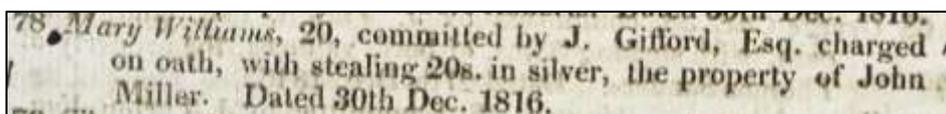


---

 Mary Williams

Date of Trial:	15 January 1817
Where Tried:	Old Bailey, London
Crime:	Grand larceny
Sentence:	7 years
Est YOB:	1796
Stated Age on Arrival:	21
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Servant
Alias/AKA:	
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	A prostitute and insolent
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

Grand Larceny was the crime committed by the young Mary Williams on 28 December 1817 and for which she was charged 2 days later, her victim being one John Miller.<sup>1</sup>



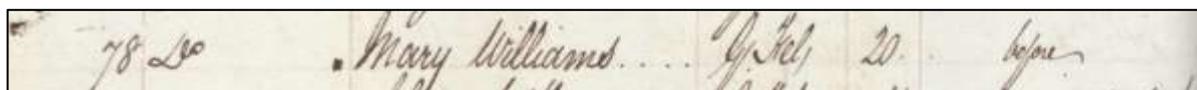
In fact, at her trial the following month the full indictment read out was for stealing 'one pocket book, value 6d; and 20s in monies numbered.' John Miller and Abraham Coatley gave evidence.

JOHN MILLER. I am a gardener, and live in Castle-street, Borough. On the 28th of December about six o'clock in the evening, my pocket-book was in my breeches pocket. I met the prisoner in Wentworth-street, Spitalfields. I asked her the way to Spitalfields, being a stranger; she was standing at her door, and three other women came, and they forced me into the house; I had my bundle on my shoulder, they got me into the passage, and the three women stood at the door while the prisoner took my pocket-book from my breeches pocket, it had 20s in it. I put up my hand to take care of my bundle, which was on my shoulder; the other women swore they would murder me - I was alarmed; the prisoner went away and I got out, and told the patrol, and described the prisoner to him. I saw her again in about five minutes. I am sure she is the person. She was searched, and a 6d found on her, which I described to the patrol before I saw it; it has a figure of 3 marked on it.

ABRAHAM COATLEY. The prosecutor came to me about half-past six o'clock, and described the prisoner to me, he pointed out the place. I apprehended the prisoner about ten minutes after, at a public-house just by. The prosecutor laid hold of her, and said, she was the woman; he said he had lost 20s, and a 6d marked with a figure of 3, which he could swear to. I searched her, and found a 6d on her, and 7s; he knew the sixpence when he saw it. He was quite sober, (I produce it).

JOHN MILLER . I can swear to the 6d.<sup>2</sup>

She was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation. The incident must have been a frightening experience for poor Mr. Miller. And in some respects it was also a case of 'poor Miss Williams' as she was the only one of the 'gang' to be arrested. However she may not merit much sympathy because from the annotation 'before' against her entry in the Newgate Register it seems that she made something of a career of crime.<sup>3</sup>



Surgeon Peter Cosgreave certainly did not regard Mary Williams as deserving of sympathy and was no doubt happy to hand her over to the colonial authorities. In fact she was actually singled out in his deposition to the official Court of Inquiry established to look into the alleged prostitution of the female convicts during the passage of the *Friendship*.<sup>4</sup>

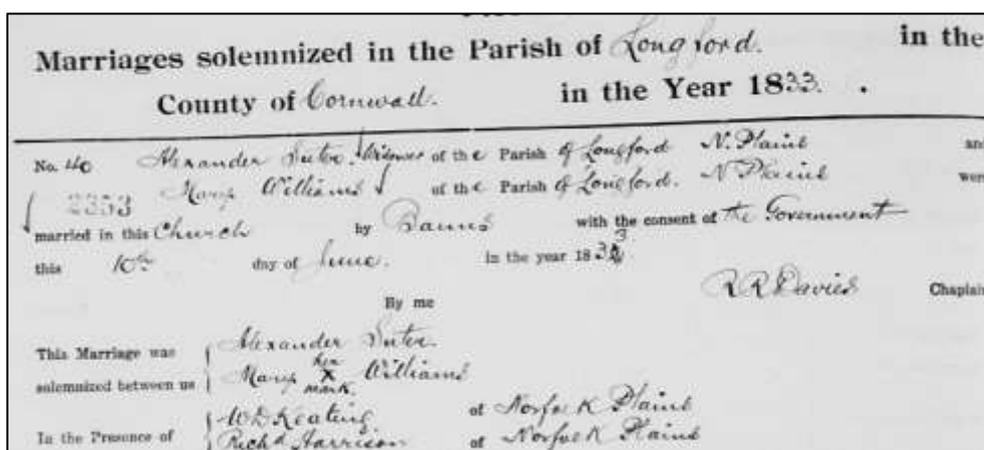
---

... about the Month of July, a Female Convict, named Williams, was brought to me, having been found in the Galley. I confined her accordingly.

Mary Williams was aged 21 on her arrival at Port Jackson. She was a servant by trade, and it was noted that she had been 'on the town'. She was one of the 53 *Friendship* women who were transferred to Van Diemen's Land on the *Duke of Wellington*, and one of the group then sent up to Port Dalrymple, where she was mustered in 1820.<sup>5</sup> According to the Settler and Convict Lists her master in that year and in 1821 was a Mr. Woodford about whom nothing has been found at this stage.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently Mary Williams committed no colonial offences, and on 15 January 1824 would have attained the classification 'Free by Servitude'. However, nothing further for her has been established after the 1821 muster record.

There is nothing to confirm or otherwise that she was the Mary Williams who, in June 1833, married Alexander Suter, a widower.<sup>7</sup>



This man had previously been married to Mary Ann Caffry, who had been tried at the Old Bailey in July 1816. She and Mary Williams spent time together at Newgate and as shipmates on the *Friendship*.<sup>8</sup>

---

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> FindmyPast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons, & Punishment, 1770-1935, Newgate Prison Calendar.

<sup>2</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), version 7.2, 18 September 2017), January 1817, trial of MARY WILLIAMS (t18170115-180).

<sup>3</sup> FMP, England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Newgate Prison Register.

<sup>4</sup> Historical Records of Australia (HRA), The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1917, Series I, Volume IX, p.755.

<sup>5</sup> Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID: 3630. Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO), Assignment List, CON13/1/1 image 111.

<sup>6</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834, New South Wales, Female 1820 and 1821.

<sup>7</sup> TAHO, Longford marriages 1833, RGD36/1/2 no 2353.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Bond of Friendship account of Mary Ann Caffry.



## **SOURCES**

### **Genealogy Websites**

#### Ancestry

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

#### FindmyPast

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

### **Other Websites**

Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), <http://www.bda-online.org.au/>

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

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

Old Bailey Proceedings Online, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>

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

### **Publications**

The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, Historical Records of Australia

© Leonie Fretwell, 2019