

**Gertrude Mary Bird
Née Goldsmith**

27.04.1886 – 19.09.1953



Gertrude Mary Goldsmith was born in 1886 at 17 Millbank Street Westminster. Her parents were **Charles Leonard Goldsmith** from **Rede Suffolk** and his second wife **Clara Ann Selina Clarke** from Somerton Suffolk. She had a half brother **William Charles** and a half sister **Mary Ann**. Also a half brother **Lawrence John**.

She was the second of four children from her father's second marriage to **Clara Clarke**, his first wife **Elizabeth** had died in 1881 at no 17 Millbank. **Charles Leonard** was born in 1884 at no 17 **Tom Edwin** in 1887 at no 17 and **Bertha Violet** at no 23 in 1899.

By 1901 Gertrude had been separated from her brothers who had been sent to lodge round the corner at 12 Wood Street with a Mr & Mrs Poulter. Allegedly her father Charles didn't care much for them.



Millbank St looking north c 1870

Millbank was a dirty and grimy place in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Certainly not the tree lined boulevard with riverside walks that it is today. Along the river bank there were factories warehouses and mills. Gertrude's father Charles worked at White John Bazely & Brothers Cement Factory as a Horse Keeper/Groom and her uncle George worked there as well. It had many tenement buildings which belonged to the Company, they were all demolished in the 1920's. The view across the river to Lambeth over the old bridge was pretty dismal as well. Dickens described Millbank as 'a melancholy waste'.

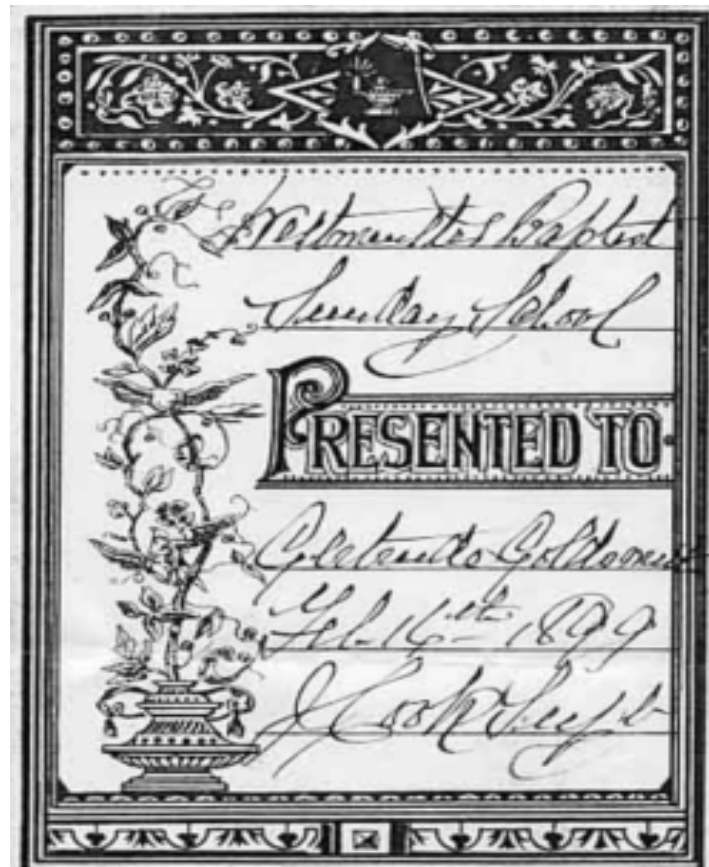


View from Millbank c1900

Gertrude and her brothers and sisters possibly attended the Millbank Infants School



She also attended the Westminster Baptist Sunday School although her brother **William** by 1899 was involved with Christ Church Westminster Bridge Road the other side of the river where he was a Vestry Worker





Westminster Baptist Church today

Gertrude also attended Grey Coat Hospital School in Westminster





*Grey Coat Hospital Uniform c 1890
Underclothes consisted of home-made stays and black surge petticoats
Handed down from child to child unwashed until they wore out*

The Grey Coat Hospital School became a day school for girls in 1874. Elsie Day was headmistress from 1874 to 1910. It took its name from the colour of the uniform. It was founded by a group of shopkeepers who were appalled at the conditions of orphaned and neglected children on the streets of Westminster. It was established in the Parish Workhouse where it remains today.

93						
NAME.	Date.	Form.	Place.	Days Absent.	Order Marks.	REMARKS.
<i>Goldsmith, Gertrude</i>	<i>1.96</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	
	<i>2.96</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>-</i>	
	<i>3.96</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>6 1/2</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>1.97</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4 1/2</i>	
	<i>2.97</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1 1/2</i>	
	<i>3.97</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>1/2</i>	<i>7</i>	
	<i>1.98</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>2.98</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Better.</i>
	<i>3.98</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>1.99</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>2</i>	
	<i>2.99</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>17 1/2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Exhausted.</i>

By the **1901 Census** when Gertrude was 14 she was a **Stationers Assistant**.

On 27th July 1909 Gertrude married Harry Bird who described himself as a **Stationer** at the Register Office St George Hanover Square.

The couple married out of 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road which was registered as a Confectionary and Pastry shop under the name of **Harry Bird**. The witnesses at the wedding were Rebecca Bird, Harry's mother and a friend Henry Grist.

Harry also had a Stationers Shop at 133 Praed Street in front of Paddington Station registered under the name of **William Bird**

Six months after the wedding Gertrude gave birth to Thora Gertrude at her in law's house at 18 Esher Street Westminster, Harry's mother Rebecca probably delivered Thora.

