

Notes on a Scandal – Emma Mould, Thomas Sweetman and the Bussells

The *Warrior* arrived at Fremantle on 12 March 1830, bringing with it several families who became prominent in Western Australia's history.¹ Among them were the Bussell brothers, John Garrett, Charles, Joseph Vernon and Alfred Pickmore, as well as John and Georgiana Molloy. The Bussell brothers went to Augusta in May 1830, but were hampered by isolation and heavily timbered country. They moved to the Vasse after John Garrett Bussell discovered fine pastures on Geographe Bay in December 1831 and by 1834 had established a property named "Cattle Chosen." The townsite of Busselton was surveyed in 1837 and named after them.

On 27 January 1833 the *Cygnets* brought Lenox, Frances Louisa (Fanny) and Elizabeth Capel (Bessie) Bussell to Fremantle.² Also on board were two servants to the Bussells, Phoebe Bower and Emma Mould. On 19 August 1834, the *James Pattison* arrived at Fremantle with Mrs Frances Louisa and Mary Bussell on board.³ The Bussells were prolific letter writers and diarists. The State Library of Western Australia holds a large collection of private archive material relating to the family, both in England and in Western Australia, including diaries, letters, notes, legal documents, plans, sketches, verse, cards, recipes, wills, accounts and religious writings.⁴ However, the collection mainly consists of letters and diaries in which religion, politics and domestic life in the Victorian period are discussed.

This paper looks at the relationship between the Bussells and their servant Emma Mould, which seems to be a curious one to say the least, and Emma's life with Thomas Sweetman after she parted ways with the Bussells. The first part of the story, of necessity, is told almost exclusively from the point of view of the Bussells, as there is nothing extant written by Emma in the period she was with them. She may have been illiterate then, but her husband was a schoolteacher on occasions in Western Australia and as Emma penned letters and petitions later in life, he may have taught her to read and write. It should also be noted that the Bussells were a large and well-respected family whose members would have been older and more mature than Emma. She could have felt much more out of her element in the strange new land she found herself in than the Bussells, who were a tightly-knit family, self sufficient, supportive and affectionate.

Emma Mould was baptised on 31 July 1816, so when she sailed with the Bussells on the *Cygnets* she would have been about sixteen years old. In their references to Emma, the Bussells were invariably disparaging of her. But was she as bad as they portrayed her, or was she a young girl trying to make her way in a strange new land with whatever means she had at her disposal, including her looks? And if she was as bad as portrayed, why did the Bussells keep her on in their service for so long? Could it have been that the Bussell boys had been without female company for a long time and reacted as men do when a pretty young girl is suddenly thrust into their midst?

We get an insight that Emma was pretty in Fanny Bussell's first reference to her in her diary on the *Cygnets* on 25 September 1832:

I was amused yesterday as I sat at work in my cabin listening to the sailors as they distributed the provisions to the steerage passengers to hear our damsels designated as 'the fearless Phoebe' and 'the lovely Emma.' Indeed we are considered quite fortunate in our selections.⁵

However, later entries begin to paint a different picture, Fanny referring to Emma as 'very complaining' and going on to say:

Emma continues poorly and we have had a little trouble with her in consequence of her attachment to Mrs McNow who proves to be completely a 'mauvais sujet.' We have had some difficulty in keeping them asunder and Bessie and I were called upon this morning to be quite authoritative.⁶

The Mrs McNow referred to would be Elizabeth McKnoe, who was on the *Cygnets* with her two children – she would later form a de facto relationship with George Syred. A mauvais sujet is French for a bad or wicked subject.

Bessie Bussell also mentioned Emma while on the *Cygnets*. In an early entry she confides:

Phoebe is very well, Emma we are disappointed in, we often long for Hannah.

Hannah was perhaps another servant of the Bussells who remained in England. Later in the same journal Bessie writes:

Emma is I am sorry to say nothing more or less than a thief. We have proof positive that it is she who robs us as we are told that she has given these things away. Pray know well the servant you bring with you. Phoebe begs and entreats we will leave her at the Cape. She says she will break our hearts. In fact she is a thief, storyteller, slanderer and a je ne sai quoi. [French for I do not know what] She is, however, willing and active but too deep for us, when she appears best she is worst.⁷

After arrival in Western Australia the diary and letter entries relating to Emma increased. Fanny wrote in her journal in 1833:

Emma had become so troublesome and insolent we were obliged to have recourse to John on Thursday, therefore the boys were occupied before breakfast in knocking up a small hut on the other side of the river for her occupation, for John had decided on solitary confinement as the best mode of punishment.⁸

Fanny also wrote, in a letter of 5 April 1833:

It is now generally understood that Emma is in the family way. From her conduct since we left England I see little reason to doubt it. You remember Mr Norrie's hint about her but you will scarcely imagine that Mr Rushmore was fully conscious of her delinquencies and was even a partner in her guilt at Portsmouth and this with all his professions of attachment and respect towards our family. We ought to have had

more than a vague hint of her real character, nothing but annoyance and anxiety have accrued from our connection with her. You cannot conceive the annoyance of servants here, expensive wages and consummate impudence.⁹

It appears that Emma may have been “sleeping around” in an attempt to get pregnant, which might have led to a marriage and an escape from servitude. However, she was to pull the trick of pretending to be pregnant several times before it actually happened. This would seem to be borne out by Fanny’s next entry, on 20 April 1833:

Phoebe and Emma are on the beach looking after the goods; Emma is herself again, and I hope will improve now we have got her away from the ship.¹⁰

Just after the fire at Adelphi, in November 1833, Fanny remarks that:

It is impossible to have Emma in attendance here as she would rob us of every thing.¹¹ (Adelphi was the property about 12 miles from Augusta that the Bussells moved to in June 1831. On the night of 5 November 1833 a fire broke out in the kitchen and completely destroyed the home. Only Bessie, Alfred, Lenox and Emma were present at the time.)

