

ANN FORBES (1771-1851)

Professor Douglas Huxley from the University of Newcastle had written a book on the history of Ann Forbes, *"Transported to Paradise"*. This was a major resource for the search of this presentation but snippets were also found in other early histories of the new Colony. (As an aside: the Library at Newcastle Uni is the Huxley Library.)

Ann's story begins in London in the late 18th Century. Her parentage and lineage have not been established with any certainty, but a Christening of an Ann Forbes in September 1771 at Christchurch, Spitalfields in Stepney is just across the river from her residence and corresponds with her age given at the time of her trial.

In April 1787 Ann Forbes appeared in court at Kingston-on-Thames, along with her co-accused, Lydia Munro, on a charge of stealing 10 yards of printed cotton valued at £1 (pound). Both girls were found guilty and sentenced to hang and were left languishing in a London prison.

At that time prisoners were being sought for the voyage to found the new colony in New South Wales and there was considerable concern about the lack of females assigned to take part in this voyage. Ann and Lydia were selected as two of the 183 females to make this first journey and accordingly their sentences were commuted to transportation - Lydia for 14 years and Ann for seven, implying Ann was the junior partner in the crime.

Ann was assigned to the only all-female convict ship in the fleet - the *"Prince of Wales"*. She had survived the many threats to her health both in Newgate Prison and on the long sea voyage and again she was extremely fortunate not to lose her life even before the First Fleet entered Port Jackson.

Arriving at their destination the ships had entered Botany Bay but it was decided Port Jackson was a more favourable site - and quote - *"Captain Hunter made signals for the transports to get underway but the wind still blew as before and there was exceeding difficulty proceeding from the bay. There was a great fear when the Charlotte ran foul of the Prince of Wales and it was only by the greatest fortune and goodness of the Almighty that they did not find themselves up on the rocks with all hands lost."*

As with all female convicts, Ann had no rights and no protection and probably in company with most female convicts, decided that she needed the protection of a "relationship".

Her first association was with George Bannister who had also been convicted of stealing and was transported aboard the "*Charlotte*", his occupation listed as Sawyer. Ann and George had a daughter, Sarah, Christened on 15th November 1789. There are no further records of Sarah so she possibly died as an infant as she was not listed as a passenger when Ann was transferred to Norfolk Island in March 1790. Her next known association was some 3 years later with fellow convict William Dring who had been selected by Arthur Phillip to be one in the group previously sent to Norfolk Island aboard the "*Golden Grove*" in October 1788.

About 6 days after Ann arrived on Norfolk Island the "*Sirius*" was wrecked. William Dring and another convict volunteered to swim out to the wreck to assist with the salvage - which they accomplished very well but then distinguished themselves by drinking too much of the rum they had found on board and accidentally set fire to the wreck. Dring spent 2 months in leg irons and was again punished for theft in 1791. It was recorded at this time by Lt Ralph Clark that Dring "*was the greatest rascal living*".

The next we hear of Ann is when she was married to William Dring in a mass ceremony conducted by the Rev Johnson in November 1791. Their first child was a daughter Ann. They had a second daughter Elizabeth in 1794 and a son Charles two years later. Perhaps his new family responsibilities motivated him to change his ways as Lt. Governor King described him in 1794 as a "*well-behaved free man - of great use as a coxswain*".

However his duties as a coxswain resulted in William's absence on and off from Norfolk during which times he found a soldier by the name of Windsor "repeatedly connected" to his wife which resulted in Dring being fined for striking a soldier. The soldier's anger at Dring was such that he was knocked down and beaten so much that he had not a feature that was not covered with blood. Two constables who were also settlers intervened and saved the coxswain's life. Such behaviour by the soldiers towards other men's wives (due to the severe imbalance in the sexes) obviously played a significant role in the Norfolk mutiny.

Personal records from Norfolk are very scanty as many were lost during the many evacuations and we do not know much more of Ann and William there. They both returned to Sydney in November 1794 and their elder daughter Ann died in 1795. Both William and their son Charles disappeared from the records without explanation. It is suspected that they had either died or may have returned to England.



Thomas (Jones) Huxley was transported in 1791 with the 3rd Fleet aboard the 'Salamander'. Because of the desperate shortage of supplies in the colony, the *Salamander* didn't land in Sydney Cove but was ordered directly to Norfolk Island where Thomas would have first set foot on Australian soil. We know nothing of what happened to Thomas while on Norfolk. However given the size of this settlement, it is likely that Thomas and Ann became acquainted during this period. Thomas didn't return to Sydney until 2 years after Ann by which time he had served out his sentence and was granted land at Mulgrave Place (near Windsor) in 1798.

