

## The Ogier Crib

*A true story, re-told by Roy S. Perry*

In the spring of 1804, at a deer farm on Duvaux Lane, St Samson, in the Channel Island of Guernsey, Thomas Ogier was employed as a gamekeeper to protect the herd. A douit (stream) ran along the northern boundary. Prussian troops were bivouacked on the fields beyond. Their leader, Colonel Bluther, was housed in the comfort of Havilland Hall, St Peter Port. They were on the island to help resist raids by The French.

One of Tom's duties, at the age of 18, was to patrol the grounds at night. One moon-less night he heard some unusual sounds by the douit. He primed and set his weapon, then stealthily approached the site. He detected the whispered voices of two men and the sounds of a fawn in distress. Poaching had been a serious problem and he needed to scare them off. Intending to frighten off the rustlers he aimed a shot in the direction of the sounds.

A cry rang out, followed by scuffles. He heard the deer crash past him to safety after which there was silence. He tracked the path of the animal which he found quivering in a clearing, scared but un-injured. Tom haltered it and led it to a safe pen by the farmhouse.

Next morning the farmer was awoken by soldiers who hammered on the door. One had some English and accused the farm staff of murdering one of the military men during the night. They all trooped out to the brook and saw a body on the far bank. A musket ball had struck him down with a blow to the head. Tom had told the farmer about the incident but had no knowledge of the outcome of his warning shot. His master had sent him home to pack some clothes and hide away. The troop commander did not believe the farmer's tale and a 'Hue and Cry' was raised to search for the culprit. Tom's parents helped the lad pack his belongings and sustenance into the only large container available – a wooden cradle, or crib.

Tom's plight alarmed his extended family until a cousin, Alfie Brehaut, who was a fisherman, offered to take Tom across to the sister island of Jersey during the following night. His boat was moored at a small bay nearby and the boys were able to leave without detection. Alfie surprised Tom by bringing his own belongings with him. The sturdy little schooner had dark blue sails so was not detected en-route.

The cousins considered their situation. They had both been attracted to the idea of travel to the new world. Now, perhaps, they could escape from the constant threats from The French. They were single, fit and heathy. They knew that ships sailed across the ocean and occasionally called at Jersey. With difficulty they sailed round the coast to St Helier.

They were challenged at the port but found it easy to hide on the dockside amongst the bustle of travellers – and sacks of potatoes awaiting shipment. An agent told them that a ship was due to call at the island on the final leg of a voyage from India, bringing a valuable cargo of tea and spices. The vessel was a fast clipper ship and was due to dock at Plymouth before sailing west to The Americas. Passengers and crew could join in Jersey. The lads had sold the fishing boat so had been able to acquire a couple of trunks and more clothes in addition a small treasury of gold coin which was concealed in the base of the wooden crib. They signed on as crew members there and then. Before departure their parents and siblings travelled over from Guernsey to wish them 'Bon Voyage'. There was good news for Tom. The second soldier in the shooting tried to poach again, was caught and told the truth. During their wait

in St Helier they had met other families who wished to emigrate and a strong bond was created between them,

The elegant ship carried the name ‘Imperial Eagle’ and was beautifully fitted out, both for the crew of 25 and more than 200 passengers. They made a fast *passage to Plymouth Crew and passengers were renewed and the voyage across the North Atlantic commenced. Warnings of bad weather did not bear fruit and they cruised under billowing sails towards Canada. Tom and Alfie were given a range of tasks to test their seamanship and they passed these well. Swabbing decks, polishing brass, repairing sails and rigging were all carried out well. On the lighter side they had increasing contacts with the fare-paying families on board, doubling up as cabin staff and deck hands. Tom met a pretty girl from Torteval in Guernsey and they soon formed an attachment. Sally Bichard and her brother were travelling with their parents and planned to settle with relatives*

Their smooth crossing stalled when the ship was over an area called the Newfoundland Bank. Clammy grey fog halted their progress for three days. Tom and Alfie were sent up aloft to man the Fore and Main lookout posts in crows nests. Both young men were now Boatswains ‘Bosons’ Mates. Suddenly the grey pall ahead was replaced by a bright, white, glistening wall of ice. The ship was slowly approaching a huge iceberg. The Master eased his charge against the mass and crew members threw grappling lines across to secure the ship alongside. Crew members scrambled across armed with axes and large hessian bags. They hacked at the berg to create a number of similar-sized blocks of ice. These were placed in the bags and stowed aboard in large holds which had contained drinking water. One of these spaces was secured very tightly to exclude air. The other provided a fresh supply of potable water.

The voyage ended in Boston which was in Massachusetts at the time. The union was only 28 years old and comprised just 15 states. Cargo unloaded included ice blocks, horticultural and mechanical equipment, and TEA! (Despite all efforts, Bostonians were still addicted to coffee. Before disembarking, a group of Guernsey families had decided to stay together in their quest for a new home. They were the Ogiers, Sarchets, Prialx, Brehauts, Le Pages and Fallas. Boston was bustling with newcomers and there was little temporary accommodation for them but they found space in the newly built but yet-to-be consecrated Church of St Stephen.



A very large number of wagon trains had already streamed out to the west. Trail bosses and wagon-masters were extolling the virtues of unexplored territory – unexplored by Europeans, that is. Few of the immigrants realised that ancestors of the indigenous native Americans had arrive more than 12,000 years earlier. A chance encounter with Channel

Islanders who had set up the Canadian towns of Sarnia and Caesarea (Roman names for Guernsey and Jersey) led to them signing up with a train whose limit was the current western border of the USA in Ohio, Kentucky or Tennessee.

They crossed New York State, cut across the north-west of Pennsylvania and reached central Ohio. Here they found exactly what they wanted, verdant meadows, plentiful woodland and springs, all on land which sloped down eventually to Lake Superior. They built a community with single storey stone walled houses similar to those in Guernsey and lived contentedly.

Two years later a larger contingent of 28 arrived from Guernsey arrived. This group landed at Norfolk, Virginia before sailing to Baltimore, Maryland and thence overland to Ohio. Further immigrants from the island arrived in 1807 and 1810.

Much later the county in which the village of Guernsey stood was given the same name with its capital named Cambridge. In 2004, to celebrate the bi-centenary an exhibition was held. Focal point was the wooden crib which Tom had bought with him all the way from Duvaux Farm. Pick up the local phone book today and you will find some interesting surnames, like: - Ogiers, Sarchets, Priaulx, Brehauts, Le Pages and Fallas



