

Thomas Mace – Convict Number 5187 (1817 – unknown)

Mace is the winner of our '*not the sharpest tool in the shed award*' he was sentenced to 6 years at Huntingdon court in 1857 for stealing a sheep.

Thomas caught and slaughtered a sheep belonging to a local farmer Robert King. He butchered the sheep in the paddock leaving the skin, head, and feet behind.

When the police turned up at Thomas Mace's house, he denied all knowledge of being involved in the crime, however on searching the premises the police officer found a steam pudding on the table containing mutton, under his bed was a sack containing a shoulder of mutton, plus sheep liver boiled up and stored in a cupboard. The rest of the sheep carcass was found hidden in his brother's home. Some swift detective work matched the sheep's feet to the carcass!

Mace had 4 previous convictions for theft and in prison his character was described as 'bad'.



Coloured stipple engraving, Courtesy of Wellcome Library, London.

William Messenger – Convict Number 5136 (1840 –1861)

He was convicted of sacrilege at Lincoln Court in 1854 and was sentenced to 14 years.

Messenger was a 14-year-old errand boy who, with another man, James Taylor, broke into the St. Peters Parish Church at Ropsley in Lincolnshire. They stole an 'enclosure award' (legal document specifying land allocated to a local person for farming), items belonging to the Church Wardens and in addition Messenger also urinated on a gravestone.

During his transportation he was a troublesome prisoner and spent much of his time in solitary confinement on bread and water rations for numerous offences including wilful damage to toilet paper!

He was released early on a ticket of leave, however, at the age of approximately 19 he drowned in a river not far from the Swan River Colony.



St. Peters Church, Ropsley, By Richard Croft, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3930677>