

Elizabeth (Betty) Kershaw

(c1831 - 7th January 1877)

The two newspaper articles from the *Halifax Evening Courier* on 13th and 20th January make for uncomfortable reading as the various witnesses describe the unfortunate woman's last few weeks and days. There is only space here to show the start of each article.

SAD END OF AN IMBECILE.—An inquest was held at the Albion Inn, Brighouse, on Wednesday, by Mr. Barstow, on Elizabeth Kershaw, a single woman, aged 45, an imbecile, of Slead Syke, concerning whom some serious evidence was given.—James Kershaw, quarryman, of Slead-syke, her brother, said deceased had been subject to fits since she was three years old. She had also been of weak mind, and never followed any employment. She had lived at his house for the last 11 months, having up to that time lived at Slead Syke with her mother, who then died. De-

MANSLAUGHTER AT BRIGHOUSE.

THE ADJOURNED INQUEST.—On Thursday, Mr. W. Barstow, coroner, resumed the inquiry opened last week at the Albion Inn, Brighouse, into the cause of the death of Elizabeth Kershaw. Mrs. Hannah Allen, sister-in-law of the deceased, was the first witness. She stated that she lived at Hove Edge. Her husband, who was a lurryman, was named Joseph, who was brother to the deceased. Witness was present when deceased died. The first time witness saw deceased during her illness was six o'clock on the Sunday upon which she died. Witness had not seen deceased before that date since three or four weeks ago. Deceased was in bed when witness saw her last Sunday week, and she was in a sad condition. The

More details from the inquest can be read in the article,

Elizabeth Kershaw (Helen Shields)

kindly sent to us by Helen Shields who wrote it up for the 'A Few Forgotten Women' project.

Elizabeth known as Betty died on 7th January 1877 and was buried in an unmarked plot B33 next to her parents in St. Matthew's churchyard, Lightcliffe on 11th January 1877.

What follows is her immediate family's story and their connections with Lightcliffe.

Elizabeth Kershaw was the daughter of George Kershaw and Maria Allen -sometimes recorded as Allum or Hallam – who married on 17th August 1829 at Elland. Interestingly George and Maria had had their marriage banns read in 1827 on 16th, 23rd and 30th September. The reason for the delay may have been the arrival of Maria’s son Joseph Allen who was baptised at St. Matthew’s, Lightcliffe on 10th February 1828. This was the ‘Joseph, brother to the deceased’ in the second newspaper article.

The groom may well have been the George Kershaw born 23rd October 1807 and baptised at St. Matthew’s Rastrick on 15th November 1807, the son of Elijah and Betty Kershaw of Hipperholme. There are other possible baptisms, but this seems the best fit working back from his death age, the subsequent naming of his children and his father’s occupation, a mason. Elijah and Betty Kershaw and other relatives were buried at Lightcliffe, their story will be told later.

Maria Allen was almost certainly the daughter of James and Grace Allen of Sutcliffe Woodbottom, Brighouse. She was baptised at St. Matthew’s, Lightcliffe on 18th March 1810. Woolcomber James Allen had married Grace Walsh on 6th September 1789 in Halifax. They appear to have had the following children before Maria was born; Mary baptised 31st January 1790 in Halifax, Ann/Nanny born c 1792, Margaret/Margery baptised at Lightcliffe on 16th April 1795 and a son James who was born and died in 1797. Another daughter Elizabeth may have been born in 1802. James and Grace Allen were buried at Lightcliffe as were daughters Nanny and Margery and many of their families. Again, more about the Allen family will be covered later in a follow up article.

Returning to George’s and Maria’s Kershaw family. They had at least eight children baptised at St. Matthew’s, Lightcliffe sometimes in double baptisms long after they were born which does not help when trying to establish their birth order. Elizabeth (Betty) appears to be the eldest born about 1831 but baptised later. Daughters Mary and Martha, who was born 20th June 1837, were baptised on 15th March 1835 and 6th July 1837. Nanny Kershaw was baptised with her oldest sister Betty on Boxing Day 1842. Ellen was baptised on 30th March 1845 but then buried at Lightcliffe on 6th January 1846. Son James – the quarryman of Slead Syke in the first newspaper report – was baptised on 21st September 1847. His younger brothers Jesse and Sampson – baptised as Sandford - , born 3rd January 1849 and 29th December 1852, had a joint baptism on 29th May 1859.

