

THREE WOMEN AT SWALLOW'S NEST, MELLING

During the summer of 1917, three women, all related to the Barker family of Todmorden were staying at, or visiting, Swallow's Nest, Melling:

- **Mary Leech** (1881-1963) lived at Swallow's Nest from May to October 1917, awaiting the birth of her first daughter in November; her second husband, Dr Ernest Bosdin Leech (1875-1950), was on army medical service in France.
- **Emily Barker** (1867-1955) was a visitor from Tatham, where she lived with the family of her brother-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Senior Roberts (1867-1939) at the Rectory of St James the Less.
- **Grace Barker** (1892-1994) had also been living at Tatham Rectory, after a period of service as a nurse in France; for the summer of 1917, she stayed at Swallow's Nest, which she had found for Mary Leech to rent.

How were these three women related?

- **Emily** and **Grace** were aunt and niece: Emily was the sister of Robert Barker (1866-1912), the father of Grace Barker.
- **Mary** and **Grace** became stepmother and stepdaughter in 1904 when, after the death of Grace's mother, Robert Barker married Mary Walder, who had been Grace's governess.
- **Emily** and **Mary** were thus sisters-in-law.

Emily's father Robert Barker died in 1912; **Mary** Barker married Dr E. B. Leech in 1916, and **Grace** Barker married Herbert Brough Usher (1892-1969) in 1923.

In October 1939, at the church of St James the Less, Tatham, Emily, Mary and Grace were among the chief mourners at the funeral of the Rev. Arthur Senior Roberts:

- 'Miss Barker (sister-in-law)' is **Emily**.
- 'Mrs H. B. Usher' is **Grace**.
- 'Mrs E. B. Leech' is **Mary**.

The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. W. J. A. Burrow, Vicar of Melling.

The chief mourners were: Mrs. Roberts (widow); Messrs. Arthur Cecil Roberts and Philip Barker Roberts (sons); Miss Barker (sister-in-law); Miss E. M. Remington; Mrs. J. Barker (sister-in-law); Mrs. H. B. Usher, Mrs. J. S. Lord, Mrs. McKay, Miss Nellie Barker (nieces); Major R. H. Barker and Dr. T. Stephens (nephews); Dr. and Mrs. E. B. Leech, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Dennett (Todmorden), Miss Edith Barker (Todmorden).

Lancaster Guardian 6 October 1939

EMILY BARKER OF TODMORDEN AND TATHAM (1867-1955)

A photo of 1917 (probably between 28 May and 16 June) shows Emily Barker and her niece Grace Barker 'by the wall in the garden' of Swallow's Nest, Melling.

Emily also stayed at Swallow's Nest on 1 and 2 October 1917.



ML's step-
daughter &
sister-in-law -

Grace Barker Emily Barker
by the wall in the garden

Swallow Nest

Melling

Emily Barker was born in Stansfield, Todmorden on 17 April 1867, and died in the Bay View Hospital, Lancaster on 6 October 1955.

Emily's family (1867-1880)

Her father was Luke Barker (1843-1896), of Stansfield Hall, Todmorden. Luke began working life as a 'warehouseman in a cotton mill' (1861 census), but by 1868 he was in partnership with his brother, William Barker, and Richard Crabtree: a cotton spinning and manufacturing business in Todmorden trading as Barkers & Crabtree which had 68 employees in 1871. Following the death of Richard Crabtree in 1890, Luke established the cotton manufacturing business Luke Barker & Sons with his sons, John and Robert. In 1905, Luke Barker & Sons was incorporated as a Limited Company, which in 1914 employed a staff of 560, operating 1407 looms and 7500 ring spindles.

In 1863, Luke Barker married Rachel Barnes (1836-1878); they had two sons, John (b. 1864) and Robert (b. 1866), and two daughters: Emily, and Mary Jane (b. 1874). The 1871 census shows Luke, Rachel, John, Robert and Emily living at 10 Barker Street, Stansfield, Todmorden.

In 1878, Emily's mother Rachel died, leaving four children under the age of 15. In 1879, her father Luke Barker remarried. Until December 1880, Emily lived at home in Todmorden; she attended Vale Academy, where her father had been a pupil when it was known as 'Dewhirst's Classical and Commercial Academy'.

Here is a typical advertisement for the school in 1880:

The Vale Academy, Todmorden

The above Educational Establishment will be REOPENED as a MIDDLE CLASS DAY and BOARDING SCHOOL on July 26th 1880.

Head Master - T. WILSON WARD (late mathematical Master at Alston College).

(Announcement in the *Todmorden Advertiser*, 4 June 1880)

Emily's English copybook (1880)

Between Midsummer and Christmas 1880, as part of her studies, Emily filled (on one side only) 18 sheets of an exercise book with 'Specimen[s] of Penmanship'. Several entries in this 'commonplace' book are quotations from Shakespeare, ending with two pages of 'Hamlet's Soliloquy on Death'. By the age of 13, Emily had been taught impeccable handwriting!

