

Baptism	24 December 1820, Latchingdon-Cum-Snoreham, Essex
Parents	Charles Ellis and Sophia Townsend
Parent's marriage	10 February 1818, Latchingdon, Essex
Siblings	Elias Townsend (1818), Mary Ann (1822), Charles (1826), Sarah Townsend (1828), Sophia (1833), James (1835), Elizabeth (1837), Frederick (1839), George (1841)
Wife 1	Emma Carter
Married	5 October 1846, Great Coggeshall, Essex
Children	None
Wife 2	Elizabeth Emma Rowland (1838-1865)
Married	2 May 1860, Perth, Western Australia
Children	Ellen (1859), Emily (1861), Elizabeth (1864-1865)
Wife 3	Caroline Victoria Robinson (1844-1914)
Married	24 April 1865, Perth

When William was born, the family lived at Snoreham, and Charles was a carpenter. The family later moved to Rayleigh, Essex.¹

On 5 October 1846, at the Independent Dissenters Meeting House in Great Coggeshall, William Ellis, 22, bachelor, labourer, residing in Great Coggeshall, father Charles Ellis, a carpenter, married Emma Carter, 23, spinster, living in Great Coggeshall, father John Carter, a labourer. William made his mark, and Emma signed the register.

From 1844 to 1848, a series of violent crimes took place in Coggeshall and the surrounding villages, which had the local inhabitants in fear for their safety. A group of up to fourteen men, known locally as the Coggeshall Gang, carried out the crimes. They had their headquarters at the Black Horse Inn in Stoneham Street. The landlord was William French, the half-brother of the leader of the gang, Samuel Crow.

William French benefited from the proceeds of the crimes by receiving stolen property from the gang. Crow was employed in driving post-chaises for innkeepers and gentry and was well known in the neighbourhood. Armed with pistols and cudgels and wearing masks, the gang operated mainly at night and terrorised the local inhabitants.

Discovery of a Gang of Burglars at Coggeshall. This newspaper report is from 1848:

At the assizes held last summer, at Chelmsford, a field gardener, named William Wade, was convicted of a burglary at Bradwell, a village near Coggeshall. Previously to his committal he had entered into a compact with those of his brethren in the craft, who were concerned in this affair, that, in consideration of their taking care of his wife, he would refrain from "peaching." Unfortunately for themselves, however, his partners in delinquency, after a short time, neglected to fulfil their part of the contract, and the consequence was a full confession by the convict.

A meeting of Magistrates was thereupon convened, when, after the depositions of several witnesses, warrants were at once issued for the apprehension of the following parties, viz. **William Ellis**, William Springett, William Tansley, and Samuel Crow.

Ellis, having some suspicion that he might be wanted, left his lodgings at Rivenhall during the night, and on the appearance of the constables on the following morning was not to be found; he

¹ Essex Record Office, D/P 258/1/4

has, therefore, escaped for the present. Springett, who was employed in thatching, was apprehended on Wednesday afternoon at a farm in the parish of Feering, and Tansley, a labourer, was apprehended in Meeting Street, Coggeshall, shortly after the warrant had been issued. Samuel Crow, the well-known leader of the gang, has, up to the present moment, escaped the hands of the police.

Immediately on obtaining the warrant for his apprehension, having mustered a sufficient force to surround the premises, the police proceeded to the Black Horse, a small public-house in Coggeshall, kept by William French. The landlord, who is a half-brother of Crow, denied that the object of their search was in his house, stating, first, that he had gone to Colchester, and then to Stanway. These replies not being considered satisfactory, an examination of the premises was made, but without success; and it was not till nearly midnight that a policeman, named Nicholls, having been induced to search an unoccupied house adjoining, discovered a hole in the ceiling large enough to admit the passage of a man's body. He immediately ascended and discovered Crow sitting on a beam near the chimney. Having given an alarm, and other constables coming up, Crow at once offered to surrender if no violence were offered to him. The officer, deeming escape impossible, descended, when Crow, with a sudden movement forced himself through the roof; he then ran over the tops of several adjoining houses, dropped from a 12 feet wall, scaled another 10 feet high, and covered with broken glass; and having cleared a high gate, spiked at the top made his way into Church Street and escaped by the meadows near Abbey Mill. He has been followed as far as Stratford, where all trace of him has been lost.