Nanny aged 4 and Martha aged 8 died within a month of one another. They were buried in unknown Lightcliffe plots on 30th November 1845 and 23rd December 1845. This seems to agree with the data in the first two censuses except for the omission of daughter Mary in 1841. She was probably the twelve-year-old Mary Kershaw of Hove Edge who was buried in another unknown Lightcliffe plot on 22nd October 1846. Joseph Allen was understandably recorded as a Kershaw. Notice Betty was employed as a card setter.

1841 census

George Kershaw	30 Stone delver
Maria Kershaw	30
Joseph Kershaw	13
Elizabeth Kershaw	6
Martha Kershaw	3
Address Hough Edge, Brighouse	

1851 census

George Kershaw	Head	43 Stone delver
Maria Kershaw	Wife	41
Joseph Kershaw	Son	23 ditto
Betty Kershaw	Dau	19 Card Setter
James Kershaw	Son	4 Scholar
Jesse Kershaw	Son	2
Address Hove Edge, Hipperholme cum Brighouse		

1853. Marriage solemnized at _____ in the Parish of <i>Halifax</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
132	March 5	Joseph Allen	23	Bachelor	Mason	Hipperholme	George Allen	Mason
		Ann Briggs	20	Spinster	—	Hipperholme	James Briggs	Mason
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by _____ or after <i>Persons</i> by me.								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>Joseph Allen his mark</i> <i>Ann Briggs</i>		in the Presence of us,		<i>James Henry Prayshaw</i> <i>John Thomas</i>		

Maria's son Joseph Allen married Ann Briggs on 5th March 1853. Notice that he gave his father's name as George Allen. At some point before the 1861 census, they moved to Leeds leaving Elizabeth, still a card setter, at home with her parents and three younger brothers.

1861 census

George Kershaw Head 53 Stone Delver
 Maria Kershaw Wife 52
 Elizabeth Kershaw Dau 29 Card Setter
 James Kershaw Son 14 Stone Delver
 Jesse Kershaw Son 12 Scholar
 Sampson Kershaw Son 8 Scholar
 Address Hove Edge, Hipperholme with Brighthouse

1861 census

Joseph Allen Head 33 Stone Mason
 Ann Allen Wife 27
 William Allen Son 4
 John Allen Son 1
 Alfred Todd Lodger 23 Stone Mason
 Address ?Ainsley Buildings? Leeds,

James and Ann Allen had another son before Ann died in 1870. She was probably the 37-year-old buried at Woodhouse, Leeds on 9th April 1870.

1871 census

George Kershaw Head 63 Flag facer
 Maria Kershaw Wife 61
 Elizabeth Kershaw Dau 39 Lunatic
 James Kershaw Son 24 Flag facer
 Jesse Kershaw Son 22 ditto
 Sampson Kershaw Son 18 ditto
 Address Sutcliffe Wood Bottom, Hipperholme with Brighthouse

1871 census

Joseph Allen Head 43 Widower Stone Mason
 William Allen Son 13
 John Allen Son 11
 James Allen Son 9
 Henry Allen Son 6
 Address 24 Industrial Terr., North Leeds

Not long after the 1871 census was taken widower Joseph Allen, and presumably his sons, moved back to Hipperholme as this was his address when he married Hannah Lodge.

1871. Marriage solemnized at <i>the Parish Church</i> in the Parish of <i>Halifax</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
178	July 22 1871	Joseph Allen	43	Widower	Mason	Hipperholme	—	—
		Hannah Lodge	42	Spinster	—	Hipperholme	—	—
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by _____ or after <i>Persons</i> by me.								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>Joseph Allen his mark</i> <i>Hannah Lodge</i>		in the Presence of us,		<i>James Henry Prayshaw</i> <i>Joseph Taylor</i>		

Hannah may well have been the daughter of Nancy Lodge baptised in Halifax on 26th July 1829. But she was definitely the Mrs Hannah Allen called as the first witness in the inquest into her sister in law's death.

Before then both Betty's parents George and Maria Kershaw had died. George on the 19th April 1872 and Maria on 30th January 1876. They were both buried in plot A33 in Lightcliffe churchyard on 22nd April 1872 and 3rd February 1876 respectively.