Writing in the *Todmorden Advertiser* of 16 January 1914 about his time as a pupil at Vale Academy, 'JNC' leaves the reader in no doubt as to the training in writing that he received:

Emily's copybook was one of two among a collection of papers and documents given to the parish archive of Melling-with-Wrayton by June Fawcett, whose late husband the Rev William Fawcett had been vicar of Melling.

You can look through the pages of Emily's English copybook [HERE](#):

Then our exercise-books were worth looking at. I well remember the pride with which I used to take mine home, and with what pride, too, they were inspected by my parents, uncles and aunts. We were trained in neat and orderly habits, so that when a lad left school to go to the counting house, he could be trusted with books. In some of our Secondary Schools of to-day neatness has gone by the board, and scribble reigns supreme. That may or may not be the case in Todmorden and its vicinity: I do not know; but having had half-a-dozen of my own children at Secondary Schools, I do not write altogether at random.



Click on the link to view the copybook

Emily at boarding school in Pontefract (1881-1884)

The 1881 census shows the Barker family living at Claremont Villas, Victoria Road, Stansfield, Todmorden: Luke, his second wife Sarah Ann, his sons John and Robert, and his daughter Mary Jane, along with his sister-in-law Ann Barker age 32 and a domestic servant.

But where was Emily?

In January 1881, Emily became a boarding pupil at a 'Ladies' School' in East Hardwick, Pontefract. According to the 1881 census, the school was run by a widow, Jemima Sutcliffe ('School Mistress'), with her daughter aged 31 (no occupation given) and son aged 29 ('Gentleman'). There was a Scottish '(Teacher) Governess' aged 18, two female servants, and four boarding pupils: Ada Fox aged 17, Anne Barker 14 (also from Todmorden), Annie Robinson 14 and **Emily Barker** aged 13.

Here is how Mrs Sutcliffe advertised her establishment:

- 'Ladies' School, East Hardwick, Pontefract, conducted by Mrs & Miss Sutcliffe. Efficient Resident Governesses and Visiting Masters. Reopens January 29th. LANCASTER SCHOOL ...' (*Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 January 1880)
- 'Educational Ladies' School, East Hardwick, Pontefract. Principals Mrs and Miss Sutcliffe. Masters for Languages, Dancing and Higher Mathematics. Pupils [from Todmorden] passed in the College of Preceptors Examination in June.' (*Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter*, 19 August 1881)

One can suppose that it was in response to one of these advertisements that, late in 1880, Luke Barker, recently widowed and newly remarried, enrolled Emily as a boarder at Mrs Sutcliffe's modest educational establishment in Pontefract.

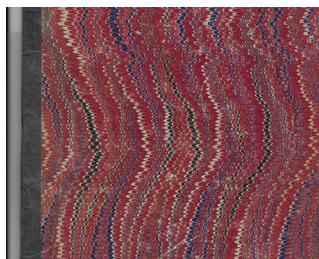
In the 1891 census, the girls' school in East Hardwick was now called 'Granville House'; the Head was Miss Edith Nancy Slack, age 27, with staff and 17 female boarders age 5-15.

For details of Slack and Lord at East Hardwick, see: www.fretwell.kangaweb.com.au/pdfs/Hoyle-Generation%203+%20-%20Descendents%20of%20Robert%20Cutforthay%20Hoyle.pdf

Emily's French copybook (1883-1884)

Between October 1883 and April 1884, as part of her French studies in Pontefract, Emily copied out in an exercise book 65 pages of immaculately written letters, addressed to relatives and female friends, and all composed in flawless French. Several are signed 'Emily', but many others bear a variety of female signatures, some English, some French.

You can look through the pages of Emily's French copybook [HERE](#):



Click on the link to
view the copybook

The first page is headed, in large bold writing: '**Style épistolaire. / 5^e Cours E. Barker**'. Several of these letters are dated 'St. Trond le 10 mars 1884' (for example) – the French version of Sint Truiden, a town of 40 000 inhabitants in Limburg, Belgium. It would be interesting to know what, if any, the link was between Pontefract and Sint Truiden.

Who taught Emily to compose – or at least to copy – impeccable French? Here is what we know:

- The 1880 and 1881 advertisement for Mrs Sutcliffe's Ladies' School in East Hardwick refer to 'Efficient Resident Governesses and Visiting Masters' and 'Masters for Languages, Dancing and Higher Mathematics';
- According to the censuses of 1881 and 1891, a Frederic Forbach was a boarder and 'Professor' or 'Teacher' of French and German at the boys' boarding school in Town Street, East Hardwick, Pontefract.

