

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.

Frances Gubbins's Story

Frances was born on 22nd February 1895 in Newcastle upon Tyne to Stephen Gubbins and Eliza Ann Dow. She was the third child to be born to Stephen and Eliza – they would go on to have 6 more children after Frances. Stephen and Eliza had moved to Newcastle from Bisley, Gloucestershire some time after the birth of their first child Rosetta around 1882-1883. Frances was christened at St. Aidan's church in Benwell, Tyneside on 24th January 1890 and was given the full name of Frances Susan Gubbins. In fact there were 5 siblings christened on the same day Rosetta, James Albert, Frances, Harrold Henry and Dinah Louisa.

Benwell is where the family are listed on the 1891 census and they are living at 35 Tyne Street, Benwell. Benwell had been a rural village up until the mid 19th

century and then the industrial revolution transformed the area and thousands of people were drawn here to work in the many different industries that were operating along the banks of the river Tyne. This is perhaps what drew the Gubbins family to Benwell from Gloucestershire as Frances' father Stephen is listed as a labourer on the 1891 census.

In 1901 Frances is aged 17 years and is a laundry maid at the Fleming Hospital in Jesmond which is about 5 miles from Benwell. She is working under the direction of Isabella Borrowdale – the laundress - and there are 4 other girls working as laundry maids :- Isabella Simpson aged 19, Margaret Deakins aged 17, Maud Beckett aged 15 and Ethel Borrowdale aged 17. The girls probably became great friends working together at the hospital. By 1911 Frances has left the hospital and is in service as a cook's domestic. She is single and aged 26 years. She is in the household of Captain Herbert Chaplin Nisbet aged 35 and his mother Mary who is aged 66 years and a widow. Their address is 8 Akenside Terrace, Newcastle, a 9 roomed residence. Captain Nisbet is listed as a Burma resident. Her father Stephen Gubbins has passed away at this time having died on 15th January 1911 which must have been a sad time but then a happy event to celebrate is her marriage to James Smith towards the end of 1911 and then a daughter is born to them Dorothy Ethel Smith born 7th April 1912. Dorothy is their only child.

More sadness for the family is the death of John (Jack) Gubbins – Frances's youngest brother who died on 30th June 1918 aged only 17 years. This is a year after a nephew Wilfred Hines is killed in action during the first World War 16th January 1917.

In 1939 James, Frances and Dorothy are living at 159 Ladykirk Road in Benwell. James is a Trolley Bus Driver, Frances is listed as carrying out domestic duties and Dorothy is a stock clerk she would have been around 26 years of age. It's not clear whether James and Frances were ever grandparents but there's no evidence yet to suggest that Dorothy ever married and had children of her own.

Frances died 24th September 1943 at the age of 58 years.

Sources

https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/departments-/sociology/FINAL-PDF-Version-132099_Benwell-Booklet.pdf

1891, 1901, 1911, 1939 census records

Births, Marriages and Death records

Probate Records

Family trees

All from www.ancestry.co.uk