On Saturday afternoon, the brother of Crow, a youth about 15 or 16, was apprehended on a charge of harbouring and concealing him. Elijah Clark, town crier of Coggeshall, on his return from Springfield Gaol, met the youth, driving a horse and gig. He questioned him as to his business in Chelmsford, and receiving an unsatisfactory answer, stopped the horse, and examined the gig, when it was found to contain a hat and coat, which Clark at once recognised as the property of Samuel Crow, and also a bloody handkerchief, the discovery of which was of importance, connected with the ascertained fact that Crow had, in his escape, severely injured his hand. There were also several packages in the gig, under cover of which, there is no doubt, he had lain concealed. The police are still in pursuit of Ellis, but up to the present time, without success. Several inhabitants of Coggeshall have offered a reward of £10 for the apprehension of Samuel Crow. French, the landlord of the Black Horse, has since been arrested and remanded. Two other men have absconded, to whom suspicion attaches of belonging to the gang.

Apprehension of Ellis.

In consequence of information having been received, a man answering the description of Ellis had been apprehended at Bury St Edmunds. A policeman was sent to identify him and returned with the prisoner, who was charged and detained at Springfield Gaol. He is believed to be the man who, with Crow, behaved cruelly to an old man named Finch and his housekeeper after they plundered the house.²

On Wednesday last, the examination of the prisoners in this extraordinary case took place at the County Gaol, Springfield, this course being necessary by reason of the illegality of removing a convict confined there whose evidence was material in the case. The magistrates present were F. U. Pattisson, Esq. (chairman), and the Rev. H. Du Cane. Mr Corder, from the office of Messrs. Blood and Douglas, clerks to the Witham Bench, attended to take down the depositions. Mr Lake, solicitor, of Braintree, appeared to watch the proceedings on behalf of the prisoner French.

The following witnesses were called. William Wade, a convict under sentence of transportation for 15 years, said, on a Friday night in March, I met Wm. Ellis, Samuel Crowe, jun., and William Tansley, in the yard of the Black Horse Inn, when Ellis said, "I know where there is an old man at Bradwell who has money; I have heard it talked about when I was at work; and so then proposed that all four of us should go and rob him, the Black Horse Inn is kept by a man named French, and we