It is therefore probable that one of the 'visiting masters' at the ladies' school was **Frederic Forbach**, born in 1843 (1871 census) or more probably in 1837 (1881 and 1891 censuses) near Lyon (1871 and 1881 censuses) or in Switzerland (1891 census).

Frederic Forbach had previously taught in Cornwall: according to an advertisement for Dunheved College, Launceston, Cornwall (established in February 1873 by Nonconformists / Methodists and merged into Launceston College in 1931):

'The Ladies' French Class will be divided so as to form a Junior Class for beginners, under the direction of Mons. *Frederic Forbach*, of Paris.' (*Launceston Weekly News and Cornwall & Devon Advertiser*, 16 January 1875)

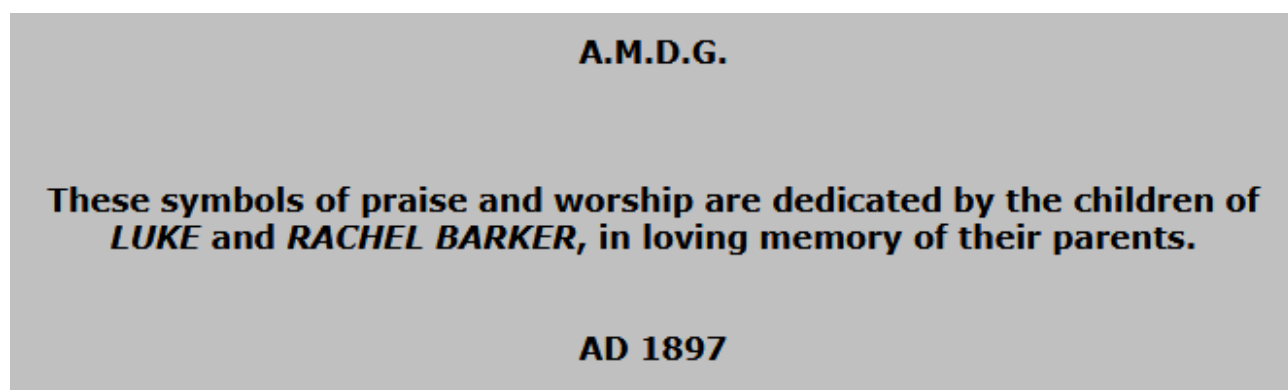
We do not know when Frederic Forbach came to England, but in the 1871 census, we find him as a boarding member of the staff ('Foreign Master') of the Collegiate Institute, Parkgate Road, Chester (20 male pupils age 10-17, and 50 male students in training age 18-25).

A 'Frederick Forbach' was buried in Brookwood Cemetery, Woking, Surrey, on 24 April 1896.

Emily and her family in Todmorden (1885-1902)

By 1885, the 18-year-old Emily was back in Todmorden, living with her father Luke, stepmother Sarah Ann and her sister Mary Jane. The 1891 census records the family at Stansfield Hall, Gable End, Todmorden; they had a general servant and a housemaid.

Emily's father Luke died in 1896. His children placed this memorial to their parents next to the reredos in Todmorden Parish Church:



In 1898, two years after the death of their father, Emily's sister Mary Jane married the curate of Todmorden parish church, the Rev. Arthur Senior Roberts. Emily then went to live in the Roberts household at 12 Byrom Street, Todmorden which, according to the 1901 census, consisted of the young couple, their baby son Arthur C. Roberts, Emily, and a cook and a housemaid.

Emily in Tatham (1902-1955)

On 22 June 1902, Arthur Senior Roberts was appointed vicar and rector of St James the Less, Tatham. When Rev Roberts moved into the Rectory at Tatham with his young family, Emily came to live with them.

On 5 January 1904, Emily was a bridesmaid at the wedding of her brother Robert Barker to Mary Walder, who had been governess to his daughter Grace Barker:

Todmorden & District News, 8 January 1904

BARKER—WALDER.—On the 5th inst., at St. James' Church, Tatham, near Lancaster, by the Rev. A. S. Roberts, M.A., Robert Barker, of 9, Carlton-terrace, Blackpool, and of Todmorden, to Mary Walder, daughter of Mrs. Walder, of Walderston, Jamacia.

After leaving Todmorden to live with the Roberts family in the Rectory at Tatham, Emily remained in Tatham for the rest of her life. Her brother-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Senior Roberts, died in 1939:



Emily Barker died on 6 October 1955 in the Bay View Hospital, Wyresdale Road, Lancaster (*Lancashire Evening Post*, 8 October 1955).



Emily as bridesmaid (photo credit: Yael Rowan-Wicks/Tatham History Society)

Emily's gravestone stands in the churchyard on the north side of St James the Less Church, Tatham

David Nott

With acknowledgements to

Mike Winstanley,

Secretary of the Tatham History Society