Mary Ann Rolfe, Johns, Chester, Wreden

Searching for Mary Ann Johns, wife of William James Chester and mother of William Edward Chester who owned the successful Golden Secret gold mine on the Cumberland goldfield, the stories of a number of other relatives who made their lives in the Marysville District were uncovered including Johns, Burchall and Wreden.

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

<u>John Johns</u> was born John Rolfe aka Ruff in 1819 in Oxfordshire, England to Thomas Rolfe (1790, Warwickshire, England-pre 1857?) and Susannah Johns aka Johnstone (1793, Warwickshire, England-1877, Eltham) who married about 1809 in Warwickshire, England.

Brothers, John and David Rolfe were in trouble with the law and at the Warwick Assizes¹ 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 Melbourne².

Joining them in Melbourne by the end of 1857 were their mother, Susannah Rolfe with her daughters and their 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. Susannah died on 12 September 1877 in Eltham, she had been married at 16 years old. Her granddaughter, Isabel Rolfe signed as the informant on Susannah's death registration and recorded Susannah has having 23³ children and that she had been in Victoria for 19 years, arriving when she was 65 years old.

The family had connections to Eltham where a number of them died and are buried in the cemetery there. David's Will of 30 January 1868 states farmer of Keilor Valley formerly of the Yarra Flats (later renamed 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 stated he was a farmer in Acheron. John died eight months later on 28 November 1868⁴ also from stomach cancer.

Whilst in van Diemen's Land John sought and was granted permission to marry the convict Ellen Farrell aka Ann Hayes. They were married by Rev. H.P. Fry on 26 December, 1848 at St George's Church, Hobart.

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 Ann Hayes. When the couple came to Melbourne and farmed in Lower Plenty they took the name Johns⁵. They also created new pasts which excluded their years in Tasmania eg Ellen recorded that she arrived in Sydney. Their daughter believed she was born 1852 in Bendigo although her parents were still convicts in Tasmania at that time.

Ellen Farrell aka Ann Hayes 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 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 as Ellen Farrell. She obtained her free certificate on 7th October 1852. Their first 4, possibly 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 Narbethong⁶ and Buxton. They leased land with two men, one of whom was Frederick Nichols⁷. The family 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 from stomach cancer and is buried at Eltham. Ellen died in 1873 in Alexandra Hospital of Phthisis (TB) and is buried in Alexandra Cemetery⁸.

John and Ellen's children:

- 1. <u>Mary Anne Johns</u>⁹ (1849, Hobart-1928, Kew, Vic) married **William James Chester** in Alexandra in 1870. *See next section in this document for her life story*.
- 2. Sarah Rolfe Johns (1851, Hobart, Tas-?)
- 3. **Matilda aka Tily Johns** (c1852, Bendigo¹⁰-1915, Marysville), parents Ellen Hayes & John Johns, curiously Matilda married Arthur Irwin (1832, Tyrone, Ireland-1906, Buxton) of Buxton in 1903. Arthur was the brother Ann Irwin who married the neighbouring large landholder William Scott also from County Tyrone, Ireland.
 - This couple had not registered events in their lives until 1903 when they put the records right¹¹, not quite because in 1906 a correction was registered re the date generating an additional entry in BMD. Arthur's health had never been good and he had spent the last 10 years confined to bed and so on 13 July 1903 when the Rev Edwin Scott (not related) and his wife Sophie attended the house, Matilda and Arthur were married in the bedroom. After the service Rev Edwin Scott produced the Will he had prepared for Arthur and it was duly signed and witnessed. Then on the 10 August 1903 the births of their three sons, now grown men (23-17) were registered in Marysville.

Arthur died in 1906 and a Magisterial Inquest was held by Thomas Barton JP of Marysville.

