

John Francis Dandridge

'Machine Breaker' or 'Swing Ricker'

**By W Read
2010**

A Contemporary Etching of a Machine Breaking Riot

Preface

After much searching for the death of my ancestor, John Francis Dandridge, by pure chance I came across a website reference of those transported for machine breaking, and listed there was a 'John' who fitted perfectly. It didn't take much to prove he was of my family, and as I began searching I soon made many contacts. I discovered that there was a wealth of information, and many original documents, relating to his arrest during the Swing riots. I became very interested in his life and his occupation, and as I had soon gathered a great deal of information on file, decided that I should like to write about his life. The following paper is about John, his life, and the events that led to his transportation.

Acknowledgments

Of all my sources, I must say thank you to the following people who have all been very helpful. Some of the information and illustrations contained within this document are directly sourced from them and which have been extremely useful in helping me produce this paper.

Firstly, Alan Mead, who talked with me on several occasions, supplied copies of some of the articles used, and from whose book I sourced much of the section on papermaking. Jill Chambers, whose book on machine breakers was very useful, and who also sent me various items. Geoffrey Bruce Sharman, whom I had contact with on several occasions and who kindly sent me copies of many original documents that were held in the Tasmanian archives, and whose website was also most helpful.

John Francis Dandridge

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Introduction

John Dandridge was baptised at Wooburn in Buckinghamshire (Appendix 1) on October 15th 1786, son of Jonathon and Ann Dandridge (nee Darvel); John had just one brother William. His father Jonathon was born at Drayton St Leonard, Oxfordshire and is known to have worked as an agricultural labourer, although it appears from later evidence that at some point in his life he came into sufficient money to own a freehold property (*Fig 1; Ref 1; Appendix 5*).

On 24th December 1810, John married Susannah Davis at Wooburn. He was obviously not schooled, as he made his mark rather than signed. I'm sure we'll never know how they met, but as John was a papermaker, and it is known from the 1851 census that various members of the Davis family worked in the paper mills and that the families lived close to one another, it is likely they worked together and attended the same church and functions associated with rural village life. Susannah and John had eight children and having obtained the baptism of my direct ancestor, his daughter Ann, I searched for and copied the baptisms of her siblings. I found an entry which is on the baptism details of John's last child Emma (who it appears he never knew) at Wooburn Bethel Chapel, Cores End on 26th July 1831 (*Ref 2*). John (now transported for machine breaking) is entered as father, formerly of Northern Woods. Almost simultaneously, whilst searching for a possible death for John, I found an entry on the internet of a John Dandridge being transported for machine breaking.

Based on these discoveries I did a little research, and in a book called 'Buckinghamshire Machine Breakers, The Story of the 1830 Riots' by Jill Chambers, I found transcripts of various documents proving that the 'John' who was transported was indeed the man I had been looking for. On the transcript of his Proteus Convict Indent (*Appendix 2*) it is written that in his native place, John's trade or calling was that of farm labourer and papermaker, Susannah's trade was lace-maker and his brother William was a shoemaker, but there is no occupation given for his father. John's religion is given as Protestant. The machine breaking riots were popularly known as the 'Swing Riots', the riots were primarily directed at destroying machinery which was taking work away from the already starving agricultural labourers, but also led to the destruction of paper making machinery.

As I became interested in the swing riots and the events which led up to them, I was encouraged to research more. I was also very interested to know the possible reasons for John becoming embroiled in the riots, and which led me to look in more detail at John's occupation of papermaker. The term 'agricultural labourer' appears with regular monotony whilst carrying out family history research and John was the first papermaker that I had encountered in the family plus the process of making paper intrigued me (see Chapter 1, Paper Making).

I decided to visit Wooburn, knowing that from both his daughter Emma's baptism, and a settlement order in 1856 for his daughter Susan, John's home at the time of his misdemeanour was definitely in Northern Woods. The same order also confirms John's transportation (*Fig 1*).

Northern Woods
 Susan the daughter
 born in a cottage
 Northern Woods 23rd
 Sept 1819 which was
 built by her father
 John Dandridge's
 death
 Cott original

And for that the said Susan M^{rs} Drowall is the
 lawful daughter of John Dandridge by Susannah
 his wife and was born on the Twenty Third day
 of September One thousand Eight hundred and Nineteen
 in a cottage which was built by the said John
 Dandridge and was situate at a place called
 Northern Woods in your said Parish of Woburn Bishops
 and has never either before her Marriage or since
 her said Husband's Decease done any act to acquire
 a legal settlement.

Woburn
 her father deeded
 his settlement from
 Woburn by reason of his
 Grandfather John Dandridge
 being the owner of a
 freehold estate at
 Northern Woods on
 part of which Estate
 his son Jacob built
 the cottage where his
 daughter Susan was
 born
 Cott original

And for that the said John Dandridge
 the said Father of the said Susan M^{rs} Drowall
 about Twenty Five years ago at the time of his
 being transported beyond seas for Machine Breaking
 had a derivative settlement in your said Parish
 of Woburn Bishops by reason of his Father John
 Dandridge being then and having been for several
 years prior to the Emancipation of the said John
 Dandridge the Owner of a Freehold Estate situate
 at Northern Woods aforesaid in your said Parish
 of Woburn Bishops (on part of which Estate the
 said John Dandridge built the cottage wherein
 his said daughter Susan M^{rs} Drowall was born)
 and for several years before the Emancipation of his said son
 having resided on his said Freehold Estate in your said
 Parish of Woburn Bishops.

And Take Notice, That unless Notice of Appeal against the said Order be received by us
 within Twenty-one Days from the sending hereof, or (in case of your application for a Copy of the
 Depositions on which such Order has been made) within a further period of Fourteen Days after
 the sending of such Copy, the said Pauper will be removed to your said Parish of Woburn
Bishops in pursuance of the said Order, and no Appeal
 against such Order shall afterwards be allowed.

Given under our Hands this Third Day of June
 in the Year of our Lord One thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Six.

M. P. Higham
 Robert Miles
 Joseph Tebbel
 Alfred Full

The Majority of the
 Churchwardens and Overseers
 of the Poor of the
 said Parish of Saint Paul,
 Deptford.

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Fig1 Extract from settlement/removal order of Susan Dandridge (Appendix 5)

On my visit to Wooburn I discovered that the nearest mill to where John lived would have been the Glory Mill, which had been pulled down. However, I found a good book on the subject by Alan Mead entitled 'Days of Glory'. The map in Fig 2 is taken from his book, and shows the mills which had existed on the River Wye, only three of which were near to where John lived; the Clapton, the Glory and the Lower Glory.

