

WALSHAM *History Group*

REVIEW Oct 2019 Number 87

THE BURY AND NORWICH POST AND SUFFOLK STANDARD

4th JUNE 1889

TRAGICAL OCCURRENCE

AT

WALSHAM-LE-WILLOWS

MURDER AND SUICIDE

Mr. Woolnough Gross, deputy Coroner for the Liberty of Bury St. Edmund's, held an inquiry at Walsham-le-Willows, on Saturday afternoon respecting the deaths of Emma Blake, 26, and Florence Blake, her illegitimate child, aged two months.

Eliza Blake, wife of William Blake, farm labourer, of Walsham-le-Willows, deposed that the elder deceased was her daughter. Last Thursday night, about ten o'clock, witness's husband went to bed. Witness followed with the child's food, leaving

its mother downstairs undressing the infant. She followed immediately afterwards. When partly undressed witness went into her daughter's room, and "tucked her up". The next morning witness's husband got up about four o'clock, and as he was going through the daughter's room, he exclaimed, "Mother, where is the girl? She's gone". Witness enquired, "Is the baby too?" and he said "Yes". Witness's husband then went downstairs, and witness jumped out of bed and followed. The front door stood wide open. Witness's husband went up the yard, whilst witness was close behind him, and he exclaimed, "Here she is!" Witness went to the pond and saw her with her night clothes in the water. Witness then called her neighbours (James Chambers and his wife), and went to a shed and got a rake, which she gave to Chambers, who pulled the body of the elder deceased to the opening of the pond. Witness's husband and herself took the body out of the water and laid it down by the side of the pond. Witness then went to dress herself, and her husband and Chambers brought the body into the house. Witness observed her daughter's shoes and her baby's bottle lying close together about a yard from the water. In about an hour the baby was found in the pond. Chambers subsequently went for a doctor, who came as soon as possible. Since the birth of the child witness's daughter had not "seemed the same as usual," but latterly had been better. Before being confined she had several times told witness that if George Baker did not marry her she should "make away" with herself.

William Blake, farm laborer, gave corroborative evidence, stating that he noticed his daughter's face about six inches below the water, which was

clear. After the body was got out of the pond, witness got a barrow, wheeled the corpse to the house, and carried it indoors. Chambers kept raking for the baby, could not find it. Witness and Chambers looked about but could not see it anywhere. Witness then went back to the pond and took the rake, and the second time he tried it drew up the body of the baby, which was also in its night clothes, lying much nearer the opening of the pond than was its mother. Witness took it into the house and laid it beside its mother. Since its birth his daughter had “seemed low- spirited”.

James Chambers, farm labourer, gave confirmatory evidence.

Mr. F.J. McNaught, surgeon, said he was sent for on Friday, at 4.50 a.m. and got to Blake’s house at 5.7 a.m. He examined the body of Emma Blake, which was lying in the downstairs room and found no marks of violence. The cause of death was drowning. Witness left in about 20 minutes, and

returned about seven o’clock, by which time the body of the baby had been recovered. He examined it and found no marks of violence. Death was the result of drowning. About five weeks back Emma Blake’s mother asked witness to go and see her daughter, and he went. She seemed to be suffering from religious mania, and said she was sleepless, and had bad dreams. Witness ordered her mother not to let her go out of her sight. About a week ago Emma Blake went to witness’s surgery for some medicine for her mother. Witness took the opportunity of asking her about herself, and she told him she was much better. She had lost the “wild look” about the eyes.

The Deputy Coroner, having addressed the Jury, and reviewed the evidence.

A verdict was returned to the effect that “Florence Blake was willfully murdered by her mother, who committed suicide whilst in a state of temporary insanity.



Above: The coroner came out from Bury St. Edmunds, shown here in the 1880s.

