

Item of Interest No 68

Mary Townley Sugden

From the Garton Archive at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School

September 2021



I am indebted to a former pupil of Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls' High School (LHS), Pat Coates (née Clark), for researching information on Mary Townley Sugden who was a music teacher at the School for over thirty years. I am also grateful to Penny van de Bosch (née Beech) for carrying out similar research on census and other records. Much of that material can be found in the appendices to this article. The information I have received from them and from several other Old Girls of the School was triggered by a reference in a previous article and which has inspired me to write about the life and career of a most interesting and remarkable woman.

Miss Sugden is shown second from the left in the middle row in the section from the School's photograph roll above. Headmistress Isobel V Cleave is on the far right. I am grateful to Rosemary Sargisson (née Churchill) for informing me that the photo featured the whole school of 350 pupils, including Rosemary herself, and that it was taken in the garden opposite the Tithe Barn on the Greestone Stairs in September

1950. She identified the teacher on Mary's left as Mademoiselle Fournier and another French teacher, Miss Clark, on her right. Star of the show is of course Miss Cleave's dog Bim, refusing to smile for the camera! Rosemary also believes that the girl standing immediately behind Mary is Margaret Franklin, daughter of George Franklin, Headmaster of Lincoln School. I am led to believe by many boarders at the school that Margaret was quite a distraction! However, she was kept well apart from us predatory day boys!

Pat Coates found that Miss Sugden was born on the 18th June 1892 in Eversley, Hampshire, and that Townley was her paternal grandmother's surname. Her father, Henry Townley Sugden FRIBA was an architect and surveyor who was born in Bangalore, India. Her mother, Isabella Jane (née Dawson) was born in the Isle of Man and was Henry's second wife. Mary was one of four children. In 1901 the family lived at Ford Cottage in Eversley and in 1911 Mary was a student governess at a private boarding school for girls in South Lowestoft. Apparently, the eminent musician and composer Benjamin Britten attended the school in later years as a seven year-old, so it much have admitted boys at a future date. Britten was taught piano at the school by Miss Ethel 'Dolly' Astle, who recognised his talent and his potential as a pianist and composer.

The LHS staff admissions register showed that Mary lived in Ramsgate from 1901 to 1903 and in Burnham, Somerset from 1904 to 1906. Then, for the next seven years, she studied piano, organ and singing and in 1914 she received her Licentiate from the Royal Academy of Music (LRAM) shortly before the outbreak of the Great War.

Mary joined the WRAF in 1915 where she was engaged in what was termed 'war work', which was described in the admissions register as 'Recruiting office, bank and in WRAF service.' Her service number was 22541 and she was described as 'immobile' which signified that she lived at home. She was discharged in June 1919 and was appointed to the staff of LCHS in September of that year and was awarded a 'definitive' appointment in July 1920 having passed what was the equivalent of her probationary year. Her starting salary was £140 per annum rising on a scale to £170 (2021 equivalent c£8,000). Despite the fact that Mary was working in Lincoln from 1919, Pat discovered from her research that she was registered as living in Ealing. In 1939, however, her residence was Exchequergate Cottage in Lincoln which was shared with a secondary school teacher called Florence E Marshall.

Mary's arrival at LHS was recorded as follows in a somewhat understated entry in the *Personalia* section of the Christmas 1919 magazine; "We welcome new members of staff including Miss Sugden LRAM, junior music mistress." She was also mentioned in Headmistress Lucie Savill's report for that year. She was appointed at the same time as Miss Platt, a more senior music teacher and it seems that she might have been overshadowed by her senior colleague as there seem to be a lack of references to Mary and her work in subsequent magazines. She was, however, making her mark as a staff member in the LHS *Three Arts Society*. The Society, which embraced Art, Literature and Music, was an innovative venture at the time and an early example of a cross-curricular initiative. It was the more remarkable for being formed by Fifth and Sixth Form pupils. Mary made an immediate impression in 1928

