

## **Female Theatre Managers in Nottingham In the nineteenth century**

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**Marianne Saville 1814-1889 – Actress and first woman Theatre manager of the old Theatre Royal and joint Licensee and Theatre Manager of the new Theatre Royal with her daughter.**

Marianne was born c 1814 in Brighton, maiden name Hobden. She married while still a minor to John Faucit Saville at St Nicholas Church in Brighton on 13/11/1830. Her mother is said to have given permission as her father was dead. John Faucit Saville, was born in Norwich in 1807 and was an actor manager and comedian. Their children included:-

Kate Saville c1835-1922 an actress. Died at 15 Pelham Crescent, Nottingham

Maria Faucit Saville c1831-1882. Died in Nottingham

Eliza Helena Faucit Saville c1843-1926. Died at 15 Pelham Crescent, Nottingham

Henry John Saville 1846-1871

As a busy theatrical family, the children were born in different towns and don't appear to have been registered at birth. With the parents touring, the children were cared for by others. At the census in 1851 when Marianne and her husband were in Manchester, the three girls were with John A Thompson and his family. He was Superintendent of Police. in Derby. Not sure who had young Henry. (It can be difficult tracing the family for their cousins had similar names.)

Professionally, Marianne was referred to as Mrs. J F Saville. In 1839 she was playing in *Genevieve de Brabant or The Hall of Torture* at Saddlers Wells.

Marianne appeared at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham then in St Marygate, in 1843. This was in a version of *Nicholas Nickleby*, with John Saville playing Nicholas and Marianne playing Mrs. Mantalini. On the same evening they performed in *Susan Hopley*, with Marianne in the lead role.

John Faucit Saville took on the licence of the Theatre Royal\* in St Marygate, Nottingham on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1844, when he is described as a comedian of Brighton, Sussex. He also managed the Theatre Royal in Leicester, Derby, Chesterfield and Sheffield.

Marianne and her husband were both popular performers at The Theatre Royal; the Nottinghamshire Guardian noted “few Hamlets on the stage are equal to Mrs. Savill” On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1849 she appeared at Windsor Castle before Queen Victoria, playing the Player Queen from Hamlet. Hamlet was played by Charles Kean. Other parts were played by relatives of John Faucit Saville, namely Mr. Diddear as Claudius, and Mr. W Farren as Polonius.

That same year she appeared with Macready in “*The Provoked Wife*” as Lady Townly in a benefit performance for the Queen’s Hospital in Birmingham.

Appearing at the Theatre Royal, Sheffield, Marianne played Romeo. In the scene with Tybalt played by Mr. Rolfe, she accidentally stabbed him in the side. A surgeon was called in, when it was thought the wound was internally severe, but with proper treatment he recovered. “Mr. and Mrs. Saville have been unremitting in their attention of Mr. Rolfe.”

Marianne was frequently on tour to Sheffield, Birmingham, Bath and Bristol. In 1854 her husband took the opportunity to buy the theatre which he then pulled down and built a new theatre. In January 1856 however, John Saville died at the family home in Clinton Street, Nottingham. Marianne took over the license and became manager of the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. The Town Council had agreed that “Mrs. Saville be accepted as tenant of the Theatre from Lady-day next, at the yearly rental of £18 18s.”

In the 1861 Census, Marianne is described as Theatrical Manager living at 26 Warser Gate,

In 1865 with the building of a new Theatre Royal on Parliament Street, the current Theatre Royal, Marianne Saville gave up the theatre at St Marygate, which became the Alhambra Music Hall.

She then went of tour. She was back in Nottingham at the new Theatre Royal in February 1866 playing Gertrude in Hamlet to great applause, the manager, Mr. Montgomery leading her to the

front of the stage. In Sheffield she played Mrs. Oakley, in "*The Jealous Wife*", a role that was seldom done, "owing to the specialité of the character – but Mrs. Saville is a great exponent.' She was back at Sadlers Wells playing the old gypsy, Margery Murdochson in an adaption of Scott's "The Heart of Mildothian", *Jeanie Deans*.