Emma may have been suffering from homesickness as Fanny hinted at in a diary entry in late October 1833:

Emma cried bitterly at receiving no news from her mother, perhaps the packages still at the Swan may contain something for her.¹²

Charles Bussell then chimes in with an entry in a letter of 5 November 1833:

Emma has been very attentive and although ill has not shown any wish to save herself trouble. Phoebe is anxious to finish with the washing before we leave. She is wonderfully well. Emma and she had a fight this morning. She knocked Emma down and kicked her, she says all this has done her good, but she cannot help being cross.¹³

Charles is to feature prominently in the Emma saga later on. Shy and a stammerer, Charles would have been an easy target for Emma as can be seen by a letter Charles wrote to his brother, John Garrett Bussell, on 22 January 1838. In it he poignantly describes his loneliness and isolation from society:

The fact is I am not a shining character and my society is found not only a bore but insupportable thanks to the mimicking propensities of my earlier years. I sometimes endeavour to think what kind of character I should have been if I had not stammered for I can imagine nothing that would tend more to alter a man in manner than this defect. To feel upon occasions that you could afford the very information that parties in conversation are seeking and to be obliged to hold your peace – to feel - at all event in your own conceit – that you could be witty and to be compelled to preserve the stiff and rigid features of a mere listener. But I have done with society – I came up here with the idea of accepting every invitation offered me and shall therefore for this

once play the game through. But it is the last time. I have scarcely entered a house without some person or another laughing in my face. Male and female have alike been guilty of this indelicacy. But I have nothing to complain of: for after all I have no right to intrude an insupportable nuisance upon perfect strangers. I am literally sighing for the greenwood shade, a sight of the cows, the horses, the goats and all the many appendages of a happy if I may not say a comfortable home. There shall I end my days and if I can contrive to get one congenial spirit who will bear with this bane of my existence and who will accept and return all the affection that the heart can offer. But what absurdity and what egotism! I was led into this last observation by the reflection that our own girls in the common course of things must shortly get married and the idea of returning to the glorious disorders of a bachelor's life.¹⁴

In the meantime Emma had fallen in with a boy called Edward Pearce, which was not to the liking of Bessie Bussell as she outlined in her Adelphi journal in 1833:

Pearce and Emma are the most incorrigibly selfish thieves I ever knew for although they at all times share as we do they never lose an opportunity of pilfering from us. I think I would quite as soon have convicts in fact I am inclined to believe Emma has been instructed in the art, there is not a single lock up place that they have not contrived to get either by false keys or slipping one off the bunch innocently smiling the while or else being insufferably insolent.¹⁵

Later Bessie writes:

Pearce who has been lately tried for robbing us he has confessed Emma is betrayed they have returned keys we are going to allow Pearce to run away in this ship viz go with him I wish I could say them.¹⁶ (Although this passage is unpunctuated and hard to decipher, the gist is that Pearce was allowed to leave and that they wished Emma had gone too.)

Edward Pearce was born on 16 July 1815, so was about a year older than Emma. He had arrived on the *Warrior* in 1830 as a fourteen-year-old servant to the Bussell boys. Little is known of him and his reason for leaving England is unknown. He appears to have been the sole servant of the Bussell boys and was probably very lonely. Although he may have been treated well enough, he was unlikely to have been accorded much warmth and kinship by his employers. The State Library holds copies of two letters written home by Pearce on 20 April 1832 and 12 March 1833 respectively. In them he does not mention the Bussells apart from the fact that he had not left their employ, but comments on the privations endured due to shortages and high prices of goods, and provides descriptions of the country, the fauna and the local Aborigines and their customs.

Charles Bussell, however, in a letter to his mother, described him thus:

We have found Pearce almost everything that is bad a lazy, shuffling, pilfering scoundrel to be plain he is a complete townbred blackguard.

He is indeed of so little service to us that I think it probable we shall get rid of him.¹⁷

Harsh words for a fourteen-year-old boy, but he did remain in the Bussell's employ for several more years. Charles went on to instruct his mother on the necessity of hiring servants who could form an attachment to the interests of the family and the fact that employers were at the mercy of their servants in Western Australia as they could not be discharged at a moment's notice without considerable loss and the inconvenience of being unable to replace them. Pearce gave notice in the *Perth Gazette* of 19 April 1834 that he intended leaving the colony.

Fanny Bussell, in two separate entries, managed to be despairing and hopeful about Emma in the space of a week. The first, in her journal on 31 January 1834, laments Emma's conduct:

This morning from Emma's continued misconduct we deemed it justifiable to banish her altogether from our presence. Everything therefore has been done by ourselves and far more satisfactorily than by the hands of a discontented and slovenly servant.¹⁸

Yet, one week later, in a letter to Bessie on 8 February 1834, she seems quite hopeful:

Emma is behaving better and we sometimes entertain hopes of rendering her a useful and respectable girl but she has great faults. I had nearly said incurable. An indentured servant is at all times a most dangerous speculation.¹⁹

Lenox Bussell then chimed in with some cryptic comments about Emma's behaviour. In his journal of 11 June 1834 he writes about the visit of an unnamed person, who was expected and came from Augusta:

After some time we asked some questions about our family and how Emma got on, whether they had much trouble with her. He said he really did not know, he asked John if he had heard anything about her, John answered no. He then asked if he had any right to stop him, he said no but if he had been the Government Resident he might have done it if he had not a pass from Captain Molloy. He then told us the particulars about Emma, of her taking a false oath. He appeared uneasy when first he came, we thought there was something the matter; he said he was absent on the night. I shall not say any more but allow the reader to imagine what they like. We did not believe anything, knowing Emma to be such a liar.²⁰ Very mysterious indeed.

