

Dursley Emigrants to South Africa in 1820

by Ann Bailey

Foreword

In writing this essay I have used only public records from UK and from S. Africa in the Cape Archives and the Cory Library. The Cape Archives contain many memorials, which were the means by which the emigrants communicated with Government. It is not uncommon to find the same memorial, with slightly different details, in separate volumes. Inevitably, in many cases, the Settlers exaggerated distress or losses for pecuniary advantage. Land grants, when considered over the period of twenty-five years become complicated due to sales, exchanges, and recollections. In some cases deliberate deceit occurred and I have relied on the 1824 statement of Commissioner Hayward who was responsible for the original titles, and the Surveyor General's documents, recorded when there was a further registration of land in 1842.

Introduction

In 1819, as a response to economic unrest in England following the end of the Napoleonic war in 1815, the Government introduced a sponsored scheme of emigration to South Africa. Among the parties that emigrated were a group from Dursley and Cam lead by Samuel Harper Bradshaw, a weaver. The Cape had been acquired by the British as a result of the war, when, threatened by the French invasion of Holland, they displaced the Dutch to retain access to the important revictualling station of Cape Town for ships bound for India and the Far East. The Dutch had been in the Cape since the seventeenth century, and had expanded the area they controlled considerably. By the nineteenth century the expansion of Boer pastoralist farmers towards the east of the province had led to conflicts between them and African pastoralists who were moving southwards. Both groups were responsible for the decline and ultimately extinction of the indigenous population of the areas into which they expanded. Pastoralists need wide grazing areas for their cattle, with access to water and there were further problems as the Xhosa had a tradition of appropriating cattle when boundary disputes arose between tribes. The Colonial Government in a bid to stabilise the situation had defined a frontier between the Xhosa and the Europeans on the Great Fish River, but the boundary was not acceptable to the Xhosa, and it had become necessary to maintain a military presence at the eastern frontier. There were numerous skirmishes between the troops and Xhosa, and in 1818 the Xhosa mounted a full-scale attack on the military town of Grahamstown in which they suffered an appalling defeat with great loss of life. The garrison suffered only light casualties.

The Governor of the Cape at this time was Lord Charles Somerset, a son of the ninth Duke of Beaufort, and the Colonial Secretary was Lord Bathurst of Cirencester Park. Lord Charles had the problem that he had insufficient resources and troops to control the fighting that had become endemic at the Eastern Cape and Lord Bathurst had the problem that public opinion expected him to ensure that the colonies were self-sufficient, and not a drain on home resources. The solution proposed was to establish British agriculturalists in the area called Albany which would reduce the need for a large military presence, and also help with the problems of unemployment in the "mother country".

Their solution was to promote assisted emigration to the Eastern Frontier. In June 1819 a Select Committee on the poor laws heard evidence from William Burchell who had travelled widely at the Cape. Burchell was an enthusiastic protagonist for such a scheme, and gave the Committee a positive account of the area and its prospects; not all his observations were accurate, they included the suggestion that the Xhosa might be prepared to sell land. In July the House of Commons agreed to a grant of £50,000 for emigration to the Cape. The scheme proposed that persons could apply to take out a party consisting of at least ten able-bodied men over eighteen, with or without families. To ensure that the emigrants had means of subsistence on arrival at the Cape deposits were to be paid. These would be repaid when they reached the Cape. Deposits asked for were £10 for a family with two children under fourteen, extra children would incur a further deposit, and children between 14 and 18 would need a deposit of £5. The Government would provide a free passage with subsistence until arrival at the Cape. Additionally each family would be granted 100 acres of land in Albany. The Circular promulgating the offer also said that parishes with

surplus populations could select an intelligent individual to go to the Cape with Settlers under his direction. The intending Settlers had to accept that they would lose their right to poor relief should they return to England. It was this offer that encouraged Samuel Bradshaw, a weaver and a freeholder, to apply to take a party out under his supervision.

