

A New Life at Ceres

John Hurley 1834-1915
Mary Margaret Quinn 1845-1917



John Hurley, photo taken at Ballarat c1912. Source: J V Hurley

Beer Farm

John Hurley was born in the parish of Payhembury, near Honiton in Devon, England on the 24th November 1834 and baptized on 1st February 1835 in the parish of nearby Luppitt. He was the third child of farmers, **Thomas Hurley and Elizabeth Bradley**. He had two older sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, and younger siblings Thomas and Mary. His forbears came from villages such as Luppitt and Uffculme in East Devon and were mostly farmers and agricultural labourers. In 1838 when John was almost 4 years old his mother died in childbirth.

John was described as a tall, dark and blue-eyed young man, and worked on his father's property at *Beer Farm*, about halfway between the villages of Payhembury and Broadhembury in East Devon. The 1841 census shows the family at *Beer Farm*: his father Thomas aged 50, unmarried aunt Susanna Hurley aged 30, his older sisters aged 11 and 8, John himself aged 6 and two teenage farm workers, Mary Clarke and John Roach. In 1851 he is there aged 16 with his older sisters, now 20 and 18, and his father aged 62 who is described as a farmer of 80 acres employing 4 labourers.

The last time he appears in the England census is at age 26 in 1861. Still at *Beer Farm* working 80 acres with his father who is now 72, and sister Jane aged 30. They also have an 18-year-old servant William Trenchard.



Beer Farm, Devon, where John Hurley grew up. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2007

Soon after the 1861 census was taken, he and friend, 21-year-old butcher John Burragh, decided to try their luck on the goldfields of Victoria. So, on July 12th the two young men set out for Australia leaving from Plymouth on the *S.S. Monarch*. He would not see his family again. His father died six years later and as far as I am aware, none of his siblings came to Australia. On October 14th their ship arrived at Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne and the two young men headed for the Ballarat goldfields with a party of Chinese prospectors. After having no luck as a gold miner, John left Ballarat and eventually came to settle in Victoria at Ceres, an agricultural village of 173 people, situated near the busy town and port of Geelong. He returned to his ancestral occupation of farming, running a few dairy cows and growing vegetables to sell at the Geelong market.

Mary Quinn descended from convicts

Mary Margaret Quinn was born in the district of Brighton, Tasmania on November 9th 1845 to **Elizabeth** (nee Tamplin/Frisby) and **Patrick Quinn**. This was her mother's second marriage and Mary was the sixth of eventually thirteen children, seven being her half-siblings. Her grandmother was **Elizabeth Tamplin** (nee Glithero) a convict sent to Tasmania in 1820.

The Quinn family came to Victoria when Mary was about 3 or 4 years old to live at Ceres where other relatives from Tasmania had settled. Her mother Elizabeth earned a living as a dressmaker and a midwife. Little is known about her father Patrick except that in June 1851 he was killed in an accident when he was run over by a cart. According to the inquest he had been drunk and fell from the cart under its wheels, dying on the way to being taken home for treatment. Mary was only 6 years old at the time, and the family, which then included her mother and five dependent children, had to seek public charity in order to survive. Patrick's burial certificate states he was a farmer aged 55 and was buried in the Roman Catholic section of Geelong's Eastern Cemetery.

Somehow the family got back on their feet because by 1854 Mary's mother purchased Lot 36 on the Barrabool Road in Ceres. By 1860 Mary's grandmother Elizabeth, recently widowed, came over from Tasmania to join them. Mary was about 15 at that time.

Married at 18

In the next few years Mary moved to Myer Street in Geelong and met John Hurley. On March 23rd 1864 Mary aged 18 (with the written consent of her mother) married John aged 25 in the Geelong Registry Office at the Geelong Court House. The marriage certificate reveals that Mary could not write her name, giving an X as her mark in place of a signature. Later that year in Ceres, at the age of 19, she gave birth to their son Thomas on December 24th.

Ups and downs in Ceres

John was able, and no doubt needed to be able, to turn his hand to a variety of jobs. On his marriage certificate he is described as a labourer, but he also supplemented the family's income from dairy farming, by working throughout the western district as a shearer. The Ceres rate books show he farmed 9 acres from 1879. At the time of his son's marriage in 1887, John is described as a quarryman, probably being employed in the local quarry in the Barrabool Hills. Unlike his wife he could write his name and was a witness at the wedding of Mary's half-sister Ann Gubby when she married Charles Armistead in 1866 at Trinity Church Barrabool Hills.



Ann Gubby and Charles Armistead. John was a witness to their marriage in 1866.
Source: Hazel Spence

1866 was a very sad year for Mary. In March her grandmother died from old age, and in June her mother, aged 46, died of typhoid. In August Mary's 3-year-old half-sister Elizabeth McMurtery also died of typhoid. It seems there was no money for gravestones for these burials and they are unmarked in the Barrabool (Highton) Cemetery.

On October 22nd 1870 Mary and John's second and last child Mary Jane, who was known as Polly, was born at Ceres. Again, Mary signs the birth registration with an X.

The 'Hurley House'²

By 1872 John and Mary had acquired Lot 36 on the Barrabool road from Mary's uncle (John Tamplin jnr. who probably inherited or bought it from Mary's mother). Years later, son Thomas added 30 more acres in Ceres enabling them to run more dairy cattle. John and Mary's timber cottage, built in 1877 at Ceres, is still to be seen now as part of the property called *Glencairn* at the end of McCann Street overlooking Corio Bay. John and Mary lived together there until 1914.



