

William Dilley, 479, *Pyrenees*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Name variation: Dilly

Baptism	7 January 1813, St Mary the Virgin, Meppershall, Bedfordshire
Parents	John Dilley and Mary Ibbott
Parent's marriage	10 October 1812, Meppershall
Siblings	James (1814), Hannah (1817), Thomas (1820), John (1823), Lucy (1826)
Wife	Hephzibah Dear
Married	1 February 1835, St Peter, Arlesey, Bedfordshire
Children	Emma (1835-1835), James (1837-1843), Jane (1839), Charles (1843), James (1847)

In 1835, William Dilley married Hephzibah Dear, the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Dear, at her home village of Arlesey. Their first child, Emma, died in May 1835. The couple then moved to Meppershall.

On the 1841 census, Meppershall.¹

William Dilley, 25, ag lab, Epsebah, 25, James 3 and Jane 2.

Committed on 16 December 1847 and tried on 4 January 1848 at Bedford:

William Dilley, 34, labourer, Meppershall, charged with having on 15 December 1848, at Meppershall, stolen one wether teg sheep, the property of John Pestell. Ten years transportation.²
A teg sheep is in its second year of life.

Petitions ³

Received 30 November 1849. (Spelling not corrected)

Meppershall, County of Bedford, 29 November 1849.

To the Right Sir George Grey.

Hephexabah, wife of William Dilly, Humbly petition your Honour on behalf of her husband who was prosecuted and committed at Bedford Quarter Sessions January 1848 for 10 years.

Your Petitioner humbly entreats your Honour to gave him his libert and permit him to return to his Parish to support his Wife and three children.

The Gentlemen and occupiers of land are willing my husband should come back if it please Your Honour to give him his liberty. Their willingness to his return your Honour will perceive from the enclosed paper in which you have the signatures of the Farmers of the Parish including Mr John Pestell who was the Prosecutor.

My husband is now at Portsmouth dock yard.

Without farther tresspass on the time of your Honour the petitioner leave the case entirely with yourself with hope that the prayer of the petion will be granted by your Honour.

Your Humble Servant, Hephixabah Dilly.

Result - Nil.

Gentlemen. As regards Wm Dilly, I have nothing to say against him as a labourer and have no objection to his being released at any time you may think proper to do so. John Pestele
Gentlemen. As for as regards Wm Dilley he as worked on my farm for several years as a labourer.
Charles Pestell

¹ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO107/3/9

² Bedfordshire Times and Independent, 08 January 1848, p2

³ TNA, HO18/266

John Kirkby, farmer in the Parish of Meppershal, begs to add his name to the several testimonials in favor of the aforesaid William Dilley. He has several times been in his employ at which times he has conducted himself as an industrious and good servant. John Kirkby.

Gentlemen, William Dilley has worked for me several times and I always knew him to be a quiet and honest man, and would have no objection employing him again. Peter Peck.

Gentlemen. Willm Dilley as worked for me several times and he was always quite and honest and when he comes home i will give him work directly you Mayor Arnold, Meppershall.

Gentlemen. As to William Dilly, I can say a good labourer. Henry Pestell

In December 1849, there was correspondence between the Home Secretary's Office and the judges who presided at the trial, to give their account of the proceedings. Eventually, a copy of the notes was sent.

Received 17 December 1849

Ickwell Bury, Biggleswade, 15 December 1849.

Bedfordshire. Epiphany Sessions 1849

R. v. William Dilley for sheep stealing

John Pestell - sworn - I live at Meppershall. On Tuesday the 14 December, my shepherd told me there was a sheep missing. In the evening he brought me the skin. I locked it up in the barn. I went for a policeman, who searched the prisoner's house. I found a great part of the sheep. I saw the mutton patterned with the skin; the two legs fitted the skin. They were not cut in the usual way. The prisoner was taken into custody before the mutton and skin were compared. She then said he found the mutton.

Daniel Hopard, police constable, sworn. When I was called upon by Mr Pestell about the sheep that was missing, I went to the field. I there saw footmarks which I thought were those of the prisoner for I had seen the prints of his shoes before. I then went to his house and searched it and found one leg of mutton in a bag behind the bedstead and another leg tied in a cloth hanging on the wall and another bag filled with mutton joints cut in pieces - all in the same bedroom. I then took the prisoner into custody and told him the charge. The prisoner said I suppose they will transport me, but I found the mutton in Mr Pestell's Hogfield. I cut it into pieces afterwards. I took both prisoner and mutton and compared it with the skin at Mr Pestell's house and they corresponded. They are not cut as a butcher would do.

