

John Goddard came from Birmingham, Warwickshire. When he arrived in Western Australia in 1851, he said he was a confectioner. On the 1851 census, there is a John Gothard, 15, a servant to John Rawley, 45, a confectioner at Aston Street, Birmingham.¹ However, the first positive recording of John is when he was committed to trial for stealing a hat from the shop door of Mr Thomas Bate, in Bull Street, Birmingham, in 1843.² John, who was 15 and illiterate, was tried at Birmingham Borough Sessions on 19 May 1843 and found not guilty of larceny.³

John possibly married Martha James on 10 March 1845 at St Philip, Birmingham. John Gothard, full age, bachelor, hawker, resides Colmore street, son of Charles Gothard, a shoemaker.

Martha James, minor, resides Colmore street, daughter of John James, a chimney sweep. Neither John or Martha were literate.

On 7 January 1848, at the Birmingham Borough Sessions, William Rogers and John Goddard, were convicted for stealing 40 yards of cloth, the property of Paul Taylor, and sentenced to 6 months in Prison.⁴ The Criminal Register records John as 19 years old and could read and write imperfectly.

In September 1848, the newspaper reported:

On the evening of Sunday last, the capture of housebreakers was effected under somewhat laughable circumstances, as narrated at the Public Office on Monday last, before the sitting Magistrates, Charles Geach, Esq, Mayor, and S Beale, Esq. Two young fellows, names John Goddard, residing in Bristol Street, and George Rogers, residing in Digbeth, were charged with having broken into the house of a carpenter named Henry Wood, situated in Chequers Lane, Holloway Head, and stealing various carpenter's tools therefrom.

It appeared that shortly after eight o'clock on the previous evening, a man named Thomas Marriot, residing in the same locality, was passing by Wood's house, when his attention was drawn to the two prisoners, one of whom stood inside the garden in front of the house, whilst the other was standing at the gate. Marriot passed on, but as soon as he got to a convenient distance, stood still and watched their motions. In a few moments they both went up to the house, opened the door, and went in, closing the door behind them. Marriot went to seek assistance, but as the locality is rather retired and unfrequented, he could not meet with any for a time, until a neighbour named Ballinger happened to come up. A light upstairs showing them in what quarter of the house the thieves were engaged, it was resolved that Ballinger should hold on by the knob of the door, and so prevent them escaping until Marriot got the assistance of the police.

It is supposed that the taking hold of the knob made a noise which was heard by the prisoners, as they immediately came down the stairs, unbolted the door from the inside, and attempted to force it open. This was resisted, as a matter of course by Ballinger from the outside, but in a minute or two the knob gave way, the door flew open, and so sudden and unexpected was the movement, that both parties measured their length backwards on the ground. Ballinger quickly got upon his legs again, however, as did also his opponents but with great presence of mind he threatened to "knock their brains out with the poker", if they dared to attempt to escape. Ballinger had no weapon of any sort in his hand at the time, but the night being dark, his opponents, unfortunately for them, did not know this, and the fear of a crack on the head from the imaginary

poker deterred them from attempting their escape until a couple of policemen arrived, and took them to the station.

On examining the house, it was found that a number of carpenter's tools had been shifted from one corner of the room upstairs to another, and that a basket of clothes had been turned over and the clothes thrown out, but nothing was missed. Several skeleton keys, which fitted the door of the house, were found in the fire-place, and had evidently been thrown there by the prisoners upon their coming downstairs.

In the course of the examination of various witnesses, the prisoner Goddard evinced considerable anxiety to establish the important point that nothing in the house had been shifted, which would have prevented the necessity of his going before the Recorder, but they were both committed to take their trial at the sessions.⁵

At the Quarter Sessions in October, John Goddard and George Rogers were sentenced to 10 years transportation for breaking into the house of Henry Wood and stealing a plane and other articles.⁶

John Goddard, 20, married, and can read, was received at Northampton Prison on 30 April 1849. He had been in gaol twice before – 1843 when acquitted of a felony and 1848 for a felony. On 5 April 1850, he was transferred to Portland Prison where he was recorded as 20 years old, married, and a fruiterer. John received a letter on 29 May 1850, unfortunately it did not say who it was from. The following year, boarded the *Pyrenees* on 13 March 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia.⁷

On arrival at Fremantle, John was described as:

589. John Godderd, 22, 5'1⁵/₈", has dark brown hair, light brown eyes, an oval face, a sallow complexion, and is stout. He had a scar over his left eye, slight scars on his right breast extending to his back, two front teeth in his top jaw were broken, and he had a gap between his front teeth. John said he was a confectioner and single, with no children.⁸

About six months before his sentence expired, John unlawfully left Western Australia. The R.M.S.S. *Emeu*, arrived at King George's Sound in mid-March 1858, from Sydney and Melbourne, with mail and 120 passengers for England. The vessel sailed on 23 March 1858.

