

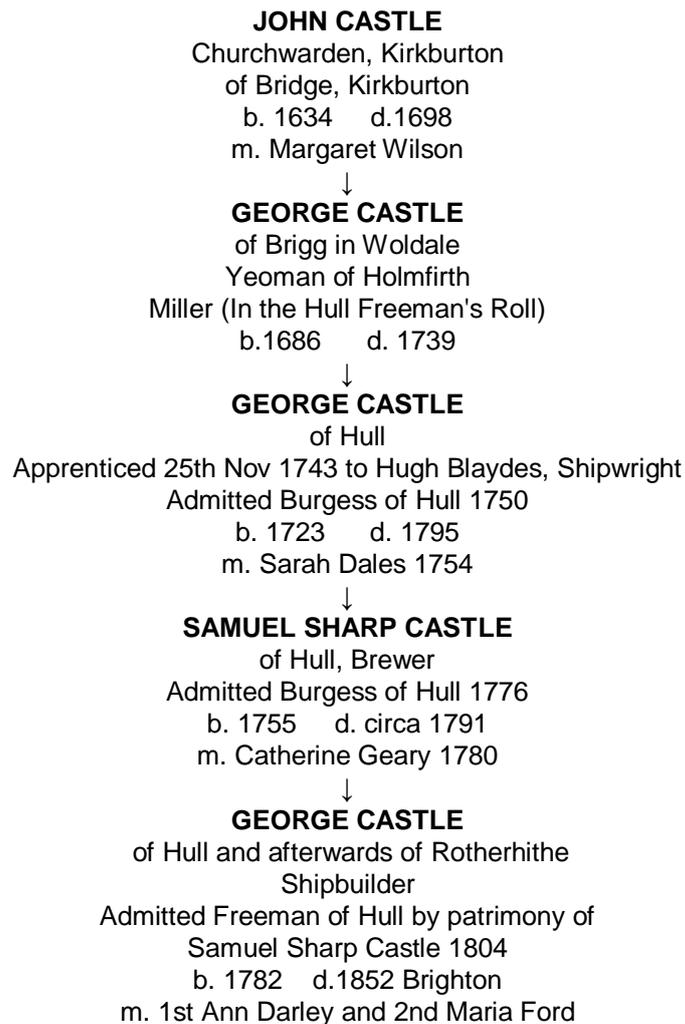
CHAPTER 2

FROM HULL TO ROTHERHITHE

The founder of the shipbreaking business, Henry Castle, was born in Deptford on 24th April 1808. The family tree shows that his father was George Castle of Hull, consequently it is important to consider this stage of the family history in some detail as it will demonstrate the origins of Henry's family and the possible link it may or may not have with the shipbreaking family based at Rotherhithe in the 17th century. In this connection, we wish to record our grateful thanks to Robert Latter MBE for his time and effort spent in researching this particular part of the family pedigree.

The family tree information is based on the pedigree published in the Visitation of England and Wales privately printed and edited by Joseph Jackson Howard and Frederick Arthur Crisp. Volume 5 printed in 1897 contains the relevant details of the Castle family tree from around 1800 through to the 1890s. In addition the notes to volume 6 give details of the pedigree dating back from 1800 to 1450. Further details of additions and corrections to the family tree are set out in addenda listed in volumes 6 to 20 and cover the periods from 1898 to 1920.

An abbreviated copy of the relevant direct lines of descent are shown below:



Henry's father George Castle of Rotherhithe is shown in the pedigree as having been born in Hull, where he was baptised at St Mary's on 29.5.1782 and is described as the son of

Samuel, Cabinet Maker, in the baptismal records.¹ George was later admitted Burgess of Hull by patrimony of his father Samuel Sharp Castle on 4.5.1804. Samuel is again described as a Cabinet Maker and not as a Brewer as shown in the pedigree.¹

We will return to George Castle of Hull and Rotherhithe a little later but consider it relevant to first refer to the antecedents shown in the pedigree as this will more directly take us to the possible area of links with the 17th century family of Castles.

