



Society of Australian Genealogists Manuscript and Image Collection (MIDAS)

Dec 2019 - MIDAS Mystery – Mary Brown letter (3/179)

In September issue of Descent we asked if some of you could help with the mystery found in Mary Brown's 1822 letter to John Shorter Morris. We also asked for help with the transcription of some ambiguous or illegible portions of the text.

We weren't really able to solve the mystery and we were not in complete agreement in our efforts with the transcription. However I think we all enjoyed the work.

I have gathered together many of the responses and transcriptions so that anyone interested may read through them. These are available in the linked documents shown below.

Research had to focus in the difficult period before full state registration of births, deaths and marriages, but I suspect that if any of the protagonists was your ancestor then more facts could be discovered.

We weren't able to find a marriage of Mary to Alexander Brown, but there is his will probated 1822. It does not name a wife but does name executor and beneficiary J Philpott the man whom Mary distrusts. Similarly we did not find the birth or death of Christopher Williams, but did find a tempting will of 1832. However, unless Mary's marriage to Alexander Brown is bigamous then that is not a likely candidate.

Some research by David raises an interesting possibility about a Philpot and Williams relationship and may be seen in the Responses document.

If you are interested in going further I have included the following in several pdf documents:-

- the original article in September 2109 Descent
- the article in December 2019 Descent with additional illustrations and comments
- the SAG Member Responses with interesting comments/theories
- the SAG Member Transcriptions
- the register entry for the marriage of Mary Muese to Christopher Williams 1812
- copies of the PCC wills of Alexander Brown, 1822 and a Christopher Williams 1832
- a small extract naming John Shorter Morris as an inventor

The other letters in the Morris collection (at 03/000179) are also interesting and some are almost certainly worthy of transcription and research should anyone be interested.

Nothing is so far known to us of the life of John Morris in Tasmania but there are possible clues in the actual provenance of the letters which were given to the Society in 1939 by a Mrs Ruthven via a Mrs Hayward who I believe was a SAG Member..

Please use these links to see the documents mentioned above.

- Descent articles: <http://midas.sag.org.au/attachments/DescentArticles.pdf>
- Responses Transcriptions: <http://midas.sag.org.au/attachments/ResponsesTranscriptions.pdf>
- Support Documents: <http://midas.sag.org.au/attachments/SupportDocuments.pdf>
- MIDAS Item 03/000179 which contains the Mary Brown letter
<http://midas.sag.org.au/fullRecordItem.jsp?recno=21790>

Please contact us at info@sag.org.au if you need help with these.