

Thomas Higham 536, *Pyrenees*

Researched by Marcia Watson

From Family Trees on Ancestry.com (not verified).

Thomas Higham appears to be the son of John Higham and Margaret/ Mary Travis, baptised at St John's Roman Catholic church on 20 August 1815. Thomas had seven siblings.¹

At the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions for the Borough of Wigan, on 3 November 1843.

Thos. Marsden, 28, and Thomas Higham, 28, charged with having stolen one hen and one cock, the property of W. H. Bullock were Acquitted.²

On 15 June 1845, Thomas married Bridget Ryan at St John's Roman Catholic church at Wigan. Bridget was from Kings County (Offaly), Ireland (from Ancestry.com, not verified).

Thomas Higham and James Gibson, two notorious characters, the former of which has only been one week out of jail where he had been incarcerated for stealing cabbages from Mr Robert Halliwell's garden, were brought up at Messrs Gaskell and Darlington's office on Saturday last, before the Rev B Powell on a charge of stealing a number of fowls from Mm Gorton's at Coppul.

Police officers Addis and Fisher had, on the previous day, observed them pass the police station, and both appeared to have something bulky in their pockets. They were followed and went into Mr Liversey's shop. The police officers went in after and saw Higham throw a bundle under the counter, which, upon examination, was found to contain two ducks. Two ducks were also found on Gibson. It appeared that on the previous night Gorton's hen coop had been broken into and 4 ducks, ten hens and one cock stolen. The ducks were identified, and the prisoners were committed for trial.

In another newspaper article: The police, having received information of a robbery, watched the two delinquents enter a house licensed for the sale of game, when they pounced upon them, and caught them with the ducks already plucked in their possession. Fortunately for the ends of justice, they had not beheaded them. Mrs Gorton, on examination, found one of the ducks with its bill split, which she identified, stating that when younger, she had struck it with a stick and split its bill.³

At the Preston Epiphany Quarter Sessions on 3 January 1848:

Thomas, 32, and James Gibson, 37, charged with breaking and entering a certain outbuilding at Coppul on 19 December and stealing ten hens, one cock, three ducks and a drake, the property of William Gorton. Both were sentenced to seven years' transportation.⁴

The Prison Registers show that Thomas Wigham, 32, married, read and write imperfectly, collier, convicted 3 January 1849, at Preston, of breaking a building and stealing 10 hens, 1 cock, 3 ducks, 1 drake, sentenced to 7 years, received at Millbank prison on 8 August 1849, once acquitted and once convicted of robbing gardens, wife at Wigan, Roman Catholic, removed to *Stirling Castle* hulk at Portsmouth on 28 June 1850.⁵

At the Stirling Castle hulk, more information was recorded on Thomas.

Thomas Higham, 34, breaking an outhouse and stealing, born Wigan, brown hair, blue eyes light brows, large nose, small mouth, fair complexion, round face, stout, 5'6½", married, can read and write, labourer, cross on left arm, **B.B.**, anchor and T.H, ring 2nd finger, scar under right shoulder, boarded the *Pyrenees* on 10 March 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia.⁶

¹ Wigan Register: Baptisms 1805 - 1822, Page 180, at the Lancashire Records Office

² Preston Chronicle, 11 November 1843, p2

³ Preston Pilot, 30 December 1848, p8; Preston Chronicle, 30 December 1848, p6

⁴ Preston Pilot, 06 January 1849, p6

⁵ The National Archives (TNA) UK: HO24/4; PCOM2/30

⁶ TNA, PCOM2/134

On arrival at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 28 June 1851, Thomas was assigned number 536, issued with a Ticket of Leave and a description of him was recorded.

536. Thomas Higham, 35, 5'6½", dark brown hair, grey eyes, oval face, fair complexion, stout, crucifix and **B.R.** on left arm, Smith's striker, married, no children. Acc 128/32

Ticket of Leave men at North Fremantle Station, including 536. Thomas Higham, Blacksmith. ⁷

Thomas was fined several times for being drunk.

Fremantle, 18 January 1852. Thomas Higham was fined 5s for being drunk. ⁸

Perth, 27 June 1853. Thomas Higham, fined 5s and costs for being drunk.

Perth, 28 June 1853. Thomas Higham, fined 10s, and costs for being drunk. ⁹

At some stage, Thomas appears to have been granted a Conditional Pardon.

The death of Thomas Higham was reported in two newspapers.

On Sunday night (17 September 1854) the police found the body of a man crouched down under a fence in Murray street, and on Monday a magisterial investigation into the cause of death was held by Mr Yule before a jury.

From the evidence it appeared the deceased, who was a conditional pardon man, had been drinking with four ticket-holders, and had a fit when the fellows carried him out of doors and left him there. The medical evidence showed the fit to have been the cause of death, but the account given by the ticket men, so widely differed from each other, as to leave no doubt of plenty of hard swearing, which the police Magistrate rewarded by sending them all to the Establishment. ¹⁰

Sudden Death. — A magisterial investigation took place on Monday last (18 September 1854) in the Perth lock-up, before T. N. Yule, Esq., P.M., as to the circumstances connected with the sudden death, on Sunday night, of a conditional-pardon man of the name of **T. Higham**. It appears that he had been drinking hard, and just before he died, had swallowed a large quantity of spirits, and almost immediately afterwards had gone into a fit, to which it was stated he was subject. The surgeon's evidence corroborated this view of the question as to the cause of death - and the surgeon's evidence alone, for the half-dozen ticket-of-leave who were examined, so contradicted and perjured each other, that Mr Yule was compelled, at the close of the investigation, to order the lot to be placed under arrest, preparatory to being brought before him the next day (yesterday) to be sent to the Establishment for 6 months. ¹¹

The men who gave unreliable evidence were received at Fremantle Prison on 20 September 1854: 1074. Joseph Shepperd, 425. Thos Taylor, 1552. Wm Hickson and 1687. and S Suncocks [Thomas Suncup] All forfeited their Ticket of Leave during H.E.'s pleasure or 6 months hard labour. ¹²

East Perth Cemetery website:

Thomas HIGHAM, buried 19 September 1854, in the Church of England section.

The cause of death was Intemperance.

His parents were Mary and John Henry Higham.

⁷ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 25 July 1851, p2

⁸ Inquirer, 28 Jan 1852, p3

⁹ Inquirer, 13 Jul 1853, p2

¹⁰ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 22 Sep 1854, p2

¹¹ Inquirer, 20 Sep 1854, p3

¹² SROWA, Superintendent's Orders, So1-So3, p340