

The Leamington Omnibus

Newsletter of the Leamington History Group

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Dr Edith Ara Huntley, Medical Pioneer. 1852-1917

Edith Ara Huntley was the older of two daughters of Arabella and Richard Huntley, born at Kings Langley, Hertfordshire in 1852, where her father was then joint owner of a Brewery. After Richard Huntley retired from the Brewery, the family appears to have moved often, possibly because it is believed that one family member was an invalid. However, both Edith's parents lived to a good age, her father dying aged 85 in Bromley, Kent in 1899 and her mother aged 79 in 1900. Edith's unmarried sister Eliza died in Bristol aged 64 in 1918. At all events, documents show that Edith lived in Leamington Spa, with her parents, and younger sister Eliza from at least 1861 to 1866 (and possibly longer). At the time of the 1861 Census, they lived at Clarence Cottage in Brunswick Street between one of the town's early Iron Founders, Thomas Radclyffe, and the Pountney family. Adelaide Pountney was the "Victorian Lady" whose diary, published in 1998 documented in writing and detailed drawings the daily life of a middle-class family in Leamington in mid-Victorian times. At the time Edith was growing up, most middle-class families employed a resident Governess, but there were also small schools for middle class children all over Leamington. National Schools were beginning to be introduced, and Edith's father, Richard, was Treasurer of the Trustees of the Leamington National Schools until at least 1866, but it is more likely, given the family's social standing, that Edith and her sister attended one of the nearby private establishments for young ladies.

Edith appears to have been set on becoming a doctor. It took her a very long time, but she was eventually accepted for training at the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians, and the London School for Medicine for Women (LSMW, below). The School was formed by an



association of pioneering women physicians, Sophia Jex-Blake, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Emily and Elizabeth Blackwell, and Thomas Henry Huxley. The founding was motivated at least in part by Sophia Jex-Blake's frustrated attempts at studying medicine at a time when women were not admitted to British medical schools. In 1877 an agreement was reached with the Royal Free Hospital allowing students at the LSMW to complete their clinical studies there. The Royal Free Hospital was the first teaching hospital in London to admit women for training and under Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, it

eventually became part of the University of London. In 1896, the School was renamed the London Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine for Women.

In 1882, Edith sat the College of Preceptor's examination for entry to the LSMW, and was awarded a prize, - the "Illustrated London News" of that year recorded that "*at the London School for Medicine for Women the entrance scholarship, value £30, has been awarded to Miss Edith Ara Huntley.*" This was not a huge sum, (about £3,400 today) given that fees at the Royal Free Hospital in 1877 for women medical students were as much as £400 per year for clinical instruction, and a further £315 p.a. as a contribution to the general funds of the hospital, but it represented a small victory in the struggle for acceptance of women practitioners in medicine. The LSMW had opened in 1874 with twelve students, who

faced endless difficulties, - no examining board would admit women, and no hospital would offer clinical training, but once the Royal Free Hospital agreed to accept women to the Medical School, the tide began to turn. Fifteen years later, notwithstanding the disproportionate fees charged to women, 143 women students were registered. Edith also won an essay competition while at the LSMW, on the study and practice of medicine by women. The essay was published and is still much referred to in relation to women's early medical education.

Edith went on to study in Edinburgh, where the two Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in Edinburgh and Glasgow, had joined forces in 1884 to set the same examinations and confer joint qualifications. In 1888, the Colleges petitioned to be allowed to confer medical degrees, alongside the Universities. This produced a huge outcry, with "The Scotsman" newspaper declaring, "*It would be deeply regretted if, through their action, a degree in medicine should become nothing more than a professional licence.*"

Edith gained her qualification on 23 April 1887. A short time afterwards, she went out to India, to work in Simla, then in 1902, moved to New Zealand, where she built a substantial house and buildings for her new medical practice in Wellington. (The building, made of wood, to withstand earthquakes, is still standing.) Edith spent the rest of her life there, earning a well-deserved long-standing reputation for her work. She is still very highly regarded throughout New Zealand.