by arranging what was unanimously agreed to be a most successful and enjoyable meeting of the Society (Midsummer 1928 magazine). It took place on the 29th June and consisted of a delightful performance of the music of Grieg. Janet Blacklock played two of his piano pieces, Dorothy Armitage played two movements from his Sonata in E Minor, Mary Farrar sang 'Spring Tide', and Margaret Daughton sang 'Solveig's Cradle Song'. But the highlight of the concert was Miss Glover's rendition of several songs including 'The Song from Monte Pincio' which she was persuaded to sing again as an encore. The audience showed its appreciation with prolonged applause. Earlier in the year, members of the Art section had given lectures on, 'Art and design in the Theatre', illustrated with slides, and Ursula Lane outlined the history of Drama up to the present day. G Davies spoke about make-up, and Kathleen Maudsley described different types of audience and their effects on the actors.

It is apparent that the Society made a vibrant and colourful contribution to the cultural life of the school, and Mary Sugden played a key part in its organisation and design. In later years she not only choreographed the meetings in school, but she also organised visits to places such as Boston Stump where the Society was treated to a fine organ recital by Dr Jackson. I am speculating that it might have been the celebrated Francis Jackson who was organist at York Minster for thirty-six years from 1946. At the time of the recital in Boston Stump he would have been a chorister at York Minster under the tutelage of organist Sir Edward Bairstow, and was about to take up the position of organist at Malton Parish Church. However, he did not receive his doctorate (DMus) from Durham until 1957 so perhaps it was another Dr Jackson. Whoever it was he certainly played a piece by Bairstow as well as works by Bach and César Franck and complained to his audience about the effects of the English summer on the performance of the organ.

Mary continued to support the orchestra, and in the Christmas 1931 magazine Headmistress Savill commented on the progress in the aesthetic side of the life of the School and congratulated Mr Mountney on his most able tutelage of the orchestra, and Miss Lloyd and Miss Sugden for the part they played in recruiting, encouraging and supporting the players. Later, Miss Sugden played in the orchestra as a 'cellist' when numbers were beginning to decrease. Some of the later LHS magazines from the 1940s used the full name 'violincello' for that most haunting and expressive of stringed instruments.

I am also indebted to several Old Girls for sharing their memories of Mary through the conduit of Jane Burgess who does so much to keep the Old Girls Association alive, and who contributes regularly to the articles from the Garton Archive. Some of their tales suggest that Mary was perhaps not the most sympathetic of piano teachers! Pam Nixon has written that her sister Judith was taught piano by Mary who was always asking what Saint's Day it was! This resonates with one of the gifts given to Mary of her retirement as you will find below! Apparently, Judith rarely knew the answer as she was brought up as a non-conformist! Sally Jack (née Hill) was also taught piano by Mary, whose method of giving her confidence and motivation was to rap her on the fingers if she played a wrong note! Lindsey Sutton recalled the time when Mary gave her piano lesson in her Exchequer Gate home after she had retired,

and Rosemary Sargisson (née Churchill) harbours an abiding memory of the day when Mary told her parents that she would never be a pianist. She promptly changed tutors and went on to achieve Grade 5 pianoforte! Rosemary also achieved fame on the back row of the LHS orchestra (while pointing out that the word 'row' has a double meaning!) and confesses that she was only marginally tolerated by the conductor, Mr Frederick Mountney, largely for swelling the number of scarce string players!

I am also grateful to former pupil of Lincoln School, Jeremy Wright, who asked his sister Judy for her own memories of Mary Sugden who was teaching at LHS at the time when their mother, Elinor Margaret Burroughs, joined the staff in September 1924 as a teacher in the kindergarten. She had been trained at the Maria Grey College in London where she was awarded the prestigious National Froebel Union Higher Certificate. Judy began her life at LHS in the kindergarten in 1937 and left the main school in 1951, a year before Mary retired. Jeremy kindly recorded her responses which are summarised below.

