

Mary Elizabeth Williams and her Grange-over-Sands and District legacies

Whilst researching the development of Kents Bank in the twentieth century I came across a reference to Mrs Williams. In researching who she was I have discovered that she had an impact on the history of Grange-over-Sands and district at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. I consider that this lady deserves to be remembered and here is her story. If you have any further information please let me know.

Pat Rowland

November 2012

Her life

Mary Elizabeth Barrow was born in 1840 at Meathop Hall. Her father, John Barrow, was 49 years old and her mother Elizabeth (nee Thornborrow of Witherslack) was 39. She was their only child. The Barrow and Thornborrow families were important people in the district and her father and Uncle were trustees of the Dean Barwick Trust in Witherslack.

The 1851 census described John as a landed proprietor and occupier of 17 acres and he employed one labourer; Mary was a pupil at Cantsfield School, Cantsfield, Lancashire. On the 1861 census day Mary was visiting Nelson and Rachel Hewertson at Maindee Church in Newport, Monmouthshire. Nelson was a timber merchant and originated from Lancaster. His wife Rachel was born in Cartmel. John and Elizabeth Barrow were recorded at Meathop Hall. John died during the following 10 years and the 1871 census show Elizabeth and Mary at Meathop Hall. Towards the end of 1872 Mary married Nelson Hewertson, a ship owner, the man she was visiting on the 1861 census day. Tragically his wife, Rachel, had died in early 1871. Nelson was a successful business man; by 1871 he was employing 357 Men and boys in his timber and woodturning business in Newport, Monmouthshire where he was elected Mayor in 1873 and 1874. He was also a Justice of the Peace. The marriage only lasted four years as Nelson died, suddenly, aged 53 at the Clifton Down Hotel, Gloucestershire on 12 June 1876. Mary was 36 years old. Nelson was a deeply religious man and his will made charitable bequests to three local institutions in Newport. His estate valued at about £50,000 was put in the hands of trustees, one of whom was his wife Mary. He left his household effects and £1000 to Mary. Mary received income from the trust fund for as long as she lived. Following her death he instructed that the trust fund was to be divided up with half going to Newport Infirmary, and a quarter each to the School of Art at Newport and the Young Men's Christian Association.

The 1881 census recorded Mary still living at Sunnybank, Nelson and her home at Christchurch, Newport. Happily, Mary remarried in 1886 when she was 46. Her new husband was William Williams, a timber merchant as her first husband had been. They lived on Holme Island at Grange-over-Sands as recorded by the 1891 census. Mary had purchased Holme Island on 13 September 1890 for £5000 and also owned the Yewbarrow Estate in Grange-over-Sands. The 1901 census record Mary and William at Wistaston, near Nantwich in Cheshire and William was described as an estate agent. In late 1904 William died. The 1911 census lists Mary as a visitor at Duggans Hotel in Radnorshire in Wales. She died on the 28th July 1915, at home, on Holme Island. Her obituary described her as a staunch Conservative, and she held

wide Protestant views. She did not have any children. A tomb and large memorial close to the entrance into Witherslack Church was erected by her for her husband, Nelson following his death in 1876. She was also laid to rest with him. William was not buried there.

She owned much land in Witherslack and Meathop and in 1916 a sale was organised by M B Hodgson and Sons which raised £16035. She was the niece of John Barrow Thornborrow of Witherslack and had inherited his estate when he died in 1868. In 1851 it was considered that he was one of the largest land owners in the Witherslack area.

