

## William Munday and the Silver Spoons

Visitors to the Bow Brickhill website will be familiar with Henry Mundy who with his parents emigrated to Australia as a boy aged 12 in 1843 and in 1909 wrote down his memoirs which in 2003 were published as book by Les Hughes entitled "Henry Mundy - A Young Australian Pioneer". You will be less familiar with a first cousin of Henry's father who arrived in the antipodes one year earlier as a guest of her Majesty Queen Victoria.

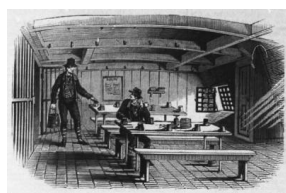
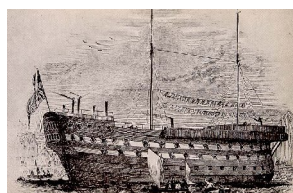
This was William Munday who was born in the neighbouring village of Simpson in 1813. William's father John was a native of Bow Brickhill and no doubt his son's baptism at Simpson arose from the fact that was working in that area at the time. Most of John's other children were in fact baptised at Bow Brickhill.

In 1834 William married Mary Kenny from Great Brickhill and two years later their first son David was born near Hazel Grove in Cheshire. The reason for William's presence in Cheshire hasn't been established; maybe he was engaged in railway construction work which was getting into full swing in the mid 1830s. By 1840 however William, Mary and David were back in Bow Brickhill and Mary was expecting their second child.

Sometime in late 1840 or possibly early 1841 William was caught by the authorities to be in possession of some silver spoons, the property of Thomas Woodward, a farmer in the village. He was subsequently convicted on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1841 at Buckinghamshire Assizes in Aylesbury.

Following his conviction William was taken to the prison hulk Warrior which was moored at Woolwich Docks in London. William's sentence was seven years transportation. William and Mary's second child, also William, had been born in February 1841 so Mary was left to care for two small children without a breadwinner in the house. The 1841 census which was taken on the night of 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> June shows Mary with the two boys described as a lacemaker, a common occupation for women in north Buckinghamshire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

William was detained on the Warrior for over 12 months. Fortunately contemporary accounts and engravings of the vessel have survived and some of these are shown below: -

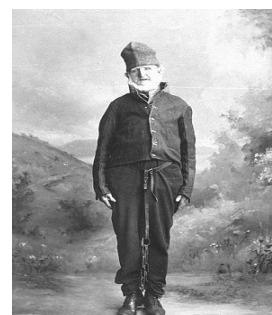


On April 14<sup>th</sup> 1842 William set sail on the convict ship Susan bound for the penal colony on Van Diemens Land (now Tasmania) calling en route at Plymouth on 21<sup>st</sup> April. The Susan arrived at Van Diemens Land on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1842 where William began his sentence. The Tasmanian State Archives have a wealth of information on the Convict System which operated between 1804 and 1853 and several references to William have been located.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1843 his term of probation of one year and one month expired. During this period he would probably have been assigned to work in a gang carrying out labouring tasks such as road making. After the probationary period however he would be eligible to find work with one of the island's settlers and would be paid wages under an agreed scale.



Convicts Working on a Chain Gang



A Tasmanian Convict

Meanwhile back in England an interesting development took place. On the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1845 William's wife Mary married John Warner at St Pancras Old Church in London describing herself as a widow. No doubt the marriage took place away from Bow Brickhill to avoid Mary being identified as a bigamist. Both Mary and John were born in Great Brickhill so it is likely that they knew each other from childhood.

Although Mary was taking a risk by entering into a bigamous marriage she probably viewed this as the lesser of two evils when she saw the opportunity to ensure that her two young sons would not go hungry. Clearly back in Bow Brickhill Mary kept her marriage to John a secret as on both the 1851 and 1861 census returns she gives her surname as Munday. In 1851 John Warner is living with Mary describing himself as an unmarried lodger working as a sawyer and labourer. Interestingly he was not recorded with Mary on the 1861 census.

Back in Van Diemens Land William was granted his ticket of leave on 29 Jan 1846. Tickets-of-leave could be applied for by men after four years of good behaviour in a seven year term and once won it entitled the holder to work for his own benefit and acquire property; but he was still subject to convict law, could not change his residence without permission and had to attend musters and church parades. It is not entirely clear from the records when William received his certificate of freedom, however a date of 14 March 1848 is entered at the bottom of his entry in the conduct register and this may well be the date he was released.

Following completion of their sentences most convicts remained in either Van Diemens land or on the Australian mainland. Indeed arrangements could be made for their families to come and join them. In William's case however a story has been passed down through two separate branches of the family that he returned to England, however a trawl through the 1861 and 1871 census returns has failed to reveal his whereabouts.

The silver spoons story has also passed down through yet another branch of the family but there was no mention of William returning to England. Tantalisingly there is a record of a William Munday departing Hobart on board a ship called Providence in 1852 bound for Melbourne. There do not seem to be any on-line records of a ship with that name arriving at Melbourne. Was Melbourne just an intermediate stop prior to a longer voyage back to England? Some deeper research into shipping movements and passenger lists in late 1852 might be fruitful.

To date this is all we know about William, however we do know that in 1871 his wife Mary and John Warner were living openly as man and wife at High Ash in Great Brickhill. Could it be that by this time Mary knew that William was dead? John and Mary died in 1876 and 1878 respectively.

Did William return to England? Did he have any further contact with his wife Mary? Did he see his sons David and William again? Can any of these questions be answered from contemporary records or from information handed down to William's many descendants? I'm one of his great great great grandsons and would dearly like to complete his life story. Can anyone help?

**Chris Pattison**

chrispattison10@googlemail.com