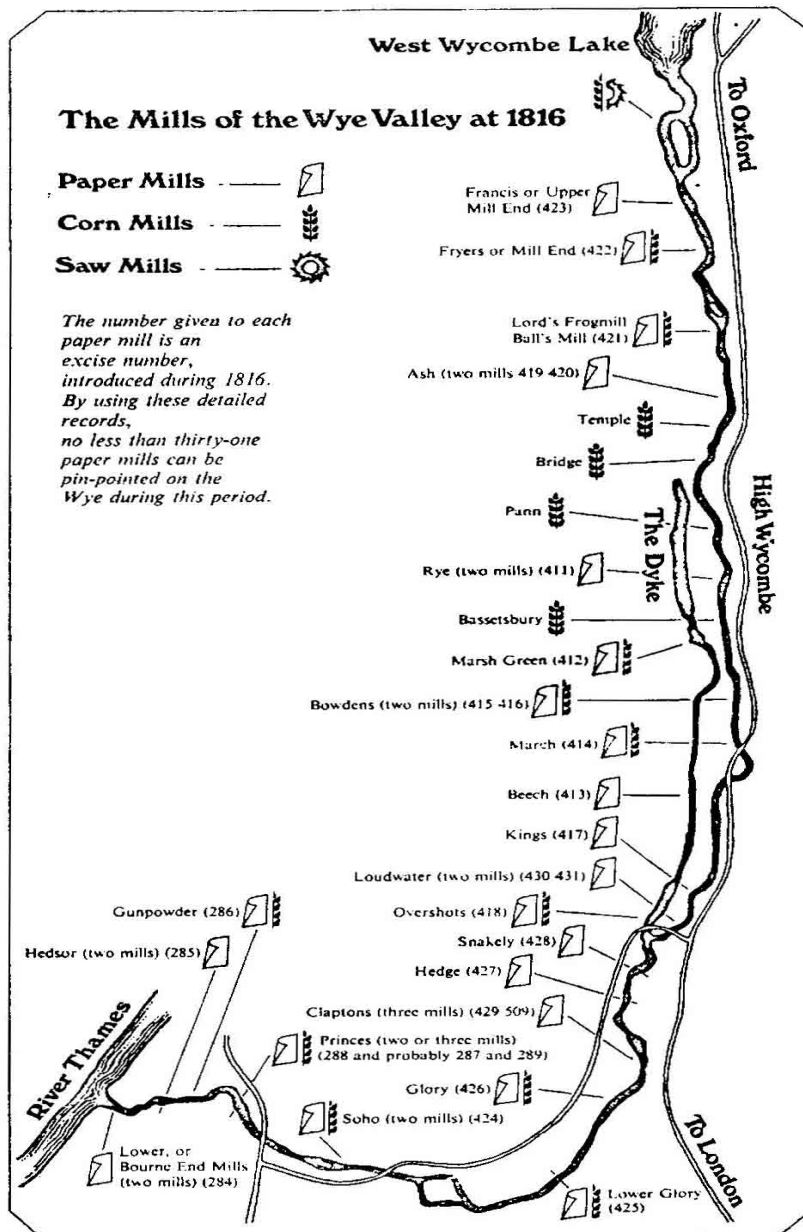
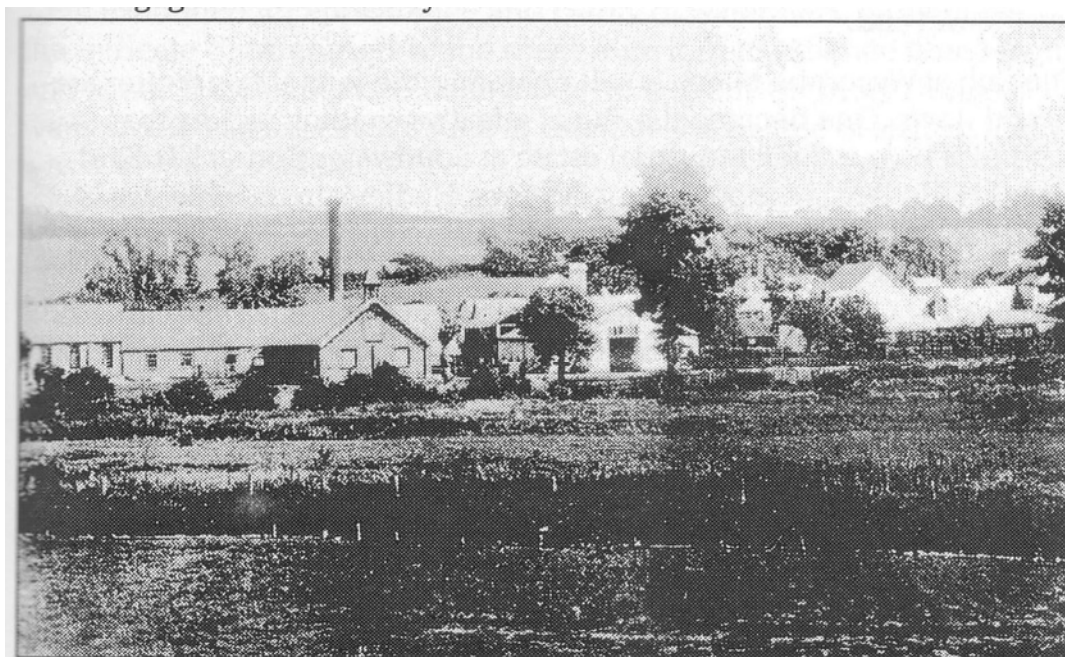


Fig 2 Map of the mills of the Wye Valley

It is very likely that John worked at the Glory Mill (*Fig 3*) on the production of hand made paper from rags. I have since spoken to Alan Mead who agrees on this, and confirmed that it was common practise for agricultural workers to supplement their income in the winter months by working at the mills. In fact some mills were built specifically to utilise the availability of agricultural workers.



Glory Mill in the late nineteenth century, before the 1898 fire

Fig 3 The Glory Mill

Chapter 1

Paper Making

Before the introduction of machinery to make paper it was a very skilled, labour intensive process, so it would seem unlikely that an agricultural worker would be sufficiently qualified to do anything other than the menial, and relatively simple, parts of the process. Alan Mead, however, said that was not always the case; the Cox family mentioned in his book were both agricultural workers and skilled papermakers.

Paper is made from fibres of a vegetable compound called cellulose. This can be obtained in various purities from different plants. Cotton and linen contain very pure cellulose, and in the early days of papermaking were the main source of cellulose until demand outstripped supply and wood pulps were brought in. The rags used to make the fibres were usually bought in from rag merchants, which is an occupation given by another of my Buckinghamshire ancestors.

