

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



This story was written, in January 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of girls from Leeds, Girls' Industrial School, Yorkshire.

Mary Ann Cardis[s]

Mary Ann was admitted to the Shadwell Children's Centre on 25 March 1868 and other than her name and age, which was noted as 11, and that she was born in Leeds there is no other information given.¹ There is a line with the word 'Girl' scrawled across the page and that would seem to indicate the Mary Ann was moved to the Ragged School in Windsor Street and indeed she is listed on the census return for that institution in 1871 as 13-year-old Mary Ann Cardiss.²

Mary Ann Cardis was baptised on 24 December 1860, St Saviour's Church in Leeds on the same day as two of her siblings, Thomas and Martha.³ I believe that

¹ West Yorkshire Reformatory School Records 1856-1922, originals at West Yorkshire Archives Service WRT/1/72-77, 81-84 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

² 1871 census, Leeds, Yorkshire, Girls' Ragged School, Windsor Street, RG10 4555 folios 114 and 155

³ West Yorkshire Archive Service; Wakefield, Yorkshire, England; Yorkshire Parish Records; New Reference Number: RDP69/1/1 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

Mary Ann's birth certificate was mis-transcribed as Mary Ann Cardas, the GRO index gives this birth registration in the September quarter of 1857 with the mother's maiden name recorded as Hartley.⁴ This is confirmed by the marriage of Thomas Cardis to Hannah Hartley on 3 August 1846 in St Peter's parish church, Leeds.⁵ The birth registrations of Mary Ann's sisters, Susannah and Martha, were also recorded as Cardas. Mary Ann is listed in the 1861 census with her parents at 3 East Ring Street, Leeds.⁶

Information on Mary Ann's parents are that her father Thomas Cardis[s]]was born circa 1818 and died in July 1867. There appears to be a little dispute about when he was born, on the burial record for him, in 1867, his age is given as 54.⁷ However, on the 1861 census his age is given as 43. On the 1851 census his birth year is estimated to be 1812. He is listed as a labourer on the 1861 census,⁸ while in 1851 he is noted as a coal heaver.⁹ Hannah Hartley, mother of Mary Ann was born about 1827 and buried on 6 July 1867, and, like her husband was buried in Beckett Street Cemetery Leeds.¹⁰ The abode of both parents at their deaths was the House of Recovery in Leeds. According to The Heaton Map website, the *'Leeds House of Recovery was opened in 1804 to treat and isolate patients with infectious diseases, which could not be treated at the Infirmary. These included typhus and typhoid fever.'*¹¹

⁴ GRO Birth Indexes, Leeds 1857, September Quarter, Vol 9b, Page 302

⁵ West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

⁶ 1861 Census returns. England. Leeds, Yorkshire HO107; Piece: 2319; Folio: 569; Page: 10

⁷ Leeds, England, Beckett Street Cemetery, 1845-1987 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

⁸ 1851 Census returns. England. St Saviour, Leeds, Yorkshire, RG 9; Piece: 3376; Folio: 50; Page: 19

⁹ 1861 Census returns. England. Leeds, Yorkshire HO107; Piece: 2319; Folio: 569; Page: 10

¹⁰ Leeds, England, Beckett Street Cemetery, 1845-1987 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

¹¹ The Heaton Map,

https://www.heatonmap.mobi/tour/location.php?app_id=8&tour_id=18&marker=252&n=1

Presumably Mary Ann was admitted to the Windsor Street Girls Ragged School because she was an orphan. Peter Higginbotham's The Workhouse website states that the Beckett Street Workhouse, in Leeds, was erected between 1858 and 1861 so I'm rather surprised that Mary Ann wasn't admitted here.¹² Or is this the same place?

Mary Ann's siblings were:

- Susannah birth registered 3rd quarter 1848 [registered as Cardas]
- George birth registered 4th quarter 1850 [registered as Cardis]
- Martha birth registered 2nd quarter 1853 [registered as Cardas]
- Thomas birth registered 1st quarter 1860 [registered as Cardis]¹³

There is a little bit of a gap between the birth of Martha and Mary Ann. A search of the birth indexes for the surname Cardas or Cardis and phonetic sound-a-likes, with the maiden name Hartley show no other children born to the couple.

