

The Story of Mary Dooley –One of the Mountbellew Workhouse Orphan girls

Siblings Michael and Mary Duley/Dooley were born in Co Galway, Ireland. Michael on April 19th 1835 and Mary approximately 1826, children of Edward / Edmund Dooley born approx 1780-1800, occupation (on Mary's wedding certificate) listed as Whitesmith, Michael autobiography claim he was the son of Edmund Duley, occupation Blacksmith: mothers name Catherine O Neil. Grandparents, Francis (Patrick?) and Mary Dooley and Michael and eight other.

Mary entered the Mountbellew Work house in 1852. Workhouse records indicate Mary was orphaned by 1852 and her last place of residence was Clonbrock. Mary was only in the workhouse for a matter of weeks before being sent to Australia, as she replaced another girl who fell sick only days prior to the journey. It is quite possible May have been interned at Ballinasloe Workhouse prior to the Mountbellew Workhouse.

A group of young girls were transported to Australia on the Palestine ship in 1852 from the Mountbellew Workhouse through assisted passage, destined to provide labour and possible marriages for convict settlers in the new colony. It was renowned that these bride-ships carried destitute girls from orphanages, poorhouses or had a sponsored fare during the Great Famine. Mary Dooley was one of these girls. Girls between the ages of 15 – 22 were normally selected. It is difficult to know whether the girls chosen were happy with the prospect of leaving their homeland, families and friends to go to a land faraway. But these were desperate times where they were surrounded by hunger, death, disease and apathy. The prospect of new clothes, better climate, and paid work seemed like a good opportunity. The young women recruited for the assisted passages to Australia didn't require a trade, but they were expected to work as domestic servants on arrival in Australia, until they reached an age to marry. It was noted through research that some of the girls did not have basic skills such as sewing, milking cows or making bread and this had on occasions caused difficulties in the areas where they went to work. This is where their life stories began! The girls that set sail on the 'Palestine' ship from Mountbellew Workhouse were:

ATKINS Marianne 18,

BUTLER Mary 19,

CARBERRY Elizabeth 20,

CARBERRY Mary 18,

COLDHAN Celia 20,

COLEMAN Catherine 16,

CONCANNON Bidy 22,

CUNNINGHAM Catherine 20,

CUNNINGHAM Mary 20

DOOLEY Mary 20,
EGAN Margaret 18,
EGAN Martha 18,
FITZGERALD Bidy 18,
FLANAGAN Mary 18
FLYNN Mary 18,
GERAGHTY Mary 21,
GLYNN Catherine 18,
HANSBERRY Ellen 22
HEAVY Mary 20,
HUGHES Catherine 18,
KILFOYLE Mary 22,
KILROY Mary 20,
LOWE Marie 19,
MANNION Mary 24,
NEILLE Jane 18,
NEILLE Maria 18,
NOON Mary 20,
STAUNTON Bidy 19
TAYLOR Mary 19,
TULLY Bidy 21 and
TULLY Catherine 22.

Once the girls were chosen, they were supplied with an outfit, at the cost of the Union of £4 to £5. Each girl was given a wooden box containing items of clothing: Six shifts, Bible, soap, prayer book, two flannel petticoats, six pairs of stockings, two pair of shoes, two gowns, one of which must be made of some warm material. The orphan girls travelled under the care of a matron – a Mrs Amos. The Union also

paid/ had to pay for the cost of the steamer trip to transport the young women from Ireland to Plymouth on the south west coast of England. In Plymouth the girls underwent one final inspection, to ensure they were fit to travel. If passed, they were assembled in a dormitory until there was a sufficient number of them to board ship to Australia. Conditions on board ship with regards to meals were apparently better than what they had received in the workhouses in Ireland. They departed on November 29th 1852 for Australia. The orphan girls arrived in Freemantle in Western Australia 28 April 1853 after five long and probably terrifying months at sea. It was feared at one stage the ship was lost at sea due to bad storms. The ship docked at the Cape of Good Hope, Africa from March 19th – 22nd in 1853 to restock essential items for the remainder of the voyage. They arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia (the Swan River Colony) after a long sea journey. It was then a remote and an undeveloped place, heavy dense forest, and a hot and often inhospitable climate, this colony was not neither an inviting or and welcoming place. During this period of time there was strong prejudice in the colony against the Irish and Catholics, so life was not easy for these young girls. The care of the Workhouse orphan girls was transferred to immigrant Orphan Committees. The girls stayed in depots until they were hired. Mary found employment as a servant with a local hotel proprietor in Busselton (then known as The Vasse), at the 'Ship Tavern'. Several months later, Mary married in January 28th 1854 to Mr John Dawson (a free settler) whom was 26 years her senior. One can only imagine the horrors that Mary managed to survive during the famine years. It is not known how much easier her life would have been after her arrival in Australia. Provisions were often late and in short supply, women even scarcer, farming mostly unsuccessful in sandy soil, dry and arid conditions, the heat would have been unbearable for a young immigrant girl in their long gowns and heavy petticoats and the bush flies, strange insects, and poisonous snakes plentiful and not to mention the searing, hot climate being unbearably oppressive for a young immigrant girl in her long gowns and heavy petticoats.