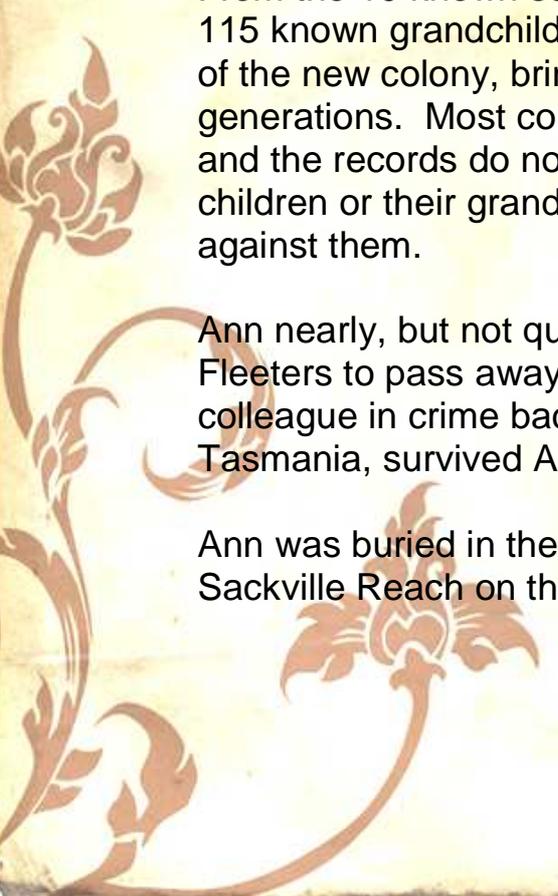
Subsequently, in the 1806 muster Ann is recorded as housekeeper to Thomas Huxley and clearly Ann was more than his housekeeper as 5 children were listed with the surname Huxley at this time. In the 1821 census they are listed as being married and had had 10 children between 1798 and 1818. They later also farmed 70 acres at Paradise Point at the junction of the Hawkesbury and Colo River and Thomas apparently also held land in the Sutherland area.

An interesting diversion from Ann's story is that of the naming of Tom Uglys Bridge in Sydney. Although the bridge was named after Thomas it is no reflection of the poor man's looks. The local aborigines had difficulty pronouncing the letter "x", and in the course of time his name had locally developed by them into "Tom Ugly".

From the 10 known surviving children of Ann Forbes there were at least 115 known grandchildren. In this regard she **was** one of the **treasures** of the new colony, bringing strong and healthy genes to pass onto future generations. Most convicts subsequently became law-abiding citizens and the records do not reveal any misdemeanours of Thomas and Ann's children or their grandchildren - quite an achievement given the odds against them.

Ann nearly, but not quite, took the honour of being the last of the First Fleeters to pass away. She died in 1851 at the age of 80 - *but* her colleague in crime back in London, Lydia Munro, who had settled in Tasmania, survived Ann by a further 5 years.

Ann was buried in the St. Thomas (Church of England) graveyard at Sackville Reach on the Hawkesbury.



Our family is descended from Thomas and Ann's 5th child SAMUEL who was born at Lower Portland Head in 1811. In the 1828 census Samuel was shown as 17 years of age and "BC" - Born in Colony. He married Mary Mitchell at Sackville Reach and they had 10 children - we are descended from their 8th child THOMAS JAMES born in 1849.

Thomas James married a lass from Ireland (Mary Owens) and they travelled to Charters Towers Queensland to set up a Wheelwright business. From there they moved to Dungog to take up farming as well as continuing his Wheelwright business. Finally they moved to Penrith and an article in the Windsor and Richmond Gazette of 21st July 1888 reported:

"Yesterday we were shown a splendid double-seated piano-box buggy, with side bar carriage made by Mr. T Huxley, the well-known buggy building of Windsor. The vehicle will probably be the first of its kind taken to Colo and it is a really first-class specimen of workmanship."

The same paper later reported:

"OLDEST CHURCH BELL - Mr. Thomas Huxley, coachbuilder, of High Street has on view in his workshop the oldest Church Bell in Australia. This bell was used in the first Anglican Church Parramatta upwards of 7 years ago..... it has a sweet sound and will be erected at Mr. Huxley's workshop to warn his employees when to commence and when to leave off work."

My grandmother MARY ELIZA CREED HUXLEY was born in 1873. We are lucky to have their family bible which is over 130 years old, printed by William Collins of Glasgow and London.

My grandmother married *Walter Charles Bishop* of Raymond Terrace, whose ancestral family home was "Muree". Their land contained a quarry from which came much of the stone used in the early local buildings of Raymond Terrace.

Walter's father, Lot Bishop, co-incidentally owned a Wheelwright business in Raymond Terrace. He was elected an Alderman in the first municipal elections there and was Mayor of Raymond Terrace in 1890, 1892 and in 1899. In 1894 Lot travelled to the United States to be presented with a medal of excellence at the Chicago World Fair for the quality of Muree stone. The medallion is now the property of the Raymond Terrace Historical Society.