

## Adolphus Sinclair, 93, *Hashemy*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Adolphus said his next of kin was Adolphus Sinclair, address unknown. He also said he had two sisters and came from Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire. There is no record of an Adolphus Sinclair of any age anywhere.

Is Adolphus Sinclair his real name?

In January 1849, Essex the following crime was reported in newspapers:

A most daring and wanton act of incendiarism was committed on the farm of Messrs Bloomfield, at Halstead, on Friday last, by two young tramps. One of whom it appears has just been discharged from Bury gaol and has been several times in Springfield and other prisons.

James Ridgewell, young man, residing at Halstead, was on his way from Braintree, and when passing a wheat stack, the produce of eight acres, standing in a field on Blamsters farm, and within a few yards of the high road, he saw two boys running from the stack, from which smoke was issuing. He collared them both and taxed them with setting fire to it, which they did not deny, but stated that they did it to get into prison. G. Sperling, Esq., who came up at the moment on horseback, dismounted, placed a lad on his horse, and sent information to the police station. Inspector Hunt, p.c. 93 Simpson, and p.c. 32 MacPherson, were quickly on the spot. The boys, who gave their names as Benjamin Galer and Adolphus Sinclair, were at once given into the custody of Inspector Hunt. Lucifer matches were found on both of them. On being told the charge, they admitted it and said their reason was that they wished to get into gaol.

Sinclair said, "We should not have done it if we could have got into the union. We have seen the man and asked him, and he told us it was no use going there, as they would not take us in." An assistant relieving officer for vagrants said neither of the prisoners applied to him for relief. The prisoners made no defence. They were committed for trial.<sup>1,2</sup>

The new and powerful engine from the town was soon at the fire, but as there was no water within a quarter of a mile, it could not be worked and was to no avail. The stack, which was valued at about £90, continued burning and was wholly destroyed; but Messrs Bloomfield, we learn, are insured in the General Fire and Life Office.

At the Essex Assize on 15 March 1849:

Adolphus Sinclair, 17 and Benjamin Galer, 17, labourers, pleaded guilty to a charge of setting fire to a stack of wheat, the property of Messrs Joe Linnett and John Linnett Bloomfield, at Halstead. The prisoners were tramps and said their reason for setting fire to the stack was being refused relief at the union-house. Guilty – 14 years transportation<sup>3</sup>

Adolphus Sinclair, 19, single, read and write imperfectly, farm labourer, was convicted on 5 March 1849 at Chelmsford, Essex, of arson and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.

He was received at Millbank Prison on 24 October 1849 from Springfield Gaol. At Millbank, he weighed 8 stone 1 pound when he arrived, and his behaviour was good while at Springfield. He said his next of kin was Adolphus Sinclair, address unknown.

There is conflicting information in the prison registers. One says it was Adolphus's first conviction, and another says he was sentenced at Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, to 12 months for vagrancy.

Adolphus was removed from Millbank to Pentonville Prison on 22 December 1849. The register says he attempted to break out of prison, although no other details are given.

On 11 June 1850, he was transferred to Portland Prison. The Governors Journal notes:

The following convicts received at 5 p.m. from Pentonville Prison – making the number in prison at night 854, the largest number yet that has been accommodated in prison. Adolphus was one of 36 convicts received from Wakefield. He boarded the *Hashemy* at 8 a.m. on 19 July 1850 for the voyage to Fremantle.<sup>4</sup>

During the voyage to Fremantle, Adolphus was ill:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge General Advertiser, 10 January 1849, p3

<sup>2</sup> Essex Standard, 05 January 1849, p3

<sup>3</sup> Essex Herald, 13 March 1849, p1

<sup>4</sup> HO24/4; PCOM2/30, p173; PCOM2/354, p320; PCOM2/383 p209; HO24/16; HO8/105

<sup>5</sup> ADM 101/32/6/1-6

Folio 2: Adolph Sinclair, aged 19, prisoner; sick or hurt, dyspepsia; put on sick list, 14 August 1850, discharged 23 August 1850 well.

