

Baptism	1 April 1821, Queen Charlton, Somerset
Parents	Arthur Cante and Elizabeth Dowdell
Parent's marriage	29 May 1820, St Pauls, Bristol, Gloucestershire
Siblings	James (1822), Jonas (1826), Ruth (1828), Ann (1831), William (1833)
Wife	Arabella Owen
Married	12 May 1844, St Philip and Jacob, Bristol, Gloucestershire
Children	Ann (1845), Ruth (1847), George (1848), Richard Owen (1858)

The first record of Arthur is on the 1841 census, when he was living with his parents and siblings in the small village of Queen Charlton, Somerset. There were 74 inhabitants in 1841. ¹

Arthur Cante 40, thatcher; Elizabeth 45; Arthur junior 20, thatcher; James 14; Ruth 12; William 7; Job Cante, 60, pensioner; John Millard 65, ag lab; and Robert Gumen 25, ag lab.

His later-to-be wife worked at the Manor House, Queen Charlton.

Arabella Owen, 24, was a servant to Mary Edwards, 70, with independent means. There was another female, aged 60, at the same address and two other servants.

In 1844, Arthur Cante married Arabella Owen. She was the daughter of George and Sarah Owen, a farmer. Her family lived at Stanton Drew when Arabella was born. Stanton Drew is about 5km from Queen Charlton.

Sheep Stealing— On Saturday night, 24 March 1849, a lamb, belonging to Mr George Brown of Queen Charlton, was stolen from one of his fields. The following day, Arthur Cante Jun of Queen Charlton was apprehended for the offence and, the next day, committed to trial. He has since been tried at the General Quarter Sessions at Wells on 27 March 1849 and sentenced to seven years' transportation.²

Later, prison and criminal registers say he was convicted of receiving stolen property. However, his petitions are for stealing a lamb. Harsher sentences are given for those who receive stolen property.

Arthur was received at Wilton Gaol, at Taunton in Somerset, on 31 March 1849. He was described as Arthur Cante, 27, 5'10", fresh complexion, grey eyes, brown hair, married, scar on middle finger of right hand, born and resides in Queen Charlton, a thatcher. ³

The Prison registers show that Arthur Cante the younger was 27, married with three children, and convicted of receiving property, receiving a sentence to 7 years transportation. He was received at Millbank Prison from Wilton Gaol on 7 June 1849. Arthur could read; he was a labourer and a thatcher; it was supposed to be his first offence; and his wife, Arabella, resides at Queen Charlton, near Bristol. There was a cholera outbreak at Millbank Prison, and many of the prisoners were transferred to Shorncliffe, including Arthur. On 8 April 1850, he was moved to the *Justitia* hulk at Woolwich. Arthur boarded *Marion* on 22 October 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia. ⁴

While in prison, two petitions were lodged by the inhabitants of Queen Charlton and Whitechurch. Petition 1. Received 15 June 1849. ⁵

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Her Majestys Chief Secretary of State for the Home Department.

¹ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO107/947/3

² Bristol Mirror, 07 April 1849, p7

³ South West Heritage Trust; Taunton, Somerset; Reference Number: Q/AGW/15/5

⁴ TNA, PCOM2/30; HO24/4; HO8/102, 110

⁵ TNA, HO 18/220

The Humble Petition of we the undersigned principal Inhabitants of Queen Charlton in the County of Somerset.

Sheweth, That at the General Quarter Sessions held on 27 March last at the Court House in the City of Wells in and for the County of Somerset Arthur Cante a native and an inhabitant of Queen Charlton aforesaid was tried and convicted for Stealing a Lamb valued at Five Shillings belonging to Mr George Brewer the Prosecutor and thereupon sentence of Transportation for the Term of Seven Years was passed on him and he is now in one of Her Majestys County Gaols at Taunton in the said County waiting for further orders of your Honor to be sent on Board onr of her Majestys Transport Ships to one of her Majestys Colonies for the reception of such transports.

Your Petitioners therefore most humbly pray that you will take into your most serious consideration the apparent severe sentence passed upon the said Prisoner against whom the evidence was very slight and that the Prisoner has a Wife and Three Children under four years of age and always bore the Character of an Honest and Industrious young Man.

And your Petitioners most humbly pray that you will be pleased to represent the above circumstances to her most Gracious Majesty and we most earnestly pray that her Majesty will in her mercy be pleased to mitigate the Punishment of the unfortunate young Man in such way and in such manner as her Majesty's wisdom may deem proper.

It being the opinion of your Petitioners that the Justice of the case will be met by imprisonment with hard labour.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, Dated May 1849. Signed by 47 people, including one woman.
The Petition was not successful.

Petition 2. Received 9 August 1851.

To The Right Honorable Sir George Grey Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department.
The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of Queen's Charlton Whitechurch and neighbourhood on behalf of Arthur Cante at present a Convict on board the Hospital Ship "Unite" at Woolwich, No. 602.

