

## The Second Mrs Pink – Where there's a Will there's a Way

I never really fancied Mary Ann Pink, digging into her life that is. However, to be fair, a graveyard headstone is not the best of places for a first encounter with anyone and a graveyard is no place for digging either. I was looking for the headstone of William Pink in Warblington Churchyard, to confirm the idyllic setting and final resting place of a foursome seemingly bound together through life and now in death. And there they were, Dorothy Francis, Thomas Francis, Sarah Pink, William Pink, their headstones eroded and overgrown but appropriately arranged to indicate the permanence of their attachment to each other. But then an additional name was written on William's stone, it is Mary Ann Pink. Five people buried on a site planned for four. Mary Ann Pink was an interloper apparently having gatecrashed the party, more precisely, grave-crashed my story, endangering some of the symmetry that attracted me. You can understand my indifference, so I ditched her, figuratively I should add, remembering where we met.

I was at this time trying to complete the research for an article about William Pink [1], and had so much material, I had to finally sit and write. The little work that I did in trying to trace the second Mrs Pink encouraged me to ignore her. William's parents had moved to Southsea in the 1830s to become pub landlords, I believe, so for a while I mistakenly followed the incorrect person. Some floosie from the bars of Portsmouth I finally reckoned, having noted the 11 years difference in her and William's age. So I felt confident at the time in dismissing her abruptly from the story I was uncovering. I should have known better and been more prepared to trust William's judgement on this matter.

The main difficulty preventing progress on researching Mary Ann Pink was caused by my not having her maiden name. It was David Hopkins of the East Meon Local History Group who pointed me in the correct direction. Mary Ann Pink died on 6th April 1890. Looking at Mary Ann's probate record revealed that one of her executors was "Charles Colbourn of 41/2 Mount-street New Charlton in the County of Kent Market Gardener the Brother". Now I don't know a thing about fractional house numbers, so I assume that Nos 41 and 42 have coalesced. No matter this Will at least tells me that Colbourn was Mary Ann's maiden name. I should have remembered the old saying that where there's a will there's a way!

Even with this vital piece of information, however, the genealogical search was difficult and it was necessary to conduct it with all "variants" open. The data assembled here has been found by utilising a number of variants of "Mary Ann", "Colbourn", "Titchfield" her place of birth and "1824" her commonly given year of birth. For example, despite the surname used by her brother on her probate record, the correct William Pink married a Mary Ann Colborn in Woolwich, London in the third quarter of 1873. In fact "Colborn" appears to be the most commonly used form of her surname in the records I have managed to find, and so I will refer to her in this way in what follows.

At the 1881 census, just after William's death, Mary A Pink is living (within transcription error) in the property listed as Walberton Villa, next door to Warblington Villa that William and Sarah Pink had occupied since retiring from service at Stansted Park in 1855 or thereabouts. Mary Ann is listed as an "annuitant" possibly as a beneficiary, through inheritance, of some of William's pension arrangements. There is however an alternative explanation I tend to favour as it recovers a degree of symmetry with what has gone before.

At the time of the 1861 Census, a Mary A Colborn (age 38, born in Titchfield, Hampshire) is listed as Cook at Stansted Park where Augustina Dixon is recorded as Head. In the 1871

census shortly before Augustina Dixon's death in Kensington, London, of that same year, Mary Calborn (sic) is recorded as a servant (age 47, born in 1824 in Hampshire) to Augustie (sic) Dixon in Cromwell Road, Kensington. Clearly Mrs Dixon has moved to London, no doubt to seek better medical treatment in the latter stages of her life. Given then that the above two Mary Ann's are one and the same person, it is notable that she is only one of two servants common to both these 1861 and 1871 households, the other is male. It seems that Mary Colborn (the soon-to-be second Mrs Pink) was a senior, highly valued, employee, and one who perhaps provided as valuable a nursing service for the second Mrs Dixon, as Sarah Jackson, the first Mrs Pink, had done for the first Mrs Dixon. From a seemingly tight-fisted initial position (remember the codicil placed in Charles Dixon's will [1]) Augustina gained renown in her later life as a most generous member of the community. Quite possible therefore that, remembering her husband Charles' example of how to show gratitude to excellent staff, Augustina made provision in her will to reward Mary Ann for her valuable additional service. Mary Ann could thus have been an annuitant in her own right, besides benefiting from the transfer arrangements of William Pink's will, if any.

