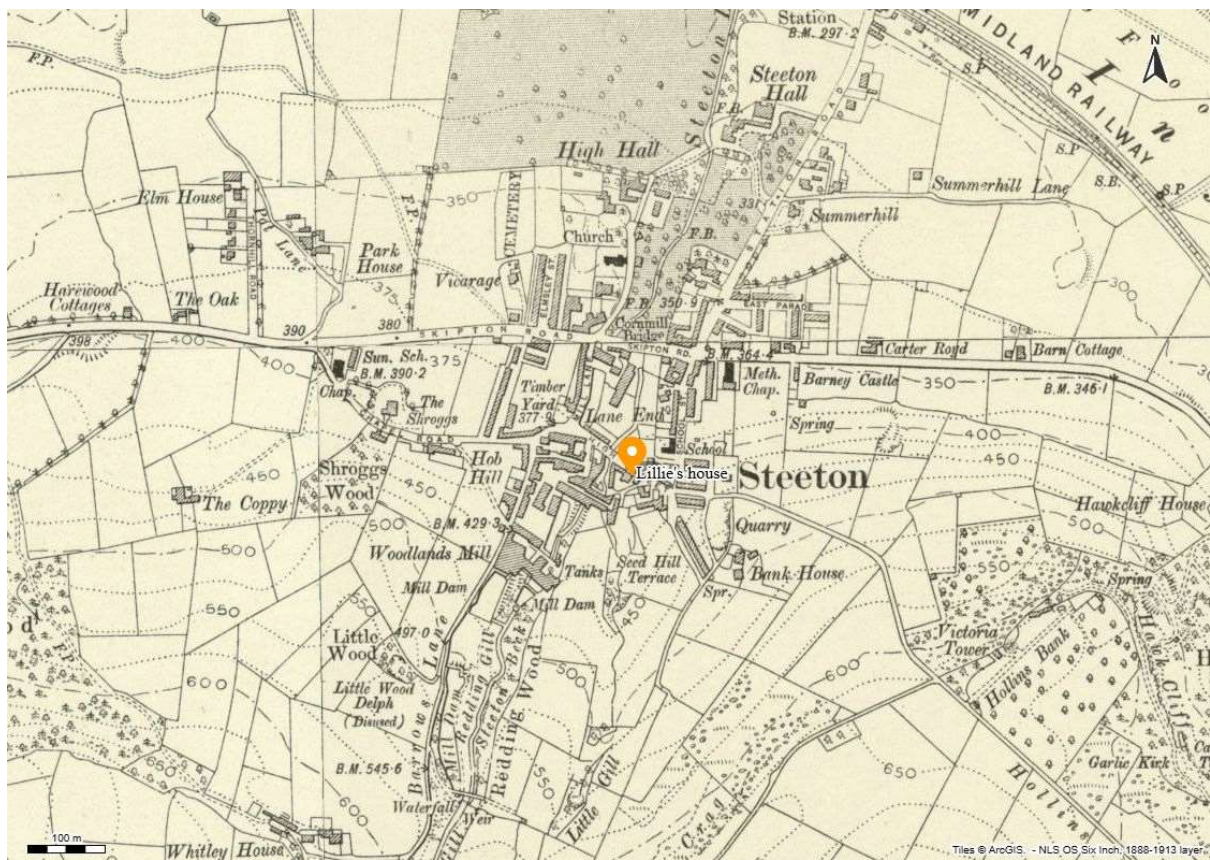


Parts of Woodlands  
Mill with the beck  
running below, the  
large mill is now  
residential flats.

Private Collection  
Jude Rhodes



The map of Steeton, below, marks where Lillie lived and Woodlands Mill is a short walk up Mill Lane from the High Street. [20] OS six-inch published 1909 CC-BY





There was another school for deaf and dumb children, this was in Doncaster and known as Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The school carried out surveys in the mid-1800s to find out the occupations of their ex-pupils. The 'Results of an Inquiry Respecting the Former Pupils' showed that the young deaf people had entered a wide range of occupations, including jobs in the textile industry.

Deaf and dumb people worked in the mills and factories of the textile industry, the intense noise produced by the rows of spinning mules and steam powered looms also caused many workers to become deaf. To communicate in the noisy environment workers used simple signing and learnt lip-reading; those, like Lillie, who had attended a school for the deaf will have had an advantage as proficient lip-readers and sign language communicators. [21] [22]

Probably when Lillie started working in the mill it was the first time she felt truly included in society and with her fellow workers, no doubt she was an asset in helping them with signing.

While Lillie was living and working in Steeton sadness hit the family when her younger brother, Maurice Robert Hodgson, was killed in action during WWI. He was a Private with the Australian Infantry and killed in action 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6th November 1916, he is buried at Warlencourt Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Maurice is named on the Raskelf war memorial. [23] [24]

The next online record for Lillie Robinson Hodgson is 7 years later when she married George John Llewellyn Gundry, the marriage certificate does not state an occupation for Lillie and her address was Raskelf, perhaps she returned to her parents to prepare for her wedding. The marriage took place following the end of WWI on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918 at St Mary's Parish Church in Raskelf when Lillie was 29 years old. The witnesses were John and Pleasance Hodgson, Lillie's father and sister, and Lillie has signed her name in very neat handwriting. Her husband was 8 years older and a cabinet maker, his address was Halifax, Yorkshire; his deceased father had been a ship maker. [25]

The 1921 census provides more information on George, Lillie's husband, and an update on her life.

