

The first record found of Stephen Williams was in December 1846, when he was indicted for uttering forged shipping notes at Liverpool. He was convicted on 20 March 1847.

FORGERY, Stephen Williams, a man of colour, was then indicted for forging and uttering two forged shipping notes for the payment of £2 10s each to Owen Miller, of Liverpool, on 24 December last, knowing the same to have been forged. The forgery was committed Messrs. Duncan Gibb and Co. In his defence, the prisoner stated that he did utter the notes in question but was ignorant of the forgery. He said they were given to him, with a request to get them cashed, and that he did get them cashed; forged.—Guilty of uttering the forged notes, but not guilty of forging.—Sentenced to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for one year.¹

Charles North, who was acquitted at the same Lancashire County Sessions held at Liverpool, was also a man of colour. Liverpool Gaol, 1846-7.²

<i>Dec 28</i>	64	CHARLES NORTH <i>By E. Rushton, Esq. } 28th December.</i>	28	N.	Having, at Liverpool, feloniously uttered to Owen Miller a certain forged undertaking for the payment of £2 10s, well knowing the same to be false and counterfeit.
<i>12 Mos.</i>	65	STEPHEN WILLIAMS ... <i>By E. Rushton, Esq. } 30th December.</i>	30	N.	Having, at Liverpool, feloniously uttered to Owen Miller two forged undertakings for the payment of £2 10s each, well knowing the same to be forged and counterfeit.

Almost a year after being released from Gaol, Stephen was mentioned in the newspapers: SWINDLING. Stephen Williams, a man of colour, was charged with obtaining money and goods by false pretences. The prisoner had gone to various persons and represented that he was a seaman about to sail from this port. In order to give plausibility to his story, he produced notes that appeared to be shipping notes. However, which were merely bills of parcels, one of them bore a signature, but it was not of any person known in the town and did not constitute a forgery. A number of persons appeared in court who had been victims of the frauds committed by the prisoner. Mr Rushton said the prisoner had very dexterously contrived to keep on the windy side of the law, and he could not detain him. He recommended that those who had been defrauded proceed against him in the County Court.³

Later in the year, Stephen, who had perfected his "technique", again avoided being charged with any offence.

A PRACTISED SWINDLER. On Saturday, Stephen Williams, a man of colour dressed in the garb of a seaman, was brought before Mr Rushton on a charge of obtaining 20s 6d and a handkerchief by false pretences. A few days ago, the prisoner went to a boarding house kept by Mr John Seed and represented himself as a steward of the ship *Mary Johnson*. As his story was believed, he was admitted as a lodger. No sooner as he gained the confidence of his landlord, he borrowed the money and property above named, with which he decamped and did not return again to the house. On being discovered he was given into custody. Mr Rushton said that he could not do anything in the case, as the prisoner had been taken in as a lodger and the money lent to him. The chief superintendent of police said the prisoner had been brought to the police office at least twenty times within the last two months for offences of a similar character to that now charged against him.

¹ Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser, 30 March 1847, p8, TNE, UK, HO27/82, p89

² TNA, UK, PCOM2/322

³ Liverpool Mercury, 27 February 1849, p4

He had been living for the last twelve months by the practice of swindling. The prisoner was discharged.⁴

His luck finally ran out:

An old rogue secured. A black man named Stephen Williams was charged at the Police court on Tuesday by Mary Welsh with obtaining £1.9s from her by false pretences. It appeared that the woman's husband was in gaol for three months for stealing a piece of pork, and the prisoner, having knowledge of the fact, went to her house on Saturday and promised to get him out on bail if she would advance thirty shillings to defray the expences. The prosecutor pledged various articles of clothing but was only able to raise twenty-nine shillings, which she gave to the prisoner, who took her to the Police office and left her outside a few minutes whilst he went in. He then told her that it was all right and that her husband would be discharged on Monday morning. Monday came, but not the husband, and then Mr Williams was sought after, found, and on Tuesday. He was committed to trial, and the magistrate observed that his long career would be closed. He had frequently been there before and had managed to rob about fifty people during the last month but had kept discreetly on the windy side of the law that there had been no getting hold of him.⁵

Stephen Williams, 34, single, a sailor, was convicted on 23 July 1849 at Liverpool Sessions with obtaining money by false pretences with intent to cheat. He was sentenced to 7 years transportation, and was sent to Wakefield Prison on 18 August 1849. He had been convicted once at the Assizes and discharged 7 times from court. On 19 July 1850, he was transferred to Portland Prison and boarded *Marion* on 29 October 1851 for Western Australia.⁶

The *Marion* arrived at Fremantle on 31 January 1852.

