

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.

Alice Taylor 's Story

Alice Taylor was born in Flixton, Lancashire and baptised as Elizabeth Alice Taylor on 7 September 1873¹ at Flixton Parish Church. Her parents were William, a coachman and his wife, Eliza, and the family lived in Flixton, which nowadays is a suburb of Greater Manchester, in the southwest of the city.

The 1881 England Census² showed that Alice had a younger brother, Thomas, who was born on 30 May 1878³. The family were living in New Street, Flixton and Alice's father, William, is now said to be a butcher.

Very sadly, William died early in 1888⁴, leaving a wife and two children aged 13 and 9 years old. This would have had a huge impact on the lives of all the family.

In the 1891 England Census⁵, 17-year-old Alice was an inmate of Staffordshire County Refuge for Fallen Women, Sandon Road, Stafford, which was also known as 'The Staffordshire County Industrial Home for Discharged Female Ex-Prisoners and Friendless Women'. As yet, we don't know why Alice was an inmate of this home, but we do know that it was founded in 1878 by the North and South Staffordshire Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies, from public subscriptions, with the specific aim of providing for up to forty women who had been discharged from Stafford prison, so that they could remain within the county.

The inmates included women who had been released from prison on a licence that required them to serve the latter part of their sentence in the refuge, but not all the inmates were former convicts. The women were expected to stay for two years, and the intention was that they should be found employment in domestic service afterwards. Many of the women were trained in the Home's laundry, which also generated additional income for the institution; others worked as needlewomen. Any woman who remained in post for at least a year after leaving the home, working to the satisfaction of their employer, was given a set of clothes and one guinea.

As insufficient prisoners from Staffordshire were transferred to the home, others were admitted from further afield. In 1891, there were forty inmates, eight of whom had been born outside Staffordshire, with Alice being one of them.

By 1901, things seem to have improved as 27-year-old Alice was working as a domestic servant in the family home of William Hood-Rowan, a cotton broker and agent. William and his wife, Eleanor, were Canadian, but their three sons, aged 8, 7 and 2 at the time of the 1901 England Census⁶, were born in Lancashire. Alice was their only live-in servant, so I imagine she had a very busy job. The family lived at No 7 Lime Avenue, Flixton, Lancashire.

On 19 November 1904, Alice married William Snelson, a labourer who lived at Woodsend Road in Flixton⁷. They were married in St Michael's Church in the Parish of Flixton, and one of their witnesses was Alice's younger brother Thomas.

From the 1911 England Census⁸ we can see that William and Alice have had two children – Thomas William, aged 7 and Mary Alice, aged 2 – and Alice's brother, Thomas was living with them. William was working as a labourer for Manchester Corporation and Thomas was a labourer at Oldham Railway Station. Later in 1911, another child was born and named Thomas William³, so the other little boy of the same name must have died.

In 1914 William and Alice had another daughter in 1914³, named Ethel Violet, followed by another daughter in 1915, whom they named Margaret³. Sadly baby Margaret lived only for four days⁴. On 9th October 1914 Alice's mother passed away⁴.

The 1921 England Census⁹ shows that William and Alice, with daughters Mary Alice, aged 12 and Ethel Violet aged 7, were living at 3 Union Cottage, Woodsend

Rd, Flixton. William was still working for the Manchester Corporation, while Alice was performing home duties.

The 1939 Register¹⁰ shows Alice still living at this address, but on her own. She was a widow; William passed away on 31 July 1928⁴. Her two daughters had moved on. Alice was working as a domestic help and cleaner.

Alice Taylor Snelson died on 3 Jun 1945⁴. She never moved far from her birthplace of Flixton, apart from her stay in Staffordshire County Refuge for Fallen Women, Sandon Road, Stafford, which may well have been related to her father's death when she was just thirteen years old.

Joy Smith

Sources

¹Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1915 on ancestry.co.uk

²1881 England Census on ancestry.co.uk

³England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915 on ancestry.co.uk

⁴England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915 on ancestry.co.uk

⁵1891 England Census on ancestry.co.uk

⁶1901 England Census on ancestry.co.uk

⁷Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1930 on ancestry.co.uk

⁸1911 England Census on ancestry.co.uk

⁹1921 England Census on ancestry.co.uk

¹⁰1939 England and Wales Register on ancestry.co.uk