

The Tisbury Sensation

"*Western Gazette*" Interview with Mr Burt

Amazed at "All the Noise"

Tisbury folk, who usually lead a quiet, uneventful life, are gradually getting reconciled to the stir which was created in their midst during the week-end by the announcement that a well-known young "woman" of the town had declared "herself" at the age of 29 to be a man.

What at first made the people stand amazed has now caused them to be quietly amused. The man himself - now Mr Evan Montague Burt, of The Quarry, Tisbury, always known hitherto as Eva Mary Burt - when interviewed by a representative of the *Western Gazette* on Monday appeared to have adopted his real sex with equanimity and naturalness.

Burt declines to state specifically when or where he is to be married. The general impression is that the ceremony will take place at the Tisbury Wesleyan Church, where he has been a prominent member for the past five or six years. At all events, there nags in the office of the Registrar of Marriages at Tisbury the notice of banns as follows:- "Evan Montague Burt (29), of The Quarry, Tisbury, with Sarah Matilda Edwards, (31), assistant nurse at Monmouth House, Tisbury".

Monmouth House is the local Poor-law Institution, where Burt was also formerly employed as a nurse and a cook and treated in every respect as a woman. At birth Mr Burt was, in the circumstances, properly registered as a girl. He was always dressed as a girl and treated as one until now.

Recently application was made to the Registrar at Tisbury for a correction in the certificate from a male to a female and Burt had the interesting privilege of choosing his own name. The alteration has been recognised by Somerset House, who have been satisfied with medical evidence that Burt has procured.

All these preliminary alterations were successfully kept secret until the time came last week for the publication of the banns of marriage to Miss Edwards, who is a Tisbury woman and with whom Burt has worked and been friendly for several years. They have constantly been in each other's company and some time ago went away together in a situation at Hungerford.

Whereas a week ago, Burt was in domestic service at Mr Noakes' confectioner's shop at Tisbury as a woman, our representative found him on Monday at his mother's house, looking remarkably natural in a suit of fawn trousers, grey jacket and waistcoat and collar and tie all neatly arranged. The hair, cut short, was brushed back.

Mr Burt himself answered the door and politely invited the *Western Gazette* man to take a seat in the sitting-room, where the interview took place. Burt said he was at a loss to understand why people wanted to make all the noise they had done about his affair.

Wished to Keep it Quiet

He was reminded that the fact that he had gone about for so many years in a woman's attire and had now published for all to see his banns of marriage as the bridegroom-to-be must inevitably cause a sensation.

"We wished to keep it quiet", answered Burt. "Besides we have done everything legally and above-board and we do not see why there should be all this interference". He was amazed on the previous Sunday when no fewer than 14 Press representatives sought an interview which was not given and when he and Miss Edwards had their footsteps dogged on Sunday evening by two strange men.

"This is not the first time I have worn man's clothes", he said. "Plenty of people have paid sixpence to see me in a man's clothes when I have taken part in an entertainment at the Wesleyan Church here".

He declares that he is not aware that he had any outstanding manly habits. He did not drink or smoke and did not go about with men. He has no idea of what he will do in the near future. He is out of work now because all the publicity which has arisen made it impossible for him to continue as a domestic servant.

A Salisbury representative of the *Western Gazette* has met Burt on two occasions at Salisbury and happened to chat with him both times. Apart from a deep voice there was not the slightest apparent characteristic of a man. He appeared to be reserved and shy, but was friendly and very pleasant in manner. At that time he was employed at the Tisbury Poor-law Institution and brought deaf and dumb inmates to Salisbury for the annual treat given by the Diocesan Deaf and Dumb Association. Burt was an extremely considerate and gentle escort to these afflicted folk.

His Conversion

The bridegroom-to-be went to the Catholic school at Tisbury, and in school days associated with girls, betraying no more of the habits of a boy than are common to many girls. He attended also the Roman Catholic Church there until he was converted at a Wesleyan mission at Tisbury about five or six years ago.

During the mission what are called decision cards were distributed, and "Miss Burt", as she was then known, was among those who handed in a card to the Rev Glanfield signifying that "she" accepted the religious doctrines that had been expounded in the mission. "Her" entry to the Church as a member followed and the Roman Catholic beliefs of her childhood were renounced.

Since that time Burt - unsuspectingly regarded, of course, as a woman - has been a devoted and valued member of the church. "She" not only sang in the church, but eventually showed promise as a preacher, and, conquering a shyness, became eventually a local preacher. There was only one other woman on the plan.

People who have heard Burt preach say he was able to make a convincing evangelical appeal. A prominent member of the congregation told our representative this week that they held Burt in the highest possible esteem and were completely startled at the announcement made last week-end as to "her" sex, although, of course, they had noticed "her" uncommonly masculine voice. It was at the suggestion of the Tisbury stewards that Burt was admitted to full plan by the Rev Bond, who recognised "her" talents as a preacher.

Minister's Surprise

The Rev Philip Hall, the Wesleyan minister, whose circuit includes the chapel at Tisbury, stated on Sunday night that the marriage will take place shortly. "As far as I know", he said, "no definite plans have been made. Banns are not read in our chapels. I was very surprised when I knew that the story had become public, but now this has happened I should like to say that everything has been carried through legally and properly. The re-registration of birth, which took place last Monday, was done after a medical examination and consultation with a solicitor. Burt is a splendid character, everybody likes him. As a woman he sang at the local concerts. He is still living in the village, but I have not yet seen him in male dress".

Burt was formerly employed at the Tisbury Poor-law Institution as a cook. Then "she" became a nurse there, where Miss Edwards was similarly employed. The two, who had been close friends from childhood, eventually went into situations together at the Hungerford Institution. They were there for some time and then they returned to Tisbury, where Miss Edwards is employed as a nurse at Monmouth House. Burt lives with his mother. His father is dead.

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