

Matthew Molyneux, 6145, *Lincelles*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Real name: Matthew Sweeney or Sweeny

'You're a good old criminal,' said Mr Wilshire, addressing Matthew Jones, at the Central Police Court on Saturday. Jones, a thin-faced, grey haired individual, stood in the dock. He saluted the magistrate in semi-military fashion, and smiled.¹ Jones was one of nine *aliases* used by Matthew Sweeney.

Born	14 August 1839, Manchester, Lancashire, England ²
Parents	Matthew Sweeney and Ann Mullineux [Molineux]
Parent's marriage	7 September 1829, Ashton under Lyne, Lancashire
Siblings	Mary Ann (1830), Margaret (~1832), John (~1836)

On the 1841 census, the family lived at 11 Hargreaves Street, Manchester. Matthew Sweeney, 20 (*sic*), calico printer, born in Ireland; his wife Ann, 30; and children Margaret, 8, John, 6, and Martha (*sic*), 2, were all born in Lancashire. Matthew was recorded as Martha, and Mary Ann appears to have died.

By 1851, the family had moved to No 2 Passage, Gun Street, Manchester:
Martin Sweeney, 40, block printer, born in Ireland
Ann, wife, 40, born in Ireland (*sic*)
Margaret, daughter, 19, doubler [doubler as someone who operates a machine that twists two or more strands of cotton fibre together to form a thread]
John, son, 15, a print worker
Matthew, son, 11, scholar
and two lodgers

Matthew's parents and sister lived at 38 Dryden Street, Manchester, in 1861.
Matthew Sweeney, 56, calico printer, born in Ireland; Ann, 54, born in West Houghton, Lancashire;
Margaret, 32, born in Manchester.

In 1854, using an *alias*, Matthew was convicted:
2995. John Seddon, 16, single, R&W, labourer, convicted of larceny (stealing one purse and one-half sovereign) after a previous conviction of felony on 20 October 1854 at the General Quarter Sessions held at Kingston-upon-Hull, sentenced to 4 years penal servitude.

He spent:

Hull Gaol - 2 months and 20 days where his behaviour was very bad.

Millbank Prison - one month and 8 days where his behaviour was good.

Pentonville Prison - 9 months and 21 days, where again, his behaviour was very bad.

John Seddon was transferred to Portsmouth Prison on 10 December 1855. After almost 3 years, he was discharged on 19 October 1858.³

According to the prison register, young Matthew's career in crime began at the Sheffield Summer Sessions in 1853 when he was sentenced to 6 months in Wakefield prison. This offence has not been found.

However, this may be an earlier crime:

¹ The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express (NSW : 1860 - 1938), 13 April 1906, p28

² GRO Reference: 1839 S Quarter in MANCHESTER Volume 20 Page 547

³ TNA, PCOM2/107

At the Salford Borough Court, on Monday [9 May 1853], a youth named Matthew Sweeney was committed to prison for a month for attempting to pick pockets at a mock auction, in Shudehill Market, on Saturday night.⁴

At some stage, he began to use a variation of his mother's maiden name and became Matthew Molyneux. He had two summary offences before being convicted in 1860 for a felony.

At the New Bailey Manchester in May 1860, William Wood and Matthew Molyneux were charged with one of the most brazen and daring robberies ever. The robbery took place on Saturday afternoon, two o'clock, on the roadway Chorlton-cum-Hardy, not far from Trafford Road. It was raining at the time of the robbery, which, no doubt, the prisoners fancied would favour their evil intentions. A married lady was proceeding home at the time named when the prisoners attacked her. Wood held her by the throat while Molyneux took a shawl, satchel containing money, and other articles valued at £3. The lady fainted and fell on the ground, but fortunately, a slight scream that she uttered was heard by some gardeners and other persons, and seeing what the prisoners were doing; they gave chase, and both were captured. The prisoner, Wood, is a tall, stout man and is partly blind or professes to be so. Molyneux is shorter and apparently a younger man. Mr F. Burghardts, a gardener, captured Molyneux after a good run, and he had in his possession some of the stolen property. Wood was captured by another man who witnessed the robbery named Kenyon. The two prisoners were remanded.⁵

