Mary Ann Rolfe, Johnes, Chester, Wreden

Searching for Mary Ann Johns, wife of William James Chester and mother of William Edward Chester who owned the Golden Bower Goldmine, the stories of a number of other people who made their lives in the Marysville District were uncovered including Johns, Burchall and Wreden.

Mary Ann's Parents - John Rolfe aka Johns & Ellen Hayes aka Farrell

John Johns was born John Rolfe aka Ruff in 1819 in Oxfordshire, England to Thomas Rolfe (1791-pre 1857?) and Susannah Johns aka Johnstone (1793- 1877, Eltham) who married about 1809 in Warwickshire, England when Susannah was 16. Susannah died on 12 September 1877 in Eltham. Her granddaughter, Isabel Rolfe signed as the informant on Susannah's death registration and recorded Susannah has having 23¹ children and that she had been in Victoria for 19 years, meaning she arrived about 1858, when she was 65 years old.

Brothers John and David Rolfe were in trouble with the law and at the Warwick Assizes² in 1841 John was convicted to transportation for housebreaking while David was convicted to transportation for breaking into a local Chapel and stealing cup, plate and etc. They had both been in trouble with the law already and were both sent to van Diemen's Land on the 'Tortoise' arriving in Hobart in 1842. They went to work on the convict gangs and on receiving their tickets of leave in 1857 they moved to Melbourne³.

Joining them in Melbourne by the end of 1857 are their mother, Susannah Rolfe with daughters and husbands - Ann (Mrs Wm Luskets?). Harriett (Mrs Thomas Smith) and Louisa (Mrs Thomas Mason) on board the 'South Carolina' which left Liverpool on 28 July 1857 for Melbourne. Whilst brothers George, bricklayer, with wife Mary, Joseph, bricklayer, William, shoemaker and Edwin, farm labourer, arrived from England on the 'Medway' on 9 December 1857.

The family had connections to Eltham where a number of them died and are buried in the cemetery. David's Will of 30 January 1868 states farmer of Keilor Valley formerly the Yarra Flats [*Yarra Glen*], executor John Rolfe. He died on 18 March 1868 of stomach cancer. Brother, John Rolfe executor sought probate on 29 July 1868 when he state he was a farmer in Acheron. John died eight months later on 28 November 1868 also from stomach cancer.

Whilst in van Diemen's Land John sought and was granted permission to marry the convict Ellen Farrell. They were married by Rev. H.P. Fry on 26 December, 1848 at St George's Church, Hobart in the presence of George Johnson and Sarah Johnson. Note: convicts had a tendency to use aliases and John and Ellen were doing this throughout their lives. John could not write and with his accent his name of Rolfe was easily recorded as Ruff. Ellen took the name Farrell when in fact her birth name was Hayes. When the couple came to Melbourne they would take the name Johns. They also created new pasts which excluded their years in Tasmania eg Ellen recorded that she arrived in Sydney first.

Ellen Farrell was from Dublin, Ireland, born there in 1819 to Jeremiah and Bridget Hayes nee Burke. She worked as a housemaid and laundress. She was not a young girl when she was caught for stealing a handkerchief and tried in Dublin in October 1845. Having previously been in trouble for shoplifting she was convicted to 7 years transportation to van Diemen's Land. She arrived in Hobart on 25th Feb 1847 on the 'Arabian' and married John Ruff in 1848. She obtained her free certificate on 7th October 1852. Their first 4, possible 5, children were born in Tasmania.

They settled in Lower Plenty where John farmed and their last child Charles was born in 1863.

By 1868 John and Ellen were in the area between Narbethong⁴ and Buxton. They leased land with two men, one of whom was Mr Nichol⁵. They were breeding horses and ran them in the bush on their leased land. MDHS has reports of horse auctions at Nichol's Buxton Hotel.

John died in 1868 and is buried at Eltham. Ellen died in 1873 in Alexandra Hospital of Phthisis (TB).

