

Ellen Wright, nee Huxtable

This is the story of Ellen (nee Huxtable) Wright - a respectable farmer's daughter who somehow stumbled into scandal, and managed to recover and end her life once again a respectable widow and mother. Tantalisingly we can only know the raw facts as we find them documented. We cannot know the motives or the temperaments or personal turmoil of the protagonists. For example, was Ellen's fall from respectability encouraged by her husband, James Wright, or driven by her wilful personality?

James Wright was born in Sandford, Mid-Devon in 20th September 1861¹, and baptised on 8th January 1862², the youngest son of Robert and Eliza Susannah Wright. His father was a Master Machinist employing three men and three boys³. Wrights had been Blacksmiths in Sandford at least since 1800.⁴ Initially brothers Robert and James worked in partnership, but the brothers fell out, and in 1859 the partnership was dissolved. Robert's brother James Wright started the West of England Iron Works, which was to become a very successful agricultural engineering business, winning prizes at agricultur-



The Square, Sandford Village

al shows around the country, and enjoying the patronage of royal customers⁵. Robert started the Britannia Iron Works and seems to have been equally successful locally. Whatever bad feeling had split the partnership was exaggerated between the two brothers and their respective offspring by commercial rivalry between their two businesses.^{6,7}

Eliza Susannah Wright (nee Parrett) was born in Stepney. Like several of her sisters she had been a schoolteacher before she married Robert.⁸

The firstborn son of Robert and Eliza, William, died in 1872, aged 18⁹.

This left only surviving sons Walter and James to work in the family business, and this is what they seemed to have prepared to do. In 1881 both sons were working with their father, described as machinists.¹⁰

In the following year James married Ellen Huxtable of Berrynarbor¹¹. She was the daughter of farmer John and Harriet (née Perrin¹²) Huxtable. Ellen was born in 1858¹³, and was baptised on 5th December 1858 with her three-year-old brother Frederick at St Peter's, Berrynarbor, the fifth of eight children¹⁴.

The Huxtable name originated in North Devon, probably in the 14th Century, from Huxtable Farm in East Buckland¹⁵. It was well established in Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Berrynarbor, Westdown, North and South Molton in the nineteenth century. In the 1881 census there was a large concentration of Huxtables in North and Mid Devon, and no significant distribution in the rest of the British Isles, with the exception of South-West Scotland¹⁶.



Bowden and Ruggaton border the Sterridge Valley

John and Harriet Huxtable began their married life at Lidford Farm, Ilfracombe¹⁷, and their first two children were born there, but by 1857 they had moved to Bowden Farm, Berrynarbor where they were to farm for almost 25 years^{18,19,20,21,22}. (John Jewel, 1522-71, Bishop of Salisbury and author of the famous *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana* of 1562, which Queen Elizabeth ordered to be read in every church in her kingdom, was born at Bowden²³). At 150 acres Bowden was slightly larger than an average farm of today. Around 1881 the family move to Ruggaton^{24,25}, Berrynarbor, a neighbouring farm where Huxtables had been farming for at least 30 years⁷. At 130 acres in 1881, Ruggaton was about the same size as an average modern day farm.

We simply do not know how James met Ellen. Berrynarbor is over thirty miles from Sandford and the two parishes had no obvious communication link. Berrynarbour is rather isolated, but as subsequent events showed, Ellen was a regular visitor to nearby Ilfracombe.

However they met, James and Ellen were married on 30 December 1882 in the Christ Church, Ilfracombe¹¹ - part of the Free Church of England. The Free Church of England was created in Devon in 1844 in protest against the Anglo-Catholicism of the then Bishop of Exeter. It was resolutely Low Church, and still exists today. Judging from the date of her first baby's birth, Ellen was already more than four months pregnant when she married James.

At about the time of his wedding James left the family business in Sandford, and took a job in Swansea. His new wife was left behind with her parents at Ruggaton Farm - not so unusual at the time. James was still working as a blacksmith in Swansea, according to the marriage certificate¹¹, and the birth certificate of their first child²⁶. Packet steamers plied daily between Ilfracombe and Swansea; some of Ellen's brothers moved there and this may explain James's move to South Wales, tempted by stories of plentiful work. Or was his departure from home driven by the fact that he had made Ellen pregnant, and the respectable Wrights expelled him from the family home and business?

