

SHAND, FRANCES BATTY (c.1815 - 1885), charity worker

Name: Frances Batty Shand
Date of birth: c.1815
Date of death: 1885
Parent: John Shand
Parent: Frances Brown
Gender: Female
Occupation: charity worker
Area of activity: Philanthropy; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Ffion Mair Jones

Frances Batty Shand was born about 1815 in Jamaica, the daughter of a Kincardineshire plantation owner, John Shand (c.1759-1825) by Frances Brown (d. 1841) of St Catherine, Jamaica. Described by Shand as 'a free woman of Color', Brown served as his housekeeper, and was mother to ten children by him, all born at St Catherine, of whom Frances was the youngest. Shand returned to Scotland in 1816, having purchased the country estate of the Burn, Fettercairn, and Arnhall, Aberdeenshire, in 1814, and with hopes of securing a parliamentary seat, evidently with a view to galvanizing West Indian plantation owners' efforts to lobby for compensation for slave owners. His daughter Frances, then a small child, also made the journey to Scotland, where her aunt Helen Shand, of Elgin, Moray, may have played a part in her care as she undertook her education. She would have benefitted from a sum of £3,000 reserved for this purpose, as did her six surviving siblings by the provision of their father's will, proved on 12 January 1826.

In 1841, Frances was living in Edinburgh in a household made up of her brother John Batty Shand and her sister Milbrough Sandiman, married since 1826, but possibly already widowed since there is no mention of her husband. By 1859, John had relocated to Cardiff, and was involved with the Rhymney Railway Company. It is likely that Frances moved with him, although there is no proof of her residence in the town until the census of 1861, which notes that she was living at Park Place. By 1871, her sister Milbrough, now clearly described as a widow, together with two female servants, also formed part of the household headed by John, at Windsor Place, Cardiff.

In the mid-1860s a commissioner from London was sent to enquire into the numbers of blind people in the south Wales towns of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. This visit may have triggered local efforts in 1865 to found the Cardiff Institute for the Blind, an undertaking in which both John Batty Shand and his sister Frances were very prominent. After settling in Cardiff, it was reported that John had 'became much interested in the moral and material well-being of the town, and was at all times anxious to lend his aid to every good work calculated to promote these objects'. His sense of the wretched plight of the blind made him 'mainly instrumental in founding [an] institution' for their benefit, with Frances taking the role of secretary (*The Western Mail*, 2 August 1877). Elsewhere, press reports appear to attribute the founding of the institute more firmly to Frances herself (*The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette*, 8 April 1871). After modest beginnings, where a small number of blind people were taught at their own houses, the institute progressed to a succession of premises: at a small workshop in the Canton area of Cardiff; at Byron Street, Roath; and, in 1868, at Longcross Street off Newport Road (where it remained until the street was destroyed during a German air raid in 1941). Frequenters of the institute were taught to read and write but an even greater need identified was that of providing them with the means of securing a livelihood which would remove their dependency on charity and Poor Law relief. Press releases naming Frances as secretary and signalling her willingness to receive correspondence from members of the public should they wish for further information about the institute's work, show her proactive stance towards advancing this goal: a Welsh example, published in November 1866, mentioned teaching reading from the Scriptures in both English and Welsh alongside instruction in a 'craft to enable them to make their own living' ('a chreffft i'w galluogi i ennill eu bywoliaeth eu hunain'); an English-language newspaper (April 1871) credited Frances with raising subscriptions 'for erecting workshops' at Newport Road. These were mainly small donations but consisted of some larger sums as well, with trustees of the institute, including John Crichton-Stuart, third marquess of Bute, among the prime donors. It was at the Longcross Street premises that the activities for furthering the goal of rendering the blind capable of living independent lives were fully established: teachers directed the attendees in 'basket and matmaking', and a store was opened for selling their creations. When hard times hit in 1876, with depression affecting the shipping trade, Frances made 'an appeal... to the ladies of the neighbourhood for help'. The committee of women established as a result proceeded to arrange a bazaar, held at the Assembly rooms, where decorated stalls were furnished with a 'large and choice display of fancy needlework etc for the drawing-room, study, bed-chamber, boudoir... French fancy-baskets, toys etc; plants in bloom sent in by Lord Bute, Lieut-Col. Hill et al'. This mobilization of women constituted an important contribution by Frances towards furthering the aims and ensuring the continuation of the institute, and was said to have provided a 'magnificent contribution' to its funds.

The following year, John Batty Shand died at his home in 13 Windsor Place. A fund set up in his name, the 'Shand Memorial Fund', was reported in 1879 to have paid a mortgage of £500 on the institute's buildings. Frances appears to have left Cardiff soon after her brother's death: she is said to be living at Rosebank, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire, in 1878, and she died in Montreux, Switzerland, on 11 February 1885. Her remains were brought back to Cardiff and left overnight at the Institute for the Blind before burial at Cathays cemetery, where her brother John had also been interred. A Scottish estate in her name was valued at £11,777 2s 5d. From this sum, she bequeathed a life interest in property owned at Moss Terrace, Elgin, to a woman named Ann Allardice, together with monies to the daughters of two cousins, Col. John Shand and William Shand. Her remaining bequests were made to charitable causes: £1,000 bequeathed to the 'Shand Memorial Fund', intended for the Cardiff Institute for the Blind, was warmly received at the institute's annual meeting in 1886, where Frances was described as the 'mother' of the establishment and 'an inspiration to those who were trying to follow her example'. The renaming in 1984 of the Cardiff Institute for the Blind as 'Shand House' is considered an acknowledgement of this contribution. A sum of £50 was bequeathed to the Cardiff town mission, whilst the remainder of her estate was earmarked for a children's ward at the Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Infirmary, named after John, the 'Shand Memorial Ward'.

Author

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Sources

Anthony Cooke, *Journal of Scottish historical studies* (2012), vol. 32, no. 2, 127-165

Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery.n. Frances Brown; Frances Batty Shand; John Shand

National Library of Wales: [Welsh Journals](#)

National Library of Wales: [Welsh Newspapers](#)

Census 1841, 1861, 1871

Will of John Shand, 1 March 1826 (PROB-11-1710-17)

[Find A Grave Index](#), database

British Listed Buildings s.n. [the Burn, Fettercairn](#)

Glamorgan Archives: Association for the Blind, Records; dated 1865 -c.2010 (DBLI)

Glamorgan Archives: The Cardiff Institute for the Blind and Batty Shand family: A brief history of the Institute, 1865-1965 (DBLI/C/1)

Glamorgan Archives: Bond dated 20 July 1859 (DJE/58)

Further reading

Sight life Formerly Cardiff Institute for the Blind

Wikipedia Article: Frances Batty Shand

Additional Links

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Published date: 2022-08-30

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APA Citation



Jones, F. M., (2022). SHAND, FRANCES BATTY (c.1815 - 1885), charity worker. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 12 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s14-SHAN-BAT-1815>

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