

A New Life Down Under

In 1825, James Markey, a stone mason, married Eliza Allen in West Coker. By 1831, they had moved to Milborne Port where they baptised eight children, one of whom died as a child. In 1841, the family were living in Kingsbury and in 1851, Eliza and the children, some employed as glovers, were living in Church Street (next door to the vicar) and James was lodging in Fordington, Dorchester, an occupation journeyman stone mason.

On 1st December 1853, the family set sail from Plymouth aboard the ship Sir Thomas Gresham arriving at Port Adelaide, South Australia on 19th March 1854, a passage of 190 days. There were 8/9 births and 4 deaths on the passage and it was noted that with regret, T Parr, the Surgeon-Superintendent had, since the arrival of the ship, died in the Colonial Hospital.

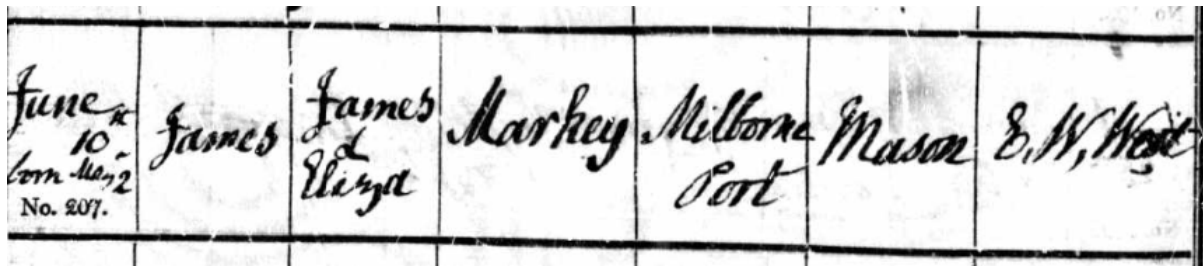
Markey	James	46	Mason	1018/2	Somerset	
	Eliza	45				
	Mary	26	Servant			with parents
	William	22	Shoemaker			with parents
	Grace	20	Glover			with parents
	Elizabeth	18	Glover			with parents
	James	16	Glover			with parents
	Thomas	9				
	Edward	5				

Imagine how interminable that journey must have felt to the Markey family. That they were prepared to tolerate such a long, boring and risky journey for an uncertain future is an indication, surely, of how pessimistically they saw what lay ahead for them in Milborne Port...

It was not unusual for Victorians to put their faith in emigration, of course, and the Markeys were not the only ones to leave Milborne Port for Australia; parishioners could apply to the Churchwardens and Overseers for funds to defray the expenses of emigration and the Markeys might well have done this. It had been decided in February 1847 to pay for the emigration costs for an Elizabeth Bennett and her two children, and such must have been the demand and discussion about whether this was the right thing to do that on 28th December 1848, a Vestry was held 'for the purpose of considering the propriety of assisting persons desirous of emigrating to Australia'. The following day, a sum of £35 was identified as what was needed for such a fund; this would have been a significant portion of the Poor Rate for the parish, but we must remember that there was no money from – or taxes paid to – the central government for this purpose.

The risk of setting sail to be bound for a land from which it was unlikely he would ever return proved worth it for at least one member of the family...

James junior had been baptised in Milborne Port in 1838.



He lived in Kingsbury and Church Street and started his working life in the gloving industry. When he arrived in Australia, he was almost 16 years old. His obituary in *The Queenslander (Brisbane, Queensland)* on Saturday 3rd February 1923 tells us how he fared in the land down under – somewhat differently from how a life in Somerset would probably have turned out!

The death of Mr. James Markey, a very old resident of Queensland, occurred at his home, Somerset, Herries Street, East Toowoomba, on Saturday, after a long illness. The late Mr. James Markey, who was 83 years of age [actually 85], was born in Somerset County, England, in 1840 [actually 1838].

He arrived in Australia in 1853 after a voyage of four months on the ship Thomas Gresham, and took up his residence in Adelaide, but in 1857 he joined in the gold rush to Bendigo and Ballarat. He was not successful as a digger, so started at the trade of building, and worked in Bendigo for about two years. He then proceeded to the Sandhills, now known as Deniliquin, and from there moved to Wagga Wagga where, in 1860, he erected a courthouse and lock-up building in that town. About 1861, he acquired land, and followed farming with variable success.



In 1876, the late Mr. Markey came to Queensland, and purchased the station property known as The Retreat, at Boondandilla, Darling Downs. He carried on there for a number of years, and subsequently selected a portion of Yandilla which was known afterwards as Foxwood, Milmerran. He resided there until 1907, when he sold out and purchased a grazing property known as Kenmore, situated 40 miles south-west from Charleville. The latter property was later purchased by the State Government. Subsequently he purchased city property in Toowoomba, and had resided in that city ever since.

Let's hope that the rest of the family fared as well.

What the article does not mention is the fact that James was married three times had many children, so many descendants exist.

Note that James had named his house in Toowoomba 'Somerset', so he must have always kept a little part of Milborne Port in his heart.

Valerie Jackson and Nathalie Hetherington, December 2023