

ELIZABETH SURRIDGE

(*Baretto Junior*, 1850)

by

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Elizabeth Surridge (aka 'Emma Surrage') had a shocking childhood.¹ The daughter of a notorious thief, she grew up in Wapping, one of the poorer parts of London. In 1847, at the age of twelve, she was convicted of theft and sentenced to transportation for ten years but pardoned because of her age. She was sent to live at London's Refuge for the Destitute but two years later she was convicted of theft again and once more sentenced to transportation for ten years. This time the sentence *was* carried out. She arrived in Van Diemen's Land (VDL) aboard *Baretto Junior* on 25 July 1850. In the colony, she led a remarkable life. Often in trouble with the law, she was gaoled several times. In 1859, she married former convict Samuel Longbottom and gave birth to a number of children before her husband deserted her, forcing her to support herself. In 1870, she sought a divorce – a rare and bold thing for a woman to do at that time - in order to protect her assets from creditors who might have wished to claim upon Longbottom. In 1871, now calling herself 'Elizabeth Kenworthy', she applied successfully for the license of the Golden Cross Hotel in Murray Street, Hobart. It was another audacious thing for a young woman to do – especially one who not only had a convict past but was also without the support of a male. That venture, however, may not have been a happy one and within a year or two she had relinquished the license. For the next thirty years, she lived quietly at New Town, Hobart, where she passed away in September 1907. She was in her early seventies.

This is Elizabeth's story:

Elizabeth Surridge was born about 1835, one of five children of Bartholomew Surrage, a 'notorious thief ... with a deplorable character'.² In her convict papers, her siblings are named as Bartholomew, Michael, James, Ellen and Margaret but there is no mention of her mother.³ The family lived in Wapping, an impoverished waterfront district populated by 'the lowest class ... occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals.'⁴

In 1847, at the age of twelve, she was convicted of the theft of money and sentenced to transportation for ten years but because of her age was pardoned on the condition of her living at The Refuge for the Destitute, Hackney Road, London. It was felt that removing her from her family would give her a chance to make a better life for herself. The refuge, founded in 1804, had been established primarily to provide shelter for persons recently released from prisons who, though

1 Conduct record: CON41-1-27, image 165; indent: CON15-1-6, images 216-217; description list: CON19-1-8, image 216, Police No: 940; FCRC ID: 2672

2 Year of birth (Old Bailey records, Case Ref: t18491217-204); description of Bartholomew Surrage: research notes of K. Graham, FCRC d/base at www.femaleconvicts.org

3 CON15-1-6, images 216-217.

4 Wapping in C19th: Booth, C. (1889): *Life and Labour of the People in London*. London: Macmillan.

they were willing to work, were unable to find employment because of their criminal pasts. It also took in 'unfortunate and deserted females' and other individuals 'in very urgent necessity'.⁵

However, just two years later Elizabeth was charged with theft again.

On 17 December 1849, at her trial at the Central Criminal Court, London (the 'Old Bailey'), a witness told the court that he had seen Elizabeth put her hand beneath the folds of the skirts of a woman who was distracted by a quarrel in which her husband was involved, and take her purse. The witness had alerted the woman and the police were called. A constable had arrested Elizabeth and taken her to the police station where she was searched and the stolen money – about four shillings and six pence - discovered. The court also heard that, in addition to this theft charge and the one in 1847, she had previously served two prison terms, one of six months for stealing a length of silk and another of a month for being disorderly. Found guilty, she was sentenced to transportation for ten years. This time, the sentence of transportation was carried out.⁶

For three months Elizabeth was held in an English gaol while awaiting a vessel to take her to VDL. Eventually she was put aboard *Baretto Junior*, which with 190 female prisoners and their twenty-two children, sailed from Portsmouth on 13 April 1850 and reached Hobart on 25 July.⁷

It had been a sad, uncomfortable - and particularly terrifying - journey. Three of the women had died from illnesses during the voyage and another had taken her own life by throwing herself from the ship. Two infants had also passed away.⁸

