

Elizabeth Gunton

Date of Trial:	17 July 1816
Where Tried:	Northampton, Liberty of Peterborough Quarter Session Oyer and Terminal Gaol
Crime:	Uttering forged notes
Sentence:	14 years
Est YOB:	1777
Stated Age on Arrival:	42
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Housekeeper
Alias/AKA:	Mary Gunton, Elizabeth Walsh/Walch (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	Quiet and industrious
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

It was as Elizabeth Gunton that this woman was entered in the Criminal Register, immediately before her partner in crime, Ann Beal.¹ But it was as Mary Gunton that, with Ann Beal, she pleaded guilty to an indictment for uttering forged notes, purporting to be of the Bank of England, when she fronted up at the Peterborough court on 17 July 1816, a crime for which they were both sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.²

County of Northampton			Sentences.		
Names	When Tried.	Crimes.	Death.	Transportation.	Imprisonment.
Elizabeth Gunton	17th July 1816	Uttering forged Bank Notes		14 Years	
Ann Beal	17th July 1816	Uttering forged Bank Notes		14 Years	

For whatever reason, J. Atkinson, Clerk of the Peace for the Liberty of Peterborough had made enquiries as to removing the pair, which elicited the following response from J. Beckett, Whitehall, dated 20 August 1816.

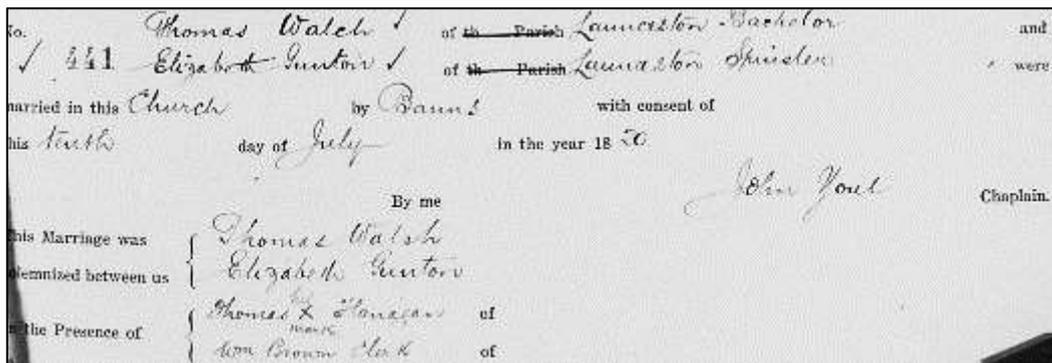
Sir

I am directed by Lord Sidmouth to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of Yesterday's date, referring to a former one upon the subject of the removal of Eliz^h Gunton & Ann Beal, two Convicts under Sentence of Transportation in the Goal at Peterborough, and in reply I am to acquaint you that it will not be possible to give any orders for the removal of the Prisoners in question until a vessel is employed for the conveyance of Female Convicts to New South Wales which is not expected to take place till the early part of next year.³

Coincidentally, the name of 'Mary Gunton, *a/s* Elizabeth' appears in an earlier Criminal Register entry.⁴ This woman was charged with 'feloniously breaking and entering the dwelling house' of her neighbour, one Samuel Johnson of Stag Gardens, Westminster, and stealing a silk gown and a cloak'. As Mary Gunton, aged 35, a married woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy, she was tried at the Old Bailey on 17 September 1806. She was found guilty of grand larceny, but the prosecutor recommended mercy on account of 'the difficult situation in which she and her husband had been a long time, he being unable to work owing to a bad leg'. She was duly sentenced to one month in Newgate and fined one shilling.⁵ But, apart from the duplicate names – Mary and/or Elizabeth Gunton – there is nothing conclusive to prove that the 1806 and 1816 crimes were committed by the same person. There is no reference in the documentation for the Elizabeth Gunton of the *Friendship* to a Mr. Gunton, or to any children that may have been left behind. Further, there is an age discrepancy. According to the convict indent, when Elizabeth Gunton arrived in New South Wales in January 1818 she gave her age as 42.⁶

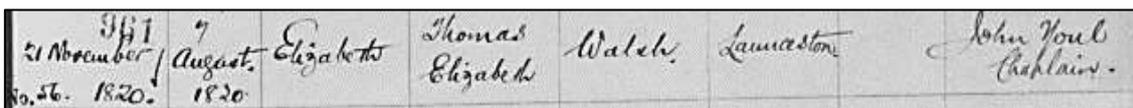
Turning now to the colonial records for the Elizabeth Gunton who, unlike her associate Ann Beal, survived the voyage and during which she seems to have been a model prisoner – 'quiet and industrious'. The disembarkation

and muster formalities having been completed, Elizabeth, a housekeeper by occupation, who could read and write, was put aboard the *Duke of Wellington* for transfer to Van Diemen's Land, where, by 1820 she was at Port Dalrymple and a married woman.⁷

