

Thomas Wiggins, 84, Hashemy

Researched by Marcia Watson

Name variation: Wigans, Wiggens, Wiggans

Born	23 November 1816
Baptism	22 December 1816, Wesleyan Methodist chapel at Eccles, Lancashire.
Parents	Thomas Wiggins and Mary Dutton
Parent's marriage	9 April 1809 at Manchester Cathedral, Lancashire
Siblings	William (1810), Rebecca (~1812-1874), John (1814), Margaret (1819), Matthew (1821-1871), Joseph (1823-1889), David (1829-1860)
Wife	Hannah Stretch
Married	5 September 1847 at Eccles, Lancashire, by banns
Children	

The family lived in Pendleton, Lancashire. The father, Thomas, worked as a stretcher and a cotton spinner, before becoming a porter.

On the 1841 census, living at Dunkirk, Ford Lane, Pendleton were: ¹

Thomas Wiggins, 55, porter j; Mary, 50, born in Cheshire; Rebekah, 29, cotton spinner j; Thomas, 24, machine maker; Matthew, 19, metal turner j; Joseph, 17, cotton dyer j; David, 12

In March 1847, at the Salford Police Court, a young man, a mechanic, named Thomas Wiggins, was charged with having stolen a silver watch from the house of Robert Mayall, beer-seller, of George-street, Salford. The watch, it appeared, was hung over the mantelpiece in a beer-house, to be disposed of by raffle, and about twelve o'clock on Thursday, the prisoner went in and called for a glass of beer. Whilst Mrs Mayall was in the cellar, where she had gone to draw beer, the prisoner took the watch and decamped with it his possession. Information was to the police, with a description of the prisoner, who apprehended in Deansgate, Manchester, on Saturday evening, by Inspector Taylor.

Mrs Mayall swore that the watch was safe when she went into the cellar, leaving no person in the room but the prisoner; and a servant girl, who was cleaning the door-steps at the time, said no person entered the house after he left it up to the time the watch was missed. He was committed to trial. ²

Thomas Wiggins, 29, was acquitted of stealing at Salford a watch, the property of John Jones. ³

In September 1847, Thomas married at Eccles near Salford, now in the Greater Manchester area.

Thomas Wiggins, full age, bachelor, machine maker of Pendleton, father Thomas Wiggins, labourer.

Hannah Stretch, full age, spinster of Pendleton, father William Stretch, labourer.

Both made their mark. Witnesses were David Wiggins and Elizabeth Tattersall, who later married.

Then in December 1847, Thos. Wiggins, of Pendleton, a young man about thirty years of age, low and stout, by trade a machine maker, was brought before E.J. Lloyd, Esq., by Constable John Bradford. He was charged with having, in company with another man at present unknown, committed a most daring highway robbery on the 16th instant, upon Mrs Bennett, of Hale, near this town, between twelve and one o'clock in the day, in a lonely part of the road. It appears, of late, the prisoner has worked little at his trade, having got connected with a bad set of companions at Manchester, and has been twice convicted of a felony, and tried twice and been acquitted. He has only been married eight weeks. ⁴

Further evidence appeared in other newspapers: Thomas Wiggins charged with robbing a Mrs Bennett, as mentioned in the Courier of Saturday, and Shaw with being an accessory before the fact. The court-room

¹ HO107/543/7/p34

² Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser - Saturday 20 March 1847, p5

³ Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser - Wednesday 21 April 1847, p3

⁴ Manchester Times - Saturday 04 December 1847, p5

was crowded to excess during the investigation, and numbers were unable to gain admittance; the excitement is caused by the fact that Shaw is the brother of Mrs Bennett, the prosecutrix, who was so shamefully treated and robbed, and strong suspicion that he had brought over the prisoner Wiggins and another man to waylay his sister and rob her, he knowing that she had been that day to receive some money from the Altrincham Savings' Bank.

Alice Bennett, of Hale, wife of John Bennett, stated that a little before one o'clock at noon, the 16th ultimo, she went to Altrincham and received some money from the savings' bank there; that, as she was returning, she met in the long lane, leading to Hale, a cart, the carter riding. She saw two men following a short distance behind the cart, and they passed her, but in a very short time, she heard footsteps behind her and was thrown down, her mouth filled with dirt, and dirt rubbed on her face; she received a blow on the back part of the head with fall upon the pavement, and either a blow on the side or one of the men's knees upon her, which hurt her much, one of her fingers was much hurt, and her mouth bled much. Thomas Wiggins, the prisoner, was the man who committed the violence upon her, but some other man robbed her of her money.

On Saturday previous to the robbery, she was at her brother Robert's house, in Salford; her brother Charles (the prisoner Shaw) was there, and heard her tell her mother and brother that she was going on the Tuesday following to receive some money from the Altrincham Savings Bank; Charles had been short of work for some time, and she gave him sixpence to buy a loaf with.

Nancy Heald stated that she was in Hale on Tuesday, the 16th November, and near Hale Barnes, in the long lane, she saw three men standing; she was alarmed, and took particular notice of them; one was the prisoner Shaw, and another the prisoner Wiggins; witness went down the lane, leaving the men the road and when near the bottom of the lane she met Mrs Bennett; and spoke with her; when she got home, the witness heard that Mrs Bennett had been robbed.

John Millington said that a little after twelve o'clock on the 16th ultimo, the prisoner Shaw, whom he had known several years, with two other men, one dressed like Wiggins, and whom he believed was the man, passed him on Hale Moss, and went in the direction of the long lane; Shaw separated from the other two while passing witness, but soon joined them again, and all three went off together; they appeared as if they did not want to be noticed.

Jane, the wife of Michael Drinkwater, stated that three men passed her house about noon; they were strangers and went towards the long lane coming from Hale Moss. Sometimes she saw Mrs Bennett returning towards Altrincham, and she stated she had been robbed.

William Molt, of Mobberley, on the 16th ult. was returning down the long lane in Hale to Altrincham, about one o'clock, and saw three men standing on the road. Soon after, he met Mrs Bennett, and when he got home, he heard she had been robbed.

Mary, the wife of John Wilcox, Hale, stated that she lives at a farm at the farther end of Hale Moss, near the long lane; that, near one o'clock, she saw a man going in a hurried manner across a meadow, leading from long lane to Hale Moss, and in the direction of Timperley; she soon after heard of the robbery.

Wm Rogerson, of Timperley, saw the prisoner and another man going over a field of Mr Carr's, in Timperley, in great haste, sometimes running and sometimes walking and looking around as if they expected pursuit. Witness remarked at the time that they must have been doing something wrong; they were coming in a direction from the long lane; it was about one o'clock.

Peter Warburton, Timperley, corroborated the last witness's statement.

William Lomas, a wheelwright, stated that he saw three men, one of whom was Wiggins, running down the lane from towards Hare and Hounds, Timperley, towards the Manchester road, near to the late Mr Gaskarth's lodge. Witness said to them, "You are in a great hurry", when one of them said to the other, "Come on".

Thomas Peers, gardener, Timperley, stated that about half-past one, on the 16th, he saw the prisoners and another man in a land leading from Timperley to Manchester; they were in a great hurry and attempted to get into a field through which there was no road, but witness turned them back; they eventually left the road, and went over some fields farther down the lane, in the direction of Sale.

George Massey, a gardener of Timperley, saw the prisoners walking very quick over some fields in Timperley, making towards Sale and Manchester.

Mr Taylor, inspector of police, Salford, stated that he received information of the robbery on Wednesday, the 17th of November, and had been searching for the prisoners since. He apprehended Wiggins in a beer-shop, in Manchester, on the 25th of November, and Charles Shaw in Hulme, on Friday last. Both denied having anything to do with the robbery when charged, Wiggins saying he never was in Altrincham or Hale in his life. Shaw has been previously convicted of highway robbery, and Wiggins twice convicted of felony. Both were committed to take their trial at the Chester Assizes. The hearing of the case occupied several hours and had created a great sensation in the neighbourhood, in consequence of Shaw being well known in the town. It is stated that his sister, whom he so ruthlessly handed over to his criminal companions some time ago, took a child of his, he being a widower, and has brought it up for him, besides behaving well to him in other respects. Mrs Bennett is an invalid.⁵

At the Chester Assizes in April 1848, Thomas Wiggins, of Pendleton, and Charles Shaw, of Salford, were convicted of the highway robbery committed them on a Mrs Bennett, of Hale, (sister to Shaw) in open day time. Wiggins was transported for fifteen years, and Shaw for seven.⁶

Thomas Wiggins, 30, married, can read, machine maker was convicted on 29 March 1848 at Chester and sentenced to 15 years transportation. He was received at Millbank Prison on 25 April 1848 from Chester Gaol. The register notes he had been three times imprisoned. On 12 December 1848, he was transferred to Wakefield Prison. This record notes that he had been once previously convicted and twice imprisoned. After eight months, Thomas was removed to Portland Prison on 12 June 1849. Just over a year later, on 19 July 1850, he boarded the *Hashemy* for the voyage to Western Australia.⁷

During the voyage to Fremantle, Thomas was sick.

Folio 2: Thomas Wiggins, aged 33, prisoner; sick or hurt, rheumatism; put on sick list, 27 August 1850, discharged [1] September 1850 well.⁸

On arrival at Western Australia in October 1850, his description was:

84. Thomas Wiggins, 33, 5' 1½", brown hair, hazel eyes, long face, brown complexion, machine maker, no marks, and married with six children.⁹ Note: he did not have any children.

General Register:

84. Thomas Wiggins, 35 years old in November 1851, married, machine maker, Methodist, reads pretty well, writes fairly well and is indifferent in maths. His father Thomas Wiggins, labourer, lives at Dunkirk, Ford Lane, Pendleton, Manchester.

Attended Divine Service?	Not regularly lately
Received Sacrament?	Not before being in prison & only a part of the time he was at Portland.
Habits?	Rather given to drink
Intellect?	Sound
State of Mind?	Good, but appears dissatisfied, fearing or fancying farther troubles.
Knowledge, Secular?	Limited
Knowledge, Religious?	Very limited

⁵ Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser - Saturday 11 December 1847, p7

⁶ Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser - Saturday 08 April 1848, p7

⁷ HO24/4; HO23/14; HO8/105

⁸ ADM 101/32/6/1-6

⁹ SROWA Acc 128/40-3

Alleged Cause of Crime? Drink

Name of Person referred to for Character, &c. Messrs Higgins & Sons, King St, Salford, Manchester. ¹⁰
[W Higgins & Sons of King Street Iron Works, King Street, Salford; Textile machinery makers.]

Thomas appears on the Casual sick list of Fremantle Prison.¹¹

Wiggins Thos	8 Nov 1850	Pain in stomach	Pill draughts
Wiggins Thos	14 Mar 1851	Splinter in eye	Lotion
Wiggins Thos	15 Mar 1851		Discharged
Wiggins Thos	20 Mar 1851		Mixture fever
Wiggins Thos	18 Apr 1851		Aperient medicine

Thomas received a ticket of leave on 10 September 1851. He was engaged by Mr J Byrne of Swan.¹²

Like many other convicts, Thomas Wiggins and John King, ticket-holders, were drunk in the streets.

Both were fined 5s, and expenses at Guildford, on 27 July 1852.¹³

An unclaimed letter for Thomas Wiggins was at the Post Office in March 1857.¹⁴

Yesterday afternoon, 14 May 1857, Stotter's boat on her return from Fremantle, found near the Pelican Rocks in the mouth of the Canning, a gig turned bottom upwards with a little dog sitting on the bottom; on turning her up she proved to belong to a man named George Shone, who with a woman and another man had been to the Guildford Steam Mill for a load of flour, and was on his return. It has been ascertained the boat was heavily laden, and while lying at the Causeway, the men had been drinking; the boat had all sail standing and the sheet fastened, and had no doubt been capsized in one of the heavy squalls from the north-west. There were two bags of flour in the boat and several could be seen in the water, but the weather was too rough to allow of any search being made for the bodies.¹⁵

Only two lost their lives of the three people we reported last week as having been drowned by the upsetting of a boat in Melville water. The survivor, Shone, reports that he and his mate, named Wilkins, got the oars together and, with their assistance swam towards Curries' Spit, and that when within a short distance, the man became exhausted and went down, and Shone soon after got to shore. The female drowned almost immediately after the capsized. While the men were in the water, a boat passed a short distance from them during a heavy squall and did not observe them. Only the body of the female has been recovered.¹⁶ [Anastasia Morrisy]

The body of the man drowned after the swamping of Shone's boat a fortnight since was found on Saturday last by a native; it was floating in the water between Currie's Spit and the one running out opposite Mr Gallop's place.¹⁷ The body of Thomas Wiggins found 23 May 1857.

Thomas Wiggins was buried 24 May 1857 at the East Perth Cemetery. His age was given as 34, and he was a boatman.¹⁸

¹⁰ SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

¹¹ SROWA Acc 1156 CS1

¹² SROWA Acc 1156 R21B; Rica Erickson notes reference CSO 216, p148.

¹³ Inquirer (Perth, WA : 1840 - 1855), 4 Aug 1852, p3.

¹⁴ The Inquirer and Commercial News (Perth, WA : 1855 - 1901), 11 Mar 1857, p2

¹⁵ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News (WA : 1848 - 1864), 15 May 1857, p3

¹⁶ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News (WA : 1848 - 1864), 22 May 1857, p3.

¹⁷ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News (WA : 1848 - 1864), 29 May 1857, p3

¹⁸ East Perth Cemetery database

Hannah Stretch, wife of Thomas Wiggins, convict 84

Baptism	16 September 1810, Independent Chapel at Eccles, Lancashire.
Parents	William Stretch (~1784-1832) and Mary Anne Barsley (~1785-1862)
Parent's marriage	28 May 1806, Eccles, Lancashire
Siblings	Catherine (1807), John (1812-1815), James (1815-1815), John (1817-1818), Ellen (1818-1824), Jonas (1823-1824)
Husband	Thomas Wiggins (1816-1857)
Married	5 September 1847, Eccles, Lancashire by banns
Children	None

The Stretch family lived at Barton on Irwell, about a mile from Eccles in Lancashire, when Hannah was born. Her father was a labourer. By 1815 the family moved to Pendleton, about four miles away. Eccles and Pendleton are now part of the City of Salford in Greater Manchester. The five children born after Hannah all died young, perhaps a sign of the growing industrialisation and pollution of the Manchester area. Hannah's father died in 1832, aged 48.

Her sister, Catherine Stretch, married John Watts in 1836. Catherine already had two children by Watts when she married, and they had one more child. John Watts was a journeyman calico printer. In 1841 the Watts family were living in Pendleton. Catherine's mother, Mary Anne Stretch, aged 62, was living with them and continued to do so until her death in 1862, aged 84.

On the 1841 census, Hannah Stretch, is recorded as 'Anna', 25, was a servant in Pendleton.

Six years later, she married Thomas Wiggins by banns on 5 September 1847 at Eccles in Lancashire. Thomas Wiggins, full age, bachelor, machine maker of Pendleton, father Thomas Wiggins, a labourer. Hannah Stretch, full age, spinster of Pendleton, father William Stretch, a labourer. Both made their mark. Witnesses were David Wiggins and Elizabeth Tattersall; they later married.

Less than three months later, the Manchester Times in December 1847, reported:

Thos. Wiggins, of Pendleton, a young man about thirty years of age, low and stout, by trade a machine maker, was brought before E.J. Lloyd, Esq., by John Bradford, constable, charged with having, in company with another man at present unknown, committed a most daring highway robbery on the 16th instant, upon Mrs Bennett, of Hale, near this town, between twelve and one o'clock in the day, in a lonely part of the road. Mrs Bennett identified the prisoner as the man who threw her down, filled her mouth with dirt, and held her while the accomplice robbed her of £5 5s 10d and a purse. It appears, of late, the prisoner has worked little at his trade, having got connected with a bad set of companions at Manchester, and has been twice convicted of a felony, and tried twice and been acquitted. He has only been married for eight weeks. At his trial on 29 March 1848 at Chester, Thomas was sentenced to be transported for fifteen years.

No trace of Hannah has been found on the 1851 census, although she was probably still in the Salford area. Sections of the Salford 1851 census were water damaged and are unreadable.

In 1861, Hannah Wiggins, 40, widow, a washerwoman, was lodging with Hannah Yates and family in Salford. Although Hannah was 50 years old, this is probably her. By 1871, Hannah Wiggins, 60, widow, a washerwoman, was boarding with Henry Beaver and family in Cross Street, Salford.

Hannah died on 12 March 1880 at 19 West Ann Street, Salford. Her death certificate states she was 72 and the widow of Thomas Wiggins, a mechanic. The cause of death was senile decay and chronic bronchitis (certified), and the informant who was also present at the death was brother-in-law John Watts, of 19 West Ann Street.