At their trial in August 1860, William Wood, 30, and Matthew Molyneux, 19, were indicted for highway robbery. The prosecutrix, Mary Kemp, while on her way from Manchester to Chorlton-cum-Hardy met the prisoners, one of whom held her while the other affected a robbery from her person of 3s, a shawl, and other articles. Both the prisoners were found guilty and previous convictions were proved. Both prisoners were sentenced to 20 years of penal servitude.⁶

The Prison Registers record that Matthew was committed on 21 May 1860 at Salford and convicted on 8 August 1860 at Liverpool Assizes of robbery together with another and with violence. He received 20 years of penal servitude. Initially, he was in Kirkdale Prison from 8 August 1860 to 4 October, where his conduct was good. He was then sent to Wakefield Prison from 5 October to 2 July 1861, where his conduct was indifferent. Matthew was then transferred to Portland Prison, where the register noted:

Matthew Molyneux, upholster, received on 3 July 1861 from Wakefield Prison, 3rd class. He was 21, single, could read and write well, his progress at school was fair, Church of England, his father, Matthew Sweeney, lived at 38 Dryden Street, Manchester.

Previous convictions:

October 1854 as John Seddon, stealing purse and money, 4 years

Summary convictions:

7 December 1858, drunk, three days

9 April 1860, reputed thief, one month

Matthew was at Portland Prison from 3 July 1861 to 23 September 1861; his conduct was generally good. Except, on 3 August 1861, he assaulted another prisoner, and was degraded to 3rd class with three days added to his sentence. Matthew boarded the *Lincelles* on 23 September 1861 for the voyage to Western Australia, and his partner in crime, William Wood, arrived in Western Australia per *York* in 1862.⁷

⁴ Manchester Courier, 14 May 1853, p9

⁵ Shields Daily Gazette, 17 May 1860, p2

⁶ Liverpool Daily Post, 13 August 1860, p7

⁷ TNA, PCOM2/373; PCOM2/398

On arrival at Fremantle on 28 January 1862, he was described as:
 6145. Matthew Molyneux, 21, 5'5¼", brown hair, hazel eyes, an oval-shaped face, sallow complexion, middling stout build, has a crucifix tattoo on left arm, is an upholsterer and single.

Matthew continued his wayward life, as can be seen from his prison record in New South Wales:

Record sheet

11905. John Dawson *alias* Matthew Jones, Joseph Martin, Edward Fitzgerald, Matthew Molyneux, John Thompson, John Connolly, Martin Sweeney.

Born - 14 August 1838 (*sic*), England

Arrived in the colony (NSW) – unknown

Carpenter, Catholic and he can read and write

5'4⁷/₈"

Weighs 134 pounds

Grey hair, grey eyes

Crucifix outside left forearm, scar under the left forearm, finger short and twisted, face and neck deeply lined, large scar on the left side of the spinal column.

Hull Sessions	October 1854	stealing a purse	4 years penal servitude
Manchester Sessions	9 April 1860	reputed thief	one month hard labour
Liverpool Sessions	8 August 1860	robbery with violence	20 years penal servitude
Western Australia	13 June 1868	unlawful communication with convicts	one month hard labour
Western Australia	11 August 1868,	entering a house with intent to commit a felony	2 years hard labour
<p>The Deanery was entered by thieves, and on being disturbed by a servant girl, ran away. Later in the evening, Archdeacon Brown heard unusual sounds and, on investigating, found a man concealed under the stairs. A police constable was nearby and arrested the man. On being taken to the lock-up, he was found to be Matthew Molyneux, tol holder, in the employ of Mr Mason. Molyneux was convicted the following day and sentenced to 2 years hard labour, with one month to be served in solitary confinement.⁸</p>			
Western Australia	18 September 1869	absconding from road party	12 months in irons
Western Australia	18 August 1871	illegally at large in Fremantle district	3 months hard labour
Western Australia	8 January 1871	absconding from lodgings	14 days
Western Australia	8 January 1872	unlawful possession of certificate of freedom	3 months hard labour
Western Australia	25 September 1872	drunk and profane language	10s or 14 days hard labour
Western Australia	16 February 1872	out after hours	7 days hard labour
Western Australia	26 December 1872	out after hours	one month hard labour
Western Australia	5 April 1873	illegally at large in Fremantle district	3 months hard labour
Western Australia	7 April 1873	drunk and disorderly	6 months hard labour

