

THE STORY/SAGA OF THE SEVEN STEPS OF TRIMBY'S TRAVELS

JOSEPH ELLIOTT ALIAS TRIMBY FF

11 June 1764 – 25 June 1836

Joseph Trimby's Story begins in Horningsham Wiltshire England in 1755 with a Richard Trimby and Christian Elliott. They were married by special licence. Their children James, Richard, Joseph and Benjamin (Twins) and later another Benjamin were baptized at Horningsham. Joseph's twin brother Benjamin must have died as a baby.

At Bristol, 24 November 1784, 20yr old Joseph Elliott (a gardener) was sentenced to 7yrs transportation for stealing a pocket book (it was empty!!). He was sent to the "Dunkirk" hulk a few days later and received there as "tolerably decent and orderly". A few years later he was transferred to the "*Friendship*" to set sail for Botany Bay in May 1787. **First Step of his Travels.** Why he took his mother's maiden name is still a mystery.

Over eight months later (January 1788) Joseph Elliott stepped on to land at Port Jackson. **The Second Step of Trimby's Travels.** Nearly 2½yrs later (May 1790) Joseph Elliott was accused of stealing 1¼ lbs potatoes worth two pence halfpenny from Mr Richard Johnson. He pleaded guilty but said in his defence that he had worked hard all day and was very hungry.....punishment..... 300 lashes on bare back with cat of nine tails, no flour ration for 6mths and to be chained for the same 6mths to two public delinquents at work on the roads. A few days later Capt Phillip allowed him his flour ration.

Sometime at the end of 1790 Joseph set sail again. He was sent to Norfolk Is. **3rd Step in Trimby's Travels.** Maybe he is the Jas Elliott recorded in December 1790 as shirking his duty...punishment 100 lashes (he could only take 73 lashes); then again in May 1791 a Jas Elliott was seriously injured by a falling tree. In 1791 we find Joseph Elliott subsisting with Eliz Seiney on a Phillipsburg lot with 95 rods cleared, sharing a 5 month old sow. In 1793 Joseph Elliott and Elizabeth are settled on 12 acres at Lot No 51. Elizabeth had arrived at Port Jackson June 1790 and 2 months later, in August, was sent to Norfolk Is, so she was there before Joseph arrived. In June 1794 records speak of **Joseph Trimby**...no longer is he called Elliott. Intrigue? Why was he now called Trimby? Was it because he and Elizabeth now had a son James to carry on the rightful name? In December 1796 Joseph and Elizabeth were leasing 60 acres and had two sons, James and Joseph.

1805 records have Joseph Trimby listed as 2nd class settler with two sons, without wife, with 13 acres cleared, owning 17 swine and signing with a mark for grain sold to Stores. A more recently restored headstone reads "Elizabeth Trumby and her 1 (or 4) year old son William". This we believe to be Elizabeth Trimby who died aged 30yrs. So Joseph had fathered 3 sons on Norfolk Is to Elizabeth. The years roll on - Joseph lived on Norfolk Is for 22 yrs, from 1790 to January 1813 (aged 26-48yrs). Now it is time for **the 4th Step of Trimby's Travels.** He was evacuated from Norfolk Is to Norfolk Plains in Van Diemen's Land in January 1813. His two sons and daughter-in-law (James had married Mary Egan the previous year) travelled as adults on the same ship.

The Trimbys were some of the first settlers at Norfolk Plains in Van Diemen's Land (VDL). They had 3 farms on the west bank of the South Esk River. There is little doubt that in the 1800s VDL was correctly termed **a bandit society**. Even those in authority were often guilty of crimes. Once again Jo is a loser. It appears that James was given a contract to supply fresh mutton to His Majesty's Stores at Launceston. During one 6 month period he did supply 1100 lbs mutton. But between them the Trimbys only had 200 acres whereas others had much larger areas and could supply four times as much as Trimbys. James did what others did - resorted to stealing sheep – but he was caught and his father and brother were accomplices. It is now recorded in Colby's Books, '*Crime Marches on*' and '*Putting Down Roots*' as well as the Tasmanian Records, in graphic detail, that the Trimbys were caught stealing sheep. e.g. words used **one famous case, Joseph Trimby and his two sons....That incorrigible family of sheep stealers, the Trimbys.... Their renowned sheep stealing activities**... The person who laid the charges was once the perpetrator of an outrageous burglary and was notorious for his attempts to escape. However the Trimbys were caught stealing sheep and taken into custody. John Stevens, a nearby farmer was made overseer of their property.

Once more Joseph Trimby lost his freedom. He and his two sons were accused on 16 January 1818 and were brought to the place now called Sydney, for trial in June that year. **The 5th Step of Trimby's Travels** from VDL aboard the

"Lady Nelson" to Sydney for trial. Another accused with them was acquitted at Sydney but the Trimby's were convicted and sentenced to 14 years at Newcastle, the major prison of the colony; a place for those who had transgressed. There, the convicts were employed as cedar getters, miners, lime burners, shingle splitters and carpenters.