² Essex Standard, 27 October 1848

were in the habit of meeting there; we all four agreed to go by the Horse River Bridge; Ellis led the way, Tansley and I followed, and in about 10 minutes Crowe came, when we all met in a cart-lodge at the Grange, Little Coggeshall. belonging to Mr Unwin: we then proceeded on the road to Bradwell; and when within 40 rods of James Finch's house, between ten and eleven o'clock, Crowe put a shirt over his head, and a white night-cap over his face, holes being cut in it for his eyes and mouth; the others blackened their faces with something which Crowe had with him for the purpose, and we all then went to the house; Tansley stood at the front door to look out, and give an alarm if any one approached: Ellis, Crowe, and I then went to the back of the premises, and Crowe, with a piece of iron, attempted to force the door open, making a great noise to the effort, which awoke the prosecutor; as he was coming down stairs Crowe burst open the door, and I then saw prosecutor and his housekeeper, Elizabeth Wright; Crowe asked if he had got any money; Finch replied he had not; Crowe, who had a pistol in his hand, then broke into the housekeeper's room, and Ellis and I went upstairs; in a minute or so Crowe followed us, and when he came into the room he again asked Finch if he had got any money; but Finch again said he had not. Crowe, who still held the pistol, said he knew better and insisted upon knowing; upon which Finch seemed very much alarmed, and told him there were a few shillings upon the beam in the room. Crowe then got onto a sack, which I understood contained wheat, and reached down a canvas purse, or bag, which he opened, and took from it a sovereign, a half-sovereign, and some silver. Crowe then told Finch he knew he had got more than that, but Finch said he had no more. Besides the money, there was a book, which I believe to be a Savings Bank book, which Crowe took from the bag; he opened the book, and asked if I could read it? I did so, and I saw Witham Savings Bank upon it. After Finch had told Crowe he had no more money, Crowe went to the bed, and found five shillings in his trousers pocket. Crowe again pressed Finch to tell him where the rest of his money was, and Finch said that was all he had, except what was in the Witham Savings Bank. Crowe then said, if he did not tell him where he had some more, he would hang him upon the beam; Finch replied, he hoped he would not do that; when Ellis and Crowe took hold of him, and dragged him into another room. Crowe made a noose in a rope which he had, and put it over Finch's neck, and, whilst Ellis held him up, Crowe, who had thrown the end of the rope over the beam, pulled him up and kept him suspended nearly a minute, whilst Ellis kept hold of him to prevent his straggling; I said, "mind you don't, hurt the old man," and they took him down; all this time Finch was in his shirt; we then went down stairs into the housekeeper's room, and found her sitting at the side of the bed, partly dressed; Crowe asked her if she had any money; she said she had not, and as Crowe was looking under the bed she said there were a few halfpence in the drawer; Crowe opened the drawer and found 5d., which he took; he then wanted to know if she had more, and said if she did not tell him he would set her on the fire; she said she could not help it, she had not got any; Ellis and Crowe then took hold of her and took her into the keeping room and placed her on the fire grate; Crowe placed some straw under her and lighted it, so that her gown caught fire and she screamed out; I said "don't do that;" and I put out the fire from under her gown, and Crowe said to me "don't do that, you fool;" the housekeeper then went into her bedroom. Crowe then went to the cupboard and took out a mug, with which he proceeded to the pantry and drew some beer: we all partook of it, as also some bread and cheese; Crowe and Ellis after this told Finch if he would not tell them where he had some more money they would put him on the fire; Finch said he had not another farthing in the house, and they then placed him on the fire place; Crowe put in a lighted candle to make a blaze, and Finch, who was still only in his shirt, called out a great deal for them to spare him, and said "pray don't do that;" they then let him get off, and I believe he went upstairs; Crowe then looked up the chimney, and took down four hams and two chaps; we then all went into the pantry where we found two tubs containing pickled pork, some of which we took out and put into a sack and a bag which we found there; Ellis and Tansley then went forward carrying part of the pork with them; and I followed them with another parcel; Crowe, who remained on the stairs, overtook us before we got to Bradwell Hall Farm; when we arrived there we went into the farm-yard and Crowe got upon a haulm wall, in which he made a hole, and hid the pork there; we all four then went back to the Grange yard, and got into the cart-lodge, and stopped there some bit;

Crowe left first, and went away homeward; Ellis, Tansley, and I stopped some time afterwards, and then repaired to the Black Horse stable; this was between four and five o'clock; we found Crowe there, and we waited till French got up, and parted the money in the meantime.

French came down between 6 and 7 o'clock, and spoke to us; he said, "You have been out somewhere tonight, I know." I told him we had been a little way, and he said, "Where have you been to?" I told him we had been to an old man's house at Bradwell; he asked us if we had any luck; I replied no matters; he then asked us what we got, and I told him we had got a few shillings, and some other things; he then said, "Let us have a drop of drink;" and as we went towards the house he said, "Perhaps you will meet with better luck next time;" this observation was made to me alone as we were going along the passage, but the previous conversation took place in the presence of Tansley and Ellis; Crowe was about the yard all the time attending to his business; when we got into the house we all drank together in the tap-room, and all breakfasted together off a pigs-fry, which Crowe either fetched or sent for, and I know that French took part of it; Ellis, Tansley, and I, stopped there the greater part of the day, and Crowe often came in and oat; we had nothing more to eat, but plenty to drink; the next day I asked Finch if he was in a mind to buy a ham or two which we got at roaster French's; he said he did not like, for he had heard of that Halsted job, and he was afraid! Nothing more was said between me and Mr French at that time: and a fortnight after, Tansley, Ellis, and I went and removed the hams to the top of Water Lane, where Crowe met us: he had promised to bring a horse and cart, but he came without, and said he could not get one; we then carried it to a lodge in Mr Doubleday's meadow, in Robinbridge Road; Crowe afterwards took the pork, and gave Tansley and I, 4s each for our share; this took place in the yard of the Black Horse Inn, but French was not present.