1150 Stephen Williams, 36, 5'10", with dark hair, dark eyes, a round face, dark complexion, stout, burn on the left cheek, steward and cook and single. He was issued a Ticket of Leave on arrival.

It was not long before Stephen appeared in court.

Fremantle, 2 April 1852— Stephen Williams, ticket-of-leave holder, brought before the Bench, charged with absconding from his employer, and ordered to return to his service.⁷

Then, on 6 November 1852 at the Fremantle Court, Stephen Williams, t.l, charged with refusing to work, was admonished and ordered to return to his duty, or to be imprisoned for three months.⁸

Stephen appears to have behaved himself until 1855, when he was charged at Perth on 16 August 1855 for obtaining goods under false pretences. He was committed for trial at Quarter Sessions.⁹ At the Quarter Sessions, on 3 October 1855. Stephen pleaded guilty to the charge of obtaining goods on false pretences from Mr Thomas Mason of Perth and was sentenced to 7 years transportation.¹⁰

He was assigned No.3712 as a Colonial Prisoner. Register 19, Character Book records Stephen as having a very good character. He was now aged 40, 5'10", a man of colour, burn on the left cheek, single, no children, and a carpenter, and he could now read and write.

While in prison, he appears on the sick list a few times, mostly with regular illnesses. On 7 March 1857, he had a boil on his finger, treated with poultice. His occupation was sailmaker.¹¹ He was discharged to Ticket of Leave on 18 November 1858.

⁴ Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser, 24 April 1849, p6

⁵ Liverpool Albion, 25 June 1849, p3; Liverpool Mail, 23 June 1849, p3

⁶ TNA, UK, PCOM2/383, HO23/14

⁷ Inquirer, 21 Apr 1852, p3

⁸ Inquirer, 8 Dec 1852, p3

⁹ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 24 Aug 1855, p3

¹⁰ The Inquirer and Commercial News, 10 Oct 1855, p2

¹¹ SROWA, Acc 1156/M14-M16.

On 25 February 1859, there is an S. Williams, a passenger on *New Perseverance* bound for Champion Bay. This appears to be Stephen.¹²

The following year, on 4 April 1860, he was convicted in the Victoria district for being in a dwelling house for an unlawful purpose. He was sentenced to 3 months. On 13 April 1860, S. Williams arrived per *Preston* from Champion Bay and was received at Fremantle Prison the same day.¹³

On 17 April 1860, the authorities received a deposition. He appears to be asking for a Conditional Pardon. Denied 1 March 1860.

4 July 1860, he was sent to Mt Eliza depot.

10 July 1860, discharged to Ticket of Leave.

27 September 1860, a letter was received by the authorities questioning if a "released from prison" license is available. The request was being considered and apparently denied.

Stephen was working in York when, on 7 November 1860, he was charged with absconding from his Master. He was cautioned and sent back to his Master. On 11 December 1860, he was charged with neglect of work and sentenced to 7 days and to pay costs 5/-.

The following year, 1861, he continued to make appearances at court in York:

30 April 1861, drunk, severely cautioned.

21 August 1861, fighting, severely cautioned.

25 October 1861, out after hours, sentenced to H. M. pleasure. He was returned to Fremantle Prison, arriving on 5 November 1861. Two weeks later, he was discharged to Ticket of Leave on 21 November 1861.

