

## BIDDY TRAINER - WASHER WOMAN

Anne Drysdale wrote in her diary on the 7 April 1842 "*John Henderson and Robert Stow arrived, the former as shepherd and latter as hut keeper. They worked garden*". John Henderson and his role in developing the Boronggoop garden was told in an earlier post. There are no other identifiable mentions of Robert Stow in the diaries. However, he re-emerges in the story of Biddy Trainer. Biddy (also known as Bridget Trainor or Traynor) was first employed by Anne and Caroline on 15 March 1842 to wash. Several women had previously been employed to take over Vair Armstrong's washing duties after she lost a baby in December 1841. Biddy was hired on a six month trial on the 24th March and then engaged to remain permanently on the 26 September 1842.<sup>1</sup> She remained with them until her marriage on 24 June 1844 to Robert Stow [also written Stowe].

Biddy Trainer became a valued member of the Boronggoop household. She continued to wash and iron for another fifteen months. On the 8th January 1844, she broke her leg when a horse bolted and upset the cart she was in. It was reported on the 13th that she was "*suffering and very weak, Dr. Clerke calls each day*". Biddy was nursed at Boronggoop until 21 March when she went to recuperate with Mrs Nally who had replaced her doing the washing. Biddy had returned to Boronggoop by mid May but by then she was engaged to be married. There are mentions of her going to A. Dempsey's, a dressmaker, presumably for a wedding gown. On the 24th, Caroline cooked her wedding cake and Vair prepared her wedding breakfast.<sup>2</sup> Biddy returned to Boronggoop to wash in July 1844 while Vair was ill.<sup>3</sup> These incidents illustrate that good workers were well treated at Boronggoop and that a sense of mutual obligation and loyalty developed between the partners and such workers. In Biddy's case, she was regarded almost as a member of the household.

The birth and immigration records for Bridget Trainer/Traynor have not been found. Her death record showed her parents as being Owen Trainor and Bridget Shiels and that she was 76 years old which would make her birth about 1814.<sup>4</sup> She was Roman Catholic and probably Irish. Bridget 'Traynor' married Robert Stow in June 1844 in Geelong.<sup>5</sup> They had seven children all born in Geelong and baptised in Saint Mary of the Angels Catholic Church. This church is now a magnificent bluestone basilica completed in 1871. In Biddy and Robert Stow's time, it was more modest. A small wooden church was constructed on the site in 1842 and in 1846 it was replaced by a stone church.<sup>6</sup>

Their children were:

- Mary Anne Stow, baptised 16 April 1845, married Matthew Gargan in 1866, died 21 January in Meredith, Victoria and buried in the Meredith Cemetery.<sup>7</sup>
- John James Stow, born 1846, Newtown, married Catherine (Kate) Reid, 1874, died 10 October 1897, Geelong, buried Geelong Eastern Cemetery.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Drysdale, Diary entries, Diary of Anne Drysdale, Vol. 11, State Library of Victoria, online.

<sup>2</sup> Drysdale, Diary entries, 15 March 1842, 29 March 1842, 28 September 1842, 8 January 1844, 13 January 1844, 21 March 1842, 22 June 1844, 24 June 1844.

<sup>3</sup> Drysdale Diary entries, 17 July 1844, 20 July 1844.

<sup>4</sup> Bridget Stow, Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836-1988, registration no. 16920/1890.

<sup>5</sup> Bridget Traynor, Victoria, Australia, Marriage Index, 1837-1950, registration no. 34809/1844.

<sup>6</sup> Anon., History of St Mary of the Angels Church, St Mary of the Angels Parish, [www.stmarysgeelong.com.au](http://www.stmarysgeelong.com.au), accessed 15 June 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Anne Stow, Australia, Births and Baptisms, 1792-1981, FHL Film No 993926; Mary Anne Gangan, Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index 1800s-Current, accessed in [Ancestry.com.au](http://Ancestry.com.au), 15 April 2023.

<sup>8</sup> John Stowe, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922, registration no 1776/1846; Victoria, Marriages, registration no. 2917/1874; Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985, registration no. 12765/1897; John James Stow, Find a Grave, memorial ID 165249415.

- Theresa Mary Stow, baptised 27 August 1848, married James Holt 1886 and died 6 September 1906 in Meredith.<sup>9</sup>
- Robert Stow, born 1849 in Newtown, Geelong, married Mary Anne Reilly 1888, and died 21 October 1918 in Meredith, buried in the Meredith Cemetery.<sup>10</sup> [For more information, see below].
- George Stow[e], born 1851 in Newtown, Geelong.<sup>11</sup> No further records found.
- Julia Stow, baptised 27 November 1853, Geelong, married William McCormack 1880, died 5 September 1883, Meredith, aged 26 [29?].<sup>12</sup>
- Catherine Stow, baptised 12 February 1855, married Walt William McDonald, 1891 and died 1902 in Ballarat, Victoria.<sup>13</sup>

Robert [George] Stow's death record indicated that he was born in Lincolnshire, England and was 73 years old at death, thus putting his birth in about 1817.<sup>14</sup> He was probably the child baptised on 30 January 1817 in Blyton, Lincoln, England to parents, John and Sarah Stow.<sup>15</sup> He arrived in Port Phillip, Australia on the *Glen Huntly* 17 April 1840 as a bounty passenger, age 25 (i.e. born about 1815) sponsored as a farm hand by Mr. Mercer of Geelong. The ship was rife with typhoid and measles and passengers were placed in quarantine on arrival, with many dying. He had thus been in the colony two years before he began working at Boronggoop. His children's records show that all were baptised in Geelong and that by 1846, Robert and Bidy were living in Newtown, Geelong. Robert was a butcher in Skene Street, Newtown.<sup>16</sup> He sold this property in June 1866 comprising a butcher's shop, four roomed dwelling, yard, stabling and hayloft and also a garden and two roomed cottage nearby.<sup>17</sup> This capital presumably financed his move into farming.