Judy recalled that Miss Sugden was a music specialist who taught class music, conducted choirs (which her mother often accompanied), gave piano lessons to individual pupils, and played 'cello in the LHS orchestra. She was also an enthusiastic church organist and had a legendary knowledge of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' which she employed to extraordinary effect. For example, she would say quite casually, "I met *Blessed are the Pure in Heart*, and *We Plough the Fields and Scatter*, this morning." Recipients of this information would be at a loss to understand the coded messages unless they possessed an intimate knowledge of Hymns A&M, and an understanding of Mary's somewhat quirky sense of humour. The first reference was to hymn number 261 in Hymns A&M and the second number to hymn 383. These combined to give the number 261383 which was the telephone number of the person whom she had met. That was of course only a number that Jeremy concocted as an exemplar. In Miss Sugden's day, numbers were generally shorter. I wonder if she would have risen to the challenge of an 11-digit mobile phone number? Perhaps this tale is a colourful example of Mary's 'inimitable humour' described by Headmistress Cleave below.

In retrospect, Judy wondered if Miss Sugden had led a tough and sometimes lonely life that was sustained by a tremendous and unshakeable faith. For many years she lived in Exchequergate Cottage, albeit not alone, under the shadow of the archway and convenient for school, the Cathedral and a number of churches.

Judy ended her trip down memory lane by telling a story about Miss Sugden. One year when Jeremy and she were in their adulthood, they both visited their old home together, where their mother had invited her former colleague Miss Sugden, to whom she affectionately referred as 'Suggie', for lunch. She had arranged that they would pick her up in a car. Miss Sugden was ready when they arrived and emerged from the cottage slamming her front door, which locked automatically, behind her. They both had the same thought; "Have you got your key?" they called out to her in unison. "Oh yes!" she replied, pulling it out of her handbag to make sure. They both heaved sighs of relief. Jeremy was an enthusiastic rock climber (still is as an active

octogenarian!) and would have volunteered to climb up to the open bathroom window to retrieve the key had it been left inside! Thankfully, Suggie was taken home on time for lunch, and was later returned to Exchequergate Cottage without incident.

Mary retired from her post at LHS in the summer of 1952 after serving the School for thirty-three years. Headmistress Cleave's Upper School Report in the Spring 1954 edition of the LHS magazine included reference to two key members of staff who had retired since her last report; Miss Clark, who had served the School since 1920 as a French teacher, Head of Department and latterly, Second Mistress, and Mary Sugden herself. Miss Cleave told her audience that Miss Sugden had brought to her teaching such faith in God, such enthusiasm for the beautiful, and such inimitable humour that it would seem impossible to replace her. She mentioned the tradition of plainsong that she had established so effectively, and the beautiful and moving singing at the Commemoration Service in the cathedral which had rewarded her skill and devotion. In wishing her an active and happy retirement she commented that because she was still teaching out of school hours, many of the girls could not believe she had actually retired. Miss Cleave ended her tribute by saying that Miss Sugden was still living in Exchequergate Cottage which, with all due respect to Canon Cook, she had amusingly referred to as the 'Sugdeanary'!

A further tribute was paid to Mary by the Honorary Secretary of the Old Girls' Association, Alfreda Jahn, who reported that the School's jubilee celebrations were tinged with sadness at the loss of two of the most faithful friends of the Association, Miss Clark and Miss Sugden, whose very belief in the value of the Association had always been a strength and an encouragement to its members. One alumna had written that both those long-serving members of staff had been so very much part of LHS that it was hard to visualise the School without them, and that she hoped they would continue to be part of LHS in their retirement. The Association had presented Mary with the gift of a carpet for her living room, a set of *Alban's Lives of the Saints*, and a bouquet of cream roses and mauve sweet peas. Over one hundred and thirty staff and members of the Association had gathered for the presentation at their annual meeting on the 4th July 1953.

Pat Coates found from her extensive research that Mary Sugden died on the 26th March 1982 at the Plevnor Nursing Home on The Avenue, Lincoln, aged 89. She also found from Probate records that Mary left less than £10,000. However, what she left in terms of her legacy as a teacher is inestimable.

