

The Silvester & Stewart Family — Biographies

Biographical entries for the principals and their parents. Footnote numbers cite the project's sources (listed beneath each entry). Italic marks a qualified reading; brown marks family tradition.

GEORGE SILVESTER

baptised 22 November 1834, Blendworth, Hampshire — died 28 January 1919, Lidcombe, New South Wales

George Silvester was baptised at Holy Trinity, Blendworth, on 22 November 1834, the son of James Silvester, an agricultural labourer on the Idsworth estate, and his wife Harriet, née Wield.¹ The family lived among the estate's farms and cottages, and in 1841 seven-year-old George was at home with his parents and five brothers and sisters.²

As a young man he came before the Hampshire courts three times under the game laws between 1851 and 1853 — committed to the county gaol at Winchester in 1851 and again in 1852, then, at a single Petersfield petty sessions on 12 April 1853, fined on two separate charges (£1 10s and 10s 6d, with costs) — over £2 in all, a sum well beyond his means. The offences were committed on the estate of the very landowner, Sir Jervoise Clarke-Jervoise, who sat upon the bench.³ Soon afterwards he emigrated to New South Wales. No passenger record survives; *the likeliest reading is of a young man getting out after one scrape too many, the gold rush of the 1850s merely easing his passage rather than drawing him.*⁴

At the Scots (Presbyterian) Church, Sydney, on 15 October 1855 — he, a labourer of Redfern, signing with his mark — George married Ellen Stewart.⁵ The couple raised at least nine children and settled by the late 1850s in Newtown, where the family remained for sixty years, latterly at 113 Bedford Street.⁶ George worked as a labourer, and once was recorded a bricklayer;⁷ unusually for a man of his trade he came to own his home, leaving at his death an estate of about £1,200.⁸

In 1918, his health failing, he made a careful will, placing his property in trust for his wife and his unmarried, invalid daughter Henrietta.⁹ He died on 28 January 1919 at the Rookwood asylum, Lidcombe, aged eighty-four, and was buried in the Church of England ground at Rookwood.¹⁰

1 · S-001, S-002. 2 · S-002. 3 · S-003, S-004, S-005, S-040. 4 · S-005, S-046 (interpretation). 5 · S-007. 6 · S-011, S-014, S-033. 7 · S-013. 8 · S-018, S-032. 9 · S-018. 10 · S-016, S-017.

ELLEN MENIA STEWART

born about 1839 — died 1 September 1919, Stanmore, New South Wales

Ellen Menia Stewart's origins remain unresolved. On her children's birth certificates — which she herself reported — she gave her birthplace as Ireland, about 1839; *only later records, supplied by a daughter, name Glasgow, and Ireland is the better-supported reading.*

¹ Her father was Robert Stewart, a coach proprietor; her mother is not known.² *How she reached New South Wales is unknown — she may have come on one of the assisted schemes that brought single Irish women out after the Famine, or by some other means.*³

A spinster of Redfern and a member of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, she married George Silvester at the Scots Church, Sydney, in October 1855, signing the register with her mark.⁴ Over the following two decades she bore at least nine children — at Redfern, Chippendale, Newtown and in the St George district — and kept the family home in Bedford Street, Newtown.⁵ As the informant on her children's births she was the keeper of the family's Irish memory.

Ellen died on 1 September 1919 at a private hospital at Stanmore, aged eighty, some seven months after her husband. Though married in a Presbyterian church, she was buried in the Roman Catholic ground at Rookwood.⁶

1 · S-008, S-024 (Ireland, qualified; Glasgow on S-013, S-015). 2 · S-015, S-024. 3 · S-047 (interpretation). 4 · S-007. 5 · S-009, S-010, S-023. 6 · S-015.

Note: biographies cover the two principals only. James Silvester and Harriet Wield (George's parents) appear on Family Group Sheet 1 (07b), and James's documented working life and death feature in the story; children's own life stories are in the group sheets and story. Ellen's Irish origin, George's motive for emigrating, and the manner of James's death are written as qualified readings per the project's agreed narrative steers.