On 10 July, not long after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the ship had encountered a most severe hurricane. For almost twenty-four hours the storm had continued with unabated fury and the vessel had been battered by heavy seas, blinding snow and gales of tremendous force. With the main try-sail ripped to shreds and blown away and the ship becoming increasingly difficult to steer, all had known that they were in great danger. Many thought their last hour had come. Below decks, there were chaotic scenes. Huge waves breaking over the ship had drenched the women and children. Under the direction of the surgeon-superintendent, R. Whitemore Clarke, the least frightened of the women had been kept busy for hours baling and swabbing up the water.⁹

It is not known how Elizabeth had fared during the voyage. She is not among the forty-three women whom Surgeon-superintendent Clarke listed in his medical journal as having required treatment from him for their illnesses or injuries. Interestingly, however, he must have had dealings of some kind with her. A few days after the ship had reached Hobart, he wrote a letter to the convict authorities in which he recommended that, before being assigned to a settler as a servant, she be 'made to undergo 6 mths probation at the Cascade Factory, the first 3 mths under strict sep[arate] treatment.' Unfortunately, a copy of the letter, dated 30 July 1850, has not yet been located and

5 K. Graham, FCRC d/base at www.femaleconvicts.org; see also *Refuge for the Destitute*. (1818): *A Short Account of the Refuge for the Destitute*. London: W. Phillips.

6 Old Bailey at <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/> - Case Ref: t18491217-204).

7 <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/shipsTAS.html>

8 Medical journal of Surgeon-Superintendent R. Whitemore Clarke @ www.femaleconvicts.org

9 *The Courier* (Hobart), 31 July 1850, p.2; *Launceston Examiner*, 31 July 1850, p.7; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 1850, p.2.

the reasons for Clarke's recommendation is unknown but it appears to have been acted upon. It was not until 18 February 1851 that Elizabeth was allowed to enter private service as a housemaid at the residence of J.H Beaumont, Macquarie Street, Hobart.¹⁰

Upon arrival at Hobart, Elizabeth had been described as being sixteen years old, single and four feet and eleven inches (about 150 cms) tall. She had a fresh complexion, brown hair and light blue eyes. She could read and write. She was a Protestant.¹¹

A few months later, now in the service of the Dixon household, Elizabeth was charged with her first offence in the colony - disobedience of orders and insolence and sent back to the Cascades to serve four months' imprisonment with hard labour. During those four months, she was punished six times for relatively minor breaches of prison discipline, including 'talking on the way to church', 'disorderly at the mess table', 'disorderly in the dormitory' and 'neglecting work'. For these offences her punishments ranged from an 'admonishment' to 'cleaning the yards for ten days', 'separate confinement' and 'three days bread and water'.¹²

None of this curbed Elizabeth's unruliness. Soon after her release she was in trouble with the authorities again. Absconding from the home of her master, James Sly of Liverpool Street, Hobart, she was missing for some days. When apprehended, she was again returned to the Cascades, this time for twelve months to be served with hard labour. Again, she had to be punished frequently for disregard of prison rules: 'disrespect' to supervisors, 'making a noise' in her cell, 'misconduct in chapel' and so on. For these offences, she was punished with 'separate confinement' and a diet of 'bread and water'.¹³ On one occasion, she was ordered to wear 'punishment dress' for fourteen days for 'misconduct to a watchwoman'. Used quite frequently at the Cascades, and often meted out in combination with some other disciplinary measure such as 'bread and water', the 'punishment dress' consisted of a black cap and short-sleeved black jacket. Presumably, like shaving the head – a much more severe form of punishment - this was intended to humiliate the offender.¹⁴

Not long after her release, Elizabeth, now eighteen years old, took up with former convict, Samuel Longbottom, and by September 1853 was co-habiting with him.¹⁵ His conduct record is unflattering. In 1839, he had been convicted in England of a felony and had been transported to Bermuda where he had served seven years as a convict. In July 1847, soon after returning to England, he had been convicted of robbery with violence at York. After his trial, he had been imprisoned on hulks in England and Gibraltar, before being shipped to VDL. He had arrived there per *Lady Kennaway* (2) in May 1851. His gaol report described him as 'daring and violent'; the surgeon-superintendent on *Lady Kennaway* had described him simply as 'bad'. About thirty-two years old, he was single, five feet three and a half inches (about 163 cms) tall, with a dark

10 CON41-1-27, image 165; John Beaumont is believed to have been a director of the Tasmanian Fire, Life and Insurance Co. with offices in Macquarie Street – see advertisement in *Cornwall Chronicle*, 20 April 1850, p.256; charged with first offence: 29 July 1851.

