

Transcriptions of Two Letters from John Gutteridge to His Wife

1. Introduction

In 2020 Michael Jaques received a copy of a letter written by John Gutteridge to his wife Elizabeth, plus copies of a handwritten “translation” of that letter and another. They came from Lynne Johnson, a second cousin of Michael, both being great great grandchildren of John and Elizabeth Gutteridge. The “translations” had been made by Joyce Hancock, a great grandchild of John and Elizabeth.

John Gutteridge was born about 1816. He married Elizabeth Wood in Christ Church, Spitalfields, London in 1843. John was living at that time at 4 North Street in Limehouse which is on the north bank of the River Thames, east of the City of London. John’s occupation was a mariner. His father, James, was a sawyer and Elizabeth’s father, Hezekiah Denbey Wood, was a mast maker.

The 1851 census, taken on 30 March, shows that Elizabeth, her six year old son John George Hezekiah and 10-week old daughter Elizabeth Mary were living at 178 North Street, Limehouse. John Gutteridge was not enumerated because he was away on a voyage. Also living at the same address were Elizabeth’s parents, Hezekiah and Elizabeth Wood and their daughter Mary.

The following typeface transcriptions of the two letters were made by Michael Jaques from the copy of the original letter and by referencing the handwritten “translations” which appear to contain some errors.

Note: Words in italics in the following sections are comments by Michael Jaques. Question marks indicate words that were not easily readable and could be incorrect. Punctuation has been added to ease understanding.

2. Letter from John Gutteridge to his wife Elizabeth, 14 February 1852.

Point de Galle, Ceylon

14th Feb

(Point de Galle is near the southernmost point of Sri Lanka).

My Dear Wife & Children,

With much pleasure I inclose these few(?) lines to you hoping Please God that it may find you and My Dear Children in the best of health as it leaves me and James at Present, thank God Almighty for it and all on Board. My Dear we safely arrived in Swan River (*the Swan River Settlement, now Perth, Western Australia*) from a very superior(?) Pasage (*passage*) indeed as I never saw such a Pasage in my life, we never Reefed our Topsails the whole(?) Pasage. We arrived in Swan River on the 17th of December 1851 and sailed for Ceylon 13th January 1852 and with the Hooping Cough on Board wich (*which*) we was Put in Currantine (*quarantine*) for 14 days (*in Swan River*). Then all the Married People that had families (*families*) was put on A Island and the Passingers (*passengers*) and the rest of the Troops was allowed to Land with the People belonging to the Ship. We had 10 Births on board and 2

Deaths, 2 small children, and 3 more the next day that the People was landed. We was all very happy the Pasage out since have Been as during(?) the Pasage.

Dear Wife, the Anna Robertson is a fine ship and the Captain and I is on very good Reasonable terms. We have had a sevel? Growl(?) two or three times but he is not a bad man. He is very Pasinnett (*passionate*) but it is soon over and he thinks no more of it. My Dear the Pasingers were the worst that ever I seen. They made me a Present of 2-0-0 (*2 pounds?*) and that was with three of them. I was very glad when they was landed and so was the Captain. My Dear the Captain is on shore now, trying to get a cargo and as the male (*mail*) goes away to day that I cannot tell you were (*where*) the ship will load. I think the ship will not load here but I think it will be in Madrass, but my dear I shall Please God be able to give you more information the next male. My dear, did not right (*write*) in Swan River because the male sailed the day before we arrived and we brought to Western Australia male to Ceylon for England.

