

# *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.*

## **Annie Harrington 's Story**

Annie was born in Lambeth, London, according to her entry in the 1901 census<sup>1</sup> of St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, where it is stated that she is 35 years old, single and a florist.

Both of Annie's parents came originally from Ireland as found in the 1861 census<sup>2</sup> showing her father James Harrington aged 37, a porter (possibly in nearby Covent Garden), mother Ellen, aged 35 and brother Dennis aged 1 year born in St Giles, parish of Holborn. Their residence at this time was 23, Princes Street, St. Giles. A possible birth record for Dennis was found in 1859 in St Giles

---

<sup>1</sup> 1901 Census RG13 1171 folios 12-13 page 18

<sup>2</sup> 1861 Census RG9 00169 folio 30

District giving his mother's maiden name as Oliver<sup>3</sup>, while a marriage was found for a James Harrington and Ellen Oliver in St Giles district during 1858<sup>4</sup> which may be this couple. St Giles was, until the late 1840's the area in London of the infamous rookeries, home to villains, thieves and social misfits. By the time the Harrington family were living there, things were gradually improving, although in 1860 Henry Mayhew<sup>5</sup> commented that it was 'an 'endless intricacy of courts and yards', home to pubs, lodging houses and the livelihoods of the impoverished.

In 1871<sup>6</sup>, Annie is found living with her mother Ellen, now a widow and charwoman aged 43 years. Her brother Denis [sic] aged 11 is recorded as born in St Clements (parish of Holborn) as was her brother John aged 5 years. Annie is recorded as born in Lambeth, the only sibling to be born south of the river Thames. The family's residence at this time is at 40 Hart Street, St. Paul, Covent Garden, very close to where her parents were living in 1861 and to where both her brothers were born. Annie's age is given as 9 years putting her birth around 1862, but no birth record has been found for her or John and no baptisms for any of the children.

In September 1888, according to a court news report<sup>7</sup>, their mother Ellen, her daughter Annie, a flower-seller and, occasionally, her son John a porter, were living at 15 Rupert Street, again not far from Covent Garden. On returning from a concert, Annie was apparently attacked by John and says that sometimes she

---

<sup>3</sup> GRO 3Q1859 St Giles vol 1b p391 Dennis Harrington mother's maiden name 'Oliver'

<sup>4</sup> GRO 1Q1858 St Giles vol 1b p395

<sup>5</sup> Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor OUP (2010)

<sup>6</sup> 1871 Census RG10 00363 folio 12 page 17

<sup>7</sup> London Evening Standard page 1 and the Echo (London) page 4 25<sup>th</sup> September 1888  
Morning Post 26<sup>th</sup> September 1888 page 2

remains out all night for fear of him, but John argued that it was Annie who attacked him with a fork. Their mother says *'she should be glad to get rid of both son and daughter and be left in peace to do the best she could'* as they were *'in the habit of getting drunk and quarrelling'*. Annie had been drunk when she came in that evening and *'whenever she got a drop of drink she was like a maniac'*. The magistrate at Marlborough-street said he did not know the man, but the sister *'had been charged several times'*. They were bound over in the sum of £5 to keep the peace with each other.

Annie has not been positively identified in the 1881 or 1891 census records but in 1891, Ellen, her mother, now 66 years old, is found still working as a cleaner/charwoman and living in St. Giles-in-the-Fields<sup>8</sup>. Her birthplace is given as Kerry, Ireland, which is in the southwest of the country.

In August 1894, Annie, a florist aged 28, appears in the newspapers again after having been charged at Clerkenwell Police court with being drunk and disorderly in Devonshire-street in Holborn<sup>9</sup>. On this occasion she *'struck Police-constable Woods 142E with an umbrella, knocking his helmet off'*. For this she was fined 20s.

In 1899, there is a potential entry for Annie Harrington, here a hawker aged 32 years, in the Clerkenwell Court Calendar of Prisoners<sup>10</sup>. She has several summary convictions for drunkenness and assault and damage. She was received into custody on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1899 and tried on 22<sup>nd</sup> February for *'maliciously damaging a plate glass window, value £6 10s, the property of*

---

<sup>8</sup> RG12 211 folio16 page16

<sup>9</sup> Islington Gazette 13<sup>th</sup> August 1894 page 3

<sup>10</sup> TNA HO140 piece 194 Clerkenwell Court Calendar of Prisoners Tried at the Adjourned General Quarter Sessions of the Peace February 1899.

*Alfred Yockleson in the night time*'. She pleaded guilty of committing wilful damage at night and was sentenced to 12 months hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs prison, to be computed from 21<sup>st</sup> February 1899.

No news report has been found linking Annie Harrington to her Reformatory stay at St Joseph's in 1901, but in March 1903, she was found in the news once again, 'celebrating' her 100<sup>th</sup> appearance at Bow Street Magistrates court for drunkenness and creating a disturbance: *'Although prisoner is on the Black List she got drunk on Friday and created a disturbance in Drury Lane. She was taken into custody and on the way to the station, while the constable was stooping to pick up her hat, she kicked him in the stomach. Two months hard labour'*<sup>11</sup>. The Evening News goes on to comment: *'While an excellent thing in the country, the new Licensing Act is bound to be more or less of a failure in such a wilderness of public- houses as in London. Such a woman, although she may encounter rebuffs near home, is sure to find someone to serve her in a neighbouring district'*.