George's father Samuel Sharp(e) was baptised at St Mary's on 22.10.1755. However, the pedigree is incorrect in regard to the "e" in Sharpe. On all but one entry in the Burgess Roll it is spelt Sharp. He did marry Catherine Geary in February 1780. Samuel was admitted Burgess of Hull by patrimony on 17.12.1776. Samuel's profession is shown as Brewer.¹

The most interesting fact about Samuel Sharp is that his later profession is shown as Victualler at the baptism of his other children, Charles and Betsy, in 1785 and 1787 respectively. However at the admission of his second son, also named Samuel Sharp, in 1806 as a Burgess he is, in addition to George, still referred to as a Cabinet Maker. At the admission of his youngest son Charles as a Burgess in 1812 he is again described as a Victualler.¹

Samuel Sharp Castle's father George, Henry's great grandfather, married Sarah Dales on 31.12.1754 and not 31.10.1754 as shown in the pedigree. Both were literate and witnesses to the wedding were Samuel Sharp and Susannah Ombler, which confirms the origin of the middle name Sharp.¹

Samuel Sharp's father George, the great grandfather of Henry Castle, was admitted Burgess on 4.10.1750 by the apprenticeship route. He was sponsored by Hugh Blaydes a wealthy Master Shipwright in Hull. George was apprenticed in 1743 at which time he would have been 20 years of age as it is shown in the pedigree that he was baptised at Kirkburton on 28.2.1723. If this was correct it would have been most unusual to have been apprenticed at such a late age. It is more generally assumed that the starting date for such apprenticeships as a shipwright in Hull at that time would have been around 14 years of age. An inspection of the marriage bond indicated that George and Sarah were 21 years of age when married in 1754. This points to the likelihood of George's date of birth being 1732 rather than 1723 and that he would have been 11 years of age at the time he became apprenticed to Hugh Blaydes.¹

A detailed search of the Kirkburton registers has not shown any such George born in the early 1730s neither is there any trace of the father being resident in the area in 1723 or 1732. However, it is certain that George was the son of George the Miller, Henry Castle's great great grandfather, as evidenced by the indenture of apprenticeship. However the records in Hull do not show that George the Miller was a Freeman of Hull as claimed in the Pedigree. On the other hand, there is a George born in 1724 in the Holmfirth area who is the son of a George the Miller. For information it should be noted that both Kirkburton and Holmfirth are to the south Huddersfield and Wooldale is a small hamlet about 1½ miles from Holmfirth. The parish of Kirkburton is also some 70 miles away from Hull.¹

Overall therefore we have to either accept for whatever reason that George was apprenticed at the age of 20; that he was descended from the previous Castle line shown in the Pedigree and that he was 10 years older than Sarah his wife or we regard the Pedigree as being erroneous at this point in the family line and that he has become mixed up with another Castle family. If this is the case then the connection with a London Castle family may be possible. So far this has not proved to be the case and our researches are ongoing but difficult to pursue more accurately. The date ranges are right for the link to have occurred as it is noted from the Thames family tree that there were six children descended from John Castle the son of William Castle of Pepys's fame.²

It was believed initially that tracing the Thames based Castles' descendants would be a relatively straightforward matter but it has proved to be a barrier beyond which we have been unable to progress. This is vitally important as George Castle of Hull born in 1724 or

1732 would have to have been directly related to one of John's six children. John was the son of William Castle, the shipbuilder - see pedigree of the family in Chapter I. Alternatively, the connection may come through Robert Castle's (William's brother) line of descent as he also had children.²

Proof of the difficulties is obtained from the records maintained by Trinity House relating to the Harwich Lights (Lighthouses). As we know William Castle was the son-in-law of Sir William Batten, the owner of the Harwich Lights, and that Batten's part of the shares in them passed to his first daughter Martha, William's wife. The date of her death has not been traced but many of the shares remained in the Castle family. One eighth was held by a William Castle who died in 1694 and by John Castle, Martha's son, who died in 1700. The latter bequeathed his share to his son William. Another 1/16th share was held by Captain Thomas Wilshaw who became Master of Trinity House. This was left to his daughter, also called Martha, who married the above mentioned John Castle. No further trace of the shares thereafter can be found.³

