

Australian Dictionary of Biography

Everingham, Matthew James (1769–1817)

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Matthew James Everingham (1769-1817), settler, was convicted in London on 7 July 1784 and sentenced to transportation for seven years. Shortly before his conviction he was employed as a 'servant' by an attorney of the Middle Temple, hence the subsequent references to him as 'attorney's clerk'. Allegedly 'in great distress' he had obtained two books by false pretences from the servant of another attorney, and these he had offered for sale.

He arrived in the First Fleet transport *Scarborough* and was employed by Assistant Commissary Zachariah Clark. On 13 March 1791 Everingham married Elizabeth Rymes of London, who had arrived in the *Neptune* on 28 June 1790 and in July he settled on a 50-acre (20 ha) grant near Parramatta. In December **Watkin Tench** noted that 'the Attorney's Clerk' appeared to find the cultivation of his own land 'not half so easy a task as he formerly found that of stringing together volumes of tautology to encumber or convey that of his neighbours'; but for once Tench was unjust. Far from being 'out of his province' Everingham succeeded as a settler. In 1800 he signed the address to Governor **John Hunter** setting out 'the grievous and intolerable burdens' under which the settlers at the Field of Mars had long laboured; soon afterwards he disposed of his grant to **Andrew Hume** and like many of the early grantees moved to the Hawkesbury where farming prospects were better. By 1803 he was well established at Portland Head, but in 1804 his home and farm buildings were burned by natives and he, his wife and servant were speared, though happily their wounds were not fatal. In 1816 he acquired 130 acres (53 ha) at Richmond Hill, and became a district constable. A year later, on 25 December 1817, he was accidentally drowned in the Hawkesbury. In a memorial to the colonial secretary in 1825 his widow claimed, apparently without financial result, that he had died while in the execution of his constabulary duties.

Everingham was survived by five sons and four daughters, and was buried in St John's cemetery, Wilberforce. His career was not spectacular, but over a long period he discharged his duties faithfully and worked steadily as a pioneering settler.

Select Bibliography

- *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, vols 1, 2, 6
- *Sydney Gazette*, 3 June 1804, 3 Jan 1818
- Proceedings of Bench of Magistrates, 15 Aug 1789 (State Library of New South Wales).

Citation details