

**William SIDEBOTTOM: A Stonemason and his Family**

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On a crisp, sunny morning in Gosford NSW, I found myself kneeling on the damp grass. As I traced the inscription, the sandstone was rough under my fingers.<sup>1</sup> It had been protected all these years, perhaps even cherished, and the words were still completely legible: *W & A Sidebottom Masons 1836*.

I thought about the man who had crafted this work; he had made sure to include his brother, Abraham ('A'), who had cut the stone for him.<sup>2</sup> Had he hoped that their names would not be forgotten, here on the other side of the world? Could he have thought that one day his great-great-great granddaughter would come, to see and touch the same stone that his hands had proudly sanded, shaped and carved? Seeing the building's arched doorways and solid walls, I knew these skills would have been passed down through families, generation to generation. What was William SIDEBOTTOM's history?

William completed the inscription when he had been in New South Wales for nearly 6 years. Arriving on the *Florentia II* on 15 December 1830, transported for Life, having been convicted at Lancaster Assizes on 6 March 1830 for "*knowingly uttering forged £5 notes*". Aged 30, a Protestant, he was married with a wife and 5 children; a native of Cheshire, he could read and write; his occupation was noted as Wheelwright & Millwright. He was assigned to F A HELY<sup>3</sup> who may have known, or quickly realised, that William was a trained stonemason and would be of great assistance in HELY's building projects at 'Wyoming' near Gosford.<sup>4</sup>

William was skilled in other ways too; in October 1835, he had been asked to "bleed" Sarah RICHARDS who had collapsed.<sup>5</sup> He was also working for himself; on 14th December 1835 he presented a bill of £4.5s.0d for building a stone chimney to the lock-up at Brisbane Water; he signed the receipt 7th June 1836.<sup>6</sup> The stone mausoleum built at 'Wyoming' was used for the burial of F A HELY in September 1836.<sup>7</sup>

When William applied for his Ticket of Leave in September 1838<sup>8</sup> (granted 18 February 1839<sup>9</sup>), he was probably hoping that his wife and family would join him. But he had received news from friends that his wife had died.<sup>10</sup> Revd Edward ROGERS wrote to the Colonial Secretary on 14 December 1840, applying for permission to publish the marriage banns at Brisbane Water for William SIDEBOTTOM and Sarah JONES, "*he swore his oath before me ... declared that his wife is dead ... she fell victim to the Colera Morbus*"<sup>11</sup>, but permission was refused on 1 February 1841, on the basis of "*it is not the custom to take the uncorroborated statement on oath of prisoners in such cases.*"<sup>12</sup>

The 1841 Census Return for Brisbane Water paints a lonely picture of William; the other households listed on that page consist of groups of people, but William is by himself – a single man between 45 and 60, a member of the Church of Scotland, an artificer.<sup>13</sup> William would have been occupied with the construction of the Parsonage at Brisbane Water; the final accounts for the building show the total payment for his work was £405.5s.6d (cost of the building was £656).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To respect the privacy of the owners of the property, I have not included its location

<sup>2</sup> Personal correspondence: information from a grandson of Abraham SIDEBOTTOM dated 21 September 1984

<sup>3</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 12188, Bound manuscript indents 1788-1835, 4/4106, pp16-17, *Florentia II*, Reel 905

<sup>4</sup> Gosford City Council *History of Wyoming*, Local Studies Librarian, Gosford City Council, [www.gosford.nsw.gov.au/library/local\\_history/Suburbs/documents/wyoming.html](http://www.gosford.nsw.gov.au/library/local_history/Suburbs/documents/wyoming.html)

<sup>5</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3016, (Gosford) Copies of letters sent, 4/5526, Inquest 17 Oct 1835, Reel 895

<sup>6</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3025, Miscellaneous Returns of the Police Establishment at Brisbane Water, 1835-1840, 4/5525 p59, 1st Oct to 31st Dec 1835, Reel 895

<sup>7</sup> Gosford City Council *History of Wyoming*, Local Studies Librarian, Gosford City Council, [www.gosford.nsw.gov.au/library/local\\_history/Suburbs/documents/wyoming.html](http://www.gosford.nsw.gov.au/library/local_history/Suburbs/documents/wyoming.html)

