

*NANNIE BELL – SORTING
CLERK AND TELEGRAPHIST
BY PETER GIBSON*

Nannie Bell - who was born Anne Elizabeth Noone in 1844 - worked in the GPO in Dublin for thirty-seven years. Whereas her father had been an unsuccessful businessman, her son-in-law, Thomas Little, was the opposite.

Post Office

Nannie Noone started work with the Post Office in about 1864 when she was about nineteen years of age. When she retired, on health grounds, in 1901, she was a sorting clerk and telegraphist. Her salary had been £91 5s 10d per year and she was awarded a pension of £53 9s 3d per year.

Nannie's Birth Family

Nannie's parents were James Robert Noone and Eliza Kinsella.

In the 1840s, James Noone was a "ship broker and commission agent", at times on his own account and, at times, with a business partner.

On 19th December 1853, Saunders's News Letter reported that James Robert Noon [sic], a clerk, had been the subject of a petition in the Insolvency Court. The Court was told that he had debts of £676 (a considerable amount of money in those days) and that "a large proportion of them had been contracted by him in commercial trading before he became a clerk".

No further record has been found of James Noone's financial affairs. He died in 1860, aged thirty-six.

Nannie's Marriage and Family

Nannie Elizabeth Noone married Thomas Bell in 1866. Thomas was a Sergeant Major in the 6th Dragoon Guards, stationed at Newbridge Barracks, County Kildare. His late father, William Bell, had been a shipowner. It is possible that William Bell had known Nannie's late father, James, during his time as a ship broker.

After Thomas left the Army, he worked as a railway clerk. He died in 1887, aged forty-nine years. The cause of his death was “Cardiac Debility, 6 months ill. Certified.”

Nannie and Thomas Bell had two daughters.

Emily Mary Bell was born in 1868. She died in 1886, aged seventeen. The cause of her death was “Supposed Phthisis, 3 months ill. No medical attendant.”

Ethel Mary Bell was born in 1878. On 26th December 1900 Ethel (aged twenty-two) married Thomas William Little (aged thirty-eight) in the University Chapel, St. Stephen’s Green, Dublin. Thomas was a widow with five children.

Thomas Little was a master plumber, sanitary engineer and contractor. He had business premises in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) where he and his first family had “lived over the shop”. Keeping the Kingstown building, the family moved to live over the Dublin branch of his business at 12 Harcourt Street, a grand Georgian building, close to St Stephen’s Green in the centre of Dublin.

When the Grand Hotel, in Malahide, County Dublin was refurbished in 1894, Thomas’ firm had been responsible for the installation of new sanitary facilities, water storage tanks and pumps. The following excerpt from the Irish Independent, dated 23rd June 1894, gives an indication of the scope of the works for which Thomas Little – Nannie’s son-in-law -- was responsible:

The bedroom floors are provided with lavatory accommodation [...] and on the south side of the building lavatories etc have been erected for the use of the buffet. Suitable sanitary appliances have been fitted in connection with the kitchen, sculleries, waiters’ and housemaids’ apartments. The water supply to the hotel is taken from a well some forty feet deep in the grounds. It has an abundant flow of pure and clear spring water, which is conveyed by two large rotary life and force pumps to storage tanks fixed on the roof, from whence it supplies the various fittings through the building. The baths, lavatories, sinks etc are all provided with hot water direct from special boilers. These works have been carried out under the supervision of Mr W Kaye Perry, BETCD and their execution was entrusted to Mr Thomas W. Little, Registered Plumber and Contractor, of 12 Harcourt Street, Dublin and Kingstown

At the time of the 1901 Census, Nannie Bell was staying at Thomas and Ethel Little’s house and business at 12 Harcourt Street.

On 23rd October 1907, Annie Elizabeth (Nannie) Bell died at Strand Road, Merrion, Dublin – the house where the Little family were living, having left Harcourt Street. The cause of her death was “Pneumonia, 5 days. Certified”.