John and Mary Hurley's house on the *Glencairn* property at Ceres.
Left: in 1998. Below: in 2016
Photos: Euan McGillivray





The view opposite John and Mary's house in Ceres. Photo: Euan McGillivray 1998

The view from this property is described in a traveller's diary of 1856:

'....one of the loveliest and most picturesque views in Victoria – the Bay of Corio, smoking steamers and richly freighted merchant ships anchored at Point Henry, the rugged and isolated You Yangs, the Barwon River at your feet below, pasture land, cultivated paddocks, wooded patches, the hills of Buninyong, the heads and the open ocean, Lake Connewarre offering a painter's pleasure, Mt. Moriac with its sprinkling of trees, and here and there farm houses built mostly of stone.'³

Their grandson Victor Hurley visited them at Ceres in October 1914 and reported that they both were well but frail.

Although their lifestyle must have been very simple, education was highly valued and their son Thomas was encouraged to abandon his ambition of becoming a blacksmith and to further his education by attending the Flinders School (now Matthew Flinders Girls' Secondary College) in Geelong. He had to walk there from Ceres every day. He was a high achiever, matriculating and later graduating from the teachers' training college. He went on to become a highly regarded schoolteacher and eventually Senior Inspector of Schools in Melbourne.

Barabool Road Ceres in 1861. Source: Zades.com.au



Family weddings

In 1887 Mary and John celebrated the wedding of their son Thomas to Mary Elizabeth Scholes of Ceres. The wedding was held at the bride's mother's home. It is interesting to consider what kind of relationship may have existed between Mary and her daughter-in-law Mary Elizabeth Scholes. The Scholes were a pious teetotal Methodist family and had

been part of the Ceres community as long as the Quinn family. How did they regard Mary Margaret Quinn who was illiterate, granddaughter of a convict, and daughter of a man who met his death due to drunkenness? Two very different families were brought together when Mary's son Thomas married Mary Elizabeth Scholes.

John and Mary's daughter Mary Jane (Polly) married James (Jim) Steele Stewart from Keilambete near Terang in Victoria, on June 28th 1895. The ceremony was conducted by a Presbyterian minister, at the Hurley's home in Ceres. Jim was the manager of the Ceres Creamery and he and Polly lived at Ceres at least until 1903. They moved further into western Victoria by 1909 to farm at Mortlake, and finally settling on a farm at South Ecklin near Terang where Polly was the local post-mistress. Bill McKinnon of South Ecklin, in his memoirs of the district, described her: 'we were rather afraid of her because she could be of fiery temperament'⁴. It is also believed she helped out with some teaching at the local school when necessary. Polly and Jim had two daughters: Zephie Mary and Doris Mary, and two sons: John Campbell and Leslie James Hurley.



Polly's family: At back Leslie James Hurley Stewart; Zephie Mary Stewart; John Campbell Stewart. Front: James Steele Stewart and Polly. Source: Matthew Woolley



Mary Jane Stewart (neé Hurley) aka Polly. John and Mary's daughter. Source: Matthew Woolley

Final days at Ballarat

In his last year John stayed with his son Thomas and daughter-in-law Mary (who would have been his carer) and were now living in Ballarat. He died at age 82 of a 'cerebral haemorrhage' at their home in Victoria Avenue on December 20th 1915. It is not known if Mary was staying there also at this time. Later, Mary may have gone to live with her daughter Polly at Ecklin South. On Mary Hurley's death certificate it states that she died at 'Nurse Stewart's Private Hospital' in Terang on August 9th 1917 (this hospital was run by her son-in-law's sisters). Cause of death was 'bronchial pneumonia and heart failure'. She was 72 years of age and is buried with John in the Ballarat New Cemetery.



John and Mary Hurley's gravestone at the Ballarat New Cemetery. Photo: Euan McGillivray 1999

Ann Hurley

2020

See my story '**In Advance of his Time**' for more about their son Thomas Hurley.

hurleyskidmorehistory.com

Notes:

¹ Beer means forest, not beer!

² A detailed description of the 'Hurley house' can be found on the *Ceres Heritage Study Report* May 2017
See geelongaustralia.com.au

³ *Ceres – A Brief History of the Village and its People* - Ceres Community Association Inc. (1997)

⁴ O'Shea, Helen - *A Walk Around Ecklin with Bill McKinnon* - Transcript and part of a collection of recordings (1989-90) National Library of Australia

Other resources:

England and Wales Census Records (Ancestry.com)

Australian Electoral Rolls 1903-1954 (Ancestry.com)

Ballarat General Cemeteries

Ceres, Vic. Rate Books

East Melbourne Historical Society

Geelong Cemeteries Trust

Geelong Family History Society Vic.

Hurley, John Victor *Sir Victor Hurley: Surgeon, Soldier and Administrator 1888-1958* (1989)

Index to Inward Passenger Lists 1852-1879 (Public Record Office of Victoria)

Stainsby, Marion - Highton Vic., Ceres historian

Stephenson, Barbara – Sorrento Vic., Hurley relation

Terang and District Historical Society Vic.

Trove (National Library of Australia)

Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839-1923 (Public Record Office of Victoria)

Victorian Birth Death and Marriage Registrations