Cross-examined by Mr Lane. French is a married man, and had a female servant in his house, but I don't know that he had one at that time; before the day of which I have been speaking I have often been at his house, and at all hours; on that morning in question I did not see any servant about; there are cottages and a blacksmith's shop in the yard of the inn, and the blacksmiths were at work; the conversation between me and French took place against the harness room, which is opposite the blacksmith's shop, and about three or four rods from it; when we went into the house there were customers present in the tap-room, but I don't know who they were; French did not sit down with us to breakfast, but sat down against the fire while the pigs fry was being cooked by Ellis; some of the others stood about; Mr French drew the beer as it was called for; French took part of the fry the same as the rest, and Mr Stribbling, who was in the bar in the course of the day, drew some of the beer, and brought it into the tap-room: we all paid our share; Samuel Crowe was ostler at the Black Horse, and it was his duty to be about the yard, and in and out of the house; the next day, when I spoke to the prisoner French about buying the hams, I called him into the passage alone.

Re-examined. The conversation which took place between the prisoner French and us near the harness room could not have been overheard by the men at work in the blacksmith's shop; Crowe is the half-brother of the prisoner French; I don't know that French stood treat.

James Finch, of Spencer's Garden, Bradwell, was next examined, and his description of the robbery and the treatment of himself and housekeeper corresponded with the statement of the accomplice Wade.

Superintendent Cook deposed that on Wednesday, 30 August, when he went to the Black Horse to apprehend Crowe; French, the landlord, denied that he was there, and said he had gone out with a gig on the Colchester Road; but on being questioned by Mr Corder said he did not know the name of the gentleman he was driving, and that he had not entered it in the Excise-book; but subsequently, on being farther questioned, he said it was a job of his own; witness searched the house, to which no impediment was offered. Witness further stated that French, at the close of his preliminary examination before the magistrate, said, "Well, if I had known it would have come to this, I would have told where he (Crowe) was."

Robert Evans, toll-gate keeper at Coggeshall, said he was on duty on the 30th inst., and was quite sure Samuel Crowe did not pass through on that day.

Rebecca Young, a resident in the Black Horse Yard, proved seeing the prisoner French come out and speak to the policeman; she heard him say to Inspector Ward, "do you want Sam?" and about ten minutes after she saw Crowe come out of a stable door, when he yawned and stretched himself, as though he had been asleep; she went up to him and told him the police had been after him or someone else; Crowe then went into the house, and she afterwards saw him come out and go into a cottage of French's, but she had not seen him since.

Cross-examined. Crowe went into the house about ten minutes after French.

William Osborne, basket-maker, remembered the day in question; between three and four o'clock saw Samuel Crowe peeping from behind the window curtain of the Black Horse, apparently watching Inspector Ward, who was in the street; saw French at the door a few minutes before, and afterwards; and he told Inspector Ward what he had seen, but not until ten at night.

Joseph Hills proved that he was in the passage of the Black Horse Inn between three and four o'clock on the day in question, when Samuel Crowe came in, and French said, "they are after you," Crowe replied, "they might have found me, for I have been having a nap in the stable."

Cross-examined. There was no appearance of alarm: nothing was said about concealment in my presence; nor did I perceive any desire evinced by French to conceal Crowe.

Mary Ann Farrow, servant to Mr Eley, of Coggeshall, deposed that on Wednesday, the 30 August, about four o'clock, she was opposite the Black Horse Inn, when she saw Samuel Crowe standing in the passage; he looked very pale, and appeared agitated, and was talking to two persons, one of whom she believed to be French; the witness, who appeared unwilling to give her evidence, afterwards said that at four o'clock she saw French and Crowe; in the passage together.

Inspector Ward proved that between 3 and 4 he looked over the lower part of French's premises, but did not see either of the parties he was in search of; he afterwards returned, and was repeatedly assured by French that he did not know where Crowe was; he visited the premises again with Smith and Nichols, when they went into the cottage adjoining, and upstairs they observed a hole, which appeared to witness to be larger than in the morning; Smith and Nichols went up and discovered Crowe, and, as there was no room for witness he called for them to seize him and hand-cuff him; he heard Crow say several times "don't hit see, and I'll come down like a man; they then left him, and presently heard a noise above, and he made his escape through the roof and got away.

