**Addendum – On why William and Margaret emigrated to Van Diemen’s Land**

The Tasmanian Ancestry journal published an article written by members of our research group in 2004 which was based for the most part on information on the family’s origins which had been discovered to that time. There was however one significant exception to this which concerned withholding the fuller story of why William and Margaret chose to marry and almost immediately depart for a new life in Van Diemen’s Land. It is clear from letters between William and British government officials that emigration was a planned decision which the couple had prepared for many months in advance of their June 1820 marriage.

The Ancestry article deliberately excluded details of William’s relationship with Mary Archer, a maid servant lass who was engaged for service in his Newbigging household, and with whom he had what today we would call an affair; an affair which led to Mary’s becoming pregnant and in August of 1819 giving birth to a son whom she named John Wilson, his firstname most probably after his grandfather John Wilson, and in accordance with traditional Scottish naming ways.

These circumstances were first discovered by Mike Wilson in research he undertook at a Melbourne based Latter Day Saints repository and was thereafter included in a brief to a professional Scottish genealogist commissioned by members of our research group – the professional’s report based on Monikie Kirk official records confirming. The Kirk records identified William and Mary each acknowledging the circumstances in admissions to the Kirk Elders in an admonishment hearing session.

The nature of the relationship we do not know and never will know – one may only suspect given the considerable age difference (38 and 20) and the difference in ‘station’ between them, that for William at least it may have been opportunistic and lacking any serious intent on his part of it progressing towards a future together. And for her part - was she an innocent young girl emotionally captivated by a mature and experienced man of some means and standing in the community, or did she too opportunistically enter a relationship in the hope of a future of higher status and prosperity – we can only speculate.

When this discovery was made and announced to the then elders of the Tasmanian based Frederick Langloh Wilson family they were quite taken aback. Since their childhood days they had been told stories of William and Margaret which had been passed down the four generations to the effect that William and Margaret had left Scotland because of dissension in William’s family which was allegedly due to his having ‘married below station’ and/or having wed in an official Church of Scotland ceremony rather than in that of the Secessionist church (such as that in Newbigging) to which his parents belonged.

William it was said had in consequence been disinherited by his family prompting departure and emigration to Van Diemen’s Land. The legendary stories of William which were retained within the Tasmanian arm of his families in Australia also record his oft stated .. “shaken the dust of Dundee from my boots forever”, seemingly reflecting ill feeling towards family and events in Scotland.

The Mary Archer relationship was totally unknown to the Tasmanian family and perhaps not surprisingly came as something of a shock to them. Accordingly in deference to the elder ladies in Tasmania, the Ancestry publication excluded the Mary Archer affair.

Also retained in the family was the legend of a newspaper advertisement placed from Scotland which had appeared in a Hobart paper apparently sometime between William’s and Margaret’s death (1856 and 1875) asking for contact with William’s family on a matter of importance. Margaret, by then in firm control of the family, ‘directed’, it is said, that the request be ignored, as it seems it was. Insufficient research has to date been undertaken to locate the newspaper item.

Subsequent research discovery has added new light to our understanding of the possible events in Scotland around the 1819/20 period which lay behind the alleged dissension in William’s family. It had been assumed that disinheritance would have been the prerogative of William’s father as the legal owner of the family’s wealth. However we were surprised to discover from researched death records in recent years that his father, John, had actually passed on in 1812.

In the prior absence of a death record coupled with the disinheritance story we had assumed he was still living at the time of William’s marriage and departure from Scotland. So, father John clearly played no part in any dissension which may have occurred.

What then is the source of the disinheritance legend – was this, together with the alleged reasons for it, simply a storyline created by William and Margaret to deflect any future family or friends from speculating or enquiring otherwise. Likely so. Was the refusal to respond to the newspaper advertisement another reputational protective step.*[see footnote]\**

However yet further subsequent discoveries may at least circumstantially have added even more light on the dissension cum disinheritance legend. When he died John Wilson and family were living on a small property called Templehall, just a couple of hundred meters along the road from Newbigging village, whilst by 1819/20 his daughter Elizabeth (William’s older sister) is known to be living there with her young family. She had married a David Barrie.

During this time Mary Archer and William are having their ‘liaison’, and Mary gives birth to her son in August 1819. We already knew from the Monikie Kirk records the son was called John, but more recently we found that he was in fact given the full name-set John Barrie Wilson. It might then be speculated that William had abandoned the pregnant Mary Archer, and that his sister Elizabeth took pity on mother and in due course the son (her nephew), probably in some way supporting them, and in appreciation, on his christening Mary gave her son the middle name Barrie. In the midst of all these events (we might speculate) there is a serious falling out between Elizabeth and William and perhaps others of William’s siblings too, and therein perhaps lies the origin of the dissension with the Scottish Wilson family.

*\*[Undoubtedly, if there was some background of difficulty which an emigrant wanted to get away from in the home country, then Van Diemen’s Land was probably the ideal destination – nowhere on Earth was more remote in time or distance. Indeed, the then Lieutenant Governor of VDL, William Sorell had been resident in Hobart for almost three years before it was discovered that Mrs Sorell was not Mrs Sorell at all, rather, the wife of another British naval officer, whom Sorell had* *‘acquired’* *in Cape Town, sending his own wife packing back to England, indeed leaving them in quite poor circumstances ]*