INTRODUCTION

This narrative presents a solution to the mystery surrounding the relationships between Thomas and Mary Bishop, and Mary’s daughter Charlotte.

Thomas, a marine, and Mary (a convict transported on Lady Penrhyn as Davis or Davies) arrived on the First Fleet. Charlotte was born on Norfolk Island a couple of years later.

The mystery began with the very identity of Mary Bishop. Molly Gillen, in her seminal work *The Founders of Australia*, while establishing that “no convict of the name Mary Bishop was recorded in any First Fleet document”, posed a raft of unanswered questions about Mary Davis, couched in statements such as “why she used the name Mary Bishop” ...... “considerable complications to her story” .... “there has been an assumption” ...... “This assumption is seriously undermined” .... “Why Mary married Samuel Day in 1788 and did not stay (with him) ...... remain at this time a mystery.”

THE SEARCH

My wife Gail carries the Bishop genes in our family. Routine tracking of births, deaths and marriages led us to her most recent convict ancestor, Jacob Chillingworth, a surname well known in the Tamworth locality, who prior to employment in the 1850s at the AA Company’s Goonoo Goonoo station, married a much younger Susannah Pentley, daughter of another convict, John.

Encouraged by these discoveries, we found that Susannah’s mother, Charlotte (née Bishop), led something of a tumultuous life, with many children and multiple partners. With the knowledge that Charlotte was buried in St. Peter’s cemetery in Richmond, in 2001 we went to visit.
Gratified to find a substantial headstone marking her grave, we were excited by the discovery, on this well preserved memorial, of a Fellowship of First Fleeters’ plaque, celebrating the life of one Mary (Davis) Bishop.

Investigation with the Fellowship soon revealed that Mary was Charlotte’s mother. However, paternity searches led to nothing but controversy and discord about Charlotte’s father’s identity. Theories abounded, on multiple genealogical platforms, suggesting varied candidates and even of a complicated adoption. However: NOT ONE quoted any supporting sources for these speculations.

**Charlotte’s father ?** The likely suspects: beginning with mother Mary’s first recorded husband. According to Mollie Gillen, based on the St. Phillip’s early church Register, that first husband was convict Samuel Day, who she allegedly married in November 1788.

However, the bride recorded in this union was Mary BISHOP. The fact that there was no Mary Bishop recorded in the First Fleet leads back to Mary Davis and Mollie Gillen’s question: *why she* (Mary Davis) *used the name Mary Bishop, remain(s) at this time a mystery.***

However, what *is* established is that within ten months of the arrival of the First Fleet, Mary Davis was *already known* as Mary Bishop.

The most credible reason for this name change is she had formed a liaison with a male named Bishop. There were only three. Two of them subsequently married others. As did, incidentally, Samuel Day. He settled on Norfolk Island with convict Mary Bolton (within ten months of his alleged marriage to Mary Bishop) and they were later recorded in Norfolk Island documentation as married.

So if Day truly married Mary Bishop in 1788, another question arises .... “**how did he get away with bigamy, and Mary continue on with the name of Bishop ?**”
The answer increasingly appears to be a case of mistaken identity. Mary Bolton and Mary Davis were transported on the same ship, convicted together, on the same day, of the same crime, in the same court. Given that Mary Davis had already acquired the name of Bishop (therefore both were Mary B___), was the scribe confused?

It is virtually certain that Samuel Day married Mary Bolton, not Mary Bishop. Which left our Mary continuing her relationship with Unknown Bishop.

Whilst records show that both Elias and Joseph Bishop married others within a few years of arrival, there is no extant record of marriage for Thomas.

Thomas Bishop, a 21\textsuperscript{st} Plymouth Company marine private, was assigned upon arrival in NSW to Captain Campbell’s Company to garrison Port Jackson. Upon discharge in late 1791, Thomas applied to settle on Norfolk Island and received a grant of land. Mary had travelled separately to Norfolk in early 1790 on HMS Sirius and lived there without a recorded partner. Thomas took up his land, but after more than twelve months of documented productivity, relinquished his grant and returned to Sydney per the Kitty, in March 1793. Mary and Charlotte accompanied him.

