

Local civilians used their first aid skills when the "Princess Alice" sank in the Thames

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS PICTURE LIBRARY

By the end of June 1878, "at least 1,100 people had been taught [St John first aid skills] to treat the wounded, and in case of war [the St John Ambulance Association] had registered the names of 192 men and women, all skilled nurses, who were prepared to go abroad at any moment for the purpose of attending to injured soldiers.¹⁵ By July 1878, provincial centres at Worcester,¹⁸ Malvern, Chesterfield, Southport,¹⁶ and Clay Cross (Derbyshire)¹⁷ had established first aid classes. And the enthusiasm in provincial Scotland in 1885 knew no bounds: "The [St John] Ambulance movement has something of the contagiousness of the 'Salvation Army'. It is extremely popular in Scotland, and is consequently spreading . . . where all the ambulance pupils are to find an outlet for their talent and instruction it is somewhat difficult to imagine."¹⁹

In the first decades of first aid instruction classes were segregated by sex. Women espoused the concepts of first aid teaching for members of the general public enthusiastically. In 1885 ladies' first aid classes were being held at the Mansion House in central London for the benefit of ladies employed in offices and places of business in the City and Port of London district under the auspices of the Lady Mayoress of London.²⁰

By the end of 1887 St John first aid classes were being taught to the general public in Malta (1882), Cannes, Melbourne (1883), Bermuda, the Bahamas,

Bombay, Gibraltar, Hong Kong (1884), New Zealand (1885), Singapore, South Africa (Kimberley in 1885), and Borneo (1887). Within a century of Shepherd's first class in the Presbyterian School at Woolwich, millions of people of all ages and from all walks of life had been trained in the rudiments of first aid. In 1993, in Australia alone, one in 80 of the general population had completed a 16 hour senior first aid course under the auspices of St John Ambulance Australia.

Within a year of Shepherd's pioneering class, the pioneer himself was dead. He was one of almost 2000 killed in the massacre at Isandhlwana.²¹⁻²³ Shepherd's legacy lives on, however, in the "new" profession of first aid, of which he was a signal pioneer.

I thank the Reverend Derek Baker of the United Reform Church (Presbyterian Amalgamated), Woolwich, London; Mrs Irene Riden, secretary and archivist of St Andrew's with St Mary's, the Ecumenical Church of Woolwich; Mr Murdoch Wales, archivist of St John Ambulance Australia (Queensland); Mr Jonathan Morgan, historian to the Priory of St John, St John's Gate, London; and Dr Christopher Gardner-Thorpe, Esquire in the Order of St John, London, for their help and encouragement.

- 1 Pearn JH. *Medicinal herbs and woundworts*. Brisbane: Amphion Press, 1993:1-30.
- 2 Clifford J. *For the service of mankind: Furley, Lechmere and Duncan, St John Ambulance founders*. London: Robert Hales, 1971-73.
- 3 Fletcher NC. *The St John Ambulance Association: its history and its part in the ambulance movement*. London: St John Ambulance Association, 1929:12-3.
- 4 St John's Ambulance Association at Woolwich. *Kentish Independent* 1878; January 19:1.
- 5 Vincent WT. *The records of the Woolwich district*. Vol I. London: Jacks, Virtue, and Coy, 1890:434.
- 6 Vincent WT. *The records of the Woolwich district*. Vol I. London: Jacks, Virtue, and Coy, 1890:176-398.
- 7 The Ambulance Association. *Kentish Independent* 1878; March 2.
- 8 Cantlie N, Seaver G. *Sir James Cantlie. A romance in medicine*. London: John Murray, 1939:19-21.
- 9 Vincent WT. *The records of the Woolwich district*. Vol II. London: Jacks, Virtue, and Coy, 1890:500-700.
- 10 Shocking accident at Woolwich. *Daily Telegraph* 1878; March 14:1.
- 11 Vincent WT. *The records of the Woolwich district* Vol II. London: Jacks, Virtue, and Coy, 1890:781-4.
- 12 The Order of St John of Jerusalem. *Standard* 1878; January 22:1.
- 13 Ambulance Department—Order of St John. *Kentish Mercury* 1878; 30 November.
- 14 St John Ambulance Association. *Woolwich Gazette* 1878; November 30.
- 15 *Order of St John of Jerusalem*. First meeting of the organisation of the St John Ambulance Association. *Daily Chronicle* 1878; June 25.
- 16 Leavens-White W. Volunteer sick bearers. *Southport Visiter* 1878; July 13.
- 17 St John's Ambulance Association. Formation of a class at Clay Cross. *Derbyshire Times* 1878; July 20.
- 18 Meeting in Worcester. *Berrow's Worcester Journal* 1878; May 4.
- 19 Ambulance classes in Dumfries. *Medical Press and Circular* 1885; March 11:1.
- 20 St John Ambulance Association. City and Port of London District Metropolitan Centre Mansion House classes. *City Press* 1885; February 18:1.
- 21 The Zulu war. General Lord Chelmsford's despatch. *Standard* 1879; February 12:1.
- 22 The Defeat in Zululand. *Kentish Independent* 1879; February 15:1.
- 23 Furneaux R. *The Zulu war: Isandhlwana and Rorke's drift*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963:89,101-2.

