

**Diary of Pensioner Joseph Wright
Aka George Sturman
of the
Voyage of the Convict Transport *Racehorse***

Reel 425A see drawer 328A

I have left the spelling as written but have added a few commas and stops to give definition to some phrases. Some entries were difficult to read and some were impossible. If in doubt consult the original.

Jeanette Lee, Transcriber.

Racehorse, Diary of Pensioner John Gorman.

May 6th 1865. Tilbury Fort, Essex.

Embarked on board the Convict Ship *Race Horse* at 12 noon at Gravesend.

Sailed at 3a.m. on the 7th for Sheerness, dropped anchor at 6 o'clock a.m.

Embarked 143 convicts at 2p.m.

On the 8th sailed at 7p.m.

Dropped anchor at 6a.m. off Ramsgate

..... at 12 midnight

Weighed anchor at 5p.m.

Dropped Anchor at 7p.m. at Spithead

11th. Embarked 60 convicts at 6p.m. 4 children fell sick of measles, my child being one.

12th. Weighed anchor at 11.30 and set sail with a head wind at 2 (p.m.?) losing sight of Isle of Wight. A rough sea in the morning and children all sea sick, head wind all night.

13th. 4 o'clock a.m. off Needles Point, put ship about 6 o'clock, wind dropped – becalmed all day off Needles. 6 p.m. wind freshening.

14th. Sunday, sighted Portland at daybreak with a fair wind dropped anchor in Portland Harbour at 8 o'clock a.m. This has been a Sabbath of great spiritual poverty being no means of grace. Lord have mercy on us. Spent a portion of the day in reading and meditation, felt the Lord present to bless my soul.

15th. Mounted watch at 4 o'clock a.m. Wet morning read a prayer and a tract – felt the spirit of the Lord present with me.

16th. Embarked 80 convicts at 12 noon from Portland Prison. Need a few tracts and other pious books.

17th. One convict prisoner died 3 a.m. sent the corpse on shore to Portland at 5p.m. for internment

18th. Wrote a letter to parents.

19th. Nothing occurred.

20th. Still at anchor at Portland harbour.

21st. Sunday. No means of grace, assembled the children on the quarter deck to sing hymns, felt happy, spoke a few words to them on the importance of minding religion young.

22nd. Assembled the children again at 10a.m. and sung two hymns, spoke a few words to them. Prisoners broke into provisions and took a portion of biscuit, one prisoner placed on poop for insolence to one of his officers and sentenced to bread and water until further orders.

23rd. Wet morning, received a letter from parents, all well. The Lord is present with me.

24th. Shipping in the harbour fired a Royal Salute in honor of the Queens birthday, 8p.m.extra grog.

25th. Pensioner Radford sentenced to a fortnights extra watch and grog stopped till further orders for the trading with prisoner, who was sentenced to 14 days solitary, confined on bread and water.

26th. 9 a.m. Ships galley caught on fire, soon extinguished without much damage 9 ½a.m. 10a.m. for sea. Weighed anchor and set sail with a fair wind at 2.30p.m.

27th. Mounted watch at 4 o'clock a.m. Wife began in labour at 7a.m. gave birth to a fine son at 11.30a.m. Sea rough wind blowing a gale, continued all night. 8 convicts placed in confinement for stealing a mess of flour from their comrades

28th. Sunday. Wind still continuing. Wife progressing favourably. 12 noon wind abating slightly. 4p.m. wind blowing a gale, continuing all night.

29th. Wind blowing a hurricane all day. Touching the skirts of Bay of Biscay, ship on her course. 9p.m. wind blowing a hurricane.

30th. 4a.m. wind settled to a moderate breeze, running S.W. by S. heavy swell. 10a.m. wind lulled to a calm.

31st. A fair wind smooth sea, pleasant sailing, ship running S.W. by W. 2p.m. wet afternoon. 4p.m. still wet. 8p.m. ship running 10 knotts (sic) in S.W. direction, sail on lee bow.

1st June. Wet morning, fair wind but light. 10a.m. wind ceased to a calm opened a school for children, great opposition. Lord help me to discharge my duty as in the Light of God.