Very early on in the marriage Harry began a relationship with **Dorothy May Mazasitisz Powell** which continued until his death in 1950.

Two more children were born, both at 215 Vauxhall Bridge Rd. The maternal line of the second female child is unknown. The third child, a son, was almost certainly Dorothy's due to his name. Parent's names on the family's birth certificates are unreliable.



Westminster Register Office

Dorothy appeared to have given birth to most of the children and allegedly Gertrude delivered them and brought them up as her own. The two women initially being sent to varying addresses for Dorothy to have the babies. Harry Bird began using the alias **William Wallace** on birth certificates and Dorothy **Mrs Wallace**, although she did name five of the children **Mazasitisz** her family name.

It seems as if Harry sent the two ladies and the younger children away from London for a few months when Dorothy was having the babies. Possibly because of the shame it brought on the family.

By 1911 Gertrude's parents and the rest of her family had moved to 69 Ponsonby Place and by the 1920's two of her brothers were running shops in the street.



Around 1918/19 Gertrude Harry and the family appeared to have left 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road and began making their way along the south coast until they finally settled in Torquay Devon.

Harry was still using the name **Wallace** until 1921.

It is rumoured that perhaps Harry was a conscientious objector and/or had used the name to cover up the family situation. According to present members of the family 'no one knew who they belonged to'.

There are stories from the older members of the Goldsmith family that there were fights between Gertrude's brothers & Harry, perhaps this is why they left London or it could have been the embarrassing family situation.

To quote " There were three of us in this marriage"



The family appeared to live in many different addresses until the end of the second world war and often seemed to have two or three properties at the same time.

Firstly Haytor View in 1921 and by 1928 Harry had acquired Newholm which was in the family for around three years. He then acquired Adyar in 1932 a Private Hotel, the whole family appeared to be living there in 1936 including Gertrude & Dorothy. Two of the children married from there. Esdaile was acquired in 1939 which had letting rooms. Most of the family lived there on & off over the years and some grandchildren were born there



Esdaile

Dorothy and Harry ran the businesses whilst Gertrude was sent off to other properties to look after the younger children. At one point she was in Brixham.

Mansands Coastguard Cottages were in the family for many years and because one of the children had a weak chest Gertrude lived there with the three youngest ones. There was no running water or electricity. Things were very primitive, they walked once a week over the hill to Brixham to do the shopping and carried it all home. The children collected the milk from the farm and walked to school in Brixham everyday

Harry visited every Friday as although he was the proprietor of Hotels he was also the Chief Cashier for the Torquay Herald. He walked all around the district on Fridays collecting the money from newsagents and would call in at Mansands to see the children and drop money off for Gertrude. This was never enough and in the summer she used to sell teas and lemonade to visitors



Teas at Mansands



Gertrude at Mansands



The three youngest girls at Mansands

The family were very musical and artistic and when the children were older Harry had a couple of bands. Later on the younger generation created their own bands. There was plenty of work around Torquay in the evenings for dances and for weddings and functions at the weekends. They often played with their daughters at the Co-Op Hall



La Zoema Band

The artistic and musical interests continue into the family today

Gertrude was a vegetarian, theosophist, internationalist, feminist, co-operator, pacifist, anti-vivisectionist and an environmentalist. Later on in her life she wrote letters to the newspapers and to public figures on her typewriter. These were often read out on the radio.

She may have become an activist after seeing how women lived before they acquired the Vote and the conditions in which she lived in as a girl in Westminster. She may have been influenced by the suffragettes, who were very active when she was living near Parliament.



Women protesting on the Thames outside Gertrude's house

Later on in life when the children grew up Gertrude lived with them and enjoyed gardening and growing fruit and vegetables for family meals. She was very active attending various groups and meetings. She used to take her daughter and grandchildren to Vegetarian Society meetings. Her grandchildren attended a Vegetarian school in Torquay called Knowles Hill.



Gertrude did not seem to have mentioned her brothers or surviving sister much many of whom continued to live for many years in Westminster. Especially to her grandchildren, although she used to visit London on occasions.

Her half sister Mary Ann died 7th June 1914 after giving birth in Westminster
 Her half brother William died 28th November 1914 at 69 Ponsonby Place
 Her **father** Charles died 21st December 1930 at 69 Ponsonby Place
 Her **mother** Clara died on 9th January 1938 at 69 Ponsonby Place
 Her brother Charles died 21st December 1939 at 30 Ponsonby Place
 Her brother Tom died in 1947 at 42 Ponsonby Place

Her half brother Lawrence John died 5th May 1959 in Greenwich

From around 1922 her brothers Charles and Tom with their wives ran shops in Ponsonby Place at no 30 and no 42

Number 42 was a newsagent and number 30 a tobacconist and sweet shop



Ponsonby Place

The two shops were in the family until 1977 being run by the children and grandchildren of Gertrude's two brothers

There is a story that Gertrude's sister Bertha may have emigrated to Australia, her son Henry Robinson was living with his grandmother Clara in 1922 at 69 Ponsonby Place and her daughter Clara Violet was still living there when her grandmother died in 1939 , she registered the death and continued to live there afterwards

Gertrude had 28 nieces and nephews

When **Harry Bird** died in 1950 he remembered Gertrude in his Will. He rarely visited her or his grandchildren on the Childs side in latter years.

Gertrude died on 19th September 1953 in the Arthington Nursing Home Barton Road Torquay at the age of 67 years. Her certificate states she was the widow of Harry Bird Hotel Proprietor (retired)