According to the information provided in the Harwich Lights and Owners book it is twice mentioned that the Castle family descendants cannot be traced as the family was large and the repetition of the Christian names Robert, William and John in the parish registers of Deptford, Rotherhithe and Bermondsey make it impossible to trace any line of descent.⁴ Unfortunately we have to concur as the reader may also be confused by all the names so far mentioned in our own book, which gives a strong flavour of all the problems encountered.

We have to say at this point that it appears that there is no direct connection between the two families of Castle and that the claim made in some of the Castles Shipbreaking brochures in the 1930s that the Shipbreaking family of Castle was directly descended from William Castle, the shipbuilder described in Pepys's diaries may not be correct and cannot be substantiated.

The confusion over names is understandably difficult to follow, however at this stage there have been three Georges involved: Henry's great great grandfather George of Holmfirth and Hull, his great grandfather George of Hull and his father George of Hull & Rotherhithe. We make no apology for the repetition of names so that the family line remains clear to the reader.

In our researches we have always assumed that we were looking for a direct descendant line from William Castle (1629-1681) through to the 19th century. However it may well be that the connection still exists but in a less direct route and if it does exist it could be through marriage to other brothers and/or sisters of the two families concerned. Furthermore, it is noted that William Castle was a widower⁴ at the time of his marriage to Martha Batten and a separate Castle line may also exist from this previous marriage. Either way it is almost impossible to prove by virtue of the reasons mentioned in the Harwich Lights history documents. A link may eventually materialise.

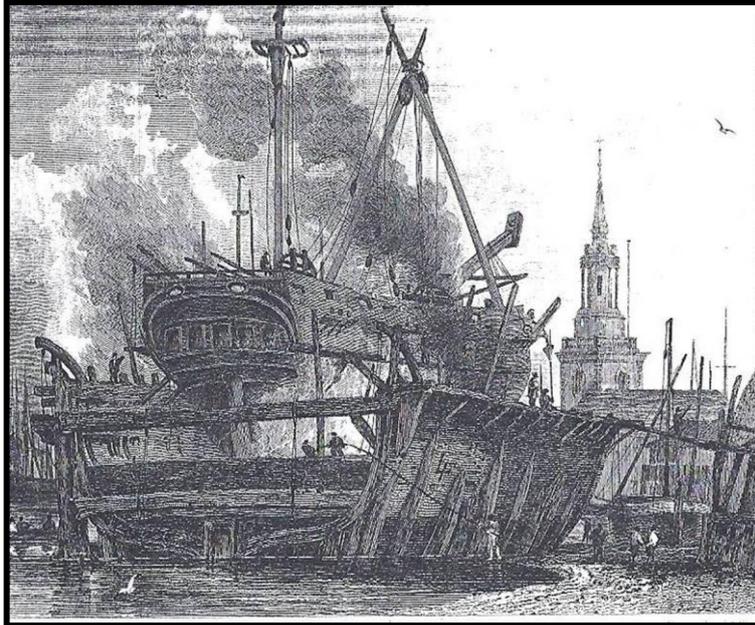
We will now examine the life and times of Henry's father, George Castle of Hull & Rotherhithe, as this will certainly have influenced his upbringing and subsequent career development.

George was born and brought up in Hull, but his father Samuel died at an early age in circa 1791 leaving the young George to be brought up by his mother and we suspect also with the help and support of his grandfather who survived until circa 1798. There is no record of George's apprenticeship but as noted above he was admitted as a Burgess of Hull in 1804 by patrimony of his father.

