

GEOFFREY VINER PICKING

(born East Hanningfield 27 May 1902)

CHESTER CHRONICLE SATURDAY 4 OCTOBER 1941

WELSH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WEDDING

MR. G.V. PICKING AND MISS M.R. ASHTON

The wedding took place quietly at St. John Street Welsh Presbyterian Church, Chester, on Saturday, of Mr. G. Viner-Picking an accountant, of Birmingham, and formerly of Rusholme, Manchester, and Miss Mair Rhianon Ashton, daughter of the late Rev. T. Ashton, and Mrs. Ashton, Oak Lodge, Hoole Village.

The Rev. Griffith Hughes, M.A. performed the ceremony, and Miss Olwen Ashton, the bride's eldest sister, played organ voluntaries from Handel and Schumann and accompanied the hymn, "O Love Divine and tender".

The bride was given away by her eldest brother, Mr. Glyn Ashton. She wore a turquoise frock, with hat and shoes to tone, and carried a bouquet of red roses; her pearls were the gift of the bridegroom.

Miss Morfydd Ashton, sister of the bride, was bridesmaid, and she wore a Tudor rose frock with hat and shoes to tone and carried a bouquet of sweet peas; her bracelet was the gift of the bridegroom.

M. D. Garnett Jones (Wrexham) was best man.

The reception was held at the bride's home, and the bride and bridegroom afterwards left for Beaumaris, the bride wearing a slate grey suit with hat, gloves and shoes in tan.

Editor's note: It seems strange that Mair's career as a nurse was not mentioned, but, maybe, that was normal for the time.

CHESTER CHRONICLE 24 NOVEMBER 1945

ALLEGED BIGAMISTS SENT FOR TRIAL

FOUR MEN CHARGED AT CHESTER COURT

Four men, charged with bigamy before Chester City magistrates on Monday, were committed for trial at the next Chester Assizes.

They are: Alfred James Perry (32), a sergeant in the R.A.M.C.; Joseph Fellows (47), 6 Paradise Row, Chester; John James Dupree (32), a private in the Royal Engineers, now living in Allington Place, Handbridge; and Geoffrey Viner Picking (43), of Granshaw Close, King's Norton, Birmingham.

All reserved their defence and were granted bail.

(Details of the first three have been excluded).

ALLEGED CONFESSION TO WIFE

Picking was charged with bigamy at Chester on Sept. 27th, 1942, his lawful wife Nora Kathleen, whom he had married on Feb. 4th, 1922, being then, it is alleged, alive.

Mr. J.C. Colley (prosecuting) said that Picking married his lawful wife, then a variety artiste, at Leicester, and visited her from time to time at the towns where she was playing. In 1926 she wrote to Picking, then employed at an accountant's office at Bridgend, and offered to go and live with him. He replied "How do you think I am going to keep a wife?"

In 1939, continued Mr. Colley, she unsuccessfully tried to find him, and in December, 1944, Picking visited her at Manchester, and then admitted that he had committed bigamy. He met the woman with whom he went through a form of marriage in 1939 and told her he was the husband of a woman named Nancy, who was dying of consumption at a sanatorium.

BELIEVED HIM A WIDOWER

This lady understood that that woman had died in 1940, and that Picking was, therefore a widower. She went through a form of marriage with him in 1941, and there was one child. In May 1945, she received two anonymous letters with reference to her marriage to Picking. She destroyed the first, but showed the second one to Picking, who then admitted that though he had not been married to "Nancy," he was married, but had not seen his wife, nor heard from her, for 20 years until about 12 months previously.

"NEVER LIVED TOGETHER"

Mrs. Nora Kathleen Picking, in evidence, said she had never lived with her husband. Det.-Sgt. Dunne said that when charged, Picking replied "I understand the charge."

Picking pleaded "Not guilty".

CHESHIRE OBSERVER SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY 1946

CHESTER ASSIZES

Voluntary Jurors Asked for by Judge

CALL READILY ANSWERED

The Calendar for Chester Winter Assizes, which opened at Chester on Monday, before Mr. Justice Stable, who presided in the Crown Court, and Mr. Justice Henn Collins, who is taking the civil business, contains the names of 45 prisoners, including three murder charges.

On Monday, Mr. Justice Stable was accompanied on the bench by the High Sheriff (Col. Harry Johnson, D.S.O.), the High Sheriff's Chaplain (Canon Coad) and the Under-Sheriff (Mr. A.L. Birch).

Mr. Justice Stable, on Tuesday, called for volunteers to act as jurors. He had intended to deal with guilty pleas, and the jury had been dispensed with for the day.

It was in the case in which Geoffrey Viner Picking (44), clerk of Granshaw Close, King's Norton, Birmingham, pleaded not guilty to having committed bigamy at Chester on 27th. Sept. 1941, his lawful wife, Nora Kathleen, whom he married on Feb. 4th. 1922, being then alive.

