

Postscript to Article on Lant Street, Southwark

The following email from Keith Meddings, 2 x great grandson of William Meddings (born c.1839), gives further information about what happened later to this branch of the Meddings family. He writes:

The other day a family history relative in Australia sent me the link to your website. I was amazed when I started reading part of my history, just incredible, so well written. I have been researching now on and off for thirty years and it is still ongoing. Your work has given me a fantastic insight into what their lives were like in Southwark, thank you so much...

The story from where you left the family is a fascinating one. Jane Maria Haysom is definitely the heroine; I have nothing but admiration for her. As you know, her husband died of TB and left her to look after the children. She had ten in all, but I can only find details of nine. In 1877 she did a courageous thing, having lost a child, aged two, a month previously, which had been born just ten days before the death of her husband.

Living in Jerusalem Court, Clerkenwell, at this time, she admitted Emma and Eliza into Barnardo's care; another son George, my great grandfather, she placed in the National Refuge; another son to fend for himself, working as an errand boy. The last thing was to admit both herself and son Alfred into Barnet Workhouse.

To cut a long story short, Emma was sent to Canada by Barnardo's in 1883; Eliza was discharged eventually, after six years, and ended up living in Lancashire with brother Alfred, working as a dressmaker. Jane Maria Haysom, I found living a mile away, working as a nurse.

My great grandfather, George, worked for over forty years on the music halls on the bill with Marie Lloyd, little Tich and many famous artists, as Burko the Laughter Making Musician. Alfred also turned magician, probably taught by his older brother. He went under the name of Cristo the Royal Magician and died in South Africa of TB in 1903. His grandchild became the Lady Mayor of Worcester.

The best bit is that eventually Jane Maria and daughter Eliza emigrated to Canada to join Emma in Toronto. Jane Maria died in 1906. George, the errand boy, also emigrated with his family to Canada.

You stated in your article that a family's fortunes could be dramatically affected by the death of the main breadwinner, which happened in this case. I also find it amazing that somehow, under those extreme circumstances, Jane Maria Haysom made sure her remaining children survived...

Keith Meddings, July 2010