Upon return to Port Jackson, Thomas was granted 110 acres on the harbour. Sadly, he died in early December, within six months of the grant, and was interred in the Old Burial Ground in George St, thus disappearing from the record.

The notion that Thomas may have been Mary’s husband, de facto or otherwise, and possibly the father of Charlotte, was gaining momentum. It was not an original thought, having been expressed by other researchers well before it occurred to us.

However, whilst the partnership was accepted, the paternity was adamantly debunked........on the grounds that Thomas remained in Sydney
for the entire seventeen months leading up to Charlotte’s recorded birth on Norfolk.

It appeared that the quest had hit one of those well known brick walls. Then along came a succession of lucky breaks......In genealogical research, as in life, often times, the harder you work, the luckier you get.

Most of us are familiar with the term “the devil’s in the detail”. Sometimes, so too are the jewels. And often, key details are only revealed in the context of a document, such as an introduction, a foot note or margin note, a heading or an endnote.

Some such jewels.....as....(with luck)....they have unfolded....

- **Detail**......the 110 acres granted to Thomas in June 1793, known as Bishop’s Farm, is of exactly the entitlement due to a discharged marine private, married, with one child. From the Historical Records of New South Wales.... “(Governor) Phillip, accordingly, was directed to issue grants....as follows:— To married men....privates, 100 acres; and, in each case, 10 additional acres for every child”. Thomas was adjudged to be both husband and father.

- **Charlotte’s birth date**, generally believed to be 9th July 1791, had been arbitrarily derived from an entry found in the Norfolk Island Victualling Book. However, analysis of this entry.....and the dates of adjacent entries ......reveals that they were entered on a Saturday. In fact, further review reveals that many of the entries in the Victualling Book (with the common exception of some ship arrivals) were made on a Saturday. It would appear that Saturday was the day of the week that the Victualling Book was updated. Not an actual date of birth?
• **Context:** Weight is added to this interpretation by the column headings in this document. The date “9th July 1791” is in the column headed “*Time of Entry*”. The notation “Born”, against each child, is in the column headed “*from whence*”, not indicating a date of birth, but simply confirmation of birth as a means of arrival. This convention is reflected in many later accountings of the colony’s population, the universal identifiers being “*date and ship of arrival*”, OR “*born in the colony*”.

• **Logic:** Clearly, this is not a birth date, but simply the date of the first entry for each child, i.e. when they began to draw a ration; ...... which implies they have experienced a period of weaning ...... historically, at the time ...... for a period of six to twelve months.

• **Validation:** Consider now the preamble to the list prepared in Sydney (Port Jackson), at or about the same time, for the Government Store (i.e. Victualling List ~ 1788) which states .......... “*The original list did not include nursing babies, which were added later when weaned*”.

• **More detail:** The March 1793 departure notation in the NIVB gives Charlotte’s “status” as receipt of half rations, which was due only to children of or over the age of 2. Charlotte’s birth therefore, at the very least, pre-dates Feb/Mar 1791, thus discrediting the abovementioned popular date in July.

**THE CONCLUSIONS** logically drawn from the above details are:

• Thomas Bishop WAS a husband and father.

• Charlotte Bishop was NOT born in July 1791, but rather sometime during mid to late 1790.

• Given that Mary Bishop didn’t embark for Norfolk Island from Port Jackson until mid March 1790, it is now virtually certain that she was with child upon departure.
The growing *conviction* that the Bishops were a married couple is **NOW CONFIRMED** by the serendipitous discovery of an original handwritten land dealing.....dated just eight months after Thomas's death....which records the release of 110 acres of land known as Bishop’s Farm, on the South side of the Harbour of Sydney, for £45, on 11th August 1794, to James Squire the colonial brewer, by *Mary Bishop, widow of Thomas Bishop*.

This extremely early Australian land document, recording a transaction that took place within seven years of the arrival of the First Fleet at Port Jackson, was offered at auction in Melbourne in 2012, and turned up in a periodic internet query ... *search term: Mary Bishop*. Full credit to Google ....... and to revisiting old ground.

Thomas and Mary Bishop, tragic couple, who had no more than a handful of years together, punctuated by servitude and duty, gifted the infant colony but one child, Charlotte. She, on the other hand, made amends.......by bearing ten children (to six different fathers)......Their descendants are legion.

This closure is for them.