Folio 5: Adolphus Sinclair, aged 10, prisoner; sick or hurt, cynanche; put on sick list, 15 October 1850, discharged 26 October 1850 well.

Folios 14-15: case no 6, Adolphus Sinclair, aged 20; prisoner; sick or hurt, cynanche tonsil, belonged to Bishop Stortford, of weak intellect and idiotic appearance, was prosecuted for arson, general health very indifferent but not so much impaired, after he came on board however he became very despondent unable to eat the ship's rations and fell into ill health without apparent functional disorder beyond a rapid wasting of flesh; put on sick list 15 October 1850, sent 26 October 1850 to Hospital at Fremantle.

From the Surgeon's diary:

Cynanche Tonsil

Adolphus Sinclair, 20, prisoner. Placed upon the sick list 15th Oct 1850 and discharged to Hospital 26 October 1850.

Adolphus Sinclair Prisoner belonging to Bishop Stortford, of weak intellect, and idiotic appearance brought up to farming pursuits; prosecuted and found guilty of arson, general health very indifferent but not so much impaired at his embarkation as to render the voyage to Western Australia at all dangerous, about a week after coming onboard however he became very desponding unable to eat the ship's rations and fell into ill health without any apparent functional disorder beyond a rapid wasting of flesh quite..... under the free use of wine and the vegetable tonics(?) with acids and a ..... regimen.

15 October after days only after his convalescence, he was attacked with cynanche tonsil, and the ordinary symptoms of Catarrh, when an emetic was given which acted freely, & a hot Bath ordered. Throat much inflamed and tonsils considerably enlarged deglutition difficult and painful. Tongue coated, Skin dry and bowels to ....., Mind dejected and sad.

Treatment listed.

17 October Blister ..... well, deglutition esp. difficult, and had some ..... sound sleep

26th. Improving till last evening when diarrhoea suddenly set in followed by great exhaustion and low muttering Delirium, the body exhaling a deadly putrid odour, and difficult respiration.

Treatment listed.

21. Diarrhoea is still present.

More treatment

22 October past a better night and more collected today able to swallow fluids without difficulty but the same fetid emanation from the surface of the body, great general debility and emanation.

Treatment

24 Considerably improved and bowels (natural?)

25. Appetite increased, and he says he is gaining strength

Treatment

26 Past a good night and is anxious to disembark, and as the other prisoners are leaving the ship he is sent to Hospital in the Convict Establishment whence the diarrhoea returned with increased violence and he sunk exhausted on the sixth day after his removal from the ship *Hashemy*, as I had predicted, never having known anyone to survive that peculiar exhalation, as from decomposed animal matter.

On arrival at Fremantle in October 1850, Adolphus was described as:

93. Adolphus Sinclair, 18 single, farm labourer, Church of England, public school, can read tolerably but cannot write. He said he left two sisters in England. Adolphus died on 2 November 1850 of consumption.<sup>6</sup>

The chaplain said the following in his report to the authorities:

Although our residence in Western Australia has been short, yet two of our number have been removed from amongst us.

The first, (Adolphus Sinclair), being in a weak state on our arrival, was conveyed ashore to hospital at once, where he lingered for about a week, death having terminated his sufferings on the 2 November, 1850.

In my conversations with him he showed a full knowledge of the way of salvation, clinging with all earnestness to the Lord Jesus, acknowledging his wretchedness, and casting his burden "on Him that is mighty to save". In prayer he joined heartily with me, even in his weakness responding with energy. His

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<sup>6</sup> SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

death occurred sooner than I expected, but not before there was strong reason to believe that God would mercifully regard him, and perfect the good work which His grace had begun in the heart. He was only in his nineteenth year.

Matthew Fletcher, Chaplain <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Further correspondence on the on the subject of Convict Discipline and Transportation; Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of her Majesty. May 14, 185. London, p90