

SOME TRANSPORTEES FROM GLOUCESTERSHIRE

1815 - 1818

The latest and most authoritative book on transportation is Convicts and the Colonies by Professor A.G.L. Shaw. Of the convicts transported he writes: "Although I have reached a number of conclusions they need to be confirmed (or perhaps refuted) by detailed investigations both of the districts from which the convicts came, and of those where they were sent; for it is only from such studies that the whole truth can emerge, and at the moment these are extremely rare." In the hope that a detailed study of convicts from Gloucestershire might contribute to the emergence of the whole truth, this research was undertaken. It is a continuation of an earlier study which covered the years 1788 to 1814, and embraces the period from Easter Quarter Sessions 1815 to Trinity Quarter Sessions 1818.

During this time 138 men and 3 women -- including 2 men and 1 woman sentenced at the City Assizes -- were conveyed from Gloucester to the hulks to await transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. They left England between August, 1815 and December, 1818; 68 were to serve seven years, 32 fourteen years, and 41 a life sentence.

It has not been possible, as yet, to discover how many of these had previous convictions. Some of the relevant records are missing and where they do exist, it has been difficult to establish which one of two persons bearing the same name was transported. However,

at present, 31 (22%) are known to have appeared in court previously, 6 had been discharged by proclamation or found not guilty, and 10 had been convicted. There has not been time to discover the verdicts in the remaining 14 cases, but 24 others came from outside the county so could have had convictions elsewhere. Of 27 possible first offenders from the neighbourhood of Bristol, 10 are known to have had no other convictions but the remaining 17 may have committed previous offences which were dealt with in Bristol city. If we add together the known and the possible old offenders we have a total of 72 - slightly over 50%. It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that between 50% and 22% had made former court appearances.

Here are some of the known old offenders:

Richard Winders of Pucklechurch, aged 17, having previously served a sentence of one calendar month for the theft of a pair of leather breeches worth 5s. was at Epiphany Quarter Session, 1818, convicted of stealing a turkey from Siston Warren. He was sentenced to transportation for seven years. Before leaving the dock he turned to the Chairman of the Magistrates, smiled and said, "I wish thou mightest be sitting there till I come back and then I'll be with thee again." The Gloucester Journal described him as "young in years but old in iniquity." In company with nine other convicts from this county he left England on the "Lord Sidmouth" in September, 1818.

Thomas Caines of Kingswood, a dealer aged 31, was "an old inmate of the gaol, known as the Captain of the Cock Road Gang."

With his son and other members of his family and several other men, he was said to have terrorised travellers passing Kingswood. Indeed "no inhabitant" of that area "felt safe in his bed". Early in October, 1814, police officers clashed with the gang in Bristol but Caines managed to escape. He was eventually captured by a quick-thinking Private in the Bitton Cavalry while carrying away sacks of stolen wheat. At the Summer Assizes 1817 he was sentenced to seven years transportation. In December, 1817 with one other from the county he sailed on the "Neptune" for New South Wales.

John Jobbins "a notorious character aged 21 was convicted of stealing a coat, at the Easter Assizes, 1815. Three years earlier he had been charged with sheep stealing and condemned to death. He was reprieved and apparently served two years in prison. In October, 1814 he was taken into custody in Bath "having lately been housebreaking and horsestealing in various parts of the county." While confined in the Beadle's room in the Guildhall, Bath, he took off his coat and burnt it, "so as not to be identified." He was brought to Gloucester and sentenced to seven years transportation. On August 25th, 1815 he sailed on the "Fanny" for Botany Bay.

Luke Riddiford, a 33 year old waterman from Thornbury, was charged - with three other members of his family - with burgling a dwelling-house in Thornbury and stealing 2 sides of bacon, 2 pigs cheeks, one tongue piece, two sweet bones, 1 copper teakettle and about 36 pounds of salt butter in an earthen pan. At the Summer Assizes in August, 1816, his father aged 71 and his brother aged 23 were found not guilty. Luke had previous convictions for assault. He and his

mother - aged 69 - were condemned to death. She - the only member of the family unable to read or write - was executed on September 7th, Luke was reprieved and in April, 1817 left England in the "Lord Eldon" to serve a life sentence in New South Wales. Twelve others from Gloucestershire sailed at the same time.

At the Summer Assizes, August 1816, Richard Griffiths aged 24 a fish carrier of the parish of St. Philip and St. Jacob, Bristol, who could read and write was sentenced to death for breaking into a dwelling house and stealing a waistcoat with silver buttons worth 20s. and other property. He was reprieved and sentenced instead to life transportation. In the early hours of the 26th November, he escaped from the Castle Gaol "and rejoined his old associates" in Bristol. He remained at large until the following April when he was recaptured in Bath where he had fled after breaking into a house in Bristol and stealing silver goods worth £70. He was brought back to Gloucester and charged with being at large while under sentence of transportation. In October, 1817 he and five others convicted at the County Assizes left aboard the "Batavia".

