

Elizabeth Cecily DAVIES

(Froebel Travelling Teachers project)

Timeline

Family name	Elizabeth Cicely Davies (known as Cicely). Daughter of Thomas Davies and Emma Davies, nee Tinsdall.
Other names used	Married name – Mrs Toko Scudamore
Date of birth (& death if known)	6.12.1887 – . 12. 1975
Nationality	British
Schooling	Secondary schooling – Welsh Girls’ School, Epsom Girls’ High School Qualifications for music - The Royal Academy of Music
Higher Education	1906 – 7 Higher certificate – Froebel Educational Institute
Travel	1909 September - arrives in NZ from UK
Employment (New Zealand)	1909 - 1911 Teacher – Island Bay Kindergarten, Richmond Free Kindergarten Union, Wellington - 1914 Kindergarten teacher, Mount Eden College, Auckland (Commonly known as Miss Bews’ College) 1914 – 1916 Teacher and co-principal of ‘Pine Lodge’ a Private Kindergarten & Preparatory School, Austin Street, Wellington 1918 - 1920 Head of Kindergarten, Miss Baber’s School, Fitzherbert Terrace, Wellington (Mrs Scudamore)
Marital status	1915 Marries Lawrence Toko Scudamore 1916 Sept. Widowed – October - birth of daughter Pauline
Travel	1920 June – leaves NZ to return to UK.
Death	1975 aged 87 years

BIOGRAPHY

In October 1909 UK based Miss Elizabeth Cicely Davies, kindergarten teacher, after a long sea voyage, reached her destination of Wellington New Zealand. Her presence and credentials reported in the city’s local paper informed readers as to the arrival of a ‘young lady just from England and who was trained at the Froebel Institute there’.¹ Her departure eleven years to return to Britain was similarly reported. Her story is one of a young woman reaching adulthood at a time of world crisis that was to bring unexpected opportunities and some losses.

Cicely Davies was born in 1887, one of two daughters of Thomas and Emma Davies. Cicely’s father, Thomas Davies died in 1896 when Cicely was aged eight. She was

educated at the private girls boarding school, *Welsh Girls School* in Ashford, Middlesex and Epsom Girls High School. Her secondary schooling assisted her acceptance in 1906 for entry to study at the Froebel Educational Institute in London (FEI). In September 1907, she qualified with a Higher Certificate of the National Froebel Foundation. It is likely she gained a teaching position in 1908. In early 1909 she accepted a teaching position from the Wellington based Richmond Free Kindergarten Union (RFKU). She travelled to her new position with, or was later joined by, her mother and sister Gladys. The three women set up their home together and both Gladys also found paid employment in the city.

The Wellington Free Kindergarten Union had opened its first school three years earlier in 1906 on an experimental basis. Such was the school's success that in 1909 three more branch schools were opened including the Island Bay Kindergarten School where Cecily was to work. Finding suitably qualified staff was an ongoing problem for the new association. The RFKU, having built a strong connection with FEI, looked abroad for staff. Two fully qualified FEI graduates responded; Cicely Davies and Miss Constance Freeman; the later accepting a position as to establish the proposed new teacher training programme. In the photo below Cicely Davies sits second right in the front row. On her left is her assistant, Miss Milne; on her right Miss Olive Stace, the current Principal and second on her right the incoming Principal & FEI graduate, Miss Constance Freeman.



Figure 1 Staff and students of Richmond Free Kindergarten Union, Wellington, 1910. Miss Cicely Davies sits second right, front row. Second left, front row is Miss Constance Freeman, graduate also from the F.E.I. National Library New Zealand, PAColl-3311-1-3

Over the next two years Cicely involved herself in kindergarten life working with children, with fundraising efforts and in meeting the needs of a growing enrolment. Fundraising events soon involved the whole family with her mother Emma telling fortunes at a fete in 1910 to raise funds for Island Bay Kindergarten and on another occasion Emma and her two daughters take responsibility for the produce stall at a three day Japanese themed fair.ⁱⁱ By 1912 it appears that Cicely no longer works for the

association. It seems, although unconfirmed, that she takes up a position as head of the kindergarten class at Miss Bews' Collegiate School in Mt Eden, Auckland.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1915 Cicely re-emerges back in Wellington as co-principal of 'Pine Lodge', a Private Kindergarten and Preparatory School established by a Miss Fleming, a Dunedin kindergartener. The school's name was later changed 'Priory School'. A property described by the letting agency as consisting of 10 spacious rooms on one floor 'situated in the best and sunny part of Wellington.'^{iv} Day and boarding options catered for girls and boys up until the age of 10 years. Dancing and music lessons were offered which would have interested Cicely, who had previously studied at the Royal Academy of Music. A 1915 newspaper account of the school's prize giving provides a brief glimpse into school life.