James's departure to Swansea played a major part in initiating the tragedy that followed. Ellen must have been missing her husband. She was pregnant, and perhaps, as was suggested, her behaviour was triggered by a turmoil of emotions and hormones. For whatever reason she embarked on a most foolish crime, in which she was bound to be discovered. She seems to have had no understanding of the banking system. We can only guess at her desperation.

The *North Devon Journal* reported the incident in detail in its edition of 25th January 1883²⁸.

“CHARGE OF FORGING A CHEQUE.

On Saturday afternoon Ellen Wright, a married woman about 23 years of age, daughter of a farmer, of Ruggenden (*sic*) Farm, Berrynarbor, was charged before N.Vye, Esq., and G. N. Maule. Esq., at the Town Hall, with feloniously forging on January 19th a banker's cheque, for the payment of the sum of £30 with intent to defraud. The prisoner, who has been but recently married, and was accompanied by her father, mother, and sister, was allowed a seat during the hearing of the case.

Considerable interest was manifested in the proceedings and the Town Hall was densely crowded.



Ilfracombe

Mr. J. A. Thorne, barrister at law, instructed by Messrs. Barnett and Langdon, appeared on behalf of the National Provincial Bank. The prisoner was undefended.

Mr. Thorne said as prisoner was not defended he only proposed to give a brief outline of the case. It appears that on the 17th inst. prisoner went to Mr. Broome's, grocer, with whom she had a prior acquaintance, and requested him to give her a cheque for £3 in lieu of cash, as she wanted to pay a debt to someone who had left the town, and she was desirous of remitting the amount by post. In compliance with her request Mr. Broome gave her a cheque for this sum, and he saw nothing more of her until the 19th, when she again called upon him, and said she was in great trouble as she had lost the cheque, but was unable to say how. She wished Mr. Broome to return the money, but he told her he could not until some time had elapsed, that he might see if the cheque were presented by anyone. He then advised her to go to the Bank and stop the payment. Instead of doing this she went to the National Provincial Bank and presented a cheque drawn by Mr. Broome, payable to a Mr. Berry, the amount being £30. As this was a crossed cheque the cashier refused to cash it, advising her to get it changed for another. She then went away and returned with another cheque for the same amount purporting to be signed by Mr. Broome. Mr. Broome had never signed the cheque, and that was the ground of the present charge. He would call the person (Miss Vickery) from whom this second cheque (a blank one) was obtained. After the cheque had been crossed the cashier had an interview with Mr. Broome, and incidentally the conversation turned upon the banking transaction, with the result that it was seen that something wrong had taken place. The Bank authorities referred to the cheque, and it was seen that it was taken from a book supplied the same day to Miss Vickery. The latter was then seen, and so prisoner was traced. What had induced prisoner to do this he could not conjecture, as if she had only reflected for a moment she must have seen that detection would follow. She had certainly acted with incredible rashness, but the National Provincial Bank had no alternative

but to prosecute.— Mary Vickery, who keeps a boot and shoe shop, was then called, and stated that she had known prisoner about twelve months. On the 19th inst. she called at her shop and said that her father had given her a cheque to pay some debts but that she had lost it and would be obliged if witness would let her have a blank cheque. Witness said that she did not think prisoner could sign for her father, but she answered that she often did. Not having a cheque she gave prisoner a written authority to get a new book at the Bank, which she brought back with one cheque taken out – (book produced).

Charles H. Gemmell, cashier at the National Provincial Bank was then examined. He stated that prisoner came to him between twelve and a quarter past one o'clock on the 19th and presented a cheque. He told her that he could not cash it as it was a crossed one. She then asked what she must do, because she wanted to pay a bill and witness told her to take it back and get another. He gave the cheque back to her and she left the bank, but shortly returned with another cheque which he cashed in gold. It was drawn by Mr W. Broome in favour of Mr A. Berry, and was for £30. He could tell by the number of the cheque that the book from which it was taken had been issued to Miss Vickery. It was supplied at her written request. The cheque now produced was the same he had cashed.