Mary Sugden was never to be one of the 'powerhouses' of the LHS staff such as Miss Reed, Miss Scoular, and Miss Thurlow. She taught music in the lower school and needed to supplement her income with piano tuition. Sadly, Music has always been one of the 'Cinderella' subjects in schools, although teachers often received some compensatory limelight from the extracurricular activities in which they willingly engaged. Thus, Mary was one of the unsung heroes at LHS, somewhat overshadowed by other more senior music teachers such as Miss Platt, Miss Adams, and more recently by Miss Broadgate. Surprisingly, despite her LRAM in pianoforte, there is no record of her having given a recital at the School, nor having contributed

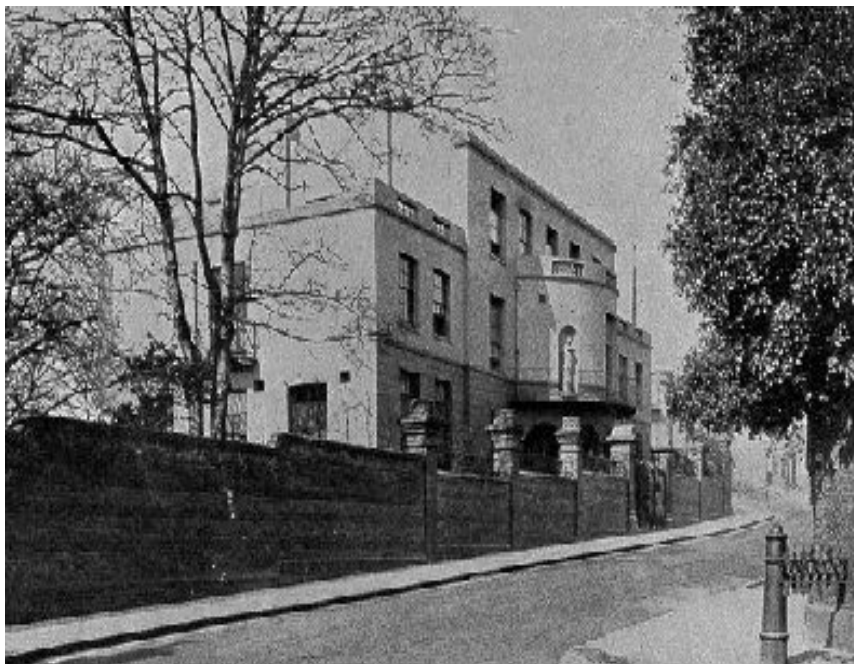
to one of the annual LHS concerts. I am told, however, that she frequently played the piano for assemblies which may have been within her comfort zone. But Mary should surely be celebrated for her longevity, her loyalty, and for the understated but invaluable contribution she made to the cultural life of the school and to the growing success of the Old Girls' Association, of which she was an active and committed staff member.

I will leave you with a typical entry in an LHS magazine. Miss Cleave, newly appointed as Headmistress in 1943, wrote in her report of the untiring efforts by Miss Adams and Miss Sugden to ensure the success of the music at the Jubilee Service in the Cathedral. Once again, she was the 'bridesmaid' rather than the 'bride' but a much-valued and trusted colleague nonetheless.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Pat Coates (née Coates and Penny van den Bosch (née Beech) for providing me with background information about Mary and her family, and for the census and other information reproduced below. I am also most grateful to Old Lincolnian Jeremy Wright for interviewing his sister Judy, to those former pupils of LHS listed above who sent stories and anecdotes about her teaching career, and to Jane Burgess for her invaluable work for the Old Girls' Association including acting as a collator and disseminator of information from LHS alumnae.

