

The Sanders Times

Entry: 20.01.2013

At the age of 22, Jane Sanders, a stocking seamer from Birstall, gave birth to her son, Richard, on the 15th December, 1821. Jane is the only registered parent on the Birth Certificate leading us to presume illegitimacy. By the time, Richard was 5 years old and Jane 27, she married a 25 year old fellow stocking weaver from the same village. His name was John Kilby.

John & Jane went on to have four other children and moved to Belgrave in Leicestershire. After they had been married for 16 years, John was arrested for 'feloniously killing a sheep with intent to steal'. He came before Leicester Quarter Sessions on March 2nd, 1842 and there was sentenced to fifteen years and transportation. He was, initially, taken to Woolwich and incarcerated in horrible conditions on the hulkship *Justitia*.

It was not unusual for men to be sentenced to transportation for comparatively minor misdemeanours and it was common solution at the time to contain them on a hulkship prior to transportation. Some hulkships were up on dry land but the *Justitia* was moored off land. We know this because there is an illustration in the National Maritime Museum copies of which are on sale from Amazon. It depicts convicts working on land during the day and the *Justitia* moored out to which they returned at night. There are lots of entries concerning detainees and their crimes. Here are three examples:



- Edward committed minor offences and spent 2 months in prison. In 1832 he stole 7 geese and was transported to Australia for seven years. After his trial he was taken to Lincoln Castle on 19 Oct 1832, and a month later taken to prison hulk ship *Justitia* at Woolwich on the Thames. The following year he sailed for Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania)
- William Cork aboard the Prison Hulk Ship *HMS Justitia*, moored Woolwich c1839. His crime was stealing a Duck.
- Boy, William Derricourt, convicted of stealing a waistcoat.*

**After sentence I was condemned, previous to being sent to the hulks, to the treadmill in Stafford Goal. There being no corn to grind and no opposing friction to the weight of the steppers on the wheel, if ever mortal boy walked on the wind I did then. The turns were so rapid that should anyone have missed his footing a broken leg might have been the consequence. This time came to an end, and orders were received for my being passed on with others to the hulks at Woolwich. Quarters were assigned me on board the *Justitia* Hulk. Before going on board we were stripped to the skin and scrubbed with a hard scrubbing brush, something like a stiff birch broom, and plenty of soft soap, while the hair was clipped from our heads as close as scissors could go. This scrubbing we endured until we looked like boiled lobsters, and the blood was drawn in many places. We were then supplied with new 'magpie' suits -- one side black or blue and the other side yellow. Our next experience was being marched off to the blacksmith, who riveted on our ankles rings of iron connected by eight links to a ring in the center, to which was fastened an up and down strap or cord reaching to the waist-belt.*

Many men never reached their transport ship because disease was so rife in the confinement of the *Justitia*. The hulkship itself built in teak in 1799 and licensed to the East India Company. The Admiralty purchased her in 1804 and named her HMS *Hindustan*. Her best known voyage was her trip to Australia in 1809 when she brought Governor Lachlan Macquarie to replace Governor William Bligh after The Rum Rebellion. Bligh turned out to be a very unlucky man. After surviving the Mutiny on the *Bounty*, he was the Governor of New South Wales who presided over The Rum Rebellion of 1808 which was the only successful armed takeover of government in Australia's history.

Two ends of the social scale meet here. Bligh was selected Bligh as a Master in the Navy and Bligh accompanied Cook in July 1776 on Cook's third and fatal voyage to the Pacific. John Kilby made the terrible selection of a sheep to kill and steal and paid with his marriage and fifteen years of his life. He managed to survive the after a month and a half on the *Justitia* and was then taken to Plymouth where he set sail on the convict ship *Susan* for Van Diemen's Land or Tasmania. on 21st April, 1842. He landed a remarkably swift three months later on 24th of July.

Fifteen years is a long time to suffer hard labour in a harsh climate. John Kilby managed it and would have been on his way home in 1857. at the age of 55 if he served his full term. Actually, a record at the Tasmanian Records Office lists him receiving a conditional pardon in 1852. However, we don't know precisely when he returned to England but, by the 1861 Census, John is living alone back in Belgrave and working as an agricultural labourer. In 1851, Jane is still there and head of a family of four. She dies in 1856 and may just have missed his return. We will probably never know. What we do know is that John Kilby only lives on until 1862, dying alone at the age of 61.

