



Ann Atkinson

Date of Trial:	22 January 1817
Where Tried:	Lancaster Quarter Session
Crime:	Larceny
Sentence:	7 years
Est YOB:	1791
Stated Age on Arrival:	27
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Dressmaker
Alias/AKA:	Ann Cotton (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	A prostitute, mutinous and extremely insolent
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

Ann Atkinson, charged with stealing money from John Marsland, merited one line in the *Manchester Mercury's* report on the Salford Quarter Sessions held in January 1817.¹ But this was perhaps not surprising considering there were 183 prisoners to be tried during the Sessions. Ann was one of the thirty five who were sentenced to be transported for seven years, as confirmed by her inclusion in the in the Lancashire Quarter Session Records and Petitions.

Whereas Ann Atkinson late of Manchester in the said county Singlewoman hath at this Session been convicted of Felony This Court doth therefore order and adjudge that the said Ann Atkinson shall be sent and transported to some part beyond the Seas for the Term of Seven Years pursuant to the Statute in such case made and provided.²

On 28 May 1817 the Governor of the Lancaster Gaol noted in his journal that he had attended prayers, at which the prisoners were well behaved, and arranged for the removal to the ship *Friendship* at Deptford of the following female transports – Ruth Guest, Ellen Simkin, Ann Atkinson and Mary Sharpe.³ The balance of the Lancashire women had been removed the previous day. Reunited again, Ann, together with the six other female prisoners who had also been tried at the same Sessions, was duly received on board the *Friendship*.⁴ Judging by Surgeon Cosgreave's remarks, Ann Atkinson seems to have made something of a nuisance of herself during the voyage. The information for her on arrival confirms the trial details and records that she was twenty-seven years old and a dressmaker by trade.⁵ Thereafter her movements for the next year or so are rather confusing.

Confusingly, the 1818-1819 Settler and Convict List records Ann Atkinson of the *Friendship* as resident in Sydney and having been assigned to the Public Factory and, for 1821, she is listed as a widow in Sydney. The 1822 New South Wales listing of males and females records Ann as the wife of Wm Cotton.⁶ However, Ann Atkinson was also on the list of female convicts who left Sydney on 30 January 1818 on board the *Duke of Wellington* bound for Van Diemen's Land.⁷ And it was there that she was mustered in 1820 assigned to (or living with?) 'Cotton'.⁸ Her status was clarified by an 1821 muster and the muster conducted in October and November 1823 – she was the wife of ticket-of-leave man, William Cotton, and they had no children.⁹

William Cotton ✓	Convict	Guildford	27 years	7 August	Banns
Ann Atkinson ✓	Convict	Friendship	30 years		
Witnesses					
John	John				
George	Northam				

Ann Atkinson and William Cotton were married by banns on 7 August 1820 at Hobart. Both were convicts; the groom was three years younger than the bride and was able to sign his name; Ann made her mark 'X'.¹⁰

Ann got herself into trouble very soon after her arrival at Hobart, and was punished relatively harshly for the first

two misdemeanours. She committed her last recorded offence shortly before she married.¹¹

Date	Charge	Outcome
25 Feb 1818	Absent from lodgings last night between 10 & 11 o'clock	To be confined in the Country Gaol and kept to hard labour for one week
22 May 1818	Drunk & Disorderly on the night of the 21st	To be confined in gaol for 14 days and kept to hard labour
19 Jun 1820	Drunk & Disorderly	To pay a fine of 5/-

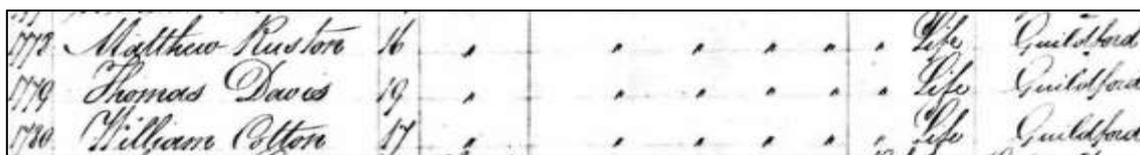
By January 1824 she was free by servitude and obtained her certificate of freedom three months later in April. Perhaps she celebrated this milestone with fellow *Friendship* women Sarah Robinson and Mary Sheen who also received their certificates on the same day. From this point in time Ann managed to keep her name out of the papers suggesting that she led a quiet and peaceable life.

