

Who was William Jordan?

So who was William Jordan, the father of Mary Jordan, my grandmother. The only clues we have is his wedding certificate which stated that he was born in Longford Tasmania, he was 24 and his father's name was James and his mother's Margaret. In fact these are important clues.

William would have been born in 1846 so his father would have probably been aged between 20 to 40 years. The area from which William came was settled by ex-convicts who had been transferred to Norfolk Plains (Longford) from Norfolk Island in 1814. Among those transferred was James Jordan the father and Richard the son of James and Mary Butler and four other children of this union.. Richard Jordan ultimately had four wives and many offspring. The family moved to Westbury before 1846. James and Mary's descendants and the offspring of his subsequent wives became the "Jordans" of Westbury. The family history has been fully documented so it *should* be simple to identify our William's roots.

The Name Jordan

The Jordan's of Mayo are predominantly of Norman descent stemming from one Jordan D'Exeter who acquired estates in Ireland following the Norman Invasion of 1172. The original source of the name is said to come from knights of the crusades who brought back bottles of water from the river Jordan and used it to baptise their children whom they accordingly named "Jordan".

The name in Irish, McSíurtáin or MacSuirtain, denotes one who was a "descendent of Jordan". According to Edward McLysaght, the lands which the family controlled, the barony of Gallen in Mayo, became known as "MacSiurtains Country" and is thus described in the Fiants and the "Composition of Connaught". The earliest written records of the name in Ireland occur in the "Annals of Connaught" between 1336 & 1470. By the Sixteenth century they were considered by the new interlopers to be a Gaelic Sept (tribe) and in "The Composition book of Connaught" their Chief was called "MacSurtaine alias Jordan". It is to be presumed that the Mayo Norman Jordan D'Exeter landed somewhere in North Mayo near Killala.

Mary Butler (Mrs Jordan)

Mary Butler, `aged 15', was found guilty of stealing money and sentenced to be transported for seven years.

At the time of the sentence the first fleet was about to arrive at Botany Bay, and there was a long delay before the second fleet departed. Mary Butler was transported to Sydney on the `Lady Juliana' a notorious voyage, which took 309 days after the ship had already lain in the Thames for six months before sailing. An account of this voyage was a television program on the ABC and is also described in Robert Hughes, "The Fatal Shore". The Lady Juliana carried 226 female convicts of whom the majority were London prostitutes. Prostitution itself was not a crime and most would have been guilty of theft. The first officer was Thomas Edgar, who had been master of the `Discovery' on Captain Cook's last voyage. He was a `kind, humane man', very good to the women convicts. The `Lady Juliana' travelled by way of Tenerife, St.

Jogo, Rio de Janeiro and the Cape, with lengthy stays in port. She was said to be nothing but a floating brothel. 'When we were fairly out at sea', recalled one of the crew, Nicol, 'every man on board took a wife from among the convicts, they nothing loath.' At the various ports seamen from every vessel in the harbour were freely entertained, and there seemed no lack of either gaiety or liquor.

Mary Butler arrived at Port Jackson as part of the second fleet, on the 'Lady Juliana' on 3 June 1790 after leaving Plymouth in 29 July 1789. Two months later, 1 August 1790, she was taken to Norfolk Island on the 'Surprise'. Also on board was William Saltmarsh who had arrived with the First Fleet on the 'Alexander'. Mary and William Saltmarsh had a son, William, who was born on Norfolk Island on 13 August 1792.

Shortly after, James Jordan arrived at Norfolk Island on 26 August 1792. From County Mayo. He has been tried at Dublin City in March 1789 and sentenced to 7 years transportation for "rebellion". He arrived at Sydney on the 'Queen' in September 1791 and went to Norfolk Island on the 'Atlantic'. He had an alias, "Sheridan" which no doubt was derived from "Suirtain".

Norfolk Island

Mary formed a relationship with James Jordan (Sheridan) from which she was known later known as Mrs. Jordan. Their eldest son Richard was born in December 1794. Other children of James and Mary were Catherine b.1801, d.1839, m. James Davey 1819; James b.1804, d.1888, m. Ann Eagan 1822; Thomas b. 1807, d. 1887 m. Abigail Hanlon 1839; and John b. 1809, d. 1883, m. Frances Quinn.

