

Ending the Crazy

There are around 80 family trees on Ancestry.com that feature the following 19th century Tasmanian family. This couple were brought to my attention when one of those Ancestry researchers, a descendant, posted via a Facebook group seeking out help with breaking through a brick wall in her research. I couldn't stop myself from digging around to see what I could find.

This paper details much that has already been uncovered but introduces some new lines of inquiry for those looking into this family tree.

The issue raised in the FB post was related to her x2 Great Grandmother, however, there is an equally resistant brick wall related to the x2 GGF. And firstly, it relates to establishing the actual names of this couple.

I will begin this paper by stating upfront the names that I have concluded pertain to this couple. They are Christian Philp WHITE 1835-1921 and her husband Jeremiah MARNEY aka COOLEY c.1813-1880.

A wee Scottish lass

Starting off with Christian or as she became known in later life, Christina, her 1921 obituary in a local newspaper¹ stated the following.

There passed peacefully away at her late residence on Wednesday, October 5, a well-known and highly respected resident of Richmond in the person of Mrs Christina Cooley, widow of the late J. Cooley. Born at Leith, Scotland the deceased came out to this country with her only brother the late Mr. James White of Glenorchy [Tasmania, Australia] when only a girl, and has lived in the Richmond district for over 50 years.....

A notice² for her death and funeral, also read

COOLEY - Passed peacefully away on October 5th at her residence at Richmond, Christina Phillips, widow of the late Jeremiah Cooley, in her 90th year. At rest. Funeral will leave her late residence...

At first glance this would appear to be quite a promising point from which to establish Christina's life. However, it is complicated by the fact that of Christina and Jeremiah's known 10 children, four birth registrations give Christina's maiden name as 'DENHOLM' and not 'WHITE' as might be expected.

¹ The World published Thursday, October 20, 1921. Page 2, Column 4.

² The Mercury published Thursday, October 6, 1921. Page 1, Column 1.

Misdirection

As a consequence it seems a researcher of this family at some point in the past went looking for and found a Scottish family by the name of Denholm with a daughter named Christian born circa 1831. A seemingly perfect fit and one that has been supported by almost all other researchers.

There are a few problems with claiming this as the family of our Christina. Firstly, the family hails from the county of Lanarkshire, which is in the southwestern corner of Scotland, whilst Leith, referenced in her obituary, is part of what is now greater Edinburgh and in the county of Midlothian, on the opposite southeastern side of the country. This of itself is not a deal breaker. There may be very good reasons about why it was thought when she died that she came from Leith but, it's certainly something that needs an explanation and I have not seen anything in all I've read that explains why the Denholms of Shott, Lanarkshire should be ruled in here (or out).

However, what does rule out this Scottish woman as being Mrs Christina Cooley of Tasmania is that this daughter of George Denholm and Jean Lang married George Bell in 1851 and died in Tollcross, Lanarkshire, 1901. There is no evidence she ever left Scotland, and her death record confirms that she is the same Christian Denholm as claimed by many Cooley family researchers.

No.	Name of Deceased and of Parents, and also Nephew, Niece, or Grandchild	Married Name (if any)	No.	Age	Sex, Country, & Date of Birth (if known)	Cause of Death, Duration of Illness, and Date of Burial (if known)	Signatures & Qualifications of Witnesses
40	Christina Bell	1901 January Twenty-second At 30m. PM.	3.	60.	George Denholm (deceased) Grandson of George (deceased) Christina Denholm (deceased) Miss Lang (deceased)	Pneumonia 6 days Cardiac failure At rest by Dysentery Miss Bell	James Miss X Miss Miss Miss
	Widow of George Bell Miss James Keefe	2 Graham Street Tollcross					

The White line

The 1921 obituary above reports Christina's brother as a James White strongly suggestive that Christina's maiden name was in fact White. And this would be consistent with the birth records of six of her children where her maiden name is given as White. So, we have 4 for Denholm, and 6 for White.

The 1921 funeral notice gives Christina a middle name of Phillips. I believe this is the only Australian record where this name is mentioned.

