

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 and Farmfield Reformatory for Inebriate Women, Horley, Surrey.

Bridget Carroll's Story

Warning – this story contains an account of domestic abuse.

Bridget Carroll was born in 1861 in Deptford¹, the second daughter of William and Elizabeth Carroll from Ireland. Her twin sisters Margaret and Elizabeth were six years younger, and her other sister Ellen was two years older. In 1861 the family could be found at 15 Garden Row, Deptford when William was recorded as being an agricultural labourer.² Ten years later they had moved to number 4, Five Bell Lane, where William is still listed as a Labourer.³ In 1881 Bridget, aged

¹ GRO Birth Indexes, 1861 Greenwich, January Quarter, Vol 01d Page 599

² 1861 England Census, Deptford, Class: Rg 9; Piece: 392; Folio: 30; Page: 11

³ 1871 England Census, Greenwich, Class: RG10; Piece: 741; Folio: 7; Page: 5;

21 was living and working as a general domestic servant for a Charles Elderton, Butcher of 152 Malpas Road, Deptford.⁴

Bridget married Joseph Pattenden on 16 October 1881 at Deptford parish church. Both parties were noted as being of full age and Joseph's occupation was listed as boiler maker. The witnesses were George Pattenden, the groom's father and an Elizabeth Cornways [?].⁵ The couple had six children, four of which died at a very young age. The two children who survived to adulthood were William George, who was born on 29 January 1884⁶ and Edward, born on 22 May 1891.⁷ By the time the enumerator for the 1891 census came calling Joseph and Bridget are residing at 9 Alexander Street with sons William and Edward, Joseph is at this stage employed as a riveter.⁸

In a newspaper article of an inquest in 1891 '*Shocking Death of a Woman*' Bridget had to identify the body of her sister Margaret Carroll, aged 26, of 65 Church Street, Deptford. Bridget is reported as living at 9 Alexander Street, New Cross and had not seen her sister for two years, though she stated she had heard of her. Margaret had for some 18 months been living with dock labourer Walter Maxwell at Church Street in Deptford. The evidence showed that Margaret had been drinking in several public houses in the area and when Maxwell returned home, he found her lying on the floor by the fireplace and having been unable to 'get any sense out of her' he went to bed. When he awoke, she had moved to

⁴ 1881 England Census, Deptford, St Paul: Class: RG11; Piece: 715; Folio: 39; Page: 17

⁵ London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

⁶ London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1923 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

⁷ Ibid

⁸ 1891 England Census, Deptford, St Paul: Class: RG12; Piece: 499; Folio: 46; Page:86

the bed-post and when he tried to pick her up he found she was stiff and he also noticed that her face was bruised and covered in blood. He called for assistance and a doctor and policeman attended the scene, Maxwell admitted that he had given the deceased a black eye a few months previously but none of the neighbours reported hearing a disturbance that night, save for an elderly gentleman who claimed to have heard cries of 'murder' together with the 'noise of blows and falls' for about an hour coming from number 65. Maxwell stated that she often got black eyes when she 'walked' New Cross and could not account for the other bruises found on her body. The doctor declared that Margaret had been dead for five or six hours and that the bruises would have been inflicted in the 24 hours before her death and that many blows and falls would have caused them. A subsequent post-mortem established the direct cause of death being suffocation due to either pressure on the chest or a stoppage over the mouth and that simply falling on the floor would not have caused the injuries. At the inquest a juror stated that Margaret had been 'terribly knocked about by someone' and several witness who had been drinking with Margaret that evening further stated that when they left her, she had no bruises or marks on her face. The jury returned a verdict of 'death from suffocation, accelerated by violence, but how that violence was caused there was not sufficient evidence to show'. The coroner told Maxwell he was fortunate not to be charged with causing the death of the woman for there was a suspicion that he had inflicted the injuries and that the police would reopen the case if new evidence came to light.⁹

⁹ Kentish Mercury, Friday 18 September 1891, page 2; Greenwich and Deptford Observer, Friday 18 September 1891, page 5; Weekly Dispatch, Sunday 20 September 1891, page 14

Bridget's first brush with the law seemed to take place on 31 July 1900 and from then onwards there are several newspaper reports of Bridget of various drunk and disorderly charges and tell a sorry story of her life. '*A Noisy Woman*' according to the Croydon Times was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Crown Hill. Bridget Pattenden, aged 40, a married woman living at Woodside Green admitted the charge. The arresting officer PC White stated that she surrounded by a large crowd, was very drunk and noisy and refused to go away. The report goes on to say that nothing was known about the defendant, and she allowed to go after paying 2s 6d costs.¹⁰

