

Mary Dockerty ? - 1883

Destinies plan for Mary Dockerty

By Kay Buttfeld

Questions of destiny and the future may not have ever been considered by young Mary Dockerty, seemingly her concerns were more immediate and centered around the daily here, and now of her existence. However, in 1832 when Mary stood in the dock of the Old Bailey her destiny was to change forever. With no family for support, seventeen-year-old Mary lived on the streets of London. She was one of many trying to survive in that ancient city awash with a teeming mass of souls all striving to stay alive amidst a changing landscape mostly etched with hopelessness. (1) Information on Mary's earlier years has not been uncovered but she may have been living on the streets for some time. Where, and when she was born we will never know but anecdotal information passed down to her twice great granddaughter suggests she was Irish or at least her parents were born in Ireland. (2)

Facing the bench that warmer than usual January day, Mary was not in unfamiliar territory.(3) There had been an incident in 1830, when the then, 15 year old Mary, was found not-guilty of a charge of threatening another 'unfortunate' girl and there was also a question mark about a previous conviction for vagrancy and being 'on the town' for a period.(4)These earlier incidents were signposts for Mary's life when on that mild winter's day in January 1832, she and another girl were tried for stealing a pair of boots which they tried to pawn.(5) The accomplice was not convicted, but Mary, perhaps because of her previous offences was sentenced to 7 years transportation to Van Diemen's Land. We can never know how Mary felt when she heard this – perhaps with the resilience of youth the enormity of it did not sink in. Mary was most likely held at Newgate prison until April when she and around 150 female convicts left Plymouth on board the *Hydery* bound for Van Diemen's Land. The ship was under the command of Captain Alex McDonald and on August 10 after 121 days at sea, he delivered his human cargo less three poor souls who had perished on the voyage. (6) According to the surgeon's report Mary had been ill on the voyage with angina pain, but overall her conduct on board was classed as good.(7)

Upon landing Mary and her fellow convicts were dispatched to the Cascades Female Factory. After a time in the Factory, Mary was assigned to a home in Hobart Town, (8) but in November she was returned to the Factory for receiving stolen property.(9) She was then assigned to Mr. Mason but in July 1833 she was suspected of being involved in a robbery so once again she was returned to the Factory.(10) It seems that it was hard for Mary to settle down and considering the changes in her short life this is not unexpected. She was then assigned to a Mr. Flammeney (?). Following this assignment, it was recommended that she should not be reassigned in town again– she was then sent to work for Mr. Lord then a Mr. Lamb in the Oatlands area. (11) It is hard to not feel sympathy for this child of the streets - removed from the world she knew and sent to a community in the middle of an unknown landscape. Brown haired Mary was 4 feet 8 1/2 inches tall, with hazel eyes and a florid complexion. (12) She was illiterate and on the official records described as a

'Nurse girl' – a title at odds with her previous circumstances. We can never know the significance of motifs she carried from her past - a scar on her right temple and a tattoo of hearts and darts with a jumble of letters on her right inner arm but no doubt they held memories for her. (13)

In Oatlands Mary's destiny changed again as in December 1834 an ex-convict, bricklayer/stonemason, Joseph Rudd, sought permission to marry her – permission was refused but Joseph applied again in July 1835, this time he was successful. (14) Although a marriage certificate has not been found it is still likely that the couple did marry.

They had at least 12 known children, including at least two, possibly three sets of twins, but as was commonplace for the times not all survived to adulthood. (15) Mary and Joseph spent the most part of their married life in, and around the Oatlands area. (16) In 1835 when they 'wed', Joseph was around 36 years old compared to Mary who was approximately 20 years. Nothing apart from the evidence of their children's birth is known about Mary and Josephs' life together. However, familial ties seemed to be strong as in the coming years various members acted as witnesses at each other's weddings and many names were passed down among the siblings own children.(17) Life was not easy for the family and Joseph sought various ways to improve their lot.(18) From the early 1850's he, with some of his older children, made trips to the Victorian gold fields to try their Vandemonian luck.(19) However, in 1868 on one such venture he succumbed to illness at White Hills near Bendigo and died. (20) We do not know how Mary reacted when she heard the news of Joseph's death.(21) Widowed Mary then seemed to become involved with caring for grandchildren particularly the children of her daughter Julia who in 1878 aged 35 had died in childbirth.(22) Later that year Mary appeared in court trying to get her young granddaughter admitted to the Industrial school as she believed her son-in-law was incapable of caring for the child.(23)

In August 1883 in Bathurst street, Hobart, at the home of one of her daughters, Mary died from Bronchitis. (24) Fate had the last word with Mary as coincidentally she was buried at Cornelian Bay on the 10th August 1883 - 51 years to the day since she had arrived in Van Diemen's Land. Curiously her age at death is given as 75 years which, when aligned with her age when convicted differs by a few years. Like her earlier years her true age is lost in time.

