

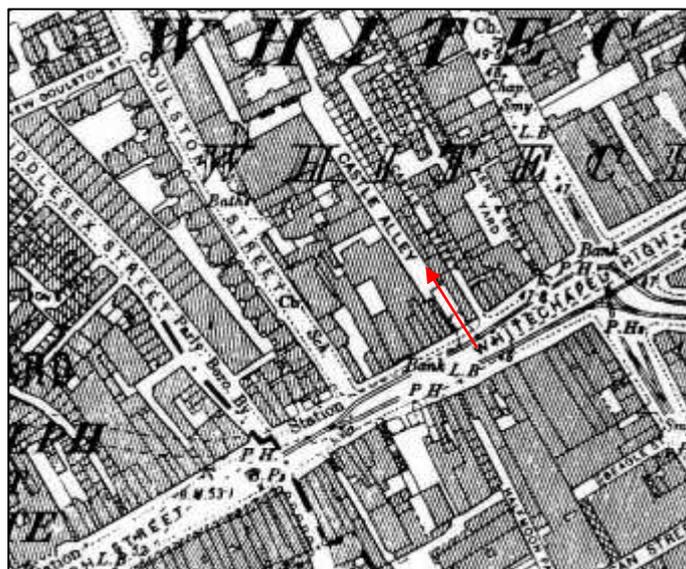


Frances Sibley

Date of Trial:	18 September 1816
Where Tried:	Old Bailey, London
Crime:	Highway Robbery
Sentence:	Life
Est YOB:	1781
Stated Age on Arrival:	38
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Servant
Alias/AKA:	Frances Hall (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon’s Remarks:	Insolent but industrious
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

From at least July 1816 until the beginning of 1818, the story of Frances Sibley was in lock-step with that of Ann Tilling, her younger partner-in-crime. Headed up – ‘Violent Theft – Highway Robbery’ their trial was recorded in the annals of the Old Bailey.

FRANCES SIBLEY and ANN TILLING, were indicted for feloniously assaulting Timothy Root, in the King’s highway on the 31st of July, for putting him in fear, and taking from his person, and against his will, a purse value 1s, a key value 2d. ten shillings and sixpence in monies numbered, and two one pound bank notes, his property. (826) TIMOTHY ROOT. I am a gardener; I live at Eltham, in Kent. On the night of the 31st of July last, I was in Whitechapel, going along the footpath in the High street; it was about half past eleven as I was told, I heard the watchman say so. I saw both the prisoners that evening; the first thing was, I was walking along, and they asked me to go with them both; I told them I had a home of my own, and I asked them where did they think their home was; and they followed me up to the entrance an Alley which is called Castle Alley; then they give me a sudden snatch, about two yards up the Alley; I am sure I was forced up the Alley by intervals they had both a hold of me then; then one seized hold of my left hand, and the other my right, and pinned both my arms down.



Then a man came up, and clapped his hand upon my mouth, and stopped me from taking my breath. Then they held me in that way; I could not call out; the holding my mouth stopped my breath entirely. I was then held so until they drew the purse out of my pocket. The biggest of the prisoners, Sibley, drew the purse out of my pocket, with two one pound Bank of England notes in it, a duplicate of a watch, and about ten or eleven shillings in silver; there was a key also, in the breeches pocket were the purse was. It was very dark where they stood. I know they are the same women by their talking to me and my answering them in the Highway. There was a lamp at the end of the passage, and in the High street also. They then ran away, and when I recovered myself, I called stop

thief. The man that had held my mouth bolted out of the passage. When I called out stop thief the watchman sprang his rattle, and the man and one of the prisoners were apprehended before I got out of the passage; that prisoner was Sibley. The other women was just by me when I went out, and I gave charge of them all; they were close together and was in the watchhouse when they were searched but I did not see my property.