11 CON41-1-27, image 165; indent CON15-1-6, images 216-217.

12 Cascades Punishment Book, CON138/1, pp.205-212, via FCRC d/base @ www.femaleconvicts.org

13 Cascades Punishment Book, CON138/2, pp.168-173, via FCRC d/base @ www.femaleconvicts.org

14 Punishment Book, CON138/2, pp.169, No. 2-173, via FCRC d/base @ www.femaleconvicts.org

15 See Elizabeth's protection order: SC89/1/2, 1870.

complexion, dark brown hair and grey eyes. Able to read and write ‘a little’, he was a labourer and stone-cutter by trade.¹⁶

While Elizabeth’s relationship with Longbottom might have offered her protection in a society in which the male population exceeded the female by a ratio of at least five to one, it seems not to have provided her with much stability. In early June 1854, again assigned to domestic service, she was charged with using ‘indecent language’ and sentenced to another six months’ gaol with hard labour.¹⁷

Within weeks of her starting this term of imprisonment, however, she was taken to the infirmary at Her Majesty’s General Hospital, Liverpool Street, Hobart, where, on 3 September 1854, she gave birth to her first child, a daughter whose name was registered as ‘Sarah Surrudge’. The name of the father was not recorded but it was probably Longbottom. After the birth, Elizabeth remained for some time at the hospital where a nursery had been established under the supervision of Dr. Edward Swarbreck Hall.¹⁸

Dr. Hall had taken up a temporary appointment as medical officer at the Cascades in June 1854. When he arrived there, he had found about sixty women and more than a hundred children cooped up in four small, cold and damp rooms. The infant mortality rate was abnormally high, most of the children were weak and sickly and some required daily medical treatment. Although Hall had tried desperately hard to improve conditions, he had been frustrated by the convict authorities whom, he felt, had no interest in the health of the children. Within a month he had moved all of the women with young children from the Cascades to the hospital infirmary where they were under the care of the Medical Department rather than the Convict Department. But even there, Hall’s frustration with the authorities continued. In March 1855, he had been forced to resign. Three months later, the Comptroller-General of Convicts had decided that that infirmary space at the hospital could be put to better use as office space and so the women and children had been moved again – this time to the Brickfields Hiring Depot at North Hobart where female prisoners who had served their initial probation were housed while awaiting their first assignments. There, also, were women who had been returned after finishing an assignment and were now awaiting another.¹⁹

At Brickfields, the women and children from the hospital were once again under the care and supervision of the Convict Department and, not surprisingly, the lack of concern for their health and safety against which Hall had fought had continued. Within two months, more than twenty of the children had died, eight in one week.²⁰ Elizabeth and her baby daughter had been among the women transferred from the hospital, of course. They remained there until April 1856.

16 Longbottom: conduct record, CON33-1-102, image 142; description list, CON18-1-52, image 198; indent, CON14-1-42, image 301/302.

17 CON41-1-27, image 165

18 Birth – Sarah Surrudge; RGD33/1/5, No. 1368, Hobart; the child was also known as ‘Susan Surrudge’ and ‘Ann’ Surrudge’ (and as ‘Mary Emma Kenworthy’ in later life).