John and Ellen's children:

- 1. Mary Anne Johnes⁶ (1849, Hobart-1928) married William James Chester in Alexandra in 1870.
- 2. Margaret Johns⁷ (1852, Hobart-1916, Heidelberg) married Josiah Hargreaves in Yarra Flat [Yarra Glen].
- 3. Bridget Johns (1854-bef 1868⁸)
- 4. John Johns(1857-alive at time of father's death)
- 5. Thomas Johns(c1858- bef 1868)
- Harriet Johnes (1860, Eltham-1927) later in life married Frederick William Hargreaves, brother of Josiah.
- 7. Charles William Johns (1863,Eltham-1952, Buxton). He was the youngest and only surviving son. His father, John died in 1868 when he was 5 years old, and his mother in 1873. Mary Ann Johns now Chester, his oldest sister, brought him up. He married Harriet Amelia Burchall and this family settled in Buxton. There are Burchalls today in the district.

Thanks must be given to Margaret Whiting, a descendant of Margaret Johns, for the above information.

Mary Ann Chester

see Appendix for a number of the primary documents that support this information.

With her mother in the Marysville area Mary Ann met William James Chester (c1840, London, England - ??), carpenter who was the son of William John Chester and Elizabeth nee Miles. He arrived in Melbourne during the 1850s⁹ and like so many others would have headed to the goldfields and by the late 1860s could well have been searching for gold in the mountains above Marysville. They married on 30 Oct 1870 in St John's Anglican Church, Alexandra.

They were in the Marysville area at least in 1870 and 1871 when their child was born. Mary Ann was not pregnant at the time of her marriage.

1. William Edward Chester (27 June 1871, Acheron River near Marysville¹⁰-1961, Fitzroy)'s birth was not registered by his mother until 4 months later. He married Catherine Maria Kirwan in 1899. For their family see the Chester document.

William James Chester vanishes in the very early 1870s perhaps he met with death by accident or illness or he just was not cut out for married life and a family, and just left Mary Ann with the baby. No death registration in Victoria has been found.

Mary Ann Wreden

Mary Ann Chester, left with a young child, next had a longstanding relationship with **Hinrick aka Henry Wreden** and had five children with him. Various statements made by Henry with regards to their marriage are recorded on the birth registrations, which are part of the Appendix. However no official marriage registration has been found.

Mary Ann and Henry's children were born on the Cumberland Creek, the area where William Edward would re-establish the Golden Bower Mine, and were registered in Marysville months later when they came to town. No father was recorded in the official column, however Hinrich, later Henry signed is name with the word 'Farther' as the informant for all the births except Wilkin's where he is the authorised agent. By 1888 Mary Ann and the children had taken the name Wreden and continued to use it, therefore they are referred to here with the Wreden surname.

2. Wilkin Wreden (16 April 1874 Cumberland Creek reg Marysville¹¹ - 14 Oct 1895, Chum Creek) Henry Wreden's father was Wilkin and with this child named Wilkin it points to Henry being his father. He died aged 21, from intestinal obstruction and liver problems. Members of the Healesville Church of England

and other friends raised the monies for his widowed mother, Mary Ann to bury him in the Healesville Cemetery¹². On his death registration his mother is listed as Mary Ann Wreden formerly Chester.

3. **Charles Wreden** (7 Feb 1876 Cumberland Creek reg Marysville¹³ - 1949, Healesville) The 1905 Electoral Roll lists the following residents in Chesterville with the right to vote - Maria & William Chester, George Ernest Locke, Annie Maria Walker and Carl Wriden.

In his 30s, Charles appears on the Electoral Roll in Healesville, a miner, with his mother. From 1912-1937 as a farmer in Healesville. For 1943 & 49 he is living in Myers Creek Road, labourer. There is no Mrs Charles Wreden listed, so Charles never married. Charles died in Healesville in 1949 and is buried in Healesville cemetery.

The Age, 14 January 1950

Notice is hereby given that after the expiration of fourteen clear days from the publication hereof APPLICATION will be made to the Supreme Court of the State of Victoria, in its probate jurisdiction that PROBATE of the will, dated the nineteenth day of November, one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine, of CHARLES WREDEN, late of Healesville, in the State of Victoria, Bushman, deceased may be GRANTED to Adelaide May Ostrom¹⁴ of Healesville, in the said State, married woman, the executrix appointed by the said will.

Dated the eleventh day of January 1950 . IAN J. C. LASRY of Nicholson street, Healesville, in Victoria, Solicitor for the applicant.