In 1866, he applied for a license to occupy four 20 acre lots of land in Meredith and later attempted to obtain more lots in the same area.<sup>18</sup> This land was in the Parish of Borhoneyghurk which provides another link with Boronggoop. Borhoneyghurk was originally a pastoral lease occupied by George Read, Jnr and Norman McLeod. Read was the man who recommended the Armstrong family to Anne Drysdale and was a frequent visitor to Boronggoop. Norman McLeod was also a frequent visitor and was the brother of Miss [Margaret] McLeod, who was one of Caroline Newcomb's special friends, who spent a lot of time at Boronggoop and later at Coriyule. Robert Stow died on the 7 May 1890 and was buried at the Meredith Cemetery. His death notice read '*A colonist of 47 years*'.<sup>19</sup> It appears Bidy and Robert Stow called their farm Borhoneyghurk. At Robert's death, he is referred to as being of Borhoneyghurk, a farmer.<sup>20</sup> When Bridget [Mary] Stow died seven months later on the 6th December, there was reference in her death notice to

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<sup>9</sup> Therisa Stow, Australia, Births and Baptisms, 1792-1981, FHL No 993926, Victoria, Marriages, registration no. 4198/1886; Victoria, Deaths, registration no. 10348/1906.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Stowe, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922, registration no. 4366/1849; Robert Stow, Victoria, Marriages, registration no. 5084/1888; Robert Stow, Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current, accessed in Ancestry.com.au, 15 April 2023.

<sup>11</sup> George Stowe, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922, registration no. 5547/1851.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Stow, baptised 27 November 1853, FHL Film no. 993926; Victoria, Marriages, registration no 3069/1880.

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Stow, baptised 12 Feb 1855, FHL Film no. 993926; Victoria, Marriages, registration no. 7624/1891; Victoria, deaths, registration no. 1239/1902.

<sup>14</sup> Stow, Robert George, Victoria, deaths, registration no. 8736/1890.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Stowe, baptised 30 Jan 1871, FHL Film no. 421927, 505768.

<sup>16</sup> *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 19 November 1855, p. 3; *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 June 1859, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> 'Auction', *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 June 1866, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 April 1866, p. 4; *Geelong Advertiser*, 25 July 1866, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Stow, Grant of Probate 43/260, VPRS28, Probate and Administrative Files, Public Records Office Victoria.



Fig. 1. Memorial to Robert and Bridget Stow, Meredith Cemetery, erected by their daughter, Catherine. Note that the dates are incorrectly inscribed as 1891.

*'her late residence Borhoneyghurk'*.<sup>21</sup> She was also buried in the Meredith Cemetery. Their farm was allotment 72A Meredith, comprising 78 acres, 1 rood and 16 perches, divided into four paddocks, a five room house, stable, barn and buggy house with six milk cows, three draught horses and dray, probate value was 995 pounds.<sup>22</sup> It adjoined the Borhoneyghurk Pastoral Lease pre-emptive selection owned by A. J. Smith as shown in the map below.



Fig. 2. Lot 72A, R. Stow, Part Map PROCM44: Meredith, VPRS 8168/P0002, Historic Maps Collection, Public Records Office Victoria

<sup>21</sup> Geelong Advertiser, 8 December 1890, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Stow, Probate, 1890.

Their son, Robert Stow Jnr held allotment 159D of 80 acres, west of the town of Meredith. In 1897, Robert Stow[e] sold a farm comprising 79 acres, divided into eight paddocks with a two room cottage plus dairy cows, horses and equipment, located at Reid's Creek, three miles from Meredith, because he was leaving the district.<sup>23</sup> This was purchased by Matthew Gargan, husband of Mary Anne Stow, who by then owned the adjoining property.<sup>24</sup> However, in 1918, Robert Jnr died in Meredith where he had been a *'highly respected resident for 50 years, and a colonist of 66 years'*.<sup>25</sup> The oldest son John held allotments 158A and 158B adjacent to Robert which comprised 266 acres, 2 roods, 28 perches. However, by 1879 he appeared to no longer be farming and was the landlord of the Royal Hotel in Meredith.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 3. Lots held by John Stow and Robert Stow Jnr, Part PROCM44, Meredith, VPRS 8168/P0002, Historic Maps Collection, Public Record Office Victoria

The story of Bidy Trainer is another where a worker with Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb who came from humble beginnings was able, along with her husband Robert Stow, to establish themselves in colonial society as landholders and respected community members.

(C) Ann Hodgkinson, Bellarine Historical Society, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Geelong Advertiser, 10 March 1897, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Geelong Advertiser, 22 March 1897, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> 'Old Resident's Death', Ballarat Star, 23 October, 1918, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ballarat Courier, 17 March 1879, p. 4.