While Ann Atkinson's crime barely received a mention, the trial of her future husband was covered in some detail. Before looking at the trial report, the case needs to be put into context, as described by Chris Upton, in the 3 April 2002 issue of *The Birmingham Post*.¹² 'A disposition to tumult, we are sorry to announce, was manifested by the populace of this town last week'. What *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* had described as 'a disposition to tumult' in May 1810 had, in fact, been a fully-fledged riot, complete with running battles with the army, projectiles, damaged property and general mayhem. This riot had been sparked by a potato, or rather by the high price of the potato, an unlikely trigger, except when, as it was in the Napoleonic War period, unemployment, poverty and inflation was widespread. The 'potato war' was quickly quelled, but an unpacified splinter group of trouble makers, mainly women and boys, set off in search of the growers. One of these was Mr. Samuel Wheeley whose family had farmed at Edgbaston since the early eighteenth century. A troop of the 7th Dragoon Guards came to the rescue before the rioters could completely demolish the farm house, tied up the thirteen culprits and delivered them to the prison. Attempts at further outbreaks over the next few days were brought under control by the military. When it came to their trial, the women (only two of whom were actually placed in the dock) and the boys fared rather well, their sentences ranging from fines to a stay in prison, the longest being for twelve months. However, such mercy was not shown to the three 'men' arrested at Mr. Wheeley's house.

On 18 August 1810 William Cotton, Matthew Ruston, and Thomas Davis were brought before the Warwick Assizes to answer to a charge of 'beginning to demolish the dwelling house of Mr. Wheeley, of Edgbaston'. In passing sentence, Sir Nash Grose addressed the trio as follows.

Matthew Ruston, William Cotton, and Thomas Davis, you three prisoners have all been convicted, on the clearest evidence, of one of the greatest and most outrageous offences that can be committed against the public peace, and against society. Whether you were prompted by the wickedness of your own minds, or did it at the instigation of others more wicked than yourselves, you assembled along with other persons, in a most tumultuous manner, for the worst of purposes. From the town of Birmingham, you proceeded in a great number, hundreds of you, and in this riotous manner you went to the dwelling house of the prosecutor, a distance of two miles, which you attacked with the most lawless violence. You not only demolished part of the house, but on one of you was found a part of the property. You stand there, lamentable instances of the effects of these acts of your excessive violence; and a dreadful example and warning to all young men of your description, and of all ages, not to engage in such lawless acts of violence and outrage. You have justly forfeited your lives to the injured laws of your country. You are highly indebted to the intercession of a humane jury, as well as to your prosecutors, who are equally anxious that mercy may be shewn to you. That mercy rests alone in his Majesty's royal favour to all deserving objects of his compassion. Still you will be accountable to God and your own consciences, and I do sincerely hope, that in whatever country you may be permitted to breathe out the remainder of your lives, that you will be exceedingly grateful, should that mercy be extended to you, but which is more than you can reasonably expect. His Lordship then passed the awful sentence of death upon the prisoners ... in the most affecting manner. (The capital convicts were reprieved).¹³

The three 'men' were still in their teens when they were received on the hulk *Portland* at Portsmouth on 13 September 1810.¹⁴



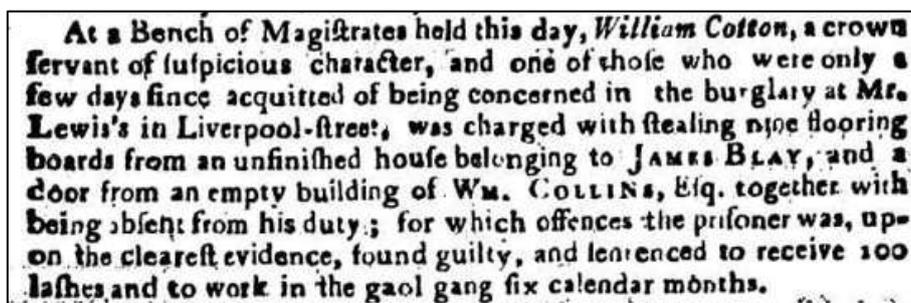
It was almost twelve months later that William Cotton and his co-conspirators embarked on the convict ship *Guildford* on the first of its eight voyages conveying convicts to New South Wales. The vessel left London on 3 September 1811 and after a voyage of 137 days arrived at Port Jackson on 18 January 1812.¹⁵ The Acting Commissary directed his deputy to go aboard the transport vessel to serve out new slop clothing for the convicts prior to their being landed, mustered and inspected by the Governor on 27 January.¹⁶ The following month William Cotton was one of the eighty convicts (including Thomas Davis and Matthew Ruston) who were embarked on the *Ruby* for offloading at Hobart Town where it was expected that they would 'breathe out the remainder of their lives'.¹⁷

