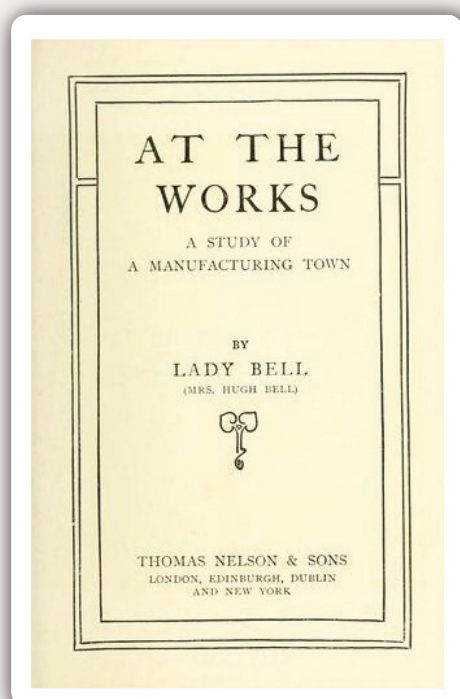

Florence Bell

Born September 9, 1851, Paris, France
Died May 16, 1930, Knightsbridge, London

Lady Florence Bell, Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE), was a British writer and playwright. She was privately educated in Paris. On 10th August 1876 she married Thomas Hugh Bell, son of Isaac Lowthian Bell of Bell Brothers, an ironmasters in Middlesbrough. After their marriage the Bells lived at Red Barns in Redcar; in 1905 they moved to Rounton Grange in East Rounton and in the 1920s they lived at Mount Grace Manor.

Lady Florence Bell published more than forty works including novels, plays, children's stories and essays. She is famous for her social investigative research on iron workers in the early-20th century and "At The Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town" was published in 1907, and looked at the working families of Middlesbrough and the rapid growth of Middlesbrough and its manufacturing industry. As well as her own observations on the ironworks and the men and women of Middlesbrough it contains much that was gained from interviews with local people.

This work was almost unique for its time and exposed the horrid conditions endured by workers, it instigated early debates on what is now known as Health & Safety.



Lady Florence Bell set up the Guild of Help to support Middlesbrough's poor, and also pioneered the Winter Gardens in Middlesbrough, which provided a cheap indoor place for relaxation, as an alternative to public houses. Her activities with the wives of Bolckow Vaughan iron workers in Eston, is thought to have influenced her step-daughter, Gertrude Bell, the British explorer, diplomat and archaeologist, who later promoted the education of Iraqi women, and is described as "the female Lawrence of Arabia".



In 1918 Florence Bell was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE). She died in Knightsbridge, London, on 16th May 1930 and was buried at Rounton in North Yorkshire.