

TRANSPORTED TO TASMANIA 1831 - SAMUEL MACEY ALIAS BANSTONE

In 1830, there were riots of agricultural labourers – known as the Swing Riots - in many counties in the south of England, protesting about their inadequate wages and the introduction of farm machinery, particularly threshing machines, which threatened their meagre livelihood. Some were sentenced to death, some to imprisonment and some to transportation. Although transportation was often for a time-limited period, only a minority of transportees returned home. This is the story of one agricultural labourer who was transported to Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land as it was then called, in 1831, for his part in the riots.

Samuel Macey was born in Fonthill Gifford, Wiltshire, in 1790, son of James and Elizabeth Macey (née Lovett). In 1809, at the age of 19, Samuel married 18 year old Charlotte Whitaker, also born in Fonthill Gifford, daughter of John and Mary Whitaker. Samuel and Charlotte Macey had 9 children, all of whom were baptised at Fonthill Gifford – Charlotte (1809), Samuel (1811), James (1813), John (1816), Elizabeth (1818), William (1821), Mary (1824), Ann (1827), and Henry (1830). Samuel junior died in infancy.

Samuel Macey, like most of his family, was an agricultural labourer. There is plentiful evidence of the desperate poverty and near starvation faced by agricultural labourers at this time. Samuel was convicted several times for poaching and once for theft. Finally, on 25th November 1830, he was involved in a riot of 400 people, during which threshing machines were destroyed at Mr Candy's Farm in Fonthill Gifford and at the farms of John Benett, MP, at Pythouse and Linley Farm in Tisbury.¹

Samuel was one of those who faced trial, under the name of Samuel Banstone. It seems that this was not simply a criminal alias, for the name Macey alias Banstone is found as early as 1575, in the will of John Macey alias Banstone, yeoman of Chilmark, which is very close to Fonthill Gifford.² Samuel was sentenced to 7 years transportation, and was transported to Tasmania in 1831. Samuel and 223 other men convicted of machine breaking or similar, 100 of them from Wiltshire, left Portsmouth on 6th February 1831 on the convict ship *Eliza* and arrived in Hobart on 29th May 1831.³ (See Appendix 1)

The four months at sea must have been harsh and frightening. On the positive side, there was a Surgeon Superintendent on board to treat the sick, and all the men survived the journey.⁴ On the negative side was the length of the journey, the cramped conditions, the use of leg irons, and, presumably, the very real fear of sinking, as well as the fear of what awaited them.

¹ The Times, Jan 3, 1831

² <http://genforum.genealogy.com/macey/messages/527.html>

³ Chambers, Jill, *Wiltshire Machine Breakers, Vol 2: The Rioters*, 2008, p 962

⁴ Chambers, Jill, *Wiltshire Machine Breakers, Vol 2, The Rioters*, 2008, p 962-967

Van Diemen's Land had a reputation for being the most severe destination, and was regarded with dread.⁵ The Governor of Van Diemen's Land between 1824 and 1836 was George Arthur. Governor Arthur set out to establish a tightly controlled society in Van Diemen's Land, by means of constant monitoring and a system of incentives and punishments.⁶

As soon as the convicts arrived, they were interrogated, and detailed information about them was recorded. Samuel was described as being 5'2 ¼" tall, with blue eyes, a long straight nose, brown complexion, brown to grey hair and reddish brown whiskers. The end joint of his left thumb was 'crippled'.⁷

The trades of the convicts were also recorded, and work placements were assigned to them accordingly. They were usually initially assigned as labourers to free settlers or on public works. But there was a hierarchy of situations between which convicts could be moved according to their behaviour. These were "[1] holding a ticket-of-leave; [2] assignment to a settler; [3] labour on public works; [4] labour on the roads, near civilization, in the settled districts; [5] work in a chain gang; [6] banishment to an isolated penal settlement; and [7] penal settlement labour in chains."⁸

Samuel's trade was described as Farm Labourer and he was assigned to Thomas Brugh, 'Inverary'.⁹ The place must have been mis-recorded, because there was no Inverary in Tasmania, but Thomas Brugh had a residence in Invermay, near Launceston. He was a farmer and horse breeder at Invermay, about one mile from Launceston on the George Town Road.¹⁰ (See Appendix 3)

This sounds as if it could have been a comparatively pleasant assignment. However, Launceston was 120 miles from Hobart, and it was customary for convicts to be marched there,¹¹ which would have been far from pleasant, especially for someone with a bad back, like Samuel.¹² Whether or not Samuel ever took up this assignment, he was soon back in Hobart.

