

Little is known about James' life prior to his arrival in Australia. From his death certificate we know that he was born and married in Northumberland England. The family obviously moved to either the parish of Ross and Cromarty or Sutherland in Scotland. Their daughter Mary was christened in Edderton in Ross and Cromarty, while their son William's marriage certificate indicates he was born in Sutherland.

In the Old Parochial Records for Sutherland, Scotland, there are no births or christenings listed for James Turnbull and Isabella Ord, however there are entries for the christening of children born to James and Isabella (Bell) Turnbull in Eddrachillis whose names and christening years correspond with the children of James Turnbull and Isabella Ord. Therefore we can only assume that these are the same family. The records also show that James and Isabella Turnbull had a son Mathew, who was christened on 18 December 1828. If this is the family which migrated to Australia, we presume that Mathew died in infancy.

James and his family minus their eldest son Richard received assisted passage to Australia under the bounty scheme. This scheme encouraged settlers in Australia to sponsor immigrants into the country. The settlers received a 'bounty' for special classes of workers and the scheme was financed through the sale of crown land to colonists.

The Turnbull family were unfortunate to join the The Glenhuntley which was on its maiden voyage. The vessel was smaller than the more well known Polly Woodside. The Glenhuntley set sail from Greenock for Oban in the Scottish highlands on 19 October 1839 to receive on board passengers who were bound for Australia. Among the 190 immigrants were housemaids, tailors, labourers, carpenters and shoemakers whose skills were highly sought in Australia.

In a letter from T F Elliot dated 13 December 1839 to the Lieutenant Governor at Port Philip [Supt La Trobe] and a report by Dr John Brown Superintendent Surgeon aboard the vessel, we learn that the Glen Huntley struck rock going into Oban requiring her to return to Greenock for repair. However the passengers were duly taken aboard and on 30 October 1839 set sail to return to Greenock for repair however she again struck rock coming out of Oban. This turned out to be the start of the troubles aboard the ill fated Glen Huntley.

Upon reaching Greenock on 7 November 1839 the Glen Huntley was put into dock for repair with the passengers remaining on board. Scarletina and measles broke out amongst the passengers preventing the vessel putting to sea. Two cases of Eruptive Disorder one of which was later diagnosed as smallpox occurred towards the end of November. The sick passengers were transferred from the Glen Huntley to the Greenock Infirmary and would not return until the danger of infection had passed. The healthy passengers remained on board and were inoculated for smallpox. By the time the Glen Huntley put to sea in mid December 1839, seven children had died.

'Determined [Doctors Boyter and I] as the least of two evils to put to sea, convinced that by removing from a cold damp dismal climate like what we had then, into a warmer and drier "it would be the best way to get rid of disease and restore the people to health & spirits nor do I think that all we have suffered that we were wrong. I feel certain that by lying 3 weeks longer at Greenock we would have lost more lives than we have done the whole voyage.' [from the report by Surgeon Brown]

The report further indicates that after setting sail the Glen Huntley met with stormy weather with contrary winds for 3 weeks and had the usual quantity of sea sickness. From the time they left Greenock until the 7 January 1840 they had a further 7 cases of smallpox; 6 mild cases except one that of a boy who died on the morning of the 1st January. There were also several cases of scarlatina where a further two children died. By the time the vessel reached Maderia the weather had become more favourable and the smallpox and scarlatina no longer remained. However there were occasionally cases of partial fever but by the time the vessel reached the equator the fever assumed all appearances of regular Fever. From this time 'until they came to St Pauls east of Cape of Good Hope on 15th March this disease continued to attack individuals here and there all over the ship, not apparently [except perhaps in one family, the Turnbolls all delicate] as if from infection and generally the symptoms bore a favorable aspect.'

After leaving St Pauls until reaching Port Phillip the weather was unusually cold, stormy and uncomfortable with the fever becoming more general and fatal with 3 men and 3 women dying.

When the Glenhuntley sailed into Port Phillip Bay on 17 April 1840 it was flying a yellow flag indicating there was a fever on board.

As the fever was thought to be Typhoid, under the orders of Port Phillip's superintendent Victoria's first quarantine station was set up at Little Red Bluff, St Kilda [now Point Ormond]. The station consisted of Tents and was arranged into two sections, 1 section for the healthy and the other section catered for patients suffering from the fever. The first of the passengers were transferred to the camp on the 24 April 1840. The station was guarded by soldiers to ensure no-one escaped. Food and supplies were carted down a rough track that is now known as Glenhuntley Road. As the patients recovered from the fever they were transferred to the Healthy section. Three passengers died within days of landing in Australia. Of the 190 immigrants who left Scotland for Australia on 52 survived.

Although the Turnbolls were described by the ships Surgeon as delicate they managed to survive and were put into the healthy section of the camp.

Under the bounty scheme James was assigned to work for Mr Munroe c/- Bourke's for 12 months. For this period he was to receive rations and 40 pounds. The passenger list for the Glenhuntley indicates that James was 49 years of age and a shepherd by trade.

The family lived in Burnley Street, North Richmond and later owned land on the Yarra River.

James died at the age of 69 years from Febris Typhris which he had for 15 days. He was buried on 13 March 1860 at the Old Cemetery, Melbourne. The death certificate indicates that at the time of his death, James was a gardener and that he was 22 years old when he married Isabella Ord in Northumberland England.

James together with other members of his family were originally buried in site 394 of the Old Cemetery in Melbourne, however around 1922, 900 bodies were exhumed from the cemetery to allow for expansion of the Melbourne Market. The records show that the Turnbull grave was one of those exhumed and interred into site 351/2 of the Fawkner Cemetery. A headstone was placed on the grave however no inscriptions were made on it.

As with their early life we can only assume that the bodies of James and Isabella, daughters Jane, Mary, Isabella, Elizabeth and Ann together with Ann's 4 children are located in the Fawkner Cemetery, as in later years when excavating to add the sewerage to the Melbourne Market many bodies were located.

Source of Information: 'Flying the Yellow Flag' compiled and written by Olive Moore