Meanwhile their son James had married Maria Rushton on 20th July 1872 in Halifax. Maria had been baptised at St. Matthew's, Lightcliffe on 11th April 1852, the daughter of miner Edward Rushton of Lower Wyke and his wife, Mary. Kershaw daughters Lily and Anna Maria were also baptised at Lightcliffe on 5th January 1873 and 7th June 1874. One year old Alice Maria Kershaw died on 24th March 1874 and was buried in Lightcliffe plot G79 owned by her father James. A son George Edward –presumably named after both grandfathers was also baptised at St. Matthew's on 7th May 1876.

1872 Marriage solemnized at <i>St. Matthew's Church</i> in the Parish of <i>Lightcliffe</i> in the County of <i>Yorks</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
138.	<i>July 20 1872</i>	<i>James Kershaw</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Delver</i>	<i>Hippeshole</i>	<i>George Kershaw</i>	<i>Delver</i>
		<i>Maria Rushton</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>Lower Wyke</i>	<i>Edward Rushton</i>	<i>Miner</i>
Married in the <i>Civil Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <i>James Kershaw</i> or after <i>Prayer</i> by me, <i>Ralph Stranks</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <i>James Kershaw</i> and <i>Maria Rushton</i>			In the Presence of us, <i>James Kershaw</i> and <i>Maria Rushton</i>					

This was the young family that Elizabeth (Betty) Kershaw moved in with after her mother Maria died as the *Brighouse News* for 17th March 1877 explains.

LEEDS ASSIZES.—TUESDAY.

CRUEL TREATMENT OF AN IMBECILE AT BRIGHOUSE.

Maria Kershaw (25), wife of James Kershaw, quarryman, of Slead Syke, was indicted for the manslaughter of Elizabeth Kershaw, at Slead Syke, on the 7th January. Mr C. B. Stuart-Wortley prosecuted, and Mr L. Gane defended the prisoner. The deceased, who was forty-five years of age, and of weak intellect, had lived with the prisoner, who was her sister-in-law, for eleven months. She had lived previously with her mother, who died. She was then stout of body and apparently in good health. She died at the house of the prisoner, on the 7th January. The evidence of some of the neighbours who were in the prisoner's house after the death of Elizabeth Kershaw, was to the effect that the body was in an extremely emaciated condition, and covered with bruises from head to foot.

Maria Kershaw née Rushton was sentenced to "Penal servitude for ten years" which she served initially in Leeds and then in Millbank prison and Fulham prison as detailed in Helen Shields article. Just two months after Maria was sentenced her baby boy George Edward died on 19th May 1877. He was buried with his sister in St. Matthew's churchyard, Lightcliffe, plot G79, on 22nd May 1877.

There is a clue as to what happened next to her husband James Kershaw and four-year-old Lily. James has been found living with his brother Sampson Kershaw and family in the 1881 census. He also seems to have a new occupation.

1881 census

Joseph Allen Head 53 Stone Mason
 Hannah Allen Wife 50
 Wm. Allen Son 24 Engine Tenter
 John Allen Son 21 Warehouseman
 Hy. Allen Son 17 Cart Driver
 Address
 13 Hove Edge, Hipperholme cum Brighthouse

1881 census

Sampson Kershaw Head 28 Stone Dresser
 Ellen Kershaw Wife 26
 George W. Kershaw Son 2
 Fred Kershaw Son [no age as <1]
 James Kershaw Brother 34
 Farmer Bailiff 42 acres
 Lillie Kershaw Niece 8
 Address Lower Clay Royd, Southowram

Sampson Kershaw, a flag facer, had married Ellen Harrington on 22nd June 1876 in Halifax. They lost a 10-month-old daughter Eliza Ann on 30th January 1878.

Brother Jesse Kershaw has not been found in the 1881 census.

On 26th March 1883 Maria Kershaw née Rushton was released on license from Russell House Refuge and then finally released on 15th November 1883. It looks as if she returned to James and Lily. Florence Gertrude Kershaw's birth was registered in the Bradford district Q3 1885. Seeing the family together in the 1891 census would have been useful but James Kershaw died on 23 January 1890. Two days later he was buried with his young children in Lightcliffe plot G79 then recorded as being owned by Maria Kershaw. There is no headstone to this plot near the new section probably covered with snowdrops in the spring.

