

Sewell family history



- William Sewell (Anna Sewell's grandfather) was a leading citizen in Great Yarmouth and prosperous grocer in the late 18th century. His shop was at 28 Market Place, known as Sewell the Grocer's Row, next to the Angel Hotel.
- William and his wife, Hannah Marie, were Quakers and preachers at the Friends Meeting House on Howard Street.
- They had seven children, the youngest being Isaac, born 1794, who was a partner in a drapery shop in town.



- Isacc married Mary Wright, born in 1797, who he met at the Friends Meeting House. They married at the Lammas Meeting House and set up a home on Church Plain, in this house now known as Sewell House.
- Mary described the house as "very diminutive but quite large enough to be happy in".
- Their daughter Anna was born on 30th March in 1820, and was baptised into the Quaker faith at the Monthly Meeting at the Friends Meeting House.



- In 1821, owing to financial problems, Isaac moved the family to London and ran a shop in Bishopsgate.
- Anna's brother Philip was born in 1822.
- The shop business was unsuccessful, and Isaac became a commercial traveller with a lace company.
- The family lived in Dalston for 10 years, then moved to Stoke Newington where Anna had an accident walking home from school at 14 years old.
- Anna injured both ankles which resulted in walking problems, so she was forced to mostly travel in horse-drawn carriages. This close association with horses led Anna to gain her love of animals.



- In 1866, the family moved back to Norfolk and settled in Old Catton, close to the small village Buxton with Lammas, where Mary was born.
- Mary was a children's author, and during her lifetime wrote many ballads, poems and homely stories which were translated into many languages.
- Anna, now confined to a sofa, dictated her novel Black Beauty to her mother.
- This novel was published in 1877. It took Anna seven years to complete Black Beauty, and she sold the copyright to Jarrolds the publishers for £40.
- Anna died four months later.



- Black Beauty has now become world famous and has never been out of print. It has been translated into over 125 languages, with worldwide sales exceeding 50 million copies.
- Anna and her other family members were buried at Lammas in a Quaker Meeting House and burial ground. Her father Isaac died in 1878, and her mother Mary died in 1884.
- Although the building later became a Wesleyan Chapel, the Quakers still used this burial ground for a number of years.
- The chapel then fell into disuse and became a barn, and the burial ground became quickly overgrown. The site was redeveloped in 1984, the old barn converted into a modern house and some of the Sewell family headstones, including Anna's, were renewed and built into the wall at the entrance of the grounds.

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