When she died in 1917, Edith left the residue of her estate be spent in "*the creation, maintenance, and endowment of an institution for the care and treatment of expectant mothers, the promotion of research into the means of alleviating the conditions of motherhood, and the teaching and training of pupils in midwifery,*" to be carried out by the Wellington Ladies' Christian Association. As one of her two trustees, Dr Huntley named a fellow Briton, former nurse and medical pioneer in her own right, Mrs Annie McVicar, who went on to distribute funds to improve conditions in maternity homes. One recipient was the Alexandra Maternity Hospital and adjacent home for friendless women at Newtown, established in 1927.

Sally McLean, a Wellington NZ-based historian researching the life and work of Dr Huntley, would be pleased to hear from anyone with information about the Huntley family, both in Leamington and elsewhere.

M. R.

Leamington Spa Free Guided Walks

For the sixth year running, starting on 19th June, Leamington History Group in partnership with the Town Council, will be providing a season of free guided walks on a variety of themes related to the history of the town. The walks are conducted by members of the Guild of Guides and are fully insured. They take place every Tuesday afternoon at 2.30 pm and every Wednesday evening at 7 pm, from 19th June until the end of August. From 4th until 12th September, walks will take place only at 2.30 pm. All Walks start at South Lodge, Jephson Gardens, opposite the Pump Rooms.

No advance booking is required, but as the walks have proved very popular, it would be wise to turn up in plenty of time. For Health & Safety reasons, walks will be restricted to 20 persons per guide.

Please note that the free walks are not available for organised groups or coach parties. For such groups, walks can be arranged at any time of the year, subject to guide availability. There is a nominal charge of £3 per person, with a minimum charge of £12 per group. Please see the website, www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk for full details, or collect a leaflet from the Visitor Information Centre at the Pump Rooms.

No 1 Clinton Street, Leamington Spa

My grandmother, Mary Ann Walton, lived at no 1 Clinton Street Leamington Spa. She is pictured standing by the lamppost in the attached photograph.



The cobbled terrace had a small fore-garden to each house and every house had a well under the front room. (possibly a rainwater/roof collection well). Number 1 was the end house and the only one in the terrace with the front door at the side of the house. All the other front doors were on the left of the bay windows and were seldom used. Everyone came and went via the back, where there was an alleyway with a very high wall to the left and the backs of the houses on the right.

When I was a child I was sometimes taken back to Clinton Street to visit my parents' friends who lived further down the row. The back garden had a low fence and a central concrete path leading to the outside toilet, (-just a plank of wood with a hole cut in the centre.) Then you entered the house through the scullery or kitchen and went into a small living room with a fireplace, crowded with dining room furniture, easy chairs, and cupboards. This was where everyday life was carried on. A door off this room opened on to a steep dark, narrow staircase. The front room was kept for best. The only time I was allowed in was to look at an ornate grandfather clock.

The undated photograph shows my grandmother who was first widowed when her husband, a railway man, died, and in October 1890 she married my grandfather, John T Walton, who was also a railway worker, a guard. John Walton died aged fifty in a railway accident in September 1910, leaving her widowed a second time with three sons under the age of sixteen. My father, Arthur Percy Walton, born in March 1894, was the oldest, followed by Douglas in 1896, and Stanley in 1898. Stanley and Douglas were both choirboys at All Saints Parish Church, and all three boys were pupils at Bath Place School. Sadly, Douglas died when he was just sixteen.

Mary Ann lived at no 1 until her death in the autumn of 1935, and when my parents married in 1940, they made their home there too. They lived at Clinton Street throughout the Second World War and had several lots of soldiers billeted on them. My father had been wounded in France in WW1, shot through the hip, which left him with one leg shorter than the other. As if that were not enough, like many others, he had trench foot, too, - and the ship bringing him back to England was torpedoed on the way back! During WW2 he worked as a railway guard and was a member of Leamington Home Guard. He lived to be over eighty, and died in 1978.

Jennifer Ingram.

Photograph © J Ingram

Forthcoming Events

In addition to the Tuesday morning 'Drop-in' sessions (10 am -12 noon) held at South Lodge all year round, LHG meets on the fourth Monday of every month except August, at Dormer Conference Centre, Dormer Place, at 7.30 pm.