Adelaide Bartlett and the Pimlico mystery

Michael Farrell

In 1886 Adelaide Bartlett stood trial at the Old Bailey for the murder of her husband, Thomas Edwin Bartlett. The court witnessed sensational evidence and the case left questions which remain unanswered.

Adelaide's origins are mysterious. Born illegitimately in Orleans in 1855, she was christened Adelaide Blanche de la Tremouille. Her father was probably Adolphe Collot de la Tremouille, Comte de Thouars d'Escury. Her mother may have been an obscure English girl, Clara Chamberlain. After a childhood in France Adelaide was dispatched to England to stay with her maternal aunt and uncle in Kingston-upon-Thames. Here in 1875 she was introduced to Edwin Bartlett, who became infatuated with the poised

Anglo-French beauty and resolved to marry her. Aged 30, 11 years Adelaide's senior, Edwin was a comfortably off proprietor of grocery stores. Adelaide's parents in Orleans approved the match and her father provided a modest dowry.

Strange marriage

Immediately they were married, Edwin arranged for his bride to rectify gaps in her formal education and sent her to a boarding school in Stoke Newington. She attended for two years, staying with her husband only during school holidays. She was then sent to a finishing school in Belgium. By 1878 Adelaide's schooling was completed and she moved in with her husband in

28 Parklawn Avenue,
Epsom, Surrey KT18 7SL
Michael Farrell, education
consultant to the Department
for Education

BMJ 1994;309:1720-3

rooms over one of his shops in Herne Hill. Edwin's father resented Adelaide coming between him and his son and after he moved into the couple's house, soon after his own wife died, he accused her of having an affair with Frederick, his youngest son. Edwin endorsed his wife's denial of this and made his father retract the allegations before a solicitor.

According to Adelaide, she and her husband had sexual intercourse only once during their married life. This was solely to make Adelaide pregnant, which it did. Nurse Annie Walker, a midwife, moved in a month before the baby was expected. She later contradicted Adelaide's account of the marriage. Observing that the Bartletts always slept together, she believed that the one act of intercourse which made Adelaide pregnant was their one act of unprotected intercourse.

Nurse Walker anticipated a difficult delivery, which could endanger the baby's life, and recommended the help of a doctor. Edwin objected to the prospect of a man interfering with his wife and consented to a doctor's presence only at the last minute. It was then too late to save the infant, who was born dead. Adelaide resolved to make no further attempts to have a child.

Annie Walker remained on friendly terms with the Bartletts. She later testified at Adelaide's trial that on one occasion Adelaide complained that Edwin's will, which left everything to his wife, stipulated that she should not remarry.

In 1883 the Bartletts moved to East Dulwich, where they lived above another of Edwin's shops. Two years later the couple moved to Merton Abbey, near Wimbledon, where they met a 27 year old Wesleyan minister, George Dyson, with whom they became friendly. Strangely enough, Edwin encouraged an affectionate relationship between the clergyman and his wife and was happy to see them kiss in his presence, although it is doubtful if the relationship between the Reverend Dyson and Adelaide ever passed beyond the bounds of mutual platonic affection. Edwin made a new will in which he left his estate to Adelaide without any stipulation that she should not remarry. Edwin made it clear that if he died he expected the pastor to become Adelaide's husband.