Marianne in conjunction with her daughter Kate assumed the management of the new Theatre Royal in Nottingham in September 1867 for three years. In 1868 she was living at 2, Stratford Square, Shakespeare Street. That Christmas she put on a "Grand Comic Christmas Pantomime of Beauty and the Beast." She entered into an agreement with Palmer's travel firm to offer cheap rail fares from Sheffield and Chesterfield to get audiences.

In 1870 it was decided to present a testimonial to Mrs. J F Saville and family as a mark of popular respect and as a memento of their long and honourable connection with Nottingham. To present a book of donors. A committee was formed to organise this. On the 6<sup>th</sup> May there was a grand performance at the Theatre Royal to mark the termination of their lease. A large number of Freemasons were present in their regalia, as it was also a Masonic bespeak. Pit stalls were erected and seats taken in all parts of the theatre.

It began with *The Rivals* with Mrs. Saville as Mrs. Malaprop and daughter, Eliza as Lydia Languish. A presentation was made on stage. It was said that many had contributed from the town and county. It was mentioned that when Marianne took on the old Theatre Royal from her husband there were many liabilities but she managed it well and was never in debt. "She has always endeavoured to please the multitude, and if she has occasionally not pleased the few, that was more than she could help; it was beyond her control..... It cannot but be gratifying to Mrs. Saville to see on this occasion so many influential and respectable persons.....and to see so many ladies decked out in their gaudy colours..."

She was presented with a silver tea and coffee service with salver. Maria was given a negligee and locket, Kate was given jewellery in gold and enamel and Eliza a very large gold bracelet studded with diamonds.

Marianne responded, "We have dwelt so long among you, that we feel Nottingham to be our home....We have produced some of the best novelties and introduced some of the best stars of the day.

Mrs. Saville died on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1889 in Kettering aged 77 and is buried in the General Cemetery, Nottingham.

**Kate Saville – 1835-1922 Actress and with her mother joint Licensee and Manager of the new Theatre Royal Nottingham 1867-1870**

Kate was the daughter of John Faucit Saville and his wife Marianne. She was born into an extended theatrical family in Belfast in 1835.

Her grandfather, John Faucit Saville Senior was for thirty years the manager of the Kent circuit and was the author of *The Miller's Maid* and several other pieces produced at the Surrey Theatre. He was the father of two sons, John Faucit Saville and E F Saville

Her Grandmother was Harriet Saville, nee Diddear. She was also a regular performer at Covent Garden. She had left her husband in 1821, and lived with William Farren, a popular actor on the London Stage. She finally married him in 1853 shortly before her own death.

Kate's uncle was E. F Saville, a comedian, who died in 1857. Her aunt was the actress Helen Faucit 1817-1898 later Lady Martin, wife of Sir Theodore Martin.

Kate's first performance on stage was in August 1841 when she appeared on stage at the Theatre Royal, Brighton. In December 1842 she appeared in *Old and Young or the Four Mowbrays*, at the age of 7, presenting four characters. "The manner in which the young lady executed her task was indeed surprising. In each part she varied her voice and action to such an extent, that it was almost impossible to believe it was the same child.'

By November 1844, young Kate was performing for Nottingham audiences, dancing with a Mr. Webb, the "Inniskilling Polka. The Nottingham Review noted that she danced "with much gracefulness, and elicited considerable applause." In February 1845 she was performing in a sketch, "The Mariner's Daughter" in

which she attempted to play five characters.’ She was said to be a “juvenile favourite.”

Kate played juvenile roles in Nottingham and at the Theatre Royal in Derby and in Buxton. In 1846 the Derbyshire Courier remarked that her performance at the Chesterfield Theatre “drew down long and repeated plaudits; and we prophecy that the day is not far distant, when her name will be heard as a star of the first magnitude.” Her parents were commended for keeping her performances special and few so that she lost nothing of her natural manner.