There was a varied programme of physical exercises, songs, recitations, and kindergarten games, a pianoforte ... and a quaint Dutch dance in custom. ... There was a display of handwork It varied from drawing, painting, and modelling to a dolls' house furnished by the children.^v

In April 1915 Cicely accepts a proposal of marriage from Lawrence Toke Scudamore, an accountant and son of the Rev. H Toke Scudamore, Bedfordshire.^{vi} The couple marry later that year on October 26th. Four months of marriage life are enjoyed before the newly pregnant Cicely farewells her husband as he left for overseas duty. Six months later, on September 16th 1916, Toke Scudamore is killed in action. Two weeks later Cicely gives birth to the couple's daughter, Pauline. In this short period of rapid change of rapid change, Cicely leaves teaching, marries, is widowed and then gives birth.^{vii}

15 months later Cicely returns to teaching. Whilst prevailing social norms meant married women rarely taught after marriage, widows without the financial support of a male breadwinner were less frowned upon. The ongoing scarcity of women teachers with suitable qualifications and experience in a growing educational system further loosened social norms. In December 1917 Miss Esther Baber, head of the Fitzherbert Terrace School for girls – and a Froebelian - announced in her annual report the opening of a newly formed kindergarten class for little boys and girls. "It will be held in one of the large and sunny front rooms for two hours only. Mrs Scudamore, Higher Certificate N.F.U., will be in charge."^{viii} In the same report Baber, aware of the shortage of eligible men for marriage due to the war's high causality rates and consequential so called 'Surplus Women' appealed to parents to consider a career for their daughter equally with their sons.

In the coming generation, still more than in the present, that highest vocation for a woman –wifhood and motherhood will be for the few; and many must find the fullness of life in other ways. ... Nursing, the medical profession, teaching, office work of all kinds, gardening and farming all offer scope for women, apart from their natural one of home making and all that implies.^{ix}

It was a message that Cicely would have understood.

Cicely worked for Miss Baber for the two and a half years. In June 1920, eleven years after she arrived in New Zealand, Cicely, along with her mother, her sister and her daughter left New Zealand to return home. Upon her arrival in England Cicely and her daughter, accompanied by her mother, took up an invitation to reside at Studham Vicarage, Dunstable, home to her dead husband's family. The next glimpse of Cicely is in November that year when she attends the ceremony of the 'unknown warrior'. Held at London's Westminster Abbey on the 2nd Armistice Day, Cicely is seated in one of the allotted places for widows of New Zealand soldiers at the windows of the Government offices overlooking cenotaph.^x The bodies of servicemen were not returned home so few family funerals were held. For Cecily this occasion could have been her first public formal opportunity to mourn the loss of her husband.

Cicely Scudamore died on 22 December 1975. Her final days were spent in a nursing home.

LINKS:

FTT biographical links:

- Constance Annie FREEMAN
- Mary Elizabeth RICHMOND

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- i 'Free kindergarten council' Annual Meeting, *Dominion*, (9 October, 1909), 7
 - ii Ibid
 - iii 'Kindergarten display', *New Zealand Herald*, (28 August, 1914), 3
 - iv 'Advertisements' *Dominion*, (7 February, 1917), 1
 - v 'Austin Street School', *Evening Post*, (16 December, 1915), 2
 - vi 'Social and personal', *Dominion*, (29 April, 1915), 2
 - vii <http://www.skidmorefamilyhistory.com/NEWZEALANDSKIDMORE0FAMILIES.pdf>
 - viii 'Miss Baber's School', *Evening Post*, (19 December, 1917), 9
 - ix Ibid
 - x 'The great unknown', *Evening Post*, 10 January, 1921, 9