Brother James (*James Wood, brother of John's wife Elizabeth*) is doing merry(?) and he is quite well and very Happy and he sends his kind Love to you all – He is as Jolly as a sand Boy. He is at this Present moment Holey stoneing (*holystoning*) the Deck and singing like a niteingale (*nightingale*). I hope, my Dear, that you are as Happy as we are and I wish so you was with us. Since we have been From Home I have learnt to Play the Fiddell (*fiddle*) and I have all hands Dancing every evening(?) when the weather will Permit and, My Love, I hope that my dear Little ones is in good health. Kiss them Both for me. I very much wish to have a Kiss at them my self. I hope and trust in the Almighty that I shall be able to do so. Me and there (*their*) Uncle often times talk abought (*about*) them and Home. We spent A Happy Christmas and your Birthday and such(?) made our selfs very comfortable and hope that you were the same. I hope that dear father and Mother is in the best of health and as happy as we are. Mine and James Kind Love to them and all at Home. James desires Mother not to forget the medle(?) and ask Father to sign(?) down(?) to Sheilds(?) and to give his best respects to them all down there. And if you received my letters Please to tell Betsy not to open them and to now(?) all our sisters ????? ?????.

We sent 2 letters by ships on the Pasage out. I hope my dear sister Mary is in the best of health and further that she is much better. For me kiss her for her Brother and my Self. I hope Joseph, Brisk, Ann (*siblings of wife Elizabeth*), Jane give all at our Kind Love to them My Love. Mr. Clark, our Chief Mate, left us in Swan River and Mr. Samson our 2nd mate is made Chief mate. Mr. Hornesby(?) and family was 200 miles in the country once. I could not see him. I wrote to him but had no answer. I hope my dear daughter is a good girl and my son getting on with his boot(?) It will be a happy time to see them dear children and to kiss them. I hope that this will be the last Pasage for me, Please God, and I sincerely hope that I shall be able to stay on shore. I think I shall.

My dear if I had received any money at all I would have sent it to you. But the Bagule(?) get(?) giving me no more than I wrote you, I could not, but if I can I will. The Capt. has got what money I received from ??? Take care of W for me.

No signature

3. Letter from John Gutteridge to his wife Elizabeth, 12 March 1852

This transcription is from a "translation", not the original letter.

12th March 1852 Barque Anna Robertson Columbo Roads

My Dear wife & children,

I send these few lines to you hoping Please God to find you all in the best of health as it leaves me and Brother James at present, which we thank God for it. My Dear, thank God we are fortunate enough to get a cargo at Columbo, Ceylon, my old spot of loading, and I hope to get home in August. We are more than half full now and are still taking in cargo very fast and we do expect to sail on the 29th of this month for London.

I do not expect any passengers as there is 2 large ships in the port who carries a surgeon and, our surgeon leaving us, the passengers is declined in going in our ship. I was in hopes of some passengers but I do not care much about them for they give nothing and we are well without them. My dear I hope that you are in good health and also my Dear children. Kiss them for me. God bless them both and I hope, please God, in 4 months after this I shall be able to see them and enjoy more of their company. My Love I shall be very glad to see you and, it please the Almighty, not part again when once more we meet and I hope to be in one another's company more than ever, it is my sincere hope.

I am happy to say that me and the Captain and also James is on the best of terms and I hope that we (*unreadable damaged section*) everything is going on very comfortable. My Dear I am longing to see my dear little daughter. My love and blessing on Her and also my Dear Boy. Please kiss them for me and I will repay the same to You when Please God I return. God Bless you all.

Dear wife, Brother James desires kindly to send his love to you all. I hope, please God, Father and Mother is in the best of Health. God Almighty bless them, our sincere love to them. I hope that you got your money quite safe. I did not expect a letter on the ship loading in Columbo and I am sorry to say that the last mail is not arrived and she is supposed to be lost My dear. I wrote at Point de Galle, I hope that you got the letter My Dear. On the 16th of this month is my sons Birth Day and the 15th is mine. Me and James keep all of yours. I drank towards your very good health on the 7 of February (*Elizabeth's birthday*) and I hope that you was quite well. I hope that Brother Joseph and Brisk is in the Best of Health and I hope that sister Ann and Mary and Jane is the same. Kindly remember me and James to them all My dear. This is 2 o'clock and the mail closes at 4 o'clock.