At the time of the 1881 census 23-year-old Mary Ann Cardiss can be found living and working as a domestic servant in the household of Edwin Hardaker, a woollen cloth manufacturer, in the Yeadon area of Leeds.¹⁴ The following year Mary Ann marries William Johnson Thwaites – sometimes referred to in records as Waite. According to a number of family trees submitted to Ancestry the marriage took place on 29 April with Ezra Waite and Eva Waite being witnesses,

¹² Higginbotham, *The Workhouse, Leeds, West Yorkshire*, <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Leeds/>

¹³ GRO Birth Indexes

¹⁴ 1881 Census England. St John's Yeadon, Wharfedale, Yorkshire. Class: RG11; Piece: 4341; Folio: 139; Page: 48

the Yorkshire BMD website confirms that they were married in Wharfedale District Registry Office.¹⁵ William was a widower having previously married Jane Elizabeth Lister on 22 September 1877,¹⁶ Jane died in December 1880.¹⁷

Mary and William emigrated to Australia, there are several possibilities on exactly when this journey took place and whether the couple travelled together or separately. The couple settled in New South Wales [NSW], where William seemed to have a number of occupations as evidenced by his children's baptism records and Australian electoral rolls.

They had four children

- George Bright, born 1886 in Canterbury, NSW¹⁸
- Myrtle Ada born 10 October 1891 in Sydney, NSW, father was noted as being a male nurse in her baptism record¹⁹
- Clifford Cardiss born 16 December 1893 in Newtown, NSW, father noted as a tinsmith²⁰
- William Johnson born 1899 in Ryde, NSW²¹

William and Mary lived at Kings Street in Newtown, Sydney during the early years of their life in Australia.²² There is a prison record from Darlinghurst jail,

¹⁵ <http://www.yorkshirebmd.org.uk/marriages.php> Reference WHARFERB/9/89

¹⁶ West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁷ GRO Death Indexes, Wharfedale, Yorkshire West Riding 1880 December Quarter, Vol 9a, Page 113

¹⁸ Australia Birth Index 1788-1922 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁹ Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1814-2011 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁰ The New South Wales Pioneers Index: Federation Series 1889-1918 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²¹ Australia Birth Index 1788-1922 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²² Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

NSW of a William Johnson Thwaites being convicted of stealing on 30 November 1894 and serving 14 days hard labour, I suspect this may be Mary's husband.²³

Tragedy struck the couple in 1916 when their son Clifford was died of 'accidental injuries' in the 3rd Australian General Hospital, Abbassia, Cairo, on 12 April 1916. According to his military records the cause of death was a fractured spine. However, his records state that as a Court of Inquiry never seemed to take place it could not be stated for certain that Clifford's death was accidental. A letter confirming his death was address to Mrs M Thwaites, 27 Kings Street, St Peters, Sydney, NSW. His army records also contain a letter from his father asking for an explanation of the circumstances surrounding his death.²⁴ He is buried in Vieux Cemetery and the epitaph chosen by his parents for his headstone reads – *In Memory of our Soldier Boy who fought and died for his Country.*²⁵

During the 1930s the couple were living at 140 Lord St, Newtown, NSW and William was a watchman.²⁶ The couple had some 15 grandchildren, and it seems from the various Ancestry trees that Mary Ann was affectionately called Auntie Minnie by her family, there are also a number of images of Mary attached to these trees.

Mary died at the age of 73 on 27 June 1931 at her home 140 Lord Street,²⁷ her funeral took place two days later and she was buried at Rookwood cemetery.²⁸

²³ New South Wales, Australia, Gaol Description and Entrance Books, 1818-1930 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁴ Australia, World War I Service Records, 1914-1920 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁵ <https://www.cwgc.org/>

²⁶ Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁷ The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 June 1931, page 8

²⁸ The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 June 1931, page 7

William died eight years later, 8 May 1939,²⁹ a notice in the Sydney Morning Herald announced his funeral the following day.³⁰

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²⁹ Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985 accessible on www.ancestry.co.uk

³⁰ The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May 1939, page 9