



## **KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND THE PUBLIC CENSUS OF 1911**

(Information below supplied with kind permission of The National Archives. See: [www.1911census.co.uk](http://www.1911census.co.uk) & [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com))

On the night of Sunday 2 April 1911, a census was taken of the British population. The count included all individual households, plus institutions such as prisons, workhouses, naval vessels and merchant vessels, and it also attempted to make an approximate count of the homeless. In common with the censuses that preceded it, it recorded the following information:

- Where an individual lived
- Their age at the time of the census
- Who (what relatives) they were living with
- Their place of birth
- Occupation

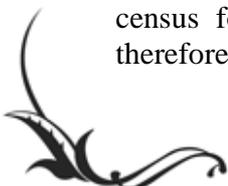
Also, depending on an individual's circumstances, additional information could include:

- Who their guests were on the night of the census
- The number of servants they had (if any)
- Whether they were an employee or employer
- Details of nationality
- Duration of current marriage

The 1920 Census Act required the closure of census information to the public for 100 years. However, the 1911 census is not covered by this act and in December 2006 the Information Commissioner's Office ruled that access should be given to the 1911 census, but that personally sensitive information should remain closed for a full 100 years. All censuses after 1911 are covered by the 1920 Census Act, so the 1921 census and all censuses thereafter will remain closed for 100 years.

**Text below: © 2009, Gerri Kimber and the Katherine Mansfield Society**

Public access to the 1911 census was made available on 12 January 2009. A detailed analysis of certain pages of the census has revealed some intriguing insights into the life of Katherine Mansfield at a difficult time for her personally, and with hitherto few substantiated facts for biographers to work on. The National Archives have given the KMS permission to reproduce the pages relevant to Mansfield at the time the census was taken. As she was in New Zealand in 1901, in France in 1921, and dead by 1931, the UK census for 1911 remains the only one where her official details are recorded, and therefore all the more important for scholars of her life and work.



Parts of the period 1908-1911 remain somewhat of a mystery for Mansfield scholars. The fact is that Mansfield destroyed nearly all the letters and diaries in her possession relating to these difficult early years in London, and many of the 'facts' written in the various biographies are based on hearsay or conjecture.

The first census form discussed here yields some surprising and fascinating information about the musically gifted Trowell family. The Trowells lived in Wellington for several years and Mansfield had known them since the age of thirteen. There were twin brothers Thomas ('Tom', though confusingly Mansfield at this time addressed him as 'Caesar' and once in Europe he would take on the professional name of 'Arnold') and Garnet, together with a younger sister Dorothy (Dolly). The oldest son Lynley had tragically died of pneumonia at the age of ten in New Zealand. Mansfield took cello lessons from Thomas the father whilst in Wellington, and developed a crush on the more talented twin Tom, a gifted cellist. The twins were sent to Europe in 1903 to further their musical careers, with the grand sum of £885 provided by benefactors in New Zealand, including Mansfield's own father. By 1907 they had been joined by the rest of their family and had made a permanent home in London.

Mansfield herself returned to London from New Zealand in October 1908. In the words of Jeffrey Meyers:

Within ten months of her arrival she had had an unhappy love affair with one man, conceived his illegitimate child, married a second man and left him the next day, endured a period of drug addiction and suffered a miscarriage. (Meyers: 36)

Once there, she immediately headed to the Trowell household in St John's Wood at 52 Carlton Hill, believing herself to be in love with Tom. However, her idealised romantic notion of a liaison proved a disappointment; it soon became obvious that her affections were not reciprocated, Tom being single-mindedly focussed on his musical career, and in truth a little embarrassed by Mansfield's overpowering affections. So, with a typically swift change of direction, she transferred her attention to the less talented, quieter twin Garnet, a violinist with a touring opera company who spent most of his time travelling and staying in third rate boarding houses in the north of England. By November, Mansfield could not bear to be separated from Garnet any longer. Moping around the Trowell family home in St John's Wood brought her no comfort. Together with Garnet she hatched a plan and travelled to Hull where he was performing, and where he had managed to find her a small role within the opera company. They lived in Garnet's boarding house as man and wife so as not to court controversy, and it was almost certainly on this trip that she became pregnant with his child. Two poems survive from this trip to Hull; one, titled 'In the Church' ends with the following verse:

In the church with folded hands she sits  
Seeing a bride and groom, hand in hand  
Stand at the altar, but no wedding band  
Crowns the young bride – save a chaplet of ivy leaves.  
(*Notebooks* vol. 1, p. 199, 'The Church' 5 November 1908)



Thomas Trowell, who had initially encouraged the liaison between his son and the daughter of the Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand was horrified to discover the illicit nature of their union. Many years later, Dolly wrote to the biographer Jeffrey Meyers stating that her father ‘was extremely angry with the pregnant Katherine rather than with his son. Katherine left their house and never returned’. (Meyers: 43) Meyers continues: ‘Though Katherine [...] probably had seduced Garnet [...] Thomas protected Garnet from what he considered a disastrous marriage and placed all the guilt and responsibility on Katherine’ (43). As far as Katherine was concerned, Garnet’s terrible act of betrayal in abandoning both her and their unborn child left her with wounds that never truly healed. In December 1908, in anguish following her banishment from the Trowell household and with an uncertain future ahead of her she wrote a poem entitled ‘The Trio’, which contains the following lines:

The winter day has set a frozen kiss. . .  
Coldly, impassive, cynically grim  
The warehouse seems to sneer at them and cry  
“My doors are shut and bolted, locked and barred  
And in my bosom nurture I my spawn  
Upon the blackened blood of my stone heart  
I blind their eyes. [...]  
(*Notebooks* vol. 1, p. 200, 9 December 1908)

Her anguish and inner turmoil is revealed in these difficult lines. Following her marriage to George Bowden on 2 March 1909 (see below), Mansfield made one further visit to Garnet from 10-28 March, whilst he was on tour in Glasgow and Liverpool, which ultimately proved fruitless – they never met again. However, there were a few letters sent; one by Mansfield from Brussels in April 1909, has ‘morning sickness’ very much in evidence:

In this room. Almost before this is written I shall read it from another room and such is Life. Packed again I leave for London. Shall I ever be a happy woman again. Je ne pense pas, je ne veux pas. Oh to be in New York. Hear me, I can’t rest – that’s the agonizing part. ‘Tis a sweet day, Brother, but I see it not. My *body* is so self conscious – Je pense of all the frightful things possible – all this “filthiness” – Sick at heart till I am physically sick – with no home – no place in which I can hang up my hat – & say here I belong – for there is no such place in the wide world for me.  
(*Collected Letters*, vol. 1, p. 91, Letter to Garnet Trowell, 28-30 April 1909)

Was the word “filthiness” used by Garnet’s father in one of his rages, shocked at the pregnancy and at the duplicity of the young couple?

By the time of the 1911 census, the Trowell family had moved from Carlton Hill to 60 Springfield Road, two streets to the north. There were six people listed on their census form, including Thomas Trowell (Senior), aged 46, who gave his profession as ‘Musician’, specifically a violinist, and his birthplace as ‘Birmingham England’, and his wife Kate, aged 51, born in Blaenavon, Wales, who signed the census form on behalf of her husband. This five year age difference was unusual. The census records they have been married for 27 years, which would have made Thomas 19 on their marriage day and Kate 24. Three children were listed as having been born during the marriage, two living and one dead; therein lies an inexplicable and deliberate omission. The Trowells had four



children altogether: their eldest son Lynley, who died at the age of ten in New Zealand, the twins, Garnet and Thomas, and a daughter Dorothy. It would seem that following the events of 1909/1910 the family had disowned Garnet completely. Tom was still at home, aged 23, single, his occupation listed as 'violoncellist', born in New Zealand. Dorothy was now 17, single, no profession listed, and also still at home. Also listed were two lodgers: a 25 year old commercial clerk by the name of Robert Blum, from Geberciler in Alsace, and Winnifred Parsons, a 30 year old spinster 'violoncellist', born in London.