I can say no more at present,

But still remain your affectionate husband John Gutteridge

Steward

Anna Robertson

4. The Anna Robertson

The following information is from the website "Royal Sappers and Miners in Western Australia" at <https://sappers-minerswa.com/ships/anna-robertson-1851/>, created by Diane Oldman.

Anna Robertson was built in 1816 by Matthew Smith, a shipbuilder and dealer of marine stores in Calcutta. The ship had various owners using her for Far Eastern trade, leading up to her voyage to Western Australia in 1851 when she was owned by A. Nairn & Co. (1).

Specifications: Official #unknown, 441 tons registered in London. An early frigate barque. Hull of teak; three masts, two decks + poop deck, square stern, 1/4 galleries; figure head of a female bust. Length: 112.0 ft. Breadth: 29.1 ft. Draft: 14.0 ft. (2).

Anna Robertson was contracted as a troop and migrant carrier that left London on 10th September 1851 with a crew of 20 bound for the Swan River Colony. She was not a convict ship and thus carried no enrolled pensioner guards. There are anomalies in reports of the number of 'troops' on board. It was intended that 70 Royal Sappers and Miners, a Captain and a Subaltern were to be dispatched (WO1-437 p.373). Lieutenant [Henry Wray](#), Mrs Wray and 2nd Lieutenant [Edmund Frederick Du Cane](#) were on board to fulfil the Royal Engineers' officer requirement. Contemporary newspapers reported that 65 sappers landed on 18th December 1851. Musters and Pay Lists confirm this number, and together with the five men already in WA since the Scindian's arrival in 1850, made up the numbers to 70 (3).



Perth Gazette, 26 December 1851

Captain John Harris' Report to the Port of Swan River, records 210 steerage and 16 cabin passengers (4).

The ten children born on board are recorded by most sources. Whether or not any of those children succumbed to the whooping cough outbreak which occurred on the voyage is unknown.

In his letter of 14 February 1852 John Gutteridge says two children died on board and three died after landing.

5. The Passage back to England on the Anna Robertson

The following information is also from the website "Royal Sappers and Miners in Western Australia".

A MISSING SHIP.—A few days ago we draw attention to the astounding fact that in the four years ending 1850—the casualties to British sailing vessels amounted to 12,041, of which 214 had sailed from various ports and had never been heard of again. Amongst these we enumerated several connected with this Port which had gone down; when and where will never be known. We fear we must add to the sad list the name of the Anna Robertson, Captain Harris, a large ship, which sailed for London from this port on the 5th April last. No news up to the early part of September had been received from St. Helena, the Cape or any other places, and it is feared she has foundered at sea. An arrival at Melbourne at the latter end of August, stated that a vessel had been seen to go down stern foremost off the Cape in a gale of wind. The probability is, that the ill-fated vessel was the Anna Robertson, as she would probably have got to about the latitude of the Cape at the time of the occurrence noted by the Captain of the ship bound to Melbourne.—*Colonial Times.*

The Argus, Melbourne 25 January 1853

6. Conclusion

The Anna Robertson left Melbourne for England on 5 April 1852. The probable sinking of the Anna Robertson was reported by a ship arriving in Melbourne in August 1852, which suggests the sinking may have occurred in June or July. John and Elizabeth Gutteridge's third child, Sarah Ann Gutteridge, was born in Limehouse, London on 24 May 1852. Elizabeth Gutteridge probably didn't hear of the loss of the Anna Robertson and presumed drowning of her husband and brother until after Sarah was born and after the loss was first reported in Melbourne.

In the 1861 census Elizabeth Gutteridge was listed as a widow living at 13 John Street, Limehouse. She was living with her three children and working as a seamstress. She has not been found in a subsequent census. She may have died in 1864 but that has not been confirmed.

Sarah Ann Gutteridge married George Giles in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, in 1877. They were great grandparents of Michael Jaques and Lynne Johnson.