

Elizabeth Pulley and Anthony Rope

Following is a very brief summary of our member Helen Pacey's presentation on her First Fleet ancestors.

Helen is descended from the well known First Fleet duo of Anthony Rope and Elizabeth Pulley. Helen said she is proudly a 6th generation Australian and began by reading this poem:



*If you could see your ancestors standing in a row
Would you be proud of them, or not, or don't you really know?
Some strange discoveries are made when climbing family trees
But some of them perhaps do not particularly please.*

*If you could see your ancestors standing in a row
There might be some of them you wouldn't care to know
But there's a different question which requires a different view,
If you could meet your ancestors – would they be proud of you?*

Anon

Elizabeth Pulley was charged with stealing wearing apparel in July 1779 when she was 16 yrs of age. She was tried and acquitted. A year later she was again committed for stealing diverse goods to which she confessed. She was found guilty, publicly whipped and spent 3 weeks in goal at Wymondham Brideswell. Because the prison was not secure she would have been kept in irons. The following year she was again convicted for stealing clothing goods and was sentenced to 12 months hard labour in Ayleshaw Prison.

Four months after being released she broke into Mrs. Minn's shop at Hethersett and stole food weighing 19.5 kilos and 2 rolls of worsted cloth. *(These goods were very weighty and Helen wondered if Elizabeth had invented the first shopping trolley to carry it all away!)*

Elizabeth was tried at Thetford Court within the gaol and sentenced to death but this was commuted to transportation. (While in the UK in 1988 Helen visited Thetford Gaol– the cells on the top floor are now flats and retain their iron bars and heavy studded doors. The lower floors are kept as a Museum.)



Inside Thetford Goal

In November 1786 Elizabeth was conveyed to Plymouth to await transportation aboard the *Dunkirk* and eventually sailed to Botany Bay aboard the *Friendship*. After many disruptive incidents Lt Ralph Clark reported how unhappy he was with the behaviour of the women on board (including Elizabeth) and they were transferred to the *Prince of Wales* to complete the voyage.

Anthony Rope was charged with burglary by breaking and entering in March 1785. He was found not guilty of breaking and entering but guilty of stealing goods to the value of 35 shillings. Sentenced to transportation for 7 years, he was forced to wait in the hulks on the Thames for 2 years.

He sailed for Botany Bay aboard the *Alexander* with no mention of any trouble on the voyage.

Anthony and Elizabeth probably met on the infamous night of debauchery when the women finally landed at Port Jackson. They were married by Rev Richard Johnson on the 19th May 1788 – both were 26 years of age. A few days later a celebration supper was held in their tent and they dined on sea pie which also contained fresh meat!

It was alleged the goat was stolen from George Johnston but the marriage party claimed they found the animal, a deer, with its entrails torn out and mangled, so they took the liberty of cutting some of the meat off for their wedding supper. They were acquitted – signed off by Capt Collins.

This was the last time Elizabeth was before the courts. A son, Robert, was born on 30th October and is said to be the first white child conceived and born in the colony. The fact that he survived shows that his mother Elizabeth can't have been as black as some people painted her. Anthony & Elizabeth had eight children.

In the heat of February 1789 Anthony received 25 lashes for neglecting work. In March 1791 he again received 25 lashes for buying a pair of shoes from John Merriot but which apparently belonged to a John Beazley who had lost them 3 weeks earlier.

Gov Phillip gave Anthony & Elizabeth 70 acres at the Ponds and they were given the title of 'Settlers' in 1792. This land was sold in 1804 for 50 guineas. In the 1806 Muster they were renting 48 acres at Badgery Nepean and were still in the district in 1820.

Elizabeth died 9th August 1837 aged 77 yrs. Anthony died on 20th April 1843 aged 84 years. Both are buried at Castlereagh. They are remembered by the suburb of Rope's Creek in Mount Drutt and Anthony and Rope Sts in Ryde.