



A Convict Mother's Plea

Michelle Dennis investigates UK and Australian records for one mother's efforts to save her convict son

What lengths would a mother go to save her wayward son from the gallows, or be banished across the seas to a foreign land?

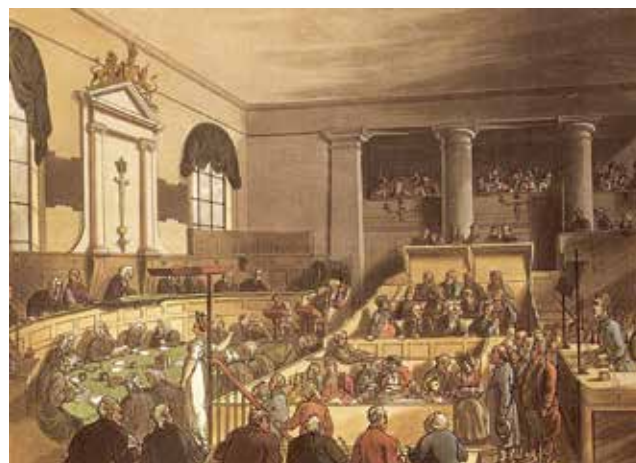
WILLIAM MILVERTON, WAS BAPTISED AT ST ANDREW'S, Holborn, London in July 1816, the son of James Milverton, a carpenter and Ann Membry, one of nine children including my ancestor Daniel. His older brother William was baptised in 1810, but died as a baby, and as was the custom, another child was given his name. James and Ann were from Winsham, Somerset, but moved to London around 1807, living in Holborn. The family can be found on Ancestry in the London, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1538-1812, www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1624.

William's father, James, had died in September 1831 after falling off a ladder, when William was 15 years old, leaving his mother, Ann, to bring up nine children alone. With no money to put the boys out into apprenticeships to earn a trade, the family sent William off to sea at a young age to work aboard naval ships. Sometime later he returned, and it seems he fell in with bad company.

In England at the time, the local church parish was responsible for the upkeep and feeding of the poor in their area. William was living rough, and probably starving, when he was tempted to break the law.

The London Old Bailey Online website presented his criminal trial record which reported the judge's guilty verdict and sentence of death. Sometimes the surname was spelled as Melverton in records, www.oldbaileyonline.org.

On 18th October 1835, at 1 am, William, a laborer, broke into the house of Mr. John Sumpter in Holborn, and stole several items, including a pair of boots, 2 caps, handkerchief, towel, scissors, book, basket, waistcoat, razor and a razor sheath, total value 20 shillings. Mr. Sumpter's wife awoke at the noise, and her husband arose to see the cause of the



LEFT: Depiction of Convict Gang, Sydney. (Wikimedia Commons) RIGHT: Old Bailey Central Criminal Court London. (Wikimedia Commons)