

Baptism	1 June 1794, St Giles, Cheadle, Staffordshire, England
Parents	William Burley and Mary Hall
Parent's marriage	2 April 1791, Cheadle, Staffordshire
Siblings	Mary (1791-1794), James (1796-1798), Elizabeth (1800-1802)

On the marriage entry for William Burley and Mary Hall in 1791, it states that Mary is a spinster. However, on some of the children's baptism or death records, she is referred to as Mary Hall, heretofore Walker. She died in 1800 at Cheadle, aged 40. William Burley died in 1837 at Cheadle, aged 82.

The 1841 census, High Street, Cheadle, Staffordshire. ¹

William Burleigh, 45, bricklayer, born in the county.

A family of five, and two others lived in the house.

In May 1847, the newspaper listed those who had been committed to Stafford county gaol. For the Assizes. William Burleigh, charged with breaking into the dwelling-house of George Bridgwood, at the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent, and assaulting the said George Bridgwood, and Mary his wife, with intent to kill and murder them. ²

At his trial in July 1847, newspapers reported:

A burglary, attended by a most atrocious attempt to murder an aged couple, George and Sarah Bridgwood, aged between 60 and 70 years old, has been perpetrated at Fenton, in the Potteries. The assailant is William Burleigh, aged about 56, by trade a bricklayer, and until a few days ago lodged with the couple.

The Bridgwoods reside alone in a house in High Street, Fenton, and kept a small provision shop. On Tuesday night they retired between 10 and 11 o'clock. About 1:30 am the man became conscious of a glimmer of light in the room, but before he could be sure, he received a blow to the head. He called to his wife that there were thieves in the house, and the assailant moved quickly to the other side of the bed and struck the wife on the breast with a spade. The wife received severe cuts to her arms from a knife, which is believed were aimed at her throat. She cried out to the assailant not to cut her, when her husband got out of bed and went and collared the assailant. A struggle ensued, and eventually Bridgwood got the man on the floor and held him securely. Bridgwood stated that when he got the man down, he knew who he was. The woman, although bleeding profusely, got downstairs and opened the door and cried "murder. A nearby policeman came and took the man into custody. The prisoner was bleeding from a wound to his throat of which it is difficult to say how it was inflicted, as Bridgwood states he was not aware of a knife being in the room until it was found after the struggle. The wound therefore must have been caused accidentally or was self-inflicted. A Doctor attended both the woman and the prisoner.

It seems the prisoner effected his entrance by removing a square of glass from the back kitchen window, which enabled him to put his hand through and unbolt the door. He appears to have gone to the house, taken a spade from an outhouse, and once inside lighted a candle, picked up a large bacon knife from the table, taken his shoes off and proceeded upstairs. One reason proffered for the attack was that, when he had lodged with the Bridgwoods, in consequence of his irregular habits and arrears in his payments, he was told he could no longer stay and accordingly left.

The prisoner was remanded until Friday. At the trial, Mrs Bridgwood was brought to court in a chair and propped up with pillows. Burleigh was charged with burglariously entering the dwelling house and using violence with intent to murder Bridgwood and his wife, or to do them some bodily harm.

¹ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO107/1006/7

² Staffordshire Advertiser, 01 May 1847, p8

The evidence showed that Burleigh owed 29/-, and while boarding with them, became aware that money was kept in a locked drawer. He was well acquainted with the house. There was some discussion about how Mrs Bridgwood and Burleigh obtained their wounds. The prisoner claimed Bridgwood had cut his throat, but this was not proved.

The Judge, in passing sentence, told the prisoner he could face execution, but while a sentence of death was recorded he would be transported for the remainder of his life to a penal settlement.

