

Remembering the Whiteboys (levellers) of Galway – As per Ship Eliza 1832

The Story of John Sheedy (aka John Silk(e))

John was born c. 1806 in County Galway Ireland. His parents were Daniel and Bridget Sheedy nee Welsh. When John was aged 26 yrs he was found guilty and sentenced to death for assembling in arms with others and attacking the house of Michael Quinn. This sentence was commuted to transportation for life to Australia in 1832. John's crime was recorded as "Whiteboy".

The Whiteboys (na Buachaillí Bána) were a secret Irish agrarian organisation in Ireland who used violent tactics to defend tenant farmer land rights for subsistence farming. Their name derives from the white smocks that members wore in their nightly raids. Whiteboyism was revived in 1830 period in

was and Patrick Shanley, for appearing in court
six months imprisonment; Luke Cullinane, for
administering unlawful oaths, to be transported
for life: Michael Hogan, for assault in a dwelling
house, John and Martin Heaney, for entering a
dwelling house and assault, Michael Quinn, John
Sheedy, Michael Moran, Pat Moran, James Moran,
and Pat Kearney, unlawfully entering and com-
mitting an assault in a dwelling house, sentence of
death recorded; Isaac Fossett, a Policeman, for
bigamy, to be transported for seven years; Peter
Walsh, for manslaughter, to be imprisoned for 9
months; Catherine Fallon, for having in her pos-
session six bad sovereigns and other base coin,
and John Cravin, assault, to be imprisoned for six
months; Wm. Harris, Wm. Gary, and Stephen
Harris, (of the 68th Light Infantry), for assaulting
a female, to be imprisoned nine months; Pat
Hallaran, Pat Walsh, and Luke Cradoc, for un-
lawfully entering and assaulting a dwelling-house,
and Pat Hines, for stealing a mare, sentence of
death recorded

opposition to the tithes they had to pay and landlord-tenant issues.

In March 1832 at the Galway Assizes there were about 26 Galway men convicted of being a Whiteboy activity in that same month. I believe a lot of those men convicted for whiteboy activities came from the Gort, Loughrea, Athenry and Kinvara areas. This was during a period where many tenants were in arrears and there was a lot of unrest.