However, nine days later, on 20 June 1834, he is almost fanciful about her:

I should not say this journal was very interesting, there is no female hero except old Phoebe and she is rather too old for that title, my romance does not extend so far. I was thinking of writing a book and having Emma for a heroine and calling it 'The Woods of Augusta' but alas she is too infamous a character to write such things about.²¹

In his next entries, in a letter written on 26 July 1834: 'I hope Emma is a good girl and has left off that detestable practice of thieving, lying etc'²² and in a journal/letter written July to September 1834 he again seems more encouraging:

I hope Emma has improved and learnt to be more truthful and that she fully understands her matrimonial duties and that she will act like an honest and prudent wife. I think she marries because she expects not to have to work.²³

Apparently an engagement took place between a man called Dawson and Emma, but this engagement ended.

By this stage Mrs Fanny Bussell had arrived and in a letter to Elizabeth Capel Carter on 18 September 1834 she wrote:

Phoebe is with the sons, Emma with the daughters, she still occasions much trouble but they hope she will amend when removed from bad advisers, it was a false report regarding her situation, a ruse to make the mate [or male] marry her.²⁴

On 19 October she wrote to Mrs Emily Huggins, again mentioning Emma:

Emma is our only drawback, she is the most depraved of girls, there is no truth in her, she is dishonest and a common courtesan, she has three times gone through the ceremony of being in the family way and is now playing the same trick, for a trick I do suspect, time however will show. I am satisfied she is much too common for such an event.²⁵

But on this occasion Emma was telling the truth.

Lenox wrote to his sister in late 1834 and mentions Emma's involvement with Dawson:

How do you manage without Emma, she is not now in a very good school for education. Dawson is in a great rage and swears revenge, he gave Emma 10 shillings when he came away, he says he has been made a complete fool of.²⁶

In later entries he writes:

I am sorry you are obliged to get rid of Emma as bad as she was she saved you a great deal of unnecessary and useless labour *and* Report says she will not now have Dawson but is going off with a sealer.²⁶

The entries relating to Dawson marrying Emma are quite confusing. Elijah Dawson, who came to Western Australia on the *Warrior* in 1830 as an indentured servant to John Molloy, accompanied the Bussells to the Vasse district in 1834 for six months. However, he had married in England in 1829 and his wife accompanied him to Western Australia and they had several children after arrival, so it is unlikely to be him. It is more likely to be John Dawson who was born in 1810 and owned lots 17 and 18 in the Augusta area and later moved to Busselton in 1839. Mrs Bussell refers to Pearce leaving the employ of the Bussells and being succeeded by Dawson, who she calls

an honest, hard working labouring man. He did not marry until after 1850, so may have been the Dawson referred to as he was known to the Bussells.

It was around this stage that Emma's pregnancy was found to be real and she left the employ of the Bussells as Fanny described in her journal in January 1835:

Having so far immortalised the events of this day, I will only say that Mr Herring's voice at the door, asking directions about dinner summons me from any task. I should mention that he is in daily attendance upon us for a few hours to cook, clean knives, shoes etc. He is an excellent old man, a model of integrity and industry, what a substitute for Emma! Unhappy girl! Few persons could imagine a character so depraved as hers. She already regrets having left us and has made an application to return, but we could not with any regard to our own interests or even common decorum, admit of any overtures.²⁷

The Mr Herring referred to would have been John Herring, born in 1780 who also arrived on the *Warrior* on 12 March 1830. He was at various times a farmer, the Postmaster at Augusta and the Tidewaiter and Postmaster at Vasse from the 1840s to 1862.²⁸ Aged fifty five at the time Mr Herring nowadays would not be described as an old man!

Mrs Bussell in a letter of 1 February 1835 mentions Emma's condition:

Emma has taken her departure from my services, she expects to be confined daily, she is the most abandoned creature, she has violated every commandment, but I did not send her away, she would go.²⁹

Fanny, in a letter to her brother John on 6 February 1835, talks about their relief in being rid of Emma:

We have sent Phoebe with the boys to wash and work for them and they find her invaluable. Honesty is a quality of rare occurrence among the lower orders here. Our young female servant turned out so very good for nothing that we cannot rejoice too much in being released from her. Her indentures were cancelled about two months since and although our labours are thereby considerably increased every thing devolving upon ourselves we have not for a moment regretted her discharge. Old Herring is still in attendance upon us and we are far more comfortable than we have been for a long time.³⁰

Emma gave birth on 17 February 1835 to a son, Henry John. The father was Charles Bussell, the shy stammerer whose speech problems obviously gave him great difficulty relating to women and so was the most likely to fall for Emma's wiles. He had taken ill and returned to Augusta in May 1834 and it would have been around this time that he impregnated Emma. John Molloy, the Government Resident for Augusta, recorded the birth of Henry John, parents E. Mould and C. Bussell on 17 February 1835.³¹ Henry John was also baptised by John Molloy at Augusta. Baptism number thirteen, dated 5 April 1835, shows Henry John, the son of Emma Mould and Charles Bussell, born 17 February 1835 at Augusta and baptised by John Molloy, the Government Resident.³²

The Bussells did not take kindly to Emma's pregnancy and their strict morality affected their compassion and as a result they judged her harshly. Georgiana Molloy was more charitable and she took Emma into her service and then recommended her to a lady at Albany. Emma may also have been looked after by the Bussells for some time after giving birth. Although the Bussells continued to deny the child's paternity, they took him to bring up themselves. Mrs Bussell wrote on 22 January 1836:

We rationed Emma till she left upon which she fattened were she the size of Mrs Prichard when she embarked for King George's Sound. We have taken her son to bring up. Mrs Molloy from necessity employed her and gave her a recommendation to a lady at that place so that she may be reclaimed if she is not transported. It is a relief to me in every sense of the word that she is departed.³³

By July 1836 Emma was working for Mrs Elizabeth Pace in Perth, as it was reported in the *Perth Gazette* of 1 July 1836 that Emma Mould, a servant of Mrs Pace, gave evidence in a court case. Elizabeth Pace (nee Fenney) was born in Seamer, Yorkshire, in late 1788 1790. She married Walter Pace in London on 30 March 1814. He was the captain of the *Medina*, which came to Fremantle on 6 July 1830 and departed for Batavia (now Jakarta) on 25 September 1830. Pace was granted 5,000 acres of land while here and returned to the Swan River on the *Ann* in 1832. He was followed by his wife and three children, who arrived on the *Quebec Trader* on 19 April 1834. Mrs Pace was also the licensee of the Crown and Thistle Hotel, later ran a store in Fremantle and was a shareholder of the Fremantle Whaling Company. She died in Victoria on 14 May 1874.³⁴

