

The Relative in the Cupboard

The story of Jane Sefton alias Jane MacCartney

There are 3 creased and torn letters which tell a piece of my family's history and speak of a woman's life lived in South Australia and Van Diemen's Land during the mid-19th century. Letters which had been kept neatly folded in a jar and are known to have been kept in a cupboard for over 100 years. The story of those letters was told to me many years ago by my Great Aunt Rebecca. My Aunt was born in Liverpool in 1898. She would recall to me how her close knit family had spoken of the relative who had left Liverpool for Australia, with a black mark, in shame, and with a stain on her character. The family through the years had spoken that they knew their relative had done something wrong, had caused a family scandal, that she had left for Australia. But as with all skeletons in cupboards through the course of the subsequent years the story as to why and what happened was no longer discussed and in time all but forgotten.

The letters were given to me by my Aunt, and whenever I read through them I found I had more questions than answers. Many, many years past and still whenever I took the letters out from the cupboard and read through them they still intrigued me; so finally, I decided to investigate for myself, undertake my personal family research and find out who the woman was and a little about her life in Australia.

This then is the known life story of the young woman who caused such a scandal in my family. Her name is Jane Sefton, alias Jane MacCartney/McCartney whose married name is Jane Howarth. The story begins in Liverpool in the year of her birth 1818, to her last known location in South Australia in 1853. Her story includes extracts from her surviving letters which by their nature include her own personal feelings, her thoughts and insights into her daily life. Whilst I have also included some accounts of a small number of people, those who travelled alongside her for a time in her life's journey.

Jane Sefton was born on 25 February 1818 in Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster in North West England. She was the eldest daughter born to parents George and Catherine Sefton. Jane was baptised on 12 April 1818 at St Chad's Parish Church, Kirkby. The church located on the outskirts of Liverpool. The Register of Baptisms informs that a number of the Sefton family children were baptised at St Chad's church. George, Jane's father is recorded on the baptism record as being a labourer by trade. The church baptism records tell me that Jane had 5 brothers, William born 1816-? Richard born 1823-? Stephen born 1825-? and James born 1827-? Jane also has a brother John who she speaks of in a letter to her Mother dated 1849. Whilst also Jane's Tasmanian conduct record informed me that she identified John as a brother. Jane had 2 younger sisters Elizabeth (Betsy) born 1821-? and Catherine

born 1829-06. It is Catherine who is my direct family relative upon my Fathers paternal side.

In England there are no census records which identify names before the 1841 census. Therefore apart from the St Chad's baptism register and family baptism certificate I found no further record of the family until Jane's offence is reported in local Liverpool newspapers in 1838.

The newspapers of the day provided me with fascinating accounts of local, national and international news and stories. There were reports of local Liverpool news, London news, to articles from all over the world such as the Americas, Australia, and India, to name just a few. But importantly for me the Liverpool newspapers, of which there were several printed at that time provided me with the Liverpool Police Court reports and the Liverpool Quarter Session reports, which include a recording of Jane's crime and conviction.

The first recording of Jane's crime is reported in '*The Liverpool Mail. Saturday 1, December 1838*' at the section for 'Liverpool Police Court'.

ANOTHER PIG-JOBBER ROBBED

Jane McCartney was charged with having robbed a pig-jobber named Brian McMahon on Thursday evening. The Irishman stated that he had been down to inquire about the sailing of the steamer Victoria, and about eight o'clock he was returning to his lodgings in Jamaica Street, when a woman came up and informed him that it was a very wet night. Brian, being pretty nearly soaked through, had been well acquainted with the fact before; but with national politeness he answered, 'It is, my dear.' The woman then asked the Irishman to treat her; but he answered; "I have no call to treat you." "Sure, I know that," said the woman, "and so I'll treat you." "Not at all," answered Brian, "there's not the least call on you to do so." The complainant then walked up Chapel-Street into Covent-garden, the woman accompanying him. The prisoner McCartney then made her appearance and both females began an external examination of the Irishman's pockets. To this Brian objected; but the women paid not the slightest attention to his scruples. At length, his first tormentor caught hold of his coat laps, and thrust her hand into the pockets; while the prisoner threw her left arm round his neck, and with her right hand snatched his purse out of the breast-pocket of his coat. The purse contained ten sovereigns and 30s. in silver. The women then ran away, but the complainant pursued them, and apprehended the prisoner. Before he caught her, he saw her stoop down near to a cellar hole, but the money could not be found either upon her person or in the street.

The prisoner was remanded to take her trial.

Jane's trial was held on 4 December 1838 at the Court of Quarter Sessions in the Crown Court, in the Sessions House in Chapel Street Liverpool. Jane didn't travel very far from the scene of the crime to the court house, as the court house was located just metres from the spot where Jane and her female accomplice had committed the robbery. The court house building is no longer standing. However you can still walk in Jane's, accomplice and Brian McMahon's footsteps. To retrace their steps I walked with the waterfront behind me up Chapel Street and turned right into Covent Garden. At the corner where both streets meet is one of Liverpool's oldest public houses, the 'Pig and Whistle'. This was a popular pub for seafarers during the 19th century and is still a popular Liverpool pub today.

I found reading the original indictment files and the hand written papers black in parts with dirt and brown in discolouration with age a humbling experience. Why was this? It was because each page provided me with an account of what happened on that particular day in history in 1838. It told me a little of the life of a person, their past, their present. But also because of their sentence and with the benefit of current knowledge what the lives of those convicts future would be. Little did anyone of them know or even conceive that in 176 years' time someone would want to read about what had happened in their lives.

For Jane her trial on the 4 December 1838 is recorded as 'number 33' on the court indictment file for that day. Jane is reported as accused of 'Simple Larceny' and 'Felony' and presents a 'P.N.G -Plead Not Guilty'. The following witnesses were 'sworn 1st day', the victim 'Brian MacMahon,' and 'John Parks'. The court indictment record states:

The Jurors of our Lady the Queen , upon their oath present, That Jane MacCartney late of the Borough of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, Singlewoman on the twenty ninth Day of November in the second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria , by the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith , with Force and Arms, at the Borough aforesaid , in the County aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction of this Court, ten pieces of the current gold coin of the realm called sovereigns of the value of ten pounds thirty pieces of the current silver coin of the realm called shillings of the value of one shilling each and one purse of the value of one penny of the Monies, Goods and Chattels of Brian MacMahon upon the person of the said Brian MacMahon being found, did then and there from the person of the said Brian MacMahon feloniously steal, take, and carry away, against the form of the statue in that one case made and provided against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity
Written in the top right corner of the court paper along with Jane's plea it reads, 'Jury say Guilty. Transportation for ten years'.

A further newspaper '*The Liverpool Mail. Thursday 6 December 1838*', records the language and the mood of the victim.

Robbing a Pig-Jobber

Jane McCartney indicated for having stolen from Brian MacMahon a purse containing ten sovereigns and 30s, was found guilty, and sentenced for ten years transportation. Brian excited a general burst of laughter by stating, in reply to a question, "Oh, that is the tory who robbed me, I am sure" (meaning the prisoner)

When I read the accounts of the newspaper reports and the court reports coupled with my knowledge of Liverpool during the first half of the 19th century, my initial assumption of Jane is that she was a street wise young woman, one who knew her way around an expanding city and Port of Liverpool. Life for her in what was one of the most densely populated cities in England would have been hard, rough and tough. However casting my assumptions aside I feel the court trial must have been a frightening and intimidating experience for young 20 year old woman. A scene where there is a lone female, standing tried, accused and convicted in a courtroom comprised entirely of men, sentenced to an unknown future in a distant unknown country.

Jane was not the only woman on trial that day at the Liverpool Quarter Sessions to be convicted and transported. Three further women were also. They were Julia Doyle, Mary Johnson and Eliza Flaherty.

Julia's crime is reported in '*The Liverpool Mail. Thursday November 29, 1838*'.

ROBBING A PIG DROVER

Julia Doyle was placed at the bar on the following charge: - Charles Waters said, that he was a pig-jobber, and lived at Dundalk. He had been in England since the month of August, and had taken pigs to Manchester, where he sold them. On Monday last he came to Liverpool intending to return home. He had in his possession a £5 Bank of England note, some sovereigns and half sovereigns, together with some silver, making in the whole upwards of £37. A little after ten o'clock he was returning to his lodgings, when he met the prisoner near to the corner of Pall Mall. She asked him whether he would "stand two pemfy-worth," and the generous Irishman at once consented. They accordingly went into the house of Mr. Gore, at the corner of Smithfield-street, where the couple had two glasses each. When the Irishman paid for the whisky he saw that all his money was safe. On going out, the beautiful Julia requested her kind-hearted countryman to give her something to buy her breakfast on the following morning. The witness declared that he had no change; but the woman, who had seen his purse, knew better, and the Irishman afterwards confirmed it by again going into the public house, and treating her to another glass. On coming out she repeated her request for money. They were then near

a gateway close to Thomassons pawn – shop, and the man took out his purse to give Julia a shilling, when she snatched it out of his hand and ran through the gateway. The Irishman pursued, but could not overtake her. He gave information to the police, and the woman was apprehended early on Wednesday morning by officer No.37, in a house in Milton-street.

Mrs Gore proved that the prisoner and Waters came into her house on Monday night, and had something to drink together, for which the man paid. He seemed to have a number of sovereigns in his purse, which the prisoner saw.

Policeman No.37, apprehended Doyle, but could not find any money, either upon her person or in the house.

The prisoner denied that she had ever seen Waters before Wednesday morning, when he was brought to her house to identify her.

She was remanded to take her trial.

For Julia her trial on the 4 December 1838 is recorded as ‘number 32’ on file for that day. She is reported accused of ‘Simple Larceny’. She made a ‘P.N.G - Plead Not Guilty’. Three witnesses were ‘sworn 1st day; Charles Waters, Mary Gore, James Lynch’. The court indictment record states:

The Jurors for our Lady the Queen, upon their Oath present, That Julia Doyle the wife of John Doyle late of the Borough of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, Laborer on the twenty sixth day of November in the second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, with Force and Arms at the Borough aforesaid, in the County aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction of this Court, twenty eight pieces of the current Gold coin of the realm called Sovereigns of the value of twenty eight pounds six pieces of the current gold coin of the realm called half sovereigns of the value of ten shillings each twenty pieces of the current silver coin of the realm called shillings of the value of one shilling each and one purse of the value of one penny of the goods and chattels of Charles Waters and one Bank note for the payment of money to wit for the payment of five pounds of lawful money and of the value of five pounds of lawful money the said Bank note being then and there the property of the said Charles Waters and the said sum of money payable and secured by and upon the said Bank note being then and there wholly unpaid and unsatisfied to him the said Charles Waters the proprietor there of upon the person of the said Charles Waters being found, did then and there from the person of the said Charles Waters feloniously steal, take, and carry away, against the form of the statute in that case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity.

Written in the top right corner of the court paper along with Julia’s plea it reads, ‘Jury say Guilty’. Transportation for ten years’.

There is an additional report recorded in *'The Liverpool Mail. Thursday, December 6, 1838'*.

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON

Julia Doyle, 37, was indicated with having stolen from Charles Waters, a pig-jobber from Dundalk, a bag containing money, in gold, silver, and a £5 bank note, to the amount of upwards of £37. The robbery took place on the night of the 26th November, and the prisoner was apprehended on the morning of the 28th, in Milton-street. The prosecutor was positive as to the identity of the prisoner. She was found guilty, and sentenced to transportation for ten years.

Mary Johnson was first tried and convicted on the 22 October 1838, alongside Michael Langan. I can locate no newspaper reports relating to the crime. The trial recorded as 22 October 1838 is recorded as 'number 72' on file for that day. Mary is reported accused of 'Larceny'. She made a 'P.G - Plead Guilty'. Three witnesses were 'sworn 4th day William Roberts, William Campbell, Edward O'Brien'. The court indictment record states:

The Jurors for our Lady the Queen, upon their Oath present, that Mary Johnson late of the Borough of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, Singlewoman on the twenty fourth day of October in the second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Victoria, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, with Force and Arms at Liverpool aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction of this Court, One Jacket of the value of Ten Shillings and One Handkerchief of the value of One shilling of the Goods and Chattels of William Roberts then and there being found, feloniously did steal, take and carry away, against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid, upon their Oath aforesaid, do further present that Michael Langan late the Borough aforesaid Laborer afterwards to wit, on the same day and year aforesaid, with force and arms at Liverpool aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction aforesaid, the said Goods and Chattels, so as aforesaid, feloniously stolen, taken, and carried away, feloniously did receive and have he the said Michael Langan then and there, well knowing the same to have been feloniously stolen, taken, and carried away against the form of the Statute in such case made and provided, and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity.

Written in the top right corner of the court paper along the plea it reads, 'Michael Langan jury say guilty Mary Johnson seven years transportation Michael Langdon Twelve cal months BHCHL'. BHCHL reads Michael received 12 calendar months at the Borough House of Correction Hard Labour.

However Mary is certainly free to walk about Liverpool as Mary committed a further crime that following November 1838. For two newspapers report that William is accused of a similar crime of stealing garments of clothing and that Mary is accused of attempting to pawn a coat at the pawnbrokers.

William and Mary's crime was reported in *'The Liverpool Times, And Billings's Advertiser. Tuesday, December 4, 1838'*.

THEFT FROM A MERCHANT'S OFFICE._ Wm. Johnson and Mary Johnson (brother and sister) were placed at the bar of the police office yesterday, charged with having been concerned in stealing a top-coat, value £3., from the counting-house of Eaton Hall, merchant, Exchange-street West. Mr. Hall stated that on Wednesday afternoon last he went out of his office, and left a brown coat hanging there. He locked the door, but left the key in the lock. In less than half an hour he returned, and found the door in the same state. On entering the office he immediately missed the coat, in one of the pockets of which was a handkerchief. Mr. Hall gave information at the police-office, and bills were as usual printed and circulated. This led to the discovery that the coat had been pawned by the prisoner, Mary Johnson, at the shop of Mr. Pye, in Bevington-bush. Thomas Robertson, apprentice with Mr. Pye, stated that about six o'clock on Wednesday night, Mary Johnson entered the shop and presented the coat, requesting twenty shillings lent upon it. She said her name was Mary Roberts. The pawnbroker had known her before, from frequented his shop. He lent her seventeen shillings on the coat. About an hour afterwards a bill arrived, in which the coat was described. Information of the coat having been pledged was sent to Constable Barton, who called upon the pawnbroker on Saturday afternoon, accompanied by Mr. Hall, who at once claimed his coat and redeemed it. Barton told the witness, Robertson, that he was to detain the pledger of the coat the first time she called. He had not left the shop more five minutes, when the prisoner entered. Barton was sent for, and he took her into custody. On the way towards bridewell he said, "I am taking you about the brown top-coat which you pledged for seventeen shillings you may please yourself whether you say anything about it or not." She said, "I got it from my brother William, who told me to pledge it for a pound; I got seventeen shillings upon it, and I gave him the money and the ticket." Barton lodged her in bridewell, and then went in search of the prisoner William Johnson, whom he found in a house in a court in Ford-street. He said, "have you given a top-coat to your sister to pledge?" He replied, "I have not - I know nothing about it." Barton took him to the bridewell. "This day," said Barton, when the prisoners were before the Magistrates, and without any question having been put to William Johnson, he said, "I got the coat from a gentleman at Princes Dock, who sent me to pledge it. I gave it to my sister." The prisoners having been

cautioned by the magistrate, William Johnson said, "I did give the coat, and I am verry sorry that I did." The girl said, "I can bring the person that saw him (William Johnson) give me the coat." The prisoners were committed at the Borough Sessions, which commence this morning (Tuesday).

Mary was tried alongside her younger brother William. Their trial on 4 December 1838 is recorded as 'number 34' on file for that day and states accused of 'Larceny' with a 'previous conviction'. William made a 'P.G' -Plead Guilty and Mary a 'P.N.G' -Plead Not Guilty. Three witnesses were 'sworn 1st day Eaton Hall, Thomas Robertson and Thomas Barton'. The court indictment record states:

THE Jurors for our Lady the Queen, upon their Oath present, that William Johnson late of the Borough of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, Labourer on the twenty eight Day of November in the second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, with Force and Arms at the Borough aforesaid, in the County aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction of this Court, one coat of the value of three pounds and one handkerchief of the value of two shillings of the Goods and Chattels of Eaton Hall then and there being found feloniously did steal take and carry away against the peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the jurors aforesaid upon do further present that Mary Johnson late of the Borough aforesaid singlewoman afterwards to wit on the same day and year aforesaid with force and arms at the Borough aforesaid and within the jurisdiction aforesaid one coat of the value of three pounds part and parcel of the said Goods and Chattel, so as aforesaid feloniously stolen taken and carried away feloniously did receive and have she the said Mary Johnson then and there knowing the same to have been feloniously stolen taken and carried away against the form of statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity. And the Jurors aforesaid, upon their Oath aforesaid, do further present, that at the General Quarter Session of the Peace, holden at Liverpool in and for the said Borough- the ninth Day of January in the seventh Year of the Reign of His late Majesty King William the Fourth and before the committing of the said Felony, for which the said Mary Johnson, was convicted of Felony, and that the said Felony for which the said Mary Johnson is now above indicted, was committed by her after such previous conviction of her the said Mary Johnson for Felony as last aforesaid, against the form of the Statute in such case made and provided, and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown, and her Dignity.

Written in the top right corner of the court paper along with William and Mary's plea it reads, 'Jury find Guilty each seven years Transportation'.

With regard to Eliza Flaherty's crime regrettably I cannot locate a newspaper report, as not all crimes were recorded in the newspapers. Eliza was tried along with William Burke. Their trial on the 4 December 1838 is recorded as 'number 23' on file for that day. Eliza and William both made a 'P.N.G-Plead Not Guilty'. There were 5 witnesses 'sworn 1st day Ann Harding, Francis Jones, Mary Hunter, Francis MacCaffery, Maud Augustin'. The court indictment record states:

The Jurors for our Lady the Queen upon their Oath present That William Burke late of the Borough of Liverpool in the County of Lancaster Labourer on the third day of November in the second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen Defender of the Faith with force and arms at the Borough aforesaid in the County aforesaid and within the Jurisdiction of this Court Six Straw Bonnets of the value of One Pound of the Goods and Chattels of John Harding then and there being feloniously did steal take and carry away against the Peace of our Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid upon their Oath aforesaid do further present that Eliza Flaherty late of the Borough aforesaid Singlewoman afterwards to wit on the same day and year aforesaid with force and arms at the Borough aforesaid and within the Jurisdiction aforesaid One Bonnet of the value of five shillings part and parcel of the said Goods and Chattels, so as aforesaid feloniously stolen, taken, and carried away, feloniously did receive and have she the said Eliza Flaherty then and there well knowing the same to have been feloniously stolen, taken and carried away against the form of the statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid upon their Oath aforesaid further present that the said William Burke afterwards to wit on the same day and year aforesaid with force and arms at the Borough aforesaid in the county aforesaid and within the Jurisdiction aforesaid six other Straw Bonnets of the value of One pound of the Goods and Chattels of Ann Harding then and there being feloniously did steal, take and carry away against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

And the Jurors aforesaid upon their Oath do further present that the said Eliza Flaherty afterwards to wit on the same day and year aforesaid with force and arms at the Borough aforesaid and within the Jurisdiction aforesaid One other Bonnet of the value of five shillings part and parcel of the said Goods and Chattels so as aforesaid feloniously stolen taken and carried away feloniously did receive and have she the said Eliza Flaherty then and there well knowing the same to have been as feloniously stolen, taken and carried away against the

form of the statute in such case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen her Crown and Dignity.

Written in the top right corner of the court paper along with Eliza's and William's plea it reads; 'Jury find Guilty Each Seven years Transportation'.

Unfortunately it is not known where the women were imprisoned pre trial and whilst waiting to be transported. It is several months later on the 9 May 1839 that all four were transported to Hobart, Van Diemen's Land. They sailed from London on the *Hindustan*. Also on board the *Hindustan* voyage is reported to have been Jane's Cousin, Sarah Sefton, who was convicted of 'simple larceny' in October 1838 and transported for 10 years.

'The *Liverpool Times and Billinge's Advertiser*. Tuesday, October 23, 1838' reports the 'Liverpool Michaelmas Sessions'.

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON

Sarah Sefton, aged 19, was charged with having, on the night of the 26th of July last, stolen a purse containing twelve sovereigns and fifteen shillings, the property of Gasper Winteler, from his person.

Mr Rushton appeared for the prosecutor, Mr Murphy for the defence.

The prosecutor, a foreigner, who spoke English but imperfectly, stated that on the night of the 26th July he was on his way from the Theatre to the Adelphi. As he passed through Houghton-street, he was accosted by the prisoner, who persisted, notwithstanding his endeavours to get rid of her, in importuning him to accompany her home. He requested her repeatedly to leave him, but she clung to his arm. Suddenly she called another girl over to her, and thrusting her hand into his pocket, she pulled out his purse and handed it to the female whom she had called. The prosecutor seized her, and calling a policeman, gave her into custody. She intreated him, if he had children of his own, to have mercy upon her, and set her at liberty. The other girl made off with the purse, and he did not get it back.

The jury found the prisoner guilty, and she was sentenced to ten years transportation.

When I read the newspaper report I noted the crime bore extremely similar characteristics to the crime committed by Jane. Could the 'other girl' have been Jane or alternatively was this approach a local tried and tested method of robbing lone males as they walked the street of a night?

Sarah's trial on 22 October 1838 is recorded as 'number 9' on file for that day.

Sarah is reported as accused of 'Simple Larceny'. The file states Sarah presented a 'P.N.G-Plead Not Guilty' and that the following '2 witnesses sworn on the 1st day, Gasper Winteler', and a 'John Edwards'.

The Court indictment record states:

The Jurors of our Lady the Queen, upon their Oath present, That Sarah Sefton late of the Borough of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, Singlewoman on the twenty sixth day of July in the Second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, with Force and Arms, at the Borough aforesaid, in the County aforesaid, and within the Jurisdiction of this Court, thirteen pieces of the current Gold coin of the realm called Sovereigns of the value of thirteen pounds fifteen pieces of the current Silver coin of the realm called shillings of the value of one shilling each and one purse of the value of six pence of the monies and Goods and Chattels of George Winteler upon the person of the said Gasper Winteler feloniously steal, take, and carry away, against the form of the Statute in that case made and provided and against the Peace of our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity.

Written in the top right corner of the court paper along with Sarah's plea it reads, 'Jury say Guilty Transportation for ten years'.

The five women, Jane age 21, Julia age 31, Eliza age 20, Mary age 20, and Sarah age 20, sailed on the *Hindustan* arriving in Hobart, Van Diemen's Land on 12 September 1839. The voyage lasted 126 days.

When reading Jane's convict conduct record I found it enabled me to paint a mental image of her. Jane is described as being '5 feet 3 inches (160 cm) tall', with 'Black Hair' and 'Black Eyebrows'. Facially she is described as having a 'Round Head, Oval Visage, Dark Hazel Eyes', with a 'Medium Nose, Mouth, Forehead, Chin' and has a 'mark on her right shoulder of J.W'. Her trade or calling is recorded as a 'House Servant and Plain Laundress'. Her native place is recorded as 'Kirby Lonsdale'; with her 'Religion' as 'Protestant' and that she could neither 'Read' nor 'Write'. Jane's Goal report records Jane as 'obedient 5 times in prison, conduct bad, Surgeons report very quarrelsome ... 6 times for drunkenness 8 days, 7 days & 5 days & fined single 2 years on the town real name Jane Sefton'.

In late September 1839, Jane, Mary and Sarah were transferred to Launceston on the *Brig Tamar*. Some old habits it appears possibly die hard for Jane because during the voyage, Jane, Sarah and Mary were found to have gone into the men's berth. A 'Gross Misconduct' verdict was given and all three received a sentence of '14 days' solitary confinement on bread and water' at Launceston Female Factory. For Jane four further offences were recorded between 1839 and 1841. One offence on the 9 December 1839 is recorded as 'absent without leave and drunk', 7 days cell on bread and water as the punishment. The second offence on the 19 March 1840 recorded as being 'drunk', the punishment being 7 days solitary confinement on bread and water. The third offence on the 20 July 1840 recorded as being 'drunk and insolent', Jane was reprimanded. Finally Jane's fourth recorded offence was on the

10 October 1841 where she was found to be 'under the influence of liquor' with a punishment of 10 days solitary confinement.

In 1841 an application was approved for Jane to marry convict Robert Howarth. Robert was age 23 years when he was transported. His native place is recorded as being 'Bolton, Lancashire'. His trade is recorded as a 'laborer'. He was tried and convicted at Lancaster, Lancashire on 2 December 1833 for the crime of 'housebreaking and stealing money' in 1833. Robert was sentenced to 7 years transportation and sailed from England to Hobart on the *William Metcalfe* on the 25 May 1834. The ship arrived in Hobart on the 4 September 1834, taking 102 days.

Robert's convict conduct record also makes for interesting reading. Robert's 'Goal report' is stated as 'not known' and his 'Hulk report' as 'good, single' and the 'Surgeons report' as 'orderly'. However within 2 months of his arrival in Hobart he had 'disobeyed orders' and was confined to barracks for 3 months. From 1835 up to and including 1842, Robert is recorded as committing a number of offences which included reports for 'drunkenness', 'larceny', and 'misconduct'. One such offence in 'May 1836 wilful provocation under Oath' resulted in Robert's transportation being extended for a further 3 years and 'recommended to be dismissed from the Police'. It was in 1843 that Robert was granted his free certificate.

The couple were married on the 28 July 1841 at St John Church, Launceston. Jane was 23 years old and Robert was 29 years old. The service was conducted by the Reverend W.H. Browne. The marriage certificate records Jane as a convict, with Robert as having a ticket of leave. The couple both signed the certificate with their mark. In August 1845 Jane obtains a conditional pardon recommendation and in August 1846 her conditional pardon was approved.

It is sometime during the late 1840s that the couple leave Van Diemen's Land and re-locate to live in South Australia for the first letter is written on behalf of Jane from Mount Gambier in South Australia.

The letter is addressed to Jane's Mother in 'Kirkdale Near Liverpool Lankeyshire.' That Jane's family lived in Kirkdale is beyond doubt, as in addition to the address on the letter, the England census records confirm that family members lived here in 1841, 1851 and 1861. This then raises the probability that on Jane's conduct record Jane's native place as Kirby Lonsdale is incorrect and that the spelling of Kirby Lonsdale has been confused with the township of Kirkdale, Liverpool.

All three letters from 1849-1853 that survive today have been written in South Australia 1849 and 1851 and in Victoria 1853. They are all penned by a different hand, each having different handwriting and are signed for on behalf of Jane and Robert. They all describe the local trade whether it is wool, wages, or shipping with Jane appearing eager to describe to the family in Liverpool what a good a life the couple are living in South Australia. Jane always describes the positive aspects of

their life. The letters show that the couple have a hunger for news from home and how they want to be informed of how life is in England.

But for me I feel the most potent personal aspect of all the letters is that they speak of separation and loss and tell of a woman who wants to connect with her mother and family. In the letters Jane wants to hear of the news of the health of a sister, she desires for her younger brother to immigrate to South Australia. And sadly for Jane she repeatedly seeks information on where her father has been buried. Each singular letter and all three collectively show I believe a demonstration of her wanting to connect to her family, with a need to impress upon them how well her life has become during the past 10 years from when she left Liverpool. I have reproduced extracts of the letters exactly as they have been originally written. Where I am unable to read a word I have replaced that word with an X several words with XX.

It is 1849; Jane is 30 years old and writes:

Dear Mother Sisters & Brothers I make with pleasure set down to rite to you all hoping to find you all in good health as it leaves me at present thank god for it Dear Mother I think it very X that I have not received no Answer from you for this two years come February & I have rote to you two letters since then but i hope you will answer this one by the return of post as we are anxious to hear from you all Dear Mother we have left Vandiemansland now & are come over to South Australia living at Mount Gambier & are doing very well at present

Dear Mother I must not forget to tell that I have got my liberty thank god & I have had it this two years & Robert and me are in very comfortable living we have no family not at present.

Jane continues to write that she has sent over to Van Diemen's Land, hoping that there will be letters there. But unfortunately Jane reports that she has had no answer from there. Jane asks 'please to answer this by return of post'.

But in what is a continued on going theme for Jane in two of her letters is the personal grief she experiences in hearing of the death of her Father, which includes her sadness of her not knowing where he has been buried or whether he spoke of her at his death. Jane writes:

I was very sorry to hear of the death of my father which I told you in my other letters but not hearing from you before I can't say weather you have received them also I hope you will get this one from us Robert and me have made up our minds to stop in this country yet a wile hearing such a bad account of England being in such a bad state But in the course of two or three years we might see England once more In your next letter you will please send me word where my Father was buried and weather he said any thing about me at his death Dear Mother I am very much obliged to Mr & Mrs Tillison for they're kind attention on my father when on his death bed

Jane concludes her letter by asking to be remembered to her brother John, asking her Mother to 'tell him I hope he will behave as a father to my Brothers Williams Children XX'. The letter is dated and has been franked by the postal service as 'G.P.O. JA+25 49 South Australia'. The letter is franked as being received in England as 'Liverpool JY 2 1849'. Interestingly the person who penned the letter (Jane could not write) makes a mistake common to some who date a letter today. For the person who wrote the letter on behalf of Jane wrote 'Jan 3 1849' having first crossed out the year '1848'. For isn't it sometimes true that many people at the start of the year forget that a New Year has begun and write the old year date.

In reading the letter I found it to have an overall personal sentiment and an endearing positive narrative of a daughter engaging with a beloved Mother. Jane's writing tells of mixed emotions, she is eager to inform her mother that she has received her liberty, but her lack of knowledge as to where her father has been buried appears to be particularly hard for her.

There does appear to have been communication prior to 1847 between Jane and her family for Jane does know of her Father's death and has received some family news. Including that a Mr and Mrs Tillison assisted the family on the death of her Father. This family whom Jane speaks of are the neighbours of the Sefton family in Kirkdale. Information in the England census return 1841 and 1851 does confirm this. With regard to the death of Jane's Father, records inform me that he died 4 years previously in 1845, age 55 years and that he is buried in the churchyard of St Chad's, Kirkby. His burial of the 3 April 1845 at the same church Catherine and he were married and Jane and her siblings were baptised. Sadly it will never be known if any member of Jane's family ever told her where her Father was buried or if he did speak of her on his death bed. So did her Mother write or not in the two years prior 1847-1849, or was the mail lost or destroyed in Van Diemen's Land? Again I will never know.

To conclude her letter Jane signs 'kind love to you all and remain your affectionate daughter'. In a post script Jane asks to be remembered to all her 'enquiring friends'. But it is the final piece of the letter that acts like a piece of jigsaw. For Jane asks for all future correspondence to be addressed to 'Robert Howarth at R.R. Leake Esq: Glencoe near Mount Gambier South Australia', and this is where I could now pinpoint that the couple had left Van Diemen's Land and were now living and working in South Australia.

In searching for evidence of the couple at this address I found that Robert Roland Leake was a well known pastoralist within the district. R. Cockburn, 'Edward John and Robert Roland Leake', in *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia Vol.1*; a book compiled from a series of articles from *The Adelaide Stock and Station Journals*, in 1925 informs that;

Edward John and Robert Roland Leake went through life hand in hand, so far as their business interests were concerned, and their careers are inseparable from the early pastoral history of the south-east ... They were the sons of the Hon. John Leake who had migrated to from England to Tasmania in the sailing ship the "Andromeda" in 1823 and upon arrival was given a grant of land at Campbell Town. He, together with Mr Gillis, is credited with having introduced the Merino sheep to Tasmania, in 1824, by the importation from the Elector of Saxony.

Robert Roland Leake did not remain in Tasmania thou and travelled from Launceston to South Australia in the late 1830s working for the South Australian Company. He subsequently left the company and according to the article:

...was first attracted to the country north of Adelaide, and in a return published on August 28, 1841, he is shown to have been, at that time, the fourth largest holder of sheep in the province, apart from the South Australian Company... In the early 1840s Robert Leake was joined by his brother Edward and they transferred their pastoral activities to the south-east, where operations were conducted on a considerable scale ... The two bothers settled at a spot they called Glencoe, in compliment to Mr. McIntyre, who came from Glencoe in Scotland ...They built a slab hut, with a bark roof, which was put together without a nail. Afterwards the more ornate homestead, known as "Frontier House, "was erected, the foundation stone being laid by Mrs Robert Leake, with considerable ceremony.

The article includes an extract written in 1845 by Evelyn P. Sturt, the brother of Captain Charles Sturt, the explorer:

"Description of runs occupied by R.R. and E. Leake, holders of an occupation licence. Situation-South-eastern portion of the province...'Glen Co., running six miles by two and a-half wide, under the north-east side of the Bluff Range marked by trees".

