



Mary Sheen

Date of Trial:	2 October 1816
Where Tried:	Old Bailey, London
Crime:	Larceny
Sentence:	7 years
Est YOB:	c1776
Stated Age on Arrival:	42
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Farm Worker
Alias/AKA:	Mary Sheehan, Mary Mulcahy/Mulcaly/Mulcraty (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	1 – daughter (died during voyage)
Surgeon's Remarks:	Abusive and meddling, "Child Dead"
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

Researching Mary Sheen has proved to be difficult, not least because of the variation in the spelling of her surname and even more so that of the man she married. Disparity in Mary's age at various times adds to the confusion. Some of the 1816 prison documents record her age as 42 (which tallies with the trial record), another as 40. On arrival at Port Jackson her age was recorded as 42.¹ Further records puts her age in 1818 as 48, and in 1820 her estimated year of birth as 1775.²

The *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* of 3 October 1816 devoted one line to her in its report on the Old Bailey proceedings of the previous day, recording that she had been convicted of felony.

Mary Sheen, for stealing a cap and other articles.³

The Old Bailey trial record provides some more detail about the case, which leaves little doubt about Mary's culpability.

Theft - Grand Larceny -

(984) MARY SHEEN was indicted for stealing, on the 7th March, a cap, value 3d. a hat, value 4s. and a gown, value 4s 6d. the property of Mary Cummings, spinster. (OB)

MARY CUMMINGS. These things were taken from my lodgings; the prisoner lodged in the same room. I got up as usual at four o'clock in the morning of the 7th of March, and I know I left my things safely locked up. When I returned that morning about eight o'clock, I found the prisoner gone. I found my box broken open, and all my property was taken.

JOHN COOPER. I am a constable. I found the property in the prisoner's room.

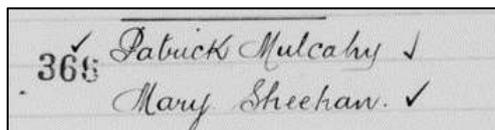
GUILTY - aged 42.

Transported for Seven Years.⁴

Mary Sheen was sent down to Newgate Prison to await her delivery to the convict vessel *Friendship* and her forthcoming journey to New South Wales. She was accompanied by a daughter when she boarded the vessel, but the name of this child is not known and who, sadly for Mary, died during the voyage. According to Surgeon Cosgreave, Mary Sheen was abusive with a tendency to meddle, but free passenger John Gyles considered that she behaved well.⁵ On arrival at Port Jackson, the *Friendship* women were separated out - some to join their husbands, others for assignment in New South Wales and fifty-four to be sent south to Van Diemen's Land. Mary Sheen was one of the latter group and it was at Port Dalrymple that she was mustered in 1820 and 1821.⁶ By this time she was a married woman.

When the Reverend John Youl arrived at Port Dalrymple in late 1819 as Assistant Chaplain one of his first tasks was to conduct a batch of marriages, many of which were held to 'regularise' existing relationships. Unfortunately, his zeal to marry couples was not matched by the record keeping. The 1819 Register simply provides the

identification number and the names of the bride and groom. Thus we find that number 366 was the marriage between Patrick Mulcahy and Mary Sheehan [sic].⁷ Noting the vagaries of ages, Mary would have been in her mid-40s and, if he has been correctly identified, her husband would have been about ten years her junior.



Prior to arriving in Van Diemen's Land Patrick had been a seaman on the HMS frigate *Theban*. He was court-martialled on the Royal Navy's HMS *Gladiator* at Portsmouth on 17 September 1811 and found guilty of 'a foul crime' and sentenced to death.⁸ The convict indents record him as Patrick Mulcrarty, as did the brief newspaper report of the court-martial.⁹ In March the following year the sentence was commuted to transportation for life and, in accordance with instructions from R. Ryder of Whitehall, the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty were to arrange to transfer Patrick, and one other, to the hulks.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordships Letters of 10 Inst signifying HRH the Prince Regent's Pleasure respecting Patrick Mulcrarty & James Parker who have been convicted by Naval Courts Martial of Unnatural Crimes & I beg leave to acquaint your Lordships that the necessary measures have been taken for carrying His RH the Prince Regents Command into Execution for the Transportation of the above named Convicts. I am therefore to desire that you will give directions for the Removal of the Prisoners to the Hulks at Portsmouth.¹⁰

Pending his deportation Patrick Mulcary, aged 27, was held on the hulk HMS *Laurel*, moored at Portsmouth.¹¹ He was one of 200 men who were embarked on the convict ship *Indefatigable* which departed from England's shores on 4 June 1812 bound direct for Hobart where she arrived on 19 October 1812.¹²

