



Emma Wright Mundella 1858-1896

Composer, hymn writer, music teacher, choir conductor

Emma was the eldest daughter of John Mundella a hosiery manufacturer and her uncle was A J Mundella, a Liberal statesman and a member of Gladstone's Cabinet - after whom a Nottingham Grammar School was named. Emma's mother was Emma Wright whose father was a Nottingham lace, thread and silk commission agent. Her upbringing was Unitarian and her family was Liberal. Emma attended the Unitarian High Pavement Chapel in Nottingham and developed an early enthusiasm and talent for music and learned to play the piano. Initially she was taught by her mother but then became a pupil of the organist at St Mary's Church. At 18 she won a Corporation of Nottingham scholarship to the new National Training School for Music - later the Royal College of Music in London. Arriving in May 1876 she was tutored by the school's Principal Sir Arthur Sullivan and other well-known names. She studied piano, harmony, counterpoint, composition and singing. In 1883 she was one of the first former pupils to receive the diploma qualification and became Associate of the Royal College of Music. She went on to teach at St Elphin's Clergy Daughter's school in Warrington and then in 1880 she was invited to be Director of Music at Wimbledon High School for Girls where she stayed for 16 years. As well as her school work she gave recitals, taught private pupils, delivered lectures on popular composers and was organist at a London Church. She also gathered together a women's choir which she conducted. From 188 she composed many pieces of music particularly for young people feeling there was little progressive music for young students. She composed cantatas, anthems, hymns, sacred songs, children's songs and other choral works. Her most important work was *The Day School Hymnbook* 1890 which contained 83 hymns. A second edition published after her death contained a further 100 works. Little is known of her personal life outside her music; she remained single lived in Bloomsbury sharing with her younger unmarried brother A J Mundella (Junior) a Guardian journalist and educational reformer. Emma died in Marylebone following a bowel obstruction which led to sepsis and heart failure. She is buried in the Wright/Mundella family vault in the General Cemetery - Nottm Family History website says Location 30? However, this may be wrong as Mundella school staff visit the Mundella vault annually at the Rock Cemetery and she may be there.