The scene was set for what was to become known as the Pimlico Mystery when in August 1885 the Bartletts moved into furnished rooms, a drawing room and adjacent bedroom on the first floor of 85 Claverton Street, Pimlico. This was the house of Mr Frederick Doggett, a registrar of births and deaths, and his wife. Edwin encouraged Dyson to see as much as possible of Adelaide, buying the clergyman a season ticket from Putney to Waterloo to make it easier for him to visit

and instruct Adelaide in Latin, mathematics, history, and geography. Alice Fulcher, the Doggett's maid, several times came upon Dyson and Adelaide in positions unusual for a tutor and pupil, once surprising them on the floor together.

Edwin's illness

Adelaide no longer shared a bed with Edwin. Both slept in the drawing room; she on a couch, he on a folding bed. One reason was Edwin's foul smelling breath. Some time previously an inexperienced dentist had cut back Edwin's decaying teeth to the gums and supplied dentures. Furthermore, Edwin was convinced that he had syphilis and apparently took mercury to treat it. In December 1885 Edwin was treated by Dr Alfred Leach, who diagnosed diarrhoea and gastritis. A more competent dentist treated his painful mouth and removed decayed teeth and stumps. Although his physical health improved, Edwin remained depressed, deluded, and hysterical.

Adelaide requested a second opinion on Edwin's condition, giving the remarkable reason, "If Mr Bartlett does not get better soon his friends and relations will accuse me of poisoning him." Accordingly a Dr Dudley was called in. Edwin's gums were inflamed but otherwise his physical health was sound. Dudley recommended a daily walk outside. Edwin apparently suddenly began to demand his marital rights, a prospect Adelaide dreaded because of his rank breath and because Edwin had almost betrothed her to Reverend Dyson.

On 27 December 1885 Adelaide asked Reverend Dyson to buy her some chloroform. A heavy colourless fluid with a sweet sickly smell, its vapour has been used as an anaesthetic because it is easily administered, is not inflammable, and acts quickly.

It is dangerous, however, and a small dose can sometimes cause sudden death by stopping the heart. Liquid chloroform was applied to the skin as a liniment to ease rheumatic pains and one or two drops on a lump of sugar helped seasickness. But liquid chloroform burns the skin and any substantial amount taken orally is likely to be lethal. Because it breaks up fat, it was used as a stain remover.

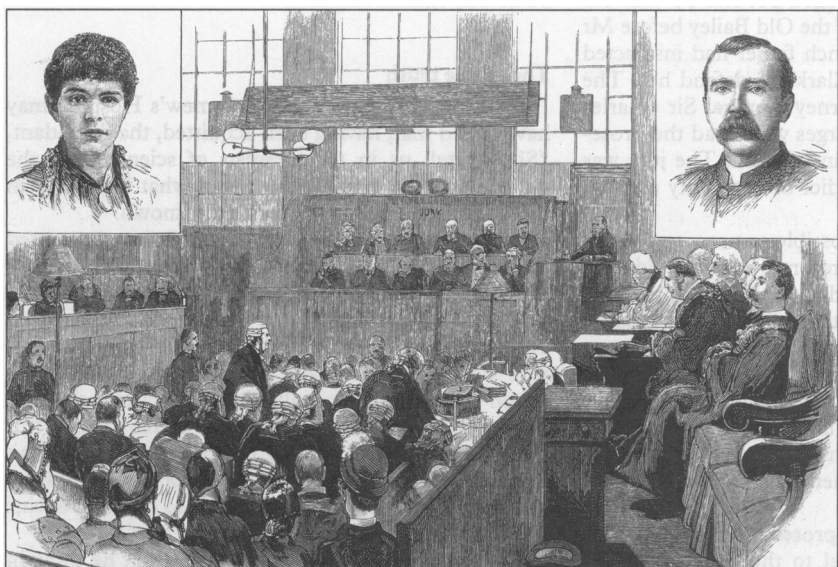
Dyson wanted to know why Adelaide hadn't asked Edwin's doctor for the chloroform. Adelaide replied that Edwin suffered from an internal complaint which cause paroxysms and of which the doctor was ignorant but she knew from previous experience would be eased by chloroform. Dyson accordingly bought chloroform from chemists in Putney and in Wimbledon, combining his purchases and presenting Adelaide with a four ounce bottle of the substance on 29 December. He told the chemists that he needed the chloroform to remove grease stains.