In the years after John's transportation, two of his sons, James and Absolom, moved to Greenwich and formed a business (J & A Dandridge) which was very successful, and traded mainly in the rag trade until the 1970's. Many of my Sexton ancestors worked for this business and initially moved from Wooburn to Greenwich to do so. A surviving descendant, Stuart Dandridge, tells me his mother used to get quite embarrassed at dinner parties when asked what her husband did for a living! The company supplied materials to the Bank of England for the manufacture of banknotes, including white £5 notes.

The best rags to use for good white paper were clean, white cotton sheets and bedding and cuttings from Lancashire's cotton mills, rags from net curtains would be next in quality, followed by other inferior materials. The rags were stored in a large warehouse called the 'raghouse', and it was here that women and girls sorted the rags (*Fig 4*) by removing foreign objects prior to processing the rags into cotton pulp. Apparently the workers were rather prone to catching fleas!

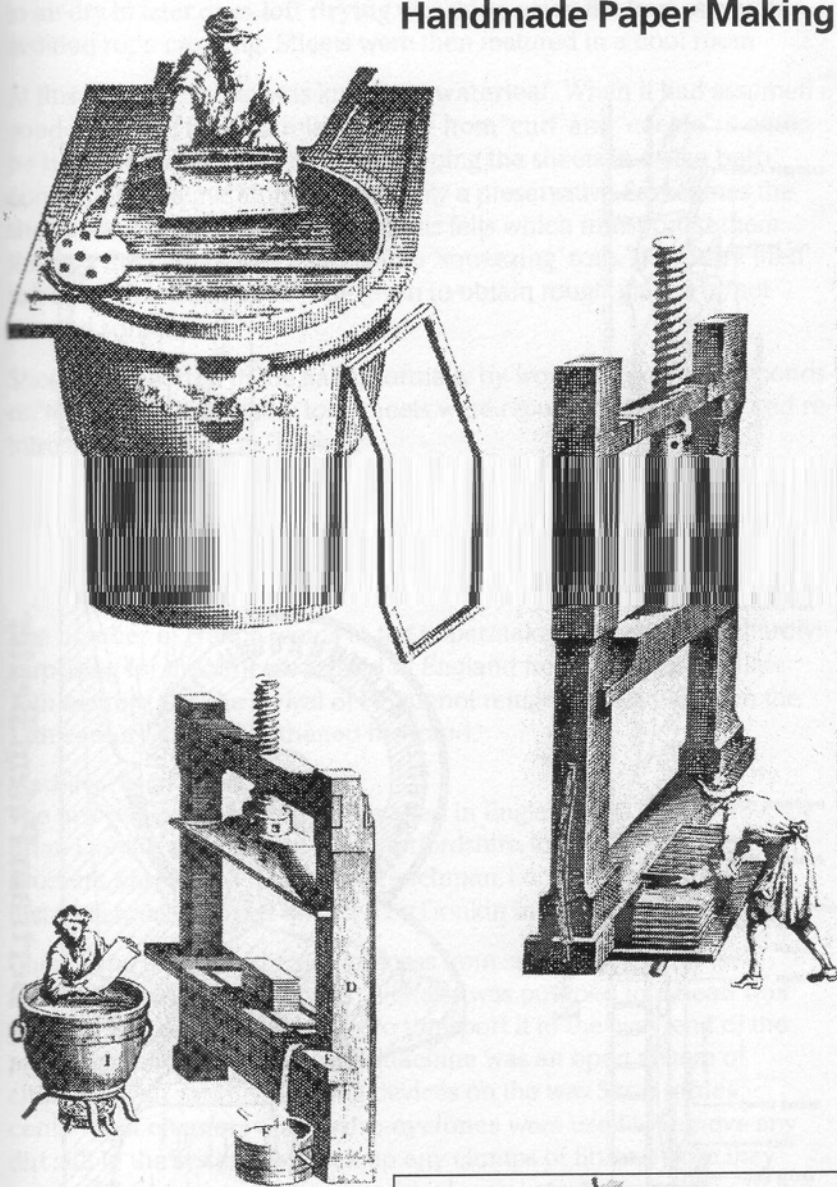


Fig 4 Raghouse Girls

After sorting and being put through a rag duster (a large old fashioned device in which the rags floated as they fell through allowing dust to separate). The rags were cut into small pieces and boiled with soda and other additives whilst rotated slowly to remove non-cellulose substances; they were then drained and washed in hot water. The rags were then placed in rag breakers or 'potchers' and circulated in water whilst adjustable metal bars in a revolving metal plate above, pushed against a similar fixed plate below, which disintegrated them into fibres (a bit like milling flour). This produced the 'half stuff', or rag pulp which was beaten and refined into 'stuff', with additives like dye and fillers mixed in, producing the basic stock from which paper was made. The pulp was suspended in water and the 'vatman' or papermaker used a mould, made of two parts, containing wire mesh to stop the fibres floating away. The upper part, the 'deckle', was placed over the first, and the papermaker would skilfully shake the frame as he removed it to evenly distribute the fibres. This was passed to the 'coucher' whose job was to invert the mould onto a felt mat. By repeating the process a pile of paper sheets, interleaved with felt, was built up to 18 inches high and known as a post. This was then pressed to remove water, and a third person known as a 'layer' was then able to remove the individual sheets and hang them on ropes to dry in a drying loft. The sheets were then matured in a cooling room. The paper was now known as waterleaf, and when relatively flat was put through a size bath containing gelatine, alum and preservative to produce the paper, which was finally sorted by women into good seconds for re-processing. Fig 5 illustrates a part of the process.

I get the impression it was difficult and tiring work, and am of the mind that John probably would have been more likely to be one of the lower order workers doing the hard physical part of the job, thus assisting the full-time papermakers. However, this would contradict his being recorded as a papermaker on his convict indent and take away one of his possible reasons for joining in the machine riots. The pulping machinery was water driven, but the process of making paper was by hand. It was not until 1850 that the Glory Mill introduced a machine to do that part of the process, thus taking work away from the papermakers. However, other mills had machinery prior to that date and were attacked for that reason as part of the machine riots. Certainly the introduction of the Fourdrinier machine, which made paper as one continuous roll rather than a sheet at a time, drastically affected the amount of labour needed to produce paper.

Handmade Paper Making



*Model of early paper machine
(Science Museum)*

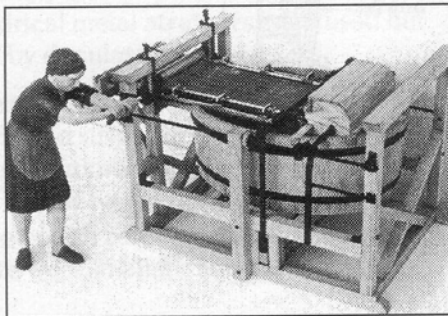


Fig 5

Chapter 2

Arrested

In 1825 John is entered in the Buckinghamshire trial book (*Ref 3*) as having been found guilty of larceny, for which he was whipped. However, this didn't seem to dissuade him though from becoming involved in the Swing riots (*Ref 4, Appendix 7*).