Ilfracombe

William Broome, grocer, said he had frequently seen prisoner in his shop, and knew her family. She came to him on the 17th, and asked him to oblige her with a cheque for £3, payable to Mr. A. Berry, of Stowford, Westdown. She had come in to pay him a bill, but he was gone home, and she wished to forward the amount by post. He gave her a cheque and crossed it for security, and she paid him £3 and a penny for it. She next called on the 19th inst., and said "Oh Mr. Broome, I am in great trouble. I have lost the cheque which you gave me the other day, and as my father has gone to Barnstaple today and will see Mr. Berry he will pay him. Will you therefore give me the money back again?" Witness said he could not until some time had elapsed so that he could be sure the cheque was lost or destroyed, as otherwise it might be presented. He then advised her to go to the Bank and stop the payment. She asked which, and he directed her to the National Provincial Bank. She then left, but came back about an hour and a half after, saying it was all right and she would call on Saturday for the £3. From the result of a subsequent conversation with the cashier, a cheque was shown him, the same as now produced. It was not his signature on it, and no part of the writing was his.

P.C. Shepherd said in consequence of information received he went to Berrynarbor and apprehended prisoner at her father's house, charging her with forging the cheque. Her father was standing by her,

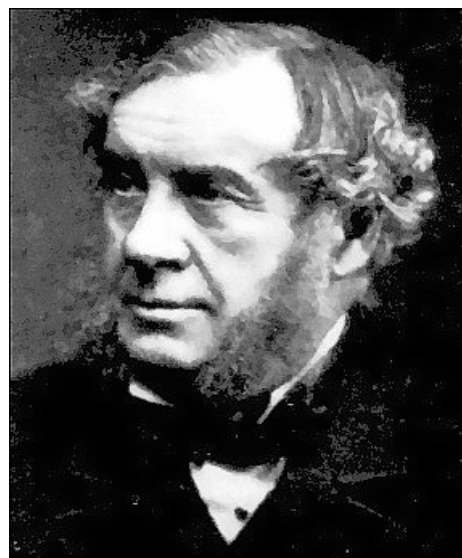
and witness showed the cheque to both. The latter replied, "Have you got the money, Ellen ? If so you had better tell the truth." Witness cautioned her against making any statement which might be used against her, but she replied that the money was upstairs in a box. Witness, with prisoner and her father, went to the box and found a sealskin purse with £24 in gold. She afterwards gave him another sovereign. In reply to the father she said she had paid Miss Vickery £3 that she owed her and sent £2 to Swansea to her husband. Prisoner further said that she had done it herself, that no one else was to blame, and that she deserved punishment. She wanted some money to go to her husband in Swansea. She appeared to be very sorry.

In reply to the question of the Bench whether she had anything to say prisoner burst out into a violent fit of crying, and her father, mother, and sister who were present, also wept bitterly. Prisoner was then committed to take her trial at the next Assizes at Exeter, and as they commence on Wednesday next it was thought advisable to refuse bail.

The case excited considerable interest in the neighbourhood and much sympathy is felt for the friends, who are respectable and well-to-do farmers at Berrynarbor."



Exeter Castle



Mr Justice Grove

The case was reported in the *Flying Post* in Exeter²⁹

"Ilfracombe.

ALLEGED FORGERY BY A LADY

A painful case of alleged forgery by Mrs Ellen Wright was investigated by the Ilfracombe magistrates on Saturday. She had cashed a cheque, afterwards found to be forged, at the National Provincial Bank. The evidence showed that she had called on a tradesman, and obtained a cheque for £3.00 in exchange for cash on the plea that she wanted to remit that amount to pay a bill. She then went to another tradesman and obtained a blank cheque, on the plea that she wanted to draw a cheque for her father. The cheque cashed was a *fac-simile* of that obtained from the first-mentioned tradesman, except that the amount was £30 not three pounds. She was committed to the Assizes. Prisoner who is of good family has recently been married."

We can be sure that this was devastating for a respectable farming family from a small community. Justice moved swiftly then. The Devon County Winter Assizes began at the Castle, Exeter on 22nd January, in fact, and Ellen appeared before Mr Justice Grove on 23rd January, the second day of the Assizes.

She pleaded guilty. The reports of the Assizes in the Press are brief, but no less chilling for that, if we consider the full implications.

