

Alexander George Williscroft 1852-1917

Alexander was the son of William Williscroft and Mary Widdescombe. He was born at Saltash, Cornwall on the 10 March 1852 and baptised eleven day later at the parish church. He was living with his parents and siblings in Saltash on both the 1861 and 1871 Census'. In 1874 he was working as a railway porter at Grampound Road, Cornwall. Grampound Road is a village in the parish of Ladock, Cornwall, England, 3 kilometres north west of Grampound. The village grew up around the railway station.



Grampound Road, Cornwall, England. 2006

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Alexander married Harriet Webber on the 28 June that year at the parish church in St Kea, Cornwall. The marriage was witnessed by her father John Webber and Joseph Webber. Harriet was 17 and Alexander 22. Their first child Lillian Mary was born the following year followed by Alexander George in 1876 and James Henry in 1878. The couple returned to St Kea for the baptism of their daughter but the two boys were baptised at Ladock.

GRAMPOUND.
POACHING.—John Williscroft, a railway porter, employed at Grampound road station, was charged at the West Powder petty sessions with trespassing on land in the parish of Ladock, in pursuit of game. He was fined 10s and costs. Mr. R. Dobell appeared for the defendant.

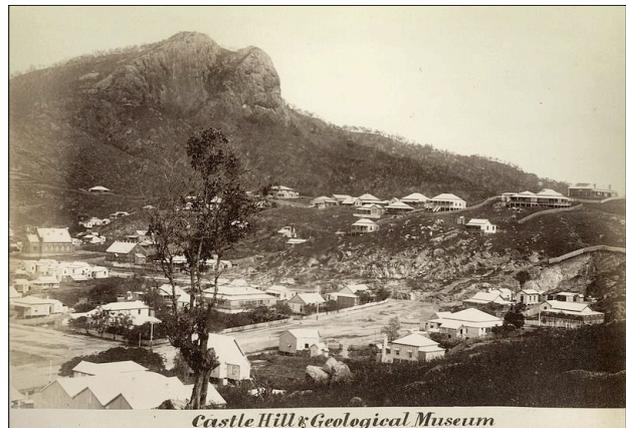
Royal Cornwall Gazette-Friday 02 August 1878

Alexander appear at the petty sessions on the 2 Aug 1878 for poaching and was fined 10s. (*Royal Cornwall Gazette-Friday 02 August 1878*). The newspaper article gave his first name as John but Alexander was the only Williscroft in the Grampound area.

The following month Alexander and Harriet boarded the “Scottish Prince” with their three young children on a new adventure to Australia. The ship set sail from London on the 6 September heading for Queensland, Australia. The couple most likely joined the ship at Plymouth in Devon. The trip was not uneventful, their youngest son James died on the voyage from bronchitis. The ship docked in Townsville, Queensland, Australia on the 16 December.

At the time of the ships arrival things were difficult in Townsville and unemployment was high amongst the immigrant population. This was partly due to the proposed building of the Northern Railway being delayed and the declining economy to the North.

The arrival of the “Scottish Prince” exacerbated the situation. It then became necessary for the government to render assistance. Some of the immigrants were sent to Rockhampton and about 200 of the unemployed in Townsville were set to work



Buildings nestled under Castle Hill, Townsville, c.1890

John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

at stone-breaking. To ease the situation the Government decided to test the forming of inland labour depots in the centres of "principal squatting districts". The government had decided that if this experiment was successful it would be adopted "extensively". The idea was this move people from the ports and avoid the immigrants going to other colonies. (*Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. / 1878 - 1954), Saturday 1 March 1879, page 2 - 3*).

On his arrival in Townsville Alexander and his family would have been housed in the depot until Alexander found employment. However, the newspaper article mentioned above states this was more difficult for married men with families. Alexander and his family didn't stay in Queensland and they had moved to Holbart, Tasmania by April 1880 when his daughter Harriet Annie was born. In 1881 they were living in Melbourne Street, Holbart, Tasmania. Alexander & Harriet went on to have three more children: Alfred Henry b.1882, Rosina Myrtle b.1884 and William John b.1885.

By 1885 the family were living in Bellerive where Alexander was caretaker of the Buff Battery. On the 3 Jun 1885 Harriet appeared at the coroners court with her daughter Lillian as witnesses in an enquiry about a fire at their home in Cambridge Street, Bellerive on the 26 May. The Jury came to the conclusion that the fire started in the wardrobe but there was not enough evidence to say if it was accidental or wilful. (*The Mercury, Holbart, Tas., AUS 3 June 1885*) By the summer of 1887 the family had moved to Holbart and were living in Liverpool Street where they ran a restaurant and boarding house.

In 1894 Harriet brought a court case against Alexander. Although Alexander was found innocent he left Tasmania and moved to Sydney, New South Wales. He is recorded in the Sands Directories between 1896 and 1899, working as a labourer. Alexander had returned to Tasmania by 1900 and was living in Queenstown on the west coast working as a labourer. He remained in Queenstown until 1915. (*Tasmania Post Office Directory [Wise]*). In 1915 an Alexander George Williscroft appeared in court in Holbart charge with having "insufficient means of support". From the article it is difficult to ascertain if it refers to Alexander or his son. In my opinion it is more likely to be his son Alexander born in 1876 but I may be wrong. (*The Mercury (Hobart, Tas. : 1860-1954) 9 Nov 1915*)

WOOD, COFFILL, and COMPANY, LTD.
WILLISCROFT. The Funeral of the late ALEXAN-
 DER GEORGE WILLISCROFT will leave his late
 residence, 237 Riley-street, Surry Hills, THIS THURS-
 DAY, at 1 p.m., for Rookwood Cemetery.
 CHARLES KINSELA,
 Tel., 694 Padd. Head Office, 1/3 Oxford-st, city.
 GEORGE SKEL

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW - 1842 - 1954)
 11 Oct 1917

Alexander had returned to Sydney, NSW by 1917. where he was a wharf labourer. He died suddenly at his home in Riley Street, Surry Hills, Sydney on the 10 October 1917. He was buried the following day at Rookwood Cemetery. Probate of estate was granted to Mary Ann O'Brien, the executrix named in his will.

Harriet continued to live in Holbart and is recorded on in both Post Office Directories and Electoral Rolls between 1898 and 1919. In 1918 she appeared twice in the magistrates court and was fined for fortune telling. She was also known as 'Madame Webber'. (*The Mercury (Hobart, Tas. - 1860 - 1954), Wednesday August 1918, page 3*).

WILLISCROFT.—On September 11, 1921, at
 2 Bloomfield-street, Surry Hills, Sydney
 (suddenly), Harriett Williscroft, late
 Madam Webber.

The Mercury (Hobart, Tas. - 1860 - 1954) Tuesday 13
 September 1921 p 1

Harriet had left Tasmania and was living with her daughter Rosina when she died on the 11 Sep 1921 at 21 Little Bloomfield Street, Surry Hills, Sydney, NSW, Australia. Her funeral took place the following day.