On 31 December 1885 Edwin had further dental treatment. When Edwin and Adelaide returned to their lodgings Adelaide mentioned to Mrs Doggett that she regularly gave chloroform sleeping drops to Edwin.

Edwin's death

Before 4 am the next day Adelaide sent the maid for Dr Leach then woke the Doggetts, saying to Mr Doggett, "Come down, I think Mr Bartlett is dead." She said that she had woken to find Edwin lying face down and had tried unsuccessfully to pour brandy down his throat to revive him: "nearly half a pint."

Mr Doggett found Edwin's body cold and estimated that death had occurred several hours earlier. A three quarters full wine glass stood on the mantelpiece within reach of Edwin's bed. Doggett thought the fluid was brandy containing a drug which smelt like ether. He



MANSSELL COLLECTION

Adelaide and Edwin Bartlett—could she have poisoned him, or was it suicide?

thought, he later testified at Adelaide's trial, that a tumbler half filled with Condyl's fluid stood on a tray near the table. Condyl's fluid is a solution of 1% compound of manganic and permanganic acids and 4% sodium chloride. It was used to remove odours and was poured on faeces as a disinfectant and deodorant. Later that morning, however, when the maid brought down the tray Mr Doggett noticed an unlabelled ounce bottle inverted in the tumbler and passed this on to the coroner's officer. Also on the mantelpiece was a bottle of chlorodyne (tincture of chlorine and morphine), which, Adelaide told Dr Leach when he arrived, had been used by Edwin to rub on his inflamed gums. There was no sign of a bottle of liquid chloroform.

Dr Leach asked Adelaide if Edwin could have taken poison, but she assured him that this would have been impossible without her knowing. Mr Doggett refused to register the death until a postmortem examination had been conducted. Leach arranged for a necropsy, a course of action which Adelaide fully endorsed. On 2 January 1886 Dr Green of Charing Cross Hospital and four other doctors conducted the necropsy. They were unable to establish any natural cause of death. On the contrary, the deceased's stomach was found to contain liquid chloroform which smelt so distinctly that it was like a freshly opened bottle.

Towards the end of January the Home Office analyst established that Edwin's death had been caused solely by chloroform found in his stomach. When Dr Leach told Adelaide she admitted for the first time to having possessed chloroform. In the later stages of his illness, she said, Edwin had attempted to have sexual relations with her, which she had declined, reminding him of her near betrothal to Dyson. When Edwin became insistent she acquired chloroform, intending to use drops of it on a handkerchief held before his face if he made further attempts. In the event, she had not used the chloroform at all, but had confessed to Edwin about it on new year's eve. She showed him the bottle while he was in bed and he put it on the nearby mantelpiece. Adelaide then fell asleep and awoke to find Edwin dead.

At the coroner's inquest in February Dyson gave evidence about the purchase of the chloroform, shifting the blame on to Adelaide, who was arrested at the jury's request. The coroner's jury gave a verdict of wilful murder against Adelaide. Dyson was later arrested and charged with being an accessory before the fact.

Trial at the Old Bailey

On 13 April 1886 Dyson, aged 28, and 30 year old Adelaide stood in the dock of the Old Bailey before Mr Justice Wills. Adelaide's French father had instructed the great barrister Edward Clarke to defend her. The prosecution was led by Attorney General Sir Charles Russell. Immediately the charges were read the prosecution withdrew its case against Dyson. The jury was asked to return a formal verdict of not guilty and the clergyman was discharged.

The Crown posed three possible answers to the key question of how the chloroform entered Edwin's stomach. Suicide was considered highly improbable. Accident was said to be practically impossible because the pain that the poison would cause would immediately alert the patient. Deliberate administration by another person was the third possibility. Adelaide, the prosecution contended, had made her husband semi-conscious by getting him to inhale drops of chloroform on a handkerchief and had then poured liquid chloroform down his throat.