Pre-Embarkation

The scheme attracted an enormous number of applicants from the latter part of July onwards, no doubt attracted by the promise of 100 acres of land. The scheme was widely reported in provincial papers and the Gloucester Journal of July 26th carried news of the scheme. It was not until September 25th that Samuel Bradshaw wrote his initial letter to the Colonial Office. He commented *the parish of Cam are overburdened with poor and propose sending out at least ten able-bodied men above the age of eighteen, principally with large families.*¹ A list was submitted, but his application was rejected. He was not prepared to accept the refusal and enlisted the help of the Gloucester MP, Robert Bransby Cooper. Bransby Cooper had married the Dursley heiress Ann Purnell, and commanded the Dursley Volunteers. Bransby Cooper was politically allied to the Duke of Beaufort, and from Matson House he wrote a letter of support which resulted in the Bradshaw application being granted. By November 18th a deposit of £192 10s. 0d had been paid into the Colonial Office.²

The Head of Party had to submit a list of those he proposed should accompany him, and in common with most applications more than one list was presented as men agreed to go, and then withdrew. In all the lists submitted there were a significant number of weavers. Parish records show that the three King brothers who emigrated, and were described as labourers, had in fact been weavers.³ The list contained the name of Isaac Wiggall of Painswick, who was the only person not to come from Cam or Dursley. Wiggall had originally applied to join a party under Thomas Rowles when the latter, a Londoner, was recruiting in Stroud. Several of Rowles' original applicants withdrew their names, and he later recruited his party from London. Wiggall, a carpenter and a wheelwright paid his own deposit.⁴ Samuel Bradshaw had a brother Richard, also a weaver. While his name together with those of his family appeared on three lists his family never sailed. However Richard did accompany his brother to the Cape.

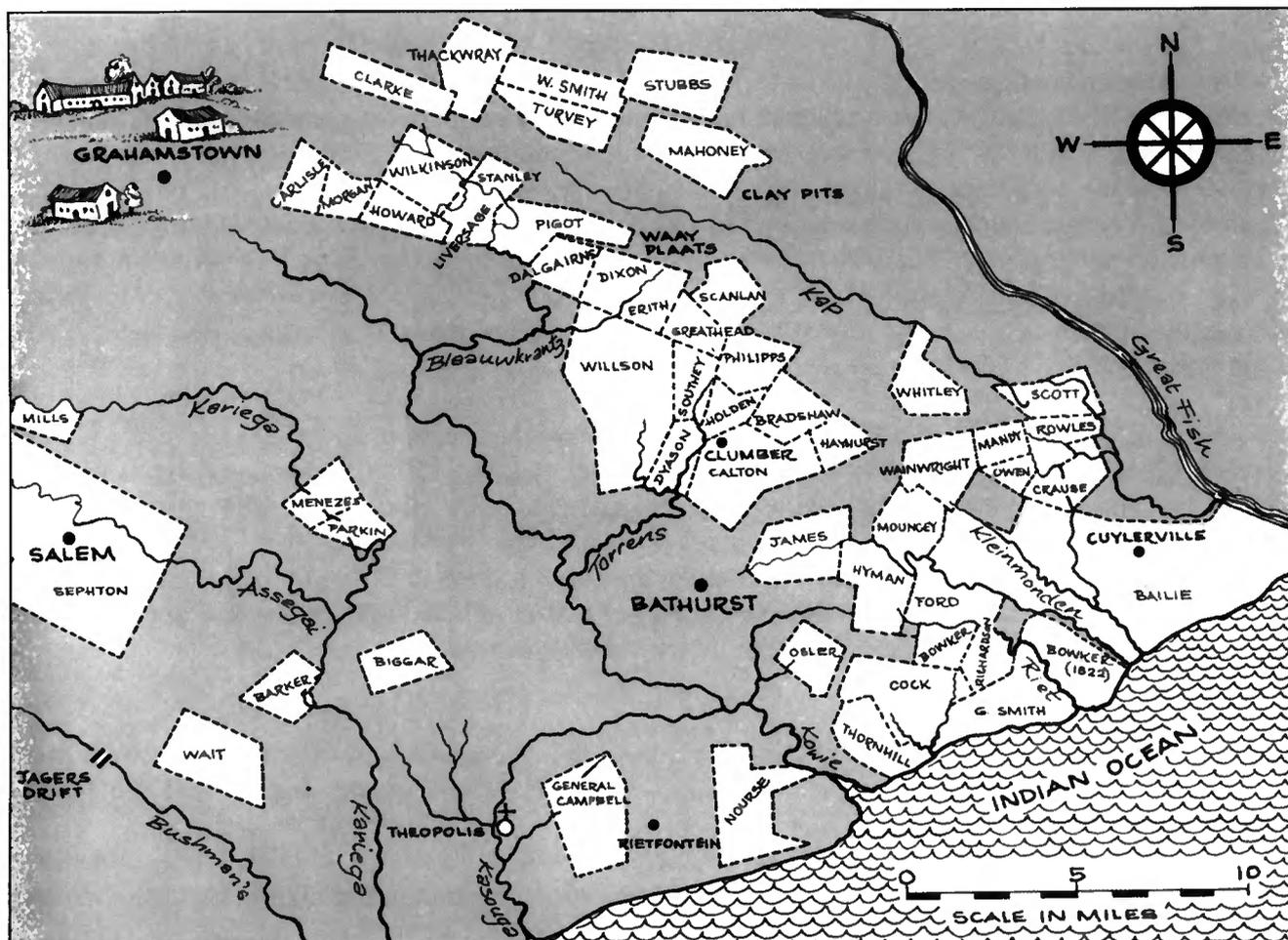
While the parishes undoubtedly paid some of the deposits and some of the expenses of embarkation it is unclear why eight of the fourteen male emigrants were under contract to yield fifteen acres of their allotted hundred acres to Samuel Bradshaw when they obtained title to the land on their location.⁵ Whether Samuel paid part of their deposit or whether the parish arranged the contract is not known. The Cam Overseers accounts list the expenses that they paid prior to embarkation; listed as for thirty-seven of the emigrants. The account included church fees for the marriages of two of the King brothers, and Samuel Bradshaw was given £5 and £1 for soap. The bills for clothing and shoes totalled £14 8s. 5d; together with an allowance of £1 5s. 6d. for beer and bread. The cost of the transport to Pill for embarkation was 15s.⁶