What of Garnet? On the night of the census, he was in Leeds, still travelling with the Moody-Manners Opera Company, staying at 15 Quarry Mount Terrace, Woodhouse, owned by a widow, Mary Jane Flower, aged 52. Also in the house were her two grown sons and one daughter, Garnet being the only 'visitor'. He listed himself as 23, single, a musician, born in Wellington New Zealand. Did he know of his family's decision to disown his existence in their own census form? Were his siblings aware of their parents' decision? We do not know. But Dolly's insistence to Meyers that her father blamed Katherine for everything does not ring true with the brutal facts as presented on the census form. The truth seems more likely to be that his son's conduct led Thomas to cut him out of the family, strangely mirroring Mansfield's own mother, who, after having deposited her wayward daughter at a convent in Bavaria at the beginning of June 1909, pregnant and alone, returned immediately to New Zealand on 10 June, and 'on her arrival in Wellington, [...] sent for her lawyers and rewrote her will – the ultimate bourgeois gesture – cutting Katherine out completely. The gesture was never revoked.' (Tomalin: 68)

Tom went on to fulfil his promise of a successful musical career; Garnet on the other hand passed into obscurity. He eventually travelled as a musician to South Africa, where he married a Canadian woman, Marian Smith, in 1923, and subsequently moved to Canada in 1929. He never discussed this early relationship with any member of his family, but significantly kept all Mansfield's letters to him until his death from cancer in 1947.

On 2 March 1909 following barely a handful of meetings, Mansfield married George Bowden, a singing teacher by profession. Most biographers concur that her precipitous haste in marrying Bowden was in order to protect herself and Garnet's baby, by providing respectability for her pregnant state. She famously left him within 24 hours of the marriage, which was never consummated.

George Bowden's completed census form was filled in at the address '23 Lance Road, Harrow', where he was living with his 64 year old mother, Mary Bowden. He declared his married status and wrote the correct number '2' under completed years of marriage. Under personal occupation he declared himself a 'Professor of Voice Culture' and listed his birthplace as 'Devon Plymouth'. There was no father present at the address, although Mary Bowden was not a widow. She noted the birth of nine children during the marriage and the death of three of them.

As is well documented, Mansfield spent six months in Bavaria in 1909, where she miscarried Garnet's baby, all the while collecting material for her stories, eventually published in December 1911 under the title *In A German Pension*. Several of the stories



were published in the *New Age* during 1910, following her return to England, thanks to an introduction to the editor A. R. Orage by her estranged husband George Bowden, with whom Mansfield had now had a rapprochement. She in fact lived with him at his flat in Marylebone for a few months in 1910.

From August 1910 to spring 1911, Mansfield sub-let (with the help of A. R. Orage and his lover Beatrice Hastings) a two-roomed flat in Chelsea at 132 Cheyne Walk. The flat belonged to the painter Henry Bishop who was taking an extended trip to North Africa. It was at this time that she cut her long hair into a shortish bob, years before such a hairstyle became commonly fashionable. She bought a grand piano from the lady in the flat above and started practising singing. It was also around this time that she met a young schoolmaster a year younger than herself called William Orton, and embarked on a love affair of sorts which Orton many years later 'fictionalised' in a chapter of his 1937 novel *The Last Romantic*; however, letters and diary entries which Mansfield had actually written were interpolated into the text, thereby adding authenticity to the loosely fictional account. Their meeting is described thus ('Michael' is Orton):

Catherine – Katharina she called herself (she was being very Russian just then) – had published several pieces in the *New Age*, which were shortly afterwards collected as her first book: and Orage had also taken a small essay of Michael's. But it was at the Berlings' they met in Hampstead, playing tennis [...] Painful things were happening in plenty to each of them; but of an evening, when sometimes the things has hurt more than usual, they would [...] laugh at them with genuine happy laughter; and then hug each other and wander about, or go and get a meal if either had any money [...] (269)

More consistently than Michael, she remained the artist, subject always to art's pitiless demand for purity, clarity, and thoroughness; but so long as she obeyed that – and she could not disobey – she was happy. The business of living under such conditions needs careful management; but Catherine, conscious (or subconscious) of her New Zealand background, chose to think she was tough and could play fast and loose with it. The collapse of her marriage has done far more harm than she or anyone else realised. (274-5)

