

# *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.*

## **Edith Meacham's Story**

*By Ruth Wilson*

*(note: the spellings Meacham and Meachem seem interchangeable. Meacham has been used unless a record spells the name otherwise)*

The 1891 census<sup>1</sup> found the nineteen-year-old Edith Meacham living in the Edgbaston Refuge for Fallen and Destitute Women at 14 Noel Road, Edgbaston. The home was under the supervision of George Davis, a Town Missionary, his wife, Jane, acting as matron, and their granddaughter, the assistant matron. Edith was one of 13 women living there, all in their late teens or early 20s. She was listed as a laundress with eight of the other inmates listed as laundry maids, the others being domestic servants.

Edith was said to have been born in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire but in fact she was born in the nearby parish of Tettenhall. In 1881<sup>2</sup> she was living with her grandparents, Joseph Meacham, a gardener, his wife, Sarah, and their daughter, Amy, in Lower Street, Tettenhall, Staffordshire. It seems likely that Edith was the daughter of Mary Meacham, baptised in Tettenhall, 9 March 1873<sup>3</sup>, and the GRO index shows the registration of the birth of an Edith

Meachem at Wolverhampton in the March Quarter of 1873<sup>4</sup>. No mother's maiden name is given in the index. Edith's school admission gives her date of birth as 26 January 1873, but no parent is named in this register<sup>5</sup>.

Her mother, Mary Meacham, was not with her family in 1881 or 1871 and only appears with them in 1851<sup>6</sup> and 1861<sup>7</sup>, showing her as being born c. 1851. In 1871 she appears to have been working as a domestic cook in the Willis household in Dudley, Worcestershire<sup>8</sup> but by 1881 she was in Hackney and had spent two months in the workhouse, after giving birth to another illegitimate daughter, Ada<sup>9</sup>, and so going some way towards explaining why Edith was in Staffordshire with her grandparents. Mary and Ada have not been traced after this.

Edith was not able to continue living with her grandparents as Joseph died in 1884<sup>10</sup> and Sarah moved in with her married daughter and family<sup>11</sup>. We cannot say for certain what caused Edith to be admitted to the Home in Edgbaston, but she seems to have had little family support available.

The next we see of Edith is her marriage in 1896 to William Bridge, a carter, at St Peter's church, Liverpool<sup>12</sup>. She gives her father's name as Joseph Meachem, gardener, which begs the question, had she seen Joseph and Sarah as her parents or had she used his name for propriety's sake? By the time of the 1891 census, the couple were living in Childwall, on the outskirts of Liverpool, with two sons, William, aged 4, and Charlie, 2<sup>13</sup>. In 1911, the family was in Wavertree with an additional three children, Edith, 8, Sam, 4, and Thomas, 1. Edith stated that she had had seven children in the marriage, of which two had died.

The First World War brought tragedy to the family as William and Edith's second son, Charlie, died on the Western Front while serving with the King's Liverpool Regiment<sup>14</sup>.

In 1921, the family was still in Wavertree. Edith had now had two more daughters, Mary Elizabeth (9) and Alexandra Rose (7)<sup>15</sup>.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, we find Edith, widowed, living in Wavertree, with her youngest son, Thomas, and married daughter, Mary Elizabeth, now Smith, and family<sup>16</sup>. However, no definite death record for William has been located.

Edith died in 1955, aged 84<sup>17</sup>. She had been living in St Domingo Road, Liverpool, and was buried in Anfield Cemetery<sup>18</sup>.

## Sources

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<sup>1</sup> 1891 Census; Class: RG12; Piece: 2359; Folio: 5; Page: 3

<sup>2</sup> 1881 Census; Class: RG11; Piece: 2788; Folio: 14; Page: 21

<sup>3</sup> [Findmypast.co.uk](http://Findmypast.co.uk), Staffordshire Baptisms, Tettenhall Regis, St Michael & All Angels

<sup>4</sup> General Register Office, [gro.gov.uk](http://gro.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> Findmypast.co.uk, National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870-1914

<sup>6</sup> 1851 Census; Class: HO107; Piece: 2017; Folio: 76; Page: 31

<sup>7</sup> 1861 Census; Class: RG 9; Piece: 1984; Folio: 16; Page: 5

<sup>8</sup> 1871 Census; Class: RG10; Piece: 3011; Folio: 50; Page: 17

<sup>9</sup> London Metropolitan Archives; London, England, UK; London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; Reference Number: HABG/308/001

<sup>10</sup> [Findmypast.co.uk](http://Findmypast.co.uk), Staffordshire Baptisms, Tettenhall Regis, St Michael & All Angels

<sup>11</sup> 1891 Census: *RG12*; Piece: 2223; Folio: 11; Page: 15; GSU roll: 6097333

<sup>12</sup> St Peter's Parish Registers, Liverpool Record Office; Liverpool, England; Reference Number: 283-PET-3-112

<sup>13</sup> 1901 Census; Class: RG13; Piece: 3505; Folio: 134; Page: 2

<sup>14</sup> Western Front Association; London, England; *WWI Pension Record Cards and Ledgers*; Reference: 674/03d

<sup>15</sup> 1921 Census; Class: RG15; Piece: 17916; Schedule no: 451

<sup>16</sup> 1939 Register; Reference: RG 101/4368G

<sup>17</sup> General Register Office, [gro.gov.uk](http://gro.gov.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Liverpool Record Office; Liverpool, England, UK; Liverpool Cemetery Registers; Reference: 352 Cem 6/1/31