

AN ICKENHAM COMICT: Update on George Willden

by Susan Toms

In last year's Journal I wrote an article about George Willden who was transported for life to New South Wales in 1833 at the age of 17 for stealing a silver watch, after breaking into the house of John Lawrence in Ickenham. In 1842 he obtained a ticket of leave which enabled him to earn his own living in the colony subject to reporting regularly to the local magistrate. But I could not find any more information about him after this date. However, since the publication of our Journal I have been contacted through the internet by an Australian descendent of George Willden who has been able to supply further information.

After he received his ticket of leave he married Mary Ann Galvin, a widow with six children, on the 2 September 1845 at St Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church in Wollongong, New South Wales. At the same time the surname of Willden/Wilden morphed into Weldon which might explain why my earlier search was unsuccessful.

George and Mary Ann also had six children who went on to have large families of their own. George died on the 11 January 1876 aged 61 at Liverpool Asylum, New South Wales, and was buried at St Lukes in that city. One son, also named George Thomas Weldon, was granted a homestead lease in 1891 for 9395 acres near Bourke in New South Wales and this farm was then passed to later generations. The family name is still going strong with the youngest member being 19 month old Jack Thomas Weldon, the grandson of the person who contacted me.

I think the following comment by this relative sums up one of the unintended consequences of transporting many young men to the colonies:

'Having been spared the death sentence young George went on to contribute substantially to the gene pool of the colony of New South Wales, Australia, which has also now branched out to Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.'

I would like to thank Jenny Trigwell for kindly supplying me with all this information.