Times were difficult during this period of the Napoleonic wars and early in the 19th century George migrated to the Deptford area possibly with two of his brothers Samuel and Charles. It is believed by some family members we have spoken to that they all worked initially in the Naval Dockyard at Deptford as shipwrights. The move to self employment must have come around 1805 as we have an interesting insight into the history of the Yard subsequently operated by George, as a tenant, in Rotherhithe often known as Anchor

Wharf,⁵ which is situated between Kings Stairs and Cherry Garden Stairs not far downstream from Tower Bridge. As far as is known the two brothers did not join George in business or set up their own businesses.

The Anchor Wharf site, “illustrated below” was operated by Beatson and McGhee, but on



Drawn by L. Francia and engraved by J. C. Allen, published by W. B. Cooke, 1815

21st January 1803 Beatson when summoned to the Thames Navigation Committee said that he had left three years before. The premises since then were in the hands of Easterby and Mcfarlane, probably solicitors acting for the creditors. However, by 31st July 1805 William Beatson was back in business petitioning the Thames Commissioners about working from a new floating dock. Apparently about six years previously permission had been granted to moor a vessel close to the front of the premises for such a purpose. Beatson actually sought the supplementary permission in September 1805 and this was refused initially but upon appeal and further inspection when the young Castle was present, the sub-committee recommended to the Grand Committee to grant the petition of William Beatson, but on the basis that it was subject to the payment of a fine and annual re-approval.⁵

Clearly, at some point after this date George Castle became the tenant of the Wharf and probably for the purpose of operating the floating dock.

We now have evidence of a link between the Beatson and Castle families. Whilst George may have worked initially in the Deptford Naval Dockyards he almost certainly moved thereafter to work in conjunction with Beatson. Nonetheless it is noted that Henry was born in Deptford in 1808 and not in Rotherhithe so the actual time of George’s move to work in Rotherhithe is not precisely known. We also have information about the Beatson family activities on the Thames and we will elaborate on these separately in Chapter 4, as an understanding of how the various branches of that particular family developed does shed some light on the probable links with the Castles at that time and through to the next generation, who became involved in the shipbreaking business.

We next hear of George in 1810 when he made a request to repair the ways in front of his premises at Cherry Garden Stairs, Rotherhithe extending forty feet out and to be done under the direction of the Water Bailiff; to pay a fine and continue paying the rent for the accommodation already granted to his predecessors.⁶

By 1811 however there is continuing evidence of problems with the site and its operation. Conflicts with the neighbouring Wharf owners Mr Trotter and Messrs Surreys occurred as both of them had applied to pile off their premises to the West and to the East respectively.

The dispute concerned a public footway by the name of Gillham Stairs between Anchor Wharf and the premises of Surreys. George Castle argued that if this footway was allowed to be taken on by them then he would be utterly ruined having taken the premises at a heavy expense and that his family would become destitute. He claimed that he was beset by formidable enemies on the West and the East.⁷

The exact outcome of this dispute is not known but later events indicate that George continued operating at that site and was not therefore financially disadvantaged as claimed.

Moving on a number of years George Castle's business had a major labour problem in 1824, the year in which the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 were repealed. The Acts were originally brought in during the Napoleonic wars in order to prevent action by labour unions disrupting the war effort and particularly to prevent strikes occurring. Unfortunately, after the repeal of the Acts there was a great deal of labour unrest and strikes and wage disputes were common place and led to the Combination Act of 1825 limiting trade union activity.⁸

The Select Committee hearings, held in May 1825, were attended by George Castle and the records divulge, in detail, a vivid description of his experiences in August 1824. George had entered into a contract to carry out repairs to a ship called the *Frances Ann* at a price of £1,200 upwards. The labour force of around 40 men who had formed a union would not work for the offered rate of 7 or 8 shillings per day, as they wanted 10 shillings per day. This was refused and a walk out occurred. George carried on with his Foreman and apprentices.⁹

About three weeks later the entire labour force appeared at the yard and a heated exchange followed that bordered on violence as expressions such as "heave him overboard" and "cut him into mince meat" were used together with many other vulgar expletives. Eventually the men retired but George went to the Thames Police Office and filed a complaint. As a result three men were arrested and put in prison but were subsequently bailed shortly afterwards.⁹