Given that Nannie Bell was in the Little family’s household on census night in 1901 and that she died at their home in 1907, it is possible that she lived with her daughter after her retirement. Although the Littles employed domestic help, including nurses, Ethel may have appreciated her mother’s help with caring for the growing number of growing children in the household.

Ethel Mary Little (nee Bell) died on 9th October 1916, aged thirty-seven, in up-market Dalkey, County Dublin, where the Littles were living. The cause of her death was “Valvular disease of the heart, uncertain. Pneumonia, 12 hours. Certified.”

When Ethel died, Thomas Little was aged about fifty-hour. He had been widowed twice and was the father of eleven children aged between thirty-one and seven – five from his first marriage and six from his marriage to Nannie Bell’s daughter, Ethel. Thomas Little died in 1948, aged eighty-seven.

Fact Sheet: Nannie Bell

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> Nannie Bell
<i>Person ID:</i> IR1016
<i>Your name:</i> Peter Gibson
<i>U3A group:</i> Northern Ireland
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
Anne Elizabeth Noone was baptised on 15 March 1844 in St Nicolas' (Without), Dublin. Her parents were James Noone and Eliza Kinsella.
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
Father: James Robert Noone was baptised in St Audoen's, Dublin on 05 October 1823. His parents were James and Margaret Noone. He died on 24 July 1860 in Dundrum, Dublin, aged 36. In the 1840s James Robert Noone was a "ship broker and commission agent", on his own account and in partnership with Meade Denis Heron. In 1853, James Robert Noon [sic], then described as a clerk, was the subject of a petition in the Insolvency Court. The court was told that he had debts of £676, - "a large proportion of them had been contracted by him in commercial trading before he became a clerk". Mother: Elizabeth Kinsella was born about 1822. She died on 11 February 1890, aged 68. The cause of death was "Bronchitis, 2 years. Asthma. Certified." She died at 11 Great Charles Street, the address of her daughter, Nannie, who registered the death.
3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)
William Francis James Noone was baptised in St Andrew's, Dublin on 07 February 1845. He died in Dublin on 12 April 1863. The death notice described him as an only son. No records have been found of any other siblings of Nannie Bell (nee Noone).

Part Two: Marriage and children

1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation)

Nannie Elizabeth Noone married Thomas Bell on 08 September 1866 in the Dublin Registrar's Office. At the time of the marriage, Nannie lived at 18 Charlotte Street. Thomas was a Sergeant Major in the 6th Dragoon Guards and was stationed at Newbridge Barracks, County Kildare. His father was William Bell (deceased), a shipowner. It is possible that William Bell knew Nannie's late father, James, who had been a ship broker.

After Thomas left the Army, he worked as a railway clerk. He died on 16 April 1887, aged 49 years, at his home, 45 North Strand Road. The cause of his death was "Cardiac Debility, 6 months ill. Certified."



Above: 48 North Strand Road, which was Nannie Bell's home in 1887. Source: Google Street View.

2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)

Emilia Maria (Emily Mary) Stane Bell was born on 06 August 1868 and baptised in St Kevin's Church, Harrington Street, Dublin on 18 August. Emily Mary died on 07 May 1887 – a few weeks after the death of her father. The cause of her death was “Supposed Phthisis, 3 months ill. No medical attendant.”

Ethel Mary Bell was born on 29 December 1878 in the Rotunda Hospital and baptised in St Peter's Pro-Cathedral on 11 January 1879.

On 26 December 1900 Ethel married Thomas William Little in the University Chapel, St Stephen's Green. Thomas was a widow with four young children. He was master plumber and sanitary engineer and lived at 12 Harcourt Street, close to St Stephen's Green.

When the Grand Hotel, Malahide was refurbished in 1894, Thomas's firm had been responsible for the installation of new sanitary facilities, water storage tanks and pumps.

At the time of the 1901 Census, Nannie Bell was a visitor at Thomas and Ethel Little's house and shop at 12 Harcourt Street.



Above: 12 Harcourt Street (now M Kennedy & Sons). Source: Google Street View.

