

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.

Frances Amelia MacDonald 's Story

Miss Frances A MacDonald was the assistant to the superintendent of the Staffordshire County Refuge for Fallen Women on the 1891 census¹. She was single, aged 48, born in West Alvington in Devon. The Refuge was alternatively known as the Stafford County Industrial Home for discharged female ex-prisoners and friendless women. Miss Emma J Fulford was the superintendent. She was single, aged 48 and born in Barford St Martin, Wiltshire. Six other women were employed as the matron, assistant matron, cook, laundry supervisor, laundry assistant and laundress. Two were single and the other four were widows. Forty single girls aged from 13 to 22 were living in the refuge.

Frances' birth was announced in the Oxford University and City Herald of 1 May 1841 as 'a daughter' to the 'wife of the Rev. Douglas MacDonald of West

Alvington'². Similarly, her birth was registered as Female MacDonald in the district of Kingsbridge Devon³. She was baptised on 9 June 1841 in the Parish Church of West Alvington where her father was the vicar⁴. Frances' parents had married in Trinity Church, Marylebone, London on 30 November 1837⁵. Douglas MacDonald was a Clerk in Holy Orders aged 26. His father, William MacDonald, was the Arch Deacon of Wiltshire. Flora, aged 22, was the daughter of Patrick Hadow, Esquire. Both gave their address as 43 Upper Harley Street.

In 1851, Frances was living in the West Alvington vicarage with her parents⁶. She was the 2nd eldest of six children ranging in age from 1 to 11. The family employed a governess, a nurse, a nursery maid, a cook and a house maid. By 1861, another two children had joined the family of six daughters and two sons⁷. A governess was still employed as were four unspecified servants.

The death of the Rev. Douglas MacDonald was reported in the Dublin Evening Mail of 16 February 1865². He died in the vicarage on 11 February 1865 aged 53. It was noted that he was the son of the late William MacDonald, Arch Deacon of Wiltshire, and that he had been Vicar of the parish for the last 29 years. His widow, Flora, aged 57, had moved to 14 Somerset Place in Bath by the 1871 census where she was 'living on dividends'⁸. Three of her unmarried daughters were still living at home and three servants were employed.

Frances was living with her mother's younger brother James R Hadow at 51 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, when the 1871 census was compiled⁹. It records that she was his niece, was aged 20 and was born in West Alvington, Devon. James Hadow was a widower aged 54 and was

described as a landowner. His two unmarried sons were also listed along with six servants.

Frances and her uncle James appear twice in the 1881 census¹⁰. She was listed at 25 Cambridge Square, Paddington as the niece of James R Hadow, Gentleman along with his two sons and 6 servants. They were also lodging at 118 King's Road in Brighton. In both entries Frances was aged 38, single and born West Alvington while her uncle was 63 and born Shenley, Hertfordshire.

The death of Frances' mother Flora was reported in the Western Times of 24 May 1881². She died at her home in Bath, 14 Somerset Place, aged 67 leaving an estate valued at £6765¹¹ which is over £1 million today (2024). On 20 August 1881, her uncle James Remington Hadow married widow Caroline Althea Carter in Bath. This was reported in the Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette of 25 August². Perhaps her uncle's marriage was the impetus for Frances to move to Stafford and become involved in the refuge.

By 1901, Frances was back in London, living at 5 Bloomfield Street in Paddington¹². She was single, aged 58 and living on her own means. Emma J Fulford, her work colleague from the refuge was visiting.

Frances Amelia MacDonald died on 5 March 1910 at 116 Sutherland Avenue, Maida Hill, Middlesex. Her usual residence was 41a Pulteney Street, Bath¹¹. She was 68, single and a fundholder¹³. Frances left an estate valued at £12,263 which has an equivalent value in 2024 of over £1.8 million¹¹. From a report of her funeral in the Bath Chronicle of 17 March 1910², Frances was interred on 12 March 1910 following a Requiem Mass in St John's Bathwick. The coffin

was made of English Oak with brass furniture encasing a metal shell. A Latin Cross decorated the lid and an inscription gave her full name, date of birth and date of death. Mourners included her brother, the Rev A MacDonald, her sisters Miss H MacDonald and Miss G MacDonald, her cousins the Rev GR Hadow and the Rev FW MacDonald. Frances was buried in plot DJ 43 St Mary the Virgin churchyard in Bathwick with her unmarried sisters Cecilia and Flora¹³.

Sources

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