For in October 1831, Samuel was in the charge of Lieutenant Gunn. Lieutenant William Gunn was Superintendent of the Prisoners' Barracks in Hobart. Most convicts stayed in the Prisoners' Barracks, going out during the day to work. Appendix 2 contains a contemporary report of some of the public works undertaken in 1831, such as the construction and repair of roads and buildings, for which convict labour would have been used.

⁵ Hughes, Robert, *The Fatal Shore*, 1987, p 368

⁶ Hughes, Robert, *The Fatal Shore*, 1987, p 382-5

⁷ Archives Office of Tasmania, *Description List*, CON18/1/6, p 13

⁸ Hughes, Robert, *The Fatal Shore* 1987, p 385

⁹ Archives Office of Tasmania, *Appropriation List*, CON27/1/5

¹⁰ The Courier (Hobart, Tas.), Friday 19 Feb 1841, page 1

¹¹ West, John, *The History of Tasmania*, 1971, p 405

¹² Lord Arundell, *Recommendations for Mercy*, TNA, HO40/27, folio 509

There was also a tread wheel in the Prisoners' Barracks, used to grind wheat, to which prisoners were assigned for bad conduct. In October 1831, Samuel was sentenced to 7 days on the tread wheel for disobedience of orders and neglect of duty. Musters records also show that Samuel was assigned to William Gunn in 1832 and 1833.

In June 1835, Samuel was granted a 'ticket-of-leave'. This meant that he was not assigned to anyone, but 'free' to find his own employment. However, he was still subject to discipline, and in July 1835, his ticket-of-leave was suspended for a week and he was put in a cell on bread and water for being drunk.¹³

In November 1832, Samuel applied for his wife Charlotte and 8 surviving children to join him in Tasmania, but for whatever reason, they did not go. Perhaps the money necessary to pay for the journey was not available, or perhaps the family did not want to go. The journey, in itself, would have been daunting, as well as the reputation of the harsh conditions in Tasmania. So they stayed to face rural poverty in England. The story of Samuel's wife and family in Fonthill Gifford is told elsewhere.¹⁴

Samuel received a free pardon in 1836, which meant that he was free to return home, but there is no record of him having returned to England before 1871. It is not known what happened to him during these years. Perhaps it took him that long to save up the fare to get home, and/or he made a new life for himself. It seems that Thomas Burt, another man from Fonthill Gifford, who was transported to Tasmania with Samuel, later went to Victoria, Australia, where he died in 1858, aged 53.¹⁵ It is possible that Samuel also went to Victoria, but this is not known.

However, it is known that Samuel did eventually make it home. The 1871 census shows him back in Fonthill Gifford, aged 82, living with his brother, John Macey, aged 78. Despite their age, they were both described as labourers. In the next household were Samuel's daughter, Charlotte Cole, and her son Lewis, an agricultural labourer. Samuel's son Henry, wife Sarah, and their children were also still living in Fonthill Gifford.

Samuel's wife Charlotte, who had been left to bring up their 8 children alone, as well as to work as an agricultural labourer, died in 1851, so they never met again. But at least Samuel had the opportunity of seeing some of his children and grandchildren before he died. Samuel died quarter ending December 1874, aged 86.¹⁶

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¹³ Archives Office of Tasmania, *Conduct Record*, CON31/1/4 p 121

¹⁴ Waterson, Jill, *Fonthill Gifford in the mid Nineteenth Century*, www.history-pieces.co.uk

¹⁵ Chambers, Jill, *Wiltshire Machine Breakers, Vol 2: The Rioters*, 2008, p 184

¹⁶ Samuel and Charlotte Macey were the 3 x great grandparents of the author of this article.

APPENDIX 1: REPORT OF ARRIVAL OF ELIZA CONVICT SHIP IN HOBART

THE HOBART TOWN COURIER, SATURDAY, 4 JUNE 1831, PAGE 2, 3

SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 1831

Arrived on Sunday the 29th May, the transport ship Eliza, 538 tons, J.J. Groves, esq. commander, from Portsmouth, 8th of Feb. with 224 male prisoners, consisting chiefly of rioters, incendiaries, and machine breakers, lately convicted under the special commissions at Winchester and elsewhere, the greater proportion of whom are said to be able-bodied, hard-working countrymen. Surgeon Superintendent W. Anderson, esq. R.N. The guard consists of Captain Moore, Lieut. Lewin, 2 serjeants, 2 corporals and 35 privates of the Royal Marines, who proceed to India by the first opportunity to join H.M.S. Southampton on the India station, or some think the Southampton will come down here to embark them and two other detachments which are daily expected in the succeeding transport ships. This is a very economical plan of Government instead of sending them out direct to India by a transport expressly taken up for the purpose.

APPENDIX 2: REPORT ON STATE OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND IN 1831

**THE SYDNEY GAZETTE AND NEW SOUTH WALES ADVERTISER,
THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 1832, PAGE 3**

BRIEF VIEW OF THE STATE OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND AT THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR 1831

(From the Hobart Town Almanac for 1832.)