2nd. Strong wind and rough sea. The wife of Corp. Naughton admitted into hospital – delivered of a still born child.

3rd. Fine morning. My wife doing well. Committed the body of Corp. Naughton's child to the deep. Fair wind.

4th. Sunday. Fine day a fair wind, Devine Service at 10 o'clock a.m.. My wife on deck for about half an hour. Read a psalm and prayers at 8p.m. felt the Lord very precious to my soul.

5th. Fine day opened school morning and afternoon, read a psalm and prayer. In the evening felt a barrenness of soul. Lord help me to be more faithful than ever.

6th. Fine morning, read prayers to my wife, intend doing so as long as we are on board. May the Lord help me not only to read the prayers but to enter into the spirit and meaning of them with all my heart by faith in the name of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Read a tract and psalm in the evening with the prayers appointed for the day. Praise the Lord for his goodness towards me.

7th. Fine morning fair wind but light.

8th. Very hot.

9th. Very hot almost calm.

10th. Moderate.

11th. Sunday. Devine Service, distributed tracts. I pray God to bless the reading of them to some pour soul.

12th. A fine day very hot, hot light wind. Sail on the larboard side outward bound in sight all day.

13th. A good breeze, the ship running 10 knotts. A sailor placed in irons for being drunk, after confinement threw the captain's kitten overboard, broke the saloon windows, very mutinous.

14th. The breeze still continuing. Sighted a steamer homeward bound.

15th. Fine morning fresh breeze, running 10 knots, visited by a few locusts, two caught on board. The day has been very hot, dark at 7 o'clock at night. The Lord is greatly favouring us with pleasant weather. Expecting to pass the Cape de Verde Islands this day.

16th. An attempt at murder by a convict upon another convict by striking him of the head while asleep with an iron belaying pin. Saw a great many Portuguese-men-of-war fish and also a few flying-fish. Met a brig at 4 ½p.m. homeward bound. This has been another very hot day.

17th. Another very hot day. The convict who attempted murder was tried and sentenced to 3-dozen lashes which sentence was carried into execution on the spot. The convicts gave an entertainment this evening as the 'Ethiopian Serenaders' on deck.

18th. Sunday. This has been another very hot day, the ship becalmed. Devine Service at 10 ½a.m. Felt very happy while engaged in the service.

19th. Very hot, a day of great anxiety expecting the prisoners to revolt. 5 ½ p.m. a breeze springing up, the ship running 12 knots.

20th. The heat continues very apprehensive with showers of rain. Wind very slack.

21st. Sighted a ship at 2p.m. homeward bound. Steady breeze.

22nd. This has been an eventful day, alarm been given, all hands stood to our arms, women and children screaming. The alarm proved false, passed an English transport ship outward bound.

25th. Sunday. No means of Grace.

26th. English ship homeward bound ... from Calcutta 132 days.... .. Bread and water, sent a boat alongside of her with letters for England.

27th. A convict prisoner died at 10a.m. consumption. Met a ship homeward bound at 5 ½ p.m.

28th. 7a.m. Committed the body of the prisoner to the deep until the time of the General Resurrection when the sea shall give up its dead. Sighted a ship homeward bound at 11a.m.

29th.

30th. 6.30a.m. A prisoner The wind changed with squalls the wind freshening. The ship running 12 knots continuing all night.

1st July. The wind still continuing. The ship on course, heavy seas, sighted a ship homeward bound.

2nd. Sunday. No means of grace, spent a portion of the day in reading and The ship still on her course..... ..

3rd. Passed St. Helena 45 miles west. The ship still making good way. The Lord is very unto us in giving us fine weather and favourable winds. Glory be to His Holy name forever.

4th. This day has been squally.

5th. Fine day felt very much of presence of the Lord with me.

6th. Fine day, light winds.

7th. Very wet. Still breeze all day, lost 5 sail at night, the winds blowing a hurricane from SSE.

8th. Fine morning the winds slight, they abated. Saw a good number of Cape pigeons and one albatross. The weather is very cold.