In 1830, when he was 45 years old, John had been arrested and charged on oath of others that “on the 29th November 1830 he was at or near the mill of William Robert Davis, papermaker of Chepping Wycombe, being feloniously present, aiding, abetting and assisting divers other persons, to feloniously and unlawfully destroy certain machinery used in the manufacture of paper in the said mill” (*see Appendix 3 and 7 – Calendar of Prisoners, 10th January 1831*).

Taken from extracts from the Times, 13th January 1831 (*Appendix 4*), at his trial on 12th January 1831 at Aylesbury special commission, John Nash constable of Wooburn Parish was examined by the prosecutor, Mr Munro, and stated “I was at Mr Davis’ on the day laid in the indictment and I saw John Dandridge. The mob had left the mill at the time. The prisoner was standing with a hammer behind his back. The mob was about 150 yards from the mill, the prisoner 200 yards, 50 in advance of the mob. I took him into custody”; John it seems was a little ahead of himself!!

When looking from an historical point of view, both of his occupations as agricultural labourer and papermaker are enough to identify reasons behind why John would have joined in the riots, the main cause being the machinery taking away work he could have done, but other information contained in a settlement order of 1856 for his daughter Susan (*Appendix 5*) shows that John may not have been in as bad a financial position as many of the poor people caught up in the 1830 Swing Riots. In fact, the order shows that he possibly owned property, or at the very least lived on freehold property owned by his father and having constructed a house there himself.

From maps of the area, which show Northern Woods (*Appendix 6*), it appears that the property in question wasn't that large, so possibly John worked on the farm and supplemented his income with work at the paper mills. However, the property issue raises the question as to why John became involved in the riots, especially as after his transportation his family became dependant on parish poor relief, indicating there may not have been that much money, or possibly that John had a rift with his father. But it is also likely that he was sympathetic to the plight of the average agricultural labourer or mill worker and so joined in the riots as a political gesture.

Chapter 3

Historical Background

In the rural areas of England lack of employment seems to have always been a problem. In 1811 a group formed, supposedly led by a mysterious 'king' Ned Ludd of Sherwood Forest. They were agitated by the introduction of machinery which led to increased unemployment and falling wages; mainly in the cloth mills of the Midlands. In 1811 the 'Luddites' destroyed over a thousand machines during the riots, and despite the government transporting a number of people in 1812 the unrest continued. In 1813 fourteen Luddites were hanged, with many more being transported and although this quietened things a little, riots were still continuing up to 1817.

The lack of employment seems to have increased dramatically in the years leading up to 1830. There was variation between counties, the worst affected counties, where pauperism was high, was mainly in the South of England. There also appears to be a definite link to the Enclosure Act, where land was redistributed among the wealthy farmers and landowners, and which affected the living standards of a high number of agricultural workers, especially in the fact that they no longer had access to common land on which to grow food to supplement their diet.

The problem of pauperism appears to have been at its worst in the counties of Sussex, Hampshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Devon, Dorset, Huntingdonshire, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Kent where enclosure had taken place on a grand scale. The economic historian, Sir John Clapham, commented that "the coincidence of the area in which wages were most systematically augmented from the rates with the area of maximum enclosure is striking."

It is also documented that between 1815 and 1820 poor law relief was on average 12/10d per person. By 1830 this had reduced to 9/9d. By making the poor law a deterrent people stopped claiming relief, but the effect was that in the same period rural crime increased dramatically, mainly the theft of food or poaching. All of these things added to the growing unrest in the poorer counties.

In 1830 there was a tiered system in place in the southern areas of England, with land owners at the top, the tenant farmers beneath them, and at the bottom the labourers. The labourers rarely had regular work, being paid a daily or weekly wage by the farmers, with most of their work dependant on the seasons. In between they had to fend for themselves, many relying on Parish relief. The amount of work available correlated directly to the harvest period.

The rent paid by the tenant farmers was a fixed yearly amount, which was usually raised by the landlord if the yearly harvest was good. However, if the harvest was poor, the rent was never decreased accordingly. In poor years the farmers needed to reduce costs and so cut the labourer's wages, or introduced machinery as labour saving devices. Again, adding to the misery of these poor people who were in a desperate situation, with many suffering hardship and hunger.

1827 the harvest was good.

1828 the summer was good, but the harvest poor.

1829 an even worse harvest, with snow in October, leading to a very bad year for labourers, high unemployment, hunger, crime on the increase and extremely cold weather.

1830 another poor harvest.

At the same time, locally there was movement to make the poor law harsher, with general unemployment on the increase and rent for homes being increased. Living conditions were poor. The introduction of labour-saving machinery was increasing rapidly.

By 1830 many were doomed to poverty; starvation was imminent for the labourers and their families. William Cobbett had toured southern England on horseback, reporting on the cultivation, the level of the standard of living of labourers and the changes in traditional rural practices. He claimed that new money and urban styles were upsetting the placid and stable rural economy (*Ref 6*).

Generally it is accepted that these were the triggers which caused the agricultural labourers to rise up in revolt in an effort to improve the lives of themselves and their families. So began what is known as the greatest wave of protest machine breaking in English history, affecting the counties of Sussex, Hampshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Devon, Dorset, Huntingdonshire, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Kent. These were to become known as the 'Swing Counties'.

The term 'Swing' is said to have been taken from that part of the flail used by the labourers to thresh the grain; a usual winter job for the poor labourer and which was being lost due to the rapid introduction of machines which did the job faster and more efficiently. It was this term which was used to name the mythical 'Captain Swing' leader of the 'Swing Riots'.

The following is taken from an account of village life in the period 1838–1840, after the swing riots of 1830 and is indicative of attitudes of that decade.



Because my father had refused to sign for "[a small loaf and a dear one](#)", he could not get any work whatever for eighteen weeks. He tried hard to get a job, but it was useless; he was a marked man, and we should have starved if my mother had not kept us all by her laundry work.