George then relented and agreed to pay 8 shillings a day on account of what they wanted but some were not satisfied and wanted to draw 10 shillings immediately. This request was refused by George. Later that day while at home in his counting house upstairs a large gang of labourers came banging at his door, which was opened by his son, about 19 years of age (sic) *actually 18*. This would have been George Castle Jnr born in 1806. His wife and other children, presumably including Henry Castle, were present in the house as well. The men about eight of them burst into the house and trampled his son in the process. George who observed that the men were intoxicated drew two pistols and threatened to blow their brains out. The son went out and sought a peace officer while Mrs Castle remonstrated with the men half way up the stairs. However, George was seized by the collar and in fear for his wife who was in great distress he let the pistols fall to the floor. He then went upstairs. Soon after the men retired after stating that they still wanted 10 shillings per hour.⁹

It appears that after this episode George agreed to pay the men on the basis they wished as finishing the ship repairing contract was finally more important. He agreed he would say no more about the incident if they went peaceably back to work.⁹

It is interesting that during later representations made to the Select Committee George stated that his son had to be sent away in fear for his safety. In the circumstances, this could have been either George Junior or Henry. George also stated that he had two apprentices in his Yard but no mention is made of them both being his sons.⁹

George's business was clearly in the field of ship repairing rather than in shipbuilding and he was firmly established at the Rotherhithe site for over 20 years. However we note that he subsequently moved the business downstream to be operated from the site of Well's Yard and from the former Randall and Brent Yard just north of the Commercial Dock.¹⁰

In July 1828 George Castle appears in the records of the Thames Commissioners when he was reported by the Water Bailiff to have repaired his ways without permission and that he had put down a large quantity of chalk on the bed of the River Thames. Mr. Castle said that he had been desired to lay down the chalk by Mr Alderman Thompson and to execute the work, but that he did not know that Mr Thompson had not made application for the work to be done. He was fined £5.¹¹

George was back again in October 1828 using the title George Castle of Rotherhithe with a petition to the Commissioners to remove the launching slip and to level the bank in order to increase the depth of water under the wharf and also to cover the said bank with about 150 tons of chalk stones and gravel in the mud so that ships may be grounded thereon until it was convenient to dock there. The petition was at first refused but on appeal the request to embank was approved and a request made that George should also consider applying to the committee in respect of the pile granted to Messrs Randall and Brent and whether he is desirous of the same being continued for his use.¹¹ As a final point it is noted that the committee were accompanied around the premises by the young Mr. Castle possibly George junior or perhaps by his brother Henry.

It is interesting at this point to note that Colledge records the *Larne* as being broken up by Castle in 1828. This would mean that the business, including the two sons Henry and George, may also have been involved in the breaking up of this vessel. If correct then this work would have provided Henry Castle with shipbreaking experience and knowledge.

It would appear therefore that George senior may have been involved in shipbuilding and shipbreaking as well at this time around 1828, hence the move to a new yard with a frontage suitable for docking ships. However, there may have been a move back to ship repairing as evidenced by the requirement to embank ships pending their move into the dock.

We know little else of the life of George Castle senior. George died suddenly in Brighton on 12th August 1852, but was buried at St Mary Magdalen's, Bermondsey.

Until now we have been examining the family history and the possible link with the Castle family based on the Thames during the 17th century. We have therefore reached the stage where the life and activities of the founder of the shipbreaking business, Henry Castle, needs to be understood.

It is surprising that there is little in the way of recorded information about Henry's early life. He was born in Deptford not very long after his father's move down south to the Thames area. His early years would have been spent with the large George Castle family in Rotherhithe and as we have already noted he would likely have been in the house during the incident connected with the strikes and violence experienced in 1824. Henry would have been just sixteen at the time and should therefore have been nearly half way through his apprenticeship and training. He obviously was working in the shipping industry and must have been very familiar with the wharf at Cherry Garden Stairs and probably even worked there at certain times.