<sup>8</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3016, Copies of letters sent, 4/5526, pp178-179, Permission from Mrs Hely, Reel 2663

<sup>9</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 12202, Ticket of Leave Butts 1 Feb-1 May 1839, 4/4127, No 39/306, Reel 932

<sup>10</sup> State Records NSW: CSIL 40/12683, Main series of letters received, 1841 Clergy – Church of England, 4/2522.5, Reel 739

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 1281, 1841 Census Returns, X946, p91, Brisbane Water District, Reel 2222

<sup>14</sup> Charles Swancott, *Gosford and the Kendall County*, Woy Woy, Australia, self-published, 1966, p213

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Revd ROGERS applied twice more for permission to marry William and Sarah, but it was not until 20 January 1842 that permission was finally given<sup>15</sup> and they signed the Marriage Register at Brisbane Water on 31 January 1842.<sup>16</sup> Later that year, William requested the recommendation of Alfred HOLDEN (Police Magistrate at Gosford) for a Conditional Pardon. On 24 September 1842, HOLDEN wrote that he and Revd ROGERS believed that William SIDEBOTTOM was deserving of a Free [Absolute] pardon, rather than the Conditional pardon that he sought.<sup>17</sup>

On the 26 November 1842, William and Sarah's son was born, whom they named William.<sup>18</sup> Sadly, William senior only knew his son for a few months; at the age of 46 he died in the General Hospital in Sydney on 2 March 1843, "Free"<sup>19</sup> – Governor GIPPS had approved his Conditional Pardon on 1 October 1842.<sup>20</sup> William's estate included "... *cattle, house, furniture, money etc ...*".<sup>21</sup>

Were there other documents that would shed light on his life and that of his family prior to his transportation to NSW? His criminal Indictment stated "... *William Sidebottom late of Manchester in the County of Lancaster Labourer ... on the Twenty third day of September in the tenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Fourth [1820] ... feloniously did dispose of and put away a certain forged and counterfeit Bank Note ... with intent to defraud the Governor and Company of the Bank of England ...*"

This same charge was repeated three more times; each indictment was for a single £5 note. Hand drawn copies of each of the forged notes were included in the Indictment. At the very end of the indictment scroll, there is a final, initialled notation, "*March Assizes 1830. Tried and Guilty. To be hung by the Neck until he be dead.*"<sup>22</sup>

A newspaper article confirmed the details of the indictment and added, "*He stated that he had received the note [sic] from a person near Manchester to whom he had sold two beasts*". He spent the money on shoes and trowsers [sic] in Ashton-under-Lyne and later in Stayley Bridge, where the notes were found to be forged and where he was taken into custody.<sup>23</sup>

The death sentence was commuted to "*be transported to some parts beyond the seas for the term of his natural Life*" on 20 March 1830.<sup>24</sup> However, William's family and friends didn't abandon hope of improving his situation and on the 20 April 1830 a petition was presented "*on behalf of the wife of Sidebottom and his large family of young children*"<sup>25</sup> :

*"...The Petition of the undersigned inhabitants of Hollingworth in the County of Chester and its vicinity on behalf of William Sidebottom late of Hollingworth aforesaid but now a prisoner in Lancaster Castle under sentence of transportation ... said William Sidebottom is known to your petitioners. That previous to the offence for which he is now under sentence of transportation he had neither been convicted nor charged with any offence of a criminal nature. That he is about 33 years of age; and has a wife and five young children wholly dependent upon him for their support ... pray that your Majesty will take his case into your merciful consideration and will, so far mitigate his punishment as the nature of his offence will permit."*

<sup>15</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 12212, Convicts applications to marry – granted, 4/4513, p275, Reel 715

<sup>16</sup> NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages: Marriages in Brisbane Water, Volume 26C, Entry 592

<sup>17</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3016, Copies of letters sent, 4/5526, p322, Reply to letter 42/1960, Reel 2663

<sup>18</sup> NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages: Baptisms in Brisbane Water, Volume 26A, Entry 1570

<sup>19</sup> NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages: Burials in the Parish of St James, County of Cumberland, Volume 27B, Entry 982