- 3.1. John Johnston Irwin (c1880-1942) married Grace Edith Trew from Warragul where they settled.
- 3.2. Charles Edward Irwin (1883, Marysville -1966, Glen Iris) worked the family farm at Buxton and married Mary Lily Kate Millman
- 3.3. Arthur Irwin (c1887-1962, Eildon)
- 4. Margaret Johns¹² (1852, Hobart-1916, Heidelberg) married Josiah Hargreaves in Yarra Flats, (today Yarra Glen). They settled there.
- 5. Bridget Johns (1854, Tasmania-bef 1868). 13

- 6. John Johns (1857, Eltham-alive at time of father's death)
- 7. Thomas Johns (c1858, Eltham- bef 1868)¹⁴
- 8. Harriet Johnes (1860, Eltham-1927) later in life married Frederick William Hargreaves, brother of Josiah.
- 9. **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 on the Cumberland goldfield. He married **Harriet Amelia Burchall** in 1893 and this family settled in Buxton/Taggerty. There are Burchalls today in the district.

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

Mary Ann as Chester

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

Mary Ann had a tough life being born to convicts in Hobart, moving to Melbourne, having her father die when she was 19, marrying William James Chester in 1870 in Alexandra and having his baby - William Edward Chester in 1871 and then deserted by her husband. Her mother, who was predeceased by her husband, died in 1873 and Mary took in her younger brother Charles. With William James Chester not on the scene, she like so many other young women at this time needed a man to look after her and the two children she was responsible for, she found this man in Henry Wreden with whom she had five children. She died aged 79, a very old lady for those times.

With her mother in the Narbethong/Buxton area, Mary Ann Johns 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 $1850s^{15}$ 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 Red Gate rush (now Alexandra). They were married on 30 Oct 1870 in St John's Anglican Church, Alexandra the nearest church at that time.

Mary Ann and William were in the Buxton-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 Marysville¹⁶-1961, Fitzroy) His birth was not registered by his mother until 4 months later. In 1899 he married **Catherine Maria Kirwan** born in Marysville.

For this family see the Chester Family document.

William James Chester vanishes in the very early 1870s, perhaps he met with an unknown death in the bush 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 and her young brother. No death registration in Australia has been found. Perhaps he returned to England.

Mary Ann as Wreden

Mary Ann Chester was left with her own young child and her youngest brother Charles William Johns who was 10 years old when their mother died in 1873 leaving them orphans. Next she had a longstanding relationship with **Heinrick aka Henry Wreden** and had five children with him.

Mary Ann and Henry's children were born on the Cumberland Creek, the area where William Edward Chester would find the Golden Secret lode in late 1890, and were registered in Marysville months later when Heinrick came to town. No father was recorded in the official column, however Heinrich, later Henry, signed his name with the word 'Farther' as the informant for all the births except Wilkin's where he is the authorised agent. This meant the children were registered in the mother's married name - Chester. By the time they moved out of the mountains to Healesville the whole family were using the name Wreden, except for William Edward Chester. With the birth of a unnamed female in Healesville in 1888 Henry declared that they were married 15 October 1873 in Alexandra. No record of this marriage has been located which is not surprising as Mary Ann married William James Chester in November 1870, certificate in hand.

Mary Ann and all the children settled in Healesville about 1880, 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 Gaol ¹⁷ 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 registration ¹⁸ 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 on Henry's death registration is his arrival in Victoria 30 years ago, about 1862 and his marriage ¹⁹ to Mary Ellen Chester when he was 40 (1871) in Marysville. Henry is buried in the New Cemetery Melbourne ²⁰.

Mary Ann Wreden had been living with her bachelor son, Charles and was last on the Electoral Roll in 1914. On 1 Feb 1915 she was admitted to the Kew Asylum, called at this time 'Kew Hospital for the Insane' with senile dementia. She would live out the rest of her life here. She was not forgotten by her family over the 13 years she lived at the hospital. She was visited by her son, daughter, daughter in law and grandson on the day she died - 12 October, 1928. Her health deteriorated drastically in the last six months and the nurse on duty records putting her to bed on the night of the family visit. She was dead by 11.15 pm. An autopsy and inquest record her death as from tuberculosis of the heart and Bright's Disease (kidney disease). She was 78 years old. She was buried in Heidelberg cemetery. What a life she had led!