Journey

The boat they were to sail on was the Kennersley Castle, which sailed from Bristol on January 10th 1820 into a fierce gale. The ship carried five separate parties including a party of artisans from Bristol. Another party was lead by Thomas Phillips, the son of a clergyman, who came from Wales; his party consisted of his family and indentured servants. In his journal he comments *Bradshaw from Cam in Gloucestershire, he is an obliging farmer and takes out a party from the parish, a most horrid dirty set and the pest of the ship.* The Kennersley Castle arrived in Table Bay on March 28th. Because there had been a considerable number of cases of measles on board the ship was quarantined, and it was not until April 16th that they were allowed to set sail for Algoa Bay where they were to disembark and travel by ox wagon to their location in Albany. They finally disembarked on April 31st in Algoa Bay.⁷ While the embarkation returns at Bristol and the returns at Cape Town are not comparable for adults it is possible to estimate the deaths among children on the voyage for the families. Five of the families lost eight children aged three or under. Samuel Bennett, who lost Elizabeth, aged three, gained a son Thomas.

They then journeyed to the border by ox wagon to settle on their location, initially in tented accommodation. All locations had access to water, and the Cam party were settled close to the other

parties from the Kennersley Castle. Their location was known as Lemon Valley, but was renamed by the Party as New Gloucester. One of the sons of Isaac Wiggall, Eli, subsequently wrote an account of his life with a description of the location. *The valley was called Lemon Valley because it contained lemon trees, also grapevines being the remains of a Dutch homestead. We traced a water ditch, also the ruins of a house which had been built of mud and destroyed by fire... A serpentine river flowed through the centre of the valley; on its banks grew wild date, fig and other trees. The Settlers divided the valley into lots and each man took a lot which pleased him until all were satisfied. They built houses of rushes, reeds and wattle and daub. None of which was waterproof.*⁸