On 26 December 1836, J B Wittenoom, the Colonial Chaplain, married Thomas Sweetman to Emma Mould at Fremantle, witnessed by Alfred Davies and Ann Woodward.³⁵ They were to have thirteen or so children together between 1836 and 1857. Thomas was Mrs Pace's agent at the Mason's Arms and the Whaler's Inn from April 1837³⁶ until August 1838, when his services were discontinued with,³⁷ so it is most probable that they met whilst in her employ. At some stage in 1838 Emma reclaimed her son from the Bussells and changed his surname to Sweetman. She had written to the Governor on 14 March 1838 requesting that the master of the *Champion* be allowed to bring her son from the Vasse.³⁸

It is not known when Thomas Sweetman arrived in Western Australia. He does not appear on any passenger lists, either newspaper or official, for Western Australia. As he died at the end of 1899 and had been a colonist for around 68 years, his arrival date in Australia may have been about 1831, when he would have been seventeen. Emma stated in a petition in 1857 that Thomas had been in Western Australia for 25 years, which would put his date of arrival around 1832.

There is some conjecture that he came to Western Australia on the *Frances Charlotte*, as she departed from Hobart on 22 February 1833 and arrived in Fremantle on 23 March 1833 with a Thomas Sweetman on board as a member of the crew. The *Frances Charlotte* sailed for Singapore on 10 April

1833, so he could have jumped ship while she was in harbour. However, another Thomas Sweetman, also a crew member, sailed from Hobart on the *Rifleman*, bound for London, on 14 April 1833. If this is the correct Thomas Sweetman, then he may have sailed to England (the *Rifleman* did not call in to Albany or Fremantle on her way to England) and returned to Western Australia by 1836 when his presence in Western Australia is first noted. (There is also a Thomas Sweetman who signed a petition in Perth relating to religion in 1832. He only would have been eighteen at the time and although there is some similarity in the signatures, it is not enough to conclude that he is Emma's Thomas.)

In 1838, after the Reverend Dr Louis Guistiniani had left the colony, Thomas Sweetman began a day school at his former Moravian Mission in Guildford for the children of local settlers. This was taken over by Abraham Jones in 1840 after Thomas and his family moved to Perth. On 23 January 1841 the *Perth Gazette* reported that Thomas was granted a publican's licence. In the first half of 1846, Thomas conducted a school for 34 boys at York. This took place in a hovel, which was let to him on a temporary basis for two shillings per week. Within a few months the school was moved into a house, occupied as a forge, part of which was let to him for £12 per annum. This school, which was supported by the government, closed when Sweetman left for Fremantle on account of ill health.³⁹

By June 1847 Thomas' ill health had worsened and the family had run into hard times as can be seen by a petition from Thomas Sweetman to the Governor on 21 June 1847:

The petition of your memorialist humbly shewest that he is a married man with seven small children. That the eldest, who has for many years been of much assistance, now lies in a hopeless state in the Colonial Hospital and the youngest, an infant six months old, has been ailing since its birth and by requiring the constant attention of its mother, prevents her from earning at washing, needlework or nursing, her usual part of the family maintenance. That petitioner, during a period of sixteen years, has by the persevering industry of himself and wife, with the strictest economy, maintained his family respectably and free from debt. That for the last three months petitioner has himself suffered much sickness whereby he has been prevented from earning sufficient to support his family, and has been driven into debt, that he is now confined to his bed wholly unable in any way to earn even the necessities of life for his now totally destitute children. That under such accumulated misfortunes, to which all men are liable, your petitioner is compelled to adopt the only course left him by appealing to your Excellency's merciful consideration of his distressed state, and in the earnest hope that such support may be afforded to the family of an honest, industrious and useful tradesman as will keep them from starvation in such a time of need and affliction, until such time as, by the blessing of Heaven, he may be restored to health, and able to resume his trade and support his family.⁴⁰

On 23 June 1847 the Colonial Secretary replied:

I am directed by the Governor in reply to your memorial of the 21st inst., to inform you that having received the report of the Colonial Surgeon on the state of your health, he will authorise an allowance of 5 shillings per week being made to you in the meantime until that officer shall be enabled to make a more favourable report.⁴¹

On the same day the Colonial Surgeon was instructed to:

Supply such medical comforts as he thought necessary, but only to Thomas Sweetman, under no circumstances was such aid to be given to any other person for him.⁴²

Sweetman recovered from his health problems, and on 28 October 1851 applied to the government for employment. In the letter he mentions that he had been in the colony for nineteen years and had worked as a watchmaker for several years, but the arrival of two ticket-of-leave men in the trade had taken away his business and left him and his large and young family in a parlous state. He also noted that the expansion of the Convict Establishment would lead to employment and asked for a position there. In reply he was told that many such applications had been received and not to hold out hope for any such position.

However, in March 1852, some three months or so later, he was employed in the Steward's Office at the Convict Establishment at Fremantle as a 2nd class clerk at a salary of £73 per annum and then became a 1st class clerk in the Gaol's Department at the Round House. As noted, he was a watchmaker (in the *Inquirer* of 9 December 1846 he advertised that he had 'received from London, per *Dispatch*, a supply of tools and materials for the watch business') and is said to have installed Fremantle Prison's clock and was the first person to wind it.⁴³ Around this time Emma advertised in the *Inquirer* of 10 November 1852 that she had opened a respectable Board and Lodging House at the corner of Henry Street, South Beach, Fremantle.