Mary and John's first child Mary Jane, was born on November 13th 1854 in Newtown, Western Australia. After all 8 children were born, it was said (hearsay) Mary became one of the first midwives in the south west along with another three Irish girls Mary Ann Scott (nee Adam) and, 2 other Irish girls Mary Seymour (nee Scanlon), Johanna Abbey (nee Scanlon) These Irish women saw into the world almost an entire generation of West Australians born into this South West region from Wallcliffe to Wonnerup.

It is presumed that Mary went on to have a happy and fulfilling life. Her youngest son Edward later told the story that Mary's relatives had earlier immigrated to America, but Mary preferred to go to Australia, as she would one day "return with her apron full of gold"; Afterwards she was to say that she "had her apron was full of gold, within her many children" . Mary's husband John DAWSON was one of the original settlers at Augusta and many years later, after marriage to Mary, purchased land at Newtown a district near Busselton(Busselton was originally named 'The Vasse' and officially the name changed in 1837. The district of Newtown many years later was renamed Vasse [in the 1920s]) Mary died on August 27th 1902 at Forest Grove (Nuralingup). John Dawson died on November 18th 1887 in Newtown WA.

John and Mary, had 8 Children (including one stillbirth):

1. Mary Jane Dawson, born 1854 in Waterloo, WA, Married William Glindon Curtis and died September 12 1916.
2. Catherine Dawson, born 1857 in Newtown, Vasse, SussexWA.
3. Elizabeth Magdalene Dawson, born 1859 in Newtown, Sussex, WA. Married Thomas Higgins
4. John Joseph Dawson, born 1862, at Broadwater, Newtown Sussex WA. Died 1934 in Vasse Sussex WA.
5. Susan Dawson, born 1866 in Newtown, Vasse Sussex, WA. Married James Rodger.
6. Rose Ann Dawson, born 1868 in Newtown, Sussex, WA. Died March 13 1930. Married Frederick Charles Seymour.
7. Edward Dawson, born 1870 in Newtown, Vasse Sussex WA. Married Belle Vidgen and died December 29th 1960. Had 3 children, Edward Grodon, Bessie Edith and John B Dawson.

Edward 'Ned' Dawson, the son of Mary Dooley and John Dawson, went on to make quite an impression on the region, along with his brother in law William Glindon Curtis. In 1900 they discovered the Yallingup Caves. Edward would go on to become a tour guide for the Cave. Yallingup Caves (now renamed Ngilgi Caves) remains a popular attraction to this day.

The photo is Image of Edward Dawson son of John Dawson and Mary Dooley, Bride is Bella Vidgen Cross in Western Australia.

Mary's brother Michael Duley/Dooley

Mary's brother, Michael, is mentioned in a biographical book titled, "Portrait and Biographical Album of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin USA". According to a biography, Michael Dooley, a retired farmer residing in Fond du Lac, is of Irish birth, and is one of the worthy citizens that country has furnished to America. He was born in County Galway on the 19th of April, 1835, and is a son of Edmund Dooley, who was also a native of Ireland. His father was a blacksmith by trade and followed that occupation during the greater part of his life. He married Miss Catherine O'Neil, and unto them were born two children, Michael and Mary; the latter is now residing in Australia. The subject of this sketch was the youngest. He was only seven years of age when his mother died, and he then went to live with his grandfather, with whom he remained until the death of that gentleman, which occurred when Michael was a lad of fifteen years. Dependent upon his own resources for a livelihood, he began looking about him for some means of employment whereby he might earn a living. He went to England, where he worked for about nine months, but believing better opportunities were afforded by the New World, he left the old country and sailed for America. At length the vessel dropped anchor in the harbor of New York, and he landed on the shores of the New World. Without delay he proceeded to Trenton, New Jersey, where he worked for one season and then returned to New York City, where he spent the winter. The following spring he removed to Pennsylvania, where he secured employment on the construction of a dam across the Schuylkill River at Reading. When the dam was completed he again went to the Empire State, whence in 1855 he removed to Wisconsin. That was in the early days of the State; the railroad was then being laid between Fond du Lac and Oshkosh, and he obtained a position as laborer on that road. The succeeding winter he assisted in laying out a road through the timber to the State line, and the following spring went to work by the month upon a farm, in which capacity he served for four years, clearing the land