In August, Bridget Pattenden of 55 Martin Road, Woodside, noted as the wife of a workman who was employed by the Brighton and South Coast Railway Company; was arrested after PC Cole attended a scene in Martin Road. There he found Bridget drunk, shouting at the top of her voice and using obscene language, 'behaving like a mad woman, in fact'. Her husband had tried desperately to get her indoors but failed and so PC Cole was obliged to arrest her. She at first denied the charges but once corroborating evidence and a similar previous offence were presented the prisoner began to cry and express her sorrow. She was allowed to go with a fine of 5s and cost of 4s and 6d.¹¹ Only a month later Bridget was sent to prison with hard labour for 14 days after she was charged with being drunk and disorderly and using obscene language in George Street, South Norwood. 40-year-old Bridget had further caused a large crowd to gather and had kicked and bitten the policeman who arrested her. The report carries the heading '*A Thrice Convicted Inebriate*' which perhaps confirms

¹⁰ Croydon Times, Wednesday 1 August 1900, page 3

¹¹ Croydon Times, Wednesday 22 August 1900, page 2

that the previous two convictions were her first.¹² In November Bridget was once again charged with being drunk and remanded in custody with a view to steps being taken under the Inebriates' Act. She was up on a charge of being drunk and disorderly, struggling with another woman and 'all the time making use of the most obscene language', this appearance 'the fourth within the present year', the last occasion being the previous week. It was decided to send her to Ashbourne Roman Catholic House, but the documents not yet being completed, she was remanded for a further week.¹³

The 1901 census confirms that Bridget was indeed sent to the inebriates' home as she is listed as an inmate at St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex,¹⁴ her husband and children were still living at 55 Martin Road, Croydon.¹⁵ However the spell in the home did not seem to help Bridget.

Under the heading '*South Norwood Inebriate*', Bridget, of 66 Westgate Road, a 'confirmed drunkard' was charged in January 1904 of being drunk and disorderly and 'making use of obscene language'. The report states that in 1900 she was sent to an inebriates' home for two years but was released on licence after 18 months. The magistrate adjourned the case for a month, further advising Bridget to behave herself in the meantime.¹⁶

¹² Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette, Saturday 29 September 1900, page 3

¹³ Croydon Times, Saturday 3 November 1900, page 3; Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser, Saturday 3 November 1900, page 3; Croydon Times, Wednesday 12 December 1900, page 2

¹⁴ 1901 England Census, Staines: Class: RG13; Piece: 1171; Folio: 13; Page:18

¹⁵ 1901 England Census, Woodside St Luke: Class: RG13; Piece: 647; Folio: 44; Page:18

¹⁶ Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette, Saturday 29 January 1904, page 3; Croydon Express, Saturday 23 January 1904, page 4

Bridget's husband Joseph died in August 1905 at the age of 45 and was buried at St Marks in Croydon on the 26th of the month.¹⁷ The Railway employment records suggest that from 24 August 1904 a Mrs Bridget Pattenden was appointed as a WR [Waiting Room] Attendant for the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, based at Tunbridge Wells Station. She was earning 12 shillings a week and said to be the widow of Chargeman. She was dismissed on 15 November 1907 for misconduct. Looking at further records I think that the 1904 entry is a mis-transcription from when records were transferred from one book to another and she was in fact employed from 24 August 1907, which would account for her widow status.¹⁸ Her son Edward also worked for the railway as a guard and perhaps assisted her in obtaining a position.¹⁹

The Croydon Guardian in June 1908 reported that 50-year-old Bridget Pattenden, whose address was given as 12 Tamworth Place was charged and subsequently discharged with a caution of being found drunk and disorderly.²⁰ The Croydon Times ran the same story under the headline '*Try, Try, Try Again*', adding that she had a large crowd gathered around her and refused to go away when requested.²¹ The following year '*Drunken Bridget*' of no fixed abode and aged 45 pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly and was fined 1s with 2s 6d costs or four days imprisonment with hard labour.²²

¹⁷ GRO Death Indexes, 1905, Croydon, July Quarter, Vol 2a Page 166; Croydon Express, Saturday 2 September 1905, page 1

¹⁸ UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette, Saturday 06 June 1908, page 4; Croydon Express, Saturday 6 June 1908, page 2

