

# *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.*

## **Winifred Sullivan**

In the 1901 UK Census, Winifred can be found as inmate at St. Joseph's Reformatory.<sup>1</sup> Winifred was age 30 born in Wandsworth, married, Roman Catholic and working as a Cigar Maker. An exploration of other census data and birth and marriage records has not yielded any further information on Winifred. However, there are newspaper reports and workhouse admission records that could relate to the Winifred Sullivan of St. Joseph's Reformatory.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1898, Winifred Sullivan of Nottingdale was charged with being drunk and creating a disturbance in High Street, Uxbridge between 5 and 11pm the previous night. She was sentenced to 7 days in default of paying a 10

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<sup>1</sup> St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex RG13 1171 folios 12-13

shilling fine.<sup>2</sup> Nottingdale is an area of West London, described at an area associated with Irish, Catholic and Gypsy communities.

In 1899, Winifred Sullivan age 30, who gave no address was 'in fighting trim on Thursday night and insisted on fighting a man, who did all he could to escape.'<sup>3</sup> She was taken into custody and used "bad language" and was thus fined 10 shillings.

There was a potential case of mistaken identity in 1903 that potentially illustrates that there were more than one Winifred Sullivan engaged with the judicial system. Reading that a Winifred Sullivan was remanded at the North London Police Court, charged with being drunk and disorderly, a man wrote to Winifred at Holloway Prison. The man believed she was his long lost sister and wanted to offer her a home. When Winifred appeared in Court, the man shouted: "That's not my sister", to which Winifred replied: "That's not my brother". The newspaper reported that Winifred had "several times been charged with drunkenness and was again remanded to see what could be done for her."<sup>4</sup>

In 1910, Winifred Sullivan a 40 year old homeless, flower seller was charged with "behaving improperly with a man" in Benares Road, Plumstead. She was fined 10 shillings or 7 days imprisonment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Middlesex and Buckinghamshire Advertiser, Uxbridge, Harrow and Watford Journal, December 10<sup>th</sup> 1898 p.7

<sup>3</sup> The Islington Gazette, 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1899

<sup>4</sup> The Evening Post, Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1903 and The Echo, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1903

<sup>5</sup> Woolwich Gazette and Plumstead News, Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1910

In 1924, Kent newspapers, reported on an homeless, 60 year old woman called Winifred Sullivan that had come to the area to hop pick in Farleigh. On the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August she was drunk and singing in Week Street, Maidstone. When asked to leave by a policeman she became “abusive and asked to be locked up as she was afraid of men following her.” The Magistrate discharged her with a caution and the instruction to leave town.<sup>6</sup>

Turning to workhouse admissions, a 27 year old, Winifred Sullivan was admitted on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1888 and discharged on the 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1888 from the Tower Hamlets, Stepney Workhouse.<sup>7</sup> She was listed as a Roman Catholic, factory girl, who was living at 3 Dorset Street, (described as her own or friends house) and was suffering from a venereal disease. A sister, Annie Dimmock of Bristol was recorded. A search has failed to elicit any confirmatory details on Annie. At the time, only 2 legitimate businesses were listed in the area and it was described as “one of the most lawless streets in London.”<sup>8</sup> Dorset Street was the scene of one of Jack the Ripper’s murders.

The Medway, Kent Poor Law Records of 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1898, identify a 28 year old Winifred Sullivan, a Roman Catholic laundress as been admitted on a Class 5 diet.<sup>9</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1899, 29 year old Winifred Sullivan of 3 Dorset Street, a lodging house is admitted to Tower Hamlets, Stepney Workhouse. She is described as having no calling and is Roman Catholic, she is suffering from

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<sup>6</sup> Kentish Express, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1924 and Kent Messenger, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1924

<sup>7</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>8</sup> pastinthe present.net In Spitalfields: Dorset Street was “the Worst Street in London” May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>9</sup> Medway and Kent Poor Law Union Records 1836-1937

venereal disease. She is discharged on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1899.<sup>10</sup> A destitute Winifred Sullivan then appears in the Greenwich Workhouse and is discharged on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1899.<sup>11</sup>

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1900 a 30-year-old Roman Catholic of 3 Dorset Street, laundress is admitted from the Tower Hamlets, Stepney Workhouse, suffering from vaginitis. She is discharged on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1900.<sup>12</sup>

Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1903, 36-year-old Winifred Sullivan a single, Roman Catholic, Laundress is admitted, suffering from tonsillitis. She is living in Dorset Street and was discharged on the 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1903.<sup>13</sup>

In 1903, Winifred is again admitted to the Tower Hamlets, Stepney Workhouse. She was admitted to Ward E2 on the 14<sup>th</sup> March and discharged on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1903. Winifred had been admitted from Aylesbury House and was anaemic. She was identified as a 32 year old, Roman Catholic Cigar Maker and was either homeless or residing at an institution.<sup>14</sup> Aylesbury House was a woman's prison that in 1902 had seen the addition of 2 extra wings for inebriates.<sup>15</sup>

In 1910 a Winifred Sullivan, age 40 residing at 35 Duval Street (a lodging house) and a Roman Catholic and suffering from venereal disease, was admitted to the

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<sup>10</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>11</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>12</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>13</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>14</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>15</sup> heritagegateway.org

Tower Hamlets Workhouse in Stepney for 5 months. She was discharged on the 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1910.<sup>16</sup> Dorset Street, Winifred's previous residence had been renamed Duval Street.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910, Winifred was back in the Workhouse for 2 weeks , described a single, Roman Catholic hawker and admitted due to knee surgery.<sup>17</sup>

The last 'sighting' of Winifred is in 1924 as described earlier and whilst we cannot say for certain that all the workhouse admissions and newspaper reports were about 1 Winifred Sullivan, it is fair to say that the cyclical despair and inability to maintain a poverty free life is.

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<sup>16</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921

<sup>17</sup> London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records 1764 –1921