Today there are descendants of Mary (and Joseph), in most Australian States and also in New Zealand, among this number are many Teachers/Educators, Doctors, Musicians, Artists and Nurses. Mary and Joseph's convict past remained hidden from the family until a few years ago when Mary was discovered through her incarceration at the Cascades Female Factory.

(1) Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "London History - London, 1800-1913", Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 20 June 2016)

- (2) Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "Communities - Irish London", Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 20 June 2016)
- (3) The British and Foreign Medico - *Chirurgical Review, Quarterly Journal of Practical Medicine*, Vol.XV111 January-April 1856, p.297.
- (4) Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 20 June 2016), May 1830, trial of ANN CARLTON MARY DOCKERTY MARY ANN BURKE (t18300527-199).
- (5) Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 20 June 2016), January 1832, trial of MARY DOCKERTY SARAH WICKS (t18320105-44).
- (6) Charles Bateson's "The Convict Ships 1787-1868"
Source: <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/ships.html>
- (7) Surgeon - Superintendents Journal, A.McLaren, *Hydery*, 1832 Adm 101/35 AJCP 3198
- (8) Master's name is unknown, not on the records.
- (9) Mary Dockerty TAHO CON 40/1/3 1832
- (10) Mary Dockerty, TAHO Conduct 40/1/3 p.71.
- (11) Mary Dockerty, TAHO Muster Roll 1833; Muster Roll 1835; Muster Roll 1841.
- (12) Mary Dockerty, Description TAHO CON 19/1/13 p.74
- (13) Mary Dockerty, Description TAHO CON 19/1/13 p.74
- (14) Permission to Marry, Rudd and Dockerty, TAHO 1834 CON 52/1/1 p.165; TAHO 1835 CON 52/1/1 p.165.
- (15) Children of Mary and Joseph Rudd – Faithful and Thomas b.1835, Mary b.1837, Julia Ann and possibly a twin b. 1841, William b.1843, Ellen Hales b.1845, Ann b.1848, Joseph b.1850, John and Robert b.1852, George b.1854 and Henry b.1857. Reference notes from Mr. Bill McConnell, a descendant of Mary and Joseph through one of their daughters – Faithful Rudd, born 1835.
- (16) Census TAHO Oatlands 1842 CEN 1/1/35 p.93; TAHO1843 Oatlands CEN 1/1/71 p.115; TAHO Oatlands CEN 1/1/94, p.78.
- (17) TAHO RGD 37/1/32 No.30 1873; TAHO RGD 33/1/28 No.345; TAHO RGD 37/1/12 No.445; TAHO RGD 37/1/33 No 260.
- (18) OATLANDS POLICE COURT. (1863, August 4). *The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.: 1860-1954)*, p.2. retrieved June 16, 2016, from <http://nla.gov.au/nola.news-article8819686>
- (19) Departures to Victoria – 1852 *Vixen* POL 220/1/2/ p.100; 1853 *Clarence* POL 220/1/3/ p.103.
- (20) <http://rpcv.com.au/deceased-search/deceased/?id=104598> White Hills Cemetery
- (21) Rudd, Joseph., Died 12/3/1868. VIC 2431/1868.
- (22) Julia Keating., Died 20/1/1878. TAHO RGD 35/1/9 No.981.
- (23) "CITY POLICE COURT." (1878, August 9). *The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.: 1860-1954)*, , p.3. Retrieved May 15, 2017, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8966460>

(24) Mary Rudd buried at Cornelian Bay, Hobart on 10 August 1883, Age 75, < millingtons.com.au >
retrieved 10 June 2016.

"Mary died at the residence of her daughter in Bathurst street, Hobart, suffering from bronchitis." Reference note from Mr. Bill McConnell, a descendant of Mary and Joseph through one of their daughters – Faithful Rudd, born 1835.