It was a terrible winter... There was corn enough for everybody - that was the hard, cruel part of it - but those who owned it would not sell it when it was so sorely needed. They kept it back, they locked it up; and all the time the folk were crying out in their extremity for bread, - crying out to men who hardened their hearts and turned deaf ears to the hungry cries of their starving fellow creatures. To make as much money as they could by letting corn rise to famine prices, was all the owners of it cared about. "Make money at any price" was their motto. They belonged to the class of men who always try to turn to their own profit the miseries, the misfortunes, and the helplessness of their poorer neighbours. They grew fat at the expense of their fellows. Those who ruled in high places, and had the makings of the laws in their hands, were chiefly rich landowners and successful traders, and instead of trying to raise the people, create a higher standard of comfort and well-being, and better their general condition they did their best - or worst - to keep them in a state of poverty and serfdom, of dependence and wretchedness. Those who owned and held the land believed, and acted up to their belief as far as they were able, that the land belonged to the rich man only, that the poor man had no part or lot in it, and had no sort of claim on society. If the poor man dared to marry and have children they thought he had no *right* to claim the necessary food wherewith to keep himself and his family alive. They thought, too, every mother's son of them, that, when a labourer could no longer work, he had lost the right to live. Work was all they wanted from him; he was to work and hold his tongue, year in and year out, early and late, and if he could not work, why, what was the use of him? It was what he was made for, to labour and toil for his betters, without complaint on a starvation wage. When no more work could be squeezed out of him, he was no better than a cumberer of other folks' ground, and the proper place for such as he was the churchyard, where he would be sure to lie quiet under a few feet of earth, and want neither food nor wages any more. A quick death and a cheap burying - that was the motto of those extortioners for the poor man past work..

The Life of Joseph Arch by himself (*Ref 5*)

Chapter 4

The Swing Riots

The first of the riots began in June 1830 in Kent, with many fires being reported. By August, this had led to many instances of machine breaking, and throughout October and November there were many wages meetings, with organisation taking place at local level and ‘captains’ being chosen from within the community. The men were demanding higher wages and lower tithes, and some of the meetings lead to cases of rioting and breaking. The riots in Kent lasted longer than anywhere else, with over 100 machines being destroyed by October.

These disturbances were in definite stages, and took several forms, essentially non-violent, but threatening. Low level violence did occur when farmers tried to prevent destruction of their machinery. The main forms of disturbance were to first send a threatening letter, usually signed by the mythical ‘Captain Swing’, after which haystacks and barns were fired. Attacks were also made on workhouses and machines were destroyed. In some cases the men also demanded money or food.

The contagious aspect of the riots alarmed the authorities who were at first slow to react, leaving local magistrates to deal with the problem. But the disturbances spread rapidly from county to county, taking less than a week to reach Wiltshire from Sussex. In some counties, including Norfolk, and particularly Buckinghamshire where John Dandridge lived, the riots were directed not only at agricultural equipment, but also paper making mills which had their machinery destroyed. By August 1830 Lord Melbourne took office, the yeomanry were mobilised, and special constables were sworn in. The land owners also organised forces of their own to protect their property. By December 1830 nearly 200 people were arrested and awaiting trial.

The government then decided that the magistrates in Kent had been too lenient on the earlier rioters, the sentences not being tough enough to deter others following their example. They set up a special commission to deal with what were considered the worst affected counties, these were Hampshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Dorset; all the other counties were still being dealt with at local assizes or quarter sessions.

The mobilisation of the yeomanry has an element of special interest in this story, in that while my ancestor John Francis Dandridge was involved in the machine breaking side of the riots, another ancestor, William Shackel, brother of a direct ancestor, was on the opposite side of the fence, he being a member of the yeomanry most likely responsible for rounding up rioters in Berkshire, which seems to have led to a later attack on ricks and property at his own farm. The following illustration and notes depict William and his position in the community.



Brief Description: Watercolour entitled 'Mr Shackle' (a gentleman farmer from Earley, Reading) by A R Burt, January 1832

Subject Date: January 1840

Creator: Albin Robert Burt

Fig 6 Mr Shackle, gentleman farmer (*Ref 7*)

This splendid watercolour portrait shows a prosperous farmer from Earley, at that point a hamlet and quite separate from the town of Reading. He looks wealthy and well-fed – a living representation of John Bull!

Such a figure would have regularly travelled into nearby Reading to sell his produce in the market, and on Michaelmas day, to hire farm workers for the coming year. The 1830s were, however, a period of poverty and desperation for most agricultural workers in the area around Reading. The 'Captain Swing' riots of the 1830s reflected this underlying insecurity. When the riots spread to Berkshire, dragoons were dispatched to Reading from Windsor to deal with the rioters, with many being arrested. Probably Mr Shackle would have belonged to the local yeomanry which joined with the dragoons to seek out trouble-makers.

Buckinghamshire Rioters

The following is reproduced from a short book by L John Mayes SLA, once librarian at Wycombe. Although never published, John's work was included in its entirety in a book "300 Years in Paper", privately published by G T Mandl 1985.

"They assembled at five o'clock on Monday morning, November 29th, 1830, gathering at Flackwell Heath where one of their leaders lived and marched off through Loudwater and Wycombe to the highest mill on the stream to be mechanised, Ash, just inside the parish boundary. They carried, quite openly, sledge hammers, crow bars and the like and made no secret of their intentions, which were to smash the machines, no more and no less. Violence would be avoided as would be any other form of damage, after all, they wanted the mills to remain as going concerns, but as vat and not machine mills, and the less offence they gave to their old employers, the better chance they had of getting their jobs back. Well aware of this the local authority had taken certain steps, including raising a force of some fifty special constables, many of whom seem, at any rate at the beginning of the affair, to have had a lot of sympathy for the machine breakers. Not all were well disposed though, and at this very first mill, Ash, the men received a terrible test of their pacific intentions. A special constable, not a paper man but, reputedly, a butcher, got up on the main beam above the mill gates and as the men surged through to get at the machine, he poured four gallons of the sulphuric acid used in rag preparation over their heads. The burns and agony can be imagined and it says much for their determination that though they caught him, they contented themselves with ducking him in the mill stream where those who had caught the worst of the acid had rushed to wash themselves. They duly smashed up the machinery at Ash and marched through the town to the next on their list, Marsh Green Mill.

On their way through the town they were joined by great numbers of hangers on, ostensibly sympathisers, but in many cases merely opportunists who indulged in looting from the shops which had not taken the precaution of boarding up their windows. At Marsh Green the master, and we shall hear more of him, was a young man named Zachary Allnutt. He begged them to spare his machine, but they wrecked it without any further incident; except that a local justice of the peace, the Rev. Vincent Price, arrived and read out that part of the Riot Act which calls on all people unlawfully assembled to depart peaceably to their houses. They carried on past the hand mills to just about the most important mill in the district, Marsh mill. The master, John Hay, had already partly dismantled his machine and he came to the gates to try and reason with the men. He promised that the machine would not be worked again until a compromise had been worked out. He pointed out that by wrecking his machine they would certainly hurt his purse, but would hurt even worse the labour force of fifty three men, women and children employed at the mill. They heard him out, for he seems to have been a good employer, but still they breached the doors and smashed his machine. Opposition in this case came from the workers in the mill and one of them did a lot of damage with a red hot poker, while another thrust a red hot iron rod through the keyhole of the lock and put out the eye of a man who was trying to force it open. At this point the men made a small detour. Apparently they had agreed among themselves to make one small addition to their declared programme, for nearby was the main farm of a wealthy local land owner who had been very much in the fore in declaring that if any mob came anywhere near his place they would regret it. The small detour was simply to smash one of his farm machines, presumably just to 'learn 'im'.