From the *Crediton and North Devon Chronicle*, 27 January 1883⁵⁰. (An identical report appeared in *Woolmers Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 27 January 1883⁵¹.)

“FORGERY AT ILFRACOMBE

Ellen Wright, 23, a married woman was charged with forging a banker’s cheque for £30, with intent to defraud at Ilfracombe on the 19th January. – Mr. Thorne prosecuted. – Mr. Coleridge, on behalf of the prisoner, pleaded guilty; and said that she was a young married woman, and had for some time lived temporarily with her father at Berrynarbor, North Devon, her husband having gone on business to Wales. He handed in a certificate showing that the prisoner’s confinement was expected in three months. At the time the offence was committed the prisoner, for some unknown reason, conceived a wish to go and see her husband, and it was one of those capricious turns of mind to which women under such circumstances were subject that she, without the slightest accountable motive, forged the cheque. – Mr Thorne said that up to the time of the committal of the offence the prisoner had borne a most irreproachable character, and the officials of the National Provincial Bank would be glad if his lordship could see his way clear to pass a merciful sentence. – Prisoner was sent to prison for six months with hard labour.”



Exeter Prison

Hard Labour for women in Exeter Prison was working in the laundry, sewing, cleaning or picking oakum - unpicking old tarred roap which would be used to stuff mattress or to caulk boats. The women would work alongside one another but in silence. The diet for prisoners of six months would comprise gruel and bread for breakfast and supper, and meat and potatoes for dinner on 3 days, with soup and potatoes for the rest of the week.⁴⁰



Picking Oakum

In the *Flying Post* of 31st January⁵²:

“PLEADED GUILTY

Ellen Wright, 23, married was indicted for forging a banker’s cheque for £30, with intent to defraud, at Ilfracombe on the 19th instant. Mr. Thorne prosecuted on behalf of the National Provincial Bank, and the Hon. B. Coleridge defended. Mr Coleridge, on behalf of the prisoner pleaded guilty, and attributed her offence to one of those curious and capricious turns of mind which pregnant women are subject to. Under these circumstances he appealed to the Judge to pass a light sentence. Mr. Thorne joined in the appeal to his lordship to take a merciful view of the case. The Judge said there were a number of cases of forgery that day. This, he thought, tended to show that in past times the punishments had not been heavy enough. If ever he came on that circuit and found such a number of forgeries he would have to be more severe. The prisoner would be sentenced to six months’ imprisonment.”

There is no mention of husband James, and indeed with the offence committed on 19th January and Ellen sentenced by 23rd January he may not even have been fully aware of his wife’s plight. Though

Ellen Wright

long distance telephone calls would not be available for some time, the telegraph was well established, and the postal system was more efficient than it is today. Beyond his presence in Wales no mention was made of James in the trial reports.

Less than a week after committing the crime, Ellen Wright, carrying her first child, newly married daughter of respectable solid Victorian yeoman and churchwarden³⁶, and wife of a member of a well-regarded tradesman's family, was incarcerated in Exeter Prison. The Nominal Register of Devon County Prison, Exeter³³, recorded the following about Prisoner no 860 Ellen Wright:

Tried on 20th January at Ilfracombe and at the Assizes at Exeter Castle on 23rd January 1883. Forgery of a banker's cheque for the payment of £30. Sentence: 6 calendar months with hard labour. Aged 23, born in Ilfracombe. No previous convictions listed. Married. Religion: C of E, Hair: Dark Brown, Height: 5ft 5 ins, Education: Imp [*imperfect*] Distinguishing marks – two cuts across left wrist. Slight scar over right eye. Date of Discharge: 22 July 1883.

We can only speculate as to how she had acquired the two cuts across her left wrist.

Lilian Wright, the first daughter of Ellen and James was born on 19th May 1883²⁵ in H.M.Prison, Exeter.

It is difficult to imagine the horror that Ellen must have felt at her imprisonment amongst sad and frightening examples of the Victorian female underclass. Nonetheless she survived.