Dyson was called as a prosecution witness but conceded information helpful to the defence. Under cross examination he confessed that the deceased had

odd ideas. Dyson also stated that Bartlett thought himself terminally ill, an admission which suggested possible suicide. Dyson admitted that Adelaide had not asked him to conceal the purchase of chloroform. Also he had thrown away the bottles which had originally contained the purchased chloroform.

Dr Leach testified to the tender care which Adelaide had lavished on her husband throughout his illness. Edwin had seemed hysterical and unbalanced, which supported the possibility that Edwin himself may have taken the poison. Leach believed that if Adelaide had stupefied Edwin with chloroform and then poured it down his throat he would almost certainly have vomited because he had eaten a large, rich meal only a short time before; but no vomiting had occurred.

Dr Thomas Stevenson, professor of medical jurisprudence at Guy's Hospital and senior scientific analyst to the Home Office, stated that he knew of no recorded case of murder by administering liquid chloroform. The difficulty of pouring the poison down the throat of an unconscious person would make him fear pouring it down the windpipe. But the necropsy had given no indication that any chloroform had found its way into the windpipe.

Analysis of the deceased's stomach contents disclosed eight to nine drops of chloroform. Taking into account the speed at which the poison is dispersed, the lethal dose was estimated to be much greater. Further traces of the substance were also found in the intestinal tract.

The defence called no witness of its own, nor was it able to call Adelaide to give sworn evidence on her own behalf (this was not allowed until the Civil Evidence Act of 1898 gave the accused the choice of testifying or not). The closing speech for the defence lasted nearly six hours and, as well as highlighting evidence which pointed to suicide, Edward Clarke drew attention to the lack of motive in the case.

In his summing up Mr Justice Wills drew attention to contraceptives which had been found in Edwin's clothing, suggesting that he and Adelaide had enjoyed the usual sexual relations of marriage. Adelaide's reason for needing the chloroform, to repel unwanted advances, would then be discredited.

When the jury returned to court after considering its verdict the foreman said: "although we think grave suspicion is attached to the prisoner, we do not think there is sufficient evidence to show how or by whom the chloroform was administered." The foreman then confirmed that the verdict was not guilty.

This was greeted with rapturous applause, although at the beginning of the trial public opinion seemed to be heavily against Adelaide.

The whole truth

Sir James Paget of St Bartholomew's Hospital may have stated that, having been acquitted, the defendant, "Should tell us in the interests of science how she did it." But the whole truth about what happened in those Pimlico lodgings may never be known.

Edward Clarke believed that Edwin committed suicide, having heard the dentist whom he visited use the word necrosis, which he may have thought meant that he was suffering from gangrene. He pictured Edwin pouring chloroform into the wine glass while his wife was out of the room and drinking its contents. When later Adelaide realised he was dead she had poured brandy into the same glass. If this were so it is puzzling that a man wanting to surreptitiously commit suicide while his wife was out of the room should waste time pouring the poison he intended to take into a wine glass. Why not drink straight from the bottle?

Dr Leach wrote later in the *Lancet* that he thought Edwin took the chloroform maliciously to distress his

wife with his symptoms after she had admitted her intentions of using it on him. Presumably his intention would not have been to kill himself but only to make himself ill.

Another possibility, that of accidental ingestion of the poison, has to be considered. In this scenario we could imagine that Adelaide had shown Edwin the bottle of chloroform, confessing her intention to use it as a sexual depressant. She had left it on the mantelpiece and was either out of the room or fell asleep when Edwin mistakenly took the chloroform, thinking it was medicine. Perhaps he awoke from a sleep and did this; perhaps he had agreed to Adelaide helping him to sleep with a few drops of chloroform on a handkerchief and awoke in a confused state. It would be surprising if the hot, burning taste of the chloroform had not alerted Edwin to his mistake. But his mouth and throat may have been sufficiently inflamed from his successive dental visits for the sensation in the mouth not to be as acute as it might otherwise have been. On balance, accidental ingestion seems the least likely possibility.