Following his marriage to Ann Atkinson, William's career can be traced through the various musters. In 1823 he was a married man, assigned to public works; in 1826 and 1830 he was assigned to his wife Ann Cotton; and the notation for 1832 is that he had received a conditional pardon on 27 July 1832.¹⁸ His name also regularly appeared in the *Tasmanian Almanack* as 'Cotton, William, Blacksmith, Brisbane Street'.¹⁹

The first charge entered on his Conduct Record was for June 1815; the last offence was committed in 1825, for which he received merely a reprimand.

Date	Charge	Outcome
10 Jun 1815	Stealing an Iron Hoop, the property of the Crown	Acquitted
12 Jul 1817	Breaking & entering into the warehouse of Richard Lewis	Acquitted
2 Aug 1817	Stealing boards & a door from J. Blay and W. Collins	100 Lashes & 6 months Gaol Gang
7 Mar 1818	Absent from Muster	To perform a double portion of labor for Govt one week
6 Apr 1818	Absent from Muster	To perform a double portion of labor for Govt one week
11 Feb 1819	Neglect of Duty	25 Lashes & work for Govt one week in own time
20 Dec 1819	Disorderly at Church	One week in Govt in his own time
8 Jan 1821	Absent from Muster & Church	To labor the same hours as Gaol Gang for 1 week
20 Sep 1825	Assaulting his wife/Absent from Muster & Church last Sunday	Reprimanded

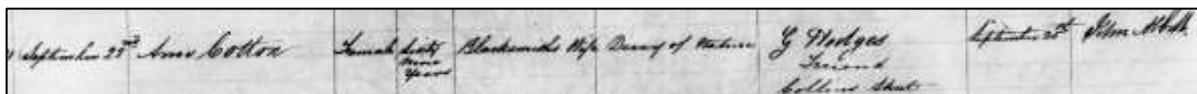
The offence that was apparently considered to be the most serious was reported in the local press.²⁰



William Cotton had to wait until July 1840, nearly thirty years after his arrival at Port Jackson, before he became a 'free' man. The good news was conveyed through a Government Notice issued from the Colonial Secretary's Office on 16 July.²¹ Based on William's 'highly satisfactory' behaviour since receiving his conditional pardon he was issued with Free Pardon Number 580.²² In the 1847 *Almanack* he was listed as one of the 'Householders in Hobart Town who pays £18 per annum and upwards'. Five years later the *Almanack* recorded that William Cotton,

yeoman of Bathurst Street, was now rated as paying £18 per annum and upwards.²³ The Cottons had, albeit modestly, 'arrived'.

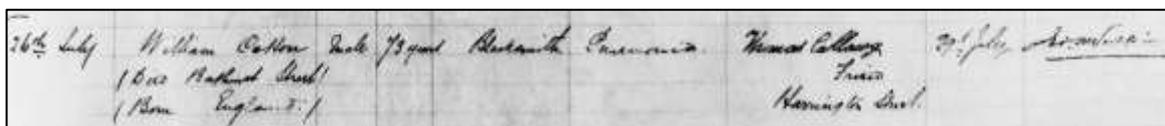
Recorded as the wife of a blacksmith, Ann Atkinson died on 22 September 1855 at Hobart at the age of sixty-nine from 'Decay of Nature', the informant being one G. Hodges, a friend of Collins Street.²⁴



Somewhat late in life, in his sixties and two and a half years after the death of his first wife, William Cotton married for a second time, the ceremony being conducted on 15 April 1858 at St David's Cathedral. His bride was widow, Elizabeth Davis. William was able to sign his name, as were the two witnesses – Sarah Bridges and W. Bridges. The bride made her mark.²⁵