So **the 6th Step of Trimby's Travels**. On 30 June 1818 they sailed up the coast on board the "Lady Nelson" from Sydney to Newcastle... that place first called Coal River, then King's Town and now Newcastle. However to the convicted it was no *new--castle* – they called it "**the Hell of NSW**". Most of the 700 or so people there were convicts with inadequate diet, shortage of clothes, 10 hours daily work, from 5 to 6 in summer and 4 to 8 in winter. They were made attend divine service conducted by the military until a chaplain came in 1820. Joseph was now 54 years old and labelled "reoffender". His two sons were now convicted also. Here the Trimby's worked as shingle splitters and carpenters.

Joseph spent his first 6 months of Newcastle convict life under Capt Wallis. Wallis had improved things a little, starting a building programme. Then he explored the valley and found fertile land, so started a farming programme. He allowed well behaved prisoners to live in barracks there and farm the land. The farm area was now called Wallis Plains after him. Those on Ticket of Leave (TOL) he even allowed to have some land of their own to farm. His humane rule earned personal commendation from Gov. Macquarie. Capt Wallis left in December 1818, the year Gov. Macquarie requested the name "Australia" be used. It was officially adopted in 1820.

After Capt Wallis, the Trimby's survived 5 years under the notorious Major Morisset, the longest serving commandant of Newcastle. Yes, he did continue the building and farming programmes but used strict rule and harsh punishment. He thought Capt Wallis had been too lenient and Morisset's own religious beliefs and personal behaviour upset the Chaplain.

After Morisset left, the Trimby's experienced some life under Capt Allman. He had been born in Ireland (later died in Yass NSW), was a sound character, a kindly considerate man and respected people. He was a failure as a farmer and with his family finances. He was given some land at Muswellbrook and a little at Wallis Plains and later bought around 500 acres at Wallis Plains which he called "Rathluba".

Like all convicts Joseph would have worn ordinary clothes at first, then calico "slops", then black & yellow for chain gangs and lastly around 1820, the broad arrow, that English symbol representing "owned by Gov". Real convict "formal dress" for our Jo indeed!! In summary, Joseph and his two sons had 6 months in Newcastle under Capt Wallis, five years under Morisset and some time under Capt Allman; early Novocastrians indeed.

Sometime around 1823 records show the 2 Josephs as part of a group farming 11 farms in the Wallis Plains area.

So **the 7th Step of Trimby's Travels** from Newcastle to Wallis Plains...either by walking, dray, or boat, up the river. The road wasn't built until 1824 and the regular boat service didn't start until 1824 so it is presume that he walked most of the way.

By 1825 Joseph is recorded as farming with his two sons on 10 acres employed by Capt Allman. He was now in his early 60s. It was in 1823 that the Trimby's requested permission to return to their own property in VDL. The request was ignored – no reply. Possibly because that was the year Tasmania became a separate colony and there were many administrative jobs to attend to...no one was interested in the Trimby's request. In January 1825 a document sent by the Commandant to the Governor describes Joseph as "**WELL BEHAVED**" and states that one son (James) is still in Newcastle.

Then on 12 April 1825 a Certificate of Good Conduct was transmitted by the Commandant to the Colonial Secretary re the Trimby's and supported by the Chaplain. Joseph is described as an honest, industrious, sober character not guilty of any crime or misdemeanour since coming to Newcastle. A few weeks later a **Ticket of Leave** was granted. Finally some reward for Joseph. The Register of TOL describes him as ... a native of Wiltshire, carpenter by trade, 5' 4½" tall, sallow complexion, brown to grey hair, dark eyes; Joseph Jnr. - a shingle splitter, 5' 7" height, dark brown hair, dark eyes. I haven't found a description for James, just the recorded numbers on his record. By now Joseph is recorded in Wallis Plains Records as farmer under Capt Allman with 30 acres - 10 cleared, 10 cultivated with horses, cattle, sheep and other.

The Wallis Plains 1828 census shows Joseph Trimby a farmer TOL under Captain Allman, with 2 sons, 30 acres, 10 cleared, 10 cultivated and horses, cattle, sheep and other. In March that same year 1828 James the eldest son died. Joseph his father buried him in their family land at Lochend as there was no cemetery land at that time. Seven years later in Nov 1835 Joseph applied for a warrant to have his son's body moved to consecrated land –“the Glebe cemetery” on 28 Nov 1835. The headstone still exists and shows the original death date, 10 March 1828.

Who paid for and worded the headstone which still survives and is readable? Was it Capt Allman? He was their employer. He was acting as Magistrate in that area that year ??? The following year a granddaughter Mary Ann was born to Joseph and Hannah.

1831 Pardon was granted to the Trimbys [through Allman's influence](#). So it is consider that Allman must have been a “**Friend** to Joseph Trimby”. Because of the Pardon, Joseph Jnr. and Hannah were now permitted to legally marry which they did soon after in the Schoolhouse at Maitland and the register reads ..**both free**.. Joseph and Hannah already had 2 children and after their 1831 legal marriage the following year 1832 they had another son, John. In 1835 Joseph saw his grandson baby James reinterred in Glebe cemetery near his uncle James.

Having completed 72 years of [life existence](#) and travelling many journeys, mostly by ship, Joseph Trimby died on 25 June 1836 at Maitland. The St Peters Burial register reads

Trimby Joseph Free/ Arrived in one of the first ships.

We now close the saga of “Trimby's Travels” regretting the 7 years unjust conviction that became 47 years punishment, from 1784-1831 (+ 5yrs pardon) all because of an empty pouch/wallet.

We believe Joseph served his full time in every way.