This is where speculation now creeps in. Ida Baker recounted in her biography *Katherine Mansfield: The Memoirs of LM* (1971), that another young man also became a frequent visitor to the flat in Cheyne Walk, identified later on as Francis Heinemann:

A frequent visitor was a young man, hardly more than a boy in appearance, and very handsome. He brought her lovely presents and I remember particularly a tiny painted Russian village. [...] They were young and happy, intended to marry and soon became lovers. However, the affair was short-lived: his family disapproved. They looked on Katherine as a potential danger, a married woman who was living alone. They must have forbidden him to see her for he did not come to her again. (62)

In Alpers' biography *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (1980), the author recounts that Ida Baker told him that Heinemann was 'the father of a child that Katherine conceived while living at Cheyne Walk' (119), but in Claire Tomalin's 1987 biography *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life*, this fact is strongly disputed:

Obviously there was a lover about, but there is no knowing who he was [A footnote at this point states: 'It has been alleged by Antony Alpers that this was Francis Heinemann. He



denied this categorically to the present author’] [...] Ida, summoned away to Rhodesia in April, left some money in a bank account to help with the supposed baby. (90)

Alpers concludes:

The expected baby, says L.M., was never born. When she came back in the autumn there was “no baby and no bank account”. Katherine never once spoke of the matter again. Obviously it had all been horrible, and L.M. was sure that Beatrice Hastings had been in some way responsible [...] Of facts not in doubt we have the following: In May 1911, just as her mother reached London [...] Katherine returned to the *New Age* with a story about a birth; it appeared on 18 May. And two days later she was the seaside with Beatrice Hastings. Whatever conjectures they may justify, these at least are facts. (123-4)

In December 1910, Mansfield published a short piece entitled ‘A Fairy Story’ in a periodical called the *Open Window*, using the pseudonym ‘Katharina Mansfield’. In 1911, possibly believing herself to be pregnant again, as recounted above, and with the imminent return of Henry Bishop, Mansfield moved from Chelsea to 69 Clovelly Mansions on the Gray’s Inn Road, near St Pancras. The rent for the fourth floor, four-room flat was £52 a year, more than half her annual income. On the lease, she signed herself ‘Katerina Mansfield’. There is a discrepancy on the date of this move. Vincent O’Sullivan states it was in January 1911, Claire Tomalin has her moving at an unspecified date in April, Alpers ‘early in 1911’. The first extant letter from this address is dated 15 April. However, the census form was filled out on April 2, 1911, so we know that Mansfield was definitely living in Clovelly Mansions by this date.

Mansfield’s census form provides a tantalising glimpse into her mindset at that moment in her life. Under ‘name and surname’ she wrote ‘Katharina Mansfield’, a completely fictitious name that we know she was using frequently at the time (see examples above), confirming her fascination with all things Russian. Her legal name at the time was Kathleen Mansfield Bowden, following her marriage to George Bowden on 2 March 1909 at Paddington Registry Office. She confirmed on the form that she was married, stating the marriage had lasted ‘three’ years, when in fact it has only lasted two ‘completed years’, which is what was asked for – a strange error. She states her occupation as ‘Author’, her birthplace as ‘Wellington, New Zealand’ and declares herself to be a ‘British subject by parentage’. The form is duly signed ‘Katharina Mansfield’.

Mansfield had not yet met John Middleton Murry, her second husband; this meeting would take place in December 1911 at the home of W. L. George. Murry did not appear anywhere in the 1911 census, since he was in Paris during the spring of 1911, making the acquaintance of the painter J. D. Fergusson, hatching the idea for a new magazine, to be called *Rhythm* (which would make its first appearance in June 1911), and generally ‘hanging out’ in the seedier parts of Paris with his friend Francis Carco, who would go on to play a significant role in Mansfield’s own life. His family however, back in England, did fill out the form.