Keeping Harcourt Street for the business, the Little family moved to live in “Gortmore” 169 Strand Road, Merrion, Dublin.



Above: 169 Strand Road. Source: Google Street View.

On 23 October 1907, Annie Elizabeth (Nannie) Bell died at her daughter's house at Strand Road. The cause of her death was "Pneumonia, 5 days. Certified".

At the time of the 1911 census, the Little family were living on Rathgar Road, Dublin, in a first class house with 13 rooms. By that time, Edith and Thomas had had 6 children. Thomas' four children from his first marriage were also in the household, as was a domestic nurse.

Edith Mary Little (nee Bell) died on 09 October 1916, aged 37, in the then family residence – 4 Coliemore Villas, Dalkey, County Dublin. The cause of her death was "Valvular disease of the heart, uncertain. Pneumonia, 12 hours. Certified."

Thomas William Little died on 21 February 1948, aged 87, in his then residence, 11 Castlewood Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin. The cause of his death was "Bronchopneumonia, 4 days. Heart failure. Certified."

Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

Nannie Bell (nee Noone) commenced working for the Post Office in about 1864, aged 19.

She retired on grounds of ill health in 1901, aged 56, after 37 years' service. She was a sorting clerk and telegraphist.

She died in 1907.

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

In 1901, Nannie Bell was recorded as being a visitor in the household of her daughter and son-in-law – Ethel and Thomas Little at 12 Harcourt Street, Dublin.

Nannie was a Telegraphist, GPO.

Thomas Little was recorded as a Sanitary Engineer and Master Plumber.

There were two servants in the household. Frances Loughlan was a domestic nurse and Kate Dowling was a cook and general servant.

Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner

Given that Nannie Bell was in the Little family's household in 1901 and that she died at their home in 1907, it is possible that she lived with her daughter after her retirement.

Her son-in-law, Thomas Little had four young children from his first marriage and, by the time Nannie died, her daughter, Edith, had given birth to five children.

Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

Anne Elizabeth (Nannie) Bell (nee Noone) (NB, Postal Pensioner)

- Baptism 1844:
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=IRE%2FPRS%2FMICROFILM0727601%2F0079&parentid=IRE%2FPRS%2FBAP%2F3069307>
- Marriage 1866:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1866/11544/8245996.pdf
- Death 1907:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1907/05515/4545495.pdf

James Robert Noone (father of NB)

- Baptism 1823:
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=IRE%2FPRS%2FMICROFILM06778-02%2F0126&parentid=IRE%2FPRS%2FBAP%2F2874445>
- Newspaper report 1853: *Saunders's News Letter* (19 December 1853): page 2, column 6.
- Death 1860: *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail* (28 July 1860): page 10, column 6.

Elizabeth Noone (nee Kinsella) (mother of NB)

- Death 1890:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1890/06117/4746280.pdf

William Francis James Noone (brother of NB)

- Baptism 1845: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/8461569:61039?tid=&pid=&queryId=e5c7e64010824be51f2cd0a91c3d5b44&phsrc=CXx1172&phstart=successSource>
- Death 1863: *Dublin Weekly Nation* (18 April 1863): page 16, column 4.

Thomas Bell (husband of NB)

- Death 1887:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1887/06214/4778145.pdf

Emily Mary Bell (daughter of NB)

- Birth 1868:
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=IRE%2FPRS%2FMICROFILM09312-01%2F0075&parentid=IRE%2FPRS%2FBAP%2F3737957>
- Death 1887:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1887/06214/4778144.pdf

Edith Mary Little (nee Bell) (daughter of NB)

- Birth 1878:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/cert_amends/cert_1878/2078304b.pdf
- Marriage 1900:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1901/10300/5749308.pdf
- Census 1911: <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai000147400/>
- Death 1916:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1916/05231/4448729.pdf

Thomas William Little (son-in-law of NB)

- Newspaper article: *Irish Independent* (23rd June 1894): page 6, column 2.
- Death 1948:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1948/04570/4207833.pdf