The Colonial Secretary's Office in Sydney received a letter from Colombo, Ceylon.⁹

Colonial Secretary's Office, Colombo, 19 July 1858

Sir,

I am directed by the Governor to transmit to you copy of a letter from the Police Magistrate of Colombo and of one from the Queen's Advocate, and to request that you will be good enough to take the instructions of His Excellency the Governor General of Australia in regard to John Gothard, the individual therein mentioned, who is at present detained in custody.

I have honor to be, Sir, Your Most Obed^t Servant,

G F.....

In Sydney, the Convict Department, noted on 20 October 1858:

It may be necessary to send copies of this to the Government of Western Australia, with a request, that they will communicate with the Colonial Secretary of Colombo, on the subject. Reference may however, be made to the Inspector General of Police, for enquiry of the prisoner in the "Eneu" which is now in Port. The minute on the first page to be now acted on - a copy of this report and of the enclosures being sent at the same time. 22nd.

Enclosed is a Memorandum of the Chief Officer of the S.S "Emeu"- of the escape of the man within alluded to, from King George's Sound, with another individual named Sidon, who is no doubt also an escaped Convict from Western Australia.

Three letters were included in the communique:

1. No. 88. Police Court, Colombo, 8 July 1858

Sir,

I have the honor to state, that on the 5th instant, a man calling himself John Gothard, gave himself up to me, at this Court, saying he is an escaped convict. He made a statement, which I took down on writing, thus: "My name is John Gothard. I am 27 years of age, and a native of Birmingham, England. I am an escaped Convict. I was transported for house breaking, about six years and seven months ago, to Swan River, Australia. I made my escape, and got off, concealed on board of the Steamer "Emu", and landed at Point de Galle, about twelve weeks ago. I came to Colombo about eleven weeks ago and have been in the Pettah Hospital for about nine weeks. I am now well. I cannot get any employment; I am starving; and I come and give myself up to Mr Dalziel the Magistrate. I was sentenced to be transported for ten years, by Mr Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham. I am willing to return to Swan River to serve out the term of my sentence."

Signed J Dalziel, J.P. / signed John Gothard

On the man's own admission that he is an escaped Convict, I committed him to the custody of the Fiseal, to Prison for further examination and pending reference to Government.

I have etc,

Signed J Dalziel, P.M.

2. Queen's Advocate Office, Colombo, 14 July 1858

Sir,

With reference to your letter No 140 of the 12th instant, I have the honor to state that the communication of the Police Magistrate should be transmitted to the Authorities in Swan River, Australia, and that John Gothard should in the meantime be detained in Custody. It must depend upon their reply whether he is sent on or released.

I have etc,

Signed Richard F Morgan

3. William Sidon and John Goden stowed themselves away on this ship - at - King Geo^s Sound - on the 23 March last - & left at Pt de Galle. M Murphy, Chief Officer, SS "Emeu"

No further trace has been found of John Godderd. As his sentence expired in October 1858, it seems unlikely he would have been punished further. His co-accused, George Rogers, spent time at Boaz Island, Bermuda, before being returned to England on 21 February 1854 and discharged.

¹ HO107, Piece: 1143, Book: 4, Folio: 20, p1

² Birmingham Journal, 22 April 1843, p6

³ HO 27, Piece: 71, p332

⁴ HO26, Piece 86, p309; Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 10 January 1848, p2

⁵ Birmingham Journal, 30 September 1848, p8

⁶ Birmingham Journal, 21 October 1848, p8

⁷ PCOM2/383, p157; HO23/8

⁸ SROWA Acc 128/40 - 43

⁹ NSW Archives, Index to Colonial Secretary Letters Received, Citation: [4/3386] Letter no 58/3752, Start Date: 01/01/1858