On Norfolk Island, James looked after Government boats and had a farm of his own on which with their children lived a normal family life with apparent prosperity for about 20 years. James was listed as coxswain of the government boats and assistant pilot in 1812. In the Norfolk Is. muster of the year he is listed as *occupying land 'by permission' - 14 acres of wheat, 8 in maize, horned cattle of 1 male and 3 females, sheep of 20 males and 25 females, swine 10 males and 14 females, goats 1 male and 2 females, 30 bushels of wheat and 70 bushels of maize in hand.*

Norfolk Island was originally settled in 1788 but was finally abandoned in 1814 because it had always been difficult to manage, was never self-supporting and lacked a protected harbour for the delivery of supplies. Most of the convicts and other settlers were resettled at Norfolk Plains, which is now the area around Longford near Launceston.

In 1824 The British government reopened Norfolk Island for secondary punishment of the worst convicts. It was to accommodate between 1500 and 2000 convicts and provide the 'harshest possible discipline short of death'. So unpleasant were the conditions that rebellions and uprisings were a regular occurrence. In 1840 the Island was excluded from Britain's decision to end transportation to New South Wales and in 1842 control of the island was transferred to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). In 1852 after transportation to Van Dieman's Land was suspended, the Island was handed over to descendants of the 'Bounty' mutineers who had been living on Pitcairn Island.

Mary died sometime between September 1812 and February 1813 just before the family was evacuated to Norfolk Plains. Among the passengers on the ship 'Minstrel', when she left Norfolk Island on 13 February 1813 bound for Port Dalrymple, were Thomas Brennan, James Jordan with four children, and young men, Richard Jordan and William Saltmarsh

Richard's Jordan's children up to 1830 were born at Norfolk Plains, but his eldest daughter was married from Patterson Plains in 1831 and the 'White Hills' address was used in later years until they moved to Oaks, Adelphi, in the **Westbury** district. The present day Adelphi Rd runs by the old Adelphi estate to a right angle bend near the Prewers' property where a turn off leads to Oaks and the main road goes on a mile or so to Whitmore.

Various sources of information on Jordan history come from Jan Standaloft, Alma Ranson, June Parrott and others. The Jordan history co-ordinated by Alma Ranson of Paper Beach, Tasmania, was put in order for the 200th anniversary of James Jordan's arrival which was celebrated at a family reunion in 1991

When Richard Jordan's second wife, Sarah, died at Talisker (a property near Westbury) the 'Colonial Times' reported, 7 April 1840, that 'She was an affectionate wife, mother and friend, and will be greatly missed by many friends who enjoyed her liberal and unostentatious benevolence'. Sarah was the child of a convict William Field who was sentenced to 14 years at the Old Bailey in May 1800. Richard's father, James Jordan also died at Talisker in 1840.

So where does William fit in?

One thing is certain, James Jordan ex Norfolk Island was not the James Jordan "father" referred to in the wedding certificate. He had died well before our William was born. He was probably not the second generation James, as the second James married Ann Eagan, not "Margaret in 1822". However that James, lived to be 84 so it is possible he remarried.

Was William a great grandson of James Jordan? The other possibilities are that our William was the grandson of one of James' sons, Richard, born 1794, James born 1804, Thomas born 1807 or John born 1809. Richard would have been 52, James 42, Thomas 39 and John 37 years of age when William was born in 1846. So all except Richard would probably been too young to be a grandparent in 1846.

The other possibilities that emerge that he was the son of another Jordan family. This is a remote possibility because few others than transferees from Norfolk Island had settled that area at that time. There would have to be another Jordan. Records of the time show only two male Jordan's (James and Richard) as having sailed from Norfolk Island to Van Diemens land. Record keeping was not infallible and there is an unexplained gap between the birth of Richard Jordan in 1794 and the birth of Catherine in 1801 whereas the other siblings of Richard arrived at regular intervals of two to three years. Were some of Richard's children not included on available records?

The jury is out on this one. It is also possible that William Jordan, son of James and Margaret was an impostor using the name of a prominent Westbury family. This story has yet to conclude.