9th. Sunday. Another Sabbath passed without any means of grace. 2 Cape pigeons caught. Wind very light. Ship on her course.

10th. Wind light. Ship in an easterly direction. 11a.m. Pensioner McGrath sentenced to 7 days solitary confinement on bread and water for striking the 3rd mate. 4p.m. sighted a ship outward bound.

11th. 6.30a.m. Spoke to the '*Andrew Jackson*' with passengers bound to Auckland N.Z.. left five days before us.

12th. A stiff breeze the ship running 12 ½ knots.

13th. The breeze still continuing.

14th. The same, the ship's run during the last 24 hours the distance 295 miles.

15th. The breeze still keeping up. The ship on course.

16th Sunday. No means of grace. The breeze still continuing.... .. set in wet, continuing all night, the wind shifted to a calm.

17th. Rain continuing all day very Wind. The weather has been very cold all the last week. Days very short only about 10 hours light. Ship on her course.

18th. A good breeze, sea rough. The ship still on her course.

19th. The breeze continuing. Weather fine

20th. The breeze freshening..... ..

21st. all day.

22nd. The wind settled to the.... Heavy swell, the ship rolled very greatly very cold

23rd. Sunday. No means of grace. Wet part of the day the wind very light.

24th. Calm mild morning. A convict very impudently stripped himself and jumped overboard to bathe but he found the current too strong for him, the life boye(sic) was thrown out to him and the boat immediately lowered but nevertheless he was carried a distance of half a mile before they could pick him up. Too much praise cannot be given to second mate Mr Hookton (?) and the boat crew for their promptness in rescuing the foolish man from a watery grave.

25th. A light wind from NE rather against us. Read the biography of Pious (?) Taylor, felt to enjoy a portion of the Holy Spirit while doing so.

26th. A very fine day, light wind, ship running about 5 knots.

27th. A good breeze, the ship on her course. 11a.m. caught a squall, carried away the fore and main topmast, stunsail, boom. The wind increased to a gale, continued all night.

28th. The gale continuing until about 11a.m. then settled to a moderate breeze, the ship still on her course. 6p.m. the wind increased again to a gale continuing all night.

29th. 6a.m. wind continuing all day, 11p.m. caught in a squall, no sleep between decks, ship rolling, pots and pans flying about in all directions.

30th. Sunday. No means of grace. This has been a day of great spiritual poverty. Wind fresh, ship on her course.

31st. The wind blowing a hurricane. Passed St. Paul's Island at 9a.m. first land we have seen since we left England. Hurricane continuing all day and night. Shipped a great deal of sea.

1st August. The wind changeable and very squally. The women and children washed out of their beds at 4a.m., the sea breaking in upon them. Continues squally all day the ship running before the wind in E by N. These have been two of the roughest days we have had on the passage.

2nd. Wind settled, a little heavy swell on the sea, the ship rolled greatly.

3rd. Wind rather light, ship still on her course, expect to see the desired haven in 3 days time.

4th. Light wind. Convict robbed one of the warders of his watch for which he had to pay one pound for the recovery. Got the cable chain up, a good sign that we are near harbour.

- 5th. Wind freshening to a good breeze, the ship still on her course.
- 6th. No means of grace. I hope this will be the last Sabbath at sea. The wind very strong, the ship close hauled to the wind but on her course.
- 7th. A regular hurricane head wind. 11a.m. the wind changed to a fair wind, rain and thunder, every prospect of being a very rough day. 2p.m. wind changed to head again and continued until 6p.m. when it settled and became more favourable.
- 8th. Light wind all day, sighted land in the evening.
- 9th. Head wind came in sight of land at 5p.m. Sighted light house at 7.30p.m. Shewed a blew light.
- 10th. Sighted land again at 5a.m. Stood in, signalised (sic) for pilot, came on board at 8.30a.m. dropped anchor at 11a.m.
- 11th. Landed the first division of convicts.
- 12th. Landed the second division of convicts.
- 13th. Sabbath. No means of grace.
- 14th. Landed the third division of convicts.
- 15th. Disembarked the troops and women and children, making our voyage 101 days.