Staffordshire Advertiser, 24 July 1847, p5, p7

The Prison Register shows that William Burleigh, 55, single, can read, bricklayer, was convicted on 19 July 1847 at Stafford of burglary and wounding, receiving a life sentence. It was his first conviction. He was transferred from Stafford Prison to Millbank Prison on 11 October 1847. About 5 months later, on 17 March 1848, he was removed to Leicester Prison. The following year, on 23 March 1849, he was sent back to Millbank Prison. His final move between prisons was on 28 April 1849 when he was transferred to Portland Prison. His conduct in prison was very good. ³

27 December 1850, Governors Journal at Portland Prison

At night the Government Steamer "Echo" arrived in Portland Roads, and the Master reported himself in readiness to take on board in the morning the Convicts for Western Australia to be embarked in the ship *Mermaid* at Spithead.

28 December 1850.

The following 116 convicts embarked at 2 past 8 o'clock in the Government Steamer Echo to be conveyed to the Convict Ship *Mermaid* at Spithead - for passage to Western Australia to be employed on the Public Works in that Colony - these Prisoners being all men of long sentences and who in ordinary course would be entitled to Ticket of Leave at different periods up to 1854 inclusive, including William Burleigh. ⁴

On arrival in Western Australia, on 13 May 1851, William was described as:

227. William Burleigh, 60, 5'6", grey hair, grey eyes, long face, fresh complexion, countenance much worn, no marks, stone cutter and single. ⁵

Initially, William was employed on Government buildings. On 8 January 1853, William received a Ticket of Leave, and from 10 January 1853 he worked for Michael Walton, a fellow convict who arrived on *Mermaid*, in the Perth district, who was a mason. On 11 May 1853, William transferred to Guildford in the Swan district.

William had refused to repay any of his passage money. In 1856, the Government cracked down on defaulters. ⁶

William was received at Fremantle Prison on 26 November 1856 from Guildford by order of the Government for non-payment of his passage money. He was discharged on Ticket of Leave on 10 February 1857.

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,
Nov. 18, 1856.*

To Ticket-of-Leave holders.

HIS Excellency the Governor directs it to be notified for the information of Ticket-of-leave holders that he has ordered the Tickets of the undermentioned men to be revoked, and the holders to be returned to the Convict Establishment, unless all arrears of passage money due from them respectively are immediately paid; and His Excellency further directs it to be notified that it is his intention to pursue the same course with all defaulters whose names may be brought under his notice :—

227 William Burleigh, Swan.
1349 J. Montague, Ditto.
2440 J Neill, Toodyay.
1700 T. Godfrey, York.
2523 M. Doyle, Bunbury,
1571 J. Thomas, North Fremantle.
2016 P. Buras, Boating on River.
1504 D. O'Brian, Ditto.
By His Excellency's command,
CHARLES SHOLL.
Pro Colonial Secretary.

³ TNA UK, HO23/4, HO24/3, HO24/4, PCOM2/27, PCOM2/29

⁴ TNA UK, TNA UK, PCOM2/355

⁵ State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA), Acc 128/1-32

⁶ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 5 Dec 1856, p3

Correspondence between various departments in February 1857 shows:

227 W. Burleigh was a man who absolutely refused to pay, asserting that he was told in England that he would not have to make any payment on his account. He has been in the Establishment since 21(*sic*) November 1856. I beg to recommend that he may be released.⁷

227 William Burleigh in prison for non-payment of the cost of passage expresses his deep regret at any refusal or delay on his part to comply with the demand referred to. Burleigh is anxious to sign the requisite Bond for the payment of the amount due from him. His immediate discharge from prison is recommended.

William may not have repaid the money owing, as on 18 May 1860, he could not be recommended for a Conditional Pardon.⁸

A Conditional Pardon was finally granted on 21 February 1862 when William was 68 years old.

He died on 20 October 1869 and was buried at East Perth Cemetery the following day. According to the register, he was 80 years old.

⁷ SROWA, Cons 1156 C22 To Colonial Secretary 1856 – 1857, Cons 1156 C5* Superintendent of Fremantle Prison to Comptroller-General 1855-1857

⁸ SROWA, Cons 1156 C23 To Colonial Secretary 1859 - 1860