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the *Walsham le Willows*

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*Civil Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Village or Hamlet, &c., of	Local Board or (Improvement Commissioners District) of	Ecological District of		
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (1), or not (2)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION	AGE of last Birthday of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Whether 1. Deaf-and-Dumb 2. Blind 3. Imbecile or Idiot 4. Lunatic
			<i>Whitely Walter</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Suffolk Walsham-le-Willows</i>	
			<i>Rizzie</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>Wm</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>Emma</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
50	<i>Green Lane</i>	1	<i>William Blake</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>agr Labor</i>	<i>do Houghton</i>	
			<i>Eliza</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>" " wife</i>	<i>do Leighton</i>	
			<i>Robert</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>agr Labor</i>	<i>do Walsham-le-Willows</i>	
			<i>Henry</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>George</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>Emma</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
51	<i>do</i>	1	<i>Arthur Carter</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>Assistent</i>	<i>do Hoxton</i>	
			<i>Robert</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Miller</i>	<i>do Freshfield</i>	
52	<i>do</i>		<i>Edward</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Builder (Apprentice)</i>	<i>do Weymouth</i>	
			<i>Robert Aldridge</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Groom</i>	<i>do Walsham-le-Willows</i>	
			<i>Thomas</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>do wife</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>James</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>Butcher (Apprentice)</i>	<i>do do</i>	
53	<i>do</i>	1	<i>Robert Kettle</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>Teamman</i>	<i>do Gillingham</i>	
			<i>Emma</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>do wife</i>	<i>do Westbury</i>	
			<i>Fredrick</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>do Gillingham</i>	
			<i>Arthur</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do do</i>	
			<i>Samuel</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do Walsham-le-Willows</i>	
Total of Houses..		1	Total of Males and Females..		10	8			

* Drawn the pen through each of the words in the margin of the original document.

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Eng. Sheet D

Above: Page from the 1841 Census, showing William, Eliza, Robert, Henry, George and Emma Blake living in Walsham-le-Willows at the time. Crown Copyright. Courtesy of The National Archives, London.

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

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Civil Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town or Village or Hamlet of	Urban Sanitary District of	Rural Sanitary District of	Ecological Parish or District of		
Shanklin				Shanklin	Shanklin		St. Johns		
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (1), or not (2)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf-and-Deaf (2) Blind (3) Imbecile or Idiot (4) Lunatic
117	1st Buttock Cottages	1	Lush William	Head	Mar	50	Iron Cur	Synthhurst Hants	
			do Elizabeth	Wife	Mar	46	do	Newport S. of W. do	
			do Francis H.	Son	Mar	10	Messenger newspaper	Shanklin do	
			do Kate A.	Daughter	Mar	11	Scholar	do do	
			do Emily	Daughter	Mar	7	do	do do	
118	2nd South View Cottages	1	Worren Nellie	Wife	Mar	5	do	Wallingborough Hants	
			Worren John	Head	Mar	20	Shoring Smith	Southampton	
			do Jane	Wife	Mar	18	Landress	Spole Dorset	
			do Sarah	Daughter	Mar	7	Scholar	Leitham S. of W.	
			do John	Son	Mar	10	do	Shanklin do	
			do Ellen	Daughter	Mar	6	do	do do	
			do Arthur	Son	Mar	2	do	do do	
119	3rd do do	1	Worren C. G.	Wife	Mar	22	Lawyer	Wallingborough Hants	
			Worren John	Head	Mar	62	Mar. Pensioner	Winchester Kent	
			do Harriet	Wife	Mar	62	do	Wallingborough do	
			do Henry	Son	Mar	18	Public Teacher	Shanklin S. of W.	
120	House Villa	1	Worren James	Head	Mar	70	do	Portsmouth Hants	
			do Mary	Wife	Mar	42	do	do do	
			Worren Emma	Serv	Mar	48	Gen. Serv.	Wallingborough Hants	
121	Clon Cottage	1	Worren George	Head	Mar	70	Blacksmith	Wallingborough Hants	
			Worren Susan	Wife	Mar	70	do	Shanklin do do	
Total of Houses..		1	Total of Males and Females..		10	11			

NOTE.—Draw the pen through such of the words of the headings as are inappropriate.

Eng.—Sheet B

Above: Page from the 1881 Census, showing Emma Blake living in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. Crown Copyright. Courtesy of The National Archives, London.

Research into the family finds them living in Walsham from the 1841 Census onwards. William was born in Haughley, his wife Eliza came from Langham.