Mr. Lind Smith, for the Crown, explained to the judge that from the depositions there was not a scintilla of evidence to shew that Picking had heard of or from or seen his wife for seven years before his second marriage.

His lordship said it was necessary that Picking should be formally acquitted by a jury, and in that matter he was in a difficulty, as the jury had been dispensed with for the day. His lordship asked for volunteer jurors and soon had two women and five men in the jury box.

Mr. Lind Smith said he offered no evidence, and on the instructions of the Judge the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and Picking was acquitted.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Nora Kathleen Riley was the second daughter of Frederick and Elizabeth Riley who were 'professional vocalists'. Frederick was born in Middlesex and Elizabeth in Portsmouth. The first time Nora appears on the Census, 1901 she was recorded as being 8 years of age. The family was at that time living at Portsmouth. The 1911 Census records Nora and her mother Elizabeth, by then a widow, boarding at Asylum Street, Leicester. Nora was at that time an 'actress'. In the 1921 Census, Nora and Elizabeth were boarding at St. Albans Street, Weymouth and by then Nora was a 'variety artiste'.

As stated in the court account, Nora married Geoffrey on 4 February 1922, at Leicester. Depending on which Census you believe Nora would have been 29 or 24. Geoffrey was not yet twenty, so if he was honest about his age at the ceremony, he would have needed parental consent to marry.

Mair and Geoffrey married again in early 1947 at Rowley Regis, Staffordshire, but I have been unable to find whether they were able to do this because Nora and Geoffrey had divorced or she had died.

A Nora Kathleen Picking married a Cyril L. Bennett in the summer of 1952, in Surrey, but this might just be coincidental names.

SHEERNESS TIMES GUARDIAN FRI 7 MAR 1958

“FORGED TO FEED HIS CHILDREN”

A man who pleaded guilty to two charges of forgery, told Sheerness Magistrates on Monday that he did it “to provide food for his children” while he was unemployed.

He was Geoffrey Viner Picking of Hope Street, Sheerness.

The case was adjourned for 14 days while the Probation Officer made further enquiries and Picking was granted bail on his own surety of £25.

Prosecuting for the Postmaster General, Mr. F.C. Stigent said Picking was charged with fraudulently withdrawing at Leysdown in September 1957, from a Post Office Savings book which stood in the name of Picking. On October 27 1951[sic] there was only a balance of 2s.3d. On that day Picking paid in £10 and he subsequently altered this to £20.

A false balance of £20 2s. 3d. was carried forward and on the strength of this, he proceeded to withdraw total amounts of £20 on various dates. The two withdrawals with which he was charged were the last two withdrawals of £4.

Picking was interviewed by an Investigating Officer on January 16 and he made a statement admitting the offences. He said that he was out of work at the time and the National Assistance he received was not enough to keep his wife and children. He was now working and would like to pay back the money.

Picking told the Magistrates: “I found it impossible to live on my unemployment assistance. I had to provide food for the children.”

Chief Inspector L.L. Reid said Picking had three children and another had been born recently.

As stated the case was adjourned.

SHEERNESS TIMES GUARDIAN FRI 21 MAR 1958

Educated man who forged is put on probation

A "VERY well educated" Sheerness man, who pleaded guilty to two charges of forgery and said he committed the offence to provide for his children while he was unemployed was put on probation for two years by Sheerness Magistrates Court on Monday.

The man, Geoffrey Viner Picking of Hope Street, Sheerness, had been remanded for a fortnight for a report by the Probation Officer, Mr. R.E. Morley.

Mr. Morley said Picking was married with four children, the eldest eight years old and the youngest only three months. He had had a number of jobs, mostly with solicitors as probate clerk. They all gave him a good character as far as his work was concerned. But he appeared to have external money difficulties. He served in the R.A.F. and had been discharged with a "very good" testimonial.

He attended Aberdeen University but had to leave because the grant was insufficient.

Mr. Morley said, "He is a very well educated man and his present job-a labourer at the Sheet Glass Works, Sheerness- is much below his capacity although the wages-about £11 a week-are better than for some time. He is rather a nervous man."

"They are very conscientious about their children and their money difficulties led him to get more money the way he has. He wishes to make restitution to the Post Office."

Prosecuting for the Postmaster General at the Court a fortnight ago. Mr. F.C. Stigent said Picking was charged with fraudulently withdrawing at Leysdown in September 1957 from a Post Office Savings book which stood in the name of Picking. On October 27 1951 there was only a balance of 2s. 3d. On that day Picking paid in £10 and he subsequently altered this to £20.

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Editor's note: The court case in Chester, 1945, mentions that Mair and Geoffrey had a child, but in the Sheerness court case it is stated that the oldest child was 8. A child born by 1945 would have been approximately 13 or older in 1958, so it is possible there is an added mystery here. Perhaps the first child was old enough to have left home or the Sheerness reporter's shorthand was inaccurate.

The 1950s was a tough decade for many, even those with employment. It is to be hoped that Mair and Geoffrey's lives took a turn for the better from this point.