Major locations of the 1820 settlers in Albany

Early years

The Cam Party were joined on their location by Joshua Davies, who had originally sailed on the Kennersley Castle as a member of a Worcestershire Party. His wife had given birth at sea to a daughter, and he had a son of three. He was a sawyer.⁹

To the Settlers, used to Gloucestershire, a hundred acres must have seemed a generous amount of land, but they were speedily to be disillusioned. The bush with which they were surrounded was not in any way akin to their Gloucestershire countryside, and the Boers who had farmed there previously considered that acreage of four thousand acres was needed. The Settlers had the additional problem that the crops they grew initially suffered from drought and disease. Up to the end of 1821 they were still being supplied with rations, flour, rice, live sheep, oxen and rum. The arrival of the rum, according to Eli Wiggall caused drunken sprees.

The distance from many of the locations to Grahamstown, the local military town and administrative centre, was about thirty-two miles, and the Acting Governor, Sir Rufane Donkin, decided to establish an administrative centre at Bathurst, central to most of the locations. This led men to seek Government work at Bathurst and by November 1820 the two Bradshaws and Isaac Wiggall were employed on building the

first public building, the Drostdy, Wiggall as a lath renderer and the Bradshaws as sawyers.¹⁰ By June 1821 the Bradshaws together with Wiggall had obtained a grant of land on the Bathurst River for the purpose of erecting a mill for grinding corn and manufacturing coarse cloth and blankets. However Isaac Wiggall fell out with the Bradshaws and departed, taking with him seventy-five cogs and a ladder.¹¹ A comment by Jeremiah Goldswain, an emigrant in another party of working conditions under private contract was *Cash was so scarce that it was almost impossible for any one to be paid for your work in money; and we had to take such things as had to pay you with and these things were sometimes quite worthless to you. So in the month of May 1822 I packed up my blanket and a few things of wareing apparel...and left for Grahamstown.*¹²

Isaac Wiggall was another settler who also looked to Grahamstown for work. Having tried to build a windmill on the Bradshaw location he abandoned this project and obtained a grant of land in Grahamstown on which he built a mill. By 1823 he was undoubtedly spending most of his time in Grahamstown, having employed someone else to work the location.¹³ Another member of the party who left the location was Edward King, a single man and probably with his deposit paid by Samuel Bradshaw. Having "experienced crop failures for three years," and in debt he abandoned his location and became a trader to the Boers. He took with him Eli, the eldest son of Isaac Wiggall, who has left an account of their travels together. Subsequently Eli returned to his family and we know that Edward King ultimately settled in Swellendam making hats.¹⁴

The majority of the men with families did, however, stay on the location. In 1822 a Government survey recorded thirteen men needing to be supplied with wheat. But in 1823 a further survey recorded more adults on the same location. It is possible that the extra adults were Settlers from other parties, who were working as paid hands. The Party had 1,400 acres with sixty acres of wheat, barley and Indian corn and four acres of potatoes under cultivation. There were forty-seven cows and sixty-seven oxen with ten pigs; and it would seem that most of the acreage was scrub or pasture. Of the houses that had been erected one was of stone, three of Devonshire cob and seven were wattle and mud.¹⁵

Land allocation in 1824

In 1842 the Surveyor General's Office reassessed titles. Their records do not exactly replicate the original report of Commissioner Hayward in 1824. Perusal of other records would suggest that the following comments are correct.

In 1824 Settlers who had worked their land for the four years were entitled to claim title to the land. New Gloucester was divided into twelve plots. Eight of the recipients were bound to cede fifteen acres to Samuel Bradshaw, and he then sold these to John Gittings, who had been a member of Phillip's Party.

