

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



'Reidie'
Winifred Alice Reid 1891-1969



It is my privilege to be the custodian of a photograph album, which contains the amalgamation of several family collections. Those that came from my maternal grandmother include an image of an enigmatic young woman, seated at a tea-table. It is labelled in my mother's handwriting "*'Reidie' a friend from John Gardener and co.*". On the reverse is the date "*September 23rd 1920*". With the release of the 1921 census, I was able to check that my grandmother, Ivy Gertrude Woolgar, did indeed work as a clerk for John Gardener and co., a wholesale caterers in Leadenhall Market, London.

Using the census to search for co-workers called Reid or Reed led me to Winifred Alice Reid. Winifred was born on 23 October 1891 in Leytonstone, Essex, the daughter of Benjamin James and Susannah Reid née Briggs. At the time of the 1921 census, her father, Benjamin, was a publican at the, now demolished, Alfred's Head Tavern, 49 Gold Street, Mile End.



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In 1921, Winifred was described as a typist for John Gardener, butcher of Leadenhall Market. It is likely that she had worked there for some time, as, in the 1911 census, Winifred was a typist for a meat contactor. At that time, she was living in seven rooms with her parents and five of her six surviving siblings, at 137 Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, Essex. Her father was a spice miller. This was an occupation that he had pursued since at least 1881, when he was a

labourer in a pepper mill. By 1891, when the family were living at 22, Devoran Terrace, Selby Road, Wanstead, Essex, Benjamin had risen to become the foreman in the mill. Despite it appearing that Benjamin worked for the same employer over a long period, in 1886, their son, Samuel, was born in Aylestone, Leicestershire. In 1901, the family were living at 69 Warren Road, Leyton.

Winifred was one of ten children, nine of whom have been traced. Two of Winifred's sisters died in infancy before Winifred was born and it is likely that the untraced child also died young. Her two younger brothers, Hector Henry and Allen Stanley died during the First World War. Nineteen year old Allen Stanley, a rifleman in the 5th (City of London) Battalion of the London Rifle Brigade was killed in action on 9 October 1916. Hector Henry served as a musician but was discharged as unfit for service on 14 December 1917. He died on 15 March 1918 in Whitechapel.

Only Winifred's two older brothers, Benjamin James and Samuel Charles, appear to have had any descendants. Samuel served in the newly created RAF during the First World War.

Neither of Alice's sisters who survived infancy married. Her elder sister, Beatrice Maud, then aged twenty six, has no occupation in 1911 but seventeen year old Ruby Mabel was a cassaque (sic) maker. By 1921, Beatrice was working at the Alfred's Head and Ruby was a comptometer operator at Debenham's drapers in Wimpole Street. Although Winifred's parents were married in the Anglican Church, it seems that the family may have had a Jewish background; as Benjamin was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in 1929.

After the death of their father, the three sisters continued living at home, whilst their mother ran the Alfred's Head. In the 1939 register, both Beatrice and Ruby were listed as barmaids. Winifred was described as a clerk to a catering company, suggesting that she was still working for John Gardner's. By 1942, another family had taken over the Alfred's Head and Susannah died in 1945.

Ruby, of 40 Nutfield Road, Merstham, Surrey, died at 2, The Pavement, South Merstham, Surrey on 24 January 1951; administration was granted to Winifred. Just a month later, on 23 February, Beatrice, of the same address, died at East Surrey Hospital; again Winifred was the administrator. Winifred herself died on 2 February 1969, at 2 Green Lanes, London N16.

I cannot be absolutely certain that Winifred is 'Reidie'. With two brother who had children, it is likely that there are living great nieces and nephews who remember Winifred and ensure that she is not forgotten. Her story is told here in the hope of confirming that 'Reidie' is indeed Winifred and finding out more about her. It would also be satisfying to return a copy of the photograph to the family.

There is a similar photograph in my album labelled 'Carlie'. She does not seem to have worked for John Gardner's at the time of the 1921 census. Carlie remains a mystery.

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