Sweetman was dismissed from the Convict Establishment in late March 1857. The *Perth Gazette* of 3 April 1857 touched on the reason for his dismissal:

An investigation was held last week at Fremantle into alleged peculations [embezzlement] by some of the under officers in the Convict Establishment. It ended in a person named Sweetman being committed for a month's hard labour.

However, the actual story, while seeming completely trivial to our eyes, is much more interesting. The Comptroller General's correspondence for 1857 contains copious depositions and statements on the affair and it all basically revolves around shoes! The majority of the correspondence concerns a re-convicted convict called James Hearn. Apparently when Hearn left the prison, he took three pairs of shoes and some leather with him, for which he received a sentence of three years. In one of his statements, made on 23 March 1857, Hearn implicated Thomas Sweetman.

Thomas Sweetman has had a pair of old cloth boots fronted and soled with Government leather in the Establishment. He had a pair half soled

the week before Mr Sweetman went on pay, also done with government leather also a pair of Albert Slippers were made for him. He told me himself I measured him, he gave me his old shoes (Divine) [and I] made the Albert Slippers.

I on one occasion cut up about 140 pairs of soles from the butt and when I went to draw them for use we could only get about 90 pairs and on counting them afterwards we found that 15 or 20 pairs were missing they said no more were cut. I do not know whether they were in store at the time or not, but I do know that I had cut a much greater number of pairs than could be found when wanted for use, I took the boots back to Mr Sweetman along with Warder "Jones" when they were finished, "Jones" had ordered them to be done for Sweetman.⁴⁴

In response Sweetman made the following statement:

The boots I positively deny giving him, James Hearn, the leather to repair them. When I showed them to him he said hand them to me I will get them done immediately for you. He took them away from the store. I asked several days [later] if they were not done, he said "very near," when I have made a neat job of them I will bring them over. After two or three days he brought them over, I said you have taken the tops off altogether, he said yes, I did not mention to him where he got the leather, I afterwards told him he had spoiled them.

Slippers – I had a pair of Albert Slippers made in the prison for use in store during winter, the slippers are now in store. The boots soled I sent to get a small patch put on and Hearn brought them back with the patch repaired and half soled. I deny ever having any boots made about three years since. I never had any made for the five years I have been in the Convict Establishment except for one pair for which there was an order – all was done by and with "Jones" knowledge sometimes leather has been brought back wet with grease and weighs more in consequence. I told Mr "Jones" if he had any charge against me for leather to let me know. He said "all right."

All boots made in prison are brought to the Stewards store to be passed out if necessary and cannot go out without a pass, without the hand of some officer. I deny knowing or hearing from Jones and Hearn that about 20 pairs of soles could not be found. If missing then they must be missing now and I do not know whether any are now missing or not.⁴⁵

The Steward, James Masters, who was Thomas Sweetman's immediate superior, testified on 27 March 1857:

Thomas Sweetman has not received any order from me nor has any order passed through my office permitting him to have any Boots or Shoes or Slippers made in the prison nor has he had any order to use government leather for his own use.

Mr Sweetman is not allowed slippers in store but I would not object to his putting on a pair if he came in with wet feet or bad feet, he is not authorized to get slippers made for the purpose. The article shown me I call Albert Boots not Albert Slippers, there is no entry of any leather having been used for making boots, shoes or slippers for Thomas Sweetman and no authority for it.

No report was ever made to me by "Sweetman" or "Jones" or any person that soles were missing, on examining the books I do not find any deficiency of leather or boots. It is possible that when soles or uppers are received after being cut out that a clerk who is dishonest may enter a less number of pairs than he receives and hand the others to the master shoe maker if he joins with him in robbing the government, but I am not aware that any thing has been stolen.⁴⁶

The result of all this was that Sweetman was dismissed from his job and sentenced to one month's hard labour by the magistrates, Thomas Brown and George Clifton. It seems odd to us today that such a thing could happen. The implication that Sweetman was somehow involved in the missing 20 pairs of soles was only on the word of the convict and could not be proved. Sweetman admitted to having a pair of Albert Slippers made for his use in the store in winter and the Steward said he had no objections to this use, only to them having been made of government leather. The consequences of Sweetman's actions seem unusually harsh.

The Albert slipper, which featured prominently in the case, is named after Prince Albert, who married Queen Victoria in 1840. They were made for the nobility who did not want to damage their homes by wearing outdoor shoes inside. They were a house shoe with a hard leather sole and heel, usually had velvet uppers with quilted synthetic lining, and often an embroidered design on the front. Ostensibly house slippers, Albert slippers were often used outside the home with tuxedos and formal dress.

Emma petitioned the Governor on her husband's behalf in early April 1857:

Thomas Sweetman, the husband of your petitioner, has been a resident in this colony for twenty five years, during which period he has maintained a character for uprightness and probity, as many of the oldest and most respectable colonists are willing to testify.

Your petitioner's husband, Thomas Sweetman, has been in the service of the Government as Steward's Clerk in the Convict Establishment for the last five years and a half, and has always acquitted himself with credit, and that upon an enquiry being instituted relative to certain peculations in the Steward's Department of the Convict Establishment, your petitioner's husband was examined and, upon his own open and straightforward acknowledgement of having a pair of slippers made to wear in his office, he has been convicted and sentenced to a month's imprisonment, thereby branding him with infamy and destroying the character he has borne for a period nearly equal to the existence of the Colony.

Your petitioner humbly trusts that your Excellency will not allow your petitioner's husband to be made the Scape Goat for the criminal acts of others, but that the true state of the case may be examined with that impartiality for which your Excellency is proverbial.

Your petitioner humbly suggests the natural enquiry that, if her husband, Thomas Sweetman be guilty, how is it that a principal officer of the Convict Establishment, on whom the entire burden of the criminal charges had rested, has been allowed to abscond?