The problems with drought, poor harvests and disease led some of the party to leave their location once they had obtained title and could sell the land. Philip, Joseph and Henry King brothers, having ceded their fifteen acres to Samuel Bradshaw, and claimed their title to land on the location then sought employment elsewhere. Philip King became a trader, and moved to Grahamstown. Joseph King purchased a building plot in Port Kowie, and in 1829 sold his location in New Gloucester. Henry King also moved to Port Kowie, having failed to make his location productive. This statement seems at variance with the Opgaff roll of 1822 when he was recorded as having twenty draught oxen, twenty goats, and two pigs. He paid 100 rix dollars [they were still using Dutch currency] for his plot in Port Kowie, which was at that time being renamed Port Frances. This was in honour of the late wife of Sir Rufane Donkin who had been very supportive of the Settlers as they arrived. However four of the party did stay on the location. They included Josiah Davies, who had originally sailed on the Kennersley Castle as a member of Greathead's party from Worcestershire. Greathead's party, apart from relatives, were all indentured servants, and Josiah must have seen an opportunity to escape the indenture and gain his own land. He was a sawyer by trade, and Samuel Bradshaw, who had plans to build a mill, must have seen the advantage of adding Josiah to his party. Thomas Brent and William Newth, both under contract to cede fifteen acres remained at New Gloucester. Samuel Birt, said by Wiggall to have paid his own deposit, also remained on his location. He was still in possession of the land when he died in 1862, although he was not living on the farm.¹⁶ William Newth also

owned thirty-one acres at New Gloucester when he died in 1869. He was still drawing his Royal Marines pension.¹⁷

Those who left New Gloucester

Samuel and Richard Bradshaw having obtained two shares sold and went to Bathurst to pursue their objective of building a fulling and grist mill.¹⁸

In 1827 Henry King, in considerable distress, petitioned for additional land next to his erf in Port Frances. Having sold his location to pay for his erf he had suffered the misfortune of losing his wife in that year. He was left with four small children, and was unable to work. We have found no official record of whether the land was granted, but in 1831 he married for the third time in Grahamstown. In 1854 Jeremiah Goldswain testified that he had been dead several years, and had not left any property.¹⁹

Joseph King purchased a building lot in Port Frances in 1825. In 1829 he sold his location for 350 rix dollars. The location consisted of three hundred and fifty acres, and the house was built of stone. The documents signed indicate that Joseph was illiterate. By 1833 he was again a widower and remarried and went to Grahamstown. However he must have moved back to Port Frances by 1835 when he submitted a claim for losses in the 1835 Kaffir War. His losses included a heavy boat for which he claimed £7 10s. 0d. His three sons were fishermen, but as they did not put in a war claim, the boat may have been a family boat.²⁰

Phillip King also sold his location, moved to Grahamstown, and obtained a licence to trade with the "Kaffirs" at Fort Willshire on the Fish River. Unlike Joseph he was literate. From the early days Phillip had been a lay preacher in the Methodist Church and in 1853 was recorded as being the Wesleyan Chapel Keeper, and his death notice in 1861 recorded his occupation as a bell ringer. His estate consisted of a small cottage, and some immoveable property. He left no will.²¹

Isaac Wiggall, undoubtedly an entrepreneur, initially built a windmill at Grahamstown. This burnt down, and Isaac, petitioned for another grant of land, with water so that he could build a watermill. The place he chose was on a stream which was the main water supply to Grahamstown. On this he built a house and started to build a mill. He was not however granted title. His first wife died in 1827, and he subsequently remarried. In 1833 he left the Grahamstown property. He was probably in the Bathurst area in 1835, with a farm on New Gloucester, as he submitted a war claim in 1835 for £195 9s. 0d. In 1836 he lost an infant daughter and in 1836 three sons are recorded as attending the Sunday school. His second wife died in Culyerville in 1843 and he was married for the third time in 1845 to Mary Ann Brown. In 1849 he was paid £10 for making and fitting a singing pew in St John's Church. Isaac's son George had moved to the Winterberg, and Isaac purchased a farm next to his son, named Pinkeet valley after a place he had lived in when in England. He died at Uitenhage in 1863, leaving seven hundred acres of land at New Gloucester, a house and ground in Culyer Street, Uitenhage and the mill property in Grahamstown.²²

