

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in March 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who appear in the 1901 census for St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex.

Ann Bush's Story

Ann, according to the 1901 Census was aged 34 years, so was born in about 1867/8, in Kilkenny, Ireland. The first sighting of 'Ann Bush born Ireland' that has been found was in the 1891 Census aged 24 years, living with her husband, George Bush, who worked at the Royal Arsenal and living with their 2 children, Florence (aged 6) and Margaret (aged 4) in Plumstead near Woolwich, London. So, was Ann born 'Bush', or did she marry and become a Bush? In the 1901 Census, while an inmate at St Joseph's home for Inebriate Women in Middlesex, she was described as married – but this could have been an error on the Enumerator's part or on the part of the person who completed the schedule – although if they took the information from the Home's register, this could have been a misdirection on Ann's part on her arrival at the home.

Ann, if she did marry, must have done this before the 1891 Census and on checking FreeBMD there are no marriages to men called George Bush in the years 1880-1891, by women called Ann.

Ann Bush, however, is more traceable and with her mother, Sarah (born 1850) is a frequent visitor to the Mint Street Workhouse in Southwark throughout the 1870's and 1880's. However, this may not be 'our' Ann Bush as there is no indication that she was a Roman Catholic, nor that she was born in Ireland. Our Ann could still have been in Ireland during this time. So, Ann becomes Bush or is in England, certainly by the 1891 Census she is using this name, but as mentioned before, this is speculation as to whether this is a married name as I have not found any Marriage Record.

Could Ann have been a relative of George Bush? A niece or cousin? If she was already called Bush, could this have been an assumption on the part of the Enumerator that George and she were husband and wife? George was 13 years older than his 'wife' or could they have just been living together as husband and wife? Ann could have come to live with George as his housekeeper as he seems to change names from George to Mark. As Mark Bush, he was imprisoned in 1890 for 4 months for larceny and receiving. Could Ann have come to look after the two children while he was in prison? He seems to prefer being called George after this time – possibly so that his employer was not aware that he had a prison record. FreeBMD were also checked for marriages between Mark Bush and women called Ann, but there were none in the 1885-90 period.

When did Ann develop a problem with alcohol? There are no newspaper records for Ann 'Bush', was she using a different name? Did her 'husband' throw her out? Was her drinking an embarrassment? There do not appear to be any Workhouse records for Ann 'Bush' in the 1890's which is odd if she was still using this name in 1901.

Did she voluntarily enter St Joseph's Home for Inebriate Women, in Ashford Middlesex? The only record of an 'Ann' being sent to Ashford was of Mary Ann Howe in April 1900, but it does not say how long her sentence was, but it was generally between one and three years to try and ensure that the women were alcohol free on their release. Certainly, Ann Bush was there on Census night in 1901, but Mary Ann Howe was not.

After that, the trail goes cold as she does not appear in any newspaper reports or criminal records. Did she commit suicide? The only death of an Ann Bush is in Woolwich, in the December of 1905 where 37-year-old Ann Bush dies – but was this our Ann? Her 'husband' remarries in 1908 so this could be the correct person, but without the death certificate, we have no idea if this Ann Bush is 'our' Ann.

Janice Brinley Codd (August 2024)

Sources:

England and Wales Census. 31 March 1901 St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex RG13 1171 folios 12-13

England and Wales Census. 05 April 1891 49 Villas Road, Plumstead, London. RG12/538 folio 22 p 36

FreeBMD Marriage of George/Mark Bush to women called Ann – nil results for 1885-90.

London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge. Mint Street. A. January 1873 A.15 March 1873 D. 17 March 1873. D. 12 April 1873 A. 8 July 1873 A.14 December 1873

British Criminal Records. Clerkenwell Police Court. February 1890. Mark Bush. Larceny and receiving. Sentence: 4 months.

Evening Standard. 20 April 1900 p. 2 c. a at Newspapers.com

England and Wales Death Registrations. December Q, 1905. Ann Bush, Woolwich V. 1d p. 747