<sup>20</sup> NSW Government Gazette No 107, 12th December 1843, p1632

<sup>21</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3016, Copies of letters sent, 4/5525, pp352-353, A Holden re Death of Sidebottom, Reel 895

<sup>22</sup> The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) PL26/106: Palatinate of Lancaster: Crown Court Indictment Files, PFF 3840

<sup>23</sup> *Wheeler's Manchester Chronicle* 13th March 1830, British Library Newspapers, Colindale Avenue, London, England

<sup>24</sup> The National Archives: PRO HO 6/15: Circuit Letters, Recorders' Reports & Judgements, Justices Recommendations 1830; Lancaster Lent Assizes, Pardons presented

<sup>25</sup> The National Archives: PRO HO 17/88: Criminal Petitions Series I, Qm-Qo; William Sidebottom, Qo 60, Lancaster 1830

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Twenty-one men signed the Petition, including Ralph SIDEBOTTOM (a surgeon and later Registrar for the district), William BRADLEY, John HYDE, John HOLLINGWORTH, Thomas DALTON, David TAYLOR, John TURNER (Churchwarden), John Buckley WOOD and John ROBERTS (both constables).<sup>26</sup>

Hollingworth was a township within the parish of Mottram-in-Longdendale in Cheshire, 12 miles east of Manchester, close to the county border with Lancashire.<sup>27</sup> The day he sold his cattle, William was returning on the Manchester Road, to his home at Hollingworth, passing through Ashton-under-Lyne and Stayley Bridge.

The petition had no effect and William was taken from Lancaster Castle to the *Cumberland* hulk on 28 May 1830, where he was described as being of “*peaceable disposition*”. He boarded the *Florentia II* on 4 August 1830.<sup>28</sup>

The Vestry Council for Mottram-in-Longdendale in 1829 included all the names noted from the petition, as well as George and Joe SIDEBOTTOM and others. In 1820, George, Joseph, John and two (!) William SIDEBOTTOMS were part of the Vestry Council.<sup>29</sup> The presence of other SIDEBOTTOM names in the Hollingworth area strongly indicated family connections.

Investigation of the baptism, marriage and burial registers of Mottram-in-Longdendale did not reveal any William SIDEBOTTOM with an occupation of stonemason, but there were other SIDEBOTTOMS who were stonemasons: James and Robert, both of whom had sons named John, Robert and William.<sup>30</sup>

The 1851 census produced more SIDEBOTTOM stonemasons in Mottram-in-Longdendale: John aged 32 and his wife; William aged 28 with his family and James’ son William aged 33, with his widowed mother.<sup>31</sup> From their marriage certificates<sup>32</sup>, Robert SIDEBOTTOM was the father of both John and the younger William. Another SIDEBOTTOM stonemason turned up on the marriage certificate of Ralph SIDEBOTTOM to Ann WARHURST in 1856; although the groom was a Spinner, he stated that his father was Isaac SIDEBOTTOM, stonemason.<sup>33</sup>

The death certificate of 1877 for Abraham SIDEBOTTOM in Minimi NSW lists his parents as William SIDEBOTTOM and Mary ACKENBOTTOM.<sup>34</sup> Abraham’s occupation is given as stonemason, and that of his father as “farmer” but Abraham was the farmer.<sup>35</sup> It was Abraham’s (and William’s) father who was the stonemason.

William SIDEBOTTOM married Mary HEGINBOTHAM at St Mary’s (Independent) in nearby Glossop, Derbyshire on 24 September 1787. The parish register shows that Mary signed her name. William made his mark and they were both of the parish of Glossop.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Pigot & Co, *1828-1829 Directory of Cheshire*, Archive CD Books, Gloucestershire, England, 2002, p41

<sup>28</sup> Australian Joint Copying Project: Register of convicts on the *Cumberland* hulk 1830-1833, with gaolers’ reports, PRO ADM 6/418, p15, Reel 1760

<sup>29</sup> *Parish chest and poor law records for Mottram-in-Longdendale, 1667-1875*, Genealogical Society of Utah Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Film 1656488

<sup>30</sup> *Parish register of Mottram-in-Longdendale, 1559-1988*, Genealogical Society of Utah Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Film 2107082