JOHN ALBERT. I am a watchman at Whitechapel, my stand is opposite Castle Alley. On the 31st of July at about half past eleven, I was at the corner of Reddich street, standing with my back against a door with my coat over my light, and I saw two women and a man run over from the opposite side from Castle Alley; they ran across the way in a very great hurry; I heard the cry of stop thief, and I followed this party about twenty yards. The whole three came close out together, and the man attempted to cross the road again; with that I sprang my rattle; the man crossed the road, and the woman going straight on. By the assistance of an extra watchman that was going along, we took the whole three into custody. When I came close to them, the man attempted to cross the road, but we secured them. I pursued the man; the other watchman stopped the women. It was not three minutes from the time stop thief was called until they were all taken into custody; they were never out of my sight I had sight of the whole three until they were apprehended; I was present when they were searched and none of these things were found on them.

JOHN BOUTLE. I am headborough of the parish of Whitechapel. I remember when the two prisoners were brought with the man to the watchhouse. The prosecutor charged them with this robbery. I searched them all three; I found nothing at all on these women nor did I find anything on the man that relates so this charge. I found on him a watch-chain, a guinea in gold, a three-shilling bank token one shilling and two sixpences.

[It came out in the course of the trial that the bill of indictment against the man spoken of as an accomplice with the prisoners, was thrown out by Grand Jury.]

Timothy Root. Re-called. Did you tell, the Grand Jury that you believed that the man who was apprehended at the same time with the prisoners was the man who gagged you - A. I did tell them I believed so.

Q. And do you now believe so - A. Yes, I know so.

SIBLEY, GUILTY - DEATH, aged 35.

TILLING, GUILTY - DEATH, aged 21.<sup>2</sup>

These two women were found guilty on the flimsiest of evidence – all that was proved was they were at the scene of the ‘crime’ and that they had run off when their ‘victim’ raised the alarm. None of the supposed stolen items were found on them, nor on the man who was apparently in cahoots with them. Of course, they may have rid themselves of the purse and its contents, and the key. However the watchman, John Albert, claimed that they were in his sight at all times of the chase, and neither he nor Mr. Root suggested that that they had thrown the evidence away. On the other hand, the notation ‘an old offender’ in both Frances Sibley’s and Ann Tilling’s entry in the Prison Register suggests that they were no innocents. And notably, using the same *modus operandi*, Frances Sibley had been tried in 1810 for a similar offence (but found Not Guilty).

205. ANN COHEN and FRANCES SIBLEY were indicted for feloniously assaulting Solomon Abrahams, in the king’s highway, on the 28th of January, putting him in fear, and taking from his person, and against his will, a pocket book, value 6d. three bank notes, value 10l. each, two bank notes, value 2l. each, and a bank note, value 1l. the property of Solomon Abrahams.

SOLOMON ABRAHAMS. I am a seaman ; I live in Angel-court; Whitechapel. On the 28th of January, about half past ten at night, I was in High-street, Whitechapel , I met with the two prisoners, I took them into a liquor shop and treated them, we had a glass of rum each; then they treated me again with a glass of peppermint; then we went to another liquor shop up a turning; Ann Cohen asked me if I would go and speak to her up the turning, and while I was speaking to Ann Cohen , Francis Sibley came unawares and caught me by the throat with one hand and with her other hand she unbuttoned my breeches pocket, and took out my pocket book; I had not power to stop her. My pocket book contained three ten pound notes, two two’s, and a one, and my pension ticket, and a certificate from captain Gordon. As soon as I got clear of them I ran to the patrol; he said he would look after them; I told him their names.

Q. You knew their names before - A. Yes. I knew Sibley four months; I knew the other by living with her.

SAMUEL MILLER. I am an officer of Whitechapel office. On Monday I received information that a man had been robbed on Sunday of thirty-five pound. I went to the prisoners lodgings in company with Freeman and found a

padlock on their door; I searched after them three weeks, at last I found Sibley in Red-Lion-court, and Cohen in Checquer-alley, Bunhill-row.

Sibley's Defence. The reason that I left my place I was in debt with my landlady, she put a padlock on my door. He has no reason to accuse me; he has known me many times; he wanted me to live with him; he kept a bagnio down Swan-court.