Forthcoming meetings include Monday 23 July: Alex Darkes and Nick Baker: "Peeps at Princethorpe", - the fascinating story of the Princethorpe foundation from its 1832 origins to today, and Monday 24 September: Tara Morton: "Mapping Women's Suffrage" - Tara's research into the lives and backgrounds of Leamington's Suffragists and Suffragettes.

Also in September, we will be opening South Lodge to the general public each afternoon (12 -3.30) of the first of the Heritage Open Weekends, (6th, 7th, 8th & 9th September). There will also be Cemetery Walks at Brunswick Street on 8th & 9th, at 2.30 pm. On Saturday 22 Sept, we hold the event of the year: LHG History Day, 10.00 - 4.00 pm at the Parish Church. Do come and join us!

Reviews, with Tessa Whitehouse

Monday 26 March, Allan Jennings: 'A View from The Home Front—Royal Leamington Spa 1939–1945'

Allan has acquired a wealth of information about domestic life, war work, the formation of the local civil defence and Home Guard, as part of his research into local people's experiences when war was declared and life was to change forever. These years, with all the restrictions and national security that became law on the outbreak of war are still uppermost in the minds of many local families. 'Keep calm and carry on' was the mood of the time as people obtained their national identity cards, queued at the local food office for ration books and observed blackout restrictions. It was what we have come to expect from Allan: a well-researched and well-illustrated presentation whose images brought back so many memories. Everyone eligible had to do war work and workers were billeted into the town to keep the wheels of industry moving. My mother had a lady from Yorkshire billeted in her front room so that she could work at Lockheed. Evacuated children from Birmingham and Coventry came to the town and schools operated a shift system to ensure they all continued their education. After the initial closure of theatres, cinemas and dance halls, they soon re-opened and everyone began to enjoy themselves again. During these years the Lockheed pantomime was first produced and was to prove a feature of the Christmas season for many more years. This was a brilliant talk, which left us all wanting to hear more.

Monday 23 April, David Morse: St Paul's Cathedral in Wartime - Defence and Defiance

David's presentation gave us a fascinating insight into how the Watch Team, a small band of dedicated volunteers from all walks of life, ensured that St Paul's Cathedral was protected from bombardment during the wars. Its defence presented a considerable challenge when incendiary bombs with delayed action were prominent features and bombs were aimed at the nearby docks. The Watch Team gave their time round the clock throughout the duration to remove and defuse any potential dangers. They also moved treasures of national significance to other locations and bricked up any that were impossible to relocate. Like firemen, this hidden army were supplied with a uniform, a hat with a number, a torch and a fireman's axe. Protective caps and flat hats were issued for working close to the roof. Watching on all levels of the cathedral for several hours at a time, a flask of tea was an essential item! Schemes were devised to get water from the Thames to all levels of the building from the crypt to the top of the dome. Before the war the base of the iconic dome was strengthened but this did not prevent one attack slightly dislodging it and leaving a crack as a reminder. One wonders what could have happened should a bomb have landed in the crypt trapping those in there but thankfully it didn't and not one member of the team was killed during the war. David had us all spellbound as he began by showing a photograph of a man named Albert Henry Sharr. This name was so often mentioned some of us wondered how he was able to pick out this one man on the many photographs he showed. Then all was revealed: Albert Henry was his own grandfather!

Monday 21 May, Jacqui Kirk: Sir Thomas Lodge 1509 - 1584

Local historian Jacqui Kirk made a welcome return to reveal more of her research into her family history with a detailed presentation of the life of one of her ancestors, Sir Thomas Lodge, who spent most of his life in London in the 16th Century. Using a range of documents and wills, Jacqui was able to trace his life from apprenticeship with the Grocers' Company to becoming Lord Mayor of London. He married 3 times, 2 of his wives dying young, and had several children. In 1562 he was elected Lord Mayor of London, the first to have a beard! He was flying high but never far from debt, bankruptcy and imprisonment. He lived through the plague of 1563, when great numbers of his compatriots died. His was a flamboyant life of a merchant, alderman, sheriff, and Lord Mayor. It was to be several years before Sir Thomas could move to a grand house in Plaistow, Essex, financed through his third wife's inheritance. Jacqui left us wondering what type of ancestors we may have and what deeds they are concealing. Her painstaking, detailed research shows that we can learn so much of a life lived over 400 years ago. And find lots of surprises!