

MORE THAN OLIVER TWIST

GUILDFORD UNION WORKHOUSE

BIOGRAPHY

SYDNEY ATTFIELD

(B :- 1840 - D:- ?)

7th February 2020.

Diann Arnfield.

Sydney's life was very harsh at times, even before he was born in 1840, his father John Attfield who had fathered 13 children by 1837, was seeking application from the Poor Law Commissioners of the Guildford Union Workhouse for them to take in his two eldest boys who were very "weakly" (1). These were probably, Henry aged 11 years & Peter aged 6/7 years (2).

Sydney was born in Albury in 1840, he was the ninth child to be born, to (3) his parents John & Lucy Ann, who then had a further 3 children – John, David & James (4). John Attfield had a total of 18 children in his lifetime. Six were by his marriage to Sarah Smithers in 1808 and then after her death in 1822, he married Ann Lucy Holland, by whom he had a further 12 children (5).

The Baptism of Sidney – took place on 14th June 1840 at St Peter and St Paul, Albury in Surrey (6).

In 1841, the family are living in the Parish of Albury, near Blackheath, in Surrey, with their nine children and George aged 20 who is John's son by his previous marriage to Sarah. John, George and Henry are all employed as Agricultural Labourers (7).

Life must have been very harsh, as Sydney's mother Ann had died in 1848 and at the time of the 1851 census, Sydney age 9 years, his older sister Sophia age 13 years are both in the Guildford Union Workhouse (8).

Plus, his sister Harriet age 23 years is in the Epsom Union Workhouse (9). John aged 63 years in 1851, was struggling at this time as he had 8 children to feed and himself, while working and receiving Parish Relief (10).

Sydney, obviously tried very hard to improve his life, as he appears to have become a shoemaker between 1851 – 1858, he may have even learnt this trade while in the workhouse or may have been apprenticed out to a local shoemaker in the Guildford area. However, sadly we gather these details, by the Calendar of Prisoners and the proceedings of the Surrey Assizes – Court date of 3rd August 1858 (11). The Summer Assizes held at Guildford on 3rd August:- recorded the following:- Sydney Attfield, Age 18, a Shoemaker by trade was brought before the Magistrate, E. Bray, Shere, Guildford on 3rd July 1858 and received into custody on 5th July 1858. The offence being- "Feloniously and burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling house of Sarah Kaile, at Albury, and stealing therein one tin canister, and one coat, her property. He was tried by Sir George, William, Wilshere, Bramwell, Knight a (Baron of the Queen) on the 3rd August 1858 in Guildford – Verdict of the Jury – pleaded guilty of the Burglary, after a Previous Conviction of Felony – Sentence – 18 months hard Labour in Wandsworth Prison.

Wandsworth Prison was built in 1849 as a Surrey House of Correction to replace Brixton Prison and was intended for those serving short sentences. Designed to hold 1000 prisoners and the first male prisoners were admitted in 1851 and female prisoners in 1852 (12).

Sydney was probably released from Wandsworth in February or March 1860.

Then around September 1860, Sydney joins the 103rd Foot Regiment, (Royal Bombay Fusiliers) fighting and keeping the peace in India. His regimental number was 3599. The origins of this regiment stretch back to the 1660's, when in 1661, Bombay became a British possession as part of Catherine of Braganza's marriage dowry to King Charles II. Charles raised four independent companies to garrison his new territory and he transferred Bombay to the East India Company in 1668, thus, these units were turned into the Bombay Regiment and put under Company control. In 1862, it transferred to the British Army and was given the numeral 103 in line infantry order of precedence. It was also granted the title 'Royal' (13).

After the Indian Mutiny, (1857 – 1859), which was largely blamed on the ineptitude of the East India Company, a Government minister presided over India in London and was assisted and advised by a Council of India in India. When British government officials, went to India in service of the crown they lived like 'super bureaucrats'. These camps and new military towns were initially erected as secure bases for the organized British regiments with straight roads wide enough for cavalry to gallop through when ever needed. The old companies 3 armies (located in Bengal, Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) which in 1857 had only 43,000 British to 228,000 native troops, were reorganized by 1867 to a much 'safer' mix of 65,000 British to 140,000 Indian soldiers (14). During Sydney's service in India, the 103rd Foot Regiment was stationed in Bombay (1864) / Neemuch (1865) and in (1866) they were again stationed in Bombay.