Lillie and George now had a baby daughter, Freda, born in 1920. Freda's birth was registered in Q4 of 1920 in Easingwold, this is the district for Raskelf therefore it can be assumed that Lillie delivered Freda at her parental home. [26]

The family were living at 3, Orrell Hall, Halifax, West Riding of Yorkshire which was just over a mile north west of the centre of Halifax. George was still working as a cabinet maker and he was employed by Marshal Haley Wholesale Cabinet Works.

The census gives George's place of birth as London, this gave a lead for further research into his earlier life. A possible birth record for George is registered in the civil birth index for Q3 1880 in the registration district of West Ham. [27] [28]

Using the above information to search the 1891 census return for George John Llewellyn Gundry gives Geo John Gundry, aged 10 years, born in Leytonstone, Essex; this was within the registration district of West Ham. [29] [30] George was a scholar at the Margate Deaf and Dumb Asylum in 1891, it is possible that he stayed at the school until 1898 when Lillie was also there or, perhaps, they met when they were younger at The Old Kent Road school. [31]

While George, Lillie and little Freda were living in Halifax Lillie's sister Hilda was now living with her older sister Amelia having left the school in Margate, she had followed in Lillie's footsteps. Amelia had moved further along the High Street in Steeton and was living at number 48 with Lillie and their younger brother Ernest. While Amelia stayed at home to look after the house her siblings Hilda and Ernest worked at John Clough & Sons worsted mill, this is where Lillie had worked; Woodlands Mill. [32] Hilda was a weaver and Ernest was gassing; this was a term used for someone placing bobbins on a gassing winding frame and lit the gas burners for the machinery. [33] [34]

In the Gundry household, two and a half years after Freda was born, the family grew with the birth of Ernest. Ernest's birth was registered in Q2 1923 in the district of Easingwold; presumably, Lillie had returned to her parental home to deliver her baby as she had done with her daughter Freda. [35] A photograph including George, Lillie, Freda and Ernest is available on the Ancestry database; the photograph shows a very smart family. [36]

A photograph including George, Lillie, Freda and Ernest is available on the Ancestry database; the photograph below shows a very smart family. [36]



Photo shared with permission from Chris Jolliffe

Front row - Magdalene Gundry, Freda Gundry, Diana Lloyd, Margaret Gundry, Basil Jolliffe

Back row - Ernest Gundry, George Gundry, his wife Lily, Carl Jolliffe, Margaret Jolliffe The next record providing more details of Lillie and her family is from 1939 when Lillie was approaching 51 years of age. [37]

The 1939 register provides the dates of birth for the family:

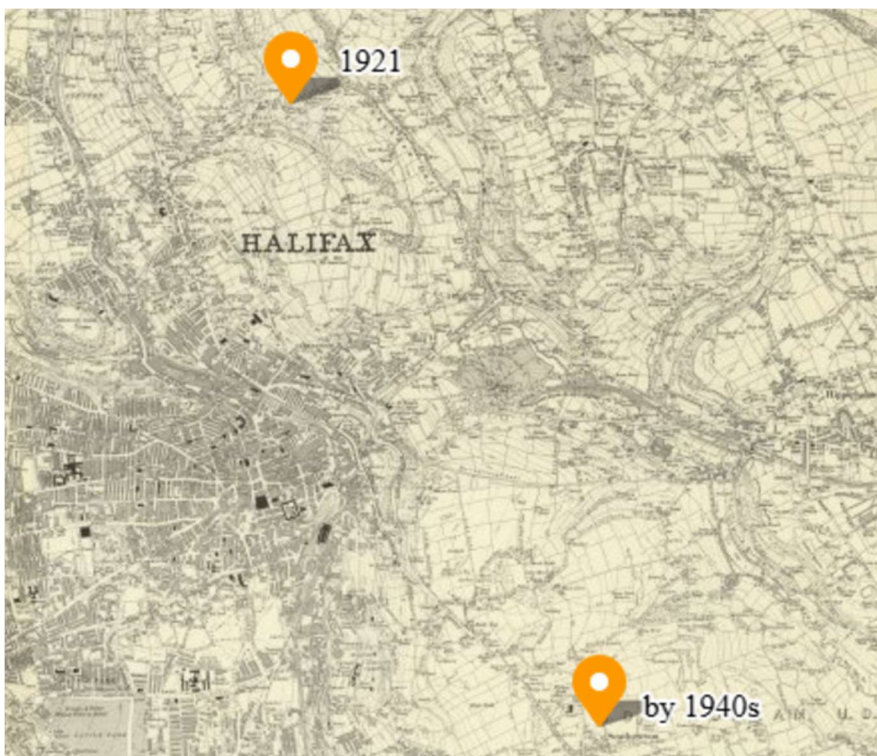
George John Llewellyn Gundry	18 <sup>th</sup> June 1880
Lillie Robinson nee Hodgson	18 <sup>th</sup> October 1888
Freda	13 <sup>th</sup> September 1920
Ernest	24 <sup>th</sup> May 1923

