

Katherine Sophia Phillips was born 31 March 1885 in Sherry River, Nelson. Her father was William Henry Phillips Jnr, and her mother was Hannah Ada Hunt.

The story below is based on one which was written we believe as an obituary for the newspaper in Nelson, although we have to source a printed copy. The author is unknown. We have included corrections, and also additional material to complete the picture of her life.



Mrs Blowes was the 2nd eldest [Ed. 4th] of a large family of boys and girls, and grew up on a sheep run at Sherry River. The property had been bought by the grandfather in the early days of the settlement of the Nelson Province. he it was who gave the land for the first school in the

district, and the timber for the little building was pit sawn by the settlers.

In due course little Katherine went to the school for her primary education. The teachers in these small country schools were for the most part well educated Englishwomen who had come to the colony as governesses, and when their charges no longer needed them, had to find other ways of earning a livelihood. Their teaching, augmented by the collections of fine books to be found in most homes, gave the children a splendid foundation on which to build their lives, even if they never passed beyond the sixth standard.



Kate aged 11yrs with Grandfather in back.

Mrs Blowes can still remember her mother's nightly readings of English classics and her own delight in reading Sartor Resatus before she was twelve.



Fig. 225.—Trentham Camp and Upper Hutt District, 1914-1918.

Reproduction from a photo received from Lewis Gunner Charles Keith Kilgour Ward, 8th Contingent, Hawke's Bay Company, Wellington Regiment, who was killed in action at La Basse Ville, 27/7/17 (Nelson College Journal, "Nelsonian," Roll of Honour, July, 1918, No. 1, Vol. XXXIV., pp. 54 and 69. Also Col. Weston's "Three Years with the New Zealanders," pp. 174-211).

She was buried in the cemetery at the same time as the other soldiers who were killed in the same battle.





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MRS KATHERINE BLOWES
(1885 — 1983)

When Mrs Katherine Blowes, nee Phillips, died on March 7th, she had been for a number of years a greatly respected Life Member of the NZSWWS.

She was born 98 years ago, on a pioneer farm in the Sherry River district. Schooling was a difficulty, as there were very few farms in the area, but her parents were keen students and had a splendid collection of books. Early in life, Katherine was called upon to be mother's aid and family nurse, and this developed in her the characteristics of compassion and helpfulness that were with her all her life.

When the last war broke out, she was living at Sherry River with her mother, by then an invalid. The need for garments for the forces soon had her spinning and knitting. The abundant supply of lichens and other native dye-stuffs interested her. She corresponded with Mrs Amy Hutchinson and Mrs Petrine Moncrieff on the subject, and after her mother's death went to Wellington where she met Joyce Lloyd, who, though crippled with arthritis, wanted to learn to spin. The story they both told was that Joyce would phone and ask pertinent questions, and Katherine would give instructions. Joyce became interested in dyeing, and so many spinners created a demand for instruction that Joyce was encouraged to produce a small booklet on dyeing with New Zealand native plants. No-one would publish it, so, in desperation, she scraped up the money and did it herself. About ten editions and years later Reeds published the book as we have it today.

During the time she was living at Sherry River caring for her mother, Katherine became interested in weaving. She used all handspun wool and plant dyes for her work, and among other things, made two single red blankets which were, in effect, examples of her work as a spinner, dyer and weaver. Later on, when she went to England, she took the blankets with her, and took them to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they were greatly admired.

In late middle life, Katherine Phillips made the acquaintance of a man she had nursed in a convalescent home during the war. He had fallen in love with her, but had been too shy to 'declare himself' as they used to say. However, as the result of a chance meeting, they were able to marry and settle in Nelson. Some years ago, Mr Blowes died, and his wife continued to live in the home they had made so pleasant. Early this year, Mrs Blowes became a resident at Green Gables.

— Iris Hughes-Sparrow

Article about Kate at Nelson Girls College Reunion in Feb 1883

