

John Cole and Emily Luker, a Convict and his Bride

Gill Watkins shares a tale with twist

Emily Looker/Luker is my first cousin three times removed. She was the eldest daughter of Richard Looker and his wife Ann, and Emily was baptised at St Blaise Parish Church, Milton, Berkshire on 2 June 1833. Richard Luker/Looker, her father, was the youngest son of John Luker and Sarah Wells, my 3x great grandparents, and he was born and baptised at Milton in 1804.

As 'Looker', Richard, 35, Ann, 30 and Emily, 8 appear on the 1841 census in Milton with two additional children, Louisa, 5, and James, 20 months, plus Mary (*illegible*), aged 70.

By 1851, Emily 'Looker' was a kitchen maid at the Manor House in Milton and in 1861 Emily 'Luker' was a house servant in East St Helen Street, Abingdon, Berkshire. On 7 May 1861 Emily was a witness at her sister Louisa's marriage to Henry Pill at Milton.

I found no marriage, census or death records for Emily in England after that date. Ancestry.co.uk recently suggested a possible marriage in Australia. The Australian Marriage Index states that an Emily Luker married John Cole in 1862 in Fremantle, Western Australia, which is inconclusive. However, following the link for John Cole, a burial entry on Find a Grave gave some tantalising details.

Firstly there is a newspaper announcement from the *Inquirer and Commercial News*, Wednesday 16 July 1862:-

"Married. At Fremantle, Western Australia, on the 2nd July, by the Rev. J Johnston, Mr John Cole, of Perth, late of London to Emily, eldest daughter of Mr Richard Luker of Milton, Abingdon, Berkshire, England." This confirms Emily's identity.

The *Find A Grave* entry records John Henry Cole was buried at East Perth Cemeteries, Perth, Western Australia. He died 12 Nov 1891 aged 58 - 59, (estimated birth date 1832). However it is the additional notes that are riveting.

"CONVICT No. 4855. Sentenced at Central Criminal Court 1856 for Wounding with Intent 20 years. Arrived 1/6/1858 per Lord Raglan.



St Blaise Church, Milton, Oxfordshire (formerly Berkshire)

Ticket of Leave 12/11/1860. Conditional Pardon 11/5/1865.

Shoemaker

Spouse; Emily Luker m. 2/7/1862 Fremantle, 1 week after Emily arrived in the Swan River Colony

Children; Fanny Louisa 1863-1864, Emily Adeline 1867, Edward 1871-1907, Edith 1873-1874"²

Searching the *British Newspaper Archive* for details of John Cole's crime, revealed that he was accused of attempting to murder Emily Luker in July 1856, the very woman who sailed out to marry him in Australia some six years later!

The case was reported nationally in August 1856.

"The Attempt to Murder by Shooting. On Tuesday, John Cole, a gardener, living at No. 1, New Church-street, Paddington, was placed at the bar, before Mr. Broughton, for final examination on the charge of having attempted to murder Emily Luker, by firing at her a pistol loaded with gunpowder and stones. The prisoner had upon several previous occasions been remanded in consequence of the prosecutrix being unable, from the frightful injuries which she had sustained, to attend. The particulars of what transpired upon former occasions in reference to the case have already appeared.

The prosecutrix was now brought up in a cab by Inspector O'Brien, from St. Mary's Hospital,

in which she had been an inmate ever since the murderous attack had been made upon her. She is 23 years of age, and was in the service of Miss Clay, 9, Howley Villas, Paddington.

The evidence before given was read over by the second clerk, Mr. Tate, after which the prosecutrix was sworn. (Her appearance excited the commiseration of all in court. She had been entirely deprived of the sight of her right eye, and portions of her face were blackened and otherwise disfigured. It was a great mercy that she was not killed on the spot.) She said—I have known the prisoner ten months, and have kept company with him for seven months. In April last he proposed to marry me, and wished me to consider of it, and give him an answer. I never told him I would marry him, and I broke off the acquaintance with him, as I considered, on the 12th of May. It was on the 18th of that month that a young man came to our house to see my fellow-servant, and he became jealous. On the 18th I told him we had better break it off, as we

should never be happy together. He said he thought we should be happy and wished to continue the acquaintance. Nearly every evening for a fortnight afterwards he called at the house. On the Sunday before he shot me, I went to the gate to let my mistress in, and he was then near at hand. On the 7th of July, while I was taking in a parcel from a youth who had brought it from his master, he (prisoner) pushed the youth aside and presented and fired a pistol at me. I fell, and bled very much, and was carried into the house. I felt at the time as though I was dying. He had threatened me, and upon one occasion he told me to remember Baker, and I understood from what he said that he alluded to a man who had murdered a

woman at Southampton. He had told me that I had deceived him, but that I should never deceive another.

After some further proceedings, Mr. Broughton asked the prisoner what he had to say.

Prisoner.—I am extremely sorry for having injured her; my mind and feelings were so wounded that I could not master them. I knew not what I was doing.