Cardiff GWR Station, where James worked

When she was released Ellen found that James had changed both job and address. He signed on as a signal man for the Great Western Railway in March 1883 at the rate of 18 shillings per week, and moved to Cardiff. Ellen joined her husband in Wales. Their second daughter, Florence Miriam, was born at 9 Cranbrook Street, St John, Cardiff on 10th February 1886²⁶. James committed some minor infringements of the rules at work, but managed to escape with cautions and no fines, and despite these, his weekly wage was increased year by year to 22 shillings by 1886⁴¹. Sadly Ellen's father died in 1888^{35,36}. But on 24 March 1888 Ellen gave birth to a son - Arthur John Wright. The family was then living at 171 Eldon Road, Canton, Glamorgan. ⁴²

One might hope that the family had put their troubles behind them and could settle down as if the events of 1883 were an aberration that could be left behind. But in fact it was at this time that the marriage and family fell apart. In about January 1889 Ellen seems to have left James for another man

Ellen Wright

- an Ernest Frayling. And as if this was not bad enough, in James's work record with the GWR there is a final and unexplained entry for February 1889 - "dismissed".⁴¹ Was his dismissal linked to the departure of his wife?

By the time of the 1891 census, the family had split up. James had disappeared completely, and cannot be found on the census returns anywhere. Daughters Lilian and Florence were living with their



Grave of John and Harriet Huxtable,
Berryarbor⁵⁶



Sandford, Rose and Crown Hill

widowed grandmother, Eliza Wright, in Sandford, at the foot of Rose and Crown Hill⁴⁵. Ellen was at 134 Philip Street, Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne, with her new partner. ⁴⁴ She claimed that her occupation was tailoress. She had also knocked more than 10 years off her age. Ellen and Ernest had baby Arthur John with them. It may be that Arthur was Ernest's son, though his birth certificate stated that he was the son of James. This move to the other side of the country suggests that Ellen and Ernest were trying to get as far away from James, South Wales and Devon as they could.

Ernest Frayling was a cabinet maker, and the son of a cabinet maker of Bath.⁴⁷ Later Ellen claimed that she and Ernest were married in Bristol in 1889⁴⁵, but there is no record of a marriage, and though she was using his surname, it seems probable that they were just living together. Over the coming years Ellen bore Ernest three children in Newcastle. Ernest Francis in 1891⁶⁵, called Frank, Alfred Sydney in 1893 ⁶⁶ and Maud Eleanora in 1896 ⁶⁷. According to the family Ernest had some kind of furniture business - a shop or a factory - which was burnt down. And it appears that misfortune continued to follow Ellen, for in 1899 Ernest died in Somerset, aged only 31⁴⁶.

At this point Ellen disappeared from the records again, with the children, as she was not recorded under the name of Frayling or Wright in the 1901 census. But James Wright did reappear in the 1901 census. He was at 34 Wellington Street, Bradford³⁴. He was working as a Railway Porter. The enumerator recorded neither James's status in the house, nor his marital status. The Head of the household was 44 year Emma Oxley, born in Wakefield, and unmarried. Also in the house was 12 year-old Elizabeth Whitaker, born in Bradford, described as a visitor. That James was a Porter suggests a decline in fortunes since his role as a Signal Man with the GWR in the 1880s⁴¹. Porter was the lowliest of occupations for an adult on the railways.

The daughters of James and Ellen were brought up by Eliza Wright in Sandford. In 1901 they were both still in Devonshire. Lilian had moved from Sandford, and was working as a general servant for

Ellen Wright

Mr and Mrs John Mortimer, the Grocer, Draper and Post Master at the Post Office, Lymptone³⁸. Florence was still living with her Grandmother, now aged 70³⁹.

At the next census in 1911 James Wright was still living in Bradford ⁴⁸. He was a boarder in the house of 52 year old widow Annie Brickley, a comb minder in a woollen mill. James was by then describing his status as widower. He was working as a goods porter. Daughter Florence had moved to the North and was living with her father. She was working as a domestic servant. Later that year Florence married Bradford plumber Fred Rothera⁴⁹; they were to have five children. Some of their descendants live in Bradford still.

In 1911 Lilian, born in Exeter Prison, still giving her place of birth as Ilfracombe, was a servant in the house of bank clerk John Ambler, his wife and daughter, at 25 Woodland Rise, Muswell Hill, north London.⁵⁰ She was then unmarried. It has not yet been established if Lilian ever married, or when she died.