²¹ Croydon Times, Saturday 8 June 1908, page 3

²² Croydon Express, Saturday 31 July 1909, page 2

The 1911 census sees Bridget, listed as a widow and a visitor in the house of general dealer Joseph Gunner, namely 67 Priory Street, she lists her occupation as laundress.²³ During this year she is arrested a number of times, gives the same address and claims to be a married woman, I wonder if she and Gunner are living as man and wife at this time, even though Gunner is married according to the census, his wife was not in the house. Whatever the situation, Bridget was certainly getting a name for herself as the local newspapers later that year announced '*Bridget Broke Out Again*' meaning that she had once again been arrested by the police for her usual antics of being drunk and disorderly in the street and using filthy language, this time she was bound over and remanded for two months.²⁴ In September Bridget Pattenden, aged 52 of 67 Priory Road, Croydon, noted as a married woman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Wentworth Road, she was further described as being well-known to the police. It was stated that she had recently spent two years in an inebriates' home, the bench decided to give her another chance and bound her over for a period of two months.²⁵ Bridget was again before the magistrates in October when she was accused of drunken behaviour less than two months after her previous conviction, mentioned as being on 26 September. The magistrate hoped that 'the woman was not incorrigible' and remanded her for a month to see how she behaved herself.²⁶ In November, having duly 'behaved herself' and the police having nothing to report, she was discharged.²⁷

²³ 1911 England Census, Croydon: Class: RG14; Piece: 3331; Schedule: 137

²⁴ Croydon Times, Saturday 30 September 1911, page 6

²⁵ Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette, Saturday 30 September 1911, page 9; Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser, Saturday 30 September 1911, page 2; Croydon Express, Saturday 30 September 1911, page 1

²⁶ Croydon Express, Saturday 14 October 1911, page 1

²⁷ Croydon Express, Saturday 11 November 1911, page 1

The Croydon Times reported in August 1912 of a '*Woman's Strange Story*', when a woman was found in a gravel pit by a police officer, she appeared to be very ill and so medical assistance was sent for. The woman, named as washerwoman Bridget Pattenden, aged 50 of Princess Road, was found to be suffering from a fractured rib. She was taken to hospital for treatment where she claimed she had slipped on the stairs at her lodgings the previous night and had been taken to hospital at that time and treated. Further inquiries found that she had indeed been conveyed to hospital by two men and after treatment was allowed home under the care of her 'friends', who had promised to look after her.²⁸

Later that year Bridget was being employed at the Sunflower Temperance Restaurant in George Street when PC Wade found her sitting on the step at 3am drunk, shouting and causing a nuisance to people in the throughfare. Previous convictions were proved, and she was handed a fine with costs or in default seven days hard labour.²⁹ It transpired that Bridget had failed to pay the fine from the earlier offence when the following year she was arrested again. '*Wanted and Found*' reported the Croydon Express in April 1913, Bridget Pattenden of Union Street was charged with being drunk and disorderly on Monday evening and once in court it was established that there was a commitment against her for non-payment of a fine for a similar offence the previous October. The police had been unsuccessful in finding the prisoner, the magistrate enforced the commitment, sent her to prison for seven days with hard labour and dismissed the current charge.³⁰

²⁸ Croydon Times, Saturday 17 August 1912, page 5

²⁹ Croydon Times, Wednesday 16 October 1912, page 3

³⁰ Croydon Express, Saturday 19 April 1913, page 1

In July 1913 local magistrates sent Bridget to prison for one month after being found drunk on Station Road, she was said to be a 50-year-old charwoman of no fixed abode and pleaded guilty to the charge. Evidence was given that she had numerous previous convictions and had spent two years in an inebriates' home. The clerk of the court remarked that she was a 'known character and had given the police a good deal of trouble', the magistrate, in jailing her for a month, commented that this action 'would be best for the prisoner and the community'.³¹

There is no mention of Bridget in the digitised newspapers after 1913, probably due to the fact that the relevant newspapers have not been digitised rather than she suddenly stopped drinking. The 1921 census shows Bridget living at 76, Flint Cottages, Thornton Road, Croydon, she states her occupation as that of housekeeper, her work 'charing' meant that she worked for 'various people'. A William Sayers also lives in the property, mentioned as the head of the house, he was recorded as a 62-year-old widower and gas board labourer.³² Bridget's death is recorded in the July quarter of 1935 in Croydon district, when her age was recorded as 65 and she was buried on 12 August at Queen's Road Cemetery, Croydon.³³

Hopefully as more information becomes available as newspapers continue to be digitised the story of Bridget can be completed.

³¹ Croydon Express, Saturday 5 July 1913, page 4; Croydon Times, Wednesday 9 July 1913, page 3; Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette - Saturday 12 July 1913, page 4;

³² 1921 England Census, West Croydon, Class: RG15; Piece: 03455; Schedule: 1

³³ GRO Death Indexes, 1935, Croydon, July Quarter Vol 2a Page 0354; Croydon Times, Saturday 17 August 1935, page 9

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