19 This paragraph is based on the research of Kippen, R. (2009). ‘The convict nursery at the Cascades Female factory, Hobart’, *Chainletter* No. 2, Monash University: Founders and Survivors at

https://researchmgt.monash.edu/ws/portalfiles/portal/9389250/2009_Kippen_convictnursery.pdf

20 Kippen, *op.cit.*

Interestingly, on 4 February 1856, a huge fire broke out at Brickfields and the convict women were forced to act quickly to avoid a catastrophe. In June 1856, a number of them, including Elizabeth, were commended for their meritorious conduct at that time.²¹

On 3 April 1856, Elizabeth, now well enough to be hired out to private service again, admitted her daughter to the Queen's Orphan School (QOS), at New Town, Hobart. Strangely, the child's name was entered into the Admissions Register as 'Ann' Surridge rather than 'Sarah' Surridge. Her age is shown as '1 year 6 mths'. Elizabeth is shown as the child's mother but, again, name of the father was not recorded.²²

As it happens, Sarah (or 'Ann') Surridge was at the QOS for only four months. On 2 September 1856, she was discharged to Elizabeth's care. A note in the register reads 'Mother, Ticket of Leave'. A month earlier, Elizabeth had received her ticket of leave which allowed her to find her own employment and to have her daughter with her.²³ Nevertheless, ticket-of-leave convicts were still subject to strict rules. They were required to carry the ticket with them at all time, to remain within a specified area in the colony, to report regularly to local authorities and to attend church on Sundays, if possible.²⁴

Thus, the authorities were not pleased when, on 27 November 1856, Elizabeth was found 'in bed with a man'. Charged with misconduct, she was sent to prison again, this time for a month with hard labour.²⁵ The man's name is not mentioned in her convict documents. Was it Longbottom? That seems most likely – but, because they were not married, the authorities would have taken a dim view of their relationship.

In 1857, Elizabeth gave birth to her second child, a son. The birth does not appear to have been registered. Was Longbottom the father? Probably. Elizabeth was to explain later that she had not reared the boy but had given him up for adoption 'by a relative'! Who the relative was remains a mystery!²⁶

On 1 December 1857, Elizabeth's Conditional Pardon (CP) was approved. Convicts whose CP's were approved were free to move around the colony but the condition of their pardon was that they not return to the United Kingdom. They were required to apply for the document within three months and to be able to produce it at the time of a muster. Anyone unable to do so could be considered a Prisoner of the Crown and returned to Government Service.²⁷

In the following year – 1858 – Elizabeth gave birth to her third child, another daughter, whom she named Hannah Charlotte Longbottom.²⁸ Sadly, however, little Hannah died - as the result of a tragic accident - a year later. On 1 August 1859, an inquest into the death found that, on 20 July, the infant's clothes 'accidentally and by misfortune, took fire' in the house of her mother (named

21 CON41-1-27, image 165.

22 http://www.orphan.school.org.au/showorphan.php?orphan_ID=5231

23 ToL granted 5 August 1856: CON41-1-27, image 165.

24 <https://www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/convicts/tickets-of-leave>

25 CON41-1-27, image 165.

26 SC89/1/2, 1870.

27 <https://www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/convicts/tickets-of-leave>

28 Birth registration not located but see Note XX, below, and refer to SC195/1/43, Inquest No. 4611.

as ‘Elizabeth Emily Longbottom’) and, although the child had been rushed to hospital immediately, she had died of ‘certain mortal wounds’ ten days later.²⁹

It must have been a very sad time for both Elizabeth and Samuel but it was one that brought them closer together – for a while, at least. On 22 August 1859, three weeks after the baby’s death, they married. The ceremony was performed at St David’s Cathedral, Hobart, by the Rev. F.W. Quilter. The marriage register shows Elizabeth’s surname as ‘Surridges’ and describes her as a twenty-four-year old ‘spinster’. Samuel was described as a thirty-eight-year old stone mason.³⁰

Four months later, Elizabeth was declared ‘free by servitude’. On 17 December 1859, the ten-year sentence that had brought her to VDL was finally up. She had served her time and was completely and unconditionally free again.

Within a year, however, Elizabeth was in trouble with the law again. In late November 1860, she was charged with being drunk and disorderly and with assaulting the police. Described in a newspaper report of the incident as ‘a sharp-looking little woman’, she was fined ten shillings for the first of those offences and twenty shillings for the second.