Number.	When married, and where.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When registered.	Signature of Deputy Registrar or Officiating Minister.
1492	15 th April 1858 St David's Cathedral Hobart	William Cotton Elizabeth Davis	Full age Full age	Widower Widow	W ^m Cotton Elizabeth Davis Mark	W. Davis	15 th April 1858	W. Davis
<p>Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the United Church of England by licence by</p> <p>This Marriage was solemnized between us } W^m Cotton { In the Presence of Sarah Bridges } Elizabeth Davis { of us } W. Bridges Minister.</p>								

The couple had just over five years together before William Cotton, blacksmith, died at home on 26 July 1863. The cause of death was given as pneumonia and the informant was a friend, Thomas Calloway.²⁶

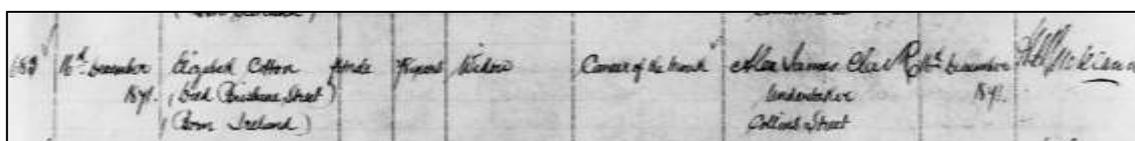


His passing was reported in the local Hobart and Launceston papers, the following being from *The Mercury*.

On the 26th, at his residence Bathurst-street, near Elizabeth-street, after a long and painful illness, William Cotton in the 73rd year of his age. His friends are respectfully invited to attend his funeral, which will move from his late residence on Wednesday, the 28th, at half-past 2. Please friends accept this as an invitation as no circulars will be issued.²⁷

Two weeks before his death William Cotton drew up his will. He appointed Jeremiah Kennally as the executor of his estate, the 'goods, chattels, rights, credits and effects of which, at the time of William's death, were deemed 'not to exceed in value the sum of Four Hundred pounds'. William bequeathed fifty pounds each to the Churchwardens of St. David's Cathedral and to The Benevolent Society, both of Hobart Town. Jeremiah Kennally, described as 'my tenant' was to receive a bequest of five hundred pounds, and Francis Cotton, William's nephew, was to receive one hundred pounds. The residue of his personal estate was bequeathed to his wife, Elizabeth. The houses and land then occupied by Jeremiah Kennally and Isaac Brindley as his tenants were to go to Jeremiah absolutely, and the residue of William's real property was to go to his wife.²⁸

Irish born Elizabeth Cotton outlived her husband by eight years. She died of cancer of the mouth on 16 December 1871 at the age of 78.²⁹



To tidy up a few loose ends – I have not been able to track William's co-transportee Thomas Davis with any

certainty through the records. It was tempting, briefly, to surmise whether the Elizabeth Davis who married William was in fact previously married to this Thomas Davis. Was she the Eliza(beth) Henderson of County Cavan, born 1792 and a housemaid, who arrived in Sydney per the *Lord Wellington* on 20 January 1820 and who, as directed by the Colonial Secretary, was subsequently on-forwarded to Van Diemen's Land per the brig *Princess Charlotte* in August 1820, under the name Elizabeth Henderson? She had been tried at County Cavan in mid-1818, and sentenced to seven years transportation for pickpocketing. It was as Elizabeth Anderson, aged 28, that she married convict Thomas Davis at Hobart on 13 February 1821, but this Thomas had arrived in Van Diemen's Land on board the *Lady Castlereagh*³⁰

Thomas mark Davis	✓	Convict	Lady Castlereagh	29 years	16 February	Barrab.
Elizabeth mark Anderson	✓	Convict	L. Wellington	25 years		
Antony Joseph Stone						
John Robertson						

Matthew Ruston proved very difficult to trace until I found that he had absconded at some stage and had managed to find his way back to England and, once more, to the Warwick Assizes where, on in April 1821, he appeared before the bench to answer the charge of 'Being at large under sentence of Transportation'. Once more he was sentenced to death. However, in the light of special circumstances [not specified] he was granted a Royal Pardon on 23 April 1821.³¹

Who Francis Cotton was, and how he was related to William Cotton, has not been established. Was he one of the Cottons connected with the Kelvedon Estate, at Swansea?³²

NOTES

¹ *Manchester Mercury*, 4 Feb 1817, p.2.