Cohen's Defence. He drank five or six glasses of liquor. I never saw him before nor since till I saw him with the officers.<sup>3</sup>

A brief account of the trial was carried in the *Morning Advertiser* of 27 February 1810.

STREET ROBBERY – Two girls of the town, of the names of Sibley and Cohen, were tried for robbing a Jew seaman of the name of Abrahams, of 41l in cash and Bank notes. The prosecutor told what the Jury thought was an incredible story and acquitted them.<sup>4</sup>

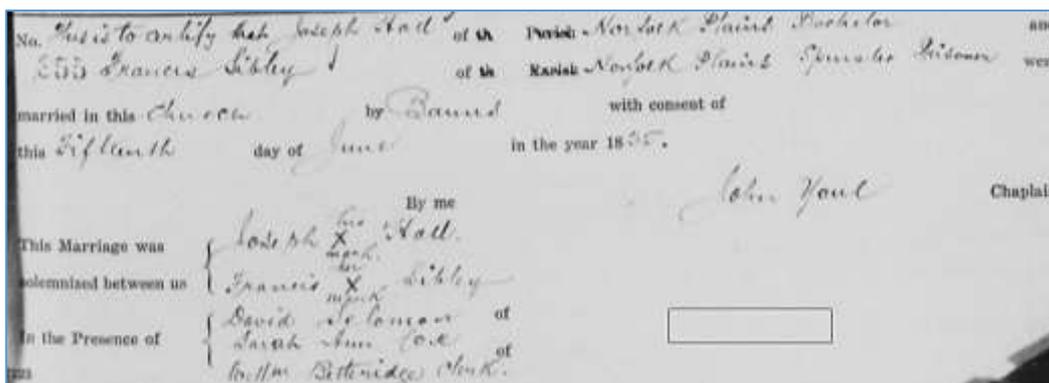
Further, Frances Sibley appears in the Prison Register for 1816, on a charge of larceny, which was dismissed owing to the failure of the prosecutor to turn up for the trial.<sup>5</sup> So it seems that prior to her conviction in 1816, Frances had led a charmed criminal life.

A meeting of the Privy Council was held in November 1816 at which the Recorder of London made his report on the thirty convicts who had been capitally convicted at the Old Bailey September Sessions, which included Frances Sibley and Ann Tilling, two of the nine who had been sentenced to death for 'robberies on the King's highway'. It took three hours for the Council to conclude its business. The death sentence was upheld for five of the cases (including one if the highway robbers), but all the others were reprieved.

We in consideration of some favorable Circumstances humbly represented unto us in their behalf are graciously pleased to Extend Our Grace and Mercy unto them and to Grant them our Pardon for their said crimes on Condition of their being transported to the Coast of New South Wales or some one or other of the Islands adjacent for and during the Term of their respective Natural Lives.<sup>6</sup>

During May and June 1817, and along with 100 other convict women, Frances Sibley was mustered on board the convict ship *Friendship* at the Deptford dockyard. Under the command of Captain Andrew Armet the *Friendship* left England on 3 July 1817 and, after a protracted voyage lasting 195 days, arrived at Port Jackson on 14 January 1818.<sup>7</sup> Ship's Surgeon, Peter Cosgreave reported that Frances Sibley had been both 'insolent but industrious' during the passage, to which one of the passengers, missionary and agriculturalist John Gyles, added 'disorderly'.<sup>8</sup> Fifty-three of the women were then sent on to Van Diemen's Land, on the *Duke of Wellington* which arrived at Hobart Town on 20 February 1818. As reported by *The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, some of the female prisoners were destined for Port Dalrymple.<sup>9</sup> It was at this point that Ann Tilling and Frances parted ways - Ann stayed in Hobart; Frances, a 38 year old illiterate servant woman, was sent on to Port Dalrymple.<sup>10</sup>