James Samuel Wright died in 1928, in Bradford. ⁵¹

At some point Ellen, now recorded as Frayling, with her family moved to Liverpool. It may have been before 1901, for in that year an Arthur John Wright was a boarding pupil in Reigate, at the Royal Asylum of St Anne's Society, Redhill ⁵²; the correct age for our Arthur, his birthplace was recorded as Liverpool, which may simply reflect the address that the school held for him. The charitable school provided education for the children of those who had seen better times. Had Ellen found a place to educate Arthur? Only when we have found Ellen and the family in 1901 will we know more.

By 1911 the family had reappeared in the records. Arthur had joined the City of Liverpool police. In 1910 he married Elizabeth Jones from Gwalchmai, Anglesey.⁶⁸ Before meeting Arthur, Elizabeth had left Anglesey to escape the cruelty of her devoutly Methodist family, and to look for work. Five of her siblings also left home in search of better conditions and prospects.

Ellen and her children had moved in with Arthur and his new wife. Thus in 1911 widow Ellen Frayling with her children Frank, Alfred and Maud were living with PC and Mrs Arthur Wright at 24 Canon Road, Clubmoor, Liverpool, in the Anfield area. ⁵³This was the first census return for many years



Canon Road, Liverpool today



Alfred Frayling

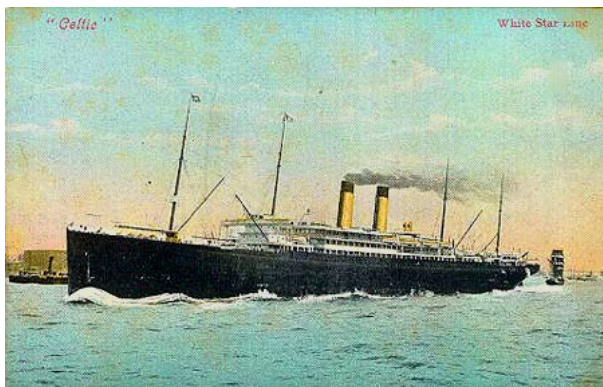
Ellen Wright

when Ellen and the children's details were recorded accurately. Ernest and Alfred were both employed as sheet metal workers. Canon Road was to be home to Arthur and the Fraylings for many years. Ellen and her remaining family seem to have remained very close-knit, and unusually perhaps, they stayed together.

At the outbreak of World War I, brothers Alfred and Frank joined up on the same day in September 1914. Both in the Royal Engineers, they served in the Middle East in Egypt, and Mesopotamia and probably for a while in India. Both were awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Frank suffered from malaria and was awarded a pension in 1919.⁵⁴

According to family stories, PC Arthur Wright was given a bravery award for stopping a runaway horse. He served with the police for several years. But his loyalty to the Liverpool City Police was not blind. Apparently he had been on leave during the General Strike of 1926 (or perhaps more likely the police strike of 1919?) when colleagues who had taken strike action were dismissed. He resigned from the force on a matter of principle, in solidarity with his dismissed colleagues, saying that if he had not been on leave he would have also been on strike. This was a rash move, as by then Arthur had a large family. It was the next move of the Fraylings and Wrights that supports the notion that Arthur's resignation from the police may have been before 1926. For in 1924 Ellen and the family emigrated.

In 1915, at the age of only 19, Ellen's daughter Maud had married a Liverpool Irish soldier Alexander McHale.⁵⁵ She was widowed in 1918 when like so many others he was killed in France. ⁵⁶ She fell



White Star Line *SS Celtic*



Maud Frayling

for an American soldier William Cuthbertson, and married him in 1918.⁵⁷ Cuthbertson had emigrated to the US from Canada, and had settled in Portland, Maine. Maud went to the US to join him. But she had barely settled there when she returned to England pregnant with her first child, in August 1919, accompanied by her husband. The son Kenneth was born in September 1919⁵⁸ and Maud returned to the US. This was to be a pattern over the next few years. Maud returned to her mother in Liverpool every year for a stay of a few months. In 1922 she had her second child, Patricia,⁵⁹ in Liverpool. She returned to the US again in September 1922 when the baby was just a few months old.⁶⁰

Did Ellen decide to go to the US to be with her daughter? For whatever reason Ellen and the family seem to have decided to join Maud in America.

