

More Than Oliver Twist: Biography

Name: Mary Ann Wilson

B. abt 1822, d 1886

It was difficult to find enough records to develop a convincing biography of Mary Ann Wilson who lived in the Leeds workhouse in 1881. The suggestions below are tentative.

According to her 1881 census record, Mary Ann Wilson was born in Leeds in 1822 (1).

It is possible that her maiden name was Mary Ann Manners because in 1851, a Mary Ann Wilson (no occupation) of a similar age, lived on Pear Street, West Leeds, with her husband Matthias, her son John, aged 1 and her sister Hannah Manners (2). Hannah was 17 and unmarried. Matthias was a 'Compositor', who set the type for printing.

By 1861, aged 40, Mary was a widow (3). She worked as a washerwoman and lived with her unmarried sister, Hannah Wilson. A baby boy also lived there, named Charles Briggs Wilson, aged 6 months. He was recorded as Mary's nephew.

The different surname for Mary's unmarried sister in 1851 and 1861 indicates these may be the records of two different sets of siblings. It is however possible that Hannah may have changed her surname from Manners to Wilson to protect her reputation.

There is no convincing 1871 census record for a Mary Ann Wilson which links to previous or future records. By 1881 Mary Ann Wilson, aged 59, a widow and formerly a washerwoman had moved into Leeds Union Workhouse(4). Five years later at the age of 63 she died (5) and was buried from North Lane, Leeds, in Beckett Street Cemetery on 11 April 1886 in a non-conformist ceremony (6).

References

1. 'Mary Ann Wilson' (1881) *Census return for Leeds Union Workhouse, Leeds, North Leeds, Yorkshire*. Public Record Office: RG11/4524, folio 107, p. 18 (1881). Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 16 April 2020).
2. 'Mary Ann Wilson' (1851) *Census return for Pear Street, Leeds, North Leeds, Yorkshire*. Public Record Office: HO107/2320, folio 1068, p. 15 (1851). Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 16 April 2020).
3. 'Mary Wilson' (1861) *Census return for Wade Court, Leeds, West Leeds, Yorkshire*. Public Record Office: RG9/3392, folio 30, p. 16 (1861). Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 16 April 2020).
4. 'Mary Ann Wilson' (1881) *Census return for Leeds Union Workhouse, Leeds, North Leeds, Yorkshire*. Public Record Office: RG11/4524, folio 107, p. 18 (1881). Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 16 April 2020).
5. 'Mary Ann Wilson' (1886). *Certified entry recording death on the Civil Registration Index, December 1996*. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 10 April 2020)
6. 'Mary Ann Wilson' (1886) Burial of Mary Ann Wilson, 11 April 1886. Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds, North Leeds, Yorkshire (1886). Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: 10 April 2020)