Your petitioner therefore humbly trusts that your Excellency will be pleased to scrutinise the charges upon which her husband's conviction rests, and cause such a searching enquiry to be instituted as will elicit the truth and fix the stigma where it ought to have rested and that your Excellency will be pleased to take into consideration the number of years your petitioner's husband has maintained a character for honour and probity – the respectable position he has filled in the Colony and his large family and graciously remit to your petitioner's husband the remaining part of the sentence pronounced upon him.⁴⁷

On the petition is written:

If ever character can be of any weight it ought to have been in this case; and it is indeed worse than nothing if such a character as Sweetman's can be sworn away by Hearn and Jones, both re-convicted. If the Bench be convinced that S is a Scape-goat (which means, if it means anything, they believe him innocent), I think they would have shown a sound deduction in abstaining from punishing him. But an inverted understanding seems the endemic malady of it.⁴⁸

The magistrates themselves seemed to be back pedalling on their original verdict as can be seen by a letter to the Governor by Thomas Brown on 7 April 1857:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th inst and in reply beg to forward the evidence in the case of "Sweetman" also in other supposed robberies. Mr Clifton and myself think the statement in the petition of Mrs Sweetman correct viz that "Sweetman" has been made the scape goat for others and that "Jones" and "Hearn" were by far the most guilty.

"Jones" was tried upon two charges and each time the case was dismissed and no new evidence has as yet come to the knowledge of the magistrates to induce them to apprehend him a third time, if we had believed the evidence of "Hearn" Jones would have been tried for his offence as stated by "Hearn" but the witnesses brought forward by "Hearn" clearly proved that "Hearn" had sworn falsely and that he had seen the boots previous to leaving the Establishment. We had little doubt of "Jones" guilt from the first but could not get evidence upon which we felt justified in convicting.⁴⁹

A couple of years later, in 1859, the newspapers were full of an investigation into peculations in the Convict Establishment, which went far beyond Thomas Sweetman's having a pair of Albert Slippers made. The *Perth Gazette*s of 15 April, 6 May, 3 June, 10 June, 15 June and 15 July, and the *Inquirer* of 15 June all reported on it and mentioned such things as the stealing of leather, parchment book covers, labels, lathes and tools and the taking of money from prisoners.

On 21 August 1857, after Sweetman had served his sentence, he wrote to the Governor regarding his pay. It appears that he felt he was entitled to an increase of 1/6 per diem as approved by the estimates of 1853/54 and 1855/56. In the memorial Sweetman noted that he had:

a large family to support without means of maintaining them since my discharge from the Convict Service and being almost destitute and considering myself justly entitled as other Clerks who received advances upon the Estimates to which I have referred, I am necessarily compelled to lay my case before your Excellency for investigation and I also pray your Excellency's merciful consideration of my distressing position.⁵⁰

Unfortunately for him the Governor noted on the application that:

Mr Sweetman has forgotten that General Duty 546 was cancelled by no. 547, which provided that the increases to the clerks in the Convict Department should be confined to those in the Comptroller General's office, the other clerks being authorised to draw the temporary increase only - as the Comptroller General states Mr Sweetman has drawn the full amount of pay to which he was entitled.⁵¹

Sweetman left Western Australia on 31 October 1857 in the *Lochinvar* bound for South Australia and never returned, apparently trying to revive his fortunes in a different colony.⁵² It appears at first that he abandoned Emma, but this may not be the full story. Emma wrote to the Governor on 10 May 1858 about her distressing circumstances and the hard times she was now suffering:

I am again induced to appeal to your Excellency on behalf of myself and family, and to ask if you can hold out any hopes of giving my husband an appointment if he returns to the colony, as I have no means of joining him in Adelaide, neither is he in a position to support me with my large family were I with him. I have parted with almost everything that I had to support myself and children during the last few months, and am now in a state of utter destitution.⁵³

This seems to indicate that Emma did have some hopes of her husband returning or of joining him in Adelaide. The Governor's reply was, in essence, that there was no hope of her husband gaining employment should he return and that he had no means for providing for her beyond those available for every destitute person - in other words the Poor House.⁵⁴

On 17 June and 11 July 1859 Emma again wrote to the Governor, this time about her husband's dismissal from the Convict Service.⁵⁵ She received the reply that the Governor could see no reason for re-opening the subject of her

husband's dismissal.⁵⁶ Things did not improve for Emma and she again petitioned the Governor on 21 January 1861:

I venture most respectfully to address you regarding the destitute circumstances I am most unfortunately placed in; with a family of seven young children owing to my husband not having returned as I had reason to believe he would have done – long ere this, I have for the last six months been living on the premises of Mr Charles Manning, near the River Jetty as caretaker – rent free, and have lately received intimation from him to quit on the 25th instant at the latest, as he has a family coming out from England, for whom he is bound to find a house, I would therefore most humbly and respectfully pray you to give my case your kind consideration with a view of granting a money allowance to enable me to pay for house rent, fuel and a trifle to furnish such necessaries of life that I am not able to work for. I have parted with nearly the whole of my furniture to support us, and am now reduced to the dire necessity of soliciting pecuniary aid, which your Excellency will with your accustomed liberality dispense to me a favour of 12/- per week.⁵⁷

The Governor asked for the names and ages of Emma's children and was informed they were Isabella 20, William 18, Charles 16, George 14, Martha 12, Walter 5½ and Benjamin 2½. The Governor noted on the letter that 'if this woman be destitute she should be admitted to the poor house. Three lads between 14 and 18 years ought to be able to earn a livelihood.'⁵⁸ (Emma at the time had another daughter, Charlotte aged about 7 who she does not mention and Benjamin would have been 3½, not 2½, having been born in 1857. Also there is no birth certificate recorded for Walter Sweetman. Of Emma's other children, some would have left by then to make their own way and some had died in infancy.)

