

### **Charles CHANCE - CLARA Convict # 4384 – (1854)\***

Charles CHANCE baptised 3 May 1829, in the Mosley Chapel, Kings Norton, Birmingham, Worcestershire, was the son of a shoe maker. He married Elizabeth Barrat, on 3 September 1854 at St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham. They had a daughter Winifred, who was baptised on 19 November 1854 in Birmingham. Charles was arrested along with William & Alfred SMITH and Thomas HIORNS for a daring burglary at Barford in 1855. They were charged with burglariously breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing a 10/ note, three watches and other articles, the property of Mr. John TIMS at Barford, on 1 May.

A newspaper report of the Oxfordshire Summer Assizes, states that John TIMS, farmer, living at Barford, near Banbury, said *"about one o'clock on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May I woke up, and saw a light shining through the door; I opened the door and saw four men in the passage; they had something over their faces and followed me into the room. They told me and my wife to be quiet, or they would blow our brains out. They demanded that the keys should be given up to them; they broke open the drawers; one of the men had a pistol, and stood over me and my wife while another man tied me and my wife together by the arms with a cord from the bedstead. They demanded my money, and I had a 10/- note in my pocket, which I gave up to them; it was a Banbury note. They took ten silver tea spoons, 6 table spoons, 3 watches 8/ in gold, 2 rings and about 2 quarts of brandy."*

The Judge summed up and went through the whole of the evidence with great care. With respect to the question of identity, he called attention to several corroborative facts, and to the prisoners being identified by different parties, and that HIORNS had worked on the farm occupied by the prosecutor. He said that the fact that a 10/- Banbury note having been passed the same day in Warwickshire by CHANCE, in company with some of the other prisoners, was well worthy of the attention of Jury, as well as the implements found upon them corresponding with those used on the night of the burglary. The Jury, after consulting a few minutes, returned a verdict of guilty against all

four prisoners. The judge ordered them to be transported for fifteen years on 12 July 1855.

Charles CHANCE arrived in Fremantle 3 July 1857 aboard the convict ship *Clara*.\* He received his ticket of leave 4 June 1859, conditional pardon in 1862 and certificate of freedom on 12 August 1870 at York, Western Australia. Aged 47, he married Mary Susannah LITTLE, aged 17, at York in 1876, and took up farming in the Beverley District. They had a daughter Sarah in 1877, but the marriage didn't last, and Mary had left him by October 1880. He died on 2nd April 1902, aged 72 and was buried in the Beverley Anglican Cemetery.

Mary Susannah LITTLE meanwhile had a new relationship with Joseph William BILLINGS and their eldest son Joseph William BILLINGS was born 1888 at Pingelly. They married in 1889. Joseph William BILLINGS Jnr., was employed by Mr Trevelyan in contract work for the Beverley Roads Board, and lived in a tent near his employer's house about a half a mile north of Mt Kokeby, seven miles south of Beverley. On the 11th February 1910, aged 22 years, he is arrested on charges of assault and having caused bodily harm and is committed for trial. In the Perth Criminal Court on 14th March Joe BILLINGS is found guilty of attempted serious offences against Miss Trevelyan aged 15. He had invaded their home at night in a savage way, and carried the girl away by force, also assaulting the mother. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment with hard labour for attempted rape, and was sent to Fremantle Prison and also spent time in Rottnest Prison. After his release in 1916, Joe enlisted in the Australian Infantry, becoming a Lance Corporal in the 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion. At age 30, Joseph William BILLINGS, son of Joseph William and Mary Susannah BILLINGS died of wounds received that day on 22 August 1918 in Picardie, France and is interred in The Daours Communal Cemetery.

*\*There were two voyages made by convict transport ships of the name Clara to Western Australia during the convict era. It had long been thought that the same ship was used twice, however, it has recently been discovered that they were two different ships having the same name.*

Carol Wheat has written a series of related convict stories called 'Convicts in the Family' based on her husband, Jeffrey George Wheat's family history.

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