The 1921 obituary also states that Christina arrived as a child or young woman in the company of her older brother. And I believe that she is the Christiana White aged 15 who arrived at Hobart on the ship *Australasia* in 1852 in the company of a James White (23) and his wife Margaret also aged 23 and their infant named James.

3083	White	✓	Christiana	15					
	White	✓	James	23					
		✓	Margaret	23					
		✓	James						Inf

Figure 1 Except from the Certificate of Final Departure for the Australasia from Plymouth 21 August 1852

Turning over another Leith

In the parish of South Leith, Midlothian, Scotland there was a baptism held 1 April 1836 for a girl named Christian Philp WHITE, born Boxing Day 1835, the daughter of George White and Elizabeth Mason. This girl seems to me to be a much better fit with the particulars provided at the time of Christina's death in 1921. I note this girl's middle name was Philp, and not Phillips but in the same manner that Christian evolved into Christina I don't consider this overly problematic.

At her death in November 1921, Christina was said to be in her 90th year indicating she was born either at the end of 1831 or in 1832. Whilst the above baptism is of a girl four years younger than that I don't think that rules this child out. It was very common and perhaps still is for people to both underestimate and overestimate their true age.

We know Christina had an older brother named James. The ship's record of their journey to Australia suggests an 8-year age difference. The above George and Elizabeth White baptised a boy named James at South Leith on 8 August 1828. He had been born on the 6th of July of that same year. This James was a bit over seven years older than his sister Christian.

When they sailed for Australia in late 1852 their ages were given as 23 and 15 respectively. If George & Elizabeth's two children are the same White siblings who sailed to Tasmania, then their correct ages at the time were nearer 24 and 16. Close enough for me.

In the absence of any other alternative or conflicting evidence I believe this family to be the most likely candidates for where Christina and her brother James originated. I also believe this James is the same James who married Margaret Anderson, at South Leith on 16 November 1850 and had a son named James born in South Leith 11 September 1851. Before the birth of their son this couple appear in the 1851 Scottish census, both aged 23 and boarding at 41 Water Lane, South Leith. In Tasmania the couple had further children. Their birth registrations record Margaret's maiden name as Anderson.

Maiden name quandary

Why then did Mrs Christian/Christina Cooley report her maiden name to be Denholm for the registration of the four children born between 1859 and 1865? Especially given that her maiden name is recorded as White for the registration of Cornelius in 1857 and for the registration of all the children born after 1865.

I referenced above ten children known to be born to Jeremiah and Christina. In many family trees there is an 11th - an Hester or Esther Elizabeth Wright née Cooley born circa 1855. It's worth noting that there is no known record of Jeremiah and Christina ever marrying. Many researchers have however noted an 1854 marriage that took place in Hobart between a Miss Christian White and a William Denning (both of 'full age'). On the back of this some people have suggested that this is our Christina White and the use of the maiden name Denholm is a *lost in translation* reference to her lawfully married name of Denning. Hmmm. However, while morphing Denning to Denholm might be a bit of a stretch I would argue not so for Denholm to Denham.

And here we can square the circle because the 1854 groom and 'steward of a vessel' William Denning is recorded as the 1855 father and 'mariner' William Denham in the birth registration of a girl born 25 May 1855. The mother was Christian Denham née White. The girl was later baptised Esther Elizabeth at Holy Trinity. Denning and Denham were in my mind indisputably the same person and first husband of Christina White.