Of the three women transported during this period, two had appeared in court before. At the Summer Assizes, 1813 22 year old Sophia Robins of Lydney, who could not read or write, was sentenced to three months imprisonment for stealing wearing apparel from a house in Lydney. At Michaelmas Sessions, 1814 and Epiphany Sessions, 1815 she was ordered to be discharged. Her fourth appearance in April, 1816 on a charge of stealing three guineas in gold and silver, two gold rings and articles of clothing resulted in a sentence of

transportation for seven years.

Jane Wood was caught stealing two pieces of cotton print from a mercer's shop in Gloucester only a few hours after serving a sentence of two years with hard labour in the Castle Gaol for a similar offence in Cirencester. She too, received a sentence of seven years. Both women sailed on the "Lord Melville" in August, 1816.

The third woman, Charity Hamilton, was a confectioner of the parish of St. Philip and St. Jacob. She was 35 years old and could read and write. At the Easter Sessions, 1817 she was convicted of receiving 350 yards of cloth worth £150 knowing it to be stolen. Thirteen months later - May, 1818 she left England aboard the "Maria". There is no evidence, as yet, to suggest that this was not her first offence.

Poaching offences were common at this time and many affrays took place - a direct product of the Game Laws which, framed by the nobility and gentry and administered by them operated fiercely against the poorer classes. (See The Village Labourer, Vol. 1, p. 184. J.L. & B. Hammond.) Two such affrays, each resulting in a death, sent 13 men into exile from Gloucestershire.

On the night of January 16th, 1816, several young men met at a house near Thornbury. There they swore a solemn oath not to betray one another. Having blacked their faces they set off towards Catgrove, some armed with guns and others with clubs. The night was moonlit and frosty. At about midnight they were discovered by Col. Berkeley's gamekeepers who were attracted there by the sound of a shot. During the

ensuing clash a gamekeeper, William Ingram, was killed and six of his companions wounded. The poachers fled. Col. Berkeley at once engaged the services of a Mr. Vickery of Bow Street and within a few days three men were in custody at Berkeley Castle. Two confessed and soon fourteen men were brought to trial on a charge of murdering or assisting at the murder of William Ingram. All but two were farmers' sons - "young men of decent appearance and respectably connected". Their ages ranged from 19 to 30. Evidence was given that Lord Ducie, Miss Langley and Col. Berkeley whose manors adjoined "having of late been much infested by poachers" employed about thirty men to patrol their estates, "but always without firearms". On the night of the affray they had been armed only with stout sticks.

One of the accused turned King's Evidence and was discharged. Another was released on his own surety of £500 and two others of £250 each to appear at the next assizes. A third, William Adams Broadribb, an attorney-at-law, was sentenced to seven year's transportation for administering an illegal oath. The remaining eleven were condemned to death. Two of these, John Allen, at whose house they had met, and who had a certificate to carry a gun; and John Penny, who had served a six-month's sentence for poaching about two years earlier, were executed. John Penny was said to have exclaimed during the affray "Now till Tom Till's debt be paid." (Tom Till had been killed by a spring gun on Lord Ducie's land some time earlier.) Both denied firing the fatal shot, declaring that, in the confusion it was impossible to say who did. The nine remaining were reprieved and

sentenced to life transportation. On the 21st May, 1816 William Broadribb left Gloucester for the hulks at Woolwich where a month later his late companions joined him. On October 9th they sailed aboard the transport ship "Sir William Bensley".

The second affray took place at Sherborne in November, 1816. Seven men were found at night in enclosed ground "armed with bludgeons and other offensive weapons." The head gamekeeper, declaring that he and his companions were armed, called on them to surrender like gentlemen. A short, sharp fight ensued. One of the poachers, badly beaten about the head, fell to the ground. Three were secured but the rest escaped. Shortly after reaching the gamekeeper's lodge, the injured man expired. The others - Samuel Parker aged 26, Richard Beckley aged 34, and Joseph Wright aged 43, were lodged in the House of Correction at Northleach. In January, 1817 they were each sentenced to seven years. With Luke Riddiford, they left England in the "Lord Eldon".

Much remains to be done, but the findings so far, are shown in tabular form overleaf. A map of Gloucestershire, showing the areas from which the convicts came, is appended.

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Sources:

Glos. R.O., Q/GC 5/1 Felons Register, 1815 1818
Glos. R.O., QS/G, 1814 1818, Gaol Calendars
Public Record Office, HO/11 Vols. II - III
Gloucester City Library, Gloucester Journal files
A.G.L. Shaw. Convicts and the Colonies (1966)

CRIMES, OCCUPATIONS AND LITERACY OF CONVICTS TRANSPORTED

FROM GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1815 - 1818

<u>Crimes:</u>	Stealing - wheat etc	5
	sheep	11
	pigs	7
	fowls etc	5
	horses	12
	woollen cloth	5
	wearing apparel	8
	from person	2
	on highway	7
	miscellaneous	9
	from dwelling house	7
	burglary) 35
	housebreaking	
	Fraud	3
	Receiving stolen goods	8
	Assault	4
	Armed to poach	3
	Murder while poaching	9
	Administering illegal oath	1