On the 30th April 1867, on completion of his Medical Examination Sydney, aged 25, was awarded a Pension, after serving 6 years & 7 months of which 2 years 6 months he served in India (15). The record states that he was suffering from:- 'Epilepsia' 'constitutional tendency called into action by excessive use of tobacco – right to earn in a civil life' (16). At that time it must be remembered that besides smoking, tobacco was also chewed & thought to cause seizures / epileptic fits (17).

Obviously, life proved difficult again for Sydney, as he is in the Guildford Union Workhouse at the age of 26 for a total of 17 days in the half year ending Michellmas – 29th September (1867) (18). Then again, he is in the Guildford Union Workhouse in early 1868, as it is recorded he spent 3 days there alongside, his sister Eliza Attfield, age 30, who had been in the workhouse a total of 94 days during the period half year ended Lady Day – 25th March (1868) (19).

Sydney, may have gone to London seeking work, but became ill and sort help from the Camden / St Pancras Workhouse, as he is recorded as to being admitted on the 6th February 1868 and then discharged on 27th August 1868, being referred to the Medical Officer for a report (21).

Sydney's whereabouts between 1868 – 1873, is not recorded on the 1871 census or noted in the Guildford Union Workhouse Books. Again though, in March 1873, Sydney is convicted of 'Simple larceny' theft of 6 shillings and sentenced to 3 months 'hard labour' (22). His criminal record – lists his previous convictions:-

7th September 1856 – theft of a saucepan / 2 calendar months hard labour

1st August 1857 – theft of a pair of shoes / 2 calendar months hard labour

27th February 1858 – absconding with Workhouse clothing / 1 calendar month hard labour

22nd June 1867 – theft of 2 shillings / 3 calendar months hard labour.

On his release from prison 31st May 1873, the record indicates, that Sydney's residence was the Guildford Union Workhouse.

During the next 8 years, it is not clear where or what Sydney did, he may have learnt to be a Baker, as this is the occupation that is listed on the 1881 census for the Guildford Union Workhouse (23).

He is listed as a Vagrant, age 38 years and occupation 'Baker'.

Sydney may have worked at 'Kings Bakery', which was established by William King in 1877 – 1925 it was situated opposite 'The Drummond' PH in Albury Village, Surrey (24).

Sydney's struggle to survive from such an early age, must have been extremely difficult and traumatic, being in the workhouse from age 9, only to frequent going back in the workhouse, at times throughout his life, when there was no other alternative. Sydney's life, was one of struggle from Workhouse – Prison – Army – Prison and possibly ended in the workhouse. His only escape from such a dire existence, was probably his years in the British Army, where he was assured of food and a bed each night.

There is no record of Sydney's death or burial.

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- 2.'Sydney Attfield'. (1841). England Census Return for Albury , Surrey. Registration District of Guildford, Surrey. Sub – registration district of Albury, Surrey. Public Record Office: PRO HO/107/Piece 1045 / Folio 27 / Page 4. Available at:<http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).
- 3.'Sydney Attfield' (1840). Birth. England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, (1837 – 1915). County Surrey. Vol 4 / Page 142. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).
- 4.'Sydney Attfield'. (1841). England Census Return for Albury, Surrey. Registration District of Guildford, Surrey. Sub – registration district of Albury, Surrey. Public Record Office: PRO HO/107/Piece 1045 / Folio 27 / Page 4. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).
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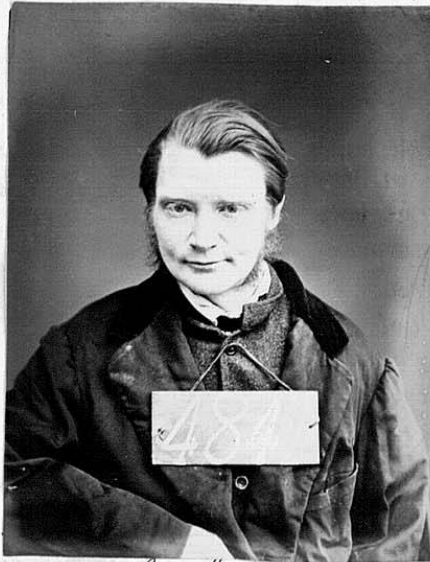
17 May 73

174
4Name, N^o Sidney Attfield 4841

and Aliases. _____

Description.