Mary Ann's children (with Henry Wreden):

- 2. **Wilkin Wreden** (16 April 1874 Cumberland Creek reg Marysville²¹ 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 in 1895 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 Cemetery²². On his death registration his mother is listed as Mary Ann Wreden formerly Chester.
- 3. **Charles Wreden** (7 Feb 1876 Cumberland Creek reg Marysville²³ 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. 1909 Charles is listed in Marysville, miner.
 - In 1912 & 14, Charles appears on the Electoral Roll in Healesville, a farmer, with his mother. From 1915-1937 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 Ostrom²⁴ 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.

Adelaide May Ostrom was Charles great niece

- 4. **Jane Wreden** (9 Sep 1877 Marysville²⁵ 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 Marysville²⁶ 31 Aug 1952, Healesville) married Norman Jefferies in 1907 in Healesville, they had three daughters including Adelaide May who married Louis Augustus Ostrom and was executrix for her Uncle Charles' Will. They lived on Norman's farm in Chum Creek Road²⁷.
- 6. **Unnamed Wreden female** (1888, Healesville-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.

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
- 11. Statement from Probate of Arthur Irwin's Will re his marriage

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♦ CORONER'S INQUEST.
VICTORIA, TO WIT. On his oath saith, I am a deputy Source of Melbourne Geol * Christian and By Ellonnic Gast pull
The deceased Stenny Wheden aged 61 years was received into baol on the 20th October 1892 on remained for medical treatment charges with vagrancy from yanna Glen Petty Sessions, he was remainded until the 23nd of November but being too ill to appears at Court on that date was finally remainded until the 21st of December, 1892 on warrant produced. Deceased was admitted into Gaol Hospital on receipt where he remained under the care of Dr. Shields until his death which took
place at 4:30 a. Mo. the 15th December 1892
Native place Germany Occupation Labores Ship + date yarrish Orient 1857 Keligion Lutheran
22 30y
Taken and Sworn before me the 15 th of day of Beenher 1892 at

	the District	1					no-		IF BURIAL	REGISTERED.		IF DECEAS	ED WAS MARRIED
When and where Died.	Name and Surname, Occupation.	Age.	(1) Cause of Death. (3) Duration of last Illness. (3) Lagally qualified Medical Practitioner by whom certified, and (4) When he last as w Decosaed.	Name and Screame of Father and Mother (Maiden Name if known), with Occupation.	. 1		Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	(1) Bignature of Registrar, (3) Date, and (3) Where Engistered.	When and where buried. Undertaker by whom certified.		Where Born, and how long in the Australian States, stating which.	(1) Where and at what (2) Age, and to (3) Whom,	Incoh, in order of Birth, the Yames and Ages.
Dwelfth October 1928 Noepital for the same Cing of New County Hearth the lamount Children Children	~	rale Ages	Coccté Ceteulitis Get Seatjo. Deilista Inquel N. Renninan Coroner Kenning	luck wown	15435		Thomas Shows and 1971 Present ad Laguest	JA Barnach Sp. Botoler 1928 Kew	Proce Und	E. Renton	1	iku	own,
Procept Proprietor		840	Onbergulosis Reside Might' Dresde Bentidol Agust A. Revinne Corner Kert Soth Betobir 1928	harkarown	15436		Thomas Store comety y y !! I want at him wash at a street of the street	Fahrman In October 1928 New	15th October 1928 Heidelberg Comstern		Dasmaine		www
Fiftenthe October 1928 Norpilel for Ling of Kew County House Or Land or Marketin Or boat Melle with the Boat Melle with the County House or Melle with the County House Melle with the Melle with the County House Melle with the Melle with the County House Melle with the Me	//Larus	Santo	Catanchal Perenance Vardictat Enguet A. Revinian Coroner Ken 30 th October 1928	hukurion	15437		Thomas Store constryly Vicents at Inquest	FTARamark 31*8chber 1928 Kow	1-0	Church VEngland	New Zestam	unk	nown
Difkink October 1928 Worpible for City of Kent Centy Brunke of Chinal	Louisa Richerdson Raticut	Boule 57/10	Rich Heart Federe Chronic Paucrestio and Edurach Pregnet Berkist at Enguest D. Rerriman Corone Esta Descriman Corone Esta Descriman Esta Descrips	unknown	15438	The state of the s	Thomas Store tonotypy ! I went at Lagriet Lew	9.7hArrand 31° 604 obs 1928 Kens	Gelong Eastern Emeters a. Mon	thekokist	COTOTA		inswn
Piferuh. Betober 1928 Hooprital for Livery And Rounto	George Dawson none Retinh	Mile	Chaustion and Chronice Bright Discust Victorial Arguest William Chroman Stand October 1928	hirknown	15439		Shomas Show constryy Swent at Lunguert	THARamon Si Betok 1958 Kens	Jaw Ku Cenul	en l	England	nu	

