

The Quarterly Newsletter of the

Entwistle Family History Association

Registered Charity number: 1196079

Twissle Times

www.entwistlefamily.org.uk

Spring 2026



Editorial

I'm delighted to be able to introduce you to Janet Durham who has volunteered to become our Chair, thus allowing our existing Chair, M Andrew Entwistle to relax into a well-earned retirement.

Our new Secretary, Steve Entwisle, has been working hard and introducing lots of ideas to take our association into the future. We plan to make much more use of online contact between the committee and the rest of our membership. Watch this space!

Jim Fleming (member 416) has sent the second article about his Entwistles from Edgworth (between Darwen and Bolton, Lancashire, England), their lives (and deaths!) and their links to Australia. We published the first of these articles in the previous Winter edition of Twissle Times. This time we have the story of Martha Entwistle's exciting journey to Australia as a convict and her development as Australia's first mental health nurse. See if you recognise any links to your own family.

Finally, we include an invitation to join us for an early summer get-together at the Strawbury Duck in the ancient township of Entwistle, from where many of our ancestors originated. Included here is a world map displaying how far our Entwistle members have dispersed around the World.

Eileen Cowen, Editor

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MARTHA ENTWISTLE'S JOURNEY

Australia's first mental health nurse

In our previous issue Jim Fleming[1] related A Tale of Two Entwistles which revealed the devastating toll of industrial progress on Harry Entwistle (who was hanged at Lancaster Castle in 1819); his cousin Henry Entwisle (who died from starvation in 1816); and Henry's wife Ann (who was sent to Australia as a convict in 1827). Yet the ripples of their misfortunes extended far beyond these family members. Few were more deeply affected than Harry's wife, Martha Entwistle.

Born Martha Jackson and baptised in August 1759, she grew up at Stanley Rake, just six kilometres from Edgworth, the home of her future husband. They married in Bolton when she was 17 and he was 20. Over the next two decades, the couple had ten children, living primarily in Edgworth. Tragedy struck repeatedly: their second son James died at age three in 1792, followed by the deaths of their youngest son Edmund in 1802 and daughter Martha in 1805. These losses likely reflected the family's deepening poverty, as the mechanisation of the weaving industry steadily eroded their livelihood.

In desperation, Harry turned to crime. He acquired forged banknotes and enlisted his family—including Martha, their eldest son William, and his wife Ann (née Yates)—to pass them. To avoid detection in their own village, they travelled to nearby towns and fairgrounds, spending the counterfeit notes anonymously.

In 1810, both Harry and William were charged with larceny. While wily Harry escaped prosecution, William was sentenced to transportation. After a daring escape from gaol and several months on the run, he was recaptured and sentenced to death. This was later commuted to transportation and in 1811 he was sent to Australia aboard the Indefatigable.

Before William's departure, Martha and Ann attempted to pass a forged £5 note at a draper's shop in Bolton. Though initially successful, Ann was arrested two days later at their Edgworth home. Martha immediately went into hiding at her brother's house, while Ann soon escaped custody and also disappeared.

Martha was eventually apprehended in February 1812 by the persistent Constable Thomas Kaye. She was sentenced to death three months later, though this was commuted to transportation. Ann, still at large, was tried in absentia and received the same sentence.

In October 1812, Martha was among 49 convict women placed aboard the brig Emu, bound for Australia. As Britain was then at war with the United States, the Emu sailed in convoy under the protection of HMS Java. But shortly after separating from the convoy a few weeks later, the Emu was captured by the American privateer Holkar. For a month, Martha and her fellow

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[1] ***Jim Fleming*** *has been researching and writing family history for over forty years. He published All Our Tracks and Ways in 2024, about his pioneering ancestors, the Reed family of Staffordshire and Australia. After obtaining an Economics degree from the University of Sydney in 1978, Jim enjoyed a 33-year career with Australian Customs, culminating in several years as a Director. In retirement he lives on Sydney's lower north shore, enjoys travelling and sings baritone in two choirs. Jim is a committee member and historian for the international Clan Fleming Scottish Society and a member of the Society of Australian Genealogists, the Bathurst Family History Group, the Entwistle Family History Association and the Turton Local History Society.*

Website: *http://jimfleming.id.au/up/index.htm*

convicts endured uncertainty before the American captain abruptly abandoned them with just four months' provisions at Mindelo in the Cape Verde Islands, off West Africa. The Emu was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, and sold as a prize of war.

Stranded, the women relied on the kindness of Catholic nuns until September 1813, when they were rescued by the British ship Isabella and returned to England but were not allowed to re-enter the country. Upon arrival in October, their clothing was so inadequate that they were kept aboard ship during what would become the third-coldest winter in English history. The Thames froze solid for six days in February 1814.

