

EDWIN LETHBRIDGE - A Devon Lad

1848 - 1932

Headmaster of York Place Boys' School 1884 - 1902

Edwin Bower Lethbridge was born in Torquay, Devon. He was the eldest child of Edwin, a painter (think 'house' not 'picture') and Emma, both of whom also hailed from Devon.

With a growing family, Emma had to earn a living. She went from being a 'Painter's wife' (1851) to a Laundress (1861) and a shopkeeper (1871).

By 1871, Edwin (junior) was no longer at home. He was attending Exeter Diocesan Teacher Training College. This was run by a 29 year old 'Clerk in Holy Orders', James Dangar, along with his family, 3 members of staff and 7 servants. Edwin was one of 40 male students, mainly from Devon and Cornwall.

Edwin must have come to Brighton soon after qualifying. He was appointed an Assistant Master at The Central National School in Church Street. Soon he progressed to the headships of Hanover Terrace and then Preston Road, both under the control of the Brighton and Preston School Board. He achieved an outstanding reputation, so was the ideal candidate to become head of the newly created York Place Higher Grade School for Boys in 1884.

He had married Margaret Lord in 1874 in Brighton. She hailed from Margate, Kent; later moving with her family to London, where she was recorded as a Pupil Teacher in 1861. The 1871 census showed her working as a governess to a family of bakers in St James's Street, Brighton.

By 1881, the family was living at 23 Warleigh Road. They had a one year old son, Herbert, who was to go on to teach at Varndean Boys' School, and a servant. Herbert was christened Edwin Herbert, but I suppose the use of his second name prevented confusion! Intriguingly, Mr Lethbridge was listed as a surgeon! Other records, however, confirm this is the right person.

The growing family stayed at the same address for a number of years. After all, Warleigh Road was a respectable middle class area, if not at the top of the scale. At various times, neighbours included a tutor, a sailor, a house painter, an engine fitter, a provisions dealer's traveller, a dressmaker, a (watch) jeweller, an artist...and a girls' home!

The 1891 census records 2 more children, Margaret and Arthur, along with a 14 year old servant. Moving on to 1901, Herbert was studying at Cambridge, whilst Margaret was a milliner and Arthur would have been at school. There was no servant. Sadness was to come, however, as Arthur died in London in 1907, aged only 21. Incidentally, there is a stained glass window dedicated to Edwin, Margaret and Arthur in St Peter's Church which is, of course, sited opposite what was the main entrance to York Place School.

Maybe retirement led to a house move. 1911 recorded them at 178 Springfield Road. Herbert was the only offspring still living at home. He was a schoolmaster, working at York Place. He continued there, except for his war service, leaving in 1920.

Until the next census comes out, it is hard to follow events after that. Margaret died in 1919, aged 73. Edwin survived her by several years, dying in 1932. At some point he decided to return to his native Devon or was visiting relatives, as his death was recorded in Torquay. His Mother had certainly continued to live there until her death in 1895. Possibly some of his siblings were still there? He left the equivalent of nearly £250000 to Herbert.

Interestingly, Herbert also moved to the area, as his alumni notes from Cambridge record him in Torquay in 1945. Four years earlier, he had married Mary Christina Hillman from Tiverton. He was still there at his death in 1966. He left only £14000.

I wonder if either Edwin or Herbert ever bumped into Miss Ellis and Miss Strange? And what was it about Torquay?