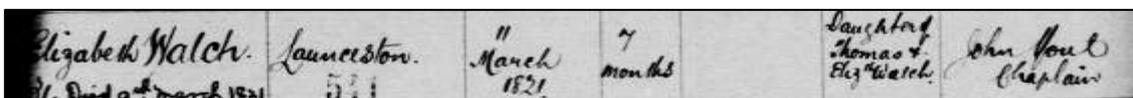


The marriage between Elizabeth Gunton, spinster, and ticket-of-leave bachelor Thomas Walsh was conducted by the Reverend John Youl on 10 July 1820. Both groom and bride were able to sign their names, but only one of the witnesses (a clerk) was able to do so.⁸ The groom's surname was a 'problem' as evidenced by the fact that it is spelt two ways in the register!

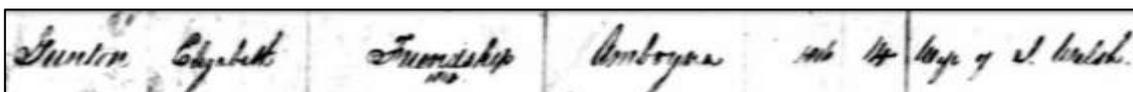
In fact, when they married Elizabeth was heavily pregnant. Their daughter, also named Elizabeth, was born on 7 August 1820 and baptised by John Youl three months later, on 21 November.⁹



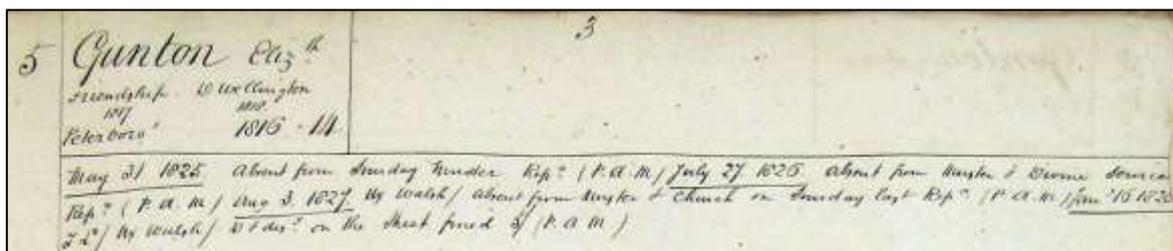
Sadly this little girl only lived for seven months, and once more John Youl was on hand, this time to perform the burial.¹⁰



For the 1823 muster Elizabeth and Thomas (this time spelt Welsh) were still living Launceston.¹¹



There are only a few entries in her conduct record. On three occasions - in May 1825, July 1826, and August 1827 - Elizabeth was absent from the compulsory Sunday muster and church service, for which she was reprimanded. In January 1828 she was found drunk and disorderly, and fined 5 shillings.¹²



The last confirmed record found to date for Elizabeth Gunton is that referred to in Government Notice No. 225, issued from the Colonial Secretary's Office on 18 December 1830, the preamble of which declared that 'The periods for which the undermentioned persons were transported having expired, certificates have been granted to them accordingly'. Elizabeth Gunton (Police No.5) of the *Friendship* was one of those listed.¹³

Elizabeth's husband Thomas had been one of the Middlesex Goal Delivery prisoners tried at the Old Bailey on 5

April 1815. He was charged and found guilty of larceny and sentenced to seven years transportation.¹⁴ On 3 August, under the name Thomas Watch, he was received on the hulk *Retribution*, moored at Woolwich, from where he was discharged on 12 May 1816 for embarkation, as Thomas Watch, on the convict vessel *Mariner*, which sailed that month for a somewhat 'lively' voyage. While thoughts of mutiny probably crossed all convict minds at some time during their long sea passage, such thoughts were rarely translated into action, and any such attempts were usually quickly dealt with, as was the case on board the *Mariner*, as later recounted by John Haslam, the Surgeon-Superintendent.