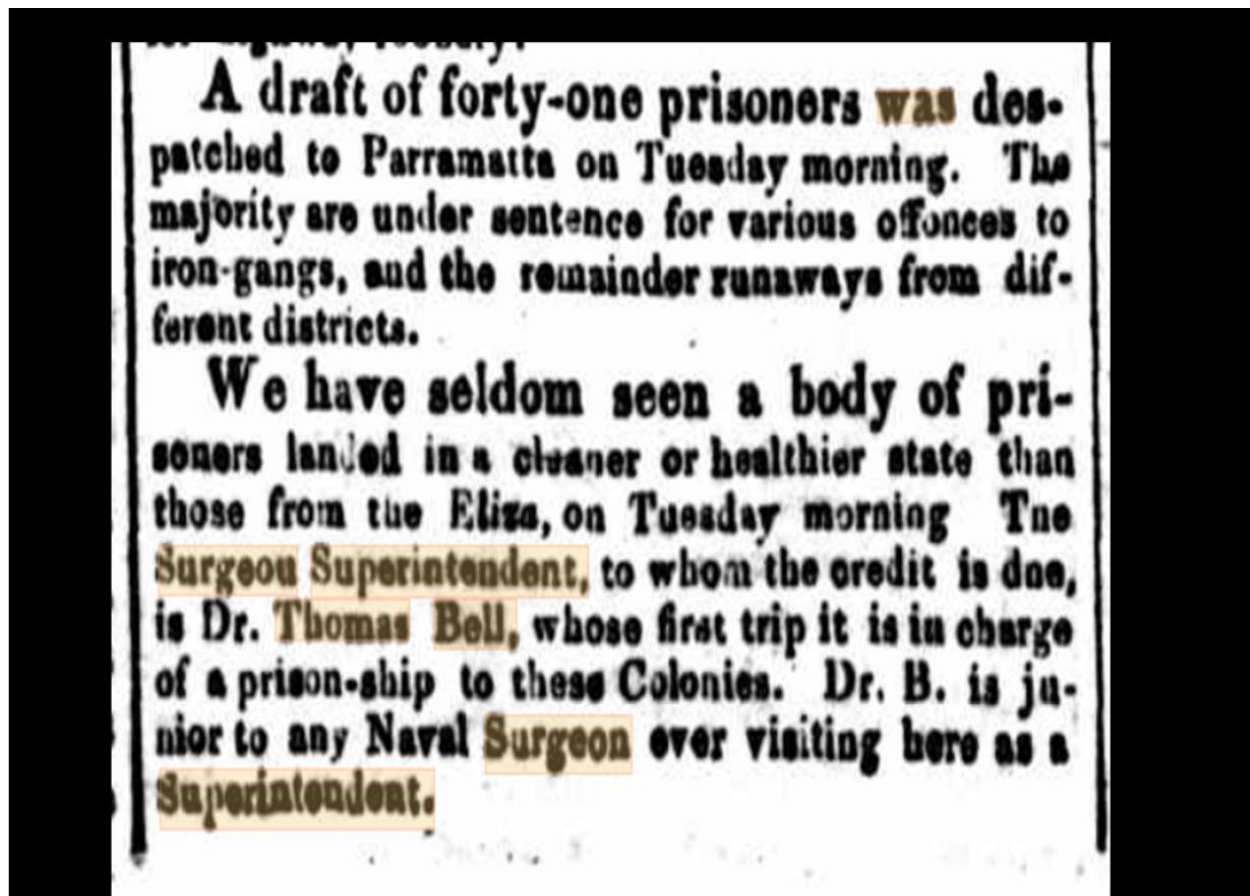
Ref: *Limerick Chronicle* 11 April 1832

The convicted men were transferred to Cork and they were held in the Hulk moored at Cobh. From there they departed Ireland never to return. It must have been a very difficult time for their families, knowing they would never see them again. The sea voyage took 119 days.

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Many of the prisoners of the ship Eliza that departed May 10th 1832 to New South Wales, were petty criminals convicted of stealing, and petty theft, however there were also twenty-six men from Galway who had been convicted of White Boy crimes.

The Surgeon Superintendent was Thomas Bell. There were 2 deaths on the voyage. They arrived in Port Jackson Australia on September 6th 1832.



<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2208638?searchTerm=Surgeon%20Superintendent%20was%20Thomas%20Bell> accessed 17.2.21 Trove

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser NSW Thur Sep 20th 1832, page 3. Internal intelligence]

Shipping Intelligence.

ARRIVALS.

From the South Sea fishery, on Wednesday evening, having left this port on the 7th December last, the barque *Lynx*, Captain Bolger, with 75 tuns of sperm oil.

From Newcastle, the same day, the steamer *Sophia Jane*.

Late on Thursday evening, the ship *Eliza*, Groves, from Cork, on the 10th May, with 198 male prisoners. Surgeon Superintendent, — Bell, Esq., R. N. The guard consists of 29 rank and file of the 4th, 17th, and 63d regiments, under the command of Liout. Hewson, and Ensign Nicholson, of the 4th. The *Eliza* hailed the *Mountaineer* at sea, bound to Sydney, all well.

Ref <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2208453?searchTerm=Eliza%20ship%201832>

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser Sat 8th Sept 1832, page 2 Shipping Intelligence

Arrival in Australia

When John arrived in Sydney, he was assigned to Helenus Scott at Glendon near Singleton (Patrick Plains).

John had absconded from Glendon 7th March 1833 but was later returned to Mrs. Scott of Glendon House. Later John was assigned to Dr George Groves at Patrick Plains.

John received his Ticket of Leave 13th November 1840 and conditional Pardon 1st June 1848.

TICKET OF LEAVE

A Ticket of Leave allowed convicts to work for themselves provided that they remained in a specified area, reported regularly to local authorities and attended divine worship every Sunday, if possible. They could not leave the colony.

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CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM

A certificate of freedom was issued at the completion of a convict's sentence, as proof he/she was a free person. They were free to travel anywhere, and could return to the United Kingdom (if they could afford it!).

CONDITIONAL PARDON

A conditional pardon allowed convicts with life sentences freedom of the colony, but they were not allowed to return to the UK.

ABSOLUTE PARDON

An absolute pardon gave a 'lifer' complete remittance of sentence. The convict had freedom of the colony and could return to the UK.

Ref: <https://www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/convicts/tickets-of-leave> Accessed 20/03/21

DESCRIPTION.	
NAME	<i>John Sheedy</i>
SHIP	<i>Eliza 6</i>
MASTER	<i>Groves</i>
YEAR of ARRIVAL	<i>1832</i>
NATIVE PLACE	<i>L. Galway</i>
TRADE or CALLING	<i>laborer</i>
OFFENCE	<i>Whitetry</i>
PLACE of TRIAL	<i>Galway</i>
DATE of TRIAL	<i>24 March 1832</i>
SENTENCE	<i>life</i>
YEAR of BIRTH	<i>1806</i>
HEIGHT	<i>5 feet 6 1/2 inches</i>
COMPLEXION	<i>Ruddy & freckled</i>
HAIR	<i>Brown</i>
EYES	<i>Hazel</i>
GENERAL REMARKS	<i>Scar top of right side of forehead.</i>