The third possibility, that of Adelaide murdering Edwin, certainly fits some of the facts. Her motive was that, despite any outward appearance to the contrary, she saw herself happier married to Dyson than to Edwin. She procured chloroform with Dyson's help and used the vapour to make Edwin drowsy, probably with his consent as the pain of the dental treatment may have made sleep difficult. She then offered her

husband brandy, which has a fiery taste, perhaps giving him a few sips. Pouring the chloroform into the wine glass, she could have persuaded her husband to swallow in one draught what he thought was more brandy. The inflamed state of his mouth may have delayed the sensations of burning pain until it was too late and he had swallowed the poison. She could just as easily have continued using the vapour until Edwin was dead but believed that the liquid was a surer way and was convinced that it would be dissipated before the necropsy. She poured more brandy down the dying man's throat to try to disguise the smell of chloroform, hid the chloroform bottle, then sat by the bed for two or three hours after Edwin died before she woke the maid and the Doggetts. As soon as she had the opportunity she disposed of the chloroform bottle. Dyson panicked and she was forced to invent the story she recounted to Doctor Leach—that Edwin had poisoned himself.

In each of these possible scenarios the puzzle remains concerning the fact that no traces of burning were noticed in the mouth and throat of the deceased. Perhaps the state of Edwin's mouth made it more difficult than otherwise to detect the signs. The evidence is closely balanced to suggest either murder or suicide, with the suicide theory appearing marginally more convincing. Adelaide did not marry Dyson but returned to Orleans, the place of her birth, leaving behind her one of the most intriguing poisoning cases of the 19th century.

Frederick Cayley Robinson's *Acts of Mercy* murals at the Middlesex Hospital, London

J H Baron

In the front hall of the Middlesex Hospital, London, are four *Acts of Mercy* murals by Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862-1927). Each is 300 cm × 480 cm, oil on canvas. Two pictures flanking the central doors to the boardroom on the north wall facing the entrance depict orphans; those on the other two walls depict doctors.

These paintings were commissioned by Sir Edmund Davis in 1910 for the old hospital. When it was rebuilt in the 1930s, recesses in the entrance were specially designed for the paintings.

Davis came to Britain in 1900 from South Africa, where he had banking and mining interests. He patronised modern art and gave collections to the Luxembourg museum in Paris in 1915 and to Cape Town in 1935. A member, and later vice president,

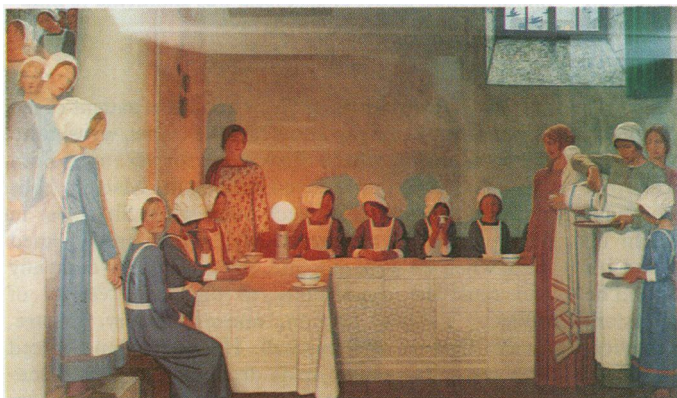
of the board of governors of the Middlesex, he was knighted in 1927; he died in 1939.

Cayley Robinson was much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, the Nabis, the Symbolists, and especially by Puvis de Chavannes, but he remained an individualist. Contemporary critics enthused about his work, calling it visionary fantasy; noble; and interweaving the synthetic with the intimate. He was then forgotten until 50 years after his death, when an article in the *Connoisseur*² and a retrospective exhibition emphasised his quasi-archaic style, the symbolic allusions without clearcut messages, and his people—denizens of a silent, timeless world.

The murals are not easy viewing and have never been fully documented, photographed, or illustrated. They

Department of Surgery,
Royal Postgraduate
Medical School,
Hammersmith Hospital,
London W12 0NN
J H Baron, senior lecturer

BMJ 1994;309:1723-4



The two scenes of "Orphans" were painted in 1915

