

**University of Birmingham: Elementary School Teacher's certificate,  
CR2500/15/4.**

March's Document of the Month focuses on Women's History Month through the story of a fascinating writer, historian and educator, Mabel Kathleen Ashby. The document chosen to represent this is an Elementary School Teacher's Certificate, awarded by the University of Birmingham, to Mabel Kathleen Ashby in October 1914.

In 1910, Mabel won a rare scholarship to Warwick High School and, upon completion of her studies, received a certificate from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, the examination board for the school. Here, she passed examinations in 6 subjects: Arithmetic, Religious Knowledge, English Language and Literature, History and Geography, French, Geometry and Algebra and Botany.<sup>1</sup> In the 1911 census, Mabel is recorded as Boarding at 9 Cape Road. She then went on to study at the University of Birmingham from 1911 to 1914 and was awarded a First for her studies. On this certification, we can see she took courses in both Professional and General Subjects that are quoted below:

*“Professional Subjects: Theory of Teaching, Practical Teaching, music, Blackboard Drawing, Reading Voice Production, ~~Physical Training~~, Needlework and Hygiene.*

*General Subjects: English Language and Literature, French, Psychology, History, Geography, Latin, Logic and Moral Philosophy.”*

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<sup>1</sup> CR2500/15/1, University of Cambridge: senior students' examination, Warwickshire County Record Office.

### Mabel Kathleen Ashby

Mabel Kathleen Ashby was born in Tysoe, Warwickshire on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1892 to Joseph Ashby, an agricultural trade unionist, and Hannah Ashby.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph was the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Ashby (Nee Townsend), a servant who was working at Idlicote House when she fell pregnant. Elizabeth is recounted as being a woman with “uncommon strength and calm reason” that perhaps shaped the strong and capable woman Mabel was to become.<sup>3</sup>

After completing her studies at the University of Birmingham, Mabel went on to have a prosperous teaching career and continuation of her education. In 1929 she wrote ‘The Country School: its Problems and Practice’ and a year later she received her Master of Education from Manchester University. She went on to teach at Salisbury Training College and Goldsmiths College in London.<sup>4</sup> In the 1939 England and Wales Register, she is recorded as Principle of Hillcroft College in Surrey, also known as the Residential College for Working Women. In 1961, Mabel published a biography of her father titled ‘Joseph Ashby of Tysoe: 1859-1919’. In the introduction to this book, Mabel is described by the Historian and Writer E.P.Thompson as belonging “to a group of very able women” who refuse to “accept their own lessness.”<sup>5</sup>

Mabel never married, instead choosing to live on a farm with her lifelong friend Margaret Philips, before dying in Oxford in 1975.

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah’s maiden name is the same as her married name.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ashby of Tysoe: 1859-1919, M.K.Ashby, page 2

<sup>4</sup> British Association for Local History: Local History News Magazine, ‘Mabel Kathleen Ashby 1892-1975’ by Joan Dils, Page 16, Edition Number 116, Summer 2015 file:///C:/Users/cfys/Downloads/balh-local-history-news-116.pdf

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ashby of Tysoe: 1859-1919, M.K.Ashby, Introduction by E.Thompson,Page ix.

University of Birmingham.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S  
CERTIFICATE.

Awarded to

*Mabel Kathleen Ashby.*

Period of Training 1911-1914.

Qualifying Examination at Entry Cambridge Senior Local.

COURSE TAKEN IN COLLEGE :

a. PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS: Theory of Teaching—Practical Teaching—  
Music—Blackboard Drawing—Reading and Voice  
Production—~~Physical Training~~ - Needlework—  
Hygiene.

b. GENERAL SUBJECTS: English Language and Literature—French—  
Psychology—History—Geography—Latin—Logic—  
Moral Philosophy.

Class of Certificate awarded: *First.*

*R. S. Keate,*

Registrar.

*Mary S. Lilly, M.A.* Lecturer on Education.

October, 1914.

Date