Hannah Allen died on 3rd January 1889. She was buried in Lightcliffe plot M47 owned by her husband, Joseph, on 5th January 1889. But she was not the first occupant of the plot. Joseph must have bought the plot when his son twenty-four-year-old son James died.

Brighthouse & Rastrick Gazette 26 March 1887

DEATHS

March 22nd, aged 24, James Allen, teamster, Hove Edge

Brighthouse News 27 October 1888

DEATHS

ALLEN Oct 20th, aged 28 years, John Allen, silk packer, Thornhill Briggs, Brighthouse

James Allen was buried at Lightcliffe on 24th March 1887 and his brother John, aged 28, on 23rd October 1888.

Then on 14th April 1890 in Bradford, Joseph Allen remarried again, a widow Susan Tinker.

1890. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Bradford in the County of Bradford

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
132	Fourteenth April 1890	Joseph Allen	62 years	Widow	Stone dresser	Hove Edge Lightcliffe		
		Susan Tinker	64 years	Widow		23 Arden Street Bradford	John Gerrard deceased	Stone mason

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by _____ after Banns by me.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, } in the Presence of us, }
 The man of Joseph Allen }
 The man of Susan Tinker }
 J. C. Wolfe Curate }
 Geo. Croft and }
 Geo. Larnell }

On the 1891 census Susan(nah)'s name was transcribed as Lucy [or should it be Susy?]. All Betty Kershaw's surviving brothers were living in Hipperholme with her sister-in-law widow Maria Kershaw née Rushton in Lower Wyke – where she was originally from - with her daughters.

1891 census

Joseph Allen Head 63 Stone Flag Facer
 Lucy Allen Wife 65 Wife
 Henry Allen Son 26 Stone Flag Facer
 Address Hove Edge, Hipperholme cum Brighthouse

1891 census

Mana Kershaw Head 39 Widow Laundress
 Lilly Kershaw Dau 12 Carpet Weaver
 Florence G Kershaw Dau 5 Scholar
 Richard Rushton Bro 61 Miner Labourer
 Address 10 Lower Wyke, Wyke

1891 census

Jesse Kershaw Head 43 Stone Dresser
 Emma Kershaw Wife 39
 William Kershaw Son 9
 Lewis Kershaw Son 6
 Ernest Kershaw Son 3
 Laura Kershaw Dau 3
 Address Edward, St., Hipperholme cum Brighthouse

1891 census

Sampson Kershaw Head 38 Stone Dresser
 Ellen Kershaw Wife 36
 Fred Kershaw Son 10
 Address New St., Hipperholme cum Brighthouse

Brother Jesse Kershaw died Q1 1892. Niece Lily Kershaw who Betty lived with for a time married William Briggs Q3 1892 in the Bradford district. Her sister, nine-year-old Florence Gertrude Kershaw, was buried at Wyke on 14th December 1894. Then their mother widow Maria Kershaw née Rushton married John Bateman Q1 1896 in the North Bierley district.

1901 census

Joseph Allen Head 73 Stone Dresser
 Susannah Allen Wife 75
 Address 57 Half House Lane, Brighthouse

1901 census

Sampson Kershaw Head 48
 Ellen Kershaw Wife 46
 Fred Kershaw Son 20 Stone Mason
 Address 36 New St., Brighthouse

1901 census

John H Bateman Head 39 Dyers Crabber
 Maria Bateman Wife 40 Laundress
 Lily Briggs Dau 29
 Doris ditto Dau 18 m
 Address 3 Valley St., Keighley

Forty-eight-year-old Sampson Kershaw died on 17th April 1901 just after the census was taken – this may explain why no occupation was recorded. His older brother Joseph Allen died aged 76 in Q3 1904. Neither were buried at Lightcliffe.

Maria Bateman formerly Kershaw née Rushton has not been found after the 1901 census. Her surviving daughter Lily Briggs and family were in Norfolk by the time of the 1911 census, perhaps Maria moved south with them.

Both Betty Kershaw's Kershaw and Allen grandparents were buried in Lightcliffe churchyard as were Maria Rushton's parents. Their family stories will be followed up later.

D.M.Barker

February 2023