Thomas Gray, sworn. I am shepherd to Mr Pestell, the prosecutor. I missed the sheep first and found the skin about poles from the pen where the other sheep were, which I took to my master. The skin produced is the skin of one of my master's sheep.

Henry Ison Jebbett, superintendent of police, sworn. I saw the mutton and skin both produced before the by a butcher. The meat was that of a sheep that had not died with the blood in it. I fitted the legs to the skin and they corresponded exactly or perfectly as could be. On examining the skin I found the throat had been cut and not struck in the usual way and meat left on the skin. I can speak positively as to the sheep being slaughtered by someone. It had not died a natural death. I have been myself a butcher.

Thomas Gray, re-examined. I had not any sheep that died the last two months.

Verdict guilty.

Sentence - transportation for ten years.

The prosecutor being called upon having stated that he had known the prisoner all his life and no good of him.

A true copy of my notes of the trial taken at the time. Charles Payne (Bt), chairman.

Received 16 March 1850. 2nd application

Meppershall, 15 March 1850

Honoured Sir,

I take the liberty to remind your Honour that last November I sent a petition directed to you on behalf of my Husband who was transported at the Beds January Sessions 1848. I had hoped that

your honour would by this time have attended to it that my husband might have obtained his release.

As I think it possible the petition is laid aside and forgotten may by the favour that it may receive immediate Attention and that I may know whether I may expect my husband return to labour for the support of his family and myself.

It will a great relief to me if he can be restored to his family and as all the parishoners have given their consent to his return including the prosecutor. (As your honour may see by the Petition). I have an informed there is no more that I can do beside laying the case before her Majesties Secretary of State trusting in your clemency.

I am your obedient Servant. Hepsibah Dilley. P.S. I neglected to say that my husband's name is William Dilley and is now in the Convict Hulk Stirling Castle.

Answered 28 March 1850. Nil

Received 30 August 1850. 3rd application

Meppershall, Biggleswade, 24 August 1850.

Sir, We the undersigned, being inhabitants of the parish of Meppershall in the county of Bedford, beg leave most respectfully to call your attention to the case of William Dilly, belonging to the said parish and now a convict on board of Her Majesty's Ship Stirling Castle at Portsmouth under sentence of transportation for ten years. It had been represented to us that the said Convict is apprehensive of being sent soon to a penal settlement in one of our Colonies, and that he is very anxious to be allowed instead thereof, to undergo the remainder of his sentence in this country. We are informed that the health of the said Convict is weak, and that he has been under medical treatment at various times during his imprisonment; also that his conduct during the portion of his sentence which has expired, namely two years and a half has been uniformly good. We therefore venture to express a hope that on these grounds, namely the weak health of the said Convict and his present good conduct, his petition that he may be allowed to undergo the remainder of his sentence in this country may be granted, if it is not inconsistent with the plans of Her Majesty's Government.

We have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient Humble Servants,

J.H. Howlett, Rector of Meppershall; John Pestell, Churchwarden; and 6 others(including Charles Pestell and Henry Pestell)

Answered 9 September 1850, Nil.

The Prison Registers show that William Dilley, 34, was convicted on 4 January 1848 at Bedford of sheep stealing and sentenced to 10 years' transportation. He was received at Millbank Prison on 1 February 1848 from Bedford Gaol. William had not been imprisoned before. On 5 August 1848, he was removed to *Stirling Castle* hulk at Portsmouth. Here it was recorded that he was born in Meppershall, had dark brown hair, dark grey eyes, high cheekbones, stout, married, 5'7¼", could not read or write, a labourer and his 4th finger on his right hand broken. His family lived at Meppershall. William was in hospital when the March Quarter 1850 prisoners were recorded, but by the June Quarter, he was well again. He boarded the *Pyrenees* on 10 March 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia.⁴

On arrival at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 28 June 1851, William was assigned number 479, issued with a Ticket of Leave and his physical description was recorded.

479. William Dilley, 40, 5'7⁷/₈", dark hair, hazel eyes, oval face, high cheekbones, several teeth out, second finger broken, hairy on breast, a labourer, and married with three children.⁵

⁴ TNA, PCOM2/134; HO24/4; HO8/103

⁵ State Records Office WA (SROWA), Acc 128/32

The Superintendent's Journal shows that:

4 July 1851. The following prisoners will be received from the ship *Pyrenees* and located in Division No. 3: 45 men from *York* hulk, Gosport and 12 men from *Stirling Castle* hulk, including 479 William Dilley.