Notwithstanding the utmost vigilance was exerted to prevent their confederation for the purpose of seizing the ship, yet they made the attempt at a time when it was least expected. On the 8th September they contrived to open the prison door communicating with the forhold; this was speedily detected, but not until several articles had been stolen. On the 28th of the same month, during a tremendous storm at night, which excited the greatest alarm amongst those who navigated the ship; they found means during the general distress to cut a hole in the deck of the prison communicating with the hold, by which in a short time they might have rendered themselves masters of the arm chest, had they not been discovered. When I went into the prison accompanied by the master and a sufficient guard, they pretended the most perfect ignorance of the transaction, said they had been asleep and wondered how it could have been effected.¹⁵

The *Mariner* arrived at Port Jackson on 11 October 1816, with no loss of life among the complement of one hundred and forty five prisoners. They were landed on 18 October, inspected by Governor Macquarie and, all being in a healthy state, were distributed to their various employments. The indent for Thomas describes him as being from Waterford City, Ireland, a plaisterer by trade, and twenty-eight years of age. He was somewhat above average height at 5' 9", had a ruddy complexion, dark brown hair and hazel eyes.¹⁶ Where he was assigned to is not known, but with his trade qualification he was probably employed on public works.

In a letter dated 5 February 1818 the Colonial Secretary advised Lieutenant Governor Sorrel that prisoners to be sent to Van Diemen's Land had been embarked on the *Duke of Wellington* in readiness for their voyage. Apart from the female contingent, a smaller group of men was being sent over, the majority described by the Colonial Secretary as 'useful Mechanics and Tradesmen'. Thomas Walch, plaisterer, was one of these whose services were to be made available for the public benefit of the community of Van Diemen's Land.¹⁷ And, of course, his future wife was also on board the same vessel.

The conduct record for Thomas Walsh appears to be very 'busy'. But a closer look shows that he was not such a reprobate as might be thought on first glance, with some of the charges against him being dismissed. However, he continued to offend even after having received his certificate of freedom.¹⁸

Date	Charge	Outcome
24 Mar 1818	Assaulting & beating Patrick Miller	Acquitted
25 May 1818	Insolent & disrespectful to the Inspector of PW	To work for Govt in his own time one month
5 Jan 1819	Absent from his lodgings at night	Work for Govt one month in his own time
21 Feb 1820	Absent from Muster & from Church	Gaol Gang for 14 days
6 Apr 1821 (TL)	Stealing knives and forks in the dwelling of Henry Simpson at Port Dalrymple	To forfeit his TL & labour for Govt the remainder of his sentence
30 Jun 1824 (FS)	Drunk & Disorderly & Assaulting Mrs Sarah Ogilvie	Fined 5/- and bound over to keep the peace for six months
10 Jul 1824	Retailing spirits without a licence	To pay the mitigated penalty of £15
30 Jul 1824	Assaulting Constable Guillois & attempting to rescue Archibald Forest from his custody	Committed for trial before Supreme Court.
18 Jun 1825	Assaulting Ann Farrell(?)	Dismissed
23 Aug 1825	Refusing to pay Ralf Ellis for labor	Charge dismissed
28 Sep 1825	Assaulting Sarah Ann Cox	Order to find surety to keep the peace for 6 months
27 Jan 1826	Assaulting Isabella Whittingham	No prosecution, dismissed

10 Apr 1826	Drunk & Disorderly	Fined 5/-
2 Mar 1827	Drunk & Disorderly & attempting to converse with the Female prisoners in the Gaol	To find sureties for his good behaviour for 3 months
10 Jul 1827	Feloniously receiving a load of wood value 4/- the property of the Crown on 28th June last	Fined 12/- & costs
16 Jul 1827	Drunk	Fined 5/-
19 May 1828	Drunk & Disorderly on Saturday last	Fined 5/- for drunkenness & to find sureties for his good behaviour for 3 months
7 Aug 1828	Receiving stolen goods of the value of 5/-	Charge dismissed
2 Oct 1829	Drunk & Disorderly last night	Fined 5/-

Two of the incidents were reported in the local press. Thomas' good character was taken into consideration - unstated mitigating circumstances resulting in reduced sentences.¹⁹

Thomas Welch, holding a ticket of leave, for stealing three carving knives and forks, the property of Henry Simpson, was found guilty; but, in consequence of his previous character, the Court only sentenced him to forfeit his leave ticket, and to be afterwards kept to Government labour for the remainder of his original term of transportation.

Thomas Walsh, assaulting a constable in the execution of his duty. Guilty. On account of some mitigating circumstances, to be imprisoned 14 days from the day of his conviction.

On occasion Thomas was evidently prone to resorting to violence to resolve issues. Interestingly two of his so-called victims – Sarah Ogilvie (née Robinson) and Sarah Ann Cox - had been transported on the *Friendship*, and were therefore well-known to Thomas' wife Elizabeth. Perhaps there was some long-standing ill feeling between the women?

