

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.

Mary Ann Konsella/Kinsella's Story

Mary Ann was an inmate at the St Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory at the time of the 1901 Census. Her name is spelt Konsilla on the census return but it is strongly suspected that this should read Kinsella which is the usual spelling of this surname. Mary Ann claims to be 54 years old, a married tailoress who was born in Co Mayo, Ireland.¹ There are no further definite sightings of Mary Ann in earlier or later censuses. It has been impossible to ascertain if Mary Ann married in Ireland or England as there is no clue as to her birth name and the number of girls born in Co Mayo with the Christian names Mary Ann in 1847 are far too numerous to search.

¹ 1901 England Census, Ashford, England. RG13; Piece: 1171; Folio: 13; Page: 17

A newspaper search produced a number of reports of an incident that could be Mary Ann. In March 1898 a Mary Ann Kinsella, also spelt Kinsala in one article, was charged at Bow Street Police Court with begging in High Holborn. Mary Ann, referred to both as a needlewoman and a tailoress, claimed that the charge was a lie. *'I'm a respectable woman, a tailoresses. Why I make trousers for Mr Newton, the magistrate'* she stated, which drew some laughter in the court, the laughter continued as she persevered with her statement *'If I'm respectable enough to make magistrates trousers, I'm good enough for anything'* It was reported that as the woman had been in police custody all night the magistrate, Sir John Bridge, discharged her.² Unfortunately there does not seem to be any newspaper reports of her detained to St Joseph's.

In April 1904 the Daily Telegraph and Courier described an inquest at St Pancras on a 59-year-old woman called Mary Ann Kinsella. She had been found in a *'dying condition'* by PC Thomas in Bear Street in the early hours of Good Friday. The woman was sufficiently conscious to be able to tell the constable her name and age and that she was homeless, after which she collapsed. She died shortly afterwards in the Cleveland Street Sick Asylum of pneumonia, accelerated by alcoholism.³

As a little interesting aside there is a death recorded in the General Register Office death indexes of a Mary Ann Kincella [sic] in the 2nd quarter of 1904, in St Pancras registration district, which would seem to match the above death.⁴ A

² South Wales Echo, Friday 4 March 1898, Page 2; Liverpool Echo, Friday 4 March 1898, Page 3; Illustrated Police News, Saturday 12 March 1898, Page 10.

³ Daily Telegraph and Courier, Wednesday 6 April 1904, Page 3

⁴ General Register Office Death Index, 2nd Quarter, 1904, District: St Pancras, Vol 1b, Page 19.

burial on 6 April 1904 of a Mary Ann Kincella took place in Woking, Surrey,⁵ which would seem a long way from St Pancras. This however may make perfect sense, the Cleveland Street Sick Asylum was one of the hospitals built to improve the provision of the care of the poor in London, separate from the workhouses. This was also one of the many London hospitals and workhouses that had a contract with the London Necropolis [Brookwood Cemetery], near Woking, to bury the bodies of the dead who had not been claimed. This cemetery was built to provide a new resting place for those who died in London as many of the capital's parish graveyards were at maximum capacity. Brookwood ran its own funeral train service, with the bodies of the deceased leaving London from Waterloo along a private branch line to Woking, referred to as the Necropolis railway.⁶ The burial registers of Brookwood record a 59-year-old Mary Ann Kincella from Cleveland Street buried on 6 April 1904⁷ in unconsecrated ground. If this is Mary Ann Kinsella, an inmate in St Joseph's in 1901, then it's a really nice piece of social history.

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Sources

1901 England Census: St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex RG13 1171 folios 12-13 [accessible via www.ancestry.co.uk]

British Newspapers Archive [<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>]

⁵ England Deaths and Burials, 1538-1991, database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CJDF-XYMM> : 20 February 2023), Mary Ann Kincella, 1904.

⁶ <https://brookwoodcemetery.com/history/>

⁷ Brookland Cemetery Records Grave reference: Cleveland-St-Uncon/152754

Deceased Online: Brookwood Cemetery Burial Scans

[<https://www.deceasedonline.com/>]

Family Search [<https://www.familysearch.org/>]

The General Registrar's indexes of birth, marriage, and death

[<https://www.gro.gov.uk/>]

The History of Brookwood Cemetery [<https://brookwoodcemetery.com/>]