Samuel and Richard Bradshaw, after many vicissitudes, built their mill; but it was never a commercial success. They had hoped to grind corn and also use the mill as a fulling mill, but drought and insufficient skilled labour meant that they only managed to produce their first pair of blankets in 1829.²³ It appears that there was probably no further production after 1830. Samuel and Richard were now sharing a house in Bathurst, and appear to have had financial problems as they were summoned for non-payment of rates. Richard was still hoping that his family would join him, and petitioned for a farm.²⁴ The brothers were now undertaking building work, being involved in the building of the Methodist church, which was finished in 1832, and also the church of St Johns. The two brothers had taken shares in the church in 1832. In 1835 the mill was burnt down in a border war, and the Bradshaws put in a claim for reparations of £754 1s. 9d. Their losses included a house, and its contents, the mill, carpentry tools, cattle and equipment for producing cloth.²⁵ When the war erupted St John's Church was sufficiently forward for the inhabitants of Bathurst to be able to use it as a shelter; the windows and doors being barricaded. The Bradshaws worked on the church together until 1840 when their partnership was dissolved. Richard returned to England some time after the partnership was dissolved and died on a return journey at sea in 1842.²⁶

Samuel meanwhile had obtained the post of Field Cornet for the district of Bathurst, a government administrative post which included the duty to lead out a party to search for cattle taken by the "Kaffirs". He held the post until 1858.²⁷ He was also a prominent member of St John's serving it as churchwarden and remaining in charge of maintenance. He was still attending Vestry Meetings in April 1861, but he died in August 1861.²⁸

Thomas Baker, having moved to Port Frances, with his wife and eight children, struggled to make a living as a labourer and moved to Bathurst in 1831. In 1835 he was confirmed as Church Clerk and Sexton to St Johns and died in Bathurst in October 1876 at the age of ninety five.²⁹

Conclusions

It has been impossible to trace all the people who are recorded as arriving at the Cape. We know that Richard Bradshaw sailed using a false name, as did Samuel Birt. The Agents, both in England and at the Cape were only concerned that the numbers of adults leaving and arriving tallied. It is possible, with some certainty, to suggest where parents may have lost children on the voyage. Bransby Cooper, in his letter of support, states that Samuel Bradshaw planned to take out ten families, and ten adults were located. However the parish undoubtedly added to the party and they appear to have been single persons and it is those that have proved impossible to trace using official records. Death records, at the Cape Archives, are not available for all persons I have been able to trace. In some cases this is because they died elsewhere than in the Cape Province, but others probably died with no property to interest Government. It is also interesting that Samuel Bradshaw appears to have sought to take out people who might have helped his mill enterprise, but that after arrival they appear to have pursued independent careers. Spinning wheels appear in the inventory of his mill losses, the mortality of the women of the party could suggest that they did not have the energy to undertake employment.

References

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CO- Colonial Office GA-Gloucestershire Archives NA- National Archives

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² NA CO 48/41

³ GA P124/OV 1/6

⁴ CA CO 8541

⁵ CA CO 8541

⁶ GA P124 /OV 2/3

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⁸ CL MS 6658

⁹ M. D. Nash 1987 *A Settler Handbook S. Africa*

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¹¹ CA CO 8541

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¹³ CA CO 8541

¹⁴ CA MOOC 6/9/29 6027

¹⁵ CA CO 4449

¹⁶ CA MOOC 6/9/100

¹⁷ CA MOOC 6/9/127 5194

¹⁸ A. & M. Bailey 2004 "South Africa's First Woollen Mill" *Journal of GSIA* pp.12-18

¹⁹ CA CO 8460; CA MOOC 6/9/66 2548

²⁰ CA LBD 60; CA LG 28

²¹ CA MOOC 6/9/168 6506

²² CA MOOC 6/9/103 237; MOOC 7/1/266 86

²³ South African Directory 1830

²⁴ CA CO 3941

²⁵ CA LG 19

²⁶ CA CO 4120 H 47; Grahamstown Journal March 31st 1842 CA CO MOOC13/1/130

²⁷ Cape Almanac 1858

²⁸ CO MOOC 6/9/96 9025; MOOC 3/1/203 42

²⁹ CA CO 8538; CL PR 4080