

# *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.*

## **Amy Gertrude Sutton 's Story**

From the 1891 census<sup>1</sup>, Amy G Sutton was a 21 year-old unmarried girl, employed as a general servant in the Edgbaston Refuge for Fallen and Destitute Women which was located at 14 Noel Road in Edgbaston. Head of the household was George Davies, a town missionary and preacher. His wife Jane was the matron of the refuge, otherwise known as the Town Mission. Besides Amy, they employed their unmarried granddaughter as an assistant matron and two other unmarried girls as the housekeeper and a domestic servant. There were ten 'inmates', unmarried women aged 17 to 26. One was denoted as being the cook, another was the laundress, while the remaining eight were laundry maids.

George and Jane Baily were operating the refuge at the same address on the 1861, 1871 and 1881 census<sup>2</sup>. Jane had died by 1901<sup>2</sup>. George was still in

charge of the refuge with the assistance of a matron and a general servant. The twelve 'inmates' were all laundresses, unmarried and aged 15 to 35 years.

Amy Gertrude Sutton was baptised on 10 August 1870 in Holy Trinity, Coventry<sup>3</sup>. Her parents were James Sutton, a tailor, and wife Mary Helen Sutton. The family were living at 55 New Street in Coventry. James Sutton, clothier of Cross Cheaping, had married Mary Helen Baily of Bishop Street on 25 April 1867 in Holy Trinity Coventry<sup>4</sup>. He was a bachelor aged 23, son of William Sutton, a florist. Mary was a spinster aged 26, daughter of Henry Baily, a maltster. Both signed their names.

Amy, aged 1, was living with her parents in 298 Bridge Street West in Birmingham on the 1871 census<sup>5</sup>. She was their only child. Her mother had been born in Coventry and went by her middle name Helen. James, a tailor, had been born in Kenilworth.

By 1881<sup>6</sup>, James and Mary Ellen had moved to Dudley in Worcestershire (now Staffordshire). They had two more children, William Henry aged 9 born in Birmingham and Mary aged 6 born in Dudley. James was still employed as a tailor. Amy, however, was listed on the census with her grandparents William and Mary Sutton at 51 Abbey End, Kenilworth<sup>7</sup>. She was a scholar aged 11. Her grandfather was a gardener and seedman aged 64 and her grandmother was 65. Whether Amy was living with her grandparents or just visiting we do not know.

Amy's mother had died prior to the 1891 census<sup>8</sup>. Her father, James, continued to live in Dudley with children William and Mary. James died in 1894 in Dudley<sup>9</sup>.

On 27 December 1896, Amy Gertrude Sutton married William Bayliss in Hinckley Parish Church, Leicestershire<sup>10</sup>. William, 38, was a bachelor and a painter. Amy, 26, was a spinster with no employment given. They were both living at 26 Mount Lane. Amy's father was James Sutton, tailor (deceased). Both Amy and William signed their names.

I have been unable to find William and Amy on the 1901 census. A William Bayliss, aged 41, died in Dudley in September ¼ 1900<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, there are no further details to establish if this was Amy's husband. It is possible that Amy has been recorded on the 1901 census as Ann Bayliss, widow aged 30, born in Coventry, employed as a cook by Uriah Evans of 47 High Street, Dudley<sup>11</sup>.

Amy Gertrude Bayliss married Benjamin Clay on 31 July 1904 in St John's Harborne, Staffordshire<sup>12</sup>. She was a widow aged 34, living at 34 North Road, the daughter of James Sutton, a tailor. Benjamin was a bachelor and mechanic also aged 34 living next door at 36 North Road. Both signed their names. Benjamin was single, aged 30, living with his widowed mother in Northfield, Kings Norton on the 1901 census<sup>13</sup>.

Benjamin and Amy were living at 26 Greenfield Road in Harborne, Birmingham on the 1911 census<sup>14</sup>. Amy, aged 41, was a launderess born in Coventry. She had been married for 14 years and had one child who was alive, Lizzie Clay,

aged 13, who was born at Clap Gate, Quinton. Benjamin, aged 40, was a brass caster born at Clap Gate, Quinton. The information provided on the 1911 census is not exactly correct. Amy says she has been married for 14 years yet she only married Benjamin Clay in 1904. She must be referring to her marriage to William Bayliss in 1896.

By the 1921 census<sup>15</sup>, Benjamin and Amy were living at 74 Greenfield Road, Harborne, Birmingham. Whether they had moved or the houses had been renumbered is unknown. Benjamin was employed by Elliots Metal Company as a brass caster and his age was given as 50 years 7 months. Amy was aged 50 years and 3 months. Daughter Mary A E Clay was aged 23 years and 4 months. This would be Lizzie of the 1911 census. She was employed by Cadbury's Bournville as a paper bag maker. All three give their place of birth as Quinton, Worcestershire.

I have been unable to find a birth for Mary A E Clay aka Lizzie Clay who was born circa February 1898. Given she was born 6 years prior to Amy's marriage to Benjamin Clay, I have also searched for surname of Bayliss without success. Perhaps she was adopted?

Amy and Benjamin were still living at 74 Greenfield Road, Harborne when the 1939 register was compiled<sup>16</sup>. She gave her date of birth as 3 March 1870 while Benjamin was born 9 November 1870. Benjamin was a retired corporation labourer.

Amy G Clay b. 1870 was buried in Harborne, Staffordshire on 5 June 1944 with death registered in Birmingham<sup>17</sup>. Benjamin died in 1949 aged 78. He was

buried in Harborne St Peter on 14 March 1949 with an address of 17 Colworth Road, Northfield<sup>18</sup>.

## Sources

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