For the 1820 and 1821 musters Frances Sibley was recorded as being at the Government Factory.<sup>11</sup> When she arrived there to serve out her sentence 'The Factory' consisted only of a shed set up in the lumber yard. The convict women worked there during the day making woollen cloth and leather shoes, but, as no sleeping quarters were provided, they had to find their own board and lodgings off-site. Many of them took the opportunity afforded by this modicum of 'freedom' to meet and 'take up with' a partner – usually a prisoner, ex-prisoner or a soldier. When Frances was mustered in 1820 she recorded as 'wife of Joseph Hall'.<sup>12</sup> For 1821 she was mustered as being in the Government Factory.<sup>13</sup> Presumably in a *de facto* relationship for a number of years, it was not until 1825 that the Hall/Sibley partnership was formalised, as evidenced by the registration of their marriage on 15 June 1825, by which time both parties were living somewhere on the Norfolk Plains.<sup>14</sup> Of note is that one of the witnesses was Sarah Ann Cox, the young woman who, convicted at Bristol, had also been transported on the *Friendship* and then had accompanied Frances to Port Dalrymple.<sup>15</sup>



In the marriage register Frances Sibley’s status is given as ‘spinster prisoner’. Joseph Hall is recorded just as a ‘bachelor’. However, if the correct Joseph Hall has been identified, he was by this time an ex-convict who had obtained his certificate of freedom.<sup>17</sup>

It was on 9 January 1809 that Joseph Hall and William Cox were tried at the Bristol Quarter Session and found guilty of having in their possession three forged bank notes for which they were both sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.<sup>18</sup> It is tempting to speculate whether William Cox was any relation to Sarah Cox, both of them having been before the Bristol courts – but Cox was a very common name. Joseph Hall aged 26, and William Cox aged 30, were taken to the hulk *Captivity* at Portsmouth, but in 1811 were dispatched to different convict vessels – William to the *Admiral Gambier* on 16 March and Joseph to the *Indian* on 27 June.<sup>19</sup> The *Indian* departed Spithead on 18 July 1810 and arrived in Port Jackson on 16 December 1810 with 192 male prisoners, eight less than had been embarked – seven having died, and one having accidentally drowned during the passage out.<sup>20</sup> According to Governor Macquarie:

... the male convicts ... proved a very Seasonable and acceptable Supply for the Colony. The settlers in general having been in great Want of Labourers to carry on their Agricultural and grazing Concerns.<sup>21</sup>

The majority of the male convicts not required for public works were distributed amongst the settlers in Parramatta, Hawkesbury and Georges River. Seven were deployed on public works at Newcastle, including Joseph Hall, as advised by the Colonial Secretary to Lieutenant Purcell, Commandant at Newcastle, on 29 December.

By the Lady Nelson there are now sent down to you for Government Work 7 Prisoners (names in the margin) lately arrived here from England in the Indian Convict Ship, and it is His Excellency the Governor’s Desire that



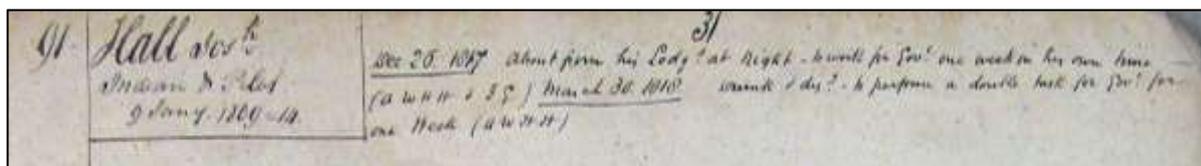
these men may receive no harsh Treatment.<sup>22</sup>

At some stage Joseph Hall had returned to Sydney because he had been mustered there in 1814, a brickmaker by trade, and 'on stores'.<sup>23</sup> But in 1815 we find him again aboard the *Lady Nelson* on his way back to Newcastle, this time as a colonial offender, as advised by instructions dated 7 April to. Lieutenant Thomas Thompson, Newcastle Commandant.