The article states that during the next decade the brothers expanded their livestock and land holdings considerably. Robert died in 1860 and upon his death Edward returned from living in Portland to live at 'Frontier House'. Edward died in 1867. Then over the course of the years the Leake family estate was sold. Today the 'Glencoe Woolshed' survives, built in 1863 it remains as a museum owned and managed by the National Trust of South Australia.

I have attempted to trace Jane and Robert within the district during the late 1840s and early 1850s; looking for their names contained within local records, however unfortunately to date I can find no record of Jane or Robert being named in any employment records of the Leake Brothers at 'Glencoe' or living in Portland. However contained within the Tasmanian archive records I found that Robert had sailed as a passenger on the *Brig 'City of Sydney'*. The ship departed Launceston to

Portland Bay on the 28 November 1850. The reason for Robert returning to Launceston and his subsequent return to South Australia is unknown to me as Jane in her letters gives no indication of such sailings.

It is now 1851 and moving forward two years and Jane writes a letter from 'Portland 22nd Feby 1851'. The letter is penned on the day she received a letter that morning from Liverpool. Jane writes a long letter to her Mother and writes of her family; Betsy, Stephen and her Father. She provides detail and insight into the life of the district she is now living in and paints a very rosy picture for her Mother. And while not all of the early pastoralists or pioneers would share Jane's view of life. Jane may well now feel she is living a life in Portland in 1851 that would have been far better than the life she would have been living in Liverpool, England.

My Ever Dear Mother,

I have the pleasure of receiving your kind letter of the 6th Sept last this morning the intelligence it conveys in two instances, I regret, the illness of my dear sister Betsy in the first place but his I hope may be only temporary, and previous to receiving any other communication from you I trust that you will be able to report her as perfectly Restored to health.

In the next brother Stephen having proceeded to New York I cannot flatter myself with a hope of now seeing him in Australia. Althou I have for some time anxiously looked for his arrival by some one or other of the Emigrant ships arriving at some of the shipping Ports from England, when you write him please say that Robert & myself have been sadly disappointed, the expense of his coming out here as an Emigrant would not have been much greater than Going out to America as a Passenger, and from the Experience both myself and Robert have of this Country, we are convinced he could do as well here if not much better than where he is gone to, current rate of wage for single men is from £25 & £30 annum in this colony with board & lodging. You can mention to him those particulars when you write him, and suggest the probability of getting a vessel from New York to the Colonies direct, as American Vessels occasionally come to Sydney Melbourne South Australia and Van Diemens Land for wool and also for whaling purposes. Should he be fortunate enough to procure a passage in the way above stated, on writing to us & an opportunity for which is almost daily, his conveyance here will be attended to by us. Our Former Letters My Dear Mother will have informed you of our having established ourselves as housekeepers in Portland with every prospect of doing well, to the present period We thank God have no reason to change our Report, I send you by this vessel some of the latest papers published in this Township, which 15 years since was a proper wilderness, and only inhabited by Black natives. this season there has been Five large vessels loaded here with the wool grown in our District. Pray in Return send some of your newspapers

they will afford us some amusements and Information about our Native Country.

At this point in the letter Jane suddenly breaks from speaking of trade and local news and again raises the lack of her knowledge as to where her Father has been buried. It certainly appears that even though they have been communicating Jane's Mother has written a short letter and has still not told Jane the information she wants to hear. Jane writes:

'I regret to note the shortness of your letter, you altho I previously asked you have never mentioned where my Dear Father was buried pray do mention this in your next.'

Then again at the next sentence Jane continues to discuss trade, and states:

you have not given us any information as to how trade was going on or if it was X. in our Place everything in the Way of Trade from October to the X of this month all is X but from that things are very Dull generally. The necessaries of Life are generally cheap and very abundant the Best Beef & Mutton prime joints X a 2plb never exceeds the latter price. The meat equal to any in Great Britain altho only Grass Fed, the Price of Flour which is at present rather high you will see by the Newspapers, Clothing Cheap almost as in England,

Jane then continues to tell her Mother of the local bush fires, although I feel she has not disclosed the full extent of the devastation and the catastrophe caused by the fires in February 1851. Jane writes:

you will observe by the newspapers sent you that many Parts of this & the adjoining Colonies have been visited by Fire those Fires originate in the Bush and are often very destructive, the late one has done much mischief

The 'very destructive' fires Jane writes about and that 'the late one has done much mischief' is more than likely to be her reference to the bushfires which raged through the colony in February and particularly on the day of 6 February. Fires caused by extreme temperature and northerly winds which burnt through a quarter of the state, the Portland area included. Fires were people were tragically killed and injured, were people lost their homes, and numerous livestock and native animals were killed. The Melbourne Newspaper, *The Argus* of 10 February 1851 reports:

THE LATE BUSH FIRES

In our Saturday's issue we briefly alluded to the extensive and destructive bush-fires that prevailed throughout the country, more particularly on the Thursday preceding. Rumours have reached XX of conflagrations on every side, but as we did not wish to appear alarmists, we refrained from noticing any but those that were well authenticated, knowing how exceedingly prone report is to magnify and distort particulars. Since then, however, we learn with regret that little only of ill news had reached us, and that what we thought magnified, is unhappily very far from the fearful extent of the truth.

