

A True Crime Story from Georgian Saltfleetby

Theft of a Horse and Cart, 1820

Grantham Giddy from Saltfleet, was the miller of Saltfleetby Windmill from about 1810 until 1818. He moved here with his wife Jane from Gayton-le-Marsh, and their baby daughter Eliza. They had a further five children in Saltfleetby All Saints. In August 1818 he was incarcerated in Lincoln Gaol for three and a half months, as a debtor, owing a sum of £17 (to the value of about £1,800 today). Debtors had rooms at the front of the Georgian Prison building situated in the grounds of the castle. They were treated more leniently than felons, who were housed in a much simpler building at the back of the exercise yards (now demolished).

In September 1818 Saltfleetby Windmill was put up for sale by auction at the Ship Inn in Saltfleet, where innkeeper George Palmer hosted the sale. “*A Brick Smock Wind-Mill with two pairs of stones, Cottage, Bake-house, Outbuildings*” [therefore an earlier mill than the brick tower windmill], with two acres of land, “*occupied by Mr Grantham Giddy*” who was to show the property.

The Giddy family then moved to Alford, where Grantham worked as a baker. Jane gave birth to a daughter in 1819, but they both died and were buried in Alford on 5th and 7th January 1820. At the age of 36 Grantham was a widower with six surviving children between the ages of two and twelve.

On the night of 12th November 1820, he stole a mare, cart and harness from the yard of 45-year-old farmer Amos Swaby, in South Somercotes.

He sold the mare to Thomas Rippingale of Brancaster in Norfolk for £4 8d. He sold the cart in Lynn market. A fortnight after the theft, Amos Swaby met with him at Kirton near Boston. Here he was apprehended by Mr Swaby, and the long-serving police constable for Saltfleet, 41-year-old James Jaques. A week later Mr Swaby found his mare in the possession of Mr Rippingale at Brancaster.



Nathaniel Gooding Clarke KC

Grantham was sent back to Lincoln Gaol, now as a felon.

He was tried at the Lent session of the Lincoln Assizes (county court) on 10th March 1821, before Nathaniel Gooding Clarke Kings Council (the Chief Justice of Brecon).

Twenty-four other prisoners were tried at the same session, of which seventeen were found guilty, including:

David Booth (32) and John Parish (48) for breaking into the house of Mrs Culy at Whaplode and stealing over £700 in bank notes, 126 guineas in gold and some property. Joseph Freshney (55) for stealing a lamb at Whaplode. Willliam King (21) for highway robbery in which he stopped Edward Hunter of Killingholme and took three half-crown pieces and four shillings from him. James Podam (21) for stealing ten sheep from Ambrose Johnson of Thurlby from his land in Bourne Fen, where his father-in-law was shepherd. John Henshaw (18) for stealing £103 from a house in Stixwold. And Charles Keys (22) for stealing a horse at Grimsby.

These seven, and Grantham were found guilty and sentenced to Death.

The prisoners remained held at the castle. On 23rd March burglars Parish and Booth were executed in a public hanging at Cobb Hall Tower in Lincoln Castle.

The other convicts later had their sentences commuted to imprisonment, or “Life”. This meant transportation to a penal colony in Australia. Three life prisoners: Grantham Giddy, William King and James Podam, and nine other men from Lincoln Gaol with shorter sentences, were removed from Lincoln on 14th June 1821 and received at Woolwich on 16th June. They were transferred onto the prison hulk “Retribution” which was moored there.



Drawing of two prison hulks, one HMS Retribution at quayside steps, by John Grieve circa 1822, collection of Royal Museums Greenwich

This old cargo vessel, no longer seaworthy, was opened in 1804 to hold convicts awaiting transportation. It usually contained over 500 prisoners at a time, until it closed in 1834. Diseases such as typhus and tuberculosis were rife in these crowded convict hulks, where it's estimated 1 in 4 prisoners died.

On 26th July 1821, Grantham Giddy set sail on the ship Minerva, captained by John Bell on his third voyage transporting convicts to Australia. There were 172 passengers aboard, their average sentence was 49 years. Seventy-seven were life prisoners, including also William King and James Podam who had been tried alongside Giddy in Lincoln. After a journey of 143 days, during which they suffered three deaths *en route*, they arrived at Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour), New South Wales on 16th December 1821.

Here they began their new lives.



Detail of the Minerva, built in Lancaster in 1804, from a painting by Thomas Whitcombe, Royal Museums Greenwich

A free settler who arrived with his family from Kent in January 1822, Thomas Fitzherbert Hawkins, was the first to receive land near the fledgling settlement of Bathurst, 120 miles inland from Port Jackson. In 1823 he began building the first brick tower windmill west of the Great Dividing Range. Workers on the project were probably convicts, who transported machinery of several tons in weight over the mountains to the site. The mill was equipped with a pair of 4-foot millstones, a dressing machine, and other equipment. It opened in October 1824. Hawkins announced that his 'Blackdown Mill' could supply the district with any quantity of flour at short notice, where they'd previously had to rely only on hand-operated flour grinders.

After his years of experience at Saltfleetby Mill, Grantham Giddy was assigned to work as miller at the new windmill near Bathurst. On the first Australian census, in 1828, he was listed as a life prisoner working as a miller in Blackdown.

In 1830 Grantham was granted a Ticket of Leave, a document that allowed convicts to work for themselves or an employer before their sentence ended. This was like a form of parole, after serving a minimum amount of their sentence and exhibiting good behaviour.

TICKET OF LEAVE

No. 30/336 18th June - 1830

Prisoner's No. _____

Name, Grantham Giddy

Ship, Minerva

Master, Bell

Year, 1821

Native Place, Saltfleet Lincolnshire

Trade or Calling, Miller

In 1836 he was issued a Conditional Pardon, meaning he was granted freedom within the colony, but was not allowed to leave.

In 1840 he married 15-year-old Sarah Ann Haines, who had arrived in New South Wales on the ship Cornwall on 1st September 1839, as a free settler, with her parents and siblings from Sandhurst, Kent. They were joining her grandfather who had been sent to Australia in 1816 as a convict found guilty of forgery, having served his sentence and been granted his freedom, remained in New South Wales.

Grantham and Sarah had three sons and a daughter, between 1842 and 1849 in Menangle, south of Sydney. He died there on 26th June 1858 at the age of 75. Sarah married again and had a further 5 children; she died in 1908 at the age of 82.

They have many descendants in Australia.