At no period since the first settlement of the colony was the spirit of improvement so strong as at the present time. Not only has every possible industry been used by the Government, with the resources at its command, to accelerate the progress of the roads and other public works, but the individual energy of the settlers has been exerted to the utmost in adding to the productive power and value of their respective properties. This is apparent in Hobart Town and Launceston, as well as in the various townships and private farms throughout the colony. The general character of the buildings which have been erected is far superior to that of former years, consisting, for the most part, of brick or stone, erected in the most desirable and substantial manner. For, while the earlier erections in the colony are now tottering or dropping to pieces, the houses built in 1831 are calculated to last for more than a century.

In Hobart Town, during the past year, about 50 houses have been built, affording rents from £30 to £200 a year each, of which the average may be reasonably taken at £60...

...The public works which have been carried on during this period by the Government consist chiefly of various improvements on the roads – of the great undertaking at Bridgewater – of the new Wharf at Hobart Town – of the extension of the Prisoners' Barracks, and the formation of Argyle-street, and part of Liverpool-street in the same place – of the Orphan School at New Town, besides innumerable other repairs and improvements which it would be tedious here to mention. An academical establishment or college, under the immediate patronage of the Government and superintendence of the Arch-deacon – a Church at Richmond on the Coal River, and at Hamilton on the Clyde or Derwent – a new township at Jerusalem – various new roads and bridges, with a regular repair and formation of the old ones, and of the streets of Hobart Town and Launceston – a new gaol at each of these towns, are among the public improvement which are generally anticipated and required during the ensuing year...

...the total population of the island on the 31st December, 1831, was above twenty seven thousand souls. Of this number 2004 were composed of male prisoners who had arrived from London during the year, the other portions of the increase having been made up by the arrival of free settlers, mechanics, and others to the colony, of the surplus number of births over that of deaths, and about 300 female prisoners...

...The increase of buildings in the two principal towns, Hobart Town and Launceston, has of course very much added to the liveliness and respectability of their appearance. New stores and shops have been opened, and those of the old ones which required it have been enlarged and remodelled. Elizabeth-street, the chief thoroughfare and mart of traffic in Hobart Town, has in this respect undergone a very decided improvement, with large commanding windows, affording a store and display of British manufactures equal to any in Oxford-street or Cheapside...

APPENDIX 3: NEWSPAPER EXTRACTS RE THOMAS BRUGH

THE COURIER (HOBART, TAS.), FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY 1841, PAGE 1

SALES BY AUCTION

Important to Breeders of Stock.

Valuable Entire Horses, Mares, Milch Cows, &c, the property of Mr. Thomas Brugh.

Mr J.C. UNDERWOOD will SELL by AUCTION, at Invermay, about one mile from Launceston, on the George Town Road, on Tuesday, the 23rd instant, at 12 o'clock precisely, the following valuable STUD of ENTIRE HORSES, MARES, and other Stock, viz.-

Samson, a jet black entire horse, three years old, 16 ½ hands high, a pure Clydesdale, brother to Wallace, out of an imported mare by Clyde

Gulliver, that well-known racing pony, six years old, by Councillor, out of a first-rate mare

Punch, a pure Clydesdale entire colt, three years old next March, by Wallace, out of a pure Clydesdale mare, that took the first class premium at the Northern Agricultural Show of 1837, and a certificate of being the best cart mare at the show of the same Society of 1838

George, a two-year old entire colt, by Wallace, out of a Lincoln mare

Nancy, a pure Clydesdale mare, imported from Scotland, mother of Wallace and Samson, stinted to Lincoln

Maggy, a Sydney mare, imported by Mr. Jonathan Griffiths, with a foal at her side by Wallace, and stinted to Samson, an excellent cart, plough, or saddle mare.

A three-year old gelding, out of Maggy, by Clyde, an excellent cart or plough horse

A two-year old gelding, out of Maggy, by Wallace, unbroken

A two-year old gelding, out of a Northumberland mare, by Black Jack

About forty head of prime dairy cattle, consisting of first-rate milch cows and heifers, of the Ayrshire breed

One Ayreshire bull

ALSO

The whole of the farming implements, consisting of carts, ploughs, harness, harrows, &c. Terms – under £25 cash; £25 to £100, three months; £100 to £300, three and six months; above £300, four and six months' credit, on approved and endorsed bills.

THE COURIER (HOBART, TAS.), FRIDAY 24TH DECEMBER 1841, PAGE 4

WALLACE.- A thorough-bred Clydesdale Cart Stallion, six years old, stands 16 ½ hands high, sure foal-getter, was bred by T. Brugh, Esq...