To complete her journey, Martha was transferred to the Broxbornebury, where she was unexpectedly reunited with her recaptured daughter-in-law, Ann. From her she would have learnt of her husband Harry's recent arrest and sentence of transportation and begun to anticipate their reunion in Australia. The two women arrived in Sydney on 28 July 1814, 18 months after Martha had first set sail.

William Entwistle, Martha's son and Ann's husband, had arrived in Hobart two years earlier. Governor Lachlan Macquarie now ordered that he be brought to Sydney to join them, but William requested instead that they come to Hobart. Though the Governor approved, neither woman made the journey.

Martha, traumatised by her maritime ordeals, pleaded to be spared another sea voyage. Instead, she and Ann were assigned to George Suttor, who had recently succeeded Reverend Samuel Marsden as Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum at Castle Hill, 33 kilometres west of Sydney. This placement may have reflected concern for Martha's own mental wellbeing.

At Castle Hill, Martha joined a small, untrained team that included naval surgeon Dr William Bland, a cook, a keeper and herself as nurse. Together, on a meagre budget, they cared for 16 patients in a dilapidated building that still bore scars from the Vinegar Hill Rebellion a decade earlier. Martha's duties likely included feeding and cleaning patients, sewing and mending clothes, assisting with medical treatments and supervising gardening work.

Two years later, in January 1817, she would have heard the tragic news that her son William had drowned in the New River at Port Dalrymple (now the Tamar River near George Town, Tasmania). Later that year, her nursing dedication was rewarded with the granting of a ticket-of-leave (a form of parole). She could now have chosen other employment, but continued nursing for several more years.

As we saw in the previous article, despite his sentence of transportation, Martha's husband Harry never reached Australia. After spending more than four years confined on prison hulks, he was released on parole, only to be arrested again within a year. This time, he was sentenced to death and hanged at Lancaster Castle on 17 April 1819.

News of Harry's execution would have eventually reached Martha, likely through her nephews William Entwistle and James Grime the Younger, who were themselves transported to Australia for their role in the crime that led to Harry's conviction. The third article in this series (next issue) will recount that they arrived in Sydney aboard the Malabar on 29 October 1819 and both settled at Parramatta, ten kilometres from Castle Hill, where they lived for many years.

Martha's widowed daughter-in-law Ann also lived at Parramatta, where she married William Rafter in 1821. She would remain there for another 50 years, passing away in 1871 at the age of 87.

As we saw in the previous article (last issue), another Ann Entwistle (almost certainly the widow of Harry's cousin Henry Entwistle who had died from starvation a decade earlier) also lived in the Parramatta District from 1827 until her death in 1868.

Martha, it seems, eventually overcame her fear of the sea. Two years before the asylum building was demolished in 1826, she had moved 400 kilometres north to Port Macquarie where she married John Carpenter. She died on 22 February 1828 and is buried at Port Macquarie.

Nearly two centuries later, Martha's pioneering role in Australian healthcare was formally recognised. An article in the International Journal of Mental Health Nursing honoured her as the nation's first mental health nurse. The authors concluded:

Martha Entwistle ... Australia's first convict mental health nurse was ... a resilient woman who endured several traumatic life experiences (and) ... was highly valued by the superintendent ... She nursed in a harsh colonial environment, short of adequate resources, during a period of fast-paced industrial and technological change.

Her story is one of hardship, resilience and quiet stoicism—an enduring legacy in the annals of Entwistle family history.



The Castle Hill Asylum Building, JOHN RIDER ROBERTS, 1826

In our next issue, the final instalment in this series of three articles will examine how Harry Entwistle's criminal enterprise impacted on the family of his sister Betty. This tale is just one aspect of a wider narrative about the Edgworth Entwistles in the early 19th century. Twelve family members across two generations were sentenced to transportation as convicts to Australia. As a long-time researcher of Australian convicts, I am not aware of any other family with this number of convictions. There is a summary of the twelve (plus 3 in-laws) on this page of my website: https://jimfleming.id.au/up/Convicts.htm .

IN THE LONGER TERM, I PLAN TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THIS FAMILY.

Further reading

Tony Raeburn, Carol Liston, Jarrad Hickmott and Michelle Cleary.
'Life of Martha Entwistle: Australia's first convict mental health nurse'.
International Journal of Mental Health Nursing, 27, 2018, pp 455-463 at doi:10.1111/inm.12356.

[James Michael Fleming, member 416[1]]

1 *© 2025 Written for* The Twissle Times *Newsletter of the Entwistle Family History Association.*