

Henry Williscroft 1830-?

Henry was aged 13 at the time of his trial and employed as a nail cutter. He could read and write imperfectly. At Parkhurst Prison he was retrained as a tailor like his brother Frederick. He boarded the Joseph Soames at the end of May 1847 in the Isle of Wight and set sail for Australia on the 2 June. The ship first arrived at Holbart, Tasmania before heading for Port Phillip Bay where it arrived in the September. Henry disembarked at Geelong on the 24 September. He gained employment as a general servant with George Faithfull of Wangaratta station on the Ovens River, Victoria. His contract was for six months with an annual salary of £20 including rations. George Faithfull had established the first cattle station there in 1838.



*The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. - 1848 - 1956)
Saturday 1 January 1853 p 2*

In the early 1850 gold was found in the area and it is very possible Henry was amongst the many men who flocked to gold fields in the hope of getting rich. Henry is mentioned in the Victoria Police Gazette in August 1852 with regards to an unclaimed letter in the care of Mr Saunders of Melbourne. I don't know if Henry collected his mail but in February 1853 he was most likely the 'H. Williscroft' who set sail for London aboard the frigate Bombay on the 18th. Henry was travelling steerage.

The journey was not uneventful. An article in the Argus newspaper in Australia reported that the ship sprung a 'very seriousin some of the British steamers communicating with the West Indian line of packets' leak during a violent gale around Cape Horn on the 18 April. The passengers had to man the pumps for two hour spells and the ship eventually reached port at Rio Janeiro in Brazil. The crew had mutinied on the journey in an argument over provisions and assaulted the captain. The passengers who were all alive and well disembarked at Rio Janeiro. They continued their journey. (*The Courier (Hobart, Tas: 1840-1859), Monday 15 August 1853, page 2]. More on the frigate 'Bombay'*)

Unfortunately I have been unable to find out any more about Henry after Rio so far. He does not appear to have stayed in Brazil after checking available records. I wonder if he found gold or got to England.