We do not know where Henry was educated but he was clearly literate and intelligent as evidenced by his later business acumen. His father was well known and probably wealthy so every effort would have been made to ensure that Henry's education and training was as good as possible. His brother George was two years older than Henry and we know he was apprenticed to his father and therefore working at the Rotherhithe yard. It appears that George Castle Junior may have taken over the ship repairing business at Rotherhithe and moved it to the other side of the Thames at Shadwell.¹² George Senior then moved down river to the Commercial Dock as previously noted. The date of this move is not recorded.

We shall shortly be looking at Henry's work and activities in Sydney Australia where he was in business with Richard Dawson for a substantial part of the time. Contact with the Dawson family researchers has yielded much useful information and raised the question of how and when they met. In addition, many people have enquired as to how and when Henry met his wife Harriet. More about this later but the skills applied in Australia were

based on Anchor Smith and Blacksmith expertise and applied in the foundry business on a considerable scale, which strongly indicates that Henry's background training and experience was linked to that type of work and business.

We have surmised in the past that Henry may have been working with his brother in Shadwell at Wapping Wall, but we have noted an interesting link here with Australia. The firm of Pow & Fawcus with premises in Shadwell were later involved in the supply of goods, including anchors, to Richard Dawson in Australia,¹³ at a much later date, and also possibly to the partnership business with Henry Castle although there is no record of this. If Henry and Richard Dawson had come into contact with each other through this firm's connection then this would provide a good clue to their background knowledge in the shipping industry and of the blacksmith's trade in particular.

Pow & Fawcus were mainly a North Country agricultural family but active in shipping on the Tyne and also had significant dealings with the Baltic timber trade. A branch of the family did locate to the Thames and the widow of Robert Fawcus lived in Lucas Street not far from Cherry Garden Street where George Castle and the family lived at the same time.¹⁴ It is therefore likely that the Castle family and the Fawcus family were well acquainted with each other and this may have led to Henry working with the firm in Shadwell. These conclusions are surmise and cannot be proven.

Richard Dawson was born in Westbury-on-Severn, Gloucestershire in 1800 the son of Captain David Dawson, Master mariner, originally of Dysart, Fifeshire. There is a record of a Richard Dawson arriving in Australia in 1829¹⁵ but it has not been possible to prove that it is one and the same person. This has led to the belief that he was either in the Navy or involved in shipping in such a way as to meet up with Henry. It has been suggested therefore that Henry may have been in the Navy, but our own feeling is that Henry was involved with sailing ships but in connection with the Baltic trade and the associated imported timber. Why else would he have later renamed the wharf at Vauxhall Bridge, Baltic Wharf? It is possible that he came into contact with Richard Dawson in this connection on the assumption that the two knew each other prior to emigrating to Australia.

A further interesting link with Australia involves the discovery from a family connection that the best man at Henry and Harriet's wedding in Sydney NSW in 1833 was a ship's Captain called William Ascough, who captained around 10 convict ship voyages to the colony. Ascough also was involved in shipping around the UK coast and we believe that it was this work that brought Henry and William into close contact. It therefore follows that the opportunity to emigrate to Sydney, Australia, would have therefore arisen through this connection. It could also of course have involved Richard Dawson who was a ship's Master at that time as well and Henry and Richard may have been introduced to each other by Ascough rather than with a Pow & Fawcus connection - see also Chapter 3.

We also should bear in mind that Henry was in partnership with his brother George, probably in ship repairing and both Ascough and Dawson may have utilised the Castle ship repairing facilities in Rotherhithe, either at the floating dock or at George Castle's premises near the Commercial Dock.

The foregoing also gives some credence to the belief that the son of George Castle referred to in the Select Committee Minutes of 1825 was possibly Henry and that he had to be sent away first to sea possibly and then back to his brother's or father's ship repairing business or perhaps with the anchor manufacturing business in Shadwell.