In January 1849 Kate appeared as Florence Dombey, in a version of *Dombey and Son*. The character had been dramatized particularly for her by the stage manager, Mr. Sidney. In 1852 she is playing Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*. She played Ophelia opposite the celebrated tragedian, Charles Pitt. In 1853 she played Juliet to her mother’s Romeo.

In December 1855 Kate played a farewell benefit prior to her departure to Edinburgh to join Mr. Black’s new corps at the Queen’s Theatre and Opera House at the head of Leith Walk.

She had great success in playing Pauline in “*The Lady of Lyons*”, a role made famous by her aunt Helen Faucit. In 1857 Kate was living at 23, Union Place, Edinburgh. We know this for she was advertising her benefit at the Theatre and gave her address as a means of getting tickets as well as the box office. The programme included, *As You Like It*, a ballet divertissement and a sketch *The Rough Diamond*.

In 1859 Kate made her debut on the London Stage at the Princesses Theatre playing in a new comedy *Joy Hall*.

In 1870 she appeared at the Theatre Royal as Louise de Lascours in “*The Sea of Ice*”, in which “she sustained the powerful manner peculiar to her in this class of piece.’

She married William Roby Thorpe of Nottingham in 1872 and retired from the stage. She lived for some time in Kettering but on the death of her husband she returned to Nottingham. For a number of years she took part in amateur performances for charitable causes.

After his death in 1896, she moved back to Nottingham.

Kate died in 1922 at 15, Pelham Crescent, The Park Nottingham.

### **Eliza Saville, daughter of Marianne and sister of Kate**

Eliza Helena Saville announced that in future she would be known as Miss E Faucit Saville. In 1867 gives address as Shakespeare Street, Nottingham. She went on to play Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White*, and at the request of Mdlle. Beatrice, she took the heroine in *the Woman of the People*.

### **Lady Don 1832-1875 – Licensee of the Theatre Royal, Nottingham 1870-1871**

Born in Dublin c 1832, Emily Eliza Saunders/Sanders, was the daughter of John Saunders, manager of the Adelphi Theatre in London. She was been a popular actress and singer in comedy and farce at the Adelphi and other theatres.

In 1857 she married as his second wife, Sir William Don, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Newtondon, Berwickshire. Sir William had an interesting career, his father was a close friend of Sir Walter Scott, but died when William was only one year old. Sir William later joined the army but got into great debt – a feature of his life. He had to sell his estate and entered the stage as a comedian, spending several years in America but still in debt. He returned to England and married Emily Saunders, whilst he had a title, it was said that Emily had the money.

Emily made her debut at the old Theatre Royal, Nottingham in 1857. Sir William was also engaged there. They became popular with Nottingham audiences and were supported by the Saville's. Sir William's temper and debts made him a regular in court,

They had one daughter, Harriet Grace Mary born in 1859. In 1871 she is living in London with her aunt, Harriet the wife of Frederick Milbank MP. In 1887 she married Everett Gray, a stockbroker, who died in 1891. She then married in 1892 John Satterfield Sandars,

Political secretary in particular private secretary to A J Balfour. She died in 1947.

In 1861 Sir William and Lady Don went to Australia, Sir William playing female characters in burlesques. They visited Hobart in Tasmania where he died in 1862. Emily returned to Britain with her husband's body. In 1843 she was back on the Nottingham stage and the following year she returned to Australia again. In 1866 she moved to Peru and then to San Francisco and by 1867 was in New York. She returned to Britain in 1868 and in 1869 she is back on stage at the new Theatre Royal in farces and burlesques.