From the farm, the mob, for so they were now being called, adjourned to a local inn where they regaled themselves with beer and food, and since by now they numbered something like five hundred it must have been big business for the landlord who most probably had more than an idea of their coming and stocked up accordingly. After this break for refreshments they went on to Loudwater Mill where Mr Plaistowe met them and, like Mr Hay, tried to reason with them- he too had partly dismantled his machine and promised not to restart it until negotiations had been held and a suitable compromise agreed. Again, as in the case at Marsh, the men heard him out but went on with the wrecking but, by now, in the face of stiffening opposition. The High Sheriff of Bucks, Colonel Vyse, had come on the scene accompanied by a number of the local gentry, some on horse, some a foot, and he tried to use his 'troops' to arrest some of the men. Stones began to fly and the Colonel was soon bleeding from face wounds, while one of his mounted men, armed with a sword, tried a sort of one man cutting out expedition to arrest the ringleaders. He was repulsed and in making his escape, he knocked down two of the many women who had followed the paper men all day. He was pulled from his horse and roughly handled but was finally allowed to remount and make his escape.

Snakeley Mill was next on the list and here the situation was different. Even the mechanised mills were not finding business too satisfactory and this mill had been idle for some time, following the bankruptcy of its occupant. The owner of the mill met the men and explained the situation to them, the machine was not working and could not work until a new tenant had been found, and he promised that even then discussions would be held with the workers before it was restarted. Once again, the reasoning was in vain and the smashing started. By now the forces of law and order had been much augmented- there were the original specials, Colonel Vyse and his "local gentry", a few soldiers from Windsor Barracks, and now came re-enforcements in a form which I should hesitate to introduce in a work of fiction, but in a factual account, fact it is. Over the local hill came riding the gentlemen members of the Royal Stag Hounds. Probably the writer of the original story was aware that it sounded unlikely for he gives a wealth of detail, even to describing the tame stag which was regularly brought out to be hunted, and honour satisfied, was returned to his comfortable quarters to await his next outing. What happened was that the members promptly abandoned the chase and offered their services to Colonel Vyse as a cavalry detachment, and, with his forces so augmented, a serious onslaught on the machine breakers was made and many of them rounded up and finally taken to Aylesbury Gaol to await trial. The 'riot' was over, and possibly it was just as well for all concerned, for the papers of the period had a very circumstantial account of the preparations at the next mill on the list, Claptons, where the master had a sizeable cannon charged with nails and scrap iron trained on the mill gates, and expressed his complete determination to fire it if any attempt was made on his machinery."

SPECIAL COMMISSION.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

AYLESBURY, WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12.

*(Before Mr. Justice PARK, Mr. Baron BOLLAND, and
Mr Justice PATTESON).*

DESTRUCTION OF A PAPER-MILL.

Thomas Blizzard, John Moody, Joseph Briant, John Crutch, William Hancock, Samuel Summerfield, William Walker, Arthur Wright, Edmund Barton, William Butler, John Sarney, James Barton, Robert Carey, John Dandridge, John East, Thomas Fisher, William Knibbs, Joseph Priest, John Reynolds, Arthur Selter, William Shrimpton, James Stone, Henry Walker, and Richard Weedon, were placed at the bar, indicted for having, on the 29th of November last, unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously assembled together, to the disturbance of the public peace, at the mill of Mr. William Robert Davis, at Chipping Wycombe, and with feloniously destroying certain machinery used in the manufacture of paper in the said mills.

All the prisoners are young men or boys, with the exception of Shrimpton, who appears upwards of 60, and Sarney, who is also advanced in life. The latter has been the keeper of a beer-shop.

Times Newspaper January 13th 1831 (Ref 8, Appendix 4)

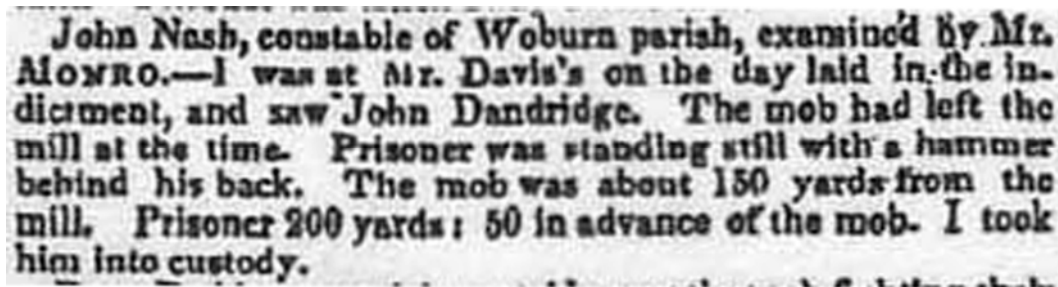
John Dandridge was among many men arrested during the riots in Buckinghamshire. A special assize was convened at Aylesbury on the 10th January 1831 to deal with the cases of those men arrested. On day three, the 12th January, court was convened and among the prisoners placed at the bar were five who had been tried the previous day, including Thomas Blizzard and John Sarney, who were acknowledged as being ringleaders in the disturbances and identified as breaking the machines in evidence given. Present among the others were Joseph Briant, whose family had links with the Dandridge family, and John Dandridge, my ancestor, who was apprehended the 29th November 1830 and committed on the 1st December 1830.

The prisoners were charged with “having unlawfully, riotously and tumultuously assembled at the paper mill of Mr William Robert Davis and having destroyed machinery at the mill”. Mr Gurney stated the case to the jury, and observed “it is an awful spectacle to behold so large a number of persons standing at the bar charged with a capital offence”.

The previous day the jury had heard a narrative of the events that occurred the 29th October, it was now their duty to listen to some of the events in support of the transgressions. The evidence was lengthy and many men were identified in having carried out particular acts, among them Thomas Salter, first to enter the mill, and Blizzard and Mooney, who broke the cylinder drying frames. Joseph Briant broke the large wheels and other various parts of the machinery.

Evidence was given of a mob of upward of 200 persons, armed with various implements, to whom the riot act was read, and which they ignored as they pressed on to the mill. A Magistrate, a Mr Sullivan, stated that as he and others tried to defend the mill concerned, they were attacked with bricks, bats, stones, hammers and other implements.