Son Frank had married ⁶¹ in 1920, to Margaret Cooper, and his son Ernest was born in 1923.⁶² Originally the intention had been for Ellen, son Frank, his wife Margaret and their child, son Alfred, son Arthur, wife Elizabeth and his family to all go to the USA together. But the US authorities thought

Ellen Wright

that Elizabeth had TB, so she was refused a visa. In time this proved to be incorrect. Despite that Arthur and his family were unable to accompany his mother.

On 4th October 1924, on the White Star liner *Celtic*, Ellen Frayling, her son Alfred, her son Ernest (Frank) and his wife Margaret, their son Ernest, sailed from Liverpool for Boston, travelling Third Class. Frank was a sheet metal worker, and Alfred a meter maker. They arrived in Boston on 12th October 1924, their destination declared as the home of Ellen's daughter Mrs. Cuthbertson at 8 Highland Avenue, Lynn, Massachusetts. ⁶³



Ellen Frayling/, formerly Wright
nee Huxtable, aged 76

Frank Frayling with Margaret
and sons Ernie and Alfred



The family settled in Medford, Massachusetts. Maud and William divorced and Maud married again to a Charles Augustus Coffin. The two Cuthbertson children took the name Coffin, and Maud and Charles had a daughter of their own. Frank and Margaret had two more children in Massachusetts.

Back in Liverpool Arthur remained in Canon Road with his five children and wife Elizabeth. She was rather scathing about Arthur's family, referring to them as a "band of gipsies". Having left the police we find Arthur in 1938 working as a meat porter.

In 1930 Ellen and her family were still together at 6 Henry Street, Medford City, Massachusetts.⁶⁴ Frank was head of the household - a metal worker in a soda fountain company. His wife and three children were living with him, as was his brother Alfred, an unmarried metal worker in a water fittings company. And living with them too was 71 year old widow Ellen Frayling, nee Huxtable, formerly Wright.

Alfred married Alice Cowell of New York in about 1931.

The family all settled in their new home, and became naturalised US citizens. Frank was the first to seek naturalisation, in 1931. Alfred followed in 1932, then Margaret in 1935. Ellen applied in 1937 and was admitted in 1938. On her application form she referred to two children only - Maud and Ernest Frank. There was no mention of her first daughter born 54 years earlier in Exeter Prison. In fact Ellen had children at that time in Massachusetts, in Liverpool, in London and in Bradford. What did she remember of those six months in 1883?

She died on 2 September 1939 and was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, Medford City, Massachusetts. Now Frayling graves are either side of hers, a long way from Berrynarbour and the resting place of her parents.

I am indebted to Paul Savje of Massachusetts, USA and Judith McCullouch of Hampshire, England for their assistance in helping me solve the mystery of Ellen's later years and for sharing family stories and photographs with me.