⁸ The Inquirer and Commercial News (Perth, Western Australia : 1855 - 1901), 19 Aug 1868, p3

Western Australia	26 February 1874	assault of police	2 months hard labour
Western Australia	26 February 1874	drunk	one month hard labour
Western Australia	13 February 1875	stealing tools	12 months hard labour
Western Australia	7 February 1876	drunk and disorderly	fined 5s
Western Australia	9 June 1876	unlawful intercourse with convicts	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	13 March 1877	assault	fined 10s
Western Australia	16 July 1877	absent from lodgings	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	25 September 1877	fighting	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	25 September 1877	drunk	10s or 7 days hard labour; paid fine
Western Australia	19 December 1877	drunk	fined 5s
Western Australia	19 December 1877	breach of peace	fined 5s
<p>Matthew Moylneux, tol, was charged with being drunk and fighting in the York Hotel on 18 December. Fined 10s or 14 days in prison.⁹</p>			
Western Australia	6 February 1878	violently resisting police	one month hard labour
Western Australia	6 February 1878	obscene language	one month hard labour
Western Australia	6 February 1878	loitering about hotels	one month hard labour
Western Australia	26 September 1878	out after hours	one month hard labour
Western Australia	27 January 1879	drunk and disorderly	20s or 7 days hard labour
Western Australia	27 January 1879	out after hours	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	27 January 1879	violently resisting police	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	7 June 1879	drunk while on a pass	one month hard labour
Western Australia	7 June 1879	obscene language	40s or one month hard labour
Western Australia	9 August 1879	drunk and disorderly	2 months hard labour
Western Australia	9 August 1879	obscene language	40s or one month hard labour
Western Australia	9 August 1879	violent assault on police	3 months hard labour
Western Australia	28 February 1881	drunk and disorderly	5s or 7 days hard labour; paid fine
Western Australia	1 April 1881	absent from lodgings	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	1 April 1881	drunk	14 days hard labour
Western Australia	22 July 1881	drunk	10s or 14 days hard labour
Western Australia	30 September 1881	out after hours	one month hard labour
Western Australia	31 October 1881	out after hours	one month hard labour
Western Australia	19 December 1881	out after hours	one month hard labour
Western Australia	20 December 1881	breakout of Geraldton Gaol	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	27 July 1882	threatening	sureties or 6 months hard labour
Western Australia	27 July 1882	drunk	one month hard labour
Western Australia	27 July 1882	assaulting police	one month hard labour
Western Australia	27 July 1882	assault	one month hard labour
Western Australia	30 December 1882	stealing a watch and chain	3 years penal servitude
Western Australia	7 August 1884	illegally at large	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	16 August 1884	refusing to work	3 days bread and water
Western Australia	24 April 1885	threatening the Comptroller	2 months hard labour

⁹ Eastern Districts Chronicle (York, Western Australia : 1877 - 1927), 22 Dec 1877, p2