From this point on information for Mary Sheen and Patrick Mulcahy is sparse. The *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser* of 22 February devoted considerable column inches covering a long list of criminal cases. One of these cases concerned Patrick. In this instance he was the victim not the offender.¹³

Joseph Burn, alias Joseph Dempley, was indicted for stealing goods in the dwelling-house of Patrick Mulkeith, near Launceston, on the 19th of December last, and putting the said P. Mulkeith and others therein in bodily fear.—The prosecutor in this case deposed, that his humble dwelling was entered about dusk one evening by the prisoner, who was armed with a pistol in each hand, and who, after tying his hands behind him, as well as those of one of his servants, he plundered the house of sundry articles, and then made his escape through the back way, although an alarm had arisen while he was in the house, and 2 or 3 men waiting to apprehend him.

John Welsh, one of the prosecutor's servants, deposed to his seeing the prisoner through the window, while in the house; that he then procured a gun from, and alarmed a neighbour, for the purpose of taking the prisoner, who escaped however immediately after, having taken only some tea and sugar, a pistol, and some gunpowder.

The prisoner in his defence, said, he had got drunk in his master's service, and that he went into the bush for fear of punishment, acknowledging the robbery in question, but throwing himself upon the mercy of the Court. He was found—Guilty, and remanded for sentence.

A Government notice dated 8 April 1824 announced that Mary Sheen had obtained her Certificate of Leave.¹⁴ In November of that year Patrick Mulcrarty was charged with assaulting his wife Mary and ordered to keep the peace for six months. In the following year, on 4 August, Mary, ux P. Mulcaly, was fined 5/- for being drunk. On 27 August her husband was ordered to find sureties for his good behaviour for three months for being disorderly and fighting in the streets of Launceston. And in the same year on 28 November he was once again found drunk and disorderly and fined 5/-. For both of them the next misdemeanours recorded on their Conduct Sheets occurred in 1827. Being drunk and disorderly, Patrick was fined 5/- on 19 May and 13 August. Mary too was fined 5/- on 13 August for the same offence as Patrick's – the last entry on her Conduct sheet. Patrick's final entry was 17 September when he was to find sureties for his good behaviour for having been drunk and disorderly on the Sabbath during Divine Service.¹⁵

It would have been with great relief that Patrick received the news, as published in the *Hobart Town Courier* of 11 July 1834.

The Lieutenant Governor directs it to be notified, that Patrick Mulcrarty, per Indefatigable has received an absolute remission of his sentence, of which His Majesty's allowance had been signified.¹⁶

Now aged about fifty, he had been in the colony for just short of twenty-two years. If she was still alive, his wife Mary would be in her mid-sixties. At this stage nothing further has been found for this couple.

NOTES

¹ FindmyPast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Prison Registers.

² Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Biographical report for Mary Sheen, Convict Indents & Ships Musters and Tasmanian Database created by Garry Wilson.

³ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 3 Oct 1816, p.3. The crime was 'foul deed with a fowl.

⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 27 April 2018), September 1816, trial of MARY SHEEN (t18160918-166).

⁵ Observations of female convicts sent from Newgate who arrived on the Friendship (for the information of the Committee of Ladies, cited in Free Settler or Felon? Convict Ship Friendship 1818, https://www.jenwillets.com/convict_ship_friendship_1818.htm. John Gyles was a pioneer of the sugar industry in New South Wales, Niel Gunson, 'Gyles, John (?–1827)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gyles-john-2138/text2717>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 23 April 2018.

⁶ Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO), CON13/1/1 p.31. Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC) Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID: 3619

⁷ TAHO, Launceston marriages 1819, RGD36/1/1 no 366.

⁸ *HMS Gladiator* spent her whole career on harbour service, which made her an excellent venue for courts-martial – Wikipedia, *HMS Gladiator* (1783), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Gladiator_\(1783\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Gladiator_(1783)).

⁹ BDA, Biographical report for Patrick Mulcrarty. *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 24 Sep 1811, p.2.

¹⁰ FMP, England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935,

¹¹ Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, Laurel, Register 1805-1836, Correspondence and Warrants.

¹² Free Settler or Felon, Convict Ship Indefatigable 1812, https://jenwillets.com/convict_ship_indefatigable_1812.htm.

¹³ *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 22 Feb 1823, p.1.

¹⁴ *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 9 Apr 1824, p.1.

¹⁵ TAHO, Conduct Registers, CON31/1/29 p.99; CON40/1/9 p.34.

¹⁶ *The Hobart Town Courier*, 11 Jul 1834, p.2.



SOURCES

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

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

Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/>

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TROVE

The Hobart Town Courier

The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser

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