

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.

Maria Day

School Records

Maria's admissions register entry contained minimal information — She was admitted on 25 March 1868, aged 13. No other information was provided. Her reason for entering the Ragged School in March 1868 could have been the family's financial hardship (see below). She cannot have stayed there long, as by March 1869 she was working as a servant.

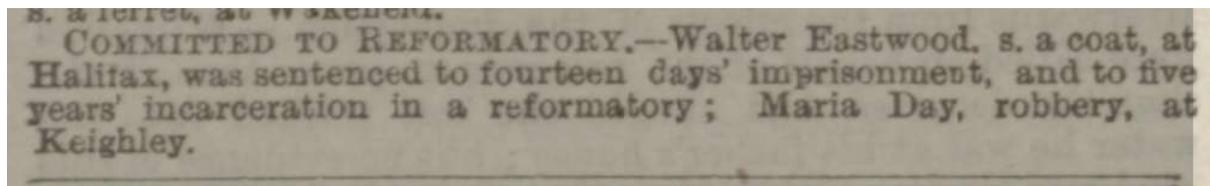
Reformatory School

In April 1869, at the Spring Quarter Sessions in Wakefield, Maria was convicted for larceny in a dwellinghouse and sentenced to a month's imprisonment, followed by five years in a reformatory school.¹

¹ UK, Prison Commission Records, 1770-1951, Ancestry.com (original records in The National Archives, PCOM 2/HO 140).

The Calendar of Trials and Calendar of Prisoners at Wakefield Gaol states that she was a spinster and a servant, when she was committed by the Magistrate (W. Marriner Esq of Worth Villa, Keighley) for 'stealing a pair of ear rings, a gold [watch] guard, 2 rings, a shawl, 6 silver spoons, 2 sheets, and a night dress, the property of Isabella Connolly, at Keighley, on the 16 March 1869'.² Although these records give her age as 18, we find Maria at a reformatory school in 1871, with an age that matches our Ragged School girl.

The detailed indictment for her crime has been digitised, revealing that she stole the jewellery and clothing using 'Force and Arms'.³ A transcription is provided at the end of this document. In previous years she might have been transported, but the last transportation took place in 1868.



'West Riding Sessions', Leeds Times - Saturday 10 April 1869 (British Newspaper Archive)

1871 Census

Maria was a 'scholar' at the West Riding Reformatory School for Girls at Balby With Hexthorpe. She was 17 and single; and occupied with 'Domestic & Industrial Work'.⁴ Since Maria was 13 on 25 March 1868 and 17 on 2 April 1871, it's possible that her birthday was between those dates in 1855.

² Criminal Registers, England and Wales, The National Archives, HO 27, Piece 154, Page 221. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

³ Yorkshire, England, Quarter Session Records, 1637-1914, Ancestry.com.

⁴ 1871 England Census, The National Archives RG10, Piece 4715, Folio 76, Page 4.

Family

I believe that Maria was the daughter of Thomas and Ann DAY. The evidence is as follows. The only match for her name, age (within 1 year) and place of birth in the 1861 census is Maria DAY, age 6, the daughter of Thomas DAY, a Tin Plate Worker born in Manchester in about 1813⁵.

Address: 54 South Weavers Square, Leeds

Name	Relation to Head	Condition	Age	Occupation	Place of birth
Thomas DAY	Head	Mar	48	Tin Plate Worker	Lancashire Manchester
Ann DAY	Wife	Mar	38		Ireland
John DAY	Son	Unm	19	Tin plate worker	Yorks Sheffield
Maria DAY	Daughter		6		Yorks Leeds
Thomas DAY	Son		2		Yorks Leeds

In 1851, Thomas (a Tin Brazier) and Ann were lodging in Leeds with Thomas's son, John, 9, and a daughter, Elizabeth, 10. They claimed to be married, although they did not in fact marry until 1852⁶.

⁵ 1871 England Census, The National Archives RG10, Piece 4512, Folio 10, Page 13. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

⁶ 1851 England Census, The National Archives HO107, Piece 2320, Folio 501, Page 18. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

Thomas and Ann married by Banns at St Peter's, Leeds on 1 Sep 1852⁷ ; Thomas DAY was a widower, 40, of Holmes Yard and Ann ASHTON was a widow, 30, of York Street. Thomas's father (Maria's grandfather) was John DAY, a cutler, and Ann's was William HALEY, labourer, showing that her maiden name was Ann HALEY. They both signed with a mark. There were no witnesses with the same surnames.

