# The History of Cardiff Institute for the Blind

## Who was Frances Batty Shand?

Frances Batty Shand (1815-1885) was born on July 11th 1816 at St. Catherine Plantation in Jamaica. She was the youngest of ten children.

Her father, John Shand (1728-1825) was a sugar plantation owner at St. Catherine, Jamaica. He also owned the estates of Arnhall and Burn in Kincardineshire, Scotland. He was a member of the Jamaican House of Assembly. Her mother was Frances Brown, John Shand’s housekeeper, who was described as a ‘free woman of colour’.

The record of her baptism reads:

‘Baptism of Persons not White 1816, July 11: Frances Batty Shand

born October 23 1815 daughter of Frances Brown, free Quadroon’

Following the death of their father, the Shand family moved to Scotland, and in 1857 Frances’s brother, John Beartrand Batty Shand, accepted the post of Secretary to the Rhymney Railway Company in Cardiff. Frances and her brother lived at 13 Windsor Place in the city. Neither married.

Frances left Cardiff following the sudden death of her brother in 1877, and she returned to Bridge of Allen, Stirlingshire, Scotland. Nothing more is known of her until her death in Montreaux, Switzerland on the 11th February 1885.

Frances’s body was brought back to Cardiff and was interred beside her brother in Allensbank Cemetery, Cathays, Cardiff, having lain overnight in the Library at the Institute on the request of the Institute Council.

On her death, Frances left a legacy of £1,000 the income therefrom to be used for the benefit of the workers

## Cardiff Institute for the Blind

Welcome to Cardiff's oldest charity!

Cardiff Institute for the Blind (CIB) was founded in 1865 by Frances Batty Shand, the daughter of a Jamaican plantation owner and a free woman of colour. She came to Cardiff with her brother who worked for the Rhymney Railway Company.

Miss Shand was concerned with the "ragged" children she saw in Cardiff and toured the city offering help and support. One day, she met Frederick Hallet, a representative of the Blind Bible Society, who told her of the plight of the many blind men in Cardiff.

Determined to help, Miss Shand opened a small workshop in the Canton area of Cardiff employing four blind men making baskets for the coal ships sailing from Cardiff.

Within a year larger premises were purchased at Byron Street in the Roath area and ten men were employed. In 1868, a third move was made to Longcross Street off Newport Road within 300 yards of the former headquarters at Shand House.

In 1877, Miss Shand retired and little is known of her until her death in 1885 in Switzerland.

The Longcross Street premises continued to prosper and by 1900, there were 100 blind men and women employed at the Institute in the manufacture of baskets, mats, brushes, ships fenders and sewing.

In 1941, Longcross Street was destroyed during a German air raid on Cardiff, but within weeks all of the employees were back at work, housed in small workshops scattered around the Roath area of Cardiff.

The Institute was given a plot of land in Newport Road in 1949 and work on the new premises commenced in 1951. Shand House, as it was named, was opened in 1953.

The work of the Institute at this time was still concentrated on the employment of blind and disabled people. In 1965, there were 70 employees engaged on the manufacture of traditional products for a blind workshop. Gradually, as attitudes changed and more opportunities arose for blind people in open employment (particularly with the rapid growth in technology) the role of blind workshops gradually decreased.

With the decrease in sheltered employment, CIB began to concentrate its role on the provision of direct services for visually impaired people in the counties of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The growth in services provided far outstripped those provided by any other society in the country and many of the new developments have been copied and taken as models of excellence for others to follow.

## Notable Dates

#### 1865 – April

Frances Batty Shand founded an ‘Association for the Improvement of the Social and Working Conditions of the Blind’ in Severn Road, Canton. Cardiff Institute for the Blind was born.

#### 1867

The Association moved to Clive Road (now Byron Street) Roath

#### 1868

The purpose-built premises in Longcross Street opened

#### 1877

Frances Batty Shand retires and leaves Cardiff following the sudden death of her brother John, Secretary to the Rhymney Railway Company

#### 1885 – 11th February

Frances Batty Shand dies in Montreaux, Switzerland. Her body is brought to Cardiff and on 22nd February is interred beside her brother in Allensbank Cemetery, Cardiff after having lain overnight in the Library at the Institute.