during the greater part of the time. He then determined to engage in business for himself and rented a farm for two years when he purchased forty acres of heavily timbered land in Fond du Lac Township. Not an improvement had then been made, trees had to be cleared away before land could be ploughed, and it was indeed an arduous task to transform it into fertile fields; but after labouring faithfully for five years he had the entire amount under cultivation, while abundant harvests rewarded his labours. He had cut the timber all up into cord wood and in the meantime had purchased ten acres adjoining his original tract. He made many improvements, built a nice brick house and good barns, and at length traded the fifty acres for the farm which he now owns, constituting 130 acres. It is now operated by his son, but Mr. Dooley made it what it now is. At the time when he became the owner it was but partially improved and was quite different in appearance from the home in the present day. It is well equipped, stocked with good grades of horses and cattle, and has the latest improved machinery.

Michael married Margaret Ryan in 1857, and had sixteen children, thirteen of whom are now living – Frank, Kate, Edward, Julia, Michael, George, Sarah, Willie, Annie, John, Peter, Nettie and Maggie. Mr. Dooley resided upon his farm until 1888, when he retired to private life and removed with his family to Fond du Lac. He and his wife are members of the Catholic Church, and are highly respected people.

(Thanks to descendants for this information provided)

Mary Dooley's connection to the locality.

Through research and contact with various descendants of Mary Dooley: Anne Gribble (nee Dawson) first connected the dots after she and her cousin namely Kerryn Ferraro (nee Roberts) were researching the Irish origins of Mary Dooley. Anne came across a photo of Mary Ann Taylor (another orphan girl on the same brideship) via the Castleblakeney Heritage Centre website, set up by volunteer, Valerie Kinsella, that first set the wheels in motion. Kerryn Ferraro published a letter in a Pennsylvanian Newspaper, eventually finding Edward Dooley's brother

Lawrence's descendents, Dr Bob Schiavonne, Hugh Doyle, John Patrick Dooley and Fran Friel, who were tremendous contributors; together with other researchers, Paula Kennedy from the Mountbellew Workhouse Orphan Girls Project published an E-Magazine story on Mary Dooley which led to Marianne Patterson from the USA connecting the dots, finding Mary's brother Michael.

Mary Dooley's cousins in the USA

From information received from Mary Dooley's descendants Ann Gribble, and Kerryn Ferraro Mary's father Edward Dooley was a Whitesmith, born around 1790 had a brother Lawrence Dooley which has been traced in Griffith's Valuation to Springlawn, in Mountbellew. He is believed to have had eight children, all but one, Bridget Dooley, are thought to have immigrated to America, although many Irish were known to be called 'birds of Paradise' because they traveled backwards and forward between the USA and Ireland. Bridget Dooley, daughter of Lawrence Dooley, eventually left later for the USA. Her great great grand daughter, Cynthia Cline, through family lore, said that her cousin Mary Dooley went to Australia from the workhouse under assisted passage. We know from descendants information supplied, that Mary apparently corresponded via post to her Cousin Catherine Murphy (nee Dooley), another

daughter of Lawrence, residing in Mt Carmel, Pennsylvania, USA 2 March 1890. The Letter detailed, Catherine's parents, siblings and connection at the time. It seems this branch of the family came to Pennsylvania for work in the coal mines.

The Project group would like to acknowledge the assistance of all the descendants of Mary Dooley, without their help and encouragement we would not know anything about Mary. They provided vast amount of information on Mary's life in Australia and her brother's life in the USA. Special thanks also to the descendents of Lawrence Dooley who not only provided detailed information of Lawrence, wife Margaret Iarkin and family, but also provided DNA to help connect the Dooley line through both Family Tree DNA and Ancestry.com, namely Dr Bob Schiavonne, Hugh Doyle, John Patrick Dooley, Fran Friel, Cynthia Cline. Special thanks to Marianne Patterson on her detailed contribution on Mary's brother Michael and his descendants.

NB . A whitesmith refers to a person who works with or light-coloured metals, and is sometimes used as a synonym for tinsmith.



Photo courtesy of P Kennedy - Kerry the great great grand daughter of Mary Dooley touching the high wall that surrounds the old former Mountbellew Workhouse. Visited May 2018

Thanks to all that have contributed to Mary Dooley's story, especially Mary's descendants.

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