

# *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.*

## **Ellen Ward's Story**

In the 1901 census for St Joseph's Inebriate's Home Ellen WARD was recorded as an inmate aged 32, single, a flower seller, born at Notting Hill.

Researching her life proved difficult due to the sheer number of Ellen WARDs in the records in the London area. Prior to 1901 there are a number of Ellen WARDs in the census but each one was eliminated as marriages and other records found. Making it even more difficult was that according to the UK Registers of Habitual Criminals, habitual drunkards category, Ellen also used the aliases of HANSBURY, DAVIS and GODFREY.<sup>1</sup>

There is an Ellen WARD regularly in and out of the workhouse in Islington but research has shown this is not our Ellen WARD as the workhouse lady married in 1908 revealing she was a widow, maiden name KENNEDY, who was actually in Holloway Prison in 1901.

Another Ellen WARD was sent to prison for the neglect of her baby in 1891. When the baby subsequently died she was tried for manslaughter at the Old Bailey, but found not guilty. This Ellen married John FARADAY in 1892 and is on the 1901 census with him.

So, what do we know for certain about the Ellen WARD living at St Joseph's Inebriate's home in 1901? She is usually recorded in newspaper reports and the Register of Habitual Criminals as Ellen, Eleanor or Helena WARD.

Ellen appeared in the *Kensington News and West London Times* on 17 August 1889 at Hammersmith Police Court charged with being drunk and disorderly in Latymer Mews, Notting Hill, and damaging a number of bottles. She was fined 10 shillings for each offence.<sup>2</sup>

*The West London Observer* of 09 February 1895 reported that Ellen WARD had been charged with being drunk and disorderly and assaulting a police officer by taking off her boot and striking him on the head. It was reported she had a number of previous convictions and was sentenced to 14 days in prison.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Berkshire Chronicle* dated 29 April 1899, Eleanor WARD was described as a violent tramp. She had been drunk and disorderly in Denmark Street, used filthy language and assaulted a policeman. She had to be carried to the police

station on a stretcher. Eleanor resisted violently and endeavoured to strangle herself with a handkerchief. She was given 5 shillings or 7 days for the drunkenness and 14 days hard labour for the assault.<sup>4</sup>

### **First Case for an Inebriate's Home**

*The Kensington News and West London Times* dated 17 June 1899 reported that for the first time the West London Police Court had used the Inebriate's Act to commit someone to an Inebriate's Reformatory. This first case was our Ellen WARD, described as Helena WARD aged 30, a flower seller who was a Roman Catholic. She had been charged with being drunk and behaving in a disorderly manner in Princes Road, Notting-dale. She had already been convicted of like offences at least 3 times within the preceding 12 months. Helena WARD pleaded guilty. The assistant gaoler produced several registers of charges to prove former convictions. He said the first he had record of was in 1894 but there were several before that. Since 1898 there had been 13 convictions. The Court Missionary said he had known the prisoner coming to court for 10 years for drunkenness. The magistrate said he was considering sending Helena to an Inebriates Home for 3 years to see if any good could be done with her. Helena spoke up and said "Can't you make it 2 years?" and the magistrate said perhaps so and then ordered her to be detained at St Joseph's Inebriates Reformatory at Ashford, Middlesex for 2 years.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately the Inebriate's Home did not solve Ellen's drinking problems. After serving her time in St Joseph's Ellen was in trouble again. *The Middlesex and Surrey Express* dated 07 September 1901 reported that at West London, Eleanor WARD, age 33, a flower seller of no home, charged with being disorderly and using obscene language in High Road, Chiswick. It stated she

had about 50 convictions, had twice been in an Inebriate's Home and was given to heavy drinking. She was fined 40 shillings or in default a month's prison.<sup>6</sup>

Ellen's next reported appearance in court was a humorous affair for some. Apparently the magistrate caused some laughter. The Worcestershire Chronicle of 07 June 1902 reported that Eleanor WARD, a homeless laundress was charged with being drunk, disorderly and using obscene language. The constable stated that he had found the prisoner in St John's Wood Park, an 'aristocratic neighbourhood'. The magistrate interrupted and said "I should like to know that spot. It's very aristocratic is it?" There was laughter in the court. The constable replied that a servant had called him to the prisoner who was very drunk and using language not fit to be repeated in court. The magistrate turned to the prisoner Eleanor and said, "You have sent a shudder through a sensitive and aristocratic neighbourhood and you appear to have behaved in a manner which would make even a Socialist unhappy." Once again there was laughter in court. She was sentenced to 14 days.<sup>7</sup>

In the Fulham Chronicle dated 18 March 1904, Eleanor WARD a 35 year old flower seller of no fixed abode was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Bridge Road. The assistant gaoler said there were about 50 or 60 previous convictions. Eleanor agreed and said, "Yes that is so. It's no good. Send me to prison for 3 months and I can pull myself around. I want to do good." The magistrate ordered the prisoner to find a surety for her good behaviour or in default 3 months detention. Eleanor said "Thank you sir, God bless you".<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, Eleanor WARD could not find the surety and did indeed go to prison for 3 months as she appeared in a newspaper report again in June.

The Fulham Chronicle dated 17 June 1904 reported that a Margaret HANSBURY of 36 Testerton Street was charged with being drunk on High Street, Fulham. She stated she had only had 4 glasses of ale but supposed it made her drunk. The constable said he had found her insensible and had to call a doctor to attend to her. The assistant gaoler then spoke up and said, "This is Eleanor WARD, sir, she came out of prison on Saturday morning after doing 3 months in lieu of finding surety, and she was locked up again on Saturday night." Prisoner said she hoped the magistrate would take into consideration that she had only had four glasses of ale and had come over faint. The magistrate only took into consideration her previous convictions and ordered her to pay 20 shillings or 14 days.<sup>9</sup>

There are no more newspaper reports which can definitely be identified as Ellen nor can she be definitely located in the 1911 census. She could have married or used more aliases. Or she could have died. There is a death in Fulham of an Ellen WARD aged 36 in 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1906. Also, another Ellen WARD in St. Pancras died 4<sup>th</sup> Q. 1908 aged 39. Both records are the correct age for Ellen. Ellen led a difficult life but she seems to have wanted to turn things around and be free of her alcoholism. In 1904 she told the magistrate "I want to do good". We don't know the end of Ellen WARD's story, but let us hope she really did do good in the end.

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**Sources** St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex RG13 1171 folios 12-13

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<sup>1</sup> UK, Registers of Habitual Criminals and Police Gazettes, 1834-1934. WARD, Eleanor. Habitual Drunkards, Portraits and Descriptions. No. 9a reprint with photo. <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*. (1889) Hammersmith Police Court. 17 August. p. 8c. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023..

<sup>3</sup> *West London Observer*. (1895) Assaulting a Constable. 09 February. p. 6c. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Berkshire Chronicle*. (1899) A Violent Tramp. 29 April. P. 7f. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>5</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*. (1899) West London Police Court. 17 June. p. 6a. Collection: British Newspaper Archives. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>6</sup> *The Middlesex and Surrey Express*. (1901) West London. 07September. p. 7a. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>7</sup> *Worcestershire Chronicle*. (1902) Marylebone Police Court. 07 June. p. 2c. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>8</sup> *Fulham Chronicle*. (1904) She was Pleased. 18 March. p. 2a. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.

<sup>9</sup> *Fulham Chronicle*. (1904) The Magistrate's Clerk. 17 June. p. 2c. Collection: British Newspaper Archive. <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 03 April 2023.