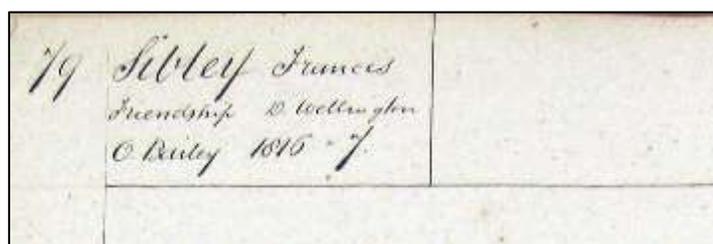
The Govt vessel the *Lady Nelson* is to proceed hence to Newcastle ... On board this vessel there are six Male Prisoners sent to the Settlement under your Command for their various sentences. I beg to refer you to the accompanying list from the jailors.<sup>24</sup>

With respect to Joseph Hall, Dan. Cubitt, Jailor, listed him as having been committed by His Excellency the Governor, for a crime [not specified] committed on 31 March, and for which he had been sentenced to two years at Newcastle. This time there was no guarantee that he would not receive harsh treatment. Two years later Joseph Hall was removed to Van Diemen's Land.

The convict vessel *Pilot*, having completed her voyage from England to Port Jackson on 29 July 1817, where part of her cargo of male convicts was landed, then proceeded in September to Van Diemen's Land with the balance, together with a contingents of 'local' convicts of whom one was Joseph Hall.<sup>25</sup> Within three months of arrival he was again in trouble, having absented himself from his lodgings. The only other entry on his conduct register is for being drunk and disorderly in March 1818. For each of these offences he was required to work extra time for the government.<sup>26</sup> Joseph was granted his certificate of freedom on 1 January 1823.<sup>27</sup>



On the other hand, Frances Sibley maintained a clean conduct record.<sup>28</sup> After her rather 'active' life pre-transportation she did nothing to attract attention to herself after her arrival in the colony. She died at the age of forty-four on 28 October 1830, at George Town, her death being registered at Launceston.<sup>29</sup>



↓ Francis Hall	George Town	28 <sup>th</sup> October 1830	44	Friendship	-	This is information on the certificate of his New Zealand George Town
No. 146	233 <sup>rd</sup>					

Given his age at trial (26), and assuming he was still alive, Joseph would have been in his early 50s when his wife died. Did he marry again? Did he leave the colony?

He was not the Joseph Hall who, with 3 others, was found guilty in 1829 of stealing three bullocks. This Joseph had been tried in Lancaster and arrived in the Van Diemen's Land per *Earl Cornwallis/Union* in 1810.<sup>30</sup> Was he perhaps the Joseph Hall who died in January 1835 at New Norfolk?<sup>31</sup>

↓ Joseph Hall	New Norfolk	27 <sup>th</sup> January 1835	53		Invalid	W. Gerrard
No. 183	424 <sup>th</sup>					

Apparently not, according to one, somewhat vague, record which assigns this death to a Joseph Hall, born about

1782, who arrived '1800 per Royal Admiral'.<sup>32</sup> There was a Joseph Hall on board the *Indefatigable* which arrived at Van Diemen's Land in October 1812. Coincidentally this Joseph Hall was also tried at Bristol, but in July 1811, and sentenced to 14 years transportation.<sup>33</sup> Whenever and wherever 'our' Joseph died, he is resting in peace, undisturbed by snooping researchers!

Frances Sibley was thirty-eight when she was mustered on board the *Friendship*. Nothing has been found in her pre-transportation records to indicate whether or not she was a married woman when she embarked on the *Friendship*. If she was indeed married, without any clues as to the name of her husband, it is an impossible task to trace her provenance. And, if she was a single woman, without further confirmed information as to parentage etc, any attempt to 'find' her can only be speculative. On that basis a possible baptism record has been found for a Frances Sibley, daughter of Francis and Mary Ann Sibley, who was baptised at St. Mary's, Whitechapel, on 31 August 1788. Francis Sibley had married Mary Ann Stafford at Whitechapel on 20 December 1781.<sup>34</sup> Taking this speculation a step further, Francis Sibley, now a widower, married a second time in 1799 to Mary Jackson, a widow, both of Whitechapel.<sup>35</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Casebook – Jack the Ripper, [http://www.casebook.org/official\\_documents/map/images/castle\\_alley.gif](http://www.casebook.org/official_documents/map/images/castle_alley.gif). It was in Castle Alley that one of Jack the Ripper's victims – Alice McKenzie – murdered on 17 July 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), version 8.0, 22 April 2018), September 1816, trial of FRANCES SIBLEY ANN TILLING (t18160918-8).

