

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



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.

Annie Schofield

In all research we are sometimes successful and at others we draw a blank. It does become disheartening when this happens and others are shouting "Eureka". In these circumstances we have to remember that the records are just not available at this point in time and that that particular person has evaded the efforts of bureaucracy to record them. Alternatively there are a number of people with the same name and it is best not to just choose one without proof. The latter was the case with Annie Schofield.

Initially Annie's record appeared promising. There was personal information and what appeared to be quite a long list of relatives and friends.

The Record:

No: 248, **Admitted:** Aug 10th 1870

Name: Annie Schofield **Age:** 10 **Where born:** Oldham
Height: ----- **Hair:** Brown **Eyes:** Light blue **Figure:** Short and well built
Scars: Had smallpox in face
Schools attended: Some
Read: No **Write:** No **Cipher:** no **Where employed:** no
Name of Parents: James, Mother dead
Occupation: Tramp and beggar
Residence: No home

Other relatives and friends: Half sister Allen (sic) and Harriet Dacans, carder in cotton mill in India Sister Simister St. no 12 Oldham
Uncles and Aunts: John and Mary Robinson speed tener cotton mill. Claytons one mile out of Oldham. James and Hannah Cocker weaver Marton Mill. Mr (Mrs?) Johnson Sheldonlow next to Oldham. ?hiskers ar. Asher's Lane nr to Lees. James ?ellett Mary Ann do. Lees Lane. Collin Broadbent Beer house keeper Wolf's Head Bent Oldham. Gdmother Sheldonlow Lees Mary Brierly.

Offence: Homeless and begging
Where and when committed: Leeds Aug 10th 70
Before whom: Willm Bruce es
Sentence: 6 years (entered in blue pencil: Time up Aug 10 1976)

Previous character: Beggar girl
1st Conviction and sentence: All her life.

On closer inspection this record is at time jumbled and confusing. The records for all the girls have contained a varying range of information so details across the school are not consistent.

Approaching Annie the first thing to be aware of is that most of the information will probably relate to Oldham over the border, not Leeds. It also soon becomes obvious that the names listed are among the most common in the area.

Beginning with Annie her birth should be around 1860. The only suitable one is in Saddleworth in Sept ¼ 1859 with mother's name also Schofield (GRO). A suitable marriage for this birth is also in Saddleworth between James Schofield and Jane Schofield on June ¼ 1858. (FREEbmd) There is also a suitable death for a Jane Schofield in Oldham in Sept 1859, (GRO) did she die giving birth to Annie?. These records in the absence of the original documents do follow a logical sequence but there is no evidence that this is Annie's family. The short time frame does not even give a census entry confirmation.

Turning to the relatives. The first statement is ambiguous. "Half sister Allen and Harriet Dacans". Does this mean that Annie was the half sister to Allen and Harriet? There were no results for the name Dacans or any variations however when information is given orally the writer will record as he hears it and if the person giving the information cannot read to correct then sometimes odd spellings occur. With this name if the c becomes soft then it could be Dyson and there are several Dyson families connected to other names in the list. In 1871 there is a Dyson family in Slaithwaite with a daughter, Harriet of an approximately correct age, who worked in the card room.

John and Mary Robinson, a speed tener (sic) in the cotton mill, Claptons one mile out of Oldham: there is a Robinson family in Bagerley Mill living next door to a Martha Schofield, widow age 66. There are several other Robinson families living close to families with names in the list.

James and Hannah Cocker: Searching by name did not reveal any results but searching page by page through RG10/4333 for 1871 did reveal many of the surnames in the list. In the Ashes region of Saddleworth were James and Hannah Cocker, 56 and 45. John was a mill hand. Delving a little deeper revealed that James Cocker married his second wife, Hannah Whitehead on 22nd Sept 1867 in Leesfield, the widow nee Broadbent (a name appearing later). The children in the census, Thomas, Mary, Robert and Betty were Hannah's. There were other households with Whitehead and Broadbent members.

Mr or Mrs Johnson do not appear to live in the Sheldonlow area in 1871.

This section is difficult to interpret “T?hiskers”? Is this a person’s name or a place?

“James ?ellett, Mary Ann do.” looking through the piece I could not discover a family which may fit.

Collin Broadbent did turn out to be a beerhouse keeper at The Spinner’s Arms. In earlier censuses he appeared to keep company with some rather dubious characters. In 1851 he was in Marshall’s Court, Oldham (HO107/2240/178/39/137) with Phoebe A. Marland, 26, “a courtezan” (a rather upmarket term for a prostitute). She had a 6 year old son. Also in the household was Fanny Brierley, (a surname found later in the list). She was also recorded as a courtezan.

The last person mentioned in the list is Gdmother, (sic) Mary Brierley. There were several possibilities for Mary including widow Mary Schofield.

Annie’s future after her 6 year sentence is as vague as all the relatives. The school record does not give any clue except the date of the conclusion of her internment of 10th Aug. 1876. There are several Annie Schofields who died at a young age and several who married. The research may be advanced in these field should certificates be obtained.

Sadly the search for Annie did not reveal any of her story. Hopefully a future researcher will read this account and should more records become available, they may progress a little further in discovering what happened to her. However, at present, poor Annie is a “forgotten girl”.

Ann Simcock January 2023