Western Australia	24 April 1885	drunk and disorderly	21 days hard labour
Western Australia	24 April 1885	illegally at large	4 months hard labour
Western Australia	15 December 1885	larceny and receiving	7 years penal servitude
<p>Mathew Molyneux and Henry Romer, two elderly men, were indicted for the larceny of a purse containing money, from the person of one Patrick James Jordan, at Fremantle, on 16 November 1885.</p> <p>Jordan is a travelling hawker, and he was at Fremantle on the day in question. Early in the afternoon, he went to the Pier Hotel, where he had a glass or two of ale. At that time, the purse in his possession contained three cheques valued at £15 14s, six £1 notes, about 9s in silver, a lock of hair, three gold rings, some private memoranda, a dog license, and a cart license. On leaving the Pier Hotel, he went to Caesar's, where he had more drink and fell asleep. When he woke up, his property was gone. It was shown that both the prisoners were at Caesar's at the same time as Jordan and that they had an opportunity to steal the missing purse.</p> <p>Later in the afternoon, two young women, Hannah Swaine and Eliza McKenna, were on the beach at Fremantle, and they saw both the prisoners coming down from the direction of Caesar's hotel to the beach, where they sat down. The young women heard one of them reading over some papers to the other, and they saw them scooping out a hole in the sand, depositing something, and covering it up. When the two men left, the young women went to the spot and found some of the papers stolen from Jordan, including the licenses. More missing articles were found on a further search in the same spot. The cheques were presumably destroyed, as no trace of them had been discovered. Concerning the money, the prosecution relied upon the fact that Molyneux was known to have been short of funds before the robbery. Afterwards very free with his money, paying a week's lodging in advance, appearing in a new suit of clothes, and having a good time generally. However, the two young women referred to were the principal witnesses against the prisoners.</p> <p>The prisoner Molyneux conducted his defence with much impudence, cross-examining the witnesses for the prosecution at some length but to very little purpose. Romer, the other prisoner, maintained a discreet silence.</p> <p>In summing up the evidence, the Attorney General said if the two men in the dock were the two men seen by the two young women on the beach, there was an end to the case. Jordan had these articles in his possession when he went to sleep at Caesar's. The prisoners had an opportunity to steal the items; within a few minutes of the robbery, they were found dealing with them on the beach and could not reasonably explain how they became possessed of them.</p> <p>The prisoners, in their defence, denied the charge, alleging that the case was one of mistaken identity. After a brief deliberation, the jury found the prisoner Molyneux guilty but acquitted Romer. Molyneux, who bore a very bad character, was sentenced to 7 years of penal servitude.¹⁰</p>			
Western Australia	12 January 1891	stealing	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	4 June 1891	stealing	6 months hard labour
<p>Perth Police Court. Matthew Molyneux, tol, who presented a bruised and battered appearance, was charged with stealing an overcoat, the property of Samuel Freedman. The prisoner pleaded not guilty. Harry Freedman said he kept a store for his brother Samuel. The prisoner was standing outside at 5:30 pm, and he snatched a coat from the door and ran away. Freedman ran after him, took possession of the coat, and turned the prisoner and coat over to the police. The constable said he arrested the prisoner in Murray Street. The prisoner had a very bad record and was a notorious thief; he was sentenced to 6 months hard labour.¹¹</p>			
Western Australia	25 November 1891	illegally at large	one month hard labour
Western Australia	26 November 1891	stealing	3 months hard labour
Western Australia	27 November 1891	housebreaking and stealing	2 years hard labour

¹⁰ Western Mail (Perth, Western Australia : 1885 - 1954), 19 December 1885, p38

¹¹ The Daily News (Perth, Western Australia : 1882 - 1955), 4 Jun 1891, p3

Western Australia	23 December 1893	disorderly	one month hard labour
Western Australia	29 December 1893	stealing	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	29 December 1893	unlawful possession	one month hard labour
Western Australia	28 September 1894	stealing	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	28 September 1894	stealing	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	28 September 1894	stealing	6 months hard labour
Western Australia	29 November 1895	stealing	9 months hard labour

Matthew Molyneux, tol, Reg. No. 6145, slight build, aged 58, 5'5¼", grey hair, hazel eyes, oval visage, sallow complexion, a crucifix on left arm, native of England, absconded from Perth district on 25 December 1896.¹²

