

Roll: **19151109-0911**

Camera: **Document: TXT**

Film:

Subject:

St Luke goes to Nottingham for bit cheese and a wedding.

Notes:

What an irritating old fruit St Luke is, On reading this second letter I find I do not like him at all. I hope he gets up early, is late for the wedding anyway and does not get his "bit of cheese".

The train service to Nottingham appears to be much depleted and I assume this was due to the Great War. St Luke's animosity to Midland Railways is a strange one. In 1915 the railways were under government control as they had been temporarily nationalised. I am rather assuming that "Stanley", of whom St Luke complains that he, "has not posted me up at all", is [Thomas Stanley Roadley](#). Stanley enlisted with 4th Battalion South Staffordshire regiment in 1915 and Elsie has a press clipping of his reported death in 1917.

I have found North Villas, Camden Sq. on Google maps and my initial impression, that St Luke was a rather well heeled sort of cove, seemed to be confirmed. The house is worth over £2,000,000 (in 2023) and the Bank of England reckons that that is the equivalent of £21,900 in 1913, well £21,900.43p to be precise, which strikes me as an astonishing amount of money. Then I checked out the census data for 1911 and Uncle St Luke don't get a mention. I checked the 1921 census and he isn't mentioned there either.

In 1911 the household is run by Florence Booth aged 39 and single. With Florence are her father, Joseph Booth (76), a retired lace manufacturer and her sister Mary Eliz Booth (45) also single. I would guess it would have been Joseph who bought the house and that control passed to Florence when he was widowed.

In addition there are 9 boarders all of whom are recorded as being single. That's some household for a 4 bedroomed property. My expectation would be that the house had 3 basement rooms and 4 first floor rooms built originally as 2 reception rooms, a kitchen and a scullery and 2 bedrooms on each of the upper floors (a total of 11 rooms).

I suspect the boarders are sharing, Marie-Marguerite and Jane for instance are both French and both working as stenographers for stockbrokers. Arthur and Alfred are both 23 year old school teachers working for the L.C.C. Florence Wright and Rose Thatcher are both servants in the house. Rose is only 14.

By 1921 Mary Elizabeth is deemed to be the head of household and is the Boardinghouse keeper while Florence Augusta is the "sister" and "Assistant" boarding house keeper. Joseph appears to have passed on and I suppose that could have something to do with the change in status of the sisters.

There are now 9 new lodgers recorded but there are 4 others in 2 separate households. The data is a little confusing as there appear to be 3 record sets available, The first purports to include number 7 North Villas and the person responsible for the return is "Miss Booth" with the postal address "7 & 8, North Villas, NW1".

There are 2 separate households additionally making returns for 8 North Villas. Giovanni Chiti and his widowed farther Parisio Chiti, both musicians at the Hotel Cecil on the Strand, and Francis Longworth Wright, a works Manager (Perfumery and Toilet Soap Trade) at the Crown Perfumery Co. Ltd and his wife, Elise Lilian Mary Wright.

The Hotel Cecil was built in the "Wrenaissance" style in 1890 and with more than 800 rooms was the largest in Europe. It provided the base for Gandhi's South African delegation campaigning for Indian rights in 1906 before being requisitioned for the war effort in 1917 when it became the first headquarters of the new RAF. Presumably the Chitis were then out of a job and perhaps had to move out of the Booth's boarding houses. But there I go, I'm making stuff up again.

The Crown Perfumery Co. Ltd which supplied perfumes to Queen Victoria, was established in 1872 and remarkably, is still advertised, although it has been acquired by Clive Christian. The address for works in 1921 was given as Sidney Road, Homerton, E9 which puzzled me for a bit as I lived in Homerton for nearly twenty years and never ran across Sidney Road and could not find it on Google maps. A little time on the search engine revealed that Sidney Road was renamed Kenworthy Road in 1938 which is a road I do

remember. I feel tinged with regret that so much of this history was played out over grounds that I knew and could have visited had I learned of it earlier. Still the Wrights are nothing to me, unless in some way they turn out to be related to my Cousin Judith and her husband Trevor Wright.

It does rather look as if, once the old man died, the sisters acquired the property next door with their inheritance, moved in and re-established the boarding house business there, while renting out number 8 as two larger units. I speculate of course but this could be verified by checking the dates of "St Luke's" death and the acquisition of number 7.

As to St Luke I am now pretty convinced that he was a Booth and that he went with Lizzie (Mary Elizabeth Booth) to the Albert Hall on [Wednesday February 5th 1913](#) to listen to "The Redemption" an oratorio by the French composer Charles Gounod. The performance was by the Royal Choral Society conducted by Sir Frederick Bridge. It began at 8pm.

The Royal Albert Hall is about five miles from North Villas and a pig of journey to get to by public transport even now. There were over 8000 motor cabs in London by 1913 and only 1,900 horse drawn cabs so you would think they would use a horseless carriage except that, from January 1st the Motor Cab drivers in London were on strike in a dispute that went on until March 18th. If "St. Luke" had been affected by the strike it would be astonishing that he did not complain about it, so either he used a horse drawn cab or public transport. The journey would have taken an hour or more, so I would imagine that they left the house around 6.30pm. Isn't it amazing what you can work out in the these days of miracle and wonder. I wonder if it was raining.

Gounod's most popular work was the opera "Faust" written in 1859 and still often performed until today.

People:

Elsie Hannett, Joseph Booth (St Luke), Stanley Roadley.

Dates:

My first impression was that the letter was written in the same year as another which identified historical events and was associated with an envelope postmarked [FEB 18 13](#)

The writer identifies the date as "Tues Nov 9th". Between 1900, when Elsie would have been 10 years old and 1920, there are only two such dates, the first in 1909 and the second in 1915. Given the problems with the trains I am as certain as I can be that this letter is from 1915.

Frames:

DOC-0001 19151109 17:30:00 Letter to Elsie.

DOC-0002 19151109 17:31:00 Letter to Elsie.

DOC-0003 20230225 22:00:00 8 North Villas.



DOC-0003 - 8 North Villas, Camden Sq. today (2023).