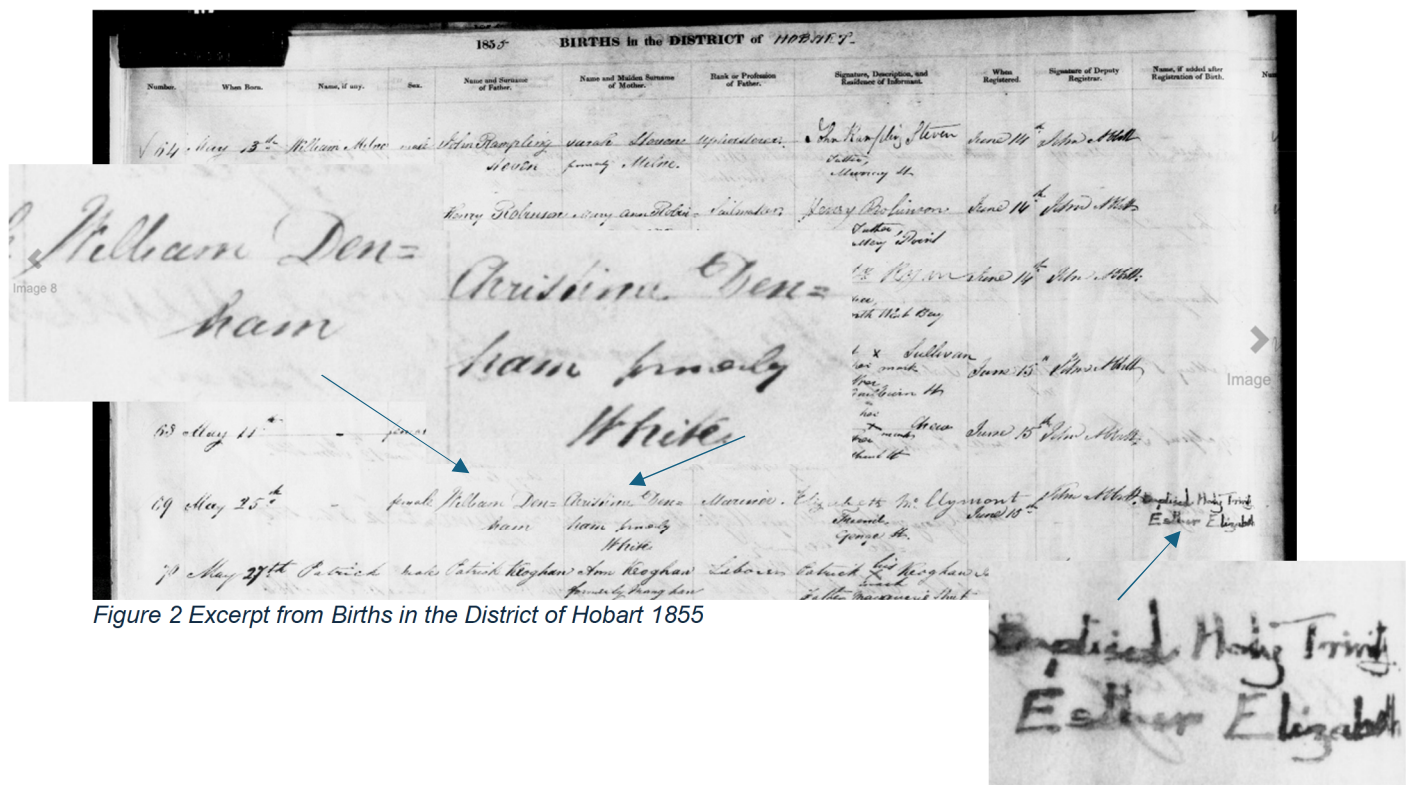


Figure 2 Excerpt from Births in the District of Hobart 1855

I would suggest the only reasonable explanation is that Christian Philp White born 1836, South Leith, Scotland arrived in Tasmania in 1852. She married aged 18 a William Denham/Denning in 1854. She had a daughter with him in 1855 after which they separated, and she got together with the shepherd Jeremiah Cooley with whom she had 7 boys and 3 girls. In registering four of those children's birth her legal married name (or a variant spelling of) was given as her maiden name.

For anyone interested in William D, the father of Mrs Esther Elizabeth Wright, I would suggest searching out shipping crew records for the 1840's and 50's.

One down, one to go

Whilst I might argue a clear and evidenced antecedence for Christina, and James her brother, I cannot do the same with Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was convicted at the Old Bailey in April 1828 after being caught red-handed by a Bow Street runner being passed a two-shilling handkerchief from his accomplice Christopher Hilliard who had just lifted the item from an unsuspecting passing stranger.