Emma's final letter to the Governor came on 23 May 1862, again on the subject of her lack of means. The Colonial Secretary responded that:

His Excellency the Governor has received your memorial respecting your husband's absence from the colony and his refusal to render assistance towards your support. As he appears to be in the service of the Government of South Australia I will address a letter to the Chief Secretary there, who may probably induce him to assist towards your support.⁵⁹

It is not known whether this did the trick and Thomas supported Emma and the children from then on or whether some of Emma's children became old enough to work and support her. We know that Henry John Sweetman, the son of Charles Bussell and Emma Mould, was working by then and may have supported Emma. In a report in the *Inquirer* of 2 May 1860, Henry Sweetman is reported as receiving a tender to execute sundry repairs to boats, for £7.6s.4d.

What is certain is that Thomas and Emma never saw each other again. It is interesting to speculate that the affair of the Albert Slipper, which culminated in Thomas being dismissed from his position with the Convict Establishment,

may have been the incident which led to them separating in 1857 and never seeing each other again. On such small things our lives revolve! Emma died on 1 November 1887, aged 71, in Fremantle (possibly at the home of one of her sons, Benjamin Tolfrey Sweetman), some 30 years after Thomas left for South Australia.

Thomas Sweetman had quite a career as a schoolteacher in South Australia, but began by working in a hotel, as not long after his arrival he sued publican William Snarr for £4 in wages.⁶⁰ In June 1859 Sweetman was recommended to receive a licence to teach at Grand Junction.⁶¹ On 17 June 1862 it was reported in the *South Australian Register* that:

A communication from the Governor of Western Australia to the Governor of this colony, forwarding a memorial from Mrs Emma Sweetman, relative to some proceedings of her husband, Mr Thomas Sweetman, schoolmaster at Glenelg, was referred to the Board for report.⁶²

In March 1864 Sweetman was granted a 2nd class licence without suspension and liabilities in the South Australian Insolvency Court – his liabilities were £92.11s.10d and assets only £15.2s.9d.⁶³ In August 1867 he applied for a licence to teach at Port Lincoln, but this was denied.⁶⁴ By July 1873 he was teaching at Little Swamp, near Port Lincoln, but because of low numbers of pupils there asked permission to establish a school at Burrawing Mine, which was granted.⁶⁵ Burrawing Copper Mine was about 12 kilometres from Tumbly Bay, which is north of Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula. By March 1877 the mine had closed and pupil numbers were falling,⁶⁶ which led to a transfer to Windsor School in January 1879.⁶⁷ Sometime after this last entry Sweetman would probably have retired as nothing more is reported on him until his death at age 85. He died at the residence of his daughter, Mrs Isabella Mould Seager; in Stanley Street, North Adelaide, South Australia on 30 December 1899⁶⁸ (Isabella had married Sydney Seager in Adelaide on 3 November 1874). Sweetman had been in Australia for 68 years.

So, what became of the other protagonists in the Emma Mould saga? The son of Charles Bussell and Emma Mould, Henry John Sweetman, married Elizabeth Adams in Fremantle in 1864. They had two children born out of wedlock and another ten after marriage. He is recorded in the *Herald Almanack* 1886-1889 as a boat builder in Fremantle and later became a storeman at Shenton & Co. However, he was in the shipwrighting industry earlier than the late 1880s as the following indicates.

As already noted, on 2 May 1860 Henry John Sweetman received a tender to execute sundry repairs to boats for £7.6s.4d. Later, on 28 October 1873 the French barque *Emilienne* went aground at Arthur's Head during a gale and was considered to be a wreck. After the cargo was removed and a pump installed, she was cleared from the rocks and towed to the South Jetty for inspection, but promptly filled with water and sank alongside. This posed a problem for other ships and Henry John Sweetman received a contract to pump her out and remove her from the jetty. In the contract, dated 12 January 1874, he stated that:

I the undersigned hereby agree to pump out the French barque *Emilienne* and place her in the position specified in notice of today, viz, 200 yards south west of the watering jetty for the sum of £300 sterling – amount to be paid in full on completion of contract.

He carried out this contract and with the help of two Randell and Knights steamboats the barque was towed to Garden Island where she was careened and repaired. As Sweetman did not appear to build any ships himself, it is assumed he was an employee of a larger shipyard in Fremantle. He owned three lots in Fremantle, Lot 473 in High Street, Lot 582 in Fitzgerald Terrace and Lot 827 in Hampton Road.⁶⁹ He died on 20 March 1902 and left an estate valued at £870 to his wife Elizabeth.⁷⁰

Charles Bussell was born in 1807, so was 23 when he arrived with his brothers on the *Warrior* in 1830. He was appointed Government Storekeeper at Augusta on 14 September 1831 at a salary of £60 per annum and was a Government Storekeeper for much of his life. In September 1848 he was appointed Storekeeper at Perth. Due to his stuttering and self-consciousness, he never married and led a somewhat unhappy life. He lived at his house, "Sandilands," for much of his life. He was in love with Ellen Heppingstone, but had to watch her marry his brother, Alfred Pickmore Bussell, in 1850. His letters and diaries show him to have been a witty and perceptive man. He died on 5 August 1856 aged 49.

Finally, what can we make of Emma in relation to what the Bussells wrote about her and her life after leaving their employ? She was a young girl when she came to Western Australia with the Bussells and almost certainly did not like being a servant, having to work long and hard hours in fairly primitive conditions. The Bussells, who were so loving and supportive of each other, were not likely to nurture and support this young girl thrust into a strange environment half way round the world. That Emma stole, lied and used any trick at her disposal she had to get herself ahead is probably true, yet these peccadilloes of her youth disappeared when she married. She bore and raised a large number of children; she ran a boarding house for gentlemen; and according to her husband's petition she supported the family by taking in washing and needlework and by nursing. She also supported her large family once Thomas left for South Australia. This is not the lazy, insolent, lying, thieving Emma as portrayed by the Bussells, but a redeemed mother and hard working member of the community.

Emma did fall on hard times after her husband left for South Australia. Perhaps he intended to return or to send for Emma and the children, but it obviously never worked out that way. Emma lived for another twenty five years after her last appeal for aid from the government in 1862, so she either received support from her husband or their children, or went into the Poor House. Whatever happened during the last period of her life, Emma did make something of a success of her life, contrary to the expectations of the Bussells. The descendents of Emma Mould and Thomas Sweetman can be found in Perth, Fremantle, Bunbury, Katanning, Beverley, Geraldton,

Dongara, Arrino and the Eastern States, amongst others. Dare I say, when they made Emma, they broke the mould?