Ellen's grave at Oak Grove Cemetery,
Medford, Massachusetts

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Ellen Wright

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- 34 1901 Census, District: Bradford, Sub-Registration District: Bradford East, Piece Number RG13/4153 Folio 151, Page 15
- 35 GRO ref: E/W Register of Deaths 1888, Apr-Jun Quarter, Registration District: Barnstaple Vol 5b Page 330
- 36 Memorial Inscription, Saint Peter's Churchyard, Berrynarbour
- "Thy will be done"
To the beloved memory of John Huxtable for 20 years churchwarden of this parish, who died June 18th 1888
"Resting in his saviour"
Aged 66 years
"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" St John 6c 37v
Harriet wife of the above who passed away April 22nd 1905, aged 75 years
"Thou wilt keep her in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee"
- 37 1891 Census Registration District: Crediton Sub-Registration District: Cheriton Fitzpaine Piece No RG12/1761 Folio 88 Page 10
- 38 1901 Census, Registration District: St Thomas Sub-Registration District: Exmouth Piece No RG13/2030 Folio 10 Page 11
- 39 1901 Census, Registration District: Crediton Sub-Registration District: Cheriton Fitzpaine Piece No RG13/2131 Folio 56 Page 7
- 40 *Devon County Prison, Exeter 1853-2003* Charles Scott-Fox, Pub. By Charles Scott Fox, Tiverton 2003
- 41 Ancestry.co.uk UK Railway Employment Records, 1833-1963 [database on-line]
- 42 Birth Certificate of Arthur John Wright. GRO Ref: Registration of Births Quarter Apr-Jun 1888 Cardiff Volume 11A page 266
- 43 1891 Census Registration District: Crediton Sub-Registration District: Sandford ED 11 RG12/1761 Folio 88 Page 10
- 44 1891 Census Registration District: Newcastle-on-Tyne, RG12/4200 Folio 19 Page 31
- 45 Ellen Frayling's Petition for US Naturalisation at US District Court of Massachusetts at Boston 25 October 1937
- 46 GRO ref.: E/W Register of Deaths 1899 Jan- Mar Quarter Registration District Keynsham Vol 5c Page 425.
- 47 1881 Census Registration District: Bristol, RG11/2500 Folio 45 Page 30
- 48 Census 1911 Bradford, RG14/26740 RG78/1540 RD498 SD2 ED21 SN60
- 49 Marriage Certificate of Florence Wright and Fred Rothera, GRO Ref: Registration of Marriages Quarter Jul-Sep 1911, Bradford Volume 9B page 263

Berrynarbor



- 50 1911 Census Hornsey, London RG14/7238 RG78/353 RD132 SD1 ED46 SN265
- 51 GRO ref.: E/W Register of Deaths 1928 Jan- Mar Quarter Registration District Bradford Vol 9B Page 286
- 52 1901 Census Registration District: Reigate Piece RG13/628 Folio 120 Page 18
- 53 1911 Census Registration district: Liverpool, RG14/22629 RG78/1327 RD455 SD10 ED19 SN116
- 54 Ancestry.com. *British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920* [database on-line].
- 55 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Marriages Quarter Jul-Sep 1915 West Derby Registration District Vol 8B Page 1211
- 56 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Debt of Honour Register. <http://www.cwgc.org>
- 57 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Marriages Quarter Oct-Dec 1918 West Derby Registration District Vol 8B Page 969
- 58 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Oct-Dec 1919 Chorlton Registration District Vol 8C Page 1623
- 59 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Apr-Jun 1922 Liverpool Registration District Vol 8B Page 241
- 60 Findmypast.co.uk Passenger lists leaving UK 1890-1960
- 61 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Marriages Quarter Jul-Sep 1920 West Derby Registration District Vol 8B Page 744
- 62 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Oct-Dec 1923 West Derby Registration District Vol 8B Page 827
- 63 Manifest of Alien Passengers for United States Immigration at Boston on board SS Celtic from Liverpool Oct 4th 1924.
- 64 US Census 1930 Medford City, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, USA ED 9-329 SD No 10 Sheet No 19B
- 65 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Oct-Dec 1891 Newcastle on Tyne Registration District Vol 10b Page 15
- 66 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Apr-Jun 1893 Newcastle on Tyne Registration District Vol 10b Page 33
- 67 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Births Quarter Apr-Jun 1896 Newcastle on Tyne Registration District Vol 10b Page 82
- 68 GRO Ref: E/W Register of Marriages Quarter Oct-Dec 1910 West Derby Registration District Vol 8B Page 939

Other Sources

- 1891 census Registration District Barnstaple, Sub-Registration District Combe Martin Piece Number RG12/1776 Folio 82 Page 10
- 1901 census Registration District Barnstaple, Sub-Registration District Combe Martin Piece Number RG13/2147 Folio 12 Page 15
- 1841 Census Registration District: Barnstaple? Sub-Registration District:Possibly Combe Martin? Census place may be Arlington. The Folio is partially destroyed. Piece No HO107-0245 Folio 3 Page 3.
- Descendancy Narrative of William Huxtable, June 13 2006 supplied by Val Fillmore (Descendants of William Huxtable.doc)
- 1851 Census Registration District: Barnstaple Piece HO/107/1892 Folio 365 Page 4
- Ancestry.Com Family Trees: Savje Family Tree
- Kelly's Directory of Devon, 1856
- Kelly's Directory of Devon, 1889