The officer, having grabbed both Christopher and Jeremiah, lost sight of the owner of the handkerchief who it seems was unaware he had had his pocket picked. By the time of the trial, he had still not been identified.

Despite there being no victim at court Jeremiah Cooley aged 15 and Christopher Hillier just a year older were found guilty and sentenced to 7 years Transportation. Jeremiah then spent over a year in a prison hulk in Kent before arriving at Sydney aboard the convict ship John in September 1829.

Unlike many convicts who turned their life around in the southern hemisphere Jeremiah didn't seem to be able to keep himself out of trouble. Annex A lists his offences but, in summary, after arriving in Australia he would be convicted over 15 times for which he would receive the following sentences –

- one of Death (obviously commuted).
- two of Transportation.
- up to 12 years in total incarceration, many spent in chains/hard labour, and
- he was whipped on at least 4 occasions receiving a sum total of 175 lashes.

Of his seven years Transportation to Norfolk Island handed down in 1838, he was in fact back in Sydney in under two years and his 1843 Life Transportation to the penal colony at Port Arthur in Tasmania came to an end after just 10 years when he received a ticket of leave. His final sentence came after he killed four of his neighbour's sheep in 1867 for which he was sent down for 8 years but was discharged from prison after serving 2. His record wasn't all black marks. On 22 March 1848 he was commended for meritorious conduct in extinguishing a fire at Port Arthur.

A reformed character, finally

Despite all this, at the age of about 40 he was finally a relatively free man when he met Mrs Christina Denham, 20 years his junior, and he settled down into married life and raised a family. Their 10 children were born over a 23-year period. Christina gave birth to singletons at regular 2 yearly intervals only interrupted by Jeremiah's imprisonment in the latter half of the 1860s.

When Jeremiah was transported to the penal colony at Port Arthur in what was still known in 1843 as Van Dieman's Land the indent recorded the following under 'relations/last residence'

M_[other] - Ellen Holborn proper
name Jeremiah Marney.

This is the only record that I am aware of where it is suggested that the name Cooley was an alias. There is no mention of it in any of his criminal records or the indent that was taken when he arrived in Sydney in 1829.

It seems to me to be likely that this is a very genuine account. Why else, when arriving at Port Arthur would he tell authorities his mother's name and then say "oh, by the way my real name is Marney not Cooley"? Of course, the whole thing could be made up. But again, why?

The reference to Holborn has been interpreted by some researchers to refer to Jeremiah's mother's surname. I'm not sure this makes sense. I think it refers to the place, Holborn, in London's inner west. If not, it would mean that of all the relations referenced on this page regarding the 9 convicts listed only Ellen did not have her 'last residence' recorded. All the other persons mentioned either have a named place or the abbreviation 'at h.p.' is used. But I readily acknowledge it says simply 'Holborn' and not 'at Holborn'.

In looking at the birth, marriage and death registers begun in 1837 there are 22 'Marney' BDM events in Bloomsbury, Saint Giles and Holborn during the period 1837-1847 with only one³ 'Cooley'. However, I would suggest the most prudent strategy in taking forward research of this man is to search for his birth/baptism under both the names Marney and Cooley.

English or Irish?

Whilst the vast majority of documents relating to Jeremiah give his origins and place of birth as London circa 1813 there are a few that give the alternative origin of Cork, Ireland and/or provide for him being upwards of 10 years older. For example, the Tombstones and Memorial Inscriptions of Tasmania Index list him as 76yo at death in January 1880. The Newgate Registers record 'born at Cork' and that he was a cabinet maker. The same details were recorded against his partner in crime Christopher Hilliard. And yet when the 2 were committed for trial the magistrates reported only Christopher as a cabinet maker. Jeremiah was noted to be a labourer bringing into question the veracity of Jeremiah's Newgate record.

At the trial the arresting officer described himself as a 'Bow street patrol'. This is a reference to the former Bow street magistrates' court from which all modern police can trace their beginnings. They were the first incarnation of what we now understand as a police force and it was established by Sir Robert Peel. English officers still go by the name 'Bobbies' and 'Peelers' in his honour.