Appendix One: Townley House, Ramsgate, where Mary lived from 1901 to 1903



Appendix Two: The 1911 Census showing Mary as a student-governess

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

Number of Schedule 200
(To be filled up by the Enumerator and returned)

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (Last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE		PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Person aged ten years and upwards	BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every person born in this Country	INFLUENT
			State for each Married Woman entered in this schedule, the number of:—	Write "Single", "Married", "Widowed", or "Divorced", opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.				
1. <u>Mrs. Kate Dutton</u>	<u>Head</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Principal of Girls' High School, Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
2. <u>Edith Maud Dutton</u>	<u>Daughter</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
3. <u>Phil Mary Kate Dutton</u>	<u>Daughter</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
4. <u>Mrs. Mary Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
5. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
6. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
7. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
8. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
9. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
10. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
11. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
12. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	
13. <u>Mrs. Dutton</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>Single</u>		<u>Student - Lincoln</u>	<u>Lincoln</u>	<u>English</u>	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature Edith Maud Dutton

Post Address Lincoln, 52 Thistle Street

Appendix 3: Mary's Registration as a Teacher

TEACHERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

(Continued by ORDER IN COUNCIL, FEBRUARY 29th, 1912.)

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Register Entry concerning: SUGDEN, MARY TOWNLEY.

Date of Registration: 1st February, 1921. Register Number: 66323

Professional Address: Girls' High School,
LINCOLN.

Attainments:

Licentiate of Royal Academy of Music (Pianoforte)

Training in Teaching:

Experience:

Musio Mistress -
Clinthurst, Wadworth, Surrey. 1915;
St. Winifred's, Brentford. 1915-1916;
Private Teaching, 1915-1916.
War Service, 1916-1917; and 1918-1919.
Musio Mistress -
Girls' High School, Lincoln. 1919 -

Secretary.

Appendix 4: Lincoln Directory showing Mary's residence in Exchequergate

10 Sheep Hill. C	143.	1	Luchs, Edwin.	M. 5 May 02	S.	Insurance Agent.	
		2.	Appenheim, Kurt, A.	M. 3 Aug 19	S.	Horse hair curling manufacturer.	
Exchequer Gate	144	1	Vernon, Caroline E. S.	F. 16 Sept 69	S.	Unpaid domestic duties.	APPENHEIM KURT AWIGIA
		2	Vernon, Sarah J.	F. 16 Feb 72	S.	Unpaid domestic duties.	
		3	Vernon, Edith M.	F. 4 Nov 79	S.	Teacher.	
		4	Vernon, Ethel O. G.	F. 4 Dec 89	S.	Book	PWC/497/256
		5	Vernon, John W.	M. 20 May 78	S.	Army Pensioner.	R. 4 M. 1. 12. 4256. 7.
2 Exchequer Gate	145	1	Mellors, Florence	F. 17 Nov 67	W.	Montfield duties & helping in Stationers Shop.	March 2. 1942
		2	Mellors, Edward S.	M. 14 July 06	S.	Stationers Shop Manager.	
Exchequer Gate Cottage	146	1	Sugden, Mary S.	F. 18 Dec 92	S.	Secondary School Teacher.	
		2	Marshall, Florence	F. 12 Feb 11	S.	Secondary School Teacher.	

Appendix 5: Mary Sugden's Music Teacher Colleagues

Stella Georgina Platt LRAM ARCM joined the staff of LHS in September 1919 to teach piano, class singing, aural culture, musical appreciation and harmony. She had previously taught at the Ladies College in Seaford and the Clergy Daughters' School in Casterton.

Dorothy Grace Glover was appointed to LHS in September 1924 to teach Music, having obtained the Diploma of the Royal Manchester College of Music in the same year. She left to be married in 1930.

Lilian Maud Adams LRAM GRSM (London) joined the LHS staff to teach Music, having trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Her previous post was at St Winifred's School, Eastbourne.

Ethel Mary Broadgate LRAM was trained at the Howard Jones School of Music, Wigmore Hall, London and was appointed to LHS in May 1943 in September 1939 as the senior music teacher. Her duties were to teach piano, class singing, class music and Higher Certificate Music. She later married the Rev J Swaby. She had previously taught in Kent, Surrey, North Yorkshire, Merseyside and Somerset.