<u>Occupations:</u>	Apothecary	1
	Attorney	1
	Blacksmith	2
	Butcher	1
	Carpenter	1
	Chairmaker	1
	Clothier	1
	Collier	3
	Confectioner	1
	Dealer	2
	Engine maker	1
	Farmer	2
	Fish carrier	3
	Gardener	2
	Grocer	1
	Hatter	1
	Hawker	3
	Labourer	36 (Inc. 7 ex-service men)
	Mason	4
	Navigator	4
	Servant	1
	Seaman	3
	Shoemaker	7
	Spinner	1
	Waterman	7
	Weaver	1
	Not known	49

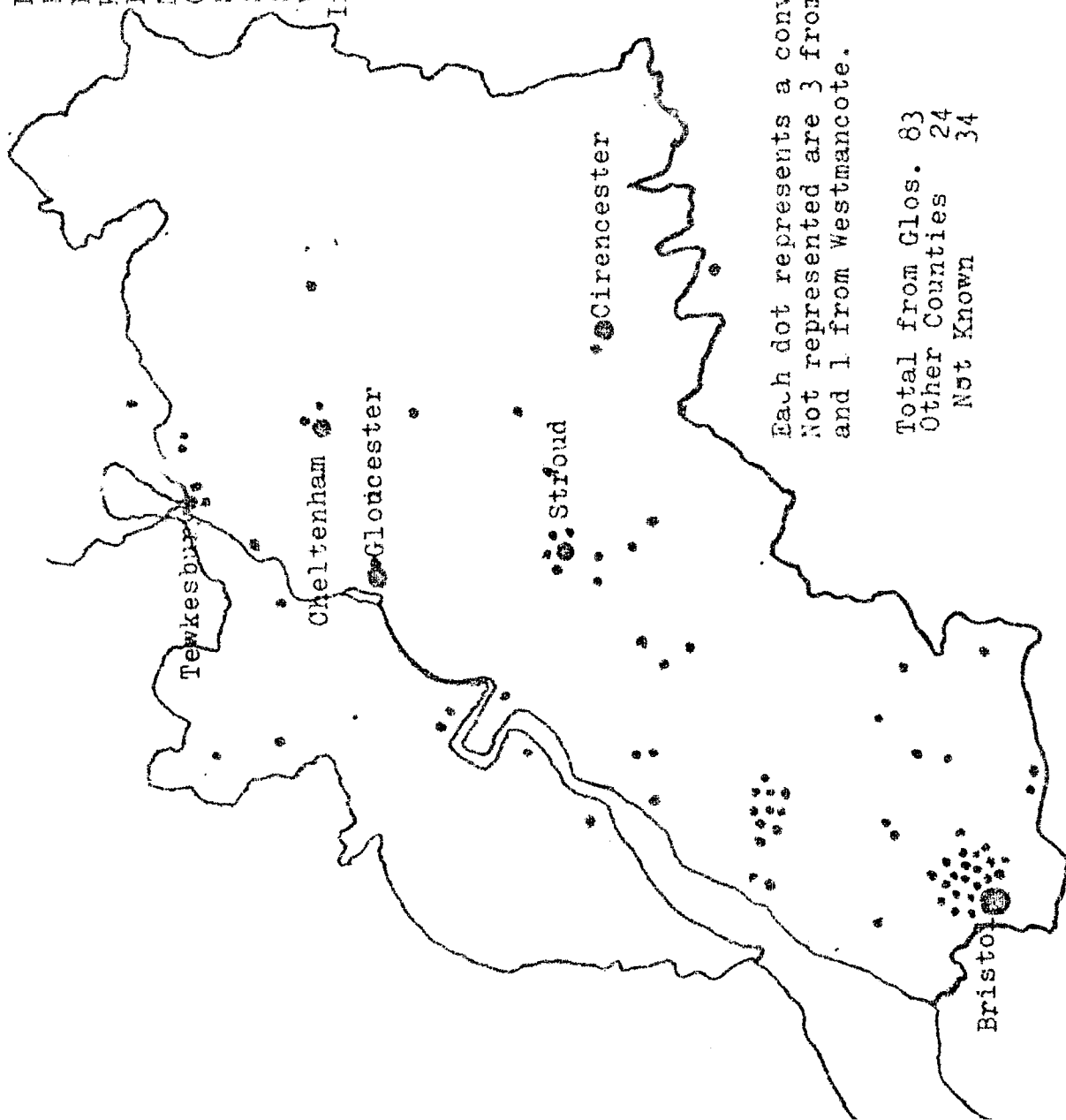
Literacy:

Read and write	29
Read and write a little	2
Read a little	17
Not read	26
Not read or write	15
Not known	52

The youngest transportee was aged 15; the oldest 60.

From other counties:

- Berkshire 1
- Brecon 1
- Essex 1
- Kent 2
- Lancs. 1
- Monmouth. 3
- Oxon. 1
- Shropshire 1
- Somerset 5
- Staffs. 3
- Wilts. 2
- Ireland/London 3



Each dot represents a convict.
 Not represented are 3 from Bristol City
 and 1 from Westmancote.

Total from Glos. 63
 Other Counties 24
 Not Known 34