In 1828 Sir Robert Peel was Home Secretary and it was to him that half a dozen men of good standing⁴ wrote a fortnight following the conviction of Christopher and Jeremiah. Their representations related to Christopher only, where they pleaded for mercy for "this Lad of 16 years of age of poor but honest parents"....." not being long in London and having no way of obtaining a livelihood but the selling of a few

³ I have not searched variant spellings of Marney in the same period but there were also 'Cooling'x2, 'Couling' and 'Colley'x9, 'Coley'x5, 'Collie', and 'Coli'.

⁴ The petition author's professions comprised of 2 Rope Makers, 2 Drapers, an Agent, a Coach Master, a Brace Maker and a Cabinet Maker.

Braces in the street". The petitioners went on to state that "through necessity and want of food he was inveigled into the company of another lad...". The other lad clearly being a reference to Jeremiah, his co-defendant.

Whether fairly or not the petitioners were pointing the finger at Jeremiah as the ringleader of the enterprise. I've not seen a response to their request but in any event, Christopher Hilliard set sail for 'Botany Bay' aboard the convict ship Eliza in June 1828 - 11 months before Jeremiah made the same journey.

I read the Petitioner's letter to imply that Jeremiah and Christopher were contemporaries and, until relatively recently, were unknown to each other. If this is true then it would support the notion that Jeremiah was 15 rather than 25 at the time of his offence and that he wasn't, like Christopher, originally from Cork. But of course, it is far from conclusive.

Conclusion

As ever everything in the above is built on the research of countless other family historians who share their findings on Ancestry.com and other platforms. Thank You. All errors in this paper are mine and please contact me if you have any corrections, queries or additions. Family history is always a work in progress.

I recognise that what I propose in this paper contradicts a long-standing position on the genealogical roots of Christina wife of Jeremy Cooley/Marney. I hope I have provided sufficient evidence to support this significant change. All of my research can be found at the relevant profiles in my family tree ZZ Odds and Sods at Ancestry.com. My username is Gatp63.

Glenn Palmer
London
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www.FamilyHistoryResources.co.uk
info@familyhistoryresources.co.uk

Annex – Jeremiah Cooley’s Criminal Record

Date	Offence	Sentence
8 Mar 1828	stealing 1 handkerchief, value 2s.	7 years Transportation
23 Feb 1830	stealing	50 lashes
15 Aug 1831	Admitted Sydney Gaol ‘for trial’ – no other records so likely not convicted.	
6 Jan 1832	returned to Hyde Park barracks to be identified and dealt with as a runaway	unspecified
31 Mar 1832	absconding – had been admitted to Parramatta Gaol on Feb 8.	6 months in irons
1 Aug 1832	purloining rations	50 lashes
28 Aug 1832	improper language	50 lashes
23 Nov 1832	larceny – had been on the run [NSW Gov. Gazette 21/11 issue No.38 (page 415)]	18 months in irons
20 Feb 1834	assaulting a fellow convict	12 months in irons
13 July 1836	in possession of stolen property	12 months in irons
6 Nov 1838	armed robbery	Death – reduced to 7 years Transportation (Norfolk Island) (ret’d Sydney Sep ’40)
20 Sep 1843	highway robbery	Life Transportation (Port Arthur VDL) (ToL Sep ’54) (Cnd’ Pardon Mar ’57)
20 Jan 1845	misconduct	25 lashes
15 Feb 1845	misconduct	7 days solitary confinement
10 Jun 1845	‘having potatoes imply[sic] in his possession’	1 month hard labour in chains
28 Jan 1847	misconduct	3 months hard labour in chains
7 Nov 1848	misconduct	Discharged [xx] to the service of the Crown and [xx] that he be not allowed to [xx] any person residing on the old wharf
1 Jun 1852	drunk	6 days solitary confinement
30 Dec 1852	misconduct	unspecified
9 Sep 1867	killed 4 sheep the property of George Ibbott	8 years imprisonment (freed 12 Dec 1869)