A number of witnesses were then examined as to seeing John Crowe with a gig at Kelvedon, Feering, Tiptree Heath, Danbury and Woodham Ferris; at the latter place, he was accompanied by a man whose description corresponds with that of the escaped party, Samuel Crow. They enquired the way to Brentwood and are supposed to have gone to Stratford. On the return of the prisoner John Crow, he was stopped at Springfield by Elijah Clark, of Coggeshall, when, as above stated, several articles of clothing known to belong to Samuel Crow were found in the gig.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the Magistrates retired for a short time, and on their return, the prisoners, when asked if they wished to make any defence, French said he was not guilty; but the others declined making any statement. The prisoners were all fully committed to take their trial at the next assize; Ellis and Tansley for the Burglary, French as an accessory after the fact, and John Crowe for aiding and abetting the escape of his brother. Upon the application of Mr Lane, it was stated that bail in two sureties of £50, and himself in £100, would be accepted for French's appearance at the assizes. The examination occupied eight hours, and as many as so witnesses were present, but the evidence of some of them was dispensed with.³

At the Chelmsford Assizes on 5 March 1849, the charges from the above account was heard in much more detail and with more witnesses called. William Ellis was further charged with:

1. Burglary at Cressing. Samuel Crow and William Ellis were charged with committing a burglary, robbery and assault in the house of Mr Totham, at Cressing, and William French with knowingly receiving part of the property stolen. French was defended, and Crow and Ellis were undefended.

³ Essex Standard, 08 September 1848, p2

Ellis and French guilty, and Crow acquitted under the direction of his Lordship.⁴

2. Burglary at Great Tey. William Springett, Samuel Crow, William Ellis, William Tansley and William Wade robbed the house of Mr Smith and his son. Springett found guilty.

There were a number of other charges relating to various burglaries, involving a number of men from the gang. Some were acquitted or not charged again if already convicted.

The Magistrate handed down the sentences:

Samuel Crow, it appears upon the evidence which has been adduced before us, that you have been the most active man, and the head this gang, that has kept the people of Coggeshall in state of alarm for so many years; and you evidently, from what appears before the court, have been the leader of this party, organising attacks upon the people, going in the night time armed and disguised, and committing offences for which very few years ago your Life would have been required; and upon this occasion you might suffer the penalty of Death. However, I shall not think necessary, and indeed the form in which you have been convicted would not permit me, and I should not if it would; but the sentence upon you is that upon the several indictments and for the several offences proved against you, you be transported for the term of your natural Life,—and that is the sentence upon each indictment.

William Tansley, though not so active as Crow, you have been concerned in a great many robberies! In some cases, you have not been found guilty for want of confirmation evidence of the accomplice, but I feel no doubt that the convict, who has given his evidence throughout with great clearness and distinctness, is correct with regard to your guilt. I shall sentence you to be transported for the term of your natural Life.

John Crow, you were found guilty of assisting your brother to effect his escape with full knowledge of his guilt and trying to screen him from justice. You are a young boy, and it is natural to expect you would do all you could to assist your brother. Still, respect and obedience to the law must be secured, and every person who endeavours to procure the escape of a felon is preventing the law from being executed. The fact that you were brother to the criminal ought to have made you more desirous to do what was right. I shall not punish you by any sentence so severe as the law would permit me to pronounce. You have acted extremely wrong, but you are young, and I shall therefore only sentence you to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for three months.

William Ellis, for the part you have taken in this guilty transaction in robbing and injuring Mr Dell, your Life is forfeited to that of your country; and I did not choose to interfere by recommending you to the merciful consideration of her Majesty, the consequence would be that you would suffer an ignominious death. You have evidently not been concerned in this alone, but the circumstances of the injury to the prosecutor were not so great as to justify me in letting the sentence take its course; therefore, your Life will be spared, but the rest of it will be spent abroad.— Death recorded.

William French, it is very clear from the evidence in this case, and from what was heard the day before yesterday, that you have been in the habit of harbouring in your house a gang of thieves, the terror of the neighbourhood. You have endeavoured to effect the escape of one of them and have been receiving part of the stolen property. You were in a station of Life which ought to have induced you to conduct yourself more respectably, but your house seems to have been made a perfect nuisance to its neighbourhood by allowing thieves to congregate there and form their plans for disturbing the neighbourhood. You will be transported beyond the seas for the term of seven years.

James Everett, you have been found guilty of being connected with a gang who have infested the neighbourhood of Coggeshall for some years past, and the fact proved against you is that you did assist in breaking into a warehouse and stealing a quantity of hams. You cannot be punished for anything but simple larceny in this case, but I should not be doing my duty to the country I did not punish everyone connected with this gang with an adequate punishment. Your sentence is that you be transported for seven years.