Whilst searching for reasons for Henry Castle's decision to emigrate to New South Wales it was noticed that his brother George Castle had been imprisoned for non-payment of his debts as a trader – see copy notice below.

Interestingly there is a reference within the Gazette notice referring to George's business as a grocer and also to his being in partnership with Henry Castle at the Commercial Repairing Docks and No 2 Russell Street, Rotherhithe.

*THE COURT FOR RELIEF of INSOLVENT DEBTORS.NT.13. See the Notice
at the end of these Advertisements.*

*The Matters of the PETITIONS and SCHEDULES of the PRISONERS hereinafter
named (the same having been filed in the Court) are appointed to be heard at the
Court-House, in Portugal Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, on Tuesday the 10th day of April 1832,
at Nine o'clock in the Forenoon.*

*Castle, George, the younger, formerly of Cannon-Street-Road: Saint George's in the East, carrying on the
business of a Grocer, in Partnership with Henry Castle, afterwards of the Commercial Repairing-Docks and
No. 2, Russell Street, Rotherhithe, in the County of Surrey, carrying on business in Partnership with his
Father, George Castle, under the name and firm of Castle and Company, and afterwards of Castle and Son,
Ship-Builders, then of No. 1, Thames-Street, Rotherhithe, and the Commercial Repairing-Docks
aforesaid, and late of*

*No. 16, Grenada-Terrace, Commercial Road, in the County of Middlesex, and the The Commercial
Repairing Docks aforesaid, General Dealer.*

Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that Henry Castle was insolvent at this time it does appear that Henry had previously decided to emigrate to Australia for reasons not fully understood. The partnership, in ship repairing, had probably incurred losses and both Henry and George appear to have returned to work with their father at this time and possibly just prior to George's insolvency. We are therefore firmly of the opinion that Henry's departure for Australia occurred in 1831 or perhaps earlier. We have not been able to trace the ship on which he travelled, but possibly he went on one of William Ascough's voyages in 1830 and 1831. We have not been able to verify the passenger lists at this point in time. It certainly could not have been later as we know that Henry was active in business in Sydney, NSW, by August 1832.¹⁶

However, an interesting development has since taken place where family descendants living in Canada have indicated that Henry first travelled to the US and Canada before making his way to Australia and that he also knew that he was to be married there. At the present time this remains to be confirmed, however if Henry had been sent away he may have gone to America and returned home before emigrating to Australia. There is a record of a Henry Castle, as a passenger, travelling down the St. Lawrence River in 1828¹⁷

We now move down under to review this fascinating antipodean adventure in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 2 - REFERENCES

1. Castles Archives - Private Research - Robert Latter MBE
2. Castles Archives - See Chapter 1 pedigree
3. Chaplin, W.R. (1951) *The History of Harwich Lights and their Owners*, page 14
4. Chaplin, W.R. (1951) *The History of Harwich Lights and their Owners*, page 13
5. Private Research - Minutes of Thames Commissioners 1804-1805 Vol.M. p.98, 139 and 147
6. Castles Archives - Private Research - Minutes of Thames Commissioners 1810-1811 Vol.P p.118
7. Castles Archives - Private Research - Minutes of Thames Commissioners 1810-1811 Vol.P p.220/2
8. www.wikipedia.org/CombinationAct/1799
9. Castles Archives - Private Research - Evidence to the 1825 Parliamentary Select Committee on the Combination Acts
10. Minutes of the Thames Commissioners 1827-1828 Vol.CC p.446 and p.454
11. Minutes of the Thames Commissioners Select Committee Meeting May 1827 -1828 Vol. CC p.509 and p.510
12. Castles Archives - Private Research - Randall's Ancient Index 1771-1856
13. Castles archives - Private Research - Australia - Harry Irwin
14. Pow & Fawcus www.marksuzi.com/familytree
15. Castles Archives - Private Research - Australia - Harry Irwin
16. Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser, 29th November 1832, p.2
17. www.theshipslist.com/ships/passengerlists/1828/slaug06.htm