Age (on discharge) — 30
 Height — 5ft 4 3/4
 Hair — L. Brun
 Eyes — L. Grey
 Complexion — Fresh
 Where born — Guildford
 Married or Single — Single
 Trade or occupation — Labor
 Distinguishing marks
 Scar right arm, back of neck
 + over right eye -



Address at time of apprehension — No home

Place and date of conviction — Guildford 1 March 73

Offence for which convicted — Simple Larceny
Sty 4 onions = 6.

Sentence — 3 Cal Mos H.L.

Date to be liberated — 31 May 73.

Intended residence after liberation — Guildford Union

Previous Convictions

Summary

7 Sep 56 Sty a saucepan, 2 Cal Mos, Guildford
 1 Aug 57 Sty a pr of shoes 2 — — —
 27 Feb 58 Absconding with workhouse clothing 1 Cal Mo — —
 22 June 57 Sty 2/- 3 Cal Mos — —

By Jury

2 Aug 58, Burglary after a P.C.F.

18 Cal Mos

Guildford Assizes.

Remarks, antecedents &c.



Wandsworth Prison. Built in 1849.



George William Wilshere Bramwell, 1st Baron Bramwell. (1808 – 1892).

MORE THAN OLIVER TWIST

LIFE HISTORY SUMMARY SYDNEY ATTFIELD

GUILDFORD UNION WORKHOUSE.

NAME:- SYDNEY ATTFIELD.

John Attfield. (Father of Sydney)

Date: 31st October 1837

Reference:- Application to Poor Law Commissioners. Guildford Union Poor Law Minute Books. (1836 - 1918) Available at:- Surrey History Centre, Woking, Surrey. Ref:- BG6 /11/1 / Page 358. (Accessed 29/01/2020).

Birth

Date: Apr -May-June 1840

Reference:

'Sydney Attfield' (1840). England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, (1837 – 1915). County Surrey. Vol 4 / Page 142. Available at : <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).

Baptism

Date: 14th June 1840.

Reference:

'Sydney Attfield' (1840) . Surrey England, Church of England Baptisms, (1813 – 1917). Parish of Albury, Surrey. No 613. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).

1841 Census Returns:

Date:1841

Reference:

'Sydney Attfield' (1841) . England Census Return for Albury, Surrey. Registration District of Guildford, Surrey. Sub- registration district of Albury, Surrey. Public Record Office: PRO HO/107 / Piece 1045 / Folio 27 / Page 4. Available at : <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).

1851 Census Returns:

Date:1851

Reference:

'Sydney Attfield' (1851) . England Census Return for Guildford, Surrey. Registration District of Guildford, Surrey. Sub- registration district of Woking, Surrey. Guildford Union Workhouse, Union Lane, in the Parish of Stoke, Guildford, Surrey. PRO HO 107 / Piece 1594 / Folio 469 / Page 6. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 23/01/2020).

1851 Census Returns:

Date: 1851

Reference:

'Sophia Atfield' (1851) England Census Return for Guildford Surrey. Registration District of Guildford, Surrey. Sub – registration district of Woking, Surrey. Guildford Union Workhouse, Union Lane, in the Parish of Stoke, Guildford, Surrey. PRO HO 107 / Piece 1594 / Folio 471 / Page 10. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 29/01/2020).

1851 Census Returns:

Date:1851

Reference:

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1851 Census Returns:

Date:1851

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Date: 3rd August 1858.

Reference:

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1864 November – Joined the Army - 103rd Foot Regiment:

Date: November 1864

Reference:

'Sydney Atfield' (1864) Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Admission and Discharge Records – Fold 3 (1715 – 1925). Period of Service – recorded on Examination of Invalid Soldiers. 30th April 1867. Regiment 103rd Foot. Private. Regimental No 3599. Available at: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed 18/01/2020).

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Date : 30th April 1867.

Reference:

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1867 Guildford Union Workhouse – Indoor Poor Relief.

Date: Half year ending Michelmas – 29th September.

'Sydney Attfield' Age 26 years. No of days maintenance 17. Guildford Union Book – Report of Guildford Board of Guardians for Years (1864 – 1871) & Statement of Accounts. Available at: Surrey History Centre, Woking, Surrey. Ref: BG6/33/1. (Accessed 29/01/2020).

1868 Guildford Union Workhouse – Indoor Poor Relief.

Date: Half year ended Lady Day - 25th March 1868.

Reference:

'Sydney Attfield' Age 27 years. No of days maintenance 3.

'Eliza Attfield' (Sydney's Sister) Age 30. No of days maintenance 94.

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Date: 6th February 1868.

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