⁴ Chelmsford Chronicle, 16 March 1849, p4

Before the prisoner **Samuel Crow** was taken down, he desired to say something to his Lordship, and, being allowed to do so, asked whether his clothes, which were in the hands of the police, might not be given up to him; he had three small children. His Lordship said he was sorry the prisoner had not thought of those children before; it was not in his Lordship's power to make any order, but very possibly the clothes would be given up to him. ⁵

On 24 July 1849, the following prisoners, convicted at the Lent assize, were removed to Preston Gaol, Lancashire, the present place of reception before transportation (Milbank Prison) being rendered unfit for the purpose, owing to the breaking out of cholera:— William Tansley, Samuel Crow, and William Ellis (for Life); William Springett, William French, and James Everett (seven years), burglaries, etc., at Coggeshall.

William Wass (15 years), arson at Aldham.— Joseph Bryant (seven years), robbery with violence at Ridgewell ⁶ (and other prisoners who did not come to Western Australia).⁷

Reprieve.

To Right Honorable Mr Baron Parke, 4 April 1849

Sir, You having certified to the Queen that the Gaol Delivery holden for the County of Essex on 5 day of March last, William Ellis was convicted before you of Burglary attended with Wounding, and received Judgement of Death for the same; and having humbly recommended him to Her Majesty as a fit object of the Royal Mercy, on Consideration that he be transported beyond the seas for the term of his natural life, Her Majesty has thereupon been graciously pleased to extend the Royal Mercy to the said W. Ellis on the said Condition and has commanded me to signify the same to you that you may give the necessary directions accordingly. I am &c, G. Grey, Whitehall. ⁸

The Prison Registers show that William Ellis, 28, convicted 5 March 1849 at Chelmsford Assizes of Burglary with violence, was sentenced to Death, and respited to Life.

William Ellis, 28, married, brick maker or brick setter, received at Preston Prison from Springfield Gaol on 24 July 1848. According to the register on 15 December 1839, he was convicted of malicious damage and received one calendar month's hard labour. William was removed to Portland on 2 May 1850, arriving there the following day. He was indifferent in Portland Prison, and he was removed to the *Defence* hulk on 12 June 1850. His wife, Mrs Ellis, resided at Meeting Street, Great Coggeshall. Transferred to Dartmoor on 9 July 1851.

Embarked per *William Jardine* for Western Australia on 26 April 1852. ⁹

Petition. William Ellis, aged 31, in Dartmoor Prison. Received 5 March 1852.¹⁰

Convicted 5 March 1849 at Chelmsford, Burglary accompanied with violence, Life having been sentenced to Death, but reprieved, received on 10 July 1851 from *Defence* Hulk.

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Bart &c, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Petition of William Ellis, a prisoner confined in Dartmoor Prison, humbly sheweth That your Petitioner was convicted of "House breaking, Robbery and Violence" at the Assizes held at Chelmsford on the Tenth day March Eighteen Hundred and Forty nine, and received the Sentence of Transportation for Life with Death recorded.

That your Petitioner has been a prisoner nearly three years from the date of conviction which term has been divided as follows:- five months at Springfield Prison; nine at Preston Prison; six weeks at

⁵ Chelmsford Chronicle, 09 March 1849, p3; Chelmsford Chronicle, 16 March 1849, p4

⁶ Edward William Wass, 261, per *Mermaid*; Joseph Bryant, 667, per *Pyrenees*

⁷ Essex Standard, 03 August 1849, p2

⁸ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO13/96

⁹ TNA, HO8/104, HO8/112; HO23/11; PCOM2/132

¹⁰ TNA, TNA, HO18/328

Portland Prison; fourteen months at the “Defence Hulk” Gosport; and seven months at Dartmoor Prison.

That your Petitioner, from a complaint which unfitted him for Public Works at Portland, was invalided, after a trial of six weeks, and removed thence to the Invalid Ship at Gosport.

That your Petitioner acknowledges his guilt of the Robbery and is now truly contrite for it, but avers most solemnly, in the Presence of his God, that he is innocent of the violence; that it is on this account he feels, and justly complains of, the severity of his Sentence - having previously to his apprehension, been uniformly respected by his Employers and all who knew or had dealings with him; nor had your Petitioner been convicted ever before.