The family were now living at 37 Sun Way in what was a hamlet 3 miles south east of Halifax on the road to Southowram. The house was built probably built around 1930 in a terrace of two-bedroomed houses with gardens. [38]

George continued in his work as a cabinet maker, Freda was a warehouse sorter as well as being an Air Raid Warden and Ernest was messenger boy for the Air Raid Precautions (ARP). There was another member of the family living at the house, Lillie's sister Hilda had now joined the family and was working as a weaver, probably in one of the numerous mills in Halifax.

The map below identifies the places to the north and south of Halifax where Lillie lived.

[39] OS Published 1908 CC-BY



Sadly, Lillie died on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1942 at home Sunway, Southowram. The newspaper notice states "Beloved wife of George JL Gundry and beloved mother of Freda and Ernest Gundry, aged 54 years. Interment at Bank Top Methodist Cemetery." [40]

The following year, 1943, was a significant year for Freda, she married Arthur Horsman in Halifax and she started training to be a nurse. [41] Freda Ellen Horsman qualified as a nurse on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1944 when she was living at Beechwood Drive, Illingworth, just north of Halifax. [42] Five years later in 1948 Ernest also was married; the newspaper notice provides the following information. 'Gundry-Brown On July 24 at Bethesda Chapel, Southowram. Ernest,

only son of Mr and the late Mrs Gundry of 37 Sunway, Southowram, to Mary, youngest daughter of Mt and Mrs Brown, Carr Green, Todmorden.’ [43]

The next newspaper notice is the sad news of George’s death.

‘The death at his home, yesterday, of George John Llewellyn Gundry (71) retired journeyman cabinet maker, 37 Sunway, Southowram, Halifax, has been reported to the coroner. He was found leaning on the kitchen table and died before the arrival of a doctor. He lived alone.’

[44] The entry in the probate calendar gives the date of death as 10<sup>th</sup> March 1952, George left a moderate sum of money to his daughter Freda Ellen and her husband, Arthur Horsman, who was a school master. There is no mention of his son Ernest, why this was the case is unknown as a death record for Ernest is 46 years later in 1998. [44] [45]

It would appear that Lillie Robinson Hodgson followed some common patterns of children who were deaf and dumb; her parents were cousins, she worked in a textile mill and her husband was also deaf and dumb. Her life choices will have helped her to be surrounded by people who will have understood her difficulties and it is uplifting to discover that Lillie had what would seem to be a fulfilled life supported by, and supporting, her family.

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[2] 1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census Image [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

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[4]\_PINFOLD, Raskelf - 1151271 | Historic England

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[7] [Ordnance Survey, London England and Wales, 1841-1952 \(nls.uk\)](http://Ordnance Survey, London England and Wales, 1841-1952 (nls.uk))

[8] The Old Kent Road | British History Online [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)

**Lillie's school records:**

[9] Ch192/R8/1/3 Entry 127 Leavers Records: Registers of Children Leaving School (1902-1912)

[10] Admission Ch192/R1/1/1 Entry 5418 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325-7615 (1880-1925)

[11] Ch192/R2/1/6 Entry 122 Register of Children Old Kent Road [1-369] with transfers to Margate

[12] Ch192/R2/2/2 Page.68 Headmaster's Register of Children: Old Kent Road (1891-1904)

[13] Ch192/R2/3/1 Page 3 Headmaster's Register of Children 1895-1913

[14] Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5354 Register of children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

[15] "England and Wales Census, 1901" [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

**Hilda's school records:**

[16] Ch192/R1/1/1 Entry 5678 Admission Records Application for Admission 4325-7615 (1880-1925)

[17] Ch192/R2/2/2 Page 117 Headmaster's Register of Children: Old Kent Road (1891-1904)

[18] Ch192/R2/1/5 Entry 5621 Register of children: Old Kent Road [5256-5670] (with transfers to Margate)

[19] 1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

[20] Georeferenced Maps [National Library of Scotland \(nls.uk\)](http://NationalLibraryofScotland.nls.uk)

[21] Leeds Industrial Museum [Disability History: 'Any Work' at the Mill \(heritageopendays.org.uk\)](http://DisabilityHistory:AnyWorkattheMill.heritageopendays.org.uk)  
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[22] Hidden histories of disabled mill workers [public-disabilityhistory.org](http://public-disabilityhistory.org)

[23] [Roll of Honour - Yorkshire - Raskelf \(roll-of-honour.com\)](http://RollofHonour-Yorkshire-Raskelf.roll-of-honour.com)

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[26] England & Wales Births 1837-2006 [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

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