In March 1861, Elizabeth and Samuel Longbottom were both fined when charged with indecent language in Murray Street, Hobart. Although newspaper reports of the incident are vague, it is probable that they were engaged in a heated argument with each other.³¹

That incident seems to have been a clear sign that their marriage had deteriorated. In late December 1862, Samuel walked out on Elizabeth and the children. He left the colony and never returned.³²

Soon after Samuel’s departure, Elizabeth began to refer to herself as ‘Elizabeth Kenworthy’. It is not difficult to imagine why she wanted to change her name – to leave her convict past behind or to disassociate herself from Longbottom, for instance – but why she chose ‘Kenworthy’ is unclear. Perhaps the ‘worthy’ part of the name had special appeal to her! Perhaps she just liked the sound of it! In any event it was as ‘Elizabeth Longbottom alias Esther Elizabeth Kenworthy’ that she next came to the notice of the police.

In June 1865, she was charged with disturbing the peace in a city street. Described in a report of the incident in *The Mercury* as a ‘virago’, she had been arrested for ‘shouting and calling Mr. Clews, the landlord of the Golden Cross Hotel in Murray Street, Hobart, abusive names’. In court, Sergeant Rollings of the Hobart police, stated:

... that when he took the defendant into custody, she resisted him by putting her legs round him and endeavouring to throw him down; in fact, she behaved like a perfect mad woman ... Two other constables arrived and then they [still] could not get her along ... they had to get the van which she had refused to enter and

29 Death: RGD35/1/6, No. 1686, Hobart, 1859; inquest: SC195/1/43, No. 4611; *Hobart Town Daily Mercury*, 3 August 1869, p.3.

30 Marriage: RGD37/1/18, No.134.

31 *The Mercury* (Hobart), 6 March 1861, p.2.

32 SC89/1/2, 1870.

*it took the three of them to get her into it. Even when she came to the watchhouse she behaved in an outrageous manner there.*³³

Even while in court, Elizabeth found it hard to control herself. As the hearing was coming to an end, she remarked to the magistrate, 'There's a great deal of law here but very little justice'. However, when the magistrate threatened to gaol her for contempt, she had wisely held her tongue. She was fined forty shillings and costs for disturbing the peace and twenty shillings and costs for resisting Sergeant Rollings in the execution of his duty.³⁴

That was to be the last time Elizabeth appeared in court to answer a charge – but it was not her last court appearance. On 10 November 1870, she made an application to the Supreme Court of Tasmania (Matrimonial Causes Jurisdiction) for a 'protection order' against Samuel Longbottom.³⁵ In it, she provided an outline of her relationship with him, stating that she had cohabited with him since 1853; they had married in 1859; she had borne six children to him before he deserted on 28 December 1862; he had since left the colony; he had not contributed in any way to her support or that of their children since that time; she had since supported herself and her children by her own earnings; she had since acquired certain property; she was now seeking an order for the protection of the earnings and property she had acquired since December 1862 from any creditors who might wish to claim upon him.³⁶

Although the application made no mention of the word 'divorce', the Court appears to have treated it as such. Was Longbottom's desertion the reason for this? According to Finlay (2005):

*After the enactment of the English Divorce Act (1857), the colonies were invited to pass similar legislation. A Divorce Act was introduced in the Tasmanian Legislative Council in 1858, but strongly opposed, in case it opened the floodgates to immorality. There was also a feeling against dictation by the mother country. A second attempt, two years later, was successful, the focus having shifted to the protection of wives and children where the husband had deserted, for example, to one of the gold rushes.*³⁷

At the conclusion of the hearing, a summons was issued to Longbottom (in his absence) to attend the court within two weeks to show cause why the protection order should not be granted. When neither Longbottom nor his attorney attended as directed, the protection order/divorce was duly granted.³⁸

33 *The Mercury*, 28 June 1865, p.3. The dictionary definition of 'virago' is 'a domineering, violent, or bad-tempered woman'.

34 *The Mercury*, 28 June 1865, p.3.

35 SC89/1/2.

36 Elizabeth's claim that she had borne six children to Longbottom is puzzling; only three children of the marriage have been identified; no registration records of the births have been located.