² *Lancaster Gazette*, 8 Feb 1817, p.3. Ancestry, Lancashire, England, Quarter Session Records and Petitions, 1648-1908, Order Books, 1817, RB 40.

³ Findmypast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1934, Lancaster Gaol, Lancashire, Governor's Journals.

⁴ Ancestry, Australian Convict Transportation Registers, Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868, HO11/2, p.177.

⁵ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, State Archives NSW; Series: NRS 12188; Item: [4/4005]; Microfiche: 638.

⁶ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834, HO10/2, HO10/11, HO10/17 and HO10/18.

⁷ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, Series: NRS 837; Reels 6004-6016, p.36.

⁸ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, HO10/44.

⁹ Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID: 3576, Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, HO10/45.

¹⁰ Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO), Hobart marriages 1820, RGD36/1/1 no 391.

¹¹ TAHO, Conduct Record, CON40-1-1 image 380.

¹² The Free Library, Perspective: Farmers had their chips in Brum's spud wars, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Perspective%3A+Farmers+had+their+chips+in+Brum%27s+spud+wars-a084360456>.

¹³ *Oxford Journal*, 1 Sep 1810, p.4.

¹⁴ Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, Perseus, Register, 1801-1836.

¹⁵ Free Settler or Felon? Convict Ship Guildford 1812, http://www.jenwillets.com/convict_ship_guildford_1812.htm.

¹⁶ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 25 Jan 1812, p.1.

¹⁷ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 15 Feb 1812, p.2. TAHO, CON13-1-1 pp.19-20.

¹⁸ Ancestry, All New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, HO10/45, .p.16; HO10/46, p.29; HO10/47, p.34; HO10/48, p.60.

¹⁹ *The Tasmanian Almanack*, various editions, Hobart.

²⁰ The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter, 2 Aug 1817, p.2.



-
- ²¹ The Cornwall Chronicle, 25 Jul 1840, p.4.
- ²² Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia, Convict Pardons and Tickets of Leave, 1834-1859, Tasmania, Pardons, 1840.
- ²³ *The Tasmanian Almanack*, 1847, p.27, 1852, p.35.
- ²⁴ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1855, RGD/35/1/1 no 231.
- ²⁵ TAHO, Hobart marriages 1858, RGD37/1/17 no 121.
- ²⁶ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1863, RGD35/1/6 no 4010.
- ²⁷ *The Mercury*, 27 Jul 1863, p.1.
- ²⁸ TAHO, Wills, AD960/1/6, Will No 1015. Jeremiah Kennally was a tailor and Isaac Brindley a carpenter, both of Bathurst Street.
- ²⁹ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1871, RGD35/1/8 no 683.
- ³⁰ Convict Records, <https://convictrecords.com.au/convicts/henderson/elizabeth/131189>. Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856. FCRC, Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database. TAHO, Hobart marriages 1821, RGD36/1/1 no 452.
- ³¹ *Northampton Mercury*, 21 Apr 1821, p.4. FMP, England & Wales, Crime Prisons and Punishment, 1770-1935, Correspondence and Warrants, HO13/36, pp.304-305.
- ³² Mary Bartram Trott, 'Cotton, Francis (1801–1883)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cotton-francis-1924/text2291>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 9 December 2018.



SOURCES

Genealogy Websites

Ancestry

Australian Convict Transportation Registers, Other Fleets & Ships 1791-1868

Lancashire, England, Quarter Session Records and Petitions, 1648-1908

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia, Convict Pardons and Tickets of Leave, 1834-1859

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australian Convict Musters, 1806-1849

New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856

New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842

New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834

UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849

FindmyPast

England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935

Other Websites

Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/>

Convict Records, <https://convictrecords.com.au/>

Female Convicts Research Centre, <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>

Free Settler or Felon? <https://www.jenwillets.com/>

LINC Tasmania, <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/>

Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, <https://www.libraries.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/>

The Free Library, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/>

Online Newspapers

British Newspapers (FindmyPast)

Manchester Mercury

Northampton Mercury

Oxford Journal

TROVE

The Cornwall Chronicle

The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter

The Mercury

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser

The Tasmanian Almanack

© Leonie Fretwell, 2019