That your Petitioner views with horror the atrocity of his crime, but is now enabled to see in the punishment thereof the mercy of Him who is justified in all doings with sinful man.

That your Petitioner was entirely led astray by bad company, and feels it good for him now that Providence inter.... and checked him in a career of crime and sin. Nor is this exposition dictated by any sudden softening of feeling under trying circumstances, but by a matured and steady desire of what suffering and application has taught him.

That your Petitioner further begs to hope that the good instructions which have been afforded him in every place of his imprisonment, will make him a wiser and a better man, and he begs to express his gratitude to all the Authorities for so much undeserved kindness as he has received at their hands, and, perhaps, the highest eulogy that he can give them is, to confess that while they know how to punish they know also how to reward.

That your Petitioner has sustained a good character throughout the term of his confinement, and earnestly implores straightway such a humane and merciful consideration of his case as may tend to recommend him for a mitigation of sentence.

And your Petitioner, as in Duty bound, will ever pray, William Ellis.

Cover: William Ellis, 28, Nil action.

On Arrival at Fremantle, Western Australia, William was assigned number 1442.

The Superintendent’s journal shows:

5 August 1852. The undermentioned prisoners received this day from on board H.M. Convict Ship “William Jardine” will be located in the 2nd and 3rd Divisions. 1442, William Ellis from Dartmoor Prison.¹¹

After working on public works for nearly 2 years, William was granted a Ticket of Leave on 5 April 1854. He was allowed to work in the Perth District.¹²

He was hired on 8 May 1854 by William Wass¹³ of Perth.

On 10 January 1855, he was working for himself.

Then, on 7 April 1856, he was working for John Stokes as a sawyer, piecework, per month from June 1856, still piecework.¹⁴

Discharged on 2 December 1856, and allowed to work for himself as a sawyer.

In June 1857, he was working with Geo Haysom.

William Ellis, Perth, hired James Fulton, 1491, on 19 October 1857 to work as a sawyer,

A Conditional Pardon on 15 December 1859, with a note saying “If this man becomes unable to earn his own living, he is to be supported at the cost of the Imperial Government”.

William mentioned in his Petition that he was unfit for work.

Ellen Ellis, the daughter of William Ellis and Emma Rowland, was born in Perth in 1859.

¹¹ SROWA, Superintendent’s Orders, So4-So6, p41, p42

¹² SROWA, Perth TOL Register Cons 1386/1 1851 - Aug 1854

¹³ William Wass was convicted of arson at the same Chelmsford Assizes as William Ellis

¹⁴ Tenders Accepted, April 1856. John Stokes, to supply sawn timber at Rottne Island at various prices.

On 2 May 1860, Wesleyan Chapel, Perth. William Ellis, 35, bachelor, sawyer, residing at Gingin, father Charles Ellis, a joiner, married Elizabeth Rowland, 22, spinster, residing in Perth, father William Rowland, unknown occupation. William signed the register, and Elizabeth made her mark. Elizabeth is recorded as Emma on the births of her children.

William's wife, Elizabeth Emma Ellis, 24, was buried on 31 January 1865 at East Perth Cemetery, Anglican section.¹⁵

He remarried on 24 April 1865, at the Congregational Chapel, Perth.

William Ellis, over 21, widow, groom, residing at Perth, father Charles Ellis, joiner, married Caroline Robinson, over 21, spinster, servant, living at Perth, Father Thomas Robinson, shopkeeper. William signed the register, and Caroline made her mark.

A few days later, on 29 April 1865, in Perth, William Ellis, 46, labourer, died of Ulceration of the (Sigmoid?). Buried on 30 April 1865 at East Perth Cemetery, Anglican section.

His fourth daughter, Elizabeth Ellis, 1, was buried 16 May 1865 at East Perth Cemetery, Anglican section.

Back in Coggeshall.

1851 census, Stoneham Street, Great Coggeshall. ¹⁶

Emma Ellis, married, 28, lace worker, born Coggeshall

Sarah Carter, sister, 11, scholar, born Coggeshall.

No further trace has been found of Emma Ellis.

¹⁵ East Perth Cemetery indes.

¹⁶ TNA, HO107/1783