

## Mary Dove 1811 – 1865

### A LETTER TO MY GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER

By Margaret Walsh

My dearest Margaret

This letter is written to you by my son, Samuel, who can read and write, whereas I never learned to do so. Samuel urged me to tell my story, so that future generations know from whence they came.

I was born in Galway, Ireland on 1 August 1811, and was a nursemaid/needlewoman.

You would probably think me to be quite a brave young girl when I tell you what happened next. I went over to London to try to make a living, as life in Ireland had no future for me. I also had a child, and on 27 February 1833 I left my child with a friend, Bridget Key, and told her I was going to sell some fruit, but I never went back. I never saw my firstborn again. If I'd known what was about to happen, I would never have gone. On 28 February, I met up with Mary Lee, who was a stranger. I asked her for lodgings, and she said I could stop with her, which I did for four nights.

The next day, a cold winter's day on 1 March 1833, Mary Lee met up with a journeyman silk-weaver, John Carlier. Mary asked him if he would give her anything to drink, so they went to a house on Bunhill Row and had some gin. Mary asked him to come to our house, which adjoined Chequer Alley. I was at home in bed when they arrived. Mary leaned over John Carlier and took something from his pockets, and before he realised what had happened, Mary had rushed downstairs talking in Irish. She'd taken a quarter of an ounce of pigtail tobacco, four sovereigns and some silver.

I ran downstairs too. The next day he found us in the public-house, where Mary was drinking a pint of gin. Carlier searched her and found the money in her stocking.

We were both charged with theft pocket-picking. At our trial at the Old Bailey (Middlesex London) there were four other witnesses, apart from Carlier, who all said we had sovereigns. James Turner, who kept a general sale shop on Whitecross Street, said he saw us with other girls and we were all intoxicated. I had gone into his shop and bought a bonnet. I told him Mary Lee had brought a man home, and I got 25s.6d out of it. I also gave him some of the tobacco.

I tried to tell the judge that it had nothing to do with me. I said I'd found the tobacco, and the bonnet and shawl, and when I gave them back to the lady who owned them, she gave me the money. The judge didn't believe me, and I was sentenced to be transported for fourteen years. I was only twenty one. I had a freckled complexion, with very dark brown hair and hazel eyes.

On 4 July 1833, I set sail for Hobart Town, Tasmania, on the "*William Bryan*", and arrived on 23 October 1833. The journey was a living nightmare. There were 129 other convicts on the ship, but I survived, unlike others who died during the journey. The ship's surgeon reported that on arrival my "state of health good". I was one of the lucky ones.

The women and children were taken to the Cascades Female Factory in South Hobart. A colder place in winter would be harder to find. Mt Wellington seemed to be snow-capped all year round. Even in summer it would cast a foreboding shadow over the factory. As we only wore gowns, petticoats, jackets and aprons made from course materials, with a straw bonnet, we were chilled to the bone and working twelve hour days.

Meals were mainly bread, gruel and soup, made from meat thickened with vegetables and peas or barley. One of my jobs was washing for the administration, the orphan schools or the gaols. We were a rowdy lot, often drunk and always in trouble.

By November 1834 I was heavily pregnant, since I went out to work for Mr Haywood. I can't tell you who the baby's father was – that would just upset you so. "*Being advanced in pregnancy and unfit for service, was returned to the female house of correction*", whereupon I had a

little boy, William Ryan. He died aged three months on 22 June 1835. My heart was broken. Now there were two children I would never see again.

In the 1835 Muster I was assigned to work for Mr G Hutton, but, on 19 April 1836, I was absent without leave and "reprimanded". Two months later I was again absent from my service, and my sentence then was "Crime Class for 3 months and assigned to be in the interior". I didn't like Mr Hutton, so on 29 November of that same year I absconded. Another "Crime Class for three months", back at the Cascades!

In 1838 I met up with William Dove. William had been transported to Hobart Town on the *Manlius* for stealing a chicken in Hackney, London in 1829. He received a sentence of seven years. William was twenty two years old and a silk weaver in Bethnal Green. He was also married with a child, but had to leave them behind in London. On arrival, he was put to work on the Risdon Assignment gang, building roads. William received his Free Certificate in 1837, and applied to marry Elizabeth Lomas, but this was refused.

On 2 March 1839 William's application to marry me was approved, however we had already married at Trinity Church, Hobart on 11 February 1839, and our daughter, Maria Theresa was born two weeks later, on 28 February. William was a butcher by this time. I received my Ticket of Leave on 27 May 1840. This was "a conditional pardon with movement restricted to a particular area". My Conditional Pardon was approved on 14 January 1845, and extended to the Australian colonies nine months later on 7 October 1845. I received my Certificate of Freedom on 12 April 1847.

I tried to keep out of trouble, but after all, I am Irish! William and I were living in 80 Bathurst Street in Hobart, but in September 1842 I was convicted of "Disturbing the Peace", and "fined five shillings". In another case before the Chief of Police Magistrates Court in Hobart Town, on 27 April 1855, William was charged with "assault".

In this case, Martin Kelly of Liverpool Street, charged William, and our son Samuel Dove, a boy twelve years of age, with assaulting him on 17 April. Mr Kelly, who lived at Mr Brown's public house, the Rob Roy, stated that on the evening of the day abovementioned, William and I came into the house. He was patting a dog in the bar, when he says I "struck him on the face". Trouble still seemed to be following me.

We had three children, Maria, William Jnr and Samuel Thomas. Samuel, published two poems celebrating Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897. He was the owner of Tattersall's Hotel in Murray Street Hobart.

Maria, your great great grandmother, married Thomas Fletcher in 1854, when she was only sixteen. Thomas had not been a convict, so things were looking up!

I died on 16 November 1865 in Collins Street Hobart. William lived a further ten years. I had a hard life, as we all did in those times, but I never gave up hope, for without hope what is there?

Take care my dear, and how blessed I was to have been a wild Irish girl who became an Australian by default! I will leave you with this Irish blessing: "*Always remember to forget the troubles that passed away, but never forget to remember the blessings that come each day.*"

Your loving great great great *seanmháthair (grandmother)*

Mary (Ryan) Dove

**SOURCES:** London Central Criminal Court website – Old Bailey court records 1674-1913  
Founders-storyline.com/mugsheets/convicts/profile website  
Trove website – *Hobart newspapers*  
Femalefactory.com.au/ffrg/pdfs/hobartinfantdeaths  
Cascades Female Factory Rules information sheets  
Tasmanian Birth Deaths and Marriages records