Speculatively, it is possible that Thomas might, in fact, have arrived at his transportation destination much earlier if he was the same person as the Thomas Welch who had been convicted at Middlesex on 2 December 1807, in which case his, and Elizabeth's story would be very different. At the age of eighteen, this Thomas Welch, on a second count for a like offence, had been indicted and, at the Old Bailey on 2 December 1807, found guilty of grand larceny –stealing on 6 November a copper pot, value 10s, the property of Ann Perrot. He was sentenced to seven years transportation, but served and completed his sentence on board the hulk *Retribution*, being discharged on 13 December 1813.²⁰

I have found nothing further after 1830 for Elizabeth and nothing for Thomas after 1829. Is it possible that they were two of the passengers who departed Launceston on 10 February 1831 on the *Persian*?²¹

FEB. 10.—Sailed the ship *Persian*, R. Plunkett, master, for London, with 500 bags of wool, 210 tons of Mimosa bark, 2 casks of ox hides, and 1 bundle of opossum skins.—Passengers, Mrs. Plunkett, Mr. Willis, Thomas Walsh, Elizabeth Walsh, Francis Rose, and James Anderson.

Postscript

From the records we know that Thomas Walsh had been born about 1788 at Waterford, Ireland. Nothing has yet been established to locate Elizabeth Gunton's birthplace. It has been suggested, based on a Familysearch record, that Elizabeth Gunton may have been the daughter of Matthew and Ann, who was baptised at Manea,

Cambridgeshire on 12 October 1777. It should be noted however that an Elizabeth Gunton, daughter of Matthew and Elizabeth, was buried at Manea on 28 June 1778.²²

NOTES

- ¹ Ancestry, England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, England, Northampton, 1816.
- ² *Northampton Mercury*, 27 Jul 1816, p.3. Findmypast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Prison Register.
- ³ FMP, England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Correspondence and Warrants.
- ⁴ Ancestry, England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, England, Middlesex, 1806.
- ⁵ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 25 October 2017), September 1806, trial of MARY GUNTON (t18060917-66). *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 23 Sep 1806, p.2.
- ⁶ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures, 1814-1818.
- ⁷ Female Convicts Research Centre, (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID: 3594.
- ⁸ TAHO, Launceston marriages 1820, RGD36/1/1 no 441.
- ⁹ TAHO, Launceston baptisms 1820, RGD32/1/1 no 961.
- ¹⁰ TAHO Launceston burials 1821, RGD/34/1/1 no 541.
- ¹¹ FCRC Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database. Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, Ancestry, Tasmania, List of convicts (incomplete) 1823. The notation 'Amboyna' in the column for 'place of trial' is a mystery/incorrect entry.
- ¹² TAHO, Conduct Record, CON40-1-3, 213, p.3.
- ¹³ *Launceston Advertiser*, 20 Dec 1830, p.3. Ancestry, Tasmania, Australia, Convict Court and Selected Records, 1800-1899, CON55/2/1.
- ¹⁴ Ancestry, England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, England, Middlesex, 1815; Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Biographical report for Thomas Walch. FMP, Home Office: Convict Prison Hulks: Registers and Letter Books; Class: HO9; Piece 7.
- ¹⁵ Cited in Free Settler or Felon? "Convict Ship Mariner 1816", http://www.jenwilletts.com/convict_ship_mariner_1816.htm.
- ¹⁶ State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales (NSW State Records), Series: NRS 12188; Item [4/4005]; Microfiche: 636.
- ¹⁷ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, Series NRS 937; Reel 6004-6016, p.41.
- ¹⁸ TAHO, Conduct Record, CON31/1/45, page 21. Ancestry, Tasmania, Australia, Convict Court and Selected Records, 1800-1899, Register, Northern Tasmania, 1822-1844.
- ¹⁹ *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 14 Apr 1821, p.1; *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 24 Apr 1824, p.2.
- ²⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 25 October 2017), December 1807, trial of Thomas WELCH (t18071202-32); Findmypast, Home Office: Convict Prison Hulks: Registers and Letter Books; Class: HO9; Piece: 7.
- ²¹ *Colonial Times*, 18 Feb 1831, p.2.
- ²² FCRC Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Pre-Transportation notes. FMP, Cambridgeshire Burials.



SOURCES

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

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Tasmania, Australia, Convict Court and Selected Records, 1800-1899

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

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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/>

NSW State Archives & Records, <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/>

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

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TROVE

Launceston Advertiser

The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser

Colonial Times

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