The Newspaper continues to report the damage and the tragic loss of life that ensued. Providing reports from several sources and the district local newspapers, including a report from a Portland newspaper:

The Portland Herald gives the following as some of the damage done in the district prior to the 3rd instant, and we almost dread to receive the accounts of devastation that must have been caused by the burning gale of Thursday last. It says - "Mr Hector McDonald, Smoky River, has got all his hay and oats burnt. His partner, Mr McKenaie, of the Britannia Inn, Portland has got his cottage, a first-rate cart, with a complete set of horse harness, burnt to ashes. Mr Curtin, at the Water Holes, has lost all his wheat, oats, hay and a great part of fencing by a bush fire. Mr Montgomery, Mount Emu Creek, has had a flock of sheep completely destroyed by bush fire.

Jane certainly does not dwell upon such grave news and the tragedies that occurred in the district, but seems always to expound the positive aspects of her life and life in general in Australia. For following such news at the next sentence Jane again seeks to inform her mother of the benefits of emigration to the colonies and writes:

You may not be aware that parties disposed to immigrate to those colonies are afforded many facilities by their Parishes on application to them for that purpose, this I think cannot be to generally known in X neighbourhood, as many Persons would be very glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of coming out here

The mail by which this Goes is about to close I am obliged to conclude & joined by Robert in love to you & my dear Sisters and Kind Respects to all Friends Believe Me Dear Mother

Yo Ever affectionate Daughter Jane Howarth

Two years now pass and the third and final letter which has been preserved is dated 1853 and reads 'Melbourn Dec 6 1853'. Sadly this letter is the most difficult to read due to the clarity of the handwriting, brown in colouring and its general poor state, being ripped in parts and with sections missing. In this letter Jane does not appear to have lost any hope of not seeing her brother Stephen again, and writes again a positive account of the livelihood that he could find if he were to emigrate to South Australia. Jane writes:

Dear Mother,

I received your kind letter dated Nov 28 1853 and was Glad to hear from you and i hope when you write me Again you will be able to give some good Account of Brother Stephen I am sorry to hear of my Brother James was so ill when you write to me dear mother i send my kind letter and love to you and my sisters and brothers things are X here at present thank goodness for it i wish X see you All but i am doing well at present X that you are doing so too dear

mother I he X with X of my dear husband since you X but I hope for the X my
dear sisters X true I love XX

Sadly further key words are illegible in this section and the remainder of the letter after this section has been unfortunately lost. This is regrettable as at this section Jane writes a particularly emotional account gleaned from the words that are legible. In the next surviving portions Jane tells her Mother of the price of wages:

XX are from 10 to 9 shillings per day to carpenter and other Tradesmen are from 25 shillings per day Stone Cutter 2 pounds per day But the rent is dear in Melbourn and the rate of board for single men are 30 shillings per week but still people can do well if my Brother Stephen should come to Melbourne or to Portland XX Melbourn home to XX

Jane then goes on in detail to give names, houses and addresses of contacts in Melbourne and Portland, people and places where Stephen can contact and find work. The writing is hard to read but I believe further scrutiny would reveal the contacts details. However one of the addresses I am able to read is 'XX house at the Top of Little Bourke Street East'.

When I read this letter and the previous letter were Jane focuses so much emotion on Stephen it leads me to ask myself; what is it about Stephen above the other brothers that lead Jane to anxiously look for his arrival at the ports over the years? Jane clearly desires to see him again and she even suggests he sail from New York to Australia and gives details of wages and names and locations of contacts for him should he arrive. Could it be that as Stephen is Jane's direct younger brother they have a special relationship? Jane is the elder by 7 years. Stephen would have been 13 years old when she left Liverpool. Or was it something about Stephens's personality? Or is it possible that it is Stephen's circumstances, in that he is the only brother unmarried and is able to travel? Has Jane reasoned that as he too has left England then why should he not come to South Australia and she could have direct contact with him, a member of her family? Possibly if Jane is living a life she sees as better than the one she lead in Liverpool, then she concludes that Stephen could have this better life also.

Finally to the very last surviving piece of the letter, that gives an indication that Jane appears to have been caught up somewhat in the sign of the times - the Gold Rush of the early 1850s. For Jane ask her Mother about the gold she has sent her. Intriguingly Jane says; 'In the last letter I sent one piece of Gold you did not say if you got it'. If Jane told her Mother in the letter a gold piece was included her Mother did not say she never received it or say thank you if she did. Did Jane ever find out if her Mother received it? I will never know. Also if Jane sent a piece of gold, then possibly she has kept an amount of gold for her owns needs also. Jane then concludes by providing a name and address of where her Mother is to send correspondence to her. The name is not legible for me to read but it is one of the

names previously quoted by Jane as a contact for Stephen and is located in Portland. It is here that her letter ends.

Whatever did become of Jane and Robert after 1853, what happened in Jane's life? Did she find a better living in Australia? Did she stay in the Portland/Melbourne district? Did she ever meet her brother Stephen again? Did any member of her family tell her where her Father was buried? Did she have any children? These and so many questions unanswered. And whilst I will continue to search archive records and newspaper reports to find answers to some of those questions they will not provide me with the insight into Jane's personal thoughts, feelings and desires. So, I feel very privileged that by the nature of Jane's letters to her mother I can catch a rare glimpse of the person she was and be able to share some of her life story. A story she could not have conceived would be hers when she lived in Liverpool, nor that it would be retold over 160 years later. I also am extremely fortunate and grateful that those letters did not perish; they were not thrown away, but that they were kept in a jar in the dark cupboard for so many many years. And by the very nature of them being kept always meant Jane was never forgotten by her family.

Postscript

I have reproduced Jane's letters, the court indictment files and the newspaper reports as they have been either handwritten or printed, word for word. This includes spelling. Sadly within Jane's letters or newspaper articles there are words which I am unable to decipher, where this occurs I have added an X for the word and XX for several words or a paragraph.

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