- 4. Jane Wreden (9 Sep 1877 Marysville¹⁵ 3 Dec 1949, Healesville) married Edward Leeder (1871, Healesville-1949, Healesville) in 1905 in Healesville. They had 4 children. Jane's funeral was held at Springvale Crematorium.
- 5. Anna Rebecca Helena aka Rebecca Wreden (27 June 1879 Marysville¹⁶ 31 Aug 1952, Healesville) married Norman Jefferies in 1907 in Healesville, they had three daughters including Adelaide who was executrix for her Uncle Charles. They lived on Norman's farm in Chum Creek Road.
- 6. Unnamed Wriden female (1888-1888) This baby only lived 2 days. Henry claimed at the time of registration of this baby to have married Mary Ann nee 'Jones' on 15 October 1873 in Alexandra. No record could be found.

Mary Ann and the children settled in Healesville about 1880, possibly so the children could go to school. Henry was probably away a lot seeking work or mining. The family struggled as shown by the community assisting with funds to bury son Wilkin.

In November 1892 Henry was arrested for vagrancy at the Yarra Glen Court of Petty Sessions and taken to the Melbourne Gaol¹⁷ where he was admitted to the Gaol Hospital because he was very ill. He died about two weeks later. The inquest for his death includes the fact that he arrived in Melbourne in 1857 on board the 'Orient' and he was a Lutheran. Henry's death registration¹⁸ recorded his birthplace as Hanover in Germany about 1831 and his father Wilkin Wreden, a hunter. Victorian Death registrations record a number of facts of the deceased's life, if known by the informant. They are not always correct. Recorded for Henry is his arrival in Victoria 30 years ago, about 1862 and his marriage¹⁹ to Mary Ellen Chester when he was 40 (1871) in Marysville. Henry is buried in the New Cemetery Melbourne²⁰.

Appendix

Primary documents with reference to Mary Ann Chester/ Wreden nee Johnes and her families.

- 1. Marriage of William James Chester & Mary Ann Johnes in 1870
- 2. Birth of William Edward Chester in 1871
- 3. Birth of Wilkin Chester/Wreden in 1874
- 4. Birth of Charles Chester/Wreden in 1876
- 5. Birth of Jane Chester/Wreden in 1877
- 6. Birth of Anna Rebecca Helena Chester/Wreden in 1879
- 7. Birth of unknown female Wreden in 1888.
- 8. Death of Henry Wreden 1892
- 9. Coroner's Report on Henry Wreden's death in 1892
- 10. Death of Mary Ann Wreden nee Jones in 1928

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DEATH of Mary Ann nee Jones, Chester, Wreden in 1928

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ENDNOTES

³ Additional information is available on their convict days.

⁴ Ellen's daughter Mary Ann nee Johnes and husband William James Chester were married in Alexandra in 1870 and they gave their address as 5 Fisher Way, Narbethong. Fisher had the hotel which would become the Black Spur Inn on Fishers Creek.

⁶⁶ This is the spelling Mary Ann used for her signature on their marriage registration.

- 8 Listed as deceased on the father's death registration.
- 9 No passenger records have been uncovered.
- ¹⁰ Vic BMD Reg No 24438
- ¹¹ Known today as the Old Melbourne Gaol in Russell Street, it was built in 1842.

¹² See Appendix

Vic BMD Reg No 10076

¹⁶ Vic BMD Reg No 10052r

¹⁸ Vic BMD Reg No 23568r

¹⁹ Vic BMD Reg No 17657r

¹ Children listed on death registration in 1877 - Mary, John*, David*, Esther, Keziah, Eliza, Louisa, Harriet[#], Joseph[#], George[#], Matilda[#], William dec baby, Thomas[#], William[#] 36, Edwin[#] 34 and others not known. [#] children listed in the 1841 English Census with Thomas, 50 and Susannah, 45. * John & David both died in 1868.

a court which formerly sat at intervals in each county of England and Wales to administer the civil and criminal law.

Frederick Nichol owned most of the land around Buxton and had the Buxton Hotel.

⁷ Ancestor of Margaret Whiting who shared her finds with Judith Vimpani, MDHS Researcher.

¹³ Known today as the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton North it began in the early 1850s. Probably in a pauper's grave.

¹⁵...Healesville Guardian, 25 October 1895 reports the financial status of the fund.

¹⁷ Adelaide Ostrom nee Jeffries is Charles niece through his sister Anna Rebecca.