Statement sworn for probate by Sophie Knight Scott wife of the Rev Edwin Scott of Alexandra with reference to the Events of 13 July 1903 when Matilda Johns and Arthur Irwin were married and Arthur's Will signed.

In the Sup	verne Court } In the Probable Junisceton
of the si	rate of Victoria)
	In the Well of arthur Jowin late of Buxton in the State of
	Victoria Farmer deceased
	I Sophie Knights Scott of Mexandra in the State of Victoria Married
	Woman make both and say
	! That I recollect the thirteenth day of July 1903
	I. That on the said thirteenth day of July 1903 I attended with
	my husband the Reverend boliver tinny Scott at resistion
	in the said state where my said husband celebrated a maniage
	to which I was one of the witnesses
	3. Ilvat after the eelebration of the said marriage and about the hour
	of three o'clock in the afternoon of the said thirteenth day of July
	1905 the said deceased requested one William Hodson and myself
but	this deponent to witness the signature of his soirt will
	4. That the said deceased who was ill in bed thereupon proceeded
	to sign his said Will
	5. That while the said deceased was so engaged I perused the said
	with
	6. That the said William Hodson and myself this deforment Thereupon
	signed our respective names as witnesses to the said Mill
	y. That the paper witing hereunto annexed marked "A is the said
	well of the said deceased and the signature Sophie Knight Scott
	thereon appearing is my peroper signature and handwitting
Auren	at alexandra we the state 1 9 11 12 11 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
of Vicke	at alexandra withe state Suphie Whylat Sign mathis 30th day of august & Suphie Whylat Sign
One	at Elexandra with State mia this 30th day of August Sight While While Sight white Sight
disc.	
	Before me
	Gryss trucker
	A Commissioner of the Supreme Court of the State of Victoria for taking affidants

ENDNOTES

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

[#]children listed in the 1841 English Census with Thomas, 50 and Susannah, 45.

- ⁴ Death registered, but no application for probate/letters of administration found on PROV.
- ⁵ From Margaret Whiting.
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ Frederick Nichols owned a large piece of the land at Buxton and also had the Buxton Hotel.
- 8 From Ellen's death registration.
- ⁹ This is the spelling Mary Ann used for her signature on their marriage registration.
- Marriage registration gives birth as 1854, Death registration gives birth c1852 in Bendigo. When family came to Victoria from Tasmania c1878 Ellen and john changed their histories to cover the fact that they both were convicts.
- Magisterial Inquest into death and Probate documents contain details of these events.
- ¹² Ancestor of Margaret Whiting who shared her finds with Judith Vimpani, MDHS Researcher in 2021.
- Listed as deceased on the father's death registration.
- Listed as deceased on father's death registration.
- No passenger records have been found.
- Vic BMD Reg No 24438
- Known today as the Old Melbourne Gaol in Russell Street, it was built in 1842.
- 18 See Appendix
- ¹⁹ No marriage records have been found.
- Known today as the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton North it began in the early 1850s. Probably in a pauper's grave.
- Vic BMD Reg No 10076
- ²². *Healesville Guardian,* 25 October 1895 reports the financial status of the fund.
- ²³ Vic BMD Reg No 10052r
- Adelaide Ostrom nee Jeffries is Charles niece through his sister Anna Rebecca.
- ²⁵ Vic BMD Reg No 23568r
- ²⁶ Vic BMD Reg No 17657r
- Information on the Ostrom family from Kellie Butler Tree on ancestry, great granddaughter.

Additional information is available on their convict days.

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.

^{*} John & David both died in 1868.