

Constance Basford

118 Kedleston Road



Constance Buckley and Bromley Basford were married on 18 June 1908 at the Congregational Church, Victoria Street, Derby

Constance Basford (née Buckley) was one of five children, born in 1883, and brought up at 11 North Street Derby, in a house adjacent to the Children's Hospital. Her father was a Hosier & Glover and her mother one of the Haslam family, well known in Derby for their involvement in local industry and politics. We know very little of Constance's childhood – after leaving school her great-niece believes that she trained as a nurse, inspired by her

eldest brother, Charles, who was Buxton Spa's rheumatism consultant. During the war he ran a hospital in Buxton for Canadian wounded soldiers.

In 1908, aged 25 she married Bromley Basford, son of the proprietor of the Derby Daily Telegraph, who himself worked at the newspaper. By the 1911 census Constance and Bromley were living at 107 Arthur Street. They never had any children.

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After war broke out Constance volunteered with the Joint War Committee (St John's Ambulance and Red Cross) as a nurse. Her Red Cross record states that between May 1915 and May 1917 she volunteered as a "Trained nurse... taking charge for sister's off duty time" at the Markham Ward in the Derbyshire Royal infirmary. The Markham Pavilion, as it was sometimes known, was the ward for wounded soldiers at the DRI.

By the time she left this post in May 1917 she and her husband (when on leave from his army training) were living at 118 Kedleston Road. Bromley had volunteered in October 1915, and after his training was completed in September 1916 he was posted to serve on the Western Front in Flanders and France. On 4 October 1917 he was killed by a stray shell whilst leading his platoon back up to the front line to fight. From an obituary published in the local paper we know that Constance learned of his death from the War Office 3 days later – as Bromley was an officer this would have been by a telegram delivered to her door.

Sadly Constance received further bad news less than 2 months later when her second brother, Gilbert, was killed in action on 30 November 1917 in France. He had joined the King's Own Scottish Borderers as a private aged nearly 40 (the upper age for conscription was 41 until near the end of the war). Gilbert was specifically told that he would not be required to serve abroad but

after the Somme he was posted to Northern France and was killed by machine guns as he knelt to reload his rifle.

Constance resumed her voluntary nursing in June 1918 and was based this time at an auxiliary hospital at Temple House on Mill Hill Lane, which had been in use as a military hospital since September 1915 when it was transferred from Derbyshire Cricket Ground pavilion. She continued working there until sometime after June 1919.

When she finished nursing Constance moved south, living for a time at Liphook in Hampshire, and later in Reigate with Gilbert's widow Annie Buckley and their two children Mary (born in 1915) and Philip (born 1917).

By the 1939 Register she was living at Park Lane, Allestree with her youngest sister Muriel and her great niece remembers her well at family Christmases in the 1940s "as a very formidable but kindly presence". She also recalls: "In the late 1960s I visited her in Allestree to find her up a tree [in her eighties] picking apples while Muriel panicked below".

At the time of her death in 1970, aged 87, Constance was living at 10 Welwyn Avenue, Allestree.

(Thanks are due to Constance's great niece for sharing her photographs and memories of Constance and Bromley with us.

There is also an information sheet on Bromley Basford, one of the casualties of the war).