

The following is taken from the War Office file of Captain Miles Radcliffe relating to his widow's alleged immoral conduct and termination of her pension.

(Ref: WO 339/5895, National Archives, Kew)

Leeds City Police

Detective Department

Town Hall

22nd September 1916

Re Mrs Radcliffe, 103 Manchester Road, Southport, said to be the widow of the late Capt Radcliffe, 2nd Border Regiment.

Sir,

In accordance with Home Office instructions and War Office circular 46/Gen. No./6053, dated November 1914, I beg to bring to your notice the conduct of the above named woman.

At 3pm on Wednesday 20th instant, 11660 Corp Mealing, R.F.A. Shoeburyness, called at this office and said his wife was missing from her home at The Laurels, Hull Road, York. One of my officers made enquiries and ascertained that Mrs Mealing stayed at the Golden Lion Hotel, Briggate, Leeds, with a man who gave his name as James R Warner, The Laurels, Hull Road, York.

Mrs Radcliffe, who resides at 103 Manchester Road, Southport is said to be the widow of the late Captain Miles Radcliffe, 2nd Border Regiment, who was killed in France in January 1915. Mrs Radcliffe is said to be in receipt of a pension from the War Office. It was ascertained Mrs Radcliffe who is Mrs Mealing's sister, had stayed at the Golden Lion Hotel, Briggate, with a man who described himself in the Register as Harold Langlon Radcliffe, of 103 Manchester Road, Southport.

Corporal Mealing states that the Southport Police have had Mrs Radcliffe's house under observation for some time on account of her immoral conduct.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed)

Chief Constable.

To: The Secretary, War Office, London

Copy

Leeds City Police

Detective Department

1st December 1916

William Wadsworth states:-

I am the proprietor of the the Golden Lion Hotel, Briggate, Leeds.

On the 19th September 1916 at about midnight, two men in officers uniform came to the hotel with two women who were very well dressed and had the appearance of being ladies.

One of them, I don't know which, said "Can we have two double bed rooms for ourselves and our wives." I then gave them the numbers of two bedrooms. Nos 14 and 28 and asked them if they had any luggage. They replied "None with us." They asked me to send a porter to the station cloak room for their luggage. I replied "It is impossible at this time of night. You had better pay a deposit or pay for bed and breakfast." They paid for bed and breakfast and I showed one of the officers and a lady, who gave their names as Mr and Mrs Warner and who signed the registration forms in my presence, into the No 14 bedroom. The night boots, Arthur Walters, showed the other officer and lady, who gave their name as Mr and Mrs Radcliffe of 103 Manchester Road, Southport, and who had filled in the registration forms, into No 28 bedroom. I never saw them again.

Mr and Mrs Warner gave their address as The Laurels, Hull Road, York.

I am unable to give a further description of the women other than that they appeared to be about 30 years of age, and were dressed in very dark, long fur coats, apparently seal skin. I remember a detective officer come in to my hotel with a gentleman who showed me a photograph and asked me if I could recognise it as one of the ladies. I said it had the appearance of one of them but could not say definitely.

(Signed) Wm Wadsworth

Witness: A W Watson, Detective Inspector

Chief Constable's Office

Town Hall

Southport

8th Dec 1916

Ref NO M.I.108/6

Re: Mrs Radcliffe, 103 Manchester Road, Southport

In answer to your letter of the 1st instant, I beg to acquaint you that this house first came under the notice of the Police in the Autumn of 1915, and during several months it was a calling place for officers of the Territorial regiment at that time billeted at Southport. The Orderly Room of the 5th Manchester Regiment was next door at 101 Manchester Road, and men on guard duty there told my officers that Military Officers were in the habit of visiting Mrs Radcliffe's house and staying late at night.

On the 12th September 1915 at 12.45am Sergt Hoyle and Constable Foster of this Force were passing the house when a taxi-cab drew up there. The Military Officers alighted; they asked the driver of the taxi-cab to wait but he refused to do so. One of the officers knocked at the door and the lights in the house were turned on, and they were admitted into one of the front rooms. My officers could see through one of the blinds which was slightly disarranged. One of the Military Officers commenced to play the piano and the other officer and a lady, presumably Mrs Mealing, were seen to be lying on the couch. This lady was clad only in her night dress. The officer was seen to be playing with the lady's breasts but no sexual intercourse was seen to take place. This continued for about an hour when my officers went away. There were no other persons in the room than the three mentioned. Some weeks later Mrs Radcliffe closed the house and returned with her sister, Mrs Mealing, about November 1915. Since that time nothing unusual has been seen to be lit up on several occasions late at night.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. Wareing, Deputy Chief Constable

To: The Chief Constable, Leeds.

Copy

Southport County Borough Police

Special Report

Division A, Central Station

5th November 1916

The Chief Constable

Re Mrs Radcliffe 103 Manchester Rd.

Sir,

I beg to report respecting the matter referred to in the attached letter from the Chief Constable of Leeds.

On Friday the 3rd instant I visited 103 Manchester Road. I there saw Mrs Radcliffe's sister, Mrs Mealing. I was informed that Mrs Radcliffe was away from home, and would not be back for a day or two. I saw the child of Mrs Radcliffe, Miles Radcliffe, a boy about 3 years of age. The child was quite bright and apparently well cared for. It walked badly and on my enquiring the cause I was told he suffered from infantile paralysis. Dr Major Davies, a specialist for children's complaints in Liverpool had been consulted and on his advice the child is at present receiving massage treatment by Mr Holt of Manchester Road, a certified masseur who is known to me personally. He informs me that the child has improved of late but it may be some considerable time before he quite recovers.

Apart from this I should consider that the child is well cared for at present. When the mother is absent, the sister and a nurse aged 19 years have the care of the child.

(Signed) C Clarke, Inspector

Madam,

In reply to your letter recently received in this office, I am directed to acquaint you that the stoppage of your pension was decided on in consequence of information to the effect that you had stayed at the Golden Lion Hotel, Briggate, with a man who gave the name of Radcliffe, and that the police have had your house at Southport under observation for some time on account of your immoral conduct.

I am etc

For the ATS

To: Mrs D K Radcliffe, 103 Manchester Road, Southport.

103 Manchester Rd

Southport

Nov 1916

To Secretary, War Office

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 30th, I should very much like to know on what grounds my conduct has been unworthy. The letter arrived after I had put in my draft for October, so the bank has already given payment for that month. I also wish to say that when the pension has been taken away from me it will leave me with a crippled child absolutely dependent upon a small voluntary allowance as the cost of the massage alone for my child is £40 per year without doctors expenses. I shall be pleased of an early reply to this letter.

Believe me,

Yours v. truly

D Kathleen Radcliffe

(War Office internal memo, A.H.D , 22/12/1916)

I think it would certainly be best not to answer Mrs Radcliffe's letter till the War Office is further pressed. It seems possible but not probable that more will be heard. If so I think it would be well to make the evidence which is very circumstantial, conclusive.

I think the handwriting of Mrs Radcliffe in the Hotel book should be compared with the examples of her handwriting in the file. Possibly, enquiry of the servants in the hotel would further substantiate the identity of Mrs Radcliffe as being the woman who stayed at the hotel.

103 Manchester Road

Southport

Jan 5th 1915

To Officer in Command

Dear Sir,

Could you tell me if the Ring, watch and other personal belongings of the late Captain Radcliffe, Border Regiment, attached 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers and killed in action Dec 12th 1914, are yet to hand. It is now sometime since I was advised these would be sent off,

Awaiting your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Miles Radcliffe