Under examination by Mr Munro, John Nash, constable of Wooburn, gave the following evidence, which was enough to condemn John.



John Nash, constable of Wooburn parish, examined by Mr. Munro.—I was at Mr. Davis's on the day laid in the indictment, and saw John Dandridge. The mob had left the mill at the time. Prisoner was standing still with a hammer behind his back. The mob was about 150 yards from the mill. Prisoner 200 yards: 50 in advance of the mob. I took him into custody.

Times Newspaper Extract 13th January 1831 (*Ref 8, Appendix 4*)

I am reliably informed by a magistrate, that by today's standards this evidence would not be sufficient in its own right, especially in that no other evidence was given to prove that John or others were present in the mill, or took part in the machine breaking, which is the basis of having committed a capital offence.

At the end of the trial, Mr Justice Parks stated "I will except Carey and Slater, but I will leave the cases of the other prisoners to the Jury". John, as already stated, was found guilty. The summing up of the case was printed in the Times Newspaper, as follows.

William Smith, William Shrimpton, John Walduck, David Lannon, James Mills, John Moody, Joseph Briant, John Crutch, William Hancock, Samuel Summerfield, William Walker, Arthur Wright, John Dandridge, William Nibbs, Joseph Priest, John Reynolds, and three others, were next placed at the bar. These prisoners had been convicted of destroying paper-machines.

Mr. Justice PARKS —It is a most painful consideration to see 19 of my own species placed at the bar of a court of justice, in all of whom the law itself has pronounced the sentence of death. In selecting you 19 out of those capital convictions on whom we do not mean to pronounce that sentence, it has been a matter of most deep and anxious consideration to us to see whether we could distinguish between your cases and that of others; at the same time, it was most dreadful to contemplate such an effusion of human blood and sacrifice of life taking place. We therefore determined to recommend you to His Majesty's royal consideration and mercy. The sentence of death will be recorded against you, instead of being formally passed, the meaning of which is, that your lives will certainly be spared, but on what terms, it is for His Majesty to determine, and not for us; yet, undoubtedly, severe punishments will be carried into execution against several of you. Public justice would not be satisfied without that being done, and the peace of the country, and the protection of the property of peaceable individuals require it. I therefore hope and trust that you will be grateful for your lives being spared, and that in whatever situation you may hereafter be placed, whether part or the whole of your lives shall be spent in another country, you will conduct yourselves as honest industrious persons, and endeavour to secure your own peace of mind and the mercy of God, which will render you worthy of his acceptance whenever it may please him to call you from this world.

The learned Judge then ordered sentence of death to be severally recorded against the prisoners.

Summing up of the case, Times 17th January 1831 (*Ref 8, Appendix 4*)

As can be seen, the sentence of death was recorded against John. This is shown in the special commission criminal register entry HO27/41 (*Appendix 7*).

Fortunately for John this wasn't really the end, as having recorded the mandatory death verdict, Justice Park, co signed by other magistrates, wrote to the Kings Office on the 15th January 1831 offering favourable circumstances on behalf of the prisoners of whom he had abstained from pronouncing the death sentence (*Ref 9, Appendix 8*). For some though, including Sarney and Blizzard there was no such hope of reprieve.

A poem was written, the sorrowful lamentations of Thomas Blizzard aged 30, and John Sarney aged 54, who were sentenced to die. At this period in history there was mass illiteracy, and ballads like this were used to arouse sympathy. The poem is reproduced below and appears to have had the desired effect, as both were reprieved at the last minute.

The Ballad of Sarney and Blizzard

*You must the feeling heart deplore,
This sad and awful time,
When want misleads the Labouring Poor,
To misery and to crime;
And now upon the fatal drop,
To meet the public eye,
Two poor men in a healthful state,
Must a sad example die.*

*Thomas Blizzard is one of these men,
His age is thirty years,
He has a tender loving wife,
And three small children dear;
John Sarney is the other man,
His age is fifty-four,
He has six children and a wife,
His case for to deplore.*

*To see their loving wives and friends,
Come to these wretched men,
Such a horrid sight, I hope that we,
May never, never see again;
I hope this will a warning be,
To all and every one,
And never throw themselves away,
By visiting unlawful bands.*

*In Aylesbury dark Condemned Cell,
These wretched men do lay,
Awaiting for the mournful knell,
To summons them both away;
May God in mercy have their souls,
By penitence made pure,
And yet with comfort cheer the hearts
Of the Industrious Poor.*

*Hark! 'tis the dreary midnight bell,
That breaks the gloom profound,
It seems to toll our funeral knell,
How dismal is the sound;*

*A few short hours and we must stand
Exposed to shame and scorn;
Ah, sad and luckless was the day,
When these poor men were born.*

*That awful hour will shortly come,
The time is drawing near,
When we must meet our fateful doom;
And on the drop appear,
And let religion be our guide,
In God put all your trust,
That after this you may reside,
In the regions of the just.*

*O what our friends they now must feel,
To think upon our doom,
That we are sentenced for to fill,
A sad untimely tomb.
They wring their hands in grief,
And send to heaven a prayer,
That he would kindly give relief,
And ease them of their care.*

*So all young men a warning take,
By your untimely end,
And may your conscience now awake,
Your evil ways amend.
Before the judge the sentence passed
My kindred near stood by,
'twod melt a heart of stone to hear,
How bitter they did cry.*

*Ah little did our parents think,
Who nurs'd on their knees,
That we should meet our awful doom,
Upon the gallows tree.
But now our youthful years are fled,
And they are pass'd and gone,
And O what bitter tears we shed,
To be thus snatch'd away.*

*We hope no person will reflect,
On those we leave behind,
Our family's quite innocent
Of this our wicked crime.
We hope you will a warning take
All you who come to see,
These most wretched men,
Hanging on the tree.*

This poem has been reproduced from "300 Years in Papermaking" published by G Mayes. The original author of the poem was anonymous.

On the 18th January 1831 the King's Office replied to the Justices of the Special Commission. Lord Melbourne, on behalf of the King, wrote that the King granted Royal mercy to those so recommended in the letter of the 15th January. Conditions were imposed, for John this meant that he was to be transported for 7 years (*Ref 10, Appendix 9*). John was held in prison in Buckinghamshire whilst waiting for a transfer to Portsmouth, where hulks (decommissioned ships used as a temporary prison for convicts) were used to hold prisoners awaiting transportation. On the 22nd February 1831 he was admitted to a hulk, the York. The receipt to the York confirms John's crime and sentence (*Ref 11, *Appendix 10A*)



Fig 7 The hulk 'York' at Portsmouth

I also have John's transfer to the ship Proteus on the 12th April 1831, which carried 112 men to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), the journey taking between 111 and 126 days. (*Ref 12, Appendix 11*). Even before the ships had left England there were efforts made to free the men, although unfortunately, unsuccessful.