Her legacies

1. Convalescent Homes at Meathop

Mary became involved with the Friendly societies of Durham whose North Eastern Counties Friendly Societies' convalescent home was first established in Yewbarrow Cottage, Grange-over-Sands on 16 May 1890 when Mary gave the Committee the use of the property. It proved a very successful venture as patient numbers rose from 29 during the first 12 months, to 81 in 1891, 113 in 1892 and 181 in 1893. During these four years the matron was Miss Chislett. The 1891 census describe her occupation as an Elementary Certificated Teacher (secondary school) born in Stokesley, Yorkshire in 1855. Subsequent census show she returned to teaching away from Grange-over-Sands. In 1894, on land Mary owned at Meathop, a purpose built convalescent home was built, possibly funded by Mary also. This was very quickly outgrown and a much larger property was built and opened in 1897 on land purchased by the Friendly Societies, facing Lindale Road between Lindale and Grange-over-Sands. It was expanded and continued to take patients until the 1970s. The documents relating to the Convalescent Home are deposited at Durham Record Office. The building is now known as Hazelwood Court and is used as holiday accommodation.



Mary then let the building at Meathop for the establishment of the Westmorland Sanatorium, one of the first to treat the 'consumptive poor'. It opened in March 1900 but Mrs Williams was not on the official guest list. Records for the Sanatorium are held at Cumbria Record Office, Kendal.

2. Yewbarrow Terrace

In 1892 plans were drawn up to build an elegant terrace of shops with flats over, opposite to Grange Ornamental Pond on land owned by Mary on Yewbarrow Estate.

Yewbarrow Terrace was built shortly after with its elegant and ornate cast iron canopy. The whole terrace was listed as Grade 2 on 2 May 1975. The cast iron work was produced by Macfarlane and Co of Glasgow. Macfarlane's Saracen Foundry was the most important manufacturer of ornamental ironwork in Scotland. Founded in 1850 it moved to Possil Estate in 1872 where workers housing was provided increasing the area's population from 10 in 1872 to 10000 by 1891. Before setting up his foundry Walter Macfarlane I started work with a jeweller and then served an apprenticeship with a blacksmith then was an employee in a foundry for 10 years. On his death in 1885 his nephew Walter Macfarlane II took charge. The firm mass produced patterns designed by prominent Glasgow architects. Much of the magnificent work was destroyed after being requisitioned during World War II for war industries. During the 1960s a lot more was lost because of high maintenance costs. Therefore we are very fortunate to retain an impressive example of this famous ornamental ironwork in Grange-over-Sands.



Taken Summer 2012 Pat Rowland

Cast iron supports within the shop units were made in the iron foundry of Sharpe and Co of Lancaster. Edmund Sharpe had set up an architecture practice in Lancaster in 1836 and his pupil Edward Graham Paley became a partner in 1845. They were very successful architects and Edmund designed many churches but in 1851 he retired from the architectural practice and became the proprietor of the foundry originally known as Phoenix Foundry. The town had a number of foundries; at White Cross, the Lune Foundry on Cable Street and the largest one, the Phoenix, had opened on a piece of land at Green Ayre in 1837. Phoenix Foundry made rolling stock in the 1840s and 50s as well as castings, steam engines, the iron piping for Lancaster's water supply in 1853 and in 1855 shells for the Crimean War. When Edmund died in 1877 his son Francis took over. The foundry ceased in the early 20th century.

In her will Mary directed that her trustees were to use Yewbarrow Terrace as an endowment fund for the establishment of a convalescent home for certain poor ladies from Westmorland.

3. Barrow-Thornborrow Convalescent Home Abbotsford, Kentsford Road

In 1929, under the terms of Mary's will, Barrow-Thornborrow Convalescent Home was opened on Kentsford Road, Kents Bank, Grange-over-Sands in the building originally erected in the 1890s as a pair of semi detached houses known as Heatherlea and Seabarrow House. The occupation was restricted to ladies who were resident in or natives of, Westmorland with a preference to those coming from the Kendal or Kirkby Lonsdale wards over those from the East or West Wards of Westmorland. Women suffering from infectious or contagious disease were not admitted. It was aimed to help women who once had adequate means but these had become inadequate and who needed rest or recuperation from sickness. Initially six ladies could be accommodated and the matron was Mrs Thompson. In 1937 the superintendent was Mrs Wyatt. It closed during the 1970s.



Old Postcard of Abbotsford

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