So where had Mary Ann Colborn spent her earlier years in service? Well at the time of the 1841 census there is a Mary Ann Coulbourn (sic) (born 1824, no place given) is a servant in the household of Catherine Treager at Liverpool Terrace, St Mary, Islington, Middlesex). By the time of the 1851 census, Mary Ann Colbourn (sic) (age 27, born 1824, in Litchfield (sic) Hampshire) is in the employment of Philip William Mure. As a wealthy "Distiller Farmer of 100 acres" in Middlesex, and MP to boot, he moved in not entirely dissimilar circles as Charles Dixon (wine merchant/importer and Sheriff of Sussex), so that it is possible that they were acquainted. A trustworthy *vita* and background on which Augustina Dixon could therefore rely, when faced with the simultaneous retirement of three of the most senior members of her household who had received such generous bequests from her husband Charles on his death in 1855. Whether this, or simply that Mary Ann was at the appropriate time of her life with the correct qualification and experience to apply for more elevated positions elsewhere, Mary Ann Colborn arrived at Stansted some time in the period 1855-61, probably as the direct replacement Cook for Dorothy Francis. Indeed Thomas Francis, as the trusted retiring butler, and William Pink, Charles Dixon's secretary, could well have played some role in making the appointment. Philip Mure himself died in 1857, which might be a more accurate indication of the date of these staff changes.

There is one small additional item that convinces me that this was a transfer of staff between familiar households, and indeed that Mary Ann was not alone in making this transfer. That is, according to the 1851 census record, also listed as being in the service of Philip Mure is Ellen Bullard. I have no direct evidence of Ellen Bullard's appointment at Stansted since, unlike Mary Ann Colbourn, she does not appear on Stansted's 1861 census return. However an Ellen Bullard with virtually identical life coordinates marries Thomas Francis in the latter half of 1860, thus becoming his second wife after the death of his first, Dorothy, in 1859. Is there a more likely place than the enchanted forest of Stansted where such a union could have been formed? I doubt it.

Perhaps Mary Ann Colborn and Ellen Bullard were best friends, but even if not, the emotional, as well as the physical, distances between Mary Ann and Ellen Bullard, and Thomas Francis and William Pink are so short as to make the introduction of Mary Ann to William virtually guaranteed. The Enchanted Forest can be relied on to fan the slightest emotional embers into a blaze remember, and so it proves. William marries Mary Ann and is pretty soon back knocking out engravings of Stansted again!

Their relationship appears to have blossomed over its seven or so years of marriage, with Mary Ann declaring on William's probate record, not that he was a butler, nor that he was an engraver, but that he was a Gentleman. Additionally, on William's headstone she records the words,

*Not gone from memory,  
Not gone from love,  
But gone to our father's home above.*

No grave-crasher then. These are fitting words, if not the password, with which to join the foursome so close in both life and death.

Of course, I would like to know where she came from, and I came up with three possibilities. There are difficulties with all three but on balance the one of best fit appears to be

"Mary Ann b.1823, Litchfield, Hampshire to Edward and Sarah Colborn"

(elements written as they occur in the Find My Past transcription). With regards to this, there is a slight discrepancy with the year of birth, explainable by the usual birth/baptism date confusion. The birthplace is correct to within transcription error, "L" and "T" in an old hand, and an even older script, being often confused. There is also a brother Charles born in 1825. The surname however does not take the precise form used on Mary Ann's probate certificate.

So how to resolve these remaining discrepancies? The wedding certificate would do it, but am I concerned enough to find the additional expense? There does come a point at which the Law of Diminishing Returns cuts in and here, I felt, was it. These final details would be confirmed at what I consider to be disproportionate cost, so I leave it there. A slightly fuzzy end agreed, but who knows, things change, and I might need to know the exact Mary Ann somewhere up the line. So if at some future date you should find me wandering around the Enchanted Forest, then despite all romantic interpretations you could attach to this, you know exactly what I'm doing!

*A Clive Pugh*

**PS:** It was just two weeks before I cracked! More likely that I had nothing better to do, if truth be known. I hadn't wanted to spend any more money than I had already spent on purchasing a Find My Past subscription, but I just had to know. At a cost of £9.25 the marriage certificate of William Pink and Mary Ann Colborn didn't come cheap, but at least it contained one critical piece of information. Mary Ann's father was a wood carver named **Edward Colborn**. Just what I needed to conclude that Mary Ann, the second Mrs Pink, was born in 1823 (baptized in 1824) at Titchfield, Hampshire to Edward and Sarah Colborn. She married William Pink on 28 August, 1873 in the Parish Church of Charlton in Kent.

Of course I got a little more for my money than that. For example of the many professions declared by Thomas Pink (William's father), on this wedding certificate he is confirmed as being a "licensed victualler" in his later life. Also the witnesses to the marriage are Robert (a bricklayer) and Emma Mitchell, aged 37 and 36 respectively living in Kensington at the time of the 1871 census. It is not clear what relationship they hold with respect to either of the married couple, but William's stated address at the time of the wedding would appear to be that of the Mitchells, while Mary Ann has used her brother Charles' address, New Charlton in Kent, which corresponds to that given on the probate certificate.

**REFERENCE:**

[1]: A Clive Pugh: “The Remarkable Mr Pink – An Emsworth Ill-luminary”, Havant Borough History Booklet, No. 53, September 2015, obtainable from Emsworth Museum.

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