



FRANCIS ABBOTT PROVIDED FREE RIDE TO AUSTRALIA.

England's penal system has produced some remarkable individuals none more so than Francis Abbott clock and watchmaker, astronomer and meteorologist.

Francis Abbott in August 1844 appearing in the Central Criminal Court in Manchester was sentenced to seven years transportation to Hobart Town for obtaining two watches under false pretences.

Francis had been born 12th August 1799 in Derby England the son of John Abbott and wife Elizabeth. It is believed he was an apprentice to John Whitehurst of Derby a well known clockmaker who was the inventor of tell-tale clocks. In 1825 he married Mary Wolley and in the following years they had seven children. In 1828 in Derby he wrote a book called 'The Management of Public Clocks'. Abbott's business in Derby lasted until 1831 when he relocated to Manchester where he ran a successful watch and clock making and astronomical machinery business. This lasted until 1844 when his life changed forever. He arrived by boat in Australia in June 1845 where he served one year with the Oyster Cove gangs and three years as an assigned servant.

Being freed on the 27th March 1849 he set up his clock and watch making business in Murray Street Hobart where he expanded his talents to photography and the supply and repair of optical and other instruments. Mary, his wife and some of the children, were granted free passage to join him in Hobart

and arrived in 1850. There his three sons earned prominent positions and became respected members of Tasmanian society.

Abbott made and erected many public clocks, the most noted would have been the Government House clock established in 1859.

Abbott had become involved with the Rossbank Observatory while still a prisoner, as it closed in 1854 and now being a free man Abbott established his own observatory at his home. He documented Hobart's weather from 1854 to 1879 and his recorded observations were published by the Royal Society of Tasmania and were funded by the Government.

His observatory included a small Transit Telescope and Astronomical Clock and for thirty years he also provided *a local time service.

In 1882 the Government opened the Hobart Observatory as Abbott's old age had forced him to give up his work as an Astronomer and Meteorologist and his public clock work which had covered the period 1855 to 1880.

From the Librarian, Jeff Dyer.

Picture top left shows Francis Abbott (1799 - 1883), by unknown photographer, c1860, courtesy of Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania. AUTAS001125299883

Plate IV. below is from the Editor's own copy of The Sidereal Heavens and other subjects connected with Astronomy by Thomas Dick, c1840, showing locations of "Abbott's little friends in the southern sky". *More in the Show'nTell section.

1831 Honorary member of the Antiquarian and Chronological Society of London.

1838 'A treatise on the Management of Public Clocks' published in London.

1844 Sentenced to seven years transportation by Central Criminal Court in England.

1845 Arrived in Hobart Town, Tasmania.

1849 Received a ticket-of-leave and started watch and clockmaker business in Murray Street, Hobart.

1850 Wife and family granted free passage to Hobart.

1854-1880 Began recording meteorological observations which were published in 'Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania'.

1855 Member of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

1859 Government House clock erected.

1860 Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, London.

1861 Life member and counselor of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

1869 Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society.

1878 'Modern Astronomy' published in Hobart.

1879 'Resume on Modern Astronomy' published in Hobart.

1880 'Siderereal Systems of Modern Astronomy, Multiple Suns and far off Worlds' published in Tasmania.