Murry’s parents, John and Emily Murry were living at ‘Lutterworth’, Cedars Road, Hampton Wick, at the time of the census. John Murry Senior described his occupation as a ‘Minor Staff Officer’ – a low-ranking civil servant. Murry’s younger brother Arthur



(always known as Richard in later life) was also on the form, aged 8. In his autobiography *Between Two Worlds* (1935), Murry wrote:

I was very fond of my parents; but I became silently critical of them. In a vague way I wanted them to be different. I did not want them to be richer; I wanted them to live differently. And one holiday it struck me suddenly, with an awful despair and a guilty consciousness of treachery, that there was not a single object in the whole house which I should have been glad to have for its own sake. This was, in its own small way a tragic realisation, though its full significance was concealed from me. (47)

Mansfield's friend Ida Constance Baker also appears in the census. On 2 April 1911 she was at 'Ridge Cap', Shottermill, Surrey, together with her sister Katherine May Baker. This appears to be a boarding house since there were ten names on the census form, mostly unrelated. Ida listed no occupation; her sister wrote 'householder'. No mention was made of this address in Ida's reminiscences or in any of the Mansfield biographies. In *The Memories of LM*, whilst discussing Mansfield's life at Clovelly Mansions, Ida stated:

Quite often during the day I would go back to my sister at Luxborough House [...] As often as possible I stayed the night, for Katherine was still sleeping badly [...] When an urgent demand came from my father in Rhodesia in April 1911 for my sister and me to go out to see him there for a few months, Katherine and I decided I should go. She was expecting the child and happy at the thought. [...] I was gone for about five months and when I returned in the autumn I found no baby and a closed bank account. (64-5)

Looking back over this early period of Mansfield's life, (and of which most details remained unknown to him until Alpers' first biography in 1954), Murry wrote in his journal in 1953:

It seems to me now that at first she was enchanted by my innocence, and wanted to preserve it, and (to be in harmony) to put away her own 'experience', which was considerable and much of it an unhappy memory. She wanted to annihilate her past. Of that I am *sure*. She never mentioned it to me – her past (I mean) so far as it consisted of relations with men – and I was made to feel that any reference to, or curiosity about, it would be unwelcome, and hurting. [...] I was deeply conscious that she wanted to start afresh, and that she was in some way afraid of my making any contact with her past. (Unpublished journal entry, 1 November 1953, quoted in Lea: 32)

As for Mansfield herself (frustratingly for biographers – she destroyed nearly all her 'huge complaining diaries' from the years 1909-12), she occasionally made reference to events from this period later in her life:

Often I reproach myself for my 'private' life – which after all, were I to die, *would* astonish those even nearest to me. Then, (as yesterday) I realise how little Jack shares with me. (June 1919, *Notebooks* vol. 2, p. 170)

I cannot sleep. I lie *retracing* my steps – going over all the old life before. . . . The baby of Garnet's love. (January 12, 1920, *Notebooks* vol. 2, p. 188)



The census documents discussed above go some way to underlining how difficult this period was in Mansfield's life. No biographer has mentioned how the Trowell family were so bitter over the relationship between their son and the 'fast and loose' Kathleen Beauchamp that they disowned him, to the extent of denying his existence. Mansfield herself was leading life under a pseudonym, trying to come to terms with recent events, cut out of her mother's will forever and probably pregnant – again. Her meeting with Murry was just a few short months away. Patient, tolerant Ida was putting up with a boarding house existence in the Home Counties with her sister, at the mercy of her irascible father in Africa. George Bowden was married, separated, and back with his mother in Harrow. The Murry family were at home in Hampton Wick, no doubt worried sick about their wayward son Jack, who did not appear to be interested in continuing his studies at Oxford, and who would shortly meet a married woman with a very difficult past, move in with her, and destroy all his father's hopes and aspirations.

'The purpose you undertake is dangerous' – why that's certain: 'tis dangerous to take a cold, to sleep, to drink. But I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.

(*King Henry the Fourth*, Part I, Act 2, Scene 3, Hotspur)

### **Bibliography**

- Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (Harmondsworth, Viking, 1980)  
Ida Baker, *The Memories of LM* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971)  
F. A. Lea, *The Life of John Middleton Murry* (London: Methuen, 1959)  
Jeffrey Meyers, *Katherine Mansfield: A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978)  
John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935)  
Roger Norburn, *A Katherine Mansfield Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)  
William Orton, *The Last Romantic* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937)  
Margaret Scott, ed., *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, vols. 1 and 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002)  
Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1987)  
Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds., *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, vol. 1, 1903-1917 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)