Birth

Maria DAY's birth was registered in Leeds in Q1 1855 (GRO Reference: Volume 09B Page 341). This registration date supports the theory that her date of birth was between 25th March and 2nd April. Her Mother's Maiden Name was registered as ASHTON, even though that was her mother's previous married name.

Family Circumstances

Maria's parents were living in Leeds in 1871, three years after Maria had been sent to the Ragged School, and while she was at the Reformatory School. Thomas was an Iron and Tin Plate Worker, and as well as their son Thomas, aged 12, Thomas and Ann had another younger child, Mary, aged 6.⁸ Their choice of both Maria and Mary as daughters' names might suggest that they were Roman Catholic (especially as Ann came from Ireland). Although they had married in an Anglican church. It would be worth checking Catholic registers in Leeds for baptisms. It is possible that following the birth of Mary in 1864, or due to other changes in circumstances, the family no longer had the space or resources for all of the children. Alternatively, the Ragged School may have simply offered

⁷ West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935, Ancestry.com.

⁸ 1871 England Census, The National Archives RG10, Piece 4544, Folio 65, Page 24. Accessed via Ancestry.com

poor children like Maria an opportunity for additional free education, even though she was above the age where school attendance was required by law.

A note about Ann's maiden name

Although her marriage register entry gave her name as HEALEY, Mary's birth was registered with Mother's Maiden Name HEANEY⁹, and Thomas's with HANEY¹⁰. Her marriage record indicates that she might have been illiterate, so there was probably no fixed spelling for her surname.

After 1871

I have not been able to locate Maria in censuses after 1871. If she served her full sentence, she would have been released from the reformatory school in May 1874. I have found evidence to rule out several potential candidates, including:

- 1881 census: Mary Day, a Tailoress & Seamstress in Leeds, and the married mother of Lilly and Eleanor W (no husband present)
- Two marriages in West Riding and Manchester
- A marriage of Annie Maria Day in Leeds, 1876
- Several married women called Maria, of the right age and birth place, in the 1881 census
- A widowed woman called Maria Day in Rothwell, 1939
- A licensor of a Leeds alehouse, 1916

I have also checked for possible deaths of Maria DAY but found no matches. Is it possible that Maria was imprisoned again, or possibly emigrated?

⁹ Mary DAY, GRO reference: Leeds, Q3 1864, Vol 9B, Page 356

¹⁰ Thomas DAY, GRO reference: Leeds, Q1 1859, Vol 9B, Page 325

There are, however, continued records for Maria's parents and siblings. I was surprised to find that in 1891, her brother Thomas was a Dancing Master in Leeds, and that as well as living with a wife and children, he shared his home with his widowed mother, Ann, who was 'Living on her own means'¹¹.

Maria's indictment — transcription:

Wakefield Sessions 5th April 1869

Pleads guilty. To be imp[risoned] 1 cal mth & then kept in a Reformatory for 5 years

And that Maria Day on the sixteenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty nine with Force and Arms at the Parish of Keighley in the West Riding of the County of York in the dwellinghouse of one Timothy O'Connell there situate One pair of ear Rings of the value of fifteen shillings and sixpence One watch guard of the value of five pounds and fifteen shillings, two Rings of the value of twelve shillings and sixpence One shawl of the value of two pounds and fifteen shillings Six spoons of the value of two pounds and seventeen shillings, Two sheets of the value of one pound and twelve shillings and one Woman's Gown of the value of One pound and five shillings of the Goods and Chattels of Isabella Connolly feloniously did steal take and carry away against the Form of the Statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid upon their Oath aforesaid further present that the said Maria Day afterwards to wit on the same day and Year aforesaid with Force and

¹¹ 1891 England Census, The National Archives, RG12, Piece 3698, Folio 66, Page 23. Via Ancestry.com.

Arms at the Parish aforesaid in the Riding aforesaid One pair of Ear Rings One Watch Guard, two Rings One Shawl, six Spoons two Sheets and one Womans Gown of the Goods and Chattels of the said Isabella Connolly feloniously did steal take and carry against the Form of the Statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid further present that the said Maria Day afterwards to wit on the same Day and Year aforesaid with Force and Arms at the Parish aforesaid in the Riding aforesaid the same Goods and Chattels in the first Count of this Indictment mentioned lately then lately before feloniously stolen taken and carried away feloniously did receive she the said Maria Day then well knowing the said last mentioned Goods and Chattels to have been feloniously stolen taken and carried away against the Form of the Statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

Witnesses:

Isabella Connolly

Jane Slinger [?]

John Clarkson

Clare Kirk January 2023