Then, in 1862, he received this letter in reply to his enquiry:

9 April 1862. Letter 57. Letter from 3712 S. Williams requesting permission to leave the Colony. Submitted to His Excellency this man is a Colonial prisoner, a native of America, a coloured man. There is no reason why he should not be allowed to leave the Colony. It is usual to notify the Superintendent of Water Police and the Collector of Customs, no authorized documents in the shape of C.P. being in existence for Colonial prisoners. E.Y.W.H.¹⁴

It would appear Stephen was keen to leave but had no money to pay for a passage. The answer – back to his old ways!

On 22 May 1862, at Fremantle, charged with obtaining money under false pretences, Stephen was sentenced to 6 months in Convict Establishment. He was discharged again to a Ticket of Leave. On 24 November 1862, he breached the Ticket of Leave regulations at Perth and was cautioned.¹⁵

Another conviction:

10 January 1863 at Perth. Stephen Williams, t.l., charged with obtaining from Thomas Evoy in November last, 19s 6s in money, and board and lodging, under false pretences; sentenced to 2 years imprisonment with hard labour.¹⁶

2 July 1864. The following reconvicted prisoners have been approved for probation at Road Party on the dates against their respective names: 3712 Stephen Williams for 2 months on the 11th instant. Later in the year, on 20 August 1864, Reconvicted Prisoner 3712 Stephen Williams, having an approved engagement, will be discharged to Ticket of Leave from Fremantle Prison.¹⁷ He was engaged by J Henderson at Fremantle, working as a cook for 30/- per month.¹⁸

¹² The Inquirer and Commercial News, 2 Mar 1859, p2

¹³ The Inquirer and Commercial News, 25 Apr 1860, p2

¹⁴ SROWA, Acc 1156/C36, Comptroller General Outward Letterbook.

¹⁵ The Inquirer and Commercial News, 3 Dec 1862, p2.

¹⁶ The Inquirer and Commercial News, 28 Jan 1863, p3.

¹⁷ SROWA, Acc 1156/R&D3-R&D4

¹⁸ SROWA, SROWA, Acc 1156/R12

What happened to Stephen Williams? He would now be in his early 50s. The following records may be Stephen returning to England and working there.

The *Hastings* left Fremantle for London via Champion Bay on 6 September 1869. S. Williams was a steerage passenger.¹⁹

In 1871, Fraudulent use of a Certificate. Stephen Williams, a coloured seaman, was brought up on remand and charged with making use of a certificate of character and discharge that did not belong to him. It appeared from the evidence that a crew was being shipped for the vessel *Henriette*, bound for the West Coast of Africa on the 30 September, when the prisoner presented a certificate purporting to be his own and made out in the name of William Ramsay. It was marked V.G. for conduct and ability. No suspicion was aroused until the prisoner signed in the name of James Ramsay – an oversight on his part which at once exposed the fraud. He then admitted that the certificate had been given to him by a man in the street. The judge said there appeared to be an increase in such cases appearing in the courts. He fined Stephen Williams £5 or two months imprisonment.²⁰

Londonderry Petty Sessions. Johannes M Zwartzes, a Swedish sailor, summoned Dugald Cameron, Master of the brig *Alexandra*, now in this port, to recover the sum of 15/-, balance of wages due him, and also for an assault alleged to have been committed on him about the 5th instant, while on board the vessel, during the voyage from Sweden to the port of Londonderry. The court dismissed the wages case. On the assault charge, one of the witnesses was Stephen Williams, a man of colour, cook and steward on board. The court found Captain Cameron guilty and fined him 50/- and costs 10/-.²¹

Londonderry. Wages Claim. Stephen Williams, a coloured seaman, sought to recover £18, wages alleged to be due to him by Dugald Cameron, Master of the schooner *Alexandra*. On the hearing of the case, it transpired that several sums of money had been advanced to the complainant, who, it alleged, refused to call at the shipping office for the balance of wages due to him. Their Worship granted a decree for £7 10s and court costs.²²

¹⁹ The Perth Gazette and West Australian Times, 10 Sep 1869, p2

²⁰ Liverpool Journal of Commerce, 03 October 1870, p3; 08 October 1870, p3

²¹ Londonderry Sentinel, 25 August 1871, p2

²² Londonderry Sentinel, 01 September 1871, p2