*All previous records, including Jill Chambers and extracts from the hulk York records, show John to have been placed on the York awaiting transportation. However, from the Ancestry website (Ancestry UK Prison Hulks and Letter Books HO9 Prob 9-9), which is identical to the record I have of the York indent, states that he was on a hulk called the 'Hardy'. Possibly he was moved from/to this ship, but the records I have are definitely from the York, therefore it's more likely an error on the part of the Ancestry website. This second record (*Appendix 10B*), appears to be a conduct record (stating 'Good'), and has an identical reference to the National Archive records for the York.

Proteus Convict Ship to Tasmania, 1831

The convict ship 'Proteus' sailed from Portsmouth on the 14th April 1831. On board were 112 male convicts, all but 13 of them had been convicted of machine breaking or associated crimes. The Master of the Proteus was Sylvester J Brown, and the Surgeon Superintendent was Thomas Logan. The Proteus arrived at Hobart Town on the 3rd August 1831 and all the convicts survived the voyage. Thomas Logan's journal of the voyage makes the following comments about the prisoners in his charge.

“Most of them are from the country, farm labourers, a few of them were artisans. Generally speaking they had the sturdy build of labouring men. Their awkwardness and stiffness were such that I became desirous of removing the embarrassment which their irons too evidently occasioned – not to speak of the danger of accidents to which they exposed them. They were accordingly all removed before leaving Portsmouth; nor did subsequent experience teach me that this act of consideration and beneficence had exceeded the limits of prudence.”

The above is reproduced from 'The Swing Riots of 1830-1831', by Jill Chambers. Thomas Logan's Journal can be found at The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office) ADM101/62/6.

The full list of men, including John, transported on the Proteus, and which gives the name, age, place and date of trial and sentences of those on board, is reproduced in Appendix 12 (*Ref 13*). Other online sources are available, including works by Geoffrey Bruce Sharman, which are extremely helpful.

The following is taken from an article found on the internet, in turn taken from a period publication in Hobart.

AUGUST 1831

3rd August – Van Diemen's Land – The convict ship, *Proteus*, arrived at Hobart Town today. All the convicts on board survived the voyage.

Sickness

During the voyage to Tasmania, on the 14th July 1831, John Dandridge reported to the ship's surgeon as suffering with haemorrhoids, and was removed from the list on the 17th as cured. The mind boggles as to what the cure was!

<i>Sick-book of Prisoners</i>					
<i>When put on the List</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Disease</i>	<i>When put off the List</i>	<i>How disposed of</i>
<i>14th June '31</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>John Dandridge</i>	<i>Haemorrhoids</i>	<i>17th July</i>	<i>Cured</i>

See Appendix 13 for the original (Ref 14)

Further documents

As well as the sick book entry above, there are several documents in existence which detail John's time in Tasmania, and his eventual pardon. The documents are listed below, with some extracts, and give a great deal of useful information. I have included copies in the appendices section. I am indebted to historian Geoffrey Bruce Sharman for sending them to me.

AOTAS CON 27/4: States John's name and details, signed by P Connoly (Ref 15, Appendix 2).

AOTAS CON 14/3: Prisoners indent on Proteus, of great more interest as it gives details of John's sentence, as well as naming his wife, father and brother (Ref 16, Appendix 14).

AOTAS CON 31/9 p52: Conduct record giving details of offence, behaviour after arrest and during gaol, and punishment received under Connoly for insolence to his master and refusing food. It also mentions free pardon 3 Feb 1836 (Ref 17, Appendix 15).

AOTAS CON 18/18: Of great interest in that it is a description of John (reproduced below).

✓

NAME, *Dandridge Jr. No.*

Trade *Farm Labr. & Paper Maker*

Height without shoes *5/5*

Age *45*

Complexion *Dark*

Head *Coar*

Hair *Dark to Grey*

Whiskers *Grey*

Visage *long*

Forehead *high & wrinkled*

Eyebrows *hard*

Eyes *grey*

Nose *long*

Mouth *wide*

Chin *mid length*

Remarks *None*

Moburn
Pricks

TNA CO283/7 p173: Hobart Gazette publication of free pardon (Ref 18, Appendix 16).

Conduct

As many transportees were generally of good character, and in many cases had useful skills, there was very quickly a system put in place to use them for productive work, and it was usual for convicts to be allocated to work for someone in the community when they arrived in the colonies. John was sent to work for the Rev P Connoly, a catholic minister, whom Geoffrey Sharman says was a drunkard who was known to be quite sadistic, as evident in John's conduct record when, after being whipped with a cat of nine tails, he is put on charge the following day for failure to get up for work! Generally John's conduct seems to have been good, but any slight step out of line was an excuse for punishment. AOTAS CON 27 was signed by a P Connoly:

Summary

From documentation of the period it seems that initial punishments for rioters were indeed lenient. In fact, many believed that as the riots were relatively non-violent that they would receive only small sentences. But the government were very keen to make an impression, and sentences were hard, with 7 or 14 years transportation being common, and for some the death sentence. Historians have since come to the conclusion that the government saw the sentencing of the men arrested as a convenient way of providing much needed workers to populate their new colonies overseas, and accordingly harsh sentences of transportation were meted out.

What is certain is that for many of the men transported it meant they would never see their families again, as even when eventually pardoned they were expected to find their own way home, and indeed some are documented as having done so, although many chose to stay on in the colonies. Some were lucky and managed to get their family from England out to them, but this was rare and many began new lives with new families. Possibly this is what John chose to do, as so far no evidence has been found of his return to England after he received his pardon, which was published in the Hobart Gazette on the 5th February 1836. What is definite, is that if he did return, he never lived with the family he left behind when transported, as I have detailed information on his family through to the present day. More likely he either chose to remain, or went elsewhere, something I am still trying to find information about.

Meanwhile in England, John's family were doing well, with two of John's sons, Absolom and James, moving to London whilst still boys, where documentation shows they began a business along the lines of what they were familiar with in Buckinghamshire, namely collecting rags for use in paper making. The business grew in strength, and soon they had moved their mother Susannah (who had had an extremely hard life) to live with them, along with most of their close family and members of my Sexton ancestors, who appear regularly in documentation associated with the Dandridge family. The business, J & A Dandridge, made them quite wealthy and survived into the 1970s, supplying among others, the Bank of England with materials for banknotes, and was eventually wound up by a descendant with whom I have contact.

A photograph of Susannah (*page 37*) is among the oldest I possess of family members, and I think her face shows the tough times she had, a good point at which to end this tale. As for my Sexton Ancestors, who were lucky enough to share in the Dandridge good fortune...well, that's another story!



Fig 8 Susannah Dandridge

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