Central Police Court	10 May 1898	stealing	£3 or 3 months hard labour
Central Police Court	10 August 1898	stealing	3 months hard labour
Newtown Police Court	14 November 1898	stealing	one month hard labour
Central Police Court	13 February 1899	stealing	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	29 August 1899	stealing	one month hard labour
Central Police Court	3 October 1899	attempting to steal from the person	6 months hard labour
Water Police Court	4 October 1900	stealing from the person	6 months hard labour
North Sydney Police Court	11 April 1901	suspected person	14 days hard labour
Water Police Court	24 May 1901	stealing	6 months hard labour
Water Police Court	24 May 1901	having supposed stolen property	one month hard labour
Water Police Court	2 May 1902	stealing	21 days hard labour
Water Police Court	3 May 1902	having supposed stolen property	20s or 7 days hard labour
Newcastle Police Court	24 February 1902	stealing	£3 or 2 months hard labour
Central Police Court	5 June 1902	suspected person	6 months hard labour
Water Police Court	11 December 1902	stealing from the person	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	13 June 1903	stealing	one month hard labour
Central Police Court	16 July 1902	stealing	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	18 March 1904	stealing from the person	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	29 September 1904	stealing carpet	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	25 April 1905	suspected person	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	31 October 1905	stealing from the person	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	6 April 1906	having supposed stolen property	3 months hard labour
Central Police Court	16 August 1906	suspected person	6 months hard labour
Central Police Court	27 April 1907	damaging Government property	23/3(?) or 14 days hard labour
Central Police Court	29 April 1907	stealing	6 month hard labour

Fifty Years in Gaol - An Old Thief's Record

A grey-bearded man of 67, who gave his name as Matthew Jones, and said he was a carpenter, appeared in the Central Police Court this morning, charged with having stolen a lady's jacket from Messrs. Goulston Brothers, George-street, Sydney.

Jones is quite a character in his way — almost a celebrity, for he has nearly as many *aliases* as sentences. Among the names he affects are *John Connelly, Matthew Sweeney, Joseph Martin, Edward*

¹² Police Gazette, 1 September 1897, p259

Fitzgerald, Matthew Molyneux and John Thompson.

He started his career in crime in Hull (England) as far back as October 1854, when he received 4 years for stealing. He then transferred his attention to Manchester and Liverpool, where, in the latter town in the old country, he got 20 years penal servitude for robbery with violence. He was sent to Western Australia to undergo his sentence, and since then has accumulated a list of 31 convictions against his names of 6 months and over and 60 convictions of 3 months and under. His sentences total 50 years and 5 months in gaol.

Constable Joyce stated he saw the accused trying to pledge the jacket (produced) in a Liverpool-street pawnshop on Friday.

Solomon Goulston gave evidence that the jacket was his property and had been exposed to view in front of his shop.

"I beg pardon. I was very drunk, and I don't know anything about it. I'd like to be dealt with here, thank you," said Jones.

The list of Jones' sentences was read out to the magistrate, who remarked, "If you get before one of the judges; of the higher court, you'll be dealt with as a habitual criminal. It is no use giving a man of your stamp a light sentence. You are sentenced to six months hard labour."¹³

Sydney Quarter Sessions	9 June 1911	larceny	6 months hard labour
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John Dawson al *Matthew Jones*, larceny, convicted Sydney Quarter Sessions on 31 May 1911, 6 months hard labour.¹⁴



A portrait was taken of *John Dawson* on 9 June 1911.

Matthew Molyneux would be 72 years old.

NSW Archives Collection Gaol inmates & prisoners photos index 1870-1930, John Dawson, NRS-2138 [3/6077] p61-4

What became of Matthew Molyneux after 1911 has not been discovered yet.

¹³ Evening News (Sydney, NSW : 1869 - 1931), 29 April 1907, p3

¹⁴ New South Wales Police Gazette and Weekly Record of Crime (Sydney : 1860 - 1930), 19 July 1911 [Issue No.29], p270