In 1870 when the Saville's gave up the lease on the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, Emily Don took it on. She made extensive refurbishments and additions to the interior of the theatre and employed ex-soldiers as commissaries for the theatre. In the Christmas season she put on a successful Pantomime, which ran into February. She generously gave free seats to the inmates of the Nottingham Workhouse but by June 1871, Emily was in debt and had to sell up all her theatrical fixtures and fittings. In 1871 she is living at 229 Woodborough Road, Nottingham.

She died from rapid consumption in 1875 in Edinburgh.

**Mrs Emily Charlotte Norton Kennion 1855-1922 – actress, author and First Lessee of The Grand Theatre, Hyson Green in 1886.**

Emily was born in Sheffield in 1855, her father was Richard Norton Forde, an Irish comedian/actor and his wife Emily, née Shribbs. Her mother was 30 years younger than her father.

Emily began her acting career at the age of 4 at the old Queen's Theatre, Manchester where her father was stage manager. When she was 8 she was playing "Henri" in Charles Dillon's "Belphegor", in many theatres. At 11 she was playing The Fool to Dillon's King Lear and by 16 she was a leading lady in many parts including Shakespeare.

Emily was an authoress and actress. She wrote Nina, a composite of Dumas' "The Lady of the Camelias" and Zola's "Nana".

In 1875 she married Thomas Robert Kennion in Liverpool. Kennion had been a Militia Officer formerly with the Cape Mounted Police and in then the Metropolitan Police, K Division. He was the son of a Dr Kennion of Harrogate and brother of George Wyndham Kennion, Bishop of Bath and Wells.

Together with her husband she managed The Vaudeville Comedy Drama and Burlesque Company. Unfortunately, in 1877 she performed at the Surrey Theatre, but had an accident and sustained a serious injury losing the use of one of her legs.

In 1880 Thomas was appointed Chief Constable of Wigan. At the same time they were running the Royal Theatre in Wigan hosting productions of Gilbert and Sullivan including *Pirates*. Called the *Sergeant*, Kennion which caused trouble with the local council! He resigned in 1883, and returned to theatrical management becoming General Manager of the Theatre Royal in Leicester by 1885. Emily had also gone into business with William Smethurst, as engineer and theatrical manager. His family owned collieries in Wigan.

In 1886 The Grand Theatre on Radford Road, Hyson Green had been built for Councillor Morrison. Trams passed by the theatre. For more detail on the theatre see [www.arthurlloyd.co.uk](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk) When she took on the lease of The Grand in Nottingham, it was noted "so long as she guides the ship, we trust it may be an argosy laded with golden grain..." On the first night included J W Turner, Nottinghamshire tenor with his English Opera Company.

However by 1888 she was bankrupt. She cited the failure of the previous season's pantomime and the depressed state of the coal trade. She gave her farewell performance in August 1888 not at The Grand but at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, by permission of the proprietors. The Mayor was in attendance and she played Lady Audley in "*Lady Audley's Secret*", the first time this production had been seen in Nottingham. In her farewell she said she had hoped that she would have stayed longer in Nottingham.

She was back in Nottingham in 1889, playing to packed houses at The Grand. In 1890 she and her husband are managing the Lecture Hall in Derby. Thomas died in Durham about 1918 and Emily died in 1922 in Essex after having her leg amputated. In the early 1880's she was well known in the Rotunda Theatre, Liverpool

and the Surrey Theatre, London. Survived by son George late 50<sup>th</sup> Rifles and Lillie who was in South Africa

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### **Finding the grave of the Savilles**

Anyone who has tried to find a grave in Nottingham's General Cemetery will know how difficult this can be. There are two maps to follow – one from the Nottinghamshire Family History Society and one from Deceasedonline which is in arrangement with Nottingham City Council. The first is in support of the transcription of headstones with a general area given but not plotted. The second is for burials but is not a very helpful map. Some paths shown are hidden by foliage. Searching for the graves is not for the fainthearted – strong footwear is advised.



**Can this really be the grave of a well-known theatrical family?**



That's better!



John Faucit Saville, Manager of the old Theatre Royal  
In St Mary's Gate