That your Petitioner's have known the said Arthur Cante for many years, have often employed him and found him strictly honest and believe him to be an honest industrious sober and preserving young man.

That in March 1849 George Brewer a Farmer of Queen's Charlton in the neighbourhood of Whitechurch on going into his Field found a Lamb had been stolen and on making strict search discovered that it had been killed in a corner of the Field and it being a White Frost he traced the foot steps of two persons to a field that adjoins Cante's residence where all further trace was lost and further search abandoned until a short time after, the father of the said George Brewer went into a Barton attached to Cante's house where he saw the water of a Cesspool coloured with blood. That in consequence of such discovery a search warrant was obtained and the premises of three different persons searched including Cante's but nothing found in either that would for a moment cast the least suspicion upon them.

That the said warrant was obtained unknown to any of the parties whose premises were searched and consequently they had no opportunity to conceal anything if they had been so disposed.

That when the authorities searched Cante's house he was not at home but subsequently they came, in the middle of the night and apprehended him.

That Cante's shoes were compared with the footmarks in the Prosecutor's field, but did not at all correspond.

That notwithstanding, this Cante was taken before a Magistrate for the County of Somerset, Mr Ireland of Brislington, who committed him for trial at the Wells Sessions.

That the only evidence adduced against Cante was the fact of his having been seen to cross a Field with something under his arm in a cloth.

That Cante was tried at Wells Sessions and sentenced to seven years transportation two and a half of which have now expired.

That your Petitioners have been informed and believe that the Prosecutor has since the trial stated that he never even suspected Cante and that he always believed him to be an honest upright hard working man and that he was never more astonished than when he heard the sentence of the Court, as he expected the man would have been acquitted.

That your Petitioners fully concur in this opinion and they think the fact of his good conduct since his incarceration will in a measure corroborate it.

That the said Arthur Cante is a married man having a wife and three children at present too young to obtain a livelihood.

Your Petitioners therefore most humbly pray that your Lordship will be pleased to grant the discharge of the said Arthur Cante.

And Your petitioners will ever pray &c. Signed by 35 men.

This case was considered so frivolous that no Counsel was instructed, with all the above Farmers will gladly employ Cante if liberated, who has a wife and three children on the Parish. He was never before a Magistrate previous to this.

Answered 28 August 1851, unsuccessful.

Arabella remained in Queen Charlton while Arthur was in prison. On the 1851 census, Queen Charlton: ⁶

Arabella Cante, head, married, 28, charwoman, born Stanton Drew

Ann 6, scholar; Ruth 4; George 2

Her in-laws still lived in the village – Arthur Cante, 51, thatcher; Elizabeth, 58, thatcher's wife; William 17, son, thatcher.

The convict ship, *Marion*, arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 30 January 1852. Arthur was assigned No. 1158, given a Ticket of Leave and a physical description was recorded.

1158. Arthur Cante, 30, 5'8½", brown hair, brown eyes, oval face, fresh complexion, stout, no marks, thatcher, married, with three children.⁷

No information has been found about his work in Western Australia. By 31 December 1852, Arthur had repaid his Passage Money (£7). He paid £6. 15s, almost all in cash, and received an allowance of 15/-.⁸ A Conditional Pardon was granted on 30 September 1853, and his sentence expired in March 1856.

Arthur returned to Queen Charlton by March 1857, as a second son was born in 1858.

<i>Twenty-fourth January 1858 Queen Charlton</i>	<i>Richard Owen</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>Arthur Cante</i>	<i>Arabella Cante formerly Owen</i>	<i>Agricultural Labourer</i>	<i>Arthur Cante Father Queen Charlton</i>	<i>born twenty-fourth February 1858</i>	<i>Henry He Registrar</i>
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Richard Owen Cante was born on 24 January 1858 at Queen Charlton. Arthur, the father, was an agricultural labourer and was the informant on 17 February 1858.

Arthur's father, Arthur senior of Keynsham, was buried on 7 March 1858 at Queen Charlton, aged 62.

The 1861 census, Queen Charlton: ⁹

Arthur Cante, head, 40, thatcher, born Queen Charlton

Arabella, wife, 38, born Stanton Drew

George, son, 12, scholar, born Queen Charlton

Richard O, son, 3, born Queen Charlton

⁶ TNA, HO107/1944

⁷ State Records Office, Western Australia (SROWA), Acc 128/32

⁸ TNA, CO18/69

⁹ RG9/1702

1871 census, Queen Charlton:¹⁰

Arthur Cantle, 50, thatcher; Arabella, 48, wife; Richard 13, son, , scholar

His mother, Elizabeth Cantle, died in the Union Workhouse, Keynsham, aged 88, and was buried at Queen Cantle on 7 October 1877.

Arthur Cantle was buried on 23 June 1878, at Queen Charlton, aged 58.

Arabella Cantle was buried on 12 November 1899, at Queen Charlton, aged 77.

¹⁰ TNA, RG10/2504