Endnotes

SROWA - State Records Office of Western Australia, SLWA - State Library of Western Australia, SLSA - State Library of South Australia

- 1 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office Received, Acc 36, vol.6, p.88
- 2 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office Received, Acc 36, vol.29, p.208; SLWA - Perth Gazette 2 February 1833, p.2
- 3 SLWA – Perth Gazette 23 August 1834, p.2; Perth Gazette 6 September, p.3
- 4 SLWA - MN 586 Bussell Family papers 1740-1956
- 5 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 18 September – 20 October 1832, 6926A/1, p.13
- 6 SLWA - Ibid, pp.20-21
- 7 SLWA – Elizabeth Capel Bussell Diary 3 October 1832 – 1833, 294A/6
- 8 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 1833, 337A/387
- 9 SLWA – Letter from Frances Louisa Bussell to her mother 5 April 1833, 337A/332
- 10 SLWA – Letter from Frances Louisa Bussell to her mother 20 April 1833, 337A/334
- 11 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 3-16 November 1833, 6926A/5, p.7
- 12 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 15 October-1 November 1833, 6926A/4, p.8
- 13 SLWA – Letter from Charles Bussell to his sister Fanny 5 November 1833, 337A/158
- 14 SLWA – Letter from Charles Bussell to his brother John 22 January 1838, 337A/162
- 15 SLWA – Elizabeth Capel Bussell's Adelphi Journal, 294A/7, p.35
- 16 SLWA – Ibid, p.40
- 17 SLWA – Letter from Charles Bussell to his mother 16 October 1830, 337A/145
- 18 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 31 January-16 February 1834, 337A/389 (typescript)
- 19 SLWA – Letter from Frances Louisa Bussell to her sister Bessie 8 February 1834, 337A/338
- 20 SLWA – Lenox Bussell's Journal 11 June 1834, 337A/544
- 21 SLWA – Lenox Bussell's Journal 20 June 1834, 337A/544
- 22 SLWA – Letter from Lenox Bussell 26 July 1834, 337A/770
- 23 SLWA – Letter Lenox Bussell from Cattle Chosen to Augusta July-September 1834, 337A/769
- 24 SLWA – Letter from Mrs Frances Louisa Bussell to Elizabeth Capel Carter, 18 September 1834, 337A/312
- 25 SLWA – Letter from Mrs Frances Louisa Bussell to Emily Huggins, 19 October 1834, 337A/313
- 26 SLWA – Letter from Lenox Bussell to his sister, Fanny, late 1834, 337A/769
- 27 SLWA – Frances Louisa Bussell Diary 1835, 6926A/7, pp.8-9
- 28 SLWA – Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre1829-1888, Vol.2, p.1456
- 29 SLWA – Letter from Mrs Frances Louisa Bussell to Elizabeth Capel Carter, 1 February 1835, 337A/316
- 30 SLWA – Letter from Frances Louisa Bussell to her brother John, 6 February 1835, 337A/346
- 31 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.45, p.108
- 32 SLWA – Church of England records, Port Augusta and the Vasse Baptisms 1830-1885, 3519A/9, no.13
- 33 SLWA – Letter from Mrs Frances Louisa Bussell to Elizabeth Capel Carter, 22 January 1836, 337A/317
- 34 SLWA - Research Notes 304, 793 & 805; unpublished online manuscript – Walter Pace and the Pace family by Tom Quinn; Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888, Vol.3, p.2399
- 35 SROWA – Baptisms, Marriages and Burials at Perth and Fremantle 1829-1841, Acc 703
- 36 SLWA – Perth Gazette 29 April 1837, p.1
- 37 SLWA - Perth Gazette 1 September 1838, p.1
- 38 SROWA, Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, vol.61, p.41
- 39 SLWA – John Ridders, Western Australian schools 1830-1980, Vol.1, pp.46 & 95
- 40 SROWA, Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, vol.157, p.22
- 41 SROWA, Colonial Secretary's Office forwarded, Cons. 49, Vol.23, nos 490

- 42 SROWA, Colonial Secretary's Office forwarded, Cons. 49, Vol.23, nos 492
- 43 SLWA - Sunday Times 31 March 1929, first section, p.3
- 44 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, p.190
- 45 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, p.191
- 46 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, pp.192-193
- 47 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, pp.201-202
- 48 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, p.203
- 49 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.375, p.200
- 50 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.372, p.35
- 51 Ibid
- 52 SLSA – South Australian Register, 17 November 1857, p.2
- 53 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.393, p.204
- 54 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office forwarded, Cons 49, Vol.35, no.371
- 55 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.417, p.246
- 56 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office forwarded, Cons 49, Vol.35, no.733
- 57 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office received, Acc 36, Vol.466, p.59
- 58 Ibid
- 59 SROWA – Colonial Secretary's Office forwarded, Cons 49, Vol.37, no.479
- 60 SLSA- South Australian Register 5 January 1859, p.3
- 61 SLSA - South Australian Advertiser 14 June 1859, p.3
- 62 SLSA - South Australian Register 17 June 1862, p.3
- 63 SLSA - South Australian Register 15 March 1864, p.2
- 64 SLSA - South Australian Advertiser 1 August 1867, p.3
- 65 SLSA - South Australian Register 8 July 1873, p.6
- 66 SLSA - South Australian Advertiser 6 March 1877, p.6
- 67 SLSA - South Australian Register 10 January 1879, p.6
- 68 SLSA – South Australian Register 10 January 1900, p.4
- 69 SLWA – Rod Dickson, They kept this State afloat: shipbuilders, boatbuilders and shipwrights of WA 1829-1929, pp. 264-265
- 70 SLWA – The West Australian 11 April 1902, p.2