<sup>31</sup> The National Archives: PRO HO 107/2239, 1851 Census, Parish of Mottram-in-Longdendale, Cheshire

<sup>32</sup> General Register Office, England: John Sidebottom 28 July 1839 at Stayley Bridge, William Sidebottom 22 December 1844 in Manchester

<sup>33</sup> General Register Office, England: Marriage of Ralph Sidebottom 14 January 1856 in Ashton-under-Lyne

<sup>34</sup> NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages: Deaths registered in Wallsend NSW, No 7585

<sup>35</sup> State Records NSW: CGS 3019, Bench Book 26 Jul 1841-23 Aug 1855, 4/5560, pp74-87, Suspicion of Felony, Reel 665

<sup>36</sup> *Parish registers of the Parish Church of Glossop, Derby, 1620-1940*, Genealogical Society of Utah Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Film 1786026

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Within the parish of Glossop there was a Presbyterian<sup>37</sup> Chapel at Charlesworth and it was here that William, son of William and Mary SIDEBOTTOM, was baptised on 17 June 1796; his birth date was 9 June 1796.<sup>38</sup> This was “our” William; the birth date matched his burial record, the Hollingworth petition and the 1841 census entry and he was Presbyterian.

William and Mary SIDEBOTTOM baptised other children in the Charlesworth Chapel: Mary, Isaac, Betty, Hannah and Jane. Other SIDEBOTTOM couples also baptised their children in the Chapel at Charlesworth; familiar names repeatedly occur for these children: James, Robert, Isaac, John, William. The register did not note father’s occupations, but was William’s father a stonemason?

On 16 November 1803, William SIDEBOTTOM, stonemason, made an agreement with Thomas CARDWELL for building a school house at Wedensaugh [Green] in Hollingworth; William SIDEBOTTOM made his mark and agreed to have it finished by 13 May 1804 or pay a penalty of £5.<sup>39</sup>

It is likely that all these SIDEBOTTOM stonemasons were related; perhaps William had left behind a son, or sons, in Cheshire (“*five young children*” in the 1830 petition) who had followed his trade and became stonemasons too? One possibility from the 1860 census of Lamar County, Texas, USA is a Robert SIDEBOTTOM born circa 1826 in England, occupation: stone mason.<sup>40</sup> He named his sons Robert and William.<sup>41</sup> His story is still being researched, but he became a Confederate soldier in the American Civil War.<sup>42</sup>

What of William’s Australian son? Ironically, considering the trouble that cattle had caused his father, William junior became a teamster, running bullock teams carting cedar in northern NSW.<sup>43</sup> The stonemason connection was continued when William junior’s own son married the daughter of a stonemason.<sup>44</sup>

As research continues, more SIDEBOTTOM stonemasons and families are coming to light – in Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Henry SIDEBOTTOM, a stonemason aged 15, is in Manchester the census night of 1841<sup>45</sup> – are there other relatives in the area? The fascinating quest continues ...

<sup>37</sup> GENUKI: Derbyshire *Lysons’ Topographical & Historical Account of Derbyshire 1817, Magna Britannia Vol 5*, [www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DBY/Glossop/](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DBY/Glossop/)

<sup>38</sup> *Charlesworth Register Book, Independent Church of Glossop, Baptisms 1786-1837*, Genealogical Society of Utah Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Film 0590682

<sup>39</sup> Cheshire & Chester Archives & Local Studies Service: P166/5: Hollingworth Parish Records

<sup>40</sup> Ancestry.com: 1860 US Census, Precinct 6, Lamar, Texas, Roll M653\_1299, p133 [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

<sup>41</sup> Ancestry.com: 1870 US Census, Davidson, Tennessee, Roll M593\_1521, p204 [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

<sup>42</sup> *1860 Census Lamar and Fannin Co. Males eligible for military service in the Confederate States Army*, Pam Underwood, Mary Lane and others <http://gen.Istarnet.com/civilwar/agecensu.htm>

<sup>43</sup> *Macleay Valley Argus* 17th March 1983: Obituary of Esther Larkin, née Sidebottom (1883-1983); also her personal recollections

<sup>44</sup> Details withheld at the request of his descendants

<sup>45</sup> The National Archives: PRO HO107/569/6: 1841 census, Deansgate, Manchester