Annie is described, together with two photographs taken side on and from the front, in the Habitual Criminals Register<sup>12</sup> of January-May 1903 as: of no fixed abode, no employment, aged 37, 5ft 3½ in tall, of proportionate build, fresh complexion, dark hair turning grey, brown eyes, straight nose, oval face, no peculiar marks. Her profession is a Flower Seller and the date of her conviction, at Bow Street, is 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1903. The nature of her conviction is not stated

---

<sup>11</sup> The People 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1903 page 12 and Evening News (London) 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1903 page 2

<sup>12</sup> TNA MEPO 6/77 No. 131 (List 15)

Digital image at Ancestry UK, Registers of Habitual Criminals & Police Gazettes 1834-1934 'Habitual Drunkards: Portraits and Descriptions' <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61812/>

but she is given 14 days hard labour. It is remarked that she frequents Covent Garden.

She appears in the same register in 1904<sup>13</sup> where she is now 38 years old, all other details remaining as before. The date of her conviction is 25<sup>th</sup> May 1904 at Marlborough Street. This time she is committed to an (unnamed) certified inebriate reformatory for three years.

In 1908, another newspaper<sup>14</sup>, under the heading 'Low Life Revelations', reports that Annie Harrington, a florist, now living at Tower-street, Lambeth, was struck by her neighbour with a broken pair of iron fire tongs. Here at last, Annie was the innocent party, maybe having moved south of the river to start a new, more sober life. She was wounded, but lived to fight another day, though sadly, not a sober one, as she appears once more in the Habitual Criminals Register as a 'Habitual Drunkard', with up-to-date photographs in March 1909<sup>15</sup>. Now 43 years old, her residence is given as Corsham-place, Frazier-street, Lambeth. She was convicted on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1909 at Bow Street and ordered to enter into her own recognizance in £5 to appear if called for. It is remarked, once again, that she frequents Covent Garden and the Strand. Annie has not been found in the 1911 census but she appears in the 1921 Census<sup>16</sup>, single, aged 59 years and 6 months living at 14 Lambeth Square in Lambeth and employed as a Charwoman for a Mr Bailey, Pea Salesman in Covent Garden. She gives her birthplace as Vauxhall, which abuts Lambeth.

---

<sup>13</sup> TNA MEPO 6/78 No. 131a (List 86) as above

<sup>14</sup> South London Press 21<sup>st</sup> August 1908 page 8  
Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder 21<sup>st</sup> August 1908 page 3.

<sup>15</sup> TNA MEPO 6/83 No. 1748 (Identical with nos 131 and 131a) as above

<sup>16</sup> 1921 Census RG15 01994 14 Lambeth Square

She is also found in the 1939 Register, still single, with a birth date of January 18<sup>th</sup> 1862. She is described as a 'Flower Saleswoman, Retired, (Covent Garden)' her residence given as 137, Kennington Lane, Lambeth<sup>17</sup>.

A probable death entry for her in 1949 in the Southwark district of London gives her age as 86 years<sup>18</sup>.

During her working life, Annie may have chosen to shave a few years off her age, but by the 1921 census, it is obvious that she knew when she had been born. It is also interesting that she describes herself as a 'florist' whereas others describe her as a 'flower seller'. The term 'flower seller' took on a different meaning in this era<sup>19</sup>, as more than flowers were sold by some as they walked the streets at night and it is possible that Annie did not want to be viewed in this way. Her 1939 description 'Flower Saleswoman, Retired, (Covent Garden)', emphasises this opinion, painting a picture of a proud and determined lady and of the importance to her of her work and that area of London, although she ended her life where it began, in Lambeth.

**© Fiona Stone March 2023**

## **Sources**

1861 Census 23, Princes Street, St. Giles RG9 00169 folio 30  
General Register Office Birth, Marriage and death indexes  
1871 Census 40, Hart Street, St.Paul, Covent Garden RG10 00363 folio 12  
1901 Census St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex RG13 1171 folios 12-13  
1921 Census 14 Lambeth Square RG15 01994  
1939 Register RG101 0343F 018 25

---

<sup>17</sup> 1939 Register RG101 0343F 018 25 Letter code ANFF Kennington Road, Lambeth

<sup>18</sup> GRO death index 1Q1949 vol 5d page 639

<sup>19</sup> Covent Garden Memories <http://www.coventgardenmemories.org.uk/index.aspx>

TNA HO140 Clerkenwell Court Calendar of Prisoners February 1899

TNA MEPO 6/77, Habitual Criminals Register

TNA MEPO 6/78, Habitual Criminals Register

TNA MEPO 6/83, Habitual Criminals Register

Covent Garden Memories

Newspapers at Find my Past <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers>:

London Evening Standard

Echo (London)

Morning Post

Islington Gazette

The People

Evening News (London)

South London Press

Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder