

MARTIN CASH

TASMANIAN GENTLEMAN BUSHRANGER?

(1808-1877)

HIS CAPTURE



Sketch of Martin Cash with a bandaged head after being captured.

by

REG. A. WATSON.

Martin Cash, the Irish escapee who plundered the countryside of Van Diemen's Land has become justifiably a legend.

Van Diemen's Land during the 1830s and 40s was little more than a penal settlement. As the years passed, however, a successful future could be envisaged for the colony and increasingly large numbers of free settlers arrived.

Bushranging began in VDL since permanent settlement in 1804 and unlike the latter mainland bushrangers like Hall and Kelly, who were native born, the former were ex-convicts who had taken to the road for survival or revenge against society.

There were other exceptions to the mainland bushranger. Generally, most bushrangers in the colony roamed on foot as opposed to the bushranger elsewhere who made great use of the horse.

Matthew Brady and his gang, bushrangers before Cash, was an exception as they did use horses to further their careers. In VDL of course, distances were shorter and settlements though small in size, relatively close to each other.

Martin was born in Ennisorthy, County Wexford, Ireland in 1808. We tend to think that all the Irish who were transported to VDL were from the poor and suppressed populace of Ireland. This was not the case with Cash. In his own words, "*My father inherited a considerable amount of property in and around my native town,*" (The Life and Adventures of Martin Cash 1967 – edition). He goes on to say

that his father was a “*negligent, indolent man*” and that his upbringing was thus thrust upon his mother’s shoulders who (he says) “*was much too indulgent and permitted us to have our own way in everything.*” She supplied him “*liberally with pocket money*” and young Martin “*very early contracted habits of dissipation which soon placed me beyond the bounds of parental authority. The greater part of my time was spent at horse races and all other places of public amusement; in fact, I was allowed to do anything and everything just as I pleased.*” So we can see that he was not ‘hard-done by’.

At the age of 18 (1826) was transported to Botany Bay, NSW.

His crime was assaulting by a shot gun a rival by the name of Jessop who made flirtations with his woman, Mary. Even though the shot entered Jessop’s breast and came out under the shoulder blade, he survived. Cash was a highly jealous person and hot headed, something, which would ultimately cause his downfall.

He was also a swift runner, which got him out of trouble on several occasions – and would have done in the end, had he not run into a dead-end street, allowing himself to be captured by a large number of Hobart Town’s citizens who chased him for the reward offered of one hundred and fifty sovereigns.

REWARD!

FIFTY SOVEREIGNS, and a Conditional Pardon.

WHEREAS the three Convicts (Runaways from Port Arthur) **MARTIN CASH, GEORGE JONES, and LAWRENCE KAVENAGH,** whose descriptions are as under, stand charged with having committed divers Capital Felonies, and are now illegally at large: This is to give Notice, that I am authorised by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor to offer a Reward of Fifty Sovereigns to any person or persons who shall apprehend or cause to be apprehended and lodged in safe custody either of the said Felons: and should this service be performed by a Convict, then, in addition to such pecuniary Reward, a **CONDITIONAL PARDON.**

M. FORSTER,
Chief Police Magistrate.

19th January, 1843.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ABOVE-NAMED CONVICTS.

Martin Cash, per Francis Freeling, tried at Launceston Q. S. 24th March 1840, 7 years, labourer, 6 feet, age 33, native place Wexford, complexion very ruddy, head small and round, hair curly and carrot, whiskers red small, forehead low, eyebrows red, eyes blue small, nose small, mouth large, chin small. Remarks—remarkably long feet, a very swift runner.

Lawrence Kavenagh, per Marian Watson, tried at Sydney, 12th April 1842, life, stonemason, 5 feet 10, age 30, complexion pale, head long large, hair brown to grey, whiskers brown, visage long, forehead high, eyebrows brown, eyes light grey, nose long and sharp, mouth and chin medium size, native place Wicklow. Remarks—A. D. above elbow joint left arm, 2 scars on palm of left hand, lost little finger on right hand.

George Jones, per Marian Watson, tried at Sydney, 14th April 1842, life, labourer, 5 feet 7, age 27, complexion ruddy fair, freckled, head long, hair brown, whiskers brown, visage long, forehead perpendicular, eyebrows brown, eyes blue, nose medium, mouth medium, chin pointed, native place Westminster. Remarks—H. W. anchor on right arm, breast hairy.

JAMES BARBER, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, HOBART TOWN.

The reward was increased to one hundred and fifty sovereigns.

Cash, however, had Providence on his side. Unlike the majority of his bush colleagues, he escaped the gallows and actually ended his days as a constable and then a fruit farmer.

He did kill one man and had wounded others, but only in self-defence – and never, never harmed or insulted a lady. Hence the title, “*gentleman bushranger*”.

After he had been captured, his companion, George Jones, continued the life of crime. Without Cash’s influence Jones became unprincipled and indiscriminating. Once he burnt the legs of an old lady with a hot spade in an attempt to have the whereabouts of her cash revealed. He obtained one pound.

Both Larry Kavanagh (his other bush companion) and Jones died on the scaffold.

After arriving in NSW as a convict, because of steady work and good conduct, Cash obtained a “ticket-of-leave” that is, he was relatively free, but on trust not to commit any offence, no matter how minor. Nor was he to leave the colony.

Cash had a woman, Bessie Clifford, as a companion and became involved in handling stolen cattle.

He stated that he did not know that they were 'hot' but even so, fled to VDL in 1837.

He had difficulty in finding employment, deciding firstly to travel to Bridgewater and then on to Launceston, then to Norfolk Plains. There was an incident regarding a theft of a wallet. He appeared before a magistrate, but he and his companion was "acquitted" so they moved on to Fingal. At the Break O' Day he worked for a whole year as a dairyman afterwards went to Cressy, then over to Campbell Town where his adventures really began.

His companion, Bessie, was arrested for being under the influences with Martin resisting the requests of the constables where upon he was "locked up". Again the case was dismissed. He then was arrested for having "stolen goods" that Martin said belonged to a Mr Miller and not him. Martin was sent to Launceston and was sentenced to 7 years transportation to work on a road leading from Richmond to Rest Down Ferry. He planned to escape. He did so and set forth to Campbell Town to meet up with his lady companion.

Moving on to Cleveland they encountered a party of soldiers under the command of Captain McKenzie. Coming before a magistrate at Oatlands Cash was sentenced to an extra 9 months on the chain gang.

After being sent to Jerusalem Cash writes that he escaped once again this time taking a supply of tea and sugar and once again headed towards Campbell Town which he reached and was able to "give her a hearty embrace". Here he was recognised by a man called Swift who assaulted him, but Cash was able to fight him off.

He left Campbell Town and gained employment with a Mr Clark of Glenthorpe Hall as a shepherd. He was recognised by another shepherd who had a shot gun and took him in charge and ordered him to walk before him.

Having evaded capture he and his lady companion took to the bush and soon after decided to plunder a Mr Epsie's house near Jericho.

Things went wrong, when a man with a gun clubbed him on his head but again he fought off his assailant. They travelled to Bothwell where he and his companion had an altercation with some constables and with some luck once again took to the bush, this time ending up at Mr. Pitt's house on the Jordon River, but here he was taken into custody by three constables, but brought before a magistrate they were surprisingly acquitted.

Then it was to Hobart Town where they rented a house, where Martin lodged for a week, but they moved premises after Martin was recognised by a Mrs Flynn from Campbell Town. Martin was arrested by six constables and brought him before the notorious magistrate, John Price for absconding.

Martin was sent to Port Arthur for two years on the brig, "*Tamar*". It was harsh existence. After arriving at Port Arthur he escaped the following day

He was quickly apprehended and received an additional sentence of nine months hard labouring in a chain gang.

Again, he took an opportunity to escape and made his way to the Midland village of Campbell Town to visit his female, Elizabeth Clifford (her married name) companion decently referred to early journals as Mrs Eliza Cash (Bessie).

Cash survived for a year, but on a trip to Hobart Town was recognised and seized by six constables.

It was back to Port Arthur with an additional two years. There he met two men, Lawrence (Larry) Kavanagh another Irishman and a cockney, George Jones. On Boxing Day they made their escape.

Port Arthur was guarded 12 km north and dogs were located on a slender neck of land called Eaglehawk Neck. There was no way they could pass these dogs; consequently they successfully swam the inlet naked, while placing their clothes above their heads.

The next few days they made their way through the dense bush. The question was finally asked: "What now?"

"*Take up arms and stand no repairs,*" answered Jones.

To that, they all agreed. Bushrangers they became.

During their career they plundered the Derwent district, the Hamilton and the Midlands area south of Campbell Town and made their fort and hide-away in the Dromedary hills near the township of New Norfolk, overlooking the River Derwent.

Mrs Cash, as she was known as, joined them at the fort but upon hearing that the 51st King's own Light Infantry was scouring the bush for them, they decided to send Betty (Bessie) Cash back to Hobart town for safety. Once it is safe, it was planned for her to return.

The police were alerted and arrested Mrs Cash at the earliest opportunity, she being apprehended by two constables (Criminal Court 28th April 1843)

Upon hearing this, Cash was furious.

In response he personally wrote a letter to the Governor, Sir John Franklin that, "*if Mrs Cash is not released forthwith and properly remunerated we will, in the first instance, visit Government House and beginning with Sir John administer a wholesome lesson in the shape of a sound flogging.*"

It was signed Cash, Kavanagh and Jones.

Mrs Cash was indeed released by the Governor and Cash foolishly considered it was because of his threat. The truth was, however, different. Bessie was released to lure Cash into Hobart Town to be captured. The plot worked. Cash visited the capital and began searching for Mrs Cash.

There was also another reason for Cash to go into Hobart Town. Bessie had shacked up with a man named Joe Pratt who lived in Murray Street. Being a jealous person Cash had all intentions of killing Pratt. Pratt was an ex-convict, a thirty nine year old cockney from London and judging by descriptive convict records not a 'fine example' of manhood.

Why did Bessie leave Cash? Bessie was now thirty one years of age and had been with Martin for nine years after teaming up in New South Wales. During that time they were on the move and he of course was now an outlaw. Perhaps she wanted security, a home and even a family, which Martin could not provide. An interesting piece in the unpublished part of the original manuscript of Cash's personal narrative makes mention Bessie stating that "my comrades were not kind to me".

Leaving his friends at a house at Cobb's Hill, he grabbed a bottle of brandy and on the first light he set out to the capital. His intention, by his own admittance is to do both harm. He called on a companion on the way living near the Crooked Billet who provided him with some refreshments.

Bidding him farewell he continued his journey crossing the Jordon River, passing Restdown Ferry, until coming with a mile of Kangaroo Point. Obviously he passed through the Geilston Bay/Lindisfarne area no doubt following the river. At Kangaroo Point he stopped to examine his three single shot pistols which he had in his belt. One he found not working, which he threw into the scrub. I wonder whether it was ever found.

By now it was quite dark and he entered the Bellerive Hotel, where he found a brisk firing burning. He asked the barman if he knew of a boatman to which he

replied he did. The barman sent a message to this particular man who arrived and for the sum of three shillings and six pence offered to take Martin to the other side of the River Derwent.

They then went down to the waiting boat when the boatman together with a boy rowed him across the river landing at the Old Wharf. It would have been a somewhat dangerous outing, being dark and in winter. No doubt they navigated by the dim lights of Hobart Town.

One wonders whether the boatman and boy knew who they were transporting.

After ferrying over from Bellerive in the evening before 8pm Tuesday 29th August 1843 Cash walked up Liverpool where he brought himself a hat. He then called on his friend, Kreigan Hill who lived in the rear of the shop. Hill was a fiddler and was known as “Vinegar Hill” as he had participated in the rebellion of 1804 at Castle Hill (NSW) which became known as the Battle of Vinegar Hill. Hill agreed to accompany him on his search for Pratt’s house. One wonders why he did this, knowing full well there was to be an altercation and would have been best not to be involved. Hill knew that Pratt lived in a lane leading from Murray Street to Harrington Street near the *Blue Bells of Scotland Inn* in Murray Street, although not knowing exactly the location of the house. Seeing two men lounging around, Hill foolishly asked for directions from one of the two men for Mrs Cash’s house. The man turned to his companion and said, “Tom this is the party we are looking for”. They had instantly recognised Martin. They were plain clothes constables, Robert Agar and Tom Thomas, who were watching Pratt’s house to see whether Cash ever turned up. To their surprise he did. Cash began to run, with Hill going in the opposite direction the constables believing he was Jones. They ignored Hill and went after Cash. “It is Cash,” one shouted. “Blow his head off!” One of the constables fired his pistol which went wild.

With a reward of 50 sovereigns on his head, the alarm was given and a number of people joined in the pursuit of Cash who now drew his two pistols. Cash ran down Murray Street, into Melville Street and over Elizabeth and Argyle Streets, hoping to scarp to the bush on the Domain. All other streets did so, except one – Melville Street! To his horror he found Melville Street a dead end with the three story high convict barracks blocking it, becoming known ever since as “Martin’s Mistake”. Cash then retreated, ran back through Melville Street then right into Argyle Street, then turning right again into Brisbane Street where he was confronted by a large crowd, perhaps up to a hundred in number, in pursuit. Noting the pistols in his hand, Cash pushed through the crowd.

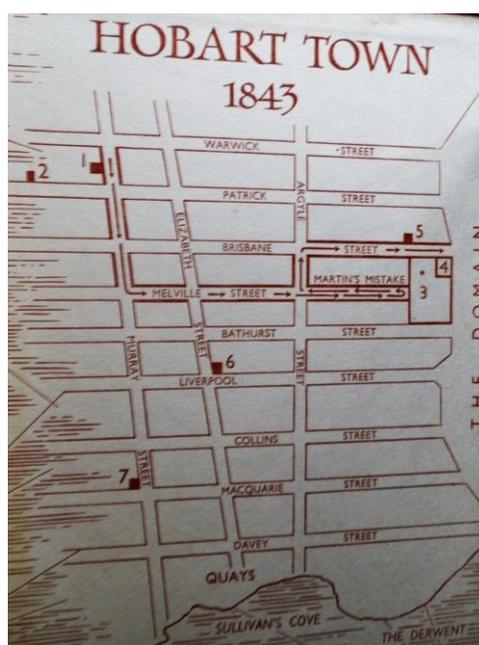


The Brisbane Hotel 2017. The Old Commodore Hotel. Constable Winstanley died there. Reg Watson photo.

He turned to face his attackers and shot a constable, whom Cash refers to a “tall, powerful man” called Peter Winstanley, who was in civilian clothes. Winstanley had not been in pursuit at the time and was off duty, working at the nearby gaol and was enjoying a drink in the Ye Olde Commodore Hotel¹ (now The Brisbane). The landlady of the hotel, Mrs Mary Ann Smith and her son, Ebenezer heard the commotion and asked Winstanley to investigate which he did after hearing the cries of “Stop the thief!” He went out into the street, put up his hands and shouted, “Halt” and sprang at Martin who fired his pistol. The ball entered Winstanley’s left breast. He said to Mrs Smith, “Oh Mrs Smith I am shot - I am a dead man.”² He was taken back into the Commodore where he was inspected by three doctors, Crowther, Myer and Crook, but nothing could be done for him. He died in the hotel on the Thursday morning.

Cash fired again, shooting a man called Oldfield in the face shooting off his nose and hitting the fingers of another attacker, by the name of Cuncliffe, but it was to no avail. The mob was upon him. According to the newspaper Tribune (29th Aug 1877 P2) Martin slipped and fell. By this time constables, Thomas and Agar had caught up. Martin soon found himself handcuffed, but only after great and bold resistance. He was savagely beaten by a number of pursuers, including the two constables.

“Get off him you cowardly dogs,” screamed one lady in the crowd, “you want to murder him. Why don’t you take him like a man.”



Martin’s Mistake.

- 1.Blue Bells of Scotland.2.Pratt’s house.3.Convict Barracks.4.Trinity Church.5.Old Commodore Inn.6.Hobart Town Gaol.7.Gallows.

Map taken from Frank Clune’s book, “Martin Cash”

Cash was then taken into the cells in Campbell Street to have his wounds treated by three doctors, Crowther, Officer and Muir. Later he was taken to other cells in Davey Street. There he was first visited by Gaoler Capon who offered him a cup of tea. Then Father Therry visited him, the first of a number of occasions. He too

¹ There was a mention of the episode in the hotel bar. However, by inquiry in July 2017 it was nowhere to be seen.

² Mrs Smith testified as such at Martin’s trial. (Colonial Times, Sept 5th 1843).

was visited by the notorious Administrator of Norfolk Island, John Price who informed Cash that Winstanley had died.

Justice was swift in the old days and by the 4th of September the trial began with a jury. Cash, though defended by well known lawyer of the day, Edward MacDowell, was sentenced to death, but the sentence was soon postponed by Judge Montagu with the news being passed to Martin by Father Therry who Martin described as a person of “*unaffected piety, benevolence and all other Christian values*”.³ Confirmation, however, had to still come from London, which would take ten months. Why this postponement happen has always been a mystery. Judge Advocate Montagu stated there was a point of law. It could be as was brought up during his trial before a jury, whether he had intended to kill Winstanley or rather to do some bodily harm. Also as Winstanley was in civilian clothes, Martin had no idea he was a constable.

The testimony of colleague from the bush, Lawrence (Larry) Kavanagh may also have helped. Kavanagh had previously been wounded by accidentally shooting himself and had voluntarily gave himself up to the authorities. During his trial he pointed out:

“Gentlemen after I went into the bush and when I was under arms I committed no act of violence or cruelty and did nothing but what became a man. I did no violence to anybody. Stains of blood we always avoided, both me and my companions and I have been unfortunate and done wrong, thank be to God I have no stain upon my hands”.⁴

Martin states in his narratives his life may have been spared because of the efforts of “*an able and talented gentleman named Mr Robert Lathrop Murray*”, who was then the editor of the journal, *Review* and through his pages appealed to His Excellency for a respite. (P.143)

Cash himself during the second day of his trial went to great details to state he was not a violent man, stating to the court and jury, “*I hope you will not consider I am a man that would do a cowardly and deliberate murder; if I was driven into close quarter with a man I would fire at him and get away as far as I could, but I would not kill him, I would cripple him.*”

Kavanagh too had his sentenced reviewed. It was commuted and he was sent to Norfolk Island. George Jones of course was still at large.

Cash would have to wait while his case was sent to London taking ten months. London eventually replied leaving the ultimate decision what to do with Martin with Governor Eardley-Wilmot. The Governor, a humane man, confirmed that the death sentenced was commuted and had Martin transported to Norfolk Island as had Kavanagh previously. There, Cash was a model prisoner as a hat maker and eventually became constable on the island.

The reward of fifty sovereigns was shared between Cunliffe (who with the following two were the first upon Cash), MacDonald, Oldfield and Constables Thomas and Agar, the latter two being ex convicts were given a pardon, meaning they could leave the colony and travel back to the home land any time they wished.

During his time on the penal island there existed another Tasmanian bushranger by the name of Rocky Whelan, who had been brutalised by the system so much that he cared not for his future welfare. A fellow Irishman, Martin had come to know him well.

³ “Martin Cash” personal narrative. P.132.

⁴ Colonial Times. September 12, 1844.

Another Tasmanian bushranger was William Westwood also known as Jacky Jacky. It was Jacky Jacky who led the mutiny on Norfolk Island, joined by Martin's old companion of the bush, Larry Kavanagh although Larry was not to participate in the butchering of four policemen. Kavanagh asked Martin to join the mutiny, but with great wisdom he refused.

In the end, Jacky Jacky and twenty five others were subdued, trialled and hanged including the luckless Kavanagh.

Regarding his mistress, Bessie, better known as Mrs Cash, no one really knows what happened to her after Cash was sent to Norfolk Island. While on Norfolk Island, Cash married Mary Bennett (1823-891) on May 14th 1854 in St Joseph's church Norfolk Island. As she was a convict, she had to receive permission to marry, which was granted 20th March 1854. Martin would have been 23 years her senior.

With the decision to close Norfolk Island as a penal settlement, the Cashes, now having a ticket-of-leave, returned to Tasmania where Martin obtained a job at the Domain Government farm as a head gardener. It was in the house, his son was born. Martin was to resign his job and leaving his wife and child did a stint in New Zealand for four years where he was arrested in 1863 for keeping a "*bawdy house and disorderly house*". Perhaps there was another side to the "gentleman bushranger".

He returned to Tasmania and to his family and brought a fruit farm of 160 acres on the Montrose rivulet at Glenorchy. Cash's life was not one of boredom. He did later suffer from the consequence of drink, probably caused by the death of his son. There were some instances of problems with the law and his relationship with his wife was sometime stormy.

His house at Glenorchy came up for sale during the year 2014. I wanted it at the time to be purchased by the Glenorchy City Council so that it could be used as a heritage building perhaps selling afternoon teas on a Sunday and where lectures could be given. I was sadly unsuccessful.

They had only one son Martin jnr (bn 22nd March 1855), who died of rheumatic fever on the 6th July 1871 before reaching manhood, aged 16 years. Martin lamented after his son. Martin junior's death certificate states he was born⁵ and died at Glenorchy, no doubt in the house. Many said it added to his father's death. Martin resorted to the bottle.

⁵ Although Martin states he was born in the Government Farm house, which is now the Botanical Gardens. His narratives, page 174. He writes: "While here (Government Gardens) my wife brought me a son, who is now growing into a young man".



Cash's house photographed in 2014 at Glenorchy. Cash died in the house as did his son. Reg Watson photo.

Before he died, Martin called into the Lord Rodney Hotel at the New Wharf Salamanca a hotel which he frequently visited. The hotel was a haunt of hard drinking ex convicts. Martin had become friends with brothers James and Samuel Weir the landlords. Martin told Samuel that he was ill and had sought admission to the hospital but he was refused entry⁶. Samuel was one of three men who erected a tombstone for Martin. The other was brother James and a B. Molloy. Cash, after stopping at the hotel for a few days recovering and being inspected by Dr. Couch, returned home to his farm at Glenorchy near Hobart and died several days afterwards aged 69 years on 26th August 1877. The death certificate stated his illness was “*accelerated by intemperance.*”

⁶ Examiner 1st Sept 1844 P13



Sketch of the Lord Rodney Hotel, Hobart. Neptune Inn to its left. (from University of Tasmania)

There is a mistake on his tombstone in death date and age. It wrongly states, he died 27th August 1878 and that he was 67 years old. Martin is buried at Cornelian Bay, Hobart and his grave is there for all to see, suitably maintained. On the way to Cornelian Bay, the coffin with Martin in it, was taken to what is now the Club Hotel, Glenorchy. There it was placed on the bar and those who were in attendance toasted Martin Cash. It is also said it was then transported to the Lord Rodney for the 'wake'.

Wife, Mary died 16th July 1891 at her residence 35 Forest Road Hobart, aged 70 years of, it was stated, "senility". (Mercury July 17 1891 P.1) Buried at Cornelian Bay in the same plot as Martin and their son which makes it a triple burial. Yet, there is no mention of her being interned with them; completely left off the tombstone. (Section A Ronan Catholic Number 110).

A tit-bit is the story of Martin Cash walking down to the shop which was then on the corner of Phillip and Main Road Montrose to buy his bread. The shop was then owned by Mr and Mrs Nicoli and Annie (Appledorf from Colinsvale.) According to Gwen Pridmore who told me the story⁷ (Annie was her auntie) Martin use to wear a bag on his back.

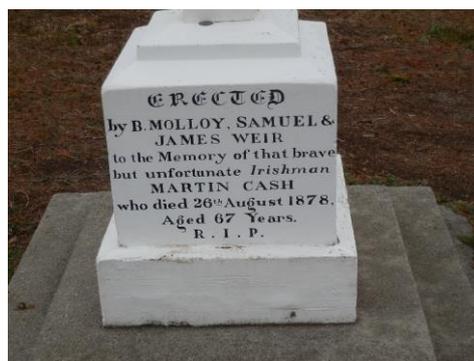
⁷ Phone conversation with Gwen 26th Feb 2017. Gwen was then 100 years old.



Few realise that Cash after returning from Norfolk Island lived in this cottage at Botanical Garden. Reg Watson pic.



A very early photograph of Cash's grave. It is stated at times, he is buried at Glenorchy, but as we have learnt, he is buried at Cornelian Bay.



Cash's tombstone inscription 2017 - Cornelian Bay Cemetery. There are two incorrect ions, his death date and age.

POSTSCRIPT: A play, in three acts, on the adventures of Martin Cash called "In the days of Martin Cash" was penned late 19th century. The newspaper, Zeehan and Dundas Herald (July 11 1899 P.2) states of the production, "...piece arranged under the direction of Mr. W.P. O'Calaghan better known to Zeehan play goers as Morris Mahon." In 1910 it was still being performed in the Huon.

Bessie Clifford (Mrs Cash) fades from history and it is not known what happened to her.

The book **Martin Cash – his personal narrative** is of course more than interesting, but very much in his favour. It is understood Cash was illiterate and that it was ex-convict James Lester Bourke who actually wrote it. It was first published in 1870 by Mercury-Walch and by 1981 it had twelve impressions. The original manuscript was a great deal larger than what was eventually published. It is available for inspection on a pdf file from the History Room of the Hobart Library. It is hard, however, to read being written in long-hand.



Recent picture of Cash's grave. Reg Watson pic.

– Reg. A. Watson. www.regwatson.com