Ref: [ancestry](#) Pardon Date 1848, June 1st. Accessed March 20th 2021

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Name:	John Sheedy
Age:	42
Birth Year:	1806
Origin Place:	Galway County
Conviction Date:	24 Mar 1832
Arrival year:	1832
Pardon Date:	1 Jun 1848
Vessel Name:	Eliza
Record Type:	Conditional
Pardon Number:	48/1123

Ref Ancestry Accessed March 20th 2021

John marries

John had changed his name about the time of his marriage to Ellen Anderson from Sheedy to Silk and later Silke. He married Ellen Anderson 2nd July 1852 at Roman Catholic Church, West Maitland. John was 45 yrs and was Ellen 15 yrs old. The witnesses to the marriage were Edward Coolaghan and Ellen Moore, the Priest was J. T. Lynch.

John and Ellen went on to have eleven children:

- 1. Mary** (Min) b 26 August 1853 Dagworth- Married 4 Nov 1872 Angus MacDonald(b1853 Edinburgh, Scotland). Occupation-Drover on a sheep station) at Church of England Boggabri. Mary & Angus had two children.
- 2. Margaret** b 19 July 1855 Dagworth. (No other information).
- 3. Bridget** b 1857 Dagworth. (No other information).
- 4. Daniel** (Dan) b 17 December 1859 Dagworth-Occupation- Carpenter
- 5. Agnes** (Al) b 1 November 1862 Dagworth-m 1892 James Ashton(b1869 Bunkerville -Parents-William &

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Mary Ashton nee Mc Connell. Occupation -Bus Driver) at Roman Catholic Church, East Maitland. James & Agnes had two children.

6. Eleanor Helena (Ellie) b1865 Dagworth-d 16 June 1905 Maitland –m 8 June 1895 Daniel McInerney(Parents-Daniel & Mary McInerney) at Roman Catholic Church, East Maitland.

7. Elizabeth b1869 Dagworth(No other information).

8. Anne Vera b 1871 Maitland-m 18 Jul 1893 Herbert Kirby(Parents-Robert & Susanna Kirby. Occupation Gunsmith later co-owned Nock & Kirby's) at St Peters Church of England Woolloomooloo. Anne & Herbert had eight children.

9. Octavia Frances b 1874 Dagworth-m 15 Sep 1903 Herbert Robert Stanton (b1879 Tamworth- Parents - Robert & Maria Stanton nee Harrison) at St Leonards. Octavia & Herbert had four children. Herbert was in the Boer War & later married Octavia & migrated to South Africa.

10. Robert Anderson b 1876 Maitland-d 10 Jun 1878 aged 2 yrs at East Maitland Buried-Catholic Section East Maitland Cemetery.

11. John Stewart (Jack) b 13 April 1879 East Maitland-m 17 March 1906 Eva Mary Hunt(Burgess) (b1886 Rose Street, Maitland- Eva's parent was Fanny Hunt. John's occupation was Head Railway Electrician at Sefton. John & Eva had seven children.

John died 9 May 1888 aged 81 yrs at Dagworth East Maitland and was buried on the 11 May 1888 at The Catholic Section East Maitland Cemetery, East Maitland.

Ellen Anderson was born 7 June 1837 at Sea, (coming around Cape of Good Hope, South Africa).

Ellen died 21 Dec. 1893 aged 56 yrs at East Maitland and buried 22 Dec 1893 at The Catholic Section East Maitland Cemetery, East Maitland.

Both are buried with their son Robert Anderson Silke. Daughter Ellie is buried close by. Ellen's parents were Robert & Margaret Anderson nee Maxwell. The Anderson family immigrated to Australia from Dundee Scotland aboard the “John Barry” arriving in Sydney on 13 July 1837.

In John’s Will, his name was recorded as John Silk also known as Sheedy. John left 55 acres of land at Dagworth- valued at 300 pound, cattle and calves to his dear wife Ellen. After John’s hard start in Australia, he became a hard worker and landowner.

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Kerry a descendant of John Silke found an old photo in her mother's family bible. The photo is made of tin and on the back scratched was Jack Silk.



Image courtesy of descendant

Thanks to Kerry, descendant of John Sheedy (Silke) for providing the majority of information on his life in Australia. We will add to this story as we gain additional information. Our next step is to ascertain which townland in Gort, Galway he came from, with the hope of reconnecting with his Irish cousins!

If you believe you could be related to this gentleman please contact us.

Contact email: galwayancestors@gmail.com

Facebook page: **The Whiteboys of Galway - that travelled on the Eliza Ship 1832** or

facebook page: **Loughrea workhouse**

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