<sup>3</sup> Findmypast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935. *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), version 8.0, 22 April 2018), February 1810, trial of ANN COHEN FRANCES SIBLEY (t18100221-58).

<sup>4</sup> *Morning Advertiser*, 27 Feb 1810, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Ancestry, England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, Middlesex, 1811.

<sup>6</sup> *Evening Mail*, 27 Nov 1816, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Free Settler or Felon? Convict Ship Friendship 1818, [https://www.jenwilletts.com/convict\\_ship\\_friendship\\_1818.htm](https://www.jenwilletts.com/convict_ship_friendship_1818.htm).

<sup>8</sup> 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. 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.

<sup>9</sup> *The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 21 Feb 1818, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO), Assignment List, CON13/1/1 p.139.

<sup>11</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Settler and Convict Lists 1787-1834.

<sup>12</sup> Female Convicts Research Centre Inc (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID 3620. Ancestry, New South Wales, Census and Population Books, 1811-1825, Port Dalrymple Population Muster, 1820.

<sup>13</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Settler and Convict Lists 1787-1834, New South Wales, Female, 1821.

<sup>14</sup> TAHO, Launceston marriages 1825, RGD36/1/1 no 855.

<sup>15</sup> Refer to the Bond of Friendship account of Sarah Ann Cox.

<sup>16</sup> TAHO, Record ID: SD\_ILS:544983, section of Van Diemen's Land map, Arrowsmith, 1834.

<sup>17</sup> *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 22 Feb 1823, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 14 Jan 1809, p.3. Ancestry, England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892.

<sup>19</sup> Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, Captivity, Register, 1801-1836. *HMS Captivity* (1796-1816) was the first hulk of this name. She was moored at Gosport and Devonport – Wikipedia, List of British prison hulks, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_British\\_prison\\_hulks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_prison_hulks).

<sup>20</sup> Free Settler or Felon? Convict Ship Indian, [https://www.jenwilletts.com/convict\\_ship\\_indian\\_1810.htm](https://www.jenwilletts.com/convict_ship_indian_1810.htm).

<sup>21</sup> Governor Macquarie to Lord Liverpool, October 1811, Historical Records of Australia (HRA), The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1916, Series I, Volume VII, p.388.

<sup>22</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856.

<sup>23</sup> Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Biographical report for Joseph Hall, Person ID: B#10012295801.

<sup>24</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856.

<sup>25</sup> TAHO, CON13/1/1 p.117. *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 13 Sep 1817, p.2.

<sup>26</sup> TAHO, Conduct Register, CON31/1/18 p.31.

<sup>27</sup> *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 22 Feb 1823, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> TAHO, Conduct Register, CON40/1/9 p.36.

<sup>29</sup> TAHO, Launceston deaths 1830, RGD34/1/1 no 2332.



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<sup>30</sup> TAHO, Assignment List, CON13/1/1 image 7. TAHO, Conduct Register, CON31/1/19 image 145.

<sup>31</sup> TAHO, New Norfolk deaths 1835, RGD34/1/1 no 4242.

<sup>32</sup> BDA, Biographical report for Joseph Hall, ID#91022948301.

<sup>33</sup> Claim a Convict, <http://www.hawkesbury.net.au/claimaconvict/convictDetails.php?convictId=129772>.

<sup>34</sup> Findmypast (FMP), London, Docklands and East End Baptisms. FMP, England Marriages.

<sup>35</sup> Ancestry, London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1932.



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