The prisoner was fully committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court, for wounding with intent to murder.”³

On 15 Sep 1856, John Cole was sentenced to transportation for 20 years for Wounding with Intent at the Central Criminal Court.⁴ He was one of 270 male convicts transported to the Swan River Colony in Western Australia aboard the hired convict Ship, ‘Lord Raglan’ in 1858.

A description of John shows the following:- “Cole John, Reg No: 4855, Occupation: Gardener, Single, Height: 5' 2 1/2", Hair: light brown,; Eyes: dark hazel, Face: thin, Complexion: fair, Build: slight, No distinguishing marks”.⁵

Further information about the ship and John's voyage are on the Duperouzel website under the link ‘Petrosellum’.⁶

There is a full list of the convicts aboard the ship as at 3 March 1858. A journal of day to day life on board from 6 February to 8 June 1858 by Mr John Bower, Surgeon and Superintendent, gives an account of the prisoners' health and daily routine, their progress and a list of those who received corporal punishment. It also makes note of the ship's position each day and the weather



Lord Raglan (1855) *The Illustrated London News*, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

conditions. The prisoners were also given classes of instruction and lectures. It is recorded that John Cole was born in England, attended Sunday and Day School on board, was able to read and write, and was one of the Monitors.⁷

The ‘Lord Raglan’ arrived at Owen’s Anchorage, Fremantle, on 1 June 1858, with 268 convicts on board, two having died during the voyage. They were allowed ashore after seven days when all the formalities were completed. The crew and their families disembarked the following day. The ‘Lord Raglan’ was the twentieth convict ship to arrive in the Swan River Colony between 1850-1868. In

total, thirty-seven convict ships transported 9,636 convicts to the Colony.

Convicts arriving at this time were initially transferred to the newly built Fremantle gaol, which was a few miles from the point of disembarkation.

John was granted his ticket-of-leave on 12 November 1860. A ticket-of-leave was achieved by good behaviour thus gaining a prisoner certain privileges. Author Rica Erickson described some of the privileges granted to a man when he received his ticket-of-leave:

"When discharged on ticket-of-leave a prisoner received a full kit of workman's clothing, with blankets and rations sufficient to take him to the district of his choice... he received only a portion of his gratuity... A ticket-of-leave man could be self-employed and engage other ticketers. He could own land and property; and he could marry, although in the early convict era the prior permission of the comptroller general was required before the ceremony... A ticketer had to be indoors by ten o'clock at night. He had to carry his ticket at all times and show it on request. He could not own or carry firearms without permission. Nor was he supposed to work on ships, a condition which was circumvented on several occasions. He could be arrested without a warrant and tried summarily by a single magistrate without a jury."

When John received his ticket-of-leave he was entitled to abandon the special convicts clothing, made of coarse cloth branded with conspicuous markings, that he had been forced to wear. At last, like all ticket-of-leavers, he had the opportunity to make a fresh start, hopeful that the local community would forget that he had been a convict.⁸

Obviously John kept in touch with Emily over the intervening period and somehow persuaded her to undertake the voyage of over 11,000 nautical miles to join him and become his wife, which she did some 20 months after he obtained his ticket-of-leave, marrying a week after her arrival in 1862.

John and Emily had three daughters and one son. Both their first and last daughters, Fanny Louisa and Edith, died as infants. Their second daughter Emily Adeline (1867 - 1936) married George Lewis Nunn in 1902 in Donnybrook, Western Australia. Their son Edward, born in 1871, married Elizabeth Nunn in Perth in 1895. He died in 1904, rather than 1907 as stated on the *Find A Grave* website.

The *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre 1829 – 1888* gives further information for both John and Emily. John was a shoemaker in Perth and had employed ten ticket-of-leave men between 1862 and 1869 including eight shoemakers. Their son Edward was an apprentice shoemaker. Emily was a cook, who had arrived on the *'Mary Harrison'*.⁹

John Cole died in November 1891. An announcement in *The West Australian* on Thursday, 12 November 1891 stated:-

*"The funeral of the late John Henry Cole will leave his late Residence, Wellington-street, Perth, at 4 o'clock this afternoon (Thursday)."*¹⁰

He is buried at East Perth Cemeteries, Perth, Western Australia, as are his two young daughters.

Emily died in April 1912. An announcement in *The Sunday Times*, Perth stated:-

"COLE.-At Noggerup, Upper Preston, April 12, Mrs. Emily Cole, beloved Mother of Adeline E. Nunn and late Edward Cole, late of Perth; aged 78 years. At rest. A resident of W.A. for 50 years. 11

I wonder if Emily got in touch with her English family.

1. *Inquirer and Commercial News* - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>
2. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/195657499/john-henry-cole>
3. *Reading Mercury* - <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>
4. *Ancestry.com. England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892*
5. *Convicts to Australia* - <http://perthdps.com/convicts/con-wa23.html>
6. *Petrosellum* - <https://duperouzel.org>
7. *The Surgeon's Daily Journal Lord Raglan 1858 Transcript* - <https://enrolledpensionerforcewa.org.au>
8. *'The Brand on his Coat'* Rica Erickson.
9. *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre 1829 – 1888* - <http://www.friendsofbattyelibrary.org.au>
10. *The West Australian* - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>
11. *The Sunday Times* - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>