11 July 1851. The following men will proceed to North Fremantle Station to replace the two returned to Establishment last night - 488 James Knight and 479 William Dilley.⁶

By December 1852, William had repaid £5.4.7½ of his passage (£10)

A Conditional Pardon was granted in November 1853.

7 January 1874 at Guildford Court.

The only reference found to William is when he gave evidence in an action brought by Mr Lennard, of the Swan, against Mr Shaw of Belvoir, to recover damages to the amount of £50, for having on the 3 December last wrongfully and negligently allowed three savage and ferocious dogs to trespass upon the lands of the plaintiff, well knowing the same dogs to be savage and ferocious, and to attack, disperse, and kill 110 sheep of the plaintiff, whereby the said sheep were wholly lost and destroyed.

William Dilley said he was a shepherd of Charles Morley, of Bull's Farm, Upper Swan.⁷

NOTE: There is another William Dilley in Western Australia at the same time. He eventually settled at Capel. There are many references to him in the newspapers.

William Dilley left Western Australia on the *Charlotte Padbury* from Fremantle on 29 December 1882. The ship arrived at London on 5 April 1883.

He returned to Meppersall, where he was reunited with his family.

No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
488	Fifteenth February 1888 Meppershall R.S.D.	William Dilley	male	74 years	Formerly a Farm Labourer	Chronic Bright's disease of kidneys Cerebral Oedema Paralysed 1 week Certified by C.E. Winchworth L.R.C.P.	The house of Hephzibah Dilley, widow of deceased, present at the death Meppershall	Sixteenth February 1888	After Jell Registrar

William Dilley, 74, died on 15 February 1888 at Meppershall R.S.D.⁸, formerly a farm labourer, died of chronic Bright's disease of kidneys, cerebral oedema for 1 week and paralysis for 1 week, his death was certified.

Informant was Hephzibah Dilley, widow of the deceased, present at death.

Registered on 16 February 1888.

William's death was announced in the newspapers:

DILLEY—Feb. 15, at Meppershall, William Dilley aged 74.

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⁶ SROWA, Superintendent's Orders, So1-So3, p 51, 52, 56

⁷ The Inquirer and Commercial News, 7 January 1874, p3

⁸ R.S.D - Rural Sanitary Districts were established in 1872 to administer public health and sanitation functions in rural areas of England and Wales. They were typically based on the boundaries of Poor Law Unions.

⁹ Cambridge Independent Press, 24 February 1888, p8

Back in England

Hephzibah Dilley continued to live in Bedfordshire and support her family.

1851 census, Meppershall.¹⁰

Epsebah Dilley, head, married, 36, plaiter, born Arlesey, Bedfordshire

Jane, daughter, 11, plaiter

Charles, son, 7, scholar

James, son, 4, scholar.

1861 census, Meppershall.¹¹

Hepsibah Dilley, head, married, 46, straw plaiter

Jane Hill, daughter, married, 21, straw plaiter

Charles Dilley, son, 17, farm labourer

James Dilley, son, 14, farm labourer.

1871 census, The Street, Meppershall.¹²

James Dilley, head, married, 24, labourer

Martha Dilley, wife, 22, straw plaiter

Epsebah Dilley, mother, widow, 56, straw plaiter

1881 census, Meppershall Road, Meppershall.¹³

James Dilley, head, married, 34, ag lab

Hepzibah Dilley, mother, widow, 66, straw plaiter

Albert Dilley, son, 8, scholar

Francis, son, 6, scholar

1891 census, Village, Meppershall.¹⁴

Charles Dilley, head, married, 47, ag lab, shepherd

Matilda Dilley, wife, 48, straw plaiter

Martha Dilley 27, straw plaiter

Jane 21, straw plaiter

Abel, 17, journeyman baker

Fred 15, ag lab

Edmund 12, ag lab and pig feeder

Herbert 7, scholar

Hephzibah Dilley, mother, widow, 76, straw plaiter.

Hephzibah Dilley died in the December quarter of 1892, aged 77, at Meppershall.

¹⁰ TNA, HO107/1753

¹¹ TNA, RG9/997

¹² TNA, RG10/1552

¹³ TNA, RG11/1631

¹⁴ TNA, RG12/1257