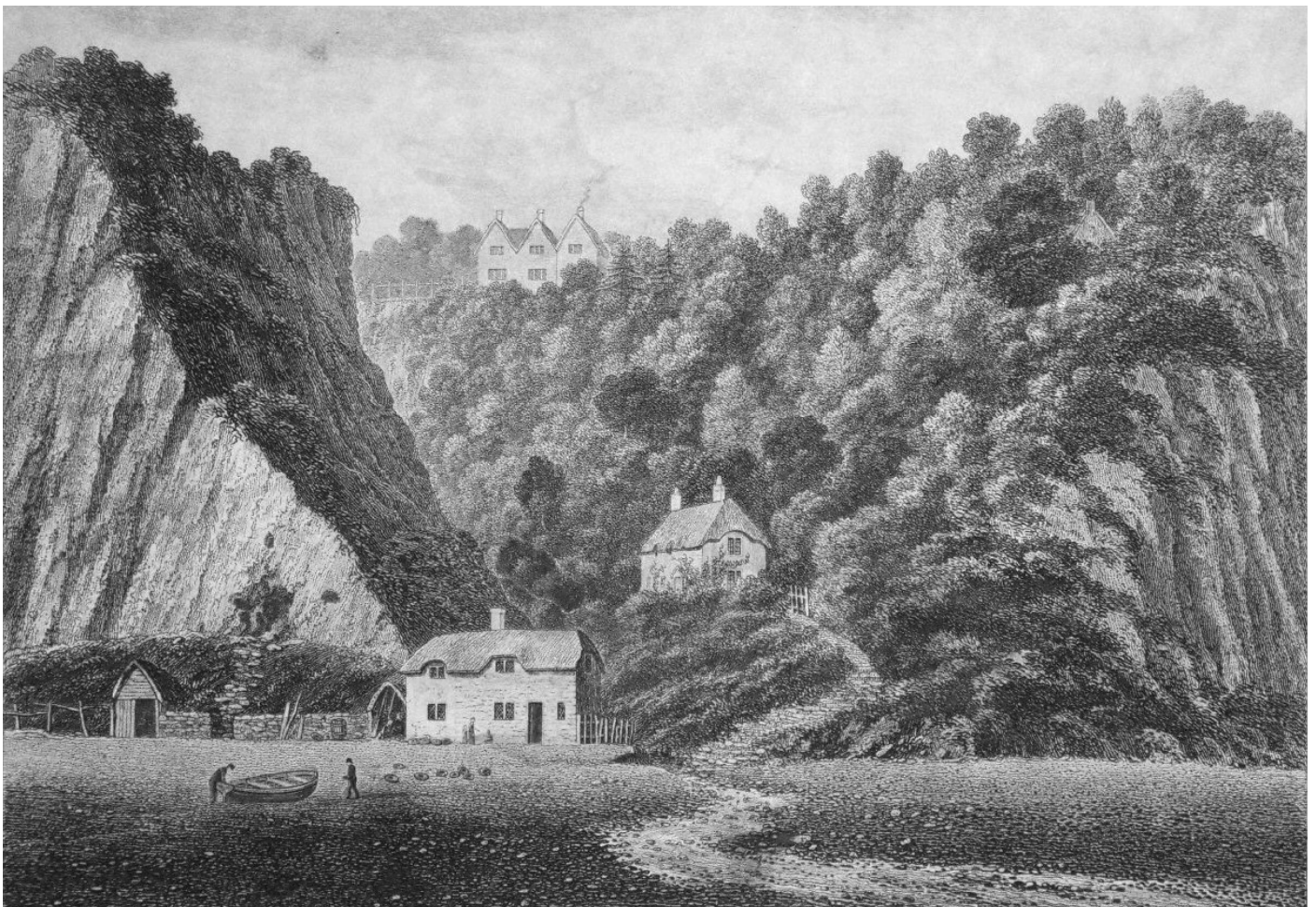
At the time of the 1871 Census, William is an Agricultural Labourer, both he and Eliza his wife are 53 years old. They have four children living with them, Robert, Henry and George, and just one daughter Emma who is at this time 7 years old. They live in Cranmer Green; the exact address is not listed.

By the time of the 1881 Census, William and Eliza are still living in Cranmer Green, but no children are listed as being with them. This suggests that Emma at 17 years old has already moved out and has employment. In fact, Emma is listed as living in Florence Villa, Devonshire Road, Shanklin, Isle

of Wight and is a servant to James Fielder and his sister Mary S Fielder both in their 70's.

We don't know what took Emma to the Isle of Wight, a long journey far away from home. It could have been through a connection or in response to an advertisement for a domestic servant. It does indicate that she was probably quite confident and looking for new pastures to explore. Emma returns to Walsham at some point after the census was taken.

Despite the fact that Emma had the love and support of her family, this was not enough to save her. It would seem that post-natal depression, which is well recognized and treatable in our times, was recognized, but no treatment other than to keep an eye on the individual was available at the time.



Above: 19th century view of Shanklin, Isle of Wight, where Emma Blake was living in 1881.

Article by Jean Davies, for the Walsham History Group