#### 1895

The first workshop for women opened

#### 1906

A horse-drawn van was purchased and goods offered for sale door to door.

#### 1915 – Jubilee Year

A new wing comprising of four large workshops, extra storage space and a Board Room was opened by Sir Cyril Pearson.

#### 1927

CIB makes the team stockings for Cardiff City Football Club when they win the FA Cup

#### 1941

Seven incendiary bombs destroy the Longcross Street premises during a German air raid on the night of 3rd March

#### 1951

Building work on the Newport Road premises begins. HRH The Duchess of Gloucester lays the foundation stone

#### 1953

Sir Walter Monkton opens the Newport Road premises

#### 1958

A single decker bus is purchased for sales to the public from door to door.

#### 1965

CIB’s centenary is celebrated

#### 1973

Richard Evans (who will become Director of CIB) appointed as its Accountant.

#### 1981

Ministry of Defence contracts are obtained. The workshops are contracted to make ships’ fenders and later storage baskets for the Royal Navy

#### 1984

Residential flats opened in Howard Gardens, Cardiff by Sir Cenydd Traherne

The Newport Road premises is renamed Shand House in honour of our founder

#### 1986

The residential flats at the Institute are closed

#### 1989

Richard Evans is appointed the fifth Director of the Institute

Carys Henry is appointed to establish the Welfare Services

#### 1991

The New Resource Centre is opened at Shand House by HRH Diana Princess of Wales

#### 1993

The Technology Centre is opened at Shand House by BBC broadcaster John Humphrys

#### 1994

The Consumer Awareness Group is formed to prioritise and monitor the work of the Institute

#### 1996

The Hospital Support Service is established

The Quarterly Newsletter is launched.

#### 1995

The Mobile Resource Centre is opened by BBC broadcaster and foreign correspondent Jeremy Bowen

#### 1997

The Contact Line is set up

#### 1998

Welsh rugby legend, Gareth Edwards accepts the invitation to become President of the CIB

The Computer Training Centre, funded by the National Lottery, is opened at Shand House

#### 2001

The Upgraded Resource, Technology and Lighting Centre is opened by Gareth Edwards

The Rehabilitation Officer qualifies and the Institute competes for contracts

#### 2002

The Eye Clinic Link Officer qualifies and develops the support services in the Eye Clinic at University Hospital for Wales, Heath, Cardiff

The CIB website is set up

#### 2003

The Resource Centre is renamed the ‘Gareth Edwards Vision Centre’ in honour of our President

Ruth Madoc accepts the invitation to become CIB’s Patron

Opening of the satellite Resource Centre in the Eye Clinic at UHW

#### 2004

CIB officially begins the change of status to a Community Fundraising Organisation. Michelle Jones is appointed as Fundraising Manager

#### 2005 – 140th Anniversary

CIB enters a Service Level Agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan Social Services Department

#### 2006

The closure of the blind workshops

#### 2009 – CIB / RNIB Partnership

CIB become associates of RNIB Cymru and begin working together to support blind and partially sighted people.

2010

CIB receives a grant from The Big Lottery Fund for a Specialist Information and Advocacy Officer

#### 2012

Kieran Harris is appointed the sixth Director of Operations for CIB

Shand House is sold for development and staff relocate to RNIB Cymru’s offices at Trident Court in Cardiff Bay.

#### 2013

Cardiff Institute for the Blind receives a Big Lottery Fund grant for the Community Links - Ending Sight Loss Isolation Project

Cardiff Institute for the Blind moves to its new city centre home at Jones Court, where it is co-located with RNIB

#### 2019

Cardiff Institute for the Blind receives a Big Lottery Cymru grant for the New Places, New Experiences - for blind and partially sighted people Project

Cardiff Institute for the Blind changes its name to Sight Life to better reflect its ethos and values

#### 2020

Michelle Jones is appointed Interim Director of Operations for Sight Life

### Services provided by Sight Life

* Resource Centre
* Hospital Support Service at the University Hospital of Wales
* Home Visits
* Computer Training in-house
* Computer Outreach
* Information and Advice
* Contact Line
* Quarterly Newsletter
* Volunteer Network
* Befriending
* Clubs and support groups
* Sport and leisure opportunities
* Telephone support groups