37 Finlay, H. (1995). 'Hapless creatures and beastly propensities: the introduction of divorce into Tasmania in 1860' in *Papers and Proceedings: Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 42, No. 3, September. See also Finlay, H. (2005). 'Marriage and Divorce' in *Companion to Tasmanian History*. University of Tasmania, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies at

www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/M/Marriage%20and%20divorce.htm

38 SC89/1/2, 1870. The case is listed as divorce in Supreme Court records.

After the hearing, Elizabeth, who seemed to have a fascination with names, never used the surnames ‘Surridge’ or ‘Longbottom’ again. From that time until her death, she was known either as ‘Elizabeth’, ‘Emma’, ‘Esther’ or ‘Emily’ Kenworthy’.

It was as ‘Elizabeth Kenworthy’ that she next came to the attention of the authorities when, in 1871, she applied for the license of the Golden Cross Hotel in Murray Street, Hobart - the very hotel from which she had had to be dragged away from, kicking and screaming like a mad woman, by three police constables just six years earlier!

In January 1871, John Clews, the publican at whom Elizabeth had been shouting abuse in June 1865, passed away and the licence had been transferred to a man by the name of George Brown. However, by early August of that year, Brown had been prepared to surrender it and Elizabeth made an application for it. It was another bold move for a relatively young woman. She was still only in her mid-thirties. She was an ex-convict. She had been in conflict with the law frequently. And even more significantly, perhaps, she was without the support – moral or financial - of a male.³⁹

Elizabeth’s application was considered at a meeting of Justices of the Peace at the Hobart Town Hall, Hobart, on 7 August. In attendance also were the Superintendent of Police and the Police Clerk. After the Superintendent had informed the Bench that the applicant for the license of the Golden Crown was a woman holding a protection order, there was a lengthy discussion about whether it was customary to grant licences to single women. When the Superintendent advised the Bench that a considerable number of licences were already held by single women and that the maintenance of order in their premises was no more of a problem than in other hotels, the transfer of the licence was approved.⁴⁰

What difficulty Elizabeth had in managing the hotel is not known - but there is evidence to suggest that the venture did not work out well for her. Within a couple of years, she had relinquished the licence to a William Valentine. As it happens, Valentine may not have had any more success with the hotel than Elizabeth had had. When, in August 1875, he wished to transfer the license to a Henry Green, the Justices of the Peace who heard the application were told that the Golden Crown Hotel:

*... was one of those infamous dens ... which were a disgrace to the town and a standing reproach to the police, who, if they did their duty fairly, would soon put an end to them It was nothing but a brothel, and it was surrounded by brothels.*⁴¹

Had Elizabeth operated the Golden Crown as a brothel? There is no evidence that she had.

For the next thirty years, Elizabeth avoided further trouble with the law and lived quietly with her daughter, Sarah, at her home at Battery Point, Hobart. When Sarah – who by this time had adopted the name ‘Mary Emma Kenworthy’ - died in November 1904, Elizabeth went to live with friends,

39 Clews, death notice: *The Mercury* (Hobart), 21 January 1871.

40 *The Mercury* (Hobart), 8 August 1871.

41 *The Mercury* (Hobart), 3 August 1875, p.2.

George Boys Albury and his wife Margarete, at New Town, Hobart.⁴² There she passed away at the age of seventy-two on 5 September 1907. Confusingly, a death notice published the following day in *The Mercury* referred to her as 'Emily Kenworthy'.⁴³ She was buried at Cornelian Bay Cemetery on 7 September.⁴⁴

In her will, Elizabeth left her entire assets, amounting to about seventy-three pounds, to George Albury. It was a sizeable sum for a person whose life had started so miserably and who had endured many hardships to have put together.⁴⁵

42 Death: Elizabeth's daughter Sarah (aka Mary Emma Kenworthy), 13 November 1904, RGD 565/1904, Hobart; *The Mercury* (Hobart), 15 November 1904, p.1.

43 Death Elizabeth Surrige (aka Emma/Esther/Emily Kenworthy), 5 September 1907, RGD 1791/1907, Hobart; *The Mercury* (Hobart), 6 September 1907, p.1.

44 AF35-1-2 (BU15757); AF70-1-30 (BU15757), Cornelian Bay, C of E, Section W, Grave No. 255; AF35-1-2

45 Will: Libraries Tasmania – AD960-1-29 (Will NO. 7260) – Emma Kenworthy.